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Trends. The Inside Threat to the Outsider: Venezuela's Hugo Chavez Frias

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The political strategy of running for political office as an "outsider" in representative democracies has had a long and--at times--successful history. Successful candidates who are outsiders are usually successful at maintaining a public image of being an outsider while becoming more and more like an insider in the running of a campaign and the making of expedient decisions that may violate professed political positions. To remain in office, the outsider must master the reigns of power and make enough compromises--again threatening the public image of "outsider" by too often appearing to be an insider. The threats to the outsider from the campaign and from assuming the office may even become actualized so that one who psychologically begins as an outsider becomes an insider, often through an insidious phenomenon of insider and outsider doppelgangers competing for one's soul.

Many political commentators believe that President-elect Chavez's success is based on the image of the outsider. This image was burnished through his special operations military status, his leading the storming of the presidential palace in 1992, and his impassioned rhetoric that appeals to sacred and secular powers alike for the political inclusion of the wretched of the earth. At this moment Chavez, is almost god-like as the apotheosis of the outsider who is also the ultimate insider--a putative messiah promising eternal deliverance. To maintain political power without demonizing his adversaries would be even more god-like--outside the scope of even master politicians. (See Athanassiou-Popesco, C. (1997). *L'intolerance a la jalousie dans l' "Othello" de Shakespeare*. *Revue Francaise de Psychanalyse*, 61, 140-151; Balmer, R. (1995). *Defence and coping: The "outsider" in the group*. *Group Analysis*, 28, 473-482; Duplaix, H. (1998). *L'autre sur fond noir*. *Cahiers Jungiens de Psychanalyse*, 92, 85-92; Haas, E.T. (1996). *Armierte Trauer, Camus' Der Fremde, Fremdenhass*. *Zeitschrift fuer Psychoanalytische Theorie und Praxis*, 11, 66-80; Kubota, K. (1997). *Intergroup discrimination and illusory correlation induced by social category: Minority, majority, and outsider*. *Japanese Journal of Psychology*, 68, 120-128; Schemo, D.J. (December 9, 1998). *Venezuelan pulls off revolution at the polls*. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>.) (Keywords: Hugo Chavez, Insider, Outsider, Political Psychology, Venezuela.)