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Hugo Chavez's discourse and personality influence on Venezuelan foreign policy towards the United States (1998-2012)

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Introduction

Hugo Chávez was probably one of the best known political leaders in the world. Even four years after his death, he remains as such. He was internationally acclaimed and criticized, and ever since his rise to power he has been labeled as controversial.

He was and still is a character difficult to understand. Opinions about who he was and what his motivations were seem to be very different. Today, every detail about his childhood or any event about his past is distorted: it is either glorified or demeaned, depending on whether it is to support him or not¹. The same could be said about the information given by Chávez himself. Additionally, he enjoyed speaking about his past and his accomplishments, however, it is never clear to what extent it is true.

With 56,2% of support in the 1998 elections, Chávez started what would become a new chapter in not only Venezuelan, but also in international and regional history. He changed the traditional line of Venezuelan foreign policy, frequently defying the United States. He became the image of the less fortunate and a revolutionary for a change.

Having lived through the political and social changes in Venezuela, and as a Venezuelan researcher, it seemed profoundly interesting to understand better Hugo Chávez and its complex personality from an academic point of view.

The research will be based on a hypothetico-deductive method, using Foreign Policy Analysis as the explaining theory. The main objective is to properly respond to the following research question:

How did Chávez's political discourse and personality influence Venezuelan foreign policy towards the United States during his mandate (1998-2012)?

¹ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. Hugo Chávez: The Definitive Biography of Venezuela's Controversial President. Pg. 13

In order to do so, a hypothesis will be presented. Due to the turbulent relationship between Venezuela (under Hugo Chávez) and the United States, the latter will be the case study of the research.

Predictions about the hypothesis' results will be introduced and after the data analysis, a conclusion on whether the hypothesis can be confirmed or not will be discussed.

Hypothesis presentation

The political discourse of Hugo Chávez and his personality influenced Venezuelan foreign policy towards the United States by not making rational decisions but belief-oriented decisions.

Hugo Chávez arrival in power was a rupture with the traditional national political order, but it also meant a shift in foreign policy. Venezuela is an oil producer country and historically, it has had a certain position in the international sphere, related to its energetic interests. It had several main objectives at the international level, such as: to maintain stable relations with the United States, to be against authoritarianism in Latin America and the Caribbean and to guard the national borders².

Even though at first Chávez maintained Venezuela's traditional alliances, throughout he started to present his type of diplomacy. Chávez's proposal was a rupture with the old system. He based himself in the Bolivarian ideas of Latin-American integration, fighting repression and injustice. His foreign policy had several characteristics:

1. To strengthen sovereignty by promoting a multipolar order (against "American hegemony"),
2. To overcome globalization and to have closer ties with non-traditional countries (such as Iraq, China, Cuba and Iran),
3. To become close to radical parties such as Latin-American leftist movements and guerrillas, and

² Mora Brito, Daniel. 2004. "La Política Exterior de Hugo Chávez En Tres Actos (1998-2004)." *Aldea Mundo* 8(16): pg. 77

4. To reorient Venezuela's role in multilateral organizations³.

Venezuela started to close its ties with Cuba, the more symbolic “anti-American” country. Simultaneously, tensions raised with Colombia, United States’ principal ally in the region. Different trade agreements were made with Cuba and several nations on the Caribbean to resist the “American imperialism” and the American influence in the region’s politics. On the other hand, several institutions were created as an alternative to American initiatives in the region.

It must be questioned, then, if Hugo Chávez’s foreign policy towards the United States was rational or if it was ideology-based. Were these policies and initiatives beneficial for Venezuela? Different arguments could lead to the conclusion that these decisions were belief-oriented and not rational:

- Chávez’s decisions were rarely advised, since his figure was seen as the maximal authority within the political party. His orders were authoritarian and he used to “rule by diktat”⁴.
- Chávez’s beliefs were strong, and he saw himself as a warrior against injustice. This would mean that his main goal was to achieve his ideological ideas, even if it did not bring back any economic profit.
- Considering that during Chávez mandate oil prices soared, he had a financial stability and an enormous budget at his disposition. This caused better conditions for him to finance social programs and institutions, without truly looking to gain a profit from the interactions, other than ideological satisfaction. This would signify that Chávez profited from a “oil-diplomacy” to achieve his ideological objectives⁵.

³ Mora Brito, Daniel. 2004. *Op.cit.* pg. 78

⁴ Aponte-Moreno, M. and L. Lattig. 2012. “Chávez: Rhetoric Made in Havana.” *World Policy Journal* 29(1):33–42. Pg. 6

⁵ Molina Medina, Norbert. 2009. “La Nueva Política Exterior de La Revolución Bolivariana : Un Viraje Hacia El Continente Asiático (1999-2008).” *Revista Venezolana de Ciencia Política* 35: pg. 119.

Taking into account these facts, it can be deduced that decisions concerning foreign policy towards the United States were made based on Chávez's own beliefs and ideologies. Therefore, not based on a rational, gain-loss-oriented, logic.

Theoretical framework: Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)

Introduction to the theory

Foreign Policy Analysis is a subfield of International Relations Theory. It develops agent-centered theory and assumes that everything that happens in international relations is a result of human decision-making.

The theory dates to the 1960s and its foundation was built around three principal works. Firstly, in 1954, "*Decision making as an approach to the study of International Politics*", by Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin; who inspired others to look below the nation-state level of analysis and emphasized decision-making and not the policy outcome. Secondly, "*Pre-theories and Theories of Foreign Policy*", by Rosenau. He encouraged the development of a theory that could link grand principles with reality, and to better understand the subject, information must be from different level of analysis. Lastly, "*Man-Milieu Relationship Hypotheses in the Context of International Politics*", by Sprout and Sprout; which highlights the importance of studying the "psycho-milieu" of the individuals and groups making the foreign policy decision⁶.

Moreover, FPA is a theory that focuses on the decision-making process of a policy and not its outcome. It gathers information and integrates it at different levels of analysis; taking into account the cognitive and psychological aspect of the decision-makers.

The level of analysis helps to better understand the decision-making process. First, the systemic level focuses on the international system and its interactions. Second, the state level refers to the state itself as a rational actor who defends its interests. Lastly, the

⁶ Hudson, Valerie M. 2005. "Foreign Policy Analysis : Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations." Foreign Policy Analysis 1: Pg. 10

individual level where the decision-making process is analyzed through individual perceptions and characteristics.

Since it is the subject's personality and discourse that will be analyzed, the research will be focused on the individual level of analysis. However, elements of the state level will be used, such as Boulding's national image. It is interesting because FPA proposes an assessment of character and how it can be linked to foreign policy decisions.

Character and personality

Political psychology is used in this area to better understand the leader and its decision-making process. In addition, there are several factors that can influence the decision, not only at the time of making it but also at the cognitive level. Some elements include stress, formative events, need for power, among others.

George, in 1969, based his work on Leites' operational code. The aim was to study the leader personality effects on foreign policy. To do so, he presented two categories of five questions each that would help to better understand the leader's opinions and belief towards certain matters. The first category are the philosophical questions, which try to identify the leaders' core beliefs:

1. What is the "essential" nature of political life? Is the political universe essentially one of harmony or conflict? What is the fundamental character of one's political opponent?
2. What are the prospects for the eventual realization of one's fundamental political values and aspirations? Can one be optimistic, or must one be pessimistic on this score; and in what respects the one and/or the other?
3. Is the political future predictable? In what sense and to what extent?
4. How much "control" or "mastery" can one have over historical development? What is one's role in "moving" and "shaping" history in the desired direction?
5. What is the role of "chance" in human affairs and in historical development?

The second category is the instrumental beliefs, which treat about practical questions:

1. What is the best approach for selecting goals or objectives for political action? what one should strive for, and what the goals and objectives of action should be when an "opportunity" to make gains arises?
2. How are the goals of action pursued most effectively?
3. How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?
4. What is the best "timing" of action to advance one's interest?
5. What is the utility and role of different means for advancing one's interests?⁷

After composing the operational code, it will be interesting to use it to identify Hugo Chávez's presidential characteristics, using Preston's and Barber's respective typologies.

The research will be divided in three chapters. First, a description of Hugo Chávez's life and characteristics will be presented. Second, the Hugo Chez's operational code will be developed. Lastly, the operational code will be a guidance for the analysis that will lead to confirm or not the hypothesis

⁷ George, Alexander L. 1969. "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making." *International Studies Quarterly* 13(2): 190–222.

Chapter I

Subject description

1. Who was Hugo Chávez

Even though Hugo Chávez was a difficult figure to decode, scientific literature has agreed on several key characteristics about Hugo Chávez. To better understand his personality, the origins of his discourse and, eventually, his decision-making style, it is necessary to outline his life in several points. First of all, his childhood will be explained; since it eventually influenced his decisions and his outlook on life. Secondly, his military education and career, which is considered as his principal trait. Thirdly, his electoral outcome. Moreover, the media phenomenon he impersonated; and finally, his relationship with Fidel Castro.

1.1 Early life

Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías was born the 28th of July 1954 in Sabaneta, Venezuela. He was the second of six children and their family financial situation was precarious. Both parents were school teachers and their income was roughly enough to support the household. With a new baby on the way, the Chávez family made a decision. Rosa Inés Chávez, his paternal grandmother, offered to take Hugo and his brother Adán to live in her house to help the family with the expenses and the children's care. By this time, Hugo Chávez is three years old, and he will never return to live with his mother⁸.

⁸ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.* pg. 24

This will have an enormous impact on Chávez's life, since he will develop a strong emotional bond with his grandmother, who will become a great influence for him. This arrangement raises a contend about his childhood. On the one hand, some believe that his financial and family situation made his childhood a difficult one, and in addition, created a resentment towards his mother. On the other hand, others believe that it was rather a happy childhood, since this kind of agreement was common in the rural Venezuela at the time. Chávez himself had never referred to this period of his life as a sad moment; he recalled these years as "poor but happy".⁹

Growing up, Chávez had two passions: painting and baseball. When his biggest baseball idol passed away in an airplane crash, he left behind his desire to become a painting and decided he wanted to pursue a career as a Major-League baseball player. Even when he decided to join the army, he did it as a means to achieve his goal. Joining the army will allow him to go to Caracas, and his plan was to stay there to focus on baseball. Being part of a conspiracy against the government and becoming president were not in his mind at all¹⁰.

Hugo Chávez moved to the city of Barinas to go to high school, since in Sabaneta the education ended with primary school. He lived there with his grandmother and subsequently, his entire family also relocated to Barinas. While there, Hugo Chávez did what teenagers at the time used to do: play baseball and hang out with friends. At this time, he will develop two traits that are going to be representative of his character: singing and talking – a lot. He used to meet with friends to listen and sing to *llaneras*, Venezuelan typical music and sing; as well as discussing current events for several hours.¹¹

Furthermore, after arriving to Barinas he met José Esteban Ruíz Guevara. Hugo had befriended two of his sons, Vladimir and Federico; the two named after Lenin and Engels, respectively. He would become his first mentor and intellectual guide. Hugo Chávez would go to the Ruiz's house and listen to José Esteban talk about Marxism, communism

⁹ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.* pg. 9-13

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pg. 28

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pg. 24-25

and Venezuelan history. This was the first contact he had with leftist ideology and will influence his thoughts later on.

In 1971, he moves to Caracas to enter the military academy. He was never seen as someone who was going to change the history of the country, and neither were his aspirations. He was seen as a “happy, polite young man with a normal amount of self-confidence”.¹² However, when he arrived at the academy, he brought with him one book that meant the start of a new life: *The Diary of Che Guevara*.¹³

1.2 The soldier

The night of February 4th, 1992, changed Venezuelan history. Hugo Chávez and a group of military conspirators staged a coup d'état against the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez. Early that day, Venezuelans saw the first glimpse of Hugo Chávez, a commander who took responsibility for the “Bolivarian military movement” and who stated that “for now, the objectives (...) were not achieved”.¹⁴

Chávez first introduction to the Venezuelan society was as a coup leader but mainly, as a soldier. His military career and education had a great impact in his personality. He described that once he was in the military academy he felt that he had “discovered the essence of life” and his “true vocation”.¹⁵ The academy would be the place where his “political motivation flourished” and where he “began to feel drawn to the leftist military regimes of Latin America”.¹⁶

At the beginning, Chávez was just another cadet. He is remembered by his classmates as an excellent baseball player, a sometimes rebellious and competitive student, someone who had a “real way with words”; in any case, someone rather apolitical.¹⁷ He was never active in the Communist Party or participated in any political endeavor. However, from

¹² Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 29

¹³ *Ibidem*

¹⁴ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Frases y Pensamientos de Hugo Chávez*. Pg. 140

¹⁵ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 34

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pg. 35

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pg. 30-31

his first year he studied political science and military theory; he read Mao, Bolívar, Napoleon, Hannibal, among others.¹⁸

After graduating the military academy, Hugo Chávez's political aspirations grew and he started to see himself as a man with a destiny, with a mission to accomplish. He wasn't only a soldier, he was a Bolivarian revolutionary soldier. He thought Venezuela was governed by corrupts and that the people were not being considered. Indeed, corruption was one of Venezuela's biggest problems, and the democratic system had been shared between two political parties over the last four decades.

Hugo Chávez strongly believed that Bolivarianism was the way to overcome the political and social problems that he saw in the Venezuelan society. Just like Bolivar did at the time, Chávez thought that he needed to undertake a "war" against repression, against oligarchs and against "the powerful". However, at the time, Venezuela was going through a period of political stability and economic boom due to the oil industry; so, he must be patient to start "the revolution"¹⁹.

The conspiracy begun around 1977 when he started to feel frustrated about how the country was governed. Chávez created the *Ejército de Liberación del Pueblo de Venezuela*²⁰. He started to meet with other people, introduced by the Ruiz' sons and others within the army who had the same thoughts. One of these men was Douglas Bravo, a guerrilla commander. Through him a group of insurgents was formed with soldiers. Their association was dissolved due to different opinions about the participation of civilians in the movement²¹.

What happens next is prove that Hugo Chávez was always full of symbolism, and that he has "an affinity for drawing parallels between landmark moments in his life and certain historical events"²². In order to create a new movement, the *Ejército Bolivariano Revolucionario*, and to immortalize it, Hugo Chávez and three other officers, Felipe

¹⁸ Harnecker, Marta. 2002. Hugo Chávez Frías: Un Hombre, Un Pueblo. Pg. 9

¹⁹ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit* pg. 39

²⁰ Author's translation: The Liberation Army of the People of Venezuela

²¹ Aponte-Moreno, M. 2008. "Metaphors in Hugo Chávez's Political Discourse: Conceptualizing Nation, Revolution and Opposition." Pg. 90

²² Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 49

Acosta Carles, Raúl Baduel and Jesus Urdaneta, swore an oath underneath a historic tree. The *Saman de Güere* is where Simón Bolívar is believed to have rested before the Battle of Carabobo, the one that attained Venezuelan independence. The three men paraphrased the words that Bolívar pronounced in the hill of Monte Sacro, in 1805, swearing to liberate Venezuela from the Spanish yoke²³:

“I swear to the God of my fathers; I swear on my homeland, I swear on my honor, that I will not let my soul feel repose, nor my arm rest until my eyes have seen broken the chains that oppress us and our people by the order of the powerful”²⁴.

The movement continued to grow, and eventually changed its name to the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement, to include the civilian elements that were incorporated to the organization.

Carlos Andrés Pérez was reelected in 1988, and in 1989, after issuing a package of economic adjustments, riots went off in Caracas. What it is known as the *Caracazo* took place on February 27, 1989, and Chávez considered it as the prove that the conditions to start the revolution were there.

After a few years of planning and conspiring under the nose of his superiors, the night of February 4th, 1992, Hugo Chávez and a group of 4 lieutenant colonels, who at the same time commanded their troupes, stormed the cities of Maracaibo, Valencia, Maracay and Caracas in insurgency, staging a coup d'état against Carlos Andrés Pérez. Everything went well except in Caracas, where the capture of the president never took place. Hugo Chávez had to surrender early in the morning and the coup was recognized as a failure. Nevertheless, this event would have an enormous impact in Chávez's life and political career.

He was asked to address his fellow insurgents to ask them to surrender, and did the speech that would become one of his most famous speeches:

“First of all, I want to way good morning to the people of Venezuela. This Bolivarian message is for the brave soldiers who are presently at the Paratroopers' Regiment in Aragua and the Armored Brigade in

²³ Aponte-Moreno. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 91

²⁴ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 48

Valencia. *Compañeros*: unfortunately, for now, the objectives we established in the capital were not achieved. That means that we, here in Caracas, did not succeed in taking control. You did an excellent job out there, but it is now time to avoid more bloodshed, it is now time to reflect. New situations will present themselves. The country must find the definitive path toward a better destiny. Listen to what I say. Listen to Commander Chávez, who send out this message so that you will please reflect and lay down your weapons, because now, truly, it is impossible for us to meet the objectives we established on a national level. *Compañeros*: listen to this message of solidarity. I thank you for your loyalty, your bravery, your generosity, and as I stand before the nation and all of you, I assume the responsibility for this Bolivarian movement. Thank you very much.”²⁵

1.3 The electoral outcome

This 169-word speech was the turning point of Hugo Chávez’s career. From this moment on, he would gain popularity among the most disadvantaged. “For now”, was interpreted as a promise, a way of saying “to be continued”²⁶. In 1998, when he won the Presidential election with 56,2% of votes, he considered to have accomplished the first step of his mission.

His campaign was all about change, anticorruption and antiestablishment. It was undoubtedly a time when most of Venezuelans were feeling forgotten by their leaders, when the perception of corruption was increasing and when the people were tired of the same political system. Hugo Chávez was elected because people saw in him a change; a rupture of the old system, of the same old political parties²⁷. At the same time, the people voted for him because they saw in him a leader, someone who gave them hope for the future²⁸.

The next elections were also victories for Hugo Chávez. Immediately after taking power, he kept one of his promises and called for a constitutional assembly. This lead to drafting

²⁵ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 75

²⁶ *Ibidem*

²⁷ Canache, Damarys. 2002. “From Bullets to Ballots: The Emergence of Popular Support for Hugo Chávez.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 44(1): pg. 70

²⁸ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. XIX

a new constitution and once it was approved, new elections for all elected posts were called, including the presidency. Chávez won in 2000 with 60,3% of the votes²⁹.

In the new constitution, major changes were added. One of the most important was the introduction of a participative democracy. Referendums were an option for the people to change their leaders and to vote for important changes. In 2004, the opposition tried to oust him from power with a recall referendum; he won with 59% of the votes³⁰.

He and his party continued to win in every election from 1998 to 2007, when he lost a referendum demanding changes in the constitution. However, in the next elections Chávez or his party won the majority of the votes. His last electoral contest was in 2012, months before his death, which he won with 55,07% of the votes³¹. His victory in the ballots was not only due to the political context and the “perfect conditions” for him to win, it was also due to his great communications skills.

1.4 The media star

Hugo Chávez was not only a president, but a television star. He will definitely be remembered for several of his speeches and for his incendiary rhetoric. From his first TV appearance after the failed coup, to his last when he announced he was going to undertake medical surgery to treat his cancer, he used the power of words and the media to spread his message.

Chávez was one of the greatest examples of the mediatization of politics. He became the message and the means to transmit the message itself. His ability to communicate allowed him to become the figure of its own revolution, since his speech on the night of February 4th 1992³². Yet, his speech was largely based on himself, his experiences and his opinions.

²⁹ Canache, Damarys. 2002. *Op.cit.*, pg. 85

³⁰ Aponte-Moreno. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 67

³¹ Consejo Nacional Electoral. Retrieved from

http://www.cne.gob.ve/resultado_presidencial_2012/r/1/reg_000000.html? On April, 1 2017

³² Muñoz, Boris. 2009. “Cesarismo Mediático.” *Comunicación*: 5–11. Pg. 6

In his inauguration speech, in 1998, he used the personal pronoun “I” 44,8% of times. This represents the double of the immediate two former presidents³³.

He had his own talk show, on Sunday mornings, *Aló Presidente*. The show was unscripted, and it relied on whatever Chávez wanted to discuss that day. He would talk, sing, receive calls from the public, approve budget for new projects, tell stories about his childhood, and, regularly, speak against the opposition and the United States.

Apart from his TV show, mass media was his favorite way of communicating with the people. He used to address the nation through what it is known as “*cadena*”, which are special broadcasts. The particularity of the *cadena* is that the government can require private channels, TV and radio, to broadcast this transmission³⁴. Hugo Chávez, from 1999 to 2008 broadcast 1.179 hours through *cadena*, meaning 49 uninterrupted days³⁵.

He had a natural charisma that attracted everyone who saw him. He tried to appear as honest and humble as he possibly could. This way, he was trying to captivate the people, the less informed, the ones who felt forgotten. At the same time, he did not fear rising his voice to anyone. He would call Bush a “donkey” or fired a vast quantity of people from the state oil company in live television.

His discourse helped him to become a “hero”, the one who was sent to improve the political situation and fight against “imperial repression”, nationally and internationally. Chávez is known today as the face of the rebellion against the United States and the establishment; of the fight against the status quo.

Chávez, as previously mentioned, was full of symbolism. His discourse reflected his military career and his veneration for Bolívar. He would use an endless amount of metaphors when referring to his “revolution”. For example, his political project was seen as a “war”, elections as “battles”, social programs as “missions” and so on³⁶. His

³³ Cañizález, Andrés. 2012. *Hugo Chávez: La Presidencia Mediática*. Editorial ALFA. Pg. 99

³⁴ Hawkins, Kirk. 2003. “Populism in Venezuela: The Rise of Chavismo.” *Third World Quarterly* 24(6): 1137–60.

³⁵ Cañizález, Andrés. 2012. *Op.cit.*, pg. 99

³⁶ Aponte-Moreno, M., and L. Lattig. 2012. *Op.cit.*, pg. 36

revolution had him as the center figure and his word was usually considered as a command³⁷.

Internationally, he was actively looking for a new world order. He was not only fighting the “American hegemony” but also trying to reinforce the developing nations to unify, and present a strong front against the current international system. He approached particularly countries that were not Venezuela’s traditional allies and that, not coincidentally, were against US policies. Simultaneously, he tried to consolidate Latin American integration through the creation of different institutions and international social and economic programs.

1.5 Fidel Castro’s influence

To Hugo Chávez, having the support and the “blessing” of Latin America oldest and most known revolutionaries was definitely an accomplishment, since Castro represented the spirit of the revolution in Latin America and elsewhere³⁸.

This was the case when Hugo Chávez was invited to Cuba, just after being released from prison in 1994. Fidel Castro received him personally, at the door of the plane, as if Chávez were a head of state. It was the start of a close relationship that would have great influence in Chávez and in Venezuelan politics. Fidel Castro attended Chávez swearing-in ceremony, and between 1999 and 2004, the two would see each other on at least fifteen occasions³⁹.

Hugo Chávez deeply admired Fidel Castro. He said several times that “Fidel will never die”⁴⁰, since his lessons will live forever. Chávez inspired his slogan “Motherland, socialism or death” in Fidel Castro’s 1960 motto “Motherland or death” combined with

³⁷ Aponte-Moreno, M., and L. Lattig. 2012. *Op.cit.*pg. 37

³⁸ Ibidem

³⁹ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 215

⁴⁰ Rangel, José Vicente. 2013. *De Yare a Miraflores: El Mismo Subversivo: Entrevistas al comandante Hugo Chávez (1992-2012)*. Pg. 296

Che Guevara's "Socialism or death"⁴¹. However, according to Luis Miquilena (Chávez former advisor), "Chávez never considered the idea of a Fidel-style revolution"⁴².

Moreover, Chávez has been compared to Castro several times. They were both charismatic and "like[d] to provoke"⁴³. But at the discourse level, they had similar rhetorical strategies. Their revolutions were always referred to with grandeur adjectives; their rhetoric had a tone of familiarity and they both used historical figures to legitimize their projects. Military metaphors were also used by both leaders and, of course, the anti-American rhetoric; which was an essential factor of their close relationship.

Chávez stated in repeated occasions that Castro's opinion had an influence on him. When he was asked why did he surrender himself on April 2011, he said he thought of Fidel's words: "Chávez, those moments, when walking in the edge of life and death, one must prove if you are a leader or not"⁴⁴, which inspired him to go meet the insurgents.

Fidel had such an influence on Chávez, that it was Fidel Castro the one that convinced him to go under medical examination in 2011, and the one who let him know he had cancer. According to Chávez, Fidel said to him "What? Do you want to die? How come you don't want to examine yourself? (...) The life of a revolutionary comes first, Chávez"⁴⁵. This influence was very important for his national policies, since it bothered Venezuelan opposition; but at the same time, was important at the international level, since Western countries were concerned about a "second Cuba".

Their relation, other than fraternal, had several economic values to the Cuban nation, which was isolated due to the US embargo and profited from oil at advantageous prices in exchange of services and advises. For Chávez, it was beneficial since he was slowly appropriating Fidel's old role of Latin American revolution symbol.⁴⁶ Chávez admired Fidel so much that he admitted he could not decide whether to call him father or brother.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Aponte-Moreno, M. and L. Lattig. 2012. *Op.cit.*, pg. 34

⁴² Barrera Tyszka, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.ci.*, pg. 213

⁴³ Ibidem

⁴⁴ Rangel, Jose Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 256

⁴⁵ Rangel, Jose Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 386

⁴⁶ Meschkat, Klaus. 2006. "¿Qué Pensar de Hugo Chávez?" *Sociedad Hoy* 10:211–21. Pg. 217

⁴⁷ Barrera, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 220

After Chávez's death, Fidel said that the Cuban people had lost "the best friend they ever had"⁴⁸.

Undoubtedly, foreign policy under Chávez mandate was extremely influenced by his person and discourse. The latter was his biggest weapon and his personality, as presented beforehand, was the result of his formative events and his strong beliefs. This is the reason why, it is interesting to analyze to what extent Chávez's political discourse and his personality influenced Venezuelan foreign policy, and more specifically, foreign policy towards the United States.

2. Hugo Chávez ideology

2.1 Venezuela in the International system according to Hugo Chávez

In order to better understand Chávez's vision of the Venezuelan position in the international system, Boulding's theory of national image will be used. In his work, Boulding explains that an International System is a "group of interacting behavior units called 'nations' or 'countries', to which sometimes be added certain supra-national organizations such as the United Nations"⁴⁹.

However, these interactions are subject to decisions made by people, who are not objective but who follow the image of a certain situation. This would mean that it is the world as it is seen what determines the behavior and not the reality itself. Boulding states, then, that it is "always the image, not the truth, that determines the behavior"⁵⁰.

The image can be defined as "the total cognitive, effective, and evaluative structure of the behavior unit, or its internal view of itself and the universe"⁵¹. The image comes from the

⁴⁸"Fidel dijo que me intuyó, que sabía que iba a nacer": cómo influyó (e influye) en Venezuela la amistad entre Hugo Chávez y Castro". 2016. BBC Mundo. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-38119868> on May 24, 2017

⁴⁹ Boulding, K. E. 1959. "National Images and International Systems." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3(2): 120–31. Pg. 120

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

⁵¹ Ibidem pg. 121

decisions taken by the decision-maker, and since there is a plurality of decision-makers within the International system, there exist a high complexity. To simplify it, Boulding introduces two groups of people who influence the decisions: “the powerful” and “the ordinary”.

“The powerful” are a small group of people who actually make the decisions concerning action in the international system; whereas the ordinary are the mass of people who are directly affected by these decisions but have little or none effect in making them. Nevertheless, “the powerful” have some obligation of representing the mass, therefore, their support is important. Plus, the first group has the ability to manipulate the images of the mass⁵². This will have an important impact in the formation of nationality. In the case of new nations, “the powerful” would be inclined to impose an image of nationality. In the case of already constructed nations, nationality will be formed since childhood and within the family group; and “the powerful” will only tend to reinforce this image.

It is important to highlight that according to the author; national image is essentially an historical image. Since historians will divert the truth and tell the story from a vanquishing side, national image is “basically a lie, or at least a perspective distortion of the truth”⁵³. However, History is important because it represents a common experience. A nation is “a body of people who are conscious of having ‘gone through something’ together”⁵⁴. Without this sentiment of shared experience, there will be no shared national image.

After explaining the basic concepts, the main interest of this theory is the impact of national image in the relations between states. For Boulding, there are three different aspects to be taken into account: the geographical space, the level of hostility and friendliness and the perception of strength and weakness.

The geographical space is the first characteristic of a state as an organization. It is a basic feature of national image since it is in the collective mind as a territory delimited with

⁵² Boulding, K. E. 1959. *Op.cit.*, pg. 121

⁵³ *Ibidem* pg. 122

⁵⁴ *Ibidem* pg. 123

borders which must be protected and guarded, because of the “exclusiveness of territorial occupation”⁵⁵.

The level of hostility and friendliness does not have to be reciprocal between countries, and it is based on the image that one country has on the other. Friendly relations are frequently formalized by alliances, whereas hostile relations are characterized by the fact that one country always feels that the enemies are being more hostile towards them than them towards the enemies.

Strength and weakness can be the product of many elements, such as economic power, resources, productivity, political organization, tradition, among others. The strength is usually defined in military terms as “the ability to hurt an opponent or to prevent one’s self from being hurt by him”.

For Boulding, the international system’s equilibrium can be resume to the concept of “compatibility”. The more the system is compatible, the more it moves towards an equilibrium. However, the international system tends to be unstable due to incompatibility between its actors. He introduced the concept of “real incompatibility”, defining it as “two countries having “two images of the future in which realization of one would prevent the realization of the other”. He states that an “illusory incompatibility” can exist, as well, in which the parties have a condition of compatibility that would actually satisfy their interests, but misunderstandings lead them to increase the hostility.⁵⁶

Undoubtedly, Hugo Chávez’s national image comes from an historical image. Simón Bolívar and his independence fight had a great impression on him and his vision. In Venezuela, rural environments are believed to be more “patriotic” than great cities; and this had an influence on Chávez’s nationality development.

When he arrived in power, he became part of the group of the powerful. He wanted to include ‘the ordinaries’ into the decision-making process, and this is why he always said that “the people” were the main deciders of the destiny of the country. His discourse tried

⁵⁵ Boulding, K. E. 1959. *Op.cit.*, pg. 124

⁵⁶ *Ibidem* pg. 129-130

to represent the powerful without abandoning his former status as an ordinary, and therefore, appearing humble and causing the people to identify with him.

It can be observed that Hugo Chávez was able to combine both functions of “the powerful”. While using aspects of the shared History, such as Simón Bolívar, the independence and the Spanish yoke, he reinforced the already existent national image. However, he also added a new one, by imposing the fact that they were still an oppressed country by the forces of imperialism.

The previous statement shows from where Hugo Chávez’s vision of the international system is developed. Venezuela’s foreign policy was, traditionally, a compliant state that did not go against the hegemony and did not want to change the dynamics of the International system. Once Chávez’s arrived in power, the discourse changed and Venezuela became an anti-status quo country, basically due to his national image and his construction of the international system.

Geographically, Venezuela is a relatively big country located in the North of South America. His northern border is the Caribbean Sea, which in a logic of territorial expansion, could be an easy entry to the country. According to Boulding, expansion of territory can only be at the detriment of another. This was one of the main concerns of Hugo Chávez. It wasn’t only a concern of territorial occupation but a matter of intervention in his government and in society; thus, the words “Empire” and “Imperialism” to refer to the United States. This is why he frequently exhorted the sovereignty of people. The case of Colombia, close ally of the United States and the west neighboring country, can be an example of his geographical dimension influence on his national image.

Hostility and friendliness was mostly clear under Hugo Chávez mandate. Since he was against hegemony and great powers, his “friends” in the international systems were every country who supported this position. He approached non-traditional countries, such as Iran, Iraq, Libya and Russia. In Latin America, the rise of leftist governments made it easier for Chávez to formalize alliances with countries in the region, and make a united front against the “enemy”: The United States.

In regards of strength in the international system, the relationship with the United States became complex. Hugo Chávez believed they were abusing its power in order to oppress the weak or little countries; and that they have been doing so for the last century. He believed that Venezuela had every right to expand its military expenses to defend itself; and that the United States, the country with the biggest military expenditure in the world, could not accuse him of provoking an arms race⁵⁷. Furthermore, he tried to “protect” weak countries from great powers and fight for a more inclusive and equal distribution of power in the international system. Petrocaribe, an institution created in 2005, composed mostly by Caribbean small countries, is an example.

It is clear then that Hugo Chávez’s national image influenced on his construction of the International system, since his vision influenced the way he saw himself and the others. However, Boulding argues that national images are highly unsophisticated. Sophistication is the fact of being aware of one self as being part of a larger system. According to the author, the International system is not seen as a whole, but both the powerful and the ordinaries see it with a naïve, self-centered, unsophisticated image of the world in which a nation moves. Indeed, the international system is so unstable that the only hope to change it is to increase the levels of sophistication, in order to see through the eyes of the others⁵⁸

2.2 Official Foreign Policy under Hugo Chávez mandate

Hugo Chávez’s national image is expressed in his official political programs. He started to plan them years before his arrival in power. Documents can be found from 1996 explaining what his plans were for Venezuela. Moreover, the Bolivarian Alternative Agenda (1996) is considered to be the ancestor of his first political program. Foreign Policy is almost not mentioned, except for a proposal of how to deal with the external debt⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ Interview with Larry King. 2009. CNN.

⁵⁸ Boulding, K. E. 1959. *Op.cit.*, pg. 131

⁵⁹ Chávez, Hugo. 1996. Agenda Alternativa Bolivariana.

In his first political program that covers from 2001 to 2007 (*Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social de la Nación*⁶⁰), foreign policy is divided in five objectives:

1. Encourage multipolarity in the international society:

The objective is to revert the traditional concentration of power within International Organizations and to stimulate coordinated action from developing countries.

2. Promote Latin-American and Caribbean integration:

This to create an effective integration, through the exploit of a common identity, to foment South-South cooperation as well as North-South. Joining MERCOSUR is expected.

3. Strengthen and diversify international relations:

Cooperation between developing countries is necessary to well adjust a new multipolar system. The objective is to strengthen energetic relations with the United States, South America, the Caribbean, China, India and Russia; to boost South-South cooperation and to create new relations with other countries and regions.

4. Strengthen Venezuela's position in the international economy:

Through the OPEC and by increasing the strategic energetic associations.

5. Promote a new integral security regime

Even though this document signifies a rupture with traditional Venezuelan foreign policy, is not yet considered to have “aggressive” rhetoric against the United States. In fact, the United States are mentioned only twice, and it is strictly about energetic-related issues.

On the contrary, the second political plan (*Proyecto Nacional Simón Bolívar*⁶¹), covering 2007 to 2013, is openly socialist and the discourse is more hostile towards the United States and more anti-status quo. The words “imperialism” or “empire” (used to talk about

⁶⁰ República Bolivariana de Venezuela. 2000. Líneas Generales Del Plan de Desarrollo Económico Y Social de La Nación 2001-2007.

⁶¹ República Bolivariana de Venezuela. 2007. Proyecto Nacional Simón Bolívar: Primer Plan Socialista 2007-2013.

the United States) is found several times, referring to “Venezuela’s historical passivity in the International Relations” being “subordinated to the geopolitical interests of the north-American imperialism”; and to promote the creation of “new poles of power to break with the hegemony of the North-American imperialism”.

It is clearly established that Venezuela’s international position is to go against the hegemony and to move towards a “new global geopolitics”. As well as creating new poles of power by strengthening relations with other regions:

1. Latin-America and the Caribbean:

It is expected to continue to work towards a better and improved MERCOSUR; to strengthen the Cuba-Venezuela-Bolivia leadership to consolidate the ALBA as an alternative to the ALCA. To boost integration through the South-American Community of Nations (UNASUR’s ancestor) and to “neutralize the Empire’s action” by cooperation and solidarity between developing countries.

2. Iran, Syria, Belarus and Russia:

Consolidate an emerging political alliance based on “common anti-imperialist interests”.

3. China, Vietnam, Malaysia and surrounding areas:

Build a new global commercial setting to break with the hegemonic poles of commercial exchange.

4. Europe:

Promote social movements and to approach the governments of Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

5. Africa:

Consolidate Africa’s presence in global geopolitics and to increase relations with African countries within the South-South cooperation.

6. OPEC Countries:

Increase technological exchange and reinforce relations with exporting countries.

7. North-America:

Promote social movements, increase the support of the North-American people and boost the creation of solidarity groups to the Bolivarian Revolution.

Furthermore, the respect of the national sovereignty “before the hegemonic bloc” is given great importance. Transformation of International Organizations is also mentioned several times.

Foreign Policy under Hugo Chávez mandate is considered then to be anti-United States, anti-status quo and looking forward a new international order. His actions will confirm his political proposals, as it could be seen with the creation of the ALBA, UNASUR or Petrocaribe.

2.3 Theoretical basis of Hugo Chávez ideology

Chávez ideology cannot be explained from just one source. As he was an adept of reading, his ideas formed from different authors and different theories. His ideology was a mix of Christianity, Bolivarianism and Socialism.

2.3.1 Christianity

Religious language has often been used in political discourse. Several ideologies such as liberalism and Marxism have resisted its use but in general, it has been used throughout history.

Hugo Chávez, as most Venezuelans, was a Christian. He used to openly profess his faith and to use religion to explain some of his actions. At the same time, Chávez used to compare catholic figures with historical figures and assume that they were socialist. For instance, he said that Christ was the “biggest socialist of History” and that Judas was the greatest “capitalist”, alluding to his treason. Additionally, he said that Christ was a leader

who “gave his life for the people” and that since the people never dies, new leaders will come to serve them⁶².

He compares the Bolivarian revolution with the “Christian revolution”, saying that as Christ resuscitated, their political model was also resuscitating. He refers to the bible to explain the class struggles and it compares the constitution as a “second Bible”, since its “sacred for the Revolution” and what “it’s sacred it’s God’s word”⁶³.

Christianity is an important part of his discourse and his personality. In 2012, little after knowing he had cancer, he said: “Give me your crown, Christ, give it to me and I will bleed. Give me your cross, one hundred crosses and I will take them, but give me life because I still have things to do for this people, for this country. Don’t take me yet”.

Furthermore, he often compares Christ with Bolivar, and refers to them as his biggest role models. However, he also compares himself to Christ and according to Negro (2015), Chávez saw himself as “Chávez-Christ” and as “Chávez the preacher”. He borrowed Christ’s devotion and his saving mission in order to mobilize support. His mission is to “save humankind and create a new social order based on moral values”⁶⁴.

2.3.2 Bolivarianism

Simón Bolívar was a leader of the rebellion against the Spanish Empire. He fought against repression and slavery, gaining the independence of five Latin-American nations: Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. He is nowadays the symbol of Latin-American independence.

Hugo Chávez started to learn about Bolívar’s actions at school, as every other Venezuelan, but also in his sessions with José Esteban Gutierrez, his first intellectual mentor. He thought that History was repeating itself looking at the political situation of the time, with

⁶² Rojas González, Cristian. 2013. “La Persistencia Del Lenguaje Religioso En El Discurso Político. El Caso de Hugo Chávez.” *Civilizar. Ciencias Sociales y Humanas* 13(24): 157–64.

⁶³ *Ibidem*

⁶⁴ Negro, Isabel. 2015. “Hugo Chávez and the Building of His Self-Image through Metaphor.” *Ibérica* 29:83–104. Pg. 95

corruption, the “rotten” Venezuelan political system, and the subordination to external powers.

He believed that Bolívar’s idea could be continued, and started the Bolivarian movement to rescue the values of the nation. The movement was based on three ideological and historic sources: Simón Bolívar, Simón Rodríguez (Bolívar’s mentor) and Ezequiel Zamora, a federalist leader. This combination is known as the “three roots’ tree” (*Árbol de las tres raíces*)⁶⁵.

This ideological basis was developed long before becoming president. “The Blue Book”⁶⁶ was, indeed, already created in 1992, before the coup d’état. This book was the first ideological work of the Three roots’ tree, and will later on become the ancestor of the Simon Bolívar National Program⁶⁷.

Hugo Chávez always identified with being Bolivarian, even before being a socialist⁶⁸. He uses Bolívar as a symbol of his revolution, and compares to him in the way he’s fighting against the “Empire”.

The Bolivarianism became a movement in the 70, inside the Venezuelan armed forces, as a critical movement of the import substitution industrial model. In 1983, a clandestine organization was created: The Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement 200 (MBR200 for its Spanish acronym). Later on, for the 1998 presidential elections, the MBR200 created the Venezuelan Revolutionary Movement as an electoral structure; to make alliances with other political groups that supported Chávez’s candidature. After Chávez declared the new phase of the project, the 21st century socialism, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) was created and institutionalized the Bolivarian-Socialist ideology⁶⁹.

⁶⁵ Aponte-Moreno. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 91.

⁶⁶ Chávez Frías, Hugo. 2013. *El Libro Azul*.

⁶⁷ Rangel, José Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 404

⁶⁸ Barrera, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina, *Op.cit.*, pg 22

⁶⁹ López Maya, Margarita. 2008. “Venezuela: Hugo Chávez Y El Bolivarianismo.” *Revista Venezolana de Economía Y Ciencias Sociales* 14(3):55–82. Pg. 56-60

2.3.3 Socialism

Hugo Chávez took some time to identify with any ideological position. It wasn't until 2005 that he openly said he was a socialist⁷⁰. However, Hugo Chávez's socialism was marked with a different definition: The Socialism of the 21st century.

To its founders, socialism is the transition period between capitalism and communism. It is characterized by the coexistence of the new relations of social productions and the old capitalist ones, until its full replacement by the communist ones. Lastly, in this transition period it is expected of the State to disappear, since it is considered a tool for power to a certain class⁷¹.

The Socialism of the 21st century is an entire new theoretical proposal for a new political model in Latin America. It was presented by Heinz Dieterich in his book "Hugo Chávez and the Socialism of the 21st century". It is described as a syncretism between Christianity, Marxism and military nationalism⁷².

It must create new realities and it is expected to be the best way to "overcome the underdeveloped reality of Latin America". In order to do so, "authentic democracies" must rise in each country.⁷³

According to Harnecker, the Socialism of the 21st century has five characteristics: the man as a social being, human development, participatory democracy, a new economic model and a higher level of decentralization that would permit a real prominence from the people.

Hugo Chávez used this term to distance himself from "real socialism" and its past mistakes, such as the URSS and East European countries and to define the transformation process that was occurring in Venezuela.

⁷⁰ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto, and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 23

⁷¹ Hamburger Fernández, Álvaro Andrés. 2014. "El Socialismo Del Siglo XXI En América Latina: Características, Desarrollos Y Desafíos." *Revista de Relaciones Internacionales, Estrategia y Seguridad* 9(1): pg. 137

⁷² Kourliandsky, Jean-Jacques. 2006. "Politique Étrangère Du Venezuela. Le Choc Des Mots, Le Poids Des Réalités." *Revue Internationale et Stratégique* 64(4):39–52. Pg. 41

⁷³ Hamburger Fernández, Álvaro Andrés. 2014. *Op.cit.*, pg. 138

It is important to highlight that even though he took some time to identify himself as a socialist, once he did, he reaffirmed, countless times, the importance of socialism as the needed ideology for a deep change in societies. He considered the socialism as the only way to “justice, to equality and to liberty; there are no other paths but socialism⁷⁴”; that we either “take the path of socialism or the world will end⁷⁵”. He said that in order to build socialism, it must be remembered that socialism can not be “copied, but a historical creation”. That it must be based on Simon Rodriguez’s theory of “either invent or err”. “Socialism, is an invention. I would say even a piece of art”.⁷⁶

As seen before, the past events in Hugo Chávez life and the development of his ideology were determinant in the formation of his personality. The latter will be deepened in the next chapter, following the guidance of George’s operational code.

⁷⁴ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 56

⁷⁵ Ibidem pg. 73

⁷⁶ Rangel, Jose Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 376

Chapter II

Operational code

The concept of “operational code” in politics appears in 1940 with the work of Merton. However, the works of Leites, in 1951 and 1953, about Bolshevism deepened the scope of analysis by combining the sociological approach of decision-making with psychology and psychoanalysis. Later on, in 1969, Alexander George reexamined Leites’ analysis and borrowed the distinction between “epistemological” and “instrumental” beliefs from Brim et al. (1962). George reorganized Leites’ previous analysis into answers to a set of questions that were designed to outline Bolshevik ideology. He divided the questions into philosophical beliefs, that refer to the fundamental nature of politics, of political conflict and the role of individual in history; and instrumental beliefs, that treat political action⁷⁷.

George established two techniques to assess the impact of the operational-code beliefs upon decisions. The first, there is the “congruence”, which basically is the consistency between the beliefs and the decision. The second, is the “process-tracing”, which defines the influence that beliefs have on the process of defining the situation, determine the options and evaluating them before deciding⁷⁸.

The distinctive characteristic of the operational code, is that it does not assume that decision-makers are rational actors who would act following the same approach of rationality in case of uncertainty. Instead, it accentuates the different personal features across decision-makers. In addition, Leites and George recognized that the national leaders view of the world and of his counterparts influences their policy choices⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ Walker, Stephen G. 1990. “The Evolution of Operational Code Analysis.” *Political Psychology* 11(2): 403–18.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, pg. 406

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, pg. 407

Moreover, in his John Foster Dulles' operational-code analysis, Holsti supports George's assumption that knowing the political actor's beliefs facilitates the analysts to narrow the options, from which the decision-maker will make his choice⁸⁰. The operational code is then an interesting theoretical choice to better understand a leader's beliefs and decisions. In this chapter, the operational code of Hugo Chávez will be constructed in order to facilitate the assessment of the influence of his beliefs in his foreign policy decisions. In order to do so, the ten questions, five philosophical and five instrumental, defined by George will be answered.

1. Philosophical questions

1.1 What is the "essential" nature of political life? Is the political universe one of harmony or conflict? What is the fundamental character of one's political opponents?

Hugo Chávez's political philosophy comes from a young age. As previously mentioned, he started to be interested about politics in his hometown and he developed his interest further when he entered the Military Academy. Since then, he read about Marx, Lenin and Bolivar; and constructed his own Bolivarian ideology.

Chávez began to feel anxious about the political and social situation in Venezuela and decided that it was time to react. He was influenced, as well, by his humble origins and the economic struggled of his childhood.

Ever since that time, he felt the people were being oppressed by internal and external forces. He believed that Venezuela was reliving Bolivar's time and that it was time to be liberated. In an interview, in 1994, he affirmed that Bolivar's constitution and geopolitical concept was still in force⁸¹. According to him, the nature of politics was definitely in

⁸⁰ Holsti, Ole. 1970. "The 'Operational Code' Approach to the Study of Political Leaders : John Foster Dulles' Philosophical and Instrumental Beliefs." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 3(1): 123–57.

⁸¹ Rangel, José Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 95

conflict. It can be explained through three variables: his military education, his political opponents and the nature of the political universe itself.

Firstly, he saw his life and his “mission” as a military mission. He saw himself as a soldier, a Bolívar’s soldier, fighting against repression. Additionally, even though he did not join the military academy with the motivation of becoming a leader; once he was there he felt like “a fish in the sea” and like “he was born for it”⁸². Therefore, his military formation was an important characteristic of himself.

He constantly used metaphors referring to battles, journeys, war, and missions. Negro (2015) studied five different speeches from 2004 to 2011. Out of 164 metaphorical expressions, 112 were about war. Words such as soldiers, army, enemy, resistance, alliance, defend and defeat, among others, were found. In addition, the most recurrent word was “battle”, said 23 times. According to the author, Chávez used the metaphor “a political process is a war”.⁸³

It must be highlighted that Hugo Chávez’s political project was named the “Bolivarian Revolution”. The word revolution implies a change of the institutions of the nation, and by definition it might be a violent change. Hugo Chávez frequently underlined that his revolution was pacific, and according to Aponte-Moreno (2008) he used the conceptual metaphor “The Bolivarian revolution is war”.⁸⁴

Furthermore, his political opponents had a great presence in his speech. From the beginning, he denounced what he believed were the oppressors and the culprits of Venezuela’s and the world’s problems. Consequently, his relationship with his opponents was always in conflict. In his work of studying the metaphors in Chávez speeches from 1999 to 2007, Aponte-Moreno indicates that from 1999 to 2001 “opponents were mainly conceptualized though conflict (42% of total) and destruction (21% of total)”⁸⁵.

⁸² Range, José Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 366

⁸³ Negro, Isabel. 2015. *Op.cit.*, pg. 95

⁸⁴ Aponte-Moreno, M. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 119

⁸⁵ *Ibidem* pg. 123

Chávez's opponents shifted with time. At first, former governments were the main enemies but after 2001, the current political opposition became his target. This supposed a change in Hugo Chávez's discursive practices. After 2004, he declared the "anti-imperialist" stage of his revolution, and the United States also became an opponent. The "US Imperialism" was frequently referred to as a conflicted relationship or as a criminal. He continued with this vision by using the metaphor that "opponents are unpatriotic citizens", linking the national opposition with foreign forces⁸⁶.

His military education and his conceptualization of opponents as criminals, combatants and enemies, makes it clear that the political universe was one of conflict. On the one hand, he believed that "politics are hatched around the subject of power, and [from power] derives great political conflicts, nationally and internationally"⁸⁷. On the other hand, he also believed that "democracy is the reign of conflict, that must be regulated, there must be institutions, mediators, but it is the reign of social conflicts, of interests (...)"⁸⁸. Also, that the State must be a mediator between the "natural conflicts of every society"⁸⁹.

He stated in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly, in 2011, referring to the United States and Libya that the "cruel logic of international relations" and that "the law only applies to the weak"⁹⁰. His vision of the world was one of a revolution to accomplish with enemies to fight against. His vision was clearly one of "us against them". Harmony in the political universe could only be attained if these goals were achieved.

⁸⁶ Aponte-Moreno. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 156

⁸⁷ Rangel, José Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 446

⁸⁸ Ibidem. Pg. 466

⁸⁹ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 146

⁹⁰ Hugo Chávez's speech at the United Nations General Assembly, 26 September 2011. Retrieved from <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/6521> on May 18, 2017

1.2 What are the prospects for the eventual realization of one's fundamental political values and aspirations? Can one be optimistic or must one be pessimistic on this score, and in what respects the one and/or the other?

According to the majority of people interviewed for the purpose of this research, Hugo Chávez was very optimistic. He had firm values and beliefs and genuinely thought that it could be implemented in Venezuela's society⁹¹. He said it himself in 1995: "I am profoundly optimistic. I have been this way my whole life. Venezuela has great resources to escape the present impasse"⁹². In the same interview, he said: "my message to the Venezuelan people is optimistic. I am a great optimist. I declare myself as one of the first optimist of the country. I believe in this people, and as I have always said, I feel the love of the people, and with love we pay. I do believe that a new generation is waking up (...) "⁹³.

When referring to the 1992 coup d'état, he said that their "insurgence was to look for deep changes, to go to the depths of the structures". He was convinced that they would be victorious that night, even though they were taking major risks⁹⁴. He believed that what they were doing was "absolutely pertinent" and it was something "inevitable"⁹⁵.

Chávez was someone that, apparently, even in his darkest times remained a positive person. When asked about the possibility of losing the 2012 Presidential election, he was very determined and very convinced that he was going to win. It must be highlighted that at the time of this interview, in August 2011⁹⁶, he already knew he suffered from cancer. He stated: "No, we will not lose, we will not lose. We are going to win (...) I am absolutely certain that we will live, that I will go through this situation with success, that I'll be candidate, that they, from their bag of scorpions, they will put out certainly a scorpion and

⁹¹ Salazar, Paola. 2017. Personal interviews.

⁹² Rangel, José Vicente. 2013. *Op. cit.*, pg. 116

⁹³ Ibidem, pg. 138

⁹⁴ Ibidem pg. 72-86

⁹⁵ Ibidem. Pg. 371

⁹⁶ Ibidem, pg. 380

that we will defeat them when the Electoral Council sets the date for the 2012 Presidential elections. We cannot accept even the slimmest chance of being defeated”.

Later on, in the interview, he explained how he reacted to hearing for the first time that he had cancer. According to Chávez, he was on a trip in Cuba and after medical exams, Fidel Castro himself told him that they had found malign cells in his tests. He said he cried for a while but later he said to himself “Well, Chávez, now you have cancer”, and felt as the “*llanero*”⁹⁷, the Venezuelan, the fighter, the ‘corpus soldado’, the soldier and fighter” flourished in him. He continues by saying that “I looked at myself and said: ‘That’s nothing to me, like the April 11th, that’s nothing to me’”⁹⁸.

It can be observed then that he was extremely optimistic, in his life and in achieving his political goals. It seems that catastrophe was not really possible for him, since he was confident in his capabilities and his influence on the people.

1.3-4 Is the political future predictable? In what sense and to what extent? How much “control” or “mastery” can one have over historical development? What is one’s role in “moving” and “shaping” history in the desired direction?

Chávez was an avid reader. He enjoyed reading philosophers and political thinkers’ works. Therefore, Fukuyama’s work about the “End of History” was one of the theories known by Chávez and one of the most criticized by him. He believed that ideologies were not extinguished, and the mere fact of having a world without ideologies was the “denial of intelligence itself”⁹⁹.

“The End of History” was simply not possible for Hugo Chávez because that would mean that his political project and his political beliefs had no place in the future. In his book “El Libro Azul”, he denounced that Venezuelan political parties had become void in

⁹⁷ Author’s translation: Plainsman

⁹⁸ Rangel, José Vicente. *Op.cit.*, pg. 387

⁹⁹ Chávez, Hugo. 1996. *Op.cit.*, Pg. 22

ideological content; and that the models that were implemented were imported from elsewhere, without taking into account people's historical roots¹⁰⁰.

History was a determinant factor for Chávez. He firmly believed that the answers to better understand and react to the future could be found in the past. In 2005, he declared that he was “convinced that in History are the keys to the present and the recipe to a better future”¹⁰¹.

When he met Barack Obama, in Trinidad and Tobago back in 2009, he was shocked that Obama did not want to talk about the past but about the future¹⁰². Hugo Chávez believed that his relationship with the United States could only be friendly if they started to behave differently from the century of oppression. Therefore, he gave Barack Obama a gift, the book “The Open Veins of Latin America”, in 2009. He believed that it represented well the historical repression in the continent. He also believed that it was “impossible” for Obama to “come here and present a future without looking at the past of the Empire that now [he] preside[s], run[s], or pretend[s] to run, with all the outrage that you [The Empire] have committed against the people of Latin America and the Caribbean”¹⁰³.

According to Hugo Chávez, history is the mean to achieve a better future. He said that “it is impossible to speak or think about the future without thinking, seeing and analyzing the past”¹⁰⁴. The future is predictable, to the extent of the realization of his political goals, of his own victory. If his revolution continued to be accepted, then the future would definitely be as he predicted. It would follow the course designed by his ideology: “Where we come from is decisive to not lose our way to socialism, and this is our definitive independence”¹⁰⁵.

He firmly believed that he was able to change the course of history. He believed that they were already “making history” and that they were “writing pages that would never be

¹⁰⁰ Chávez Frías, Hugo. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 41

¹⁰¹ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 21

¹⁰² Rangel, José Vicente. *Op.cit.*, pg. 309

¹⁰³ Rangel, José Vicente. *Op.cit.*, pg. 309

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem

¹⁰⁵ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 153

erased from Venezuelan history, and that will be forever sealed in the pages of our history¹⁰⁶”.

He thought his vision of the world could definitely be implemented, it was only a matter of compromise. This compromise can be observed with the creation of institutions such as Petrocaribe or UNASUR, because they represent Chávez’s beliefs of an equal distribution of power without the influence of the United States.

1.5 What is the role of "chance" in human affairs and in historical development?

Hugo Chávez believed in a certain destiny. Looking back, he believed that he was meant to be in the military and later on, he came to represent himself as the future of the country. However, and even though he might have been considered as impulsive¹⁰⁷ for some things, he was a planner – and a meticulous one¹⁰⁸.

The coup d’état of 1992 had been planned for almost 7 years, carefully, in order to not be caught. When it failed, he was asked if they have foreseen that possibility. He answered: “There’s a military thinker that says that in war, the triumph is for those with less bad luck, because war is the reign of uncertainty. We had foreseen that”¹⁰⁹. This would mean that there was no place for letting “bad luck” stop them.

His political program was being prepared since 1994, four years before the Presidential election¹¹⁰. According to Hector Navarro, he always had in mind his basic principles and before taking any decision, he would spend hours trying to understand the situation and the subject of discussion¹¹¹. Hugo Chávez did not let things to be decided by chance. He truly believed that whatever happened had a culprit. He said that the “actual suffering is

¹⁰⁶ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 23

¹⁰⁷ Salazar, Paola. January 2017. Personal Interview with Luisa Romero.

¹⁰⁸ Salazar, Paola. January 2017. Personal Interview with Hector Navarro.

¹⁰⁹ Rangel, José Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 76

¹¹⁰ Salazar, Paola. 2017. *Ibidem*, Hector Navarro

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*.

not a consequence of a dirty trick of Nature” but a “direct consequence of the injustice that reign over the Earth”¹¹².

It can be argued that due to his religious beliefs, he let things to be decided by God himself – or at least he said he did. He said that “God is in charge of all this. We follow his path and we follow God’s design¹¹³”. On the other hand, he stated that Christ was a guide in his decisions: “I invoke Christ, then, for him to continue with us, giving us the light, the courage and the example to continue doing what we have to do”¹¹⁴.

In 2001, he stated that he would want the next decade in Venezuela to be called “the gold decade”. He also explained that he would remain in power “if God wants it that way and if the people decides it, not because I want to, I don’t care about my personal destiny or the role that I play, but I think that it is necessary for me to continue to navigate the vessels for some years”¹¹⁵.

Nevertheless, according to Barrera Tyszka (2005), nothing was improvised. He states that the president was someone really organized, that did not let anything be decided by fate; and that even his public interventions, that seem to be spontaneous, were calculated.¹¹⁶

2. Instrumental questions

2.1 What is the best approach for selecting goals or objectives for political action?

Hugo Chávez had several goals throughout his life. First, he wanted to be a baseball player. Second, he wanted to change the political direction of the country. Third, he wanted to become President, in order to serve the people and make structural changes. Lastly, he wanted to live to continue with his mission.

¹¹² Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 125

¹¹³ Rojas González, Cristian. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 160

¹¹⁴ Ibidem pg. 162

¹¹⁵ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 158

¹¹⁶ Barrera Tyszka, Alberto. 2005. “Chávez Nuestro Que Estás En Los Cielos.” *Letras Libres*, 28–30. Pg. 30.

For Hugo Chávez, the best approach to set his goals were by planning and by ideological study. According to General Albarrán, Chávez was very convincing, since he mastered several theories and had a theoretical basis for his arguments¹¹⁷. His beliefs were the main motivation to move forward with political action.

Simultaneously, Prof. Luisa Romero stated that he believed that “seizing power was the only way to accomplish things”¹¹⁸. According to George (1969), political actors should not make extremely conservative choices since they cannot have the whole information of possible consequences of their actions. This would mean that the political actor believes that either the goals are “objectively attainable” or just “probably possible”¹¹⁹.

Translating this to Hugo Chávez’s decisions, his ideological beliefs and his optimism strengthened the fact that objectives were definitely attainable and possible. In 2004, when he was presented with a recall referendum, he accepted it and was convinced that he was going to win¹²⁰. There was a calculation of the opponent and of the consequences. Besides, the planning of every action and the necessity of discussing it beforehand would mean that, Hugo Chávez had in mind a set of gradual attainable objectives in order to achieve a bigger one.

According to William Izarra, a retired military officer that participated in Chávez campaign, Hugo Chávez was “very wise and with great deal of political intuition, which allowed him to decide, quite categorically, who was useful to him and who was not (...) A swift learner with a prodigious memory, he assimilated the theoretical elements that he needed to understand in order to take political action in a given situation... He always held fast to the position that he would not be beholden to anyone. Anyone who joined him did so to achieve and end, in which he was the leader and the objective was to get him to Miraflores^{121,122}”.

¹¹⁷ Salazar, Paola. January 2017. Personal interview with General Albarrán.

¹¹⁸ Salazar, Paola. *Op.cit.*, Luisa Romero

¹¹⁹ George, Alexander L. 1969. *Op.cit.*, pg. 196

¹²⁰ Salazar, Paola. *Op.cit.*, Hector Navarro

¹²¹ Author’s translation: The Venezuelan Presidential Palace.

¹²² Barrera, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina, 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 119

2.2 How are the goals of action pursued most effectively?

Once again, Chávez's military education was an essential element. The fact that he saw his life as a mission and his political project as a war; made him react with all his forces in every action he undertook. In 2001, he said to the National Assembly that to them "it [was] mandatory to prevail, because it is about the people's life" and that they "prefer[red] this path and will fight for it with all the force of our existence as a nation"¹²³.

He believed that each of his political actions were going to have a positive impact in his program. He said: "The march continues to be difficult, but with the irresistible force of love, we are on our way to achieving definitive independence, a socialist and liberated nation"¹²⁴.

The most effective way to pursue his goals was with real action. In his speech to the UN in 2011, he made clear that Capitalism and "the Empire" were the perpetuators of the world's problems. He denounced oppression to the little or weak countries by the powerful ones, and exhorted the United Nations to reform the Security Council by removing the veto power¹²⁵.

He continued explaining that "the future of a multi-polar world, in peace, resides in us. In the organization of the majority of people on earth, to defend ourselves against the new colonialism in order to achieve a balance in the universe that is capable of neutralizing imperialism and arrogance". He also mentioned the ways in which Latin America had been moving forward to more cooperation and integration, to fight other powers, such as the creation of the ALBA, UNASUR and the CELAC¹²⁶. For him, these institutions represented a concrete action against to what he believed were the repressors.

¹²³ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 27

¹²⁴ Negro, Isabel. 2015. *Op.cit.*, pg. 93

¹²⁵ Hugo Chávez's speech at the United Nations General Assembly, 26 september 2011. Retrieved from <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/6521> on May 18, 2017

¹²⁶ Ibidem.

At the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, he declared that we wouldn't have to "change the climate but change the system. As a consequence, we will start to save the planet"¹²⁷. Direct action was then necessary to change the system.

Besides real action, goals must be pursued coherently. When asked if there was a plan to kill President Carlos Andrés Pérez in the coup d'état in 1992, Chávez answered that the "commanders decided that it wasn't necessary (...) Killing Pérez would mean to start a new government with a great political error, and having everyone against us". This would mean that even if killing the president at the time would have facilitated their entry to the government, which was the main objective, it wasn't the most efficient way due to what it would signify to the people.

Similarly, negotiation with his opponents was coherent with his beliefs, which were his guidance in deciding how to react. In 2003, less than a year after the failed coup d'état against him, he stated that "there's no negotiation with the oligarchy, because the homeland is not negotiable, the dignity is not negotiable, the principles are not negotiable"¹²⁸.

2.3 How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?

According to Albarrán, Chávez was someone who was extremely aware of the risk he was taking when he made a decision. Having participated in the 1992 coup d'état, Albarrán said that he was very calculator of the risks of going through with the operation. Chávez himself said that since he was facing the risk of having the civil society caught in the confrontation, he decided to surrender¹²⁹.

Furthermore, risk was frequently present in his political career. The risk of dying during the coup, the risk of not being elected, of being ousted by the recall referendum, of dying

¹²⁷ Hugo Chávez speech at the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009. Retrieved from <https://www.aporrea.org/actualidad/n147198.html> on May 18, 2017

¹²⁸ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 24

¹²⁹ Harnecker, Marta. 2002. *Op.cit.*, pg. 77

of cancer. But the times that he referred to taking risk and assessing the risk of his choices, he was convinced of having study it and that it was under control.

Notably, he believed that risks were meant to be “recognized and confronted”¹³⁰. He said that he liked being leader and that he considered that “a true leader must stand up, be responsible; the greater the risk and the danger the more [a leader] has to stand up and not hide (...)”¹³¹. In 2010, he stated: “Every step we take with the Revolution implies not only risks but above all, new challenges. We have proven our willing to confront them, with responsibility and compromise, having in our heart the sincerest needs of the Venezuelan people”¹³². According to Navarro, Chávez’s personality was of not “running away from any challenge, because he loved challenges”¹³³.

This could be confirmed observing the way he used to refer to his opponents. As previously said, he considered his opponents as his biggest enemies, who must be defeated at all costs. However, the size of his opponents must be considered as well. When referring to the United States as “the oppressing Empire” or as the “enemy”, he was taking a risk of being “punished”, in a certain way, since the United States is the principal importer of Venezuelan oil. Nevertheless, Hugo Chávez stated that the adversary “could not be underestimated in any battle, neither in war or in politics. It must be well assessed”. Prof. Luisa Romero believes, however, that “he didn’t know the risks he was taking, because he wouldn’t have made the mistakes he made”¹³⁴.

2.4 What is the best "timing" of action to advance one's interests?

Hugo Chávez believed that the Venezuelan and the world’s socio-political actual state could not hold up any longer. Before 1992, Hugo Chávez was developing the best way and trying to assess the perfect time to make a move and change the course of history. This moment was on February 2nd 1992.

¹³⁰ Rangel, José Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 303

¹³¹ Ibidem pg. 306

¹³² Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 30

¹³³ Salazar, Paola. *Op.cit.*, Hector Navarro

¹³⁴ Salazar, Paola. *Op.cit.*, Luisa Romero

According to General Albarrán, the coup d'état had been postponed 3 times already. However, considering the fact that President Carlos Andrés Pérez was abroad, and that there was still a part of the population who were upset with the latest political and economic measures, they decided to go through with it. The decision started to become a reality a week before, but it was only forty-eight hours before it became a certainty¹³⁵.

Chávez believed that this was an historical time where the people were “awaken” against imperialism¹³⁶. That this century was “ours” and that it must not be “lost”¹³⁷, and it was “time for the people that entered History to remain in it forever”¹³⁸. For him, this century was the perfect time to accomplish his project and to leave a mark in History. The willing to cooperate and to “fight” imperialism was the only thing that it took to be part of the Revolution.

Regarding timing, he declared that “There was not a most successful decision that the one that is taken in time and responding to the characteristics of the historical moment”¹³⁹. It is then to be considered that the best timing to continue with political action was when the social, political and economic conditions were given to introduce a new discourse. This can be applied to the before-mentioned situation in Venezuela at the time of Chávez’s arrival to power; as well as the political context of Latin America, which was experiencing a “left-turn”. Therefore, there was an ideological congruence between leaders.

2.5 What is the utility and role of different means for advancing one's interests?

Hugo Chávez was internationally known for his radical ways and his responses to great traditional powers. For him, this was one of the best means to pass on his message and to attract attention to him and to his project. According to Navarro and to Romero, Chávez indeed enjoyed creating controversy. Hugo Chávez said it himself, declaring that he liked to be picked on and that it will be sad the day he would open a newspaper, turn on the

¹³⁵ Salazar, Paola. *Op.cit.*, General Albarrán

¹³⁶ Chávez Frías, Hugo. 2010. *Las Líneas de Chávez*. Pg. 227

¹³⁷ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 198

¹³⁸ *Ibidem* Pg. 179

¹³⁹ Chávez Frías, Hugo. 2010. *Op.cit.*, pg. 364

radio or the TV and not be picked on. That would be the time to “hang on the gloves, to sheath the sword”¹⁴⁰.

Clearly, this would not seem as an effective way to assert his interests, but according to Navarro, Chávez needed to convince people about his ideals in order to achieve a structural change. The only way to accomplish this was by showing his beliefs without “makeup” or “ornaments”, by being severe¹⁴¹.

The humble origins of Hugo Chávez made him capable of identifying with people. He used to speak really clear and straightforward, in order to be understood by everyone. He used a lot of proverbs in order to illustrate his arguments and he approached people by singing, laughing, using baseball references and being casual¹⁴². He said once that he truly did not feel as a President, just “a guy that wanders around”¹⁴³.

One important mean to accomplish his interest was the media. Hugo Chávez is considered as one of the most mediatized Presidents. He used the media as a mean to convince the people, to confront his adversaries and to provoke his enemies; and did so by profiting his status as a “mass leader”¹⁴⁴.

Telesur, for example, is a “Latin American communication space with social vocation, oriented to lead and promote the unification processes of the people of the South”¹⁴⁵. It is a TV network implemented by Chávez intender to “counter-weight CNN’s tyranny” and give the people their “fundamental human right to be informed”¹⁴⁶. This network, such as the Venezuelan state-own national networks, are considered to be “a strategic element of the diffusion of the President’s and the government’s agenda”¹⁴⁷

He used catchy slogans and song in order to retain people’s attention, such as “Chávez, heart of the people”, “Homeland, socialism of death” and “Venezuela is now for

¹⁴⁰ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 149

¹⁴¹ Salazar, Paola. *Op.cit.*, Hector Navarro

¹⁴² Muñoz, Boris. 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 6

¹⁴³ Rangel, Jose Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 431

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem*

¹⁴⁵ Telesur. Retrieved from <http://www.telesurtv.net/pages/sobrenosotros.html> on May 24, 2017

¹⁴⁶ Zúquete, José Pedro. 2008. “The Missionary Politics of Hugo Chávez.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 50(1):91–121.

¹⁴⁷ Muñoz, Boris. 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 10

everyone”. This resulted in a rapprochement between Chávez and its supporters, who would cry them out loud in any pro-Chávez rally¹⁴⁸.

Furthermore, Hugo Chávez believed in ballots. He believed that only the people could choose the future of their country and he had full “confidence on the conscience of the people”¹⁴⁹; he believed they would always make the right decision. He said that he and his governments had always been “against taking any other way that would eliminate electoral processes”¹⁵⁰.

Anyhow, Hugo Chávez’s preferred way to act was within the limits of sovereignty. He denounced foreign intervention in the continent since he arrived in power and he continue to do so until his death. He believed that “every country has its sovereignty, its people, its minds, its leaders; every country builds its own destiny and that is something fundamental”¹⁵¹.

3. Presidential character and decision making style

Character, personality and behavior are frequently studied in FPA in order to predict the possible actions that a leader could make. Different typologies have been developed, but Preston’s and Barber’s seem to be interesting in the context of this research.

Barber, in his book “The Presidential character: Predicting performance in the White House” (1972), develops a typology in order to place a leader and better understand his behavior in policy making. He based himself on two axes. The first axe is based on *activity-pasivity*, which translates into the energy the leader invests on his job. The second axe is *positive-negative affect*, and it refers to the leader’s enjoyment of his job.

The author constructs four categories of Presidential types: *active-positive*, *active-negative*, *passive-positive* and *passive-negative*. Considering the before explained

¹⁴⁸ Villasmil, Xiomira. 2001. “¿Cómo El Presidente Chávez Mantiene Su Popularidad?” Revista Latinoamericana de Comunicación CHASQUI (73):54-59.

¹⁴⁹ Herrera, Carlos. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 168

¹⁵⁰ Rangel, José Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 424

¹⁵¹ Interview with Larry King. 2009. CNN

personality of Hugo Chávez, it is clear that he was very active in the policy making process, as well as in the political life in general. As previously said, Chávez had a “missionary” vision of his political role, and frequently stated that he enjoyed “serving the people”. Therefore, Hugo Chávez fits the *active-positive* type.

Barber considers that leaders belonging to this category have “high self-esteem and relative success in relating to the environment”. He states as well that the leaders would “show an orientation toward productiveness as a value, and an ability to use his styles flexibly, adaptively, suiting the dance to the music”. Lastly, the leader may find hard to understand why not everyone sees things his way¹⁵². This matches Hugo Chávez’s personality, since he was determined to achieve his goals and he disparaged those with opposed beliefs.

Furthermore, Preston developed another typology, in his book “The President and his Inner Circle: Leadership Style and the Advisory Process in Foreign Affairs” (2001). He based it in three different characteristics that according to him, play a critical role in the shaping of presidential leadership style: need for power, complexity and prior policy experience.

First, according to Prof. Luisa Romero and to Hector Navarro, Hugo Chávez had a high need for power. For Preston, this would mean a dominant and assertive leadership style. There would be a greater degree of personal control, towards policy making and towards subordinates. This need of control is reinforced by his military education¹⁵³. Second, complexity translate itself in a need for information. As mentioned before, Chávez was a planner, and before making a decisions he would asked for all the information he could obtain about the subject¹⁵⁴. However, he used to see the world’s dynamic as an “us versus them”, which translates into low complexity. Finally, when Chávez arrived in power, he had not been in any elected office before, which means that he had no prior policy experience.

¹⁵² Barber, James David. 1972. *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*. Pg. 8-9

¹⁵³ Salazar, Paola. *Op.cit.*, Luisa Romero

¹⁵⁴ Salazar, Paola. *Op.cit.*, Hector Navarro

Preston regrouped these characteristics into “static characteristics”, such as the need for power and need for information, and “nonstatic or changeable characteristics”, such as policy experience. Combining these two axes, he came with eight different types of leadership¹⁵⁵.

Hugo Chávez’s best fit for the first dimension is the category named “The Magistrate”, which has a low policy experience but a high need for power. According to Preston, leaders with this presidential style tend to centralize decision making into tight inner circles. Moreover, their lack of policy experience leads them to delegate the policy formulation and implementation, but he gives the guidelines for it to be developed. Navarro confirms this when asked about policy decision-making¹⁵⁶.

In the second dimension, Hugo Chávez seems to match “The Maverick”. They have low complexity and low policy experience. Preston determines that “their decisions are driven primarily by their own personal idiosyncratic policy views and principles, which are often heavily influenced by simple decisions heuristics (such as analogies)”¹⁵⁷. Furthermore, they tend to have a decisive, less deliberative decision making process. As previously said, Hugo Chávez used his beliefs and his ideologies as a guidance to make decisions, and frequently used analogies of historical events.

Hugo Chávez had strong beliefs and his incendiary personality was often linked to his decisions and his way of doing politics. In order to respond to the research question, it must be analyzed to what extent his personality indeed influenced his decision-making.

¹⁵⁵ Preston, Thomas. 2001. *The President and His Inner Circle: Leadership Style and the Advisory Process in Foreign Affairs*. Pg. 14

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem* pg. 26

Chapter III

Hypothesis analysis

The political discourse of Hugo Chávez and his personality influenced Venezuelan foreign policy towards the United States by not making rational decisions but belief-oriented decisions.

After drafting the operational code of Hugo Chávez, an overall vision of Hugo Chávez's personality and beliefs was obtained. These characteristics will be the guide for the next chapter. The relation between Hugo Chávez's personality, his beliefs, his discourse and the Venezuelan Foreign Policy towards the United States will be analyzed hereafter. In order to facilitate the analysis, the chapter will be organized in chronological order, starting in 1998 with Hugo Chávez's arrival in power.

1. 1998-2001: Observation and recognition

Hugo Chávez's electoral victory in 1998 was, mostly, due to his discourse against traditional parties in Venezuela. Once in office, his focus was to maintain his promises about launching a process to change the Constitution, which he did just months after his inauguration¹⁵⁸.

In matters of foreign policy, he was very cautious at the beginning regarding the United States. His first public statement about the United States was very prudent, saying that his "struggle is not against the United States. Our struggle is against corruption and against

¹⁵⁸ Duarte Villa, Rafael. 2004. "Dos Etapas En La Política Exterior Venezolana Frente a Estados Unidos En El Período de Hugo Chávez." Cuadernos del CENDES 21(55): 21-45. Pg. 24

this government... We believe that the United States would not interfere with our project because it is not openly at odds with [US] foreign policy”¹⁵⁹.

He restrained himself from criticizing Clinton’s administration on the fact that the United States had refused his visa demand, twice. Referring to this matter before being elected, he said that every country was sovereign and could decide whether or not to give anyone a visa¹⁶⁰.

Afterwards, he expressed in several occasions his willingness to adapt to the United States’ interests¹⁶¹. He invited foreign investors to come to Venezuela and did a presidential tour abroad, visiting 20 countries in 1999¹⁶². The latter was an attempt of search approval of himself and his revolution; to detach himself from the reputation he had¹⁶³. This is coherent with Hugo Chávez’s instrumental beliefs of selecting gradual goals to accomplish a bigger one. It can be argued that this first period was of “observation and recognition”¹⁶⁴, and it will gradually convert into more radical and direct policy, that will better represent his ideology.

Different matters started to push away the two countries and tensions appeared. During the 1999 severe floods in the Venezuelan coast, Hugo Chávez rejected the offer from the United States of sending Marines in order to help and repair the affected zones. Even though it was and still is considered to be the most devastating natural tragedy in the history of the country. He was concerned about the precedent that it would create having American military men in Venezuelan soil¹⁶⁵.

According to General Raúl Salazar, who was Defense minister at the time (and was dismissed later), Chávez had authorized him to ask the Clinton’s government for help, but changed his mind at the last minute, when the American soldiers were already arriving. Salazar told him that he was making a mistake, but Chávez responded that “it was an

¹⁵⁹ Barrera, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 204

¹⁶⁰ Rangel, José Vicente. *Op.cit.*, pg. 190

¹⁶¹ Ellner, Steve. 2009. “La Política Exterior Del Gobierno de Chávez: La Retórica Chavista Y Los Asuntos Sustanciales.” *Revista Venezolana de Economía y Ciencias Sociales* 15(1): 115–32. Pg. 116

¹⁶² Mora Brito, Daniel. 2004. *Op.cit.*, pg. 79

¹⁶³ Barrera, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 153

¹⁶⁴ González Urrutia, Edmundo. 2006. “Las Dos Etapas de La Política Exterior de Chávez.” *Nueva Sociedad* (205): 159–71. Pg. 161

¹⁶⁵ Barrera, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 135

intervention, some things about sovereignty and that they could spy”. For Salazar, Chávez spoke to someone the night before, and he makes an allusion to Fidel Castro. He believes he was poorly advise and that “the aid should have never been rejected”¹⁶⁶. This could be considered as the first belief-oriented and non-rational decision of Hugo Chávez concerning the United States.

In addition, he did not authorize the use of Venezuelan airspace to let American forces combat drug trafficking in the Colombian border¹⁶⁷. This was one of the first ruptures with traditional Venezuelan foreign policy, since his predecessor had already authorized this type of action¹⁶⁸. This was perceived to Chávez as a reinforcement of the Plan Colombia, which was seen as a possible militarization of the region. Plus, there were some groups within the Venezuelan Armed Forces who were against the American position that Latin American Armed Forces must have as their main function fighting against drug trafficking. These sectors believed that this could be done autonomously, without the support of Washington¹⁶⁹.

The Clinton administration was mainly moderated, because they were respecting the fact that Chávez had win the election by an overwhelming majority. They decided to conduct a policy of “wait and see”, since the anti-democratic antecedents of Hugo Chávez and the possibility of him breaking with the democratic order was always a concern¹⁷⁰.

The first difficult encounter of the US-Venezuela relations was the proposal of a military alliance, different from the already existent, created with the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance. This provoked the first estrangement between the two countries, in a context of a Venezuela moving to closer relationship with Cuba and declaring a neutral position about the Colombian guerrillas (FARC).¹⁷¹

Chávez was trying to implement a “participative democracy” at the national level, but at the same time trying to apply this at the international level in order to construct a new

¹⁶⁶ Barrera, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina. 2007. *Op.cit.*, pg. 135

¹⁶⁷ Ellner, Steve. 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 116

¹⁶⁸ Duarte Villa, Rafael. 2004. *Op. Cit.*, Pg. 29

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*

¹⁷⁰ Mora Brito, Daniel. 2004. *Op.cit.* pg. 79

¹⁷¹ Blanco, Ronald, and Rosalba Linares. 2008. “Chávez En La Política Exterior Venezolana: (ALCA VS ALBA) de La Democracia Representativa a Participativa.” *Aldea Mundo* 13(26): 49–58. Pg. 53

“multipolar order”. He tried to implement this form of democracy at the multilateral level, during the negotiations about the Democratic Charter at the OAS, but failed.¹⁷²

Furthermore, Hugo Chávez was taking position at multilateral organizations in sensitive matters, which was interpreted as his willing to be active at the international level without being linked to Washington. He demanded immediate action from the United Nations to reach an agreement about Kosovo in 1999; and voted against a report that condemned the Human rights conditions in China, Cuba and Iraq¹⁷³.

Tensions only grew when Chávez met with Saddam Hussein and Muamar Gaddafi in the year 2000, since he was visiting two countries already considered as Rogue States. One of his main concerns at the time was the oil prices, so he approached OPEC countries in order to develop better relations. Other than economic interests, the rapprochement with OPEC countries signified the start of a diverse foreign policy as well. He was the first world leader to visit Iraq since the Gulf War¹⁷⁴.

2. 2001-2002: Coup d'état

The Bush administration harden the position of the United States concerning Venezuela. After 9/11, Chávez declared in national television that the “killing of innocents” must be stopped, that terror could not be fought with “more terror”. The State Department declared that this transmission was “completely inappropriate”¹⁷⁵. Chávez, shortly after, declared regret that his statements might have misinterpreted and that The United Sates and Venezuela were partners and “the revolutionary government has neither the slightest desire nor the intention to damage these relations”¹⁷⁶. However, the “with us or against us” attitude taken by Bush against terrorism only aggravated the tensions, and the US called its ambassador back for consultations¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷² Duarte Villa, Rafael. 2004. *Op.cit.*, pg. 35

¹⁷³ Ibidem.

¹⁷⁴ Mora Brito, Daniel. 2004. *Op.cit.*, pg. 79

¹⁷⁵ Ellner, Steve. 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 117

¹⁷⁶ Barrera, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina. *Op.cit.*, pg. 209

¹⁷⁷ Ellner, Steve. 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 117

Tensions increased even more when Chávez was temporarily ousted from power in 2002. Before his return to power, the White House suggested that Chávez himself had caused the internal situation that led to the coup, and that elections needed to be organized as soon as possible. Clearly, the fact that the United States had not condemned the coup d'état was not welcomed by Chávez or his government. On the other hand, Bush declared that he hoped Chávez “had learned his lesson”¹⁷⁸.

According to Bonfili (2010), this moment is crucial to understand Chávez’s foreign policy thereafter. The fact that Chávez believed that the United States were involved in the failed coup initiated a process of construction of threat perceptions that would take over the Chávez administration approach toward the United States. He states that these perceptions were internalized and drove Chávez’s foreign strategies and goals¹⁷⁹.

The failed coup and the tense political and social situation in Venezuela were harmful for Chávez’s image at the international level. He focused his foreign policy in re-legitimizing his government, in an attempt of regaining international trust and assuring governability.¹⁸⁰ He said that they “had no interest in complicating relations with the United States, in damaging them and much less on breaking them” and what they would do was to “raise the subject of sovereignty, of independence, not only to the United States but to all countries in the world”¹⁸¹.

3. 2003-2004: The discourse radicalization

It was not until 2003-04 that Hugo Chávez’s openly opposed the United States and began with his aggressive discourse. The United States’ attitude towards Chávez’s declarations was to pretend not to hear them. According to Mora Brito (2004), it is possible that this

¹⁷⁸ Barrera, Alberto and Marcano, Cristina. *Op.cit.*, pg. 209

¹⁷⁹ Bonfili, C. 2010. “The United States and Venezuela: The Social Construction of Interdependent Rivalry.” *Security Dialogue* 41(6): 669–90. Pg. 670

¹⁸⁰ González Urrutia, Edmundo. 2006. *Op.cit.*, pg. 163

¹⁸¹ Harnecker, Marta. 2002. *Op.cit.*, pg. 80

reaction was because the United States had other things to attend in their agenda or simply because Chávez did not suppose a real threat to them.¹⁸²

This transformation was provoked, in part, by two different reasons. Firstly, the Venezuelan National Security Council released a report, a year after the failed coup, concluding that the United States had participated in the events of 2002. This accusation was made by this institution at first, until 2004, when Chávez himself broke the silence and openly denounced the United States of meddling with internal affairs and trying to remove him from power¹⁸³.

Secondly, and according to Duarte Villa (2004), this radicalization could be interpreted as a distraction from the recall referendum that took place in 2004. The idea was to relocate the attention on an external subject in order to create a better national cohesion, having an “external common enemy”¹⁸⁴. It is reaffirmed by Prof. Luisa Romero, who says that the relation with the United States has always been used as a mean to manipulate people through their feelings; making them believe that their difficult situation was the fault of the oppressor.¹⁸⁵

Nevertheless, Chávez’s personality and beliefs can also explain this attitude. Hugo Chávez’s beliefs of historical repression and unbalanced international system come from years before his arrival in power. He believed in a multipolar world but to that date, he refrained himself to a moderate extent of preaching it out loud.

He used the alleged American intervention in the 2002 failed coup as the perfect example of what he was trying to demonstrate all along. It shows that the United States was an imperialist force who was constantly meddling in Latin American internal affairs and oppressing its people.

This can be linked to Hugo Chávez instrumental belief about the best timing for advancing his interests. As said before, he would study the historical time and try to act according to it. In 2003, the United States were being criticized for their Iraq intervention and their

¹⁸² Mora Brito, Daniel. 2004. *Op.cit.*, pg. 83

¹⁸³ Duarte Villa, Rafael. 2004. *Op.cit.*, pg. 42

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem pg. 42

¹⁸⁵ Salazar, Paola. *Op.cit.*, Luisa Romero

economic vulnerability. This was a strategic time to radicalize the discourse against them¹⁸⁶.

It is clear, for Hugo Chávez, the mean to better achieve his goal was creating controversy and to give media coverage to his discourses. He profited from this situation in order to, ultimately, be able to show his ideological intentions and better pursue his bigger goal of a multipolar world and an integrated Latin America. Duarte Villa concludes in his work (2004) that foreign policy under Hugo Chávez indeed sacrificed a pragmatic diplomacy in favor of an ideological one¹⁸⁷.

After winning the recall referendum, he considered that he had enough legitimacy to deepen its revolutionary project and focused on consolidating the geopolitical and strategic alliances at the international level. He increased his participation in foreign affairs and it was clear that foreign actions and decisions were linked to himself. This constituted a “presidential diplomacy”¹⁸⁸.

4. 2004-2005: Towards a multipolar world

From the beginning, and as it is expressed in his political program from 2001, Chávez promoted a more inclusive and representative international system. He reinforced multilateral organizations and international groups who represented the non-traditional and developing countries, such as the G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement¹⁸⁹. He also demanded to enter MERCOSUR.

Hugo Chávez emphasized Bolívar as an anti-colonial leader and picked up his project of a union of the former Spanish colonies as the essential tool for facing the great powers’ intervention. This project is characterized by the assumption that the United States were historically the center of Latin American relations. In order to accomplish Bolívar’s

¹⁸⁶ Ellner, Steve. 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 121

¹⁸⁷ Duarte Villa, Rafael. 2004. *Op.cit.*, pg. 44

¹⁸⁸ González Urrutia, Edmundo. 2006. *Op.cit.*, pg. 165

¹⁸⁹ Blanco, Ronald, and Rosalba Linares. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 52

project, it is necessary to take a distance from the United States¹⁹⁰. As previously said, history was the main component of Hugo Chávez's ideology, and this was represented in its actions at the international level.

Confrontation with the United States took a different path when Hugo Chávez opposed to the FTAA project. The FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas), or ALCA for its Spanish acronym, is an American initiative for a free trade zone between the countries of the American continent. He considered that it would be another mechanism to foster neoliberalism, protecting only the interests of free trade and transnational capital.¹⁹¹ He stated, in 2002, that he "believed that the FTAA was not the path to follow", that it would be necessary to define another path and that "Bolivar can help us a lot with that"¹⁹².

This is when the ALBA emerges. The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA for its Spanish acronym) is a Hugo Chávez initiative to counter the FTAA. Its objective is to emphasize the fight against poverty and social exclusion, fostering strategies of cooperation between nations in order to compensate asymmetries¹⁹³.

It started with the Cuba-Venezuela agreement, signed in 2004. Hugo Chávez said that he was very insistent trying to move forward with the creation of the ALBA, and that at the beginning only Cuba gave his accord. He even said, in the OPEC Summit in Caracas, that it was easier to reunite leaders from the other side of the world than Latin American leaders¹⁹⁴.

This was widely seen as one of the first concrete foreign policy actions of the Hugo Chávez government against the United States. It was considered as an open defiance to the American hegemony. Today, it is thought that it did not have the success that it was expected, and that it was mainly based on the Venezuelan great financial resources due to the boom of oil prices.

¹⁹⁰ Illera, Olga. 2005. "La Política Exterior de Chávez: Proyección de La Revolución Bolivariana En Las Relaciones Internacionales." *Desafíos* 12: 209–40. Pg. 217

¹⁹¹ Blanco, Ronald and Linares, Rosalba. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 54

¹⁹² Harnecker, Marta. 2002. *Op.cit.*, pg. 74

¹⁹³ Blanco, Ronald and Linares, Rosalba. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 54

¹⁹⁴ Harnecker, Marta. 2002. *Op.cit.*, pg. 74

Besides the ALBA, Hugo Chávez was protagonist of other rapprochements at the international level that were considered as a provocation to the United States. The creation of the South American Community of Nations, later renamed UNASUR, was seen as an alternative to the Organization of American States, which headquarters are in Washington; and to which Chávez referred to in several times as a “employee of the ‘yankee imperialism’” and “useless”¹⁹⁵.

It must be noted that going towards a multipolar world included an economic diversification of Venezuelan economy, in order to be less dependent on the United States. This matter will be discussed thereafter, in the “oil-related relations” section.

5. 2005-2007: Growing tensions and assassination plans

Even more incendiary rhetoric followed the next years. Hugo Chávez declared in 2005, that there were plans of assassinating him and that if anything happened to him, it was Bush’s fault¹⁹⁶. Consequently, he threatened with stopping oil supply to the United States if, “by the hand of the devil, those perverse plans succeed”¹⁹⁷.

Accusations were back and forth between the governments during these years and tensions build up. The US President declared that Venezuela had “failed demonstrably” to fulfill his obligations against drug trafficking and later on, under section 40A of the Arms Export Control Act. The Department of State determined that Venezuela was “not cooperating fully” with US counterterrorism efforts. This measure meant that defense articles were not sold or licensed for export to Venezuela in 2006¹⁹⁸.

George Bush continued to be the main target of Hugo Chávez complains. He denounced him at the national level, during his Sunday TV show, calling him a donkey, a coward, an assassin and an alcoholic. He also referred to him in several occasions as Mr. Danger or

¹⁹⁵ Dando y dando TV program. VTV. 2009. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-eejcy1Ifw> on May 21, 2017

¹⁹⁶ Zúquete, José Pedro. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 106

¹⁹⁷ Chávez says US plans to kill him. February 21, 2005. BBC. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4282603.stm> on May 21, 2017

¹⁹⁸ US Department of State. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35766.htm> on May 21, 2017

Mr. Evil.¹⁹⁹ Later that year, when addressing the General Assembly of the UN, Chávez called Bush “the Devil” and called him the “spokesperson for imperialism”. He also said that it “would take a psychiatrist to analyze the speech he [Bush] delivered (...)”²⁰⁰.

Once again, this action fits in with Chávez’s operational code. Chávez’s best means to achieve his goals were through controversy and mediatization. Calling the president of the United States “The Devil” in front of the UN General Assembly had a great impact, and he certainly took a clear position about Venezuelan foreign policy.

Other US government officers were “mistreated” by Chávez, as well. In 2006, he expelled US Naval Commander John Correa, an attaché at the US embassy, arguing the government had evidence on spy-related activities²⁰¹. Condoleezza Rice, the US Secretary of State at the time, who had already referred to Chávez as a “negative force in Latin America”, was also object of Chávez aggressive rhetoric. Chávez suggested that Rice was suffering from “sexual frustration”; in other speech, he blew Rice a kiss and said, “Don’t mess with me, girl”²⁰².

His humble origins made that his speech was always clear and direct, being able to reach every one who heard him. Not only creating controversy he convinced people, but also by staying simple and straightforward.

Another source of tensions appeared when Chávez announced the withdrawal from the Andean Community in April 2006. It was a response to the bilateral agreements about free trade that Colombia and Peru had closed with the United States. This was an action purely ideological, since neither Chávez nor his governments explained the economic benefits from this withdrawal. The arguments Chávez gave were that Colombia and Peru had not consulted the other members of the organization; and that they were in favor of

¹⁹⁹ Zúquete, José Pedro. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 100

²⁰⁰ Hugo Chávez speech to the UN General Assembly. 2006. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/61/pdfs/venezuela-e.pdf> on May 22, 2017

²⁰¹ Guardia Rolando, Ines Margarita, and Adlin de Jesus Prieto Rodriguez. 2007. “La Construcción Del Miedo En La Revolución Bolivariana.” *Revista Venezolana de Ciencia Política* 32: 75–91. Pg. 81

²⁰² Zúquete, José Pedro. 2008. *Op.cit.*, pg. 100

the “elites and the multinational companies” but not of the “indigenous, the black and the poor”²⁰³.

6. 2008-2012: The Obama administration

Before Obama’s election, Venezuela-US relations were at a critical state. In September of 2008, Venezuela had declared the US ambassador, Patrick Duddy, persona non grata and expelled him from the country. He was accused of being part of a conspiracy to kill the president and organize a coup d’état. The expulsion was also made in solidarity with Bolivia, who had expelled the American president that same month. The United States responded the same way, expelling the Venezuelan ambassador, Bernardo Alvarez²⁰⁴.

Clearly, the change of government in the United States was seen as a possibility for better relations. After the results of the US Presidential election were known, the Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs issued a statement congratulating the new government of the United States. Hugo Chávez said himself that he saw “winds of change” and that they were willing to discuss in order to build better relations²⁰⁵.

However, this “kindness” did not last long. A few days before his inauguration, Obama declared in an interview that he considered Chávez as an “obstacle for Latin American progress”. Not long after that, Hugo Chávez responded that Obama seemed to be the same “miasma” than Bush²⁰⁶.

In February 2009, the Department of State issued two reports about Venezuela. The first, denouncing its concern about human rights in Venezuela in 2008. The second, stating that Venezuela was not cooperating with the global anti-drug trafficking efforts and that there was still an important traffic of drugs, high levels of corruption and a weak judicial

²⁰³ Ellner, Steve. 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 129

²⁰⁴ Romero, Carlos A. 2010. *La Política Exterior de La Venezuela Bolivariana*. Pg. 20

²⁰⁵ Rangel, Jose Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.* pg. 286

²⁰⁶ Chávez arremete contra Obama: le llama “miasma” y dice que ya da órdenes a la oposición. (2009). *Noticias 24*. Retrieved from <http://www.noticias24.com/actualidad/noticia/22929/obama-es-la-misma-miasma-por-no-decir-otra-cosa/> on May 23, 2017

system²⁰⁷. Chávez referred to this publication saying to Obama to “focus on [his] own business” that he would focus on his, and to “not follow the same clumsy and stupid path of the precedent US government²⁰⁸”.

However, this tensions seemed to cool down in April, 2009, at the Summit of the Americas. According to Chávez, he did not have the intention of greeting President Obama, but since he approached him, he cordially responded. He said to him that he wanted “to be his friend”²⁰⁹.

After Obama’s speech at the Summit, Chávez approached him and gave him a book that represented the century of repression of Latin America from colonial countries. This gesture was provoked by Obama’s words, referring to move on from the past and look for the future. He had already stated that in other occasions, saying that the Latin American people have more to gain by looking forward than focusing on “old ideological battles”²¹⁰.

For Hugo Chávez, this represented a serious confrontation with his beliefs. As stated before, history was the basis of Chávez ideology, and his political universe was based on historical times and events. After the Summit, Chávez quoted Daniel Ortega, President of Nicaragua at the time, claiming that the events of repression from the Empire were not a matter of the past, but of the present. When asked if he had any “illusions” about Obama, he said that “none, because he is the chief of an Empire”²¹¹.

Either way, this encounter between the two presidents lighten the tensions and in June 2009 the respective ambassadors were reinstalled to their duties. Nevertheless, tensions grew again at the time of the crisis in Honduras, where the then-President Manuel Zelaya was ousted from power. The United States continue with its disqualification of the Venezuelan government drug-trafficking cooperation and Chávez continue with its accusations to the Empire.

²⁰⁷ Romero, Carlos A. 2010. *Op.cit.*, pg. 19

²⁰⁸ Chávez le dice a Obama “deje la estupidez”. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKvCQG8Ena8> on May 23, 2017

²⁰⁹ Rangel, Jose Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 308

²¹⁰ "Vínculos del Gobierno venezolano con Irán y Cuba no benefician a su gente". 2009. *El Universal*. Retrieved from <http://www.eluniversal.com/nacional-y-politica/111219/vinculos-del-gobierno-venezolano-con-iran-y-cuba-no-benefician-a-su-ge> on May 23, 2017

²¹¹ Rangel, Jose Vicente. 2013. *Op.cit.*, pg. 308

Chávez also said he believed there were “two Obamas”, one that preached change and peace, and another who was the “Obama of War”. This came after Obama approved the establishment of seven military bases in Colombia.²¹²

Other incidents followed after Obama criticized Venezuela’s relation with Cuba and Iran, to which Chávez responded that he was a “clown” and an “embarrassment”. At the same time, Venezuela bought different military material and arms from Russia and China, and Chávez explained that in any attempt to apply the “Libyan formula” in Venezuela, they would defend themselves. He also denounced that the United States did not wanted to sell him the spare parts of some F16, so for him, it was only normal to search elsewhere. Chávez denounced several times that the United States had plans to invade Venezuela, and that preparing themselves for this was on their sovereign right.

After the killing of Osama Bin Laden, the Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs released a statement in which it, “assuming that the death of Bin Laden is real, demands to stop the occupation and the violence conducted by the United States in Central Asia, with the intention of neutralizing [Bin Laden]”²¹³. This was criticized at the international level.

Venezuela-US relations improved during the Obama administration, even though tensions and insults (mostly from Chávez’s part) were still present. Obama tried to distance himself from Bush’s policies since the beginning. Chávez even said that if he was “north-American” he would “vote for Obama”, during the presidential campaign of 2012²¹⁴.

After Chávez death, Obama’s statement said: “At this challenging time of President Hugo Chávez’s passing, the United States reaffirms its support for the Venezuelan people and its interest in developing a constructive relationship with the Venezuelan government. As Venezuela begins a new chapter in its history, the United States remains committed to

²¹² Interview with Larry King. 2009. CNN.

²¹³ Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs. May 2011.

²¹⁴ Chávez: "Si yo fuera norteamericano, votaría por Obama". Ultimas Noticias. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgNwpDVULMs> on May 24, 2017

policies that promote democratic principles, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.”²¹⁵

7. Oil-related relations

Traditionally, Venezuela had always had an oil-oriented foreign policy. Since the United States have always been one of the principal importers of Venezuelan oil, the commercial relationship between the countries led to a good relationship in other matters. In 2015, the United States were still Venezuela’s largest trading partner²¹⁶.

According to the theory of interdependence, economic cooperation leads to peace because of the common goal of maximizing capital. However, this assumption was proven wrong in the case of US-Venezuela relations under Chávez mandate. The political tensions and the ideological differences had become a source of an antagonist relation, regardless of the economic ties²¹⁷.

Chávez used oil as his most powerful tool. As said before, the multipolar-oriented foreign policy was partially based on a diversification of Venezuelan economy in order to become less dependent of the United States. Even though several action can prove this logic, it can be argued that, in this specific matter, there were incoherencies between Hugo Chávez discourse and his actions.

The Venezuelan oil supply to the United States was never stopped, despite Chávez’s accusations and declarations of the US as the enemy. The two countries are significantly associated in this matter, and it would be disadvantageous for both if the economic relations were broken.

This energy interdependence is based in several factors, but the main one is the interconnection and investment ties between the two countries’ oil sectors. First of all,

²¹⁵ Statement of President Obama on the Death of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. March 5, 2013. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/03/05/statement-president-obama-death-venezuelan-president-hugo-chavez> on May 24, 2017

²¹⁶ US Department of State. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35766.htm> on May 22, 2017

²¹⁷ Bonfili, C. 2010. *Op.cit.*, pg. 671

geographic proximity plays an important role, since Venezuelan oil is 5 days away from the US Gulf Coast, compared to 30 or 40 days for Middle East oil. Besides, PDVSA, the state-owned Venezuelan oil company, reaches US market through its subsidiary in the United States, CITGO Petroleum Corporation.²¹⁸

Finally, there is a high level of integration between the two oil sectors. Most Venezuelan oil is the heavy type of crude oil, and special refineries must treat it. In the United States, only a small number of refineries can treat it. This means that in the case of a disruption of supply, these refineries would be affected as well, since they are configured to run most economically with Venezuelan oil²¹⁹. It must be taken into account that the oil sector in the United States has been linked to the exploitation and commercialization of Venezuelan oil for over 80 years. Strong lobbying has always existed in Washington in favor of the Venezuelan oil sector²²⁰.

However, the Chávez administration did try to distance itself from the United States market, profiting from the increase of oil prices. In 2005, Venezuela signed an agreement with Cuba, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and other 10 countries from the region, creating “Petro-Caribe”. This is an oil-related commercial program that allows member countries to have special prices on an percentage of the oil supplied, that can be paid in over 25 years with an 1% interest rate; or, paid the resultant debt in services or products, such as bananas, rice, sugar, etc.²²¹

Actual benefits from this program are debated, since governments supporters argue that it is a way of helping the small neighboring countries in exchange of other goods. Chávez discourse in favor of international cooperation and solidarity usually did not mention the economic benefits of these programs. Consequently, Venezuelan opposition argues that this was a way for Chávez to “buy” support at the multilateral organizations, such as the OAS; that Venezuelan oil was being “given-away”, and denounced the high cost of the humanitarian programs²²².

²¹⁸ Bonfili, C. 2010. *Op.cit.*, pg. 673

²¹⁹ *Ibidem* pg. 673

²²⁰ Duarte Villa, Rafael. 2004. *Op.cit.*, pg. 38

²²¹ Ellner, Steve. 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 122

²²² *Ibidem*

However, other social programs based on oil revenues and oil itself were implemented. A program to provide heating oil to underprivileged families in the United States was a decision that was both criticized and acclaimed. This program did not bring any economic benefits for Venezuela and represented a form of charity from a developing country to a great power²²³. This program was expanded in 2009, serving more than 202,000 households, 245 homeless shelters, and 250 Native American communities in 25 states; representing around 49 million gallons of discounted heating oil²²⁴. This program was very welcomed in the US, even from sectors who would normally be critics of Chávez²²⁵.

Chávez humanitarian and “social call” were the arguments used to justify these programs. As previously said, benefits from Petro Caribe are debatable, and with the US heating oil program there is a certainty that there was not economic profits. It can be argued that these decisions were in partially ideological, an attempt to better his image at the international level, and finally, it could be considered as a way to “control” small countries of the region, regarding Petro Caribe.

It is clear, then, that oil was a determinant factor of Hugo Chávez foreign policy. In an interview in 2009, when asked if he would stop the oil supply to the United States, he answered that it was “a compromise (...) it is business, it is commerce”. And that 150 years from now, there will only be five countries with oil in the world: Russia, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. He stated that the world is going to depend on them and that is why they want to have “the best relations”, to “invest in resources to maintain the energetic needs of the world”²²⁶. The latter was the frequent justification for his rapprochement with these countries, but ideological affinities were definitely determinant.

With this in-depth analysis It can be noted that the antagonism and hostility between the US and Venezuela did not affect the rationality of its actors in oil-related matters. For Prof. Luisa Romero, there is no doubt that if Hugo Chávez had acted according to his speech, oil supply would have been stopped²²⁷. Until 2010, the energy trade remained

²²³ Ellner, Steve. 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 123

²²⁴ Orhangazi, O. 2014. “Contours of Alternative Policy Making in Venezuela.” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 46(2): 221–40. Pg. 225

²²⁵ Ellner, Steve, 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 123

²²⁶ Interview with Larry King. 2009. CNN.

²²⁷ Salazar, Paola. *Op.cit.*, Luisa Romero

relatively stable, even though there was a decrease on the quantity of barrels sent in 2009 (due to a Venezuelan production failure)²²⁸.

Venezuela continued to be dependent on US market. There are two explanations for Chávez actions. First, Chávez knew that he was in a disadvantageous bargaining position, since Venezuela was not the United States' only supplier. Second, he knew that it was not likely that imports from the US would stop, so he faced little risks of being “punished” by the US. It can be concluded that Chávez did assess his risks when deciding on foreign policy. Regarding this matter, his decisions were rational but incoherent with his discourse.

8. Final comments

We can summarize US-Venezuela relations with Boulding's concept of “real incompatibility”. Taking into account that this concept introduces the fact that the image of the future of one country can only be accomplished if the image of the future of the other country is prevented, it could be argued that the two countries were incompatibles. The fact that Hugo Chávez fought indeed tirelessly the “American Empire” in order to create a multipolar world, went directly against the future of the United States.

It would seem that US-Venezuelan relations were more of a “illusory incompatibility”, since they had common interests in terms of oil supply, but in fact, both countries had opposed visions of the future, since both governments had different long-term goals²²⁹. As explained before, image of the international system is determinant in foreign actions, and increased tensions made foreign policy more ideological than pragmatic.

However, a distinction must be made between the economic relations and the political relations. Political relations and actions were indeed conducted by ideological beliefs, impulsivity and personalities; but economic relations maintained rationality in order to protect both interests. As previously mentioned, oil supply was never stopped, which

²²⁸ Bonfili, C. 2010. *Op.cit.*, pg. 674

²²⁹ Ellner, Steve. 2009. *Op.cit.*, pg. 123

indicates that the Venezuelan government was aware of the disadvantaged of going through with such a move. Hugo Chávez historical preferences, his enjoyment of controversy, his tendency to be mediatized, and his conflictual political universe had a great influence in his decisions, as it was demonstrated before.

It can be concluded that, the foreign policy of Venezuela towards the United States was indeed influenced by Hugo Chávez's discourse, beliefs and personality. This fact confirms his belonging to "The Maverick" category in Preston's typology. However, in the economic relations, rationality was preserved; although it represented an incoherency with Hugo Chávez discourse.

Conclusion

As the previous chapters have illustrated, Hugo Chávez's personality and discourse were determinant elements for Venezuelan foreign policy during his mandate, specially towards the United States. His personal life and his formative events had a great influence in the development of his personality, therefore, the first chapter explained them in detail, using mostly biography books.

Moreover, the operational code and the different typologies deepened the analysis of his personality, creating a guide to the hypothesis analysis. Different sources were used in this chapter, such as biography books, scientific articles and interviews. The latter were especially useful, since the operational code required Chávez's opinion on different matters.

Furthermore, the hypothesis analysis was aimed to help respond the research question. US-Venezuela relations were definitely influenced by Chávez's personality and discourse. Several decisions were indeed belief-based. However, and as previously mentioned, this influence remained in the matters of politics, and not in the economic relationship. This leads to a nuanced confirmation of the hypothesis.

Therefore, different breakthroughs can be highlighted. First, perceptions about Hugo Chávez appear to be different from the reality. Clearly, he was seen as impulsive and irrational, nevertheless, the research showed that he was actually a planner, who took care of details; and understood the risks of irrational actions regarding economic relations. Second, considering that he represented and still represents an anti-American movement, it was expected that his tense relationship with the United States was there from the beginning. Yet, it only started after several years in power.

Analyzing a complex personality, such as Hugo Chávez's, was definitely a challenge. As controversial as he was, he had many adepts and many opponents as well. This made

difficult to find objective information. The different personal interviews were delicate to conduct, since questions about Chávez and his personality could be seen as a sensitive subject for some. In addition, FPA theory is based on qualitative data and methods, which can lead to misinterpretations.

Being Venezuelan, the research was exceptionally interesting. Since Chávez's figure was very present while growing up, it influenced the expectations of the research. Venezuela is a highly polarized country, and one of the principal limitations was the difficulty of putting personal opinions aside. Nevertheless, the analysis brought a better understanding of Hugo Chávez's personality, his actions, and the actual Venezuelan political situation.

It can be noted that the research could be a positive contribution to the FPA field of research. It seems, indeed, that an operational code had never been conducted on Hugo Chávez before. Furthermore, the operational code is a method that it has been left aside in recent times, thus, it is interesting to revitalize it. Lastly, FPA is a considerably new theory and has been frequently criticized. This research can further prove that the individual level and decision-making process influence the systemic level.

Moreover, further researches could be done in order to deepen the analysis about Hugo Chávez's personality and his influence in foreign policy. A FPA-based multi-level analysis of Chávez's foreign policy would show a broader image of his actions. Likewise, an analysis of his influence on today's Venezuelan foreign policy will demonstrate his impact on Venezuelan politics. Finally, his personal influence on Latin American politics would definitely be interesting as a continuation of this research.

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Ce mémoire repose sur la personnalité et le discours politique d'Hugo Chavez, ancien président du Vénézuéla, et analyse leur influence sur la politique étrangère du pays. Pour cela, la théorie *Foreign Policy Analysis* a été utilisée. L'*operational code* a été l'outil sélectionné pour mener cette recherche, avec les Etats-Unis comme cas d'étude.

Mots-clés : Hugo Chávez, *Foreign Policy Analysis* (FPA), *operational code*, Etats-Unis, Venezuela.