

Has Chavism's Polarization Arrived to Argentina? Media Framing Effects and its Impacts in Public Opinion

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Abstract

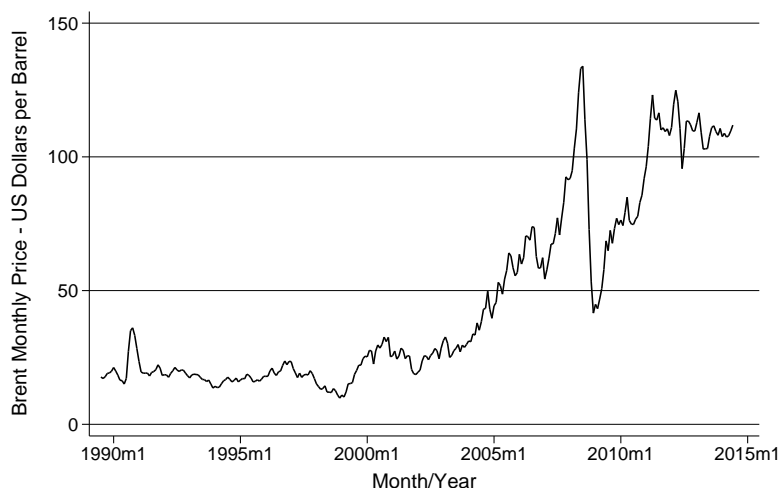
Since its arrival to power, Chavez's administration strengthened economic and political ties with most of Latin American countries, particularly with those where leftist movements also managed to arrive to government. Through a quantitative text analysis of all the articles published by two of the most read Argentinian newspapers that focused in Venezuela for a period of four years, we show that Argentinian media presents a polarized vision about Chavism. Subsequently we find that this pattern is also present in public opinion. In both media and public opinion this is explained by their support or opposition to the Argentinian government. With these findings we argue that polarization about Chavism has been exported beyond Venezuela and has taken root in Argentina due to it's own internal polarization.

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1 Intro

After winning by a landslide in the 1998 presidential election¹, the ‘chavismo’ went on to succeed in thirteen of the last fourteen electoral contests celebrated in Venezuela² during the three terms of Hugo Chávez Frías presidency. With the high legitimacy that the electoral victories provided and an ample pocketbook that emerged from the steep increase in oil prices since 2002 (see figure 1), the Bolivarian president radically altered the political structure of Venezuela. These changes, together with a high social conflict (Lander, 2005) and a populist style of government (Roberts, 2006), resulted in a strong polarization of the Venezuelan domestic debate (Ellner and Hellinger, 2003), which continues to this date (Sagarzazu, 2014).

Figure 1: Evolution of price of oil (1989-2014)



Source: US Energy Information Administration³

Since founding the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1960, oil rents have been used as one of the fundamental tools of Venezuela’s Foreign Policy. However, during the Chávez Administration these were utilized, in unprecedented levels, to reach both internal and external political objectives and is the main reason why Venezuela was able to expand its influence in Latin America (Poertner, 2011;

¹Chávez obtained 56,20% of the valid votes, followed by Henrique Salas Römer with just 39,97%

²First with the alliance led by the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) and later with the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV)

³<http://www.indexmundi.com/commodities/?commodity=crude-oil-brent&months=300>

Arriagada-Herrera, 2006). Even though some have explained Venezuela's commitment to, and protagonism in, the Latin American sphere (see for instance Serbin, 2006) there have been few attempts at understanding how this expansion has affected the rest of the countries in the region.

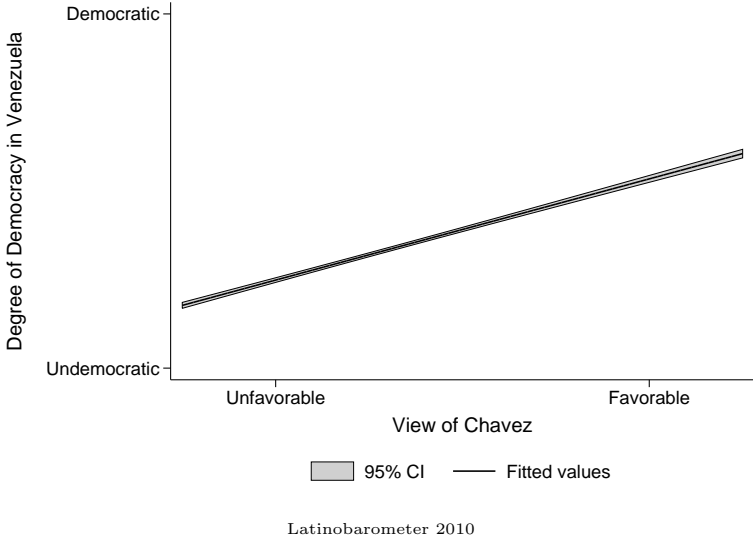
The objective of this paper is to show how in Latin American countries interaction with the Chávez's government has in itself become a polarizing domestic debate (Paramio, 2006). To better understand this we study the case of Argentina. This country has, during the two Kirchner governments (Néstor 2003-2007 and Cristina 2007-present), established stronger bilateral relations with Venezuela. This closer relationship at the governmental level has percolated in society to the point where it has been used as a mechanism to criticize the government and some of its policies. Given this reality, in this paper we attempt to provide some insight into the dynamics news production and of public opinion as it regards foreign affairs. To do so we focus our study on a quantitative analysis of the Argentinian media and two public opinion surveys.

Our argument starts with a discussion of the bilateral relation between Argentina and Venezuela, where we pay special attention to the topic of regulation of the media. This is of particular interest given that both governments have been highly compared on this policy area. We follow this discussion by our empirical sections. In the first we use a novel dataset of all newspaper articles published in *La Nación* and *Página 12* in which the only topic of discussion was Venezuela. We process these documents with quantitative text analysis techniques to obtain a classification of the articles on a positive-negative scale. In contrast with the media indexing theory that posits that on foreign affairs the media follow the government's lead (see for instance Hallin, 1986; Bennet, 1990; Entman and Page, 1994; Zaller and Chiu, 2000), the results of this analysis corroborate our assumption that the media cover Venezuela differently depending on their association with the Argentinian government. This opens the way for the second part of our analysis.

To test the relationship between being a supporter/opponent of the government and the view about Venezuela we use a survey of over 1,000 students from the *Universidad*

de Buenos Aires. This research was carried out in November of 2013 (a month after our newspaper article collection ended). We also use the data from the 2010 Latinobarometer, a public opinion survey carried out in all Latin American countries. With this information we can claim that there exists a very high correlation between supporting the Kirchner government and having a positive view of Chavism, and viceversa. Similarly, we find that a majority of opponents to the Kirchner government consider that Argentina is taking as reference the Chavista model. Together these findings show how the Venezuelan polarization has transcended their frontiers, and has taken root elsewhere specially where it has strong bilateral relations. For instance, as shown in figure 2 the degree to which latinamericans believe Venezuela is a Democracy are —directly and— highly correlated to their evaluation of Hugo Chávez.

Figure 2: Two pair regression between Degree of Democracy in Venezuela and View of Chavez



Our paper is structured as follows. The next section presents an analysis of the bilateral relation between Argentina and Venezuela during the last ten years and particularly with regard to the policies of media regulation. Secondly we explain how our database was constructed, the models and results from our media quantitative text analyses about what has been published about Venezuela in two of the most important Argentinian newspapers. Later, we justify the connection between media and public presenting two public opinion surveys, one applied by ourselves at the Universidad de Buenos Aires and

the other wave 2010 of the Latinobarometer. Finally we arrive at the conclusions of the work; highlighting its strengths, noting some caveats and presenting new research that should be deepened.

2 Venezuela & Argentina closer than ever?

In the past ten years, Argentina and Venezuela have deepened their bilateral relations to an unprecedented level. As we will see, this approach can be explained both by structural economic factors as well as political decisions.

According to official statistics issued by the Argentinian Ministry of Economy ⁴, between 2002 and 2010 the entire flow of trade between the two countries grew at a rate of 36.6% per year, while Argentina's exports to Venezuela increased at an annual rate of 32.7%, and imports grew at a rate of 14, 4%. This intensification in trade must be explained firstly due to the increasing complementarity between the two economies. While Argentina is abundant in foods and articles derived from the food industry, Venezuela is a net importer of these products. In this sense, milk and milk products, meat, meat offal, fats and animal or vegetable oils accounted for 34.9% of Argentine exports to Venezuela in 2010, amount that has remained steady due to Venezuela's single product economy ⁵.

In turn, the economic model adopted by Néstor Kirchner and followed by Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, has been based on a strong proliferation of domestic consumption accompanied by subsidies for basic services⁶, which has greatly increased the use of local energy. In order to meet this demand, the easiest alternative for Argentinian presidents was to import more fossil fuels to supply thermoelectric plants and given that Venezuela holds its economy primarily in the production and export of oil and chemical

⁴For more information see http://www.mecon.gov.ar/peconomica/dnper/documentos/Venezuela_Jun2011.pdf

⁵According to data provided by the Venezuelan National Institute of Statistics, Venezuela imported in 2012 US\$ 8122 million in food and articles derived from the food industry. http://www.ine.gov.ve/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=48&Itemid=33#.

⁶For more information see the Argentine 2013 budget <http://www.mecon.gov.ar/onp/html/presupresumen/resum13.pdf>

derivatives, agreements between the two countries have increased dramatically in the last decade⁷.

On the other hand, since the NO to the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) in 2005,⁸ Casa Rosada (the seat of the Argentinian Government) and Palacio de Miraflores (it's Venezuelan counterpart) have increasingly engaged in a bilateral relationship marked by affinity and mutual support. This closer relationship is not unique to Venezuela and Argentina, on the contrary is a characteristic of the left wave sweeping through Latin America. This arrival of leftist leaders to presidential palaces throughout Latin America has motivated several authors to analyze these movements in a comparative way (eg. Petkoff, 2005; Castañeda, 2006; Levitsky and Murillo, 2008).

For instance, two studies by former cabinet ministers of Venezuela and Mexico, Teodoro Petkoff and Nestor Castaneda respectively, point to the differences of the various leftist movements that have arrived to power in the last decade. Petkoff (2005) was the first one to suggest that these organizations should not be considered homogeneously. In a similar vein, Castañeda (2006) proposed a division of the new governments into two different types of lefts: one modern, open-minded, reformist and internationalist; another heir of the populist tradition, close-minded and nationalist. Argentina and Venezuela would fall in the second contingent, as Kirchner and Chávez would have had little interest in economic performance, democratic values, programmatic achievements and establishing good relations with the United States (Castañeda, 2006).

Conversely, for (Levitsky and Murillo, 2008) empathy does not necessarily implies that Kirchnerism and Chavism are synonymous. In the authors' words, Néstor Kirchner's ability to concentrate power was limited by strong democratic institutions, a strong civil society and the nature of his own Peronist coalition. Therefore, the centralized and

⁷To see all the agreements signed between the two countries see http://argentina.embajada.gob.ve/index.php?option=com_content&id=66&Itemid=29

⁸Negotiations for the signature of the FTAA included Latin American countries (except Cuba) and the United States began in 1994 with the Ist Summit of the Americas. However, at the IVth summit held in Mar del Plata during September 2005 the agreement was rejected and negotiations ended due to the strong opposition posed by Latin Americas leftist leaders in power at the time.

autocratic Chávez was never approached, even in the height of his popularity and political strength (Levitsky and Murillo, 2008, p. 83) .

However, both political processes have been constantly associated in the last years, principally because any type of media reform in Latin America has been stigmatized as 'venezuelanization' (Kitzberger, 2010, p. 11) or what is most used in Argentina, 'Chavizacion'. In the next section we look in more detail at the evolution of the relationship between the Argentinian government and media.

2.1 Media as a political arena

During the last decade, several governments in the region, mainly those with a leftist ideological orientation, have tried to introduce reforms in the media system (Kitzberger, 2009). This has been the case because of the key political role that media play in most Latin American democracies (Ruiz, 17-60), together with the high levels of media concentration (Becerra and Mastrini, 2009) most of which is in conservatives' hands (O'Schaughnessy, 2007).

For the Argentinian case, the policies implemented by Menem's administration (1989-1999) had removed any obstacle or restriction for the creation of media giants (Belinche, 2004). Once Nestor Kirchner gains power he engages in a more confrontational discourse against the biggest media groups (Vincent, 2011), although this new tone did not change structurally the pro-media scenario during his government.. In fact, former president Kirchner decided to extend the media licenses for ten years and approved the merger of the two largest cable providers (Cablevision and Multicanal) groups which before the union owned between them 47% of the cable market. These initiatives clearly benefited the established media groups.

Since the beginning of Cristina Fernandez's administration (2008-Present), however , the confrontation with the press radicalized (Kitzberger, 2010). The problems began during the approval process of Resolution 125. With this measure the government attempted to

change the taxation system for agricultural exports, establishing a progressive taxation mechanism indexed to international commodity prices.⁹ This resolution proved to be very divisive in Argentinian society generating a conflict between the government and the agricultural producers. During this clash, Grupo Clarín, the largest media monopoly in Argentina, gave high visibility to the most controversial aspects of the project and blamed the government for the conflict (Zunino and Aruguete, 2010). Subsequently, after failing to approve the bill, Casa Rosada reinterpreted the legislative defeat as a problem in the communication strategy and not as a structural flaw in the design of the resolution. Consequently, the Executive sent to Congress a project of Law to reform the media system. This proposal managed to, in the timespan of a few months, polarize the media in an Opposition-Supporters cleavage; and as previously mentioned, it was extremely criticized by traditional media with adjectives such as “venezuelización” or “chavización”. In the following section we show how Venezuela’s image was used in the Argentinian domestic debate by two of the main newspapers of the country.

3 A Polarized Press

In this section, we will analyse the extent to which the Argentinian press represents Venezuelan politics. To do so we rely on a quantitative text analysis technique (*Wordfish*) that, via scaling procedures, positions the data on a continuum based on how close the different document are between them. We first explain the construction of the dataset for analysis. We then discuss how the two newspapers analyzed differ significantly in their coverage of Venezuela and we expect to show this from the results of our analysis of the newspaper stories. To do so we will first discuss the data collected, followed by explaining the method of analysis, and finally the analysis of the results.

⁹For more information see <http://infoleg.mecon.gov.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/135000-139999/138567/texact.htm>.

3.1 The data

In order to test the argument made in the previous section we need to evaluate the degree to which the stories about Venezuela, reported in the Argentinian media, have a slant based on the newspaper in which they are published. We chose *La Nación* and *Página 12* based on data availability and the official circulation numbers¹⁰. These are two of the three most widely read newspapers in Argentina¹¹; and more importantly however, these two newspapers have been identified to be located on ideological opposite extremes (Balán, 2013). As it can be seen, our selection of data sources provides a great opportunity to evaluate the degree to which the media provide different representations of foreign affairs, or on the contrary follow a similar line of discussion.

We study the attention that Argentinian newspapers pay to Venezuela during a four year period 2009-2013. This period starts with the day of enactment of Law 26.522 (Law of Audiovisual Communication Services) and ends four years afterwards. This time period allows a comprehensive look at the articles published by both newspapers as it encompasses a long enough period that it allows for temporary biases to evaporate. Moreover, if in this time period we are able to find a consistent bias in the reporting of Venezuelan politics then it would support our argument that the image of Venezuela is used as a tool in the domestic debate. From all the newspaper articles we particularly pay attention to those in which the focus of the news story is Venezuela, furthermore we selected those where the story spoke about the country or just about the bilateral relation. In this sense, we excluded all the news about Arts, Sports, and the ones that mentioned Venezuela but referred to other countries or focused on international organizations.

All together, we analyzed 1,492 articles of which 1,004 were published by *La Nación*, and 488 were published by *Página 12*. While we acknowledge the disparity between both

¹⁰La Nación is the second highest read newspaper with a circulation of 165 thousand papers a day while Página 12 has a daily circulation of 51 thousand newspapers, according to the Cultural Information System of Argentina <http://sinca.cultura.gov.ar/sic/estadisticas/>

¹¹While it would have been ideal to also include in the analysis *Clarín*, the most read newspaper, its print version is not isolated from its online version and it was impossible to create a database similar to the other two sources.

sources it has to be seen in the context that La Nación is a larger publication.

3.2 Scaling newspaper articles

In order to analyze the newspaper articles into ideal point estimates of positioning we use *Wordfish* (Proksch and Slapin, 2008; Slapin and Proksch, 2008). This technique applies an Expected Maximization Algorithm to the distribution of words in the documents. By using it we are able to automatically locate newspaper articles on a continuum based on the co-occurrences of words between the different articles included in our text dataset. This model is based on the premise that the probability that words are distributed according to a Poisson distribution. The model is the following:

$$y_{ij} \sim \text{Poisson}(\lambda_{ij})$$

$$\lambda_{ij} = \exp(\alpha_i + \psi_j + \beta_j \times \omega_i)$$

Where y_{ij} is the number of times word j is mentioned on text i ; α is a control for the length of the texts, ψ controls for word usage in the understanding that some words are more frequent than others; β , the word specific weight, captures the importance of word j in categorizing texts; and ω is the estimate of the article's i position. In essence articles that use the same set of words should be grouped more closely than articles that differ significantly in their word-usage.

The chosen modelling strategy uses as input the word matrix which specifies the co-occurrence of words across texts (Proksch and Slapin, 2008). Using this information, *Wordfish* allows to automatically classify each document into one dimension. The advantages of applying this technique to our newspaper dataset are that: 1) it allows for a completely replicable analysis; 2) it permits the analysis of large volumes of data without the need for using reference texts or values. The major drawback is the possible lack of validity of the results, as we are cognisant of this we will perform a validity analysis

once our documents are classified.

To prepare our dataset we followed standard procedures in quantitative text analysis in order to convert our raw data into word frequency matrices (e.g. Proksch and Slapin, 2008; Pardos-Prado and Sagarzazu, Forthcoming; Grimmer, 2010; Quinn et al., 2010). First, text files are standardized by eliminating punctuation signs, currencies and numbers from the documents, and converting all characters to lower caps. Second, stop words were removed (such as “in” “the” “from” “to” “because”) as well as words with no political meaning (such as words related to Chavez’s cancer) and all newspaper labels. Third, we stemmed the words to their roots (Porter, 1980). Fourth, we computed a stem count matrix which indicates the number of times a stem is mentioned in each of the different newspaper articles. Fifth, stems that were very frequent (with a presence in more than 95% of texts) and very infrequent (with a presence in less than 1.5% of texts) were eliminated, leaving a total of 528 stems for the analysis. Finally, a stem frequency matrix was estimated, which will be the input for the quantitative text analysis.

Once the stem frequency matrix was generated, we obtained our ideal point estimates using *Wordfish*. One of the advantages of this algorithm is that it allows to understand what words are helping to classify the documents along a scale. Of particular importance are the most negative and most positive words, as they are most useful in discerning between the articles. In the case of our dataset, we found that articles with negative scores tend to be defined by words such as ‘inflation’, ‘debt’, ‘nationalization’ while articles with a more positive score mention words such as ‘listens’, ‘talks’, ‘human’, or ‘youth’ (amongst others).

Figure 3 represents this graphically. It is important to take notice of the location of the words “Hugo” and “Chavez” in the center of the horizontal scale (β) and towards the top of the vertical axis (ψ), which indicates that these two words are amongst the most mentioned in all the articles and as such do not contribute towards the positive/negative classification. Similarly it should be noted that the β values are considerably skewed towards the negative values (Figure 3), this can probably be explained by an over reliance on the words ‘hugo’,

As mentioned before, while the tool we chose has a high reliability its validity needs to be proven. That is, we need to make sure that what the scale is measuring actually reflects a positive/negative coverage of the Venezuelan government. We have partly done this with the analysis of the word scores presented above, however, in order to be certain that our ideal points are effectively measuring slant in news on Venezuela, we performed several tests.

First, we'd want to make sure that the time series nature of our dataset is not affecting the estimates by identifying changing trends in word usage instead of slant. To test this we regressed our estimates based on the date of publication of the article and find that there is no relationship between these two variables (the coefficient for the date variable is 0.0006). On the contrary article omega's are evenly distributed through time.¹² Second, we read a sample of the articles, with particular attention to those articles classified at the extremes. As shown in the examples provided in Appendix B, our measure is correctly identifying the slant of the newspaper articles.

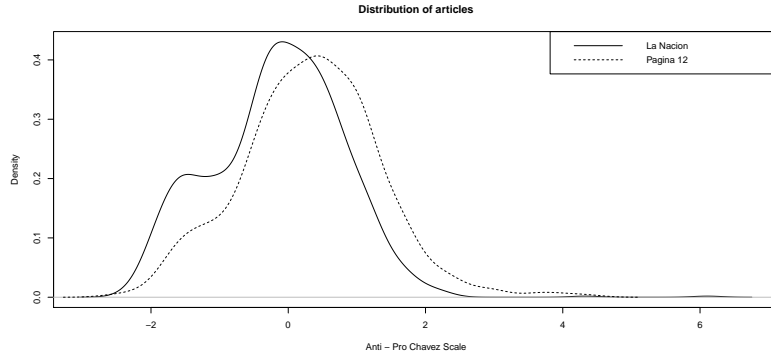
3.3 A polarized press?

Having estimated, and checked for the validity of, our document classification on a positive/negative scale we can proceed to evaluate whether the articles from these two media outlets have a slant. To do so, we first evaluate the distribution of the classified documents. Figure 6 shows the distribution of articles for *La Nación* (solid line) and *Página 12* (dotted line) along our negative/positive scale. As it becomes clear from the two lines shown the articles by *La Nación* are ,on average, more negative than those of *Página 12*. That is, there are more articles in the former newspaper with negative stories about Venezuela, and more articles in the latter with more positive ones.

However, in order to be certain of this distinction we compared both samples by using a two sample t-test. This type of test is appropriate when comparing two populations in

¹²See figure A.1 and table A.1 in Appendix A.

Figure 5: Distribution of Ideal Points by Newspaper



order to determine whether the two are significantly different from each other. As table 1 shows the means of both samples are different and this is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. This finding corroborates the visual representation of the data in figure 6, articles published in *La Nación* are more negative about Venezuela than those published in *Página 12*.

Table 1: Two sample t-test with equal variance

Newspaper	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	95% Conf. Interval	
La Nación	1004	-0.1596	0.0301	0.9551	-0.2187	-0.1005
Página 12	488	0.3203	0.0457	1.0096	0.2305	0.4101
<i>Combined</i>	1492	-0.0027	0.0259	0.9986	-0.0534	0.0481
<i>Difference</i>		-0.4799	0.0537		-0.5853	-0.3746

Since traditional literature suggests that media have a gatekeeping role for public opinion regarding foreign affairs (Hill, 2003), in the next section we try to answer if Argentinian media polarization about chavism has its correlate in public opinion.

4 The other side of the coin: Argentinian Public Opinion perceptions

In order to test if the polarized view spread by Argentinian media about Venezuela has its correlate in public opinion, we carried out a survey one month after the ending of our collected articles. Our data comes from a public opinion research applied at the

Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), between November 7 and November 11, 2014. This survey was done over a convenience sample¹³ of 1,006¹⁴ students from Law School (30.3%), Economics (34.3%) and Social Sciences (35.4%). With help of the academic staff of the University, we first entered in contact via e-mail with all the professors of the three courses and after their approval, we arranged a time in which we could interrupt their lessons and apply the survey. Students were informed that they were part of a voluntary public opinion poll and as stimulus we offered a \$ARG1,000 voucher prize in books. The survey was paper self-administered, however, three research assistants helped in order to avoid contagion effects.

After answering 25 questions that tried to catch their perceptions about international trade, China and Brazil, participants had to give their opinion about Chavism, and to answer if they believed that Argentinian government was taking Chavism as a reference (respectively questions 1 and 2 in Appendix B). After a series of socioeconomic and political questions, participants were asked about their current political affiliation to the Argentinian government. Interviewees had to say if they considered themselves “Kirchneristas” or “Opositores”, and the degree of intensiveness of this attachment (See questions 3 and 4 in Appendix B).

4.1 It’s all about Government perception

Having described our survey instrument and a descriptive account of some of the aggregate measures, we now present the interaction between the main variables of our study: “Government perception” and the outputs “Chavism image” and “Chavism as an example”.

As we can see in Table 2, almost all opponents have a negative image from Chavism

¹³Although latent limitations, for some cases students samples have demonstrated to work as general public opinion ones (Druckman and Kam, 2011). Moreover, they provide an efficient way to test initial hypotheses before attempting to generalize one’s theory to broader samples (Dasgupta and Hunsinger, 2008).

¹⁴1050 questionnaires were applied and finally 44 of them were excluded from the sample, as they were incomplete or students decided to do not give them back.

Table 2: Predicted Probit Coefficients (95% Confidence Intervals)

		Government perception	
		Opponents	Kirchneristas
Image of Chavism	Positive	94% (92%; 97%)	32% (28%; 36%)
	Negative	6% (3%; 8%)	68% (64%; 72%)
Should take Chavista model as example?	No	30% (26%; 35%)	64.5% (60%; 68%)
	Yes	70% (65%; 74%)	35.5% (32%; 39%)

(94%), contrary to Kirchneristas, who majorly declare to have a positive view of the actual Venezuelan government (68%).

Being so, our findings confirm the hypotheses that opposition in Argentina tends to associate both political process in a negative way. From the interviewees that assumed to be against Argentinian government, 70% of them believe that Kirchnerism take Chavism as a reference. On the other hand, supporters do it in just a 35.5% and from those, 44% previously declared to have a positive view from Venezuelan government. Consequently, we can affirm that just 20% of Kirchneristas think that the Argentinian government takes Chavism as a model in a bad sense.

Moreover, if we take into account the degree in which respondents assume themselves to be Kirchneristas or opponents, then we can divide our sample in a scale of four points going from Very intense opponent (1) to Very intense Kirchnerist (4).

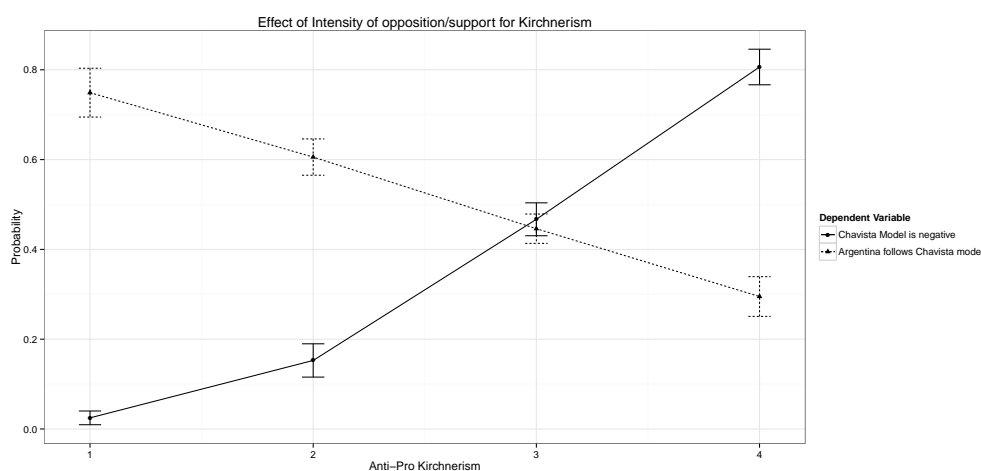
Table 3 shows the coefficients from the probit regression that takes into account this intensity variable, together with controls for age, gender, ideology, and students who work while they study (and those who don't). As it can be seen, the coefficients for intensity are statistically significant. For the model which evaluates the degree to which Argentina follows as a reference the Chavista model the coefficient is negative, indicating that while opponents see more resemblance with chavism, kirchnerists see less. On the second model we see that the coefficient for intensity is positive, indicating that opponents have a worse

image of chavism.

Table 3: Results of Probit regressions

	Reference	Opinion
Intensity of support of Kirchnerism	-0.421*** (0.043)	1.015*** (0.063)
Ideology	-0.098*** (0.022)	0.186*** (0.026)
Age	0.010 (0.009)	0.004 (0.010)
Female	-0.432*** (0.089)	0.112 (0.104)
Part Time worker	0.052 (0.101)	-0.021 (0.118)
Constant	1.546*** (0.250)	-4.115*** (0.336)
N	952	967
LogLik	-569	-405
AIC	1150	822

Figure 6: Probability of thinking that Argentina is following the Chavista model & that the Chavista model is bad

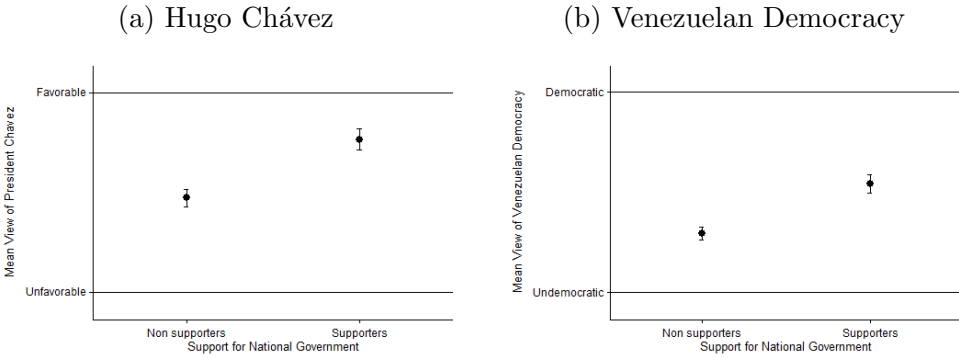


As we can see in Figure 6, controlling for variables such as political ideology, age, gender and part time work, the effect continues being statistically significant. Considering this new measure we can see that the effects of “Government perception” are even more intense.

Having tested the degree to which support for the government affects perceptions of Chavez and views that the Argentinian government is following the chavista model we

now proceed to use a national sample to do a similar analysis. Specifically, using data from the 2010 wave of the Latin-barometer survey we tested the degree to which our results, from the student sample, are mimicked in a representative sample of the population. Specifically we looked at three questions for respondents of the Argentinian questionnaire. First, the evaluation of Hugo Chávez on a four point scale from (1) Very Unfavorable to (4) Very Favourable.¹⁵ Second, the degree to which the respondent thinks Venezuela is a (1) Totally undemocratic or (10) Totally Democratic. Finally, whether the respondent supports or not the Argentinian government. Figure 7 shows the mean value of both the Chavez (7a) and Venezuelan democracy (7b) evaluation variables and it's 95% confidence interval. These means were divided using the government support variable. From it we can make two statements: first, similar to the student survey pro-government respondents evaluate both Chávez and Venezuelan democracy more positive than non supporters; second, this difference is statistically significant.

Figure 7: Evaluation of Hugo Chávez and Venezuelan Democracy in Argentina according to support to National Government



Source: Latinobarometer 2010

5 Conclusions

During the Chávez era, with the aid of increasing oil revenues, Venezuela made a significant push in its foreign policy. With it, the Chávez government seek to create stronger ties with it's Latin American neighbors and strategic alliances with counter

¹⁵The original scale was reversed.

hegemonic countries. Special targets were governments that shared an ideological affinity with the leftist Bolivarian revolution, such as Argentina during the Nestor and Cristina Kirchner administrations. These close ties involved increasing commercial relationships which benefited both countries. However, with the increased economic ties also came an increased exportation of Venezuela's polarization.

We started this paper with the objective of showing the degree to which this polarization had taken root in Argentinian media and public opinion. To do so we used a two part analysis: in the first part we focused on a quantitative analysis of the Argentinian media; followed by a second part where we studied two surveys of public opinion. In both sections we find that, both the Argentinian media and public, are divided in their views and evaluation of Venezuela and its charismatic leader. Moreover, this split exists in relationship to their relationship to their national government. That is, media and citizens who support the government will have a more positive view of Chávez and Venezuelan democracy; that in comparison to opponents of the Kirchner government who in contrast will have a negative view of both and will tend to believe that Chavism is a bad example that is being followed by Argentina.

This finding posits several normative questions regarding the degree to which a country's polarization can be exported. First, it is worth asking whether this polarization affects all countries similarly or whether it does so to different extents. For instance, does a country need to be internally polarized for these dynamics to be imported? Second, if chavism is used as a bad example by opponents of internal chavista-sympathizing parties they must contrast this with "good examples" to compare the two (Russell and Tokatlian, 2011). Considering these facts it would be interesting to test whether polarization is exported but also the degree to which this polarization takes root in elites (political and media) as well as in public opinion.

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Appendix A.- Robustness of Text Classification

Figure A.1: Distribution of Document's ω by date

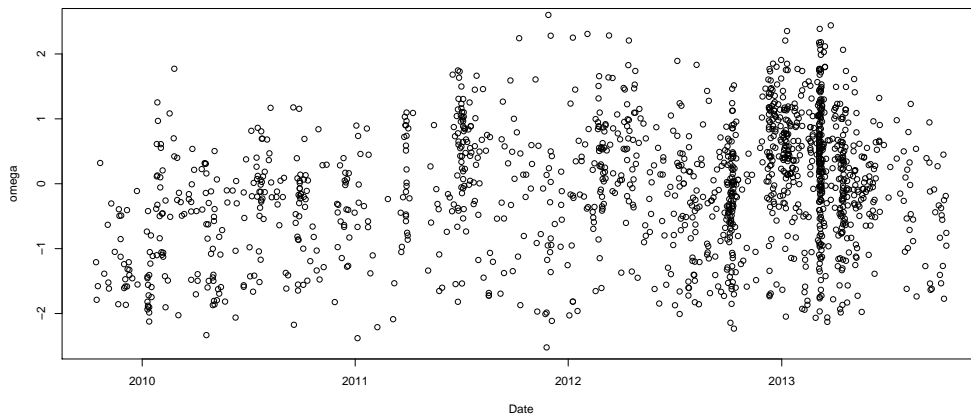


Table A.1: Estimates of Linear Regression of ω Scores on a document's date and newspaper

Variable	Estimate	Std. Error
Intercept	-7.905***	(1.018)
date	0.0005***	(0.00006)
Página 12	0.357***	(0.0513)
N	1491	
Adjusted R ²	0.085	
F	70.05	

Appendix B.- Sample Texts

Score:-0.39

Title: Kirchnerismo y chavismo, cada vez más parecidos

Source: La Nación

By: Joaquín Morales Solá

URL: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1515544-cont-kirchnerismo-y-chavismo-cada-vez-mas-pa>

Sample text: "...The other feature that distinguishes greatly's the deal with independent journalism. Should disappear in both Venezuela and Argentina. Chavez was in his country that was almost unanimously Chavez audiovisual system, with the exception of Globovision news channel skeptical forecast from yesterday. Cristina Kirchner is doing the same in Argentina, which already achieved a hegemonic position of ruling on radio and television. The necessary critical journalism is, for both administrations, an obstacle that responds to economic interests, foreign ideologies or mandate unnamed empires..."

Score: 0.89

Title: Fue un gran amigo de la Argentina

Source: Página 12

URL: <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elmundo/4-215284-2013-03-07.html>

Sample text: Chavez was a great friend who helped Argentina in the most difficult times, when no one's outstretched hand. Unlike what happens with the presidents in the world, in Latin America the ratio is fellowship, and common construction task. Chavez was the first who came to help Argentina and always put the construction of the common issue in the region.

Appendix C.- Survey Questionnaire

1. ¿Cuál es su opinión del gobierno Chavista?
What is your opinion of the Chavez government
 - Muy positiva *Very positive*
 - Positiva *Positive*
 - Negativa *Negative*
 - Muy negativa *Very negative*
2. ¿Usted considera que el gobierno argentino toma como referencia al modelo Chavista?
Do you think the Argentinian government takes as reference the Chavista model
 - El gobierno argentino toma como referencia al modelo Chavista
The Argentinian government takes as reference the Chavista model
 - El gobierno argentino no toma como referencia al modelo Chavista
The Argentinian government doesn't take as reference the Chavista model
3. En general, en asuntos de política ¿usted se considera más kirchnerista u opositor?
In general, in terms of politics do you consider yourself more kirchnerist or opponent?
 - Kirchnerista *Kirchnerist*
 - Opositor *Opponent*
4. ¿Cómo identifica este sentimiento? *How do you identify this sentiment?*
 - Muy intenso *Very intense*
 - No muy intenso *Not very intense*