

Abstract

Thesis

PhDr. Radek Buben

Deconsolidation of Venezuelan Democracy: Erosion of the Party System, Neo-Populism, and Repoliticization of the Armed Forces

The thesis *Deconsolidation of Venezuelan Democracy: Erosion of the Party System, Neo-Populism, and Repoliticization of the Armed Forces* addresses the process of deconsolidation of democracy in Venezuela between 1973 and 1993. The analysis is based on both theoretical and comparative approach embedded notably in institutional comparative political science (analysis of systemic and institutional conditions of the analyzed process), historical sociology and political theory (phenomena of populism and neo-populism) and approaches of traditional historical analysis of political process in a particular period of time. The theoretical part of the text is focused on the issue of democracy in Latin America in general. More concretely, it concerns with typologies of political regimes, institutionalization of party systems, civil-military relations and the so-called resources curse theory. The great deal of the text covers analysis of populism, its definition and the existing research of the phenomenon. The starting point of the empirical part presents the establishment of the petrostate and bipartism in 1973. The analysis ends with the decomposition of the system in 1993 in the moment of the recall of Carlose Andrés Pérez, the author of the politically most successful (neo)liberal reform, by his own political party. In addition to the analysis of political regime, the text covers the process of repoliticization of armed forces and the formation of the so-called Bolivarian movement. The study emphasizes the facets of the deconsolidation in Venezuela that arose out of the political class itself: factional and generational conflicts inside the political parties, the effort to maintain clientelist relations and the opening of the political space in the time of vanishing political legitimacy and of severe economic problems. Venezuelan political elite have created a specific system built on excessive expectations of the society (rental mentality), on clintelist type of relations resulted from petrol rentes, and on systemic drain of all social demands through the state and the political parties. The government established after the elections in 1989 attempted, thanks to the autonomy gained from presidentialism, to realize unforeseen reconstruction of the system. However, the endeavor came up against the hostility of all the social groups as well as the political elite, which was not overcome by populist strategy as it is known in the case of Argentina in the same period of time. As a consequence of the process, in 1989 – 1993 the

political and economic reforms those were initially intended to support and complement each other, entered into conflict.