Exploring elements of coloniality & border thinking in Venezuelan political rhetoric: A comparative discursive analysis of Nicolás Maduro & Juan Guaidó's political rhetoric

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Abstract

This thesis aims to identify elements of coloniality, mainly the rhetoric of progress, and elements of border thinking, in the political rhetoric of Juan Guaidó, current leader of the Venezuelan political opposition and (disputed) interim president since 2019, and of Nicolás Maduro, current president of Venezuela. The research question that guides this thesis is as follows: '*To what extent do elements of coloniality present themselves in the rhetoric of current Venezuelan political leaders?*'. This research carries out a comparative, discursive analysis of six speeches, three on behalf of each speaker, in three comparable contexts: one international context (the 75th address to the UNGA), and two local contexts, (a presidential address, and a press conference). The research rationale is guided by the theory of critical discourse analysis. The results of this thesis reveal that both Juan Guaidó and Nicolás Maduro engage in the rhetoric of progress, particularly by centralizing the extractivism of oil as the path to ultimate 'progress'. Moreover, this thesis found that neither Juan Guaidó nor Nicolás Maduro engage concrete examples of border epistemologies in their rhetoric. This latter point warrants the question that if Juan Guaidó were to take power after Nicolás Maduro, the former would continue to rely on oil extractivism and resource exploitation, as he offers no alternative or structural critique to oil dependency in his political rhetoric.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures & Tables

List of Appendices

1. Introduction

It is no secret that Venezuela has been undergoing a political, humanitarian, and economic crisis for over a decade (UNHCR, 2021). Arguably, this crisis stems from Hugo Chavez' rise to power in 1998, becoming one of the pioneers of what has been thereafter nicknamed s South America's 'pink tide'. Chavez' win was a first of its kind, not only for the continent but for Venezuela itself; as the politician ran on a platform of redistribution of wealth, mainly that generated by Venezuela's booming oil industry.

However, Chavez' rise to power is nothing but a symptom of a greater ailment. While many Venezuelans would, indeed, tie the current crisis to the rise of the socialist-populist leader, one could argue that Chavez' win was inevitable in a society that was becoming increasingly dependent on oil and thus increasingly divided by sharp wealth and social inequalities.

Regardless, it has become clear in recent years that a change needs to occur in order to salvage Venezuela from the worst economic crisis in its history. If one follows normative beliefs of democracy, the way out becomes obvious: a change of administration needs to occur. This piece does not tackle the issue of *how* exactly this would take place, as it would be beyond the scope of the research. Rather, this thesis aims to explore whether there are any traces of the *rhetoric of progress*, a concept brought forth by the theory of coloniality/decoloniality and whether there are alternatives being touched upon, based on the notion of *border thinking*. Assuming that the Chavista opposition, led by Juan Guaidó, takes power after the current Venezuelan president, Nicolás Maduro; then one would infer that if Guaido's economic practices continued to rely on a rhetoric of progress, these would create no structural criticism of capitalism, and thus would also continue to create economic dependency on the extraction of oil.

To reiterate, this thesis utilizes the theory of coloniality/de-coloniality to argue that elements of coloniality are still present in current Venezuelan political rhetoric. In short, the question that guides this thesis is '*To what extent do elements of coloniality present themselves in the rhetoric of current Venezuelan political leaders?*'

Furthermore, this thesis aims to test the following hypotheses through the examination of a series of discursive analyses:

H1: Independently of their political affiliation, Venezuelan politicians will continue to employ the rhetoric of progress.

H2: The discourse of the main Venezuelan political leaders, regardless of their party's ideological positions, do not present alternative perspectives to the one of rhetoric of progress, such as the ideas underpinning border thinking.

This thesis holds significant relevance for several reasons. The most glaring motive regards the urgent nature of the current Venezuelan crisis. The situation has been deemed a humanitarian, political, and economic crisis by the United Nation's Human Rights Council (2021). Additionally, the Human Rights Watch defines the refugee crisis arising from the Venezuelan crisis as an 'exodus,' with over 5.5 million people having fled the country since 2014 (2021). In fact, Venezuelans are currently living through an unprecedented, dire plight, with conditions that liken that of a state at war –without a doubt, further academic research can provide insight on whether the alternative for the current administration can change the Venezuelan political and economic landscape for the better.

Moreover, the Venezuelan crisis is often underreported. With that said, there is no clear answer to how Venezuela can evolve past said crisis, catalyzed by Chavez and consequently worsened by Maduro's petro-capitalistic policies and poor management of resources. This thesis raises the question that if there is no structural change in the way the Venezuelan political elite speaks of oil, and consequently, alters their relationship with the nation's natural wealth, then Venezuela is doomed to stay a petrostate, regardless of its political ruler.

Additionally, the researcher chose the case of Venezuela because it is a prime example of the dangers of relying on petroleum as a single source of capital. This research aims to further unveil the colonial ties to Venezuela's status as a petrostate, to reveal that Venezuela has been *maldeveloped* (as opposed to *underdeveloped*) by a process of colonization, followed by an industry that is built on similar ways of collecting capital –extractivism. This idea in particular can be extrapolated to other post-colonial nations, raising the question as to how oil dependency is fueled by socio-political residues of coloniality.

Moreover, the researcher considers that the research question, particularly pertaining to the rhetoric employed by Juan Guaidó, is underdeveloped in current academic literature. While the

use of the rhetoric of progress is alive and well in current Venezuelan political rhetoric, no one has stopped to question whether a) it is present in Guaidó's communications specifically and b) whether this would reflect in his subsequent policies if Guaidó were to take power, and thus providing no structural criticism to Venezuela's extractivist practices. Conversely, there is a gap in the literature regarding whether Guaidó's communications incorporate border epistemologies as alternatives to extractivism and dependency on oil.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: Section 2 will introduce the thesis' theoretical framework outlining the relevant aspects of the theory of coloniality, followed by an in-depth discussion of the rhetoric of progress, finalized by a review of border thinking as a conceptual tool for de-coloniality.

Section 3 offers relevant empirical background for the research, and for the reader. It delves into important information regarding the 'main actors' of this research, mainly Hugo Chavez, Nicolás Maduro, and Juan Guaidó. This section is key in highlighting each actor's role in the current Venezuelan political state.

Section 4 pertains to the research design of this thesis. This section begins with the role of Critical Discourse Analysis in the data collection process. Thereafter, this section details the data collection & justification aspects of the research. Section 4 also provides the two codebooks that will be used to code and extract relevant information from the speeches at hand.

Next, Section 5 concerns the results of this research and their consequent discussion. Section 5.1 provides the reader with relevant 'word counts' extracted from the results, and important takeaways from how certain codewords were utilized. Section 5.2 further analyzes the speeches at hand through the lens of colonial theory, inspecting them for traces of the rhetoric of progress and border thinking. Note that the full results can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Coloniality of Power

Anibal Quijano (2000) uses the phrase 'coloniality of power' to refer to the establishment of a "Euro-centered, capitalist colonial/modern world power that is still with us today" (p. 218). Thus, one must note that coloniality of power refers to a matrix (See figure 1) of dominant power structures that were first established by colonial systems 500 years ago; those including, but not limited to, racialized social relations, a capitalist world system, and an epistemic hierarchy of knowing that, consequently, benefits Eurocentric ways of knowing (Quijano 2000; Grosfoguel 2011).

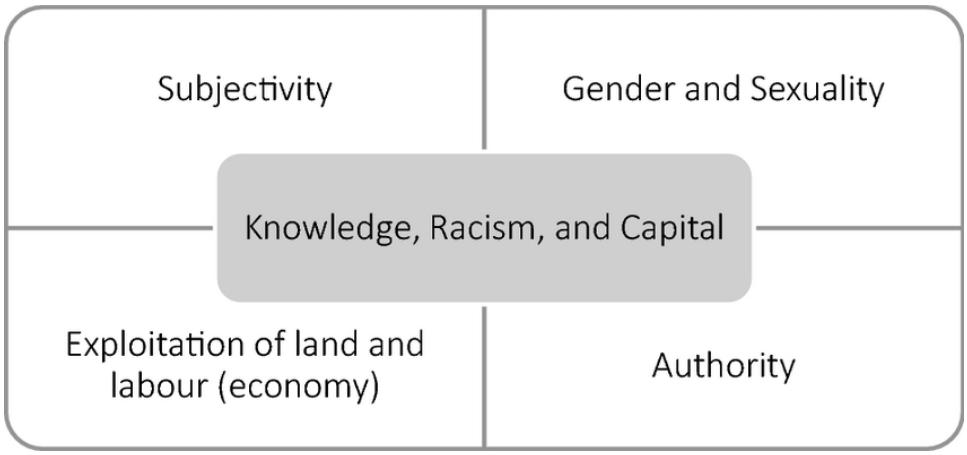

Figure 1: Illustration of the Colonial Matrix of Power (Quijano, 2000).

The coloniality of power as a concept is key to this thesis, as it positions Venezuela, its subsequent history as a 'liberated' nation, its dependency on oil –and its imminent and current crisis—as a direct result of its status as a Spanish colony.

The process of colonization of the Americas laid the 'foundation', per se, for post-colonial states' identities within capitalist society (Grosfoguel, 2011). This is due to the notion that colonialism was first established in relation to two significant main assumptions:

1. That all forms of labor, exploitation, and production revolved around the notion of what we modernly refer to as the 'world market', thus, making way for a new pattern of power, all surrounding the accumulation of capital (Quijano, 2000).
2. The emergence of a new category to codify relations of dominance, led by the idea of 'race' (Quijano, 2000).

With that said, this study focuses on one of the four assumptions of the colonial matrix of power, brought forth by Quijano (2000), which establishes the centrality of capital (Exploitation of land and labor) in power relations. This thesis chooses to focus on this particular aspect, as it is the most relevant to the research question at hand, and its subsequent hypotheses about the rhetoric of progress –a result of the consistent exploitation of land and labor as a colonial consequence. Additionally, one of the primary causes of the current Venezuelan crisis is its persistent dependency on the exploitation of oil. It is this inevitable emphasis on the accumulation of capital through extractivism, along with other underlying colonial structures, which has helped establish Venezuela as a petrostate.

To understand the relation between the coloniality of power and modern-day Venezuela, one must understand the role of extractivism in coloniality. Essentially, extractivism is a colonial residue for several reasons. Quijano (2000) puts it quite well, explaining that "although capital existed *before* America, it came into being *with* America". That is to say, the colonization of the Americas created an unprecedented, large-scale, structured system of organized and controlled labor (Quijano, 2000). European crowns not only controlled every resource collected in the Americas by Black and Indigenous bodies, but they were also able to control the traffic of said resources due to their strategic conquest of the Atlantic basin (Quijano, 2000). Consequentially, Europe was at the very center of this structured system of labor, dominating every aspect of it. Colonialism then made way for the emergence of a Euro-centric, capitalist world order that is present to this day (Quijano, 2000).

Colonialism is inextricably connected to the accumulation of capital, and by definition, to capitalism. Anibal Quijano (2000) and Miguel Grosfoguel (2011) argue that despite the subsequent independisation and 'decolonization' of what we can now refer to as post-colonial nation-states, the capitalist form of exploitative labor (and control thereof) prevailed. The creation of the nation-state did not dissolve said system of labor but transactionalized it (Quijano, 2000; Coronil, 1997). Nation-states are, therefore, a direct result of their status as colonies, and their governments are the facilitators in said system of labor and accumulation of capital. Quijano (2000), refers to this as the 'problem of the nation state' (p. 222). The starting point of the problem of the nation-state lies in the notion that any given society, and thus, a nation-state with an established identity, is a power structure –and it is this power that gives the nation-state its singular identity (Quijano, 2000,

p. 222). Consequently, independent political power, such as the one granted to a central government, is a direct product of the power that established said authority in the first place (Quijano, 2000, p. 223).

Additionally, one must note that the established system of labor and accumulation of capital depended on the exploitation of Indigenous and Black slaves (Quijano 2000; Grosfoguel 2011). Racialized labor is a key component of how Quijano (2000) characterizes the emergence of the problem of the nation-state, as it defined how societies would be instituted once a colony became an independent nation-state. It is important to note that no Latin American nation-state was originally White. In several Latin American countries, Indigenous populations were nearly exterminated, thus making way for a greater European population of colonialists that had an easier time 'homogenizing' their newly founded countries (Quijano, 2000). Conversely, other Latin American nation-states were still left with colonial societies that heavily relied on the exploitation of Black, Indigenous people, and their Mestizos (Quijano, 2000). Venezuela falls under the second category of Latin American countries, and what emerged from these newly independent states was a structure of racialized, centralized political power.

Essentially, all non-White 'races' were, at a first stance, formally prohibited from participating in political life, and thus in the organization and subsequent establishment of their respective centralized governments (Quijano, 2000). Hence, the small population of White elites took charge of those newly established nation-states; and while they did inevitably free themselves from the Spanish crown, they continued to impose colonial restrictions on Indigenous communities and perpetuated the slavery of Black peoples (Quijano, 2000). It is here in which the problem of the nation-state materializes itself, reflected in what Quijano (2000) refers to as "a paradoxical situation of independent states with colonial societies" (p. 226). This implies that current Hispanic American nation-states, such as Venezuela, were created based on colonial structures of exploitative labor, accumulation of capital, racialized and gendered relations, and extractivism.

The theory of coloniality, particularly as conceptualized by Anibal Quijano (2000), is a useful lens through which one can establish the long-term effects of colonialism on modern-day nation-states, such as Venezuela, as Quijano (2000) delves into the long withstanding effects of the power structures established by colonial institutions. Above, I have gone over how coloniality has

influenced the means of production through the exploitation of racialized groups and power relations and established itself as the basis of current-day Hispanic American governments.

2.2 Rhetoric of Progress/Modernity

To further understand the concepts below, I would like to define the concept of 'modernity' as referred to in relevant literature by Walter Mignolo (2007). This definition, originally brought forth by Enrique Dussel, defines modernity as a mainly European phenomenon, one which affirms Europe as the 'center' of self-inaugurated World history (Mignolo, 2007). The existence of a center, thus, implies the existence of a 'periphery,' one which is then classified as 'less-than' by the prominent thinkers that comprise the 'center,' or in other words, the 'modern.' Furthermore, modernity affirms the concept of 'emancipation' as a key step in attaining modernity, while simultaneously creating the myth of the 'underdevelopment of barbarians,' and thus justifying genocidal violence, as well as the constant plundering, destruction, and undermining of the 'periphery' (Mignolo, 2007).

Essentially, modernity *needs* coloniality in order to assert itself as 'modern' (Mignolo, 2007). In fact, the concept of modernity serves to position Europe and its respective, hegemonic, epistemic frameworks at the forefront of history, separating it from feudalism, the Middle Ages, and the 'barbarians' inhabiting the 'New World.' With that said, the researcher must make a point of stating that if coloniality is a key constituent of modernity, then the rhetoric of progress, as discussed below, is merely one of its consequences, and an inherent instrument of discursive reproduction.

The theory of coloniality of power further reinforces the idea that colonialism established an 'otherness,' where the 'other' was the colonized, whereas the 'norm' or 'standard' of knowing was the colonizer. Quijano (2000) effectively explains how this notion stems from a mutation of dualist, European universal perspectives, particularly from the musings of Descartes' theory of the Body vs. The non-Body ('spirit,' 'reason,' or 'subject') (Quijano, 2000). For the European imaginary, the 'Body' became the object of study, and thus, simply the vessel through which the 'Subject' carried out its sense of rationality (Quijano, 2000). This idea is reflected in how European epistemology characterized the colonized as 'objects' of study, prone to domination, exploitation,

discrimination, and 'scientific theorization' on their 'race'; meanwhile, Europeans themselves became the 'rational' subjects, capable of categorizing and exploiting the 'Body' as much as they wished (Quijano, 2000, p. 221). All this made way for an evolutionist historical perspective, in which non-Europeans could be continuously categorized in *relation to* Europeans, from 'primitive' to 'civilized' and from 'irrational' to 'rational' (Quijano, 2000). Otherwise, as Quijano succinctly explains, "In sum, for non-Europeans, they could be, in time, at best Europeanized or 'modernized'" (2000, 221).

Another perspective on why and how Eurocentric ways of knowledge dominate former colonies and how it interacts with the coloniality of power is discussed by Miguel Grosfoguel (2011). Grosfoguel (2011) refers to hegemonic European paradigms of knowledge as the 'Western myth', which entails that by delinking itself from an ethnic, racial, sexual, or gendered epistemic location, Western philosophy is able to disguise itself as objective universal truth. Essentially, Western philosophy denominates itself as the 'point zero' of knowledge and beyond a particular point of view, deceptively feigning neutrality (Grosfoguel, 2011). This notion has allowed the Western man to present himself as the only one capable of achieving a universal truth, and thus, developing universal ways of knowledge (Grosfoguel, 2011). Consequently, European colonial domination established a hierarchy of superior ('objective,' 'true') knowledge, and inferior knowledge, thus inevitably differentiating between superior and inferior people across continents (Grosfoguel, 2011).

Mignolo (2007), similarly, explains how hegemonic epistemic frameworks were, and still are, a tool (and a residue) of coloniality. Mignolo (2007) characterizes how Western hegemonic ways of knowing hold an "exclusionary and totalitarian notion [Totality] which negates, excludes, and occludes the differences and the possibilities of other totalities" (p. 451). Like Grosfoguel and Quijano, Mignolo characterizes Western perspectives of knowledge as conceptualizing themselves as the neutral 'point zero' of knowledge, and thus, the ultimate, universal truth. Mignolo (2007) explains that hegemonic epistemic frameworks stemmed from the notion that the control of knowledge in Western Christian colonies belonged to Christian, White men, which then implies that all subsequent perspectives of the world would only be conceived by, on behalf of, and benefitting, White, Western, Christian men. This conception, as alluded to above, is not only racialized but directly affected by theology (or what Mignolo cleverly refers to as *theo-politics*).

In consequence, since Indigenous, Black, and other non-White (I.e., Mestizos) communities did not themselves hold the authority or legitimacy to classify the world, they were declared inferior and thus "cast out of the standard of humanity" (Mignolo, 2007, pp. 478-9).

Mignolo (2007) further argues that the hegemony of theo-politics and its subsequent epistemic framework simply evolved into a secular version of itself or *ego-politics*. This was due to the rise of European seventeenth-century philosophers and their consequent questioning of theology. Ultimately, this translates into the idea that hegemonic epistemic frameworks constitute what are 'correct' modes of politics and economics, as well as how the organization of society should be (Mignolo, 2007). Note, also, that Mignolo recognizes 'capitalism' as a moral and cultural model, and not solely an economic one –that is to say, while capitalism has established the blatant prioritization of capital over human societal life, it is in focusing on its culture through rhetoric and discursive practice as a tool of capitalism that we can begin to catalyze a change.

With that said, Eurocentric perspectives of knowledge have persisted long after the independization of Hispanic American nation-states. Quijano (2000) likens its pervasiveness to a "distorted mirror" of what Hispanic American nation-states will never be, as the image it presents is simply too partial (p. 222). It has led Latin Americans to be "what [they] are not, what [they] never should have been, and what [they] will never be," (Quijano, 2000, p. 222).

There is a fixation on behalf of post-colonial nation-states to constantly be on the journey towards 'progress,' towards 'modernization' and towards that 'objective,' 'universal' truth which Eurocentric ways of knowledge have deemed the standard (Grosfoguel, 2011; Quijano, 2000). It is here where one can begin to understand where the 'rhetoric of progress' then stems from Kingsbury (2016) characterizes the 'rhetoric of progress' as the inherent, and often unconscious, positioning of post-colonial nation-states as inferior to the more 'modernized' West. The rhetoric of progress insidiously internalizes itself in the post-colonial imaginary as anxieties of vulnerability, dependency, and the constant need to 'modernize' (Kingsbury, 2016). In the words of Kingsbury (2016), the rhetoric of progress mistakenly "underwrites maldevelopment as underdevelopment" (p. 423). Decidedly, the rhetoric of progress effectively ignores the historical process through which the Global North actively hindered the economic and independent political growth of the South (Kingsbury, 2016). The rhetoric of progress is thus a direct residual of

colonialism, and it is an undeniable aspect of the coloniality of power that prevails in post-colonial nation-states.

The works of Donald V. Kingsbury (2016) and Fernando Coronil (1997) connect the pervasiveness of the rhetoric of progress to Venezuela and their subsequent dependency on oil. For one, Kingsbury (2016) characterizes how Venezuela's status as a major oil exporter is tainted by "anxieties of underdevelopment", as it compares itself to other major oil exporters, such as Norway or the U.S.A. (p. 423). That said, Venezuela's status as an immensely oil-rich nation is ever-present in the Venezuelan imaginary, defining oil as a unifying, 'magical' resource, but also as an inevitable curse (Kingsbury, 2016; Coronil, 1997). Coronil (1997) succinctly symbolizes this relationship by explaining that "Venezuela [has] two bodies, a political body, made up of its citizens, and a natural body made up of its rich subsoil," (p. 5). Thus, the very personhood of Venezuela is anchored on these two converging identities, or 'bodies.'

The rhetoric of progress as employed in the Venezuelan context is, then, one that envisions Venezuela transcending past its status as a petrostate, and thus positioning itself as equals alongside other developed oil-exporting nations, such as Canada or Norway (Kingsbury, 2016). A significant characteristic of the rhetoric of progress is that it is inevitably self-defeating, and lacks faith on behalf of its perpetrators, constantly undermining the very personhood and potential of Venezuela (Kingsbury, 2016). This is a direct result of the logic of coloniality, as it has, as explored above, always championed Euro-centric epistemological frameworks of what comprises the 'correct' and the 'modern.'

Coronil (1997) places emphasis on the 'magical' aspect of becoming a petrostate, and how that further reinforced the illusion of progress through political rhetoric at the center of it. Essentially, Venezuela's transformation into an oil state catalyzed the deification of the state itself (Coronil, 1997). Thus, the development of the Venezuelan oil industry birthed cosmogony, a 'miraculous' development. Coronil (1997) also contrasts how Venezuela shifted from a slow evolution based on agriculture (an extractivist economy established in colonial times), to a 'fantastic' development, one that created the illusion of a 'miracle', one that would modernize Venezuela, and position it on the same strata as their developed, Western counterparts.

For Venezuelan politicians, oil had the 'power of myth,' and most importantly, the power to persuade (Coronil, 1997, p. 1). Figuratively speaking, oil helped Venezuelan leaders and their

administrations become ‘magnanimous sorcerers,’ equipped with the magical ability to replace reality with the fantastic fiction of oil wealth and its endless possibilities (Coronil, 1997, p. 2). The notion of the politician as the ‘magnanimous sorcerer’ manifests itself in the rhetoric of progress through the use of metaphors that ignite hope and promise within Venezuelans, in a way so that they have faith in the ‘magnanimous sorcerer’ themselves (Coronil, 1997). To an extent, at the right moments of the petroleum boom, Venezuelan leaders *were* indeed successful not only in partaking in the rhetoric of progress, or what Coronil (1997) refers to as the ‘myth of progress’, but they were successful in *performing* accordingly; further democratizing Venezuela, creating modern infrastructure, and establishing periods of relative stability. However, the reality was that most of the oil wealth produced at the expense of Venezuelan petroleum did not completely trickle down to the middle and lower classes; corruption was rampant, and, worst of all, the Venezuelan state had a monopoly on the country’s natural wealth (Coronil, 1997).

Thus, the rhetoric of progress has been employed by Venezuelan politicians ever since the country’s transition into a petrostate in the early twentieth century. Simultaneously, oil, at the center of the Venezuelan imaginary, became both the nation’s ‘one-way ticket’ to modernization, but also the (in)famously called ‘devil’s excrement’ that actively upholds Venezuela’s status as a petrostate (Coronil, 1997; Kingsbury, 2016).

2.3 Border Thinking

Theories of coloniality, as well as the matrix of colonial power, are excellent concepts for explaining where an issue stems from, but not in delving into how *exactly* one can begin to ‘delink’ or ‘*desprenderse*’ from colonial epistemic frameworks and their residual rhetoric and practices (Mignolo, 2007). This is where ‘border thinking’ comes in. Border thinking has been lauded as a crucial concept in de-colonial literature, as it provides a concrete way to break away from hegemonic colonial epistemic frameworks (Mignolo, 2011).

The concept ‘border thinking’ was originally introduced by Chicana writer, Gloria Anzaldúa, in her piece ‘Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza’ and was further developed by other colonial/de-colonial thinkers, such as Walter Mignolo. The latter explains border thinking as

inherently decolonial, as it aims to not only change the contents of the conversation surrounding epistemic frameworks, but it aims to change the *terms* of it as well (Mignolo, 2011).

In short, border thinking can be described as 'thinking from the outside' or, in other words, as the use of alternative ways of knowing and languages to introduce other epistemic frameworks into Western modernity (Mayblin, n.d.). Note, also, that a key aspect of border thinking is the biographical and the body-political –or the lived experience of the subject that has historically been excluded from the production of knowledge (Mignolo, 2011; Mayblin, n.d.). Mignolo (2011), would describe the excluded subject as 'Anthropos', and the agent of Euro-centric, White and Western hegemonic epistemology as the 'enunciator'. Utilizing those terms, border thinking involves the Anthropos delinking from the enunciator and refusing assimilation into their preconceived power structure (Mignolo, 2011). Border thinking is, then, "becom[ing] epistemically disobedient, and think and do decolonially, dwelling and thinking in the borders of local histories confronting global designs" (Mignolo, 2011, p. 277).

The notion of border thinking also considers the idea that 'borders' are a fabrication of colonial epistemology; border thinking actively challenges this categorization and cultural structure, offering instead the option of epistemological hybridity based on relations, and not on constructed borders.

An example of border thinking can be found in the purpose of the Bandung Conference of 1955, in which nation-states from Asia and Africa gathered, with the purpose of defining a common vision of the future, one that was not based on either of the two greatest political Western macro-narratives, capitalism or communism (Mignolo, 2011). The Bandung Conference is an excellent example of border thinking because it actively sought an alternative to the hegemony of liberal enlightenment political theory, and its political economy, as well as from its opposition, communism-socialism (Mignolo, 2011). Rather, attendees were encouraged to seek alternatives that could be found in their own cultural, social, and political practices. A more concrete example of border thinking within the Bandung Conference is how Simon Yampara, an Aymara scholar, promoted communal doing as an alternative to capitalism and communism (Mignolo, 2011).

Thus, in Venezuelan political rhetoric, border thinking can manifest itself in the extent to which political figures incorporate alternative ways to progress or overcome the Venezuelan crisis, particularly based on 'Anthropos' perspectives, such as stemming from Indigenous perspectives,

including, but not limited to, perspectives from the Wayuu (Guajira) people, the Warao people, and the Yanomami peoples (IWGIA, 2021).

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Above, the relevant aspects of the theory of coloniality, the coloniality of power, and border thinking have been outlined. The researcher deems that the concepts above are necessary to a) Understand how coloniality is at the root of Venezuela's status as a petrostate; b) How coloniality manifests itself in Venezuelan political rhetoric, as the so-called 'rhetoric of progress'; and c) How one can begin to identify elements of de-linking from hegemonic epistemic frameworks, as explained by the concept of border thinking, or border epistemology.

At the heart of this conceptual framework lies the idea that colonialism, and the subsequent establishment of their hegemonic epistemic frameworks, determined Venezuela's status as a petrostate and its inherent fixation of the pursuit of 'progress' through the exploitation of oil. As determined by Mignolo (2007), hegemonic epistemic frameworks determine what is a 'modern' economy and government. It is also this idea of modernity that translates into the rhetoric of progress, which then manifests itself in political rhetoric, regardless of political affiliation.

Finally, border thinking, a key concept from de-colonial literature will be crucial in determining whether current Venezuelan political figures actively attempt to de-link from hegemonic epistemic frameworks, particularly, from the rhetoric of progress.

3. Empirical Background

To properly contextualize the discourses as will be analyzed below, the researcher deems it necessary to provide general insights into Venezuela's current situation and how it emerged. This section will begin by briefly discussing how oil came to be Venezuela's sole export, followed by the political factors that gave rise to Hugo Chavez, and, by proxy, to Nicolás Maduro. Likewise, this section outlines the emergence of Juan Guaidó as the current, most prominent political leader of the Venezuelan opposition.

3.1 Venezuela's status as a petrostate

Venezuela had been on its path to becoming a petrostate long before Hugo Chavez took power. Certainly, "The notion of "sowing the oil" had been present in the country's imaginary and political discourse since the 1930s, to use the benefits of oil revenue to strengthen agriculture and industry," (Bull & Rosales, 2020, p. 114). As explained above, governments prior to Chavez were organizing the economy around the production, export, and revenue of oil. The notion of 'sowing the oil' is a particularly fascinating one, as it implies that, like a crop, oil can be sown, nourished, and harvested, instead of being treated as a limited resource. Most certainly, this reference is telling of the unfathomable abundance of fossil fuels rooted in Venezuelan soil. The latter then, absolutely gave the numerous leaders before Chavez a sense of security, as the volume of oil might have appeared endless, and without environmental consequences.

With that said, Venezuela first began exporting oil in the 1920s (Cheatham, Roy & Labrador, 2021). With that in mind, early Venezuelan oil policy "provided favorable conditions for foreign companies to operate in the country," (Wiseman & Beland, 2010, p. 143). With subsequent democratization on the horizon, the former became less and less desirable to the regular Venezuelan, who craved the right to the wealth of capital derived from petroleum revenue extracted from their very own subsoil (Wiseman & Beland, 2010).

It wasn't until 1976 that the *Ley de Nacionalización del Petróleo* (Petroleum Nationalization Law) was passed, thus granting ownership of all oil production within the country to the state. This law made way for the establishment of Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA), the national Venezuelan oil company. However, this decree still fiercely favored international conglomerates, dictating that structures that were established before the nationalization could continue as usual, while also stating that foreign companies could participate in the Venezuelan oil industry as long as activities remained 'in the interest of the Venezuelan state' (Wiseman & Beland, 2010). The latter, of course, in its ambiguous nature, left plenty of room for multinationals to extract and produce Venezuelan oil. Once again, the Venezuelan oil industry continued to benefit external parties, and a small group of local political elites, over their people.

What followed was a myriad of policies on behalf of the Venezuelan political elite that continued to invite and benefit foreign oil conglomerates. This includes, but is not limited to, internationalization through the lowering of corporate taxes, as well as lax conflict resolution mechanisms that gave international tribunals and courts predominance over local ones (Wiseman & Beland, 2010; Bull & Rosales, 2020).

3.2 Who was Hugo Chavez?

Hugo Chavez rose to power in 1999 after running on a platform of re-distribution of wealth, particularly of oil wealth, as well as combatting social inequalities. He formed part of the Latin-American movement nicknamed the 'pink tide' due to his socialist-populist stances. Chavez' election was the result of public dissatisfaction with an increasingly stagnant economy, as well as a lack of faith in the traditional political partisan parties due to perceptions of rampant corruption (Canache, 2002).

Before his rise to power, Chavez conducted a failed coup, *Operacion Zamora*, in 1992. *Operacion Zamora* was a direct response to the repression and violence against protestors in *El Caracazo;* a protest in response to a steep fall in oil prices and high perceptions of political corruption (Canache, 2002). *Operacion Zamora* failed in a matter of hours, as Chavez and his allies only had about 10% support of the military; soon after, Chavez turned himself in and was arrested (Spanakos, 2011). However, it's argued that Chavez' failed coup had a positive effect on his public perception, as several Venezuelans (particularly lower and working-class Venezuelans) felt a deep discontent with their government (Spanakos, 2011). By the time Chavez was released from jail, there was clear support for his cause. Essentially, Chavez understood the importance of following a democratic means to reach his ends, even if he referred to his mission as a 'revolution' of the working class. The former would, in time, legitimize him in the eyes of a previously elitist, bipartisan government. Chavez went on to win the 1998 presidential election with an overwhelming 56.2% of the votes (Canache, 2002).

At the height of his political popularity, Chavez was revered by the Venezuelan lower class for his emphasis on social programs, the construction of infrastructure, and the empowering of the disenfranchised through socialist spaces. Although Chavez was channeling considerable funds into

his '*Misiones*' or social projects, he made several decisions that contributed to the steady decline of Venezuela's oil production, including the mass firings of thousands of experienced PDVSA workers, as well as providing large sums of subsidized oil to other countries in the region (Cheatham, Roy & Labrador, 2021). Chavez' democratic legitimacy also declined significantly and paved the way for authoritarian practices; he modified presidential term limits so they would benefit him, took total control of the Supreme Court, heavily censored the press, and nationalized hundreds of private businesses (Cheatham, Roy & Labrador, 2021).

Chavez' critical battle with cancer culminated in his death in 2013, leaving behind a divided nation on the verge of the worst political, economic, and humanitarian crisis it had ever witnessed (Neuman, 2013).

3.3 Maduro's Administration and the Venezuelan Crisis

Prior to his passing, Chavez appointed Nicolás Maduro as his political successor (Neuman, 2013). According to the Venezuelan constitution, emergency elections would be held within 30 days of the former president's passing. It is here in which Maduro ran, representing Chavez' party, and won against (then) opposition leader, Henrique Capriles Radonski (Neuman, 2013). Maduro won by a narrow margin of 1.6%, to which the Venezuelan opposition claimed foul play and result manipulation (Watts & Lopez, 2013). Regardless, the electorate council denied any claims of manipulation, as well as Capriles Radonski's appeal for a vote-by-vote audit (Watts & Lopez, 2013).

Part of the appeal of Chavez' administration was his personalistic leadership style –without it, and in the hands of the inexperienced Maduro, the latter was ill-equipped to deal with the effects of plummeting global oil prices in 2014 (Cheatham, Roy & Labrador, 2021). Venezuela's economy, solely reliant on oil exports, took the blow, and thus created an unprecedented crisis. Venezuela's situation is characterized by hyperinflation, rampant violence and crime, food and medicine shortages, and the demise of the medical and public system (Reid, 2022). More than 5 million Venezuelans have fled the country in search of a better life (UNHCR, 2021).

Despite the dire situation, Maduro's leadership has been tainted by "political repression, censorship, and electoral manipulation," and otherwise little action to mitigate the effects of the current crisis (Cheatham, Roy & Labrador, 2021).

3.4 Political Opposition and the Role of Juan Guaidó:

Political fragmentation and dissent among the Venezuelan political opposition has prevailed since the beginning of Chavez' administration and has continued well into Maduro's regime (Gunson, 2021). Significant cleavages between the leading opposition parties have continuously undermined their efforts to strategize and mobilize against the Chavista front. Although they hold similar political ideologies (middle right), the opposition is fragmented in terms of what they deem the best strategy to confront the Chavista regime.

There are two dominant strands of what each faction thinks is the most appropriate course of action: the '*salidistas*,' those who favor insurrection, mass mobilization, and 'maximum pressure' from external actors, and the gradualists, those who, as the name implies, are open to more gradual change, accepting concessions and (often) losses (Gunson, 2021). The latter seeks to engage with the current government and follow democratic routes to success. The *salidistas*, on the other hand, seek support and pressure on behalf of the international sphere towards Maduro's administration in the form of sanctions, military action, shaming, and diplomatic isolation (Gunson, 2021).

Juan Guaidó is a *salidista* opposition leader. The 35-year-old obtained his position as interim president after becoming the head of the National Assembly, Venezuela's national parliament in 2019 (Nugent, 2019). Although Maduro had stripped the National Assembly of its power years prior, the National Assembly continued to meet and was nonetheless still being recognized across the country (Nugent, 2019). After consulting the constitution, it was deemed that if there is a 'vacuum of power' within the country, then the president of the National Assembly ought to step in as interim president (Nugent, 2019). Guaidó, backed by the members of the National Assembly, declared himself interim president following the presidential elections of May 2018, which were widely believed to have been rigged to the benefit of Maduro, thus lengthening his term (Nugent, 2019).

Immediately, Guaidó claimed recognition and support on behalf of the Venezuelan military and claimed to enjoy over 60% of support from the Venezuelan people (Gunson, 2021). Likewise, Guaidó was recognized by several actors within the international community. Regionally, he was recognized by Chile, Colombia, and even by Brazil's far-right Jair Bolsonaro (Nugent, 2019). Other major supporters included the United States, and the European Union, although the latter revoked their support in 2021 (Gunson, 2021). Conversely, some governments openly continued to support Maduro, such as China, Russia, Iran, and Cuba (Rendon & Fernandez, 2020). Considering the above, the researcher would like to emphasize the unconventional nature of Venezuela's political situation. This international divide in support and recognition also further demonstrates the level of instability of Venezuela's government –as it is a controversial, divisive topic among the international community.

Since then, not much has changed for Venezuela under Guaidó's interim presidency. The challenges he faces include continuing to strive for a unified opposition, producing a transparent and documented account of how his administration is employing the money at their disposal, and to further increasing his perceived legitimacy (Gunson, 2021). The latter is particularly important as, over two years and a pandemic later, Guaidó still has not run in legitimate elections against Maduro: these elections should have taken place within 30 days of Guaidó being named interim president (Gunson, 2021). In consequence, Guaidó has lost the support of major international players, such as the European Union (Gunson, 2021).

4. Research Design

To reiterate, the guiding research question of this thesis is as follows: *'To what extent do elements of coloniality present themselves in the rhetoric of current Venezuelan political parties?'*. With that in mind, this research aims to find elements of the rhetoric of progress, as well as of border thinking, in political discourse carried out by Nicolás Maduro, the current president of Venezuela, as well as by Juan Guaidó, the current, most prominent leader of the Venezuelan opposition and acting interim president. This thesis consists of an in-depth comparative analysis of three oral, political communications on behalf of each leader. Due to the examination of each speech *as is*, considering their context, this research is positive, meaning that this research aims to understand

and explain reality "as is" (Toshkov, 2016, p. 24). This research can also be classified as explanatory because it aims to explain a general causal relation between coloniality, its residual epistemic frameworks, and its manifestation in current day post-colonial contexts (Toshkov, 2016). In using each leaders' discourse as the unit of analysis, one can apply the lens of colonial/decolonial concepts to each speech to demonstrate the presence of the rhetoric of progress, and the absence of alternatives to oil extractivism and dependency.

4.1 Research rationale: Critical Discourse Analysis

This thesis will carry out discourse analysis as its main form of data analysis. The former will be carried out through a socio-political approach, more precisely, through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The researcher deems CDA an appropriate form of discursive analysis because CDA, by definition, seeks to examine structural relations of power and dominance as they manifest in language (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). This directly relates to the matter at hand, as one seeks to identify the presence of the rhetoric of progress, as well as of border thinking in post-colonial political discourse. As established in the literature review, the rhetoric of progress is a direct result of hegemonic epistemology in post-colonial nations, and border thinking, its counterpart. Thus, language is a residue of colonial power that continues to manifest itself in rhetoric, which then affects social, cultural, and economic practices. Political speeches then are a crucial part of said consequential rhetoric.

There are three dimensions to CDA, *discourse as text*, discourse as a *discursive practice*, and *discourse as social practice* (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). This thesis will only be utilizing the third, *discourse as social practice*, which assumes that discourse is an inherent feature of hegemonic processes. In this case, the rhetoric of progress is a residue of colonial epistemic frameworks and thus is engrained, as a discursive feature, in post-colonial political rhetoric. Conversely, the dimension of discourse as a social practice also lends itself to identifying *alternatives* to the rhetoric of progress, which as mentioned above, entails border thinking. This is because discourse as a social practice also assumes that hegemonic change can be witnessed and manifested in discourse (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). Furthermore, CDA works particularly well with theories of ideology and power, such as the colonial/decolonial theory at hand. This is because

CDA facilitates the materialization of these theories, by projecting them upon a discursive object, and gives them patterns to account for the relationship between linguistic practice and social structure (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 452).

This research will utilize CDA to analyze the following aspects of each speech: vocabulary (the word choice employed by each speaker), as well as the genre; this is due to the speeches all falling within the same genre –political speeches. Elements such as grammar or non-verbal communications (such as body language) on behalf of each speaker will not be considered.

4.2 Case selection & Justification

The researcher has chosen to examine elements of coloniality/decoloniality in Venezuelan political rhetoric as a demonstration that hegemonic epistemic frameworks established during colonialism dictate current economic practices, in this case, Venezuela's dependency on oil exports.

This thesis focuses solely on the speeches of Juan Guaidó and Nicolás Maduro because they are currently the most prominent political leaders of the nation. On one hand, due to the fragmented nature of the Venezuelan opposition, as explained above, the rise of Juan Guaidó is significant, as it garnered extensive international and national renown –a status no other Venezuelan opposition leader had ever achieved. Guaidó's leadership of the Venezuelan opposition is also the most recent, and therefore the most underreported on, particularly in academic literature. Finally, if Venezuela were to transition away from *Chavismo* and Maduro's regime, it would most likely be through the election and leadership of Juan Guaidó. Therefore, it is worth examining whether there is a difference in attitudes towards 'progress' as well as alternative, de-colonial thinking between Guaidó and Maduro.

On the other hand, Maduro represents the 'status quo,' per se. Maduro represents the perspective in power, the one that has been perpetuating extractivism and the status of Venezuela as a petrostate through Hugo Chavez' legacy. Additionally, Maduro is the point of comparison for Guaidó's rhetoric. The former is in power, and the latter stands directly opposite them, hoping to replace him.

This research will analyze six speeches, three on behalf of each speaker. For this, one has chosen to select speeches based on comparable contexts: one international, and two local contexts. One chose to incorporate an international context due to the salience that Guaidó's rise to (interim) presidency had within the international community. Additionally, it is compelling to see whether either leader uses the rhetoric of progress more, less, or at the same rate as when they speak to a solely Venezuelan audience. On the other hand, one chose two local contexts as they can demonstrate how each leader speaks to solely Venezuelan audiences. Local contexts, then, allow for the opportunity to focus on the interaction between the leader and their respective followers.

Speeches in the first context, the international context, will be speeches given to the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2020. Although only Maduro was invited to the virtual session, Guaidó also released a virtual statement, addressed to the member states of the General Assembly, as well as the Secretary-General (Armario, 2020). Not only were both speeches formulated to be given on the same international stage, but they were also both pre-recorded due to the virtual nature of the conference. This eliminates factors of physical place, as they were both recorded in the leaders' respective 'comfort zones.' This context makes for excellent comparability between leaders, as the speeches were both addressed to the same audience, within the same conference.

The second context is a local one, meaning it is directly addressed to the Venezuelan people. To make both contexts comparable, these also ought to be similar. Thus, for this second context, both speeches are in the form of 'official presidential addresses.' On one hand, Guaidó's speech in this context is his first official address to Venezuelans after the National Assembly declared him interim president in 2019. On the other hand, Maduro's selected speech for this context is his 'Yearly Address to the Nation', for the year 2021. Both are directed at the Venezuelan people, and both deal with general topics (as opposed to a speech given considering a particular situation). Essentially, these last two speeches are comparable based on their same theme (presidential address) and purpose (to inform the Venezuelan people verbally regarding the administration).

The third context is also a local one. For both leaders, this second local context will be in the form of press conferences, in which both speakers are asked a set of questions by local reporters. Because the notion of a press conference is rather broad (meaning a press conference could tackle any issue at hand, including special press conferences), and the time constraints of this research

do not allow for the viewing of every single press conference given by each speaker, due to the sheer volume of the former, one has chosen to randomize how these speeches are chosen. The researcher will touch upon this notion further below.

Furthermore, the researcher chose to work with three speeches, as opposed to five or ten, because, on the one hand, this number captures the three major modes of speech in which each leader communicates with their followers and with international actors. On the other hand, his number is within the time constraints of this thesis. One also deems three speeches to be enough to answer the research question, as all speeches offer a variety of quotes to be taken into consideration due to their nature, as well as their length.

4.2.1 Contextual Information by Speech

This sub-section will briefly outline the relevant context of each speech to properly understand any relevant, salient events that may have shaped the content of the speeches.

The first speech for both speakers is an address to the 75th session of the UNGA. In 2020, the United Nations held its 75th session of the General Assembly (UNGA) on an online platform for the first time in history, due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical gatherings in New York City, U.S. (Hernandez & Perez-Sarmenti, 2020). This format was ground-breaking, as it allowed world leaders that had previously skipped previous UNGA meetings to 'attend' from the safety of their presidential palaces (Armario, 2020). This was the case for Maduro, who had skipped the session the previous year and who was advised against setting foot in the United States. Maduro duly submitted a pre-recorded, half-an-hour statement which was then aired at the actual UNGA meeting. Maduro's website also provided an official transcript of his speech via his official government site.

Juan Guaidó, on the other hand, although recognized by over sixty member states at the time as the legitimate interim president of Venezuela, was not invited to attend (Armario, 2020). Regardless, Guaidó released a statement addressed to the members present at the Secretary-General summit, as well as to the Secretary-General himself, Antonio Guterres. Guaidó released this statement as a pre-recorded, half-hour message on his public Twitter, as well as on the official website of the Venezuelan National Assembly, along with the transcript of the speech.

The first local context for both speakers is in the form of a presidential address. For Guaidó, it is his first address to the Venezuelan people after the National Assembly named him interim president on January 25, 2019. A few things to keep in mind, after being named president of the National Assembly, Guaidó and his supporters incited peaceful protests across the country. Civil response to their pleas was overwhelming, and an attestation to Guaidó's initial popularity can be attributed to Wednesday, January 23rd, 2019, when the National Assembly swore him in as interim president before thousands of opposition supporters in the main town square of Venezuela's capital city, Caracas (Cheslow, Wamsley & Gonzales, 2019).

Note that January 23rd is not a random date in Venezuelan history. In 2019, January 23rd marked the 61st anniversary of the coup against Venezuelan dictator Marco Perez Jimenez in 1958, and thus the beginning of a relatively stable, 20th Venezuelan democracy (Wallenfeldt, n.d.). After his swearing in, protesting continued across the country well into Friday, January 25th, which is when Guaidó's first address to the people as interim president took place. Guaidó gave the address at a central, public place in the heart of Caracas, where they were met with overwhelming support from hundreds of supporting attendees.

The presidential address the researcher chose on behalf of Maduro takes place nearly two years later, on January 12, 2021. It was given to the National Assembly, now renewed with pro-Maduro representatives after persecuting and shunning Guaidó and those who supported him. The presidential address was televised on all national channels and took a total of four hours. Like Guaidó's address, Maduro's speech was written for an audience of supporters, with plenty of hopeful speech regarding the Chavista regime, condemning capitalism, and re-capping Venezuela's 'excellent' response to the COVID-19 virus.

Moving on, Guaidó's third speech, a press conference, was given on September 14, 2021. It was a routine press conference, not without any specific topic in mind. However, due to his emphasis on the latter, one can infer that it was to encourage his supporters to vote in local municipal elections, which were to take place the following week. Guaidó tackled several topics, mainly relating to recent occurrences with Venezuelan-owned petrochemical company, Monomeros, to how Guaidó and his party could facilitate COVID-19 relief.

Lastly, Maduro's press conference took place on February 17, 2021. It was also without a specific cause or topic in mind. There were several questions regarding Maduro's thoughts on Biden's

extended support for Guaidó, xenophobia on behalf of other Latin American countries towards Venezuelan migrants, Maduro's opinions of Guaidó (to which the former did not give much attention to), and about the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines.

4.3 Data Collection

The method of data collection consists of compiling three speeches for each political leader. As mentioned above, these three speeches will vary in context, with the first one being an international context, and the second and third being local (national) contexts.

The data sets for the first two contexts are the official channels of communication of both political leaders. For Guaidó it is the '*PresidenciaVe.com*' website, for Maduro, it is the site 'mppr.gov.Ve,' as well as their respective official YouTube channels, which provide access to their live-streamed speeches. The researcher chose to utilize Guaidó and Maduro's official sites as their databases because some live streams from external news sites experience technical difficulties, where they are either cut off unexpectedly, or the recording quality is simply low, and thus the live stream glitches and cuts off what the speaker has to say. Choosing official databases eliminates this problem, as speeches are live-streamed in their entirety.

Moreover, for Guaidó and Maduro's addresses to the 75th session of the UNGA, as well as for Maduro's annual presidential address[1], the researcher utilized the official transcripts of the speeches, uploaded in Spanish to the leaders' official websites. For the other three speeches, the researcher had to transcribe them manually. This was done with the help of a Python program code, written and coded by a close acquaintance. The code transcribed the text of the YouTube videos and placed them in a document with their respective timestamps.[2]

In section 4.2, the researcher mentioned that the choice of the third context, the local press conference, would be randomized. The researcher does this by inputting the keywords: '*Rueda de*

[1] Maduro's annual presidential address (2021) was over 4 hours in its entirety. The researcher utilized the official livestream, as well as the official transcript provided by Maduro's official site, in order to code the speech. However, due to its length, the researcher was unable to access time-stamped transcripts from the YouTube video. Thus, citations for this speech will not be time-stamped.

[2] Transcripts can be found via this link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17TnvVfOY3_0P0l_ffgBxtIR1Nvu5x-wS?usp=sharing

prensa (press conference),' in the search bar of the leaders' official sites and YouTube channels. One avoided titles that specified that the press conference pertained to a specific topic, as was the case when taken from either of the official sites of each speaker. To narrow down data sets, the researcher decided that both press conferences should be from the years 2020 up until 2022. This is to control for the topic of the COVID-19 pandemic so that if it were to come up, it would not only show up in one of the two speeches or otherwise skew the rhetoric of only either of the speeches.

4.4 Data Analysis

4.4.1 Codification & Themes

To analyze the content of each speech, this research used deductive codification to identify relevant themes as guided by the research question and hypotheses. Briefly, coding is "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 3). In qualitative research, a code can be anything –ranging from a single word to complete paragraphs (Saldaña, 2016). Likewise, sentences, words, or phrases that share a common theme can also be considered units of analysis that represent a singular meaning. Note, also, that a code in the context of this article is a "research-generated construct" that attributes interpreted meaning to each individual theme (Saldaña, 2016, p. 3). In this case, each code speaks to elements of colonial theory as put forth in the theoretical framework.

For this research, one will search for two elements in each speech. On one hand, there is the theme of the *rhetoric of progress*, which has to do with progressing 'past' something, modernization, and evolution as a country and society. This element speaks directly to one of the categories of the colonial matrix of power as brought forth by Quijano (2000), which is the 'exploitation of land and labor (economy)'. The researcher has chosen to focus on this aspect when codifying, and consequently, in the interpretation of their results, as it speaks directly to *H1*. Again, the search for this theme is deductive, as it is guided by the theory of coloniality, and there is prior evidence for its presence in post-colonial political rhetoric.

The second element one will seek in each discourse is the conceptual category of border thinking. As explained in the literature review, border thinking seeks alternative epistemic perspectives to capitalism and extractivism and sets epistemology as the foundation of each civilization and, therefore, of its transformation. The search for border thinking in post-colonial political rhetoric is also deductive.

To effectively seek out both aspects of coloniality in each speech, the researcher has devised a list of keywords that they expect to find for both the rhetoric of progress and border thinking. (See Tables 1 and 2 below). These keywords offer a starting point for identifying the semantic field surrounding each theme, consequently helping the researcher identify patterns in words, phrases, and concepts as put forth by each speaker. This process of codification will aid in the discovery of other patterns and keywords that have not been accounted for yet (Saldaña, 2016).

Representative Words	Code	Theme
Oil, petroleum	Oil	Oil
Oil reserves, petroleum reserves, activos (actives)	Oil reserves	
Oil revenue, petroleum revenue	Oil revenue	
Oil industry, national oil industry, national oil company	Oil industry	
Fossil fuels, fuel	Fossil fuels	
Resources, natural resources	Natural resources	
Progressing	Progress	Progress
Move forward, moving forward, moving ahead	Move forward	
Modernity, modern, modernizing	Modernity	
Develop, development, developing	Development	
Leave crisis behind, leave crisis, exit crisis	Leave crisis	
Evolution, evolving	Evolution	
Democracy, democratization, return to democracy	Democracy	
Triumph, to triumph, win, won, triumph over	Triumph	
Battle (Lucha)	Battle	
Deserving, deserved	Deserve	Hope
Hope, hoping	Hope	
To dream, dreaming	Dream	
Awaken	Awaken	
Sacrifice, to sacrifice, sacrificing	Sacrifice	
Determination, determined	Determination	
Dignity, with dignity	Dignity	
Wounds, wounded	Wound	
Heal, to heal, healing	Heal	
Future, for the future, in the future	Future	

Table 1: Description of codes and themes for the *rhetoric of progress*.

Representative Words	**Code**	**Theme**
Ethnic groups, ethnic tribes	Ethnic groups	Indigeneity
Indigenous groups, Indigenous tribes	Indigenous groups	
Wayuu (Guajiro)	Wayuu, Wayu, Guajiro/a	
Warao	Warao	
Yanomami	Yanomami, Yanomamis	
Revolution, to revolutionize, revolutionary	Revolution	Revolution
Anti-capitalist, anti-capitalism	Anti-capitalism	
Hegemony	Hegemony	
Imperialism, anti-imperialism	Imperialism	
Transformation, revolutionary transformation	Transformation	
Community, communal	Community	Epistemic Disobedience
Communal decision-making		
Delinking, 'desprenderse'	Delinking	
Capitalism, capitalist system	Anti-capitalism	

Table 2: Description of codes and themes for *border thinking*.

4.5 Validity, Reliability & Limitations

The scope of this research is not without limitations. The most obvious limitation is that this thesis only analyzes three speeches on behalf of each political leader. While one has attempted to choose each speech based on comparable, relevant contexts, it would be wrong to assume that those three speeches cover all the necessary and/or relevant results for a study of this nature. It is expected that if this study covered a more significant number of speeches, then results would allow for greater reliability and potential for generalization. Next, although the Venezuelan crisis is salient, this thesis does not consider or compare *other* countries within South America to further identify themes of coloniality. Therefore, some situational elements of the thesis solely pertain to Venezuela.

Another limitation is that the researcher is a single coder, meaning that one does not have any extra aid in the coding process, or an extra set of eyes to oversee the coding process and its consequent results. Coding is inherently an interpretative practice, that may be shaped by the coder's previous knowledge, perspectives, and lived experiences –a second coder can mitigate the effects of the first coder's perspectives on data (Saldaña, 2016). Likewise, the researcher translated all codes and quotes present in the thesis to Spanish based on their own native knowledge of Venezuelan Spanish. This warrants the question of whether a Spanish speaker from a different Hispanic country would translate or interpret codes and quotes in a slightly different manner. However, to mitigate erroneous or biased interpretations, one has provided key points regarding the context of each speech, in order to analyze discourse vis a vis their contextual backgrounds.

Regarding the validity of this research, the theoretical elements considered are undisputed and established in the field of social and political science. Since this thesis is based upon widely peer-reviewed elements of the theory of coloniality and carries out the final analysis utilizing said elements, one can attest to their validity. Furthermore, one has established that this thesis addresses a gap in the literature pertaining to the academic coverage of Juan Guaidó's speech.

Lastly, this research presents high levels of reliability because it utilizes speeches that are accessible to whoever wishes to replicate the study. The sources utilized were, in all instances, official government sources, meaning that they stem from reliable sources and stand alone as primary sources.

5. Results

5.1 Key Findings

The full results of this thesis' discursive analysis can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. Appendix A lists the quotes which exemplify the rhetoric of progress, as explained earlier in the thesis. Appendix B, on the other hand, lists quotes that relate vis a vis border thinking –the researcher would like to clarify, once again, that border thinking is a concept through which the researcher will analyze the text. The researcher is clarifying this as the base of their analysis is one aspect of the colonial matrix of power (economy), which the rhetoric of progress falls under, whereas border thinking searches for epistemological alternatives –it is, therefore, less established in rhetoric.

Below, the reader can find the most prominent 'word counts' on behalf of each speaker (Tables 3 and 4). These 'word counts' showcase the number of times each code or word came up within the speeches analyzed for each speaker.

JUAN GUAIDO – *Rhetoric of Progress*	
Word/Code	**# Of times said**
Resources	23
Battle (Lucha)	20
Hope	12
Petroleum (oil)	5
Dream	3

Table 3: Description of word count of the top 5 most prominent codes in identifying the *rhetoric of progress* utilized by **Juan Guaidó**.

NICOLAS MADURO – *Rhetoric of Progress*	
Word/Code	**# Of times said**
Petroleum (oil)	32
Battle (Lucha)	20
Dignity	12
Hope	9
Resources	8

Table 4: Description of word count of the top 5 most prominent codes in identifying the *rhetoric of progress* utilized by **Nicolás Maduro**.

Some interesting things to note about the results pertaining to the rhetoric of progress include:

- When referring to petroleum (oil), 60% of the time, Guaidó was utilizing Venezuela's large oil reserves as a reason for development, meaning that Venezuela *should* be more advanced due to its immense oil riches.
- When Guaidó referred to Venezuela's natural resources (or 'activos'), 30% of the times it was to convey ownership of the latter to the common Venezuelan.
- When Maduro referred to petroleum (or the oil industry), 40% of the times it was to convey that external factors (and actors) 'sabotaged' the Venezuelan oil industry, and thus it has been stunted. 21% of the time, Maduro referred to the Venezuelan oil industry as something his administration is 'reconstructing.'
- Oddly enough, Guaidó and Maduro utilized the term 'battle (Lucha)' the same number of times.

JUAN GUAIDO – *Border Thinking*	
Word/Code	**# Of times said**
Community	12
Martyrs	2
Ancestors	2
Civil Society	1
Wayuu (Guajiro)	0
Warao	0
Yanomami	0

Table 5: Description of word count of the top 5 most prominent codes in relation to border thinking utilized by Juan Guaidó.

NICOLAS MADURO – *Border Thinking*	
Word/Code	**# Of times said**
Revolution	29
Community	18
Inclusive	15
Capitalism	8
Participative	7
Wayuu (Guajiro)	0
Warao	0

Yanomami	0

Table 6: Description of word count of the top 5 most prominent codes in relation to border thinking utilized by Nicolás Maduro.

Some interesting things to note about the results pertaining to border thinking include:

- Guaidó solely used the word 'community' to refer to the 'international community', as opposed to Maduro, who used it as such only 50% of the time. 33% of the time, Maduro used the word 'community' to refer to Venezuelans, in particular the role that singular communities play in Venezuelan politics.
- Maduro solely used the word 'revolution' to refer to his regime, subsequently emphasizing his focus on inclusion and aiding the working class.
- Although not depicted in tables 5 or 6, Maduro only mentions Indigenous communities once, in a list sequence of those that make up Venezuelan populations. Maduro also mentions 'ethnic groups' once, but as groups that ought to be protected, not included. Guaidó does not mention either 'Indigenous communities,' nor 'ethnic groups' once.
- Neither Guaidó, nor Maduro refer to the top three most prominent Venezuelan Indigenous groups: the Wayuu (Guajiro) (413,000 inhabitants), the Warao people (36,000 inhabitants) and the Yanomami (35,000 inhabitants) (MAR, 2006).

5.2 Discussion

This section delves into the results described above, as well as displayed in the appendices, and places them into discussion with each other, through the lens of the theory of coloniality as put forth in the theoretical framework. To reiterate, the researcher will be analyzing the speeches, particularly concerning one out of four aspects of Quijano's (2000) model of the colonial matrix of power – exploitation of land and labor, as this aspect is the one that directly pertains to the rhetoric of progress. The analysis will consider the main elements of the rhetoric of progress as dictated by Coronil (1997), and touched upon in previous sections, and use them to identify these within Guaidó and Maduro's political speeches. This analysis will also consider how both political leaders' rhetoric may differ slightly from Coronil's (1997) concept of the rhetoric of progress.

This sub-section will begin by analyzing the results of the rhetoric of progress, followed by the results of border thinking, followed by a general discussion of how these two concepts overlap (or do not) with each other. Furthermore, the researcher will also delve into the significance of the results (or lack thereof) of border thinking.

The results from this compact study of six speeches by two prominent Venezuelan leaders reveal that the rhetoric of progress is alive and well in Venezuelan political discourse –and just as speech does, it has evolved to reflect the current occurrences in Venezuelan politics. The main characteristics of the rhetoric of progress are present in the results, with these being: references to oil resources as a justification and pathway for progress (or for 'deserving' progress), calls to striving for progress that are devoid of any structural critique of extractivism, self-defeating language, and the use of emotional or 'magical' metaphors that contribute to feelings of hope and empowerment.

The rhetoric of progress as employed by Guaidó and Maduro differs slightly from the one put forth by Coronil in 1997 in a few ways. Consider, for example, that the 'original' rhetoric of progress was a persuasive discursive tool used by the political elite, regardless of party, in a standard way (Coronil, 1997). However, the results of this study revealed differences in what 'progress' means for each party and thus affecting how the rhetoric of progress itself is used, respectively. Hence, while it is still a persuasive tool, parties do not employ it in the same manner. For example, one can assume that Guaidó, on one hand, associates 'progress' with democracy and international legitimacy. On the other hand, Maduro associates 'progress' with rejecting 'hegemony' and embracing icons of Venezuelan history, such as Simon Bolivar. The bottom line, however, (or what maintains their discourse as a subset of the rhetoric of progress, even if slightly different than the original), is that both Guaidó and Maduro offer no structural critique of extractivism and economic dependency on oil –but continue to see it as their 'one-way ticket' to progress, whether that entails the support of the international community, or embracing icons of independence. This absence of criticism towards extractivism aids in the perpetuation of the exploitation of land as a component of the matrix of colonial power.

5.2.1 The centrality of oil in the rhetoric of progress

With that said, the researcher would like to reiterate that oil continues to be an essential aspect of the rhetoric of progress as employed by Guaidó and Maduro. According to the results, the speakers refer to oil, oil reserves, or resources, in two ways: as a justifier and/or as a supposed source of power. Oil is used as a 'justifier' in the sense that the mere fact that Venezuela has massive oil reserves should 'justify' Venezuela's future progress, almost making oil reserves an unofficial precursor to modernity. On the other hand, oil is used as a source of power –similarly, to 'justify' why Venezuela should be more advanced, the notion of having oil 'as is' should be reason enough for the country to be powerful on its own.

When referring to oil, Guaidó mostly utilizes it as a justifier. For example, consider Guaidó's first quote extracted from his address to the 75th session of the UNGA, which tells that it is "nearly unbelievable that a country with one of the largest oil reserves in the world, vast natural resources, and a relatively stable [past] democratic tradition has become what it is today," (2019, 16:59). This quote positions Venezuela as what it should be, versus where it currently is. Guaidó mentions oil reserves, 'vast natural resources', and a past democratic tradition –thus, inherently equating oil wealth with a 'modernized', progressed democracy, or with what Venezuela should be. Oil wealth, in short, justifies a paved-out path to progress that Venezuela ought to follow. The bottom line is that Guaidó is still using Western metrics of progress and modernization, such as democracy and access to natural wealth, by which to judge and compare Venezuela –Certainly, vast oil resources in a fossil fuel dependent world mean more capital, and more capital means more potential for expansion, infrastructure, and eventually, modernity. All this ought to be facilitated by the utmost Western standard of politics, liberal democracy.

Another observation regarding how Guaidó speaks about oil in his rhetoric of progress is how he reiterates the ownership of oil and natural resources to Venezuelans. In a few quotes, Guaidó underlines how Monómeros, a petrochemical company that falls under PDVSA, the national oil company, "is and will always belong to Venezuelans" (2021, 40:45). Guaidó utilizes pronouns of ownership in referring to oil reserves and 'activos', principally 'our' and 'ours'. This observation serves to reinforce the idea put forth by Coronil (1997), that Venezuela has two bodies: the citizens, and the oil-rich subsoil, respectively. These two bodies converge to make up the Venezuelan identity. In granting (metaphorical) ownership of oil to Venezuelans, Guaidó is further converging these two 'bodies', and thus further cementing the centrality of oil, and consequently, the

exploitation of land, into the Venezuelan imaginary. Underlining the ownership of oil in his speech also contributes to the notion that the Venezuelan people 'deserve' progress, as it would stem from the profits of what is rightfully theirs, and these profits will eventually make way for the so-coveted standard of modernity set forth by Venezuela's Western counterparts.

On the other hand, Maduro utilizes oil in his rhetoric of progress as a source of power, and as an attestation to the success of his current administration. In line with the aforementioned, Maduro often refers to the Venezuelan oil industry as a source of power that has been wounded by external aggressors. Take, for example, this quote from his presidential address in January 2021, in which he states, "Our oil industry has been the main target of a policy of destruction, of a barren earth," (Maduro, 2021). The 'policy of destruction' Maduro is referring to are the sanctions placed on his regime on behalf of several countries, mainly by the United States. Additionally, consider this other quote, in which Maduro emphasizes, "These imperial wars have one goal (…) to take absolute political power and with it control of our immense resources and riches," (Maduro, 2021). Although this quote does not mention oil, one can infer that Maduro is referring to Venezuela's oil industry –as he does throughout the remainder of the speech. In both instances, according to Maduro, the Venezuelan oil industry has been the recipient of external violence; implying that the precursor to Venezuelan progress, which is oil wealth, is wounded, and thus has crippled Maduro's administration to thrive. In the speeches analyzed, Maduro's references to oil and the Venezuelan oil industry are always touched upon vis a vis the international sanctions that have crippled it. This signals the idea that the Venezuelan oil industry is the way to success, but there is an external roadblock to progress. The following quote further reinforces the following, as Maduro states, "[If sanctions were revoked] Venezuela would enjoy an immediate recuperation, miraculous and automatic. It would be like giving oxygen to the blood of a debilitated body," (Maduro, 2021). The lifting of international sanctions would reinvigorate the Venezuelan oil industry –and thus give oxygen to the blood of Maduro's administration. Oil is, clearly, a source of power and ultimate progress. This quote also aligns with Coronil's (1997) proposition regarding the two bodies of Venezuela mentioned above; its people and its rich subsoil. The second body, Venezuela's rich subsoil, is something that is, ultimately, always in a state of revitalization to achieve progress and modernity.

While both Maduro and Guaidó continue to emphasize the Venezuelan oil industry as a gateway to development and ultimately, modernity, both leaders differ in other aspects of their rhetoric of progress. The researcher classifies this aspect as a tool of persuasion, or, in other words, different means for the same ends. On one hand, Guaidó highlights the importance of international intervention and deems that high levels of international legitimacy for the Venezuelan administration is the way to go. On the other hand, Maduro wants to continue the path which Chavez laid out for him, the Bolivarian, populist 'revolution' of the working class and instead draws inspiration from Venezuelan historical figure, Simon Bolivar.

Take, for example, Guaidó's constant emphasis on international support. While the latter is (or was, before the European Union revoked recognition of his interim status), a foundation for Guaidó's political legitimacy, international recognition also provides a point of comparison –and ultimately, a destination, for Guaidó's Venezuela. Throughout his speeches, Guaidó consistently embodies a sense of pride at the amount of support the Venezuelan opposition has garnered from the international community, constantly reiterating and listing the countries which have joined the battle for a 'Venezuela libre,' or a free Venezuela. Even in discussing Venezuela's own petrochemical company, Monomeros, in his press conference in September 2021, Guaidó makes a point of bringing in the perspective of the international community, stating that it is through the auditing and aid of legitimate international actors and nations (or as Guaidó refers to supporting governments: allies) that companies such as Monomeros can thrive (Guaidó, 2021). Based on the results of the discursive analysis carried out, Guaidó holds that progress is only possible with the support of the international community.

Following Guaidó's constant emphasis on international legitimacy, it is safe to assume that Guaidó views most international 'allies' as models of democracy to strive for, particularly referring to the United States and the European Union. While this may appear obvious, there is an important point to be made about the idealization of these Western examples of democracy. First, both actors (The United States and the European Union) followed and succeeded in implementing a hegemonic framework of democracy, all the while reinforcing other epistemic frameworks of hegemony, such as capitalism, racism, sexism, and heteronormativity, among others that were consequential to the coloniality of power. Secondly, in striving to be like them, Guaidó is perpetuating the mistake which so often characterizes the rhetoric of progress: comparison to countries that have not been

subject to the same history of colonial plundering. In doing this, Guaidó is (once again) underwriting the maldevelopment of Venezuela as underdevelopment. This is a key aspect of the rhetoric of progress because it contributes to self-defeating language and comparisons. In idealizing Western actors, Guaidó is perpetuating Western models of government, and inherently, of thinking and knowledge, another aspect of the matrix of colonial power. Thus, this attitude, by definition, contributes to the exploitation of land.

It is no wonder that Guaidó's strategy is oriented towards the approval of the international community, as this can be deemed a direct response to Maduro's approach to progress: following a Chavista 'revolution' which instead venerates Venezuelan historical figures as exemplary epitomes of freedom and imminent change.

In his speeches, Maduro mentions Simon Bolivar3 several times. Maduro refers to Bolivar in several ways, whether it be in admiration, or in comparing himself and his predecessor, Hugo Chavez, to the 'Liberator' of Venezuela. Nonetheless, the Chavista 'revolution', aims to create parallels between itself and the independence revolution led by Bolivar, in which he freed Venezuela from the Spanish crown. Take, for example, how Maduro refers to himself in his yearly presidential address, "The 'Liberator' has returned, the Commander has returned, and with him the historical strength that characterizes us as people!" (Maduro, 2021). Now, Bolivar is commonly nicknamed the 'Liberator' in Venezuelan pop culture, so in referring to himself as such, Maduro is directly comparing himself to the historical figure.

The problem with Maduro's emphasis on following Bolivar's steps is that it lacks nuance, and thus arrives at the same issue that Guaidó, in his idealization of Western power, faces. Maduro (and Chavez, for that matter), always conveniently leaves out Bolivar's Whiteness; how he came from a wealthy, upper-class family of 'Criollos'4, or how he was educated abroad, in none other than the elite schools of Madrid, Spain. Maduro forgets to mention that Bolivar did not establish freedom to participate in political life for Indigenous, Black, or mestizo citizens, and in doing so, continued to reinforce the racial hierarchy so characteristic of colonialism, and, simultaneously, upholding the matrix of colonial power. In the speeches analyzed, Maduro highlights how Chavez and himself aim to continue to 'liberate' the Venezuelan people from what he so often refers to as 'hegemonic systems and empires.' Now, this is a great promise, (a necessary one, even). But Maduro's insistence on maintaining and upkeeping the Venezuelan oil industry as the greatest, if

not sole, provider of economic income speaks louder than his intentions. In perpetuating an extractivist economy, Maduro is doing the opposite of 'liberating', and thus the opposite of challenging hegemony. He is, instead, reinforcing it by encouraging the exploitation of land for capital.

As described above, both Maduro and Guaidó employ trademark elements of the rhetoric of progress, such as centralizing oil as the pathway to progress, and idealizing elements of Western hegemony, regardless of ideology. In doing this, they continue to look at Venezuela through, as Quijano (2000) would say, the "distorted mirror" that is Western success, progress, and modernity.

5.2.2 Self-defeating language & the 'wounded' metaphor

Another important element of the rhetoric of progress that is unequivocally present in both Guaidó and Maduro's speeches is the presence of self-defeating language. This is particularly present in the use of the metaphor of wounds, or what the researcher refers to as 'wounded language'. Note, however, that each speaker differs in whom they blame for said 'wounds.'

On one hand, when Guaidó refers to Venezuela's 'wounds,' he attributes them to internal factors, with these mainly relating to Maduro and Chavez' regimes, who mis-administered Venezuelan resources and thus negatively impacted the economy (Cheatham, Roy & Labrador, 2021). Conversely, Maduro attributes the blame for Venezuela's 'wounds' to otherwise external factors. These range from the sanctions inflicted on the Maduro administration on behalf of the American government, to the more general threat of 'empires' and 'hegemonic systems.'

It is worth noting that Guaidó utilizes wounded language with less frequency than Maduro. However, when he does employ it, it is always merely to describe the pain that Venezuelans have been subject to. What one means to say is that Guaidó employs wounded language vis a vis the experience of Venezuelans, and not to directly blame Maduro's Chavista regime; that is to say, Venezuelans are always central in the metaphor of 'wounded language.' While this metaphor does contribute to the aspect of self-defeating language, due to how Guaidó employs it, the researcher does not have enough evidence to qualify it as the type of self-defeating language that comprises the rhetoric of progress.

On the other hand, Maduro utilizes wounded language at a higher frequency and often does it not to relate it to the experience of Venezuelans, but to highlight the strain that external factors, whether this is Donald Trump or the nebulous 'capitalist system,' have brought upon the Venezuelan economy. The Venezuelan oil industry is central in Maduro's metaphor of 'wounded language.' In fact, in the three speeches which were analyzed, Maduro consistently blames the United States (and fellow 'conspirators') for destabilizing the Venezuelan economy. The blaming of the United States goes hand in hand with the constant critique of 'imperial capitalism,' which Maduro constantly cites as the inflictor of Venezuelan wounds. Maduro does not elaborate past the broad terms of 'capitalism,' 'imperialism' and even goes as far as referring to capitalism as the 'law of the cowboy,' as the perpetrators of Venezuelan misery. Arguably, the self-defeating elements of Maduro's wounded language lie in the vagueness of these accusations. For the fellow listener (or reader), it almost feels as if the Chavista regime is fighting an 'impossible' battle against the hegemon, who, no matter what the former does, will never succeed against the latter.

With that said, the principal observation regarding the use of wounded language on behalf of both speakers is that, although there are differences in whom each leader blames, neither Guaidó nor Maduro shifts their attention to the more insidious, likely culprit of current Venezuelan misfortune: dependence on oil extractivism. Although the nominated 'culprits' of Venezuelan wounds are plausible, their discourse lacks nuance –neither Guaidó nor Maduro bring in the word 'oil' or 'oil dependency' to detail why Venezuela is in a crisis in the first place. Arguably, this absence of critique can represent an unwillingness to de-link from the exploitation of land for capital, which then inherently perpetuates the colonial matrix of power.

5.2.3 The role of hope

Another relevant element of the rhetoric of progress that is present in Guaidó and Maduro's speeches is the use of metaphors that contribute to feelings of 'hope' and empowerment. This notion completely contradicts the self-defeating wounded language that was touched upon above –but it is these metaphors that keep the Venezuelan public enthralled with the 'magnanimous sorcerer' that is the political elite (Coronil, 1997). With that said, these metaphors often evoke positive feelings within the Venezuelan listener, aiming to unify, appease, and most importantly, instill hope and belief in a modernity that Venezuelans ultimately see through Quijano's (2000)

‘distorted mirror.’ The main metaphors employed in these speeches are those of ‘dreaming’, ‘awakening’, and ‘battling’.

Guaidó provides Venezuelans with inspiring words that speak of awakening and dreaming. The following two quotes are exemplary of these metaphors. The first one is from his presidential address in January 2019, in which Guaidó states, “We have awakened today to fight for the Venezuela that we had, that we deserve, and that we will have,” (Guaidó, 2019, 1:49:02). Similarly, in a press conference from 2021, he assures, “Certainly, we will rescue Venezuela for our future generations. This battle is not in vain. Not only for the Venezuela that we saw, and we lived in, but that many of you also lived in. For the Venezuela we dream of, we want, and we continue to visualize and sacrifice for,” (Guaidó, 2021, 1:19). Although Guaidó mentions dreaming and awakening a few other times, these are worth examining due to their mention of the past. In both quotes, Guaidó alludes to a previous Venezuela, a Venezuela devoid of any crises, humanitarian or economic –he is most likely speaking of a pre-Chavista Venezuela, dating to the nineties and eighties. These quotes stood out because, while the code words (future, dream, awakened) helped classify them as exemplary of the rhetoric of progress, Guaidó combines the nostalgia of a ‘better’ past with a future that appears even brighter –and thus evoking sentiments of hope for both old and young followers. Most importantly, Guaidó idealizes a past Venezuela, one that was also dependent on oil extractivism, and although not on the verge of economic collapse, the ‘old’ Venezuela was not without its issues.5 However, in ‘playing’ with these emotions, Guaidó embodies the ‘magnanimous sorcerer,’ one that invokes an array of emotions to keep their followers faithful in their vision of progress through oil dependency (Coronil, 1997). These two quotes also pose a perfect example of how insidious the rhetoric of progress can be, disguising itself in nostalgia, translated into hope, but lacking structural critique of the real culprits of a country’s crisis.

Both leaders, as good public speakers do, engage in the flowery language of emotive metaphors. But all these metaphors do is distract-- distract the listener or viewer from the real issue, the lack of structural critique towards oil extractivism and oil dependency. Instead, these metaphors shift focus to an unrealistic standard of coveted modernity that demands a more in-depth discussion of how Venezuela’s maldevelopment can be accepted, and consequently, embraced, to create structural changes to its economy. With that said, the researcher must reiterate H1, which states

that independent of political affiliation, both leaders would engage in the rhetoric of progress. Due to substantial evidence, particularly pertaining to the centrality of the exploitation of land in their rhetoric, and the lack of structural critique of oil extractivism and dependency, this thesis accepts H1.

5.2.4 On border thinking

This section addresses the second factor considered in the discursive analysis: border thinking. While the results of the coding process did not yield evidence of border thinking, one must note that the total absence of epistemic alternatives also qualifies as empirical evidence.

Regardless, the research did yield results that lend themselves to be analyzed through the theoretical lens of border thinking. The greatest (and most obvious) observation is that there is no mention of alternative epistemic perspectives introduced or employed in either Guaidó or Maduro's political rhetoric. However, this was somewhat expected, as border thinking is not only a rather recent concept but simply less used (and more marginal) within Western/modern vocabulary. It is also significant to note that, as mentioned in the 'Findings' section, neither politician alluded to any of the top three largest Indigenous groups in Venezuela.

With that in mind, one must begin by discussing the scarce results from Guaidó's speeches. Although these were not great in quantity, they still make important points regarding the lack of border thinking in Guaidó's political rhetoric. Mainly, Guaidó mentions and commemorates ancestors, which can include (or exclude) Indigeneity. Two quotes exemplify this; such as in this first one, from his presidential address in January 2019, "Let us thank our martyrs, our ancestors, and God," (Guaidó, 2019, 1:47:52). Another example of commemoration is this quote, also from his presidential address, "Heir of Bolivar, of Paez, of Miranda, of Sucre, put yourselves on the side of Venezuela," (Guaidó, 2019, 2:00:09). In the first quote, the words 'martyrs' and 'ancestors' point to a recognition of Indigeneity, as most Venezuelans can likely trace their ancestry to an Indigenous group. These could also be classified as martyrs. However, the quote is not explicit enough to confidently say that Guaidó is acknowledging Indigenous or border perspectives, as he could also be speaking about White 'martyrs' and ancestors, such as Bolivar, or other historical icons of Venezuelan history. Note, also, that Guaidó mentions 'God,' a prominent element of

Western and colonial theology, and a trademark of colonial expansion. Once again, Guaidó includes an inherently Western element in his gratefulness, which is reminiscent of his idealization of Western superpowers, such as the EU. The mention of a Catholic God also signals an attachment to a Western epistemic framework of Catholic theology.

The second quote is, in its entirety, a reference to Venezuelan icons of independence –all of them of European descent, and upper class. The fact that Guaidó makes a point of mentioning these independence heroes again speaks directly to whom the leader idealizes, looks up to, and compares himself and the Venezuelan people to. Arguably, Guaidó is obscuring the impact and significant role that Indigenous and other non-White individuals played in Venezuelan history, particularly in their struggle for independence. There was little more that the researcher could extract from Guaidó's speeches that would be worthy of analysis through the lens of border thinking. Thus, not only do these quotes stand out due to their absence of border thinking but so does Guaidó's rhetoric overall. What can this reveal about Guaidó? The most obvious point is that not only does Guaidó's rhetoric lack an inherent critique of oil extractivism, but it also does not consider epistemological alternatives that may help Venezuela transition away from oil extractivism and dependency. This notion points to accepting H2.

On another note, the lack of mention of Indigenous communities speaks to a larger issue in Venezuelan politics; the lack of consideration of Indigenous interests, as well as the lack of inclusion of Indigenous representation. Assuming Guaidó embraces oil extractivism and the exploitation of land, which, if one follows the results pertaining to the rhetoric of progress, he does, then his practices would continue to threaten Indigenous communities in Venezuela, which as of 2020, were reduced to 2.8% of the population (IWGIA, n.d.). According to the Indigenous Work Group for International Affairs, the exploitation of natural resources, including mining, consistently disturbs Indigenous groups (n.d.). This indicates that the Venezuelan regime ought to limit, regulate, and perhaps diminish the exploitation of land to mitigate negative effects on Venezuela's already dwindling Indigenous communities.

Conversely, Maduro's rhetoric provided several quotes to be analyzed through border thinking. For one, Maduro consistently critiqued hegemonic epistemic frameworks, particularly that of capitalism and imperialism (although the latter appeared to be mistakenly used interchangeably with the former, and inevitably lacked depth in its subsequent discussion), and, to some degree,

provided alternatives of how Venezuela's government could shift towards communal and 'protagonistic' politics.

Two notorious quotes capture Maduro's disdain for capitalism, and they are both from his presidential address in 2021. The first quote reveals, "All we need are numbers to judge the neoliberal capitalist system, the hegemonic system, and its logic to save great capital before their own peoples," (Maduro, 2021). Likewise, Maduro reiterates in the second quote, "The pandemic revealed the perversity of the capitalist model, (…) it put big banks above life, as if the world only with money, and without people were possible," (Maduro, 2021). At least in speech, Maduro sharply acknowledges the fatal flaw of capitalism –that it puts capital above human beings, a shortcoming made glaringly obvious by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Mignolo (2011), recognizing how (in this case) capitalism disbenefits society is a good first step towards 'delinking' from colonial epistemic frameworks, or towards 'desprendimiento.' Regardless, quotes that simply criticize capitalism do not qualify for border thinking. On the other hand, these quotes could also be interpreted simply as a discursive practice of leftist, authoritarian regimes of the global South, in which they openly critique Western hegemony, but continue to perpetuate it through an established capitalist economy (such as one dependent on oil extractivism).

However, Maduro did touch upon alternative political practices in the three speeches that I analyzed. Maduro emphasized the role of community, participative and protagonistic politics, and consequent 'autogestion' as a trademark of his regime. Now, it is difficult to tell to what degree he has exactly established these policies, and how successful they have been, but he most certainly makes a point of delineating that they are the alternative to 'imperial hegemony'. Take, as an example, this quote from his presidential address in 2021, in which Maduro states, "The commune, community and family, those should be the references for national life. Only in the capacity that we create a democratic model, a social, participative model. A highly productive communal model, generator of social wealth. (…) The commune must be the founding and fundamental powerhouse of this new society," (Maduro, 2021). Here, Maduro is explicitly outlining that community ought to be the backbone of Venezuelan politics and society. This idea resonates with a core point of border thinking, which is an emphasis on the lived experience of subjects that have been previously excluded from the political process.

Moving on, Maduro only touched upon Indigenous communities once in the three speeches that were analyzed. Maduro mentioned Indigenous people in the following quote from his presidential address in January 2021, as he was listing the populations that lay at the 'heart' of Venezuela, "The Indians, Black people, the 'Pardos,' the women of the 'Oriente', of Caracas, of the South, the lancers of the deep Apure, (…) and our greatest Liberator, Simon Bolivar, our father, which all our poets sing to," (Maduro, 2021). Maduro was not mentioning or including Indigenous thought, but rather grouping them into a long list of other racialized indicators. Essentially, Maduro includes Indigenous peoples in the rich history of those who make Venezuela who she is, not as epistemic contributors, but as racialized bodies. Like Guaidó's rhetoric, this is followed by the obvious idealization of Bolivar and, albeit somewhat justified (due to his iconic standing in Venezuelan history), it starkly contrasts the lack of recognition of the other communities and groups that made up, and still makeup Venezuela.

Moreover, while Maduro does provide vague alternatives to capitalism, neither he nor Guaidó provides criticism or alternatives to oil extractivism. In the case of Guaidó, this was to be (somewhat) expected, as his discourses yielded the most results for the rhetoric of progress and idealized a nostalgic version of a dead Venezuela —one whose riches were characterized by frequent oil booms.

As outlined in the introduction, H2 states that, regardless of political affiliation, neither Venezuelan political leader presents an alternative to the rhetoric of progress or border thinking. Results all indicate that the researcher must accept said hypothesis: as proposed, there were little to no proposed alternatives to the rhetoric of progress, as well as to the attaining of modernity through oil extractivism.

5.2.5 Final conclusions

To recap, the results of this thesis can provide the following conclusions:

- The rhetoric of progress is alive and well in Venezuelan political discourse, regardless of party.

- Guaidó's speeches yielded little results for the factor of border thinking. This warrants the notion that, if Guaidó were to take power after Maduro, he would most likely continue to rely on oil extractivism or seek few alternatives to it.
- Maduro's regime hints at alternatives to capitalism, but these remain vague, and the idealization of a Western political macro-narrative remains. Therefore, there is not enough evidence to deem that either leader provides border thinking in their rhetoric.
- Neither political leader provides a structural critique of oil dependency and extractivism.

6. Conclusion:

This thesis aimed to analyze the political discourse of two current Venezuelan political leaders through the lens of colonial/decolonial conceptual categories to demonstrate the absence of an alternative to oil extractivism in their political rhetoric. To reiterate, the research question was the following: '*To what extent do elements of coloniality present themselves in the rhetoric of current Venezuelan political leaders?*'. Considering the final conclusions as outlined in the previous section, the researcher concludes that there is substantial evidence of elements of coloniality, particularly that of the rhetoric of progress, in the rhetoric of Venezuelan political leaders. To reiterate, both H1 and H2 were accepted by the researcher.

The researcher chose to study Juan Guaidó, as he is currently (and thus far) the most renowned leader of the notoriously fragmented Venezuelan opposition, nationally and internationally. Additionally, the researcher wanted to explore whether Guaidó's rhetoric would demonstrate alternatives to the Venezuelan petrostate, given the disastrous economic crisis Venezuelans are currently experiencing. Of course, the study needed a point of comparison, and this is where Nicolás Maduro's speeches came in; as the current acting president, Maduro's discourses grant insight into current attitudes towards oil extractivism –and whether they differed from Guaidó's in the first place.

The theory of coloniality/decoloniality was the backbone of this thesis, guiding the coding process, and the analysis of the consequent results. Particularly, the theoretical framework focused on the

writings of Anibal Quijano, Miguel Grosfoguel, Walter Mignolo, Fernando Coronil, and Sean Kingsbury –all scholars that helped solidify and explain how colonialism continues to impact great aspects of current political (and non-political) life in post-colonial member states. The literature review also helped guide the reader towards the significance of the rhetoric of progress, as well as of border thinking, the key conceptual lenses through which results were analyzed. With that said, the researcher believes that this thesis contributes to the ongoing (and evolving) academic conversation regarding the presence of the rhetoric of progress in Venezuelan political discourse.

This research focused on three relevant contexts that would make the speeches of each speaker relatively comparable to each other. An *international context,* in this case, the address to the 75th UNGA (which, albeit on their own platforms, ironically enough, both gave), and two *local contexts:* a presidential address to their Venezuelan supporters, and a press conference, chosen at random. Choosing speeches based on context not only helped narrow down the scope of speeches that could be analyzed but also purposefully placed them within comparable categories.

The findings revealed interesting, albeit unsurprising outcomes. The hypotheses were as follows:

H1: Independently of their political affiliation, Venezuelan politicians will continue to employ the rhetoric of progress.

H2: The discourse of the main Venezuelan political leaders, regardless of their party's ideological positions, do not present alternative perspectives to the one of rhetoric of progress, such as the ideas underpinning border thinking.

Again, the results all indicated that the researcher must accept H1. The three speeches that were analyzed demonstrated that both Guaidó and Maduro not only employed the rhetoric of progress but maintained oil as a viable path to progress and modernity. Importantly, neither speaker criticized Venezuela's status as a petrostate nor demonstrated alternatives towards relieving dependence on oil extractivism. Rather, when speaking of oil, both leaders either spoke of the resource as a source of (supposed) power or as a justification for progress. Additionally, both speakers engaged in evocative language, including metaphors and visuals of dreaming, battling, and hopefulness, which are key elements of the rhetoric of progress.

The researcher also accepted H2. The results regarding Guaidó's speeches stood out due to their lack of elements that could be analyzed through border thinking. What this reveals is that Guaidó

does not touch upon anything remotely alternative to the extractivist status quo. The content of Maduro's speeches was fascinating in its consistent critique of hegemonic empires (mainly the United States) and subtle, but persistent victimization. More importantly, Maduro *did* touch upon alternatives to political organization, mainly suggesting 'autogestion' of communities, so the latter can take a more participative approach to political decision-making. While this is promising in several ways, this does not exactly qualify as border thinking. The question that lies ahead is to what extent Maduro's critique of capitalism is a valid (read: effective) point.

On one hand, this thesis contributes to further the literature on Maduro's discursive practices, as opposed to Chavez' discursive practices, which were widely written about, as his discourses were a trademark of his personalistic leadership style. Further understanding of how Chavez' successor employs linguistic tools can continue to provide an insight as to why Chavismo has prevailed for so long. On the other hand, and especially, this research seeks to contribute to the scarce literature on Juan Guaidó –who made an unforeseen and unconventional political move in the face of rampant oppression and a ruthless humanitarian crisis. Additionally, this thesis addresses a gap in the literature pertaining to how post-colonial nation-states, particularly Venezuela, can begin to seek (or struggle to seek) a transition away from the petrostate, through political rhetoric, as well as through the inclusion of border epistemology.

Limitations and future research

There are, of course, a series of limitations to this empirical research. The most obvious one is that the researcher only analyzed a limited number of speeches, and while it was attempted to choose relevant, comparable contexts, this thesis did not analyze the entirety of the collection of speeches given by either Guaidó or Maduro. Thus, it is difficult to arrive at concrete generalizations regarding their rhetoric, since the entirety of their discursive practice was not covered. On another note, this thesis considers contextual and historical factors that may only apply to Venezuela. Although certain elements can be comparable to other countries, this study does not concern other post-colonial nation-states in its analysis.

Another great limitation was that the researcher was that the discursive analysis was carried out by a single coder. Thus, the results lacked a secondary coder that could prevent biased

interpretation on behalf of the first coder. However, the researcher must reiterate that contextual points for each speech were discussed and considered to avoid interpretative bias.

Other studies that would bring the results of this study further would, in the first place, include a more comprehensive compilation of speeches, as well as a more extensive coding process, for both speakers. For example, it would be compelling to study the way in which either speaker refers to Venezuelan Indigenous groups when they *do* mention them: do political leaders use language of protection? Or language of inclusion and action? Conversely, it would also be worth studying the evolution of the representation of Indigenous groups in the Venezuelan political landscape – particularly in relation to oil and resource extraction policy.

Other potential studies could include cross-case studies, in which one could examine and compare the presence of the rhetoric of progress in other former colonies turned petrostates; or study instances in which a country has transitioned away from the petrostate status, and whether border thinking played a role in this transition.

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Appendix A

Quote	Code	Context	Speaker
"It is nearly unbelievable that a country with one of the largest oil reserves in the world, vast natural resources, and a relatively stable [past] democratic tradition has become what it is today: a territory controlled by a criminal organization," (Guaidó, 2020, 16:59).	Oil reserves, natural resources	Address to the 75th session of the UNGA	Juan Guaidó
"It was him [Maduro's regime] who in the past seven years has led a political project proven itself incapable of handling crises. As of today, for example, only 8% of the petroleum Venezuelans need to survive is being distributed in the country," (Guaidó, 2020, 24:23).	Petroleum		
"They [oil reserves] are instead being used by the oligarchs of a dictatorship. In a country with the greatest and most important oil companies in the world," (Guaidó, 2020, 24:36).	Oil companies		
"The bad administration of resources on behalf of the state has shattered the economy," (Guaidó, 2020, 24:43)	Resources		
"Venezuelans continue to endure horrors that liken the ones someone experiences in a country at war. But that is due to the hope that we have. The hope that we will retrieve a Venezuela in which our wounds will heal," (Guaidó, 2020, 26:35)	Hope, wounds		
"We suffer, we cry, we laugh –but here are the people of Caracas, Venezuela, here is all of Venezuela," (Guaidó, 2019, 1:39.39).	Suffer	Presidential address, January 25th, 2019	
"This past January 23rd, Venezuelans awoke from a nightmare, from anguish, and from the belief that they are forever bound to live this way," (Guaidó, 2019, 1:45:05).	Awakening		

"Venezuela has awakened to make its dreams come true –not only to watch our children graduate, and to see bread on the table, but to protect ourselves from corruption," (Guaidó, 2019, 1:45:36).			
"Tell me, Venezuelans, have you not already begun to dream of this beautiful, new Venezuela?" (Guaidó, 2019, 1:47:00).	Dream		
"In Miraflores, they think that we will lose [hope]. The current symbols of power believe that we will grow tired. But here, no one grows tired, no one gives up – Venezuela has awakened to dream once again," (Guaidó, 2019, 1:48:06).	Awakened, dream		
"We have awakened today to fight for the Venezuela that we had, that we deserve, and that we will have," (Guaidó, 2019, 1:49:02).	Awakened, fight, deserve		
"We are telling each and every one of those soldiers, there is an opportunity here –of a nation, of a country, of a future, and of a republic," (Guaidó, 2019, 02:06:50)	Opportunity, future		
"Certainly, we will rescue Venezuela for our future generations. This battle is not in vain. Not only for the Venezuela that we saw, and we lived in, but that many of you also lived in. For the Venezuela we dream of, we want, and we continue to visualize and sacrifice for," (Guaidó, 2021, 1:19).	Future, battle, dream, sacrifice	Press conference, September 2021	
"The certainty of moving forward. That is where Venezuelans' strength lies" (Guaidó, 2021, 3:19).	Moving forward		
"Turn the happenings of September 21st into strength, into a battle, because we are still battling so what happened in 2015, in 2017, doesn't happen again," (Guaidó, 2021, 4:36).	Battle		

"The change that we want, it has been at a high cost. It is expressed in pain, in wounds, in family that is far away, and in hunger, now. But more than anything, in battle, in the need to move forward," (Guaidó, 2021, 5:34).	Wounds, battle		
"We propose the protection of our resources (activos), so we can use our own resources. We want to preserve the resources (activos) that belong to Venezuelans," (Guaidó, 2021, 18:35).	Resources (activos)		
"Pertaining to our protected resources, a company of Venezuelan titularity should be run as such," (Guaido, 2021, 40:39).			
"Monomeros [petrochemical company] is and will always be for Venezuelans," (Guaidó, 2021, 40:45).			
"We are committed to international, intercultural, constructive, and cooperative dialogue to advance the promotion and protection of all human rights, including, of course, the right to comprehensive development of peoples," (Maduro, 2020, 12:33)	Development	Address to the 75th session of the UNGA	Nicolás Maduro
"For this reason, we must demand the cessation of all unilateral coercive measures, of all the alleged sanctions, and that they allow our peoples to exercise their own rights, the right to development and peace," (Maduro, 2020, 29:30).			
"Today I can tell you, your Excellency, that a revolution of innovation has been unleashed in our Homeland, a new offensive to transform into a virtuous cycle of opportunities the attempts of aggression to make our nation collapse," (Maduro, 2020, 18:57)	Innovation, opportunity		
"The Liberator has returned, the Commander has returned, and with him the historical strength that characterizes us as people!" (Maduro, 2021).	Historical strength	Presidential address, January 2021	

“Currently, we have a generation of communal, popular leaders. Young leaders, military leaders, working-class leaders, that embody the same battles that 200 years ago freed our liberators (…) They respect the great history of our country,” (Maduro, 2021).			
“The most brutal parts we have faced with dignity, with decorum, with wisdom. This has been the economic war against our economy (…) our oil, our petroleum,” (Maduro, 2021).	Dignity, oil, petroleum		
“Our oil industry has been the main target of a politic of destruction, of barren earth,” (Maduro, 2021).	Oil industry		
“Since 2015, the war on our oil industry has followed several simultaneous courses of action,” (Maduro, 2021).			
“[If sanctions were revoked] Venezuela would enjoy an immediate recuperation, miraculous and automatic. It would be like giving oxygen to the blood of a debilitated body,” (Maduro, 2021).	Recuperation		
“But I also ask of the opposition, enough with hurting the country, let’s reconstruct the country together,” (Maduro, 2021).	Reconstruction		
“Until Trump started targeting our payment abilities, the sale of our petroleum,” (Maduro, 2021).	Petroleum		
“We know that the wounds of this war are still there, these wounds must be healed today,” (Maduro, 2021).	Wounds, healed		
“These imperial wars have one goal (…) to take absolute political power, and with it, control of our immense resources and riches,” (Maduro, 2021).	Resources, riches		

"I am plainly conscious that we have paid a very high price to defend our nation, to maintain Venezuela's dignity high," (Maduro, 2021).	Dignity		
"Everyone is reinventing themselves, not just our greatest industry, our great oil industry, our petrochemical industry, and refineries are also reinventing themselves" (Maduro, 2021).	Reinvention, oil industry		
"This [sanctions] has left festering wounds in Venezuela's social, economic, and familial life," (Maduro, 2021, 12:24).	Wounds	Press conference, January 2021	
"Venezuela has been able to resist due to its system of social wellness, but it is a system that has been left vulnerable, shot, and wounded," (Maduro, 2021, 13:17).			
"This allows us to continue our battle for dignity and independence; the battle that Venezuela is fighting for Venezuela and for humanity," (Maduro, 2021, 13:58).	Dignity		
"Venezuela is Venezuela. Her institutions, our dignity, our courage and our rebelliousness are above false recognitions," (Maduro, 2021, 40:23).			
"We have demonstrated plenty of dignity and courage in our positions for the Bolivarian revolution," (Maduro, 2021, 1:10:54).			
"This helps the good Venezuela, the Venezuela that wants peace, that wants progress, that wants stability," (Maduro, 2021, 1:08:17).	Progress, stability		
"They have wanted to damage our country. Our country is a country of peace, but it is made up of warrior people," (Maduro, 2021, 1:25:29).	Warrior		
"I hope our call for hope reaches the world. (…) Venezuela is a noble country, with special people, very generous, very human, and our country deserves a better future, a better destiny," (Maduro, 2021, 1:27:52).	Hope, future, destiny		

Appendix A: Description of Evidence of the *Rhetoric of Progress* in Speeches by Guaido & Maduro

Appendix B

Quote	Code	Context	Speaker
“Let us thank our martyrs, our ancestors, and God,” (Guaidó 2019, 1:47:52).	Ancestors, martyrs	Presidential address, January 2019	Juan Guaidó
“Heir of Bolivar, of Paez, of Miranda, of Sucre, put yourselves on the side of Venezuela,” (Guaidó, 2019, 2:00:09).	Heir, history		
“[The solution to conflict] must come accompanied by the international community, political parties, with civil society, with women, with students, with the church, and with all those that put forth their own grain of sand in order to move forward,” (Guaidó, 2021, 7:56).	Civil society	Press conference, September 2021	
"The South also thinks, the South also matters, the South also exists", as the poet Benedetti said,” (Maduro, 2020, 4:52).	South	Address to the 75th session of the UNGA	Nicolás Maduro
“They [The United States] openly disregards multilateralism and any type of pre-existing global rule,” (Maduro, 2020, 6:48).	Multilateralism		
“This emergency [COVID-19] has made us aware of and critically think about the contradictions of capitalism and its logical and operational inability to deal with these crises,” (Maduro, 2020, 8:03).	Capitalism		
“The health and well-being of the population are not merchandise; the market cannot continue to regulate the destiny of humanity!” (Maduro, 2020, 8:40).	Market, merchandise, destiny		

"We are committed to upholding the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-politicization, and non-selectivity in their implementation," (Maduro, 2020, 12:19).	Universality, impartiality, non-selectivity		
"The Venezuelan path is of peace, democracy, freedom, vote, participation and 'protagonism' of the people," (Maduro, 2020, 37:23).	Protagonism		
"Inclusive national dialogue is needed now more than ever," (Maduro, 2021).	Inclusive	Presidential address, January 2021	
"All we need are numbers to judge the neoliberal capitalist system, the hegemonic system, and its logic to save great capital before their own peoples," (Maduro, 2021).	Neoliberal capitalism, hegemonic, capital		
"The pandemic revealed the perversity of the capitalist model, (…) it put big bank above life, as if world only with money, and without people were possible," (Maduro, 2021).	Capitalist model		
"While Latin American countries abandoned their citizens, the capitalist system took their jobs, rented homes, and limited any possibility of economic aid," (Maduro, 2021).	Capitalist system		
"Currently, we have a generation of communal, popular leaders. Young leaders, military leaders, working-class leaders, that embody the same battles that 200 years ago freed our liberators (…) They respect the great history of our country," (Maduro, 2021).	Communal, working-class, history		
"Venezuela was hurt and shunned only because it catalyzed a revolution of a popular and sovereign character," (Maduro, 2021).	Revolution		

"As our supreme commander, Hugo Chavez admonished (…) in 2012, 'There will be further attempts to install the neoliberal model in Venezuela, a model of exclusion, of looting and of misery," (Maduro, 2021).	Neoliberal model		
"This is possible due to the social model designed and constructed over these past 21 years of transformation," (Maduro, 2021).	Transformation		
"Venezuela has entered a new route of stability, recuperation, and wellbeing, under the premise of communal cities," (Maduro, 2021).	New route, communal		
"The commune, community and family, those should be the references for national life. Only in the capacity that we create a democratic model, a social, participative model. A highly productive communal model, generator of social wealth. (…) The commune must be the founding and fundamental powerhouse of this new society," (Maduro, 2021).	Commune, participative, communal model		
"No capitalist country can boast of these achievements (…) the *Gran Mision Vivienda Venezuela* – it is the utmost expression popular power that has been '*autogestionado*'," (Maduro, 2021).	Capitalist, 'autogestion'		
"That is why we consider that democracy ought to be deepened even more, and I ask of the National Assembly to prioritize creating more spaces for popular and civil participation," (Maduro, 2021).	Popular & civil participation		
"The Indians, the Black people, the 'Pardos,' the women of the 'Oriente', of Caracas, of the South, the lancers of the deep Apure, (…) our greatest Liberator, Simon Bolivar, our father which all our poets sing to," (Maduro, 2021).	Indigenous people, Black people, 'Pardos'		

"Enough with hegemony, of threats, and of empires. Enough with the dog-eat-dog law of the 'cowboy', -- who pursues, who tortures, and who ends people (…) Humanity must open itself to a new situation, that's what we believe in Venezuela," (Maduro, 2021, 14:37).	Hegemony, empire, new situation	Press conference, January 2021	
"21 years of revolution, we have a world record. You tell people from other countries, and they don't believe you," (Maduro, 2021, 17:08).	Revolution		
"I remind you that we want a great national agreement (…) for an election for mayors and governors who are inclusive, participative, and protagonistic," (Maduro, 2021, 23:10).	Inclusive, participative, protagonistic		

Appendix B: Description of Evidence in relation to *Border Thinking* in Speeches by Guaido & Maduro