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The Simultaneous Practice of Democracy and Dictatorship: a Hybrid of Governance in
the Administration of Hugo Chávez

Thesis for an Undergraduate Degree in International Studies and Bilingual Trade

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Dedication

For the people who live under the Socialist regime of the 21st Century; to my family, my friends, my alma mater. To everyone, really, who contributed in any way to the ideas presented in this work.

Acknowledgments

To my parents, sisters, and friends, who directed my dreams to see a free, prosperous, and just Latin America, where rights and liberties are respected. To Ph.D. Tamara Trownsell, who motivated me to complete this work and contributed with several ideas presented herein, through various means and in different capacities. To Guillermo Ochoa, for his contributions, advice and recommendations that ended up defining this work. To all those who motivated me to pursue the objective of this investigation for believing that it has repercussions of vast importance for those who live in the reality described herein.

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Summary

This work focuses on the Venezuelan nation, at the time when Hugo Chavez was its president, in order to show that during that period of time democracy and dictatorship were practiced simultaneously. To this end, I have reviewed the criteria of different political thinkers in order to establish the definitions necessary to the understanding of this research, and further, to show that democratic and dictatorial activities were exercised during Chavez' presidential term. These activities have served to demonstrate that the Chavez regime was a dictatorship hiding behind some democratic processes.

Introduction

There is no dictatorship here. I have been elected three times. And when the rich took me out in coup d'état the people brought me back. I'm a democrat. I have the legitimacy given to me by the people's majority. Democratic Socialist and in democracy. (Hugo Chávez, cited on BBC World, 2010)

Venezuela stopped being a democracy a long time ago, and no one seems very concerned. (Moisés Naím, cited in Duarte, 2014)

When encountering opinions about the Chávez Administration, it is apparent that both the governing party and the opposition are right about certain points. Chávez actually was elected by popular vote, one of the most important characteristics of a democracy; on the other hand, the opposition is correct to criticize all the actions Chávez took that go against a democratic system. So if both sides are correct, should it be asserted that Chávez' Venezuela experienced a democracy or a dictatorship? It is important to find a term that best describes the Commander's government.

Dictatorship and democracy are globally recognized terms and it is easy to exemplify them. However, there are situations in which their application becomes complex when trying to categorize a form of government or political system of a particular State.

The contradictions that arise when attempting to determine whether Chávez' Venezuela is a dictatorship or a democratic nation call attention to political tendencies that make it difficult to find neutral or a middle ground. It is pertinent to allude to the citations that begin this section. Hugo Chávez, protagonist of *chavismo* and ex-president of Venezuela, defends his term in government as democratic. Moisés Naím, a Venezuelan political analyst and member of the opposition party, rejects democracy as a characteristic of Chávez' movement, currently headed by Nicolás Maduro. The issue seems obvious: the opposition is always going to contradict the one in power.

The truth is that both of these Venezuelan political figures are right to a certain degree. It is undeniable that Hugo Chávez came to power by decision of the popular majority on more than one occasion. Neither can we ignore Naím's claims, which came from an interview in which he specified the reasons to completely deny democracy as part of *chavismo*:

The government uses the Armed Forces, the Police and Justice to pursue and imprison those who don't think like them, there are no means of free communication, now they even kill citizens with complete impunity. (Moisés Naím cited in Duarte, 2014)

Naím's words also constitute examples of action that go against a democratic regime and a democratic State. These days it is no longer strange to hear about scandals within the Venezuela's governing party, a situation that goes back to the days when Hugo Chávez was in power, so it is difficult to deny that there are clear cases of repression and authoritarianism within his administration.

The fact that there are thinkers, political scientists, and millions of Venezuelans debating about the form of governance of their country - regarding whether or not it is a democracy or a dictatorship - has motivated this research to be carried out. The need to define the political reality of a State that encompasses characteristics of both dictatorial and democratic regimes is vital to making that reality clear and practical to those who are living it.

This research looks to demonstrate that in Venezuela, during Chávez' term in office, dictatorship and democracy were practiced simultaneously. In order to achieve this it has been necessary to define key concepts that will give the reader a clear idea about the context of this research; after which is detailed, through examples and explanations, the evidence of the dictatorial and democratic tactics used by Chávez. Likewise, the reader will come to understand how populism plays a fundamental role in convincing and placating the masses with the aim that they will not realize - or that they justify - the repressive and authoritarian attitudes of *chavism*, as well as the task of satisfying the minimum requirements of what the population considers to be democracy.

Throughout this research the complexity of democracy and how this can be the entry point for a dictatorial regime will become clear. Chávez' strategy, which led him to have a government idolized by the people despite blatantly obvious repressions, will be explained. Finally, dictocracy as a latent reality in Venezuela will be defined by everything established in the body of this research based on strict facts.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this research has embodied distinct fundamental concepts so that the reader may examine this undergraduate thesis knowing exactly what is meant by the words: democracy, dictatorship, and populism. Democracy is the first concept to be analyzed, which has been given a special emphasis and relevance (more than the other concepts) due to the fact that it has been taken as the starting point and reference to be later contrasted with dictatorship. Following these is populism, the concept of which is based on the analysis of its different characteristics together with its primary exponents. Finally, is the concept of authoritarian democracy, which has the aim of giving an initial sample of the possibility of hybridizing forms of governance - which is to be understood as the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not (Alem, Silva, Loayza, Reyes, Corro, & Gómez, 2011, p. 18). All of the previously mentioned terms are explained, for the most part, with facts and rigorous examples.

1.1 Democracy

Democracy is one of the most popular political terms throughout the world; unfortunately, it is also one of the least clear, most polemic, and badly used. Within the context of the title of this work, the term democracy has been developed with special care, taking into consideration its historical origins, to begin with, and then referring to the definitions and opinions of the scholars on the subject.

The section on "democracy" consists of a study and a synthesis of the contributions of Mariano Grondona on the topic in his book "Political Development: the failed subject of the Argentinians" - which was studied in electronic form - the last edition of which was published in 2011. The content of the works by the Argentinian author fits perfectly with the context of this undergraduate thesis, contributing a fitting explanation of democracy, its principle characteristics and diverse perspectives.

1.1.1 The history of Democracy

Rome and Athens

Democracy cannot be referred to as a doctrine that arose along with the first civilizations formed by human beings. In order for democracy to exist, an evolution of social organizations had to occur, beginning with the formation of "political power" which, of course, was not known by that name at the time although it existed. It is enough to think of the configuration of a tribe, with a leader or "political chief" whom the rest obeyed and who was, furthermore, accompanied and immediately succeeded by a few collaborators. That is to say, the concept that governors and the governed co-exist has been maintained since the beginning of civilization; nevertheless, democracy as such did not come to be until after a laborious political process in Rome and Athens (Grondona, 2011, pp. 32-33).

When we think about the term "democracy," what quickly comes to mind is ancient Greece. How many times have we learned by one mean or another the etymology of that word, which has, of course, Greek roots: *demos* - people; *kratos* - power, the power or government of the people. Democracy as a term and as an ideal (the democratic ideal understood as a distinctly political and subjective term) was born in Athens after a process that began with the laws introduced to the *polis* by two politicians of the era, Dracon and Solon (between 620 and 593 BC). The aforementioned laws began the terms *lex* and *nomos* ("law" and "norms", respectively) and generated a new Athenian perspective where individuals acted in favor of their city, being responsible to her by means of following the law and not by obeying a person (Grondona, 2011, pp. 33-34).

At the time when Athens began to create laws it was known as a *politeia*, the modern day equivalent to what we call a "republic." The new expression of power introduced by Dracon and Solon consisted of laws that applied to everyone in general. Later, Pericles - an important politician of the time - implemented plenary democracy in Athens, or

"perfect" democracy. This consisted in giving citizens of this Greek city the ability to meet and, without any restrictions, decide and vote on laws, mandates, and civil actions. This is how the Athenians created the first forms of democracy and of republics; they also managed to attain a democracy that, since that time, has not been repeated (Grondona, 2011, pp. 33-34).

It is important to keep in mind that the ideal democracy invented by the Athenians does not include the entire population of the city. At the time, Athens had a population of around 200,000 inhabitants, but only 38,000 citizens, who represented only the children of a father and mother who were both born in Athens; left aside were women, slaves, and foreigners. It is worth repeating that all citizens had equal voting power. There were, therefore, 38,000 governors (Grondona, 2011, pp. 33-34).

Athenians, at the moment of exercising their political power, met in assemblies - then called *ecclesias* - prepared by the "the council of five hundred." There, citizens rotated their functions and turns, but all of them had the same power of voice and vote. However, the path that democracy took was interrupted many times by different politicians, after the death of Pericles, until it finally disappeared for good (Grondona, 2011, pp. 33-34).

Athens fell to Sparta in wartime, which is why its inhabitants lost faith in democracy, due to the fact that shortly after their assemblies - when war strategies were discussed - the Spartans, one way or another, found out about Athens' plans and changed their battle plans. Eventually, the whole Hellenic region would be conquered by Rome. The Romans imposed themselves militarily and politically, putting aside the perfect democracy of Athens and implementing their own (Grondona, 2011, pp. 33-34).

In another place - and more or less at the same time as Athens - Rome defined its own form of democracy, one that was based on the republic and aristocracy. Contrary to the plenary democracy of the Greeks - who did not have political leaders other than the 38,000 citizens - the Romans set up an aristocratic democracy represented by

"patricians" - individuals that ran the senate and, as such, were in charge of governing. The governing class was formed by "plebeians," who could accept or reject the proposals of the patricians (Grondona, 2011, pp. 45-52).

In contrast to the Athenians who called their city a *polis*, the Romans lived together in *civitas*, or city-States, due to the fact that there were several villages within their jurisdiction. Rome, therefore, was much more extensive and populated than Athens, so much so that its territories extended to Northern Africa; Athens, on the other hand, rather than give up the perfect democracy, would end up being conquered (Grondona, 2011, pp. 45-52).

Even though Athenian democracy has not been revived, it continues to have a marked influence even today, as well as Roman democracy. Both cities have been posteriorly invoked in different political events. So, it is necessary to ask ourselves to which of the two regions we owe contemporary democracy. To answer this question we can cite the writing of Grondona:

There is a central contrast between both cities. Rome is like a river of continuous influence because it never stops flowing. Athens is lodged in the origins of democracy and in the exacting future that it demands in theory. Athens is the beginning and the end. Rome, the way. (2011, p. 46)

1.1.2 Contemporary Democracy

Democracy is a phenomenon that evolves alongside the political necessities of society. That is how the antecedents of the democracy conceived by Athenians and Romans have not maintained their exactitude over time but rather has evolved in regards to its application and has more or less maintained - depending the case - the ideal of popular participation. In any case, two events that took place in the modern world formed the base for the democracy - and politics - that we know today: the French Revolution and the "Glorious Revolution" in England.

In Great Britain, following the "Glorious Revolution" (1688), absolute monarchy was substituted by a parliamentary monarchy in which the people maintained a moderate level of participation in elected representatives to the House of Commons. Here, however, the king or queen was maintained as the highest governing power that, like the members of the House of Lords, inherited their command. That is to say that the Glorious Revolution was greatly inspired by that aristocratic democracy (because of the inherited commands of lords, kings, and queens) of Rome, with a very limited democracy, applied to the election of the members of the House of Commons (Grondona, 2011, pp. 52-60).

However, there were two political pressure groups at the time that demanded a more extreme, more Athenian, democracy: the levelers. The pressure and ideological conflict that was born in Great Britain for implementing a democracy like that of Athens or Rome ended up exploding in a region far away from the British Isles with an act that significantly marked the evolution of modern democracy and politics: the French Revolution. This event will be described presently, taking into account that it is not the only one that based its demands on the implementation of a democratic regime, being that there are others around the world, such as the fight for independence in the United States (Grondona, 2011, pp. 52-60).

In the beginning, the French Revolution (1789) intended to form a kind of new French empire by means of ideological and territorial expansion. This idea did not last long. Rousseau appeared on the scene to clamor for an Athenian democracy through the pressure he exerted over the Jacobins. He did not succeed. Part of his failure was due to the fact that France was already a constituted country, vastly populated, and geographically extensive, in comparison with Athens, which was nothing neither more nor less than a city. This made it impossible for the millions of French to, like Athens, meet in assemblies to govern. Furthermore, there were innumerable proposals to be implemented once the revolution ended: those of Mirabeau's faction wanted a monarchy like Great Britain's; then Louis XVI was decapitated and ended with their aspirations. Immediately afterward, Bonaparte continued with his dream of new kind of Roman

Empire, but was defeated at Waterloo and, after uncountable human and economic losses, France returned to where it was in 1789 (Grondona, 2011, pp. 52-60).

Even though the French Revolution experienced such inconveniences, it was a period that shows Athenian democracy is still present in the modern world. In more recent incidents it has been possible to identify references where ideologies seek greater citizen participation, as well as major political empowerment by the people, which seeks, in the end, a democracy similar to that of Athens, which is more and more possible thanks to technology (Grondona, 2011, pp. 52-60).

Finally, all Western countries ended up choosing Roman democracy, the representative, which has expanded throughout the entire world. Nevertheless, as was previously established, democracy is a phenomenon that has evolved with the passing of time to that point that, today, innumerable perceptions of what it means can be observed. These ideas have been defined thanks to many political scientists over the years.

1.1.3 Different concepts and contributions of Democracy

There are so many concepts of democracy in existence that its perception and understanding vary from one place to another. This brings up different problems with the measurement of democracy: how can we measure that a nation is democratic, if there is not even a universal vision of the concept? How many times have we heard leaders of totalitarian regimes - who accept popular participation - defend their democracies as correct and their nations the most democratic in the world. This happens in great part because even if democracy has its spirit in the people, it can be applied in various ways.

As can be seen within this section, such authoritarian rulers are not completely wrong when they establish how democratic their nations are, because, in effect, they can have a minimal democracy, based solely on electoral processes, and can make very efficient use of such. That is to say, there are governments that are experts in the application of incomplete democracy; and, however, they do not stop being a democracy.

The idea of democracy is multidimensional. Hugo Chávez, for example, has defended the democracy of his government countless times: where elections exist with the possibility of allowing contenders. Nevertheless, there are democracies that go further, which encompass important characteristics such as fundamental rights and other liberties, as much as in electoral contests as in the moment of exercising power. The most relevant perceptions of different political thinkers - those on minimal democracy as well as the concepts that have constituted more complete democracies - are presented next. They serve to show the evolution of the democratic idea throughout the years.

Aristotle (385 B.C. - 322 B.C.): Pure and Impure Forms of Government

The Greek philosopher fits within this section because of his multiple contributions on the subject of politics, among which is emphasized the detailing of the existence of three pure and impure forms of government. The pure forms are monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, which have been considered as such due to the number of people who exercise power (As cited in Borja, 1997, p. 207).

Aristotle defined monarchy as the government of one person, aristocracy as a few chosen people, and democracy as the power of the people. When those who govern are more inclined to their personal interests than to the common good, monarchy becomes tyranny, aristocracy becomes oligarchy, and democracy becomes demagoguery (As cited in Borja, 1997, p. 207).

Hobbes (1588 - 1679), Locke (1632 - 1704), and Rousseau (1712 - 1778): Secularization, contractualism, and the power of the majority

After Pericles invented plenary democracy in Athens and other thinkers - like Polybius - contributed to the democracy representative of Rome, uncountable erudites offered new perspectives on democracy. Many of them inclined towards Athenian democracy while other towards the Roman. However, political scientists like Locke and Rousseau

implemented new ideas, contractualism, that introduced new terms and concepts within the general democratic framework.

The Leviathan (1651), by Thomas Hobbes, is the book that impulsed the secularization of politics, creating a medium in which Locke and Rousseau would later develop their contractualist theories and express themselves in regards to the power of the majority. It is furthermore an analogy that permanently changed the dimensions and concepts of politics since its publication. In it, Hobbes describes the lethal god that devours his children with the intention of explaining his theory on contractualism: the people bow before the tyrant voluntarily in an imaginary contract that finds its sustenance in their fear of anarchy and disorder (Grondona, 2011, pp. 86-95).

Thus, Thomas Hobbes established that political power stems from the people because they make the decision to submit themselves to a tyrant. Furthermore, the idea proposed by Hobbes contributed to the secularization of power thanks to the analogy in his text - the leviathan is a lethal monster, an artificial creation of Man. Power did not come to him from any god, neither from Man, who was designated to rule by God. This left rulers as simple despots (Grondona, 2011, pp. 86-95).

Once the secularization of power took hold, Locke published his Treatise on Civil Government (1690), which explained how the people, through an imaginary constitutional contract, do not act by fear of the despot, but rather in function of limiting rulers through laws; this is what is called "the right of resistance to oppression." Rousseau, for his part, created the Social Contract (1762), where citizens voluntarily give up rights, putting forward the use of reason, since it is better to have a few benefits than none in regards to a relationship between the people and government. The author himself called this "the general will of the people" and for Rousseau it was - no longer Hobbes' Leviathan - the only acceptable relinquishment of political power (Grondona, 2011, pp. 86-95).

In regards to the power of the majority, Locke always accepted this power as long as it did not affect or in any way make the rights of the other party vulnerable. On the other hand, Rousseau established that the majority expressed exactly what the General Will of the People wanted; therefore, the minority that did not agree with their counterpart must immediately admit its error and adapt itself to the spirit of the General Will (Grondona, 2011, pp. 86-95).

Montesquieu (1689 - 1755): Moderate Government

Montesquieu, in great part with the collaboration of Locke, established that political power is divisible, unlike what Hobbes, Rousseau and others believed. The contributions of this thinker had great importance to the realization of contemporary democracy: it did not pretend to analyze the good or the bad that a ruler who concentrated all power could come to be; rather, he thought that concentrating all power in itself was unacceptable (Grondona, 2011, pp. 95-100).

The "Moderate Government" is the name received by Montesquieu's proposal of how to administrate power. The French thinker admitted as much to the monarchies as well as to the republics that in order for them to work as moderate governments, the only condition was that the Executive branch not take part in Legislative or Judicial matters. So, Montesquieu created the first system of counter-balances in political power throughout the world, becoming renowned for his famous phrase: "power stops power" (Grondona, 2011, pp. 95-100).

Alberdi (1810 - 1884): Justifying extreme executive power

Alberdi was an Argentine politician who contributed in great part to the doctrine that brought forth the Constitution of his country; furthermore, he is the founder of the "anarchist-authoritarian syndrome" theory, which attempts to explain in one way or another the reality of Latin American politics within the context in which he lived. For Alberdi, Latin America had, since its beginnings, lived a chain of events that had fallen

into an absence of power, coming to be disorder and chaos - due to events like conquest and colonialism. Likewise, other moments that characterize the region are those where authoritarian governments implant themselves and reestablish order (Grondona, 2011, pp. 116-121).

Many of the reasons that inspired Alberdi's proposal are the reflection of the history of our continent: colonial times, feudalism, etc., that engendered a zone of confusion, high volatility, and political instability, unlike the Anglo-Saxon region that, either had a political system establish for centuries - as in the case of several European countries - or in their defection inherited those political systems - like the United States did from England (Grondona, 2011, pp. 116-121).

In no way did Alberdi try to promote dictatorship, nor was he in favor of it. As he believed - like Simón Bolívar - "the Latin American States need kings named as presidents," he also introduced a concept that remains alive in the region even today: the prohibition of indefinite reelection. That is how dictatorships are avoided: with rotational governments and some kind of limit by other powers. However, the firm hand of Latin American presidents is, for Alberdi, necessary and just (Grondona, 2011, pp. 116-121).

Huntington (1927 - 2008): Minimalist Democracy

Samuel Huntington is one of the most relevant contemporary thinkers on the subject of politics. His doctrinarian contributions to democracy have been venerated by many and criticized by others. At the time when he wrote some of his most successful books, like *The Third Wave* and *The Crash of Civilizations*, Huntington had to first take on the task of defining several concepts himself, like that of democracy.

In *The Third Wave*, Huntington speaks about the expansion of democracy from the beginning of the modern era, a process that, according to him, has occurred in three different periods, or three distinct waves. Each one - with exception of the third, which

is still occurring - had its "counter-wave," characterized by the return of authoritarianism in the world order (Huntington, 1993, pp. 3-30). In order to conclude such an exhaustive analysis, Huntington defined democracy in a way that works as a base to determine when a nation achieved it, a common point that investigators can agree upon.

Huntington analyzed two forms of democracy before arriving at his final definition. The first of them is based on the "source" of democracy - which stems from the people - and the second on the "end" of democracy - the good of the people. However, in the interest of obtaining a definition to serve as a common model, Huntington based his concept of that of Schumpeter: a procedural concept of democracy. Procedural because it focuses specifically on the electoral process, putting aside other more complicated and elaborate possibilities of analysis (Grondona, 2011, p. 123).

On the inspiration from Schumpeter, Huntington concluded "a contemporary regimen is democratic to the extent that its most powerful decision makers are selected through impartial, honest, and periodical elections, in which candidates compete freely for votes and virtually the entire adult population has the right to vote" (Grondona, 2011, pp. 123-124).

As can be seen, for Samuel Huntington, it is enough that a nation chooses its leaders by competitive elections for democracy to exist. Likewise, in *The Third Wave*, Huntington established that the political tendencies of the candidates does not matter, nor the authoritarians they could become, but rather only the respect for the electoral process that determines a nation as a democracy (Huntington, 1993, pp. 3-30). These provisions - as it is easy to infer - have made the path to democracy much easier for countries like Venezuela, since, regardless of censure of the press or the persecution of political enemies, Venezuela chooses leaders through electoral processes. Therefore, according to Huntington, Venezuela is a minimal democracy, but a democracy after all.

John T. Rourke: Procedural and Substantive Democracy

Although Rourke did not create any of the concepts regarding substantive or procedural democracy, in his book *International Politics on the World Stage* he expresses a fitting conceptualization, comparison and differentiation of both. Procedural democracy is the minimal democracy of Samuel Huntington - that which is characterized by strictly enforcing the citizenry to choose its leaders in periodic elections and where more than one candidate participates. Furthermore, he establishes that the freedom of expression is fundamental in procedural democracy because with it both the candidates and the public can enjoy a fairer electoral process (Rourke, 2008, p. 178).

Substantive democracy, on the other hand, presents a more complete form of democracy for which the electoral process alone is not sufficient. The civil right to equality - in all respects - plays a fundamental part in substantive democracy. In the event that a nation has a social classification marked by race or economy, for example, it goes directly against the right to equality. That is how inequality can generate large corporate groups, with vast economic power, which can use their resources to influence political decisions that affect the rest of society. Therefore, even though procedural requirements are met, according to this way of thought, there would be no democracy until rights, like that of social equality, are met (Rourke, 2008, p. 178).

1.1.4 A final look at democracy

After examining several contributions on the subject of democracy, it is appropriate to analyze them. To begin with, it is important to take into account the importance that thinkers like Locke and Rousseau gave to the majority as a democratic principle. In accordance with their theories, we can conclude that the majority of people are those who have power and make decisions. This means that democracy directly reflects what at least 50% plus one of the population establishes, and is directly related to the minimal democracy of Huntington insofar that it is enough that the majority decides on it in order for there to be democracy.

Likewise, upon understanding the people as the wielder of political power it can be inferred that an administration is legitimate only when it is elected, when the people recognize it. But the principle of legitimacy does not always work as a basis of democracy. Legitimacy occurs when the people accept their leader together with the form of government proposed; this way it can be understood that the monarchies of the past were legitimate when the people did not show discontent with them. Today, different authoritarian governments around the world are legitimate because the public approved of them, whether or not those governments have a democratic regime.

Different democratic governments tinged with authoritarianism can find the way to maintain their popularity being more or less efficient regarding what the people ask or demand. Again citing Grondona: "A political regime is efficient to the extent that it reasonably satisfies the expectations of society" (2011, p. 144). This sentence proves very important in the following chapters, since there is a clear case in which the idea is applied.

In the same way, Montesquieu taught us that there must necessarily exist a division in the branches of power - Executive, Judicial, and Legislative (in some cases there are more) - and none of them should interfere in the others. That way there exists a system of counter-balances that guarantees a certain mode of democracy, where a ruler, compared to a dictator, can never control more than Executive function of power. Further along it will be demonstrated that there are violations of this principle in nations that have been defined as democratic. Alberdi established reasons for which Latin America tends to lean towards authoritarian governments. This will be of great help in understanding why the Venezuelan people legitimized a political figure who - as will later be shown - has clearly violated legal framework and interfered in other powers.

Grondona writes very fittingly in the book that has had a protagonist role in the development of the conceptualization of democracy in this chapter (*Political Development: the failed subject of the Argentinians*): contemporary democracy has three dimensions, which will be explained according to necessity. The first is minimal -

Huntington's - while the second is the most complete, or maximum, which has to simultaneously fulfill characteristics like legitimacy, order, efficiency, the right to equality, etc. (Grondona, 2011, pp. 53-59) Therefore, procedural democracy is the minimum, while on the opposite scale is substantive democracy - as explained by Rourke.

Even so, Grondona has established that neither minimal democracy, nor the maximum, can be practiced without combining one with the other from time to time. For example, if a minimal democracy exists - like that of Venezuela - at some time or another the ruler will have to develop some characteristic of more complete democracies and, by that means, maintain public satisfaction.

Minimal democracy is a threshold that, lacking one of its few procedural characteristics, would cease to be a democracy. Consequently, all of the nations that cross the threshold of minimal democracy can call themselves democratic. But there are certainly States that are more democratic than others, that offer more rights to their citizens.

The third dimension of democracy, which Grondona, like Rourke, refers to as the "real" dimension, that which combines and absorbs characteristics of the minimal and complete, a middle ground that can also be closer to one or the other extreme. This is logical, considering that it is impossible to maintain solely a complete or maximum democracy, since there does not actually exist a way to achieve public participation as in Athens. On the other hand, the efficiency of minimal democracy runs constant risks. It cannot be successfully maintained over time unless its leaders include participative means that go beyond presidential or district elections when the public demands to be heard and attended to.

Latin America has lived a very particular reality. After a long period of colonization, there have appeared both democratic regimes and dictatorships, reflecting a kind of "immaturity" and political instability. In any event, following the global trend, democracy now reins in Latin America. Nevertheless, the region shows particularities

that can only be explained by its unique heritage. The socialism of the 21st Century and progressionism have become legitimate protagonists in different nations, creating - thanks to tools like populism - fervor and complacency amongst the masses, making them avoid the irrefutable reality of a democracy in decline, continuing anti-democratic tactics of governing and knowing how to satisfy the public's minimum requirements of democracy.

Later on there is a more in depth study of the democratic reality in Venezuela and other nations in the region. First it is necessary to review the concepts of dictatorship and populism.

1.2 Dictatorship

It is presumed that democracy and dictatorship are opposites, purely in terms of definitions. The importance of emphasizing the meaning of democracy was previously highlighted in order to then only briefly compare it to dictatorship. In this manner we get a clearer idea of the term in the context of the theoretical framework. Democracy is, without a doubt, a multidimensional concept, more complex than that of dictatorship. Nevertheless, the relevance of a brief study of dictatorship is undisputable, in order to validate the central argument of this undergraduate work.

When it comes time to specifically address the simultaneous practice of dictatorship and democracy in Venezuela, the reader can easily distinguish the dictatorial characteristics of the Bolivian Republic. However, it is more complex to understand the reasons for which Hugo Chávez - with some very valid arguments - defended his administration as a democracy. Why, in the midst of repression and censure, did the Commander fervently declare that Venezuela's democracy is one of the best in the world? Thanks to theoretical framework, the reader can understand the answer. Presently the characteristics of democracy's most popular counterpart will be briefly established.

1.2.1 The opposite of democracy

A political regime that, by force or violence, concentrates all power in one person or sometimes in a group or organization and represses human rights and individual liberties. (Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary, 2014)

The above citation is one of the definitions of dictatorship in the Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary, very fitting and yet too simple. It is almost certain that citizens have at least a common idea of what a dictatorship is; it appears in our minds in images of soldiers, repression, and violence. Yet dictatorships are a bit more complex.

A dictatorial regime is characterized by maintaining a de facto government - that is to say that it came to power without following a legal order - that installed itself in command generally due to a coup d'état. Furthermore dictators do not respect a division of power and they violate liberties and rights.

Therefore, the difference between a dictatorship and a democracy becomes obvious when contrasting what was explained in subchapter 1.1.2. In the first place, dictatorship comes about without public approval, that is to say, without voting. This constitutes one of the principle and most obvious differences between a democracy and a dictatorship. Even so, it will later be evident that, depending on how politics have evolved, different forms of government have evolved as well as the processes that establish them. That is to say, there are currently cases where political regimes can be observed that have clear dictatorial characteristics that have not been installed in command by a coup d'état.

Contradictory to what Hobbes, Rousseau, and Locke established, in a dictatorship the majority ceases to make political decisions. The dictator or dictators are converted into the only decision-makers of the State, and not only in matters concerning the Executive branch but the Legislative and Judicial branches as well.

The fact that a dictator or group of dictators is or are the possessors of all the branches of power in a nation contradicts Montesquieu's theory of Moderate Government, in which

the division of power is established as a system of counter-balances fundamental to democracy. As has been previously established, the intentions of the ruler do not matter; the mere fact that he or she holds all the power is repudiable (Grondona, 2011, pp. 95-100).

Dictatorship finds itself crossing the threshold of Huntington's minimal or procedural democracy into the side of unlimited power and repression. When elections do not exist (for the most part) and by restricting liberties and denying rights, a dictatorship is formed. In the end, when contrasting democracy with dictatorship it is possible to reiterate what has already been stated: dictatorship is everything that democracy is not. However, dictatorship also has to meet with certain of its own requirements.

1.2.2 Better understanding dictatorships

In order to go deeper into the explanation of dictatorship - and not merely contrast it with democracy - it is necessary to briefly review the context within which it developed in a particular region, in this case Latin America. In the region there have developed several of the most repressive and violent dictatorships of all time, especially after the Second World War, an event that certainly was not the only precedent that prepared a fertile ground for authoritarian governments. It was, however, the most important event of the last decades, the time closest to the focal point of this study.

After the Second World War - in the middle of the Cold War - the world bore witness to an ideological dispute between two powers: the United States and the United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Both nations had the intention to spread their economic and political systems (capitalism and communism, respectively) to progressively gain more strength and become the only world power (Carbone, 2006, pp. 1-23).

Latin America was involved in the ideological conflict of the time. After unforgiveable decades of oppression by employers, a social class dispute erupted that ended in revolutions and revolts of the oppressed classes. That is what triggered leftist, more

idealist movements in the region. Those movements, by demanding social justice and equality of opportunity and rights, by demanding that which was always denied, found a compatible refuge in Communism and Socialism (Carbone, 2006, pp. 1-23).

Such is the case of Fidel Castro's Cuba, a great ally of the USSR, who inspired other nations of the continent, through movements and social struggles, to take the same path. This terrified the United States - and with them all the capitalist regimes of the world - which wanted to avoid at all cost the propagation of Communism throughout the world (Carbone, 2006, pp. 1-23).

To counteract the appearance of leftist politics and popular movements in Latin America, the West did everything possible to insert military dictatorships to retake control of capitalism in political power of the countries that were leaning towards the left. A clear example is the military dictatorship in Chile of a conservative to the extreme right - Augusto Pinochet - imposed just after a leftist leader was in power and died in the coup d'état that defeated him - Salvador Allende (Alarcón & Ruiz, 2012).

Augusto Pinochet, like other dictators such as Videla in Argentina or Somoza in Nicaragua, represented a clear example of a classic dictatorship: 1) he was commander of all the branches of power of the State; 2) he violated human rights; 3) he did not permit political or ideological rivals; 4) he was repressive and violent with his "adversaries"; etc. (Peña, 2009, p. 19).

In general, dictatorships have maintained characteristics similar to those here described, not only in Latin America but also throughout the world. However, it is not always the case that dictatorships are imposed to end Communism; their purposes vary depending on the reality of each country. In any case, just as democracy has evolved over the centuries, so have dictatorships.

Today it is common to hear political scientists accuse as dictators those leaders who have been elected by popular vote and are not necessarily military. What happens when

a President meets several requirements of a dictator - such as violating human rights, not allowing rivals, etc. - but is elected democratically? That question will be answered throughout this undergraduate thesis. However, the point of this section is to make the reader question if dictatorships have to be lead only by military men and coups d'états.

1.3 Populism

Populism, according to an author who has synthesized various different concepts into his own, is "a movement, at times ideological, of mobilizing the urban masses, which is characterized by discourse tied to the public and complaisant distribution (demagogic) of wealth, without its equivalent production" (Neira, 2006, p. 2).

In order to form a clearer idea of what populism is, it is necessary to emphasize that, like dictatorship and democracy, it is a phenomenon that has evolved over time. Furthermore it is important to clarify that the explicative summary that follows is concentrated specifically on Latin America, since that is the region of the country focused on in this work. However, populism has made its presence known on all continents.

Rodrigo Borja has prepared a complete and accurate conceptualization of populism that is as described below:

'Populism' refers to a position and style of politics - that do not go so far as to be an ideology - characterized by the captivation of the multitudes around that "enchanter of the 21st Century," ready always to offer paradise on earth just around the corner, the populist leader or caudillo.

The term populism originated in the United States in the last decade of the 19th Century in reference to the approach of the People's Party, which was formed to canalize the demands and protests, barely elaborated though justified, of the small farmers in the Midwest, plundered by industrialized centers from the East that controlled the market of raw material and agricultural products, fixed their prices, managed the credit of the financial sector, monopolized the networks of grain storage and dominated the railways. The People's Party in that time was the most powerful alternative movement that dared to defy the two biggest traditional parties: Republican and Democratic. It won a million votes in the

presidential elections of 1892 and four years later its candidate William Jennings Bryant was a mere 500 votes from victory.

It is inappropriate to refer to the "populist left" or the "populist right", as is sometimes done, because "left" and "right" are ideological categories that do not have a place in populism, which has no ideology. Populism is, simply, populism. Rather, a conjunction of political agents around the "enchantment" of the populist caudillo, without any consideration whatsoever for an approach to ideological order.

The technology needed to fabricate a populist leader is extremely simple: hyperbolic exaltation of the caudillo's personality, fabrication of a charismatic halo, provincialism, and demagoguery. To this end, a chorus of praises well directed and articulated sings around the caudillo, repeating over and over the same prefabricated and stereotyped lauds until they are stuck in the minds of the public. At the same time, an "enemy" or "enemies" are fabricated - at first national and then foreign - against who are directed all reproaches, taunts, and accusations and against whom collective hate is encouraged, inflamed and canalized. Then comes Manichaeism, the adulation of the masses and the ascension of the monopoly of truth. The "enemies" are at fault for all the afflictions the country suffers, from which only the hand of the caudillo can free them. Even though the public square is the caudillo's natural habitat, he may also tackle the radio and television - the virtual public square of visual waves and sound waves - to broadcast deftly manipulated populist programs. This is media populism, which some call "neo-populism", but it is really just traditional populism using modern methods and technologies. The public will, incarnated in the caudillo, cannot submit to legal limitations. The caudillo declares the laws "insufficient." He is above ideologies. He does not submit himself to programs. He makes a spectacle of politics. He gives the public bread and a circus. He leans towards provincial paternalism. The populist politician, in the field of economics, is terribly irresponsible. Public assets are the caudillo's assets and their use is at his discretion.

The extreme poor are very sensitive to sermons of protest and are easily seduced by demagoguery.

In populist politics "the enemy" takes on a role of primary importance, in the individual order as well as the collective: that of framing the fields of action, contributing to the identity of the protagonists of the enemy and generating around them sympathies or antipathies.

"The enemy" also serves the function of a "sedative" in the sense that it helps to calm the anxiety of the populist caudillos and the groups that surround them. Upon identifying their "enemy," caudillos discharge all of their own guilt and tensions upon them, justify their mistakes, free themselves of their failings, revenge their disappointments, and eventually reconcile the use of force.

Therefore, the "fabrication" of the enemy individual and social circles is a strategic element available to populist caudillos and their satellite groups. In their Machiavellian view of politics - since the enemy is "bad" and the ally is "good" - they create supports, plans, and internal and external solidarity for the cause of the bigwig populist.

Able manipulators of psychology of the masses, populist caudillos always look to identify the "public enemy" against whom to discharge all fury of the masses, contained during centuries of frustration. This identification serves them as a way to mobilize the public. All manner of reproaches accumulate against the "enemy." In the manipulative dialect of these caudillos, the "enemy" is guilty of all suffering. For Hitler, those "enemies" were the Jews, who "stabbed Germany in the back" during the war, and the international plot that later led Germany to sign the Treaty of Versailles. For Perón, and his *justicialismo* the "public enemy" was the "oligarchy" whose meeting place - the exclusive Jockey Club of Buenos Aires - was burnt down by his working class supporters, *descamisados*. Nasserism in Egypt at the end of the '40s raised arms against the monarchy of King Farouk and his ally, British colonialism. Fidel Castro, who without a doubt has populist traits despite his ideology, made the "Yankee Imperialist" the great enemy of Cuba. All populist caudillos tend to denounce an enemy and if they do not have one, they invent one.

Populism, when it comes to power, tends to operate on the margins of a plan of government. It lacks systemization and order. It does not have long-term macroeconomic or social goals. With spectacle and demagoguery it seeks the satisfaction of immediate public demands. This leads to improvisation. To top it off, all of this frequently produces a phenomenon characteristic to populism: collective frustration. In regards to government, the caudillo turns out to be incompetent in satisfying the demands that he contributed to inflating during elections and then all of his demagogic scaffolding crumbles and the wave of illusions that brought him to power turns against him. It all ends in tragedy: the suicide Getulio Vargas in 1954 when he had no other option, as in the case of Perón in September of 1955, the overthrow and flight of the coryphaeus and his close followers, loaded down with guilt and money. (Borja, 1997)

Once informed by the explanation of the term given by Borja, which is a global and general concept, it is necessary to continue the explanation of populism from the perspective of its evolution in Latin America, with events closer in time and place to the region.

José María Velasco Ibarra (1893-1979), five times elected President of Ecuador, is an example of populism of the time (1934-first presidency): classic populism. One of the

pioneers, not only on the continent but in the world, of using political discourse that included the voters as well as non-voters. (Gratius, 2007, p. 6)

So, during the Thirties and Forties emerged the *National-Popular State*, which tried to incorporate the masses in political processes, through vertical mechanisms, with leadership and sermons laden with symbols that alluded to the public and the nation, as well as open and expressive public participation of common people in the street, supporting the process. (Bonilla & Pérez, 2003)

Velasco Ibarra was not the only protagonist of classic populism, but other politicians such as Getulio Vargas in Brazil or Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina as well. However, those populist political systems failed over time, in part because of their own mistakes, but mostly due to the fact that brutal dictatorships, as previously explained, appeared in the region.

When populism could not effectively resolve real problems, as it had promised the masses, little by little it loses their support and that of the bourgeois (attentive only to their own interests); it falls of its own accord, and leaves a vacancy of power, which ordinarily is immediately filled by military (Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador) or a modern social democracy. (Neira, 2006, p. 4)

Once the dictatorial process is finalized in the region, a new kind of populist appears on the scene, demonstrating for the first time the evolution of the concept: "neo-populism," with leaders more radical in their discourse and with additional, unpublished characteristics.

Alberto Fujimori arrived in the presidency of Perú with a populist discourse and strategy; until then the leftists and populism could be understood as phenomena that went hand in hand. However, once in power, Fujimori established a liberal government, a friend of trans nationals and of capitalism, as well as of military leaders. Menem and Gutiérrez did the same in Argentina and Ecuador, respectively (Neira, 2006, p. 4).

Governments like those of Gutiérrez, Menem, and Fujimori demonstrate that populism is a tool that can be used only and exclusively for electoral ends. Once installed in power, leaders could take a different path from that of their discourse as candidates.

Furthermore, various Latin American political figures contributed to neo-populism with peculiar ways of acting. Bucaram, for example, danced Rock n' Roll on a stage in front of thousands of citizens. Those attitudes made populists be what the people wanted and converted them into a kind of hero (Bonilla & Páez, 2003).

Also, new characteristics were gradually incorporated into the concept of populism. The massive use of the press by populist governments became an obvious constant. Rafael Correa settles business weekly with citizens via televised media ever since he started governing (2007), having appeared on television around 400 times to date. And that does not include all of the coverage of his activities by his communications team, shown daily on different public and private media outlets. Something similar happened with Chávez in Venezuela and Menem in Argentina (Bonilla & Páez, 2003).

There are those who consider populism a political strategy that integrates and generates democracy. Hugo Chávez, Rafael Correa, and Evo Morales are considered, quite often, as political figures that have innovated democracy with the governmental policies. On the other hand, it is a different story for those who believe in a democracy that acknowledges the rights of opposition, pluralism, and civil liberties (de la Torre, 2013).

It is true, populists tend to raise minimum wages and redistribute income; however, the cost of these benefits is the creation of an image of an imposing leader, deserving of absolute obedience. Therefore, everything that contradicts the populist regime immediately converts into a "traitor," an "oligarchy," into a "conservative" (de la Torre, 2013). The attacks on the opposition's press as "corrupt" and "immoral" are daily, actions antagonistic to democracy; below is an idea cited from de la Torre:

These governments are authoritarian since they concentrate their power in the Executive branch, the opposition are made out to be malicious enemies that attack the interests of the revolutionary process, they are at war with the private media outlets and elections are held in conditions favorable to those who are in power without giving the slightest guarantees to the opposition. (As cited in de la Torre, 2013, p. 7)

Focusing on current populist governments, it is evident there is a dilemma in relation to this concept and democracy. Even though these kind of governors maintain an inclusive discourse, often as not it is based on demagoguery - typical of dictatorships - which begs a contradiction that begins to hybridize the forms of governance that will be studied from here on.

The enemies represent a moral threat that must be eradicated. The people do not confront an adversary but rather moral enemies. During the general opposition strike, Chávez declared: "This is not between Chávez and those who are against Chávez but against patriots and those who are enemies of the homeland". (As cited in de la Torre, 2013, p. 11)

Populists use demagoguery to turn themselves into supreme leaders of nations; they pit the people against their political enemies; they use media and the press to their own benefit and to defame the opposition. Basically, they go against democracy and, however, are popularly elected. What name do these regimes have, that have popular legitimacy but undoubtedly have characteristics that lead them to also be a dictatorial regime? The answer to this question can be found in the next three chapters.

1.4 Authoritarian Democracy

After having revised the terms democracy, dictatorship, and populism, it is appropriate to introduce the concept in the Theoretical Framework of the present study that begins to combine all of the previously explained concepts. Authoritarian democracy is a phenomenon that includes characteristics of distinct forms of government.

As it is easy to infer, authoritarian democracy is a form of government in which those who control the power are democratically elected; however, they execute it through authoritarian practices. Democracy, as has already been explained, has different conceptions depending on the point of view. It is a dichotomy that can be practiced in several ways. It was previously shown how democracy can be strictly procedural, putting the emphasis on the electoral phase without the elected governors necessarily implementing a democratic administration. With these antecedents it is possible to

understand that democracy - principally though not limited to the procedural - can put in power rulers who, once in command, employ anti-democratic tactics of governing that even fall into the authoritarian (Reyes, 2009, p. 191).

In authoritarian democracy it is important to analyze the role played by populism. Normally, populists come to power as caudillo leaders who have come to save the masses from a crisis (be it economic, social, religious, etc.) and, in that way, achieve inclusion and rash justice of the masses by the "traitors to the homeland" (Tatis, 2009, pp. 155-159). When these leaders come to power (usually elected by the people) they have the absolute trust and admiration of those they represent, who blindly trust in their discourse thinking they will actually receive what is promised. The people believe in the populist without question, therefore, they allow him to do whatever is necessary to fulfill his promises. That is how the populist ruler can become an authoritarian without losing the support of the people who remain in hopes that their caudillo will return to them what has historically been denied.

Authoritarianism is a concept that attaches itself to dictatorship. The Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary gives a very vague definition of authoritarianism to the context of the present work. A more political and appropriate conception has been given by Javier Tatis - a contemporary political scientist.

The category *authoritarianism* is newly fledged, it arose in the 20th century as an explanation of certain regimes posterior to the First World War and configured under the light of universalizing ideologies. Under this kind of government, the State is usually directed by a political party that condenses a kind of "universal authority". (2009, p. 160)

Counting on popular support, the authoritarian ruler does not have the need to resort to "coercion or persuasion" (Arendt, 1998, p. 146 as cited in Tatis, 2009, p. 160). Likewise, authoritarian regimes are characterized by an abuse of authority that is maintained thanks to popular consent. Unlike dictatorships, physical and psychological violence are not necessary to sustain the regime; the authoritarian stays in power thanks to the hope the people have put in the caudillo (Tatis, 2009, p. 160).

Democracy, populism, and authoritarianism are a fundamental part of authoritarian democracy. Merely reading the words "authoritarian democracy" arises a contradiction in our minds since, according to what has been reviewed here, democracy is understood as the opposite of authoritarianism, as it is of dictatorship. Nevertheless, authoritarian democracy or democratic authoritarianism is a result of the combination of various terms and political practices that are by nature antagonistic and which is visible in the contemporary world, functioning very successfully in several countries around the world.

The simultaneous practice of antagonistic forms of government is what has motivated the present work. The following is a more in-depth study of a particular case in which it is evident an authoritarian democracy that gathers the most basic requirements of democracy and combines them with repression, censure, and attacks. Likewise, it is appropriate to establish the following: many governments are not merely authoritarian but collect and adapt attitudes typical of a dictatorship, while maintaining popular legitimacy. This categorization, very similar to authoritarian democracy, will be known henceforth as "dictocracy."

CHAPTER 2: WAYS TO SATISFY THE MINIMUM DEMANDS OF DEMOCRACY: THE CASE OF HUGO CHAVEZ' VENEZUELA

After having described the fundamental concepts for the correct understanding of the present work, it is time to give way to the content that begins to express its depth and spirit. As can be seen in the title of this research, the case study focuses specifically on the country of Venezuela in the time when Hugo Chávez was its Commander in Chief. Thus, presented next are the most representative methods by which Hugo Chávez could successfully create a generalized perception of the public that in his government democracy actually existed.

A revision of the term "democracy" was previously established and it was explained how democracy can be applied in various ways. From its most minimal expression (minimal or procedural democracy) to its most complete version (substantive democracy), democracy can have varying points of applications without ceasing to be. In the case of Chávez' Venezuela, a minimal version of democracy can be witnessed - which will be demonstrated in this chapter and the following - with popular legitimacy and an unprecedented acceptance.

Going forward, several strategies used by Hugo Chávez to satisfy the public's minimum requirements for democracy will be laid out within the context of this chapter. First it is necessary to establish the parameters that make up a minimal democracy.

2.1 Parameters of a minimal democracy

To begin the content of the present chapter, it is indispensable to establish a more limited parameter of a minimal democracy, in order to later make a comparison between them and the activities of Hugo Chávez' administration.

Consequently, the parameters of a minimal democracy coincides within the perspective of various doctrines, as subsequently described:

- At the most fundamental level, all democratic parties benefit from, and should support, the rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Political parties agree to accept as the basis of government the will of the people as it was expressed in legitimate elections.
- Political parties should respect chosen electoral procedures, including electoral registration laws, regulations regarding voting centers and voting certification procedures.
- All democratic parties have the right to expect that they and their followers can freely express their opinions; the governing party and public institutions are obligated to watch over said rights and to safeguard an environment of free competition.
- Democratic parties in democracy systems reject the use of violence as a political tool.
- Political parties communicate their principles, political proposals, and achievements to the members of the party, supporters of the party and other citizens.
- Political parties benefit, as does a democratic society in general, when political participation is encouraged. The effort to nurture the participation of historically excluded or underrepresented groups - including women and minorities, ethnic or otherwise - frequently benefits the parties by increasing their support base. At the same time, they can also increase the legitimacy of the political system for which the parties are responsible.
- Political parties that receive the leadership of government, alone or in a coalition, should govern responsibly. (National Democratic Institute, 2008, pp. 2-14)

It is not difficult to imagine the potential result upon applying a survey to citizens regarding the following: what is democracy to you? Without a doubt, an infinity of answers are expected that refer in some way or another to the words once spoken by Abraham Lincoln in his historic Gettysburg Address in 1863: "democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people" (Smithsonian National Museum of American History). However, delving a little deeper into the investigation, with a

question that demands a profounder explanation about the public's perception of democracy, surely the majority of responses would contain the following: "it's when there are elections, when the people elect their leaders" (Hola, 2015).

The NGO Latinobarómetro, based in Chile, publishes an annual study, "The image of countries and their democracies," whose results reflect the thoughts of more than 20,000 citizens in 18 Latin American countries, who respond to questions about democracy and their countries. Venezuela is in second place - following only Uruguay - with an index of 7/10, which establishes that the great majority of Venezuelans feel that they live in a democracy (Estrada, 2014).

On the other hand is the report by The Economist Intelligence Unit, for the news channel BBC, regarding the democratic index of States in the Latin America region. To get their results, the researchers evaluate not only the classic access to the polls, but also five more elements: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functionality of the government, political participation, and political culture.

The results of The Economist Intelligence Unit study are divided into four sections: full democracy, imperfect, hybrid, and authoritarian regimes. According to the study, Venezuela has an index of 5.07/10, which classifies it as a Hybrid. The creators of the study conceptualize a Hybrid system of government as that in which substantial irregularities exist in elections that are usually far from free or fair, and the government pressures the opposition party. Furthermore, in those countries the State of Rights is weak and the judicial branch is not completely independent (Hola, 2015).

Once the anterior is established, a new question can be planted: Why does the same State - Venezuela - have a "good" rating according to one study and a completely different one in another? The answer is simple. In the study that based its investigation on the perception of Venezuelans only took into the account the citizens' responses, which without a doubt are heavily influenced by the environment in which they live.

Contrarily, the study by The Economist Intelligence Unit took more factors into consideration that are directly related to a more complete democratic regime.

So, a big problem comes to the surface: Venezuelans have a concept of democracy that is even more minimal than what is stated in the doctrine of minimal democracy itself. As can be seen, the parameters considered in the analysis by The Economist Intelligence Unit for the news channel BBC are very similar to those that comprise the concept of minimal democracy: civil liberties, political participation, etc. Furthermore, by categorizing Venezuela as a Hybrid State, it establishes that the country has a weak State of Rights; judicial power is not completely independent, the government pressures the opposition; and confirms the presence of irregularities that make justice impossible during the electoral process (Hola, 2015). The surveyed Venezuelans in the first study, who have expressed without hesitation that they live in a democracy, take none of these aspects into consideration.

Therefore, the perception of the Venezuelan people about democracy is reduced exclusively to the point of elections, a fact that makes it easy for leaders like Hugo Chávez when the time comes to satisfy the minimal democratic requirements of the people.

2.2 Democracy in the Chávez regime

Everything that has been previously established indicates that democracy can exist on different levels, from its minimal form to its substantive form. Likewise, it was previously established how difficult it is for any government to practice merely a minimal or substantive democracy. The norm is to find political regimes that practice a kind of median between the extremes.

The reader can infer that Chávez' Venezuela was a minimal democracy - or at least very close to that extreme - which is undoubtedly true. Populism served the ex-president of Venezuela as a means to placate its citizens in respect to democracy, even while

democracy in Venezuela was considered to be in crisis by countless political scientists around the world. That same populist attitude is what endowed Chávez with popular credibility and, despite clear acts of authoritarianism - which will be described in the following chapter - managed to convince the great majority of Venezuelans that they live in a democracy.

Those who defend the fact that democracy exists in Venezuela - principally those who are supporters of *chavismo* - have a powerful support: the constitutional instrument that is most closely related to public participation: the popular vote. Community Councils and the amplification of the universal vote also constitute democratic actions taken in Venezuela by *chavismo*. Those actions are described next and are the most representative proofs of democracy in Venezuela, as minimal as they may be (Gómez, et al., pp. 51-52).

2.2.1 The popular vote in Venezuela

The popular vote is one of the few clear proofs of the democracy that exists in Venezuela. The elections of said country are held periodically and citizens can express their opinion by voting to choose certain public servants in the different areas that comprise the Public Sector (National Electoral Council).

Furthermore, in theory, Venezuelan legislation is in harmony with universal civil rights and policies, such as the right of every citizen to run for a public office by popular election (Constitutional Law of Electoral Processes, 2009). Moreover, as is expected from a democratic nation, in Venezuela opposition parties are allowed to participate in electoral competitions, as has been historically demonstrated until the most recent elections.

Hugo Chávez, on being elected as Lawful President of Venezuela for the first time in 1999, modified the Constitution, which remains current - an action that is very common among authoritarian and populist governments - and changed the rules of play in regards

to popular elections in the country. With the passing of the years, there would be new editions of the Venezuelan Magna Carta; however, in 1999, Chávez forced a change in the periods of time that popularly elected leaders could hold office.

Currently in Venezuela, the people elect the following offices: President of the Republic, Representatives of the Andean and Latin American Parliament, Delegates to the National Assembly, Governors of State, Delegates to the State Legislative Councils, Town Mayors, Town Council members, Members of County Boards, City Mayors (and Mayors of the Towns that fall within a Metropolitan District), and the City Council (National Electoral Council).

Voting systems can differ depending on the public office, as well as the legal periods in which politicians can remain in office. Governors, Mayors, and members of the State Legislative Councils, Town Councils, and County Boards can stay in office for 4 years. The members of the legislative branch remain in office for 5 years. The President of the Republic - and therefore the offices of the Executive branch - can take power for 6 years. It is important to note that the Venezuelan Constitution of 1999 allows re-election to all of the previously mentioned offices (National Electoral Council).

The brief explanation of the popular voting system in Venezuela has been given in this section in order to give an idea of how Venezuelan democracy works at the levels where the population has the most intervention and participation. There are limitations and evidence of anti-democratic activities in regards to the popular vote in this country, which will be later described. In the current section this succinct explanation in order to establish the panorama of elections in Venezuela.

Beyond the popular vote, there are two tools related to public participation and elections in Venezuela that were forged in Chávez' administration and which have a democratizing connotation: Community Councils and the expansion of Universal Vote.

2.2.2 Community Councils (CC)

Community Councils, created in 2006, are another example of the democratizing activities of Chávez' government and are regulated by the Law of Community Councils. In accordance with the text "Venezuela: Democracy in Crisis" by Luis Gómez et al., the CC are constituted in the following way in agreement with the legislation that regulates them:

Firstly, the law has a rank and end function granted to the CCs, according to Article 2, of "the construction of a new model of socialist society" and, according to Article 3: "to establish the sociopolitical base of socialism", (...) secondly, it grants them legal personality (Article 17), which implied they have penal and administrative responsibilities and rights, for which reason their members can be considered as public servants (...) (Gómez, et al., 2010, pp. 74-75)

Likewise, the text establishes that the CCs "act in a populated geographical area of about 200 to 400 families in rural areas, 20 families in rural areas, and from 10 or more in indigenous communities. Their members must be older than 15 and elected by public assembly. They are structured by an executive organ made up of the groups that live in the community, a financial organ that administrates resources, and a social control unit" (2010, pp. 74-75).

In regards to the competencies of the CCs, Gómez et al. specify the following in the same text cited in previous paragraphs:

They should organize citizen participation en ways that promote the co-responsibility of the collective; strengthen deliberation and social control; incorporate the activities of coordination and cooperation into the design of execution of local public policies, promoting organizations (neighborhood groups, committees, technical boards, among others), using mechanisms of inclusion to generate collective solutions, oriented towards solidarity and cooperation. (2010, pp. 75-76)

Community Councils

are born under the strong tutelage of the State, as a figure destined to absorb the dynamic of fundamental, pre-existing community organizations, but with the potential to generate and develop interest in public issues, to get to know the needs of the local collective, to develop associative ties and solve communities' pressing problems. (Gómez, et al., 2010, p. 74)

Regardless, the fact that CCs are constantly tutored by government, since their beginning and during their activities, can and has generated tendencies regarding the decisions they make within their competencies. Furthermore, and for the same reason, the majority of participants in Community Councils are sympathizers with the central government, which favors a participative relationship that aligns itself with the guidelines of *chavism*. This goes against democracy since, even though this tool decentralizes power, it has been created in such a way that there is not ample diversity of political beliefs or easy entry for those of the opposition. These ideas will be studied more in depth in the following chapter.

Later a variety of other limitations, contradictions, and even characteristics unique to the CCs will be shown, which run counter to democracy and which are not easy to identify by sight - no thanks to the discourse of their precursor, Hugo Chávez. However, here the Community Councils are shown as a fundamental tool in satisfying the minimal democratic requirements of the Venezuelan people. Without a doubt, and despite anything shown to the contrary henceforth, the CCs are a palpable example of democratization in Venezuela by Chávez. Rural and indigenous communities, even some urban, never had the chance to be politically active at such a decentralized level, a fact that can be considered as a distraction technique that undoubtedly has contributed to the sympathy that millions of Venezuelan's have with the Chávez regime.

2.2.3 The expansion of the Universal Vote

Elections in Venezuela are no mandatory. This participative characteristic has been marked as the one responsible for historically high abstention rates by those registered in

electoral rolls. However, since Chávez took power, decades of high margins of abstention ended, giving way to a new political and participative panorama in Venezuela:

The Universal Vote has increased, achieving positive results regarding society's interest in politics and the reduction of the index of abstentions. Furthermore, it can be seen as a democratizing activity. (Gómez, et al., 2010, p. 51)

Specifically, the expansion of the universal vote consists of the inclusion of social sectors in the voting process; the disabled are a good example of this. It is regarded as democratizing because a larger section of the social conglomerate is directly involved in political acts.

The sectors that were recently included in the universal vote in Venezuela would very probably vote for those who included them. The idea should be taken into consideration: the "new" voters increase the total numbers of the voter rolls and, doubtlessly, the majority of them will show up to fulfill their duty, which reduces the index of abstentions (Gómez, et al., 2010, p. 51). Therefore, what can be seen as a democratizing activity could have a hidden intention, which is posed in the following question: more inclusion or more supporters?

The popular vote, the creation of the Community Councils, and the expansion of the universal vote are the more important proofs of democratization by *chavism*, according to the author's criteria, and have been vital at the time of generating credibility to the public. Nevertheless, all of these additions and actions that have been presented as examples of democracy have been tinted with a concept of fundamental importance, that at the same time includes other characteristics that could convince the majority of what its protagonist tries to establish: populism.

2.3 Populism as a principal element of distraction

There is no dictatorship here. I have been elected three times. And when the rich took me out in coup d'état the people brought me back. I'm a democrat. I have the

legitimacy given to me by the people's majority. Democratic Socialist and in democracy. (Hugo Chávez, cited on BBC World, 2010.)

In effect, Hugo Chávez, while giving the speech that begins this sub-chapter, had been elected on three different occasions, this fact being only a part of all the victories that the Chávez regime achieved, on all levels of public administration. Specifically, there were 14 elections that the regime of the former leader of Venezuela faced in its 14 consecutive years of government (until 2013), emerging triumphant in the majority of them (Reuters, 2013). All of the victories won by the Commander represent an unprecedented phenomenon in Venezuela, a complete political success for *chavismo* that would be difficult for any regime around the world to replicate. Such a conquest cannot be the result of mere casualty.

In the previous chapter, in which the fundamental concepts to understanding this work were presented, populism was described as one of the key concepts. It is worth mentioning that the populism referred to from here on, is that which characterizes the governments that assert the Socialism of the 21st Century, since the previous chapter established the different concepts of populism that have evolved over time.

It is important to remember that populism presents the image of a caudillo who has come to power to save a nation from chaos, corruption, injustice and other social, economic and other ills that were brought to the country by the outgoing regime - or the regimes of the past in general. The "heroes" of the people are those populists that offer the long desired justice and equality from which they have been historically excluded and ignored. That was how Commander Hugo Chávez came into power in Venezuela.

It's not mere rhetoric, our boliviaranity, no; it's an imperial necessity for all Venezuelans, for all Latin Americans and those from the Caribbean actually, to search behind, search in the keys, or in the roots of our existence, the formula to get out of this labyrinth, the terrible labyrinth we're all in. In this presidential address, which is not just a presidential address, no; it's the first presidential address of a new age, it's opening the door to a new national existence. It has to be that way; it's mandatory that it be that way. In Venezuela, when we look things over, comrades, or when we look over our recent history, Venezuela

could be used as a case study, and take away experiences from here, an example of what should never ever happen, never ever. (Chávez, 2009)

Chávez' speech when he took over the presidential office for the first time shows his displeasure with previous administrations. Of course, after showing his displeasure, Chávez also let it know that his arrival would change everything in Venezuela for the better. The inclusion of forgotten and excluded social sectors came to be a part of his many and infamous speeches. The public use of the word would convert into one of Chávez's main weapons; his rhetorical appearances have upset the world on more than one occasion. The former president, knowing full well the benefits brought by a good use of the word, gave public speeches very regularly - characteristic of populism - and he was a very good speech giver, he knew his audience well.

Remember that populist leaders, by promising a positive change for the marginalized classes, demand in exchange their trust in order to achieve the justice they promised. Consequently, populists can justify their authoritarian and most criticized actions because they show that they are necessary to fulfill their promises. And the masses believe in them thanks to the power of their speeches.

When Hugo Chávez first came to the presidency of Venezuela he fervently criticized previous administrations - as can be read in the excerpt from the speech cited above – it was when the image of a savior began to take shape. Venezuelans began to see Chávez as a necessary figure to their rising up, long desired and always denied. Once the people got the idea of a heroic Hugo Chávez, they can then accept and even support the decisions the leader makes to keep his promises, even when they go against democracy.

We are going to make our Revolution stronger every day, our revolutionary democracy. A powerful democracy, that has the power to transform, that has popular power working; economic power, social power, popular power, moral power. (Chávez, 2011, p. 34)

On more than one occasion Hugo Chávez reiterated the need to have a "powerful democracy," with enough power to transform Venezuela. The population never asked

itself if the word "powerful" was an appropriate adjective to accompany "democracy," it never stopped to think by which means the "power" of said democracy would transform the situation. But it never mattered because in those same paragraphs and speeches where the strong hand the Commander Chávez tried to employ was clearly established, the magic words "popular power," "social power," "economic power," etc., were always present; phrases that referenced the inclusion promised by Commander Chávez.

"And why did you vote for Chávez?"

"Because I don't ever want to be invisible again." (Galeano, 2004)

This quote from Eduardo Galeano reflects not only most Venezuelans' disposition to support Hugo Chávez, but also shows their total dedication to him, the gratefulness and trustfulness that is not far off from devotion. In effect, that dedication continues to reflect the attitude of millions of Venezuelans who have complete faith in the Chávez regime, faith that has been strengthened by the unprecedented social investment implemented by the Commander which was introduced by populist means and that comprised a way to please and distract the populace while taking parallel, anti-democratic actions.

Similarly to other leaders who follow the same line of government, Hugo Chávez has invested historic sums of money to improve the level of quality of life of the marginalized sectors. Elías Eljuri, president of the National Statistics Institute of Venezuela, indicated that of the 547 billion dollars that has come into the State, 60% has been invested in the social sector. According to the preliminary report that Venezuela will present this month at the United Nations regarding the achievement of the so called Millennium Development Goals, social investment in the country doubled over the course of 10 years of Bolivarian government, compared to the 10 years previous to 1999 (Últimas Noticias, 2010).

All of the actions described in the previous paragraphs - and which will have a deeper explanation in the next chapter - reflect the partial coherence of Chávez to his discourse

on inclusion and social justice, which, among other things, has strengthened the image of the former president. Those who had a space to make decisions for the first time in a Community Council, or those parents who lived Chávez's social investments up close and whose children now go to a new school close by, have a faithful belief in the Chávez regime, because they have lived it personally.

Upon gaining popularity, populism becomes an unarguable tool of success for Chávez. Prevalent in the minds of Venezuelans is the strong image of the Commander that turns into the savior of a Venezuela decimated by previous administrations. They are completely sure that the hero will restore to them that which has always been denied has finally arrived.

Additionally, it is important to bring to attention a term that represents activities related to electoral contests and that have been characteristically representative of populist governments - though not exclusively - throughout history: political patronage (from here on referred to only as patronage).

Patronage fits into the current section as a tool that has been used by the Chávez Administration when it comes times to get votes in elections. Cagiagli (1997), in a work by Barbra Schröter, "Political Patronage: does the ghost exist and what does it wear?" is cited in the following manner:

It is a dyadic relationship, in which a powerful person (the boss) puts in play means and influence to protect give protection or certain advantages to a person less powerful socially (the client) who offers support and services to the boss. (Schröter, 2010, p. 142)

It is necessary to demonstrate that Chávez has been an exemplary handler of the concept. The Community Councils are a clear example of political patronage by the Chávez Administration. At first glance, the implementation of the said Councils could be seen as a democratizing and inclusive action - in truth, it is partly so - but there is something that escapes notice at first glance that must be taken into consideration: the Councils are politicized from their creation by government (Gómez, et al., 2010, p. 74), the people

who form part of them learn from the "school" of Chávez, they become sympathizers and, even though they are included in decentralized participation, their political tendencies are well defined from the beginning. It is a kind of "I include you, but I want your loyalty in exchange."

Populism, therefore, is the primary means of distraction used by Chávez that has unarguably attained the belief of Venezuelans that they live in one of the best democracies in the world: "The charismatic leader that incarnates the will of the people (and manipulates it at will) is a quasi messianic figure in which those citizens "trust" (Gratius, 2007, p. 3).

CHAPTER 3: ANTIDEMOCRATIC TACTICS OF GOVERNING: THE CASE OF HUGO CHAVEZ' VENEZUELA

According to the title of this study, its objective is to explain how there can be a simultaneous practice of democracy and dictatorship, two antagonistic forms of government, in the case of Chávez' Venezuela. Well, in the proceeding pages it was briefly shown how democracy works in that country and the most representative activities of the Chávez government in that respect. To continue with the present development, it is necessary to establish the antidemocratic characteristics of Chávez's government.

To that effect, this chapter is divided into two sections that in their turn are subdivided. The first section explains how Hugo Chávez came to power in 1999 and, at the same time, presents the way in which his coming to power started to open the way to hyper-presidentialism. The second section shows an already hyper-president Chávez and gives examples of his more important repressive actions during his time in power, actions that are really typical of a dictator.

3.1 Chávez: the hyper-president

To understand hyper-presidentialism, it is first necessary to clarify the definition of presidentialism that, as Rodrigo Borja explains:

is the fusion of basic principles and characteristics of a presidential regime, in which the president is, at the same time, the Chief of State and the head of government and brings together, as such, the representative powers inherent to his first position with the political and administrative powers of the second. It is also the political theory that favors this system or the tendency to increase the powers of the president within the government (...) In presidential regimes, Congress is limited almost exclusively to its legislative functions (...) There is no cabinet as a legally constituted entity. Neither is there a prime minister: all of the ministries have the same rank (...) Comparing the constitutional right shows that in this system the president is assigned the tasks of executing laws, maintaining order, managing public administration, the supreme leadership of military forces,

the management of bills proposed by Congress, legislative initiatives, the elaboration of the State budget proposal, granting pardons. (1997, pp. 780-781)

Hyper-presidentialism, then, is an exaggeration of presidentialism, an over application of its characteristics. Revising the previous definition given by Borja, it can be seen how the presidential system gives the lead to the head of the Executive branch, more than the other branches of power. Therefore, hyper-presidentialism magnifies that power, which is supported thanks to "Constitutions that are prone to establish authoritarian systems of government, where the separation of powers is left in the background and it is sought to concentrate powers in the Executive" (Salgado, 2015, p. 9).

Hyperpresidentialism can be perceived as a threat to democracy, since, as Juan Paz y Miño confirms, it "controls all institutions; tries to control the polls; concentrates the State in self-centered leaderships" (Paz y Miño, 2012).

The construction of a favorable legal framework, the control of the masses, and the disrespect for democratic institutions are some of the tactics used by Chávez to convert himself into the controller of the entire Venezuelan State. They are explained herein in order to show the creation of a path to hyper-presidentialism that later turned into outlines of authoritarian activities.

3.1.1 The first years in office

There is something twisted, something perverse and dysfunctional in Venezuelan democracy since in its name have been mined the political and civil liberties of citizens and since it is going straight towards crowning a dictatorship. (Reyes, 2009, p. 189)

In the year 1992, a Venezuelan soldier tried and failed to take power in Venezuela by a coup d'état. That same person, a little more than five years later, became the Commander in Chief of his nation in an electoral contest that he won with relative ease. Since coming to power, Hugo Chávez quickly became one of the most well known politicians in the world. The failed coup d'état, then, was one of his biggest triumphs. As

a dictator he eventually would have fallen - or at least have been looked down upon by the international community - but as a democratically elected President he had more success than maybe he ever imagined he could (Romero & Quiñones, 2011, pp. 521-532).

Venezuela's political system is widely criticized and diversely categorized by innumerable political thinkers, principally since Venezuela took the reigns in 1999. It has been repeated several times in this work how important a role populism played in the Commander's administration, it has been discussed that it began a political system capable of uniting traditionally immiscible forms of government. Effectually, all of the innovations implemented by the Chávez administration succeeded because of his political genius - everything was calculated since he came into the presidency, even before.

The Commander won the 1999 elections with 56% of the votes, thanks to the obvious demagoguery present in each and every one of his speeches as a candidate (Romero & Quiñones, 2011, pp. 524-532); speeches that gave the impression of a new image and justice on all levels. Once installed in office, the brand-new President initiated a plan of action that would slowly give him control over all the power of the State; and, even though his followers did not see it that way, this work intends to show the development of government that fell into repression and threatened the civil and political rights of innumerable Venezuelans.

Xavier Reyes, a political scientist who has criticized the Chávez government for years, accurately describes the beginning of that administration - and, in general, the beginning of the administrations that he refers to as "parodic totalitarianism," for exercising authoritarianism having won popular elections.

Against a crisis situation a leader presents himself as the "anti-politician" (outsider) uncontaminated by any relationship or responsibility concerning the perverse pre-existing powers. In his campaign strategy any evils will not be attributed merely to bad politics but rather he will persist in a radical critique of

the entire system and, therefore, in the urgent necessity to "refound" the Republic. (Reyes, 2009, p. 192)

The first speech that Chávez gave as President, which was quoted on previous pages, as well as populism which has already been referred to, among other things, are proofs of what Reyes set forth: the Commander came to power as a messianic leader, ready to change everything that had been prostituted and done badly in the past in order to bring back justice and hope to the people.

Once the elections are won he will celebrate the triumph with an openly demagogic speech, immediately establishing the ochloratical condition of the Government ("government of the multitudes"). This speech, more focused on the emotional and in planting the feeling in the people that the time has come for vengeance (...) (Reyes, 2009, p. 192)

One of the first steps taken by presidents to arrive at the "parodic totalitarianism" spoken of by Reyes is to adjust the legal base of the country for the convenience of his government. Hugo Chávez, shortly after taking office, convoked a Constitutional Assembly, which was approved by a referendum thanks to the majority support of the new President (Combellas, 2003, pp. 110-113).

Chávez's leadership was capable of convincing millions of people; it was therefore easy to persuade the public of the necessity of a Constitutional Assembly and how it should be made up of a majority of government supporters in order to concrete the social justice projects that were promised. Something very similar happened in Ecuador with President Rafael Correa, who stated that, before the Constitutional Assembly was held in that country in 2008, "in order to put an end to the 'play dough democracy' in Ecuador, it was necessary to control the constitutional assembly 'with 60, 70, 80 or 90 percent of its members'" (Hurtado, 2012, p. 63).

That is how Hugo Chávez managed to concrete one of the first steps on the path to authoritarianism: "dissolve the pre-existing frames of power and recreate them according to the needs of the Government, filling them with their supporters" (Reyes, 2009, p. 193). So, beyond the new Constitution, which is adjusted to the parameters required by

government, the Constitutional Assembly was responsible for various activities that helped to further the development of authoritarianism.

(...) the Government will put in circulation an uncensored speech clearly directed at provoking the vertical fracture of society, encouraging hate of certain classes or races (...) it will weaken civil society, and could convert the most disfavored sector of the population, undoubtedly the majority in Latin America, into its faction. (Reyes, 2009, p. 193)

By having the Constitution and the majority of the populace in his favor, Chávez could arm a kind of "army", made up of people of a certain nature, motivated to defend their government for several reasons: some for actual conviction, others for personal interests, and others for unethical or immoral reasons, but "soldiers" in the end:

To this social secession will also correspond a parodic duplication of existent traditional forces that can oppose the Government. So, if student movements organized against authority, the Government will form its own student movements (without caring, for example, that those who participate are not enrolled in any academic institution whatsoever); it will impose its own unions on already existing ones; its own parallel academies and professional associations; against protests and civil marches it will set up counter-marches, even if it has to move people by paying them or transporting them on buses; even to oppose the Catholic Church it could start its own national church. In this way, the Government will make the value of all social action relative and will sustain the appearance of a fireproof popularity, in addition to building among its supporters a corporatist structure of clearly fascist make. (Reyes, 2009, p. 193)

When Chávez was comfortably situated in the presidency of Venezuela, with the Constitution and the majority of the populace in his favor and a very effective strategy to counterattack the movements of the opposition, he executed a very effective system that turned out to be beneficial in terms of its purpose and collateral effects. The 14 electoral contests that *chavismo* met with unprecedented success have already been mentioned; in reality, so many confrontations can be seen as part of a strategy that is again well explained by Reyes:

This type of regime will promote, to the tune of "participative democracy", a plebiscite frenzy that permits it to keep alive the argument over legitimacy of origin, and that will convert the president into an eternal candidate, constantly

campaigning and wrapped in electoral propaganda. The key to this resource is that the Government controls, publicly and notoriously, the entities in charge of scrutinizing it, but it will not relinquish the appearance of a formidable popularity, maintained by means of populism and thanks to the noisiest communications strategy possible. Consequently, after elections the voters won't know if they were defeated or if they were actually victims of fraud. Those that think the latter will feel unmotivated to keep participating, and will begin to abstain, blaming those who continue to vote of playing the Government's game. Supporters of participations will blame defeat on those who abstain and, continuing to hope that they will one day win, will fulfill the necessary quota of opposition voters needed by the regime to declare itself winner in good faith. Regardless of the position it takes, the truth is that it involves the opposition in a zero sum game in which they will always lose. (Reyes, 2009, p. 194)

With the law and the majority on his side, as well as a strategy to counteract the opposition and a veil of participation and democracy that hides reality, Chávez was able to set the foundations of what would transform into an authoritarian government with popular approval. Since he took office, countless actions took place that would give him the liberty to exercise totalitarian hyper-presidentialism without losing legitimacy or the clearly majority approval of the Venezuelan people.

3.1.2 The separation of powers in *chavismo*

The limited autonomy enjoyed by the Powers of the past has been substituted for a 'minimal' autonomy that has been forged gradually and has ended with all those Powers of civil servants identified with the chavista process and, more and more, those of the President himself. (Aponte & Gómez, 2009, p. 5)

Since the beginning of his term, when the strategy to absorb all power was put in march, Hugo Chávez thought up a way in which one of the indispensable characteristics of an efficient democratic system would conveniently fail: the counter-balances of the division of Power of the different branches (Executive, Judiciary, Legislative, Electoral, and Citizens' Power, in the case of Venezuela). Going against what Montesquieu proposed, the Commander managed, directly and indirectly, to control all the power of the State.

Even with the support of the popular masses, even for a populist like Chávez, it was very difficult and risky "to stick his hand in" institutions outside of his jurisdiction as

Commander in Chief, although many times he managed it successfully. That it was difficult is due in part to the control of existing international organizations that could accuse him before the international community of said violations of democracy. However, due to one impertinence or another, on more than one occasion Chávez was criticized by other countries and institutions for his disrespect of the system of counterbalances.

For that reason, the manner of controlling all the Powers was done indirectly, for the most part, but it was still obvious. With these antecedents, Carlos Aponte and Luis Gómez, in their work "The political regime of modern-day Venezuela", indicate that the weakening of the division of Powers of State in Venezuela happened for the following reasons, especially:

- The designation of the members of the Citizens' Power, especially since their election to the Assembly in 2000.
- The decision of the Electoral Power by a ratio of 3 or 4 to 1 in favor of government representatives, especially since 2003.
- The configuration of the Supreme Court, especially since its magnification in 2004 with judges who were designated taking solely into consideration their being supporters of the "process."
- The predominance of *chavismo* in the Legislative Branch as a simple majority, until 2005, and as an absolute majority - more than two thirds, if not more since December of that year, when the opposition decided to retire from parliamentary elections. (Aponte & Gómez, 2009, pp. 5-6)

Thanks to those actions, the highest ranking civil servants - and therefore their subordinates - of all the Powers of the State of Venezuela were, and are, party members of *chavismo*. Therefore, the Commander had support to continue pushing laws that were convenient to his administration, make a joke of legal processes, carry out electoral processes according to his convenience, and mask his authoritarianism with the lie of citizen participation, which in reality did not exist.

An example of all this are the Community Councils alluded to in the previous chapter, the same which are apparently a tool to decentralize power, that motivate communities at the levels farthest from that of the State to participate politically. Yet, since their very

foundation, the Community Councils have a clear inclination towards the politics of the party in power, they are clearly comprised of members of Chávez' political party - and now that of Maduro (Gómez, et al., 2010, pp.74-77), by which it can be inferred that opposition groups cannot participate in the hermetically sealed circles of "civil participation".

Given that the model that Chávez implemented in his government has been a smashing success, it has since been used by other leaders in the region. Rafael Correa Delgado, for example, with exceptional cheek, declared the following in one of his public speeches on the 7th of March 2009:

Because the president of the Republic, listen to me well, is not only the chief of the Executive branch, he is the chief of the entire Ecuadorian State and the Ecuadorian State is power over the Executive, Legislative, Judicial, Electoral, Transparency and Social Control, Supervision, Attorney General, Treasury, all of that is the Ecuadorian State. (as cited in Hurtado, 2012, p. 8)

The disrespect of the division of Powers of State means a clear violation of democracy that, as Osvaldo Hurtado establishes, "has been designed to avoid the concentration of power in one branch of State, much less in the President of the Republic" (2012, p. 109). Without an adequate delimitation of the competencies of the institutions that comprise the Powers of State, it is easy to fall into an authoritarian political system headed by a single person who disguises his control of all power.

3.1.3 Alternation of power

On February 15, 2009, a referendum was held in Venezuela that amended the Constitution, since it was approved with 55% of the vote. Said amendment was a reform that allowed indefinite reelection of the President and other public offices (Gómez, et al., 2010, p. 40). The alternation of power is a fundamental characteristic of democracy - even in its minimal expression - a situation that, as can be seen, is not upheld in Venezuela. Chávez could be President of Venezuela as many times as he wanted, if he managed to achieve it or not is a different topic. The important thing is to keep in mind

that alternation of government was limited and broken; and what is even more surprising: with popular approval.

On this occasion the methods used by *chavismo* to convince the public will not be reviewed, since it has already been done. The first part of this chapter intends to show the political environment in Venezuela created by Chávez, the preparation of the battleground so that conditions would play in his favor. The battle tactics themselves will be described next.

3.2 Chávez: the dictator

Hyper-presidentialism is a term that is not necessarily equivalent to a characteristic of a dictator, at least from the traditional point of view of the concept. However, the setting described in the previous section could well be that of a dictator. Within that context, it is understood that Hugo Chávez modified the law in his favor, and with it, the democratic institutions of Venezuela. By having greater influence in all of the Powers of State, the Commander made it easy to disrespect the rights of Venezuelans, and even the breach of all legal frameworks. On innumerable occasions, Chávez ignored what the Constitution states, failing to apply the rule of law, a fundamental concept in a democracy.

Therefore, once the reader has understood the political environment that Chávez created, it is indispensable to emphasize the actions that can categorize him as a dictator. In order to do this, the crimes against democracy must first be analyzed, even in their minimal expression, with the purpose of building a convincing argument that immediately shows the dictatorial part of the Chávez Administration, and, secondly, the purpose of this chapter will continue to be corroborated with examples and repressive actions taken by the Commander.

3.2.1 Attacks on democracy and the opposition

In the previous chapter Venezuela's current electoral system was briefly described, a system that does not differ in any great way from other democratic nations around the world - with respect to the time periods in which they take place and the allowance of free competition. That is to say, one of the basic parameters of the electoral process in a minimal democracy. However, in Venezuela, since Chávez came to power, the electoral process has been restricted to favor the ruling party.

On the preceding pages, the word "opposition" has been mentioned several times. In this section the term will have to be explained in order to create an analysis more appropriate to political science. Rodrigo Borja stipulated it as:

the act and effect of opposing a government, that is to say, to refute its conduct for reasons of convenience of legality. The purpose of opposition, which is a true function of the democratic State, is principally but not only confided to political parties (...) when they are out of power, political parties are trusted with one of the most important tasks that exists in the modern State: to *oppose*. (Borja, 1997, p. 498)

Taking into account what opposition refers to, and knowing the meaning of "democracy" according to what was established in the first chapter, it is possible to understand that in the new political panorama of Venezuela, after the victory of President Chávez, there were many limitation in regards to participation and political involvement. Above all to the opposition to the political party in power, as can subsequently be seen.

Pluralism and a multiple party system are essential to a democratic regime that goes beyond the electoral process (minimal democracy), and both concepts have been minimalized by Chávez' government. To understand the way in which said phenomenon has come about, it is first necessary to define the concepts:

(Political pluralism) is to accept the diversity of opinions, options, and political organizations with their respective projects, means, and ends, as long as they contribute to the common good and respect the rights of man. (Valdés, 1991, p.2)

(Multi-party system) is an expression of political pluralism. It presumes the right of people to associate and organize with healthy political ends, according to natural morals. It does not necessarily come down to the organization of traditional parties, it could also be, and actually are, other kinds of political organizations: movements, civic forums with political programs, etc. (Valdés, 1991, p. 2)

Even though Valdés' concept does not expressly establish it, political pluralism assumes the acceptance and respect for opinions and political organizations, with all that they imply, by the Government in power. Likewise, a multi-party system implies freedom and citizens' right to practice politics, using their tool of preference to that effect without fear of persecution or harassment of any kind.

However, in Venezuela, by all of the parameters that have been identified and which will continue to be explained in the next chapter, the multi-party system and political pluralism have deteriorated almost completely:

The lack of credibility of the electoral judge especially endangers the opposition, since their members tend to abstain if they do not trust that their vote will be respected. It is also true that on the other extreme, the regime runs the risk of being openly anti-democratic, since a fair and credible electoral judge is one of the requirements of the minimal concept of democracy. (Aponte & Gómez, 2009, p. 9)

Discrimination against the opposition means a clear anti-democratic action of governing, since, as Aponte and Gómez state, it goes directly against the minimal form of democracy. The ways in which politicians have been discriminated against are many, from exclusion to insults, persecution and direct attacks, all with the complicity of democratic institutions.

In that sense, the most significant cases of repression in the Chávez Administration, to coincide with countless political thinkers, are the Tascón and Russián Lists, which will be explained below as a prime example of the political repression that the opposition to *chavismo* suffered - and suffers - without failing to emphasize that there existed - and exist - many other cases.

The Tascón List owes its name to Luis Tascón, a deceased representative of Chávez' government who, after a revocation referendum of the President in 2004, published a list of those who signed to approve the referendum. The National Electoral Council received the direct order from Chávez to get the list of signatures from Tascón, who would publish it in different media for general knowledge (Primera, 2010).

The justification for this act by the governing party sprung from the intention to demonstrate the fraud of the opposition in including fake signatures in the petition. The list was published so that all Venezuelans could see who was or was not on it. Anyhow, there are testimonials, indicators and even evidence that those who were on it were affected by it, primarily in the field of work - most of all in the public sector. Because of the list, hundreds of civil servants lost their jobs while other hundreds could not get work at all because they appeared on the list (Radio Caracas Television, 2012).

In 2005, a year after the explosion caused by the Tascón List, Chávez ordered its disappearance from all forms of published media because of the controversy it was causing in Venezuela. The evidence of harm and discrimination caused to those who were on the list began to generate tumult, protests, and other inconveniences to *chavismo*. However, several analysts close to the case assert that the Tascón List did not disappear but evolved, in complexity and number, to convert into the Maisanta List - a list that gave more names of people involved in electoral processes threatening to *chavismo* (Cañas, 2005). That is how the Commander could identify among all the voters who were of his party and who were not.

The Russián List, on the other hand, owes its name to the late Clodosbaldo Russián, who was Inspector General of the Republic of Venezuela from 2000 to 2011 (Taylhardat, 2008). Said list (...)

Is made up of political disqualifications, which impeded the postulation of elected offices of more than 200 people. That sanction, decided by the Inspector General of the republic, a known member of the party in power, affected various representatives of opposition parties who had good chances of winning the Mayoral race for Caracas and three governorships. Those disqualifications were

decided by an administrative public servant (the Inspector) and not by Court, as it is laid down in the National Constitution and the Interamerican Convention of Human Rights." (Gómez, et al., 2010, pp. 41-42)

Finally, a few days before the beginning of candidate registrations, the TSJ approved the validity of the disqualifications, established the precedent that an administrative office, in this case under the President, could make the decision to impede the candidature of certain citizens. This breaks drastically with basic political rights to elect and be elected. Furthermore, there is a notable disproportion between sanctions and the carrying out of administrative offices by members of the opposition and those of the government party. Even though there are contradictory versions, the most moderate statistics point to close to half of the disqualifications being opposition, while others suggest the rate reaches almost 80%. (Gómez, et al., 2010, p. 42)

Innumerable cases can be described of those negatively affected because of these lists, enemies of the *chavismo* regime. This kind of discrimination represents a sure example of authoritarianism and has even come to be known as a "labor apartheid," according to Adolfo Taylhardat in one of his many articles on the event (2008).

In my case I have two kids, I'm a father and mother. I was warned not to go sign because if I did my boss would fire me immediately, Architect Aurora Morales, the chief of the construction Inspection Unit. That unit is assigned to Infrastructural Management, and the boss is Captain GN under the engineer José Gregorio Quijada. I was fired on March 11th. They gave me my dismissal as soon as I got back from vacation. What matters is that you decide. There's no opportunity here. (Testimony of Arelys Loaiza, cited in Jatar, p. 16)

Even today said lists can be found in electronic form, which continues to generate fear among Venezuelans who hope to find a job and even among those who hold public offices:

In Venezuela today it's enough to have a computer with any of these databases in a hospital, a school, a ministry, a public sector company, a legal registrar or a court, for there to be looks, attitude, gestures, decisions, opportunities, sanctions, service, condemnation and even life itself being destined to exclusion and injustice. (Jatar, p. 13)

The events that have just been explained are not the only examples of political discrimination, as has been previously shown. Beyond those are many more actions

adopted by *chavismo* that have injured dozens of aspirants to a political position or of any kind. When beginning an electoral campaign, there does not exist any equality of opportunity between official party members and the opposition, which represents electoral opportunism in favor of *chavismo*.

Electoral opportunism affects the most basic rules of electoral procedure. It emanates from the very integration of the board of the CNE in which, since 2003, there are a majority of members clearly inclined in favor of the government, who receive requests, primarily from the opposition, that the minimal rules of the electoral game be satisfactorily carried out. (Gómez, et al., 2010, p. 43)

It is part of an efficient democracy that the contenders in an election participate under equal conditions in all respects that are part of the same. Electoral opportunism exists when one or several parties in an electoral contest have an advantage over the other or others by any means. This is what happens in Venezuela and in several countries that follow the lines of action of the Socialism of the 21st Century.

The different electoral processes in which Chávez played a hand were seen as stained by an electoral opportunism in his favor. As stated by Vicente DÍA, the only member of the CNE in 2012 who was in opposition to *chavismo*, electoral opportunism was in irrefutable fact in the Chávez Administration due to the following considerations:

1. The use and abuse of resources of the State for campaign expenses (transportation, flyers, mobilization, rallies, radio and TV ads), as well as demagogically increasing promises, sinecures, donations (electro-domestic goods), the inauguration of public works, subsidies and social services (...)
2. Because of the control the regime has over all of the powers of State. Chávez has used his electoral majority in the Legislative branch to fill the Judicial branch and the CNE with staunch supporters and thereby change the rules in his favor, persecute and intimidate political opposition and independent media. He has even forced the use of a sophisticated automated voting system, questioned by half of the voters due to their distrust in the neutrality of the CNE (...)
3. A subtle voter intimidation campaign that generates doubts about the secrecy of the votes. Directed primarily at government workers and their companies, the

government encourages its sympathizers and threatens the opposition with the message: "The government knows whom you vote for. Technology allows it."

4. The manipulation and abuse of the State media and its affiliates (they control 80% of the media). The official channels discriminate against the opposition's campaign and the Ministry of Communications intimidates the candidates and independent media. The opposition has 4 minutes available per day on televised media for its campaign, while the government has the same, plus 10 minutes reserved for institutional publicity, in addition to the national chains for unlimited time.

This opportunism violates constitutional precepts and is not sanctioned by the CNE nor the Inspector General. But even so, *chavismo* can overcome the punishing vote it should suffer as a consequence of the deteriorated situation in the country, including scarcity and inflation (the highest in Latin America), insecurity and crime (the highest in the world) and the deplorable services of the State. Some 50% of Venezuelans think the country is going down the wrong path.

Opportunism is necessary in order to guarantee that the authoritarian regime in power keeps complete control over an incomplete democracy, where the regime thinks that because it won elections it has the right to ignore or violate the principles and fundamental liberties of democratic governance. This electoral distortion is also a clear violation of the principles and fundamental practices of free and fair elections, accorded to all democracies of the continent in the Interamerican Democratic Charter of the OAS. (Cited in Perina, 2013)

Beyond the damage caused by the aforementioned lists and the opportunism in electoral procedures, there are several other forms of political repression that are not necessarily directed towards those on the Tascón and Russián Lists. As in all political processes, in Venezuela there are also movements and dissident institutions that are headed by leaders that emphasize the negative of the government in power and propose improvements to citizens. Those leaders are immediately converted into staunch enemies of *chavismo*; many of them have been jailed or forced into exile. Discrimination in this sense took on great force in Chávez' Venezuela and was aggravated once Nicolás Maduro came into power.

Of what was just discussed there are innumerable news pieces and articles to be found in the media that reflect to some degree the repression Chávez exerted against his opponents.

(...) the Board of Democratic Unity (MUD) realized in a communiqué that the coordinator of its Human Rights Commission, Delsa Solórzano, recorded that in the country there are 28 political prisoners and more than 3,000 persecuted. (EFE Agency, 2011)

Slowly the cases of political repression increased during the Chávez Administration in accordance with the increase in marches and expressions of individuals and groups against it. A report by Amnesty International in 2013 highlighted the following conclusions and cases in Venezuela:

- Governmental authorities and the State media continue to pour unfounded accusations on defenders of human rights in an attempt to delegitimize their work. The defenders of human rights also suffered physical aggression, but the offenders were not tried. In May, Marianela Sánchez Ortiz, of the Venezuelan Prison Observatory (OVP), received threats. Her husband, Hernán Antonio Bolívar, was kidnapped at gunpoint and his captors told him to warn his wife that she should stop denouncing penitentiary conditions and criticizing the government or she and her family would suffer the consequences. Governmental authorities also accused the OVP of falsifying information about prisons to receive funding from U.S. donors. (Amnesty International, 2013, p. 347)
- Judge María de Lourdes Afiuni continued under house arrest during all of 2012. In September, some unidentified, armed men drove by the building where she lived and shot at her apartment. In November, the judge publicly revealed that she had been raped while in prison. Judge Afiuni had been jailed in December 2009 and spent more than a year in prison. She had been accused of crimes such as corruption, abuse of authority, and intending to commit a crime. She had freed on parole a banker that had spent more than two years under custody waiting to go on trial, a decision that fell under her duties and was in accordance with Venezuelan legislation. (Amnesty International, 2013, p. 348)
- In May, President Chávez, with the support of the National Assembly and the Supreme Court of Justice, announced his plans to retire from the Interamerican system of human rights. In September, Venezuela officially denounced the American Convention on Human Rights, beginning its withdrawal from the Interamerican Court of Human Rights. As a consequence, as of September 2013, the victims of human rights violations could not present reports to the highest court on the American continent. (Amnesty International, 2013, p. 348)

These are just a few examples that in some way describe the political situation in Venezuela during Chávez' time in office, in regards to insecurity and political reprisals. In any case, it is worth mentioning that today, and since Maduro came into power, the regime that can still call itself chavista has increased incidences of violence against political enemies, cases that have reverberated in newscasts around the world and are consequences of what Chávez sowed while in office. Amnesty International, in its 2014-2015 report, concluded the following:

Security forces employed excessive force to break up protests. Dozens of people were arbitrarily detained and were denied their rights to lawyers and medics. Protesters and passersby reported torture and other mistreatment. The judicial system continued to be used to silence those who criticized the government. People that defended human rights were subject to intimidation and attacks. Prison conditions continue to be hard. (Amnesty International, 2015)

As during the Chávez Administration, Maduro is also characterized by jailing and unfairly reprimand his political enemies. One of the most famous cases is that of Leopoldo López, one of the prominent leaders of the opposition and leader of the party Voluntad Popular, who has been detained since February 18th. In addition, two other members of Voluntad Popular, Carlos Vecchio, political coordinator, and Antonio Rivero, national party leader, also had detention orders served against them. Days before their detention, February 18th, the authorities had given the order for capture of Leopoldo López, for his supposed responsibility of crimes committed during and following the student marches on February 12th and on previous days. According to reports, the order indicated a series of preliminary charges, like terrorism, homicide and assault, among others (Arriagada & Woldenberg, 2012, pp. 13-14).

Within that same context it can be established that the media has also been, unarguably, a great enemy of *chavismo*, practically since the beginning of Chávez time as President.

In regards to news publications, the situation that started out against the government today seems balanced. On television, government prevalence is shocking, estimating that in 2007 it controlled 7 channels at a national level and 35 open communication channels. As many academics have pointed out, if in 1999, when Chávez arrived, the power of emission corresponded to the private

sector of radio television, eight years later that predominance had transferred to the government. (Arriagada & Woldenberg, 2012, p. 4)

As can be seen in the above paragraph, at first Chávez increased the unedited coverage of state media, which was to be expected when keeping in mind the populist aspect of his doing politics. However, the Commander did not have a good relationship with private nor public media outlets. To describe this, once more we refer to Amnesty International, although it emphasizes that, along with other aspects, the disrespect of freedom of expression can let itself be known through innumerable resources.

Amnesty International has received reports from dozens of journalists that have been subject to threats, harassment, aggressions, and arbitrary detentions. The people who turned in the reports did not want their cases made public. In the majority of the cases, the events took place when these professionals were covering protests. The reports included journalists and media outlets with an editorial line of criticism against the government, as well as state media outlets. (Amnesty International, 2014, p. 13)

But the protests were not the only time when media outlets were victims of violence and discrimination. Beginning in 2009, Chávez ordered the closing of 33 radio stations and a television channel alleging they did not meet operation requirements. However, it was generally known that said media outlets were not affiliated with his administration and that this measure did not include a single State or pro-government radio station or television channel (Ibarra, 2009).

One of the cases that reverberated most is that of Globivisión, a private television channel whose owner, Guillermo Zuloaga, had expressed his discontent with Chávez' government on repeated occasions. Zuloaga was sued directly by the Commander for spreading false information and for insulting him. Public institutions as well as chavismo party members supported the suit. Something similar happened with Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV), which was also forbidden to air because of political disputes (El Nuevo Diario, 2010).

A piece in the Venezuelan newspaper El Clarín narrates the relationship between Chávez and media outlets during his time in office until 2009:

The media outlets that dared to question the president suffered the consequences: insults, admonitions, and threats fell like bombs among press executives. Various media outlets saw the coup d'état on April 11, 2002 as a chance for revenge. They did not imagine what would happen two days later, that Chávez would be back in charge of the country and with a new bill that would put them up against a wall.

(...) Despite the time that passed, Chávez did not forget that the TV stations Televen, Venevisión, and RCTV had supported his dismissal in 2002 and five years later he revoked the license of the latter. The oldest channel in Venezuela sent out its last broadcast on May 27, 2007. The other two stations managed to save their frequencies, but at the cost of modifying their critical editorial line.

(...) By January 2009, the attacks on journalists got worse. Orel Sambrano, opposition, director of the weekly political publication ABC, vice presidents of Radio América 890 AM, and editor of the regional journal Notitarde, died after being shot by three unknowns. Beatriz Adrián, journalist for Globovisión, the only opposition channel left in Venezuela, revealed in March the salary of a delegate of the Communist Party allied with Chávez. Since then, she faces a case for "hacking" the National Assembly information system. That has not been the only punch against the TV station. Their editorial offices have suffered various attacks from radical militant chavistas.

(...) Despite the criticisms that rained down him for his attacks on the press, Chávez did not stop and called the media "terrorists" last May. He warned their executives that he would not allow them to continue their "daily terrorism" and accused them of believing they are "above the law." Three days later, he again threatened the press and stated: "They poison the populace". (El Clarín, 2009)

To conclude this section, and in order to leave the reader with a vivid image of Chávez' attitude, a speech in which he references one of his opponents will be cited - Manuel Rosales, ex-candidate for President of Venezuela in the 2006 elections and ex Governor of the Venezuelan state of Zulia:

Manuel Rosales is one of the ones who wants to see me dead. I don't want to see him dead, no. I want to see him out of the Governor's office and out of the Mayor's office and out of power, out of Zulia, out of Venezuela. I told you (...) I'm going to tell you something that is even more blunt than what I've said before. I am determined to put Manuel Rosales in jail (applause). I am determined, okay,

that's enough, that's enough, that I'm going to put Manuel Rosales in jail, he's going to end up in jail, know that, know that. Know it Zulia, know it Venezuela because a man of his ilk has to be in prison, not governing a state, or a city, not governing anything, not even a family because imagine what kind of damage he does to his kids! (...) The people of Zulia don't deserve to have a drug lord like that in the Governor's office, or the Mayor's office, or anywhere. He's a mobster! And I came to ask the people of Zulia to kick him out. If you don't, I'll be forced to revise my relations with Zulia, listen to me carefully. I will have to revise all of the plans and projects, that in good faith, with commitment and responsibility we have been going ahead with here. Supposing that Manuel Rosales would manage them, with all the billions of dollars being spent what is he doing, the pressuring, threats, because drug lords are like that, they bribe, blackmail, threaten, buy souls, the typical gangster, and they kill. If that drug lord Manuel Rosales succeeds in imposing his formula, poor state of Zulia, poor Maracaibo, poor Venezuela! (Álvaro & Chumaceiro, 2012, pp. 11-12)

3.3 Final considerations

The construction of a panorama that favors his interests, dissemination of fear through lists of enemies, the repression of political opposition and media outlets, are all examples of an authoritarian government that has the audacity to violate democratic institutions and to do, with its own consent, whatever it wants.

The lists of names of his enemies (Tascón and Russián) represent an action that has been very common in the dictatorships of the world, according to history, as well as the control and abuse of the media. It goes without mention that the violation of human, civil and political rights is also typical of an authoritarian regime. In the end, everything that has been presented in this chapter shows the typical characteristics of a dictator that controls everything and does not hesitate to punish anyone that opposes him.

Supposing that the third part of this undergraduate thesis were shown to an individual who has a general knowledge of what a dictatorship is - but nothing about Venezuela under Chávez - it can be assumed with almost certainty that the person would say, after reading it: Of course! Venezuela is a dictatorship!

Continuing the example in the above paragraph, perhaps the same individual's idea would fall to pieces if he or she were to read the second chapter of this work: how can Venezuela under Chávez be a dictatorship if his government was popularly elected and has decentralized, to some degree, civil participation en politics? These details will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DICTOCRACY AS A REALITY

If the evidence and analyses presented on the preceding pages are concise enough, they will highlight their significance and repercussions of vast importance. To speak of democratic manifestations to later contradict them with typical action of a dictatorship, all within the same nation, can seem on the surface like a jumble of random ideas with no direction. However, showing that what has heretofore been established actually exists and that the recognition of it is of vital importance is essential to contemporary politics, since we could be witnessing a new, original form of governing.

The last chapter of this undergraduate thesis, which is written as its conclusion, emphasizes the key points of the previous chapters in hopes of elucidating the main idea shown in this work: Venezuela experienced a democracy and a dictatorship simultaneously during the period of Hugo Chávez' time in office. On preceding pages dozens of political scientists have been cited - both contemporary and classic - journalists, witnesses, historians, professors, etc., with the aim of expounding solid ideas that justify what will be established fore with.

4.1 Dictocracy

Even if dictocracy is not a politically recognized term, after simply reading the word its meaning becomes clear: a combination of the words "dictatorship" and "democracy". Now, this word is not an invention of the author of this work, there are a few political scientists that have already used the term to refer to authoritarian regimes that were elected by popular vote, such as Juan Ramírez, who states that dictocracy is a "theoretically democratic system, that, in practice, poses behaviors that are similar to a dictatorship, which in the end is covered with a democratic veil" (Ramírez, 2015). Regardless, the concept is applicable - even though its not a widely recognized - in the specific case of Chávez' Venezuela, for all the reasons that have been and will be explained.

Dictocracy can be understood, therefore, as a term that combines characteristics of both democracy and dictatorship - whose definitions were explained in the first chapter. Validating Ramírez' definition, dictocracy becomes a dictatorship with popular legitimacy. The concept, put to the test in Venezuela under Chávez, allows a minimal democracy, exclusively based on electoral procedures so that, once the Commander was installed in power, the government could act in ways similar to a dictatorship.

The idea of a "dictatorship with popular support" promoted by Juan Bosch - ex-president of the Dominica Republic - and supported by Rodrigo Borja tackles several considerations of dictocracy but should not be confused with the same, since there is a fundamental difference. The "dictatorship with popular support" is considered correct by Bosch and comes from his own idea that "Latin America has been dominated for a long time by economic, social, and political oligarchies, and these are incapable, by their own nature, of directing and accomplishing any kind of development" (As cited in Borja, 1997, p. 289).

With these antecedents, Bosch considers the implementation of a representative democracy to be obstructed thanks to the permanency of the oligarchy in power, and therefore thinks that

dictatorship with popular support is a new form of State, capable of dedicating itself to guarantee work, health, and education to all those who do not benefit from these attributes or absolutely all of the fundamental liberties of being human; the suppression off hunger and its dismal social consequences, the elimination of the exploitation of some men by others who have dominion of the means of production, etc.; furthermore it establishes that this kind of dictatorship could guarantee the true equality of all citizens. Bosch believes that a regime of this kind would be genuinely democratic, by popular legitimacy and support, even if it was not elected. (As cited in Borja, 1997, p. 289)

The concept of "democracy with popular support" is similar to dictocracy in that both are criteria that describe dictatorships with the consent of the masses. However, in Bosch's theory there are no elections while in dictocracy there are. Furthermore, "dictatorship with popular support" is seen as a viable, positive option for the region of

Latin America because it is, according to Bosch, a kind of State capable of ending all the negatives of society. Dictocracy, on the other hand, does not boast such characteristics and, even if "dictocracy" can maintain altruistic ideas and social development in its discourse, they are merely a part of its discourse given that dictocracy has not been considered as a solution to counteract the ills of the region.

It is necessary to make a clarification: dictocracy, though valid but little used, is similar to other definitions, concepts, and ideas that are recognized in politics. Authoritarian democracy, which definition was given in the first chapter of this work, holds a close similarity to dictocracy. So, the two terms can be considered synonyms. This undergraduate thesis, considering the objective it intends to produce, will refer to this last episode of hybridization of democracy and dictatorship with the word "dictocracy," because it is a true oxymoron that describes the Chávez Administration in Venezuela.

4.2 Dictocracy in Venezuela

Having given a brief review of the fundamental concepts that merit the review for the complete understanding of this work, because of the democratizing actions of Chávez' government and its antidemocratic practices of exercising power, it is time to end the study determining the "why" of everything here written and their repercussions for the Venezuelan State.

Democracy is known as a concept with diverse levels of applicability, from its most basic expression to its most complete concept. Therefore, after reading the second chapter it can be confidently inferred that Venezuela experiences, since Chávez came to power, a form of procedural, or minimal, democracy based exclusively on the electoral process. Even if there are additional systems of participation in said country, there are contradictions that dim the acts of democratization and decentralization of power.

The Community Councils, for example, as set out in the second and third chapters, while apparently offering a decentralization of power at an unprecedented level, are politicized

institutions (Gómez, et al., 2010, pp. 74-77). The fact that a medium of interaction exists with marked tendencies towards a certain movement or political party goes against democracy, since a democratic form of government always allows all political ideologies that could appear.

With that in mind, politicizing institutions of citizen participation, continuing the example in the previous paragraph, implies a contradiction: political spaces are created for society that is conditioned by the party/movement that creates them. That fact limits the inclusion of opponents in political arenas like Community Councils. This paradox is nothing more than a part of all the incidents that can prove that the democracy in Venezuela is the most minimal version the doctrine pleads. Many of the tools and democratizing actions created in the Chávez Administration are incoherent with the speech that defends and promotes them.

In the second chapter two studies were cited that are related to the perception of democracy in Latin American countries - which was focused solely on Venezuela. The first of them deal exclusively with the popular perception of democracy in their countries. The second, on the other hand, indicated the state of the democracy according to studies that took more factors into account regarding what comprises a democratic regime. From the analysis of both studies, it was concluded that Venezuelan citizens have a perception of democracy even more minimal than what is established in the theory of minimal democracy itself. This precept is of great importance to this final analysis.

Reducing democracy to merely an electoral process, leaving aside civil and political rights, is a vision that, while generalized, minimalizes democracy even further. That is what is happening in Venezuela. Nevertheless, Hugo Chávez declared innumerable times that his government was a democracy, since he always was elected and his political current had several electoral victories with great advantages. This proves that elections were fundamental to the Chávez Administration, a concept that can be understood as

The tendency to make electoral acts too important in the development of a political society, up to the point of confusing *democracy* with *elections*. Electoralism considers elections as an end in themselves, and not as a means to designate the public offices representative of the State. (Borja, 1997, p. 357)

The concept of electioneering becomes of great importance because in a system where dictocracia is thought to exist, there must necessarily be a great emphasis on elections, as they are the only element that differentiates it from a pure dictatorship. Whoever practices electioneering is known as "electorero":

Politician who worries more about the harvest of votes than the systemic problems of the country. He is capable of doing all kinds of political acrobatics in order to get votes. The universe of his worries is the electoral process. The country's problems, the people's situation, the bumps in the economy, international questions are much less important to him than the number of votes needed to win the election. (Borja, 1997, p. 357)

Hugo Chávez' line of defense is undeniable. The Commander, in effect, did win every election he ran in for President. Likewise he was the main protagonist in several electoral campaigns as the head of his political party (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela). Furthermore, although with interests particular to his political ideology, there was a decentralization of power that favored citizen participation, such as the Community Councils or the extension of the universal vote. These measures were discussed in the second chapter and can be understood as inclusive and democratizing, reasons enough for Chávez to defend with sword and cape that his government was democratic.

By any means, it would be incorrect for this undergraduate work to corroborate the idea of a chavist and democratic Venezuela, since the violations of civilian rights are visible and many of them are provoked by attitudes more similar to those that a dictator would adopt.

The combination of repressions by Chávez' government encompass lines of action that go from discrimination of its political enemies to the censure of opposition media outlets

- and those of the same political party on many occasions. This can bear strong similarities to dictatorial governments, not only in the region but all over the world, in which the imposition of that which the government in power establishes becomes daily routine and where going against what has been established can be seen as an offense worthy of punishment or retaliation.

The Russián and Tascón lists referred to in the third chapter are similar to lists that dictators make to unabashedly identify those who oppose their regime. In Venezuela, if those persons who figured on the pages of said documents were not chased down to be captured, tortured, and later killed - as has happened in the bloodiest dictatorships - they were discriminated against in all aspects of their daily lives that had anything to do with the State. Activities from receiving attention at Social Security to applying for a job as a public servant become impossible for those whose names were on the lists.

More than that, it is indispensable to emphasize the way in which Chávez came to power together with the construction of an environment favorable to it. One of the main decisions a dictator commonly makes when installed in power is that of throwing out the laws, which were valid up to that point, and making new ones that favor his intentions and gives him an indisputable ease of control over the State. Exactly the same happened with the entrance of Chávez in the Presidency of Venezuela.

The writing of a new Constitution, and various other laws, was one of the first decisions made by President Chávez (an attitude that he maintained during his entire administration in regards to different legal bodies), who would quickly absorb all power of the State through the strategic placement of known supporters of his government in institutions of the other branches of power. Hence, even with new legal framework in his favor, Chávez counted on the freedom to violate it whenever he wanted, since there was nobody to judge him.

In the 2012 presidential elections, for example, Chávez broke Venezuela's Electoral Law by holding a press conference the day before elections, in which he tirelessly

emphasized the achievements of his government (Garcia & Lozano, 2012). There were many other legal violations by Chávez, who always came out from them untouched.

The international community has been known to accuse Chávez of his faults on numerous occasions - the abuse of power through repression and rights violations in general. The media, presidents of other nations, international organizations, and infinity of political scientists from all over the world have reproached the politics and actions of Chávez during his time in office.

The environment that the Commander created for his benefit permitted him to do anything he pleased. Said environment was built in great part thanks to the populism characteristic of his daily governance. Chávez' infamous way with words allowed him to convince the masses of everything he intended, made even easier thanks to his control of Venezuelan media outlets.

Chávez controlled everything. It is true, he did not do it purely in the style of a the typical conservative, bloodthirsty dictator of the past in Latin America; neither did he act as President of the CNE, of the National Assembly or any other branch of power simultaneously. Chávez absorbed all power in his hands by innovative and indirect means. If the political structure of Venezuela conserved republican characteristics, it is known that the great majority of public officers were supporters of Chávez, which permitted him to do what he wanted.

Chávez was a dictator, after all. The Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary (DRAE) has three definitions for the word "dictator", which are:

1. In modern times, a person who assumes or receives all additional political power and uses them without legal limit.
2. A person who abuses his or her authority or treats others harshly.
3. Among ancient Romans, a temporary head of state that one of the consuls named in agreement with the Senate in times of danger to the republic, transferring additional powers. (2012)

Upon comparing the conduct of Chávez and the above definitions, remembering the content in Chapter 3, it can be shown that the Commander meets with the characteristics of all three concepts. Reviewing specifically the first and second definitions, the agreement becomes clear when taking into account that Chávez had all the political power and that he used them without legal limits, for reasons already explained. Furthermore, the Commander abused his authority and treated others harshly; the Russián and Tascón lists, together with all their repercussions, are a good example.

Although the third concept of the DRAE is historical, it is applicable if analyzed from the point of view of the arrival of Chávez to power who, like a good populist, arrived as a savior to put a chaotic and off-track Venezuela back in order, for which he asked - and received - the trust of the people to allow him to do "the best" for them, regardless of repercussions this idea could have, which is why he enjoyed additional power to govern.

Additionally, analyzing a more political definition of the term, the excess of power that a dictator typically has:

Is an individual or group of individuals cloaked in a legal protest that, in a temporary interruption of the validity of legal institutions, assume interim power which exceeds the normal scope of competence of a legislator in the framework of a State of rights blessed with a constitutional system. (Peña, 2009, p. 19)

The exception of Venezuela's case according to the above cited concept is based on said nation's being framed within a State of rights - although vulnerable - blessed with a constitutional system. This is a key idea, since it reinforces the paradox this work attempts to establish.

This leaves us with a President that, throughout the length of this work, meets with the characteristics of a dictator. But he does not stop being a President, a public officer elected by votes that were a source of civic participation at a level never before seen in the country. It is not the first time this political paradox is being considered:

Hegemony can survive if it is accepted by those who are affected by it; it is not necessarily imposed. Conformity does not always need unilateral predominance of power or exorbitant force. (Poitras, 1990, p. 30)

Venezuela, since 1999, has lived under the government of a legitimate authoritarian regime. The people have elected as President a person who can be considered a dictator. Therefore, the simultaneous practice of democracy and dictatorship is undeniable: the election of a Head of State, who, once installed in power, allows democratic practices up to a certain point so that, at the same time, he can run government at dictatorial levels of authority. Democracy exists so that dictatorship can exist. Venezuela, since 1999, lives under a dictatorship, even though Chávez has never admitted it: "(...) but then no ruler has accepted being a dictator. Like demagogues, like populists, dictators are always the adversary, never oneself" (Peña, 2009, p. 19).

The Venezuelan model created by Chávez has dispersed to other electoral districts. It is extremely important that the people affected by this reality become familiar with the phenomenon that they could be living through and take action, above all after seeing the results of this model in Venezuela, whether they seem positive or negative. It is indispensable to generate consciousness among citizens in order for the public to keep in mind that they are those who hold the power, that the violation of any right is unjustifiable, and that history and the present reveal events that should not be repeated nor continue.

It seems that we are living in a democracy, but all of the institutions of the State are subject to one person. (Jiménez, 2015)

Conclusion

It was necessary to analyze the concepts reviewed throughout this study in the political sphere, in an international context. They all had the intent to direct ideas towards the objective of this work. That is how the reader can understand that democracy is complex, that it has evolved over time and has different levels of applicability, from its minimum to its maximum expression. This has been achieved thanks to the evaluation of contributions from various thinkers on the subject, as well as the history of the concept and its perceptions.

It can furthermore be demonstrated that *chavismo* has opted to use the minimal form of democracy, the only pure methods of participation being elections, leaving aside the observation of rights and liberties that are fundamental in a State of Rights. This work also showed the way in which the ex-president was able to satisfy the minimal necessities of the people regarding participation, thanks to the demand of trust in him.

Dictatorship was emphasized, highlighting its most significant characteristics in order to compare them with some of the lines of action of Hugo Chávez' Administration; explaining how repression, political persecution, and various other forms of authoritarianism constitute clear examples of the dictatorial part of Chávez' Venezuela. It was explained how the image and authority of the Commander reached the point they did thanks to populism and the construction of a legal and political panorama in his favor.

It was shown that Chávez was elected on numerous occasions and that *chavismo* won in several elections, as well as proved that, once installed in power, Venezuela converted into a State full of attacks on democracy and the opposition, of censure and persecution. Dictocracy is indisputable: democracy has served as the threshold of a path that leaves democracy behind and is characterized by being replete with dictatorial characteristics.

The definition of dictatorship has been fundamental to making it understood that this system is applicable in Venezuela, since in said State there is no pure practice of either democracy or dictatorship. It was possible to find the term that adequately describes Venezuelan politics during the time Chávez was in power. Therefore, the result is the establishment of a clear panorama that describes the reality of Venezuelans - even now that Maduro is president - that can dissipate the doubts of those who are close witnesses, victims, victimizers, and supporters of the regime of 21st Century Socialism, which is neither a democracy nor a dictatorship but both.

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