

# Hugo Chávez

A threat to the Netherlands Antilles?



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Nijmegen, October 2011

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## ***Executive Summary***

The main research question that is being discussed in this thesis is: 'What is Chávez' rationale for uttering provocative remarks concerning the United States of America and The Netherlands?' In order to come to a feasible answer to the main research question, there will be made use of both discourse analysis and the Post Colonialism theory. In addition to finding an explanation for Chávez provocative discourse, this thesis also analyses whether these provocative statements are just discourse, or if Chávez is also able to support and underpin his discourse with actual deeds or actions. Another reason for not only focussing on Chávez' discourse, but also on his actions or deeds is to satisfy the main critique on Post Colonialism theory, namely that it is too much focussed on just discourse and to a certain extent ignores the actions or deeds that often accompany the discourse.

The analysis shows that Chávez is certainly able to support his discourse with convincing actions or deeds. Regarding the main research question it appeared that the rationale for his provocative remarks should not be seen as an assault primarily focussed on The Netherlands or the Netherlands Antilles itself. On the contrary it should be seen as part of the bigger, overarching metier of Chávez denigrating and being critical about the United States. This metier of being critical about the United States comes forth out of a feeling of being surrounded by the US (military) presence in the countries neighbouring Venezuela as well as by means of the US Navy Fourth Fleet patrolling the sea area nearby Venezuela.

## ***Preface***

I hereby present the final work to complete my Human Geography Master, with a specialisation in Conflicts, Territories and Identities. For me as an officer in the Royal Netherlands Navy it has been a major privilege to be given the opportunity to complement my education at the Netherlands Defence Academy with this interesting Master programme offered by the Radboud University. Especially because in my line of work as being part of the Armed Forces, I expect to encounter various (post) conflict situations in the near future. It is in those situations where the knowledge gained in this programme will be of great value for me, by providing me with diverse perspectives on conflicts and conflicting theories, which I otherwise never would have had.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor dr. Bert Bomert for his knowledge, critical notes and assistance during the whole process of writing this thesis. My friends and family for their support during the months that I was occupied writing this thesis and was therefore not able to spend as much time with them as I would have liked. Furthermore, I would like to thank my employer, the Netherlands Ministry of Defence for granting me a year 'off duty' in order to participate in this master programme. It has been a pleasant and fruitful year.

All errors or shortcomings are mine.

Bernd Peeters

Nijmegen, October 2011.

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## ***Introduction***

The president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez can be labelled as a notorious person. Not only his appearances in public when he is sometimes dressed in a jogging suit covered with the Venezuelan national colours, also his discourse (especially in the media) is at times very remarkable. Recently Chávez has been uttering provocative statements and remarks towards the government of The Netherlands. These remarks were found interesting and remarkable and for that reason this interest eventually lead to Chávez' discourse becoming the subject for this thesis.

An example of Chávez' provocative remarks towards The Netherlands is his recent claim on the islands of the Dutch Antilles and Aruba. According to Chávez all territory that is located within 200 nautical miles North of Venezuela belongs to Venezuela. The Netherlands Antilles and Aruba are less than 40 nautical miles North of Venezuela.<sup>1</sup> Another example of this kind of narrative is the announcement Chávez has made during the international climate summit (COP 15) in Copenhagen on December 17, 2009. On this occasion Chávez said: 'The Netherlands and the United States are arming Curacao, Bonaire and Aruba to the teeth in preparation for aggression against Venezuela.'<sup>2</sup> These and comparable remarks attracted the interest, not only of the author, but also of the inhabitants of the Dutch Antilles: 'The people of Curacao are not worried about Chávez [...] but not only in The Hague, also on the island of Curacao it is nonetheless an important subject of discussion'.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to find out why Chávez was uttering these remarks. The first logical step to make is to have a look at the geographical situation, which is being displayed on this map:

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<sup>1</sup> Chávez Maakt Aanspraak Op Nederlandse Antillen En Aruba. Nu.nl, August 17, 2007. Retrieved: July 12, 2011. <<http://www.nu.nl/algemeen/1199016/chavez-maakt-aanspraak-op-nederlandse-antillen-en-aruba.html>>.

<sup>2</sup> Sluis, M. Curaçao Maakt Zich Niet Druk Om Chávez. *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*. December 19, 2009. Retrieved: July 12, 2011. <<http://www.rnw.nl/caribiana/article/cura%C3%A7ao-maakt-zich-niet-druk-over-ch%C3%A1vez>>.

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



Figure 1. Map of Venezuela and the Dutch Antilles<sup>4</sup>

The large landmass in the lower section of the map shows the coast of Venezuela. The three tiny islands just above are the Dutch Antilles and Aruba. The islands are (in order from West to East): Aruba, Curacao (indicated by the red pointer) and Bonaire. As the map shows, all islands are close to Venezuela. The distance between Aruba and Venezuela is only about 20 miles. According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)<sup>5</sup>, article 3 in section 2: 'Every state has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles, measured from baselines determined in accordance with this convention.' Since 12 nautical miles equals 14 'land' miles, it shows that, although Aruba is close, Chávez' claim is not viable on geographical grounds according to the UNCLOS.

However based on this research another aspect can be found, which could function as an argument for Chávez' claim on the Dutch Antilles. This explanation has to do with the legacy of freedom fighter Simón Bolívar. It is no secret that Chávez is a great admirer of Bolívar. On the website of the Dutch news agency, NOS, a recent article stated that Chávez is willing to make himself immortal (just like Bolívar) by trying to get rid of the (last) colonial

<sup>4</sup> Google Maps. Map showing Venezuelan coast and the Dutch Antilles. Retrieved: August 31, 2011. <<https://maps.google.com>>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Retrieved: August 31, 2011. <[http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/part2.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part2.htm)>

heritage surrounding Venezuela, which are the islands of Aruba and the Dutch Antilles.<sup>6</sup> Therefore Chávez' statements that everything that is within a 200 nautical mile range of Venezuela belongs to Venezuela could be based on historical (colonial legacy) and ideological (admiring Bolívar) incentives. More discussion and elaboration about the rationale behind these remarks stated by Chávez can be read in this thesis.

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<sup>6</sup> Bootsma E. (2011). Nederland vreesde invasie Antillen. NOS. January 20, 2011. Retrieved: September 1, 2011. < <http://nos.nl/artikel/213026-nederland-vreesde-invasie-antillen.html>>

## **1. Methodology**

Once the interested in Chávez and his provocative remarks was attracted, the question that arose is: why is Chávez uttering these remarks? What could be his rationale? On the basis of these questions, also some possible explanations came up like, could this be a way to cover up for domestic issues? Is it just a cry for attention? Is Chávez really looking to expand his power or territory? Bearing these questions in mind, I started to explore the scientific publications and literature, which are able to shed more light on this matter. There is literature that argues that Chávez is already expanding the Venezuelan sphere of influence in the Caribbean.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it shows that the Netherlands is not the only country that is confronted with Chávez' provocative remarks. Especially the United States is the subject of many (disqualifying) utterances made by Chávez.<sup>8</sup> However, there is hardly any research that could explain why Chávez has been uttering these provocative remarks, nor about the rationale for these remarks. There seems to be a lack in the current status of the (scientific) knowledge regarding this subject. This thesis tries to fill this up.

### **1.1 Main research question**

The elements and aspects that have been discussed in the previous section eventually led to the main research question of this thesis namely: What is Chávez' rationale for uttering provocative remarks concerning the United States of America and The Netherlands?

An important aspect that is accompanying the main research question is about scaling the threat or impact of Chávez provocative statements and arguing how serious this threat should be taken. This thesis argues whether these statements are just words, or if Chávez is also willing to commence actions to strengthen his statements? This is an important aspect, because it is able to set the main research question in the right perspective. It is necessary to create a complete and clear picture of Chávez' provocative

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<sup>7</sup> Sanders, R. (2007). Venezuela in the Caribbean: Expanding Its Sphere of Influence. *The Round Table*, 96(391), 465-476.

<sup>8</sup> Bonfili, C. (2010). The United States and Venezuela: The Social Construction of Interdependent Rivalry. *Security Dialogue*, 41, 669-691.

statements in order to be able to formulate plausible and underpinned arguments about the rationale for Chávez' provocative statements and thereby answering the main research question.

The method used for answering the main research question in this thesis is to analyse Chávez' foreign policy discourse (in all its dimensions). The reason for using discourse analysis as a scientific tool for answering the research question is that this type of analysis is able to give information about the discourse that is not instantly visible or apparent. Discourse analysis is able to reveal the (at times) 'hidden' intended message of the discourse. Discourse analysis is able to achieve this by i.e. focussing on certain matters that are deliberately left unspecified or unsaid, but on the other hand also on certain matters that are expressed very colourful or vibrant. Discourse analysis can give insight in the power relations between the actors in the discourse, or between the actor and the audience, but it can also give insight in how people or events are being characterized.<sup>9</sup> The rationalization for analysing Chávez' discourse 'in all its dimensions' comes forth out of the effort of not only focussing on the mere textual aspects of Chávez' discourse, but of trying to keep 'all the dimensions' of discourse in mind. It is not only important *what* Chávez has said, but also *how* it has been said. The statements and remarks made by Chávez do not exist in a vacuum or an empty 'stand-alone' space; for that reason the analysis in this thesis will not merely look at the remarks and statements that Chávez has made (the textual dimension), but there will also be attention to other dimensions, like the audience it was said to, the rhetoric that was used (i.e. vibrant or formal), the setting and the context. All of these aspects have influences on Chávez' discourse and are as important as the mere textual aspect of the discourse. These and other dimensions will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Discourse analysis is a scientific tool or method rather than a theory, and for that reason this thesis is not merely based on discourse analysis alone. There is also a need for more theoretical underpinning. This can be found in the theory of Post Colonialism. Post Colonialism has its origins in the research

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<sup>9</sup> Based on: Dijk, T. A. van (1993). Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. *Discourse & Society*. 4(2), 249- 283.

and publications in the middle part of the twentieth century. At that time many European nations were dealing with anti-colonial struggles.<sup>10</sup> Chapter 2 goes into the multiple arguments that can be made why Post Colonialism is a suitable field of academic inquiry to be used in this thesis.

The (theoretical) goal of this thesis is to find a rationale for Chávez' discourse by analysing his discourse in all its dimensions. Through the use of discourse analysis while keeping a scope on all its dimensions, combined with the use of Post Colonialism theory, can lead to new insights into the rationale behind Chávez' statements and remarks.

## **1.2 Roadmap towards answering the research question**

In order to answer the main research question - namely finding a rationale for Chávez' provocative remarks - it is sensible to first pay attention to Venezuela as a country and its current president in order to be able to put the research question in context. Until about the year 2006 Chávez' popularity was on the rise. After the 2006 elections, however, the opposition began to gain more and more popularity amongst the Venezuelan people. The current (deteriorating) situation of Venezuela does give the opposition some political momentum, for instance, the high crime rates and the increased drugs related violence, but also the deteriorated bilateral relations with several Latin-American countries and the United States.<sup>11</sup> As will be dealt with in Chapter 3, since the popularity of the opposition is rising, Chávez' (media) appearances become more remarkable. Chávez' claims on the Dutch Antilles, which took place in 2007 and 2009, can also be seen in correspondence of Chávez' discourse being more outspoken and remarkable.

After the context of this thesis has been made clear, the next logical step is to examine what Chávez' actually and exactly said. It is important to gather all his remarks and utterances regarding his claims on the Dutch Antilles, in order to get a clear and complete as possible picture of Chávez' remarks. In addition to sources and articles from news agencies, another interesting source for Chávez' discourse regarding his claim on the Dutch Antilles can be

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<sup>10</sup> Barnett, C. (2006). Postcolonialism: Space, textuality and power. In: S. Aitken, & G. Valentine (Ed.), *Approaches to Human Geography* (pp. 147-159). London: SAGE.

<sup>11</sup> Corrales, J. (2011). A Setback for Chávez. *Journal of Democracy*, 22(1), 132.

found in his own television show. More elaboration about this television programme will be made in the following sections and chapters. Furthermore, whenever the data is available I will also shed light on what the Venezuelan people think about Chávez' remarks and discourse. By adding the opinions and views of the Venezuelan people, Chávez' discourse can be set in a better context and therefore make this thesis more relevant, particularly since Venezuelans seem to be very important for Chávez, both personally as in policy making. Chávez once said that he would rather default on international debt payments, than let his people suffer.<sup>12</sup> In addition to Chávez' discourse and the Venezuelan public opinion, there will also be emphasis on Chávez (threatening with) policy actions and deeds (if there are any), to support his claim.

### **1.3 Thesis relevance**

As mentioned before, there is already literature that shows Chávez being provocative and remarkable in his utterings. However, I was not able to find any research about the rationale for Chávez' utterances. Nonetheless, there is quite a lot of speculation about Chávez' intentions and rationale on discussion forums on the Internet and in newspapers and on websites. This shows that it is indeed a subject that attracts societal interests, but it does not have any scientific underpinning (yet). It is therefore relevant to try to find an explanation, or to come to an explanation through scientific methods, for the rationale behind Chávez' remarks. These explanations can be beneficial for various parties, i.e. for the Dutch society as a whole, and especially for the people in the Netherlands Antilles. Furthermore it could be particularly relevant for my employer: the Ministry of Defence. I am aware that Chávez' recent utterances did not pass by unnoticed in the Dutch defence community. The Dutch defence specialist Colijn argues that 'the assertive politics and policy of Chávez is a threat and that there is a possibility of Chávez assaulting Curacao.'<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, diplomatic cables between The Hague and

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<sup>12</sup> Sylvia, R. D., & Danopoulos, C.P. (2003). The Chavez Phenomenon: Political Change in Venezuela. *Third World Quarterly*, 24(1), 63-76.

<sup>13</sup> Fraaij, T. (2011). VS, Nederland, Venezuela in greep van angst. *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*. May 12, 2011. Retrieved: October 1, 2011. <<http://www.rnw.nl/caribiana/article/vs-nederland-venezuela-greep-van-angst>>. NB. The Defence report that Colijn quotes is: *Eindrapport verkenningen, houvast voor de krijgsmacht van de toekomst*. p. 124.

Washington (which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 and 5 of this thesis) show that the Venezuelan - Dutch relationship was a high priority issue on the agenda in Dutch politics.

#### **1.4 Research type and sources**

This research will mainly be one of qualitative research. It can be characterized as being desk research. The research method that will be used in this thesis is *discourse analysis*. The sources that will be used will predominantly be journals, books, media (like TV appearances and newspapers) and other literature. An interesting source for retrieving Chávez' discourse are the various episodes of Chávez' own television programme 'Aló Presidente'. This programme enables Chávez to communicate with his people, but also gives the Venezuelan population the possibility to get in contact with its president. People can phone the programme and ask live questions to their president, or participate as audience in the programme.

## **2. Research model**

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part deals with the question what discourse analysis is and how it has been used in this research. This part also describes how discourse analysis can be a suitable scientific method for providing answers to research questions. Furthermore, this part clarifies that discourse (analysis) has multiple dimensions and that it is necessary to emphasize all of these dimensions, in order to be able to analyse Chávez' foreign policy. The second part is about why Post Colonialism as a field of academic inquiry, can function as the relevant theoretical underpinning in this thesis.

### **2.1 Discourse analysis**

A good approach to start explicating what is meant by discourse analysis is provided by Barbara Johnstone.<sup>14</sup> She treats discourse analysis 'not as a discipline but as a systematic, rigorous way of suggesting answers to research questions.'<sup>15</sup> Johnstone sees discourse analysis as

'a research method that can be (and is being) used by scholars with a variety of academic and non-academic affiliations, coming from a variety of disciplines, to answer a variety of questions. It is therefore not aimed at the collection of facts but it sets out to answer many kinds of questions about language, about speakers and about society and culture'.<sup>16</sup>

In order to find out what discourse analysis is, it is sensible to first shed light on what both elements 'discourse' and 'analysis' mean. Starting with the term 'discourse'. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*<sup>17</sup> 'discourse' is written or spoken communication or debate. The origins of the word are in Middle English (denoting the process of reasoning) from Old French *discours*, from Latin *discursus* 'running to', in Medieval Latin 'argument', from the French verb *discourir*. It is worth noticing that the *Oxford Dictionary* does not use the

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<sup>14</sup> Johnstone, B. (2006). *Discourse Analysis*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. XI

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. XI

<sup>17</sup> Stevenson, A. (2010). *Oxford Dictionary of English*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

word 'language' to describe discourse. Instead it uses the word 'communication'. Communication entails more than just language. For instance, it could involve non-verbal utterances like media, photography, gestures, dance, clothing, behaviour and architecture.

Continuing with the term analysis. According to *Oxford Dictionary*<sup>18</sup> 'analysis' is a detailed examination of the elements or structure of something. It is also understood as the process of separating something into its constituent elements. The word originates from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century via Medieval Latin from the Greek word *analysis*.

If the words 'discourse' and 'analysis' were then combined, the description would become: the process of separating communication or debate into constituent elements or structure and examine these elements or structure in detail. However, as Johnstone argues, the description of discourse analysis can also involve the term 'taking apart' less literally.

'A way of analyzing something is by looking at it in a variety of ways. An analysis in this sense might involve systematically asking a number of questions, systematically taking several theoretical perspectives, or systematically performing a variety of tests. Such an analysis could include a breaking-down into parts. It could also include a breaking-down into functions (What is persuasive discourse like? What is narrative like?), or according to participants (How do men talk in all-male groups? How do psychotherapists talk? What is newspaper writing like?), or settings (What goes on in classrooms? In workplaces? In sororities?), or processes (How do children learn to get the conversational floor? How do people create social categories like 'girl' or 'foreigner' or 'old person' as they talk to, about, among each other?)'.<sup>19</sup>

Norman Fairclough has done some notable work on the explanation of discourse analysis. He focuses strongly (even more than Johnstone) on

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

<sup>19</sup> Johnstone (2006), p. 4.

discourse analysis as a social process, as something that is much more than mere language.<sup>20</sup> Fairclough states that ‘discourse analysis is based upon a view of semiosis as an irreducible part of material social processes. Semiosis includes all forms of meaning making – visual images, body language, as well as language’.<sup>21</sup> In his research he offers examples for his statements. He elaborates that semiosis has an influence on the discourse in different social practices. For example, doing a job at the office not only influences the language one uses, but also influences the semiosis of this language (namely: the body language, visual images and gestures). The analysis is not only about texts, but also about interactions. This view is in line with Johnstone’s view, since she also states that discourse analysis is more than just about language, it is about communication.

Theo van Leeuwen<sup>22</sup> builds on the work of philosopher Michel Foucault and defines discourses as ‘socially constructed ways of knowing some aspects of reality which can be drawn upon when that aspect of reality has to be represented, or, to put it in another way, a context-specific framework for making sense of things’.<sup>23</sup> He further argues that discourses are ultimately modelled on social practices. Therefore, knowledge about what a word means partly comes from knowledge about what a word does, i.e. the word ‘footballer’ is based on what footballers in practice do (they play football). Furthermore Van Leeuwen sees discourse as a continuum. He states that discourses will transform the knowledge about words, by leaving some aspects out. These are deliberate transformations driven by certain interests. ‘Different discourses, different ways of making sense of the same aspect of reality, will do all this in different ways, including and excluding different things, and doing so in the service of different interests’.<sup>24</sup> This is an important aspect to look at when analysing Chávez’ discourse. Especially when certain

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<sup>20</sup> Fairclough, N. (2001). Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research. In: R. Wodak, & M. Meyer (Ed.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp. 121-138). London: SAGE.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 122

<sup>22</sup> Leeuwen, van, T. (2009). Discourse as the recontextualization of social practice: a guide. In: R. Wodak, & M. Meyer (Ed.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp.144-161). London: SAGE.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 144.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p. 145

matters are sometimes included and sometimes deliberately excluded in different discourses by Chávez about the same subject. Underlying (hidden) interests drive the choice to include or exclude certain subjects or words in the discourse. It is important to reveal these underlying interests, because it can illustrate Chávez' underlying message or thought behind his discourse.

Concluding on how various authors define and give more insight in discourse analysis, this paragraph combines all these insights together to come to a workable and feasible description of what, in the framework of this thesis, discourse analysis is understood to. An understanding and demarcation of discourse analysis in this thesis is necessary before it is possible to answer the next question posed in this chapter, namely: How can discourse analysis be a suitable scientific method for providing answers to the research question? The basis for the understanding of discourse analysis in this thesis will be a combination of the definition of the words 'discourse' and 'analysis' according to *Oxford Dictionary*: the process of separating communication or debate into constituent elements or structure and examine these elements or structure in detail. Working from this basis, some refinements, additions, specifications and nuances will be added. The first addition that is worth making is the process of systematically asking a number of questions and systematically taking several theoretical perspectives, as formulated by Johnstone, which are considered earlier in this chapter. This is important because answering these questions gives more understanding of the process, setting and functions of the discourse. Another nuance that is worth noting is the argument by Fairclough stating that discourse analysis is a social process and much more than mere language, it is also about interactions, body language and gestures. Merely looking at texts is thus insufficient when using a discourse analysis; there should also be attention to the behaviour and interactions. Van Leeuwen posits the last refinement that is worth making. He states that discourse is a continuum and that it is constantly changing, in service of different interests.

Since it is now clear how discourse analysis is defined in this thesis - the process of separating communication of debate into constituent elements or structure and examine these elements or structure in detail - the focus of the

next part of this chapter is on the more practical side of discourse analysis. This part of the chapter discusses how to go about and use discourse analysis in order to be able to provide answers to the main research question.

Following the description of discourse analysis that has been constructed in this chapter, the first step in the discourse analysis process would be to separate communication or debate into constituent elements or structure and examine these elements or structure in detail. The examination of these separate elements could be attained by asking certain questions in order to gain more understanding about the discourse. These questions, also called heuristics, could be:

- What is the discourse about?
- What is said or written?
- How is it said or written?
- Who said or wrote it?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What motivated the discourse?
- Why these particular words in this particular order?
- How does it fit in the setting? (How does it fit in the set of things people conventionally do with discourse?)
- What about its medium?
- What about its language?
- What about the structure of the text? (Does it fit in a larger structure of texts and interactions?)<sup>25</sup>

A noteworthy aspect that keeps emerging in the course of this chapter is that discourse is more than text, speech or language. There are more dimensions to discourse than just text, which are of importance when analyzing the discourse. The final part of this chapter therefore further elaborates on the question what these dimensions are and how they can be emphasised in the analysis.

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<sup>25</sup> Johnstone (2006), p. 9.

## 2.2 Dimensions of discourse

In this research discourse is seen as a phenomenon with multiple dimensions. In the previous section of this chapter, the principal dimension of discourse, namely text, is elaborated upon and made clear. However, for a solid discourse analysis it is also necessary to emphasise the other dimensions of discourse, which are gestures, syntax, lexicology, rhetoric, (social) interaction and context. According to Derek Edwards<sup>26</sup> discourse analysis should consider more than mere language, text or speech; social interactions should also be taken into account. Analysis of discourse has to respect the indexical, interaction-oriented nature of its phenomena.<sup>27</sup> In this section the different dimensions of discourse will be elaborated on.

### *Rhetoric*

According to the Oxford Dictionary<sup>28</sup> the word 'rhetoric' means 'the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques'. Studying rhetoric that is used during discourse can give much information about the intentions of the speaker or writer. Nathan Crick<sup>29</sup> gives a description of rhetoric that is suitable to work with in this research. Crick elaborates that rhetoric comes out of a 'cultivated habit of responding to problematic situations by manipulating and redeploying meanings intended to persuade an external audience to alter its beliefs and behaviour.'<sup>30</sup> Hence, according to Crick, rhetoric is a practice that can be used in problematic situations. This understanding can be useful for this research about Chávez' discourse, since when Chávez uses strong rhetoric, this can be an indicator of an underlying feeling or emotion of being in a problematic situation. The use of strong rhetoric might be used for concealing a problematic situation, which is not easily visible or noticeable.

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<sup>26</sup> Edwards, D. (2006). Discourse, Cognition and Social Practices: the Rich Surface of Language and Social Interaction. *Discourse Studies*, 8(1), 41-49.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47.

<sup>28</sup> Stevenson (2010).

<sup>29</sup> Crick, N. (2005). Capital and Novel Argument: Charles Darwin's Notebooks and the Productivity of Rhetorical Consciousness. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 91(4), 337-364.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p. 340.

Shaul Shenhav<sup>31</sup> comes to similar conclusions. He states that using strong rhetoric can be applied as a device to move from one (unwanted or problematic) issue to another (more favourable) issue. Rhetoric can be used to suit a conversation to one's own agenda. Shenhav refers to this concept as 'closure'.

### *Social interaction*

Discourse analysis is also about (social) interaction. Examples of this (social) interaction can be found in the work of Ruth Amossy.<sup>32</sup> She states that (social) interaction deals with persuasion, but is also looking for an agreement on what is reasonable. So it is therefore not only a one-way device for trying to manoeuvre out of problematic situations, it also aims at doing this in a reasonable way so that all the actors involved in the discourse can agree upon. According to Amossy a possible way of reaching this agreement is with the use of effective presentation. An actor involved in the discourse can use effective presentation when he or she impresses him or herself on the hearers. Subsequently the hearers' consciousness gives the hearers' mind a certain orientation, making it pleasing and accessible for the interpretation of the speaker. Indicators for this process can, according to Amossy be:

- The use of repetition of words or arguments
- The use of accumulation of arguments
- The use of concrete versus abstract arguments

It is notable that also in this dimension of discourse, there are elements of convincing the audience.

### *Lexicology*

In regard to the dimension 'lexicology', Amossy makes another important point on a possible way of reaching an agreement, which is related to the lexicology.<sup>33</sup> She argues that the choice of a term is never innocent. Each phrase is the result of a choice between various possibilities and a

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<sup>31</sup> Shenhav, S. R. (2005). Thin and Thick Narrative Analysis: On the Question of Defining and Analyzing Political Narratives. *Narrative Inquiry*, 15(1), 75-99.

<sup>32</sup> Amossy, R. (2009). The New Rhetoric Inheritance. *Argumentation and Discourse Analysis*. *Argumentation*, 23(3), 313-324.

<sup>33</sup> According to Oxford Dictionary, 'lexicology' is the study of the form, meaning and behaviour of words.

combination of words. As a result, the words that are being used in a discourse can function as indicators of the intentions of the particular actor.

### *Syntax*

Syntax refers to the composition and structure of a sentence. Jacob Høigilt<sup>34</sup> argues about the use of logical constructions in sentences (i.e. 'if... then', and adverbials like 'nevertheless', 'despite', 'unfortunately', 'consequently'). These constructions have two functions that can be of advantage to the speaker or writer. One function is that they create coherence in a text and the other function is that they can signal the author's attitude to the issues that are being discussed. In addition to the use of these logical constructions, the deliberate and calculated use of putting a sentence in the interrogative can also be a way to include the reader in the argumentation and indicate what is going to be the next topic of discussion and what would be the desired responses for the reader or listener. This awareness of the syntax is obviously also a way for the speaker or writer to work towards an agreement (which has already been discussed in this chapter) with the reader or listener. This dimension is therefore another aspect to look at when analysing Chávez' discourse later on in this research.

### *Context*

The last dimension of discourse that is discussed in this chapter is 'context'. Chávez' discourse does not exist in a vacuum or an empty 'stand-alone' space, therefore it is important to take the context of his discourse into consideration. Teun van Dijk has written about the relation between context and discourse.<sup>35</sup> He argues that, when studying discourse, it is important to also study the various environments of this discourse (i.e. the social, political, institutional or cultural environment). Van Dijk calls these environments 'context'. These environments influence the discourse. These influences can be of limiting or controlling nature, but also of a freeing nature. Context can have influences in both 'what' people say, but also in 'how' they say it. The

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<sup>34</sup> Høigilt, J. (2010). Rhetoric and Ideology in Egypt's Wasatiyya Movement. *Arabica*, 57, 251-266.

<sup>35</sup> Dijk, T. A. van (2005). Discourse, Context and Cognition. *Discourse Studies*, 8(1), 159-177.

choice of words and syntax can be a result of the context of the discourse. For example, a speech by Chávez during electoral campaigning directed at the Venezuelan people will contain different syntax and lexicology than a speech by Chávez at the General Assembly of the United Nations.

This chapter provides a framework on how discourse analysis is defined and has been carried out in this thesis. This research will be a broad analysis, which uses material from different sources: research articles, media sources (news agencies, news papers, etcetera) and the programme '*Aló Presidente*'. The programme '*Aló Presidente*' was first aired at May 23, 1999, as a radio broadcast. On August 27, 2000, it became a television programme. The programme enables Chávez to have interaction with his people. At the same time the programme offers an opportunity for the Venezuelan people to get in contact with their president, for instance to ask him questions about various subjects. The focus of the analysis is on episodes of the programme that deal in any relevant way with Chávez' remarks on the Dutch Antilles. It has been made clear that discourse contains multiple dimensions and that it is necessary to emphasise all these dimensions in order to be able to make a thorough analysis of Chávez' foreign policy. The advantage of using the television programme '*Aló Presidente*' as the source of Chávez' discourse is that almost all the episodes can be downloaded from its official website, containing clear video and sound, but also written transcripts. Therefore it is not only possible to know *what* Chávez says, but also *how* he says it, and in what context or setting he says this, how the audience reacts to what he says, etcetera. This enables a good analysis, because not only the text, but also the other dimensions of discourse are available for analysis. In the next chapter there will be more information and discussion about the '*Aló Presidente*' programme.

### **2.3 Post Colonialism**

In this part of the second chapter, the relevance and suitability of Post Colonialism as the theoretical underpinning of this thesis will be explicated. There are multiple arguments to be made why Post Colonialism could be a suitable field of academic inquiry to be used in this thesis. The first and most straightforward one would be that Venezuela was once a (Spanish) colony.

However there are more substantive arguments to be made, for instance, as was already mentioned in the previous chapter and will be widely discussed in the following chapters of this thesis, Chávez is denigrating and being critical about the United States of America in many of his (media) appearances. Chávez' (negative) message in these appearances almost always contains elements of the United States wanting to gain something at the expense of Venezuela and its people. This gain can be in the form of influence, political power, military advantage, but also oil revenue or other economic gains. In Post Colonialism the emphasis is on relations of colonial subordination that are embedded in cultural systems of identity and representation. Although the days of the 'colonies' are over, it means that 'in the mind' the feeling of (political) superiority, inferiority (political exploitation), and the privilege to attain goods, or make profit out of the colonized areas (economic exploitation) is still present in certain parts of Western society. According to Post Colonialism theory the best examples of the 'colonial mindset' still being present in the modern Western society can be found in discourse, written (in text) as well as spoken (in speech). In Chávez' remarks (as will be further analysed in the following chapters), aspects can be found which show that Chávez feels that the mindset of the United States is still in the colonial era. It is a mindset that involves elements of both political as well as economic exploitation, according to Chávez' discourse that has been analysed in the following chapters of this thesis.<sup>36</sup>

Post Colonialism furthermore acknowledges also the existence of a process called 'othering'. Barnett states about 'othering' that it is

'an understanding that has come to define a whole range of academic research in the social sciences and humanities. According to this understanding, identity is socially constructed in relation to other identities, in a simultaneous process of identification with certain groups and differentiation from certain other groups. At the same time this construction is hidden or disavowed, so that it is common for identities to be presented as if they were natural. If identity is

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<sup>36</sup> Barnett (2006). pp. 146-150.

relationally constructed, then it works primarily by excluding some elements that take on the role of the other, an image of non-identity that confirms the identity of the self or the collective community.<sup>37</sup>

Another interesting viewpoint on Post Colonialism can be found in the research of Gregory. He states that

‘Post Colonialism, we might say, has a constitutive interest in colonialism. It is in part an act of remembrance. Post Colonialism revisits the colonial past in order to recover the dead weight of colonialism: to retrieve its shapes, like the chalk outlines at a crime scene, and to recall the living bodies they so imperfectly summon to presence. But it is also an act of opposition. Post Colonialism reveals the continuing impositions and exactions of colonialism in order to subvert them: to examine them, disavow them, and dispel them.’<sup>38</sup>

The main critique that Post Colonialism has received is that it spends too much time on texts and representations, and that more attention needs to be paid to ‘material practices’. An argument from Post Colonialists against these critiques could be that in order for people to gain access to and knowledge about this ‘material practices’ and to pass it on to others, they need text, idioms, vocabularies and rhetoric. Furthermore, Post Colonialists are not interested in mere texts, nor do they see the world as being all about text. Post Colonialists rather think of the specific sort of power that can be deployed by the use of textual apparatuses like books, printing presses, newspapers and so on.<sup>39</sup>

My view on Post Colonialism is for a large part in concurrence with the arguments made by Gregory in a previous paragraph of this section. I see Post Colonialism as an instrument to rethink about the colonial era. This was an era of political en economic extortion of ‘others’ (see Barnett), mostly Asian, African or American countries and cultures. However at the same time

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p. 150.

<sup>38</sup> Gregory, D. (2004). *The colonial present*. Oxford: Blackwell pp. 8-10.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p. 155.

Post Colonialism can be used as an instrument to show how the colonial past of certain countries still influences (and sometimes limits) these countries in modern day. An illustration of this (limiting) influence can be found in the metaphor used by Gregory, in which he sees the colonial legacy as a dead weight that a particular country is still carrying along today. In addition to this view, I am aware of the critique on Post colonialism. Although I agree with Barnett in stating that the best examples of the 'colonial mindset' can be found in discourse, written as well as spoken, the world does not consist only out of discourse. Deeds, acts and actions are equally important aspects that must be discussed in this thesis when using the Post Colonialism theory. Therefore I will try to link Chávez' discourse with his actual 'acts', 'deeds' or 'actions' or threats to commence these acts, deeds or actions made by Chávez. This will be able to address and satisfy the main critique on Post Colonialism of paying to much attention to just discourse.

### **3. Venezuela, its history, its president and its government**

This chapter describes Venezuela, its history, its current president Chávez and his government. This is important because one must have a certain knowledge about Venezuela and its history before it is possible to discuss the rationale behind the narrative and behaviour of its president. The same goes for knowledge about the personality of the president himself. Without this background, it is very hard (if even possible at all) to be able to see (and set) the discourse and behaviour by Chávez in the right frame and context and to draw the right conclusions from it. The goal of this chapter is therefore to provide the context for this thesis.

#### **3.1 A short overview of the history of Venezuela**

The modern history of Venezuela starts with Christopher Columbus. He was the first foreigner to set foot on Venezuelan soil in 1498. A year later the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci landed on Venezuela's shores and gave it its name. Venezuela means 'little Venice'. In 1500 the name Venezuela appeared for the first time on a map. It was then a Spanish colony.<sup>40</sup>

In 1817, Simón Bolívar started a revolution and defeated the Spaniards on August 7, 1819, in the battle of Boyacá, Columbia (at that time named New Granada). After this victory, Bolívar organised a conference creating Great Colombia (consisting of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela). The state of Great Colombia existed just over a decade. In 1830 it collapsed and the state of Venezuela gained independence.<sup>41</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century five successive military rulers ruled Venezuela. They did not bring the country the wealth and prosperity it had hoped for. However, after military dictator Pérez Jiménez was forced out in 1958, Venezuela became a democracy and in the following decades, in combination with the new steady stream of oil exploitation income, the economy and living conditions in

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<sup>40</sup> Based on: Kohnstamm, T. (2007). *Venezuela (pp. 2-30)*. Footscray, Vic.: Lonely Planet publications.

<sup>41</sup> Based on: Sherwell, G. A. (2005). *Simon Bolívar, the Liberator: Patriot, Warrior, Statesman, Father of Five Nations* (pp. 109-125). Fairfield, IA: 1st World Library Literary Society.

Venezuela improved. All seemed to go well until the global economic recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The prices of oil dropped drastically, cutting Venezuela's national revenue into half; combined with the corrupt image of the government Venezuela was in a bad shape.<sup>42</sup>

In February 1992, paratrooper Colonel Hugo Chávez attempted a coup d'état. The coup took the life of more than twenty people but it failed and Chávez was sentenced to imprisonment. In 1994 Chávez got pardoned and he started an aggressive populist campaign running towards presidency. Chávez compared himself to Bolívar and promised help to the weak and poor people of Venezuela. The 1998 elections put Chávez into power and he started a 'social revolution'. This social revolution was anything but peaceful. The political situation was not stable and several coups were staged. Chávez survived all of these coups. In spite of this turmoil, in the 2002 referendum the majority of the people granted Chávez their vote and as a result of this referendum his position as president got consolidated. Chávez started reaching out towards other South-American leftist leaders. His aim was to form a Latin American political bloc to offer an alternative to the US hegemonic position in South and Central America. Due to a change in the electoral system and procedures, which previously only enabled a president to stay in office for a maximum of two terms, Chávez managed to get himself eligible for re-election in the 2006 presidential elections and acquired a third term in the presidential office. In 2006 Chávez did not only win the presidential elections again, he also changed the presidential term limit from four to six years; therefore he will hold the presidency at least until 2012. He promised a more aggressive turn towards socialism and made no secret about his plans to amend the electoral system again. This resulted in a national referendum in 2009, which approved the elimination of term limits (which were previously already elongated from four to six years) for all elected officials, including the president. This enables Chávez to keep his position as President for many years to come.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Based on: Ewell, J. (1984). *Venezuela, a Century of Change* (pp. 110-112). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

<sup>43</sup> Kohnstamm (2007), pp. 25-30

### 3.2 Democracy in Venezuela

In the turbulent political history of Venezuela, there was little room for democracy. The Constitution of 1961 created a political system called *Puntofijista* (after the foundational pacts of Punto Fijo). This would become the first real democracy for Venezuela. This system, which lasted until 1999, has been intensively studied and is seen as very successful. Some scholars regard it as a triumph of the democratic left, struggling to make civilian rule and mass politics work.<sup>44</sup> The goal of *Puntofijista* was twofold:

- Defence of the constitution and the right to govern according to election results.
- A government of national unity. This is considered fair to all the signatories and other elements of society in the formation of the executive cabinet of the winning party.<sup>45</sup>

It is commonly acknowledged by scholars that the oil revenues had an immense impact on the political system of Venezuela. There were positive effects: the exploitation of oil clearly generated large sources of income for Venezuela. However, negative effects prevailed, such as growing corruption and inflation and an overspending of money on failing institutions. Not only oil revenues, also the political parties had both positive as negative effects on the political system of Venezuela. At first political parties were regarded as a positive aspect and a necessity towards a true democracy, but as time passed by, the negative effects began to prevail. The path towards the decline of political parties started when all forms of political participation were organised around and through the parties. The parties took over trade unions and professional organisations and used these organisations for the parties' own interests. Although the barriers for personal participation in politics were low (such as the vote, or membership of a political party), which was regarded as a positive development, this growing influence of political parties led to a feeling of less representation and discontent with the political system among the majority of the Venezuelan population. The negative influences and

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<sup>44</sup> Alexander, R. (1964). *The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution* (pp 166-167). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

<sup>45</sup> Full text of the pact found at: Camero, Y. Pacto De Punto Fijo. *Analítica.com*. Retrieved: March 21, 2011.

<[http://www.analitica.com/bitbliblioteca/venezuela/punto\\_fijo.asp](http://www.analitica.com/bitbliblioteca/venezuela/punto_fijo.asp)>. Translated into Dutch and English by Google translate.

effects of both oil revenues and the political parties resulted in discontent about the political system among the people of Venezuela. This discontent reached a high when the global recession started in the 1980s. This resulted in a politically unstable period of almost two decades in which the survival of the Puntofijista system was heavily challenged. The coming into power of Hugo Chávez in 1998 meant the true end of the Puntofijista political system.<sup>46</sup>

### **3.3 Developments and changes in the Chávez era**

In the 1998 elections Chávez gained 56,2% of the votes and he became president of Venezuela. Following Chávez' triumph, the role of the military became more visible and active than ever before. The old political elites, along with their parties were substituted for new ones and a new constitution was drafted. At the same time a significant change in the economic and social policy took place. According to the newly drafted Constitution, the government had to create a universal social security system. This process of change in Venezuela was not an easy one. It was full of tensions, uncertainties and obstacles. The largest problem was the polarization within society. The former (pre-Chávez) social and economic situation had created huge social divisions between a relatively small wealthy part and a large poor part of society. These divisions were also represented in (pre-Chávez) politics. There were two blocs and both did not show much capacity for dialogue or consensus. One bloc was the government's party and its political allies; the other bloc was formed by the radicalised opposition. Chávez successfully capitalized on combating the social polarization during the electoral campaign leading up to the 1998 elections. He promised a fairer division of wealth through his leftist socialist policy.<sup>47</sup>

During the first eight years of his presidency Chávez was hindered in his policy by the former elites who refused to accept Chávez as the legitimately elected president and launched the country into political turmoil and radicalization. This turmoil eventually came to a halt when the Venezuelan

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<sup>46</sup> This section is based on: Levine, D. H. (2002). The Decline and Fall of Democracy in Venezuela: Ten Theses. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 21(2), 248-254.

<sup>47</sup> Based on: Maya, M. L. (2004). Hugo Chávez Frías: His movement and his presidency. In: S. Ellner, & D. Hellinger, *Venezuelan Politics in the Chávez Era: Class, Polarization, and Conflict* (pp. 73-92). Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

people re-elected Chávez. After his re-election in 2002 Chávez promised to implement '21<sup>st</sup> century socialism'. It has never been entirely clear what this exactly means, but it involves support for an anti-capitalist and participatory democratic state in the midst of a still functioning capitalist economy.<sup>48</sup> According to Chávez it is a new kind of socialism that is based on the values of the French revolution, utopian socialism and Christianity. It would involve

'the transformation of the economic model, increasing cooperativism, collective property, and the submission of private property to the social interest and to the general interest. [...] Furthermore such a socialism is community-based, stressing that the centre-piece of the project, the new communal system of production and consumption, must be created from the popular bases, with the participation of the communities, through the community organizations, via the cooperatives, self-management and other different ways to create this system'<sup>49</sup>.

According to Chávez, 'this socialism is not just economic, but also political, saying: Socialism of the political, this has a combination of elements, but one is central: participatory and protagonist democracy. This is the central axis of socialism in the political [realm], democracy from below, from inside, full democracy'.<sup>50</sup>

After his re-election in 2002 Chávez started to develop and invest in his relations with other Caribbean countries in the vicinity of Venezuela, for example the CARICOM<sup>51</sup> members. The reason that Chávez did so was to maximize his own interests in the region and to function as a counterweight against the influence of the United States in the region. An example of an initiative by Chávez to increase his relations with other Caribbean countries

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<sup>48</sup> Wilpert, G. (2007). Chávez' Venezuela and 21st century socialism. in: P. Zarembka, *Transitions in Latin America and in Poland and Syria* (pp. 3-4). Amsterdam: Elsevier.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

<sup>51</sup> CARICOM (Caribbean Community) is an organisation that provides leadership and service towards the member countries. It strives for the attainment of a viable, internationally competitive and sustainable community, with improved quality of life for all. < <http://www.caricom.org/index.jsp>> Date accessed: August 17, 2011.

was the so-called Petro Carib agreement. This agreement functions as follows: Venezuela provides crude oil and refined oil products to Caribbean countries in its vicinity. These Caribbean countries have to pay 60% of the total sum of the purchased products right away, but the remaining 40% can be paid over a period of 23 to 25 years at a 1% interest rate. At first, the Caribbean countries liked this agreement and it was regarded as a positive development in the bilateral relations with Venezuela. This agreement made Venezuela an influential actor in the Caribbean region. As a result of Venezuela's heightened influence in the region, Chávez tried to export not only oil but also his '21<sup>st</sup> century socialism' to other Caribbean countries. However, the Caribbean countries were not enthusiastic in following and adopting Chávez' leftist politics. Furthermore, the other Caribbean countries did not want to comply with Chávez' desire to function as a counterweight against the influence of the United States in the region. This behaviour has created tensions in the bilateral relations between Venezuela and the other countries in the region.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to the heightened bilateral international tensions, Chávez also faces domestic problems. During the last couple of years there has been a declining popular support for Chávez' ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). The PSUV had its peak in the December 2006 elections, but since then the popularity of the party has been in decline. At the same time the opposition parties became better organised and their popularity among the Venezuelan electorate grew. The opposition became so popular that they managed to win 52% (a de facto majority) of the votes in the September 2010 elections for the National Assembly. However, due to gerrymandering, manipulated appointments and a reduction in the number of available seats in the National Assembly determined by proportional representation, the PSUV was able to retain control over Venezuela's legislature with 98 out of 165 seats. This strategy has managed to keep Chávez in power.

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<sup>52</sup> Sanders, Ronald (2007), "Venezuela in the Caribbean: Expanding Its Sphere of Influence", *The Round Table*, 96.391: 465-476.

The main causes of the decreased popular support for the government are twofold. One explanation comes forth out of the increased level of drug related violence and crime. Chávez has expelled the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), for allegedly spying on Venezuela. Venezuela and Bolivia have been the only Latin American countries to do so and as a result Venezuela has become a safe haven for drugs trade in the region. This has led to an increase of violence and organised crime. The other sign of popular discontent comes forth out of street crime. Venezuela is suffering from a wave of street crime; the country ranks high in the world listings of murders and kidnappings.<sup>53</sup> The main cause for this is the hands-off approach of the government. This hands-off approach means that there is a very low risk for criminals to get caught and prosecuted.<sup>54</sup>

The expelling of the DEA is a deliberate choice in Chávez' foreign policy and has created tensions in the bilateral relations with the United States. It will be made clear in the next chapters, that this is not the only example of Chávez troubling the relationship with the United States, verbally as well as regarding policy. One could argue that by expelling the DEA, Chávez was trying to keep a part of his domestic problems (drug related violence and trade) out of sight for the United States and the rest of the world. However it is also arguable that by expelling the DEA Chávez may be ending up with the opposite outcome of his policy, because by trying to downscale the efforts against drug related violence, this could lead to an increase in violence, resulting in an increase of international (media) attention for this violence, which is the reverse result that Chávez wanted to achieve.

During Chávez' rule Venezuela has received much more attention in the international media than it has ever done before.<sup>55</sup> Not only Chávez' behaviour and discourse about foreign policy issues are being reported and

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<sup>53</sup> Corrales, J. (2011). A Setback for Chávez. *Journal of Democracy*, 22(1), 132.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 132-133.

<sup>55</sup> See Time archive: Retrieved: May 3, 2011.

<<http://search.time.com/results.html?N=0&Nty=1&Ntt=chavez&x=19&y=13&p=0&cmd=tags&srchCat=Full+Archive>> and New York Times archive: Retrieved: may 3, 2011.

<[http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/c/hugo\\_chavez/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=hugo%20chavez&st=cse](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/c/hugo_chavez/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=hugo%20chavez&st=cse)>.

analysed in the international media, also his domestic affairs are being discussed. A subject that is recurring quite often is the referendum that Chávez has created for his indefinite re-election. During one appearance (covered in an article in *Time* magazine) Chávez even sings: 'Uh-ah, Chávez no se va [Chávez isn't leaving]'.<sup>56</sup> This article is one of many that deal with the noteworthy discourse and behaviour of Chávez, which is often received with international depreciation. However, it is remarkable that according to the article Chávez' audience very much likes what they see and hear.

Notwithstanding the growing electoral support for the opposition to the detriment of Chávez' party, one could argue that it is remarkable that almost half of the Venezuelan population is still supporting Chávez. Despite increasing tensions with fellow Latin-American countries and the United States (by expelling the DEA), Chávez still manages to continue attracting around half of the votes. One would expect that the popular support for Chávez would decrease as a result of his recent foreign policy discourse and behaviour, which did not do any good to Venezuela, but the popular support remains high.<sup>57</sup> Considering his appearances in the international media, there is still large support for his discourse and behaviour from the Venezuelan people. The people apparently feel that Chávez is representing their thoughts and opinions well.

### **3.4 Aló Presidente**

The television show '*Aló Presidente*' plays an important role in this thesis, because it is as an interesting source for retrieving discourse about Chávez' foreign policy. Therefore it is useful to gain more insight into this programme.

The programme '*Aló Presidente*' was first aired at May 23, 1999, as a radio broadcast. On August 27, 2000, it became a television programme. The goals of this show (which are also the reason for choosing this show as a source of analysis in this research) are multiple. On the one hand the goal is to enable Chávez to interact with his people and to inform them about programs, plans

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<sup>56</sup> For example look at this Time article: Padgett, T. (2008). Hugo Chávez for President ... Now and Forever? *TIME.com*. December 2, 2008. Retrieved: May 3, 2011. <<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1863197,00.html>>.

<sup>57</sup> Corrales (2011), p. 124.

and strategies of the government. The other goal is to give the ordinary Venezuelan citizen a chance to talk to their president and tell him about their concerns. For Chávez it is also a good opportunity to explain his 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism to his people. The programme remains very popular, up till today. Both supporters of Chávez, as well as his political adversaries watch it. Chávez is being portrayed as a well-doer. He has arranged expensive medical operations, legal assistance or housing for the people who were in need of it and who have contacted their president in his show. So with the help of this television programme, Chávez tries to show that he is not a distant leader governing from far away, but that he is personally concerned about the needs and hopes of the Venezuelan citizens.<sup>58</sup>

The period that is being studied in this thesis is starting just before Chávez made his first remark about claiming the territory of the Dutch Antilles in the Summer of 2007. This will make it possible to also include possible discourse or behaviour by Chávez that may have led up to the actual claims to be included in the analysis. The period ends with the June 5, 2011 airing. This airing is the last and most recent episode that is included in the analysis. The rationale for this choice is a very practical one. That episode is the most recent one that (at the moment of writing) can be downloaded and watched on the website of '*Aló Presidente*' and is therefore the most recent show that is publicly accessible.

The selected period is a very interesting period in light of the matter that is being analysed in this thesis. That is because after the 2006 elections the popularity of Chávez' United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) went into a firm decline. The reasons for this decline have been discussed in previous paragraphs of this chapter. In light of this decline Chávez promised the Venezuelan people a more aggressive turn towards socialism. Looking back on the 2002 elections, Chávez was sitting firmly in the saddle and could count on a firm popular support. This has changed after the 2006 elections and Chávez' political opposition began to gain support amongst the Venezuelan

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<sup>58</sup> Aló, Presidente: ¡Cómo Un Presidente Cautivó Una Audiencia, Oyendo Pasar Los Años! *Alo Presidente*. March 18, 2010. Retrieved: May 23, 2011. <<http://www.alopresidente.gob.ve/historia/28/1633>>.

people. Chávez now has to strive and put effort in reaching out to his people, in order to gain more popular support. His television show is the right forum for this endeavour, because this programme enables him to have much interactive contact with his people. The expectations are that the period following the 2006 election is an interesting period for analysing the '*Aló Presidente*' programme.

As was already mentioned earlier, in addition to the television programme '*Aló Presidente*' also the views and opinions of the Venezuelan people will be taken into account in this thesis. Consequently the time period that has been demarcated in the former paragraphs does not only apply to the episodes of Chávez' television programme, but it also sets the time period for examining the views and opinions of the Venezuelan people. The reason for this is that Chávez' television show is, to a certain extent, a 'one-way street' of Chávez talking to his viewers. This is obviously very helpful when analysing Chávez' discourse. However, the opinions and views of the Venezuelan people should be explored in order to be able to set Chávez' discourse in the right context. This could not be done by using the television show as the only source, because it is not clear whether the audience in the television studio, or people who telephone the show have been instructed beforehand, or have been specially selected as being (for instance) pro-Chávez. Therefore the sources that have been used in this chapter to attain a viable representation of the public opinion consisted out of opinion polls, sources derived from different publications about the Venezuelan public opinion on various subjects and relevant articles from international news agencies.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

After Chávez' fast increase in popularity, the opposition nowadays seriously challenges his position as president. The current situation of Venezuela does give the opposition some benefits, for instance, the high crime rates and the increased drug related violence, but also the deteriorating bilateral relations with several Latin-American countries and the United States. Then there are the gerrymandering and other shady procedures that Chávez is using to make sure that the results of the elections always turn out to be in his favour. During the most recent elections he managed to evade an electoral loss by making

shady changes to the electoral process, but nonetheless the question rises: for how much longer can Chávez cope with the risen popularity of the opposition and cope with the growing domestic and international problems and tensions from which Venezuela suffers at the moment? A very remarkable aspect, however, is the support that Chávez is continuing to receive from around half of the electorate. Apparently a large part of the Venezuelan population still regards that voting for Chávez is a better option than voting for the opposition, so maybe Chávez is able to cope with these challenges quite well and will hold on to his position as president for many more years to come.

Will Chávez be the president of Venezuela for many more years to come? In addition to the challenge that his political adversaries pose to him, also his personal health may cause difficulties for prolonging his presidency. In the summer of 2011 news came out that Chávez suffers from cancer and was flown to Cuba for a treatment. The illness has raised doubts about whether Chávez will be able to participate in the re-elections that are planned for 2012. Especially the opposition parties are willing to use this 'moment of weakness' of Chávez to push their ideas and debate forward and into the spotlights by showing the Venezuelan population that Chávez also has his faults and weaknesses. However according to Chávez he will be ready for the elections and is aiming for victory.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Venezuela's Hugo Chavez to Resume Cuba Cancer Treatment. *BBC News*. August 7, 2011. Retrieved: August 17, 2011. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-14429281>>.

#### **4. Summer of 2007**

In this chapter, Chávez' first claim, which he made in the Summer of 2007 will be analysed. This will be done by first examining what Chávez exactly said, based on both news reporting about this statement as well as by looking for episodes of his television show in which Chávez elaborates on this subject. After this has been done, it is clear what Chávez actually and exactly said.

According to the Dutch news website '*www.nu.nl*' Chávez announced, on August 15, 2007, in a speech for the Venezuelan parliament that he wants to start an inquiry about the northern border of Venezuela. According to Chávez, everything that is situated within 200 nautical miles North of Venezuela is part of the Venezuelan territory.<sup>60</sup>

In his television programme '*Aló Presidente*', Chávez is only sideways mentioning his claim on the Dutch Antilles in only one episode. That was in episode 291 (see Annex 1), which was aired at August 26, 2007.<sup>61</sup> Chávez is having a dialogue with a Venezuelan journalist who has worked for a British newspaper. The subject that they are elaborating on is Western countries and Europe in particular and the colonial past of (certain of) these nations. Chávez makes it very clear that he has a strong aversion against the colonial era and the colonising activities that certain Western countries once undertook; it is something that should be contested. Chávez continues by mentioning that that the Dutch Antilles and Aruba are still part of a Kingdom. Chávez states that this Kingdom limits the freedom and the power for the people to decide about their matters of national interest. Chávez further argues that the situation would be better for the inhabitants of the Dutch Antilles if they were

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<sup>60</sup> Chávez Maakt Aanspraak Op Nederlandse Antillen En Aruba. Nu.nl, August 17, 2007. Retrieved: July 12, 2011. <<http://www.nu.nl/algemeen/1199016/chavez-maakt-aanspraak-op-nederlandse-antillen-en-aruba.html>>. An article by Maartje Willems is acknowledging this in the Dutch magazine '*Elsevier*': Chávez: Agressief Nederland spant samen met Amerika. Elsevier, December 18, 2009. Retrieved: September 1, 2011. <<http://www.elsevier.nl/web/Nieuws/Buitenland/253649/Chavez-Agressief-Nederland-spant-samen-met-Amerika.htm>>

<sup>61</sup> Episode: 291. <<http://200.109.120.52/alopresidente/alopresidente291.wmv>> Retrieved: September 1, 2011.

part of Venezuela. According to Chávez in Venezuela the people have more power, because many issues are being decided on by a popular referendum.

#### **4.1 Discourse Analysis**

In accordance with Chapter 2, all the dimensions of discourse<sup>62</sup> will be separately discussed in separate sections.

##### **4.1.1. Text**

The first dimension that will be dealt with in this chapter is text. This dimension will be discussed based on the heuristics by Johnstone<sup>63</sup>, which have been elaborated upon in Chapter 2. Starting with the first question posed by Johnstone, namely 'What is the discourse about?' The discourse is about Chávez wanting to start an inquiry about the northern border of Venezuela. Chávez argues that the territory of Venezuela stretches out 200 nautical miles over seas to the North. By stating this, he implies that the islands of the Dutch Antilles and Aruba (which are about 20 miles North of Venezuela) will then become part of the Venezuelan territory.

Continuing by answering the fourth, ninth and tenth question posed by Johnstone, namely 'Who says or writes the discourse?' (Chávez himself), 'What is its medium?' (International) Media and his television show and 'What is the language used?' (Spanish), guides us to the fifth question posed by Johnstone, namely 'Who is the intended audience?' The answer to this question is not straightforward. It can be argued that the intended audience is the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which is (as a result of the colonial past) still having a significant influence on the islands. The message that Chávez might be trying to send to the Netherlands is that by relocating Venezuela's border, Chávez is living up to his personal hero (the freedom fighter Simón Bolívar) by trying to contest and get rid of the colonial heritage (as was already mentioned in the introduction). This could also explain and link these remarks, with the statements Chávez has made in his television programme. In this programme he stated that the Antilles are still part of a kingdom. Therefore the freedom of the people is limited, compared to the Venezuelan people, Chávez argues. By stating this Chávez might imply that the people of the

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<sup>62</sup> For more on the dimensions of discourse, see Chapter 2.

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

Dutch Antilles and Aruba will be better off when the islands will be under Venezuelan control (when the Venezuelan border moves 200 nautical miles North). This would also be able to answer the eleventh question posed by Johnstone, namely 'What about the structure of the text, how does it fit in a larger structure of text and interaction? Because Chávez is stating in his television programme that the people of the Antilles are being limited in their freedom as a result of being part of a Kingdom and that they would be better off if they were part of Venezuela, and his earlier statement about expanding his territory 200 nautical miles North, fits in the larger structure of Chávez contesting the colonial heritage of the Western countries.

#### **4.1.2 Gestures**

The next dimension that will be discussed is gestures. Norman Fairclough has done some notable work in which he focuses strongly on discourse analysis as something that is much more than just text or language.<sup>64</sup> Fairclough argues that discourse analysis is based upon a view of semiosis. Semiosis includes all forms of meaning making. Naturally this includes the use of text, but equally important it also includes the use of body language and gestures (more about the work of Fairclough in Chapter 2).<sup>65</sup>

The overall picture of Chávez' gestures in his television show is that of a calm and deliberate man. In many episodes of his show, he is sitting behind a desk, and he discusses the issues (both domestic and international) that he and his government are facing, in a calm way and without using many gestures. He has some resemblances with a newsreader. The only gestures Chávez makes are some hand movements. An example of this can be seen in episode 331 (aired at May 28, 2009).<sup>66</sup> In other episodes of his programme, when he is standing outside or walking around on various sites or places in his country while presenting his show, he generally makes more gestures. These gestures are often meant to make contact with the audience but also with people who happen to pass by the location where the episodes are being taped. For example, he waves at them as a way of saying hello and to

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<sup>64</sup> Fairclough, N. (2001). pp. 121-138.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* p. 122

<sup>66</sup> Episode 331. <http://200.109.120.52/alopresidente/alopresidente331II.wmv>  
Retrieved: May 25, 2011.

persuade people to come and stand closer and take a look at what is being discussed in his show. With these gestures, he seems like a very approachable president. Chávez regularly interrupts his talking to take time to wave and interact with people passing by. However these gestures are all very calm. An example of this can be found in episode 368 (aired at December 19, 2010).<sup>67</sup> The episode that is being discussed in this chapter (episode 291) has a combination of all aspects that have been described in this section. The episode starts with Chávez standing on a pontoon in the water, deliberating about the beauty of the Caribbean water and the Caribbean itself. It seems like he is a bit melancholic. As the programme progresses and Chávez reaches the more serious parts of this episodes he sits down behind a desk. He is interviewing a Venezuelan journalist, when he brings the Antilles issue up and it is all being discussed in a relative calm manner, without involving many gestures.

#### **4.1.3 Syntax**

The next dimension that will be discussed is Syntax, the composition and structure of a sentence. Jacob Høigilt<sup>68</sup> argues that logical constructions create coherence in a text and that they can signal the author's attitude to the issues that are being discussed. In addition to the use of these logical constructions, the deliberate and calculated use of putting a sentence in the interrogative can also be a way to include the reader in the argumentation and indicate what is going to be the next topic of discussion and what would be the desired responses from the reader or listener.

Chávez is using the syntax in a clever way, which allows him to indicate his attitude about the Dutch Antilles via his discourse, without actually having to say it literally, and risking that he is being too provocative. In his discourse he never directly said: 'I want the Dutch Antilles to be part of Venezuelan territory'. Instead he uses logical constructions like: expanding the borders of the Venezuelan territory further North (which implies: incorporating the Dutch Antilles into Venezuelan territory). Another example is Chávez stating that the

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<sup>67</sup> Episode 368: <http://200.109.120.52/alopresidente/alopresidente368.wmv> Retrieved: May 25, 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Høigilt, J. (2010). pp. 251-266.

Antilles are part of a Kingdom, which has limiting effects for the people and that they would be better off when being part of Venezuela. These constructions create coherence in the message that he is trying to get across, namely: The Dutch Antilles belong to Venezuela, without actually having to say this literally.

#### **4.1.4 Lexicology**

The next dimension that will be discussed is Lexicology. Amossy argues that the choice of a term is never innocent.<sup>69</sup> Each phrase is the result of a choice between various possibilities and a combination of words. As a result the words that are being used in a discourse can function as indicators of the intentions of the particular actor.<sup>70</sup> This is also in coherence with what has been stated in the previous section about syntax. Chávez is getting his message across without actually stating it literally. He makes deliberate combinations of words in which he leaves out the words or terms that could be seen by other countries as being (too) provocative and could have consequences for Chávez, for example words like take over or incorporate the Antilles into the territory of Venezuela, he does not use.

#### **4.1.5 Rhetoric**

The next dimension that will be discussed is Rhetoric. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*<sup>71</sup> 'rhetoric' means: 'the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques.' Studying the rhetoric that is used during the discourse can give much information about the intentions of the speaker or writer. Crick elaborates that rhetoric comes forth out of a 'cultivated habit of responding to problematic situations [...] to persuade an external audience to alter its beliefs and behaviour'<sup>72</sup>. Regarding the issue that is being discussed in this chapter Chávez is very careful in his rhetoric. For instance, he is not stating that he is *going to* move the border 200 nautical miles north. He states that he is planning to start an inquiry about moving the border. By doing this,

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<sup>69</sup> According to Oxford Dictionary, 'lexicology' is the study of the form, meaning and behaviour of words.

<sup>70</sup> Amossy, R. (2009). pp. 313-324.

<sup>71</sup> Stevenson (2010).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* p. 340.

he is able to send his message across, without actually having to say it. Since it is officially only an 'inquiry', Chávez leaves open a possibility to later always being able to back out of his claims by stating that he was only exploring the possibility.

#### **4.1.6 Social interaction**

The next dimension that will be discussed is (Social) interaction. Ruth Amossy<sup>73</sup> states that (social) interaction deals with persuasion, but is also looking for an agreement on what is reasonable by making use of effective presentation. An actor involved in the discourse can use effective presentation when he or she impresses him or herself on the hearers. Subsequently the hearer's consciousness gives the hearer's mind a certain orientation, making it pleasing and accessible for the interpretation of the speaker. Regarding the issue that is being discussed in this chapter, there are no signs that show Chávez using any of the indicators for impressing himself on the audience. Actually the contrary seems to be true, regarding what has been argued in the previous sections, it shows that Chávez is very diplomatic and careful with his words.

#### **4.1.7. Context**

The next dimension that will be discussed is context. As mentioned before, Chávez' discourse does not exist in a vacuum or an empty 'stand alone' space, therefore it is important to take the context of his discourse into consideration. Teun van Dijk<sup>74</sup> argues that, when studying discourse it is important to also study the various environments of this discourse. Van Dijk calls these environments 'context'. These environments influence the discourse. Regarding the context of the episode that is being discussed in this chapter, Chávez is having a dialogue with a Venezuelan journalist who has been working in Great Britain. They are discussing the colonial history of certain Western countries and especially Europe's past as a colonizer. They are also denigrating countries that have had colonies in the past like Great Britain, Spain and The Netherlands. It is in this context that Chávez starts discussing the fact that Aruba and the Dutch Antilles are still part of their

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<sup>73</sup> Amossy, R. (2009). pp. 313-324.

<sup>74</sup> Dijk, T. A. van (2005). pp. 159-177.

former coloniser and that this has limiting effects on the people. This context is able to support Chávez' argument about moving his border 200 nautical miles north, which he made earlier, because the Dutch Antilles and Aruba should than be better off if being part of Venezuela.

#### **4.2 Post Colonialism theory**

In this section the elements of the Post colonialism field of academic inquiry will be discussed. As is already clear from the discourse analysis, which has been conducted in the previous section, that Chávez is capitalising on the so-called 'colonial mindset' (see Chapter 2). He is focussing on the political extortion part of it, considering the superior /inferior relationship between colonizer and colony. In episode 291 of his television programme, just before addressing the Antilles issue, Chávez is denigrating the former colonising nations of Europe. He even states that he would rather die than be enslaved in a colony (see Annex 1). Thereafter Chávez elaborates that their former colonizer (The Netherlands), is still influencing the Dutch Antilles and Aruba in a negative and limiting way. According to Chávez the islands should be better off when incorporated into the territory of Venezuela. This is very paradoxical, because first Chávez is talking about the horrors of being colonised. He then continues by discussing that the Antilles should be incorporated in the Venezuelan territory. Which is in fact again a colonising move. Because Chávez does not know or seem to take into account whether the people of the Antilles even want to be incorporated in the Venezuelan territory.

Hitherto the analysis has only focussed on the textual aspects of this issue (which is also the main critique on Post colonialism theory). Therefore this section is focussing on the deeds (or threatening with deeds) by Chávez. There are interesting comments about this matter to be found in a leaked diplomatic cable between Washington and The Hague (see Annex 2).<sup>75</sup> In this cable the US ambassador in the Netherlands, Clifford Sobel, discusses a couple of possible actions that Chávez could make to put pressure on The Netherlands. Sobel states:

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<sup>75</sup> NOS Wikileaks dossier < <http://nos.nl/artikel/213026-nederland-vreesde-invasie-antillen.html>> Retrieved: September 1, 2011.

'Most disturbing to the Dutch were the many instances of Chavez apparently offering assistance to political figures (including former minister Cova) to encourage them to challenge Prime Minister Ys' government as well as existing ties between The Netherlands and the islands. The Dutch representatives noted that Chavez had a wide range of tools for exerting influence on the islands, including the flow of oil, pro-Venezuelan (Antillean) politicians (such as Cova), and even criminal groups (such as that gathered around former strongman Godett); used together, these elements could have a powerful destabilizing effect on the islands and create serious problems for the Dutch government.'

The possible deeds or actions that Chávez could undertake can certainly support and add more weight and significance to his provocative statements aimed towards The Netherlands. The information in this diplomatic cable shows that Chávez is apparently able to exercise political pressure on the government of The Netherlands by making use of his ties and connections with both a former Antillean politician (Cove) as well as through a (criminal) strongman named Godett. If Chávez would be able to convince both Cove and Godett of his statements and opinions and knows how to motivate Cove and Godett to start carrying out and spreading these statements amongst the people of the Dutch Antilles, a significant challenge would then emerge for the Dutch Government to maintain their legitimacy and authority on the Islands. This political and societal influence is a very powerful instrument for Chávez to be able to show that his provocative statements are not just meaningless words, but can also be supported by possible actions.

In regard to what has been discussed in the previous paragraph about the possible deeds or actions that Chávez could undertake; none of these have ever been in effect (as far as I was able to verify). On the contrary, the action that Chávez did undertake, can also be read in the same cable, namely that Venezuelan military aircraft have flown over the Dutch Antilles and Aruba and have entered their airspace, without having requested, let alone being granted permission by the Dutch authorities. This can be regarded as a provocative deed, because it is neither desirable nor usual to fly military aircraft into the

airspace of other sovereign countries. This in fact can be regarded as an act of aggression towards another sovereign country.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

In this section the remarks that Chávez has made in the Summer of 2007 have been analysed, by using discourse analysis against the background of Post Colonialism theory. The emphasis was not only on the textual aspects, but also on the actions, or intended actions that Chávez could undertake to support his remarks. It appeared that Chávez had chosen his words carefully, by making his desire to expand the Venezuelan territory by incorporating the Dutch Antilles and Aruba very clear, without actually having to say this literally. The best proof that the message that Chávez was trying to send, did arrive and was well understood can be found in the diplomatic cable between Washington and The Hague. It shows that the Dutch government was indeed taking Chávez' message serious and that Chávez was indeed in possession of considerable means to support his discourse with actions.

I would very much have liked to add the views and opinions of the Venezuelan people - regarding the issue whether the Dutch Antilles should be part of Venezuela or not - to the analysis in this chapter, however I was not able to retrieve any information about the Venezuelan public opinion regarding this subject.

Considering the main research question, namely what could be Chávez' rationale for these remarks? The analysis showed that Chávez has a genuine disaffection and hostility towards the Western colonisers of the past. In this chapter Chávez' rationale for making these remarks is twofold. One explanation is his agitation against colonising countries in general and in this case against the Netherlands (which is still influencing its former colonies Aruba and the Antilles) in specific. These remarks and behaviour can then be explained as a part of Chávez' Bolívarian inspired sentiment towards the extinction of the colonial legacy in an around Venezuela. Another explanation might be a serious desire by Chávez to add the Dutch Antilles and Aruba to Venezuelan in order to extend his territory, for reasons that are not directly clear or made public by Chávez.

In the following chapter other remarks concerning the Antilles that Chávez has made 2 years later will be analysed. In these remarks Chávez also involves the United States into the matter. In these remarks may lay the answer to the question why Chávez may have the serious desire to add the Dutch Antilles and Aruba to his territory and what he has to gain from these islands?

## 5. Winter of 2009

In this chapter, Chávez' second claim, which he made in the Winter of 2009 will be analysed. This will be done, just like in the previous chapter, by first examining what Chávez exactly said, by looking at multiple news articles about this statement and by looking for episodes of his television show in which Chávez elaborates on this subject.

In an article written by journalist Miriam Sluis for Radio Netherlands Worldwide she states that on the Copenhagen Summit for Climate change (COP 15) on December 17, 2009, Chávez said: 'The Netherlands and the United States of America are arming Curacao, Bonaire and Aruba to the teeth, in preparation for aggression against Venezuela.'<sup>76</sup> The article of Frank J. Daniel for news agency 'Reuters' also points to this statement by Chávez.<sup>77</sup>

In two episodes of his television programme Chávez mentions this issue. The first time he brings it up is in episode 345 (see Annex 3), aired eleven days before the COP 15 conference in Copenhagen at December 6, 2009. In this episode Chávez is elaborating about the global decrease of fresh drinking water reserves and the global increase in the use of electricity and oil. He argues that these issues are challenges that are not only facing the less developed countries, but also developed countries like the United States. Chávez then continues by stating

'why do you think the Yankees are putting seven military bases in Colombia and are strengthening the foundations of Aruba and

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<sup>76</sup> M. Sluis. (2009). Curaçao Maakt Zich Niet Druk Om Chávez. *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*. December 19, 2009. Retrieved on: July 12, 2011. <<http://www.rnw.nl/caribiana/article/cura%C3%A7ao-maakt-zich-niet-druk-over-ch%C3%A1vez>>.

<sup>77</sup> F.J. Daniel. (2009). Venezuela's Chávez accused Dutch of aggression. *Reuters*. December 17, 2009. Retrieved: September 3, 2011. <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/12/18/us-venezuela-chavez-dutch-idUSTRE5BH00020091218>>

Curacao, and have created the Fourth Fleet? Because South America has the largest freshwater and petroleum reserves in the world.’<sup>78</sup>

The second time Chávez mentions the issue that is being discussed in this chapter, is in episode 346 (see Annex 4), which was aired at December 20, 2009. In this episode Chávez warns his people that the attacks on Venezuela are increasing and that it is evident that the United States of America are preparing attacks from Aruba and Curacao, where they have military units, planes, drones and bases.<sup>79</sup>

## 5.1 Discourse analysis

### 5.1.1. Text

The first dimension that will be dealt with in this chapter is text. This dimension will be discussed based on the heuristics by Johnstone<sup>80</sup>, which have been elaborated upon in Chapter 2. Starting with the first question posed by Johnstone, namely ‘What is the discourse about?’ The discourse is about Chávez agitating against the United States military presence on the Dutch Antilles. This US military presence consists out of the so called: ‘Forward Operating Locations’ or FOL’s. According to the *Reuters* article by Frank J. Daniel, this FOL consists of ‘about 250 US Air Force (USAF) crew and ground staff involved in counter narcotics and surveillance operations over the Caribbean.’<sup>81</sup> The United States are placing these FOL’s in various countries in the Caribbean, South and Central America in order to contribute in the US counter narcotics and surveillance operations. Continuing by answering the fourth, ninth and tenth question posed by Johnstone, namely ‘Who says or writes the discourse?’ (Chávez himself), ‘What is it’s medium?’ (International) Media and his television show and ‘What is the language used?’ (Spanish), guides us to the fifth question posed by Johnstone, namely ‘Who is the intended audience?’ Looking at the fact that Chávez is elaborating about the issues of the US military presence on the Dutch Antilles on both an

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<sup>78</sup> Episode 345. < <http://200.109.120.52/alopresidente/alopresidente345.wmv>>  
Retrieved: September 3, 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Episode 346. < <http://200.109.120.52/alopresidente/alopresidente346.wmv>>  
Retrieved: September 3, 2011.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> F.J. Daniel. (2009)

international theatre (COP 15 in Copenhagen) and in his television programme. The intended audience might be twofold. On one hand his remarks are meant for the United States and Dutch government, but on the other hand in his television show (in episode 346), he also warns the Venezuelan people for the US military preparations. Therefore the Venezuelan people are also part of the intended audience. Continuing with the eleventh question posed by Johnstone, namely 'What about the structure of the text, how does it fit in a larger structure of text and interaction? These remarks by Chávez fit in the larger structure of Chávez recurrently denigrating the United States (and linking this to various subjects, not only the Dutch Antilles). More about this denigrating of the United States will be discussed in this chapter.

### **5.1.2 Gestures**

The next dimension that will be discussed is gestures. In both episodes (345 and 346) that are being discussed in this chapter Chávez is not making very abundant gestures. When he is making the concerning remarks he straightens his body and leans forward a bit and moves his arms and hands when speaking, so it shows that this is an issue that is clearly of importance for him. However there are no abundant gestures to be seen.

### **5.1.3 Syntax**

The next dimension that will be discussed is Syntax. In the remarks that Chávez has made, that are being discussed in this chapter, he is using very provocative syntax. In his sentences he uses word combinations and logical constructions like 'I would like to warn my people', 'the US is clearly preparing', 'the attacks on Venezuela are increasing' and 'The United States and the Dutch are arming those islands to the teeth'. This use of syntax and logical constructions make his discourse sound almost warlike. It is clearly Chávez' intention to make his remarks stand out and being noticed (and picked up by international media).

### **5.1.4 Lexicology**

The next dimension that will be discussed is Lexicology. The choice of a word or term is never innocent. This is also in coherence with what has been stated

in the previous section about syntax. Chávez is using firm language and words like 'warn my people', 'attacks are increasing' and 'arming to the teeth'. It is worth noting that, when looking at other episodes of Chávez' television show (not specifically about the Dutch Antilles issue), Chávez is directly or indirectly involving the United States into his discourse many times. And almost every time the United States feature in his programme, Chávez uses this firm and aggressive lexicology. Another interesting aspect is that although the United States has a lot of airtime in his television programme, most of the time Chávez is not using the official term, United States of America. He uses various denigrating terms like Gringo, Yankee Empire, imperialists, imperialist empire and capitalists. As was already mentioned in this paragraph, the choice of words is never innocent. It is clear that Chávez wants to signify his aversion against the United States in his discourse. The final addition that is worth making is that the author could only find Chávez using this tone and lexicology when he is directly or indirectly involving the United States in his discourse. Only when talking about matters that involve the United States in some way or another, Chávez is using these denigrating words and tone. On the contrary, when mentioning other countries he only uses their official name.

### **5.1.5 Rhetoric**

As has been mentioned in the previous section, Chávez is clearly giving his message a provocative tone. In his discourse he mentions the Dutch islands Aruba and Curacao, but the message is actually mostly directed towards the US government and its military presence on those islands. When studying other episodes of his television show (concerning subjects other than the Dutch Antilles), it shows that Chávez feels like his country is being surrounded by US military bases that are situated in the countries surrounding Venezuela and the US Fourth Fleet at sea in the neighbourhood of Venezuela.<sup>82</sup> He is clearly agitating towards this development. The best example of this agitation coming to the fore in Chávez' discourse can be found in episode 312 of his television programme (Annex 5), which was aired at June 8, 2008. He is elaborating about the US influence in Latin America, especially the US influence in the oil rich Latin American countries surrounding Venezuela.

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<sup>82</sup> F.J. Daniel. (2009)

Chávez says: ‘from these shores in the Caribbean to Patagonia: Yankee go home! Gringos go home! We are free, but the battle is hard and the battle is everyday.’<sup>83</sup> This fear of being surrounded by the United States could be able to explain the rationale behind Chávez’ discourse that is being studied in this thesis.

### **5.1.6 Social interaction**

The next dimension that will be discussed is (Social) interaction. In the concerning parts of Chávez’ discourse in this chapter where the Dutch Antilles issue is raised, there seems to be little social interaction coming from Chávez. It is very much a one-way street of Chávez making his remarks. Neither in the episodes of his television programme nor in his speech at the COP 15, is there a dialogue or debate going on in which Chávez made his remarks.

### **5.1.7. Context**

The next dimension that will be discussed is context. As mentioned before, Chávez’ discourse does not exist in a vacuum or an empty ‘stand alone’ space. As has already been discussed in this chapter, these remarks by Chávez should be seen in the broader context of Chávez feeling surrounded by the increasing US military influence both on land (military bases in the countries surrounding Venezuela) as on the sea (the US Fourth Fleet). In his discourse (both in the media as in his television programme) Chávez shows that he is not very pleased with this development.

## **5.2 Post Colonialism theory**

In this section the elements of the Post colonialism field of academic inquiry will be discussed. In this chapter the process of ‘othering’ was very present in Chávez discourse. Chávez is often trying to label the United States as ‘the other’. He has various ways of achieving this. The most visible way is the use of the numerous denigrating terms for indicating the United States. Another example can be found in the section about rhetoric where Chávez is shouting at the United States to ‘go home’ and ‘get out’. This shows Chávez wanting the United States (the other) as far away from him as possible. There are also

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<sup>83</sup> Episode 312: <http://200.109.120.52/alopresidente/alopresidente312.wmv> Also on youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvSIQxO6h6M> (time: 1:10) Retrieved: May 25, 2011.

aspects of the 'colonial mindset' visible in Chávez' discourse that was being analysed in this chapter. Especially aspects of 'economical extortion', because in episode 345 of his television programme, Chávez is accusing the United States of wanting to gain from some of Venezuela's valuable fresh drinking water and petroleum resources at the expense of Venezuela and its people.

Hitherto the analysis in this chapter has only focussed on the textual aspects of this issue; therefore this paragraph is focussing on the actions (or threatening with actions) by Chávez. In a Curacao - Washington diplomatic cable written by the US consulate on Curacao<sup>84</sup> (see Annex 6) it is mentioned that Chávez had undertaken certain military moves regarding the discourse that is being discussed in this chapter. Aircraft from the Venezuelan Air force have challenged a Dash-8 plane operated by the Dutch Antilles Coast Guard, which upon contact voluntarily turned around. According to Venezuelan officials the Dash-8 plane was in Venezuelan airspace. Dutch officials however are stating otherwise, namely that the airplane was in international airspace.

In order to come to a more thorough understanding about whether Chávez' threatening statements and actions are substantive or not, it is helpful to look at Venezuela's military resources. The size and strength of the Venezuelan Air Force influences the way in which this 'Dash-8 incident' should be seen, for example might this incident be a precursor for more serious airpower, or is the Venezuelan Air Force not capable to commit more airpower? It appears that the striking capability of the Venezuelan Air Force is almost similar to that of the Royal Netherlands Air Force, both consisting out of approximately 70 planes (excluding transport and auxiliary planes or helicopters). In the Netherlands Air Force the emphasis is on fighter planes while the Venezuelan

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<sup>84</sup> The press project. <

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:ap1u5Mw1PwMJ:www.thepressproject.gr/cablegate/details.php%3Fid%3D91810+public+opinion+Venezuela+antilles&cd=19&hl=nl&ct=clnk&gl=nl&source=www.google.nl>> Retrieved: September 4, 2011.

Air Force consists out of a mix between fighter and bomber planes.<sup>85</sup> The strategic advantage that the Venezuelan Air Force has, is that all its airbases are in relative close vicinity of the Dutch Antilles, while for the Netherlands Air Force the majority of its airplanes have to be shipped or flown over from airbases in The Netherlands, since there is not a sufficient amount of airbases on the Antilles to facilitate them. In regard to the figures discussed in this paragraph it is clear that Chávez does have sufficient military means in order to underpin his statements. On top of that Venezuela has the advantage of being (geographically) close to the Dutch Antilles. An important side note to make in regard to discussing Venezuela's airpower is that there is obviously a giant leap between the Venezuelan Air Force challenging an unarmed Dutch Coast Guard plane (Dash-8) to make it alter its course and deploying strike capable aircraft on the territory of the Dutch Antilles. The inventory of the Venezuelan Air Force that has been discussed in this paragraph should therefore be seen in the light of what Chávez *could possibly* deploy, not what he *would probably* deploy. Chávez presumably knows that truly deploying his Air Force will have consequences. Despite the fact that Chávez has never actually deployed any (strike capable) aircraft against The Netherlands Antilles, the awareness that he has the capability to do so has a threatening and deterring effect and is able to act as leverage for his statements and giving these statements more weight and impact.

In the same cable as has been mentioned in the previous paragraph other notable information can be found regarding Chávez' ability to exercise influence on the Dutch Antilles, namely:

'This action follows recent criticism and strike action over the announcement of significant retail fuel price increases on Curacao. Opposition parties are telling the public that Venezuelan President Chavez will not consider giving Curacao a better deal on fuel as long as the FOL (which he reportedly

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<sup>85</sup> The website of the Venezuelan Air Force <<http://www.aviacion.mil.ve/modules/tinycontent/index.php?id=6>>, and CIA World factbook <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>>. Retrieved: October 3, 2011.

considers a potential threat) is allowed to operate. The Curacao-owned, but Venezuelan (PdVSA)-operated, oil refinery supplies all fuel to local retailers'

This information shows that Chávez has a very powerful instrument to support his discourse, because apparently Chávez is able to determine the fuel prices on Curacao. As can be read in the diplomatic cable, the rising price of fuel is an issue that concerns the people of Curacao. This means that through using the PdVSA as leverage, Chávez is able to exert considerable influence on the public and the public opinion on Curacao in order to gain support for his statements about dismantling the FOL base on Curacao with (powerful) actions. This also directly enables Chávez to exercise influence on the Dutch government, its relations with the United States and its policy making.

Regarding the military action conducted by the Venezuelan Air force and the power and influence Chávez has on the people of Curacao by controlling the flow of oil on the island, shows that Chávez is not only capable to 'talk the talk', but he is also willing and able to 'walk the walk'.

### **5.3 Public opinion**

In this section the views and opinions of the Venezuelan people regarding the Dutch Antilles issue will be discussed. Part of the motive for including the views and opinions of the Venezuelan people in this thesis, is the assumption that Chávez' discourse does not just tumble down out of thin air. It can be argued that there is popular support for his discourse; Chávez may even draw ideas from the opinions and views of the Venezuelan population. The rationale for this assumption is that despite Chávez' conspicuous media appearances (some have already been analysed in the previous chapters) he is still taken serious by his people. This could mean that his discourse cannot stand completely isolated or detached from the views of his population, otherwise his appearances would be frowned upon by the Venezuelan population and they would not feel represented by him. Consequently, it is assumed that the Venezuelan citizens can, at least to some extent, agree with Chávez' comments and the way he is behaving.

Although at every election, the accusations of Chávez gerrymandering the outcome consistently reoccur, at present day Chávez still derives his legitimacy from the ballot box. Critics say that Chávez has hollowed out Venezuela's democracy, but in the end public opinion still matters in Venezuela. Notwithstanding the fact that around 40% of the population is still in favour of voting for Chávez, there are decent opposition parties for the Venezuelan people to vote for as an alternative.<sup>86</sup> This shows that the public opinion in Venezuela is not a uniformity but that a debate exists and different opinions have a chance to come to the fore. McKenna takes it even further by stating that:

'there is nowhere more exciting than Venezuela where it is commonplace for large numbers of people to debate politics in the workplace, coffee shops and squares. Such debates take place not so much from the deep-seated prejudice which has become entrenched in general consciousness of the feeling that politicians lie and cheat and are therefore all as bad as each other, but from the belief that the ideas and activities of working people can decisively change the political course.'<sup>87</sup>

Unfortunately, I was not able to find any reliable sources discussing Venezuelan public opinion about the FOL's on Aruba and Curacao. However, reliable sources were found discussing Venezuelan public opinion about the main reason (according to Chávez in his speech at the COP 15) why the United States created the FOL's on Aruba and Curacao, namely because it is looking to increase its influence in Venezuela and is looking to benefit from the fresh drinking water and oil reserves that Venezuela has. These sources state that the national Venezuelan oil company PdVSA and the national oil resources are important matters for the Venezuelan people. A noteworthy indication of the importance of oil for the population can be found at Hawkins. He states:

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<sup>86</sup> The Wrecking of Venezuela. *The Economist*. May 13, 2010. Retrieved: August 19, 2011. <<http://www.economist.com/node/16109302/print>>.

<sup>87</sup> McKenna, T. (2009). Hugo Chavez and the PSUV in Light of the Historical Process in Venezuela. *Critique*, 37(1), 121-134.

'What [...] almost broke the regime, [...] were Chávez' attempts to restructure the national oil company, PdVSA. Many Venezuelans perceived PdVSA as one of the few government companies that ran efficiently, and it was seen as a source of pride and national wealth. After Chávez publicly fired the top managers of the company during one of his television programmes in April 2002, the opposition mobilised several demonstrations in favour of PdVSA leadership against the government.'<sup>88</sup>

Apparently the Venezuelans find their national oil reserves of enough importance to demonstrate for on the streets if they feel that Chávez is not implementing the right policy.

On the contrary, in the case that is being discussed in this section, when Chávez claims that the United States is interested in Venezuela's oil reserves, the Venezuelan people are also willing to demonstrate on the streets to aid their president in maintaining and protecting the PdVSA. This can be found in an article by Jorge Martín, who states: 'When faced with the provocations from Washington, Chávez threatened to cut oil supplies to the US, the Venezuelan oil workers responded with a massive march in Caracas. They declared they were ready to defend the revolution'.<sup>89</sup> This shows that when Chávez is shouting towards the United States to 'go home' and stay away from the Venezuelan oil resources, the Venezuelan population share his view on the protection of the nation's oil reserves. It is not clear whether the Venezuelan people also willing to share Chávez' rejection of the FOL's on Aruba and Curacao, as intense as they do regarding the nations oil reserves.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

In this section the remarks that Chávez has made in the Winter of 2009 have been analysed, by using discourse analysis and the Post Colonialism theory.

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<sup>88</sup> Hawkins, K. (2003). Populism in Venezuela: the Rise of Chavismo. *Third World Quarterly*, 24(6), p. 1144.

<sup>89</sup> Martín, J. (2011). US Sanctions on PDVSA - Latest Imperialist Provocation. *Venezuela Analysis*. May 27, 2011. Retrieved: August 20, 2011. <<http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/6223>>.

The emphasis was not only on the textual aspects, but also on the actions, or intended actions that Chávez could undertake to support his remarks. This has all been done to contribute in coming to an answer for the main research question in this thesis namely: 'What is the rationale behind Chávez' remarks'. This chapter (in continuation of Chapter 4) has been able to shed some extra light on the explanation for Chávez' rationale. It became visible during the analysis in this chapter that Chávez was agitating firmly against the United States' FOL's on the islands of Aruba and Curacao, both in the media as well as in his television programme. It furthermore became apparent that Chávez' agitation against the FOL's fits in the larger structure of Chávez feeling surrounded by US (military) influence, both on land (military bases in neighbouring South and Central American and Caribbean countries) and at sea (the US Navy Fourth Fleet). This feeling of being surrounded by the United States leads to numerous examples of statements, remarks and utterances of Chávez being denigrating about the United States. These statements, remarks and utterances are visible in his (international) media appearances, but also (and especially) in various episodes of his television programme '*Aló Presidente*'. Therefore the conclusion of this chapter is that the feeling of being surrounded by the United States can function as a part of the explanation for Chávez' rationale behind his remarkable discourse.

## **6. Conclusion**

The main research question of this thesis was 'what could be Chávez' rationale for uttering the provocative remarks concerning the United States of America and The Netherlands?' This thesis aimed to come up with an answer to this question. The method that is used to come to this answer is a combination of a discourse analysis of Chávez' discourse and the use of Post colonialism theory.

As has been argued in the first chapter, in order to see and set Chávez' statements in the right perspective it is necessary to make a judgement about how viable and substantive these statements are. In other words, is Chávez able to underpin or support his statements with significant deeds or actions? The answer to this question is 'yes'. In Chapter 4 and 5 it showed that Chávez is able to exert considerable influence on the Dutch Antilles. This influence can be of multiple dimensions. Starting with political and societal influence. The 'The Hague - Washington diplomatic cable' (Annex 2) shows that Chávez has strong ties with former Antillean politician Cova and (criminal) strongman Godett. These persons function as a metaphoric 'beachhead' for Chávez on the Dutch Antilles through which he can conduit his influence and to enable him to create support for his opinions and viewpoints amongst the public, and consequently also amongst the politicians of the Dutch Antilles. In addition to political and societal influence, it showed that Chávez is also able to exert strategic and economic influence on the Dutch Antilles. He is able to achieve this through the Venezuelan ownership of the oil refinery on Curacao, which is the main source for oil and fuel for the people of the Dutch Antilles. Chávez is able to control the fuel prices (and therewith also controls a part of the purchasing power of the people) on the Dutch Antilles. He uses this power as leverage to force his viewpoint, which is in disagreement with the presence of the US Forward Operating Location (FOL) on the Dutch Antilles. Furthermore the analysis showed that in addition to political, societal and economical influence that Chávez is able to exert on the Islands, the Venezuelan Air Force is also large enough and very capable to function a significant deterrence and threat for underpinning Chávez' discourse with possible actions. In regard to what has been argued in this paragraph it is feasible to

state that Chávez is certainly able to underpin his discourse with substantive actions or deeds and that he is not only able to 'talk the talk', but also capable to 'walk the walk'.

Now that it is clear that Chávez' provocative statements should be taken seriously, the next part of this chapter will focus on discussing the rationale for these provocative statements.

From the analysis that was conducted in Chapter 4 it showed that Chávez has a genuine disaffection and hostility towards the Western colonisers of the past. The Dutch Antilles is a former colony of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the islands (although they have been granted more autonomy in recent years) are still part of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. These remarks should be seen as a part of Chávez' disaffection of the former Western colonisers and the Bolívarian inspired sentiment towards the extinction of the colonial legacy in an around Venezuela. Furthermore, an interesting outcome of using the theory of Post Colonialism in this thesis is the circumstance of Chávez (as president of a country that was once itself a colony) picking up the Post Colonialism discourse and using this discourse against the former colonising countries and that he is able to make it convincing.

However as the analysis of Chávez' discourse continued in Chapter 5, it appeared that the Bolívarian sentiment is only partially able to serve as an explanation for the rationale behind his discourse. While studying more of Chávez' discourse in his television programme '*Aló Presidente*' and his media appearances, it became increasingly noticeable that when the subject of Chávez' discourse has a direct or indirect link with the United States, his remarks and behaviour become very outspoken and remarkable, to say the least. It showed that Chávez leaves no opportunity lost to denigrate the United States in both his television show as in media appearances. This was also the case in the concerning remarks that have been analysed in this thesis, where Chávez is agitating firmly against the United States' FOL's on the islands of Aruba and Curacao. It furthermore became apparent that Chávez' agitation against the FOL's fits in the larger structure of Chávez feeling surrounded by US (military) influence, both on land (military bases in neighbouring South

American and Caribbean countries) and at sea (the US Navy Fourth Fleet). This feeling of being surrounded by the United States is only further increased by the FOL's that the United States has stationed just 20 to 40 miles off shore of Venezuela and in various countries surrounding Venezuela. This leads to numerous examples of outings, remarks and utterances by Chávez in which he is being denigrating about the United States.

As more and more discourse and behaviour (both in media appearances and in his television programme) of Chávez was being studied and the analysis progressed, the awareness arose that Chávez' remarks directed towards The Netherlands should not be seen as an assault primary focussed on The Netherlands or the Netherlands Antilles itself. On the contrary it should be seen as part of the bigger, overarching metier of Chávez denigrating and being critical about the United States. In the remarks that have been analysed in this thesis, The Netherlands is cooperating with the United States ('the enemy' for Chávez) and is therefore used as a tool or an example for Chávez through which he can express his critical point of view towards the United States. The answer to the main research question of this thesis, regarding the rationale for Chávez' provocative remarks aimed against The Netherlands, is that these remarks should be seen in the bigger picture of Chávez denigrating and being critical about the United States, whereas in this case Chávez is using the decision of the Netherlands to cooperate with The United States of America, as an utensil or an appliance to utter and attract (media) attention to his point of view. His viewpoint of being critical about the United States comes forth out of a feeling of being surrounded by the US (military) presence in the countries surrounding Venezuela as well as by means of the US Navy Fourth Fleet patrolling the sea area surrounding Venezuela.

## **6.1 Reflection and recommendations**

Choosing Chávez' provocative remarks as being the subject for this thesis contained a number of challenges. First of all, Chávez' discourse is in Spanish and I do not have sufficient knowledge of the Spanish language to fully understand Chávez' discourse whether it is spoken or written. I was able to overcome this challenge by using '*Google translate*' and searching for Chávez' discourse in international news sources, and relying on the

translation of the author of those sources. This could be regarded as a limitation of this thesis since I am not fully able to verify if these translations are flawless.

Furthermore, this thesis uses the television programme '*Aló Presidente*' as a source for retrieving Chávez' discourse. Chávez is starring in this programme as being both interviewer as well as show host. This enables him to fully control what subjects are being discussed in his programme and which persons will be allowed to participate in these discussions. Consequently Chávez is therefore also able to determine which persons are not being heard in his programme and which subjects or (different) opinions are not being discussed. This may result in a gap between Chávez' official discourse and the underlying truth or reality. Discourse analysis is in part able to unravel this underlying truth, however it is impossible to always fully grasp the parallel agendas and personal ideologies that operate behind the official discourse.

This thesis discussed the unfriendly and tense relationship between Chávez and the United States of America. It appeared that Chávez' provocative statements towards The Netherlands can be regarded as being part of an overarching metier of Chávez being critical and denigrating about the United States of America. It could be beneficial for both further research as well as for the usability in praxis, to study this troubling Chávez - Washington relationship more thoroughly. Because next to provoking the Dutch authorities, which has been discussed in this thesis, there may be other political or policy instances or events that can be related to Chávez' disaffection with the United States, which currently are not regarded as being part of, or related to this disaffection. Reconsidering these instances could lead to different insights regarding these instances.

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## Annexes

### 1. Episode 291



Gobierno Bolivariano  
de Venezuela

Ministerio del Poder Popular  
para la Comunicación y la Información



Asistentes [aplausos].

Presidente Chávez Mejor es morir peleando que ser un esclavo. Europa... nunca he visto un periodista europeo que venga aquí, ni siquiera de... digamos, de esos periodistas más críticos, a preguntar aquí: “¿Qué opinan ustedes de la llegada de Colón aquí, y la llegada de las huestes británicas aquí?”. Tú sabes que por aquí se habla inglés, en estas islas y el jefe de Estado de algunas islas del Caribe todavía es la Reina de Inglaterra, el jefe de Estado. Qué bueno que tú fueras a The Guardian, publicaras algún trabajo sobre eso: ¿por qué a estas alturas la Reina de Inglaterra sigue siendo el jefe de Estado de no sé cuántas islas del Caribe? El jefe de Estado está allá, en Londres, y aquí están los ciudadanos de ese Estado. ¡Qué cosa!, ¿no? Entonces en Europa andan con el tema de que Chávez se quiere perpetuar en el poder porque yo estoy proponiendo, para que el pueblo lo decida, la posibilidad de la reelección continua para jefe de Estado. Posibilidad.

Asistentes [aplausos].

Presidente Chávez ¿Por qué no le van a preguntar?, ¿por qué no hacen un referéndum en las islas del Caribe anglófono, por ejemplo, y les preguntan a los habitantes de esas islas hermanas, aquí mismo, si ellos quieren que la Reina de Inglaterra sea su jefe de Estado?, si es que quieren hablar de democracia en Inglaterra... Pero hay cuánto cinismo en el mundo, cuánto cinismo. Lo mismo pasa aquí mismo, en Aruba, las Antillas Neerlandesas. Nosotros limitamos con reinos, pues. ¡Qué cosa!, ¿no? La Europa, la culta Europa, y nosotros somos los bárbaros, los indios, los negros, los sudacas. ¡Vaya qué cinismo el de Europa, vaya qué cinismo! Ojalá estas palabras no sean tomadas por ningún europeo como una ofensa a Europa, porque entonces se ofenden: “Chávez arremetió contra Europa, nos ofendió”... ¡Ah!, pero Europa no ofende a nadie. Europa nos atropella desde hace siglos y nunca ha ofendido a nadie, es la culta Europa, la Belle Europe. Cinismo. Europa es la reina del cinismo. Ojalá sirva esto sólo para la reflexión de la Europa, la Europa. Entonces andan los periódicos europeos como locos, —la mayoría—. Chávez el tirano, Chávez el caudillo, Chávez el que se quiere perpetuar. Y allá tienen reyes compadre [risas], tienen reyes todavía y reina, que no los elije nadie y además de carácter hereditario; y son los jefes de Estado, jefe de Estado. Y además... bueno en Gran Bretaña por ejemplo, en Inglaterra, los primeros ministros que son los jefes de gobierno, pueden ser reelegidos cuantas veces aquél pueblo quiera reelegirlos. Y entonces están preocupados porque aquí, se está sometiendo a consideración. Yo dificulto que en Inglaterra, le hayan consultado al pueblo inglés, si ellos están de acuerdo con esa reelección continúa. ¿Por qué someterán eso a un referéndum? A ver qué opina el pueblo inglés. Allá no hay ni siquiera Constitución en Inglaterra. No hay Constitución. ¿Ustedes sabían eso? Tarek, tú sí sabías eso ¿verdad? No hay Constitución escrita.

## 2. Washington – The Hague diplomatic cable

37875  
2005-08-03  
05THEHAGUE2136  
Embassy The Hague

CONFIDENTIAL

05THEHAGUE2044|05THEHAGUE2127

C O N F I D E N T I A L

SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 002136

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/01/2015  
TAGS: PREL, PHUM, EPET, NA, NL, VZ  
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/VENEZUELA/ANTILLES: DUTCH WORRIED ABOUT CHAVEZ;  
DETERMINED TO ENGAGE  
REF: A. A) THE HAGUE 2127 B. B) THE HAGUE 2044 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD SOBEL FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: According to Prime Minister Balkenende's chief foreign policy advisor, concerns about Venezuelan interference in the Dutch Antilles and Aruba have recently risen to the top of the Dutch list of foreign policy priorities. A Chavez visit to the Netherlands is not currently under consideration, but Balkenende may try to deliver a firm message to Chavez on the margins of the upcoming UNGA. Foreign Minister Bot and Justice Minister Donner both plan to visit Caracas in the next few months, and Balkenende is also considering a possible visit in November. During a recent briefing by a visiting USG Venezuela expert, working level MFA contacts admit that the Dutch feel torn between their desire to support an EU consensus on Venezuela and protecting Dutch national interests in the Caribbean. The Dutch have compiled a list of grievances ranging from flyovers by military aircraft to public statements by Venezuelan officials recalling Venezuelan territorial claims to the islands. Further U.S.-Dutch consultations in this area would be beneficial to both parties. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Rob Swartbol, Prime Minister Balkenende's senior foreign policy advisor, told Ambassador Sobel on August 1 that the Dutch government is increasingly concerned about Venezuelan President Chavez' efforts to broaden his influence in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. Swartbol acknowledged that for years the Dutch did not take Venezuelan maneuvering seriously, but stressed that now it is at top of our agenda. Prime Minister Balkenende has taken a personal interest in the issue, he added, and has asked for a paper in the next two to three weeks to help clarify Dutch options. Swartbol confirmed that, contrary to earlier indications, the Dutch do not plan to invite Chavez to visit The Netherlands in the near future. If Chavez does come to The Netherlands as part of a broader European tour, however, the Prime Minister would expect to meet with him, he added.

3. (C) Ambassador Sobel stressed that the U.S. shared Dutch concerns about destabilizing Venezuelan moves in the region. The Dutch, he added, could play a role in encouraging the EU to stand firm against Chavez' destabilization efforts. The EU, he added, needs to be very careful in engaging Chavez, who is a proven master at manipulating engagement efforts to his own advantage. EU members considering

selling weapons to Venezuela for ostensibly legitimate purposes, in particular, need to understand the broader impacts of such sales. Swartbol agreed that the EU should have a coordinated approach on arms sales and other issues that took such concerns into account. Although the Dutch do not want to give Chavez a day in the sun, he added, they also see no realistic alternative to engagement at this point.

4. (C) According to Swartbol, Prime Minister Balkenende may propose meeting Chavez on the margins of the UNGA in September to send a strong signal that Venezuelan infiltration efforts in the islands are unacceptable. Swartbol suggested, however, that a final decision on whether Balkenende would engage Chavez in New York would depend in part on FM Bot's plans, as the Prime Minister would not want to engage Chavez before Bot has had an opportunity to meet with him. (Note: The MFA told us on July 29 that Bot currently plans to visit Venezuela in the October 17-24 timeframe.) If a meeting in New York does not take place, the next logical time for a Balkenende-Chavez meeting could be in November, when the Prime Minister is scheduled to travel to Suriname.

5. (C) PM Balkenende confirmed to Ambassador Sobel during a private meeting on July 29 that he hopes to engage Chavez directly about Dutch concerns over the Antilles, but left open the issue of timing and venue. In addition to the Bot and/or Balkenende meetings with Chavez, Dutch Minister of Justice told the Ambassador on July 30 that he also plans to travel to Venezuela, Colombia, Suriname, and Curacao beginning August 27. Although Donner's trip will focus primarily on improving counter-narcotics cooperation in the region (especially with Colombia), Donner also expressed serious concerns about political developments in Venezuela and Chavez' intentions toward the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, which he described as our Malvinas.

6. (C) Separately, during a briefing on Venezuela by a visiting USG expert on July 28, Dutch working-level representatives from the MFA's Western Hemisphere Department expressed deep concern over the increasing frequency and growing seriousness of Venezuelan attempts to influence and intimidate the Dutch Antilles' government. Dutch interlocutors provided a four page list of incidents (reported in other channels) to illustrate their concerns. These ranged from an unauthorized 2002 flyover of Curacao by Venezuelan military aircraft, to Venezuelan accusations (around the time of the USS Saipan visit) that the Antilles supported U.S. aggression against Venezuela, to recent public statements (including by the Venezuelan Consul General in Curacao and the Governor of Falcon) calling for a restoration of the historic relationship between Venezuela and the islands. Most disturbing to the Dutch were the many instances of Chavez apparently offering assistance to political figures (including former minister Cova) to encourage them to challenge Prime Minister Ys' government as well as existing ties between The Netherlands and the islands. The Dutch representatives noted that Chavez had a wide range of tools for exerting influence on the islands, including the flow of oil, pro-Venezuelan politicians (such as Cova), and even criminal groups (such as that gathered around former strongman Godett); used together, these elements could have a powerful destabilizing effect on the islands and create serious problems for the Dutch government.

7. (C) The Dutch diplomats noted that they found it difficult to reconcile their national interests regarding the Antilles with their general desire to support and implement EU consensus positions. For example, the Dutch found it unlikely that the EU could find consensus on taking a strong public position on Venezuelan Human Rights abuses, although they argued that EU representatives could and would deliver tough messages in private. The Dutch diplomats noted that Chavez had successfully maneuvered to avoid having an EU team observe elections

in the past and predicted he would do so again, but doubted that this would lead to a public confrontation between the EU and Caracas. At the same time, the recent Dutch deployment of F-16s to Aruba -- a move unrelated to any tensions with Venezuela, but one they hoped Caracas noticed -- demonstrated that the Dutch remain capable of defending their national interests in the region if necessary. In recent meetings with the Ambassador and DAO, CHOD Berlijn said that the Dutch are exploring options for boosting the military presence around the islands (potentially including submarines and naval forces from other EU members), primarily for counter-narcotics purposes. As noted ref a, the CEO of Royal Dutch Shell has recently expressed concerns regarding Chavez' illogical approach to foreign investors and the potential impact of his policies in the region.

8. (C) COMMENT: As an EU state with Caribbean interests, the Dutch have good justifications for assuming a leading role within the EU in developing a strategy toward Venezuela. Such a role does not come naturally to the Dutch, however, and they will be reluctant to challenge traditional Spanish leadership on Latin American issues without serious cause and/or encouragement. A policy of confronting Chavez would also be risky domestically given the Dutch public's ambivalent attitude toward the Antilles and Aruba and the Dutch colonial legacy in general. That said, senior Dutch officials, including Balkenende, clearly understand that Chavez' machinations threaten Dutch interests directly -- in addition to destabilizing the region more broadly -- but believe that their options for dealing with this threat are currently limited. We should continue to seek every opportunity to engage the Dutch on this issue to help develop regional options for countering Chavez' destabilizing policies, and to encourage the Dutch to work within European circles to help stiffen the spine of the EU. END COMMENT.

SOBEL

### 3. Episode 345



Ministerio del Poder Popular  
para la Comunicación y la Información



este caso, pero la situación es nacional, todos los embalses, con alguna excepción, siguen bajando, bajando. Entonces el consumo de agua potable hay que cuidarlo, racionalizarlo, y el consumo de energía eléctrica. Ahora, éstos son problemas que hoy está enfrentando todo el mundo, en unas partes más, en otras partes menos, hasta los países más desarrollados tienen problemas de agua y energía eléctrica. Por qué creen ustedes que los yanquis están poniendo siete bases militares en Colombia y están fortaleciendo las bases de Aruba y Curazao, y crearon la IV Flota, porque Suramérica tiene la reserva de agua dulce más grande del mundo y la reserva de petróleo y energía de hidrocarburos más grande del mundo, ésa es la razón de que los yanquis andan merodeando y han tomado a Colombia. Lamentablemente han tomado a Colombia y amenazan a Venezuela y a Bolivia, porque ellos quieren asegurar su futuro, no se dan cuenta, pobre de ellos, de que el futuro de ellos está ligado poderosamente al futuro de nosotros, aquí habrá vida para todos o no habrá vida para nadie, por eso el mundo hay que cambiarlo, aquí lo estamos cambiando y tenemos que seguirlo cambiando. Fidel lo decía hace unos días que lo visité, “Chávez, cuiden la Revolución Bolivariana, cuídenla porque de esa revolución depende el futuro de toda América Latina, y del futuro de toda América Latina pudiera depender el futuro del mundo”. Vean ustedes la responsabilidad de nosotros y del Partido Socialista y de los delegados y delegadas de la vanguardia del partido, una responsabilidad que se pierde de vista, no podemos fallar, no podemos fallar.

Asistentes [aplausos].

Presidente Chávez Bueno, hay un guión aquí. Me acordé que hay un guión. Estacionamiento del hotel Maracay. Ya cantamos un rato. Partido socialista. Victoria popular en Uruguay. Elecciones en Bolivia, ya lo hablamos. Estoy en el guión. Adelanto de los viajes a Argentina. ¡Ah!, ya les dije que nos vamos mañana al Mercosur y de allí estaremos en Uruguay el día martes todo el día. Nicolás, ¿verdad?, tendremos una reunión, ya está confirmada, con el Presidente electo, con el Pepe tendremos reunión, por supuesto con el presidente Tabaré, primero que nada para seguir fortaleciendo la relación bilateral. Es muy importante, dos victorias de lo más importante, la de Uruguay donde la derecha hizo todo para tratar de ganar. ¡Ah!, fíjense ustedes la importancia que tiene la unidad, trataron de dividir el Frente Amplio, eh, y éstos fueron capaces de mantener la unidad, la derecha trató de que salieran dos candidaturas de esa alianza grande que es el Frente Amplio, se impuso la disciplina por dentro y todos apoyaron a quien ganó las elecciones internas pues, que fue el Pepe. Lograron una fórmula unitaria, el otro candidato interno aceptó la vicepresidencia, eso fue muy importante porque aseguraron la unidad, si se hubieran dividido hoy el resultado sería totalmente distinto. Ésas son lecciones que uno tiene que mirar; mirar la táctica, la estrategia. La unidad es fundamental. Bolívar fue toda la vida el luchador infatigable por la unidad y perdió la batalla y al final se quedó solo, lo abandonaron los unos y lo abandonaron los otros y al final lanzó la frase aquella que por ahí anda galopando: “Qué puede un solo hombre contra el mundo”. ¡Nada!

## 4. Episode 346



Gobierno Bolivariano  
de Venezuela

Ministerio del Poder Popular  
para la Comunicación y la Información



Presidente Chávez Pero que más nunca volverán a gobernar este país, ¡más nunca!

Asistentes [Aplausos].

Presidente Chávez Entonces, yo cumpla con el deber de alertar, a lo que se conoce con el nombre de la comunidad internacional, a los países de Suramérica, todos son países amigos, incluyendo Colombia, un país amigo, más que amigo un país hermano, un pueblo hermano, pero las agresiones contra Venezuela se están incrementando y los preparativos son evidentes de las fuerzas militares de Colombia, del gobierno de Colombia, del gobierno yanqui en Aruba, Curazao, que tienen bases militares, que están moviendo unidades, están moviendo aviones, están usando aviones no tripulados, están usando aviones de estos que le ponen el sistema de inteligencia... Ayúdame Luis.

Vicepresidente Luis Reyes Reyes El Awac.

Presidente Chávez El Awac. Son aviones de mucha tecnología que dan vuelta y graban todo, nos graban conversaciones, toman fotos de donde estamos – exactamente- las coordenadas dónde estamos, dónde no estamos; es la tecnología del imperio. Entonces, yo estoy obligado a alertar a la comunidad internacional sobre estos últimos eventos que configuran un cuadro de amenaza contra Venezuela. Pero además, además, casi todos los días dicen que soy yo (Chávez) el que está preparando una agresión contra Colombia. Por lo tanto, ellos, están preparando el terreno para hacer algo y presentarlo como que fue Chávez el que agredió, para ellos, luego atacar, eso es lo que están preparando. No es la primera vez. Buscar una excusa pues, para que quedemos nosotros como los agresores, como los agresores. Yo llamo al gobierno de Colombia, bueno, a que recupere su mínimo ¿no? su mínimo, recupere su mínimo, y no se deje utilizar por el imperio yanqui, para ponernos a pelear. Nosotros no tenemos ningún plan contra Colombia, nada, nunca lo hemos tenido, yo tengo aquí 11 años, he visto pasar gobiernos por ahí, siempre; siempre hemos tendido la mano amiga, hasta que nos cansamos de que nos abofetearan pues, y entonces, hemos retirado la mano, pero no estamos preparando ninguna agresión ni contra Colombia ni contra nadie. La batalla nuestra es aquí, primero que nada, la lucha contra el crimen, aquí estamos, la Policía Nacional, ese es el trabajo. Ayer, ayer revisando la Misión Niño Jesús -que la lanzaremos pasado mañana, el 23-, para darle una atención plena, integral, preventiva, desde el embarazo hasta el parto y el posparto a todas las mujeres venezolanas, vamos a poner casas en los barrios, casas de atención integral a las embarazadas, en los pueblos... ¿Con la ayuda de quién? ¡Ay Dios mío! De Fidel y la Revolución Cubana, de ustedes las cubanas y los cubanos y la experiencia que tienen.

Asistentes [Aplausos].

## 5. Episode 312



Ministerio del Poder Popular  
para la Comunicación y la Información



Bueno, saludos a todos los alcaldes que están presentes, alcaldesas. He invitado de manera especial al alcalde de Maracaibo y próximo gobernador del Zulia, Gian Carlo di Martino. Por allá está Gian Carlo di Martino, el próximo gobernador del estado Zulia.

Bueno y ustedes saben, Estela y Gian Carlo, viendo el mapa, lo importante de la batalla, en primer lugar, que hemos comenzando a dar, y en segundo lugar, el triunfo del 23 de noviembre. Es un triunfo absolutamente imprescindible: vean ustedes toda el área geopolítica que ocupan los estados Falcón y Zulia. Zona fronteriza, además, de una gran importancia para el país toda esta zona, un arco.

El imperialismo tiene el plan de ganar las elecciones en todos estos estados, pero sobre todo tienen a Zulia como el epicentro. Pero miran a Falcón con mucho interés también. Recordemos que aquí mismo en Curazao tiene el imperialismo una gran base militar, y desde estas islas el imperialismo acecha a Venezuela, y aquí está la refinería más grande del mundo, en Paraguaná, y aquí el Golfo de Venezuela y la zona petrolera, petroquímica, gasífera. Todo esto es gas, hay mucho gas en toda esta zona y en el Golfo: energía para el futuro. De allí la importancia estratégica, como lo hemos venido diciendo. Anoche yo lo recordaba en Maracaibo: las elecciones de gobernadores y alcaldes, de noviembre, son mucho más que un proceso para elegir alcaldes y gobernadores; está en juego el futuro de la Revolución, el futuro de la Patria, y más allá —hay que decirlo con modestia, pero hay que decirlo—, también está en juego toda esta época de cambios que ha comenzando a activarse con fuerza en Suramérica, en América Latina y en el Caribe.

Atacan por Argentina, ataca la oligarquía; atacan por Bolivia, ataca la oligarquía; atacan por Venezuela, ataca la oligarquía; atacan por Ecuador, ataca la oligarquía. ¿Y detrás de las oligarquías quién?, la mano peluda, huesuda y maloliente del imperialismo norteamericano. Tenemos que derrotarlo. Desde estas costas del Caribe hasta la Patagonia: yanqui, go home! en América Latina, gringo go home! Nosotros somos libres, pero la batalla es dura, y la batalla es de todos los días. Y no habrá descanso para nosotros, no habrá descanso.

Por aquí está con nosotros también Elegido Civada, el comandante Magoya, líder campesino, comandante guerrillero de los años 60. Magoya, ¿qué tal? Yo sí te busqué, vale, cuando yo era soldado antiguerrillero. Magoya desde entonces era famoso, se fue para la guerrilla siendo un niño. Pero yo tenía la idea de que Magoya era un viejo, cuando lo conocimos ¡es un muchacho!; tiene algunos años más que yo, pero somos unos muchachos. Elegido Civada, saludos, viejo soldado, campesino, guerrillero. Aquí estamos subversivos para siempre, porque se trata de subvertir el viejo orden capitalista, el viejo imperialismo. Me da mucho gusto saludarte, Elegido Civada, familiar del Chema Saher. Están hermanos, hermanas, tíos, sobrinos: Marisela Saher, César Saher, Elías Eljuri, tío materno, presidente del INE, Instituto de Estadística; Lucía Tello Saher y Samuel Saher. Vamos a darles un aplauso a los Saher y Eljuri.

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10 ALÓ PRESIDENTE, programa N° 312  
Planta trituradora de piedra "Chema Saher". Santa Ana de Coro, estado Falcón  
Domingo, 8 de junio de 2008

## 6. Willemstad – Washington diplomatic cable

C O N F I D E N T I A L CURACAO 000082

DEPARTMENT PASS TO WHA/CAR; ALSO PASS TO PM/SNA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/24/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV MOPS SNAR NA NL AA VE

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION PARTIES AND VENEZUELA COMPLAIN ABOUT U.S. COUNTER-DRUG FO...

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CURACAO 000082

DEPARTMENT PASS TO WHA/CAR; ALSO PASS TO PM/SNA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/24/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV MOPS SNAR NA NL AA VE

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION PARTIES AND VENEZUELA COMPLAIN ABOUT U.S. COUNTER-DRUG FORWARD OPERATING LOCATION

REF: (A) CARACAS 000695; (B) HAVANA 000462

CLASSIFIED BY: William J. Furnish, POL, ConGen Curacao, State.  
REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Local opposition parties are using rising fuel prices and fears of regional conflict to attempt, unsuccessfully, to stir up popular opposition to the U.S. counter-drug Forward Operating Location (FOL). Local media reports have also highlighted recent Venezuelan government criticism of the FOL. Venezuelan air traffic controllers have threatened U.S. and allied counter-drug flights in the area, challenging U.S., French, British and Netherlands Antilles aircraft operating in international airspace. Missoffs have sought to provide friendly GONA officials with information to counter the criticisms, but we probably can expect more negative attention in the run-up to renewal of the FOL agreement, which expires in 2011. END SUMMARY

OPPOSITION SEIZES ON AIRSPACE VIOLATION TO CRITICIZE FOL

2 . (U) Leaders of Curacao's opposition parties have used the recent, alleged Venezuelan airspace violation by a USAF S-3 plane flying out of Curacao (REF. A) to attempt to stir up local fears over the presence of the U.S. Air Force counter-drug FOL here. Party leaders Nelson Pierre of the Not One Step Backwards List (PLNP) and Helmin Wiels of Sovereign People (PS) party have taken to local media to plant the idea that the U.S. is attempting to use the FOL as a staging area for military incursions into VE, and that Curacao could eventually become

caught in the middle should any military action occur. The opposition called for a public meeting on the issue in the Island Council, now set for June 24.

#### BREAK AT THE PUMP FOR GIVING U.S. FOL THE BOOT?

3 . (U) This action follows recent criticism and strike action over the announcement of significant retail fuel price increases on Curacao. Opposition parties are telling the public that Venezuelan President Chavez will not consider giving Curacao a better deal on fuel as long as the FOL (which he reportedly considers a potential threat) is allowed to operate. The Curacao-owned, but Venezuelan (PdVSA)-operated, oil refinery supplies all fuel to local retailers.

#### WHO IS FUNDING LOCAL OPPOSITION?

4 . (C) A pro-U.S. Curacao Island Council member called on COM recently to discuss possible Venezuelan interference in this and related issues. Source informed us that he and other members of the government are concerned that the opposition parties and certain labour unions are suddenly better organized and funded, and that they plan to use the upcoming council meeting to put political pressure on the GONA, including regarding the FOL. He reported that a recent strike and public demonstration by the taxi bus drivers` union over fuel prices was far more organized and coordinated than prior events. He noted especially the involvement in the strike of former GONA cabinet member and avowed Chavista Errol Cova of the now-defunct Labour People's Crusade party.

#### MISOFFS REACH OUT

5 . (C) Opposition leaders will reportedly raise the Venezuelan airspace incident and try to link it with the fuel price issue at the Island Council meeting to suggest that the GONA get rid of the FOL. In an effort to help pro-U.S. officials counter the criticism, COM and the JIATF-South liaison officer briefed Island Governor and Council head Lisa Dindial, and later PM Elhage on May 25 regarding the airspace incident (using approved press guidance). Missoffs provided background information on the limited, counter-drug mission of the FOL and on its many benefits to Curacao. During the meeting with the PM, Missoffs were surprised to encounter visiting Dutch State Secretary for Kingdom Affairs Ank Bijleveld and Netherlands local representative Rob Vermaas. The PM invited them to sit in on the meeting, where they also expressed concern about possible Venezuelan interference. The Lt. Governor and PM planned to pass the FOL information to friendly island commissioners so that they can better respond to the accusations and allegations that the opposition is likely to make at the June 24 public meeting.

#### VENEZUELAN DRUMBEAT OF CRITICISM

¶6. (C) For its part, Venezuela is apparently ramping up its public criticism of the FOL and taking an increasingly aggressive posture against counter-drug flights from Curacao. In President Chavez`s recent visit to Cuba, he reportedly referred, as he has previously, to the threatening U.S. military bases in Curacao and Manta, Ecuador (REF. B). Local media also report that former Venezuelan Vice President Vicente Rangel again cited the Curacao FOL as a potential threat during his weekly TV program. Other current and former Venezuelan officials have also been quoted locally as calling the FOL a

threat to Venezuela.

#### CHALLENGES TO BRITISH, FRENCH, ANTILLEAN COUNTER-DRUG FLIGHTS

7. (C) Perhaps partly as a result of the airspace violation and high-level political attention, Venezuelan air traffic control authorities seem to be taking a more aggressive stance toward U.S. and allied counter-narcotics flights in the region. On three occasions over four days, June 14-17, we understand that Venezuelan air traffic control (ATC) at Maiquetia airport has challenged the presence of counter-narcotics aircraft operating within its Flight Information Region (FIR) but within international airspace. On these three occasions, British, French and Antillean counter-drug reconnaissance planes were told they needed Venezuelan clearance to transit the FIR. The aircraft commanders have responded that no such clearance is necessary as they are state aircraft operating in international airspace with due regard to other traffic. In the first incident, the British pilot was told that if he entered the Venezuelan FIR again, he will be intercepted by military aircraft. A Dash-8 operated by the Netherlands Antilles Coast Guard was challenged the following day and voluntarily turned around. Finally, the French aircraft, which remained in international airspace, was reportedly shadowed for 15-20 minutes by what were apparently two unidentified Venezuelan military planes 150 miles away and flying over Venezuela on a parallel course.

#### WORKING-LEVEL RESPONSE SUGGESTED

8. (C) The Netherlands Antilles Foreign Affairs Directorate (FAD) called ConGen June 15 to ask about unofficial complaints from the Venezuelan ATC regarding the first of these incidents. COM corrected the claim that U.S. aircraft were involved, and encouraged the FAD to deal with the matter first at the technical, working level. COM updated the FAD Director and Deputy PM on the margins of the June 16 FOL change of command ceremony here. The FAD director, who had just returned from talks with Venezuela on the future of the Curacao refinery (run by PDVSA), agreed. He noted that similar incidents two years ago were handled on a mil-mil basis at a low level. He also predicted that the GOV would not succeed should it attempt to link the FOL to the refinery negotiations. COM also expects to discuss the issue during a visit to JIATFSouth HQ next week where he will be joined by the Governors of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, and the Curacao-based Dutch Commander of CTG 4.4.

9. (C) Comment: The opposition parties, while small, have a dedicated following, mainly among working-class citizens who are already wary of Dutch influence and control. Opposition leader Nelson Pierre (a reputed former drug addict) of the PLNP is known to deliver lengthy, screaming rants on local radio shows, accusing U.S. and Dutch interests of wide-ranging conspiracies against Curacao and the region. Post suspects that some opposition leaders have links with the Venezuelan government and may receive funding from it. We expect more opposition attacks on our military presence in the run-up to renewal of the FOL agreement, which expires in 2011. We will continue efforts to promote the FOL as a multinational effort to work with the Antilles (and Aruba) to combat drug trafficking, and to show the Opposition parties that there is a political cost to not supporting that fight in defence of their own people. We will also continue to highlight the FOL's counter drug mission and success, along with its positive economic and social impact in

the community, in order to influence already generally favourable public opinion.

DUNNTJ