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The Voice of the Barrios: Hugo Chavez's 21st Century Socialism as a Counter-Hegemonic Challenge to American Supremacy

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

"I am convinced that the path to a new, better and possible world is not capitalism, the path is socialism"

Hugo Chávez

Venezuela – Brief Background

Venezuela is located at the northern coast of South America on the Caribbean Sea. It is one third larger than the state of Texas in the United States with a land area of 882,050 sq. km[1] and a total area of 912,050 sq. km[2]. Venezuela is bordered by Columbia to its west, Guyana to the East and Brazil to the South. Venezuela has a range of mountains that separate the nation into four distinct areas namely: the Maracaibo lowlands, the mountainous region in the north and northwest, the Orinoco basin, with the llanos (vast grass-covered plains) on its northern border and great forest areas in the south and southeast and the Guiana Highlands, south of the Orinoco, accounting for nearly half the national territory[3].

Venezuela's population is estimated at 28 047 938 people as per the statistics taken in 2012[4]. Their population's growth rate rests at 1.468% and the population density is 77 people per square mile[5]. The capital of Venezuela is Caracas, a city of 6 474 367 people in the metro area[6]. Some of the largest cities in Venezuela are Maracaibo, Valencia and Barquisimeto. Being a former Spanish colony, Venezuelans adopted the language[7]. Spanish is still spoken in Venezuela as the home language. Since it's been colonised, Venezuela has had one of the most interesting tales in world history. Their history includes a series of dictators and two esteemed revolutionaries.

[1] FactMonster, *Venezuela*, http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0108140.html, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[2] The University of Texas, *Lecture: Oil and Gas in Latin America*, http://www.utdallas.edu/~pujana/latin/PDFS/Lecture%2012-%20LAoil.pdf, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[3] FactMonster, *Venezuela*, http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0108140.html, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[4] Manuela, J., *Venezuela*, 25 November 2013, http://prezi.com/tpvmlkj5tkvl/venezuela/, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[5] FactMonster, *Venezuela*, http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0108140.html, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[6] Ibid
[7] Manuela, J., *Venezuela*, 25 November 2013, http://prezi.com/tpvmlkj5tkvl/venezuela/, last accessed on 2014-02-05

In 1498, Columbus explored Venezuela, which was then primarily inhabited by Arawak, Carib and Chibcha Indians[8]. A Spanish explorer named the nation "Venezuela" which means "Little Venice"[9]. The capital city of Caracas was founded in 1567[10]. An extremely important historical figure was born in Caracas in 1783. Simon Bolivar was a Venezuelan born liberator that did not only succeed in liberating Venezuela but several other South American states as well. With the efforts of Simon Bolivar, Venezuela was the first South American nation to revolt against colonial imperialism in 1830[11]. These revolts did not have the most positive consequences. A long series of dictators ruled in Venezuela for many years. Between 1870 and 1888, Antonio Guzman Blanco governed the Latin American nation[12]. During his time as governor, he developed Venezuelan infrastructure, expanded the agricultural sector and invited foreign investment.

The dictator, General Juan Vicente Gomez, ruled Venezuela between 1908 and 1935[13]. During this era, Venezuela began exporting its oil and became one of the major oil exporters in the world. After Gomez's death, Venezuela was ruled by a military junta. The Democratic Action Party with the leftist leader, Dr. Romulo Betancourt won the majority number of seats in a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution for the country in 1946[14].

A candidate from Betancourt's party and well known author, Romulo Gallegos, became the first democratically elected leader in Venezuela in 1947[15]. His presidency lasted a mere 8 months before he was overthrown by a military coup led by Marcos Perez Jimenez[16]. By 1958, Jimenez was also ousted[17]. Venezuela has been one of the most stable democracies in South America and the Latin American region since 1959. Betancourt served as president from 1959 to 1964[18]. After his reign, Rafael Caldera

[8] FactMonster, *Venezuela*, http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0108140.html, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[9] USF College of Education, *Venezuela: Little Venice,* http://www.coedu.usf.edu/culture/Story/Story_Venezuela.htm, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[10] Geographia.com, Caracas, http://www.geographia.com/Venezuela/caracas/index.htm, last accessed on 2014-01-30
[11] Gott, Richard., *Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution*, London: Verso, 2011
[12] FactMonster, *Venezuela*, http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0108140.html, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[13] McBeth, B. S., *Juan Vicente Gomez and the Oil Companies in Venezuela, 1908-1935*, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 282
[14] Ibid
[15] FactMonster, *Venezuela*, http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0108140.html, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[16] Ibid
[17] Ibid
[18] Adams, Jerome, R., *Liberators, Patriots and Leaders of Latin America: 32 Biographies*, North Carolina: Mcfarland and Company, 2010

Rodriguez was president from 1969-1974[19]. During his term in office, he legalized the Communist Party and established diplomatic relations with Moscow.

Carlos Andres Perez took office in 1974 and in 1976 the Venezuela government nationalized foreign-owned oil and steel companies[20]. Venezuela benefitted from the oil boom in the 70s. Despite the large revenues received from oil wealth, the majority of Venezuelans were still extremely poor. Economies were not diversified and there were no social developments. By 1978 Luis Herrera Campins became president[21]. During this time oil prices declined which had a huge negative impact on the Venezuela economy[22]. The oil bust increased the foreign debt of Venezuela. In 1988, Perez was re-elected as president when he launched a highly unpopular austerity program[23]. There were 2 unsuccessful coups against Perez in 1992 and not long after the Venezuelan Congress impeached President Perez on corruption charges[24]. In December 1993 Rafael Caldera Rodriguez was elected president[25]. His presidency came with a huge deficit as half of Venezuela's banking sector collapsed, oil prices had fallen, there was a lot to be paid in foreign debt and the country was experiences a very high inflation. This resulted in poverty and extreme poverty increases countrywide especially in Venezuela's barrios.

Recognition of the mistreatment of the poor, uneven distribution of wealth and the lack of social development was recognized by socialist revolutionary Hugo Chavez. His presidential campaign was aimed at liberating the poor in Venezuela and liberating Venezuela from the clutches of the American empire. Using this philosophy in his campaigns, he gained support from the majority of the poor Venezuelans which won him the 1998 Venezuelan elections by a landslide. Venezuela was since then ruled by a socialist leader that went against the dictates of Washington. This was to the dismay of every American leader and senior official since the Chavez era began.

"I hereby accuse the North American Empire of being the biggest menace on the planet"

[19] FactMonster, *Venezuela*, http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0108140.html, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[20] Gott, Richard., *Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution*, London: Verso, 2011
[21] Adams, Jerome, R., *Liberators, Patriots and Leaders of Latin America: 32 Biographies*, North Carolina: Mcfarland and Company, 2010, p. 357
[22] Ibid, 359
[23] Riding, Alan., *MAN IN THE NEWS; Venezuelan and Winner: Carlos Andres Perez*, 6 December 1988, http://www.nytimes.com/1988/12/06/world/man-in-the-news-venezuelan-and-winner-carlos-andres-perez.html, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[24] FactMonster, *Venezuela*, http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0108140.html, last accessed on 2014-02-05
[25] Ibid

Aim and Rationale

The history and very recent situation (pre-Chavez era) of Venezuela is not unique in the region. Latin America has been ruled by the United States (US), both directly and indirectly, for several years. Several nations in the region were subjected to American supremacy with the US government controlling Latin American governments and economies. When leaders rose up against this supremacy it was met with hostile reactions from the United States and most of the western world. The US would take measures to ensure that a leader they approved of would be in power in Latin American nations. This would be done solely to serve American national interests. This is in despite of their propaganda leading the world to believe that they aimed to help spread democracy and act as an advocate for human rights.

The US government has supported and funded various coups in several Latin American states to ensure a leader that complied with American ideals was in power. This way, Latin America became the US's backyard whereby the US imposed their system (whether it worked or not) on various Latin American populations denying them the right to develop on their own terms and create their own laws. This was all done under the guise of promoting a good system of neo-liberal capitalism and democracy. What the US failed to realize is that what may have worked for them, did not necessarily work for other nations. This failed realization in conjunction with America being the *king of the world* blinded America from the possibility that one of the most dominant counter-hegemonic forces may emerge from a region that they spent years bullying.

Standing up to American supremacy is not uncommon. Though, leaders have faced several repercussions as a result of presenting an alternate regime to the US system. These new systems have been implemented anyway for the social development and to uplift the lives and wellbeing of the majority of Latin Americans. This is proven whether looking at Salvador Allende in Chile or Fidel Castro in Cuba. A very strong and famous leader that possesses a lot of charisma in the creating of a counter hegemonic challenge to the US supremacy would be the late Venezuelan president, Hugo Rafael Frais Chávez.

The imperial power exerted by the United States has led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Chavez regime has been one of the only counter hegemonic challenges to American neo-liberal capitalism bringing forward a progressive alternate system. Chavez's government rules and policies were frowned upon by many western states, especially the United States. However, through his development of 21st century socialism, Chavez sought to create a state that did not have wide wealth gaps. He aimed at developing the nation socially creating an equal society. He achieved these goals by using oil revenues.

When Chávez took to office, it was a triumph for Venezuelan democracy. As expected, this did not sit well with the American government. After the War on Terror, ex-president George W. Bush separated the world into two. There were those that conformed to US norms and supported the US and any nation or person that went against the dictates of Washington was a fascist or terrorist. Needless to say, America considered Hugo Chávez a dictator as he presented his brand of 21st century socialism instead of subjecting to American neo-liberal capitalism.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War marked the end of any official opposition to the United States and capitalism. Since these major historical events, Hugo Chávez has been the only real counter-hegemonic challenge to American supremacy. He achieved this by refusing to conform to the dictates of Washington and by creating a system that benefited his country. In addition, Chávez acted as an example for the rest of the region and other nations across the globe.

Chávez is known for his Bolivarian Revolution and initiating social change in Venezuela while looking toward regional integration. He does this with an anti-American sentiment which results from the hostility America has shown towards him. His revolution really revolutionized the face of Venezuela. With reforms in almost every sector including health, education and food security, Chávez was indeed the leader of the Venezuelan people as he stated in his inaugural speech. Not only was this a triumph, but his influence in Latin America has made him a regional and world icon. Spreading his message is to the dismay of the American government – who would do anything in their power to avoid the dreaded pink-tide in Latin America. With Chávez's popularity on the rise, the reality

of a left-wing Latin America was also on the rise. His positive social changes as well as the influence in the region have led to a threat to the supremacy of the United States.

The aim of this research report is to investigate the Chavez years in Venezuela. I will firstly provide a thorough theory and literature review where I will investigate the various literatures surrounding the topic. The different theories that will be used in this literature will be defined and analyzed in relation to the topic. I will also look at which authors agree and which disagree on the various themes at hand. A comprehensive methodology, detailing how the research will be conducted, will be provided. Thereafter, I will provide a background to Hugo Chávez looking at who he was, how he came to be president and the various challenges faced in becoming a world leader as well as the challenges he faced while he was president. Next, I will look at the social, political and economic changes made by the Chavez regime in terms of his adoption of 21st century socialism. By doing this I will be able see whether or not his regime is indeed counter-hegemonic or not – following Gramsci's theory of counter-hegemony.

In addition to this, I will discuss how influential Chavez and Chavismo are in the Latin American region. By looking at political, social and economic change as well as the influence of Chavismo, I will be able to develop an argument as to whether or not Chavez's 21st Century socialism presents a counter-hegemonic challenge to US Supremacy. It will focus on domestic relations of Venezuela in terms of the domestic social, economic and policy changes made by Chavez. It will also include an international perspective being that it will look at how Chavez influenced other Latin American leaders. Lastly it will look at the future prospects of Chavismo in Venezuela after the death of Chavez as well as possible solutions to possible problems Venezuela may face.

The reason I chose this research this topic is that it deals with a very contemporary issue that involves a recently completed era. Because the Chavez era is not on-going, data and information will not become obsolete in a few months. There is sufficient literature on Chavez's brand of socialism. There is sufficient credible literature on this topic. A wide variety of Latin American researchers, scholars and authors have wrote on Chavez, his foreign policies, Venezuela and Latin America. This research will be developed using a wide range of sources (books, journals, interviews and articles) that provide credible and critical information that will add value to my research.

The gap in the literature would be that because Chavez passed away last year, writings of his complete era are few. Developing literature on the entire Chavez period will add benefit to existing literature as it close and conclude any uncertainties that previous literature had. Chavez's influence in Latin America is not heavily explored in literature. His influence can be described as a counter-hegemonic force because certain Latin American leaders have admitted to being influenced by Chavez in leading their country's policies away from American capitalist systems. This area of study is underexplored which makes it valuable research.

Research Question

Did the social, political and economic policy changes implemented by Hugo Chavez's through 21st century socialism as well as his influence in Latin America pose a counter hegemonic challenge to American supremacy?

Sub-Questions

What is the likelihood of Chavismo prevailing in Venezuela after the death of Chavez?

What possible challenges and solutions is Venezuela left after the death of Chavez?

Hypothesis

Hugo Chavez made a multitude of changes socially, politically and economically in Venezuela when he took office in 1999. The domestic and foreign policy as well as the social developments has led to Chavez's regime being an alternate to the American capitalist system. Chavismo extracts certain elements of capitalism and incorporates it with 21st century socialism. Lastly, the influence Chavez had on other Latin American revolutions also illustrates how his regime can be counter hegemonic.

Chapter 2

Theory and Literature Review

Theory and Literature Review

This chapter aims to focus on the theory and literature that will be used to answer my research question. By applying theory, I will get a clear answer as to whether Chávez's 21st century socialism is counter-hegemonic or not. Various literatures will be used from a wide variety of sources. These literatures will be analyzed to draw conclusions and help prove or disprove my hypothesis. In addition, I will look at which authors and scholars agree and which disagree on certain issues relating to the topic – while adding whether or not I agree with the various authors. Lastly, I will also look at the gap found in the literature and where my research can fill it.

Theory Review

Existing theory is important in research as it helps understand current situations in international relations. All good research draws on theory and existing literature to strengthen the credibility of the research. Looking at different theory and literature allows us to see what has already been researched and where there is a gap to be filled within existing literature. For my research I will draw on the following different theories and literature to best explain the Chavez era in Venezuela and how it is counter-hegemonic the US supremacy.

Neo-Gramscian Theory

Neo-Gramscian Theory is an international relations critical theory[26]. Instead of focusing on problem solving with the maintenance of social power relationships, Neo-Gramsci Theory shifted the debate towards a critical theory of hegemony, world order and historical change[27]. According to Robert Cox, Neo-Gramsci Theory does not take institutions as well as social and power relations for granted. It rather calls them into question by relating to the origins of these relations and institutions and whether or not

[26] Latham, Peter., *The Relevance of Gramsci's Theory for Today*, http://links.org.au/node/1456, 3 January 2010, last accessed on 2013-04-09

[27] Adam David Morton, "Social Forces in the Struggle over Hegemony: Neo-Gramscian Perspectives in International Political Economy", *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (2003): p. 153

they might be in the process of change[28]. I will use Neo-Gramscian Theory to historicize change in Venezuela particularly pre-Chavez era versus the Chávez era. In this research I will use three aspects of Neo-Gramscian Theory to explain Chavez's 21st Century Socialism as a counter-hegemonic challenge to US Supremacy. The three aspects include:

1. Counter-Hegemony

Counter-hegemony is the most important theory used in this paper. I will use this theory to prove my hypothesis and answer my research question. Counter-hegemony in international relations is established internally through a political project and after that it is projected externally. It is an alternate political project that creates a new form of state. In addition to this, it creates new roles and functions of the state that are created domestically and projected outwards.

Gramsci believes in a war of oppressed vs. Oppressor[29]; an idea also used by Karl Marx. As in the case of Venezuela during Chavez rule, the United States can be considered the oppressor and Venezuela (in particular, Hugo Chavez), the oppressed. The theory of counter-hegemony is the main theory that will be applied in this paper as it is the most important theory in explaining and answering my research question as well as proving/disproving my hypothesis.

Gramsci defines counter-hegemony as being an alternate regime to the dominant norm where positive changes occur and there are positive outcomes in this regime[30]. Using Gramsci's theory of counter-hegemony, I will investigate whether Chavez's 21st century socialism is counter-hegemonic based on the outcomes of his influence and changes. This theory will also be used to illustrate the positive changes made by Chávez in order to assess whether or not his challenge was counter-hegemonic.

[28] Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States And World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies,* Vol.10 No.2 (1981): p. 129
[29] Raul Burgos, and Carlos Perez, "The Gramscian Intervention in the Theoretical and Political Production of the Latin American Left". *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 29, No. 1, (2002): p. 10
[30] Bates, Thomas. R. "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony". *Journal of the History of Ideas,* Vol. 36, No. 2, (1975): p. 352

The Resource Curse Theory

Another theory that will be looked at, in conjunction with counter-hegemony, will be the resource curse theory. As stated by Terry Lynn Karl, the resource curse (also known as the paradox of plenty) is when resource rich countries experience a lack of economic growth and economic and social development despite their vast resource rents[31]. Throughout the globe there have been countless cases where countries that had an abundance of valuable resource wealth (such as oil and diamonds) have been struck with various socio-economic problems. The wealth obtained from natural resources in resource rich countries has proven to have had a huge impact on the economics and politics of the rentier state[32].

An abundance of resource wealth has led to a lower growth rate, increased corruption, and more volatility and in certain cases even civil war[33]. In a country affected by the resource curse, there are key standard features that have led to the development of this theory. These nations have dictatorship style leaders that use oil wealth to benefit their lives alone. The majority of the country remains poor and destitute. The resource curse is present in several African nations that have valuable natural resources and vast resource wealth.

Though many states that are blessed with natural resource abundance suffer from the resource curse, there are case studies that have combatted the resources curse and evaded it through structural policy adjustments and social developments within their state. This done to benefit the majority of people and reduce the effects of a resource bust by saving and developing when there is a resource boom.

In Venezuela, prior to Chavez, the effects of a resource curse was present. Using resource curse theory and analysing how Chavez spent oil wealth, I will try to determine who Chavez made oil alliances with and whether or not Chavez helped Venezuela reduce the adverse effects of the resource curse. The resource curse theory can also be used to

[31] Terry-Lynn, Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States*, Berkeley : University of California Press, 1997

[32] George Soros, "Foreword". In *Escaping the Resource Curse*, edited by Macartan Humphreys, Jeffrey D. Sachs and Joseph E. Stiglitz, p. xviii, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007

[33] Macartan Humphreys, Jeffrey D Sachs, and Joseph E Stiglitz, *Escaping the Resource Curse*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 408

explain why Venezuela is no longer a victim of the resource curse. This will be analysed in later chapters.

21st Century Socialism Theory

Chavez's brand of 21st Century Socialism is another theory that can be used to better understand Chavez's Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela[34]. In order to progress in this paper, a clear understanding of 21st century socialism needs to be illustrated. This is to understand how Chavez's system and regime is different to the United States and what makes these differences important.

A socialist state includes an economic system whereby a state owns and controls the countries capital[35]. Gregory Wilpert discusses Chavez's 21st century socialism[36]. He claims that Chavez's speech at the 5th World Social Forum in 2005 was vague as to what Chavez defined his brand of socialism as. However, he did imply that his adoption of 21st century socialism would not be state-centric like Russia or Cuba; it would be more pluralistic. Wilpert also questions whether or not Venezuela is moving towards a post-capitalist order[37]. According to a report by Economic and Political Weekly, Chavez took the first steps to creating an alternative to capitalism by implementing 21st century socialism[38].

Chavez implemented 21st century socialist ideas and in this research report, the outcomes and consequences of these ideas will be explored. Chavez embraced socialism as an alternate to Western Capitalism. This ties in to the idea of being a counter-hegemonic state. Using socialist theories I will determine what changes Chavez made to Venezuela. In addition Chavez's 21st century socialism can be used to explain his relations with different parts of the world. I am to answer question such as: how does 21st century socialism in Venezuela affect US-Venezuelan relations and how does it affect Venezuelan-Latin American relations?

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[34] Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *A Theory of Socialism and Capitalism: Economics, Politics, and Ethics*. The Ludwig von Mises Institute's Studies in Austrian Economics. 1990

[35] Jensen, Drew. *Socialism vs. Capitalism*, 5 June 2012, Last accessed on 2013-04-23, http://www.freedomthoughts.com/resources/Socialism.pdf

[36] Wilpert, Gregory. (11 July 2006), *The Meaning of 21st Century Socialism for Venezuela,* http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/1834, last accessed on 2013-05-30

[37] Ibid

[38] Economic and Political Weekly. (2006) "A 'Red Tide'?", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 41, No. 50, pp. 5096-5097

2. Supremacy

The second aspect of Neo-Gramscian theory I will be using is supremacy. Hegemony differs from supremacy. Hegemony refers to a leadership role that one state has over others. Supremacy on the other hand refers to a more harsh form of dominance by one state over others. With no question, the United States is a globally supreme country as very rarely do nations contradict the US regime as the American norm has become the universal norm. Since the illegal invasion of the United States in Iraq in 2003[39], the US has no longer been a global hegemonic state but rather a state of global supremacy. Countries that do develop outside of neo-liberal capitalism often suffer major consequences from the United States. These consequences come in the form of sanctions, unfair trade relations and in some evidential cases, even war. This was especially noticeable in the Middle East and Latin America. For the sake of this essay, I will be looking at the case study of Venezuela to prove this theory. Supremacy can also be used to explain the power dynamics between the United States and Venezuela.

There were several anti-Chavez propaganda campaigns as well as US involvement in the military coup against Chavez in 2002. All this criticism surrounding Chavez was because he did things different to the "American norm". Chavez referred to, the death of capitalist society of the Republic of Venezuela to the socialist Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as the formation of new historic blocs[40]. When Chavez came into power he formed Venezuela's political sphere with a variety of different people that represented different aspects of Venezuelan society. This type of coalition developed by Chavez would have been referred to as "historical bloc building" by Gramsci[41]. Gramsci's theory, his arguments about counter-hegemony in particular, will be used in this essay to explain the rise of Chavez, what he represented and what he stood for. Using the aspect of supremacy, I will explain the United States' role in the global arena as well as how this impacted on Latin America's social, political and economic spheres.

[39] Afua Hirsch, *Iraq war was illegal, Dutch panel rules*, 12 January 2010, last accessed on 2013-04-25, The Guardian: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/12/iraq-war-illegal-dutch-tribunal

[40] Nazemroaya, Mahdi Darius, *Post-Chavez Latin America Will Continue to Drift Away from the United States*, 1 April 2013, last accessed on 2013-04-11, http://www.globalresearch.ca/post-chavez-latin-america-will-continue-to-drift-away-from-the-united-states/5329402?print=1

[41] Nazemroaya, Mahdi Darius, *Post-Chavez Latin America Will Continue to Drift Away from the United States*, 1 April 2013, last accessed on 2013-04-11, http://www.globalresearch.ca/post-chavez-latin-america-will-continue-to-drift-away-from-the-united-states/5329402?print=1

Another theory that can be used to further explain the idea of supremacy would be neoliberalism. Neoliberalism refers to the international relations school of thought that asserts that states should be focused on absolute gains rather than relative gains[42]. Absolute gain refers to international actors determining their own interests. It is when states weigh out the effects of a decision on the state or organisation and act in accordance to this. Absolute gain means that states can acquire wealth through peaceful relations[43]. This differs from relative gains. Relative gain refers to the actions states take only in respect of power relations[44]. In the relative gain framework, the only way a state can earn wealth is to take it from another state by exerting power and dominance. Neoliberalism places emphasis on economic growth. Although neoliberalism aims to focus on absolute gain, when this theory is put into practice, it has more of a focus on relative gains.

Robert McChesney describes neoliberalism as being "the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit"[45]. His definition agrees with Noam Chomsky's ideologies surrounding neoliberalism. Chomsky criticizes neoliberalism. He traces the roots of neoliberalism to the present crisis in the world today.[46] Looking at neoliberalism in this light, together with the full spectrum of the United States military forces, brings forth extremely supremacist policies in international relations. Neoliberalism hollows out democracy. This makes it fit under the section of supremacy rather than hegemony.

A hegemonic state would influence other states to follow their governance and economic system. A supreme state, on the other hand, holds absolute power and takes drastic action if other states do not abide to their dictates. Rather than promoting ideas of peace and development, a supreme state chooses to remain the number one player in the international arena with the most leverage. They cannot accept or respect a state's right to develop on their own or by their own means. This violates the sovereignty of individual

[42] Chomsky, Noam., *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order,* London: Turnaround Publishers, 2011
[43] Ibid
[44] Ibid
[45] McChesney, Robert., *Noam Chomsky and the Struggle Against Neoliberalism,* 1 April 1999, http://www.chomsky.info/onchomsky/19990401.htm, last accessed on 2014-01-20
[46] Chomsky, Noam., *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order,* London: Turnaround Publishers, 2011

nations. During the Cold War, the USSR and the United States represented hegemonic nations. They had leadership roles and other states would freely choose which state they sided with. Supremacy means there can only be one dominant state. There is no shared power or alternate. Alternative government systems are not welcomed by the global hegemon. Developing new ways forward results in a series of adverse consequences for the revolutionary leader and the state. What makes Chavez's project so different to neoliberalism and supremacy would be how he focuses on social development rather than economic growth. His ideologies and governance systems were and are heavily criticised by the United States as they were presented at a time when the US was most dominant and supreme in the international arena.

3. Social Forces.

The third aspect of Neo-Gramscian theory I will be using in this essay is social forces. Social forces are an important aspect to Gramscian theory and have played a major role in keeping Chavez in power[47]. Neo-Gramscian Theory does not side bar social forces and institutions. The theory acknowledges the role of social forces in defining world order. In Chávez's case the social forces were the people of Venezuela, in particular, the poor people. An example would include when the 2002 coup took place and Chavez was forcefully stripped of his title as "head of state", tens of thousands of people from Venezuelan barrios took to the streets to get their rightfully elected president back into power.

By using the Gramscian idea of social forces, I will be able to determine how and to what degree was social forces responsible for Chavez's popularity. This may extend outside the region as well. Using this theory, and applying it to the social changes made by Chávez will help explain why the Venezuelans residing in the barrios stood up for Chávez and insisted on him coming back into office after the coup in April 2002.

[47] Germain, Randall. D., and Kenny, Michael., "Engaging Gramsci: International Relations Theory and the New Gramscians" in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1, (1998): pp. 3-21

Literature Review

There have been several authors that have studied Venezuela, Hugo Chavez and 21st century socialism. This paper is relevant as is connects all these different researches to formulate an answer to one question, is 21st century socialism in Venezuela counter-hegemonic to American supremacy? There has not been much research on this topic and this is how I am filling a gap in literature.

Looking at different aspects of literature is important in any study because it give the researcher some insight as to what has already been said and investigated and what holes there are that need filling. This section of the paper will give an in depth literature review on the topic at hand. Using, applying and analysing this information, I will be able to fill gaps in literature, discover which authors agree and which disagree on various issues. The literature will help me achieve my primary goals, which is to answer my research question and prove or disprove my hypothesis.

A lot of literature is biased in some way or the other. Positive/pro-Chavez literature encourages and supports the idea that Chavez is creating an alternate system to American neo-liberal capitalism. The United States obviously feels threatened by this which has led to the American funded coup in 2002 and various anti-Chavez sentiment in American and privately owned Venezuelan media. This proves that both the USA and Chavistas are aware of the possibility of Venezuela being a counter-hegemonic country through the implementation of 21st century socialism.

There are many other authors and scholars I will be exploring throughout this research. Not all could be mentioned in this literature review; however several authors with varying views will be explored in the chapters to follow. I will use the findings to illustrate whether or not Chavez's 21st century socialism is counter-hegemonic to American supremacy or not. For the sake of this literature review, I separated works from different authors under the following themes: the political rise of Hugo Chavez, the social changes implemented by Chavez, Chavez's influence in the Latin American region and lastly the varying views as to whether or not Chavez's brand of 21st century socialism is counter-hegemonic or not.

The Political Rise of Chavez

Richard Gott writes a very colourful book about Chavez's background and beliefs. His book is very pro-Chavez and gives a first-hand detailed account of the rise of Chavez as well as the wide-range transformation that took place in Venezuela during the time of Chavez's presidency. In his book, Gott claims that since the development of the Bolivarian Revolution led by Chavez, the government was able to take control of the vast amounts of wealth from the oil reserves and direct this wealth in social development for the barrios[48]. This was never done before by any pre-Chavez government in Venezuela. Gott also includes the positive impacts of these social changes in Venezuela as Chavez provided food and education for Venezuela's poor by using oil income to uplift the majority of Venezuelan citizens[49]. The example used by Gott to illustrate the healthcare reforms in Venezuela since Chavez, was Chavez's relationship with Cuba[50]. The corruption of the judiciary in the pre-Chavez era was a major problem in Venezuela; however this problem was dealt with when Chavez reformed the judiciary according to Gott[51].

Tariq Ali, in an interview with Oliver Stone, claimed that Chávez emerged from a military that was destroying the people[52]. He (Chávez) knew this was bad and spoke out against the injustices of the Venezuelan military claiming that this is not what he signed up for or what a military should represent.

Counter-hegemony would be the main theory to use in this section. Chavez's rise was counter-hegemonic internally and as well externally. His new political ideas as well as the promise and formation of the new constitution proved how he acted as a counter-hegemonic force within Venezuela. Once in power, the growth of his support within the region and world proves how he developed a counter-hegemonic system that impacted international relations. Social Forces is another aspect of Neo-Gramscian theory that can explain Chavez's rise. Chavez was a people's president. His entire political campaign was aimed at bettering the lives of the masses. When he came into power, he did all that he

[48] Gott, Richard., *Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution*, London: Verso, 2011, p. 256
[49] Ibid, 257-258
[50] Ibid, 258-259
[51] Ibid, 264-265
[52] Ali, Tariq in *South of the Border*, Directed by Oliver Stone (2009; New York: GrapeVine Productions, 2009), DVD

had promised. He reduced poverty, increased education and developed the Venezuelan health care system. This is the reason for his popular support. It is the reason he came into power and the reason he remained in power.

Social Changes Made by Chavez & The Support that Followed

The social, economic and political changes made by Chavez have had positive and negative reactions from various world leaders, media and scholars as well as the local citizens of Venezuela. Most of the negative feedback comes from American reporters, Venezuelan media and scholars that criticise Chavez for being a dictator because he does not promote neo-liberal or capitalist ideologies in his political framework. Despite this, there are several authors that also support Chavez as they recognise the achievements made by the Chavez Administration and they go on to highlight the strengths in his changes rather than over criticising his system. For example Michael Parenti defends Hugo Chavez and focuses on Chavez's achievements in the development of his argument[53]. Chavez only wants to help the masses of his country and bring about social and economic order to end injustices and inequalities the many Venezuelans have experienced for several years[54]. Poor Venezuelans were never given a voice or taken care of until Chavez took to office.

Patricia Marquez's research is important as she ventured out to several barrios in Venezuela where she spoke to many poor Venezuelans. Through these interviews she found that the reason for Chavez popularity would be the fact that he represented change[55]. Chavez's success came from his electoral campaigns where he promised reform and the end to the poor suffering in Venezuela[56]. Not only did Chavez promise this change, but he delivered it as well. In this way, Chavez became the voice of the barrios as he uplifted millions of Venezuelans from their state of poverty. These shifts in the political paradigms of Venezuelan politics were noticed by the people in Venezuela, especially the poor, who continued to support Chavez for over a decade long. Michael

[53] Michael Parenti, "Good Things Happening in Venezuela", *Third World Traveller*, July/August 2005, Last accessed on 9 April, 2013, http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Parenti/GoodThings_Venezuela.html
[54] Ibid
[55]Patricia Marquez, "The Hugo Chavez Phenomenon: What Do "the People" Think?". In *Venezuelan Politics in the Chavez Era: Class, Polarization & Conflict*, edited by Steve Ellner and Daniel Hellinger, 197-213. London, Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2003
[56] Ibid

Derham adds to the argument made by Marquez when he argues that that Chavez gained support with the lack of institutions because Venezuelans never really benefitted from previous institutions[57].

In his documentary *The War on Democracy*, John Pilger highlights the positive aspects of the Chavez era and investigates the US government and the CIA's role in the 2002 military coup against Chavez[58]. The CIA and the US government deny their involvement and deny supporting the coup to oust Chavez despite the concrete evidence that prove their support[59]. Pilger also found that the lives of the majority of Venezuelans were made better since the Chavez era. The poor in Venezuela loved Chavez and the rich loathed him. He appealed to the masses which is what gave him such popular support as stated by Marquez as well. Throughout his travels in Venezuela and other parts of Latin America, Pilger proves to be in favour of Chavez's government and the left-wing alternate, provided by Chavez, to American supremacy. Pilger interviews Chavez and in this interview Chavez refers to America and "the empire".

Patricia Marquez's study proves to be one of the most interesting studies on the topic of this paper as she does field work in Venezuela asking locals in the various barrios what their views are on Hugo Chavez and the Chavez government[60]. Like Kozloff, her work also provides me with primary material to use in this paper. Her findings include only positive responses from Venezuela's poor towards the Chavez Administration. The poor "support Chavez because he is a change"[61]. For Venezuela's poor this is really important as their need for change was long overdue. Using these findings, I am able to analyse the general opinion of Venezuela's low income earners in order to determine the success and support of the Chavez government.

The support surrounding Chavez came from the idea of change. The majority of Venezuelans are poor and did not see any benefit from the vast oil wealth the country had to offer. Previous Venezuelan governments used a neo-liberal Americanised style of

[57] Michael Derham, "Undemocratic Democracy: Venezuela and the Distorting of History" in *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (2002): p.280
[58] *The War on Democracy*, directed by John Pilger (2007; Granada: Youngheart Entertainment, 2007), DVD
[59] *The War on Democracy*, directed by John Pilger (2007; Granada: Youngheart Entertainment, 2007), DVD
[60] Patricia Marquez, "The Hugo Chavez Phenomenon: What Do "the People" Think?". In *Venezuelan Politics in the Chavez Era: Class, Polarization & Conflict*, edited by Steve Ellner and Daniel Hellinger, 197-213. London, Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2003
[61] Ibid, p. 197

capitalism when dealing with oil wealth distribution. This meant that only the rich and elite benefited from oil wealth and the majority of the country's poor remained poor and even got poorer. What Marquez found was that the Chavez government provided change for these low income earners[62]. His appeal and support came from not only suggesting but also implementing these changes.

Resource curse theory can be used to explain the positive outcomes of the changes made by Chavez. Using and applying this theory in Venezuela and looking at it in conjunction with the social changes made by Chavez, the results show that Venezuela is not a victim of the resource curse. This will be explained in more detail and with more examples in the chapter 5.

The main theories in this section would be the resource curse theory and counter-hegemony. The resource curse theory will explain how Chavez used oil wealth to better the lives of the majority of poor Venezuelans. This of course differs from his predecessors that only used oil wealth for their benefit. Following this will be how his regime is counter-hegemonic as a result of his choices. He presents an alternate that is highly beneficial for the people in the country. This makes it counter-hegemonic in the Gramscian definition of counter-hegemony.

Chavez Influence in Latin America

Chavez's influence in Latin America comes in a variety of ways. His main focus was aimed at promoting regional integration and reducing Latin American dependence on the United States. Chavez's influence in the Latin America is present and his relationship with Fidel Castro is probably what made him the victim of American scorn. Chavez was indeed influenced by Castro in his Bolivarian revolution.

His role in The Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America (ALBA) was also influenced by Simon Bolivar according to Ernesto Revello[63]. In 2001, Hugo Chavez implemented the proposal for ALBA at the third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Association of Caribbean States. The formation of ALBA helps

[62] Ibid, p. 200
[63] Revello, Ernesto., *Venezuela Case Study: The Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America (ALBA)*, www.emergingcountries.org.pdf/Alba.pdf , last accessed on 2013-08-16, p.3

answer the research question. When investigating and analysing what ALBA did and stood for and how much it achieved, it is easy to understand why they presented a counter-hegemonic challenge to US supremacy.

Oliver Stone's documentary *South of the Border* paints a very clear and true picture of Hugo Chavez along with other part of the Latin American region[64]. In this documentary, Stone journeys through Latin America giving a full scale first-hand account of his experience with Hugo Chavez and other Latin American leaders[65]. His findings include a very positive response and attitudes towards Chavez from the poor in Venezuela as well as other Latin American leaders. Speaking to the presidents of Bolivia and Argentina, Stone found that they both had strong ties with Hugo Chavez and supported his course[66]. Oliver Stone also finds, in his documentary, that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) used South American as a guinea pig for their experiments[67]. Though they did not fully implement 21st century socialism in their own countries, Bolivia and Argentina have used elements of Chavez's system in implementing their domestic and international policies. The case studies of Chavez's influence in Bolivia and Argentina will be discussed in Chapter 6 of this paper.

Through the use of this documentary along with the John Pilger documentary, *The War on Democracy*, I managed to gain the insight of various different world leaders, researchers, scholars, government officials as well as institution officials on the various themes of this paper.

The main theories to describe this section would be counter-hegemony and supremacy. Chavez wanted to create regional integration and reduce Latin American dependence on the United States. Chavez spread his influence with success in the region. His development of an alternate system to the supreme state, that was successful, was counter-hegemonic.

[64] *South of the Border*, Directed by Oliver Stone (2009; New York: GrapeVine Productions, 2009), DVD
[65] Ibid
[66] Ibid
[67] Ibid

Is Chavez's 21st Century Socialism Counter-Hegemonic to the United States Supremacy?

Using the work of Nikolas Kozloff will help me answer my research question as he is one of the few authors that discuss the challenge Chavez posed towards the United States[68]. Kozloff looks at the various reasons that people from Venezuela and the rest of the world hail Chavez as a great leader and even a hero. Kozloff gives a personal account on his experience in Venezuela; this makes his work very important and vital for this paper as it provides primary sources from Venezuela.

Kozloff also looks at Chavez's fight against neoliberalism[69]. He looks at the challenge Chavez had: how was Chavez going to prosper a poor country with neoliberalism? The answers found are social change. This author also found that the Chavez government and Chavez himself did not want any dealings with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for capital and foreign direct investment (FDI)[70]. Chavez suspended the privatisation of Venezuela's healthcare systems.

Kozloff also speaks about Chavez's discontent towards ex-US President George Bush and the entire Bush Administration[71]. This of course ties in the famous speech given by Chavez at the United Nations General Assembly where he called President Bush, "the devil"[72]. The Bush Administration along with several media networks in the United States, such as FOX NEWS, painted Chavez in an extremely negative light. Their sentiments were made clear when they called Chavez a dictator and evil.

All Opposed

Despite the numerous social changes that had positive outcomes for millions in Venezuela, Chavez and the Chavez Administration were and still are victims of criticism. Several leaders in the western world as well as members of western news stations are extremely critical towards Hugo Chavez. Their opinions are based on ignorance and failure to recognise a successful state that does not run on the neoliberal capitalist American way.

[68] Kozloff, Nikolas. *Hugo Chavez: Oil, Politics, and the Challenge to the U.S.,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007
[69] Ibid, 55
[70] Ibid, 55
[71] Ibid, 57
[72] BBC NEWS, *Chavez tells UN Bush is 'Devil'*, (20 September 2006), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/5365142.stm, last accessed on 2013-05-06

Steve Ellner also criticizes the left-wing leaders in Latin America that oppose neoliberalism[73]. He claims that this move is considered "backward" in the age of globalization[74].

Andres Oppenheimer, an Argentine-American journalist, discredited Chavez in his writings. He describes Chavez as being similar to Juan D. Peron of Argentina[75]. Both Chavez and Peron were military officers and coup plotters. Though they both flirted with fascism, once in power they changed the lives of millions of poor people. Chavez was able to do this as he had the benefit of an oil boom and a hike in commodity prices. This set him apart from any former president of Venezuela – these presidents only paid "lip service" to the nation's poor citizens, which made up the masses of the population.

Oppenheimer continued his critique of Chavez claiming that Chavez built a cult personality of himself. Several Venezuelans practically worshiped Chavez and adored his charismatic leadership style. This persona is negative because it allows citizens to be blindsided by a leader that is destroying their country according to Oppenheimer. Chavez gave billions of dollars away locally and internationally and was never held accountable for any of this money spent. Oppenheimer further claims that this destroyed his country and the nation's economy. He further describes Chavez's formation of ALBA as being a "narcissist-Leninist model"[76].

The criticisms against Chavez made by Oppenheimer extend to the point where he claims that Chavez bought political support by giving away more money than President Bush in the United States. Chavez's support and popularity rose with the increase in oil prices. When the government generated more money, Chavez could give away more money to increase support in his attempts to gain a seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Oppenheimer applies the resource curse in his criticisms of Venezuela. He claims that Venezuela is a victim of the resource curse as Chavismo is "bread for today, but hunger

[73] Ellner, Steve., "Leftist Goals and the Debate over Anti-Neoliberal Strategy in Latin America, in *Science and Society*, Vol. 68, No. 1, 2004, pp. 10-32
[74] Ibid, 11
[75] Oppenheimer, Andres. *Chávez's 'revolution' will lose steam abroad, but not at home*, 3 March 2013, http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/03/05/3268977/chavezs-revolution-will-lose-steam.html, last accessed on 2013-11-20
[76] Ibid

for tomorrow"[77]. Several other authors also assert the same claims made by Oppenheimer and claim that successful nations are based on strong institutions rather than strong leaders. David Muir, of ABC News, referred to Chavez as "a fierce enemy of the United States"[78]. The biggest anti-Chavez campaigner in the world is the United States. The US, through their government and media criticises Chavez on an on-going basis. FOX News demeans the Chavez government at every opportunity calling Hugo Chavez a dictator and predicting the end of the Venezuelan economy once the oil reserves run dry. They also claim that Chavez is messing up Venezuela[79].

Phil Flynn, an American energy analyst from the Alaron Trading Corp, admitted that the US imports more oil from Venezuela than any other OPEC nation. "Whoever replaces Chávez is gonna be a lot more friendly to United States interests than this previous president was"[80]. This illustrates the lies fed by the United States. Not only do they not care for equality and democracy in Latin America, they openly admit to caring for their own interests alone. Their hypocrisy has caused turmoil in a region that would be perfectly stable without their interference. According to Eva Golinger, interference from the American government in Venezuela has increased every year since Chavez took office[81]. She adds that "Obama not only increased the funding to anti-Chavez groups, he made it even more official by openly including such funding in the annual Foreign Operations Budget"[82].

Conclusion

There have been many researchers that have looked at the positive and negative of the Chavez era. The positive arguments made towards Chavez are accurate and supported with factual statistics. Those that oppose the Chavez Administration do so in a highly propaganda affair where they use media to nit-pick on small shortcomings of the Bolivarian Revolution. Research and literature on the positive outcomes of Hugo Chavez

[77] Ibid
[78] Muir, David,. In Hart, Peter, *ABC's Very Efficient Anti-Chavez Propaganda*, 10 October 2012, http://www.fair.org/blog/2012/10/10/abcs-very-efficient-anti-chavez-propaganda/, last accessed on 2013-12-02
[79] *South of the Border*, Directed by Oliver Stone (2009; New York: GrapeVine Productions, 2009), DVD
[80] Flynn, Phil. In *South of the Border*, Directed by Oliver Stone (2009; New York: GrapeVine Productions, 2009), DVD
[81] Golinger, Eva., Interviewed by Mike Whitney, *Why did Washington Hate Hugo Chavez?*, 30 July 2013, HTTP://WWW.COUNTERPUNCH.ORG/2013/07/30/WHY-DID-WASHINGTON-HATE-HUGO-CHAVEZ/, Last Accessed On 2014-07-15
[82] Ibid

is not as common as the negatives. Media articles from Western nations as well as the privately owned media in Venezuela only criticise Chavez. Despite this, there has been some research and literature does look at the positive impacts of socialism in Venezuela and how this can be a counter-hegemonic challenge to the United States. I do not agree with the claims made by Chavez's oppositions. There is very little justification in their claims and they fail to look at the bigger picture in the social developments in Venezuela. Hugo Chavez helped the majority of people in his country by implementing these changes. He changed the lives of millions by not selfishly using oil resources. Their notion that capitalism is the answer to achieving freedom is highly flawed. The capitalists system is what created the mass amounts of poverty in Venezuela in the first place. Had Chavez not stepped in and changed the social order, millions of Venezuelans would still be living in poverty while the rich got richer.

By providing this alternative, of social change and nationalisation, Chavez posed a challenge to the traditional American neoliberal capitalist model. The reason this becomes a challenge to US supremacy would be that it is a system that actually works. In the Chavez years, the poor were taken care of. They were looked after and given food, medical care, education and employment opportunities which all led to a reduction in mortality rates, poverty reduction, extreme poverty reduction, increased skilled labour force and a healthier more productive society. Critics like Andres Oppenheimer claim that the many pledges made by Chavez has never materialised. What Oppenheimer fails to look at is the deficit Venezuela was in when Chavez took office. He does not comprehend the major successful changes that Chavez has made in diversifying his economy, socially developing the nation and reducing poverty to an all-time low in Venezuela. Had Chavez been blessed with more years as president of Venezuela, the country would become more developed, educated, healthy and prosperous. Claiming that the Venezuelan economy is in shambles and near chaos is an unfair statement as the positive aspects far outweigh the negative aspects of the Chavez administration.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Methodology

The main purpose of this chapter would be to analyze the methods and methodology I will be using in this paper. The type of research will be discusses as well the different sources that will be used. In addition to this, I will also discuss my limitations and challenges to conducting this research and how I overcame those challenges.

Methodology

This research will be conducted using qualitative research methods. Qualitative research involves distinctions based on qualities[83]. A wide range of sources will be used to analyze the topic at hand and draw conclusions. This research is not based strongly on statistics and gathering quantitative data. Despite this, some statistics will be used from several credible sources that are responsible for collecting data, such as the World Bank and the United Nations. This data will be analyzed in conjunction with a number of other sources, both primary and secondary, in order to reach an informed conclusion. Quantitative data cannot be used as I am unable to gather quantitative information from Venezuela due to money and time constraints.

Qualitative research is used to gain a deep understanding of a specific organization, event or person rather than a surface description of a large sample of a population[84]. It aims to provide an explicit interpretation of the structure, order and the broad patterns found within a group of participants. Qualitative research is also referred to as ethnomethodology or field research[85]. It produces data based on human groups in social settings. This type of research does not introduce treatments or manipulate variables[86]. Nor does it impose a researcher's operational definitions of variables on the participants[87]. Instead, it lets the meaning, of whatever is being investigated; emerge from the participants of the research. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research is flexible

[83] Anderson, John, D., *Qualitative and Quantitative Research*, Imperial Grants and Evaluation Office, http://www.icoe.org/webfm_send/1936, last accessed on 2014-02-01
[84] CSULB.EDU, *Data Collecting Strategies II: Qualitative Research*, http://www.csulb.edu/~msaintg/ppa696/696quali.htm, last accessed on 2013-10-09
[85] Ibid
[86] Ibid
[87] Ibid

and can adjust to the setting of the research topic[88]. Various concepts, data collection tools and data collection methods can bend and be modified as the research progresses[89].

In International relations, researchers that use qualitative methods of analysis often use case studies and comparative case studies to rigor their research designs and enhance their explanatory leverage. Using case studies is the most important part of qualitative analysis in international relations.

Based on my research topic, qualitative methods will be used. I will use Venezuela as a case and investigate Hugo Chavez's 21st century socialism in the country. I need to use this method in order to gain a strong insight to answer my research question and prove/disprove my hypothesis. The variables will not be manipulated as it will be based on the analysis of historical facts.

The necessary statistics and indicators will be used from different sources such as the World Bank and various other credible (peer reviewed) sources. Analyzing cases of Venezuela's relations with other states will be done through deductive reasoning and process tracing. By using various methods as mentioned above, I will investigate whether or not the Chavez regime is counter-hegemonic to US supremacy.

Primary Sources

Primary resources are important as it adds credible value to any research. It allows a research to be well accepted as it gives a clear indication of different views. Primary sources also add value as they are direct quotations from various parties that have different views and opinions. It gives a clear cut indication of individual sentiments making it legitimate.

The primary resources for this research will be interviews. This research is not quantitative in nature and as such, there is no need to gather and analyze data and statistics. Interviews will be conducted with members of the Venezuelan Embassy in South Africa. For time and money reasons I cannot go to Venezuela to interview Venezuelans and Latin American politicians and scholars. To remedy this limitation, I

[88] Sage Publications, *Qualitative Research: Defining and Designing*, http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/48453_ch_1.pdf, last accessed on 2014-01-30
[89] Ibid

will use interviews conducted by other scholars regarding Chávez, and interviews with Chávez as another primary source.

Another way to access these interviews are through documentaries. I have gathered various documentaries on Hugo Chávez, the Bolivarian Revolution as well as documentaries that focus on US-Venezuela relations. These documentaries illustrate the makers going to Venezuela and interviewing from President Chávez, right up to people that reside in the barrios. Another advantage of this would be that various scholars, world leaders, government officials as well as Latin American locals are interviewed. This gives a very clear understanding of the different views and opinions of Latin Americans depending on their class structure and social status.

Secondary Sources

For the sake of this research report, I will be very reliant on secondary sources. Secondary sources will consist mainly of books, journals, academic papers and reports and various articles found online and in newspapers. These sources become important as they help present what literature on the topic at hand is out there which allows researchers to fill gaps in literature. In addition, these literatures will be carefully analyzed to reach a verdict. Using external sources, I can see what other scholars and researchers have written on the topic, who agrees and who disagrees and why. This is important in formulating a literature review. Web based sources will be used because I am keeping my research as current as possible and the only way to access current information is through news sources on the internet. Due to the fact that Hugo Chávez passed away in March 2013, there is very little peer reviewed journal articles or books based on his full life and political career. Conducting this research will help fill that gap and create credible literature on the topic at hand.

Discussing Chávez's socialism as well as the implications after his death, I will need this wide range of sources to establish legitimate and accurate conclusions that are based on facts and reason rather than opinion and bias.

Independent Variables

An independent variable is the variable I will have control over. This variable can be chosen and manipulated. It is usually the variable that can manipulate the dependent variable. For the sake of my research the following two independent variables are:

- The United States neoliberalism
- The Pre-Chavez era in Venezuela

I chose these variables because they can be manipulated. I can choose which part of the pre-Chavez era I will use and which aspects of American neoliberalism are relevant to answering my research question. In addition, if I want to change or add in another variable I am able to. These variables will be used to explain and analyse my dependent variable.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is what can be measured in the experiment, investigation and research. The dependent variable responds to the independent variable. It is dependent because it depends on the independent variable. For my research my dependent variable is:

- Chavez's 21st century socialism as counter-hegemonic challenge to American Supremacy

I chose this as my dependent variable because it is dependent on the two independent variables. This variable cannot be manipulated or altered. It remains the same and forms part of my research question. This is my dependent variable because I need other factors (variables) to explain and analyze it.

Constraints to the Research

Major limitations to the research are time and money. This thesis had to be completed within a stipulated time period thus limiting the scope of gathering information. If there were no time limit, I would be able to access more sources, collect and assess a wider range of authors to develop my literature review. However, I managed to combat this constraint by looking at a very large number of different sources (both primary and

secondary) to formulate a well explored argument involving work from a large number of authors, scholars, academics and the media.

Another limit would be money. For the sake of this paper it would have been excellent to develop my own primary sources by travelling to Venezuela. However, this is impractical due to monetary constraints as well as time limitations. I could not afford to go to Venezuela and collect quantifiable data nor access documentation directly from Venezuela. Despite this, I managed to collect a variety of sources from South Africa. I combated this limitation by looking for interviews conducted by other researchers as well as news reports that provided direct quotes from Chávez and the general public in Venezuela. This aided me in understanding the difference in public opinion as well as Chávez's views on 21st century socialism and how it may or may not be counter-hegemonic.

The final limitation would be the language barrier I faced. I am not fluent in Spanish and some sources were found in Spanish. I was able to combat this limitation by getting help translating the documents. Several web based sources and articles came with English translation which helped me gather more research.

Using the methodology described above, I managed to formulate a well-balanced qualitative thesis that included a wide range of primary and secondary sources to help prove/disprove my hypothesis and answer my research question. This research did not come without any challenges and constrains. Even though I have some challenges and limitations to this research, I managed to overcome them by finding solutions.

Chapter 4

Hugo Chavez: Life and Political Career

Hugo Chavez: History and Political Career

"The left is back, and it's the only path we have to get out of the spot to which the right has sunken us. Socialism builds and capitalism destroys."

Hugo Chavez

Who Was Hugo Chavez?

On the 28th July 1954, Hugo Rafael Chavez Frias was born in a rural town in Sabaneta, one of Venezuela's poor barrios[90]. He was born in his grandmother's modest three bedroom home in Sabaneta. Chavez's family was of Spanish, Afro-Venezuelan decent. His parents, Hugo de los Reyes Chavez and Elena Frias de Chavez, were not high income earners and lived a modest life as lower middle class school teachers[91]. They too lived in a Venezuelan barrio called Los Rastrojos.

Hugo Chavez was the second eldest of 7 children[92]. Due to the extreme poverty faced by his parents, Hugo and his brother, Adan Chavez was sent to live with their grandmother, Rosa. Chavez describes his grandmother as being a "pure human being"[93] and also claimed that she has pure love and kindness in her heart.

On a religious level, Hugo Chavez was a devout Catholic[94]. This stems from his grandmother being a member of the Roman Catholic Church and Chavez being an altar boy at this same church as a child[95]. He continued practicing the ways of the Catholic Church till the day he died. Chavez was a very religious and spiritual man often speaking

[90] Epatko, Larisa., *Venezuela's Brassy President Hugo Chavez Dies*, 5 March 2013, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2013/03/hugo-chavez.html, last accessed on 2013-12-02
[91] Ibid
[92] Sánchez-Azuara, Raul., *Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez*, 6 March 2013, http://dialogo-americas.com/en_GB/articles/rmisa/features/regional_news/2013/03/06/feature-ex-3980, last accessed on 2013-12-02
[93] Hollowverse.com, *The Religion and Political Views of Hugo Chavez*, 13 January 2013, http://hollowverse.com/hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-10-05
[94] Ibid
[95] Fieser, Ezra., *Venezuelan President Changed Nation, Had Rocky Relations With Bishops*, 5 March 2013, http://cnsblog.wordpress.com/2013/03/05/, last accessed on 2013-09-08

about God and the teachings of the Bible in various interviews and speeches, even from a young age.

In terms of his personal interests, Chavez's hobbies included history, art and American baseball. His historical interests rested in the 19th century General, Ezequiel Zamora, as his own grandfather served in General Zamora's army[96].

Chavez attended primary school with his brother in the barrio where his grandmother resided[97]. For high school however, Hugo, Adan and their grandmother had to move away to the City of Barinas as the only high school in the rural state was in this city.

Throughout his life Chavez has experienced, in his words, "humility, poverty, pain, sometimes not having anything to eat"[98] and "the injustices of the world"[99]. Recognising the hardships that came with poverty, Chavez went on to become a socialist leader in Venezuela[100]. His brand of 21st century socialism was focused on even wealth distribution and social development to uplift the lives of the millions of poor Venezuelans.

Despite the adverse circumstances surrounding Hugo Chavez as a child, he rose to being one of the most important political figures of all time. This chapter will discuss the political rise of Hugo Chavez and how he came to be the president of Venezuela.

Military Career

In 1971, at the age of 17, Hugo Chavez studied at the Venezuelan Academy of Military Sciences in Venezuela's capital city, Caracas[101]. At this academy, Chavez did not only learn about military affairs, but also about a wide variety of topics taught by various

[96] Hellinger, Dan., *Looking Back at What Hugo Chavez Did,* 30 July 2013, https://www.stlbeacon.org/#!/content/32110/voices_hellinger_chavez_072913, last accessed on 2013-08-05
[97] CBC NEWS., *Hugo Chavez: 1954-2013,* 5 March 2013, http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/hugo-chavez-1954-2013-1.1324889, last accessed on 2013-12-03
[98] Gupta, Girish., *Hugo Chavez Leaves a Double-Edged Legacy,* 6 March 2013, http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/americas/venezuela/130306/hugo-chavez-dead-leaves-double-edged-legacy-venezuela, last accessed on 2013-12-02
[99] Ibid
[100] McGuire, Sarah., *Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela: Analysis of the Events Leading Up to the 2009 Referendum*, PA 762 Leadership for the Public and Nonprofit Sector, 18 May 2010
[101] Sánchez-Azuara, Raul., Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez, 6 March 2013, http://dialogo-americas.com/en_GB/articles/rmisa/features/regional_news/2013/03/06/feature-ex-3980, last accessed on 2013-12-02

lecturers from other universities[102]. In 1975, Chavez graduated from the military academy as one of the top of his class. He was number 8 out of 75 graduates[103].

It was during this period in Caracas that Chavez witnessed the extreme poverty in the capital city that mirrored the poverty he experienced while growing up. This gave Chavez a stronger sense of commitment in achieving social justice for all Venezuelans.

The main influences in Chavez's life and career were Simon Bolivar, Karl Marx, Mau Ste Tung, Vladamir Lenin, Ezequiel Zamora and Che Guevara as they stood for positive change in Latin America and sought ways forward from colonialism and dependence from the west[104]. Chavez's influences also came from several leftist Latin American leaders such as General Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru and Panamanian President Omar Torrijos. Chavez was particularly impressed at the Panamanian land reform undertaken by Torrijos as it benefited the poor majority.

The influence from these two leaders gave Chavez the foresight to see the potential that the military can seize control over the government in nations where the government and governmental authorities only saw to the needs of the elite rich minority.

Adding to his counter-hegemonic sentiment, Chavez was anti-Pinochet despite his support for Torrijos and Velasco. Augusto Pinochet was the right-wing general that took control over Chile from Salvador Allende with the aid of the American CIA. Chavez even went on to claim that "with Torrijos, I became a Torrijist. With Velasco I became a Velasquist. And with Pinochet, I became an anti-Pinochetist"[105]. The Pinochet government in Chile mirrored the 2 day government of Pedro Camona – who was sworn in as President of Venezuela on 12 April 2002 after the coup d'état against Hugo Chávez.

After graduation, Chavez was stationed at a counterinsurgency unit in Barinas. By 1977, he was transferred to Anzoátegui where he also battled Marxist insurgency groups[106]. It was at this time that doubt started to filter through Chavez. He became very sceptical about the government, the torture methods of the military and the way the oil revenue in

[102] Ibid
[103] Epatko, Larisa., *Venezuela's Brassy President Hugo Chavez Dies*, 5 March 2013, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2013/03/hugo-chavez.html, last accessed on 2013-12-02
[104] Levin, Judith., *Modern World Leaders: Hugo Chavez*, New York: Chelsea House Books, 2007, p.37
[105] Marcana, Cristina., and Tyszka, Alberto, Barrera., *Hugo Chavez: The Definitive Biography of Venezuela's Controversial President*, London: Random House, 2006
[106] Ibid

the country was being spent. The poor remained poor and a too large segment of the population remained in extreme poverty despite the country's large revenue received from oil resources. In this regard, Chavez began sympathising with the insurgents and even condoned their violent acts. Analysing this, it would seem that Chavez realised the truth. He saw the negative footprint in his country as a result of the government and military. Being from a poor background, it is easy to understand why Chavez would be sympathetic to the Red Flag course. He knows what it means to have very little despite living in a country of immense wealth.

His Bolivarian ideologies for social change were aimed at helping those that suffered as a result of poor public spending and torturous military practices.

Hugo Chavez was a highly skilled officer in the military. Shortly after joining, he moved up the ranks in the army and earned numerous amounts of commendations. Chavez reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel – which is one of the highest positions in the military[107]. As a Colonel, Chavez taught at the Venezuelan Academy of Military Sciences. It was during this period, in the military, that Chavez came up with the concept of "Bolivarianism"[108]. This term was named after the great Latin American leader, Simon Bolivar. Bolivar had a very strong influence on Chavez as he liberated Venezuela from colonial rule[109]. Being a believer that the country and the military need change, Chavez modelled his ideologies on the revolution of Simon Bolivar[110].

In his time at the Academy, Chavez also formed a secret society within the Venezuelan military called the Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200 which translates as the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement 200[111].

Chavez became aware of the gross violations occurring in Venezuela and this lead to the 1992 coup attempt to over through the Perez government. In this regard Chavez was not counter-hegemonic as a military coup is stealing power and this is not counter-hegemonic. However, the Perez government was unfair to the majority of Venezuelans. The poor in Venezuela remained poor despite oil wealth revenues. Being counter-

[107] Ibid
[108] Gott, Richard., Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution, London: Verso, 2011
[109] Ibid
[110] Lynch, John., Simón Bolivar: A Life, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, 299
[111] Jones, Bart (2008), Hugo! The Hugo Chavez Story from Mud Hut to Perpetual Revolution, London: The Bodley Head, pp202-4

hegemonic according the Gramscian model meant that you provided a beneficial alternative to the existing dominant framework or hegemon. This was Chavez's aim however it could not be realised from a coup. When he discovered the ills of the government and military officials in Venezuela, he wanted to change this framework to bring about something new – something that benefitted not only the rich elite, but the poor majority as well. Chavez wanted to create social equality within Venezuela to alleviate poverty through even distribution of resource wealth. After winning the elections in 1998, Chavez achieved this. His success after the elections is what made Chavez counter-hegemonic on a national domestic level. Though not counter-hegemonic, his political ideology is what led to the 1992 coup attempt against the Perez government.

The 1992 Failed Coup Attempt

His disgust for the government and military practices led Chavez to carry out a military coup on the 4th February 1992[112]. On this day he led 5 squads of his most loyal supporters to the Venezuelan capital, Caracas[113]. Here, Chavez and his army aimed to seize control of the Presidential Palace, the Venezuelan airport, the Ministry of Defence and the Military Museum[114]. Along with this, his other purpose was to detain then President, Carlos Perez and to arrest the high command of the armed forces in Venezuela.

Each squad went on a separate mission to seize and control different areas. One unit attacked the defence ministry while another went on to seize La Carlota –which is a military airport inside the capital, Caracas[115]. The third unit moved towards Minaflores, which is the presidential palace also in Caracas[116]. Chavez led another unit to the Military/History Museum. This Museum acted as a base because it was near Minaflores and communications equipment was set up there[117].

Chavez and his men failed to seize Caracas in this coup. Chavez was arrested for this coup attempt and spent 2 years in jail[118]. He was released in March 1994 where he

[112] McCoy, Jennifer., "Chavez and the End of "Partyarchy" in Venezuela", in *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 64-77, p. 64, 1999
[113] Gott, Richard., *Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution,* London: Verso, 2011, p. 63
[114] Ibid
[115] Ibid, 64
[116] Ibid
[117] Ibid, 65
[118] BBC NEWS, *Profile: Hugo Chavez*, last updated 18 February 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-10086210, last accessed on 2014-02-07

continued his political and military career[119]. While in prison, Chavez was treated very well and was even allowed to be interviewed for television and radio broadcasts. While Chavez was in prison, several political developments happened in the country. President Carlos Andres Perez, the survivor of 2 military coup attempts in 1992, was removed from power in June 1993[120]. Perez had to stand trial for stealing an approximate of US $ 17 million from the public reserves.

The coup was illegal. It went against the tenants of government that Chávez later defended when there was a coup against him. Despite this, the majority of Venezuelans saw Chávez as a hero because he stood up for the people against a tyrant government. It is also important to note that this coup was not counter-hegemonic. A coup is usually an attempt to steal power by overthrowing the existing government. This does not fit into the counter-hegemonic framework. The counter-hegemony brought about by Chavez came later in his project of 21st century socialism.

Chavez started the Movement of the Fifth Republic. Through his new party, he promoted change and development with the establishment of a new constitution. This was a revolutionary political party and through this party Chavez ran for elections in 1998. Here he promised social and economic reforms along with campaigns against government corruption.

The 1998 Venezuelan Elections

In 1997, Chávez decides to run for president. His primary opponent is a former Miss Universe, Irene Saez Conde[121]. The battle for the presidency becomes known as The Beauty and the Beast. While Conde offers no more than shivery remarks, Chávez preaches revolution in his presidential campaign. Chavez's campaign consisted of what the people of Venezuela wanted to hear.

In 1998 Venezuela hosted their elections where Hugo Chavez ran for presidency. This election marked the turning point for Venezuela as Hugo Chavez was elected by a

[119] Ibid
[120] Kozloff, Nikolas. *Hugo Chavez: Oil, Politics, and the Challenge to the U.S.*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 53
[121] EL UNIVERSAL, *Hugo Chavez Wins Elections with 56.20 Percent*, 1998, http://www.eluniversal.com/aniversario/100/en_ca11_art_hugo-chavez-wins-ele_01A2251995, last accessed on 2014-02-07

landslide, accounting for 56% of the votes[122]. He took office in February 1999 where he began implementing his brand of 21st century Bolivarian socialism. After winning the elections, Chávez stated in an address to the people, "This power which you have given me doesn't belong to me. This is YOUR power"[123]. He added that it will not be a government of Hugo Chávez, because Chávez is the people and therefore it will be a government of the people.

In his Bolivarian Revolution, several social projects were developed and achieved such as education and healthcare reforms. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Chavez sought to create a new constitution whereby the rights of the majority were looked at and acknowledged. He also undertook this by populist consent where the people approved the constitution and the national assembly. The new constitution meant that Chavez has to run for re-election. He won by a landslide once again in these elections.

After taking to office in 1999, Chavez changed the Venezuelan constitution. He amended the powers of the congress and judicial system. It was here that Chavez changed the name of the country to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Chavez's presidency did not come without a few challenges of its own. As Chavez tried to tighten the hold on sate-run oil companies, a lot of protests broke out in Caracas which led to the coup against him in 2002.

The Constitution of Venezuela

History of Constitutional Reform

Before the Chavez presidency, it was not clear what Chavez wanted to do in Venezuela should he be elected president. Chavez promised different things to different people but one thing that remained constant was his intent to reform the constitution[124]. Chavez's military movement, the MBR 200, began discussing how Venezuela needs complete reform after witnessing the devastating outcomes of the 1989 riots in Caracas, known as the "Caracazo"[125].

[122] Ibid
[123] Chavez, Hugo., *Presidential Inaugural Speech*, 1998
[124] Wilpert, Gregory., *Venezuela's New Constitution*, 27 August 2003, http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/70, last accessed on 2014-02-07
[125] Solorzano, Francisco., *Caracazo,* http://venezuelanalysis.com/tag/caracazo, last accessed on 2014-02-07

"We discussed how to break with the past, how to overcome this type of democracy that only responds to the interests of the oligarchical sectors; how to get rid of the corruption. We had always rejected the idea of a traditional military coup, of a military dictatorship, or of a military governing junta. We were very aware of what happened in Colombia, in the years of 1990-1991, when there was a constitutional assembly – of course! – it was very limited because in the end it was subordinated to the existing powers. It was the existing powers that designed Colombia's constitutional assembly and got it going and, therefore, it could not transform the situation because it was a prisoner of the existing powers." – Hugo Chavez (in an interview with Marta Harnecker)[126]

After the 1992 coup, Chavez was a prisoner. During this time he studied the theories of leftist theorists such as Antonio Negri[127]. These theorists gave him an understanding of constitutional reform and constituent power. During his presidential campaign, Chavez made constitutional reform a top priority. This was one of his most consistently articulated plans. Chavez's political party was called the Fifth Republic Movement (Movimiento Quinta Republica, or MVR – the "V" meaning the Roman number 5). This is symbolic as the reformed Venezuelan constitution would mark the beginning of the 5th republic in Venezuelan history since the country's founding in 1811[128].

One should bear in mind that the idea of completely reforming the Venezuelan constitution is not new in the nation's history. The constitution of 1961 lasted the longest until 1999 when Chavez reformed it[129]. However, this constitution has also been subjected to reforms during the 1990s while Carlos Andres Perez was still president. He implanted the change that allowed for a direct vote for state governors and mayors. More changes were planned but never implemented. During his 1994 campaign, Rafael Caldera brought up issues of constitutional reform as well but with no major success[130]. Major success of constitutional reform came when Hugo Chavez was elected.

[126] Hugo Chávez, interviewed by Marta Harnecker, taken from: *Hugo Chávez: Un Hombre, Un Pueblo*. (2002)
[127] Southhall, Nick., Toni Negri in Venezuela: *Socialism of the 21st Century*, revoltsnow.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/ ***toni-negri*** *-in-venezuela.doc, last accessed on 2014-02-07*
[128] Wilpert, Gregory., *Venezuela's New Constitution*, 27 August 2003, http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/70, last accessed on 2014-02-07
[129] Ibid
[130] Ibid

The Formation of the New Venezuelan Constitution

Following the elections in December 1998, the first action taken by the new president, Hugo Chavez, was scheduling a vote on whether or not Venezuelans want to call together a constitutional assembly. The previous constitution did not provide a clause for calling a constitutional assembly. Some critics and scholars argued that reforming the 1961 constitution was necessary[131]. An opposition to the reform was a human rights organisation, Fundahumanos. On December 16th 1998, they filed a case with the Venezuelan Supreme Court asking the Court to "issue a constitutional interpretation as to the constitutionality of holding a referendum for the approval of a constitutional assembly"[132].

On the 19th of January the court ruled in favour of Chavez[133]. He was then allowed to follow his true intent of reforming the entire constitution. This decision is still highly controversial amongst the opposition in Venezuela as they believe this laid the path for a dictatorship. I would disagree with the opposition here. The new constitution was not a form of absolute control and thus referring to it as a dictatorship is incorrect. Chavez meant to reform the constitution to bring power to the people. The new constitution would allow more rights and freedoms to those Venezuelans who were ignored for far too long during the pre-Chavez era.

On the 19th of April, the referendum took place[134]. This vote had 2 questions; should a constitutional assembly be convoked and do voters accept the procedures set forth by the president[135]. 92% of voters answered "yes" to the first question and 86% approved the procedures set forth by Chavez[136]. On the 25th of July a vote for the members of the constitutional assembly took place[137]. 24 members were elected nationally and 3 represented the indigenous population. 104 members were elected from their respective states. This totalled to a sum of 131 members of the constitutional assembly. All members

[131] Constitution Net, *Constitutional History of Venezuela*, http://www.constitutionnet.org/country/constitutional-history-venezuela#Timeline, last accessed on 2014-02-07
[132] Wilpert, Gregory., *Venezuela's New Constitution*, 27 August 2003, http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/70, last accessed on 2014-02-07
[133] Constitution Net, *Constitutional History of Venezuela*, http://www.constitutionnet.org/country/constitutional-history-venezuela#Timeline, last accessed on 2014-02-07
[134] Ibid
[135] Wilpert, Gregory., *Venezuela's New Constitution*, 27 August 2003, http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/70, last accessed on 2014-02-07
[136] Ibid
[137] Ibid

were elected directly and by a simple majority. 95% of the assembly were allied to Hugo Chavez leaving only 6 members as part of the opposition.

The members of the assembly began their work with immediate effect. Despite this, they realised that the plenary sessions were too time consuming. Chavez wanted the new constitution to be drafted within 6 months since the vote on July 25th. The opposition debated the fact as to whether or not the constitutional assembly had the right to take over the normal legislative functions. Along with his supporters, Chavez argued that the assembly is the highest level of legislative representation. As a result the assembly should take precedence over the national legislature. The aid and assistance of the judiciary allowed for Chavez's view to be won. By December 1999, the new constitution was ready and on the 15th of the December 1999 it was submitted to a national vote. The majority ruled in favour of the new constitution with 71.8% approving it[138]. The abstention rate of this vote was 55.6%[139].

Changes in the New Constitution

Though the constitution was totally reformed, certain changes stand out from the old to the new. One of the main changes was the name change of the country[140]. The country went from being called the Republic of Venezuela to the Bolivarian republic of Venezuela. This is of course as a result of the influence Simon Bolivar had on Hugo Chavez and his campaign. Another change was gender inclusivity[141]. The new constitution includes the masculine and feminine of all political actors and mentions. This was done to establish an equal platform and one that would allow women to participate in politics without being like men. The new constitution also highlights the difference between law and justice. Law does not always bring justice and this is acknowledged in the constitution. This is found in article 2 of the constitution. Human rights and international treaties are another important change in the new constitution[142]. Before Chavez came into office, Venezuela was bound by human rights treaties but often violated them. As a result of the human rights violation in the past, Chavez made it a

[138] Lendman, Steve., *Venezuela's Social Democracy Hits A Speed Bump*, 4 December 2007, http://sjlendman.blogspot.com/2007/12/venezuelas-social-democracy-hits-speed.html, last accessed on 2014-02-07
[139] Ibid
[140] Wilpert, Gregory., *Venezuela's New Constitution*, 27 August 2003, http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/70, last accessed on 2014-02-07
[141] Paneni, Marco., *The Constitutional History of Venezuela*, 2011/2012, LUISS
[142] Ibid

central feature in the new constitution. Human rights in Chavez's constitution go beyond most constitutions. They do not only include civil rights but social rights as well.

Taking human rights a step further can be seen in the inclusion of women's rights in the new constitution[143]. The constitution has some of the most progressive principles on women's rights. This means that no woman will be faced with discrimination whether it is in applying for a job or to a university. Women are also allowed to be homemakers and receive a social grant for the work they do at home. One of the most controversial articles would be article 58 which is the right to inform. Not only do Venezuelans have the right to inform but the right to access of information as well. The opposition read this as the government having the right to censor information. This is inaccurate as article 58 clearly states that information will be share "without censorship, in accordance with the principles of this constitution"[144].

The state financing of political parties was eradicated in the new constitution. The state used to finance major political parties. However, there was too much corruption and money laundering which led Chavez to include that the state will no longer finance these or any other political party. Social, educational, cultural and economic rights were always a top priority for Chavez. This is proven in how includes more that jus basic human rights in his constitution. For the first time in history, the Venezuelan constitution recognises the rights of the indigenous people in Venezuela. Chavez involved the indigenous representation when formulating indigenous rights. He also guaranteed them seats in the constitutional assembly.

The new Venezuelan constitution is very progressive in environmental rights. It commits to the state protecting all natural habitats within the environment. This is an unusual clause in a constitution. However, I believe it is positive as it shows progressive change for the betterment of the nation. This is another example of how Chavez's project was counter-hegemonic. Another unusual aspect to the constitution would be the idea of 5 powers instead of 3. The usual three are the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. Chavez adds on (in the constitution) an electoral power and public power. Citizen power

[143] Paneni, Marco., *The Constitutional History of Venezuela*, 2011/2012, LUISS
[144] Wilpert, Gregory., *Venezuela's New Constitution*, 27 August 2003, http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/70, last accessed on 2014-02-07

adds to participatory democracy and allows for everyone to take part in the political affairs of their nation.

Another major change is the one regarding the legislature[145]. The United States uses a bi-cameral system. Venezuela used a similar system until it changed to a unicameral one with the new constitution. This was meant to speed up the process of approving laws. In actual fact, since the unicameral legislature, approving laws has fallen behind its legislative schedule. The unicameral system cannot be blamed for this as the opposition in Venezuela stall the conclusion of debates on laws.

Another major change that caused controversy would be the extension of the presidential term[146]. Chavez increased the presidential term from 5 to 6 years and allowed for the immediate re-election of a president[147]. This was not done before in Venezuela. He was criticised for this as his opponents claimed he would use this law to stay in power. Chavez denied any of these claims. The state's role in the economy is another noticeable change in the new constitution. Since Chavez, the state plays a much larger role in the economy. The state promotes various areas of the economy including: agriculture, tourism and small businesses. Finally, another change to the constitution is civil disobedience[148]. This section was not paid much attention to until the coup against Chavez in 2002. Articles in this section include that citizens are obligated to re-establish the applicability of the constitution, should the current government fail to follow the constitution[149].

The changes made to Venezuela and the Venezuelan constitution did not come without criticisms. These criticisms came from the opposition in Venezuela as well as nations that opposed Chavez's presidency. One of the most notable critics of Venezuela under Chavez, as well as the new constitution, would be the United States. In order to better understand how Chavez's project was counter-hegemonic, I will the relationship between Venezuela and the United States after Chavez came into power.

United States – Venezuela Relations

[145] Ibid
[146] Ibid
[147] Ibid
[148] Paneni, Marco., *The Constitutional History of Venezuela*, 2011/2012, LUISS
[149] Wilpert, Gregory., *Venezuela's New Constitution*, 27 August 2003, http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/70, last accessed on 2014-02-07

Well known for being outspoken and dogmatic, Chavez refused to hold back any of his own opinions. This was especially the case for the United States. Aside from insulting various world leaders and oil executives, Chavez was known for his hostile relations with the United States. A famous example would be how he openly called ex-President George W. Bush, "the devil" at the United Nations General Assembly[150]. To add to his discontent for the ex US president, Chavez opposed the Iraq War claiming that George Bush abused his powers and created and illegal war. When commenting on the Iraq War, Chavez referred to Bush as an imperialist. Eva Golinger adds that the United States "seems unable to engage in a mature, respectful relationship with Venezuela"[151]. This is in reference to their constant interference and hypocrisy towards Chavez and the Venezuelan government.

The relationship between Cuba and Venezuela added to the already hostile tensions between Venezuela and the United States. Fidel Castro is a long-time adversary of the United States. This new relationship between Castro and Chavez could not have made the US happy as the growth of the left in Latin America meant that the US would have less power to dominate the region. Capitalism was challenged with the growth of the left and according to American standards; there should be no challenge to capitalism since the end of the Cold War.

Chavez also threatened to stop the supply of Venezuelan oil entering the US. Despite all hostile tensions however, Chavez still provided the US with heated oil during Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. These two natural disasters destroyed a large sum of fuel-processing facilities in the affected and surrounding areas.

The 2002 Coup against Chavez

The middle and upper class in Venezuela despised Hugo Chavez, whereas the poor and lower classes loved him immensely. Needless to say that poor Venezuelans always supported Chavez and was the reason that he came into power after the 1998 Venezuelan elections. Middle to upper class Venezuelans were not in favour of Chavez's presidency

[150] BBC NEWS, *Chavez tells UN Bush is 'Devil'*, (20 September 2006), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/5365142.stm, last accessed on 2013-05-06
[151] Golinger, Eva., Interviewed by Mike Whitney, *Why did Washington Hate Hugo Chavez?*, 30 July 2013, HTTP://WWW.COUNTERPUNCH.ORG/2013/07/30/WHY-DID-WASHINGTON-HATE-HUGO-CHAVEZ/, Last Accessed On 2014-07-15

at all. They called him a fascist and claimed that he wanted to turn Venezuela into the next Cuba. This was rather unfortunate sentiments as Chavez's entire presidential campaign was aimed to better the lives of Venezuelans, lower poverty and unemployment in Venezuela and use oil wealth for social development. The contestation between Venezuela's rich and poor led to protests that both favoured Chavez as well as demonstrations that were against him. These protests escalated and reached a peak in April 2002. Anti-Chavez protest rallies took to the streets of Caracas, towards Minaflores, demanding for Chavez to be removed from power.

After firing the national oil company's management, Chavez was the victim of a coup on the 11th April 2002[152]. He was forced to resign as protesters bombarded the presidential palace and demanded his removal[153]. There was an interim government, which was all too quickly recognised by the United States. This led to suspicions that the US was involved in the coup against Chavez. As shown in the John Pilger Documentary, *The War on Democracy*, these suspicions are proven to be true[154].

The coup was funded for by the United States and this is proven in classified CIA documents that were brought into light[155]. The United States deny any involvement in the coup, but they were extremely happy when Chavez was ousted and the replacement, Pedro Carmona took office[156]. This shows the hypocrisy of the United States. They pride themselves on democracy; however Chavez was democratically elected but they supported an undemocratic de facto leader that only took office as a result of the coup with no public elections held.

The beauty of this coup was seen after Chavez was removed from power. The very people, that his campaign was aimed at helping, took to the streets and helped him.

Even though Chavez was returned to office within 2 days of the coup, there were still demonstrations against him and his policies regarding the oil sector reforms[157]. This led to a referendum vote as to whether Chavez should remain president or not. The vote was

[152] Gott, Richard., *Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution*, London: Verso, 2011, p. 223
[153] Ibid, 224
[154] *The War on Democracy*, directed by John Pilger (2007; Granada: Youngheart Entertainment, 2007), DVD
[155] Ibid
[156] Ibid
[157] Ibid

held in August 2004 and the outcome was that Chavez should continue and complete his term in office[158].

Chavez also had connections beyond the Latin American region. He was known globally for his charisma and ability to gain the support of the people. Chavez formed connections with Angola and China by leveraging the nation's oil resources. On a regional scale, he used his influence, along with Fidel Castro and Evo Morales, to help form the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) – which is discussed in chapter 6. Chavez's links with Iran and the Iranian President, Mahmood Amadeenajad, was a particular concern for the United States. The US now had two nations, with government that they did not support, creating bilateral links and looking for alternate anti-American governmental systems. This undermines American hegemony and ultimately creates a challenge to US supremacy.

Gregory Wilpert was present when the shootings took place in Venezuela as protesters demonstration support for Chávez and those that were anti-Chávez took to the streets in April 2002[159]. The media in Venezuela essentially became part of the opposition. In the months leading up to the coup, the Venezuelan media openly supported the opposition and criticised Chávez to a very great extent. Wilpert's points are very important as they give a strong indication to the hypocrisy of the American government and media, the opposition in Venezuela and the Venezuelan media[160]. The irony here rests in the fact that they deemed Chávez a dictator that ruled with fascism. Had this been true, the media and opposition would not be able to talk and preach so freely against Chávez and the Chávez administration. The 2002 coup d'état was the first media coup and several participants in the coup openly thanked the media for their role and support in the coup. The IMF supported the coup d'état[161] and responded to their aid requests faster than they have responded to several requests from people dying of starvation in Africa.

The toppling of Chávez was in the interest of global capitalism according to the IMF[162]. The US does not easily accept another form of development. Though capitalism has failed

[158] Gott, Richard., *Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution,* London: Verso, 2011, p., 260
[159] Wilpert, Gregory in *The War on Democracy*, directed by John Pilger (2007; Granada: Youngheart Entertainment, 2007), DVD
[160] Ibid
[161] *South of the Border*, Directed by Oliver Stone (2009; New York: GrapeVine Productions, 2009), DVD
[162] Ibid

them and many other nations, they continue to believe that it is the best way forward for progressive development.

Washington would smile at the thought of Chávez being ousted from government for their own selfish reasons. The US is dependent on the Venezuelan oil and with a leader of 'their choosing' in Venezuela, it makes access to oil supplies that much easier and oil will flow into the US at a much more reduced rate.

Declining Health and Death

In June 2011, Hugo Chavez was diagnosed with cancer. From 2011 to early 2012, Chavez underwent three major surgeries to remove his cancerous tumours[163]. The United States were almost happy for Chavez's ill health. Their disappointment came in when Chavez's health had improved and he was present at the summit that led to the formation of the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC)[164]. This summit was postponed till July 2011 due to Chavez's medical concerns[165]. Chavez's presence dashed the American government's hopes that health issues would succeed where US-backed coups and destabilisation plans against Chavez and his administration have failed.

The unfortunate reality was that Chavez's health continued to decline after the summit in 2011[166]. Being fully aware that he would not be able to continue his role as president he called on the Venezuelan Vice-President, Nicolas Maduro, to be his successor[167]. His declining health prevented him from being inaugurated in January 2013 for his fourth term in office.

While Chavez was fighting for his life, battling cancer in Cuba, the media in the Western world thrashed his government[168]. The real surprise came in as Chavez, who was so sick and criticised heavily by both western and local opposition media, was ahead in the electoral campaign. A reason for his popularity in this landslide victory was a result of

[163] Palomares, Sugey., *Hugo Chavez: A Timeline of His Declining Health*, 5 March 2013, http://www.latina.com/lifestyle/politics/hugo-chavez-death-declining-health#axzz2mP66aV00, last accessed on 2013-10-01
[164] Ibid
[165] Ibid
[166] CHINA DAILY., *Chavez's Health Continues to Decline,* 6 March 2013, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2013-03/06/content_16281166.htm, last accessed on 2013-10-01
[167] Ibid
[168] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez,* 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05

Chavez, not using oil wealth for a small class of renters like previous governments, but rather because he invested the money in social and infrastructural developments[169]. These services were something that many Venezuelans desperately needed. In the first 10 years since Chavez took office, social spending increased by 60.6% totalling at a value of US$772 billion[170].

At the age of 58, Hugo Chavez passed away, after fighting his cancer for 2 years, on the 5th of March 2013 in Venezuela[171]. He is survived by, Maria Isabel Rodriguez, his wife and his five children: Hugo Rafael, Rosines, Rosa, Virginia and Gabriela. Two days after his passing, Vice-President Maduro made an announcement that Chavez' body would be preserved and placed in a glass tomb (which was under construction)[172]. The tomb would be placed in a museum in the nation's capital, Caracas. This site is located not too far from Minaflores, where Chavez ruled for over a decade. It is called el Museo Historico Militar de Caracas[173].

Poor Venezuelans mourned the death of Chavez, while the rich and upper middle-class celebrated his death and thought of it as a birth of a new era. Though Chavez was extremely charismatic and reduced poverty by half along with his anti-American sentiments and campaigns, he did leave his nation did leave his nation divided[174]. From when Chavez took office right up to when he left, there were always two groups of people in Venezuela, Chavez supporters and those against him. The sad reality is that despite the numerous social reforms that bettered the lives of millions, the Venezuelan media and upper-middle-class citizens still continued to 'boo' Chavez and refer to him as a dictator that has ruined the country. This is despite him allowing them to live freely and in a safe environment without hazardous risks[175].

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[169] Páez Victor, Maria. *Why Do Venezuelan Women Vote for Chavez?*, 24 April 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/04/24/why-do-venezuelan-women-vote-for-chavez/print, last accessed on 2013-11-28

[170] Ibid

[171] Kraul, Chris. And Mogollon, Mary, *President Hugo Chavez Dies at 58; Hero to Venezuela's Poor,* 5 March 2013, http://articles.latimes.com/2013/mar/05/local/la-me-hugo-chavez-20130306, last accessed on 2013-03-29

[172] The Associated Press, *Hugo Chavez Body to be Permanently Displayed in Glass Tomb*, 7 March 2013, http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/chavez-body-perserved-permanently-displayed-article-1.1282666, last accessed on 2013-11-29

[173] Ibid

[174] Kraul, Chris. And Mogollon, Mary, *President Hugo Chavez Dies at 58; Hero to Venezuela's Poor,* 5 March 2013, http://articles.latimes.com/2013/mar/05/local/la-me-hugo-chavez-20130306, last accessed on 2013-03-29

[175] *The War on Democracy*, directed by John Pilger (2007; Granada: Youngheart Entertainment, 2007), DVD

A really interesting aspect to Chavez's death was when a news reporter claimed that Chavez wasted money on healthcare reforms instead of building skyscrapers[176]. This was of course satirised a lot by other media comparing the Dubai skyline to the clinics and schools built by Chavez[177]. In an article Jim Naurekas wrote the following, "That's right: Chavez squandered his nation's oil money on healthcare, education and nutrition when he could have been building the world's tallest building or his own branch of the Louvre. What kind of monster has priorities like that?"

Though the satire is funny, I would rate the original statements as extremely disappointing and ignorant. Had Chavez built giant skyscrapers, he would be heavily criticised for not providing for his people. I say it is ignorant because Chavez looked after his people. When he was instated in office, there was a huge deficit in Venezuela. Financially and socially, the poor were extremely deprived and saw no fruits that the oil revenues would bear in Venezuela. Chavez came in and changed all of this for the better. Too often was he criticised for not doing enough, but previous governments did nothing at all. Had the world been privileged enough to see more Chavez years, the world would see continued development socially and economically. Chavez's focus on priorities and service delivery to the poor cannot be overstated. His legacy will live on in the hearts of people across the globe for the contributions he made to his country.

[176] Naureckas, Jim., AP: *Chavez Wasted His Money on Healthcare When He Could Have Built Gigantic Skyscrapers*, 6 March 2013, http://www.fair.org/blog/2013/03/06/ap-chavez-wasted-his-money-on-healthcare-when-he-could-have-built-gigantic-skyscrapers/, last accessed on 2013-13-20
[177] Ibid

Chapter 5

21st Century Socialism and the Social Changes Implemented by Hugo Chavez

The Social Changes Implemented in Venezuela by Hugo Chavez's 21st Century Socialism

"The only way to save the world is through socialism, but a socialism that exists within a democracy; there's no dictatorship here"

Hugo Chavez

Introduction

The main purpose of this research is to discuss Chavez's 21st century socialism as a counter hegemonic challenge to American supremacy. In order to explore this further, a clear understanding of 21st century socialism needs to be established. This chapter aims to describe in detail all the elements that make up Chavez's brand of 21st century socialism. In addition to this, it will lay focus on all the social, political and economic changes made by Chavez when he took office.

By looking at these concepts and understanding them, I can apply it to my research question to reach an analysed conclusion. The social and political changes also add value in understanding why 21st century socialism is counter-hegemonic. Positive change would allow us to conclude that 21st century socialism is counter-hegemonic because it portrays a progressive way forward for nation without succumbing to the American prescriptions and standards of neo-liberal capitalism and democracy. Using and applying this definition fits into Gramsci's theory of counter-hegemony.

Defining 21st Century Socialism

21st century socialism cannot be defined in a single sentence. It is a combination of elements that make up the ideology behind Chavez's 21st century socialism. One aspect would be that representative democracy, the government system practiced and promoted by the United States, is a not feasible for all nations[178]. Representative democracy refers to the party system where a leader that represents a particular party is elected. Another

[178] Manwaring, Max G. 2005. *Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, Bolivarian Socialism, and Asymmetric Warfare*, http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/, last accessed on 2013-06-04

aspect that ties in with representative democracy is capitalism. Neo-capitalism, also developed by the United States, is promoted as being the best way for a country to achieve economic growth, reduce poverty and unemployment, and narrow the gaps of inequality within a state. In order to remedy the ills of capitalism and representative democracy, a new system of "participatory" or "direct" democracy needs to be implemented[179]. Using these concepts, Chavez is expanding the definition of democracy by promoting a more socialist economic system as opposed to the capitalist system. Critics of participatory democracy refer to it as radical populism[180]. These critics mainly include Western leaders, especially government officials and media from the United States.

Chavez's attempt to create an alternate to the American neo-liberal capitalist system came with more criticism than positive feedback. When Hugo Chavez took office, he sought to create a new brand of governance that separated Venezuela from the dependency of colonialists, in particular the United States. Separating himself and Venezuela from their dependence on America led to the development of 21st century socialism.

"The main values of 21st century socialism, according to Chavez, ought to be liberty, equality, social justice, and sustainability"[181]. Chavez lived up to this as he changed Venezuela by bringing social justice to all through reducing inequalities that the majority of Venezuelan citizens (that are poor) have suffered for over four decades with the previous governments of Venezuela.

Chavez's 21st century socialism can also be explained by using Gramsci's theory of counter-hegemony. In this theory Gramsci claims that counter-hegemony is providing an alternate to the existing dominant norm with a new system that works and benefits the masses of people within a country. When looking at the changes made by Chavez, it is clear to see that these changes were positive and did in fact succeed in helping millions of Venezuelans. The social changes implemented through Chavez's 21st century socialism

[179] Ibid
[180] Ibid
[181] Wilpert, Gregory. *Changing Venezuela by taking power: the history and policies of the Chavez government*, New York: Verso, 2007, p. 188

will be described below and thus proving that Chavez's 21st century socialism is indeed counter-hegemonic according to the Gramscian definition of counter-hegemony[182].

The Social Changes Made by Hugo Chavez

Through his implementation of 21st century socialism, Hugo Chavez made several social changes within Venezuela. These changes have had both positive and negative responses from the people of Venezuela as well as on an international scale. For this research I will discuss the economic, political and social reforms undergone in Venezuela during the Chavez years. In addition to this, I will include the outcomes of these changes by looking at who supported and who opposed them. These changes will illustrate whether or not Chavez's 21st century socialism is indeed counter-hegemonic or not. I will break up this section in to different categories to discuss, in full, all the important social changes made by Chavez.

Education

Education is a basic human right. However tens of thousands of people in the world do not have access to this right or simply do not have the money to provide themselves with a decent education. Reasons for this include: extreme poverty, mismanagement of public wealth and the resource curse amongst others. Prior to Chavez's rule in Venezuela, all three of these factors were prominent in the Venezuelan education system[183]. Venezuelans residing in the barrios did not have access to schools and universities. Educational institutions were always too far or too expensive for Venezuela's poor thus making it inaccessible.

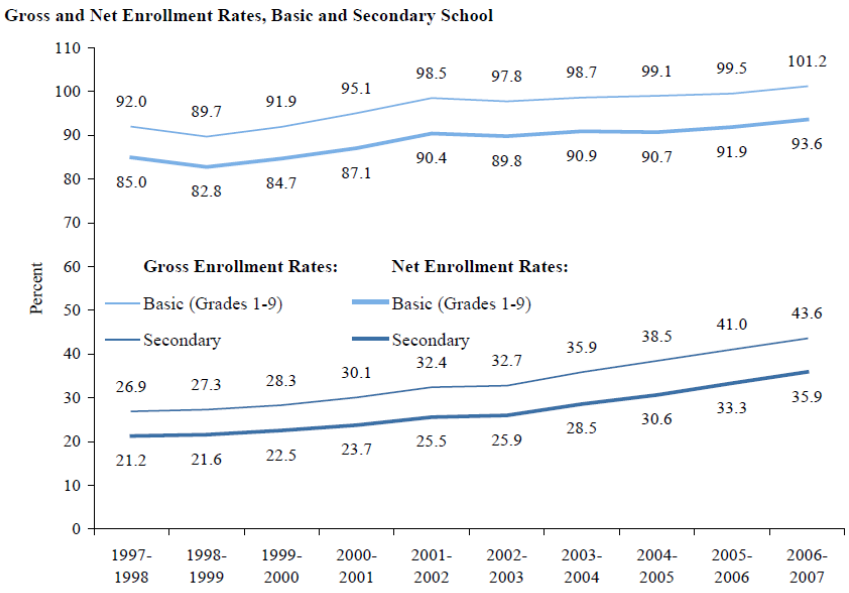
In addition to this, using resource curse theory, governments prior to Chavez used oil resources for the private gain of a few elite members of the Venezuelan society, the private business sector and government officials[184]. By doing this, these governments did not build schools or socially develop Venezuela's education sector. The Chavez

[182] Heywood, Andrew (1994) *Political Ideas and Concepts: An Introduction*, London, Macmillan, p. 100-101
[183] Fausset, Richard., Kraul, Chris., and Mogollon, Mery., *Among Venezuela's Poor, Hugo Chavez 'Will Never be Forgotten'*, 6 March 2013, http://articles.latimes.com/2013/mar/06/world/la-fg-venezuela-mourners-20130307, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[184] Hammond, John, L., "The Resource Curse and Oil Revenues in Angola and Venezuela", in *Science and Society*, Vol. 75, No. 3, July 2011, pp. 348-378, p. 354

Administration came in and changed the entire educational system in Venezuela for the positive.

With the wealth provided by the Chavez regime several people, old and young, got to have an education free of charge. Education for me is the most important social reform for Venezuela because it impacts on several of the greater issues at hand – including economic and political[185]. A more educated population would mean that unemployment and poverty will reduce as educated people can find labour and higher paid labour much more easily.

Venezuela is an oil rich state. As such they are prone to booms and busts depending on the international price of oil and the markets. As a result, Venezuelans need to look for alternate means of income to prevent crisis during a bust period. Education and educating the public is a strong step forward in developing other sectors of the economy. As people progress and learn different skills they develop various sectors of the economy. Less labour will need to be imported as locals will be able to provide for their own people and country. This is what Hugo Chavez was looking at achieving through the social changes made in his implementation of 21st century socialism.



Source: Sistema de Indicadores Sociales de Venezuela (SISOV) , 2009.

The Chavez regime has improved the education sector for both young and older students alike. The traditional age enrolment has risen at a significant rate as illustrated in the

[185] Ibid, p. 362

graph above. The enrolment of students in grades 1-9 has risen from 85% to a very positive 93.6%[186]. Secondary or high school enrolment has increased even more. Before Chavez, only one-fifth of the Venezuelan population went to high school but after Chavez and his educational reforms, one-third of the population (of secondary school age) has now enrolled in high school.

The increase has been so positive that it represents 8.6%, which is almost half a million, of children (aged 5-14) that are now in school[187]. These children would not even be granted the opportunity to gain access to education if these reforms were not put into play. In terms of secondary schools, 14.7% of teenagers aged between 15 and 19 (which makes up an approximate of 400 000 Venezuelans) have been able to stay in high school. This results from the social development educational reform programs implemented by President Chavez.

The continuous rise in the amount of children enrolling in school equates to a 16.7% increase in the number of primary school enrolments and 14.7 in secondary school enrolments from 1999 to 2007 – as illustrated in the graph above[188].

Not only has the Chavez administration helped increase the number of children attending school, but with the implementation of the Ribas Mission in 2003, secondary education for returning adults was also provided. The social benefits of this include that Venezuelans were becoming more educated as a nation[189]. With higher levels of literacy, less labour needed to be imported allowing the local economy to develop and prosper at the hands of the country's nationals. Between 2003 and 2005, the Ribas Mission graduated over half a million students which is 3% of the Venezuelan adult population[190]. In addition to this, the Venezuelan government also provided literacy training programs on a very large scale.

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[186] Weisbrot, Mark, Ray, Rebecca and Sandoval, Luis., *The Chávez Administration at 10 Years: The Economy and Social Indicators*, Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2009
[187] Ibid
[188] Ibid
[189] Venezuela-us.org., *Over 800 000 Venezuelans Have Benefitted From Social Missions "Ribas" and "Madres del Barrio",* 17 November 2011, http://venezuela-us.org/2011/11/17/over-800000-venezuelans-have-benefitted-from-social-missions-%E2%80%9Cribas%E2%80%9D-and-%E2%80%9Cmadres-del-barrio%E2%80%9D/, last accessed on 2013-12-03
[190] PDVSA, *Ribas Mission*, 2005, http://www.pdvsa.com/index.php?tpl=interface.en/design/readmenu.tpl.html&newsid_obj_id=2191&newsid_temas=40, last accessed on 2013-12-03

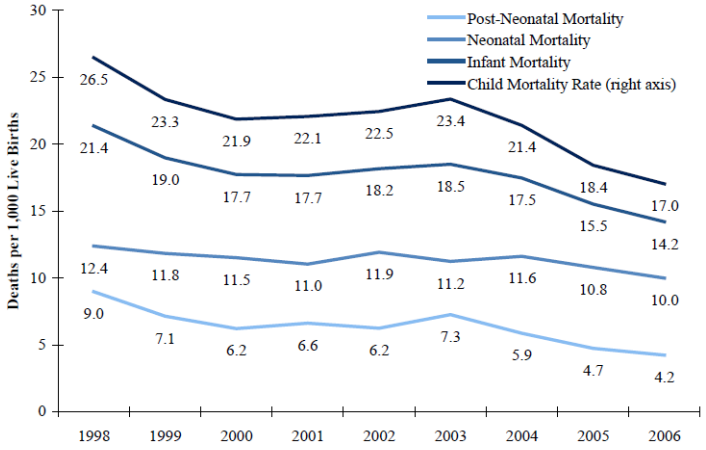
According to Munater, Benach and Paez, education is a key determinant of both health and poverty[191]. During the Bolivarian Revolution, Chavez increased the social spending on education by allotting over 6% of the GDP to the education sector[192]. Illiteracy has eradicated even more since Chavez took office – a fact recognised by UNESCO as well. In Latin America, Venezuela is the third country whose population reads the most.

An incredible aspect of the Bolivarian Revolution would be the free tuition for students from day-care age's right up to university level. Thousands of schools in Venezuela have been refurbished and 10 new universities have been built. "The country places 2nd in Latin America and 5th in the world with the greatest proportions of university students"[193]. 1 out of every 3 Venezuelan children is enrolled in some form of educational program that was initiated and developed by the Chavez administration.

Health Care Reforms

Since his first term in office Hugo Chavez has placed a large amount of the country's wealth on healthcare reforms. He believed that all people should be equal and given the same access to public healthcare. By stationing several mobile clinics in the Barrios with doctors providing free healthcare and medical services to the poor, Hugo Chavez and his policies were the reason that many Venezuelans were seeing a doctor for the first time in their lives.

Infant and Child Mortality Rates during the Chávez Administration



Source: Sistema de Indicadores Sociales de Venezuela (SISOV), 2009.
Note: Infant mortality concerns children under age one, neonatal mortality concerns children under one month of age, postneonatal mortality concerns children between one and eleven months of age, and child mortality concerns children under age five.

[191] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez,* 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05
[192] Ibid
[193] Ibid

Children have benefitted the most from the new reform health policies in Venezuela under the Chavez regime. In under 10 years the infant mortality rate has reduced from 21.4 to 14.2 deaths per 1000 births as illustrated in the above chart[194]. Child mortality has also reduced by over one-third from 26.6 to 17 deaths per 1000 live births[195]. The biggest benefactors in terms of mortality are infants in their post-neonatal stage – which is between 1 and 11 months[196]. In 1998, the child death rate for children between 1 and 11 months was 9.0 deaths per 1000[197]. In less than 10 years this reduced to 4.2 deaths per 1000 births[198].

In addition to the impressive statistics shown in the graph above, Chavez's health care reforms have also allowed for over 10 000 Venezuelans to receive cataracts treatment for their eyes[199]. This prevented many Venezuelans from going blind or having severe eye conditions. In Cuba, 51,000 Venezuelans have been treated for specialized eye treatment and the eye care program "Mision Milagro" has restored sight to 1.5 million Venezuelans[200].

In the year 1990, infant mortality was at 25 deaths per 1000[201]. It reduced to 13 deaths per 1000 in 2010[202]. Before Chavez took office in 1999, there were 18 doctors per 10 000 Venezuelans[203]. By 2013, there are 58 doctors per 10 000 inhabitants[204]. Venezuela's health system has an impressive 95 000 physicians[205]. A number that did not exist before Chavez became president. Previous governments took over four decades to build 5 081 clinics[206]. In a mere 13 years that Chavez was in office, he managed to build 13 721

[194] Weisbrot, Mark, Ray, Rebecca and Sandoval, Luis, *The Chávez Administration at 10 Years: The Economy and Social Indicators*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2009, p.11
[195] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez*, 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05
[196] Weisbrot, Mark, Ray, Rebecca and Sandoval, Luis., *The Chávez Administration at 10 Years: The Economy and Social Indicators*, Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2009
[197] Ibid, p.11
[198] Ibid
[199] Ibid
[200] Pabian, Marcus., *Social Gains of the Socialist Revolution in Venezuela*, July 2008, http://directaction.org.au/issue2/social_gains_of_the_socialist_revolution_in_venezuela, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[201] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez*, 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05
[202] Ibid
[203] Ibid
[204] Ibid
[205] Ibid
[206] Kapumha, Zvikomborero Butler., Hugo Chavez, The Bolivarian Revolution and 21st Century Socialism, 7 March 2013, http://butlerzkapumhatoday.blogspot.com/2013/03/hugo-chavez-bolivarian-revolution-and.html, last accessed on 2014-02-09

clinics where patients received free treatments[207]. This was a whopping 169.6 % increase. Venezuela is home to the largest intensive care unit in Latin America which was expanded dramatically after Chavez came into power.

An example of an initiative developed by Chavez is the Barrio Adentro[208]. This is a primary health care program with the aid and assistance of over 8 300 Cuban doctors. The Barrio Adentro saved an estimate of 1.4 million lives in 7 000 clinics around the country[209]. They have also given over 500 million to consultations – many of these patients were seeing doctors for the first time in their life.[210]

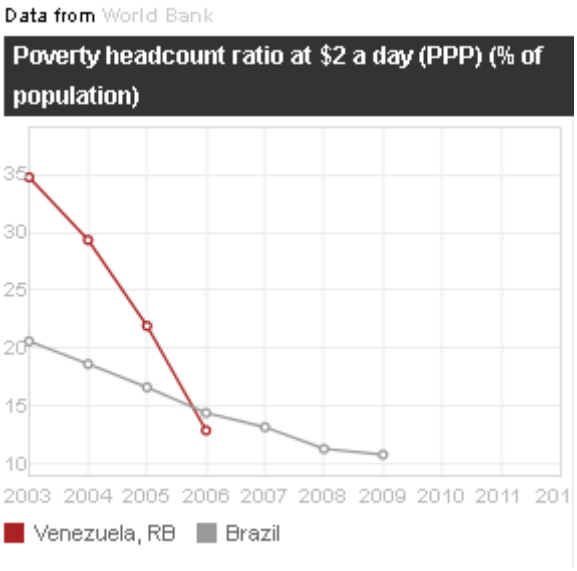
67 000 Venezuelans received high cost medications for free in the year 2011 alone[211]. This was for patients diagnosed with 139 different pathologies including cancer, hepatitis, osteoporosis and schizophrenia amongst others. Venezuela now has over 34 rehabilitation clinics to combat a variety of addictions[212].

When looking at the health statistics, Venezuela is the country in Latin America with the lowest inequality levels as measured by the GINI Coefficient. The Chavez administration has reduced health inequalities by 54%[213].

Poverty Reduction

19 840 homeless people have been medically attended to in 6 years through a variety of social programs[214]. Since Chavez took office there are practically no children living on the streets.

[207] Ibid
[208] Robertson, Ewan., *Barrio Adentro,* 14 October 2013, http://venezuelanalysis.com/tag/barrio-adentro, last accessed on 2013-12-05
[209] Ibid
[210] Ibid
[211] Forte, Maximilian., *Hugo Chávez Frías: An Unforgettable and Victorious Permanence*, 11 March 2013, http://www.globalresearch.ca/hugo-chavez-frias-an-unforgettable-and-victorious-permanence/5326209?print=1, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[212] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez,* 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05
[213] Ibid
[214] Ibid



In order to fully understand the changes brought by Chavez in 21st century socialism, it is important to understand the levels of poverty and social development before the Chavez presidency. Based on the above graph, Venezuela dropped poverty at a much more alarming rate than Brazil.

In August 2011, President Hugo Chavez provided information that affirmed the country's progress in achieving poverty reduction through economic and social achievements. He cited statistics from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to prove his statements[215]. In ten years the Venezuelan government, headed by Chavez, was able to halve the poverty rate[216]. ECLAC also confirmed that not all countries in Latin America were able to reduce poverty and some in some Latin American countries, poverty actually increased[217].

More than 60% of the Venezuelan population was in poverty when Chavez took office in 1999. There were major drops in the poverty rate since Chavez became president. According to ECLAC reports, Chavez reduced poverty to 48.6% by 2002 and even further to 27.6% by 2008[218]. This represents a 43% decrease in less than 10 years.

[215] Correo Del Orinoco International, *Venezuela Reduced Poverty by 50% Affirms ECLAC*, August 2011, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/6451, last accessed on 2013-10-05
[216] Ibid
[217] Venezuela-us.org, ECLAC: Venezuela Has Third-Lowest Poverty Rate in Latin America, 13 January 2013, http://venezuela-us.org/2012/01/13/eclac-venezuela-has-third-lowest-poverty-rate-in-latin-america/, last accessed on 2013-12-03
[218] Correo Del Orinoco International, *Venezuela Reduced Poverty by 50% Affirms ECLAC*, August 2011, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/6451, last accessed on 2013-10-05

Chavez's phenomenal success comes from the proper spending of the country's natural resource wealth and the development of the social sector. Another dramatic change would be the decrease in extreme poverty. When Chavez took office, the figure sat at 25% and not a decade later it reduced to 7%[219]. This too was achieved by strategic social programs that worked with all Venezuelans and left no room for exclusion.

Through the development of these programs, skills were developed and thus jobs were created. This provided Venezuelans with dignity as well as the ability to access basic human needs. Another method of poverty reduction would be the nationalising of private companies to create more jobs where employees get paid a fair minimum wage that is relative to inflation. This will be discussed later in the chapter. "It's not time to die, it's time to live and to keep fighting, because Venezuela reduced poverty by 50%, affirms ECLAC we are on the path to the dignification of the liberation of our people"[220], stressed Chavez.

All the social development is aimed at alleviating poverty in Venezuela. Chavez grew up in a poor household and this held sentiments in his heart when he took on a military and political career. His witness to the mismanagement of oil wealth and the hoarding in the private sector, by previous governments, encourages him even more to go the extra mile to help all people in Venezuela reach equality.

According to ECLAC, the Chavez Administration has done an excellent job in eradicating and reducing poverty in the country[221]. The social investment in Venezuela has paid itself off. Not only are Venezuelans living in better conditions than before, they now have access to education and skills development facilities. The growing economy and the rise in skilled labour will reduce poverty even further as time passes by. This will also allow for other sectors to develop which will create more employment and reduce the dependence on oil wealth – which is a depleting resource.

Using resource curse theory, this can be further explained. Developing other sectors of the economy is of utmost importance to a resource rich developing nation such as Venezuela. During a resource boom, Chavez was clever to develop other sectors of the

[219] Ibid
[220] Ibid
[221] China.org., *Chavez changed Americas for the better: ECLAC chief*, 7 March 2013, http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2013-03/07/content_28155167.htm, last accessed on 2013-12-03

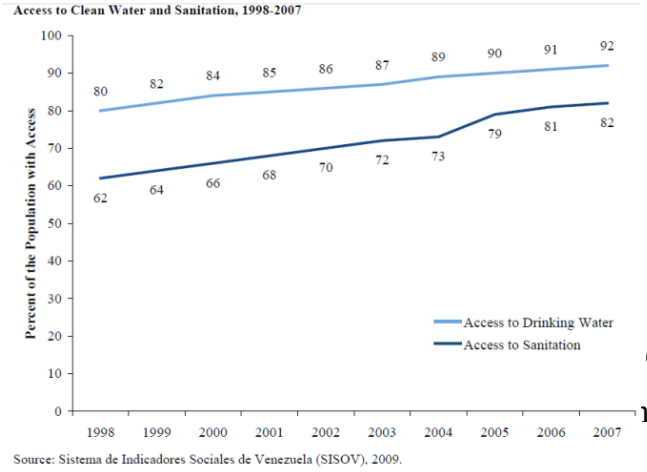
economy and allow for social development. This aids the nation when there is a resource bust as the nation has other sectors of income to allow for the flow of capital and development to occur.

Poverty cannot be defined only by the lack of income, nor can health be defined solely by the lack of illness[222]. They are both intertwined under the umbrella of social processes. To truly measure the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela throughout the Chavez years, the key available data on social services and progresses in health, education, inequality, income, food security and poverty need to be examined through a close lens[223].

Poverty has been reduced in Venezuela by almost 50% from 70.8% in 1996 to a low 21% by 2010[224]. Extreme poverty has been reduced even further from 40% in 1996 to a very low 7.3% in 2010[225]. An estimate of 20 million Venezuelans have benefitted from these anti-poverty campaigns called Misiones. In the precious government only 387 000 senior citizens received a pension grant. Since Chavez took office, this number increased to 2.1 million elderly people.

Eradicating the Food Crisis

The Chavez government, despite Western belief, has helped eradicate the food crisis in Venezuela. The majority of Venezuelans live in poverty. This meant that food became more of a luxury commodity, despite it being a necessity.



Source: Sistema de Indicadores Sociales de Venezuela (SISOV), 2009.

The average calorie of the recommended levels in 1998 to 10 ıote, the malnutrition

[222] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez*, 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05
[223] Ibid
[224] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez*, 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05
[225] Ibid
[226] Ibid

related deaths have halved over these years from 4.9 to 2.3 deaths per 100 000 Venezuelans. Two major programs were developed to reach these goals[227].

The first program is called the Programa Alimenticio Escolar (PAE)[228]. This was designed as a school feeding program which provided free meals included breakfast, lunch and snacks to students. PAE was formed in 1999 and served over 250 000 students in 1999[229]. By 2008, over 4 million students were benefactors of the PAE program[230].

Secondly, the Mercal network was formed[231]. This was a series of government chain food stores around Venezuela. These stores supplied the basic food such as grain, bread and milk at reduced prices to ensure that all citizens would have access to basic food items. In addition, these stores were mainly stationed in Venezuela's poorest areas, the barrios. The people living in the barrios now had access to food items without having to travel far for it. This reduces their expenses further. Another positive would be the employment created with these Mercal stores. As more stores got put up, more and more Venezuelans were granted work opportunities. This gave local businessmen in the barrios a chance to be able to make some more money and live better lives. In this regard, social development occurred as more people worked, less people were subject to extreme poverty and the majority of the state had access to food and water.

21% of the Venezuelan population was malnourished before Chavez took office. During the 1980s, over 90% of Venezuelan food was imported whereas today less than 30% is imported[232]. The Chavez government has also established numerous amounts of food subsidies for poor Venezuelans to be able to access basic goods through the development of local grocery stores and supermarkets. "Five million Venezuelan receive free food, four million of them are children in schools and 6,000 food kitchens feed 900,000 people"[233]. An initiative of the Bolivarian Revolution called Misión Agro-Venezuela gave

[227] Ibid
[228] Lamrani, Sam., *50 Truths About Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution*, 9 March 2013, http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/8133, last accessed on 2013-11-09
[229] Ibid
[230] Ibid
[231] Venezuela.us.org, *Venezuelan Government Has Distributed Over 3.3 Million Tons of Food This Year*, 18 November 2013, http://venezuela-us.org/2013/11/18/venezuelan-government-has-distributed-over-3-3-million-tons-of-food-this-year/, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[232] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez*, 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05
[233] Ibid

out 454 238 credits to rural producers of agriculture since Chavez took office[234]. This proves that not only does the Chavez administration aim to help feed hungry Venezuelans but they aimed at creating a long-term plan for sustainable living. Reducing dependence on international nations will provide Venezuela with the ability to grow economically as well as it will enrich the lives of locals though local production and job creation. In addition to this, their economy will diversify leaving them less dependent on oil wealth and promoting local development and regional integration.

The agrarian policy reforms implemented by Chavez have helped agricultural producers increase the domestic food supply. Results of this is only positive as malnourishment can be combatted with free or very cheap locally produced goods instead of foods that need to be imported and cost more due to import taxes and tariffs. This has been proven as malnourishment was at 7.7% in 1990 but reduced to 2.9% in 2013[235].

Diversification of the Economy

Eradicating the food shortages in Venezuela allowed for the diversification of the Venezuelan economy. Agricultural sectors developed which created employment and reduced the dependence on oil wealth in Venezuela. Venezuela's success is outstanding as 96 % of the population now has access to clean water for drinking and sanitation[236]. This was a goal of the Bolivarian Revolution and it was achieved.

The diversification of the Venezuelan economy is evident in the fact that the State now obtains an equal amount of money from tax revenue and the sale of oil – this has been since it strengthened its capacity for tax collection and wealth redistribution. In a mere ten years, Venezuela obtained US$ 251 694 million in taxes, which is more that its petroleum income per annum[237]. This is an economic milestone for the Latin American nation and figures like a 47.4% economic growth in just ten years would make America and most European nations very jealous[238]. Economists that have studied the Venezuelan economy in detail have indicated that "the predictions of economic collapse, balance of payments

[234] Ibid
[235] Ibid
[236] Venezuela.us.org, *96% of Venezuelans Have Access to Safe Drinking Water*, 21 Mach 2012, http://venezuela-us.org/2012/03/21/96-of-venezuelans-have-access-to-safe-drinking-water/, last accessed on 2013-10-05
[237] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez*, 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05
[238] Ibid

or debt crises and other gloomy prognostications, as well as many economic forecasts along the way, have repeatedly proven wrong… Venezuela's current economic growth is sustainable and could continue at the current pace or higher for many years"[239].

Nationalisations

During his term in office, one of the major changes that sparked controversy around the world was when Chavez nationalised several private companies. In the year 2011 alone, 459 companies had been nationalised[240]. Since Chavez took to office and estimate of 1045 companies have been nationalised[241]. The purpose of nationalisation is to ensure that the state plays the dominant role in strategic sectors such as oil, electricity, steel, and telecommunications, construction materials such as cement and food production and distribution.

In a country like Venezuela, nationalising these sectors is a positive thing as Chavez did not selfishly indulge in the profits like his predecessors. Chavez used oil revenues and the profits from these sectors for social development and to better the lives of the people of Venezuela. The food hoarding in private sectors were discovered and Chavez put an end to it where big international companies like Parmalat, Colgate Palmolive, Pepsi Cola, Heinz, Nestle, Coca Cola, Unilever, Glaxo Smith Kline, and Polar were monitored for irregularities and food hoarding[242]. These companies then pledged to support the government and to ensure that the needs of the Venezuelan people were met.

These companies were also affected by the price controls that have been set by Chavez on 18 food, household and hygiene products – which was in effect from 22 November 2011[243]. The Chavez administration has been placing price controls on a variety of essential household and food items since 2003.

[239] Weisbrot, Mark and Johnston, Jake., *Venezuela's Economic Recovery: Is it sustainable?,* September 2012, Centre for Economic and Policy Research: Washington
[240] Fuentes, Federico., *Summit in Venezuela Opens New Phase in History*, 3 December 2011, https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/49664, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[241] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez,* 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05
[242] Fuentes, Federico., *Summit in Venezuela Opens New Phase in History*, 3 December 2011, https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/49664, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[243] Ibid

Under a new law that has been put in place, the Law on Fair Costs and Prices, the prices of the 18 good are frozen till an investigation and analysis can be done. The cost of these products will be examined in order to measure what the reasonable rate to sell it at would be. This, once again is positive in Venezuela as it allows all Venezuelans to afford basic commodities and helps preserve the human dignity of the majority of Venezuelans.

These price controls were put into effect from the middle of December 2011. Should any company violate these regulation and price controls, they would be sanctioned by the Venezuelan government. The second phase of these price controls were put into effect in January 2012 which involved the price control of medicinal products. Chavez did all of this for the people of Venezuela. On the 7th November 2011, he made the following comment, "We cannot give the large business owners and large corporations the freedom to continue looting the pockets of Venezuelans"[244]. The new law was a much needed strategic state intervention to turn Venezuela away from capitalism and toward socialism.

Increasing the Minimum Wage

Chavez's counter-hegemonic challenge brought about many positive changes to Venezuela's poor. These changes allowed for several positive outcomes to occur. One of these outcomes is the increase in minimum wage. As Chavez nationalised several companies, they came under state control. This allowed the Venezuelan government to utilize the money made by these businesses however they believed would help the masses of the people the most. One change, or rather positive outcome from nationalisation would be the increase in Venezuela's minimum wage.

Since Chavez took office the minimum wage in Venezuela has been on the rise. In 2011, the minimum wage increased by over 26% in the year alone[245]. 2012 saw a minimum wage rise of over 32%. In September 2013, Venezuela saw their second minimum wage rise for the year. This increase is part of a three-tiered minimum wage increase under the government of Nicolas Maduro. By the end of the year, Maduro aims for the minimum wage increase to be between 38-45%.

[244] Fuentes, Federico., *Summit in Venezuela Opens New Phase in History*, 3 December 2011, https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/49664, last accessed on 2014-02-09

[245] Rosnick, David and Mark Weisbrot., *Inflation Experiences in Latin America, 2007-2008*, Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2009, http://www.cepr.net/index.php/publications/reports/inflation-experiences-in-latin-america,-2007-2008/, last accessed on 2013-08-08

On the first of May 2013, the minimum wage rose by 20% from 2 047 Bolivars to 2 457 Bolivars[246]. A further 10% wage increase in September increased the minimum wage salary to 2 703 Bolivars[247]. The benefits of these increases are immense and cannot be overstated. 3.24 million Venezuelan workers will benefit from the wage increase all while receiving full social benefits such as healthcare, education and food vouchers[248]. The food vouchers will be worth 1 200 Bolivars for each worker[249]. Pensioners and those Venezuelans on social welfare will also profit from these wage increases.

The rise in the minimum wage did not come without criticism from opposition parties and Western governments. Government opposition parties claimed that the minimum wage increase meant nothing for Venezuelans as the inflation costs rose even more rapidly than the minimum wage increase. Jorge Millan, leader of the opposition party in Venezuela the Justice First (PJ), claimed that the Chavez administration is "a corrupt and inept gang who will never manage to defeat the inflation and shortages that are wearing down all Venezuelans"[250]. He added that Chavez's efforts were insufficient and that people would never have enough money to eat.

Despite the inflation costs in Venezuela the increase in minimum wage has led to an increase in spending according to a Caracas-based financial consultant named Henkel Garcia. Venezuelans, even poor Venezuelans have been spending more money since these increases which keeps the economy of Venezuela running and keeps small business sectors alive. In 2012, inflation was at 20% whereas the minimum wage increase was at 32%[251]. For the year of 2013 inflation was lower than the minimum wage increase. In addition to this, inflation spiked in the early parts of the year peaking at 6.1% in May and

[246] Robertson, Ewan., *Venezuela Implements Second Minimum Wage Increase of 2013,* 1 September 2013, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/9993, last accessed on 2013-11-22
[247] Ibid
[248] Ibid
[249] Venezuela.us.org, *Venezuelan Government Has Distributed Over 3.3 Million Tons of Food This Year*, 18 November 2013, http://venezuela-us.org/2013/11/18/venezuelan-government-has-distributed-over-3-3-million-tons-of-food-this-year/, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[250] Robertson, Ewan., *Venezuela Implements Second Minimum Wage Increase of 2013,* 1 September 2013, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/9993, last accessed on 2013-11-22
[251] Rosnick, David and Mark Weisbrot., *Inflation Experiences in Latin America, 2007-2008*, Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2009, http://www.cepr.net/index.php/publications/reports/inflation-experiences-in-latin-america,-2007-2008/, last accessed on 2013-08-08

dropped to 3.2% in July[252]. The National Institute of Statistics (INE) estimated that the cost of a basic monthly food basket for a family of five is around 2 779 Bolivars[253].

The Chavez administration had always increased the minimum wage year in and year out during his time in office. The new Venezuelan president, Nicolas Maduro aims to continue the same pattern by increasing the minimum wage along with trying to reduce inflation in order for Venezuelans to live comfortably and with dignity.

INE President, Elias Eljuri, claimed that "During the [Bolivarian] revolution there have been permanent salary increases, unlike previous governments". The minimum wage in Venezuela has multiplied by 24.5% since Chavez came into office. Inflation has also risen, but at a slightly lower rate than the minimum wage increase.

Conclusion

According to Jamie Ferrell, some of the numbers regarding the effectiveness of the social programs in Venezuela are exaggerated. However, he also claims that if the government is improving the life of one Venezuelan, it is successful. These statements hold some sense of truth but based on the statistics above, it is proven that the Venezuelan government under Chavez has helped many people in Venezuela. Since he came into office, Chavez has helped reduce the poverty and extreme poverty rate. In addition to this levels of literacy and education have increased because he made education free for all. Chavez also provided healthcare to people that have never seen a doctor before.

Though the Venezuelan government has not rid the country of all social ills, it is doing everything in its power to use all resources in order to meet the need of the people – Venezuela's poor recognises this. A very important aspect of the Bolivarian revolution would be the intense political participation which is a key characteristic of Venezuelan democracy. There are 30 000 communal councils that allow for public participation in politics. These councils look at the social needs of each area and allow the people to be the protagonists of the change they need.

There is too much over criticism over Chavez and what he has done in Venezuela. What the world, and in particular the United States, fails to see is how positive his changes are.

[252] Ibid
[253] Ibid

He does not have selfish agendas related to money making and profits. Instead he is helping the people of Venezuela. He alleviated hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans out of poverty and extreme poverty. This is much more than any previous government has done in Venezuela.

Chapter 6

The Influence of Hugo Chavez and 21st Century Socialism in Latin America

The Influence of Hugo Chavez and 21st Century Socialism in Latin America

"Long live the unity of Latin America…"

Hugo Chavez

Introduction

When looking at Chavez's 21st century socialism as a counter-hegemonic challenge, we need to first look at how much of an influence was his project in the Latin American region and on a global scale. Chavez was one of the most charismatic leaders in the world. His presence alone would cause a crowd to rupture and every action taken by him has had either an extremely positive or extremely negative response.

This chapter will focus on the influence Hugo Chavez had in the Latin American region, the formulation of The Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America (ALBA) and how this influence strengthens the case for 21st century socialism to be counter-hegemonic. I will include Chavez's influence in regional bodies such as Community of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC), Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and the South America Community of Nations (UNASUR). In addition to this, I will look at his influences in Argentina and Bolivia as case study analysis.

Chavez's Influence in Latin America

A meeting held in Asuncion, by the presidents of Paraguay, Bolivia, Uruguay and Venezuela emphasised the mounting influence of the Venezuelan president[254]. Regionally, Hugo Chavez was very influential. He sought to obtain a seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to sign energy agreements with other key players in the international arena to denounce the US military exercises in the Latin American region[255].

[254] Fraga, Rosendo. (27 April 2006), *Chavez's Influence in Latin America*, http://www.nuevamayoria.com/EN/ANALISIS/fraga/lat/060427.html, last accessed on 2013-11-15
[255] Ibid

In addition to this counter-hegemonic influence, Hugo Chavez is also highly influential in the Latin American electoral process[256].

According to James Read, Chavez was both charismatic and controversial[257]. He was the most influential Latin American leader of his generation. Chavez was an advocate for regional integration and a he spoke out blatantly against American imperialism often referring to America as "the empire"[258].

Chavez's influence allowed for many left-wing leaders to gain power and win elections in Latin America[259]. His example provided a source of inspiration for many leftist parties to rise up and challenge the government. Before the 1998 elections in Venezuela where Hugo Chavez was elected president, left wing leaders very rarely came into power or won elections. After the Chavez bomb was dropped in Latin America, the left found it hard to lose elections.

Inspired by Chavez, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Peru, Paraguay and Ecuador all voted in left-wing presidents that shared more similarities than differences. The political shift to the left in Latin America was also known as the "pink tide"[260]. Voters opted for leaders that would combat and alleviate poverty in addition to bringing social justices to the country. These voters were mainly the poor majority that suffered under cruel injustices of the past and were subject to an extremely low standard of living while past governments and elite profited considerably from the resource wealth and economic growth of the nation. People supporting these left-wing governments also shared very similar anti-American sentiments and were critical of American influences Latin America.

Particular allies of Chavez included Nestor and Cristina Kirchner of Argentina and Evo Morales of Bolivia. Case studies of Chavez's influence in these two countries will be discussed later in this chapter.

[256] Ibid
[257] Read, James. (6 March 2013), *Hugo Chavez: Venezuelan Leader's Latin American Legacy,* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-21682064, last accessed on 2013-05-05
[258] *The War on Democracy*, directed by John Pilger (2007; Granada: Youngheart Entertainment, 2007), DVD
[259] Read, James. (6 March 2013), *Hugo Chavez: Venezuelan Leader's Latin American Legacy,* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-21682064, last accessed on 2013-05-05
[260] Ibid

Chavez was considered in many ways, the ideological heir to Fidel Castro's legacy. Much like Castro, Chavez took on the anti-American rhetoric and used left-wing ideas to influence much of Latin America. 28 years older than Chavez, Cuban leader Fidel Castro became a close friend of the Venezuelan leader and in many ways became a very close ally and mentor to Chavez. Castro was a father figure to Chavez and this made their political alliance extremely strong.

Trade agreements were made between the 2 countries. Chavez would provide Cuba with oil at a very low price to help the struggling socialist economy in Cuba[261]. In exchange for the cheap Venezuelan oil received by the Cuban government, they sent thousands of Cuban doctors and other medical workers to Venezuela to support Chavez's socialist healthcare reform project[262]. This situation was ideal for both Cuba and Venezuela as it reduced their dependency on the United States while promoting regional integration. Havana also sent a number of security advisors and intelligence agents to Venezuela. This was done to maintain the Venezuelan-Cuban alliance which was vital to the survival of the Cuban revolution.

Aside from Cuba, several other small countries in the Caribbean also benefited from the generosity of Hugo Chavez and his cheap oil sold to these nations. Since the death of Chavez in March 2013, these small countries as well as Cuba face similar concerns over the flow of oil into their country from Venezuela.

Chavez's influence has also extended to the point where he set up regional bodies to provide an alternative structure to the Organisation of American States (OAS)[263]. This organisation excluded Cuba and was dominated by Washington leaving out the interests of the Latin American people according to Chavez[264]. Counter-hegemony can be seen in these sorts of activities undertaken by Chavez. He sought to find alternatives to American supremacy and succeeded in finding these alternatives. By providing a more regional based paradigm that allowed for Latin Americans to prosper and bring social justice to the

[261] Brouwer, Steve., *Revolutionary Doctors: How Venezuela and Cuba Are Changing the World's Conception of Health Care*, 21 July 2011, http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/6368, last accessed on 2013-12-04
[262] Ibid
[263] Morales, Hector., *Cuba Hasn't Been Given a Free Pass*, 2009, http://www.americasquarterly.org/OAS-cuba-readmit, last accessed on 2013-12-04
[264] Ibid

people, Hugo Chavez's influence extended through popular support for his ideologies and policy reforms.

Chavez's influence did not only extend in Latin America, but on a global scale. This is what makes his counter-hegemonic project not only local or regional, but international as well. Chavez's diplomatic focus on reviving OPEC to boost his country's revenue allowed for new alliances to emerge with other leaders from around the globe that shared his anti-American sentiments[265]. Libya's Muammar Gaddafi and Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad soon became close allies with Chavez[266].

With the emergence of the Arab Spring and uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, Chavez continued his support and remained loyal to Gaddafi and President Bashar al-Assad[267]. The Venezuelan president saw the Arab revolts as evidence of the US interfering in Arab affairs.

There was a decline in Chavez's influence in Latin America which began from about 2006. Economic problems started to occur in Venezuela under the Chavez government. This could be expected as a lot of social development programs were a result of the large sum of money that came in with a resource boom – as with almost all resource rich countries. Resource curse theory can be applied in this context as well. The theory explains that countries that are blessed with vast levels of natural resources have booms and busts[268]. When the market price or demand is high there is a huge amount of money made for the country. However this does not last forever. Resource prices drop, tariffs are put in place and resources become less in demand – either nations find alternate means of the natural resource, or they acquire their supply from countries that suit their economic status quo[269]. What this means for resource rich countries is that instead of a boom, they now experience a resource bust[270].

[265] Kucera, Joshua, *What is Hugo Chavez up to?*, 2001, http://www.wilsonquarterly.com/essays/what-hugo-ch%C3%A1vez, last accessed on 2014-02-12
[266] Ibid
[267] Carroll, Rory., *Gaddafi envoys in Caracas for Libya crisis talks, says Chávez*, 27 April 2011, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/27/gaddafi-envoys-venezuela-talks-chavez, last accessed on 2013-12-04

[268] Terry-Lynn, Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States*, Berkeley : University of California Press, 1997
[269] Ibid
[270] Ibid

To avoid the adverse effects of a resource bust, it is important for resource rich nations to diversify their economies while they are having a resource boom. This can be done through the development of other sectors and institutions to create a diverse means of income and make the country less reliant on resource wealth. Unemployment and poverty will be combated through this as well. More people will work which will lead to a more productive and less poor country allowing for positive economic growth and development. To avoid the negative impacts of a resource bust, resource rich nations need to adhere to long term development plans and diversifying their economies.

When Chavez's influence began to decline in 2006, the Brazilian left-wing president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva became the more dominant influential figure in the Latin American region[271]. Lula da Silva's government, though left-winged, was far less severe in their policies than Chavez. Despite this, and without the aid of an abundance of oil wealth, Lula da Silva and his government also lifted millions out of poverty in Brazil. His success comes from doing this without deterring and alienating foreign investment and business. Social change was implemented in Brazil, by Lula da Silva, without political polarization and international confrontation with super powers and other emerging economies[272].

An example of the shift in influence from Chavez to Lula da Silva in Latin America comes from Peru. When Ollanta Humala stood for president in 2006, he was dubbed the "Peruvian Chavez" and this lead to him losing the elections that year[273]. However a few years later in 2011, he cast himself as the "Peruvian Lula" and won.

What did win Chavez a lot of support was his personal style and charisma. He had a particular affinity with the common man on the street which gave him credibility of being a "people's person" and allowed for him to make friends and extend his influence in Latin America. His greatest legacy in Latin America would be his contribution to a greater unity within the region.

[271] Read, James. (6 March 2013), *Hugo Chavez: Venezuelan Leader's Latin American Legacy,* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-21682064, last accessed on 2013-05-05
[272] Ibid
[273] Wagner, Camila Immich., and Diaz, Emilia., *How Argentines Feel About the Falkland Islands Dispute*, 6 March 2013, Atividade Acadêmica 50489: Aprendendo a Aprender I

Following in the footsteps of his personal hero Simon Bolivar, Chavez pursued the same dream of uniting and liberating Latin America from imperial rule. During Simon Bolivar's revolution, the imperial forces were the European countries that colonised in Latin America. The imperial power, during the Chavez era would have to be the United States.

Three major alliances were formed as part of regional integration in Latin America: The Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC). In addition to this, Venezuela joined a fourth economic bloc called the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR). These regional projects as well as Chavez's influence and participation in all of them will be discussed in detail below.

The Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America (ALBA)

The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) was formulated by the United States of America in 1994[274]. According to scholars if the FTAA was applied at the time, it would lead to disunion of Latin American nations. A socialist perspective would regard the implementation of FTAA as a contributing factor to increased poverty and inequality in the Latin American region. From an economic perspective, this would denationalize Latin American economies as well as extend the roots of neo-liberalism[275]. This offset lead to the formation of ALBA which looks at Latin Americans finding solutions to suit the needs and problems of Latin American people.

ALBA is a programme or movement created for the people in the Latin American and Caribbean region[276]. This alliance is social, political and economic as it defends the independence and identity of the Latin American people[277]. ALBA is an initiative developed and promoted by Venezuela for the integration of Latin America countries and

[274] Sullivan, Cathleen., *Free Trade Area of the Americas*, http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/NAFTA_FTAA/FreeTradeAreaAmericas.html, last accessed on 2013-12-04
[275] Revello, Ernesto., *Venezuela Case Study: The Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America (ALBA)*, www.emergingcountries.org.pdf/Alba.pdf , last accessed on 2013-08-16, p.3
[276] Revello, Ernesto., *Venezuela Case Study: The Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America (ALBA)*, www.emergingcountries.org.pdf/Alba.pdf , last accessed on 2013-08-16, p.1
[277] Chance, Kenton. X., (2011), *The Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) and the Fragmentation of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)*, Ming Chuan University International College - Graduate School of International Affairs

the Caribbean[278]. The first ALBA proposal was formulated by non-other than Hugo Chavez in December 2001[279]. It formed part of Chavez's counter-hegemonic project as regional dependence would mean distancing Latin America from their dependence on the United States, the global hegemonic country.

ALBA differs from the FTAA in the sense that it does not promote the American norm of mercantile or neo-liberal capitalism. Instead, the founders of ALBA's main objective were to achieve development through harmony, sustainability, the respect for all citizens' human right and to achieve all this in environmentally sustainable ways. In addition to this ALBA sought to prevent he discrimination of any Latin American and shift Latin America and the Caribbean to a more socially equal region of the world[280].

The main purpose and objective of ALBA is too convert Latin American societies from the neo-liberal capitalist system to one which is more fair, engages in participatory democracy and is more supportive and knowledgeable[281]. These changes are meant to eradicate social injustices faced by the majority of Latin American societies for several decades. ALBA aims to promote the quality of life of citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Main Objectives of ALBA

One of the main objectives of ALBA would be that trade and investment must not be an end in itself[282]. The integration between Latin American and Caribbean nations cannot be solely based on commerce and investment. These should just be instruments to reach a fair and sustainable development. In order to overcome the dominance of commerce, state participation should be the necessary regulator and coordinator of economic activities. Special and differential treatment is another objective for ALBA[283]. There is equal access for all member states to derive benefits from the integration process. However, special

[278] Lamrani, Salim., "The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America: The Challenges of Social Integration" in *International Journal of Cuban Studies,* Vol. 5, No. 2, 2012, p. 211
[279] Revello, Ernesto., *Venezuela Case Study: The Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America (ALBA)*, www.emergingcountries.org.pdf/Alba.pdf , last accessed on 2013-08-16, p.3
[280] Ibid, p.1
[281] Venezuela Analysis, *What is the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean?,* 2004, http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/344, last accessed on 2013-10-05
[282] Revello, Ernesto., *Venezuela Case Study: The Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America (ALBA)*, www.emergingcountries.org.pdf/Alba.pdf , last accessed on 2013-08-16
[283] ALBA TCP, *V Extraordinary Summit - Cumaná, Venezuela - April 16 and 17, 2009: Joint Declaration*, http://www.alba-tcp.org/en/contenido/joint-declaration-v-extraordinary-summit, last accessed on 2014-02-10

and differential treatment can be considered depending on the economic development and growth of every country.

Another objective was to reach economic complementarity and cooperation between member states and non-competition between countries and productions[284]. This meant that by the ALBA framework, there needs to be a mutually dependent relationship between nations without creating large competing markets. This eliminates economic threats within the region and allow for balanced economic development in each country. These developments would include strategies for poverty reduction as well as maintaining the cultural identity of each state.

An important objective for ALBA would be the cooperation in special plans for the least developed countries in the region[285]. An example here would be Mission Miracle in Venezuela. This was a Latin American initiative where the poorest of Venezuelans received free medical care and health treatments. Regional equality can be reached through this method as poor states, or even a state lacking in a particular resource will be helped and taken care of through ALBA. An important objective proposed by Hugo Chavez was the creation of the social emergency fund[286]. This fund helps aid social development in ALBA member countries to achieve social equality and move away from neo-liberal capitalism.

Communications and transport was and remains a key objective of ALBA[287]. Developing a more integrated telecommunications system would ensure that member states are well connected and able to reach each other with ease. Transport systems such as expressways, airlines, ships and railroads would mean that more people would travel (with ease) between member states. This would establish new relationships and build on existing ones. In addition, the tourism generated from integration would be good for all economies. ALBA also sees to develop actions that will favour sustainable development while protecting the environment[288]. This includes a balanced use of resources and preventing the proliferation of wasteful consumption. Resources that can be renewed such

[284] Ibid
[285] Revello, Ernesto., *Venezuela Case Study: The Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America (ALBA)*, www.emergingcountries.org.pdf/Alba.pdf , last accessed on 2013-08-16
[286] Ibid
[287] ALBA TCP, *V Extraordinary Summit - Cumaná, Venezuela - April 16 and 17, 2009: Joint Declaration*, http://www.alba-tcp.org/en/contenido/joint-declaration-v-extraordinary-summit, last accessed on 2014-02-10
[288] Ibid

as cocoa or coffee beans should continuously be replanted and regrown. This will allow for these markets to never run dry causing a reliance on importing what is a common domestic product. In addition to this, keeping farms running will mean that soil remains fertile and the environment is not being harmed. What's more is that this creates and maintains employment.

ALBA also seeks to engage in energy integration plans between regional countries[289]. These plans guarantee a stable supply of energy that will benefit Latin American and Caribbean societies. Examples of these initiatives include Petrocaribe and Petroamerica. Both these organizations are promoted by Venezuela. Lastly, ALBA sought to promote Latin American capital investment within the region[290]. This is with the intent of decreasing Latin American dependence on foreign investors. To achieve this goal, ALBA produced and promoted the following institutions: The Bank of ALBA, a Latin American Fund for Investments and a Society of Reciprocal Latin American Guarantees[291].

The Bank of ALBA differs in regulation to institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF[292]. This Bank does not impose loan conditions to its loan recipients as they function based on a consensus of all member states. The Bank also operates within a democratic framework as the president of the Bank rotates amongst member states. Latin American grown institutions such as the Bank of ALBA is a positive step forward for the people in the region[293]. It gives independence to states that were always dependent on the United States, the World Bank and the IMF.

Through their objectives, ALBA sought to create a regional bloc that separated itself from the United States. This is ultimately what made it counter-hegemonic. It was a positive way forward for the region without relying on support and ideologies of the American government. ALBA formed part of Chavez's counter-hegemonic project. Though ALBA is one of the main Latin American regional bodies, they are not the only one that Venezuela (and in particular Hugo Chavez) has had an influence on.

The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)

[289] Ibid
[290] Ibid
[291] Ibid
[292] Revello, Ernesto., *Venezuela Case Study: The Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America (ALBA)*, www.emergingcountries.org.pdf/Alba.pdf , last accessed on 2013-08-16
[293] Ibid

The South American Community of Nations (Comunidad Sudamericana de Naciones: CSN) was the predecessor of UNASUR. CSN was established in 2004 after 12 South American leaders signed the Cuzco Declaration in the city of Cuzco, Peru[294].

The CSN united two major trade groups in South America. The Andean Community and MERCOSUR continued to exist in their own right but become bilateral trading partners creating regional interdependence and reducing Latin American dependence on the United States. The first annual summit took place in Brazil in 2005 with the second one taking place in Bolivia in 2006. At these summits, leaders of member states developed strategic plans to increase regional integration and trade. It was at the South American Energy Summit in April 2007, that the CSN renamed the organisation to the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)[295].

It was on the 23rd of May 2008 that representatives of each member state signed the Constitutive Treaty of the South American Union of Nations in Brasilia, Brazil[296]. To ensure even distribution of power that would encourage regional integration, the UNASUR general secretariat was based in Quito, Ecuador and the parliament in Cochabamba, Bolivia[297]. The treaty states that there will be an annual meeting for heads of member states and a biannual meeting for foreign ministers. The presidency will be a one-year term contract and will be rotating. The first president of UNASUR was Chilean President Michelle Bachelet[298]. The organisation also consists of a South American Defence Council that is made up of the defence ministers of the 12 participating countries. In addition to this, there is also a South American Council of Health within the organisation[299]. Venezuela took over the leadership role at UNASUR in 2012[300]. The

[294] Encyclopaedia Britannica., *UNASUR,* http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1496583/UNASUR, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[295] Sanahuja., José Antonio., *Post-liberal regionalism in South America: the case of UNASUR*, European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2012, http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/20394/RSCAS_2012_05.pdf?sequence=1, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[296] Amies, Nick., *International partners watch South American summit with interest*, 10 August 2009, http://www.dw.de/international-partners-watch-south-american-summit-with-interest/a-4555145-1, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[297] International Democracy Watch, *Union of South American Nations*, http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/index.php/union-of-south-american-nations, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[298] MERCOPRESS.COM, *Chile's Bachelet Nominated UNASUR's First President*, 24 May 2008, http://en.mercopress.com/2008/05/24/chile-s-bachelet-nominated-unasur-s-first-president, last accessed on 2014-01-30
[299] International Democracy Watch, *Union of South American Nations*, http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/index.php/union-of-south-american-nations, last accessed on 2014-02-09

Venezuelan Energy Minister, Ali Rodriguez assumed the role of Secretary General of UNASUR[301].

UNASUR is an organisation that was created in 2008 to promote and actuate regional integration in South America. This organisation aimed to focus on issue of democracy, education, energy, infrastructure, the environment and security as well as eliminating social inequalities and exclusion of the poorer classes. UNASUR was modelled around the framework of the European Union (EU). The member states of this organisation are (in alphabetical order): Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela[302]. Mexico and Panama hold an observer status in the organisation[303]. UNASUR has long term goals in order to maintain a regionally integrated South America. They aim to create a free trade zone between member states along with the creation of a single currency and an interoceanic highway.

DATE	COUNTRY	NOTES
23 May 2008 (date of the signature of the Treaty)	Bolivia Colombia Ecuador Peru	Members of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN). These countries are also considered to be associate members of MERCOSUR. Bolivia and Ecuador had ratified the constitutive treaty.
	Argentina Brazil Paraguay Uruguay Venezuela	Members of MERCOSUR. These countries are also considered to be associate members of the Andean Community. Venezuela had ratified the constitutive treaty.
	Chile	Member of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Chile is also considered to be associate members of MERCOSUR and of the Andean Community.

[300] Boothroyd, Rachael, *Venezuela Takes over Leadership Role at UNASUR*, 14 June 2012, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/7055, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[301] Ibid
[302] Amies, Nick., *International partners watch South American summit with interest*, 10 August 2009, http://www.dw.de/international-partners-watch-south-american-summit-with-interest/a-4555145-1, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[303] Encyclopaedia Britannica., *UNASUR*, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1496583/UNASUR, last accessed on 2014-02-09

	Guyana Suriname	These countries are currently members of CARICOM and entered its single market in 2006. It is unknown if simultaneous UNASUR and CARICOM membership would be possible to accomplish; these states may remain UNASUR associate members only. Guyanahad ratified the constitutive treaty.

Source of table: UNASUR Website, http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/index.php/union-of-south-american-nations

The Table above provides the member states of UNASUR. Most states are members of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) as well. This proves that regional integration is progressive in Latin America. Nations in the region are involved in the development, progression and success of regional bodies that were created to benefit Latin America and reduce dependence on North America.

The Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR)

Brief History of MECORSUR

The Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) is political and economic agreement originally signed by Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay on the 26th of March 1991[304]. Paraguay is currently suspended from MERCOSUR[305]. Venezuela only joined MERCOSUR in 2006 but the ratification was only completed in July 2012[306]. MERCOSUR holds a 6 month rotating position where member states get a chance to hold the presidency of the regional economic bloc[307]. The main purpose for the establishment of MERCOSUR was to create a common market within Latin America and a common external economic commercial policy, also known as a custom union, by December in 1994[308].

The transition period would involve trade liberalisation amongst member states that would include the free circulation of goods and services along with other factors of

[304] BBC NEWS, *Profile: MERCOSUR – Common Market of the South*, 15 February 2012, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/5195834.stm, last accessed on 2013-10-24
[305] The Guardian, *Paraguay Suspended from MERCOSUR*, 30 June 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/30/paraguay-suspended-mercosur, last accessed on 2014-01-05
[306] Bakker, Fleur. E., *MERCOSUR: Predictions and Deepening MERCOSUR Integration*, June 2013, Centre International de Formation Europeenne
[307] Ibid
[308] Ibid

production between member states. In addition to this, member states would have a common tariff on other products imported into the respective country. This system was criticised as there was no real management and the common external tariff rule implemented in 1995 saw a lot of imperfections. Critics of MERCOSUR claim that the goal of implementing a common market was not met in the projected time frame. Despite this, MERCOSUR is the fourth largest trading bloc in the world along with being the biggest economic bloc in Latin America[309]. This trade bloc hosts a population of approximately 276 million people and a GDP of circa 3.5 trillion US dollars[310].

Venezuela and MERCOSUR

Since Venezuela's recent entry to MERCOSUR in 2012, positive new opportunities in the private and public sectors of the country has emerged[311]. These include but are not exclusive to alliances with big companies like Samsung and Renault for export to the region. In December 2012, the Venezuelan Minister of Industry, Ricardo Menendez, announced that several new initiatives would be forming to increase export to MERCOSUR countries in the coming years[312]. One of the most notable initiatives would be the joint venture between the South Korean company, Samsung, and the Venezuelan government to increase the export of electronic goods to South America[313].

The initiative with Samsung is just one of several announced in late November and December 2012[314]. Private and public firms alike are looking at taking advantage of the new common market. The common market creates new windows of opportunity for both sectors and will continuously develop the nation while establishing lasting relationships with other international actors. Menendez also included that the MERCOSUR common market opens the possibility for non-traditional exports as well. He cited an increase in glass exports by the state-owned company, Venvidrios. In addition to this there has also been a large increase in aluminium exports to Brazil.

Venezuela admits to not entering MERCOSUR to solely be importers. "We can't let Venezuela be seen as just a potential market for Brazilian firms to come sell their

[309] Ibid
[310] Ibid
[311] Carlson, Chris., *Mercosur Opens New Economic Opportunities for Venezuela*, 6 December 2012, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/7526 , last accessed on 2014-02-07
[312] Ibid
[313] Ibid
[314] Ibid

products," said Venezuelan businessman Eugenio Mendoza[315]. An example of Venezuelan export comes from a Venezuelan computer company, Siragon[316]. Since 2012, this company has begun exporting computer components to Argentina[317]. There needs to be a mutually beneficial aspect to the common market. Venezuela is achieving this as they are importing and exporting goods to MERCOSUR member nations.

The formation of MERCOSUR happened before Hugo Chavez became president of Venezuela. Venezuela only joined after Chavez took office. It does however follow the same ideologies that Chavez carried throughout his term. MERCOSUR promotes ideas of regional integration and free trade between member states. Along with this, there is a common tariff when trading with international states. These principles allow for more development as countries import and export amongst each other and when trading with an international counterpart all member states benefit. Like almost everything Latin America has done to develop, MERCOSUR was and is criticised by the western nations, in particular the United States. This is especially so after Venezuela assumed presidency of MERCOSUR on the 12th July 2013 and the suggestions brought forward by Venezuelan officials[318].

An example here would be how Venezuela (after it became president of MERCOSUR) suggested that MERCOSUR should develop mechanisms to prevent the US from spying in Latin America[319]. The proposal followed the investigative journalism found in Brazilian press that suggests that the US National Security Agency (NSA) monitors interest traffic in Latin America especially in Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia and Mexico[320]. The NSA also had 16 US spy bases to monitor the phone calls and emails in Brazil, Mexico, Ecuador, Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Egypt, India, Iran, Turkey, China, Russia, and France[321].

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[315] Carlson, Chris., *Mercosur Opens New Economic Opportunities for Venezuela*, 6 December 2012, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/7526 , last accessed on 2014-02-07
[316] John-Lall, Raphael., *Latin America's Rise,* 24 October 2012, https://guardian.co.tt/business-guardian/2012-10-24/latin-america%E2%80%99s-rise, last accessed on 2013-05-06
[317] Ibid
[318] Mallett-Outtrim, Ryan., *Venezuela Assumes Presidency of Mercosur; Bloc Condemns Actions of US and European Governments*, 12 July 2013, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/9849, last accessed on 2014-01-07
[319] Pearson, Tamara., *Venezuela and Mercosur Discuss Mechanisms to Prevent US Government Spying*, 18 September 2013, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/10030, last accessed on 2014-02-01
[320] Ibid
[321] Ibid

In September 2013, the Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Elias Jaua, claimed that MERCOSUR would formulate a commission[322]. This commission would in turn formulate public policies to counter US interference in the region. "Governments, companies, and citizens were violated by the United States spying,"[323] said Jaua. He also added that many member states were victims of US spying. This infringes their right to sovereignty and action should be taken to prevent this in the future. Jaua also expressed support for the Brazilian President Dilma Roussef as she cancelled her visit to the US as she was in rejection of US spying. "Any act of espionage that violates human rights, above all the basic right to privacy, and undermines the sovereignty of nations, deserves to be condemned by any country that calls itself democratic,"[324] Rousseff said.

Looking at Venezuela's influence in MERCOSUR, it can be noted that they had a positive influence to protecting sovereignty of member states as well as promoting regional integration. Venezuela only joined the economic bloc after Chavez's presidency. This proves that Chavez took steps to realise his vision in creating a more united Latin America. Though Chavez was not part of development process of MERCOSUR he did have an influence once he joined. Chavez did create more regional integration with the formation of the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC) – which was his initiative.

Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC)

On Saturday, the 3rd of December 2011, CELAC was officially launched in Caracas, Venezuela[325]. At the same time in the United States, media focus and attention was paid to the demise of the Republican Presidential candidate, Herman Cain and the growing financial crisis in most of Europe. As a result not much attention was paid to CELAC initially[326]. The member states of this organisation include every country in the Western Hemisphere with the exception of the United States and Canada. CELAC is seen as the

[322] Ibid
[323] Ibid
[324] Castaldi, Malena., South American bloc repudiates U.S. on spying, Snowden, 12 July 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/12/us-usa-security-snowden-latinamerica-idUSBRE96B0TP20130712, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[325] Robertson, Ewan., *Regional Organisation CELAC Forges Links with China and India,* 10 August 2012, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/7163, last accessed 2014-02-09
[326] Main, Alex., *CELAC: Speaking for Latin America and the Caribbean*, 7 December 2011, http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/5450:celac-speaking-for-latin-america-and-the-caribbean, last accessed on 2013-11-08

potential rival to the Organisation of American States (OAS)[327], which is a Washington based organisation. In this regard, CELAC was a counter-hegemonic project and posed a direct threat to American supremacy[328].

Though the summit leading to the formation of CELAC received a large and positive response from Latin American media, the United States media did not seem to pay a great deal of attention to it[329]. The New York Times, for example, largely overlooked the summit in Caracas by only covering it with a hundred word blurb[330]. The attention that was given to the summit was very critical and it downplayed the summit and the formation of CELAC to a large degree. American newspaper called CELAC "Chavez's baby" and claimed that it would not last long as it does not have the teeth to bite. White House official and representative of the right-wing Latin American government, Oppenheimer, claimed with certainty that CELAC "will never make it into the history books"[331].

I could not disagree more with the comments made by the United States press and government officials. The formation of CELAC was a huge step in removing Latin America from their roles as being the backyard of the United States. It also allows for Latin America to formulate its own international politics through regional cooperation and unity.

The importance of this new institution cannot be understated. After combining the gross domestic product (GDP) of the member countries, CELAC is the third largest economic powerhouse in the world[332]. CELAC also plays host to some of the world's largest oil reserves, it is the world's largest producer of food and it produces the third largest sum of energy globally.

[327] Ibid
[328] Mallett-Outtrim, Ryan., *Venezuela Speaks Out Against "Colonialism" at CELAC Summit,* 30 January 2014, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/10315, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[329] Main, Alex., *CELAC: Speaking for Latin America and the Caribbean*, 7 December 2011, http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/5450:celac-speaking-for-latin-america-and-the-caribbean, last accessed on 2013-11-08
[330] Ibid
[331] Ibid
[332] Ibid

CELAC is also responsible for building on existing regional bodies and frameworks in Latin America[333]. Examples of this include the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Bank of the South. In addition, they have also established trade mechanisms between certain member states that have replaced that US dollar with local currencies. CELAC explicitly exclude the United States and Canada[334]. This proves that they have moved passed being the backyard to the US and have chosen to move forward with regional integration and development that is not dependent on the US. By doing this, they have also moved beyond the norms of neo-liberal capitalism. They have instead chosen to develop with a system that works for them and has been designed by them rather than one that the US has instilled in the global arena and expects the world to follow.

The United States does not have the people of Latin America's interests at heart. They have excluded Cuba from the OAS[335] because Cuba challenged the great US Empire by following through with their revolution and not conforming to the imperial norm. Cuba was however, not only invited to join CELAC but to host the 2013 CELAC summit as well. Latin American nations are very positive about CELAC and believe that it will seal the coffin that is the OAS[336]. This rests well with South America as the OAS was dominated by the superpowers up north making it hard for South American nations to develop and prosper on their own terms without having to answer to the United States.

"We believe we need a profound change in the inter-American, basically Latin American, system because the US's gravitational power [within the OAS] is clear" said Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa[337]. President Correa also claimed that Latin America needed this system as a place to discuss problems within the region and not in Washington. He adds that institutions that do not take into account the values, traditions and needs of Latin Americans should not be imposed in Latin America.

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[333] Fuentes, Federico., *Summit in Venezuela Opens "New Phase in History",* 3 December 2011, https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/49664, last accessed on 2013-10-09
[334] Ibid
[335] BBC NEWS, Cuba eyes Americas Summit Place, But Not OAS Return, 16 February 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-17053827, last accessed on 2014-02-10
[336] Fuentes, Federico., *The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Challenge to US Hegemony in Western Hemisphere?*, 5 December 2011, http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-community-of-latin-american-and-caribbean-states-celac-challenge-to-us-hegemony-in-western-hemisphere, last accessed on 2014-02-09
[337] IFCLA, *Out of the Backyard: New Latin American and Caribbean Bloc Defies Washington*, 7 December 2011, http://www.ifcla.net/site2/?p=11468, last accessed on 2014-02-10

The Bolivian vice president, Alvaro Garcia Linera was also in favour of CELAC. He claimed that CELAC would represent the meeting of Latin Americans leaders where they can defend their destiny without any costs and find solutions to regional problems without the presence of the United States.

Though the American government accused CELAC of being the product of Hugo Chavez – who they deemed to be a dictator – it was supported by the all of the Latin American states that joined. This presents another counter-hegemonic force. Here, Chavez developed a regional block to stand tall against the imperial force, which is the United States.

The formation of CELAC has led to an imperial weakening of the United States and this is made obvious through the retaliation of the US towards CELAC[338]. The US tried everything in their power to stop CELAC. The former Columbian president, Alvaro Uribe, made an attempt to stop the formation of CELAC in 2011[339]. Considered a puppet to the US, Uribe went to Venezuela in November 2011 to meet with the right-wing opposition parties. He urged them to speak out against the growing relationship between the Colombian and Venezuelan governments[340]. Uribe was not and is not a fan of Venezuela and Hugo Chavez. When he was in power, relations with Chavez were so bad that a war nearly broke out between Venezuela and Colombia. He also undermined the progress of UNASUR despite being a member.[341]

Though Uribe was a neo-liberal that was controlled by the strings of its puppet master, the United States, the new Colombian president, Manuel Santos has a very different foreign policy structure. He aims to integrate Colombia with the rest of Latin America by re-establishing bilateral relations within the region[342]. Despite these progressive changes made to separate from the chains of American imperialism, not all Latin American countries agree that CELAC will automatically replace the OAS, nor do all Latin

[338] Fuentes, Federico., *Summit in Venezuela Opens "New Phase in History",* 3 December 2011, https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/49664, last accessed on 2013-10-09
[339] Ibid
[340] Ibid
[341] Ibid
[342] Government of Colombia, *"Colombia is the Country with Most Investment and More Jobs Created in Latin America" - President Juan Manuel Santos*, http://www.investincolombia.com.co/news/654-colombia-is-the-country-with-most-investment-and-more-jobs-created-in-latin-america-president-juan-manuel-santos.html, last accessed on 2014-02-10

American countries reject what US foreign policy dictates[343]. As with any organisation, there always some problems and CELAC is no exception. There will be disagreements with the member states on issues of war, nuclear energy and humanitarian intervention to name a few. However, I believe that the benefits of CELAC outweigh these challenges. A common denominator can be found when there are global issues that need to be dealt with. The idea that Latin America, what was for so long known and treated like America's backyard, has now developed an institution to solve their own problems without outside intervention is extremely positive.

An example of a progressive outcome of CELAC would be the links created between CELAC with China and India in 2012[344]. The regional organisation formed a strategic alliance with India to ensure that there is an increase in commercial exchange between CELAC members and India[345]. China formed tighter diplomatic relations with CELAC as they also wanted more commercial exchange. The Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, offered CELAC US$5 billion in economic cooperation and a further US$10 million in loans for infrastructural development[346].

For the purpose of this chapter, 2 country case studies will be used to illustrate Hugo Chavez's influence in Latin America. I will be using the case study of Chavez's influence in Bolivia and Chavez's influence in Argentina.

The Influence of Hugo Chavez and 21st Century Socialism in Bolivia

Hugo Chavez has become a force to be reckoned with in Latin America as well as other parts of the globe. His relationships with left-wing leaders from Latin America, Russia, Iran and the Caribbean were built to influence them and spread his socialist and populist style of leadership[347]. Critics and supporters of Chavez often ask why he takes this course of action and what he aims to achieve from influencing other nations to adopt 21st century socialism or at least parts of 21st century socialism. This section of the chapter aims to

[343] Fuentes, Federico., *Summit in Venezuela Opens "New Phase in History",* 3 December 2011, https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/49664, last accessed on 2013-10-09
[344] Robertson, Ewan., *Regional Organisation CELAC Forges Links with China and India,* 10 August 2012, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/7163, last accessed 2014-02-09
[345] Ibid
[346] Ibid
[347] Ross, Hilary., *What is Hugo Chavez Doing in Bolivia?,* 2009, Capstone Essay: General University Honours

focus on the effects of Chavez's influence in Bolivia and what he has done to influence Bolivian politics, the Bolivian military and the economy of Bolivia.

Bolivian president, Evo Morales, is one of Chavez's closest allies[348]. Building these sorts of alliances with other presidents in South America creates and promotes a united region which will allow Latin America to develop without the aid of the United States. This was a key feature in the establishment of ALBA and the Bank of the South.

On a military level, Chavez is developing a military and security strategy not only for Bolivia, but for several other allies and neighbours in the Latin America region[349]. Chavez promoted a new kind of joint defence initiative for Latin America on his television talk show. This would integrate the militaries and intelligence services of the member states of ALBA (Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba and Nicaragua). The main purpose of this integration of militaries would be to counter the United States Empire.

Though the likelihood of a multi-country defence unit is not probable, President Morales has sought to create a better bilateral relation with the military of Venezuela. Bolivia's chief of staff, Juan Ramon Quintana, fully supports the idea of merging the Venezuelan and Bolivian militaries[350]. The mutual benefits of this agreement are questionable. They are mostly one-sided in favour of Bolivia. With the domestic unrest present in Bolivia in 2009, the bulk of the Bolivian armed forces have been used to quell the internal problems and conflicts[351]. Joining militaries with Venezuela would mean that Venezuelan armed forces would support and aid the Bolivian government in their domestic conflict.

This conflict should remain internal and interference and participation from Venezuela and its military will only destabilise the region. Instability would ignite the anger of states that are much more economically and militarily strong, such as Brazil and Chile[352]. Venezuelan borders have disappeared before in the case of FARC in Columbia, which also brought instability in the region and caused distress to bilateral relations amongst South American states.

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[348] Ibid
[349] Ibid
[350] Ibid
[351] Bajak, Frank., and Smith, Fiona., *Chavez Influence Dominates Vote in Bolivia*, 29 June 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/29/AR2006062901097.html, last accessed on 2013-10-04
[352] NUEVOMEDIA, *Brazilian Sectors Reject Chavez's Influence in Bolivia,* 2 May 2006, http://www.eluniversal.com/2006/05/02/en_pol_art_02A702015, last accessed on 2013-10-05

Support and influence are often combined in various case studies. For example in Bolivia, Hugo Chavez sent support to Bolivia in the form of money, equipment and military personnel. In the year 2006 Chavez sent, to president Evo Morales, 2 military helicopters and 30 military personnel to train Bolivians on how to use and maintain these helicopters[353]. These helicopters were sent as humanitarian aid from Venezuela to Bolivia. The Bolivian Congress however, did not authorise the reception of these helicopters and training personnel[354]. Opposition groups in Bolivia were outraged by this and considered it a violation of Bolivian sovereignty. At first Morales condoned Chavez's behaviour, but not long after he followed in the footsteps of Chavez and shifted his policies more to the left as well. The difference rests in the fact that the opposition parties in Bolivia are still very strong as opposed to Venezuela. Should the Bolivian and Venezuelan armed forces unite, there would be a very large public outcry in Bolivia which would lead to protests.

In 2006, Bolivia nationalised its gas sector[355]. This was done through coordination with Venezuela and with influence of the Venezuelan president. This is not surprising as Chavez nationalised over 1000 privately owned business including several oil companies in Venezuela. The results of his nationalisations were extremely positive as he manages to lower the prices of basic goods to ensure that all Venezuelans could benefit from it. Chavez's influence extended to Bolivia in terms of nationalising as well. On his 100th day in office, Evo Morales nationalised the oil and gas sectors in Bolivia[356]. He ordered the military to occupy the area containing the gas and oil and insisted that foreign investors have 6 months to comply to his new regulations or they should leave[357].

The unfortunate outcome of this nationalisation is that Brazil is the biggest loser as Bolivia provides Brazil with half of the gasses they need[358]. I say this is unfortunate because through the formation of CELAC, ALBA and UNASUR the primary objective

[353] Bajak, Frank., and Smith, Fiona., *Chavez Influence Dominates Vote in Bolivia,* 29 June 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/29/AR2006062901097.html, last accessed on 2013-10-04
[354] Ibid
[355] Gentile, Carmen., *Analysis: Chavez's Role in Bolivia's Gas*, 31 May 2006, http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Energy-Resources/2006/05/31/Analysis-Chavezs-role-in-Bolivias-gas/UPI-19861149119276/, last accessed on 2013-10-05
[356] Zissis, Carin., *Bolivia's Nationalisation of Oil and Gas,* 12 May 2006, http://www.cfr.org/world/bolivias-nationalization-oil-gas/p10682, last accessed on 2013-12-04
[357] Ibid
[358] NUEVOMEDIA, *Brazilian Sectors Reject Chavez's Influence in Bolivia,* 2 May 2006, http://www.eluniversal.com/2006/05/02/en_pol_art_02A702015, last accessed on 2013-10-05

was to breed regional integration through trade and development. Making regional allies unhappy by nationalising or undertaking other rash decisions is not good for regional stability. Allies, friends and trading partners are lost this way.

Criticisms of this nationalisation include that it could cause instability in the region. In addition to this, private owned companies like Petrobras accounts for 20% of Bolivia's GDP which could be adversely affected through nationalisations[359].

The Influence of Hugo Chavez and 21st Century Socialism in Argentina

Several left-wing governments in Latin America and the rest of the world have been influenced by Hugo Chavez and Chavismo. Few leaders have been influenced as much as Nestor Kirchner of Argentina[360]. From February 1999 to March 2013, which was almost a decade and a half, Chavez has been the president of Venezuela. He ruled governed with what some may call an iron fist using the abundance of natural resource wealth to expand the influence of Venezuela and unite the people of Latin America against US imperialism. Together with Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua, Argentina was one of the countries that were most impacted by Chavismo.

As is the case in several other nations across the globe, oil played a really important role in the relationship between Hugo Chavez and Nestor Kirchner. Argentina was going through an extremely difficult energy security situation when Kirchner came into power. The Argentinian energy crisis of 2004 came from a shortage of natural gasses[361]. Chavez helped Kirchner by sending 50 million tonnes of fuel oil to Argentina via the Venezuelan oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA)[362]. This was done to help Argentina in alleviating the damaging effects of the crisis. Chavez's strategic use of oil in this case study illustrates how and why his influence in the region spread at such a rapid pace. He would always help fellow Latin American leaders so that they would not have to turn to the aid from the United States.

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[359] Zissis, Carin., *Bolivia's Nationalisation of Oil and Gas,* 12 May 2006, http://www.cfr.org/world/bolivias-nationalization-oil-gas/p10682, last accessed on 2013-12-04

[360] Parma, Alessandro., *Argentina and Venezuela Strengthen Links,* 22 November 2005, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/1484, last accessed on 2013-11-27

[361] Honore, Anouk., *Argentina: 2004 Gas Crisis,* Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, November 2004

[362] Quintana, Juan Uriburu., *The Influence of Chavism and Venezuelan Populism on Argentina: "Don't cry for him, Argenzuela"* , The Quarterly of Latin American Economy and Trade N°13, http://chihleeir.lib.chihlee.edu.tw/bitstream/310993300Q/1865/2/The%20Influence%20of%20Chavism%20and%20Venezuelan%20Populism%20on%20Argentina%20Don't%20cry%20for%20him,%20Argenzuela-Juan%20Uriburu%20Quintana.pdf, last accessed on 2013-12-04

Diverting from American dependence by promoting regional integration was one of the main concerns for Hugo Chavez. In this regard, it is easy to see why he would be so keen to use his oil resource wealth to not only benefit Venezuelans but to help Latin American leaders that faced some form of a crisis. Extending his influence would only mean that fewer nations would have to succumb to pressures placed by the United States and it would increase the support between Latin American nations.

Chavez's influence in Argentina was not only reflected in terms of the fuel oil sent to Argentina. Chavez had a tremendous political influence on Argentina as well. In 2007, Kirchner was stepping down from his presidency and allowing his wife to run for president[363]. A Venezuelan man by the name of G. Antonini Wilson was caught trying to smuggle a bag into Argentina from Venezuela[364]. This bag was said to carry US$ 800 000 and this money was used for the election campaigns of the then first lady, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner[365].

Over and above the monetary and resource needs, Chavez also extended his influence to Argentina through the attention paid on the constitution of his country. Chavez did not pay much attention to the laws and limitations set forth in his constitution. After coming into power, Chavez feared that the courts and Venezuelan Constitution would limit his Bolivarian Revolution and so he achieved dominance of the courts. He succeeded in doing this which inspired Kirchner to follow the same strategy.

Attempts to Destroy the Bolivarian Revolution

Venezuela, under the Chavez government, held the first summit was a double blow to the interests of the United States. The US is on an on-going campaign to destroy Chavez's Bolivarian Revolution. Despite the adverse claims made by several American government officials and the bulk of the American media, Venezuela hosted the summit that gave birth to CELAC. This very act undermines the lies fed to the world by Washington and the corporate media of the US, that Venezuela is a failing country that is isolated in Latin America. Eva Golinger adds that one of the main reasons Washington hated Chavez, was

[363] Latino Life, *Life After Kirchner*, http://www.latinolife.co.uk/?q=node/221, last accessed on 2014-02-10
[364] Barrionuevo, Alexei ., *Indictments Stir Plot in the Case of the Cash-Filled Bag, 21 December 2007,* http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/21/world/americas/21suitcase.html?_r=0**,** 2014-02-10
[365] Ibid

because of his influence in the region[366]. Chavez spearheaded plenty of regional blocs to reduce dependence on the United States and because this did not comply with their status quo, Chavez was heavily critiqued by all the American presidents he has had to face[367].

The US slate Chavez's name and make it seem as if he is hated in Latin America. The facts point to the contra. An example would point to how 32 000 organisations signed on a campaign to support Chavez's re-election while he was still alive in 2011. The polls show that Chavez has more than 50% of the country's support and that the US-backed right-wing opposition has yet to find a suitable candidate to challenge Chavez. The US has responded by trying to prevent Chavez's anti-capitalist mandate from spreading through Latin America. The US had budgeted US$ 20 million for the right-wing opposition in Venezuela for the 2012 elections[368]. Another ploy used to undermine the Chavez administration would be the capitalist hoarding. On the 27th November 2011, the Bolivarian National Guard "seized 127,000 kilos of rice, 132,000 kilos of corn flour, 256,000 kilos of powdered milk, 85,000 litres of vegetable oil, 246,000 kilos of sugar and 10,500 kilos of coffee — all of which were being illegally hoarded by private companies"[369].

An example of private hoarding would be the case of Italian-owned company, Parmalat[370]. Parmalat published a declaration stating that they were not aware of the 210 000 kilos of powder milk that the government seized from their company in November 2011[371]. According to the officials at the company, this milk was meant for the state distribution company as per a signed agreement. Chavez responded the next day: "We found Parmalat hoarding milk and this is typical of the bourgeoisie … they think we are fools or idiots … Gentlemen of Parmalat, we are not stupid!"[372] Following this,

[366] Golinger, Eva., Interviewed by Mike Whitney, *Why did Washington Hate Hugo Chavez?*, 30 July 2013, HTTP://WWW.COUNTERPUNCH.ORG/2013/07/30/WHY-DID-WASHINGTON-HATE-HUGO-CHAVEZ/, Last Accessed On 2014-07-15
[367] Ibid
[368] Artz, Lee., "Venezuela: Making a 'state for revolution' -- the example of community and public media" in *International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, 1 May 2012, http://links.org.au/node/2849, last accessed on 2014-02-10
[369] Fuentes, Fredrico., *Summit in Venezuela Opens a New Phase in History*, 3 December 2011, https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/49664, last accessed on 2013-12-04
[370] Reuters, *Venezuela Accuses Italy's Parmalat of Hoarding*, 28 November 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/11/28/venezuela-parmalat-idUSN1E7AR0EK20111128, last accessed on 2013-12-04
[371] Pearson, Tamara., *Venezuelan Government Confronts Milk Hoarding*, 7 December 2011, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/6673, last accessed on 2013-12-04
[372] Hugo Chavez in Fuentes, Fredrico., *Summit in Venezuela Opens a New Phase in History*, 3 December 2011, https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/49664, last accessed on 2013-12-04

Chavez ordered a large scale investigation into Parmalat[373]. He also reminded Parmalat executives that the government has the power and capacity to expropriate the company should such actions carry on in the future[374].

[373] Pearson, Tamara., *Venezuelan Government Confronts Milk Hoarding,* 7 December 2011, http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/6673, last accessed on 2013-12-04
[374] Ibid

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Conclusion

The United States have proven time and again that they are more than a globally hegemonic nation; they are a globally supreme nation. Their dominance has been notified in several Latin America, Middle Eastern and even African nations. Since the end of the Cold War neo-liberal capitalism, as established by the United States, has been the dominant framework in the international arena. Any state that develops a system that goes against the prescriptions of the American norm is severely penalised. These nations often face sanctions and get so badly criticised by the American government and media that it affects their international status and restricts their freedom to engage in international trade. These problems are set in motion as the United States' realise that these alternates are a threat to their supremacy. A clear example of this is Venezuela during the Chavez rule. This era marked the birth of a new style of governance that would leave the framework of the region, and the United States, changed forever.

Hugo Chavez was elected president of Venezuela in 1998 and took office in 1999. When Chavez took office, he changed the name from Venezuela to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This was done to serve the people of Venezuela the same way his idol, Simon Bolivar, did. In his time of presidency, Chavez implemented several changes to the nation. One of the major changes was creating and implementing his brand of 21st century socialism. Needless to say, this did not come without any criticisms. Though his leadership style proved to be controversial and he received a lot of criticisms for it, Chavez made a difference to the quality of life of the poor in Venezuela. He was indeed a president for the people.

The criticisms surrounding Chavez included that he was an authoritarian dictator and that only aims to serve his own interests. The irony was that Hugo Chavez did the exact opposite in his country. The Bolivarian Revolution is building infrastructure and agricultural developments that 40 years of previous governments have failed to achieve. In addition to this, their economy continues to grow and get stronger every day. He used oil revenues to help social development and uplift the lives of Venezuelans living in

barrios. Aside from his many domestic victories, Chavez was highly influential in Latin America and paved the road for many other nations to adopt left-wing policies that were anti-American. He promoted development through regional integration to reduce the dependence Latin America had on the United States. Concerns drew in when the world's super power, the United States, felt a threat from Hugo Chavez and his influence in the region.

This led to the coup d'état in April 2002. The anti-Chavez sentiments from Western media, in particular America come with no real justifications and are done to slander Chavez's name and silence him in the international arena. Another irony is how America preaches democracy but there is no democracy practiced in their actions.

Chávez was elected by a majority vote, whereas the president that took over after the coup d'état was placed on a pedestal by who's authority? There is no democracy in any action that the United States' engage in, especially in the Latin American region. They are the real fascists, exerting their brand of fascist democracy on the world and only supporting leaders that blindly follow what Washington tells them to do. The constructive outcome from the changes implemented by Chavez was most appreciated by the poor in his country.

The majority of the Venezuelan population saw positive change in their country since Chavez took office. They realised that the American way is not the only way and they saw more development and positive outcomes with the socialist changes implemented by Chavez. It is expected that Maduro will follow these principles in his presidency which will allow Venezuela to grow and develop even more. As more development occurs, along with regional integration, the lives of Venezuelans will improve dramatically. The population will become more educated, healthier and poverty will reduce even further. In addition to this, extreme poverty will be eradicated in the not too distant future if social progressive changes are continuously made in Venezuela.

These changes have been extremely positive for several Venezuelans as he has halved poverty in 13 years, which is something his predecessors could not achieve in over 40 years. These successes cannot be overstated as Chavez evaded the resource curse by implementing social development and diversifying the economy using resource wealth.

Chavez is heavily criticised because many people in Venezuela are still poor. These criticisms as they are unjustified. Chavez did more for Venezuela than any leader of Venezuela has ever done. What also needs to be taken into account is that when Chavez took office, he had a huge deficit to deal with. Previous presidents left him in debt as they were stealing money and using oil wealth for private gains. Much like Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Chavez cannot be blamed for the mistakes of past leaders. It was because of these past leaders that he implemented a coup against the government in 1992 and wanted to oust the government for unequal treatment of the people in Venezuela.

The tide of progressive change in Venezuela came in when Chavez took office. For the first time ever, infrastructure was built on a rage scale that benefited that majority of Venezuelans. In addition to this, Chavez laid a large sum of bricks in the formation of ALBA, UNASUR, the Bank of the South and MERCOSUR. These regional integration institutions were to create a co-dependence within Latin America and to reduce the dependence the region had on the United States. Positive developments occurred at the summits hosted by the respective institutions. The developments were not only positive for Venezuela, but for all member states. This followed a different development model than the neo-liberal capitalism that has been dictated to the world by Washington.

The effects of these institutions have been positive for the region. Not only has debt in Latin America dropped substantially, but growth rates have exceeded even European countries. The changes in Venezuela are not abstract. President Chavez's government has improved the lives of Venezuela's poor significantly. Their contribution to the political sphere in Venezuela has also increased through Chavez's political participation. With this, citizens from all over Venezuela can participate in the social changes they deem necessary for their barrio.

As a socialist model, this new system of governance implemented by Chavez has had a phenomenal impact in Latin America and the surrounding areas. Chavez's 21st century socialism has brought social and economic development to Venezuela and this has influenced other Latin American nations to do the same. As a result, several other nations in Latin America have grown socially and economically using elements of Chavez's 21st century socialism in their regimes. For example, the CIA World Factbook as well as the Global Finance has indicated that the Venezuela economy presents unemployment at a

rate of 8%, government (public) debt as a percentage of the GDP is resting at 45.5%[375]. This is in contrast to the European public debt per GDP which is at 82.5%. Venezuela's GDP per capita is US$ 13 070[376]. These figures are so impressive and leave many Western nations, ironically, in Venezuela's back yard. The *Wall Street Journal* also report Venezuela's stock exchange as the best performing stock market in the world[377]. They have reached an all-time high in October 2012. The nation's bonds are also some of the best performers in emerging markets.

Changes made in Venezuela are not at all abstract. They can be seen and the progressive outcomes of these changes do not need a magnifying glass to be seen. Not only has there been positive change but the people of Venezuela are catered for even at a time of crisis. A very clear example of how government responded to the need of its people was after the heavy tropical rains in 2011. These caused severe damages leaving over 100 000 people homeless. They did not have to spend one night on the wet streets of Venezuela as they were temporarily sheltered in government buildings and hotels. In a year and a half the government built 250 000 houses to help the victims of this catastrophe as well as others with permanent shelter and residence.

These positive outcomes cannot of course be accepted and acknowledged by neo-liberal capitalist countries such as the United States. Their role as the empire is challenged when a new system that provides positive outcomes has formed. The spread of this regime further threatens the United State making them even angrier at the idea of the world being exposed to leaders like Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro.

The United States as well as other neo-liberal countries and media over-criticise the efforts made by leaders such as Chavez and Castro. This come with regret as these leaders do more for their people than Western leaders. Venezuela is #61 out of 176 countries having increased 7 places in 10 years on the United Nations Human Development Index. Facts such as these failed to be published by the US and privately owned Venezuela

[375] CIA, *The World Fact Book: Venezuela*, Last updated on 6 November 2013, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html, last accessed on 2013-12-03
[376] Muntaner, Carles. Benach, Joan. Victor, Maria Paez, *The Achievements of Hugo Chavez*, 2012, http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/, last accessed on 2013-09-05
[377] AVN, *Venezuela Has the Best Performing Stock Market in the World*, 18 October 2012, https://www.google.co.za/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&ved=0CDIQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.avn.info.ve%2Fprintpdf%2F138293&ei=L-GdUoOIK46ihgeuz4DICA&usg=AFQjCNEx72cPyMQsTeqk_4i7qHltfJBGWQ&sig2=O6wp3X7NfbWnaxoDc_RWDw&bvm=bv.57155469,d.Yms, last accessed on 2013-12-03

media. These news casts were presented by a media that was 95% privately owned and that had extremely anti-Chavez sentiments. Between Chavez's positive changes as well as his influence in the region and the United States' fear of this influence, it is safe to conclude that his project of 21st century socialism was indeed counter-hegemonic to American supremacy. His influence was positive as it provided an alternative for the current neo-liberal capitalist system that is forced upon the world by the United States. This makes it counter hegemonic based on Gramsci's definition of counter-hegemony.

Whether it was for positive or negative, the world will remember Hugo Chavez. His death evoked a range of responses within the nation as well as all across the globe[378]. The fact that 1000 private companies were nationalised by Chavez, allowed the US to refer to him as an authoritarian ruler that did not abide to the dictates of democracy[379]. Venezuela's poor that resided in the country's many barrios adored Chavez and treated him as a hero. They claimed that he was the best president Venezuela ever saw[380]. A third set of responses came from the professional, upper-middle-class that left Venezuela during the Chavez regime. This group of people called Chavez "a destructive, irresponsible, authoritarian clown who gutted the country's oil wealth without reinvesting in the critical sectors of the economy which would advance long-term development"[381].

Regional leaders such as the Castro's in Cuba, Ortega from Nicaragua and Morales of Bolivia believed in Chavez's socialist dream and called him a visionary. This forms part of the influence Chavez extended in the region. He created allies to co-depend on instead of stretching his hand to the US like previous Venezuelan leaders have done. For Chavez's entire term in office as well as after this death, the socialist dream remained alive with the sole purpose of bettering the lives of the less fortunate.

Since the death of Hugo Chavez, it has been questioned whether or not the Bolivarian Revolution will survive Venezuela's revolutionary leader. Based on the facts and positive results achieved in Venezuela since Chavez, I would say his system of government would survive despite his demise. The masses of the Venezuelan population are the poor – who were incidentally the cause of Chavez being elected in every election he stood for

[378] Randall, Stephan. J., *The Chavez Legacy,* University of Calgary: A Latin American Research Centre Publication, March 2013
[379] Ibid
[380] Ibid
[381] Ibid, p.1

president. The people of the barrios even fought for Chavez to remain in power after the coup d'état in April 2002. These same people believe in Chavez and what he stood for.

It is easy to mistake their support as support for Chavez alone. To some degree this is true as Chavez was and remains a hero amongst the poor in Venezuela. Despite this, I believe that socialism will remain in Venezuela and the people will continue voting for the government that succeeds Chavez in his principles and policies. Never before have Venezuelans been able to participate to such a great degree in political affairs. Nor have they been given any of the privileges that came through the social developments implemented by Chavez. Should promises of the same treatment and development be made, Venezuela's poor (which is their majority) will continue voting for the leader that promises to lead as Chavez did.

Despite the need for the United States to dictate the terms of the international order, without taking the needs (or accepting that each nation needs to develop in a way that best suits them) of other nations into account, Hugo Chavez developed his own system that did not conform to the US norm. He broke away from the neo-liberal trusses that the United States claim is the best system ever; however this system has failed the world – this is proven in the very recent global financial crisis of 2007.

The United States brands various leaders around the world dictators. Despite this, the way they enforce the global political order on the world makes them the real dictators. Any nation that goes against the prescriptions of Washington is seen as dictators and are constantly critiqued in Venezuela government documents as well as Western media. This is despite the fact that these leaders create systems that have worked for them.

I disagree with the criticism thrown at Hugo Chavez. The propaganda against Chavez delegitimised his counter-hegemonic project. This anti-Chavez campaign was discouraged by Venezuelans as they believed in Chavez. His success in providing for them and socially uplifting their lives was a reason for their faith in him. He was a great exemplary leader that did for his nation what no other leader in Venezuela could do in over four decades. His idea of creating a Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was not for his own personal gain but rather for the people in Venezuela to help them achieve and

succeed. Venezuela claimed in several interviews that his aim was not to make any man rich but rather to equalise living standards in his country.

This is admirable by any account as most leaders today, especially the acclaimed dictators, live to only please themselves and satisfy their needs. Resource curse theory is also applied to many of these nations where authoritarian leaders use oil wealth for the sole purpose of living luxuriously. Many of his critics claim that Chavez is an authoritarian leader. However, he did not indulge selfishly in oil wealth but rather shared it amongst the people of Venezuela. He has done this through his Bolivarian Revolution and by implementing social changes.

Hugo Chavez's victories have impacted the world as he is recognised for not only having spearheaded a positive radical change in Venezuela, but in several countries in Latin America as well. His influence can also be noted as reshaping the global order of the international political arena. This victory was even more impressive as the US backed the opposition party with millions of dollars for anti-Chavez political campaigns.

The economy of Venezuela has very low debt, high petroleum reserves and high savings; despite this, Western nations oppose any action taken by Chavez and economists in these nations claim that Venezuela's economy is not sustainable and it will see its demise when the oil becomes scares and oil wealth is reduced to nothing[382]. The irony here is that they do not make the same claims towards the Canadian and Saudi Arabian economies. They also ignore the fact that Venezuela's oil reservoir is one of the largest in the world as it hosts 500 billion barrels of oil[383]. What is also ignored is the fact that these oil revenues have been spent on to socially uplift the country and has been invested in a long term plan for a sustainable future.

Chavez's death devastated the majority of Venezuelans. According to Eva Golinger, Venezuelans remained hopeful that Chavez would recover from his battle against cancer[384]. The reaction to his death was a collective cry that mourned the loss of a man

[382] Weisbrot, Mark and Rebecca Ray, *Oil Prices and Venezuela's Economy*, Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2008, http://www.cepr.net/index.php/publications/reports/oil-prices-and-venezuela-s-economy, last accessed on 2013-12-03
[383] Ibid
[384] Golinger, Eva., Interviewed by Mike Whitney, *Why did Washington Hate Hugo Chavez?*, 30 July 2013, HTTP://WWW.COUNTERPUNCH.ORG/2013/07/30/WHY-DID-WASHINGTON-HATE-HUGO-CHAVEZ/, Last Accessed On 2014-07-15

that gave everything to improve the lives of the millions impoverished in Venezuela. On the 10th day of mourning, a large parade of people accompanied Chavez's funeral procession to the "Cuartel de la Montaña" (Barracks of the Mountain) across from the presidential palace Miraflores in Caracas, where he was laid to rest in a strikingly beautiful tomb called "The Four Elements"[385].

Venezuela's future remains unclear. There is much debate as to whether or not the people of Venezuela will continue voting for a socialist rule or whether they were just voting for Hugo Chavez, a man of charisma and style. Based on the positive outcomes of the Venezuela era, I would say that the majority of Venezuela would vote for Nicolas Maduro to remain president as he was Chavez's successor and personally chosen by Chavez as a deputy and a second in command.

Hugo Chavez was the voice of the barrios. He did for Venezuela's poor what no other leader has done. His achievements should be given more credit and fewer criticisms. In terms of being counter-hegemonic, Hugo Chavez's 21st century socialism was indeed counter hegemonic. I agree with my hypothesis. Chavez did not only provide an alternate to the dictates of the United States, but he provided an alternate framework that worked and benefitted the lives of millions of Venezuela. In addition to this, his influence spread and as a result millions of lives of Venezuelans changed through regional integration and progressive changes that did not involve the United States.

Hugo Chavez's socialism project is an example of how a revolution can change a country for the better. He has also proven time and again that the American system is not the only system which makes 21st century socialism counter-hegemonic to US supremacy. His circumstantially adverse childhood led to him becoming one of the greatest and most influential leaders in Latin America. Chavez was a man of charisma and will be remembered by people all over the world. Even as the Venezuelan economy prospers and they see positive change, Venezuela will never see another Hugo Chavez.

[385] Ibid


“Venezuela has changed forever”
Hugo Rafael Chavez Frias (1954-2013)

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