The Power of the Spoken Word

A case study on Hugo Chávez's rhetorical impact on
social conflict in Venezuela

Author: Mari Wallin

Abstract

With the rise from populism over the last few decades, one can observe an increase in the violent clashes connected to populists. However, this seems to be in coherence with the right-wing side mostly, because the left-wing side gets forgotten in the calculations over conflict together with populism. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to dive into a case study that is taking place in Venezuela, more specific with the focus on the populistic left-wing leader Hugo Chávez. The aim is to view what role the populistic rhetoric from Chávez has played in the social conflicts in the country. It is carried out as a discourse analysis, by analysing four speeches by Chávez, taking place in different years with different effects on society. To be able to explain the statements, the help will come from two theoretical frameworks: a populistic theory and a social conflict theory. The question is what role the populistic rhetoric from Hugo Chávez played in the occurring social conflicts. In terms of result, the rhetorical tools Chávez used had some amount of impact on social conflicts. However, one cannot exclude the effect of other essential factors in the development of social conflict in Venezuela.

Keywords: *Chávez, discourse, Latin America, left-wing, populism, rhetoric, social conflict, Venezuela*
Number of characters: *69 320*
Number of words: *11 341*

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

Populism is a phenomenon that over the years, has developed into a constant factor within the frames of politics. With its secure grip around the popular influence, populism has established itself on the international platform, and it does not seem to step aside from that position any time soon (Canovan, 1999, pp.2-3). However, this perspective regarding the transformation inside the political landscape works foremost for the rightist phalanx. A distinction of the concept that creates isolation by excluding the left from the debate and the equation. Of course, we know that right-wing populists are more associated with violent clashes. They create an external threat that could be damaging towards the culture and heritage of the nation (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, p.218), it can make disagreements thrive in the community and sustain the belligerent division in societies. And at the same time, left-wing populists seem to generally be more determined to argue for the internal problems connected to socio-economic inequalities, and at the same time advocate for non-violence (de la Torre, 2016, p.61; Prentoulis & Thomassen, 2017, pp.1-3; Schamis, 2006, pp.20-22). But does that automatically mean that the polarization of populism creates two blocks where one represents peace and the other violence? Does that implicate that there is no existing threat from the left-wing, that they have no purpose for violent encounters? Due to these types of enquiries, I would like to look over the leftist side of populism connected to violent clashes. Therefore, I have selected to analyse the populistic rhetoric of one left-wing leader to examine how his statements have played into existing social conflicts.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to look into a specific case of left-wing populism and examining if there is a tendency towards violent clashes. By analysing a left-wing

populistic leader, I will assess if the rhetoric can have initiated violent actions and contributed to social conflict in the country. Since left-wing populism had a breakthrough with the Pink Tide in Latin America during the 1990s (Ellner, 2012, p.112), my initial idea was to have a base within that region and select one of the left-wing countries as an analytical object. In this case, I decided to focus on Venezuela and Hugo Chávez for several reasons. First, Hugo Chávez was one of the leading figures in developing the left turn in Latin America, and many left-wing leaders have followed in the footsteps of him and taken inspiration from his political ideology Chavismo (Stavrakakis et al. 2016, p.53). Second, even though Hugo Chávez is labelled a left-wing populist, the question occurs regarding his actions and his turn towards becoming more authoritarian in his reign, which is an interesting claim and aspect to keep in mind in this thesis (Levitsky & Loxton, 2013, pp.108-110). Third, it has been discussed by some whether Hugo Chávez could be claimed to be a possible threat rising from left-wing populism, something that gives leverage to the chosen research area and makes it possible to find material to work with (Weyland, 2013, pp.30-32). Therefore, the research question for this thesis will be as following:

- *To what extent has the populistic rhetoric from the left-wing leader Hugo Chávez played into existing social conflict in Venezuela?*

1.2 Background

In short terms, populism is "political ideas and activities that are intended to get the support of ordinary people by giving them what they want" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). The concept originates from the late 19th century, with the People's Party in the United States where the agrarian movement mobilized the grassroots against the capitalists. And with the Narodniki in Russia where a group of young students wanted the peasantry to join them in overthrowing the tsarism. Populism has always been defined as a people's movement, with a leading figure that is one of the people, that works for the people and together with the people (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017, pp.3-4).

The radical right of populism has, without any doubt, received the most amount of attention. With the substantial rise during the 1980s and 1990s, they have managed to keep a steady grip around the widespread support for some time. Something that shows primarily in contemporary Europe, since the majority of the countries possess a right-wing populistic party. In different strengths, of course, but they stick around with sharp sentiments of authoritarianism and nativism (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, pp.9,260; Stavrakakis et al. 2017, p.420).

One can view how supporters stand positive towards the populistic progress since they see the charismatic leaders as a guiding light towards more considerable change and hands-on results. While the opposition belongs to the sceptical masses, since they see issues with the radical opinions, that they lead towards violent courses of action and can be genuinely hostile (van Kessel, 2015, p.2). Among else, one can distinguish these patterns in France with Marine Le Pen and the National Rally, where Euroscepticism and national sovereignty are at the core of the ideology, which advocates for the exclusion of the outsiders. Another example is found in Germany with the Alternative for Germany, where the anti-immigration attitudes with the protectionistic approach from the party have led up to violent protests. A third illustration is with Hungary and Viktor Orbán Fidesz, where the authoritarian government has gained considerable control over the freedom of expression, which has contributed to various demonstrations in the capital (Bogaards, 2018, pp.1484,1491; Stavrakakis et al. 2017, pp.430-431; van Kessel, 2015, pp.45-47).

The broader discussion on left-and-right-wing populism surely reached the surface in the middle of the 20th century, and particularly in Latin America, where the developments within left-wing populism saw the daylight during the 1990s. With the so-called Pink Tide, there were reactions against economic instability and social inequality in many of the Latin American countries. The left-turn occurred especially in Venezuela, where the people stood up against the corrupt elite, advocating for change (de la Torre, 2017, p.200; Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017, pp.5-6). A short background on Venezuela is that it is the oil-rich country in the northwest of the Latin American continent. This nation that has experienced a

variety of unstable conditions over the years. For more than 300 years, the country stood under the Spanish colonial rule, and it was not until 1830 that the Venezuelans could claim their independence. However, the colonial heritage has been present and influenced the transition towards liberation, which has been one of the reasons for the state-building process to have been a rocky road. The country has lived through more than 100 years of powerful dictatorships, firm military regimes until the year of 1957, followed by a turn towards more democratic governments. For some time, it was a steady climb of prosperous developments, much to do with the oil incomes that helped the economy to grow (Landguiden, 2020).

However, the oil crisis in the 1970s affected the temporary stability, and a negative spiral with political corruption hit the economic situation and the communal welfare state. Due to worrying times in the country, a general named Hugo Chávez came into the picture with the attempt to complete a coup back in 1992. It was unsuccessful, but still, a significant move, because it put Chávez on the political map and later in the presidential position. Throughout his political career, his secret weapon would always be his rhetoric. Referring to phrases such as; *el pueblo*, *el revolución Bolivariana*, *todos los venezolanos,* he became the hope for the country by showing how he was one of the people (Jiménez & Patarroyo, 2019, pp.271-273). Thanks to it, he managed to create a charismatic bond with his supporters and therefore enabling the Bolivarian revolution to take place in Venezuela. A revolution that was conducted in the memory of the national hero Simon Bolívar, built upon the crossing between past and future, a socialistic transformation that would help to strengthen the homeland. With his background from a low-class family, Chávez saw it as his mission to be the voice of the marginalized sector (Gauna, 2016, pp.39,46; Martin, 2017, p.250).

2 Theory

2.1 Populistic Theory

When discussing populism, there are different ways to address the topic. Some claim it to be an ideology or a phenomenon, while others state it as a type of rhetoric or a performance. Depending on how one decides to approach populism, there is a trio to look to for guidance in this matter: Cas Mudde, Benjamin Moffitt and Ernesto Laclau. Moffitt discusses populism in the sense of a stylistic approach, meaning that it has to do with the behaviour and performance. In a way, this approach can be seen as is a bit more opportunistic than the other two, since this one uses personal appearances and current events to interconnect to the supporters. By constructing empathy and understanding from the audience, the populist can easily evoke an emergency and call for immediate action (Moffitt, 2016, pp.29,43,44). Mudde discuses populism in the sense of an ideational approach, to frame the phenomenon as an idea and an ideology to follow. The division is made into two groups, on one side we have the pure people, and on the other, we have the corrupt elite. This thin-centred ideology possesses a core that consists of the people, the elite and the general will; the three keystones of the society (Mudde, 2017, pp.28-33). Laclau discusses populism in the sense of a discursive approach, meaning that the form of framing and presenting the reality is crucial. Not only is it referring to the use of words, but instead a package deal containing gestures, images and political practices. In this way, it is easier to construct an antagonistic division in the society, while identifying as well as shaping links between groups (Laclau, 2005, pp.3,4,67). What one can comprehend is that they all share some core concepts in their definitions, mostly regarding the distinction of having the people as the reference point. Although, in the very end, their approaches differ and their main focus towards populism are

not the same (Laclau, 2005; Moffitt, 2016; Mudde, 2017). Therefore, in this thesis, the starting point will be to originate from only one of these top three scholars, namely Ernesto Laclau. The choice to focus on this particular scholar has to do foremost with my impression of him being the most suitable for my chosen topic, since the theoretical framework of Laclau is aligned with the discursive approach of populism and the antagonistic division.

According to Ernesto Laclau, the populistic cause is neither created upon the substance within the practice of populism. Nor is it about the expectations or demands or ideology. Instead, the populistic cause is located within how it is articulated and formulated (De Cleen, 2018, p.652). He states that populism is built upon popular movements and is a creation of empty signifiers. Meaning that rather hollow objects, such as logos or slogans, can express the ideas and words that the narrator or interpreters want them to represent. So, in the right context, these empty signifiers can create a symbolic structure of the political environment (Laclau, 2005, pp.69-70). As earlier mentioned, Laclau discusses the significance of discourse concerning populism, how the use of language can construct essential relations to the audience. Meaning, that in a way, populists manage to succeed in creating an imagined reality where they invite their followers, which is visible through the presentation of the antagonistic division in society. The populists use the right type of rhetorical tools to compile a phenomenon where the reference object always will be the people, and where the community is composed of the establishment and the underdogs. In other words, by showing the societal dichotomy, a populist can shape linkages towards the followers, giving the people a push to take practical measures to turn against the elite (Laclau, 2005, pp.68-72). With that said, Laclau highlights the essence of creating a chain of equivalence, a series of sameness in the framing. In this way, a populist can manage to appeal to the people, to reach out to the larger masses, to bring the supporters together. However, this does not mean that the combined group has to share the same background or be from the same societal sector. When looking towards populistic followers, there are diversities amongst them. But they share a common core factor and the same goal, which is anti-elitism (De Cleen, 2018, p.652).

Ernesto Laclau is also one of many scholars within the field of post-structuralism, which focus on the role and value of language together with discourse theory (Bergström & Boréus, 2014, p.29). The post-structural idea laid the foundation for the progression within the field of discourse analysis, developing into Critical Discourse Analysis, which will be explained in the method. Because of the connections between these essential factors, populism and post-structuralism and discourse analysis, I have chosen to focus on this path when managing this thesis. Also, it has to do with the fact that it helps to define how Hugo Chávez's rhetoric can be labelled as a populistic, and after that look to what extent his speeches have played into the violent clashes in Venezuela. Same goes for the next in line, social conflict theory; it interconnects with it all. It depends on the fact that social conflict rises from divergences and discrimination, something that creates antagonistic division. Because of this, I hope it is possible to see how I motivate that the chosen theories fit together with one another and that the theoretical frameworks connect to the analytical approach selected.

2.2   Social Conflict Theory

When addressing social conflict theory, one is focusing on one of the branches within the umbrella concept of conflict theory, namely looking towards social change and social organization. In social conflict theory, the focus lays on economic divisions, societal structure and the class perspective. What Lee Benson (1979) describes in his chapter, is that when a society experiences an unequal availability to essential resources and rights, it creates a culture which stimulates social conflict to take place in different ways (Benson, 1979, pp.190-191). Here one can observe how society forms an arena for dysfunction, that in the long run can generate struggle or revolution, to urge for social change. From this perspective, the structure of the community holds a significant challenge, namely, to solve the issue of inequality by integrating the social system. In the places where this is not achieved, the differences grow into societal gaps, which in the end often leads up to social conflict (Dahrendorf, 1958, pp.171-173; Fink, 1968, pp.415-417). The hierarchy in societal living becomes a force that maintains the imbalance between classes and the dominance of the elite, which makes social

conflict theory to originate from Karl Marx ideas on social order, power and dominance. It builds upon the conflict of interest in social society, where the power structures of a community are founded on dominance rather than consensus. Something that is beneficial and gives privileges to the ones with a high social position, since they can keep their influence over their capital and resources. While this creates an imbalance in society, because the advantages for a few is at the expenses of the majority, and the ones at the bottom usually possess different interests (Benson, 1979, p.192; van Dijk, 2011a, p.380).

Social conflict theory covers a comprehensive collection of areas and takes form in different ways, depending on the context. Anthony Oberschall (1978) describes a broad spectrum of events that all fall under the label of social conflict: civil disorder, demonstrations, marches, protest gatherings, rebellions, revolutions, riots, and strikes. These types of communal risings can derive from class, economic or societal conflicts, where the struggle for equality or values can be the core of the social conflict. Inequalities in society become challenged by citizens. By gathering in social protest, the goal of the participating groups is to work for change in the way of neutralizing or removing the rival (Oberschall, 1978, p.291). An important aspect to keep in mind is that new democracies are more vulnerable to the experience of social conflict, much due to the fact that they are building up a new foundation from the ground. Social conflicts happened particularly in Latin America because a majority of the countries experienced a political transition when the military regimes lost power after the 1970s and 1980s. It signalled a shift from political to social conflict when the countries transitioned into democratic governments, since the implementation of neoliberal policies made the socioeconomic inequalities more visible (de la Torre, 2016, p.61; Lander, 2005, p.20). Latin America possesses, in theory, the opportunities to succeed in their continental progression. Although, with political transformations and economic growth all over the region, the disadvantages with communal diversity and socioeconomic inequality remain. In some way, the development over the continent nourished social conflicts and created an interactive platform for violent clashes to thrive. In a report from UNDP (2013), one can see how the collected data shows that when countries possess excessive social exclusion and have regimes with low institutional legitimacy, the risk for social conflict to occur is

higher. Something one can find when turning towards Venezuela, where over 50% of the social conflicts that have occurred have ended in violent clashes (UNDP, 2013, pp.10,18,27).

Staying put in the continent named above, since it is a good case to look at when discussing long-lasting discrimination and segregation, Fernando Calderón (2012) presents ten arguments regarding the occurrence of social conflict in Latin America. Among these ten, I have selected four of them to explain in this section briefly, and I will come back to them in the analysis. I specifically chose these four because Venezuela generally possesses a high rate of these types of social conflict. I then thought it would be appropriate to focus on them when looking towards how Chávez rhetoric might have had an impact on the existing social conflicts. First, Calderón shows how the wealth and income distribution contribute to social diversity and therefore leads up to the social conflict. Second, a reason for social conflict has to do with the power of the media, in the way of the media space becoming a platform for conflict. Third, the disappointment with productivity and usefulness of the state raises distrust over the possibility to reach developments in the country and therefore becomes a part of the social conflict. Fourth, Calderón sees also the cultural aspect that affects the social conflict, regarding the cultural mobilization and recognition that is needed to provide the citizens with the feeling of security (Calderón, 2012, pp.11,12,20,23).

2.3 Operationalization

When it comes to operationalising the main concepts in this thesis, I would claim that the two of them appears in the theoretical frameworks: populism and social conflict. The need to operationalise these two has to do with the need for answering the research question of the thesis. To be able to motivate in what extension the populistic rhetoric has played into social conflict, there is a need for a clarification on how I will treat these concepts when implementing them into the thesis. When operationalising populism, I will base it on the definition that can be found in the populistic theory by Ernesto Laclau (2005). I will be looking at the rhetorical approach by Hugo Chávez when addressing the people and how he

manages to create an antagonistic divide of the society, as well as focusing on the articulation on specific concepts. When operationalising social conflict into the analysis and observing how it took place in Venezuela, I will look to the given descriptions that one can find in the theoretical framework. To define how it can be an example over a social conflict, I will turn to the driving forces behind the start of the social conflict, according to Anthony Oberschall (1978). But also find support from the chosen arguments from Fernando Calderón (2012) and connect each of them to a specific social conflict.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

The research design I will be using is a historical process research, an interconnection between a longitudinal design and a single case (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p.241). This since I believe it to be the most appropriate because I will be handling a small sample of speeches made by Hugo Chávez during his politically active years in Venezuela. I will be focusing on finding connections in-between Chávez's use of populistic rhetoric and social conflicts in Venezuela. By doing so, I want to clearly state that this thesis will not work with finding causality between the rhetoric and conflict. Much due to the fact that it would be challenging to reach a waterproof argument that it exists a causality between Chávez's speeches and social conflict. Therefore, this thesis is not aiming to deliver a cause-and-effect relationship between the discourse and social conflict, but rather to see if it is possible to be able to view a correlation between the two of them. It will be a small discourse analysis on one case that will be under observation for a short period, with the primary material being four speeches. Due to the few numbers of statements that are going to be analysed, I have decided not to code the qualitative data. Needless to say, but no matter if it is a qualitative or quantitative analysis, one can always code the collected material (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p.335, Hansen, 2006, p.25). However, I motivate my decision not to use coding for my data because I believe it is hard to say something about the result by compiling it into a chart. Since it is only four speeches, I think it is more important to focus on a more considerable discussion about the findings.

The next step is to decide in what way the theoretical frameworks should interconnect to the chosen material; whether it is a case of building new theory or deliver a more in-depth understanding. Or using current theory in new

environments, or study exceptions to the rule (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p.217). I started this project by doing an observation that there was a noticeable coherence between right-wing populism and violence, but not between left-wing populism and violence. Due to this, it became a form of inductive analysis, where I went from the narrow to the broad. By looking at the phenomenon of populism from another perspective, namely from the left-wing instead of the right-wing, it was possible to create hypotheses and draw general conclusions regarding the use of violence. Therefore, the selection became theory-generating, an approach where one generates new hypotheses and theories which can show how or why a specific phenomenon occurs. This since it seems like the most suitable option, because of the research gap and that it hopefully can be applied in other cases in the future.

To be able to analyse the relationship between discourse and socially constructed reality, the method I will be using for this thesis is discourse analysis. I have been taken inspiration from Lene Hansen (2006, p.77) since she is implementing the method of discourse analysis on a single-n case study. The main idea behind discourse analysis has to do with thinking outside of the box, finding connections between the text and its context. It is also one of the broadest types of analytical method since it is possible to applicate in many fields of study (Halperin & Heath, 2017, pp.335-336; van Dijk, 2011b, pp.3-5). When discussing discourse in an analytical context, one could place the development in this area into diverse generations of discourse analyse. I will look at the enlargement of discourse as a phenomenon. Where the distinction between discourse and non-discourse melts together with each other. To be able to view the broader meaning of authority and rhetoric, I will look at discourse from the dimension of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This systematic approach explores the attachments between pre-existing social structures and power relationships. It works as a critical instrument to reveal the links amongst ideology, language and power, to show how texts are multi-functional tools that construct identity and are actions on their own (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2016, pp.187-188). With CDA, one looks at the weight of discourse; how control over the discourse enables control over the mindset of people, which in turn leads towards gaining social power and after that achieving dominance but also hegemony (Halperin & Heath, 2017, pp.338-339). CDA works in a way as a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research method, as an

analytical framework that combines disciplines to explain an issue, and it one can use it to apply in a societal context together with an ideological context.

When adopting CDA, Fairclough and Fairclough address four issues of interest to have in mind when working with this specific approach and how one can apply it for practical use. First, they stress the value of analysing discourse in combination with the behaviour of social actors, rather than treating them separately, they put them in context. Secondly, they explain how semiotic factors, together with the argumentation, plays a central role in the structural selection of strategic procedure. Thirdly, they argue that by integrating imaginary and strategy, meaning the desirable reality towards the existing one and the operating plan to achieve the goal, it raises the stakes to succeed with the practical argumentation. Fourthly, they clarify how the critical part in this model is not the denunciation of the use of discourse, but rather to problematise the ideological and political characters behind it (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2016, pp.195-196).

3.2 Earlier work

I have found some articles that investigate the same field of research but using other angles. Some of these scholars are already mentioned in my thesis since they have contributed to my work. Scholars such as Ryan Brading, Aníbal F. Gauna and Kurt Weyland have been a big help and inspiration for this project. Brading (2014) is discussing how Venezuela has experienced a transition within the regime, from the corrupt elitist government towards a populistic yet drastic one with Chávez. He claims the development to be a radical revolution, an interesting aspect to use when looking to what extent the populistic influence has had over social conflict. Gauna (2017) is presenting an assessment over Laclau's work on populism, a type of literature review over the same book as I have used for my populistic framework. He also adds a segment of Venezuela in combination to the populistic theory, but without looking towards specific performances by Chávez. When it comes to Weyland (2013), his research upon the threat from the left-wing side of populism caught my attention and inspired me the most to work with this topic. In one way, one could say that he planted a seed in my brain, and from that,

it grew to this finished product that is in front of the reader today. As one can see, many scholars have covered a lot in this area before I decided to dig further. However, I still consider it to be a gap when it comes to violence within left-wing populism, which is why I hope my approach will show a new direction in this area. Therefore, I hope to contribute with a bit of scientific relevance, since I do think it would be of importance within my field of study, and also a bit of societal relevance, since it is a real-world problem that is developing.

3.3   Material

Before continuing with the thesis, I would like to briefly lift the material that has been of most significance for the development of my work. Namely the speeches, which I have found through the YouTube channel "Tele Sur TV" and the database "Todo Chávez". Both of these sources have provided a wide range of material to choose from and possessed high credibility as well. When it comes to the motivation behind the selected speeches, I base it upon the fact that I decided to be pragmatic in my decisions. I picked these four due to the complexity of the subject and the challenge of finding available data. Although, this is something I will come back to in my discussion section further below. Apart from these two primary sources for my analysis, three authors have played a significant role in the working process. The populistic framework of Ernesto Laclau (2005) has been guiding when taking the first glance on the speeches. His material, in combination with Fernando Calderón's work on social conflict in Latin America (2012) and the variety of examples over social conflict presented by Anthony Oberschall (1978), has made my research more manageable.

3.4   Disadvantages

Before moving into the analysis, I would like to address some of the possible shortcomings to be aware of during the working process. It has to do with the selection bias and the chosen research design, but also validity together with the language and empirical data. When referring to selection bias (Halperin & Heath,

2017, p.175), there will always be a challenge surrounding the decision of which material to focus on and there will always be a source of concern hovering over the choice of issues. Even more so in this situation, when I am conducting a single-n case study since it would be almost impossible in my position to claim that the selection of speeches to be completely objective. The choices I make, depending on which material I decide to focus on, will affect the entire path of this thesis. At the same time, when conducting a small discourse analysis, one needs to be pragmatic in the selection one makes. However, this is not a way for me to sweep it under the carpet to make the issue disappear, but rather inform the reader of the fact that I am aware of the selection bias during the working process. Further on, regarding validity (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p.344), I can only speak from a subjective point of view, whether I have accomplished what I set out to do at the very start. In the end, it will be up to my examiner and fellow peers to decide. However, I have tried to find the necessary textual evidence in the selected texts to be able to answer the research question. Hopefully, this coherence between the chosen statements and the social conflicts, show credibility in the analysis. When it comes to the chosen material, there are some disadvantages with the language and the secondary data and the timeframe (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p.177). By doing discourse analysis, I will work with a qualitative type of analysing when looking at a few numbers of speeches from Hugo Chávez. These four speeches are in Spanish without any translation into English, which makes it a challenge both on a translating level and a time-consuming level. Also, the empirical data will among else build upon the material that has been collected or recorded by others, so I will not have the same amount of control when researching the data. Another drawback I want to bring to the table has to do with the choice of doing a small discourse analysis. The decision was because this project both struggles with the limitations of time and space, and I decided to narrow it down when it comes to analytical material, to be able to focus on going deeper rather than wider.

4 Analysis

The disposition of the analysis will be in chronological order of the chosen speeches. I will start with presenting when in time it was held and in the context of its performance. I will display an extract of the original speech, and I will then mark the essential sentences/words in bold. These selections will later be explained below in the connection of the conflict. When singling out some of the phrases, I will try to show how the rhetoric is populistic, according to the earlier presented framework by Ernesto Laclau. Afterwards, I will dive into how these statements from Hugo Chávez could be seen to have had any level of impact on social conflict in the Venezuelan community, by connecting the social conflict to the earlier presented arguments by Fernando Calderón. Lastly, in my discussion section, I will more thoroughly cover the selection of the speeches and how the result can help to answer the research question.

4.1 Speech: 04/02/1992

The first speech to look into was held by Hugo Chávez on Tuesday the 4th of February in 1992. The context of the statement, with it being his first-ever performance on television in Venezuela (Arráiz Lucca, 2019), was for Chávez to reach out to the troops and order a ceasefire in the ongoing coup attempt.

"*Primero que nada quiero dar buenos días a todo **el pueblo de Venezuela,** y este **mensaje bolivariano** va dirigido a **los valientes soldados** que se encuentran en el Regimiento de Paracaidistas de Aragua y en la Brigada Blindada de Valencia. Compañeros: Lamentablemente**, por ahora, los objetivos que nos planteamos no fueron logrados** en la ciudad capital. Es decir, nosotros, acá en Caracas, no logramos controlar el poder. Ustedes lo hicieron muy bien por allá, pero ya es tiempo de evitar más derramamiento de sangre, ya es tiempo de reflexionar y*

16

vendrán nuevas situaciones y el país tiene que enrumbarse definitivamente hacia un destino mejor. Así que oigan mi palabra. Oigan al Comandante Chávez, quien les lanza este mensaje para que, por favor, reflexionen y depongan las armas porque ya, en verdad, los objetivos que nos hemos trazado a nivel nacional es imposible que los logremos. Compañeros: Oigan este mensaje solidario. Les agradezco su lealtad, les agradezco su valentía, su desprendimiento, y yo, ante el país y ante ustedes, asumo la responsabilidad de este movimiento militar bolivariano. Muchas gracias." (Tele Sur TV, 2014).

One could claim that it was the Caracazo, a series of riots against the government's economic policies, on the 27th of February in 1989 that motivated the execution of the coup in 1992. The event of social conflict three years earlier was a reaction to the deep economic crisis and social inequalities taking place in Venezuela, with the increased oil prices as a tipping point for the population (López Maya, 2003, p.117). With barricades and vandalism, the people showed their dissatisfaction for the state's actions. However, the protest developed into violent clashes between the people and the government, since the rebel groups were met with a brutal approach from the regime (de la Torre, 2017, pp.200-201). The 1992 coup attempt was a way to displace the then-current president Carlos Andrés Perez, much due to the neoliberal policies that were implemented and hit the lower classes hard in Venezuela. A move that happened much in line with the argument presented by Calderón (2012, p.11) regarding that the income distribution in Venezuela increased the social diversity and inequality, leading up to a type of social conflict. Hugo Chávez was the leading figure in this coup, at that point a political outsider that stood against the establishment and had the mission to eliminate the corrupt and rotten elite in the country (Levitsky & Loxton, 2013, p.124). Even though he indeed was a political nobody, he declared that he highly appreciated the bravery and loyalty from the fellow Venezuelans (*les agradezco su lealtad, les agradezco su valentía*) that had stood by him in this failed coup attempt.

By starting the speech with the direction of speaking to the people of Venezuela (*el pueblo de Venezuela*), he is including the ordinary citizens that supported him

in his cause for revolution in the country. He clearly states that this message goes out to the brave combatants (*los valientes soldados, compañeros*) that has fought next to him in this attempt for transformation, where the people has gone through a battle against the government's brigade. By stating that this is a Bolivarian message (*mensaje bolivariano*) he is referring to the memory of cultural heritage that the people of Venezuela share. Simón Bolívar, the lead figure for Bolivarianism, was a Venezuelan general that became the liberator for the North-western part of Latin America when he led them to independence from the Spanish monarchy back at the beginning of the 19th century. The February coup was a failure and Chávez was imprisoned, but he gained great popularity for his efforts. The speech for surrendering showed the people that Chávez took responsibility for the cause of action, but also his idea of a Bolivarian era to follow (*la responsabilidad de este movimiento military bolivariano*). His accountable approach made it possible for him to be welcomed back with open arms after his release from prison and won him the presidential election in 1998 (Andrade, 2019, p.3).

This speech is perhaps seen as it is out of low quality when stating a connection between social conflict and populistic discourse. Much due to the fact that this statement was held when the coup ended, and it was not a driving force towards the beginning of the social conflict. However, in retrospective, one could distinguish how the speech consists of populistic metaphors that in the end, influenced the continuance of social conflict. One can see this by Chávez's explanation about how their affirmed goals for the coup was not reached (*por ahora, los objetivos que nos planteamos no fueron logrados*). But that would not stop them entirely, because it was not a declaration of total capitulation. Instead, it was a temporary retreat before the next opportunity would arrive for those who wanted alteration for their motherland (vendrán nuevas situaciones y el país tiene que enrumbarse definitivamente hacia un destino mejor). In fact, during the time Chávez was in prison, a new coup attempt was planned and executed on the 27th of November 1992. It has not been a hundred per cent confirmed whether this group worked amongst Chávez or if it was a new group leading the second coup.

Nonetheless, it is visible that they shared the same motives and wished for the same outcome as Chávez and his supporters did work for (Baburkin, 1999, p.147). Therefore, one could argue that the words Chávez uttered at the end of the February coup affected the willpower in peoples mind. The populistic rhetoric which referred to the people and the country (*el pueblo de Venezuela*), lighted a candle for change in the Venezuelans. They saw a new character on the TV screen, someone to follow and listen to in order to fulfil the dream of a transformed Venezuela.

4.2   Speech: 14/11/2001

The second speech to look into was held by Hugo Chávez on Wednesday the 14th of November in 2001. Here, the context is that Chávez is presenting a renewed reform of great importance for the development and great empowerment for the country. A package deal of 49 laws that goes under the title "Ley Habilitante" = The Law of Enablement.

*"Buenas noches a todos ustedes, venezolanos y venezolanas, **de este momento histórico tan importante que estamos viviendo**. Pues bien, esta cadena nacional breve para informar algo de suma **importancia y de un impacto positivo para el país**, sumamente positivo, se trata de que acabamos, terminamos, concluimos un proceso de un año hoy 13 de noviembre [...] y aprobar un conjunto muy importante de leyes, sobre todo **orientadas al desarrollo económico, al desarrollo social, al desarrollo socioeconómico institucional de la nación,** sobre todo en esa dirección [...] creador oyendo diversas opiniones, recogiendo el clamor **especialmente de los que nunca tuvieron voz,** de ustedes, de la mayoría de los venezolanos porque hasta hace muy poco aquí se hacían las leyes, era allí en pequeños cenáculos y **casi siempre para beneficios de pequeños sectores; ahora no, nosotros tenemos un compromiso jurado con el país**, con la voluntad de la nación, con la mayoría de los venezolanos y **todas estas leyes que hemos aprobado en este año habilitante pues están orientadas al desarrollo del país**, no de sectores específicos especialmente sectores minoritarios"* (Todo Chávez, 2001).

Chávez claimed that the enabling law package was of great importance for the whole population and it possessed a positive impact for the entire country (*importancia y de un pacto positivo en el país*). A way to give restitution to the people that never had been invited to the conversation or to those who never had been given a voice (*especialmente de los que nunca tuvieron voz*). For Chávez, it was crucial to go through with this revolutionary reform, since it altered the law system completely. Earlier on, it had just favoured a small part of the nation, foremost the wealthy upper class. But from that moment, everything changed, and the laws were focused on developing the country instead of a specific sector (*todas estas leyes que hemos aprobado en este año habilitante pues están orientadas al desarrollo del país*). However, the effects from the implementation of the reform package contributed to a rise in distrust amongst some Venezuelans. In correspondence to the argument regarding dissatisfaction on state productivity (Calderón, 2012, p.20), a social conflict arose due to the negative effect that the legislative change would cause specific businesses. This since a part of the Venezuelan community did not see this change as an essential experience and a historical moment for the country (*de este momento histórico tan importante que estamos viviendo*).

One step closer to the Venezuelan populist Bolivarian Revolution, that was the promise with the Ley Habilitante. The purpose was to reshape the institutional structure to enable a change in the socio-economic system and develop the economic and social model of the country (*orientadas al desarrollo económico, al desarrollo social, al desarrollo socioeconómico institucional de la nación*). This transformation with a constitutional change became possible through a referendum, that Chávez won with almost 60% of the votes, a victory which gained him control over several areas to complete the drastic reforms (Brading, 2014, p.56). However, the restructuring model was controversial, among else because of the debated land reform (Ley de Tierras y Desarrollo Rural) that was implemented. It was a form of a Robin Hood-approach, where it was possible to take rural land from the property of the private and wealthy sector, without any compensation from the state, and handing it over to the underprivileged sector and working class. But primarily, it was the Hydrocarbons Law (Ley de

Hidrocarburos), which profoundly affected the oil industry, that would become the most problematic and lead to social conflict (Encarnación, 2002, p.41). The law increased the state's control over the industry, something that made the leadership of the PDVSA (Petroleum of Venezuela) very unhappy with Chávez reform. It began with opposition and resistance from the PDVSA to accept the lawful transition, which made Chávez take harsh actions against the oil elite. He decided to send out a message on the 7th of April in 2002, by firing seven of the top executives in the industry and after that giving the open spots to government loyalists. With this decision, it became an open conflict between Chávez and the oil elite, and it later triggered the national strike to occur on the 9th of April the same year. Although, since it did not possess the reaction they had hoped for, the strike developed into a demonstration two days later, on the 9th of April. It became a massive march against the presidential residence of Miraflores. With the outcome that eleven demonstrators got shot downed and killed by the government. Because of the violent approach towards the demonstration, the opposing elite demanded Chávez to step down from the presidential position and take responsibility for the deaths. Once out of power, the opposition took temporally control and intended to erase the legacy of Chávez, as well as to abolish the controversial law (Andrade, 2019, pp.4-5; Brading, 2014, p.57).

As one can tell, the reform package met significant opposition from the upper classes of Venezuela. Much because the benefits that used to be existing for a few small sectors, was now transformed into welfares for the entire country (*casi siempre para beneficios de pequeños sectores; ahora no, nosotros tenemos un compromiso jurado con el país*). This transformation shaped Venezuela into a polarized country; with the anti-government supporters within the oil business on one side, and the pro-Chavista supporters formed within Chávez's Bolivarian circles on the other. The circles were a form of populistic organizations, where Chávez encouraged the people of Venezuela to gather and discuss. Similar to a book club, the floor was open to debate topics such as the local issues that faced the people, or defend the ongoing revolution, or study the ideology of Bolivarianism. Over two million Venezuelans joined these Bolivarian circles, and it was thanks to these that president Chávez was restored to power (de la Torre, 2017, p.204). The supporters in the circles demonstrated against the dictatorial

elite that took his place and managed to secure his return to power after 48 hours of removal. With the mobilization of the circles, one can see how the populistic rhetoric from Chávez was used as a powerful weapon that paid off in the reliable support he had from the people (de la Torre, 2017, p.204).

4.3   Speech: 23/01/2003

The third speech to look into was held by Hugo Chávez on Thursday the 23rd of January in 2003. Here, the context is that Chávez speaks to his followers on the topic of the alleged oil strike. He addresses it in a way that condemns its effects on the community and its real existence, a statement that would provoke the opposition and develop into consequences for the president.

*"Pues bueno, la oligarquía depredadora, antinacional, privatizadora y neoliberal, fascista y **golpista, pretendió a fin de año sacarnos del poder**, a través de la huelga petrolera o más bien eso no es huelga, corrijo, ahí no hay huelga, el sabotaje petrolero es lo correcto. Eso no es huelga ni paro ni nada. […] Yo se los avisé, se los dije, **tienen la F del fracaso pintada en la frente** y ahora la tienen mucho más marcada, sellada. No se les va a borrar más nunca. Bueno, pero ellos vinieron planificando el sabotaje petrolero para tratar de generar un caos en la economía y en la sociedad. […] la recuperación ha sido mucho más rápida de la que esperábamos **gracias al trabajo heroico de los trabajadores petroleros**, de los **técnicos patriotas y de muchos voluntarios de brigadas voluntarias** y de muchos militares que se unieron a los trabajadores pera recuperar nuestra industria petrolera. […] Gracias a los trabajadores, a los nuevos gerentes de la PDVSA patriota. **PDVSA es de la patria ahora por primera vez en la historia venezolana."* (Todo Chávez, 2003).

This statement and the events following in the months afterwards had a link to the 2002 coup, a coup which Chávez called out to be a failed effort from the coup-oriented elite to remove him from power (*golpista, pretendió a fin de año sacarnos del poder*). After both the removal and return of Chávez in April 2002, the blockade continued later that same year, between December 2002 until

February 2003. The 64-day long lockout of the oil industry was a head-on attack against the Chávez government, a blow against the economy but mostly against the working class. This because the strike was more a form of sabotage since the high-level executives destroyed a lot of valuable equipment and halted the production rate (Golinger, 2004). Something which Chávez claimed to have had more an effect on the business than on the actual government when stating that the so-called strike was a complete failure and only hurtful for the oligarchy itself (*tienen la F del fracaso pintada en la frente*). Instead, he chose to deny the existence of the strike. He pointed out the excellent work from the heroic workers that had made sure that the PDVSA was led by true patriotic Venezuelans (*gracias al trabajo heroico de los trabajadores petroleros; PDVSA es de la patria ahora por primera vez en la historia venezolana*). These populistic phrases framed the oppositions attempts to be an utter failure and led to polarise the society and can, therefore, classify as a provocation that pushed the button for the following revolts.

The following month there was a demand for the Chavista opposition for a recalled referendum, a way to terminate Chávez time as president. Another approach was implemented, and this time it was not through a coup attempt, but instead through legal actions. In correspondence with the 1999 constitution, this form of evoking referendum could be performed if at least 2.4 million signatures were collected. And the Venezuelan opposition succeeded in turning in the petition with almost 3 million signed names (Carroll, 2013, pp.92,215). The Supreme Court ruled in favour of the request and placed the referendum on the 15th of August 2004. In a way, one could call this event a social conflict in itself since this is a case of cultural mobilisation around the fact that a considerable amount of the population felt sceptical and insecure over the presidential power (Calderón, 2012, p.23). Perhaps the shape of this specific social conflict was slightly different than others, but this occurred in a way where the protest gatherings showed an example over a social conflict that was put in writing on a piece of paper.

During the oil strike, Chávez received his all-time lowest support from the voters, with only 31% of the population's encouragement. This showed that his approach

with the Bolivarian missions, social programs that were supposed to improve the social welfare system and reduce national poverty, was not intriguing for all of the Venezuelans. His populistic move was to attract the genuine patriotic people, the volunteers that had supported the country in challenging times (*técnicos patriotas y de muchos voluntarios*). He relied on the constructed support from the lower classes and the unemployed workers to stay put in the presidential position. In this way, he became the leader that gave the excluded sector a voice in the political system, to show them that they mattered and that he relied on them as a critical element for his political career to continue (Posner, 2016, pp.27,40,41). Even though that was the case, when it all came down to it, the people that supported the leader of the Bolivarian revolution continued to have his back. When the results got publicised, Chávez received excellent news, with a 59% voting no for withdrawing the president from office (BBC, 2004).

In the case of seeing Venezuela from a general perspective, this form of action with evoking the direct democracy, in the form of a recalled referendum, has been proven to be efficient when dealing with crises. It is a way for the government to take charge of the escalating situation; they are taking the disagreements away from the streets and avoiding violent clashes to occur. Instead, they are putting it into the electoral arena to handling the diversity of opinion with a vote, in that way it is a solution constitutionally and democratically and at the same time, the result speaks for itself (Ellner, 2012, pp.99-100). And when the results got public, the Chavista supporters celebrated the successful outcome and cheered that their leader continued to hold the power position. At the same time, the opposition called the announcement a fraud, indicating that Chávez loyalists infiltrated the National Elections Council and that they had altered the result into his victory (NBC News, 2004). However, even if there was a diversity in opinion regarding the result, the recalled referendum became a way to escape the infected situation that existed in society, as a way to deconstruct the national dissimilarities that had hoovered over Venezuela since the 2002 coup attempt.

4.4 Speech: 25/01/2007

The fourth speech to look into was held by Hugo Chávez on Thursday the 25th of January in 2007. Here, the context is that Chávez is stating that the private television network RCTV (Radio Caracas Televisión) will not receive a renewed broadcasting license, due to the network's alleged involvement in the 2002 coup and the following general strikes that occurred in the country.

*"Tres meses y un poquito más. ¡Se acabó! Sencillamente es una concesión pues, el Estado nacional tiene todo el derecho, la potestad, para tomar esa decisión. Ahora ellos están brincando, chillando que van a ir a las instancias internacionales**, que vayan donde ellos quieran, pero la concesión se les acaba ahora en mayo y listo**, se acabó, vayan a ver qué otra cosa van a hacer, vayan pensando a ver qué otra van a hacer. Pero entonces están, claro, aprovechando esto para que si convocar manifestaciones, **que tienen todos los derechos de hacerlas**, pero incitando a la violencia, buscando voceros para incitar a la violencia, hablar de explosiones sociales, etcétera. Yo sólo le quiero recordar a **la oligarquía venezolana, y a los factores fascistas venezolanos**, que siguen todavía aquí haciendo uso y abuso de las libertades democráticas, que si se les ocurre volver por los caminos abiertos del fascismo, de **la provocación y de la violencia**, se van a arrepentir otra vez, porque el pueblo venezolano ya tomó aquí una decisión, el Gobierno Revolucionario está junto al pueblo decidido **a seguir transitando los caminos del socialismo y de la revolución socialista**.*" (Todo Chávez, 2007).

By the point of this announcement, the conflict between the private media and the Chávez government had been rather complicated and infected for quite some time. Which clearly shows when he is addressing them as the oligarchy and fascist (*la oligarquía venezolana, y a los factores fascistas venezolanos*). At the beginning of Chávez political career, he had widespread support from the private media sector. Due to the corrupted political system, the media chose to support Chávez in the election of 1999. However, once Chávez got the official position, the tables turned quickly (Hawkins, 2016, p.252). The private media sphere, and the RCTV in particular, saw the development with Chávez in a position of power, as a

radicalisation of the ideology he once advocated before being elected president. The left-wing populism that Chávez wanted to implement was still there, and the socio-economic transformations that were enabled were still inside of the democratic framework. Although, some in the private media sector argued that it was a transition towards a more competitive authoritarian regime that Venezuela experienced, that by having Chávez as a holder of office he could abuse the position and use the power to his advantages (Levitsky & Loxton, 2013, p.114).

The change was said to have a connection to the close cooperation and bond that Chávez had to Fidel Castro. A relationship that did not collect any points on the popular support scale. From the outside, one could see the collaboration between Cuba and Venezuela as a bilateral agreement; Cuba received free oil from Venezuela, and in return, the Cubans offered healthcare service to the Venezuelan people. However, the opposition against Chávez saw this partnership as a way for Cuba to influence the Venezuelan political agenda, and that Chávez followed the same course as Castro had done when dealing with the voice of the media. With that said, Chávez increased his direct influence over the private media, since he metaphorically demanded to write his script for the Bolivarian Revolution. To do that, he needed to control the airwaves and be able to release the narrative he sought to be relevant (Andrade, 2019, p.6; Aponte-Moreno, 2012, p.35). What Chávez saw as the correct path to walk down on to succeed with socialism and the social revolution (*a seguir transitando los caminos del socialismo y de la revolución socialista*), others saw as a prevarication to close down a critical network.

Another angle of the same story is that the media coverage and especially the transmissions coming from the RCTV had a significant impact and was an important puzzle piece for the coup in 2002. The importance is something that shows a deep connection to Calderón's argument (2012, p.12) regarding media power and how it becomes an essential platform for the social conflict to express itself. Chávez blamed the broadcasting network for infiltrating the coup and pushing for the opposition to go into a general strike at the end of 2002. Therefore, they undermined the Chávez administration by being coup-plotters, and Chávez criticised the private media for throwing fuel on to the existing fire

(Eimer, 2004). They could say and do what they liked, his decision on cutting them off in May was final (*que vayan donde ellos quieran, pero la concesión se les acaba ahora en mayo y listo*). Which is why the government decided to systematically reduce the space of the private media more and more, and eventually, revoked the license of the most successful private television network in the country. Not only because Chávez needed to put an end to the critical proclamations that the RCTV published, but also to send out a message to the remaining networks, a way to set an example and show what happens if they got on his wrong side. Because, either you were with him or against him. This closedown turned out to be a practical approach since the remaining media stations decreased their critical broadcasting of the government (Hawkins, 2016, p.252).

The battle with the media may have started as a conflict with the elite, but it shifted into becoming a social conflict when the 2007 RCTV protests began. In the middle of May 2007, there were more than a handful of demonstrations were held for two weeks. They had all the legal right to do, but that was not going to change the mind of Chávez, who claimed it to simply be about provocation and violence (*que tienen todos los derechos de hacerlas; la provocación y de la violencia*). The majority of the demonstrators was in favour and support for the broadcasting network, but some of the Chavistas showed their endorsement for Chávez decision to close it down.

Hundreds of journalists and students took place on the streets of Caracas on the 21st of May, protesting against the decision not to renew the broadcasting license of the media station. With an enormous banner stating "SOS Freedom of Expression" in ten different languages, the goal of the demonstration was to reach out to the broader masses and to show the world what was going on in Venezuela. To point out that the government of the country had started to become an authoritarian regime with the decision to delimit the people's opportunities and rights. One of the students taking part in the demonstration stated that the students would not accept this decision. They wanted to show the president that he could not decide for the people what they should watch and what they should avoid, he

could not determine for the people who are permitted to talk and who should stay quiet (Márquez, 2007).

While the opponent's message was clear, the verdict from the Supreme Court on the 24th of May 2007 was substantial. They ruled in favour of president Chávez decision to close down the RCTV, and that the 27th of May should be the last active day for the network. The ruling was for the RCTV to stop broadcasting immediately on that date, but also approving the government to confiscate the equipment and stations if the deadline was passed by (El Universal, 2007). Even though the broadcasting network had officially closed down, the demonstrations continued to be alive for another few days. On the 2nd of June, there was a march in support for president Chávez decision to reject the renewed license for the network. Tens of thousands of president Chávez supporters marched down the streets of Caracas, all wearing red clothing, a trademark that represents the Bolivarian Revolution (Chirinos, 2007). What can be said about the rallies in the aftermath, is that the opposition was more vocal and managed to send out their message on the topic. But in the end, it was not enough, the majority of the people supported Chávez decision, and the Chavista government continued its way down the road to reach a socialistic revolution.

5   Discussion and Conclusion

To begin this discussion, I would like to start by motivating the selection of speeches for this analysis. As earlier mentioned, I based upon pragmatism when choosing the speeches to analyse. In my opinion, the choices were the most suitable when doing this thesis, because they all presented an opportunity for grasping sufficient material to complete the analysis. All speeches could show some inkling of impact in the community, with some effect from the populistic rhetoric on social conflicts in Venezuela. Also, I selected theses speeches due to the broad spectrum that they represent since they show off different types of social conflict. And to show evidence on how the rhetoric played into social conflict to either happen overnight or build up for a longer time. With that comes a more extended timeframe, since they take place at four separate occasions within reach between 1992 until 2007, an intriguing aspect of it as well. I believe that it makes it possible to show how it was not something that happened at a single occasion once in a while, but rather that the impact of Chávez's rhetorical performances was a constant factor over several years. Before moving into the discussion, I would like to add that if I had done this project differently, an interesting aspect that I had wanted to work with would be looking towards a comparison between the populistic rhetoric of Chávez and the one from the current president Nicolás Maduro. To examine how the effects of their rhetoric differ, but also, to dive deeper into the critical determining factors. Comparing the crucial ones that existed in 1992 against the ones in 2001, and the ones in 2013 against the ones of today.

If we turn to the first speech, the performance by Hugo Chávez was a springboard towards the Bolivarian revolution to come, and it was a starting point for the people to get acquainted with their future leader. But if we instead look to the 1992 attempted coup, it arose from the social structure that promoted inequality in Venezuela (Calderón, 2012). The event did not happen because of populistic

rhetoric. It took place before the speech occurred, so it was more because of a social movement in the country that demanded change. What we can tell is that the speech where Chávez ended the coup attempt, in true populistic fashion, was a speech where he stood in opposition together with the people, against the elite and the government (Laclau, 2005). It was an important milestone for his political career, but also because the populistic rhetoric he used played a crucial role in the next coup attempt. And most of all, the realisation of the Bolivarian revolution and the ongoing social conflict (Oberschall, 1978).

If we look at the second speech, it showed how the tables turned when Chávez went into office. As president, the populistic rhetoric went out to his fellow people, at the same time as it provoked his opposition. After his statement, one can see how it stirred up reactions in the opposite camp. First, there was a strike, then it developed into a demonstration, and eventually, it reached a coup attempt (Oberschall, 1978). All these three events are examples over social conflicts, which came to life due to the distrust in the state productivity with the implementation of the law reform (Calderón, 2012). The speech based upon the class perspective, where the upper classes lost a few of their privileges, but the idea was to equalise the society (Laclau, 2005). With the second speech, one could state that it was the implementation of the law reform package in itself that sealed the deal for the social conflict to emerge. Although, one could claim that it was the populistic rhetoric worked as a provoking statement and led up to a trail of social conflict events.

By examining the third speech, this also started as a populistic provocation. By stating a clear antagonistic division between the people and the elite, he applauds the hard-working group that has helped the nation back on its feet, while he discards the oligarchy that has tried to push him down from power (Laclau, 2005). After the speech, the situation in the country intensified, and it developed into a demonstration put in writing, a protest gathering on a piece of paper (Oberschall, 1978). There was a form of culture conflict happening together with a culture mobilisation around the fact that the opposition doubted the role of power that Chávez did possess. It was shaping a power dysfunction in the country, which led up to the point where the Venezuelans were questioning the political structure that

took place in their country (Calderón, 2012). One could state that, to some extent, it was the populistic rhetoric that effected the social conflict to take place. However, it occurred in combination with an underlying dissatisfaction, where the opposition was unsure about the security and stability of the president and wanted to see a change in the political representation.

When viewing the fourth and last speech, we have something that started as an attack and a conflict on the media elite. Chávez blamed the RCTV for being coup-plotters and mishandling the responsibility they had, using rhetoric in true populistic colours (Laclau, 2005). Later it converted, from a conflict with Chávez and fellow Chavistas in one corner, and the media with their freedom of the press-supporters in the other. It transformed into a full-on social conflict, with a numerous amount of demonstrations and riots, both for and against the decision president Chávez made about revoking the broadcasting license (Oberschall, 1978). It was clear that the power of the media was influential, and the platform that media could provide was essential to reach out with a message (Calderón, 2012). At the same time, this was clear from the perspective of Chávez, which led him to close down one of the most critical stations. Something that did not go unseen from the public, since they claimed it to be an undermining of the freedom of expression and claimed a form of corruption appearing in the country.

5.1   Concluding remarks

What one can state clearly is the following: there is a correlation between the populistic rhetoric from Chávez and social conflict in Venezuela. As I declared in the method section, this is not a presentation of causality between these two variables. Thus, I would instead claim that the causality locates within the class society. As one can see, populism originates from antagonistic divisions and the idea of the people against the elite. In other words, the legacy locates within the societal hierarchy. Additionally, social conflict originates from different socio-economic inequalities in the community that drives disagreements. In other words, the legacy establishes from the capitalistic hegemony. Therefore, populism and

social conflict have individually and separately a causality towards class society. While between the two of them, they only share a correlation.

Conclusively, one can view that the populistic rhetoric, to some degree, has affected the continuousness of social conflict in Venezuela. With this analysis, I have been trying to uncover how the populistic rhetoric shines through in the selected speeches held by Hugo Chávez and to what extent this has played into existing social conflict in Venezuela. We have seen the signs for social conflict appear out from all the speeches, and we have seen that it is cases of populistic rhetoric as well. What began as a flourishing socialistic revolution would transition into a new reality for the Venezuelan people, where they would encounter several social conflicts during the presidency of Hugo Chávez. It might not be the case that the speeches have been the only facilitator for the social conflicts to happen, but I dare to state that they have played a significant role in the influence of the social conflicts. Therefore, when it comes to what extent the populistic rhetoric from the left-wing leader Hugo Chávez played into existing social conflicts in Venezuela, I would lastly like to indicate that it has perhaps not been the definitive factor of impact. But the populistic rhetoric has more or less played an essential role in the continuous phase of social conflict.

6   References

Andrade, Gabriel (2019). "Conspiracy Mongering in Venezuela: The *Chavismo* Period (1998-2018)", *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, pp.1-13.

Aponte-Moreno, Marco – Lance Lattig (2012). "Chávez: Rhetoric Made in Havana", *World Policy Journal*, vol.29, nr.1, pp.33-42.

Arráiz Lucca, Rafael (2019). "February 4, 1992: The Day Venezuelans Learned the Name 'Hugo Chávez'", *Caracas Chronicles*. 2019-02-04. [Online article] https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2019/02/04/february-4-1992-the-day-venezuelans-learned-the-name-hugo-chavez/

Baburkin, Sergei et.al. (1999). "The 1992 Coup Attempts in Venezuela: Causes and Failure", *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, vol.27, nr.1, pp.141-154.

BBC News (2004). "Venezuelan audit confirms victory". 2004-08-21. [Online article] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3587184.stm

Benson, Lee (1979). "Marx's General and Middle-Range Theories on Social Conflict", in Merton, Robert K. – James S. Coleman – Peter H. Rossi (ed.) *Qualitative and Quantitative Social Research,* London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, pp.189-209.

Bergström, Göran – Kristina Boréus (2014). "Samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys" in Bergström, Göran – Kristina Boréus (ed.) *Textens mening och makt: Metodboken i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys,* 3rd ed. Lund: Studentlitteratur, pp.13–48.

Bogaards, Matthijs (2018). "De-democratization in Hungary: diffusely defective democracy", *Democratization,* vol.25, nr.8, pp.1481-1499.

Brading, Ryan (2014). "From Passive to Radical Revolution in Venezuela's Populist Project, *Latin American Perspectives*, vol.41, nr.6, pp.48-64.

Calderón, Fernando (2012). "Ten theses concerning social conflict in Latin America", *Ceparl Review*, vol.2, nr.107, pp.7-30.

Cambridge Dictionary (2020). "Populism" [Electronic resource] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/populism

Canovan, Margaret (1999). "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy", *Political Studies Association*, vol.47, pp.2-16.

Carroll, Rory (2013). *Comandante: The Life and Legacy of Hugo Chávez*. New York: The Penguin Press.

Chirinos, Carlos (2007). "RCTV: el turno del gobierno", *BBC Mundo*. 2007-06-02. [Online article] http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin_america/newsid_6715000/6715249.stm

Dahrendorf, Ralf (1958). "Toward a Theory of Social Conflict", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.2, nr.2, pp.170-183.

De Cleen, Benjamin – Jason Glynos – Aurelien Mondon (2018). "Critical research on populism: Nine rules of engagement", *Organization*, vol.25, nr.5, pp.649-661.

de la Torre, Carlos (2016). "Left-wing Populism: Inclusion and Authoritarianism in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador", *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, vol.23, nr.1, pp.61-76.

de la Torre, Carlos (2017). "Populism in Latin America", in Rovira Kaltwasser, Cristobal – Paul A. Taggart – Paulina Ochoa Espejo – Pierre Ostiguy (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.195-213.

Eimer, Charlotte (2004). "Venezuela's war of the airwaves". *BBC News*. 2004-03-19. [Online article] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3524760.stm

El Universal (2007). "TSJ orders RCTV to hand over its broadcast infrastructure", 2007-06-26. [Online article] https://web.archive.org/web/20110525130403/http:/english.eluniversal.com/2007/05/26/en_pol_art_tsj-orders-rctv-to-h_26A874677.shtml

Ellner, Steve (2012). "The Distinguishing Features of Latin America's New Left in Power: The Chávez, Morales, and Correa Governments", *Latin American Perspectives,* vol.39, nr.1, pp.96-114.

Encarnación, Omar G. (2002). "Venezuela's 'Civil Society Group'", *World Policy Journal*, vol.19, nr.2, pp.38-48.

Fairclough, Norman – Isabela Fairclough (2016). "Textual Analysis", in Bevir, Mark – R.A.W. Rhodes (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Interpretive Political Science*, London & New York: Routledge, pp.186-198.

Fink, Clinton F. (1968). "Some Conceptual Difficulties in the Theory of Social Conflict", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.12, nr.4, pp.412-460.

Gauna, Aníbal F. (2016). "Populism, heroism, and revolution. Chávez's cultural performances in Venezuela, 1999-2012", *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, vol.6, nr.1, pp.37-59.

Gauna, Aníbal F. (2017). "Explaining populism beyond Laclau: A historical-comparative assessment of *On Populist Reason*", *Thesis Eleven*, vol.140, nr.1, pp.38-55.

Golinger, Eva (2004). "A Case Study of Media Concentration and Power in Venezuela", *Venezuelan analysis*. 2004-09-25. [Online article] https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/710

Halperin, Sandra – Oliver Heath (2017). Poli*tical Research: Methods and Practical Skills*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hansen, Lene (2006). *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, London & New York: Routledge

Hawkins, Kirk A. (2016). "Responding to radical populism: Chavismo in Venezuela", *Democratization*, vol.23, nr.2, pp.242-262.

Jiménez, Jenny Alexandra – Santiago Patarroyo (2019). "El populismo en contextos democráticos en América Latina: revisión a los significantes vacíos en el discurso de tres líderes populistas, en estudio desde el análisis político del discurso", *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales,* vol.64, nr.235, pp.255-288.

Laclau, Ernesto (2005). *On populist reason*. London & New York: Verso.

Lander, Edgardo (2005). "Venezuelan Social Conflict in a Global Context", *Latin American Perspectives*, vol.32, nr.2, pp.20-38.

Landguiden (2020). "Venezuela" [Electronic resource] https://www.ui.se/landguiden/lander-och-omraden/sydamerika/venezuela/

Levitsky, Steven – James Loxton, 2013. "Populism and competitive authoritarianism in the Andes", *Democratization*, vol.20, nr.1, pp.107-136.

López Maya, Margarita (2003). "The Venezuelan 'Caracazo' of 1989: Popular Protest and Institutional Weakness", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol.35, nr.1, pp.117-137.

Márquez, Humberto (2007). "Venezuela: Marches and Counter-Marches Over TV Station's End", *Inter Press Service News* Agency. 2007-06-12. [Online

resource]

https://web.archive.org/web/20070612203557/http:/www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=37828

Martin, Heather (2017). "Coup-Proofing and Beyond: The Regime-Survival Strategies of Hugo Chávez", *Latin American Policy,* vol.8, nr.2, pp.249-262.

Moffitt, Benjamin (2016). *The global rise of populism: performance, political style, and representation*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Mudde, Cas (2017). "Populism: An Ideational Approach" in Rovira Kaltwasser, Cristobal – Paul A. Taggart – Paulina Ochoa Espejo – Pierre Ostiguy (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.27-47.

NBC News (2004). "Observer teams endorse Venezuela vote results". 2004-08-16. [Online resource] http://www.nbcnews.com/id/5710814/ns/world_news/t/observer-teams-endorse-venezuela-vote-results/#.XsujYy8zJ8d

Norris, Pippa – Ronald Inglehart (2019). *Cultural Backlash – Trump, Brexit and authoritarian populism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oberschall, Anthony (1978). "Theories of Social Conflict", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol.4, pp.291-315.

Posner, Paul W. (2016). "Laboring Under Chávez: Populism for the Twenty-first Century", *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol.58, nr.3, pp.26-50.

Prentoulis, Marina – Lasse Thomassen (2017). "Left Populism: The Challenges from Grassroots to Electoral Politics", *Transform – A Journal of the Radical Left,* pp.109-128.

Rovira Kaltwasser et.al. (2017). "Populism – An Overview of the Concept and the State of the Art" in Rovira Kaltwasser, Cristobal – Paul A. Taggart – Paulina Ochoa Espejo – Pierre Ostiguy (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.1-24.

Schamis, Hector. E (2006). "A 'Left-Turn' in Latin America? Populism, Socialism and Democratic Institutions", *Journal of Democracy*, vol.17, nr.4, pp.20-34.

Stavrakakis, Yannis et.al. (2016). "Contemporary Left-wing Populism in Latin America: Leadership, Horizontalism, and Postdemocracy in Chávez's Venezuela", *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol.58, nr.3, pp.51-76.

Stavrakakis, Yannis et.al. (2017). "Extreme right-wing populism in Europe: revisiting a reified association", *Critical Discourse Studies,* vol.14, nr.4, pp.420-439.

Tele Sur TV (2014). "Venezuela recuerda gesta revolucionaria del 4 de febrero de 1992", last updated 04/02/2014 [Video] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEhwB93yPs4

Todo Chávez (2001). "Hugo Chávez Frías Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Conclusión conjunto de leyes en la Ley Habilitante" last updated 2015 [Speech] http://www.todochavezenlaweb.com.ve/todochavez/2138-hugo-chavez-frias-presidente-de-la-republica-bolivariana-de-venezuela-conclusion-conjunto-de-leyes-en-la-ley-habilitante

Todo Chávez (2003). "Intervención del Comandante Presidente Hugo Chávez durante acto de conmemoración del 23 de enero de 1958", last updated 2015 [Speech] http://www.todochavezenlaweb.com.ve/todochavez/1473-intervencion-del-comandante-presidente-hugo-chavez-durante-acto-de-conmemoracion-del-23-de-enero-de-1958

Todo Chávez (2007). "Juramentación del Consejo Presidencial Moral y Luces", last updated 2015 [Speech] http://www.todochavezenlaweb.com.ve/todochavez/2684-juramentacion-del-consejo-presidencial-moral-y-luces

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme (2013). "Understanding Social Conflict in Latin America", Bolivia: Fundación UNIR Bolivia/PAPEP. [Online report] https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/crisis%20prevention/Understanding%20Social%20Conflict%20in%20Latin%20America%202013%20ENG.pdf

van Dijk, Teun (2011a). "Discourse and Analysis" in van Dijk, Teun (ed.) *Discourse Studies: A multidisciplinary Introduction,* 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications, pp.379-407.

van Dijk, Teun (2011b). "Introduction: The study of Discourse" in van Dijk, Teun (ed.) *Discourse Studies: A multidisciplinary Introduction,* 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications, pp.1-7.

van Kessel, Stijn (2015). "Populist Parties across Europe", in van Kessel, Stijn (ed.) *Populist Parties in Europe - Agents of Discontent?* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Weyland, Kurt (2013). "Latin America's Authoritarian Drift: The Threat from the Populist Left", *Journal of Democracy*, vol.24, nr.3, pp.18-32.