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**The Union of South American Nations**

**MAPPING MULTILATERALISM IN TRANSITION NO. 3**

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**ELECTIONS IN VENEZUELA**

After a partial solution to the crisis was accomplished, UNASUR embarked on another important responsibility at the regional level: monitoring the Venezuelan presidential elections to guarantee their transparency. Following President Chávez's death in the beginning of March 2013, the Venezuelan National Electoral Council convened new elections in April 2013, in which the main candidates were Nicolás Maduro and Henrique Capriles. Moreover, an invitation was made for UNASUR to play a supervisory role in the electoral polls, by being independent, impartial, and respecting Venezuelan sovereignty.<sup>25</sup> The agreement between Venezuela and UNASUR was signed on March 25th, and it formalized UNASUR's commitment to observe elections in that country.

The representative of the regional bloc's mission, Carlos Alvarez, made his trust for the Venezuelan electoral system explicit and reiterated the civic behavior that would be portrayed by it. The multilateral organization deployed approximately forty-two observers who were in charge of supervising the normal preparation for the elections through, among other ways, the monitoring of the machines in charge of registering the electronic votes. After election day, Alvarez maintained that the results that were divulged by the Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE) had to be respected, and hence, a possible recounting of the votes did not concern UNASUR, due to its acting as a neutral actor. If a recount happened, then it would be a sole concern for the Venezuelan authorities. This situation arose because the opposition candidate, Henrique Capriles, refused to recognize the results due to the narrow margin that led to his loss and, moreover, to the irregularities presented during the polls: "[The CNE] declared chavista Nicolas Maduro as the winner with 50.66% of the total votes, against 49.07% attributed to the opposition candidate Henrique Capriles, who did not accept the result and asked for a recounting of the total votes."<sup>26</sup> Even though a consensus was achieved among the heads of state in regard to this issue, in the beginning Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos manifested his intention to ask for a recount of the votes. Meanwhile, the heads of state of Argentina and Bolivia—Cristina Fernandez and Evo Morales— expressed their total rejection of this proposal.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, a delegation from UNASUR, composed of Brazilians, evidenced irregularities in the machines that identify fingerprints and showed that it was possible to vote without a proper match between identification number and fingerprint. However, the Council of Heads of State and Government adopted the Lima Declaration in April 2013 in which they continued to urge the parties to recognize the results. (28)

(28) Adrian Rivera, "Unasur presenci6 irregularidades con uso de m6quinas captahuellas," El Nacional, April 19, 2013, available at [www.el-nacional.com/politica/Unasur-presencio-irregularidades-maquinas-captahuellas\\_0\\_175182486.html](http://www.el-nacional.com/politica/Unasur-presencio-irregularidades-maquinas-captahuellas_0_175182486.html) ; Presidencia de la Rep6blica del Per6, "Declaraci6n del Consejo de Jefes y Jefas de Estado y de Gobierno de la Uni6n de Naciones Suramericanas (UNSAUR)," Lima, April 19, 2013, available at [www.presidencia.gob.pe/declaracion-del-consejo-de-jefes-y-jefas-de-estado-y-de-gobierno-de-la-union-de-naciones-suramericanas-unasur](http://www.presidencia.gob.pe/declaracion-del-consejo-de-jefes-y-jefas-de-estado-y-de-gobierno-de-la-union-de-naciones-suramericanas-unasur) .

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