

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE AMERICAN SELF IN RELATION TO  
VENEZUELAN OTHERS THROUGH U.S. FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSES  
(2001-2019)

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DISCOURSES (2001-2019)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE AMERICAN SELF IN RELATION TO VENEZUELAN OTHERS THROUGH U.S. FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSES (2001-2019)**

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This thesis focuses on the inherent relation between foreign policy and identity formation through difference. By adopting the Poststructural international relations theory and discourse analysis methodology, this thesis aims to provide an alternative interpretation of U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela during the leftist-populist administrations of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro by mainly focusing on the construction of American identity concerning various Venezuelan Others; Chávez and Maduro regimes as the dangerous Others, the Venezuelan people, and Juan Guaidó as friendly Others. Through an extensive reading of the foreign policy texts, the author determined three key events (2008, 2015, and 2019) as three crucial turning points in the relations between the U.S. and Venezuela. The key events coincided with the presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack H. Obama, and Donald J. Trump. The discourse analysis of these three events (based on the hegemonic and basic discourses) explicitly exposed the symbiotic relation between the employment of discourses of danger with identity formation (including the constitutions of the American Self and the Venezuelan Others). It also provided the answer to how these constitutions enable specific foreign policy actions towards Venezuela while simultaneously making other actions unthinkable.

**Keywords:** U.S. Foreign Policy, Discourse Analysis, Poststructuralism, American Identity, Venezuelan Politics

## ÖZ

### AMERİKAN BENLİĞİNİN VENEZUELALI ÖTEKİLERLE İLİŞKİSİ ÜZERİNDEN ABD DIŞ POLİTİKASI SÖYLEMLERİYLE İNŞASI (2001-2019)

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Bu tez, dış politika ve ötekilik aracılığıyla kimlik inşası arasındaki içkin ilişkiye odaklanmaktadır. Postyapısalcı uluslararası ilişkiler teorisini benimseyerek ve söylem analizi metodolojisini kullanarak, bu tez, özellikle Hugo Chávez ve Nicolás Maduro'nun solcu-popülist iktidarları döneminde ABD'nin Venezuela'ya yönelik dış politikasının alternatif bir yorumunu sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, özellikle Amerikan kimliğinin çeşitli Venezuelalı Ötekiler ile ilişkisine odaklanarak; ABD dış politikası söylemlerinin Chávez ve Maduro rejimlerinin tehlikeli Öteki, Venezuela halkının ve Juan Guaidó'nun ise diğer dost Ötekiler olarak inşa etmesini incelemektedir. Dış politika söylemlerinin ayrıntılı okunması sonucunda yazar üç anahtar olayı (2008, 2015 ve 2019) belirlemiştir. Bu olaylar ABD ile Venezuela arasındaki ilişkilerin üç önemli dönemeç noktasını oluşturmaktadır. Anahtar olaylar, George W. Bush, Barack H. Obama ve Donald J. Trump'ın başkanlıkları dönemlerine denk gelmektedir. Bu üç olayın söylem analizi, hegemonik ve temel söylemlere dayanarak, tehlike söylemlerinin kimlik inşası ile (Amerikan Benliği ve Venezuelalı Diğerlerinin inşalarını da içeren) olan simbiyotik ilişkisini açıkça ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, bu inşaların Venezuela'ya yönelik belirli dış politika



eylemlerini nasıl mümkün kıldığını, aynı anda diğer eylemleri düşünmez kıldığını da ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** ABD Dış Politikası, Söylem Analizi, Postyapısalcılık, Amerikan Kimliği, Venezuela Siyaseti

*To My Beloveds: Asli, Selin, and Volkan*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AD</b>	Democratic Action Party
<b>ALBA</b>	Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America
<b>CAFTA-DR</b>	The Central America and Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement
<b>CELAC</b>	The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
<b>CIPE</b>	The Center for International Private Enterprise
<b>CNE</b>	The National Electoral Council
<b>COPEI</b>	The Independent Political Electoral Organizing Committee
<b>CTV</b>	The Confederation of Workers of Venezuela
<b>FARC-EP</b>	The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army
<b>FECA</b>	The Federal Election Campaign Act
<b>FEDECAMARAS</b>	Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce
<b>FTA</b>	Free Trade Agreements
<b>FTAA</b>	Free Trade Area of the Americas
<b>G77</b>	The Group of 77
<b>GNI</b>	Gross National Income
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>IRI</b>	International Republican Institute
<b>MERCOSUR</b>	The Southern Common Market
<b>MUD</b>	The Democratic Unity Roundtable
<b>NAFTA</b>	The North American Free Trade Agreement
<b>NED</b>	National Endowment for Democracy
<b>OAS</b>	The Organization of American States
<b>OPEC</b>	The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
<b>PCV</b>	The Communist Party of Venezuela
<b>PDVSA</b>	Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.
<b>PSUV</b>	The United Socialist Party of Venezuela

<b>R4V</b>	The Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela
<b>TPP</b>	The Trans-Pacific Partnership
<b>TSJ</b>	The Supreme Justice Tribunal
<b>USMCA</b>	The United States, Mexico, and Canada Agreement
<b>UNASUR</b>	The Union of South American Nations
<b>URD</b>	The Democratic Republican Union
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>US CENSUS</b>	The United States Census Bureau

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

On January 23, 2019, U.S. President Donald Trump officially recognized the Venezuelan opposition leader, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, as the interim president of Venezuela and outlawed the elected President Nicolás Maduro from the presidency. Also, U.S. Diplomats lobbied for the recognition of Juan Guaidó as the rightful president by other countries such as Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and many members of the European Union<sup>1</sup>. The U.S. has been implementing strict sanctions and embargoes against Venezuela's oil sector (the country's primary source of income) since 2019, which devastated the Venezuelan economy<sup>2</sup>.

The Trump administration claimed to act against President Maduro's "policies, which are marked by authoritarianism, intolerance for dissent, and violent and systematic repression of human rights and fundamental freedoms"<sup>3</sup>. The same administration announced its intent to entitle "Brazil as a Major Non-NATO Ally" in 2019<sup>4</sup>. According to the U.S. Department of State's 2019 and 2020 reports on Human Rights in Brazil, the Bolsonaro administration did not respect certain human rights,

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<sup>1</sup> Clare Ribando Seelke et al., "Venezuela: Background and U.S. Relations," 2021, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Luis Oliveros, "How U.S. Sanctions Have Directly Aggravated Venezuela's Economic Crisis," WOLA, 2020, <https://www.wola.org/2020/10/new-report-us-sanctions-aggravated-venezuelas-economic-crisis/>; Francisco Rodríguez, "U.S. Oil Sanctions Are Hurting Venezuelans. Time for a New Approach to Pressure Maduro," Washington Post, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/12/04/us-oil-sanctions-are-hurting-venezuelans-time-new-approach-pressure-maduro/>; Bea Sophia Pielago, "Uncovering the 5 Major Causes of the Food Crisis in Venezuela," *Glocality* 3, no. 1 (June 24, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.5334/glo.24>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations with Venezuela," 2020, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-venezuela/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Brazil, "Joint Statement from President Donald J. Trump and President Jair Bolsonaro," 2019, <https://br.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-from-president-donald-j-trump-and-president-jair-bolsonaro/>.

including freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial, and the right not to be discriminated against for sexual orientation<sup>5</sup>. In other words, the U.S. claims that Brazil and Venezuela repeatedly repressed human rights and freedoms. What caused such a contrast in the approach of U.S. foreign policy towards the claimed human rights violations in Brazil and Venezuela? This dissertation is not about U.S. foreign policy actions or outcomes toward Venezuela. On the contrary, this study's main objective is the constitution of a particular reality through foreign relations, discourses of danger, and identity formation through difference. Why did certain events between Venezuela and the U.S. represent threats but not between Brazil and the U.S.? It is crucial to note that this argument does not claim that the foreign policy of Venezuela towards the U.S. has been benevolent, nor does it claim that the U.S. intentionally created a threat when there was nonapparent. To put it differently, these specific events had to be interpreted as dangers rather than different events, and how they are interpreted as dangers operates particular modes of representation, not the alternative ones. The constitution of the Chávez and Maduro administrations as dangerous others by the U.S. foreign policy discourses was necessary to reproduce the American identity. Linking danger to American identity has been a pivotal part of its constitution since portraying danger through foreign policy helps secure its national identity's limits<sup>6</sup>.

Within this framework, it is possible to view the constitution of the Chávez and Maduro administrations as dangerous Others in a new light, as another instance of the continuous production and reproduction of American identity through foreign policy actions rather than solely as a crisis caused by external factors. Furthermore, to establish American identity (which is represented by individual liberties, liberal democracy, and an open market economy), it was crucial for exclusionary practices to convincingly connect dissenting elements to a secure identity on the "inside" by employing a narrative of danger, where the identified threats were positioned and

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of State, "2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Brazil," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/brazil/>; U.S. Department of State, "2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Brazil," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/brazil/>.

<sup>6</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 3.

attributed to the "outside". Traditional International Relations analysis modes cannot expose such representations of the inside/outside dichotomy. Therefore, an unconventional mode of analysis is necessary. This type of analysis includes the Poststructuralist logic of interpretation because this particular logic examines the political results that arise from employing one mode of representation over others. To understand and expose these complex modes of representation, this dissertation asks specific questions, like how outlawing a president of another country became a possible option for U.S. foreign policy. How does the U.S. constitute itself as a superior political subject that decides which political subject (especially in Latin America) could be outlawed from the international community while simultaneously constituting Venezuelan people as lacking the ability to govern themselves democratically? How does this discursively constructed reality enable specific U.S. foreign policy actions toward Venezuela while making other foreign policy options unthinkable?

To answer these research questions, this study focuses on the construction of U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela after the elections of leftist presidents in Venezuela, Hugo Chávez in 1998 and Nicolás Maduro in 2013, by adopting Poststructuralist International Relations Theory (especially David Campbell's interpretation) and by combining Lene Hansen's discourse analysis methodology. This thesis analyzes the official discourses (statements, speeches, interviews, memoirs, and tweets) of U.S. Presidents like George W. Bush, Barack H. Obama, and Donald J. Trump and their foreign policymakers concerning Venezuela to determine the key representations of identity within these texts. These official policy texts are collected from The American Presidency Project archives, governmental websites such as the Department of State, the archives of the White House, Public Papers of the Presidents of the U.S., newspapers (direct quotations from related foreign policy agents), memoirs, and their official Twitter accounts. Because of the ontological formation of this Poststructuralist framework, the data collection and data analysis are processed simultaneously along with the research.

### **1.1. The Research Puzzle**

After 2015, we see an escalation in the deterioration of U.S.-Venezuela relations. President Obama issued Executive Order 13692 on March 8, 2015, and declared

Venezuela as “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States” and sanctioned seven top Venezuelan officials individually<sup>7</sup>. In 2017, President Trump implemented more sanctions against President Maduro himself and his regime's prominent politicians and businesspeople while declaring President Maduro a dictator<sup>8</sup>. However, the crux of the matter emerged when the U.S. implemented an embargo against Venezuela's oil sector (the country's primary income source) in 2019 after the Trump Administration recognized the opposition leader Juan Guáido as the interim President of Venezuela<sup>9</sup>. According to the former National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Trump administration, Juan Cruz, the U.S. sanctioned anything but the sun and air in Venezuela and would sanction those too if they could<sup>10</sup>. In the 2019 Worldwide Threat Assessment report of the U.S. Intelligence Community, Venezuela represented a more significant threat than Cuba<sup>11</sup>.

During his speech on April 17, 2019, President Trump's National Security Advisor, John Bolton, said, "Today, we proudly proclaim for all to hear: the Monroe Doctrine is alive and well"<sup>12</sup>. He also emphasized that Venezuela is in the Western Hemisphere and that the U.S. has a *special responsibility* in Venezuela<sup>13</sup> (referring to

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Issuance of a New Venezuela-Related Executive Order; Venezuela-Related Designations ,” 2015, <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/recent-actions/20150309>.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Treasury Sanctions the President of Venezuela ,” 2017, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0137>; David Smilde, “Trump and Venezuela,” in *The Future of U.S. Empire in the Americas: The Trump Administration and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 37–58, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429425073-4>.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Recognizes Guaidó as Venezuela’s Interim President,” Bureau of Global Public Affairs, 2019, <https://share.america.gov/u-s-recognizes-guaido-as-venezuelas-interim-president/>.

<sup>10</sup> Stephania Taladrid, “Can Biden Reverse Trump’s Damage in Latin America?,” *The New Yorker*, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/can-biden-reverse-trumps-lasting-damage-in-latin-america>.

<sup>11</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “Statement for the Record: 2019 Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community,” 2019, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/congressional-testimonies/congressional-testimonies-2019/item/1947-statement-for-the-record-worldwide-threat-assessment-of-the-us-intelligence-community>.

<sup>12</sup> John R. Bolton, “Remarks to the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association,” U.S. Embassy in Cuba, 2019, <https://cu.usembassy.gov/ambassador-bolton-bay-of-pigs-veterans-association-brigade-2506/>.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* [Emphasis Added].

the Monroe Doctrine<sup>14</sup> again). Bolton also criticized President Obama's appeasement policy toward Latin America, especially towards the "Troika of Tyranny" (as Bolton calls Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua). In his speech, he promised that Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua would finally be free from "the communist dictators"<sup>15</sup>. His whole speech insinuated an active U.S. involvement in the region. After he resigned from the position of National Security Advisor in September 2019, John Bolton wrote a memoir, "The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir," and reserved a separate chapter just for Venezuela<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, in different speeches, President Trump, Ambassador Bolton, Senator Graham, and U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo repeatedly stated that *all options* (including military intervention) concerning Venezuela are on the table<sup>17</sup>. Senator Graham even proposed a military invasion like Grenada in 1983 for Venezuela, saying, "This is in our backyard"<sup>18</sup>. President Trump repeatedly answered questions about a possible military intervention with the same answer: "All options are on the table"<sup>19</sup>. In 2018, he openly stated, "All options are on the table; strong ones and the less-than-strong ones. Every option—and you know what I mean by strong. Every option is on the table with respect to Venezuela. We are going to take care of the people of Venezuela"<sup>20</sup>. Interestingly enough, for more than 20 years, despite all the tension,

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<sup>14</sup> The Monroe Doctrine announced before the U.S. Congress by the U.S. President James Monroe in 1823. The doctrine stated that the U.S. would not tolerate any further European colonization of the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine formed the base of the U.S. Foreign Policy towards Latin America especially during the Cold War. Mark T. Gilderhus, "The Monroe Doctrine: Meanings and Implications," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (March 2006): 5–16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2006.00282.x>.

<sup>15</sup> Bolton, "Remarks to the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association."

<sup>16</sup> John R. Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir* (New York: Simon&Schuster, 2020), 229.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Baker and Edward Wong, "Intervening Against Venezuela's Strongman, Trump Belies 'America First,'" *The New York Times*, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/24/world/americas/donald-trump-venezuela.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Eric Kleefeld, "Lindsey Graham Proposes Invading Venezuela," *Vox*, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/5/26/18640654/lindsey-graham-trump-invade-venezuela-reagan-grenada>.

<sup>19</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Jair Messias Bolsonaro of Brazil and an Exchange With Reporters," 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-prior-meeting-with-president-jair-messias-bolsonaro-brazil-and-exchange-with>.

<sup>20</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Upon Arrival at United Nations Headquarters in New York City," 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-exchange-with-reporters-upon-arrival-united-nations-headquarters-new-york-city>.

the U.S. avoided using "the one weapon that would hurt Venezuela the most", imposing sanctions and an embargo on Venezuelan oil<sup>21</sup>. Only the Trump administration took this step on January 28, 2019<sup>22</sup>. The first question that comes to mind is why, however, the literature is already filled with studies looking for the question of why (the literature on why questions is discussed further on section 1.3.). Even though it is a good question within this context, the subject of this study is not the question of why. Traditional Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) generally focuses on why questions and causations. FPA traditionally asks why certain foreign policy actors takes certain foreign policy decisions. For instance, one can look for the domestic sources of foreign policy and, for example, analyze President Trump's personality characteristics on deploying sanctions against the Venezuelan oil industry or getting votes of the anti-Castro, anti-Maduro, Cuban, and Venezuelan Americans in Florida<sup>23</sup>. One can also assess this decision from a different point of view and look at the democratic deterioration in Venezuela and the U.S. response to this deterioration. Stephen Walt, for example, concludes that Venezuela collapsed not because of foreign intervention or economic sanctions but because of domestic political reasons in Venezuela<sup>24</sup>. This study intends to look beyond the why question that the current literature overlooks. Asking why only President Trump took such actions in 2019 towards Venezuela disregards the historical construction of identity and ignores the Bush and Obama administration's previous actions towards Venezuela. "What is explained is not why a particular outcome obtained, but rather how the subjects, objects, and interpretive dispositions were socially constructed

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<sup>21</sup> Javier Corrales and Carlos A. Romero, *U.S. Venezuela Relations since the 1990s* (London: Routledge, 2013), 7.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions Venezuela's State-Owned Oil Company Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A.," 2019, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm594>.

<sup>23</sup> When it comes to presidential elections in the U.S., Florida has a very important role. George W. Bush won the 2000 presidential election with the margin of less than 0.5 per cent in Florida. Donald Trump, Marco Rubio, John Bolton, and Mike Pompeo continuously visited Cuban and Venezuelan Americans in Miami-Dade County of Florida (where the most Cuban and Venezuelan Americans live in the U.S.), made strong speeches against the Castro and Maduro regimes. In 2020 presidential elections, President Trump increased his vote 80 per cent in Florida (compared to 2016 elections) and got 66 per cent of total Cuban American votes. Carmen Sesin, "Trump Cultivated the Latino Vote in Florida, and It Paid Off," NBC News, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/trump-cultivated-latino-vote-florida-it-paid-n1246226..>

<sup>24</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "All Great-Power Politics Is Local," *Foreign Policy*, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/24/all-great-power-politics-is-local/>.



such that certain practices were made possible”<sup>25</sup>. Essentially, the focus is not on why the Trump administration took actions such as outlawing Maduro or imposing sanctions on the oil industry, but on understanding how these specific foreign policy actions have become as possible options within U.S. foreign policy discourses since 1998.

Furthermore, the U.S. has lobbied for the recognition of Juan Guaidó as the interim president by other countries too (in Canada, the members of the European Union, and Latin American countries), including extensive diplomatic efforts to exclude President Maduro from the international community by outlawing him from the presidency, cutting all the diplomatic, economic, and political ties with his administration<sup>26</sup>. How come the U.S. does not make the same effort for the other 'authoritarian' governments? Under President Trump, the U.S. had good relations with President Putin, President Erdogan, President Bolsonaro, and Prime Minister Orbán. President Donald Trump visited Saudi Arabia in 2017, his first foreign trip as the president. He said, "America will not impose its way of life on the others," and that he is not in Saudi Arabia to lecture people, "to tell other people how to live, what to do, who to be"<sup>27</sup>.

Being in danger is not an objective situation. What one constitutes a situation, a subject, or an event as a threat does not exist out there independently. If authoritarianism is a danger to U.S. ideals, why does the U.S. choose to constitute Venezuelan administrations as a threat but no other 'authoritarian' administrations? The main argument of this dissertation is that the ongoing crisis between the U.S. and Venezuela is not simply a crisis triggered by external factors. It is instead a necessary incident for the continuous reproduction of American identity through foreign policy actions. In short, the main question here is not why the Trump

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<sup>25</sup> Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines," *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1993): 298.

<sup>26</sup> Timothy M. Gill, "Shifting Imperial Strategies in Contemporary Latin America: The U.S. Empire and Venezuela under Hugo Chávez," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 32, no. 3 (2019): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12216>.

<sup>27</sup> Jennifer Calfas, "Trump Saudi Arabia Speech," Time, 2017, <https://time.com/4787609/donald-trump-saudi-arabia-speech-2/>.

administration outlawed President Maduro or chose to sanction the oil sector; instead, the question is how these specific foreign policy actions became possible options through U.S. foreign policy discourses since the election of Hugo Chávez as President in 1998. What is the relation between the discourses of danger (constituted by the U.S. against Venezuela) and the constitution of the U.S. identity? What kind of reality is constructed via the discourses of danger? What kind of foreign policy actions became possible, and more importantly, what kind of foreign policy actions became unthinkable and unfeasible because of these discourses? To answer these questions and trace the construction of the American Self against Venezuelan Other(s), one first needs to focus on the history of the relations between these two countries. Elaborating the historical relations between the two countries, enables a comprehensive understanding.

## **1.2. A Historical Look to the U.S. - Venezuela Relations**

It is not shocking to trace the roots of the current controversial relations between the U.S. and Venezuela back to the 1998 Presidential Elections in Venezuela. Between the late 1950s and 1990s, many scholars labeled Venezuelan democracy as "exceptional"<sup>28</sup>. After long periods of dictatorship in Venezuela, the opposition parties (both left and right wings), military, businesspeople, and the church created an alliance called The Patriotic Junta (Junta Patriótica) in 1957<sup>29</sup>. They successfully overthrew the dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez in January 1958. On January 31, three prominent political party leaders (AD, COPEI, Democratic-Republican Union, URD) signed the Punto Fijo Pact and promised to respect the democratic election process. With the effect of the Cold War, these three political parties excluded the left-wing political parties from the pact<sup>30</sup>. This exclusion of the left and the dominance of the right-wing political parties in the Venezuelan political system for forty years created

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<sup>28</sup> Daniel Levine, *Conflict and Political Change in Venezuela* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016); L. Herman Donald, "Democratic and Authoritarian Traditions," in *Democracy in Latin America: Colombia and Venezuela*, ed. Donald L. Herman (ABC-CLIO Publishing, 1988), 1–15; Steve Ellner and Miguel Tinker-Salas, *Venezuela: Hugo Chavez and the Decline of an "Exceptional Democracy"* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Levine, *Conflict and Political Change in Venezuela*, 102.

<sup>30</sup> Steve Ellner, *Rethinking Venezuelan Politics: Class Conflict and the Chavez Phenomenon* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), 48.

the socio-political base for the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998. They studied this exceptional state of Venezuelan democracy because while nearly every Latin American country received its share of military coups, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, Venezuela did not. Starting from the democratic transition in 1958, Venezuela became the perfect model for the U.S. to show its democracy as an example to other Latin American countries. As U.S. President Kennedy's adviser, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., put it in 1961, "Some of us in Washington saw Venezuela as a model for Latin America's progressive democracy"<sup>31</sup>.

After 1958, only the two parties' candidates, Democratic Action (AD) and Christian Democratic Party (COPEI), became presidents through elections for forty years<sup>32</sup>. During these forty years, relations between the U.S. and Venezuela were very stable because "Venezuela achieved fundamental objectives in relation to American ideals and goals- its democratic system, the successful integration of Venezuelan oil into U.S. market, the Pentagon's influence on the National Armed Forces and the presence of American way of life"<sup>33</sup>.

Hugo Chávez was the first president with no former affiliations with these two political parties. During his campaigns, he openly challenged the Punto Fijo system (the former political establishment), private oil companies, and the U.S. As expected, his elections led to a clean break from the past forty years. During one of his campaign speeches in 1998, Hugo Chávez promised to fire the head of PDVSA (the state-led oil company of Venezuela) and restrict foreign direct investments in the Venezuelan oil sector<sup>34</sup>. After his electoral victory, he claimed that "today, the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, we Venezuelans have written a new page in our history. The national soul

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>32</sup> Rafael Caldera became the president in 1994 and served until 1999, and he got elected from National Convergence Party in 1994; however, between 1969 to 1974, he was the candidate of the Christian Democratic Party (COPEI).

<sup>33</sup> Janet Kelly and Carlos A. Romero, *United States and Venezuela: Rethinking a Relationship, United States and Venezuela: Rethinking a Relationship* (Routledge, 2013), 1, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315023441>.

<sup>34</sup> Ellner and Tinker-Salas, *Venezuela: Hugo Chavez and the Decline of an "Exceptional Democracy,"* 10.

has been reborn"<sup>35</sup>. After the election, President Chávez made fundamental political, economic, and social changes in Venezuela. These changes include writing up a new constitution, holding a referendum for the constitution's approval by the people, channeling the state's oil income to the previously neglected parts of the society, and introducing a new participatory democracy model and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism<sup>36</sup>.

Consequently, right after he claimed office, he also started to face massive resistance from the members of the former establishment (especially from the oil industry) and the U.S.<sup>37</sup> Richard N. Haass, a U.S. diplomat, openly stated that "Hugo Chávez poses a challenge to U.S. interests in the Americas"<sup>38</sup>. These radical changes in Venezuelan politics, economy, and society created a breakpoint in the foreign relations between the U.S. and Venezuela. Venezuela, a former U.S. ally in South America, became a foe. Since then, both parties have been on opposite sides on many different subjects, including ideology, politics, interests, security, and the economy. Over the years, they constructed intense hostility against each other<sup>39</sup>. Sometimes, this enmity even became personal between the leaders of these countries<sup>40</sup>. The U.S. accuses the

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<sup>35</sup> Serge F. Kovalski, "Populist Elected in Venezuela," *Washington Post*, 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/dec98/07/venezuela120798.htm>; Diana Jean Schemo, "Renegade Officer Favored in Venezuelan Election Today," *The New York Times*, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/06/world/renegade-officer-favored-in-venezuelan-election-today.html>.

<sup>36</sup> The concept of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism coined by Heinz Dieterich in 2000 and then developed by Michael A. Lebowitz *Build It Now: Socialism for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2006). specifically for Venezuela during the Chávez era. The aim was creating a new socialist model for Venezuela. It had different stages, including constitutional, educational, political and geopolitical reforms. President Chávez tried to implement this model to Venezuela through a referendum, however his administration lost the Constitutional Referendum in 2007. Chris Carlson, "What Is Venezuela's Constitutional Reform Really About?," *VenezuelAnalysis*, 2007, [https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/2890#\\_ftn1..](https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/2890#_ftn1..)

<sup>37</sup> Iñaki Sagarzazu and Cameron G. Thies, "The Foreign Policy Rhetoric of Populism: Chávez, Oil, and Anti-Imperialism," *Political Research Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2019): 205–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912918784212>.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Lappert, "Living with Hugo: U.S. Policy Toward Hugo Chávez's Venezuela," 2006, v.

<sup>39</sup> Corrales and Romero, *U.S. Venezuela Relations since the 1990s*, 46.

<sup>40</sup> Presidents of both countries insulted each other during different speeches. In 2006, President Chávez called President Bush 'the devil' during his speech at the United Nations. David Stout, "Chávez Calls Bush 'the Devil' in U.N. Speech," *The New York Times*, 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/20/world/americas/20cnd-chavez.html..> In 2009, as a response to President Obama's accusation of exporting terrorism, President Chávez called President Obama, a poor ignoramus. Michael O'Brien, "Chavez: Obama an 'Ignoramus,'" *The Hill*, 2009,

Venezuelan administration of driving Venezuelan democracy towards authoritarianism and the Venezuelan people to hunger, migration, and violence<sup>41</sup>. In contrast, the Venezuelan government blames the U.S. for repeatedly attempting to topple the Venezuelan government to control Venezuela's unprecedented oil reserves<sup>42</sup>.

Interestingly, despite the long-term strained foreign relations, up until 2019, the U.S. and Venezuela had solid trade relations. During the Chávez administration, Venezuela was the largest oil supplier to the U.S., and the U.S. became Venezuela's top trading partner<sup>43</sup>. This fact did not change even during the crisis periods. For example, in 2002, there was a failed coup attempt by the opposition against President Chávez, and the Venezuelan government openly accused the U.S. of funding the opposition<sup>44</sup>. During the same year, the U.S. remained Venezuela's top trading partner, with 30.7% of total imports and 56% of total exports<sup>45</sup>. The same happened when President Chávez introduced his 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism model in 2005, or Nicolás Maduro became the new Venezuelan president with a minimal vote margin in 2014. The U.S. was still Venezuela's top trading partner, with billions of dollars in trade volume. Even in 2018, 52% of Venezuela's total imports were from the U.S., which was the highest percentage since 2000<sup>46</sup>. Only after the 2019 oil sanctions and

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<https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/campaigns/foreign-policy/37640-chavez-obama-an-ignoramous>. More recently, Nicolás Maduro called Donald Trump a racist and supremacist while President Trump called him a dictator, narco-terrorist, and Cuban puppet. Nahal Toosi, "In Venezuela, Trump Finds One Dictator He Doesn't Like," Politico, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/01/24/venezuela-trump-maduro-dictator-1124121>.

<sup>41</sup> Especially after the U.S. embargo on Venezuelan oil, Venezuelan people has been suffering from extreme hunger. As of early 2022, six million Venezuelans migrated to other countries. According to the InSight Crime, since 2016, Venezuela has been one of the top three on the list of the most violent countries in the world. Jeremy McDermott and Steven Dudley, "GameChangers 2021: Long on Criminality, Short on Democracy in Year to Come," InSight Crime, 2021, [https://insightcrime.org/news/gamechangers-2021-criminal-plenty-amid-democratic-shortage-2022/..](https://insightcrime.org/news/gamechangers-2021-criminal-plenty-amid-democratic-shortage-2022/)

<sup>42</sup> David Smilde, "Trump's Bluster Failed Venezuela. Biden Must Use Diplomatic and Economic Levers to Address the Crisis.," The Washington Post, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/01/19/venezuela-biden-maduro-guaido-trump-diplomacy/>.

<sup>43</sup> OEC, "Venezuela Country Profile," 2020, <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/ven>.

<sup>44</sup> Eva Golinger, *The Chavez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela* (Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> OEC, "Venezuela Country Profile."

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

the embargo implemented by the U.S. did the two countries' economic relations become nonexistent for the first time. The disruption of relations between the U.S. and Venezuela became an exciting academic subject. Relations between the U.S. and Venezuela had been nearly ordinary and unproblematic for years. Today, it is the opposite. The following section evaluates the literature on U.S.–Venezuela relations.

### **1.3. The Study of U.S. Foreign Policy towards Venezuela**

The challenges of the Chávez and Maduro administrations towards the U.S. attracted the attention of many scholars. However, it was interesting to find that two approaches have dominated this field of study. Many scholars adopt democracy promotion or a neo-Marxist approach while handling the issue. Most of these ask why U.S.-Venezuela relations have become controversial. For example, in most of his works, Gill explores U.S.-Venezuela relations by adopting Michael Mann's concepts of power<sup>47</sup> (ideological, economic, military, and political), the American empire, and new American imperialism<sup>48</sup>. He explores how the U.S. dealt with the anti-American governments of Venezuela since Hugo Chávez and how the U.S. regime change, and democracy promotion strategies evolved to cope with the new leftist wave in Latin America, especially in Venezuela. Instead of giving open military support to pro-American governments as it used to, according to Gill, the U.S. strategy shifted to support the opposition in every other possible source of power, including monetary support through different organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the International Republican Institute (IRI), or the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (New York City: Verso, 2005).

<sup>48</sup> Timothy M. Gill, ed., *The Future of U.S. Empire in the Americas: The Trump Administration and Beyond* (Routledge, 2020); Timothy M. Gill, “The State and Civil Society in Socialist Venezuela” (The University of Georgia, 2016); Timothy M. Gill, “From Promoting Political Polyarchy to Defeating Participatory Democracy: U.S. Foreign Policy towards the Far Left in Latin America,” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 24, no. 1 (2018): 72–95, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2018.750>; Timothy M. Gill, “Politics, Human Rights, and Social Policy under Contemporary Populist Regimes: The View from Trump-America and Socialist Venezuela,” *Irish Journal of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2019): 80–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0791603519827226>; Gill, “Shifting Imperial Strategies in Contemporary Latin America: The U.S. Empire and Venezuela under Hugo Chávez.”

<sup>49</sup> Gill, “Shifting Imperial Strategies in Contemporary Latin America: The U.S. Empire and Venezuela under Hugo Chávez,” 3.

Greg Grandin takes a similar stance to Gill. He adds a historical perspective, tracing the Bush administration's preemptive interventions in Latin America to Ronald Reagan's in Central America during the 1980s<sup>50</sup>. He also outlines how America's imperial identity evolved and how the U.S. hegemony declined in the region after the election of leftist governments in Latin America. Biegon also assesses the decline of the U.S. Hegemony in Latin America after the rise of the 'New Latin Left' (NLL) in the region, starting with President Chávez and Venezuela<sup>51</sup>. He uses critical IR theory, a neo-Gramscian perspective of hegemony, and international political economy (by emphasizing that hegemony is never only political; it also has to be economic) to examine how the U.S. tries to reassert its hegemony over the region after the NLL<sup>52</sup>. Petras and Veltmeyer, on the other hand, choose to adopt Lenin's conceptualization of imperialism (while criticizing the contemporary conceptualizations of imperialism) to study U.S. imperialism in Latin America by giving special attention to Venezuela after the election of Chávez<sup>53</sup>. They compare the U.S. foreign policy over Latin America within the coup period (from 1964 to 1983) to the post-Chávez period. They question how the U.S. tries to reassert its hegemony over the region by giving examples from contemporary U.S.–Venezuela relations while showing the similarities between the past and the present.

Other scholars adopt the concept of democracy promotion while examining the relations between the two countries, but they choose different approaches than neo-Marxism and imperialism. Camilleri questions the recent changes in U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela from the Obama to the Trump administrations<sup>54</sup>. According to him, the Obama administration chose to promote democracy in Venezuela and act accordingly. In contrast, the Trump administration tried only to 'eliminate an ideological foe' instead of promoting democracy in Venezuela. The

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<sup>50</sup> Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (Holt Paperbacks, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> Rubrick Biegon, *US Power in Latin America: Renewing Hegemony* (Routledge, 2017).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>53</sup> James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *Power and Resistance: U.S. Imperialism in Latin America* (Brill, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094306117734868ee>.

<sup>54</sup> Michael J Camilleri, "Evolution or Revolution ? U.S. Policy on Venezuela from Obama to Trump," *Pensamiento Propio* 47 (2017): 189–206.

latter chose neo-conservative foreign policy actors like John Bolton, Mike Pompeo, and Marco Rubio as his leading political team. They heavily affected U.S. foreign policy actions towards Venezuela<sup>55</sup>. He concludes that both administrations were unsuccessful in their efforts.

In his article, Bonfili adopts a constructivist approach to explain how the U.S. and Venezuela constructed each other as rivals after 1998<sup>56</sup>. He combines the Wendtian constructivist approach with the Copenhagen School in his paper. He concludes that economic interdependence (especially in the oil sector) and rivalry/polarization coexist in U.S.–Venezuela relations. He claims that a rupture in bilateral relations is unlikely because of this unique coexistence, and he was right until the Trump administration<sup>57</sup>.

Corrales and Romero's book on U.S.-Venezuela relations since the 1990s combines various IR theories like structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, constructivism, and domestic sources of foreign policy to explain this unusual relationship between the two countries<sup>58</sup>. They claim that no IR theory can explain this unique relation by itself, which this study disproves. Like Bonfili, they also show that the U.S. constructed Venezuela as only a mid-level security threat. This construction is why their bilateral relations are different from any other country. They call this policy "talk softly, sanction softly"<sup>59</sup>. According to their argument, there is always a balance between them; sometimes tension rises, and sometimes relations become better, but relations never come to a breaking point. When they wrote this book, Chávez had cancer but was still in power. They predicted that the U.S. would become less dependent on Venezuelan oil with the new technological innovations in U.S. oil production (like hydraulic fracturing). The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 also disproved this prediction. Since then, Venezuelan oil has become more

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>56</sup> Christian Bonfili, "The United States and Venezuela: The Social Construction of Interdependent Rivalry" 41, no. 6 (2010): 669–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010610388209>.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 683.

<sup>58</sup> Corrales and Romero, *U.S. Venezuela Relations since the 1990s*.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 189.



critical for the U.S. and European countries. They needed to start negotiations with the Maduro Administration at the highest diplomatic level since 2019<sup>60</sup>.

Unlike other scholars, the two prominent scholars within the field, McCoy and Smilde, make essential suggestions about the future U.S. foreign policy approach toward Venezuela<sup>61</sup>. McCoy mainly focuses on domestic developments like Obama's electoral victory, the 2008 financial crisis, and the decrease in oil prices<sup>62</sup>. By giving examples from the recent history of U.S. policies towards Venezuela, she shows how the U.S. was unable to isolate Venezuela before and the ineffectiveness of the policy of isolation. She criticizes former U.S. policies towards Venezuela (like not condemning the 2002 coup attempt against President Chávez or funding the Venezuelan opposition through organizations like NED or USAID). According to her, by implementing these policies, the U.S. lost its role in democracy promotion in Venezuela<sup>63</sup>. The U.S. should still provide democratic assistance but not lead it; instead, the international community, international organizations, and other states in the region should engage more in this matter.

More than a decade later, Smilde also makes similar suggestions to the Biden administration<sup>64</sup>. He criticizes the Trump administration for not being multilateral and even threatening President Maduro with military intervention. He offers multilateralism (the involvement of international organizations and other states), improving communication with the pro-Maduro states like Russia and China, revoking sanctions against the oil sector (but continuing the personal sanctions

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<sup>60</sup> Anatoly Kurmanaev, Natalie Kitroeff, and Kenneth P Vogel, "US Officials Travel to Venezuela as the West Isolates Putin," *The New York Times*, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/world/americas/venezuela-russia-usa.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Jennifer McCoy, "Engaging Venezuela: 2009 and Beyond," in *The Obama Administration and the Americas: Agenda for Change*, ed. Abraham F. Lowenthal, Ted Piccone, and Lauren Whitehead (Brookings Institution Press, 2009), 145–66; Smilde, "Trump and Venezuela"; Smilde, "Trump's Bluster Failed Venezuela. Biden Must Use Diplomatic and Economic Levers to Address the Crisis."; David Smilde, "Joe Biden Should Not Try to Out-Hawk Trump on Venezuela," *Responsible Statecraft*, 2020, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/06/25/joe-biden-should-not-try-to-out-hawk-trump-on-venezuela/>.

<sup>62</sup> McCoy, "Engaging Venezuela: 2009 and Beyond," 156.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>64</sup> Smilde, "Joe Biden Should Not Try to Out-Hawk Trump on Venezuela."

against the Maduro administration), encouraging further mediation between the opposition and Maduro administration in Norway<sup>65</sup>.

As mentioned above, the literature on the subject is rich. However, nearly all of these studies stem from causal claims and theories. Many IR theories (including neorealism, neoliberalism, and constructivism) are adopted in these studies, but there is also a certain lack of Poststructuralist approaches in related literature. When the subject is U.S. foreign policy, scholars tend to ignore this approach. European scholars show more interest in Poststructuralism, foreign policy discourses, and the role of foreign policy in identity construction than their American colleagues<sup>66</sup>. Of course, prominent academic works study U.S. foreign policy, discourses of danger, and American identity. However, they are either former studies<sup>67</sup> or not directly about U.S.–Venezuela relations<sup>68</sup>. This study aims to take a step to fill in this void in

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<sup>65</sup> Smilde, “Trump’s Bluster Failed Venezuela. Biden Must Use Diplomatic and Economic Levers to Address the Crisis.”

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Risse-Kappen, “Identity Matters: Exploring the Ambivalence of EU Foreign Policy,” *Global Policy* 3 (December 2012): 87–95, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12019>; Bahar Rumelili, “Turkey: Identity, Foreign Policy, and Socialization in a Post-Enlargement Europe,” *Journal of European Integration* 33, no. 2 (March 2011): 235–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2011.543528>; Bahar Rumelili, “Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU’s Mode of Differentiation,” *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 1 (2004): 27–47, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210504005819>; Adrian Hyde-Price, “Interests, Institutions and Identities in the Study of European Foreign Policy,” in *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy* (Manchester University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526137647.00012>; Caterina Carta and Ruth Wodak, “Discourse Analysis, Policy Analysis, and the Borders of EU Identity,” *Journal of Language and Politics* 14, no. 1 (2015): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.14.1.01car>.

<sup>67</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines”; Roxanne Lynn Doty, “The Double-Writing of Statecraft: Exploring State Responses to Illegal Immigration,” *Alternatives* 21, no. 2 (1996): 171–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437549602100202>; Michael J. Shapiro, “The Constitution of the Central American Other: The Case of Guatemala,” in *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 89–123; James Der Derian, “God Is an American,” *Social Text* 16, no. 56 (1998): 37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466765>; Jutta Weldes and Diana Saco, “Making State Action Possible: The United States and the Discursive Construction of ‘The Cuban Problem’, 1960–1994,” *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (1996): 361–95, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298960250020601>.

<sup>68</sup> Simon Philpott and David Mutimer, “The United States of Amnesia: US Foreign Policy and the Recurrence of Innocence,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 2 (2009): 301–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557570902882109>; Krystal M. Perkins, Tuğçe Kurtiş, and Luis Velazquez, “What It Means to Be ‘One of Us’: Discourses of National Identity in the United States,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 78, no. October 2018 (2020): 43–52,

the literature, takes a critical stance toward U.S. foreign policy practices, and analyzes the U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela by adopting a Poststructuralist approach, Self/Other(s) nexus, and discourse analysis as its methodology.

#### **1.4. The Aim and the Significance of the Thesis**

This study intends to contribute to the related literature by assessing U.S. Foreign Policy toward Venezuela within a Poststructural framework. This framework includes the construction of the American Self concerning various Venezuelan Other(s) through discourses of danger and its discourse analysis. Nevertheless, it is impossible to cover all American national discursive space, read all documents and interviews, and listen to all the speeches. Research is about choosing subjects, actors, events, and time frames. These choices always enable different interpretations. There are always different ways to approach U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America or Venezuela in particular. For instance, the rise of the leftist-populist movements across Latin America namely the Pink Tide could be analyzed from a Postcolonialist point of view in order to assess U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America. A Postcolonial theorization of identity and discourse could be very useful to understand this subject from another point of view. This study, on the other hand, will give its own interpretation from a Poststructuralist lens to the study of U.S. Foreign Policy towards Venezuela after the elections of left-wing populist governments in Venezuela. This interpretation is based on the author's own reading of the official discourses. The discourse analysis of this study provides a single interpretation of the subject matter. Accordingly with its theoretical and methodological framework, this study accepts that many alternative interpretations are always possible.

The main aim here is to understand how the U.S. foreign policy has perceived and represented threats (Venezuela in particular) and thus ensured the boundaries of the American identity by depending on modes of differentiation. Difference and otherness are crucial in constituting the American identity as one of the main actors

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.12.003>; Kenneth Christie, *United States Foreign Policy and National Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2008); Michael Patrick Cullinane and David Ryan, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Other* (Berghahn Books, 2015).

in international relations. This subject positioning, in return, triggers the dichotomy of international engagement and isolationism. However, confining the debate on U.S. foreign policy and American identity within this dichotomy simultaneously and deliberately occludes the understanding of U.S. foreign policy as a crucial political practice that plays a vital role in the production, reproduction, and preservation of American political identity<sup>69</sup>. Because identity can only be attained through “a regulated process of repetition,” foreign policy practices play a vital role in this process<sup>70</sup>. Therefore, instead of approaching the U.S.-Venezuela relations from the U.S. engagement/isolation dichotomy, this dissertation focuses on the performative constitution of the American Self concerning various Venezuelan Other(s) by examining official U.S. foreign policy discourses constructing the American and Venezuelan subjects the discursive structure they encounter, and their role in the legitimization of specific foreign policy actions towards Venezuela. The latter is vital because these foreign policy discourses legitimize specific foreign policy actions, but more importantly (this is the point where the conventional analysis chooses to overlook) while simultaneously making specific options unthinkable.

For example, if the U.S. positions itself as a superior subject in international relations, declares itself as the protector of civil liberties and democracy all around the world, and claims it has a “special responsibility” (especially towards Latin America), this subject positioning automatically brings specific foreign policy actions to the fore like military interventions (like Grenada in 1983) or indirect policies such as funding opposition political parties against ‘authoritarian’ regimes. When President Reagan claimed that the lives of Americans were in danger and the U.S. national security was under threat, as the President of the U.S., he “had no choice but to act strongly and decisively” against Grenada in 1983<sup>71</sup>. Right after the invasion, President Reagan stated that the U.S. was committed to promoting the

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<sup>69</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 8.

<sup>70</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 133, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203824979>.

<sup>71</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks of the President and Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica Announcing the Deployment of United States Forces in Grenada,” U.S. Presidential Library & Museum, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-president-and-prime-minister-eugenia-charles-dominica-announcing-deployment>.

political, religious, and economic liberty of humanity, and the invasion of Grenada showed this commitment to the rest of the world once again<sup>72</sup>. This historical example clearly shows the deep and complex relations between foreign policy and national identity. They simultaneously depend on each other to co-exist. American identity contains specific values, which U.S. foreign policy acts upon to ‘protect’ these values worldwide. These foreign policy actions, in exchange, provide the repetition process that American identity depends on. In the end, these values also legitimize similar foreign policy actions in the future. Moreover, debating the invasion of Grenada from engagement/isolation dichotomy occludes this complex relation between American identity and U.S. foreign policy.

Most of the literature on U.S. foreign policy is interested in U.S. engagement strategies and isolation policies<sup>73</sup>. However, there is a clear gap within the literature regarding the Poststructural analysis of U.S. Foreign Policy. First and foremost, Poststructuralism incorporated the neglected concepts into the IR discipline, such as the politics of identity, exclusion, and historical context. It also exposes this negligence through post-positivist methodologies. This study has a similar purpose. There is an abundance of Poststructural analysis of the foreign policies of the European Union countries, including the identity politics of the EU and the EU’s discursive othering practices (especially concerning Turkey and

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<sup>72</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Reagan-Bush Campaign Reunion ,” U.S. Presidential Library & Museum , 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-reagan-bush-campaign-reunion>.

<sup>73</sup> Michael Shifter, “The United States and Venezuela: Managing a Schizophrenic Relationship,” in *Isolate or Engage: Adversarial States, US Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy*, ed. Geoffrey Wiseman (California: Stanford University Press, 2020), 259–79, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804795555-012>; Jürgen Haacke, “Foreign Policy Entrepreneurs, Policy Windows, and ‘Pragmatic Engagement’: Reconsidering Insights of the Multiple Streams Framework and the Obama Administration’s 2009 Policy Shift Toward Military-Run Myanmar,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 17, no. 3 (May 28, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orab017>; Eiki Berg and Scott Pegg, “Scrutinizing a Policy of ‘Engagement Without Recognition’: US Requests for Diplomatic Actions With De Facto States,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, May 5, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orw044>; Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, “Lean Forward: In Defense of American Engagement,” *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 130 (2013); Michele Zebich-Knos and Heather N. Nicol, eds., *Foreign Policy Toward Cuba: Isolation Or Engagement?* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005); Lane Crothers, “The Cultural Roots of Isolationism and Internationalism in American Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 9, no. 1 (March 22, 2011): 21–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14794012.2011.550774>; David M. McCourt, “Knowledge Communities in US Foreign Policy Making: The American China Field and the End of Engagement with the PRC,” *Security Studies* 31, no. 4 (August 8, 2022): 593–633, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2022.2133629>.

Russia)<sup>74</sup>. Interestingly, the same conclusion cannot be reached for the Poststructural analysis of U.S. foreign policy. There had been essential and prominent studies, but they were mainly written during the 1990s or early 2000s<sup>75</sup>. The current literature lacks this perspective. This study aims to contribute to this gap within the literature, as mentioned earlier, by focusing on identity politics, the discursive practices of differentiation, and foreign policy through a Poststructuralist approach. To do so, this study exposes how the American Self has been written and rewritten via the foreign policy discourses of danger towards the various Venezuelan Others for the past twenty years. In the end, the main contribution of this dissertation is providing an understanding of bilateral relations between the U.S. and Venezuela beyond politics of oil. When it comes to Venezuela, the literature mainly focuses only on the Venezuelan oil and misses the relations of power, identity construction, and the constructed hierarchical position of the U.S. especially in Latin America. This study provides an alternative understanding on the subject.

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<sup>74</sup> Justin Gibbins, *Britain, Europe and National Identity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137376343>; Henrik Larsen, "Discourse Analysis in the Study of European Foreign Policy," in *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy* (Manchester University Press, 2018), 62–80, <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526137647.00010>; Andre Pereira Matos, "A Constructivist Perspective on EU's Democracy Promotion in Turkey" (2014); Rumelili, "Turkey: Identity, Foreign Policy, and Socialization in a Post-Enlargement Europe"; Hyde-Price, "Interests, Institutions and Identities in the Study of European Foreign Policy"; Ruth Wodak and Salomi Boukala, "European Identities and the Revival of Nationalism in the European Union: A Discourse Historical Approach," *Journal of Language and Politics* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 87–109, <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.14.1.05wod>; Senem Aydın-Düzgit, "Critical Discourse Analysis in Analysing European Union Foreign Policy: Prospects and Challenges," *Cooperation and Conflict* 49, no. 3 (2014): 354–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836713494999>.

<sup>75</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992; Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines"; Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Weldes and Saco, "Making State Action Possible: The United States and the Discursive Construction of 'The Cuban Problem', 1960-1994"; David Campbell, "Foreign Policy and Identity: The Japanese 'Other'/American 'Self,'" in *The Global Economy as Political Space*, ed. Stephen J. Rosow, Naeem Inayatullah, and Mark Rupert (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 147–68; James Der Derian, "Decoding The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," *Boundary 2* 30, no. 3 (2003): 19–27, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01903659-30-3-19>.

## CHAPTER 2

### A POSTSTRUCTURALIST FRAMEWORK FOREIGN POLICY, IDENTITY, AND THE MUTUAL CONSTITUTION OF THE SELF AND OTHER(S)

*“The appropriate ‘place’ of poststructuralism in the study of global politics is neither domestic nor international. It is the ‘non-place’ defined in terms of the ever-problematical difference between the two”<sup>76</sup>.*

This study explores how the U.S. constructed the Chávez and Maduro Administrations as enemies/dangers by critically analyzing U.S. Foreign Policy actors’ discourses, the practices of U.S. Foreign Policy, and the mutual constitution of the American Self in relation to Venezuelan Others. What are the dominant U.S. Foreign Policy discourses toward Venezuela since the 2000s? How have the U.S. presidents and related U.S. foreign policy actors<sup>77</sup> constituted the left-wing populist Venezuelan administrations as an ‘other,’ threatening American identity and ideals through discursive practices? How have this subject positioning and the practices of othering Venezuela made specific foreign policy actions (like outlawing a president of a sovereign state or implementing stringent sanctions in the oil sector) possible for Venezuela?

These questions are deeply connected with the Poststructuralist theory of International Relations. As Doty perfectly puts it, “why particular decisions are made is not our concern. It is only a secondary concern. The primary concern is the

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<sup>76</sup> Richard K. Ashley, “Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War,” in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, ed. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989), 285.

<sup>77</sup> Like U.S. Senator Marco Rubio and National Security Advisor, John R. Bolton during the Trump Presidency, U.S. Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Arturo Valenzuela during the Obama Presidency, or the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during the Bush Presidency. Mainly because these politicians had vital roles shaping American Foreign Policy towards Venezuela and made various official public statements on the subject.

discourse which constructs a particular reality"<sup>78</sup>. Unlike “how” questions, “why” questions are not interested in the intersubjective and discursive constitution of the subjects’ identities and the role of power within this constitution. The history of bilateral relations between the two states, previous U.S. administrations' discourses, and the realities they constructed profoundly affect the Trump Administration's foreign policy actions against Venezuela. This study intends to interpret relations between the U.S. and Venezuela from a perspective different from the rationalist and causation-oriented literature on the subject. It aims to bring Poststructuralist foreign policy analysis back into the study of U.S. Foreign Policy, therefore primarily asking how-possible questions.

This chapter is designed to formulate this thesis's theoretical framework. Since the research questions are inherently connected with Poststructuralist IR Theory, the theoretical framework of this thesis is built around that particular theory. Poststructuralism argues that foreign policy relies heavily upon discursive practices by taking both material and ideal factors into its conceptualization. The complex link between identity and foreign policy is also central to the Poststructuralist research agenda because the existence of identities depends on foreign policy practices, and identities are simultaneously produced and reproduced through these practices<sup>79</sup>. For instance, to argue about migration, the rise of far-right movements, and foreign policy, one must also consider the identity of the Self (the citizens of the host country) and Others (immigrants). This chapter focuses on this complex relationship between the representations of identity and foreign policy by adopting Poststructuralist conceptualization.

## **2.1. Poststructuralism and the Critical Turn in International Relations**

Does the oil dependence of the U.S. affect the U.S. Foreign Policy toward Venezuela? Why did the Trump Administration choose to sanction the Venezuelan oil sector in 2019 while any other former U.S. administrations did not? To what

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<sup>78</sup> Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines,” 304.

<sup>79</sup> Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, Routledge (London: Routledge, 2006), 1.



extent are these sanctions effective? Do the developments in Venezuelan domestic politics affect U.S. Foreign Policy toward Venezuela? All these questions need causal explanations. The study of IR is derived from searching for answers to such questions. IR scholars searched for reasons for phenomena like war, predicting their possible outcomes, compiling feasible policy options for international actors, and giving further policy recommendations to politicians about survival in the anarchical international system. These questions are all related (one way or another) to causation<sup>80</sup>. After the 1980s, this domination of causation in IR theory became questionable with the rise of Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Feminism, and Constructivism<sup>81</sup>. Robert Cox criticizes the positivist methodology of mainstream IR Theories and labels them as problem-solving theories while emphasizing the political power of these theories<sup>82</sup>. Constructivists challenged many aspects of mainstream IR theories, including their rationalist, causation-oriented, and positivist conceptualizations. They also underlined the importance of identity, history, intersubjective meanings, norms, cultures, and ideas. According to Constructivism, states' interests are not pre-given or fixed. On the contrary, identities substantially affect state preferences and interests. Social practices mutually constitute agency and structure while simultaneously producing state identities and interests<sup>83</sup>.

Poststructuralism challenges mainstream IR Theories' privileged status and moves the critiques further by bringing the power-knowledge relationship and identity politics to the fore<sup>84</sup>. By taking the works of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida to the center, Poststructuralists emphasize the importance of language and its power

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<sup>80</sup> Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton University Press, 1994), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400821211>; Adam R. C. Humphreys, "Causation in International Relations," in *International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199743292-0274>.

<sup>81</sup> Milja Kurki, *Causation in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 124, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511491481>.

<sup>82</sup> Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981): 126–55, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298810100020501>.

<sup>83</sup> Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 176, <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.23.1.171>.

<sup>84</sup> David Campbell and Roland Bleiker, "Poststructuralism," in *International Relations Theories* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 198, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hepl/9780198707561.003.0012>.

because meanings, structures, and identities are produced within the language<sup>85</sup>. Based on Foucault's studies, they also underline the relation between power and knowledge within the IR discipline (as well as any other field) and research how the world is represented as it is<sup>86</sup>. Knowledge is produced by power and relies on that power to reproduce existing relations of power. For Poststructuralists, there is no objective truth out there independent from the power/knowledge nexus. There are discourses and regimes of truth as the products of power. The relations of power are hidden within these discourses and make these discourses look like universally accepted truths. Thus, in order “to discover the prevailing dominance of the practice of inclusion/exclusion as a process of othering in international relations theory,” Poststructuralism tries “to reverse the accepted hierarchies and to promote difference over identity” by exposing the binary dichotomies within the IR discipline and its restrictive power on the political imagination of the modern state<sup>87</sup>.

By adopting a meta-theoretical stance, Poststructuralism first and foremost problematizes International Relations as a discipline and the dichotomies within this discipline (such as domestic/foreign, self/other, core/periphery, North/South, developed/underdeveloped) to show how they dominate the field and thus limit the contemporary political imagination. For example, Walker studies the inside/outside distinction of the IR Theory discourse<sup>88</sup>. This discourse represents the “inside” by sovereignty and order. The “outside”, on the other hand, is represented by anarchy and disorder. These discourses condition the subject for a particular type of thinking and limit the subject's ability to imagine IR differently. Scholars as subjects are not immune from this discourse's reproductive and restrictive characteristics. In the end, subjects cannot separate themselves from the social world that they live in and are

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<sup>85</sup> Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines,” 310; Lene Hansen, “Poststructuralism,” in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, ed. John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens (Oxford University Press, 2014), 169.

<sup>86</sup> Maja Zehfuss, “Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, and Postcolonialism,” in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012), 151, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446247587.n6>.

<sup>87</sup> Fuat E. Keyman, *Globalization, State, Identity/Difference: Towards a Critical Social Theory of International Relations* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997), 124; R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>88</sup> Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*.

continuously produced and reproduced within this social world. According to Poststructuralism, subjects of IR are not only humans. States are also subjects, not because of their nature but because discourses of IR produce states as subjects and entities capable of action<sup>89</sup>. Poststructuralism tries to interpret "how subjects are produced by a discourse that simultaneously obscures this production and especially the role that otherness plays in it". It exposes this complex web of relations, dichotomies, and representations through post-positivist methodologies<sup>90</sup>.

Poststructuralists criticize mainstream IR theories because these theories put certain concepts at the center (such as state, sovereignty, and anarchy) and, by doing so, exclude and marginalize other images (such as North-South relations, state identity, and representational practices). Poststructuralists deny many aspects of rationalist mainstream IR Theories, including positivist methodology, causation, foundationalist theory, ahistorical approaches, fixed meanings, and the presence of an objective world<sup>91</sup>. Instead, they focus on language, discourse, subjectivity, identity formation through difference, historically developed representational practices, intersubjective meanings, interpretation, and the construction of the ideal and material world through discursive practices<sup>92</sup>. Poststructuralism and discourse analysis focus much more than foreign policy, identity, and differentiation. Doty, for instance, focuses on the immigration<sup>93</sup>, national identity and North-South relations<sup>94</sup> from a Poststructuralist

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<sup>89</sup> Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Immigration and National Identity: Constructing the Nation," *Review of International Studies* 22, no. 3 (1996): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210500118534>.

<sup>90</sup> Zehfuss, "Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, and Postcolonialism," 153.

<sup>91</sup> Campbell and Bleiker, "Poststructuralism"; Lene Hansen, "Discourse Analysis, Post-Structuralism, and Foreign Policy," in *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 95–110, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hepl/9780198708902.003.0005>.

<sup>92</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992; James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, "International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics" (Lexington Books, 1989); Shapiro, "The Constitution of the Central American Other: The Case of Guatemala"; Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*, University of Minnesota Press (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, 3rd Edition (London: Routledge, 2010); Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis*.

<sup>93</sup> Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Racism, Desire, and the Politics of Immigration," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28, no. 3 (December 24, 1999): 585–606, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298990280031001>.

<sup>94</sup> Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*.

point of view. Other range of issues analyzed from a Poststructuralist lens varies from the elite discourses<sup>95</sup>, humanitarian intervention<sup>96</sup>, citizenship<sup>97</sup>, the crucial role of the concept of ‘domestic’ plays in understanding European integration studies in Turkey<sup>98</sup>, famine<sup>99</sup>, environmental security<sup>100</sup>, refugees<sup>101</sup> and conflict resolution<sup>102</sup>. Instead of trying to reach all-encompassing theoretical explanations, Poststructuralists rather prefer to examine the intricate processes through which the world is perceived and conceptualized during specific historical moments. They aim to explore how specific social practices operate within power dynamics and contribute to the development or reinforcement of particular modes of thinking. Similarly, this study aims to explore and understand role of identity construction and difference in U.S. foreign policy.

## **2.2. International Relations, Identity, and Foreign Policy**

The main concern of the traditional study of foreign policy is how the states understand, perceive, and react to other subjects within the international realm. There are many different approaches to studying foreign policy, and they all have different perspectives on how a foreign policy assessment should be made. While the traditional and rational approaches focused on subjects like national security, military power, terrorism, and so-called high security, critical approaches rejected studying

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<sup>95</sup> Canan Balkır and Sedef Eylemer, “Shifting Logics: The Discourses of Turkish Political Elites on EU Accession” 21, no. 1 (2016): 29–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2016.1147523>.

<sup>96</sup> Anne Orford, *Reading Humanitarian Intervention: Human Rights and the Use of Force in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>97</sup> Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>98</sup> Başak Alpan and Thomas Diez, “The Devil Is in the ‘Domestic’? Footnote European Integration Studies and the Limits of Europeanization in Turkey,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 1 (2014): 1–10, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2013.864180>.

<sup>99</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Whose Hunger? Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

<sup>100</sup> Simon Dalby, *Environmental Security* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

<sup>101</sup> Nevzat Soguk, *States and Strangers: Refugees and Displacements of Statecraft* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

<sup>102</sup> Roland Bleiker, “Order and Disorder in World Politics,” in *International Society and Its Critics*, ed. Alex J. Bellamy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 179–92.

these fixed foreign policy subjects. Even though the roots of identity-related IR studies can be traced back to the 1950s, the critical turn within the discipline of IR brought many previously neglected subjects (culture, religion, minority politics, language, international migration, ethnic conflicts) to the fore, including identity after the 1980s<sup>103</sup>. After the 1990s, especially with the historical developments (globalization, migration, and the eruption of ethnic conflicts worldwide), we see an abundance of literature on identity in IR and its effects on states, foreign policy, and international relations<sup>104</sup>.

During the Cold War, the U.S.-dominated discipline of IR (the Hobbesian tradition of IR, as Campbell identifies) primarily focused on “high politics”, including the state's survival in the anarchical international system, the balance of power, national security, military power, and national interests<sup>105</sup>. The focus was on the ‘rational’ actors and how they can make rational decisions (based on positivist scientific methodologies) in an anarchical international realm. How can states survive in such an environment? By increasing their military capabilities, as Structural Realists claimed, or cooperating with other liberal democracies, as Neoliberals argued. Both rationalist theories have a strict understanding of separating the domestic and international realms, as previously mentioned. For Structural Realism and Neoliberalism, the interests and identities of the states are fixed because the anarchical structure of the international system forces them to act in a certain way. Regardless of their national identities, states must act similarly in the international realm to survive. As a result, rationalist theorists try to reach universal scientific truths by adopting positivist methodologies to get generalizable and predictable outcomes<sup>106</sup>.

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<sup>103</sup> Karl Wolfgang Deutsch, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area; International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton University Press, 1957).

<sup>104</sup> Yosef Lapid, “Culture’s Ship: Returns and Departures in IR Theory,” in *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, ed. Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwill (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 10; Bernd Bucher and Ursula Jasper, “Revisiting ‘Identity’ in International Relations: From Identity as Substance to Identifications in Action,” *European Journal of International Relations* 23, no. 2 (June 13, 2017): 392, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066116644035>.

<sup>105</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 62.

<sup>106</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Illinois: Waveland Press, 2010); Robert O. Keohane, “Reciprocity in International Relations,” *International Organization* 40, no. 1 (May 22, 1986): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300004458>.

Structural Realism and Neoliberalism claim they have explanatory power regarding the systemic-level analysis and are interested in the ‘real world’. However, these rationalist theories are insufficient regarding unit-level or individual-level analysis and how those units (such as states, policymakers, or ethnic groups) intersubjectively affect international politics concerning their identities and cultures<sup>107</sup>. The critical IR theorists criticized the rationalist theories because of their incapability to interpret post-Cold War world politics. On the other hand, the rationalist theorists criticized the critical theories of IR because of their critical stances against methodologies. Alexander Wendt introduced structural constructivism and the agents' and structures' mutual constitution to find a middle way between these two opposite poles<sup>108</sup>. His approach made it possible to consider different units when it comes to the analysis of international politics. However, Wendt still believed in systemic analysis because “states are the dominant form of subjectivity in contemporary world politics”<sup>109</sup>.

Wendt’s Constructivism is based on three main principles. First, states are the central unit of analysis for international politics. Second, states’ identities and interests are constructed socially in the international realm. Finally, the structure of the international system is constructed intersubjectively<sup>110</sup>. Based on these three premises, his theory points out the importance of the subjective nature of the states as actors and the social formation of their identities and interests. According to Wendt, actors’ identities are inherently connected with the formation of their interests because it is impossible for an actor to “know what it wants until it knows who it is”<sup>111</sup>. Wendt categorizes the identities of states as corporate and social identities. Corporate identity is “constituted by the self-organizing, homeostatic structures that make actors distinct entities”. It comprises the Self, is based on domestic politics,

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<sup>107</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (June 2, 1994): 384–96, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2944711>.

<sup>108</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.37-5935>; Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” 385.

<sup>109</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 9.

<sup>110</sup> Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” 385.

<sup>111</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 231.

and is “constitutionally exogenous to Otherness”<sup>112</sup>. They are also pre-social; they do not need social interaction with other states to develop.

On the other hand, states are inherently social and have social identities as subjects. “Social identities are sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others”<sup>113</sup>. They include the answer to who I am or who we are concerning the Others. In other words, social identities need interaction with other subjects to develop. Thus, while states’ corporate identities form within the domestic realm, their social identities can only form within the international realm. States’ social identities are significant because they create a group of “Us” within the international society and groups of “Them”. In parallel, this collectivity enables collective action against the Others<sup>114</sup>. That is why states’ social identities are crucial for Wendt’s theoretical analysis. Structural Constructivism mainly focuses on the identity of states because the international system is mutually constructed through social interaction between the states, not within the domestic realm. Therefore, while arguing against the Structural Realist assumption that all states have fixed identities and interests, Wendt accepts Waltz’s focus on the international structure, separates the domestic and international realm, and excludes domestic aspects from his analysis just like Waltz<sup>115</sup>.

Wendt’s exclusion of the domestic aspects of identity for a systemic approach brought many counterarguments into the debate. These theorists did not find Wendt’s state-centric, systemic, structural, and positivist approach compatible with the critical approaches. They highlighted the importance of domestic aspects such as culture, identity, norms, and values<sup>116</sup>. Several Constructivist scholars formulated their

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 224–25.

<sup>113</sup> Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” 385.

<sup>114</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 293.

<sup>115</sup> Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” 175.

<sup>116</sup> Steve Smith, “Wendt’s World,” *Review of International Studies* 26, no. 1 (2000): 151–63; Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002); Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander, eds., *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and His Critics* (London: Routledge, 2006); Rumelili, “Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU’s Mode of

conceptualizations and called Wendt's constructivism "Conventional" or "Modern" Constructivism while emphasizing that there are also "Critical" or "Postmodern" Constructivist approaches<sup>117</sup>.

Conventional Constructivism is the middle way between the mainstream IR theories and the critical theories; it does not follow the methodological and epistemological characteristics of the critical theories<sup>118</sup>. Conventional Constructivists mainly focused on norms, but they accepted these norms as given, they disregarded the discursive constitution of those norms. They dominated the U.S. academia, adopted positivist epistemologies primarily using the process tracing methodology, and focused on the causal mechanism between dependent and independent variables<sup>119</sup>. Still, Conventional and Critical Constructivism both have common aspects. Both types of Constructivism emphasize the importance of the social world and the role of identity in international politics, the mutual constitution of the agent and the structure through social interaction in the international realm, and the relation between power and knowledge<sup>120</sup>.

The main divergence appears when it comes to methodology. While Conventional Constructivism accepts the existence of various social identities in the international realm, it still claims that positivist methodologies can study these identities. Thus, according to Conventional Constructivism, positivist methods can help understand international politics. Hoffman calls this minimal foundationalism<sup>121</sup>. He argues that

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Differentiation"; Vincent Pouliot, "The Essence of Constructivism," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 7, no. 3 (2004): 319–36, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jird.1800022>.

<sup>117</sup> Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," 172; Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, "Dangerous Liaisons," *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 3 (September 24, 1998): 261, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066198004003001>.

<sup>118</sup> Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Constructivist Approaches to European Integration," in *Handbook of European Union Politics*, ed. Knud Jørgensen, Mark Pollack, and Ben Rosamond (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006), 57–76, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607903>.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," 182.

<sup>121</sup> Mark Hoffman, "Restructuring, Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation: Four Voices in Critical International Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 20, no. 2 (1991): 169, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298910200021001>.



Conventional Constructivists believe in a certain degree of universalism<sup>122</sup>. While accepting that there are different social identities, they also think those identities denote specific actions, which can be predicted if the identity can be discovered.

On the other hand, Critical Constructivists deny foundationalism and positivism altogether. They deny the possibility of universal truths and focus on subjectivity. They are interested in identities not because they imply specific actions but because they want to reveal how all the citizens of a particular state “come to believe in a single version of a naturalized truth”<sup>123</sup>. They are more interested in the formation and the origins of the identity, the culture, and the myths that form the identity rather than the identity’s effect on state action. They also emphasize difference and othering practices on forming the Self more than the Conventional Constructivists. The latter accepts the existence of several types of identities but claims they can coexist together. At the same time, the former argues that there is a hierarchical relationship between these various identities, and they always compete to oppress, subordinate, or assimilate the Others. Critical Constructivists always emphasize the importance of power relations between the subjects. These power relations are exercised and reproduced by the subjects through social interactions. While Conventional Constructivism accepts the role of power relations, it is not necessarily interested in where precisely those power relations exist and reveal their role in international politics<sup>124</sup>.

The line between Critical Constructivism and Conventional Constructivism is noticeably evident. They have common characteristics (such as their ontology and the social construction of the world) but different epistemologies, methodologies, and aims. On the other hand, the line between Critical Constructivism and Poststructuralism seems blurry, but they are still different theoretical approaches. In the related literature, some of the scholars interchangeably use these two theories in

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>123</sup> Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” 183–84.

<sup>124</sup> Maja Zehfuss, “Constructivism and Identity: A Dangerous Liaison,” *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 3 (September 25, 2001): 315–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066101007003002>.

their studies<sup>125</sup>, others on the other hand, they strictly separate Constructivism from “non-scientific post-structuralist approaches” or use the term “myth” for the close relation between Constructivism and Postmodernism<sup>126</sup>. Campbell calls this “academic xenophobia”<sup>127</sup>. Hansen argues that some of the scholars in the field prefer Constructivism instead of Poststructuralism because the latter is understood as “some exotic social theory” denying causality, (sometimes) even methodology, and disengaging from the real world<sup>128</sup>. She calls this blurry line between Poststructuralism and Critical Constructivism ‘misleading’ because the former heavily depends on the writings of Derrida, Foucault, Laclau, and Mouffe, while the latter depends on the writings of Fierke and Milliken (inspired by Wittgenstein)<sup>129</sup>. Therefore, these scholars want to conduct their research (instead of getting into meta-theoretical debates), which is found acceptable by the mainstream international scientific community. Just like every other theory, Poststructuralism also has strengths and weaknesses. No theory can interpret every social phenomenon perfectly. Therefore, research designs heavily depend upon the research questions. Poststructuralism makes solid arguments, especially regarding the constitutive role of representations of identity on foreign policy, the importance of the discursive practices on the formation of foreign policy, the constitution of the Self concerning Others, and the inherent relation between knowledge, subject, and power<sup>130</sup>. Poststructuralism constantly underlines the innate relationship between identity,

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<sup>125</sup> Senem Aydın-Düzgit, “De-Europeanisation through Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of AKP’s Election Speeches,” *South European Society and Politics* 21, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2016.1147717>.

<sup>126</sup> Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511598661>; Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas Onuf, and Paul A. Kowert, “Constructing Constructivism,” in *International Relations in a Constructed World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 4, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315703299-1>.

<sup>127</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 192.

<sup>128</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 3–4; Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (Columbia University Press, 1996), 34; Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner, “International Organization and the Study of World Politics,” *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (February 20, 1998): 645–85, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830003558X>.

<sup>129</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 166, see note 4.

<sup>130</sup> Richard K. Ashley, “The Achievements of Post-Structuralism,” in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 245–46, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511660054.013>.

discourse, and foreign policy. As Hansen argues, policy representations are discursively linked with the representations of identity but do not have a causal relationship<sup>131</sup>. This study combines Poststructuralism with a political discursive methodology. Doing so proves that a non-causal epistemology does not indicate divergence from the analysis of the real world and proves that a systematized evaluation of data through a Poststructuralist framework is always possible. The author of this dissertation will refer to Poststructuralism as this study's leading theory, not as Critical Constructivism, and denies the interchangeable use of these two theories. There are three crucial reasons for this choice.

The main reason comes from the very name of the theory itself. Poststructuralism comes from Structuralism. It contains a Post but is also inextricably linked to Structuralism and never denies its structural roots. On the contrary, it embraces the importance of language, Semiotics, and Sociolinguistics<sup>132</sup>. Poststructuralism is much more specific than Critical Constructivism regarding its inherent relation with the language and its role in the discursive construction of reality. Unlike Poststructuralism, Critical Constructivism does not have this direct and inseparable relation with Structuralism and language. In parallel to this argument, Checkel, for example, introduces a new type of Constructivism (in addition to Conventional and Critical Constructivism) as Interpretative Constructivism to incorporate the importance of the language and discourse within the study of Constructivism because Critical Constructivism does not directly serve this purpose of linguistic analysis<sup>133</sup>. One of the central claims of Poststructuralism is the role of differentiation in constructing every meaning, and this claim directly comes from the father of Structuralism, Fernand de Saussure<sup>134</sup>. However, even if the highly structured nature of the language systems is undeniable for Poststructuralism, it also denies the absolute fixity of the meaning. It problematizes the unstable nature of the language<sup>135</sup>. Poststructuralism transcends Structuralism and stresses the socially

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<sup>131</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 9.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>133</sup> Checkel, "Constructivist Approaches to European Integration."

<sup>134</sup> Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, 96.

<sup>135</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001), 111.

constructed natures of the meanings by focusing on the instability of the meaning (the floating signifiers, for example)<sup>136</sup>. Therefore, while acknowledging structural linguistics' crucial role, Poststructuralism also incorporates the ever-changing nature of the meaning into its analysis. It looks beyond the constructed reality, focuses on the gap between reality and representation, and denies the universal truth (which Structuralists accept)<sup>137</sup>.

Poststructuralism denies the existence of nondiscursive realms and acknowledges that there is nothing outside of discourse<sup>138</sup>. It does not mean that Poststructuralism rejects the presence of the material world but indicates that even the material world is constituted within the discourses and even the ideal<sup>139</sup>. More importantly, humans as subjects cannot comprehend this material world without discourses, and just like all objects, subjects are dependent on discourses to exist. A soldier pointing a gun at a terrorist has a different meaning than a high school student pointing a gun at their teacher and classmates. The same weapon can have different meanings when subjects hold it in other locations. The discourses, then, constitute meanings, identities, and even spaces. This comes from the performative characteristic of the discourses<sup>140</sup>. Understanding discourse as performative helps discourses seem stabilized over time to construct the impression of fixity. It also opens the path to the deconstruction of identity; so, the denaturalization of identity formation opens the space for alternative identity formations. On the other hand, Critical Constructivism does not have this 'radical logic' of deconstruction and instead focuses on stabilizing specific identity characteristics for conducting analysis<sup>141</sup>. Therefore, they distance

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<sup>136</sup> Chris Barker, "Structuralism, Poststructuralism, and Cultural Studies," in *The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2010), 4.

<sup>137</sup> John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies* (London: Routledge, 2010), 109, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203837382>.

<sup>138</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 22; Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*, 25.

<sup>139</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 108.

<sup>140</sup> David Campbell, "Poststructuralism," in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith (Oxford University Press, 2007), 235.

<sup>141</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 223.

themselves from the conception of subjectivity and performativity. Poststructuralists concentrate on the performative constitution of identity, adamant questioning of the performative role on the subject, and inextricable relation between the Self and Others, which constitute the third reason for opting out of Poststructuralism for this dissertation.

Another reason for preferring Poststructuralism is its focus on the exclusion of specific topics from the academic agenda. Poststructuralism intends to expose the excluded topics from the research agenda and wages “a war on the totality of metanarratives”<sup>142</sup>. Social scientists (like any other scientists) can choose the research questions and the theoretical and methodological approaches to answer those questions. Therefore, they can determine what is allowed within the research agenda and what is not<sup>143</sup>. They are producing the known, but more importantly, Poststructuralism focuses on the unknown<sup>144</sup>. So, while many American IR Scholars use their power to naturalize certain international relations subjects (such as anarchical international system, the survival of the states, the fixed interests of the states, and the rational executives of those states), Poststructuralism opened the path for denaturalization of these subjects and pointed out which subjects deliberately pushed out from the research agendas (such as human rights, equality, women rights, minorities, migration, language, culture, religion)<sup>145</sup>. The meanings naturalized within the political discourses are presented as the natural condition of the world. However, subjects, subjectivity, or constructed social relations cannot exist without the power mechanisms<sup>146</sup>.

Even though Critical Constructivism has this critical stance and recognizes the power-knowledge relations, it does not have the same determination as

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<sup>142</sup> Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 82.

<sup>143</sup> Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” 128.

<sup>144</sup> Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 60.

<sup>145</sup> Ian Manners, “Another Europe Is Possible: Critical Perspectives on European Union Politics,” in *Handbook of European Union Politics*, ed. Knud Jørgensen, Mark Pollack, and Ben Rosamond (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006), 83.

<sup>146</sup> Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*, 165–66.

Poststructuralism to expose what is excluded from the research agenda. Many Poststructuralists problematized these naturalized truths and started the denaturalization process with their research agendas to create alternative possibilities<sup>147</sup>. Hence, when social scientists and politicians label the U.S. as the leader of the democratic world, this discursively constructed role imposes specific foreign policy actions on the U.S., like interfering in another country's internal affairs to preserve that role. This automatically excludes other possible political actions from the U.S. foreign policy agenda, such as non-intervention. This brings us to the subject matter of this study (which is inherently linked with the previously mentioned reasons): How did outlawing the president of another sovereign country become a possible option for the Trump Administration? Moreover, which other options become excluded from the U.S. foreign policy agenda? This study heavily relies upon Poststructuralism to problematize these questions and interpret their possible answers.

### **2.3. Poststructuralism, National Identity, and the Constitution of the Self and Other(s) via Foreign Policy**

Poststructuralism conceptualizes identities as *relational*, *social*, *discursive*, and *political*<sup>148</sup>. Identities cannot exist out there by themselves; they are relational and social. Identity is relational because it is always constituted through difference. To exist, identity necessitates difference, and identity transforms this difference to construct otherness<sup>149</sup>. Being a developed, democratic, liberal state simultaneously indicates the existence of an underdeveloped, undemocratic, and illiberal state. They are also social because they must be produced and reproduced by the repetitive

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<sup>147</sup> Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines"; Doty, "Immigration and National Identity: Constructing the Nation"; Richard K. Ashley, "Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 17, no. 2 (1988): 227–62, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298880170020901>; Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*; R. B. J. Walker, "The Hierarchicalization of Political Community," *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 151–56, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210599001515>; Der Derian and Shapiro, "Int. Relations Postmod. Readings World Polit."

<sup>148</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 7.

<sup>149</sup> William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 64.

discursive foreign policy practices concerning Others. They are also discursive and political because they are not fixed and not objective. On the contrary, they are always open to interpretation. There is not one single objective identity residing in an extra-discursive territory. They are subjective, changeable, produced, and reproduced through discursive foreign policy practices. In short, identity has an endless delineation process against external otherness<sup>150</sup>.

It is important to note that Poststructuralists are interested in the relationship between identity and foreign policy not because they want to understand foreign policy from the theory of identity but because they want to expose how foreign policy is associated with the reproduction of identity<sup>151</sup>. Identities are the products of foreign policy, and at the same time, they also create justification for foreign policy actions<sup>152</sup>. Shapiro emphasizes the importance of politics of representation because it affects foreign policy choices<sup>153</sup>. How a state represents Others implies how that state represents itself. For example, the U.S. governments categorize some states as rogue states. According to the U.S., these states represent many things the U.S. does not. They are authoritarian; they deny human rights and civil liberties and deliberately oppress the opposition and their citizens. Thus, the U.S. represents itself by simultaneously representing these other states as “rogue” states, constituting them as threats and declaring that the American Self is nothing like them. These representations put states (as subjects) in different subject positions. Identity is not a possession but rather a position constructed as a possession<sup>154</sup>. The subject positioning also implies a hierarchical relationship and inherently contains power relations. Discourses of subject positioning determine who is included or excluded. While positioning Cuba as a rogue state and inferior, the U.S. simultaneously

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<sup>150</sup> Michal Kolmas, “National Identity in International Relations: Between Constructivism and Post-Structuralism,” *Mezinárodní Vztahy* 52, no. 1 (2017): 56.

<sup>151</sup> Ole Wæver, “Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory,” in *European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States*, ed. Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver (Routl, 2002), 43.

<sup>152</sup> Hansen, “Poststructuralism,” 179.

<sup>153</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography and Policy Analysis* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2905383>.

<sup>154</sup> Hansen, “Poststructuralism,” 180.

constructs itself as a superior, obtaining the ability to marginalize another subject and thus the power to exclude Cuba from the international community.

Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), as a discipline, separates the inside (the domestic realm where identity formation takes place) from the outside (the international realm). The latter is where the state encounters the "Others"<sup>155</sup>. Campbell conceptualizes foreign policy as 'foreign policy' and 'Foreign Policy'<sup>156</sup>. The former refers to the practices of othering, while the latter refers to the discourses of danger. For him, foreign policy refers "to all practices of differentiation or modes of exclusion that constitute their object as foreign"<sup>157</sup>. This is where the exclusion and difference take place. To know who we are, we have to know who we are not by differentiating the Self from the Other. The othering practices that enable this and the resulting relationship between the Self and the Other can be interpreted as 'foreign policy'<sup>158</sup>. On the other hand, 'Foreign Policy' is just one of the many discourses of danger circulating within a state's discursive space at any given moment. This discourse of danger disciplines citizens by telling them "what to fear"<sup>159</sup>. Without a difference, there is no meaning; where there is no Other, there cannot be a Self. As a result, there can be no declaration about the nature of the Self, which is free of suppositions about the Other. In other words, representations of Self and Others mutually constitute identities, and this constitutive relationship heavily relies upon foreign policy.

While agreeing with the vital importance and necessity of the othering practices and differences in the construction of identity, scholars do not agree on the characteristics of the Other. For Campbell, the Other is the enemy because it is constructed as a threat by the Self, using discourses of danger<sup>160</sup>. His logic of identity necessitates

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<sup>155</sup> Hansen, "Discourse Analysis, Post-Structuralism, and Foreign Policy," 95.

<sup>156</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 76.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Campbell, "Foreign Policy and Identity: The Japanese 'Other'/American 'Self,'" 150.

<sup>159</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 77.

<sup>160</sup> Campbell, "Foreign Policy and Identity: The Japanese 'Other'/American 'Self'"; Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992.



difference<sup>161</sup>. Even the discipline of IR is built upon the practices of inclusion and exclusion; the inside is the Self, safe and orderly, while the outside is the Other, dangerous, and anarchical<sup>162</sup>. “State identity can be understood as the outcome of exclusionary practices in which resistant elements to a secure identity on the inside are linked through a discourse of danger, with threats identified and located on the outside”<sup>163</sup>. According to Campbell, this otherness must be practiced and repeated with the discourses of danger. These discourses include warnings about the Other, the unknown, and the stranger. In short, identity and foreign policy are interwoven through the discourses of danger. Identity formation has a strong relationship with the othering practices, but “identity is more than something which derives its meaning solely from being positioned in contradistinction to difference; identity is a condition that has depth, is multi-layered, possesses texture, and comprises many dimensions”<sup>164</sup>. Yes, for the formation of identity, the difference is crucial; however, identity has a complex structure and is much more than just a difference.

Scholars like Wæver, Rumelili, Neumann, and Hansen conceptualize the Other differently than Campbell’s single dangerous (or radical) Other<sup>165</sup>. They all accept that identity is relational, and the radical Other is crucial and a condition for the constitution of the Self because meaning can only be constructed concerning what that meaning is not. They also accept that the existence of a radical Other is crucial for building the Self’s national identity. Neumann claims that “there is no inclusion without exclusion” because the Other’s existence is a necessary condition of the Self from its ontological and epistemological standpoint<sup>166</sup>. However, these scholars strongly reject a single and straightforward conceptualization of the dangerous Other.

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<sup>161</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 55.

<sup>162</sup> Campbell and Bleiker, “Poststructuralism,” 217.

<sup>163</sup> Campbell, “Foreign Policy and Identity: The Japanese ‘Other’/American ‘Self,’” 149.

<sup>164</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 86.

<sup>165</sup> Wæver, “Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory”; Rumelili, “Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU’s Mode of Differentiation”; Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: “The East” in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*.

<sup>166</sup> Neumann, *Uses of the Other: “The East” in European Identity Formation*, 15.

Neumann criticizes Campbell for “singling out only one type of human collective” and focusing only on the radical Other<sup>167</sup>. He claims that collective identity formation is multi-dimensional, and the study of collective identity should also be as such. Wæver also disagrees with Campbell and argues that the Other does not necessarily have to be an enemy; it could also be a friendly state, an ally, and even a temporal other (how contemporary Europe constitutes itself concerning 1930s and 1940s Europe as the historical Other)<sup>168</sup>. Rumelili emphasizes the variety within relations of Self/Other<sup>169</sup>. For her, the difference within the Other does not necessarily have to be threatening; alternative representational othering practices are also possible. In parallel to this argument, Hansen approaches the Other differently, underlies the flexible form of identity, and formulates the practices of multi-faceted othering<sup>170</sup>.

Hansen conceptualizes ‘Others’ as located within a web of identities instead of Campbell’s sharp distinction between the Self and the single radical Other. This is precisely how the U.S. presidents split the Venezuelan Others for the past twenty years: the authoritarian Chávez and Maduro Administrations (as a national security threat to the U.S.) as the radical/dangerous Other and the Venezuelan people as the friendly Other (as oppressed, pro-democratic, worthy of better political and economic conditions). In the case of Venezuela, there is also an additional Other constructed by the U.S. as an ally and a friendly Other: the recognized interim president, Juan Guaidó. On August 6, 2019, at the International Conference for Democracy in Venezuela, President Trump’s National Security Advisor John Bolton included Venezuela within the rogue state’s categorization<sup>171</sup>. A year later, the U.S.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>168</sup> Wæver, “Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory,” 24; Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 191–92.

<sup>169</sup> Rumelili, “Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU’s Mode of Differentiation,” 36.

<sup>170</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 36.

<sup>171</sup> Joshua Goodman and Scott Smith, “Bolton Warns Foreigners That Violate Venezuela Asset Freeze,” Associated Press, July 7, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/venezuela-international-news-john-bolton-peru-global-trade-7314263d68924c2990e52f1ff1ea99d8>.

Department of Justice indicted President Maduro and many other Venezuelan officials for narco-terrorism, drug trafficking, and corruption<sup>172</sup>. At the same time, prominent U.S. officials, including President Trump's Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, repeatedly stated that the U.S. will always "support the Venezuelan people in their quest for freedom and democracy"<sup>173</sup>. Within this context, Hansen's ontologically flexible formation of Self/Other(s) has more interpretive power over the U.S. construction of Venezuelan Others, which is why this thesis adopts Hansen's conceptualization of difference. Therefore, Chapter 2 focuses on this issue and merges Hansen's conceptualization into this dissertation.

#### **2.4. Conceptualizing American Identity as a National Identity**

The primary focus of this dissertation is the mutual constitution of the American Self concerning various Venezuelan Others (since the election of Hugo Chávez) and the undeniable effects of this constitution on U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela from the Bush administration to the Trump administration<sup>174</sup>. The main aim is to be able to interpret how outlawing President Maduro<sup>175</sup> or charging him with narco-terrorism (and with many other criminal charges<sup>176</sup>) becomes a possible foreign policy action for the Trump Administration. To answer this question within the determined poststructuralist framework, one should look at the discursively

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<sup>172</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, "Press Release: Nicolás Maduro and 14 Current and Former Venezuelan Officials Charged with Narco-Terrorism, Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Criminal Charges," March 26, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/nicol-s-maduro-moros-and-14-current-and-former-venezuelan-officials-charged-narco-terrorism>.

<sup>173</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, "Tweet from (@SecPompeo): My Message to the Venezuelan People Is Clear: The United States Stands Firmly with You in Your Quest for Freedom and Democracy. Your Bravery and Voices Will Put Venezuela on the Path to Liberty and Prosperity, and We Will Partner," Twitter, 2019, <https://twitter.com/secpompeo/status/1124728310058094592>.

<sup>174</sup> The Clinton administration is not included to the research because even though Hugo Chávez got elected in 1998, there had not been serious confrontations between the Chávez and Clinton administrations between 1999 and 2001. More importantly, Hugo Chávez only obtained more control over the Venezuelan polity after the Mega Elections of 2000 and took a strong anti-American stance after the Election of George W. Bush as the President, 9/11 and the Bush administration's announcement to invade Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.

<sup>175</sup> U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Recognizes Guaidó as Venezuela's Interim President."

<sup>176</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, "Press Release: Nicolás Maduro and 14 Current and Former Venezuelan Officials Charged with Narco-Terrorism, Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Criminal Charges."

constructed reality of U.S.-Venezuela relations from the election of Hugo Chávez to the Trump era. Hence, the time frame of this study includes the presidencies of George W. Bush (2001 – 2009), Barack H. Obama (2009 – 2017), and Donald J. Trump (2017 – 2021). Since the Poststructural framework of this study denies the absolute fixity of identity and embraces its ever-changing nature, this Chapter aims to focus on the historical and discursive construction of American identity from “the invention” of America<sup>177</sup>. However, first, the concept of national identity should be discussed to express what is referred to as the American identity.

National identity (just like any other identity) is a very complex, subjective, and slippery concept<sup>178</sup>. Under section 2.3., identity and the crucial role of the difference in constructing the identity are already discussed. Without the representations of Others (especially the dangerous other), there could be no Self. The representations of the Self and Others must encounter for the mutual constitution of national identities, primarily through foreign policy practices<sup>179</sup>. So here, an important question comes up. What is national identity? To answer this question, one should first clarify what nation means. A nation is a political community that requires all its members to adhere to a single set of rights and obligations, the common institutions and shared traditions, history, myths, and values<sup>180</sup>. Smith defines specific characteristics of modern nations<sup>181</sup>. The first one is the territorial element. There should be deep historical roots, shared symbols, values, myths, and mutual belonging between the possessed land and people<sup>182</sup>. The second element is the understanding of a motherland with common institutions and laws. Every citizen must be equal

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<sup>177</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 106.

<sup>178</sup> Paul A. Kowert, “National Identity: Inside and Out,” *Security Studies* 8, no. 2–3 (December 1998): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636419808429373>.

<sup>179</sup> Sybille Reinke de Buitrago and Erica Resende, “The Politics of Otherness: Illustrating the Identity/Alterity Nexus and Othering in IR,” in *Routledge Handbook of Critical International Relations*, ed. Jenny Edkins (London: Routledge, 2019), 181, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315692449-14>.

<sup>180</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 9; Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 19.

<sup>181</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, 8–11.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

before the law<sup>183</sup>. The last element is the necessity of cultural, historical, and ideological unity<sup>184</sup>. Smith's definition of national identity is very similar to his characterization of the nation; he sees national identity as "the continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identification of individuals with that pattern and heritage"<sup>185</sup>. Anderson, unlike Smith, defines the nation as an "imagined political community" mainly because it is not possible for every single member of a nation to know/meet to each other, yet they all have an image of their community in their minds<sup>186</sup>. This concept of imagination comes from a constructive perspective. For Anderson, the spread of the mass media, especially the newspapers, enabled the expansion of the represented imagined community (namely the nation) via the dispersion of discourses<sup>187</sup>. The discursive construction of us vs them throughout the mass media reinforced these imagined communities and their national identities.

The reification of the nations and their identities also depends on the state planning and nation-building process. The state-owned and planned education system is the most obvious example of this reification<sup>188</sup>. State elites are the main actors shaping social communities' self-perceptions, traditions, beliefs, and cultures. Of course, these elites cannot create a culture out of nothing. Existing "social cognitive structures" set the limits for the elites, but they can interpret and form those structures discursively<sup>189</sup>. These social cognitive structures within societies comprise a variety of discursive formations (within these formations, every discourse competes to become the hegemonic discourse)<sup>190</sup>. As a result, identities construct these

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 10–11.

<sup>185</sup> Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic*, 19.

<sup>186</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>189</sup> Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*, 32–33.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 3.

discursive formations. Since identities are “sociolinguistic constructs,” not just social constructs, they are the discursive practices of the state that produce national identities<sup>191</sup>. Constructing national identity is endless because its existence and continuance depend on its discursive hegemony and transformation<sup>192</sup>. From a Poststructural standpoint, no fixed and complete national identity could exist. However, there could be a partially fixed and hegemonic one (until the following discourse replaces the hegemonic discourse). Conceptualizing national identity as a discursive formation reveals the mutual and constructive relations between state elites, national institutions, and discourses of national identity.

The literature on American identity is enormous, and these studies adopt positivist, post-positivist, or mixed methodologies<sup>193</sup>. First and foremost, one should look at how the Americans constructed themselves since the Conquest of America. Then, the issues of the other will be discussed, especially concerning Todorov’s and Campbell’s studies. U.S. citizens call themselves Americans even though America is the name of the whole continent, not a particular state. The United States of America provides its citizens “a peculiar anonymity” because its space does not precisely match its name<sup>194</sup>. Because of this anonymity, Walzer argues that being an American is particularly easy, compared to other nationalities, mainly because it is a country of

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<sup>191</sup> Janice Bially Mattern, *Ordering International Politics: Identity, Crisis, and Representational Force* (London: Routledge, 2004), 71.

<sup>192</sup> Doty, “Immigration and National Identity: Constructing the Nation,” 241; Étienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Immanuel Wallerstein and Étienne Balibar (London: Verso Books, 1991), 98.

<sup>193</sup> Rogers M. Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (September 2, 1993): 549–66, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2938735>; Philpott and Mutimer, “The United States of Amnesia: US Foreign Policy and the Recurrence of Innocence”; Penelope Kinch, “American Political Identity,” in *The US-Iran Relationship: The Impact of Political Identity on Foreign Policy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 74–111; Perkins, Kurtiş, and Velazquez, “What It Means to Be ‘One of Us’: Discourses of National Identity in the United States”; Cynthia Weber, *I Am American: Filming the Fear of Difference* (Bristol: Intellect Ltd., 2011); Walter L. Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Kenneth Christie, ed., *United States Foreign Policy and National Identity in the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203023259>; Deborah J. Schildkraut, “National Identity in the United States,” in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* (New York, NY: Springer New York, 2011), 845–65, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9\\_36](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_36).

<sup>194</sup> Horace M. Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 51, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351312929>.

immigration<sup>195</sup>. To be an American, one does not have to be a member of a particular ethnic group, class, religion, or come from a specific region. As one of the first official slogan of the U.S. claims, “e pluribus unum” which means “out of many, one” or “one from many”<sup>196</sup>. Being an American is about being an individual, leaving behind being a member of an ethnic or religious group, and melting different characteristics into one common cultural American identity. As Saint John de Crèvecoeur puts it, Americans leave behind “all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men” (hence the melting pot)<sup>197</sup>. This new race of men (the Self), of course, simultaneously created the Others as blacks, women, “Indians”, and as well as Germans, Russians, or Japanese<sup>198</sup>. Still, being a part of this new race of men and becoming American is a high possibility if you are a white man and could commit yourself to the ideals of equality, liberty, and republicanism<sup>199</sup>. For Walzer, since the U.S. is a country of immigration, tolerance, liberty, and equality, these are inevitable ideals for coexistence<sup>200</sup>. Because of the continuity of this immigration, “America is still a radically unfinished society”, and this unfinishedness still forms the unique characteristic of being an American<sup>201</sup>.

O’Donnell identifies nationalism, cultural homogeneity, and religion as the three foundational characteristics of the traditional American identity<sup>202</sup>. The first pillar, American nationalism, had a distinctive feature. Unlike the origins of any other nation-states, the allegiance was placed in the American nation itself, not in a

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<sup>195</sup> Michael Walzer, “What Does It Mean to Be an ‘American’?,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (September 2004): 591, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2004.0010>.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 593–94.

<sup>197</sup> J. Hector Saint John de Crèvecoeur, “Letters From an American Farmer (1782-1784): Letter III - What Is An American,” New York Fox, Duffield & Company, 1904, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/letter\\_03.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/letter_03.asp).

<sup>198</sup> Walzer, “What Does It Mean to Be an ‘American’?,” 597.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 598.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 611.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 614.

<sup>202</sup> Fabio O’Donnell, “Defining a Traditional American Identity: Religious Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Bias” (Dartmouth College, 2019), 35.

kingdom, lordship, or any other political leader<sup>203</sup>. American nationalism began with waging a war against the British Monarchy while promoting the roots of a liberal democratic nation. The second pillar of traditional American identity is cultural homogeneity. Unlike the religious pillar, the American constitution did not protect cultural homogeneity<sup>204</sup>. The Ten Amendments did not mention the definition of a citizen or the ability to vote. This, in turn, created an exclusion of disadvantaged groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, and women. Therefore, the ruling elite, the white Christian American men, could establish their racial and cultural homogeneity<sup>205</sup>. This pillar is mainly related to *difference*. The third pillar is the religion. In 2021, 63 percent of the U.S. population identified themselves as Christians. This percentage was 75 a decade ago<sup>206</sup>. Even though the number of Americans identified as Christians has been shrinking, they still comprise a considerable part of American society, and the religious Christian discourse is still dominant within the American political domain.

Even today, the religious pillar of American identity represents itself in three ways: through the use of the bible while taking an oath (so help me God), through the Pledge of Allegiance (one nation under God), and through the currency (in God we trust)<sup>207</sup>. American history in elementary schools mostly starts with the arrival of Puritan Pilgrims (who ran from the Church of England in search of freedom of faith) with the Mayflower Ship in 1620<sup>208</sup>. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the free practice of religion is under constitutional protection. The American Constitution's First Amendment openly prohibits Congress from making laws against the free exercise of religion<sup>209</sup>. Unsurprisingly, religion was also used by the Founding

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 37–38.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Gregory A. Smith, “About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated,” Pew Research Center, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/>.

<sup>207</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 105.

<sup>208</sup> O’Donnell, “Defining a Traditional American Identity: Religious Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Bias,” 48.

<sup>209</sup> Library of U.S. Congress, “U.S. Constitution - First Amendment,” 1791, <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-1/>.



Fathers for othering practices. As John Adams declared, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other”<sup>210</sup>.

Scholars like Walzer, O’Donnell, Schildkraut, and Kallen focus on the traditional traits of the American identity and define specific and typical characteristics of the contemporary American identity. They ask what questions and explain the meaning of being an American by defining the characteristics of the American identity. These studies are valuable to determine the current characteristics of American identity, like being the protector of individual liberties, promoting liberal democracy, and open market economy. These studies also embrace the concept of constant change within identity and make historical references; however, they do not include a broader historical analysis. For instance, they do not historically assess the role of othering practices (against the British, Amer-Indians, Irish, and African Others). Therefore, one also needs to look into the Poststructuralist conceptualizations of American identity to discuss historical othering practices. The historical roots of othering practices play a crucial role within the constitution of contemporary American identity. Without assessing the effects of these historical othering practices, one could easily miss the connection between the current and historical othering practices.

#### **2.4.1. Poststructuralist Conceptualizations of American Identity**

Tzvetan Todorov<sup>211</sup>, David Campbell<sup>212</sup>, and Roxanne Lynn Doty<sup>213</sup> are prominent academics on the Poststructural analysis of American identity and the othering practices of the American Self, mainly focusing on U.S. foreign policy. Therefore,

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<sup>210</sup> John Adams, “Letter From John Adams to Massachusetts Militia,” The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 1798, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-3102>.

<sup>211</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers Inc., 1984).

<sup>212</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992; Campbell, “Foreign Policy and Identity: The Japanese ‘Other’/American ‘Self.’”

<sup>213</sup> Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines.”

this part specifically focuses on their related works on the subject. Based on the encounters of the American Self and many Others, Campbell categorizes many historically different and dangerous Others (Amer-Indian Others, European Others, and African Others) concerning the discursive construction of the American Self<sup>214</sup>. By combining Tzvetan Todorov's outstanding study<sup>215</sup> with his research, Campbell conceptualizes the imagination and re-imagination of America throughout history concerning Otherness.

Todorov argues that the conquest of America was the confrontation between the Christian Self and Amer-Indian Others, and this confrontation constituted the identity of the "New World"<sup>216</sup>. There is a considerable gap between the Columbus' voyage of 1492 and the foundation of the U.S. in 1776. For Campbell, this gap is crucial because the genocide of Amer-Indians by the Columbus Voyage and its results have an indirect effect on the U.S. and its appropriation of the term America as its name<sup>217</sup>. As Todorov states, "It is, in fact, the conquest of America that heralds and establishes our present identity"<sup>218</sup>. According to him, the invention (not the discovery) of America occurred during the transitional period from the medieval to the modern era, and it was the starting point of the modern Western identity<sup>219</sup>.

By starting with Columbus', Hernán Cortés' and Bartolomé de las Casas'<sup>220</sup> writings, Todorov investigates how the Christian Self was encountered with the Amer-Indian Others during the voyages<sup>221</sup>. This encounter started a hegemonic relationship between the 'superior' Christian Self and the 'inferior' Barbarian Others.

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<sup>214</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 105–43.

<sup>215</sup> Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>217</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 106.

<sup>218</sup> Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, 5.

<sup>219</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 110.

<sup>220</sup> Bartolomé de las Casas was a priest, historian, and landowner. He was part of the Columbus' second voyage to America.

<sup>221</sup> Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, 36.

According to these writings, Amer-Indians were savages and lacked religion, civilization, and customs<sup>222</sup>. For Todorov, however, the Self approached the Amer-Indian Others in two different ways while encountering them<sup>223</sup>. The first one was Cortés' and Las Casas' *colonialist ideology*. This ideology constituted them as less humans and pagans, but they could be re-humanized and saved by Christianity. Columbus' *enslavement ideology*, on the other hand, constituted Amer-Indians as objects rather than subjects. According to this ideology, they were barbarians, and their slavery was the only solution. These two ideologies have their own dichotomies<sup>224</sup>. The colonialist ideology was about the contradiction between the pagan Other and the Christian Self. The pagan identity is not fixed because the pagan Other could transform into the Christian Self by converting. For the enslavement ideology, on the other hand, there was a rigid fixity. The Barbarian Other could not be transformed into a Civilized one. It was simply not possible. Therefore, this fixity in their 'Barbarian' identity cleared the path for their actions and created the legitimization for their enslavement.

According to Campbell, while the Spanish encounter between the New World (Amer-Indians) and Old World (Europeans) constituted America, The Church of England's oppression of Puritans enabled another encounter between the Puritan Self and the European Others<sup>225</sup>. In 1620, the Puritans traveled to America for long-term settlement and to establish a new society where they could exercise freedom of their religion. The Puritans believed their colonization of America had a spiritual value, and this myth was based on the belief that God inspired their American Self<sup>226</sup>. Because of this myth, they believed the lands in America belonged to them, and every other person on these lands was an obstacle to remove by any necessary means. They were dangerous pagan/barbaric others to their Puritan selves. If the colonists lose their Puritan selves somehow, they will turn into the 'inferior' pagan

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<sup>222</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 112.

<sup>223</sup> Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, 175.

<sup>224</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 117.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

and barbarous people. If the dissimilarities among the colonists were not restricted and contained, this fear of becoming barbarians served as a continual warning of what they could evolve into<sup>227</sup>. This discourse of danger, in return, enabled excessive actions against the Others. Puritans' reaction to otherness was beyond difference, and it was beyond the ideologies of enslavement and colonization. During the first encounters, the result of these discourses of danger and fear was the extermination of Amer-Indians by the American colonies. However, this attitude towards Amer-Indians lessened when the American identity became more stable, especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>228</sup>.

During the same period, Africans started to be part of the colonial American society through slavery. While the Amer-Indians faced extreme measures, African Others were treated better than the Amer-Indians, especially since they were part of the colonial economy. They were not labeled as savages or pagans but as “negroes, Africans, or Blacks,” for example<sup>229</sup>. During the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century, in addition to Christianity, American identity was defined as being free and white<sup>230</sup>. Just like the discourses of the rigidity of the Barbarian identity (which cannot be transformed into a civilized one), the race and color of the Africans were used to create this type of rigidity at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to this discourse, because of their color and race, they could never become Americans<sup>231</sup>. As it always has been, this discourse, in return, constituted the roots of racism (as an othering practice) within American society.

The prompt expansion of American colonialism and the increase of the African Slaves brought into America skyrocketed the population during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, which, in return, increased the existing social and economic conflicts<sup>232</sup>. This

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>232</sup> Michael R. Haines, “The Population of the United States, 1790–1920,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 143–206.

increase in the population necessitated a re-imagining of the American colonies, the American Self as the U.S. (inclusions of Virginia, New York, and New England), and the Imperial Others. The problems between England and the U.S. were political and administrative, not social. The latter was afraid of losing its freedom against imperial tyranny, which eventually caused the separation from England and the establishment of the U.S. with the Declaration of Independence in 1776. This separation enhanced the understanding that America was unique, a role model for the rest of the world, and it had the leading position among other states (even England)<sup>233</sup>. After the French Revolution, otherness was divided into the English Monarchy and the French Republic. This division created the roots of the American bi-party system as the Federalists (defending increased centrality and Governmental powers) vs. the Republicans (opposing centralization). The political divisions within the U.S. became visible during the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Both sides accused each other of treason. The Republicans blamed the Federalists for wanting to bring back the English tyranny, while The Federalists blamed the Republicans for bringing French terror into the U.S.<sup>234</sup>. To contain the American Self, linking domestic others to foreign dangers created a frequently used foreign policy strategy. This strategy was simply about associating the alien threat with a domestic other.

Campbell adapts Delumeau's "evangelism of fear" concept into his conceptualization of American identity. For Delumeau, after the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Christendom started to face challenges from the new emerging polities and felt the need to consolidate its power through the discourse of danger. This discourse was "evangelism of fear" by Delumeau<sup>235</sup>. This fear had two vital missions to constitute the danger. The first was about the othering practices against the enemies (i.e., the Ottomans) that threatened Western civilization. The second was about creating the fear of Hell and promising salvation since the combination of sin and death could result in ending up in Hell<sup>236</sup>. The Church used these two missions to constitute the fear of evangelism until the

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<sup>233</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 135.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>235</sup> Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture, 13th-18th Centuries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 36, 112.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Peace of Westphalia. Campbell uses this argument and argues that even though the U.S. is a secular state, secularity is intertwined with spirituality in the case of the U.S.<sup>237</sup> In other words, by taking a similar stance to the Church, the U.S. is charged with the duty of achieving salvation in the ongoing battle of morality against tyranny, authoritarianism, and communism (representing the outside, the Hell). Thus, the U.S. creates a sense of safety and promises Heaven on Earth to its citizens *inside*. Whenever the U.S. feels threatened and challenges maintaining the hegemonic discourses on American identity, it also feels the need to contain these challenges through the othering practices of foreign policy (via employing the discourses of danger) to reproduce the traditional American identity discursively. To prove his point, Campbell examines the important historical moments in the constitution of America (the invention of America, the American colonization, and the American Revolution) and shows the deep and entwined relationship between the discourses of danger, foreign policy, and identity formation through the processes of differentiation. By doing so, he also emphasizes how these historical roots can still be seen in the current representations of American identity. He defines the U.S. as ‘the perfect and exceptional imagined community’ because its existence is primarily dependent on representational practices, for not having deep historical roots in a territory or a kingdom before the establishment of the nation-state (unlike Turkey and the Ottoman Empire or Germany and the Kingdom of Prussia for example)<sup>238</sup>. Thus, for Campbell, “arguably more than any other state, the imprecise process of imagination constitutes American identity”<sup>239</sup>.

As Campbell argues, when encountering difference, just like any other Self, the American Self constitutes the Other via discourses of fear and danger to secure the American identity<sup>240</sup>. Campbell’s argument perfectly unravels President Donald Trump’s extreme reaction to the Caravan of Central American undocumented immigrants (traveling to the U.S. from the Mexico border in 2018). He called these

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<sup>237</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 133.

<sup>238</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992, 105.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

immigrants “hardened criminals”, “bad people”, “not little angels”, and “unknown Middle Easterners” (even though they are primarily from Central American countries)<sup>241</sup>. State of the Union address is a vital annual speech delivered by the presidents of the U.S. During his State of the Union address in 2019, President Trump stated that as he speaks, large groups of caravans were marching to the U.S., the Mexican government was transporting these “invaders” to Mexico – U.S. border and creating “a threat to the safety, security, and financial wellbeing of all America”<sup>242</sup>. Using these discourses of danger and fear, President Trump contributed to the constitution of the threat to the American Self by differentiating the Caravan Others.

For Doty, the historical and current encounters between the North and the South have produced meanings and identities<sup>243</sup>. Mainly because the political and academic focus (of the North) on the relations between the North and the South were on specific subjects (like international terrorism, massive immigration from the South to the North, drug trafficking, and contagious diseases), and this focus itself provided the structure where these identities are constructed and reconstructed mutually. In her research concerning the U.S., Canada, and Cuba relations, Wylie emphasizes the importance of U.S. identity, how that identity contains a premise about the U.S. being an exceptional nation, and the effect of this premise on the relations with Cuba<sup>244</sup>. The perception of being exceptional inherently puts the U.S. in a hierarchical 'superior' position compared to other 'inferior' nations. As America's 'backyard,' every Latin American country has been in the 'American sphere of influence' since the Monroe Doctrine. This perception still affects the relations between the U.S. and other Latin American countries and Cuba. In addition, American identity is imprinted with being the guarantor of democracy, human rights,

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<sup>241</sup> Sam Wolfson, “Are Donald Trump’s Claims about the Caravan of 7,000 Migrants Accurate?,” *The Guardian*, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/22/fact-check-trumps-claims-migrant-caravan>.

<sup>242</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks by President Trump in State of the Union Address,” *The White House*, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-state-union-address-2/>.

<sup>243</sup> Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*, 2.

<sup>244</sup> Lana Wylie, “Perceptions and Foreign Policy: A Comparative Study of Canadian and American Policy toward Cuba,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 11, no. 3 (January 2004): 39.

and freedom. The American superiority, along with this assumed role of guarantor, enables the U.S. to enter into foreign relations with certain presuppositions<sup>245</sup>. This is why U.S. foreign policy actions are the secondary concern of this study, while the structure where the two states encounter and how that structure has been constructed through discourse and identity politics are the primary concerns.

Ido Oren, like Wylie, problematizes the well-known premise of democratic peace theory (liberal democracies refrain from going to war with each other, unlike non-liberal democracies) and claims democratic peace theory was constituted by American elites and political scientists after 1917<sup>246</sup>. Only after the Bolshevik Revolution did democracy become a concept separate from socialism and turn into ‘America’s chief self-portrayal’<sup>247</sup>. Constructing American democracy in this way enabled the production of a particular type of democracy whose characteristics were determined by the Americans. Moreover, it made that type of democracy the only acceptable type within the international community. Oren’s conceptualization of democracy as a political discourse exposes the relational characteristics of the democratic identity of a state. America’s exceptional democracy would not exist without the rogue states. The constitution of this ‘liberal obligation’ of the U.S. manifests the intervention as the only political choice.

As Doty and Oren argue, the Northern politicians and academics’ discursive representations of the South produce the regimes of “scientific knowledge” and “truth”<sup>248</sup>. When scholars conceptualize the North/South relations in this manner, the encounters between the North and South become much more than a field of international relations. It becomes the realm of politics where the identities (of states, nations, people, or even regions) are mutually constructed and reconstructed via

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ido Oren, “The Subjectivity of the “Democratic” Peace: Changing US Perceptions of Imperial Germany,” *International Security* 20, no. 2 (1995): 147–84; Ido Oren, “American Political Science as Ideology,” in *Our Enemies and US: America’s Rivalries and the Making of Political Science* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 1–22.

<sup>247</sup> Oren, “The Subjectivity of the “Democratic” Peace: Changing US Perceptions of Imperial Germany,” 152.

<sup>248</sup> Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*, 1–2.



these representational practices<sup>249</sup>. Nations are inseparable from the international<sup>250</sup>. Without the existence of other nations, a single nation's identity cannot be constituted since the very essence of a nation is dependent on differences, and the practices of international relations between nations occur through the representational practices of foreign policy. Considering these representational practices enables thinking outside the box (unlike the traditional assessment of binary oppositions such as first world/third world, democratic states/authoritarian states, and developed/underdeveloped) and exposes these binaries' constructed and subjective essence. Exposing these binaries and power politics also reveals the "acceptable" and "unacceptable" or even "unthinkable" and "unmentionable" political options, which is the main problem of this study. This study does not focus on the "democratic" U.S. regime and its democracy promotion towards the "authoritarian" government of Venezuela. It focuses on the mutual construction of the American Self through Venezuelan Others via foreign policy and representational practices. This part of the dissertation focuses on the Poststructural literature on American identity, its othering practices, and how it is historically constructed through representational practices while building the thesis' Poststructural framework. The next Chapter focuses on its methodology.

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>250</sup> Craig J. Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 93.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

*“The truth is always local and flexible”*<sup>251</sup>.  
*“Our access to reality is always through language”*<sup>252</sup>.

As a result of its inherently critical nature, there is no commonly accepted methodology for a Poststructuralist research agenda. Consequently, one of the main criticisms against Poststructuralism was its lack of methodological approaches during the 1980s. This criticism was unfair since Poststructuralism originated from a meta-theoretical position. This position determined mainstream IR theories as Poststructuralists' subject matter problematized them and their role in constructing the current international system first and foremost.

This was crucial for understanding the discipline of international relations as constructive and reformative. If one wants to assess the constructive role of IR theories, it is only natural to choose mainstream IR theories as its subject matter<sup>253</sup>. Because of this position, critics claim that Poststructuralism can only make implications in theory, not in practice, and cannot analyze the problems of the “real world”<sup>254</sup>.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, the critical theorists themselves also started the self-criticism process and introduced more practical and applicable post-

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<sup>251</sup> Jacob Torfing, “Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges,” in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, ed. David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005), 13–14, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230523364\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230523364_1).

<sup>252</sup> Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002), 8, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871>.

<sup>253</sup> Knud Erik Jørgensen, “The Post-Positivist Tradition,” in *International Relations Theory: A New Introduction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 167.

<sup>254</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (June 1991): 223, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600471>.

positivist methodologies<sup>255</sup>. Prominent Poststructuralists like Milliken<sup>256</sup> and Hansen<sup>257</sup> argued that “it is time for Poststructuralism to take methodology back”; many admirably built their methodological approaches (including their versions of Discourse Analysis) since then<sup>258</sup>. This study adopts Hansen’s Discourse Analysis methodology and David Campbell’s conceptualization of U.S. foreign policy and American identity. While the previous chapter mainly focuses on Campbell’s conceptualizations, this chapter will focus on Hansen’s discursive methodology. The first part argues the importance of qualitative Discourse Analysis and Hansen’s method. The second part consists of adapting Hansen’s Discourse Analysis methodology into this study as a qualitative analysis of U.S. foreign policy.

The most notable works within the field adopt discourse analysis and identity formation regarding the Poststructuralist foreign policy analysis<sup>259</sup>. Mainly because “identities are simultaneously constituted and reproduced through formulations of foreign policy,” and they are inherently interconnected<sup>260</sup>. They cannot exist without

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<sup>255</sup> Jennifer Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods,” *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (June 25, 1999): 225–54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066199005002003>; Zehfuss, “Constructivism and Identity: A Dangerous Liaison”; Teun A. Van Dijk, “Ideological Discourse Analysis,” *New Courant* 4 (1995): 135–61; Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Sage Publications (London, 2001); Carta and Wodak, “Discourse Analysis, Policy Analysis, and the Borders of EU Identity”; Jenny Edkins and Maja Zehfuss, eds., *Global Politics: A New Introduction* (Routledge, 2014).

<sup>256</sup> Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods.”

<sup>257</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, xvi.

<sup>258</sup> Wodak and Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*; David Howarth, Aletta J Norval, and Yannis Stavrakakis, *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, Manchester University Press, 2000; Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*; Wæver, “Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory”; Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, “Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method,” *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871>; Iver B. Neumann, “Russia as Central Europe’s Constituting Other,” *East European Politics and Societies* 7, no. 2 (1993): 349–69.

<sup>259</sup> David Campbell, “Global Inscription: How Foreign Policy Constitutes the United States,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 15, no. 3 (July 1990): 263–86, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437549001500302>; Campbell, “Foreign Policy and Identity: The Japanese ‘Other’/American ‘Self’”; Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992; Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines”; Doty, “Immigration and National Identity: Constructing the Nation”; Cynthia Weber, *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis*.

<sup>260</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 15.

discursive practices, and states (as subjects) attempt to maintain certain perceptions of themselves via foreign policy discourses. This perception (and reality) construction heavily depends on foreign policy discourses because foreign policy is about constructing the national identity of the Self concerning Others. Without the dangerous, radical Other, the Self cannot be identified<sup>261</sup>. For example, a soldier of a state's National Army can be recognized as legitimate compared to an outlawed terrorist via the simultaneous discursive othering practices of foreign policy<sup>262</sup>. Thus, studying foreign policy construction from a Poststructuralist perspective enables one to assess foreign policy practices in a broader realm where a constructed international order contains multiple international identities<sup>263</sup>. It also allows one to see how the Self is discursively constructed concerning Others and enables interpreting the constructed *hierarchical* structure of international relations. After all, the discursive practices of marginalizing others contain the techniques of constructing the Self as the superior while simultaneously constructing the others as inferiors. This hierarchical relationship between the U.S. and Latin America has been evident since the Monroe Doctrine.

Without a dispute, the European Self, non-European Others, and the European Union's foreign policy are the most studied subjects within the field<sup>264</sup>. However, U.S. foreign policy is neglected in the Poststructuralist foreign policy analysis. This

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<sup>261</sup> David Campbell conceptualizes the Other as a single, dangerous Other. Lene Hansen, on the other hand conceptualizes multiple Others, however, she also emphasizes the importance of the existence of the radical Other in the constitution of the Self. Different conceptualizations of the Others are elaborated on part 1.3.

<sup>262</sup> James Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), 92.

<sup>263</sup> Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines," 305.

<sup>264</sup> Carta and Wodak, "Discourse Analysis, Policy Analysis, and the Borders of EU Identity"; Henrik Larsen, "Discourses of State Identity and Post-Lisbon National Foreign Policy: The Case of Denmark," *Cooperation and Conflict* 49, no. 3 (2014): 368–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836713495000>; Larsen, "Discourse Analysis in the Study of European Foreign Policy"; Bucher and Jasper, "Revisiting 'Identity' in International Relations: From Identity as Substance to Identifications in Action"; Gibbins, *Britain, Europe and National Identity*; Senem Aydın-Düzgit, "Foreign Policy and Identity Change: Analysing Perceptions of Europe among the Turkish Public," *Politics* 38, no. 1 (2018): 19–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395717729932>; Wodak and Boukala, "European Identities and the Revival of Nationalism in the European Union: A Discourse Historical Approach"; Rumelili, "Turkey: Identity, Foreign Policy, and Socialization in a Post-Enlargement Europe."

gap in the literature encourages the researcher to make further analyses on the subject. Still, at the same time, it is challenging to construct appropriate methodologies because the existing studies in the literature are limited and mostly outdated. As mentioned before, Campbell's analysis of the subject includes only the radical Other. At the same time, Hansen's or Wæver's work on European Foreign Policy has already enabled much more comprehensive research on multiple othering practices through foreign policymaking. Campbell's framework cannot solely help us to understand the construction of a friendly Venezuelan Other, Juan Guaidó. This is why this study adopts a multi-method approach, including a Poststructural qualitative analysis of foreign policy, Campbell's conceptualization of identity politics, the othering practices of the Self via foreign policy, and Hansen's political discourse analysis. After elaborating on the discourse as a concept and discourse analysis, this chapter will elaborate on how Hansen's methodological framework for European Foreign Policy will be adopted for the qualitative and poststructuralist research of U.S. foreign policy.

### **3.1. Discourse Analysis**

Discourses are the “systems of meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects”<sup>265</sup>. According to Laclau and Mouffe discourse is “The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice”<sup>266</sup>. They argue that discourse extends beyond language or communication, encompassing a more comprehensive perspective on the construction and sustenance of power, ideology, and social relations through language and symbolic practices. According to Laclau and Mouffe, discourse influences how individuals and groups interpret the world, shape identities, and establish hierarchies of power. The construction, contestation, and transformation of social reality, in their view, primarily occur through the discourse. Discourses are formed through social interactions and practices. Discourses are not only ideas but have both ideational and material factors<sup>267</sup>. They

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<sup>265</sup> Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis, *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, 3–4.

<sup>266</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 105.

<sup>267</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 15.

are inherently political because they imply the construction of identity through otherness by drawing an imaginary line between Us vs. Them. Discourses contain the acts of power intrinsically because the marginalization of others through foreign policy discourses and the construction of hierarchical relations between different social actors are the main components of discourses. As Hansen argues:

The conceptualization of foreign policy as a discursive practice implies that policy and identity are seen as ontologically interlinked: it is only through the discursive enactment of foreign policy that identity comes into being, but this identity is at the same time constructed as the legitimization for the policy proposed. Identities are thus articulated as the reason why policies should be enacted, but they are also (re)produced through these very policy discourses: they are simultaneously (discursive) foundation and product<sup>268</sup>.

Political discourses are also interconnected and historically constructed. They cannot exist out there by themselves. They must be related to other discourses to make sense and to be accepted by the related audience. For example, it is not a coincidence that U.S. Presidents often quote the Founding Fathers during their election campaigns or in their presidential speeches. The historical connection between the past and present is also necessary to legitimize current and future policies. They are also helpful for convincing citizens that policymakers' particular policies are the most beneficial ones for the sake of their nation. The main objective of this complex web of relations between foreign policy discourses, identities, and their historical roots is concealing the representations and the power relations within them. Researchers use the Discourse Analysis methodology to expose and interpret the power relations behind these political representations.

Every text contains many possible interpretations, and Discourse Analysis is the prominent methodology for interpreting texts. Isabela and Norman Fairclough define Discourse Analysis as “an analysis of political discourse from a critical perspective, which focuses on the reproduction and contestation of political power through political discourse”<sup>269</sup>. Howarth and Stavrakakis define discourse analysis as “the

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>269</sup> Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough, *Political Discourse Analysis: A Method for Advanced Students* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 17.

practice of analyzing empirical raw materials and information as discursive forms”<sup>270</sup>. Poststructuralists use discourse instead of language because the former refers to producing value and meaning in language. Language is powerful and constitutive such that the power relations embedded in discourses construct realities and represent them like truths rather than representations. In parallel to Hansen’s argument, Doty also claims that discourses are “constructing particular subject identities, positioning these subjects vis-à-vis one another, and thereby constructing a particular reality in which policy became possible, as well as larger reality in which future policies would be justified in advance”<sup>271</sup>. So, instead of focusing directly on subjects and their identities, Poststructuralism focuses on how language and discourses construct subjects, identities, positions, and relations.

As mentioned, this study analyzes U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela since the elections of left-wing populist presidents in Venezuela with a multimethod approach. These approaches include Poststructural qualitative analysis of foreign policy, identity politics, othering practices through foreign policy, and political discourse analysis. Evaluating foreign policy through discourse analysis is also possible with a quantitative methodology. Most of the literature on U.S. foreign policy adopts quantitative analysis<sup>272</sup>. Accordingly, the social world is an objective field through quantitative methods independent of human experience and knowledge. Quantitative analysts’ (who claim that they can approach social phenomena objectively) main

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<sup>270</sup> Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis, *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, 4.

<sup>271</sup> Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines,” 304.

<sup>272</sup> Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson and Steven B. Redd, “Framing and the Poliheuristic Theory of Decision: The United Fruit Company and the 1954 U.S.-Led Coup in Guatemala,” in *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Alex Mintz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2003), 77–100; Clayton L. Thyne, “Supporter of Stability or Agent of Agitation? The Effect of US Foreign Policy on Coups in Latin America, 1960–99,” *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 4 (July 25, 2010): 449–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343310368350>; Paul C. Avey et al., “Does Social Science Inform Foreign Policy? Evidence from a Survey of US National Security, Trade, and Development Officials,” *International Studies Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (February 9, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqab057>; Alex Mintz, Steven B. Redd, and Eldad Tal-Shir, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Political Decision-Making,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.302>; Richard N. Haass, *Foreign Policy Begins at Home* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Benjamin E. Goldsmith and Yusaku Horiuchi, “In Search of Soft Power: Does Foreign Public Opinion Matter for US Foreign Policy?,” *World Politics* 64, no. 3 (July 27, 2012): 555–85, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887112000123>.

aims are discovering the universal truths about our social world, exposing causal relationships between different social phenomena through positivist methodologies, and predicting the future of the social world<sup>273</sup>.

In contrast, this thesis builds its argument against the quantitative approach by adopting an anti-foundationalist epistemological and anti-essentialist ontological point of view. The Poststructuralist framework of this study rejects the existence and possibility of a single objective truth because social scientists (like all humans) cannot separate themselves from their beliefs and values. As a result, the knowledge they produced cannot be objective; instead, that knowledge must be “historically and culturally specific and contingent” and can change in the future while our identities change<sup>274</sup>. Since we cannot reach objective reality, we can only know social reality through its representations, and to reveal these representations, scientists need to use multiple methodological tools. Therefore, it is ideal to integrate several methodological techniques into single research because this strategy brings comprehensiveness, richness, and profoundness into that particular study<sup>275</sup>.

The traditional quantitative approaches try to understand the social world as it is and what it means for the members of that social world. In contrast, discourse analysis explores how that social world and reality are produced by its subjects (in return, reproduce these subjects simultaneously) through language and discourse and thus tries to reveal this complex web of relations by adopting a Poststructuralist position. According to this approach, discourses constitute the social reality. As a result, this social reality cannot be revealed without studying the discourses that constitute it in the first place<sup>276</sup>. There are different discourse analysis methodologies considering their application to various disciplines (such as linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and political science). Since this study problematizes U.S. foreign policy discourses

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<sup>273</sup> David Howarth, *Discourse, Concepts in the Social Sciences* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 126.

<sup>274</sup> Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Anal. as Theory Method*, 2002, 5.

<sup>275</sup> Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, “Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (California: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2005), 5.

<sup>276</sup> Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Anal. as Theory Method*, 2002, 11.



(presidential and prominent foreign policymakers' discourses), *political* discourse analysis is adopted as the methodology. For Wæver, the main aim of political discourse analysis is to find the patterns in political texts that modify the political structure<sup>277</sup>. This structure is crucial because it determines what can be said, what type of political actions can be on the table, and, more importantly, which options are unthinkable, unmentionable, or entirely out of the question within that political climate.

According to Der Derian, Poststructuralism is about revealing the “textual interplay behind power politics”<sup>278</sup>. Social realities (including power politics) are constructed through textuality and embedded in the practices of representation. The concept of intertextuality claims that all texts must refer to other texts to strengthen their arguments by referencing them, creating a vast web of meanings<sup>279</sup>. Every text is different, yet they are interconnected. They must be. Meanings in these texts cannot make sense alone. They must refer to other texts to make sense, build strong arguments, construct social and political realities (including identity), and, more importantly, build authority.

It should be noted that text is not only a form of a written work; it has a broader definition. Poststructuralists see the world as a text, constructed like a text within the discourses. In this context, studying international relations, foreign policy, and identity with an intertextual framework enables a more comprehensive analysis. “To textualize a domain of analysis is to recognize, first of all, that any reality is mediated by a mode of representation and, second, that representations are not descriptions of a world of facticity but are ways of making facticity”<sup>280</sup>. This process of reality-

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<sup>277</sup> Ole Wæver, “Discursive Approaches,” in *European Integration Theory*, ed. Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Oxford University Press, 2009), 165.

<sup>278</sup> James Der Derian, “The Boundaries of Knowledge and Power in International Relations,” in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, ed. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (Lexington Books, 1989), 6.

<sup>279</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 7.

<sup>280</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, “Textualizing Global Politics,” in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, ed. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (Lexington Books, 1989), 13–14.

making can only be interpreted by focusing on representational practices because discourse and these practices have a formative effect on reality. These constructed realities are situated within social, historical, and cultural contexts. Notably, these realities, produced meanings, and identities are not fixed; they are unstable, constantly fighting for domination and trying to look stable.

Discourse Analysis embraces the constant change within identities, norms, and values by arguing that language is inherently unstable. They are not given or fixed but constructed and reconstructed through discursive practices to seem fixed. This approach denies the unified conceptualization of a single identity and exposes the clash between competing identities. For Poststructuralism, identity and policy ontologically coexist, and this coexistence is mobilized through discourse<sup>281</sup>. Identities are constructed and reconstructed through foreign policy discourses; they are also constructed to justify specific foreign policy actions. This process contains constant change. However, if language is inherently unstable, how can one fix discourses just enough to study them? How is it possible to study an unstable, unfixed, constantly changing phenomenon? Different scholars introduced various discourse analysis methods<sup>282</sup>. Laclau and Mouffe, for example, introduce nodal points (referencing Lacan) as “privileged signifiers that fix the meaning,” just enough to study them<sup>283</sup>. Their approach also known as the Essex School of discourse analysis is called a referential approach in Discourse Analysis, “where words and concepts are names used to reference objects out there in reality”<sup>284</sup>. There are also differential approaches to discourse analysis, which are more systemic because they position meaning in differences amid concepts<sup>285</sup>. We can only know

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<sup>281</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 23.

<sup>282</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*; Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines”; Neumann, “Russia as Central Europe’s Constituting Other”; Henrik Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis France, Britain and Europe*, Routledge, 1997; Ruth Wodak and Paul Chilton, *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis Theory, Methodology and Interdisciplinarity* (John Benjamins B.V, 2005); Teun A. Van Dijk, “Principals of Discourse Analysis,” *Discourse and Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249–83.

<sup>283</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 112–13.

<sup>284</sup> Wæver, “Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory,” 28.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

something by comparing it to what it is not, by looking at what is different about them. The analysis of the construction of the Self concerning Others employs a differential approach. This study will employ Hansen's methodological framework by adopting an understanding of language as a system of linking and differentiation to demonstrate how representations of identity and several foreign policy positions are co-constitutive (rather than causal). The next part will elaborate on this methodology and discuss how it is implemented in this study's analytical framework.

### **3.2. Adopting Hansen's Poststructuralist Research Methodology**

By adopting intertextuality, Lene Hansen's methodology forms around a dual understanding of language, meaning, and identity construction. Originating from Laclau and Mouffe's logic of equivalence and logic of difference, Hansen's conceptualization of identity consists of two interconnected phases: "*a positive process of linking*" and "*a negative process of differentiation*"<sup>286</sup>. These two processes must be actualized simultaneously for identity construction. The language system consists of signs, and meanings arise from juxtapositions of these signs. This relational formulation of identity claims that meanings are constructed through the discursive juxtaposition of one favored meaning beside an unfavored one.

As Hansen exemplifies in Figure 1, being a European woman during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century meant "being emotional, simple, reliant, and motherly". These juxtapositions create a positive process of linking among the identities of European women during that century. When we juxtapose 19<sup>th</sup> Century European men as "rational, complex, independent, and intellectual beings" against 19<sup>th</sup> Century European women, we create a negative process of differentiation<sup>287</sup>. Thus, these two processes constitute identity simultaneously. This duality is strictly structural but, at the same time, very unstable. This conceptualization perfectly clarifies why Poststructuralism has a Post in it but is also inherently associated with Structuralism<sup>288</sup>. Discourses compete to fix

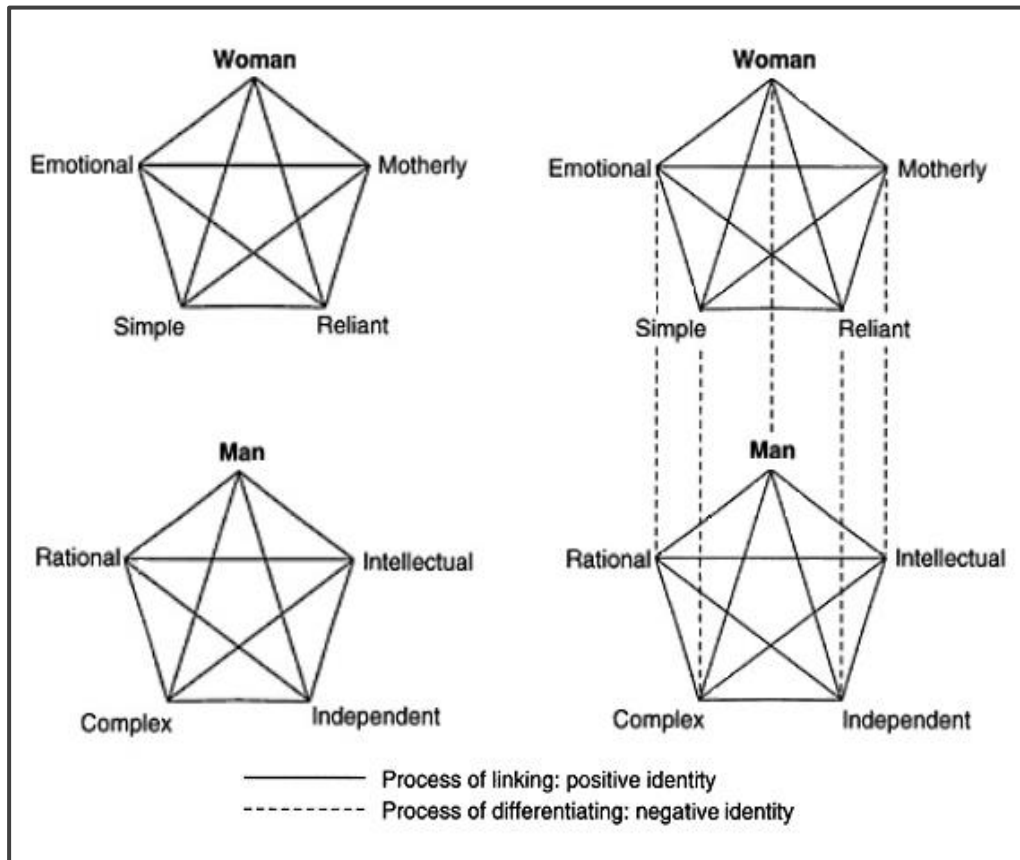
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<sup>286</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 17; Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 129–45.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

the meaning structurally but cannot reach absolute fixity and always stay in an appearance of absolute unfixity<sup>289</sup>.



**Figure 1.** Hansen's Dual Understanding of Identity Construction<sup>290</sup>

In addition to the process of linking and differentiation, Hansen's conceptualization of identity also includes temporal, ethical, and spatial constructions of identity as analytic lenses<sup>291</sup>. Time, responsibility, and space have direct relations with foreign policy constructions and differentiation of identity. Spatial constructions of identity involve the construction of boundaries. The distinction of domestic/international space in the discourse of international relations theory is the perfect example of spatial construction<sup>292</sup>. The temporal construction of identity employs the possibility

<sup>289</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 111.

<sup>290</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 17–18.

<sup>291</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 42.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

of change, transformation, development, etc. As previously mentioned, within the colonialist discourse, the Amer-Indians were constructed as inferiors, but there was a possibility of change by converting to Christianity. However, according to the enslavement discourse, they were also savages, but their temporal identity was constructed differently than the colonialist discourse. They were barbarians, and they could not become like the Christian Self; therefore, their enslavement or extermination was legitimized within this discourse.

Lastly, constructing the ethical identity involves the possibility of intervention and responsibility<sup>293</sup>. The construction of the Maduro administration as the radical Venezuelan Other within the U.S. foreign policy discourses after 2017 automatically brought the questions of international responsibility of the U.S. against the Venezuelan people (the friendly Venezuelan Other) as the oppressed, living in poverty and fleeing from their country<sup>294</sup>. Thus, the ethical construction of the American Self against Venezuelan Others within the U.S. foreign policy discourses enabled various statements about military intervention from the highest-ranking members of the Trump administration and President Trump himself: “We have many options for Venezuela, including a possible military option if necessary”<sup>295</sup>. More importantly, when an issue is distinctively constructed within the discourses of international responsibility, this construction enables an effective discursive shift from the domestic realm to a higher but morally good realm where the foreign intervention becomes an ethical responsibility for the good of the people, in this dissertation’s case the Venezuelan people<sup>296</sup>.

Hansen’s dual conceptualization of identity enables more room for interpretation of identity/difference by incorporating spatial, temporal, and ethical dimensions of

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>294</sup> According to the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela (which is directed jointly by the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), more than 7 million Venezuelans left their country since 2015. <https://www.r4v.info/en/refugeeandmigrants>

<sup>295</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary Tillerson, US Permanent Representative to the UN Haley, and National Security Adviser McMaster,” The American Presidency Project, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-following-meeting-with-secretary-state-rex-w-tillerson-united-states-permanent>.

<sup>296</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 45.

identity rather than focusing only on the vital “us vs. them” dilemma. Since discourses strive to seem stable, Hansen’s complex yet simple conceptualization helps reveal these discourses’ unstable nature. It provides a multi-dimensional identity analysis while enabling an assessment of change in identity, representational practices, and foreign policy discourses with an intertextual understanding. Lastly, it also allows an analysis concerning the Self with multiple constructed Others (rather than one dangerous Other).

The discursive structures are inherently political and powerful. Because meanings produce identities, the structure they encounter, and their positions against each other. They are also crucial for making political outcomes and consequences<sup>297</sup>. For instance, Campbell analyzes George H. Bush’s War on Drugs policy and problematizes three critical discourses on the War on Drugs<sup>298</sup>. First, he asks how and why some drugs (such as painkillers) are constituted as “acceptable” while others are considered “dangerous”. Then, he examines how certain races (blacks and Hispanics) are linked with these dangerous drugs (such as cocaine) within the discourses of the War on Drugs. Lastly, he reveals how this discursive framing produced aggressive political responses against blacks or Hispanics in the U.S., even though statistically, white suburban Americans consume more of these “dangerous” drugs than in black or Hispanic neighborhoods<sup>299</sup>. According to Poststructuralism, what the statistics or “facts” prove is not essential. It is important to focus on the discursive constructions of these facts, how they are represented within these discourses, their political consequences, and, more importantly, which political decisions and actions are constructed as unimaginable.

Foreign policy practices rely on human agency, such as foreign policymakers. They aim to represent a particular foreign policy decision as legitimate and applicable to their voters. Their political activities try to construct the link between policy and identity because the former must always be consistent with the latter<sup>300</sup>. As subjects,

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<sup>297</sup> Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines,” 310.

<sup>298</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1992.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 198–206.

<sup>300</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 25.

they are also not independent from the encompassing nature of policy-identity dichotomous. They are constrained by social and political limitations while making decisions. They cannot know about every single topic on state governance and must rely on advisors, bureaucrats, specialists, and the media. While making decisions, they encounter different representations of the same foreign policy issue. In return, they make decisions, produce representations, and finally act on them. Policymakers must consider their citizens' foreign policy representations as well. Radical changes in foreign policy are possible, but they are also not easy. Foreign policy actors must move within "a discursive terrain already partially structured through previously articulated and institutionalized identities" and convince the public of their political actions<sup>301</sup>. They also must cope with the oppositional discourses or the critical media discourses. These discourses shape their facts and produce different readings of the same event, making consensus impossible.

Different discourses constantly challenge each other for domination, and the dominant discourse's main aim is to seem fixed and permanent. However, the dominant discourse also always has competition. After all, the opposition parties, media, or critics within the same political party have their discourses. For instance, when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, oil prices increased because of the West's dependence on Russian oil, including the U.S. Especially since they have been sanctioning Venezuelan crude since 2019, the West became increasingly dependent on Russian oil. Until 2019, the U.S. had been importing Venezuelan oil since the early 1900s, so the refineries in the U.S. are mainly built for processing Venezuelan crude oil. These refineries cannot process Saudi oil because its structure is runnier and very different from Venezuelan oil. Russian oil's structure is closer to Venezuelan oil, which is why the U.S. became more dependent on Russian oil in 2019 when the U.S. started sanctioning Venezuelan crude<sup>302</sup>. So, when Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022, the U.S. and the E.U. introduced various sanctions against Russia, including oil. This policy, in return, caused an increase in oil prices worldwide.

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>302</sup> Brian Winter, "Enemies with Benefits: Can Venezuela Help the West Wean Itself off Russian Oil?," *The Economist*, April 23, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/the-americas/can-venezuela-help-the-west-wean-itself-off-russian-oil/21808837>.

To create an alternative oil supply to Russian oil and reduce the oil prices in the domestic market, the Biden Administration started new and highly unexpected negotiations with the Maduro Administration on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, by sending top U.S. diplomats<sup>303</sup> to Venezuela<sup>304</sup>. This political move, of course, challenged the dominant discourse on the Maduro regime in the U.S. The opposition, predominantly Republican Senator Marco Rubio<sup>305</sup>, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis<sup>306</sup>, and even the Democrat members of the U.S. Congress<sup>307</sup>, strongly argued against this policy change towards Venezuela and the Maduro regime. Both discourses have challenged each other while both sides try to persuade their relevant audiences to support their policies. To do so, they also try to constitute a link between their policies and the American Self by simultaneously constructing Venezuelan Others. For instance, Republican Governor of Florida Ron DeSantis states, “We do not accept Joe Biden legitimizing a murderous tyrant, and we stand with the people in South Florida and the people in Venezuela who are seeking freedom”<sup>308</sup>. Republican Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart blames the Biden Administration for threatening national security by stating, “In these talks, he [Joe Biden] is betraying the freedom of Venezuela, which is something that we will not stand for. We have not seen a betrayal like this since the ‘60s, and not only is he betraying the Venezuelan people, he is harming our national security”<sup>309</sup>. Within this narrative, the Maduro Administration is constructed

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<sup>303</sup> The special presidential envoy for hostage affairs Roger Carstens; the National Security Council’s senior director for Western Hemisphere affairs Juan Gonzalez; and the U.S. ambassador to Venezuela Jimmy Story are the three members of this high-level U.S. Delegation.

<sup>304</sup> Kurmanaev, Kitroeff, and Vogel, “US Officials Travel to Venezuela as the West Isolates Putin.”

<sup>305</sup> Marco Rubio, “Rubio Warns President Biden Against Any Change in U.S. Policy Toward Venezuela,” Press Releases, 2022, <https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2022/5/english-espa-ol-rubio-warns-president-biden-against-any-change-in-u-s-policy-toward-venezuela>.

<sup>306</sup> Ron DeSantis, “Governor DeSantis Lambasts Biden Administration’s Engagement with Maduro Regime and Its Destructive Domestic Energy Policies,” News Releases, 2022, <https://www.flgov.com/2022/03/11/governor-desantis-lambasts-biden-administrations-engagement-with-maduro-regime-and-its-destructive-domestic-energy-policies/>.

<sup>307</sup> Darren Soto, “Tweet from (@RepDarrenSoto): Florida Democratic Members Came Together Today to Oppose Importing Oil from Venezuela. We Cannot Support Dictator Maduro & His Murderous Regime, as We Work to Ease Gas Prices,” Twitter, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RepDarrenSoto/status/1502031646949883907>.

<sup>308</sup> Rubio, “Rubio Warns President Biden Against Any Change in U.S. Policy Toward Venezuela.”

<sup>309</sup> DeSantis, “Governor DeSantis Lambasts Biden Administration’s Engagement with Maduro Regime and Its Destructive Domestic Energy Policies.”



as the radical Venezuelan Other (a murderous tyrant and a threat to the national security of the U.S.), while the Venezuelan people are constructed as friendly Other (seeking freedom). Simultaneously, this narrative constructs the Biden Administration as a threat to American identity and ideals because fighting against authoritarianism and standing with democracy-seeking people are the main characteristics of the American identity.

When a policymaker frames a subject within the national security discourse, automatically, that subject becomes a responsibility because foreign policy discourses construct that subject as such. Consequently, it creates specific opportunities for the policymaker, including the power to make marginal and far-reaching political decisions<sup>310</sup>. For the sake of the national or international community, the policymaker assumes the responsibility to answer that national security threat urgently with a lower level of accountability. More importantly, this construction moves the subject from the domestic/national level to the international level to a moral ground. For example, the status of the democratic regime in Venezuela (whether its deterioration or maintenance) is generally situated at the domestic level. However, when a U.S. policymaker frames a possible deterioration in Venezuelan democracy as a threat to U.S. national security, this discursive move relocates the issue from the national to the international level. Accordingly, this 'threat' against U.S. national security brings the American government an international responsibility, especially for the sake of the American and Venezuelan people. Thus, an international response (more than fifty states, including the U.S., the members of the E.U., and many Latin American states, including Chile, Colombia, Brazil, and Paraguay) such as sanctioning Venezuelan oil or outlawing Nicolás Maduro from the presidency become possible.

This example shows the suitability of Hansen's methodology for this analysis; it captures the challenges and possible changes within the dominant foreign policy discourses while showing the relation between the policy and identity construction. Hansen's methodology suggests determining *key events* to trace the dominant discourses' challenges or changes. Key events are instances in which significant facts

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<sup>310</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 44–45.

appear in the broader political debate. They affect the policy-identity dichotomy and enforce the official discourse to encounter the alternative discourses of the opposition or the media<sup>311</sup>. Determining a small number of key events makes it easier to capture the official discourse and the counterarguments against it, so building the debate around these key events provides stability to trace the official discourse and helps to build a timeline on the research subject. Constituted facts need human agency, including the citizens, media outlets, and institutions, to affect the official discourse. These facts are important because they bring foreign political actions and outcomes. For instance, when the Armenian events of 1915 were constituted as a “genocide” within the U.S. foreign policy discourse, it created different foreign policy actions, outcomes, and foreign policy responses than “mass atrocity”.

### **3.2.1. Intertextual Research Models**

Hansen’s intertextual methodology for analyzing foreign policy discourses has four different models: Model 1, Model 2, Model 3A, and Model 3B, as Table 1 shows. Model 1 is at the core of this methodology, and other models form the outer circles of this core. Model 1 mainly focuses on the official foreign policy discourses by focusing on the official texts from the Heads of State, Ministers, high-ranked military officials, and other officials like senators, advisors, representatives, or governors related to the subject of the study. The main aim is to locate the official foreign policy discourses within these official texts through extensive reading of the official texts and assess how these official discourses encounter the critical discourses within the discursive terrain.

Model 2 broadens the discursive area by including the critical discourses as well as the official discourses. The textual sources of the critical discourses are parliamentary debates, media texts, and oppositional party arguments. These texts form the counterarguments against the official discourses. The researcher analyzes these texts to determine the challenges to the hegemony of the official discourse, the possible transformation of the official discourse, and how the critical discourse became the subsequent official discourse. Models 3A and 3B widen the research area

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 28.

and bring social, cultural, and academic texts into the analysis. Depending on the research subject, these texts could be movies, soap operas, magazines, caricatures, paintings, photographs, or academic texts. With these models, the researchers can focus on the broader public discourses and how these discourses are consolidated through these texts.

**Table 1.** Hansen’s Intertextual Research Models<sup>312</sup>

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3A</b>	<b>Model 3B</b>
<b>Analytical Focus</b>	Official Discourse	Wider Foreign Policy Debate: Political Opposition, Media	Cultural representations: Popular culture, High culture	Marginal political discourses: Social movements, Illegal associations, Academics, NGOs
<b>Object of Analysis</b>	Official Texts	Political Texts, Media Texts, Editorials, etc.	Film, fiction, television, computer games, photography, comics, music, poetry, painting, architecture, travel writing, autobiography	Marginal newspapers, websites, books, pamphlets, Academic analysis
<b>Goal of Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The stabilization of official discourse through intertextual links</li> <li>• The response of official discourse to critical discourse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The hegemony of official discourse</li> <li>• The likely transformation of official discourse</li> <li>• The internal stability of media discourses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sedimentation or reproduction of identities in cultural representations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance in non-democratic regimes</li> <li>• Dissent in cases of models 1 and 2 hegemony</li> <li>• Academic debates</li> </ul>

Every research subject is different, so there is no way to say, for instance, that Model 1 is better than Model 3A. The researchers should choose the appropriate model according to their research subject and questions. For example, Hansen chose Model 3A for her research because she was focused on how non-literary fiction (Robert D. Kaplan’s *Balkan Ghosts* book) played a massive role in Bill Clinton’s decision to intervene in the Bosnian war and changed the whole dominant Western discourse of non-intervention to the war<sup>313</sup>. This study evaluates the U.S. foreign policy towards

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 7.

Venezuela after the election of populist left-wing presidents. Thus, it has a long time frame (2001-2019), starting with the George W. Bush administration. This brings certain limitations to the study. Reading every discursive text on the subject accumulated for nearly twenty years, including the official, media, cultural, academic, or marginal texts, is almost impossible and time-consuming.

On the other hand, this long time frame is crucial and necessary for extensive analysis of U.S. foreign policy discourses towards Venezuela during the Chávez and Maduro administrations. The research questions are built around this time frame. As a result, this study focuses primarily on the official discourses of American Presidents (George W. Bush, Barack H. Obama, and Donald J. Trump) and their close circle of foreign policy team related to Venezuela specifically because these policymakers had leading roles in determining foreign policy discourses and actions towards Venezuela during the Chávez and Maduro administrations. These circles include Secretaries of State, the U.S. Ambassadors to Venezuela, Senior Directors for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Representatives of the United States in the Organization of American States (OAS), and the related (especially from Florida since most of the Cuban and Venezuelan Americans live there) senators, representatives, and governors.

The main question is how the researcher could identify *the basic discourses* within these official foreign policy texts. Basic discourses “construct different Others with different degrees of radical difference; articulate radically diverging forms of spatial, temporal, and ethical identity; and construct competing links between identity and policy”<sup>314</sup>. In parallel to the argument in the intertextuality part, every foreign policy text is unique, but they also depend on each other for legitimacy and building hegemony. Every other foreign policy text is different, yet they are also shaped around specific common themes, identity constructions, and necessary practical policies. Hence, debates about foreign policy issues are linked through a small number (usually two or three) of foreign policy discourses<sup>315</sup>. The point is to

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

determine these basic discourses through extensive reading and analysis of official foreign policy texts, but how can a researcher identify these basic discourses within the texts? It is crucial to focus on different identity and policy constructions and how they are linked within the broader political context in the foreign policy texts, primarily how the Self is constructed concerning Others, how many Others are constructed, how the Self and Others are constructed through the spatial, temporal, and ethical dimensions. The basic discourses are usually enunciated around the key representations of identity, such as being a “Bolivarian” in debates around post-Chávez Venezuela.

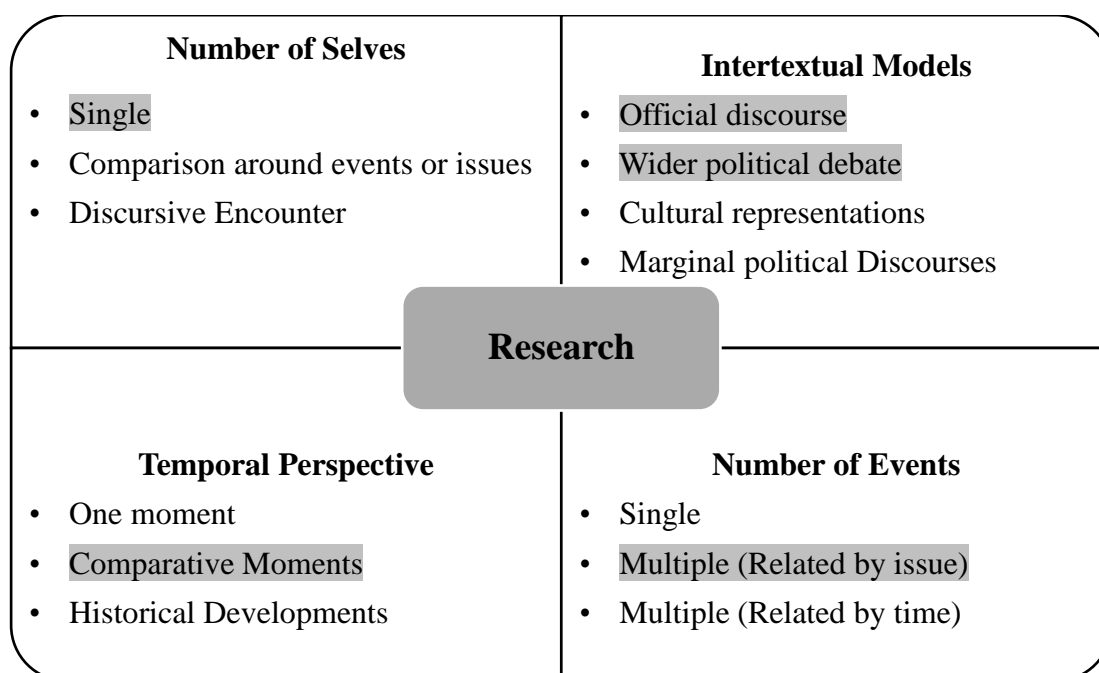
The historical links of these critical representations of identity are also vital. Hugo Chávez constructed a new ideal of Venezuela and Latin America, independent from the hegemony of the U.S. and the West, by often referring to Simón Bolívar, a historical leader<sup>316</sup>. President Chávez changed the country's name after him to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and adopted his ideal: a socially, politically, and economically integrated Latin America (similar to the EU). He also formed his whole foreign policy around this debate, including the foundation of The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) in 2004 against the U.S. hegemony in the continent. Venezuela also had the income to be able to make a real difference in politics, so he openly used the oil wealth to fracture the U.S. influence. In short, while it is imperative to determine the key representations of identity, it is also crucial to do a historical reading and find the links between the current basic discourses, the constitution of others within these texts, and their references to the historical texts.

### **3.2.2. The Research Design**

In addition to the intertextual models (Models 1, 2, 3A, 3B), Hansen also builds a research design for concrete Discourse Analysis of foreign policy. Her design has four dimensions, as Figure 2 shows below.

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<sup>316</sup> Simón Bolívar was the ‘Liberator of America’, he was a Venezuelan politician and military leader, he led the independence wars against the Spanish Empire during the 1810s and became the founding father of Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. His ideal was uniting all the Latin American countries.



**Figure 2.** The Research Design for Discourse Analysis<sup>317</sup>

These dimensions include the number of selves, intertextual models, temporal perspective, and several events<sup>318</sup>. These are the main guidelines for the researcher; all the dimensions have certain sub-options depending on the research agenda, and the researchers should choose the appropriate sub-options depending on their research subject. The first dimension concerns the Self; does the research entail a single Self or multiple Selves? How many foreign policy subjects will be analyzed? For instance, if one examines the European Union's and Turkey's relationship, there will be multiple comparisons of European Selves against Turkish Others. This study focuses on constructing the *single* American Self concerning numerous Venezuelan Others. The second dimension is about the intertextual model. As discussed in the previous part, the focus is mainly on the official discourses and the broader political debate (including the oppositional discourses in Congress) of U.S. foreign policy toward Venezuela. The third dimension is the temporal perspective. What is the time frame of the study? It could include one moment like a civil conflict or war. Alternatively, just like in this study, it could be *comparative moments* of U.S. foreign policy formation during the Presidencies of Chávez and Maduro under different U.S.

<sup>317</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 72.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 66–73.

administrations. Assessing comparative moments is crucial because they facilitate determining the discursive changes across the chosen moments. How should the researcher select the moments? For Hansen, these moments should be selected by their ability to create essential changes in the political structure or institutions<sup>319</sup>. These comparative moments should also be tied around certain foreign policy developments and include a small number of separate incidents within the determined study time frame. The time frame needs to be broader for the sake of this study's research agenda. Hence, only official discourses are included in the research. It is not possible or feasible to critically read all the social, cultural, and political texts for a nearly 20-year period. Therefore, the research's focus is limited to *multiple events (related by issue)*, which brings the subject to the fourth dimension of the research design. The research can focus on a single event or multiple events (divided into two parts related by time or issue). Events comprise political issues. A key event can be determined as a single day, like 9/11, or a couple of months, depending on the political, economic, and social developments. What type of foreign policy issues will be evaluated in the research? This thesis adopts the multiple events (related by issue) approach because it focuses on the discursive changes within the U.S. foreign policy responses towards Venezuela while focusing on multiple events related by issue (namely confronting the Chávez and Maduro administrations) along a chosen temporal period.

Based on the extensive reading of the official U.S. foreign policy texts during the Presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack H. Obama, and Donald J. Trump, the author determined three vital key events within the period mentioned earlier. All these key events are formed around periods of increased discursive activities relating to the relations between the U.S. and Venezuela. This dissertation focuses on the U.S. and Venezuela relations to expose how the U.S.' foreign policy actions towards Venezuela (such as the declaration of Venezuela as an unusual and extraordinary threat to the U.S. national security or outlawing an elected president of a sovereign country from the presidency) are deeply interconnected with the construction of American identity with discourses of danger. These foreign policy outcomes were not merely a result of the personality traits of President Trump, or domestic

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 70.

disruption of Venezuela. These causal explanations disregard the deep connection between the construction of the American identity in relation to various Venezuelan Others and these outcomes. In order to provide an alternative interpretation of U.S. and Venezuela relations, this study adopts Hansen's methodology. Suitably with this methodology, a comprehensive discursive reading was made by the author. The result of that reading exposed three key events from 2001 to 2019. Each of these key events coincided with the terms of three different presidents of the U.S. These key events were chosen because these key events represent critical turning points in US-Venezuela relations, where both hegemonic and basic discourses confronted with the opposition discourses. The key events are important because they show how the official foreign policy discourses responded to the key events, how basic discourses were employed during them, and how the policy-identity link was reimagined during the key events of 2008, 2015, and 2019. The following three Chapters will focus on the key events of this thesis.



## CHAPTER 4

### EMBEDDING THE COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT WITHIN THE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY DISCOURSE

“America is very naive about the threat Chávez poses. Today Chávez is at least *as dangerous as bin Laden*; he is preparing his attack; he is even implementing the attack, but too many of America’s leaders are still ignoring him. This could be a tragedy bigger than 9/11”<sup>320</sup>.

“We have a great vision before us: a fully democratic hemisphere, bound together by good will and free trade”<sup>321</sup>.

Trade and free market economy play a massive role in the U.S. foreign policy and identity discourses towards the Western Hemisphere, especially after the Cold War. Presidents George Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush had the same objective: creating a hemisphere united by a free trade zone. However, trade agreements and lifting trade barriers became the George W. Bush administration's top priority, according to the War on Terror discourse. In 2001, the U.S. had only three free trade agreements with three countries. President Bush raised this number to fourteen trade agreements until 2009. The constitution of the trade as a cure for terrorism after 9/11, the Western Hemisphere, and the Free Trade Agreements discourses enabled the value and free trade promotion during these eight years. When the congressional approval of the Colombia FTA process came to a deadlock in 2008, the Bush administration had to adapt its foreign policy discourses and respond to the oppositional discourses of the Democrats. This adaptation process and the new

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<sup>320</sup> Otto Reich, former U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela and Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. Cited in; Douglas E. Schoen and Michael Rowan, *The Threat Closer to Home: Hugo Chávez and the War against America* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 2 [Emphasis Added].

<sup>321</sup> George W. Bush, “President’s Speech at the Summit of the Americas,” The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/04/20010423-1.html>.

discourses of U.S. foreign policy were inherently related to the constitution of President Uribe of Colombia as a friendly Other and the constitution of the Chávez administration as a dangerous, radical Other against the U.S. interests and national security. This chapter focuses on this key event. However, the effect of 9/11 on American identity and foreign policy, as well as the U.S. confrontation with the Chávez regime in the Western Hemisphere, must be elaborated first to give a thorough interpretation of this key event.

#### **4.1. War on Terror Discourse and the Reconstitution of American Identity**

The September 11, 2001, events caused a fundamental and undeniable change in international politics, but this change did not come from this single event alone. On the day of 9/11, “everything is changed” and “night fell on a different world”<sup>322</sup> because the meanings of 9/11 discursively represented as an “act of war,” as “deadly terrorist acts,” as “the most rapid and dramatic change in the history of U.S. foreign policy”<sup>323</sup> and as the cause of paradigm shifts in international politics<sup>324</sup>. A “discursive void” arose from the inability of existing security discourses to manage the events of September 11 for the U.S. public right after the early days of the attacks<sup>325</sup>.

As discussed under the theoretical framework, discourses are never fixed and constantly compete for dominance. The void and the weakening of former discourses allowed other competing discourses to become the new dominant discourse. Hence, the Bush administration got an opportunity to determine the contemporary hegemonic discourses of international security. The Administration needed to construct new concepts of truth and power. Benefiting from globalization and the

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<sup>322</sup> George W. Bush, “President Declares ‘Freedom at War with Fear,’” The White House, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>323</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “Beyond Bin Laden: Reshaping U.S. Foreign Policy,” *International Security* 26, no. 3 (January 2002): 56, <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228801753399718>.

<sup>324</sup> Michael Cox, “Paradigm Shifts and 9/11: International Relations After the Twin Towers,” *Security Dialogue* 33, no. 2 (June 29, 2002): 247–55, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010602033002011>.

<sup>325</sup> Jack Holland, “From September 11th, 2001 to 9-11: From Void to Crisis,” *International Political Sociology* 3, no. 3 (September 2009): 275–76, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2009.00076.x>.

events of 9/11, the Bush administration constructed new regimes of truth, especially by reimagining 9/11 as a crisis<sup>326</sup>. According to this reimagination, 9/11 changed the world. It constituted an unprecedented threat endangering the whole world, not just the U.S. By defining an event as a crisis; policymakers can determine the solutions and strategies, especially using language and discourses. Therefore, the policymakers as actors become critical for managing this crisis, and more importantly, it allows policymakers to reconstruct the narrative and gives them the power to act<sup>327</sup>.

The discourses on the War on Terror filled the discursive void right after President Bush made the speech on September 20, 2001, and defined the enemy, the danger they posed to the *whole world*, and how the U.S. would respond to the attacks of these enemies. The response had two phases: declaring war against this new enemy and exporting freedom, liberty, and free enterprise to every corner of the world<sup>328</sup>. As the narratives of these possible solutions resonated with the general U.S. public (mainly through media), the War on Terror discourse became hegemonic by obtaining the power of meaning production<sup>329</sup>. The War on Terror discourse has three distinctive features. The first feature is constructing the single, radical Other as the new, unprecedented enemy. The second feature is related to the reconstruction of the single Self bounded by God's values: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. The third feature is the exportation of these values to 'oppressed societies' where terrorists were harbored by these societies' oppressive, evil, and tyrannical regimes. The following sections will elaborate on these three features.

#### **4.1.1. The Constitution of the New Enemies of 9/11**

The War on Terror discourse only includes one radical Other as the "terrorists" and strongly resonates with "us vs. them" rhetoric. The Bush administration made "no

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<sup>326</sup> Mike Milford, "National Identity, Crisis, and the Inaugural Genre: George W. Bush and 9/11," *Southern Communication Journal* 81, no. 1 (January 13, 2016): 18–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794X.2015.1064989>.

<sup>327</sup> Colin Hay, "Narrating Crisis: The Discursive Construction of the 'Winter of Discontent'," *Sociology* 30, no. 2 (May 2, 1996): 260–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038596030002004>.

<sup>328</sup> George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/coalition/cr/rm/2001/5025.htm>.

<sup>329</sup> Milford, "National Identity, Crisis, and the Inaugural Genre: George W. Bush and 9/11," 25–27.

distinction between terrorists and those who knowingly harbor or provide aid to them”<sup>330</sup>. This radical Other is identical to Campbell’s identity/difference conceptualization of one dangerous Other<sup>331</sup>. Within this discourse, there are no gray areas, no discursive space to construct different, non-radical Others. Like Ronald Reagan’s famous statement about Latin America, “If you are not for the contras, you are for communism”, President Bush said, “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists”<sup>332</sup>.

This enemy, international terrorism, was nothing like the conventional threats and enemies (like other states, for instance). As President Bush stated, “We are facing a different enemy than we have ever faced”<sup>333</sup>. Representing a new enemy creates a clean break from the temporal and spatial dimensions of the identities of past enemies. This new type of enemy was nothing like the “enemies in the past” because, in the past, they “needed great armies to endanger America”. This new enemy, however, had “shadowy networks of individuals” that “can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank”<sup>334</sup>. Spatially, they were also different since this enemy was not a single state within a clear/defined border. They were present in various countries like Tanzania, Kenya, Iraq, and Afghanistan<sup>335</sup>.

In democracies like the U.S., the administration has to get the consent of their citizens for massive foreign policy changes like declaring war against another state. Constructing 9/11 as a crisis involving an extraordinary and conceptually slippery enemy paved the way for *carte blanche* given by the U.S. citizens to the Bush Administration. Because to manage a complex and shocking crisis like 9/11,

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<sup>330</sup> George W. Bush, “Statement by the President in Address to the Nation,” The White House, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>.

<sup>331</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 73–90.

<sup>332</sup> Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People.”

<sup>333</sup> Bush, “Statement by the President in Address to the Nation.”

<sup>334</sup> George W. Bush, “The National Security Strategy,” The White House, 2002, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/>.

<sup>335</sup> Bush, “President Declares ‘Freedom at War with Fear.’”

“Americans would have allowed President Bush to lead them in any of several directions”<sup>336</sup>. The Bush Administration’s solution to the 9/11 crisis had two phases: a military response like invading Iraq and a value-based response to support oppressed societies and to end oppressive regimes so the terrorists cannot take shelter there. Surprisingly, both strategies were expressed repeatedly by the many prominent actors of the Bush Administration before 9/11. Overthrowing Saddam Hussein from power was an essential objective of the Bush Administration even before 9/11. In January 2001, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld stated, “It is not helpful to have Saddam Hussein’s regime in power”<sup>337</sup>. In February 2001, when the journalists asked President Bush if he had any goal to oust Saddam Hussein, he replied, “We are going to watch very carefully as to whether or not he develops weapons of mass destruction, and if we catch him doing so, we will take the appropriate action”<sup>338</sup>. During the same speech, he also stated that the Bush administration had no “beef” with the Iraqi people but with Saddam Hussein himself. In July 2001, he declared that Saddam Hussein was “still a menace and a problem”<sup>339</sup>.

The second strategy, namely exporting freedom, democracy, and free enterprise worldwide, was also the main agenda of the Bush administration before 9/11, especially the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). On many occasions, President Bush<sup>340</sup>, Vice President Dick Cheney<sup>341</sup>, Secretary of State Colin Powell<sup>342</sup>,

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<sup>336</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “Invasion of the Isolationists,” *The New York Times*, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/31/opinion/invasion-of-the-isolationists.html>.

<sup>337</sup> Ari Fleischer, “Press Briefing,” *The American Presidency Project*, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-ari-fleischer-142>.

<sup>338</sup> George W. Bush, “The President’s News Conference With Prime Minister Tony Blair,” *The American Presidency Project*, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-prime-minister-tony-blair-the-united-kingdom-camp-0>.

<sup>339</sup> George W. Bush, “President’s Remarks,” *The American Presidency Project*, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-prior-meeting-with-virginia-gubernatorial-candidate-mark-earley-and-exchange-with>.

<sup>340</sup> George W. Bush, “President’s Remarks to Students and Faculty at National Defense University,” U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/t/ac/rls/rm/2001/2873.htm>.

<sup>341</sup> Dick Cheney, “Remarks by the Vice President at the Hispanic Leadership Forum,” *The White House*, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/vicepresident/news-speeches/speeches/vp20010609.html>.

<sup>342</sup> Colin L. Powell, “Secretary Greets State Department Employees,” U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/58.htm>.

and Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Peter Romero<sup>343</sup> made statements on these values and the importance of exporting these values all around the world. For instance, Secretary of State Powell elaborates them as “the value system that we are taking to the rest of the world that is founded on the individual rights of men and women, founded on human dignity, founded on the power of democracy, founded on the power of the free enterprise system”<sup>344</sup>.

Constructing 9/11 as a crisis that changed the whole world and having hegemony over the discourses on the War on Terror gave the Bush Administration the power to determine and implement specific foreign policy actions (like invading another state), which was not very feasible and found acceptable by the U.S. public before 9/11. For instance, after 9/11, the U.S. public became eager to invade Iraq, as the polls show<sup>345</sup>. Once the discourses of new threats and enemies became hegemonic through the Bush Administration’s endless efforts and articulations, the hegemonic discourse obtained the power to change the policies. The new enemies needed new measurements to deal with, and this process brought many practical policy changes both in domestic and international politics. For example, only six weeks after 9/11, U.S. Congress passed the USA/Patriot Act, which caused heated arguments on whether this act violated U.S. citizens’ First and Fourth Amendment rights<sup>346</sup>. In the international realm, the fight against “international” terrorism with freedom, liberty, and democracy became the main agenda for the administration. Ironically, when television host Bill Maher said that the airplane hijackers were not cowards (opposing President Bush’s statements), the White House spokesperson Ari Fleischer answered a journalist’s question about it and openly reminded “to all Americans that

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<sup>343</sup> Peter F. Romero, “The Western Hemisphere in a New Administration,” U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2001/520.htm>.

<sup>344</sup> Colin L. Powell, “Preserving U.S. Global Leadership,” U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/4028.htm> [Emphasis Added].

<sup>345</sup> Jon Western, “The War over Iraq: Selling War to the American Public,” in *American Foreign Policy and The Politics of Fear*, ed. A. Trevor Thrall and Jane K. Cramer (New York: Routledge, 2009), 156.

<sup>346</sup> Sharon H. Rackow, “How the USA Patriot Act Will Permit Governmental Infringement upon the Privacy of Americans in the Name of ‘Intelligence’ Investigations,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 150, no. 5 (May 2002): 1651–96, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3312949>; Jennifer C. Evans, “Hijacking Civil Liberties: The USA Patriot Act of 2001,” *Chicago Law Journal* 33, no. 4 (2002): 933–90; Susan N. Herman, “The USA/Patriot Act and the Submajoritarian Fourth Amendment,” *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 41 (2006): 67–132.

they need to watch what they say, watch what they do”<sup>347</sup>. This answer sets an excellent example of how opposing discourses are received by the administration, even if the response contrasts with the very fiercely defended values of the Bush Administration, like the freedom of speech.

#### **4.1.2. The Constitution of the Single Self bounded by God’s Values**

The weakening of former discourses on international security and re-constitutions of the new threats paved the way for the discursive reconstruction of the American Self through the foreign policy and othering practices led by the Bush Administration. As the new enemy constituted, simultaneously, the American Self reconstituted within the War on Terror discourse. Interestingly enough, just like the constitution of a single enemy, the Self is also constituted as a single Self. International space was divided into two by the War on Terror discourse: as the terrorists vs. the ones standing together against terrorism, as the axis of evil vs. peace-loving societies, and as evil, tyrannical regimes vs. freedom-loving nations<sup>348</sup>. Even though the American Self and other democratic states (mainly the West) are different subjects, this discourse constituted them as a single subject bounded by “the Almighty God’s values”, including democracy, liberty, and a free enterprise system<sup>349</sup>. According to the Bush administration’s War on Terror discourse, these values are “not American values, not European values” but “God’s values”<sup>350</sup>, and when it comes to God’s values, “there is no clash of civilizations”<sup>351</sup> because these values are for every single

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<sup>347</sup> Ari Fleischer, “Daily Press Briefing,” The White House, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010926-5.html>.

<sup>348</sup> Bush, “Statement by the President in Address to the Nation”; George W. Bush, “State of the Union Address,” U.S. Department of State, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/wi/14573.htm>; Colin L. Powell, “Testimony on FY 2003 Budget,” U.S. Department of State, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2002/7806.htm>; Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice on Terrorism and Foreign Policy,” The American Presidency Project, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-national-security-advisor-condoleezza-rice-terrorism-and-foreign-policy>.

<sup>349</sup> George W. Bush, “President Discusses CAFTA-DR in North Carolina,” U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/e/eeb/rls/rm/2005/49714.htm>.

<sup>350</sup> Powell, “Testimony on FY 2003 Budget.”

<sup>351</sup> George W. Bush, “Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy,” The American Presidency Project, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/commencement-address-the-united-states-military-academy-west-point-new-york-1>.

human being independent of their nation, religion, race, etc. President Bush said, “We understand that the desire for freedom is universal, written by the Almighty into the hearts of every man, woman, and child on this Earth”<sup>352</sup>. In other words, the discourse on the War on Terror constituted two subjects; on one side, there are the bearers and claimers of God’s values; on the other, there is evil embracing “ideology of tyranny and terror, hatred and hopelessness”<sup>353</sup>. If given a chance, everyone would choose God’s values over tyranny<sup>354</sup> since “it is the natural desire of every human being”<sup>355</sup>. Naturally, this discourse implied that even God is on Self’s side. As President Bush said, when freedom and fear are at war, “God is not neutral” in this war. God’s side was also evident<sup>356</sup>.

The spatial and temporal dimensions of the Self and Other within the hegemonic War on Terror discourse are well articulated. Spatially, 9/11 represented an attack not only against the U.S. but an attack against *the civilized world*. “This is not, however, just America’s fight. (...) This is civilization’s fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance, and freedom”<sup>357</sup>. The Self (the civilized world) carries God’s values, democracy, liberty, and market capitalism. These are mainly Western values. Therefore, spatially, the Self is constructed as the West, as “the civilized world”<sup>358</sup>. The Other is articulated as the “Islamic extremists” primarily in the Middle East and certain African countries like Kenya and Tanzania<sup>359</sup>. It should be noted that, unlike the Self, the enemy cannot be contained within the borders of states.

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<sup>352</sup> George W. Bush, “President Bush Discusses Global War on Terror,” The White House, 2007, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/11/text/20071101-4.html>.

<sup>353</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Opening Remarks by Secretary of State-Designate ,” U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/40991.htm>.

<sup>354</sup> Bush, “President Discusses CAFTA-DR in North Carolina.”

<sup>355</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks at the Community of Democracies Opening Plenary,” U.S. Department Of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/45386.htm>.

<sup>356</sup> Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People.”

<sup>357</sup> Bush, “President Declares ‘Freedom at War with Fear.’”

<sup>358</sup> Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People.”

<sup>359</sup> George W. Bush, “Advancing Freedom and Democracy Around the World,” The American Presidency Project, 2007, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/fact-sheet-advancing-freedom-and-democracy-around-the-world-0>; Bush, “President Declares ‘Freedom at War with Fear.’”



Temporally, the single Self represents a clear break from the past because 9/11 represented the day that the world changed, and establishing a new Self requires a clean break from the past<sup>360</sup>. The future has to prevail over the past with this new, improved Self not to make the same mistake the past Self did and to build a “world not just safer but better”<sup>361</sup>. Therefore, the Self is very capable of change and improvement. Conversely, the Other was represented as the continuum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’s “murderous ideologies” like Nazism, totalitarianism, and fascism<sup>362</sup>. As the continuum of these murderous ideologies, the Other was represented as incapable of changing, incapable of becoming something better. Therefore, the terrorists must be annihilated. This discursive constitution of the Other leaves no other foreign policy action but war and invasion. Different foreign policy options, such as supporting internal opposition in Iraq (which is a very close object to exporting Western values) against the Saddam regime, were not an option.

Another critical point for the constitution of the Other is the clear distinction between the evil regimes and their people. As Secretary of State Powell states, it is the “regimes that are inherently evil. Their people are not evil, but the governments that lead them are evil”<sup>363</sup>. The people were represented not as threats but as communities under oppression; therefore, they needed to be saved by a superior entity, like the Self, the carrier of God’s values led by the U.S. Temporally, the people are capable of change, only they do not have the power to do it by themselves. Hence, they need the help of the Self. This representation, in return, paves the way for U.S. foreign policy actions such as democracy promotion abroad, foreign aid, and development assistance. Hence, other foreign policy choices, such as leaving the ‘oppressed’ people to decide for themselves, are not an option because, within this discourse, the non-interference would lead to more national security risks, like 9/11. Here, the ethical dimension of the Self merges with the temporal and spatial dimensions. It is

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<sup>360</sup> Dirk Nabers, “Identity Construction in US Foreign Policy during the Bush Years,” in *The Bush Leadership, the Power of Ideas, and the War on Terror*, ed. David B. MacDonald and Dirk Nabers (Routledge, 2016), 55–74, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315614236-4>.

<sup>361</sup> Bush, “The National Security Strategy.”

<sup>362</sup> Bush, “President Declares ‘Freedom at War with Fear.’”

<sup>363</sup> Powell, “Testimony on FY 2003 Budget .”

represented that the U.S. and its allies have *a moral responsibility* to fight against the enemy and save the oppressed people from these terrorists. As President Bush declared, “Every civilized nation has a part in this struggle, because every civilized nation has a stake in its outcome”<sup>364</sup>. Since the enemy wanted to destroy the civilized world’s values, their way of life was also at stake. This articulation of ethical responsibility to spread God’s values worldwide created the backbone of the Bush Administration’s foreign policy agenda even before 9/11. Interestingly enough, 9/11 and the hegemony over the discourses on the War on Terror gave the administration enough power to act on this foreign policy agenda. This is crucial because the exportation of values was also determined the Bush Administration’s primary approach to Venezuela under the Chávez Administration and general U.S. foreign policy principles towards the Western Hemisphere. The following section will elaborate on this.

#### **4.1.3. The Bush Era Foreign Policy Discourse: Making The World Better**

On September 10, 2001, just a day before 9/11, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman delivered “An American Diplomacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” and laid out the Bush Administration’s foreign policy agenda<sup>365</sup>. The speech is about the new challenges and opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, especially globalization. As “the most powerful nation on Earth” and “the world’s leader”, how would the U.S. foreign policy meet these challenges and opportunities<sup>366</sup>? Quoting from President Bush, he said that the U.S. would pursue a “distinctly American internationalism” promising to promote political liberty, free markets, and free trade<sup>367</sup>. The Bush Administration had a solid stance against isolation and protectionism. Their claim lies in the transnational problems (like human trafficking, international migration, drug trafficking, etc.) that globalization brought. These new types of threats “require

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<sup>364</sup> George W. Bush, “President Thanks World Coalition for Anti-Terrorism Efforts,” U.S. Department of State, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/8716.htm>.

<sup>365</sup> Marc Grossman, “An American Diplomacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/us/rm/6581.htm>.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

common multilateral responses (...) because no one state can address them alone”<sup>368</sup>. On many occasions, President Bush openly stated that his administration was against isolationism. He once said, “It is dangerous for this country to become isolationist and protectionist”<sup>369</sup>. Throughout his presidency, he strongly argued for American engagement worldwide.

After 9/11, exporting values to the “oppressed societies” became the priority because, according to the Bush administration, these societies would have continued to be a safe haven for the terrorists. For the administration, 9/11 led to one conclusion; “The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom worldwide”<sup>370</sup>. Therefore, the only “logical” foreign policy option within the War on Terror discourse constructed “to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world”<sup>371</sup>. Saying that “by bringing freedom to these societies” the administration legitimized this approach, “we replace hatred with hope, and this will help us to marginalize the extremists and eliminate the conditions that feed radicalism and make the American people more secure”<sup>372</sup>.

As the hegemonic discourse, the War on Terror was represented as the only choice for a safer and better world. Alternative foreign policy options, any alternative, were portrayed as the bearer of absolute chaos and constituted as unthinkable actions. For instance, when John Kerry criticized the invasion of Iraq as a “profound diversion”<sup>373</sup>, President Bush replied, “Iraq is no diversion, it is the place where civilization is taking a decisive stand against chaos”<sup>374</sup>.

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<sup>368</sup> Roger F. Noriega, “The Complex Challenges for the Americas in the 21st Century,” U.S. Department of State, 2003, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/21971.htm>.

<sup>369</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-united-states-hispanic-chamber-commerce-2>.

<sup>370</sup> George W. Bush, “President Bush’s Second Inaugural Address,” The White House, 2005, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/inaugural/>.

<sup>371</sup> Bush, “The National Security Strategy.”

<sup>372</sup> Bush, “President Bush Discusses Global War on Terror.”

Highly increased government spending on foreign aid and development assistance and the firm rejection of isolationism and the promotion of international engagement can be interpreted as the precise results of the Bush administration's hegemonic control over the War on Terror discourse. For instance, during the Bush Era, the government funding for democracy promotion more than doubled<sup>375</sup>. Convincing the taxpayers to increase government funding, convincing the congresspeople to pass the budget, and convincing both to spend all these funds outside of the U.S. require control over the regimes of truth and power.

#### **4.2. Unpacking the Two Basic Discourses of the Bush Era towards Latin America**

The War on Terror discourse functioned differently in the Western Hemisphere than in the Middle East. During the Bush era, no "Islamic extremism" existed in the Western Hemisphere. Apart from the National Liberation Army (ELN) and The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), there were no Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations by the U.S. Department of State<sup>376</sup>. After 2007, particular concerns were expressed by the Bush administration about the close relations between Venezuela and Iran and how this close relation could increase Hezbollah activities in the region<sup>377</sup>. Still, even the Bush Administration officials admitted there were no apparent links between them<sup>378</sup>. After 2011, however, more concerns were raised about ties with Venezuela and Hezbollah, which will be mentioned in the next chapter.

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<sup>373</sup> John Kerry, "Iraq Was a Profound Diversion," CBS, 2004, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kerry-iraq-a-profound-diversion/>.

<sup>374</sup> George W. Bush, "Campaign Speech," C-SPAN.org, 2004, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?183815-1/bush-campaign-speech>.

<sup>375</sup> The White House, "President Bush's Freedom Agenda Helped Protect The American People," 2009, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/factsheets/freedomagenda.html>.

<sup>376</sup> There was also The Shining Path a Peruvian Maoist organization however it was not constituted as a threat like ELN or FARC by the Bush Administration. U.S. Department of State, "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," 2023, <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>.

<sup>377</sup> Mark P. Sullivan, "Venezuela: Political Conditions and U.S. Policy," U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2009, 52–53, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL32488.html>.

<sup>378</sup> Sean McCormack, "Daily Press Briefing," The White House, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2007/feb/79708.htm>.

Since ‘Islamic extremism’ was not yet constructed as a threat in the Western Hemisphere, the Bush administration’s policies towards the region mainly focused on exporting values, particularly democracy and market capitalism<sup>379</sup>. During President Bush’s first term, American engagement in the hemisphere was based on strengthening democracy, fostering economic development, and responding to transnational issues (such as drug trafficking) unitedly with the hemispheric community<sup>380</sup>. In addition, the administration declared 2007 as the “year of engagement” in the Western Hemisphere, with particular attention to the free trade agreements, especially in Latin American countries<sup>381</sup>. Combined, these two new developments affected the Bush administration’s foreign policy behavior toward the Chávez administration to a great extent.

Bush administration had two basic discourses towards Latin America: the Western Hemisphere and the Free Trade Agreements discourse. Until 2007, the Bush administration’s main foreign policy action towards President Chávez was ignoring him and his strong anti-U.S., anti-Bush statements<sup>382</sup>. Instead, U.S. foreign policy discourse mainly focused on the Western Hemisphere, exporting values to the hemisphere, and accomplishing the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

#### **4.2.1. The Western Hemisphere Discourse**

Geographically, the Western Hemisphere consists of the Americas and the surrounding waters. The Western Hemisphere is based on the notion that the region's populations share a distinct bond, distinguishing them from the rest of the world<sup>383</sup>. The Hemispheric Self and European Other had a specific spatial dimension, differentiating the Self from the Others. Thomas Jefferson had often written about

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<sup>379</sup> Luis J. Laurodo, “Building Hemispheric Democracy,” U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2001/50.htm>.

<sup>380</sup> Romero, “The Western Hemisphere in a New Administration.”

<sup>381</sup> John D. Negroponte, “Remarks at 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Washington Conference on the Americas,” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/2007/84188.htm>.

<sup>382</sup> Nicholas R. Burns, “America’s Global Leadership Challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/us/rm/2007/85332.htm>.

<sup>383</sup> Arthur P. Whitaker, “The Origin of the Western Hemisphere Idea,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 98, no. 5 (1954): 323.

the peculiarities of the Western Hemisphere and emphasized that the hemisphere was quite different from other continents, especially Europe<sup>384</sup>. He strongly promoted a clear separation from Europe, especially politically, by highlighting the geographical distance. In 1813, he wrote to Alexander von Humboldt that “America *has* a hemisphere to itself: it must have its separate system of interests” since vast oceans separate them from other continents<sup>385</sup>. The discursive use of geographical distance was followed by the divergence in values while constructing the Hemispheric Self separated from the European Other. Two months before the declaration of the Monroe Doctrine, Jefferson wrote President James Monroe a letter. He drew out two fundamental principles they should follow: never to interfere in European affairs and let European powers intervene in the hemisphere<sup>386</sup>. He underlined the importance of the values that Europe would “become the domicile of despotism” and that the Western Hemisphere should become the domicile of freedom<sup>387</sup>.

The temporal dimension of the Hemispheric Self and European Other was articulated as the New World and the Old World. The Western Hemisphere, thus the New World, would be a continent endowed with freedom, while the Old World was reimagined as the lands of tyranny, monarchy, and despotism<sup>388</sup>. The Self would break its ties with the Old World and constitute a new Self separate from the Others, their interference, and their values. The differentiation from the Other also necessitates a unification within the Self. The idea that nations within the Western Hemisphere should embrace the same values of freedom and liberty and support each other came from this discursive construction. In 1822, President Monroe described the main difference between the New World and the Old World; the former was

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<sup>384</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Letter From Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Latham Mitchill,” The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 1800, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-32-02-0011>.

<sup>385</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Letter From Thomas Jefferson to Alexander von Humboldt,” The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 1813, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-07-02-0011> [Emphasis Added].

<sup>386</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Letter From Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe,” The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 1823, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-3827>.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Brian Loveman, *No Higher Law: American Foreign Policy and the Western Hemisphere since 1776* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 39.

representative for the people, and the latter was oppressive<sup>389</sup>. Unsurprisingly, the first diplomatic recognition of several newly independent nations, including Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico, came from the U.S. in 1822<sup>390</sup>. Soon after, President Monroe declared that from then on, the nations in the Hemisphere would “not be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers”<sup>391</sup>. The President also warned them not “to extend their system to any portion of this [Western] hemisphere” in his speech to the Congress<sup>392</sup>. After a boundary dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain (originally started in 1841), when Venezuela officially resorted to the U.S. quoting the Monroe Doctrine in 1876, the Doctrine became close to being enforced for the first time<sup>393</sup>. For nearly 20 years after Venezuela’s appeal, the U.S. had not been directly involved with the issue. However, after British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury made a statement about the invalidity of the Monroe Doctrine according to international law in 1895, U.S. President Grover Cleveland and the U.S. Congress became officially involved. U.S. Congress formed an arbitration commission and declared that the commission's decision would be binding<sup>394</sup>. After the involvement of the Congress in 1899, Great Britain agreed to abide by the commission’s decision on the dispute. Even though this incident was solved without aggression, three years later, British, Italian, and German ships blocked Venezuelan ports to collect their debts. It justified U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt's expansion of the Monroe Doctrine in 1904<sup>395</sup>. President Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine stated:

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<sup>389</sup> James Monroe, “Special Message to the House of Representatives,” The American Presidency Project, 1822, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-house-representatives-containing-the-views-the-president-the-united>.

<sup>390</sup> U.S. Office of the Historian, “A Guide to the United States’ History of Recognition: Chile,” 2023, <https://history.state.gov/countries/chile>.

<sup>391</sup> James Monroe, “Monroe Doctrine,” The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 1823, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/monroe-doctrine>.

<sup>392</sup> James Monroe, “President James Monroe’s Seventh Annual Message to Congress,” The Library of U.S. Congress, 1823, <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llac&fileName=041/llac041.db&recNum=3>.

<sup>393</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Venezuela Boundary Dispute, 1895-1899,” 2023, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/gp/17463.htm>.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> Gretchen Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (London: Duke University Press, 2005), 30, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv125jhr>.

Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere, the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power<sup>396</sup>.

President Roosevelt's expansion of the Monroe Doctrine was self-appointed the U.S. as the international police of the hemisphere. In his speech to Congress, President Roosevelt defined the values of the U.S. foreign policy<sup>397</sup>. As a civilized nation, the U.S. should live in peace and justice by itself and "perform its duty toward others" in the Western Hemisphere to live with the same standards<sup>398</sup>. Since there is no overarching judicial body in the international arena, therefore, "the civilized powers" should embrace "the general world duty" and stand up for the "brutality and aggression" of "the powers of evil"<sup>399</sup>.

By appointing itself as international police for all the nations within the Hemisphere, the Self-constituted the ethical dimension of its identity as being responsible for having "stable, orderly, and prosperous" neighbors<sup>400</sup>. There was also an apparent hierarchy between the Self (knowing what is suitable for Others and enforcing it) and the Other (needing the help of a superior power to live in freedom). It should be no surprise then, one hundred years later, when Robert P. Jackson, the Director of the Office for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy, stated that the goal of the Bush Administration was to use every available tool to ensure "a stable, prosperous, and peaceful Venezuela and a stable, prosperous and peaceful Western Hemisphere"<sup>401</sup>.

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<sup>396</sup> U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, "Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine," 1904, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/roosevelt-corollary>.

<sup>397</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, "President's Annual Message to Congress," The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 1904, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1904/message-of-the-president>.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, "Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine."

<sup>401</sup> Robert P. Jackson, "Human Rights and Democracy in Venezuela," U.S. Department of State, 2004, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/rm/31740.htm>.



Before 9/11, President Bush and many other officials made various statements about the vital importance of the Western Hemisphere for the administration. Secretary of State Powell said the Western Hemisphere was “one of the first and highest priorities of President Bush's administration”<sup>402</sup>. A month later, he told the U.S. had never seen another president so interested and concerned in the hemispheric affairs, and the Western “hemisphere is at the center of the President’s worldview”<sup>403</sup>. Before 9/11, engaging with the Western Hemisphere was the administration's top priority. This engagement was rigorously bounded by the exportation and enhancement of the U.S. values throughout the hemisphere. These values included “the rule of law; limits on the power of the state; respect for women; private property; free speech; equal justice; and religious tolerance”<sup>404</sup>. On numerous occasions, President Bush and his team underlined the importance of taking “this value system out across the world”<sup>405</sup> to make the world safe and better<sup>406</sup>. Because for the Bush Administration, “this value system triumphed” the Cold War, “it was the power of that system, democracy, and free enterprise, that defeated the forces of fascism and communism”<sup>407</sup>. After 9/11, this engagement agenda (based on ‘universal’ values) became the priority. Bush administration’s foreign policy discourse towards Latin America consisted of two main intertwined components: the Western Hemisphere and spreading U.S. values throughout the hemisphere. U.S. Ambassador to the OAS John Maisto articulated that U.S. foreign policy towards the hemisphere was “grounded in basic American ideals and values”<sup>408</sup>. As President Bush stated in his speech about the future of the Americas, his administration was “committed to building a prosperous,

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<sup>402</sup> Colin L. Powell, “The Work of a Hemisphere,” U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/2343.htm>.

<sup>403</sup> Colin L. Powell, “Remarks at Council of the Americas,” U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/2734.htm>.

<sup>404</sup> Bush, “State of the Union Address,” 2002.

<sup>405</sup> Powell, “Preserving U.S. Global Leadership.”

<sup>406</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Dr. Condoleezza Rice Discusses President’s National Security Strategy,” The White House, 2002, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021001-6.html>.

<sup>407</sup> Powell, “Preserving U.S. Global Leadership.”

<sup>408</sup> John Maisto, “An OAS Update on Democracy and Development in the Western Hemisphere,” U.S. Department of State, 2003, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/23449.htm>.

free, and democratic hemisphere”<sup>409</sup>. Building a fully democratic hemisphere “from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego”<sup>410</sup> had been a historical objective for many U.S. presidents, including John F. Kennedy<sup>411</sup>, Lyndon B. Johnson<sup>412</sup>, Ronald Reagan<sup>413</sup>, George Bush<sup>414</sup>, and George W. Bush.

The spatial dimension of the hemispheric Self is quite straightforward. It includes the North and South American continents. The hemispheric Self heavily relies on separating the Western Hemisphere from the rest of the world. Within this geopolitical discourse, Americas as a continent becomes the border between the Self and the Other. The origins of the separation between the Western Hemisphere and the rest go back to the distinction between the old and new worlds. Especially since the Cold War and the Cuban Revolution, the hemispheric Self has been reimagined as bounded by God-given values. President Reagan rearticulated the hemispheric self “from the tip of Tierra del Fuego to the north slopes of Alaska”, as he called the people of the hemisphere “all Americans, *a new breed of people*”<sup>415</sup> worshiping the same god and cherishing the same freedom<sup>416</sup>. Reimagining all Americans as a

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<sup>409</sup> George W. Bush, “The Future of the Americas,” U.S. Department of State, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/7344.htm>.

<sup>410</sup> Tierra del Fuego is the name of a group of islands located in the southernmost corner of Latin America.

<sup>411</sup> John F. Kennedy, “Address by the President at a Luncheon Given in His Honor by President Lopez Matcos,” The American Presidency Project, 1962, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-president-luncheon-given-his-honor-president-lopez-matcos>.

<sup>412</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, “Remarks to the Ambassadors of Nations Participating in the Alliance for Progress,” The American Presidency Project, 1964, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-ambassadors-nations-participating-the-alliance-for-progress>.

<sup>413</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at a Meeting of the Council of the Americas,” The American Presidency Project, 1984, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-meeting-the-council-the-americas>.

<sup>414</sup> George Bush, “Proclamation 6271—Pan American Day and Pan American Week,” The American Presidency Project, 1991, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-6271-pan-american-day-and-pan-american-week-1991>.

<sup>415</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce,” The American Presidency Project, 1983, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-annual-convention-the-united-states-hispanic-chamber-commerce-tampa-florida> [Emphasis Added].

<sup>416</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the American Legion,” The American Presidency Project, 1983, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-annual-convention-the-american-legion-seattle-washington>.

distinct, new type of people creates a hierarchical relation between the hemispheric Self and the rest (Other).

It should be noted that this distinctiveness came from geographical location, historical relations, and shared values. According to the Western Hemisphere discourse, the hemispheric Self is inseparable from these values. Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas Shannon elaborated the Bush administration's foreign policy towards the hemisphere as a Pan-American policy<sup>417</sup>. For the administration, the U.S., Latin America, and the Caribbean are not separate entities. They form *a single entity*. This Pan-American policy has two essential parts: the first one is embracing American values, and the second one is creating economic growth through free markets and trade<sup>418</sup>. For this single entity (the hemispheric Self), embracing alternative values, such as implementing a statist economy, was unthinkable.

The temporal dimension of the hemispheric Self is capable of change and progress. This Self is an ideal for all the states in the hemisphere to reach. When a Western Hemisphere nation embraces this ideal by embracing the values of freedom, liberty, and market economy, that nation unites with 'the family'. It becomes a part of the hemispheric Self. Being a family in the Western Hemisphere is a frequently used articulation. As President Bush stated, "Our two continents are becoming more than neighbors united by the accident of geography. We are becoming a community linked by common values and shared interests in the close bonds of family and friendship"<sup>419</sup>. Within this discourse, even the geographical ties could be accidental. However, not the status of the shared values. The thirty-four states in the Western Hemisphere therefore "become a family"<sup>420</sup>.

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<sup>417</sup> Thomas A. Shannon, "Importance of Free Press in the Americas," U.S. Department of State, 2006, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2006/q4/73536.htm>.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> George W. Bush, "President Discusses Western Hemisphere Policy," The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 2007, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/03/20070305-6.html>.

<sup>420</sup> J. Curtis Struble, "Building Strong, Resilient Democracies and Growing, Modern Economies," U.S. Department of State, 2003, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/20037.htm>.

Cuba, as the thirty-fifth state in the hemisphere, is excluded from the family because its regime was not a democratic one. When a state chooses not to embrace previously mentioned values, they will no longer be a part of this family. If they embrace those values again, they could become a part of the family of democracies again. For instance, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega stated in 2005, “Haiti will return to our family of democracies when it holds elections later this year, leaving only Cuba as the odd country out”<sup>421</sup>. Discourses on traditional families construct specific roles for certain family members. The father's role is very different from the role of the children, for example. Within the hemisphere, there are various selves naturally; in addition to their hemispheric Self (bounded by the values), different states have different selves. U.S. foreign policy discourses in the hemisphere constituted the U.S. as the hemispheric family's father figure. Apart from Canada, other states in the hemisphere constituted the children by the same discourses. When the Bush administration's officials expressed their relations with the hemisphere, they often used discourses heavily similar to family discourses. These discourses can constitute children as “a subject that can simultaneously be a source of pride over progress thus far made, concern with shortcomings, fear of eventual failure, and desire to protect and guide”<sup>422</sup>.

There are many examples given by U.S. officials reimagining the U.S. as the father figure of the hemisphere, knowing better than the children, knowing what is right for them in the future, and even deciding for them. As in Henry Kissinger's famous statement on Chile, “The issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves”<sup>423</sup>. U.S. Ambassador to the OAS Roger F. Noriega's assertion on the 2002 coup attempt against President Chávez stated, “It would be irresponsible to leave the Venezuelan people to fend for themselves”<sup>424</sup>. President

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<sup>421</sup> Roger F. Noriega, “China's Influence in the Western Hemisphere,” U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2005/q2/44375.htm>.

<sup>422</sup> Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines,” 310.

<sup>423</sup> Amy Goodman, “Ask Kissinger About Pinochet,” Democracy Now, 2006, [https://www.democracynow.org/2006/12/14/ask\\_kissinger\\_about\\_pinochet](https://www.democracynow.org/2006/12/14/ask_kissinger_about_pinochet).

<sup>424</sup> Roger F. Noriega, “The Challenges for Democracy in Venezuela,” U.S. Department of State, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/10538.htm>.

Bush's announcement "To the people of Latin America: We care for you"<sup>425</sup> all resembled the discourses on traditional family. The U.S. is reimagined as the caregiver, and the people of the hemisphere were reimagined as those in need. The U.S. is constituted as being in charge of American values. As Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega stated, the U.S. "has an obligation to defend democratic values in the hemisphere"<sup>426</sup>. A month later, on March 5, 2007, President Bush used the word 'help' forty times in a single speech in which he talked about the aid the U.S. gave to the hemisphere under his administration<sup>427</sup>. He said the U.S. had a "desire to help those in our neighborhood who need help"<sup>428</sup>. This familial subject positioning inherently contains hierarchy. The hemispheric Self is superior to the rest of the world, but within the hemisphere, the U.S. Self is superior to the Other Latin American countries. The U.S. constructed itself in a position that gives and implements vital decisions, helping in need while simultaneously constituting Others as inferiors to the Self, needing help from a superior actor, especially to make their democracies work. This discursive subject positioning enabled foreign policy actions such as empowering and funding opposition parties through The National Endowment for Democracy (NED), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), or International Republican Institute (IRI) in other sovereign states, even though the same act is illegal and forbidden in the U.S.<sup>429</sup> For instance, the funds for NED increased 150% from 2001 to 2009<sup>430</sup>. NED is a highly contentious organization for Latin American countries, mainly accused of intervening in Venezuela's (as well as other leftist-populist regimes in Latin America such as Ecuador and Bolivia) domestic affairs by the

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<sup>425</sup> George W. Bush, "President Bush Discusses Western Hemisphere Policy," The White House, 2007, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/03/20070305-6.html>.

<sup>426</sup> Roger F. Noriega, "Assistant Secretary Noriega Meets With Spanish-Language Networks," U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/41967.htm>.

<sup>427</sup> Bush, "President Bush Discusses Western Hemisphere Policy," 2007.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

<sup>429</sup> The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) prohibits foreigners from providing financial contributions to the elections in the U.S. It is also illegal for the political parties to accept foreign funding.

<sup>430</sup> The White House, "A Legacy Booklet: Highlights of Accomplishments and Results of the Bush Administration" (Washington D.C., 2009), <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/legacybooklet.pdf>.

Venezuelan governments many times over the years since the coup attempt against President Chávez in 2002<sup>431</sup>.

The hemispheric Self's ethical dimension was highly related to international responsibility. This responsibility is constituted as the duty of the whole 'family', not just the U.S. responsibility. U.S. officials had repeatedly articulated that a democratic hemisphere was in the interests of the U.S. Simultaneously, isolationism and protectionism were framed as dangerous and in contrast with the U.S. national interests<sup>432</sup>.

It is in our national interests; it is in the interest of the United States of America to help the people in democracies in our neighborhood succeed. When our neighbors are prosperous and peaceful, it means better opportunities and more security for our own people. When there are jobs in our neighborhood, people are able to find work at home and not have to migrate to our country<sup>433</sup>.

Even though a wholly democratic Western Hemisphere bounded by American values was in the interest of the U.S., the responsibility of ensuring this was constructed as an international responsibility within the U.S. foreign policy discourses. "We have a great vision before us: a fully democratic hemisphere, bound together by goodwill and free trade. (...) it is the responsibility we share" with the countries of the Western Hemisphere<sup>434</sup>. When a 'problem' arose within the hemisphere, U.S. officials became very careful not to constitute the U.S. as the only one who had the solution. Instead, they constituted the OAS and the whole hemispheric community as responsible. This preference has three main reasons. The first one comes from the fact that the U.S. has intervened many times in the internal affairs of Latin American countries in the past. This history of (especially military) interventions created a distrust against the U.S. within the hemisphere.

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<sup>431</sup> Eva Golinger, *Bush Versus Chávez: Washington's War on Venezuela* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2007), 69–84.

<sup>432</sup> George W. Bush, "President's Remarks to the Economic Club of New York," The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-economic-club-new-york-and-question-and-answer-session-new-york-city>.

<sup>433</sup> Bush, "President Discusses Western Hemisphere Policy."

<sup>434</sup> George W. Bush, "President's Speech at the Summit of the Americas," The American Presidency Project, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/fact-sheet-presidents-speech-the-summit-the-americas>.

The second reason was the U.S. reaction to the 2002 coup attempt against President Chávez. The ability of the U.S. to promote democracy in the Western Hemisphere was significantly weakened when the Bush Administration chose to assign responsibility to President Chávez for his ousting rather than openly denouncing the coup. The Bush Administration got off on the wrong foot with the Chávez administration, and the first serious breakdown between the U.S. and Venezuela came right after the coup attempt on April 11, 2002. After the Venezuelan opposition arranged a coup and took the presidency from Hugo Chávez (only for a couple of days), White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer made a statement and blamed President Chávez by stating that “the action encouraged by the Chávez government” and by denying naming the events anything but as a coup attempt<sup>435</sup>. Also, the Senior Director for Democracy, Human Rights, and International Operations at the National Security Council, Elliot Abrams, was accused of “giving the nod” to the Venezuelan opposition for the coup<sup>436</sup>. Years later, in 2013, after Hugo Chávez died, Otto Reich, former U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela and Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, admitted the U.S. was aware that the Venezuelan opposition would attempt a coup against Chávez. When the U.S. did not immediately condemn the coup attempt in 2002 and gave implicit approval to the interim government of Pedro Carmona, this situation created an antipathy towards the U.S. among other Latin American countries.

Thirdly, when the Chávez government increased its oil income after 2005, his administration could vigorously challenge the influence of the U.S. within the region. President Chávez used the power from the increase in oil revenues to disrupt the U.S. influence in the area and successfully created an anti-American sentiment across the hemisphere. The U.S. foreign policy discourses towards the Western Hemisphere mainly focused on the three pillars mentioned above during the Bush Administration. Venezuela under the Chávez administration became a challenge to all these three pillars against the U.S. in the Western Hemisphere. Especially after the oil prices skyrocketed after 2006; as a result, Venezuela's Gross National Income (GNI) nearly

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<sup>435</sup> Ari Fleischer, “White House Press Briefing,” White House Archives, 2002, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/04/text/20020412-1.html>.

<sup>436</sup> Ed Vulliamy, “Venezuela Coup Linked to the Bush Team,” The Guardian, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/21/usa.venezuela>.

quadrupled in 2008 compared to 2003<sup>437</sup>. This increase in income allowed President Chávez to pursue a foreign policy agenda against the U.S. in the hemisphere, primarily through oil subsidies to other states. It is important to note that, during the same period, many nations of the continent elected leftist-populist politicians as presidents, including Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Guatemala, forming the Pink Tide.

These three reasons formed an increasing anti-U.S. stance within the hemisphere. After 9/11, when the Middle East became the number one priority for the Bush administration instead of the Western Hemisphere, and the U.S. influence within the region began to lessen, the Chávez administration got more opportunities to change the balance of power in the area. The U.S. officials responded by building a hemispheric responsibility to protect and promote American values, primarily through the OAS. The following section will focus on the free trade agreements discourses of the Bush administration. After that, the first key event will be elaborated on by combining the knowledge of two basic discourses of the Bush administration towards Latin America and the constitution of Venezuelan Other(s) during the Bush Era.

#### **4.2.2. The Free Trade Agreements Discourse**

Like the Western Hemisphere discourse, free and open trade was also a “high priority” for the Bush administration<sup>438</sup>. Within the Bush administration’s foreign policy discourses towards the Western Hemisphere and especially towards the Chávez government, free trade represented much more meaning than other U.S. values. During 2007 and 2008, the Bush administration made an enormous effort to include Free Trade Agreements within the U.S. National Security discourses. The following section will specifically focus on the Western Hemisphere discourse, free trade agreements discourse, and their instrumentalization to constitute Venezuelan

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<sup>437</sup> The World Bank Data, “Gross National Income (Current US\$) - Venezuela,” The World Bank, 2016, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.MKTP.CD?locations=VE>.

<sup>438</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks at the Jacksonville Port Authority,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-jacksonville-port-authority-jacksonville-florida>.



Others with the American Self. Conversely, this section elaborates on the U.S. foreign policy discourses built around free trade and market capitalism.

Free trade represents one of the main tools for the War on Terror. The National Security Strategy 2002 states that the Bush administration “will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world”<sup>439</sup>. There were eight objectives in that document to fight against terrorism, and enhancing free markets and free trade was one of those objectives. Why did free trade become an answer for terrorism for the Bush administration? According to the administration, free trade advances prosperity, creates new jobs, generates higher income, ends poverty, and spurs political and economic reforms against corruption<sup>440</sup>. This would enhance U.S. national security because when all the people become prosperous, there would be no terrorism. When the states become liberated through democracy and free trade, they will not harbor terrorists. As Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Roger Noriega articulated, “Free trade plus democracy comes with a bonus: peace”<sup>441</sup>. The foreign policy action for implementing the free trade agenda was signing as many bilateral, regional, and global free trade agreements as possible. Thus, the Bush administration strongly advocated reducing tariff barriers and signing free trade agreements with many states. Since both the Western Hemisphere and free trade were the highest priority of the administration, approving the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) became the region's number one foreign policy agenda. President Bush explained, “My initiative is the free trade of the Americas, which is a large concept of a marketplace, united from the north of Canada all the way to the south of Argentina”<sup>442</sup>. The goal was to complete and implement FTAA by 2005<sup>443</sup>.

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<sup>439</sup> Bush, “The National Security Strategy.”

<sup>440</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>441</sup> Roger F. Noriega, “Council of the Americas, 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Washington Conference “Crisis and Opportunity: Realizing the Hopes of a Hemisphere,” U.S. Department of State, 2004, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/32133.htm>.

<sup>442</sup> George W. Bush, “Interview With Radio Programas de Peru,” U.S. Department of State, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-with-radio-programas-de-peru>.

<sup>443</sup> Dick Cheney, “The Vice President Delivers Remarks to The Council of The Americas Conference,” The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 2002, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/vicepresident/news-speeches/speeches/text/vp20020506.html>.

Even though George W. Bush declared FTAA as his initiative, it has a long past. Even though many U.S. presidents discussed creating a trade area within the hemisphere, President Kennedy became the first U.S. president to implement this agenda. With the effect of the Cold War and the Cuban Revolution, the Kennedy administration declared a ten-year-long project, “the Alliance for Progress”, in 1961 to decrease the socialist influence in the hemisphere after the Cuban Revolution. The project included economic integration and free trade, but there were other subjects such as military cooperation, education, social change, etc.<sup>444</sup> However, after his death, the project lost its momentum. Nearly thirty years later, George Bush announced the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative and stated, “The future of Latin America lies with free government and free markets” in 1990<sup>445</sup>. The main goal was creating a free trade zone within the hemisphere, increasing the capital flow of the region reducing the debt burden of Latin American countries<sup>446</sup>. The main agenda was helping the countries in the hemisphere transform their economies into a post-Cold War world where less protectionism and isolationism existed. His main plan was “to create a free trade zone that will cover all of North America” and “set the stage for a whole hemispheric zone of free trade”<sup>447</sup>. A year later, the U.S., Canada, and Mexico signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which entered into force in 1994<sup>448</sup>. In 1994, the FTAA negotiations began during the Clinton administration at Miami's Summit of the Americas. The goal was “to create

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<sup>444</sup> John F. Kennedy, “Address at a White House Reception for Members of Congress and for the Diplomatic Corps of the Latin American Republics,” The American Presidency Project, 1961, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-white-house-reception-for-members-congress-and-for-the-diplomatic-corps-the-latin>.

<sup>445</sup> George Bush, “Remarks Announcing the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative,” The American Presidency Project, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-the-enterprise-for-the-americas-initiative>.

<sup>446</sup> Roger B. Porter, “The Enterprise for the Americas Initiative: A New Approach to Economic Growth,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 32, no. 4 (January 2, 1990): 6–8, <https://doi.org/10.2307/166113>.

<sup>447</sup> George Bush, “Remarks Commemorating the First Anniversary of the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative,” The American Presidency Project, 1991, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-commemorating-the-first-anniversary-the-enterprise-for-the-americas-initiative-and>.

<sup>448</sup> U.S. Trade Representative, “North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA),” 2023, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/ustr-archives/north-american-free-trade-agreement-nafta>.

the largest free trade area in the world,” including the thirty-four states of the hemisphere, except Cuba<sup>449</sup>. In the next summit in Chile, FTAA was formally set in motion. President Clinton pointed to globalization and argued that “American leadership” was also under challenge. He claimed that the U.S. should make “trade a priority element of American security” to protect this leadership position. With the War on Terror discourse, the Bush administration achieved this goal. Starting with 9/11 and after the National Security Strategy of 2002, a strong link between national security and trade was discursively established. When Hugo Chávez became the president and openly stood against the U.S. policies within the hemisphere (including bilateral free trade agreements or FTAA), the Bush administration had to resort to this link and frame the Colombian Free Trade Agreement as a national security matter in 2008. The following section will elaborate on this issue while analyzing the key event of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement approval in Congress from February 2008 to May 2008.

#### **4.3. Constituting Venezuelan Other(s) by Employing the Western Hemisphere and Free Trade Agreement Discourses**

The Bush administration’s foreign policy towards the Western Hemisphere can be separated into three periods. The first period was between the beginning of this presidency and 9/11. During this period, it was clear that FTAA and promoting American values throughout the hemisphere would be President Bush’s leading foreign policy agenda. President Bush and his team repeatedly expressed this priority of the hemisphere over other parts of the world<sup>450</sup>. However, after 9/11, the administration’s number one priority became the Middle East. Many politicians, including Senator Barack Obama and Representative Ted Poe, criticized this negligence of the hemisphere. Senator Obama said, “Our standing in the Americas

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<sup>449</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA),” 2023, [https://1997-2001.state.gov/issues/economic/ftaa/0599\\_ftaa\\_exec.html](https://1997-2001.state.gov/issues/economic/ftaa/0599_ftaa_exec.html).

<sup>450</sup> Powell, “The Work of a Hemisphere”; George W. Bush, “The President’s News Conference With Summit of the Americas Leaders,” The American Presidency Project, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-summit-the-americas-leaders-quebec-city>; Lino Guterrez, “Bush Administration Policies for Latin America and the Caribbean,” U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2001/4089.htm>.

has suffered due to the misguided policies and actions of the Bush administration”<sup>451</sup>. Similarly, Representative Poe stated that the “U.S. influence is lessening in Latin America” while criticizing the Bush administration’s policy as a republican himself<sup>452</sup>.

The second period was between 9/11 and the victory of Hugo Chávez over the presidential Recall Referendum that was held on August 15, 2004, in Venezuela. During this period, President Bush chose to appoint hardliner politicians of the Cold War to the top positions of his administration. Three of them served in Latin America and the Caribbean during the 1980s, when the U.S. was militarily involved in the region, especially in Central America. John Negroponte became the United States Ambassador to the United Nations in 2001, and he was the United States Ambassador to Honduras (1981-1985). Otto Reich was one of the most controversial appointments of the Bush administration. He was nominated as the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs in March 2001. However, the democrats in the U.S. Senate did not confirm his appointment by declaring him an ideologue<sup>453</sup>. During a congressional recess, President Bush designated him temporarily as the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, then as a special envoy, which does not require the Senate’s approval<sup>454</sup>. He is a Cuban American and served as the U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela (1986-1989) under the Reagan administration. Before that, he was the Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (1981-1983), responsible for media relations and openly supported the Contra guerrillas against the leftist Sandinistas in Nicaragua<sup>455</sup>. During this term, there was much unverified news coming from his

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<sup>451</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Congressional Record: Latin America,” Library of U.S. Congress, 2007, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-153/issue-40/senate-section/article/S2895-2>.

<sup>452</sup> Ted Poe, “Congressional Record: New Dogs in Our Backyard,” Library of U.S. Congress, 2008, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-154/issue-43/extensions-of-remarks-section/article/E403-1>.

<sup>453</sup> Jeff Cohen, “The Return of Otto Reich,” FAIR, 2001, <https://fair.org/article/the-return-of-otto-reich/>.

<sup>454</sup> Tim Weiner, “Bush Envoy Puts Latin Post, and a Stormy Past, Behind Him,” The New York Times, 2004, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/17/world/bush-envoy-puts-latin-post-and-a-stormy-past-behind-him.html>.

<sup>455</sup> Thomas Blanton, “Public Diplomacy and Covert Propaganda: The Declassified Record of Ambassador Otto J. Reich,” The George Washington University, 2001, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB40/>.

office. A U.S. government investigation found his actions “beyond the range of acceptable agency public information activities”, but he was never officially charged<sup>456</sup>.

Elliot Abrams was appointed President Bush’s special assistant in 2002 and Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (1985-1989) under President Reagan. This team made strong statements against the Castro and Chávez regimes in the hemisphere. They also were accused of being involved in the coup attempt against Hugo Chávez in April 2002, especially after the Wikileaks documents were released<sup>457</sup>. They mainly worked during President Bush’s first presidential term. After the appointment of Condoleezza Rice as the Secretary of State, this team changed to a more diplomatic team, including Thomas Shannon as the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs (2005-2009) and William Brownfield (2004-2007) as the U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela.

Within these two periods (between 2001 and 2005), the Bush administration confronted President Chávez’s anti-U.S. agenda within the hemisphere with a policy that they called to *watch his deeds, not his words*. The official diplomacy to deal with the Chávez regime was expressed as “measuring Venezuela by its deeds and not Chávez’s words” by the U.S. officials<sup>458</sup>. Instead of focusing on his statements against the U.S. and the Bush administration, they focused on his actions. For instance, President Chávez repeatedly made statements about cutting the U.S. oil supply, but he never did. This policy was introduced by John Maisto in 2001, the Special Assistant to President Bush and Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs<sup>459</sup>.

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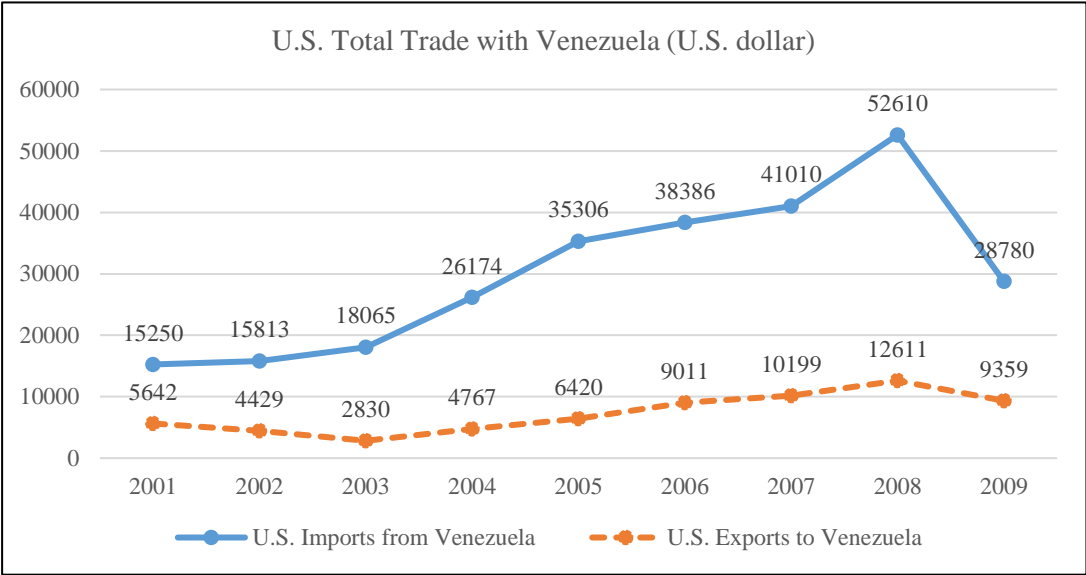
<sup>456</sup> Duncan Campbell, “Friends of Terrorism,” *The Guardian*, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/feb/08/britainand911.usa>.

<sup>457</sup> Gregory Wilpert, “Coup Against Chávez in Venezuela” (Caracas, 2003); Golinger, *Bush Versus Chávez: Washington’s War on Venezuela*.

<sup>458</sup> Lino Guterrez, “U.S. Policy in the Western Hemisphere,” U.S. Department of State, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2001/6950.htm>.

<sup>459</sup> Scott Wilson, “Chavez Turns Caracas From U.S. Ally to Critic,” *The Washington Post*, 2001, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/11/22/chavez-turns-caracas-from-us-ally-to-critic/b29574b6-7fcd-48c5-bc1d-51b5e2e54ccf/>.

As mentioned, during the Chávez administration, the social and economic ties between the U.S. and Venezuela have not been affected as much even though the political relations have decayed. Economic ties between the two countries never halted during the Chávez administration. Venezuela continued to be the leading oil supplier of the U.S.



**Figure 3.** U.S. Total Import/Export with Venezuela<sup>460</sup>

This is very interesting because when the Chávez administration accused the U.S. of arranging a coup against President Chávez in 2002, as Figure 3 shows, Venezuela continued to export to and import from the U.S. The U.S. imports from Venezuela (mainly crude oil) were 15.8 billion U.S. dollars in 2002. This number reached 18 billion U.S. dollars in 2003.

We see the same thing when President Bush stated that “the regime in Caracas has railed against America” in 2008<sup>461</sup>, yet during the same year, U.S. imports from

<sup>460</sup> The data was collected from the U.S. Census website, Figure 3 created by the Author. The World Bank Data, “United States Imports/Exports from Venezuela 2001 - 2009,” World Integrated Trade Solution, 2023, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/USA/StartYear/2001/EndYear/2009/TradeFlow/Import/Partner/VEN/Indicator/MPRT-TRD-VL#>.

<sup>461</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks at the Jacksonville Port Authority in Florida,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-jacksonville-port-authority-jacksonville-florida>.

Venezuela reached an all-time high with 52.6 billion U.S. dollars<sup>462</sup>. Between 2001 and 2008, the U.S. imports from Venezuela more than tripled, while the U.S. exports to Venezuela doubled during the same period. There were many crises between the two governments during this period; however, this tension did not affect the trade volumes between the two states. The main reason for this was the codependency of oil. The U.S. has a tremendous demand for oil, and historically, Venezuela has been one of the top suppliers of U.S. oil. Even the refineries in the U.S. are built specifically for processing the type of crude oil extracted from Venezuela. So, they were deeply codependent on each other for the sake of their economies. However, the new oil drilling technology, hydraulic fracturing, and horizontal drilling increased U.S. crude oil production, especially after 2010. In 2008, only 10% of the total oil production within the U.S. was provided by hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling. Therefore, the U.S. was dependent on foreign oil resources<sup>463</sup>.

During the second period, the administration also had a robust medical discourse against the Chávez administration. U.S. politicians often used medical and disease metaphors to differentiate the Other, namely the Chávez administration. Usually, doctors adopt the medical discourse towards their patients and their bodies. Having biomedical knowledge, doctors have a hierarchical power and control over their patients. They choose the medicine and the cure for the health and sake of the patient. When politicians adopt the same medical discourse, it serves as a defiance, something to get rid of and only done by knowledgeable politicians<sup>464</sup>. This danger constitution usually becomes successful since the ‘illnesses’ of the Other could quickly spread through the Self and create a danger to the health (even the existence) of the Self<sup>465</sup>.

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<sup>462</sup> The decline of trading volume in 2009 is related with the 2008 financial crisis which is also known as the mortgage crisis in the U.S.

<sup>463</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, “Hydraulically Fractured Horizontal Wells Account for Most New Oil and Natural Gas Wells,” 2018, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=34732>.

<sup>464</sup> Howard Waitzkin, “A Critical Theory of Medical Discourse: Ideology, Social Control, and the Processing of Social Context in Medical Encounters,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 30, no. 2 (June 1989): 221, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2137015>; Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 83.

<sup>465</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 85.

U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, Roger Noriega, was the first U.S. official to use the medical discourse against the Venezuelan government by stating that “the *symptoms* of the declining state of Venezuelan democracy had been clear for many months”<sup>466</sup>. He accused the OAS of ignoring the symptoms and not addressing the problems between the government and the opposition in Venezuela sooner. In a Congressional Report, Mark Sullivan mentioned the OAS negotiations between the government and the opposition in Venezuela to resolve “the political crisis that has *plagued* Venezuela for over a year”<sup>467</sup>. A year later, Senator John Kerry described the polarization in Venezuela as “the divisions that have plagued Venezuela” and urged the Bush administration “to play a true leadership role” to pressure President Chávez<sup>468</sup>. A plague poses a grave danger and can spread quickly, so severe actions should be taken immediately to contain the epidemic. Here, by deploying a medical narrative, U.S. politicians reimagine the Chávez administration as a danger that could quickly spread its anti-U.S. agenda all around the hemisphere and consequently endanger the U.S. leadership in the hemisphere. This reimagination paved the way for the OAS to undertake a more active role in resolving the crisis between the Venezuelan government and the opposition. As previously mentioned, the official U.S. statements about the coup attempt against President Chávez in 2002 discredited U.S. influence in the region. Therefore, U.S. politicians chose to use the OAS as a more active foreign policy actor in the hemisphere instead of taking a more direct approach.

After the coup attempt and the general strikes in the state-owned oil company PDVSA (which devastated the Venezuelan economy and oil production) in 2002 and 2003, U.S. officials urged the OAS and Secretary General César Gaviria to find common ground between the opposition and the government and “to seek a peaceful democratic and constitutional solution to Venezuela's political impasse”<sup>469</sup>. This

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<sup>466</sup> Roger F. Noriega, “The OAS and the Democratic Charter,” U.S. Department of State, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/9992.htm> [Emphasis Added].

<sup>467</sup> Mark P. Sullivan, “Venezuela: Political Conditions and U.S. Policy,” The Library of U.S. Congress, 2003, 1, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RS20978.html> [Emphasis Added].

<sup>468</sup> John Kerry, “Kerry Statement on the Referendum Process in Venezuela,” *VenezuelAnalysis*, 2004, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/527>.

<sup>469</sup> Otto J. Reich, “The Administration’s Four Goals in the Western Hemisphere,” U.S. Department of State, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/14880.htm>.



solution convinced the Chávez government to arrange a recall referendum to revoke Hugo Chávez from the presidency<sup>470</sup>. Even after the Chávez administration accepted to hold the recall referendum on August 15, 2004, the medical discourse continued to be deployed by the U.S. Officials. Republican Representative from Florida, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, made a statement in Congress on “the danger of the Chávez regime” to the “hemispheric peace” and claimed that “under Hugo Chávez, Venezuela is becoming a *cancer* in the Americas”<sup>471</sup>. Just like the re-articulation of the ‘plague’, the articulation of cancer connotes to the fear of the spread of the disease and the dangerous outcomes of not treating it immediately. So, Representative Diaz-Balart argued strongly against “the politics of appeasement in Venezuela” and urged the hemispheric community “to put pressure on” the Chávez administration before it wraps “the rope of dictatorship around the necks of all Venezuelans”<sup>472</sup>.

The recall referendum was held on August 15, 2004, and the Venezuelans voted not to recall Hugo Chávez from the presidency with 60% of the vote<sup>473</sup>. U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela became shortly paralyzed after this result. Mainly because the official U.S. arguments were based on the Venezuelan people’s oppression by the Chávez regime and how they would not choose Hugo Chávez as the president again if they were given another chance<sup>474</sup>. President Chávez’s victory over the recall referendum created a discursive void within the U.S. foreign policy discourses towards Venezuela. This discursive void was filled by the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2005. After she was appointed the Secretary of State, the Bush administration’s policy towards the Chávez administration profoundly changed,

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<sup>470</sup> Richard Boucher, “Daily Press Briefing,” U.S. Department of State, 2003, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2003/16835.htm>.

<sup>471</sup> Lincoln Diaz-Balart, “Congressional Record: The Danger of the Chavez Regime to Human Rights and Hemispheric Peace,” U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004, <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CRECB-2004-pt6/CRECB-2004-pt6-Pg7258/summary> [Emphasis Added].

<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> Consejo Nacional Electoral, “Boletín Electoral Referendum 15 de Agosto de 2004,” CNE, 2004, [http://www.cne.gob.ve/referendum\\_presidencial2004/](http://www.cne.gob.ve/referendum_presidencial2004/).

<sup>474</sup> Roger F. Noriega, “Remarks on Freedom of the Press,” U.S. Department of State, 2004, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/32374.htm>; Roger F. Noriega, “Preserving Democracy in Venezuela,” U.S. Department of State, 2004, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/33689.htm>.

especially during the legislative process of the Colombian FTA in the U.S. Congress between February 2008 and May 2008.

The third period came right after the appointment of Rice as the Secretary of State on January 26, 2005, during President Bush's second term. Secretary Rice clarified the Bush administration's foreign policy in her many statements. As a professor of International Relations, she vigorously defended a foreign policy that declined the superiority of the realist school over the idealist school and vice versa. She argued that these categories cloud reality because "in real life, power and values are married completely" and that being a great power matters just like the "values of great powers matter"<sup>475</sup>. President Bush argued very closely, saying, "To achieve idealistic goals, we need realistic policies"<sup>476</sup>. National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley said the Bush administration made no "false choices" between realist or idealist foreign policy; instead, the administration's foreign policy acknowledged that "an idealistic foreign policy based on promoting liberty was the only realistic strategy for advancing America's fundamental interests"<sup>477</sup>. Accordingly, with this foreign policy agenda, value exportation based on U.S. values was still the number one priority of the Bush administration during this period, too. Within this foreign policy discourse, values are represented as the glue that holds the whole hemisphere together, and there is no other way than this particular glue for a united hemisphere. The Bush administration constructed no alternative.

This last period was constructed around "a positive agenda" towards the Western Hemisphere. This positive agenda was still within the Western Hemisphere discourse because it was the same one as the previous agenda of the Bush administration, namely exporting values throughout the hemisphere. This was a crucial period for U.S.–Venezuela relations because, during this period, there were clear articulations

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<sup>475</sup> Rice, "Dr. Condoleezza Rice Discusses President's National Security Strategy."

<sup>476</sup> George W. Bush, "Remarks at the International Republican Institute Dinner," The American Presidency Project, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-international-republican-institute-dinner>.

<sup>477</sup> Stephen Hadley, "Remarks by National Security Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies," The American Presidency Project, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-national-security-advisor-stephen-hadley-the-center-for-strategic-and>.

of the Venezuelan Other(s) by the U.S. foreign policy discourses. First, the U.S. Self was reimagined around this positive agenda of exporting U.S. values through the hemisphere. The Bush administration discourse focused on this positivity of the values instead of focusing on the negativity of certain leaders like Hugo Chávez. Simultaneously, the Chávez regime was reimagined as the counter force against this agenda, especially since he declared that the “FTAA is dead, and we, the people of the Americas, are the ones who buried it”<sup>478</sup> in 2004. President Chávez was one of the lead actors that ended the FTAA process. On November 4-5, 2004, at the fourth Summit of the Americas meeting in Argentina, thirty-four countries of the hemisphere (except Cuba) needed to accept the terms for the FTAA by unanimity; however, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay (as MERCOSUR<sup>479</sup> members) and Venezuela did not accept the agreement. According to these five countries, the U.S. was not limiting barriers to its agricultural industry, and the agreement terms were unequal<sup>480</sup>. After all, the U.S. had to stop pursuing a regional free trade agenda, namely FTAA, and instead had to focus on the bilateral FTAs in the hemisphere.

On January 18, 2006, Secretary Rice announced the new administration's “transformational diplomacy” principles<sup>481</sup>. The primary mission of this diplomacy was ending tyranny and changing the world by building “well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people” and using “America's diplomatic power to help foreign citizens better their own lives and to build their own nations and to

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<sup>478</sup> Larry Rohter and Elisabeth Bumiller, “Hemisphere Summit Marred by Violent Anti-Bush Protests,” *The New York Times*, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/05/world/americas/hemisphere-summit-marred-by-violent-antibush-protests.html>.

<sup>479</sup> MERCOSUR is the Spanish initials of the Southern Common Market. The founding members were Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. It was established in 1991 to eliminate the trade barriers. Venezuela was trying to become a member of MERCOSUR since 2003, became a full member in 2012, only to be suspended in 2017 for the “rupture of the democratic order” of the Maduro regime. Argentina Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Trade and Worship, “Venezuela: MERCOSUR Rejects the Use of Force to Restore Democratic Order,” 2017, <https://cancilleria.gob.ar/en/news/releases/venezuela-mercosur-rejects-use-force-restore-democratic-order>.

<sup>480</sup> Stephen Hadley, “Press Gaggle by National Security Advisor Steve Hadley and Senior Administration Official,” *The American Presidency Project*, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-gaggle-national-security-advisor-steve-hadley-and-senior-administration-official>.

<sup>481</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Fact Sheet: Transformational Diplomacy” (Washington D.C., 2006), <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/59339.htm>.

transform their own futures”<sup>482</sup>. As the Bush administration declared in the National Security Strategy of 2006, the U.S. foreign policy had a two-fold strategy: the first phase was “to block the threats posed by the (oppressive) regime,” and the second phase was to expand U.S. engagement and outreach to the people the regime is oppressing”<sup>483</sup>. The crucial agenda of this transformational diplomacy was establishing solid links between societies (people to people) instead of between only states (government to government)<sup>484</sup>. The adaptation of transformational diplomacy to the Western Hemisphere was clarified by the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas Shannon on May 3, 2006<sup>485</sup>: “Our agenda in the Americas is positive, people-focused, and committed to our fundamental political, economic, and social values”<sup>486</sup>.

The reimagination of Rice’s transformational diplomacy was inherently related to the rise of populism and the Pink Tide in the hemisphere. Many countries’ presidents got elected, from Bolivia to Brazil, Chile to Ecuador, by adopting a populist discourse in the Western Hemisphere after 2005. The main argument of this populist discourse came from a strong separation between the elites (as the Other) and previously neglected parts of the society (as the Self). The populist leaders promised the voters to turn the tables against the elites. This discourse received substantial public support across the hemisphere and coincided with the Bush administration. In 2005 and 2006, twelve presidential elections were held in the hemisphere<sup>487</sup>. Many elected presidents were leftist populist leaders, such as Evo Morales in Bolivia, Lula da Silva in Brazil, Michelle Bachelet in Chile, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and Hugo Chávez in

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<sup>482</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Transformational Diplomacy,” U.S. Department of State, 2006, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/59306.htm>.

<sup>483</sup> U.S. Department of State, “The President’s National Security Strategy,” 2006, 20–21, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ei/wh/63212.htm>.

<sup>484</sup> Bush, “President Bush Discusses Western Hemisphere Policy,” 2007.

<sup>485</sup> Thomas A. Shannon, “Transformational Diplomacy in the Western Hemisphere,” U.S. Department of State, 2006, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2006/q2/69285.htm>.

<sup>486</sup> Thomas A. Shannon, “Our Agenda in the Americas,” The Council of American Ambassadors, January 2006, <https://www.americanambassadors.org/publications/ambassadors-review/fall-2006/our-agenda-in-the-americas>.

<sup>487</sup> These states were Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Costa Rica, Columbia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela.

Venezuela. The Bush administration recognized there was a heavy inclination towards populist movements by the voters of the hemisphere.

Interestingly, like leftist-populist presidents, the Bush administration also accused the old elites in the Latin American countries of not responding to public needs enough in the past and paving the way for populism. According to Secretary Rice, the time of “old, elite-dominated politics” was ended by this social revolution (the demands of the people from their governments to live in an equal society), and the people wanted these new governments to solve the “long-standing problems of poverty and inequality and social exclusion”<sup>488</sup>. President Bush called this movement a “revolution in expectations” as a way of institutionalizing democracy where the elections were not enough for the people anymore, and the new governments had to address the expectations of their people<sup>489</sup>. According to this discourse, people of the hemisphere want solutions to chronic socioeconomic problems such as poverty, income inequality, and economic growth through the market economy, and a positive agenda was formed as a response to this revolution in expectations.

Adopting the positive agenda rhetoric corresponded to increasing leftist-populist leaders throughout the region. When the Pink Tide and the populist agenda became more robust within the hemisphere and impossible to ignore, U.S. foreign policy rhetoric had to adopt new ones to respond to these movements. The positive agenda and the transformational diplomacy were the foreign policy responses of the Bush administration in parallel to these expectations of the people in Latin America. Secretary Rice’s positive agenda was rearticulating the hemispheric Self, embracing U.S. values such as democracy, the rule of law, economic liberty, freedom to worship, and free market economy. More importantly, within this dissertation's context, the positive agenda had a symbiotic relationship with the FTAs. Secretary Rice defined the meaning of this agenda. “It means pursuing the economic opportunities that free trade, (...) whether it is South America or North America, to try to extend free trade benefits. It means pursuing economic policies that are pro-

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<sup>488</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks at the Council of the Americas 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting,” U.S. Department of State, 2008, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/05/104461.htm>.

<sup>489</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks on Democracy in the Americas,” The American Presidency Project, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-democracy-the-americas-brasil>.

growth”<sup>490</sup>. According to Secretary Rice, this economic growth would directly affect the prosperity of the people. This exportation of U.S. values and economic growth through free trade agreement discourses directly confronted the leftist-populist discourse in the hemisphere.

For the first time in history, the U.S. imperative over the region came face to face with an alternative, a strongly supported one by the other hemispheric states. The official U.S. response to this confrontation completely ignored one of the lead actors, Hugo Chávez. Accordingly, with the positive agenda, U.S. officials chose not to make statements openly naming him and diplomatically answering questions about him or his statements. When a reporter asked Secretary Rice a question about President Chávez’s increasing influence across the hemisphere, she replied, “I spend very little time anymore or ever, answering Hugo Chávez” and that “the President didn't mention his name” even once during his trips to the Western Hemisphere<sup>491</sup> in 2007. According to Secretary Rice’s re-articulation, “the issues with Venezuela are not issues between the United States and Venezuela (...), they are issues about the freedom and democracy”<sup>492</sup> “and by the way between Venezuela and its own people”<sup>493</sup>. This positive agenda “has to be an agenda that's not anti-Chávez, but that is pro-democracy”<sup>494</sup>. Even though U.S. foreign policy discourses denied the constitution of President Chávez as a subject, in reality, the main priority of this agenda was the constitution of the Chávez regime as the radical Other against the hemispheric Self.

When President Bush was elected in 2001, he continuously asserted his intention to reach a fully democratic hemisphere. There were many official statements

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<sup>490</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks With Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim,” U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/45180.htm>.

<sup>491</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Interview With the New York Post Editorial Board,” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/10/93046.htm>.

<sup>492</sup> Rice, “Remarks With Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim,” 2005.

<sup>493</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks En Route Panama City, Panama,” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/06/85986.htm>.

<sup>494</sup> Rice, “Interview With the New York Post Editorial Board.”

mentioning there were thirty-four democracies in the hemisphere, except Cuba<sup>495</sup>. The thirty-four democracies represented all the OAS members who signed the Inter-American Democratic Charter. On September 11, 2001, thirty-four members of the OAS accepted the Charter by stating that “the peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it”<sup>496</sup>. This Western Hemisphere discourse articulated the democratic hemispheric Self as a single unity, and Cuba was the only Other against this hemispheric Self. However, this was also changed when the populist discourse in Latin America started to openly challenge U.S. discourse across the hemisphere, especially after 2005. The hemispheric Self (led by the U.S.) was represented as a positive force within the region, “making people’s lives better”<sup>497</sup>, united, promoting and embracing U.S. values. According to Western Hemisphere discourse, President Bush was the carrier of the positive messages of democracy, free trade agreements, and prosperity. At the same time, President Chávez represented as the carrier of negative messages across the hemisphere<sup>498</sup>. Secretary Rice stated that “we are really determined to have a positive agenda for this region” and that there was “a consensus within this hemisphere” about this positive agenda<sup>499</sup>. Simultaneously, the Western Hemisphere discourse constituted the Venezuelan Government as “the negative force” and a “destabilizing force” in the region<sup>500</sup>. According to Secretary Rice, this negativity

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<sup>495</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks Following a Meeting With Hispanic Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters,” The American Presidency Project, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-following-meeting-with-hispanic-leaders-and-exchange-with-reporters-miami-florida>; Robert B. Zoellick, “Press Briefing,” The White House, 2003, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/12/text/20031204-11.html>; Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Washington Conference of the Council of the Americas,” U.S. Department of State, 2006, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/65797.htm>.

<sup>496</sup> The Organization of American States, “Inter-American Democratic Charter,” 2001, [https://www.oas.org/OASpage/eng/Documents/Democractic\\_Charter.htm](https://www.oas.org/OASpage/eng/Documents/Democractic_Charter.htm).

<sup>497</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Meeting With Members of the Advisory Committee on Democracy Promotion,” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/apr/83098.htm>.

<sup>498</sup> Nicholas R. Burns, “Remarks to the Council of the Americas,” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/us/rm/2007/83003.htm>.

<sup>499</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks With Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim,” U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/45180.htm>.

<sup>500</sup> U.S. Government Printing Office, “The Hearing on the Nomination of Dr. Condoleezza Rice to Be Secretary of State in U.S. Senate,” 2005, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG->

came from the Chávez regime's alliance with Cuba as the "only undemocratic government in the region", meddling with the internal affairs of other states across the region and suppressing the Venezuelan opposition<sup>501</sup>. She then openly expressed the Bush administration's determination to move Venezuela "in a positive direction" because the U.S. wants "a democratic Venezuela to exist" for "the people of Venezuela"<sup>502</sup>. The Bush administration repeatedly clarified that "the Venezuelan people are friends of the American people. The problem has been with some of the actions of the regime"<sup>503</sup>. This statement perfectly exemplifies how U.S. foreign policy discourses constituted different Venezuelan Others as the radical Other (Chávez administration) and the friendly Other (the Venezuelan people and opposition in need of help).

Constituting Venezuelan and Cuban governments as the only two radical Others required the constitution of a united hemispheric Self. The Populist discourse represented another hemispheric Self embracing populist values like participatory democracy, state-led economy, and eliminating U.S. hegemony in the hemisphere. For instance, Hugo Chávez directly addressed the "people", not the "elite," in his speeches<sup>504</sup>. He claimed that the elite controlled the substantial oil wealth of Venezuela with the U.S. "empire" and never shared it with the Venezuelan people. He promised to change this by transforming Venezuelan representative democracy with a participatory democracy where the people can directly participate in the governance<sup>505</sup>. The Western Hemisphere discourse responded to this challenge by

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109shrg22847/html/CHRG-109shrg22847.htm; Condoleezza Rice, "Remarks with Colombian Foreign Minister Carolina Barco," U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/45280.htm>.

<sup>501</sup> U.S. Government Printing Office, "The Hearing on the Nomination of Dr. Condoleezza Rice to Be Secretary of State in U.S. Senate."

<sup>502</sup> Gabriela Guerreiro, "US Wants a Democratic Venezuela to Exist," Agência Brasil, 2005, <http://memoria.ebc.com.br/agenciabrasil/2005-04-26/us-wants-democratic-venezuela-says-condoleezza-rice>.

<sup>503</sup> Condoleezza Rice, "Interview by Constanza Santa Maria at UCTV," U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/45437.htm>.

<sup>504</sup> Rickard O. Lalander, "Política y Sociedad En La Venezuela Del Chavismo," *The Stockholm Review of Latin American Studies* (Stockholm, 2006).

<sup>505</sup> Steve Ellner, "Venezuela: The Challenge to a 'Model Democracy,'" in *Its Problems and Its Promise: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 406, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429495069-21>.



reimagining the hemispheric Self and by including friendly populist regimes in this hemispheric Self. Assistant Secretary Shannon states populism “is not an illegitimate or invalid political expression. Quite the contrary, it is a natural phenomenon in a democracy”<sup>506</sup>. These leftist-populist regimes (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, or Uruguay) were set apart from President Chávez’s populist regime. President Chávez’s populist regime was characterized as “negative populism”<sup>507</sup>, “radical populism”<sup>508</sup>, “shallow populism”<sup>509</sup>, “false populism”<sup>510</sup>, and “pied pipers of populism”<sup>511</sup> by various top U.S. officials.

This Western Hemisphere discourse also denied having any ideological agenda, arguing that Chávez and Castro’s alliance was ideological. According to Assistant Secretary Shannon, “partners” like Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Uruguay understand that the issue “was not an ideological issue”<sup>512</sup>. He elaborated on the Bush administration’s position towards these leftist-populist regimes in the region:

The Bush administration has attempted to (...) remove ideology from our engagement with the region to make it clear that we have not engaged based on whether a government is left or right; we engage based on whether a government is democratic, whether it is committed to the kind of economic models that we think are necessary to be successful in the world<sup>513</sup>.

Secretary Rice also made similar statements on how the U.S. does not charge any “ideological price” for its partnership and how the U.S. will work with any

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<sup>506</sup> Shannon, “Transformational Diplomacy in the Western Hemisphere.”

<sup>507</sup> Rice, “Meeting With Members of the Advisory Committee on Democracy Promotion.”

<sup>508</sup> Bob Corker, “The Nomination of Negroponte, John D., to Be Deputy Secretary of State,” Library of U.S. Congress, 2007, <https://www.congress.gov/event/110th-congress/senate-event/LC8560/text>.

<sup>509</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks to the Democracy and Security Conference,” The American Presidency Project, 2007, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-democracy-and-security-conference-prague>.

<sup>510</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks in Miami, Florida,” The American Presidency Project, 2007, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-miami-florida-6>.

<sup>511</sup> Robert B. Zoellick, “Press Roundtable in Brazil,” U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/54974.htm>.

<sup>512</sup> Shannon, “Transformational Diplomacy in the Western Hemisphere.”

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

government if it embraces the aforementioned American values without looking at whether they are from left or right<sup>514</sup>. A week later, Under Secretary Hughes declared the Bush administration's strategic imperative "to isolate and marginalize the violent extremists and confront their ideology of tyranny and hate" and to promote "a positive vision of hope"<sup>515</sup>.

In July 2006, Secretary Rice and Secretary Guterrez submitted a report on Cuba to President Bush. This report mentioned the formation of an ideological and anti-American "Cuba-Venezuela axis" and how this axis was quite similar to the Soviet Union-Cuba axis during the Cold War<sup>516</sup>. The term axis is heavily associated with the axis of evil of the Bush administration. The axis of evil was the term used by the administration to define the "terrorist alliance" between Iran, Iraq, and North Korea after 9/11<sup>517</sup>. So, it was not surprising when former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs (2001-2004) Otto Reich wrote an article on how Cuba and Venezuela formed a Western Hemisphere-style axis of evil and a threat to U.S. national security<sup>518</sup>. According to Reich, "with the combination of Castro's evil genius, (...) and Chávez's unlimited money and recklessness, the peace of this region is in peril<sup>519</sup>". Mr. Reich also emphasized that the U.S. "cannot put all the leftists in one basket"<sup>520</sup>. It was clear that within this discourse, two sides were constituted as the hemispheric Self (could be leftist-populist but have to embrace democracy and free market economy) and the radical Other(s) having an authoritarian and ideological agenda (to eliminate U.S. influence in the region).

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<sup>514</sup> Rice, "Remarks at the 36th Annual Washington Conference of the Council of the Americas."

<sup>515</sup> Karen Hughes, "Remarks at the Council on Foreign Relations," U.S. Department of State, 2006, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/us/66098.htm>.

<sup>516</sup> Condoleezza Rice and Carlos Guterrez, "Report to the President: Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba," Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, 2006, <http://www.cafc.gov/cafc/rpt/2006/68097.htm>.

<sup>517</sup> George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address," U.S. Department of State, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/wi/14573.htm>.

<sup>518</sup> Otto J. Reich, "Latin America's Terrible Two: Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez Constitute an Axis of Evil," National Review, 2006, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2006/08/latin-americas-terrible-two-williumrex/>.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

Even though several U.S. officials made statements on the ‘undemocratic’ and ‘authoritarian’ characteristics of the Chávez regime, President Bush chose not to directly make statements against President Chávez. Instead, he decided to ignore him up until the congressional approval process of the Colombia FTA from February 2008 to May 2008. This period forms this dissertation's first key event, which will be elaborated in the following section.

#### **4.4. The Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy Discourses during the Congressional Approval Process of the Colombia FTA from February to May 2008**

The 2008 congressional approval process of the Colombia FTA is the first key event because the hegemonic War on Terror discourse of the Bush administration had to respond to the Democrats’ challenges to approving the agreement. The FTA process has many executive, legislative, and consultative processes, so its completion takes a long time. The process of the Colombia FTA started in 2003, and the FTA entered into force in 2012 during the Obama administration. However, from February 2008 to May 2008, the Bush administration spent a very intensive effort to respond to the oppositional challenges, especially by framing the Colombia FTA within the U.S. National Security discourses and by reconstituting the Chávez regime as a threat against the hemispheric Self, U.S. values and hegemony over the region. The main reason for this effort was to pass the Colombia FTA before the end of the Bush presidency in 2009. These intense efforts constituted this time frame as the key event of this dissertation because, during this period, U.S. foreign policy discourses were highly concentrated on the Colombia FTA and the Chávez regime.

FTAs were the backbones of the Bush era foreign policy discourse. President Bush and his foreign policy team made countless statements on the importance of this matter. They made direct relations between the cure of terrorism, free markets, and free trade agreements. When George W. Bush became the president in 2001, the U.S. only had three free trade agreements with three countries. During his presidency, President Bush increased this number to fourteen agreements<sup>521</sup>. In the U.S., the

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<sup>521</sup> The White House, “A Legacy Booklet: Highlights of Accomplishments and Results of the Bush Administration,” 17.

approval process of the FTAs, first step starts with the U.S. Trade Representative's (on behalf of the President) letter to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives notifying them of the President's intention to enter into a free trade agreement negotiation with another country. For the Colombia FTA, this process started on November 18, 2003. U.S. Trade Representative began consultation with the related congressional committees on the possible clauses of the agreement.

It should be noted here that if the President has the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) from Congress, the approval process of the FTA would be faster than the standard procedure. That is why TPA is also known as the fast track. TPA also limits the congressional power over the trade agreements by giving the executive more power. Without the TPA, the President's power over trade negotiations is minimal<sup>522</sup>. The Bush administration made a tremendous effort to get TPA authorization from Congress in 2001. As Acting Assistant Secretary Guterrez expressed in 2001, "The FTAA is at the core of President Bush's hemispheric policy. And the request to Congress to pass trade promotion authority is at the top of the President's legislative agenda"<sup>523</sup>. After all the efforts, President Bush got the TPA from Congress in August 2002<sup>524</sup>, so he put fourteen FTAs into effect.

After the Congressional consultation period (which lasts ninety days), the executive power could enter negotiations with another country, Colombia. After the U.S. and Colombia negotiation, the U.S. Trade Representative and Colombia Trade Minister signed the U.S. – Colombia FTA on November 22, 2006. The Democrats in Congress (both in the House and the Senate) demanded additional clauses, especially for environmental and labor provisions, before bringing the FTA to vote. Violence against trade unionists in Colombia and the agreement's possible effects on the U.S. job market were the most significant subjects of disagreement between the Democrats and Republicans in Congress<sup>525</sup>. On May 10, 2007, there was a bipartisan

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<sup>522</sup> Charan Devereaux, Robert Z. Lawrence, and Michael D. Watkins, *Case Studies in US Trade Negotiation: Making the Rules* (Massachusetts: Institute for International Economics, 2006), 3.

<sup>523</sup> Guterrez, "Bush Administration Policies for Latin America and the Caribbean."

<sup>524</sup> George W. Bush, "Senate's Passage of Trade Promotion Authority," U.S. Department of State, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/e/eeb/rls/rm/2002/12412.htm>.

<sup>525</sup> Nancy Pelosi, "House Speaker Nancy Pelosi Weekly Briefing," C-SPAN.org, 2008, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?204420-1/house-speaker-weekly-briefing>.

agreement, especially on ending violence against unionists; however, there was no further agreement on bringing the Colombian FTA for voting to Congress because the Democrats and Speaker Pelosi were not convinced that the terms of the agreement had been met<sup>526</sup>. Since FTAs are considered congressional-executive agreements (not treaties) under U.S. law, they must be approved by a majority vote in the Senate and the House<sup>527</sup>. To bring the FTA in to vote, the House Speaker has to schedule the vote. Since there was no bipartisan compromise on the Colombian FTA, Speaker Pelosi refused to schedule the vote until the congressional consultation process was completed.

For convincing the Democrats to bring the Colombia FTA into a vote, President Bush's primary strategy was to try to persuade the politicians by framing the FTA within national security discourses, especially after October 2007<sup>528</sup>. When this discursive strategy did not convince the Democrats to bring the Colombia FTA into Congress for voting, this time, the administration tried another discursive strategy. This strategy was the reimagining of the Chávez regime as a direct threat against the U.S. interests, security, and vision in the Western Hemisphere between February 2008 and May 2008. Beginning with the February 2008 Annual Threat Assessment Hearing Intelligence Community, the Chávez regime started to be reimagined as a threat and a national security issue by the Bush administration<sup>529</sup>. This discursive strategy located the Chávez regime against the positive agenda of the U.S. as a "negative force"<sup>530</sup> "playing negative roles"<sup>531</sup> in the hemisphere. According to this

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<sup>526</sup> U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, "Fact Sheet: U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Essential To Our National Security" (Washington D.C., 2008), <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/03/20080312-3.html>.

<sup>527</sup> Devereaux, Lawrence, and Watkins, *Case Studies in US Trade Negotiation: Making the Rules*.

<sup>528</sup> George W. Bush, "Fact Sheet: Latin American and Korean Free Trade Agreements Vital to U.S. Economy and Security," The American Presidency Project, 2007, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/fact-sheet-latin-american-and-korean-free-trade-agreements-vital-us-economy-and-security>.

<sup>529</sup> Michael J. McConnell, "Congressional Testimonies 2008," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2008, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/congressional-testimonies/congressional-testimonies-2008>.

<sup>530</sup> Rice, "Remarks with Colombian Foreign Minister Carolina Barco."

<sup>531</sup> Nicholas R. Burns, "Global Challenges and Opportunities in U.S. Foreign Policy," U.S. Department of State, 2008, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/us/rm/2008/101488.htm>.

discourse, Hugo Chávez had an “anti-US, radical leftist agenda” and had various relations with the terrorist organizations like FARC and deliberately ignored their drug trafficking operations in the Venezuelan border<sup>532</sup>. Also, by forging an “ideological alliance” with the Castro regime, the “radical populist government” of Venezuela was trying to promote a competing vision across the hemisphere<sup>533</sup>.

With the positive agenda rhetoric, the Bush administration represented the hemispheric Self as a united subject sharing a common vision for all the peoples of the Americas<sup>534</sup>. This discursive structure relocated President Chávez’s vision directly against the U.S. values and interests in the region. The alternative vision of Hugo Chávez was “based on populist rhetoric, statist economics, and authoritarian politics”<sup>535</sup>. President Bush’s vision was represented as “positive and constructive”<sup>536</sup>, uniting the hemisphere, whereas the Chávez regime’s “radical vision” played a negative role, creating divisions across the hemisphere<sup>537</sup>. The U.S. was represented as the bearer of a vision of “freedom, progress, and hope”<sup>538</sup>. Simultaneously the Chávez regime’s vision was represented as “false populism”<sup>539</sup>, “poverty”<sup>540</sup>, and “empty promises”<sup>541</sup>. The main argument for the Bush

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<sup>532</sup> McConnell, “Congressional Testimonies 2008,” 34–35.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>534</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Common Values, Shared Interests: The United States and Its Promise in the Western Hemisphere,” U.S. Department of State, 2008, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2009/113779.htm>.

<sup>535</sup> Hadley, “Remarks by National Security Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.”

<sup>536</sup> Roger F. Noriega, “Achieving a Genuine Revolution in the Americas,” U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2005/53082.htm>.

<sup>537</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks on the Situation in Colombia,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-situation-colombia>; Burns, “Global Challenges and Opportunities in U.S. Foreign Policy.”

<sup>538</sup> Bush, “Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.”

<sup>539</sup> George W. Bush, “The President’s News Conference,” The American Presidency Project, 2007, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-1130>.

<sup>540</sup> Bush, “Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.”

<sup>541</sup> Thomas A. Shannon, “Building an Enduring Engagement in Latin America,” U.S. Department of State, 2008, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2008/q2/103035.htm>.

administration was that the former vision would certainly bring accurate results for reducing poverty and promoting prosperity. At the same time, the latter only gives empty promises under the pretense of false populism. For the Bush administration, socioeconomic problems like poverty and inequality were “the main recruitment ground for terrorists, for guerillas or drug traffickers”<sup>542</sup>, and the only solution to poverty was “democracy, free markets, and free trade”<sup>543</sup>.

This positive agenda was also represented as “the only way” to reach the U.S.-led vision of freedom that could only be achieved if the whole hemisphere were united around this agenda<sup>544</sup>. This shared vision had no ideological condition. It was “ideologically blind”<sup>545</sup>. Secretary Rice and other U.S. officials repeatedly emphasized that the U.S. policy was value-based, not a matter of left or right, and the Bush administration could talk with anybody (leftist populist governments too like Argentina, Brazil, Chile) as long as they were committed to the same positive agenda as the U.S.<sup>546</sup> Alternative visions would be “like trying to defy the laws of gravity”<sup>547</sup>. By adopting this positive agenda rhetoric, the Bush administration constituted it as precise as the law of nature. At the same time, all other alternative policies (including President Chávez’s) for reducing poverty appeared as absurd as

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<sup>542</sup> Dan Fisk, “Press Briefing by the Director of Western Hemisphere Affairs for the National Security Council,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-ambassador-john-veroneau-deputy-us-trade-representative-dan-fisk-director>.

<sup>543</sup> Stephen Hadley, “Press Briefing with National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley,” The American Presidency Project, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-with-national-security-advisor-stephen-hadley>.

<sup>544</sup> Thomas A. Shannon, “Press Briefing by Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere Tom Shannon,” The American Presidency Project, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-assistant-secretary-state-for-the-western-hemisphere-tom-shannon-the>.

<sup>545</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Latin America: We Need These Trade Deals,” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/88664.htm>.

<sup>546</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Interview With William Waack of Globo TV,” U.S. Department of State, 2008, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/03/102230.htm>; Shannon, “Importance of Free Press in the Americas”; Nicholas R. Burns, “Remarks at the Argentine Council on International Relations (CARI),” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/us/rm/2007/80640.htm>.

<sup>547</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks at the Organization of American States, Hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations,” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/10/93377.htm>.

standing against the law of nature, even though the Chávez administration managed to reduce poverty by openly defying the U.S. agenda during the same period. The rate of Venezuelans living below the poverty line dropped from 55.6% in 1997 to 26.4% in 2009<sup>548</sup>. This did not stop the Bush administration's efforts to constitute the Chávez regime as the dangerous Other to pass the Colombia FTA from the U.S. Congress.

For the Democrats, there were two main problems of the Colombia FTA: the concerns about environmental and labor rights in Colombia and the concern about a possible increase in the U.S. unemployment rates after the 2008 Financial Crisis<sup>549</sup>. After the bipartisan May 10 compromise in 2007, the Colombian government made specific legislative regulations for the protection of unionists and environmental rights; however, the Democrats were not convinced and wanted to continue the consultation process between the President and Congress. According to Congressman McGovern, "In just the first twelve weeks of 2008, seventeen trade unionists had already been assassinated," and the Colombian government did not make enough efforts to stop this violence<sup>550</sup>. Speaker Pelosi said they wanted to see proof of change in Colombia and pass a new package for protecting recently unemployed Americans<sup>551</sup>. When this gridlock could not be solved, the Bush administration started to employ national security discourses and the absurdity of making petty politics while essential matters such as U.S. national security were at stake. During his speech on February 26, 2008, President Bush framed the Colombia FTA within the national security discourses of the U.S. while mentioning who would win and who would lose if the trade agreement would not pass from Congress:

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<sup>548</sup> The World Bank Data, "Poverty Headcount Ratio at National Poverty Lines (% of Population) - Venezuela," *The World Bank*, 2009, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=VE>.

<sup>549</sup> Nancy Pelosi and Charles Rangel, "Pelosi and Rangel Statement on Administration Sending Colombia Free Trade Agreement to Congress," U.S. House of Representatives, 2008, <https://pelosi.house.gov/news/press-releases/pelosi-and-rangel-statement-on-administration-sending-colombia-free-trade>.

<sup>550</sup> Jim McGovern, "Stop Fast Track Rule for Colombia Trade Pact," Youtube, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bf9Iiakn2UI>.

<sup>551</sup> The White House, "Setting the Record Straight: Critics of Colombia Trade Agreement Ignore Facts," 2008, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080411-9.html>.



The trade bill with Colombia is a really important piece of legislation for America's national security. A stable neighborhood is in our interests. (...) The trade vote with Colombia would say a clear message to a strong democratic ally: We support you. A defeat of the trade bill (...) would embolden the false populism that exists on the continent. It would send a chilling signal to our allies, and it would harm the national security of the United States<sup>552</sup>.

A day before this speech, Under-Secretary for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns excluded Venezuela for the first time from the democratic community of the Western Hemisphere, namely from the hemispheric Self. Previously, the Bush administration had always mentioned that there were thirty-four democratic states in the hemisphere, and the only exception was Cuba<sup>553</sup>. Undersecretary Burns, for the first time, said how President Castro and President Chávez became marginalized leaders and how “nearly everybody in the hemisphere is a democracy with the exception of Cuba and a couple of other countries”<sup>554</sup>.

The exclusion of the Chávez regime from the hemispheric Self was the first step to differentiate Venezuela from the rest of the hemisphere. This differentiation started with the approval process of the Colombia FTA. That is why President Uribe of Colombia was reimagined as the perfect representative of the hemispheric Self against the Venezuelan Other (the Chávez regime) by the Bush administration’s discursive strategy. President Uribe was reimagined as “U.S.’ staunchest ally in the region” because he was making “major progress in strengthening democracy by improving security”. This improved security, in return, fueled foreign direct investment<sup>555</sup>. U.S. foreign policy discourses constituted President Uribe as a game changer, radically transforming Colombia by stating that Colombia was “a potential

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<sup>552</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks Following a Meeting With Former Cabinet Secretaries and Senior Government Officials,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-following-meeting-with-former-cabinet-secretaries-and-senior-government-officials>.

<sup>553</sup> George W. Bush, “President Bush Discusses Western Hemisphere Policy,” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/03/20070305-6.html>; Thomas A. Shannon and Sean McCormack, “Coffee Break at the State Department: Assistant Secretary Shannon,” U.S. Department of State, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/07/q1/80073.htm>.

<sup>554</sup> Burns, “Global Challenges and Opportunities in U.S. Foreign Policy.”

<sup>555</sup> McConnell, “Congressional Testimonies 2008,” 36–37.

failed state” before the Uribe administration. However, thanks to President Uribe, it became “one of the most successful states in Latin America”<sup>556</sup>. The Bush administration chose to ignore the human rights violations, including the killings of hundreds of civilians during the FARC operations, illegal surveillance of the opposition by the Colombian National Intelligence Service, and increasing support for paramilitary groups during the Uribe administration<sup>557</sup>. Instead, the top officials of the Bush administration represented President Uribe as “a strong democratic ally”<sup>558</sup>, “pro-democracy, pro-markets and pro-U.S.”<sup>559</sup>, “a key ally”<sup>560</sup>, a “strong friend of America, who has done all the right things to try to bring his country to stability, democracy and prosperity”<sup>561</sup> and as “a very strong and courageous leader”<sup>562</sup>.

At the same time, the Bush administration’s Western Hemisphere discourse emphasized the dangers against the Uribe administration, U.S. interests, leadership, and national security in the hemisphere. After elaborating on how Colombia was improved under President Uribe, Director of Western Hemisphere Affairs Dan Fisk pointed out the dangers of a possible reversal of Colombia to the former, nearly

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<sup>556</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Press Briefing on Colombia Free Trade Agreement,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-colombia-free-trade-agreement>.

<sup>557</sup> Garry Leech, “Colombia: The Successes and Failures of President Uribe,” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/colombia-successes-and-failures-president-uribe>; Maria Alejandra Silva, “Alvaro Uribe: The Most Dangerous Man in Colombian Politics,” The Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 2017, [https://coha.org/alvaro-uribe-the-most-dangerous-man-in-colombian-politics/#\\_edn5](https://coha.org/alvaro-uribe-the-most-dangerous-man-in-colombian-politics/#_edn5); Amnesty International, “Colombian President Should Stop False Accusations against Human Rights Groups,” 2008, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2008/11/colombian-president-should-stop-false-accusations-against-human-rights-groups-20/>.

<sup>558</sup> Bush, “Remarks Following a Meeting With Former Cabinet Secretaries and Senior Government Officials.”

<sup>559</sup> Susan Schwab, “Press Briefing by Tony Fratto and United States Trade Representative Susan Schwab,” The White House, 2008, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080407-3.html>.

<sup>560</sup> Bush, “Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.”

<sup>561</sup> Rice, “Press Briefing on Colombia Free Trade Agreement.”

<sup>562</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-colombia-free-trade-agreement>.

failed state<sup>563</sup>. President Uribe had done everything right and stood up against the rising “anti-Americanism” in the hemisphere<sup>564</sup>. There would be severe consequences for not passing the Colombia FTA from the U.S. Congress, like harming U.S. national security, letting down a close ally, damaging U.S. credibility in the hemisphere, and emboldening the demagogues in the region<sup>565</sup>. On many occasions, President Bush quoted Canadian Prime Minister Harper’s two statements on Colombia FTA: “If the U.S. turns its back on its friends in Colombia, this will set back our cause far more than any Latin American dictator could hope to achieve”<sup>566</sup>. The second quotation explicitly reconstituted not passing Colombia FTA as a more significant threat than President Chávez himself: “The biggest fear in South America is not the leader in Venezuela, but the biggest fear for stability is if the United States Congress rejects the free trade agreement with Colombia”<sup>567</sup>.

In dealing with President Chávez’s anti-American rhetoric, the Bush administration primarily adopted the strategy of completely ignoring him and even not mentioning his name, as previously mentioned. This strategy radically changed after President Bush’s March 12, 2008 statement. Before then, he implicitly said “the antagonists in Latin America”<sup>568</sup>, “the demagogues” in the hemisphere<sup>569</sup>, and the rising “false populism” across the region<sup>570</sup> but never directly named President Chávez himself as the promoter of the radical, anti-U.S. vision. On March 12, President Bush gave a speech to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and he explicitly contested the

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<sup>563</sup> Fisk, “Press Briefing by the Director of Western Hemisphere Affairs for the National Security Council.”

<sup>564</sup> Bush, “Remarks at the Jacksonville Port Authority.”

<sup>565</sup> Bush, “Remarks on the Situation in Colombia.”

<sup>566</sup> Bush, “Remarks in Miami, Florida”; Bush, “Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce”; Bush, “Remarks at the Jacksonville Port Authority in Florida.”

<sup>567</sup> George W. Bush, “The President’s News Conference,” The American Presidency Project, 2007, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-1132>.

<sup>568</sup> U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, “Fact Sheet: U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Essential To Our National Security.”

<sup>569</sup> Bush, “Remarks on the Situation in Colombia.”

<sup>570</sup> Bush, “Remarks Following a Meeting With Former Cabinet Secretaries and Senior Government Officials.”

Chávez administration's policies in the hemisphere. He accused President Chávez of supporting FARC, provocatively promoting a "hostile anti-American vision" across the hemisphere, and threatening Venezuela's neighbors<sup>571</sup>. During the same speech, President Bush also praised President Uribe by declaring him as the closest ally and a courageous leader speaking out against anti-Americanism and fighting against FARC terrorists<sup>572</sup>. On March 18, 2008, President Bush again challenged the Chávez administration openly by stating, "The regime in Caracas has railed against America, has forged an alliance with Communist Cuba, has met with FARC leaders in Venezuela"<sup>573</sup>. He also mentioned what "an unshakeable partner" President Uribe had been, and President Bush appraised him for being "the most reliable and effective ally" to the U.S.<sup>574</sup>

The spatial dimension of the discursive constitution of the Chávez regime as the Other is linked with the Western Hemisphere discourse, the Monroe Doctrine, and the employment of 'backyard' (while defining Latin America) in U.S. foreign policy discourses. All three are also symbiotically related to the ethical dimension of the constitution of the U.S. Self and the Other. To have a backyard (Latin America), one should also have a home; naturally, the backyard belongs to the homeowner<sup>575</sup>. U.S. officials often used the word home to describe the Western Hemisphere. "The Western Hemisphere is our home,"<sup>576</sup> and "the best foreign policy starts at home"<sup>577</sup>. This ownership issue often presents itself in U.S. politicians' statements referring to Latin America as "*our own* back yard"<sup>578</sup>. This discursive construction gives the Self

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<sup>571</sup> Bush, "Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce."

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Bush, "Remarks at the Jacksonville Port Authority in Florida."

<sup>574</sup> Ibid.

<sup>575</sup> Eldon Kenworthy, *America/Américas: Myth in the Making of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 40–41.

<sup>576</sup> Noriega, "China's Influence in the Western Hemisphere."

<sup>577</sup> George W. Bush, "Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One," The American Presidency Project, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/exchange-with-reporters-aboard-air-force-one-23>.

<sup>578</sup> Poe, "Congressional Record: New Dogs in Our Backyard"; Bush, "Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce," [Emphasis Added].

a special responsibility to ‘protect’ the hemisphere because an unsecured backyard would eventually threaten the house’s security. As Congressman Ted Poe said, “Strangers in one’s backyard do not make for a secure household”<sup>579</sup>. The homeowner also has a responsibility to protect the home and its backyard. This responsibility constitutes the ethical dimension of the U.S. Self. Secretary Rice claims that “the United States has a special responsibility to lead the way” in the hemisphere, and not passing the FTAs “would be a retreat from our responsibility of leadership and a renunciation of our influence in the Americas”<sup>580</sup>. Within Western Hemisphere and Free Trade discourses, not passing Colombia FTA would mean “the United States cannot be trusted to keep its word”<sup>581</sup> and “cannot be trusted to stand by its friends”<sup>582</sup>. It also “would have very serious consequences, do very serious harm to America’s interest and to America’s credibility” in the hemisphere<sup>583</sup>. This, in return, would cripple the U.S. influence in the region, and it would mean that the U.S. was betraying its closest friend in its “own backyard”<sup>584</sup>.

Accordingly, the Other was also watching the approval process of the Colombia FTA to see what the U.S. would do. “People are watching the actions of the U.S. Congress very carefully. Champions of false populism in the region are watching Congress”<sup>585</sup>. Therefore, passing this agreement “can provide a powerful rebuke to dictators and demagogues in our backyard”<sup>586</sup>. “The enemies of democracy” in the hemisphere were promoting “authoritarian politics and state-run economies”, and the failure to pass the Colombia FTA would be a win for them<sup>587</sup>. Here, the temporal dimension of

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<sup>579</sup> Poe, “Congressional Record: New Dogs in Our Backyard.”

<sup>580</sup> Rice, “Remarks at the Organization of American States, Hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations.”

<sup>581</sup> U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, “Fact Sheet: U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Essential To Our National Security.”

<sup>582</sup> Bush, “Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.”

<sup>583</sup> Rice, “Press Briefing on Colombia Free Trade Agreement.”

<sup>584</sup> Bush, “Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.”

<sup>585</sup> Bush, “Remarks on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement.”

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> Rice, “Remarks at the Organization of American States, Hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations.”

the radical Other is constituted as incapable of change by the U.S. foreign policy discourses. The discursive constitution of the Chávez regime during the congressional approval process of the Colombia FTA left no room for change for the Venezuelan government. Before, the hemisphere consisted of thirty-four democratic governments plus Cuba. After, the U.S. discourses represented Venezuela as marginalized as Cuba, Iran, and North Korea. As a threat to U.S. national security, there was no room for reconciliation between the Bush and Chávez administrations<sup>588</sup>.

On the other hand, the Venezuelan people reimagined highly differently than the Chávez regime. The U.S. will “remain committed to a positive relationship with the people of Venezuela” while the government promotes its “negative vision”<sup>589</sup>. For instance, under the Bush administration, one of the NED’s core institutions, the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), started giving Venezuelans free market education since the Chávez administration denounced capitalism, free trade, and markets<sup>590</sup>.

By framing the Colombia FTA within the U.S. national security discourses, the Bush administration tried to move a trade bill from the political arena to a ‘higher moral ground’ in attempting to depoliticize the FTA approval of Congress. When a matter is framed within the official foreign policy discourses, it represents the matter as a threat to the Self with a political urgency<sup>591</sup>. The administration would have to act soon to eliminate the threat. This urgency would allow the executive to implement decisions without the usual procedures and restrictions of the legislative power. The

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<sup>588</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, “Venezuela: Looking Ahead: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere of the Committee on Foreign Affairs,” U.S. Congress, 2008, [https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GOVPUB-Y4\\_F76\\_1-PURL-LPS106653](https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GOVPUB-Y4_F76_1-PURL-LPS106653).

<sup>589</sup> Thomas A. Shannon, “Venezuela: Looking Ahead,” U.S. Department of State, 2008, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2008/q3/107164.htm>.

<sup>590</sup> Timothy M. Gill, *Encountering U.S. Empire in Socialist Venezuela: The Legacy of Race, Neo-Colonialism, and Democracy Promotion* (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022), 140–42.

<sup>591</sup> Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 30–31; Weldes and Saco, “Making State Action Possible: The United States and the Discursive Construction of ‘The Cuban Problem’, 1960-1994.”

Bush administration's main agenda was getting the Colombia FTA into voting in Congress before the end of the Bush era in 2009. By linking a trade agreement with the national security discourses, the administration tried to speed up the FTA's approval process by reducing the Congress's role. President Bush employed this strategy by saying, "Time is running out, and we must not allow delay to turn into inaction. The Colombia agreement is pivotal to America's national security"<sup>592</sup>.

President Bush also called out to the Democrats in Congress on March 2008 to "put politics aside and focus on what is best for the United States of America"<sup>593</sup>, to take a step back from politics, and "set aside petty politics and focus on doing what is right for the United States of America"<sup>594</sup>. Thus, the primary strategy was to depoliticize the Colombia FTA and reimagine the trade agreement as a national security matter. To convince the Democrats to bring the Colombia FTA to Congress as soon as possible, the Bush administration tried to relocate the agreement from petty politics to a higher ground of national security. A danger to the Self's national security must be constituted since a trade agreement cannot be represented alone as a national security matter. Foreign policy discourses must also constitute a dangerous Other. Not so coincidentally, during the same time, a joint intelligence operation between the FBI and the Colombian Army was carried out in February 2008, tracing FARC movements and telecommunications through Colombia-Ecuador borders<sup>595</sup>. Based on the gathered intelligence, the Colombian army initiated a military operation in Ecuador on March 1, 2008, and killed a top commander of FARC, Raul Reyes<sup>596</sup>. Since the operation took place on Ecuador's territory, President Uribe claimed he had informed Ecuador's President Rafael Correa.

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<sup>592</sup> Bush, "Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce."

<sup>593</sup> Ibid.

<sup>594</sup> George W. Bush, "Remarks at a United States Chamber of Commerce Reception in New Orleans," The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-united-states-chamber-commerce-reception-new-orleans>.

<sup>595</sup> Urgente24, "Golpe a Las FARC: Desmantelaron Un Importante Grupo Logístico de La Guerrilla," 2008, <https://urgente24.com/173914-golpe-a-las-farc-desmantelaron-un-importante-grupo-logistico-de-la-guerrilla-en-el-que-venezu>.

<sup>596</sup> Jeremy McDermott, "Farc Aura of Invincibility Shattered," BBC, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7273320.stm>.

On the other hand, President Correa claimed President Uribe misinformed him on purpose, carried out a more extensive operation than told, and killed civilian Ecuador citizens during the operation<sup>597</sup>. President Chávez also condemned the operation for violating Ecuador's borders and sovereignty<sup>598</sup>. Moreover, during the operations, the Colombian Army captured many documents from Raul Reyes's computer. It claimed that, according to the documents, the governments of Ecuador and Venezuela were linked to FARC<sup>599</sup>. Venezuela and Ecuador denied the accusations<sup>600</sup>. These documents were enough for the Bush administration to designate the danger to the Self, even though some of the alleged evidence was found false later<sup>601</sup>. They were sufficient to declare President Chávez as “a dog” in the U.S.’ “own backyard”<sup>602</sup> or attempt to declare Venezuela as a state sponsor of terrorism<sup>603</sup> along with Iran, North Korea, and Syria. Therefore, Congressman Mack's statement about the proposed bill to announce Venezuela as a state sponsor of terrorism should not come as a surprise: “By passing the Colombian Free Trade Agreement, we will show our allies we stand with them and against the tyranny of Hugo Chávez”<sup>604</sup>.

When the Bush administration's strategy had failed to convince the Democrats to bring the Colombia FTA into voting, President Bush decided to use his authority to bypass the congressional consultation process under TPA to force Congress to schedule the voting for the Colombia FTA on April 7, 2008, as a last resort. While

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<sup>597</sup> BBC Mundo, “48 Horas Frenéticas: La Crisis Entre Los Gobiernos de Colombia, Ecuador y Venezuela,” 2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin\\_america/newsid\\_7274000/7274806.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin_america/newsid_7274000/7274806.stm).

<sup>598</sup> Ibid.

<sup>599</sup> Semana, “El Computador de Reyes,” 2008, <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/el-computador-reyes/91396-3/>.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid.

<sup>601</sup> Jennifer McCoy, “Venezuela: Looking Ahead: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere of the Committee on Foreign Affairs,” U.S. House of Representatives (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008), 50–51, [https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GOVPUB-Y4\\_F76\\_1-PURL-LPS106653](https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GOVPUB-Y4_F76_1-PURL-LPS106653).

<sup>602</sup> Poe, “Congressional Record: New Dogs in Our Backyard.”

<sup>603</sup> Connie Mack, “H.R.1049: Calling for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Be Designated a State Sponsor of Terrorism,” U.S. House of Representatives (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/BILLS-110hres1049ih/summary>.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.



sending a letter to Congress, Bush stated that “the need for this trade agreement is too urgent and *the stakes for national security are too high* to allow this year to end without a vote”<sup>605</sup>. Under TPA, the implementing bill has to have an up-or-down vote without amendments, so the two parties had to agree before the vote. When Speaker Pelosi refused to bring the bill for voting, President Bush tried to eliminate the congressional consultation process by using TPA and transmitting the Colombia FTA implementing bill to Congress<sup>606</sup>. This move intended to force Speaker Pelosi’s hand into scheduling the voting because after the President sent the bill to Congress, Congress had to finish the congressional process within ninety calendar days<sup>607</sup>. On April 8, 2008, the legislation for implementing the Colombia FTA was brought into the Senate (S.2830)<sup>608</sup> and the House (H.R. 5724)<sup>609</sup>. In response to the Bush administration’s move to speed up the implementation process, Speaker Pelosi and the Democrats in the U.S. Congress decided to suspend TPA rules by adopting the H.R. 1092 rule in the House<sup>610</sup>. This move by the Democrats eliminated the obligation to bring the Colombia FTA into a vote within ninety calendar days because the consultation process had to continue.

According to Speaker Pelosi and the Democrats in Congress, the Bush administration did not make enough efforts to change the two main concerns of the Democrats, for ensuring the safety of the trade unionists in Colombia<sup>611</sup> and for passing a stimulus package for the U.S. citizens who lost their jobs, especially after the 2008 financial

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<sup>605</sup> George W. Bush, “Fact Sheet: President Bush Signs Letter to Send the United States-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Implementing Legislation to Congress,” The White House, 2008, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080407-5.html> [Emphasis Added].

<sup>606</sup> George W. Bush, “President Bush Signs Letter to Send the United States-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Implementing Legislation to Congress,” The White House, 2008, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080407-1.html>.

<sup>607</sup> Schwab, “Press Briefing by Tony Fratto and United States Trade Representative Susan Schwab.”

<sup>608</sup> Harry Reid, “S.2830: United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act,” U.S. Congress, 2008, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/senate-bill/2830>.

<sup>609</sup> Steny H. Hoyer, “H.R.5724: United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act,” U.S. Congress, 2008, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-bill/5724/text>.

<sup>610</sup> Ian F. Fergusson, “Trade Negotiations During the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress,” U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2008, [https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20080417\\_RL33463\\_04988fd9f94d1ef41e92de57fc494e9be365a8da.pdf](https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20080417_RL33463_04988fd9f94d1ef41e92de57fc494e9be365a8da.pdf).

<sup>611</sup> McGovern, “Stop Fast Track Rule for Colombia Trade Pact.”

crisis<sup>612</sup>. This move and the dispute between the Bush administration and the Democrats in Congress made it impossible to ratify the Colombia FTA until the end of President Bush's second term. The Colombia FTA was approved in the U.S. Congress on October 21, 2011, during the Obama Presidency and entered into force in 2012<sup>613</sup>. The Bush administration's efforts to expedite the approval process of the Colombia FTA before the end of President Bush's term were recoiled. However, the U.S. foreign policy discourses adopted during this period had severe consequences. The explicit discursive constitution of the Chávez administration as a dangerous, radical Other to the American Self for the sake of approving Colombia FTA by the Bush administration eliminated any chance of reconciliation between the Bush and the Chávez administrations. Besides, this subject positioning also enabled more aggressive statements against the Chávez regime, especially from hardliner politicians like Otto Reich, Connie Mack, and Ilena Ros-Lehtinen. Former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Bush administration, Mr. Reich, stated, "America is very naive about the threat Chávez poses. Today Chávez is at least as dangerous as bin Laden (...), but too many of America's leaders are still ignoring him. This could be a tragedy bigger than 9/11"<sup>614</sup>.

The diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Venezuela ended after the Chávez regime expelled the U.S. ambassador to Venezuela, Patrick Duddy, by declaring him Persona Non-Grata on September 11, 2008. The U.S. did the same a day later<sup>615</sup>. President Chávez blamed the Bush administration for trying to oust President Morales and decided to expel the U.S. ambassador from Venezuela in solidarity with Bolivia<sup>616</sup>. President Chávez rejected having diplomatic relations with the Bush

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<sup>612</sup> Nancy Pelosi, "Floor Statement on Colombia Free Trade Agreement," U.S. House of Representatives, 2008, <https://pelosi.house.gov/news/press-releases/pelosi-floor-statement-on-colombia-free-trade-agreement>.

<sup>613</sup> Eric Cantor, "H.R.3078: United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act," U.S. Congress, 2011, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-bill/3078/amendments>.

<sup>614</sup> Schoen and Rowan, *The Threat Closer to Home: Hugo Chávez and the War against America*, 2.

<sup>615</sup> Sean McCormack, "U.S. Declares Venezuelan Ambassador Persona Non Grata (PNG)," U.S. Department of State, 2008, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/sept/109565.htm>.

<sup>616</sup> Christopher Toothaker, "Venezuela's Chavez Expels U.S. Ambassador," The Seattle Times, 2008, <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/venezuelas-chavez-expels-us-ambassador/>.

administration and said the diplomatic relations would return to normal “when there is a new government in the United States”<sup>617</sup>.

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<sup>617</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE CONSTITUTION OF VENEZUELA AS AN UNUSUAL AND EXTRAORDINARY THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES

“We are willing to break free from some of the stale debates and old ideologies that have dominated and distorted the debate in this hemisphere for far too long. There are no senior or junior partners in the Americas. We are simply partners”<sup>618</sup>.

“After eight years of the disastrous policies of George W. Bush, it is time to pursue direct diplomacy, with friend and foe alike, without preconditions”<sup>619</sup>.

The main themes of the Obama administration’s foreign policy were change, looking forward with hope, not back. President Obama promised to renew the American leadership worldwide, which was damaged during the Bush era. President Obama criticized the Bush administration’s Manichean “us vs. them” rhetoric and promised to pursue diplomatic relations first without looking if the other side was a friend or foe. In parallel, the U.S. foreign policy towards the Americas during the Obama era had two basic discourses: equal partnership and constructive engagement. However, these basic discourses were openly challenged by the Republicans’ oppositional discourses in the U.S. Congress. The discursive challenge between the Obama administration and the opposition in Congress led to the second key event of this dissertation: the legislative process of Executive Order 13692. Since this event includes a legislative process that could take a long time, the time frame of this key event is longer than the previous one. The second key event was formed around the

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<sup>618</sup> Barack H. Obama, “The President’s News Conference in Port of Spain,” The American Presidency Project, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-port-spain>.

<sup>619</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-cuban-american-national-foundation-miami-florida>.

discursive competition between the executive (the Obama administration) and the legislative (the Congress) over the disagreement about the individual sanctions against Maduro government officials. This chapter analyzes and interprets the evolution of the legislative process of Executive Order 13692 while focusing on the discursive constitutions of the Venezuelan government and the Venezuelan people within the discourses of the U.S. government and opposition.

### **5.1. Foreign Policy Discourses of the Obama Administration**

The concepts of change<sup>620</sup> and hope<sup>621</sup> are at the core of President Obama's political rhetoric. His rhetoric comprised promises of changes from the past in nearly every realm. Simultaneously acknowledging the U.S.' past mistakes (including the U.S. foreign policy towards the hemisphere during the Bush administration<sup>622</sup>), his rhetoric is based on a clear break from the past mistakes of the Bush administration and constituting a hopeful future for the next generations<sup>623</sup>. The Obama administration's vision for the U.S. was to reverse the Bush administration's policies and mistakes rather than completely transform American identity, values, and foreign policy. His rhetoric on American identity and foreign policy was quite traditional. He often quoted the American exceptionalism, American creed, and the founding principles of the U.S., including liberty, democracy, and egalitarianism<sup>624</sup>.

As discussed, the official American identity discourse has depended on constantly re-articulating these principles and American exceptionalism. Accordingly, Americans are united around specific values (including liberty, individualism, limited government, the free market economy, the rule of law, and democracy), not by

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<sup>620</sup> Barack H. Obama, *Change We Can Believe In: Barack Obama's Plan to Renew America's Promise* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008).

<sup>621</sup> Barack H. Obama, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (New York: Vintage, 2006).

<sup>622</sup> Obama, "Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation."

<sup>623</sup> Barack H. Obama, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," The American Presidency Project, 2011, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-16>.

<sup>624</sup> Amílcar A. Barreto and Richard L. O'Bryant, *American Identity in the Age of Obama* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 11.

ethnicity or ancestry. Campbell emphasizes this by defining the U.S. as “the imagined community par excellence”<sup>625</sup>. When the identity is rearticulated around specific values, promoting these values at home and abroad automatically becomes the main objection of the U.S. foreign policy<sup>626</sup>. Thus, U.S. foreign policy discourse intertwines with the core U.S. values: promoting democracy, free market economy, and equality worldwide, even if it means using military power at the expense of U.S. taxpayers’ money.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, President George W. Bush also had the same objective regarding promoting U.S. values during his presidency. His administration’s foreign policy discourse was firmly based on promoting the core American values worldwide to eliminate terrorist threats against the U.S. and its allies. Even though Presidents Bush and Obama seem to have the same objectives, their methods and foreign policy practices differ. The Bush administration was the main target of Barack Obama’s criticism during his presidential campaign. President Obama strongly criticized the Bush administration’s foreign policy decisions, including the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the human rights abuses in the Abu Ghraib prison or Guantanamo Bay detention camp<sup>627</sup>. According to President Obama, closing Guantanamo was a priority because Guantanamo did not represent American values. He stated that “in the dark halls of Abu Ghraib and the detention cells of Guantanamo, we have compromised our most precious values” in 2007<sup>628</sup>. Since both American values and identity are discursively interwoven, moving away from these values would also mean moving away from the origins of the American identity. President Obama claimed that the Bush administration compromised the core American values, identity, and leadership. In return, he promised to renew them

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<sup>625</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 91.

<sup>626</sup> Mark A. Menaldo, “Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy Leadership: Renewing America’s Image,” in *American Identity in the Age of Obama*, ed. Amílcar A. Barreto and Richard L. O’Byrant (New York: Routledge, 2014), 199.

<sup>627</sup> Barack H. Obama, “The World Beyond Iraq,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-fayetteville-north-carolina-the-world-beyond-iraq>.

<sup>628</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Security Address on Counter-Terrorism,” Wilson Center, 2007, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/security-address-counter-terrorism-the-honorable-barack-obama-united-states-senator-illinois>.

by constructing engagement with partners, restoring the American economy, and pragmatically balancing diplomacy and using military power<sup>629</sup>.

### **5.1.1. The Reconstitution of the American Self and U.S. Leadership Worldwide**

The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the images and reports of torture from Guantanamo, and the strict adoption of “us vs. them” rhetoric in foreign policy discourses created a decline in the U.S. image in the international realm<sup>630</sup>. President Obama often asked if the U.S. did not implement its values, how could the U.S. ask other nations to follow them? He said, “When we uphold our values at home, we are better able to promote them in the world”<sup>631</sup>. In order to renew American leadership, promote American values worldwide, and return the core principles of the American identity, President Obama promised to “end the mindset that focuses on Iraq and ignores the rest of the world”<sup>632</sup>. According to President Obama’s “Bush-McCain failure” rhetoric, the Bush administration neglected the rest of the world (especially the Western Hemisphere) while focusing only on a “misguided war in Iraq”<sup>633</sup>. This negligence, in return, gave others (like Venezuela, Iran, or China) the opportunity to fill the vacuum. President Obama then promised to turn the page and renew American leadership worldwide by promoting U.S. principles and diplomacy<sup>634</sup>.

The main themes of President Obama’s first inaugural speech were hope and unity. Despite that, he started his speech by acknowledging the problems the country faced first:

Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred.  
Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility

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<sup>629</sup> Obama, “The World Beyond Iraq.”

<sup>630</sup> Menaldo, “Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy Leadership: Renewing America’s Image,” 198.

<sup>631</sup> The White House, “The 2015 National Security Strategy,” 2015, [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015\\_national\\_security\\_strategy\\_2.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf).

<sup>632</sup> Obama, “The World Beyond Iraq.”

<sup>633</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>634</sup> Ibid.

on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly, and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet<sup>635</sup>.

He then identified the American Self as “the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things”<sup>636</sup>. He added, “Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America”<sup>637</sup>. President Obama represented Americans as people who “keep pushing ahead, persevering through hardship, growing through challenge, building something firmer and stronger in place of what was”<sup>638</sup>. According to this rhetoric, being persistent and not quitting are not the only traits of being American. Putting differences aside and uniting around the common good instead of just pursuing individual interests also constitute the main characteristics of Americans. President Obama draws a parallel relationship between being American and being soldiers in the same uniforms. He said, “When you put on that uniform, it does not matter if you are Black or White, Asian, Latino, Native American; conservative, liberal; rich, poor; gay, straight”<sup>639</sup>. Therefore, when Americans unite around the same core principles, the American creed, and work together for the common good, their ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation would not matter, just like they do not matter for the soldiers in the U.S. Army who fight side by side.

### **5.1.2. The Reconstitution of the Extremists as the Others**

The War on Terror discourse has “us vs. them” at the core. Even though Secretary Rice’s statements claimed a balanced foreign policy approach between idealism and

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<sup>635</sup> Barack H. Obama, “President Barack Obama’s Inaugural Address,” The White House, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/president-barack-obamas-inaugural-address>.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

<sup>638</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Remarks by the President at Nellis Air Force Base,” The White House, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-nellis-air-force-base-las-vegas-nevada>.

<sup>639</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” The American Presidency Project, 2012, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-15>.



realism, the Bush Administration's inclination towards realist principles was highly apparent. The us vs. them rhetoric, putting military power above others, interpreting international relations as a zero-sum game, and pursuing a neoconservative agenda could be given as examples for this era. The threats were clearly defined, and the enemy was well identified by the foreign policy discourses of the Bush administration, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Reaching the same conclusion for the Obama administration is not possible. While criticizing the Bush administration's aforementioned foreign policy choices, President Obama tried to use a more constructive rhetoric. He criticized the Bush administration's "us vs. them" rhetoric by defining this mentality as "a threat to the values that we profess, the values we seek to defend"<sup>640</sup>.

As might be expected, his rhetoric defines terrorism and violent extremism as the dangerous, radical other against not just the ideals, values, and national security of the U.S. but also civilization and Western principles<sup>641</sup>. In his speech to the U.S. troops in Afghanistan, President Obama compared the traits of Americans to the extremists:

Al Qaida and the violent extremists who you are fighting against want to destroy. But all of you want to build, and that is something essential about America. They have got no respect for human life. You see dignity in every human being. That is part of what we value as Americans. They want to drive races and regions and religions apart. You want to bring people together and see the world move forward together. They offer fear, in other words, and you offer hope<sup>642</sup>.

Here, President Obama gives a clear example of Hansen's dual understanding of identity construction: the juxtaposition of the positive process of linking with the negative process of differentiation. Being an American is represented as being a builder, respecting every human life and dignity, uniting people, and being a beacon

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<sup>640</sup> Barack H. Obama, "Remarks by President Obama in Address to the Parliament of Canada," The White House, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/30/remarks-president-obama-address-parliament-canada>.

<sup>641</sup> John Kerry, "Exit Memo From Secretary Kerry to President Obama," U.S. Department of State, 2017, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/01/266480.htm>.

<sup>642</sup> Barack H. Obama, "Presidential Remarks in Afghanistan," C-SPAN.org, 2010, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?292781-1/presidential-remarks-afghanistan>.

of hope. Simultaneously, being a violent extremist is represented as being a destroyer, having no respect for human life and dignity, separating people, and spreading fear.

Obama administration's rhetoric of the American Self is closely related to change and becoming better Americans (especially than the Bush era). The rhetoric of "Bush-McCain failure" represented the American Self in decline since the American leadership became questionable, the economy suffered greatly, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq could go on for years<sup>643</sup>. Therefore, the temporal dimension of the American Self was constituted by its constant comparison with the Bush administration's failures and reversing them. Furthermore, His rhetoric of leadership always referenced back to the post-World War II world order and the U.S.' leading role in building that order, including the foundations of international organizations like NATO or the U.N.<sup>644</sup> He repeatedly referenced back to the post-Second World War order and expressed the desire to do the same during his presidency. President Obama compared the possible returns of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and Iraq to the return of U.S. troops from the Second World War. He promised that just like the latter generation built the "strongest economy and middle class, the world has ever known", the Obama administration would do the same with the former, renew American leadership worldwide and bring America back<sup>645</sup>.

The temporal dimensions of the American Self and the extremist Others, on the other hand, are pretty similar to the Bush administration's War on Terror discourse. Within the Obama administration's identity discourses, the American Self is represented as being "tougher, smarter, realistic and gutsy", capable of changing and improving<sup>646</sup>. The extremist Others pose a "real threat" to the Americans, their values, and "the

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<sup>643</sup> Obama, "Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation."

<sup>644</sup> Barack H. Obama, "Remarks to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs," The American Presidency Project, 2007, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-chicago-council-global-affairs>.

<sup>645</sup> Obama, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," 2012.

<sup>646</sup> Joe Biden, "Remarks by the Vice President at the John F. Kennedy Forum," The White House, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/10/03/remarks-vice-president-john-f-kennedy-forum>.

civilized world”<sup>647</sup>. The extremist Others are mainly represented as Al Qaida and Daesh. According to this rhetoric, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, and Yemen provided “safe havens” to these extremists<sup>648</sup>. Similar to the War on Terror discourse, these extremists are represented as incapable of change and must be “disrupted, dismantled and defeated”<sup>649</sup>. However, the means to eliminate the threat differs. The Obama administration criticizes the Bush administration’s long-term use of military power in Afghanistan and Iraq. Finding the balance between military power, civilian power, and diplomacy is at the center of the Obama administration’s foreign policy discourse. The further characteristics of this discourse will be discussed in the next sub-chapter. However, this rhetoric of balance also represents the main differences between President Bush’s and Obama’s foreign policies and should be mentioned here. President Obama said, “After eight years of the disastrous policies of George Bush, it is time to pursue direct diplomacy, *with friend and foe alike*, without preconditions”<sup>650</sup>. Engaging “hostile nations” became one of the National Security Strategy of the U.S. in 2010, including Cuba, North Korea, and Iran<sup>651</sup>. Deploying solely military power was denounced by the administration repeatedly.

According to the Obama administration, the U.S. should actively engage with Afghanistan and Iraq, promote local democratic forces, and give developmental aid, especially through the USAID. He said, “In the long-term, our efforts to work with other countries to counter the ideology and root causes of violent extremism will be more important than our capacity to remove terrorists from the battlefield”<sup>652</sup>. In brief, within this discourse, the terrorists and extremists must be eliminated however,

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<sup>647</sup> Ibid.; Kerry, “Exit Memo From Secretary Kerry to President Obama.”

<sup>648</sup> Biden, “Remarks by the Vice President at the John F. Kennedy Forum.”

<sup>649</sup> The White House, “The 2010 National Security Strategy,” 2010, [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf); Biden, “Remarks by the Vice President at the John F. Kennedy Forum.”

<sup>650</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation” [Emphasis Added].

<sup>651</sup> The White House, “The 2010 National Security Strategy.”

<sup>652</sup> Barack H. Obama, “The 2015 National Security Strategy,” The White House, 2015, [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015\\_national\\_security\\_strategy\\_2.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf).

their “safe heavens” needed extra measures than just the use of military force. Their societies are constituted as capable of change with the “help” of the civilized world<sup>653</sup>. The Obama administration thought they could restore American leadership worldwide, especially through developmental aid. Therefore, the U.S. had to act because “The world wants the U.S. to lead. (...) They look to us (...) and they want to see us produce results and solve problems”<sup>654</sup>. Being a group leader (like the global leadership) inherently contains a hierarchical relationship, where the leader is superior, and the others are naturally inferior. Thus, the rhetoric of restoring American leadership worldwide rearticulates the ethical and spatial dimensions of the American Self. The American exceptionalism and being the leader of the rest constitutes the spatial dimension of the American Self. The responsibility that comes with being a group leader constitutes the ethical dimension because the leader has to make decisions for the sake of the group. On the other hand, the Obama administration repeatedly articulated the importance of constructive engagement, building partnerships, and acting collectively to deal with the international threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including climate change, energy security, and terrorism<sup>655</sup>. In short, while the U.S. constitutes itself as the leader of the free world, it simultaneously constitutes itself as the subject protecting the group of states, determining the problems, and having the solutions for them.

### 5.1.3. Engaging with the World

9/11 was an unexpected event, and it changed the whole course of the U.S. policy. As discussed in the previous chapter, President Bush and his administration

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<sup>653</sup> Jacob J. Lew, “Building Capacity to Protect U.S. National Security: The Fiscal Year 2010 International Affairs Budget,” U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/s/dmr/former/lew/123024.htm>.

<sup>654</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “Foreign Policy Priorities in the FY2011 International Affairs Budget,” U.S. Department of State, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/02/137256.htm>.

<sup>655</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Remarks by the President at the Summit of the Americas Opening Ceremony,” The White House, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-summit-americas-opening-ceremony>; Hillary R. Clinton, “New Beginnings: Foreign Policy Priorities in the Obama Administration,” U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/04/122048.htm>; Arturo Valenzuela, “U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond,” U.S. Department of State, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2010/138246.htm>.

articulated 9/11 as the event that changed everything and used it as an opportunity to pursue an aggressive policy agenda to reshape the world. This agenda was not the continuance of traditional U.S. foreign policy. Traditional U.S. foreign policy would aim to interconnect its increasing power with U.S. values to legitimize its growing power and influence worldwide. U.S. power would be the foundation of U.S. values during the Bush era<sup>656</sup>. The traditional interconnection became unbalanced while the role of the power became more visible under President Bush. In addition, the use of military force (sometimes unilaterally without the support of international organizations), the images of torture from Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo, and the false accusation of Iraq for developing weapons of mass destruction all combined and damaged the U.S. perception worldwide<sup>657</sup>.

The Obama administration's main domestic agenda was dealing with the economic recession and its adverse effects (like unemployment). The primary foreign policy rhetoric of the administration was based on reversing the failures of the Bush-McCain era<sup>658</sup>. The economic recession was highly crucial because U.S. politicians and foreign policymakers faced a demanding task: convincing the U.S. taxpayers to pay billions of U.S. dollars outside of U.S. soil while the average U.S. citizens struggled with unemployment and lost their homes. The Bush and Obama administrations' inability to convince the U.S. public of foreign spending polarized the public. It paved the way for the election of Donald Trump as the president in 2016<sup>659</sup>.

President Obama's strategy for the "Bush-McCain failure" was pursuing a traditional U.S. foreign policy agenda only with a heavy liberal tone, like highlighting diplomacy over the use of military power. The 2010 National Security Strategy stated, "When we overuse our military might, (...) or act without partners, then our military is overstretched, Americans bear a greater burden, and our leadership around

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<sup>656</sup> Menaldo, "Barack Obama's Foreign Policy Leadership: Renewing America's Image," 211.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid., 200, 211.

<sup>658</sup> Obama, "Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation."

<sup>659</sup> Jessica Trisko Darden, *Aiding and Abetting: U.S. Foreign Assistance and State Violence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 115–16.

the world is too narrowly identified with military force”<sup>660</sup>. Overusing military power was a short-term priority, while diplomacy and development gave long-term results in peace and prosperity. Thus, the Obama administration’s foreign policy agenda focused on diplomacy and development to reduce the necessity of resorting to defense<sup>661</sup>. By making diplomacy a top priority of U.S. foreign policy, the Obama administration aimed to promote U.S. values worldwide as always, but not by compromising these values for national security as the Bush administration did in Abu Ghraib. According to President Obama, when the U.S. compromised these values, it would lose its power and legitimization to promote these values internationally<sup>662</sup>. He then promised to lead by example.

The Secretary of State Clinton shared the administration’s foreign policy vision as “the Smart Power”, which combines “the tools of diplomacy, development and defense”<sup>663</sup>. The first objective of the vision of Smart Power was increasing civilian power worldwide (but especially in failed or autocratic states) by supporting the people, political parties, and trade associations through U.S. developmental aid<sup>664</sup>. Secretary Clinton always mentioned the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in the same sentence. Whenever she said the State Department, she also mentioned USAID<sup>665</sup>. For the Obama administration, the top priorities were increasing civilian power, the budget, and the Foreign Service

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<sup>660</sup> The White House, “The 2010 National Security Strategy,” 18.

<sup>661</sup> Lew, “Building Capacity to Protect U.S. National Security: The Fiscal Year 2010 International Affairs Budget.”

<sup>662</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” The American Presidency Project, 2014, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-21>.

<sup>663</sup> Clinton, “New Beginnings: Foreign Policy Priorities in the Obama Administration”; Hillary R. Clinton, “Foreign Policy Priorities in the President’s FY2010 International Affairs Budget,” U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/05/123692.htm>.

<sup>664</sup> Lew, “Building Capacity to Protect U.S. National Security: The Fiscal Year 2010 International Affairs Budget.”

<sup>665</sup> Clinton, “New Beginnings: Foreign Policy Priorities in the Obama Administration”; Hillary R. Clinton, “National Security Through Diplomacy,” U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/04/122098.htm>; Clinton, “Foreign Policy Priorities in the FY2011 International Affairs Budget”; Hillary R. Clinton, “The Nomination of John F. Kerry to Be the Secretary of State,” U.S. Senate, 2013, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-113shrg86451/html/CHRG-113shrg86451.htm>.

officers for developmental aid. This is why the U.S. foreign aid reached 50 billion U.S. dollars in 2012, catching the Cold War aid levels for the first time since 1952<sup>666</sup>. It is also important to note that, during the Obama administration, the amount of military aid decreased while the amount of developmental assistance increased in the overall budget of the U.S. international aid<sup>667</sup>. According to the administration, this was a deliberate “transition from military to civilian leadership”<sup>668</sup>.

The second objective was allocating the aid with a different developmental strategy than before. Instead of supporting the fragile governments (from a top-down strategy), the administration employed a “bottom-up development strategy” to support citizens and civil society directly through public diplomacy initiatives, including health, education, small businesses, and women's empowerment<sup>669</sup>.

The third objective was increasing constructive engagement with bilateral and multilateral partnerships. Engaging with the world was also part of the Bush administration's (and previous administrations') foreign policy agenda. President Obama's engagement discourse has a distinct principle: pursuing pragmatic and principled diplomacy and diplomatic tools (like sanctions or international isolation) first without looking at their ideology, past relations with the U.S., and classifications as a friend or foe<sup>670</sup>. It also included starting diplomatic discussions with Cuba and Iran<sup>671</sup>.

The fourth objective was strengthening global security capabilities with the U.S. allies. Apart from the traditional security threats, the Obama administration

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<sup>666</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, “Foreign Aid: U.S. Programs and Policy,” U.S. Congress, 2019, [https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20190416\\_R40213\\_ab215c466e78fd99f264f76b85d6b3501228394c.html](https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20190416_R40213_ab215c466e78fd99f264f76b85d6b3501228394c.html).

<sup>667</sup> Ibid.

<sup>668</sup> Marian Leonardo Lawson, “State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs: FY2012 Budget and Appropriations,” U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2012, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R41905.html>.

<sup>669</sup> Lew, “Building Capacity to Protect U.S. National Security: The Fiscal Year 2010 International Affairs Budget.”

<sup>670</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>671</sup> Clinton, “Foreign Policy Priorities in the President's FY2010 International Affairs Budget.”

successfully added new, emerging threats to the global agenda, like climate change, decreasing dependence on oil, and increasing the production of green energy. According to the administration, these new global threats (nuclear proliferation, global diseases, international migration) needed collective actions and responses since “For just as no nation can meet these challenges alone, no challenge can be met without America”<sup>672</sup>. The last objective involved developing urgent responses to the humanitarian needs that can occur after natural disasters, internal conflicts, and global diseases.

The Secretaries of State Powell and Rice had quite different foreign policy discourses, especially in the Western Hemisphere, even though they both served during the Bush era. Unlike their predecessors, the Secretaries of State, Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, had quite similar foreign policy discourses. Needless to say, there were a few nuances. For instance, Secretary Clinton had more statements on women's rights than Secretary Kerry, or he made more statements on the importance of free trade than her. However, overall, their foreign policy discourses as Secretaries of State were more aligned than their predecessors: the prominence of diplomacy and developmental aid over highlighting military power. These policies were especially pertinent in the case of U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America. Especially during the Bush administration, the anti-American rhetoric in the region was on the rise, and the Obama administration needed to develop new strategies to renew the U.S. image within the hemisphere and confront the leftist-populist discourses across the region. The following section will elaborate on the two basic discourses of the administration towards the hemisphere.

## **5.2. The U.S. Policy towards the Americas during the Obama Era**

As the keynote speaker at the Cuban American National Foundation's event, Barack Obama announced his foreign policy principles towards the Americas on May 23, 2008<sup>673</sup>. Expectedly, he built his Americas agenda on the World War II era President

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<sup>672</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “Foreign Policy Address at the Council on Foreign Relations,” U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/july/126071.htm>.

<sup>673</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”



Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms”. President Roosevelt’s 1941 State of the Union address laid the foundation for promoting U.S. values. He declared political freedom, religious freedom, freedom from want, and freedom from fear as the four types of freedoms as a cure to tyranny and dictatorship “everywhere in the world”<sup>674</sup>. President Obama claimed that while the U.S. had been defending these values worldwide in the past, the Bush administration failed to do so<sup>675</sup>. President Obama also accused President Bush of being negligent towards the Americas<sup>676</sup>. This negligence, in return, created a vacuum filled by “demagogues like Hugo Chávez”<sup>677</sup>. He said President Chávez had a “perilous mix of anti-American rhetoric, authoritarian government, and checkbook diplomacy offers the same false promise as the tried and failed ideologies of the past”<sup>678</sup>. The Obama administration’s foreign policy objectives towards the Americas were heavily related to the attempts to repair the “Bush-McCain failure” in the region to reestablish the U.S. leadership in the region<sup>679</sup>.

The Obama administration represented this policy of change as a unique and historic opportunity to renew the social contract between the Americas so that the region could leave behind the period of crisis and build a better future for the people of the Americas<sup>680</sup>. To realize these promises, the administration laid out their agenda for the Americas<sup>681</sup>. This agenda had two vital discursive components. The first one was the *equal partnership* between all the countries in the Americas, and there would be

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<sup>674</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union,” The American Presidency Project, 1941, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/annual-message-congress-the-state-the-union>.

<sup>675</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>676</sup> Obama, “The World Beyond Iraq”; Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>677</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Obama, “The World Beyond Iraq”; Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>680</sup> Thomas A. Shannon, “Remarks at the Inter-American Conference of Mayors,” U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2009/124673.htm>.

<sup>681</sup> Obama, “Remarks by the President at the Summit of the Americas Opening Ceremony,” 2009; Clinton, “New Beginnings: Foreign Policy Priorities in the Obama Administration”; Valenzuela, “U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond,” 2010.

no hierarchical partnership. The second one included the promise that the U.S. would build a *constructive engagement* with the Americas at all levels, from the individual level (the people of the Americas) to the international level (working with the international organizations in the region). The main aim of this agenda was lifting the people up, especially from poverty, so that they could “fulfill their own God-given potentials”<sup>682</sup>.

The official discourse analysis of the Obama administration’s foreign policy towards the Americas shows that the Bush administration’s two basic discourses towards the region (the Western Hemisphere discourse and the FTA discourse) were replaced by equal partnership and constructive engagement discourses. Instead of the Western Hemisphere, the Obama administration officials chose to refer to the region as the Americas. In addition, Assistant Secretary Valenzuela said, “Trade agreements are an integral part of the Administration’s overall strategy to deepen our ties within the Western Hemisphere”<sup>683</sup>. However, unlike the Bush administration, it was not the top priority for the Obama administration. President Obama rejected the idea that “any trade deal is a good deal”<sup>684</sup> and argued that “our trade should be fair and not just free”<sup>685</sup>. The top priorities of the Obama administration were renewing the American image by focusing on equal partnerships, engaging with every actor, primarily through developmental aid and USAID, and overcoming 21<sup>st</sup> century’s challenges (decreasing poverty, enhancing security, promoting democracy, and adopting policies compatible with the climate change) together with an understanding of mutual responsibility<sup>686</sup>. The following sub-sections will analyze the two basic discourses of equal partnership and constructive engagement of the Obama

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<sup>682</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “Remarks at the Launch of Inter-American Social Protection Network (IASPN),” U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/09/129473.htm>.

<sup>683</sup> Arturo Valenzuela, “U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond,” U.S. Department of State, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2010/138246.htm>.

<sup>684</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>685</sup> Barack H. Obama, “President Obama’s Farewell Address,” The White House, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/farewell>.

<sup>686</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Remarks of President Barack Obama Summit of the Americas Opening Plenary,” The White House, 2012, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/14/remarks-president-barack-obama-prepared-delivery-summit-americas-opening>.

administration and comprehensively analyze U.S. foreign policy towards the Americas under President Obama by focusing on these two basic discourses.

### **5.2.1. The Equal Partnership Discourse**

Just like the Western Hemisphere discourse of the Bush era, the Obama administration's equal partnership discourse also constitutes a collective hemispheric Self bounded by shared geography, values, interests, and responsibility. Unlike his predecessor, President Obama built his rhetoric towards the Americas with an acknowledgement; when it came to the Western Hemisphere, the U.S. made mistakes in the past (not just the Bush administration). The prominent administration officials made speeches about the past mistakes of the U.S. in the region, including President Obama<sup>687</sup>, Vice President Biden<sup>688</sup>, Secretary Clinton<sup>689</sup>, and Assistant Secretary Valenzuela<sup>690</sup>. This acknowledgment had a familiar subject: In the past when the U.S.' Cold War priorities and democratization process in Latin America were encountered, the U.S. had always chosen the Cold War priorities over the democratization<sup>691</sup>.

Historically, "the equal partnership" was first used by President Eisenhower in 1953 for the possible admission of West Germany to NATO. He argued that West Germany should be welcomed into NATO and treated as an equal partner in the

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<sup>687</sup> Obama, "Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation"; Barack H. Obama, "Op-Ed: 'Choosing a Better Future in the Americas,'" The White House, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/op-ed-president-barack-obama-choosing-a-better-future-americas>.

<sup>688</sup> Joe Biden, "Op-Ed by Vice President Biden: 'A New Day for Partnership in the Americas,'" The White House, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/op-ed-vice-president-biden-a-new-day-partnership-americas>; Joe Biden, "Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the 20th Annual CAF Conference," The White House, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/08/remarks-vice-president-joe-biden-20th-annual-caf-conference>.

<sup>689</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, "New Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas," U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/06/124173.htm>.

<sup>690</sup> Arturo Valenzuela, "Statement by Arturo Valenzuela for the Nomination to Be the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs," U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2009, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/404?notfound=/testimony/2009/ValenzuelaTestimony090708a>; Valenzuela, "U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond," 2010.

<sup>691</sup> Valenzuela, "U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond," 2010.

community<sup>692</sup>. Ten years later, President Kennedy claimed that a united Europe would be “a full and equal partner” of the U.S. and the unity of Europe was in the interest of the U.S.<sup>693</sup> Surprisingly, the first U.S. president who pledged to establish an equal partnership with the Western Hemisphere was Richard Nixon in 1971<sup>694</sup>. In 1983, another Republican president, Ronald Reagan, renewed this pledge and said only the equal partnership between the nations of the hemisphere could make the region reach its full potential<sup>695</sup>. Both these Presidents decided to intervene in the affairs of certain Latin American countries during their presidencies. The U.S. role in the 1973 coup d'état in Chile is undeniable, as the official documents show<sup>696</sup>. Secretary Kissinger said, “I do not see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people. The issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves”<sup>697</sup>. President Reagan decided to invade Grenada in 1983, saying the U.S. had no other choice, as previously mentioned.

President Obama was the first Democrat president who declared the hemisphere an equal partner to the U.S. He also accepted that in the past, the U.S. intervened in the affairs of the other nations in the hemisphere. In his remarks at the fifth Summit of the Americas Opening Ceremony in Trinidad and Tobago, President Obama declared to the heads of thirty-four Latin American countries:

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<sup>692</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Address ‘The Chance for Peace’ Delivered Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors,” The American Presidency Project, 1953, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-chance-for-peace-delivered-before-the-american-society-newspaper-editors>.

<sup>693</sup> John F. Kennedy, “Address in the Assembly Hall at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt,” The American Presidency Project, 1963, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-assembly-hall-the-paulskirche-frankfurt>.

<sup>694</sup> Richard Nixon, “Proclamation 4046—Pan American Day and Pan American Week,” The American Presidency Project, 1971, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-4046-pan-american-day-and-pan-american-week-1971>.

<sup>695</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks on Central America and El Salvador at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers,” The American Presidency Project, 1983, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-central-america-and-el-salvador-the-annual-meeting-the-national-association>.

<sup>696</sup> James Doubek, “Chile Coup 50 Years Later: The U.S. Role and Its Unintended Consequences,” NPR, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/09/10/1193755188/chile-coup-50-years-pinochet-kissinger-human-rights-allende>.

<sup>697</sup> Goodman, “Ask Kissinger About Pinochet.”

I know that promises of partnership have gone unfulfilled in the past, and that trust has to be earned over time. While U.S. has done much to promote peace and prosperity in the hemisphere, we have at times been disengaged, and at times we sought to dictate our terms. But I pledge to you that we seek an equal partnership. There is no senior partner and junior partner in our relations; there is simply engagement based on mutual respect and common interests and shared values. I am here to launch a new chapter of engagement that will be sustained throughout my administration<sup>698</sup>.

The Obama administration's equal partnership discourse recognizes past mistakes but skips the apology part. The administration never elaborated on these mistakes in detail or attempted to make official apologies, mainly because apologizing would remove the vagueness of those mistakes and lead to further foreign policy actions to correct them. Instead, this discourse maintained that there were mistakes in the past, but the hemisphere should not stay in the past and should only focus forward.

The temporal dimension of the Obama administration's hemispheric Self constituted only two choices: "We can overcome our shared challenges with a sense of common purpose, or we can stay mired in the old debates of the past"<sup>699</sup>. The past is represented as a dark, vicious cycle<sup>700</sup> and an old ideological battle<sup>701</sup>. In return, the future represented enormous new opportunities<sup>702</sup> and an eclipse blocking the darkness of the past<sup>703</sup>. This constitution of the past and future, then, also constitutes only one acceptable option, as President Obama elaborated, "I did not come here to debate the past, I came here to deal with the future. I believe (...) that we must learn from history, but we cannot be trapped by it"<sup>704</sup>.

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<sup>698</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President at the Summit of the Americas Opening Ceremony," 2009.

<sup>699</sup> Barack H. Obama, "Interview With Juan Carlos Lopez of CNN En Espanol," The American Presidency Project, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-with-juan-carlos-lopez-cnn-en-espanol-0>.

<sup>700</sup> Barack H. Obama, "Remarks by President Obama and President Uribe of Colombia in Joint Press Availability," The White House, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-and-president-uribe-colombia-joint-press-availability>.

<sup>701</sup> Thomas A. Shannon, "Intervention During the Plenary Session Regarding Cuba and the OAS," U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2009/124314.htm>.

<sup>702</sup> Obama, "Op-Ed: 'Choosing a Better Future in the Americas.'"

<sup>703</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President at the Summit of the Americas Opening Ceremony," 2009.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid.

The equal partnership discourse failed to maintain internal integrity. First of all, this temporal constitution alone is not entirely compatible with the discourse itself. If only one side mentions some mistakes of the past without elaborating the details or apologizing, if only one side decides the possible options on the table (staying in the past or choosing the future), and by limiting the options if only one side constitutes the only reasonable outcome (as choosing the future over the past), then is it possible to conclude that there is equality between the partners here? The answer is no since only one (the U.S.) of the partners decides what is best for all the other partners. The Obama administration's equal partnership discourse is incompatible with the U.S. leadership discourse. Repeatedly, the administration promised to renew the U.S. leadership within the hemisphere<sup>705</sup>. Secretary Clinton said none of the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be solved without the leadership of the U.S.<sup>706</sup> Is it possible for the U.S. to have the leadership role of the thirty-four countries in the region while simultaneously being just one equal partner of them? The leadership role ontologically has a hierarchy, but there is no hierarchy among equals. Therefore, being a group leader and an ordinary equal partner in that group is impossible. The leadership role has peculiar power, responsibility, and legitimacy to decide and act on it. Equal partners have to make decisions among themselves multilaterally, while the leader could decide and act alone for the sake of the group. The internal incompatibilities of the equal partnership discourse made the discourse vulnerable to the oppositional discourses (in this case, Republicans' discourse in the House and the Senate). This vulnerability is pivotal for the second key event and will be discussed further in section 5.4.

The spatial and ethical dimensions of the hemispheric Self were interwoven in the equal partnership discourse. President Obama usually opted for the Americas, not the Western Hemisphere, referring to the continent. Historically, U.S. presidents preferred the Western Hemisphere. In fact, apart from President Franklin Roosevelt, every U.S. president was inclined to use the hemisphere more than the Americas. Besides, the prominent positions regarding the region were created using the name

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<sup>705</sup> Obama, "Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation"; Obama, "President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address"; Obama, "Interview With Juan Carlos Lopez of CNN En Espanol ."

<sup>706</sup> Clinton, "New Beginnings: Foreign Policy Priorities in the Obama Administration."

Western Hemisphere, for instance, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. It is not called the Bureau of the Americas Affairs or the Assistant Secretary of State for the Americas. President Roosevelt was the only U.S. president who used the Americas more than the Western Hemisphere regarding the region until President Obama. President Obama's rhetoric on the Americas heavily relied on President Roosevelt, as discussed in part 5.2. Just like President Obama, he also became president after an economic crisis (the Great Depression) and promised to restore the economy. President Obama's economic program was similar to President Roosevelt's: social security, increasing taxes on the business, not the ordinary citizens, and new controls over the banking system<sup>707</sup>. President Roosevelt's good neighbor policy was also close to President Obama's equal partnership discourse. They both accepted that the U.S. unilaterally dictated the terms in the region in the past. However, they promised that this would change with a non-interventionist multilateral approach during their presidencies. President Roosevelt criticized the unilateral declaration of the Monroe Doctrine<sup>708</sup>. In 2013, Secretary Kerry declared:

The era of the Monroe Doctrine is over. (...) The relationship that we seek is about all of our countries viewing one another as equals, sharing responsibilities, cooperating on security issues, and adhering not to doctrine, but to the decisions that we make as partners to advance the values and the interests that we share<sup>709</sup>.

Even though the Obama administration preferred the Americas, the region was still bound by shared values, purposes, security, interests, geography, and responsibilities. "There is power in our proximity—now, our geographic proximity, to be sure, but also the proximity of our economic interests, our values, our culture, and the challenges we share"<sup>710</sup>. This commonality was so vital that the future of the U.S.

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<sup>707</sup> The White House, "Franklin D. Roosevelt," 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/franklin-d-roosevelt/>.

<sup>708</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Press Conference on Board President's Train En Route to Washington, D.C.," The American Presidency Project, 1940, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-conference-board-presidents-train-en-route-washington-dc>.

<sup>709</sup> John Kerry, "Remarks on U.S. Policy in the Western Hemisphere," U.S. Department of State, 2013, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/11/217680.htm>.

<sup>710</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, "Remarks at the 41<sup>st</sup> Washington Conference on the Americas," U.S. Department of State, 2011, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/05/163025.htm>.

was “fundamentally tied to the future of the Americas”; therefore, “what is good for the people of the Americas is good for the U.S.”<sup>711</sup>. This discourse created a unity around the hemispheric Self like it represented a single unity since they all had the same identity. This Self’s spatial dimension is the same as the Western Hemisphere discourse. The geography of the Americas is unique and different from any other part of the world.

This uniqueness and their shared histories, values, and interests also constructed the ethical dimension of this Self because they face the same threats of climate change, international terrorism, transnational crime, poverty, and citizen insecurity. These threats were also rearticulated as unique threats; they were not national. They were international or transnational. So, one nation alone, even the U.S., could not meet these challenges alone. As Secretary Clinton said, “In today’s world, we face challenges that have no respect for borders. Not one of them can be dealt with the U.S. alone. None, however, can be solved without us leading”<sup>712</sup>. As a result, rearticulating the threats beyond traditional borders enabled new foreign policies necessitating international cooperation. These cooperations had their own necessities. For instance, international drug trafficking has been in this ‘threats without borders’ category since the 1970s. The U.S. has been in a “war on drugs” for years. In 1986, President Reagan ordered to find ways to destroy the drug supply, especially in Central America (including military intervention), by putting the drug threat to the same level as terrorism<sup>713</sup>. When a subject is included within the national security discourse, it gives tremendous power to the politicians, especially the executive, to deal with it, including military intervention, providing economic aid to the supplier countries in exchange for changes in their domestic policies, or the obligation to cooperate with the U.S. on the matter. The studies analyzing the U.S. relations with Colombia and Mexico with a specific focus on the War on Drugs discourse show the hierarchical and interventionist nature of this discourse<sup>714</sup>. They show how the U.S.

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<sup>711</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>712</sup> Clinton, “New Beginnings: Foreign Policy Priorities in the Obama Administration.”

<sup>713</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 172.

<sup>714</sup> Dominic Corva, “Neoliberal Globalization and the War on Drugs: Transnationalizing Illiberal Governance in the Americas,” *Political Geography* 27, no. 2 (February 2008): 176–93,



construction of this discourse created a hierarchical relationship, changed domestic politics, and created exclusionary practices against Colombia and Mexico. Thus, the representation of threats as transnational enables the U.S. to follow specific foreign policy actions (intervening in the domestic politics of other countries through developmental aid or economic initiatives like the Merida Initiative) and simultaneously disable alternative foreign policy actions.

The spatial constitution of the hemispheric Self obliges the states of the Americas to comply with the U.S.' policies to be a part of that hemispheric Self. This is represented as sharing the responsibility, constituting the ethical dimension of the hemispheric Self. Since their values are common, the threats to the hemispheric Self are common, too, and these threats cannot be dealt with alone. It should be their ethical responsibility to fight them all unitedly. When a state in the hemisphere like Venezuela chooses not to comply with this U.S. policy, it is declared "not cooperating fully with the U.S. counterterrorism efforts"<sup>715</sup> or identified "as a major drug transit and major illicit drug producing country"<sup>716</sup>. It also enables the exclusion of Venezuela from this hemispheric Self as an Other.

Confronting the challenges and the shared responsibility forms a considerable part of the Obama administration's foreign policy agenda towards the Americas. Jeffrey Davidow, the White House Advisor for the 2009 Summit of the Americas, summarized the Obama administration's approach to the Americas "with a spirit of equality; with a spirit of equity; and with a sense of responsibility"<sup>717</sup>. The spirit of

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2007.07.008>; Dawn Paley, "Drug War as Neoliberal Trojan Horse," *Latin American Perspectives* 42, no. 5 (September 22, 2015): 109–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X15585117>; Michael L. Rosino and Matthew W. Hughey, "The War on Drugs, Racial Meanings, and Structural Racism: A Holistic and Reproductive Approach," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 77, no. 3–4 (May 29, 2018): 849–92, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12228>.

<sup>715</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism," 2023, <https://www.state.gov/country-reports-on-terrorism-2/>.

<sup>716</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Presidential Determination on Major Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries," The White House, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/presidential-determination-on-major-drug-transit-or-major-illicit-drug-producing-countries-majors-list/>.

<sup>717</sup> Jeffrey S. Davidow, "A Discussion on the Summit of the Americas," U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2009/120328.htm>.

equality includes the equal partnership between the hemisphere states. The spirit of equity involves the peoples of the Americas and reducing poverty in the region. Lastly, a sense of responsibility means the shared responsibility of the region against the common problems and the future generations<sup>718</sup>. The strategies developed to cope with these challenges included a new chapter of constructive engagement not just between the governments of the Americas but also between the people of the Americas. These strategies will be analyzed in the next section.

### **5.2.2. The Constructive Engagement Discourse**

President Obama's engagement discourse unsurprisingly started with criticizing the Bush administration's 'disengagement' from the region. He claimed President Bush "raised the hopes of the region that our engagement would be sustained instead of piecemeal"<sup>719</sup> and then let down the people and the region's governments. Adopting the equal partnership discourse was about acknowledging past mistakes and gaining the trust of the states and the people in the region. The constructive engagement discourse was inherently related to the future. The U.S. made mistakes in the past, but how should the Obama administration move forward without making the same mistakes? The answer was establishing equal partnership and constructive engagement throughout the hemisphere. These had to be done without looking back, leaving the ideological arguments of the past behind and focusing on the future with partnership and engagement, especially to transcend problems like international terrorism, economic crisis, and climate change<sup>720</sup>. Mainly because these "ideological dogmas" create resistance to the solutions to these transnational problems<sup>721</sup>. Therefore, the Obama administration's foreign policy discourse relied on establishing "a relationship that seeks to build equal and pragmatic partnerships" with the countries of the hemisphere by focusing on the future, not staying stuck in

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<sup>718</sup> Ibid.

<sup>719</sup> Obama, "Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation."

<sup>720</sup> Denis McDonough, "Press Briefing to Preview the President's Trip to the Summit of the Americas," The American Presidency Project, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-briefing-preview-the-presidents-trip-the-summit-the-americas-jeffrey-davidow>.

<sup>721</sup> Obama, "The President's News Conference in Port of Spain."

the past<sup>722</sup>. In sum, within this discourse, the hemispheric Self looks to the future by establishing pragmatic partnerships and constructive engagement to solve problems while the Other stays stuck in dogmatic ideologies of the past and creates a block against the solutions.

The base of the constructive engagement was establishing a dialog with everyone in the hemisphere. The counter-parties of this engagement vary. All the states in the hemisphere, including Cuba, were a part of this engagement agenda. This rhetoric denied the Manichaeism where the hemisphere is divided as friends and foe, rejected approaching all the countries in the hemisphere with the same “one size fits all” policy, and adopted a policy acknowledging the sub-regional contexts (like the establishments of new regional organizations like ALBA or UNASUR<sup>723</sup>. Therefore, even these international organizations that were founded to combat against the U.S. hegemony in the region should be a part of this constructive engagement. Assistant Secretary Valenzuela framed this understanding within the “dynamic multilateralism” concept<sup>724</sup>. According to him, the U.S. foreign policy towards the Americas must focus on sub-regional efforts (like Central America or the Southern Cone) and provide specific policies (for instance, focusing on Brazil for green energy investments)<sup>725</sup>. Finally, the peoples of the Americas constituted the most crucial part of this engagement discourse since “what is good for the people of the Americas is good for the United States”<sup>726</sup>.

The constructive engagement agenda had four main pillars: promoting economic prosperity, increasing citizen security, advancing democratic governance, and deploying clean energy<sup>727</sup>. Within this discourse of constructive engagement, these

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<sup>722</sup> Valenzuela, “Statement by Arturo Valenzuela for the Nomination to Be the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs.”

<sup>723</sup> Arturo Valenzuela, “U.S. Foreign Policy in the Obama Era,” U.S. Department of State, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2010/149345.htm>.

<sup>724</sup> Arturo Valenzuela, “Remarks at the 40th Washington Conference on the Americas,” U.S. Department of State, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2010/142163.htm>.

<sup>725</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>726</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>727</sup> Arturo Valenzuela, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation,” U.S. Department of State, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2010/142162.htm>.

four pillars were represented as the critical top priorities of the peoples of the Americas<sup>728</sup>.

The first pillar is promoting prosperity, and its main aim is decreasing poverty and inequality in the region. This pillar is directly related to the competitive market economy. It was one of the areas where the U.S. led by example. The administration claimed that the U.S. became “the wealthiest nation on Earth” because it follows the principles of an open market economy and offers equal opportunities for all its people independent of their race, gender, religion, and economic background<sup>729</sup>. This is why the administration’s agenda towards the Americas included promoting prosperity by encouraging trade, improving competitiveness, and investing in infrastructure and people through education<sup>730</sup>. Unlike the Bush administration, the Obama administration repeatedly argued that trade and lowering barriers alone were insufficient for improving prosperity since FTAs were not a magic bullet<sup>731</sup>. Alongside the trade, improving economic competitiveness was a necessity. President Obama said, “We have to look for ways to grow our economies and deepen integration beyond trade deals. That is what China is doing right now, as they build bridges from Beijing to Brazil and expand their investments across the region. If the U.S. does not step forward, we risk being left behind”<sup>732</sup>. Hence, the administration’s plan involved building bridges, new roads, railroads, and stadiums<sup>733</sup>. As a part of the “from the bottom up” agenda, investing in people’ of the Americas education became one of the goals, especially for strengthening the contacts between people to people.

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<sup>728</sup> Ibid.

<sup>729</sup> Obama, “The President’s News Conference in Port of Spain”; Obama, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” 2011.

<sup>730</sup> Valenzuela, “U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond,” 2010.

<sup>731</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “Remarks at the First Diplomacy Briefing Series Meeting, Focused on the Issues and Challenges of U.S. Relations With Latin America,” U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/12/133453.htm>; Valenzuela, “Remarks at the 40th Washington Conference on the Americas”; Valenzuela, “U.S. Foreign Policy in the Obama Era.”

<sup>732</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>733</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Remarks by the President at CEO Business Summit in Brazil,” The White House, 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/19/remarks-president-ceo-business-summit-brasilia-brazil>.

Secretary Clinton claimed that “In our region, the income gap continues to widen; too few girls and boys finish their educations; women, rural farmers, Afro-descendants and indigenous people remain trapped on the bottom rung of the economic and social ladder with too few opportunities to move up”<sup>734</sup>. Therefore, according to the administration, the U.S.’ main agenda towards the Americas should focus on education and training. This educational agenda included providing exchange programs across the region, giving business training to the people in the region, and increasing academic research partnerships<sup>735</sup>.

The second pillar was increasing human security throughout the hemisphere. President Obama said, “Today, too many people in the Americas live in fear”<sup>736</sup>. The increasing crime rates, organized crime, drug trafficking, gang-related crimes, poverty, and inequality were all listed as the targeted aims of this pillar<sup>737</sup>. Instead of focusing on the old ideological debates of the Cold War, the region needed to focus on promoting security because, as President Obama said, “To combat lawlessness and violence, we do not need a debate about whether to blame right-wing paramilitaries or left-wing insurgents – we need practical cooperation to expand our common security”<sup>738</sup>. Therefore, strengthening cooperation between the governments, following an understanding of co-responsibility, and providing international aid to combat the crime rates became the main goals of this pillar<sup>739</sup>.

The third pillar was improving values like democracy, human rights, accountability, and individual liberties across the Americas. The leading organization for this improvement was the OAS, and the primary legal document was the Inter-American Democratic Charter of the OAS, which was adopted on the same day as 9/11<sup>740</sup>. As a

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<sup>734</sup> Clinton, “New Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas.”

<sup>735</sup> Arturo Valenzuela, “Does the U.S. Have a Policy Toward Latin America? Assessing the Impact to U.S. Interests and Allies,” U.S. Department of State, 2011, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2011/156598.htm>.

<sup>736</sup> Obama, “Remarks by the President at the Summit of the Americas Opening Ceremony,” 2009.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid.; Valenzuela, “U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond,” 2010.

<sup>738</sup> Obama, “Remarks by the President at the Summit of the Americas Opening Ceremony,” 2009.

<sup>739</sup> Valenzuela, “Remarks at the 40th Washington Conference on the Americas.”

<sup>740</sup> The Organization of American States, “Inter-American Democratic Charter.”

result of the anti-U.S. stance of the Pink Tide, Chilean José Miguel Insulza was elected as the Secretary General of the OAS in 2005, reelected in 2010, and served until 2015. Secretary Insulza is a leftist politician who served as Minister for Internal Affairs of Chile from 2000 to 2004. He was a political advisor in the leftist coalition of the government of Salvador Allende and lived in exile for twelve years after the 1973 coup in Chile<sup>741</sup>. His candidacy to the OAS was supported by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, and Uruguay and not by the U.S.<sup>742</sup> After he was elected the Secretary-General, the U.S. effect on the OAS visibly declined. From then on, the U.S. politicians often criticized the ineffectiveness of the OAS in regional disputes<sup>743</sup>. Assistant Secretary Valenzuela was one of them. He said the OAS must “fulfill the promise of the Inter-American Democratic Charter as an effective tool in the collective defense of democracy” and “should be less hesitant to use their existing authorities under the OAS Charter”<sup>744</sup>. Despite the criticisms, working with the regional and international organizations was a priority for the Obama administration, especially when it came to democratic governance. Again, USAID and international aid were tools for promoting democratic governance in the region, especially to support civil society and the opposition in the ‘authoritarian regimes’<sup>745</sup>.

The last pillar was the clean energy deployment. President Obama was the first U.S. president to openly accept the realities of climate change. His administration offered plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, develop alternative green energy resources to oil, and pursue sustainable energy policies<sup>746</sup>. Energy resources were an important

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<sup>741</sup> Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, “Reseñas Biográficas Parlamentarias: José Miguel Insulza Salinas,” BCN, 2023, [https://www.bcn.cl/historiapolitica/resenas\\_parlamentarias/wiki/José\\_Miguel\\_Insulza\\_Salinas](https://www.bcn.cl/historiapolitica/resenas_parlamentarias/wiki/José_Miguel_Insulza_Salinas).

<sup>742</sup> José de Córdoba, “OAS Election Underscores Decline of U.S. Clout,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 2005, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB111498849121921692>.

<sup>743</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Remarks to the General Assembly of the OAS,” 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/47228.htm>; Robert B. Zoellick, “Remarks to General Assembly of the OAS,” U.S. Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/2006/67552.htm>; Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, “Ileana’s Cause,” *The Ripon Forum* 43, no. 3 (2009): 10–11.

<sup>744</sup> Valenzuela, “U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond,” 2010.

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>746</sup> Tom Donilon, “Remarks by Tom Donilon, National Security Advisor to the President At the Launch of Columbia University’s Center on Global Energy Policy,” The White House, 2013,

topic for the region since the most significant three suppliers of oil came from Canada, Mexico, and Venezuela<sup>747</sup>. The region was essential for developing alternative clean energy resources and ending the U.S. dependence on oil<sup>748</sup>. Providing incentives and academic partnerships for clean energy technology like biofuels and hydropower were the central policies for this pillar. Brazil was one of the leading partners in this energy partnership and engagement primarily through the biofuel partnership and initiatives<sup>749</sup>. In fact, initiatives and international aid created the backbone of the Obama administration's foreign policy towards the Americas, especially Central America. The administration acknowledged that the U.S.'s power over the region declined for years. The U.S. even lost its hegemony over the OAS. Thus, the administration focused on the economically fragile sub-region to rebalance the changing power dynamics. The constructive engagement with Central American countries mainly consisted of these initiatives. The Merida Initiative, the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, and the Central America Regional Security Initiative, for instance, aimed to fight drug trafficking and violent drug-related crimes in Mexico and Central America<sup>750</sup>. Other initiatives encompassed the whole region, like the Pathways to Prosperity to promote prosperity across the region, 100,000 Strong in the Americas to establish an exchange program for the students of the region, and the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions<sup>751</sup>.

Overall, between 2009 and 2011, the administration launched forty new initiatives across the region<sup>752</sup>. This alone is enough to explain why the U.S. budget for

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<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/24/remarks-tom-donilon-national-security-advisor-president-launch-columbia->

<sup>747</sup> Mark P. Sullivan, "Venezuela: Issues for Congress, 2009-2012," U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2013, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R40938.html>.

<sup>748</sup> Barack H. Obama, "Remarks on Fuel Efficiency Standards," The American Presidency Project, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-fuel-efficiency-standards-0>.

<sup>749</sup> Valenzuela, "Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation."

<sup>750</sup> Biden, "Op-Ed by Vice President Biden: 'A New Day for Partnership in the Americas'"; Valenzuela, "U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond," 2010.

<sup>751</sup> Valenzuela, "Does the U.S. Have a Policy Toward Latin America? Assessing the Impact to U.S. Interests and Allies."

<sup>752</sup> The White House, "Partnerships for Progress: The Fact Sheets," 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/21/partnerships-progress-fact-sheets>.

international aid reached the Cold War levels in 2012 for the first time in sixty years<sup>753</sup>. Secretary Clinton explains the aims of these initiatives: “All of these initiatives are designed to enhance American security, help people in need, and give the American people a strong return on their investments. Our aim is not to create dependency. We do not want to just pass out fish; we want to teach people to fish”<sup>754</sup>. These were “the efforts to lift other countries out of the poverty”<sup>755</sup>, and the administration wanted to create the opportunity so that not just the U.S. citizens, but all the people of the Americas could fulfill their “God-given potentials”<sup>756</sup>. Secretary Clinton called this as leading through the civilian power of the U.S.<sup>757</sup> The rhetoric of “to lift people out of poverty”<sup>758</sup> or “to lift up those who are on the bottom”<sup>759</sup> certainly does not connote with the equal partnership discourse. One can only lift someone up if she/he is not at the bottom. The superiority and hierarchical relation between the Obama administration’s rhetoric and certain people of the Americas (apart from the citizens of Canada and the U.S.) is highly evident. These internal inconsistencies within the Obama administration’s foreign policy discourses across the region made them highly vulnerable to the counter-arguments of the oppositional discourses. As previously argued in the theoretical framework, the discourses are never fixed, and they constantly fight with each other over hegemony. The Obama administration’s hegemonic discourse always competed with the oppositional discourse. In this case, the latter was the discourses of Republican members of Congress. They argued constantly against these equal partnership and constitutive engagement discourses.

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<sup>753</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, “Foreign Aid: U.S. Programs and Policy.”

<sup>754</sup> Clinton, “Foreign Policy Priorities in the FY2011 International Affairs Budget.”

<sup>755</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Remarks by the President at the Summit of the Americas Opening Ceremony,” The White House, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-summit-americas-opening-ceremony>.

<sup>756</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “Policy Address on Opportunity In The Americas,” U.S. Department of State, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/06/142848.htm>.

<sup>757</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “The 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR): Leading Through Civilian Power,” U.S. Department of State, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/s/dmr/qddr/2010/index.htm>.

<sup>758</sup> Obama, “The President’s News Conference in Port of Spain.”

<sup>759</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “Remarks At the 40th Washington Conference on the Americas,” U.S. Department of State, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/05/141760.htm>.



Moreover, the Obama administration's incapability to convince the U.S. public of the radical changes in foreign policy, like being open to negotiations with Iran, North Korea, and Cuba, strengthened the hands of the Republicans. Similarly, the administration could not persuade the U.S. public of the necessity of the high increase in international aid right after the economic crisis. President Obama repeatedly criticized the military spending of the Bush regime. However, the latter could at least constitute the necessary conditions to convince the public of the necessity of military intervention (even if it was just for a couple of the first years). The constitution of the War on Terror discourse as a hegemonic discourse was highly successful. The Obama administration could not do that. The question is not about the necessity of spending billions of U.S. dollars outside of U.S. soil. The question was about framing this necessity within a hegemonic discursive space and convincing the general public of the necessity of it.

The internal inconsistencies within the administration's discourses and the inability to convince the U.S. public opened the discursive space for the oppositional discourses to compete. The first disagreement between the executive and the legislative branches of the government (in other words, between the hegemonic discourse vs. oppositional discourse) arose right after Arturo Valenzuela was nominated the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs and Thomas Shannon's nomination as the Ambassador to Brazil. The Republicans (and even Democrats like Senator Bob Menendez) in Congress firmly stood against the Obama administration's foreign policy agenda across the Americas from the start, especially the members of the Subcommittees on the Western Hemisphere of both the Senate and the House<sup>760</sup>.

The official appointment process starts right after the president's nomination, and then the Senate decides whether to confirm the nomination. The Senate's appointment process was placed on hold by Republican Senator Jim DeMint to protest the Obama administration's initial reaction to President Zelaya's overthrow in

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<sup>760</sup> The U.S. Senate has the Committee on Foreign Relations, and it has the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues. The U.S. House of Representatives has the Foreign Affairs Committee, and it also has The Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere.

Honduras<sup>761</sup>. The main argument was on the official U.S. reaction to the coup d'état against Honduras President Zelaya on June 28, 2009<sup>762</sup>. President Zelaya became closer to the Pink Tide after his election in 2006. When he was ousted by the military on June 28, 2009, and sent into exile, President Obama called this, surprisingly, a coup<sup>763</sup>. Surprisingly, because traditionally, when an anti-U.S. Latin American president got ousted by the military, the U.S. usually chose not to call this ouster as a coup but as the wish of the people<sup>764</sup>. The Bush administration gave an example of this traditional stance by not declaring President Chávez's overthrow in 2002 as a coup but as an event that "resulted in a change in the government", which also "happened in a very quick fashion as a result of the message of the Venezuelan people"<sup>765</sup>. In the Honduras case, President Obama said, "We believe that the coup was not legal and that President Zelaya remains the president of Honduras. (...) We do not want to go back to a dark past. The United States has not always stood as it should with some of these fledgling democracies"<sup>766</sup>. Senator DeMint argued against the President's arguments since he was closer to the traditional stance; he declared that President Zelaya was "a Chávez-style dictator" and "President Obama's call for the reinstatement of Zelaya is a slap in the face to the people of Honduras"<sup>767</sup>.

The Obama administration's first test in Latin America was the coup in Honduras because the administration promised a clean break from the past. Both President

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<sup>761</sup> Alexander Bolton, "Obama and DeMint Locked in Proxy Fight over Hugo Chavez," *The Hill*, 2009, <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/50647-obama-and-demint-locked-in-proxy-fight-over-hugo-chavez/>; Council on Hemispheric Affairs, "Critical Confirmations for Valenzuela and Shannon Remain Delayed as Senator DeMint Trivializes Process," COHA, 2009, <https://coha.org/critical-confirmations-for-valenzuela-and-shannon-remain-delayed-as-senator-demint-trivializes-confirmation-process/>.

<sup>762</sup> Obama, "Remarks by President Obama and President Uribe of Colombia in Joint Press Availability."

<sup>763</sup> Alexander David and Arshad Mohammed, "Obama Says Coup in Honduras Is Illegal," *Reuters*, 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-honduras-usa-sb-idUKTRE55S5J220090629>.

<sup>764</sup> Bolton, "Obama and DeMint Locked in Proxy Fight over Hugo Chavez."

<sup>765</sup> Fleischer, "White House Press Briefing."

<sup>766</sup> Obama, "Remarks by President Obama and President Uribe of Colombia in Joint Press Availability."

<sup>767</sup> Susan Davis, "Sen. DeMint Supports Honduran Coup," *The Wall Street Journal*, 2009, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-WB-11030>.

Obama and Secretary Clinton admitted that when it came to the hemisphere, the U.S. dictated the terms unilaterally and created problems in the past<sup>768</sup>. Assistant Secretary Arturo Valenzuela said, “The U.S. put Cold War priorities ahead of democratization in the region”<sup>769</sup>. Their promise was a radical change from the past and building the U.S. leadership for the future. President Obama declared that the ideological stale debates were in the past and the Americas “must choose the future over the past”<sup>770</sup>. So, the U.S. would stop “pressing for top-down reform” in the region and pursue “an agenda that advances democracy, security, and opportunity from the bottom up”, especially by directly engaging the people of the Americas<sup>771</sup>.

More importantly, the Obama administration’s intention to talk with everyone was the biggest problem for the Republicans in Congress. The administration was transparent in prioritizing diplomacy and had been open about their plans to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba, Iran, and North Korea. The 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy declared and supported this policy<sup>772</sup>. Promoting engagement over disengagement was the administration's general foreign policy principle, not just towards the Americas. President Obama argued that disengagement made “hostile nations” more dangerous so that the U.S. would pursue engagement with them first<sup>773</sup>. The Republican disapproval of this engagement agenda was visible, so Senator DeMint’s statement on blocking the approval process of the top officials in the hemisphere reveals this disapproval. He said, “I am hopeful that as President Obama grows in office, he will eventually turn away from despots like Ahmadinejad, Chávez, Castro, and Zelaya and give the United States' full-throated support to the people of any country who are fighting for the same values we cherish and defend in America”<sup>774</sup>. Similarly, another Republican

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<sup>768</sup> Clinton, “Remarks at the First Diplomacy Briefing Series Meeting, Focused on the Issues and Challenges of U.S. Relations With Latin America.”

<sup>769</sup> Valenzuela, “U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond,” 2010.

<sup>770</sup> Obama, “Op-Ed: ‘Choosing a Better Future in the Americas.’”

<sup>771</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

<sup>772</sup> The White House, “The 2010 National Security Strategy.”

<sup>773</sup> Ibid.

<sup>774</sup> Davis, “Sen. DeMint Supports Honduran Coup.”

Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen, said, “The U.S. approach to friends and foes is completely backwards. While appeasing the enemies of freedom worldwide, we punish those in Honduras struggling to preserve the rule of law, fundamental liberties, and democratic values”<sup>775</sup>.

This first disagreement between the Obama administration and the Republicans in Congress could only be solved after the Obama administration retreated from supporting President Zelaya’s return to the presidency. In other words, the administration could not fulfill its own promise of equal partnership and constructive engagement. Legally, when the U.S. officially recognizes an event as a coup, the administration has to act on it, including cutting all diplomatic relations. The Obama administration did not declare the events in Honduras as a coup officially. It kept the U.S. ambassador in Honduras only “to help find a resolution to the political crisis”<sup>776</sup>. After Senator DeMint’s block of the nominations of Valenzuela and Shannon, the administration did not press for the reinstatement of Zelaya as the president. Instead, they chose the solution that supported an election where President Zelaya could not be a candidate in the new presidential elections<sup>777</sup>. After this, Senator DeMint’s block ended, and the U.S. Senate approved the nomination of Arturo Valenzuela. Thomas Shannon’s block, on the other hand, was continued by other Republican Senators from Florida as a punishment for the unanimous OAS decision (including the U.S.) to readmit Cuba to the organization since Thomas Shannon was a part of the decision-making process<sup>778</sup>. Florida has the largest Cuban population in the U.S., and the decision to readmit Cuba to the OAS created a great disturbance among the (mostly Republican) Cuban American community in Florida<sup>779</sup>.

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<sup>775</sup> Bolton, “Obama and DeMint Locked in Proxy Fight over Hugo Chavez.”

<sup>776</sup> Ibid.; U.S. Government Accountability Office, “Review of U.S. Response to the Honduran Political Crisis of 2009,” The GAO, 2011, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/a585825.html>.

<sup>777</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, “Review of U.S. Response to the Honduran Political Crisis of 2009.”

<sup>778</sup> The Organization of American States, “The OAS General Assembly’s 2438 Resolution on Cuba,” 2009, [www.oas.org/39ag/documents/AGRES-2438E.doc](http://www.oas.org/39ag/documents/AGRES-2438E.doc).

<sup>779</sup> Jens Manuel Krogstad and Antonio Flores, “About Half of Cuban Voters in Florida Backed Trump,” Pew Research Center, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/15/unlike->

The dispute over the Honduras case was only the first one among many. The disputes between the executive and the legislative over the Americas during this period mainly arise from Florida's Republican members of Congress. After the Cuban Revolution, many Cubans fled from the country and settled in Miami, Florida. These Cuban Americans were strictly against the Castro regime and used their votes for the candidates to support their views in the Congress, governorship, and White House. 54% of Cuban Americans in Florida were registered as Republicans, but 70% voted for the Republican governors, and 69% voted for the Republicans in Congress<sup>780</sup>. Therefore, the strongest arguments against the Obama administration's policies towards the Americas came from the Congresspeople from Florida, including Lincoln Díaz-Balart, Marco Rubio, Ron DeSantis, Mario Díaz-Balart, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and Bill Posey. These people played a huge role in determining the oppositional discourses during the Obama administration. They were the main oppositional actors during the declaration of the Executive Order 13692 in 2015, the second key event of this dissertation. Their firm stance against the Chávez and Maduro administrations defeated the hegemonic position of the Obama administration's foreign policy discourse towards the region in 2015. The following two sections will assess this.

### **5.3. The Constitution of Venezuelan Others during the Obama Era**

During the Obama era, there were two different presidents in Venezuela. From 2009 to 2013, President Chávez was in power until his death on March 5, 2013. After his death, his successor, Nicolás Maduro, was elected president in April 2013<sup>781</sup>. President Chávez's death coincided with the decrease in the oil prices worldwide. Since 95% of Venezuela's export earnings came from oil exports, price increases or

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other-latinos-about-half-of-cuban-voters-in-florida-backed-trump/; Jens Manuel Krogstad, "Most Cuban American Voters Identify as Republican in 2020," Pew Research Center, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/10/02/most-cuban-american-voters-identify-as-republican-in-2020/>.

<sup>780</sup> Guillermo J. Grenier, "How Cuban Americans in Miami View U.S. Policies Toward Cuba," *Florida International University* (Florida, January 1, 2018).

<sup>781</sup> Consejo Nacional Electoral, "Divulgación Elecciones Presidenciales," CNE, 2013, [http://www.cne.gob.ve/resultado\\_presidencial\\_2013/r/1/reg\\_000000.html](http://www.cne.gob.ve/resultado_presidencial_2013/r/1/reg_000000.html).

decreases in the world market directly impacted the Venezuelan economy<sup>782</sup>. During the Chávez administration, oil prices soared, and as a result, Venezuela's GDP increased significantly. As a part of his leftist-populist agenda, President Chávez invested this income into Venezuelan society. This move, in return, increased his vote. Hugo Chávez won every presidential election he ran for with wide margins of votes<sup>783</sup>. President Chávez also agreed to hold a recall referendum in 2004 and immediately accepted the results when he lost the 2007 referendum. Indeed, his administration interfered with the democratic process (such as closing media channels, interrupting the recall signature process, and increasing the number of terms he could serve as president). However, during the Chávez era, Venezuela was a democracy. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said, “As a matter of fact, of the 92 elections that we have monitored [as the Carter Center], I would say the election process in Venezuela is the best in the world” in 2012<sup>784</sup>. The quality of Venezuelan democracy became a highly contested topic during the Maduro presidency. Even though the Obama administration did not see any difference between the Chávez and Maduro administrations, nearly all other states in the hemisphere did. The change of administration is an important topic, especially regarding the region’s changing attitude towards Venezuela after 2016.

The Obama administration’s main foreign policy agenda towards the region was confronting Chávez's influence. The leftist-populist wave in the region, the high oil revenues that enabled Venezuela to give oil subsidies to other countries (including Cuba), the decline in the U.S. hegemonic power during the Bush years, the establishment of regional organizations like ALBA and UNASUR, and Insulza’s election as the OAS Secretary General declined the U.S. influence across the region. Toning the hegemonic stance of the U.S. in the region through equal partnership and constructive engagement discourses was the main move of the administration to

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<sup>782</sup> Phillip Brown, “Venezuela’s Petroleum Sector and U.S. Sanctions,” U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2018, [https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2018-03-27\\_IF10857\\_afaf7568c22137d32aeafb6f2ad4f69bb13acd96.pdf](https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2018-03-27_IF10857_afaf7568c22137d32aeafb6f2ad4f69bb13acd96.pdf).

<sup>783</sup> Consejo Nacional Electoral, “Resultados Electorales,” CNE, 2023, [http://www.cne.gob.ve/web/estadisticas/index\\_resultados\\_elecciones.php](http://www.cne.gob.ve/web/estadisticas/index_resultados_elecciones.php).

<sup>784</sup> Ewan Robertson, “Former U.S. President Carter: Venezuela’s Electoral System Is the Best in the World,” Centre for Research on Globalization, 2012, <https://www.globalresearch.ca/former-us-president-carter-venezuelan-electoral-system-best-in-the-world/5305779>.

displace President Chávez from his hegemonic position in the region. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg openly stated that the region was waiting for the U.S. leadership “as a counterweight to governments like those currently in power in Venezuela and Bolivia, which pursue policies which do not serve the interests of their people or the region”<sup>785</sup>.

As a Senator, Barack Obama made quite strong statements about the Chávez administration and Venezuelan democracy. In 2007, his remarks in Detroit targeted the U.S.’ oil dependency. He argued that the U.S. had to reduce the dependency on foreign oil so the oil money would not go to “the most despotic, volatile regimes in the world”<sup>786</sup>. He claimed that the oil money sent from the U.S. “corrupts budding democracies and gives *dictators from Venezuela* to Iran the power to freely defy and threaten the international community”<sup>787</sup>. He promised that during his presidency, this dependency would end, not just to stop sending money to those ‘dictators’ but also for the sake of the climate and future generations<sup>788</sup>. A year later, he made a similar statement and said, “We can end our dependence on foreign oil and gas and free ourselves from *the tyranny of oil-rich states* from Saudi Arabia to Russia to Venezuela”<sup>789</sup>. He declared his foreign policy agenda towards the Americas from Florida in 2008 while harshly criticizing the Bush administration’s foreign policy. He claimed that while the Bush administration was highly focused on the Middle East, it neglected the Americas, creating a vacuum. This vacuum, in return, was filled by “demagogues like Hugo Chávez” with a “perilous mix of anti-American rhetoric, authoritarian government, and checkbook diplomacy offers the same false promise as the tried and failed ideologies of the past”<sup>790</sup>. According to Senator Obama, President Chávez was elected democratically but did not govern democratically. Instead, the

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<sup>785</sup> April Howard, “Hillary Clinton and James Steinberg ‘Talk Tough’ on Latin America ,” COHA, 2009, <https://coha.org/hillary-clinton-and-james-steinberg-talk-tough-on-latin-america/>.

<sup>786</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Remarks to the Detroit Economic Club,” The American Presidency Project, 2007, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-detroit-economic-club-0>.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid. [Emphasis Added].

<sup>788</sup> Ibid.

<sup>789</sup> Obama, “The World Beyond Iraq” [Emphasis Added].

<sup>790</sup> Obama, “Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation.”

Chávez administration governed Venezuela with a “Petro-powered authoritarianism”<sup>791</sup>. He claimed that “the Bush Administration’s blustery condemnations and clumsy attempts to undermine Chávez have only strengthened his hand” and that the U.S. and its allies “should reject the bombast of authoritarian bullies” in the region<sup>792</sup>. In Michigan, Senator Obama said that the U.S. was held hostage in the hands of “tyrants and dictators who control the world’s oil wells”, and he promised that during his presidency, he would work to end the energy dependency of the U.S. to stop the U.S. dollars going into “the pockets of Venezuela”<sup>793</sup>.

After becoming the president, President Obama did not continue to call President Chávez a dictator, tyrant, demagogue, or authoritarian leader. President Obama’s rhetoric was highly critical of the Bush administration’s policies, but he also adopted and improved many of President Bush’s foreign policy strategies<sup>794</sup>. For instance, the new administration continued the Bush administration’s competing vision rhetoric. The U.S. was represented as the promoter of a positive vision, while the Chávez administration was represented as the negative Other and a threat to this positive agenda.

For too long, we have ceded the playing field to Hugo Chávez--a democratically elected leader who does not govern democratically and whose actions and vision for the region do not serve his citizens or people throughout Latin America. (...) It is time for the United States to fill that void with strong and sustained U.S. leadership in the region. We should have a positive agenda for the hemisphere in response to the fear-mongering propagated by Chávez and Evo Morales<sup>795</sup>.

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<sup>791</sup> Ibid.

<sup>792</sup> Ibid.

<sup>793</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Remarks in Lansing, Michigan,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-lansing-michigan>; Barack H. Obama, “Remarks in Charleston, West Virginia,” The American Presidency Project, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-charleston-west-virginia-1>.

<sup>794</sup> Timothy J. Lynch, *In the Shadow of the Cold War: American Foreign Policy from George Bush Sr. to Donald Trump* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 165, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139027120>.

<sup>795</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “Nomination of Hillary R. Clinton to Be the Secretary of State,” U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2009, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111shrg54615/html/CHRG-111shrg54615.htm>.



The Obama administration's similar discourse constituted the U.S. as the builder of a bright future for the hemisphere, simultaneously constituting the Chávez administration as stuck in the dark past and following the failed ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>796</sup>. President Chávez's rhetoric was highly populist. He argued that in the past, the Venezuelan elites and the capitalist oil companies (represented by the U.S.) greedily shared the oil income. In contrast, the Venezuelan people lived in poverty<sup>797</sup>. With a socialist agenda, he promised the Venezuelan people that the oil income would be shared with the public during his presidency. This leftist-populist agenda resonated with both the voters and other countries in the region.

President Obama's rhetoric was based on challenging this leftist-populist rhetoric. According to him, "the old debates of the past" between "the state-run economy vs. unregulated capitalism" and "the right-wing paramilitaries vs. left-wing insurgents" were over<sup>798</sup>. According to Secretary Clinton, President Chávez was advancing his "out-moded and anti-American ideologies" across the region for far too long<sup>799</sup>. Instead, the region "must choose the future over the past" because the future holds opportunities for all the peoples of the Americas<sup>800</sup>. Staying stuck in the past was ideological, but offering principled policies for establishing equal partnerships and constructive engagements for the future was intensely pragmatic<sup>801</sup>. This principled, pragmatic partnership is targeted to solve the region's problems, including poverty, human rights abuses, transnational crime, climate change, and energy security<sup>802</sup>.

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<sup>796</sup> Obama, "Interview With Juan Carlos Lopez of CNN En Espanol ."

<sup>797</sup> Sagarzazu and Thies, "The Foreign Policy Rhetoric of Populism: Chávez, Oil, and Anti-Imperialism."

<sup>798</sup> Obama, "Op-Ed: 'Choosing a Better Future in the Americas.'"

<sup>799</sup> Howard, "Hillary Clinton and James Steinberg 'Talk Tough' on Latin America ."

<sup>800</sup> Obama, "Op-Ed: 'Choosing a Better Future in the Americas.'"

<sup>801</sup> Valenzuela, "Statement by Arturo Valenzuela for the Nomination to Be the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs"; Clinton, "Foreign Policy Address at the Council on Foreign Relations."

<sup>802</sup> Dan Restrepo, "Press Gaggle," The White House, 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/16/press-gaggle-press-secretary-jay-carney-senior-director-western-hemisphe>; Arturo Valenzuela, "It's Not Your Grandfather's Hemisphere: The U.S. Moves beyond Traditional Diplomacy," *Americas Quarterly*, 2011, <https://www.americasquarterly.org/fulltextarticle/its-not-your-grandfathers-hemisphere/>.

The ideological Venezuelan Other did not offer anything new for the region and the problems the region had. According to the Obama administration, poverty and inequality were the top problems in the region<sup>803</sup>. However, Venezuela's success in these two problems was not seen and entirely ignored by the Obama administration. The administration never acknowledged the accomplishment of the Chávez administration of reducing the poverty, extreme poverty, and inequality in Venezuela. According to the World Bank Data, from 2003 to 2012, the poverty rate decreased by 50%, while the extreme poverty rate decreased by 72% in Venezuela<sup>804</sup>. According to the United Nations Human Settlements Program, Venezuela became the most equitable country in the region in 2012 while leaving Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay behind<sup>805</sup>.

Asking the Chávez administration how they lowered the inequality and poverty in Venezuela and then bringing up new policies to fight with them across the region would be an excellent example of equal partnership and constructive engagement. The Obama administration's foreign policy discourse heavily relied on diplomacy, engagement, and partnership; however, he did not offer the same courtesy to Venezuela as Iran and Cuba. Even though the quality of democracy in Venezuela declined during the Chávez administration, it was still a democracy, especially compared to Iran, Cuba, and North Korea. While readmitting Cuba to the OAS, the Obama administration also continued to constitute the Chávez administration as a threat to the U.S. interests in the region, especially since President Chávez "created a permissive environment for Hizballah to exploit" in the region<sup>806</sup>. According to the Director of National Intelligence Blair, President Chávez was "moving toward a

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<sup>803</sup> Obama, "Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation"; Biden, "Op-Ed by Vice President Biden: 'A New Day for Partnership in the Americas'"; Valenzuela, "Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation"; Clinton, "Remarks At the 40th Washington Conference on the Americas."

<sup>804</sup> The World Bank Data, "Poverty Headcount Ratio at National Poverty Lines (% of Population) - Venezuela," The World Bank, 2013, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?end=2012&locations=VE&start=2003&view=chart>.

<sup>805</sup> United Nations Human Settlements Programme, "The State of Latin American and Caribbean Cities 2012," U.N.-Habitat, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19339636>.

<sup>806</sup> Dennis C. Blair, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," U.S. Senate, 2009, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/hearings/open-hearing-current-and-projected-national-security-threats-united-states>.

more authoritarian and statist political and economic model” and “likely to continue to support like-minded political allies and movements in neighboring countries and seek to undermine moderate, pro-U.S. governments”<sup>807</sup>. Here, Venezuela was represented as a dangerous Other to the region and the U.S.’ positive agenda.

On the other hand, the hemispheric Self would focus on the future with a positive agenda and find pragmatic solutions to the region's problems for a better future<sup>808</sup>. According to Secretary Clinton, the U.S. “should have a positive agenda for the hemisphere in response to the fear-mongering propagated by Chávez”<sup>809</sup>. This positive agenda was represented as a common agenda of the hemispheric Self, and some of the authoritarian and populist Others could try to undermine it:

Our broad common agenda, not individual differences or outliers, should define our interaction in the Americas. I know some governments in the region will not embrace this approach, will do so only very selectively, or will seek to undermine this common cause. Working together with others, we need to be clear-eyed and proactive in countering efforts to undermine our common agenda. These can include attempts to expand authoritarian or populist rule at the expense of effective democratic governance based on the rule of law and representative government. They can also include the ill-conceived embrace of dangerous or problematic external actors<sup>810</sup>.

Venezuela’s relations with Cuba and Iran were the most alarming thing for both the Obama administration and the opposition. Both acknowledged this was a huge concern, but their methods of dealing with it differed. The Obama administration supported a collective action (such as the OAS) against these undemocratic practices of the Others. At the same time, the Republicans in Congress wanted bold actions such as declaring Venezuela as “a state sponsor of terrorism”, strong isolation, and even sanctions against the individuals in the Chávez administration for violating the human rights of the Venezuelans<sup>811</sup>. The latter, sanctioning the Venezuelan

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<sup>807</sup> Dennis C. Blair, “Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community,” ODNI, 2010, [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Testimonies/20100202\\_testimony.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Testimonies/20100202_testimony.pdf).

<sup>808</sup> Valenzuela, “It’s Not Your Grandfather’s Hemisphere: The U.S. Moves beyond Traditional Diplomacy”; Obama, “The President’s News Conference in Port of Spain.”

<sup>809</sup> Sullivan, “Venezuela: Issues for Congress, 2009-2012.”

<sup>810</sup> Valenzuela, “U.S. Policy Toward the Americas in 2010 and Beyond,” 2010.

<sup>811</sup> Sullivan, “Venezuela: Issues for Congress, 2009-2012.”

administrates, caused strong disagreement between the Obama administration (the executive) and the Republicans in the U.S. Congress (the legislative) after the 2014 Protests in Venezuela. Therefore, the U.S. relations with Venezuela under President Maduro should be analyzed separately from the Chávez administration. This will be done in the next section while assessing the second key event of this study: the legislative process of Executive Order 13692.

**5.4. The Constitution of Venezuela as a National Security Threat to the U.S. with Executive Order 13692**

The disagreement on U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela between the U.S. government and the opposition in Congress intensified after the election of Nicolás Maduro in 2013. President Maduro was elected only by a 1.49% vote margin against his opponent, Henrique Capriles<sup>812</sup>. Capriles then officially filed a complaint against the results to the Electoral Council and called the Venezuelans to protest the election fraud<sup>813</sup>. As a highly polarized country, Venezuelan society was divided into two as the pro- and anti-Chavistas<sup>814</sup>. The street protests began after the 2013 presidential elections, and with every political crisis between the Venezuelan government and the opposition, these protests started again.

**Table 2.** Economic Situation in Venezuela<sup>815</sup>

	1998	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Oil Prices (Per Barrel \$)</b>	10.87	95.54	78.84	44.35	25
<b>GDP of Venezuela (in billion US\$)</b>	91.33	371.1	482	258	115.88
<b>Inflation in Venezuela (%)</b>	40	18	52	75	254.9

As Table 2 demonstrates, in 1998, the year Hugo Chávez was elected as the president, the oil price was 10.87 U.S. dollars per barrel, and mainly because of the

<sup>812</sup> Consejo Nacional Electoral, “Divulgación Elecciones Presidenciales.”

<sup>813</sup> Alan MacLeod, *Bad News from Venezuela: Twenty Years of Fake News and Misreporting* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 61–62.

<sup>814</sup> McCoy, “Engaging Venezuela: 2009 and Beyond.”

<sup>815</sup> Data combined by the author from the World Bank and U.S. Energy Information Agency websites.

U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, it reached 128 U.S. dollars in 2008<sup>816</sup>. This created considerable revenue for the Venezuelan economy. However, the Chávez administration could not diversify these revenues and invest in other sectors other than the oil sector, so Venezuela remained dependent on oil revenues. The Venezuelan economy started to decline when the oil prices started to go down in the international market after 2013. In March 2013, the oil prices decreased to 95 U.S. dollars, in February 2015 to 44 U.S. dollars, and in February 2016 to 25 U.S. dollars<sup>817</sup>. As a result of the decrease in oil prices, right after President Chávez's death, the Venezuelan economy started to collapse. The GDP was 371 billion U.S. dollars in 2013, falling to 258 billion U.S. dollars in 2015 and 115 billion U.S. dollars in 2016<sup>818</sup>. The inflation skyrocketed from 21% in 2012 to 254.9% in 2016<sup>819</sup>. The crime rates soared mainly due to the economic crisis and political polarization<sup>820</sup>.

The protests started in February 2014 after the murder of a famous Venezuelan actress, Mónica Spear, and her husband in a robbery<sup>821</sup>. The protests were against the high crime rates, economic crisis, and democratic deterioration and continued until May 2014. As a result of the violent clash between the Venezuelan government supporters and the opposition, 43 people died from both sides<sup>822</sup>. The Maduro government, in return, started to detain and prosecute the top opposition leaders for

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<sup>816</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, "U.S. Crude Oil First Purchase Price (Dollars per Barrel)," U.S. EIA, 2023, [https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=pet&s=f000000\\_\\_3&f=m](https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=pet&s=f000000__3&f=m).

<sup>817</sup> Ibid.

<sup>818</sup> The World Bank Data, "GDP (Current US\$) - Venezuela," The World Bank, 2023, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=VE>.

<sup>819</sup> The World Bank Data, "Inflation, Consumer Prices (Annual %) - Venezuela," The World Bank, 2023, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG?locations=VE>.

<sup>820</sup> InSight Crime, "Caracas World's Most Violent City: Report," Venezuela Investigative Unit, 2016, <https://insightcrime.org/news/brief/caracas-most-violent-city-in-the-world-2015-report/>.

<sup>821</sup> Alan Taylor, "Venezuela Gripped by Weeks of Anti-Government Protest," The Atlantic, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/02/venezuela-gripped-by-weeks-of-anti-government-protest/100689/>.

<sup>822</sup> David Osborne, "Dissent in Venezuela: Maduro Regime Looks on Borrowed Time," The Independent, 2015, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/dissent-in-venezuela-maduro-regime-looks-on-borrowed-time-as-rising-public-anger-meets-political-repression-10070607.html>.

trying to overthrow the government, including Leopoldo López, María Corina Machado, Manuel Rosales, and Antonio Ledezma<sup>823</sup>.

The official U.S. response to the crisis was to “call on the Venezuelan government to provide the political space necessary for meaningful dialogue with the Venezuelan people and to release detained protestors”<sup>824</sup>. Calling “to engage in genuine dialogue” was also the official response to the protests after the 2013 Presidential elections in Venezuela<sup>825</sup>. These official statements emphasized that the U.S. was not the only one to call for a dialogue. The OAS and the Inter-American community also wished for a dialogue. “The U.S. values its strong historic and cultural ties with the Venezuelan people and remains committed to our relationship with them. With the OAS and our regional partners, we are working to urge calm and encourage a genuine dialogue among all Venezuelans”<sup>826</sup>. When President Maduro accused the U.S. government of trying to overthrow him and expelled three U.S. diplomats from Venezuela, the Obama administration claimed that this was a move to distract the international community from discussing what was really happening in Venezuela<sup>827</sup>. Calling for dialogue was a multilateral approach consistent with the partnership and engagement discourses. The U.S. clearly rearticulated that this was *not a bilateral issue* between the U.S. and Venezuela but *a multilateral issue* that must be solved through third-party mediation from the OAS or the UNASUR<sup>828</sup>.

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<sup>823</sup> NPR, “Jailed Protest Leader Urges Venezuelans To Keep Demonstrating,” 2014, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/02/19/279654952/jailed-protest-leader-urges-venezuelans-to-keep-demonstrating>; Amnesty International, “Venezuela: Sentence against Opposition Leader Shows Utter Lack of Judicial Independence,” 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2015/09/venezuela-sentence-against-opposition-leader-shows-utter-lack-of-judicial-independence/>.

<sup>824</sup> John Kerry, “Recent Violence in Venezuela,” U.S. Department of State, 2014, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/02/221693.htm>.

<sup>825</sup> Joe Biden, “U.S. Vice President Joe Biden at the 43rd Washington Conference on the Americas,” 2013, <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/remarks-us-vice-president-joe-biden-43rd-washington-conference-americas>.

<sup>826</sup> Jen Psaki, “Reports Regarding Expulsion of U.S. Officials in Venezuela,” U.S. Department of State, 2014, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/02/221760.htm>.

<sup>827</sup> Ibid.; Barack H. Obama, “The President’s News Conference,” The American Presidency Project, 2014, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-president-enrique-pena-nieto-mexico-and-prime-minister>.

<sup>828</sup> Senior Administration Official, “Background Press Briefing by Senior Administration Officials,” The American Presidency Project, 2014, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/background-press-briefing-senior-administration-officials-the-vice-president-and-dr-jill-0>.

The Republicans in Congress (especially Congresspeople of Florida, Marco Rubio from the Senate, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen from the House) criticized the Obama administration's call for dialogue. They demanded harsher policies against the Maduro government, such as imposing individual sanctions. Senator Rubio said, "The President and his administration should vigorously enforce all existing U.S. laws to identify and sanction individuals engaging in these human rights violations"<sup>829</sup>. Representative Ros-Lehtinen said that the U.S. must stand up against "this repressive regime because our inaction would only serve to embolden other rogue regimes that seek to fight back the tides of democracy"<sup>830</sup>. Representative Duncan argued that the U.S. has "an obligation, as the beacon of liberty in the free world, to support the Venezuelans"<sup>831</sup>. The first move came from the House by Representative Ros-Lehtinen. She introduced H.Res. 488 for "supporting the people of Venezuela as they protest peacefully for democratic change and calling to end the violence"<sup>832</sup>. She criticized the Obama administration for being too passive against the actions of the Maduro regime. She immediately called the President to impose sanctions with the International Emergency Economic Powers Act<sup>833</sup>. Two days later, Senator Menendez, a democrat, introduced S.Res. 365 in the Senate. It was unanimously approved on March 12, 2014<sup>834</sup>. This resolution also urged "the President to impose targeted sanctions against individuals in Venezuela"<sup>835</sup>. The most crucial bill relating to this argument was introduced a day later, again by

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<sup>829</sup> Marco Rubio, "World Must Wake Up To What's Happening Now In Venezuela," U.S. Senate, 2014, <https://www.rubio.senate.gov/rubio-world-must-wake-up-to-what-s-happening-now-in-venezuela/>.

<sup>830</sup> Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, "Congressional Record, Volume 160 - Venezuela," U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2014, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CRECB-2014-pt3/html/CRECB-2014-pt3-Pg3373.htm>.

<sup>831</sup> Jeff Duncan, "H. Res. 488 - Supporting the People of Venezuela," U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2014, <https://www.congress.gov/event/113th-congress/house-event/LC548/text>.

<sup>832</sup> Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, "H. Res. 488 - Supporting the People of Venezuela," U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2014, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-160/issue-36/house-section/article/H2106-1>.

<sup>833</sup> Ibid.

<sup>834</sup> Robert Menendez, "S.Res.365 - 113th Congress (2013-2014): A Resolution Deploring the Violent Repression of Peaceful Demonstrators in Venezuela," U.S. Congress, 2014, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-resolution/365>.

<sup>835</sup> Ibid.

Senator Menendez, S.2142 Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014<sup>836</sup>. This bill created the base for the declaration of the Executive Order 13692.

Despite the legislative efforts to convince President Obama to impose sanctions against the Maduro officials, the official U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela (supporting dialogue) did not change. Especially after the UNASUR-led mediation with the Vatican started on April 10, 2014<sup>837</sup>. Secretary Kerry stated, “We support the UNASUR-sponsored dialogue in the hope that it will allow Venezuelans to come together and take on the challenges that they face”<sup>838</sup>. However, the dialogue process stopped on May 13, 2014, when the Maduro government denied the release of the political prisoners. The coalition of the Venezuelan opposition (the MUD) decided to leave the mediation<sup>839</sup>. The MUD was divided on demanding the immediate resignation of President Maduro or pressuring the government to hold a democratic legislative election in December 2015. Part of the MUD arguing about the latter solution started to continue the dialogue process on May 23, 2014<sup>840</sup>. The dialogue process stalled but continued until January 2017<sup>841</sup>.

The Obama administration was reluctant to impose sanctions while the UNASUR-led mediation process continued because whenever the U.S. made a unilateral foreign policy move, the Maduro government accused the U.S. of arranging a coup against him<sup>842</sup>. According to the former U.S. ambassador to Venezuela, Patrick Duddy, “In

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<sup>836</sup> Robert Menendez, “S.2142: Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014,” U.S. Congress, 2014, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/2142>.

<sup>837</sup> Roberta S. Jacobson, “U.S. Policy in the Western Hemisphere,” U.S. Department of State, 2014, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/ime/224115.htm>.

<sup>838</sup> John Kerry, “Remarks at 44th Annual Washington Conference of the Americas,” 2014, <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/remarks-secretary-state-john-kerry-44th-annual-washington-conference-americas>.

<sup>839</sup> Mark P. Sullivan, “Venezuela: Issues for Congress, 2013-2016,” U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2017, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/download/R/R43239/R43239.pdf/>.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid.

<sup>841</sup> Pryanka Peñafiel Cevallos and Mouly Cécile, “UNASUR in Venezuela: Mediation, Bias and Legitimacy,” *Contexto Internacional* 41, no. 3 (December 2019): 579–98, <https://doi.org/10.1590/s0102-8529.2019410300005>.

<sup>842</sup> Sullivan, “Venezuela: Issues for Congress, 2013-2016.”



the current circumstance, the Maduro government would clearly love to turn their domestic crisis into a bilateral one. We should not be sucked into that dynamic by taking steps unilaterally at this point that would validate Maduro's wild accusations”<sup>843</sup>. According to Representative McGovern, imposing individual sanctions instead of supporting the dialogue process would be like throwing gasoline on fire<sup>844</sup>. He said, “What is not needed is for the U.S. to appear to be interfering in the process and allowing the Maduro government to portray the political crisis of the past few months as a conflict between Venezuela and the U.S.”<sup>845</sup> More importantly, Assistant Secretary Jacobson explained that the MUD asked the U.S. not to pursue sanctions during the dialogue process in her May 7, 2014 testimony<sup>846</sup>. Moreover, when the U.S. Senate passed the bill urging the President to impose sanctions, the UNASUR immediately condemned this development<sup>847</sup>.

Then, the members of Congress increased the pressure on the government by discussing the issue often, especially in the Subcommittees on the hemisphere (both in the Senate and the House). The statements got harsher against the Maduro regime, the regional organizations (especially the OAS for staying ineffective), and the Obama administration for disengaging from the region<sup>848</sup>. The unresponsiveness represented the most significant national security threat since 9/11<sup>849</sup>. Representative Ros-Lehtinen called this unresponsiveness a “lack of leadership”, claiming that “President Obama chooses to lead from behind” with “five years of failed foreign policy”<sup>850</sup>. As a way to relieve the pressure of the opposition, Secretary Kerry

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<sup>843</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, “Assessing Venezuela’s Political Crisis,” U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2014, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-113shrg94361/html/CHRG-113shrg94361.htm>.

<sup>844</sup> Jim McGovern, “Venezuelan Human Rights and Democract Protection Act,” U.S. Congress, 2014, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-160/issue-81/house-section/article/H4844-4>.

<sup>845</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>846</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, “Assessing Venezuela’s Political Crisis.”

<sup>847</sup> Cevallos and Cécile, “UNASUR in Venezuela: Mediation, Bias and Legitimacy.”

<sup>848</sup> U.S. Congress, “U.S. Disengagement from Latin America,” Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, 2014, <https://www.congress.gov/event/113th-congress/house-event/LC1111/text>; U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, “Assessing Venezuela’s Political Crisis.”

<sup>849</sup> U.S. Congress, “U.S. Disengagement from Latin America.”

<sup>850</sup> Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, “Congressional Record Vol. 160, No. 53,” U.S. Congress, 2014, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-160/issue-53/house-section/article/H2806-1>.

imposed visa restrictions against “a number of Venezuelan government officials who have been responsible for or complicit in such human rights abuses” while emphasizing that his decision was “specific and targeted, directed at individuals responsible for human rights violations and not at the Venezuelan nation or its people”<sup>851</sup>.

Venezuela was not the only source of disagreement in the hemisphere between the executive and the legislative; reestablishing a diplomatic relationship with Cuba was also a big concern for the congresspeople from Florida since they were the children of Cuban exiles themselves, including Congresspeople Ros-Lehtinen, Rubio, Menendez, and DeSantis. Establishing a dialogue with the Castro regime was not a possible action for the Republicans. After his election, President Obama lifted the travel ban to Cuba and allowed remittances to Cuba in 2009<sup>852</sup>. According to the administration, this new approach would strengthen the link between the Cuban and American people. By traveling to the U.S., Cubans would see the opportunities of a free world and demand freedom from their government<sup>853</sup>.

The second key event was formed around the discursive competition between the executive (the Obama administration) and the legislative (the Congress) over the disagreement about the individual sanctions against the Maduro government officials. The Obama rhetoric supported the dialogue between the UNASUR, the Maduro government, and the Venezuelan opposition coalition MUD. The administration was reluctant to get involved in the mediation process or even to make a harsh statement against the Maduro government while the dialogue process continued. In this regard, the Maduro administration’s rhetoric of blaming the U.S. for interfering in the domestic affairs of Venezuela was quite successful. It could directly affect the Obama administration’s foreign policy actions.

In order to not be seen as a coercive power in the region, the Obama administration promoted partnership, engagement, collective action, and multilateralism across the

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<sup>851</sup> Marie Harf, “Visa Restrictions Against Human Rights Abusers in Venezuela,” U.S. Department of State, 2014, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/07/229928.htm>.

<sup>852</sup> Obama, “Remarks by the President at the Summit of the Americas Opening Ceremony,” 2009.

<sup>853</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “Press Statement: OAS Resolution on Cuba,” U.S. Department of State, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/06/124305.htm>.

region. On the other hand, the opposition in Congress found this multilateral policy of the administration ineffective and claimed that the Obama administration was getting disengaged from the region. They emphasized the role of unilateral action, including imposing sanctions on the Maduro administration officials since the behaviors of regional organizations like the OAS “has been downright embarrassing and shameful”<sup>854</sup>. The opposition was also repulsed by the U.S. inaction towards the events in Venezuela while emphasizing that the world was watching to see what the U.S. would do<sup>855</sup>. This inaction would encourage the enemies of the U.S., which could bring more significant threats than 9/11<sup>856</sup>. Senator Rubio said, “We should be outraged about this. This is happening in our own hemisphere, right underneath our nose. And it is shameful that the leadership of our government has so far not done more to address this. This is happening right now, right in our own backyard, in our own hemisphere”<sup>857</sup>. With a very close discourse to the War on Terror, the opposition represented the Venezuelan issue as a national security problem. They urged the Obama administration to sanction the Venezuelan government officials immediately.

The Obama administration declared its foreign policy change towards Cuba on December 17, 2014<sup>858</sup>. Not so coincidentally, President Obama signed the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014 (S.2142) into law the next day<sup>859</sup>. The administration’s decision to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba and impose sanctions (including freezing the assets, revoking visas, and penalty fines) on Venezuelan authorities simultaneously was a tradeoff. These moves could

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<sup>854</sup> Marco Rubio, “Congressional Record Vol. 160, No. 49,” U.S. Congress, 2014, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-160/issue-49/senate-section/article/S1793-3>.

<sup>855</sup> Marco Rubio, “Venezuela: Congressional Record Vol. 160, No. 101,” U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2014, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-160/issue-101/senate-section/article/S4117-1>.

<sup>856</sup> U.S. Congress, “U.S. Disengagement from Latin America.”

<sup>857</sup> Rubio, “Congressional Record Vol. 160, No. 49.”

<sup>858</sup> The White House, “Charting a New Course on Cuba,” Office of the Press Secretary, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/17/fact-sheet-charting-new-course-cuba-0>.

<sup>859</sup> Robert Menendez, “Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014 (S. 2142),” U.S. Congress, 2014, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s2142>.

be interpreted as a way to relieve the pressure of the opposition by giving them what they want (imposing sanctions) while pursuing their planned foreign policy agendas (reestablishing relations with Cuba and Iran). The S.2142 authorizes “the President to impose U.S. asset blocking and U.S. exclusion sanctions against any person, including a current or former government of Venezuela official”<sup>860</sup>. It is a crucial bill because it created the legal base for Presidential Executive Order 13692, which imposed sanctions against Maduro government officials while constituting Venezuela “*an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States*” in March 2015<sup>861</sup>. The order declares:

I, Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, find that the situation in Venezuela, including the Government of Venezuela's erosion of human rights guarantees, persecution of political opponents, curtailment of press freedoms, use of violence and human rights violations and abuses in response to antigovernment protests, and arbitrary arrest and detention of antigovernment protestors, as well as the exacerbating presence of significant public corruption, constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, and I hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat<sup>862</sup>.

Imposing individual sanctions on Venezuelan authorities created a huge reaction and antipathy from the region and the world. Argentina, Brazil, China, Ecuador, and Uruguay criticized the executive order<sup>863</sup>. Politicians from the United Kingdom and the EU Parliament signed a statement opposing the U.S. sanctions against Venezuela<sup>864</sup>. International Organizations, including CELAC, UNASUR, and G77+, declared statements against the constitution of Venezuela as a national security threat

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<sup>860</sup> Menendez, “S.2142: Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014.”

<sup>861</sup> The White House, “Executive Order 13692 – Blocking Property and Suspending Entry of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Venezuela,” Office of the Press Secretary, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/09/executive-order-blocking-property-and-suspending-entry-certain-persons-c> [Emphasis Added].

<sup>862</sup> Ibid.

<sup>863</sup> VenezuelAnalysis, “UNASUR Rejects US Aggressions on Venezuela,” 2015, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/11270/>.

<sup>864</sup> TeleSUR, “120 UK Politicians Tell US to Back Down from Venezuela Order,” 2015, <https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/120-UK-Politicians-Tell-US-to-Back-Down-from-Venezuela-Order-20150325-0039.html>.

to the U.S.<sup>865</sup> The UNASUR issued a statement and “manifest their rejection of the Executive Order issued on March 9, 2015, by the government of the United States of America, for it constitutes a threat of interference against the sovereignty and the principle of non-intervention in other States’ affairs”<sup>866</sup>. Even the Venezuelan opposition stood against the executive order as oppositional leader Henry Falcon said, “Venezuela cannot be considered a threat to any other nation on the planet. We have serious internal problems, but we will solve them between Venezuelans”<sup>867</sup>.

Unexpectedly the worldwide reaction, the Obama administration repeatedly tried to elaborate on the meaning of Executive Order 13692<sup>868</sup>. The order gave the Obama administration the ability to sanction and freeze certain Venezuelan authorities’ assets in the U.S. According to the Obama administration, in order to implement S.2142, the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014, President Obama legally had to apply the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, especially for being able to freeze the assets of the Venezuelan authorities in the U.S. soil. The right to private property is ‘sacred’ in U.S. law; therefore, the President could *only* regulate international transactions and commerce after declaring a national emergency against an unusual and extraordinary threat<sup>869</sup>. According to

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<sup>865</sup> Lucas Koerner, “G77+ China, CELAC, UK Politicians Reject US Aggressions on Venezuela,” *VenezuelAnalysis*, 2015, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/11298/>; The Organization of American States, “OAS Permanent Council Received the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela,” *The OAS Permanent Council*, 2015, [https://www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-091/15](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-091/15).

<sup>866</sup> *VenezuelAnalysis*, “UNASUR Rejects US Aggressions on Venezuela.”

<sup>867</sup> Eva Golinger, “Latin America in Uproar over Obama’s Venezuela Sanctions,” *International Business Times*, 2015, <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/latin-america-uproar-over-obamas-venezuela-sanctions-1495447>.

<sup>868</sup> Senior Administration Official, “Background Conference Call by Senior Administration Officials on the President’s Executive Order on Venezuela,” *The American Presidency Project*, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/background-conference-call-senior-administration-officials-the-presidents-executive-order>; U.S. Government Publishing Office, “The Deepening Political and Economic Crisis in Venezuela: Implications for U.S. Interests and the Western Hemisphere,” *The Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere*, 2015, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg96257/html/CHRG-114shrg96257.htm>; Michael Fitzpatrick, “Remarks at the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council to Receive the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela,” *U.S. Department of State*, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/239556.htm>.

<sup>869</sup> U.S. Office of the Law Revision Counsel, “50 USC Ch. 35: The International Emergency Economic Powers Act,” 1977, <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title50/chapter35&edition=prelim>.

the Interim Permanent Representative of the U.S. to the OAS, Michael Fitzpatrick, the executive order was “misunderstood or misinterpreted”, he added that the constitution of the unusual and extraordinary threat was “part of the language of the statute that the President is required to employ in order to implement the actions mandated by the law”<sup>870</sup>. He claimed that the executive order was an internal issue and that the U.S. was “exercising a sovereign right to protect U.S. immigration prerogatives at home, and to protect the U.S. financial system from unwanted investors and their money, at home”<sup>871</sup>. The Obama administration also repeatedly stated that “this executive order does not sanction the Venezuelan government and also does not target the Venezuelan people. Seven individuals were listed in the annex of this authority today for being involved in committing significant acts of violence or serious human rights violation”<sup>872</sup>. As Venezuela’s largest trading partner; the U.S. could only “want the Venezuelan people to succeed and to thrive”<sup>873</sup>. A month after the declaration of Executive Order 13692, President Obama said, “We do not believe that Venezuela poses a threat to the United States, nor does the United States threaten the Venezuelan government”<sup>874</sup>.

The Obama administration’s two basic discourses of equal partnership and constructive engagement had severe internal inconsistencies. The administration declared that the countries of the hemisphere would be equal partners from then on and that “the era of Monroe Doctrine is over”<sup>875</sup>. On the other hand, they promised to renew the American leadership in the region, which transparently indicated a hierarchical relationship. The main inconsistency emerged after the continuous oppositional challenges from Congress when the Obama administration constituted

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<sup>870</sup> The Organization of American States, “OAS Permanent Council Received the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela.”

<sup>871</sup> Fitzpatrick, “Remarks at the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council to Receive the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela.”

<sup>872</sup> Senior Administration Official, “Background Conference Call by Senior Administration Officials on the President’s Executive Order on Venezuela.”

<sup>873</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Interview with EFE Newswire,” The American Presidency Project, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-with-efe-newswire>.

<sup>874</sup> Ibid.

<sup>875</sup> Kerry, “Remarks on U.S. Policy in the Western Hemisphere.”

Venezuela as an unusual and extraordinary threat to the U.S. Many countries and international organizations criticized the executive order, especially since the dialogue process continued at that time.

The declaration of the Executive Order 13692 clearly shows the importance of oppositional discourses. Despite being in power, the Obama administration, as the executive, could not resist the challenges of the oppositional discourses of Congress. Congresspeople (mainly from Florida) Rubio, Menendez, DeSantis, Ros-Lehtinen, and Mack played a vital role in shaping the discursive space where the U.S. foreign policy was determined. By making countless statements, using social media effectively, bringing the issue to Congress repeatedly, introducing bills to Congress, and, more importantly, successfully constituting Venezuelan Others discursively, they gained the ability to shape the U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela. When Donald Trump became the President of the U.S., these congresspeople could constitute the hegemonic U.S. foreign policy discourse over Venezuela, which led to the sanctioning of the oil sector in 2019 for the first time in U.S. history.

## CHAPTER 6

### RECOGNIZING JUAN GUAIDÓ AND SANCTIONING VENEZUELAN OIL THE EXCESSIVE EFFORTS TO UNSEAT NICOLÁS MADURO

“This election is a choice between the AMERICAN DREAM and a SOCIALIST NIGHTMARE. Our opponents want to turn America into Communist Cuba or Socialist Venezuela. As long as I am President, America will never be a socialist country!”<sup>876</sup>

“Now it is time for every other nation to pick a side. No more delays, no more games. Either you stand with the forces of freedom, or you are in league with Maduro and his mayhem”<sup>877</sup>.

The Trump era was fundamentally different than the Bush and Obama era. President Trump’s rhetoric was highly populist; therefore, this difference was a condition for this rhetoric’s existence. Populist leaders have to differentiate themselves from the former leaders in order to attract the masses. According to the populist leaders, the leaders before them were not the actual leaders of the people but the leaders of an establishment. Naturally, they only protect the establishment’s interests, not the people’s. This is why the populist leaders’ central promise is a temporal rupture. In President Trump’s case, this break represented a “new chapter” that “will be authored by the American people” and only the American people “will be running the show, not the donors, not the insiders, not the media executives” and indeed not “the corrupt establishment”<sup>878</sup>. In his rhetoric, his rival in the 2016 election, Hillary

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<sup>876</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Tweet from (@realDonaldTrump): This Election Is a Choice between the AMERICAN DREAM and a SOCIALIST NIGHTMARE. Our Opponents Want to Turn America into Communist Cuba or Socialist Venezuela,” Twitter, 2020, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1321904365892894720>.

<sup>877</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Remarks at a UN Security Council Meeting on Venezuela,” U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/remarks-at-a-united-nations-security-council-meeting-on-venezuela/>.



Clinton, represented a part of the past and the corrupt establishment, while his campaign represented the new future<sup>879</sup>.

This new future is inherently related to Donald Trump's America First discourse and Make America Great Again campaign. In this future, American citizens will always come first. According to this discourse, in the past, the U.S. put the security of other nations first by spending the U.S. military budget for others and making trade deals where the American people were disadvantaged, like NAFTA, the Paris Agreement, or the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)<sup>880</sup>.

Because today we are not merely transferring power from one administration to another or from one party to another, but we are transferring power from Washington, DC, and giving it back to you, the people. (...) For many decades, we have enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry and subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military. We have defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend our own and spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay. We have made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has dissipated over the horizon. (...) But that is the past. And now we are looking only to the future<sup>881</sup>.

In this future, President Trump's promise was a new foreign policy where "America will put its citizens, its values, and its concerns first"<sup>882</sup>. This chapter elaborates on President Trump's foreign policy discourse by assessing the discursive constitutions of the American Self and Venezuelan Others by focusing on the U.S. recognition of Guaidó as the interim president of Venezuela.

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<sup>878</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks at a Rally in Pensacola, Florida," The American Presidency Project, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-rally-the-pensacola-bay-center-pensacola-florida>.

<sup>879</sup> Ibid.

<sup>880</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks at a Rally in Miami, Florida," The American Presidency Project, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-rally-the-james-l-knight-center-miami-florida>.

<sup>881</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Inaugural Address," The American Presidency Project, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-14>.

<sup>882</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks at the U.N. General Assembly: Outlining an America First Foreign Policy," The American Presidency Project, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-release-president-donald-j-trump-the-united-nations-general-assembly-outlining>.

## 6.1. Foreign Policy, Principled Realism and America First Discourse

President Trump's America First discourse was the hegemonic discourse. It has the power of convincing the voters to elect Donald Trump as the president. After his election, President Trump put America First into practice.

America First discourse had an apparent temporal rupture not just from the Obama administration but also from the Clinton and Bush administrations. President Trump claimed that after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. and the presidents lost their ability to lead the world by not fully adapting to the change that came with globalization<sup>883</sup>. It was not a coincidence that his campaign's motto was the same as Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign: "Let's Make America Great Again"<sup>884</sup>. Ergo, according to President Trump, after the Reagan administration, not only the U.S. power and leadership but also the American people's interests were compromised<sup>885</sup>. President Trump openly criticized specific policies of the Bush administration, including the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. However, he mainly focused on denouncing Bill Clinton's and Barack Obama's presidencies because his opponent in the presidential race was Hillary Clinton. President Trump's criticisms towards the previous administrations varied from the economic deterioration (not just from the 2008 financial crisis but also from the "not fair" free trade agreements like NAFTA), increased unemployment rates, production shift to China, unsecured borders, undocumented immigration, and Obama administration's diplomacy first (friend and foe alike) approach in foreign policy<sup>886</sup>. According to President Trump,

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<sup>883</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by the President to the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly," The White House, 2018, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-73rd-session-united-nations-general-assembly-new-york-ny/>.

<sup>884</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention," The American Presidency Project, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-republican-national-convention-detroit>.

<sup>885</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks Introducing Governor Mike Pence as the 2016 Republican Vice Presidential Nominee," The American Presidency Project, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-introducing-governor-mike-pence-the-2016-republican-vice-presidential-nominee-new>.

<sup>886</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks at the Collier County Fairgrounds in Naples, Florida," The American Presidency Project, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-collier-county-fairgrounds-naples-florida>; Trump, "Remarks at a Rally in Miami, Florida."

“The Hillary Clinton foreign policy has cost America thousands of lives and trillions of dollars – and unleashed ISIS across the world”<sup>887</sup>. He also claimed that “the way President Obama and Hillary Clinton negotiate gets nothing of value for the United States, ever”<sup>888</sup>. The Bush and Obama administrations tried to establish a positive foreign policy agenda (especially in the Western Hemisphere) based on promoting U.S. values, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The Trump administration did the opposite and adopted a problem-oriented agenda where the problems in the U.S. and worldwide and the dangers they posed to the American Self were repeatedly articulated by the President or his team.

This problem-oriented agenda was promoted, especially during the election periods. A month before the midterm elections in November 2018, President Trump stated, “If Democrats get control, they flood your streets with criminal aliens, weaken our military (...), and replace freedom with socialism. (...) They will turn America into Venezuela”<sup>889</sup>. This statement was not in just one instance. President Trump and Vice President Pence made various statements similar to this speech<sup>890</sup>. Within the America First discourse, the people could only be protected if President Trump gets elected. After winning the 2016 presidential elections, the Trump administration laid out their foreign policy agenda as “principled realism” because “eight years of Obama meant there was much to repair”<sup>891</sup>. American leadership must be reasserted for the Trump administration since the U.S.’ “adversaries have been emboldened to take advantage of this absence of American leadership”<sup>892</sup>.

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<sup>887</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks in New York City,” The American Presidency Project, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-trump-soho-new-york-city>.

<sup>888</sup> Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Pensacola, Florida.”

<sup>889</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Mississippi,” The American Presidency Project, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-southaven-mississippi>.

<sup>890</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks in Florida,” The American Presidency Project, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-pensacola-florida-0>; Donald J. Trump, “Remarks in Florida,” The American Presidency Project, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-estero-florida>.

<sup>891</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 10.

<sup>892</sup> Rex W. Tillerson, “Statement of Rex Tillerson, Nominee for Secretary of State,” U.S. Department of State, 2017, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/statement-of-rex-tillerson-nominee-for-secretary-of-state/>.

President Trump faced significant challenges in filling important bureaucratic positions. His first national security advisor, Michael Flynn, resigned before completing his first month in the position<sup>893</sup>. President removed Secretary of State Rex Tillerson from office just after one year from Twitter<sup>894</sup>. Apart from personal disagreements, the Senate's confirmation of the presidential nominations was often delayed or denied. Secretary of State Pompeo made many statements while emphasizing the relation between filling these empty seats and U.S. national security<sup>895</sup>. These appointment complications created a problem for the administration in shaping its agenda on crucial issues such as foreign policy. This is why the 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) was the only key text until Mike Pompeo became Secretary of State. It framed the Trump administration's foreign policy agenda, and this agenda heavily relied on "principled realism":

This strategy is guided by principled realism. It is realist because it acknowledges the central role of power in international politics, affirms that sovereign states are the best hope for a peaceful world, and clearly defines our national interests. It is principled because it is grounded in the knowledge that advancing American principles spreads peace and prosperity around the globe. We are guided by our values and disciplined by our interests<sup>896</sup>.

Based on the realist school of International Relations, President Trump's principled realism promoted the traditional nation-state as the main actor of international relations, prioritized the U.S. national interest over any other entity (nation-state or otherwise), simultaneously rejecting the global governance, any superior entity over the nation-states, and liberalism. At the U.N. General Assembly in 2018, he declared, "We reject the ideology of globalism, and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism. Around the world, responsible nations must defend against threats to sovereignty not just from global governance, but also from other, new forms of coercion and

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<sup>893</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 16.

<sup>894</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Tweet from (@realDonaldTrump): Mike Pompeo, Director of the CIA, Will Become Our New Secretary of State. He Will Do a Fantastic Job! Thank You to Rex Tillerson for His Service!," Twitter, 2018, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/973540316656623616>.

<sup>895</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, "Roadblocks to State Department Staffing," U.S. Department of State, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/roadblocks-to-state-department-staffing/>; Michael R. Pompeo, "Remarks to the Media," U.S. Department of State, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/remarks-to-the-media-3/>.

<sup>896</sup> Donald J. Trump, "The 2017 National Security Strategy," The White House, 2017, 55, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

domination”<sup>897</sup>. The principled realism represented liberalism as a weakness since it was a “discredited theory that had failed for decades to yield progress”<sup>898</sup>. When former U.S. presidents opted out for liberalism, the allies and enemies of the U.S. took advantage of U.S. In President Trump’s words “other countries have been ripping us off so badly, and some of the worst offenders are our so-called allies. (...) European Union is worse to us on trade than China”<sup>899</sup>. In a speech titled “Restoring the Role of the Nation-State in the Liberal International Order”, Secretary Pompeo strongly criticized the post-Cold War liberal world order by stressing the importance of the revitalization of the nation-states<sup>900</sup>.

America First discourse relied on this temporal distinction between the old and the new U.S. The former, post-Cold War U.S. was governed by liberal presidents who were elected by the big donors, not the people, made trade deals (like NAFTA) in favor of other countries, sent the U.S. Army overseas while weakening U.S. borders, prioritizing diplomacy with enemies (like Cuba) and neglecting the U.S. citizens (especially by shifting the production to China and therefore increasing unemployment in the U.S.). The world is changing, creating new challenges, and the former U.S. could not respond to these challenges, especially the new competitive challenges coming from China and Russia. According to President Trump, “These competitions require the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades—policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners. For the most part, this premise turned out to be false”<sup>901</sup>. Consequently, the new U.S., under President Trump, would be governed

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<sup>897</sup> Trump, “Remarks by the President to the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly.”

<sup>898</sup> Donald J. Trump, “President Donald J. Trump’s State of the Union Address,” The White House, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-state-union-address-2/>.

<sup>899</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks by President at Turning Point USA’s Teen Student Action Summit 2019,” The White House, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-turning-point-usas-teen-student-action-summit-2019/>.

<sup>900</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Restoring the Role of the Nation-State in the Liberal International Order,” U.S. Department of State, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/restoring-the-role-of-the-nation-state-in-the-liberal-international-order-2/>.

<sup>901</sup> Trump, “The 2017 National Security Strategy,” 3.

by principled realism (not by false ideologies) where the administration “will serve the American people and uphold their right to a government that prioritizes their security, their prosperity, and their interests. This National Security Strategy puts America First”<sup>902</sup>. To do so, the Trump administration determined four pillars for the 2017 NSS: protecting the American people, the homeland, and our way of life, promoting American prosperity, preserving peace through strength, and advancing American influence<sup>903</sup>.

The first pillar of the 2017 NSS was protecting the American people, the homeland, and the American way of life, which was inherently related to the constitution of the American Self and Radical Others like ISIS or North Korea<sup>904</sup>. This pillar referred to the strengthening of U.S. border security inside and pursuing threats (radical extremism) to their sources outside. The second pillar promoted American prosperity, especially by moving American companies back to the U.S. for American workers and renegotiating the “unfair” trade agreements like NAFTA, Paris Agreement, or TPP<sup>905</sup>. President Trump declared that after the renegotiations, he would terminate the trade agreements if he could not get a good deal for the U.S.<sup>906</sup>. Under the Trump administration, the U.S. withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement<sup>907</sup>, the TPP<sup>908</sup>, U.N. Human Rights Council<sup>909</sup> and renegotiated NAFTA<sup>910</sup>. The third pillar was preserving peace through strength, which refers to renewing the U.S. military, intelligence, nuclear, and defensive capabilities<sup>911</sup>. The

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<sup>902</sup> Ibid., ii.

<sup>903</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>904</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>905</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>906</sup> Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Pensacola, Florida.”

<sup>907</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 24.

<sup>908</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Minnesota,” The American Presidency Project, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-mankato-minnesota>.

<sup>909</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Remarks on the UN Human Rights Council,” U.S. Department of State, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/remarks-on-the-un-human-rights-council/>.

<sup>910</sup> Pompeo, “Restoring the Role of the Nation-State in the Liberal International Order.”

<sup>911</sup> Trump, “The 2017 National Security Strategy.”

Trump administration claimed that post-Cold War U.S. administrations relied on a liberal ideology, decreased military spending, and ran after international cooperation for nothing: “We assumed that our military superiority was guaranteed and that a democratic peace was inevitable. We believed that liberal-democratic enlargement and inclusion would fundamentally alter the nature of international relations and that competition would give way to peaceful cooperation”<sup>912</sup>. The last pillar concerned advancing American influence worldwide, especially by promoting American values: liberty, democracy, and the rule of law without compromising U.S. interests in the multilateral forums<sup>913</sup>.

Leader-centered populist rhetoric and, to some extent, the inability to fill the top bureaucratic positions enabled a foreign policy constituted around the leader. Trump administration’s identity construction heavily depended on the 2017 National Security Strategy and his key speeches, such as the inauguration speech<sup>914</sup> and the State of the Union addresses<sup>915</sup>. The following two sub-sections will elaborate on the construction of the Self concerning the dangerous Others in the Trump era by analyzing these texts.

### **6.1.1. The Constitution of the Others during the Trump Era**

The Trump administration had a clear articulation of the categories of the Others; at the top of the agenda were “hostile state and non-state actors”<sup>916</sup>: North Korea, Iran, and “Jihadist terrorist organizations” like ISIS and al-Qa’ida<sup>917</sup>. These actors were

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<sup>912</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>914</sup> Trump, “Inaugural Address.”

<sup>915</sup> Donald J. Trump, “State of the Union Address,” The White House, 2018, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-state-union-address/>; Trump, “President Donald J. Trump’s State of the Union Address”; Donald J. Trump, “Remarks by President Trump in State of the Union Address,” The White House, 2020, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-state-union-address-3/>.

<sup>916</sup> Trump, “The 2017 National Security Strategy,” 8.

<sup>917</sup> Ibid., 10.

constructed as active, direct, and radical dangers to the very existence of the American Self. “North Korea seeks the capability to kill millions of Americans with nuclear weapons. Iran supports terrorist groups and openly calls for our destruction. Jihadist terrorist organizations such as ISIS and al-Qa’ida are determined to attack the United States and radicalize Americans with their hateful ideology<sup>918</sup>. The Trump administration claimed that eight years of the Obama-Clinton administration did nothing but empower these threats with a concessive foreign policy<sup>919</sup>. As a result, these dangerous “outlaw regimes” and terrorist threats emboldened during the Obama era and posed more danger to Americans<sup>920</sup>. This is why President Trump repeatedly complained about how he “inherited a mess” from the previous administration and that they should never allowed these dangers to get to that point<sup>921</sup>.

The strategies to deal with these radical Others varied. The first group of radical Other was the jihadist terrorists. In this representation, they were barbarians and had “wicked”, “evil”, “hateful”, and “barbaric ideologies”<sup>922</sup>. Similar to Todorov’s argument, the barbaric Others cannot be transformed into something better like the Self; therefore, the only strategy was constructed as their extermination. In President Trump’s words, “We have no choice but to annihilate them. (...) Terrorists are not merely criminals; they are unlawful enemy combatants. And when captured overseas, they should be treated like the terrorists they are”<sup>923</sup>. The Obama administration also had a similar approach to dealing with the ‘extremists’, but

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<sup>918</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>919</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 10; Michael R. Pompeo, “Confronting Iran: The Trump Administration’s Strategy,” U.S. Department of State, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/confronting-iran-the-trump-administrations-strategy/>.

<sup>920</sup> Pompeo, “Confronting Iran: The Trump Administration’s Strategy.”

<sup>921</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress,” The American Presidency Project, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-2>; Donald J. Trump, “Remarks by President Trump and First Lady Fabiana Rosales of Venezuela Before Bilateral Meeting,” The White House, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-first-lady-fabiana-rosales-bolivarian-republic-venezuela-bilateral-meeting/>.

<sup>922</sup> Trump, “The 2017 National Security Strategy,” 1,3,7,11.

<sup>923</sup> Trump, “State of the Union Address.”



Secretary Clinton repeatedly emphasized the importance of foreign aid to fight terrorism and to help the people. The Trump administration denied this diplomatic approach. According to Secretary Tillerson, the State Department's only job was to clear and secure the areas, but rebuilding the communities was not their job<sup>924</sup>.

The second group of radical Other consisted of North Korea and Iran. The Trump administration defined North Korea as “the greatest security threat”<sup>925</sup>, and the primary focus of U.S. national security efforts had been the denuclearization of North Korea<sup>926</sup> because the nuclearization of these regimes created “the most significant *existential threat* to the United States”<sup>927</sup>. Here, the primary strategy was implementing all the available diplomatic tools to pressure the “rogue regime” of North Korea to “keep the pressure on and bring them to the negotiating table” so the threat could be successfully eliminated<sup>928</sup>. President Trump's National Security Advisor, John Bolton, admitted that he was supporting a military strategy towards North Korea because the economic sanctions alone would not stop Kim Jong Un<sup>929</sup>. He said, “A preemptive strike against North Korea's nuclear and ballistic-missile programs would work; how we could use massive conventional bombs against Pyongyang's artillery north of the DMZ, which threatened Seoul, thereby reducing casualties dramatically”<sup>930</sup>. In the end, President Trump did not support Bolton's military strategy and followed the diplomatic strategy to deal with the threats posed by both North Korea and Iran. The Obama administration attempted to ease

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<sup>924</sup> Rex W. Tillerson, “Address to the Press,” U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Turkey, 2017, <https://tr.usembassy.gov/address-to-the-press/>.

<sup>925</sup> Rex W. Tillerson, “I Am Proud of Our Diplomacy,” U.S. Department of State, 2017, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/i-am-proud-of-our-diplomacy/>.

<sup>926</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Strengthening American Diplomacy: Reviewing the State Department's Budget, Operations, and Policy Priorities,” U.S. Department of State, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/strengthening-american-diplomacy-reviewing-the-state-departments-budget-operations-and-policy-priorities/>.

<sup>927</sup> Trump, “The 2017 National Security Strategy,” 25 [Emphasis Added].

<sup>928</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Remarks at the Department of State's Foreign Affairs Day,” U.S. Department of State, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/remarks-at-the-department-of-states-foreign-affairs-day/>.

<sup>929</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 33.

<sup>930</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

diplomatic relations with both Iran and Cuba. This move was seen as a weakness of the Obama administration; therefore, the Trump administration's diplomatic agenda was reversing them immediately. According to the Trump administration, President Obama's premise was that "the policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners" turned out to be false<sup>931</sup>. These appeasement policies with 'the rogue regimes' gave them the opportunity to strengthen their regimes inside and advance their anti-Western propaganda outside<sup>932</sup>. So, President Trump declared, "We will not avert our eyes from a regime that chants 'Death to America'"<sup>933</sup>. In the end, the Trump administration's strategy to deal with these threats was using all the diplomatic tools to isolate these regimes in the international realm (including sanctions), undermining their internal support, forcing them to negotiate for denuclearization, and therefore eliminating their threats to the U.S. citizens.

China and Russia were also constituted as a threat to the U.S. but not as dangerous as Iran and North Korea. They were represented as rivals, creating "strategic challenges" that could threaten the U.S. influence worldwide<sup>934</sup>. China and Russia's tendency to support anti-U.S. regimes worldwide was the primary concern for the U.S. since "China and Russia want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests"<sup>935</sup>. China's strategic challenge was economic for the Trump administration since there was a production shift from the U.S. to China for years and China had been investing billions of dollars in infrastructure, especially in the Western Hemisphere. This was considered dangerous to the U.S.' regional interests and the Monroe Doctrine<sup>936</sup>. U.S. strategy to confront China and Russia was to promote

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<sup>931</sup> Trump, "The 2017 National Security Strategy," 3.

<sup>932</sup> Ibid.

<sup>933</sup> Trump, "President Donald J. Trump's State of the Union Address."

<sup>934</sup> Trump, "The 2017 National Security Strategy," 8; Trump, "State of the Union Address."

<sup>935</sup> Trump, "The 2017 National Security Strategy," 25.

<sup>936</sup> Rex W. Tillerson, "Address on U.S. Engagement in the Western Hemisphere," U.S. Mission to the OAS, 2018, <https://usoas.usmission.gov/secretary-tillerson-delivers-address-u-s-engagement-western-hemisphere/>.

American values and persuade the governments to cooperate with the U.S. instead of China or Russia. The Trump administration claimed that “China’s offer always come at a price – usually in the form of state-led investments, carried out by imported Chinese labor, onerous loans, and unsustainable debt”, while the U.S.’ approach was based on mutual gains<sup>937</sup>, “mutual respect and shared principles” unlike China and Russia’s “purely transactional mindset”<sup>938</sup>. Unlike China, Russia was identified as a danger to the U.S.<sup>939</sup> Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, support for the Assad regime in Syria, possession of nuclear power, relations with undemocratic regimes (including Venezuela), and interference with the 2016 U.S. elections were the main problems according to Secretary Pompeo<sup>940</sup>. The U.S.’ main strategy to deal with these problems was “to steadily raise the costs of aggression until Vladimir Putin chooses a less confrontational foreign policy while keeping the door open for dialogue in our national interest”<sup>941</sup>. The U.S.’ relations with both China and Russia became highly strained over Venezuela after 2019 since both were “seeking to expand military linkages and arms sales across the region”, but especially in Venezuela<sup>942</sup>. According to National Security Advisor Bolton, the U.S. sanctions would be more effective, and President Maduro would be overthrown if it were not for the support of China and Russia<sup>943</sup>. This issue will be discussed further under section 6.4.

In the 2017 NSS, Cuba and Venezuela were represented as threats to the common security and shared values of the Western Hemisphere since these threats were

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<sup>937</sup> Ibid.

<sup>938</sup> John J. Sullivan, “Remarks at 48th Annual Washington Conference on the Americas,” U.S. Department of State, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/remarks-at-48th-annual-washington-conference-on-the-americas/>.

<sup>939</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Nomination Hearings of The 115th Congress,” U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2018, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-115shrg29844/pdf/CHRG-115shrg29844.pdf>.

<sup>940</sup> Pompeo, “Strengthening American Diplomacy: Reviewing the State Department’s Budget, Operations, and Policy Priorities.”

<sup>941</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Opening Remarks by Secretary of State Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,” U.S. Embassy in Estonia, 2018, <https://ee.usembassy.gov/opening-remarks-by-secretary-of-state-michael-r-pompeo-before-the-senate-foreign-relations-committee/>.

<sup>942</sup> Trump, “The 2017 National Security Strategy,” 51.

<sup>943</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 236.

coming from “areas of close proximity” to the U.S. and the region<sup>944</sup>. They were represented as threats to Western values (democracy, market-oriented economy, and the rule of law), their people were suffering under “anachronistic leftist authoritarian models”, but more importantly, they were weak states and U.S. rivals like China and Russia seen this power gap as an opportunity to operate in the region<sup>945</sup>: “Both China and Russia support the dictatorship in Venezuela and are seeking to expand military linkages and arms sales across the region”<sup>946</sup>. This was the first time the Maduro regime called a dictatorship in an NSS. In the 2015 NSS, Venezuela was mentioned only once, and its democracy was at risk<sup>947</sup>. The strategy to deal with Cuba and Venezuela was increasing regional efforts to build reliable partnerships united around the shared values of the OAS and the Inter-American Democratic Charter and isolating the regimes of Cuba and Venezuela from all the free states across the hemisphere<sup>948</sup>.

Unlike the Bush and Obama administrations, the Trump administration’s foreign policy discourse primarily focused on the negative agenda and the propagation of conspiracy theories. This discourse depended on the continuous articulation of the existential threats and how these threats could have severe consequences for the Self: North Korea could obtain the nuclear power to “kill millions of Americans”<sup>949</sup>, Iran chanted “Death to America”<sup>950</sup>, China was taking American workers’ jobs<sup>951</sup>, Russia was meddling with the U.S. elections and attempting “to sow instability in America”<sup>952</sup>. Even though conspiracy theories are not new, the internet has increased

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<sup>944</sup> Trump, “The 2017 National Security Strategy,” 51.

<sup>945</sup> Ibid.

<sup>946</sup> Ibid.

<sup>947</sup> Obama, “The 2015 National Security Strategy,” 28.

<sup>948</sup> Trump, “The 2017 National Security Strategy,” 51.

<sup>949</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>950</sup> Trump, “Remarks by President Trump in State of the Union Address,” 2019.

<sup>951</sup> Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Pensacola, Florida.”

<sup>952</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Remarks to the Media,” U.S. Department of State, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/remarks-to-the-media-2/>.

conspiracy theories' ability to reach millions in just a couple of hours. The increasing numbers of flat-earthers or microchip vaccine conspiracy theorists are inconceivable. According to Muirhead and Rosenblum, the use of conspiracy theories to delegitimize democracy is a new phenomenon<sup>953</sup>, and one example was President Trump. This new conspiracism is not interested in the truths, explanations, or evidence. Instead, its power comes from its spillover effect on social media. By delegitimizing democracy and attacking its core institutions like political parties, this new conspiracism creates an antidemocratic ideology<sup>954</sup>. This ideology rejects pluralism, congressional testimonies, and institutionalized traditions (like giving daily press briefings in the White House). Ultimately, this ideology would enable the unification of the people as a single Self around the leader<sup>955</sup>. In President Trump's words, "We will be One American Nation. We Will Be One American People"<sup>956</sup>. The construction of this new American Self under the Trump presidency will be analyzed in the next section.

### 6.1.2. Rediscovering American Identity

According to President Trump, the 2016 presidential elections would be historical because "This election will decide whether we are ruled by the people or the politicians"<sup>957</sup>. The post-Cold War U.S. started to serve an establishment, a rigged political and economic system. This system was rigged by "the big donors", "big businesses", "fake media", and bureaucrats<sup>958</sup>. The politicians led this establishment to look out for the interests of the big donors instead of the interests of the American

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<sup>953</sup> Russell Muirhead and Nancy L. Rosenblum, *A Lot of People Are Saying: The New Conspiracism and Assault on Democracy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), 7, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv941trn>.

<sup>954</sup> Massimiliano Demata, Virginia Zorzi, and Angela Zottola, "Conspiracy Theory Discourses: Critical Inquiries into the Language of Anti-Science, Post-Trutherism, Mis/Disinformation and Alternative Media," in *Conspiracy Theory Discourses* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2022), 4, <https://doi.org/10.1075/dapsac.98>.

<sup>955</sup> Muirhead and Rosenblum, *A Lot of People Are Saying: The New Conspiracism and Assault on Democracy*, 86.

<sup>956</sup> Trump, "Remarks at a Rally in Pensacola, Florida."

<sup>957</sup> Trump, "Remarks in New York City."

<sup>958</sup> Ibid.

people<sup>959</sup>. The Obama-Clinton administration represented the establishment, while President Trump represented all of the American people regardless of their race, religion, gender, and political parties<sup>960</sup>. Therefore, the election of Donald Trump as the president would mean “transferring power from Washington, DC, and giving it back to the people”<sup>961</sup>. The people here did not represent a specific part of the American society. Within America First discourse, American people were united around a single Self: “We are fighting for all Americans – Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Conservatives, Liberals – who have been failed by this corrupt system. We are fighting for everyone who does not have a voice”<sup>962</sup>.

The American Self before President Trump represented as forgotten, disregarded, and financially struggling<sup>963</sup>. This representation constituted the temporal dimension of the American Self during the Trump era. With the America First discourse, this temporal break from the past and having a bright future with the leadership of President Trump was highlighted. The past was “bitter and divisive”<sup>964</sup>, while the future “includes each and every American”<sup>965</sup>. Therefore, with President Trump in office, “It is time to break with the bitter failures of the past and to embrace a new, inclusive, and prosperous American future”<sup>966</sup>. The past also embraced an ideology of globalism (President Trump used globalism, interventionist globalism<sup>967</sup>, and global governance<sup>968</sup> interchangeably), and this ideology made big businesses richer while making Americans poorer. The previous U.S. presidents signed unfair trade agreements (especially NAFTA and TPP), enabling shifts in production from the

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<sup>959</sup> Trump, “Inaugural Address.”

<sup>960</sup> Trump, “Remarks in New York City.”

<sup>961</sup> Trump, “Inaugural Address.”

<sup>962</sup> Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Pensacola, Florida.”

<sup>963</sup> Trump, “Inaugural Address.”

<sup>964</sup> Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Pensacola, Florida.”

<sup>965</sup> Ibid.

<sup>966</sup> Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Miami, Florida.”

<sup>967</sup> Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Pensacola, Florida.”

<sup>968</sup> Trump, “Remarks by the President to the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly.”

U.S. to Mexico or China. This, in return, increased unemployment in the U.S. and decreased wages while increasing the taxes for the American business. All, in return, weakened the American economy. Global governance was seen as a threat to sovereignty<sup>969</sup> and U.S. borders<sup>970</sup>. Therefore, America First also represented a break from globalism. As President Trump said, “We reject the ideology of globalism, and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism”<sup>971</sup>. This patriotism represented rediscovering the American identity<sup>972</sup> and reclaiming the American pride and power: “What we are witnessing today is the renewal of the American spirit. Our allies will find that America is once again ready to lead. All the nations of the world—friend or foe—will find that America is strong, and America is proud”<sup>973</sup>.

The spatial dimension of the American Self within the America First discourse is quite prominent. According to President Trump, American exceptionalism has been hurt by previous administrations, especially the Obama-Clinton administration. The Obama administration depleted the U.S. military, humiliated America, and hurt national pride<sup>974</sup>. President Trump made many statements that the world was laughing at the weak state of the U.S.<sup>975</sup> According to the America First discourse, the temporal break from this ‘embarrassing’ past also revitalized American exceptionalism. President Trump claimed that with his presidency, “A new era of American exceptionalism is dawning”<sup>976</sup>. The Trump administration repeatedly

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<sup>969</sup> Ibid.

<sup>970</sup> Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Mississippi.”

<sup>971</sup> Trump, “Remarks by the President to the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly.”

<sup>972</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “A Foreign Policy From the Founding,” U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/a-foreign-policy-from-the-founding/>.

<sup>973</sup> Trump, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress.”

<sup>974</sup> Trump, “Remarks at the Collier County Fairgrounds in Naples, Florida.”

<sup>975</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Tweet from (@realDonaldTrump): Remember, Politicians Are All Talk and NO Action. Our Country Is a Laughing Stock That Is Going to Hell,” Twitter, 2015, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/598328562739970048>; Donald J. Trump, “Tweet from (@realDonaldTrump): The Entire World WAS Laughing and Taking Advantage of Us,” Twitter, 2017, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/922830229525225477>.

<sup>976</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Proclamation 9729—World Intellectual Property Day,” The American Presidency Project, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-9729-world-intellectual-property-day-2018>.

articulated the superior position of the U.S. concerning the rest of the world<sup>977</sup>: “This is the greatest country in the world. We now have the strongest military by far. (...) We have the greatest economy on Earth”<sup>978</sup>. More importantly, this hierarchical distinction of the spatial identity created a premise where the inside (within the U.S. borders) was represented as safe, prosperous, and stronger than any other nation.

The ethical dimension of the rediscovered American Self was also about rediscovering the responsibilities of the U.S. presidency. According to the Trump administration, previous administrations ignored their responsibilities to the American people. They focused on the U.S.’ worldwide responsibilities by overreaching its capabilities and neglecting its citizens. As already mentioned, the Trump administration claimed that even the allies of the U.S. had taken advantage of the U.S., and with the new administration, this would be over<sup>979</sup>. In return, the Trump administration expected the allies to do more: “We expect them to shoulder a fair share of the burden of responsibility to protect against common threats”<sup>980</sup>. By renegotiating NAFTA, withdrawing from the TPP, or forcing NATO members to meet their financial obligations, President Trump argued that the U.S. reclaimed its responsibility to its citizens. Moreover, the administration has not stopped its ‘moral responsibility’ worldwide. This responsibility was represented as promoting U.S. values worldwide and confronting the regimes that do not follow these values. As Secretary Tillerson said, “Our moral light must not go out if we are to remain an agent of freedom for mankind. Supporting human rights in our foreign policy is a key component of clarifying to a watching world what America stands for”<sup>981</sup>. The ethical dimension of the new American Self of the Trump era is particularly relevant for the U.S. recognition of Guaidó as the interim president of Venezuela. This

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<sup>977</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks During a Meeting With Representative Jefferson H. Van Drew and an Exchange With Reporters,” The American Presidency Project, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-during-meeting-with-representative-jefferson-h-van-drew-and-exchange-with>.

<sup>978</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Departure for New Jersey,” The American Presidency Project, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-exchange-with-reporters-prior-departure-for-bedminster-new-jersey>.

<sup>979</sup> Trump, “Remarks by President at Turning Point USA’s Teen Student Action Summit 2019.”

<sup>980</sup> Trump, “The 2017 National Security Strategy,” 4.

<sup>981</sup> Tillerson, “Statement of Rex Tillerson, Nominee for Secretary of State.”



relation will be discussed in detail in section 6.4. The following section focuses on the Trump administration's policy towards the Western Hemisphere and the two basic discourses of the administration.

## **6.2. The Return to the Monroe Doctrine: Employing America First Across the Western Hemisphere**

Unlike the two previous administrations, the U.S. engagement with the hemisphere was not the top priority for the Trump administration's agenda. President Trump was the first president ever who did not attend the Summit of the Americas in 2018. The lack of appointees was not the reason for his negligence; on the contrary, it resulted from the America First agenda. Within the America First discourse, President Trump's priority was the Americans. Foreign policy and international relations were just tools for making American people's lives so much better than before: "Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families"<sup>982</sup>.

The Trump administration criticized many Obama administration policies. However, his foreign policy towards the hemisphere was subjected to the harshest criticisms, especially President Obama's reconstitution of diplomatic relations with Cuba and Secretary Kerry's statements about the end of the Monroe Doctrine. National Security Advisor Bolton interpreted Kerry's statement as "a mistake that had reverberated through all of the national security departments and agencies with predictable effects"<sup>983</sup>. NAFTA and immigration from the South were other crucial policies criticized by President Trump. He said, "We have lost one-third of our manufacturing jobs since Bill and Hillary Clinton gave us NAFTA. We are going to stop companies from leaving our country and keep those jobs right here in America"<sup>984</sup>. He also said, "Immigration security is national security. Hillary's pledge for 'open borders' includes an open border with the Middle East – meaning

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<sup>982</sup> Trump, "Inaugural Address."

<sup>983</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 237.

<sup>984</sup> Trump, "Remarks at a Rally in Pensacola, Florida."

generations of radicalism and terrorism spreading and growing within your communities and near your families”<sup>985</sup>.

The Trump administration’s main agenda in the hemisphere was “to reverse the consequences of the disastrous Obama-era policies”<sup>986</sup>. However, the appointment problem also affected the State Department’s Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, the top position for determining and implementing the policy towards the hemisphere. The nomination of Kimberly Breier as the Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs was approved by the Senate in October 2018, six months after her nomination. Until her approval in October 2018, the top administrative seat concerning the Western Hemisphere was filled only by acting Assistant Secretaries. Ten months later, she resigned over the disagreement with the White House on immigration policies<sup>987</sup>. Because of the lack of top bureaucrats, President Trump’s foreign policy towards the Western Hemisphere was mainly handled by Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary Tillerson, and then Pompeo, and after January 2019, the U.S. Special Representative for Venezuela, Elliott Abrams.

The predominance of America First discourse is also visible in the Trump administration’s foreign policy towards the hemisphere. America First has a presupposition that all other nations, including the “so-called allies”, had been taken advantage of the U.S. while the latter had suffered<sup>988</sup>. Therefore, President Trump’s foreign policy agenda implied revanchism. First and foremost, maintaining foreign relations with the U.S. depended on the other side’s behavior: making up for their past mistakes. NAFTA was represented as one of those mistakes. President Trump stated, “It is [NAFTA] been very good for Canada, it is been very good for Mexico, but it has been horrible for the United States”<sup>989</sup>. So, under Trump, like other trade

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<sup>985</sup> Trump, “Remarks at the Collier County Fairgrounds in Naples, Florida.”

<sup>986</sup> Bolton, “Remarks to the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association.”

<sup>987</sup> Justin Wise, “Top US Diplomat Breier for Latin America Resigns,” *The Hill*, 2018, <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/456653-top-us-diplomat-for-latin-america-resigns/>.

<sup>988</sup> Trump, “Remarks by President at Turning Point USA’s Teen Student Action Summit 2019.”

<sup>989</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks During a Meeting With President Mauricio Macri of Argentina,” *The American Presidency Project*, 2017, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-during-meeting-with-president-mauricio-macri-argentina-and-exchange-with-reporters>.

agreements, NAFTA had to be either renegotiated or terminated (if the opposite sides denied the renegotiation)<sup>990</sup>. Ultimately, the Trump administration decided to renegotiate and replace NAFTA with The United States, Mexico, and Canada Agreement (USMCA), which entered into force on July 1, 2020<sup>991</sup>. The other states did not welcome this revanchist understanding of foreign policy since the U.S. superiority is embedded in this understanding. As a result, during the Trump era, U.S. relations with the Western Hemisphere were callous.

Secretary Tillerson declared the Trump administration's foreign policy agenda towards the region after one year in presidency on February 1, 2018<sup>992</sup>. He elaborated on the three pillars of the U.S. foreign policy towards the hemisphere: economic growth, regional security, and democratic governance<sup>993</sup>. The first pillar, economic growth, was related to economic prosperity (benefiting American workers). For the Trump administration, making fair and reciprocal trade agreements was the key for reaching prosperity<sup>994</sup>. This was why renegotiating NAFTA was a priority for the administration. Moreover, confronting China's economic influence across the hemisphere was another policy for this pillar<sup>995</sup>. This confrontation was about convincing the hemispheric countries to trade with the U.S. instead of China. This convincing strategy was based on exposing the negative ways to make trade deals with China while mentioning the positive aspects of making trade deals with the U.S. Secretary Pompeo stated, "The problem, though, is when China does business in places like Latin America, it often injects corrosive capital into the economic bloodstream, giving life to corruption and eroding good governance"<sup>996</sup>.

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<sup>990</sup> Ibid.

<sup>991</sup> The International Trade Administration, "USMCA vs NAFTA," 2023, <https://www.trade.gov/usmca-vsnafta>.

<sup>992</sup> Tillerson, "Address on U.S. Engagement in the Western Hemisphere."

<sup>993</sup> Ibid.

<sup>994</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Key Topics," Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, 2021, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/key-topics-bureau-of-western-hemisphere-affairs/>.

<sup>995</sup> Francisco Palmieri, "Review of Secretary Tillerson's Trip to Latin America and the Caribbean," U.S. Department of State, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/review-of-secretary-tillersons-trip-to-latin-america-and-the-caribbean/>.

<sup>996</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, "Seizing the Opportunity for Freedom in the Americas," U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/seizing-the-opportunity-for-freedom-in-the-americas/>.

The second pillar was regional security, and it targeted transnational criminal organizations, drug and human trafficking, corruption, and immigration. These were also targeted to protect the U.S. citizens at home and abroad<sup>997</sup>. The U.S. prioritized enhancing security cooperation with Central American countries and Mexico to ensure regional security. Building a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border and stopping the migrant caravan were the main strategies to ensure regional security<sup>998</sup>. The migrant caravan was a migration flow from Central American countries to the U.S. Right before the 2018 mid-term elections, thousands of people (the estimated number was five thousand) left their home countries and started to move toward the U.S. to seek asylum in October 2018<sup>999</sup>. The caravan movement presented an opportunity for the Trump administration, and he combined ‘the socialist threat’ with ‘the open border’ threat. He said, “The Democrats want to invite caravan after caravan of illegal aliens to flood into your communities, depleting our resources and overwhelming our nation”<sup>1000</sup>. Using “illegal alien” instead of “undocumented immigrant” was a political choice. Of course, illegal alien is a technical legal term in U.S. law; however, many U.S. institutions decided to change the term to “noncitizen” because the term “illegal aliens” was found outdated, pejorative, and derogatory<sup>1001</sup>. The term alien is employed for dehumanization and constructing the immigrants as a subject less than humans, as “ravages”, for instance<sup>1002</sup>. This construction, in return, enabled

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<sup>997</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Key Topics.”

<sup>998</sup> U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, “Addressing Mass Migration Through the Southern Border of the United States,” 2019, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/05/13/2019-09992/addressing-mass-migration-through-the-southern-border-of-the-united-states>.

<sup>999</sup> The United Nations, “UN Agency Assists Central American Caravan Migrants,” UN News, 2018, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/11/1024882>.

<sup>1000</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Montana,” The American Presidency Project, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-belgrade-montana>.

<sup>1001</sup> Library of U.S. Congress, “To Cancel the Subject Heading ‘Illegal Aliens,’” 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsol/illegal-aliens-decision.pdf>; U.S. Department of Justice, “Terminology,” Executive Office for Immigration Review, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/book/file/1415216/download>; Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, “Governor Newsom Signs Suite of Legislation to Remove Outdated Term ‘Alien’ from State Codes,” 2021, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2021/09/24/governor-newsom-signs-suite-of-legislation-to-support-californias-immigrant-communities-and-remove-outdated-term-alien-from-state-codes/>.

<sup>1002</sup> Trump, “Inaugural Address.”

specific policies like separating children from their families, forcing immigrants into prison-like detention centers, and using them as scapegoats for the problems of the receiving country<sup>1003</sup>. President Trump linked the migrant caravan and socialist danger together as a national security problem and, right before the 2018 mid-term elections, used this threat to unite his voters around his leadership. This danger constitution will be assessed through section 6.4.

The last pillar was promoting U.S. values across the region and “defending freedom, democracy, and human rights and seeking to end corruption throughout the hemisphere”<sup>1004</sup>. This pillar was inherently related to U.S.–Venezuela relations. Like previous administrations, the Trump administration maintained a multilateral approach for strengthening democratic governance across the region and confronting the problems of restoring democracies in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela<sup>1005</sup>. Instead of acting alone, the U.S. preferred to act with the Lima Group or the OAS while confronting these challenges<sup>1006</sup>. Because acting alone could cause questioning of the legitimacy of the U.S. involvement in Venezuela, this involvement will also be discussed in the following two sections of this chapter.

President Trump's foreign policy towards the Western Hemisphere focused on a negative agenda like ‘illegal aliens’, ‘unfair trade deals’, ‘tyranny in Cuba and Venezuela’, and confronting Russia and China’s influence in the region. The Bush and Obama administrations openly avoided confronting the Chávez and Maduro regimes, especially by focusing on a positive agenda in the hemisphere, trying to demolish the interventionist image of the U.S. across the hemisphere. They always underlined the importance of multilateralism for solving the problems of the hemisphere. The Trump administration did the contrary and followed a problem-

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<sup>1003</sup> David M. Markowitz and Paul Slovic, “Why We Dehumanize Illegal Immigrants: A US Mixed-Methods Study,” *Plos One* 16, no. 10 (October 7, 2021): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0257912>; Stephen M. Utych, “How Dehumanization Influences Attitudes toward Immigrants,” *Political Research Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (June 5, 2018): 440–52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917744897>.

<sup>1004</sup> Tillerson, “Address on U.S. Engagement in the Western Hemisphere.”

<sup>1005</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Key Topics.”

<sup>1006</sup> Tillerson, “Address on U.S. Engagement in the Western Hemisphere.”

oriented foreign policy. This position enabled a confrontation with the Maduro regime to show solidarity with the Venezuelan people. President Trump declared, “The United States will not stand by as Venezuela crumbles”<sup>1007</sup>. He made this statement early in his presidency, even before the Western Hemisphere policy was announced. Vice President Pence also said, “We will continue to stand with free nations across our hemisphere until democracy is restored for the Venezuelan people”<sup>1008</sup> in August 2017.

Since the previous two administrations avoided a direct confrontation with the Chávez and Maduro administrations, their foreign policy discourses towards the Western Hemisphere (instead of Venezuela) determined their administrations’ basic discourses. The Trump administration’s foreign policy discourse differed; therefore, the two basic discourses were determined as socialist nightmare and tyranny discourse directly related to Venezuela. For the first time, the U.S. decided to *directly* challenge the Maduro regime as a radical, dangerous Other and denied any solution where President Maduro was involved. Also, by employing these two basic discourses, the Trump administration overexerted itself to construct a new Venezuelan Other, Juan Guaidó, in 2019, which constitutes the key event of this chapter.

### **6.2.1. The Socialist Nightmare Discourse**

The fear of turning a socialist country, namely the “Red Scare”, was not a new phenomenon. Before Campbell’s *Writing Security*, the literature defined two periods of the Red Scare; the first period started right after the Bolshevik Revolution, and the second period started right after the Second World War<sup>1009</sup>. Before Campbell, these two periods were defined as the fear of Soviet expansion. However, Campbell’s

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<sup>1007</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Statement from the President,” The White House, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-donald-j-trump-5/>.

<sup>1008</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President Pence and President Santos of Colombia in Joint Press Conference,” The White House, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-president-santos-colombia-joint-press-conference/>.

<sup>1009</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 136–44.

interpretation of the Red Scare exposed the relationship between American identity and discourses of danger. The threat was not actually coming from the Soviet military or expansion<sup>1010</sup>. The real threat was losing the core of the American Self: capitalism<sup>1011</sup>. This analysis redefined the red scare and traced its history to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, before the Bolshevik Revolution. Between 1874 and 1877, while the Indian Wars continued, the Indians were defined as the “anarchical” and “barbarous” Reds in the American newspapers<sup>1012</sup>. In these newspapers, the American Self was juxtaposed with the newly emerging capitalist order, future, and civilization, while the Indians were juxtaposed with tribalism, past, and barbarism<sup>1013</sup>. According to Campbell, “The well-developed antipathy toward communism in the United States stems from the way in which the danger to the private ownership of property it embodies is a code for distinguishing the ‘civilized’ from the ‘barbaric’”<sup>1014</sup>. U.S. politicians still employ the juxtaposition of the barbaric with the civilized. For instance, after the Assad regime’s use of chemical weapons in Syria, Vice President Pence stated, “The civilized world must send a message of resolve and unity that we will not accept such barbaric attacks”<sup>1015</sup>.

The Red Scare was unified with the Soviet threat after the Bolshevik Revolution. Right after the First World War ended, U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing declared Bolshevism a threat to the core of U.S. society<sup>1016</sup>. After the Second World War ended, the Red Scare discourse was revitalized again. This time, the external threat was linked with internal chaos. The very core of the Red Scare was not just the construction of an external threat but the combination of this external threat with the internal disorder<sup>1017</sup>. This internal disorder was constructed as the Democratic

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<sup>1010</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>1011</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>1012</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>1013</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>1014</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>1015</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President at First Plenary Session of the Summit of the Americas,” The White House, 2018, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-by-vice-president-pence-at-first-plenary-session-of-the-summit-of-the-americas/>.

<sup>1016</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 142.

<sup>1017</sup> Ibid., 141.

Party<sup>1018</sup> U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy started a campaign against the “enemies within”; this campaign is also known as the second wave of the Red Scare or McCarthyism<sup>1019</sup>. In 1947, The Director of the FBI, John Edgar Hoover, said there was a “force of traitorous communists, constantly gnawing away like termites at the very foundations of American society”<sup>1020</sup>.

Linking danger to American identity has been a pivotal part of the constitution of American identity since the portrayal of dangers through foreign policy helps to secure the limits of its national identity<sup>1021</sup>. The Trump administration’s employing of the Red Scare discourse started in September 2018. Unsurprisingly, he also linked an external threat (the socialist Maduro Regime) with an internal disorder (the Democratic Party). The administration constructed an enemy inside, which represented a severe existential threat to the core of the American Self and its values, the Democratic Party. Right before the November 2018 mid-term elections, President Trump started to use conspiracies to incriminate the Democratic Party. In September 2018, at a rally in West Virginia, he said:

Democrat-controlled Senate will try to take away your Second Amendment (...) They want to make us Venezuela (...) Erase America's borders (...) The Democrat Party will stop at nothing to run your lives, run down your values, and ransack our nation's wealth (...) *The Democrat Party is radical socialism, Venezuela, and open borders*. It is now called, to me, you have never heard this before, the party of crime (...) They want no borders. Let everybody just pour into our country. (...) That unleash violent predators like MS-13 into American communities, leaving innocent Americans at the mercy of--really, by the way, really ruthless animals (...) This election is about security (...) The Democrats are trying to destroy our proud American heritage<sup>1022</sup>.

This statement was just the beginning. Until the November mid-term 2018 elections, he continuously used these conspiracies that if the Democrats obtained the majority

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<sup>1018</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1019</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>1020</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>1021</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>1022</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at a ‘Make America Great Again’ Rally in West Virginia,” The American Presidency Project, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-wheeling-west-virginia> [Emphasis Added].



in the Senate, the U.S. would turn into a socialist country where the borders would be opened so that the “illegal criminal aliens” could invade the U.S.<sup>1023</sup> Between September to November 2018, President Trump made many speeches identifying the Democratic Party with socialism and even abolishing the U.S. borders<sup>1024</sup>. He said, “Radical Democrats want to tear down our laws, demolish our prosperity in the name of socialism and probably worse and abolish our borders in the service of globalism”<sup>1025</sup>.

As discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, difference is a necessity for the existence of any identity. Discourses of danger constitute this difference<sup>1026</sup>. The Other represents everything that the Self does not want to become. The American Self (intertwined with liberal democracy and market-oriented economy) represents the opposite of the socialist Other. Losing the Self and turning into the socialist Other creates an existential threat to the Self with the articulations of discourses of danger. President Trump’s employment of discourses of danger ignited this existential threat among Americans. It aimed to convince them to vote for his movement so the Americans could recover from this threat and reclaim their identity. He claimed, “The Democrat Party is the party of high taxes, high crime, open borders, late-term abortion, socialism, blatant corruption, and the total obliteration of the Second Amendment. The Republican Party is the party of the American worker, the American family, and the American dream”<sup>1027</sup>. In the 2018 mid-term elections, the Republicans increased

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<sup>1023</sup> Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Mississippi.”

<sup>1024</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Press Release - Congressional Democrats Want to Take Money from Hardworking Americans to Fund Failed Socialist Policies,” The American Presidency Project, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/press-release-congressional-democrats-want-take-money-from-hardworking-americans-fund>; Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Rochester, Minnesota,” The American Presidency Project, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-rochester-minnesota>; Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Topeka, Kansas,” The American Presidency Project, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-topeka-kansas>; Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Johnson City, Tennessee,” The American Presidency Project, 2018, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-johnson-city-tennessee>; Trump, “Remarks in Florida.”

<sup>1025</sup> Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in Mississippi.”

<sup>1026</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 1998, 1–14.

<sup>1027</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at a Rally in South Carolina,” The American Presidency Project, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-keep-america-great-rally-charleston-south-carolina>.

their seats and kept the majority in the Senate, while the Democrats got 41 more seats in the House<sup>1028</sup>. President Trump celebrated the Republican victory in the Senate by saying, “This election marks the largest Senate gains for a President’s party in a first midterm election since at least President Kennedy’s in 1962. Fifty-five is the largest number of Republican senators in the last 100 years”<sup>1029</sup>.

Regardless of whether President Trump's conspiracies were successful, the Trump administration continued to use the conspiracies, especially after the January 2019 Venezuela-U.S. crisis, but this time for the 2020 presidential elections. President Trump often resorted to this discourse, especially during the election periods. In his nomination speech, he declared that “a vote for any Democrat in 2020 is a vote for the rise of radical socialism and the destruction of the American dream”<sup>1030</sup>. The American Dream constitutes one of the centers of the American identity. This dream means that independent of one’s race, ethnicity, or religion, one can become successful and prosper in the U.S. At its core, it is about a market-oriented economy. In this economy, if one works hard enough, eventually, one will become rich. President Trump explained, “America is the place where anyone can rise. And here, on this land, on this soil, on this continent, the most incredible dreams come true”<sup>1031</sup>.

The American Dream is constructed as the antithesis of a socialist economy, in President Trump’s case, the Venezuelan economy. A debate over whether Venezuela's economy was socialist or not is irrelevant here. For the Trump administration, it was a socialist economy. The source of economic devastation and

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<sup>1028</sup> CNN, “Senate & House Election Results 2018,” 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/election/2018/results/house>.

<sup>1029</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks by President Trump in Press Conference After Midterm Elections,” The White House, 2018, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-press-conference-midterm-elections/>.

<sup>1030</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks Announcing Candidacy for the Republican Presidential Nomination in 2020,” The American Presidency Project, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-candidacy-for-the-republican-presidential-nomination-2020>.

<sup>1031</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” The American Presidency Project, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-27>.

poverty was socialism. Therefore, their rhetoric was constructed to answer this ‘nightmare’. President Trump stated, “Look at what is happening in Venezuela. (...) We believe in the American Dream, not in the socialist nightmare”<sup>1032</sup>. Within this discourse, standing against “the socialist nightmare” meant “defending the American way of life” and “defending the American borders” in other terms, the American Self<sup>1033</sup>. Here, the Trump administration employed the discourses of danger against the existence of the Self, stimulating disorder. It constituted an existential threat to the American Self because, according to this discourse, “The moment America becomes a socialist country is the moment America ceases to be America”<sup>1034</sup>. If the Democrats get elected, they will turn the U.S. into a socialist country, abolish the police force, and diminish the U.S. borders. So that “the drug dealers, human traffickers, gang members, and criminal aliens” would “pour right in” the U.S. and even enjoy the American citizen’s front lawns<sup>1035</sup>.

The existential threat was clear; it was tied to an external threat (the Maduro regime and socialism), and it could create chaos inside the borders (even to the borders) of the U.S. The elimination of this existential threat and disorder was simple: not voting for any Democrats and voting for President Trump and Republican candidates. The socialist nightmare discourse was not the only discourse of danger employed by the U.S. for the discursive construction of the Maduro regime as a threat to the essence of the American Self. The tyranny discourse accompanied the socialist nightmare discourse and employed for increasing fear among U.S. citizens to get their votes. The former will be discussed in the next section. Both discourses enabled the unconventional U.S. foreign policy actions towards Venezuela, including the intense diplomatic efforts to construct a new Venezuelan Other as subject, Juan Guaidó, after January 2019.

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<sup>1032</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Maryland,” The American Presidency Project, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-conservative-political-action-conference-oxon-hill-maryland-0>.

<sup>1033</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1034</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President to Rice University’s Baker Institute,” The White House, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-rice-universitys-baker-institute/>.

<sup>1035</sup> Trump, “Remarks in Florida.”

### 6.2.2. The Tyranny Discourse

The tyranny discourse formed around two prominent politicians of the Trump administration: the Vice President Mike Pence and the National Security Advisor John Bolton. As mentioned, the Trump administration's top administrative chair appointments were problematic. Usually, the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs deals with the policies towards the region. In President Trump's case, Vice President Pence was in charge of determining the U.S. foreign policy toward Venezuela until the appointment of John Bolton as the President's National Security Advisor in April 2018. The two administrators were in an intensive diplomatic effort to oust President Maduro. National Security Advisor Bolton mentioned this intensive effort in his memoir in a separate chapter reserved for Venezuela<sup>1036</sup>. In this Chapter, John Bolton discussed the administration's efforts to oust President Maduro and replace him with the President of the National Assembly of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, from January 2019 to April 2019.

Eight months after President Trump's inauguration, in August 2017, Vice President Pence used 'the tragedy of tyranny' for the first time: "In Venezuela, we are seeing the tragedy of tyranny. (...) The once-free people of Venezuela are being forced to endure this fate by the brutality of the Maduro regime. Venezuela is sliding into dictatorship"<sup>1037</sup>. Here, we see the traditional U.S. representation of Venezuelan Others, the dictatorial Maduro regime as the dangerous Venezuelan Other, and the Venezuelan people as the friendly Venezuelan Other. He continued quoting President Trump's words, "The United States will not stand by as Venezuela crumbles. We will continue to stand with free nations across our hemisphere until democracy is restored for the Venezuelan people"<sup>1038</sup>. Here, we see the construction of the American Self as the supporter of the people, not 'dictatorships', and the promoter of the U.S. values across the hemisphere. According to Pence, the U.S. and its

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<sup>1036</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*.

<sup>1037</sup> Pence, "Remarks by Vice President Pence and President Santos of Colombia in Joint Press Conference."

<sup>1038</sup> *Ibid.*

Constitution are “the greatest bulwark against tyranny in history”<sup>1039</sup>. Vice President Pence also represented Venezuela under the Maduro regime as a threat not only to the U.S. but to the entire hemisphere.

Failed states know no borders. A failed state in Venezuela will drive more illegal drug trafficking, with its murderous criminal consequences radiating outward. A failed state in Venezuela will drive more illegal migration, compromising our borders. And ultimately, a failed state in Venezuela will endanger the well-being of all who call this hemisphere home. (...) I promise you; the United States will not rest; we will not relent until Venezuela is restored to a full and prosperous democracy. The Venezuelan people will be free once more, for here in the New World, freedom always wins<sup>1040</sup>.

Unlike other U.S. officials, Vice President Pence often uses the same speech and same sentences in different places. He repeatedly articulated the same sentences above whenever discussing Venezuela on different dates<sup>1041</sup>.

The tragedy of tyranny discourse was first and foremost employed for acknowledging the economic devastation in Venezuela and describing the tragedy experienced by the Venezuelan people. After the decrease in oil prices worldwide, Venezuela's national income decreased, leading to economic collapse. Just like in almost every oil-producing country, the Venezuelan economy has been heavily dependent on oil income, and the Chávez administration was unable to increase the production diversity in the economy. With billions of dollars in income from oil imports, Venezuela exported nearly everything, including agricultural products and food<sup>1042</sup>. When the oil prices decreased, the dollar income of the country also decreased, which in return enabled a limited exportation of goods.

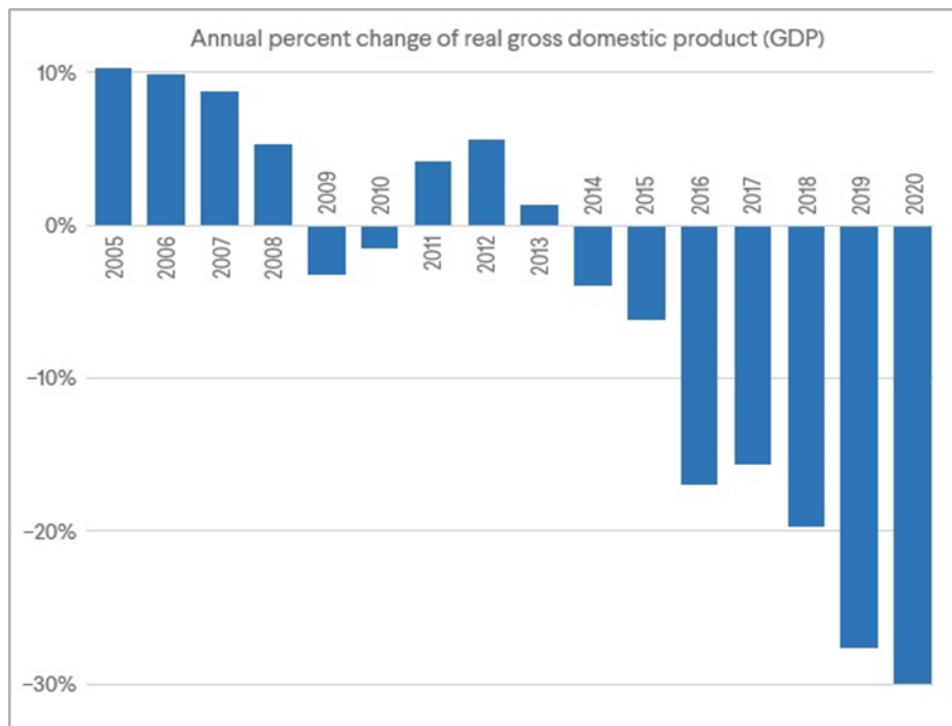
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<sup>1039</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President to Federalist Society,” The White House, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-mike-pence-federalist-society/>.

<sup>1040</sup> Pence, “Remarks by Vice President Pence and President Santos of Colombia in Joint Press Conference.”

<sup>1041</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President to the Argentine and Latin American Business Community,” The White House, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-argentine-latin-american-business-community/>; Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President Pence and President Macri of Argentina in Joint Press Conference,” The White House, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-president-macri-argentina-joint-press-conference/>; Mike Pence, “Remarks by the Vice President at the Panama Canal,” The White House, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-panama-canal/>; Pence, “Remarks by Vice President at First Plenary Session of the Summit of the Americas.”

<sup>1042</sup> Amelia Cheatham and Diana Roy, “Venezuela: The Rise and Fall of a Petrostate,” Council on Foreign Relations, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/venezuela-crisis>.



**Figure 4.** Annual Percentage Change of Real GDP in Venezuela<sup>1043</sup>

As Figure 4 indicates, the percentage of Venezuelan GDP has been decreasing continuously since 2014. The economic crisis caused hyperinflation, the devaluation of the Venezuelan currency Bolivar, and shortages of basic goods, including medicine and food<sup>1044</sup>. Since the Maduro regime stopped announcing basic statistics (like the inflation and crime rates), researchers could only reach the estimated numbers published by organizations such as the Venezuelan Finance Observatory and InSight Crime. As Figure 4 shows, the crisis worsened after the U.S. oil sanctions in 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic. The GDP decreased by 30% in 2020. As the economic crisis got worse, the crime rates soared.

The economic collapse created a shortage of basic goods, skyrocketed crime rates, and caused a massive exodus from Venezuela. According to the R4V, the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela (jointly led by the UNHCR and IOM), from 2015 to August 2023, 7.7 million Venezuelans

<sup>1043</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1044</sup> Samantha Raphelson, "Venezuela's Health Care System Ready To Collapse," NPR, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/02/01/582469305/venezuelas-health-care-system-ready-to-collapse-amid-economic-crisis>.

left their country, 6.5 million Venezuelans migrated across the Latin American countries, and Colombia became the country of destination for 2.8 million Venezuelans<sup>1045</sup>. This means nearly 28.6% of Venezuelans have left their country since 2015. This exodus also created a concern for the Trump administration because “The policies of the regime of President Maduro have consequences that extend beyond Venezuela’s borders, threatening regional stability and national security”<sup>1046</sup>.

President Trump’s National Security Advisor, Ambassador John Bolton, employed a different tyranny discourse with ‘the troika of tyranny’. Ambassador Bolton admitted in his memoir that Venezuela was not on his agenda; North Korea was at the top when the President first appointed him<sup>1047</sup>. He explained in his memoir on August 15, 2018, “Trump said to me emphatically, ‘Get it done’, meaning get rid of the Maduro regime”<sup>1048</sup>. He added that President Trump wanted a military option for Venezuela, claiming that the President said to him that Venezuela was “really part of the U.S.”<sup>1049</sup> He also claimed that President Trump also “wanted assurances [from Guaidó] regarding post-Maduro access to Venezuela’s oil resources”<sup>1050</sup>.

Troika was a reference to the Soviet Union and socialism. “The troika of tyranny”, “the three stooges of socialism”, and “the triangle of terror” all have a very close similarity to George W. Bush’s “axis of evil”, and included Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, all socialist regimes for the Trump administration<sup>1051</sup>. Just like the axis of evil discourse, standing against the troika of tyranny was represented as defending

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<sup>1045</sup> R4V, “Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela,” 2023, <https://www.r4v.info/en/refugeeandmigrants>.

<sup>1046</sup> Steven T. Mnuchin, “Statement by Secretary Following Meeting on Venezuela,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2018, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0353>.

<sup>1047</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 230.

<sup>1048</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1049</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1050</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>1051</sup> John R. Bolton, “Remarks by Ambassador Bolton on the Administration’s Policies in Latin America,” The White House, 2018, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-administrations-policies-latin-america/>; Bolton, “Remarks to the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association.”

“the rule of law, liberty, and basic human decency”<sup>1052</sup>. He gave two prominent speeches where the central theme was the troika of tyranny. The first speech was on November 2, 2018 (four days before the Mid-term elections) in Miami, Florida, where the largest number of Cuban and Venezuelan Americans live in the U.S.<sup>1053</sup> Ambassador Bolton admitted that he made this speech “to turn a spotlight on Venezuela”<sup>1054</sup>. On November 2, right after he praised the right-wing “likeminded leaders” President Bolsonaro of Brazil and President Ivan Duque of Colombia, Ambassador Bolton declared a war against the troika of tyranny in the Western Hemisphere<sup>1055</sup>:

In this Hemisphere, we are also confronted once again with the destructive forces of oppression, socialism, and totalitarianism. In Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, we see the perils of poisonous ideologies left unchecked and the dangers of domination and suppression. (...) Under this administration, we will no longer appease dictators and despots near our shores. We will not reward firing squads, torturers, and murderers. We will champion the independence and liberty of our neighbors. And this President and his entire administration will stand with the freedom fighters. The Troika of Tyranny in this Hemisphere—Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua—has finally met its match<sup>1056</sup>.

The second speech came on April 17, 2019, thirteen days before the April 30 ‘Operation Liberty’, the Venezuelan opposition’s operation to topple President Maduro<sup>1057</sup>. April 17 was the anniversary of the Bay of Pigs Invasion, and Ambassador Bolton made a speech on the same day to the invasion’s Cuban American veterans. He made the same points on the regimes of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. However, he strongly criticized “the disastrous Obama-era policies” and declared, “Today, we proudly proclaim for all to hear: the Monroe Doctrine is alive

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<sup>1052</sup> Bolton, “Remarks by Ambassador Bolton on the Administration’s Policies in Latin America.”

<sup>1053</sup> Mohamad Moslimani, Mark Hugo Lopez, and Luis Noe-Bustamante, “11 Facts about Hispanic Origin Groups in the U.S.,” Pew Research Center, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/08/16/11-facts-about-hispanic-origin-groups-in-the-us/>.

<sup>1054</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 231.

<sup>1055</sup> Bolton, “Remarks by Ambassador Bolton on the Administration’s Policies in Latin America.”

<sup>1056</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1057</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 258.



and well”<sup>1058</sup>. Ambassador Bolton found former Secretary of State Kerry’s statement about the end of the Monroe Doctrine highly unfortunate. He claimed that the statement increased the involvement of China and Russia across the hemisphere<sup>1059</sup>. So, he tried to reverse it by declaring the vitality of the Monro Doctrine and showing a strong presence in the hemisphere. The domestic turmoil in Venezuela and the internationalization of the turmoil after the exodus became the perfect opportunity to do so. Vice President Pence’s and Ambassador Bolton’s employment of tyranny discourses constructed the Maduro regime directly as a radical, dangerous Other, the Venezuelan people and Juan Guaidó as the friendly Others. The following sections will focus on this subject constitution.

### **6.3. Constructing Venezuelan Others: Nicolás Maduro, the Venezuelan People and Juan Guaidó**

The 2019 U.S.–Venezuela crisis over the legitimate government and the recognition of Juan Guaidó as the interim president dated back to the 2015 parliamentary elections in Venezuela. The Maduro government’s approval rates were decreased to 20% in 2015<sup>1060</sup>. The economic collapse substantially decreased the support for the Maduro regime; therefore, the protests that began after February 2014 never stopped. Since then, a new protest has begun every couple of months in various regions of Venezuela<sup>1061</sup>. The decreased support for the Maduro regime became apparent after the 2015 Venezuelan parliamentary elections. On December 6, 2015, the opposition coalition MUD won the two-thirds majority in the Venezuelan National Assembly by gaining 112 (three of them from the indigenous population’s quota) of 167 seats<sup>1062</sup>. President Maduro’s political party, PSUV, only won 55 seats. This was the first

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<sup>1058</sup> Bolton, “Remarks to the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association.”

<sup>1059</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 10, 237.

<sup>1060</sup> Jennifer McCoy, “Venezuela’s Controversial New Constituent Assembly,” *The Washington Post*, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/01/venezuelas-dubious-new-constituent-assembly-explained/>.

<sup>1061</sup> Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social, “Protestas: Sistema de Información Geográfico de Conflictos,” 2023, <https://www.observatoriodeconflictos.org.ve/tag/protestas>.

<sup>1062</sup> Consejo Nacional Electoral, “Resultados Elecciones Parlamentarias - 6 de Diciembre de 2015,” CNE, 2015, [http://www.cne.gob.ve/resultado\\_asamblea2015/r/0/reg\\_000000.html?](http://www.cne.gob.ve/resultado_asamblea2015/r/0/reg_000000.html?)

electoral defeat of the Chávez movement in the general elections since its foundation. When the opposition got hold of the majority in the National Assembly, Venezuela's constitutional court, the Supreme Justice Tribunal (TSJ), blocked the inauguration of three MUD members of the parliament. This move prevented the MUD's two-thirds majority in the assembly<sup>1063</sup>. Since the Chávez and Maduro regimes appointed the majority of the judges of the TSJ, the MUD declared this decision as a "judicial coup"<sup>1064</sup>. In 2016, the crisis between the Maduro government and the MUD intensified after the MUD initiated the recall process for the president, just like in 2004<sup>1065</sup>. The National Electoral Council (CNE) delayed and blocked the recall process while suspending the 2016 gubernatorial and mayoral elections<sup>1066</sup>.

On March 29, 2017, the TSJ ruled that the National Assembly was in contempt of court for the inauguration of three MUD members of the parliament whom the court had previously suspended due to accusations of electoral fraud<sup>1067</sup>. The TSJ also declared that it will be assuming the parliamentary capabilities of the National Assembly until the conflict is ended<sup>1068</sup>. In response to this decision, the opposition held wide protests across Venezuela in April 2017<sup>1069</sup>. On May 1, President Maduro declared his intention to change the constitution with a "Citizen Constituent Assembly" to end the internal conflict and protests<sup>1070</sup>. To do so, he had to hold an election for a Constituent Assembly, just like President Chávez did in 1999<sup>1071</sup>. The

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<sup>1063</sup> Rogelio Pérez-Perdomo, "The Venezuelan Political Crisis and the Constituent Assembly," ConstitutionNet, 2017, <https://constitutionnet.org/news/venezuelan-political-crisis-and-national-constituent-assembly>.

<sup>1064</sup> Tim Walker, "Venezuelan Opposition Cries Foul over 'judicial Coup' ," The Independent, 2015, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/venezuelan-opposition-cries-foul-over-judicial-coup-as-court-blocks-swearing-in-of-politicians-a6792386.html>.

<sup>1065</sup> Pérez-Perdomo, "The Venezuelan Political Crisis and the Constituent Assembly."

<sup>1066</sup> Maria Aguado Álvarez de Sotomayor and Lizbeth Navas-Aleman, "Maduro's New Constitution: More Authoritarianism for Venezuela," Institute of Development Studies, 2017, <https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/maduros-new-constitution-more-authoritarianism-for-venezuela/>.

<sup>1067</sup> Pérez-Perdomo, "The Venezuelan Political Crisis and the Constituent Assembly."

<sup>1068</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1069</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1070</sup> Aguado Álvarez de Sotomayor and Navas-Aleman, "Maduro's New Constitution: More Authoritarianism for Venezuela."

<sup>1071</sup> McCoy, "Venezuela's Controversial New Constituent Assembly."

Venezuelan Constituent Assembly has overwhelming powers over drafting the constitution, dissolving the TSJ or National Assembly, dismissing existing elected officials and institutions, and postponing the elections<sup>1072</sup>. The MUD denied participating in the elections for the Constituent Assembly. Despite the protests and the opposition's objections to the constitution change, the Constituent Assembly elections took place on July 30, 2017, and the members were sworn in four days later<sup>1073</sup>. Immediately, the Constituent Assembly took over the MUD-controlled National Assembly's legislative duties. The MUD denied recognizing the legitimization of the Constituent Assembly<sup>1074</sup>. The international response was immediate. The EU, the OAS, and the Lima Group denounced the establishment of the Constituent Assembly, the Mercosur suspended Venezuela from the organization, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and the U.S. refused to recognize the elections for the Constituent Assembly<sup>1075</sup>. The U.S. State Department's spokesperson, Heather Nauert, stated, "The United States considers the Venezuelan National Constituent Assembly the illegitimate product of a flawed process designed by the Maduro dictatorship to further its assault on democracy" and declared the Assembly as a parallel institution<sup>1076</sup>.

While the crisis continued, the CNE declared the delayed election dates in May 2017. According to the CNE, the regional elections will be held on December 10, 2017, while the Presidential Elections will be held on May 20, 2018, and the President-elect's term will start in January 2019<sup>1077</sup>. The Constituent Assembly later changed the date for the regional elections to October 15, 2017. Under the undemocratic and unfair electoral processes (including changing the set election days month before,

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<sup>1072</sup> Pérez-Perdomo, "The Venezuelan Political Crisis and the Constituent Assembly."

<sup>1073</sup> McCoy, "Venezuela's Controversial New Constituent Assembly."

<sup>1074</sup> Pérez-Perdomo, "The Venezuelan Political Crisis and the Constituent Assembly."

<sup>1075</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1076</sup> Heather Nauert, "Venezuela's Illegitimate National Constituent Assembly," U.S. Department of State, 2017, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/venezuelas-illegitimate-national-constituent-assembly/index.html>.

<sup>1077</sup> Jorge Rueda and Christine Armario, "Venezuela Regional Election Date Set amid Opposition Rebuke," AP News, 2017, <https://apnews.com/general-news-8a6a558433fe4bd4b7590b7ad7832c>.

banning the opposition parties from the race, persecuting the opposition candidates, and using the state income to fund the elections), President Maduro and his coalition “the Great Patriotic Pole” won all the elections in 2017 and 2018<sup>1078</sup>. The MUD was divided over boycotting the presidential elections because many leaders of the political parties in the coalition were banned from candidacy, including Henrique Capriles, Leopoldo López, Antonio Ledezma, and María Corina Machado<sup>1079</sup>. In February 2018, the MUD declared they would boycott the May 2018 presidential elections due to the rigged electoral system<sup>1080</sup>. The leader of the Progressive Advance party, Henri Falcón, left the MUD and decided to participate in the elections. President Maduro was reelected on May 20, 2018, with 67.85% of the total votes, while his opponent, Henri Falcón, took 20.93%<sup>1081</sup>. The UN, EU, OAS, and Lima Group denied recognizing the elections. Countries including China, Cuba, Nicaragua, Turkey, Russia, Syria, and Iran recognized the results of the 2018 elections, while many countries of the Western Hemisphere (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, the U.S.) and the UK, France, Germany, Australia, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden denied recognizing the results<sup>1082</sup>. The decline of the Pink Tide across the hemisphere contributed to this result. Mauricio Macri, a right-wing businessman, became the president of Argentina in 2015, the left-wing President Dilma Rousseff was impeached from the presidency in 2016, the president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, could not run after the end of his third term in 2017 and the right-wing leader Jair Bolsonaro won 2018 presidential elections in Brazil<sup>1083</sup>. The decline of the Pink Tide led to a change of decisions in international organizations in the region in favor of the U.S.

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<sup>1078</sup> Consejo Nacional Electoral, “Resultados Electoral Regionales 2017,” CNE, 2017, [http://www.cne.gob.ve/resultados\\_regionales2017/](http://www.cne.gob.ve/resultados_regionales2017/); Consejo Nacional Electoral, “Resultados Elecciones Presidenciales 2018,” CNE, 2018, <http://www.cne.gob.ve/ResultadosElecciones2018/>.

<sup>1079</sup> Ana Vanessa Herrero and Kirk Semple, “Venezuela Opposition Will Boycott Election,” *The New York Times*, February 21, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/21/world/americas/venezuela-election-opposition-boycott.html>.

<sup>1080</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1081</sup> Consejo Nacional Electoral, “Resultados Elecciones Presidenciales 2018.”

<sup>1082</sup> Will Freeman, “How Maduro Survived,” *Journal of Democracy*, 2023, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/how-maduro-survived/>.

<sup>1083</sup> Mike Gonzalez, *The Ebb of the Pink Tide: The Decline of the Left in Latin America* (London: Pluto Press, 2019).

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, the Trump administration increased sanctions on the Government of Venezuela with Executive Order 18835, “denying the Venezuelan regime the ability to earn money by selling off public assets at ‘fire sale’ prices at the expense of the Venezuelan people”<sup>1084</sup>. Venezuela's legitimacy crisis reached its peak around the second inauguration of Nicolás Maduro as the president on January 10, 2019. According to the Venezuelan Constitution’s Article 231, the inaugurations had to be held at the National Assembly or before the TSJ<sup>1085</sup>. President Maduro decided to take his oath before the TSJ. The MUD-led National Assembly decided not to recognize this oath, and the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, declared, “Today there is no head of state. Today, there is no commander-in-chief”<sup>1086</sup>. The same day, he said, “We have, adhering to the Constitution, adhering to Article 233 to clearly assume the powers of the presidency of the Republic because our Constitution says so”<sup>1087</sup> and claimed that as the President of the National Assembly, he would assume the presidency until the new elections will be held. Article 233 regulates the situation where the President of Venezuela “becomes permanently unavailable to serve”; in that case, “the President of the National Assembly shall take charge of the Presidency of the Republic”<sup>1088</sup>. On January 23, 2019, President Trump made it official and recognized Juan Guaidó as the interim president of Venezuela:

Today I am officially recognizing the President of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, as the Interim President of Venezuela. (...) I will continue to use the full weight of United States economic and diplomatic power to press for the restoration of Venezuelan democracy. We encourage other Western Hemisphere governments to recognize National Assembly President Guaidó as the Interim President of Venezuela. (...) We continue to

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<sup>1084</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Venezuela Sanctions,” Office of Foreign Assets Control, 2018, <https://ofac.treasury.gov/faqs/topic/1581>.

<sup>1085</sup> VenezuelAnalysis, “Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” 2023, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/constitution/>.

<sup>1086</sup> Scott Smith, “Isolation Greets Maduro’s New Term as Venezuela’s President,” AP News, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/f1df9924783f49859874f5fc97f0f534>.

<sup>1087</sup> Juan Guaido, “Me Apego a Los Artículos 333, 350 y 233 Para Lograr El Cese de La Usurpación y Convocar Elecciones Libres,” Asamblea Nacional, 2019, <https://asambleanacionalvenezuela.org/noticias/juan-guaido-me-apego-a-los-articulos-333-350-y-233>.

<sup>1088</sup> VenezuelAnalysis, “Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.”

hold the illegitimate Maduro regime directly responsible for any threats it may pose to the safety of the Venezuelan people<sup>1089</sup>.

On January 10, 2019, Venezuela had two presidents, both claiming that they were the legitimate ones. A day later, John Bolton acknowledged Juan Guaidó's move by declaring, "We support the courageous decision of the National Assembly President, Juan Guaidó, to invoke protections under Venezuela's constitution and declare that Maduro does not legitimately hold the country's presidency"<sup>1090</sup>. From January 2019 to April 2019, the Trump administration overexerted its efforts to overthrow the Maduro regime (including sanctioning the Venezuelan oil and repeatedly articulating the military option). Therefore, this period constitutes the third key event, and the next section will analyze these efforts by employing the two basic discourses of the U.S. towards Venezuela from January 2019 to April 2019.

#### **6.4. The Struggle to Replace Nicolás Maduro: Constructing Juan Guaidó**

The Trump administration was the only U.S. administration openly confronted with the Maduro regime from its start. The Bush and Obama administrations decided not to directly confront the Chávez and Maduro administrations. They even tried not to mention the Presidents of Venezuela; instead, they implemented their 'positive agenda' across the region, promoting free trade and U.S. values. Instead of focusing on 'the problems' like Venezuela, they focused on increasing U.S. engagement with the hemisphere. For Secretary Condoleezza Rice, U.S. foreign policy was "not anti-Chávez, but that is pro-democracy"<sup>1091</sup>. President Obama did not name the Chávez regime directly (after he became the president of the U.S.), but he said 'some' of the regimes in the region were stuck in the ideological stale debates of the past and that the hemisphere "must choose the future over the past"<sup>1092</sup>. Only the Obama

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<sup>1089</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Statement Announcing United States Recognition of National Assembly President Juan Gerardo Guaidó Márquez as Interim President of Venezuela," U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2019, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/DCPD-201900046/html/DCPD-201900046.htm>.

<sup>1090</sup> John R. Bolton, "Statement from National Security Advisor on Venezuela," The White House, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-bolton-venezuela/>.

<sup>1091</sup> Rice, "Interview With the New York Post Editorial Board."

<sup>1092</sup> Obama, "Op-Ed: 'Choosing a Better Future in the Americas.'"

administration included Cuba in its positive agenda by re-establishing the diplomatic relations between the two countries, allowing remittances and visits to Cuba from the U.S. Unlike his predecessors, President Trump led a problem-oriented foreign policy worldwide and in the Western Hemisphere. The troublemakers of the hemisphere were “the troika of tyranny” for the administration<sup>1093</sup>. The feasible solution for them was confronting them directly, restoring democracy, supporting the peoples of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and isolating these regimes through sanctions<sup>1094</sup>. In 2017, Vice President Pence declared, “The United States will continue to bring the full weight of American economic and diplomatic power to bear. We simply will not accept the emergence of a dictatorship in our hemisphere”<sup>1095</sup>.

Until 2019, the U.S. had been constructing two Venezuelan Others concerning the American Self: the Chávez and Maduro regimes and the Venezuelan People. The American Self was represented as the promoter of a positive agenda based on U.S. values such as democracy, a market-oriented economy, and the rule of law within the U.S. foreign policy discourses. The Chávez regime, on the other hand, represented as the promoter of the “anti-U.S., radical leftist and authoritarian agenda”<sup>1096</sup> and as an authoritarian leader<sup>1097</sup> by the Bush and Obama administrations. The Maduro regime represented “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States”<sup>1098</sup>. Accordingly, the American Self had an obligation to stand against this regime since the American Self was “the beacon of liberty in the free world”<sup>1099</sup>. The Trump administration maintained this subject constitution through U.S. foreign policy discourses. Aside from increasing harsh criticism

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<sup>1093</sup> Bolton, “Remarks to the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association.”

<sup>1094</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1095</sup> Pence, “Remarks by Vice President Pence and President Santos of Colombia in Joint Press Conference.”

<sup>1096</sup> McConnell, “Congressional Testimonies 2008”; Hadley, “Remarks by National Security Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.”

<sup>1097</sup> Blair, “Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community.”

<sup>1098</sup> The White House, “Executive Order 13692 – Blocking Property and Suspending Entry of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Venezuela.”

<sup>1099</sup> Duncan, “H. Res. 488 - Supporting the People of Venezuela.”

towards the Maduro regime, the administration also spent much effort constructing a new Venezuelan Other as a widely recognized subject, Juan Guaidó as the interim president of Venezuela. This section will analyze the inherent relations between the Trump administration's foreign policy discourses and its temporal, spatial, and ethical constitutions of Venezuelan Others (the Maduro Regime, the Venezuelan people, and Juan Guaidó) from January 2019 to April 2019.

Juan Guaidó was in the student movement against Hugo Chávez's 2007 Constitutional Referendum, and in 2009, he joined the former Mayor Leopoldo López's new political party, the Popular Will (Voluntad Popular)<sup>1100</sup>. Leopoldo López has been one of the leading figures of the Venezuelan opposition. However, after his arrest (later, he was moved to house arrest in 2014), Juan Guaidó became a more well-known figure, especially after he became the leader of the Popular Will's coalition in the assembly in 2015<sup>1101</sup>. Still, until he declared presidency, he was not a widely known figure, and President Maduro often mocked him for his unpopularity<sup>1102</sup>. Ambassador Bolton claimed President Trump had also thought the same thing about Juan Guaidó. According to Bolton's memoir, President Trump said, "I have always said Maduro was tough. This *kid* [Guaidó]—nobody has ever heard of him"<sup>1103</sup>, and "He [Guaidó] does not have what it takes"<sup>1104</sup>. According to Bolton, in President Trump's mind, "Guaidó was weak, as opposed to Maduro, who was strong"<sup>1105</sup>. However, President Trump's negative impressions of Guaidó did not stop the Trump administration from immediately recognizing his declaration of presidency. After invoking Article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution, Juan Guaidó declared himself as the interim president of Venezuela on January 10, 2019.

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<sup>1100</sup> Ryan C. Berg, "A Conversation with Juan Guaidó, Former Interim President of Venezuela," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/events/conversation-juan-guaido-former-interim-president-venezuela>.

<sup>1101</sup> Joe P. Daniels, "Who Is Juan Guaidó, the Man Who Declared Himself President?," *The Guardian*, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/15/juan-guaido-venezuelan-opposition-leader-challenging-maduros-rule>.

<sup>1102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1103</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 238 [Emphasis Added].

<sup>1104</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>1105</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.



However, he took the oath of office in an anti-Maduro protest in Caracas on January 23, 2019, and therefore officially became president that day<sup>1106</sup>. For the first time in its history, Venezuela had two presidents simultaneously, both claiming that they were the legitimate president. According to the Trump administration, Juan Guaidó exaggerated his support, especially among the Venezuelan military<sup>1107</sup>. Thus, replacing President Maduro with Juan Guaidó needed more effort from the Trump administration.

From the start, the Trump administration called the Maduro regime “incompetent and dysfunctional”<sup>1108</sup>, “authoritarian”<sup>1109</sup>, “dictatorship”<sup>1110</sup>, “rogue regime”<sup>1111</sup>, and the “most despotic” regime with a “failed socialist ideology” in the hemisphere<sup>1112</sup>. However, the temporal construction of the Maduro regime as the radical Other began to change after January 2019. The Maduro regime (and most of the time with the Chávez regime) was constructed as the continuation of the past defeated ideology of the Soviet Union. For President Trump, “Socialism promises a better future, but it always returns to the darkest chapters of the past”, just like it did in Venezuela under President Maduro<sup>1113</sup>. According to Vice President Pence, “Venezuela has gone in the opposite direction toward dictatorship, not a democracy; toward oppression, not

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<sup>1106</sup> Daniel Cheslow, Laurel Wamsley, and Richard Gonzales, “Opposition Leader Juan Guaidó Declares Himself President,” NPR, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/23/687643405/anti-maduro-protesters-march-in-cities-across-venezuela>.

<sup>1107</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 259.

<sup>1108</sup> Tillerson, “Statement of Rex Tillerson, Nominee for Secretary of State.”

<sup>1109</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President at the Wilson Center,” The White House, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-wilson-center/>.

<sup>1110</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by the Vice President at the Adriatic Charter Summit,” The White House, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/2437/>.

<sup>1111</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by the Vice President and President Bachelet of Chile in a Joint Press Conference,” The White House, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-president-bachelet-chile-joint-press-conference/>.

<sup>1112</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President at OAS Reception,” The White House, 2018, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-organization-american-states-reception/>.

<sup>1113</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Remarks by President Trump to the Venezuelan American Community,” The White House, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-venezuelan-american-community/>.

freedom; toward the past, not the future”<sup>1114</sup>. After Juan Guaidó became the interim president, the Trump administration constructed the Maduro regime as ‘incapable of change’; any solution involving the Maduro administration became unacceptable for the U.S. foreign policy. Just like Columbus’ enslavement ideology<sup>1115</sup>, “the brutality and the barbarism of the Maduro regime”<sup>1116</sup> made the regime incapable of change. Thus, the only “viable” foreign policy option for the Trump administration was overthrowing Maduro. In Vice President Pence’s words, “Nicolás Maduro must go”<sup>1117</sup>. According to the Vice President, “The struggle in Venezuela is between dictatorship and democracy, between oppression and freedom, between the suffering of millions of Venezuelans and a “new future” of freedom and prosperity”<sup>1118</sup>.

This new future for the Venezuelan people could only be built with a new leader, Juan Guaidó. While the Maduro regime got stuck in the failed ideologies of the past, the Guaidó regime would “inspire hope in the Venezuelan people for a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic future”<sup>1119</sup>. Accordingly, with the ethical dimension of the American Self and as the “beacon of liberty” of the Western Hemisphere, naturally, “The United States is helping to recover a brighter future for Venezuela”<sup>1120</sup>. Vice President Pence said, “The United States has a special responsibility to support and nurture democracy and freedom in this hemisphere”<sup>1121</sup>.

For the Trump administration, recognizing the presidency of Guaidó would simply not be enough to achieve this goal. In other words, to replace President Maduro, the

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<sup>1114</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by the Vice President on Latin America,” The White House, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-latin-america/>.

<sup>1115</sup> Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, 175.

<sup>1116</sup> Pence, “Remarks by the Vice President on Latin America.”

<sup>1117</sup> Pence, “Remarks by Vice President to Rice University’s Baker Institute.”

<sup>1118</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks to the Lima Group,” The White House, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-lima-group-bogota-colombia/>.

<sup>1119</sup> Robert J. Palladino, “Swearing in of Venezuela’s New National Assembly President,” U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/swearing-in-of-venezuelas-new-national-assembly-president/>.

<sup>1120</sup> Pompeo, “Remarks at a UN Security Council Meeting on Venezuela.”

<sup>1121</sup> Julian Borger, “US Diplomat Convicted over Iran-Contra Appointed Special Envoy for Venezuela,” The Guardian, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jan/26/elliott-abrams-venezuela-us-special-envoy>.

Trump administration had to construct the Guaidó administration as a new political subject in the international realm. First, the Trump administration had to prepare a multilateral response against President Maduro. Thus, the administration went on an extensive diplomatic mission to persuade other nations to recognize the presidency of Guaidó. To do so, Secretary Pompeo strongly stated: “Now it is time for every other nation to pick a side. No more delays, no more games. *Either you stand with the forces of freedom or you are in league with Maduro and his mayhem*”<sup>1122</sup>. This was a very similar speech to President Bush’s speech on the War on Terror. After 9/11, President Bush declared, “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists”<sup>1123</sup>, leaving no grey areas for other actions. From the Lima Group<sup>1124</sup> to the OAS<sup>1125</sup>, from the U.N Security Council<sup>1126</sup> to the bilateral meetings<sup>1127</sup>, there were dozens of diplomatic initiatives by the Trump administration to persuade other nations to recognize Juan Guaidó.

Secondly, the administration also had to ensure they were doing everything they could to pressure the Maduro regime, so the latter had no choice but to leave. The main foreign policy option to ensure this was sanctioning the Maduro regime and Venezuelan oil for the first time. The Trump administration did not waste any more time. Right after the official recognition of Juan Guaidó, the Trump administration declared oil sanctions against Venezuela’s state-owned oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA), on January 28, 2019<sup>1128</sup>. Secretary Pompeo added, “These new sanctions do not target the innocent people of Venezuela”; instead, the main aim was “to prevent the illegitimate former Maduro regime from further

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<sup>1122</sup> Pompeo, “Remarks at a UN Security Council Meeting on Venezuela” [Emphasis Added].

<sup>1123</sup> Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People.”

<sup>1124</sup> Pence, “Remarks to the Lima Group.”

<sup>1125</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Remarks at the OAS,” U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/remarks-at-the-organization-of-american-states/>.

<sup>1126</sup> Pompeo, “Remarks at a UN Security Council Meeting on Venezuela.”

<sup>1127</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Recognition of Juan Guaido as Venezuela’s Interim President by Several European Countries,” U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/recognition-of-juan-guaido-as-venezuelas-interim-president-by-several-european-countries/>.

<sup>1128</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, “Sanctions Against PDVSA and Venezuela Oil Sector,” U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/sanctions-against-pdvsa-and-venezuela-oil-sector/>.

plundering Venezuela's assets and natural resources"<sup>1129</sup>. From January 2019 to May 2019, the U.S. announced fourteen separate Venezuela-related sanctions, including sanctioning top officials of the Maduro regime or their relatives (including President Maduro's son and wife), the PDVSA, the Venezuelan gold Sector, and the Central Bank of Venezuela<sup>1130</sup>. Apart from sanctioning the Maduro regime, the U.S. (especially CITGO revenues) and the U.K. (the gold reserves of the Venezuelan Central Bank) gave some of the Venezuelan assets to Juan Guaidó's control<sup>1131</sup>.

In addition to the sanctions and extensive diplomatic efforts, President Trump also appointed an official from the Reagan era as the U.S. Special Representative for Venezuela at the U.S. Department of State, Elliot Abrams<sup>1132</sup>. He is known for his harsh Cold War policies and supported Contra rebels against the leftist movements in Central America, especially El Salvador, in 1981<sup>1133</sup>. In 1991, he pleaded guilty to withholding information from U.S. Congress<sup>1134</sup>, and soon after, President George Bush pardoned him<sup>1135</sup>. After his appointment, Elliot Abrams called on the Venezuelan army to turn against President Maduro and implicitly stage a coup against him:

For those remaining supporters of the [Maduro] regime, we have one simple message: your time is up. A new, free, and prosperous Venezuela will rise, and your fellow citizens will remember who stood by them in their struggle. This includes especially the armed forces (...) Now is the time for the armed forces to support the Venezuelan people and reclaim their own legitimacy<sup>1136</sup>.

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<sup>1129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1130</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Venezuela-Related Sanctions," 2023, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/venezuela-related-sanctions/>.

<sup>1131</sup> Robert J. Palladino, "Protecting Venezuela's Assets for Benefit of Venezuelan People," U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/protecting-venezuelas-assets-for-benefit-of-venezuelan-people/>; Stefano Pozzebon, "UK Court Rules in Favor of Juan Guaido in Sovereign Gold Dispute," CNN, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/07/29/world/venezuelan-leader-juan-guaido-sovereign-gold-dispute-intl-scli/index.html>.

<sup>1132</sup> Borger, "US Diplomat Convicted over Iran-Contra Appointed Special Envoy for Venezuela."

<sup>1133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1134</sup> David Johnston, "Elliot Abrams Admits His Guilt in Contra Cover-Up," The New York Times, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/10/08/us/elliott-abrams-admits-his-guilt-on-2-counts-in-contra-cover-up.html>.

<sup>1135</sup> Borger, "US Diplomat Convicted over Iran-Contra Appointed Special Envoy for Venezuela."

<sup>1136</sup> Elliott Abrams, "Venezuela at a Crossroads," U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2019, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116hhrg35362/html/CHRG-116hhrg35362.htm>.

The spatial dimension of the American Self was inherently constructed by unseating Maduro. The Western Hemisphere discourse (similar to President Bush’s discourse; see section 4.2.1.) was employed by the Trump administration, especially by Vice President Pence. He often used the Old World/New World dichotomy to emphasize the peculiarity of the hemisphere and the U.S. (the New World) compared to the rest of the world (the Old World)<sup>1137</sup>. President Trump underlined this peculiarity by saying, “We are Americans. We are pioneers. We are the pathfinders. We settled the New World, we built the modern world, and we changed history forever”<sup>1138</sup>. According to Vice President Pence, “Freedom has always sprung from the hearts of people here in the New World”, and he declared, “I believe with all my heart: The day is coming soon when Venezuela will once more be free”<sup>1139</sup>. Thus, the U.S. and “the freedom-loving nations” across the hemisphere represented the promoters of freedom in this New World, while the Maduro regime represented the tyrannical Old World<sup>1140</sup>. According to Senator Rubio, the Maduro regime was the “cancer in Caracas” and “a threat to our national security”<sup>1141</sup>. As a result, just like the temporal dimension of the Maduro regime as the radical Other, its spatial dimension was also incompatible with the American Self’s temporal and spatial dimensions. Accordingly, with these constructions, the Maduro regime had to go, and there was no other foreign policy option to implement. As Ambassador Bolton admits in his memoir, the Trump administration had to act quickly and went with full force against the Maduro regime that the “Half measures were not going to cut it”<sup>1142</sup>. He tried to speed up the process, especially the sanctions, but he continually complained about

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<sup>1137</sup> Pence, “Remarks by Vice President at First Plenary Session of the Summit of the Americas”; Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President at the OAS Reception,” The White House, 2018, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-organization-american-states-reception/>; Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President at the Washington Conference on the Americas,” The White House, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-washington-conference-americas/>.

<sup>1138</sup> Trump, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union.”

<sup>1139</sup> Pence, “Remarks by Vice President to Rice University’s Baker Institute.”

<sup>1140</sup> Pence, “Remarks to the Lima Group.”

<sup>1141</sup> Marco Rubio, “Florida Lawmakers on Crisis in Venezuela and Government Shutdown,” C-SPAN.org, 2019, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?457186-1/florida-lawmakers-crisis-venezuela-government-shutdown>.

<sup>1142</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 234.

the bureaucratic resistance in his memoir. First, Ambassador Bolton complained about the Secretary of Treasury Mnuchin's reluctance to impose sanctions<sup>1143</sup>. Later, he claimed he had to persuade President Trump to sanction Venezuelan oil and recognize Juan Guaidó as the interim president<sup>1144</sup>. Lastly, he blames Kimberly Breier and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs for trying to subvert his policies towards Venezuela<sup>1145</sup>.

The spatial dimension of the Venezuelan Others, the geographical closeness of Venezuela to the U.S., and being in the Western Hemisphere were essential for the Trump administration. President Trump criticized the U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq while blaming the previous administrations for neglecting the U.S.'s own hemisphere. On February 13, 2019, while mentioning Venezuela, President Trump said, "We fight all over the world, and then you look at what happens right at our front door"<sup>1146</sup>. As Secretary Pompeo explained, "This is our neighborhood. This is going to be fundamentally different. President Trump made very clear that we have an important national interest in ensuring that the Venezuelan people get the democracy that they deserve"<sup>1147</sup>. For him when authoritarianism rises in the hemisphere, authoritarians like President Maduro invite "the bad actors" (like Iran and Russia) into the hemisphere and therefore poses a national security threat to the U.S.<sup>1148</sup> Secretary Pompeo later wrote:

In the Trump administration, we could not tolerate a nation just 1,400 miles from Florida putting out the welcome mat for Russia, China, Iran, Cuba, and

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<sup>1143</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>1144</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>1145</sup> Ibid., 240–41.

<sup>1146</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump and President Duque of Colombia Before Bilateral Meeting," The White House, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-president-duque-colombia-bilateral-meeting/>.

<sup>1147</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, "Interview With Steve Doocy, Brian Kilmeade, and Ainsley Earhardt of Fox & Friends," U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/interview-with-steve-doocy-brian-kilmeade-and-ainsley-earhardt-of-fox-friends/>.

<sup>1148</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, "Diplomatic Realism, Restraint, and Respect in Latin America," U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/diplomatic-realism-restraint-and-respect-in-latin-america/>.

the cartels in *a twenty-first-century violation of the Monroe Doctrine*. We concluded that if left unaddressed, the Venezuela problem would fester, with terrible security consequences for the American people and our hemisphere<sup>1149</sup>.

According to Vice President Pence, “Venezuela is a failed state, and as history teaches, failed states know no boundaries. Drug traffickers, criminal gangs, even terrorists like Hezbollah, are exploiting the chaos in Venezuela”; therefore, the Maduro regime was not only a threat to the U.S., to the American people, but also to the whole region<sup>1150</sup>. When asked why the U.S. treats Saudi Arabia differently than Venezuela (since both of them were ‘despotic’ regimes), Ambassador Bolton’s answer was about Venezuela’s location: “In this administration, we are not afraid to use the phrase Monroe Doctrine. This is a country in our hemisphere; it has been the objective of presidents going back to Ronald Reagan to have a completely democratic hemisphere”<sup>1151</sup>. On April 19, 2019, he claimed, “The destinies of our nations will not be dictated by foreign powers; they will be shaped by the people who call this Hemisphere home. Today, we proudly proclaim for all to hear: the Monroe Doctrine is alive and well”<sup>1152</sup>.

Seeing the hemisphere as a continuance of U.S. borders (like a front or back yard, for instance) constructs the ethical dimension of the American Self. The house owner is also responsible for the ‘mess’ in the yard. As Secretary Pompeo said, “There remains an awful lot of work to do in our own backyard, in our own hemisphere”<sup>1153</sup>. Since the Monroe Doctrine, Latin America has been constructed as the ‘backyard’ of the U.S.<sup>1154</sup> This construction gave the American Self the power to act if a foreign

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<sup>1149</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, *Never Give an Inch: Fighting for the America I Love* (New York: Broadside Books, 2023), 329 [Emphasis Added].

<sup>1150</sup> Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President at a Special Session of the UN Security Council on the Crisis in Venezuela,” The White House, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-special-session-united-nations-security-council-crisis-venezuela-new-york-ny/>.

<sup>1151</sup> Adam Taylor, “John Bolton’s Justification for Trump’s Opposition to Maduro,” The Washington Post, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/03/04/what-is-monroe-doctrine-john-boltons-justification-trumps-push-against-maduro/>.

<sup>1152</sup> Bolton, “Remarks to the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association.”

<sup>1153</sup> Pompeo, “Diplomatic Realism, Restraint, and Respect in Latin America.”

<sup>1154</sup> Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: From Monroe’s Hemisphere to Petroleum’s Empire* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996); Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The*

power intervenes in the U.S.’ own ‘backyard’ (this discussion was elaborated on section 4.2.1.). President Trump took this one step further and wanted to invade Venezuela and keep it because “it is really part of the United States”<sup>1155</sup>. The same went for the Venezuelan oil as well. On January 24, 2019, Ambassador Bolton gave an interview to Fox Business, and he said, “Venezuela is right in our backyard. (...) It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies really invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela”<sup>1156</sup>. On January 30, 2019, President Trump called Juan Guaidó. According to Bolton, during the call, “Trump then assured Guaidó he would pull off Maduro’s overthrow, and offered as an aside that he was sure Guaidó would remember in the future what had happened, which was Trump’s way of referring to his interest in Venezuela’s oil fields”<sup>1157</sup>.

This spatial dimension of the American Self and reclamation of the Monroe Doctrine by the Trump administration gave the administration the legitimacy to act with every possible option, including the military. Secretary Pompeo stated, “We recovered the essence of the Monroe Doctrine under President Trump with respect to Venezuela” and “at various points suggested military options for Venezuela”<sup>1158</sup>. Thus, explicitly articulating a U.S. military option for unseating Maduro became a normalized and viable foreign policy option for the U.S. The Trump administration’s foreign policy towards Venezuela was mainly based on countless re-articulations of how all the options were on the table when it came to Venezuela. On August 11, 2017, President Trump declared:

We have many options for Venezuela. And by the way, I am not going to rule out a military option. This is our neighbor. We are all over the world, and we

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*Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire*; Gilderhus, “The Monroe Doctrine: Meanings and Implications”; Grace Livingstone, *America’s Backyard: The United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror* (Zed Books, 2009).

<sup>1155</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 230.

<sup>1156</sup> John R. Bolton, “Bolton: I Don’t Think Maduro Has the Military on His Side,” Fox Business (Fox Business, January 25, 2019), <https://www.foxbusiness.com/video/5993599263001>.

<sup>1157</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 242.

<sup>1158</sup> Pompeo, *Never Give an Inch: Fighting for the America I Love*, 328–29.



have troops all over the world in places that are very, very far away. Venezuela is not very far away, and the people are suffering, and they are dying<sup>1159</sup>.

President Trump insisted on a military option because unseating Maduro would be quicker then. About the Maduro regime, he said, “It is a regime that, frankly, could be toppled very quickly by the military”<sup>1160</sup>. He repeatedly asked if the military option could actually be viable (earlier in his administration) to Secretary Tillerson and his National Security Advisor McMaster<sup>1161</sup> and later to Ambassador Bolton<sup>1162</sup>, Congressmen Lincoln Diaz-Balart and Ron DeSantis, and Senators Marco Rubio and Rick Scott<sup>1163</sup>. On January 28, 2019, John Bolton gave a press conference; his notepad was visible to the journalists. On the notepad, he wrote, “5000 troops to Colombia”<sup>1164</sup>. A day later, he tweeted, “We continue to pursue *all paths* to disconnect the illegitimate Maduro regime from its sources of revenue”<sup>1165</sup>. The members of the U.S. Congress expressed their discomfort about how the Trump administration was often raising the military option for Venezuela while the President did not have the authority to unilaterally declare war (without receiving authorization from Congress).

The War Powers Resolution was introduced in the U.S. Congress to limit the presidential power to declare war and was enacted into law in 1973<sup>1166</sup>. According to

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<sup>1159</sup> Trump, “Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary Tillerson, US Permanent Representative to the UN Haley, and National Security Adviser McMaster.”

<sup>1160</sup> Trump, “Remarks by President Trump and President Duque of Colombia Before Bilateral Meeting.”

<sup>1161</sup> Joshua Goodman, “Trump Pressed Aides on Venezuela Invasion, US Official Says,” Associated Press, 2018, <https://apnews.com/article/a3309c4990ac4581834d4a654f7746ef>.

<sup>1162</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 230.

<sup>1163</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>1164</sup> Eli Rosenberg and Dan Lomathe, “John Bolton Notepad Photo Showing ‘5,000 Troops to Colombia’ Raises Questions about U.S. Military in Venezuela,” *The Washington Post*, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/01/29/troops-photo-john-boltons-notes-raise-questions-about-military-role-venezuela-crisis/>.

<sup>1165</sup> John R. Bolton, “Tweet from (@AmbJohnBolton): “We Continue to Pursue All Paths to Disconnect the Illegitimate Maduro Regime,” Twitter, 2019, <https://twitter.com/AmbJohnBolton/status/1090045359332700161> [Emphasis Added].

<sup>1166</sup> Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, “War Powers Resolution of 1973,” *The National Archives*, 1973, <https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/news/war-powers-resolution-1973>.

this Resolution, U.S. presidents have to notify Congress forty-eight hours before declaring the war and have to end the military action within sixty days. However, in 1981, President Reagan deployed the U.S. military to El Salvador without notifying Congress; President Clinton, in 1999, did not comply with the sixty-day time limit in Kosovo, and President Obama also deployed the military to Libya without congressional authorization in 2011<sup>1167</sup>. Thus, in practice, the Resolution did not limit the presidential power over war. Elliott Abrams and the Trump administration knew this, especially since Abrams worked with President Reagan from 1981 to 1989. Whenever the Congresspeople raised the issue about how the Trump administration had to get authorization from Congress, Special Representative Abrams replied with a similar answer: how the Clinton and Obama administrations also did not comply with the resolution. During his testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, he said, “This is a long debate. Presidents, including the most recent President, President Obama, have used force in cases where there was a big debate about the War Powers Act. And Presidents sometimes have said, ‘I am submitting a report, but I am not sure that I am obliged to do so’”<sup>1168</sup>. Representative David Cicilline even introduced H.R. 1004, “Prohibiting Unauthorized Military Action in Venezuela Act”, attempting to stop the Trump administration from enacting military options toward Venezuela. However, it was not passed by Congress<sup>1169</sup>.

This military option also included turning the Venezuelan army against President Maduro. On many occasions, the Trump administrative officials called the Venezuelan military to act against the Maduro regime. For instance, President Trump said, “We seek a peaceful transition of power, but all options are open. We want to restore Venezuelan democracy, and we believe that the Venezuelan military and its leadership have a vital role to play in this process”<sup>1170</sup>. Elliot Abrams also said,

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<sup>1167</sup> Sarah Burns, “Debating War Powers: Battles in the Clinton and Obama Administrations,” *Political Science Quarterly* 132, no. 2 (June 1, 2017): 203–23, <https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.12615>.

<sup>1168</sup> Abrams, “Venezuela at a Crossroads.”

<sup>1169</sup> David Cicilline, “Prohibiting Unauthorized Military Action in Venezuela Act (116th Congress H.R. 1004),” GovTrack.us, 2019, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/hr1004>.

<sup>1170</sup> Trump, “Remarks by President Trump to the Venezuelan American Community.”

“Members of the Venezuelan military know what is going on in the country. So, we will continue to call upon them to act upon that knowledge”<sup>1171</sup>. The Trump administration also supported Juan Guaidó’s April 30 “Operation Liberty”. Operation Liberty was an internal attempt to overthrow Maduro led by Juan Guaidó, Leopoldo López (who escaped from house arrest for the operation), the Venezuelan opposition, and the military personnel who supported the opposition. It started early morning on April 30, 2019, from an airbase in Caracas with Guaidó’s and López’s video call to the public to take the streets with the military<sup>1172</sup>.

However, soon, it became clear that the Venezuelan opposition overestimated their support within the Venezuelan military, and the operation failed<sup>1173</sup>. After the failure of Operation Liberty, the Trump administration was convinced that unseating Maduro would not be easy. According to Ambassador Bolton, the Departments of State and Treasury were dragging their feet when it came to passing Venezuela-related decisions, and this “was equivalent to throwing Maduro a lifeline”<sup>1174</sup>. As previously stated, President Trump found Juan Guaidó weak, unlike President Maduro. For all these reasons combined, the U.S. efforts to overthrow Maduro lost momentum after April 30, 2019.

The 2018 Venezuelan presidential election was the starting point of the legitimization crisis internally. After winning the 2018 elections, when President Maduro took his seat on January 10, 2019, the crisis became international with the vast support of the Trump administration for Juan Guaidó. From then on, an excessive diplomatic effort began for the international recognition of Guaidó’s presidency. Only fifty-two countries (more than half of them were in the EU)

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<sup>1171</sup> Elliott Abrams, “Briefing by the Special Representative for Venezuela,” U.S. Department of State, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/special-representative-for-venezuela-elliott-abrams/>.

<sup>1172</sup> Juan Guaido, “Tweet from (@jguaido): “En El Marco de Nuestra Constitución. Y Por El Cese Definitivo de La Usurpación.” Twitter, 2019, <https://twitter.com/jguaido/status/1123161692219686912>.

<sup>1173</sup> Anthony Faiola, “Guaidó Says Opposition Overestimated Military Support for Uprising,” The Washington Post, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/need-more-soldiers-venezuelas-guaido-says-opposition-overestimated-military-support-before-failed-uprising/2019/05/04/72561cb8-6e8b-11e9-bbe7-1c798fb80536\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/need-more-soldiers-venezuelas-guaido-says-opposition-overestimated-military-support-before-failed-uprising/2019/05/04/72561cb8-6e8b-11e9-bbe7-1c798fb80536_story.html).

<sup>1174</sup> Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, 251, 254.

officially recognized Guaidó; on January 6, 2021, twenty-seven EU countries dropped the recognition of Guaidó<sup>1175</sup>. A year later, a fragmented opposition in the Venezuelan National Assembly dissolved Guaidó's interim government<sup>1176</sup>. While claiming legitimacy by invoking Article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution, neither Juan Guaidó nor the National Assembly acknowledged the part of Article 233 where it says, "When an elected President becomes permanently unavailable to serve prior to his inauguration, *a new election by universal suffrage and direct ballot shall be held within 30 consecutive days*"<sup>1177</sup>. Thus, according to the Venezuelan Constitution, even if Juan Guaidó's 'interim' presidency were valid, it should have ended on February 21, 2019.

Even if the Trump administration's effort to unseat Maduro lost momentum after April 30, the administration did not drop all its efforts altogether. However, President Trump and Vice President Pence continued to deploy foreign policy as a weapon against the Democrats. Until the 2020 Presidential Elections, the Trump administration vigorously used the "American Dream vs. Socialist Nightmare" rhetoric, especially in the states where the Cuban and Venezuelan American population resides (like Miami-Dade County)<sup>1178</sup>. For instance, in June 2019, Vice President Pence declared in Florida, "The moment America becomes a socialist country is the moment America ceases to be America"<sup>1179</sup>. After the Vice President's speech, President Trump continued by saying, "A vote for any Democrat in 2020 is a

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<sup>1175</sup> Michael Stott, "EU Drops Recognition of Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's Interim President," *Financial Times*, 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/aa372f3a-a1ac-41da-848a-46355fc3ec4f>.

<sup>1176</sup> Ana Vanessa Herrero, "Venezuela's Opposition Dissolves Guaidó-Led Government," *The Washington Post*, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/12/29/guaido-venezuela-opposition-ouster/>.

<sup>1177</sup> VenezuelAnalysis, "Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela."

<sup>1178</sup> Mohamad Moslimani, Luis Noe-Bustamante, and Sono Shah, "Facts on Hispanics of Cuban Origin in the United States, 2021," Pew Research Center, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/u-s-hispanics-facts-on-cuban-origin-latinos/>; Mohamad Moslimani, Luis Noe-Bustamante, and Sono Shah, "Facts on Hispanics of Venezuelan Origin in the United States, 2021," Pew Research Center, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/us-hispanics-facts-on-venezuelan-origin-latinos/>.

<sup>1179</sup> Mike Pence, "Remarks Announcing Candidacy for the Republican Presidential Nomination in 2020," *The American Presidency Project*, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-candidacy-for-the-republican-presidential-nomination-2020>.

vote for the rise of radical socialism and the destruction of the American dream”<sup>1180</sup>. As already discussed, this was not just one instance or one speech. President Trump’s entire campaign was based on this discourse of danger (the socialist nightmare discourse) where the American Self would lose its entire identity to a socialist Other<sup>1181</sup>. This strategy seemed to work according to the comparison between Florida’s 2016 and 2020 presidential election results. President Trump increased his total vote by 2.6% in the 2020 elections, and in Miami-Dade County (the most populous one) of Florida, he nearly increased his vote by 11.4% compared to the 2016 elections<sup>1182</sup>. Democrats won the county but lost 11.4% of total votes to President Trump. From the start, the Trump administration had rejected the ‘tyrannical’ Maduro regime, especially in the name of defending the Venezuelan people. The administration clearly constituted the Venezuelan people as friendly Venezuelan Other who were suffering under Maduro’s ‘dictatorship’ and in need of help. While sanctioning the Venezuelan oil and transferring the CITGO revenues to Guaidó’s administration, they also claimed that they were protecting the rights and assets of the Venezuelan people. At the same time, the oil sanctions made the economic and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela much worse<sup>1183</sup>. The Trump administration also denied granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Venezuelans in the U.S., which basically protected Venezuelans from deportation to Venezuela until the last day in his office on January 19, 2021<sup>1184</sup>. Until then, the U.S. continued to deport Venezuelans to the hands of a ‘dictator’.

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<sup>1180</sup> Trump, “Remarks Announcing Candidacy for the Republican Presidential Nomination in 2020.”

<sup>1181</sup> Georg Löffmann, “‘Enemies of the People’: Donald Trump and the Security Imaginary of America First,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 24, no. 3 (August 5, 2022): 543–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481211048499>.

<sup>1182</sup> Dan Rorabaugh, “2020 vs. 2016: Presidential Election Results Comparison, Florida,” *Northwest Florida Daily News*, 2020, <https://data.nwfdailynews.com/presidential-election-results-compare-2016-2020/>.

<sup>1183</sup> Oliveros, “How U.S. Sanctions Have Directly Aggravated Venezuela’s Economic Crisis”; Geoff Ramsey and David Smilde, “U.S. Policy in Venezuela: Learning from Failure and Seizing Opportunities,” WOLA, 2020, <https://www.wola.org/analysis/recalibrating-u-s-policy-in-venezuela-learning-from-failure-and-seizing-opportunities/>; Gregory Wilpert, “The US War on Venezuela,” in *Sanctions as War: Anti-Imperialist Perspectives on American Geo-Economic Strategy* (BRILL, 2021), 273–89, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004501201\\_017](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004501201_017); Francisco Rodríguez, “The Human Consequences of Economic Sanctions,” *Journal of Economic Studies*, November 7, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JES-06-2023-0299>.

<sup>1184</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Memorandum on Deferred Enforced Departure for Certain Venezuelans,” The White House, 2021, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/memorandum-deferred-enforced-departure-certain-venezuelans/>.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

This dissertation provides a critical interpretation of U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela, particularly after the elections of Hugo Chávez in 1998 and Nicolás Maduro in 2013, through a Poststructuralist lens. The central argument of this dissertation is that the ongoing U.S.-Venezuela crisis is not merely a result of internal factors (such as increasing authoritarianism in Venezuela) but is a necessary condition for the continuous reproduction of American identity through foreign policy discourses. In essence, the focal inquiry is not why the Trump administration took actions such as outlawing President Maduro or imposing sanctions on the oil sector. Rather, the study delves into understanding how these particular foreign policy actions emerged as viable options within U.S. foreign policy discourses since 1998. The study's focus has been on understanding the constitution of American identity in relation to the construction of Chávez and Maduro administrations as the dangerous 'Others', emphasizing the mutual relationship of foreign policy discourses, perceptions of danger and identity construction. In addition to the dangerous Others, the simultaneous construction of friendly Others (Venezuelan people and Juan Guaidó) also included into the research.

In the early stages, the study originated from questioning why the Venezuelan oil only sanctioned by the Trump administration, despite the years of controversial relations. Over extensive research, the research questions transformed to; What is the relation between the U.S. discourses of danger, the constitution of American identity and Venezuelan Others? What kind of reality is constructed through these discourses of danger? What kind of foreign policy actions became possible (declaring Venezuela a national security threat or sanctioning Venezuelan oil), and more importantly, what kind of foreign policy actions became unthinkable because of these discourses? How does the U.S. construct itself as a superior political entity

through U.S. foreign policy discourses, determining the exclusion of certain political subjects (President Maduro), particularly in Latin America, from the international community? Additionally, how does this process coincide with framing the Venezuelan people as incapable of democratic self-governance?

These research questions enable noncausal interpretations. The theoretical and methodological framework of this study is built around the Poststructuralist international relations theory and discourse analysis since the research questions are deeply connected with Poststructuralism. The primary concern is not analyzing the U.S. policymakers' decision-making processes but how the U.S. foreign policy discourses constructed a particular reality since the earlier days of the Chávez administration. Poststructuralism argues that foreign policy and discursive practices are inherently codependent. The intricate connection between identity and foreign policy holds a central position in the Poststructuralist research agenda. This is because the existence of identities is dependent on foreign policy practices, and identities simultaneously constructed and reconstructed through these discursive practices.

Furthermore, this dissertation contributes to filling the gap in the literature on U.S. foreign policy by adopting a Poststructuralist approach, a perspective often neglected in the academia. By analyzing the U.S. foreign policy discourses, the study underscores the integral role these narratives play in shaping American identity, U.S. domestic politics, and international relations. The predominant focus in U.S. foreign policy literature revolves around the examination of U.S. engagement strategies and isolation policies. However, a noticeable gap exists in the literature when it comes to the Poststructuralist analysis of U.S. Foreign Policy. Poststructuralism, first and foremost, introduced previously overlooked concepts into the realm of International Relations, such as the politics of identity, exclusion, and historical context. This study shares a similar objective. However, the only contribution is not the lack of the literature, the U.S. – Venezuela relations studied on many aspects, but a Poststructuralist interpretation enables viewing the relations from different angles instead of merely looking causes and results, enriching the analysis by looking from a historical and critical perspective.

While the first, second and third Chapters elaborate theoretical and methodological framework of the study, the fourth Chapter focuses on the Congressional approval process of the Colombia FTA from February 2008 to May 2008. Even though, the Chávez and Bush administrations confronted each other on many different crisis (including the 2002 coup attempt against President Chávez, 2004 recall referendum, or the diplomatic crisis over Bolivia), the Colombia FTA process was determined as the key event because for the first time, the Bush administration's foreign policy discourses constructed the Chávez regime as a dangerous Other to the U.S. In order to assess the Colombia FTA process, first, the War on Terror discourse is analyzed because it was the hegemonical discourse during the Bush administration and had a huge transformative effect on American identity especially through "us vs. them" narrative. Then the two basic discourses of the Bush administration towards Latin America was determined as the Western Hemisphere and Free Trade Agreements through an extensive reading of discursive texts. The primary focus of the administration across the region was on promoting democracy and market capitalism, with significant attention paid to the free trade agreements. Central to the Western Hemisphere discourse was the concept of a distinct bond shared by the states of the region, setting them apart from the rest of the world, especially Europe. This notion dates back to Thomas Jefferson, who highlighted the hemisphere's difference from Europe and promoted political separation based on geographical distance. This geographical distinctiveness constructed the spatial dimension of the hemispheric identity. President Jefferson and later President Monroe emphasized the values of freedom, democracy, and free enterprise as the core of the Western Hemisphere, contrasting with European despotism.

The temporal dimension of the hemispheric Self framed the Western Hemisphere as the New World, embodying freedom, in contrast to the Old World's tyranny and despotism. The Monroe Doctrine further solidified this view, with the U.S. opposing further European colonization or interference in the hemisphere. President Theodore Roosevelt expanded the Monroe Doctrine, positioning the U.S. as the international police of the hemisphere, responsible for ensuring stability, order, and prosperity. This established a hierarchical relationship, with the U.S. as a paternal figure, guiding and making decisions for other countries in the hemisphere, reinforcing



democratic values and market economies. This role also constituted the ethical dimension of the American Self. In essence, the Bush administration's policy towards Latin America was based on a paternalistic approach, seeing the U.S. as a guiding force for democratic values and economic growth in the hemisphere. This approach also involved a hierarchical view of the U.S.' role in the region, where it was seen as responsible for guiding and aiding its 'family' of nations in the Western Hemisphere but only for their own good.

The free trade agreement discourse was the other basic discourse of the administration. After 9/11, free trade was represented as the cure of the terrorism by the Bush administration. Putting the Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA) into effect was the main aim of the administration and it was also the arch enemy of the Chávez administration. The latter's populist-leftist narrative directly confronted with the U.S. hegemony in Latin America and the rise of the Pink Tide all over the continent strengthened his hand in this regard. After the FTAA process ended without completion, bilateral FTAs became vital for the Bush administration. In 2008, when the U.S. Congress came into a deadlock over the approval of the Colombia FTA, President Bush started to directly target the Chávez administration (before that the official foreign policy was completely ignoring Hugo Chávez). From February to May 2008, Venezuela was constructed as a danger to U.S. national security and interests in the hemisphere and also to the key ally of the U.S., Colombia. During this process, the Chávez regime discursively separated from the hemispheric Self and constituted as a danger to both the hemispheric Self and the American Self. By situating the Colombia FTA within the context of U.S. national security discourses, the Bush administration aimed to elevate a trade bill from the realm of politics to a 'higher moral ground'. This strategy sought to depoliticize the approval of the FTA (because it became a matter of U.S. national security) by Congress while constructing the Chávez regime as a danger. The Bush administration's attempts to hasten the approval of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement before the conclusion of President Bush's term faced resistance. Nevertheless, the U.S. foreign policy discourses employed during this period had significant repercussions. The overt discursive portrayal of the Chávez administration as a perilous and radical Other to the American Self, undertaken by the Bush administration to facilitate the approval

of the Colombia FTA, extinguished any prospect of reconciliation between the Bush and Chávez administrations (consequently the following administrations).

The fifth Chapter focuses on the second key event of the thesis; the constitution of Venezuela as a national security threat to the U.S. with the Executive Order 13692. The hegemonic discourse of the Obama era was change. His policies were based on changing the Bush era's War on Terror discourse, reconstruct the American leadership worldwide, promoting U.S. values and leading by example. Accordingly with the change narrative, he claimed that he would transform the U.S. relations with the Americas. The analysis revealed a significant shift from Bush era of aggressive foreign policy, marked by unilateral actions, to Obama era characterized by a commitment to diplomacy, constructive engagement, and an emphasis on equal partnerships. This shift was not only a change in strategy but also an ideological transformation that resonated with the core American values of democracy, liberty, and egalitarianism. During his term the two basic discourses of the U.S. towards the Americas were the equal partnership discourse and the constructive engagement discourse. These two discourses aimed to demolish the hierarchical relationship between the U.S. and Latin America while focusing on solving the critical problems of the region such as poverty and inequality. During the Obama era, the developmental aid and the budget of the State Department skyrocketed and returned to the Cold War levels. It could be interpreted as the Obama administration's efforts to repair the U.S. image worldwide. These efforts were underscored by the administration's emphasis on acknowledging past U.S. mistakes in the region without necessarily issuing formal apologies and repairing these mistakes formally. This approach was a strategic maneuver to maintain diplomatic relations and foster partnerships based on mutual respect and shared interests without facing the consequences of these past mistakes. The Obama administration's policy towards the Americas, building on Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" and rejecting the Monroe Doctrine, represents a significant departure from traditional U.S. foreign policy. It signals a move towards a more collaborative and less hegemonic approach in the Western Hemisphere. This approach, while aiming for equality and mutual benefit, also grappled with inherent contradictions, particularly in balancing the U.S.' role as a leader with being an ordinary equal partner in the Americas.

The declaration of the Executive Order 13692 was actually the result of a battle between the executive and the legislative branches of the U.S. government. The Republicans in the Congress were arguing strongly against the Obama administration's foreign policy agenda towards the hemisphere. The internal inconsistencies of the Obama administration's two basic discourses made them vulnerable for the attacks of the oppositional discourses. The Congress vigorously fought with President Obama's appeasement policies towards the 'authoritarian' regimes like Cuba and Iran. President Obama decided to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba while increasing tensions with Venezuela. This was a tradeoff. The Obama administration decided to give into the Republicans' demands on sanctioning Venezuelan officials in order to continue reestablishing diplomatic relations with Cuba. While the mediation process between the Maduro regime and the MUD, while the MUD members specifically asked the U.S. not to get involved while the mediation process continued, the Obama regime declared sanctions and this move created a huge backlash from the hemisphere. The legal process of declaring sanctions necessitated the construction of Venezuela as "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" with the Executive Order of 13692. Four years later, the same order used by the Trump administration to sanction the Venezuelan oil while crippling Venezuelan economy and therefore the Venezuelan people.

The second key event of the thesis provides a comparison between the foreign policies of the Bush and Obama eras while exposing the inherent relation between the construction of American identity in relation to the construction of two Venezuelan Others; the Chávez and Maduro regimes as the dangerous Others and the Venezuelan people as the friendly Others incapable of transforming Venezuelan democracy and in need of help. The declaration of the Executive Order 13692 was very important also because it proved the importance of the oppositional discourses and how effective they are to shape the discursive space where the U.S. foreign policy was determined. Tackling the region's poverty and inequality problems with Venezuela (since under Chávez Venezuelan society became the most equitable on in Latin America) became unthinkable for the Obama administration. Instead, the feasible foreign policy action was the construction of Venezuela as a national

security threat. The same congresspeople who made the oppositional discourse on Venezuela as the hegemonic discourse, also played a huge part in shaping President Trump's foreign policy towards Venezuela.

The third and the last key event of the dissertation was the U.S. struggle to replace Nicolás Maduro and constructing a new Venezuelan Other; Juan Guaidó as a new political subject in international realm. The Trump era was characterized by its hegemonic discourse; "America First", emphasizing national interests over engagement. The foreign policy of the Trump administration towards the Western Hemisphere marked a significant departure from the approaches of the Bush and Obama administrations. This shift resulted in reduced prioritization of U.S. engagement with Latin American countries. One of the most notable aspects of Trump's policy was his critical stance towards the policies of previous administrations, particularly those of President Obama. The Trump administration repeatedly criticized Obama's reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba and Kerry's statements about the end of the Monroe Doctrine. This criticism extended to other policies, such as NAFTA and immigration from the South, which Trump linked to national security concerns.

The Trump administration's main foreign policy agenda in the hemisphere was to reverse what it saw as the negative consequences of Obama-era policies. This reversal was marked by a significant emphasis on renegotiating trade agreements like NAFTA, now replaced by the USMCA, and confronting China's economic influence in the region. These actions were part of a broader strategy to reassert American economic interests and address perceived imbalances in trade relations. Trump's foreign policy towards the Western Hemisphere was shaped by a negative agenda that focused on issues like illegal immigration, unfair trade deals, and confronting the influence of Russia and China in the region. This approach contrasted with the more positive and multilateral focus of the Bush and Obama administrations, which also sought to avoid direct confrontation with regimes like those of Chávez and Maduro in Venezuela. President Trump was the only U.S. president openly challenging the leftist-populist Venezuelan administrations from the start. His two predecessors decided not to target Chávez and Maduro regimes; accordingly, their basic

discourses adopted a positive tone, addressing the whole hemisphere. President Trump did the opposite and from the start of his presidency challenged President Maduro while emphasizing the poor conditions of the Venezuelan people. Therefore, the two basic discourses of the Trump era were directly related with Venezuela: the socialist nightmare discourse and the tyranny discourse.

The peculiarity of the Trump era came from the reemployment of the Red Scare for constituting the 'socialist' Maduro regime as an existential threat to the American Self. Within the socialist nightmare discourse, the American Self (represented by the American dream) would be destroyed by the socialist nightmare, the borders of the U.S. would be abolished, and the 'criminal illegal aliens' would invade the front yards of the Americans, only if the Americans decide to vote for the Democrats. This discursive strategy became very successful for winning the seats in the Senate and increasing Republican votes in Florida. The other basic discourse of the Trump era was the tyranny discourse which was employed by Vice President Pence and Ambassador Bolton. They were the main actors along with Republican congresspeople from Florida to determine U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela during the Trump era.

The recognition of Juan Guaidó was the U.S. response to the presidential legitimacy crisis of Venezuela. In January 2019, the head of the National Assembly Juan Guaidó declared himself the president invoking the article 233. However, President Maduro had the control of the institutions and army. In order to pressure his hand into quitting and holding elections, the Trump administration first increased individual sanctions including President Maduro's son and wife, freezing Venezuelan officials' assets in the U.S., and prohibiting trading PDVSA bonds. During this period, the Trump administration added another Venezuelan Other into U.S. constitution of Venezuelan Others. The Trump administration became the first to officially recognize Guaidó's presidency on January 23, 2019. For the first time, the U.S. sanctioned Venezuelan oil by sanctioning the state-owned oil company PDVSA. After this, the U.S. got into an excessive diplomatic effort to convince other nations also recognize Guaidó, to denounce Maduro and to support the people of Venezuela. Overall, the study highlights the complexity of U.S.-Venezuela relations, which

transcends mere diplomatic tensions and enters the realm of identity politics and foreign policy discourses. It uncovers the paradox in U.S. foreign policy where the same administration that condemns certain 'authoritarian' regimes elsewhere, like Venezuela, maintains close diplomatic relations with other 'authoritarian' nations accused of human rights violations. This dichotomy is a product of the discourses of danger employed by the U.S., which selectively portrays certain regimes as threats based on their alignment or opposition to American interests and values. This dichotomy simultaneously occluded by the foreign policy discourses.

The analysis demonstrates that the U.S. foreign policy discourse has played a pivotal role in constructing the Chávez and Maduro administrations as existential threats to the American Self, thereby reinforcing American national identity. This construction is not simply a reaction to external events but a necessary element in the ongoing reproduction of American identity. The discursive practices of differentiating the Self from the Others have been central to this process, where the U.S. has portrayed itself as the protector of democratic values and civil liberties, thus legitimizing its foreign policy actions towards Venezuelan Others. Accordingly, the only viable foreign policy actions were constructed as overthrowing the dangerous Other (the Maduro regime), legitimizing the Guaidó administration as friendly Venezuelan Other and saving the Venezuelan people (another friendly Venezuelan Other) since they do not have the ability to do themselves (while reinforcing the superiority of the U.S. in the region).

The Chávez movement represents a crucial point for successfully challenging the U.S. hegemony in Latin America. President Chávez was the first president both openly challenging the U.S. superiority in the region while having the necessary resources to undermine the U.S. position across the region. The Chávez movement is important because it created an existential threat to the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. superiority and presence in the region. His populist policies, the increase in the oil prices, the rise of the Pink Tide, and President Chávez's ability to defy U.S. foreign policy (for instance by offering oil subsidies or supporting leftist-populist presidential candidates in other Latin American Countries) all made the case of Venezuela unique. This is why many U.S. administrations (including the Bush,

Obama, and Trump administrations) tried different foreign policy approaches for toppling the Chávez and Maduro administrations. According to these U.S. administrations, Venezuela was in the U.S.' backyard and a powerful challenging regime in that backyard could not be acceptable for the U.S. For all these reasons, a critical interpretation of U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela is highly important because while focusing on causal explanations, traditional Foreign Policy Analysis overlooks all of these crucial points.

In conclusion, this dissertation not only provides a nuanced understanding of U.S.-Venezuela relations but also emphasizes the significance of discourse analysis in international relations. It underscores the necessity of adopting alternative analytical frameworks to comprehend complex international dynamics, particularly those involving power, identity, and representation. The findings and methodology of this study offer valuable insights for future research, especially for scholars exploring comparative research on U.S. foreign policy discourses during the rise and decline of the Pink Tide because the foreign policy behavior of the regional organizations (such as the OAS, Mercosur, or the Lima Group) directly affects the regional political realm. Another suggestion for further research would be delving deeper into the economic dimensions of U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela while investigating the role of oil, economic sanctions, and trade policies in constitution of American identity. Recognizing the opposition as the legitimate executive power was not something new for the U.S. In 2011, the U.S. also recognized the Libyan National Transitional Council against the Gadhafi regime for instance. A year later, the official U.S. recognition came for the Syrian Opposition Coalition against the Assad regime. The recognition of Guaidó in this sense was not surprising. The analysis of U.S. discourses on the official U.S. recognition of the Libyan National Transitional Council, the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the MUD supported Guaidó would be an excellent subject for further research to see how the U.S. employed the discourses of danger during these recognitions. Lastly, researchers should also focus on the transformation of U.S. foreign policy discourses if President Trump were to be reelected in the 2024 U.S. presidential election. In a scenario like this, it is unlikely for the new Trump administration to continue the Biden administration's sanction relief in exchange for a free and competitive election in Venezuela. The sanction

relief decision came after the agreement between the Maduro administration and Venezuelan opposition accordingly with the Norway-led dialogue in Barbados on October 2023<sup>1185</sup>. According to this agreement, the Maduro government accepted releasing certain political prisoners, lifting the electoral ban against the leading oppositional candidates, and allowing E.U.'s electoral observation during the upcoming presidential elections in Venezuela. It is unlikely for President Maduro to hold a free and fair election especially since the TSJ already denied lifting the electoral ban on the leading candidate María Corina Machado in January 2024<sup>1186</sup>.

The U.S. is not completely responsible for the turmoil in Venezuela, however, U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela, especially the sanctions contributed greatly to the crisis. The Trump era sanctions worsened the Venezuelan economy and increased the Venezuelan exodus across the region and the Trump and Biden administrations did not implement policies to help the countries in the region to cope with this exodus. This in return, decreased the U.S. popularity across the region. The future U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela should focus on the international cooperation between the Latin American countries for the return to democracy in Venezuela. During the Trump era the left was weakened across the region, however, the left had returned; Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru all elected leftist presidents over the last couple of years. Instead of imposing one-sided foreign policy decisions on the countries in the region, the U.S. should try to unite the region for the restoration of democratic governance in Venezuela. For once, the U.S. should follow the regional lead not the vice versa for a permanent solution.

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<sup>1185</sup> Joshua Goodman and Regina Garcia Cano, "Venezuela and Opposition Reach Deal on Electoral Conditions," Associated Press, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/venezuela-opposition-norway-talks-c7591a133328d66512854a6869b13703>.

<sup>1186</sup> Tribunal Supremo de Justicia, "Decisiones - El Número de Expediente 2023-0461," The TSJ, 2024, <http://www.tsj.gob.ve/es/web/tsj/decisiones#>.



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## APPENDICES

### A. CURRICULUM VITAE

#### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Dinçer Akan, Deniz Pelin

Date and Place of Birth:

#### EDUCATION

B.Sc, Hacettepe University, International Relations, 2011

M.Sc, The Middle East Technical University, Latin and North American Studies, 2015

M.Sc, Eskisehir Osmangazi University, International Relations, 2017

Ph.D, The Middle East Technical University, International Relations, 2024

#### WORK EXPERIENCE

2014 – Present, Research Assistant, Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Turkey

#### FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English (Fluent), Spanish (Intermediate)

#### PUBLICATIONS

##### • Articles

Dincer, Deniz Pelin (2023). Demokrasi Kalitesi Analizi: Başkan Maduro Yönetiminde Venezuela Demokrasisi. *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 24(2), 557-570. <https://doi.org/10.17494/ogusbd.1252019>

Dincer, Deniz Pelin. (2022) "Latinx Immigrants in the United States: A Comparative Analysis on the Venezuelan and Cuban Immigrants in Florida." *Istanbul Gelisim University Journal of Social Sciences*. 9.2: 567-582. <https://doi.org/10.17336/igusbd.795584>

##### • Conference Presentations

The Middle East Technical University, Turkey, 2023. 17th Congress of Turkish Social Sciences Association- Title: "U.S. Foreign Policy towards Venezuela: The escalation and the reluctant de-escalation of anti-Maduro Stance of the U.S."

The Middle East Technical University, Turkey, 2019. 16<sup>th</sup> Congress of Turkish Social Sciences Association- Title: "Latinx Immigrant in the United States: Comparing Cuban and Venezuelan Americans in Florida".

## B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

23 Ocak 2019 tarihinde ABD Başkanı Donald Trump resmi olarak Venezuelalı muhalefet lideri, Ulusal Meclis Başkanı Juan Guaidó'yu Venezuela'nın geçici başkanı olarak tanımış ve seçilmiş Başkan Nicolás Maduro'yu başkanlık görevinden menetmiştir. ABD diplomatları aynı zamanda, Brezilya, Kanada, Meksika ve Avrupa Birliği'nin birçok ülkesi gibi diğer ülkeler tarafından Juan Guaidó'nun meşru başkan olarak tanınması için yoğun lobi faaliyetlerinde bulunmuşlardır. ABD, Venezuela'nın petrol sektörüne (ülkenin başlıca gelir kaynağı) 2019'dan bu yana sıkı yaptırımlar ve ambargo uygulamaktadır, bu da Venezuela ekonomisinin halihazırda olduğundan çok daha kötü bir duruma evrilmesine sebep olmuştur. Trump yönetimi, Başkan Maduro'yu, otoriterlik, muhalefete tahammülsüzlük ve insan hakları ile temel özgürlüklerin şiddetli ve sistematik baskısı ile suçlamaktadır. Aynı yönetim, 2019'da Brezilya'yı resmi olarak NATO üyesi olmayan ana müttefik olarak atamıştır. ABD Dışişleri Bakanlığı'nın 2019 ve 2020 İnsan Hakları Raporlarına göre, aynı Bolsonaro yönetimi ifade özgürlüğü, adil yargı hakkı ve cinsel yönelim nedeniyle ayrımcılık yapmama hakkı gibi belirli insan haklarını çiğnemiştir. Başka bir deyişle, ABD, Brezilya ve Venezuela'nın insan hakları ve özgürlüklerini sürekli olarak bastırıldığı iddiasında bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, ABD'nin Brezilya ve Venezuela'nın iddia edilen insan hakları ihlallerine yaklaşımındaki çelişkinin kaynağına odaklanmaktadır. Bu tez, Venezuela'ya yönelik ABD dış politika eylemleri veya sonuçları hakkında değildir. Aksine, bu çalışmanın temel amacı, dış ilişkiler, tehlike söylemleri ve kimlik inşası aracılığıyla gerçeğin inşa sürecini incelemektedir. Ek olarak, bu araştırma, Venezuela'nın ABD'ye yönelik dış politikasının tamamen iyiliksever olduğunu iddia etmemektedir; aynı şekilde, ABD'nin görünmeyen bir tehdit olmadığında bile bir tehdit yarattığını iddia etmemektedir. Başka bir deyişle, bu çalışma, belirli olayların farklı olayların aksine tehlike olarak inşa edilmesinin bir zorunluluk olduğunun altını çizmektedir. ABD dış politika söylemleri tarafından Chávez ve Maduro yönetimlerinin tehlikeli ötekiler olarak inşa edilmesi, Amerikan kimliğini yeniden üretmek için gereklidir. Tehlikeyi, Amerikan kimliği ile

ilişkilendirmek, dış politika aracılığıyla tehlikeyi tasvir etmek, ulusal kimliğinin sınırlarını güvence altına almak için kilit bir parça olmuştur.

Bu tez, 2000 ile 2020 yılları arasında ABD'nin Venezuela'ya yönelik dış politika söylemlerinin evrimini incelemektedir. Çalışma, Juan Guaidó'nun geçici başkan olarak tanınması, Venezuela'nın petrol sektörüne yönelik yaptırımlar ve ABD'nin Venezuela ve Brezilya'daki insan hakları ihlallerine karşı yaklaşımlarındaki kontrast gibi temel olayları eleştirel bir şekilde incelemektedir. Bu tez, David Campbell'in Postyapısalcı Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorisi'ni ve Lene Hansen'in söylem analizi metodolojisini birleştirerek ABD dış politikasına farklı bir bakış açısı kazandırmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu araştırma, dış ilişkiler, tehlike söylemleri ve ötekilik aracılığıyla kimlik oluşturma sürecini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. İnsan haklarını çiğnediğini iddia ettiği Brezilya ile ittifak yapabilen ABD'nin, Venezuela'yı insan hakları ihlalleri yaptığı iddialarıyla sert şekilde eleştirmesi ve bu doğrultuda dış politika kararları uygulaması nasıl mümkün olmuştur? Tez, ABD kimliğinin sürekli yeniden üretiminde krizin yalnızca dış faktörlerle tetiklenmediğini de ayrıca vurgulamakta, ABD iç politikasındaki önemli değişkenlere ve hegemonik söylemlere de odaklanmaktadır.

Araştırma sorularına yanıt aramak için, 1998 ve 2013'te solcu başkanların seçilmesinin ardından ABD'nin Venezuela'ya yönelik dış politika söylemlerine odaklanılmış ve George W. Bush, Barack H. Obama ve Donald J. Trump gibi ABD Başkanlarının resmi söylemlerini içeren analizler yapılmıştır. Çalışma, çeşitli kaynaklardan toplanan resmî açıklamalar, konuşmalar, röportajlar, anı yazıları ve tweetleri içermektedir. Bu inceleme ile 2015 yılı sonrasında ABD-Venezuela ilişkilerindeki gerilimde bir tırmanış tespit edilmiştir; bu tırmanış, başkanlık kararları, yaptırımlar ve ambargolarla sonuçlanmıştır. Çalışma, Monroe Doktrini vurgusunu, tehlike retoriğini ve Chávez ve Maduro yönetimlerinin Amerikan kimliğine yönelik tehdit/öteki olarak inşasını ele almıştır. Analiz ayrıca, belirli dış politika eylemlerinin tercihin ve alternatif seçeneklerin düşünülemez olarak inşa edilmesine de sorgulamaktadır.

ABD-Venezuela ilişkileri üzerine mevcut literatür çoğunlukla ABD'nin demokrasi teşviki girişimleri ve Neo-Marksizm çerçevesinde analizler içermektedir. Bu çalışma

ise ABD dış politikası analizinde Postyapısalcı bakış açılarının eksikliğini eleştirmektedir. Tez, kimlik politikalarına, ötekileştirici söylem pratiğine ve dış politikanın Postyapısalcı bir bakış açısıyla analizine odaklanarak literatürdeki bariz boşluğa katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Genel olarak, araştırma Amerikan kimliğinin nasıl inşa edildiğini ve son yirmi yıl içerisinde özellikle ABD-Venezuela ilişkileri bağlamında nasıl şekillendiğine odaklanmaktadır.

2014 yılı sonrasında, ABD-Venezuela ilişkilerinde bir bozulma yaşandığı gözlemlenmektedir. Başkan Obama, 8 Mart 2015'te Başkanlık Kararnamesi (Executive Order) 13692'yi yayımlayarak Venezuela'yı ABD'nin ulusal güvenliğine ve dış politikasına sıra dışı ve olağanüstü bir tehdit olarak ilan etmiş ve yedi üst düzey Venezuela yetkilisine yaptırım uygulamıştır. 2017'de, Başkan Trump, Başkan Maduro ve yönetiminin önde gelen siyasetçi ve iş insanlarına karşı daha fazla yaptırım uygulamış ve Nicolás Maduro'yu da bir diktatör olarak ilan etmiştir. Trump yönetimi daha sonra Venezuela'da muhalefet lideri Juan Guaidó'yu geçici Venezuela Devlet Başkanı olarak tanımış ve Venezuela'nın başlıca gelir kaynağı olan petrol sektörüne 2019 yılından itibaren ambargo uygulamaya başlamıştır. Trump yönetiminin eski Ulusal Güvenlik Konseyi Batı Yarım Küre İşlerinden Sorumlu Kıdemli Direktörü Juan Cruz'a göre, ABD Venezuela'da güneş ve hava hariç her şeyi yaptırıma tabi tuttuğunu ve eğer mümkün olsaydı ABD'nin güneş ve havayı dahi yaptırıma tabii tutacağını açıklamıştı. ABD İstihbarat Topluluğu'nun 2019 Küresel Tehdit Değerlendirmesi raporuna göre ise Venezuela Küba'dan daha büyük bir tehdit oluşturuyordu.

17 Nisan 2019'daki konuşmasında, Başkan Trump'ın Ulusal Güvenlik Danışmanı John Bolton, Monroe Doktrini çok güçlü bir biçimde hayatta olduğunu ilan etmiştir. Ayrıca, tekrar Monroe Doktrinine atıfta bulunarak Venezuela'nın Batı Yarım Küre'de bulunduğunu ve ABD'nin Venezuela'da *özel bir sorumluluğa* sahip olduğunu vurgulamıştır. Bolton ayrıca, özellikle "Tiranlık Üçlüsü" olarak adlandırdığı Küba, Venezuela ve Nikaragua'ya karşı Başkan Obama'nın Latin Amerika'ya yönelik yumuşama politikasını eleştirmiştir. Bolton konuşmasında, Venezuela, Küba ve Nikaragua'nın nihayet "komünist diktatörlüklerden" özgür olacağına dair söz de vermiştir. 2019 Eylül'ünde Ulusal Güvenlik Danışmanlığı görevinden istifa ettikten

sonra John Bolton, "The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir" adlı bir anı kitabı yazmış ve kitabında Venezuela'yı ayrı bir bölümde ele almıştır.

Çeşitli konuşmalarında Başkan Trump, Büyükelçi Bolton, Senatör Graham ve ABD Dışişleri Bakanı Pompeo, Venezuela'ya ve Maduro Yönetimine yönelik tüm seçeneklerin (askeri müdahale dahil) masada olduğunu ısrarla belirtmişlerdir. Senatör Graham, Venezuela'nın ABD'nin 'arka bahçesinde' bulunduğunu söyleyerek ABD'nin 1983'teki Grenada müdahalesine benzer bir askeri işgal önerisinde bulunmuştur. Ek olarak, Başkan Trump, olası bir askeri müdahaleye dair sorulara sürekli olarak askeri seçenek dahil tüm seçeneklerin masada olduğu şeklinde yanıtlar vermiştir.

İlginç bir şekilde, 20 yıldan fazla bir süredir, ikili ilişkilerdeki tüm gerilimlere rağmen, ABD, Venezuela'ya en çok zarar verecek olan "tek silahı" kullanmaktan yani Venezuela petrolüne yaptırım ve ambargo uygulamaktan kaçınmıştır. Bu adımı sadece Trump yönetimi, 28 Ocak 2019 tarihinde atmaya karar vermiştir. Ayrıca, ABD, Juan Guaidó'nun diğer ülkeler tarafından geçici başkan olarak tanınması için yoğun diplomatik lobicilik faaliyetleri gerçekleştirmiştir (Kanada, Avrupa Birliği üyeleri ve Latin Amerika ülkelerinde). Amaç, Başkan Maduro'yu uluslararası topluluktan dışlayarak onunla olan tüm diplomatik, ekonomik ve siyasi ilişkilerin kopmasını sağlamaktır. Peki ABD, neden diğer 'otoriter' hükümetler için aynı çabayı göstermemektedir? Başkan Trump döneminde ABD, Putin, Erdoğan, Bolsonaro ve Orbán gibi liderlerle iyi ilişkiler kurmuştur. Başkan Donald Trump, 2017'de yaptığı ilk yurtdışı gezisinde Suudi Arabistan'ı ziyaret etmiş ve "Amerika, yaşam tarzını başkalarına dayatmayacak" açıklamasında bulunmuştur. Başkan Trump, ABD'nin insanlara nasıl yaşamaları, ne yapmaları, kim olmaları konusunda nasihat etmek için Suudi Arabistan'a gelmediğini de belirtmiştir. Aynı Başkan, Suudi Arabistan'dan daha iyi bir demokratik rejime sahip olan Venezuela'ya aynı yaklaşımı niçin göstermemektedir? ABD'nin gözünde Venezuela neden Suudi Arabistan, Brezilya veya Macaristan'dan çok farklıdır? Bu çalışma, bu tavır değişikliğinin ABD kimliğinin tehlikeli öteki ile bağlantılı olarak inşası için bir zorunluluk olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Tehlike nesnel bir şey değildir. Bir kişinin bir durumu, bir konuyu veya bir olayı tehdit olarak değerlendirmesi bağımsız olarak var olamaz. Eğer tehlike nesnel bir şey

olsaydı, bu durumda ABD'nin ideallerine tehdit olarak inşa edilen otoriterlikle doğru orantılı olarak, her otoriter rejim ABD'nin doğan düşmanı olmalıydı. Nesnel olmayan tehlike inşası, ABD'nin Venezuela'yı tehlike olarak görmesinin önünü açarken, aynı anda Suudi Arabistan'ı da bir müttefik olarak görmesine yol açmaktadır. Bu tezin ana iddiası, ABD ve Venezuela arasındaki krizin sadece dış faktörler tarafından tetiklenen bir kriz olmadığıdır. Bunun yerine, bu kriz, Amerikan kimliğinin dış politika eylemleri aracılığıyla sürekli olarak üretilmesi için gerekli bir olay olarak inşa edilmiştir. Kısacası, buradaki temel soru şu değildir: Trump yönetiminin petrol sektörüne yaptırım uygulama seçeneğini tercih etmesinin nedeninin ne olduğu değildir. Bunun yerine, asıl soru şu olmalıdır: ABD'nin belirli dış politika eylemleri, Hugo Chávez'in 1998'de Venezuela Devlet Başkanı seçilmesinden bu yana ABD'nin dış politika söylemleri aracılığıyla nasıl mümkün hale gelmiştir?

ABD ve Venezuela arasındaki tartışmalı ilişkinin kökleri 1998 Venezuela Devlet Başkanlığı seçimlerine dayanmaktadır. 1950'lerin sonlarından 1990'lara kadar, birçok bilim insanı Venezuela demokrasisini istisnai olarak tanımlamıştır. 1900'lü yılların başından 1958 yılına kadar Venezuela'da uzun süreli diktatörlük dönemleri yaşanmıştır. 1957 yılında ise muhalefet partileri (hem sol hem de sağ kanattan partiler), ordu mensupları, iş insanları ve kilise Vatansaver Cunta (Junta Patriótica) adlı bir ittifak oluşturmuştur. Bu ittifak, dönemin diktatörü Marcos Pérez Jiménez'i Ocak 1958'de bir darbe ile devirmiştir. 31 Ocak 1958'de ise dönemin üç önde gelen siyasi parti lideri (AD, COPEI ve URD partileri) Punto Fijo Anlaşması'nı imzalayarak demokratik seçim sürecine saygı göstermeyi taahhüt ederek Venezuela'da demokrasi dönemini başlatmıştır. Soğuk Savaş'ın etkisiyle bu üç siyasi parti, diktatör Jiménez'i devirmeye yardım eden sol kanat siyasi partileri anlaşmadan dışlamıştır. Solun dışlanması ve sağ kanat siyasi partilerin Venezuela siyasi sisteminde kırk yıl boyunca egemen olması, 1998'de Hugo Chávez'in seçilmesi için sosyopolitik zemini hazırlamıştır. 1958-1998 yılları arasındaki kırk yıllık demokrasi dönemi Punto Fijo dönemi olarak adlandırılmaktadır.

1958 sonrası Venezuela demokrasi akademisyenler tarafından istisnai olarak adlandırılmıştır çünkü neredeyse tüm Latin Amerika ülkeleri (Arjantin, Brezilya ve

Şili gibi), özellikle 1960'lar ve 1970'ler boyunca, askerî darbelere maruz kalırken Venezuela'da bu durum hiç yaşanmamıştır. 1958'deki demokratik geçişten itibaren, Venezuela demokrasisi, ABD'nin diğer Latin Amerika ülkelerine örnek gösterdiği bir model haline gelmiştir. ABD Başkanı Kennedy'nin danışmanı Arthur Schlesinger da bu örnek gösterme durumunu 1961'de kendi sözleriyle ifade de etmiştir.

1958 sonrasında, yalnızca iki partinin (AD ve COPEI) adayları, kırk yıl boyunca gerçekleşen seçimler aracılığıyla başkanlık görevine gelmiştir. Bu kırk yıl boyunca, ABD ve Venezuela arasındaki ilişkiler çok stabil bir seyir izlemiştir çünkü Venezuela, Amerikan ideallerine oldukça yakın bir demokratik sistemi vardır. Ayrıca Venezuela petrolü, ABD pazarına başarılı bir şekilde entegre edilmiş ve Pentagon'un Venezuela Ulusal Silahlı Kuvvetler üzerindeki etkisi bu dönemde artmıştır. Hugo Chávez, AD ve COPEI ile hiçbir bağlantısı olmayan ilk devlet başkanıdır. Hugo Chávez 1998 başkanlık seçim kampanyaları sırasında, Punto Fijo dönemine, özel petrol şirketlerine ve ABD'ye açıkça meydan okumuştur. Beklediği gibi, Chávez'in başkanlık dönemi geçmiş kırk yıldan keskin bir ayrılığı temsil etmektedir. 1998'deki kampanya konuşmalarından birinde, Hugo Chávez, PDVSA'nın (Venezuela'nın devlet yönetimindeki petrol şirketi) başkanını görevden almayı ve Venezuela petrol sektörüne doğrudan yabancı yatırımları sınırlamayı vaat etmiştir.

Seçim zaferinden sonra ise Başkan Chávez Venezuelalı kimliğini kökten değiştirecek değişikliklere imza atmıştır. Başkan Chávez, Venezuela'da temel politik, ekonomik ve sosyal değişiklikler yapmıştır. Bu değişiklikler, yeni bir anayasa yazmayı, anayasanın halk tarafından onaylanması için referandum düzenlemeyi, devletin petrol gelirini önceden ihmal edilmiş toplum kesimlerine yönlendirmeyi, yeni bir katılımcı demokrasi modeli inşa etmeyi ve 21. yüzyıl sosyalizmine geçişi içermekteydi. Bu nedenle, Chávez göreve başladıktan hemen sonra ve görevini ilk yıllarında, özellikle Punto Fijo dönemi müesses nizamının (özellikle petrol endüstrisinden) ve ABD'nin yoğun direnişiyle karşılaşmıştır. ABD'li diplomat Richard N. Haass konuşmalarında Chávez'in Amerikan çıkarlarına bir tehdit oluşturduğunun altını çizmiştir.

Venezuela politikasında, ekonomisinde ve toplumunda Chávez döneminde meydana gelen bu radikal değişiklikler, ABD ile Venezuela arasındaki dış ilişkilerde de bir

kırılma noktası yaratmıştır. Güney Amerika'da eski bir ABD müttefiki olan Venezuela artık bir düşman haline gelmiştir. O zamandan beri, her iki taraf da ideoloji, siyaset, çıkarlar, güvenlik ve ekonomi de dahil olmak üzere birçok farklı konuda karşıt taraflarda yer almaktadır. Ayrıca taraflar, yıllar içinde, birbirlerine karşı yoğun bir düşmanlık inşa etmişlerdir. Bazen bu düşmanlık, bu ülkelerin liderleri arasında kişisel bir boyut da kazanmıştır. İki ülkenin de liderleri birbirlerine hakaret edecek kadar ileri de gitmişlerdir. ABD, Chávez yönetimini ,Venezuela demokrasisini otoriterliğe doğru yönlendirmekle ve Venezuela halkını açlığa, göçe ve şiddete sürüklemekle suçlamaktadır. Buna karşılık, Venezuela hükümeti, ABD'yi darbe yapmakla ve Venezuela'nın zengin petrol rezervlerini kontrol etmeye yönelik tekrarlayan girişimlerle suçlamaktadır.

İlginçtir ki, uzun vadeli gergin dış ilişkilere rağmen, 2019'a kadar ABD ve Venezuela arasında sağlam ticaret ilişkiler devam etmiştir. Chávez yönetimi sırasında Venezuela, ABD'nin en büyük petrol tedarikçisiyken ABD, Venezuela'nın en büyük ticaret ortağıdır. Bu gerçek, kriz dönemlerinde bile değişmemiştir. Örneğin, 2002'de Venezuela muhalefetinin, Başkan Chávez'e karşı başarısız bir darbe girişimi olmuştur. Chávez yönetimi, ABD'yi muhalefeti finanse etmekle açıkça suçlamıştır. ABD'nin Venezuela muhalefetini NED ve USAID aracılığıyla maddi olarak desteklediği, çeşitli eğitimler verdiği bu iki kurumun da açıkça kabul ettiği bir gerçektir. Ancak ABD, bu kurumların Venezuela muhalefetinin darbe girişimine yardım ettiği iddiasını reddetmektedir. Aynı yıl ABD, Venezuela'nın toplam ithalatında payı %30,7 ve toplam ihracatındaki payı ise %56'dır. Bu dönemde de ABD, Venezuela'nın en büyük ticaret ortağı olarak kalmaya devam etmiştir. Aynı durum 2005 yılında Başkan Chávez'in 21. Yüzyıl Sosyalizmi modelini tanıttığı dönemde ve Nicolás Maduro'nun 2014'te minimal bir oy farkıyla Venezuela cumhurbaşkanı olduğu zaman da yaşanmıştır. ABD, milyarlarca dolarlık ticaret hacmi ile hala Venezuela'nın en büyük ticaret ortağı kalmaya devam etmiştir. 2018 yılında dahi, Venezuela'nın toplam ithalatının %52'si ABD'den gelmiştir, bu oran 2000 yılından bu yana en yüksek orandır. İlk kez 2019 yılında ABD'nin uyguladığı petrol yaptırımları ve ambargo sonrasında iki ülkenin ekonomik ilişkileri sekteye uğramıştır.



Bu çalışma, ABD'nin Venezuela'ya yönelik dış politikası üzerine Postyapısalcı bir yorum getirerek ilgili literatüre katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu yorum, Amerikan Kimliğinin çeşitli Venezuelalı Ötekiler üzerinden tehlike söylemleri ve söylem analizi yoluyla inşasını içermektedir. Ancak, tüm Amerikan ulusal söylemsel alanı, resmî belgelerin tamamının incelenmesi ve tüm konuşmaların dinlenmesi imkânsızdır. Araştırma yapmak; konuları, aktörleri, olayları ve zaman çerçevelerini seçmekle ilgilidir. Bu seçimler her zaman farklı yorumlara imkân tanır. Bu çalışma ise Venezuela'da solcu popülist hükümetlerin iktidara gelmelerinden sonra ABD'nin Venezuela'ya yönelik dış politikası üzerine kendi Postyapısalcı yorumunu sunacaktır. Buradaki ana amaç, ABD'nin dış politikada tehditleri (Venezuela özelinde) nasıl algıladığını, temsil ettiğini anlamak ve böylece Amerikan kimliğinin sınırlarını ötekileştirmeye bağlı olarak nasıl çizdiğini anlamaktır.

Farklılık ve ötekilik Amerikan kimliğinin inşasının özüdür. Farklılık ve ötekilik aynı zamanda ABD dış politikasının temeli olarak inşa edilen uluslararası etkileşim (international engagement) ve izolasyonizm (isolationism) dikotomisini tetikler. Ancak, ABD dış politikası ve Amerikan kimliği üzerine yapılan tartışmaları bu dikotomi içinde sınırlamak, aynı anda ve bilinçli olarak Amerikan kimliğinin üretiminde ve korunmasında önemli bir rol oynayan ABD dış politikasının Amerikan kimliğinin oluşumu üzerindeki rolünü bulanıklaştırır. Çünkü kimlik sadece, düzenlenmiş bir tekrar süreci aracılığıyla inşa edilebilir, dış politika pratikleri bu süreçte önemli bir rol oynar. Bu nedenle bu tez, ABD-Venezuela ilişkilerine ABD'nin etkileşim/izolasyon dikotomisi üzerinden yaklaşmak yerine, Amerikan kimliğinin çeşitli Venezuelalı Ötekilere yönelik performansını odak noktasına alarak, resmi ABD dış politika söylemlerini inceleyerek Amerikan ve Venezuelalı kimliklerinin inşalarını, söylemsel yapıyı ve tüm bunların Venezuela'ya yönelik belirli dış politika eylemlerinin meşrulaştırılmasındaki rolünü incelemektedir. Çünkü bu dış politika söylemleri belirli dış politika eylemlerini meşrulaştırma işlevini gerçekleştirir, ancak daha da önemlisi (bu nokta geleneksel analizlerin göz ardı ettiği noktadır), bu söylemler aynı anda belirli dış politika eylemlerini de düşünülemez kılar.

Örneğin, ABD söylemsel olarak uluslararası ilişkilerde üstün bir özne olarak konumlanıp, dünya genelinde sivil özgürlüklerin ve demokrasinin koruyucusu olarak

kendini inşa etmektedir. Söylemsel olarak inşa edilen bu konum, ABD'yi hak ve özgürlüklerin koruyucusu olarak inşa etmekte ve bunların korunmasını sağlamak için ABD'ye özel bir sorumluluk (özellikle Latin Amerika'ya karşı) yüklemektedir. Bu özne konumlanması otomatik olarak askeri müdahaleler (örneğin, 1983'teki Grenada müdahalesi) veya ABD'nin otoriter olarak etiklediği rejimlere karşı muhalefet partilerini destekleme gibi dolaylı politikalar gibi belirli dış politika eylemlerini gündeme getirmektedir. Başkan Reagan, 1983'te ABD Başkanı olarak Grenada'ya karşı güçlü ve kararlı bir şekilde hareket etmekten başka bir seçeneği olmadığını çünkü Amerikalıların hayatlarının ve ABD ulusal güvenliğinin tehdit altında olduğunu iddia etmiştir. Grenada'ya yapılan askeri harekattan hemen sonra ise Başkan Reagan, ABD'nin, insanlığın siyasi, dini ve ekonomik özgürlüğünü teşvik etmeye adanmış bir ülke olduğunu belirtmiş ve Grenada'ya yapılan hareketin bunu bir kez daha dünyaya gösterdiğinin altını çizmiştir. Bu tarihi örnek, arasındaki derin ve karmaşık ilişkiyi açıkça ortaya koymaktadır. Dış politika ile kimlik birbirlerinin inşası için birbirlerine bağlıdırlar. Amerikan kimliği, ABD dış politikasının dünya genelinde özgürlük, demokrasi ve serbest piyasa ekonomisi gibi değerleri koruma amacına yönelik olarak hareket ettiği belirli değerleri içerir. Bu dış politika eylemleri, karşılığında Amerikan kimliğinin bağımlı olduğu tekrar sürecini sağlar. Sonuçta, bu değerler aynı zamanda gelecekte benzer dış politika eylemlerini de meşrulaştırmak amacıyla kullanılır. Tıpkı ABD'nin 1983'te yaptığı hareketin 2019 Venezuela'sında da uygulanmasının istenmesi gibi. ABD'nin Grenada'ya askeri çıkarmasını etkileşim/izolasyon ikilemi açısından ele almak, tüm bu girift ilişkilerin, Amerikan kimliğinin ötekilere bağlı inşası ile ABD dış politikası arasındaki bu karmaşık ilişkinin göz ardı edilmesine yol açmaktadır.

ABD dış politikası üzerine yazılan literatür çoğunlukla, ABD'nin etkileşim stratejileri ve izolasyon politikalarına odaklanmaktadır. Ancak, ABD dış politikasına yönelik Postyapısalcı analizler literatürün eksik kaldığı noktalardır. Postyapısalcılık ilk olarak, uluslararası ilişkiler disiplinine, daha önceden ihmal edilen bazı kavramları (kimlik politikaları, ötekileştirme ve tarihsel bağlam gibi) dahil etmiştir. Aynı zamanda bu ihmal edilmiş konuları post-pozitivist metodolojiler aracılığıyla incelemiştir. Bu çalışmanın da benzer bir amacı vardır. Literatürde, Avrupa Birliği ülkelerinin dış politikalarının Postyapısalcı analizleri (özellikle AB'nin kimlik

politikaları ve AB'nin Türkiye ve Rusya ile ilgili tartışmaları içeren ötekileştirme pratikleri) yoğun bir şekilde mevcuttur. İlginç bir şekilde, aynı sonuca ABD dış politikası özelinde ulaşamamaktadır. 1990'lı yıllarda ve 2000'li yılların başlarında ABD dış politikasını Postyapısalcı çerçeveden yorumlayan temel ve önemli çalışmalar yapılmış olsa da aynı sonuca günümüzde ulaşamamaktadır. Mevcut literatürde bu konuda boşluklar bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışma ise, kimlik politikalarına, ötekileştirmeye, söylem pratiklerine ve dış politikaya Postyapısalcı bir yaklaşım ile odaklanarak literatürdeki bu boşluğa katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çerçevede, bu çalışma 2001-2019 yılları arasında, Amerikan Öznenin, çeşitli Venezuelalı Ötekilere karşı tehlike odaklı dış politika söylemleri aracılığıyla nasıl inşa edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu tez, özellikle Hugo Chávez'in 1998'de Venezuela Devlet Başkanı olarak seçilmesinden sonra ve Nicolás Maduro'nun 2013'te aynı göreve gelmesinden sonra, Postyapısalcı bir bakış açısıyla ABD'nin Venezuela'ya yönelik dış politikasını eleştirel bir şekilde yorumlamaktadır. Bu tezin merkezi argümanı, devam eden ABD-Venezuela krizinin sadece içsel faktörlerin bir sonucu (örneğin, Venezuela'da artan otoriterlik) olmadığı, aynı zamanda Amerikan kimliğinin dış politika söylemleri aracılığıyla sürekli olarak yeniden üretilmesi için bir zorunlu koşul olduğudur. Esasen, odaklanılan nokta, Trump yönetiminin Maduro'yu yasaklama veya petrol sektörüne yaptırım uygulama gibi eylemlerini neden gerçekleştirdiği değil, bu spesifik dış politika eylemlerinin 1998'den bu yana ABD'nin dış politika söylemleri içinde nasıl mümkün seçenekler olarak ortaya çıktığını anlamaya yöneliktir. Çalışma, aynı zamanda, Amerikan kimliğinin, ABD dış politika söylemlerinin, ABD'nin tehlike algılarının, Chávez ve Maduro yönetimlerini tehlikeli ötekiler olarak inşa etmesiyle karşılıklı ilişkisini sorunsallaştırmaktadır. Çalışmanın bir diğer temel noktası, ötekinin inşasını tartışırken, sadece tehlikeli öteki inşasına odaklanmak yerine dost ötekilerin de inşasına odaklanmasıdır. Salt tehlikeli ötekinin inşasına, yani Chávez ve Maduro yönetimlerinin ABD tarafından inşa edilmesine odaklanmak yerine, bu tez, ABD'nin Venezuela yönetimlerini tehlikeli ötekiler olarak inşa edişine ek olarak aynı anda Venezuela halkı ile Juan Guaidó'yu dost ötekiler olarak inşa edişine de odaklanmakta böylece daha zengin bir yorumlama sağlamaktadır.

Bu doktora tezi, erken aşamalarında, yıllarca süren tartışmalı ilişkilere rağmen neden sadece Trump yönetimi tarafından Venezuela petrolüne yaptırım uygulandığı sorgulamalarından doğmuştur. Kapsamlı araştırma sonrasında ise neden sorusunun yetersiz kalacağı sonucuna varılmış ve çok daha kapsamlı araştırma soruları yazar tarafından hazırlanmıştır: ABD'nin tehlike söylemleri, Amerikan kimliğinin inşası ve Venezuelalı Ötekilerin inşaları arasındaki ilişki hangi dış politika eylemlerini mümkün kılmaktadır? Söz konusu tehlike söylemleri aracılığıyla hangi tür gerçeklik inşa edilmektedir? Bu inşada hangi tür dış politika eylemleri mümkün hale gelmiş (Venezuela'yı ulusal güvenlik tehdidi ilan etme veya Venezuela petrolüne yaptırım uygulama gibi), ve hatta daha da önemlisi, hangi tür dış politika eylemleri düşünülemez hale gelmiştir? ABD, dış politika söylemleri aracılığıyla kendi kimliğini (özellikle Batı Yarım Küre'de) nasıl üstün bir siyasi kimlik olarak inşa etmiştir? Bu inşanın, ABD'nin belirli siyasi öznelerin (Başkan Maduro) uluslararası toplumdaki dışlanmasına karar verecek kadar güçlü bir konuma gelmesindeki rolü nedir? Ayrıca, Venezuela halkını demokratik öz yönetim konusunda yetersiz ve yardıma muhtaç Venezuelalı dost öteki olarak inşa etmenin, ABD'nin kendini üstün bir siyasi kimlik olarak inşa etmesine katkısı ne olmuştur? Tüm bu araştırma soruları, nedensel olmayan yorumları mümkün kılmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın teorik ve metodolojik çerçevesi, araştırma sorularının Postyapısalcılık ile derinlemesine bağlantılı olması nedeniyle Postyapısalcı uluslararası ilişkiler teorisi ve söylem analizi etrafında inşa edilmiştir. Temel mesele, ABD politika yapıcılarının karar verme süreçlerini analiz etmek değil, ABD'nin Chávez yönetiminin ilk günlerinden bu yana Venezuela'ya yönelik dış politika söylemlerinin belirli bir gerçeği inşa ettiği biçimi ve bu inşanın neleri mümkün kıldığıdır. Postyapısalcılık, dış politika ve söylem pratiğinin doğası gereği birbirine bağımlı olduğunu savunur. Kimlik ve dış politika arasındaki karmaşık bağlantı, Postyapısalcı araştırma gündeminde merkezi bir konumda bulunur. Bu durum, kimliklerin varlığının dış politika eylemlerine bağlı olduğunu ve kimliklerin bu söylem pratikleri aracılığıyla eş zamanlı olarak inşa edildiğini ve yeniden inşa edildiğini göstermektedir.

Bu tez, genellikle akademide ihmal edilen bir bakış açısı olan Postyapısalcı bir yaklaşım benimseyerek ABD dış politikası üzerine literatürdeki boşluğa da katkıda bulunmaktadır. ABD'nin dış politika söylemlerini analiz eden çalışma, bu anlatıların

Amerikan kimliğini, ABD iç politikasını ve uluslararası ilişkileri şekillendirmedeki bütünsel rolünü vurgulamaktadır. ABD dış politikası literatüründe genellikle ABD'nin etkileşim stratejileri ve izolasyon politikalarının incelenmesine odaklanılmaktadır. Ancak, ABD dış politikasının Postyapısalcı bir analizi söz konusu olduğunda literatürde belirgin bir boşluk bulunmaktadır. Ancak, çalışmanın amacı sadece literatür eksikliği değildir. Geçtiğimiz yıllar boyunca, Chávez sonrası ABD-Venezuela ilişkileri birçok açıdan incelenmiş olsa da ikili ülke ilişkilerine petrolden öte bir yorum getiren çalışma sayısı yok denecek kadar azdır. ABD-Venezuela ilişkilerine Postyapısalcı bir yorum getiren bu çalışma, ilişkileri sadece neden-sonuç üzerinden yorumlamaya çalışmanın ötesine geçerek tarihsel ve eleştirel bir perspektiften ele almaktadır.

Tüm bu amaçlara ulaşabilmek adına çalışma Lene Hansen'in Postyapısalcı söylem analizi metodunu kullanmaktadır. Bu yöntem, aynı zamanda tek tehlikeli öteki inşası yerine, çeşitli ötekilerin de benliğin inşasında önemli olduğunu kabul eden bir metottur. Bu sebeple, Amerikan benliğiyle çeşitli Venezuelalı ötekilerin nasıl inşa edildiğine dair yorumlamaları mümkün kılmaktadır. Bu yorumlamalar için Hansen öncelikle hegemonik ve temel söylemlerin geniş bir söylemsel okumayla belirlenmesi gerektiğini belirtmiştir. Bunlar belirlendikten sonra ise yapılması gereken bu söylemlerin muhalif söylemlerle sürekli devam eden mücadelelerinin dönüm noktasına geldiği anahtar olayları belirlemektir. Temel ve hegemonik söylemlerin bu anahtar olaylar etrafında nasıl şekillendiği, bu süreçte Amerikan benliğinin ve Venezuelalı ötekilerin ne şekilde inşa edildiğinin tartışıldığı bölümler ise tezin analiz bölümlerini (dört, beş ve altıncı bölümler) oluşturmaktadır. Buraya kadar anlatılan kısımlar çalışmanın ilk üç bölümünü yani giriş, teorik ve metodolojik çerçeveleri özetlemiştir. Bundan sonraki kısımlar ise çalışmanın analiz bölümlerini özetleyecektir.

Çalışmanın dördüncü bölümü, tezin ilk anahtar olayına yani Şubat 2008 ve Mayıs 2008 tarihleri arasında Kolombiya Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması'nın ABD Kongresindeki onay sürecinin Başkan Bush tarafından hızlandırılmaya çalışılmasına odaklanmaktadır. Chávez ve Bush yönetimleri birçok farklı krizde karşı karşıya gelmişlerdir (Chávez'e karşı 2002 darbe teşebbüsü, 2004 Venezuela referandumu,

2008'de Bolivya konusundaki diplomatik kriz dahil), ancak Kolombiya Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması süreci, Bush yönetiminin dış politika söylemlerinin ilk kez Chávez rejimini ABD için tehlikeli bir "Öteki" olarak inşa ettiği bir süreç olduğundan anahtar olay olarak seçilmiştir. Kolombiya Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması sürecini değerlendirmek için, öncelikle Bush döneminin hegemonik "Terörle Savaş" söylemi analiz edilmektedir. Bu hegemonik söylem özellikle "bize karşı onlar" anlatısı aracılığıyla Amerikan kimliği üzerinde büyük bir dönüşüme neden olmuştur. Ardından Bush yönetiminin Latin Amerika'ya yönelik iki temel söylemi, Batı Yarım Küre ve Serbest Ticaret Anlaşmaları söylemleri olarak belirlenmiştir. Bush döneminde ABD'nin Latin Amerika genelindeki asıl odak noktası, demokrasi ve serbest piyasa ekonomisinin teşviki olmuş, serbest ticaret anlaşmalarına bu dönemde büyük önem verilmiştir. Batı Yarım Küre söyleminin merkezinde, bölgenin devletleri arasında paylaşılan özel bir bağın olduğu yer almakta, özellikle Avrupa'dan ayrı tutularak bölgenin dünya genelinden ayrıldığı özellikler vurgulanmaktadır. Bu düşünce, Thomas Jefferson'a kadar dayanmaktadır. Başkan Jefferson, Batı Yarım Küre'nin Avrupa'dan farklılığını vurgulayarak coğrafi mesafeye dayalı siyasi ayrımı teşvik etmiştir. Bu coğrafi özgünlük, Batı Yarım Küre kimliğinin mekânsal boyutunu inşa etmiştir. Başkan Jefferson ve daha sonra Başkan Monroe, Batı Yarım Küre'nin özünün özgürlük, demokrasi ve serbest piyasa ekonomisi olduğunu savunmuşlardır, böylelikle de Eski Dünyada kalan Avrupa despotizmine karşı Batı Yarım Küreyi Yeni Dünya olarak adlandırmışlardır. 1823 Monroe Doktrini ise ABD'nin Batı Yarım Küre üzerinde daha fazla Avrupa kolonizasyonuna ve müdahalesine karşı çıkarak Yeni Dünyanın bu rolünü daha da pekiştirmiştir. Başkan Theodore Roosevelt, Monroe Doktrinini genişleterek ABD'yi Batı Yarım Küre'nin uluslararası polisi olarak konumlandırmış ve istikrar, düzen ve refahı sağlamakla sorumlu kılmıştır. Bu, ABD'yi demokratik değerleri ve serbest ekonomileri güçlendirmek için bir baba figürü olarak konumlandıran, diğer ülkeler için rehberlik yapma ve kararlar alma sorumluluğuna sahip hiyerarşik bir ilişkiyi de aynı zamanda inşa etmiştir

Özünde, Bush yönetiminin Latin Amerika'ya yönelik politikası, ABD'yi demokratik değerler ve ekonomik büyüme konusunda rehberlik edici bir güç olarak inşa eden bu babacan yaklaşıma dayanmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım, ABD'nin bölgedeki rolünü hiyerarşik bir bakış açısı içinde görmeyi de içerir, burada ABD bir baba figürü

olarak, Batı Yarım Küre'nin 'ailesine' rehberlik etme ve yardım etme sorumluluğunu üstlenir, ancak sadece kendi iyilikleri için. Bu inşa içerisinde baba dışındaki aile figürleri de kazançlı olacaktır.

Serbest ticaret anlaşması söylemi, Bush yönetiminin temel söylemlerinden biri olarak öne çıkmaktadır. 11 Eylül sonrasında, Terörle Savaş söylemi içerisinde serbest ticaret, terörizmin tedavisi olarak temsil edilmiştir. Amerikalılar Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması'nı (FTAA) yürürlüğe koymak, Bush yönetiminin ana hedefidir ve aynı dönem FTAA'yı onaylatmamak da Chávez yönetiminin temel hedefidir. Chávez'in popülist-solcu söylemleri, Latin Amerika'da ABD hegemonyasına doğrudan meydan okurken, kıtada Pembe Dalga'nın (Pink Tide) ve sol iktidarların yükselişi Chávez yönetiminin elini kuvvetlendirmiştir. FTAA süreci tamamlanamadan sona erdiğinde, ikili serbest ticaret anlaşmaları Bush yönetimi için hayati hale gelmiştir. 2008'de ABD Kongresi, Kolombiya Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması'nın onayında çıkmaza girdiğinde, Başkan Bush, daha önce keskin bir biçimde adını bile anmadığı Chávez yönetimini doğrudan hedef almaya başlamıştır. Şubat'tan Mayıs 2008'e kadar Venezuela, Bush yönetimi tarafından ABD'nin ulusal güvenliğine ve kıtadaki çıkarlarına, aynı zamanda ABD'nin önemli müttefiki Kolombiya'ya bir tehlike olarak inşa edilmiştir. Bu süreçte, ABD dış politika söylemleri tarafından Chávez rejimi kıtasal benlikten ayrılmış ve hem kıtasal benliğe hem de Amerikan benliğine bir tehdit olarak temsil edilmiştir. Bush yönetimi, Kolombiya Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması'nı ABD ulusal güvenlik söylemleri çerçevesinde konumlandırarak bir ticaret tasarısını siyasetin ötesine, daha yüksek ahlaki bir zemine yükseltmeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu strateji, Kongre'nin Kolombiya Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması'nı onayını siyasetin alanından çıkarmayı, aynı zamanda Chávez rejimini bir tehdit olarak konumlandırmayı da amaçlamaktaydı. Kolombiya Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması'nın onayını, Başkan Bush'un görev süresinin sona ermeden önce hızlandırma çabaları Kongre'deki Demokratlar tarafından dirençle karşılanmıştır. Bununla birlikte, bu dönemde kullanılan ABD dış politika söylemleri önemli sonuçlar da doğurmuştur. Bush yönetimi tarafından Kolombiya Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması'nın onayını kolaylaştırmak amacıyla Chávez yönetiminin tehdit olarak inşası Kolombiya Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması'nın onayını sağlayamasa da Bush ve

Chávez yönetimleri arasında (sonraki yönetimler de dahil olmak üzere) uzlaşma olasılığını ortadan kaldırmıştır.

Beşinci Bölüm, tezin ikinci anahtar olayına odaklanmaktadır; bu olay 13692 numaralı Başkanlık Kararnamesi ile Venezuela'nın ABD için bir ulusal güvenlik tehdidi olarak inşa ve ilan edilmesidir. Bu anahtar olay Obama dönemine denk gelmektedir. Obama döneminin hegemonik söylemi değişim olarak belirlenmiştir. Başkan Obama dönemi politikaları, Bush döneminin hegemonik Terörle Savaş söylemini değiştirmeye, Amerikan liderliğini dünya çapında yeniden inşa etmeye, ABD değerlerini teşvik etmeye ve dünyaya bu değerlerle örnek olmaya dayanmaktadır. Analiz, agresif dış politika ile karakterize edilen Bush döneminden, diplomasiye bağlılık, yapıcı etkileşim ve eşit ortaklıkların vurgulandığı bir Obama döneminin temsil edilmeye çalışıldığını ortaya koymuştur. Bu değişiklik sadece bir strateji değişikliği değil, aynı zamanda demokrasi, özgürlük ve eşitlik gibi temel Amerikan değerleriyle iç içe geçen bir ideolojik dönüşümü de temsil etmektedir. Obama yönetimi boyunca ABD'nin Latin Amerika'ya yönelik iki temel söylemi eşit ortaklık söylemi ve yapıcı etkileşim söylemleriydi. Bu iki söylem, ABD ve Latin Amerika arasındaki hiyerarşik ilişkiyi yıkmayı amaçlarken bölgenin yoksulluk ve eşitsizlik gibi temel sorunlarını çözmeye odaklanmıştır. Bu temel söylemlerle paralel olarak Obama döneminde, ABD Uluslararası Kalkınma Ajansı (USAID) bütçesinde büyük bir artış yaşanmış ve USAID bütçesi ilk kez Soğuk Savaş seviyelerini yeniden yakalamıştır. Bu artış, Obama yönetiminin ABD'nin dünya çapındaki imajını düzeltme çabalarının bir yansıması olarak yorumlanmaktadır. Bu çabalar, ABD'nin geçmişteki hatalarını resmi olarak özür dileme sorumluluğuna girmeden kabul etmesi ile de doğru orantılıdır. Obama yönetiminin Latin Amerika'ya yönelik politikası, Roosevelt'in "Dört Özgürlük" temelinde inşa edilmiştir ve dahası Monroe Doktrininin reddine dayanmaktadır. Bu durum, geleneksel ABD dış politikasından önemli bir sapmayı temsil etmektedir. Bu yaklaşım, eşitlik ve karşılıklı yarar hedeflediğini dile getirirken, Amerika'nın Batı Yarım Küre'de bir lider olarak rolünü yeniden inşa etme çabalarıyla birlikte yürütülmeye çalışıldığından içsel tutarsızlıklar da sergilemiştir.

13692 numaralı Başkanlık Kararnamesi'nin 2015 yılındaki ilanı aslında ABD hükümetinin yürütme ve yasama kolları arasındaki bir mücadelenin sonucudur.



Kongre'deki Cumhuriyetçiler, Obama yönetiminin Batı Yarım Küre'ye yönelik dış politika gündemine şiddetle karşı çıkmışlardır. Obama yönetiminin iki temel söyleminin içsel tutarsızlıkları, bu söylemleri muhalefet söylemlerinin saldırılarına karşı savunmasız kılmıştır. Kongre'deki Cumhuriyetçiler, Başkan Obama'nın Küba ve İran gibi 'otoriter' rejimlere yönelik yumuşama politikalarına şiddetle karşı çıkmıştır. Başkan Obama, Küba ile diplomatik ilişkileri yeniden kurmaya karar verirken aynı anda Venezuela ile gerilimleri arttırmıştır. Obama yönetimi, Küba ile diplomatik ilişkileri sürdürebilme kararını verebilmek için Cumhuriyetçilerin Venezuelalı yetkililere yaptırım taleplerine boyun eğmeye karar vermiştir. Maduro rejimi ile Venezuela muhalefet bloğu MUD arasındaki arabuluculuk süreci devam ederken, MUD üyeleri özellikle ABD'nin bu sürece müdahil olmamasını istemesine rağmen Obama yönetiminin yaptırımlar ilan etmesi bölgeden büyük bir tepkilerin gelmesine sebep olmuştur. 13692 Sayılı Başkanlık Kararnamesi ile bireysel yaptırımların ilanı, Venezuela'nın yasal olarak ABD'nin ulusal güvenliğine ve dış politikasına karşı olağanüstü ve sıra dışı bir tehdit olarak inşa ve ilan edilmesini de gerektirmekteydi. Başkanlık Kararnamesi 13692'nin önemi, muhalif söylemlerin ne kadar önemli olduğunu ve bunların ABD'nin dış politikasının belirlendiği söylemsel alanı şekillendirmedeki etkinliğini kanıtlamasıdır. Dört yıl sonra, aynı kararname, Trump yönetimi tarafından Venezuela petrolüne yaptırım uygulamak için kullanılmıştır.

Tezin ikinci anahtar olayı, Bush ve Obama dönemlerinin dış politikalarını karşılaştırarak Amerikan kimliğinin inşası ile iki Venezuelalı ötekinin de ilişkisini ortaya koymaktadır: tehlikeli "Öteki" olarak Chávez ve Maduro rejimleri ve dost "Öteki" olarak görülen Venezuela halkı. Bu temsiliyette Venezuela halkı, kendi demokrasisini dönüştüremeyen ve yardıma muhtaç duyan bir toplum olarak inşa edilmiştir. Bu inşa etme biçimi doğal olarak ABD'nin Venezuela'nın iç işlerine karışabilmesinin meşruiyetini de sağlamıştır. Söylemsel olarak inşa edilen bu gerçeklik, tüm Latin Amerika politikalarını bölgenin yoksulluk ve eşitsizlik sorunlarına çözüm bulmak üzere inşa eden Obama yönetiminin, yoksulluk ve eşitsizlik sorunlarını büyük oranda iyileştiren tek yönetimi olan Chávez yönetimini ve Venezuela'yı ulusal güvenlik tehdidi olarak inşa etmesine yol açmıştır. Bu gerçeklik, ABD'nin Venezuela'ya bu sorunları nasıl çözdüğünü danışmak ve olası

çözümleri bölgesel ölçekte uygulamaya çalışmasına yardımcı olmak yerine Venezuela'nın iç işlerine müdahil olmasına meşruiyet sağlama görevini yerine getirmiştir.

Tezin üçüncü ve son anahtar olayı, ABD'nin Nicolás Maduro'yu iktidardan düşürme çabası ve uluslararası sahada yeni bir Venezuelalı "Öteki" inşa etme çabasını yani Juan Guaidó'yu yeni bir siyasi özne olarak inşa etme çabasını konu almaktadır. Trump dönemi, "Önce Amerika" olarak belirginleşen hegemonik bir söylemle karakterize olmuştur. Trump yönetiminin Batı Yarım Küre'ye yönelik dış politikası, Bush ve Obama yönetimlerinin yaklaşımlarından önemli ölçüde sapma göstermiştir. Bu değişim, ABD'nin Latin Amerika ülkeleri ile etkileşiminin azalmasına yol açmıştır. Trump'ın politikasının en dikkat çekici yönlerinden biri, önceki yönetimlerin politikalarına eleştirel bir duruş sergilemesidir, özellikle de Başkan Obama'nın Küba ile diplomatik ilişkileri yeniden tesis etmesine ve John Kerry'nin Monroe Doktrininin sonucuyla ilgili açıklamalarına yönelik eleştiriler bunlara örnek gösterilebilir. Bu eleştiri, NAFTA ve ABD'nin güneyinden gelen göç gibi diğer politikalara da uzanmış ve Başkan Trump'ın tüm bu konuları ulusal güvenlik söylemleri içerisinde çerçeveselendirmesine olanak tanımıştır. Trump yönetiminin Batı Yarım Küre'deki temel dış politika gündemi, genel anlamda Soğuk Savaş sonrası ve Obama dönemi politikalarının olumsuz sonuçlarını tersine çevirmek olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu tersine çevirme, NAFTA gibi ticaret anlaşmalarına yeniden müzakere etmeyi ve Çin'in Latin Amerika'da artan yatırımlarına karşı çıkılmasını da içermektedir. Trump'ın Batı Yarım Küre'ye yönelik dış politikası, ABD'ye artan kayıt dışı göçü engellemek, haksız ticaret anlaşmalarını sonlandırmak veya yeniden müzakere etmek ve Rusya ile Çin'in bölgedeki etkisini karşılamaya odaklanan olumsuz bir gündem etrafında şekillenmiştir. Bu yaklaşım, Chávez ve Maduro rejimleriyle doğrudan çatışmadan kaçınmayı amaçlayan Bush ve Obama yönetimlerinin politikalarından oldukça farklı bir politikadır. Başkan Trump, başkanlığının ilk gününden son gününe Venezuela'daki sol-popülist yönetime karşı açıkça meydan okuyan tek ABD başkanı olmuştur. Bush ve Obama yönetimleri, Chávez ve Maduro rejimlerini hedef almayı tercih etmemiş, Latin Amerika'da pozitif bir gündem kurmayı amaçlamışlardır. Bu nedenle söz konusu iki başkanın bölgeye yönelik temel söylemleri, Venezuela'ya yönelik değil, Batı Yarım Küre'ye yönelik

olarak belirlenmiştir. Başkan Trump ise tam tersini yaparak başkanlığının başından itibaren Maduro'ya meydan okuyarak bu yönde politikalar benimsemiştir. Bu nedenle, Trump döneminin iki temel söylemi doğrudan Venezuela ile ilgilidir. Bu temel söylemler sosyalist kâbus söylemi ve zorbalık söylemidir.

Trump yönetimi, 'sosyalist' Maduro rejimini Amerikan benliği için varoluşsal bir tehdit olarak inşa edebilmek için 'Kırmızı Tehlike' söylemini yeniden araçsallaştırmıştır. Sosyalist kâbus söylemine göre eğer ABD vatandaşları Demokratlara oy verecek olursa Amerikan benliği sosyalist kâbus tarafından yok edilecek, ABD'nin sınırları ortadan kaldırılacak ve 'suçlu illegal göçmenler' Amerikalıların ön bahçelerini istila edecektir. Bu söylem stratejisi, ABD Senatosundaki koltukları kazanmak ve Florida'daki Cumhuriyetçi oyları artırmak için oldukça başarılı olmuştur. Trump döneminin diğer temel söylemi, Başkan Yardımcısı Pence ve Büyükelçi Bolton tarafından kullanılan zorbalık söylemidir. Sosyalist kâbus söylemi Maduro yönetimini tehlikeli öteki olarak inşa ederken, zorbalık söylemi Venezuela halkını zorba yönetim altında acı çeken, yardıma muhtaç dost öteki olarak inşa etmektedir.

Venezuela'nın başkanlık meşruiyet krizine ABD'nin yanıtı Juan Guaidó'nun resmen başkan olarak tanınması olmuştur. 23 Ocak 2019'da Ulusal Meclis Başkanı Juan Guaidó, Venezuela Anayasası'nın 233. Maddesini gerekçe göstererek kendisini devlet başkan ilan etmiştir. Ancak, Başkan Maduro, halihazırda devlet kurumlarını ve daha da önemlisi orduyu kontrolü altında bulundurmaktaydı. Trump yönetimi, Başkan Maduro yanlısı kurum yöneticilerine ve yüksek ordu mensuplarına bireysel yaptırımları arttırmıştır. Bu yaptırımlar Venezuelalı yetkililerinin ABD'deki varlıklarının dondurulması ve PDVSA tahvillerinin ticaretinin yasaklanmasını da içermektedir. Bu dönemde Trump yönetimi, farklı bir dost öteki inşası için yoğun diplomatik çaba göstermiştir: Juan Guaidó'nun Amerikan benliğine dost bir öteki olarak inşası. Trump yönetimi, resmi olarak Guaidó'nun başkanlığını ilk kez 23 Ocak 2019'da tanıdı. ABD, Venezuela devletine ait petrol şirketi PDVSA'ya ilk kez yaptırım uygulamaya başlamıştır. Bundan sonra, ABD, diğer ülkeleri de Guaidó'yu tanımaya, Maduro'yu kınamaya ve Venezuela halkını desteklemeye ikna etmek için yoğun diplomatik efor sarfetmiştir.

Genel olarak, bu çalışma, söz konusu Venezuela-ABD ilişkileri olduğunda salt petrole odaklanan geleneksel dış politika analizlerinin ötesine geçerek, kimlik politikaları ile dış politika söylemlerine odaklanmıştır. Bu türden bir analiz, ABD'nin dış politika söyleminin, Chávez ve Maduro yönetimlerini Amerikan benliği için varoluşsal tehdit olarak inşa etmesinin Amerikan kimliğini nasıl pekiştirdiğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu inşa aynı zamanda Amerikan kimliğinin sürekli yeniden üretiminin vazgeçilmez bir unsuru olarak da ortaya çıkmaktadır. Kendi benliğini ötekilerden ayırmak için kullanılan söylemsel pratikler, ABD'nin benliğini demokratik değerlerin ve sivil özgürlüklerin koruyucusu olarak inşa edebilmesine ve bu nedenle Venezuelalı ötekilere yönelik dış politika eylemlerini meşrulaştırabilmesine yol açmaktadır. Bu gerçeklik inşasında uygulanabilecek tek bir meşru dış politika eylemi vardır, o da tehlikeli ötekini yani Maduro rejimini devirmektir. Zira, bir başka özne inşasıyla Venezuela halkı da kendi başlarına Venezuela'da demokrasiyi kurmaktan aciz ve ABD yardımına muhtaç halde inşa edilmiştir. Böylelikle ABD'nin Guaidó yönetimini dost Venezuelalı öteki olarak meşrulaştırmasının da önü açılmaktadır.

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