

FROM THE BOLIVARIAN ALTERNATIVE TO STRATEGIC ISOLATION: THE TRANSFORMATION OF VENEZUELA'S GEOPOLITICAL POSITION IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE BEFORE AND AFTER 2013

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Abstract: Between 2004 and 2013 Venezuela authored more regional architecture than any Latin American state of its size in history — ALBA in 2004, PetroCaribe in 2005 with concessional terms the IMF valued at no less than 0.7% of members' GDP, and a leading role in UNASUR and CELAC — while after 2013 it became the object around which the hemisphere's institutions reorganized: suspended from Mercosur in 2016 and 2017, self-expelled from the OAS between 2017 and 2019, the cause of the Lima Group's creation in 2017 and of PROSUR's in 2019, and the subject of the largest coordinated recognition-of-government action of the modern era in 2019 (Jardón et al., 2020; Palestini, 2021; Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019; Nolte, 2021; Hasar, 2025). The aim of this review article is to synthesize the fragmented scholarship on Venezuelan foreign policy, Latin American regionalism, extra-regional patronage, and recognition politics into a single account of this transformation. The research applies a structured review methodology: a corpus of 76 peer-reviewed studies published 2019–2026, verified item by item, is synthesized with institutional and documentary sources and organized through a three-period, four-arena reconstruction of Venezuela's institutional standing. The original contribution of the article is the concept of hub inversion — the transformation of a state from author of regional institutions into the object around which rival institutions organize — operationalized in a Hemispheric Position Matrix whose every cell is documentarily anchored. Key findings: the exclusion cascade of 2014–2019 was executed almost entirely through institutions Venezuela had once shaped or joined, making the isolation a mirror image of the earlier activism; extra-regional deepening with Russia, China, and Cuba compensated the lost hemispheric position only in regime-survival terms, not in positional terms (Gratius, 2022; Kosevich, 2023; Bull & Rosales, 2026); and the isolation proved sticky through mechanism change — the recognition coalition of 2019 collapsed by 2023, yet non-recognition of the 2024 election, the escalation of the Essequibo dispute before the International Court of Justice, and exclusion from every functioning hemispheric body reproduced the isolated position by new means (Mijares, 2025; Pomson, 2025; Legler, 2020). The concept and matrix are transferable to other cases of institutional authorship reversed, from interwar revisionists to contemporary Nicaragua.

Keywords: *Venezuela, geopolitics, Western Hemisphere, regionalism, ALBA, OAS, recognition, hub inversion, strategic isolation.*

INTRODUCTION

Few states have traveled the distance Venezuela traveled between two Caracas summits. In December 2011 the city hosted the founding summit of CELAC — the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the first region-wide body excluding the United States and Canada — as the culminating act of a decade in which Venezuelan initiative and Venezuelan oil had underwritten a new institutional geography: ALBA from 2004, PetroCaribe from 2005 with up to 70% of oil bills financed over twenty-five years at 1% interest, UNASUR's energy diplomacy, and the political sponsorship that helped carry Cuba back into hemispheric society (Baião & Saramago, 2024; Jardón et al., 2020; Cederlöf & Kingsbury, 2019; de Bhal, 2019). A decade later the same state stood outside every functioning hemispheric institution: suspended from Mercosur since 2016–2017 under the bloc's democratic clause (Palestini, 2021), withdrawn from the OAS by its own denunciation of 28 April 2017, effective April 2019 (Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019), the reason twelve governments founded the Lima Group in August 2017 and eight presidents founded PROSUR in March 2019 (Barros & Gonçalves, 2021; Nolte, 2021), unrecognized in its 2018 and 2024 elections by most of the hemisphere's democracies (Corrales, 2020b; Mijares, 2025), and confronting its small eastern neighbor before the International Court of Justice over two-thirds of that neighbor's territory (Anderson, 2022; Pomson, 2025).

The transformation poses the review's central question: how does a state move, within a single decade, from the author of a region's institutional order to the object of it — and what does the movement reveal about the nature of geopolitical position itself? The question is not answered by any single literature. The regionalism scholarship has anatomized the crisis of Latin American organizations — UNASUR's paralysis after six of

twelve members suspended participation in April 2018, the summit drought that left CELAC without a presidential meeting between January 2017 and September 2021 (Nolte, 2021; Agostinis & Nolte, 2023) — but treats Venezuela as one stressor among several. The Venezuela literature has anatomized the domestic collapse — an economy contracted by more than 80%, nearly eight million emigrants, an authoritarian consolidation documented election by election (Congressional Research Service, 2025; Weitzman & Huss, 2024; Corrales, 2020b; Jiménez, 2023) — but treats the international position as backdrop. The patronage literature has anatomized the Russian, Chinese, and Cuban relationships (Kosevich, 2023; Bull & Rosales, 2026; Fonseca et al., 2020) but not their positional arithmetic. And the legal-institutional literature has anatomized the recognition crisis and the sanctions architecture (Hasar, 2025; Ahlborn, 2025; Palestini, 2023; Rodríguez, 2024) as episodes rather than as phases of a single trajectory. Integrating the four accounts is this review's task.

The article addresses three research questions, formulated as reviewable hypotheses. The first hypothesis (H1) holds that the transformation constitutes hub inversion: before 2013 Venezuela authored institutions and set agendas — an institution-maker; after 2013 institutions were authored about Venezuela — the exclusion cascade of 2016–2019 ran through bodies Venezuela had shaped or joined, and the new coalitions of the period existed only because of it. The second hypothesis (H2) holds that extra-regional deepening — the Russian, Chinese, and Cuban relationships — substituted for the lost hemispheric position only functionally, not positionally: it supplied regime survival while leaving Venezuela's institutional standing in its own region at zero. The third hypothesis (H3) holds that the isolation is sticky through mechanism change: the coordinated recognition-denial of 2019 collapsed by 2023, regional governments re-engaged

pragmatically, yet the isolated position reproduced itself through new mechanisms — non-recognition of the 2024 election, territorial revisionism over the Essequibo, and continued absence from every functioning regional body (Mijares, 2025; Pomson, 2025; Legler, 2020; Nolte, 2021).

The original contribution of this article lies in the concept of hub inversion — the transformation of a state from author of regional institutions into the object around which rival institutions organize — and in its operationalization through a Hemispheric Position Matrix that records Venezuela's institutional standing across four arenas (hemispheric organizations, regional integration schemes, ad-hoc coalitions, and extra-regional partnerships) at three documented time points (2012, 2019, 2026), every cell anchored to verified sources. Unlike the rise-and-decline narratives the case usually receives, hub inversion names a specific structural mechanism: the same institutional density that a hub creates in its ascendancy becomes the infrastructure of its exclusion, because the institutions it built or joined are precisely the venues in which coalitions against it can act (Palestini, 2021; Legler, 2020; Ramanzini Júnior et al., 2022). The concept is transferable to any case where institutional authorship reverses.

The article proceeds in six parts: literature review and methodology; research results presenting the corpus, the chronology, and the matrix; four analytical sections — the Bolivarian apex, the exclusion cascade, the extraversion substitute, and the residual position with its theoretical yield; and a conclusion with limitations and implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Literature Review

Four bodies of scholarship converge on the transformation, and each supplies one

layer of the reconstruction. The first body is the literature on Latin American regionalism and its crisis. Its diagnosis is now settled: the post-hegemonic architectures of the pink-tide era entered simultaneous crisis in the mid-2010s, with UNASUR paralyzed after the April 2018 suspension of participation by six of its twelve members and the summit system itself falling silent — no CELAC presidential summit between January 2017 and September 2021 (Nolte, 2021). The comparative work explains the variance: across eight documented crises of Latin American regional organizations, only UNASUR broke down, with distributive interstate conflict and decision rules determining survival (Agostinis & Nolte, 2023). The democracy-protection strand documents how the region's instruments were turned on Venezuela: the Inter-American Democratic Charter's invocation from May 2016 and the contested normative premises that ended in Venezuela's denunciation of the OAS Charter (Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019); Mercosur's suspensions of December 2016 and August 2017, the latter the unique case of the bloc's democratic clause applied to a relatively powerful member, requiring convergence of Brazil and Argentina with US support (Palestini, 2021); and the weaponization of democracy clauses in the 2016–2020 period, which the periodization literature reads as regionalism's degeneration from crisis management into interstate division (Ramanzini Júnior et al., 2022). The successor coalitions are documented in the same literature: the Lima Group's founding declaration of 8 August 2017 by twelve governments, PROSUR's creation at Santiago on 22 March 2019 as a low-institutionalization anti-Maduro forum, and Brazil's trajectory from UNASUR protagonist to its denunciator (Barros & Gonçalves, 2021), with the far-right contestation of the pink-tide architectures completing the demolition from the other ideological side (Sanahuja et al., 2024). The synthetic frame for the period is order upheaval: multilateral democracy protection

failed in Venezuela because the hemispheric order itself was in transition, and the OAS, the Lima Group, and the International Contact Group of February 2019 could not filter extra-regional intervention in the crisis (Legler, 2020).

The second body is the Venezuela literature — domestic trajectory and foreign policy. The domestic side is established in the crisis scholarship: the drivers and pathways of the collapse (Bull & Rosales, 2020b; Monaldi et al., 2021; Aray & Vera, 2024), the authoritarian consolidation documented through an original database of 117 electoral irregularities across 24 contests between 1999 and 2019 (Corrales, 2020b), the repression–opposition dynamics (Jiménez, 2023; Morselli et al., 2021), regime survival through function fusion (Corrales, 2020a), the sanctions-informalization spiral (Bull & Rosales, 2020a; Rosales, 2019), and the petro-state's authoritarian turn after the 2014 oil shock (Burgess & Corrales, 2024; Buxton, 2020). The foreign-policy side has its own recent wave: the comparative analysis of Chávez-era and Maduro-era integration diplomacy (Acuña, 2025), the role of experts and loyalty inside the foreign-policy apparatus (Boersner-Herrera, 2026), the ALBA project's loss of a common horizon (Baião & Sarago, 2024), PetroCaribe's petropolitics and its econometric evaluation (Cederlöf & Kingsbury, 2019; Jardón et al., 2020), the regional integration behind the US–Cuba thaw (de Bhal, 2019), and the 2024 electoral rupture — a first bulletin of 51.2% for the incumbent against opposition tally sheets covering more than 80% of machines and indicating approximately 67% for the challenger — that renewed the non-recognition cycle (Mijares, 2025). The Essequibo escalation adds the territorial file: the ICJ's jurisdiction judgment of December 2020 and its April 2023 rejection of Venezuela's preliminary objection put the validity of the 1899 award — and with it two-thirds of Guyana's territory

— before the Court over Caracas's objections (Anderson, 2022; Pomson, 2025).

The third body concerns the extra-regional patrons. The Russian relationship is mapped across its determinants (Boersner Herrera & Haluani, 2023), its status-and-loss logic (Thoene et al., 2023; Svoboda, 2024), its post-2022 thinning (Solar, 2023; Kosevich, 2023), and its Global South framing (Vuksanović, 2025; Locoman & Papa, 2022); the material core — approximately eleven billion dollars in arms and the Rosneft collateral positions — is documented institutionally (Seelke et al., 2022; Rouvinski, 2019; Herbst & Marczak, 2019; IISS, 2025). The Chinese relationship is mapped from South–South cooperation debates (To & Acuña, 2019; Vaddell, 2019; Malacalza, 2019) through the lending arithmetic (Yueh, 2024; Moura, 2025), the Belt-and-Road non-transformation (Jenkins, 2022), pandemic soft power (Xing et al., 2023), and the three-phase engagement ending in structural stagnation (Bull & Rosales, 2026; Dominguez, 2024). The Cuban relationship's survival services are established in the bilateral literature (Fonseca et al., 2020), the hemispheric great-power context in the institutional assessments (Chindea et al., 2023; Berg, 2024; Leiva Van de Maele, 2026), and the skeptical verdict on autocracy promotion in the comparative work (Palestini et al., 2025; Gratius, 2022). The arms-transfer literature adds the positional reading of procurement: supplier choice as alignment signaling, embargo-driven re-sourcing, and the durability of re-sourced portfolios (Bove & Böhmelt, 2021; SIPRI, 2025).

The fourth body is legal-institutional: the recognition and sanctions scholarship. The 2019 dual-presidency crisis produced the modern era's largest recognition-of-government action — some sixty states — and its doctrinal reckoning between effectiveness and legitimacy (Hasar, 2025), the fragmented representation practice in international organizations that followed (Ahlborn, 2025), and the geopoliticization of recognition as a

systemic phenomenon (Newman & Visoka, 2023). The sanctions strand documents the architecture — financial sanctions from August 2017, oil sanctions from January 2019, the general blocking order of August 2019 — and its consequences: the econometric attribution of roughly half of the post-2017 oil losses (Rodríguez, 2022), the survey of thirty-one quantitative studies of sanctions' human costs (Rodríguez, 2024), the legitimization contest around the combined regimes (Palestini, 2023), the informalization response (Bull & Rosales, 2020a), and the civil–military strengthening that sanctions produce inside targeted regimes (Kiyani et al., 2025). The peacemaking record — repeated mediation without settlement — completes the file (Smilde & Ramsey, 2020). The defense-studies literature supplies the remaining instruments of context: European reindustrialization as the contrasting case of position rebuilt through capability (Knežević, 2025), migration instrumentalized as interstate pressure (Vardanjani, 2026; Dukalskis et al., 2024), the informational dimension of position contests (Bilić, 2025; Pantić, 2025; Perez, 2024), the legal grey zones of proxy coercion (Claes, 2025), and the regional civil–military benchmarks (Jenne & Martínez, 2022; Ellner, 2023; Duarte Villa, 2022; Polga-Hecimovich, 2022). What the four bodies lack is a positional synthesis: an account in which the institutional authorship of the first decade and the institutional objectification of the second appear as phases of one mechanism. That synthesis is the review's contribution.

Research Methodology

The research applies a structured review methodology organized in three components. The first component is corpus assembly. Peer-reviewed studies published between January 2019 and 2026 were identified through systematic searches of Crossref and publisher databases using search families combining Venezuela with regionalism,

OAS, Mercosur, UNASUR, CELAC, ALBA, PetroCaribe, Lima Group, recognition, sanctions, Essequibo, and the names of its extra-regional partners, together with theoretical searches on regional organizations in crisis, democracy clauses, and recognition politics. Inclusion required peer-reviewed publication in 2019 or later, verifiable bibliographic identity — every DOI resolved and checked against the Crossref registry during assembly — and substantive bearing on Venezuela's international position or its interpretive context. The final corpus comprises 76 peer-reviewed studies, supplemented by 10 institutional and documentary sources — congressional and think-tank assessments (Congressional Research Service, 2025; Seelke et al., 2022; Chindea et al., 2023; Berg, 2024; Rendon & Fernandez, 2020; Rouvinski, 2019; Herbst & Marczak, 2019; Fonseca et al., 2020) and the standard defense reference works (IISS, 2025; SIPRI, 2025) — that anchor quantities peer review does not supply for an ongoing case.

The second component is the construction of the Hemispheric Position Matrix. Venezuela's institutional standing is recorded in four arenas: hemispheric organizations (OAS and the inter-American system), regional integration schemes (Mercosur, UNASUR, CELAC, ALBA, PetroCaribe), ad-hoc coalitions (the coalitions formed about Venezuela: Lima Group, PROSUR, International Contact Group, the 2019 recognition coalition), and extra-regional partnerships (Russia, China, Cuba, and associated alignments). Standing is coded at three documented time points — 2012 (the apex year, before the transition), 2019 (the trough of the exclusion cascade), and 2026 (the review's horizon) — using a five-value scale: author (the state created or leads the institution), member in good standing, suspended or withdrawn, object (the institution exists about the state), and defunct (the institution no longer functions). Every cell is anchored to at least one verified source, and cells are

falsifiable by documentation. The matrix's diagnostic quantity is the authorship count — the number of arenas in which the state holds author status — whose trajectory (from three of four in 2012 to zero of four from 2019) is the operational signature of hub inversion.

The third component is the periodization. Three periods organize the analysis — 2004–2013 (the Bolivarian apex), 2014–2019 (the exclusion cascade), and 2020–2026 (the residual position) — with boundaries at the 2013 leadership transition compounded by the 2014 oil shock (Burgess & Corrales, 2024; Monaldi et al., 2021), and at the January 2019 recognition rupture that completed the cascade (Hasar, 2025). The review follows the structured-instrument tradition of the author's previous work in this series; as in its predecessors, the matrix remains deliberately qualitative, because a review's contribution is organized evidence, and the five-value coding keeps every judgment auditable against its anchor.

The conceptual placement of hub inversion among neighboring concepts should be fixed before the results. It is not decline: a declining power loses relative capability while retaining its seats and memberships, whereas Venezuela's capability collapse and positional collapse were distinct processes on distinct timetables — the arsenal decayed for a decade after the memberships were already gone (IISS, 2025; Seelke et al., 2022). It is not simple isolation: isolation describes an outcome, while hub inversion describes the mechanism by which a specific kind of state — an institutional author — arrives there, through its own *acquis* (Palestini, 2021; Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019). It is not rogue-state status, a unilateral designation by a hegemon: the cascade was multilateral, legalistic, and executed by the target's own region through instruments the target had ratified (Ramanzini Júnior et al., 2022; Legler, 2020). And it is not the pariah dynamics of the recognition literature alone, because the positional loss preceded and exceeded the recognition crisis:

Venezuela had already exited or been suspended from every integration scheme before a single state recognized a rival president (Nolte, 2021; Hasar, 2025). The concept's nearest kin is the regionalism literature's own observation that Latin American organizations are presidential, thin, and mortal (Nolte, 2021; Agostinis & Nolte, 2023) — hub inversion adds what happens to the presidential author of such organizations when the presidency itself becomes the region's problem.

Three limitations of design are acknowledged at the outset and elaborated in the conclusion: the review rests on published sources, and several of the period's institutional events — notably the internal deliberations of the Lima Group and the 2025 escalation — lack peer-reviewed treatment; the matrix's five-value scale compresses gradations of standing; and the 2026 horizon captures a position still in motion.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The review generated three blocks of results: the corpus structure, the documented chronology of institutional events, and the Hemispheric Position Matrix with its authorship trajectory.

The corpus structure is as follows. Of the 76 peer-reviewed studies, 13 center on regionalism and its institutions, 25 on Venezuela's domestic trajectory and foreign policy, 16 on the extra-regional relationships, 11 on recognition, sanctions, and international law, and 11 are defense-studies and comparative instruments applied across the groups. The temporal pattern mirrors the phenomenon: the regionalism-crisis literature clusters in 2019–2023, digesting the 2016–2019 cascade (Nolte, 2021; Palestini, 2021; Ramanzini Júnior et al., 2022; Agostinis & Nolte, 2023), while the 2024–2026 publications shift to the residual position — the 2024 election (Mijares, 2025), the Essequibo litigation (Pomson, 2025), the far-right contestation of what remains of regionalism (Sanahuja et al.,

2024), and the re-engagement literature on China's cautious return (Bull & Rosales, 2026).

The chronology is presented in Table 1, and its structure carries the review's first finding: the exclusion cascade of 2014–2019 ran, step by step, through institutions Venezuela had authored, joined, or shaped. The Inter-American Democratic Charter invoked against Caracas in 2016 was a charter Venezuela had signed at its 2001 adoption; the

Mercosur that suspended Venezuela in 2016 and 2017 was the bloc Caracas had spent a decade negotiating to join; the OAS that Venezuela denounced was the organization in which its own diplomacy had been among the most active; and the Lima Group, PRO-SUR, and the International Contact Group were called into existence by the Venezuelan question itself (Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019; Palestini, 2021; Barros & Gonçalves, 2021; Legler, 2020; Nolte, 2021).

Year	Event	Direction	Source
2004	ALBA founded, Havana, by Venezuela and Cuba	authorship	(Baião & Saramago, 2024)
2005	PetroCaribe founded; concessional terms up to 70% financed, 25 years, 1%	authorship	(Jardón et al., 2020)
2008–2011	UNASUR treaty; CELAC founded at Caracas summit	authorship/co-authorship	(Nolte, 2021; Barros & Gonçalves, 2021)
2014–2015	US–Cuba thaw prepared through regional integration pressure	co-authorship (indirect)	(de Bhal, 2019)
31 May 2016	OAS Secretary-General invokes Democratic Charter, Art. 20	objectification	(Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019)
2 Dec 2016	Mercosur suspends Venezuela (norm incorporation)	suspension	(Palestini, 2021)
28 Apr 2017	Venezuela denounces OAS Charter, effective 27 Apr 2019	withdrawal	(Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019)
5 Aug 2017	Mercosur suspends Venezuela under Ushuaia democratic clause	suspension	(Palestini, 2021)
8 Aug 2017	Lima Group founded by twelve governments	objectification	(Barros & Gonçalves, 2021; Legler, 2020)
Apr 2018	Six of twelve members suspend UNASUR participation	system collapse	(Nolte, 2021)
Jan–Feb 2019	~60 states recognize interim presidency; International Contact Group formed	objectification	(Hasar, 2025; Legler, 2020)
22 Mar 2019	PROSUR founded at Santiago by eight presidents	objectification	(Nolte, 2021; Barros & Gonçalves, 2021)
18 Dec 2020	ICJ affirms jurisdiction over 1899 award (Guyana v. Venezuela), 12–4	judicialization	(Anderson, 2022)
6 Apr 2023	ICJ rejects Venezuela's preliminary objection, 14–1	judicialization	(Pomson, 2025)
28 Jul 2024	Disputed election: first bulletin 51.2%; opposition tally sheets ~67% for the challenger; broad non-recognition	re-isolation	(Mijares, 2025)
2023–2026	Recognition coalition lapses; pragmatic re-engagement; Essequibo escalation; continued exclusion from functioning bodies	residual isolation	(Mijares, 2025; Pomson, 2025; Bull & Rosales, 2026)

Table 1. Documented chronology of Venezuela's institutional position, 2004–2026.
Source: author's compilation from the cited references.

The Hemispheric Position Matrix is presented in Table 2, and its authorship trajectory is the review's organizing result. In 2012 Venezuela held author status in three of four arenas — regional integration (ALBA, PetroCaribe, CELAC co-authorship), hemispheric bodies (as an agenda-setting member of the OAS system), and extra-regional partnerships (as the architect of its Russian and Chinese alignments) — with no coalition existing about it. In 2019 the authorship count was zero: suspended or withdrawn in the first two arenas, the object of three purpose-built coalitions in the third, and a dependent rather than author in the fourth, where the

relationships had converted into survival services (Fonseca et al., 2020; Gratius, 2022; Kosevich, 2023). In 2026 the count remains zero, but the mechanism has changed: the coalitions of 2017–2019 have themselves decayed — the Lima Group inactive, PROSUR moribund, the recognition coalition lapsed with the interim presidency's end — yet no readmission, no new authorship, and no functioning institution has replaced them for Caracas, while the ICJ litigation and the 2024 non-recognition sustain the isolated position through judicial and electoral mechanisms (Mijares, 2025; Pomson, 2025; Nolte, 2021; Agostinis & Nolte, 2023).

Arena	2012 (apex)	2019 (trough)	2026 (residual)
Hemispheric organizations (OAS system)	member, agenda-setting (Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019)	withdrawn, eff. 27 Apr 2019; rival credentials seated in some bodies (Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019; Ahlborn, 2025)	outside; no readmission process (Ahlborn, 2025; Legler, 2020)
Regional integration schemes	author — ALBA, PetroCaribe; CELAC co-author; Mercosur accession (Baião & Saramago, 2024; Jardón et al., 2020)	ALBA/PetroCaribe contracted; Mercosur suspended; UNASUR collapsing (Palestini, 2021; Nolte, 2021)	schemes defunct or minimal; no authorship (Baião & Saramago, 2024; Agostinis & Nolte, 2023)
Ad-hoc coalitions	none existed about Venezuela	object — Lima Group, PROSUR, ICG, ~60-state recognition coalition (Legler, 2020; Hasar, 2025)	coalitions decayed; object of judicial and electoral non-recognition mechanisms (Mijares, 2025; Pomson, 2025)
Extra-regional partnerships	author — Russian and Chinese alignments contracted at Caracas's initiative (Kosevich, 2023; Vaddell, 2019)	dependent — survival services from Russia, China, Cuba (Gratius, 2022; Fonseca et al., 2020)	dependent, thinner — Russian capacity contracted, Chinese re-engagement cautious (Solar, 2023; Bull & Rosales, 2026)

Table 2. Hemispheric Position Matrix: Venezuela's institutional standing by arena and period
Source: author's coding of the documentary and scholarly record; authorship count 3/4 (2012) → 0/4 (2019) → 0/4 (2026).

The matrix's diagnostic reading extends beyond the authorship count to the composition of what remained at each time point. In 2012, the position's assets were diversified across arenas and convertible between them — oil finance purchased summit outcomes, summit outcomes purchased recognition capital, recognition capital protected the domestic project (Jardón et al., 2020; de Bhal, 2019; Buxton, 2020). In 2019, the surviving assets were concentrated in a single arena — the extra-regional — and non-convertible: Russian vetoes could not be exchanged for

Mercosur reinstatement, Chinese credit could not purchase OAS standing, Cuban counterintelligence secured the government and nothing beyond it (Gratius, 2022; Fonseca et al., 2020; Palestini, 2023). By 2026 even that arena had repriced: Russian capacity contracted with its war, Chinese re-engagement demanded collateral rather than solidarity, and the patron portfolio as a whole had converted from alliance to clientele (Solar, 2023; Bull & Rosales, 2026; Svoboda, 2024; Kosevich, 2023). Position, the matrix shows, behaves like a currency portfolio: the

apex position was liquid across arenas, the residual position is a single illiquid holding — and the difference between the two, not the count of friendly capitals, is what the vocabulary of “isolation” actually denotes in this case (Legler, 2020; Nolte, 2021).

Three subsidiary findings complete the results. First, the cascade's instruments were Venezuela's own: every exclusion of 2016–2019 operated through a democratic clause, charter article, or membership Venezuela had accepted in its ascendancy — the mechanism precondition of hub inversion (Palestini, 2021; Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019; Ramanzini Júnior et al., 2022). Second, the extra-regional compensation was functionally real and positionally void: the patronage literature documents survival goods — credit, sustainment, intelligence, diplomatic cover (Seelke et al., 2022; Fonseca et al., 2020; Yueh, 2024) — but no re-entry good; no patron restored a seat, a membership, or an authorship (Gratius, 2022; Palestini et al., 2025). Third, the isolation outlived its authors: the coalitions that produced it decayed on the ordinary schedule of Latin American ad-hoc bodies (Nolte, 2021; Agostinis & Nolte, 2023), yet the position they created persisted through new mechanisms — the empirical basis of H3 (Mijares, 2025; Pomson, 2025).

THE BOLIVARIAN APEX: OIL, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE MAKING OF A HUB, 2004–2013

The first period requires reconstruction precisely because its scale is now hard to credit: for roughly a decade, the hemisphere's institutional innovation ran disproportionately through Caracas.

The material base was the oil boom refracted through a deliberate strategy. ALBA, founded with Cuba in December 2004 as the counter-project to the Free Trade Area of the Americas, converted petroleum into political architecture: subsidized energy, mission-based social programs, and a membership

that grew across the Caribbean basin (Baião & Saramago, 2024; Acuña, 2025). PetroCaribe, from 2005, generalized the instrument: up to 70% of the oil bill financed over twenty-five years at 1% interest above the forty-dollar barrel, repayable partly in goods and services, for a membership that reached eighteen states — a transfer the IMF valued at no less than 0.7% of beneficiaries' GDP in 2015, and the energy-geography literature reads as the deliberate construction of a Caribbean energy region under Venezuelan leadership (Jardón et al., 2020; Cederlöf & Kingsbury, 2019). Around the energy core, Caracas co-authored the political shell: UNASUR from 2008, CELAC founded at the 2011 Caracas summit as the first region-wide body without the United States, and a Mercosur accession pursued and achieved in 2012 (Nolte, 2021; Barros & Gonçalves, 2021; Palestini, 2021). The architecture had measurable diplomatic products: the regional pressure that made Cuba's isolation untenable and prepared the 2014–2015 US–Cuba thaw ran through exactly these bodies (de Bhal, 2019).

The soft-power perimeter of the apex extended the architecture beyond its members, and its reach explains the depth of the later fall. PetroCaribe's concessional web made eighteen Caribbean and Central American governments material stakeholders in Venezuelan solvency, converting small-state votes in hemispheric bodies into a reliable constituency — the mechanism the econometric literature captures when it values the transfer at 0.7% of beneficiaries' GDP and the political literature when it reconstructs the “energy region” as governance project (Jardón et al., 2020; Cederlöf & Kingsbury, 2019). The Bolivarian social missions traveled as exportable policy, ALBA's mission diplomacy pairing Cuban personnel with Venezuelan financing across the basin (Baião & Saramago, 2024; Fonseca et al., 2020), and the participatory-democracy repertoire supplied an ideological export that resonated through the pink-tide governments even where the institutions did

not reach (García-Guadilla & Mallen, 2019; Buxton, 2020). The apex diplomacy's crowning demonstration was subtractive: the regional consensus that isolated Washington on Cuba — unanimous Latin American insistence that the next Summit of the Americas include Havana — showed the hub setting the hemisphere's agenda against the hegemon's preference, the achievement the thaw literature credits to exactly the integration architecture Caracas had driven (de Bhal, 2019). Measured at this perimeter, Venezuela's 2012 position was not merely institutional but ideational: it owned the vocabulary — integration, sovereignty, anti-imperialism — in which the region's politics were then conducted (Acuña, 2025; Heine, 2024).

The extra-regional dimension of the apex was authored on the same initiative. The Russian alignment — arms, credit, energy positions — was contracted at Caracas's request after the 2006 US arms embargo forced resourcing, in the pattern the embargo literature documents: re-sourced portfolios persist (Bove & Böhmelt, 2021; Rouvinski, 2019; Seelke et al., 2022). The procurement itself was positional signaling as much as capability: fighter contracts as declarations of alignment, in the reading the arms-transfer literature gives such purchases (Willardson & Johnson, 2022; Herbst & Marczak, 2019; SIPRI, 2025). The Chinese relationship was likewise Venezuelan-authored: the loans-for-oil architecture from 2007 made Caracas the largest recipient of Chinese policy-bank credit in the region, framed on both sides as South–South cooperation and multipolar construction (To & Acuña, 2019; Vadell, 2019; Malacalza, 2019; Dominguez, 2024). At the apex, in the matrix's terms, Venezuela was author in three arenas simultaneously — and, crucially, no coalition existed about it: the hemisphere's Venezuela problem had not yet been invented (Legler, 2020; Nolte, 2021).

The apex contained its own fragilities, and the literature identifies three that the inversion would exploit. The first was fiscal:

every instrument of the architecture — the subsidy, the mission, the summit — was an oil-price derivative, and the petro-state literature documents how the 2014 shock converted the entire portfolio into liabilities at once (Burgess & Corrales, 2024; Monaldi et al., 2021; Rosales, 2019). The second was institutional: the architecture Venezuela built was intergovernmental, presidential, and thin — summit-dependent bodies without secretariats or lock-in, which the regionalism literature identifies as the crisis-prone design of the entire post-hegemonic generation (Nolte, 2021; Agostinis & Nolte, 2023). The third was normative: Venezuela had signed the region's democratic instruments in its ascendancy — the Democratic Charter at its 2001 adoption, the Ushuaia clause with Mercosur accession — and the domestic authoritarian consolidation documented in the elections database was accumulating exactly the record those instruments were written against (Corrales, 2020b; Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019; Palestini, 2021; García-Guadilla & Mallen, 2019). The hub, in short, was building the courtroom of its own trial.

THE EXCLUSION CASCADE, 2014–2019: HOW A HUB'S INSTITUTIONS BECOME ITS EXITS

The second period is the mechanism at work, and its reconstruction shows the cascade to have been sequential, legalistic, and executed through Venezuela's own institutional acquisitions.

The sequence ran from soft censure to hard exclusion in three years. The OAS Secretary-General's invocation of the Democratic Charter's Article 20 on 31 May 2016 opened the formal file (Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019). Mercosur moved first on substance: the December 2016 suspension for failure to incorporate bloc norms, then the 5 August 2017 suspension under the Ushuaia democratic clause — the unique application of a Latin American democracy clause against a

relatively powerful member, possible only when Brasília and Buenos Aires converged with Washington (Palestini, 2021). Caracas answered the OAS process with the 28 April 2017 denunciation of the Charter, converting threatened suspension into self-expulsion, effective April 2019 (Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019). The coalitions followed the exclusions: the Lima Group's twelve founding governments in August 2017, created precisely because the OAS's own machinery had deadlocked; PROSUR in March 2019 as the anti-UN-ASUR; and the recognition coalition of January–February 2019 — some sixty states behind the interim presidency, with the International Contact Group as the European-Latin American mediation track (Barros & Gonçalves, 2021; Legler, 2020; Hasar, 2025; Nolte, 2021). By the trough year, every arena had inverted: the state that authored institutions was the object of three purpose-built ones, member of none in good standing, and represented by rival delegations in the bodies where credentials were contested (Ahlborn, 2025).

The recognition rupture of 2019 deserves its own register within the cascade, because it converted institutional exclusion into ontological contestation — the question was no longer Venezuela's standing in bodies but which Venezuela existed. The interim-presidency recognition by some sixty states was, in the doctrinal literature's assessment, the largest coordinated recognition-of-government action of the modern era, and it strained the traditional effectiveness doctrine to its limit: states recognized a government that controlled no territory, against one that controlled all of it, on legitimacy grounds the intervention-prohibition literature still debates (Hasar, 2025). The institutional consequences were immediately fragmentary: credentials contested forum by forum, with the rival delegation seated in the Inter-American Development Bank and the OAS while the incumbent's retained the United Nations General Assembly — a fragmentation of

international legal personality that the organizations literature documents as unprecedented in its breadth (Ahlborn, 2025). The geopolitics-of-recognition frame places the episode in its systemic moment: recognition had become an instrument of order contestation globally, and the Venezuelan case was its largest single deployment (Newman & Visoka, 2023). For the matrix, the rupture registers as the completion of objectification: by February 2019 Venezuela was not merely outside the hemisphere's institutions but divided between two claimants inside them, its position no longer a seat to occupy but a dispute to adjudicate (Ahlborn, 2025; Legler, 2020; Corrales, 2020b).

The cascade's political economy explains its speed. Domestically, the period is the one the crisis literature reconstructs: the 2015 opposition supermajority nullified, the 2017 Constituent Assembly and its protest cycle with the radicalization the computational studies document in real time (Morselli et al., 2021), the 2018 election boycotted and unrecognized, and the irregularities series peaking exactly when the ruling party was most threatened (Corrales, 2020b; Jiménez, 2023; Pantoulas & McCoy, 2019). Regionally, the pink tide's ebb replaced sympathetic governments with hostile ones, and the new right's contestation of the post-hegemonic architectures — culminating in Brazil's UNASUR denunciation of April 2019 — meant Venezuela's institutional shelter collapsed at the same moment its record worsened (Sanahuja et al., 2024; Barros & Gonçalves, 2021; Ramanzini Júnior et al., 2022). Externally, the sanctions architecture hardened in step: financial sanctions from August 2017, oil sanctions from January 2019, the general blocking order of August 2019 — the sequence whose economic attribution and human costs the econometric literature has since quantified (Bull & Rosales, 2020a; Rodríguez, 2022; Rodríguez, 2024; Palestini, 2023). The order-upheaval frame ties the three levels together: a hemispheric order in transition could produce

coalitions against Venezuela but not solutions for it — the OAS deadlocked, the Lima Group declared, the ICG mediated, and none could either restore democracy or manage the extra-regional patrons filling the vacuum (Legler, 2020; Smilde & Ramsey, 2020; Gra-tius, 2022).

The migration dimension gave the cascade its societal engine, and no account of the exclusion is complete without it. The exodus that reached three million by 2018 and nearly eight million by mid-decade transformed Venezuela from a distant governance problem into every neighbor's domestic policy crisis — border management, labor markets, health systems, and electorates absorbing the hemisphere's largest displacement (Weitzman & Huss, 2024; Pantoulas & McCoy, 2019; Congressional Research Service, 2025). The strategic literature's insight that migration flows function as interstate pressure applies here in its structural rather than intentional form: whatever Caracas intended, the outflow coerced the region into coalition — the Lima Group's founding members were precisely the principal receiving states, and the quality of the crisis changed for them from foreign policy to homeland policy (Vardanian, 2026; Legler, 2020; Barros & Gonçalves, 2021). The demographic hemorrhage simultaneously drained the state's own capacities — the skilled exodus documented in the human-capital literature (Garcia Zea, 2020) — so that the same flow that mobilized the coalition weakened the target, accelerating the convergence of “weak enough to sanction” with “important enough to organize against” that the cascade required (Palestini, 2021; Kiyani et al., 2025). Few variables in the period did more simultaneous work on both sides of the inversion.

The theoretical point of the cascade is the one the review's concept names. Venezuela was not excluded despite its earlier institutional activism but through it: the democratic clauses it had signed supplied the legal instruments, the memberships it had won supplied

the venues, and the summit networks it had built supplied the coalition infrastructure — the Lima Group was, sociologically, the same presidential diplomacy Venezuela had mastered, now pointed at it (Palestini, 2021; Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019; Nolte, 2021; Legler, 2020). Hub inversion is precisely this: the conversion of a state's institutional acquis into the machinery of its own objectification. The comparative literature's finding that regional organizations sanction weak members easily but powerful ones only under great-power convergence (Palestini, 2021) adds the scope condition: inversion requires the hub to have become weak enough to sanction — which the domestic collapse ensured — while remaining important enough to organize against — which the migration crisis, at eight-million scale and itself an instrument in the strategic literature's reading, guaranteed (Weitzman & Huss, 2024; Vardanian, 2026; Congressional Research Service, 2025).

EXTRAVERSION: THE EXTRA-REGIONAL SUBSTITUTE AND ITS POSITIONAL LIMITS, 2014–2026

The third analytical section tests H2: what the extra-regional relationships did and did not replace.

What they replaced is documented across the patronage literature, and it is regime survival in all its components. Russian sustainment kept the armed forces' inventory partially operational and the diplomatic cover flowing — bomber visits, vetoes, disinformation alignment — even as Moscow's material capacity contracted after 2022 (Seelke et al., 2022; Solar, 2023; Kosevich, 2023; Svoboda, 2024). Chinese finance carried the state through the collapse's first phase before retrenching into repayment management and, after 2023, cautious special-economic-zone re-engagement (Yueh, 2024; Bull & Rosales, 2026; Jenkins, 2022; Moura, 2025). Cuban services supplied the counterintelligence shield that the survival literature treats as

decisive for coup-proofing (Fonseca et al., 2020; Corrales, 2020a). The informational and soft-power dimensions ran in parallel — pandemic diplomacy, narrative alignment, the cognitive-domain operations the defense literature models (Xing et al., 2023; Bilić, 2025; Pantić, 2025; Perez, 2024). In the survival ledger, the substitution worked: the regime that the 2019 coalition expected to fall did not (Corrales, 2020a; Gratius, 2022).

What they did not replace is position, and the review's matrix makes the deficit precise. No patron restored a membership: Russia and China could veto Security Council action and blunt sanctions legitimacy (Palestini, 2023; Gratius, 2022), but neither could seat Venezuela in Mercosur, the OAS, or any functioning regional body — indeed the patrons' visibility in the crisis was itself the argument the Lima Group and the ICG used for urgency (Legler, 2020). No patron supplied authorship: the relationships' agendas were set increasingly in Moscow and Beijing as Venezuelan leverage collapsed — the dependency inversion the author's earlier work in this series documented for the Cuban case operating across the whole portfolio (Fonseca et al., 2020; Bull & Rosales, 2026; Thoene et al., 2023). And no patron proved positionally reliable: the skeptical literature on autocracy promotion finds external support explaining survival but not standing — the patrons defended the incumbent, not the country's place in any order (Palestini et al., 2025; Gratius, 2022; Leiva Van de Maele, 2026; Chindea et al., 2023; Berg, 2024). Extraversion, in short, was a substitution of function, not of position: it moved Venezuela from a hemispheric order it had helped author into the clientele of an extra-regional counter-order in which it authored nothing (Vuksanović, 2025; Locoman & Papa, 2022; Dominguez, 2024).

The patrons' own hemispheric strategies bounded the substitution from above, and the great-power literature specifies the ceiling. Russian engagement in Latin America

was always demonstrative rather than constructive — reach displayed at low cost, with Venezuela as the exhibition and the exhibition's costs carried as geopolitical expenses (Vuksanović, 2025; Svoboda, 2024; Thoene et al., 2023; Chindea et al., 2023). Chinese engagement was portfolio-governed: the lending that made Caracas the region's largest borrower followed a strategic-distance logic that the econometrics of Chinese official finance documents, and the same logic dictated retrenchment when the borrower failed — no BRI transformation, no alliance conversion, cautious re-entry only on collateralized terms (Moura, 2025; Yueh, 2024; Jenkins, 2022; Bull & Rosales, 2026). Both patrons, moreover, calibrated against Washington: the US response to the extra-hemispheric advance was belated but real, and when it came — sanctions architecture, recognition diplomacy, the pressure campaigns of the late 2010s — the patrons absorbed none of it on Venezuela's behalf (Leiva Van de Maele, 2026; Berg, 2024; Rendon & Fernandez, 2020; Palestini, 2023). The soft-power complement — pandemic diplomacy, media presence, the informational operations whose mechanics the defense literature models — reached Venezuelan audiences but changed no institutional fact (Xing et al., 2023; Bilić, 2025; Pantić, 2025; Perez, 2024). The ceiling, in the matrix's vocabulary, is that patrons offered membership in nothing: the counter-order they anchor has clients and forums, but no institution in which Venezuelan standing could be deposited and compounded — which is why extraversion shows in the matrix as dependence, never as authorship (Locoman & Papa, 2022; Gratius, 2022; Dominguez, 2024).

The military dimension of extraversion carries the positional logic in material form, and a defense-studies readership will recognize the trajectory from this series' first article. The eleven-billion-dollar Russian arsenal contracted in the apex was itself a positional statement — supplier choice as alignment

(Rouvinski, 2019; Herbst & Marczak, 2019; SIPRI, 2025) — and its post-2014 decay for want of financing, maintenance, and supplier commitment tracked the wider inversion: the capability that had underwritten Bolivarian confidence became a maintenance queue dependent on the patron's dwindling attention (IISS, 2025; Seelke et al., 2022; Solar, 2023). The contrast with position rebuilt through capability elsewhere — Europe's reindustrialization wave converting threat into factories, jobs, and alliance weight (Knežević, 2025) — measures what Venezuela's extraversion could not deliver: a capability base is a positional asset only when its sustainment is sovereign, and Venezuela's never was (Kiyani et al., 2025; Duarte Villa, 2022). The civil-military corollary closed the circle domestically: sanctions strengthened the military's internal position while the external position collapsed — armed forces ever more central to a state ever more marginal (Kiyani et al., 2025; Jenne & Martínez, 2022; Ellner, 2023; Polga-Hecimovich, 2022).

THE RESIDUAL POSITION, 2020–2026: STICKY ISOLATION, THE ESSEQUIBO TURN, AND THE THEORY OF HUB INVERSION

The final period supplies the test of H3 and the concept's theoretical yield, because it shows the isolation persisting after its original mechanisms dissolved.

The dissolution is documented. The interim presidency wound down by January 2023 and the sixty-state recognition lapsed with it, returning the recognition file to the fragmented, forum-by-forum practice the legal literature describes (Hasar, 2025; Ahlborn, 2025). The Lima Group ceased activity as its member governments changed; PRO-SUR joined the long list of moribund presidential forums; and the regionalism literature's verdict on the whole ad-hoc generation — low institutionalization, high mortality — applied to the anti-Maduro coalitions exactly

as it had to the Bolivarian ones (Nolte, 2021; Agostinis & Nolte, 2023; Sanahuja et al., 2024). Pragmatic re-engagement followed: neighboring governments restored working relations for migration management and border security, and Chinese capital returned cautiously through special economic zones (Bull & Rosales, 2026; Congressional Research Service, 2025). On the mechanism-by-mechanism ledger, the isolation apparatus of 2017–2019 was gone by mid-decade.

The position, however, did not recover — and the period's two defining events reproduced it by new means. The first was electoral: the 28 July 2024 presidential election, in which the electoral council proclaimed the incumbent's victory with 51.2% on a first bulletin never disaggregated, against opposition-collected tally sheets covering more than 80% of voting machines and indicating approximately 67% for the challenger — a sequence the political-science literature reads as miscalculation followed by fraud and authoritarian radicalization, and which most Western and several Latin American governments answered with non-recognition (Mijares, 2025). The recognition file thus reopened in decentralized form: no coordinated interim presidency, but a standing, documented illegitimacy that forecloses institutional normalization (Mijares, 2025; Newman & Visoka, 2023; Corrales, 2020b). The second was territorial: the Essequibo escalation, in which Venezuela answered the ICJ's assertion of jurisdiction — December 2020, twelve votes to four — and its April 2023 rejection of Caracas's preliminary objection, fourteen to one, with a December 2023 consultative referendum and annexation rhetoric over two-thirds of Guyana's territory (Anderson, 2022; Pomson, 2025). For the review's argument, the Essequibo turn is diagnostic: a state with institutional standing pursues territorial claims through institutions — as Guyana is doing — while a state without standing externalizes its domestic crisis into revisionism, converting the hemisphere's residual sympathy into

renewed threat perception and giving the isolation a security rationale it had previously lacked — a rationale reinforced by the armed non-state governance already documented in the same borderlands (Pomson, 2025; Mijares, 2025; Mantilla & Feldmann, 2025; Legler, 2020).

The domestic anchor of the residual position completes its description, because the isolation's persistence is over-determined from inside. The regime that survived the cascade emerged more consolidated and more militarized than the one that entered it: the subnational machinery of autocratization completed its work through the 2021 regional elections (Polga-Hecimovich, 2022), the armed forces' economic and political centrality deepened on the trajectory the civil-military literature documents (Duarte Villa, 2022; Jenne & Martínez, 2022; Kiyani et al., 2025), the defensive strategy hardened around the diminished but loyal base (Ellner, 2023; Corrales, 2020a), and the coercive apparatus's conduct across the 2024 cycle reproduced the international illegitimacy on schedule (Mijares, 2025; Morselli et al., 2021). Re-entry to the hemispheric order, in other words, now carries a domestic price — verifiable elections, institutional restoration, security-sector accountability — that the incumbent coalition has repeatedly shown itself unwilling to pay precisely because its survival architecture depends on the practices the order sanctions (Corrales, 2020a; Jiménez, 2023; Palestini, 2023). The isolation is therefore not merely imposed but co-produced: the position's stickiness reflects an equilibrium in which the external order will not readmit the regime as it is, and the regime cannot become readmittable without ceasing to be itself — the deadlock the mediation record has traced through every failed negotiation cycle (Smilde & Ramsey, 2020; Legler, 2020; Burgess & Corrales, 2024).

The theoretical yield can now be stated as three propositions that generalize the case. First, hub inversion is mechanism-complete:

the same institutional *acquis* that constitutes a hub — clauses signed, memberships held, summit networks built — supplies, in decline, the venues, instruments, and coalition infrastructure of the hub's objectification; the Venezuelan cascade is the type case (Palestini, 2021; Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019; Legler, 2020). Second, positional and functional support are separable currencies: extra-regional patrons can sustain a regime indefinitely without restoring a single element of its position — survival is purchasable, standing is not — which is why extraversion stabilized the government and did nothing for the state (Gratius, 2022; Palestini et al., 2025; Bull & Rosales, 2026). Third, isolation is sticky through mechanism succession: coalitions decay, but a position once inverted regenerates its isolation through whatever mechanisms the environment supplies — electoral non-recognition, judicialized territorial disputes, sanctions inertia — unless the state re-acquires authorship somewhere, which Venezuela has not (Mijares, 2025; Pomson, 2025; Rodríguez, 2024; Nolte, 2021). The propositions travel: interwar revisionists leaving the League, Nicaragua's current trajectory through the inter-American system, and the counter-order memberships of sanctioned states are all codable in the same matrix — a comparative agenda the conclusion specifies (Agostinis & Nolte, 2023; Newman & Vioska, 2023; Heine, 2024; Gonçalves, 2026).

CONCLUSION

The review set out to synthesize four literatures into a single account of Venezuela's hemispheric transformation and to test three hypotheses. The first hypothesis, hub inversion, is confirmed. The matrix's authorship trajectory — three arenas of four in 2012, zero from 2019 — is documented cell by cell, and the cascade's mechanism ran through Venezuela's own institutional acquisitions: the Democratic Charter it signed, the Mercosur it joined, the summit diplomacy it

perfected, turned into the instruments of its exclusion between May 2016 and April 2019 (Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2019; Palestini, 2021; Barros & Gonçalves, 2021; Legler, 2020).

The second hypothesis, the positional void of extraversion, is confirmed. The Russian, Chinese, and Cuban relationships supplied survival — sustinment, credit, counterintelligence, cover — at every point where the hemispheric coalitions expected collapse, and supplied no position: no membership restored, no authorship created, no standing defended beyond the incumbent's tenure (Seelke et al., 2022; Fonseca et al., 2020; Yueh, 2024; Gratius, 2022; Palestini et al., 2025). The substitution's asymmetry — function without position — is the finding that separates this account from both the “abandoned by the region” and the “rescued by the patrons” narratives.

The third hypothesis, sticky isolation through mechanism change, is confirmed with the period's own evidence. The exclusion apparatus of 2017–2019 dissolved on schedule — coalitions decayed, recognition lapsed, re-engagement proceeded — and the isolated position persisted regardless, reproduced by the 2024 electoral rupture and its non-recognition, by the judicialized Essequibo escalation, and by the simple absence of any functioning body to readmit Venezuela to (Mijares, 2025; Pomson, 2025; Ahlborn, 2025; Nolte, 2021).

The principal original contribution of this article is the concept of hub inversion and its operationalization in the Hemispheric Position Matrix — a documented, falsifiable instrument that converts the rise-and-decline narrative of the Venezuelan case into a structural mechanism with scope conditions and a comparative agenda. The concept completes the series of structured instruments developed in the author's previous work: where those measured the sustainability of transferred capability, the direction of asymmetric dependence, and the governance functions of coercion, the matrix measures position itself.

The limitations of the review are fourfold. First, it rests on published sources: the internal politics of the Lima Group, the OAS diplomacy of 2016–2019, and the 2025 escalation await archival and peer-reviewed treatment, and the corpus's documented coverage gaps — no verified study of the December 2023 referendum or of the 2025 Caribbean pressure — bound the final period's reconstruction. Second, the matrix's five-value scale compresses gradations — “member in good standing” spans passive membership and agenda-setting — and its three time points sample a continuous trajectory. Third, the corpus's 2019 threshold admits the pre-crisis literature only as mediated by current scholarship. Fourth, the 2026 horizon captures a moving object: re-engagement dynamics, the ICJ merits phase, and the post-2024 recognition file all remain open.

Future research should proceed on three lines: comparative application of the matrix to Nicaragua's trajectory through the inter-American system and to historical cases of institutional authorship reversed, testing whether the three propositions generalize; process-tracing of the cascade's decision points — the Mercosur suspensions and the OAS denunciation above all — as archives and memoirs open; and quantitative development of the authorship count into a continuous positional index, for which the matrix supplies the coding frame. For policy, the implications run in two directions. For the hemisphere's democracies, the case teaches that exclusion instruments work — the cascade was executed — but produce position, not outcomes: the regime survived exclusion, and the tools that isolated the state proved unable to change it, a gap the peacemaking record documents mediation attempt by mediation attempt (Smilde & Ramsey, 2020; Legler, 2020; Rodríguez, 2024). For any future Venezuelan government seeking re-entry, the matrix is a checklist in reverse: readmission to the inter-American system, reinstatement in Mercosur, a settlement track on the

Essequibo, and recognition-restoring elections are the four arena-openings through which an inverted hub would begin, cell by cell, to write itself back into the order it once

authored (Ahlborn, 2025; Pomson, 2025; Mijares, 2025; Nolte, 2021).

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OD BOLIVARSKE ALTERNATIVE DO STRATEŠKE IZOLACIJE: TRANSFORMACIJA GEOPOLITIČKOG POLOŽAJA VENECUELE U ZAPADNOJ HEMISFERI PRIJE I POSLIJE 2013. GODINE

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Sažetak: Između 2004. i 2013. godine Venecuela je stvorila više regionalne arhitekture nego ijedna latinoamerička država njene veličine u istoriji — ALBA 2004, PetroCaribe 2005. sa koncesionim uslovima koje je MMF procijenio na najmanje 0,7% BDP-a članica, i vodeću ulogu u UNASUR-u i CELAC-u — dok je poslije 2013. postala objekat oko kojeg su se institucije hemisfere reorganizovale: suspendovana iz Mercosura 2016. i 2017, samoisključena iz OAS-a između 2017. i 2019, uzrok stvaranja Lima grupe 2017. i PROSUR-a 2019, i predmet najveće koordinisane akcije priznavanja vlade u modernoj eri 2019. godine. Cilj ovog preglednog članka je da sintetizuje fragmentiranu literaturu o venecuelanskoj spoljnoj politici, latinoameričkom regionalizmu, vanregionalnom pokroviteljstvu i politici priznanja u jedinstven prikaz ove transformacije. Istraživanje primjenjuje strukturiranu metodologiju pregleda: korpus od 58 recenziranih studija objavljenih 2019–2026, verifikovan stavku po stavku, sintetizovan je sa institucionalnim i dokumentarnim izvorima i organizovan kroz rekonstrukciju institucionalnog položaja Venecuele u tri perioda i četiri arene. Originalni doprinos članka je koncept inverzije čvorišta (hub inversion) — transformacije države iz autora regionalnih institucija u objekat oko kojeg se organizuju suparničke institucije — operacionalizovan u Matrici hemisferskog položaja čija je svaka ćelija dokumentarno usidrena. Ključni nalazi: kaskada isključenja 2014–2019. izvršena je gotovo u cjelini kroz institucije koje je Venecuela nekada oblikovala ili kojima je pristupila, čineći izolaciju ogledalom ranijeg aktivizma; vanregionalno produbljivanje sa Rusijom, Kinom i Kubom nadoknadiło je izgubljeni hemisferski položaj samo u terminima opstanka režima, ne u pozicionim terminima; a izolacija se pokazala postojanom kroz promjenu mehanizama — koaliciju priznanja iz 2019. koja se raspala do 2023. zamijenili su nepriznavanje izbora 2024, eskalacija spora oko Essequiba pred Međunarodnim sudom pravde i isključenost iz svakog funkcionalnog hemisferskog tijela. Koncept i matrica prenosivi su na druge slučajeve obrnutog institucionalnog autorstva, od međuratnih revizionista do savremene Nikaragve.

Ključne riječi: *Venecuela, geopolitika, zapadna hemisfera, regionalizam, ALBA, OAS, priznanje, inverzija čvorišta, strateška izolacija.*