

ABOUT ME

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I am Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I am also the editor of the academic journal *The Latin Americanist*.

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My Latest Book



Understanding Latin American Politics
Gregory Weeks (F



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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2014

Competitive Opposition in Venezuela

Yordan K. Kutiyski and André Krouwel, "Narrowing the Gap: Explaining the Increased Competitiveness of the Venezuelan Opposition." *Latin American Politics and Society* Early View 2014. Gated.

Abstract:

This article seeks to explain why electoral support for the Venezuelan opposition has increased substantially, using Venezuelan public opinion survey data from LAPOP and an opt-in sample collected through the online vote advice application Brújula Presidencial Venezuela. It analyzes why Venezuelans who had either voted for Chávez or abstained in 2006 defected and started to support the opposition in subsequent elections. It proposes several reasons: negative voter evaluations of the economy, concern for public safety, and dissatisfaction with Venezuelan democracy. While the finding that negative policy evaluations boost support for the opposition aligns with theoretical expectations, this study finds a strong relationship between having different evaluations of the quality of democracy and supporting Chávez, which shows that the advocacy of two competing visions of democracy by the incumbent and the opposition also affects voting patterns in Venezuela.

This article mostly confirms with data what seems quite clear, namely that anxiety over the economy and public safety are making more voters willing to cast their ballot in favor of the opposition. Another important point is that the opposition gained once it stopped attacking popular social programs and instead promised they would not be dismantled. The mention of democracy refers to the fact, also not surprising, that *Chavistas* and anti-*Chavistas* have different conceptions of democracy. The latter are greatly concerned about the extensive role of the state. Nonetheless, economic concerns overshadow that.

The opposition gained a lot from previous abstainers, and that will be an important group to hold on to and add to. The 2013 presidential election was very close, and declining fortunes will push more people into the opposition camp.

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