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Abstract

Since January 2019, the presidency of Venezuela has been disputed between Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó. Both leaders claim their legitimacy over the office of the President, and both have been recognised by different countries and international organisations. In the context of this presidential crisis, a specialised corpus of 5 political speeches and 4 political interviews of these leaders was collected with the purpose of analysing the social and ideological representation of ingroups and outgroups (i.e., the ideological polarisation, van Dijk, 1998a) from a critical socio-cognitive perspective (van Dijk, 2018). The analysis was carried out with Sketch Engine (see Kilgariff et al., 2014) and focused on the collocates and concordances of the main social actors, as well as their frequencies. The results of this corpus-assisted discourse study (Marchi & Taylor, 2018) were critically interpreted considering the socio-political situation, the ideological background of the two Venezuelan presidents, and previous research on polarisation (e.g., Bolívar, 2013b; Gadavani, 2020; Li and Zhu, 2019). The discourse of Nicolás Maduro evidenced a neo-colonial ideological schema based on a strong polarisation between Bolivarian and imperialist groups. The ingroup was described as revolutionary, Bolivarian, and anti-imperialist, while the outgroup as right-wing imperialist elites. Guaidó was conceptualised as a puppet of the US government and extra-constitutional president, in opposition to Maduro, who was represented as the only legitimate leader, heir of Chávez and Bolívar. As regards Guaidó's discourse, the ingroup-outgroup polarisation revealed a democracy vs. dictatorship struggle. He portrayed the ingroup as a free, united, democratic movement that would establish a transitional government, and the outgroup as an armed paramilitary dictatorship led by a usurper. Overall, ideological polarisation allowed these leaders to define their political identities and conceptualise themselves as rivals, to reproduce their ideologies and attitudes, and to legitimise themselves and delegitimise the other.

Key words: *Critical discourse studies, ideology, social representation, polarisation, Venezuelan crisis*

1. Introduction

Within an atmosphere of institutional, economic, democratic, and social tension, a unique political conflict emerges in Venezuela on January 23, 2019². This conflict, known as the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis, directly affects the leadership and presidency of the Republic. On January 10, 2019, Nicolás Maduro was sworn in as President of Venezuela as a result of the victory obtained in the 2018 presidential elections. Thirteen days later, on January 23, the president of the National Assembly or AN (*Asamblea*

Nacional) Juan Guaidó proclaimed himself interim president of the country, receiving immediate support from the United States. He did so on the basis of the 233, 333 and 350 articles³ of the Venezuelan Constitution. Nowadays, the conflict remains unresolved. On the one hand, Nicolás Maduro continues legally leading the country, counting on the support of the Venezuelan military forces or FANB (*Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana*). On the other, Juan Guaidó aims at gaining the armed forces' support and tries to achieve as well as maintain recognition from foreign countries and organizations.

This article studies how *ideological* or *social polarisation* (Bolívar, 2013a; Gadavani, 2020; Lozada, 2020; van Dijk, 1998, among others) is (re)produced in the political discourses of these Venezuelan leaders. Ideological polarisation relies on the opposition between *ingroups* (i.e., Us, the Self) and *outgroups* (i.e., Them, the Other). More specifically, it involves the emphasis of information that is positive about Us and negative about Them, and the de-emphasis of information that is negative about Us and positive about Them. Thus, ideological polarisation is a face-keeping strategy based on the differentiation of group positions and relations, and it is used for praising and legitimising the Self, discrediting and delegitimising the Other, and maintaining or challenging abusive power relations. In the context of the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis, analysing the positive self- and negative other-representations in political discourse may open a window for understanding the ways in which Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó build their individual and group identities, reproduce their ideological values and attitudes, legitimise their political positions, and enhance social differentiation. As van Dijk (1998a) claims:

Some groups exist by virtue of their hierarchical or more powerful position, as is the case for superiors and subordinates, elites and the 'masses' or majorities and minorities. [...] Identification, access and inclusion of (new) members, may be intimately linked to the exclusion of others, thus defining power abuse and domination. (p.161)

The analysis of the presidential crisis from a discourse-analytical perspective is interesting for three main reasons. The first one is its originality within the general academic field. Since the conflict started in 2019 and got caught in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, very few studies have been published about it. The second reason is its originality within the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS). As Bolet (2018) says, there is a vast amount of research on the social and discursive practices of the Chávez Era, that is, the period in which Hugo Chávez led Venezuela (1999-2013). However, studies on Nicolás Maduro and the current socio-political situation from a CDS perspective are quite limited. The third reason is the unique nature of the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis. Despite the numerous difficulties and obstacles that Venezuela has undergone, never in its long history has it had two leaders claiming the office of President at the same time, and for such a long period. Thus, it is a great opportunity to shed light on the complexity of the social, political, economic, diplomatic, international, and deeply polarised crisis that Venezuela has been suffering, especially over the past three years.

To present a critical analysis of Maduro and Guaidó's polarised discourses, this study examines the ideological positive self- and negative other-

representations with the results drawn from a corpus-based analysis. Corpus-linguistic methods not only provide quantitative support to the qualitative CDS analyses, but also allow the exploration of vast amounts of texts from different times, contexts, and languages. When applied to smaller, issue-specific corpora, corpus analysis complements the detailed discourse analysis by providing useful distributional and semantic patterns that may not be noticeable to the discourse analyst. Thus, as Baker et al. (2008) state, the combination of Corpus Linguistics and CDS can be considered a useful methodological synergy (p. 274). Although recent corpus-based discourse studies on polarisation have approached it from a Systemic-Functional perspective (see Theoretical Background), the present article adopts a more critical, socio-cognitive approach (as in Bolívar, 2013a). This is because the socio-cognitive approach also takes the relationship between knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies into account. In other words, it adds a cognitive basis to the understanding of how discourse and society work.

The aim of this study is, then, to analyse the characteristics of ideological polarisation in the discourses of Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó, and to investigate the role that this polarisation has had in the presidential crisis so far. The following section includes more information about the conflict under study and its current situation. Whilst the theoretical background and the methodology have been briefly explained in this introduction, it is expanded in sections 3 and 4, respectively. The results are interpreted and discussed in section 5, and the final remarks are developed in section 6.

2. Background of the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis

There are various factors and events to consider to fully understand the origins of the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis (see, for example, Pantoulas & McCoy, 2019; Sanahuja, 2019), but two of them are especially significant. The first one is the institutional crisis, which concerns the conflict between the judicial branch (i.e., the Supreme Court), the executive branch (i.e., the President and his cabinet) and the legislative branch (i.e., the National Assembly or AN). In May 2017, Nicolás Maduro created the National Constituent Assembly or ANC (*Asamblea Nacional Constituyente*), which was made responsible for elaborating a new constitution. Three months after, the ANC assumed supra-constitutional competences, thereby taking complete control over all public powers (Gaceta Oficial de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2017). This assumption of powers was considered to violate several constitutional standards and, after it took place, the ANC was condemned by numerous countries and organizations (Sanahuja, 2019; Tarver, 2018; Urosa & Hernández, 2018). The second factor, closely linked to the first, is the 2018 presidential elections. The Venezuelan opposition and part of the international community did not consider them legitimate, as irregularities were found in the electoral process. These irregularities, made possible by the ANC's control over public powers, ranged from the annulment of opposition political parties to the manipulation of electoral dates in favour of the government (Observatorio Electoral Venezolano, 2018; Urosa & Hernández, 2018).

To sum up, the presidential crisis emerged as a consequence of the breach in the separation of powers of the country and the 2018 presidential elections.

Now, the decision behind who occupies the presidential position highly depends on (1) the celebration of the next presidential elections, which are officially dated for the year 2025; (2) the support of the armed forces; and (3) external factors, including the recognition from foreign countries and organizations. As for today (2021), the conflict between Maduro and Guaidó persists. The FANB has remained loyal to the government thus far, and Guaidó has legally lost his control over the AN due to his refusal to participate in the 2020 parliamentary elections (Ellsworth & Kinosian, 2020). The legitimacy of the new Venezuelan parliament has been again called into question, but so has the parallel parliament installed by Guaidó. While the recently elected US president Joe Biden has stood firm in his decision of supporting Juan Guaidó and the 2015 National Assembly (Spetalnick, 2021), the European Union no longer recognises Guaidó as Interim President (Emmott, 2021). Nonetheless, a new political scenario might arise after the regional elections (21 November 2021), as the government and the opposition are going to face each other for the first time since the 2018 presidential elections.

3. Theoretical Background

The previous section provides an approximation of the factors that have contributed to the emergence of the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis, which are important for understanding the context of this article. This section presents a theoretical overview of critical and political discourse studies, polarisation, and the socio-cognitive approach, referencing both classic works in the field and recent literature.

3.1 Critical-Political Discourse Studies

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), also known as Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), 'is an inter-disciplinary approach to language in use, which aims to advance our understanding of how discourse figures in social processes, social structures and social change' (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 1). Following this definition, the main focus of CDS is the relationship between discourse and society. This relationship is dialectical, that is, discourse is viewed both as socially constitutive and as socially conditioned (Blommaert, 2005). Since CDS understands discourse as a form of social practice, discourse is analysed with respect to its historical, socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. Rather than studying discourse from a single methodological and theoretical perspective, CDS draws on different methods⁴ and theoretical approaches. That is why it has been defined in the literature as an inter-, multi-, trans-, and post-disciplinary approach (Wodak & Forchtner, 2018). CDS, in addition, is concerned with the discursive aspects of power relations and inequalities, and particularly their effects on producing social wrongs (Fairclough, 2010). Critical discourse analysts thus often take political stances and seek social transformation openly (Hart, 2020). Since this paper focuses on the study of the political discourses of two different social actors, it also relies on Political Discourse Analysis⁵ (PDA) or Political Discourse Studies (PDS). CDS and PDS are understood as mutually inclusive. While the study of political discourse draws on the critical perspective of CDS, CDS is seen as intrinsically political.

The main goal of this critical-political approach is, then, to examine how discourse structures and practices (re)produce power⁶, power abuse or domination, as well as to explore the forms of resistance against such dominance (van Dijk, 1998b).

Within this general approach, this work focuses more specifically on *polarisation*. Polarisation consists of the positive representation of the Self (We/Us, the ingroup) and the negative representation of the Other (They/Them, the outgroup). There are multiple studies on polarisation in political discourse from a CDS perspective. For instance, Ghachem (2014) critically analyses self-representation in two newspaper articles jointly written by Barack Obama, David Cameron, and Nicolas Sarkozy using Systemic Functional Linguistics' transitivity analysis. Similarly, Abid and Manan (2016) and Rababah and Hamdan (2019) investigate transitivity in the discourses of three Heads of State to examine the types of processes involved in the construction of the Self and the Other. Within the same framework, Li and Zhu (2019) provide a corpus analysis of Chinese political discourse based on the Appraisal System. In addition, Gadavani (2020) studies the style, interdiscursivity, and intertextuality of ingroup and outgroup representations in the discourse of Thaksin Shinawatra, former Prime Minister of Thailand, and focused on polarisation as a legitimisation strategy. As regards Venezuelan literature, Adrián (2013), Bolívar (2013a) and Lozada (2020) examine (and emphasised the importance of) polarisation in Hugo Chávez's political discourse from a CDS perspective. In the following section, the notion of polarisation is explained in relation to this article's theoretical framework, that is, Socio-Cognitive Discourse Studies.

3.2 Polarisation: A Socio-Cognitive Approach

This paper approaches the critical-political study of discourse from the perspective of Socio-Cognitive Discourse Studies⁷ (SCDS). According to van Dijk (2018), SCDS is a multidisciplinary type of CDS which relates discourse structures with social structures through a complex socio-cognitive interface. The socio-cognitive approach explores the role of mental representations in the (re)production, understanding, and processing of discourse. It demonstrates that a complete analysis of discourse should relate the linguistic and the social with the cognitive, especially by describing the attitudes, ideologies, and knowledge of participants. These cognitive processes take place in the mind or memory of participants, who are understood as individual social actors and members of social groups. Within their social groups, these actors share a sociocultural knowledge of the world, as well as common attitudes, ideologies, norms, and values.

The notion of *ideological polarisation* is central to the present study. It can be defined as a form of social actor representation (Koller, 2020) and as a schematic structure of ideologies (van Dijk, 1998a). The way social actors (i.e., the people or social groups that participate in social events or situations and carry out different actions) are represented in discourse determines, for instance, their importance, attitudes, ideological viewpoints, or their Self vs. Other image constructions. These representations are especially relevant in conflictive, polarised political scenarios (see Filardo-Llamas et al., 2021; Huang & Holmgreen, 2020; Morales-López & Floyd, 2017). In discourse, deictic pronouns We/Us and They/Them can denote social or ideological

polarisation (Bolívar, 2013b; van Dijk, 1998). This kind of polarisation is built through the positive representation of We/Us (i.e., the ingroup) and the negative representation of They/Them (i.e., the outgroup). From a socio-cognitive approach, polarisation is at the core of ideologies. Van Dijk (1998b) claims that ideologies are self-serving schemas for the representation of Us and Them as distinct social groups, and that their role is to organise Our social practices to serve Our best interests while preventing Them from hurting such interests. Therefore, ideological polarisation may be used to legitimate or obscure certain power relations, as well as to resist or denounce social situations of domination and inequality (p. 69).

The group's self-serving schema affects the local semantics of political discourses (van Dijk, 1995). Expressing attitudes through positive evaluations of Us and negative evaluations of Them generally results in *contrastive meanings* (van Dijk, 1998b, p. 31). These contrastive evaluative meanings de-emphasise Our bad actions and Their good ones. Hence, positive predicates about the ingroup will normally be made explicit, direct, and detailed, while negative predicates will be hidden or incomplete. The opposite will happen with the representation of the outgroup. On an ideological level, this presence or absence of information in semantic representation, and its consequent expression or suppression in the interests of the speaker/writer, conforms to the *ideological square* (Abid & Manan, 2016; Rababah & Hamdan, 2019; van Dijk, 1998a). It allows social actors to (re)produce ideologies, to identify themselves as members of a particular social group, and to build their identity in terms of that membership. On a socio-political level, semantic polarisation influences political processes, including the competition for votes, support, and legitimacy (van Dijk, 1998b). The next section develops the methodology used in this study for analysing polarisation.

4. Methodology

The main goal of this study is to analyse ideological polarisation in the political discourses of Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó. It aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the main characteristics of ideological polarisation in the political discourses of Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó?
2. What role does ideological polarisation play in the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis?

To answer the aforesaid questions, this research integrates tools from Corpus Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), which are understood to be within a dynamic quantitative-qualitative continuum (Partington & Marchi, 2015), and not as being subservient to the other (Baker et al., 2008). The combination of CL and CDS has become increasingly popular over the past two decades. This combination forms a spectrum of similar approaches that go under several names, such as corpus-based (also corpus-driven) CDS, Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS), or corpora and discourse studies (Marchi & Taylor, 2018). The study of political discourse from a corpus linguistic perspective has also become quite popular (see, for instance, Kutter, 2018). As Ádel (2010, p. 592) explains, political discourse

tends to be frequently represented in standard corpora because political genres are usually publicly and widely published. In this research, the results come from a quantitative frequency and collocation analysis of the main social actors provided by *Sketch Engine* (see Kilgariff et al., 2014), a corpus analysis software, and a qualitative concordance analysis inspired by CDS. In line with McEnery and Hardie (2012), this research is thus approached from a traditional discourse-analytical perspective because it focuses on the detailed analysis of a small corpus and its social context. In the following sections, more information is provided about the corpus data, and the methods and procedures.

4.1 Dataset

The corpus consists of a collection of 9 texts (see Table 1), 4 produced by Nicolás Maduro and 5 by Juan Guaidó. It is a small, specialised corpus⁸, compiled with the purpose of representing the language of the Venezuelan presidents in a specific moment in time and context. I have focused on 5 political speeches and 4 political interviews. These were selected according to different criteria. I chose political speeches that were given by both leaders on two key dates: the day of Guaidó's self-proclamation (January 23, 2019) and exactly a year after that (January 23, 2020). To ensure the data was balanced, I incorporated an additional speech⁹ delivered by Guaidó on the 21st of February 2020. Regarding the political interviews, I selected those that were conducted by the same TV channels (*BBC* and *Euronews*) around the same dates (February and March 2019). While the transcriptions of the interviews were collected from the news outlets' websites, the political speeches were manually transcribed. The code employed in the analysis is specified in the abbreviations given in brackets, in Table 1. An example of this code would be NM-I1, where 'NM' is the subcorpus, and 'I1' is the specific interview (the first interview, that is, the BBC interview). Following this code, JG-S2 would be interpreted as an example quoted from Guaidó's subcorpus (JG) and taken from the Worldwide Economic Forum speech (S2), and so on. Overall, the corpus consists of 33,547 words, with 3,727 words being the average length of its texts and 2,114 the total number of sentences. Regarding the subcorpora, Maduro's subcorpus has 17,090 words and an average text length of 4,272 words, while Guaidó's subcorpus has 16,456 words in total and 3,291 words per text on average. The lexical density, that is, the proportion of content words in both Guaidó and Maduro subcorpora, is 54%.

Subcorpus	Genre	Name	Speaker (s)	Date	Duration	N of words
Nicolás Maduro (NM)	Political speech (S)	Annual commemoration speech and response to Guaidó's self-proclamation (1)	Nicolás Maduro	23/01/2019	00:58:12	3909
		Annual commemoration speech (2)	Nicolás Maduro	23/01/2020	00:57:02	4053
	Political interview (1)	BBC interview (1)	Nicolás Maduro, Orla	12/02/2019	00:21:35	4323

	(I)		Guerin			
		Euronews interview (2)	Nicolás Maduro, Anelise Borges	13/02/2019	00:32:32	4824
Juan Guaidó (JG)	Political speech (S)	Self-proclamation speech (1)	Juan Guaidó	23/01/2019	00:33:33	2233
		Worldwide Economic Forum speech (2)	Juan Guaidó	23/01/2020	00:25:24	1890
		National Conflict Resolution speech (3)	Juan Guaidó	21/02/2020	00:39:54	5220
	Political interview (I)	Euronews interview (1)	Juan Guaidó, Anelise Borges	18/02/2019	00:23:17	3189
		BBC interview (2)	Juan Guaidó, Will Grant	15/03/2019	00:29:52	3906

Table 1. Corpus Description

Political speeches and political interviews are the two main genres of political discourse under analysis. According to van Dijk (1998b), politicians talk politically when their talk is contextualised in political communicative events. There are multiple political discourse genres¹⁰ besides political speeches and media interviews, such as parliamentary debates, government regulations, propaganda, and political advertising. Each genre follows its own schematic structure, which can either be canonical, as in parliamentary debates, or strategic, as in political speeches. Political speeches are ‘typically meticulously prepared, rhetorically elaborate and read from a written manuscript’ and, from a linguistic perspective, they can reveal the idiolect of specific politicians (Ådel, 2010, p. 593). With respect to political interviews, these are mediated political discourses. As Chilton (2004, p. 72) claims, political interviews are sub-genres of political discourse because their participants show awareness of social structures and customs of discourse beyond the specific context of the interview. In political interviews, neutrality plays a key role. Although media institutions are obliged to exercise impartiality, this impartiality has a limit. For example, when the interviewees are considered ‘extremist’¹¹ political actors, interviewers may express their disapproval (Chilton, 2004, p. 77). This is especially relevant in this paper, as Nicolás Maduro is regarded as an extremist because his values are not representative of those that exist in the news institution’s democratic polity, in this case, Europe.

4.2 Methods and Procedures

The research methods used in this study were frequency, collocation, and concordance analyses. In Sketch Engine, these were analysed with the tools *Word list*, *Word Sketch* and *Concordance*, respectively. The analysis started with the identification of the most frequent nouns and personal subject pronouns in the corpus. This frequency analysis, performed with the *Word list*

tool, brought to light the main social actors of the presidential narratives. Only personal subject pronouns (*I, You, He, We* and *They*) and nouns referring to people, social groups, and countries (often personified) were considered. This is because the analysis of polarisation is mostly based on nouns and personal pronouns, which typically point to social actors, and their contexts. For instance, Li and Zhu's study on polarisation (2019) considers the nouns *China, country, side* and *motherland* as the nucleus of the ingroup, and countries other than China as the members of the outgroup. Additionally, Bolívar (2013b) looks at personal pronouns *I* and *We* versus *You* and *They* for exploring polarisation. Based on this, and considering the Venezuelan socio-political context, social actors were classified into ingroups and outgroups.

Once social actors were located and classified, their co-occurrences and concordances were explored with *Word Sketch* and *Concordance*, respectively. Several studies on polarisation, such as Abid and Manan (2016), Li and Zhu (2019), and Rababah and Hamdan (2019), perform collocation and concordance analyses to look at the positive construction of Us and negative construction of Them. Abid and Manan (2016), who examine the discourse of George W. Bush in the context of the Iraq war, find that modifiers, specifically adjectives, were predominantly used to differentiate the ingroup from the outgroup. Hence, the collocation analysis in this paper focused specifically on the modifiers (labels and adjectives), nouns and pronominal possessors that co-occurred with social actors. Their frequencies were noted with the purpose of measuring the representativeness of the ingroup and the outgroup in the narratives under study. The concordance analysis paid attention to the lines where social actors and the verb *to be* appeared together, since this could reveal more about their positive or negative representations. Thus, in the analysis of, for instance, the social actor Hugo Chávez, I looked at the collocates of *Chávez* in *Word Sketch*, and at the concordances 'Chávez + to be' and 'He + to be' in *Concordance*. Overall, as the following section develops, this corpus-based analysis provided an insightful approximation to the construction of the Self and the Other in the discourses of Maduro and Guaidó.

5. Results and Discussion

In this section, an analysis and a discussion of the results is provided from a critical socio-cognitive perspective, that is, considering the relationship between the political discourses under study with their social context and the speakers' ideologies. It is demonstrated that the frequency, collocation, and concordance analyses explained in the Methodology section are useful tools to unveil the ideological polarisation that characterises Maduro and Guaidó's discourses. Indeed, these analyses do not only provide a description of the different representations of social actors, divided into ingroups and outgroups, but also of the attitudes behind these representations and their relationship with legitimation and delegitimation processes.

It is important to remark that the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis could be considered a *legitimation crisis* (Habermas, 1976) that is reflected in the narratives under analysis. Since the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013, *Chavismo* has lost much of its symbolic power due to its personalist political and ideological style (Tarver, 2018). In fact, this power loss has gradually become

a loss of legitimacy at the global level. As public opinion surveys point out (see Corporación Latinobarómetro, 2021), the Venezuelan population's discontent and distrust of Maduro's government and institutions have turned out very high since 2018, the year of the presidential elections. Hence, to re-establish his authority, Maduro would adopt a re-legitimizing discourse that emphasises Our legitimacy and Their illegitimacy (see Martín Rojo & van Dijk, 1997). Regarding Guaidó, he would concentrate on Our positive (democratic) values to convince the population about the viability and democraticness of his movement, as the validity of his self-proclamation act remains questionable.

To develop these ideas, this section is divided into three subsections, the first one dealing with the characteristics of Maduro's narrative, the second with the features of Guaidó's, and the third with a discussion of the role of ideological polarisation in both discourses.

5.1 Nicolás Maduro

Maduro's narrative is characterised by an extensive and varied use of lexical items that serve to legitimise the government (i.e., the ingroup) and delegitimise the opposition (i.e., the outgroup). Table 2 shows the representation of the ingroup. As this table depicts, the key ingroup social actors (i.e., Venezuela, the Venezuelan people, Maduro's government, Nicolás Maduro, Hugo Chávez, and Simón Bolívar) are mostly accompanied by positive collocates. Venezuela and the Venezuelan people, which are the social actors with the highest number of (positive) collocates, represent the nation. By transmitting an image of sovereignty, independence, decency, dignity, respect, and liberty, Maduro emphasises the nation's colonial past and achieves morality-based legitimacy (Oddo, 2011). This colonial struggle is linked to the Bolivarian Revolution and Chávez's 21st century socialism¹¹ through the description of the ingroup social actors as revolutionary, strong, patriotic, socialist, Bolivarian, and *Chavista*. Hence, both Venezuela and the Venezuelan people are regarded as colonial subjects and revolutionary actors.

Social actors	Ingroup collocates and concordances (ic)	F _{ic}
Venezuela	Bolivarian, sovereign, worthy, independent, receiving, receptor of (im)migrants, noble, pacifist, worthy, profound, interesting, important, beloved, beautiful, socialist; Ezequiel Zamora's land, Chávez's land, land of victories, land of the 21 st century miracle, land of liberators, the world's geopolitical centre; opportunities, advances, Christian values, Bolivarian values, <i>sucrista</i> values, dignity, democracy, freedom, participation, peace, respect, sovereignty, honesty, strength, serenity, bravery, patriotism, revolutionary spirit; our/my country, our Venezuela, our/my homeland	73
Venezuelan people	self-conscious, Bolivarian, sovereign, victorious, noble, profound, revolutionary, united, free, real, grateful, heroic, humble, protagonist, combatant, firm, joyful, beloved, dear, brave; civil-military union, Chávez's sons and daughters, warriors, fighters, brothers; prominence, love, resistance, fighting capacity, power, justice; our people	58
Government	real, capable, legitimate, elected, free, independent, popular, revolutionary, Bolivarian, anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, profoundly <i>chavista</i> , socialist, good, fundamental; people's	38

	government, heirs of the spirit of the 23 rd of January, heirs of Fabricio Ojeda, Chávez's people; effort, struggle, democratic life, majority	
Nicolás Maduro	elected, legitimate, constitutional, re-elected, revolutionary, democratic, humble, not weak, not a coward, not a traitor; worker, man of the people, Chávez's heir; dialogue	20
Chávez	constitutional, alive; revolutionary giant, great master, master of the democratic life, supreme commander, infinite commander, legitimate president; Bolivarian principles; our commander	17
Bolívar	great, liberator, founding father, Father Liberator, revolution, revolutionary spirit	12
Totalic		194

Table 2. Ingroup representation Nicolás Maduro

The Venezuelan government and its supporters are represented as the revolutionary, legitimate leaders of the *homeland* (1). Several patriotic values are attributed to this group, including the revolutionary spirit, strength, independence, and closeness to the people. These are also connected to the representation of the Bolivarian Revolution as a struggle between the colony and the empire, or between the (pro-)Bolivarian and anti-Bolivarian groups. The government-people union seems to be the core of this revolution (2). In addition, for legitimation purposes, both the government and Nicolás Maduro (*We/I*) are presented as constitutional and democratic, in contraposition to the imperialist forces (*They*) (3).

- (1) *Ese es el camino de la **patria**: la valentía, el patriotismo, el espíritu revolucionario.* [That is the path of the **homeland**: bravery, patriotism, and revolutionary spirit.] (NM-S2)
- (2) *Si no hubiera un **pueblo** consciente, si no tuviéramos un **pueblo** mayoritariamente de valores, revolucionario, la Revolución Bolivariana hubiera desaparecido hace tiempo.* [If a self-conscious **people** did not exist, if we did not have a revolutionary people of values, the Bolivarian Revolution would have disappeared a long time ago.] (NM-I2)
- (3) *Ustedes me reeligieron democráticamente, constitucionalmente un 20 de mayo del año 2018. Todo lo que **nosotros** tenemos nos lo hemos ganado con el voto del pueblo. Todo lo que **nosotros** somos se lo debemos al esfuerzo, a la lucha, a la vida democrática. **Ellos** dicen que **yo** soy un dictador. **Yo** les digo que **yo** no estudié ni me formé en la Escuela de las Américas, donde ustedes formaron, señores imperialistas, a todos los dictadores de América Latina y del Caribe.* [You democratically and constitutionally re-elected me on May 20th, 2018. Everything **we** have, we've won it with popular vote. Everything **we** are, we owe it to the effort, struggle, and democratic life. **They** say that **I** am a dictator. **I** tell them that **I** did not study at the School of the Americas, where you, imperialist lords, trained the dictators from Latin America and the Caribbean.] (NM-S1)

Another important part of the ingroup is composed of the Bolivarian historical forces, that is, Simón Bolívar and Hugo Chávez. According to Bolívar (2013a), the *Chavista* belief system (see section 5.3) was based on the idea of Chávez as the reincarnation of both the people and Simón Bolívar (p.

134). To continue with this line of thought, Simón Bolívar is referred to as the founding father of the homeland, and Hugo Chávez as the eternal master and supreme commander of the Bolivarian Revolution and the 21st century socialism. Thus, both are contemplated as the historical, immortal pillars of the revolution. In fact, one of the slogans that have been used by the government since Chávez's death is 'Chávez lives!' (*iChávez vive!*), contemplated in the literature as a strategy for sanctifying the leader (Álvarez & Chumaceiro, 2013). Pointing to the colonial and *Chavista* past helps Maduro to enhance the anti-imperialist spirit and to present himself as the unique, legitimate heir of Chávez's legacy. Moreover, it re-establishes Maduro's authority and thus contributes to the legitimation of his *Chavista* political project.

The representation of the outgroup is provided in Table 3. Its key social actors are the Trump-led American opposition and Guaidó-led Venezuelan opposition. These are, in line with the colony vs. empire schema, mainly represented as imperialist forces (see *nation vs. world*, example 4). They are the *extremist, far-right* elites that have carried out an illegal coup d'état. As such, they are often presented jointly, as allies. Furthermore, one of the key strategies to delegitimise Guaidó is to conceptualise him as a puppet of the US government. In that way, Maduro deprives Guaidó of his personality and authority, and directly points to the US and Donald Trump as the real threats to peace. Apart from that, Maduro uses several insults against the opposition, like Chávez did in his time as a president (see Bolívar, 2008). Guaidó is characterised as a traitor (*traidor, vendepatria*) (NM-S2) and a coward, implying that he does not represent the patriotic and military values that define the Bolivarian Republic, and that he is not worthy of the people's respect. Last, but not least, international (and, specifically, European) *media* (5) are blamed for hiding and censoring the reality of Venezuela and distorting the country's image. This shows Maduro's attempts to *monopolise discourse* (Martín Rojo & van Dijk, 1997, p. 550), that is, control the access to public discourse so as to gain voice, and hence, power.

- (4) *Les hemos dado una lección al imperialismo norteamericano, al **mundo** imperialista de Europa, de que hay un **pueblo** unido, dispuestos a ser libres, dispuestos a hacer patria.* [We have taught North American imperialism and Europe's imperialist **world** a lesson: we are a united **people**, willing to be free, and willing to ensure the country's prosperity.] (NM-S2)
- (5) *Ustedes, el pueblo combatiente, no existen para los **medios** de comunicación de la burguesía. Los **medios** de comunicación internacionales, una vez más, censuran al pueblo de Venezuela. Todos los **medios** internacionales manipulan, y con su manipulación, invisibilizan para el mundo que aquí hay un pueblo bolivariano gobernando, dirigiendo los destinos de la nación.* [You, combatant people, are invisible for the bourgeois **media**. International **media**, once again, censor the Venezuelan people. International **broadcasters** are manipulators, and because of them, the world cannot see that a Bolivarian people is governing here, determining this country's fate.] (NM- S1)

Social actors	Outgroup collocates and concordances (oc)	F _{oc}
United States	despicable, illegal, right-wing, extremist, oppressive; elite, oligarchic democracy, raider; intervention, coup d'état, division, destruction, imposition, imperialism, self-interest, folly, lackey, satellite governments, empire, economic war, Ku Klux Klan, with their hands in Venezuela,	62
Opposition	divided, weak, extra-constitutional, imperialist, satellite, gringo, extremist, <i>guaidocista</i> (pro-Guaidó), puppet, far-right, pro-imperialists; showmen, clowns, demagogues, heirs of the 23 rd January treason, heirs of <i>puntofijismo</i> , heirs of the worst, heirs of the rottenness of the Fourth Republic; fight, division, lack of leadership, weakness, complete failure, coup, show, slyness, demagoguery, fake offer, censorship, veto, usurpation, irresponsibility, corruption, tricks; their government	51
Donald Trump	extremist, white supremacist; threats, kidnapping, imposition, defeat, (military) invasion, illegal policies, war, aggression, irresponsibility, folly, lies, humiliation, crisis, blocking, misguided policy; with his hands in Venezuela,	32
International media	manipulation, invisibility, stereotype, problem, censorship, veto, aggression, lies, persecution	26
Juan Guaidó	extra-constitutional, subservient, fool (<i>bobolongo</i> , <i>imbécil</i> , <i>muchacho pa' bobo</i>), puppet, traitor (<i>traidor</i> , <i>vendepatria</i>), clown, corrupt; division, defeat, fault	15
Western world	imperialist, unipolar; empire, bourgeoisie	6
Total _{oc}		181

Table 3. Outgroup representation Nicolás Maduro

5.2 Juan Guaidó

Juan Guaidó's narrative is based on the positive representation of Venezuela, the 2015 National Assembly, the Venezuelan people, Guaidó himself, the countries and organisations that support him, and the military (see Table 4). In this narrative, the revolutionary standards supported by Maduro are absent. There is no exaltation of the homeland, the anti-imperialist sentiment, Bolívar, or Chávez. Instead, Guaidó's discourse is centred upon democratic notions of freedom, union, and open-mindedness (see section 5.3 for further description of his ideology). He conceives the ingroup as a *growing, unstoppable, democratic* social movement that will bring a hopeful future to the country and construct a new history. He also reinforces the idea of brotherhood, which creates a sense of familiarity and closeness with his supporters and the Venezuelan population. In fact, a key characteristic of Guaidó's positive construction of the ingroup is the metaphoric conceptualization of the military as a family (see Musolff, 2016). FAMILY metaphors in this context could serve not only to form a bond with the addressees and hence gain potential supporters, but also to mobilise the Venezuelan people against the government. This exemplifies the strategic use of conceptual metaphors and metaphor scenarios in the discursive construction of polarisation. Thus, the call for unity and collaboration is very important in his narrative. What is more, Guaidó frequently mentions the *nation* (6) with the purpose of imploring his three main goals: the cessation of the usurpation, the transitional government, and freedom. In this case, the people are described as *brave, determined, courageous* and *libertarian*

citizens who are *fighting for their right to live in dignity* (JG-S3). Additionally, and with a certain resemblance to Maduro's discourse, Guaidó invokes the colonial past by describing the Venezuelan people as *heirs of liberators* and as *owners of their own history* (7).

(6) *Vimos la reacción de un **pueblo** que quiere el reencuentro y la unidad, hacer viable un país. En definitiva, lograr el cese de la usurpación, el gobierno de transición y libertad. Un **pueblo** determinado a cumplir con sus objetivos.* [We witnessed the reaction a **people** that wants to be united and looks forward to the prosperity of the country. In short, a **people** that wants to achieve the cessation of the usurpation, the transitional government and liberty. All in all, a **people** determined to reach its goals.] (JG-S1)

(7) *Créanse y siéntanse dueños de su historia, de nuestra historia, de nuestro país, de nuestra soberanía, de nuestro futuro. Son herederos de libertadores, de hombres y mujeres dignos.* [Consider yourselves owners of your history, of our history, of our country, of our sovereignty, of our future. You are the heirs of liberators, of worthy men and women.] (JG-S3)

Social actors	Ingroup collocates and concordances (ic)	Fic
Venezuela	greater, free, united, democratic, open, beautiful, authentic, in service of humanity; interim presidency, article 233, Constitution, change, (interim) president, support, development, freedom, consolidation, (free) elections, military, (re)construction, sovereignty, transition, democracy, international cooperation, responsibility, potential, future, great resources, great opportunities, happiness, hope, recovery, voice, negotiations, dialogue, dignity, strength, soul, reunion, recognition, rights, unity, mobilisation, miracle, employment, liberties, brothers; independence; our/my country, our state	113
National Assembly	responsible, legitimate, peaceful, sovereign, growing, unstoppable, constitutional, unbeatable; unified command; majority, governance, (interim) president, articles 233, 333 and 350, interim presidency, change, amnesty, (free) elections, Constitution, guarantees, dialogue, union, relatives, streets, reengagement, support, right, honour, construction, success, mobilisation, international aid, recognition, legitimacy, democracy, loyalty, dignity, love, prosperity, hope, strength; our movement	74
Venezuelan people	libertarian, brave, peaceful, determined, courageous, united, relentless, good; brothers, sisters; popular/social/communal power; support, backing, mobilisation, humanitarian aid, (free) elections, demands, dignity, normality, future, direction, family, freedom, happiness; our people	38
Juan Guaidó	legitimate, elect, Venezuelan; (interim) president, example of progress; (free) elections, Constitution, article 233, support, cooperation, international community, change, transition, applause, dignity, swearing, opportunities	30
Partner countries/groups	gathered; brother countries, region brothers; brotherhood, freedom, change, (free) elections, support, European community; our brothers	15

Armed Forces	central; military family; defence, side, support, peaceful transition; our military family	13
Total _{ic}		283

Table 4. Ingroup representation Juan Guaidó

Regarding the representation of the outgroup, as illustrated in Table 5, Guaidó conceives of the Venezuelan government as a dictatorship and a criminal conglomerate. In this context, Maduro is contemplated as a *very cruel* dictator (JG-I1), a usurper of the presidency, and an ally of criminal mafias and armed paramilitary groups (including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the National Liberation Army, and Hezbollah). This is the core of Guaidó’s strategy for claiming legitimacy as Interim President, and for demanding the celebration of new, free elections. What he wants is a transition towards democracy, and this transition can only take place with the support from the citizens and the international community (see *dictatorship vs. democracy*, example 8). In fact, to reinforce his view, Guaidó maintains that he is the only president that counts on this support and recognition, and not *Maduro* (9). In addition, Guaidó talks about a *second independence* (JG-S2). From his point of view, the people of Venezuela are not free nor independent, as they are living under an oppressive regime. Thus, Guaidó’s narrative is based on the struggle for the liberation of the people from Maduro’s dictatorship.

(8) *Esto es una **dictadura**. Pocos dictadores aceptan voluntariamente que lo hicieron mal, que quebraron al país, que asesinaron gente, que se robaron una elección. Por eso la presión ciudadana es tan importante y la cooperación internacional para lograr la transición pacífica a la **democracia**.* [This is a **dictatorship**. Few dictators willingly accept that what they did was wrong, that they broke the country apart, assassinated people, and stole an election. That is why citizen pressure and international cooperation are so important for achieving the pacific transition towards **democracy**.] (JG-I2)

(9) *Mientras tanto, Nicolás **Maduro** usurpa funciones, ejerce como dictador en Venezuela. Y el principal respaldo que tengo yo es el de la gente. Los estudios de opinión, y seguramente los has visto, dicen que el 90% de la gente me respalda y rechaza a **Maduro**.* [Meanwhile, Nicolás **Maduro** usurps functions and serves as a dictator in Venezuela, and the main support that I have comes from the people. Opinion surveys, which you have probably seen, say that 90% of the people support me and reject **Maduro**.] (JG-I2)

Social actors	Outgroup collocates and concordances (oc)	Foc
Government	unnatural, armed, paramilitary, small, irregular; criminal conglomerate, sad metaphor, failure; darkness, usurpation, dictator, persecution, political assassination, breach of rules, sanction, hunger, destruction, not democratic, not supported, kidnapped, parastate, rivalry, ideological struggle, agony, coup d’état, terror, electric emergency, crisis, serious situation, sabotage, genocide	44

Nicolás Maduro	disconnected from reality, isolated, withdrawn; usurper, dictator; withdrawal, dictatorship, (international) pressure, rejection, armed, paramilitary, revolution, dilemma, war, massacre, elite, blockade, risk, lack of support/food/democracy/trust, persecution, insecurity	39
Total _{loc}		83

Table 5. Outgroup representation Juan Guaidó

5.3 Ideological Polarisation and the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis

As analysed in the previous subsections, ideological polarisation is clearly presented in the discourses of Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó, thus supporting van Dijk's ideological square theory (1998). The contrastive meanings of the collocates and concordances found in the analysis contribute to (re)producing this polarisation by emphasising Our good actions and Their bad ones and de-emphasising Our bad actions and Their good ones. Figure 1 portrays the ingroup and outgroup positive and negative representations based on the total number of collocates and concordances. The discourse of Maduro is sharply polarised, as the positive representation of the ingroup is almost as frequent as the negative representation of the outgroup (194 positive vs. 181 negative terms). By contrast, Guaidó concentrates more on the emphasis on Our good actions (283 positive terms) rather than Their bad ones (83 negative terms), thus transmitting a less polarised view of the socio-political reality but reinforcing the ingroup's identity. Since the two political actors under study are considered rivals, their discourses reveal the struggle for power and legitimacy behind the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis. In fact, both narratives are completely contrastive, as they represent the Self as an agent of self-defence and a victim, and the Other as an agent of destruction and a global threat, therefore enhancing Our goodness and Their evilness (Rababah & Hamdan, 2019).

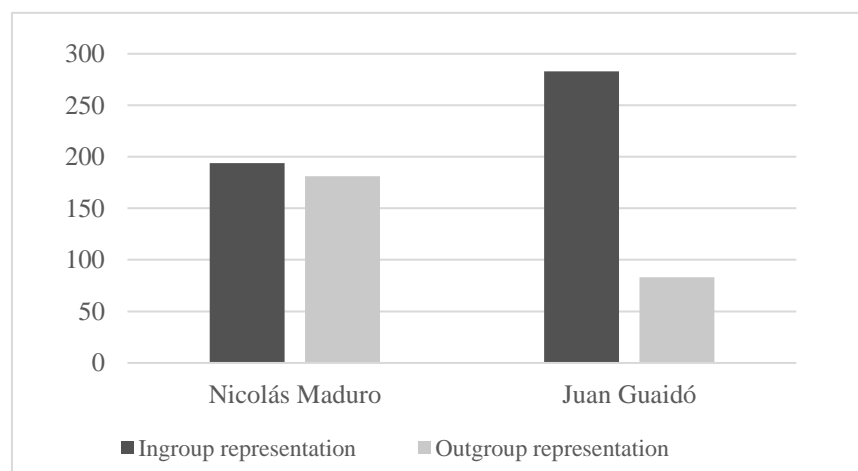


Figure 1. Ingroup and Outgroup representations

In Maduro's narrative, the presidential crisis is characterised as a *neo-colonial struggle* (NM-I2) between Bolivarian and imperialist groups. While the ingroup is made up of the Bolivarian revolutionary nation (i.e., Venezuela, the people, Nicolás Maduro, and his government), the outgroup is formed by

the imperialist elites (i.e., United States, the opposition, and international media). When analysing Thaksin Shinawatra's political discourse, Gadavanij (2020) similarly finds that he used the collective *We* for referring to the people and the government, and *They* as the media and the elites. Maduro's ideological scheme is deeply rooted in the discourse of the former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, who characterised the ingroup as Bolivarian and the outgroup as a group of right-wing traitors (Adrián, 2013; Bolívar, 2013a). As Bolívar (2013a) and Lozada (2020) point out, the collective *We* in *Chavista* discourse included the people, represented as revolutionary actors, the messianic military leader that promised to save the nation, and the armed forces. Thus, the military spirit is a key feature of the Bolivarian identity, alongside the resistance against the empire. In addition, the mythification and deification of both Chávez and Bolívar helps Maduro to continue with Chávez's legacy and to be considered his heir (Baquero et al., 2017; Lozada, 2020). Overall, this self-serving schema allows Maduro to legitimise his power and position. However, self-appraisal is only one side of the ideological polarisation. The conceptualisation of the outgroup as the imperialist elite that harms Venezuela contributes to establish the polarised dynamics where *We* are the oppressed, and *They* are the oppressors. Within these dynamics, the United States and Donald Trump are represented as the aggressors and as the real force behind Guaidó's self-proclamation. Guaidó is described as a *puppet* and a *fool* that is being manipulated by the US, as an extra-constitutional leader, and as a traitor to the Bolivarian Revolution. By conceiving the self-proclamation act as a US-led coup d'état and Guaidó as a puppet, Maduro's rival is discredited and delegitimised. This, together with the portrayal of the media as acritical and deceitful, sets up a narrative where *We* are victims and *They* are attackers.

Like Maduro, Juan Guaidó represents the ingroup as the oppressed and the outgroup as the oppressors. In this case, the members of the ingroup are portrayed as the victims of a cruel dictatorship. The ideological schema behind Guaidó's discourse relies on the polarisation between tyranny and democracy. While *We* are a *united free peaceful democratic* group, *They* are an *irregular paramilitary* organisation led by a *dictator*, a *usurper*. The positive self-representation allows Guaidó to justify his self-proclamation and, therefore, legitimate his position as interim president. In order to present himself as a man of dialogue and a man of the people, he addresses the Venezuelan people and the military as a family, as *brothers and sisters*. Gadavanij (2020) explains that these kinship phrases establish a sense of group solidarity and indicate that the speaker is trying to position himself in the same status as the audience, namely, address them like equals. Besides, to define his political identity amid his ideologically polarised view, Guaidó emphasises that his main goal is to celebrate free elections and to establish a transitional democratic government democracy that would eventually lead to the *independence* of Venezuela. Another key characteristic that distinguishes *Us* from *Them* in the interim president's narrative is that *We* are recognised, and *We* cooperate with countries all around the world. Thus, overall, unity, democracy and cooperation are the key characteristics and values of the ingroup. As pertains to the misrepresentation of the outgroup, Maduro and his government are delegitimised because their standards do not match *Our* democratic values. In this regard, Abid and Manan's (2016) analysis of George W. Bush's discourse before and after the Iraq war uncovered that Saddam

Hussein (i.e., the outgroup's leader) often co-occurred with *dictator* and *regime*, and that this promoted his delegitimisation. In conclusion, Guaidó's narrative focuses on the conceptualisation of Them as *roadblocks to freedom* (Ghachem, 2014, p. 556), and Us as the ones who are bringing that freedom.

In summation, the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis could be characterised as a political and discursive quest for legitimacy. According to Maduro's polarised narrative, Guaidó's self-proclamation is proof of the US attempts to illegitimately overthrow him and take control of Venezuela. For this reason, his discourse is based on the idea that We must protect ourselves from Them, because They want to take our independence away. Legitimacy is thus partially achieved through *temporal proximisation* (Oddo, 2011), namely, the construction of the outgroup as an imminent threat and the ingroup as a historical force. As pertains to Guaidó, he presents himself as the dissident who is going to free Venezuela from Maduro's dictatorship. He affirms that We must defeat Their dictatorship with the establishment of a transitional democratic government, because We deserve to be independent. Hence, overall, ideological polarisation allows these leaders to define their political identities and conceptualise themselves as rivals, to reproduce their ideologies and attitudes, and to legitimise themselves and delegitimise the other. Moreover, polarisation in both narratives is achieved through the representations of the ingroup as a resistance against the dominant outgroup. While Maduro conceives Us as the victims and resistance against Their aggressions, Guaidó perceives Us as the democratic resistance against Them, the dominant dictatorship.

On a socio-political level, Maduro and Guaidó's polarised discourses are only contributing to perpetuating the crisis rather than solving it. Although these leaders present themselves as men of dialogue, their discourses evidence a non-cooperative attitude. In fact, while both have kept trying to gain and maintain support from foreign countries and organisations, internal problems have remained in Venezuela since the beginning of the presidential crisis. Maduro's narrative not only damages international relations with the US and Europe, but also sustains his authoritarian practices. Besides, it is important to note that his privileged access to public discourse limits Guaidó's chances to gain support in Venezuela. Despite being less polarised, Guaidó's rhetoric does not do any better, as he promotes a crisis of mistrust in both the Venezuelan government and its institutions. In other words, he perpetuates the legitimisation crisis that has been taking place in the country since Chávez's death. Thus, the conceptualisation of Us as completely the opposite of Them makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to come to an agreement. As long as Maduro and Guaidó continue to encourage social, ideological, and political division, a peaceful future in the country is hardly imaginable.

6. Conclusion

The Venezuelan Presidential Crisis emerges as a result of two clashing ideological extremes, represented by the polarised discourses of Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó. This study has shown that both narratives are based on the oppressed vs. oppressor polarisation, which encourages not only the victimisation of the ingroup and blaming of the outgroup, but also the characterisation of the leaders as saviours of the nation as well as the

legitimation of the Self and the delegitimation of the Other. On the one hand, Nicolás Maduro aims at keeping the Bolivarian Revolution alive. Constructing a narrative based on the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist sentiment, he defends his role as President of Venezuela and as leader of the 21st century socialism. The representation of the outgroup as imperialist aggressive elites goes hand in hand with the positive portrayal of the ingroup. While Juan Guaidó is described as a puppet of the US government without the right to claim the presidency, Maduro is characterised as the constitutional, revolutionary leader of Venezuela that embodies the nation's Bolivarian spirit. This strongly polarised discourse is further reproduced with the strategic use of history, that is, with the deification of Hugo Chávez and Simón Bolívar. Both historical figures are considered the fathers of the nation, the liberators. Maduro takes advantage of this idea and represents Us as heirs of these liberators, thus emphasising the military and revolutionary essence of the Bolivarian regime. On the other hand, Guaidó builds the positive self-representation around the concept of democracy, and the negative other-representation around the concept of dictatorship. The ideological clash has its roots in the polarisation between Our democratic and Their non-democratic values. By representing the ingroup as a democratic unity that is going to overthrow Maduro's dictatorship, he aims at receiving both internal and external support (i.e., from people and organisations inside and outside Venezuela) to do so. Guaidó tries to approach the nation as an equal, as a man of dialogue and a cooperative leader that wants to celebrate free elections. Furthermore, since his self-proclamation act may be seen as undemocratic, he emphasises the legal frame in which he supports this act (i.e., the articles 233, 333, and 350 of the Venezuelan Constitution). Thus, the conceptualisation of Maduro as a usurper helps Guaidó to legitimise his interim presidency. All in all, polarised representations in the political discourses of Maduro and Guaidó lead to the continuity of the presidential crisis rather than its solution, as the Self is presented as completely the opposite of the Other.

In light of these results, this paper corroborates the validity of critical socio-cognitive studies in polarisation, which have demonstrated the strategic use of ingroup and outgroup oppositions in politics. In fact, it shows that polarisation occurs in discursive, cognitive, and social dimensions, and that the three of them cannot be separately understood from each other. Additionally, it pushes the field forward by analysing new discourses and a recent unexplored socio-political conflict.

Notes

1. This article is the result of the "Polarization and Digital Discourses: Critical and Socio-Cognitive perspectives" project (PODDS, PID2020-119102RB-I00) of the Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation (Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación, MCIN).
2. This date has major relevance in the history of Venezuela. On the 23rd of January 1958, a coup d'état led by a civil-military movement forced Marcos Pérez Jiménez, the dictator who had been governing Venezuela since 1952, to flee the country. Thus, this date marks the beginning of democracy in Venezuela, and the celebration of the National Day of Democracy. (Quintero-Montiel, 2018)
3. Article 233 refers to the President's absolute absence (i.e., permanent unavailability to serve) (Rodríguez-Ferrand, 2019); articles 333 and 350 deal with the protection of the Constitution. (Quintero, 2019)
4. For a comprehensive collection of these methods, see Wodak and Meyer (2015).

5. For the relationship between language and politics, see Chilton and Schäffner (2002) or Chilton (2004).
6. For the relationship between language and power, see Fowler et al. (1979); van Dijk (2008b); or Fairclough (2015).
7. SCDS is based on the socio-cognitive model developed by van Dijk (1990; 1998a; 2008a; 2008b; 2014). For a summary of the socio-cognitive approach, see van Dijk (2018).
8. For the distinction between general and specialised corpora, see Part II in Flowerdew (2002), and O’Keeffe and McCarthy’s handbook of CL (2010).
9. An even number of political speeches and interviews (8 in total) was intended to be analysed, expecting they would equally represent the discourses of both leaders. However, when the 8 texts had been collected, I realised that the corpus was unequal, since the political speeches given by Maduro were larger than Guaidó’s.
10. For general volumes on political genres, see Cap and Okulska (2013), and Section III of Wodak and Forchtner (2018).
11. In fact, this could have a potential effect on the speakers’ response and thus discourse production, as Maduro might behave defensively, whereas Guaidó might show a more cooperative attitude. Nonetheless, the inclusion of both political speeches and interviews in this corpus is considered necessary to offer a wider picture of the two leaders’ ideologies, as the availability of data (particularly of Guaidó’s political speeches) is quite limited.

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