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Political Discourse Analysis over the Securitization Discourse from the US towards Venezuela:  
The Case of Obama and Trump (2015-2020)

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## **Dedicatoria**

A mi familia,

A mi padre a quien deseo enorgullecer, es mi modelo a seguir. Gracias a él trato diariamente de convertirme en una persona más fuerte y más humana. Me ayudó a superarme incluso en los momentos más oscuros.

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## Resumen

El concepto de amenaza normalmente ha sido sinónimo de comportamientos militares tradicionales, lo que de hecho limita el alcance y la extensión del concepto aplicado a los tiempos actuales. Este proyecto de investigación tiene el objetivo principal entender el proceso discursivo de Obama y de Trump para la construcción de Venezuela como una nueva amenaza hacia los Estados Unidos. Esto se analiza a través de un análisis discursivo que compara y contrasta los discursos de Obama y Trump como agentes políticos con legitimidad junto a sus actores funcionales (institucionales). Ambos discursos del ejecutivo con sus actores funcionales perciben a Venezuela como el mismo tipo de amenaza, una amenaza “inusual”. Sin embargo, el supuesto principal del ejecutivo es que Venezuela es una amenaza, debido a la influencia que tiene el país suramericano con otras potencias extranjeras por como Rusia y China. La investigación explora no solo la temática de Venezuela como una amenaza por los pilares discursivos del ejecutivo en el discurso de securitización, sino que también tiene el objetivo de entender los tipos de factores discursivos que se usaron para la construcción de Venezuela como una nueva amenaza. Adicionalmente, nos enfocamos en los valores, objetivos y expectativas que tienen los actores funcionales (institucionales) como una forma de triangular la información usada para la construcción del enemigo. Se llegó a la conclusión que Venezuela es de hecho una amenaza, no obstante, es usada como chivo expiatorio. Esta nueva amenaza es real. Sin embargo, es una consecuencia del proceso discursivo de securitización, el cual es intersubjetiva y promulgada por los Estados Unidos.

## **Abstract**

The concept of threat has normally been a synonymous with traditional military demeanors, which in fact limits the scope and the extent of the concept applied to current times. This research project has the main objective of understanding the discursive process of Obama and Trump for the construction of Venezuela as a new threat to the United States. This is analyzed through a discursive analysis comparing and contrasting the speeches of Obama and Trump as political actors with legitimacy along with their functional (institutional) actors. Both speeches from the executive with its functional actors perceive Venezuela as the same type of threat, an "unusual" threat. However, the main assumption of the executive is that Venezuela is a threat, due to the influence that the South American country has with other foreign powers such as Russia and China. The research explores not only the theme of Venezuela as a new threat through to the discursive pillars used by the executive in the securitization discourse, but also has the objective of understanding what kind of new threat Venezuela is. Additionally, we focus on the values, objectives and expectations that functional (institutional) actors have as a way to triangulate the information used for the construction of the enemy. Finally, it was determined that Venezuela is a new threat, nonetheless, it is used as a scapegoat. This new threat is real. However, it is also the consequence of the discursive process of securitization, which is intersubjective and propelled by the US.



## **Introduction**

### **1. Problem Statement**

In March 2015, president Obama explicitly stated that Venezuela was an imminent threat to the US national security. The US immediately placed economic sanctions on the country as well as on Venezuelan officials due to corruption and human rights abuses- and specifically targeted the excessive use of violence against civilians-. However, the threat of Venezuela can be traced since December 2014, when president Obama signed the first Executive Order (E.O.) of the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act, before even explicitly mentioning that Venezuela was perceived as a threat to the US at all. This allowed further sanctions to be placed in 2015. According to the White House Office of the Press Secretary, “We are committed to advancing respect for human rights, safeguarding democratic institutions, and protecting the U.S. financial system from the illicit financial flows from public corruption in Venezuela” (2015). The E.O of 2015 determined Venezuela as a threat to the US not only by Obama himself, but rather it was determined by both the Department of Treasury and the Department of State along with the constant enforcement of other institutions such as the republican led Congress.

On the other hand, the goal of the aforementioned Act of 2014 was for the region to support political free speech and liberties in Venezuela, which should defend democratic and liberal commitments that are articulated in the ratified OAS charter. The Charter explicitly mentions the importance of liberal and democratic values, where individual liberties and democratic institutions are pivotal for the improvement of the region and each country. As a regional organization, the OAS, defends sovereignty, the non-intervention principle, and roots for order and peace through solidarity (Charter of the OAS, 1948). These are some of the expected demeanors ratified members should follow, one of those members is Venezuela. Apart from the US using direct coercion to pursue a democratic transition in Venezuela, they are also trying to push forward through international organizations, such as the OAS, that work in the region as a way to increase their leverage.

Regardless of the discourse and US sanctions imposed on Venezuela, the US is still economically active with the south American nation. According to The Guardian “The US

maintains deep economic ties with Venezuela, particularly its energy sector. According to a 2013 State Department fact sheet, Venezuela was one of the top five suppliers of foreign oil to the US.” (The Guardian, 2015). Antagonism does not necessarily mean exclusion of the other. During the Trump administration the rate of executive orders signed exponentially grew to six E. O’s. A military intervention was on the table not only by the executive but also supported by a big part of the republican party, especially in Congress. Trump had a policy of “maximum effort” against Venezuela. Hence, the sanctions imposed to Venezuela were harder and larger than the ones given by the Obama administration. However, the sizeable private sector in Venezuela was not blacklisted during the Trump administration.

In fact, during the last two years of the Trump administration, Venezuela, was such a discussed topic that in every single hearing Venezuela would come up not only as a threat that had to be dealt with a military intervention, but also as a political threat through their ongoing systemic corruption and their ongoing humanitarian crisis. For Trump, Venezuela is a mutually exclusive nation when compared to the US that has to be pushed and sanctioned for not having the same values as the US. They are the “other”. According to Jraissati & von Laer “In 2019, Trump then made the decision to freeze the Venezuelan government’s bank accounts in the United States and prohibit all U.S. entities from engaging in transactions with the Maduro government without prior authorization from the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control” (2021). The majority of sanctions imposed by Trump went against PDVSA and every company that made any sort of transactions with the Venezuelan state oil company in the hopes that Maduro would lose control of key interest groups.

Venezuela is a topic that matters due to the historic relations the US has had with the South American Nation. Moreover, both countries still are heavily dependent on each other due to Venezuelan oil regardless of their ongoing antagonism. It is of deep interest to understand the process in which a country with a perception of a friend can eventually become a foe. The US government started to allocate resources to change the perception of Venezuela into an enemy, through E.O.’s and in Trump’s case by constantly using Venezuela as a negative adjective. As a matter of fact, Trump apart from increasing the E.O’s used Venezuela as a way of antagonizing democrats. If historically we take into account the power dynamic the US has had in the region,

it has always tried to have “ good” relations. The fact that the US and Venezuela discursively are always trying to antagonize each other, even though, both countries are dependent on each other simply makes us question what is the real incentive to do so and if it is worth it.

Moreover, in 2018 alone, over 3 million Venezuelans had immigrated to other countries in the American continent seeking better economic opportunities due to Venezuela’s hyperinflation and corruption index. Nowadays over 7 million Venezuelans have immigrated in the search for better opportunities. The interesting fact is that the great majority of immigrants decided to stay inside Latin America and few made it up to the US border. In 2017, Venezuela’s GDP decreased 35%, even a greater than the fall of the US’ GDP during the Great Depression (Vox, 2017).

Throughout the 116<sup>th</sup> US congress<sup>1</sup> along with the republican party, there was constant lobbying for a military intervention alongside a diplomatic solution, which the latter was proposed by the democratic Party. US intervention in Venezuela, increased when the interim president Juan Guaido was elected in 2019, forming a parallel government. Congress and the executive increased their securitization discourse to propel intervention under the basis of corruption and humanitarian purposes. Nonetheless, the discourse changed during the Trump administration when the pandemic hit, leaving Venezuela as a secondary problem.

In contrast to the Obama administration, the Trump administration had the support of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress and the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, which were republican majority. However, both administrations propelled for a democratic transition for the South American country in their own ways. At the core, Congress always maintains the same values and objectives for the US, which is directed to maintain their hegemony in the region. Regardless, the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, mentioned that to force for a democratic transition in the region would not only be costly in a military sense but stated that an enforced democratic transition could not stand for a long period of time and democracy could be short lived in the South American nation. Hence, the need of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Congress’ president was Mike Pence and the majority was republican, increasing the push for republican policies against Venezuela. The 116<sup>th</sup> Congress lasted for the last two years of the Trump administration.

US government to use organizations such as the OAS and the support from their Latin-American counterparts to achieve a persuasive diplomatic solution.

The broadening of the threats, go in hand with the concept of new threats in security studies, also known as “emerging threats” in the literature. Venezuela is perceived by the US as a “new threat” even though the White House explicitly mentioned that it was an “unusual and extraordinary threat”. New threats have an impact of the future of the nation-state in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that are not only limited to the state. When speaking of emerging or new threats “security may be defined not merely as a goal but as a consequence- this means that we may not realize what it is or how important it is until we are threatened with losing it” (Fonseca & Rosen 2017, 7). The security agenda can change when society changes and regular problems can be elevated to security threats. Therefore, the intrigue to understand what changed in society for Venezuela to be considered a new threat for the US. Two main sectors where the new threats immediately came to mind were: the political sector and the societal sector.

Venezuela due to their left-wing, socialist ideology fundamentally represents a new political threat to the very own institutions of the US, which are capitalism and democracy. A political threat is the entity that proves to be an existential fear to the referent object to maintain safe, it causes an identity to question itself. According to Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde “Political threats are about giving or denying recognition support, or legitimacy which explains why it is possible to have purely political threats” (1998, 142). It changes the order of the public realm. Venezuela ideologically is a counterbalancing force that at the core rotten the institutions that make the American identity “Americanism” or even the concept of patriotism for the US. The rivalry between ideologies is quite a complex to securitize and complex to minimize as a threat.

On the other hand, societal threats are closely related to political threats but are not the same. “Societal threats are about the organizational stability of states and the ideology that give government and states their legitimacy” (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998, 119). Ideas and practices are what give society an order, whether is democracy or capitalism (which are political aspects). Nonetheless, the political and societal threats for the authors are in continuous feedback, they are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are both mutually sustaining. Societal

security is about identity and the collectivity. The greatest difference is that political threats erode tangible institutions such as democracy, while societal threat damage the social cohesion that can be seen through nationalism/identity.

We must also bear in mind that vulnerabilities increase due to the growth in capabilities one them being the growth in population. The more mature the state formation, the more vulnerabilities that state will have to face. The more security the US propels, the more stable their structure becomes for securitizing is seen traditionally as a synonym for what is good and politically desirable. However, what is not seen from “strong states” it is that because they propel towards more security, the spectrum of security increases, increasing the possible threats leading them to the traditional security dilemma. The securitization theory due to its discursive approach, requires the differentiation between the ‘us’ and the ‘other’, which dictates behavior.

The pivotal point over securitization is that speeches with a receptive audience create a threat. The more an idea is accepted by the audience, it becomes a reality. On the same note, for the process of securitization to work properly, it requires a political actor, which in this case is Obama and Trump along with an audience that will take their words as legitimate. According to Buzan “unless an idea is widely held, it cannot count as part of the idea of the state” (1983, 53). Language to work properly, or any speech act, it requires a teleological classification, what is good and what is bad, and for it to be accepted by the audience/society. Language itself is violent and requires a binary logic to outline the limitations of its own fields by excluding, when there is exclusion- the gray areas in the concept do not interrelate- then the more difficult is to forget or re-arrange the core block of an idea. Language is built in a way that the more you use an object as a threat, the audience will eventually believe it and get in sync.

The analysis of threat construction from the securitization theory, states that the perception of threat is not something exogenous. Rather is constructed by widely accepted ideas from the collectivity, the audience, also known as the “us”. A threat is not physical or tangible but rather represent an existential danger to the construction of the “us” . It is everything that can categorically be foreign in our identity creeds. We must take into account that at the core, national security in the securitization theory is also linked with the notion of securitizing oneself

from outside and domestic threats for survival. Hence, the political elite that invokes “securitization” will also inherently mention the consequences of taking no response at all, increasing fear through the possible weakening of state foundations/institutions, which is an extension of the nation and of individuals. The foundation to understand a threat is the construction of the ‘us’ versus the antagonist ‘other’, both are mutually sustaining and not excluded. This mutual constitution of language can be seen through the fact that Venezuela and the EE.UU. are antagonist and still have deep economic ties and be highly interdependent (Bonfili 2010).

Venezuela is a created threat based upon the interests and of the US. Hence, the goal of this research is to understand the discursive pillars of the Obama and Trump speeches over the perception of Venezuela as a threat. This will be done by using the political speeches of both executives with the theory of securitization. In addition, the project has the specific objective to comprehend the type of new threat Venezuela is for the US, thus, the research project axis of study is security studies. All in all, the study asks the following overarching research question:

- In what manner the discursive pillars of Trump and Obama are used in the construction of Venezuela as a new threat?

The relevance of this research lies in the fact that it analyzes a current phenomenon, which is the case of Venezuela. It is of interest to understand the broad discursive construction of a new threat and how it becomes an existential fear to the referent object. The literature does in fact state that Venezuela is a new threat, nonetheless, a discourse analysis has not been used and the majority of literature has limited itself to case studies. Hence, we shall take a deep dive into the discursive analysis of threat construction. Additionally, the great majority of research published about the securitization of Venezuela is about immigration, specially focused during the COVID-19 period. The articles about the securitization of migration do state that racism and other anti-immigration laws are a consequence of host countries been unable to accommodate migrant communities due to the drain it gives to social services (Chami, Brown & Roy 2020). Meaning that these projects have taken into account the fact that to elevate something as an existential fear, it is a highly politicized action and it involves political actors with certain interests.

Moreover, there are no research until now that has compared and contrasted the discourses given by both Obama and Trump over the perception the US has against Venezuela.

Comparative projects have only discussed over immigration problems or foreign policy of both administrations through case studies and not through a discourse analysis. The handful of discourse analysis that do speak about Venezuela only analyze one administration and not two at the same time. Moreover, not many projects have focused on the securitization process the Obama administration gave Venezuela, rather they focused on the securitization of Iran and Islam. On the other hand, articles that speak about the securitization of new threats have not used Venezuela as an object of study, but rather have performed a genealogical deconstruction of the concepts of new threats and organized crime. Hence, the scope of this research project is highly ambitious because it is comparing and contrasting two different administrations and their discourses while analyzing the type of new threat Venezuela currently is for the US.

To understand the theory of securitization, we shall perform a comparative Discourse Analysis (DA) to the security actors which can also be renamed as political actors, in this case the executive branch through the DA of the Obama and Trump discourses. In addition, we shall analyze the functional actors required inside the theory of securitization through a DA, also renamed in this research as the “institutional actors”<sup>2</sup>. According to Buzan, Waever and De Wilde “Functional actors affect the dynamic of a sector. Without being the referent object or the actor calling for security” (1998, 36). Through DA we shall be able to understand the text, the discourse and the sociocultural practice over the construction of threat. The key fact in this DA is that no branch alone in the US government can act by itself. Hence, the need not only to analyze the discourses of both presidents but also of the institutions aforementioned during their administration.

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<sup>2</sup> In this research, functional actors are renamed institutional actor just to make it clear for the reader that the entities been analyzed are institutions of the US. These actors are analyzed to triangulate the information analyzed in the Obama and Trump speeches. The functional actors are needed inside the securitization theory.

## **2. Functional Actors (institutional actors)**

Functional actors influence the speech act and decision-making processes within the theory of securitization, but they are not the political actor for the securitization process that calls for the securitization of a referent object. They influence the dynamics of the securitization sector. A set of functional actors might be government agencies that have certain values and objectives to perform, within the theory of securitization this category has been neglected and focused only on the audience. Therefore, the need to additionally analyze our three main functional actors, which in this research shall be regarded as institutional actors. Plus, to add these actors, will allow us to triangulate the information, giving us more valuable and objective data to analyze. The department of treasury and the department of state shall be analyzed conjointly for they both back up the executive orders signed by both previous presidents. Mainly in this section only E.O's shall be analyzed, because both departments needed the signature of the executive to perform the sanctions imposed to Venezuela. The E.O's that were analyzed were:

1. Executive Order 13884 of August 6, 2019 “Blocking Property of the Government of Venezuela”
2. Executive Order 13857 of January 28, 2019 “Taking Additional Steps to Address the National Emergency with Respect to Venezuela”
3. Executive Order 13850 of November 1, 2018 “Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing to the Situation in Venezuela”
4. Executive Order 13835 of May 21, 2018 “Prohibiting Certain Additional Transactions with Respect to Venezuela”
5. Executive Order 13827 of March 19, 2018 “Taking Additional Steps to Address the Situation in Venezuela”
6. Executive Order 13808 of August 24, 2017 “Imposing Additional Sanctions with Respect to the Situation in Venezuela”
7. Executive Order 13692 of March 8, 2015 “Blocking Property and Suspending Entry of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Venezuela”

Moreover, another institutional actor researched, is the Committee on Foreign Relations from the Senate and the last actor is Congress. The Foreign Relations Committee is a standing committee



inside the US Senate. It has twenty-two members and seven subcommittees. The papers to be analyzed in this section shall be the joint hearings from the committee. Our main focus are those hearings that do talk about Venezuela as a threat but also those hearings that will talk about the US influence over the western world and the perception the US government has upon different enemies. For congress, congressional records shall be analyzed where bipartisan politics happened inside the institution. However, regardless of the fact of “who rules”, Congress has the same values and goals. During the Obama administration and part of the Trump administration was Honorable congressman Duncan who is part of the democratic party. The tendency of talking about Venezuela was rather low by the democratic party. In last years of the Trump administration this changed due to the acting chairman, which was from the republican party, this changed the dynamics of Congress.

### **3. Methodology and techniques to collect data**

To analyze the process of securitization and threat construction of Venezuela by the US political discourse, this research shall have a qualitative methodology with a constructivist ontology with a post-positivist epistemology. This research will be part of the methodological pluralism “pluralist rigor” the science has been taking part for the past few years with the goal of helping the science grow. According to Lapid “Post-positivism also invokes a deliberate shift to the thematic level of underlying ontological, epistemological, and axiological premise and assumptions” (1989, 241). Hence, the explanation and overall research shall have an interpretative approach. “Meaning comes from the context of a cultural symbol system” (Neuman 2006, 72) . Meaning and understanding are not intrinsic to the world but are socially constructed. We did not tap into post-structuralism, because no assumptions could be given to reader because there is nothing given in the world.

The post-positivist epistemology expands the agenda of the social theory and how theory works to understand, the logic of society comes from relational experiences, which at the core is another way of saying “speech acts” or “discourses”. According to Hollis & Smith “The goal is to find a meaning in actions and events... it is not to look for hidden causes because the context of action cannot be divorced from the actors due to the meaning ideas have” (1990, 70).

Therefore, to use a positivist epistemology is a way of limiting oneself to simply explain and at

the core for many constructivists, positivism has proven to be restrictive and dehumanizing because holism and an emancipatory view of reality cannot be apprehended. Post-structuralism is an epistemology that also assess discourse. However, they dwell into a more abstract debate of substance over matter of language that would make the project more abstract. It will open far too much ground for the research tilting us towards a meta-debate. Hence, the decision to stay within the post-positivism epistemology.

The use of post-positivist epistemology opens the theory to understand, which is to reproduce the logic in the actors and audience's minds becoming more self-reflective over the tropes that influence reason and logic in the world. This epistemology will lead us to *hermeneus* or 'interpreter' for action must always be understood *verstehen* from within the social cohesion<sup>3</sup>. Due to this lack of scientific pluralism, International Relations has been categorized as the least self-reflective science of the western social sciences, pushing those post-positivists authors to embrace more philosophy rather than IR (Lapid 1989). The post-positivist epistemology aims towards a qualitative methodology, which embraces an understanding of the social world and its processes. Post-positivism breaks with the modern/positivist ideas of enlightenment but does not disregard them either.

These types of research prefer to collect non-numeric data, focusing on meaning and processes of the social world that can be found in the forms of the spoken or written language, both nationwide and internationally (Lamont 2015). Having a clear methodology will allow us to reach for scientific pluralism without reaching towards an epistemological anarchism or a hyper-reflexivity. Part of a qualitative data analysis is to triangulate, in this research triangulation is applied by analyzing the institutional actors (known within the securitization theory as functional actors). Triangulation is to cross-reference information to assess the validity of the data and to minimize inconsistencies while producing a more robust understanding. This is done through the institutional actors such as: the congress, the committee on foreign relations, the department of

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<sup>3</sup> Social cohesion is the sameness from within a community, as in the words of Tonnies the *Gemeinschaft*. The level of trust and likeness.

state and the department of treasury to assess that the information from both Obama and Trump is coherent.

The research method in this project shall be through a comparative discourse analysis (DA). This enables us to understand how discourse worked in the construction of the new threat for each administration. Discourse itself becomes the object of study. For reality nor “truth” can be achieved without discourses. The three basic premises any method of discursive analysis takes into account are: knowledge of the world should not be treated as an objective truth, the social world is constructed socially and discursively, different social understandings lead to different social actions, and that knowledge is created through social interaction. (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discourse, identities and the social space are the key points that organize reality discursively- meaning nodal points, master signifiers and myths respectively-. To achieve a successful discourse analysis one needs cultural competence, meaning that context is also pivotal. This is because DA is a great way of showing and understanding the power relations.

Through discourse analysis, the basic assumption is the performativity of social actions in the social structure, we think and we act in a certain way that enables performativity inside the discourse. When discourse is performative, we mean that it produces a certain conglomerate of effects that goes through a two-way information channel, which is solidified by the performance of agents simultaneously. According to Foucault “Western thought has seen to it that discourse be permitted as little room as possible between thought and words...that the structures of language themselves should be brought into play producing a certain effect of meaning” (as cited in Lemert & Wallerstein 1993, 454). In the West, discourse is strong due to the rituals involved and the fellowship of discourse, which defines the qualifications required by the speaker. Hence, the power or legitimacy to recite certain discourses through the exercise of a vertical hierarchical thought process, which is evident in the political actors inside securitization. This legitimacy is required in speech because society is always trying to form common truths.

Furthermore, DA is a great method to understand the power relations that have not been addressed as much nor challenged. It is obvious that there is a power imbalance between the US and Venezuela, which is a vertical and hierarchical dynamic. However, we are looking to

understand how that power imbalance works, making it more evident. Discourse tends to be politicized when the patterns of meaning change and this is the quest of us in this research (Neumann 2008). Also, the technique makes the world more transparent to understand how elements interact between each other. “ It tries to understand how discourses that structure the activities of the social agents are generated and how they work or may be changed” (Howarth 1995, 125). It is clear that we are focusing on understanding how the securitization discourse works and why the discourse is applied, the hidden cause, need or interest from the political actors securitizing the referent object.

Language and meaning are pivotal for DA, Jorgensen & Phillips mention that “Language is a machine that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world” (2002, 9). However, DA bears in mind that the discourse changes because the social world change propelling discourse, knowledge and subjectivities. DA aim to the study of the discursive processes that built discourse itself because people are influenced by those processes. The project’s aim is to understand the discursive process of construction of the new threat of Venezuela. Therefore, power relations and how the discourse is built by the political actor is pivotal. DA states that discourses are made by ideologies and that truth is unattainable, which is compatible with the securitization theory where the process of securitization is a speech-act. Perception of a threat do not necessarily translate into the unattainable reality.

Political discourse analysis (PDA) was the technique to analyze the data, along with the institutional actors, which enables the discourse to have an impact in decision-making. PDA “Is a perspective which focuses on the reproduction and contestation of political power through political discourse” (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012, 17). This technique in this research helped us to limit the amount of information been analyzed, to only speeches inside a political context. Meaning that the primary sources of both executive came from political events, whether it was a rally, a bilateral meeting or a speech at an organization. The political context is pivotal because we are able to see how the political actors exert their power. PDA sees the argumentation before the political decision, the way in which the political actor convinces the audience (the American audience), also known as the *perlocutionary effect*, which will be used in the analysis.

In a PDA is required to do a discourses analysis, but at the same time is needed to analyze the perlocutionary effect or the argumentation effect of the political actors (political actors) through the struggle for power. Inside the discourse, the political actor might be cooperative or non-cooperative (lying or deceiving), to determine whether the political actor is cooperating or not the institutional actors are of great help. Argumentative schemes are required to perform a PDA, according to Fairclough & Fairclough “Argumentation (a central analytical concept in our approach) is a verbal, social activity, in which people attempt to criticize or justify claims; it is a complex speech act which convinces an interlocutor to accept a standpoint” ( 2012, 23).

Argumentation for PDA is an extra-linguistic goal, political actors try to change the world and upon this they formulate strategies. In PDA also deliberation does in hand with argumentation, or the why to the action, in deliberative democracies different viewpoints need to be addressed to produce a legitimate decision. (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012). To understand the deliberation and the type of argumentation the political actor is giving, the institutional actors will help us to understand the logic behind the executive discourses.

To analyze the discourse of threat construction through differences and similarities we built three main discursive pillars inside the PDA that allowed us to compare and contrast each administration. Both Obama and Trump alongside their institutional actors had three discursive pillars in common, which were: Enemy “threat”, Security “referent objects”, and Nationalism “us”. Each discursive pillar mentioned has also subsidiary categories, which differs on each administration. Each subcategories will be discussed in the upcoming chapters. The discursive pillars to compare and contrast each administration was as follows:

**Table 1.1. The Discursive Pillars**

<b>ENEMY (The other)</b>	<b>SECURITY (Referent Objects)</b>	<b>Nationalism (The us) through community, institutions or even through enemy creation</b>
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Source: Information built upon the research question of this research project (see page 6)

These abovementioned discursive pillars were used in each discourse whether it was for Obama and for Trump. The difference occurs when analyzing each president, the discursive

subcategories change. For each pillar of discursive construction are built differently due to the individual and the political experiences and intentions each president has and overall, their interests. Also, the context and the argumentation each president had were very different. Moreover, during the analysis each discourse had different security constellations. Trump's constellations were seen in the subcategory of immigration whilst the Obama constellation was seen in democracy and capitalism. Finally, it is important to mention that the subcategories change because of the executive own goals, each president had a different goal in mind and the values and goals the US has, influence the collectivity through their actions and discourses up to a point.

The information analyzed was gathered through an archival and document-based research. In this research our primary sources were the speech transcripts given by both Obama and Trump in political scenarios, such as bilateral meetings, speeches at different NGOs or when addressing the nation. The primary sources that were analyzed added over 400 speeches between Obama and Trump, all of the transcripts were given in a political platform, due to the fact that both Obama and Trump are political actors with enough qualifications. To limit information in DA is always a challenge because discourses interrelate to one another (Neuman 2008). Nonetheless, it is needed to limit the scope of the research. We limited this research to only speeches that were given in a political arena or context, meaning that all of them came from a formal scenario. The speeches (primary sources) started from 2015 as abovementioned until 2020.

The most relevant discourses by Obama and Trump were picked mainly through two websites: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/> for Obama and <https://factba.se/transcripts> for Trump. Later on, they were all analyzed with ATLAS.TI, which is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). We focused on discursive action through hyperlinking and narrowing the analytic focus through codes. These codes helped us choose the most relevant discourses to be analyzed.

The primary sources for Obama from 2015 until 2016 that were quoted inside the research were:

- ASEAN Business and Investment Summit Address

- Civil Society Forum Address in Panama
- End of Year Press Conference
- Joint Press Conference with President Xi Jinping
- Presser on Education Secretary Change
- Selma March 50-Year Anniversary Address
- Southeast Asian Youth Initiative Fellows Address
- Statement on Iran Nuclear Agreement
- United Nations 70th Session General Assembly Speech
- Speech to the Parliament of Canada
- Address in Hannover to the Peoples of Europe
- Address on Entrepreneurship at Dreamplex in Vietnam
- Address to the People of Greece
- Final Presidential Press Conference of Year
- Joint Presser with Chancellor Angela Merkel
- Nuclear Security Summit Press Conference
- On Closing Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility
- Press Conference in Peru
- United Nations 71st Session General Assembly Speech

The primary sources for Trump from 2016 until 2020 that were quoted inside the research were:

- Donald Trump in Miami, FL
- Speech: Donald Trump Delivers a Campaign Speech in Tampa, FL
- Speech: Donald Trump in Williston, ND
- Donald Trump Hosts Hispanic Heritage Month at The White House
- Donald Trump Signs New Policy Towards Cuba in Miami
- Press Conference: Donald Trump and Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia
- Donald Trump Addresses the 73rd Session of the United Nations
- Donald Trump Answers Questions from Press Pool
- Donald Trump Delivers the State of the Union Address

- Donald Trump Delivers the State of the Union Address
- Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Council Bluffs, Iowa
- Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Elko, Nevada
- Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Las Vegas, Nevada
- Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Pensacola, Florida
- Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Rochester, Minnesota
- Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Springfield, Missouri
- Catherine Herridge of Fox News Interviews Donald Trump - Full Interview
- Donald Trump Addresses the Faith and Freedom Coalition in Washington
- Donald Trump Attends a Multilateral Meeting on Venezuela
- Donald Trump Attends a National Day of Prayer Service at The White House
- Donald Trump Delivers the State of the Union
- Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in El Paso, Texas
- Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Sunrise, Florida
- Interview: José Díaz-Balart of Telemundo Interviews Donald Trump
- Remarks: Donald Trump Holds a Bilateral Meeting with Mario Benítez of Paraguay
- Speech: Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Speech: Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Cincinnati, Ohio
- Donald Trump Announces Executive Order on Hong Kong and China
- Donald Trump Holds a Coronavirus Pandemic Briefing
- Interview: Jose Diaz-Balart of Noticias Telemundo Interviews Donald Trump in Florida
- Maria Bartiromo Interviews Donald Trump on Fox News

The secondary sources on the other hand came from books, articles and official documents for the analysis of the institutional actors (functional actors within the securitization theory), which are agencies that have certain values, objectives and actions/expectations to perform.

Methodologically triangulation as a validation strategy in the section of the institutional actors, because no single method can capture the whole reality (Denzin 1978). The documents analyzed for the triangulation were the executive orders given by both Obama and Trump when dealing with the department of state and treasury, the congress' hearings of the committee of foreign



affairs and finally the congressional records all relating to the way Venezuela is treated as a threat. Moreover, it is important to highlight that the institutional actors will also help us analyze if whether or not the securitization process was successful (whether or not the political actor was able to acquire support of the audience) and if within the political discourse analysis if the argumentation of the political actor was cooperative or non-cooperative.

Hence, the documents used in the institutional actors analysis are an addition to analyze the primary sources documents as a way to decrease personalistic biases (Lamont 2015). This is additional data that will help us further understand the research question of how Venezuela is perceived as a new threat within the discursive pillars of the Obama and Trump speeches. There were also analyzed through a CAQDAS. Triangulation in this research project helped us in multiple ways apart from with the discourse analysis as way to understand the political context in which both executives gave their speeches, it also helped us with the PDA to understand the perlocutionary effect and whether the political actors were able to convince the audience for the allocation of resources.

The triangulation of the institutional actors (Congress, Department of state and treasury, and the committee on foreign affairs) decreased biases and morality. The attitudes the executive might be different from those of the government, thus, why the triangulation was of data sources. Finally in the theoretical framework, the triangulation of the institutional actors (functional actors) have us a further in-depth scope of the securitization process of Venezuela as a new threat and whether the process was a successful one or not. According to Denzin “ By triangulation data sources, analysts can efficiently employ the same methods to maximum theoretical advantage, discovering that their concepts have in common across settings” (1978, 295). The reader must take into account that the functional actors inside the securitization theory are important not because they give the speech to the audience, but rather they tilt the frame for the storyline of the security issue, this will be discussed later on.

#### **4. Structure**

The research is divided into four chapters: introduction, the first chapter which is the theoretical framework, the second chapter “Obama”, third chapter “Trump”, and the conclusions with

recommendations as the final chapter. The main objective of the theoretical framework is to understand the main concepts as well as the theories that influenced the research project. In this case as previously stated, this research shall analyze discourses through a constructivist lens. We also state that the main theory to be used shall be the theory of securitization, which is part of the constructivist realm, the construction of the threat through a discursive act. Moreover, in the theoretical framework we analyzed the different perceptions of threat, how a threat is built and the influence power relations have upon the construction of the threat. Finally, we spoke about “unconventional threats/new threats” and whether Venezuela could be in fact a threat to the US. This chapter apart from the theories, we used John Bolton’s book, *The Room Where It Happened*, which explained Trump’s logic upon Venezuela and his actions against the South American nation.

The second chapter is the first empirical chapter, which focused on the securitization discourse through a collective political decision-making from Obama. This chapter focuses on the 2015 period until 2016. The analysis once again starts since March 2015, when Obama clearly states that Venezuela is a direct and imminent threat for the US national security by signing his first and only E.O against Venezuela. The first economic sanctions were imposed to Venezuela by the US during the Obama administration. Moreover, in this chapter the reports, hearings and statements from the four different institutional actors (Congress, Foreign Relations Committee, Department of State and Department of Treasury) of the US shall be also taken into account. When we analyzed both types of discourses, we can acknowledge the deliberation behind the sanctions imposed to the treat. In this chapter, the institutional actors were also analyzed from 2015 until 2016.

The third chapter shall do the same as the second chapter. However, this chapter will focus only on the Trump administration, meaning that the chapter will focus on the 2016 until 2020 period. In this period, economic and political sanctions imposed to Venezuela hardened and expanded from the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014 and the first E.O in 2015. In addition, this chapter shall take into account the political backlash Trump had to receive and whether he has proven to be an effective securitizing actor by enforcing more force. Moreover, in 2019 the Trump administration has tried to come into terms with different countries

in Latin America, to securitize against Venezuela. This not only due to the massive immigration influx the whole continent has received from Venezuela but also due to the intervention of foreign powers in the region. Plus, during the Obama term, the Monroe Doctrine was seen as outdated and during the Trump term, the doctrine is once again used.

The fourth chapter, is the conclusions of the research. In this chapter, the main findings shall be stated. Moreover, in this chapter we compared and contrasted the securitization speeches from both Obama and Trump with their institutional actors. Seeing the similarities and differences between not only the executive branch but also the government itself through their institutions. In the conclusions, we shall see if both administrations had a successful securitization process through a collective decision-making, or whether they were simply securitizing moves that had no impact whatsoever. Plus, we were able to determine what type of new threat Venezuela is and was during both administrations and whether or not we can state that Venezuela is a threat or is simply a phenomenological one.

This research project argues the fact that Venezuela is a new threat for the US and creates an existential fear to what is perceived as the United States. This means that the threat fundamentally transcends the exclusive focus of threat to the state, diversifying actors and sources. To analyze the scope of new threats, the concept of threat through mainstream IR needs to be broaden because it has been historically perceived only through a military lens. Mainstream limits the understanding of the type of threat Venezuela is. Hence, this research project will explain how the discursive pillars of Obama and Trump were used in the construction of Venezuela as a new threat to the US. The project will compare and contrast the three main discursive pillars analyzed by both presidents, which were: enemy, nationalism, and security as the referent object. In addition, the project will discuss the values, goals and expectations each institutional actor had upon the topic of Venezuela to triangulate information in the speech-act. Finally, the project discusses the power relations involved in the discursive construction of the new threat.

## **Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework**

### **The Adaptation of the Theory**

This theoretical chapter will discuss the link the research objective, concepts and assumptions with the main theories of IR; thus, this chapter has a deep ideological and philosophical approach. The main theories to be discussed are: Realism, Constructivism, and the Securitization Theory. All of the theories are mutually sustaining, even though, the reader might think that realism as a theory is incompatible with the first two. We must take into account that constructivism is a theory that bridges positivist theories with post-positivist theories, post-positivism does not disregard positivist theories, they only pinpoint their limitations as a way to achieve theoretical pluralism. Moreover, the three theories presented are needed to understand the complexity of a new threat construction. Alone the theories cannot explain the phenomenon of securitization as a speech-act in the scope we are attempting. The theoretical approximation will allow us to understand how the discursive pillars of both Obama and Trump were used in the construction of Venezuela as a new threat to the US. Moreover, this chapter will give us bibliographic insight upon how Venezuela has been regarded by the US historically. We shall discuss the perception both administrations had of Venezuela and their approaches to the South American nation. Additionally, this chapter will allow us to understand the key concepts in the discursive pillars which are: enemy, nationalism, and the process of securitization also known as threat.

Realism will mainly focus on the concept of nationalism and will explain the aim of US foreign policy. In fact, even for the process of securitization to properly work, nationalism as a concept is pivotal to understand, the differentiation between the “us” and the “other” is required. For realists, nationalism is an important force in international politics because the concept of nationalism heavily intertwines with the state and its survival by any means. The US foreign policy also depicts a similarity with nationalism, where US interest prevails first as a way to achieve survival. It takes into account that Venezuela through this lens cannot be attained as a threat. According to Fonseca & Rosen “Realists view weaker powers as irrelevant to understanding the international system as they can simply align with other countries in order to balance against other powers” (2017,6). However, the theory for being state-centric must be prepared for any sort of threat that might attack the state.

On the other hand, constructivism will allow us to understand the concept of power and the influence people, norms, ideas have to form intersubjectivities. The theory will allow us to understand US hegemony through discourse and how they influence the Latin American nation. This section shall also speak about the construction of friend or foes and how attitude changes. Meanings become common knowledge, for something to become understood it must have a logic behind it. The internalization of perceptions are due to the construction of meanings that go in hand with power asymmetries. In this case we shall see the causes why Venezuela is perceived as foe rather than a friend, taking into account that the US during the 90's used to perceive Venezuela as a friend. A negative rule is a negative rule because it is given a negative description (Kratochwil 1989). All in all, this theory will help us understand the power dynamics behind language and how/why the US discourse is able to categorize something positively or negatively. Finally, the theory of securitization as a constructivist approach it also takes intersubjectivity keenly. It encompasses security through five main lenses: military, political, societal, economic, and environmental, broadening the scope of security studies. We will discuss how things become securitized and how new threats become threats. To perceive something as a threat or not highly depends on social cohesion and the discursive process behind it. It requires political actors with legitimacy and an audience able to listen. Moreover, this section discusses the main structure required to securitize a political problem.

All the theories are linked due to the discursive pillars analyzed in this research. Nationalism is the propeller of the audience's approval for the securitization process where survival against the existential threat is imperative. Constructivism on the other hand is a theory that bridges both realism and the theory of securitization and at the same time allow us to understand how discourses influence one another through norms and ideas. Nonetheless, realism at the end of the day even though a strong theory to understand the concept of nationalism, proves to be limiting for our research due to the object of study, which is discourse.

### **1. Survival, the Motor that Propels? Realism**

Human nature is what makes states get worry about their survival, the fact that due to ambition and violence other state might become an actual threat in the quest of attaining more power. The

main theoretical propositions from the realist theory by default sets more emphasis on military capabilities and the use of power through a state-owned monopoly of coercion. This theory main concerns is on material factors and it is highly state-centric. Because the theory is highly state-centric, the only political actor that could gain power are states – which is its main unit of analysis- and not individuals or speeches. As mentioned by Morgenthau “All politics, domestic and international, reveals three basic patterns: a political policy seeks either to keep power, increase power, or to demonstrate power ” (2006, 50). Meaning, the only way of achieving or acquiring power is through material absolute gains through the entity of a state. However, for Trump Venezuela was seen as a necessary country to have under control for the national interest and security of the US by acquiring more influence or power. A conceived threat inside this theory can only be seen from the standpoint of another state that could have the sufficient power to change the balance in the international order (counter-balancing).

The fact that neither Trump or Obama performed a military intervention in Venezuela, makes us appreciate that US foreign policy is still highly realist. The realist theory can only take into account a threat through a materials factors, it can only be apprehended as another state with more military capabilities that could possibly change the balance of power which is the *raison d'état*. Venezuela cannot change the balance of power in the anarchic order, because the country is not a military or even an economic superpower. It is destined to bandwagon. In fact, to militarily intervene in Venezuela would be a waste of resources rather than a gain, which is why Republican congressmen did not approve a military intervention on the first place.

Due to the Monroe Doctrine the Trump administration applied more coercion to Venezuela due to the foreign influence of Russian and China, which was clearly a concern for the administration. According to Bolton “Maduro’s autocratic regime was a threat due to its Cuba connection and the opening of afforded Russia, China and Iran. Moscow’s menace was undeniable, both military and financial, having expended substantial recourses to buttress Maduro” (2020, 230). For Trump to resurrect the Monroe Doctrine after Obama and Kerry tried to bury it, was primordial, especially due to the troika of Tyranny that is made up of leftist/ authoritarian regimes in the Americas.

The influence foreign powers had upon the Venezuelan oil and gas industry that was strategically disastrous for the Trump administration, it left the US unprotected to face multiple threats. According to Morgenthau “ Political life almost always operates through the medium of coercion. Even if one adopts a narrower definition of coercion that resists it to military action (2006, xix). The threats can be summarized to Russia and the People’s Republic of China, which were exploiting Venezuela for their own geopolitical purposes. This allowed Maduro to circumvent the economic sanctions set by the US and the EU, giving Venezuela the option of maintaining their political system through debts.

Moreover, Venezuela is been supplied by military equipment by Russia and Rosneft is handling 70 to 80 percent of Venezuelan oil exports (Faiola & De Young 2020). However, Congress and the republican party blocked the idea from Trump to military intervene in Venezuela and at the end of the day. According to Bolton, Trump saw that a military option was an option “We have many options for Venezuela, and by the way, I am not going to rule out a military option. We have many options for Venezuela.” (2020, 231). Trump’s way of dealing with Venezuela was amoral, however, power is amoral, it aims towards self-preservation.

In realism, pledges and cooperation are not trustworthy, and the state must always use coercion because politics is driven by fear rather than influence or persuasion. Ultimately States are not trust worthy and agreeing upon cooperation might have bigger destabilizing effects even when the foundation of their cooperation is security. The way Russia and China are benefitting from the energy sector in Venezuela could change the balance of power through a realist lens. The US and Venezuela historically had a strategic alliance, even with Chavez, due to the oil reserves the country has.

Political antagonism has not curtailed this strategic alliance, Venezuela still depends on the US buying their oil and the US of acquiring Venezuelan oil. For realism what is pivotal is to enhance the gains a state could have regardless of how these gains are acquired. What matters is the survival of the state regardless of ideologies, the interest of becoming stronger. Regardless of the E.O. given by the Trump administration and the sanctions imposed on those who made deals with PDVSA. The US still has strong ties with the Venezuelan oil company specially with

CITGO that is a subsidiary of PDVSA. According to Taylor “While political relations between Washington and Caracas were on the brink, the economic relationship between the two nations went largely unhindered. The US avoided imposing sanctions on Venezuela’s oil industry, and CITGO was able to operate as an independent entity” (2019). The exports Venezuela gives to CITGO is what gives money to the Maduro regime and the elites, which are those who are mostly connected to the government.

As a matter of fact, the exports of Venezuela to Russia and China do not create revenue, because they are mostly to pay debt. Freezing PDVSA assets would mean that the US government would be freezing CITGO’s assets in the US. Moreover, PDVSA owns a major refining network, “it wholly owns five refineries, along with other four owned through partnership with US companies” (Bonfili 2010, 674). The US extended protection to CITGO from creditors. Since 2018 the consumption of Venezuelan oil decreased significantly. Nonetheless the dependence the US still maintains with Venezuela is notorious. Not only because Venezuela has the biggest oil reserves in the world, but due to the proximity the country has with the US. Moreover, during the Trump administration the US gave Juan Guaido, the legitimate president of Venezuela the control over CITGO to circumvent the oil sanctions.

According the Trump administration, people that tried to help Maduro to circumvent the sanctions imposed were helping the country’s corruption (Aljazeera 2021). The fact that the Trump administration gave protection to investors of CITGO, makes the US a partner in crime of the Maduro regime. The regime by US standards is part of the troika of tyranny, where human rights abuses happen daily and corruption is systematic. The Trump’s administration actions might be amoral, but again what is pivotal is the survival of the state and without oil or an energy source, no country can ensure their survival. Even though the sanctions would block about \$7 billion in assets with \$11 billion in loses, CITGO on the other hand can continue operating and the money needs to go to a designated account (Wong & Casey 2019). All in all, the sanctions imposed by the Trump administration were filled with loopholes with the aim of the US not entering an energy crisis and at the end of the day Rosneft is making billions out of Venezuela, which for the US was unacceptable. According to Bolton:



At one thirty p.m., I met with American executives of the Citgo Petroleum Corporation, which is majority-owned by Venezuela's state-owned oil company, to tell them we supported their efforts, and those of the Venezuelan Opposition, to keep control of Citgo's refineries and service stations in the United States, thereby shielding them from Maduro's efforts to assert control (2020, 242).

The Trump administration stated that Russia's actions were immoral because they were supporting a government that is going harm to the people of Venezuela. But at the end of the day the US is doing the same, which is power politics. State survival comes first, whether is through acquiring more money, more oil, more energy. If we take into account Clausewitz' perception on peace, then it is the time where states must prepare for the following war through constant hoarding of materials.

The increased influence Russia and other powers such as China had in Venezuela is not something new. During the Bush administration and the Obama administration Russia's influence in the south American nation increased exponentially. Russia is one of the countries that do not abide by US pressure. According to Bonfili "Venezuelan arms imports from Moscow worth US\$ 1,944 billion for the period of 2006-08 made Russia the largest supplier of conventional weapons to Venezuela" (2010, 681). Sanctions were not good for the US as a state, they were good for political support for Trump.

Both Obama and Trump has a similar goal when regarding US foreign policy, especially in the region, which was to improve their leadership role. Since 2001 the US tilted their attention to the Middle East, leaving the region forgotten. However, Obama's foreign policy in comparison to Trump was different. The Obama administration stated that the Monroe Doctrine was not applicable to today's world while the Trump administration on the other hand, brought it back to life and mentioned that taking the Monroe Doctrine out was one of the biggest mistakes the Obama administration had done. According to Carr, "Power is an indispensable instrument of government. To internationalize a government in any real sense means to internationalize power; and international government is, in effect, government by that state which supplies the power necessary for the purpose of governing" (2000, 107). The more effective control a country has over their periphery, it translates that the more power it has.

However, both presidents had a clear commonality in their agenda, which was to improve US leadership in the region and the world. Obama's foreign policy tried to be more liberal by selling the world the universal values of the US and by trying to create an "international community". Those that did not attain to the US universal values were the troublemakers. However, taking into account the aforementioned statement, the Obama administration did see Venezuela as a problem and as a troublemaker. For the Obama administration it was necessary to find common ground or a *modus vivendi* with Venezuela. This need to find common ground was also because of the oil dependence both countries had. According to McCoy "The United States buys about 55 percent of Venezuelan oil exports and Venezuela provides between 11 and 14 percent of US imported oil" (2009, 145). Obama had a tough job with Venezuela because since Chavez, Venezuela's foreign policy has always tried to counterbalance the US hegemony in the region. Instead of isolating or confronting, Obama tried to engage through cooperation.

Obama in contrast with Trump and previous presidents saw that isolating Venezuela was going to be counterproductive. The administration knew about the disenchantment the region had of the US; thus, the goal was to diffuse confrontation with Venezuela as much as possible. "The most important factor to change the negative dynamic will be a change in style and attitude by the US, a turn toward greater multilateralism, consultation and respect" (McCoy 2009, 159). The Obama agenda for Latin-America was more tolerant than others as a way to ameliorate the negative attitudes towards the US, which had decreased their leadership role in the region, mostly due to their unilateralism.

Regardless of Obama's tolerance approach to the region, to fully improve their image would require the US to allow foreign states to choose their leaders. The fact that he was the first president to impose a E.O's theoretically proves that the US agenda it is still highly realist even though, the president at the time tried to be more of a liberal. Regardless of the fact that the region upholds similar values, the relationship of Washington with the region has grown more distant" (Zovatto 2009). This makes Obama's tolerance even more questionable. Moreover, Obama was very keen on forming an international community, where he left Venezuela and other authoritarian regimes aside and isolated them. Even though his first aim was not to escalate

conflict at the end of the day he did it. The region is left by the US not because it is not important, but rather, because it is not seen as a threat. Moreover, the key ingredient Obama lacked in this foreign policy was to see the region as a region with weak institutions that the US must enhance to actually improve their image. Rather Obama separated the countries in the region, from those that are part of the international community and those that are not.

On the other hand, nationalism is a highly important concept in this research, as it is a way to increase security and to maintain a nation safe, whilst increasing the notion of an imagined community through identities and loyalties. Through the realist lens, to talk about nationalism is to talk about warfare, because every time nationalism is evoked a war occurs. According to Posen:

Nationalism is the propensity of individuals to identify their personal interest with that of a group that is too large to meet together; to identify that interest on the basis both of a “culture” that the group shares, and a purported history that the group purportedly shares; and to believe that this group must have the state structure of its own in order to survive” (1993, 81).

Nationalism is there to increase common culture as a way of validating their own humanity through their heritage. American nationalism based itself on four different creeds, the more creeds an identity has the stronger it gets. Nowadays we can speak about a crisis in US identity because out of the four creeds, only one still stands, which is the political creed. American identity is weak. Thus, the state is weak and its survival can be questioned. Nationalism at the core increases state legitimacy and in times of war increases support for the war effort to mass mobilize people and resources (Posen 1993). Moreover, nationalism creates a *sameness* in people where trust is a must, this creates a *gemeinschaft*<sup>4</sup> or a warm circle where existential fear of the other is unknown. The *gemeinschaft* is not only acquired through language itself but through symbols and myths.

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<sup>4</sup> Ferdinand Tönnies coined the concept of *Gemeinschaft*, which can be considered as a warm circle as mentioned by Goran Rosenberg, apprehension with the other does not require words and a feeling of real social togetherness is created. It is a social unit where sympathy and help are expected without asking.

Additionally, nationalism is a key component for nation-building, and the executives also show nationalism through patriotism and protectionism. According to Schmidt “The traditional meaning of national security is most often associated with the notion of protecting, and ultimately securing, the physical survival of the nation-state from external threats in the form of a statist military attack” (2012, 188). Nationalism is achieved by self-glorifying myths that may turn into hyper-nationalism and see other “inferior” nations as a threat. The point of nationalism even for realist is not only the survival of the state as a territory, but also the survival of the nation that underpins it.

Mythmaking in any context of nationalism is pivotal for nationalism to function. Myths and symbols are what give destiny to a nation; however, the causes of nationalism are not only limited to only these. In fact, nationalism can also be propelled by economic problems or security threats (Synder & Ballentine 1996). Nationalism at the core allows the leaders to have more legitimacy to impose their citizens certain policies or to convince them of a greater threat that is out there to get them. This is due to the tight bonds and *sameness* created by society, where trust is pivotal. According to Porter “a complex bureaucratic apparatus designed to mobilize resources as well as generating material power.” (2016, 242). This overall propels less resistance of the nation. The enemy within the logic of nationalism, must reflect a counter-identity, it has to be the opposite of what the national identity is. In the US case, there are normally countries that are categorized by having an evil behavior such as oppressing their citizens or not been democratic (Huntington 2004). The mythmaking in the US scenarios it is that they are not the evil doers but the saviors of the liberal democracies, there is a clear differentiation between “us” the good and the “others” the wrongdoers.

Since 2001, the US has had a crisis in identity and nationalism. In addition, the creeds that made US identity are politically incorrect. In fact, the idea that the US is a country of immigrants it was a myth that started to appear after WWII and it is not the reality at all. According to Huntington “For all practical purposes America was a white society until the mid-twentieth century”(2004, 56). Immigrants on the one hand maintain links to their former nations, while settlers stop having links with their previous nations. They focus on building a new society, which was the case for the US during their colonization period. The myth of immigration can be

seen as an incentive to homogenize their citizens into a single culture, as a way to increase the power of the state and overall legitimacy and governability. However, when nationalism is all inclusive it stops building an identity and starts building values. According to Snyder:

Through nationalism and nationalist myths are not the only cause of conflict between nations, we do argue that a tendency to breed conflict is inherent in typical nationalist myths, because they overemphasize the culture and historical distinctiveness of the national group, exaggerate the threat posed to the national by other groups, ignore the degree to which the nation's own actions provoked such threat, and play down the costs of seeking national goals through militant means (1996, 11).

Trump in his administration openly admitted been a nationalist and not only a globalist, and that a patriotic education should be compulsory. In fact, the US has always tried to have a nationalist speech, whether they are the savior of democracy or the oldest democracy in the world, it holds a tradition of exceptionalism. The speech of nationalism is operated by both democrats and republican alike and it has been part of the political agenda the US for decades. They much be regarded as the best country in the world, even though racism and social exclusion are still socially accepted. (Mudde 2020). Nationalism in the US normally is tied with calamitous threats that bump patriotism and national consciousness, by the definition of the other (threat) that is an existential problem. This is a way in the word of Snyder to “overemphasize the distinctiveness of the national group” especially when the only identity creed the US had left is the political one. The US starts antagonizing those countries that politically do not reflect the interest of the US.

The national identity the US upholds since the 1990's is not ethnic, racial, not cultural but rather limited only by political identity, which focuses on the democratic institutions such as capitalism “the best economic system”. Overall, this kind of component is seen as an ideological commitment to the creed, or as solely an ideological feature, which in contrast with ethnic identity is easily changeable and not permanent, making this feature come in short and feeble to sustain a nation for long. Hence, why their recurrent need to categorize someone as an enemy or as the “other” because it is the only way of not letting their nationalism die.

The US categorizes others as the threat when they need to hyper-glorify, which is the purpose of nationalism even though they might also apply certain suppression of liberties or rights. Nationalism is tied with the nation-state survival, where if the state is weak another state might come to attack inside the anarchic system. The easiest way to achieve survival is through the state (Mearsheimer 2011). Nationalism promotes that the group where the sameness can feel at ease and nationalism promotes to treat people inside that group differently to those outside the group. The logic behind the “us” and the “other” is also amplified. In fact, Trump was an extreme nationalist because according to Bolton:

Since Trump was disparaging the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq at the time, he had seemingly implied that Kelly’s son had died needlessly. “Trump doesn’t care what happens to these guys,” Kelly said. “He says it would be ‘cool’ to invade Venezuela” (Bolton 2020, 210).

Nationalism is not about caring for Venezuela or for other countries apart from the US. Nationalism is the process in which to increase the overall power of the state in the eventual future that a threat might arise or if a threat is inevitable. The fact that US foreign policy is always stating that they will support for a democratic transition in Venezuela and only support the opposition groups, instead of holistically improving their democratic institution has something to say. They are benefitting from the current state of Venezuela for their identity construction. The closer an enemy, the more important it becomes.

## **2. The Concept of US Influence: Constructivism**

The US influence in speech as the political actor is pivotal for this research, because for a discourse to properly work you require an agent with legitimacy and an audience willing to listen without challenging the speech. The research is framed by the constructivist perspective, according to Wendt “Social threats are constructed, not natural... This process of signaling, interpreting and responding completes a “social acts” and beings the process of creating intersubjective meanings” (1992, 405). In constructivism a two-way highway of information continuously gives feedback to the agents and the structure giving the importance to the analysis of norms, institutions, and discourses. Intersubjectivities create expectations through reinforcements of thinking one way instead of another and upon these reinforcements we create

our interests and therefore our identities. The US as a rule, treats their allies different in comparison to countries that are deem as enemies.

Constructivism through intersubjectivities gives us the clues of why someone or some states may be trusted while other should not. Identities and meanings are constituted by collective meanings that are built through practices. According to Kratochwil “The appropriate model of knowledge is one in which the reconstruction of a subjective interpretation of a coherent (rational) course of action” (1989, 24). For constructivist ideas matter and the main units of analysis are not necessarily states but also individuals and society can be one. US influence can be seen through the power of their speeches, and their constructed reality of been the defender of democracy, which is still used today. Nonetheless, since the war on terror, the US has proven to be a country that produces instability in the regions that they decide to “help”. In fact, the US through their practices have shown the world that they care little about the citizens of other parts of the world and that their own national interests is what prevails (Wood 2019). The aggressive policies the US has taken in the region and around the world have provoked humanitarian crisis and worsened conditions. Hence, there is no logic whatsoever between the language and the action, for a perception to become true there must be a sequential logic.

For constructivism, security and threats are socially constructed through common knowledge<sup>5</sup>, giving great importance to the study of identity, norms, and culture, which are all interconnected. According to Lapid “Meaning and understanding are not intrinsic to the world, but on the contrary, are continuously constructed, defended, challenged.” (1989, 242). When a practice of the US ignores to care about the citizens of other countries, then the disenchantment of the US will eventually happen. Both Obama and Trump had the goal of improving US leadership in the world and both of them failed because in one way or another, they both went back to square one. According to Bolton:

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<sup>5</sup> Common knowledge for constructivist is also understood as shared knowledge, according to Flockhart “Shared or common knowledge about material factors, rules, symbols, and language, which all shape how we interpret the world and the actions of others” (2012, 84).

Trump was very happy with how “the Venezuela thing” was playing in the press. He asked if we should send five thousand troops to Colombia in case they might be needed, which I duly noted on my yellow legal pad, saying I would check with the Pentagon. “Go have fun with the press,” Trump said, which we did, when my note, picked up by cameras, produced endless speculation (2020, 241).

Trump was very hyped about invading Venezuela or actually doing more harm to the South American nation. Thus, he did not care about the citizens whatsoever nor actually care about the region. Institutionalization of behavior as a commonality or as a new commonality changes identities, norms, and culture, through constant feedback of discourse and actions. This feedback depends on the object, whether is a friend or an enemy. The perceptions we might have of a friend or a foe depends on the practice and the commonalities the other and has with us and the reinforcements we can have by believing that someone is a friend. “Throughout history the US has changed its foreign policy objectives to suit its needs without accounting for how this will affect other states... they only aid imperialism” (Wood 2019, 168). Because the US only cares about their national interests, this will change the perception the world has of the US as a friend regardless of the bonds certain Western countries might have, whether is sharing similar ideas, beliefs, and certain democratic identities.

On the other hand, Trump was far more concerned over the fact that the general population was entertained by Venezuela than actually helping ameliorate the threat Venezuela has, which is corruption. In fact, within the Western Hemisphere, Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua were seen as threats for Trump, because they did not have a pro American policy (Bolton 2020). At the core, the construction of a threat happens through a co-construction of individuality and the collectivity, leading to the concept of societal security, where threats do not come from outside the state but are influenced by outside forces as well as from within. People and societies do build each other, but there is no denying of a reality out there either (Onuf 2013). An enemy in a more philosophical regard is necessary to create national identity. All in all, the enemy propels identity through differentiation, which thrust the need to demonstrate superiority, leading to antagonism through competition (Huntington 2004).



A great mechanism to create identity is through mass media, mass media has the power to construct norms and rules and to speak against Venezuela is a great way of stating who is a friend and who is a foe. John Bolton in this book *The Room where it happened*, mentioned that the sanctions and the actions the Trump administration was doing to Venezuela was a way to push for their democratic turnover. “One ploy we considered to send signals to key figures in the regime was delisting from the sanctions people like wives and family members, a common practice in US policy to send signals to influence the behavior of selected individuals or entities.” (2020, 252). Identity helps us to have a common knowledge of a friend or a foe, our behavior will tilt towards cooperation or conflict, because language is what gives life to society.

Per example, the US security agenda seems different for NATO members in contrast with non-aligned states such as Iran and certain Middle Eastern countries. Clearly, the US is sending a message that Venezuela is a foe rather than a friend. According to Agius “Interests cannot be pursued without a particular identity” (2013, 91). Because if we understand the world in a particular matter – through identity construction-, our behavior will go accordingly through interaction. Identities are the propellers of interests. To understand where a country is and their actions upon their norms and ideas is pivotal to make a clear differentiation between an enemy and a foe. The problem with the quest of the US improving their leadership or their hegemony it is that they have destroyed their discursive influence. “The US has not learned from its past mistakes and continues to act aggressively to achieve hegemony, competing with Russia in a conflict in which brokering a settlement with them would be the most utilitarian outcome” (Wood 2019, 174). The interests the US has is of American interests above all. Therefore, their identity shall be reflected on putting America first as in the words of Trump. In the case of Obama, US policy had the desire to take into account the region’s diversity and to achieve a good neighbor policy, but the change in outlook was limited. Language cannot be private, but the way in which each administration has proposed their new foreign policies it would seem that language is private for the US.

When Obama was elected there was this idea that the foreign policy the US had with Latin America was going to ultimately change for the good. The Obama administration mentioned that he will have a direct diplomacy with every country whether they were friends or foes. According

to Buxton “Republican administrations are associated with gunboat diplomacy and the use of stick such as embargoes. Democrats prefer to lure dissenters with carrots of dialogue and development assistance” (2011,30). There has been multiple problems in the region, one of the them it is that the US has left the region alone and gave all their energies and focus to the Middle East. Moreover, in the region has a strong disenchantment with the US, leading to South America to choose doing business with the EU or with other foreign powers.

If we take into account the meaning and the language of intention as in the words of Kratochwil, then the US is not having the illocutionary force of the utterance in any of their administrations. “The Illocutionary force of the mutual promises establishes the binding character of contracts” (Kratochwill 1989, 28). The US was far more concerned on the influence foreign powers were having in the region, rather than been concerned on why the region prefers other countries instead of the US. The US did not understand the certain rules required for a good partnership in the region. According to Onuf:

Winch may have meant that rules govern, not just meaning, but behavior directly; rules are causes. On this construction, however, Winch has succeeded in keeping cause and intention separate by making people automatons. Whatever they intend, they cause nothing, not even the rule they intend to work casually on their behalf. And if rule alone can cause behavior, it is redundant to speak of rule government behavior. No behavior can be otherwise. without clarifying anything further about rules, Winch cannot have said anything about behavior, whether linguistic or social (2013, 49).

Throughout history, the main concern for the US has been to securitize the region due to drug production, as a way to limit the number of drugs that reach the US. The rule for the US it is that the region’s interests must align with the interest of the US, this is a very globalist approach. The lack of support in development of bilateral treaties that turn away from a security perspective in the region is what propels a disenchantment of the US in the region. The policies propelled by the US have not been effective in the region because rule of law is not a topic improved in Latin America, violence is eminent because of weak institutions (Zovatto 2009). Latin America has been left behind by the US because in the political sphere of the US the best way of improving foreign relations with the region is through immigration reforms that only

benefit Hispanics in the US. Unfortunately, countries that do not agree with the foreign policy of the US they end up been treated differently, that is the rule of the US, regardless of the political regime.

Moreover, republican actions, which have tended to be more aggressive than the ones from the democrats have always pushed South American nations further away. According to Buxton “ As the economic dimensions of the American Ideology were questioned in Latin America, so was the assumption of the political superiority of the US” (2011, 33). All in all, the US has maintained a dysfunctional relationship with the region, which could happen due to institutional constrains and US history. At the core of it all, Obama also had a discourse of exceptionalism in Latin America, where the US is seen as the savior of the region while Latin America is seen as the other who needs to try to emulate the US. The culture of exceptionalism whether is given by Obama or by Trump are heavily intolerant. The way the US promotes themselves creates further imbalances in system where reinforcements are not in place. Perhaps it is the knowledge that the US maintain in the region that is still seen as the beacon of democracy based on their world-images relations (Kratochwill 1989). This is pivotal for the perception of the US is wrong in interactions among the social subjects are norm governed and the norm is that the US is a hegemon but in reality, is not the only hegemon, limiting their actions.

Structure for Wendt is a compilation of identities codified in formal rules, norms, identities and understandings are mutually constituting. Institutions can be cooperative or conflictual and it depends on the necessities of the us, meaning the interest each identity has. A way of improving the US image and perception in the region would be by closing Guantanamo and by improving anticorruption instruments instead of war on drugs. As a way to improve US hegemony in the region, the sameness or identities that might close the gap between the US and Latin America should be exploited. “Democracy is the dominant form of government in Latin America, and there is substantial agreement that the focus in the region must be on improving the efficiency, competence and integrity of democratic institutions” (Zovatto 2009, 39). A real framework for cooperation should be pursued by the region regardless of the political regime, the system of reinforcements can easily be put in place, creating a new scenario of friendship.

On the other hand, human interactions rule government through language, specially through the rules of everyday language. Rules and norms mold decisions through deliberation that may built universal rules. According to Piccone:

A special Latinobarometro survey about the 2008 US presidential election, 30 percent of those who were asked which candidate would be better for their country said that it made no difference who won the November election, and another 31 percent had no opinion. This widespread indifference, according to Marta Lago, director of the poll, shows the extent to which the United States has lost influence in the region in recent years (2009, 48).

To construct or to constitute are synonyms, in fact “ people and societies construct, or constitute, each other” (Onuf 2013, 36). Things exist when they are name as such. Hence, when no one cares about the presidential election of the US, linguistically the region is stating that they do not care about the US influence in the region, which is of grave danger for the US. The hegemony of the US has failed because 1. they do not follow the new rules for bilateral cooperation in the region, and 2. still have the old nationalistic discourse that decreases their changes to improve their leadership in the region and in the world. If we take the insights of constructivism, the ideas or perceptions people have of the US through language become a reality and vice versa. The best way for the US to improve its hegemony is by improving relations in a horizontal manner.

The OAS is of vital importance as a way to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in the region, however, the OAS in the case of Venezuela was used a way to impose the first E.O by Obama instead of providing assistance to ameliorate the lack of rule of law in the Maduro regime. The ability the OAS could become again active and for the US to improve their leadership in the region heavily depends on the relationship of the administration with the region. If the US wishes to revamp the OAS, they require good relations with the biggest countries in Latin America, including Venezuela, which is seen as an enemy. The words enemy and threat are mutually sustaining. However, discursively, the enemy for the US is everything or everyone that does not support US interest. Thus, anything or anyone could be an enemy and it does not depend on the political regime whatsoever.

### **3. Securitization of New Threats: The Copenhagen School**

The theory of securitization focuses on the transformation of regular political issues into matter of security, everything that is perceived as a friend or foe in security is due to a speech-act. Security is an act, according to Waever securitization is to “undercut the political order, they naming something a political problem through a speech act” (2011, 94). Securitization or to make something into a security threat is an extreme version of politization, this is tangible through a securitization discourse/speech. In this research, we will use the term “securitization discourse” meaning the discourse where a perceived security threat is built. The used term is simple the security speech act in tangible discursive motion. Security is a discursive practice that works through the creation of existential threats through a political constellation ‘elites’ (these elites inside the theory are recognized as political actors) with an audience willing to hear, in this case the audience is the American population and functional actors that set the framework for the speech act to work properly. The security game is simply a necessity for the political actors in time of need, which is why security and insecurity are not binaries, insecurity is simple a problem where no mobilization of resources happen. (Waever 2011).

The Copenhagen school is seen as a middle-ground theory within constructivism and suggest to see the process of securitizing as the action of elevating a problem within “ordinary politics” as a threat through a speech act. The school enhances the work of the constructivist theory by introducing five realms or sectors where security can be applied. The sectors introduced by Buzan were: military, political, societal, economic, and environmental security. All of these sectors can intertwine and are not exclusive but mutually sustaining. Through these sectors multiple threats can arise. This theory analyzes how the speech-act heavily depends on the interest of the political actors, because at the core every problem could potentially become a threat.

This chapter will exploit the concept of threat, taking into account the referent object to securitize. The securitization theory states that the discursive construction of threat requires a political actor with legitimacy (it can also have functional actors) and an audience willing to hear the speech. According to Emmers “Security according to the authors is about survival” (2013, 132). Thus, security is a social construction through the proper rhetoric of the other, where identities must be fortified through the securitization actor for the security discourse to work.

Moreover, the theory for certain authors has been limited by downplaying narratives of identity (McDonald 2008). In this project we shall not downplay the narrative of identity because at the core intersubjective meanings are driven by identities and downplaying them would prove to be counterproductive.

Security for the theory is a constructed relation between collectivity and individuality; both are equally needed for continuous feedback of interests –backed with a collective identity- for a government not to be toppled (Buzan & Hansen 2009). For this discourse analysis a particular subjectivity should not be named. Inside discourse there is no such thing as subjective nor objective, but intersubjective meanings with the use of common knowledge. Moreover, to perceive something as a threat it means that the state must have vulnerabilities, this is increased when the state is both a small power and a weak state, then the threat perception can be unlimited (Buzan 1983). The stronger the state the more capabilities it has to absorb the threat.

The theory introduces non-state actors deepening security and the referent object to keep safe are not only exclusive to the state, it can be institutions, identities, or even the nation. New threats tend to be non-military because humans are the primary referents of security. The threat can only be understood upon the characteristics of the referent object. Nonetheless to categorize something as a threat depends on the common knowledge the collective identity has. As mentioned by Buzan, Waever & De Wilde “ the special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measure to handle them. The invocation of security had been the key to legitimizing the use of force” (1998, 21). This broadening of the sector allow us to understand Venezuela as an “unusual threat”. Moreover, we need to be careful about the sectors Buzan proposed to broaden the security scope because they can intertwine and produce a spillover effect, because threat construction is politicized there will always be a spillover effect. On the other hand, to categorize something as a security problem or threat does not depend on the categorization the threat is given as a threat, but rather depends on the act after categorization. According to Waever “By uttering “security”, a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claim a special right to the use whatsoever means are necessary to block it” (2011, 95). Venezuela is a nation that produces instability for the US and they perceive it as a threat because the government decided to pursue

so as a threat. Threats that are left unattended do not stop being threats. Venezuela is a threat because it challenges American identity. Venezuela could even become an economic threat to the US' economic stability due to the sanctions been imposed, because the country has decided to sell their oil and gold to other foreign powers such as China and Russia. According to Manwaring "The contemporary asymmetric revolutionary warfare challenge is rooted in the concept that the North American "Empire" and its bourgeois political friend in Latin America are not doing what is right for the people" (2012, 3). The state or non-state actors can initiate the securitization processes, they only require political legitimacy.

Some states will securitize religious movements, social groups or in this case, another state with another type of political regime. "The exact definition and criteria of securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects" (Buzan, Waever & De Wilde 1998, 25). Perceiving something as a threat or as an enemy is due not because there is a real threat, but because security is a linguistic practice where an issue is represented as a threat, the stronger the state then it will be fairly invulnerable in the political sector. The language game of securitization is often associated to a necessity of the elites. For example the goal US has never been to change the political regime, but to change the policies that go against US interests. The sanctions the US imposed against Venezuela increased the threat of the South American country, because instead of increasing the closeness it amplified the distance between both countries. The US aimed to apply the Rumsfeld-Cebrowski Doctrine where the periphery of the region must attain to the capitalist system that will benefit US interest. (Gandésegui 2019).

Moreover, the fact that Venezuela has executive orders since 2015, made the securitization process and threat construction a highly politicized event. The fact that Venezuela became highly politicized threat, widened the gap of differences between countries, according to del Monte "as an issue that comes politically from the consolidation of a globalized neoliberal model that has rapidly generated landscapes of inequality and uncertainty throughout the globe" (2021, 84). Securitization is a relational and power process. According to Bolton:

Driving the state-owned oil monopoly's production as low as possible, which the Opposition fully supported, might well have been enough to crash Maduro's regime. There were many other sanctions necessary to eliminate the regime's illicit income streams—especially drug trafficking with narco-terrorists operating primarily in Colombia, with safe havens in Venezuela—but striking the oil company was key (2020, 233).

Trump in his political speeches tended to increase antagonism against Venezuela, through the speech act. The political actor, in this case Trump, was trying to acquire more support from the audience as a way to mobilize more resources against the existential threat. In the case of Venezuela, the process of securitization was successful because Venezuela exemplifies the counterculture of the exceptionalism of American identity. Hence, why Trump mentioned that Venezuela is a safe-haven for drug traffickers instead of mentioning that Colombia or Mexico are also safe-havens for drug traffickers. For Trump Colombia and Mexico are good partners not only due to their fight against drugs but also because they are used as buffer zones to decrease the immigration flow from central America to the US border. Beyond the Narcostate narrative, other countries in central America have bigger cocaine flows than Venezuela, one of them been Guatemala with 1,400 metric tons of cocaine (Ramsey & Smilde 2020).

To categorize Venezuela as a new threat would not be far of the reality but it depends on the type of new threat, we wish to categorize the South American nation. Organized crime and corruption has thrived in Venezuela since 2013 with Maduro and his reliance on the military forces. However, because threat depends on the referent object, which can also be society it depends on the context the linguistic process is happening. State and society must align together and if they do not then the securitization process of threat construction will not be successful as it was with the Iraq war. This means that you need to convince your audience. According to Buzan & Hansen "Security is not only a matter of force and control but one of legitimacy and societal cohesion" (2009, 27). Through the securitization model, values and institutions are also a referent object to securitize, meaning that the collectivity as well as the individuals might be the referents of security. Some threats might be regarded as low priority but due to the politization of the new threat sometimes they may work by turning them into a priority. (Fonseca & Rosen 2017). Thus, the best way to give Venezuela a priority is not only through the antagonizing of



their political regime but through “drug trafficking” even if it is not real, in the scope the US depicts.

To speak about threats, we always need to see the referent object to securitize in the case of immigration, which is a phenomenon that the US constantly securitizes, and the economic sector is the referent object. People have the perception that the more immigrants the more difficult it will be for them to acquire a job. In the case of the new threat of Venezuela, it clearly is between a societal and political threat, it becomes a societal threat because it endangers the fabric of society and a political threat because it undermines the national sovereignty of the US through organized crime. We shall analyze the threat construction of Venezuela through organized crime rather than through drug trafficking which is the preferred method for the US. “Securitizing injects urgency into an issue and leads to a sustained mobilization of political support and deployment of resources.” (Emmers 2013, 136). Organized crime and drug trafficking do have certain correlations and linkages but drug trafficking in Venezuela, but this has had a tendency of been exaggerated, especially with Trump naming everyone inside the Maduro regime “cronies”. There is a reason behind calling Venezuela a Narcostate even though it is not one, it is a way of stating that the government is financed by illicit money and the only way they shall reply is through force. In fact, Venezuela normally tends to be a country of drug transit from producers from the Andean region and of Colombia (Ramsey & Smilde 2020). Organized crime and drug trafficking also have strong links towards corruption, organized crime/trafficking tend to happen in a country where bribery is systemic. Taking into account that the corruption index in Venezuela, according to Transparency International is 15 out of 100 (0 been highly corrupt and 100 been less corrupt) it gives all the qualities for the US to build a discourse of threat to Venezuela.

Organized crime is an umbrella term, where trafficking could happen not only through drugs but also of people and so on. All in all, organized crime has a profound effect on the societal sector, political sector and even the economic sector (Emmers 2013). States that have fragile institutions and high level of corruption and impunity, where rule of law does not exist tend to be victims of organized crime and violence. According to Fonseca & Rosen “The key point here is that organized crime group have a relationship with the state and they need the state” (2017, 18).

Corruption leads to the erosion of the state and the more influence Venezuela could have in the US it would mean that corruption could leak to the US and the influence organized crime could have.

Organized crime is by default a threat to democracy and its institutions. The Narcostate speeches given by Trump are a way of simplifying the understanding of the audience for which he requires their support to mobilize resources for the securitization process. Drugs are a more tangible threat to the US in contrast with organized crime. However, according to Ramsey & Smilde “US authorities estimate that 93 percent of US bound cocaine is trafficked through Western Caribbean and Eastern Pacific Routes, not through Venezuela’s Eastern Caribbean coast” (2020, 12). The globalized world at the end of the day, is far more vulnerable to organized crime because borders are no longer physical, this creates even a more abstract threat, which is translational organized crime (TOC).

Nonetheless, discursively speaking Venezuela is known as a Narcostate, worldwide people repeat the fact that Venezuela is categorized as a Narcostate. The discourse Venezuela has against the US is what propels the securitization discourse and what influence the US to provide the common knowledge of Venezuela being a Narcostate. A threat is always going to be an existential fear and due to power imbalance, and Venezuela can only win by social and political factor that is relevant in the targeted culture. Venezuela needs to attack the myths and symbols that make up an identity of a nation. According to Manwaring “violent imposition of a radical political-economic-social restructuring of the state and its governance in accordance with the values” (2012, 21). In contrast with Colombia which is still seen as one of the strongest US partners in the region.

As a matter of fact, Colombia it is still recognized as the oldest democracy in Latin America and has never been categorized as a narcostate by any US president. According to Fonseca and Rosen “Colombia became an epicenter of organized crime and drug trafficking in the 1990s as a result of the illicit activities of two major cartels: Medellin and Cali” (2017, 21). This is due because Colombia also took part of the war on drugs from the US, meaning that they supported the US interest in the region and therefore American identity. Moreover, certain countries in

South America have very low democratic core and face security crisis, such as Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala and they are not categorized as Narcostate either. (Zovatto 2009).

The critic to the securitization speech is that even though Venezuela does represent a threat to the US due to their antagonism of the myths of Americanism. They are other countries in the region such as Mexico and Colombia that statistically send more drugs, 90% of drugs that arrive to the US are from Mexico and Colombia (Fonseca & Rosen 2017). Nonetheless, the reader must remember that the securitization process of the construction of a threat depends not on objectivity or subjective matters but on intersubjectivities “common knowledge”. The fact that Mexico and Colombia are regarded as strong democracies it would not allow the political actor to acquire the audience’s support to mobilize resources.

Mexico per example had a flawed transition, the more they became democratic the more corruption they acquired (Fonseca & Rosen 2017). In addition, organized crime for the Trump administration was a securitized problem and it was elevated to their security agenda. Discourse and the conception/understanding of what a threat is for the context and the audience gives us a path of whom can be regarded as a threat, which depends on the psychocultural disposition of the audience. (Balzacq 2005).

The US charged both Nicolas Maduro and the first lady with drug trafficking, giving more legitimacy to their Narcostate discourse. The government and the closest people to them allegedly tried to smuggle drugs into the US. Even though, Maduro would be impossible to capture in US soil “ The state department has offered \$15 million in reward for his capture” (Delacroix 2020). The fact that Maduro is charged by the US government is a way of pushing him to leave office. At the core Venezuela has lost its credibility due to corruption and organized crime. However, to categorize Venezuela as a country filled with corruption instead of drugs would not have the same perlocutionary effect for the US executive. “Combating corruption requires strengthening institutions... it is a major institutional challenge” (Fonseca & Rosen 2017, 26). The US been a symbol of democracy and of helping other countries achieve democracy, their legitimacy would decrease if the audience would realize that the government

prefers to only support opposition leaders instead of improving the democratic institutions in the region.

Due to the war on drugs that was applied by the US government in Colombia, many drug trafficking groups in Colombia immigrated to Venezuela, the Colombian Peace Processes propelled guerrillas had to flee Colombia to Venezuela due to lack of safe-havens (Ares Mujica 2015). Additionally, in 2002 the coup in Venezuela made Chavez increase military presence in the Colombian border in the fear of US invasion through Colombia, this increased corruption of military personnel with drug trafficking groups. The lack of rule of law due to weak institutions do propels organized crime in the country. However, Venezuela is not the only country in the region with week democratic institutions. The permeability of the Venezuelan Colombian border, makes Colombia a country where organized crime can also easily happen. Colombia is a producer of drugs, while drug trafficking groups benefit of the permeability of the border due to the cheap oil from Venezuela (Ayuso 2018). Organized crime regardless of the type of state encompasses illegal enterprise and the state. The concept of criminal governance has actually surfaced to conceptualize the way state and illegal groups interact between each other. If we go down to the causes of organized crime, weak democratic institutions are the partial cause but lack of legibility of the state is the root of it all.

Terrorist groups can benefit from organized crime, the criminal elements pray on nations that have weak institutions, poverty and a population that feels left behind by their government. These structures create the facilitators for these criminal groups, “Undermine our financial institutions, our laws, and our national morals. The money alone involved in this activity easily corrupt small governments; and it can corrupt large corporations and larger, more stable government if left unchecked” (Novakoff 2016, 136). Terrorist groups also have a strong influence in these weak government structures, they create revenue through trafficking drugs and raw materials. Due to globalization these type of crimes and threats create shared vulnerabilities inside the region. According to Bolton:

And because of Obama’s relaxed attitude about authoritarian regimes and Chinese and Russian threats in the hemisphere, our eyes and ears were already substantially reduced. Even worse, the

State Department utterly mishandled the aftermath, not sending Jimmy Story, our Venezuela Chargé d'Affaires, and at least some of his team immediately back to Colombia, where they could work closely with Embassy Bogotá to continue their work across the border (2020, 252).

If left unchecked transnational crime and groups that work in Venezuela can easily reach the US and not necessary by entering US soil but also, they could perform illegal activities through the internet. “It is language that positions specific actors or issues as existentially threatening to a particular political community” (McDonald 2008, 568). Even though Venezuela has extremely weak institutions, have no rule of law and their corruption rate is at an all-time high, the great majority of south American countries also have weak institutions. Moreover, during the dictatorships in the 60's and 70's in South America, translational crime was already a thing and institutions were weak. Regardless of having authoritarian governments with organized crime at the time, the US never categorized them as Narcostates. They were authoritarian regimes that supported US interests, it is pivotal to understand, that the purpose of securitizing is also to create purpose for the state.

Venezuela is seen as a threat because it creates a vulnerability to the US, while it undermines economic, social, cultural, political, and civil development. In fact, Venezuela could be a threat to the world if the discourse could be applied to more communities. TOC is a problem in El Salvador and Guatemala where government institutions are threatened by criminal groups, the more violence a society has, the blurrier the links between national gangs and organized crime (Novakoff 2016). Local gangs are also a major challenge for security through the Americas. In fact, during the 80's the US started deporting members of gangs, especially MS-13, back to El Salvador, as a way of avoiding clogging the US prison system (Fonseca & Rosen 2017). Until now organized crime have resulted in high level of violence not only in Venezuela but also in Colombia and Mexico. All in all, the meaning of threat and how threat construction works is deeply embedded on intersubjectivities. To securitize a common problem is a speech act and no objectivity can be applied. This is why countries that could be categorized as Narcostates are not while Venezuela is.

#### 4. Conclusion

The theory of securitization answers the problem statement of this research and how political actors can elevate a normal political problem into an existential threat to a referent object.

Moreover, the theory can clearly show how political elites elevate a normal problem to a security problem creating a threat. To securitize an issue does not necessarily mean that the process is done through a democratic way, but rather it is of the interest of the political actors to categorize something as a threat because they have the legitimacy of the audience or because their functional actors have paved the right way to securitize a problem. In the case of the US, to elevate Venezuela as a threat is a way of maintaining a country or regime along the lines of US interests. Moreover, the theory is very explicit that to perceive something as a threat it requires intersubjective meanings or common knowledge that can only be acquired through social cohesion and that the audience have the psychocultural disposition to accept the threat.

The theory also is able to pinpoint which type of threat Venezuela is, which is a societal and political threat at the moment due to organized crime and their weak institutions and lack of governability. Organized crime can have ultimately a spillover effect to the American society. Additionally, due to the sanctions imposed by the US, Venezuela as a new threat could also potentially become an economic threat in time, if we speak in terms of security sectors. It is a theory that will allow us to understand why other countries that have the same corruption problems and weak institutions are not regarded as a threat. Moreover, Venezuela even though counter-intuitive in other theories, it is a country that produces instability to the US due to their discourse that dis-glorifies the US symbols and myths. It takes into account the power asymmetries the Latin-American country has in comparison to the US.

Additionally, the theory allow us to apprehend the need of an audience willing to support the political actor giving the securitizing discourse, which in this case are both Obama and Trump. It is interesting in this section to mention that Venezuela is elevated as a new threat when a it is categorized as a Narcostate, due to corruption, but the concept can even be more suited to other countries in the region such as Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico. To elevate something as a security problem it is not only language specific but depends on the interests of the political actor, again reflecting power dynamics. It takes into account how a speech is given against the

potential threat and why sometimes the US propels the construction of a threat even though it might be counter-intuitive for the survival of the state. To impose sanctions to Venezuela is not rational within a realist lens, but it does increase the political support through intersubjectivities.

The theory in a way has also a lot to do with the survival of the nation-state, when a threat is elevated then to allocate resources to protect oneself from the threat is pivotal. Moreover, constructivism as the theory also gave us insight on the way foreign policy in Latin America is built and how the US treats their enemies versus their friends and how a friend can potentially become an enemy if properly stated. When you securitize something, the act of securitizing is not only mentioning that something is a problem but are the acts that follow, whether is treating a state differently or applying sanctions to the state been the existential threat. Realism even though has certain points in common with the theory of securitization is not a theory of use because of the object of study, which is discourse, and the theory is way too state-centric. Within capabilities it is irrational to perceive Venezuela as a threat because it is not one inside the military sector. The securitization theory is seductive in this project because it does not disregard the state as a referent object but it amplified the securitization process to non-state entities and the threat is not only limited to the state.

## **Chapter 2. Obama's Securitization Discourse**

### **Obama: Our Survival is a Joint Survival**

#### **1. Obama's Discursive Pillars**

Obama has a very particular speech that does not necessarily differ from Trump. There are differences within the pillars of discursive construction of what is necessarily Nationalism, the referent object to Securitization and the Enemy. Obama's speeches are focused on a different context than with Trump, one of them being Obama's speeches in the NAACP and black memorials such as Selma. In addition, Obama let the Iran nuclear agreement, the Cuban relaxation policies, and the 2016 investigation of the presidential election hacking from Russia, setting Obama in a totally different political context from Trump's. This is pivotal to know because the context is keen to understand the PDA to be performed. Regardless, the same discursive pillars shall be used to analyze both discourses which are: enemy, identity, and security. In this section alone, sixty-six discourses were analyzed and coded from Obama through Atlas.ti.

The discourses were picked by relevance and by date, since March 2015 when Obama mentions that Venezuela is a threat to the US, until his last day as president of the US in January 2017 with his farewell remarks. When coded, the most used pillar in the Obama speeches was the nationalism pillar, with over three hundred and one codes in sixty-six speeches. Meaning that Obama was keen on the construction of the "us" to determine the boundaries of what is ours and what is foreign, hence, one must be clear of what is the "us". This has the goal of increasing social cohesion. Nonetheless, Obama in his speeches explicitly mentioned that the "us" versus "them" mentality was a thing of the past and mostly used during the Cold War. However, foreign policy in the US has not evolved since the Cold War, this shows us the gap between reality and speech/rhetoric is very far.

The security pillar came in as the second most used pillar with eighty-seven entries, most of these entries highlighted the characteristics of a threat according to Obama himself. Finally, the enemy/ threat pillar, was the least used pillar by Obama, with only forty-nine entries. Obama was not very piercing on mentioning explicitly that something or someone is a threat for the US. Obama was very acute on the characteristics that make terrorism a threat and in one press



conference why Russia was a threat, which shall be discussed later on. Notwithstanding, the construction of each pillar varies from actor to actor, in this case it varies due to the political actors giving the speeches whether is Obama or Trump, and not only due to the context because each political actor has different personal goals. Hence, why the subcategories Obama uses for the construction of Nationalism, Security, or what is an Enemy shall vary from Trump. Words must be understood through a wide intertextuality, for words are not biased by themselves or by the actor, but also have a biased nature which is given by the specific speech act within a context. The coding chart of the discursive pillars with their own subcategories used for the Obama discourses is as follows:

**Table 1.2 Discursive Pillars of Obama and its Subcategories**

ENEMY	SECURITY	NATIONALISM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venezuela</li> <li>• Extremism</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Corruption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capitalism</li> <li>• Democracy</li> <li>• Sovereignty</li> <li>• Nationalism “American People”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values/ ideals</li> <li>• Capitalism as the economy (institution) equal dignity through growth</li> <li>• Freedom</li> <li>• International Community/ International Society.</li> <li>• Democracy (institution)</li> <li>• Justice</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Rule of law</li> <li>• Human Rights</li> </ul>

Source: Information built upon the research question and the discursive pillars (see pages 6 and 13)

Inside the nationalism discursive pillar, the most used subcategory with Obama were: the international community with one hundred and thirty entries and values/ideals with eighty-eight entries, the former was mostly mentioned in the speeches as universal ideals and/or values. Moreover, democracy had ninety-five entries and capitalism with only sixty-five entries. Regarding the second most used pillar, which was security the most used subcategories were:

democracy with ninety-five entrees, capitalism with sixty-five entrees, American people with twenty-six and finally sovereignty with only sixteen entrees. Finally, the least used discursive pillar for Obama was the enemy pillar, and the used subcategories go as follow: extremism with only nine entrees, corruption and lack of transparency with six entrees each, and finally, Venezuela with only three entrees. Inside the Obama discourse, Venezuela as a threat or even as a topic inside the speech act was the least used by the political actor, which is quite ironic because at the end Obama was the first president to enforce sanctions and to perceive discursively that Venezuela is a new threat to the US. Nonetheless, when speaking of Venezuela as a direct threat it might be a partial truth for inside the discourse the political actor never specified which kind of threat Venezuela is for the USA, a threat might not be only military-wise but it can be non-state related.

The securitization process of Venezuela as previously mentioned started with the Obama administration back in December 18, 2014 when he signed a bill authorizing sanctions against Venezuela. This bill allowed the US government to freeze the assets of and ban visas for anyone accused of carrying out acts of violence or violating human rights. Moreover, the E.O from Obama in 2015 along with the Department of Treasury and State, mentioned that indeed Venezuela was a direct and ‘unusual’ threat to the US due to corruption, lack of political expression and/or democracy, and obviously the breaches to human rights that had happened in Venezuela by the government.

According to the chart above Venezuela becomes a threat for not having the same universal values as the US vouches. However, when the E.O is read thoroughly, Venezuela is seen as a societal and political threat for not accomplishing the political model the US would like the country to have. Therefore, to highlight the fact that Venezuela is a direct but unusual threat is pivotal because when a political actor speaks about a threat there might be a wrongful perception from audience that the threat can only be one from the military sector.

The speeches from both Obama and Trump analyzed are aimed towards the American population as their audience. At the end of the day, they are both directed to the American middle-class, which is the audience regardless of territoriality -within the US-. An interesting fact upon

starting this analysis is that in Obama's first administration back in 2008, he gave several speeches with hopeful and supportive messages for both Venezuela and Cuba -also their governments specifically-. In regards with moving forward to a more liberal and open political model in the region. In 2016, he was the first president in the US since the Coolidge administration to visit Cuba, and to meet with the president Castro. According to The White House Office of the Press Secretary "But as Cuba opens up, it will mean more opportunity and resources for ordinary Cubans. And we're starting to see some progress." (February 20, 2016). Throughout time Obama's policies have changed towards Venezuela, from a mediating and supportive one to an aggressive one. Since the 2015 E.O Obama never mentioned Venezuela in a negative regard, nor he had a formal conversation with president Maduro even during the America Summit in 2015 that both presidents attended, increasing politization. In addition, only in two occasions Obama mentioned Venezuela in a very light and brief manner. One of them was in 2016 when he visited Havana and the topic was brought up by Castro rather than Obama. Therefore, this shows that regardless the Obama administration did perceive Venezuela as a threat. However, most likely the executive branch did not really care about these types of regimes.

The first pillar to be analyzed in this PDA of the securitization discourse of Obama shall be the Nationalism Pillar, which can also be regarded as a synonym to the American National Primordialism. This pillar apart from being the most used by Obama is the one that has the most subcategories. The more discourses a discourse has within, the more complex and stronger it gets with little space for rebuttal. The more subcategories used, the more intricate it is to go against that pillar. For discourses work with each other like puzzle pieces, where one discourse requires another discourse to uphold the construction. Obama's discourses out of the batch are politicized, as of any other politician. He sees a threat to the pillar of Nationalism, and the threat is easily regarded when there is a strong momentum or perception of who is "us", the nationalism pillar is used to set up the categories that make up the American identity.

Nationalism as a tradition can be summarized on certain values such as uplifting democracy and capitalism through free market and the freedoms to the people. In the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit Address Obama mentioned that "A future of freedom, where government is

based on the will of the people, citizens are empowered by democratic governance and the inherent dignity and human rights of all people are upheld.” (November 21, 2015). In every international summit Obama was very keen on mentioning these universal values that do not only represent the American identity, but it also represents the identity the world should embrace as their own. At the core, to create a successful process of securitization, one needs to establish an audience that will listen to the securitizing actor or actors. Apart from having political power by the agents, strong nationalism is required to make the process successful. Without a strong delimitation of who is “us” and who are “them” having the necessary boundaries and increasing self-esteem within the group, there will be no threat and no securitization of the politicized issue. Obama had a strong nationalism discourse specifically through his second administration, one that uplifted American values and institutions at the same time. However, his discourse was biased and his discourse of nationalism collided with other speeches.

American nationalism in the Obama speeches is not something strong but “a work in the making” as their democracy is. In addition, the traditional perception we have had of American Nationalism comes in short. For the main subcategories that make up the traditional perception of nationalism and what is America are not primarily focused on capitalism nor democracy but on subcategories that are far more abstract. The first subcategory to analyze in the discursive pillar of nationalism is the International Community for is seen as an extension and a synonym of American Nationalism and Universal Values that according to Obama are not American Values but are Western and universal global values. They are not western values nor American values. They are indeed American Ideals that were introduced in the international order after WWII, as a way to create a global gemeinschaft.

The only component nowadays the US identity can vouch for internationally and to their own citizens is the political component not only due to political incorrectness of certain creeds such as race but also due to structural assimilation throughout time. Making the construction of identity in fact more complex and less stable, leading the US to always have the need of an inherent threat for the construction of the us. According to Obama in his Press Conference in Peru:

But what I also know is that the basic framework of the world order coming out of World War II and then on through the end of the Cold War was shaped by a set of ideals and principles that have worked for the vast majority of people -- not just America, but around the world. The notion of democracy and rule of law, and a free press and independent judiciary, and open markets, and a social welfare state to moderate some off the sharp edges of capitalism, and lifting up issues of human rights, and investing in public health and development not just within our own borders but elsewhere in the world. And working with multilateral institutions, like the United Nations; making sure that were upholding international norms and rules (November 20, 2016).

It would seem that nationalism for Obama goes in the lines of who belongs inside the international community and who does not. In Obama's extract, he does mention the foundation of what are those universal values that he is always talking about, such as capitalism, and lifting up issues of human rights, and investing in public health and development. Nonetheless, he mentions that the UN and other international organizations shall enforce the behaviors expected in the international order, implicitly mentioning that this is the representation of the international community. The ideals the US wishes the world to have, are those that work along the US interest, it is a way to fight the poor construction of nationalism inside the US. If there are no differences with different cultures and religions, then the vulnerability of the US against external attacks will minimized, this goes in hand with the notion of achieving a democratic peace per example.

Furthermore, the International Community inside Obama's speeches is a very abstract concept, being part of the community does not necessarily require countries to respect human rights nor have those discursive values. If a country is part of the International Community, there is an automatic correlation that they must support US interests. In fact, there is support from the American government to certain non-transparent governments. According to Obama in a Press Conference "So I want Russia to be successful.... It is in our interest for Russia to be a responsible, effective actor on the international stage that can share burdens with us, -- because the problems we have are big." (October 2, 2015). Russia is an ideological competitor with the US and it is categorized by being a demi-democracy for just having three presidents, this is obviously not an interest for the US during the Obama administration. In the universalist belief, everyone has the same values as the US and if they don't have them yet, they will eventually

because America has a responsibility to persuade them to become better (Huntington 2009, 364). Another great example of being part of the International Community is Turkey, which has a colorful president, Erdogan, but still are seen as friends that share common values for being part of NATO and putting their economic effort to the organization.

According to Obama in the Nuclear Security Summit Press Conference “Turkey is a NATO ally. It is an extraordinarily important partner in our fight against ISIL” (April 1, 2016). Being part of the international community is more about working in line with the economic and political interest the US has. If they work according to the agenda of the US then their lack of transparency, human rights, democracy and rule of law are over-sighted. This also happens in Saudi Arabi and Qatar. Those that are not part of the International Community nor pro-US are forced to be through sanctions such as Venezuela, Iran and in some degree China.

The construction of nationalism and of who are “we” is pivotal for Obama especially because at the core American Nationalism is not something strong nor clearly constructed. Obama is constantly saying when speaking that democracy and equality are not something perfect, but rather democracy and the universal values they preach are messy. If the American People are doing good and are secure, then the world is secured and this can only be accomplished if the world has the same values and goals the US has. According to Obama in his End of the Year Press Conference “More often, it’s a matter of us convening, setting the agenda, pointing other nations in a direction that’s good for everybody and good for U.S. interests, engaging in painstaking diplomacy, leading by example.” (December 18, 2015). Moreover, during the Americas Summit in 2016, he mentioned that indeed these times are not the Cold War anymore when mentioning Cuba, meaning that politically he does not care what other countries do, but it must benefit the US. This can be seen furthermore with the TPP, which Obama always promoted for countries around the world to join.

The second subcategory to analyze in this pillar are US values and ideals, which go in hand with the construction of the International Community. As a matter of fact, the values the US vouches for are not something the US actually has but rather they are what they strife for. Equality, democracy and dignity for all the people inside the US and the world is not something that has a

discursive logic with what actually happens. In the Joint Press Conference with Merkel, Obama stated whilst remembering the 27<sup>th</sup> fall of the Berlin Wall that, “To look at long term trends that shape policies that will serve the American people, keep them safe, keep our economy growing, put people back to work, and best ensure peace, cooperation, and stability around the world.” (November 17, 2016). The values the US vouches for are not something tangible nor clear; it is a work in the making.

Moreover, Obama also takes a key value that the US must be patriotic, through globalism and to embrace the world. The next subcategories to discuss are democracy and capitalism. These subcategories have been traditionally the basis of the American Identity. This can be both seen through the TPP and the constant interest of Obama for the Western world to be conjoined, specifically ASEAN members. The more the concepts of democracy and capitalism are sold to the world, by default the more secure the American Nationalism is. It is very similar to the concept of collective security, if everyone is inside the group then the less threats a particular country might face. Every subcategory from the international community, to the values/ideals, democracy and capitalism are co-constitutive for nationalism to work. They all mutually build each other and secure each other. A great way of seen how both democracy and capitalism are used at the same time to withhold American Nationalism is through the TPP, which Obama always mentioned in the East Asia Summit or when speaking in a country in Asia. In his address to the people of Vietnam Obama stated that:

The TPP will reinforce regional cooperation. It will help address economic inequality and will advance human rights, with higher wages and safer working conditions. For the first time here in Vietnam, the right to form independent labor unions and prohibitions against forced labor and child labor. And it has the strongest environmental protections and the strongest anti-corruption standards of any trade agreement in history (May 24, 2016).

Obama set the TPP as the best way for the world to join the universal values for which they stand, as the only way of having a constructive and equal trade in the world it is by setting the same standards around the world. Moreover, those that are part of the TPP shall also be perceived as part of the International Community that vouches for the same values the US applies mainland, plus the need to adopt capitalism and democracy inside their regimes. It is an

implicit way of enforcing sanctions to those countries that do not wish to do business with the US nor care about their security or human rights.

The TPP enforces regional cooperation and with that regional security. Societal and political threats always are present in a regional level of analysis for they form regional economic blocs. To keep a societal security, you need mutual security through institutions, “They are cultural defense mechanism against the powerful homogenizing effects of open markets” (Buzan, Waever & De Wilde 1998, 170). Therefore, the need not only of international political institutions but also the TPP where not only certain intuitions such as democracy and capitalism are securitized but also human rights. Capitalism and democracy are also co-constituting, the more democracy and rights for the workers, the more capitalism and more progress the world should have. The TPP for Obama is a way to connect to the world and be more active upon global issues whilst forging international responses. The TPP main goal apart from increasing the world economic through an open market perspective is to address corruption and lack of transparency, and at the same time imposing universal values. Although as is always mentioned by Obama no other nation should impose its will on another country’s destiny.

The next subcategories to discuss did not have so much entrees in the Obama speeches. Nonetheless, they are very important for the construction of nationalism. These subcategories were: race with twenty-seven entrees, rule of law with seventeen entrees, human rights with thirty-two entrees, freedom with twenty-two entrees, and justice with seven entrees. The most important one and more interesting to analyze is race for there one sees the gap between rhetoric and reality within the US democratic institutions and the lack of equality that still hunts the US. According to Huntington “Racial perceptions and racial prejudices are and will remain facts of life in America” (2005, 308). Systemic racism in the US was never appropriately resolved, and the cost of it is great not only for the country itself but to identity building. Nonetheless, race shall be properly analyzed later one. First, we shall focus on rule of law, which works along with justice, the rule of law is what makes justice possible in a good democratic country according to the Nationalism pillar used by Obama. In his Address on Closing Guantanamo Bay, the president stated “Keeping this facility open is contrary to our values. It undermines our standing in the world. It is viewed as a stain on our broader record of upholding the highest standards of rule of law.” (February 23, 2016). Rule of law and justice in society are one of the main tools that gives



dignity to all people, through independent judiciaries. To criticize, to protest, and not being detained for that is due to a good system of rule of law, which ensures prosperity and security for generations to come. If there is justice, there is rule of law, if there is freedom for civilians then there is rule of law, and in this case, American Nationalism upholds rule of law as one of their prime characteristics.

Human rights is another important subcategory within the construction of Nationalism in the Obama discourse because it goes in hand with rule of law. If a country has human rights, it inherently has also justice for the people. Obama mentions human rights implicitly and explicitly in most of his speeches, for this is one of their universal values that the US stands for. According to Obama in the Xi Jinping Joint Press:

We had a frank discussion about human rights, as we have in the past. And I again affirmed America's unwavering support for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people, including freedom of assembly and expression, freedom of the press and freedom of religion (September 25, 2015).

For Obama human rights can and should be propelled through the TPP around the world, where fair trade and fair treatment of workers is primordial. Where workers could have labor unions and go against human trafficking and child labor. It is key to understand how all the discourses surrounding the pillar of Nationalism intertwines. Because there cannot be a country with human rights without rule of law, there cannot be rule of law without democracy, and there cannot be democracy without capitalism.

Furthermore, Obama is persistent in mentioning the importance of democracy and capitalism when speaking in his press conference in Greece, whilst addressing the steps the country took to overcome their economic downfall. Obama stated "democracies require that you don't get a hundred percent of what you want. It requires compromise. Winston Churchill famously said "that democracy is the worst form of government" -- except for all the others". (November 16, 2016). In addition, with capitalism there comes the respect and culturalization of universal values that make up the international community. Making all the subcategories necessary in the pillar for the construction of the "us", which at the end makes it easier to determine who is the others or "them".

Finally, another key pillar that is very important inside the nationalism discursive pillar, which is race. Obama himself constantly mentions that US democracy is not perfect, but rather a messy endeavor. Mentioning in multiple parts of the world that American democracy is not perfect at all because there are still breaches to human rights and inequality. This is very well seen in the subcategory of race, which unfortunately is part of American Nationalism and if it is part of it then is part of the universal values the US is constantly selling the world to adopt. Of course, the great majority of speeches from Obama that mention racism as a major problem inside the US are given domestically and not abroad. Still Obama does have a speech that ratifies racism as something immutable inside the US and their construction of Nationalism.

Obama himself is not racism and this is very important for the reader to understand. However, his speeches are racist, due to the audience, which upholds a nationalism that is racist by default to minorities not only inside the US but also in the world. Obama in the 50th Anniversary of Selma mentioned “Racial division is inherent to America... We just need to open our eyes, and our ears, and our hearts to know that this nation’s racial history still casts its long shadow upon us.” (March 7, 2015). Moreover, this can be even seen through the intertextuality of the discourse Obama has, for during his last two years of his presidency he had to deal with mass shootings. The great majority of them were targeted towards the black community such as in Charleston and towards other minorities.

The challenges the US has due to racial bias is a receipt from their systemic racism since the 60’s. When racial problems were not properly dealt with, due to the legacy of slavery and segregation through their own constitution due to Jim Crow and other discriminatory law, this has led towards an eruption of racism in the last few years. In addition, their racial profiling laws that are used today have not helped to overcome this inequality under law. In the Address to the People of Europe, Obama said “And we still have a lot of work to do... That’s because we committed ourselves to a larger ideal, one based on a creed - not a race, not a nationality - a set of principles” (April 25, 2016). It is pivotal the fact that Obama mentions that the US is founded upon creed, which is the only pillar US identity basis itself nowadays is upon the political creed. However, this is precisely what makes US identity so fragile and due to this fragility and uncertainty leads to the fact that the US cannot surpass racism. The US is racist in its foundation; American Nationalism is a racist construction.

The reader at this point when addressing the race subcategory would actually believe that yes indeed Nationalism is actually racism and so what? However, the race subcategory is a tangible way of seeing how the American Nationalism and, hence, how their international identity is failing. Due to this, the US might even be seen as a deteriorating state. Hence, their constant need to securitize their institutions. Nationalism is crumbling there is not a clear definition of what is us and what is foreign, requiring a natural enemy to uphold the Nationalism pillar, which upholds the security pillar, and the enemy pillar. To understand race, equality, and the gap between reality and rhetoric is pivotal to understand the security discourse, which requires other discourses to have legitimacy from the audiences. Nevertheless, at the same time the discourse is a double-edged sword that is constantly building itself but is constantly biting itself on the neck.

The second pillar to be analyzed in this PDA is the Security pillar. This pillar represents the objects that are securitized by the US. In fact, this pillar acts as a bridge between the nationalism pillar and the enemy pillar. The Security pillar represents the objects that must be kept safe from the existential threat, which in this case is Venezuela. This pillar also has several subcategories such as capitalism with sixty-five entrees, democracy with ninety-five entrees, sovereignty with sixteen entrees, and the American people with only twenty-six entrees, which in Obama's discourses is used as a synonym for the government itself. The interesting thing about the Security pillar is that it intertwines heavily with the nationalism pillar because they share two of the same subcategories, which are capitalism and democracy. Both subcategories make up American Nationalism. According to Obama in his Statement on Iran Nuclear Agreement "Together with our allies and partners -- has reached a historic understanding with Iran, which, if fully implemented....As President and Commander-in-Chief, I have no greater responsibility than the security of the American people." (April 2, 2015). The security of the US and their institutions not only give security to the American people, but also according to the executive speeches, it gives security to the world that shares the same values and ideals, meaning the International Community. Therefore, the need of US engagement in the region and in the world, to protect citizens and those communities that share the same type of values as the US has.

Moreover, taking into account the subcategories aforementioned let us first analyze the subcategory of the American people. Especially when Obama mentions the security of the American people, normally is a regard towards the security of the government. In the

securitization process of a political threat, the referent object is normally society itself. Nonetheless, the securitization of society is a measure of governments, specifically weak governments, to security themselves and their administration (Buzan, Waever & De Wilde 1998). Meaning that the government due to the legitimacy that their discourse has, they use this kind of discourse not because there is a threat to the state, but most likely there is a threat to the government. The stronger the state and the unity through an identity, the more secure the institutions and the existential characteristics that make up the identity the state will have. According to Obama in his 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the United National General Assembly Address:

Imagine if, instead, Russia had engaged in true diplomacy, and worked with Ukraine and the international community to ensure its interests were protected. That would be better for Ukraine, but also better for Russia, and better for the world -- which is why we continue to press for this crisis to be resolved in a way that allows a sovereign and democratic Ukraine to determine its future and control its territory (September 28, 2015).

The fact that sovereignty is something only applicable to the US makes it very clear that it must be related to the government itself. Especially when dealing with opposition inside the region such as in the case of Venezuela. Societal and political threats have a distance attribute. Per example, certain immigration can be transformed into a societal threat due to the distance South America has with the US. The more influence a threat has towards the US institutions the less sovereignty the US shall have; specifically, now where there is a decline of American nationalism and a lack of trust in US institutions due to inequality and racial bias. The less sovereignty a state might be then the less legitimization they shall have from their audience.

In addition to this pillar analysis, we shall mention once again capitalism and democracy are intertwined inside the institutional system of the US. Mostly when being a referent object these subcategories must be seen as ideologies and institutions. This part is linked with the Nationalism pillar where capitalism and democracy were already mentioned. The best way to securitize these subcategories is through international organizations or through regional and international cooperation. The best examples are seen through ASEAN Summits and when Obama speaks fondly about the TPP. Another great example of how capitalism and democracy

work as ideologies and institutions that must be kept safe is in Obama's Southeast Asian Youth Initiative Fellows Address:

I think that Malaysia, like all our countries, not just ASEAN countries but countries here in the United States, have to recognize that democracy is not just elections but it's how open and transparent and accountable government is between elections. And it's important that free speech, freedom of the press, an independent judiciary, the right to assemble peacefully -- that all those rights are observed to make democracy work (June 1, 2015).

In this address, Obama kept a great emphasis on the TPP and on ASEAN as the biggest market nowadays for the US. In addition, Obama mentions that indeed democracy goes far beyond elections but is by default interconnected with capitalism. Because when Obama mentions an open government, he is not only talking about transparency but also about an open market economy that forces a government to open up not only economically but also in a social way. To securitize the referent objects that also make up their national identity, it is also a way of keeping people safe, specifically the American People. For companies through an open market according to Obama's discourses gives them sometimes impunity to go against the values the US internationally is trying to vouch for.

Finally, for the PDA of Obama we must also take into account the discursive pillar of the Enemy. This pillar was the least used by Obama because at the core Obama focused on building a nationalism. This pillar also has some subcategories such as Venezuela with only three entrees out of the sixty-six discourses, extremism with nine entrees, lack of transparency with six entrees, and corruption with six entrees. Obama's discourses are very well known due to this lack of enemy related speeches, specifically in naming one country, naming one political party, and even when speaking of China, he has been very careful of not mentioning them as a threat or an enemy to the US. In fact, the great majority of discourses from Obama are keen on regional and international cooperation through open markets and through collective security. Nonetheless, he is very specific on Iran and on naming one particular organization to be an enemy of the US and the international community, which is ISIL that is backed by Iran. Therefore, the enemy pillar from Obama is there but it is mentioned implicitly due to the constant need to form coalitions.

Moreover, Obama is insistent on American values and the goodness of being American. Van Dijk mentioned that metaphors might be used, as well as hyperboles and euphemisms as a way to emphasize to de-emphasize meaning (2006). Obama himself has very well used this, when mentioning that the US is a beacon of certain universal values while diminishing some countries such as Russia, Iran and certain non-state entities such as ISIL. In his Final Presidential Press Conference Obama used many metaphors against Russia and certain enemies, mentioned “The Russians can’t change us or significantly weaken us. They are a smaller country. They are a weaker country. Their economy does not produce anything that anybody wants to buy, except oil and gas and arms. They don’t innovate” (December 16, 2016). These kinds of metaphors were given when asked about the Russian hacking in the 2016 elections and whether they impose a threat to certain institutions of the US such as the financial system. Saying that Russia, a big gas and raw materials country, which primarily forced the EU to stop sanctions due to energy needs with a massive territory, to be called “small” is definitely a metaphor of economic, political, and societal regards.

In addition, the enemy construction Obama has in his speeches goes according to what he stands for in his Nationalism pillar. Everything and everyone that is not part of the International Community is primarily out. Therefore, a treat and an enemy to the US identity perception. Consequently, the international community must reject racism, fundamentalism, and propel tolerance. In addition, Obama also mentions something pivotal to understand whom might be perceived as an enemy and it is primarily those that do not want to open up to the world economy or do not wish to accept globalism. Meaning those that go against the identity the US then they also go against the international community. In his Final Address to the United Nations General Assembly Obama mentioned:

That’s why we’ve pushed for transparency and cooperation in rooting out corruption, and tracking illicit dollars, because markets create more jobs when they’re fueled by hard work, and not the capacity to extort a bribe. That’s why we’ve worked to reach trade agreements that raise labor standards and raise environmental standards, as we’ve done with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, so that the benefits are more broadly shared (September 20, 2016).

To further understand the basic premises of the enemy pillar we must also understand and analyze the ways in which this pillar is formed. This can be seen through its subcategories. The first subcategory to analyze is Venezuela, which is perceived as a threat to the US due to Obama's E.O. However, Obama never mentioned Venezuela in any of his formal speeches nor in any press conferences. He never explicitly mentioned the executive order he gave out in 2014, he never stated anything negative about the corruption and the type of government Venezuela had. It seems that he was far more interested on Iran, Syria and ISIL. When speaking of Latin America, he was fond of Argentina, Peru and Colombia as their strongest allies and partners and mentioned that the US has the strongest ties with the region in comparison to other administrations. He did mention that there were certain countries that are not necessarily the enemy but do go against the American universal values, lacking transparency and corruption, which hold back aspects of economic and civic life.

Nonetheless, the construction Obama has of the enemy is more abstract and less explicit. Especially due to his lack of regards to Venezuela, out of all his speeches analyzed he only mentioned Venezuela in two occasions and both in 2016. Obama mentioned Venezuela, and not negatively at all, in his Joint Press Conference with Raul Castro and in his Address to the Parliament of Canada. In the former Obama stated "I fear sometimes that we are timid in defense of these values. That's why I will continue to stand up for those inalienable rights, here in our own hemisphere -- in places like Cuba and Venezuela --"(June 29, 2016). When speaking of the universal values the US stands for such as freedom and tolerance, whilst praising the friendship the US and Canada has for sharing the same values and principles.

Furthermore, the other subcategories pretty much explain the characteristics certain countries or organizations must have to be seen as enemies and not to be included into the international community. However, this is a faced for many countries in the Middle East and in Asia have problems with lack of transparency, corruption and extremism and still are seen as partners and friends of the US. Those undemocratic countries are still part of the international community because at some degree they work along the lines of the interests the US might have. When speaking of lack of transparency Obama mentioned in the Civil Society Forum in Panama "That's what we believe. And, increasingly, civil society is a source of ideas -- about everything from promoting transparency and free expression, to reversing inequality and rescuing our

environment” (April 10, 2015). Because good governance and transparency is what attracts investment in a country, and the more transparent a country the more trust that country will receive from the International Community. Furthermore, if we analyze the subcategory of corruption is also intertwined with transparency. Because the US constantly promotes transparency and accountability as a way to fight corruption in authoritarian countries that have high levels of corruption.

In the subcategory of corruption, Obama also ties it with corruption leads to bad development. According to Obama in the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit Address “Around the world, and here in the Asia Pacific, the cancer of corruption is a daily indignity.... Corruption drains billions of dollars that could be used to improve the lives of citizens.” (November 21, 2015). Obama equals corruption in countries as a way to limit a day’s honest work and a limit to the world economy due to lack of trust. Corruption through the American lens is seen as a limitation to economic potential. Finally, the last subcategory that makes up the enemy pillar is extremism. Most the time this category is reserved to terrorist groups such as ISIL and Hezbollah.

## **2. Institutional Actors Analysis**

Certain branches of the US government in this research shall be seen as functional actors, not necessarily because their role in the securitization process is not important but rather secondary. In addition, they are regarded as functional actors because our focus are Trump and Obama discourses in the construction of Venezuela as a threat. In fact, certain branches of the US government have been extremely important into the perspective Venezuela has as a threat such as the Department of Treasury and the Department of State with the E.O in 2014 with Obama. Two primordial functional actors that will be analyzed conjointly shall be the Department of Treasury and State, because both of them are in charge of making the E. O’s happen for Obama and Trump. The Department of State is in charge of the foreign policy of the US whilst the Department of Treasury is in charge is of the federal government; it works as an executive branch. The Department of Treasury works to promote economic prosperity and to ensure financial security in the US and in the world economy. Hence, the executive orders from both Obama and Trump work jointly with the Department of State and the Department of Treasury by



freezing assets from Venezuelan individuals. For all the functional actors we shall take analyze primarily their values, goals, and possible expectations.

### **3. Committee of Foreign Relations**

The first functional actor to be analyzed through PDA shall be the senate's committee on foreign relations. We were able to analyze fifteen hearings during the Obama administration. The great majority of the Hearings from the committee came from the subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, about half of them to be exact. Meanwhile, the rest of the hearings were part of the subcommittees on Asia and the Pacific, on Terrorism, Non-Proliferation and Trade, the Middle East and North Africa, and the subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Relations. The committee was persistent of different topics. Nonetheless, we focused on the values of Nationalism, that are keen on upholding values such as human rights and open market policies. Hence, I was able to limit the number of hearings. Another great topic that constantly erupts in the hearings are Venezuela and Cuba for they are discussed in a similar manner. In fact, one hearing was explicit about both Cuba and Venezuela because they share a similar political ideology in the region. As previously mentioned in our introduction this section shall be analyzed through goals, values and expectations, which will help us with the triangulation for our conclusions. It is very important to mention once again before starting this section that goals and values are intertwined. Consequently, the line is transparent for the goals can make up the values and certainly the values are the starting point of what our goals might look like. We shall first focus on values and then on the goals of the committee.

The committee on foreign relation first and most important value is to establish the leadership of the US not only in the region through the application of the Monroe Doctrine but throughout the world. In fact, in several hearings the chairman of the subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Mr. Duncan, constantly mentioned that secretary Kerry was mistaken when he said that the Monroe doctrine was not applicable anymore. That in fact, since mentioning that the doctrine was obsolete the US had lost influence in the world as a world leader. In addition, this committee has one clear value even above US leadership that is historically given since Washington's time, which is reputation. In fact, for the US both values of leadership and reputation are intertwined,

for their reputation in the world tilts the leadership they might have through their enchantment through ideals. According to Mr. Duncan

In 1793, President George Washington warned a young America that a reputation of weakness could lead us to a loss of America's rank among nations and that if we desired a secure peace, it must be known that we are at all times ready for war... While the need for strategic planning to pursue a position of strength and keep the peace (September 10, 2015).

Weakness according to Mr. Duncan is not necessarily weakness in the military realm for the US has a monopoly inside the military realm. Still, leftist governments and weak governments in the region are diminishing the US reputation as a leader and as a beacon of ideals to follow. The reputation of the US as the pinnacle of democracy is what makes the US strong, which is primarily formed by their values and what the country stands for not only as a nation but as an ideal of a nation. The downfall of American reputation is what has propelled the influence of foreign powers in the region such as China and Russia and is because people and American citizens are disenchanted by American values that have not fulfilled their promise. Moreover, the fact that since 9/11 the US has exclusively tilted their attention in the Middle East. This decreased their influence and the economic input the US had in the region and in the Western Hemisphere itself.

The more strength an ideal has the more this ideal can be sold; this is indeed a strategic planning to keep peace. The quote above can go in hand with the slogan of 'democracies do not fight each other' and hence the inherent peace democracies can hold. However, I do not believe democracies do not fight each other, it would be keener to say democracies do not fight each other because of influence the US has and that can intervene. Moreover, no democracy in the world would fight the US because they are the ideal, they are trying to reach and to keep afloat, if that ideal fall, then other democracies will not have a model to follow.

Additionally, only the subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere talked about the inherent values of the US in the American region. In fact, there is no subcommittee at all of Latin America. The hearings that mentioned Cuba and Venezuela specifically came from the subcommittee on The Western Hemisphere. This is perplexing because they are subcommittees on Africa, Asia and Europe. Meaning that the values and goals the US has to Latin America are

the default of the outcome of the policies applied for the rest of the world. Thus, they are seen as an extension of the hemisphere. Moreover, another value that goes in hand with the main values of reputation and leadership in the US, are the property rights. For the US, leftist and socialist governments do not secure property rights for their citizens nor for American investors. The more economic opportunities US citizens have abroad the stronger the US seems and the more reputation they have. Property rights is a very discussed subject for Cuba specifically and also for Venezuela. According to Mr. Duncan in the hearing of property rights in Cuba:

One of the fundamental principles of a free society and free economy is private property ownership. And the understanding that if you invest money in real estate, develop a home or a business, or business property, or even develop a business in general, that you own that property, and you have some sort of free assurances that it won't be confiscated by a government, whether it is this government or a government abroad if you are an American investor (June 18, 2015).

In the hearing about Cuba and Venezuela it seems that it is constantly mentioned that human rights are still been violated. However, their main interest is property rights Cuba violated when nationalizing American companies, and is the same with the hearing of Venezuela. A value to uphold property rights goes in hand with the values the US historically has of a free market and a free society. A key component of liberalism is having private property, which historically is a value represented in property rights. Therefore, as mentioned above during the Obama analysis, democracy is a strong value for American Nationalism but more than democracy itself, what is primordial are the gains that come from democracy organically. According to Mr. Andersen in the hearing on the Venezuelan crisis "Under the last President Hugo Chavez, the government nationalized domestic and foreign-owned private enterprises, undermined private property rights and violated contractual agreements. Under his successor, Mr. Maduro, the government has continued to threaten the private sector" (June 22, 2016). After stating this, they mentioned once again that the US since its foundation has rooted for democracy and that they are supporting of Venezuela reaching their dream to live in a free democracy. Nonetheless, the US was not founded on democracy; it was founded upon the belief of tolerance and pluralism, not democracy, especially as we understand it now. The value of democracy as we think now was pursued after WWII with the new international world order.

Another value that is very important for the committee is leadership that we already mentioned but have not analyzed yet. Leadership can be acquired through economy, through values and ideals, through influence, or even through agreements and actions during world problems or wars. The scope in which the US focuses their leadership is worldwide, making it even harder. It is impossible the amount of leadership the US wishes to have, not only due to the distance, cultural differences, but also due to the money needed to influence multiple regions. This is why China and Russia have deeply influenced Latin America with military assistance and economic influence through loans. Mr. Dusser Peters stated in the hearing of China's advance in Latin American and the Caribbean that "There is a huge gap with what China is exporting to the region, and this has also reflected and explains the region's increasing disenchantment with its most dynamic partner" (September 10, 2015). The US is very aware of the problem, specifically regarding the Caribbean for they still perceive it as a *mare nostrum*, and they are constantly losing a grip over it.

To acquire leadership for the committee can be regarded as both a goal and a value, this is seen not only due to their motive to certain policies but also by mentioning the need to have a stronger OAS. Mr. Joseph Harris said "I agree with you on the ineffectiveness of the OAS. I don't want to be misunderstood. But I am saying that there is an institutional framework. It needs to be empowered." (September 10, 2015). The OAS is a failing institution that demonstrates the lack of leadership in the region; it simply cannot support democratic institutions anymore.

The committee is convinced that their loss of leadership in the Americas is due to their lack of interest and putting more money in other regions such as the Middle East. However, perhaps their expectation of eradicating socialism and enforcing a way of political society is what has propelled the American disenchantment in the region. In one of the hearings, this is briefly mentioned that perhaps American leadership was no longer working because the US enforced too much. The more pressure one applies it sometimes increases the resistance. This perception was strongly rebutted and disregarded by Mr. Duncan in the subcommittee. According to Mr. Zeldin in the hearing about ISIS and defining the enemy, "The world needs America to lead. Now, it is our responsibility here to ensure that we are never setting our services members up to defeat." (April 29, 2015). The pivotal point of leadership is to appear strong, for enemies do not respect weakness. Hence, the desperate need the US has to prove itself as a Pacific Power, a

Western Power and as a global leader in humanitarian response. Leadership is the motor of reputation, the more the world is influenced by the US and their way of life the more the US will advance in their national interests.

In addition, to the value aforementioned we shall focus on the goals the committee has for the US. The goals are far broader than the values. The ultimate goals the committee has shown is to eradicate socialism, promote human rights, economic development, transparency and tackle corruption, stop foreign influence in the region and the world. They have the goal of increasing their position as a leader by being part of every economic agreement. One primordial goal the US is pursuing at the moment and it is something the Committee agrees with is to be part of ASEAN and be more involved economically with Asia. At the core the US does sees itself as a Pacific Power and it should have a strong competition and influence in the region, specifically due to the Mariana Islands and US territories. “I wish to reiterate the Pacific region’s strategic importance to the United States .... Our engagement in this region is about our long-term strategic interests.” (June 23, 2016). Because of the US leadership in the Pacific will lead to increased prosperity not only for the US, but also to the other small nations around. The committee explicitly mentioned that the aim of the US is to promote peaceful and pluralistic societies that fight against corruption, but this is a false statement. The general values and aims of the US are to improve their image and reputation that has been going down since the 2008 recession.

Another goal the Committee is constantly pursuing is to enforce human rights and fight corruption; this is a way of achieving another goal, which is to eradicate socialism and communism. A way they are trying to achieve all of this is through sanctions whether is for Venezuela, Iran, and Russia. They are aiming sanctions as a way for governments to change their political regime while enforcing more transparency. Even though in several hearings when speaking of Venezuela witnesses mentioned that, the sanctions actually helped propel corruption even more inside the country. The sanctions imposed to government officials can actually end up hurting citizens and the country even more. In the Hearing about the Castro Regime and their Ongoing Violations Dr. Biscet stated that “Nevertheless, this law has been violated by the administration that’s actually in power. Our people are still living under this modern slavery which is communism and socialism.” (July 13, 2016). They even mentioned that Russia could be better

and could reform to a democracy, and then Russia could be seen as a potential partner. The goal of the US is to improve their image, but at the same time they are using a double-edged sword. The more their policies are an imposition the more resistance they will get, it would also seem that the way in which the committee mentions how to achieve those set goals in their minds they still believe this is a bipolar world.

When speaking of sanctions as the only way for the US to enforce democracy and transparency in the region, the subcommittee was very specific in the sanctions imposed to both Venezuela and Cuba. When speaking of a democratization in the region they are outspoken of sanctioning former socialism countries due to their wrongdoings to US enterprises and civilian population. However, at the same time it seems that the US needs countries like Venezuela due to economic and geopolitical reasons. Sanctions also help with the US goal of keeping their financial system strong and confident, by trying to eradicate kleptocracies and not allowing money from corrupt government officials in the country. Mr. Duncan stated in the Venezuela hearing that:

Today, many government officials in Venezuela who are directly responsible for human rights abuses, the deterioration of democratic institutions, public corruption, and drug trafficking remain free to access U.S. financial systems. This is not right. And in view of the especially horrendous situation in Venezuela right now, the Obama administration should be doing more to resolve the humanitarian crisis, support a democratic outcome and ensure that those responsible for committing human rights abuses and subverting democratic institutions no longer receive access to the U.S. financial system, at the very least (June 22, 2016).

This quote shows very well the stand of the US which is again of imposition; this will not improve the reputation of the US as a strong country. If we remember during the Obama PDA only weak countries can be threatened by other countries, especially Venezuela. They in fact regard every socialist and communist country as weak but still they see Venezuela as an unusual threat, making the US even weaker by their stand. Even if the US increases influence in the world to decrease the Chinese and Russian influence, it would be extremely difficult because of their imposing attitude. Countries nowadays if they do not agree or cannot get to terms with the US, they simply find someone else. All of the areas in which the US has a goal whether is

international crime, press, women rights are for one purpose alone, which is to increase leadership and therefore reputation.

Furthermore, another goal the US has is increasing development and economic growth which is to increase trade and promote the TPP not only in the Pacific but worldwide. The TPP for the US would allow them to introduce rules and improve conditions for human rights and labor practices. However, this same ideal was implemented in the Philippines after the war and in several other countries where citizens ended up been exploited with low wages. Ms. Tami Overby the VP for Asia of the US chamber of commerce in the TPP prospects for Greater U.S. Trade Hearing mentioned that:

TPP has the potential to create an explosion of trade and new American jobs and would demonstrate continued U.S. leadership across this important region. It is an exciting vision, which on the right terms can be an economic shot in the arm for the United States and for our friends and allies in the region. It can send a clear, unmistakable message that Americans' leadership is in the Pacific to stay (March 4, 2015).

Morocco and Vietnam are not seen as a threat and do not require sanctions from the US not because they are transparent or very democratic, this is because they play by the US game of the international open market. Venezuela in the eyes of the committee is seen as a threat that requires sanctions because they are not willing to play the same game with the rule the US wishes to impose and they will never sign a TPP with the US in the foreseeable future. The TPP in the way the US wishes to enforce it is not a good alternative to show the world their leadership, because countries can choose to leave agreements if they find something better. The goal of influencing the economic world through an agreement like the TPP does not ensure upholding human rights or labor rights. Quite the contrary if the US cannot assure the TPP in every country, it might backfire and propel more disenchantment of the US. This has already happened in several countries in the Americas and in Asia. The logic of the TPP is that the stronger the trade relation the less the countries will lean towards Russia or China with their own economic agreement.

On the other hand, there is a goal from the subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere. One that is very particular from its chairman Mr. Duncan. I would seem that a personal goal of Mr. Duncan out of the entire chairmen of the other subcommittees is to disregard the efforts of the Obama administration to attempt to improve the situation in Venezuela and for normalizing relations with Cuba. In the hearing of US Policy toward the Western Hemisphere chairman Duncan stated that, “The Obama administration has shown little strategic vision for United States leadership and has failed to make an effective case for why countries in the region should make the United States their partner of choice. That has got to change.” (December 9, 2015). It is quite interesting to mention this because in the eyes of Mr. Duncan it would seem that Obama alone could increase the leadership of the US, which is false and goes against the notion of democracy by US standards. The executive cannot work alone.

Duncan, whom is a strong contestant of the Obama administration to no surprise, belongs to the Republican Party. Moreover, chairman Duncan was extremely against the relaxation policies Obama took for Cuba and the lack of strength he gave towards Venezuela. He also mentioned that the lack of leadership from the Obama administration and not turning Venezuela into a democracy is leading to more immigration of Venezuelans to the US, which is negative for the Republican Party. This is important to mention for at least in regards with Venezuela it might be used for bipartisan political reasons.

Venezuela could become a democratic versus a republican issue rather than a humanitarian crisis that indeed requires the help of the US. Chairman Duncan also mentioned during the Venezuela hearings that their current administration was socialist and that Obama did not enforce more strength into changing Venezuela into a democracy because he agreed on certain socialist policies. For the US had a socialist running for the presidency of the United States. In the hearing of Deplorable Human Rights Violation in Cuba and Venezuela chairman Duncan said that, “It is striking to me that although the Obama administration has taken great pains to change U.S. policy; delist Cuba from state sponsor of terrorism list... the administration has made no real effort” (November 6, 2015). Chairman Duncan mentioned that it was absurd to work together with the Cubans if US interests and principles, such as property rights, are not used to achieve results. The US should demand the release of all political prisoners of those socialist and



communist countries before normalizing relations. Even though, this is one of the problems the US has and let to them losing their leadership in the world.

#### **4. The Department of State and the Department of Treasury**

In this section, we shall only focus on the documents that were issued against Venezuela by both departments. Interestingly enough, both departments were in charge of the E.O with Obama in 2015 that blocked the property and currency as well as the entry of several Venezuelan officials. The E.O 13692 of March 8, 2015 was able to pass due to the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights Act passed by Congress in 2014. This allowed the US to create laws that might benefit or negatively affect the Venezuelan society. The only value of the executive order is to deter the unusual threat the US is facing, which is Venezuela.

Their immediate goals are various but primarily the executive order wishes to diminish or to stop the violence in Venezuela and the abuses to civilians that has been going through the past few years. All in all, to decrease or eradicate corruption and overall abuses to the political opposition. According to the E.O 13692 “The situation in Venezuela, including the Government of Venezuela’s erosion of human rights guarantees, persecution of political opponents, curtailment of press freedoms, use of violence and human rights violations.” (March 8, 2015). Additionally, this executive order has another immediate goal, which is to impose sanctions that shall not affect the Venezuelan population but rather to the government officials that support the Maduro government or that have been involved in corruption or in human rights violations.

Setting the E.O. in a holistic perspective, we can also see the goals that are not explicit. The committee as well as congress and overall, the majority of the Republican Party saw the Obama administration as weak and responsible of America’s crumbling reputation. Taking Venezuela out of the picture for a little, it would seem that Obama was pushed to pass the executive order not only because of bipartisan politics but also as a power stance. If we see this in a broader perspective setting the executive order is a way of showing leadership in the region, by sanctioning a country that is abusing human rights and lacks transparency. Historically there has been a value of the US as the defender of the world and of injustice. Clearly, the US is trying to play that game once again. The goals and values in the executive order in this section are limited;

this will change when Trump's E.O's are analyzed due to not only the quantity but also due to the number of amendments.

## **5. Congress**

In this section, all of the documents analyzed were congressional records and the laws passed involving Venezuela. One of the most important laws passed in Congress was the Defense of Human Rights Act it passed in 2014. This law came into existence by Congress due to the repression many civilians endured by government officials during the February 2014 antigovernment protests. In this act, Congress talked about the current situation of Venezuela where inflation was the highest inflation in the Western Hemisphere due to improper currency controls. Basic goods are unavailable and most importantly the erosion of human rights guarantees that allows the government to intimidate citizens. According to the Act "The government did not respect judicial independence or permit judges to act according to the law without fear of retaliation...prosecuting political, unions, business, and civil society leaders who were critical of government policies or actions" (December 18, 2014). Security forces have used extreme violence to the opposition and to civilians and have not been charged or been held accountable at all. According to Obama, Congress can only pass acts by the people will.

During his speeches previously analyzed, he stated that Congress was responsible of shaping sanctions applied not only to Venezuela but also to Iran and Russia. In the Mayor Conference Obama mentioned, "Ultimately, Congress will follow the people...Congress act when the public insists on action." (June 19, 2015). Nevertheless, bipartisan politics play an enormous part in Congress, due to this Obama has not been able to pass certain policies or laws not only about the US foreign policy but even laws regarding the US domestically. One of the biggest laws Obama wanted to push before leaving was closing Guantanamo, he was not able to get enough votes. Because Congress during the last administration of Obama was a republican majority. Furthermore, understanding the lack of support to the Obama administration by Congress will allow us to understand better Congress' values and goals and therefore their expectations regarding Venezuela.

In our analysis we were able to identify two main values that Congress upholds, one is the value of changing behaviors according to US interests and the other one is improving their reputation as a world leader. In the Public Law 113-278 also known as The Act of Venezuela it was stated that “The United States supports the people of Venezuela in their efforts to realize their full economic potential and to advance representative democracy, human rights, and the rule of law within their country” (December 18, 2014). Inside the Congress act, it is stated that the US is forced to stop further violence in Venezuela. Moreover, the policy the US is taking upon Venezuela is of support due to their aspiration of living inside a representative democracy. However, this statement goes in hand with the value of improving their reputation through leadership, especially when in the Act is mentioned that Venezuela is part of the OAS and as a ratified member should have the same political regime the US has. In section four of the Act is said that “The US shall continue to support the development of democratic political processes and independent civil society in Venezuela” (December 18, 2014). The Act is a clear indication that the US wishes to lead Venezuela not only through democracy but also through distribution of technology to alleviate the technological obstacles Venezuela is having.

Furthermore, the goals the Congress has apart from eradicating socialism in the region, pursuing human rights and property rights as the committee of foreign relation previously discussed, is to ensure and clarify that the crisis Venezuela is going through is not due to US intervention. They keep on repeating that Venezuela is having a humanitarian crisis due to improper currency controls and due to the Chavez and Maduro administrations. That a country so rich in oil is bankrupt due to incompetence and corruption of the socialism government. Consequently, the Congress at the same time when speaking of Venezuela, they blame Obama for not doing enough and not trying to force Venezuela into becoming a democracy. Congress has a very similar outlook that the committee has, that for the US to establish relations with socialist or communist countries, they must first become democracies immediately or by force. According to Ms. Ros-Lehtinen in the Congressional Record Vol, 162 No. 82:

I rise to discuss the ongoing crisis in Venezuela due to the incompetence of its leader, Nicolas Maduro. No matter what Maduro says, the crisis is his fault, not the fault of the U.S., not the fault of the Organization of American States. Maduro and his corrupt cronies are the ones to blame for

this disaster no one else. While the Obama administration has sometimes tried to concede to the Maduro regime, it has only been reciprocated with no real positive change or any way forward by Maduro (May 24, 2016).

Congress in this quote not only disregards the efforts the Obama administration has done for Venezuela but also, they try to improve the image of the OAS. An organization that has failed but must be taken if the US wishes to improve their reputation in the world. Congress is very repetitive and limited on the scope of analysis they have of Venezuela, of imposing sanctions to enforce democracy in Venezuela. Congress is always saying that Venezuela should respect the constitution and pursue a fair referendum for the presidency. This clearly is not going to work because the opposition in Venezuela has already failed. Even though imposition is what in the first place has diminished US reputation in the world, is what Congress is looking for. In fact, Obama is very keen on stating that several US policies were outdated such as the embargo and not speaking with socialist or communist countries. Perhaps the fact that Obama never mentioned Maduro or Venezuela in his speeches has something to do with the influence Congress and the Committee were having.

Congress more than any other actor sells the situation of Venezuela as a humanitarian crisis. To stop this crisis is not a goal, it is just an easier way of selling the problem to the audience and use it as bait to increase regional cooperation. In the Congressional Record Vol. 162 No. 82 it was mentioned that “The crisis in Venezuela must wake up others in the region. The new leaders of Argentina and Brazil are needed to bring the Southern Cone together in the name of regional stability” (May 24, 2016). A very clear goal for Congress is to lead cooperation in the region, leading to a better reputation. Congress’ goal of increasing cooperation is a way of naturally increasing US leadership by increasing the strength of the OAS and being able to change behavior at their will. In the eyes of Congress, the best way to ensure leadership apart from regional cooperation is by setting more names in the SDN list of people that are not allowed into the US and have their property blocked.

Additionally, another goal of Congress is to stop foreign influence in Venezuela that might help them economically. Foreign powers might interfere and help Venezuela in exchange of oil.

According to congressional record 82 “Now Maduro is trying desperately to receive assistance from other countries to save his corrupt regime. India has offered medicine in exchange for Venezuelan oil, and China may offer loans to Venezuela in exchange for oil.” (May 24, 2016). This is very important because for Congress Venezuela is beyond saving. However, because they wish to increase leadership, they are trying to isolate Venezuela in any way possible. To force them to work with the US as their only alternative. It is not about communism versus capitalism, it is more about power. Finally, the expectation Congress has when taking into account their policies and their actions is not to tackle the humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless, they expect that their sanctions will not affect the general population of Venezuela so that their international image can be restored.

## **6. Conclusion**

Obama as the political actor in this chapter, produces argumentation to the American audience by stating that first comes the safety and needs of the American people. During his speeches, if the US is secure then the values of the rest of the world will be secured, for Obama the values the US represents and needs to achieve security are the same values required for the entire world due to his globalist approach. For a PDA and within the theory of securitization it is required for the political actor to deliver a speech that is legitimate to an audience. For the PDA the political actor needs to deliver a speech with a perlocutionary effect “convince” the audience, which in this case is the American population. Obama in this PDA would seem that he is not a cooperative political actor because his argumentation had no reasonable deliberation, the political actor can be lying or deceive. Nonetheless he was keen on mentioning in one of the speeches that Congress follows the people’s will. It would seem that Obama as the political actor, had no deliberation whatsoever in the decision of the E.O against Venezuela, regardless of this I believe that the political actor was simply non-cooperative with the audience and did not pursue a process of argumentation. The process of argumentation is the process in which the political actors tries to gain acceptance and support from the audience, which Obama clearly did not have. The fact that the only mentioned Venezuela three times after his first E.O it can be mentioned that Obama did not have a legitimate decision upon enforcing the sanctions towards Venezuela.

PDA enables us to see how discourse has an impact in decision-making, the political actors that have legitimacy over the audience and the justification of enforcing certain decisions. In Obama's case the best effort he had in this discourse to impose sanctions were two, his desires to increase leadership in the world and his desire to create a stronger international community. Moreover, in the theory of securitization the political actor must convince the audience to allocate resources to elevate a problem as a threat, this again was not in the case of Obama. Discursively, Obama did not engage with the American population to perceive Venezuela as a threat. He was far more concerned on pinpointing Islam and Iran as a threat rather than Venezuela. To mention that lack of transparency and corruption are a problem to the US and to the world is not a strong discursive justification to see Venezuela as a threat. Through his discourses, Obama mostly linked corruption with terrorist groups such as ISIL and Hezbollah.

On the other hand, Obama was explicit on mentioning that Congress was responsible for the sanction imposed to Venezuela, Iran and Russia and he did not take a strong part in the process of securitization. This goes in hand with the fact that the most used discursive pillar in the Obama speeches was nationalism and his strong desire to pursue an international community with strong acceptance to American values, that according to Obama should be regarded as universal values. Obama as a political actor explicitly mentioned that certain policies of the US in the world and specifically the region were outdated but to change these policies it would require the support of certain actors such as Congress, which instead of supporting the democratic executive disregarded his efforts.

The triangulation of information with the institutional actors gave us knowledge of the context and within the theory of securitization functional actors are not the actors giving the securitization speech against (both implicitly or explicitly) to the threat but rather they set the framework for the referent object to feel threatened. The institutional actors within the theory did set the framework to perceive Venezuela as a threat but rather the political actor did not antagonize the country meaning that the process of securitization during the Obama administration clearly failed. This is not because Obama did not pursue a process of securitization on other realms but rather because the Obama context was more focused on the Middle East still. Obama discursively even though he explicitly mentioned that congress was the

entity that pursued sanctions against Iran had a more vivid securitization discourse against Iran and Islam than with Venezuela.

For Obama the security of the American people did go in hand with the security of the government and their institutions, but this within the process of securitization is mostly seen in weak governments. The US with their constant need to require an enemy, is rather the example of a decaying power. During the Obama discourses Venezuela is regarded as a societal and political threat because of the recurrent need to sell the entire world the universal values of the US that by default will pump economic development by decreasing corruption and enforcing transparency. More abstract concepts with Obama could be securitized such as corruption but to only mention the need for the world to be part of an international community it is not enough within the discourse. As a matter of fact, to securitize something successfully more emphasis on the enemy pillar should be given instead of the pillar of nationalism alone, because what the political actor needs to create is an existential fear to allocate resources through the perception of an emergency. Within the theory, Obama's action could be regarded as a securitizing move, which is highly politicized.

## **Chapter 3. Trump's Securitization Discourse**

### **Trump: Old America is the New America**

#### **1. Trump's Discursive Pillars**

Trump's political discourse since 2015 has not changed, his speech has evolved superficially, over how he reiterates certain ideas. Trump has consistently maintained the same roots, vision, and discursive goals. Since the beginning of his political campaign, he rooted for nationalism and protectionism, whilst abolishing globalism in the sense the democrats created it. Trump's political discourse in certain aspects had no coherence specially when he mentioned that he was not supporting of globalism due to the 'horrible' trade deals achieved by the democratic party did with China. NAFTA and NATO were also perceived as grim. Nonetheless, the Trump administration was very open for TLC's with other nations, specifically those in the southern hemisphere. Furthermore, Trump's discourse always mentioned how nationalism has been forgotten by the US and that the values that made up American identity should be upheld with honor, with the values of a forgotten America, to make America Great Again by using the nostalgia of the past of what the US and the American dream used to be. In this section alone, eighty-eight discourses were analyzed and coded from Trump through Atlas.ti. The discourses were picked by relevance and by date, since June 16, 2015 when Trump mentions that he will be running for the US presidency in the republican party, until election day in November 3, 2020.

As mentioned in the previous section, both presidents' discourse were analyzed through three main pillars of discursive construction which are Nationalism, the referent object to Securitization (Security) and the Enemy. Each pillar had their own subcategories that construct the pillar aforementioned, these subcategories shall be explained and analyzed further on. When coded, the most used pillar in the Trump speeches was the enemy pillar, with over four hundred and seventeen codes in eighty-eight speeches. This means that Trump was keen on the construction of the "other" and a construction of fear for the American people through an existential fear. The enemy is a discursive construction because of its existential character, meaning that without a securitization discourse previously established, there would be no appropriate management for the threat. The threat has to be legitimized as a threat to the referent object and the speech act has to be understood by the audience for the management of the object will change. According to



Weaver “A discussion of security is a discussion of a threat, so it makes sense to develop discourse ethics criteria of justification for securitization” (2011, 473). However, the construction of this enemy did not only limit itself to a tangible enemy, but it created a discursive enemy inside the US that represented both a political and societal threat.

Trump was very repetitive on what is a threat for himself, the republican party, and for the American people. On the other hand, the nationalism pillar came in as the second most used pillar with two hundred and eight-four entrees, they highlighted the need to return to the American values and to be proud of being Americans along with the symbolisms inside the American identity. Moreover, Trump in every speech that mentioned American identity, he always mentioned God and religion as tool to create social cohesion. Finally, the security pillar, was the least used pillar by Trump, with only one hundred and fifty-one entrees. Trump mostly mentioned that the economy and the republican party must be securitized. For the institutions of the republican party and the capitalistic economy are subcategories that can provide security for the American people. The coding chart used for the Trump discourse analysis was as follow:

**Table 1.3. Discursive Pillars of Trump and its Subcategories**

ENEMY	SECURITY	NATIONALISM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venezuela</li> <li>• Democrats</li> <li>• China</li> <li>• Socialism</li> <li>• Immigration (immigrants)</li> <li>• Fake news (media)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trump</li> <li>• Immigration (the wall)</li> <li>• Republican Party</li> <li>• Military</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values/ ideals</li> <li>• Immigration (legal)</li> <li>• America First</li> <li>• US economy</li> <li>• Race</li> </ul>

Source: Information built upon the research question and the discursive pillars (see pages 6 and 13)

Inside the enemy discursive pillar, the most used subcategories with Trump were: democrats with a hundred and thirty-nine entrees, the subcategory of Venezuela with one hundred and eighteen entrees. Moreover, the subcategories of socialism with eighty entrees, immigration with forty-seven entrees, China with twenty-four entrees and finally fake news with only five explicit

entrees. Regarding nationalism discursive pillar, the subcategories were as follow: US economy with one hundred and five entrees, values/ideals with sixty-eight entrees, immigration with forty-seven entrees, America first with nineteen entrees, and finally race with only nine explicit entrees. Finally, the least used pillar was security, however, its subcategories were: Trump with fifty-nine entrees, immigration with forty-seven, the republican party with thirty-seven entrees, and finally military with eight entrees. Notwithstanding, the military was always mentioned in every speech given by Trump mentioning that the services his administration was giving the vets were far superior and the fact that the US military was depleted before his administration. However, the military is not one of our key goals inside this research.

One subcategory in comparison to the Obama analysis in the previous chapter, can also be seen inside every discursive pillar in Trump's speeches. This subcategory is immigration. Nonetheless, it is used differently in every discursive pillar. In the enemy pillar, immigration is used when regarding illegal immigrants, which according to Trump are a threat due to the increased violence and drugs sanctuary cities that are primarily run by democratic politicians. In the security pillar, immigration is used when Trump mentions border enforcement and 'the wall', meanwhile in the nationalism pillar, immigration is used as a way to propel legal immigration through a merit-based system. This is an interesting security constellation to analyze because it proves the complexity of securitization as a whole, this is called a security constellation because the subcategory of immigration is used in different security sectors/realms. According to Buzan, Waever & de Wilde "The securitization in different sectors are connected. The main instances of securitization are narratives that draw upon elements from several sectors to produce images of existential threats and necessary action- typically, sustained integration" (1998, 188). Immigration is a tangible proof that security and what is security for the US is complex to understand not only due to the changing context, which influences the securitization object and the existential threat been used. But also, it gives us an insight that the subcategories and every discursive pillar are in fact intertwined. This is key inside Buzan's insistence that security cannot be isolated for treatment nor understanding.

Trump right out the bat has a different discourse than Obama not only due to the discursive pillars and the subcategories but also due to the context Trump had. The inter-textuality of the

discourse is way different than Obama's. Trump's context was primarily centered on his impeachment process, sex accusations from several women, the possible construction of a wall to stop illegal immigration, and finally a global pandemic. All in all, Trump's discourse happened in a polarizing political environment since his presidential candidacy. In comparison with Obama, who won his last campaign due to demographics, through the vote of American minorities. Trump was the most rational option, because the traditional American middle class was forgotten during the Obama administration. Regardless, the great majority of speeches analyzed primarily talked about three things: The US economy, Venezuela and/ or socialism, and how Trump is great dealmaker. In fact, every single discourse Trump gives out is used as a political catapult to propel his image in a positive way. Even when the context is bad or inappropriate Trump used his position to promote propaganda for himself. Even though Trump was regarded as an outsider, his foreign policy regarding Venezuela and China were pretty traditional. In his discourse he mentioned that the relaxation policies with Cuba were awful and that the Iran nuclear deal was one of the worse deals ever made. Instead of having a position of openness to the world and other foreign powers Trump's political stance was extremely traditional.

To start this analysis, we shall first focus on the enemy discursive pillar, which again was the most used pillar inside Trump's discourse. The enemy is always the "other", this pillar is mostly used not only to build fear for the audience but is required for the nationalism pillar to work. To build nationalism through negative nationalism as Trump did, there is a necessity to build the enemy of those that are foreign to the construction of the "us". The easiest way both psychologically and discursively know what is the us, is to know what is not part of the us. The enemy for Trump is a very straightforward existential construction, for the enemy is everything that challenges the values he wants America to have once again.

Trump mentioned in his State of the Union Address that "As we rebuild America's strength and confidence at home, we are also restoring our strength and standing abroad. Around the world, we face rogue regimes, terrorist groups, and rivals like China and Russia that challenge our interests." (January 30, 2018). Furthermore, the enemy according to Trump's speeches are also a threat to the institutions of the US and the political ideology they have. In addition, a

securitization process becomes more effective when an authoritative figure declares there is an existential threat, which makes it obvious of why the enemy is the most used pillar inside Trump's speech.

The main subcategory and the most used subcategory to analyze inside the enemy pillar is the democratic party of the US or the democrats. Even though, the democratic party represents one of the core values of what the US is, which is political freedom and bipartisan politics. Trump in his speeches he is not keen on talking about democracy or defending democracy, he specifically states that the value the US must go back to the old ways, when American was a proud patriot, something the democrats do not abide. Those values go in hand with the values the republican party, meaning that what is not republican is a direct threat to the US values. For Trump the democrats are the enemy because they use a new platform to reach the American audience, which are both radical socialists and globalists. Trump in almost every single speech analyzed kept on mentioning that a vote for a democratic politician is a vote in support of radical socialism and the destruction of the American Dream.

The democrats are not religious, they want open borders, increasing crime and overall want to abolish capitalism in the US, leading the country towards socialism. The democrats are to be blamed for the rigged political system the US currently has. Trump mentioned that the US with a democratic congress or with a democratic president elect will eventually become a bigger Venezuela. Trump in his speech in his political rally in Elko, Nevada stated that "Democrats want to massively raise your taxes, impose socialism on our country. We'll be another Venezuela. They want to take away your health care, destroy your Second Amendment" (October 20, 2018). Trump has a very repetitive discourse again, linking democrats with increased poverty and raising taxes to the US citizens as a way to increase bureaucracy. Moreover, Trump mentions that the democratic party wishes to ban guns from the American citizens, which is in fact, a God given right from the constitution.

Trump during his presidency, continuously mentioned that he was always attacked by the democrats because he was tearing down the status quo. Hence, he used his slogan 'drain the swamp'. Trump in his political rally in Sunrise, Florida stated that "The failed Washington

establishment is trying to stop me because I'm fighting for you and because we're winning...And if you want to see what corruption looks like, then take a look, no further than slow, sleepy Joe.” (November 26, 2019). Therefore, the reason behind his impeachment trial failed because at the core it was phony and a fake, plus some democrats voted in favor of the republican party. In addition, Trump kept on stating that those trapped in poverty inside the US had to blame the democratic party, because the party failed to deliver. Trump blamed Obamacare for it ended up been too expensive for a lot of Americans that had no health insurance. Overall, Trump had a deep hate towards the democratic party and their politicians along with the mainstream news channels, that according to the former president were actual allies. Trump in his political rally at Las Vegas, Nevada started that:

I'm angry at Democrats because of what they're doing to our country. I'm angry at Democrats because of what they do to our country. Today's Democratic Party is held hostage by left-wing haters, angry mobs, socialist fanatics, deep-state bureaucrats, and their fake news allies (September 20, 2018).

All in all, the democratic party was to blame for the impeachment trial and the continuous fake news the Trump administration had to go through, the democrats worked to turn the population against the republican party. Another interesting point is that during the Trump administration, a lot of riots due to racism in the US were constantly reported in mainstream new channels such as CNN that favored the democratic party and blamed the Trump administration for hate crimes committed again the black and Hispanic population of the US. Trump repeatedly stated that the democrats and news broadcasting channels were promoting a witch hunt against him, his family, and the republican party for standing up to true American values and not been politically correct.

Furthermore, Trump made continuous backslashes against the democrats, especially Obama and his ACA<sup>6</sup>. Stated that Obama Care was too expensive for the great majority of senior citizens and that it did not take into account the US veterans and their proper care. Trump stated that the

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<sup>6</sup> The ACA also known as the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, is a United States federal statute enacted by the 111th United States Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama on March 23, 2010. The law provides consumers with subsidies in health services, aiming to make health care more affordable. Moreover, the law forced insurance to cover preexisting conditions.

democrats do not want to provide American citizens with good and affordable healthcare, but wish to use American taxes to pay for the welfare of illegal immigrants. The irony in Trump's discourse is that the speech was not coherent with his actions, if a speech cannot go in hand with actions, it has not coherence whatsoever.

Trump was unable to build a better and improved ACA/Obamacare, he was only able to change certain clauses. However, Trump was not allowed to repeal ACA. Trump eliminated the individual mandate from Obamacare, which had several consequences, one of them is that illegal immigrants were discouraged in enrolling in Medicare. Moreover, with the new ACA clauses work requirements were necessary, those enrolling needed to prove they were working or studying, whilst unemployed people were left out of Medicare. Finally, in 2017, without any warning the federal government stopped paying for the ACA cost sharing subsidies to keep premium costs low. The continuous rhetoric Trump maintained was that the democrats wanted to decrease the living standards for the American middle class, destroying every welfare institution for American citizens, because their priorities are in immigration and promoting left radicalization in the US. Due to this the democratic party promotes for illegal immigrants to vote in US elections to have more people and strength in their political radicalization. However, Trump and the republican party ended up lowering the living standard for many unemployed Americans and for many inside the middle class due to his changes of ACA.

Furthermore, pro-immigration policies and illegal immigrants are a priority for the democratic party and as it was abovementioned, Trump had this continuous rhetoric that without border control and without the law enforcement through ICE in the southern border, there is no US. Without strong borders the American nation will be depleted. According to Trump in his political rally in Rochester, Minnesota "By the way, you don't have borders, you don't have a country, folks. You don't have a country. Keith Ellison's Democrat Party embraces radical socialism and open borders. The new platform of the Democrat Party is to abolish ICE." (October 4, 2018). By stating that without borders nor the patriotic workers from ICE there shall be no country, it is a great discursive and psychological way of existentially threatening legal Americans inside mainland US.

Without a border and without ICE more immigrants shall come inside the southern border, even though the wall is already there, increasing crime and destroying the discursive concept of what American culture is and how the average American should look like. According to Trump in his political rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan “The Democrats want to abolish ICE. They want to get rid of these very great patriots, these very tough people that love our country as much as anybody I’ve ever seen.” (March 28, 2019). All in all, this is a clear demarcation of what will form the ‘us’ versus the ‘others’ inside Trump’s political discourse. Since 2016 until 2020, Trump has always mentioned that he was in favor of patriotism and nationalism through the securitization of the US and the values it had to offer the world, in comparison to the democrats that clearly aimed towards globalism. Supporting a strong border is a synonym for been patriotic, something that Trump mentions that has been forgotten due to democratic administrations that frown upon nationalism due to their globalist approach. There is a direct discursive link that the democrats are the existential enemy because of their immigration policies that disrupt America’s status quo as a world hegemon. Overall, Trump was very acute on mentioning that the democrat’s priority was not the American middle class nor the forgotten America in the rural areas, but are sanctuary cities that mostly clasp illegal immigrants. Trump in his political rally in Cincinnati, Ohio mentioned that:

Democrats have forgotten who it is that they're supposed to represent. They forgot. I wonder why they forgot. The job of elected officials is to represent American citizens. The radical democrats even support deadly sanctuary cities which release dangerous criminals onto our streets, sanctuary cities (August 1, 2019).

The fact that for Trump, democrats support illegal immigration and human trafficking by having weak borders, is a clear indicator of left-wing radical influence in the country. Trump in some of his speeches said that it was an abomination that people had to apologize for been American and for behaving like an American around immigrants. Trump, in his political rally in Elko, Nevada stated that “Democrats believe our country should be a sanctuary for criminal aliens. Republicans believe our country should be a sanctuary for law-abiding Americans.” (October 20, 2018). Everything that is against republican values and against taking care of the American citizens is a direct threat to the US as a State and as a Nation. Therefore, the democrats are the

enemy for also supporting other enemies such as are illegal immigrants and allowing flexible immigration policies.

Additionally, another reason for seeing the democratic party as an existential threat to Trump, the US, and the republican party is that the democratic party does not believe in the American dream. Obama in his last administration mentioned that the US and its system ended up failing to a lot of Americans, especially minorities. This failure of the American dream is seen through structural racism in the US, Obama addressed the issue constantly in contrast with Trump, that sugarcoated every tragedy such as the death of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor due to police brutality. For Trump the problem comes from democratic governments that promote violence and riots from their voters. All in all, for Trump the fate of the US as a country has been destroyed by the democrats and every vote a citizen gives to the democrats is a vote in favor of socialism, crime, and the destruction of American values. The Green New Deal by the democrats is also another point where Trump and the republican party see the democrats as a threat to the US and their citizens, due to the job creation. Manufacturing jobs according to Trump's discourse were almost extinct and due to his administration; several companies have gotten back to the US decreasing unemployment. Trump during his announcement of the E.O on Hong Kong and China stated that:

Mandate net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. And I believe he's changing that. He's bringing it down. He wants no petroleum product. He wants no oil or gas. I don't think Texas is going to do too well. They're going to get rid of about 7 million jobs if you go by the Biden plan. I don't think that Oklahoma, North Dakota, Pennsylvania are going to be too happy with that - and many other states - Ohio (July 14, 2020).

In February 2019, Trump said that over 304,000 jobs were added in one month alone, the great majority of jobs that Trump managed to bring back to the US as mentioned in his discourses came from car companies and coal mining for energy consumption. In addition, Trump when he spoke about his economic agenda, mentioned that because of his government female unemployment dropped historically, and in 65 years the US has reached the lowest unemployment rate for females. The economy alone during the Trump administration did add 6.7



million jobs. Nonetheless, the last three years of Obama alone added seven million jobs, meaning that Trump inherited an already growing economy in 2016 in comparison to Obama in 2008 who inherited a crumbling economy due to the mortgage bubble burst. In 2017 when Trump took office, he only had a 4.75 of unemployment. According to Trump in his speech in Miami, Florida:

My economic agenda can be summed up in three words. And you're going to like these three words. Jobs, jobs, jobs. [Applause] One of my highest priorities is to bring jobs into our inner cities. African-American communities have suffered horribly as a result of failed Democratic leadership. Democrats have run these inner cities for a half a century, for 60 years, 75 years, even in some cases 100 years straight. Unabated (September 16, 2016).

It is quite shocking from Trump's remarks that he does not recognize the economic policies Obama had already implemented to take the country out of recession. In Trump's speeches everything that the democratic party has done well is still frowned upon. The democrats are not only seen as a threat but also as an inherent competition. Trump in his interview with Maria Bartiromo of Fox News stated that "Not to mention, all of the crime is coming out of Democrat states. Republicans are doing incredibly on crime, on opening, on economic, it's all -- everything coming out, crime and other problems are in Democrat-run states." (October 11, 2020). During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump championed for the working man, but during his administration he did not add something pivotal to propel the American working class and go beyond the democratic party. In fact, the Trump administration measured the increase in the US economy not only by stating that the unemployment rate was dropping, which was true with only a 3.5% of unemployment in September 2019. The administration was very keen on mentioning the Dow Jones and the increase it had in the international market with Trump. Regardless of the fact that the Dow Jones has nothing to do with increasing employment nor the PPP per capita, rather the Dow is simply a measure of the behavior and productivity of the thirty largest companies listed on US stock exchanges.

Trump is the second president in US history after Herbert Hoover to leave office with less jobs than when he started office, objectively speaking this was also bolstered due to the COVID 19

pandemic. Trump in many of his political rallies mentioned how many jobs his administration was creating nationwide. According to Trump in his State of the Union Address “On Friday, it was announced that we added another 304,000 jobs last month alone -- almost double what was expected-- and the only thing that can stop it are foolish wars, politics or ridiculous partisan investigations.” (February 5, 2019). Trump stated that he created over 304.000 jobs and that bipartisan politics will try to spot the economic miracle happening in the US due to the Trump administration. Nonetheless, the US economy created an average of 193,000 and 175,000 a month with Trump (The Economic Times, 2020). In addition, Trump as a discursive strategy always compared the democratic party with socialism and Venezuela as a way to make the party politically incorrect and to rest votes away from them. According to Trump in his political rally in El Paso, Texas “They're becoming the party of socialism, late-term abortion, open borders, and crime. [Audience Boos] This weekend, some Democrats even proposed a measure that would force the release of thousands of criminal illegal aliens” (February 11, 2019). For Trump the democrats demonize the police force and everything that is conservative and patriotic inside the US. Therefore, the socialist democrats are a party of crime because they do not only not care about US citizens, but care only about immigrants.

The second most used subcategory inside the enemy discursive pillar is Venezuela, this can be seen even in the section abovementioned were the democrats and their party where constantly compared to Venezuela and socialism. Venezuela may not be the same type of threat to the US as it was established back in 2015 but it is still a political and societal threat if it is analyzed in sectors. A strong state inside the securitization theory is little vulnerable specially against small powers. However, in this case of the US proves that their principles of nation-building for the country itself and their citizens are weak by stating that Venezuela is a threat. Venezuela for the US might influence the stability of the political order by trying to diminish their sovereignty. In Venezuela’s case the country and their political system represent a societal threat due to the identity challenges Venezuela is producing inside the US. The main threat in this sector for both north America and Latin-American is migration. According to Huntington:

White Americans see immigration as a threat not so much because they US could become a Spanish speaking (whites could be a minority) but rather because the increasing self-assuredness

of different minorities threaten to produce a less unified, more multicultural and thereby less universalistic United States (1998, 131).

The political diversity Venezuelan immigrants have is a threat not only due to xenophobic reasons that are a fact in the US, but it also their perception of politics. The Hispanic demographics of the US are giving more electoral power to Latinos and the democratic party, which support immigration reforms. The US universal values do not base themselves upon socialism or a welfare state but rather a state of non-intervention and freedom. There is an unavoidable clash of different cultures one that is polychronic or group centered versus another one that is anachronic and individualistic. The most notorious discourse Trump had against Venezuela as a threat, regards the influence the country has in the hemisphere. If Venezuela is left untouched and without sanctions this might propel a socialist wave in the region and mostly it will influence the political stand the US has had, specifically swaying the democrats and young progressist voters. Trump is extremely focused on keeping the hemisphere free and democratic. According to Trump in his signature of a new policy towards Cuba in Miami “Because we know it is best for America to have freedom in our hemisphere, whether in Cuba or Venezuela, and to have a future where the people of each country can live out their own dreams.” (June 16, 2017). Nonetheless, the main point in Trump’s discourse is not that every country is democratic as it might sound in his hemispheric discourse.

The US with Trump had substantial relations with Saudi Arabia, which is clearly not a democracy. Keeping the hemisphere free and democratic is another way of keeping it running on interests the US has in the region. As long as a regional leader works along the lines of the US it is not pivotal if that regime abuses human rights or is leading their population to starvation. Trump had a strong interest in making economic deals with every country in the region and China regardless of their political regime, what was pivotal for Trump is that the countries had to abide by the US rules and that the winner was always the US in every realm. Trump does see Venezuela as a new threat that endangers the political institutions the US stand for and the patriotism/protectionism Trump vouches for. According to Trump in his political rally in Sunrise, Florida “Here in the Western Hemisphere, we are confronting the brutal menace of communism and socialism. We are proudly supporting the great people of Venezuela, Cuba, and

Nicaragua in their righteous struggle for freedom, and you know that.” (November 26, 2019). In addition, Trump in his political rallies, especially in those places with a large Latino community, always brought political refugees from Venezuela to talk about the situation in their country and the horrible human rights abuses happening in the Maduro regime. Often those invited to talk in Trump’s political rallies were politically persecuted by the Maduro regime. Trump was very peculiar in showing the American people that socialism and communism were a main threat against the values of freedom the US has. Furthermore, for Trump socialism was always tied to poverty and social chaos which will reach the US shores if citizens embrace the democratic party.

Trump’s way of helping Venezuela and other leftist-authoritarian countries is through enforcement and not through dialogue or cooperation. Trump when he was answering questions from press pool mentioned that “All options are on the table. Everyone. Strong ones and the less-than-strong ones. Every option -- and you know what I mean by “strong.” Every option is on the table, with respect to Venezuela.” (September 26, 2018). When Trump says strong options he is stating directly that a military option is on the table as a way to propel democracy and freedom in Venezuela. In fact, a military option was rebutted in Congress by the democrats, for the consequences of a regional war will be more catastrophic than the Maduro regime.

This enforcement by the Trump administration can also be seen in his speech in the 73rd session of the United Nations “In that spirit, we ask the nations gathered here to join us in calling for the restoration of democracy in Venezuela. Today, we are announcing additional sanctions against the repressive regime, targeting Maduro’s inner circle and close advisors.” (September 25, 2018). The Trump administration in comparison to the Obama demonstration, made several executive orders against the government of Venezuela in particular against high political authorities inside the government. Overall, Trump also focused the sanctions against the foreign interference from foreign nations such as China, Iran, and Russia inside Venezuela. According to CNBC “In another show of support, Moscow has given Caracas a line of credit to purchase Russian arms” (2020). The elected president stated that it was not fine for them to influence Venezuela whatsoever and that Latin America still represents their sphere of influence for years before and more to come. Actually, the Trump administration was the one who revived the Monroe

Doctrine, for it was disregarded in the Obama administration by the Secretary of State John Kerry and perceived as an expired approach to deal with foreign policy. In contrast, Trump sees the Monroe Doctrine as the formal policy of the US in the region and especially due to the current context of Venezuela and foreign powers. Trump's security adviser John Bolton, mentioned that the Doctrine was alive and well with the right to intervene.

Another interesting point about Trump's discourse within the Venezuela subcategory is that when speaking about Venezuela he is always focused on the increasing poverty due to the regime. In the discourse the cause of poverty is not corruption or the economic breakdown but rather Trump blames socialism as the only trigger for not having food nor water. In the National Day of Prayer Service at The White House, Trump stated that "The brutal repression of the Venezuelan people must end and it must end soon. People are starving, they have no food, they have no water and this was once one of the wealthiest countries in the world" (May 2, 2019). Before socialism, Venezuela was one of the richest countries in the region and it still is one of the countries that holds the largest oil reservoirs in the world. In addition, the Trump administration was very repetitive about the lack of food and water Venezuela has during the Maduro administration.

The third most used discursive subcategory inside the enemy pillar is socialism, which is not a shocker because every single time Trump mentioned the democrats and Venezuela, there was a constant reminder that both agents are influenced by socialism and ultimately communism. Trump always stated as a fact that Venezuela is able to keep their corrupt regime because the Cuban socialist government still supports Maduro. Moreover, the economic and military realms are sustained by impact of foreign powers such as China and Russia. When Trump started his administration, he was asked if he was going to do something against those foreign powers, due to the Monroe Doctrine. Trump mentioned that every action was on the table to minimize foreign influence in the hemisphere but during his administration he did nothing directly against the aforementioned powers

In the US, socialism has been a difficult political concept to introduce. However, with the appearance of certain politicians such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the

acceptance of a more leftist/progressive ideologies are underway. Specifically, in the 2016 campaign, Sanders, had a strong support of young voters, changing the political map the US has had historically. Trump in the State of the Union stated that “America was founded on liberty and independence -- not government coercion, domination and control. We are born free, and we will stay free. Tonight, we renew our resolve that America will never be a socialist country.” (February 5, 2019). In the above-mentioned quote, Trump stated that the US shall never be a socialist country, reminding the American citizens of the national values the US was founded upon, which are liberty, democracy, and overall hard work. Trump is not only worried of the hemispheric influence socialist countries have in the region but rather he is anxious of the influence it has upon politics inside the US due to the immigration influx.

The republican party and the Trump administration are uneasy of the growing strength the democratic party is having. At the core the democrats sway immigrant voters to support them, not only due to their flexible immigration bills but also due to their Latino candidates running for multiple political positions. In fact, many Hispanic immigrants tend to give more votes to other Latino political candidates, rather to candidates from different ethnicities. According to Trump in his political rally in Sunrise, Florida “Virtually, every top Democrat, also supports late-term abortion...Democrats are now the party of high taxes, high crime, open borders, late-term abortion, socialism, and blatant corruption.” (November 26, 2019). The fact that in the previous quote, Trump mentions that the Democrats are in favor of open borders is another way of stating that democrats are in favor of illegal immigration and of setting easier paths towards citizenship, which they should as a way to countermeasure immigrants’ vulnerable status. Nonetheless, another important fact that is not very well discussed inside this discourse analysis is the fact that in Florida, where the quote aforementioned was said the newest immigrants settling in are primarily coming from Venezuela.

The fact that immigrants normally tend to feel represented by the democratic party and that there is a great number of Venezuelan immigrants just arriving in the US, makes the threat of Venezuela in a societal sense and political sense even more threatening. Not only because of a cultural and ethnic shock but due to a political shock of system of government and stability. Furthermore, Trump blames the democratic party for addressing the systemic racism inside

certain institutions in the US and the overall problem with racial minorities citing the cases of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, among others. Inside Trump's rhetoric to address these structural problems, is what gives rise to more violence.

Finally, the least used subcategories inside the enemy pillar is immigration (immigrants) and China. The subcategory of immigration inside this discursive pillar primarily focuses around illegal immigration and illegal immigrants, that as stated by Trump is one major threats the US is facing due to the increase of drug trafficking, human trafficking, and overall crime. All in all, crime is worse because of immigrants and first-generation immigrants in the US. Moreover, when confronted with the problems of the children been separated from their parents in the border, specifically in Nogales, Trump stated that there is no problem at all.

Trump saw a way to disincentivize illegal immigration by putting kids inside cages with no hopes of been reunited with their parents. Trump in the State of the Union stated that "Now is the time for Congress to show the world that America is committed to ending illegal immigration and putting the ruthless coyotes, cartels, drug dealers, and human traffickers out of business." (February 5, 2019). In fact, the child separation policy and Trump's zero tolerance policy did decrease illegal immigration. During the first months of the Biden administration from January until February 2021, illegal immigration in the southern border exponentially grew by his willingness to eradicate the zero-tolerance policy. Just in two months, around 15.000 unaccompanied minors primarily from central America tried to cross the border, and around 500 unaccompanied minors try to cross the border illegally per day (Fitz-Gibbon 2021).

Trump blamed the democrats for pursuing the shutdown of ICE due to the problems in the southern border, the republican party as the Trump administration keep on stating that in fact ICE keeps the country secure by enforcing more force in the border, because for the republican crime comes from outside the US primarily and not from within. Trump was very keen supporting ICE in his political rally in Council Bluffs, Iowa:

But they're very tough people. Guess what? That's what we need to take care of MS-13, all the gangs. You don't want to do it. You don't want to do it. Even you don't want to do it. I don't want

to do it, either. They're fantastic people. They love our country. And to them, it's a day in the office. For other people, they want no part of it. They want to turn America, these Democrats - and that's what they want - into a giant sanctuary for criminal aliens and the MS-13 killers (October 9, 2018).

ICE during the Trump administration had to deal with a lot of backlash due to the humanitarian problem in the southern border, which was constantly blamed to the Obama administration for building the cages along the border. Trump persistently answered when asked about the topic that his administration did not build the cages and that in fact, they were taking care of minors by taking them away from their families and protecting them from coyotes. In addition, Trump is very keen in mentioning that ICE workers are true patriots for enforcing the US borders. Everyone that supports open borders inside Trump's rhetoric are not true patriots nor stand by American universal values. On the other hand, democrats are an enemy to America because they have another set of priorities, which are illegal aliens, rather than their own population.

Finally, the last subcategory used in the enemy pillar is China, which according to Trump is mayor economic problem for the US due to the trade barriers the Asian power has enforced against US produce and products. Trump around the clock blamed the democrats for agreements that were counterproductive to the US economy with China. Specifically blamed the Obama administration and foresaw the probability that with the Biden administration more horrible trade agreements for the US were going to be signed. According to Trump in his interview with Catherine Herridge of Fox News "Well, China is a big problem. We're losing \$500 billion a year to China. There's a great hostility, there's a great by -- China's a big problem" (May 2, 2019). Trump's preoccupation over China was primarily due to their pricing policy of dumping, which according to Trump was unethical and it is not a fair way to play with the world economy. Nonetheless, due to the trade barriers Trump and many other western powers have set against China, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce has backfired with anti-dumping policies, raising the imposed anti-dumping duties from 116.2 percent to 218.4 percent (Global Times, 2021). At the end of the day, the stronger the economy the stronger the country and the patriotic sway.



The second most used discursive pillar inside Trump's speeches is the pillar of nationalism, inside the abovementioned discursive pillar of nationalism, the most used subcategory in Trump's speeches is the US economy. The American economy and the improvement of the economy during the Trump administration was a major trend to talk about. Trump was constantly mentioning that the US had the hottest economy in the world, and that was pivotal for the US to maintain strong and respected around the world. Trump in his State of the Union Address stated that "Since the election, we have created 2.4 million new jobs, including... [Applause] including 200,000 new jobs in manufacturing alone. After years of wage stagnation, we are finally seeing rising wages. [Applause] Unemployment claims have hit a 45-year low." (January 30, 2018). In fact, having a strong economy for Trump is another variable to propel nationalism, for having the strongest economy in the world and the lowest unemployment in history should make the American population proud of their country and of their president elect.

In contrast with the democrats that according to Trump heavily damaged the US economy for years, due to NAFTA and horrible trade deals with China. Trump in all his administration mentioned that because of him alone the US is having a strong economy, obliterating everything that Obama did in his administrations to take the US out of the recession. In the State of the Union, Trump mentioned "The U.S. economy is growing almost twice as fast today as when I took office, and we are considered far and away the hottest economy anywhere in the world." (February 5, 2019). The more the US grows economically, the prouder people should feel for living inside the US that for the republican party it is still the greatest country on earth. Trump was very keen in stating that his office is the reason why the US is the strongest economy in the world. In addition, Trump mentioned the subcategory of US Economy continuously blamed the democrats and their poor economic agenda, which lead to a depleted US military. Due to the Trump administration and improving the economy for every American, the US military is no longer depleted as a counter-measure. The stronger the economy the stronger the US military and the prouder the US citizens should be for country and its might, something that goes in hand with old fashioned American values.

For Trump improving the economy is another plus for Americans to feel proud of the US and to reinvigorate the forgotten American patriotism and nationalism. Putting America first is feeling

proud of being American due to the political and economic institutions the US has and was founded upon. The ideological creed the US has is what compounds every American into one sole unit. Nonetheless, stating that the US economy is strong due to Trump is a bit of a reckless discourse even though due to the ideological creed is needed as a propeller. Trump did improve the economy during his four years of administration and the unemployment rate did effectively decrease. According to Smith “Over the next three years it grew almost \$6,000, to \$68,703. That’s perhaps why, despite the pandemic, 56% of U.S. voters polled last month said their families were better off today than they were four years ago” (2020). However, economic policies to have tangible consequences require a minimum of ten years’ time.

Hence, Trump was able to improve an already growing economy due to previous administration policies already implemented eight years before. Trump improved those policies by promoting a trade war, which counterintuitively improved the economy. The Trump administration used a trickle-down economic model that sometimes in certain contexts does increase the economy, but normally it tends to only increase the economic gap. Putting America first might not be something for the common worker but rather is prioritizing certain US enterprises. Due to the US strong economy, not only the US should feel more patriotic of their country and government. But in fact, because of the growing economy Americans should feel more wary of illegal immigrants.

For Trump in his discourses illegal immigration was growing because of their economy, due to the low unemployment, immigrants were trying to cross the border away from corruption to acquire jobs in the US. Something that for Trump is unbearable because they are taking jobs away from law-abiding Americans. Trump remarked in his political rally in Pensacola, Florida “You have a lot of bad people coming into our country and we're not letting them come into our country. But one of the reasons they're coming up is my fault. You know that.” (November 3, 2018). It is quite interesting that Trump when speaking about the economy only mention himself as the direct cause of the improvement ‘they are coming up is my fault’ Trump does not take into account the international markets nor the actions of certain institutions such as the FED as multicausal variable to explain the growing economy the US was experimenting.

The second most used subcategory in the nationalism discursive pillar are the value/ideals. According to the universal values/ideals the US vouches for and those that Trump vouches for, socialism and communism are errors from the last century that must not be repeated. The US, during the Trump administration supports the universal values of liberty, freedom of religion, equality, individualism, representative government, private property, and hard work. However, some discourses from Trump clash with other discourses when the states the need to practice any religion, but still explicitly mentioned that the US believes in God. For Trump is quite important to vouch for patriotic and nationalistic education, which is been lost. Trump in this address in the 73rd session of the United Nations “In America, we believe in the majesty of freedom and the dignity of the individual. We believe in self-government and the rule of law. We celebrate our heroes, we treasure our traditions, and above all, we love our country.” (September 25, 2018). Those that support freedom shall be perceived as loving patriots for the US, whilst those that aim for a leftist ideology cannot be regarded as patriotic nor truly American. Trump in his aforementioned quote, states that the US stands with deep faith, and in every discourse at the ending always mentions one of the most patriotic quotes from the US which is “In God we Trust”.

The US aims towards liberty of religion, which means that not everyone in the US should belief in a God. This is one of the clashing discourses Trump uses to build a national identity for the American audience. In a straightforward fashion Trump aims to patriotism and nationalism in an old perspective or through an old lens, where old values of American identity should be brought back. Trump is honest in stating what American values are under his administration. How Americans can feel more American, Trump in his political rally in Springfield, Missouri stated that:

Our ancestors crossed the ocean, settled a continent, won a revolution and fought, to victory, in two world wars. American patriots, like you, defeated fascism, triumphed over communism, and delivered millions into freedom. That's us -- freedom. These courageous patriots did not shed their blood, sweat and tears so that we could sit at home while others tear down their legacy, erase their history and sacrifice our proud American heritage (September 21, 2018).

Trump triggers American identity by remembering back how American became to be a strong country, which was in fact due to World War II. Finally, another interesting fact is that when Trump states the basis values and beliefs every American should have, he always mentions immigrants that do not share Anglo European values. He states that those immigrants that support other political systems should embrace the American way or simply not come inside the US. For the European values of been a freedom fighter for the Western Hemisphere will not be written by socialists and tyrants, but by liberty-loving patriots (that should be ethnically white). Trump clearly marks the difference between a real American and those others that embrace a leftist political ideology.

The last subcategories to analyze are immigration (legal and merit based), America First, and race/racism. The first subcategory of immigration is quite counterintuitive if superfluous analyzed, for historically the US is known to be a country of immigration. Even Trump mentioned that his forefathers came from Germany to the US in the search of a better future. Nonetheless, this statement of the US been a country if immigrants is a partial truth, the US is rather a country of settlers. According to Huntington:

America was not a nation of immigrants, it was a society, or societies, of settlers...Settlers leave an existing society, usually in a group, in order to create a new community in a new and often distant territory. They are imbued with a sense of collective purpose (2004, 39).

In contrast with immigrants that go to a territory because they wish to form part of a society that settlers already formed. In addition, immigration is a more individual process and do not cut ties with their former countries in comparison to settlers that due to the lack of technology during the 1500's left everything behind. This is why Trump wanted to change the immigration system to something that fits into the values/ideals and beliefs the US has as a nation. His administration was very keen on terminating DACA, which they did and wished to reform the immigration system to a merit-based system, where highly skilled workers could be called upon to their path towards citizenship. Trump stated in his interview with Jose Diaz-Balart from Telemundo that "Well, what I'm going to do is that they're going to part of a much bigger bill on immigration. It's going to be a very big bill, a very good bill, and merit-based bill, and it will include DACA".

(July 10, 2020). For Trump apart from eradicating this perception that the US is a country of immigrants, he pursued to prioritize admission only to those immigrants that can actually contribute to the US economy. This need to change the US immigration system goes in hand with Trump's motto of putting America first.

America first is another subcategory to analyze, for it sums up not only the patriotic need to feel proud about been American but to think first about American needs, America for Americans. Furthermore, Trump constantly mentions the need to put America First in contrast to the democratic party that never thought about the US needs, but rather focused on how to improve US image internationally. In his speech in Williston, North Dakota Trump stated that "We're going to rebuild our inner cities. We're going to make you and your family safe, secure and prosperous. The choice in November is a choice between a Clinton agenda that puts donors first or an agenda for America." (May 26, 2016). Overall, to make America stronger, safer, and a richer country, which consequently also helps the world. For Trump as for many presidents in the history of the US including Obama, standing up for America and their universal values is also standing up for the world. Moreover, America in comparison to the world is an exceptional nation not due to their creed, but instead of following ideologies, historically America is an ideology for their identity is defined by principle instead of ascription.

Finally, the last subcategory to analyze in this discursive pillar of nationalism is race/racism. Unfortunately to many the belief that America is a nation of immigrants or the fact that race is an old concept no longer applicable to human race are wrong. By stating the assumption that race still matter, we can find the root causes of why systemic racism in the US is still prevalent and have not been able to be eradicated. From police brutality, to gerrymandering, to the still prevalent KKK or neo-Nazis in the US, at the core the US was a country of settlers, primarily Anglo-protestants and not of immigrants. According to Huntington "For all practical purposes America was a white society until the mid-twentieth century...American identity as a multiethnic society dates from and, in some measure, was a product of World War II" (2004, 56-58). Trump blamed the leftist media that they constantly attacked him by saying that he was a racist, which is the oldest playbook for the democratic party, to obliterate someone politically because they might be racist.

However, Trump in his speeches always mentioned that no other government apart from his had increased unemployment for minorities in the US. That because of him the black communities and the Latino communities had better paid jobs and that could not possibly come from a racist president or a racist administration. Trump in his press conference after election day stated that “No. No, I would never do that and I don't use racist remarks. And you know what? If I did, you people would've known about it. I never worried about it because I never did. I never used racist remarks.” (November 7, 2018). Trump might not use racist remarks publicly, nonetheless, the lack of importance he gave the murder of certain African American citizens by police brutality does show a stand by the Trump administration and the American audience for which he tends. The fact that systemic racism is still a problem in an exceptional country not only argues the fact that the president is a racist, but in fact he is a racist for he comes from a racism society.

The last discursive pillar to be analyzed is the pillar of security, this pillar was the least used in the Trump speeches, which makes sense for he aimed to create a strong patriotic identity. Trump overall, had a very polarizing discourse and when speaking about security, normally an effective discourse must aim towards unity and not disunity as Trump continuously did. The objects to securitize in this pillar were not values or beliefs from the American creed but rather their territory and they republican party, which is counter-intuitive if one wishes to create a strong national identity through negative nationalism<sup>7</sup>. The most used subcategories in this discursive pillar were Trump as an object to securitize and Immigration (The Wall in the southern border). The subcategory of Trump highlights those moments where Trump ignites self-promotion over the work he was doing as president. Moreover, he repeatedly mentions that he is far the best president in the history of the US not only because he improved the working conditions for many Americans, but lowered unemployment for minorities, and improved the military. Trump in this subcategory is always stating that no one else has done what he had done, especially when he compares his administration to any democratic administration in the past. Trump mentioned in his bilateral meeting with Mario Benitez of Paraguay that “I've done much more for them than Obama did for them.” (December 13, 2019). This quote is always repeated in any Trump speech

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<sup>7</sup> Negative nationalism is created through the differentiation of the “us” versus the “other” normally tends to see the other as something foreign and dangerous, meaning a direct enemy to the warm circle of the *gemeinschaft*. A strong enemy is a great propelled to feel more in tune with the us.

in different forms, during the 2020 campaign he mentioned the same when comparing himself to Joe Biden, for Trump, Biden always looked tired and unavailable to the job.

Furthermore, Trump at the core already inherited a growing economy, he simply needed to maintain it. Trump in his interview with Jose Diaz-Balart of Telemundo “I have no regrets. You know, I've done a great job. I've done more than any president in the history of our country in the first two and a half years. I've gotten -- I've taken care of our vets.” (June 20, 2019). Trump in his subcategory is always trying to find ways to self-promote. When Boris Johnson from the UK was compared to Trump, he stated that it was a good thing for the UK because they wished they could have a president like Donald Trump with his economy policies. However, comparing Johnson to Trump was not a compliment but rather a mockery to both politicians by the mainstream media. Again, the discursive tool for faking it until you make it is very explicit in Trump’s speeches, because it does work up to some point. Trump in certain speeches said that he had a goal to be the greatest president in the history, to be remembered to the standard of FDR even though their social and economic policies were extremely different.

The next subcategory to analyze is immigration, in this discursive pillar it mostly refers to the securitization of the southern wall. The primary point in this subcategory is to securitize the American territory through border security and to maintain the US population secure by limiting the entrance of a different society not only by cultural and religious standards but also due to race. According to Trump in his press conference with Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia “The drug epidemic is poisoning too many American lives, and we're going to stop it many different ways. One of them will be the wall.” (May 18, 2017). The pivotal point of immigration here is to stop illegal immigration. To build a wall discursively was frowned as a racist and inhumane policy. Nonetheless, we must remember that for years US policies discriminated and restricted mobility for those that came from non-northern European countries. This is frowned upon during modern times because the US is seen as the role model for democracy and inclusion.

The fact that we see the US as a country of immigrants is due to the promotion of universal American values that the US vouches for around the world. “How America define themselves determines their role in the world, but how the world views that role also shapes American

identity” (Huntington 2004, 362). Americans in a way have a responsibility to persuade the world to acquire universal values due to their creed, whilst race is eradicated for not entering the politically correct dogma. Hence, Trump when defending the construction of the wall stated that Americans are the one who have to pay the price for illegal immigration for it leads to a depleted social safety net.

Finally, the last subcategories to analyze in this discursive pillar of security are: the republican party and the military as objects to securitize. The republican party in Trump’s discourse is pivotal for the creation of a national and a patriotic identity, which has been forgotten by modern America. The republican party for Trump is the party of free health care and of standing up to American values, ideals, and needs. Therefore, the republican party must be securitized because it personifies the real needs of the US audience. According to Trump in his campaign speech in Tampa, Florida “Together, we're going to restore ethics and honesty to our government. We're also going to restore safety to our country.” (August 24, 2016). When Trump states that they are going to restore ethics and honesty with the republican party and the American citizens, he embraces the true components of national identity. A going back to conservative values in which the US is built upon, in comparison to progressive ideals that normally comes from the democratic party. Moreover, Trump surprisingly mentioned the need from the republican party to safeguard not only legal and law-abiding Americans, but to eradicate laws that protect illegal immigrants in sanctuary cities. If the party is eradicated or if they did not win the 2020 election, this would mean that America shall not be put first, but rather legal Americans will be treated as second degree citizens. Without the republican party, American cannot show their true colors.

The military is another subcategory which forms the discursive pillar of securitization, for without a strong military the US is not a strong country, nor it continues with their history of military strength. Trump since the 2016 campaign stated that the US military was defunded by the democrats. Even though, the US even during the Obama administration still had the strongest military in the world, even more so than China. In the press conference on the Executive Order on Hong Kong and China, Trump stated that “We've -- we've got now, soon -- as it -- all this equipment comes in, all made in the USA -- we've got the newest, most incredible weapons anywhere in the world.” (July 14, 2020). Without an upgrade of military warfare, the



US would remain disrespected around the world. The best way to the US to be respected is through their direct and hard power as analyzed in Trump's discourse. Hence, the need of Trump to be constantly buying new planes and military equipment along with constant increase is expenditure. Even though their newest military aircraft carrier USS JFK did not have the appropriate modifications to carry the F-35 recently bought by the Trump administration.

## **2. Institutional Actors Analysis**

Certain branches of the US government have been extremely important into the discursive creation of Venezuela as a threat. These branches have been: The Department of Treasury and the Department of State with the E. O's of Trump, Congress, and the Committee of Foreign Affairs from the Senate. Two primordial institutional actors that will be analyzed conjointly shall be the department of treasury and state, because both of them are in charge of making the E. O's happen for Obama and Trump. The department of state is in charge of the foreign policy of the US whilst the department of treasury is in charge is of the federal government; it works as an executive branch. The department of treasury works to promote economic prosperity and to ensure financial security in the US and in the world economy. Hence, the executive orders from both Obama and Trump work along the Department of State and the Department of Treasury by freezing assets from Venezuelan individuals. For all the functional actors taken into account we shall analyze their values, goals, and possible expectations.

## **3. Committee of Foreign Relations**

The first functional actor to be analyzed through PDA shall be the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations, just as in the previous chapter. We were able to analyze only five hearings during the Trump administration (2017-2020). Only two hearings came from the subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere in the 115th Congress. The rest of hearings about Venezuela came from the Committee of Foreign Relations from the 116th Congress of the US with their new democratic chairman Hon. Eliot Engel. The main value for this committee whether it was with the previous chairman of the subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere with the Hon. Jeff Duncan or with the democratic chairman of the committee Hon. Eliot Engel, was to maintain the regional power the US as a hegemon. In the house hearing No. 116-4, the democratic representative Mr. Cicilline stated that "The United States must show leadership in our

hemisphere and we must continue to provide aid to suffering Venezuelans.” (February 13, 2019). This quote states the necessity of the US to take care of its own backyard and to ameliorate the influence foreign powers including Iran that is actively helping the south American nation through the clandestine shipment of gasoline to boost the fuel output of Petr6leos de Venezuela (PDVSA). When stating that the main value of this committee is to achieve regional power and strength it is not only military-wise but politically through the acceptance of American universal values. This is quite interesting when comparing the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress with the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, regardless of political party they both have similar values, leading to bipartisan initiatives towards Venezuela.

During the hearing analyzed a pivotal theme was the influence foreign powers were having by lending money to Venezuela. The committee constantly spoke about Petr6leos de Venezuela (PDVSA) and the ties it has with Russian corporations, which might endanger US companies. In addition, the committee gave a lot of scrutiny to the Venezuelan refugee problem that is not only jeopardizing the US but the whole region. The goals the committee had were several. However, they all go in hand with the need to position the US once again as a regional and world hegemon. One of the main goals the committee has and was actively pursuing it, was to launch the strength and influence the OAS might have upon Venezuela. Regardless of the fact, that the OAS has never worked the way it should have due to the lack of cohesive identity from North America towards the Latin-American nations. It is still seen as an organization that symbolizes the strength the US have upon their own backyard. According to congressman Albiro Sires in the house hearing No.115-13:

The OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro has wisely called for Venezuela’s suspension from the OAS unless he frees political prisoners, accepts humanitarian aid, and holds elections without delay. While a political solution is the only way to provide sustainable change for Venezuela, for the Venezuelan people, the dialogues up until now have done nothing but help provide Maduro a lifeline while his regime is teetering on the edge of collapse. I believe that we need to work together with our allies around the world and continue to insist Maduro abide by the international norms and give the Venezuela people the freedom they deserve (March 28, 2017).

The goal of strengthening the OAS is not only to increase the organization impact regionally and globally. But it is also a way of strengthen the influence the US could have in the world. At the end of the day the US influenced the creation of the OAS as the oldest regional organization, not only to enhance cooperation but to improve cultural ties in the western hemisphere. The OAS is a tool for the robustness the US in the world through the implementation of adopting universal values and democratic discourses. Taking Venezuela out of the OAS is only another way to enforce the Maduro regime to hold elections and to adopt the abovementioned universal values. Nonetheless, this type of hard power normally does not work at all. As a matter of fact, the more the US pushes directly for a change of government, the Venezuelan government might show more resistance.

Moreover, another goal from the committee and the subcommittee is to reach regional peace through a democratic peace. To achieve a political peace is also a way of achieving a social peace for the committee. The US in the last few years realized that if the Latin-American states are not thriving, then the immigration influx towards the north increases. In fact, a massive exodus in countries like Venezuela could lead to public health threats due to the rising cases of malaria, Zika, and other diseases that have long been eradicated. The fact that Venezuela has no vaccines whatsoever increases the chances of a new pandemic of already tackled diseases. House hearing No. 116-14, Vanessa Neumann gave out her statement mentioning that:

At 3.4 million, Venezuela is the second largest refugee population in the world, second only to Syria. There are more Venezuelan refugees than South Sudanese, Somalis, or Afghans. Before the pervasive blackouts caused by the greatest kleptocracy the world has ever seen, the U.N. and the OAS estimated that 2 million more Venezuelans would flee this year alone, making the total refugee to 5.4 million. Brookings and the OAS estimate that that would be 7.2 million refugees by the end of 2020. That would absolutely destabilize the entire hemisphere (March 13, 2019).

To reach regional peace will deviate the possibility that the hemisphere will have a humanitarian issue. The mass exodus is not only having an impact in the US due to the increment in caravans but also it has been problematic for neighboring countries in South America. However, the US apart from stating that the narcostate of Maduro has let the population to immigrate to other countries in the hope of earning money, they also blame the Kremlin for the mass exodus. The

final goal the committee had was is to decrease or eradicate the influence foreign powers have in the region, specifically Russia due to the impact it has in PDVSA through their Russian state owned Rosneft, which could get hold of several American infrastructure and pipelines. In the house hearing No. 115.13, chairman Duncan stated his concerns of Russia getting involved in the oil company of the South American nation, mentioning that:

The recent news that PDVSA received a \$1.5 billion loan in ex-change for giving Russia's state-owned oil company Rosneft 49.1 percent of its shares in CITGO is problematic for U.S. interests. Should Venezuela default on its debt obligation to Rosneft, the Russians would become the second-largest foreign owner of U.S. refining capacity and thereby take control of a critical U.S. energy infrastructure, including three U.S. refineries and a network of pipelines. This is an untenable situation and undermines U.S. energy security interests (March 28, 2017).

Furthermore, the committee stated their explicit concerns not only by the fact that Russia is actively seeking to take hold of Venezuela oil extraction capacities but also of American infrastructure. Increasing their influence in the region would make Russia the third largest refiner in the world, escalating their political power worldwide and specifically in the EU. In addition, Putin himself and Russia have historically appraised oil as a geopolitical tool to expand their power sum zero and their economic sphere of influence.

The goal to decrease the influence of foreign powers is not limited to Russia alone, but also involves China and Iran. China has the same interest in Venezuela as Russia does, which is to have a relatively anti-US actor close to the US shores. Russian activity for the committee is more limited than the Chinese, which is seen as a threat due to the economic influence they have in Venezuela for being their only lender. Iran on the other hand is seen as a possible military threat wise due to Hezbollah, that might be working inside Venezuelan territory. To have these extremist groups inside Venezuela is not a threat to the country itself, but to the western hemisphere as a whole due to the proximity they are with the US. According to Mr. Ellis, in the house hearing 115-65, "I believe that Iran's strategy in the region is fundamentally the same. They are continuing to recruit personnel for the Iranian madrassas from places like Venezuela. They are continuing to introduce Quds Forces into the region." (September 13, 2017). The fact that an anti-US state is so close to US shores is a problem. In addition, a portion of the

Venezuelan gold reserves according to the committee are stored in China, protecting Venezuela partially from international legal claims.

Taking into account that expectations are the actions materialized from the securitization discourse, meaning the actions placed to reach the values the committee has, which is to make the US a regional and worldwide hegemon. Hence, their main expectation is to implement sanctions against Venezuela, which should decrease the influence anti-US powers might have in the region leading to an increase of US leadership worldwide. The committee expects that economic sanctions will pressure Venezuela to call for free and fair elections and eventually a democratic pro-US government will be elected. According to the Honorable chairman Eliot Engel in the house hearing No. 116-14 stated “My position on Venezuela has been clear: I believe that the United States and our allies in the Lima Group and the European Union must continue to squeeze Nicolas Maduro and push for a peaceful, democratic transition.” (March 13, 2019). The committee expects that by forcing Venezuela for a political change they shall reach their goals. Moreover, another expectation the committee has upon Venezuela is to reach a diplomatic solution even though the US embassy was closed by Maduro. This is probably escalating the chances there might be a military intervention against Venezuela. However, the more economic pressures the US impose along with the support of the EU, the less chances there might be for a diplomatic solution, which requires empathy and mediation.

#### **4. The Department of State and the Department of Treasury**

In this section, we shall only focus on the executive orders (E.O's) that were issued against Venezuela by both departments. During the Trump administration six E. O's were signed since 2017 until 2019. The first E.O Trump signed imposed additional sanctions against Venezuela, which was on August 24, 2017 also known as executive Order 13808. It prohibited the purchase of certain Venezuelan government bonds in American markets, without affecting the import of oil. All in all, every general license imposed in the Executive order 13808 not only based its legal status by the Executive Order 13692 of March 8, 2015 but also every general license does not authorize any transaction that is already prohibited in the previously analyzed E.O 13692 of 2015. The executive order 13808 is backed up due to the human rights abuses in Venezuela such as corruption, repression, and persecution. The Maduro regime even with a strong opposition, is

still trying to maintain an authoritarian government that promotes no freedom nor individualism. According to the E.O 13808 “The establishment of an illegitimate Constituent Assembly, which has usurped the power of the democratically elected National Assembly and other branches of the Government of Venezuela” (August 24, 2017). This E.O goes in hand with one of the main values and goals of the Department of State and the Department of Treasury, which is to have a democratic regional peace. Finally, this E.O also prohibits any transaction by a US person or entity of new debt of PDVSA.

The majority of E. O’s signed against Venezuela were in 2018. In this year alone three orders were drafted and approved. The first one was executive order 13827 “Taking Additional Steps to Address the Situation in Venezuela” signed on March 19, 2018. This E.O relies upon executive order 13692 and executive order 13808. As a way to increase the economic sanctions imposed in 2017 because the government of Venezuela when pleased with previous sanctions issued a digital currency, which the democratically elected National Assembly voted as unlawful. This E.O prohibits all transactions, even with a digital currency issued by or for the government of Venezuela. This limited the possibility of people or US entities to engage in online commerce with Venezuela. Moreover, on May 21, 2018 the executive order 13835 “Prohibiting Certain Additional Transactions with Respect to Venezuela” was signed by president Trump. This E.O closes the chance from the Venezuelan government to sell public assets and fire-sale expenses even those from PDVSA. It blocks every opportunity from the government of Venezuela even with high interest rates to do business with the US and vice-versa. According to executive order 13835 “Including endemic economic mismanagement and public corruption at the expense of the Venezuelan people and their prosperity, and ongoing repression of the political opposition” (May 21, 2018). Furthermore, this E.O takes into account the decision and the consultation of the Secretary of Treasury and the Secretary of State, to authorize certain actions, rules, and regulations. Every single executive order is backed by the first executive order signed by Obama in 2015, and each basis its legal reasons to upgrade sanctions based upon the previous E. O’s signed.

The last executive order signed by Trump in 2018 was the executive order 13850 “Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing to the Situation in Venezuela” in November 2 of

2018. This executive order primarily blocks money from people that operate in the gold sector of the Venezuelan economy and every other sector authorized by the Secretary of the Treasury along with the Secretary of State. The E.O 13850 mentions that “Particularly in light of actions by the Maduro regime and associated persons to plunder Venezuela’s wealth for their own corrupt purposes, degrade Venezuela’s infrastructure and natural environment through economic mismanagement.” (November 1, 2018). It blocks money from people or entities that might have been explicitly or implicitly complicit with corruption in the Maduro regime. The people that are to be sanctioned and the sectors which shall be sanctioned were determined by both the Secretary of Treasury and of State. Moreover, this is the first E.O that takes into account the massive exodus of Venezuelan refugees as a motivation to pursue a new order with further sanctions.

The last executive orders signed by Trump were on 2019, executive order 13857 “Taking Additional Steps to Address the National Emergency with Respect to Venezuela” signed in January 25, 2019 and executive order 13884 “Blocking Property of the Government of Venezuela” signed on August 5, 2019. The E.O 13857 propels additional sanctions for those persons or entities that curtail the power of Interim President Guaidó and the democratically elected National Assembly, which is regarded by the US as the only working branch in the Venezuelan government. Additionally, this E.O puts an emphasis on sanctioning those persons affiliated to the Maduro regime, which harasses political opponents and cuts freedom of expression. Finally, the last executive order signed by president Trump against Venezuela was E.O. 13884. This E.O was very keen on blocking assets and property inside the US from people involved with the Maduro regime. The assets from those entities or persons cannot be transferred or withdrawn from the US to any place. This E.O is originated due the diminishing power of the Interim President Guaidó and the National Assembly by government entities. Besides, this E.O blocks the entrance of such persons involved with the regime as an immigrant or non-immigrant into the US, and the admissibility of such persons shall only be lifted under the authority of the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Overall, the main values of the Department of State and the Department of Treasury according to the six different E. O’s analyzed apart from propelling the US as a regional and world power, is to eradicate the authoritarian regime from Maduro that cuts both political freedom and individual

freedoms from the citizens of Venezuela. Another value even though this one is an implicit one is for Venezuela to stop inciting foreign powers into their economy, territory, and region. The fact that the main value of the E. O's and of both departments is to reach for democratic elections so that socialism and the authoritarian regime of Maduro shall be destroyed. To reach a capitalistic and democratic government that vouches for the universal values of the US. Secondly, there are several goals that are notorious inside the E. O's analyzed, the goals are propelled by the values from the collective and the individuals inside the Department of State and the Department of Treasury. They must be regarded as the steps to be taken to achieve the values they stand up for.

One of the main goals from the Department of State and the Department of Treasury is to stop or diminish the economic mismanagement and the repression that is happening inside the Venezuelan government. To ameliorate the systemic and political corruption inside the Maduro regime, which is impoverishing the country. Another goal that goes in the hand with the main goal of taking corruption out of Venezuela is to improve the degrading infrastructure, such as the lack of basic needs, which has led to a regional migration crisis. Finally, the expectations both departments have upon Venezuela and their government is to block economic goods from those entities and persons associated with the Maduro regime. The fact that both departments support the E.O signed by the president of the US is a clear expectation that more economic sanctions, this will push the Maduro regime to comply with the impositions the US and the western hemisphere is giving them. Besides the expectations that sanctions will force Venezuela to have a democratic government, is not only limited to economic sanctions but also mobility and travel bans for certain persons associated with the Maduro regime. For there is also a blockade of entry to immigrants and non-immigrants.

## **5. Congress**

The documents analyzed in his section were thirty-six Congressional Records from the House of Representatives from 2016 until 2020. A major problem inside Congress was the bipartisan policies that were presented to vote. Republicans praised the actions of Trump whilst democrats stated that the actions from the executive were not enough. All the Congressional Records analyzed focused their proposing bills towards the situation in Venezuela. However, Venezuela



was used as a political tool for each party to propel or to block certain policies. The democratic majority of Congress blamed Trump for wanting to deploy a military action in Venezuela, whilst the republicans blamed the democratic party for inaction against Maduro during the Obama administration. According to Congressman Scott in the Congressional Record vol. 165, No. 169:

Americans have always stood up for freedom, and today is no exception. That is why I am here again to ask unanimous consent to pass my amendment to H.R. 549, granting temporary protective status for Venezuelans fleeing Nicolas Maduro's oppressive regime. Even though Senate Democrats blocked the same proposal last month, I refuse to give up. I stand with the proud Venezuelans. My proposal has the support of all Senate Republicans (October 24, 2019).

Bipartisan politics rule Congress regardless of party majority and the executive branch. When Senate Democrats present a bill or a policy is disregarded by the republican party and vice versa. As a matter of fact, democrats first came up with an immigration bill to protect Venezuelans living in the US but it did not pass due to insufficient republican votes. Venezuela was a well-regarded topic in Congress and not only due to the threat of communism and socialism inside the western hemisphere but Venezuela was also discussed as a humanitarian issue due to the massive exodus in the region. Interestingly enough, Senate Democrats for the first time on record mentioned the need to for the US to propel economic prosperity in Latin America, as a way to decrease the asylum requests and the illegal immigration going up north. As previously mentioned, the democratic party proposed a Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuelan nationals already living inside the US, a way to temporarily gain green cards to legally work and pay taxes, this TPS was not passed due to the republican party inside Congress, which did not vote. Senator Durbin in the Congressional records Vol. 166, No. 160 stated that "Senate Republicans could pass the bipartisan House bill to grant Venezuelans TPS, but they refuse as well. Let it be clear that the real failure to help Venezuelans in the United States rests on their shoulders." (September 16, 2020). Regardless of the fact that both parties had similar bills proposal for a TPS for Venezuelan citizens, does show off that they do see as a problem for citizens to go back to a shattered country. However, what is primordial is bipartisan politics and which party comes up with the bill.

For Congress, both Venezuela and Cuba are perceived as rogue regimes with no respect for freedom nor law. In the Congressional Record Vol. 163 No. 50 congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen mentioned that “ The Venezuelan people believe that there is no justice in their land. They believe that there is no respect for law in their country, and they are right... the inflation in Venezuela last year was around 800 percent” (March 22, 2017). At the core, both the democratic party and the republican party condemn Venezuela by stating that is a communist nation and a Narcostate. Its primary goal is to enrich those in a corrupt government, which starves their population. Moreover, both parties deplore the actions of US private companies that still do business with the government of Venezuela, one of them being Goldman Sachs that bought \$2.8 billions in Venezuelan bonds with crippling debt repayments. At the core, Congress as a whole vouches for imposing sanction to regime officials that facilitate human rights abuses inside Venezuela.

In this section we shall also focus on the values, goals and expectations Congress has upon Venezuela as an approach to understand the discourse analysis of the institutional actors. One of Congress’ main values is to fight for freedom and American democratic values as principles. In fact, every time a bill is not passed due to insufficient votes due to the bipartisan dynamic in Congress, both the democratic party and the republican party mention that the parties are not standing up or living up to the American tradition of freedom and doing things right. For a true American value is to support bills that uphold democratic values regardless of whose party came off with the proposing bill. For every congressperson a fundamental principle is not to vote due to party but due to what is the greater good in the US. As mentioned in the Congressional Record Vol. 164, No. 125 by congresswoman McMorris Rodgers “The United States was founded on the fundamental principles of individual liberty and that all are created equal. As the late President Reagan once said: Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction.” (July 25, 2018). Regardless of these words, every congressperson votes due to party alliances rather than following the principles of liberty and equality. Moreover, the ideal that Venezuela or any government categorized as non-democratic, is due to the fact that they do not uphold the same individualistic values the US vouches for. Therefore, they are seen as a disgrace for the region. For Congress, is unconceivable to have a region with captive nations such as Venezuela and other socialist countries, for at the core is it still the backyard of the US.

Furthermore, the main values of freedom and democracy also ties Congress by default to other values such as the need of government transparency and human rights. A great expectation/action from Congress to propel these values is to ban American made weapons to Venezuela and the continuous need from the US to buy oil from Venezuela. Senator Carper stated in the Congressional Record Vol. 165, No. 36 “It is about supporting the Venezuelan people, but it is also about sending an important message globally that the United States remains confident that democracy is the way for people to achieve their hopes and dreams.” (February 27, 2019). The US as a country has banned individuals and companies from profiteering from government companies that might influence the repression Venezuelan citizens are living. Blockading Venezuela has let to one of the biggest immigration crises the region has even seen. Another value for Congress is to give an appearance of unity for the fight against socialism whether is inside the US or abroad. Congress discourse has tried to eradicate bipartisan politics as a way to engage in more substantial bills and reforms that will put more pressure to the Maduro regime. Congressman Soto mentioned in the Congressional Record Vol. 165, No. 126 that:

So, I think we are going to have a second chance. We are going to have a chance tonight to vote on this again where we won't need a two thirds vote, but it would say a lot about saying that the Socialist regime that Maduro has in Venezuela needs to go, and that we, as a Congress, stand together as Democrats and Republicans to condemn that; and to allow people who are here, over 170,000 in Florida, and over 1 million throughout the United States, to have a second chance (July 25, 2019).

The TPS aforementioned was not approved due to the lack of republican votes, and this was not because they did not approve an immigration reform for Venezuelan living inside the US but the lack of votes was because the bill was not proposed by a republican congressperson. Bipartisan politics even though is it not well seen but it is highly prevalent inside Congress. Meaning that votes are given due to party affiliation and not due to bills. This affiliation can be seen when republican congressmen explicitly mention that every policy the Trump administration has done it's been great for Venezuela. In addition, every republican member supports Trump's decision that every option for Venezuela was on the table, implicitly mentioning that a military option is a

viable one. In contrast with the democratic party, which strongly opposes a military intervention. The democrats oppose a military option not only due to the political backlash the US could have in the region but also due to the economic cost a long-lasting war might have on the economy and society.

Finally, the last value Congress has is to maintain the US as a regional hegemon specially against those with different political regimes. The best way to persist with this value of the US as a strong country is to minimize the influence foreign powers have upon the region. In the Congressional Record Vol. 165, No. 51 congresswoman Wasserman Schultz clarified that “This menacing Kremlin influence creates not only a hurdle to restoring a functioning, legitimate democracy to the people of Venezuela, but it also poses an imminent military threat to the entire Western Hemisphere.” (March 25, 2019). The fact that Russia heavily influences Venezuela is not only a problem for Venezuela and the US, but rather the entire region. The image of the US as the only power is threatened by Russia itself and by other economic powers such as China. Moreover, the lack of influence the US has in the region in comparison to previous years has given the consequence of rising insecurity due to the narco-terrorist cartels, which is a normal consequence in a multipolar international order.

The objectives from Congress can be summed through their interest to pressure Venezuela to hold free and fair elections by pushing regional leaders to isolate the Maduro regime. In addition, to push for a regional action against Maduro, Congress has a strong aim to improve the overall strength the OAS could have in the region, this is an explicit objective from both parties in Congress. According to Congressman Royce in Congressional Record Vol. 163, No.198 “This resolution calls on regional leaders and the Organization of American States to continue to pressure Maduro to release political prisoners, to dissolve the unconstitutional constituent assembly, and, most importantly, to schedule fair and transparent elections now.” (December 5, 2017). Moreover, to reach these objectives Congress has continuously tried to talk about human rights abuses and the ongoing humanitarian crisis going inside Venezuela and the region as a way to enforce a regional action.

Furthermore, for Congress another key objective is to create a negative perception of foreign influence in the region. In fact, Congress mentions that Russian and Chinese influence is what is limiting the power interim president Guaido might have in Venezuela, because they protect Maduro. According to congressman Rooney in the Congressional Record Vol.165, No. 51 “Russia has invested over \$16 billion in Venezuela and has provided billions in military equipment to that murderous regime. In December of last year Russia sent two nuclear capable bombers to conduct joint exercises with the Venezuelan military.” (March 25, 2019). Russian influence is what stops the transition to free and fair elections. Congress aims to lower the influence of Russia in Venezuela not only due to Maduro but they urge the region to stop accepting economic deals with the Kremlin and Beijing as a way to weaken the Maduro regime. This rather sounds more as a strategy for the US to maintain their regional influence and uphold the Monroe Doctrine.

This objective goes in hand to maintain US as a regional hegemon or at least give out the image to the international community that the Americas is for the US. America for Congress is failing to lead and engage in the world stage, which is propelling more authoritarian regimes in the world as a way to fill the void the US as a world power cannot attend. Moreover, the fact that Venezuela is having a humanitarian crisis and a socialist regime is due to the lack of importance the US has given to Latin America over their welfare. According to Senator Rubio in the Congressional Record Vol. 163, No.23:

A third problem in the region is the lack of economic opportunity. It is simply in America’s interest to have more prosperous neighbors, people to sell to and trade with. Ultimately, if people can’t earn enough money to feed their families and live in a safe neighborhood, they will either pick up and leave by any means necessary, including illegal immigration, or they will join drug gangs (February 13, 2017).

This is the first one of the most notorious quotes from Senator Rubio, for he addresses the main problem with the US foreign policy that has not changed since the Cold War. They have only focused on making America richer and better than the rest of the world, in particular in comparison to the southern hemisphere, leading to massive immigration waves to the US and the propelling of socialism in the region as a consequence of the huge social gap in Latin America.

When the US fails to lead bad actors emerge and democracy becomes under attack for dignity is a must in the region. For at the core, Congress knows the US alone cannot impose a democracy in a country anymore due to the multipolarity happening in present times.

The expectations Congress has had been primarily the actions that they are taking into action to achieve their objectives and henceforth their values. Their main expectation is that the stronger they make the OAS and the relationship the US has with other regional leaders, the easier a democratic transition in Venezuela will happen. Congress realized that sanctions alone will not pursue Venezuela to change their political regime. Nonetheless if the world believes the US and support the US, they might achieve it. In the Congressional Record Vol. 163, No. 208 Senator Cardin stated that “We must recognize, however, that sanctions alone will not resolve the challenges the people of Venezuela are facing. We need a comprehensive strategy that utilizes all elements of U.S. diplomacy. We must provide critical foreign assistance.” (December 20, 2017). Sanctions are not the only expectation Congress have, for they have proven that they are not practical. In fact, due to the increased sanctions imposed during the Obama administration the more economic and military alliances Venezuela has come to have with China and Russia. Sanctions have worked against the US and their regional influence. Congress’ expectation is that a regional pressure to Maduro will eventually release all political prisoners and will schedule fair and democratic elections. Hence, sanctions or military intervention will not cut it for a true transition of Venezuela. In fact, Congress is also trying to reach diplomatic strategies to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and to urge democratic mechanism been adopted in Venezuela.

## **6. Conclusions**

The way Trump built the threat of Venezuela discursively primarily focused on the enemy pillar, whether the enemy was not only Venezuela itself but also the influence the country could have to the democratic party, where democrats were a synonym of Venezuela and they were antagonized by having more progressive ideologies. If we take into account the PDA Trump as the political actor with legitimacy, he did have a perlocutionary effect to the audience, which in this case is the American population. During his speeches he did try to gain the audience’s support not only by constantly speaking wrongfully about the democrats by constantly comparing them to Venezuela and socialism but also during his rallies he invited people that were persecuted by the

Maduro regime. He did this as a strategy for the American audience “to believe” the evil and the threat socialism could have in the US. The argumentation Trump had for the implementation of more sanctions and for having his maximum effort policies against Venezuela were reasonable and he was a cooperative political actor with the audience because his decision-making went in accordance to what he was preaching.

Taking into account the theory of securitization, where the political actor is required to gain the audience’s support to allocate resources and elevate a problem to a security threat, then the process of securitization was a successful one during the Trump administration. Where not only resources were allocated to perceived Venezuela as a new threat to the US but also time and effort from Trump were put in to see Venezuela as a threat. Nonetheless, this process was not so direct as the reader believes, Trump’s main enemy was the democratic party rather than Venezuela. However, because the audience must be placed in a psychocultural context, to see the democratic party as an enemy is rather more complex than an enemy abroad, which in this case is Venezuela.

The way of treating Venezuela as a foe rather than a friend was evident in the Trump administration. Moreover, the triangulation with the institutional actors, set the framework for the Trump administration to have a securitizing speech against Venezuela because their main goal was to eradicate socialism and to have the first free hemisphere in the world, while increasing the US leadership within the region. The administration gave more emphasis on using certain organizations such as the OAS as a way to improve leadership within the region. The framework given by the institutional actors as the speech by Trump had a logic for the audience and therefore an argumentation. It is worth noting again that Trump spoke wrongfully of Venezuela in every single speech, not necessarily because he was speaking about Venezuela but he always spoke in an antagonist way towards the democratic party and about socialism.

In addition, term of Narcostate for Venezuela was first used in the Trump administration not only by Trump himself but also by the institutional actors. For Trump even though he did not explicitly mention that Venezuela was a new threat, he implicitly mentioned that it was a new threat when he spoke about organized crime, corruption and lack of rule of law and overall

illegal immigration that was not based on a merit system. For the Trump administration Venezuela was not only a political and societal threat but it started to become an economic threat as well. The way Venezuela could potentially become an economic threat it was not only limited to illicit money but he gave far more emphasis on illegal immigration that will deteriorate the social services law-abiding citizens were getting. Moreover, the increased sanctions in the Trump administration did not specifically help Venezuela whatsoever nor helped the US economy either, rather the sanctions helped Trump politically. Also, he stated that human trafficking and having weak borders could potentially become a problem due to the sovereignty of the country. The subcategory of immigration was a very good way to perceive Venezuela not only as a political threat but also as a societal and economic one.

Trump explicitly in his speeches mentioned that he was a nationalist and that to be a patriotic American should be incentivized rather than been punished. Trump within his discursive pillars gave more emphasis on the enemy because the American identity no longer had universal values and ideals, but rather it was something limited only for the American people. Everything that was the enemy had to be related to socialism, meaning that the democratic party had to go against freedom. Trump when speaking of nationalism, he never mentioned democratic values or the fight for democracy, but rather focused his speech on mentioning that the US was fighting back for freedom and that the US was going to take care of Venezuela and every rogue regime in the region as a way to pursue for their democratic turnover and the democratic transition in the hemisphere. It is the return for the Monroe Doctrine by the Trump administration, due to the continuous influence foreign powers were having in the region.

The most interesting point within the Trump discursive pillars it is that he achieves a successful securitization process regarding Venezuela but technically speaking it was a default of him trying to perceive the democrats as the imminent threat within the US. This goes in hand with the argument that the sanctions far more helped Trump politically than helped the US or Venezuela. He ends up securitizing Venezuela because when speaking against the democratic party, for pursuing a witch hunt against the republican and Trump for “standing to true American values” they are been radical socialist just like Venezuela and the US “shall never become a socialist country”. It is a chain of logic used within the Trump discourse. His main interests was not to



improve the image of the US abroad but rather to improve his image in the US for the next election. Additionally, Venezuela becomes a threat due to the flexible immigration laws the democratic party gives illegal immigrants and because of this Venezuela started to become an economic threat.

## Chapter 4. Conclusions

### **The differences are smaller than the commonalities**

Venezuela is regarded as a new threat for the US, due to organized crime and corruption. To state that Venezuela is a new threat to the most powerful State in the region is rather a strong statement but a real one. It is categorized as a new threat because it is not a military problem rather it gets out of the military sector if we take into account the securitization sector's given by Buzan. Easily Venezuela is a problem for the societal and political sector of US society not only because of immigration, which it was the security constellation in the Trump analysis.

Immigration can potentially become a problem because according to the Trump administration it could potentially damage the social cohesion of the country but also through socialism/communism, illegal immigrants could decrease the effectiveness of social services and due to lack of border control the sovereignty of the US could be affected. In fact, Trump in contrast to Obama was far more explicit on constructing Venezuela as a new threat whether it was through drug, human trafficking, or even just by having illegal aliens that will endanger the life of good patriotic white Americans.

New threats tend to be non-military because humans are the primary objects of security. Hence, it is far more common that the new threat belongs to the sectors of societal, political and economic security. The reader must remember again that within the securitization theory the threat can only be understood upon the characteristics of the referent object. Nonetheless, to categorize something as a threat depends on the common knowledge the collective identity (audience) has. To securitize Venezuela or a threat requires the legitimate power of the political actor to allocate resources and to elevate a political problem as a security threat. Therefore, the need to determine whether or not Obama and Trump had a strong discourse to persuade the American audience for the construction of Venezuela as a threat through a PDA. If the discourse process was a strong one, then the securitization process most likely was a successful one due to the sanctions imposed by both administrations regardless of the number of sanctions each president signed. The first thing to speak about in this conclusion is how the discursive pillars for both executives were organized to build such perception of the new threat. For Trump his most used pillar was the enemy where he constantly spoke against democrats and Venezuela due to

their progressive ideologies. While on the other hand, the most used pillar in Obama was nationalism through the perceptions of globalism through the universal values the US preaches nationwide and abroad.

In the case of Obama his most used discursive pillar was nationalism in a positive sense, he wanted to world to acquire the same set of universal values the US preaches, to become a strong democratic country with transparency, meaning less corruption all in all. This is why Obama constantly mentioned this in the ASEAN and TPP summits because for him the best way to promote this universal values is through the promise of a strong economic development if the world had these set of values. The Obama discourse used a lot the subcategory of international community, to build such a community would mean that the US would be safer and therefore the world would be safer. Obama was very keen that everyone could be part of the International Community because democracy is a work in the making and that the US does not have a perfect democracy, that to become a democracy is quite a messy process. However, within the discursive logic of Obama if everyone is a democracy then conflict should decrease. It is worth mentioning that regardless that Obama was a globalist, he had the traditional speech of the US, meaning that he had a strong discourse of exceptionalism of the US. Exceptionalism by default is a nationalistic discourse where nothing else matters but the US alone and their interests.

Trump on the other hand, spoke about patriotic Americans and that Americans should feel proud about the US because in Trump's speech, the US is the best country in the world. Trump in contrast with Obama used the enemy pillar for the construction of Venezuela as a new threat. This goes in hand with the fact that Trump was not a globalist but rather a nationalist, Trump mentioned that the US should even have patriotism as a compulsory class in public education. However, the enemy pillar for Trump was far more focused on the democratic party rather than Venezuela. Trump constantly compared the democratic party to Venezuela and antagonized the party as a party that wished to destroy all the American institutions the US has as a way to make the country a socialist country. Socialism for Trump is rather the perfect equation for poverty and for not having sovereignty in the US. Trump in contrast with Obama explicitly mentioned that Venezuela was a Narcostate due to organized crime that constantly threatens US institutions and because at the end of the day it was a kleptocracy where only those linked to the Maduro regime

enriched themselves due to the high levels of corruption. In fact, Trump uplifted American values such as freedom, democracy, freedom of religion that could be threatened by the “Brutal Menace of Socialism and Communism”.

Trump on the other hand, was very keen on mentioning certain identity creeds that were not politically correct but they were real. Trump because he was a nationalist always mentioned the original creeds by which American identity was founded upon. Trump implicitly mentioned that true patriotic Americans must be white and support the political ideology the US traditionally has had. Moreover, real patriotic Americans support ICE and do not regard illegal immigration as something valid but rather illegal immigrants should be deported. Americans by default need to fight communism, fascism and should root for freedom not only inside the US but also around the world. Trump also used the economy as another point that should increase patriotism in Americans, because of his administration immigrants wanted to enter to US to find a better economic future and that it was “Trump’s fault” because he propelled a more dynamic economy. In fact, for Trump in this security pillar, the referent object to securitize was not the US as a country of as a nation but rather the republican party and himself because those were the objects that represented the true American because of the values the republicans have.

Taking into account Obama’s speeches the least used discursive pillars was the enemy pillar where Venezuela is mentioned. This makes sense because Obama tried to aim towards an inclusion, plus his will to have a good neighbor policy in the region even though it failed due to the political agenda the country has. Obama since he signed his first executive order in 2015 until this last day as active US president only mentioned Venezuela three times, twice he didn’t say anything against the country and only once he mentioned that he was concerned over the fact that both Cuba and Venezuela were missing out on been part of the International Community. Obama more than perceiving Venezuela as a threat he perceived corruption and lack of transparency as the actual threat that can limit not only the economic productivity of a country but also the economic revenues normal citizens could gain. This goes in hand with the fact that the referent object to security for Obama was democracy and capitalism, both actually made up the nationalism pillar inside the discursive pillars for Obama.

Obama discursively avoided mentioning a certain country as a threat rather his aim was centered on cooperation. Because the universal values and ideals the US was trying to sell the international community were based on capitalism and democracy, the referent objects to securitize were democracy and capitalism as well. Those countries that did not attain to those values were seen as negative. The fact that Obama only mentioned Venezuela three times, makes that his perlocutionary effect upon the audience not logic, meaning that the action of imposing sanctions without persuading the audience was non-cooperative and had no logic whatsoever. Without the support of an audience then the process of securitization cannot be successful, because to perceive something as a threat is not a matter of coercion but of persuasion to the audience (Buzan & Hansen 2009). The securitization process in the Obama case was unsuccessful because the political actor was non-cooperative in a technical sense. In contrast with Trump the securitization process was successful not because Trump's aim was to perceive Venezuela as a threat but rather he was more concerned on perceiving the democratic party as a threat due to political reasons. However, because the democrats were always compared to Venezuela due to progressist policies in every speech he gave, the threat that by default got the acceptance of the US audience was Venezuela. The threat due to the psychocultural context must always be the "other" and cannot be part of the "us", because nationalism is always trying to hyper-glorify the "us".

At the end of the day regardless of how both executives embraced nationalism, both spoke wrongfully of those who did not want to embrace American values or universal values. Even though the discursive pillars both Obama and Trump used were different in the technical sense, both had very similar discourses. Obama was a globalist, which can be regarded with a positive nationalism whilst Trump was a nationalist that always aimed to see the differences between what is truly American and what is not. Nonetheless, due to their discourse of exceptionalism, both administrations at the end of the day discriminated to those countries that did not embrace their nationalisms or ideals. The speech of exceptionalism is highly nationalistic where no other country matters but only the US, hence why the good neighbor policy of Obama did not work in the region. Additionally, the institutional actors of both executives serve to understand the political agenda the US as a government had, which explains their traditional discourse of

exceptionalism. This is due because the institutional actors in both administrations had similar goals, values and expectations regarding Venezuela.

The institutional actors in both the Obama and Trump administrations had the goals to increase the US leadership in the region and around the world. Obama in contrast to Trump knew that the world had a disenchantment to the US and their ideals, hence, the need to change this perception in the region and the world. The institutional actors did have a phenomena that was highly interesting in the Obama administration, because of congressman Duncan, Congress disregarded the Obama administration and their relaxation policies to Cuba and Venezuela. Bipartisan politics was notorious in the Obama administration where even the eradication of the Monroe Doctrine was frowned upon. But apart from this the goals in both administration were the same. On the other hand, the values the institutional actors had were to promote human rights and to curtail regimes that went against human rights and the traditional values the US promote such was freedom and democracy. Finally, the institutional actors expectations that through force they would increase the chances of a democratic turnover of Venezuela. Even though they had the goal to increase US enchantment in the region, the government is trying to do so through coercion, which is counterproductive. Because of these actors is that both speeches of Obama and Trump were similar. Within the theory of securitization, the functional actors are those agencies that pave the framework for the discourse to be accepted by the audience.

The institutional actors had a strong exceptionalism discourse and they knew US hegemony was diminishing and still is. This is why they tried to enforce a democratic transition in the country and later on tried to persuade the region to support them in a diplomatic solution to achieve a democratic turnover in Venezuela. The Committee's aim was to take care of Venezuelans and those that are inside rogue regimes, Trump had a similar speech upon Venezuela. US hegemony due to their nationalist discourse abroad has actually decreased the enchantment the South American region used to have. Both political actors knew that the leadership role the US used to have decreased because they started giving more attention to the Middle East, which was also in 2001, just as the identity crisis. Both executives would wish to improve their leadership through the OAS but it heavily depends on the relationship the political actors could have with the

region. Even though the US wished to increase their leadership, they constantly shoot themselves on the foot because their way to achieve their interests have always been through coercion.

Moreover, the commonality both presidents had was that both presidents were tackling the main problem the US is facing which is the lack of identity. The last momentum of patriotism in the US happened right after 9/11. Both presidents had a main goal of not only building again this forgotten identity but also to improve the image the US has in the world at the same time, which goes in hand with the goals of the institutional actors. Obama tried to build a stronger US identity through the notion of collective security by sharing worldwide their universal values and beliefs through the concept of an international community. On the other hand, Trump saw the world in a more binary way where those that supported protectionism were true patriots and that going back to the identity creed of the US where politics was not their only axis but also religion, race and ethnicity is the way for the US to be great again. The main value of why both presidents were doing this is that they both knew and saw that the US is a falling power due to its political creed which lacks consistency and strength to maintain a good US identity. As a matter of fact, when Trump mentioned that he was going to increase US nationalism inside the US, this idea was highly supported by Obama.

The lack of leadership of the US and its downfall as a hegemon is what propelled Venezuela to become a new threat. Venezuela just like its counterparts in the region multiple corruption problems and problems within the realm of transnational organized crime. TOC requires a weak State with weak institutions because these groups require a State that is willing to accept bribes. Nonetheless, because of the disenchantment of the US, Venezuela was able to challenge the US by antagonizing their national myths through their progressist discourse, this is a power asymmetry between the US and the south American nation. The discursive construction of Venezuela as a Narcostate is real even though it does not show reality as analyzed in the theoretical framework. There are other states that have more drug flows than Venezuela, regardless of this they are framed as a new threat. Organized crime is a problem mostly to the societal and political sector, which is regarded in the Obama administration because the referent object to security was democracy and capitalism. Venezuela could potentially destroy the social cohesion of the US due to socialism as an ideology and their institutions due to corruption. At the

end of the day US institutions can also be influenced by corruption. Even though, other countries have problems with organized crime such as Colombia and Mexico, the US has focused their efforts on Venezuela.

However, during the Trump administration Venezuela was not only regarded as a societal and political threat but also as an incoming economic threat to the US, not only because of corruption that may spill to the US or because of the lack of sovereignty but because of the growing economy Trump was achieving in the US. The fact that he mentioned that Venezuela must be kept at bay due to the negative influence it may have to the financial institutions of the US says a lot about keeping US economy safe. Even though the economic sanctions did not help the American economy it did help Trump's political capital within the US. Moreover, CITGO and the private companies that had strong links to PDVSA were not sanctioned by the US government but as a matter-of-fact protections were extended to them. Even though Trump antagonized other governments such as Russia that still helped the Maduro regime and financed their regime, the US government was doing the same. Economic threats may influence or decrease the economic gains the US nation and the country may gain. Venezuela was not only perceived as an economic problem due to corruption and money financed by corruption of the Venezuelan regime but also because of the humanitarian crisis that grew exponentially during the Trump administration. Immigrants can decrease the effectiveness of societal services and economic transactions with Venezuela may allow money financed by organized crime to enter to US.

Venezuela is used as a scapegoat because the political actor and their functional actors know that Venezuela is a country filled with organized crime, which is caused by corruption. If the US would actually like to improve their leadership in the region, they would try to improve the democratic institutions in the region through anticorruption programs or initiatives and not through economic sanctions that affect the population. Additionally, the fact that Trump and his administration gave protections to CITGO and American companies with ties to Venezuela says that he does not really care about the threat of Venezuela but rather the economic gains the US can achieve all in all in the region. The US on the other hand, simply supports opposition groups, which has proved to increase social problems inside the countries. To securitize something as a



threat, the threat does not necessarily need to be there, you can actually create it. For the US due to the crisis of identity is pivotal to have an antagonist and it is better if the antagonist is in the same region, there is an distance implication with the construction of a threat. The closer it is the more problematic the threat can become and could promote an emergency situation. Venezuela is a new threat because it has all the requirements to be categorized as such, but so does Mexico and other allied countries to the US. The fact that Venezuela is a successful securitization within the Trump administration process was because of context, in this case the American audience was able to see Venezuela as the other and the dangerous one due to common knowledge.

Finally, the last different needed to point out in this comparative discourse analysis is between the Obama discourses and the Trump discourses and the way both give their speeches to the audience. Meaning that there is a notorious difference between the formal discourses from Obama and the populist informal discourses from Trump. At the core a discourse is also representative of the individual personalities each president had and the perception the American audience had of them. Obama had a shorter discourse in contrast to Trump in length, for Obama's speeches were by far more descriptive. On the other hand, Trump's discourses were not very concrete, making them quite ambiguous for they were extremely personal and mostly tried to antagonize the democrats and everyone that was not part of this administration. Moreover, context wise the media persecution the Trump administration had to go through in comparison to Obama was intense. Venezuela as a new threat construction, it is based on the fear not of the other but on the fear of losing the self-glorification of the national and the myths that involve the US identity.

The only media outlet in favor of the republican administration was Fox News. According to Casañ- Pitarch "This attitude of media towards the republican president is creating a magnifying drama around him, depicting him as a villain" (2018, 174). The context and the media created a perception of each president, the perception many voters in urban areas and many minorities had of Trump was of a villain, which immediately throws his discourse towards a negative sphere of a teleological measuring stick. To antagonize Trump so heavily did not only set in stone his image of a villain, but made his discourses sound more racist, narcissistic and binary. In comparison to the formal discourse Obama had which was regarded with a very humble

discourse with a notorious lack of egocentrism. In contrast, the formality of Obama's discourse is not only given by the lack of narcissism but rather because the audience he aimed apart from the American nationals was the international community. Nonetheless, both political actors had interests and the functional actors had a strong interest to maintain the US traditional discourse of exceptionalism.

The theory of securitization is a great theory to understand the discourse and the hidden interests of the political actors along with their functional actors. It has its limitations, the main one is that the theory sees the functional actors as secondary actors and these actors should be more analyzed all throughout the theory. They set the right context for the securitization discourse to be accepted by the audience and without them the process could eventually fail in the same level as if the process did not have a political actor with legitimacy. On the other hand, it is a bit difficult but not impossible to determine if an audience is actually persuaded by the political actor and if they support the arguments of the political actor, meaning if there is a perlocutionary effect. This is why certain securitization processes such as the Iraq war and the war in Vietnam failed. As a matter of fact, Iraq within the theory of securitization failed because the institutional actors did not support the discourse the political actor at the time was giving. As an overall recommendation to the readers of this project research is that they take more into account the institutional actors and that perhaps future projects should be seen through the eyes of a south American identity and how American nationalism has propelled progressist ideologies in the southern hemisphere.

## List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CCS	Comparative Case Study
DA	Discourse Analysis
E.O.	Executive Order
ICE	US Immigration and Customs Enforcement
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
PDA	Political Discourse Analysis
PDVSA	Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (Petroleum of Venezuela, S.A.)
SDN	Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List
TOC	Transnational Organized Crime
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TPS	Temporary Protected Status
US	United States of America

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