

No sympathy for Chavez

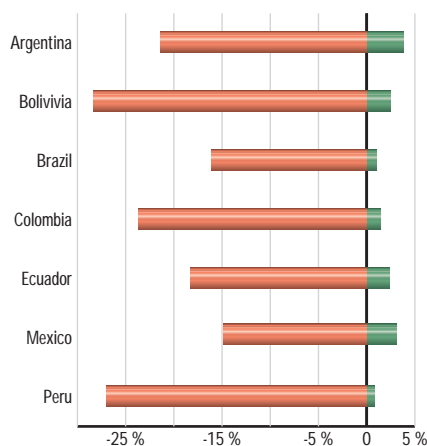
Venezuela's president in the media



Hugo Chavez

positive
negative

1) Assessments of Hugo Chavez



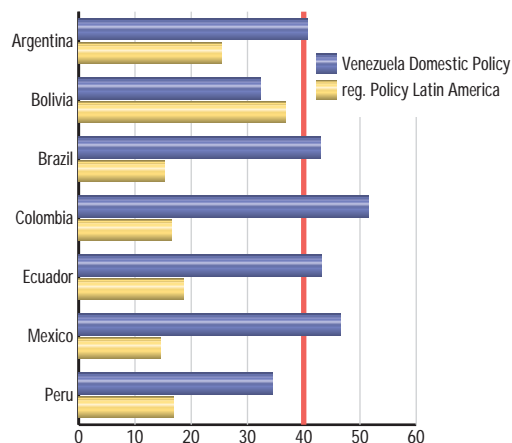
Remainder of 100%: no clear rating

Source: Media Tenor Basis: 13.110 statements on/from Chavez and his administration in 21 Latin-American newspapers

Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez has difficulties in exporting his socialistic ideas to the region. The newspapers of seven Latin American countries have shown little sympathy towards his ideas in the past months, as has been shown by a new Media Tenor analysis of 21 leading newspapers from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Columbia, Mexico and Peru (*chart 1*). Chavez's re-election generated positive headlines, but his leadership aspirations for the region as well as his announced renaissance of a new socialism of Latin American coinage (the "Bolivian Revolution") were both met with skepticism. Some newspapers see Venezuela the brink of dictatorship, and the Mexican newspaper Reforma called Chavez a "tropical Mussolini".

In the run-up to the presidential elections, Hugo Chavez did not manage to convince the Latin American media of his ideas. In November, a critical tone dominated coverage on topics of foreign and regional policy. In the Argentinean newspapers (*Clarín*, *La Nación* and *La Razon*), for example, every fourth statement on Chavez' international policies was negative. The same applied to regional politics. Here 15.7% of the statements on the Venezuelan president had a critical undertone. All in all, journalists showed only limited support. It is true that the Bolivian media were less skeptical, but even here negative statements prevailed.

2) Share of news stories on the Chavez administration



100%: All statements on the Chavez government

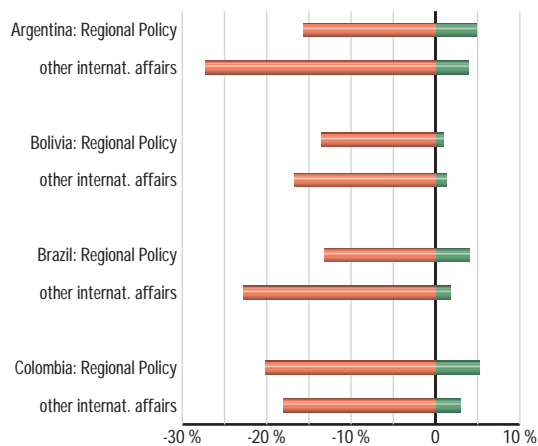
Source: Media Tenor Basis: 13.110 statements on/from Chavez and his administration in 21 Latin-American newspapers

Although Chavez and his government did attract considerable attention in Latin American media coverage, he was not able to convincingly position himself as a political leader who promotes the interests of the poor internationally or pushes forward the integration of South America. Journalists often viewed his efforts to politically unite Latin America as populist unilateralist actions as well as an attempt to meddle within areas of domestic sovereignty of the partner states.

Without success on the international stage

With his anti-imperialist revolutionary rhetoric he already attracted public attention prior to the elections when, in September 2006, he called US President Bush "the devil" in his speech before the UN General Assembly. Yet neither his international ambitions nor his foreign economic policies were received enthusiastically in Latin America. Topics around politico-economic cooperation dominated coverage on regional politics. The strengthening of the South America free trade bloc MERCOSUR as an economic counterweight under the auspices of Venezuela and the extension of that idea to create a pan-American free trade zone (FTAA) with the help of a "Bolivarian" alternative (ALBA) did not go down well with the Latin American media. They rather interpreted this as a nationalistic power instrument that could threaten the continent's regional stability (*Los Tiempos*, Bolivia, 13.12.2006).

3) Assessments of selected policy areas



Remainder of 100%: no clear rating

Source: Media Tenor Basis: 13.110 statements on/from Chavez and his administration in 21 Latin-American newspapers
10/01/2005 – 09/30/2006

Revolution without radiance

International policy topics shaped Chavez's image only in the run-up to the election campaign coverage. As the election day drew closer, the focus of coverage shifted to domestic policy issues that primarily tackled traditional election campaign topics: In five of the seven countries analyzed, the election in Venezuela was the dominating subject matter (**chart 2**). With regard to regional policy issues, Chavez did not manage to cash in on the Latin American media's attention before the election.

It poses the question whether or not Chavez and his idea for the "socialism of the 21st century" were acknowledged in the region. Did the Venezuelan president benefit from the attention that journalists had given him, in order to present himself as the leader of the "Bolivarian Revolution in Latin America", which could be of decisive importance for the future of the region?

In January 2007, that is shortly after his election victory, the Latin American media appeared to be little convinced by the ideas of the Venezuelan president (**chart 3**). The share of critical coverage was somewhat above 20% of all statements on Chavez. As to the "socialism of the 21st century" as an alternative to the Western model of society, Chavez was confronted with predominantly critical voices subsequent to the election, mainly evoking the danger of a new totalitarianism in Venezuela.

For the time being, the radiance of the "socialism

of the 21st century" is limited to Venezuela. In the other Latin American countries it has little power. Coverage in the Latin American media analyzed has shown that, after winning the presidential election, Chavez could not use the rise in attention in order to advertise his "Bolivarian Revolution" in Latin America. Journalists rather assessed his international and ideological image critically – particularly those from a conservative background. (sj)

Basis:

Media: **Argentina:** La Nación, La Razón, Clarin; **Bolivia:** El Diario, La Razón, Los Tiempos; **Brazil:** Folha de Sao Paulo, O Globo, O Dia; **Ecuador:** Hoy, El Comercio, El Universo; **Colombia:** El Colombiano, El Tiempo, El País; **Mexico:** La Jornada, Reforma, El Universal; **Peru:** Correo, El Comercio, La Republica.

Period of analysis: 01.09.2006 – 01.01.2007; all statements on/from Chavez and his administration in 21 Latin-American newspapers

