

# **Geopolitical Role Construction Through Language**

**A Critical Discourse Analysis of EU and US  
Policy Statements towards Venezuela  
(2017-2019)**



***–Master’s Thesis–***

**Master in Diplomacy and International  
Organizations**

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I would like to thank my Professor Jordi Quero, for teaching me the power of the EU in the world; my mother, for teaching me the power of the US in Latin America; and my father, for teaching me the power of language.

### Abstract

How can language be used to construct roles through foreign policy statements? Authors have long used discourse analysis as a method to study foreign policy. This analysis takes a social constructivist approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA) to study the roles constructed by the EU and US through their policy statements towards Venezuela from 2017 to 2019. First, a literature review addresses the historical power dynamics and relations between the EU, US, and Venezuela using a triangular approach. Then, the recent relations the EU and US have had with Venezuela are laid out, particularly the policies enacted in response to the rise of Hugo Chavez and the regime of his successor, Nicolás Maduro. Twenty-one Council and twenty-three US Department of State statements released between 2017 to 2019 were chosen and analyzed using Norman Fairclough's three-leveled approach to CDA: description (textual analysis), interpretation (processing analysis), and explanation (social analysis) in two stages. In Stage I, the EU and US statements are analyzed independently on Fairclough's first two levels. Stage II consists of a comparative social analysis on the third level, and conclusions are drawn on the roles which the EU and US have constructed through language as they relate to each other and to Venezuela. Using the discourse analysis, I present four alternative theoretical models to illustrate new interpretations of the relationships between the three.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis, Foreign Policy Triangle, EU Foreign Policy, US Foreign Policy, Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, Nicolás Maduro

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#### List of Abbreviations

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DEA	US Drug Enforcement Agency
EEAS	European External Action Service
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EU	European Union
FAC	Foreign Affairs Council (of the European Union)
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
G7	Group of Seven
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission
ICG	International Contact Group
RCTV	Radio Caracas Televisión
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
VE	Venezuela

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## 1. Introduction

In June 2018, the G7 leaders met in Canada to reach agreements on the current most pressing global issues such as trade and climate change. Yet one final disagreement marked a world turning point, at least in the eyes of the leaders: one word, consisting of one letter: “A.” Indeed, the customary opening lines of the G7 communiqué expressing a commitment to “*the* rules-based international order” was rejected by Trump who, under the counsel of National Security Advisor John Bolton, insisted instead on the phrasing “*A* rules-based international order.”<sup>1</sup> The difference between the definite and indefinite articles sparked a clash between the heads of state. Until the last hours of the meeting, leaders surrounded Trump quarreling over the word choice. At the end of the day, no decision was reached and the article “a” was used in the opening lines of the communiqué and “the” in the same phrase in other parts of the text.

The struggle over word choice truly reflected the context of the G7 policy struggles. Trump had been actively expressing dissident views to the agenda of the G7 and protesting the status quo by attacking and distancing the US from other well-established international agreements and alliances. Directly prior to the G7 meeting, Trump even suggested that Russia be reinvited to the group. These deviations made it impossible for Trump’s advisors to feel comfortable signing the final agreement. Bolton argued it was a chance for the Europeans to “force through language that they can later use against the United States.”<sup>2</sup> As a result, the US advisors channeled their frustration into the language to be used rather than the content.

This event, and the one word, monumentally changed the world order, as leaders saw it. Martin Selmayr, Secretary-General of the European Commission, stated that the word change demonstrated that “The United States of America is no longer willing to be the pillar of the rules-based international system; the world is a different place.”<sup>3</sup> The event shows not only the importance of language in official policy stances in documents, it also shows how words—even one simple letter—actively construct our world. Once the word was produced, the world was changed.

Language used in official documents and statements communicating policy has long been a critical field in foreign policy. In politicians’ speeches and statements, words and discursive strategies are carefully constructed by professional writers to consider a variety of factors including the target audience, intention of the message to be delivered, consequences of accidental offense, and word avoidance, among others. The statements are meticulously edited to make sure that the language produced creates the ideal role that the speaker aims to construct, considering how it will interact with the audience, allies, and adversaries through such a role.

In the opening episode of the political drama series “Madam Secretary,” an exchange between the speechwriter (A), communications correspondent (B), and the Secretary of State (C) demonstrates a debate of word choice for an official statement:

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Storzaker and Tania Rakhmanova, *Trump Takes on the World* (Brook Lapping Productions, 2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJpQLRwM1Xs>.

<sup>2</sup> Storzaker and Rakhmanova, *Trump Takes on the World*, 36:10.

<sup>3</sup> Storzaker and Rakhmanova, *Trump Takes on the World*, 40:00.

- A: I'm still working on the adjectives. Right now you're happy and excited...you could be eager and optimistic.  
B: No, she can't be eager, that's too Jimmy Carter.  
C: Can I be cautiously optimistic?  
A: Well, that's for serious world events.  
B: You can be forward thinking.<sup>4</sup>

The exchange comically represents the art of political statement and speech writing. Neither the Secretary's policies nor stances have changed. Rather, the words used will construct her role within the world. Thus the words must be chosen considering how they will affect the way in which her role is perceived by other actors, and how it will shape such relationships.

Words not only express meaning, but also shape our world and construct who we are in it, thus they shape geopolitical roles. Without words, foreign policy would not exist. As we have seen, even one word, of one letter, can change the entire international order and the roles within. This thesis will study how words have constructed foreign policy and roles in the international system in the context of the European Union and the United States role construction in their relation to the changing political situation in Venezuela from 2017 to 2019. The study will show how words used by each actor actively construct the roles they are performing in the international system, impacting as well the relation between the two.

This technical study of language using critical discourse analysis will aim to understand the bigger picture of how the roles of the two actors are playing out in the context of the changing international system. While the current study focuses on the EU and US roles towards Venezuela, the aim is to contribute to a better understanding of how these actors, who have historically enjoyed a strong influence over the Latin American region, are confronting new challenges as many developing countries are now gaining power and influence in the international system. While some argue that the US maintains a hegemonic position, and the EU still holds the upper hand over former colonies through trade, aid, and development investment, others consider the first two decades of the 21st century to have been a shift in the international order towards a multipolar world order. Middle-income economies such as India and China are growing like never before and alliances such as BRICS and Mercosur are gaining influence globally. Studies of the balances of power in the international system are thus crucial in understanding how the historically powerful US and EU are still exercising their influence, or if the balance of power in the system is truly changing towards a new international order.

How have the roles of the US and EU changed throughout the past two decades confronting these new power balances in the Latin American region? Is the US finally turning a tide in how it interacts with non-democratic regimes in the hemisphere? Is the EU able to regain influence over these former colonies and if so to what extent? Have Latin American countries emancipated themselves enough to determine their own political regimes without interventions from these powers? These are a few questions this paper will address using a critical discourse analysis of language to understand the roles that these actors are constructing. Thus, the aim of the study is twofold: to demonstrate the importance of language in constructing geopolitical roles, and to consider these roles in understanding what they reveal about the changing international order in the 21st century. The technical analysis will be used to contribute reflections to the theoretical approaches to geopolitical roles and

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<sup>4</sup> "Pilot," *Madam Secretary* (CBS, September 21, 2014).



relations in the international system. This understanding of new power balances and role dynamics in the international system are crucial for moving forward into the new world of the 21st century for the purpose of creating alliances, cooperating multilaterally and reaching solutions to global challenges.

## 2. Analytical Framework and Methodology

### 2.1 Framing the Historical and Political Background

The technical analysis of this study aims to demonstrate how EU and US policies towards a constantly changing Venezuelan political regime are articulated in statements and what the language can reveal about the relations between the two actors and their roles within the international system. In order to approach these relations, a historical and political background will be presented to demonstrate the bigger picture of the power dynamics of these actors towards Latin America. A theoretical triangular approach will be used to conceptualize these relations. This background is essential as the critical discourse analysis will then be used to determine whether and how these roles have changed and propose reflections on the triangular approach from a broader theoretical perspective.

First, a brief historical overview will illustrate the geopolitical relations between the EU, US, and Latin America prior to the 21st century. Then, a literature review will detail the findings of the roles and influence which authors have observed of the EU and US in the international system using a triangular approximation adapted from the “Atlantic Triangle” which many have used in approaching dynamics of three countries or regions. This historical background and literature review will not be exhaustive, rather, the objective is to give the reader a sufficient understanding of the historical timeline and relations of the actors towards the region to then see how these roles play out in the current context of Venezuela.

A descriptive-analytical section will follow, using the historical context outlined as a foundation upon which policies from the US and EU were developed. This section will provide a more in-depth understanding of recent political events such as early responses to the rise of Hugo Chavez, his regime, and the regime of his successor, Nicolás Maduro. The respective responses of the US and EU governments will be described and analyzed, along with policies enacted. In sum, the historical overview and literature review will contextualize the history of relations and power dynamics of the EU and US towards Latin America while the descriptive-analytical presentation of the policies from 2000 to 2017 will contextualize the specific political framework in the context of Venezuela. Lastly, prior to the critical discourse analysis, a timeline will detail the exact events occurring from 2017 to 2019 in Venezuela at the moments of the statements produced. These background sections together will serve as a foundation to understand the full historical and political context in which the critical discourse analysis of EU and US statements takes place.

### 2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The heart of this study lies in a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of official policy statements on Venezuela from the EU and US between 2017 to 2019 using Norman Fairclough’s method, detailed as follows. Fairclough defines “discourse” as “the imbrication of speaking and writing in the exercise, reproduction and negotiation of power relations, and

in ideological processes and ideological struggle.”<sup>5</sup> His method establishes a three-tiered analytical approach corresponding to three levels of discourse (as demonstrated in figure 1): 1. text, 2. discourse practice and 3. sociocultural practice. The three levels correspond to three levels of analysis: 1. text analysis, 2. interpretation (processing analysis), and 3. explanation (social analysis). This model of critical discourse analysis will be used to interpret the texts of EU and US foreign policy statements from a close-up textual lens focusing specifically on lexicon and rhetoric used. In other words, the focus is not so concerned with the number of times a word is used (while relevant), rather, when a word is produced, what message it conveys in that moment (processing) and through that message what role is being constructed (social analysis). The many close-up textual observations will thus be strung together to paint a picture of the roles being constructed.

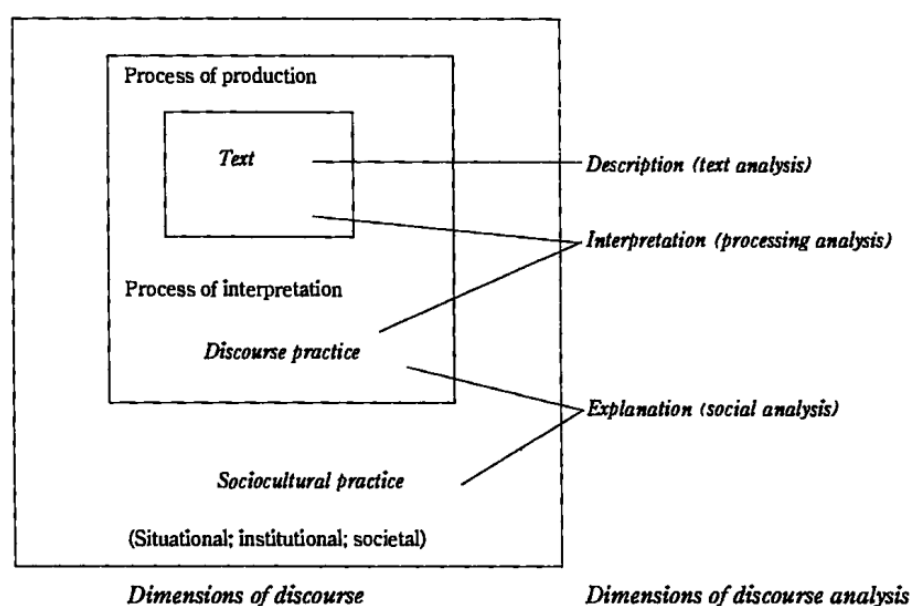


Figure 1. Fairclough's 3 Levelled Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis. "A Critical Approach to Discourse Analysis," in *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, by Norman Fairclough (London and New York: Longman Group Limited, 1995), 98.

In the first stage, two siloed analyses will be carried out following the first two levels of Fairclough's CDA: first, a textual and processing analysis of statements from the Council of the EU articulating stances and policy towards Venezuela and then a subsequent analysis of US Department of State statements of official foreign policy stances towards Venezuela. These two parallel analyses will use the same methodology yet study independently the way in which the EU and US respectively construct their role and relation to Venezuela through language.

Stage II of the analysis will use the Stage I textual and processing analyses and cross-examine the roles constructed in a social analysis as they relate to each other (Fairclough's third phase). A social constructivist approach will be used, as seen in previous

<sup>5</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London and New York: Longman Group Limited, 1995).

analyses<sup>6</sup> based on the notion that our world is created and shaped by knowledge contingent upon history, cultures, values and identity. Viewing discourse through a social constructivist lens allows the textual analysis to reach deeper interpretations on the identities and roles being actively constructed in the international system through language. As Larsen establishes in his proposition on EU discourse analysis through social constructivism: “Discourses make intelligible some ways of acting towards the world...discourse produces this world, including its policies.”<sup>7</sup> Hence, a social constructivist approach to critical discourse analysis will be used to study how the language produced in these statements is actively constructing relations of the EU and US and understand how these ever-changing relations are contingent upon values, identity, and history. Ultimately, foreign policy is never developed in a vacuum, rather, policies are constantly shaped taking into account other international actors. The findings of the analysis will study in a larger sense how the EU and US, in constructing roles in relation to Venezuela, are at the same time considering each others’ roles towards the region and how those roles contrast. Tables will be presented at the end of the CDA summarizing the main findings on each level of analysis for the four discursive dimensions later outlined. These findings will then be used to address the bigger picture of power dynamics and relations between the EU and the US within the international system, as they are shaped through language. The findings of the CDA will then be drawn on in presenting theoretical adaptations to the proposed EU/US/VE triangle.

### 2.3 Studying Foreign Policy through a “Single Voice”

In terms of defining the voice of foreign policy in this study, it must be noted that foreign policy will be analyzed as expressed from the Council and Department of State on behalf of the EU and US, respectively. In this context, the EU Council statements will be used as considered the organ from which the EU articulates the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the Union, and on the US side, executive statements from the Department of State will be considered the voice of the US foreign policy. This approach to foreign policy study follows Graham Allison’s “Rational Actor Model,” (model I in figure 2) in which States are the primary actors and make decisions based on national interests as one unit, or a “black box.” The State makes policy decisions dependent upon what it considers the other States will do, as assumed by a series of rational decision-making processes. In other words, one voice of foreign policy delivered by these organs is analyzed as the stance of each respective actor. In this case, the study is not limited to States being the sole actors, as the European Union will be considered an actor in parallel as well.

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<sup>6</sup> Henrik Larsen, “Discourse Analysis in the Study of European Foreign Policy,” in *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 62–80.

<sup>7</sup> Larsen, “Discourse Analysis,” 67.

**Summary Outline of Models and Concepts**

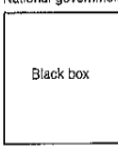
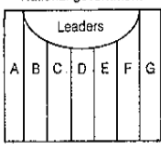
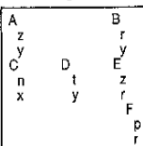
The Paradigm	Model I	Model II	Model III
	National government 	National government 	National government 
<b>Basic unit of analysis</b>	Governmental action as choice	Governmental action as organizational output	Governmental action as political resultant
<b>Organizing concepts</b>	National actor The problem Static selection Action as rational choice Goals and objectives Options Consequences Choice	Organizational actors (constellation of which is the government) Factored problems and fractionated power Parochial priorities and perceptions Action as organizational output Goals; constraints defining acceptable performance Sequential attention to goals Standard operating procedures Programs and repertoires Uncertainty avoidance (negotiated environment, standard scenario) Problem-directed search Organizational learning and change Central coordination and control Decisions of government leaders	Players in positions Parochial priorities and perceptions Goals and interests Stakes and stands Deadlines and faces of issues Power Action-channels Rules of the game Action as political resultant
<b>Dominant inference pattern</b>	Governmental action = choice with regard to objectives	Governmental action (in short run) = output largely determined by present SOPs and programs Governmental action (in longer run) = output importantly affected by organizational goals, SOPs, etc.	Governmental action = resultant of bargaining
<b>General propositions</b>	Substitution effect	Organizational implementation Organizational options Limited flexibility and incremental change Long-range planning Goals and tradeoffs Imperialism Options and organization Administrative feasibility Directed change	Political resultants Action and intention Problems and solutions Where you stand depends on where you sit Chiefs and Indians The 51-49 principle Inter- and intra-national relations Misperception, misexpectation, miscommunication, and reticence Styles of play

Figure 2. Allison's 3 Models of Decision-Making. Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971).

Indeed, there is extensive debate in literature regarding the consideration of the EU as a single actor. As the European Union itself is not a State, it transcends traditional approaches to foreign policy, such as Realism, which considers States the main actors. As a highly integrated political system, it is at the same time composed of States with diverging national interests and policy stances, and has an EU "single voice" to which (in theory) all Member States consent and adhere to policy. Indeed, the extent of EU international "actorness" has been widely examined, as Van Hamme and Richard highlight in their empirical literature review.<sup>8</sup> Many authors have begun to view the EU as an actor in the international system, such as Sjöstedt who defends its ability to "implement autonomous external action"<sup>9</sup> representing the Member States through one voice, while Jupille and Caporaso call it a "collective actor"<sup>10</sup> pointing to definitions of "actorness" such as the cohesion of policy internally, authority (legality of policies), autonomy, and recognition from other actors. Bretherton and Vogler include their definition of actor: opportunity, coherence and capability/legitimacy of the decision making process.<sup>11</sup> The EU meets all of these criteria, given its established External Action Service (EEAS) and Foreign Affairs Council (FAC)

<sup>8</sup> Gilles Van Hamme and Yann Richard, "The European Union as an Actor in International Relations," *L'Espace Géographique* 42, no. 1 (2013): 15–30.

<sup>9</sup> Gunnar Sjöstedt, *The External Role of the European Community* (Weastmead: Saxon House, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> James Caporaso and Joseph Jupille, "States, Agency, and Rules: The EU in Global Environmental Politics," in *The European Union in the Global Community*, by Carolyn Rhodes (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, "Conceptualizing Actors and Actorness," in *The European Union as a Global Actor*, ed. John Vogler and Charlotte Bretherton, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, n.d.), 12–36.

which serve to define one united voice of the Member States, the ability for these decisions to be autonomous from other actors, and the capability to enact legislation from such.<sup>12</sup> It is true that cohesion of policy has been challenged by differing Member States' foreign policy stances in the past two decades, as seen in Member States' divergences in military action alongside the US invasion of Iraq in 2003<sup>13</sup> as well as divisions in the FAC in 2013 whether to lift an arms embargo to Syria.<sup>14</sup> Despite these moments of divided unanimity on foreign policy stances, the present analysis will consider the EU as an international actor, in defense that it has the legitimacy, capacity and international recognition to develop autonomous stances reflecting foreign policy interests of the Union.

## 2.4 Limitations

Several limitations present in this study. First, due to the extent of the study, responses and foreign policy coming out of Venezuela will not be analyzed. The study's main focus is to analyze the power dynamics between the EU and the US in response to Venezuela. The directionality is North-South in Stage I combined with East-West in Stage II. Further studies may add to the findings of the present study, using the methodology employed to analyze executive statements from the Chavez and Maduro regimes, in a way completing the "foreign policy triangle" of the relations between the three regions.

A second limitation is that this analysis will use the Fairclough approach, designed for both oral and textual analysis, to study exclusively texts. Due to great linguistic distinction between written and oral speech, the two simply cannot be analyzed using the exact same methodology given the variety of linguistic components such as utterances, pauses, tone, among others which play a role in the construction of messages. Thus, due to the extension and methodology of this analysis, the oral remarks that have been released alongside the statements will not be studied. Further studies may address such spoken remarks and exchanges in this context to complement the findings of this study.

Third, from a purely technical standpoint, there is a considerable limitation to the number of statements analyzed. Due to the extent of this study, 21 statements were chosen from the Council and 23 from the Department of State (see Appendix A and B for the full list). This choice was partly due to the fact that there were around 21 statements from the EU released from the Council pertaining to Venezuela in the time frame,<sup>15</sup> while there were over 100 from the US<sup>16</sup> released from the Department of State. Thus, the method that was used was to select the US statements that corresponded to the moments in which the EU statements were released to facilitate the comparison of the two in their roles towards Venezuela at the same moments. The Council released its statements at critical turning points in relation to the crisis, such as moments of elections or action taken on behalf of the EU,

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<sup>12</sup> "The Evolution and Structure of CFSP," in *Perceptions and Politics: The Foreign Relations of the European Union with Latin America*, by Klaas Dykmann (Frankfurt: Vervuert Verlag, 2006), 13–38.

<sup>13</sup> Only The UK, Spain, Poland, Italy and the Netherlands invaded Iraq alongside US troops in 2003.

<sup>14</sup> James Kanter, "European Nations End Weapons Embargo, Creating Path to Arming Syrian Rebels," *The New York Times*, May 27, 2013, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/28/world/middleeast/syria.html>.

<sup>15</sup> "Timeline EU Response to the Crisis in Venezuela," European Council Council of the European Union, August 17, 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/venezuela/timeline-eu-response-to-the-crisis-in-venezuela/>.

<sup>16</sup> "Releases Pertaining to Venezuela," US Department of State, n.d., <https://2017-2021.state.gov/releases-pertaining-to-venezuela/page/48/index.html>.

including the implementation of restrictive measures. These specific moments will be outlined in the timeline (figure 6) prior to the critical discourse analysis to give the reader an understanding of the context and justification of why the statements were released. Above all, these moments serve to demonstrate the constant role construction in relation to Venezuela as they give the EU and US a reason to respond and to enact a role in their response. A future study could analyze all of the US statements and ponder further the effect of timing and volume of such statements released.

Fourth, extensive decision-making processes are carried out in order to reach a final endpoint of foreign policy stances. This analysis is limited in that it will not address these decision-making processes, rather, it will consider the final statements to be the foreign policy reflected as the “single voice” of each actor, as described within the framework of the aforementioned Allison’s Rational Actor Model. Further research could utilize a methodology such as Allison’s Organizational Process or Government Politics Models (see model II and III in figure 2)<sup>17</sup> to analyze how the decisions were made considering the complexity of foreign policy decision-making, and taking into consideration the many actors and processes within the EU and US systems influencing such policies.

Lastly, critical discourse analysis aims at presenting a method through which to interpret text and language, which is fluid and subjective. This study does not intend to reach definitive conclusions on the exact meaning behind the lexicon or rhetoric used nor the exact intentions of those actors delivering such language. On the contrary, the intention of this study is to provide one interpretation of the discourse which may open doors for further analysis of these relations and roles which are constantly living and changing through language.

### 3. Historical Overview of EU and US Relations Towards Latin America

#### 3.1 EU Historical Relations with Latin America

As the EU has emerged and evolved only in the past few decades, it is a relatively new actor on the scene. Nevertheless, its Member States have historically had significant influences on Latin America. Specifically, Spain and Portugal, began to establish colonies in the 15th and 16th centuries along the agreed-upon territory division according to the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the term “Latin America” refers to the Latin-derived European languages spoken in the region through processes of colonization.<sup>19</sup> These colonies gained independence throughout the 19th century through revolutionary nationalistic movements. In Venezuela, this included the revolutionary movement led by Simón Bolívar, who is portrayed to have valiantly emancipated the country from Spanish rule from 1813 to 1823.<sup>20</sup> Since the loss of their colonies throughout the 20th century, European powers lost influence in the region, partly due to post-war instability in Europe and a shift of power to the

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<sup>17</sup> See Allison’s Chart of three models: Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 256.

<sup>18</sup> “Treaty of Tordesillas,” UNESCO, accessed May 10, 2023, <https://es.unesco.org/memoryoftheworld/registry/613>.

<sup>19</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Latin America from the Colonial Era to the 20th Century,” accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Latin-America>.

<sup>20</sup> Gerhard Straussmann Masur, “Simón Bolívar: Venezuelan Soldier and Statesman,” Britannica, April 29, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Simon-Bolivar>.

United States in the hemisphere.<sup>21</sup> The literature review which follows will dive further into these power shifts and roles in relation to the region. For the purposes of the current study, the unique relationships Spain and Portugal have with their former colonies and its influence on EU decisions, while significant, will not be addressed since EU foreign policy will be studied and viewed as an actor with a single voice. The following section will outline the recent EU foreign policy towards the region as it has developed throughout the past few decades.

Currently, the EU has a permanent mission in 33 countries in Latin America and a physical presence in 26;<sup>22</sup> yet the region was not a primary region of interest of EU foreign policy throughout the latter part of the 20th century. Official relations and first CFSP action in the region developed in response to the turmoil in Central America in the 1980s. At the San José conference in 1984, a common foreign policy was created based on negotiation arguably in contrast to the US interventionist approach to fight cold war era communist spheres. Spain's accession to the EU added an interest in developing strategic relations to the region,<sup>23</sup> and in 1987, the creation of the Rio Group made strides to create dialogues of communication between the European Union and the region with the goal of peacefully resolving conflicts. However, it remained flawed as it excluded Central America, and was fragmented due to diverging interests of countries. Additionally, it had little structure and offered poor mechanisms for negotiations to take place.<sup>24</sup> Thus, EU relations with the region prior to the 21st century have often remained fragmented between countries and primarily focused on trade. In the 1990s a new trade agenda emerged in the form of several bilateral association agreements with Central America, the Andean Community, Mexico, Chile, and Mercosur. Many of these agreements included provisions on political dialogue, yet, in practice, materialized in trade. The Generalized Scheme of Preferences sought to establish special trade relationships with low-income countries and provide incentives for the EU agenda in the region, such as additional benefits through GSP+ for respecting labor and human rights, environmental and climate protection, and good governance.<sup>25</sup>

Through the 1990s, EU interest in Central America dwindled, arguably due to the lack of proximity, as the region was not considered a threat. Moreover, the EU was focused on de-escalation and stabilization of Eastern Europe as war and ethnic conflict erupted in former Yugoslavia. The lack of policy shows from a structural perspective. EU foreign policy is labeled as “the Common Foreign and Security Policy” (CFSP) and designed to create a European single voice with the initial objective of being able to act efficiently and respond quickly to crises in a unified effort. Established in 1993 by the Maastricht Treaty, the Council strategizes and holds legislative and executive power over CFSP; while the European Council has some guideline-setting functions. The Commission mainly implements decisions as well as the Parliament, which holds some influence in decision-making. All Member States must

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<sup>21</sup> Juan Carlos Puig, “The United States and Europe: Their Place in Latin American Politics,” in *Latin America, Western Europe and the US: Reevaluating the Atlantic Triangle* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), 239–57.

<sup>22</sup> Strategic Communications, “Latin America and the Caribbean,” European Union External Action, January 20, 2022, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/latin-america-and-caribbean\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/latin-america-and-caribbean_en).

<sup>23</sup> Roberto Dominguez, *EU Foreign Policy towards Latin America*, The European Union in International Affairs (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Klaas Dykmann, *Perceptions and Politics: The Foreign Relations of the European Union with Latin America* (Frankfurt: Vervuert Verlag, 2006), 43-44.

<sup>25</sup> “Generalised Scheme of Preferences,” European Commission, accessed May 9, 2023, [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/development-and-sustainability/generalised-scheme-preferences\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/development-and-sustainability/generalised-scheme-preferences_en).

abide by common positions adopted by unanimity in the General Affairs and External Relations Council--a controversial and many times ineffective task due to diverging Member State foreign policy objectives and strategy. In the early 2000s there were only two working groups in Latin America: AMLAT and COLAT.<sup>26</sup> In both cases, major decisions were reached within the working groups and did not even reach COPS. According to interviews in Brussels, Solana did not consider Latin America a priority.<sup>27</sup> EU foreign policy in Latin America has been considered to be cooperative, and it relies on “dialogism,” is actively noncoercive, and promotes “value-based” policy as a “civilian power.”<sup>28</sup>

### 3.2 US Historical Relations with Latin America

The US has had an extraordinary presence in the Western hemisphere due to its proximity and hegemonic position. Yet, the US began as a string of British colonies seeking to gain independence, just as the other colonies in the 16th and 17th centuries. Thus, the US shares a certain foundation with others in the hemisphere based on the shared experience of liberation and emancipation from the European imperial powers. The most notable early position of the US was the “Monroe Doctrine.” Announced in 1823, the doctrine is defined as “a statement of US foreign policy expressing opposition to extension of European control or influence in the western hemisphere,”<sup>29</sup> and it has been described as the notion that “any intervention in the politics of the Americas by foreign powers was a potentially hostile act against the United States.”<sup>30</sup> Hence the Monroe Doctrine asserted a sort of US claim and obligation to protect the region. It has now been interpreted as the doctrine by which the US justifies both forceful and indirect political intervention in Latin American regimes.<sup>31</sup> However, at the time it was accepted by many Latin American leaders, including Simón Bolívar, who believed it supported the various movements for independence.<sup>32</sup> The Monroe Doctrine will be further addressed in this analysis regarding its presence in present-day policies towards Venezuela. Figure 1 below shows a cartoon of the Monroe Doctrine depicting the US as Uncle Sam with his body standing over the Hemisphere holding a baseball bat.

The US position shifted in 1933 to what Franklin D Roosevelt introduced as the “Good Neighbor Policy,” which, as it sounds, aims at establishing good relationships with Latin American countries on the basis of non-intervention. From its start up until the Cold War, successes of this policy included the US support of Mexico’s nationalization of the oil industry and the withdrawal of the US military in its occupation of Haiti.<sup>33</sup> The Good Neighbor Policy was reinforced by the Lima Declaration, which replaced the strategy of

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<sup>26</sup> Dykmann, 57.

<sup>27</sup> Dykmann, 59.

<sup>28</sup> Mario Carranza, “‘Toward a Strategic Partnership?’ The European Union and Latin America in the Post-September 11 Era.,” Website Forum, Foro Euro-Latino, January 5, 2005, [http://www.nuevasoc.org.ve/upload/anexos/foro\\_200.doc](http://www.nuevasoc.org.ve/upload/anexos/foro_200.doc) 13-14.

<sup>29</sup> “MONROE DOCTRINE,” Merriam-Webster, April 4, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Monroe+Doctrine>.

<sup>30</sup> *Brief History of US-Latin American Relations*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-1PaSporys>.

<sup>31</sup> Wayne S. Smith, “The United States and South America: Beyond the Monroe Doctrine,” *Current History* 90, no. 553 (1991): 49–90.

<sup>32</sup> *Brief History of US-Latin American Relations*.

<sup>33</sup> “U.S. Intervention in Haiti, 1994-1995,” Office of the Historian, May 10, 2023, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/haiti>.



unilateral action with a commitment to a cooperative approach with the American States for collective security<sup>34</sup> as well as the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, which declared that “no State has the right to intervene in the internal or external affairs of another” (Article 8).<sup>35</sup>

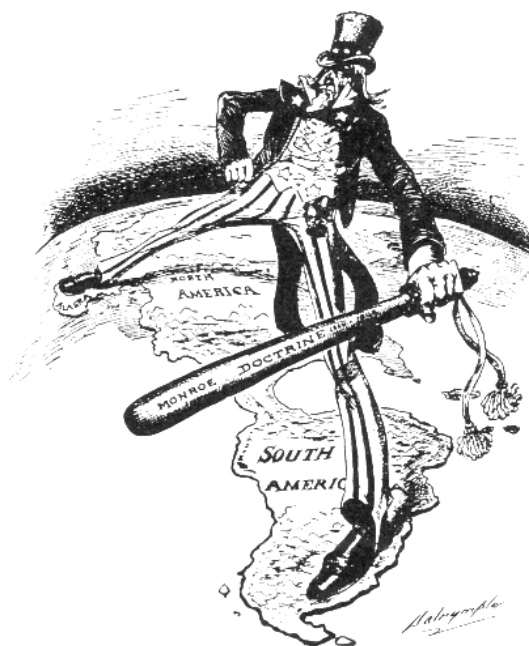


Figure 3. Louis Dalrymple, *Uncle Sam with a Big Stick Political Cartoon*, 1905,  
<https://www.grangeracademic.com/results.asp?image=0091561&itemw=3&itemf=0002&itemstep=1&itemx=1>.

The Good Neighbor Policy was quickly discarded at the start of the Cold War. The US saw an urgent and pressing need to ensure that neither communism nor socialism could sprout regimes in the hemisphere, and has since intervened 32 times following the Second World War. Many of these interventions were direct and militarized, such as the coup d'états and invasions in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Chile, and Grenada.<sup>36</sup> Yet direct military intervention under the guise of ousting communist and socialist regimes did not end with the Cold War: George H.W. Bush's "Operation Just Cause" was an invasion of Panamá in 1989,<sup>37</sup> and Bill Clinton's "Operation Uphold Democracy" was an invasion of Haiti in 1994,<sup>38</sup> both operations executed with the objective of regime change.

<sup>34</sup> Charles G. Fenwick, "The Monroe Doctrine and the Declaration of Lima," *The American Journal of International Law* 33, no. 2 (1939): 257–68, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2190332>.

<sup>35</sup> "Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States - The Faculty of Law," University of Oslo the Faculty of Law, accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.jus.uio.no/english/services/library/treaties/01/1-02/rights-duties-states.html>.

<sup>36</sup> John Coatsworth, "United States Interventions," *ReVista Harvard Review of Latin America* IV, no. 2 (May 15, 2005), <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/united-states-interventions/>.

<sup>37</sup> Ronald H Cole, *OPERATION JUST CAUSE: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama* (Washington, D.C.: Joint History Office Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/History/Monographs/Just\\_Cause.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/History/Monographs/Just_Cause.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> "U.S. Intervention in Haiti."

In the 1980s and 90s, alongside these military interventions, the new “Bretton Woods,” institutions including the IMF and World Bank, have played a major role in development across Latin American countries through aid and loans.<sup>39</sup> The US also has established relations during these decades based on anti-narcotics efforts. Sparked in part by what Reagan notoriously named “the war on drugs,” the US implemented actions such as “Plan Colombia,” in which Clinton sent \$1.3 Billion in military aid and deployed troops to Colombia.<sup>40</sup> Lastly, despite hostilities and interventions, the US has strong cultural ties to the region. There is a high volume of immigrants who have settled in the US: migrants from Latin America comprised 6.5% of the population in 2019<sup>41</sup> and are thus a growing influence on politics. Cultural ties have also been initiated by the US government to fortify relations from the start of the Good Neighbor Policy, for example the promotion of the Brazilian singer Carmen Miranda.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. Literature Review: Conceptualizing EU and US Roles in Latin America

The following literature review will give a brief insight into roles observed and critiqued by authors using a triangular approach. Much literature has analyzed foreign policy through foreign policy triangles. Notably, the “North Atlantic Triangle” was a term first coined by John Bartlet Brebner in 1945, referring to his analysis of interconnected relations between the US, Canada, and Great Britain since the beginning of colonization of the Americas.<sup>43</sup> Even before Brebner, an early triangle has been studied connecting the Americas, Europe, and Africa from the onset of European colonization. Dominated by economic relations, exploratory missions and the slave trade between the 16th and 19th centuries, the *triangular trade* referred to the routes in which ships travelled from Europe to West Africa to exchange manufactured goods for slaves, who were then shipped to the Americas and forced into the economy of producing raw materials such as sugar, tobacco and rum, which was then shipped back to Europe.<sup>44</sup> This initial triangular visualization demonstrates the interconnected role of each leg of the trade routes and the economic relations between the American colonies, Europe, and Western Africa (that is, from a European colonial viewpoint). See a visual depiction of the triangular trade route below in figure 4.

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<sup>39</sup> Eric Helleiner, “Reinterpreting Bretton Woods: International Development and the Neglected Origins of Embedded Liberalism,” *Development and Change* 37, no. 5 (November 9, 2006): 943–67, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2006.00508.x>.

<sup>40</sup> ABC News, “Clinton Announces \$1.3B in Aid to Colombia,” ABC News, August 31, 2000, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=82756&page=1>.

<sup>41</sup> “Latin American Immigration to the United States,” American Economic Association, March 13, 2023, <https://www.aeaweb.org/research/charts/immigration-latin-america-historical-us>.

<sup>42</sup> “Cultural Exchange in the Forging of Brazil’s Special Relationship with the U.S.,” Brown University Library, accessed May 10, 2023, <https://library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-5/media-representations-in-us/>.

<sup>43</sup> John Bartlet Brebner, *The North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, The United States and Great Britain, The Relations of Canada and The United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

<sup>44</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Transatlantic Slave Trade: Key Facts,” Britannica, accessed February 8, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Transatlantic-Slave-Trade-Key-Facts>.

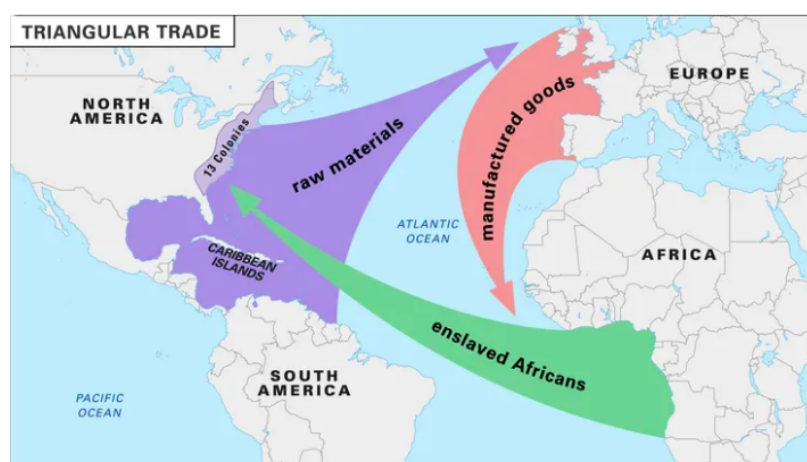


Figure 4. Triangular Trade. *Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc./Kenny Chmielewski*

For the purpose of this study, the following “EU/US/VE” triangle will be used (figure 5), yet the legs of the triangle represent the geopolitical relations between the actors rather than trade relations. The dotted lines illustrate the relations which will be studied: The EU responses to Venezuela, the US responses to Venezuela, and the EU and US as they construct their roles considering each other.

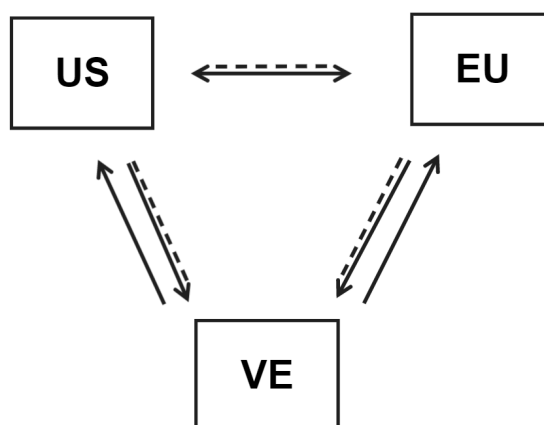


Figure 5. The EU/US/VE Triangle

Various analyses have focused on these connections in a Cold War and post-Cold War scheme of power relations, as seen in Grabendorff and Roett’s collection of critical essays in *Latin America, Western Europe and the US: Reevaluating the Atlantic Triangle*. First, Puig points to how the hegemonic power shift occurred from European colonial dominance of the region to a US hegemonic position throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, largely due to the

independence of colonies and instability in Europe through the two World Wars.<sup>45</sup> In the face of continued American intervention in regimes following the fall of the Berlin wall, such as the invasion of Panamá, Smith argues that it is not just the Cold War which was the basis of these interventions, rather, the US has consistently had the ulterior motive of controlling the hemisphere and keeping all other powers out.<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, authors such as Grabendorff claim that the US tends to enact policy towards the region primarily through a security lens, especially in terms of regime stability and democracy, as opposed to the EU's human rights lens.<sup>47</sup> Puig points to an overarching theme to determine policy strategy in the past century: the perceived threat of communism over all else considering other "progressive" economic policies "tolerable."<sup>48</sup> Coatsworth points to the approximately 41 regime changes that the US has been involved in as primarily motivated by security interests, with economic interests in their shadows, primarily to save the capitalist enterprise system, which is ultimately intertwined with the fight against communism.<sup>49</sup> Mark Weisbrot claims that Obama's intervention in the Honduras coup, along with meddling in elections in Haiti, and increasing military bases in Colombia, have demonstrated a continuity in America's everlasting interventionist policies in Latin American politics.<sup>50</sup> In terms of trade and development, Bretton Woods development assistance to Latin America has been argued to be nothing more than "economic interventionism" by Helleiner, who claims the initiatives were of "embedded liberal" US vision in the region, fearful of Nazi influence, thus tying the economic back to security concerns.<sup>51</sup> Overall, the US strategy in the region has been described by authors as pragmatic, marked by the ability to act quickly, maintain its dominance over the region,<sup>52</sup> centered on pushing democratic, neoliberal agendas,<sup>53</sup> and to keep adversaries and outside forces out of the region.<sup>54</sup>

The EU has also embarked on economic influence in the region through its General Scheme of Preferences (GSP) and GSP+ initiatives which offer incentives on sustainable development, good governance and human rights.<sup>55</sup> As such, the EU is argued to now present a new opportunity for Latin America. Carranza points out that the EU is a fresh option on the scene for alliances and trade and that Latin America can benefit from diversification of

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<sup>45</sup> Puig, "The United States and Europe."

<sup>46</sup> Smith, "Beyond the Monroe Doctrine," 49.

<sup>47</sup> Wolf Grabendorff, "The United States and Western Europe: Competition or Cooperation in Latin America?," in *Latin America, Western Europe and the US: Reevaluating the Atlantic Triangle* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), 257–74.

<sup>48</sup> Puig, "The United States and Europe," Octavio Ianni, "Diplomacia e Imperialismo En Las Relaciones Interamericanas," in *Relaciones Políticas Entre América Latina y Estados Unidos*, ed. Julio Cotler and Richard Fagen (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 1974).

<sup>49</sup> Coatsworth, "United States Interventions."

<sup>50</sup> Mark Weisbrot, "Commentary: Obama's Latin America Policy: Continuity Without Change," *Latin American Perspectives* 38, no. 4 (July 2011): 63–72.

<sup>51</sup> Helleiner, "Reinterpreting Bretton Woods," 944.

<sup>52</sup> Dykmann, *Perceptions and Politics*.

<sup>53</sup> Janet Kelly and Romero Carlos, *The United States and Venezuela: Rethinking a Relationship*, ed. Jorge Domínguez and Rafael Fernández de Castro (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> Mario Carranza, "'Toward a Strategic Partnership?' The European Union and Latin America in the Post-September 11 Era," Website Forum, Foro Euro-Latino, January 5, 2005, [http://www.nuevasoc.org.ve/upload/anexos/foro\\_200.doc](http://www.nuevasoc.org.ve/upload/anexos/foro_200.doc).

<sup>55</sup> "Generalised Scheme of Preferences."

economic partners.<sup>56</sup> This comes as Latin American countries have been rejecting the US not only for its hegemonic position in the hemisphere, but also for its decision to break from international norms in invading Iraq in 2003, as Carranza argues.<sup>57</sup> Other authors such as Grabendorff have suggested that the EU has not played a major role in the region in the past decades, and its interests have focused on trade and human rights.<sup>58</sup> Dykmann claims that there has been no real doctrine for the EU in the Americas, rather, it is driven by events and many times the EU leaves Latin America “in the hands” of the US.<sup>59</sup>

In “Perception and Politics,” Klass Dykmann carried out a study consisting of interviews among officials to discover how the US and EU view each other in terms of policy enacted towards Latin America. His findings showed that “the US doesn’t take EU involvement in Latin America seriously,” regards EU involvement in the region as a “playground” for the EU, in part as the US is wary of the EU’s project as a single actor.<sup>60</sup> Regardless, Dykmann suggests that the US could have concerns of the EU’s strength as a trading partner in Latin America, and that goals for the region tend to lie on the same lines such as fostering development, liberal trade policies, and human rights. Yet the approach is different: the US tends to be more “pragmatic” and “blunt” while the EU tends to be more “dialogue, dialogue, dialogue.”<sup>61</sup> Above all, Dykmann sees the relations between the two and their influence on Latin America to be asymmetrical, as summed up in the following quote:

“It is quite possible to write a book on US-Latin American affairs without mentioning Europe. However, it is absolutely impossible to prepare a study on European-Latin American relations without referring to the US role.”<sup>62</sup>

In sum, the literature surrounding triangular relations of the EU and US towards Venezuela has shown the US as a dominant force in the region, influencing and intervening in countries’ political affairs, in a way continuing the Monroe Doctrine. While the EU on the other hand is seen as an emerging actor, willing to provide Latin American countries new opportunities in trade and development, these being contingent upon EU terms of values such as human rights and good governance. The literature has shown a strong consensus that the US has played a role in intervening in countries affairs based on security concerns, and the EU plays a minor role, concerned primarily with human rights. These roles will be examined in the context of Venezuela and revisited following the critical discourse analysis.

## 5. Historical Timeline of Venezuela’s Political Regimes: 1998-2017

The following section will outline the political framework of the events in Venezuela from 2000 to 2017 and preliminary responses from the EU and US. This framework will serve as a historical foundation upon which a later analysis will occur of the responses of the two actors during this time frame.

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<sup>56</sup> Mario Carranza, “Leaving the Backyard: Latin America’s European Option,” *Internationale Politik Und Gesellschaft*, no. 2 (2004): 54–79.

<sup>57</sup> Carranza, “Leaving the Backyard,” 73.

<sup>58</sup> Wolf Grabendorff, “The United States and Western Europe: Competition or Cooperation in Latin America?,” in *Latin America, Western Europe and the US: Reevaluating the Atlantic Triangle* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), 257–74.

<sup>59</sup> Dykmann, *Perceptions and Politics*, 140.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Dykmann, *Perceptions and Politics*, 133, 126.

<sup>62</sup> Interviews carried out by Dykmann, *Perceptions and Politics*, 136.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Venezuela began to suffer some of the worst economic hardships due to the various financial crises with its GDP falling a whopping 40%.<sup>63</sup> Under President Carlos Andrés Pérez (1989-1993), policies failed to address the economic crisis as 80% of the population remained in poverty, despite Venezuela's oil wealth.<sup>64</sup> Growing frustration from the masses led to internal political unrest: two coup d'états were staged against Pérez in 1992. One of the leaders, Hugo Chávez, would later present a charismatic populist platform against the backdrop of President Rafael Caldera (1993-1999), appealing to a working class frustrated with newfound economic problems. His rise in popularity among the masses was based on a typical populist platform: critiques of the elite leaders in power; a call to overturn the regime to a leader who would fight for the working classes; ideas for new social reforms; and above all, blunt, harsh rhetoric.<sup>65</sup> Such rhetoric would prove to be anti-american, anti-neoliberalism and pro-working class. He expressed the view that Venezuela was not benefitting from American-driven liberal trade policies promoted in the region and that there must be a shift in strategy to focus on emancipating the country to solve its economic and social problems on its own.

Elected in 1998, Chávez immediately brought sweeping changes to the constitutional order of the country. A new constitution was written, and the government was restructured, creating a Constituent National Assembly "aimed at transforming the State and creating a new legal order," as expressed in a winning referendum.<sup>66</sup> Political unrest highlighted pockets of opposition to the regime in 2002 as a portion of the military staged a coup d'état ousting Chávez for a mere 48 hours before masses of support reinstated him. Yet Chávez maintained a strong base of supporters, and wooed them throughout the early 2000s with a series of social reforms aimed at improving the lives of the poor including healthcare, education, housing, food, and literacy. Named "Plan Bolívar" and later "Bolivarian Missions," Chávez identified his regime as a new Bolivarian revolution, a reference to revolutionary Simón Bolívar, "liberator" of Venezuela who led the colony to independence in the early 19th century.<sup>67</sup>

These policies were made possible through direct funneling of oil wealth and focused mainly on providing goods and services without making considerable systematic changes.<sup>68</sup> Contingent upon a steady flow of oil and favorable international oil prices, the programs faced criticism from many economists, both Venezuelan and foreign, who saw them as not sustainable for the long-term.<sup>69</sup> Regardless, many lower class Venezuelans viewed the

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<sup>63</sup> Michael Shifter, "In Search of Hugo Chávez," *Foreign Affairs (Council on Foreign Relations)* 85, no. 3 (May 1, 2006).

<sup>64</sup> Andrew King, "Venezuela 2002: The Coup Heard around the World," *People's World*, April 14, 2022, <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/venezuela-2002-the-coup-heard-around-the-world/>.

<sup>65</sup> Otto Franziska, "What Is Populism: Definition, Characteristics, Examples," *Liberties.eu*, May 20, 2022, <https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/populism/44261>.

<sup>66</sup> Allan R Brewer-Carías, "The 1999 Venezuelan Constitution Making Process as an Instrument for Framing the Development of an Authoritarian Political Regime," in *Framing the State in Times of Transition* (US Institute of Peace Press, 2010), [https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Framing%20the%20State/Chapter19\\_Framing.pdf](https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Framing%20the%20State/Chapter19_Framing.pdf).

<sup>67</sup> Straussmann Masur, "Simón Bolívar."

<sup>68</sup> Michael Bowman, "Venezuela's Oil Wealth Powers Social Programs, Drives Divisions," *VOA*, August 4, 2010, <https://www.voanews.com/a/venezuelas-oil-wealth-powers-social-programs-drives-divisions-100077894/123381.html>.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

policies favorably as they saw direct, tangible changes to their lives and improved living situations in their communities as a result of these programs.<sup>70</sup>

Moving forward into the 2000s, support of Chavez remained divided. In 2004, 2.7 million signatures on a petition resulted in a recall vote which ultimately failed to oust Chavez from office.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, Chavez continued to drastically change the political and economic landscape of Venezuela through the nationalization of various industries such as steel, agriculture, banking, gold mining, telecommunications (including Radio Caracas Television RCTV), electricity, tourism, transportation, and most notably, the oil industry, which was the main generator of wealth in a poorly diversified economy. After winning the 2006 elections, Chavez moved to combine various political coalitions into a single political party: the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). While a referendum proposing constitutional reforms such as abolishing term limits failed to pass in 2007, in 2009, despite widespread opposition, Chavez would succeed in his endeavors to end term limits. At this time, it is no surprise that Chavez was developing strong ties to other authoritarian regimes and Western adversaries, most notably Fidel Castro in Cuba, in addition to ties to Iran, China and Russia, as seen through the Russia-Venezuela arms deal.<sup>72</sup>

Growing opposition to Chavez emerged in the 2010 parliamentary elections, in which Chavez's two thirds majority was overtaken by the opposition gaining 65 seats. In the 2012 presidential elections, Chavez still was able to maintain his presidency with a fourth term, although opposition led by Henrique Capriles Radonski from the Coalition for Democratic Unity showed up for a close election. Elections once again occurred in 2013, this time following the death of Chavez who had been battling cancer for several years. Yet again, Chavism prevailed, but not without a fight: opposition led by Capriles Radonski resulted in an election won by 1.6%, highly contested as rigged, but ultimately leading to Nicolas Maduro entering office as President.<sup>73</sup>

Nicolas Maduro was overall simply not as popular as Chavez in terms of gaining the same mass support. Ultimately, Maduro's presidency would be characterized by a shift into an authoritarian regime, militarization, and economic downfall leading into an outright humanitarian crisis. He was not viewed as the same revolutionary leader, and did not have the same rhetoric and tangible impact that Chavez had, largely because the social programs implemented by Chavez began to go downhill. Not long after taking office, oil prices began to fall, leading to the situation economists had long warned about in a poorly diversified economy dependent on oil.<sup>74</sup> This period resulted in the start of a trend of hyperinflation and a worsening economy, as the government price-controlled oil and other industries such as food began to crash. The inflation over this period escalated from 54.3% in 2013<sup>75</sup> to what is

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> "Venezuela's Chavez Era."

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Watts and Virginia Lopez, "Nicolás Maduro Narrowly Wins Venezuelan Presidential Election," *The Guardian*, April 15, 2013, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/15/nicolas-maduro-wins-venezuelan-election>.

<sup>74</sup> A \$100 priced barrel of oil under Chavez was worth \$46 in 2017. Peter Cahill and Laura Saravia, "Venezuela Protests and Economic Crisis: What Is Going On?," NBC News, May 6, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/venezuela-crisis/venezuela-protests-economic-crisis-what-going-n755306>.

<sup>75</sup> "Venezuela Joins the Hyperinflation Club: 54.3% in Last Twelve Months and Climbing," MercoPress, November 8, 2013,

estimated at ten million percent in 2019 by *the New Yorker*.<sup>76</sup>

As a result of the devastating economy, basic resources such as food and healthcare became scarce leading to internal unrest among citizens and massive protests in 2016 and 2017. On the political end, Maduro was making various attempts at consolidating his power across the legislative and judiciary branches as much as possible, introducing a new constitution and National Constituent Assembly. In a 2017 election, the main opposition coalition boycotted, claiming the election would be illegitimate regardless and Maduro came out with winning another term. In response, a referendum organized by the opposition, and deemed illegal by Maduro, showed that an overwhelming majority of Venezuelans rejected Maduro's attempts to restructure the legislative assembly and voted in favor of new elections to overturn the regime.<sup>77</sup> Regardless, Maduro claimed victory while the opposition claimed there was fraud and it was a rigged election in Maduro's favor.<sup>78</sup> It is in this context where the further critical discourse analysis and role construction will dive into the responses of the EU and US as they relate to the turning of events following these elections. The timeline in figure 6 outlines the following political events from 2017 to 2019. On the left side of the timeline key political events are outlined, and on the right side corresponding statements are listed released by the EU and US, which will undergo critical discourse analysis in sections 9 and 10.

## 6. EU Relations towards Venezuela from 2000-2017

First, a major component of EU relations with Venezuela, as with other countries in the region, is trade as its fourth largest trading partner with the height of trade being €2.9 billion in 2012.<sup>79</sup> In terms of political framework, the EU has been enthusiastic with election observation, as it observed Chavez's win in the 1998 elections along with elections in 2006<sup>80</sup> and 2012.<sup>81</sup> Yet the CFSP was much more limited in responding to political events in Venezuela as it was uninterested and ineffective at times. With regards to the 2002 coup in which Chavez was ousted for not more than two days, the EU response represented the two main critiques that the CFSP faces: a fragmentation of independent responses of Member States and a lack of capacity to act quickly in sending a firm, coherent stance. First, information regarding the situation and dialogue surrounding responses occurred through

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<https://en.mercopress.com/2013/11/08/venezuela-joins-the-hyperinflation-club-54.3-in-last-twelve-months-and-climbing>.

<sup>76</sup> Jon Lee Anderson, "Venezuela's Two Presidents Collide," *The New Yorker*, June 3, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/06/10/venezuelas-two-presidents-collide>.

<sup>77</sup> "Venezuela Referendum."

<sup>78</sup> "Venezuela Election: Maduro Wins Second Term amid Claims of Vote Rigging," *BBC News*, May 21, 2018, sec. Latin America & Caribbean, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-44187838>.

<sup>79</sup> "EU Trade Relations with Venezuela," European Commission, [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/venezuela\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/venezuela_en).

<sup>80</sup> Core Team Members of the EU Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) under the direction of Monica Frassoni who acted as Chief Observer of the EUEOM, "European Union Election Observation Mission - Presidential Elections, Venezuela 2006 - Final Report," European Centre for Electoral Support, November 15, 2006.

<sup>81</sup> "Study Mission to the October 7, 2012, Presidential Election in Venezuela" (Atlanta: The Carter Center, October 2012),

[https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace\\_publications/election\\_reports/venezuela-2012-election-study-mission-final-rpt.pdf](https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/venezuela-2012-election-study-mission-final-rpt.pdf).



informal talks and phone calls, according to officials in Brussels.<sup>82</sup>

The main point of divergence came from a quick reaction from Spain in response to the coup, in absence of responses from the international community, joining the US in a statement condemning the acts of violence, standing with the people of Venezuela and calling for “full democratic normalization” and the “the consolidation of a stable democratic framework.”<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, divisions rose in the EU when the Spanish presidency issued a draft declaration which would have been seen to support the interim government without passing it by the HR. As Dykmann points out, this statement, without the consultation of the Member States nor the HR (mandatory according to the Treaty of the European Union Title V Article 22), was considered a significant mistake on Spain’s behalf.<sup>84</sup> Yet overall, the EU seemed mainly unbothered as the COLAT group continued their work in preparation for the Madrid summit and the coup did not even appear on the agenda.<sup>85</sup> It was only 6 weeks later that the EU released a statement that did not condemn nor support either side, rather called for “good wishes on the re-establishment of democratic institutions in Venezuela.”<sup>86</sup> This reflects the critiques the EU has faced for vague wording, little concrete policy and overall a significant delay in reaching a stance. Additionally, it shows a focus on institutional recovery rather than taking a stance on the change of regime or Presidents themselves. The events with the Spanish statements demonstrate how the internal divisions within the EU in reaching decisions create obstacles to acting quickly in responses and developing coherent policy responses.

During this time, not only was there not much focus from the EU on Venezuela, Member States at times remained in control of their voices about the situation. Upon the death of Chavez, official statements coming from ministers and heads of State included messages intertwined in condolences such as: the potential for “new times” and “great potential” for “democracy and Freedom” (Germany); political views that “not everyone shared” (France); and having left a “lasting impression” (Great Britain). While it is standard for countries to wish condolences, through these statements the Member States implicitly sent these different messages of their stances on Chavez.

The main reactions to the crisis in Venezuela began in 2016, with the consolidation of power by Maduro and the escalating situation into authoritarianism. On the Council’s website, the timeline begins in 2016 with one statement (during the entire year) on Council conclusions on the situation.<sup>87</sup> Beginning in 2017, as the following analysis will study, the Council’s policies focused on statements condemning human rights violations, with the main policy action, among sanctions, being an International Contact Group in attempts to reach a peaceful political solution to a democratic regime change through cooperation.<sup>88</sup> This

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<sup>82</sup> Dykmann, *Perceptions and Politics*, 115.

<sup>83</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, “US-Spain Joint Statement on the Situation in Venezuela,” U.S. Department of State Archive (Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs., April 12, 2002), <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/9322.htm>.

<sup>84</sup> Dykmann, *Perceptions and Politics*, 116-117.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Dykmann, *Perceptions and Politics*, 118.

<sup>87</sup> “Timeline EU Response to the Crisis in Venezuela.”

<sup>88</sup> Anna Ayuso, Marianne Riddervold, and Elsa Lilja Gunnarsdottir, “The EU Trapped in the Venezuelan Labyrinth: Challenges to Finding a Way Out – Joint,” Joint Research Papers (Brussels: Joint, February 2023),

terminology will be revisited in the analysis. Overall, the EU relationship with Venezuela prior to 2016 had been reflective of its relations with the region: focused on trade, not of a priority in Brussels, and policy enacted mainly from statements. In sum, up until 2016, the EU paid little attention to Venezuela.

## 7. US-Venezuela Relations from 2000 to 2017

The George W. Bush administration began the turn of the 21st century with a new priority in US foreign policy: just 8 months into the presidency, the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers would change the entire trajectory of US foreign policy moving into the century. These attacks would be responded to with a declaration of “war on terror” and subsequent years of both military and cultural wars promoted by the administration against terrorist groups in the Middle East as defined by Bush’s “Axis of Evil” list.<sup>89</sup> With the US main focus on the Middle East, it is no surprise that Venezuela was not an initial top priority. Yet Venezuela would be added to the list of US adversaries after years of slowly defying the US defined international standards related to drug and terrorist policy during the Bush administration. Indeed, the first key turning point signaling a changing relationship between the US and Venezuela was directly linked to the initial US reaction to 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan. Chavez’s statement that the US was “fighting terror with terror”<sup>90</sup> was a hit taken personally by the US. King describes Chavez’s words as “openly defying the “with us or against us” logic of the Bush administration’s “war on terror.”<sup>91</sup>

A second turning point can be seen in the 2002 coup attempt against Chavez. The US has been alleged to have played a role in executing the coup<sup>92</sup> and despite denials, it has been confirmed through reported CIA documents that the administration did have prior knowledge of the attempt far before it occurred. Although its public stance had been that it had issued “repeated warnings that the United States will not support any extra-constitutional moves to oust Chávez.”<sup>93</sup> The US began to keep a harder eye on Venezuela.

The US policy during these early years did not focus on Venezuela itself, *per se*, rather, its connections to adversaries and larger fights such as anti-narcotics action. First, in terms of connections to adversaries, personal friendships with Castro and a Russian arms deal, along with support for Iran’s nuclear weapon program concerned the US. These were seen as potential security and ideological threats to the US as these countries could create alliances and threaten the very hegemonic position the US was grasping onto in the early

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<https://www.jointproject.eu/2023/02/21/the-eu-trapped-in-the-venezuelan-labyrinth-challenges-to-finding-a-way-out/>.

<sup>89</sup> “Text of President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union Address,” The Washington Post, January 29, 2002, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm>.

<sup>90</sup> Scott Wilson, “Chavez Turns Caracas From U.S. Ally to Critic,” Washington Post, November 22, 2001, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/11/22/chavez-turns-caracas-from-us-ally-to-critic/b29574b6-7fcd-48c5-bc1d-51b5e2e54ccf/>.

<sup>91</sup> King, “The Coup Heard around the World.”

<sup>92</sup> Ed Vulliamy, “Venezuela Coup Linked to Bush Team,” The Guardian, April 21, 2002, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/21/usa.venezuela>.

<sup>93</sup> Juan Forero, “Documents Show C.I.A. Knew Of a Coup Plot in Venezuela,” The New York Times, December 3, 2004, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/03/washington/world/documents-show-cia-knew-of-a-coup-plot-in-venezuela.html>.

years of the century, as Chomsky describes.<sup>94</sup> The State department found Venezuela to be “not adequately cooperating” with the War on Terror, and highlighted their continuous arms buildup and lack of action in cracking down on terrorist groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN).<sup>95</sup> Consequently, the US took one of its first steps in punishing Venezuela by “cutting off sale or license of defense articles and services to Venezuela.”<sup>96</sup>

Regarding drugs, tensions first arose between the US and Venezuela in the context of the former’s anti-narcotics efforts, which were one of the top policy priorities in the region, especially in Columbia, a neighboring State highly interconnected with anti-narcotics efforts. Venezuela broke ties with the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), while in US congressional foreign policy reports from 2000 to 2002 Venezuela is seen as moving from the list of countries “fully cooperating” with US-backed efforts and the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances to the list of countries which “do not yet comply with minimum standards but are making significant efforts.”<sup>97</sup> Regardless, the US still remained open to the possibility of “improved cooperation” between the two, as detailed in a State Department report.<sup>98</sup> In sum, the early policies towards the Chavez regime were focused on anti-narcotics efforts and other adversaries to which Venezuela was tied, and seen through the US foreign policy lens of the war on terror. Yet overall, under the Bush administration the US followed a “wait and see” policy at the start as, after all, the US was occupied with the war on terror, now involving wars in the Middle East and Venezuela was not a main concern. Despite stark anti-american rhetoric coming from Chavez, the US continued to pursue a positive relationship with Venezuela.

In the mid-2000s, the US was primarily focused on the financial crisis and Venezuela was not a top priority. However, early concerns came in the face of the first attempt to abolish presidential term limits through referendum. The US began to speak openly about concerns of democratic freedoms with the the closure of Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV), massive opposition protests, and government crackdowns against protestors as well as arbitrary arrests. Official statements from the White House expressed clearly that the actions of the Venezuelan government were violations of human rights, freedom of expression and the right to due process, calling on the government repeatedly to stop its actions with respect to the authoritarian-like suppression.<sup>99</sup> In these statements, the US expressed a clear stance of non-intervention in the country’s affairs. The White House stated that Venezuelans must elect the President they choose, decide the kind of future they want for their country, and solve their social and economic problems on their own. These ideas were notably conveyed in a statement upon Chavez’s death, in which the US saw a renewed possibility for change in the

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<sup>94</sup> Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Dominance*.

<sup>95</sup> Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2006” (US Department of State, April 20, 2007).

<sup>96</sup> See section 40A of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2781), and “Executive Order 13637,” Code of Federal Regulations § (2013).

<sup>97</sup> See 107th Congress, “Legislation on Foreign Relations through 2000,” 108th Congress, “Legislation on Foreign Relations through 2002.”

<sup>98</sup> Lauren Monsen, “United States Hopes for Improved Cooperation,” Washington File, U.S. Department of State, August 19, 2005.

<sup>99</sup> John Kerry, “Situation in Venezuela,” February 19, 2014, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/02/221919.htm>.

face of democratic elections. It urged the Venezuelan people to pressure their leaders to enact policies as, “that’s not something that the United States can necessarily do for Venezuela. Those are things the Venezuelans have to decide to prioritize and their leaders have to decide to respond to.”<sup>100</sup> This rhetoric may show a US ready to turn away from Monroe intervention and attempts to demonstrate that those are ways of the past. The US also struck down any claim that they had intervened in the affairs of the country in a coup.<sup>101</sup>

Towards the end of President Obama’s first term, the first major move towards Venezuela was put in place: individual sanctions on 7 Venezuelan top government officials, including those of the National Police, Public Ministry and of Armed Forces.<sup>102</sup> The Executive Order 13692 was the legal basis utilized by both Obama and Trump to enact sanctions. These addressed anyone involved in: actions or policies undermining democratic processes or institutions; serious human rights abuses; prohibiting, limiting, or penalizing freedom of expression or peaceful assembly; and public corruption.<sup>103</sup> The White House continued to push the rhetoric that these sanctions were individually targeted and not an attack on the Venezuelan people or country as a whole.

Despite the rhetoric coming out of the US centered on human rights, these sanctions returned the US to an old familiar concept: the human rights violations were the trigger for a declaration of Venezuela as a national security threat. Yet, the sanctions were individual, which begs us to ask the question: why are human rights violations in the internal affairs of another State considered a national security threat to the US? The US in this period is at the same time caught between two sides of the Monroe Doctrine: not intervening directly, leaving it up to the people of Venezuela to decide for themselves their political regime, yet still feeling the need to get involved and take unilateral action through sanctions, ultimately intending to impact the politics and punish the regime leaders.

#### 8. Timeline of Critical Events in Venezuela (2017-2019)

Figure 6 below shows a few critical events which occurred in the time period in which the statements analyzed were produced. EU statements appear in black and US statements in red alongside their respective statement reference number (see Appendix A and B).

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<sup>100</sup> The White House, “Background Briefing on the Situation in Venezuela,” March 6, 2013, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/03/205689.htm>.

<sup>101</sup> The White House, “Response to Venezuelan Government Accusations about U.S. Involvement in a Coup,” February 19, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/02/237650.htm>.

<sup>102</sup> The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “The White House President Barack Obama,” FACT SHEET: Venezuela Executive Order, March 9, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/09/fact-sheet-venezuela-executive-order>.

<sup>103</sup> Clare Ribando Seelke, “Venezuela: Overview of U.S. Sanctions” (Congressional Research Service, n.d.), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10715>.

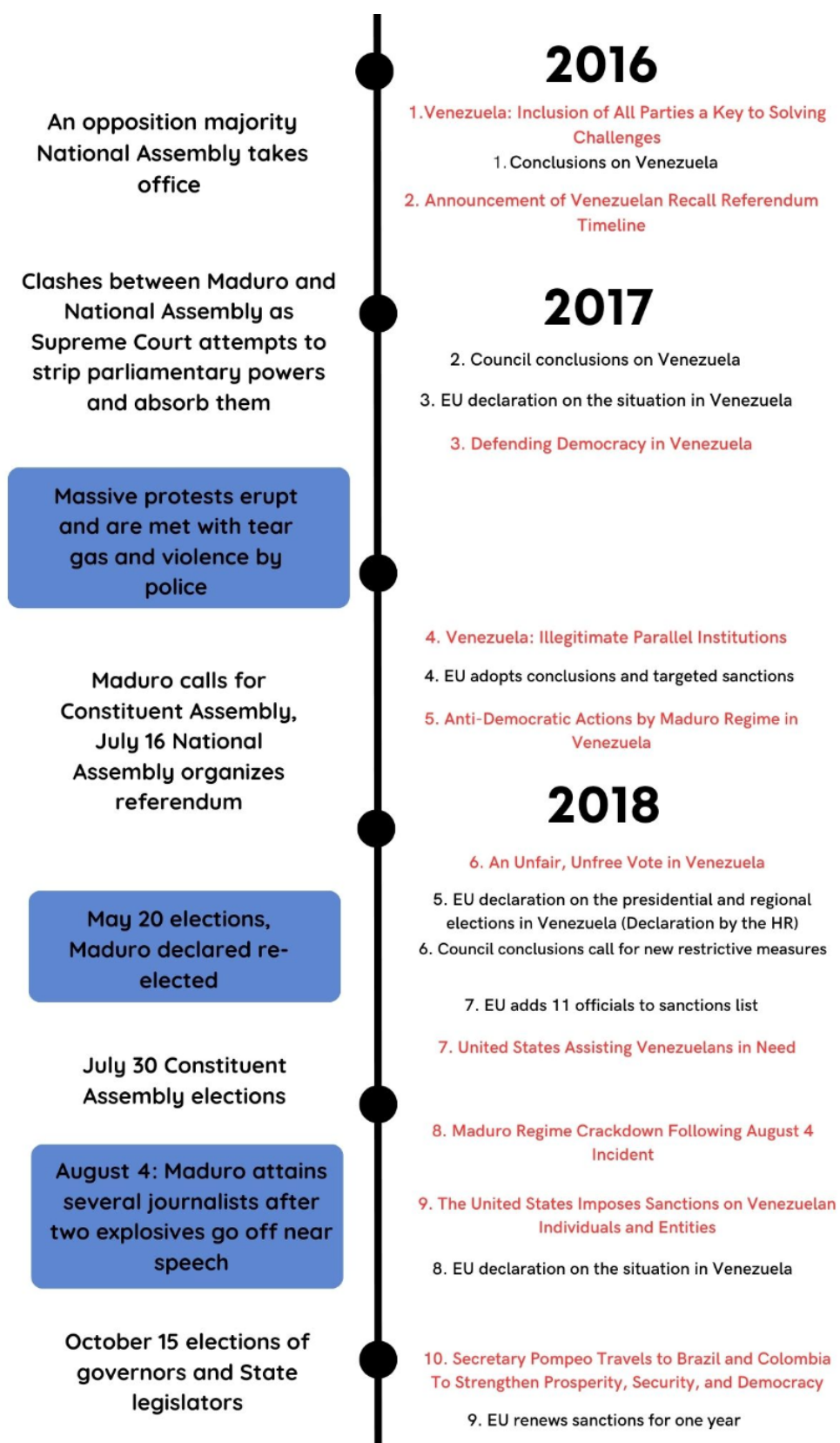




Figure 6. Timeline of Critical Events in Venezuela from (2016-2019) and Corresponding EU and US Statements

## 9. Stage I: Critical Discourse Analysis of EU and US Policy Statements

### 9.1 EU Council Statements: Textual and Processing Analysis

The following two sections will apply Fairclough's three-leveled approach of critical discourse analysis to 21 written statements released by the Council of the European Union and then to the 23 US State Department statements. While the time frame chosen is from 2017 to 2019, a few have been included from 2016. The statements will be referred to by their reference number in parenthesis according to appendices A and B. Four main discursive strategies were found in these statements: 1. Presentations and definitions of the situation, 2. Values, principles and rights, 3. Appeals to the people of Venezuela, and 4. Solutions and strategies presented. The following analysis will be structured according to these four dimensions. Chosen words will undergo a textual analysis and then processing analysis, which will aim to describe the intent of the message behind the words on a pragmatic level. The Merriam-Webster dictionary will be used for the definitions of words. General trends of language use will be shown supported by the various examples. The textual and processing analyses of the four dimensions will be drawn upon in the Stage II social analysis to complete a bigger picture of the role the Council is aiming to construct through the language compared to the US.

#### 9.1.1 EU Presentations and Definitions of the Situation

First, the EU tends to center the statements around the humanitarian crises on the ground from the very start. The first lines of the statements many times begin with a line describing such situation:

“On 20 May, elections took place in Venezuela...” (5)

“The massive, popular demonstrations which have taken place...” (11)

“The worsening conditions in Venezuela...” (12)

At other points, the Council begins by articulating a voice of the EU through an active subject, yet its active voice articulates not much more than the EU being concerned or recalling action which it has taken:

“The EU ministers discussed the deepening political, economic and social crisis” (8)

“The EU underlines its conviction that...” (13).

“The EU stresses its serious concern...” (17)

The Council starts with the former strategy 7 times for about a third of the statements beginning with the description of the events on the ground, placing it as the center point for the statements in this sample. The latter (the active subject of the EU as a concerned actor) justifies its place at the table, simply by its concerns over the situation.

In one of the very first statements (July 18, 2016) an interesting rhetorical strategy is used to establish a connection between the EU and Venezuela: “The EU and Venezuela have strong historical and cultural links and share the same fundamental values and democratic principles” (1). The first line of the first statement seeks to establish a relationship on

common values with Venezuela and demonstrate the EU's place in solving the situation *because* of the shared values mentioned. At the same time that these values are the motivation for the EU to involve itself, they are placing them at the forefront of the statement.

In describing the situation, the most prominent trend in language use throughout the Council statements is the consistent use of a passive voice: “the economic and social situation has further deteriorated” (2); “the political, economic and social situation...keeps getting worse” (10). At times, in following a passive tone, the situation is used as the subject in itself with no person as a subject: “the latest developments in Venezuela have pushed further away the possibility of a constitutional, negotiated solution” (6); “the crisis has taken a devastating toll” (8); “Major obstacles... stood in the way of fair and equitable elections” (5). In doing so, the Council isolates the crisis and situations at hand from any authority or source causing it, proving that it can be focused on the problems themselves without linking them to politics or acknowledging any active subject causing the situation.

A high degree of nominalization is used alongside a passive voice to describe the situation and actions. Using nominalized nouns as subjects allows the Council to define the situation and their concerns based directly on the problems without naming or getting involved with specific actors such as: “the *setting-up* of an all-powerful Constituent Assembly (4); “*dismantlement* of democratic institutions” (19); “the *worsening* of living conditions” (12). However, there are times when the Council must point to the people behind the actions they are condemning, and in doing so, they avoid blame as much as possible. An active voice is still avoided: “the *actions* against members of the National Assembly...*are hampering* the Constitutional work of the National Assembly” (17); “officials *involved* in the *non-respect* of minimal democratic standards” (7); “Demonstrations *have been met* with indiscriminate violence from authorities” (11). These statements point to actions which are being condemned by using passive tone, nominalization (“non-respect”), and vague subjects (“authorities”) refusing to name Maduro himself or anyone else for that matter. Instead, the Council uses terms such as “involved” rather than an active voice, omitting direct blame to any subject, rather, expressing that the person finds him/herself intertwined into what is many times referred to as a “multidimensional” crisis or challenges (1, 2, 6, 9, 12, 13, 18).

Indeed, there is a tendency throughout the statements to avoid naming officials or Maduro himself. Throughout the statements, the word “regime” is used twice. The word “government” on the other hand is used 16 times. The difference in terminology is key: according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary “regime” has two connotations: one ideological, defined as a “mode of rule or management” or “a form of government” and another as temporary, defined as “a government in power” or “a period of rule.”<sup>104</sup> “Government,” on the other hand, has a much more objective definition: “the body of persons that constitutes the governing authority of a political unit or organization.”<sup>105</sup> By consistently referring to the “government” rather than the “regime,” the Council is putting Venezuela on the same level as the rest of the actors in the international community, and avoiding language which may suggest that an ideology is driving the crisis. Additionally, if the word “regime” was used, its connotation of temporariness might suggest that the EU's intention is to oust Maduro from

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<sup>104</sup> “Regime,” in *Merriam-Webster* (Merriam-Webster, 2023),  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/regime>.

<sup>105</sup> “Government,” in *Merriam-Webster* (Merriam-Webster, 2023),  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/government>.



power, which could indicate intents of intervention. Instead, the Council's use of the term "government" reinforces a passive voice, avoiding blame towards an ideology as the problem and focusing instead on addressing the problems on the ground. Overall, politics come into play little in describing the situation and, as previously mentioned, there are not strong connections presented between human rights and the regime. Never in any of the statements is there a classification of the regime as socialist nor dictatorial. This avoiding blame leaves open a channel of communication for future negotiations and collaboration, especially with States in the region, in order to find solutions to the human rights problems of which the EU is concerned above the political.

Maduro is mentioned only once when the Council condemns the January 2019 elections, yet once again in a passive way, suggesting that Maduro is only one part of a multidimensional situation. Statement 10 (10 January 2019) begins with: "the presidential elections of last May in Venezuela were neither free, nor fair," demonstrating the tendency to put the situation ("presidential elections") as the subject causing the situation. It then turns to say that the EU's call for new presidential elections "was ignored" (no subject, passive voice), and that "President Maduro is today starting a new mandate on the basis of non-democratic elections." It might seem from just this statement that Maduro was only one of many actors and he was simply starting his "mandate" due to the elections. This puts no cause or effect let alone any direct blame on him. Once more, the crisis is pointed at the actions that took place (the elections) and not the people causing or directing such actions.

Lastly, using the mentioned tactics, the Council attempts to demonstrate the situation as two-sided and complex, once again avoiding pointing blame to one side. Many phrases define the conflict as two sided: "The escalation of *political tensions*...has claimed too many lives" (3); along with the description of the situation as "political *polarisation*" (4, 15); "all political actors" (6), and labeling the conflict as "multidimensional" (1, 2, 6, 9, 12, 13, 18). The frequent term "multidimensional" describes either multidimensional "challenges" or "crisis," both presenting a vague depiction of a situation where many actors are involved.

In sum, in presenting and defining the situation on the ground, the Council is extremely careful with word choice with two main objectives: to avoid at all cost pointing direct blame, and to isolate the humanitarian crisis from the politics, avoiding any correlation or conflation between the two. Instead, the Council highlights the humanitarian issues as problems in themselves, and puts the "multidimensional crisis" or "challenges" as the subject. Thus the Council puts the situation in itself as an active subject as the root problem and not the political regime. The EU may be making an attempt at not choosing sides as much as possible and focusing more on the problems and effects themselves in order to solve the problems as peacefully as possible without burning bridges with the government officials which could later hinder the main goal of collaboration to solve the humanitarian crises at hand. A possible driver may also be divergences in Member States' stances, resulting in vague descriptions of the situation and a lack of strong stances on the EU level.

### 9.1.2 EU Values, Principles, and Rights

Throughout the Council statements, there is a consistent repetition of the same values and rights, which are presented as being violated. This section will focus on the vocabulary used in articulating these principles and the larger messages and implications. Many are core rights of liberal democracies such as individual rights: "right to peacefully demonstrate" (2);

“right to food,” (4); “right to health,” (4); as well as political and institutional: “rule of law, separation of powers” (15); “democracy” (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 18, 19, 21); “democratic institutions” (2, 4, 8, 10, 18 ). In reference to the individual rights, the word “fundamental” many times precedes the “rights” or “freedoms,” implying that the rights are inherent and regardless of the circumstances, there is an obligation to ensure that they are upheld. These rights, specifically the “right to food” (4) and the “right to health” (4) emphasize critical human rights highlighting the situation on the ground independent of the regime or political situation. Hence, the Council stresses human rights once again separately from the political actions and condemnations (with some exceptions) in order to point to a specific problem and later present a solution.

With regards to the political rights relating to democracy, considering the past observation of no label of the regime as authoritarian, nor socialist, nor dictatorship, and even the avoidance to use the term “regime,” it is interesting that the stress on democracy and restoration of democratic institutions is included. In a way, the Council is able to suggest that there is no democracy without applying a label to the government itself. Indeed, many times the word democracy is often used in the context of specific actions: “actions undermining democracy” (21); “dismantlement of institutional checks and balances has eroded democracy” (20) (passive voice and nominalization), or targeted measures that address actions which have undermined democracy: “the persons listed are responsible for...undermining democracy” (7); “restrictive measures on...individuals...responsible for...undermining democracy” (9). Another trend is democracy connected to elections: “democracy through free, transparent and credible presidential elections” (12); “regional polls went ahead...not respecting political pluralism, democracy” (5) (passive voice, regional polls as the subject). However, the Council does make a general call to the government of Venezuela to “take the necessary steps to reinstate democracy” (8) in doing so not entirely avoiding a call to the government and recognizing--without saying--that the government is not democratic. In these statements, democracy is not brought into play as a restriction or violation of the government, but rather tied to a solution, or a way out. The EU strategy addresses values and human rights in a solution-oriented approach rather than a name-blaming violations approach. This values-based solution-oriented approach will be detailed further in section 4 on strategies and solutions.

Democracy and rule of law often appear together as key political values alongside human rights such as: “restoration of democracy, rule of law and human rights” (18, 19, 20). Thus a linkage is created between the three, implying that subjectively the human rights situation is also a democratic crisis, once again, without labeling the regime otherwise. In doing so the Council establishes the EU’s voice as an actor concerned with the human rights situation, rule of law, and democracy as a promoter of liberal values, emphasizing these political institutions as the backbone for upholding human rights. In other words, the other aspects of the relationship such as economic, trade, citizens, cultural, are all left out and the focus is on values mentioned. The initial appeals to recognize the relationship between the two by mentioning the EU citizens that live in Venezuela (1, 2, 3) is no longer mentioned through the sample. Thus, the Council does not feel the need to establish any relationship to publish these statements, rather, the simple violations of human rights and related concerns of democracy suffice for the EU to be involved.

In sum, the Council stresses human rights along with political rights as key concepts

driving these statements. The Council places the EU in a role where it is not merely interested due to a personal relationship it has with Venezuela, rather, it plays a role to promote and protect these values abroad. A positive promotion of the values is seen without considering it necessary to condemn the regime as socialist or authoritarian (as others do) in order to promote these values, rather, democracy and democratic institutions are embedded into a way forward. The principles of “neutrality, impartiality and independence” (17) show the EU recognizing that the process is not to favor one side, rather, democracy and democratic institutions are an objective goal. This places the EU as a neutral promoter of liberal values while maintaining a certain impartiality to the regime, avoiding name-blaming when highlighting these violations of human rights and democratic principles.

### 9.1.3 EU Appeal to the People of Venezuela

The first appeal to people is to the EU citizens residing in Venezuela at the onset of the political events and escalations: The Council makes a strong connection to Venezuela based on it being a country where “600,000 European citizens currently reside” (1, 2). This rhetoric does three things: 1. It establishes the EU as a single actor with “European citizens” pertaining to the authority. 2. It shows the relationship that the EU has with Venezuela and provides proof of a vested interest in the situation, justifying its later action and involvement due to the citizens residing there. 3. It takes an early people-centered approach to the crisis from the very beginning.

The mention of European citizens residing in Venezuela disappears quickly after statement 3 (July 2017) and instead, the statements make several appeals to both the “population” or “people” of Venezuela. While the two words may seem synonymous at face value, their definitions differ. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “population” as: “the whole number of people or inhabitants in a country or region”<sup>106</sup> and “people” as: “human beings making up a group or assembly or linked by a common interest.”<sup>107</sup> Thus, the word “people” humanizes the group, both as individuals and a collective, while the word “population” aims objectively outlining the number of inhabitants in a country. The Council uses the two terms respectively in its statements: “population” when discussing policy, in a more geopolitical sense, such that restrictive measures “will not harm the Venezuelan population” (9, 20, 21). Whereas the word “people” is used as a tool to humanize the conflict and suffering and ensuring that the EU stands with the people in defense of their human rights:

“The EU reiterates its friendship and support to its people” (6),

“the toll on the people of Venezuela” (8)

“stands with the Venezuelan people” (11, 16)

“the people of Venezuela continue to face a dramatic situation” (20).

Thus the EU concerns itself equally with the people of Venezuela and maintains that it stands with them in their fight for human rights independently of the regime.

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<sup>106</sup> “Population” in *Merriam-Webster* (Merriam-Webster, 2023),  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/population>.

<sup>107</sup> “People,” in *Merriam-Webster* (Merriam-Webster, 2023),  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/people>.

In supporting the people of Venezuela, the Council statements connect the people's rights to sovereignty and self-determination enabled through institutions as a means to an end, as shown in the following statements:

"Establishment of an electoral calendar so that the people of Venezuela can express their will in a democratic way" (2)

"Elections...so the Venezuelan people can express their will through free, direct and universal suffrage" (3)

"Venezuelan citizens to express...their political will and thereby determine the future of the country" (5)

"The Venezuelan people have suffered...it is time to let them decide their future." (12)

"stands with the Venezuelan people and its legitimate democratic aspirations" (16)

"a democratic and Venezuela-owned process." (16).

These lines all express either directly or indirectly a need for the people to regain sovereignty and express their "will" through democratic elections and institutions. A consistent use of the possessive gives the ownership of Venezuelan people of this sovereignty and self-determination. Specifically, in all of these phrases, the EU defense of the people of Venezuela is linked to their sovereignty and will to determine their government, especially as these lines many times come alongside pleas for new elections and democratic institutions.

The appeal to the people shows how the geopolitical decisions such as restrictive measures, do not affect "the population" while separately humanizing the situation and putting "the people" at the center of the human rights crisis on the ground, expressing their problems while stressing a need to give them the power and choice to make change. Indeed, when announcing sanctions there is always insistence that it does not affect the "population," whereas the "people" in general are displayed as victims of a situation even though the regime is not named or blamed directly. The Council's EU voice attempts to sympathize and "stand by" the people in response to the regime. The people-focused approach also reinforces the previous observations that the EU is concerned about the humanitarian issues linked to a lack of democracy and separates the situation in which the people encounter themselves from the political regime. Together, the discursive strategies allow the Council to present the EU as a promoter of human rights, a defender of democracy and rule of law, focusing on finding a solution for the people independently of the government in place.

#### 9.1.4 EU Strategies and Solutions

EU Council strategies and solutions are consistently presented in these statements with little lexical variation and are primarily focused on international cooperation, negotiation, and above all, the end goal of a peaceful political process. First, in discussing strategies and solutions, the Council makes repetitive calls on other international actors and the importance of cooperation and partners: "The EU calls on the Venezuelan government...including the facilitation of external cooperation" (8). The use of the word "government" here in line with external cooperation may indicate an attempt at convincing the officials that they are an equal actor in the international community in order to sway them towards cooperation, rather than push them away by labeling them a "regime" which could

have ideological connotations.

The words “Regional and international” appear as a modifier before “efforts” (2, 4), then “actors,” (6), and then “partners,” (11, 13). The trajectory from “efforts” to “actors” to “partners” shows a plea to an increasing degree of cooperation. First, the EU states that it will “support regional and international efforts” in the “facilitation of external cooperation” (2) (July 2017), and then the EU starts taking action itself as it states in statement 6 (May 2018): “the EU will enhance its diplomatic outreach with all relevant national, regional and international actors, recognising especially efforts by Latin American and Caribbean partners” (6). This line establishes the EU as a primary actor now assertive in its role to bring together the cooperation. The EU did indeed act on these words through the creation of an International Contact Group (ICG) in late January 2019 following the elections in which it was considered that Maduro illegitimately claimed the presidency. In statements announcing the ICG, the EU continues to make a plea for international “partners” to cooperate with the ICG. It established that “contacts and coordination with regional and international partners are ongoing” (11), and that “the EU will keep closely monitoring events in cooperation with the International Contact Group members and its regional and international partners” (13). Here, the EU centers itself by beginning with an active verb “will keep monitoring” followed by “in cooperation with” suggesting that the EU is a central monitoring actor of international cooperation by bringing together the partners. Thus the Council does more than just suggest international cooperation-- it asserts the EU as a main player who can facilitate such cooperation:

“The European Union is fully committed to helping Venezuela find peaceful and democratic solutions” (2)

“EU encourages and stands ready to support in every way possible the creation of a regional "group of friends” (3)

“The EU underlines its commitment” (8)

“The EU has reiterated on numerous occasions its readiness to help find a democratic way out” (9)

“The EU stands ready to assist the UNHCR in her efforts to ensure that the fundamental rights of all Venezuelans are fully protected.” (18).

Through these statements of readiness, commitment, and support, the Council expresses the EU as a key player in facilitating cooperation, despite its geographical distance from the region. The last phrase specifically gives a sense of preparedness for responses, especially towards the human rights situation, which has shown to be of central concern for the EU.

The fact that the Council did not bash the regime prior and has displayed the conflict from a neutral, two-sided approach allows them to now play a mediator role in negotiations which they believe will reach a solution as seen in the phrases: “readiness to cooperate with Venezuelan authorities” (3); “result-oriented negotiation conducted in good faith, that includes all relevant Venezuelan political actors” (6). A phrase that truly captures the EU cooperative approach is in their first statement in July 2016:

“The European Union believes that regional countries and organisations, as well as other main international partners, have a key role to play to encourage the government and the opposition to engage in a genuine dialogue and in addressing the pressing needs of the people of Venezuela.” (1)

This line sums up the EU approach to strategies and solutions in three senses. First, the EU centers itself in the proposition by beginning as the subject and an active verb, asserting itself as a key player in bringing together regional and international cooperation. Second, it uses neutral terms such as “government” and “opposition” avoiding blame in presenting the situation as two-sided which allows it to approach the situation as a neutral mediator. Third, the main focus of presented strategies of cooperation is ultimately the needs of the Venezuelan people. This proposition thus demonstrates several of the linguistic tools used in the description of the humanitarian situation in its approaches to solutions.

Beyond the strategy of cooperation, the EU solution lies within one line which is consistently reiterated: “there can only be a democratic political and peaceful solution to the current crisis” (8). While this line is repeated several times, other factors are included such as: “constructive dialogue and negotiation are the only sustainable way to address the current crisis” (3). The fact that the words “peaceful” and “political” appear next to each other suggests that they go hand in hand in the solution the Council proposes, leaving two implications: first, the EU’s primary goal is new elections. Second, the main stress of the “peaceful” solution indicates that absolutely no military force nor violence will be used.

In terms of new elections, it is no surprise that the EU is aiming primarily towards elections as many of the values outlined and emphasis on the people have been in the context of their will for the country, self-determination and sovereignty through suffrage. Thus, elections and new democratic institutions are a means by which the EU sees the Venezuelan people freeing themselves and regaining their human rights. While the EU does not conflate human rights to being inherently connected to the political, they establish political solutions in order to re-establish these human rights. Elections are also explicitly proposed as a solution to the crisis. The term “elections” appears next to adjectives such as “transparent,” “free,” “fair,” not only recognizing that Venezuela is indeed holding elections currently, yet they are not sufficient to meet the democratic standards which these adjectives entail. The word “transparent” implies a degree of election observation, as the EU is adamant about international election observation having previously played a role in election observation in the country. Perhaps the most significant insistence is to hold elections which meet “minimum international standards” (5) for “a credible process” (5), or “internationally recognised democratic standards” (8, 10). In addition to elections, the statements show an insistence of “separation of powers” (2, 3, 15), in other words the establishment of democratic institutions as a solution for the people of Venezuela.

A look towards a similar case supports a certain trend of the EU focus on elections and democratic institutions as conditions for a means to an end in the context of the “Arab Spring” revolutions. Indeed, authors Pérez Herranz and Quero Arias in their discourse analysis of Commission statements in response to the “Arab Spring” regime change movements found that for the EU, an ultimate priority above all was elections with minimum democratic standards.<sup>108</sup> It was argued that the establishment of democratic institutions

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<sup>108</sup> Matilda Pérez Herranz and Jordi Quero Arias, “El ‘Fin de La Poscolonialidad’, La Unión Europea y España: Un Análisis Del Discurso Institucional Ante La ‘Primavera Árabe,’” in *España y La Unión Europea En El Orden Internacional* (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2017), 259–71.

through elections were “essential conditions to be able to ‘protect democratic values, rule of law, and respect human rights.’”<sup>109</sup> In the present case, we observe the same plea for new elections in order to reach the solution of respecting these liberal values and human rights. Again, these democratic values come into play through a solution-oriented institutional approach.

The constant repetition and insistence on this “peaceful and political” solution clearly asserts the EU as a pacific player and a key international partner who will facilitate diplomatic negotiation and political cooperation and above all against any use of military force. While it is not stated directly in these statements, it is clear that the “peaceful and political solution” is a response to the military interventionism that the US has historically enacted in achieving goals of regime change in the region. In fact, returning to the common position on Cuba in 1996, the EU stated that: “It is not European Union policy to try to bring about change by coercive measures with the effect of increasing the economic hardship of the Cuban people.”<sup>110</sup> This clearly articulates a policy towards Cuba in contrast and as a direct response to the US actions in the region which tended to resort to military force. This specific 1996 stance could be argued to be a response to the US “operation uphold democracy” just two years prior, in which the US used military force in Haiti to stage a coup and overthrow the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.<sup>111</sup>

Overall, the strategy of the EU is presented as a cooperative, negotiated, multilateral effort and the solution being peaceful and political. The Council positions the EU as a strategic, central player and uses neutral language to facilitate bringing both sides together. The “political solution” on one hand refers to the EU’s historical tendency and current priority to establish new elections and democratic institutions as conditions for the restoration of human rights, rule of law, and to ensure the will of the people to self-determination. At the same time, the “peaceful solution” aims at creating the role of a new leading pacific actor on the scene to contrast the US which has dominated regime change in the region through forceful interventionist approaches. Alongside these calls to cooperation through the International Contact Group, the EU also implements a variety of individual sanctions (as previously detailed in relation to not hurting the population of Venezuela).

## 9.2 US Department of State Statements: Textual and Processing Analysis

23 US Department of State policy statements were chosen which corresponded to the dates the Council statements were released which respond to critical points such as elections, condemnations of actions in Venezuela, and action taken by the US, such as sanctions. What follows is a textual and processing analysis of the texts. The discursive strategies found remain parallel to the four dimensions seen across the Council statements with the appeal to the people being seen through a hemispheric approach, resulting in the four following sections: 1. Definitions and presentation of the situation, 2. Values, principles and rights, 3. Hemispheric and emancipation appeal to the people, and 4. Strategies and solutions. The

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<sup>109</sup> Pérez Herranz and Quero Arias, “El Fin de La Poscolonialidad,” 268. Quote translated from original Spanish: “condiciones imprescindibles para ‘proteger los valores democráticos, el Estado de Derecho y el respeto de los derechos humanos.’”

<sup>110</sup> “COMMON POSITION of 2 December 1996 Defined by the Council on the Basis of Article J.2 of the Treaty on European Union, on Cuba,” Pub. L. No. 96/697/CFSP (1996), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A31996E0697>.

<sup>111</sup> “U.S. Intervention in Haiti.”

language used in the US statements varied greatly from one to the next thus the analysis which follows will focus more on specific phrases used and place them in context of the overall discourse strategies.

### 9.2.1 US Presentations and Definitions of the Situation

Every single statement in the sample begins with the United States as a subject and an active verb, as to immediately assert itself into the presentation of the situation whether through expressing concern: “the United States remains concerned..” (1); “the United States condemns” (3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11), or action implemented: “the United States has taken necessary actions..” (14), “the United States imposed sanctions” (9, 18). Few times a personal pronoun “we” is used, such as “we welcome the decision today..”(14) and sometimes a representative of the US is the main subject such as the President (20) or Vice President (7). Regardless, the US sees itself as a key determiner of the situation from the very root of each statement.

In describing the situation, the US is very specific in its detailing of the specific events in context in Venezuela, and then gives it a label or condemns it, sometimes intertwined, as seen in the following lines:

“The government's latest anti-democratic action: requiring newly elected governors to submit to the illegitimate Constituent Assembly to be sworn into office” (4).

“Maduro regime’s increasing disrespect for democracy...by attempting to strip the democratically elected National Assembly’s President...Freddy Guevara of his parliamentary immunity” (5),

“The United States condemns the fraudulent elections that took place in Venezuela on May 20.” (6).

Overall, the US does not separate its condemnation of the regime from the statement of facts, thus creating an image of the situation tainted with its condemnations. The third line above from statement 6 provides a perfect example of how the US is unable to objectively outline the situation without giving its take (the elections being “fraudulent”) and at the same time placing it subordinate to the US which is an active subject determining the situation.

A key feature of defining the situation is the direct naming and blaming of government officials as well as labeling and condemning the regime of Maduro. Unlike the Council, The Department of State calls out Maduro’s name 57 times throughout this sample, for an average of 2.5 times per statement. 29 of those times it is phrased as the “Maduro regime.” Using “Maduro” as a modifier to the “regime” hints at authoritarianism, even if it is not directly stated. This is in part seen as the word “regime” itself connotes that an ideology is at play while “Maduro” is conflated to that regime, in doing so allowing the US to blame him directly for the actions of the government.

The United States is also not afraid to directly label the regime as authoritarian and a dictatorship, the former coming much before the latter. Early calls of authoritarianism appear in mid to late October 2017 (3, 4) as the “architects of authoritarianism” are labeled those who “participate in the National Constituent Assembly as a result of today’s flawed elections” (3). These labels are placed on government officials while calling the Maduro regime authoritarian by stating: “requiring newly elected governors to submit to the illegitimate Constituent Assembly to be sworn into office” as “another example of the Maduro regime’s authoritarianism.” (4). Thus authoritarianism is linked to specific actions of a group of government officials alongside the regime itself. In describing them as



authoritarian, the US blames the regime and its officials of active actions executing these powers and when not labeling them directly authoritarian, depict their actions as nevertheless active attacks on democracy:

“The United States condemns the Venezuelan government’s latest anti-democratic action” (4)

“Maduro regime’s increasing disrespect for democracy” (5)

“the United States took action against the former Maduro regime for increasing its intimidation of those supporting democracy in Venezuela” (17).

The first label of dictatorship, comes in the statement on January 10th, 2019, immediately following the elections in which Maduro claimed the Presidency which were viewed illegitimately by the large portion of the international community who recognized Guaidó as the legitimate President. Thus, it is in this key turning point in which the claim of power by Maduro is what the US feels comfortable calling a dictatorship, directly connecting a dictatorial regime to the lack of “free and fair elections” (10). While the label of authoritarianism focused on specific actions, the US considers Maduro the center of the regime and has no problem putting him at the center of the blame. The regime is labeled “authoritarian” and “dictatorial.” When the words are not directly used, an active voice blames Maduro and government officials for actions suppressing democracy.

Overall, the depiction of the situation by the US through the Department of State is assertive, places the US as an active subject, as one determining the situation, and in that line is unable to describe the events objectively without inserting critiques and condemnations into the same sentences. From the start, the regime is labeled authoritarian and later a dictatorship in describing its actions, painting the events of the situation under a certain ideological lens which at the same time aims to demonize the regime, and justifies the US involvement in the fight for democracy in the region.

### 9.2.2 US Values, Principles, and Rights

It is no surprise that the values, principles and rights which the US mentions are connected to liberal democratic values. On an individual level these include: “freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly” (3), “right to engage freely and peacefully in political discourse” (5), “human rights” (various), and the “right to democracy” (6). On an institutional level, these include: “democracy,” “rule of law,” and “free, fair and transparent elections” (6), very similar to those institutional values of the EU. One can see that there is an incredible amount of overlap between the individual and institutional rights, such as the “right to democracy” (6), and the “right to engage freely and peacefully in political discourse” (5). These show that the US continuously conflates the individual rights violated to a right to freedom and democracy, in other words political rights. It seems as though the lens in which the US views the rights of the people is exclusively tied to a political and ideological lens and the US is unable to separate human rights violations from the regime depicted as authoritarian.

In naming Maduro directly, the US is able to create a direct causal link between the actions of the Maduro regime and the suffering of the Venezuelan people, connecting the political with the humanitarian. Best seen in statement 6 of May 2018, in reference to the recent elections:

“Sunday’s process was *choreographed by a regime* too unpopular and afraid of its own people to risk free elections and open competition...the regime selectively *parceled* out food to manipulate the votes of hungry Venezuelans...The Maduro regime fails to defend the Venezuelan people’s right to democracy” (6)

“Maduro’s illegitimate usurpation of power today following the unfree and unfair elections *he imposed* on the Venezuelan people” (11).

“Maduro’s repression of Venezuelans..has dramatically impacted the quality of life for average citizens” (20)

These three lines show a direct overlap between the humanitarian (“hungry Venezuelans”) and the political rights (“votes”) while some rights are inherently political (“right to democracy”). There is direct blame to the Maduro regime in all three lines, pointing to the political regime as the cause of the violations of those rights. The active voice creates a direct, strong causation between the regime and the human suffering. Human rights are all tied back to the regime, and a lack of democracy.

Indeed, an overall theme of principle throughout this sample of statements is democracy. The word “democracy” or “democratic” is mentioned 71 times throughout the statements for an average of around 3 times per statement. As demonstrated, democracy is the basis of the peoples’ political rights, and the root of the problem: the non-democratic regime of Maduro. The interesting feature of the repeated democracy is that it is many times preceded by a notion to “restore” democracy or “return” democracy. This begins with early pleas to Maduro who has the power to restore democracy: “Until the Maduro regime restores a democratic path in Venezuela...” (6); “Maduro regime...restore democratic freedoms” (8). Later, the return to democracy is put in the hands of the Venezuelan people as having the power to restore democracy and giving them a certain ownership of such democracy:

“support for the well-being of the Venezuelan people and the restoration of *their* democracy” (8)

“support the Venezuelan people as they seek to restore *their* democracy” (12)

“the peaceful restoration of democracy, stability, and prosperity to the people of Venezuela.” (16)

“the malign actors that are impeding the will of the courageous Venezuelan people, who demand democracy” (17).

Thus while the US centers the problem around the regime and its lack of democracy, democracy is also personalized with the placement of the Venezuelan people as the core of democracy. The ownership of democracy is expressed through the use of the possessive pronoun “their” and a certain ring of emancipation from the brutal regime, rhetoric which hints to past independence movements in the hemisphere. This discretely establishes a connection between the US and Venezuela in that sense as two countries founded upon democracy and independence movements. Thus the restoration of democracy reminds the people that democracy was indeed a foundation for the independence of the country and a reminder that Venezuela could return to democracy if the people will it, hinting at solutions being elections or a change of government.

Overall, in outlining the human rights violations, the US makes a direct connection to the political regime and depicts Maduro and the government actions as actively causing the

human rights crisis. Conflating the humanitarian with the political allows for the ultimate solution to be political regime change, ringing true to US historical Monroe Doctrine intervention tendencies and promotion of regime change in the region when deemed necessary. Lastly, in connecting human rights to political freedoms, the US is able to put Venezuelans at the center of their fate, in the context of political change and the restoration of democracy which is rightfully theirs.

### 9.2.3 US Hemispheric and Emancipation Appeal to the People

The rhetoric of giving ownership to the people of Venezuela brings in a new dimension to the discursive strategies used by the US: an appeal to the hemisphere, and a sort of emancipation from the Maduro regime paralleling revolutionary movements for sovereignty and independence in the Americas. First, as previously observed, there is an inherent connection between the people and democratic freedoms and the use of possessive pronouns gives the Venezuelan people a power of emancipation from the regime:

“The United States stands by the people of Venezuela...in their quest to restore *their country* to a full and prosperous democracy.” (3)

“The United States...support the Venezuelan people as they seek to restore *their democracy*” (12)

The United States stands with...the people of Venezuela as they seek to restore constitutional order and democracy to *their country*. (20)

“It is time for Venezuelan leaders to make a choice. We urge those who support this regime...to stop enabling repression and corruption” (11).

As seen, the continued use of the possessive pronoun “their” in relation to democracy and country reflects an ownership of sovereignty belonging to the masses and a power of emancipation from the regime which is portrayed as oppressing the people.

In statement 3 on July 30, 2017, this rhetoric goes further with a direct emotional appeal to the independence movement of Simon Bolívar, who, as previously mentioned, was admired as a courageous, revolutionary leader who led the country to independence in the early 19th century.<sup>112</sup> The statement reads:

“Nearly 234 years to the day after the birth of Simon Bolivar, who fought for the freedom of the people of Venezuela, President Nicolas Maduro has cast aside the voices and aspirations of the Venezuelan people.” (3)

The rhetoric used to make a plea to the Venezuelan people tugs on the emotional strings of the revolutionary leader who led the masses to freedom and emancipation. The connection the people of Venezuela have with the leader was ironically demonstrated two decades back, as Chavez himself used this relationship to allure supporters to his regime, portrayed as a revolution and emancipation from the previously corrupt elite ruling the country. Now, the US uses this discursive strategy known to work, in displaying Maduro as the leader from which the people must emancipate in order to gain back the democratic freedoms, which are once again linked personally to the Venezuelans themselves.

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<sup>112</sup> Straussman Masur, “Simón Bolívar.”

The way in which the US depicts the Venezuelan people in contrast to Maduro and his officials places them in a strong revolutionary stance against the corrupt latter. The US places emphasis on the “life of the average citizens” (20) and “every day employees” (11) as well as the use of adjectives to praise the people of Venezuela as “courageous” (17) and “innocent” (14). This creates a picture of a mass of people who are willing to fight for their freedoms, with a revolutionary tone, while Maduro and his officials are tainted with corruption and greed:

“Nicolás Maduro and his thugs are committing gross violations of the human rights of the Venezuelan people and depriving them of their basic rights and freedoms through systemic repression, torture, and intimidation.” (19)

“While Maduro and his associates continue to enrich themselves, the Venezuelan people suffer brutality, violence, and oppression at the hands of the intelligence, security, and armed forces.” (22)

“The security forces should be the guardians of peace and civility and quickly end the violence and intimidation of these irregular armed groups, which threaten the security and *sovereignty* of the people of Venezuela. These acts of intimidation will not succeed in delaying the inevitable—the peaceful restoration of democracy, stability, and prosperity to the people of Venezuela.” (15)

This dichotomy paints an image of a country ready for a revolution. Alongside a picture of revolutionary, brave Venezuelan people ready to emancipate themselves and regain their sovereignty, the US inserts itself as standing by their side as a country which too emancipated itself with a revolution. In this sense, the US is once again making a strong appeal to the people of Venezuela which is intertwined with the political, in this case, emancipation from a corrupt, non-democratic government.

This relationship between the two countries is reinforced by the hemisphere in which they share, and the historical background of American independence movements. Indeed, the word hemisphere appears 6 times across statements in several contexts. First, the word hemisphere creates a shared cause:

“more than 338 political prisoners remained jailed, more than in all other countries in the hemisphere combined.” (6),

“The United States greatly appreciates the generosity and compassion of countries throughout the hemisphere who are hosting hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans fleeing the crisis in their country.” (7)

Second, it creates a shared responsibility within the hemisphere to combat the shared problems:

“We encourage governments in the hemisphere and around the world to take strong action to hold accountable those who undermine democracy, deny human rights, bear responsibility for violence and repression, or engage in corrupt practices” (3)

“Our close cooperation has the potential to make our countries more prosperous and more secure. Together, we will support democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere.” (10)

In using the word “hemisphere” rather than “region,” the US emphasizes a unique relationship that the American countries have: a shared history of emancipation and independence movements from their former European colonial powers. The relationship

established with the word hemisphere also implies an exclusion of other international partners, or rather placing cooperation with international partners on a separate level, aside from the business of the hemisphere which must remain in the hands of the region. Thus, the Monroe Doctrine interventionist strategies, as shown in the literature, are still very much in play as the US establishes a need for the countries in the Western Hemisphere to lead and protect the efforts towards democracy. In doing so, the US asserts itself as the main leader. In the previous line that “the United States greatly appreciates the generosity and compassion of countries throughout the hemisphere” (8) the US plays an active subject, appreciating the other countries efforts, demonstrating themselves to be the coordinator as if they are in charge of the situation, and observing the others’ efforts as secondary. A statement detailing Secretary Pompeo’s visit to Brazil reads:

“We welcome the opportunity to forge a close and comprehensive partnership with South America’s most populous democracy and the world’s eighth-largest economy. Our close cooperation has the potential to make our countries more prosperous and more secure. Together, we will support democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere...As the two largest democracies in the hemisphere, our partnership is based on shared values and commitments to democracy and the rule of law, public security, education, and human rights. *The United States will work with Brazil* to support the peoples of Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua who are struggling to live in freedom against repressive regimes.” (10).

Once again the start of the sentence with the personal subject pronoun and the active voice asserts the US into the picture as a dominant player. The middle lines show the rhetoric of establishing a relationship on the common grounds of political values (democratic). Yet the last line goes further to assert the US as the main player once more by saying that “The United States will work with Brazil.” The subject placement and active voice come in once more putting the US as the main player and Brazil as a side player. In other words, the US did not say “the US and Brazil will work together.” The asymmetry of the former used contradicts the symmetry of the latter, demonstrating a clear continuation of a Monroe Doctrine mentality towards the region. These lines sum up the main rhetorical strategy of the US: an assertion of the US as the principle actor, an establishment of a connection to the hemisphere through political ground, a grouping of Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua as one big sphere of threats to democracy in the hemisphere, and the unbreakable connection between the political regime and the suffering of the Venezuelan people.

#### 9.2.4 US Strategies and Solutions

In terms of strategies and solutions, the US Department of State statements continue to be self-focused, expressing cooperation in terms centered around the US and actions taken by the US mainly relying upon unilateral sanctions. In other words, the US determines for itself the action that must be taken. Overall, the strategies and solutions, following previous trends, are almost exclusively viewed through a political lens, with the overall goal to restore democracy.

The word “cooperation” is only used twice in the same statement (10). On December 28, 2018, the statement focused primarily on Secretary Pompeo’s visit to Brazil. The cooperation is context of bilateral cooperation with Brazil:

“We welcome the opportunity to forge a close and comprehensive partnership with South America’s most populous democracy and the world’s eighth-largest economy. Our close cooperation has the potential to make our countries more prosperous and more secure.” (10)

The second time is a call for cooperation with Brazil and Colombia in reference to drug crime and not relating to Venezuela. In the former, a bilateral relationship is established on a political basis of democracy and nothing more. The cooperation relates to both of the States’ democracies. No time is the word cooperation used in strategizing towards Venezuela. Furthermore, the cooperation is used in limited context within the Hemisphere and not to international partners outside of the region.

The word “partner” is used only 4 times across the sample, in contexts of collaboration which remain asymmetrical: First, the State Department places the US at the center of humanitarian aid:

“U.S. assistance will help provide displaced Venezuelans with emergency food assistance, safe drinking water, hygiene supplies, shelter, protection from violence and exploitation, and work and education opportunities, in coordination with other humanitarian organizations and government partners.” (7)

The sentence begins with the US as a subject along with an active verb, describes all of the assistance it will give, and places partners at the end without mentioning them by name or their efforts, clearly placing them in a side role. A similar sentiment is expressed in broader efforts for democracy:

“the *United States*, with the international community, including the Organization of American States, the Lima Group, and the European Union, *support* the Venezuelan people as they seek to restore their democracy.” (12)

While the sentence may come off as symmetrical, one may observe that the subject continues to begin with the United States as a main actor and the rest of the actors as supplementary.

In the last three statements from September to December 2019, a similar line ends each statement:

“with our *democratic partners* in the region and around the world, the United States stands with Interim President Guaido” (20)

“With our *democratic partners* in the region and around the world, the United States will continue to support interim President Guaido” (22)

“With our *democratic partners* in the region and around the world, the United States will continue to support the people of Venezuela” (23)

Here, while unnamed, the partnerships are linked politically to democratic regimes, once more stressing the crisis as a political one above all else. In other words, whether in supporting the people (23) or the opposition leader Guaidó (20, 22), it all comes back to democracy. The term “region” comes before “around the world” indicating an approach that the Hemisphere must regionally cooperate above all the rest. However, the term “region” is used instead of “hemisphere,” showing that while the Hemisphere was defended by the US before, now the focus is on democracy above all else.

In terms of partners, the State Department acknowledges the European Union little, the only times being in the aforementioned list of actors from statement 12, and the following statement:

“We are also *heartened* by the European Parliament’s January 31 resolution recognizing Juan Guaido as Interim President. They join the United States and more than 23 other countries in recognizing Juan Guaido as Interim President” (14).

The term “heartened” comes off as condescending, putting the EU down as an unimportant actor whose recognition was clearly voluntary and not important. This partly has to do with the fact that the EU hesitated to come out with a recognition of Guaidó as President due to internal Member State diversions. The statement mocks the EU in a way for a failure to reach a statement arriving late to the table, paralleling the weeks late response in releasing a statement towards the 2002 coup. This also reinforces the idea that Washington does not fully support the EU as a single actor, as Dykmann argues, which is reinforced by the statement addressing EU *Member States*, rather than the EU as a whole:

“We encourage all countries, including other EU Member States, to support the Venezuelan people by recognizing Interim President Guaido and supporting the National Assembly’s efforts to return constitutional democracy to Venezuela.” (14).

By stating the “EU Member States” as opposed to the “EU” the US fails to acknowledge the EU as an effective single voice and brushes it aside as a side actor.

In terms of solutions, the US State Department expresses actions in the form of sanctions taken unilaterally against individuals as well as sectors. The individual sanctions target those who are associated with the regime, who are always named, including the naming of activities they were involved in and usually followed by the following line:

“U.S. sanctions need not be permanent; they are intended to change behavior. States would consider lifting sanctions for persons sanctioned under E.O. 13692 that take concrete and meaningful actions to restore democratic order.” (9).

The emphasis on the individual nature of these sanctions, along with their reversibility gives a justification for the sanctions and the intention of the US in using them “to change behavior.” Such behavior of actions to restore democratic order is vague, and brings the punishment back to the core of the violations which the US considers to be linked to failure to respect democracy. It also emphasizes that the sanctions “do not target the innocent people of Venezuela” (13) once again proposing a solution which is punitive towards the officials whom the US tainted as corrupt while helping the people which the US has appealed to as innocent and good.

The frequency and depth of sanctions imposed under the Trump administration has been known as a “maximum pressure” approach. This does not mean that the same strategies were not used previously (Obama’s executive order 13692 set up the initial legal base for sanctions). It must be noted, however, in regards to solutions, that Trump, as President, made remarks on a few occasions implying the consideration of a potential military option. However, the State Department never expressed such a view, thus the remarks may be considered rogue statements from the President not unlike his other statements of threatening military force, which is a characteristic of nationalistic leaders (such as him) to boast military

strength and make aimless threats.<sup>113</sup> As this study uses the State Department as the voice of official foreign policy stances of the US, such remarks will not be considered in this study.

A critical phrase comes up towards the end of this sample, showing the true US historical mentality towards the current situation:

“No dictatorships last forever. Venezuela will soon be free, and those responsible for abuses and violations of human rights in Venezuela will be held accountable.” (19).

This statement is unique as it is one of the only times the word dictator is used and the only time a temporary time frame is suggested. While the intentions of the US could be varied in this statement (suggesting possible forced regime change, a threat, new elections, etc), the clear message refers back to the Hemisphere’s long struggle with dictatorships and the US role in ending those regimes. In this case the role is not directly on the ground yet nevertheless active as a punitive actor imposing sanctions and restricting from the outside.

Overall, the general trend of the US in defining the situation, the peoples’ struggles and solutions is rooting everything back to democracy, or the lack thereof. It is the political lens through which the US views this crisis and cannot separate any part of it from the political regime which is labeled authoritarian and dictatorial, condemned with harsh words, and sanctioned. The people on the other hand are displayed as innocent, revolutionary, and powerful, who are fighting for rights which are all interconnected with political rights and rooted once more in the violations of the regime. In creating this picture, the US is able to define the overall situation as non-democratic and thus a problem for the US, as a protector of democracy in the Hemisphere. The US uses the word “hemisphere” in maintaining its Monroe control over the Hemisphere, mocks the EU’s voice in its statements, and sets it, along other international actors, to the side. Thus, the US actively constructs a role of being a dominant force in the region and imposing punitive measures on the “bad” government officials to help the “good” people. In creating this dichotomy and demonizing the regime’s actions as anti-democratic, the US permits itself to enter the scene and take action.

#### 10. Stage II: Comparative Social Processing Analysis of EU and US Role Construction

First, from the start of each statement, the US centers itself, whereas the EU at times stresses its concerns, and at times the situation itself. The US never begins with neutral statements of the events without including itself as the main subject, seeing itself as involved from the situation by nature. The EU on the other hand is able to recognize the humanitarian crisis on the ground without involving itself, rather, establishing interest based on shared values relating to human rights. In brief, the US sees itself as an actor involved from the start, whereas the EU must establish a relationship to have a seat at the table. It does so by initially stressing these shared values and highlighting the number of European citizens living in Venezuela. Then, the EU takes a focus of the humanitarian crisis, and its concerns, establishing a role of a defender of human rights and justifies its involvement as such. In other words, the difference in approaching the situation suggests that the US sees its role as an obligation to the situation to speak out against a non-democratic regime, whereas the EU is voluntarily stepping in to defend human rights and must defend its seat at the table.

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<sup>113</sup> Erin Jenne, “Populism, Nationalism and Revisionist Foreign Policy,” *International Affairs* 97, no. 2 (2021): 323–43, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa230>.



The clearest marker of differences in presenting and defining the situation lies in the willingness to call out the Maduro regime, name Maduro and label the regime as authoritarian or dictatorial. As seen in the textual analysis, the EU highly avoids calling Maduro out by name whereas the US consistently calls Maduro out, linking him to the regime and in the later years conflating him with the regime as a dictator. That is not to say that the EU does not condemn the government, nor the US does not call out the humanitarian situation. Rather, the EU focuses on the humanitarian situation and the suffering of the people and from there makes a plea for international cooperation based on the situation on the ground. For the US, the root is the political regime and from which stems the humanitarian crisis. In other words, for the US, the biggest violation is a political one (not respecting democracy) whereas for the EU it is a value-based one (not respecting the human rights of the people and the crisis on the ground). These priorities construct opposing approaches to the situation and in doing so, will begin to construct the roles of the two actors. The US uses the political condemnations and blaming to construct itself as an actor who fights for democracy, especially in the region, continuing a long tradition of doing so. The EU on the other hand presents itself as an alternative protector, that of human rights in the region and promoter of liberal values and principles.

The US articulates policy considering its hegemonic position and historical place in calling out non-democratic regimes in the hemisphere and intervening in the name of democracy. In this sense, the US sees Venezuela as no more than another brutal, oppressive authoritarian regime which must be called out and eliminated as done before. In pulling the “hemisphere” card, the US brings back a Monroe Doctrine tone of separating the American States from other international actors who lay outside the hemisphere, such as the EU. The active tone of the US, along with the use of the repetition of the word “hemisphere” creates a role of the US as its protector, as it has fought for democracy in the hemisphere for decades through interventions and forced regime changes. In fact, the very name of the “operation uphold democracy” for the military coup in Haiti shows the US as it sees itself a protector of democracy and its own responsibility to keep regimes in the Hemisphere democratic.

In its claim to the Hemisphere, and its protection of democracy throughout, the US establishes a relationship with the people of Venezuela based upon historical values of the political foundations which the two countries share. The US paints images of Venezuelans as courageous and innocent, suffering at the hands of the brutal, oppressive Maduro regime and present calls for emancipation and sovereignty: they can take their country into their own hands. The dichotomy created paints a picture of a country ready for a revolution, symbolizing past revolutions, as the US makes a direct emotional connection to Simón Bolívar and his revolution which freed the people. The US uses possessive pronouns to demonstrate how the country belongs to the Venezuelans and an active voice of the suffering the regime and officials have directly caused. This does two things: first, it creates an emotional connection and establishes a connection based on the shared history of the people in the Americas who fought for freedom and independence from the Europeans. This sentiment, alongside the use of the word “hemisphere,” establishes a relationship the US has with the country which the EU or other actors outside the hemisphere do not. Second, it places the peoples’ suffering as directly caused by the Maduro regime, thus conflating the humanitarian with the political. By doing this, the US can point a finger to Maduro as blamed for everything and by connecting all issues back to the non-democratic actions of the government. The US can legitimize its involvement as the protector of democracy in the

Hemisphere and by transitive property gives itself the responsibility to take action on behalf of all the issues.

The historical basis of the US position is clear. The decades of intervention in non-democratic regimes in the hemisphere and the Monroe Doctrine back up the sentiment of a responsibility to protect democracy in the Americas. Specifically, the line sums up a great amount of US mentality:

“No dictatorships last forever. Venezuela will soon be free, and those responsible for abuses and violations of human rights in Venezuela will be held accountable” (19).

The language used in these lines emits three messages: 1. The Hemisphere has seen many dictators and the US has played a significant role in ousting them. 2. The country has a right to emancipation and 3. The US will play the role of punishing those who they view as responsible. Overall, the lines could be viewed as a threat. The US takes the exact opposite approach of the EU, whose avoidance of the term “regime” and tiptoeing around regime change strategies attempts to avoid rhetoric that would suggest a regime overturning by any force. The temporal aspect puts Venezuela in the context of the dictatorships that came and went in the Hemisphere and the US having played a role in changing those regimes. In this case, while military action did not occur, the US is willing to “hold accountable” those responsible, showing a punitive threat, once again as a force in the region with leverage over countries and influence over ending regimes, even if not through direct intervention.

As seen in the textual analysis, for the US, strategies and solutions are unilateral (sanctions), with brief mentions of other international actors, whereas for the EU, while sanctions are implemented, international cooperation is key to reaching solutions through the creation of the International Contact Group. This enforces the role each is performing: the US as the one and only protector in the Hemisphere, responsible for the situation, and the EU as a collaborator, intending to partner with countries in the region as well as others in the International Contact Group created to collectively reach the conditions necessary for change.

The EU and US both implement sanctions, which have some similarities and some differences. Similarities include the individual sanctions which both actors stress do not impact the people of Venezuela. For the EU, this part is key, as the humanitarian situation is the center of the objectives and for the US it is key to condemn the regime in saving the people from it, once again juxtaposing the two and taking the side of the people. The difference is the broad sectoral sanctions that the US implements in a “maximum pressure” strategy as a punitive way to bring about change in behavior by isolating the sectors. Indeed, both actors outline goals of the sanctions to be temporary and motivating changes in behavior. The EU aims for “shared solutions” (1, 4, 7, 9, 21) with a passive mention of individuals’ “non-respect of democratic principles.” (4, 6, 7). The US sanctions on the other hand use strong language to name and demean officials, using an active voice such as officials who “to corruptly enrich themselves” (23). The times where US sanctions are expressed many times are not connected to a solution, implying that they are simply punitive for the actions of the individuals and intended to retaliate against their actions, which are once again actively connected to harming the Venezuelan people. Thus, the EU and US differ in their strategies of sanctions: The EU using them as a tool to bring about positive change in behavior, as centered around changing behavior *towards* democratic principles, and the US to simply punish the officials and Maduro regime for their *past* violations of democratic

principles. In doing so, the EU looks towards the future as the US turns to the past to find solutions. The EU demonstrates itself as a new, collaborative partner on the scene to make a positive change, and the US as following an old pattern of punitive, at times forceful intervention into non-democratic regimes in the Hemisphere.

The solutions proposed ultimately create a vision of the role which each is attempting to construct. As seen, the Council presents the EU as a negotiator and collaborator, searching for a negotiated peaceful political solution, avoids calling out Maduro as putting the blame on Maduro would close doors for negotiation within the region along with international partners, and shows that at the end of the day, the EU is involved to solve the humanitarian crisis which it separates from the regime. Both actors are concerned with the human rights of the Venezuelans, yet for the EU, the separation of the humanitarian and the political lead to a solution of bringing new elections and democratic institutions in order to facilitate the respect for these human rights. For the US, human rights *are* democracy, and the inherent link created between the two and the ideology oppressing human rights leaves no option but for regime change back to a democratic regime. At the end of the day, both actors have similar goals of restoring democracy, human rights, and rule of law, among other principles. Yet while the EU focuses on specific actions at an institutional level which can be achieved through international cooperation, the US paints the whole picture through the same ideological lens, justifying a broad, clearcut solution to the problem which has been seen before as “no dictatorships last forever” and in doing so justifies a continuation of the role of fighting for democracy in the Hemisphere.

The “peaceful and political solution” presented shows the EU as an opposite to the US which has consistently relied on military force to change non-democratic regimes. Instead, the EU steps on the scene, establishes a vested interest and relationship based on the same democratic values the US uses, yet presents an alternative approach, in hope to attract the rest of the international community to find a solution which does not use military force by any means. The solution also differs from that of the US in that the EU pushes for “fresh elections” (6, 7, 10, 11) rather than the US goal of ousting Maduro from power (“no dictatorship lasts forever”). This diversion shows the EU giving the people the will to choose their leader through elections looking towards a new future. The US has already decided for the people of Venezuela that Maduro must go and takes punitive action to punish the regime and its leaders, in a “maximum pressure” approach to force Maduro out of power, while not intervening *per se*.

In conclusion, the EU is presenting a new role for itself to be a new political partner in the region in promoting democracy and human rights, just as it has presented itself as a fresh trade partner in the region for Latin American economies to diversify their partners and emancipate themselves from the US’s monopoly on investment to develop these countries. Presenting itself as a new political partner and proposing “peaceful political” solutions clearly is a response to the long time US forceful regime changes in the Hemisphere. The US on the other hand, in its claim to the hemisphere, attempts to maintain Monroe-like control of the region, centering itself from the beginning, and taking it in its own hands through unilateral action to condemn and punish the regime and its officials, as the protector of democracy in the Hemisphere. All of the suffering is conflated with the oppressive regime. In conclusion, the EU presents itself as a new partner in contrast to the US and the US actively pushes the EU away as it grasps to retain full control of protecting democracy in the hemisphere. Thus,

the two actors, in the construction of their roles towards responding to the situation in Venezuela, are also responding to each others' construction of roles. The following tables summarize the findings on the three levels of analysis for each of the four discursive dimensions which were laid out in these sections.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Presentations and Definitions

	EU	US
Textual Analysis	Objective descriptions of the situation; Passive voice, nominalization; Terms "government" versus "regime"; Presenting the situation from a neutral standpoint; Focus on problems themselves; Separation of the political from humanitarian; Maduro "starting his mandate;" "Polarization."	Unable to objectively describe situation objectively without intertwined condemnations and always through a political lens; Conflation of Maduro and regime; Calling out Maduro, Maduro regime; Labels of "authoritarian" and "dictator"
Processing Analysis	Description of the situation as complex; No blame on Maduro; The human rights situation is a problem that must be solved on its own not to be involved with politics; the problems are not necessarily linked to an ideology.	Maduro regime as actively causing the human suffering; The regime as a dictatorship is a threat; The situation must be addressed through democracy as the human rights violations are all connected to lack of democracy
Social Analysis	The EU as a neutral actor, hoping for cooperation; the EU focused on protection of human rights, the EU hesitant to blame the Maduro regime.	The US role to call out regime; The US justifies involvement as a protector of democracy against the dictatorial regime causing suffering

Table 2. Comparative Analysis of Values, Principles and Rights

	EU	US
Textual Analysis	“Fundamental” rights centered around individuals; Separate from political rights; No labels of authoritarianism, dictatorship but calls to re-establish democratic institutions.	Human rights are always connected to democracy, (political rights); Active voice blaming Maduro and officials for regime causing human rights violations; Possessive pronoun usage indicating ownership of democracy; All values connected to democracy
Processing Analysis	Democratic institutions and institutional change (elections) as main way to enable these rights; Mention of democratic ways forward; No backwards blame	All blame of the humanitarian crisis linked to Maduro and regime, lack of democracy; People as owners of their own democracy; Democracy as the only way out, needs to be re-established
Social Analysis	EU as problem and solution-oriented; Seeks specific institutional change; Obligated to act on human rights violations	US determines and condemns the regime; US as standing by the people, establishing their needs to return to democracy

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Appeals to the People

	EU	US
Textual Analysis	Use of terms "population" and "people," possessive pronoun usage ("their future"), Political "will;" Focus on suffrage, elections	Use of word "Hemisphere;" use of Bolívar revolutionary reference; The Venezuelans as ordinary people victims of officials as corrupt, greedy; Continued assertion of US as main subject
Processing Analysis	Separates the political from the humanitarian effect on people; Self-determination and sovereignty as "political will" and main appeal to the people	The people as needing to be emancipated, a new revolution, dichotomy of the courageous, innocent masses and the corrupt government officials; The US in central role in relation
Social Analysis	Role of EU as political negotiator separate from role of EU as promoter of human rights; Main priority of elections and institutions in freeing the people, enabling a way out; Ability to tackle humanitarian crisis without involving in politics or the regime	US establishing a common relationship on the basis of independence movements; US as protector of democracy in the hemisphere (Monroe Doctrine), keeping others out of the picture.

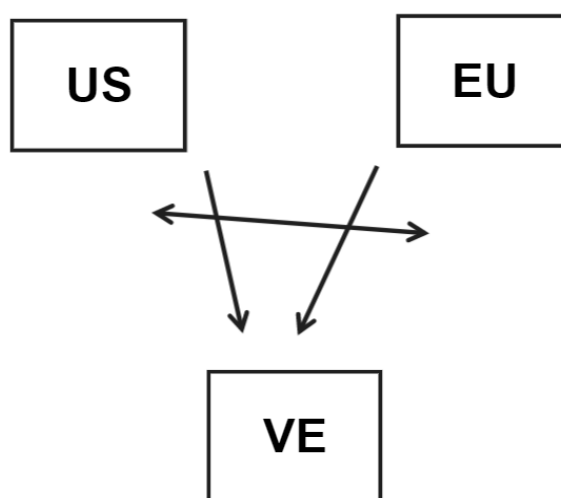
Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Strategies and Solutions

	EU	US
Textual Analysis	Calls on actors for collaboration; EU as an active subject; reiteration of a "peaceful political solution"	Little mention of cooperation, partners subordinate in sentence to US active subject; "no dictatorships last forever;" "democratic partners," "heartened by the EU decision;" Unilateral individual sanctions
Processing Analysis	Solution-oriented on establishing new elections and democratic institutions; No military force nor intervention	US as center point and partners as side players; Unilateral action punishes individuals directly for behavior
Social Analysis	The EU as central player bringing together the cooperation efforts; EU presenting a contrasting approach in response to US military interventionism: it must be peaceful, and through international cooperation it can gain the capacity to implement a solution in the region	US maintains its control to condemn and take unilateral action over the situation; Hints at regime change; Does not take the EU as a serious actor

## 11. Proposed Adaptations of the EU/US/VE Triangle

The findings of this analysis suggest that the dynamics between the relations and roles being created are much more intertwined than the original 3-legged triangle displays. The following four models suggest proposed adaptations to the triangle with the aim of viewing these complexities of relations and roles from different angles. The aim is that these theoretical approximations may contribute to future studies of the EU/US/VE triangle and the role dynamics within.

### 11.1 Model 1. The V-Cross Triangle

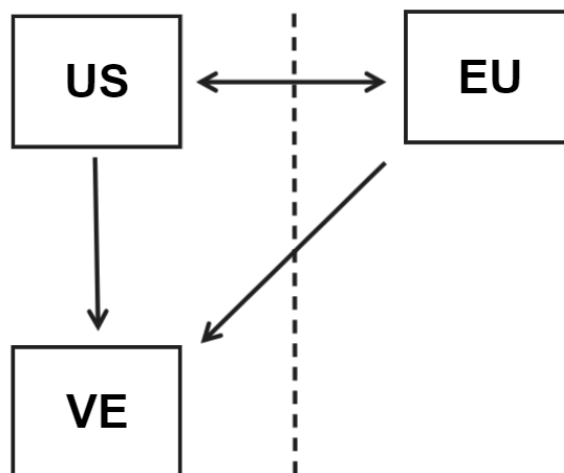


Model 1. The V-Cross Triangle

The first model proposes a revision to the East-West leg of the triangle, dropping the line which represents the EU and US relations down to intersect with the top-down relations of EU and US towards Venezuela. The resulting model suggests that in developing policy and constructing roles towards Venezuela, the two must consider each other first (the horizontal line). This model could be used to claim that the US is taking the EU into consideration as a new actor in preserving its dominance over the Hemisphere and keeping others out while the EU must consider this Monroe Doctrine role of the US when enacting policy and developing its role to the region in proposing alternative peaceful political solutions.



### 11.2 Model 2. The Asymmetrical Cross-cutting Triangle



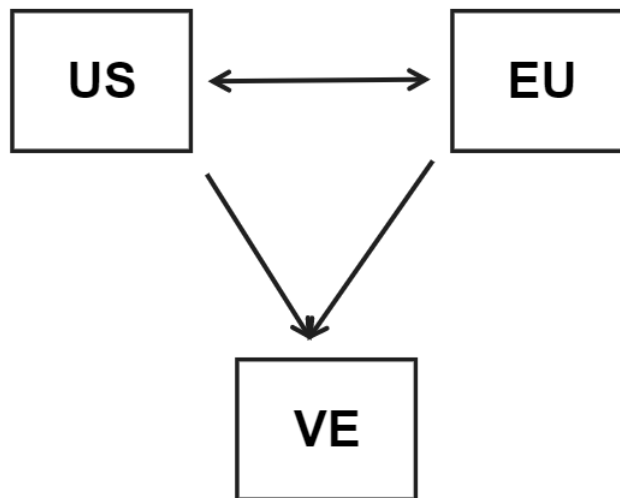
Model 2. The Asymmetrical Cross-cutting Triangle

The second proposed model presents an asymmetrical relationship between the EU and US in their roles constructed towards the region. The Asymmetrical Cross-cutting model (Model 2) maintains the 3 legs of the traditional triangle, establishing the three relationships with each other, however, a dotted line separates the sphere of influence of the US on the Western Hemisphere and the EU to the East. While the US relations constructed top-down point directly towards Venezuela, the EU has to cut crosswords into the “US territory,” so to speak. According to this model, in creating relations with Venezuela, the EU must cross over into the US sphere of influence that it maintains over the Hemisphere. It suggests that the US creates this sphere of influence in line with the Monroe Doctrine and while the US does not have to cross over any line with the EU creating its policies towards Venezuela, the EU does have to cross that line to consider the US in developing its role, as it is entering into the American “territory.” This model reinforces Dykmann’s findings, who suggests that you can write a book about US-Latin American relations without mentioning the EU but cannot do the contrary.<sup>114</sup>

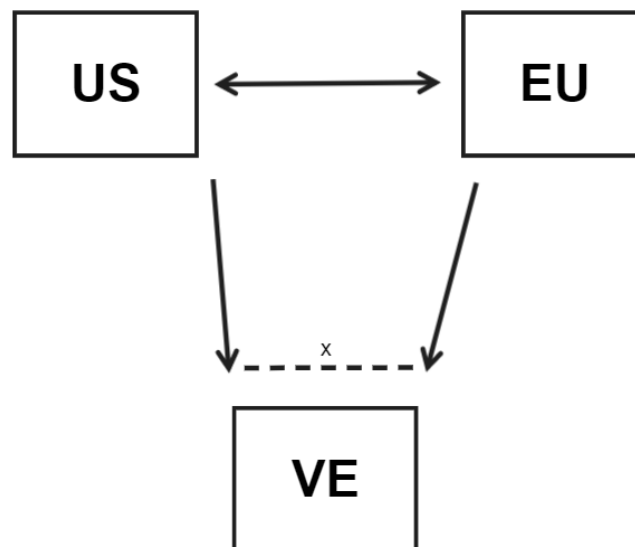
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<sup>114</sup> Interviews carried out by Dykmann, *Perceptions and Politics*, 136

### 11.3 Models 3.1 and 3.2 The Converging Arrow versus the Diverging Arrow



Model 3.1 The Converging Arrow Model

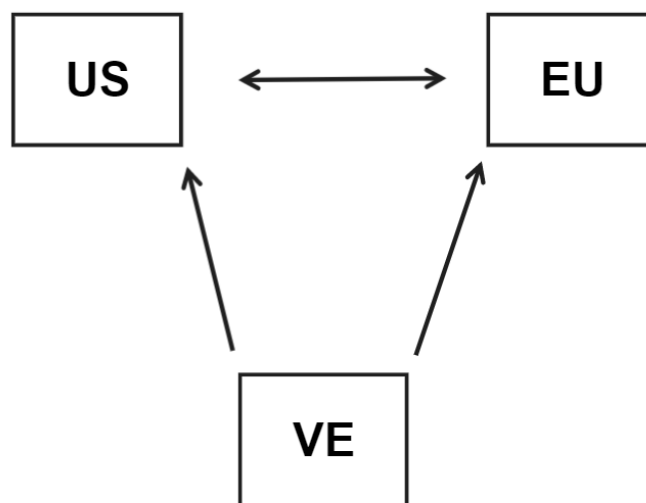


Model 3.2 The Diverging Arrow Model

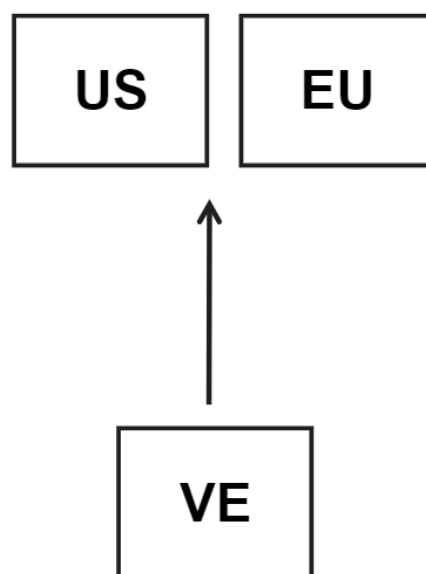
The third models represent the arrows coming from the EU and US as they reach Venezuela. Model 3.1 presents a triangle in which the two arrows representing the end results of EU and US policy converge completely. This model suggests that at the end of the day, the relations constructed and policy implemented towards Venezuela in reality have the same end goals and thus aim to reach the same endpoint. It could also suggest that Venezuela receives the roles and endpoints to be the same. These end goals could include regime change, maintaining human rights and democratic principles, the re-establishment of democracy, new

elections, among others seen in this study. On the other hand, in Model 3.2 the diverging arrows represent an EU and US which have different end goals and reach Venezuela at different points. This model could be used to suggest that the US main goal is for Maduro to be ousted by any means, whereas the EU main goal is for new elections. In the diverging arrow model, the proximity of the end points may be adjusted depending on the proximity of the end goals, as demonstrated by the variable “x.”

#### 11.4 Models 4.1 and 4.2 Venezuela’s Response (separate or single)



Model 4.1 Venezuela Separate Responses



Model 4.2. Venezuela Single Response

Unfortunately, due to the extent of this study, a major limitation was that the analysis excluded any look into Venezuelan policy response and role construction in response to the EU and US roles constructed. Thus, the study leaves the following models to ponder what those responses could look like and encourages further research to analyze such responses. Model 4.1 displays that the Venezuelan government responds to each actor separately while model 4.2 suggests that the Venezuelan government conflates the two roles together and in doing so, responds to their actions together. Model 4.1 could be used to argue that Venezuela responds to the US as an imperial power acting through the Monroe Doctrine while the EU as performing a contrasting different role focused on human rights. Model 4.2 could be used to argue that Venezuela sees both the EU and US as attempting to interfere in their political affairs, as two imperial powers alike, among other similarities that Venezuela might see in the two roles constructed.

## 12. Conclusions: a New Monroe Doctrine?

In conclusion, this study has shown how EU and US relations with Venezuela have changed leading up to the 21st century and how they constructed roles towards the Maduro regime through language used in statements from the years 2017 to 2019. The critical discourse analysis on textual, processing, and social levels demonstrated how specific words and linguistic features of text can illustrate role construction using a social constructivist approach.

There is no doubt that the Monroe Doctrine serves as a central focal point through which many view US foreign policy in the region. It is also relevant for the EU, as a new actor with strategies and solutions directly contrasting the interventionist, unilateral actions of the US that these countries were victims of for decades. As seen in the Common Position on Cuba of 1996, the wording that “it is not European Union policy to try to bring about change by coercive measures”<sup>115</sup> is a direct response to the US interventionist approach of the time. In doing so, the EU is attempting to provide an alternative to Latin American countries struggling to reject the US strategies and policy decided unilaterally.

The EU is a new actor on the scene, and while authors show the EU as a new option for Latin American countries to diversify their economic partnerships,<sup>116</sup> it appears to be more than that. This study has shown how the EU, through the same human rights and democratic institutional lens it has been seen to use, is striving for a seat at the table in finding a solution for Venezuela. In this case, the EU is more than just one statement or one common position, as it has been in the past. It is consistent in releasing statements calling for new elections, and condemning the regime’s attack on democratic institutions. The creation of an International Contact Group was a direct attempt to take collaborative action in bringing together actors and to show that creating the conditions for democratic change can be pacific and solution-oriented, focusing on specific goals such as new elections, whereas the US actions focus almost exclusively on punitive sanctions. For the US, the lack of democracy is the problem. For the EU, the re-establishment of democracy is the solution.

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<sup>115</sup> COMMON POSITION of 2 December 1996 defined by the Council on the basis of Article J.2 of the Treaty on European Union, on Cuba.

<sup>116</sup> Carranza, “Leaving the Backyard,”

The role constructed towards Venezuela shows the US caught between two sides of the Monroe Doctrine, in part considering the new role of the EU on the scene. On one hand, the emancipation appeal to the people sets the US on the same level as Venezuela as two countries both led by revolutionaries that freed themselves from colonial powers and pushed them out of the region. In this sense, the US achieves two goals: it pushes European powers out of the picture, while making a plea for the people to take matters into their own hands, taking a turn away from the attitude of telling a regime or people in the region how to handle internal political affairs or taking action for them. This step back is reflected in Obama's previous statement, referencing potential strategies and solutions: "that's not something that the United States can necessarily do for Venezuela. Those are things the Venezuelans have to decide to prioritize and their leaders have to decide to respond to."<sup>117</sup>

Yet on the other side of the Monroe Doctrine, the US can still be seen as a punitive force in the region, directly punishing those officials in the Maduro government who are determined to be actively suppressing the human rights of the Venezuelan people. After all, taking unilateral action through sanctions attempts to indirectly affect internal political affairs and is thus reflective of the Monroe Doctrine control over the Hemisphere. Indeed, the Monroe Doctrine is precisely depicted as punitive, as seen in the "Uncle Sam with a Big Stick" cartoon (figure 3). This begs to ask the question: is the US attempting to reshape the Monroe Doctrine, exchanging Uncle Sam's "big stick" for a helping hand?

While there is focus on the individuals and the people, it is created through a dichotomy between the courageous people and the "corrupt" regime, and centered entirely around democracy. The US is walking a fine line between a desire to move away from a Monroe interventionist approach yet not ready to take the "big stick" off of the hemisphere, especially concerning democracy. The strategy is instead placed on the people as a central point in order to make an appeal to their cause and justify US unilateral action without others claiming it is just another US attempt at regime change or involvement in internal political affairs of the region. Washington is well aware of critiques of the history of US interventionism in Latin America just as much as they are aware of the fact that in the years to come, new actors are arriving on the scene, such as the EU, and these actors will have the influence and capacity to present new solutions and different strategies. Above all, the US can no longer simply invade a country in the region in the name of ousting communism. The Cold War is long over, and so is the hegemonic phase in the decade that followed during which Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton continued with invasions in the region for regime change. The US knows that if it wishes to change non-democratic regimes in the region, it must take a different approach, thus placing democracy on an individual level and justifying action in protecting the people's democracy, not just that of the State. This then creates the tightrope of Monroe-ism: while the US continues to take unilateral action against the regime through sanctions to push for democracy, it must justify it through a human rights lens, taking into consideration the EU's strategy, and at the same time, keep the European powers outside of the hemisphere, hence the hemispheric and emancipation appeal to the people.

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<sup>117</sup> The White House, "Background Briefing on the Situation in Venezuela," March 6, 2013, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/03/205689.htm>.

These findings confirm what many authors have pointed to, such as Weisbrot, who claims that the US has continued the Monroe Doctrine through the Obama administration.<sup>118</sup> John Bolton, the same national security advisor who refused the language of the G7 communiqué, said on March 3rd, 2019, “we’re not afraid to use the Monroe Doctrine. This is a country in our hemisphere.”<sup>119</sup> Yet at the same time, there is a shift. Even under the Trump administration’s many sanctions and maximum pressure policies, there is a step back from direct intervention and a turn to a people-centered approach, as seen in Trump’s remarks similar to those of Obamas in a 2019 speech: “The people of Venezuela are standing for freedom and democracy, and the United States of America is standing right by their side.”<sup>120</sup> While this study has not focused on oral remarks of government officials or Presidents, these comments reflect the findings of US policy in the written statements. The US is taking action to punish the regime and push for change, yet at the same time, taking a people-centered approach and standing by. In conclusion, as the EU is presenting itself as a new actor on the scene with its proposed peaceful political solutions in response to the US Monroe Doctrine, the US finds itself attempting to hold down the Hemisphere while approaching from a human rights and people-centered emancipation lens to democracy. This approach takes into consideration that these are the discursive strategies that powers will be using in the 21st century, and that the EU will be coming onto the scene pushing these very discursive strategies as a defender of human rights and liberal institutional values. In constructing roles towards Venezuela, the EU and US are constructing roles towards each other as well.

These findings beg to reconsider the Monroe Doctrine and demonstrate that the relations are much more complex than the traditional triangle suggests, thus four new models of the triangle are proposed to bring the critical discourse analysis to a theoretical level. The first triangle (the V-Cross Triangle) proposes that there is an East-West relationship in which both actors cross taking into consideration the other in developing and enacting their foreign policy and roles towards Venezuela. The second model (the Asymmetrical Cross-cutting Triangle) proposes a model where the EU “enters” the US territory and must consider the US role whereas the US need not consider the EU’s role in developing foreign policy towards Venezuela. The intention of these models is to show new theoretical visual approaches to understand the roles at play. Given the aforementioned findings, I suggest that these roles are playing out according to Model 1, as the EU and US are both considering the other in their responses to Venezuela. The EU presents new strategies to regime change and the re-establishment of democracy in the country through an institutional approach in contrast to the historical US interventionist approaches, while the US considers the EU in holding its foot down on the Hemisphere and adjusting the Monroe Doctrine policies accordingly towards a people-centered human rights approach, shifting away from the years of unilateral military action of invasions and coups.

However, while both seem to be considering the other in their approaches, the US appears to interpret its role according to Model 2 (the Asymmetrical Cross-cutting Triangle).

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<sup>118</sup> Weisbrot, “Commentary: Obama’s Latin America Policy.”

<sup>119</sup> Daniel Jativa, “John Bolton: ‘We’re Not Afraid to Use the Word Monroe Doctrine,’” *Washington Examiner*, March 3, 2019,

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/john-bolton-were-not-afraid-to-use-the-word-monroe-doctrine>.

<sup>120</sup> Donald Trump, “Remarks by President Trump to the Venezuelan American Community” (Miami, February 18, 2019),

<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-venezuelan-american-community/>.

The language used dismisses the EU as a side player, precisely as Dykmann has argued, and the scoffing at the delayed responses presents the US as the one who is in control of the Hemisphere and interprets the EU as simply attempting to enter this territory of geopolitics. The degree to which the US is truly concerned by the EU's growing influence is unknown. Yet there is reason to consider this view of the EU as non-threatening as a bluff, just as the Monroe Doctrine itself has been argued to be an overestimation of the US capacity to truly keep the entire Western Hemisphere in its control.<sup>121</sup>

Lastly, Models 3.1 and 3.2 address the roles as they relate to end goals for Venezuela and their similarity, begging the question: are they ultimately the same? While the EU focuses on new elections and the re-establishment of democratic institutions in a solution-oriented tangible approach, the US focuses more on democracy and ousting a dictator, referencing the history of ousting regimes in the hemisphere ("No dictatorships last forever." (19)). Yet at the end of the day, the main goals are ultimately very similar, if not identical. Elections, the respect of human rights, the return of rule of law and other values mentioned meet the same goals, whether the lens through which the EU views the situation is separating the humanitarian from the political and the US lens conflates the two. Therefore, I suggest that the converging arrow (Model 3.1) or a diverging arrow with very close proximity would be the most reflective to view the roles in which the actors are playing in reaching a solution.

Ultimately, geopolitics is a game. The EU and US are seen to be actively changing their roles as they approach the region and the aim of this analysis was to demonstrate the importance of language in shaping foreign policy and creating actors' roles in the international system as they relate to each other. The findings propose one interpretation of the discursive strategies used: that the US continues to play its role of a dominant protector of democracy in the hemisphere, while taking a step back towards allowing Venezuelans to pursue their own emancipation, while the EU presents itself as a new actor on the scene, ready to collaborate and provide fresh, peaceful options for Latin American countries to diversify their strategies to political solutions. In the 21st century, Latin American countries are now gaining influence and will only continue to shape their new roles, which may also shift the triangle, which further studies may tackle using the models presented. Only time will tell whether the US truly means to adapt the Monroe Doctrine or get rid of it altogether in the face of new powers coming onto the scene presenting truly peaceful solutions, and if power will shift towards giving the EU increased influence in the region. These constantly changing roles and relations in an evolving multipolar system will be constructed every day through language - even if only through just a few words.

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<sup>121</sup> *Brief History of US-Latin American Relations.*

Appendix A. EU Council Statements Log

No.	Date	Statement Title
1	July 18, 2016	Conclusions on Venezuela
2	May 15, 2017	Council Conclusions on Venezuela
3	July 26, 2017	EU declaration on the situation in Venezuela
4	November 13, 2017	EU adopts conclusions and targeted sanctions
5	May 22, 2018	EU declaration on the presidential and regional elections in Venezuela (Declaration by the HR)
6	May 28, 2018	Council conclusions call for new restrictive measures
7	June 25, 2018	EU adds 11 officials to sanctions list
8	October 25, 2018	EU declaration on the situation in Venezuela
9	November 6, 2018	EU renews sanctions for one year
10	January 10, 2019	EU declaration on the new mandate of President Maduro
11	January 26, 2019	EU declaration on the latest developments in Venezuela (HR/VP)
12	February 24, 2019	EU declaration on the latest events in Venezuela (HR/VP)
13	March 2, 2019	EU declaration on Venezuela
14	March 7, 2019	EU declaration on the latest events in Venezuela
15	April 4, 2019	EU declaration on the decision to lift Juan Guaidó's parliamentary immunity
16	April 30, 2019	EU declaration on the latest events in Venezuela (HR/VP)
17	June 18, 2019	EU declaration on the situation in Venezuela (HR/VP)
18	July 16, 2019	EU declaration on the latest developments on Venezuela
19	September 27, 2019	EU adds 7 members of the security and intelligence forces to sanctions list
20	September 27, 2019	EU declaration on Venezuela
21	November 11, 2019	Council renews sanctions until 14 November 2020



Appendix B. US Department of State Statements Log

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Statement Title</b>
1	February 17, 2016	Venezuela: Inclusion of All Parties a Key to Solving Challenges
2	September 22, 2016	Announcement of Venezuelan Recall Referendum Timeline
3	July 30, 2017	Defending Democracy in Venezuela
4	October 19, 2017	Venezuela: Illegitimate Parallel Institutions
5	November 7, 2017	Anti-Democratic Actions by Maduro Regime in Venezuela
6	May 21, 2018	An Unfair, Unfree Vote in Venezuela
7	June 26, 2018	United States Assisting Venezuelans in Need
8	August 17, 2018	Maduro Regime Crackdown Following August 4 Incident
9	September 25, 2018	The United States Imposes Sanctions on Venezuelan Individuals and Entities
10	December 28, 2018	Secretary Pompeo Travels to Brazil and Colombia To Strengthen Prosperity, Security, and Democracy
11	January 10, 2019	Actions Against Venezuela's Corrupt Regime
12	January 23, 2019	Recognition of Juan Guaido as Venezuela's Interim President
13	January 28, 2019	Sanctions Against PDVSA and Venezuela Oil Sector
14	February 4, 2019	Recognition of Juan Guaido as Venezuela's Interim President by Several European Countries
15	March 4, 2019	Interim President Juan Guaido's Return to Venezuela

16	March 26, 2019	United States Condemns Attacks on Interim President Guaido and National Assembly Members
17	May 10, 2019	The United States Sanctions Venezuela's Defense and Security Sector
18	June 28, 2019	The United States Sanctions Nicolas Maduro Guerra
19	July 5, 2019	UN Human Rights Report Documents Maduro Regime's Human Rights Abuses
20	August 6, 2019	The United States Imposes Maximum Pressure on Former Maduro Regime
21	September 24, 2019	The United States Takes Action Against Former Maduro Regime Officials and Strengthens International Efforts
22	November 5, 2019	The United States Takes Action Against Former Maduro Regime Officials and Strengthens International Efforts
23	December 9, 2019	The United States Takes Action Against Maduro-Aligned Individuals

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