

Venezuelan Oil Diplomacy and Voting in the U.N. General Assembly

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Venezuela enjoys one of the world's largest oil reserves. Since the profound restructuring of the state-owned oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA)*, after the managerial strike in 2002/2003¹ that led to the restoration of state control over the oil sector, the Chávez administration has used oil and oil revenues to pursue various political objectives, both internally and externally, as part of the Bolivarian Revolution. Many authors would even consider Venezuela's use of oil in foreign relations to be the country's main instrument to pursue their international interests, leading to expressions such as "oil diplomacy," "petropolitics," and Venezuelan "dollar diplomacy."² In the current debate, there are different hypotheses that try to account for Venezuela's motivations in committing enormous funding to oil diplomacy within Latin America and the Caribbean. Scholars have argued that it is in Venezuela's national interest to continue this funding in order to gain support in the Organization of American States (OAS) or the United Nations (UN).³ While it is usually assumed that oil diplomacy has the greatest benefit for the country employing it, in a few cases this has been refuted through qualitative assessments of general bilateral relations between Venezuela and some

¹ For further information on the events and structural changes, see Christian Parenti, "Venezuela's Revolution and the Oil Company Inside," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 39, no. 4 (2006): 8-13.

² Genaro Arriagada, "Petropolitics in Latin America: A Review of Energy Policy and Regional Relations" (Working Paper, Inter-American Dialogue, Washington, DC, 2006), http://www.thedialogue.org/PublicationFiles/1114_IAD%20Andean_Arriagada.pdf; Klaus Bodemer, "'Petropolitics' – Politischer Diskurs, Geopolitik und ökonomisches Kalkül in den Beziehungen zwischen Venezuela und den Vereinigten Staaten" ['Petropolitics' – Political Discourse, Geopolitics, and Economic Considerations in the Relations between Venezuela and the United States], *Lateinamerika Analysen* 16, no. 1 (2007): 169-201; Thomas L. Friedman, "The First Law of Petropolitics," *Foreign Policy* 154 (May/June 2006): 28-36; Nikolas Kozloff, *Hugo Chávez: Oil, Politics, and the Challenge to the U.S.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Detlef Nolte, "Die neue Verortung Lateinamerikas in der internationalen Politik" [The New Localization of Latin America in International Politics], *GIGA Focus Lateinamerika*, no. 8 (2007): 17.

³ Genaro Arriagada, "Oil and Gas in Latin America: An Analysis of Politics and International Relations from the Perspective of Venezuela Policy" (Working Paper, Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid, 2006); Ronald Sanders, "Venezuela in the Caribbean: Expanding Its Sphere of Influence," *Round Table* 96, no. 391 (2007): 465-476; Diego B. Urbaneja, "La Política Exterior de Venezuela" [The Foreign Policy of Venezuela], *ARI Real Instituto Elcano* 41 (2005).

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countries, for example, in the Caribbean.⁴ While this type of case study exists only for a few countries, a comparative analysis of the impact of Venezuelan oil diplomacy on the entire region has not been carried out.

To analyze Venezuela's impact on the region, this study examines the voting behavior of the countries of the Western Hemisphere within the United Nations General Assembly. This paper tries to answer the question of whether oil diplomacy has led to an increase in support for Venezuela from countries in the United Nations General Assembly. If the commonly held assumption that oil diplomacy has won Venezuela substantial support in the United Nations General Assembly from some Latin American and Caribbean countries is accurate, we would expect to find increased positive correlations between the voting patterns of Venezuela and countries subject to oil diplomacy shortly after the inception of the particular oil initiative. Although these correlations alone would not causally establish the impact of Venezuelan oil diplomacy, they are necessary to confirm such influence. In other words, if no correlation exists between Venezuela and other countries' voting behavior after the establishment of oil diplomacy or if no significant changes in behavior can be observed, this would indicate that Venezuela was unable to exert substantial influence on other countries to gain their support in the United Nations General Assembly. In cases where correlation does exist, qualitative data can then be taken into consideration to evaluate whether there is a causal link.

The dependent variable — a change in support by other countries of Venezuela in the United Nations General Assembly — can clearly be measured as a significant change in the share of resolutions on which any country voted the same way (or the opposite way) as Venezuela in any given year compared to previous years. The independent variable, exposure to Venezuelan oil diplomacy, indicates whether a country was subject to Venezuelan oil initiatives such as Petrocaribe. This combined longitudinal and cross-sectional study, which includes all countries within the Americas (North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean) during the time period from 1994 to 2008, answers the question of whether Venezuelan oil diplomacy has led to a gain of support in the United Nations General Assembly.

While the surprising results of this study show that there is evidence hinting at the impact of Venezuelan oil diplomacy on a few countries, they also indicate that it is a highly inefficient instrument to gain influence in the United Nations General Assembly. In the vast majority of countries examined, it is obviously unable to dominate foreign policy behavior. These unexpected results contribute to discussions on Venezuela's role within Latin America and the structure of the hemispheric state system of the Americas, which includes the changing importance of the U.S. as a regional hegemon. Furthermore, it will help us to understand more about the role of oil as a political instrument.

⁴ Sanders 2007.

After giving more detailed information on the theoretical framework and the methodology used in this paper, I present the results of how the voting behavior in the United Nations General Assembly has changed. Finally, I analyze the role of Venezuelan oil diplomacy and draw conclusions and evaluate the results and implications.

VENEZUELAN OIL DIPLOMACY

Expressions like “oil diplomacy,” “petropolitics,” or “oil politics” refer to two different phenomena: according to Genaro Arriagada, “one is the result of applying force and hegemony to control this energy resource; the other is the sometimes open and arbitrary use of oil wealth to influence events in other countries.”⁵ The first situation revolves around the creation of domination and subordination between countries through the control of oil resources. A dependence of oil-importing countries “can be further reinforced if supplies are sold at preferential prices or term.”⁶ The second situation focuses on the actual “exercise of the power of wealth” in order to “gain influence and power over other states by acting directly either on their governments or on opposition groups or movements.”⁷ However, I have to include both types in our definition of oil diplomacy, petropolitics, or oil politics because “they complement and reinforce each other in real political life.”⁸

Venezuelan oil diplomacy is seen as the “Hauptinstrument der venezolanischen Hemisphärenpolitik” [main instrument of Venezuelan hemispherical politics], which has almost taken the role of an “alternativen Währungsfond” [alternative monetary fund].⁹ As Genaro Arriagada points out, oil diplomacy is “nothing new” to Venezuelan policy.¹⁰ As a founding member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Venezuela managed to stabilize its own oil income in the long run. Following the explosive increase in oil revenues in 1973 and 1974, Venezuela’s foreign policy changed; it perceived itself as regional power that could use its oil wealth to influence other countries in the region.¹¹ Under the Puerto Ordaz agreement,

⁵ Arriagada, “Oil and Gas in Latin America,” 2.

⁶ Arriagada, “Petropolitics in Latin America,” 1.

⁷ Arriagada, “Oil and Gas in Latin America,” 2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung, *Wohin steuert Venezuela? Zur Politik des Präsidenten Hugo Chávez* [Where is Venezuela headed? About the Politics of President Hugo Chávez] (Bonn: IEZ – Lateinamerika und Karibik, 2005), <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/03026.pdf>, 5; Nolte 2007, 4.

¹⁰ Arriagada, “Oil and Gas in Latin America,” 6.

¹¹ Andreas Boeckh, “Die Außenpolitik Venezuelas: Von einer “Chaosmacht” zur regionalen Mittelmacht und zurück” [Venezuela’s Foreign Policy: From a “Chaotic Power” to a Regional Middle Power and Back], in *Venezuela unter Chávez – Aufbruch oder Niedergang?* [Venezuela under Chávez – Departure or Decay?], ed. Oliver Diehl and Wolfgang Muno (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2005), 85–98; Elsa Cardozo Da Silva, “Venezuela: ¿Potencia Media en el Caribe?”

signed in December 1974, Venezuela agreed to deliver oil to six Central American countries – Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama – “under quite favorable financial terms.”¹² In 1980, this agreement was followed by the San José Accord, which integrated Mexico as an oil exporter and expanded the use of partly loan-based oil sales to Barbados, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica, in addition to the six Central American states mentioned above. In its initial execution, this agreement introduced a loan scheme for 30 percent of the oil sales, repayable at an interest rate of 4 percent over five years.¹³ As Boué also points out, these “very favourable terms, however, did not survive the 1982 oil price fall,” and they were replaced by a scheme that covered only a smaller part of the oil sales while charging higher interest rates. After oil prices dropped significantly during the 1980s and the debt crisis captured Venezuela in 1983, Mexico and Venezuela’s once “very potent and high profile foreign policy instrument” was no longer as powerful, and Venezuela’s ambitions to become a regional power were brought to an early end.¹⁴

Following up on the San José Accord, the “Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas” was agreed upon by ten Central American and Caribbean countries on October 19, 2000.¹⁵ This accord governs the amount of crude oil and refined products that were to be sold by Venezuela to the signatory states. It determines that these signatory countries would have 15 years for the amortization of the payment at a 2 percent annual interest rate after a grace period of up to one year for 25 percent of their oil imports from Venezuela.¹⁶ On October 30, 2000, Hugo Chávez and Cuban president Fidel Castro agreed on the “Convenio Integral de Cooperación entre Cuba y Venezuela,” in which they promised to work out an accord under which Venezuela would sell up to 53,000 barrels of oil per day to Cuba with preferential short-term and long-term financing options. This agreement would cover almost all of Cuba’s oil imports from Venezuela, amounting to about half of Cuba’s total oil imports.¹⁷ Part of the accord also states that Cuba could also

[Venezuela: Middle Power in the Caribbean?] in *Venezuela y las Relaciones Internacionales en la Cuenca del Caribe*, ed. Andrés Serbin (Caracas: ILDIS/AVECA, 1987), 179–194.

¹² Juan Carlos Boué, *Venezuela – The Political Economy of Oil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 132.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Besides Venezuela, the signatory states were the Dominican Republic (20,000 barrels daily), Guatemala (10,000 barrels), Costa Rica (8,000 barrels), Panama (8,000 barrels), El Salvador (8,000 barrels), Jamaica (7,400 barrels), Haiti (6,500 barrels), Honduras (5,000 barrels), Nicaragua (4,900 barrels), Barbados (1,600 barrels; ended up not signing), and Belize (600 barrels). See Ariela Ruiz-Caro, *Cooperación e integración energética en América Latina y el Caribe. Recursos Naturales e Infraestructura* [Energy Cooperation and Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean. Natural Resources and Infrastructure] (Santiago de Chile: Naciones Unidas – CEPAL, 2006), 46.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

pay part of its oil imports through the provision of medical goods and services and some products like sugar.¹⁸

The agreements under the framework of Petroamérica are the next major piece of Venezuelan oil diplomacy to consider. As the main pillar of the energy policy of the “Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas” (Alternativa Bolivariana para las Américas – ALBA), this initiative promotes energy cooperation and integration in Latin America.¹⁹ It combines three sub-regional initiatives, which have been pushed by Venezuela: Petrosur, Petrocaribe, and Petroandina.²⁰ Besides the main focus of Petrosur and Petroandina on long-term regional energy cooperation and integration, for example by promoting cooperation between state-owned energy companies and investments in regional pipelines, Petrosur and Petroandina also include bilateral agreements with Venezuela that guarantee preferential financing options for oil loans. In August 2005, Argentina and Venezuela agreed on a series of bilateral accords that, among other things, incorporated the sale of a total of four million barrels of Venezuelan fuel oil in exchange for agricultural products and two oil ships.²¹ Around the same time, Uruguay and Venezuela signed an agreement that allowed the Uruguayan state-owned petroleum company to buy Venezuelan crude oil at a price that would be five dollars below market price, which was estimated to save Uruguay around 60 million dollars per year.²² In December 2005, an accord between Paraguay and Venezuela was signed that established a preferential long-term financing option for 25 percent of Paraguay’s oil imports from Venezuela.²³ After the new government under Evo Morales took power in Bolivia in the beginning of 2006, Bolivia was included in the “Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas” for up to 200,000 barrels of oil every month.²⁴

The sub-regional initiative for the Caribbean, Petrocaribe, is probably the most institutionalized of the three programs. It relies on a permanent intergovernmental organization, located in Caracas, with a Council of Ministers and an Executive Secretariat.²⁵ It also provides the most preferential conditions for oil sales of any Venezuelan agreement. The financing terms are bound to the oil price at the time of sale. With an oil price of over 40 dollars per barrel, 30 percent of the amount qualifies for long-term financing; once the oil price

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁰ While Petrocaribe includes a variety of Caribbean and Central American countries, Petrosur consists of Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, and Uruguay; Petroandina was proposed to include all the members of the Andean Community (Comunidad Andina de las Naciones – CAN): Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela (see *ibid.*, 25).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²² *Ibid.*, 33.

²³ *Ibid.*, 34. It allows Paraguay 15 years for the amortization of the payment at a set 2 percent annual interest rate after a grace period of up to two years.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 26. The President of the Council of Ministers is permanently taken by Venezuela.

exceeds 50 dollars per barrel, 40 percent of the amount is eligible for a long-term loan, and for an oil price over 100 dollars per barrel, even 50 percent can be financed with a long-term loan.²⁶ These long-term loans are granted for a 25-year period at a set interest rate of 1 percent, while the grace period is extended to two years and the remaining short-term payment does not have to be made within 30 days (as under the previous accords), but within 90 days.²⁷ While Petrocaribe was formally established in June 2005, its working statutes were adopted in September 2005.²⁸ In the second half of 2007, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Honduras also joined the agreement. After Guatemala also joined in July 2008, Costa Rica and Panama applied for membership.

So the current use of oil diplomacy under President Hugo Chávez is not the first time in Venezuelan history that oil has been used as a foreign policy device. However, the Chávez administration has used this “foreign policy instrument to an extent unprecedented.”²⁹ The importance ascribed to the strategic role of oil by the current government is also reflected in Venezuela’s changed behavior in OPEC. Though Venezuela is a founding member of OPEC, it “had been something of a scab-nation within the ranks” of the cartel, before Chávez came into power.³⁰ This changed dramatically and “Venezuela went beyond adherence to OPEC policy, providing leadership to the organization.”³¹ But what is the motivation behind this policy shift? Why does Venezuela use enormous parts of its oil rent to finance regional institutions and loans towards countries that might never even be able to pay back the original debt?

There are different hypotheses that try to account for Venezuela’s motivations in pursuing oil diplomacy within Latin America and the Caribbean. In the current debate about the Venezuelan case, we can distinguish at least three different arguments. The first one argues that Venezuela pursues oil diplomacy for integrationist reasons, which are almost altruistic in nature, holding a deep belief in the necessity of regional integration. According to the Chávez government, this Latin American integration process should be following a “modelo de integración alternativa” [model of alternative integration], rejecting the neoliberal model of development of the Washington

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 26–27. With a low oil price of under 40 dollars/barrel, the old conditions of the “Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas” remain in effect, except for an extension of the grace period to two years.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 28. The initial members of Petrocaribe were Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Venezuela.

²⁹ Arriagada, “Oil and Gas in Latin America,” 6.

³⁰ Ronald D. Sylvia and Constantine P. Danopoulos, “The Chávez Phenomenon: Political Change in Venezuela,” *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (2003): 70.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

Consensus.³² According to this explanation, Venezuela uses oil diplomacy to promote a variety of regional institutions and treaties in order to encourage regional integration, within all of Latin America, as well as sub-regional integration, for example among Caribbean countries, and to “create a ‘counter-hegemonic bloc’” to the position of the United States within the hemisphere.³³

The second hypothesis tries to explain Venezuela’s actions through the country’s economic interests. It argues that Venezuelan oil politics follows two basic aims: in the short run, it tries to “maximizar la renta” [maximize the rent], and in the long run, it tries to “reducir la preeminencia del mercado norteamericano” [reduce the preeminence of the North American market].³⁴ Steve Ellner also underlines that, although Chávez might justify Petrocaribe “by appealing to humanitarian sentiment,” the point “that discounts or special terms of payment to clients are a viable strategy for any company interested in penetrating new markets” remains.³⁵

The third argument cites political reasons for Venezuela’s oil diplomacy, focusing on Venezuela’s national interests rather than a selfless, integrationist motivation. It claims that Venezuela uses this foreign policy instrument “to weaken US sway over the region” and to strengthen its own sphere of influence within the region in an attempt to gain the role of a middle power.³⁶ In this argument, the current tendencies in Venezuela’s foreign policy are seen as a continuation of the claims to regional power during the 1970s.³⁷ The argument is that oil diplomacy secures Venezuela the “favor político” [political favor] of the other countries that profit from Venezuelan policies.³⁸ As Genaro Arriagada points out, looking at the motivation of Venezuela’s oil diplomacy towards Caribbean countries through Petrocaribe, “the CARICOM countries have 14 votes in the General Assembly of the OAS, while South American nations have only ten.”³⁹ Looking at the same sub-region, the former High Commissioner for Antigua and Barbuda to the United Kingdom, Sir Ronald Sanders, goes beyond citing support in the Organization of American States (OAS) as motivation for Venezuela’s policies and emphasizes the voting

³² Presidencia de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, *La Nueva Etapa: El Nuevo Mapa Estratégico* [The New Stage: The New Strategic Map] (Caracas: Presidencia de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2004), www.aporrea.org/audio/2004/12/objetivos_nueva_etapa_17_nov_02.pdf, 18. See also Boeckh 2005, 92–94 for a good summary of the integrationist elements in Bolivarian ideology.

³³ Teo Ballve, “Is Venezuela the New Cuba?” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 39, no. 1 (2005): 3.

³⁴ Urbaneja 2005, 3; for further information, see also Thomas Fritz, *ALBA contra ALCA. Die Bolivarianische Alternative für die Amerikas: Ein neuer Ansatz regionaler Integration in Lateinamerika* [The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas: A New Approach of Regional Integration in Latin America] (Berlin: FDCL, 2007).

³⁵ Steve Ellner, “Toward a ‘Multipolar World’: Using Oil Diplomacy to Sever Venezuela’s Dependence,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 40, no. 5 (2007): 17.

³⁶ Sanders 2007, 467; see also Boeckh 2005; Bodemer 2007.

³⁷ Boeckh 2005; Bodemer 2007.

³⁸ Urbaneja 2005, 3.

³⁹ Arriagada, “Oil and Gas in Latin America,” 9.

power these countries have in the United Nations, forming “a solid bloc in the Latin American and Caribbean group.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, Klaus Bodemer highlights that Venezuelan oil diplomacy pursues the goal of not just including Venezuela-friendly states like Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, and Uruguay but also those that confront “die seinen boliviarischen Träumen einer alternativen Entwicklung und Integration eher mit Skepsis gegenüberreten” [his Bolivarian dreams of an alternative development and integration rather with skepticism].⁴¹

In the current debate, there is little doubt about Venezuela’s increased importance within Latin America and the large role that oil diplomacy has played in its rise. In his article “The First Law of Petropolitics,” Thomas L. Friedman notes a negative correlation between the price of oil and democratic liberties in petrolist states following the tradition of “resource curse” theory. He states that increased oil prices are “fueling [Chávez’s] influence throughout the region.”⁴² Analyzing Venezuela’s role in the Caribbean, Sanders argues that, although Venezuela had little influence over the CARICOM states before 2005, this “has now begun to change as the centre of gravity and the balance of power and influence in the Caribbean has begun to shift away from the USA and move towards South America and Venezuela in particular.”⁴³ He observes that the “relations between the Venezuelan government and the governments of several Caricom countries are now friendly and . . . tensions seem to have abated” due to Petrocaribe and ALBA-Caribe.⁴⁴ However, Friedman comes to the conclusion that the CARICOM member states keep on acting “in their own self-interest as they see it,” which raises the question of the effectiveness of Venezuelan oil diplomacy in this sub-region.⁴⁵ Other authors argue that the Caribbean sub-region is the area where oil diplomacy is most effective because there are “a few big oil producers and more than twenty countries that are net importers,” and new dependencies on Venezuelan oil can be observed in, for example, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica.⁴⁶ Furthermore, there is little doubt that Venezuelan oil diplomacy has had quite an effect on Cuba, helping it to “ease the political and economic isolation” by supplying “100,000 b/d of crude oil” partly in exchange for services such as the provision of medical doctors.⁴⁷

Very little has been written with regard to the actual impact of Venezuelan oil diplomacy on the behavior of countries within the United Nations framework. One exception to this is the well-explored case of

⁴⁰ Sanders 2007, 467.

⁴¹ Bodemer 2007, 187.

⁴² Friedman 2006, 32.

⁴³ Sanders 2007, 465.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 472.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 475.

⁴⁶ Arriagada, “Oil and Gas in Latin America,” 9; Fritz 2007, 31.

⁴⁷ Moises Naim, “A Venezuelan Paradox,” *Foreign Policy* 135 (2003): 95; James Griffin, “Venezuela: Resources for All,” *OPEC Bulletin* 37 no. 5-6 (2006): 14.

Venezuela's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2006. In this case, Latin America was deeply divided between the two candidates: Guatemala, which was heavily supported by the United States, and Venezuela. In the end, after multiple votes, neither of the two countries was able to get the necessary two-thirds of the votes in the United Nations General Assembly and Panama was elected as a compromise candidate.⁴⁸ Within Latin America, Venezuela was supported by the member states of Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay), Bolivia, and numerous Caribbean countries; Guatemala, on the other side, could count on Mexico, Central America (except for Belize), and Colombia.⁴⁹ Although the longstanding disagreement between Guatemala and Belize made it hard for Caribbean countries to support Guatemala's candidacy, the general view seems to be that Venezuela received its support due to its oil politics towards its supporters.⁵⁰

Furthermore, it has been argued that even if the Petrocaribe countries decided "to blindly support the Chávez government in the OAS and in the Latin American groups at the UN as a *quid pro quo* for his help," these countries would not be able to dominate the discourse in these organizations.⁵¹ While this statement might be true, the question of whether this "quid pro quo" actually happens at all remains. This is the research question of this paper: Has Venezuelan oil diplomacy led to increased support in the United Nations General Assembly

METHODOLOGY

My sample includes all current, independent states within the Americas as defined by Kristian S. Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward.⁵² I examine the voting behavior in the United Nations General Assembly over the time period from January 01, 1994 until December 31, 2008, which includes parts of the 48th session, all of the 49th–62nd sessions, and parts of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly in order to contrast the time periods before Chávez came into power (1994–1998), after he came into power but before the inception of Venezuela's oil initiatives, and after the inception of Venezuelan oil initiatives. Because United Nations General Assembly votes are not equally

⁴⁸ Carlos Malamud, "Latin America and the Security Council," *ARI Real Instituto Elcano* 125 (2006); Richard Lapper, *Living with Hugo – U.S. Policy Toward Hugo Chávez's Venezuela* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2006).

⁴⁹ Bodemer 2007; Malamud 2006.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Sanders 2007, 469.

⁵² Kristian S. Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, "Interstate System Membership: A Revised List of the Independent States since the Congress of Vienna," *International Interactions* 25, no. 4 (1999): 393–413; Kristian S. Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, "System Membership Case Description List" (2008), http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/data/iisyst_casedesc.pdf.

distributed over the calendar years (for example, in 2000 and 2001, no resolution was passed before June), there is no reliable way to measure changes in voting behavior within years, only on an annual basis.

The data used to analyze the voting behavior build on a dataset assembled by scholars at Georgetown University,⁵³ which includes the votes on adopted resolutions in the UN General Assembly by all member states since its first meeting in 1946. Unfortunately, this dataset only includes the votes on adopted resolutions during the time period in question, excluding cases in which resolutions were not adopted. In absence of a better dataset and taking into account that “resolutions rarely fail in the plenary session,” these few cases of unsuccessful resolutions are not included.⁵⁴

In the original dataset, there are five different choices for a country’s vote on any resolution. A country can either vote yes or no; alternatively, it can abstain from voting on a resolution, or not be present during the vote. The fifth value is for cases in the dataset where a country is not a member of the organization. For my research, the last case is irrelevant because all the selected countries were members of the United Nations General Assembly during the time period in question.

The independent variable, exposure to Venezuelan oil diplomacy, is determined by whether that examined country was subject to Venezuelan oil initiatives, such as Petrocaribe. In order to measure the dependent variable, a change in support by other countries in the United Nations General Assembly, I analyze changes in the share of resolutions on which any country voted the same way (or the opposite way) as Venezuela in any given year compared to previous years.

As stated previously, though correlations alone would not causally establish an impact of Venezuelan oil diplomacy, they are a necessary (but not sufficient) factor to confirm such influence. In other words, if no correlation existed between Venezuela and other countries’ voting behavior after the establishment of oil diplomacy, or if no significant changes in behavior could be observed, this would indicate that Venezuela was unable to exert substantial influence on that country to support it in the United Nations General Assembly. In cases of significant correlation, qualitative data would then be considered to evaluate whether the increase in support is causally linked to oil diplomacy.

In order to quantify the dependent variable, changes in three different indicators are observed for every country. The first indicator reflects the share of votes in a given year in which the country in question voted exactly the same

⁵³ Erik Voeten and Adis Merdzanovic, *United Nations General Assembly Voting Data. Dataset* (2009) hdl:1902.1/12379 UNF:3:Hpf6qOkDdzvXF9m66yLTg==.

⁵⁴ Erik Voeten and Adis Merdzanovic, *United Nations General Assembly Voting Data. Codebook* (2009), 2, hdl:1902.1/12379 UNF:3:Hpf6qOkDdzvXF9m66yLTg==.

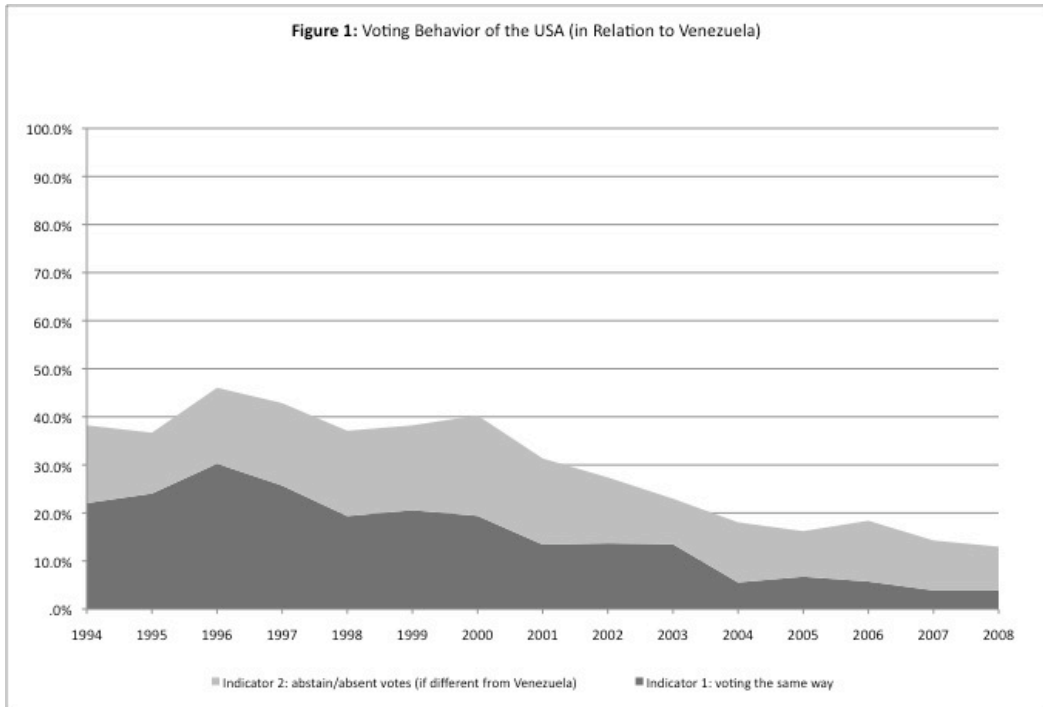
way as Venezuela on resolutions. This would be the case, for example, if Nicaragua voted yes and Venezuela also voted yes. The second indicator shows the share of cases in which the country in question abstained from voting by expressly voting “abstain” or by simply not being present, while Venezuela voted yes or no. I decided to combine the two vote choices “abstain” and “absent” from the original dataset because their effect is similar: the country does not take a stand on the issue. With regard to Venezuela, the other country neither expresses the same position as Venezuela by voting the same way, nor states a clear opposition. Except for very small countries, it can be assumed that any country could logistically manage to vote on any resolution. However, in cases of high accumulation of combined “abstain/absent” votes, I look more closely at the composition of this combined vote. The third indicator is the share of cases in which Venezuela and the other country took clearly opposing positions on any given resolution. An example for this would be Venezuela voting yes and Canada voting no, or vice-versa.

VOTING BEHAVIOR IN THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Applying the methodology described above, very interesting patterns emerge that reflect Venezuela’s changing position within the hemisphere. Looking at all three indicators for each country over time, we can clearly distinguish three groups of countries. First, there are countries that show significantly decreasing similarities between their and Venezuela’s voting behavior: they vote less with Venezuela than they used to. Second, there are some countries that demonstrate no significant changes in their voting behavior in comparison with Venezuela at all. Third, there is a group of countries that present significantly increasing similarities between their and Venezuela’s voting behavior: at some point, their voting behavior began to more closely resemble Venezuela’s. Furthermore, there are a very few countries that present no clear or consistent patterns of significant changes in their voting behavior compared to Venezuela. Cases of each type of country are presented in order to portray the three different patterns of changes in voting behavior. Table 1 in the following section summarizes the findings on all cases examined in this study.

Decreasing Similarities

There is a clear group of countries that show decreasing similarities between their voting behaviors and Venezuela’s in the United Nations General Assembly. Unsurprisingly, the clearest example of this can be found by correlating the voting behavior of the United States of America and Venezuela. While the U.S. voted the same way as Venezuela on an average of 23.1 percent of the cases during the time period from 1994 to 2000, this number dropped to 3.9 percent in 2008. Looking at the first and third indicator, we can clearly



distinguish three different time periods. From 1994 to 2000, the U.S. and Venezuela voted the same way on an average of 23.1 percent and oppositely on 52.5 percent of all cases. From 2001 to 2003, the share of cases in which they voted the same way dropped down to 13.5 percent, while the opposition share grew to 69.0 percent. From 2004 to 2008, another stage was reached as the two voted the same way an average of only 5.2 percent and voting in opposition in a total of 79.1 percent of all cases.

Although most of the other countries within this group started on a much higher level of voting with Venezuela (indicator 1) and also maintained a higher “baseline,” a similar decrease in the share of votes occurred in all cases. Furthermore, in most cases a significant increase in the share of opposing votes (indicator 3) could be observed, often starting around 2004, while there had been very few or even no such votes beforehand.

Increasing Similarities

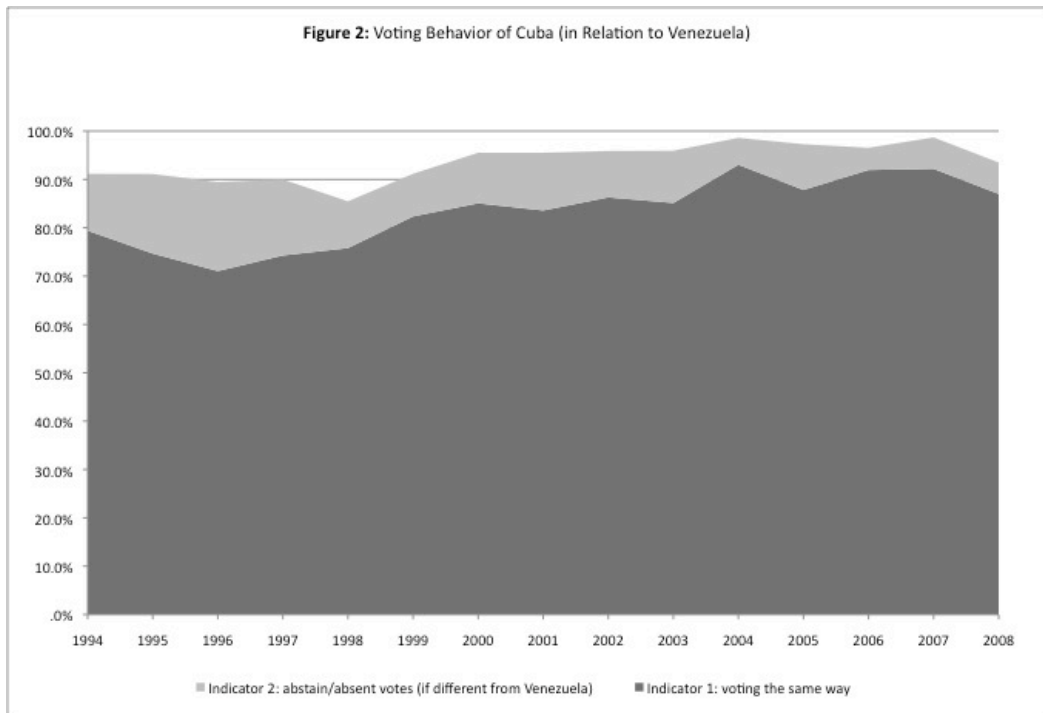
Countries that show increasing similarities with Venezuela in their voting behavior include Cuba, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic. The most extreme example is unsurprisingly Cuba. Cuba exhibits three clearly distinguishable stages of increases in the shared voting with Venezuela. From 1994 to 1998, the average share of cases in which they voted the same way was 75.0 percent. This share jumped by almost 10 percent to an average of 84.5 percent during the years 1999 to 2004 and then to 90.4 percent from 2005 to

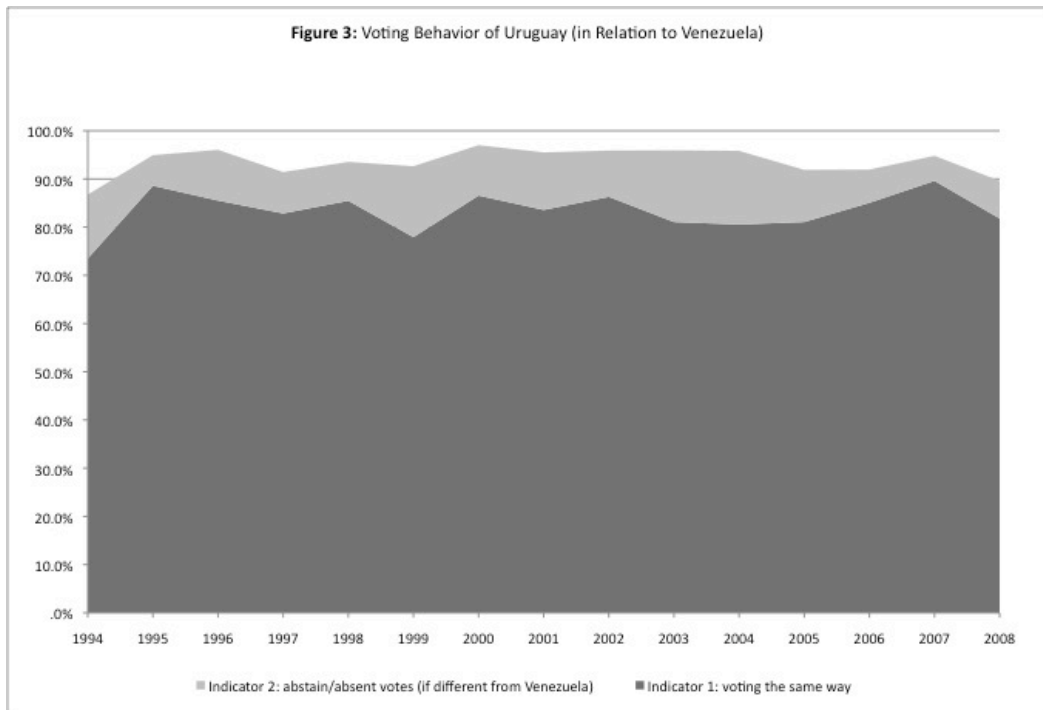
2008. Although never having had a high share of opposing votes (averaging 2.3 percent between 1998 and 2002), there has not been a single case in which Venezuela and Cuba have voted in opposition since 2003.

Nicaragua also shows a significant increase in the share of voting with Venezuela in 2007 and 2008. Before these years, Venezuela and Nicaragua voted the same way on an average of 76.8 percent of all cases. In 2007 and 2008 this number went up to an average of 93.5 percent. Like Cuba, there has not been a single vote on which Nicaragua has opposed Venezuela since 2007.

Costa Rica's increase in the share of cases in which they voted with Venezuela started earlier. While Costa Rica voted with Venezuela in an average of 67.1 percent of the cases from 1994 to 1998, this figure jumped to an average of 83.0 percent from 1999 to 2008. There are no significant changes with regard to opposing votes, which make up an overall 2.0 percent of the cases.

Looking at the Dominican Republic, we observe very low rates of voting with Venezuela in 1994 and 1995 (on average 11.1 percent) and still comparably low rates from 1996 to 1999 (on average 50.5 percent). During the following years (2000–2008), the Dominican Republic voted with Venezuela in most cases (on average 82.7 percent), showing only insignificant fluctuations within this time period.





No Significant Changes

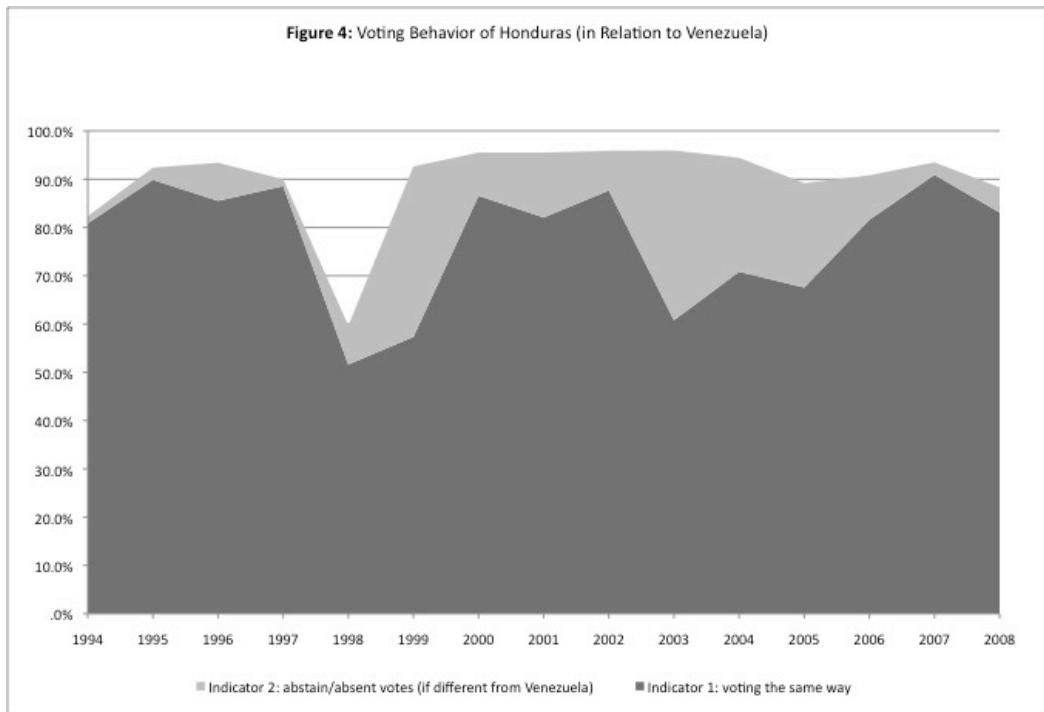
Besides those countries that show either decreasing or increasing similarities with Venezuela, there are several countries that do not show any significant changes in their overall voting patterns compared to Venezuela. This group includes some South American states like Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay as well as some countries in the Caribbean like The Bahamas and Barbados that have very similar voting patterns. Very typical cases such as Uruguay and Paraguay have traditionally maintained high levels of voting with Venezuela (Uruguay voting with Venezuela on average 83.4 percent of the time; Paraguay voting with Venezuela on average 84.0 percent of the time). Although a few countries within this group show slight increases in opposing votes (indicator 3), they do not exhibit any significant deviations from their very constant level of voting with Venezuela during the time period in question (indicator 1).

Changes Without Clear Pattern

Lastly, there are three countries that present significant changes in the voting behavior compared to Venezuela without portraying a clear overall tendency of increasing or decreasing similarity. Grenada’s average rate of voting with Venezuela in 78.2 percent of all cases is quite high. After the low point of only 50.6 percent in 1995, Grenada voted with Venezuela in 84.4 percent of the cases

(until 2003). The following years appear to move inconsistently, “up and down.” In 2004, this number decreased slightly to 72.2 percent and, in 2005, more drastically to 63.5 percent. While prior to 2004, Grenada hardly ever voted in opposition to Venezuela (1994–2003: on average 0.6 percent of the cases), it did so in an average of 13.1 percent of cases during 2004 and 2005. The following year, Grenada did not cast any vote in opposition to Venezuela and voted with Venezuela in 87.4 percent of the cases. In 2007, this changed again quite notably as the Caribbean island voted with Venezuela in only 61.0 percent of the cases. At the same time, abstentions increased significantly (to 33.8 percent compared to 8.05 percent the previous year) and the opposition rate increased slightly (to 5.2 percent). Yet again, in 2008 we can again observe almost the same values for all three variables as in 2006.

Honduras is an example of a country that, with significant changes in its voting behavior compared with Venezuela’s voting behavior, does not follow a clear pattern. The initial high degree of voting with Venezuela from 1994 to 1997 (in an average of 86.2 percent of the cases) is followed by a sharp drop from 1998 to 1999 (on average 54.5 percent) and yet again an increase to the same level as before the drop (averaging 85.4 percent between 2000 and 2002). This was followed by another smaller drop (to 66.4 percent between 2003 and 2005) and a recovery to the high levels follows (jumping to an average of 85.2 percent between 2006 and 2008). From 2005 to 2008, there is a small increase in opposing votes to 5.1% (from 0.5 prior to 2005). Taking into account the cases in which Honduras does not abstain from voting, it is striking that Honduras does not significantly vote in opposition to Venezuela during the second drop in voting the same way (between 2003 and 2005). Rather, it shifts from voting the same way to abstaining. Looking more closely at the composition of these combined “abstain/absent” votes, we can see that Honduras explicitly abstains in most cases during these years. This is why Honduras maintains a constantly high level of either voting with Venezuela or abstaining (in 93.2% of the cases between 1999 and 2008).



THE ROLE OF VENEZUELAN OIL DIPLOMACY

In the previous sections, we have observed a multitude of significant changes in the voting behavior of the examined countries in relation to that of Venezuela. In this section, I evaluate the ability of oil diplomacy to account for these changes. Before looking at individual cases, it is worthwhile to consider the results of the regression analysis between the independent and dependent variables for the entire dataset (see Table 1).

Table 1: Regression

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.157 ^a (***)	.025(***)	.023(***)	.193969

a. Dependent Variable: Share of Votes with Venezuela
 a. Predictor: Subject to Venezuelan Oil Diplomacy

Overall, there is a weak yet statistically significant relationship between the independent and dependent variable. This relationship also appears in a

panel regression that clusters the error on the country variable to account for the structure of the data ($R^2 = 0.0245$; at $p < 0.05$ level). This hints at some impact of Venezuelan oil diplomacy on at least some countries' voting behavior. At the same time, the weakness of the relationship suggests that the relationship is either not given in all cases or is universally weak.

Correlating the data on significant changes in voting behavior with the inception of the different oil initiatives with regard to different countries, I make some further observations that go beyond the results of the regression (compare Table 2). Almost none of the countries that show decreasing similarities between their voting behavior and Venezuela's were subject to any oil initiatives at the time of these changes. All of the countries that present increasing similarities between their voting behavior and Venezuela's were subject to oil initiatives at some point in time. And lastly, those countries that do not reveal any significant changes in their voting behavior make up a mixed group in which some have been subject to oil initiatives and some have not. Initially, these observations create the image of a correlation between the decrease or increase in similarity of the voting behavior and the exercise of oil initiatives.

Looking more closely, however, this correlation is less clear: three of the eight countries with increasing similarities between their voting behavior and Venezuela's started to behave more like Venezuela before becoming subject to any oil initiative at all. Costa Rica and Cuba started to show a significant increase in 1999, but they were not subject to any oil initiative until October 2000. Dominica began to present increasing similarities with Venezuela in 2004, but Petrocaribe did not come into existence until June 2005. Furthermore, Dominica shows a mysterious drop in voting with Venezuela in 2007, well after the beginning of oil transfers.

Going beyond the initial observations, it is necessary to distinguish between the different oil initiatives, since it might be possible that one of them has a stronger correlation with changes in voting behaviors than others. Starting with the first oil initiative in question, the "Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas," only one out of the 11 countries that have been subject to it moved away from Venezuela in its voting behavior. This country, Belize, decreased its similarities of voting with Venezuela in 2001, the year following the inception of the accord. Five countries did not change their behavior in relation to Venezuela's voting behavior during the immediate years following the signing of the accord.⁵⁵ And only two countries started behaving more like Venezuela in the United Nations General Assembly after the inception of the

⁵⁵ These countries were El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Panama, and Nicaragua. Nicaragua did not increase its similarity until 2007.

“Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas.”⁵⁶ As mentioned before, Costa Rica and Cuba both started their increase a year before the “Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas” was even agreed upon.⁵⁷ In conclusion, there is not a clear pattern of correlation between increases or decreases in the voting behavior similarity with Venezuela and the employment of the “Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas,” except in the cases of the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

The “Convenio Integral de Cooperación entre Cuba y Venezuela,” which was signed around the same time as the “Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas” and only applies to Cuba, does not show any correlation either because the Cuban increasing similarity with Venezuela began over a year before the agreement was reached, and no significant further increase occurred until 2004.

The next oil initiative that came into effect, Petrocaribe, applied to 17 countries.⁵⁸ Only one of the countries showed a significant decrease in its voting similarity with Venezuela after the inception of Petrocaribe.⁵⁹ Ten countries did not change their voting behavior compared with Venezuela after they became subject to Petrocaribe.⁶⁰ And three countries started acting more like Venezuela with regard to their votes.⁶¹ Looking at the countries that received benefits from neither Petrocaribe nor any other oil initiative, six countries present decreasing voting similarities, four do not give any significant changes, and none became more similar in their votes to Venezuela’s, at the same time (since 2005).⁶² Looking at these results, I conclude that, in the cases of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Saint Kitts and Nevis, there are correlations between increases in the voting behavior similarity with Venezuela and the employment of the oil initiative Petrocaribe.

The last initiative of Venezuelan oil diplomacy is composed of bilateral treaties that are part of Petrosur, and only applies to Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. While the latter two did not change their voting similarity with Venezuela after the treaties were signed, Argentina showed increasing

⁵⁶ These countries were the Dominican Republic and Bolivia. However, Bolivia did not even continue its increasing similarity after a year.

⁵⁷ Honduras and Haiti cannot be considered for any correlations because their changes in voting patterns are highly unclear and do not allow any categorization.

⁵⁸ Three countries, Honduras, Haiti, and Grenada, again cannot be considered for any correlations because their changes in voting patterns are highly unclear or inconsistent and do not allow any categorization.

⁵⁹ This country, Guyana, presented a significant decline in voting like Venezuela in 2008. This does not show a negative correlation, though, because it happened over two years later.

⁶⁰ This group includes Suriname, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Guatemala, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Dominica and the Dominican Republic. Dominica had already started to vote more like Venezuela in 2004 and the Dominican Republic in 2000.

⁶¹ These countries are Cuba, Nicaragua, and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

⁶² Decreasing: USA, Canada, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Mexico; no significant changes: Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Brazil, and Chile.

Country	Similarity with Venezuela	Time Period of Change	Subject to Oil Initiative at that		Oil Initiative	Inception	Oil Initiative	Inception
			Time?	Initiative at that				
USA	decreasing	1994-2008	no					
Canada	decreasing	1995-2008	no					
Peru	decreasing	1999-2008	no					
Ecuador	decreasing	1999/2005	no					
Guyana	decreasing	1999/2008	1999: no/2008: yes	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005			
Trinidad and Tobago	decreasing	2000	no					
Suriname	decreasing	2000-2002	no	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005			
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	decreasing	2001	no	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005			
Belize	decreasing	2001	yes	ACE	October 2000	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005	
Antigua and Barbuda	decreasing	2001-2002	no	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005			
Colombia	decreasing	2005-2008	no					
Mexico	decreasing	2005-2008	no					
Bahamas	no changes	-	yes	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005			
Barbados	no changes	-	no					
Brazil	no changes	-	no					
Chile	no changes	-	no					
El Salvador	no changes	-	yes	ACE	October 2000			
Guatemala	no changes	-	yes	ACE	October 2000	Petrocaribe	July 2008	
Jamaica	no changes	-	yes	ACE	October 2000	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005	
Panama	no changes	-	yes	ACE	October 2000	applied for PC		
Paraguay	no changes	-	yes	Petrosur	Dec. 2005			
Saint Lucia	no changes	-	yes	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005			
Uruguay	no changes	-	yes	Petrosur	August 2005			
Costa Rica	increasing	1999-2008	since 2000: yes	ACE	October 2000	applied for PC		
Cuba	increasing	1999-2008	since 2000: yes	CIC	October 2000	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005	
Dominican Republic	increasing	2000-2008	yes	ACE	October 2000	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005	
Dominica	increasing	2004-2006/2008	since 2005: yes	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005			
Argentina	increasing	2006-2007	yes	Petrosur	August 2005			
Bolivia	increasing	2007	yes	ACE	January 2006			
Saint Kitts and Nevis	increasing	2007	yes	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005			
Nicaragua	increasing	2007-2008	yes	ACE	October 2000	Petrocaribe	January 2007	
Honduras	unclear	-	yes	ACE	October 2000	Petrocaribe	Dec. 2007	
Haiti	unclear	-	yes	ACE	October 2000	Petrocaribe	August 2007	
Grenada	inconsistent	2004-2008	yes	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005			

(ACE: Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas / PC: Petrocaribe / CIC: Convenio Integral de Cooperación entre Cuba y Venezuela)

Table 2: Combined Information on Changes in Voting Behavior and Oil Initiatives

Country	Time Period of Correlation	Oil Initiative	Inception
Dominican Republic	2000-2008	ACE	October 2000
Bolivia	2007	ACE	January 2006
Cuba	2005-2008	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005
Saint Kitts and Nevis	2007	Petrocaribe	June/Sep. 2005
Nicaragua	2007-2008	Petrocaribe	January 2007
Argentina	2006-2007	Petrosur	August 2005

(ACE: Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas)

Table 3: Countries with Positive Correlations between the Variables

similarities with Venezuela in 2006 and 2007, after the treaty was signed in August 2005. So only Argentina presents a correlation between an increase in the voting behavior similarity with Venezuela and the employment of the oil initiative Petrosur.

As explained in the methodology section, a correlation between increases or decreases in the similarity of voting behavior with Venezuela and the employment of an oil initiative by Venezuela is a necessary – but not sufficient – condition to confirm the hypothesis of this paper. Therefore, the cases in which this correlation could not be found indicate that Venezuela was unable to exert substantial influence on that country to support it in the United Nations General Assembly. Thus, it can be concluded that Venezuela was unable to gain substantial influence on the Cuban voting behavior through the “Convenio Integral de Cooperación entre Cuba y Venezuela” and that the “Acuerdo de Cooperación Energética de Caracas” did not lead to an increased support by Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Grenada, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, or Panama either. Furthermore, it is clear that the oil diplomacy under Petrosur did not lead to increased support in the United Nations General Assembly by Paraguay or Uruguay.

In the cases of positive correlations, these correlations alone are not sufficient to confirm causation between Venezuela’s oil diplomacy and the voting behavior of other states. Further analysis of the cases of positive correlation is used to examine the question of causation more closely.

The time period of correlation for the cases of Bolivia and Nicaragua also happened shortly after ideological changes in the governments of these countries. In Bolivia, President Evo Morales and his socialist government came into power in January 2006. In Nicaragua, President Daniel Ortega and his Sandinista government assumed office in January 2007. Both of these presidents, governments, and political movements hold deep ideological sympathies for Venezuela’s Bolivarian project. These changes could also account for increased similarities between the voting behavior of Bolivia or

Nicaragua and Venezuela. However, these factors do not exclude the possibility of an influence of oil diplomacy as a contributing factor.

In the case of Argentina, the ideology of the Argentine government could not serve as an explanation because Argentina had the same president from 2003 until 2007, and the correlations are not observed until 2006. However, the time period of correlation starts shortly after Venezuela announced that it would cover US\$ 2.4 billion of Argentine foreign debt.

As Cuba has expressed its solidarity with Venezuela on many occasions, cooperates with Venezuela on numerous issues, and the ideologies of both governments share a lot of common ground, these factors may well account for the initial increase in the similarity of their voting behaviors in 1999, right after Hugo Chávez came into power. However, these factors did not change substantially in 2005 and, therefore, they cannot explain the second stage of increased similarity in voting behavior, which is the basis for the observed correlation.

Changes in ideology due to a change in government are also unable to account for the correlation in the case of Saint Kitts and Nevis, because Prime Minister Denzil Douglas has been in power, and the same political party – the Saint Kitts and Nevis Labour Party – has held the majority in the National Assembly since 1995. The increasing voting similarity, however, is not observed until 2007.

In the Dominican Republic, on the other hand, the government and its political affiliation have changed multiple times since 2000. Nevertheless, even under rather conservative governments, the high voting similarity with Venezuela has been maintained since 2000.

The inability of these alternative attempts to explain the correlations might hint at causation between the variables, but they do not sufficiently establish it. In order to examine this question conclusively, further research based on more extensive qualitative data for these cases will be necessary. This research should include in-depth case studies of the countries with positive correlations between the variables (see Table 3).

Nevertheless, I conclude that even if a causation exists and Venezuelan oil diplomacy can lead to an increased support in the United Nations General Assembly, the fact that the time period of correlation for Argentina, Bolivia, and Saint Kitts and Nevis ended in 2007, even though the oil initiatives remained in effect in 2008, would indicate that other factors also have substantial influence on the voting behavior. These factors could range from domestic reactions to external pressures over the influence of other regional actors, such as the United States as a regional hegemon, to national events in these countries that happen independently from international influences.

Furthermore, I conclude that, even if causation exists in the cases where correlation is apparent, Venezuelan oil diplomacy is a highly inefficient

instrument to gain influence over other countries in the United Nations General Assembly. In most of the countries that are targeted by Venezuelan oil diplomacy, there is no observed increase in voting similarities that can be explained by this foreign policy instrument, primarily due to the lack of correlation. Although Venezuelan oil diplomacy might have an influence on other countries, it is clearly unable to dominate those countries' foreign policies. This could be due to two different reasons: Either the national foreign policy interests of the target countries withstand the influence of Venezuelan oil diplomacy, or other regional actors such as the hegemonic United States are able to maintain sway over the region.

Since Venezuelan oil diplomacy is unable to lead to significant support in the United Nations General Assembly in most cases, it is even more doubtful that it could increase influence in the context of regional institutions like the Organization of American States (OAS), which deal with issues in which the national interests of the other countries are even more highly affected.

As stated in the methodology section, the dataset used for this research project only includes the votes on the adopted resolutions during the time period in question. Since "resolutions rarely fail in the plenary session" and due to the unavailability of the data for this research project,⁶³ it was justifiable that these few cases of unsuccessful resolutions were not included. In the context of further research, however, it would also be interesting to include these cases in the dataset.

CONCLUSION

After having thoroughly examined the voting behavior of the countries of the Western hemisphere within the United Nations General Assembly, the results presented give a multi-part answer to the question raised in the beginning of this paper of whether oil diplomacy has led to a gain of support by countries in the United Nations General Assembly. The hypothesis that Venezuela has gained substantial support in the United Nations General Assembly from some countries within the region due to the impact of oil diplomacy has been supported by the correlations found with only some countries. Although these correlations of increased voting similarities with Venezuela and the use of oil initiatives by Venezuela alone might not conclusively substantiate the hypothesis, they are a necessary condition that has to be met. The preliminary examination of alternative explanations for these correlations hints at causation between the variables at least in the cases of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. At the same time, the hypothesis has been clearly falsified for most of the countries examined. In most countries that have been subject to Venezuelan oil diplomacy, no correlations between changes in the

⁶³ Voeten and Merdzanovic, *United Nations General Assembly Voting Data. Dataset*, 2.

voting behavior and the employment of oil diplomacy could be observed. This leads to the conclusion that Venezuelan oil diplomacy is an ineffective and highly inefficient instrument to gain influence over other countries in the United Nations General Assembly. Although Venezuelan oil diplomacy might have an influence on some countries, it is unable to dominate most countries' foreign policy behavior. There are numerous possible reasons why Venezuelan oil diplomacy cannot deliver the expected influence over most examined countries. It could be that the national foreign policy interests of the individual countries could withstand the influence of Venezuelan oil diplomacy because the dependencies that oil diplomacy has to create in order to be successful were too weak in the examined cases. It could also be that other regional actors, such as the United States, have been able to maintain their sway over the region.

A study that examines such a huge variety of cases over such a long time period can rarely make the claim to be exhaustive and complete. It would be interesting to continue research on the causation between the variables that has been hinted at by some of the correlations. This research should include in-depth case studies of the countries with positive correlations between the variables. Furthermore, the future voting behaviors of the countries in question should be watched to see whether the patterns presented here remain after a longer period of Venezuelan oil diplomacy. Although it is highly doubtful that Venezuela can gain greater support in the context of regional institutions like the Organization of American States (OAS) through the use of oil initiatives, this hypothesis also calls for further research, and testing in that context would be a useful comparison. In addition, the current debate of what Venezuela might "get out of" oil diplomacy also leaves many unanswered questions in the field of possible integrationist and economic motivations.

Since the United Nations General Assembly is the only truly international forum with almost universal membership of all countries in the world, it can also give us some picture of the power structures in this world. As Venezuela has been unable to enhance its status in this organization through the employment of oil diplomacy, this also points at the limitations of Venezuela's claim to being a regional power. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of the Chávez government, Venezuela's role within the region might not have changed as much as people might have been led to believe.

