**CANVAS Analytic Department**

**January, 2010**

**SUBJECT:** Analysis of the situation in Venezuela, January 2010. (DRAFT)

**INTRODUCTION**: This analysis tends to cover **Situation (I), Pillars of Support (II) Key Opposition Stakeholders and their allies (III), List of potential issues in the campaign (IV)** in Venezuelan Society in the face of forthcoming parliamentary elections in September 2010, and it is based on Strategic Estimate performed by CANVAS and its Venezuelan partner 2006,series of independent, academic and institute analysis in 2006-2009. as well as opinions from relevant international analysts in January 2010. Its goal is to provide basis for more detailed planning potentially performed by interested performers and CANVAS. The follow up of this analysis will appear in Plan Format later during the process after consultations with stakeholders.

**BRIEF ANALYSIS:** Elections in 2010 are perceived as important by majority of Venezuelans. Regime is losing a popularity but stays on offensive position against fragmented and strategically divided opposition. Non-formal opposition groups to the regime are gaining more support though its unclear whether they would be capable to influence election results. The key to the election results therefore, may lie in the question **whether the Student Groups and other “non-formal actors” are capable to build their infrastructure and exploit their legitimacy, work on wider coalition among themselves, create and develop sound strategy for the elections with its partners, develop cooperation with prominent opposition leaders in order put a pressure on opposition parties to unite in forthcoming elections, carry on mobilization and “Get out to vote campaign”, repeat successful attempt to monitor and report on the results from last referendum, and mobilize people to defend electoral results in the case of election fraud by the regime.**

**I: SITUATION**

Key Elements of Actual Situation (political, Soico/economic, International and military):

a) POLITICAL:

1. Chavez offensive vs. defensive opposition and partly active (but mostly REactive) civil and students groups and individual subjects in bussines and media.

2. Existence of “Democratic façade”: through increased concentration of the public powers and institutions. Even in highly centralized system elections for parliament in 2010 are perceived “important” or “very important” by the majority of population.

3. Regime putting most of the resources to re-assure reelection through direct control over electoral power, use of state propaganda and abusive use of the legal apparatus (including restrictions on potential opposition candidates some of which will be banned from running on the elections.

4. Opposition parties: perceived is weak, working for their own interests , related to former economic elites, unarticulated, unclear and with weak leadership, without ideas and credibility. Political parties and civil society’s inactive and immobilized. Keeping opposition running in “many lines” on September elections will enable regime candidates easy victory.There is space for new ideas and political movements.

5. “Winner`s - Loser`s Perception”: Even the victories of the opposition, like those on Referendum on Constitutional changes and winning the seats of Mayors and Governors in local elections are efficiently undermined by regime, who is still perceived to have upper hand. There is a strong “intangible factor” element among Venezuelan voters to “support the winner”,

6. Key Opponents: Among institutions not-aligned with government Students Movement and The Church are perceived as credible, and show stronger support rating by the people that most of governmental institutions and opposition parties.

7. Chavez enjoys hard-core popular support by mostly the poor and low educated people, as well as state employers .There is a strong element of Indoctrination of followers - Chavistas are continuously fed by State Propaganda in order to keep them bold and ready to act – including the physical activity against opposition groups.

b) SOCIAL AND ECCONOMIC:

1. Oil based economic resources, used for covering basic needs and social control shows its weakness as prices of oil continue to fall on world Market. This produces plenty of difficulties for the almost exclusively Oil based economy.
2. Growing crime rate and lack of security in the society.
3. Continuation of “Nationalisation” carried by state against domestic and international business sector deteriorates the situation in economy. More firm proofs that” The State is in fact very bad manager” are “spin” by state propaganda but consequences are getting recognized by employers.
4. Increase of use of “Coercive Pillars” by the regime: Use of fear and economic dependency as tools for social control. Pressure towards Business and Union Associations, along with the Church, Enactment of repressive laws, Human Rights are violated and not guaranteed. There is a rising level of Discrimination against dissidents
5. Mass Media under censorship and a self-inflicted censorship. Limited freedom of expression. Continious crackdown on private media in order to narrow the political space available for the opposition.
6. High level of positive expectations of opportunities, deteriorating public confidence in state institutions despite Chavez steady charisma, confrontational discourse, populism and demagogy
7. Use of non-conventional confrontation against conventional organizations carried out by the regime.

3) INTERNATIONAL AND MILITARY:

1. Alliance with Cuba and other strategic countries, such as: Iran, China, Libya, etc… (replacement of Venezuelans with non-Venezuelans – Human resource and skills and knowledge)
2. Chavez “crusade “against “US imperialism” provides him with charisma in the region and around the world. There is continious National and International Communications campaign carried out by the regime, in order to exploit anti-US sentiment in the country and internationally (Partly harmed after “Satan Bush” leaving office for more internationally popular and generally more moderate president Obama).
3. Chavez’s arm race with recent acquisition of weapons (AK-49) and plains.
4. Neutralization and control of the Military, also through creation of reserve troop under Chavez’s direct control. Formation of Parallel political enforcement organizations, such as Bolivarian street mobs, the Bolivarian Armed Front, Reserve Army

**IIChavez’s pillars of support**

**(Key Institutions and organizations supporting the actual regime):**

1. Military and Police.
2. Judiciary and Buerocracy.
3. Oil Industry and other nationalized economy sectors
4. Educational System.
5. Media
6. CNE
7. Foreign regional Actors: Cuba and Bolivia
8. Foreign Global Actors: Russia and Iran

III Key Players and Potential Allies

Individuals considered by this analysis are coming from different parties, but as in case of Serbia are considered to be important either because of formal elected positions (though Mayoral powers are heavily diminished by central government with a set of regulations after opposition Mayors has took their offices in November 2008), or because of their authority and growing potential. Following the suggested model of Unity building used efficiently in Serbia, movement Unity efforts should focus first on selected prominent individuals, and then, eventually to the apparatus of 15 opposition parties and numerous organizations listed as “potential allies”.

1. **Antonio Ledezma, Mayor of Caracas,**and leader of the centre-left Fearless People’s Alliance, potential role model for gathering in the capitol, as well as developing common strategy with movement from the formal position
2. **Carlos Eduardo Ocariz War**. Ex-MP, has become a political reference of the opposition to President Hugo Chávez. In the elections held on November 23 in 2008 was elected to the post of mayor of the Sucre municipality in Caracas. As Sucre represents “typical Chavistas environment” with huge number of barrios and high crime rate this is role model for successful battleground efforts which, if successfully exploited by movement can apply to other parts of the country, spatially in mobilizing poorest citizens. Chavez is VERY aware of this potential and therefore focused on Ocariz and Sucre region.
3. **Henrique Capriles Radonski,** governor of Miranda State, with authority spreading to his previous electoral base of Baruta Municipality and experience from Parliament where he has served as youngest elected member in previous term.
4. **Leopoldo López Mendoza,** previous mayor of the Chacao Municipality of Caracas, later banned from running by the government. He also carries symbolic and exploitable relationship to Simon Bolivar, as well as reckognizable international media attention.
5. **Alexandra Belandria,** student activist and TV journalist, one of founding members of “CAMBIO” group which was initially mobilizing previously neutral and inactive students in 2006 and 2007. (“ancestor” of the groups groups which later boosted in student movent as we know it today.) Great planning skills and variety of experience in community organizing, including series of “OTPOR” like provocative and humorous activities in barrios.
6. **Yon Goicoechea,** Venezuelan law student at Universidad Católica Andrés Bello and active in the opposition to the government of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez. Goicoechea was one of the main organizers of the Movimiento Estudiantil Venezolano (Venezuelan Student Movement) cited as a key factor in the rejection of Chavez's proposed constitutional changes in the December 2007 Venezuelan constitutional referendum.

**List of potential allies to be considered in the campaign:**

1. Political parties that will oppose Chavez on Elections (hopefully united)
2. Student and Civil Groups, potentially active in mobilization of youth, Get Out To Vote Campaign and “control the ballot boxes and defend the votes” activities.
3. Media: Independent, foreign,
4. Guilds, Unions and Professional Associations: journalists, medical, engineering, law.
5. Federacion Campesina
6. Federacion Venezolana de Maestros
7. Fedecamaras
8. Fedenagas
9. Entertainment and cultural actors (find out if they are organized)
10. Immigrant communities in VE (Asociacion Italo-Venezolana, Hermandad Gallega, etc…)
11. Neighborhood Associations
12. Asamblea de Ciudadanos (discuss political situations)
13. Asamblea de Padres y Representantes
14. Fe y Alegria
15. Dividendo Voluntario para la Comunidad
16. Rotary Club
17. Sports communities (baseball players in the US, FIFA)
18. Former oil workers and executives
19. Catholic Church
20. University Faculty Members

IV List of issues with potential to be exploited in the campaign:

1. Crime and insecurity: 18000 murders a year and complete areas in barrios ungovernable by security force. The Situation has tremendously deteriorated since 2006. Elections dramatically: Reason for change
2. Education: Government is taking over the education system: Professors need to get fired up. They will have to lose their jobs or submit! They need to be encouraged and there will be a risk. We will have to convince them that we hold them to the highest levels of society; they hold the most valued responsibility. Teachers will motivate the students. Who will influence them? How will we touch them?
3. Youth: The message needs to be tailored towards the young people, not just university students.
4. Economy: Oil is Venezuela’s, not the government’s, it’s your money, is your right! Welfare and Social Security.
5. Women: What do mothers want? Rule of Law, police under local authorities. We will allocate the necessary resources. We don’t want any more thugs.
6. Transportation: Workers need to be able to reach their jobs. It’s your money. We need to be able to hold government accountable, and we cannot do it as it is right now.
7. Government: Redistribution of wealth, everyone must see an opportunity.
8. **There is a strong presidentialist trend in Venezuela. Can we change it? How can we work with it?**

CONCLUSION: Detailed analysis of the situation should be completed due to February 2010. With relevant stakeholders, and used for further analythic/planning purposes.

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Belgrade, January 2010.

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