

**Thesis submitted for Doctor of Philosophy in Politics at the
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***Origins of Radical Policy-making: An Analysis of
Foreign Policy in the Fifth Republic of Venezuela***

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Abstract

Over the past few years, national domestic and international policy behaviour has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Approaches to this issue vary from those that emphasise strong societal influences such as the role of interest groups and political elites, to those that focus on influences derived from within the state such as the role of bureaucrats and veto players, and those that examine forces external to the nation such as stronger nation states and international institutions. One neglected area in these scholarly debates is whether these theoretical approaches can account for the emergence of radical change in policy-making processes and policy choices of a nation?

For this reason, policy-making in Venezuela presents as a particularly interesting case study with which to test the utility of these policy behaviour models. Since the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998, Venezuela has undergone significant political and societal transformations under the banner of the Bolivarian revolution. The nation has witnessed the emergence of a radically different approach to policy-making that has transformed the governance of the Venezuelan state domestically, and redefined its role regionally and internationally. These radical changes are particularly evident when contrasted with the period of the Fourth Republic immediately prior to Hugo Chávez's rise to power during the late 1990s.

What best explains the emergence of radical policy change in a nation? This thesis seeks to answer this question by assessing the explanatory powers of several models of policy-making against the case study of Venezuelan policy-making during the period of the Chávez government. Therefore, this thesis will trace the historical events that led to the decline of the Fourth Republic of Venezuela and *Punto Fijo* democracy and the rise of Hugo Chávez and his Bolivarian revolution during the Fifth Republic of Venezuela. Moreover, by historically tracing key political events, this thesis will show how President Chávez overcame several challenges during the first five years of his presidency and ultimately achieved a domestic consolidation and centralisation of power in the role of the President. This consolidation of power allowed President Chávez to concentrate on matters of foreign policy, both regionally and further abroad, most notably in the second half of President Chávez's decade in power. During this time, Venezuelan foreign policy emerged as a radical and influential force in regional and foreign affairs.

Certificate of Authorship

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List of Abbreviations

- AD - *Acción Democrática*
- ALBA - *Alianza Bolivariana para las Américas*
- ANC - *Asamblea Nacional Constituyente*
- CARE - *Comisión de Relaciones Exteriores*
- CD - *Coordinadora Democrática*
- CNE - *Consejo Nacional Electoral*
- COPEI - *Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente: Partido Social Cristiano*
- CTV - *Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela*
- ECLA - *Economic Commission on Latin America*
- FARC - *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*
- FEDECAMARAS - *Federación de Cámaras y Asociaciones de Comercio y Producción*
- FONDESPA - *Fund for Economic and Social Development*
- FTAA - *Free Trade Area of the Americas*
- GFC - *Global Financial Crisis*
- IFIs - *international financial institutions*
- IMF - *International Monetary Fund*
- MBR-200 - *Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200*
- MRE - *Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
- MVR - *Movimiento de la Quinta República*
- NED - *National Endowment for Democracy*
- OAS - *Organization of American States*
- OPEC - *Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries*
- PDVSA - *Petróleos de Venezuela*
- SUCRE - *Sistema Único de Compensación Regional*
- UN - *United Nations*
- UNCTAD - *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*
- UNDP - *United Nations Development Programme*
- URD - *Unión Republicana Democrática*
- US – *United States*
- VIO - *Venezuela Information Office*

VPs – Veto Players

WB – World Bank