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A Tale of Two Revolutions: A Comparative Case Study of the Rhetoric of Twenty-First Century Socialist Movements in Cuba and Venezuela

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Abstract

Cuba and Venezuela have historically been signaled as the two longest-lasting socialist revolutions and governments in the Western hemisphere. Much of their revolutionary theory has been based on the actions taken by the United States towards Latin America as a whole, as well as towards those two countries specifically. This can be most acutely perceived in the ways in which the leaders of these revolutions, Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, speak about the United States in relation to their own ideologies. Consequently, simultaneously studying these policies by the United States, Castro's speeches, and those by Chávez provide evidence on how punishment and radicalization are closely related. Specifically, political sanctions have historically fueled the passion with which the sanctioned regime opposes its rival. Additionally, the punishment and radicalization on one revolutionary regime has informed the other revolutionary regime, in that the close ties between Cuba and Venezuela have been crucial to shaping some of Chávez's rhetoric as well.

Keywords

political science, comparative politics, latin american politics, cuban politics, cuba, venezuelan politics, venezuela, fidel castro, hugo chavez, social sciences, Tulia Falleti, Falleti, Tulia

Disciplines

Comparative Politics | Political Science

A TALE OF TWO REVOLUTIONS:
A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF THE RHETORIC OF
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SOCIALIST MOVEMENTS
IN CUBA AND VENEZUELA

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SENIOR HONORS THESIS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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Senior Honors Thesis for Political Science
Thesis Advisor: Professor Tulia Falletti

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I. INTRODUCTION

On March 11th, 2019, United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo explicitly blamed Havana and Moscow, the capitals of Cuba and Russia respectively, for the massive power outage in Caracas, Venezuela. He said of Venezuela's current situation, "When there is no electricity, thank the marvels of modern Cuban-led engineering. When there's no water, thank the excellent hydrologists from Cuba. When there's no food, thank the Cuban communist overlords."¹ Pompeo further described Cuba's relationship with Venezuela specifically as "a match made in hell."² Studying the situation from a perspective focused purely on recent events, the accusation that Cuba may be involved in the Venezuelan crisis, or even be considered Venezuela's "communist overlords", might

¹ David E. Sanger, Anatoly Kurmanaev and Isayen Herrera, "Pompeo Accuses Cuba and Russia of Propping Up Venezuelan Ruler," (*The New York Times*, 2019).

² Ibid.

seem bordering on conspiracy. However, the two countries have a much deeper connection than merely their dedication to a socialist ideology and a culinary taste for rice and black beans. Cuba and Venezuela are the two most well-known instances of established socialist regimes in Latin America in the twentieth and twenty-first century, consequently dubbing themselves as twenty-first century socialism itself.

The histories not only of the establishment of these regimes, but also the countries themselves, are far from identical. Cuba's socialist project began as more of a revolutionary movement in the sense that it was not politically sanctioned or democratically elected when Fidel Castro assumed power in 1959, whereas the project in Venezuela became politicized mainly through the election of Hugo Chávez Frías forty years later. Additionally, their trajectories since the ascension to power of both Castro and Chávez (and later on Nicolás Maduro) have not been entirely the same. However, the two brands of twenty-first century socialism have been mutually intertwined, based not just on trade agreements and diplomacy but a shared political and revolutionary ideology in particular, since the end of the twentieth century. As political leaders and faces of these revolutions, both Castro and Chávez have made no secret of their strong negative feelings towards the United States and its imperialism, going as far as to refer to the country as "the empire itself." As different as each revolution may have been or continues to be, this animosity towards the United States has long been a trademark to some degree of the rhetoric employed by these leaders, if not having been present since the beginning of their respective projects. This begs the question: to what extent have the policies of the United States towards Latin America informed the socialist projects of Cuba and Venezuela?

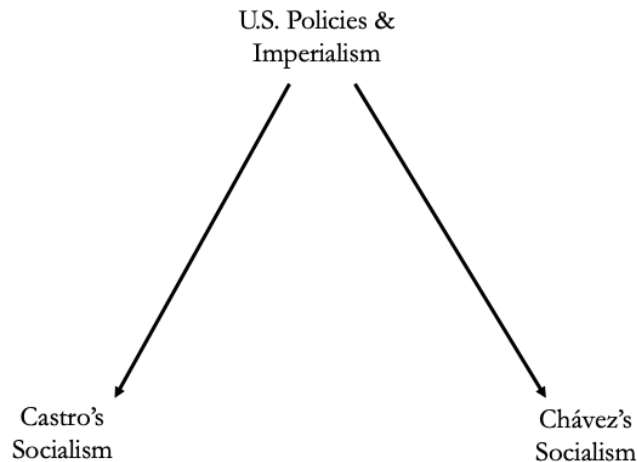


Figure 1: Logic Pyramid

The United States has a long history of implementing policies, both foreign and economic, that have both directly and indirectly impacted Latin America. As George Weeks described it, the relationship of the United States “with Latin America remained based firmly in the concept of security, and the advancements of U.S. economic development became intertwined with security.”³ This paper will provide a brief overview of the existing literature on the relationship between the three points of the Logic Pyramid, shown above. A summary will then be provided of United States interventions in the region, taking the time to outline specific instances in which its policies have impacted Cuba or Venezuela alone. Basing this argument on dependency theory, the point will be made that the foreign policies of the U.S. can and historically have influenced certain regimes and political rhetoric in Latin America.

In order to do this, a closer look at certain speeches by Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez will show how the discourse of each leader evolved over time, in response to actions taken by the United States. U.S. interventions occurring both before and during the governance of each leader will establish a connection not only between the historical American legacy of involvement in Latin America and current regime ideology, but also between ongoing sanctions and the leaders’ speeches

³ Gregory Weeks, *U.S. and Latin American Relations*, (Pearson Longman, 2008), 89.

at the time. This will demonstrate that political sanctions have the capacity to further radicalize the governments being sanctioned. A further examination of the triangular relationship shown in Figure 1 will also show the connection between Castro's socialism and Chávez's socialism, as well as the more complex relationship between Castro and the United States. Finally, the implications of this study on the current political situation in Venezuela and the United States' role will be outlined, arguing the need to proceed with caution when imposing sanctions even just on high-level governmental officials. This policy suggestion will be based on the overarching thesis that political sanctions and ideological radicalization have a complicated, mutually influential relationship, as shown by these specific case studies of Cuba and Venezuela.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In his book, Weeks does an efficient job of tracing the present relations between the United States and countries in Latin America back to the late 19th century, including Cuba and Venezuela. He analyzes the motivation behind these actions taken by the United States, arguing that oftentimes these are meant to serve American interests almost exclusively. Furthermore, he pays attention to global settings that have an undeniable effect on the region, including and particularly the Cold War. He also studies the relationships between these countries to some extent, describing how certain grievances were shared across borders and thus cultivating a culture that was dissatisfied with imperialism.

Peter Smith, on the other hand, attributes this rather paternalistic approach by the United States towards Venezuela, and the region as a whole, to President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy, which he describes "not as a departure from past practices but as the *culmination* of trends in U.S. policy toward the region."⁴ Smith focuses more on outlining the policies and historical trajectories of interventionism by the United States toward Latin America, beginning in the 19th century and

⁴ Peter Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*, (New York: Oxford University, 2013), 92.

continuing until the year of writing, 2013. He critically studies the potential motivations behind, content of, and impact upon Latin America as a whole of specific policies by the United States through an admittedly anti-imperialist lens, detailing how certain actions by the American government may have led to radicalization or worsening of conditions in Latin America. His explanation of the reasoning and impact of the stance of the United States on regional hegemony, leftist regimes, and neoliberalism provides important contextualization of the country's actions, particularly its behavior towards regimes it opposes or considers dangerous for its own interests, such as Cuba. He further suggests an almost circular relationship between the policies of the United States against communist regimes and the radicalization of these regimes.

While both Smith and Weeks effectively provide a general overview of the relationship between the United States and Latin America through structuralist perspectives, their works do not particularly touch upon the relationships between the countries in Latin America affected by what they are studying. Smith does not center his study on Venezuela and Cuba, and consequently does little in terms of exploring the link between the two from an in-depth perspective. Weeks also frames his work in a much more regional level, studying the responses of Latin America as a whole. As a result, neither of these two renowned works on United States interventionism necessarily addresses specific instances of the United States having a more direct impact upon certain countries of the region, let alone how these impacts might affect and influence each other.

Furthermore, while there have been individual case studies or works that relate Hugo Chávez to Fidel Castro in terms of ideology and anti-imperialist rhetoric, there is a shortage in literature that specifically focuses on the complex relationship between the socialism in Venezuela and Cuba and the policies of the United States. Javier Corrales and Carlos Romero efficiently examine the mutually affective relationship between the United States and Venezuela, as well as the impact of Venezuelan-Cuban relations on that relationship. However, their study still fails to draw a comprehensive

connection between the three to study their historical parallels and their implications. Additionally, few studies if take a comparative approach on not only actions by the leadership but also their specific rhetoric. An example of this is James Cohrs's analysis of how Cuba may have helped the socialist government in Venezuela remain in power. While his paper effectively demonstrates the policy linkages between the two revolutionary governments, it provides little background on why the two parties might have an ideological stake in helping each other. It also does not mention the role that the United States' policies may have had in both revolutionary projects.

Those that do focus on speech specifically, such as William LeoGrande's study of U.S. and Cuban rhetoric and how they inform each other, are concentrated primarily on only one of the two relationships depicted in the Logic Pyramid in Figure 1. Another example is Antonio Reyes's book on the use of language by George Bush, Hugo Chávez, and Fidel Castro. A shortcoming of such a study is that it mainly considers language as a tool and less as an ever-changing, reflective surface on which to analyze the relationships upon which it is wielded. While these are informative to understanding certain dimensions of these relationships, it is crucial to study all three connections—U.S. policies, and Cuban and Venezuelan rhetoric—in tandem, to grasp their full synergy. This begs the question: to what extent have the policies of the United States towards Latin America and the projects of “twenty-first century” socialism in Cuba and Venezuela informed each other?

III. METHODOLOGY

To conduct this study, a comparative historical analysis will be used to address this question, as it will inspect various characteristics of Cuba and Venezuela's individual histories, recent socialist political rhetoric, and mutual relationship, through the lens of both cases having been successfully established socialist projects. Specifically, John Stuart Mill's Method of Agreement will be employed in order to see how, despite varying factors in the pre-revolutionary history of these countries, this

specific factor of United States interventionism has unified the discourse of the two socialist projects. Mill's method posits that if in case studies that see a particular effect there is a single common factor, then this common factor is the cause of the effect. In this study, the particular effect is the radical socialist rhetoric of the leftist projects in both case studies of Cuba and Venezuela; and the common factor is United States policies towards Latin America, specifically U.S. interventions in these two countries. This perspective is useful for analyzing these two cases because they have shared characteristics with each other across a range of dimensions wide enough to be comparable, while still having different executions and implications so as to discuss how differing degrees of importance conferred to American interventionism might have been addressed through the leaders' speeches.

Additionally, this paper will employ a historical-structural perspective, which is also used by Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto and, to an extent, Theda Skocpol. This is particularly important in terms of understanding how the dynamic between the United States and Latin America is both everchanging and impactful. As Cardoso and Faletto posit, this perspective is helpful as "it emphasizes not just the structural conditions of social life, but also the historical transformation of struggles by conflict, social movements, and class structures."⁵ Skocpol also fervently defends structuralism in her study of three particular social revolutions, arguing that this is the most appropriate framework in which to work, "with special attention devoted to international contexts and to developments at home and abroad that affect the breakdown of the state organizations of old regimes and the build-up of new, revolutionary state organizations."⁶ Structuralism, especially adjacent to a historical approach, allows for the possibility of a more dynamic relationship between countries and regions, and permits the explanation of both the overarching power structures and the smaller,

⁵ Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, (University of California Press, 1979), x.

⁶ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 5.

national-level socialist struggles and movements as mutually informative, rather than one as strictly causal to the other.

In order to understand the crux of the argument and how actions and policies of the United States might be able to inform the socialism that grew in Cuba and Venezuela as the independent variable of this study, it is important to conceptualize these countries' relationships through the lens of dependency theory. Dependency theory, as set forth by Cardoso and Faletto, argues that relationships between what are conceived to be "first world" and "third world" countries are complex due not just to strictly economic factors, but also the power dynamics between them. It takes a different perspective from development theory, which suggests that all countries follow a similar trajectory toward modernity and some countries are merely more underdeveloped than others. Instead, dependency theory views countries as either core or periphery economies, saying that the structure of international relations depends on periphery countries being economically dependent upon core economies. In this way, the authors of this theory argue for a perspective that examines the ways in which imperialism, United States interventionism, and the histories of Latin American countries as colonies have contributed to current power structures. According to Cardoso and Faletto, "there exists among the developed and underdeveloped economies a difference [...] of function and position within the international economic structure of production and distribution."⁷ In other words, political and economic development in each country was not an isolated matter but was instead occurring in, and being informed by, the network of international relations among other countries as well.

The United States in particular holds a strong core position in the international economy, which became even more pronounced by "postwar financial agreements, [...] as well as by American

⁷ Cardoso and Faletto, 17.

control of world trade.”⁸ While this led to many Latin American countries attempting to benefit from the presence of the United States, especially politicians and economic elites, a situation of dependency can also be conducive to worsened conditions for the local lower classes. Through the process of industrialization, the difference in incomes can become greatly exacerbated, further strengthening the structural heterogeneity of Latin America’s socioeconomic field. Additionally, while United States businesses held a stake in Latin American countries, the American government was not necessarily providing aid to help build infrastructure in those nations. As a result of the linkage between income inequality and the American presence in Latin America, there grew to be a “nationalist and increasingly anti-U.S. sentiment, fueled by poverty, occupation, and mistreatment.”⁹ This in turn provides abundant material to analyze to what extent this involvement of the United States in Cuba and Venezuela, both specifically and as a core country intervening in the region of peripheral countries, led to the specific brands of socialism that grew in each of those nations.

Beyond dependency theory, however, a perspective that is crucial to consider is the way in which these socialist kinds of rhetoric may, in turn, inform the policies by the United States towards the respective country. While the historical legacy of United States interventionism has given rise to a certain type of discourse in Latin America, it is also fair to say that this leftist discourse has also influenced the United States through a relationship based on structural neorealism. This perspective allows for the study of United States policies towards Cuban and Venezuelan socialism as not static, but rather a dynamic struggle to protect itself and its regional hegemony from any security concerns that could arise due to rivaling political ideology. In other words, the ideological and rhetorical relationship between the United States and Cuba, and between the United States and Venezuela, does

⁸ Ibid., 181.

⁹ Weeks, 90.

not flow in a single direction. It is based on mutual reactions to each other's histories and current outlooks.

These exact brands of socialism, as aforementioned, will be the dependent variable in this study. As Skocpol says in her defense of a structuralist perspective, “both the occurrence of the revolutionary situations in the first place and the nature of the New Regimes that emerged from the revolutionary conflicts [in her specific case studies] depend fundamentally upon the structures of state organizations [...] as well as their positions in relation to other states abroad.”¹⁰ Essentially, both the national and international contexts may inform the type of social revolution that is both created and realized, and that the intended outcome and the actual outcome may not necessarily coincide. In other words, while Marxist theory has been applied to several social revolutions throughout the world—including the Russian and the Chinese revolutions—the specific rhetoric targeting the United States as an opponent and source of imperialism is particularly poignant in Cuban and Venezuelan socialism.

It is crucial to distinguish, however, between the current state and governing power in both of these countries, and the socialist movements themselves. Skocpol makes a distinction between the faces of such social revolutions, which are often conflated with the movements that they supposedly represent, and these movements themselves. Keeping in this tradition, it is important in this study to acknowledge the separation between personalistic leaders like Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro from the revolutions that they have inherited or helped to see through. Consequently, this study will focus on the personalistic leaders, Chávez and Castro, as the main faces of the revolutions at the time they were successfully implemented in their respective countries.

Historical texts and primary documents including speeches and manifestos from these aforementioned projects will be analyzed to see how far they have been affected by American policies. Naturally, American policy papers and reports will be analyzed as well, although less so for their

¹⁰ Skocpol, 284.

wording and more for their chronological enumeration of actions taken by the government towards these two countries. While studying each revolution as a whole would make for a much more in-depth study of the different facets of revolutionary rhetoric that are impacted by external factors, that project is extremely ambitious and would require the compilation of thousands of documents, primary and secondary sources, policy papers, etc. Inevitably, some of the source materials will only exist in their original Spanish, although the quotes in this study will be manually translated to English for the reader's convenience. In terms of time span, the speeches and manifestos being analyzed took place between the start of the Cuban revolution in 1959, and the end of the Bush presidency in 2007. The beginning was chosen to study both Cuban and American rhetoric and attitudes towards the beginning of Fidel Castro's revolution, the first instances of a leftist threat to the United States since Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala. The end of the Bush presidency in 2007 serves as an appropriate end date both because the time before that spans the formative years of the Venezuelan socialist revolution, and because the Bush administration's policies towards Cuba and Venezuela were consistent with previous presidencies, as opposed to after Obama became president and established new kinds of relationships with the two leaders. Furthermore, it marks the end of the period in which Fidel Castro was the official head of state in Cuba.

IV. UNITED STATES INTERVENTIONISM IN LATIN AMERICA

The United States and Latin America have had an ongoing relationship dating back to colonial times. However, the relevant pieces of history to this study begin primarily at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. One prominent aspect of this relationship is the interventionist policies that the United States has exercised upon the region. This began as early as 1904 with the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, when President Roosevelt announced

that sometimes his country would need to take on the role of “international police power.”¹¹ This Corollary also asserted that the United States “would interfere with [countries in the Caribbean and Latin America] only in the last resort, and then only if it became evident that their inability or unwillingness to do justice at home and abroad had violated the rights of the United States.”¹² Evidently, then, one of the principal purposes for American involvement in the neighboring region was to ensure the security of the United States itself.

President Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor policy was a further continuation of this kind of involvement by the United States in the Latin American region. The United States by then had fortified its relationship with its neighbors, significantly increasing its direct investments and strengthening its sphere of influence in the West. The idea behind the Good Neighbor framework was that of nonintervention, halting the tradition of using direct military force in sovereign nations. This directly countered the Roosevelt Corollary and supported the independence of individual countries. Instead, the United States exercised its influence in economic and ideological terms. In 1933, President Roosevelt mentioned regional trade as “the most important item in our country’s foreign policy,”¹³ appointing as secretary of state an advocate of liberalization. Additionally, in Panama in 1939 the American government proposed the need “to eradicate from the Americas the spread of doctrines that tend to place in jeopardy the common inter-American democratic ideal.”¹⁴ This would indirectly assist the United States in establishing itself as a regional hegemon, especially ideologically.

During the Cold War, the United States was devoted both to stopping the spread of Soviet influence globally and to preventing the infiltration of Communism into the Western Hemisphere. The Truman Doctrine proposed by the president was described as a policy “to support free peoples

¹¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Annual Message to Congress for 1904*, (Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1904).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *Looking Forward*, (William Heinemann, 1933), 245.

¹⁴ “Resolution VII” in *International Conferences of American States*, (Panama, 1939), 354-356.

who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”¹⁵ In effect, then, the United States would reclaim its role as a security hegemon in the region. This continued in a mutated version of the Good Neighbor policy, as the United States began concerning itself more with Latin America after the second World War. Throughout this time, the main preoccupation of the American government was the threat of a potential Communist wave in their southern neighbors.

Further down the line, the United States had two main goals when viewing the country’s relationship with Latin America: “the 1954 Declaration of Caracas, with its renunciation of Marxism, and the 1960 Act of Bogotá, with its assault on poverty and underdevelopment.”¹⁶ The United States adopted a perspective heavily based on modernization theory, previously explained as a theory that posits a uniform trajectory from traditional to modern society that inevitably ought to be followed by countries. This had a particular economic aspect to it, as trade liberalization and development was considered to be of utmost importance by this ideology. As a result, leftist movements were seen as the direct opponent to the concept of modernization. The United States therefore emphasized both a strictly anti-leftist military support network and a focus on the socioeconomic growth in the region, as might strengthen trade relations. In the decades to come, this process would manifest itself as neoliberal reforms being recommended consistently by the United States and global organizations for Latin America.

At the end of the 1980’s came a set of neoliberal reforms known as the Washington Consensus, which mainly used Adam Smith’s economic theories to argue for the reduction of state involvement in the economy, which would disrupt the import-substitution industrialization model on which Latin America had largely based its economic growth shortly beforehand. Neoliberalism is a crucial aspect to consider as it has ties both with imperialism and the American-oriented rhetoric in many leftist

¹⁵ Harry S. Truman, *President Truman’s Message to Congress*, (Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1947).

¹⁶ Smith, 133.

movements in Latin America. These new neoliberal policies would provide protections for the private sector that would eventually significantly help the economy of the United States as well. In Latin America, banks and investors that would also be drawing benefits from the policies prescribed by the Washington Consensus reacted positively. Opposition stemmed mainly from the left, including labor unions, as well as marginalized populations and nationalists. This was mainly due to the fact that the increase in regional wealth would not be equally distributed, benefitting mainly the private sectors and foreign investors without lower class locals being able to reap similar rewards. Decades later, the consequences of neoliberalism in Latin America have been largely mixed, leading to increased foreign investment but remaining problems of debt and poverty in the region.

A. United States and Cuba

Notably at the beginning of the 1900's, the United States had a strong influence upon the island nation of Cuba. The main element was the Platt Amendment from 1903. Under this Amendment, the United States would have the power to set public debt limits, grant permission to Cuba before Cuba could enter any treaties, and use the American military to intervene at any moment “for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the Treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the government of Cuba.”¹⁷ It essentially made Cuba an American protectorate and served to limit Cuban autonomy, despite supposedly having been initiated into a postcolonial time period. The Amendment also mentioned that any acts taken by the United States military in Cuba would be considered “ratified and validated, and all lawful rights acquired thereunder shall be maintained and protected.”¹⁸ Additionally, the Amendment established that the leasing of Guantánamo by Cuba to the United

¹⁷ United States Congress, *Platt Amendment*, (1901), Article III.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Article IV.

States would be guaranteed in order to assure Cuban independence, as “to enable the United States to maintain the independence of Cuba, and to protect the people thereof, as well as for its own defense, the government of Cuba will sell or lease to the United States lands necessary for coaling or naval stations.”¹⁹ Through the Platt Amendment, then, the United States not only seemingly constrained the political and economic power of Cuba as a newly independent nation, but also brought that title into question precisely through these restrictions.

Because of the legitimization of American military presence in Cuba, the United States was consequently entitled to make certain interventions when they saw fit. Therefore, the United States remaining heavily involved in Cuban affairs was not always in order to ensure Cuba’s independence, but rather was something to ensure the security of American economic interests on the island. This was not just a matter of the United States being specifically invested in the island; President Wilson had a deep desire to spread democracy, leading to “U.S. troops [being] sent to more countries, and occupation was the norm in countries such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua. This combination meant that hegemony and ‘democratic promotion’ were one and the same.”²⁰ This led Cubans, especially merchants, to resent this influence, to the point that many locals felt that the United States’ involvement was more unwelcome than seen as a mere security measure. During the decade of the 1920’s, precisely this perspective, mixed with the continued intervention by the United States, led to a nationalism after the increased price of sugar after the first World War greatly boosted Cuban economy.

Aside from the physical presence of the United States, there was also the matter of its influence in Cuban politics. According to Weeks, “from 1906 until 1934, Cuban politics was characterized by rapid, often violent changes of government, accompanied by U.S. intervention and, at times, control

¹⁹ Ibid., Article VII.

²⁰ Weeks, 89.

over the country's finances."²¹ This in turn emphasized the dependent relationship between the United States and Cuba. In 1925, the Cuban presidential elections were won by Gerardo Machado, a candidate supported both by merchants in Cuba and the United States government for his commitment to economic development. Machado had a tendency to act harshly upon the working sector of the country in order to draw investors to the island. Not long after, however, the United States took note of general Cuban discontent towards Machado, and so they asked him to step aside, leading to him fleeing the country. The new president was also not widely supported in Cuba, which caused army officers of lower rank to begin organizing. This ultimately led to the Sergeants' Revolt, organized by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista, which resulted in the rise to presidency of civilian Ramón Grau San Martín. This new president, championing Cuban nationalism, announced his intentions to end the Platt Amendment. This was a concern to the United States, who had great stakes in the matter of Cuba restricting American presence and influence on the island. As a result, the United States under the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt denied diplomatic action, thus illegitimizing its new government. Instead, the United States worked with Batista to oust Grau, which occurred late 1933. The next president that was inaugurated through Batista led the Roosevelt administration to finally cease the Platt Amendment.

Afterwards, between 1933 and 1936, the United States eventually decided that "open interference was no longer part of the diplomatic arsenal."²² Instead, the American government began to focus its efforts into preventing the rise of Communism in the Western Hemisphere. Because of leftist party involvement in eradicating fascism in Latin America during the second World War, they were able to gain respectability and government positions. The discontentment among more conservative counterparts throughout the region were eventually able to find "a strong a willing ally

²¹ Ibid., 86.

²² Smith, 99.

in their confrontation with the left: the United States.”²³ In early 1935, when then-president Carlos Mendieta suspended constitutional guarantees in Cuba, United States ambassador to Havana Jefferson Caffery expressed that “although [Mendieta’s government] has strengthened its position in the country by its recent firm attitude, the communists have by no means given up hope and will continue to be a menace for some time to come.”²⁴ Evidently, the United States had adopted a policy of prioritizing anticommunist efforts over democracy in Latin America. As a result, there were a handful of right-wing dictatorships in the mid-to-late twentieth century in the region that had, directly or indirectly, received backing and support from the American government. Particularly in Cuba, the backlash against the political left involved not just political parties but also labor unions. Those confederations that were not coopted by the government found themselves further marginalized. The United States also played a role in this, “through the appointment of labor attachés to embassy staffs and, indirectly, through the anticommunist efforts of the American Federation of Labor.”²⁵

Later, in 1952, Batista himself ascended to power in Cuba after leading a military coup shortly before the presidential elections. He established dictatorial rule, backed by the support of the United States. Under his power, “organized crime flourished and lined the pockets of Cuban politicians and bureaucrats. Corruption was rampant, and the brief Cuban experience with democracy had withered away.”²⁶ By this point, “much of Latin America had fallen under the sway of long-lived dictatorships [...] Somewhat conspicuously, these regimes emerged precisely in those countries where the United States had intervened or intermeddled to the greatest degree.”²⁷ This, along with the economic involvement of the United States, led to growing resentment among the Cuban middle class, including one Fidel Castro who was imprisoned after an attack on the army barracks in Moncada in 1953. Castro

²³ Ibid., 129.

²⁴ Ibid., 99.

²⁵ Ibid., 130.

²⁶ Weeks, 110.

²⁷ Smith, 99.

had previously been among Cuban students that traveled to Bogotá, Colombia to join the Colombian Communists in protesting United States hegemony. Meanwhile in Guatemala, the American invasion to prevent the rise of Communism began in June of 1954. The return of dictatorship to the country and the intervention by the United States would have long-lasting consequences, not just on Guatemalan-American relations but also on those between Cuba and the United States, as well as on guerrilla warfare itself. Additionally, this had a significant ideological impact upon the revolutionary Ernesto “Che” Guevara, who was in Guatemala at the time. This experience led him to believe that “real reform [...] was possible only in a socialist revolution that excluded the old oligarchic elite and rejected the façade of ‘democracy’ so heralded in the United States.”²⁸ A couple of years later, Guevara would find himself in Mexico, where he would meet Castro after the latter was granted general amnesty by Batista and was thus released. The two of them would begin planning a guerrilla revolution against Batista’s government. This war was ultimately launched in 1956, to little avail. At this point in history, Castro was not explicitly socialist, nor was that how he characterized his revolution. In fact, he even “emphasized the domestic nature of his mission: ‘You can be sure that we have no animosity towards the United States and the American people.’”²⁹

Throughout the Cold War, the situation escalated as the United States doubled down on its anticommunist efforts. The refusal by the American government to grant diplomatic recognition to Castro’s government led to alienation between the two countries, to the point where Cuba began to seek economic and political support from the Soviet Union instead. This only helped to further exacerbate the existing conflict between the island nation and the United States. As a response not to the particular regional dynamic but to the largely bipolar global struggle, the United States “sought to extend and consolidate its political supremacy throughout the hemisphere. Launching an

²⁸ Weeks, 110.

²⁹ Ibid., 111.

anticommunist crusade, the United States [...] encouraged (or compelled) friendly governments to crush leftist labor movements and to outlaw communist parties; and orchestrated the military overthrow of elected governments that seemed ‘soft’ on communism.”³⁰ This included the opposition of Cuban agrarian reform in 1959 and, later on, the trade embargo imposed by President Eisenhower upon the island nation and the Bay of Pigs invasion carried out in 1961, a failed assassination attempt by the United States on Fidel Castro.

B. United States and Venezuela

United States involvement in Venezuela began in 1895 with the Olney Doctrine, which legitimated the United States intervening in the border dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela. In the very commission organized to handle the concern, there were notably no Venezuelans, and the result of the dispute was to grant great concessions to Great Britain. Afterwards, however, United States relations with Venezuela remained stagnant for a significant amount of time, with the former instead focusing on the World Wars and other pressing concerns in the region. However, once the United States began to outwardly oppose communist and leftist regimes in the mid-twentieth century, the country’s government became more involved and invested in regime change in Latin America. As previously stated, this oftentimes included supporting, both directly and indirectly, right-wing governments that at times resulted in a blatant dictatorship. For instance, in 1948 the U.S. State Department granted diplomatic recognition to Marcos Pérez Jiménez, Venezuelan military dictator. His harsh stance against communism additionally won him the Legion of Merit, a military award by the U.S. Armed Forces, in 1954. Along with Fulgencio Batista in Cuba and Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, Pérez Jiménez enjoyed the support of and close relations with the Eisenhower Administration.

³⁰ Smith, 117.

In 1958, Pérez Jiménez fled the country after a coup against him, finding exile in the United States. A mere five months afterwards, Vice President Richard Nixon traveled to Latin America, stopping in Caracas briefly despite rumors of demonstrations against his visit and United States policy. In particular, one source of discontent was the fact that the United States had not hidden its support for the most recent dictator. During his time in Caracas, Nixon's car had been attacked by protesters, and he was met with great negative protest. The United States government denounced these demonstrations as communist agitation, and Nixon concluded that, in light of the origin of the demonstrations, it would be wise for the United States to not be as closely affiliated with authoritarian leaders in the region. Nevertheless, "unless they were becoming fragile, unpopular, or inconvenient, anticommunist dictators could expect continuing support from Washington."³¹

Faced with popular unrest throughout Latin America, President Kennedy stated the need to support democratic governments and thus attempt to prevent revolutionary uprisings. In particular, centrist parties like Venezuela's *Acción Democrática* provided an adequate medium through which to stave off the rise of the left without aiding more right-wing regimes. Within the countries themselves, elite classes still worked to prevent social and economic reform, particularly in terms of land and wealth redistribution. Consequently, despite the centrist government of Rómulo Betancourt, there was still some degree of social opposition. This resulted in division within his party, particularly as Castro's revolution in Cuba gave hope to revolutionaries throughout the entire region that a socialist or communist governance was possible to attain. Guerrilla bands in Venezuela by the Armed Forces of National Liberation (*Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional*, FALN) and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*, MIR) further exaggerated this divide.

Finally, towards the end of the twentieth century, the liberal reforms being suggested by Washington upon Latin America also generated discontent in Venezuela. In 1989, Caracas saw another

³¹ Ibid., 133.

demonstration against a structural adjustment program by then-President Carlos Andrés Pérez, also from *Acción Democrática*. This was due to the economic policy focus on, and prioritization of, market expansion and trade liberalization for new economic policies, rather than the welfare of the nation itself. In this, the United States was implicated due to the government's attachment and involvement in the Washington Consensus. This led to a more favorable public opinion regarding the increase of tariffs, heightened levels of protectionism, and less concessions to outsider oil companies. As such, the populist rhetoric of Hugo Chávez Frías, by then retired army colonel, was particularly appealing. His electoral victory in 1998 with 56 percent of the vote clearly conveyed this sentiment. His close relationship with Fidel Castro and history as a failed military coup leader in 1992, in conjunction with his policy proposals, only served to further the United States' opposition to his government.

V. TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SOCIALISM

The origin of what is now referred to commonly as “Twenty-First Century Socialism” can be largely traced back to Fidel Castro's rise to power in Cuba, although that is certainly not the only instance of this phenomenon in Latin America. Originally not an avowedly socialist or communist revolution, Castro's experiment in Cuba nevertheless came to be known as the greatest example of socialism by revolution in the Western hemisphere. Nearly half a century later, another socialist revolution would arise in the nearby South American country of Venezuela, under Hugo Chávez. As previously mentioned, these two revolutions do not exist, nor have they ever existed, in isolation. The very interventions by the United States in Latin America enumerated above, particularly in each of those specific countries, have had a great impact upon the design, implementation, and most importantly the rhetoric of these two socialist projects. It is therefore crucial to analyze how certain events and policies may have informed the way in which these two personalistic leaders describe their revolutionary missions.

A. Fidel Castro and the Cuban Left

After the failed attack of 1953 in the Moncada Barracks, Fidel Castro delivered his most famous speech, “*La historia me absolverá*”. This speech served to launch him further into the eye of the public, which “made Castro’s name a household word in Cuba;”³² and would later become the inspiration for his published revolutionary manifesto. Scholars point out, however, that “there was no mention of Marx or Lenin, or even the word Socialism. In 1953 Castro was still playing down his Marxist sympathies. But he was already proposing a radical transformation of society, and rejecting the Western concept of democracy.”³³ Castro would then be imprisoned for a year, later forming a revolutionary group with his brother Raúl Castro and with Ernesto “Che” Guevara. This group was instrumental in overthrowing Fulgencio Batista’s government in 1959 after an earlier failed attempt in 1956. Later, on February 16th of that year, Castro became the military and political head of Cuba as Prime Minister. In the words of Susan Eckstein in her book on the Cuban revolution, “the Cuban revolution is Fidel’s revolution. Without his charisma modern Cuban history would be different.”³⁴ Castro conducted his revolution largely guided by the speeches and sayings of José Martí, a nineteenth-century Cuban nationalist and revolutionary figure that to this day is largely revered on the island. According to Lillian Guerra, Castro’s initial rhetoric was largely based on “Christian discourse and the promotion of *fidélismo* as a new cultural religion.”³⁵ Guerra further says that “as early as 1959, Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, and Che Guevara pursued the related goals of national sovereignty and economic independence through speech acts.”³⁶

³² Susan Eckstein, *Back From the Future: Cuba Under Castro*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 15.

³³ Leicester Coltman, *The Real Fidel Castro*, (Yale University Press, 2003), 91.

³⁴ Eckstein, 3.

³⁵ Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 17.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

Castro is therefore largely credited as a creator of the Latin American “pink tide”, along with other figures including Hugo Chávez. Much of his language echoed a desire to create a new Cuba independent of colonial and imperial legacies, entirely self-reliant and newly decolonized. He continuously expressed a desire to equalize wealth disparity and no longer participate as a branch of United States hegemony in the region. At this point, he had maintained relatively amiable relations with the North American country, despite President Eisenhower’s refusal to meet with him during his visit in April of 1959. His Agrarian Reform Law passed in May 17th of 1959, however, branded him as “an incipient form of Communism”³⁷ by the United States quite early on in the new revolutionary regime. This was arguably the beginning of the more significant clashes between Castro’s government and that of the United States.

Of course, the timing of Castro’s rise to power—early in the Cold War—did nothing to ingratiate either party towards the other. The United States at the time was pushing for explicit anti-Communism from its allies. Castro, while at the time was avowedly not a Communist, did not do enough against Cuban Communists, driving an ideological wedge between his government and that of the United States. This wedge, along with measures taken by the United States to suppress Castro’s power, resulted in part in closer relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union, enhancing U.S. opposition of Castro. This division was especially poignant given Cuba’s proximity to the United States, unlike the U.S.’s relationship with leftist states further away. Further United States involvement with Cuba throughout the consequent years would prove to have a radicalizing effect on Castro’s revolutionary discourse, exacerbating the ideological and political divide between the two countries. It is a widely held position that Washington’s policies against Castro’s Cuba served “to contribute to its radicalization and to Cuba’s alliance with the Soviet Union.”³⁸

³⁷ Guerra, 39.

³⁸ Eckstein, 5.

A Revolutionary Process

Castro's Agrarian Reform Law called for the expropriation of holdings greater than a certain area, to later be redistributed. The compensation for these properties would be based on the value claims as shown in the property taxes. However, some American properties in Cuba had been taxed at lower rates due to lowered value claims, resulting in a seemingly unfit rate of compensation for the expropriation. This was reminiscent to Jacobo Árbenz's land reform in Guatemala less than a decade earlier, and the conflicts that arose with the United Fruit Company. The United States, seemingly also noticing the historical parallels, became concerned that Castro was showing signs of leading a socialist state. This, in turn, "put into jeopardy the very stability of the hemisphere; it posed a direct challenge to U.S. hegemony, and its destruction became an obsession."³⁹ Despite Castro's insistences that the revolution was "neither capitalist nor communist,"⁴⁰ the United States nevertheless perceived this regime as a potential threat.

The first significant sign of unrest between the two nations came in October 21st, 1959, when two planes from the United States dropped thousands of leaflets over Havana, Cuba, leading to chaos that resulted in two deaths and dozens wounded. Pedro Luis Díaz Lanz, a former Cuban air force chief, came to admit partial responsibility later on. In a speech delivered not a week later on October 27th, Castro stated, "How is it possible that, in exchange for a base in Cuban territory for the greater security of the American people, [Cuba] should be subjected to attacks from war criminals—attacks which come from bases on American territory?"⁴¹ Here, he clearly referenced both the October 21st incident as well as the Platt Amendment and its consequent continued leasing by Cuba of Guantánamo Bay. He characterized this event as "both aggression from foreign territory and domestic treason,"⁴²

³⁹ Weeks, 118.

⁴⁰ Fidel Castro, *Fidel Castro Reader*, (Ocean Press, 2007), Timeline.

⁴¹ Fidel Castro, *Speech in Havana*, (Havana, 1959).

⁴² *Ibid.*

He further took this as an attack specifically on the Cuban revolution when he claimed that these “war criminals” “want to force the Cuban people to renounce their magnificent revolutionary process and its aspirations of bringing justice to Cuba. [...] This is simply a case in which a revolutionary process is damaging powerful interests which refuse to accept it peacefully.”⁴³ While this attack had clearly increased Castro’s defensiveness against the United States and acts of foreign aggression, at this point he still maintained that the revolution has no avowed ideological characteristic, and that the United States accusing the Castro government of being communist was merely them “seiz[ing] upon the same pretext they have been using for 50 years.”⁴⁴

Cuba: America’s Colony

By his speech at the United States General Assembly on September 26th, 1960, Castro was openly referring to Cuba as “a virtual colony of the United States.”⁴⁵ He dated this idea back to the end of the nineteenth century, stating that “in the opinion of John Adams, [...] Cuba was a fruit, a ripe apple on the Spanish tree ready to fall into the hands of the United States.”⁴⁶ Here, Castro expressed a clear, deeply-embedded resentment towards the United States’ treatment of the island. He drew upon more recent United States actions against Cuba, including the suspension of Cuba’s sugar quota on July 6th and the trade embargo from August 28th. He also mentioned the Platt Amendment as part of the “recolonization of [his] country,”⁴⁷ arguing that “the legislative body of a foreign country imposed on [Cuba], by force, its right to intervene and its right to lease bases or naval stations.”⁴⁸ The reference to intervention, of course, not only speaks to the literal content of the Platt Amendment, but in addition invokes the broader history of United States interventions upon the region. This right

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Fidel Castro, *Fidel Castro Reader*, 140.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 141.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 142.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 141.

of intervention, coupled with the concessions of many different types to the United States, according to Castro “transformed Cuba from a Spanish colony into a U.S. colony.”⁴⁹

Castro further attacked this idea of concessions to the United States, dating back to Fulgencio Batista’s regime in Cuba. He eventually concluded that a revolutionary government had no other alternative but to modify its policies to suit the people, not the companies. He contested the idea that the American and other foreign monopolies suffered after the ending of Cuba’s concessions towards them, arguing that “Cuba was the injured party [...] because Batista’s government was maintained in power with the assistance of the U.S. government,”⁵⁰ which included military weapons and training. His diatribe against foreign monopolies in Cuba was extensive during this speech, recognizing the Agrarian Reform Law and the end of concessions as the “first conflict with the U.S. monopolies.”⁵¹ This clash between the interests of the monopolies and the interests of the Cuban government, according to Castro, “was more than the U.S. government, that is, the representative of the U.S. monopolies, could tolerate. Then a new stage began in the harassment of our revolution.”⁵²

Before then, he added, “at a time when the U.S. press and the international news agencies [...] described Cuba as a communist government, a ‘red menace’ 90 miles from the United States, the revolutionary government had not yet had the opportunity of establishing diplomatic or commercial relations with the Soviet Union.”⁵³ In other words, by the time the United States had branded the Castro government as communist and, consequently, in line with the Soviet Union, that was not yet true, regardless of whether that was Castro’s intention at the time. He continued by listing the different acts of aggression that he perceived the United States to have conducted against Cuba, including cutting Cuba’s sugar quota and aiming to “deprive [Cuba] of the resources it needed for development

⁴⁹ Ibid., 142.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 145.

⁵¹ Ibid., 147.

⁵² Ibid., 150.

⁵³ Ibid., 151.

and to reduce [Cuba] to impotence in order to obtain a political objective.”⁵⁴ He then expressed his confusion at the Soviet Union being condemned for actions in Cuba, rather than the United States, despite the fact that Cuba “[had] not been attacked by the Soviet Union. [They had] not been the victims of aggression by the Soviet Union. No Soviet aircraft had flown over [their] territory.”⁵⁵ Partiality towards the Soviet Union is evident, then, in these comments. This was only exacerbated in January of 1961 when the Eisenhower Administration severed diplomatic relations entirely between Cuba and the U.S.

Imperialist Interventions

Castro’s rhetoric became more pointedly anti-imperialist and anti-American after the bombing raids on Cuban air fields in April 1961. At the burial ceremony for the victims on April 16th, the day after the fact, Castro argued that the Cuban people were “fully entitled to consider the imperialist attack that took place [the day before] as a doubly criminal, doubly underhanded, doubly treacherous and thousand-times more cowardly act.”⁵⁶ While the circumstances in which he was speaking certainly affected his tone and word choice, the words “imperialist” and “criminal” appear several times throughout his speech, in reference to the United States. Additionally, in this speech alone he referred to his government in Cuba as a “socialist revolution” in at least three distinct occasions, indicating a radicalized shift in his ideology.

After the failed Bay of Pigs invasion began a few days later, on April 17th, 1961, Castro led a massive May Day rally in Havana on May 1st. The invasion, which was carried out by CIA and Cuban exiles living in the United States, Castro stated was based on a “false and hypocritical ideal that the Yankees inculcated in their mercenaries, as if they were parrots repeating the word ‘ideal.’”⁵⁷ Here he

⁵⁴ Ibid., 156.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 158.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 190.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 199.

accused the United States of essentially brainwashing those sent into the invasion against Castro's regime. He later referred to them as "promoting the policy of isolating Cuba, [...] complying with imperialism's orders and breaking relations with a Latin American country under attack by imperialism, [and] [...] miserable traitors to the interests and feelings of the Americas."⁵⁸ Additionally, this policy of isolation he credited to the United States State Department. While he separately attacked imperialism and the United States, this speech makes it clear that he largely began conflating the two by this point, if not earlier.

In January of the following year, 1962, the Organization of American States (OAS) decided to expel Cuba during their meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay. Additionally, in early February of that year President Kennedy announced a complete blockade of Cuba. These two occurrences were referenced in Castro's "Second Declaration of Havana" speech on February 4th. He first mentioned José Martí, the Cuban nationalist, signaling him as having referred to imperialism as such as early as 1895. He continued by enumerating the various actions of aggression that the United States had enacted upon Cuba, adding that "the intervention of the U.S. government in the internal politics of the countries of Latin America has become increasingly open and unbridled."⁵⁹ He also made a reference to the OAS occurrence, showing his distrust of the organization by stating that "the OAS was revealed for what it really is—a Yankee ministry of colonies, a military alliance, an apparatus of repression against the liberation movement of the Latin American peoples."⁶⁰ He further signaled the responsibility of Cuba's ousting from the organization as belonging to the OAS delegations by saying that "they know that the U.S. government went there not only to establish the basis for aggression against Cuba, but the basis for intervention against the people's liberation movements in any Latin

⁵⁸ Ibid., 205.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 250.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 254.

American nation.”⁶¹ In describing the differences between the United States and Cuba, he mentioned that while Cuba stood for national sovereignty and socialism, the United States stood for capitalism and intervention.⁶² He began to see, and speak of, United States imperialism and intervention as synonymous with United States foreign policy objectives.

A Socialist and Communist Revolution

Castro spoke again at the founding meeting of the Cuban Communist Party on October 3rd, 1965. Strikingly, he referred to Cuba as “our socialist society, our communist society,”⁶³ openly using the communist label in regard to the revolution. He additionally spoke of the Communist Party as “[their] party,”⁶⁴ further establishing the characteristic of his rule. Castro defended his logic by arguing that “when the imperialists are surrounding [Cuba], training mercenaries and organizing terrorist attacks in the most shameless manner, [...] when the imperialists threaten to intervene in any country in Latin America or in the world, we do not live under normal conditions.”⁶⁵ Here, Castro indirectly pointed to the interventions by the “imperialists”, referring clearly to the United States, as responsible for the drastic rebranding of the revolution. Two years later, when speaking on the Latin American revolution on August 10th, 1967, he said that the United States “have been systematically opposed to all the concepts of the revolution; to the most pure and sincere revolutionary attitudes of [the Cuban] people; to [their] concepts of socialism, of communism, of everything.”⁶⁶

Additionally, two months later when Che was killed, something in Castro shifted. Leicester Coltman, who studied several biographies of Castro, describes Castro’s reaction to Che’s execution in Bolivia by government agents as his first truly emotive reaction to a close death. According to

⁶¹ Ibid., 261.

⁶² Ibid., 253.

⁶³ Ibid., 279.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 282.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 286.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 311.

Coltman's book, after that event Castro "began to hanker for a more stable and comfortable relationship with the Soviet Union. [...] Perhaps Guevara's failure did show that the road to worldwide revolution would be longer than he had hoped. He began to feel, and to express, more gratitude for the Soviet aid which he had previously accepted as no more than his due."⁶⁷ Castro referenced once again the United States' blockade on Cuba and the leasing of Guantánamo Bay through the Platt Amendment in his address towards the United Nations General Assembly on October 12th, 1979, on behalf of the Movement of Nonaligned Countries. He called out the blockade specifically, as well as other acts of aggression by the United States towards Cuba, as "a flagrant violation of the UN charter and the principles of international law, and a threat to world peace."⁶⁸

Interestingly, in his speech during the inauguration of President Hugo Chávez in Venezuela on February 3rd, 1999, Castro claimed that the socialist and communist ideology had always been a backbone of his revolution. He commented that after the blockade and the aggression by the United States, "the Soviets felt great sympathy for Cuba and great admiration for [their] revolution,"⁶⁹ as shown by the aid that the Soviet Union gave to Cuba after the American trade embargo was placed upon the island. In the absence of economic support from the United States, "there was another powerful pole and so [Cuba] anchored [them]selves to that pole, which had come out of a great social revolution."⁷⁰ He later explained that Cuba "exported [their] sugar to the Soviet Union and [they] received oil, raw materials, food and many things."⁷¹ As can be understood from these comments, the lack of cooperation from the United States to Cuba was a factor in pushing them to collaborating with the Soviet Union. However, he added, by then "[they] had already read almost a whole library of the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and other theoreticians. [They] were convinced Marxists and

⁶⁷ Coltman, 217.

⁶⁸ Fidel Castro, *Fidel Castro Reader*, 397.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 462.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 469.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 469.

socialists.”⁷² Still, his comments from speeches in the early stages of the revolution vacillated between ideologies, being predominantly anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist over anything else.

Nevertheless, the increased radicalization of the Cuban revolution may have been so gradual and spanned over such a long period that the shift may not have seemed significant. He did concede later that, while he could not understand why the revolution’s political thought had not been deduced since the time of the Moncada attacks even though the revolution by then already “contained the foundation of a socialist program”, he and his fellow revolutionaries “were convinced the time was not yet ripe.”⁷³ He also admitted that the “angry and arrogant opposition of the United States [...] had a great influence in [Cuba], so it made itself felt and the [revolutionary] process became increasingly radicalized with each blow and each aggression [they] suffered.”⁷⁴ Evidently, regardless of whether the socialist or communist ideologies were guiding principles for the Cuban revolution from the very beginning, its tumultuous relationship with the United States served to in some ways radicalize it to the point where it is now.

B. Hugo Chávez and the Venezuelan Left

Hugo Chávez is signaled as one of the causes for the reemergence of “‘neopopulism,’ [...] where newly elected presidents [...] blamed capitalism and the United States for his country’s economic woes and income inequality.”⁷⁵ His rise to political power in Venezuela polarized views of him, depicting him as either “a redeemer of not just Venezuela’s but Latin America’s long-suffering poor” or “a populist authoritarian intent on ending the region’s longest uninterrupted democracy.”⁷⁶ He began his life in the political spotlight in 1992, after a failed coup attempt against then-president

⁷² Ibid., 462.

⁷³ Ibid., 465.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 466.

⁷⁵ Weeks, 188-189.

⁷⁶ Alejandro Velasco, *Barrio Rising: Urban Popular Politics and the Making of Modern Venezuela*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 228.

Carlos Andrés Pérez. After being imprisoned for two years, the new Venezuelan president Rafael Caldera pardoned him, along with other members of the *Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200*, or MBR-200. He ran in the 1998 elections, winning with 56% of the vote. At the very beginning of his rule, his main position was as an alternative to the previous Punto Fijo democratic system that had ultimately broken down. His discourse focused not only nationalist figures, but also “elements from panindigenous and Afro-Venezuelan ideologies, socialism, neofascist thought, and liberationist Catholicism, as well as evangelical Protestantism.”⁷⁷

His speeches tended to focus less against the United States by name, and more against imperialism and oligarchy as a whole. During his speech at the 60th General Assembly of the United Nations, Chávez spoke in more general terms about the political and economic crises of Latin America. He merely stated that “[they] are driving in Venezuela, too, a new economic model.”⁷⁸ He also described as his main goal “the justice for the peoples of the Third World.”⁷⁹ In terms of what the revolution stands against, he only mentioned “a crisis without precedents in all our history, a moral crisis, an economic crisis, a political crisis, a social crisis; that has taken [Latin America] to dangerous extremes, to explosive forces that have been concentrating in the last decades.”⁸⁰ During the early days of the Bush administration and even before, the Venezuelan president had been one of the voices actively denouncing neoliberalism and the globalized economy. In the next ten years, his government “became progressively more radicalized on the back of rising oil export revenues and as it [...] insulated itself from domestic and international pressures from opponents.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ David Smilde, “Introduction: Participation, Politics, and Culture – Emerging Fragments of Venezuela’s Bolivarian Democracy,” in *Venezuela’s Bolivarian Democracy*, ed. David Smilde and Daniel Hellinger, (Duke University Press, 2011), 21.

⁷⁸ Hugo Chávez, *La Unidad Latinoamericana*, (Ocean Sur, 2006), 11. Translated by me.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸¹ Julia Buxton, “Foreword: Venezuela’s Bolivarian Democracy,” in *Venezuela’s Bolivarian Democracy*, ed. David Smilde and Daniel Hellinger, (Duke University Press, 2011), xxi.

Though his rhetoric began closely linked to that of Fidel Castro in Cuba, both in likeness and praise of the older leader, Chávez soon began to vilify the United States consistently, referring to the American president in derogatory terms and condemning the actions of the U.S. One study of U.S.-Venezuelan relations went as far as to say that their relationship “transformed U.S.-Latin American relations like no other factor had since perhaps the civil wars in Central America in the 1980s.”⁸² The same study described Chávez’s later rhetoric as “reminiscent of the radical left during the Cold War or of anti-imperialists after the late 1880s.”⁸³

The New Face of Imperialism

Chávez was much clearer in his objectives in his speech from May 16th, 2004, where he highlighted the need to discuss the ideology of imperialism, a “word [that] was even being removed from our lexicon.”⁸⁴ He mentioned one type imperialism, describing it as “the classic interventionist imperialism that invaded territory, that overthrew governments, that generated world wars.”⁸⁵ However, this he distinguished from a new type of imperialism, “a less bad empire, that supposedly no longer needed territorial invasions, but only the penetration of markets through neoliberalism.”⁸⁶ This kind of imperialism, clearly referencing the neoliberal policies recommended by the Washington Consensus of 1989, was predicted by him to be “like the great world police, the great universal father, tough but with a human face.”⁸⁷ He further assigned a negative character to this neoliberalism by calling it “the mask behind which hid for almost two decades the old and perverse capitalism, the mask behind which hid for almost 20 years the old, perverse and murderous imperialism that has caused so much damage to the peoples of the Third World during 500 years, but is the same old

⁸² Javier Corrales and Carlos A. Romero, *U.S.-Venezuelan Relations Since the 1990's: Coping with Midlevel Security Threats*, (Routledge, 2013), 3.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁴ Chávez, *La Unidad Latinoamericana*, 37.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

imperialism.”⁸⁸ A product of his time, Chávez did not attack the same villain as Castro did during the early years of the Cuban revolution; rather, his speech fought against the supposed evolution of imperialism that emerged towards the end of the twentieth century. Towards the end of this speech, Chávez returned to the topic of imperialism in itself, emphasizing that the Bolivarian Revolution was in its anti-imperialist phases. He stated that previously, imperialism had never been singled out as the enemy of the revolution, but that this revolution “after having passed through several stages, has entered the anti-imperialist stage, this is an anti-imperialist revolution and that fills it with a special content that forces us to clear thought and to action not just in Venezuela but in the whole world.”⁸⁹

Chávez also specifically attacked the Free Trade Area of the Americas proposal that had been discussed only six months prior, seeing it as another attempt at pursuing neoliberal politics in Latin America. When negotiations for neoliberalism fail, he said, “then that old imperialism [...] finished taking off the mask and simply shows us once again its bloody fangs and its bloodthirsty claws.”⁹⁰ Later in the same speech, he characterized it as “murderer, invader [...] invading peoples, overthrowing governments and running over the dignity of millions of human beings on this planet.”⁹¹ In referring to imperialism and neoliberalism as a violent creature with a mask, Chávez alluded to the history of policies and wars aiming for the concentration of capital by certain entities. However, he refrained from significantly pointing out the United States as the perpetrator yet. He briefly mentions the attempted coup in Venezuela from April 11th, 2002, saying that “the whole world knows that this coup occurred and could occur only thanks to the North American support, to the support of the North American imperialism.”⁹² Still, beyond these accusations of North American involvement in the coup, there is no more personal attack.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 38.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 50.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁹¹ Ibid., 40.

⁹² Ibid., 40.

“Bushism” versus Socialism

During his speech not two weeks later at the conference *La Condición Humana y las Naciones del Sur* [The Human Condition and the Nations of the South], Chávez’s rhetoric began a slight shift. He referenced a historical moment in which an assassination attempt was aimed at Simón Bolívar, saying that “it is not very clear, it was never very clear what was the role that the United States Embassy in Bogotá played in that occurrence in the year [18]28 when they almost killed Bolívar in an assault.”⁹³ The accusatory tone in which he shared that historical anecdote already pointed a finger against the United States in his speech. He later linked imperialism with the United States explicitly, saying that “from the United States surge some declarations that constitute another hit towards the Venezuelan people, and a threat besides that [...] And this is part of that battle that began in Venezuela several years ago, for the essence and the human condition against the inhumanity and the savagery [...] against the imperialist pretention of imposing upon us the neoliberal model and the so-called bourgeoisie democracy.”⁹⁴

Here, he identified the United States as attempting to impose a certain kind of democracy upon Latin American nations, later naming Chile, the Dominican Republic and Guatemala as examples. He later repeated his accusation that the United States had been involved in the April 2002 coup against him, saying that “the CIA was preparing the Allende formula against Venezuela,”⁹⁵ a clear reference to the United States’ staged coup against Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973. He proceeded to call the American government “a cruel, inhumane, imperialist government” that had entered a new phase of imperialism beyond those listed by Lenin: “bushism”, so named by Chávez after the then-president of the United States.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid., 68.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 73.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 77.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 81.

At the World Social Forum on January 30th, 2005, Chávez stated that since entering the military academy in Venezuela, he “began to read Mao [Ze Dong], the military writings, the philosophical writings, the political theses, the red book.”⁹⁷ Here, he communicated that even before the attempted coup of 1992 he had been studying communist thought. He again cited a leftist philosopher when he reflected upon “that expression by Leon Trotsky, when he said that every revolution needs the whip of the counterrevolution.”⁹⁸ He added that in the case of Venezuela, it was “the Yankees [that] came at [them] with whips: economic sabotage, media sabotage, social sabotage, terrorism, bombs, violence, blood and death, coup, institutional manipulation international pressure.”⁹⁹ This counterrevolution, which he attributed to capitalism and imperialism, Chávez stated “must be transcended by the path of socialism, that path is how the capitalist model must be transcended, the true socialism.”¹⁰⁰

“Mr. Danger”

On June 20th, 2005, Chávez gave a speech on the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), where he began by saying that “the United States of North America was born with an imperialist sign, like that, with a birthmark. Thomas Jefferson said it, one of the founders, it is written, proposed the plan of imperialism from the very birth of that state, when he said: ‘Now we must swallow one by one the republics that are being birthed in this continent.’”¹⁰¹ Despite the clear exaggeration, his feelings towards the brand of imperialism he attributed to the United States become extremely obvious throughout this particular speech. ALBA, by design, was meant to be an initiative “designed to weaken the thrust of U.S.-sponsored neoliberalism.”¹⁰² Additionally, he once again mentioned the attempted coup in Venezuela, referring to it as having been “driven by various fronts,

⁹⁷ Ibid., 104.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 108.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 108.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 111.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 129.

¹⁰² Nikolas Kozloff, *Hugo Chávez: Oil, Politics, and the Challenge to the United States*, (Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 74.

one of them the oil one, after the military coup came the oil coup, an operation conceived in Washington,”¹⁰³ referencing the oil lockout and strikes that began December of 2002. Besides the effects of imperialism in his home country, however, Chávez also mentioned “the International Monetary Fund, mechanism to dominate governments and peoples; the World Bank [...] [as] mechanisms of imperialism.”¹⁰⁴ Evidently, he began making connections not just between Venezuelan higher classes potentially involved in the 2002 coup with the United States, but also between the United States and international organisms.

Most strikingly, however, this speech marked the beginning of the more personal attacks against the United States. While in the previous phase of his remarks he had gone as far as to label a new kind of imperialist stage as “bushism”, he directly attacked the United States president in this speech. At one point he referenced President Bush by the nickname “Mr. Danger.”¹⁰⁵ This, however, was not the only instance in which Chávez called him by that epithet. During his speech months later on August 13th, he again called President Bush and his administration “Mr. Danger and his ‘*dangeritos*’.” Here, he was accusing them of being “the destabilizers, they are the ones who have destabilized this continent, they are the ones who have massacred entire peoples.”¹⁰⁶ He proceeded to explain the hypocrisy of imperialism, further emphasizing his enmity towards it. While his personal ideology may not have shifted significantly so far, the manner in which he spoke about the United States and its president are indicative of the radicalization of his thought.

Chávez never missed an opportunity to condemn imperialism or highlight Washington’s role in promoting neoliberalism. In his speech at the 60th General Assembly of the United Nations on September 15th, 2005, he signals neoliberalism as “the fundamental cause of the great evils and the

¹⁰³ Chávez, *La Unidad Latinoamericana*, 141.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

great tragedies that our peoples endure: the neoliberal capitalism, what the Washington Consensus has generated is greater degree of misery, of inequality and an infinite tragedy to the peoples of this continent.”¹⁰⁷ Later on in the same speech, he added that “the only country where a person can have the luxury of asking for the magnicide of a Chief of State is the United States, as happened recently with a reverend named Pat Robertson, very good friend of the White House.”¹⁰⁸ In this case, Chávez is referring to television evangelist Pat Robertson, who commented on August 22nd of that year that the United States should assassinate Chávez. While Chávez’s comment referenced Robertson individually, the sentence implicitly invokes the history of the United States with interventions in which presidents or other chiefs of state have been deposed or assassinated. This, in turn, demonstrates that Chávez’s rather inflammatory rhetoric regarding the United States was based, at least to some extent, on the country’s interventionist legacy.

Freedom from “El Diablo’s” Hegemony

Earlier in August of 2005, Venezuela had broken ties with the United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) due to accusations that the DEA was spying on the Venezuelan government. On September 17th, Chávez proclaimed that the allegations that Venezuela was not collaborating against drug trafficking were misleading. Rather, he said, they “had to break the agreement with the DEA, not because [they] wanted to but because [they] discovered a few months ago that the DEA was conducting espionage in Venezuela; that the DEA was conducting illegal operations in Venezuela, [...] what country could allow that?”¹⁰⁹ In this case, Chávez is not attacking the U.S. government itself, but rather the idea that Venezuela might not have been able to exercise its sovereignty against a U.S. national entity committing crimes on its soil. This idea of external

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 209.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 212.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 223.

domination was further noted in his speech during the celebration of the seventh anniversary of the Revolutionary Bolivarian Government, when he said that, previously, Venezuela had been “dominated by transnational interests. Venezuela was, until seven years ago, a colony dominated by the interests of North American imperialism.”¹¹⁰ Curiously enough, this sentence not only clearly communicated the resentment of previous foreign domination over Venezuela, but also indirectly referenced Castro’s speech at the United Nations General Assembly in September of 1960, in which Castro calls Cuba an American colony.

Almost exactly forty-six years after Castro’s speech at the United Nations, Chávez delivered a speech before the same audience in which he, in no uncertain terms, condemned the United States actions towards Venezuela. He referenced Noam Chomsky, whom he called “one of the most prestigious intellectuals of this America and of the world”, in saying that the greatest threat to the stability of the world was “the hegemonic pretention of North American imperialism, that puts in risk the very survival of the human species.”¹¹¹ He later mentioned President Bush’s speech the day before, describing how the U.S. president, “who [he calls] ‘*El Diablo*’ [‘The Devil’] came here talking like the owner of the world.”¹¹² He continued by saying that “as the spokesperson of imperialism, [President Bush] came to give his recipes to try and maintain the actual scheme of domination, of exploitation, and of pillaging of the peoples of the world.”¹¹³ He returned to the idea of American hegemony by saying that “the difference is that the government of this country, of the United States, does not want peace; it wants to impose on us its model of exploitation and of pillaging and its hegemony through wars.”¹¹⁴ This speech is clearly the most abrasive towards the United States, which he famously began

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 314.

¹¹¹ Hugo Chávez, *Misión Permanente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela ante las Naciones Unidas*, (New York, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2006). Translated by me.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

to call “*el imperio mismo* [the Empire itself].” Nevertheless, his tone regarding what he called American imperialism and the United States’ hegemony in the region soured and became provocative rather early on during the Bolivarian Revolution, only to continue to escalate to almost comical proportions.

VI. A COMPLICATED LOVE TRIANGLE

In the above section, it is evident that the shifts in rhetoric of both Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez become more leftist and more specifically anti-United States over time, respectively. Castro’s speeches morph from anti-colonial and anti-imperialist to adopting socialist and communist characteristics, reflecting the ideological evolution of the revolution itself. Chávez, meanwhile, shifts from general socialism and anti-imperialism to the rather pointed vilification of the United States as the sole global empire. Once the speeches are aligned chronologically and compared to key events and changes in United States policy towards those specific countries (see the timeline in Appendix A), there are clear instances in which an action taken by the United States is not only directly referenced in a revolutionary speech, but it in fact changes the tone of the leader delivering it. This is in accordance with the Logic Pyramid displayed in Figure 1.

However, seldom are policy implications as simple as two one-directional lines—and this triangular relationship is no exception. There are two key connections not shown in Figure 1 that have a significant impact upon one or more of the angles of the Logic Pyramid. In Figure 2 below, the sides that were shown in the first pyramid are shown as dotted, drawing attention to the other relationships that have not yet been discussed. The first of these relationships is that between the U.S. policies and imperialism, and Castro’s socialism. While that side of the pyramid existed in Figure 1, the arrow pointed from American policies down to the Cuban ideology. In Figure 2, the solid arrow points the opposite direction, indicating that Castro’s socialism not only was informed by U.S. policies, but also to some degree informed the policies themselves. The second relationship to be discussed is the solid

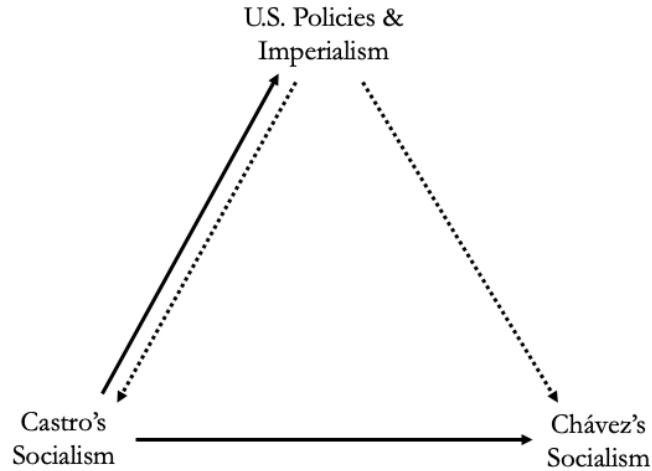


Figure 2: Logic Pyramid - Revised

arrow between Castro’s socialism and Chávez’s socialism. Despite the near half century time jump between the beginning of the two revolutions, the Bolivarian Revolution is inextricably linked to the Cuban one both in practical assistance and ideology.

A. Fidel Castro and the United States

In his article on the break in relations between U.S. and Cuba, William LeoGrande argues that the emotional responses of American policymakers regarding Castro’s rhetoric led them to produce harsher policies against Cuba. According to a U.S. Congressional Research Service report updated in June of 2006, “since the early 1960s, U.S. policy toward Cuba has consisted largely of isolating the island nation through comprehensive economic sanctions.”¹¹⁵ The report additionally noted that though the key goal towards Cuba was “to help bring democracy and respect for human rights to the island,”¹¹⁶ there were disagreements on how to achieve this. The option that was seemingly followed was “maximum pressure on the Cuban government until reforms are enacted.”¹¹⁷ In other words, until

¹¹⁵ Mark P. Sullivan, *Cuba: Issues for the 109th Congress*, (Library of Congress, 2006).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Cuban policies aligned with the objectives of the United States, sanctions and different kinds of forces would be pushed on the island.

Fidel Castro himself noted on several occasions that his rhetoric, even before becoming overtly socialist or communist, was causing unfavorable tensions between the two countries. In his speech at the United Nations General Assembly in September of 1960, he stated that “the interests adversely affected by the Cuban revolution [...] owned the natural wealth and resources of the majority of the peoples of the world. So the Cuban revolution had to be punished. Punitive actions of every type—including the destruction of those insolent Cubans—had to be carried out against the revolutionary government.”¹¹⁸ Here, he was referring to the aerial attacks, the explosion of *La Coubre*, and other such actions that either he suspected or were confirmed to have been carried out by the CIA.

Two years later, during his “Second Declaration of Havana” in February of 1962, he bluntly stated that “Cuba hurts the imperialists in a special way. What is hidden behind the Yankees’ hatred of the Cuban revolution? [...] What unites them and agitates them is fear. What explains it is fear. Not fear of the Cuban revolution but fear of the Latin American revolution.”¹¹⁹ He directly pointed out the fact that, while a nearby island nation having a successful socialist revolution in itself would not negatively impact the United States, the possibility that other nearby Latin American nations might be emboldened by this kind of revolution would not only affect United States industries based in those countries but also supply the Soviet Union, at the time their Cold War adversary, with ideological allies.

Interestingly, the previously mentioned policy report did single out a turning point in relations between the United States and Cuba specifically. It stated that “in the early 1960s, U.S.-Cuban relations

¹¹⁸ Castro, *Fidel Castro Reader*, 151.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 247.

deteriorated sharply when Fidel Castro began to build a repressive communist dictatorship and move his country toward close relations with the Soviet Union.”¹²⁰ This sentence has various implications for this study. On the one hand, several of Castro’s comments in speeches cited in earlier sections of this study indicated that closer relations with the Soviet Union had been primarily due to the economic isolation Cuba had begun to suffer at the hands of the United States. This report stating that deteriorating U.S.-Cuban relations were due to closer relations with the Soviet Union suggests a circular logic narrative heavily dependent on perspective, similar to that suggested by Peter Smith. On the other hand, it was not until the mid-1960’s that Castro began consistently describing his government as communist, indicating that the U.S. characterization of the revolution as “a repressive communist dictatorship” might have been preempted, if not slightly exaggerated.

During President Chávez’s inauguration in 1999, Castro added that because Cuba was the only revolutionary socialist state before the Venezuelan election, “all the propaganda, all the mass media in the world [were] used by the United States in the ideological and political warfare against [the Cuban] revolutionary process, in the same way that it uses its immense power in all fields, including its economic power, and its international political influence in the economic warfare against Cuba.”¹²¹ By this Castro meant the Cuban Democracy Act, passed in October of 1992 by the United States Congress. This policy meant to promote a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba by using a two-pronged strategy of sanctions and humanitarian support. The United States provided support to the Cuban population, including “U.S. private humanitarian donations, medical exports to Cuba under the terms of the CDA, U.S. government support for democracy-building efforts, and U.S.-sponsored radio and television broadcasting to Cuba.”¹²² An important practical impact, however, was an attempt to extend the economic blockade against Cuba to other countries, further isolating the island.

¹²⁰ Sullivan, *Cuba*, 11.

¹²¹ Castro, *Fidel Castro Reader*, 452.

¹²² Congressional Research Service, *Cuba: U.S. Policy in the 155th Congress*, (Library of Congress, 2019), 29.

Combining the reasoning of this study's earlier section on Castro's increasingly leftist rhetoric informed by United States policies with this section leaves one with the impression that to see either side as solely the cause or solely the effect would be incorrect. While it may be true that the historical legacy of the United States as an intervening imperialist force informed much of Castro's initial rhetoric, this rhetoric in turn also increased the hostility with which the United States treated Cuba. This hostility was then met with radicalized speech, which made the United States more hostile—and this cycle has essentially been repeated *ad infinitum*. The significance of this fact is that the other branch of thought outlined by the policy report, calling for “a swift normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations,”¹²³ had not been applied between the beginning of the Cuban revolution and 2007, leaving the question open as to whether that may have served to de-escalate conflict during that time.

B. Fidel Castro and the Venezuelan Left

The rhetorical and practical ties between the leftist governments in Cuba and Venezuela are arguably the most prominent relationship of all the ones shown in Figure 2. Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro over time fostered a strong fraternal relationship, which “has provided the foundation for a productive exchange between their countries that has expanded beyond their borders to the farthest corners of the continent.”¹²⁴ According to an analysis of the relationship between the two leaders, “their relationship seems to be anchored in historical and political grounds: two major Latin American social transformation processes taking place in geographical proximity, sharing domestic and regional objectives, and encountering similarly motivated opponents were destined to develop close ties.”¹²⁵ The Cuban and Bolivarian revolutions have been closely linked in ideology since before the Bolivarian revolution was even institutionalized. Two years after his release from prison for the attempted coup

¹²³ Sullivan, *Cuba*.

¹²⁴ Max Azicri, *The Castro-Chávez Alliance*, (Sage Publications, 2009), 100.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

in 1992, Chávez delivered a speech in Havana where he made several references to his reverence and admiration for Castro's socialism. He commented that, during his time in prison, he "read, in the first place, in the jail in Yare, that flaring defense, that flaring word of [Castro's] in 'History will absolve me,' [...] and having compared, and, within so many comparisons of so many ideas with 40 years almost of difference between one and the other, making several conclusions, [...] That [they] re-read, [they] read in the prison, and it was for [them] sustenance for prisoners, and it was for [them], and continues to be, sustenance for rebels."¹²⁶ Here, Chávez shared how, even before he was pardoned for his attempted coup almost a decade before he became president, he had devoted time to analyzing the Cuban socialist model. He then proceeded to describe how focused he was "in organizing in Venezuela an immense social movement: the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement 200,"¹²⁷ which would later on evolve into the Movement for the Fifth Republic (*Movimiento Quinta República*, MVR) to support Chávez's presidential candidacy. The connection he established between his reading in prison and the MBR-200's mission shows a clear ideological link.

As mentioned previously, Castro spoke at Chávez's presidential inauguration in 1999. Aside from the mere fact that he was present as a speaker during such an occasion, Castro's speech itself signaled a camaraderie between the two leaders. There, he made several references to Venezuelan revolutionary Simón Bolívar, quoting him as having said, "'The United States seems destined by Providence to plague the Americas with misery in the name of liberty."¹²⁸ This quote would then proceed to be referenced by Chávez on several occasions, including at his speech at the *Universidad Autónoma de México* (UNAM) in 2004. Afterwards, Castro also added that in the incoming Chávez presidency, he saw "a true rebirth of Venezuela, or at least an exceptionally great opportunity for Venezuela. [He saw] it coming not only in the interest of Venezuelans; [he] also [saw] it in the interest

¹²⁶ Hugo Chávez, *Speech in Havana*, (Havana, 1994). Translated by me.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Castro, *Fidel Castro Reader*, 456.

of Latin Americans. [He saw] it as something in the interest of other peoples in the world as it advances—because there is no other choice—towards a universal globalization.”¹²⁹ Chávez’s later references of globalization for Latin America and the Caribbean¹³⁰ shared with this speech a distinctive goal for the integration of the region. Finally, Castro assured Chávez and his audience that “[their] neighbors to the north are not at all happy with the process that is taking place here in Venezuela, and they do not want it to succeed.”¹³¹ Castro based this premonition on personal experience of the Cuban revolution and its relationship with the United States, indicating that the U.S. would react similarly to Chávez as they did to Castro due to a perceived likeness.

The relationship between the leftist governments in Cuba and Venezuela became even stronger in 2003, when, as part of his *Barrio Adentro* program, Cuban medics began to enter Venezuela to provide medical assistance in exchange for oil. This new policy, however, raised concerns among U.S. officials that Venezuela was being “Cubanized.” In response, Castro sent Chávez a communication that June, where he said that these accusations “do not offend Cuba, on the contrary they honor it, those who, by the use of some internationally renowned Cuban experiences, affirm that to teach to read and write is to Cubanize Venezuelans, as it also does not offend [Cuba] those that slander [their] selfless medics that in many parts of the world fight for health and life, presenting them as indoctrinators.”¹³² He not only referenced *Barrio Adentro*, but also other Bolivarian projects such as *Misión Robinson*, a literacy program, that had been modeled closely after their Cuban counterparts. Chávez also mentioned this “Cubanization” in his speech at the UNAM, after saying of Cuba: “Cuba is a brother people¹³³, and what a brother and what solidarity that of the Cubans, and it has a President,

¹²⁹ Ibid., 462.

¹³⁰ Chávez, *La Unidad Latinoamericana*, 5.

¹³¹ Castro, *Fidel Castro Reader*, 474.

¹³² Fidel Castro, *Communication to Chávez*, (2003). Translated by me.

¹³³ There is no proper translation for this phrase. In the original Spanish, it is written as “*pueblo hermano*”, meaning a people that is close to another.

and the problem of Cuba is of the Cubans, not of the North Americans, or of the Mexicans, or of the Venezuelans. [Venezuela] must make a front in defense of the sovereignty not only of the Cuban people, of the Mexican people, of the Venezuelan people.”¹³⁴ He used his claim that the Venezuelan and the Cuban peoples are like brothers to call for the protection of Cuban sovereignty as a priority for Venezuela.

On December 14th, 2004, on the tenth anniversary of his first visit to Cuba, Chávez was awarded the Order of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes by Castro. That same day, the ties between the Cuban and Venezuelan revolutions were institutionalized through ALBA. During his speech at this event, Castro described ALBA as “a Bolivarian conception of economic integration, and a bilateral agreement to begin its application, that will make history.”¹³⁵ Furthermore, he added that what moves him and his Cuban colleagues the most is that Chávez returned to Cuba “to share [his] Bolivarian and Martian¹³⁶ battles with [Cuba].”¹³⁷ In referencing both Simón Bolívar and José Martí, Castro took his speech a step further than merely connecting the ongoing revolutions to each other: he drew historical parallels between revolutionary figures, implying a similar status for himself and Chávez. Chávez made a similar statement in his speech at the World Social Forum in June of 2005, when he mentioned that only three years prior “[they] were only Fidel and [Chávez] alone in those meetings of presidents, it was like a neoliberal chorus and one there felt like an infiltrated, conspiring.”¹³⁸ He spoke of himself and Castro as the two lone voices speaking out against imperialism, establishing that as their ideological bond. While their revolutions were not identical, with Chávez having “no plans to emulate the

¹³⁴ Chávez, *La Unidad Latinoamericana*, 78.

¹³⁵ Fidel Castro, *Speech at the Acto de Condecoración con la Orden "Carlos Manuel de Céspedes" to Hugo Chávez*, (Havana, 2004). Translated by me.

¹³⁶ By “Martian” [“*martianas*” in the original Spanish], Castro means originated by Cuban revolutionary José Martí.

¹³⁷ Castro, *Speech at the Acto de Condecoración*.

¹³⁸ Chávez, *La Unidad Latinoamericana*, 116.

particular Soviet form of the Cuban economy, or the particular form of Cuba's political arrangements,"¹³⁹ what did unite them did so fiercely.

In August of 2005, Castro and Chávez gave subsequent speeches regarding the Bolivarian Revolution and the construction of 21st century socialism. Castro spoke first, describing his friendship with the Venezuelan president as one "that can exist between two endeared brothers, two truly sincere revolutionaries."¹⁴⁰ He then proceeded to predict that "in a country with the enormous resources on which Venezuela counts, the Bolivarian Revolution may reach—in half the time—75% of what Cuba, blockaded country and with infinitely less resources than Venezuela, has been able to achieve since the triumph of the Revolution."¹⁴¹ While he did not say this explicitly, his comment clearly implied a significant commonality between the aims of each revolution. He concluded his speech by referencing his famous speech from 1953, saying that "if President Chávez agrees, a day like this would be the appropriate occasion to respond: Condemn us, we do not care! History will absolve us!"¹⁴²

To that, Chávez responded directly, "to be just and exact with history and with the peoples and with Fidel, [...] [he] would just add the following: You, Fidel, have already been absolved by history."¹⁴³ The camaraderie between the two revolutionary figures reached an evident degree with these linked comments. Chávez's affinity for Castro's specific ideology is also specified in this speech on two occasions. The first was when Chávez said that "every day imperialism is more dangerous, as Fidel says, it is the most powerful empire in history."¹⁴⁴ Moments later, he mentioned how his government, "from Caracas, from Venezuela, have made the call because [they] believe it was the first step that needed to be taken, [they] believe it was the first step because almost nobody in the world

¹³⁹ Julian Brooks, *Hugo Chávez and his Bolivarian Revolution*, (2005).

¹⁴⁰ Chávez, *La Unidad Latinoamericana*, 178.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.

had dared in these past years to speak of socialism, almost, nobody; exceptions? The revolutionary and socialist Cuba.”¹⁴⁵ In those two comments, Chávez expressed his reverence towards the Cuban revolution and its ideology.

This relationship did not go unnoticed by the United States. April 28th, 2006, the Country Reports on Terrorism by the U.S. state department stated that “Venezuela virtually ceased its cooperation in the global war on terror, tolerating terrorists in its territory and seeking closer relations with Cuba and Iran, both state sponsors of terrorism.”¹⁴⁶ On August 18th, 2006, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte announced the establishment of the position of Mission Manager for Cuba and Venezuela. This caused heightened tensions between the United States and Venezuela, which had been close to signing an agreement to cooperate with the DEA once again. Additionally, in the policy report from November of 2006, it was noted that “U.S. officials have expressed concerns about President Chávez’s plans for military arms purchases, his relations with such countries as Cuba and Iran, and his efforts to export his brand of populism to other Latin American countries.”¹⁴⁷ Though the report mentioned both Cuba and Iran as points of concern in Venezuelan foreign policy, Cuba was further specified when it added that “U.S. officials also have expressed concerns about President Chávez’s close relationship with Cuba’s Fidel Castro, but Chávez defends his relationship with Cuba.”¹⁴⁸ Evidently, both the ideological similarities between the two revolutions as well as their foreign relations between each other were poignant enough to garner attention from the United States authorities.

Finally, if it has not yet demonstrated its strength in previous quotes, the personal friendship between Castro and Chávez was markedly clear during the phone conversation aired on a radio

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 196.

¹⁴⁶ Mark P. Sullivan, *Venezuela: Political Conditions and U.S. Policy*, (Library of Congress, 2006), 2.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 32.

emission of Chávez's show, *Aló, Presidente* on February 27th, 2007. In a rare instance of broadcasted communication, Castro called Chávez while the show was being transmitted that day. Chávez admitted early on in the conversation that “that energetic [Venezuelan] revolution without Cuba would have been impossible.”¹⁴⁹ Further along in the conversation, Chávez referred to Castro as an “example of resistance and now of offensive.”¹⁵⁰ By this, he meant that not only did Castro and the Cuban revolution endure the challenges that arose in the early stages of his government, but Castro was able to consolidate his socialist project and help advance those of other countries as well. Included in those other countries whose socialist projects have been helped by Fidel Castro and his revolutionary rhetoric, evidently, is Venezuela under Hugo Chávez. In their analysis of Venezuela's relationships with allies against the United States, Corrales and Romero even stated a then-popular theory that “it is doubtful that the Cuba-Venezuela alliance will falter as long as Chávez and the Castros are in power.”¹⁵¹ While in previous sections the influence of U.S. policies and interventions in Latin America and Venezuela specifically was noted in the increased hostility against the United States to be found in Chávez's rhetoric, his initial and continued socialist revolutionary ideals have undoubtedly been inspired by his older Cuban counterpart.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study began with the premise that, in order to understand why the rhetoric of certain revolutionary figures has historically taken a specific tone, their relationship with international context is paramount. This idea is based on dependency theory, as the latter maintains that the economic dependency of one nation upon another affects not only its specific economics, but also its relationship with other countries in an international context, as well as to what degree the country on

¹⁴⁹ Hugo Chávez, *Phone Conversation between Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez*, (*Aló, Presidente*, 2007). Translated by me.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Corrales and Romero, 28.

which it is dependent may influence national politics. As a result, the beginning of this study focused on analyzing the relationships that the two peripheral countries in question—Cuba and Venezuela—had with the United States. This, in turn, allowed for both a historical lens (in the sense that policies from the early twentieth century were studied) and a structural lens (how more recent U.S. policies had, and continue to have, an ongoing impact) in this analysis. As predicted, there were consequential ties between policies enacted by the United States towards Latin America as a whole and the two countries in general, and the way in which the leaders modified or radicalized their rhetoric, studied through their references to the United States.

However, there are two relationships that had not been clear from the outset: the influence that Fidel Castro's socialist and revolutionary rhetoric was having upon the policies of the United States, as well as its influence upon Hugo Chávez's own ways of speaking. While it is difficult to establish causality between the United States' policies and Castro's revolution in Cuba, what is evident is that the cyclical relationship between the two lent itself both to further radicalization by Castro, as well as harsher stances within American foreign policy against Castro and his brand of socialism. As aforementioned, this idea is strengthened through a structural neorealist perspective, allowing for the escalation of security concerns based on Castro's rhetoric to lead to stricter United States policies. On the other hand, Castro's revolutionary ideology had a clearly defined impact upon Chávez's own thought since well before the latter was elected president of Venezuela. Castro's radicalization, as a result and combined with aforementioned U.S. policies, also saw parallels in the radicalization and anti-American government tone of Chávez's speech. A crucial aspect of this chain of influence is demonstrated in the Circular Logic Pyramid in Figure 3, in which both U.S. policies towards Venezuela and Castro's socialism in Cuba have informed Chávez's speech and rhetoric. It then follows that U.S. policies towards Cuba and Castro would also have an indirect effect upon the way in which Chávez perceives the United States.

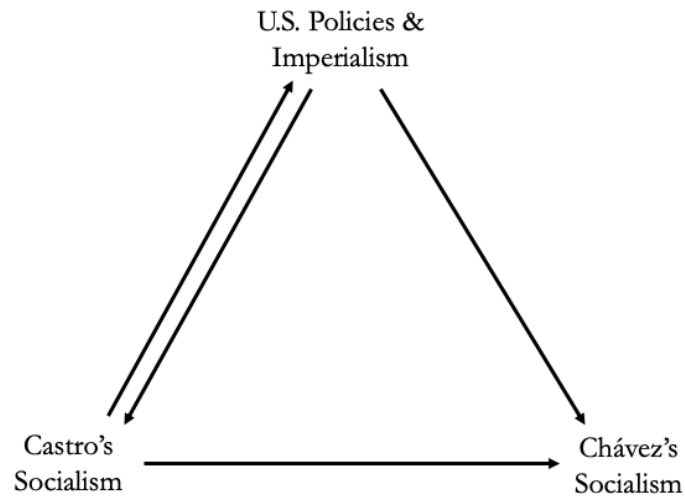


Figure 3: Circular Logic Pyramid

One important area of study that could benefit from further exploration is extending such an analysis centered in historical structuralism, dependency theory, and structural neorealism, to not merely include discourse but also employ a broader focus to include national policies and constitutional amendments made under Castro and Chávez. Furthermore, limiting this study to speeches and policies enacted prior to 2007 excludes analysis of Obama-era policies, which are especially important to consider given that these international relationships may or may not have changed once Castro and Chávez were no longer political heads of their respective countries. Consequently, a study that expanded from the very beginning of these two leaders' rises to power to their end would constitute a more holistic review of shifts in both rhetoric and policies. Finally, a study that takes into consideration grassroots organizing and other leftist and socialist organizations on a more local national level in both Cuba and Venezuela could shine a light on whether the rhetorical radicalization is specifically unique to Castro and Chávez, or whether this is indicative of a broader trend among leftist leadership faced with U.S. opposition.

The Battle Over Venezuela: A Modern Tale

There are important policy implications of this study, especially with the ongoing humanitarian crisis surging in Venezuela under the presidency of Nicolás Maduro, Chávez’s handpicked successor. Faced with sanctions and punishment, the leadership of the country has not only denounced it as further proof of current U.S. imperialism, but it has also gripped more tightly onto its revolutionary tone. According to a report for U.S. Congress, during 2017 and 2018 “President Maduro and the ANC [Constituent National Assembly] moved to consolidate power and blamed U.S. sanctions for the country’s economic problems.”¹⁵² Although a great part of the economic downfall of Venezuela under the Maduro regime is attributed to mismanagement and falling prices of oil, Maduro has been able to use the United States’ antagonization of his government as supposed evidence of economic sabotage not unlike that against Cuba in the early Castro years. Additionally, the United States’ influence on global institutions such as the OAS, the IMF, and the World Bank has given Maduro further ammunition to claim of a Western conspiracy against his rule.

Not unlike the non-Communism-related concerns towards Cuba, the global community has also expressed disagreement with how Maduro’s government handles democracy and human rights violations in Venezuela. In August of 2017, the Lima Accord was signed “rejecting the rupture of democracy and systemic human rights violations in Venezuela, refusing to recognize the ANC, and criticizing the government’s refusal to accept humanitarian aid.”¹⁵³ November of 2017, the European Union created a framework for sanctions against the Venezuelan government and included material that could aid in internal repression. Later in January of 2018, this framework would help target sanctions against several governmental officials. After the May 2018 presidential elections in Venezuela, which many countries considered illegitimate, “the Trump Administration has sought to

¹⁵² Congressional Research Service, *Venezuela: Background and U.S. Relations*, (Library of Congress, 2019), 7.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 22.

increase pressure on the Maduro government in order to hasten a return to democracy.”¹⁵⁴ As a result, several measures were taken against Venezuela, including Executive Order 13808, restricting the ability of Venezuela’s government and national oil company PDVSA to access American finance; Executive Order 13827, preventing United States purchase of Venezuelan digital currency; and Executive Order 13850, forbidding United States purchase of Venezuelan debt.¹⁵⁵

With the current struggle for political power over Venezuela between Maduro and National Assembly president Juan Guaidó, the international stage has once again shone a spotlight upon the region. Under the national constitution of the country, the absence of a legitimate president by the inauguration date means the president of the National Assembly assumes the charge of interim president until new elections are held. Consequently, late January 2019, Guaidó was declared interim president of Venezuela. Some members of the international community, however, question the legitimacy of Guaidó’s claim to power, leading to certain leaders supporting or opposing this new government. In Alejandro Velasco’s op-ed, he describes Venezuela as “a spoil in a larger prize.”¹⁵⁶ He, along with many Venezuelan politics scholars, worry about the impact the United States’ role in a government transition may have upon the prospect of a future governmental transition in the country. It is true that a regime change might result in a more beneficial relationship between the new Venezuelan government and the American government, as it is highly improbable that a new political leader would view the United States with as hostile a perspective as Maduro. This certainly sheds light on the adamant concern shown by U.S. government officials such as Mike Pompeo towards the Venezuelan situation. However, this conceptualization of United States interventionism lacks a strong distinction between direct intervention and the support of a legitimate regime change. In this specific

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵⁶ Alejandro Velasco, “A Geopolitical Showdown in Venezuela Will Only Make Things Worse,” (*The New York Times*, 2019).

instance, the classification of Guaidó's interim presidency as legitimate or otherwise depends predominantly on Venezuelan national politics, rather than a tunnel-like focus on the fact that other countries are becoming involved.

There have also been simultaneous global efforts to aid the ongoing refugee crisis resulting from the poor humanitarian conditions in Venezuela. With a mass exodus occurring, neighboring countries in the region have been faced with an unprecedented influx of Venezuelan refugees. Aside from joint international actions being taken to support this cause, “the Trump Administration has worked bilaterally and multilaterally to increase pressure on the Maduro government while also providing assistance to neighboring countries hosting more than 3 million Venezuelans who have fled the country.”¹⁵⁷ This crisis, in part, has also influenced the United States’ decision to not implement significantly stronger restrictions upon Venezuela, for fear that conditions could worsen for Venezuelans themselves. Additionally, as noted by the Congressional report on Venezuela, “sanctioning additional Venezuelan officials might help to increase pressure on the Maduro government to cede power or at least stop violating human rights, whereas others argue that increased sanctions would only encourage Maduro and his allies to harden their positions.”¹⁵⁸ Following the arguments of this thesis, further sanctions might not only have a direct negative impact on the Venezuelan population itself, but also indirectly by encouraging the antagonization by Venezuelan officials against international interventionism—humanitarian or otherwise.

In terms of actions taken by the government and the key leaders’ ideologies, this study demonstrates that further radicalization is the most common response in these two revolutions, which by virtue of Maduro being Chávez’s successor has continued well past the latter’s death six years prior. While concessions might not accomplish the goal of resolving this crisis, any sanctions must be

¹⁵⁷ Congressional Research Service, *Venezuela*, 39.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

carefully analyzed to ensure that the historical connotations do not lead to a perceived perpetuation of imperialism. Additionally, direct intervention would have a strong effect in the opposite direction as intended, as possible failure of such a mission would result in much harsher attitudes against cooperating with the intervening government. Essentially, while measures taken by the international community may specifically be targeting only the top heads of governments, there is still an important way in which this could negatively impact the rhetoric, policies, and, as a result, people of those countries. Extreme caution in ensuring that future political sanctions and actions taken against the Maduro regime is necessary to encourage a de-escalation of the conflict, without fueling further anti-Americanism or exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1901		Platt Amendment
1934		In Cuba, Fulgencio Batista ousts Grau San Martín with help from the United States.
1939		The United States sponsors a resolution recommending that it eradicate “threatening” ideologies.
1948		The United States grants diplomatic recognition to Venezuelan dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez.
1952		Fulgencio Batista rises to power in Cuba after leading a military coup shortly before presidential elections.
1953	July 26	Fidel Castro leads an attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba. The attack is unsuccessful, and Castro is imprisoned for a year. He then travels to Mexico, where he forms a revolutionary group with his brother Raúl and with Ernesto “Che” Guevara.
1954		The Declaration of Caracas is decided in the Caracas Conference of the Organization of American States (OAS), in which anticommunism is included by the United States as part of the agenda.
1956		Fidel Castro and Ernesto “Che” Guevara launch a guerrilla war against Fulgencio Batista but are unsuccessful.
1958	January 23	The Venezuelan <i>Pacto de Punto Fijo</i> is signed to preserve a new democratic regime after the fall of President Marcos Pérez Jiménez.
1959	February 16	Fidel Castro rises to power in Cuba as Prime Minister.
	May 17	Fidel Castro passes his Agrarian Reform Law, expropriating large holdings with compensation.
	May 21	Fidel Castro states in a televised speech that his revolution “is neither capitalist nor communist”.
	October 21	Two planes from the United States fly over Havana and leave two dead, dozens injured.
	October 27	Fidel Castro leads a rally in Havana and speaks to the crowds, blaming the United States for the aerial attacks. Toward the end of the month, President Eisenhower approves a CIA covert program against Cuba.
	December	The CIA proposes to recruit Cuban exiles in paramilitary attacks against Cuba.
1960	March 4	An explosion occurs on French vessel <i>La Coubre</i> , which had been bringing Belgian arms to Cuba.
	March 5	Fidel Castro first uses the slogan “ <i>Patria o muerte</i> ” at the funeral of the <i>La Coubre</i> victims. He shares his belief that the CIA was responsible for the attack.

	May 8	Cuba restores diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, previously broken under Fulgencio Batista.
	July 6	The United States suspends Cuba's sugar quota, which is then taken up by the Soviet Union instead.
	August 6	Cuba nationalizes United States businesses such as oil refineries, sugar mills, and electricity and phone companies.
	August 28	The United States imposes a trade embargo on Cuba.
	September 13	The Act of Bogotá is signed, proposing measures to increase higher socioeconomic standards of life in Latin America.
	September 20	Fidel Castro speaks at the United Nations General Assembly.
	December 16	President Eisenhower reduces Cuba's sugar quota to zero.
1961	January	The Eisenhower Administration severed diplomatic relations between Cuba and the U.S.
	April 15	Planes with fake Cuban insignia launch bombing raids on three Cuban air fields.
	April 16	Fidel Castro speaks at the funeral ceremony for the victims of the previous day.
	April 17	1,500 mercenaries, trained and armed by the CIA, begin an invasion in the Bay of Pigs. The invasion would later fail.
	May 1	"First Declaration of Havana": Fidel Castro conducts a massive May Day rally in Havana and speaks about the Bay of Pigs invasion.
	December	Fidel Castro announces that the Revolution is not just Socialist, but rather is Communist.
1962	January 22	The OAS decides to expel Cuba.
	February 3	President Kennedy announces a complete blockade of Cuba.
	February 4	"Second Declaration of Havana": Fidel Castro speaks as part of a manifesto for the liberation of the Americas.
1965	October 3	Fidel Castro speaks at the closing ceremony of the founding meeting for the Cuban Communist Party.
1967	August 10	Fidel Castro gives a speech on the Latin American revolutions.
	October 9	Ernesto "Che" Guevara is assassinated by Bolivian Army Rangers, under Washington's command.
1976	October 6	A Cubana airlines plane explodes off the coast of Barbados. Cuban exiles and CIA agents Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles are arrested in Venezuela and charged.

1979	October 12	Fidel Castro addresses the United Nations General Assembly on behalf of the Movement of Nonaligned Countries.
1982		Cuba is listed for the first time among the United States' list of states sponsoring terrorism.
	December 17	The Bolivian Revolutionary Movement 200 (MBR 200) is founded by people including Hugo Chávez.
1989		The Washington Consensus, a series of trade liberalization policies, is recommended to Latin American countries.
	February 27	The protests known as <i>el Caracazo</i> take place against increased gas prices, resulting in approximately 5,000 casualties and newly imposed curfews on cities through militarization.
1992	February 4	Colonel Hugo Chávez and his supporters make a coup attempt. Chávez is imprisoned for two years before being pardoned.
	October 3	The U.S. Congress approves the Cuban Democracy Act, extending the blockade against Cuba to third countries. It aimed to promote a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba.
1994	March 26	Hugo Chávez and other imprisoned military rebels are pardoned by Rafael Caldera's government.
	December 14	Hugo Chávez speaks at the University of Havana.
1998	July 12	Luis Posada Carriles admits to having been involved in 1997 bombings of Cuban hotels.
	December 6	Hugo Chávez is elected president. The next month, he makes his first visit to Cuba as president.
1999	February	Fidel Castro attends the inauguration of President Hugo Chávez in Venezuela.
	April	Hugo Chávez launches <i>Plan Bolívar 2000</i> to further civic and social development, modeled after Castro's project from the early 1990's.
	May 6	Hugo Chávez speaks about his intentions for his presidential term.
	September 21	Hugo Chávez speaks at the United Nations General Assembly.
2000	October 30	Cuba and Venezuela sign the convention on oil.
2001		Hugo Chávez passes 49 laws regarding the redistribution of land and wealth, raising concerns of concentrated economic and political power similar to Cuba.
2002	April 11	Hugo Chávez is the victim of an attempted coup.
	December 2	The Venezuelan Oil Lockout begins, the most serious in a series of strikes against the Chávez government.

2003		As part of Hugo Chávez’s program <i>Barrio Adentro</i> , Cuban medics begin entering the country to provide medical assistance. In exchange, Venezuela would gift Cuba with millions of dollars’ worth of oil.
	June 20	Fidel Castro speaks to Chávez about the unrest in Venezuela, as well as the accusations that Cuba is “Cubanizing” Venezuela.
	October	President Bush appoints the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba (CAFC) to hasten the demise of the Cuban revolution.
	November	Trade ministers from 34 countries meet to discuss the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) to reduce trade barriers among all countries in the Americas except for Cuba.

2004	May 8	The Bush administration plans to accelerate the transition to democracy in Cuba. Fidel Castro responds on May 14 th in a public letter.
	May 9	126 Colombians are captured during a raid in a Caracas farm, and are accused of attempting to overthrow Hugo Chávez. Of the 126, 27 were found guilty the following year, and the rest were released and deported.
	May 16	Hugo Chávez makes a nationally broadcasted announcement talking about the recent events in Venezuela.
	May 27	Hugo Chávez speaks at the conference “The Human Condition and the Southern Nations” at the <i>Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México</i> (UNAM).
	June 21	Fidel Castro reads his “Second Epistle” to President Bush in response to CAFC.
	July	The United States tightens travel restrictions to Cuba.
	December 14	Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro sign the Cuba-Venezuela Agreement, solidifying the creation of ALBA (the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas). Fidel Castro gives a speech when granting Hugo Chávez the Order of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes.

2005	January	Hugo Chávez signs a decree on land reform, later seen as an attack on private property.
	January 30	Hugo Chávez speaks at the World Social Forum.
	June 20	Hugo Chávez speaks about the ALBA.
	August	Venezuela breaks ties with the United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) when the government accuses the agency of espionage.
	August 13	Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez describe their vision for 21 st Century Socialism.
	August 22	Television Evangelist Pat Robertson comments that the United States should “assassinate” Hugo Chávez, eliciting a reaction both from Venezuelan officials and U.S. policymakers.
	September 15	Hugo Chávez speaks at the 60 th United Nations General Assembly.
	September 17	Hugo Chávez speaks at the Forum on Poverty and Justice in Our Globalized World.

	September 26	A U.S. immigration judge determines that Luis Posada Carriles cannot be deported back to Venezuela due to the possibility of him being tortured.
2006	February 2	<p>Hugo Chávez speaks at the celebration of the seventh anniversary of the Bolivarian Revolution.</p> <p>The U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld compares Hugo Chávez to Hitler, saying they were both legally elected and then consolidated power.</p> <p>Hugo Chávez refers to President Bush as Hitler and a “madman” planning on invading the country. He announces plans to expel a U.S. naval attaché for spying.</p> <p>The U.S. expels a Venezuelan diplomat from Washington.</p>
	February 3	Fidel Castro gives a speech praising the Bolivarian Revolution as he awards Hugo Chávez the José Martí International Award.
	February 16	The U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice names Venezuela as one of the United States’ biggest problems in Latin America and shows concern regarding Venezuela’s relationship with Cuba as “a particular danger to the region.”
	April 28	The State Department releases a report in which it states that Venezuela is “seeking closer relations with Cuba and Iran, both state sponsors of terrorism.”
	July 31	Fidel Castro steps down, delegating the presidential responsibilities to his brother Raúl Castro.
	August 18	<p>John Negroponte, U.S. Director of National Intelligence, announces the establishment of the position of Mission Manager for Cuba and Venezuela.</p> <p>Venezuelan officials later announce they are reconsidering signing an agreement to cooperate with the DEA.</p>
	September 20	Hugo Chávez delivers a speech to the United Nations General Assembly, condemning the United States and President Bush.
2007	February 27	Hugo Chávez receives a phone call from Fidel Castro while on the air of his radio show <i>Aló, Presidente</i> .

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