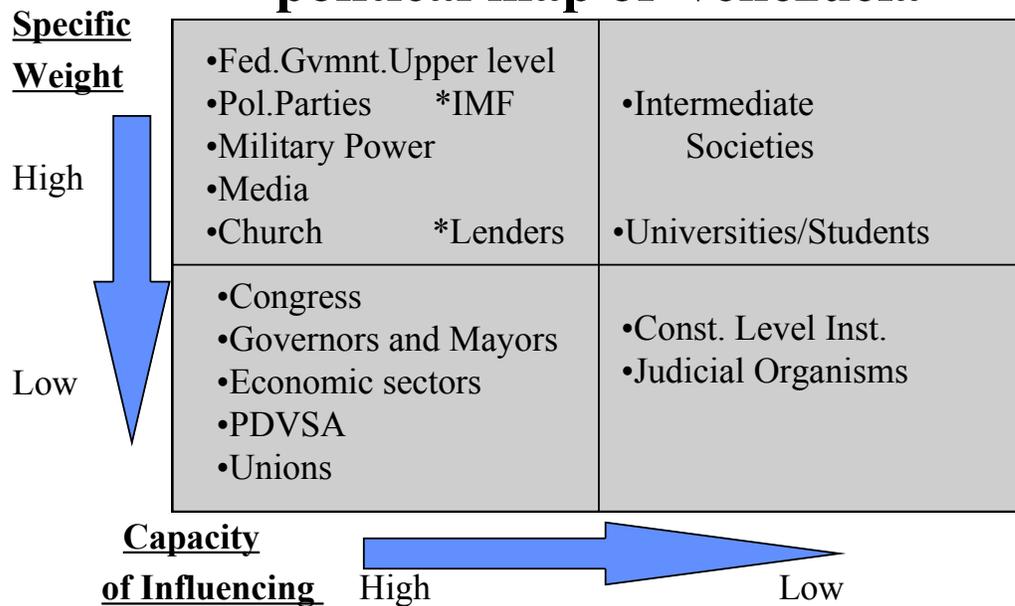


Date: 10/12/96
To: Merilee Grindle
From: Vladimir Petit Medina
Subject: Country Briefing Memo 1.

The political map of Venezuela¹

Ranking the influential groups /
political map of venezuela



- Weight as a measure of the need of making extra consultations beyond the organization itself. Less weight, more consult-out needed.
- Capacity of influencing as an indicator of the level of the real possibilities to affect a given process.

¹Venezuela:*Formal democratic system and Federal State, strong Presidential command. Additions from Parliamentary system have mitigated that power;*No group is capable of accomplishing successfully the whole policy making process by itself :*Bargaining is a concrete need.*261Mayors,22 Governors,204 Representatives,49 Senators.

* **Domestic Actors:**

Formally

- ***Federal Government:*** (Upper Level) *The President controls the most important public affairs, its decisions , implementations and , in some cases, the whole financial and economic context. The most important amount of money is managed by the President and the Cabinet*².
- ***Congress:*** Its *power comes from the real status quo by which is composed and led*, and it represents the political interaction. *As an institution, is determinant to promote some policies or to stop them.*
- ***Governors and mayors*** : Since they are elected by nominal system, they became real power centers (*administrators,bosses of the state-parties' establishments*). ***They are constrained by the parties' national boards.***
- ***Constitutional level Institutions:*** (General Prosecutor,etc)These are posts which importance is based on the person appointed for that responsibilities and ***his level of independence from the party by which he is nominated*** .
- ***Judicial Organisms:*** As ***appendixes of the political parties***, they became influential when deciding *on an important affair*³ .

Informally:

² The President's influence depends also on his personality, and the management of communicational resources available (two TV stations, 100 radio stations)

³ AE. Justices of the Supreme Court became influential when the final sentence against President Perez was pending on their decision.

- ***Parties:*** Real and declining centers of power. AD (Social-Democrats) and Copei (Christian-Democrats) had popular support when they became the two largest parties. Now, *their influence is based on their control over the social and political institutions* (AD: 128 Mayors, 12 Governors, 52 Representatives, 18 Senators, 12 Standing Committees, 7 Supreme Court Justices and the General Prosecutor: Copei: 101 Mayors, 5 Governors, 48 Representatives, 15 Senators, 10 Standing Committees, 6 Supreme Court Justices and the General Comptroller). The system was carefully designed by themselves to keep it generating power even without people's support (increasing abstention and depolarization). Convergencia, was just the president's electoral platform and it capitalized the division of Copei. The rest of the alliance is composed by small parties. Causa R (radical party) is damaged by important losses. A new party might be founded by Carlos Andres Perez, representing a new division of Ad. ***The sources of parties' power are their power channels and their impressive organizations,***
- ***Military Power:*** Led by the Minister of Defense and the Joint-Staff, is *the most organized and respected force in the country. Political establishment used to control it⁴, now it fears of it.* Its opinion is decisive not only in military aspects but, also, in some other operations, involving foreign interests. It stopped the auctions of both an airway and a national bank, and the approval of some bills .
- ***Media:*** Owners of Media have built an impressive credibility which ***is used to destroy or to promote.*** Everybody fears of it.
- ***Catholic Church:*** Most Venezuelans accept the catholic church guidance. *It has built such an important credibility by being the voice of the poor people and a well-organized institution⁵.* ***Therefore its influence comes from the spiritual leadership and the management of its strengths.***

⁴ Political establishment has carefully preserved the control over military-promotion process . This relationship became problematic when reducing posts of division generals because of the fiscal crisis

⁵ The church is the owner of two newspapers, ten radio stations and three tv stations.

- **Economic interests**: Associated in Fedecamaras, their *influence is based on their capacity to sabotage and to support policies*. Since there is not a perfect market, the agreement of some few entrepreneurs may destroy some decision making process by changing realities. ***They fear of the political-establishment economic power*** , so, they rather finance it.
- **PDVSA**: The National Oil Company. Although its national board is appointed by the government, it usually makes an important political *lobby*. *Its high-tech influence is determinant in decisions related to oil, but through the Ministry of Energy and the lobby itself*.
- **Unions**: *Its public image is devastated* .However, they keep control over some public employee's organizations and over parties' national boards. *Then, threatening the parties' authorities is their real way of influencing*.
- **Intermediate societies**: Professional associations' *influence is based on the public opinion they are able to generate and their connections with the parties*.
- **Universities and Students** : The Highest intellectual level's influence depends on *the level of distress it may cause*, inside the parties and in the streets.

International actors:

- **IMF**: Since Venezuela signed an agreement with the IMF, *it became the newest money supplier (impressive influence)*.
- **Lenders**: The large external debt has made the foreign lenders very influential, specially because *they may damage the foreign image and credit of the country*.

