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Bias or Neutrality?

An Assessment of Television News Coverage in Venezuela by Globovisión

A study prepared by

American University's Center for Latin American & Latino Studies (CLALS)

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Executive Summary

This study assesses the extent to which the Globovisión television station provided balanced coverage of political and social events in Venezuela during the polarized period spanning from the fall of 2013 through the summer of 2014. It analyzes Globovisión's coverage surrounding the municipal elections of 2013; the wave of opposition street demonstrations in early 2014; international efforts to convene talks between the government and opposition in the spring of 2014; and the shortages of basic goods during the summer of that year. The study focuses on whether Globovisión provided unbiased coverage in terms of the access given to representatives from the government and opposition, the favorability of the presentation and portrayal of prominent individuals and organizations, and the choice of issues and perspectives receiving coverage.

Drawing on state-of-the-art scholarly methods of media content analysis, the study analyzes data from 88 hour-long broadcasts, including some 600 news stories or interview segments featuring more than 1,000 different individuals and discussion of 36 different topics. The study finds that Globovisión's framing of the issues tended to be neutral, and that bias in favor of the government was no more likely than bias in favor of the opposition.

While overall Globovisión achieved its goal of providing unbiased coverage of the most critically important social and political events in the country, there were differences between the periods and issues covered, as well as across particular measurements of bias. Opposition voices received more total coverage than pro-government voices during the periods surrounding the municipal elections and the street demonstrations, and this coverage tended to be unfavorable to the government. However, pro-government perspectives received slightly more coverage when the international dimensions of the crisis or the shortages of basic goods were the topics of discussion. The analysis also shows that news stories that appeared earlier in a broadcast tended to be relatively more pro-government, whereas those appearing toward the end of a broadcast were more favorable to the opposition.

I. INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES

This study assesses the extent to which Venezuelan television station Globovisión provided balanced coverage of critical political and social events in Venezuela during the station's first year under new ownership. It considers this question in light of the deep divisions between *chavismo* and the opposition, which led to a highly polarized political environment marked by competing interpretations of events. For Globovisión this created the challenge of providing visibility and fair depiction to sharply different perspectives on enormously controversial events.

To examine Globovisión's coverage of the most critical political and social developments in Venezuela during this period, this study analyzes content aired during four "critical junctures." These include: 1) "The Municipal Elections Period" (November 9–December 15, 2013); 2) "The Street Demonstrations" (February 12–March 21, 2014); 3) "The International Dimensions of Crisis," when both the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Vatican sponsored mediation talks (March 25–May 14, 2014); and "Shortages of Basic Goods" (August 7–29, 2014). These four periods of inflection were characterized by high degrees of polarization, and analysis of how they were handled by the station enables us to assess whether it gave visibility to different interpretations of events, aired balanced portrayals of government and opposition perspectives, and chose to broadcast coverage of highly controversial events.

The structure of this report is as follows. The first section provides political context, from Chávez's election in 1998 to Maduro's first eighteen months in office (1998–2014). It also addresses Venezuela's elections, institutional developments, and shifting media landscape. The second part defines key terms used in the study and draws on the scholarly literature to explain why "balance" is best analyzed through the prism of "bias." The third section provides an in-depth description of the study's methodology. The fourth section presents the empirical analysis of Globovisión's coverage and details the study's findings. The concluding section summarizes those findings and assesses their implications.

In December 1994 Venezuelan citizens Luis Teófilo Núñez Arismendi, Guillermo Zuloaga Núñez, Nelson Mezerhane Gosen, and Alberto Federico Ravell Arreaza founded a national television station, Globovisión. The channel became the first 24-hour news network in Venezuela, with headquarters and an operational base in the capital city of Caracas. The channel began broadcasting to the country's main urban areas—the Federal District, Aragua, Carabobo, Miranda, and Zulia—and soon formed domestic and international partnerships to disseminate its programming via third parties and abroad. Globovisión could also be found on the dial of virtually all Venezuela's cable subscribers.

During the Chávez Presidency (1999–2014), the channel gained increased public visibility. Alberto Federico Ravell, who became the channel's principal director, was directly involved in the daily newsroom, and his open criticism of the government made him and Globovisión prominent regime antagonists. In April 2002, Globovisión and other privately owned channels broadcast news that favored the opposition's version of events during an aborted coup attempt. Globovisión's coverage was broadly consistent with the opposition narrative, which claimed that a civil society uprising, not a military coup, had prompted Chávez to leave office. After the failure of the coup and the president's return, Globovisión maintained its hard stance against the Chávez government.

The difficult relationship between Globovisión's initial ownership group and the Chávez government is illustrative of a broader pattern of conflict and change in the Venezuelan media landscape. As the media's role in politics grew during the president's first seven years in office, private media outlets moved to the center of attention in the highly polarized environment. Some adopted pro-opposition editorial lines, arguably fueling polarization. This set the stage for spiraling confrontation between privately owned media and the government.

In 2004 the government began to craft a new legal framework for regulating private media. That same year, *Venevisión*, another prominent privately owned channel, began to soften its editorial line. Then, in 2007, the country's other longstanding private station, RCTV, was stripped of its license to broadcast. RCTV's principal owner had been an outspoken critic of the Chávez government, and observers widely interpreted the non-renewal of its license as a sign of an increasingly aggressive government approach to the media. These developments at *Venevisión* and RCTV left Globovisión as the lone channel with an editorial line critical of the government. Globovisión thus became the media outlet carrying the flag for the opposition and "independent private media."

The channel's leadership insisted relentlessly that station programming provided an independent voice in a media landscape subject to politically motivated pressures from the state regulatory commission for telecommunications, CONATEL. In 2009, CONATEL opened investigations into Globovisión's news coverage and accounting practices. These led to heavy fines being levied against the station.

Chávez's criticism of Globovisión became personal, as he directly identified Ravell as the source of the channel's putatively unfair coverage. Elements of the state security forces carried out a publicly televised search of owner Zuloaga's house, before temporarily arresting him. Subsequently, the government obtained a minority stake in the station (approximately 25 percent) after the state nationalized a bank owned by Globovisión's founder and still part-owner Mezerhane. New owners bought Globovision shortly after the April 2013 presidential elections, as the previous ownership group claimed that the

channel had become financially unsustainable. They felt forced to sell.

Under new ownership, Globovisión introduced significant changes to programming, and ensuing changes in personnel saw the departure of its star evening news host Leopoldo Castillo. The channel's slogan became "Responsible and Truthful Information," as it maintained its focus as a news station but changed its editorial line.[1] The new owners claimed they would simply "transmit the news," make an effort to "lower the levels of conflict," and work toward "peace" in Venezuela.[2] In this vein, the new owners signaled that they wanted Globovisión to be a neutral voice in the country's heated political conflict.

DATA AND METHOD

This study analyzes data from 88 hour-long broadcasts, including some 600 news stories or interview segments featuring more than 1,000 different individuals and discussion of 36 different topics. The data, supplied by Globovisión, consists of footage from three of its television programs, including the channel's most widely viewed news program and its two most popular opinion and interview broadcasts. The research team selected these shows for analysis based on a comprehensive review of the channel's programming, and Globovisión delivered footage for a range of dates that were specified by the research team on grounds that they encompassed the most important coverage aired during the four critical juncture periods.[3]

To generate data for the quantitative analysis of potential bias in Globovisión news, information, and opinion coverage, we conducted a thorough content analysis. Content analysis is a method to systematically study a broad range of textual, audio, and video content in order to identify patterns and trends of interest, in this case media bias.[4] Drawing on this technique, researchers coded and analyzed a selected sample of Globovisión most watched news, information, and opinion broadcasts during the station's first year under new ownership to identify any patterns of bias and to determine the principal factors associated with such bias. In this manner, the study developed measurements of bias regarding the access given to representatives from the government and opposition, how favorably relevant individuals and organizations were portrayed, and the range of issues and perspectives receiving coverage.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As outlined in detail in the Empirical Analysis and Findings section of this report, the study found that Globovisión's framing of the issues tended to be neutral, and that bias in favor of the government was no more likely than bias in favor of the opposition. While overall Globovisión achieved its goal of providing unbiased coverage of the most critically important social and political events in the country, there were differences between the periods and issues covered as well as across particular measurements of bias. Opposition voices received more coverage than pro-government voices during

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[1] Previous slogans for the channel were, from 1994–2010, "24 hours of information," and then later, 2012–2013, "the expression of a country."

[2] Quoted from a broadcast on May 23, 2013. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzCmX5Uifu0 (Accessed 24 April 2015).

[3] In some instances, interruptions of regularly scheduled program content occurred. Such interruptions, which ranged from breaking news stories to official state announcements by the president, or from members of his cabinet, involved live news events. This live content was included in the sample.

[4] Data collection entailed following five steps: developing the codebook and coding form, training coders, piloting tests of validity and reliability, finalizing intercoder reliability tests, and assigning coders to review specific broadcasts.

the periods surrounding the municipal election and the street demonstrations, and this coverage tended to be unfavorable to the government. However, pro-government perspectives received slightly more coverage when the international dimensions of the crisis or the shortages of basic goods were the focus of broadcasts. The analysis also shows that news stories that appeared earlier in programs tended to be relatively pro-government, whereas those appearing toward the end of a broadcast were more favorable to the opposition.

II. THE VENEZUELAN CONTEXT: ELECTIONS, CONSTITUTIONS, AND MEDIA

T he 1998 presidential elections marked a watershed in Venezuela's history. After 40 years of two-party democratic rule known as the *Punto Fijo* era—from a 1958 agreement among political parties to share and rotate power—many Venezuelans became disenchanted with established political elites. In the campaign none of the main contenders ran on the tickets of traditional parties. Hugo Chávez, a former army lieutenant who had been jailed for staging a failed coup in 1992, distinguished his candidacy by promising to challenge established political elites and institutions. His message resonated in a time of economic recession and disillusionment with the establishment parties—*Accíon Democrática* (AD) and *Comité de Organizacíon Política Electoral Independiente* (COPEI). Chávez coasted to victory with 56 percent of the vote.

His first moves were to orchestrate a constitutional reform process. Votes were held on the proposal to convene a constituent assembly, to select the members of the assembly, and to approve the newly drafted Constitution. That 1999 Constitution, which renamed the country the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, mandated new elections. Chávez won a new term, 2000–2006, and the Constitution allowed him to stand for consecutive re-election. The stage was set for deeper changes when the 2000–2005 Congress granted Chávez decree powers. In November 2001, Chávez decreed 49 laws, the most controversial of which increased state control over the oil sector and called for a land reform that implied a new property rights regime. The expansion of state jurisdiction, coupled with Chávez's use of decree powers, stirred heated opposition.

Established interest groups, rather than parties, served as the main vehicles for channeling anti-government sentiment. With the business federation FEDECAMARAS and the country's main labor organization *Centro de Trabajadores Venezolanos* (CTV) speaking for organized anti-Chávez forces, party politicians moved to the background. The media played a major role in stirring up opposition sentiment. In the 1998 presidential elections, private media had tended to favor Chávez editorially once he became the frontrunner. By 2001, though, most had pivoted to a hard anti-government editorial line and coverage seemed in step with the views of opposition-aligned civil society groups.

By the end of 2001, instead of a governing party competing with opposition parties, Chávez, a charismatic leader representing a new coalition, competed with traditional civil society interest groups that represented the old guard. With communication between government and opposition closed off, politics moved from institutions to the streets.

NOT ONE STEP BACK: THE COUP AND DEEPENED POLARIZATION, 2002

In early 2002, mass demonstrations, both for and against the government, consumed the country. By March of that year, rhetoric heightened to the point that coup rumors became highly plausible. On April 11, CTV President Carlos Ortega headed an opposition march in Caracas to an office of *Petróleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA), the state oil company that came to symbolize the battle for political control over Venezuela's oil-dependent economy. With the slogan, "*Ni un paso atrás*" (not one step back), Ortega called for the march to continue downtown to Miraflores, the presidential palace. With the march headed for Miraflores, a coup went into motion. In the blocks around Miraflores, a firefight between government supporters and the opposition left 19 dead. On April 12 at 4 a.m., Chávez was taken from Miraflores palace to a distant military base. Soon after, the President of FEDECAMARAS, Pedro Carmona, appeared on television to announce an interim government. It lasted only 24 hours.

Pro-Chávez military leaders, primarily in the Army, reacted when Carmona named a government composed of conservative officials and moved to dissolve all institutions associated with the 1999 Constitution. Without the support of top army officials, the Carmona government collapsed. The next day, April 13, found Carmona fleeing Miraflores, the pro-Chávez wings of the army in command, and *chavista* demonstrators descending upon the palace. The stage was set for Chávez's return. By early morning, April 14, the army returned Chávez to Miraflores by helicopter for a hero's welcome from the emotional crowd of supporters gathered outside the palace.

A FATEFUL FACE-OFF: THE CHÁVEZ GOVERNMENT AND THE MEDIA

The role the media had played during the coup generated intense controversy. *Chavistas* accused private television stations of slanting news coverage to favor the opposition. They claimed that the media presented pro-government demonstrations in a highly negative light while portraying anti-government demonstrations in a highly positive light.

Two examples were frequently cited. First, television stations broadcast footage appearing to implicate *chavistas* in an ambush of peaceful marchers, a charge that was undermined by subsequent investigations. Second, *chavistas* expressed outrage at television stations effectively for "blacking out" news unfavorable to the Carmona government. For instance, on April 13, while Carmona's government was falling apart and *chavista*s were descending upon Miraflores to call for Chávez's return, television stations replayed American movies, soap operas, and sports clips. One television's news ticker read: "Venezuela recovered its Liberty. Chávez resigned." By and large, print media followed suit. In both their news coverage and editorial line, major newspapers strongly favored the opposition. To *chavistas*, private media's news coverage during the failed coup seemed part of a right-wing plot to topple the government.

THE OIL STRIKE AND REFERENDUM, 2002–2004

Despite a brief moment of reconciliation after Chávez returned to power, by the end of 2002, the opposition, then organized under the "Democratic Coordinator" umbrella group, mounted a renewed effort to

pressure Chávez to resign. It orchestrated a mass work stoppage in which both white- and blue-collar petroleum workers walked off the job—the so-called *paro petrolero*. The work stoppage spread to other sectors of the economy, including food and goods production. But the government was able to restart oil production and develop alternative channels for goods production and distribution.

Next, the opposition turned to the Constitution's Article 72, which allowed for a referendum to recall a president once past the midway point of his or her term in office. After delays in verifying signatures on the recall petition, the vote took place on August 15, 2004. By then, oil prices had begun a steady climb, which enabled Chávez to implement a signature social assistance programs—*Las misiones*, block-level programs for basic health, education, and food services. The *misiones* galvanized support for the president, and the initiative to recall him was defeated 59–41 percent.

That same year, the Chávez government reshaped the media landscape on two fronts. First, the National Assembly passed a Law of Social Responsibility for Television and Radio (*Resorte* Law). It included bans on vulgar language and images of "psychological" or physical violence during general viewing hours (7 a.m.–11 p.m.). It also increased the penalties for slander or statements impugning the honor of public officials. Second, the government began funding community radio and alternative television outlets. By the end of 2004 there were approximately 300 of these new outlets. The government also started a new state channel, *Vive TV*, and bankrolled *Telesur*, an international channel that Chávez hoped would compete with *CNN en español*.

The failure of the 2004 referendum had split the "Democratic Coordinator" group into factions arguing over whether the vote had been clean or fraudulent. Ultimately, the claims of vote fraud prevailed within the opposition parties and led them, at the last minute, to abstain from the campaign for the 2005 parliamentary elections. The opposition allowed pro-government parties to win complete control of the 2005–2010 Congress. A year later, the opposition returned to electoral participation for the 2006 presidential contest. Chávez easily defeated opposition candidate Manuel Rosales, 63–37 percent, setting a historical record with 7.3 million votes. His victory speech unveiled plans to build "Twenty-First Century Socialism" in Venezuela.

The victory had coincided with a major geopolitical event—an increase in the price of oil. Armed with windfall revenues, Chávez embarked on three ambitious initiatives: the nation-wide expansion of the *Consejos Comunales*, an experiment in state-funded grassroots governance; the construction of a Socialist political party, the *Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (PSUV), a major change for pro-Chávez forces that heretofore lacked an organizational structure; and the expanded jurisdiction of the state over the economy, a process marked by nationalizations in the telecommunications, electricity, and energy sectors.

Concurrently, Chávez promoted a constitutional reform to be submitted for public approval through a referendum. Most notably, it proposed eliminating term limits for the presidency but maintaining them for governors and mayors. Held in December 2007, just a year after the presidential election, the referendum encountered a fatigued electorate. A significant segment of Chávez's 2006 election coalition failed to turn out and the "No" vote won by a slim margin, 1.5 percent, delivering Chávez his first electoral defeat. The surprising result lifted spirits in the opposition. Indeed, the outcome held out the promise of competitive elections. Yet the loss did not slow Chávez down. He repackaged some of the proposals in the constitutional reform as individual laws, which the pro-government

National Assembly summarily passed.

RESHAPING THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE: THE CHÁVEZ GOVERNMENT AND RCTV

Television returned to the center of national political discussion in May 2007 when CONATEL denied Radio Caracas Television's (RCTV) request for license renewal, sparking public demonstrations. RCTV, which had opened in 1953, enjoyed a strong following among two groups: average Venezuelans who tuned in for the channel's popular soap operas and anti-Chávez sectors that turned to its news programs for hardline criticism of the government. Press freedom groups took issue with the non-renewal decision that seemed to have only targeted RCTV. Previously, CONATEL license renewals had tended to be routine. Other private television stations that had broadcast highly unfavorable coverage of the government during the 2002 coup, but changed their tone afterwards, saw their licenses renewed for five years. In addition, President Chávez had injected his personal views about how CONATEL should rule, which seemed to have influenced the decision. Despite the protest, a new state-funded, public service channel, Social Venezuelan Television (*Televisora Venezolana Social*, TVES), replaced RCTV on the national dial. RCTV continued to broadcast in Venezuela, but via satellite and cable and through its Miami-based international channel RCTV International.

A new chapter in this dispute began in January 2010, when CONATEL expanded the jurisdiction of the 2004 *Resorte* Law. The Commission reviewed cable broadcasters' content to determine whether 70 percent or more of their content and operations could be considered "national," that is, pertaining directly to Venezuela. If that were the case, the channel would come under the *Resorte* Law's regulations. CONATEL ruled RCTV International's content did offer mostly "national" coverage, and that it thus had to air *las cadenas*, the national government-sponsored broadcasts.

EXPANDED EXECUTIVE POWERS AND THE OPPOSITION'S RESURGENCE, 2008–2010

Regional elections to choose mayors and governors marked 2008, and opposition candidates successfully built on the momentum gained from defeating Chávez's 2007 constitutional reform. Their candidates won key posts in metropolitan Caracas, defeating prominent *chavista* officials campaigning as members of the PSUV political party. The opposition had become a force to be reckoned with, but it was still competing on an uneven field. Constraints on its ability to compete emerged on several fronts. In particular, seven months before the regional elections, the Comptroller's office published a list of politicians accused of corruption. Existing legislation authorized that office to notify the National Electoral Council (CNE) of citizens whose public activities involved irregularities, and who therefore should be ineligible to hold public office, in effect banning them.

The list of ineligibles comprised mostly opposition politicians, including Leopoldo López, a rising leader with a national profile. López appealed the administrative ruling through the courts but lost. The case became emblematic of restrictions on the freedom to run for public office.

Meanwhile, Chávez expanded the central government's jurisdiction over the economy and its influence over elected sub-national authorities. In August 2008, Chávez nationalized the *Banco de Venezuela*, a subsidiary of Spanish banking group *Grupo Santander*. He also used decree powers to create so-called civilian militias, rename the armed forces as Bolivarian, and pass legislation that allowed him to appoint regional vice-presidents who would oversee territories and sectors previously under the jurisdiction of elected governors. In 2009, Chávez returned to the issue of term limits. Unlike the 2007 proposed constitutional reform that would only have eliminated presidential term limits, Chávez now proposed an amendment that would ban term limits for all elected offices.

The Constitution's rule banning direct reelection to a third term made this issue an urgent one for *chavismo*. Under the 1999 Constitution, Chávez would be compelled to leave office in 2012. Thus, the referendum on the amendment turned into something of a plebiscite on Chávez's rule. With the stakes raised, pro-Chávez mobilization reached high levels. The amendment passed 55 to 45 percent, and it seemed that Chávez would remain president for the foreseeable future.

Parliamentary elections shaped the 2010 political agenda. Before the elections, the CNE reformed the Electoral Law to put 60 percent of seats under a first-past-the-post system of selecting candidates instead of the proportional, closed-list system. The winners of opposition primary elections ran united under the electoral coalition *Mesa de la Unidad Democrática* (Coalition for Democratic Unity, MUD). With the "unity" strategy, MUD candidates won 65 seats out of 165, enough to block the government from a two-thirds majority. The shares of the popular vote, though, revealed a more evenly divided electorate. Chávez's PSUV party won 48 percent of the vote, the MUD 47 percent, and small parties took the rest.

In June 2011, President Chávez startled the nation with the announcement that he had cancer. The diagnosis called into question whether Chávez could stand for reelection the following year. But in July 2012, he claimed to be cancer free. The Governor of Miranda state, Henrique Capriles, won the opposition primaries and ran a strong campaign, sparking enthusiasm and attracting some new voters to the MUD coalition. But, with the government undertaking a massive public spending campaign and Chávez running for what seemed likely to be his final term, the president won reelection on October 6 with 55 percent of the vote. The euphoria among *chavistas* quickly turned to gloom, however, as Chávez announced a month later that he would undergo a new round of chemotherapy treatment in Cuba, raising major doubts about the future of his movement.

CHÁVEZ'S DEATH AND MADURO'S ELECTION

Chávez's renewed health crisis ushered in a period of extreme political uncertainty and constitutional crisis. In December 2012, Chávez shuffled foreign minister Nicolás Maduro to the vice-presidency and then named Maduro his successor, which addressed *chavismo*'s crisis of leadership succession but posed other challenges. The timing of Chávez's death, on March 5, 2013, brought a constitutional crisis. According to the Constitution, Chávez should have been sworn in for his new term on January 10. But Vice-President Maduro announced that Chávez was still receiving medical treatment in Havana and would not travel to Caracas by that date. On January 9, the Supreme Court, under the principle of "administrative continuity," ruled that the sitting government could continue exercising its functions without the incumbent president going through a formal inauguration in the National Assembly. The Court's decision also affected the procedures for naming an interim president if Chávez passed away, as seemed imminent. An interim president would hold office while the electoral authority organized snap elections. The Constitution's Article 233 provides for two scenarios: the President of the National Assembly becomes interim president if the elected president becomes incapacitated before the new term begins, while the vice-president, an unelected official, becomes interim president if the president is incapacitated during the first four years of his term. With its ruling nullifying the need for a formal inauguration, the Supreme Court effectively decided that Chávez began his new term on January 10, even though he was hospitalized in Havana at the time. Throughout the crisis, government officials maintained that Chávez was in control of his mental faculties and still exercising presidential power.

The Supreme Court's decision put Article 233's second scenario into motion. Vice-President Maduro, not National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello, became interim president on March 5, the day government officials declared Chávez's "complete absence" following his death. On March 8, Maduro was sworn in as interim president to hold office while the electoral authority organized elections. On April 14, 2013, Maduro faced off against 2012 presidential candidate Henrique Capriles. Amidst accumulating signs of economic slowdown, the election proved to be a very tight contest. Upon tallying the votes, the electoral authority declared Maduro the winner by a margin of 1.5 percent. Capriles rejected the results as fraudulent, and called for a recount. Heated public demonstrations after the vote threatened to turn violent. But, before major episodes of political violence broke out, Capriles called off a rally scheduled to end in downtown Caracas, a *chavista* stronghold. The electoral authority reviewed the vote and Capriles filed a complaint through the court system. Neither process convinced Capriles the election had not been stolen.

Six months after his razor-thin victory, Maduro faced a new electoral challenge: the December 2013 municipal elections. Capriles raised the stakes by describing these local elections as a national plebiscite on Maduro's government. Meanwhile, the deteriorating state of the economy and growing shortages in basic consumer goods emerged as the biggest election issues. A little over a month before the election, Maduro forced consumer goods prices down to what the government called "just prices," using the National Guard to assist state regulators in enforcing the mark. This coincided with the start of the Christmas season and boosted the government's popularity just when the opposition seemed to have gained the edge. On December 8, which Maduro had declared the "Day of Loyalty and Love to the Supreme Commander Hugo Chávez and the Fatherland," pro-government candidates won 54 percent of the vote. The outcome was an important victory for Maduro and a serious setback for Capriles, whose argument that the government lacked popular legitimacy was undermined. His leadership of the opposition came into doubt.

A NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

In 2010 the government had amended the 2004 *Resorte* Law covering the media, banning content that could "incite or promote hatred . . . foment citizens' anxiety or alter public order . . . disrespect authorities . . . encourage assassination . . . or constitute war propaganda." These changes paved the way for a more active state role in regulating media. Alleging that "democratic security" was at stake, CONATEL cited private television and print media for violations of the *Resorte* Law and, in some instances, levied heavy fines. In August 2013, two private newspapers with national circulation, *El Nacional* and *Tal Cual*, were fined one percent of their 2009 gross incomes for publishing photographs in 2010 that sought to expose what they said were terrible conditions at the Caracas morgue. In 2011, CONATEL fined television station Globovisión $2.1 million dollars for the channel's coverage of a prison riot. The Commission decided that Globovisión's report "promoted hatred and intolerance for political reasons." In October 2013, the attorney general's office opened an investigation into the newspaper *Diario 2001* for its reporting on gasoline shortages. Earlier that year, two important media outlets had been sold: the Globovisión news channel and the *Cadena Capriles* newspaper conglomerate. Within months, a number of prominent editors and reporters at each outlet resigned their positions, alleging editorial pressure.

The year 2014 started with the murder of a former beauty queen and soap opera star, and her ex-husband, in a highway car-jacking incident. While the incident garnered international media attention because of the woman's celebrity, the crime represented something to which ordinary Venezuelans could relate. In response, Maduro called a meeting with all elected governors, including Capriles, to discuss citizen security. At the meeting, Capriles shook Maduro's hand, a gesture that seemed to confer legitimacy on the government. Coordination between national and local level officials increased somewhat, but soon fell apart when another round of heated demonstrations shook the country.

Two opposition leaders, Leopoldo López and María Corina Machado, promoted a campaign challenging the government. They called their effort "*La Salida*," which can mean the Exit or the Solution. They called for mass public demonstrations against the general state of affairs in the country, and the drive gathered steam on the heels of news that government authorities had repressed student protests in the interior states Mérida and Táchira. The campaign's largest demonstration took place on February 12, National Youth Day. López led a rally that marched to downtown Caracas. As the rally dispersed, shooting broke out and left three people dead.

Six days later, authorities detained López for trial on charges of inciting violence, an action that spurred violent demonstrations throughout February and March. Students, opposition loyalists, and politicians participated in rallies all over the country. Government security forces cracked down on the protests, targeting student leaders who were sentenced to jail or placed under house arrest. The protests eventually slowed and halted in mid-April, after the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Vatican helped to broker talks between the government and MUD leadership. The talks helped to calm tensions and to move political action from the street to institutional negotiations. But, ultimately, the government and opposition failed to agree on mutual concessions. In mid-May, the MUD's Executive Secretary, Ramón Guillermo Aveledo, announced that the opposition was leaving the talks, dissatisfied with the government's unwillingness to negotiate. The talks remain frozen.

Economic issues moved to the forefront of national debate during the summer, when shortages of basic goods became dramatic. The shortages extended from food and hygiene goods to medical supplies and automobile replacement parts. Signs of economic recession and the increasingly acute shortages of basic goods caused a major drop in the government's popularity. At 2014's close Maduro's popularity was in the low 20s.

Also in 2014, the sale of the 105-year-old *El Universal* newspaper gave rise to renewed concern about pluralism in the media landscape. On the heels of ownership changes at Globovisión and the *Cadena Capriles* media group, the sale of *El Universal* generated fresh worries about the transparency of media ownership and prospects for balanced news coverage under new ownership.

III. APPROACHES TO DETERMINING MEDIA BIAS

This study is organized around one central research question: in a politically polarized Venezuela, did Globovisión offer balanced coverage of the most politically relevant events during its first year under new ownership? We examine the question through the lens of bias.

The terms balance and bias are empirically related but analytically distinct, with subtle but important differences. A literal understanding of balance can refer to an equitable amount of coverage of a political party or position. Alone, however, such an assessment does not provide a thorough analysis of the quality of treatment given to competing groups or views. Consider, for example, a two-party system in which the two sides receive equal amounts of news coverage but the quality of the coverage varies dramatically, with one party consistently cast in a negative light. In this sense, the issue is not balance, but how praise and criticism are allotted. To capture the fact that balanced coverage is more a matter of the extent to which favorable coverage is provided equally than the extent to which, for example, two parties receive equal amounts of on-air coverage, this study turns to the issue of bias.

There are multiple ways to define bias and different types of bias. We chose to examine it in terms of the degree of slant, a concept that calls attention to the extent to which coverage is favorable or unfavorable. It is important to emphasize that bias may exist to different degrees. For example, some studies see bias when "a systematic slant" exists (Waldman & Devitt 1998). In our terms, this would be an example of a strong bias. Different amounts of favorable, unfavorable, and neutral coverage may exist, which raises the possibility of strong, weak, or moderate biases (Moriarty & Popovich 1991). Thus, bias, as used here, is not a negative pole of an imagined standard of complete objectivity. Rather, it refers to a judgment about the character of news coverage. Similarly, the extent of slant is our main dimension, and observations about favorability serve as the main measures of whether coverage is slanted and to what degree.

To explore the nature of any bias that may exist in Globovisión's coverage, it is important to explain how we empirically trace favorability. What are the links between coverage and favorability? What aspects of coverage do we observe to determine favorability? What manifestations of bias do we examine?

We consider three potential manifestations that provide a fairly comprehensive examination of bias in terms of favorability. First is the visibility of actors—their appearance or on-air salience. Second is the presentation and introduction of topics—how the news is framed. Third is the depiction of the actors in the story, which refers to the main content of the story. In the second and third manifestations of potential bias, both visual and non-verbal aspects are assessed along with verbal elements. Thus, in analyzing visibility, we ask how much coverage government representatives receive compared to opposition representatives and whether there is greater salience for one or the other. We look at how topics are framed by asking whether the visual and verbal presentations favor one side or another. Finally, we ask whether the visual and verbal depictions of actors in the story treat them favorably or unfavorably.

A COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCHING BIAS

This study's comparative framework enables us to examine what factors may affect the appearance of bias. We review news coverage over four temporally separate critical junctures to ask whether coverage becomes more or less balanced over time and across the critical junctures. Since each critical juncture introduced different issues, did any appearance of bias change in frequency or in intensity? Additionally, the study examines three programs in depth, including weekly news programming, week in review (Sunday) programming, and an interview program. The question here is straightforward: if there is any bias, does it vary by program type?

RESEARCHING ON MEDIA BIAS AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Media bias has long been a major area of research in political communication. Research on bias stems from recognition that media play a significant role in shaping public opinion and political outcomes. This role is inherent to the news medium: to inform is to make an impact. The notion of media bias refers to issues specifically linked to the format and content of news messages.

Two fundamental questions are at the heart of inquiry into bias. First, do media outlets present news content that lacks objectivity and balance? Second, under what circumstances is bias likely to emerge? Answering these questions is not as straightforward as it may seem.

Many attempts to measure bias employ a single or comparative case framework. Such studies have found evidence of ideological biases (Zeldes, Fico, Capenter, & Diddi 2008; Bozell & Baker 1990; Shoemaker & Reese 1991) where media outlets favored a political position. These and similar case studies generally have two strengths. They focus on the local context of the media landscape, and they can capture the specific ways in which media bias is likely to become manifest in light of political circumstances.

Encompassing studies tell a different story. A major overview by D'Alessio and Allen (2000) analyzed the findings of 59 studies of political bias in the U.S. media during presidential elections.[5] These studies examined bias in both print and television outlets. For all print outlets surveyed, D'Alessio and Allen found no significant biases. For television news they found a small degree of coverage and statement biases but judged them statistically insignificant.[6]

Strictly speaking, their study does not disprove the thesis that media exhibit systematic bias. Rather, it underscores a point commonly made in the literature on bias: because of the lack of agreement on how to define bias, the fact that much of the research examines different types of bias and that some research also takes into account the factor of audience reception, it is very difficult to answer definitively whether ideological or partisan media bias exists. In short, growth in the literature on media bias has resulted in a complex field of research marked by multiple lines of inquiry but no underlying strong consensus.

TWO FRAMEWORKS: NEWS PRODUCTION AND NEWS RECEPTION

There are two dominant frameworks for examining the sources and mechanisms of bias. Roughly, one considers news production and the other, news reception. The news production approach examines the individual ideologies of news professionals, the institutional structure of the outlet, and the journalistic principles that determine newsworthiness. The news reception approach posits media bias to be dependent on viewers' comprehension of news. Therefore, bias is strongly influenced by the audiences' prevailing political beliefs (Ayton & Tumber 2001).

Within the news production approach, the question of agenda-setting is central. Agenda-setting theory refers to both the salience and framing of news messages. In other words, audiences acquire much of their views about the relative importance of political events and the characteristics of political actors from the news content, as well as how the media presents the news (Graber 2005; McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver 1997; Soroka 2003). The theme of salience focuses on the process of news selection. This means that audiences learn about a particular issue and about how much importance it should be given based on whether or not it is covered and on how much attention it receives (McCombs & Shaw 1972). The theme of framing focuses on how stories are structured through verbal and nonverbal information. This means that the media both informs audiences "what to think about" and shapes "how to think about" a particular subject (McCombs 2005).

Media reception studies examine the role of perceptions, attitudes, and behavior of audience members in their responses to news content. More specifically, reception research on media bias considers the influences of pre-existing beliefs and cognitive processes on an audience's

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[5] An encompassing study, also known as a meta-analysis study, is based on the review and aggregation of existing research on a given topic in order to utilize a larger sample size and make broader knowledge claims than individual studies offer (D'Alessio & Allen 2000, 2012).

[6] The coverage bias was detected in terms of the time allotted to Democratic candidates (52.7 percent) in relation to Republican candidates (47.3 percent). Statistically, this difference is small and most certainly would go undetected by the audiences (D'Alessio & Allen 2010: 146–47).

perceptions of ideological bias and partisanship in the news (Arpan & Raney 2003; Vallone, Ross, & Lepper 1985; Watts, Domke, Shah, & Fan 1999). This type of bias perception stemming from audiences' opinions, beliefs, and ideological dispositions has been termed the "hostile media" effect (Gunther & Schimitt 2006; Vallone et al. 1985).

Studies of the hostile media effect suggest that it involves two distinct mechanisms—one based on opinions and the other on cognition. With regard to the former, audiences evaluate media messages in light of their own partisanship and what they consider a fair or accurate portrayal of the story in relation to their position. With regard to cognition, pre-existing beliefs tend to affect how people interpret media and what aspects of a particular story they retain and recall (Vallone et al. 1985). In a widely cited experimental study, Vallone and colleagues (1985) found that, after viewing identical samples of news coverage of a conflict situation, two partisan groups on opposite sides of the issue evaluated the news segments as biased in favor of the other side. The responses suggest that the participants watched "different" shows—in the sense that they recalled different information and disagreed on the nature of the content viewed.

Whether due to partisanship or to varying levels of attention during exposure (Chaffee & Schleuder 1986), even "neutral" news stories on controversial issues may be perceived as biased. This is especially true in polarized contexts marked by extreme degrees of partisanship and high tensions (Watts et al. 1999: 147; see also Gunther & Liebhart 2006). The main conclusion of reception research on media bias bears emphasizing: Whether or not biases can be found in the media content, partisans will nonetheless perceive some degree of bias. As Gunther and Liebhart (2006: 464) contend, "partisans on all sides of an issue will be systematically likely to criticize mass media for presenting unfavorable, slanted or biased news coverage."

THREE TYPES OF BIAS: GATEKEEPING, COVERAGE, AND STATEMENT

The focus of this study is on potential biases found in news content. Consequently, we are generally working within the news production framework. Two concepts identified earlier—salience and framing—underlie much of the research on news production and point our research toward the important mechanisms that may generate bias. D'Alessio and Allen (2000: 135–6) identify three types of media bias: "gatekeeping bias," "coverage bias," and "statement bias." In our terms, the three key processes are the selection of news stories and topics, the use and visibility of sources, and the favorability of verbal and visual presentation.

Gatekeeping or selectivity bias essentially concerns "information or knowledge control" (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien 1972: 42). Research addressing gatekeeping bias focuses on the choice of news topics to cover. A narrowing of topics is inherent to the industry. The professional routine of journalists and news producers requires them to make decisions not only about which specific news items are relevant—according to a set of industry values and norms—but which ones are deserving of more coverage. A number of other possible stories will necessarily be left out. The selection of topics and construction of news stories may be influenced by the corporate structure of media outlets, internal pressures from owners and executives, and market incentives (Entman 2007; Uscinski 2014; D'Alessio & Allen 2000), or by the political beliefs of media professionals (Levite 1996, in D'Alessio & Allen 2000). Gatekeeping can filter the range of potential stories even before editorial decisions about newsworthiness.

Donohue et al. (1972: 43) suggest that, beyond the news selection processes, gatekeeping biases can also be found in the "shaping, display, timing, withholding or repetition of entire messages or message components." Decisions made in the process of producing, constructing, and displaying a news story lie at the core of the gatekeeping process. For example, how many minutes should be devoted to a particular story? In what order should it appear in the broadcast? Such questions are pivotal because the context can determine for audiences which items are more newsworthy than others (Entman 2007). This fashioning of the news can also be linked with bias.

The second type of bias addressed by researchers is coverage bias. Generally, this is measured as the amount of coverage granted to actors on different sides of a particular issue (Stempel & Windhauser 1989; Stovall 1985). Analyses of this kind also identify ideological imbalances in the selection of sources, often relying on government officials (Croteau & Hoynes 1994; Reese, Grant, & Danielian 1994), and on experts and other spokespeople (Covert & Washburn 2007; Salwen 1995; Welsh, Fenwick, & Roberts 1997). In highly polarized political contexts, for example, scholars consider that "half the coverage should be accorded to one side and half to the other, and that deviations from this pattern are consistent with a coverage bias of some kind" (D'Alessio & Allen 2000: 136). Such coverage bias can be tracked quantitatively, as has been done in this study of Globovisión.

Finally, the third type of bias, statement bias, refers to newsmakers' explicit or implicit insertion of their opinions into the news. Though it can vary in format, it is generally defined as a measure of whether the coverage is "favorable" or "unfavorable" (Hopmann, Van Aelst, & Legnante 2011), or "positive" or "negative" (Robinson & Sheehan 1983). Analysis of statement bias[7] generally involves identifying the use and frequency of positive, neutral, or negative statements (Niven 2003). In addition, facial expressions, images, and other visuals included in the story are understood to play a role in determining the existence of statement biases. Nonverbal cues can be particularly relevant to communicate emotions (Banning & Coleman 2009; Ekman 1972), and research has shown that these cues have as much influence as the verbal content, particularly on how political actors are perceived (see also Graber 1990; Richmond, McCroskey, & Payne 1991).

LIVE COVERAGE

Live reporting, now ubiquitous in contemporary news coverage, can also be a source of news bias. The growing availability of technology, the search for faster information delivery, and the attempt to bring audiences "closer" to the scene have driven the increase in live reporting (Upshaw 1994; Tuggle & Huffman 2001, 1999), sometimes at the expense of news values (Smith & Becker 1989). Scholars are concerned that in choosing to report a particular story live, broadcasters signal that the issue deserves greater attention than others (Tuggle & Huffman 2001: 337; see also Morris & Nydahl 1983; Weaver & Wilhoit 1996). Besides making the event more salient, broadcasting live from the scene may affect the framing and accuracy of the story, as reporters have less time to gather and present information. Scholars suggest that live coverage may also pressure leaders to respond instantly,

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[7] For studies that addressed media bias through examination of facial expressions of newscast, see Efron (1971); Ekman (1972); Friedman, DiMatteo, & Mertz (1980); Friedman, Mertz, & DiMatteo (1980); Babad (1999); Babad & Peer (2010); D'Alessio & Allen (2000).

"circumvent[ing] established avenues of political communication" and making "the process of governing more reactive than deliberative" (Tuggle & Huffman 2001: 336; see also Beschloss & Talbott 1993; Friedland 1992).

While the Internet has considerably affected news delivery, the study of live broadcasting remains a significant aspect of political communication research. This is particularly true for Latin America, where television is still a major source of information (IBOPE 2013).[8] Despite increasing levels of Internet penetration, broadcast television remains a central medium for news reporting and political communication.

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[8] For a comparison of rates of penetration across mediums in Latin American countries, see also *Latin Link. Media Penetration in Latin America*. Available at http://latinlink.usmediaconsulting.com/2013/08/media-penetration-in-latin-america/ (Accessed on 27 March 2015).

IV. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GLOBOVISION'S NEWS AND OPINION COVERAGE

This section of the report begins by outlining the content analysis methods used in the study. First, it operationalizes different indicators of political bias. Second, it discusses the selection of cases for quantitative analysis. This includes a discussion of the "critical junctures" chosen as the focus of study, the news and opinion shows of interest, and the types of stories and interviews within these broadcasts that are deemed relevant for being coded for analysis. Third, it outlines the method of data collection, which entailed the following five steps: developing the codebook and coding form, training coders, conducting pilot tests of validity and reliability, repeating intercoder reliability tests, and assigning coders to review specific broadcasts.

Measuring Political Bias

A. ACCESS TO MEDIA

The first dimension of political bias that is measured through the content analysis is "visibility." Much research on media balance has focused on the visibility of actors affiliated or associated with different parties or political factions (Hopmann et al. 2011). This form of bias is also referred to as "coverage bias," and is defined by "the physical amount of coverage each side of some issue receives" (Stempel 1969; Stempel & Windhauser 1989; Stovall 1985). Scholars generally contend that "in a two-party electoral system, it is reasonable to assume that half the coverage should be accorded to one side and half to the other, and that deviations from this pattern are consistent with a coverage bias" (D'Allessio & Allen 2000: 136). This study proceeds from this premise to determine whether and to what extent greater visibility is awarded to social and political actors identified with the government of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela or with the opposition.

Determining visibility requires four steps. First, we identify the first four actors that appear in each story. Second, we identify up to two affiliations of each actor[9] and categorize the type of actor. The types of actors include: 1) non-elected official or government bureaucrat; 2) current or former

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[9] These affiliations could include the political parties or government agencies the individuals are representing, the institutions where they work, the cities where they hold office, and so forth.

elected representative; 3) candidate for office or surrogate; 4) civil society group or representative; 5) issue expert, pundit, or journalist; 6) member of the citizenry; 7) private sector representative; 8) political party militant; 9) other. Third, each actor's level of "visibility" is recorded. Those who are simply mentioned are given a value of "1"; those who are quoted are counted as "2"; those who are pictured and mentioned or quoted but who do not speak on air (e.g., image-bites) are coded as "3"; and those who are shown while speaking or being interviewed are coded as "4." Finally, the amount of time that each actor is visible is recorded and used as a second indicator of visibility.

Using this information, we can compare the level and length of visibility of different types of actors and of actors with different affiliations. In addition to comparing the visibility of explicitly political actors associated with the opposition and the government, we compare the visibility of nominally objective—or disinterested—actors (such as pundits, experts, or members of the public) who represent positions favorable or unfavorable to the government. This relates to the second key goal of the inquiry into the issue of bias: assessing the favorability of coverage.

B. FAVORABILITY OF ACTOR PORTRAYAL

To determine the second dimension of political bias, the favorability of actors presented in news coverage or interviewed with respect to the government or opposition, we measured several indicators. To classify the verbal favorability of actors, coders examined the *presentation* or *portrayal* of the actor in terms of what was said and then identified whether this was favorable to the government or not. The researchers coded this in terms of how each actor would perceive her or his portrayal. Verbal favorability was classified with reference to the way the hosts discussed the actor and his/her actions or, in the case of interviews, with how the actor presented him/herself.

Non-verbal actor favorability was coded based on terms of what was shown on the screen. This could include the gestures and facial expressions of the hosts in discussing the actor or the situation in which the actor was involved, the choice of images and video clips, and how the actor was visually presented during an interview.

Both the verbal and non-verbal favorability of the actors were coded as 1) favorable to the government's position; 2) unfavorable to the government's position; 3) neutral with respect to the government's position (i.e., supports NEITHER the government nor the opposition narrative); or 4) ambivalent, denoting a mix of both pro- and anti-government positions.

C. FAVORABILITY OF TOPIC PRESENTATION AND FRAMING

Another way we measure the favorability of news coverage focuses on how the topics covered in news stories and interviews are framed and presented by the hosts and the overall broadcast. Measuring this variable required two principal steps. First, coders identified at least one and up to four "subtopics"[10] per news story or interview segment. As a rule, a topic was only included if it was introduced by the host(s) or presented in a non-verbal way by the production of the broadcast itself. The exception to this general rule came when a topic was introduced by the guest, but was subsequently engaged and

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[10] See Appendix 2.

discussed by the host(s).

Second, once at least one subtopic was identified, coders assessed the verbal and non-verbal favorability given to each topic by the hosts and narrators. As with the coding of actor favorability, we classified topic presentation as favorable, unfavorable, neutral, or ambivalent vis a vis the government's position. Failure to interject with a pro-government counterargument in response to points made by an opposition representative was coded as neutral, rather than unfavorable. Interjection with counterarguments that balanced the overall presentation was viewed as "ambivalent" (i.e. playing devil's advocate). When presentations and interventions supported the government's position, this was coded as "favorable," and when they opposed it, they were coded as "unfavorable" (this was the case independently of whether the actors are pro-government, pro-opposition, or disinterested parties). For interviews, the verbal presentation of the topic was defined by the nature of the questions, statements, and arguments that introduced the discussion and moved it forward. For news stories, verbal presentation was defined by the way in which the host(s) introduced the topic, narrated throughout, interviewed people "on location," and so forth.

For the non-verbal presentation of each topic, topics introduced by hosts who had an indeterminate facial expression or did not make gestures that indicated support or rejection of claims being made, as well as those presented with innocuous images, were coded as neutral. Failure to show images that would undercut the government (or opposition) position was deemed neutral, rather than favorable/unfavorable. For interviews, the non-verbal presentation of the topic was determined based on the facial expressions and body language of the host when asking questions, making statements, and presenting arguments throughout the segment. For news stories, non-verbal presentation included the facial expressions, hand movements, and body language of hosts and narrators as well as the still and video images used to introduce the topic. This also included the way a story or interview was edited, including if an interview was cut off in a way that was favorable/unfavorable to the government position.[11]

D. GATEKEEPING BIAS

A third type of bias identified in the research literature is referred to as selectivity or gatekeeping bias. This includes decisions by television stations and programs on which news stories, interview guests, and topics to cover, when to cover them, and what questions to ask. Stories that receive coverage are selected from a much wider potential body of stories, guests are recruited from a universe of candidates, and topics that receive coverage or generate questions are chosen over others. By extension, the choice of what to select for coverage effectively deselects other topics (D'Alessio & Allen 2000). Gatekeeping functions as a means of "information or knowledge control" (Donohue et al. 1972: 42). In addition to decisions about selection, we understand gatekeeping *bias* to also include decisions about display, timing, and withholding of information (Donohue et al. 1972: 43).

To identify and quantify gatekeeping bias, our analysis estimated the share of total news and opinion broadcast hours among Globovisión's most popular shows (see below for discussion of

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[11] Such cuts do not impact the verbal presentation code, which was strictly based on what the hosts said.

the selection of shows) that was devoted to topics and sub-topics related to the four critical juncture periods.[12] Within each of the broadcasts analyzed, we selected for coding individual news stories that included topics relevant to each critical juncture. For each critical juncture period, we identified the number of stories, their length, and their placement in each broadcast sampled. In addition to identifying which stories and interview segments covered topics relevant to the critical junctures, our identification of sub-topics within each juncture allowed for a more refined estimate of the topics that were covered and those that were not.

Our ability to strictly identify the presence of gatekeeping bias was limited insofar as we lacked an objective baseline of what topics and stories were relevant for coverage and, crucially, what precise share of broadcast time and what precise placement of relevant stories and interviews was appropriate. That said, the estimation of a statistically valid share of broadcast time devoted to coverage of these topics provided a crucial first step toward identifying the degree to which Globovisión has provided sufficient coverage to the crucial issues of the day.

Case Selection

The selection of cases for analysis in this study occurs at several levels. First, we identified four "critical juncture" periods, ranging in length from four weeks to two months, that particularly exemplify the political polarization of the country. Second, we chose Globovisión's most watched news program and two most watched information and opinion programs as the focus of our analysis of coverage during these periods. Third, within each critical juncture, we randomly selected 25 broadcasts of these three programs for content analysis. Fourth, we reviewed each of the sampled broadcasts, divided them into "stories" (for news programs) and "interview segments" (for interview/opinion programs), and determined if the topic(s) covered fell within the desired universe of analysis for the given critical juncture. What follows is a more detailed discussion of this process of case selection, sample selection, and data collection unit identification.

A. SELECTION OF THE CRITICAL JUNCTION PERIODS

This study assesses the extent to which Globovisión meets its goal of providing balanced reporting and analysis of Venezuelan politics. This is particularly challenging, given the deep divisions in the country between *chavismo* and the opposition not only about the best direction for the country, but also about the underlying facts. It is in this context that we aim to understand the relative balance of Globovisión's coverage of Venezuelan politics in general since late 2013.

Rather than randomly select sample broadcasts of Globovisión's news and analysis over the course of a whole year, we chose instead to sample from key, critical juncture periods. While this might make our analysis less useful for understanding the nature of Globovisión's coverage in times of relative continuity and calm, these are arguably few and far between in contemporary Venezuela.

In addition to representing critically important moments during the network's first year under new ownership, each of the four periods chosen represents a different set of topics and issues

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[12] The junctures are discussed above and elaborated in Appendices 2 and 3.

across which Venezuelan politics is particularly polarized. We chose to focus on these junctures because they are moments of inflection characterized by high degrees of polarization and as such represent the kinds of moments when the significance of the media's voice is amplified, and thus when the provision of balanced coverage is especially important. We also focus our analysis on coverage of these events and topics because they are microcosms of the main political tensions and issues of contention that characterize political polarization in Venezuela.

Thus, the selection of these four junctures is important not only because they represent what we assessed to be the most important moments in Venezuelan politics from late 2013 through mid-2014, but also because this allowed us to assess coverage of a range of topics that were most salient during each period. While a simple random sample of broadcasts would have given this study a higher level of external validity—that is, provide a more pure representation of Globovisión's coverage of Venezuelan politics *in general*—this method would not have ensured a sufficient sample of broadcasts during these most critical periods of Venezuelan politics, nor of the most salient issues to generate statistically valid estimates. The methodology we chose makes possible statistically valid estimates of different types of bias during each period, while making possible comparisons of the station's coverage across periods and topics. We now turn to a brief description of the four periods that are the focus of this study.

1) The Municipal Elections Period (Nov. 9–Dec. 15, 2013)

Venezuela held municipal elections on December 8, 2013. The vote took place against a backdrop of high-intensity political contestation. The April 14, 2013 presidential elections saw opposition candidate Henrique Capriles reject the official outcome—a victory for President Maduro by 1.5 percent. After the opposition's appeal of the results failed to bear fruit, Capriles and the opposition turned their attention to the municipal elections.

Until November the opposition was ahead in the polls. With one month left before the elections and the all-important Christmas holiday looming afterwards, the government undertook policy measures that lowered prices at consumer goods stores. Government candidates won more mayoral offices than did the opposition, and nationally pro-government candidates won 6 percent more of the vote. In defeat, Capriles spoke on behalf of the opposition and complained of facing highly "unequal campaign conditions."

2) Street Demonstrations (Feb. 12–Mar. 21, 2014)

Venezuela experienced a wave of mostly student-led demonstrations from approximately January 23–March 21. The demonstrations originated in Táchira and Mérida (interior states on the western border with Colombia) and spread to Caracas (the capital) on February 12. They snowballed after opposition leader Leopoldo López was taken prisoner on February 18. The demonstrations took a variety of forms, from peaceful protest to more violent barricades and road blocks, and generated counter-demonstrations by government supporters. State security institutions responded with excessive force in some cases and in step with accepted standards of policing in others. The demonstrations dissipated toward the middle of March, with fatigue and state repression undercutting their momentum.

3) International Dimensions of Crisis (Mar. 25–May 14, 2014)

From March 25–May 14, Venezuela's political crisis moved to the international level, with dynamics playing out in two theaters. Within the region, UNASUR (the Union of South American Nations) and the Vatican served as the formal conveners of political talks between the government and the opposition. To facilitate these talks aimed at defusing the political crisis, UNASUR sent a delegation of foreign ministers from Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador and the Vatican operated through its Ambassador (*El Nuncio*) in Caracas. In the United States, meanwhile, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee took up the issue of human rights violations in Venezuela. The Committee held a high-profile committee meeting with the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheric Affairs to discuss proposed legislation for imposing targeted sanctions against Maduro government officials. The talks produced multiple rounds of discussion but yielded few concrete gains for alleviating the crisis. When the talks failed to produce concessions from the government on the issue of releasing high-profile political prisoners from jail, this increased the likelihood for actions by the Senate and the State department.

4) Shortages in Basic Goods (Aug. 7–29, 2014)

From August 7–August 29, Venezuela's intermittent problems with scarcity of foodstuffs and goods reached new heights. Beyond decreased availability of food, the crisis involved decreased availability of both over-the-counter and prescription medications and of medical supplies. Consequently, the situation at hospitals and medical clinics moved to the front and center of media discussion of the shortages. The government announced a major new policy measure to combat hoarding during this period. The acute shortages dissipated but underlying supply problems continued.

B. IDENTIFICATION OF NEWS AND OPINION PROGRAMS FOR STUDY

To further focus our analysis, we identified thirteen news or opinion programs that regularly covered contemporary political topics of interest to this study. Rather than randomly select broadcasts from these thirteen programs, however, we chose to focus on those with the highest viewership, while seeking representation of both traditional news programming and information and opinion (interview-based) programming. The programs chosen for this study were *Noticias Globovisión Estelar*, the network's flagship daily news show; *Aló Venezuela*, a weekly interview and news program; and *Vladimir a la Una*, a long-form interview program that airs every weekday.

We ranked the popularity of all thirteen shows with relevant political news content using the audience levels—number of individuals watching—for selected week-long periods within each juncture.[13] The thirteen shows were ranked based on the average number of viewers per broadcast-hour over the course of a selected week. We selected week-long periods since some shows aired every day and others only once a week. The "average" number of viewers for shows that only aired once a week—such as *Aló Venezuela*—was based on the per-hour average of that broadcast. The ranking of shows that aired every day was based on the average number of viewers per-broadcast-hour for all seven days.

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[13] No ratings data was available for the "Municipal Elections" period.

To determine the most popular shows during these periods, we focused on one-week periods from February 12th through 18th, April 1st through 7th, May 16th through 22nd, and August 7th through 14th. There were no ratings data available during the November–December 2013 juncture. After ranking the thirteen shows within each of the four one-week periods, we calculated the average of the four ranks. The most popular news show, and the most popular of all shows by a considerable margin, was *Noticias Globovisión Estelar* (avg. rank = 1.25), which airs from 9:00 to 10:30 p.m. every night. The two most popular information and opinion programs were *Aló Venezuela* (avg. rank = 4.25), which airs every Sunday, followed by *Vladimir a la Una* (avg. rank = 5), which airs every weekday.

C. SAMPLING OF BROADCASTS

The sampling frame was thus determined based on 1) the four week-long periods and 2) the three programs chosen for study based on viewership. From this, randomly selected twenty-five broadcasts within each period. This random selection was done using a three-step process in the OpenOffice Calc application. First, researchers listed all broadcasts of the three selected programs in chronological order over the entire period. Second, researchers used the random number generator function, "RAND()," which generates a random number between 0 and 1 for each broadcast. Third, researchers sorted all broadcasts in ascending order based on these random numbers and selected the first twenty-five broadcasts within each critical juncture. The sample included eight broadcasts of *Aló Venezuela*, sixty broadcasts of *Noticias Globovisión Estelar*, and thirty-two broadcasts of *Vladimir a la Una*.

D. DATA COLLECTION

Once the sample of broadcasts was selected as outlined above, each broadcast was divided into news stories or interview segments. These were the data collection units, as distinct from sampling units (Neuendorf 2002: 72). In addition to identifying the start and end time of each news story or interview segment, we identified whether each unit included discussion of a topic or subtopic relevant to the period under study (i.e. municipal elections, protests, international dimensions of the crisis, and shortages). Those stories and segments not covering a relevant topic were not coded for indicators of bias.

A detailed codebook was developed to generate the relevant data for the quantitative analysis on the framing of key topics by the hosts and the station, visibility of different types of actors, and the relative favorability of these actors' presentation and portrayal vis a vis the government's position. The codebook was developed, tested, and revised over several coder training sessions and group and individual pilot coding tests. The research team conducted a total of five independent coding pilot tests of a selection of news and opinion content from all of the Globovisión programs of interest within the periods of the study, but outside of the selected sample of broadcasts. After each of the first five pilot tests, the four coders met together with one or both of the lead researchers to review points of confusion, disagreement, and agreement, and to further refine the instrument and clarify the operationalization of the variables. Based on feedback from these meetings, the lead researchers made revisions to variables, their operationalization, and added clarifications with respect to how certain pieces of content should be coded. At this point the codebook and accompanying coding form were finalized (see Appendix 1).

After these independent, off-sample pilot tests were completed, the lead researchers conducted two paired-independent coding exercises using broadcasts that were sampled for the study. As acceptable levels of reliability had not yet been reached, pairs of coders met with each other to identify and reconcile any points of disagreement, and provide the lead researchers with finalized data for those broadcasts.[14] It was determined that reliability levels were sufficient to proceed to full, independent coding at this point, and the remaining 79 of 100 sampled broadcasts were assigned randomly to the four coders, based on the number of work hours each was free to dedicate each week. To calculate final reliability statistics, 15 broadcasts were coded by two coders. This reliability sample of 15 broadcasts consisted of 296 data collection units (stories or interview segments), 23 percent of the remaining data collection units in the sample.[15] Any disagreements between coders in the final reliability sample were reconciled by randomly selecting the codes of one of the coders for each variable (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken 2002: 601).

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[14] Importantly, the bulk of these disagreements are trivial in the sense that they are related to where in the coding spreadsheet a given coder lists a particular actor rather than disagreement about the type, visibility, or favorability of the actor to the government's position.

[15] Final reliability for the key variables was calculated using "ReCal: reliability calculation for the masses," created by Deen Freelon of American University, and are reported in Table A-1 in Appendix 5, Tables and Figures (see Freelon 2010).

V. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

We now present the analysis and findings regarding different types of bias in the news, information, and opinion broadcasts of Globovisión. The quantitative content analysis seeks to identify and measure bias reflected in visibility of pro-government and opposition voices and the presence of any favorable or unfavorable slant in the treatment, presentation, and framing of competing perspectives. In addition to this favorability dimension of bias, we examine a third type of bias, known as gatekeeping. We do this by using the data gathered to estimate the share of broadcast coverage that focused on key topics of national importance during each of the periods under study. The programs included in the sample were the most popular news program *Noticias Globovisión Estelar* and the two most popular opinion programs *Aló Venezuela* and *Vladimir a la Una*. These estimates provide evidence of whether Globovisión exercised bias in selecting topics to cover.

This section is divided into three parts. The first presents descriptive statistics on different measures of each dimension of bias (visibility, favorability, and gatekeeping). In addition, this part identifies variations in bias across the four discrete periods under study. The second part presents a comprehensive index of bias, which combines estimates of visibility and favorability bias, and identifies key factors associated with relatively more (and less) bias in favor of the government. The third and final subsection discusses implications of the results.

Indicators of Bias: Descriptive Statistics and Comparisons

### A. ACCESS TO MEDIA: VISIBILITY

The first set of estimates in this study identifies bias with respect to the access afforded to individuals associated with the opposition compared to those associated with the government and those who are not partisan. We used two distinct measures of "visibility." The first consisted of a scale of actor visibility, ranging from 1 to 4, with 4 being the highest

level of visibility and 1 being the lowest.[16] The second indicator of visibility measured the amount of time (in minutes) that each individual actor is "visible" (i.e., is mentioned or discussed, quoted, shown in images, and mentioned or shown while speaking).

To identify the presence of any partisan bias, we classified the individuals appearing in stories or being interviewed as pro-government partisans, pro-opposition partisans, or nonpartisan.[17] We defined partisanship narrowly, such that actors were only considered partisan insofar as they directly participated in electoral politics in Venezuela. Thus, individuals such as U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden or Bolivian President Evo Morales were not classified as partisan, nor were actors from such organizations as the National Association of Journalists, the National Electoral Council (CNE), or unaffiliated political analysts.

*Figure 1. Visibility Scale by Actor Partisanship*
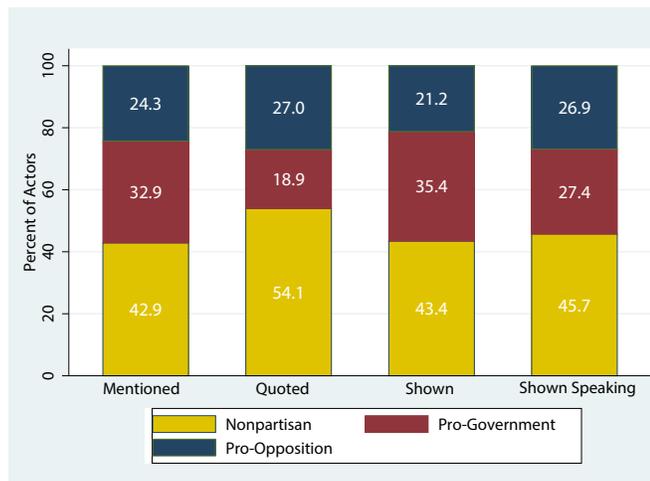
Overall, nonpartisan actors were most commonly featured in coverage (45.3 percent) and pro-government and pro-opposition partisans were equally likely to receive attention (28.4 and 26.3 percent, respectively). Regardless of partisanship, individuals appeared most often while speaking or being interviewed.[18] As illustrated in Figure 1, of all individuals who were interviewed or shown while speaking, 45.7 percent were nonpartisan, 27.4 were pro-government, and 26.9 were pro-opposition. Nonpartisans were the largest group regardless of how visibility was measured. At the lowest level of the visibility ("Mentioned") and the third level of visibility ("Shown while Mentioned or Quoted"), pro-government figures were somewhat more represented than their opposition counterparts, but opposition voices were more likely to be quoted. Globovisión's coverage achieved noteworthy balance with respect to the average amount of time allotted to pro-government (1.6 minutes) and and pro-opposition voices (1.97 minutes).

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[16] Specifically, actors who were mentioned or discussed by the hosts were categorized as "1"; those who were quoted were counted as "2"; those who were shown in the picture and mentioned or quoted but not speaking (e.g., image-bites) were coded as "3"; and those who were shown while speaking or interviewed were coded as "4."

[17] In order to ensure the independence of our classifications of visibility and favorability, we classified actor partisanship only after completing the content analysis. These classifications were made based on the affiliations of each actor as reported through coverage (e.g. the political party they represented), based on coders' own expertise, and through secondary internet research. Finally, in some cases where these classifications were not clear, researchers consulted specific video footage to identify the partisanship of actors.

[18] There was no difference in the average qualitative visibility of the three actor types.

Figure 2. Minutes Visible by Actor Partisanship
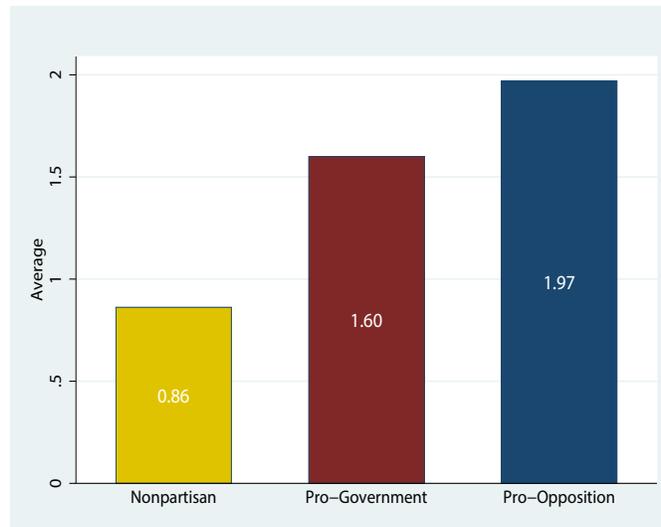
As shown in Figure 2, partisans tended to be visible for considerably longer than nonpartisans (0.86 minutes). Another way to examine the relative access to the media of different types of individuals is by calculating the number of minutes in which they were visible. Table 1 shows the total number and percentage of broadcast minutes that nonpartisan, pro-government, and opposition actors were visible. The results show balance, with those from the opposition receiving a slightly larger percentage of coverage (37.5 percent) than those associated with the government (33.6 percent) or nonpartisan actors (28.9 percent).

*Table 1. Total Number of Minutes Visible*

	Nonpartisan		Government		Opposition	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Municipal Elections	58	16.4	87	24.7	208	58.9
Street Demonstrations	169	25.7	250	38.1	238	36.3
International Dimensions	72	66.4	25	22.9	12	10.8
Shortages of Basic Goods	98	38.4	100	39.1	57	22.5
All	396	28.9	461	33.6	515	37.5

Thus, although considerably more individuals who appeared on these programs were classified as nonpartisan, these actors were visible for less time. Among partisans, pro-government actors were no more likely to appear, and did not appear for longer periods of time, when compared to those who were pro-opposition. Furthermore, pro-government voices did not have a higher level of visibility compared to others. However, these trends vary across the periods that we measured. Figure 3 shows the average number of minutes each perspective was made visible within each critical period.[19] During coverage of "Municipal Elections" and "Shortages of Basic Goods," the average opposition actor was visible for a full minute more than the average pro-government counterpart. The average visibility of

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[19] The qualitative indicator (range 1–4) did not vary significantly across the four periods, so it is not plotted on this graph.

nonpartisan actors was higher than that of partisans only during coverage of international engagement with Venezuela, and much lower during the other three junctures we analyzed. The magnitude of these differences can be seen in Table 1.

Figure 3. Nonpartisan, Pro-Government, and Pro-Opposition Actors
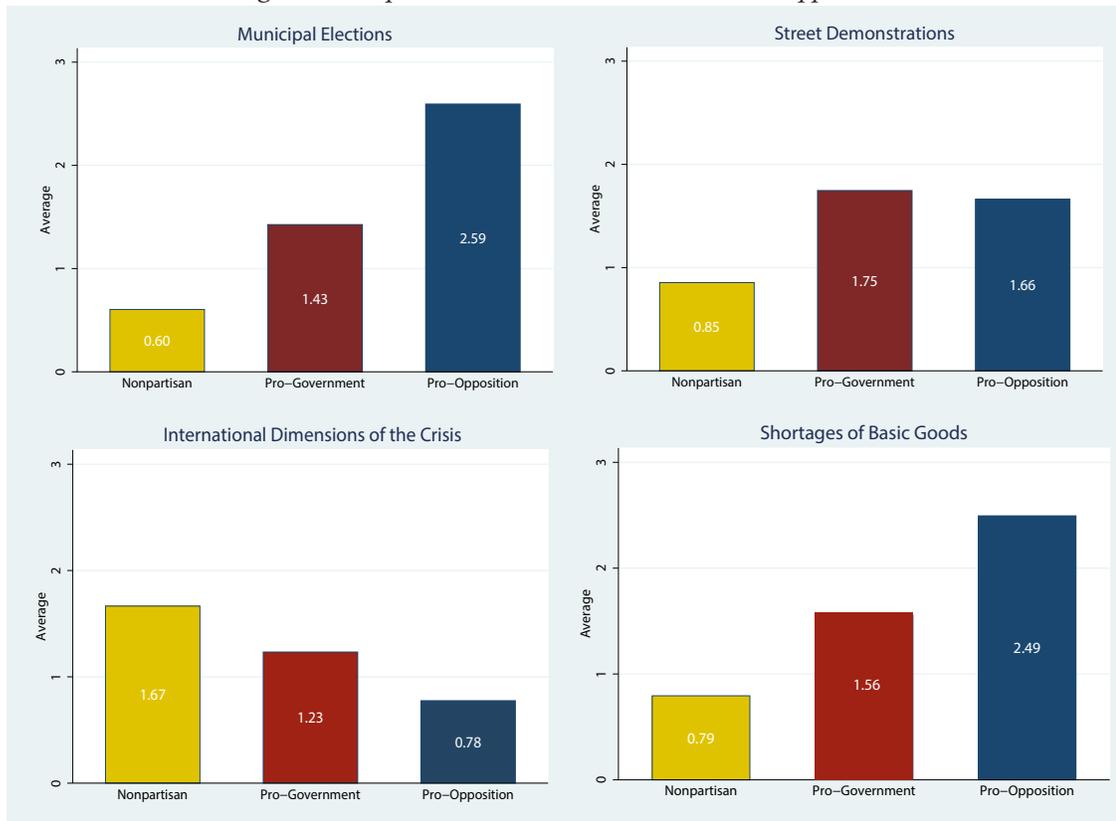
The second set of estimates of political bias relate to favorability, measured in terms of whether voices featured in news, information, and opinion programs express views that favor the government's position. Both verbal and non-verbal favorability are assessed, and we measure whether the first four actors that appeared in a story or segment are 1) favorable, 2) unfavorable, 3) neutral, or 4) ambivalent toward the government.

We analyzed favorability 1) at the actor level, 2) at the story/segment level,[20] and 3) at the broadcast level. Reporting favorability of entire stories and broadcasts, in addition to the discrete ratings of individuals, is important because it provides measures of bias in the messages that viewers perceive. That is, a viewer's perception of the messages occurs at the level of a whole news story, and sometimes a whole broadcast.[21] For example, a story could be unbiased on net if it presented equal numbers of perspectives favorable and unfavorable to the government, or if all perspectives were neutral.[22]

1. Actor-Level Analysis

Table 2. Favorability of Individuals toward the Government (Verbal)

	Critical Juncture									
	1		2		3		4		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Favorable	64	26.1	170	33.9	24	29.6	68	31.5	326	31.2
Unfavorable	103	42.0	234	46.6	25	30.9	87	40.3	449	43.0
Neutral	78	31.8	83	16.6	27	33.3	55	25.5	243	23.3
Ambivalent	0	0.0	15	3.0	5	6.2	6	2.8	26	2.5
Total Actors	245	100	502	100	81	100	216	100	1,044	100

Breaking the data down by actors gives as much weight to a voice that appears in a news story for 5 or 10 seconds as to someone who is interviewed for an entire 10- or 15-minute segment, or to an individual who appears at the beginning or end of coverage. Table 2 shows the data on the verbal favorability of individuals who appeared in each of the four periods we studied. The most important finding here is that the portrayal of actors was considerably more likely to be unfavorable to the government position. The "unfavorable" category was most common in all instances except for those focusing on the "International Dimensions of the Crisis." On that topic, "neutral" was the most common characteristic of coverage. Overall, the portrayal of actors was more likely to be unfavorable to the government (43.0 percent) than favorable (31.2 percent), with about 1 in 4 being categorized as either neutral (23.3 percent) or ambivalent (2.5 percent).

During the period of the "Municipal Elections," more than two out of every five actors (42 percent) were portrayed in a way that was unfavorable to the government, more than a quarter (26.1 percent)

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[20] As was described in the Case Selection section, the unit of data collection was the story or segment, and data were collected on up to four topics, and up to four actors within each data collection unit.

[21] The exception of an individual interviewee who is the only person in a particular segment proves the rule. Technically speaking, the favorability of this person toward the government at the actor level would be equivalent to that at the story level.

[22] A similar logic is at play when comparing the net favorability of an entire broadcast with that of its component stories and individuals represented.

were presented favorably, and 31.8 percent were classified as neutral.[23] There was a similar favorability bias away from the government position during the period of "Street Demonstrations" (February 12–March 21, 2014). During this period, 46.6 percent of actor portrayals were classified as unfavorable, compared to 33.9 percent favorable and only 19.6 percent either neutral or ambivalent.

As noted, the exception to the rule that actor portrayals lean against the government was found in our analysis of the "International Dimensions of the Crisis" (March 25–May 14, 2014), where there were no significant differences. During this period, one in three (33.3 percent) was neutral, similar to the share that was favorable (29.6 percent) or unfavorable (30.9 percent) to the government. The trend of bias against the government continued during the fourth period of study on "Shortages of Basic Goods" (August 7–August 29, 2014). Specifically, 40.3 percent were coded as unfavorable, compared to 31.5 percent coded as favorable and 28.2 percent as either neutral (25.5 percent) or ambivalent (2.8 percent).

Table 3. Favorability of Individuals toward the Government (Non-Verbal)

	Critical Juncture									
	1		2		3		4		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Favorable	31	12.6	88	17.7	13	16.1	31	14.4	163	15.7
Unfavorable	34	13.8	137	27.6	5	6.2	19	8.8	195	18.8
Neutral	181	73.6	270	54.1	61	75.3	165	76.4	677	65.0
Ambivalent	0	0.0	4	0.8	2	2.5	1	0.5	7	0.7
Total Actors	246	100	499	100	81	100	216	100	1042	100

Table 3 shows statistics for the non-verbal favorability of actors. In notable contrast with the findings for the verbal portrayal of actors, the non-verbal portrayal was most likely to be classified as neutral. Across all four junctures we analyzed, about two-thirds of actors were portrayed in a neutral fashion (65.0 percent), compared to 18.8 percent as unfavorable and 15.7 percent favorable to the government. These patterns roughly held across time and theme, with neutrality being the most common throughout. Individuals featured in coverage of street demonstrations were considerably less likely to be non-verbally neutral; 54.1 percent compared to roughly three-fourths for the other three junctures we analyzed.

2. Story- and Segment-Level Analysis

To provide a slightly different way of analyzing how actors are portrayed, we also created measures of verbal and non-verbal actor favorability at the level of the news story/interview segment. For stories or segments with multiple actors, the measures of favorability combine the favorability of all actors (1–4) who appear. To capture this segment-level actor favorability, we create an indicator of "net actor favorability," calculated by taking the difference between the number of actors portrayed in such a way that was favorable to the government and the number portrayed in a manner unfavorable to the government (range –4 to 4).

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[23] During this juncture, no actor was identified as having been ambivalently portrayed.

Table 4. Net-Favorability of Actors in Stories

	Mean by Critical Juncture Period		
	Verbal	Non-Verbal	N
Municipal Elections	*-0.22**	0.02	144
Street Demonstrations	*-0.28**	*-0.20**	270
Int'l Dimensions	-0.04	0.13	55
Basic Goods Shortages	-0.11	0.10	133
All	*-0.20**	-0.05	602

* Statistically different from 0 at the 0.05 level, two-tailed.
Note: 0 means no bias. Positive numbers indicate Pro-Government bias and negative numbers
indicate Pro-Opposition bias.

The results presented in Table 4 are consistent with what was found in the actor-level analysis. Across all the periods we studied, the net verbal favorability at the level of the news story or interview segment was shaded against the government (–0.20). Our estimates of non-verbal net-favorability did not find bias overall, but there are some important differences across periods that need to be highlighted.

The coverage of street demonstrations was unfavorable to the government on both the verbal and non-verbal dimensions, as was coverage of the municipal elections on the verbal dimension. Figure 4 depicts the distribution of the verbal and non-verbal favorability of actors, and shows these for the street demonstrations and all other periods separately. One thing these figures reflect is a large number of stories/segments that are neutral (having net-favorability close to 0), and this tendency is even more pronounced when considering the non-verbal scores.

Figure 4. Net-Favorability of Actors at the Story/Segment Level of Analysis
Street Demonstrations, Others, and All Periods
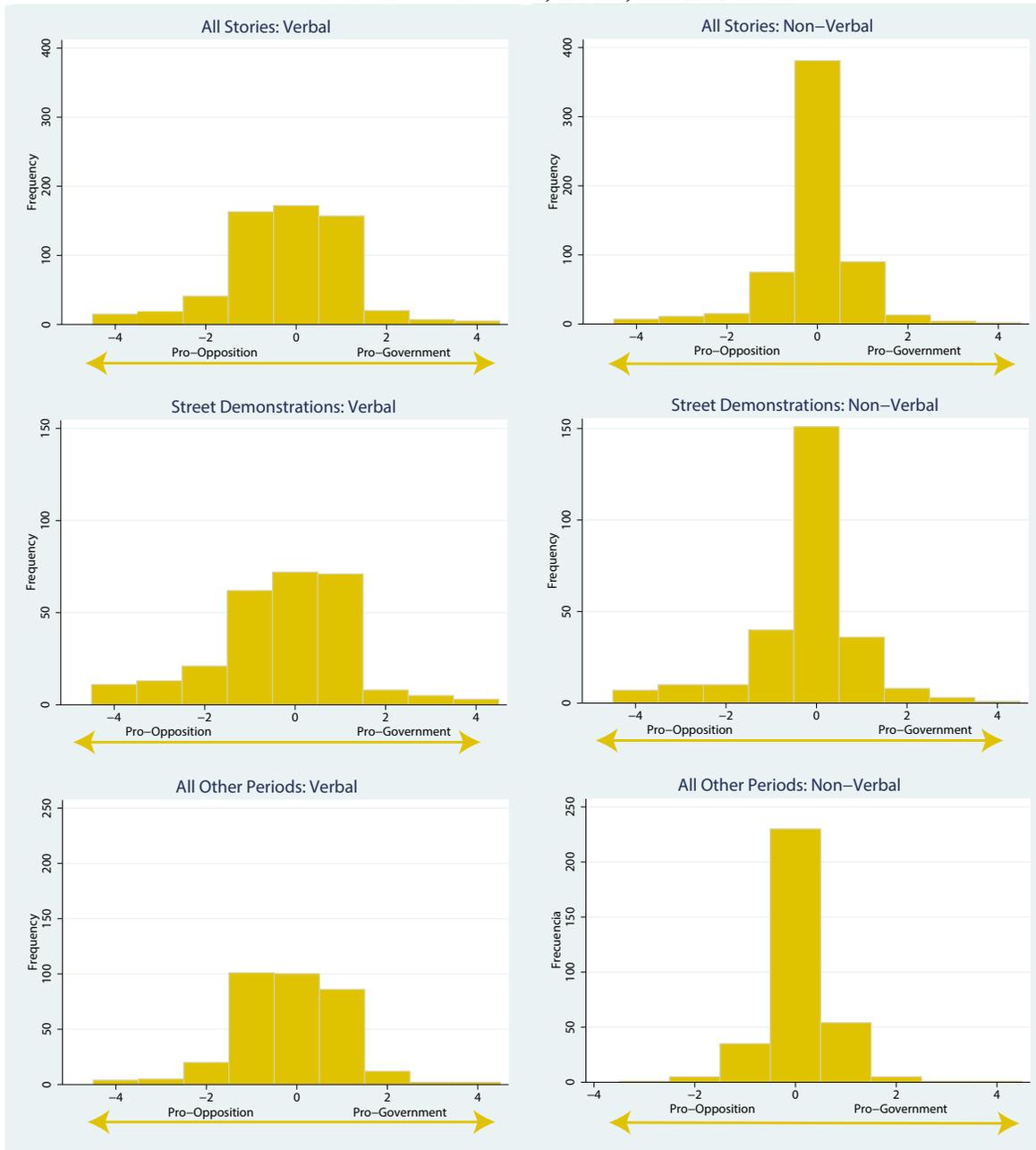
3. Broadcast-Level Analysis

To offer a slightly different way to examine the favorability of how actors are portrayed, we present summary measures of favorability by hour-long broadcast.[24] As shown in Table 5, no bias was found in the favorable or unfavorable direction at the broadcast level. A noteworthy difference appeared in the non-verbal favorability in coverage of the "International Dimensions of the Crisis." Here, non-verbal coverage was on average favorable to the government.

Table 5. Net-Favorability of Actors in Broadcasts

|	Mean by Critical Juncture Period		
	Verbal	Non-Verbal	N
Municipal Elections	*-0.27**	0.00	21
Street Demonstrations	*-0.18**	-0.11	25
International Dimensions	0.10	*0.18**	21
Basic Goods Shortages	-0.05	0.06	21
All	-0.10	0.00	88

* Statistically different from 0 at the 0.1 level, two-tailed.
Note: 0 means no bias. Positive numbers indicate Pro-Government bias and negative numbers indicate Pro-Opposition bias.

C. TOPICS OF COVERAGE AND GATEKEEPING

This subsection presents data on the range of subtopics covered within each critical juncture and on the share of broadcasts that did not cover the target topic during each period of study. For each broadcast, stories and segments within them were identified as covering the target topic of each juncture: 1) Municipal Elections, 2) Street Demonstrations, 3) International Dimensions of the Crisis, and 4) Shortages of Basic Goods. Within each of these target topics, we identified several sub-topics, and each story was coded as covering at least one and up to four of these topics.

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[24] These variables were calculated simply by taking the average of net-favorability scores at the segment level across the full hour of each broadcast we coded.

Figure 5. Percent of Broadcasts Covering Target Topic by Critical Juncture Period
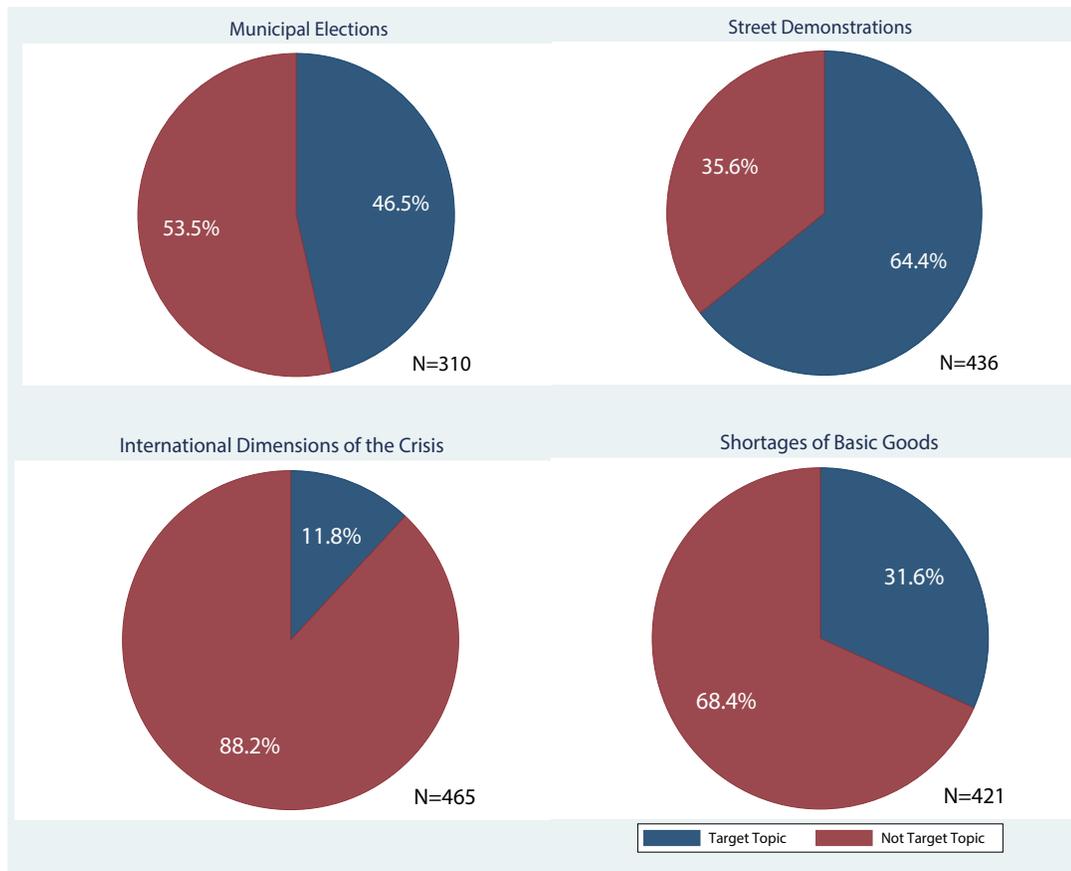
Across all of the broadcasts in the three programs analyzed, 602 stories or segments touched on the relevant topic and 1,030 did not. The variation in frequency of "on-topic" segments between the four periods is noteworthy; ranging from only 12 percent of stories focusing on "International Dimensions of the Crisis" during the mid-late spring of 2014 to more than three-fifths focusing on "Street Demonstrations" earlier that year (See Figure 5).

Statistical findings for each of the critical junctures we analyzed are presented in Figure 6 (see also Tables A-2 and A-3 in Appendix 5). During the period of the municipal elections, the most common subtopic covered was the "Economic Situation" (30.2 percent). Some 45 percent of topics covered focused on different aspects of the elections themselves: the campaign, 26.0 percent; party leader reactions to the election results, 14.9 percent; electoral institutions, 10.7 percent; and turnout and results, 5.3 percent.

During the period of "Street Demonstrations," it was most common for stories to focus on "Violent Anti-Government Demonstrations" (20.3 percent), followed by "Peaceful Anti-Government Demonstrations" (16.9 percent), "General" coverage of demonstrations (15.4 percent), and "Police and Security Forces" (10.7 percent). "Pro-Government Counter-Demonstrations" only made up 4.4 percent of topics covered.

As noted above, the broadcasts sampled during the period of the study devoted to the "International Dimensions of the Crisis" were considerably less likely to contain stories or interview segments that

Figure 6. Subtopics Covered by Critical Juncture Period
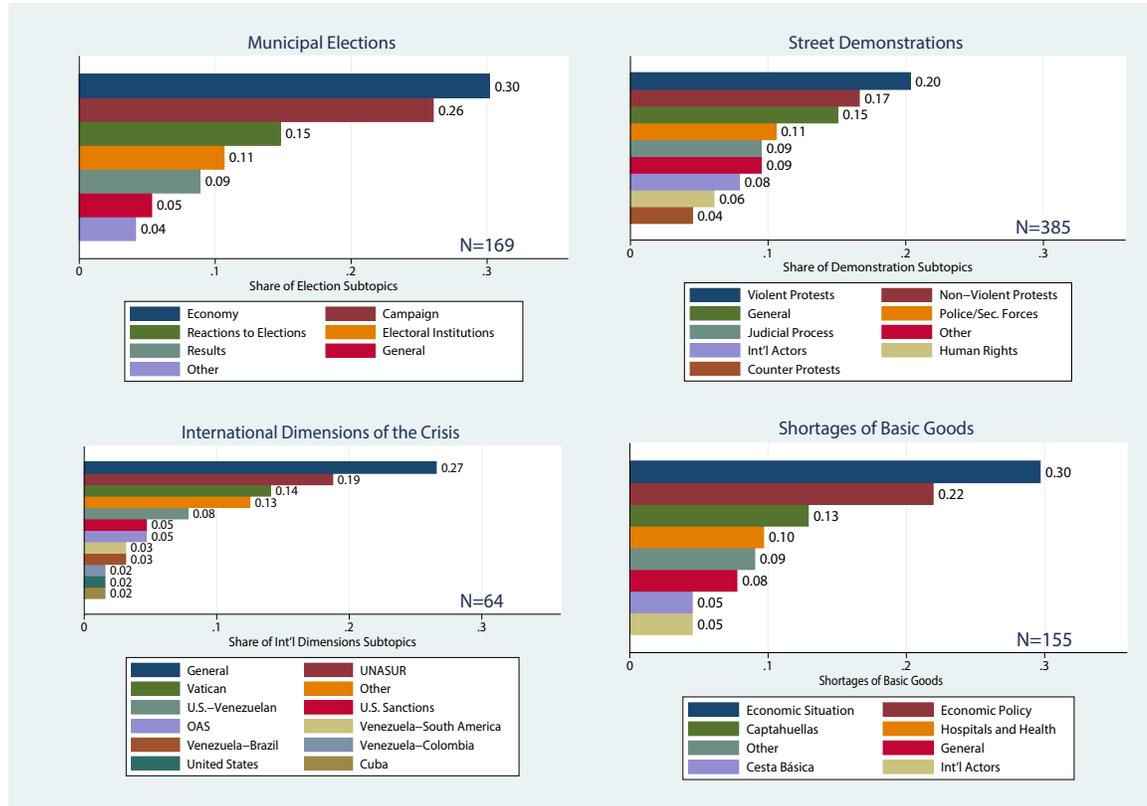
touched on our target topic. Within this smaller number of stories, the plurality focused generally on international dimensions of the crisis, rather than on any of the specific subtopics identified (26.6 percent). Of the subtopics of interest, the most commonly covered were the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Vatican, both of which were key players in external attempts to launch talks to resolve Venezuela's domestic political conflicts.

Finally, our analysis identified, unsurprisingly, that the most common subtopics covered during the period where we focused on "Shortages of Basic Goods," during August 2014, were the "Economic Situation" (29.7 percent) and the "Economic Policy Context" (21.9 percent). There was also a considerable amount of coverage of the "Fingerprint System," or *Captahuellas* (12.9 percent), and "Hospitals and Health Clinics" (9.7 percent).

D. FAVORABILITY OF TOPIC PRESENTATION AND FRAMING

In addition to classifying the favorability of the portrayal of actors who appear in stories, we similarly classified whether the topics covered in news stories and interviews were framed and presented by the hosts in a way that was favorable to the government. As with actor favorability, we classified the verbal and non-verbal framing and presentation of the topics covered.

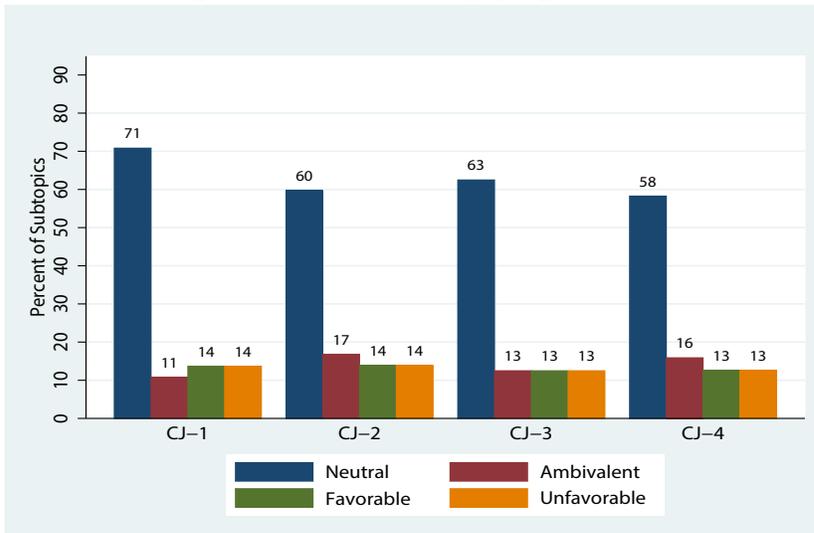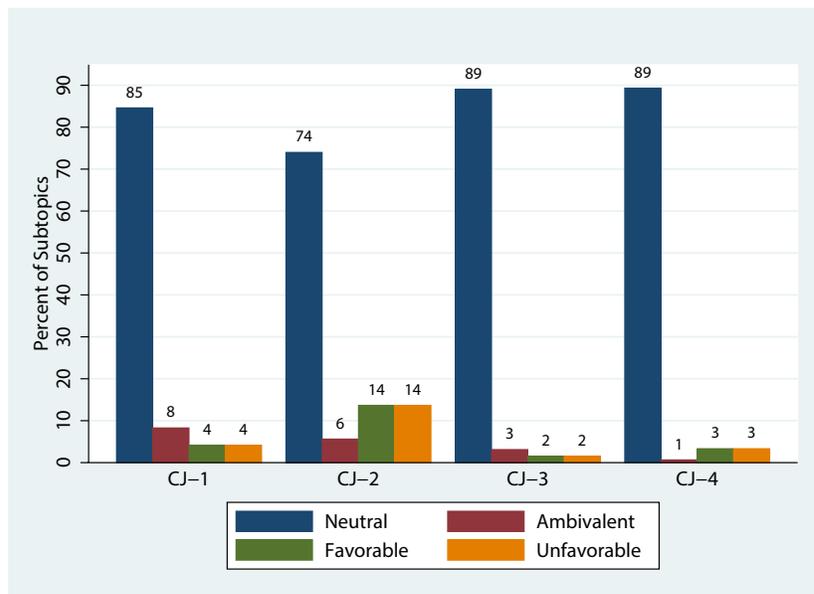*Figure 7. Verbal Favorability of Topic Presentation*

Figure 8. Non-Verbal Favorability of Topic Presentation

What is most noteworthy here is that neutrality is the norm, with more than three-fifths of topics covered being categorized as verbally neutral (61.8 percent) and 80.3 percent categorized as non-verbally neutral. Figures 7 and 8 show the verbal and non-verbal favorability of topic presentation for each of the four periods we analyzed. Most importantly, topics were equally likely to be framed for or against the government, both verbally and non-verbally and in each period. The percentage of topics framed either favorably or unfavorably was very low for non-verbal favorability. The only exception to this trend was in coverage of street demonstrations, where 14 percent of topics were portrayed in a way that was favorable to the government and 14 percent were unfavorable. The overarching conclusion here is that unbiased topic presentation was the norm, with the bulk of topics being neutrally presented, and in those that were not, pro- and anti-government presentations balanced each other out.

Measuring Overall Bias and What Explains It

COMPREHENSIVE INDEX OF BIAS

In this section we present a total bias score for each news story. This is based on a comprehensive index which combines the different indicators of visibility and favorability of the actors portrayed in news coverage as well as the favorability of topic presentation and framing. This provides a total bias score that simultaneously reflects the different dimensions of media bias in a single indicator. We created this comprehensive indicator by combining the following variables at the level of the news story: 1) Visibility Type, 2) Minutes Visible, 3) Actor Verbal Favorability, 4) Actor Non-Verbal Favorability, 5) Verbal Topic Presentation, and 6) Non-Verbal Topic Presentation.[25] This analysis creates a single measurement of bias that incorporates all of the different dimensions of bias analyzed so far. Next, we conducted an analysis to identify the factors that are associated with different levels of bias as measured by this comprehensive index.

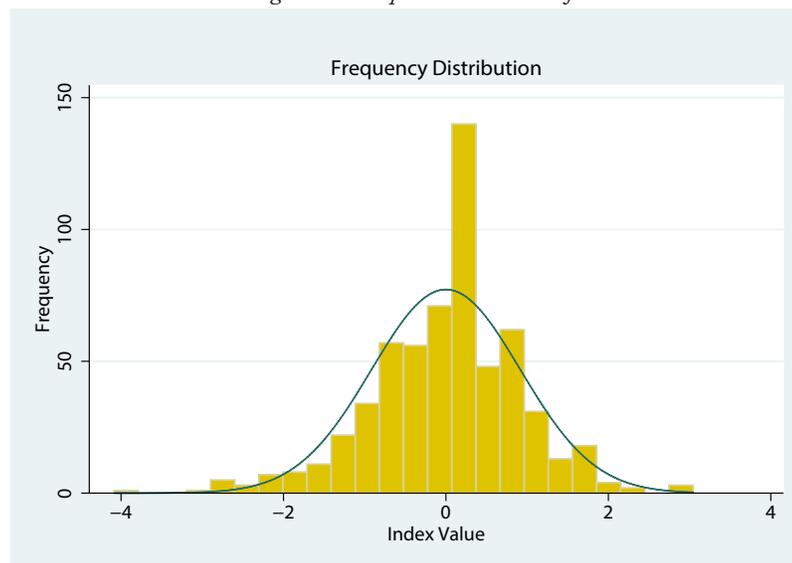*Figure 9. Comprehensive Index of Bias*

Figure 9 shows the plots the comprehensive index variable. The height of each bar represents the number of stories at each value of the index and stories with higher values on the index were more biased in favor of the government relative to other stories.[26] In addition to estimating the degree to which bias varied across the periods analyzed in this study, we examined variation across time. Additional variables of interest include the sampled programs (*Aló Venezuela*, *Vladimir a la Una*, and *Noticias Globovisión Estelar*), however, these programs had similar levels of total bias. In addition, we measured the order in which each story appeared within each broadcast. Analyzing how the prioritization of the story was associated with the direction of bias allowed us to show that pro-government stories tended to be prioritized at the beginning or relegated to the end of broadcasts.[27]

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[25] The precise method used to calculate this index variable is described in the Methodological Appendix.

[26] Note that the factor analysis technique sets the mean at 0. Figures A-1–A-6 in the appendix show the distribution of the six indicators of bias that are the component parts of the comprehensive index.

[27] Descriptive statistics for all of these variables, as well as the component parts of the bias index variable, are included in Table A-4 in Appendix 5.

We identified through statistical analysis a couple of noteworthy findings that build on the descriptive analysis of the different types of bias. First, stories and interviews that occurred during the "Municipal Elections" period and the weeks of "Street Demonstrations" tended to be less favorable to the government. Second, in contrast to the general findings of an absence of bias in favor of the government, and the occasional bias in favor of the opposition, we find evidence here that the placement of stories favored the government.[28]

Figure A-7 in the Appendix 5 presents four scatter plots (one for each period we studied), which show the correlation between bias and story prioritization.[29] The negative correlation between them indicates that stories that are relatively more favorable to the government tend to be presented earlier in broadcasts. The mild downward slope depicted in Figure A-7 is visible in all four critical juncture periods. It should be emphasized, however, that the substantive significance in this difference is relatively minor.[30] Thus, if anything, this result should serve as a very minor exception to a general rule that systematic bias was not present in the coverage of Globovisión's most popular news and opinion programming during the critically important periods of political polarization examined in this study.

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[28] See Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) results in Table A-5 in Appendix 5.
[29] This variable, which we call "Story Number," simply indicates where each story appeared in the sequence of an hour-long broadcast.
[30] Specifically, moving from the latest story (Number 29) to the first story (Number 1) would imply an expected movement down the Index of Bias of less than 1, about 1/8th of the total range of the index.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study set out to determine the degree of balance in news coverage provided by Venezuelan television station Globovisión. To answer this question we conducted a rigorous content analysis of 88 hour-long broadcasts, including some 600 news stories or interview segments featuring more than 1,000 individual appearances and discussion of 36 different topics. We focused exclusively on whether there was evidence of bias in coverage during four critical junctures, spanning from November 2013 to August 2014, that were deemed best suited to determining whether Globovisión programming provides fair coverage of major political events and controversies.

NEUTRALITY AND BALANCE

The study found that Globovisión's framing of the issues tended to be neutral, and that there was no significant bias in favor of the government or the opposition. While overall Globovisión achieved its goal of providing unbiased coverage, we found modest variation across the periods and issues covered as well as across particular measurements of bias. Specifically, opposition voices received more total coverage than pro-government voices in the periods surrounding the municipal elections and the street demonstrations, and this coverage tended to be unfavorable to the government. However, pro-government perspectives received slightly more coverage in broadcasts focused on international dimensions of political crisis or shortages of basic goods. The comprehensive analysis of the different dimensions of bias also found that—although opposition partisans received more on-air time overall—news stories that appeared earlier in a broadcast tended to be relatively more favorable to the government, whereas those appearing toward the end of a broadcasts were more favorable to the opposition.

The placement of news stories is important since it speaks to the priority an outlet assigns to the topic. Stories reported earlier in a program are what the channel "leads with" in prioritizing its presentation of the news. This study found a pattern in sequencing that is

likely to hold significance. News stories appearing earlier in a broadcast tended to be more favorable to the government than those appearing toward the end. Because we were unable to to secure access to data to determing whether audience levels fluctuated over the course of each program, this prevents us from assessing the full significance of these tendencies in Globovisión presentation of the news. The absence of data on viewership also prevents us from reaching conclusions about the significance of the finding that coverage tilted modestly in favor of the opposition during the elections and street demonstrations, and modestly in favor of the government when the focus was international engagement with Venezuela's political crisis or with shortages of consumer goods.

In the absence of information about viewership, this study's data consisted exclusively of specific footage supplied by the station at the request of the research team. Analysis of that information enables us to establish that Globovisión did not strongly favor the government position by providing pro-government voices significantly more visibility or by presenting them in a more positive light than their opponents. This runs counter to widely reported opposition sentiment during this period regarding the supposed capture of Venezuelan media by the government. The "hostile media" effect, a phenomenon identified in the "Approaches to Determining Bias" section of this report, may be relevant here. The hostile media effect refers to how partisan perceptions of what constitutes a fair portrayal of events can predispose audiences to believe that a media outlet favors a contrary political position. This effect powerfully shapes how audiences interpret news and helps to explain the prevalence among government opponents of a conception that Globovisión is a surrogate for official positions. Moreover, the hostile media effect is an especially relevant phenomenon in polarized political contexts such as that found in Venezuela today. With Venezuela experiencing high levels of polarization since at least 2002, and Globovisión's previous editorial line giving the channel a pronounced anti-government slant, much of Globovisión's audience inevitably holds views about the station's editorial line under the ownership group that bought the channel in June 2013. Nonetheless, this study finds that expectations of a shift from support for the opposition to strongly favoring the government is not evidenced by rigorous empirical analysis.

While we did not assess the quality of news coverage during this period in terms of the depth of investigative reports, the quality of sources, or the checking of facts, the findings also suggest that Globovisión programming often achieved a degree of neutrality with its news coverage while also providing a space for government, opposition, and neutral voices during important moments. This conclusion is especially important for assessments of balance.

Moreover, the correlation between visibility and favorability—for example, in coverage of street demonstrations in early 2014, in which there were more appearances by opposition figures and more news segments unfavorable for the government—provides quantitative confirmation for an observation derived from the qualitative review of Globovisión news programming. In reviewing footage, researchers noted the tendency of Globovisión's reporters to provide both street- and studio-based interview guests significant time and latitude to answer questions. The non-confrontational, open-ended approach of Globovisión journalists afforded partisan guests ample opportunity to express themselves clearly and without obstacle. The manner in which Globovisión frames and presents the issues of the day suggests that, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the hosts and production teams at the stations have largely succeeded in producing unbiased programming in the areas that are arguably most directly under their control.

Two characteristics of the local context in Caracas are useful for thinking through some practical reasons why Globovisión might have provided greater space for opposition voices during particularly critical moments. First, generally speaking, pro-government politicians use public or state-owned media outlets to increase their exposure, promote their images, and articulate their positions. It is less frequent for pro-government politicians or government officials to utilize private media outlets for these purposes, and their preference for using state-owned media may affect the size of the pool of potential recruits for private media outlets such as Globovisión. At the same time, opposition politicians know that their base audience is much more likely to watch a privately-owned channel such as Globovisión. As a result, it is entirely possible that the incentive structure for appearing on Globovisión varies significantly between pro-government and anti-government actors, i.e. individuals associated with the opposition are simply more interested in appearing on Globovisión.

Second, the geographic location of the channel, which is headquartered in Caracas, provides some context for considering the effects of Globovisión's social environment and the networks it accesses. The metropolitan area of Caracas is split more or less evenly between government and opposition supporters. However, five of the city's six municipalities—Baruta, Chacao, Sucre, El Hatillo, and Metropolitan Caracas—have tended to vote for opposition mayoral candidates. With Globovisión often reporting on events in the Caracas area, and a large portion of its traditional audience residing in these markets, the channel may have found it most convenient, and in its market self-interest, to invite interviewees from these mayoral administrations or from Caracas-based universities or research centers. The inevitable effect would be to augment the relative proportion of guests who would hold views highly critical of the government.

A broader political factor is also relevant for interpreting this study's general finding of an absence of bias in favor of the government. After the death of President Chávez in March 2013, Venezuela entered a political crisis. This crisis heightened when the opposition presidential candidate, Governor Capriles, rejected the results of a tight election held in April 2013. Then, by the end of 2014, Venezuela had fallen into economic crisis. This combination of political and economic travails created a situation in which an overwhelming majority of Venezuelans judged the country's situation as negative.

Hence, the Maduro government faced daunting conditions in 2013 and 2014, and the challenges it faced constituted the country's most important issues. As a result, media outlets covered matters that, by their very nature, placed the government in a mode of having to defend its record amid objective signs of poor performance. The prevalence of news topics that were unpleasant for the government meant that independent media would report on issues that the government would rather avoid, and this may explain a tendency for Globovisión to invite guests associated with the opposition, as they would be more inclined under the circumstances to discuss these controversial topics.

The study revealed Globovisión to have given coverage to a fairly wide range of issues and perspectives. A total of 36 topics received coverage, with many of these directly related to the main themes and problems prevalent during the junctures. This suggests that Globovisión covered the most important issues and problems facing the country. It is difficult to draw a similarly positive conclusion about the extent to which Globovisión strengthened political pluralism with fresh perspectives on controversial topics or discussing new elements of hot topics. For example, the case of jailed opposition leader Leopoldo López received less attention from Globovisión than from international outlets such as CNN in Spanish or NTN24. Lillian Tintori, López's wife and his spokeswoman while he has been in jail awaiting trial, appeared on Globovisión a handful of times. But, she was not featured as an in-studio interviewee.

Though the study's quantitative analysis of empirical data did not find evidence of bias in favor of the government, there is a noteworthy qualitative finding about the visibility of key government and opposition leaders. Specifically, our study revealed that former presidential candidate and Governor of Miranda state Henrique Capriles appeared 11 times out of approximately 1,000 instances of appearances by individuals. Under Globovisión's previous ownership group, Governor Capriles frequently appeared on the channel for invited interviews and as a partisan actor in news reports. In the channel's first year of operation under new ownership, Governor Capriles, who won 49 percent of the vote in the 2013 elections and led the opposition's campaign in advance of the 2013 municipal balloting, did not appear as an interview guest on any of the Globovisión programs in the research sample. Meanwhile, President Maduro appeared as a partisan actor in 42 segments. Governor Capriles's degree of visibility on Globovisión does not seem commensurate with his political prominence.

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Appendix 1. General Codebook

<u>Sampling Unit</u>: Show broadcast. First hour of the broadcast should be coded if longer than an hour (e.g., *Aló Venezuela*).

<u>Unit of data collection</u>: For news shows, the unit of data collection will be the news story. For in-depth interview and opinion shows, the unit of data collection is the segment. A segment is defined by periods between commercial breaks. All of the segments in the selected broadcast should be considered for coding. If a news story or interview continues after a segment break, treat the second part as a new coding unit (i.e., a column in the spreadsheet).

Stories/segments that have content on the target topics will be identified separately and coders will be provided with a list of stories/segments (by start time and number) that they should code.

1. Coder Initials

2. Broadcast Code: Unique code for each broadcast (provided)

3. Juncture Code: Unique code for the critical juncture period (provided)
    1 = 11/9–12/15/13; 2 = 2/12–3/21/14; 3 = 3/25–5/14/14; 4 = 8/7–8/29/14

4. Show Name: Write name of show in this field (provided)

5. Show ID: Fill in ID number for each show (provided)

6. Date: Enter date of broadcast (mm/dd/yy) (provided)
    e.g., November 20, 2013 is "11/20/13"

7. Broadcast Start Time: Enter start time of selected broadcast (hh:mm) (provided)
    e.g., a show airing at 2:00 p.m. should be coded as "14:00," at 2:00 a.m. as "02:00"

NOTE: This should be the same value for ALL stories/segments in a given broadcast

8.   Broadcast End Time: Enter end time of selected broadcast (hh:mm) (provided)

         e.g., a show ending at 2:00 p.m. should be coded as "14:00," at 2:00 a.m. as "02:00"

9.   File ID: Digital file name for video (provided)

10.   Story/Segment Number: Indicate where the story or segment falls within the broadcast (provided).

         1. first story/segment
         2. second story/segment
         3. third story/segment
         4. fourth story/segment
         5. fifth story/segment
         6. sixth story/segment
         7. seventh story/segment
         etc...

11.   Story/Segment Start: Enter timer value when story/segment starts (provided)
         Format: hh:mm

12.   Story/Segment End: Enter timer value when story/segment ends (provided)
         Format: hh:mm

13.   Video Start: Time the video starts (provided)
         Format: mm:ss

14.   Video End: Time the video ends (provided)
         Format: mm:ss

<u>Topics and Presentation</u>

15.   Target Topic: Indicate whether the segment includes discussion of a topic or subtopic relevant to the period under study. To make this determination, refer to supplementary document for the relevant period of study (provided)

         Yes=1 (e.g., discussion of municipal elections, discussion of protests, discussion of international talks, discussion of shortages, etc.)
         No=0 (e.g., no significant discussion of the target topic(s) [do not code, move on to next story or segment]).

16.   Topic Notes: Notes entered by pre-coders on the guests, focus, topic, etc. of each story/ segment

17.   Topic 1: Enter the detailed code for the first relevant topic discussed in the story/segment. Make your best judgment and only enter one code in each field. If multiple relevant topics are discussed, code for the second topic (even if introduced simultaneously) under Topic 2, etc.

NOTE: Only code for topics introduced by an interview guest when the host(s) directly engage(s) with the topic. 99=missing n/a (more likely for Topics 2–4)

18.   Other Topic: If "other" relevant topic juncture, briefly identify topic discussed.

19.   Topic 1 Verbal Presentation: Identify if the verbal presentation of Topic 1 by the hosts, narrators, etc., is favorable, unfavorable, neutral, or ambivalent vis a vis the government's

position). Failure to interject with a pro-government counterargument to points made by an opposition representative is neutral, rather than unfavorable. Interjection with counterarguments that balance the overall presentation is "ambivalent" (i.e. playing devil's advocate). When presentations and interventions support the government's position, this is favorable and when they oppose it, this is unfavorable (this is the case independently of whether the actors are pro-government, pro-opposition, or disinterested parties).

NOTE: If this is an interview, the verbal presentation of the topic is defined by the nature of the questions, state-ments, and arguments that introduce a new topic for discussion AND move the discussion forward. As stated above, topics should only be considered if engaged directly by the host (e.g., don't code for every topic mentioned by a guest, unless there is back and forth with the host or unless the host asks the question to begin with). For news stories, ver-bal presentation is defined by the way in which the host(s) introduce(s) the topic, narrate(s) throughout, interview(s) people "on location," etc.

1. favorable to the government's position
2. unfavorable to the government's position
3. neutral with respect to the government's position
4. ambivalent: presents both government and opposition positions
88. not verbally introduced

20.   Topic 1 Non-Verbal Presentation: Identify if the non-verbal presentation of Topic 1 is favorable, unfavorable, neutral, or ambivalent vis a vis the government's position. Neutrality is the baseline (e.g. a lack of facial expression, gestures that do not indicate support or rejection of claims being made, innocuous images, etc.). Failure to show images that would undercut the government (or opposition) position is neutral, rather than favorable/unfavorable. If this is an interview, the non-verbal presentation of the topic is defined by the facial expressions and body language of the host when asking questions, making statements, and presenting arguments throughout the segment. For news stories, non-verbal presentation includes the facial expressions, hand movements, body language, etc. of hosts and narrators as well as the still and video images used to introduce the topic. This also includes the way a story or interview is edited, including if an interview is cut off in a way that is favorable/unfavorable to the government position (such cuts should not impact the verbal presentation code, which should be based solely on what is said by the hosts).

1. favorable to the government's position
2. unfavorable to the government's position
3. neutral with respect to the government's position
4. ambivalent: presents both government and opposition positions
88. Topic not introduced by hosts or with visuals

21.–32. Topic 2–Topic 4 coded in the same way as above

<u>Actor Affiliation, Visibility, and Favorability toward Government</u>

For this section, the FIRST FOUR (4) actors that appear and/or are discussed in a news story/ segment should be coded for the variables below. "Actors" can be individuals (e.g., politicians, experts, etc.) or groups (e.g., "students," "police," etc.) that have done something, said something, etc. (e.g, in a story that discusses ac-tions of supporters of Nicolás Maduro, the "supporters" are the actor, not Maduro). For interview or debate segments, the actors are the individuals interviewed or who sit on a panel/round table. For news stories or reports, the actors can be people interviewed, people discussed by the hosts or others, or people shown on still photographs or video clips while being discussed.

33.   Actor 1 Paternal Last Name: Enter text of paternal last name (no accents)
        99=not given

34.   Actor 1 Maternal Last Name: Enter text of maternal last name (no accents)
        99=not given

35.   Actor 1 First Name: Enter first name (no accents)
        99=not given

36.   Actor 1 Affiliation 1: Enter first affiliation mentioned (e.g., Minister of X)
        99=none given

37.   Actor 1 Affiliation 2: Enter second affiliation mentioned (e.g., Political Party Y)
        99=none given

38.   Actor 1 Type: Enter primary actor type. If more than one type, enter the one that is most
        relevant to the given topic/story.

        1. Government bureaucrat, security forces, police, government agent, etc.
        (non-elected, current or former)

        2. Elected representative (e.g., president, mayor, assembly member, governor,
            Member of Congress, former elected representatives, etc.)

        3. Candidate for office or surrogate (e.g., secretary general of a political party, party plat
            form, party issues, MUD, political party)

        4. Civil society group or representative (e.g., chamber of commerce, labor union,
            human rights organization, NGO, international organization, etc.)

        5. Issue expert, pundit, journalist (e.g., journalist, intellectual, professor, scientist, etc.)

        6. Member of the public (e.g., someone interviewed "on the street" to represent the
            opinion of the "ordinary" citizens)

        7. Private sector representative (e.g., business owner, CEO of corporation, etc.)

        8. Political party militant (if not a candidate or surrogate)

        9. Other

39.   Actor 1 Other Type: Enter text of other actor type (only if "9," "other" for previous
        question).

40.   Actor 1 Visibility: How visible is Actor 1 in the segment?

NOTE: code as the highest relevant (i.e., if mentioned AND quoted, code "2").

        1. Mentioned
        2. Quoted
        3. Shown in picture and mentioned or quoted but not speaking (e.g., image-bites)
        4. Shown while speaking or interviewed

41.   Actor 1 Visibility 2: Enter amount of time Actor is visible, discussed, or heard in the
        segment. Format: mm:ss

42.   Actor 1 Favorability (verbal): Enter score for how favorable to the government's position
        the presentation or portrayal of the actor is in terms of what is said as would be perceived
        by the individual or group appearing in the story. This includes the way the host(s)
        discuss(es) the actor and his/her actions, as well as how the actor presents him/herself.
        Partisans who are guests on interview shows will usually be coded as "favorable" (if govern

ment partisans/allies) or unfavorable (if opposition partisans).

1. favorable to the government's position
2. unfavorable to the government's position
3. neutral with respect to the government's position (i.e., supports NEITHER the government nor opposition narrative)
4. ambivalent: mixes both pro- and anti-government positions

43.   Actor 1 Favorability (visual): Enter score for how favorable to the government's position the presentation or portrayal of the actor is in terms of what is shown as would be perceived by the individual or group appearing in the story. This might include the gestures and facial expressions of the host in discussing the actor or the situation, as well as the choice of images and video clips used, as well as how the actor is visually presented during an interview.

1. favorable to the government's position
2. unfavorable to the government's position
3. neutral with respect to the government's position
4. ambivalent: represents both pro- and anti-government positions

44–76. Actors 2–4 coded in the same way

Appendix 2. Supplementary File 1: Topics and Subtopics

<u>100 Municipal Elections</u>
        110 Economic Situation
        120 The Election Campaign
        130 Election Day Turnout and Results
        140 Party and Leader Reactions to Election Results
        150 Electoral Institutions—The *Consejo Nacional Electoral* (*El CNE*)
        160 Other

<u>200 Street Demonstrations</u>
        210 Anti-Government Demonstrations—Peaceful Protests
        220 Anti-Government Demonstrations—Violent Protests
        230 Counter Demonstrations
        240 Judicial Process
        250 Human Rights
        260 Police and Security Forces
        270 International Actors
        280 Other

<u>300 International Dimensions of Crisis</u>
        310 The Vatican
        320 UNASUR
        321 Venezuela-South American Relations
        322 Venezuela-Brazil Relations
        323 Venezuela-Colombia Relations
        324 Venezuela-Ecuador Relations
        330 The United States
            331 U.S.-Venezuela Relations
            332 Sanctions Proposals
        340 Cuba
            341 Venezuela-Cuba Relations
        350 *Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de América* (ALBA)
        360 Organization of American States (OAS)
        370 Other

<u>400 Shortages of Basic Goods</u>

      410 Economic Situation
      420 International Actors
      430 Economic Policy Context
      440 Hospitals and Health Clinic
      450 Basic Food Basket (*Cesta básica*)
      460 Fingerprint system (*Captahuellas*)
      470 Other

Key Words and Phrases for Topics

<u>100 Municipal Elections</u>
We're the Majority, Economic War, Economic Counter-Offensive, Day of Loyalty, Illegitimate, Plebiscite

<u>200 Street Demonstrations</u>
The Street, Scarcity, Right to Protest, Separation of Powers, Fascism, *Las guarimbas*, Inflation, *Colectivos*, *Political Prisoners*, Insecurity, Miami

<u>300 International Dimensions of the Crisis</u>
Hombre de paz, Amnesty, *Presos políticos*, *Colectivos*, Truth Commission, Miami, Economic War, Mutual Respect, *Golpe continuo*

<u>400 Shortages in Basic Goods</u>
Acaparamiento, *Falta de producción*, *Guerra económica*, *Contrabando*, *Corrupción*, *Crisis de salud pública*, *Emergencia en el sector médico*, *Las colas* (The lines)

Appendix 3. Codebook Supplementary File 2: Summary of Critical Juncture Periods

I. Municipal Elections (Nov. 9–Dec. 15, 2013)

Venezuela held municipal elections on December 8, 2013. The vote took place against a backdrop of high-intensity political contestation. The April 14, 2013 presidential elections saw opposition candidate Henrique Capriles reject the official outcome—a victory for President Maduro by 1.5 percent. After the opposition's appeal of the results failed to bear fruit, Capriles and the opposition turned their attention to the municipal elections.

Until November, the opposition was ahead in the polls. With one month left before the elections and the all-important Christmas holiday looming afterwards, the government undertook policy measures that lowered prices at consumer goods stores.

Government candidates won more mayoral offices and nationally pro-government candidates won 6 percent more of the vote. In defeat, Capriles spoke on behalf of the opposition and complained of facing highly "unequal campaign conditions."

II. Street Demonstrations (Feb. 12–Mar. 21, 2014)

Venezuela experienced a wave of mostly student-led demonstrations from approximately January 23–March 21. The demonstrations originated in Táchira and Mérida (interior states on the western border with Colombia) and spread to Caracas (the capital) in mass form on February 12. They snowballed after opposition leader Leopoldo López was taken prisoner on February 18. The

demonstrations took a variety of forms, from peaceful protest to more violent barricades and road blocks, and generated counter-demonstrations. Likewise, state security institutions responded with the use of excessive force in some cases and in step with accepted standards of policing in others. The demonstrations dissipated toward the middle of March, with fatigue and state repression undercutting momentum.

III. International Dimensions of Crisis (Mar. 25–May 14, 2014)

From March 25 to May 14 Venezuela's political crisis moved to the international level, with dynamics playing out in two theaters. Within the region, UNASUR (the Union of South American Nations) and the Vatican served as the formal conveners of political talks between the government and the opposition. To help convene these talks over political issues for defusing the political crisis, UNASUR sent a delegation of foreign ministers from Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador and the Vatican operated through its Ambassador (*El Nuncio*) in Caracas. In the United States, meanwhile, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee took up the issue of human rights violations. The Committee held a high-profile committee meeting with the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheric Affairs to discuss proposed legislation for imposing targeted sanctions against Maduro government officials.

The talks produced multiple rounds of discussion but yielded few concrete gains for alleviating the crisis. When the talks failed to produce concessions from the government on the issue of releasing high profile political prisoners from jail, this increased the likelihood for actions by the Senate and the State Department.

IV. Shortages in Basic Goods (Aug. 7–29, 2014)

From August 7–August 29, 2014 Venezuela's intermittent problems with availability of foodstuffs and goods reached new heights. Beyond decreased availability of food, the crisis was marked by problems with decreased availability of medical supplies, both over-the-counter and prescription. Consequently, the situation at hospitals and medical clinics moved to the front and center of media discussion of the shortages. The government announced a major new policy measure to combat hoarding during this period. The acute problems with shortages dissipated but underlying issues with availability continued.

Appendix 4. Index of Bias

The index of bias presented in the second part of "Empirical Analysis and Findings" is calculated using factor analysis of six variables at the level of the news story/interview segment. The variables are: 1) Visibility Type, 2) Minutes Visible, 3) Actor Verbal Favorability, 4) Actor Non-Verbal Favorability, 5) Verbal Topic Presentation, and 6) Non-Verbal Topic Presentation. As each unit is potentially composed of up to four actors and up to four topics, these six variables are themselves composed of multiple elements, the operationalization of which we will now discuss.

Visibility Type is measured on a scale of 1–4 for each actor that appears in a story or is interviewed. To generate a story-level variable of actor visibility, we take the difference of the sums of the "visibility type" variable for all pro-government actors and all pro-opposition actors. As such, a story with four pro-government actors who spoke while being shown (visibility type=4) would have a net story-level government visibility value of 16, and a story with four pro-opposition actors who spoke while being shown would have a story-level net government visibility score of –16.

The Minutes Visible variable would be similarly aggregated at the story level by subtracting the

total number of minutes pro-opposition actors were visible from the total number of minutes pro-government actors were visible. To measure actor favorability at the story-level, as already presented in the Findings section, we operationalize variables for the net-verbal and non-verbal favorability of actors. To do this, we take the sum of actors portrayed in a way that was favorable to the government and subtract the sum of actors portrayed in a way that was unfavorable to the government. The net favorability of topic presentation (verbal and non-verbal) was measured in a similar way. Specifically, we added up the total of topics in each story that were framed in such a way that was favorable to the government and subtracted from them the total of topics that were unfavorable to the government. The results of a factor analysis of these six variables are presented in Table A-6.

Appendix 5. Supplementary Tables and Figures

Table A-1. Final Content Analysis Reliability Indicators

	% Agree	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	K's Alpha
Topic	79.6	0.396	0.401	0.400
Verbal Presentation	79.2	0.319	0.324	0.324
Topic Non-Verbal Presentation	86.6	0.358	0.361	0.362
Actor Visibility	88.4	0.773	0.774	0.775
Actor Favorability (Verbal)	80.6	0.646	0.648	0.648
Actor Favorability (Non-Verbal)	88.0	0.745	0.745	0.747

Calculated using "ReCal: reliability calculation for the masses." Created by Deen Freelon, American University (http://dfreelon.org/utils/recalfront/)

Table A-2: Topics and Subtopics Covered by Critical Juncture Period

Topic	N	%
Municipal Elections-General	9	5.3
Economic Situation	51	30.2
The Election Campaign	44	26.0
Election Day Turnout and Results	15	8.9
Party and Leader Reactions to Election	25	14.8
Electoral Institutions	18	10.7
Other	7	4.1
Street Demonstrations-General	57	14.8
Peaceful Anti-Gov. Demonstrations	65	16.9
Violent Anti-Gov. Demonstrations	78	20.3
Counter Demonstrations	17	4.4
Judicial Process	36	9.4
Human Rights	23	6.0
Police and Security Forces	41	10.7
International Actors	31	8.1
Other	37	9.6
International Dimensions of Crisis	17	26.6
The Vatican	9	14.1
UNASUR	12	18.8
Venezuela-South American Relations	2	3.1
Venezuela-Brazil Relations	2	3.1
Venezuela-Colombia Relations	1	1.6
The United States	1	1.6
U.S.-Venezuela Relations	5	7.8
Sanctions Proposals	3	4.7
Cuba	1	1.6
Organization of American States (OAS)	3	4.7
Other	8	12.5
Shortages of Basic Goods	12	7.7
Economic Situation	46	29.7
International Actors	7	4.5
Economic Policy Context	34	21.9
Hospitals and Health Clinics	15	9.7
Basic Food Basket (*Cesta Básica*)	7	4.5
Fingerprint system (*Captahuellas*)	20	12.9
Other	14	9.0

Table A-3. Coverage of Target Topic

	N	%
Municipal Elections	144	46.5
Street Demonstrations	270	61.9
International Dimensions	55	11.8
Basic Goods Shortages	133	31.6
All	602	36.9

Table A-4. Dependent and Independent Variables Used in OLS Regressions

	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Dependent Variables					
Bias Index	597	0.00	0.92	-4.09	3.04
Net Visibility Value	598	0.10	3.85	-16	13
Net Minutes Visible	598	-0.09	3.57	-29	17.83
Net-Actor Favorability (Verbal)	598	-0.20	1.26	-4	4
Net-Actor Favorability (Non-Verbal)	598	-0.05	0.90	-4	4
Topic Favorability (Verbal)	598	-0.05	0.58	-2	3
Topic Favorability (Non-Verbal)	598	-0.04	0.46	-2	2
Independent Variables					
Municipal Elections	598	0.24	0.43	0	1
Street Demonstrations	598	0.44	0.50	0	1
International Dimensions	598	0.09	0.29	0	1
Shortages of Goods	598	0.22	0.42	0	1
Noticias Globovisión Estelar	598	0.77	0.42	0	1
Vladimir a la Una	598	0.14	0.35	0	1
Aló Venezuela	598	0.09	0.28	0	1
Story Number	598	9.14	6.21	1	29

Table A-5. Explaining Variations in the Index of Bias OLS Model of Bias Index

	β	s.e.	P-value
Municipal Elections	-0.25	0.143	0.075
Street Demonstrations	-0.24	0.133	0.067
Shortages of Goods	-0.01	0.144	0.936
Noticias Globovisión Estelar	0.11	0.133	0.400
Vladimir a la Una	-0.04	0.163	0.785
Story Number	-0.03	0.006	<0.001
Intercept	0.38	0.183	0.040

Observations = 597
Adj R-squared = 0.0447

Note: The "International Dimensions of the Crisis" Juncture and "*Aló Venezuela*" were the reference categories, and thus omitted from the models.

Table A-6. Factor Analysis of Measures of Bias

Variable	Factor Loadings
Visibility Type	0.699
Minutes Visible	0.375
Actor Verbal Favorability	0.792
Actor Non-Verbal Favorability	0.757
Topic Verbal Favorability	0.601
Topic Non-Verbal Favorability	0.641
Observations	597

Eigenvalue = 2.6
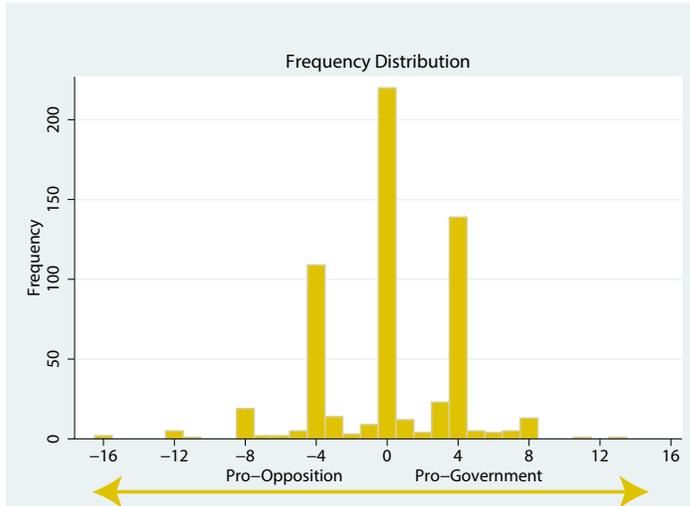
Figure A-1. Net Government Visibility Quality

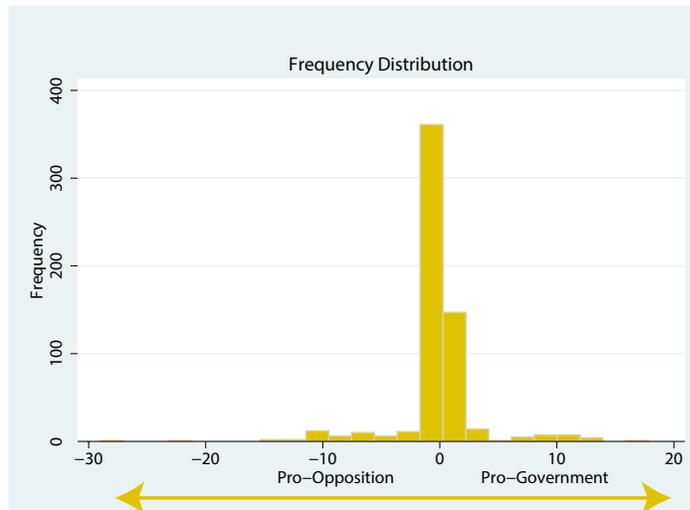*Figure A-2. Net Government Minutes Visible*

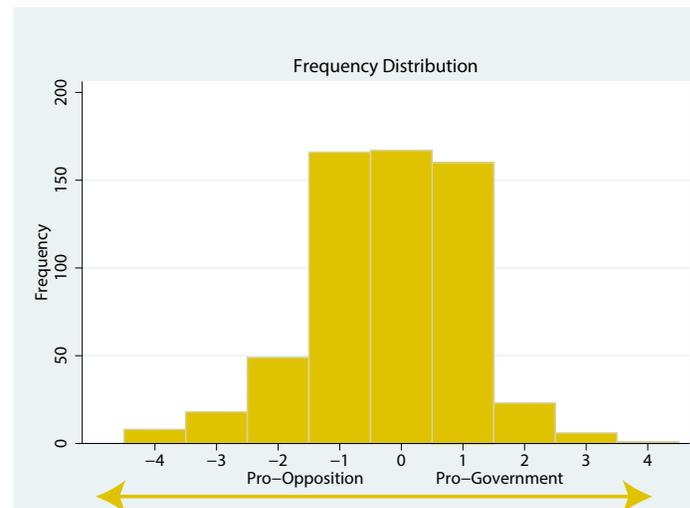*Figure A-3. Net Government Actor Favorability*

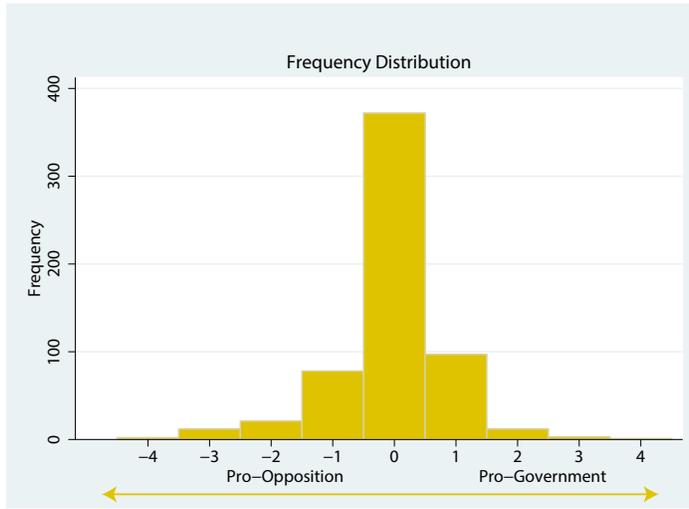*Figure A-4. Net Government Actor Non-Verbal Favorability*
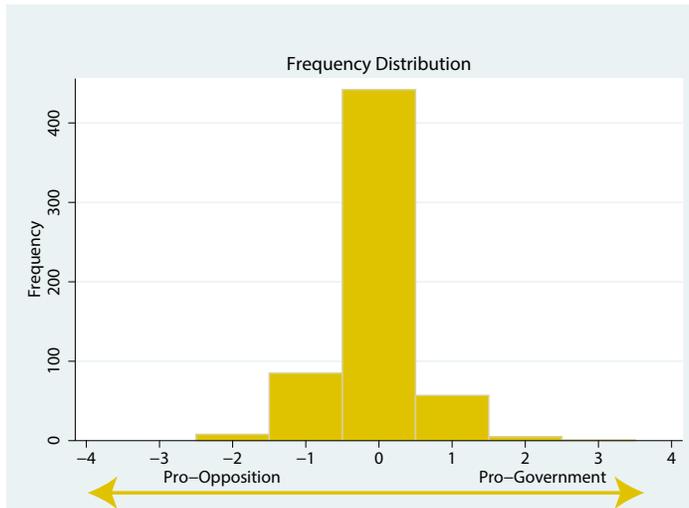

Figure A-5. Net Government Topic Favorability

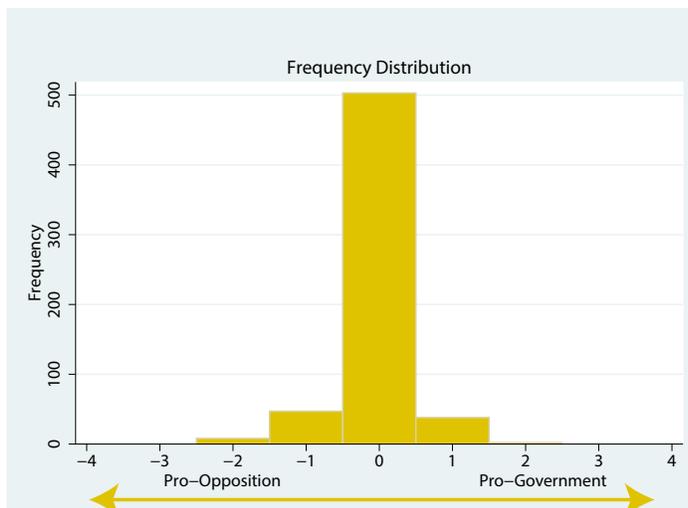*Figure A-6. Net Government Topic Non-Verbal Favorability*

Figure A-7. Pro-Government Bias and Story Prioritization: Scatter Plots by Critical Juncture

Graphs by Juncture Number