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*South American Elite Views on Democracy and Inequality:  
A Comparative Perspective*

**Denilde Holzacker**

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Center for Latin American Studies

University of Miami

**Author Contact Information:**

Denilde Holzacker  
Assistant Professor  
FAAP, São Paulo, Brazil  
denildehuol.com.br

**Abstract**

This paper analyzes the perceptions of South American elites in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Venezuela on social inequality and its relationship with democratic stability. The current context shows that governments have defined combating poverty and inequality as the first goal of the country. As a result, since 2000 the region has shown important improvement in terms of economic growth and combating poverty. On the other hand, the political moment has exposed institutional weaknesses, such as the incapacity of institutions to mediate the social demands and the representation of new political movements. Thus, the study purports to show the level of effectiveness that elites see democracy as having in resolving social questions; we also indicate which policies have more support or opposition among the elite. The study uses survey research conducted by the Center of International Relations (NUPRI) at the University of São Paulo. The survey conducted interviews with South American and Mexican elites in the political sector, government sector, business, NGOs and academic areas.

Keywords: elites, democracy, social and political inequality, poverty, South America

The study uses survey research conducted by the Center of International Relations (NUPRI) at University of São Paulo.

## **Democracy and Inequality in the South America Elites views: a comparative perspective**

**Denilde Holzacker<sup>1</sup>**

This paper uses a survey to analyze the level of consensus and convergence among South America elites on the policies to combat social inequality and consolidation of democracy. We surveyed a broad range of elites, including government sector, business, journalist, intellectuals, unionist, community and religious leaders. This paper explores the elite's perceptions regard the debilities of the democratic regime, economic and social policies, also the implications of these process for the regional context. We will compare the elite's behaviors in five countries Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Venezuela.

The contemporary agenda in South America contents a complex debate on national strategies of development the necessity of integrating economic growth, reduction of poverty, income redistribution and a consolidation of the democratic system. These issues involve large internal debates which resulted in a little consensus about the South America challenges. For that reason, it is essential to investigate level of support for the government policies among the society.

However, the social and political debates are not restricted to national context and had impact on the country's international affairs. The regional integration process, for example, had incorporated the social dimension as one of the integration goals (Holzacker and Marques, 2007).

Also the leftwing leader's views, as Morales (Bolivia) or Chavez (Venezuela), understand that the economic and social problems in South America were product of international capitalism exploitation<sup>2</sup>, and the globalization process emphasized the negative effects of this historical process. Even moderate views, as Lula da Silva in Brazil, consider that the current political moment represents a rupture with the Latin America history. On those conceptions, the countries have an opportunity to build one society without the external interventions. Thus, in defense of one equity society, it has emerged nationalist positions, also we see attitudes favorable a State intervention in economy.

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<sup>1</sup> Researcher at NUPRI and assistant Professor at the Rio Branco College and the FAAP, São Paulo, Brazil.

<sup>2</sup> That view is a base of the dependency theory which explains economic in development in Latin America.

There are a large number of studies which analyze the implications for the economic and political system the emergence of the left-wing governments in South America (Almeida, 2006; Coutinho, 2006; Castañeda, 2006). Most of them focus on the institutional aspects. They have tried to identify the nature of the new governments, the similar or differences between them<sup>3</sup>. However, few studies analyze the elite's perceptions, specially, in the comparative perspective (Stevens at all, 2006; Rosas, 2005; Luna and Zechmeister, 2005).

### **South America Elite's in the literature perspective**

In this paper the term elite was based on the pluralistic and democratic theory. A pluralistic approach, moreover, admits that the elite behavior affects a major political process, and they represent the interests of different groups who, through channels of participation and performance in public affairs, influence policy decisions.

In the latest years, the South America countries have had important trends in the social and political context. In most countries have seen the emergence of a new social composition, the elites have became more heterogeneous with the incorporation of new groups, as the indigenous in Bolivia or the social activist and labor unions in Brazil and Chile.

Empirical studies showed that demographics transformations have an impact in the attitudes and behaviors on the elites. In US case, for example, the large proportion of women and blacks bring greater polarization between liberal and traditional attitudes (Rotman, Black, 1999). Also the influence in the decision making process could incorporate the demands of these new groups.

Most of the studies in South America focus on the social role of new elites, but there are a few researches that analyze elite's attitudes or behaviors about policies. Rosas (2005), for example, shows the legislators policies preference on economic and international affairs during the 90's. She explores how the ideological dimension affects the legislators' attitudes. In her study the legislators show two groups of positions: one favorable to economic market-oriented policies, which mean privatization, market openness and international investments, with a rightwing ideological orientation. The other group has economic state-oriented policies, which is favorable to state intervention, social policies with the state-sponsored safety nets to protect market participants from adverse economic outcomes.

Like Rosas (2005), Reis and Cheibub (1995) identified the same division inside Brazilian elites: one group is favorable to market policies and privatization, and the other group has a

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<sup>3</sup> The Journal of Democracy ( Volume 16, Number 3 July 2005) contents a large number of analysis from different perspectives regard the emergence of the leftwing governments in South America countries.

critical position against the neoliberal policies. In both studies the ideological dimension is essential to identify the differences between the elites. Thus, the right position tends to be more pro-market, while the left position is more state-sponsor in economic issues.

After the leftwing governments the expectation is that the pro-state views have become more intense in the South America elites. For Almeida (2006), in nowadays there is, on one hand, a national-developments vision, which combines nationalization, universal social policies and economic growth attitudes and, on the other hand, a liberal-institutionalism view - this perspective is favorable to social policies combining with neoliberal economic policies and the strengthening of the institutions, as parties and Congress.

Reis (2000) argues that, in South America, is necessary to explore the views of the elites on the issue of inequality and social exclusion because these issues involve a complex debate about the national strategies. Her study indicates that, for example, Brazilian elites consider the problem of poverty the major public policy. Also for Brazilian elites education is a key element to overcome the inequality and should be seen as a strategic factor in government policies. Furthermore, the elites did not show resistance to support the discriminatory policies for minority groups, and that there is a preference for universal social policies (Reis, 2000: 147).

The democratic institution evaluation is another important point on the studies about elite perceptions. In this case, the largest study has been conducted by the Latinobarometer<sup>4</sup> since 1995, which presents the society level of confidence in the democratic institutions and also the position on public policies. In 2005, for example, it measured that that 53% of the population supported democracy. Also the main economic problem in Latin America is the issue of unemployment (representing 50% of interviews). The results indicate that, for some groups of Latin American society, economic growth is more important than the defense of democracy and civil liberties. Considering these results, it suggests the following question: is it possible to consolidate democracy in an unequal society?

On the other hand, Stevens (2006) argued that the relation among the elite authoritarian attitudes in Latin American and the economic and social policy preference is not clear. They saw little influence of the authoritarian attitudes for the preferences to taxation and economic liberalization. However, the authors admitted that they looked at only three policies preference and it will be necessary to explore this aspect more. Also they suggested the necessity to understand the relation between democracy, social inequality and economic in elite's views,

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<sup>4</sup> The project was a model based on the Eurobarometer, which has, since 1970, under the European Union poll of opinion, to contribute to the decision of member countries in integration processes. The study of Latinobarometer allows a comparative analysis of the attitudes in the region.

because for some analysts the behavior of elites often is reactive to the positions of other groups (Reis: 2000). Moreover, studies show that policies are more likely to be implemented when there is a consensus among the elites (De Sawan, 1988).

The policies to combat poverty and inequality are important aspect on the political agenda in South America, which have brought different views and opinion inside the society. In this paper our question is how do the elites support or not democracy consolidation and social policy to combat inequality? We consider that the emergence of new social groups have brought new perspectives in the national public policy debate, especially on inequality issues. Also the comparative perspective permits that we explore elite's perceptions and attitudes about democracy and social policies. Moreover, we will try to explore the elite's views about political institutions and the government role, as well the evaluation on policies to suppress inequalities and poverty, also the discussion about economic and social development in these countries.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN:

The data is drawn from a survey of 718 elites in Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and Venezuela by the Center of Research in International Relation (NUPRI) at the University of São Paulo, which was conducted in August-November 2008<sup>5</sup>. The selection of the sample in each country followed international standards, thus, the selection was intentional and considers the ability of influence and leadership<sup>6</sup>. The five selected countries samples were composted by six major groups: government, political parties, businessmen, labor unionists and community leaders, intellectuals and journalists.

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<sup>5</sup> The research is coordinated by Prof. Dr. Rafael Villa, Prof. Dr. Jose Augusto Guilhon and Elizabeth Balbachevsky from University of São Paulo. The research also included elites from Mexico, but we will not explore this data in this paper.

<sup>6</sup> The sample was called "purposive sample", because it involves the intentional selection of particular cases to studies. In our research, we selected the respondents for the following criteria: Political Sector and Government: national top-level public office and legislators and political parties' leaders; Business sector: CEO's, Executives and Directors in private companies; NGOs and Labor Unions: Executives and Directors. Media: editors and journalists from the national and local newspapers and magazines; Academia: Deans, heads of schools and departments, and influential faculty in public and private universities, as well as research centers.

Table 1 – Elites Sectors Interviews by Country (%)

Sectors	Countries					Total
	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Venezuela	
	41	35	87	55	27	
Political	34.7%	39.8%	38.2%	28.1%	30.7%	34.1%
Business	28	28	92	74	12	
	23.7%	31.8%	40.4%	37.8%	13.6%	32.6%
Labor Union	10	5	9	21	14	
	8.5%	5.7%	3.9%	10.7%	15.9%	8.2%
Social and Academic (1)	39	20	40	46	35	
	33.1%	22.7%	17.5%	23.5%	39.8%	25.1%
Total (100%)	(118)	(88)	(228)	(196)	(88)	(718)

Source: South America Elite's Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

(1) It includes intellectuals, religions leaders, journalists and NGO activists.

All countries had implemented processes of consolidation in their democratic system since the 80s. These countries also have in common the rise of new political leadership that enhance the criticism for the neo-liberal economic model, implemented in the 90s, and also established the end of inequality as the central goal of their administration. Each country demonstrates a different intensity of social mobilization and political stability - the government Lula da Silva (Brazil) and Bachelet (Chile) are recognized, in the literature, as stables governments with high level of consensus between the elites groups. Beside during the first mandate (2003-2006) the Lula da Silva Administration suffered a profound crisis with accusation of corruption.

In Argentina, the Kirchner's Administration showed high level of polarization in certain subjects, for example during the research there were large riots and disputes between the government and the agricultural sector. Venezuela and Bolivia have had a high level of social mobilization and a political struggle between the government and opposition parties, which has produced several internal conflicts.

In case of Venezuela and Bolivia the political conflict - and consequent social polarization - created difficulties to obtain interviews. In both countries, an interesting aspect was the reluctance of members of the current government to be considered part of an elite

group given that the ideology of these people has opposed to traditional elites. In some cases, the pluralist concept of elite had to be explained.

It was also an issue during the research, the maintenance of a balance between government supporters and opposition groups, especially in Venezuela and Bolivia. Thus, we could have a more refined view about the dissent, dissensions and consensus among elite in each country.

In Bolivia case, the interviews took place both in La Paz and the province of Santa Cruz, because the different composition of the elite. The Morales government has strong support among the indigenous groups and social movements in La Paz. On the other hand, his opponents are primarily related to business groups, based in Santa Cruz.

At the time of the interviews in Brazil occurred local elections, which created difficulties to access politicians and public officials.

The questionnaire explored the level of support for democracy; also it investigated the connections between the issue of social inequality and democracy. In a second part, we asked about the role played by the processes of regional integration to overcome the social needs of these countries and an assessment of the impacts of global processes that affect the region, especially the recent trends in international trade more relevant to the region.

In this paper we will analyze two groups of variables: the first set of variable will be the support and view about the democracy. According to Almeida (2006), it is possible to identify three ideas about democracy: first, it focus on the issue of institutional rules and standards. The second aspect relates to the vision that the author calls "elitist", that is, lack population participation in the political process and the political apathy are the cause of low civil culture in South America; the last group considers that the high levels of inequality affects negatively the quality of democracy in the countries.

A second set of variable refers economic and social policies support among elites. Another aspect refers to the influence of external factors. In this sense, we examine the view about globalization, considering the positive or negative effects of greater integration between the groups.

### **Elites Attitudes on democracy issues**

The South America elites appointed four factors as the main obstacles to consolidate the democracy in the region: first, the low education of the population (40.1%), second, the high level of poverty and inequality (40.2%); third, the corruption political environment (40%) and,

finally, the politician incompetence (32.2%). However, institutional aspects, such as absence of party tradition, only 5.5% of respondents attribute as a negative factor for democratic consolidation.

Table 2 – Greatest negative influence on the consolidation of democracy in South America (%)

Negative influence on the consolidation of democracy:	Argentina	Bolivia	Brasil	Chile	Venezuela	Total %
Low level of education standards in the population	26.3	44.3	49.1	41.0	28.7	40.1
High level of inequality and poverty	42.4	33.7	42.3	41.8	34.5	40.2
Corruption in the political environment	22.9	25.3	44.4	50.5	43.7	40.1
Politician incompetence	28.8	33.3	27.6	39.0	32.2	32.2
Political clientelism	24.3	19.8	34.6	28.9	25.9	28.5
Threat of military intervention	38.1	14.8	24.9	30.2	18.6	26.5
Lack of political organization in the society	29.3	13.8	27.1	19.6	32.2	24.4
Low economic growth	10.3	21.2	11.1	26.0	18.4	17.2
Political apathy	12.0	12.6	19.8	13.0	29.4	16.9
Elite egoism	16.9	8.0	21.5	10.7	26.4	16.7
Groups and sectors of society acting on its own cause	10.4	20.5	25.0	11.5	9.2	16.5
Absence of party tradition	4.3	2.3	8.0	3.6	8.2	5.5

Source: South America Elite's Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

Note: Notes: (1) the respondents indicated for each factor the negative influence on the democracy process on a scale from 0 to 10, 0 meant "less negative influence" and 10 "more negative influence". (2) The table includes only the value 10 for each item asked, for that reason the total does not sum 100%.

A factor analysis indicates that politician incompetence, political corruption and clientelism have the highest scores, 0704, 0696, and 0631 respectively. Following factors are associated with lack of political participation and civic culture in the population, 0623 and 0643, respectively. The third group of scores includes the social inequality and economic issue, respectively, 0549 and 0444<sup>7</sup>.

This result coincides with literature, as we saw in the other section, about the main negative factors that affect democracy in Latin America. The basic arguments that consider the difficulty in combining democratic values with high levels of inequality is quite consolidated in the perception of elites.

<sup>7</sup> All score test wee at the Appendix 3.

Nevertheless, the role of competence is more important than the party system, not obeying the logic of institutionalism for the political stability. In fact, the expectation in the political leader ability to solve economic and social problems is one characteristic of Latin America presidential system, which could facilitate the populist practices.

The elites attitudes also show what Almeida (2006) called “elitist democracy”. In this case, the elites attribute the lack of a civil culture as a main negative point of the Latin American society. The “elitist democracy” has a position contrary to popular participation in decisions of government, in this sense, going against the left ideological principal that historically support the grassroots movements and popular participation. For the elite, the people should not influence direct the legislative affairs. That position is a clear reference against the current practice of many governments to call plebiscites. Thus, 60.1% of respondents agree that the population is unable to take part on the legislative decisions.

In general, there is a strong rejection to authoritarian attitude in society, for example, the overwhelming majority does not believe that use of force is the main instrument of social change. Furthermore, 38% of respondents consider that a formal democracy may not be sufficient to resolve the social and economic problems of countries in the region.

Table 3 – Essential activities to democracy by countries (%)

	Countries					Total
	Argentina	Bolivia	Brasil	Chile	Venezuela	
Guarantee of application of the law	31.7	44.7	25.8	27.2	30.7	31.0
Guarantee of elections rights	16.3	23.5	20.2	28.5	12.9	20.5
Guarantee of popular participation	29.3	7.1	15.7	11.3	33.7	20.4
Guarantee of the opposition rights	1.6	3.5	6.2	8.6	5.0	5.2
Guarantee of freespeech rights	17.9	15.3	31.5	24.5	17.8	21.3
Protect disadvantage groups	3.3	5.9	.6	.0	.0	1.4

Source: South America Elite’s Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

Authoritarian attitudes, such as closing the Congress or the executive intervention in the judiciary issues, are strongly rejected by the interviewees – the level rejection was above 85%. However, there was a greater acceptance for the Government’s intervention in the media. The position on this issue demonstrates the tolerance to the Government actions. The most notable case occurred in Venezuela in 2007, when President Hugo Chavez withdrew permission for the transmission of RCTV (Radio Caracas Television). The fact provoked considerable debate in the region regard the limits of governments and also on the role of the media, as an agent of mass mobilization. Venezuela Government was not the only country has proposed the limitation

and control of media freedom, for example, in Brazil the Lula's Administration sent to Congress a project of law in this issue.

The data show that 26% of the Venezuelan respondents stand in favor of the government, and 73% disagrees with this government position. The majority of the elites from other countries reject any action to limit the role of the media in their societies: in Brazil, for example, 90.5% of respondent do not agree with Government action against the media freedom.

**Table 3 - Agree or Disagree with Government action against media freedom by country**

	Country					Total
	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Venezuela	
Disagree	84.3%	89.8%	90.5%	83.9%	73.6%	85.5%
			2.6		-3.4	
Agree	15.7%	10.2%	9.5%	16.1%	26.4%	14.5%
			-2.6		3.4	
Total (100%)	(115)	(88)	(221)	(192)	(87)	(703)

Source: South America Elite's Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

Pearson Chi-Square Value 16.281<sup>a</sup> Df 4 Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) .003

### Support of Governments policies on the inequality and economy

The results indicate that in the elite opinion the countries goals should be: distribution of wealth (35%) and the promotion of economic development (30.7%). Social order is important for 10% of respondents. Accordingly, the data shows a consensus between elites group that the government goal should be to promote economic development with the distribution of wealth. The question is how these policies should be implemented.

**Table 4 - Most important Government Priorities by countries (%)**

Government priorities	Argentina	Bolivia	Brasil	Chile	Venezuela
Economic Development	23	65	37	37	27
Wealth of distribution	63	19	38	37	51
Police and security	5	15	12	17.7	8

Source: South America Elite's Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

Notes: (1) the respondents indicated for each factor the causes of the government priorities in Latin America countries on a scale from 0 to 10, 0 meant “less important” and 10 “most important”. (2) This table includes only the value 10 for each item asked. For that reason, the total does not sum 100%.

There is no cohesion among elites when it comes to the role of the state, society and market. When requested to position on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 as "each one must do everything for their own welfare" and 5 as "is the government who should take responsibility for the safety of all", it is perceived that most (58%) of respondents positioned in the intermediate point of the scale. That is, the individual has its responsibilities, but the state has a strong role for guarantee a good life.

The spirit of capitalism that assure opportunities for those who work hard is rejected for the elites, 56.2% of respondents disagreed that capitalism is a system in which those who work receive their just winnings. On the other hand, they largely support the policies of correction of inequalities.

In another scale that measure from state intervention in the economy to private initiative, most positioned them more favorable to the private initiative (See table 5). This scale reveals that the most of the elites could never accept the complete nationalization process. The data suggests more support to market-oriented policies Chile in comparing with the other countries. On the other hand, the Venezuela elite shows more favorable to the State intervention in the economy, we have to say that we interview person which support the Chavez Administration. The data shows high association with the variable favorable to a lesser state participation in the economy and the support to openness the economy to the external investments. Venezuela, Bolivia and Argentina show lower correlation than Chile and Brazil.

Table 5 – Views favorable of State intervention on the economy or Private Initiative by country

	Country					
	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Venezuela	Total
More favorable State Intervention	2.4%	5.6%	2.2%	3.7%	18.0%	5.6%
2	47.2%	26.7%	33.7%	16.6%	43.2%	32.7%
3	32.0%	40.0%	26.1%	30.1%	18.0%	28.7%
More favorable Private Initiative	18.4%	27.8%	38.0%	49.7%	20.7%	33.0%
Total (100%)	(125)	(90)	(184)	(163)	(111)	(673)

Source: South America Elite’s Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

According to 48% of the respondents the state should ensure equality of opportunity, however, this does not mean that the problem of inequality will improve. 32% of the respondents said that the government should go further and limit the enrichment of some groups to favor the poor. In the elite's diagnosis the gap between rich and poor is a major cause of poverty (34% of respondents). Another factor also attributed by the interviewees is that the State did not comply with their social functions (25.2% of respondents) and has a high degree of corruption (28.7 of respondents), causing therefore a high level of poverty in society.

It is interesting to note that corruption in the politics has a negative factor in the strengthening of democratic institutions, as affecting the social dimension. The main view is that inequality reflects the lack of political interest in pursuing more just social policy persists among the elites.

For 38.9% of the members of the elite the fighting against poverty and social inequality should be focused on increasing efficiency of public services, otherwise, the expansion of public spending is reported by 25%. However, the openness of the economy to foreign investment is supported by 19% of respondents and only 5.6% support a process of privatization of social security.

Among the main objectives of the Government is the need to improve the educational indices (26.1%), followed by the reduction of poverty and inequality (23.4%) and guarantee of economic growth (16%). There is no explicit support for implementation of policies of socialism, as Venezuela and Bolivia are trying to implement. In general, the elites reject the socialism model as the solution of social problems of countries. Indeed, the elites demonstrate a critical assessment on the region's governments, and the majority does not believe that the government of his country has managed to solve the problems.

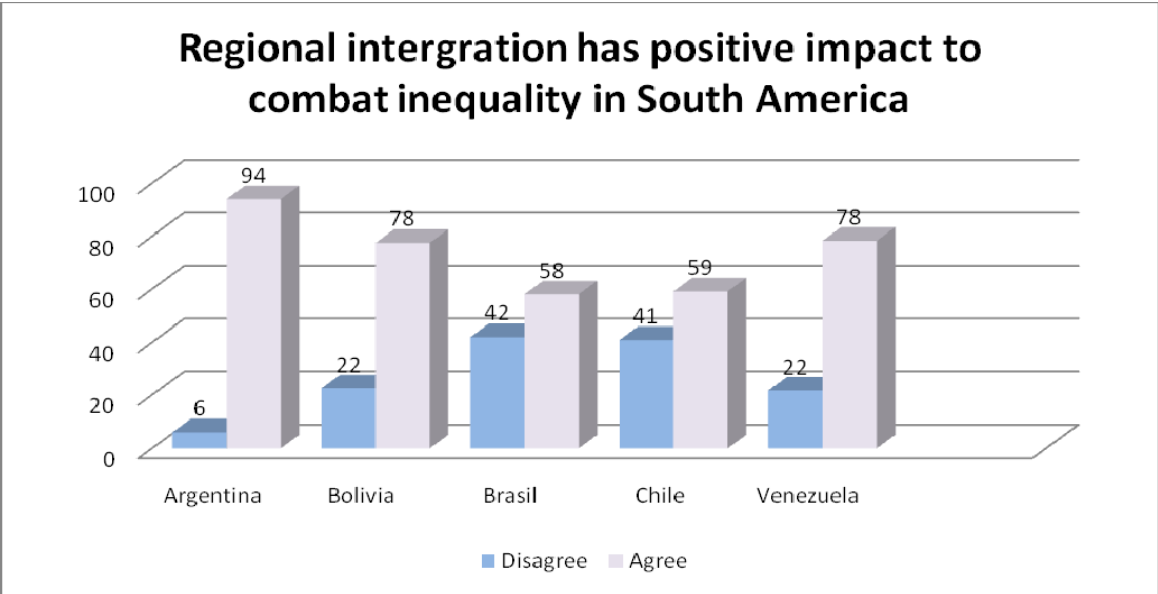
There is a strong perception among the elites that globalization is process that will make necessary a major adaptation on the social and economic system of all countries. But the impacts are not homogeneous. While globalization increases opportunities (58.3%), developing countries also feel the negative effects of globalization as the increase in inequality (49.1%). For the elites the positive effects of globalization are restricted to rich countries (52.3%), showing a skeptical view. This figure reflects a widespread perception in Latin American society that globalization has deepened the negative effects on the international system, and only reinforces the idea that states should go back to solve their domestic problems.

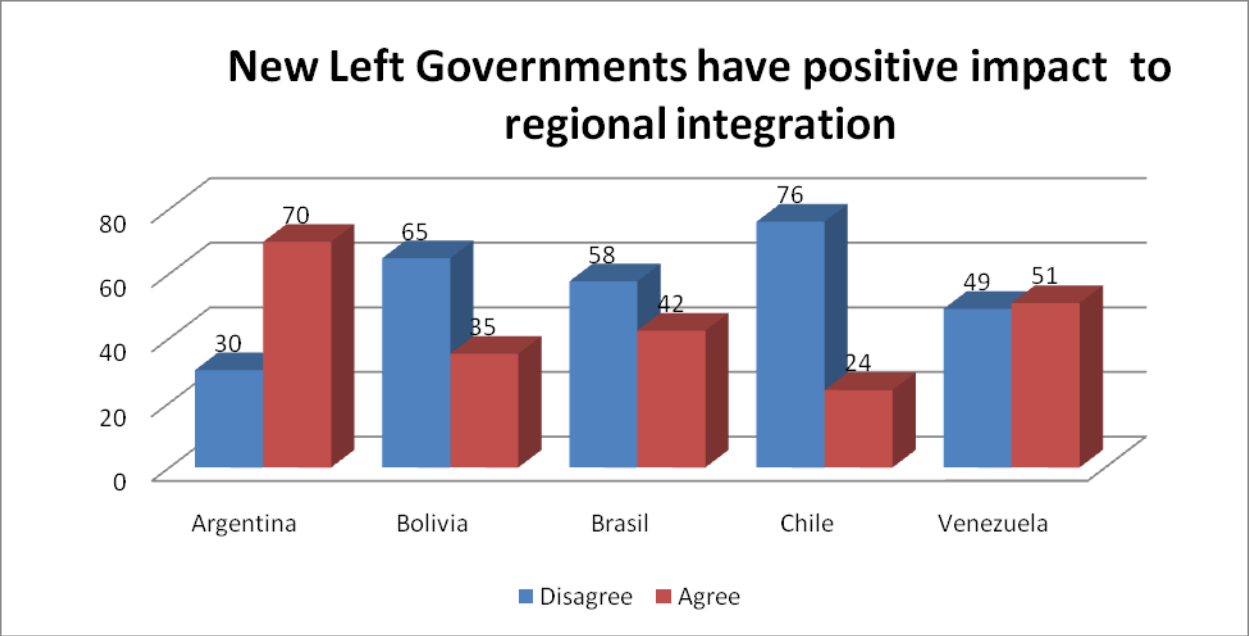
In South America case, the international strategies have focused on the regionalist alternatives. Economic integration played an important role in the region, in the 60 and 70's, it had a number of very ambitious initiatives inspired by the European experience. The other phase of integration started at the end of the 80's, when these countries began the liberalization process. The renaissance of regional integration is viewed as a potentially valuable tool for modernization and development the economy.

Generally, regional integration focuses exclusively on trade and macroeconomic figures, leaving aside other issues related to the interrelation between economy, politics and society. But the new national political environment the Governments try to include the social issues for the regional context. The argument is that the cooperation should consider the convergence of interest and the scope of the regional integration should include those interests.

The data shows a positive view about the impact of the regional integration to solve the social problems (77% believes in this positive impact). For 25.3% the increase of trade with neighbor's countries would decrease the inequality.

In terms of foreign policy goals, 30% of the responds considers the best strategy would allied with of developed countries, whereas only 16% say that the South America integration should be a major objective of their country. Clearly, there is a dichotomy between the rhetoric of support for regional integration and supporting policies to encourage regionalism.





**Final Thoughts**

This paper did a first step to explore the elite’s attitudes in South America context and to investigate the level of support for the Government agenda in social and economic policies, as well as the regionalism strategies. The first analysis of the survey “South America Elites Perception” shows that elites reject all authoritarian attitudes, beside they consider countries problems will be not solve with the formal democracy. In terms of economic and social conditions the elites attitudes reinforce the literature arguments that the social conditions have a negative impact on the quality of democracy. On other hand, there are a strong view that the state needs to implement policies against poverty and inequality. There is not a strong position favorable to nationalization process or socialism models. On the other hand, there is a positive opinion about the Government interventions in some economic areas. The regionalism policies show more incongruent positions, because the elites consider important the increase of the regional trade as a formal of development, but they resist support programs to aid to poor neighbor countries. That results need a more accurate analysis of the principal variable which structure the elites behavior, thus, we could know better the impact of the different elites groups on the decision makers.

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## Appendix

### Evaluation about the Government

Evaluation	Countries					Total
	Argentina	Bolivia	Brasil	Chile	Venezuela	
This government has been solving the economic and social problems	25.6	3.8	42.2	14.6	24.3	21.4
This government has capacity to solve the problems, but it need more time	41.9	21.5	16.9	27.8	21.4	28.8
This government does not have capacity to solve the social and economic problems	30.8	74.7	39.6	56.9	53.4	48.5
None government could solve the country social and economic problem	1.7	.0	1.3	.7	1.0	1.4

Source: South America Elite's Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

### Opinion about wealth distribution in the society by countries (%)

Opinion wealth distribution	Countries				
	Argentina	Bolivia	Brasil	Chile	Venezuela
Country wealth should be distribute for everyone with equality	89	53	61	60	64
Social policy has negative affect for the most competence people	6	45	12	27	40

Source: South America Elite's Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

### Elite's opinions about the causes of poverty in Latin America by country (%)

Causes of Poverty	Countries					Total
	Argentin a	Bolivia	Brasil	Chile	Venezuel a	
Absence of opportunity and wealth concentration	27.1	23.3	30.9	32.9	17.6	33.0
Higher level of corruption	11.5	27.6	29.3	-	35.8	28.4
Lower performance of the State	21.8	10.5	27.3	19.2	24.3	25.4
Lack elite's commitment	20.2	6.0	23.5	12.0	19.4	18.5
Political sector unwillingness	16.2	17.9	19.9	11.0	16.5	17.2
The country economic undevelopment	7.8	25.0	15.0	9.8	12.3	13.6
Higher level of criminal and violence	6.3	1.2	13.6	9.1	15.9	9.6
Poor people unwillingness	2.3	2.3	3.8	1.3	7.4	3.4

Source: South America Elite's Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

Notes: (1) the respondents evaluated for each factor the causes of poverty in Latin America countries on a scale from 0 to 10, 0 meant "more negative" and 10 "more positive". (2) This table includes only the value 10 for each item asked. For that reason, the total does not sum 100%.

### Most important policies to combat inequalities and poverty by country (%)

	Argentina	Bolivia	Brasil	Chile	Venezuela	Total
Increase the efficiency of public services	16.3	36.5	41.2	47.6	38.2	38.2
Finance the economic growth	25.2	29.4	25.0	26.4	24.5	29.3
Increase taxes from rich people	39.4	17.6	25.0	23.3	23.9	28.7
Make the income tax more progressive	33.3	13.4	19.9	21.4	20.4	25.1
Expand national spending	20.0	8.2	28.0	19.0	21.1	23.8
Implement employee's participation in the profits of companies	21.4	6.0	22.0	20.0	22.7	21.8
Open the economy to foreign investments	4.6	36.0	13.6	30.7	20.9	19.9
Reduce the government interference in economic activities	2.3	4.9	9.0	7.5	10.2	7.2
Controlling population growth	2.3	3.6	10.2	.6	9.3	5.3

Source: South America Elite's Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

Notes: (1) the respondents evaluated for each factor the most important policy to combat inequality and poverty in Latin America countries on a scale from 0 to 10, 0 meant "less important" and 10 "most important". (2) This table includes only the value 10 for each item asked. For that reason, the total does not sum 100%.

#### Level of support to social policies (%)

Totally favorable	Countries					
	Argentina	Bolivia	Brasil	Chile	Venezuela	Total
Public education for all levels	66.9	39.8	47.1	32.1	59.3	51.6
Universal Health	72.2	50.6	65.8	42.8	61.9	60.3
Target income programs	42.7	25.9	31.0	29.4	31.2	33.6
Quotas for disadvantage groups	12.7	19.0	20.9	14.6	36.9	23.3
Employment stability	31.0	33.3	12.4	27.6	46.0	30.8
Retiree and unemployment public insurance	41.8	21.7	35.3	36.4	40.2	37.3
Agrarian reform	14.6	16.7	27.2	10.9	31.2	25.5
Quotas for employees from disadvantages groups	19.2	10.0	15.5	7.4	30.6	18.9
Privatization of the social security	.0	8.0	4.3	6.8	7.2	5.2

Source: South America Elite's Perception, Center of Research in International Relations at University of Sao Paulo, 2008.

Notes: (1) the respondents indicated for each factor the level of support to social policies on a scale from 0 to 10, 0 meant "no favorable" and 10 "totally favorable". (2) This table includes only the value 10 for each item asked. For that reason, the total does not sum 100%.

Appendix – Factorial Scores - Negative influence on the consolidation of democracy in South America (%)

Low level of education standards in the population	.549
High level of inequality and poverty	.548
Groups and sectors of society acting on its own cause	.476
Politician incompetence	.704
Lack of political organization in the society	.623
Elite egoism	.578
Political clientelism	.631
Low economic growth	.444
Political apathy	.642
Corruption in the political environment	.696
Threat of militar intervention	.518

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.