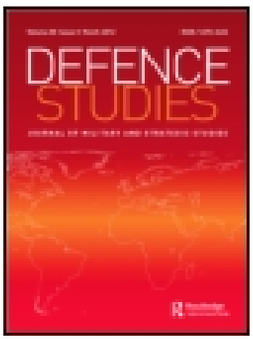

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ARTICLE

Venezuelan military: a political and ideological model in Chavista governments

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ABSTRACT

The arrival of Hugo Chavez (1999–2013) to the government profoundly altered the role of the armed forces in the Venezuela political system. In this article we argue that Hugo Chávez's government took the military to the field of politics by turning them into important political actors and Maduro's governments (2013 - present) grants them a high degree of autonomy in politics and economics according to a model of political and ideological behavior. We advance our argument by proposing and testing the political and ideological model of military behavior through dissecting important events and dimensions (of the political, economic, and ideological nature) in Chávez and Maduro's administrations. Through these events, the article aims to explain how the transformation of the armed forces into a political actor during the Chavista governments happened.

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Armed forces; autonomy; chavista government; political participation; economic participation; ideology

Introduction

With the emergence of the Chavist[1] political and military phenomenon in Venezuela at the beginning of the 21st century, the literature that investigated civil-military relations on Venezuela varied from a description of the deterioration in civilian control mechanisms (Irving, 2001; Trinkunas 2001; Norden,2001) to a critical review of the militarization of political life in Venezuela during the Chavista period (Koeneke 2005; Irving et al, 2006; Jácome 2011, 2014; Diamint 2015). This article tries to cover a gap in the literature on civil-military relations in Venezuela during the period of the Chvez´s governments (1999-present) related to the participation of the military in Venezuela's political life.

Chávez promoted a radicalization of Venezuelan liberal democracy through the institutionalization of participatory democracy and a model of socialism that later came to be known as "socialism of the 21st century."[2] Probably no experience of military radicalism, with leftist tones, had gone so far in a Latin America.[3] Hugo Chávez held power in Venezuela for almost fourteen years (1999–2013). When Chávez died on 5 March 2013, he left a very important legacy, and a political consequence, for the Venezuelan armed forces with the growing militarization of institutions, as well as their politicization.

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The militarization of the Venezuelan political sphere was a sharp drop in democratic practices. It should be remembered indeed, when in the 1980s most Latin American countries were emerging from long periods of dictatorship, Venezuela was considered, along with Costa Rica, the only consolidated liberal democracy in Latin America (O'Donnell 1982). Therefore, a significant and thought-provoking question that emerges in relation to Venezuela is: How did the model that most subordinated the military to the civil political class in the Latin American region until the late 1990s become so much politicized, making the Venezuelan military corporation politically autonomous from civil authority?

Hence our argument reinforces that Chavista governments took the military to the field of politics by turning them into important political actors which can be understood through the political and ideological model of military behavior (that included changing norms in the constitution), strong political participation in national public administration and in the economy, and socialization of Bolivarian ideologies in armed forces making the military acquire a high degree of autonomy of initiative, especially in the Maduro government.

We apply our framework, which is based on two opposing models of civil-military relations to the relationship between military and policymaking in the Chavista government and we show how the politization of the military has occurred, according to a political and ideological model (model 2, following our theoretical framework). The Venezuelan case offers interesting insights because, in the years of the Punto Fijo Pact's democracy (1958–1998), it proposed a constitutional interesting formula that subjected the military to mechanisms of subordination to civil policy power. This transformed the armed forces into a professional and neutral force (Sanjuán 2004), taking the military away from politics, and leaving them with several prerogatives and ineffective democratic control (Pion-Berlin and Martínez 2017). We advanced and tested our argument through dissecting important events and dimensions (political, economic, ideological) in Chávez and Maduro's administrations, in which the role of the armed forces had been engaged.

This article is structured in three sections. The first section deals with a review of two opposing models of civil-military relations and political participation. In the second part we test the "political and ideological model of military behavior." This second part has been divided into four subsections (in which the first and the second one provides a detailed analysis of the political and cultural-ideological dimensions during the governments of Hugo Chávez, while the remained sub-sections discuss the autonomy and economic dimensions of the Venezuelan armed forces during the Maduro government regarding the context of political and economic factors. In the final remarks we assess the model in accordance with the finding.

Civil-military relations and political participation

Security scholars and policymakers identified problems with the expanding military roles and the transformation of armed forces. These reorganization processes were related to new roles, missions and democratic control over the armed forces and the reorganization of military roles (Edmunds 2006). While acknowledging the merits of an early wave of studies concerned with military professionalism, Praetorianism, military coups and regimes (Huntington 1981; Janowitz 1960), scholars have argued that previous works

have focused excessively on the democratic control of the military, neglecting important issues such as military engagement in internal governance. They highlighted that an excessive focus on political control over the military at the expense of other variables (military autonomy, political participation or civil society engagement in security and defense) was problematic (Cottey et al. 2002; Edmunds and Malešič 2005).

This new conceptualization furthered our understanding of how states generate and manage military power thus making it susceptible to political and economic trade-offs. These findings stress the normal (non-political and professional way in which the armed forces could behave vis-à-vis civilian political power. This leads to two opposing four - dimensional models.

Model 1: Apolitical and professional model of military behavior

This model describes how a defense policy formulation ideally occurs in a government, highlighting the expected civil-military relations.

- Dimension 1: political objective control – Huntington's (1957) model of objective control of civilians over the military in democratic regimes was based on the idea of the soldier as both a professional and a political agent of the defense. The political participation of active or retired military personnel in civilian governments is an uncommon fact.
- Dimension 2: military organizations as agents removed from the ideologies of civilian rulers. Weber views military organizations as legal-rational forms of domination. Power relations are derived from a stable set of rules and principles that ensure the efficient implementation of their missions (Weber 2015, 529). The armed forces are an apolitical rather than a deliberative force, therefore promoting a professional defense, in which the military bureaucracy does not have beliefs and ideologies.
- Dimension 3: military removed from key economic management – the roles, missions and contributions agree with their functional autonomy. "Although the military does not necessarily challenge the economic policies of the government, they can still have considerable prerogatives, such as the autonomy in the determination of military missions, budget allocation and defense spending . . . or even the supervision of the police and intelligence agencies" (Stepan 1988, 94–97).

Model 2: Political and ideological model of military behavior

This model describes a civil-military relationship counter-model to the previous one and operates according to the following dimensions:

- Dimension 1: subjective control 1 – Civil-military relations are based on the "subjective control" model, being the idea that there are power struggles between different groups of civilians trying to control the military. Armed forces politicized either by coincidence with the decision makers or by becoming an important political actor in the political system, in such a way that the military is subjectively subordinated through a "political civil control" (Pion-Berlin 2005).
- Dimension 2: politicization and military ideologization. Civil-military relations are based on cultural factors, and values including symbols and attitudes, ideological coincidences, and other dimensions such as military loyalties derived from personal ties or military career history or doctrinal coincidences that significantly define the relationships

between political decision-makers and the military. On the other hand, there is a extended military autonomy in defining defense policy in terms of promotions and military spending.

- Dimension 3: broad participation of the military in defining public policies beyond defense ones, as national economic, development and public security. As Klepak (2010, 269) points out, for example, "the Cuban armed forces assumed functions that included agricultural production and business administration" and the Cuban army "soon became involved in managing the agrarian reform and programs of many of the nationalized industries that came under government control. It also managed a network of companies and institutions that allow it to be self-sufficient regardless of external crises."

Describing both models more widely according to model 1, Samuel Huntington (1957) discusses "objective control" and "subjective control." In the "objective model," civilians control the armed forces, relying on professionalism and political neutrality. The government designs defense policies but gives the military considerable autonomy in the domain of its competence. Civilians exercise power over the military, but they do so primarily through a division of labor. In contrast, "subjective control" model is based on the idea that there are power struggles between different groups of civilians trying to control the military, as well as between the military and civilians. In this model, civil groups try to control the military by turning them into a "mirror of the State."

According to the model 1 and based on the Weberian premise of "sine ire et studio" used for the civil state bureaucracy, the military accepts political neutrality to adapt themselves to the variety of political groups that can reach power (Norden, 2008). Despite all, Pion-Berlin (2005) asserts that governments have achieved control over the military and acquired military obedience through the use of "civil political control." The method consists of attracting the loyalty of some soldiers, with whom in some cases personal or family relationships are established, and of those military who are promoted to higher ranks or appointed as head of the Ministry of Defense.

In model 2, the ideational cultural factors also affect the civil-military relations as Rebecca Schiff stated. Cultural factors include values, loyalties, symbols, and attitudes which are important in informing not only the vision that society has of its military members, but also the military's view of its own role. When the army recruits its soldiers, it must draw from existing civilian sectors with distinctive cultural norms and values (Schiff 1995, 11). Schiff's "concordance theory," emphasizes dialogue, accommodation, cooperation, and shared values and goals among political elites, military, and society. Her theory of agreement explains two goals: first, it describes institutional or cultural conditions – involving separation, integration, or alternative path; second, it discourages military intervention. The concordance theory does not assume that the separation of civilian and military is necessary to avoid military intervention in the civil sphere. Involvement of the military in the decision-making process takes place in the context of active agreements, decrees or constitutional laws based on longstanding historical and cultural values.

As expected by model 1, military personnel in democratic governments can retain enough institutional autonomy to determine budget allocation and defense spending. It appears more problematic in model 2, as the doctrines of national security urge the military experts and the population to include under the umbrella of "national security" also the economic development, the foreign policy, as well as education and internal

political developments. However, why would the military engage in politics beyond military and defense policy, so behaving within the dimensions of our model 2? The reasons could be diverse, as discussed here. Firstly, the military could participate in policy for doctrinal reasons. Following the Venezuelan military normative precepts since the beginning of 2000, this country's armed forces have actively participated in political roles of community action, public security and in the administration of state-owned companies guided by the doctrine of the citizen soldier.[4] Furthermore, governments can achieve the use of militaries in politics due to their personal ties, old friendships, personal loyalty of certain soldiers or professional history.[5] It resembles what Pion Berlin (2005) calls "civil political control" and Huntington named it as subjective control (1957). In these models the inclination towards the politicization of the armed forces is quite pronounced. The participation of the armed forces can be based on shared loyalty to a certain political party or group, on non-political personal ties or even on material interests, but it supposes that this loyalty is limited to the relationship between some military groups and several rulers or political factions (Norden 2008).

Furthermore, alliances with civil-military decision makers also can represent a mechanism for the participation of the armed forces in politics. It means that, when sectors of the armed forces establish alliances with civilian sectors, they are no longer a "neutral" sector, hence also becoming an inner actor of the political system. Contrarily to the ideal of an apolitical military, scholars point out that a professional military corps could tolerate a certain degree of politicization, without endangering the whole structure of civilian control (Janowitz 1959).

Schiff (1995) showed that cultural factors including values and perceptions, such as prestige and military efficiency, can condition cooperation and the sharing of principles and goals among political elites, military, and society.

In the long term, the conjunction of all those dimensions of model 2, or parts of them, stress the problem of what should be the extension of military autonomy vis-à-vis civilian decision-makers. The meaning of military autonomy, which is at the core of civil-military relations, is a problematic issue. As Pion-Berlin (1992) argues, the concept has two dimensions, one institutional and other political. Institutional autonomy refers to the professional independence of the military as a corporation, which allows it to attribute itself to a "sense of organic and conscious unity," that affirms its identity and establishes its borders from other institutions. Therefore, institutional autonomy is an expected dimension of a professionally organized entity. However, when they are accumulating power, they become species of guardians of their political gains. "The more valuable and entrenched their interests are, the more vigorously they will resist . . . " to the control by their political civic leaders (Pion-Berlin, 1992, p. 85).

Testing political and ideological model of military behavior in Chavista governments: political, ideological, and economic events

Subjective political control dimension: participation of the armed forces in Chávez governments

In the Punto Fijo Pact, the military remained quite attached to Huntington's objective model under the predominance of the civil political class. In fact, since 1958, the armed forces came to be separated from the partisan debate by shifting their loyalty from the

local or national chief to the legitimately constituted civil power. Specifically, the armed forces owed their allegiance to the democratic system and its rules, constituting a professional institution whose main responsibility was the security and defense of the country and the maintenance of the territorial integrity of the republic (Belmonte 2012, 7–8, 55–56). That goal was successfully maintained through three means: i) by involving the military in the Punto Fijo governance pact and always reserving to them certain political spaces, like the control of the Ministry of Defense; ii) by purging military leaders who were seen as destabilizing factors in the nascent regime, as in the case of Marcos Pérez Jimenez who was exiled in Spain, where remained until his death in 2001; iii) by designing a powerful normative mechanism, namely the Constitution of 1961,[6] which depoliticized and subordinated the military to civilian power. In fact, Article 132 of the Constitution of 1961, stated: "The national armed forces form an apolitical, obedient and non-deliberative institution" (Constitución de Venezuela 1961, art. 132).

At the end of 1998, Chávez came into power. Once in office, a first act his government was the enacting of a new constitution – the Constitution of 1999,[7] still in force nowadays. Through the Constitution of 1999, the first Chávez government (1999–2004) relaxed the military's ban on engaging in political activity contained in the 1961 Constitution, by giving them the right to vote and by changing the definition of the armed forces from an "apolitical" institution to one "without political militancy" (Norden, 2008). The new 1999 constitution supported the politicization of the armed forces by eliminating the existing prohibitions against the military for simultaneously performing the command of force and holding positions of government[8] (Rey 1999).

Despite all, beyond that normative change, a failed coup attempt against Hugo Chávez in April 2002 would create the conditions for the definitive leap of the military into politics. The coup of April that ousted Chávez from power for approximately 48 hours[9] involved civilians and military personnel and produced important social and military consequences. Because of the coup d'état indeed Chávez realized that his permanence in power depended on the actions undertaken towards two sectors: the poor social class and the disobedient military. Public policies called Missions (Misiones, in Spanish) and financed with resources derived from the state oil company PDVSA, came to be strongly implemented since 2003 as a response to poor social support of April 2002 (Duarte Villa, 2005). By engaging the armed forces in the Misiones, the Chávez's government demanded them to participate in tasks of community action, such as the construction of bridges and schools, the collaboration in preventive medicine or the distribution of food in periods of scarcity and the intervention in relief operations in natural disasters, as well as the supervision of order in electoral processes, through the so-called Republic Plan.[10] In this aspect, the National Organic Security Law, sanctioned in 2005 by the National Assembly as well, deepened "the relationship between development and security, giving the military a more important role in the tasks of social-economic development" (Jácome 2011, 3).

For these reasons the military remained engaged in a wide variety of community actions, mainly through the Bolivar 2000 Plan.[11] A further consequence of the coup of April 2002 consisted in the process of purging disobedient members of the armed forces. Hence, between 2003 and 2004, the National Executive purged the military institution, by retiring some officers, moving others away from the operational command or reducing their functions to administrative positions. These measures also meant that an

indeterminate number of high-ranking military personnel have voluntarily requested the removal of the service (Garay and Ramos 2016; Álvarez 2004). This process of purge after the April 2002 coup drew a strong distrust of Chavez towards sectors of the armed forces. Indeed, he preferred to entrust his personal security to Cuban bodyguards and in 2009, he created parallel armed forces, known as the Bolivarian Militias.[12]

Moreover, one of the most important consequences of the coup of Abril 2002 was to accelerate a process of incorporation of the loyal military personnel, both active and retired ones, in the Venezuelan political system, especially in the public administration, by offering them key positions in state-owned enterprises and other means of central and local administration. The military presence expanded over governorships, main ministries, vice ministries, the National Assembly (National Congress), consulates and diplomatic corporations (Jácome 2011). Furthermore, it also included state companies such as Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA, the state oil company), industries as the national steel mill, Metro de Caracas (Caracas´s subway) and the tax collection agency, the Integrated National Customs and Tax Administration (SENIAT). In addition, Chávez maintained certain areas of the military untouched, such as the control over the Minister of Defense (Norden, 2008). Further, Chávez stimulated the military participation in national politics by electoral means. In fact, at the regional elections of 2012, 11 of the 23 elected governors, which means about 48% of them, had political relations with the governmental Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV) and in the regional elections for governor of 2018 the military were a third of the elected governors by the same party (CNE; 2012; 2019). In this way, Chávez involved the military into power struggles between different groups of civil politicians t/hereby politicizing the armed forces either by coincidence with Chavista ideas or by subjectively subordinating them to a "civil political control" (Pion-Berlin 2005).

The ideological dimension: the politicization of the armed forces

Chávez also managed to transform the personal loyalty of some military officers, with whom he had personal, historical and political affinities, into a political asset. These officers were promoted to the high military hierarchy or appointed to the head of the Ministry of Defense and other executive positions. Some of the politically most influential military officers in Venezuela, including both those still in active and the ones already retired, belong to the original group that in 1992, together with Chávez, embarked on a failed coup d'état attempt against Carlos Andres Pérez´s second government (1989–1992), in reaction to the "Caracazo."[13] However, it is not possible to disassociate the 1992 coup attempt from its essentially military origin in the early 1970s. During Rafael Caldera's first term (1969–74) there was a reformulation of applied education at the Military Academy, whose new program opened the door for Chávez and some of his comrades trained in sciences and military arts. It also opened the doors to the common population. From the intellectual point of view, the formation of these officers was directed at nationalism, to the cult of the thought of Simon Bolivar and to the rescue of the military dignity. Parallel to this, the new trend of training of the Venezuelan official led to the emergence of cadets with critical views of the *status quo*, not just of military institutions but also of the government. Thus, Bolivarianism can be defined as a specific civil-military movement of Venezuela emerged among army officers in the 1980s with the

intention of criticizing, reflecting and questioning the country's political, economic and social model at that time, defending the recognition of dignity and the fight against corruption and social inequality.

The cult of Bolivar and the reflections on his political thinking and legacy in Venezuela were spreading in various sectors of society and institutions. However, this collective memory was channeled to the political discussion by the military, and more specifically by the group of debates led by Hugo Chavez in the Military Academy. In 1982 the Chávez group founded the 200th Bolivarian Revolutionary Army (EBR200), which soon became the 200th Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement (MBR-200). This movement was organized around a proposal to seize power by force in 1992 (Silva, 2017). The former military Diosdado Cabello,[14] the former ministry of defense Raul Baduel, the former governor of Zulia state, Arias Cardena and Major General Miguel Rodríguez Torres, who accompanied Chávez in the 1992 coup attempt, occupied prominent positions during the Chávez government (Pardo 2016).

A very important dimension, from Chávez's political model of relations, is the role of cultural-ideological factors in line with Shiff (1995). Indeed, an important "cultural" factor in the politicization used by Chavism was portrayed in terms of shared values and identities between the Bolivarian national armed forces (FANB) and the Chavista Bolivarian discourse. Gradually, between 2005 and 2010, a process of ideological indoctrination was promoted within the armed forces by various mechanisms: the promulgation of a new Organic Law of the National Armed Forces (LOFAN, 2005); the doctrinal designation of a New Venezuelan Military thought oriented towards the concept of an asymmetric war (Jácome 2011), that involved the creation of the Militias; the use of political-ideological slogans in barracks, even waving the Cuban flag in military units (García 2011; Rodríguez 2011), and the designation of the name of "Fidel Castro" in the promotion of Command and General Staff course in 2005 (Garay and Ramos 2016). Previously, in 2004, the New Strategic Map of the Bolivarian Revolution was proclaimed, with three doctrinal points: a) the strengthening of the military power of the Nation, b) the deepening of the civil-military union (soldiers and people) and, c) the strengthening of popular participation in the tasks of national defense (Dieterich 2004).

That cultural politicization in the Venezuelan civil-military discourse and military institutions operated in two ways. Firstly, it consolidated an Bolivarian ideological movement that approximated the military to the Bolivarian doctrine, as quite clearly expressed by the current Minister of Domestic Affairs (Ministro del Interior, in Spanish) Carmen Melendez. "The model (. . .) encompasses (a) Bolivarian military culture and its dialectical pairs and methodology for militarism, which is translated into the words that the best prepared, trained and committed people are, the greatest possibilities they will have to defend the conquests of the Bolivarian revolution"(cited by Aguana, and Sayegh, 2012, 5).

Secondly, it encouraged ideological identification based on socialist ideas (21st century socialism) and anti-imperialism thinking. The now deceased President Hugo Chávez promoted the identification of the FANB with his socialist proposal inside the Venezuelan barracks through the slogan "homeland, socialism or death, we will triumph" ("patria, socialismo o muerte, triunfaremos", in Spanish). And later, many of the generals point out in their speeches that they were "socialists, revolutionaries, Chavistas and anti-imperialists." (Bermúdez 2019).

Table 1. Discourses of members of the armed forces: ideological identification with Chávez government.

Military	Speech	Context
General Padrino López, Chief of the General Staff in 2012 and Minister of Defense in the Maduro's government since 2014.	"here there are 10.890 patriots of the nation, Bolivarians, socialist, anti-imperialist, revolutionaries, trained and equipped for serving the nation(Cited by the Expreso, 2016)	Discourse on the 05th of July 2012, during the celebration for the 201 years of the country's independence in the Monumental Avenue of Los Próceres [Caracas],
Minister of Defense, Admiral in chief Carmen Meléndez	(. . .) we all have to be like Chávez, in thought and in action, to make the Venezuelan path to socialism irreversible"(Da Corte 2013).	Act of appointment of Carmen Melendez as Minister of Defense on 12 July 2013 held at the Academia Militar in Fuerte Tiuna (Caracas)
Minister of Defense, Admiral in chief Carmen Meléndez	"let me tell you, my commander in chief Nicolás Maduro, that we will be shoulder to shoulder in the defense of the revolutionary process (. . .)" (Da Corte 2013).	Act of appointment of Carmen Mlendéz as Minister of Defense on 12 July 2013 held at the Academia Militar in Fuerte Tiuna (Caracas)
Minister of Interior, Justice and Peace, Major General Miguel Rodríguez Torres	"I'm not from the PSUV, I'm a revolutionary" (Lugo 2013)	Interview by Miguel Rodríguez Torres with journalists Hernán Lugo and Thabata Gusmán at the beginning of July 2013 in the Division of Special Operations of Sebin (Lugo and Molina 2013)
Commander of the Bolivarian National Guard, Major General Justo Noguera	• "The members of the National Armed Forces are Bolivarian and Chavista (. . .)" (Lozano 2013)	Interview to the newspaper El Nacional (Caracas) on 12 August 2013.
Speech by the Minister of Defense and General in Chief Padrino López	"As long as there is an Armed Force like the one we have today, anti-imperialist, revolutionary, Bolivarian, they will never be able to (the Venezuelan Opposition) exercise political power in Venezuela") (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela 2020)	Speech by Padrino López on the occasion of the 209th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and FANB Day, in Caracas on 5 July 2020.
Speech by the Minister of Defense and General in Chief Padrino López	"Chávez lives! . . . The Homeland continues! Independence and Socialist Homeland! . . . We will live and win! Always loyal! . . . Never traitors!" (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela 2020)	Final words of the of the speech by Padrino López on the occasion of the 209th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and FANB Day, in Caracas on 5 July 2020.

That ideological identification with the Chávez socialist project was constantly reinforced in the discourses of highest commands of the armed forces. On the 05th of July 2012, during the celebration for the 201 years of the country's independence, General Vladimir Padrino López, current ministry of defense, claimed that "In the Monumental Avenue of Los Próceres [Caracas], there are 10.890 patriots of the nation, Bolivarians, socialist, anti-imperialist, revolutionaries, trained and equipped." (Valery 2016). Furthermore, as shown in the Table 1, speeches by members of the armed forces are often repeated by high military officers from the Venezuelan armed forces:

Therefore, the way Chávez developed his political relationship with the armed forces was similar to a "(subjective) political civil control" in that the civilians (represented by a former military) lead the Venezuelan professional military to commit themselves to the "Bolivarian revolution,"[15] allowing the Executive branch to gain an ideological military component (Machillanda 2004). In doing so, Chavez actively brought the military into Venezuelan politics and politicized their role (Norden, 2008).[16]

Political dimension under Maduro government: expanding the autonomy of the armed forces

When Chávez died in March 2013, he was replaced as president by his vice-president Nicolas Maduro (2013- present). Contrary to Chavez, who exercised leadership among the different political sectors of Chavismo grouped together into the PSUV, Maduro´s leadership is not consensual Before his death, Chavez divided the power he had accumulated into three groups, each of them representing the heterodox Bolivarian amalgam: firstly, Maduro´s group, who was then the Minister of Foreign Affairs, representing the civilians from the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV); the second group, of Diosdado Cabello, representing the military; and lastly, Rafael Ramírez group, responsible for oil management. This kind of triumvirate worked until mid-2015 with Maduro in the Executive, Cabello in Congress and Ramírez in PDVSA[17] (Raatz 2017).

After Chavez's death, that kind of internal division of power in Venezuela left Maduro in a situation of greater political fragility, forcing him to approach high-ranking military personnel and grant them concessions. Thus, one of the first concessions was to give up the traditional civil power initiative on military promotions. which started to be defined basically within the own military corporation; secondly, Maduro grants to the military a high number of promotions of officers to the top category of generals. More specifically, under Maduro's government, promotions to the category of general officer amounted to more than 1,000 (El Financiero 2017), a number three times higher than the average of Brazilian generals and a third more than the United States.

But there is another political fact that determines the autonomous position of the armed forces during Maduro's governments: the strengthening of the political opposition to Maduro after 2013. Although the Venezuelan opposition, which for years was organized in the Democratic Unity Table (MUD; Mesa de la Unidad Democrática in Spanish), suffered successive defeats that significantly reduced its political space, between 2013 and 2019 it witnessed a change. The first sign of this change is represented by the defeat of the opposition candidate, Henrique Capriles, in the presidential elections of April 2014 by Nicolas Maduro with just a marked margin of 1.5% of the votes (CNE, 2013). And this trend of consolidation of Opposition was strengthened when, in December 2015, the Democratic Unity Table (MUD) won 110 out of 167 seats in the National Assembly (AN), that is just over 2/3 of the AN (CNE, 2015). However, by using authoritarian means, Maduro neutralized the advance of the opposition. Thus, Maduro managed to elect a Constituent National Assembly (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, in Spanish), on 30 July 2017, with an absolute Chavista majority, and that would have substituted or surpassed the 2015 legitimately elected AN. As a result, both the government and the opposition have been well aware that political support for one or the other depends on the sustain of the armed forces. And, of course, the strengthening of the opposition has also meant the seeking for support among the military hierarchy, in the same way Maduro was trying to maintain its foundations.

Furthermore, between 2019 and 2020, the Venezuelan opposition led by the president of the AN, Juan Guaidó (elected in 2015 and self-proclaimed president of Venezuela) and assisted by internal and international political support, proposed to get rid of Maduro by any political and military means, and to promote a "cessation of [Maduro's] usurpation, transitional government and free elections" (BBC News Mundo 2019a). These goals have

had several political and military moments of intense pressure, seeking to replace Maduro, as: i) Guaidó's self-proclamation as interim president of Venezuela in January 2019, also recognized by more than 50 countries; ii) the pressure for the entry of humanitarian aid through the city of Cúcuta on the Colombian border, in February 2019, which saw the commitment of presidents of Colombia, Chile and Paraguay and representatives of the US embassy in Colombia; iii) a frustrated military revolt in Caracas (known as Operation Liberty), on 29 April 2019, led by Guaidó himself; and, iv) finally, Operation Gideon (Operación Gedeón, in Spanish) on 3 May 2020, consisting of an attempt of some Venezuelan military and civilian dissidents (mainly exiled in Colombia) and three members of a US private security force to infiltrate Venezuela from Colombia, through the coastal state of La Guaira (Roque 2021).

The weakening or failure of all these Venezuelan opposition initiatives and the opposition's inability to secure stronger support from the military hierarchy have solidified support for Maduro's government. Furthermore, the Venezuelan Opposition recognizes that three sectors are crucial for the establishment of a new government in Venezuela: the people, the international community, and the armed forces (Armario and Rueda 2019). And the obstacle to achieve the armed forces' support lies in the commanders' loyalty to Maduro. Indeed, the high military ranks have two main fears: "that they will be destroyed by a future government that cannot guarantee their current political and economic power or that Maduro himself will destroy them" (Tapia 2019). That means that the top commanders are indebted to Maduro and fear losing their political and economic positions, increasing a policy of mutual dependence policy between Maduro and these hierarchies, as shown in the picture below:

Picture: Reuters

However, the armed forces' support to Maduro is a more complex issue, because, although it is sure that the high ranks advocate for the president, the ideological commitment of both middle and lower-ranking troops to the government has fallen. During the Chávez years, high international prices allowed the middle patents of the armed forces (captains, major, lieutenants) and the troops (many of them coming from the country's lower classes) to be included in the measures of pay increase and income

distribution promoted by social missions. "But if the military hierarchy is still close to President Maduro, the story is different in the lower military ranks. Most of these military forces have faced the economic hardship of Venezuela, as well as all the common citizens around the country. Unlike the highest military ranks, the lower [and middle] ranks are suffering from a lack of fuel, a shortage of food and hyperinflation – and there is a growing discontent" (García and Ontiveros 2019). Therefore, the declined support for Maduro by both middle patents and troops is not so linked to political and military causes as to the deep economic crisis that has hit the country since 2015. For example, between 2018 and 2019, inflation in commodity prices increased by 1.046,97% (Finanzas Digital 2019). Notwithstanding that, what does explain the slightest support that Maduro retains in the lower and middle military ranks? Even when "(. . .) is true that many soldiers suffer from hunger like so many other Venezuelans, they do not have a leadership that allows them to challenge their superiors, which means that they will probably opt for the status quo." (Rueda, 2019).

In short, Maduro delves into the dimension of the subjective political model (dimension 1 of model 2) already used by Chávez, but now in the context of internal struggles of groups within Chavismo and the internal struggles of the government with the Venezuelan opposition.

Economic dimension: participation of the military into the Venezuelan economy

The transformation of the armed forces into political agents in the Maduro government is not only expressed in politics but also in the economic terms as they gained strong autonomy to manage their own businesses. The military group that came to be pejoratively designated as the "Bolibourgeoisie" ("Boliburguesia," in Spanish to indicate the new Bolivarian bourgeois caste) took control of the oil production chain, in addition to the extraction of other minerals, including gold. The high point of the military's consolidation of the economic sector is the increase in their power of initiative to build their own economic institutions. The FANB leads and controls a whole series of companies: the BANFANB, bank in the financial sector; the AGROFANB, an agricultural company; EMILTRA, in transportation; EMCOFANB, in communication systems; TVFANB, an open digital television channel; TECNOMAR, a technology and mixed military project company; the FIMNP, an investment fund; and the CONSTRUFANB, in construction industry. Such an influence of the military in the macro and micro economic management of the Venezuelan state is unique to Maduro's government and continues to perpetuate severe economic crises (Jácome 2014). The army has also obtained lucrative contracts, managing exchange controls and subsidies like, for example, the sale of cheap gasoline purchased in neighboring countries with large profits. Besides that, the production and distribution of staple foods is under the control of the military sector, almost transforming it into a national security policy, especially in times of severe scarcity, caused by the generalized economic crisis that consumes the country since 2015 (Lameirinhas 2019).

The armed forces' autonomy in the economic field allows the military to participate in the country's economic administration, playing a role in the internal political struggle among current factions of the Chavismo. Maduro and his group continued to commit the military in their favor by giving them the control of PDVSA, considered one of the most

powerful state-owned oil companies around the world until 2015. From 2017 to 2020, a military man named Manuel Quevedo Fernández exercised the presidency of that state-owned company in a political exchange that sought military support in maintaining the status quo for Maduro.

Another common practice to win the loyalty of the military sector has been to enact continuous annual salary increases of between 30%, 40% and 50%, along with credit preferences for the acquisition of Chinese-made homes, vehicles and household appliances. This has created a notable salary's difference between the military and other professions (Garay and Ramos 2016). According to Rocio San Miguel, "This is a route that Chávez had taken up since his rise to power and which meant, in the first place, to incorporate the military in bureaucratic activities, in those that handle huge amounts of money. This procedure has been perfected in the government of Maduro increasing the ministers in uniform (militaries) and presence in state companies. In the government Maduro military "passed to represent 25% of the cabinet to 48% between 2014 and 2017" (cited by Bermudez, 2019). And the political line of economic incentives to the loyalist military has led to management of the PDVSA´s oil bureaucracy, the state-owned mining company – CAMIMPEG, headed by an army general, and the administration of the Gran Misión Abastecimiento Soberano (GMAS), which is responsible for importing food into the country and is led by the Minister of Defense, who handles large amounts of foreign currency (Bermúdez 2019).

How to explain the fact that military dominance in the economy was stronger after Chávez's death and the takeover of Maduro? The wider economic spaces that Maduro granted to the military can be interpreted as a bargain in which the military increased their political autonomy (and influence in the economy) in exchange for the continuity of the presidential mandate, in a context of strong social and economic crisis. This need for survival paradoxically brings the Venezuelan military closer to Maduro than to Chávez, although for Maduro, surely, this strong approach indicates more dependence on the military sector than in Chávez's governments. Hence, in the Maduro´s governments, and adopting the Pion-Berlin's (1992) framework, that results in political autonomy, rather than the institutional autonomy of the armed forces.

On the other hand, an external economic variable is important to explain economic participation and military support to Maduro. In the Maduro government, the discourse about a possible US intervention has become more pronounced, focusing on its participation in sabotage and destabilization activities, as well as in economic warfare, especially in the intense economic sanctions that the Donald Trump government had imposed on Venezuela since 2019. These sanctions include freezing of financial assets from PDVSA, punishment of international private companies that commercialize Venezuelan oil, prohibition of sale of hardware components and software for PDVSA and stoppage of supply of diesel and gasoline from USA. The US economic sanctions to Venezuela during the Trump administration were also perceived as a threat to the sovereignty and independence of the country by the Venezuelan military hierarchy, which also ensured support for the continuation of the Maduro government.

In sum, Venezuelan armed forces have become an actor "with economic and political interests [transforming them] in an autonomous bloc in Venezuelan politics" (Giusti 2014; Diamint 2015). They have expanded their participation in defining public policies in the national economy and transformed themselves into owners or managers of the

main state-owned companies, in a reproduction of the Cuban model of participation of the military in the economy (Klerak, 2010) and analytical in line with our model 2 of political and ideological model of military behavior.

Final remarks

This article showed that the Venezuelan armed forces can be understood through a political and ideological model of military behavior. In fact, the military became like a mirror of the new political nature that Chavismo was impressing on the political system. Consequently, the resurgence of the military in Venezuelan politics during the Chávez governments rested on a deeper convergence of ideas (ideologies), consistent with the ideological model and evaluative convergences between the political leaders and those from the military hierarchy. This creates conditions for the armed forces to move from an apolitical, professional, and neutral force to become a political actor with broader autonomy. However, this form of convergence between the civilians and the military was beyond both the "subjective control" of Huntington and the "civil political control" of the Pion-Berlin's model. Both concepts seem to rely on simple alliances between a civilian ruler and a fraction of military leaders. On the contrary, in the Chávez government, the authority over the military originated either from a shared set of beliefs and preferences in relation to the shape of the political system, or from a military recognition of the effectiveness of the political regime (Norden, 2008).

Chávez was successful in achieving that consensus on the values that should guide the doctrinal thought inside the highest military hierarchy of the armed forces. On the other hand, both the political-military and economic spaces that Maduro granted to the military can be interpreted as a bargain in which the military increased their political autonomy (and influence in the economy) in exchange for the continuity of Maduro´s power, within a context of strong social and economic crisis. Thus, by bringing the Venezuelan military into negotiations about their political future "they must have confidence that they will participate in a co-government that preserves their power and allows them self-protection, something for which they did not have" (Leon 2019). That creates a dilemma for the Venezuelan armed forces. More specifically, political negotiation can mean subjecting them to civil authority and losing a key role in the political and economic governance of the state. Therefore, there is for the armed forces a high cost and little incentive in depoliticizing their current role and bringing them back to that apolitical role prior to the emergence of Chavismo. Due to the politicization and the wide political and economic space that the armed forces have gained over the last twenty years, this actor could be quite resistant to any change of political *status quo*.

Another important variable that explains the subjection of Venezuelan military to a model of political and ideological behavior is related to the fact that internal and external pressures might contribute at "tightening the ranks" and increasing, instead of decreasing, or supporting the government of Maduro. Domestic pressures such as the possibility of a military intervention in Venezuela had an impact on military nationalist sentiment; but also, external pressures might contribute to "tightening the ranks" around Maduro. For example, in February 2019 the American President Donald

Trump, by talking directly to the Venezuelan military, claimed that if they [the military] did not abandon Maduro "they will lose everything" (BBC News Mundo 2019b). Furthermore, there is a risk that some military personnel from the Venezuelan military leadership will be extradited to the United States as a potential downfall for the Maduro government. At least seven high-military ranks are accused by the US government of business corruption with American companies, money laundering and narco-terrorism (Weffer 2020). It is reasonable, then, to think that at least high-ranking military personnel prefer to opt for the status quo of contemporary Venezuelan politics.

Finally, the broad economic spaces that Maduro was granted to the military, greater than in Chavez governments, can be interpreted as a bargain in which the military increased their political autonomy (and influence in the economy) in exchange for the continuity of the presidential mandate, in a context of strong social and economic crisis.

Notes

1. When we talk about the Chavista governments we are referring to the two presidents (Hugo Chávez and Nicolas Maduro) who have been presiding over Venezuela for this political movement since 1999.
2. The "socialism of the XXI century" is a concept originally formulated in 1996 by the German sociologist Heinz Dieterich. According to Dieterich, this type of socialism would have four phases: regional democratic developmentalism, the Marxist economy of equivalences, participatory and protagonist democracy, and social grassroots organizations. The term was mentioned in a speech by the then president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, on 30 January 2005, at the V World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. See Dieterich (2010).
3. Other examples of military who resembled the characteristics of Chavez's political action in Latin America, but with a more nationalist character than left-wing nature, appeared in Peru, with General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968–1975); and in Panama, with General Omar Torrijos (1968 – 198). However, unlike Chavez, they both came to power through a coup d'état.
4. "The security of the n nation is based on co-responsibility between the State and civilians. But also, the doctrine was pleasing to the military because it allowed the military to exercise its right to vote derived from the fact that the military would be citizens with the right to vote as well (Noria 2003).
5. For example, the majority of the generals of the military generation (1975–79) of the current Brazilian president [Bolsonaro] have been employed in governmental functions.
6. This constitution was approved by the Venezuelan Congress in January 1961, inaugurating regulating the democratic period that began in 1958.
7. The 1999 Constitution changed the name of the country from "Republic of Venezuela" to "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" and established a series of principles among which: the importance of social justice and participatory democracy.
8. Between 1999 and 2013 approximately 1.614 military personnel held government's position. See: http://www.reporteconfidencial.info/noticia/3209920/1614-militares-han-ocupado-cargos-en-el-gobierno-desde-1999/
9. In 11 April 2002 a march organized by a sector of the opposition that was supposed to walk through Caracas´s sectors until the *Petróleos de Venezuela*, PDVSA headquarter, was redirected, by the harangues of the organizers, to the Government Palace, in Miraflores, Caracas, where government sympathizers were concentrated from April 9. From the confrontation between these groups, and due to the presence of snipers, 18 people died and about 69 got wounded. This episode was used by part of the military high command as an argument to join the opposition movement to Chávez leading to a coup. A new de facto

government was constituted, chaired by Pedro Carmona who dissolved the National Assembly, the Supreme Court of Justice and suspended the Attorney General, the Controller General, the governors and the elected mayors. Chávez was exiled to some Venezuelan island but due to the pressure from poor sectors of society, and part of the Venezuelan military leadership, as well as international pressure, he came back to power 48 hours later (El Universal 2002; El; Pais 2002).

10. The Plan Republic is a military deployment carried out during all the electoral processes whose main purpose is the safeguarding of the order and security during the electronic rallies in Venezuela.
11. Plan Bolívar 2000 was established on 27 February 2000, during the first term of Hugo Chávez's presidency. It included around 40,000 Venezuelan soldiers who became involved in activities against poverty, including mass vaccinations, distribution of food and education (Gregory 2003).
12. Created by President Hugo Chávez in 2005 as the General Command of the National Reserve and National Mobilization. In 2009, it was changed to its current name. The Bolivarian Militia (MB) is one of the five components of the Bolivarian National Armed Force (FANB), and it is a military force composed basically of reservists who accomplished the mandatory military service (Osacar, 2008).
13. Carlos Andrés Pérez governed Venezuela with the Acción Democrática (AD) party, in the periods between 1974–1979 and 1989–1993. Its first mandate is known as the stage of "Saudi Venezuela" due to the fact that it coincided with a great rise in international oil prices allowing the flow of petrodollars and initiating a period of great economic propensity for the country. However, during the second presidential term the international oil prices dropped, leading the country to contract a very high external debt. Thus, at the beginning of his government Pérez took unpopular fiscal measures that provoked a big popular protest known as "Caracazo", which led to the use of military force and resulted in more than 300 deaths. Both corruption scandals and "Caracazo" were used as an argument by Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez to attempt a failed coup d'état on 4 February 1992. Pérez suffered impeachment in May 1993 (Semana, 26 December 2010)
14. Cabello was one of the militaries who accompanied Chávez in the attempted coup of February 1992. Elected deputy, in 2012 Cabello became the president of the National Assembly, and within the contemporary Chavismo Cabello represents one of the hard-line trends within the Unified Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV).
15. Despite the apparent homogeneity of the Armed Forces under Chavismo, this process was not always linear. Two dissidents became emblematic signs of the divisions among the high ranks of the armed forces. A first case occurred in July 2007, when General Raúl Baduel, one of the president's most loyal collaborators, broke up with the government in repudiation of Chávez's proposals of an institutional reform of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces (FANB). A second major dissident was Miguel Rodríguez, a retired Army General, who was a close collaborator of President Hugo Chávez. He also participated with Chávez in the attempted coup against President Carlos Andrés Pérez in 1992. Rodrigues broke up with Maduro's government when he left office in 2014.
16. Influence from military hierarchy was accelerated in 2006 as an arms embargo imposed by the United States, which was its main supplier of arms, along with Italy and the United Kingdom. The Washington blockade forced Hugo Chávez to search for a new strategic partner in Russia, for the most sophisticated combat aircraft (Su-30) of the Venezuelan Army, and anti-aircraft defense systems (S-300) and most of its tanks and helicopters (The Military Balance, 2008). Chavez was sensitive to military support, which demanded the modernization of the outdated armaments and equipment.
17. Maduro and Ramirez (the latter commanded PDVSA between 2004 and 2013) broke up politically in 2017. Ramirez then went into self-exile in Spain.

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