



Through a post-political gaze

On the ideological loading of democracy in the coverage of
Chávez's Venezuela

av

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Abstract

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Rooted in ideology critique, this dissertation studies the construction of democracy in the coverage of Venezuela during the era of President Hugo Chávez. The aim of this endeavor is twofold. First, the dissertation aims to understand the relationship between ideology and the construction of democracy in journalism on foreign political phenomena. Second, it attempts to explore the ways in which the relationship between ideology and democracy in journalism serves to legitimize or delegitimize the struggle for social justice in nations in the global South vis-à-vis the political and economic fundamentals of global capitalism.

The dissertation comprises three articles that study the construction of democracy in depictions of the Venezuelan political system and its key political actors. Article I studies the construction of (il)legitimate democracy in relation to the Venezuelan government, Article II explores the construction of difference between Chávez's supporters and his opponents, and Article III studies the coverage of the coup d'état against Chávez in 2002. All three articles are methodologically rooted in critical discourse analysis and rely on materials from a sample of three elite newspapers: *Dagens Nyheter* (Sweden), *El País* (Uruguay), and the *New York Times* (US).

Across the studies, there are four macro-strategies that in different ways serve to ideologically load the notion of democracy. Three of these strategies – the constructs of populism, of power concentration and of difference – serve to define political deviance and to (de)legitimize political actors in relation to democracy. The fourth macro-strategy, relativization, serves to justify actions that contradict established democratic principles but serve greater politico-ideological goals.

(De)legitimation in relation to democracy corresponds with the closeness of a group of actors to the dominant political practices and values within global capitalism. Journalistic reporting thus follows a *post-political gaze*; it is generally in accordance with the political consensus that characterizes the post-Cold War era. Through this gaze, any challenge to the political tenets of global capitalism fails on democratic grounds.

Keywords: Ideology, Democracy, Hegemony, Journalism, International journalism, Post-politics, Critical discourse analysis, Media studies, Venezuela

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