

Venezuela: Federal or Communist State?

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On December 16th regional authorities are going to be elected in Venezuela's 23 states. This new electoral process imposes an assessment of the possible outcomes and its impact on the country's future development.

After being re-elected on October 7th, President Hugo Chávez Frías managed to win in 21 States, except in the Andean states of Táchira and Mérida.

Two months later the candidates of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) could obtain a similar victory. However, the regional election has its specifics due to the local reality and the performance of the local government. Furthermore, the Constitution allows the re-election of current Governors.

The strengths of PSUV's candidates are: high enthusiasm generated by the victory on October 7th; the governmental use of all means and resources during the electoral process and on election day; and the mechanism of intimidation enforced upon those voters dependent of the central government, and dependencies as well as the beneficiaries of the social programs (missions) granted by the Chavez's government.

However, Chavez appointed his candidates to Governors by a criterion of loyalty to his leadership and his political project "21st Century Socialism". He imposed candidates that have no connection to regional realities and those opting for reelection have been unable to solve everyday problems since the decisions are taken in Caracas.

In the case of the Opposition Coalition for Democratic Unity (MUD), the candidates were elected by popular vote in a primary process in February, with the exception of the 7 States where the Governors are running for re-election.

In these 7 States the middle class is a key factor since its income is provided by jobs in the private and regional public sector and not only by Chavez's government.

Evaluating the possible result one can predict that if the mobilization works as it did last October 7th, the PSUV will win in 21 States while the MUD only in 2.

But Chavez' physical absence during this electoral campaign diminishes his charisma effect on the winning possibilities of the PSUV candidates, opening an option to the MUD to gain between 6 to 8 States; upholding the current status. However, this scenario depends on the MUD's mobilization strategy during Election Day, because the middle class in the urban centers is still "mourning" and depressed due to the loss of the Presidential Election last October 7th and is not motivated to participate.

In the end the electoral process on December 16th opens the debate about the political administrative structure of the country, because if the PSUV has a decisive victory it would enforce the creation and development of the Communist State erasing the present structure model established in the Constitution: *the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a decentralized Federal State*.

The new Communist State would create new forms of power, where the social, economic and political control would be in the hands of the Supreme Leader, similar to Cuba, North Korea, Belarus, Iran, Syria, or Gaddafi's Libya.