

Opposition Media, State Censorship, and Political Accountability: Evidence from Chavez's Venezuela

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Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Context
- 3 Irregular Terrain Method
- 4 Viewership
- 5 Chavez approval
- 6 Electoral Results
- 7 Protest Activity
- 8 Conclusion

Opposition Media and Censorship

- Opposition media can help voters to hold incumbent politicians and parties accountable
- Yet incumbent governments face incentives to censor opposition media
- Does censorship increase support for the government?
- If so, does this depend upon whether voters respond to censorship by changing media consumption?

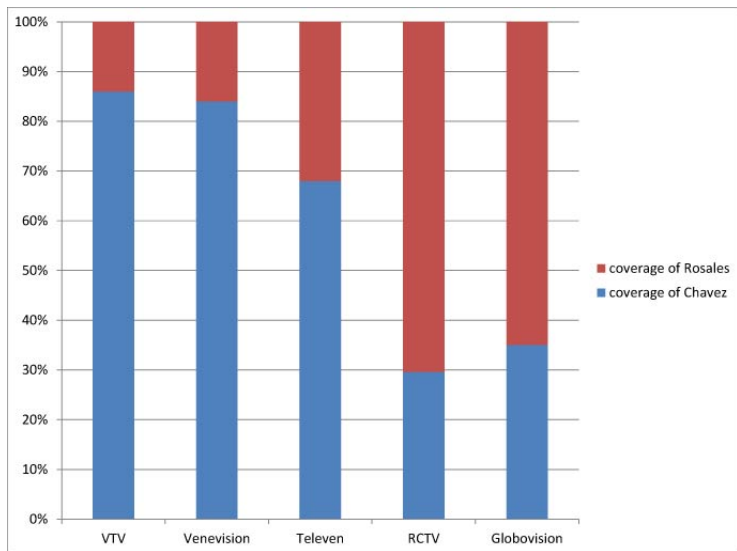
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Television sector

- Out of the five main television channels in Venezuela as of 2006, only two (RCTV and Globovision) with opposition slant
- This classification is consistent with media monitoring by the EU during the 2006 election

Media monitoring by EU during 2006 campaign



Closing of RCTV

- The 20-year license for RCTV expired on May 27, 2007 and was not renewed by the government
- The channel was replaced overnight by a pro-government public channel, which inherited the RCTV channel number and infrastructure
- Viewers in two metro areas, Caracas and Valencia, retained access to opposition news via Globovision
- The remainder of Venezuela had no opposition news

Research Questions

- Did RCTV viewers in cities with Globovision respond to censorship by switching to Globovision?
- If so, did this switching reduce support for Chavez in these cities, relative to cities without Globovision?
- Measures of support include:
 - approval ratings
 - voting returns
 - protest activity

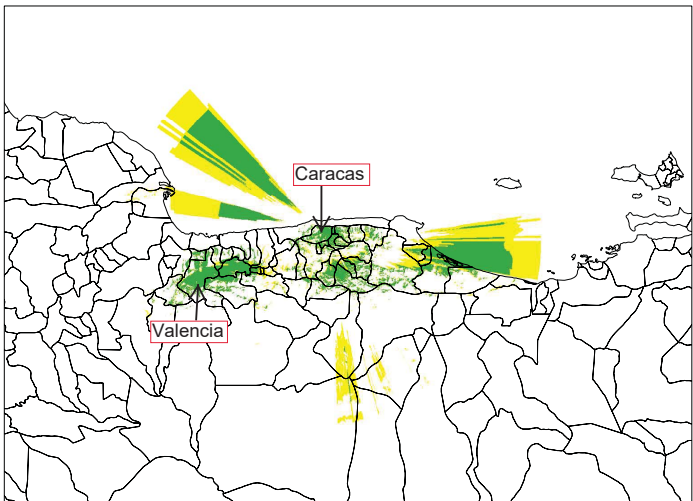
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Irregular Terrain Method

- Globovision is only available in two metro areas, Caracas and Valencia.
- To measure the strength of the Globovision signal at the municipal level, we use the Irregular Terrain Method
- Inputs include the location of the four Globovision towers, height, power, and terrain

Irregular Terrain Method



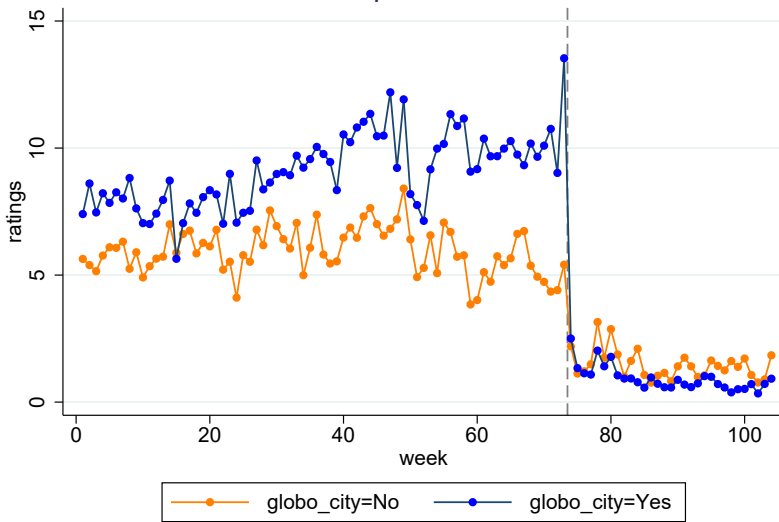
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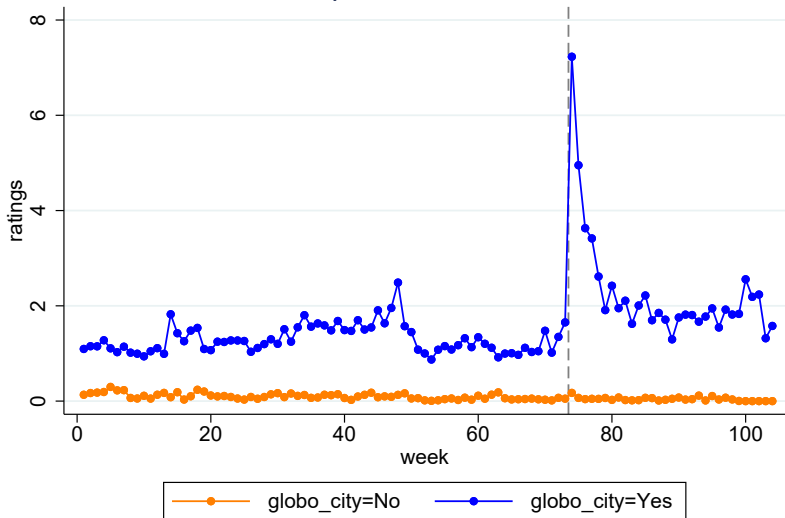
Analysis of Switching

- Using show-by-show, day-by-day ratings from Nielsen during 2006-2007, we examine television viewership in Venezuela
- We compare metro areas:
 - two with access to Globovision signal: Caracas and Valencia
 - two without access: Barquisimeto and Maracaibo

RCTV/TVES viewership for households without cable



Globo viewership for households without cable



Summary: Change in Consumption of Opposition News

- Using these estimates, we compute a switching rate of 50 percent
- That is, for every two minutes of opposition television viewership lost due to censorship of RCTV, there is a one minute increase in Globovision viewership (in Globo cities)
- We also show that the drop in viewership of opposition news was larger in non-Globo cities (102 minutes week) versus Globo cities (75 minutes per week)

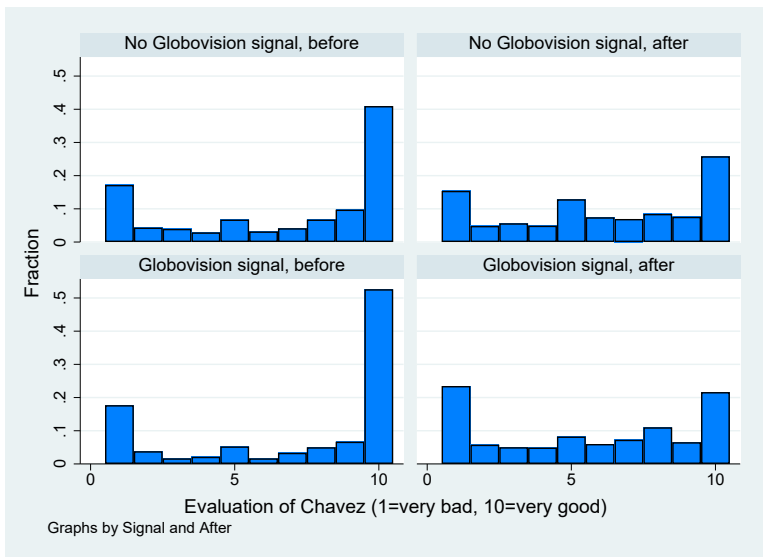
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Latinobarómetro Data

- Using survey data, we examine trends in evaluations of Chavez, before (2005-2006) and after (2007-2011) the closing of RCTV in May 2007
- Respondents evaluate Chavez on a 1 (very bad) to 10 (very good) scale
- Data include respondent municipality, allowing for measurement of Globovision availability

Support for Chavez



Results

- We next estimate an ordered logit model, with the following index of support:

$$index_{imt} = \beta_1 After_t + \beta_2 Signal_m \times After_t + \mu_m$$

- where i indexes individuals, m indexes municipalities, and t indexes time.

Globovision signal and support for Chavez

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	approval	continuous signal	high signal	controls	controls and flexible coefficients	narrow control group	internet controls
After	-0.4865*** (0.1291)	-0.4663*** (0.1324)	-0.4973*** (0.1268)	-0.2954 (0.1929)	-1.0163*** (0.3447)	-0.5338*** (0.1936)	-0.2665 (0.1871)
Globo City X After	-0.6796*** (0.1975)			-0.7293*** (0.2488)	-0.6635** (0.3307)	-0.6133** (0.2488)	-0.7273*** (0.2464)
Signal X After		-1.0109*** (0.2757)					
Globo City (high) X After			-0.6880*** (0.1974)				
Observations	7,976	7,976	7,976	7,976	7,976	4,119	7,907

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

standard errors clustered at the city level.

controls include gender, SES, age, and urban.

Threats to Identification

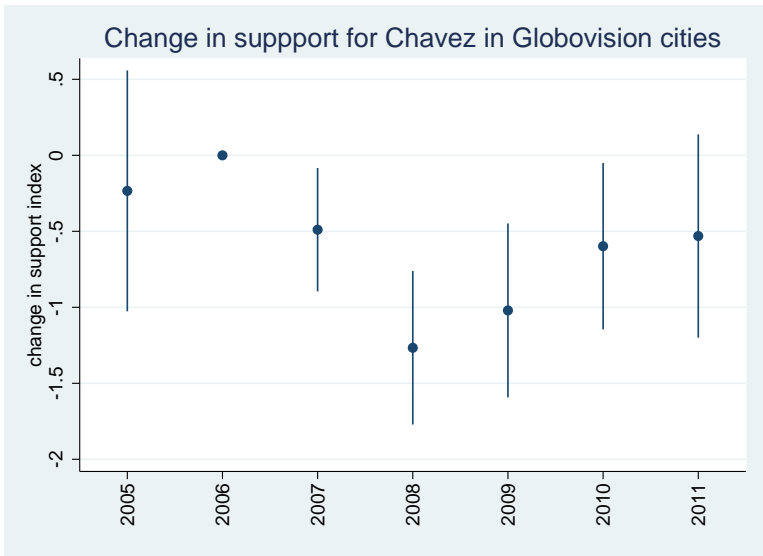
- Key identifying assumption: trends in support for Chavez in Globo cities would have followed trends in non-Globo cities absent closing of RCTV
- We address threats to this assumption in three ways:
 - ① accounting for observable differences, including urban/rural
 - ② narrow geographic control group (Globo states and bordering states)
 - ③ internet penetration

Event Study

- To further investigate dynamics, we estimate an ordered logit model that allows for the difference between signal and no-signal cities to vary over time in a flexible way (β_{2006} normalized to 0).

$$index = \beta_t Signal_m + \mu_t + \mu_m$$

Event Study



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Election Data

- We next use data on electoral returns from municipalities for the following elections:
 - 2004 Presidential Recall Referendum (before RCTV closing)
 - 2006 Presidential Election (before RCTV closing)
 - 2007 Constitutional Referendum (after RCTV closing)
 - 2009 Constitutional Referendum (after RCTV closing)
 - 2012 Presidential Election (after RCTV closing)
- We then measure $\ln(\text{votes for Chavez}/\text{votes for opposition})$

Electoral Support for Chavez

Globovision signal and electoral support for Chavez

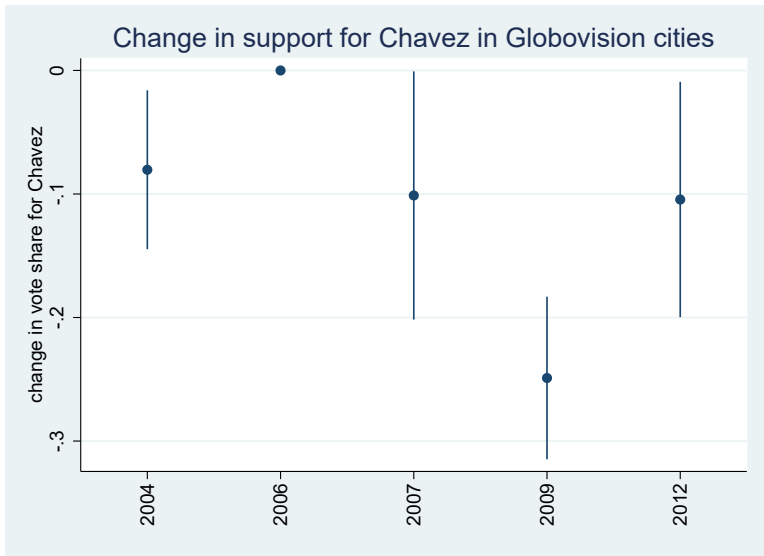
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VARIABLES	baseline	vote share	high baseline support	low baseline support	log turnout	narrow control group
after	-0.2256*** (0.0168)	-0.0503*** (0.0036)	-0.2817*** (0.0249)	-0.1695*** (0.0216)	0.0377*** (0.0082)	-0.2476*** (0.0253)
Globo City X After	-0.1117*** (0.0391)	-0.0183** (0.0091)	-0.0972 (0.0682)	-0.1261*** (0.0301)	0.0426*** (0.0147)	-0.0897** (0.0436)
Observations	1,668	1,668	833	835	1,668	688
R-squared	0.8370	0.8474	0.6438	0.8095	0.9558	0.8815

Robust standard errors in parentheses

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standard errors clustered at the city level

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Protests Data

- We use protest data from GDELT events database
- We create a panel in which the unit of observation is month by municipality, covering 2000-2014
- We focus on 148 municipalities with at least one protest
- Key measures include the number of events and the number of mentions

Protests: Baseline Result

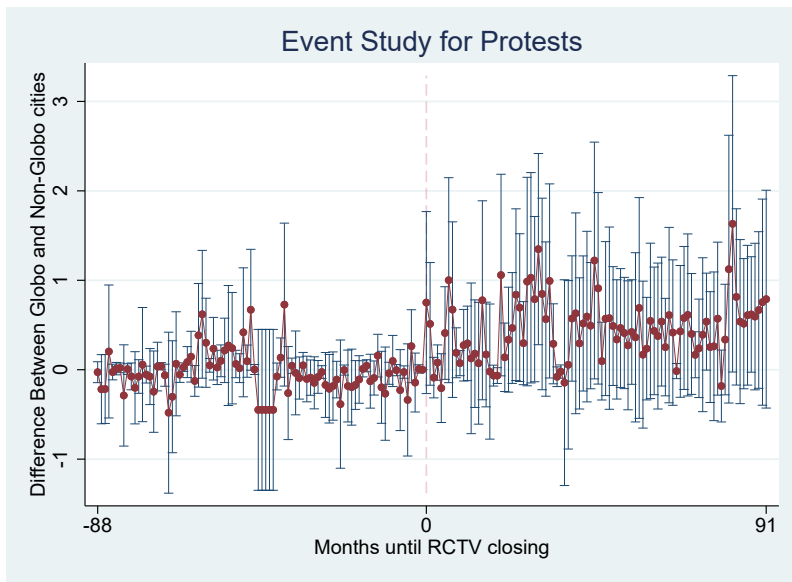
VARIABLES	(1) mentions	(2) events	(3) opposition	(4) pro- government	(5) other	(6) state-level	(7) annual	(8) narrow control
After	0.0534*** (0.0085)	0.0261*** (0.0043)	0.0205*** (0.0045)	0.0122*** (0.0034)	0.0089*** (0.0023)	0.2572*** (0.0496)	0.3597*** (0.0532)	0.0489*** (0.0110)
Globo City X After	0.4938* (0.2818)	0.2827* (0.1666)	0.3019* (0.1759)	0.2620 (0.1616)	0.1882 (0.1296)		0.5352 (0.4426)	0.4982* (0.2829)
Globo State X After						1.1495*** (0.3904)		
Observations	26,640	26,640	26,640	26,640	26,640	4,320	2,220	12,780
R-squared	0.4230	0.4727	0.3287	0.3549	0.2856	0.4677	0.4419	0.5570

Robust standard errors in parentheses

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standard errors clustered at the city level (state level in column 6)

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Summary

- Viewers re-sort across channels following state censorship of RCTV
- These changes in media consumption help to undo the effects of censorship
- In particular, switching reduces support for Chavez in places that retained access to opposition TV