

COMPARISON OF THE IDEOLOGICAL PROFILE OF THE PARTIES PRIMERO JUSTICIA (PJ) AND VOLUNTAD POPULAR (VP) AND THE IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS OF THEIR EMERGING YOUTH LEADERSHIPS DURING THE PERIOD 2015 - 2017.

ANA LUISA CIORDIA

Universidad Metropolitana de Caracas, Venezuela

aciordia@unimet.edu.ve

Summary

This study examines ideological differences between the Venezuelan political parties Primero Justicia (PJ) and Voluntad Popular (VP) and their emerging youth leaderships. Surveys reveal that both parties share nearly identical ideological positions, with a slight center-right tendency and an inclination toward self-expression values. The findings suggest that political polarization has suppressed ideological debate within the Venezuelan opposition, turning these parties into political platforms rather than distinct ideological entities.

Keywords: Primero Justicia, Voluntad Popular, political ideology, youth, polarization, Venezuela, emerging leadership.

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INDEX

Summary	11
Bibliography	20



Introduction

“Ideology is a cognitive shortcut that allows parties to reduce the information cost citizens [...] it minimizes the effort citizens have to make to learn what positions parties have on the most important issues of debate.” (Trak, 2017).

But what if these “shortcuts” give inaccurate information about the true positions of party members?

For years now, since the youth leadership that is emerging in the country today, there has been no ideological debate in Venezuela. Real discussions about taxes, health systems, legalization of homoparental adoption, or any other similar cause, have been overshadowed by the political polarization in the country. There has only been space for the debate between the government and the opposition; therefore, the political culture in ideological terms for the young militants is separated between opposition, chavista or madurista.

By relating the ideological orientation of the emerging youth leadership of Primero Justicia (PJ) and Voluntad Popular (VP), with the ideological profile of their parties, we sought to satisfy a personal doubt as to whether or not the young militants really know what the color of the shirt they are wearing represents. Although PJ and VP were born during the mandate of President Chávez, seeking an alternative to the traditional opposition parties, today they promise to defend different ideological profiles. But as it is observed, both in the analysis of Dr. Trak (2017), in his articles *Ideological Encounters and Disencounters of Venezuelan Parties Today (I and II)*, as well as in my graduate work, the difference between PJ and VP is minuscule in ideological terms.

In order to obtain the ideological orientation of the emerging youth leadership (DJE) of Primero Justicia and Voluntad Popular, in the metropolitan area of Caracas, the interviewees were

asked: “As you may remember, when talking about politics, the expressions left and right are normally used. In which box would you place yourself, taking into account your political ideas?” and “And, in this same scale, where would you place your own party?”

In the case of the Primero Justicia party, only seven (7) of its emerging youth leaders positioned themselves in the same box as their party. In the case of Voluntad Popular, nine (9) DJE's positioned themselves in the same box of the left-right spectrum as their party. Based on these responses, the average position of each party was obtained, according to where it was placed by its DJE. The difference in the mean of the parties in question is practically nonexistent. With a difference of only 0.04, Primero Justicia was placed slightly more to the right than Voluntad Popular. Based on the data obtained, both parties could be considered center-right.

Now, the youth leaders of both parties were asked to say to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of seven statements; a scale of 1 to 7 was used, where “1” meant strongly disagree and “7” meant strongly . The questions were taken from the questionnaire conducted by Alcántara's Latin American Parliamentary Elites Project, presented by Dr. Trak in Encuentros y Desencuentros ideológicos de los partidos venezolanos de hoy (I y II). The seven sentences used below dealt with the role of the State in the economy:

- i. ROES 101 The State, instead of the private sector, should own [the] country's main companies and industries.
- ii. ROES 102 The State, more than individuals, should be [the] main responsible [for] ensuring welfare.
- iii. ROES 103 The State, rather than private enterprise, should be [the] main responsible for creating jobs.
- iv. ROES 104 The State must implement policies to reduce income inequality between rich and poor.
- v. ROES 105 The State, rather than the private sector, should be [the] main responsible for providing [retirement] pensions.
- vi. ROES 106 The State, rather than the private sector, should be primarily responsible for [providing] health services.
- vii. ROES 107 The state, rather than the private sector, should be [primarily] responsible for providing university education.

Within the averages, it can be observed how the only item in which there is a difference of more than thousandths, is the one corresponding to question ROES_103 that says: “The State, more than private enterprise, should be [the] main responsible for creating jobs”. With a scale of one

(1) to seven (7), with “1” being strongly disagree and “7” strongly , the emerging youth leadership of Primero Justicia yielded an average of 3.12, when the DJE of Voluntad Popular

yielded an average of 4.12. Although there is a small difference between the opinion of the DJE of both parties, the average of the youth leadership of PJ tends towards a more neutral position, when VP is already on the “right” side of the scale.

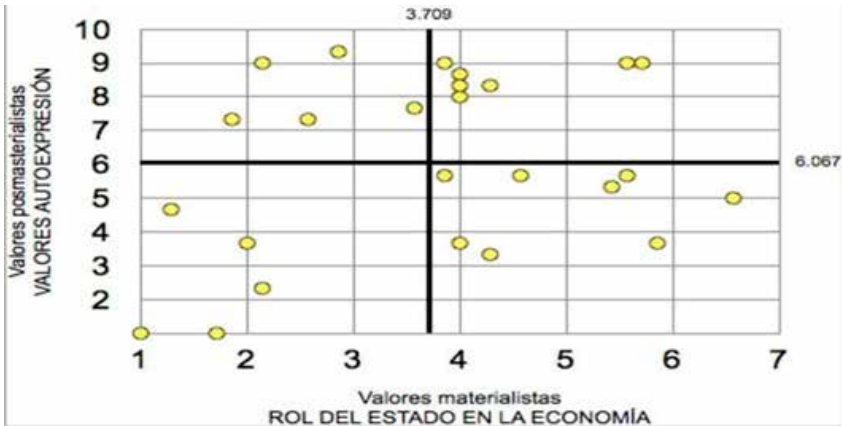
The results show that there are many points of agreement on the role of the State in issues such as: ensuring welfare, implementing policies to reduce income inequality, and providing university education. Likewise, it is evident how the emerging youth leaders of both parties tended towards a State with little intervention.

Materialist values, those concerning the role of the state in the economy, could be summarized on the left-right scale, referring to citizens’ aspirations for physical and economic security. In contrast, post-materialist or self-expressionists could be summarized on the spectrum between tradition and self-expression (Trak, 2017). Having already evaluated the materialistic values, we proceeded to evaluate the postmaterialistic ones, in which we obtained the average position of the DJE of PJ and VP regarding the legalization of same-sex marriage, the abortion and drugs. On a scale of one (1) to ten (10), with “1” being strongly disagree and “10” being strongly agree.

The results showed that although there is very little difference in the position of post-materialist values between the DJE of both parties, there is a tendency slightly more towards self-expression on the part of the youth of Primero Justicia, since in the three questions their average position is always above five (5) points. On the other hand, Voluntad Popular seems to be only slightly more conservative with respect to abortion and drugs, however, they show a more liberal position with respect to homosexual marriage. The DJE of VP, with 8.44 shows to be quite in favor of the legalization of same-sex marriage, unlike that of PJ, who, although still in , approve less strongly with 6.8. The difference between the average positions of the two parties remains very insignificant.

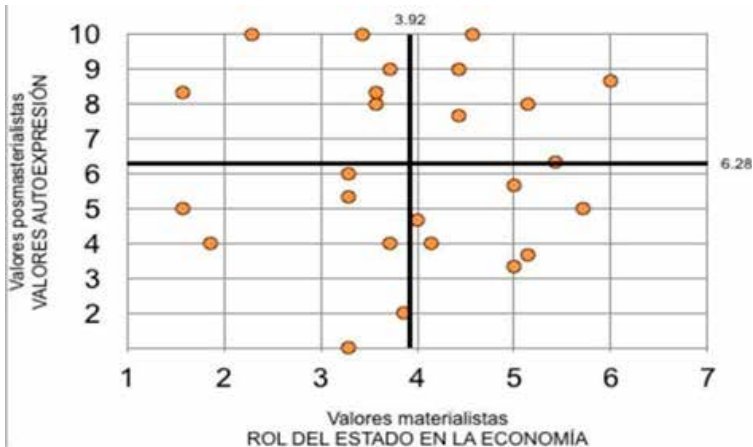
Finally, and following the example of Juan Manuel Trak (2017), the results obtained were crossed, both on the axis of state intervention in the economy, as well as the positions on the tradition-self-expression axis, to show the final position of the political parties Primero Justicia and Voluntad Popular, according to the ideological orientation of their emerging youth leadership.

Average position of the DJE of Primero Justicia in the axes of Role of the State in the Economy and Values of Self-Expression.



With a significant dispersion among the leaders, the emerging youth leadership of Primero Justicia yields an average position of 3.709 on the axis of the Role of the State in the Economy, where one (1) means the least intervention of the State and seven (7) the greatest. In the case of the self-expression values axis, where one (1) represents the most traditional position, and ten (10) the most traditional position. (10). The DJE yields a score of 6.067. From these results it can be concluded that PJ's political ideology, based on the ideological orientation of its DJE points to moderate state intervention in the economy and a trend towards self-expression.

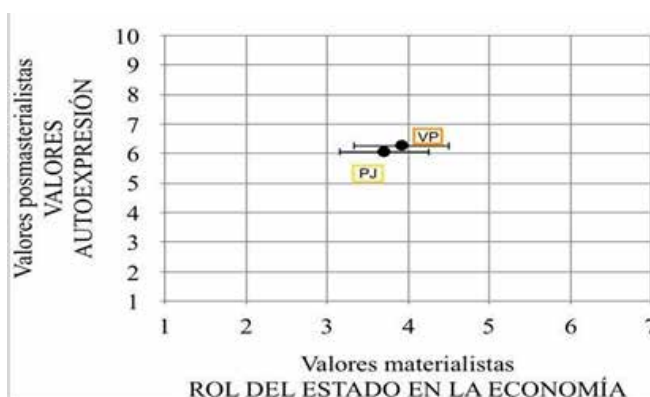
Average position of the DJE of Voluntad Popular in the axes of Role of the State in the Economy and Values of Self-Expression.



With a difference of only 0.04, with respect to that of the PJ youth leaders, Voluntad Popular yields an average position of 3.92 in terms of the Role of the State in the Economy and 6.28 in terms of self-expression values. From the above it could be inferred that VP, based on the ideological orientation of its DJE, is a party with a non-traditional tendency and believes in less state intervention in the economy.

After having the average positions of both emerging youth leaders, a comparative graph was made to locate the ideology of the Primero Justicia and Voluntad Popular parties, if it depended solely on their DJE.

Average position of the PJ and VP parties in the axes of Role of the State in the Economy and Self-Expression Values.



As can be seen in the graph, the average position of PJ and VP according to the ideological orientation of their emerging youth leadership is practically the same. With an average of 3.7 on the axis of materialistic values and 6.067 on the axis of post-materialistic values, we obtain that the youth leadership of Primero Justicia is oriented towards self-expression and would tend to support State measures that intervene little in the economy. On the other hand, the emerging youth leadership of Voluntad Popular does not support a very interventionist State either, with an average of 3.92 on this axis and tends a little more than PJ towards self-expression. The difference between the ideological orientations of the DJE of both parties is extremely small.

The analyses between the parties' averages show a difference between them of only 1.35 on self-expression issues and 0.45 on the role of the State in the economy, which implies a very short ideological distance between the two. However, the results of the mean of the emerging youth leadership is almost nonexistent, only 0.21 on both axes. We also note that the DJE sample was taken only in the state of Miranda and included 25 people from each party, so it is only an approximation and the distance could be even smaller. The distance that separates the emerging youth leaders from their parties is greater than the distance that separates each of

them from each other. That is to say, there is no major difference between the emerging youth leadership of PJ and that of VP; ideologically they would represent the same interest group.

Although this minimal distinction between the ideological orientations of the DJE of PJ and VP could be the consequence of an innumerable number of factors, the lack of political culture, political polarization and the non-existence of ideological debates among the opposition parties, I consider to be the most influential. Although it is true that in this historical-political context, and with all the effort made by the opposition parties to show a united front, the differences among Venezuelan political parties have had to be put aside, it should not be left out of the equation lose the essence of what a political party is, and that they must serve the interests of different groups; otherwise they would run the risk of becoming mere political platforms that revolve around a leader and not around the same cause or ideology. If I am to be guided only by the results of the analyses presented here, Primero Justicia and Voluntad Popular are not fulfilling their function as political parties, but as platforms for their emerging youth leadership.

Stambouli (2002) said “[...] the reality is that the parties have changed their medial function into a mediatizing one: the instrument has become an end in itself, and politicians have ended up placing “[...] above the narrow partisan interest, the supreme personal interest [...]” (Les Luthiers)”, and unfortunately, after carrying out this research work and meeting first hand many of the emerging youth leaders, I consider that his reflection could not be more accurate.

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