

THE QUESTION OF STATUS IN PUERTO RICO REVISITED:

Rational-Choice, Spatial Analysis, and Heresthetics

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Introduction and background

One of the most discussed and analyzed issues in Puerto Rican politics is the question of the political status of the archipelago. For almost two centuries, this topic has characterized the entire debate, first with Spain, and presently with the United States. This ‘debate’ included several failed revolts for independence, movements for annexation, and movements for increased autonomy within the Spanish crown. Autonomists achieved their goal on November of 1897: Puerto Rico was granted an Autonomic Charter, which conceded political and administrative autonomy to the island. This new status did not last for long, however: the United States invaded the country in July 25, 1898, and Spain ceded Puerto Rico along with Cuba, the Philippines, and Guam in December of that year.

The overarching themes of political struggle, exclusion, and repression experienced under Spanish rule replicated themselves under American rule. This was particularly the case under the military and civil but undemocratic governments of 1898-1900 and 1900-1948. The situation changed somewhat in 1952, when the Constitution of the *Estado Libre Asociado* (lit. “Free Associated State”, usually

translated as “Commonwealth”) was established. Scholarly and political discussion remains divided on the significance of this event with regards to the status question¹. While some indicate that the Commonwealth signifies a different status to previously held ones, others claim that no such change occurred. They maintain that status has been the same since 1917, when Congress statutorily made all Puerto Ricans US citizens.

Previous research has delved into the issue² extensively. In particular, approaches with rational choice models have tried to elucidate and predict behavior in this regard. For instance, in *The Question of Status in Puerto Rico* (Garriga-Picó, 1979), the analysis assumed a plebiscitarian interpretation of general elections in Puerto

¹ The United States government indicates that Puerto Rico is a territory subject to Congress through the Constitution’s Territorial Clause (U.S. Const., Art. IV, Sec. 3, cl. 2). This position is held by *independentistas* and *estadistas*, and it’s also used by *soberanistas*, but it’s denied by others like *estadolibristas* who describe the 1952 constitution as a pact between Puerto Rico and the United States that solved unequivocally this issue. This will be further discussed in future sections of this paper.

² This paper revisits some of the discussion and findings of José Enrique Garriga Picó’s doctoral thesis, *The Question of Status in Puerto Rico: A Rational Choice Analysis* (NYU 1979). The literature involved, however, is not solely academic, but also political and institutional, with presidential taskforces and congressional commissions intervening in the discussion from time to time. Some of these reports are also used to elucidate the interpretation of the U.S. Congress to the post-2012 referendum situation.

Rico, and stated that the Commonwealth alternative was unambiguously the Condorcet candidate. That is, the alternative that given pair-wise contest against its competitors, -- here Statehood (annexation as the 51st state of the United States) and Independence -- could muster a majority in its support, even though in reality its real supporters were less than a majority. As foreshadowed by Garriga Picó, this was not a perennial situation. Because of a small change in the manner in which the alternative was presented to the electorate in 2012, Commonwealth was finally defeated with the combined votes of the pro-independence and pro-statehood electorate, leading to the current state of affairs, which will be discussed thoroughly in this paper.

In section 2, I begin with a discussion of party rankings of the status alternatives. In section 3, I analyze variations in the electorate's preferences between the 1998 and 2012 status referenda, and proceed to model and explain the reasoning behind these changes. In section 4, I evaluate the alternative presented by the Puerto Rican government to tackle the status conundrum. From the established data and assumptions, I indicate how such an alternative would lead to a solution to the issue at hand. I conclude that the status issue has now moved to a different situation, given the defeat of the status quo alternative.

Electoral organizations and their preferred status alternatives

In Puerto Rican politics, three major parties have shared nearly 100 percent of the vote in elections since 1968. The three parties are not symmetrically sized, and their

policy posturing is basically tied with status preferences: the *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* (PIP, Puerto Rican Independence Party) advocates for full independence; the *Partido Popular Democrático* (PPD, Popular Democratic Party) traditionally advocates for the status quo (the Commonwealth) yet is currently split on this issue; finally the *Partido Nuevo Progresista* (PNP, New Progressive Party) advocates for statehood. This special political condition allowed for a plebiscitarian analysis of elections, as conducted by Garriga Picó. However, the arrival of new parties, with policy-based instead of status-based platforms, may present obstacles to this approach. Of these parties, only one has a clearly identified status preference in their platform (and party name), the *Movimiento Unión Soberanista* (MUS, Sovereignist Union Movement). As a consequence, the arrival of MUS necessitates a departure from this method. Moreover, the presence of a status plebiscite, which provoked most parties to announce their preferences explicit or implicitly, facilitates this analysis.

PPD – a party with split preferences

The PPD is currently the governing party after receiving a plurality victory in the 2012 general elections. When confronted with the PNP-proposed plebiscite, which divided the status question into two³, the

³ The first question of the plebiscite was “Do you agree that Puerto Rico should continue to have its present form of territorial status? Yes ___ No ___” The second question said “Regardless of your selection in the first question, please mark which of the following non-territorial options would you prefer: Statehood ___ Independence ___ Sovereign Free Associated State ___”. (Source: Sample November 2012 plebiscite ballot, *Comisión Estatal de Elecciones* [CEE])

PPD leaders reached a joint conclusion, advocating for a Constituent Assembly (usually a *soberanista* proposal) instead of a plebiscite as a means to decide the status issue. However, the party's factions faced the plebiscite split, a sector advocating for a "Yes & Blank" vote and another championing either a "Yes & Sovereignty" or a "No & Sovereignty" vote.

Soberanistas – The Associated Republic or 'Sovereign Free Associated State'

The *soberanista* (pro-sovereignty faction) leaders like Carmen Yulín Cruz Soto, now mayor of San Juan, advocated for a vote for the ELA *Soberano* alternative (*Sovereign Free Associated State*), while denouncing the plebiscite as political trickery, claimed that their proposed Constituent Status Assembly presented a better alternative to settle in a more consensual manner the century old affair. Based on documents⁴ and many public speeches, I determined that their scale of preferences is 1) 'Sovereign Free Associated State' (which is basically free association or an associated republic); 2) Independence (due to the proximity to preference 1); 3) 'Enhanced Commonwealth' (due to its vague proximity); 4) Status quo; and 5) Statehood as their next worst and worst alternatives.

<http://ceepur.org/es-pr/Documents/PapeletaModeloPlebiscito12.pdf>.

⁴ Among others, the proposed *Pacto de Asociación* prepared by PPD senators Antonio Faz Alzamora and Ramón Luis Nieves. Available in English: (<http://www.pactodeasociacion.com/images/pdf/compactofassociationamended.pdf>)

Autonomistas or conservadores – Status Quo or 'Enhanced Commonwealth'

Governor Alejandro García Padilla, as well as other party strongmen like former governor Rafael Hernández Colón, currently lead the (slightly) majoritarian faction of the party. This faction either favors status quo or calls for the development of the Commonwealth within the Territorial Clause. For the plebiscite, this faction called for a 'Yes' vote on the first question (validating the current territorial status) and a blank vote on the second question as a means of protest against the design of the Plebiscite. Recently, however, during status hearings in Congress to discuss the results of the 2012 Plebiscite, it advocated for a vague political alternative, the 'Enhanced Commonwealth', which would make Puerto Rico able to choose (critics would rather say cherry-pick) which federal laws and regulations apply to the territory. Although the 2011 and 2007 President's Task Force reports dismissed this option on the grounds of it being unconstitutional, I include it in the options list because the analysis is focused on what parties prefer and actively discuss. From their definition of 'enhanced commonwealth' and based on the discussion that took place in the congressional hearings of August 2013, I identify this group's preferential order as: 1) Status Quo; 2) 'Enhanced Commonwealth'; 3) Sovereign Free Associated State; 4) Independence; and as the worst alternative for this group 5) Statehood (which, according to governor García Padilla, would be an economic disaster and would convert the island into a

‘Latin American ghetto’⁵).

PNP – The 51st State of the American Union

The PNP is the pro-statehood party and at the time of the plebiscite held power in all three branches of government. This party designed the 2012 Plebiscite in a two-step manner that was criticized by the PPD because it ‘created’ a majority against the status quo and could manufacture an ‘artificial’ majority for statehood. This group’s preference order is fairly easy to establish based on Garriga Picó’s analysis (1979) and confirmed by their leaders’ comments and attitudes in everyday debate. Their preference order is 1) Statehood; 2) Status quo (for fear or indifference of the subsequent alternatives, which increases based on how far away they get from the United States); 3) ‘Enhanced Commonwealth’; 4) Sovereign Free Associated State; 5) Independence.

PIP – Advocates for the Republic of Puerto Rico

The PIP is one of the most straightforward parties in terms of their expressed preferences. While they would support every alternative that moves the country towards independence, their worst alternative lies in statehood, because it forbids any future possibilities of independence. Such a position has often provoked their alliance with *populares*,

which made the Commonwealth alternative the Condorcet candidate: a desire to avoid annexation. Based on this, their preference order would be 1) Independence; 2) Sovereign Free Associated State; 3) Enhanced Commonwealth; 4) Status Quo; and 5) Statehood.

MUS – Sovereignty (Associated Republic/Sovereign Free Associated State)

The MUS is a recently formed political group, with a leadership consisting of old PIP leaders that disagree with some postures of that party, as well as some *soberanistas* that recognize in this party an alternative to force change for sovereignty. In general, it would seem they have the same order of preference as PPD *soberanistas*, and in their most preferred outcomes this is the case. However, their worst and next worst outcomes are inverted, for these voters would rather eliminate the territorial condition of Puerto Rico. This leads to the following preference order 1) Sovereign Free Associated State; 2) Independence; 3) ‘Enhanced Commonwealth’; 4) Statehood; and 5) Status Quo.

Voter preferences

The preceding discussion leads to the following table of preferences, with symbols *I* for independence, *A* for sovereignty (associated republic), *E* for ‘enhanced commonwealth’, *Sq* for Status Quo, and *St* for Statehood. This scale of preferences will again be discussed when dealing with the Constituent Assembly. Finally, each player’s

⁵ Caribbean Business *García Padilla: Statehood would turn PR into a ‘Latin American ghetto’*, June 17, 2013. <http://www.caribbeanbusinesspr.com/news/garcia-padilla-statehood-would-turn-pr-into-a-latin-american-ghetto-85655.html>

preference scale is assumed to be transitive. That is, if a voter prefers I to A, A to E and E to Sq, then it will always prefer I to Sq or I to E.

From this stated scale of preference, I will derive possible coalition-building processes in the Status Assembly discussed in section 4, a situation that lends itself to be

an apt case to apply the model established in *Forming Stable Coalitions* (Brams, Jones, and Kilgour 2005). With this model, it is possible to anticipate some of the dynamics that may arise within the proposed Constituent Assembly that would take place starting in 2014.

Table 1. Voter preferences over status alternatives in Puerto Rico.

Party/Preference	Best (1)	Next Best (2)	Indifferent (3)	Next worst (4)	Worst (5)
<i>Independentistas</i>	I	A	E	Sq	St
<i>Soberanistas (P)</i>	A	I	E	Sq	St
<i>Soberanistas (M)</i>	A	I	E	St	Sq
<i>Conservadores</i>	Sq	E	A	I	St
<i>Estadistas</i>	St	Sq	E	A	I

Source: Author's calculations based on explicit and implicit preferences of the leadership of political organizations in Puerto Rico (2012-2013).

The Status Question Revisited

The 1998 and 2012 plebiscites

most recent plebiscites, which will lead the argument on the following sections of this paper.

Below I present the data of the two

Table 2. The 1998 plebiscite⁶

Choice	Percentage obtained
Statehood	46.60%
Independence	2.60%
Free Association	0.30%
Territorial Commonwealth	0.01%
None of the Above	50.5%

⁶ It must be noted that in 1998 the 'None of the above' option was favoured by the PPD, for they were not satisfied with the definition of commonwealth there involved, so it should be read as a victory for the status quo alternative.

Table 3. The 2012 plebiscite results.

First Question	Percentage (without blanks)	Percentage (Total)	Second question	Percentage (without blanks)	Percentage (Total)
Yes	46.00%	44.04%	Statehood	61.11%	44.60%
No	54.00%	51.70%	Sovereignty	33.34%	24.33%
			Independence	5.55%	4.05%
Blanks	-	3.55%	Blanks	-	26.02%
Null	-	0.71%	Null	-	0.99%

Source: CEE, 2013.

The new voter distribution

As can be seen, the voter distribution drastically changed in the left side of the left-right/independence-statehood continuum in the 2012 plebiscite in relation to the 1998 and other previous referendums. This can be explained by several factors, one being the new manner in which the referendum was conducted. However, the aftermath and political realignment observed would suggest that this new equilibrium responds to a change in the distribution. There are several ways to explain this political realignment of forces, the defeat of the status quo, and the increase of support to the sovereignty and independence alternatives when comparing the results of the 1998 and 2012 referenda. These range from demographic, cultural, social, and political phenomena and changes that have occurred in the fourteen years between both referendums. However, these phenomena have one common link: the economic decline that started around 2005 and continues to this day.

The economic contraction experienced in Puerto Rico has been severe

with a fall in output as measured by Gross National Product of 12.74 percent between 2006 and 2013. We can find decreases in the participation and employment rates (from 48.9 percent to 41.7 percent and from 43.75 percent to 35.45 percent, respectively, between the same years), and increases on unemployment, which currently stands at 14.7 percent⁷. The negative economic situation has spilled over to other spheres of society in combination with other structural problems in Puerto Rico; such as high inequality levels, government inefficiency and short-sightedness, budget reliance in cyclical income and debts, as well as the loss of competitiveness. The situation has also generated higher levels of criminality, massive emigration levels that rival migration patterns of the last six decades, and a general loss of confidence in the economic and political model of the Commonwealth, as evidenced by a recent poll conducted by Puerto Rico's main newspaper, *El Nuevo Día*. However, the

⁷ Data has been drawn from the following sources: GNP (Junta de Planificación), Participation Rate (Departamento del Trabajo y Recursos Humanos), Employment Rate (idem, author's calculation of provided data), Unemployment Rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

manner in which people react politically with respect to the status issue varies depending on the voters' previous preferences. I formalize in the following section the factors that lead to the electorate's status preference changes, which are based on the economic situation in Puerto Rico and on the expected utility that each voter ascribes to the relation held currently with the United States.

Modeling the voter distribution

To elaborate on the factors that led to status preference changes, I define the preferences of the electorate by modeling the observed and expected processes in the Puerto Rican and American economies with the general voting function being

$$v^P = (\pi)\Delta e_t + (1 - \pi)\mathbb{E}(u_i),$$

whence the individual voter preferences of the population (v^P) for preferences I, A, Sq and St, can be derived. In this model, economic performance of the commonwealth through time, e_t , is combined with the expected utility of the relation with the United States for each voter, (u_i), with preference weights π and $1 - \pi$. The expected utility function of the relation with the United States for the Puerto Rican electorate could be defined as

$$u_t = \frac{\mathbb{E}(b_{r+i})}{|(Y_{US_t} + \varphi)|^\theta} - \frac{\mathbb{E}(c_{r+i})}{|(Y_{US_t} + \varphi)|^{-\theta}}, f(Y + \varphi) \begin{cases} f \geq 0, \theta < 0 \\ f < 0, \theta > 0 \end{cases}$$

where the economic, cultural, legal (rights), and psychological benefits and costs (real or imagined) of the United States-Puerto Rico relation are expressed and weighed by the state of the American economy and a

variable which embodies non economic factors, φ . This weighting function increases either the effects of benefits or costs depending on the value of the function *per se* and who the individual voter evaluating the function might be through the values of the exponent, θ . Voters are also bounded to limits in the distribution such that v_i and v_a must never cross to the right of the middle of the distribution (that is, vote for statehood), and vice-versa for v_s . These constraints⁸ hold the preference order expressed earlier, therefore a violation of these restrictions will result in unsatisfactory outcomes.

Due to the negative conditions of the economy and to small, negative or near zero expectations of utility from the United States – i.e. the perceived benefits from the relation have been decreasing for a significant portion of the electorate, especially the voters that were to the left of the centrist alternative – the proportion of voters satisfied with retaining the status quo decreased to the point where the territorial status quo was defeated. This can be visualized in the spatial distributions for the electorate, which judging from the results obtained from the CEE, would be completely altered, as can be seen here.

It must be observed that both the original and the new distributions keep the median a shade to the left of the statehood

⁸ The constraints can be expressed as $v_i^P: (\pi)\Delta e_t + (1 - \pi)\mathbb{E}(u_i) \leq 0.5$ for independence supporters, $v_a^P: (\pi)\Delta e_t + (1 - \pi)\mathbb{E}(u_i) \leq 0.5$ for sovereignty supporters $v_{St}^P: (\pi)\Delta e_t + (1 - \pi)\mathbb{E}(u_i) \geq 0.5$ for statehood supporters, and no constraints exist for commonwealth-status quo supporters ($v_{Sq}^P: (\pi)\Delta e_t + (1 - \pi)\mathbb{E}(u_i)$).

voters. This is consistent with the results of the plebiscites, in which Statehood failed to attain a majority if one includes the protest blank votes, which conveyed in them a protest to the way the plebiscite had “loaded the dice” against their preferred alternative, status quo. The new distribution however says that the left tail grew in size while the peak shrank. This is due to the presence of the new alternative, sovereignty, which was supported officially by the MUS, as well as the *soberanista* faction of the PPD leadership. It obtained nearly 25 percent of the votes, vis-à-vis the 26 percent blank

votes that the rest of the PPD asked for. These voters may also include some

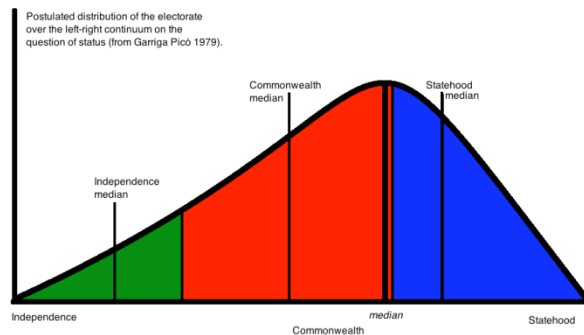


Figure 1. Postulated previous distribution (based from Garriga Picó 1979).

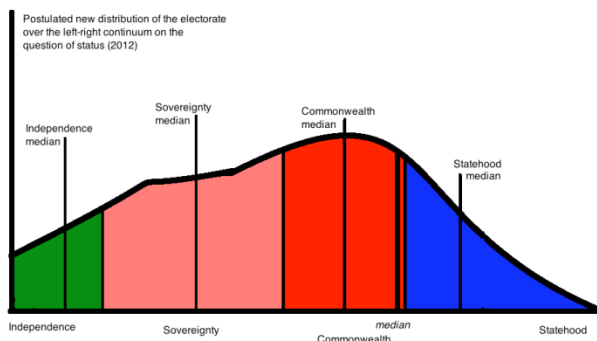


Figure 2 . Postulated new distribution (based on author's argument).

independentistas who decided to give their votes for their second best alternative, in an

effort to strengthen it against Statehood and the blank votes (perhaps as a show of force). This new distribution mostly affects the PPD. By finally allowing the party and outsiders to visualize the strengths of both sides, frictions and tensions have been on the rise in this centrist party. Although the search for a new equilibrium for their binomial inner distribution has proven difficult, it has led to the consideration and almost certain future approval of the Constituent Assembly of Status (CAS).

What's Next: the Constituent Assembly

For the 2012 elections the PPD proposed to tackle the status issue with an unprecedented mechanism, the CAS. Although Governor García Padilla appeared to be uncertain with regards to this alternative, he eventually reaffirmed that the CAS was a campaign promise, which would be activated in the early days of 2014 if the federal government failed to approve any significant related measure⁹. Three projects have been proposed, all of which call for a similar approach: 1) representatives will be elected proportionally and will negotiate with the Federal Government and themselves the different alternatives for a maximum of five years; 2) every solution must include the derogation of the Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act (which contains all laws pertaining the US-PR relation) and guarantee that it lies outside of the territorial clause of the US Constitution. This would

⁹ Caribbean Business *PPD cements constituent assembly pledge*, August 19, 2013. <http://www.caribbeanbusinesspr.com/news/ppd-cements-constituent-assembly-pledge-87835.html>.

rule out entirely the status quo alternative, which has been somewhat resisted by some, and provokes changes to the preferences available for the groups (Sq). To see how this could work, I will use the scale of preferences elaborated in section 2.2, along with the results of section 3.1, to build a scenario in this CAS.

Analyzing the Constituent Assembly of Status

I will make the following assumptions: (1) that the preferences and proportions hold from previous sections; (2)

that a 75 member CAS is approved; (3) that the alternatives here discussed are the only participants; and (4) that the MUS *soberanistas* and PPD *soberanistas* can be examined as one force due to their small differences in scale of preferences. This last assumption is made to simplify the analysis process. This leads to the following setup for inner assembly negotiations derived from Brams (1994). Here, N is an outcome in which no option triumphs. Every other outcome will be named with the abbreviations used before.

Table 4. Assumed seating share in the CAS derived from the results of the 2012 referendum.

Votes/Seats/Share			Party/Preference	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5
4.30%	3	4%	<i>Independentistas</i>	I	A ^(*)	E	Sq	St
24.58%	19	25.3%	<i>Soberanistas</i>	A ^(*)	I	E	Sq	St
26.27%	20	26.6%	<i>Conservadores</i>	Sq	E	A ^(*)	I	St
44.85%	34	45.3%	<i>Estadistas</i>	St	Sq	E	A	I
<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Original</i>			N	N	E	N	St
	<i>When E is eliminated, and I and S agree to keep at A</i>			N	A ^(*)	-	N	St

Projections of a negotiation process

Assuming for incomplete information in portions of this game and revelation as we move through successive rounds, at first the CAS does not appear to be of much use, finding equilibrium at the E , which is an unconstitutional alternative. The St outcome in round 5 is not attainable and

cannot hold in reality (anti-statehooders will not vote for statehood, anti-independence voters will not vote for independence). Now let us assume that the *soberanistas* and *independentistas* know of the *conservadores* preference scale just before I . If this is the case, then *soberanistas* will not budge from their initial status (shown as A^(*)) and *independentistas* will try to hold at their next

best alternative just until the point where the *conservadores* reach the conclusion that A is the best outcome they will reach via majority.

This strategic vote can only be replicated satisfactorily on alternatives A and E, but E will be ruled out once it is proposed to Congress. *St* (Statehood) would not be preferred by this process if these assumptions hold, because every other player has identified Statehood as its least favorable outcome. This may not necessarily be the case in real life: there are voters who will probably ‘jump’ in their preference scales because they do not necessarily accommodate to the generalized assumptions made in section 2. Assuming again that these assumptions hold, the third most favored option (sovereignty) would become the successful winner, solving the status problem, although this can only be attained with a grand alliance of every player that does not support the *St* alternative.

Projections of coalition building in the Constituent Assembly of Status

Following Brams, Jones, and Kilgour’s (2005) model for coalition building and the discussion of previous sections, I examine how the dynamics of the assembly may be understood in a somewhat different manner than the one established in the preceding section. Using the two methods described in this model, fallback (FB) and build-up (BU) processes¹⁰, one may find distinct stable and

semi-stable coalitions forming depending on players’ preference order. In this application, players have different weights, as identified in table 4. Recall that players’ preferences have been identified in table 1. Again, for simplicity, the *soberanistas* of the MUS are combined with the *soberanistas* of PPD. For the initial scenario, we may identify the preferences in this very same manner:

Initial state I: A E Sq St A: I E Sq
St Sq: E A I St St: Sq E A I

where the probable coalitions to be formed are identified in Table 5 following the fallback and build-up processes. Assuming no inner-party or coalition dissensions, it unfolds in the following manner:

¹⁰ As discussed in Brams, Jones, and Kilgour (2005), fallback and build-up differ in the satisfaction of members with their fellow coalition members: in FB, players need only be deemed acceptable which may not prevent a desire to belong to another coalition. In BU, coalitions are

comprised of members whose members rank each other – and no players outside the coalition – the highest. The latter are more stable than the former.

Table 5. Coalitions formed in the CAS with options A, E, I, Sq, St(1).

		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>FB coalitions formed</i> (* = majority)	IA (29.3%)	IASq (for A)* IASq (for E)* (55.9%)	IASq (for A, I, E, and Sq)* (55.9%)	IASqSt* (for all) (100%)
	<i>BU coalitions formed</i> (* = majority)	IA (29.3%)	IASq (for A)* IASq (for E)* (55.9%)	IASq (for A, I, E, and Sq)* (55.9%)	IASqSt* (for all) (100%)

That is, even when both I and A find themselves as the others' most preferred partner, they cannot reach a majority, falling short by 20.8 percent of that outcome. A fallback to the next level produces two level-2 majority coalitions with different outcomes (Associated Republic and Enhanced Commonwealth) due to the **Sq** player split preference between Status Quo and the Enhanced Commonwealth. The process is then supposed to stop and we designate these coalitions as FB₁, that is, the set of FB coalitions formed first. In this case, for illustrative purposes, further levels have been identified with results becoming increasingly ambiguous and, finally, unfeasible. It is important to notice that player **St** stands as the least preferred

partner for every other player. This makes it impossible for him to side with **Sq** at the level 1 fallback, which would have led to the victory of Sq forces by a supermajority. We also notice that BU coalitions are identical to those reached by FB, due to the preference ordering that positions player **St** as the last alternative.

However, alternative E (Enhanced Commonwealth) has been disqualified and questioned by federal reports and officials (such as the Presidential Task Force reports and the recent Congressional hearings in August 2013), since it would violate the U.S. Constitution, thus being an unviable alternative. This leads us to reduce the preference ordering by eliminating E. The new ranking unfolds as follows:

Reduced state **I**: A Sq St **A**: I Sq St **Sq**: A I St **St**: Sq A I

where the probable coalitions to be formed are identified as in the previous table:

Table 6. Coalitions formed in the CAS with options A, I, Sq, St (2).

		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>FB coalitions formed</i> (* = majority)	IASq (55.9%)*	IASq (for Sq or I)*	IASqSt (for all)*
	<i>BU coalitions formed</i>	IASq	IASq (for Sq)	IASqSt (for

	(* = <i>majority</i>)	(55.9%)*	or I)*	all)*
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The result is that in the very first level we obtain for both FB and BU processes a majority coalition, under all the assumptions previously espoused (transitivity, party and coalition discipline). The result in this case is that $FB_1 = BU_1$ unequivocally for associated republic (A). If players fallback for a second time (which is not the case here), the coalition building process will oscillate between the status quo and the independence alternatives. The result is similar to the one shown in Table 5. However, the elimination of alternative E as an option provokes the consummation of a majoritarian coalition at an earlier stage. Thus, the associate republic alternative results victorious in the CAS due to the bargaining process among coalition members. It is worth mentioning that this alternative was the second (or third) most favored option in the 2012 referendum.

Concluding remarks

Heresthetics is a word that must be used to describe several events in recent and future Puerto Rican electoral processes related to status. The word, coined by Riker (1986), is related to the art of political manipulation; that is, a strategic manipulation of behavior and outcomes through logical, grammatical, or rhetoric tools. The manner, by which the

Commonwealth alternative was eliminated, for instance, in the 2012 plebiscite, speaks of a certain degree of manipulation. By isolating the former Condorcet candidate in a different question, both tails of the electoral distribution could join forces to see it defeated.

A less subtle and less effective manipulative action occurred in that very same Plebiscite, when the CEE certified Statehood as the winner with 61% of the votes cast. The problem is that blank votes were not counted for that purpose and no option such as “none of the previous alternatives” was available as it was in the 1998 plebiscite. The PPD leadership favoring the status quo instructed their followers to leave that portion blank, in an effort to protest this apparent exclusion of their formula. It could be argued that PNP manipulated the process to make its alternative the clear winner, but failed to do so, as has been evidenced both in the congressional hearings of August and in the report made by the Congressional Research Center. Heresthetics is a factor that cannot be ruled out, and actually will be expected when working with the future CAS. In particular, vote-trading in the CAS that does not resonate with popular sentiment can make this new process fail in its last stages by making a winning option lose in a confirmation vote in referendum.

Finally, an alternative that must be discussed to arrive at a solution to the status issue while guaranteeing at all times the electorate's satisfaction is approval voting. In approval voting, the voter can exercise his real preferred vote (i.e., he/she need not be insincere and vote for a next best). This is the case because this electoral approach allows for the voter to indicate his

preference scale. If his candidate is eliminated and no majority is obtained at first, the vote is transferred to his second alternative, and so on, until the majority condition is satisfied. The end result is that the most approved candidate is decidedly the victor, avoiding misunderstandings and heresthetic or manipulative interpretations.

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