

**BOLETIN PNUD
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**Author:
Lucia Miranda**

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**What Do People on the
Right Think? Citizen and
Elite Values and Opinions in
Latin America**



Introduction

Ideological placement on a left/right scale corresponds to one of the most widely recognized cleavages in the arena of political competition.¹ Beyond historic and contextual particularities experienced in Latin America, it has been shown that Latin American citizens are able to identify themselves on this scale (Alcántara Sáez, 2004; Colomer and Escatel, 2005; Llamazares and Sandell, 2001; Zechmeister and Corral, 2010). Given this, the aim of this work is to explore in a comparative way the values and opinions of both citizens and politicians regarding some key topics. It is important to know the degree of overlap between the candidates' proposals and the constituencies' demands, for instance to know if candidates' proposals respond to the demands of the electorate. Following this line of reasoning, this exploratory work seeks to examine to what extent politicians and citizens who self-identify on the right coincide in their policy views.²

This project is based on data collected in the Parliamentary Elites of Latin America Project from Salamanca University. To ensure validity it is optimal to work with data collected during the same period (Cuxart and Riba, 2009). Here, the aim is to analyze the values and perceptions of the politicians on the right who were elected to the most recent term (2006-2010). The countries where data were collected within this period of time are Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Dominican Republic, México and El Salvador (See Appendix I).

In addition, the project uses data collected by the Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)³ in 2006 in the same selected countries. This descriptive work identifies a series of questions asked in analogous ways in each survey, developing frequency tables for each question asked of both politicians and citizens who self-place on the right of the ideological scale.

There are three dimensions of the analysis (see Table I). The first assesses if the candidates' political platforms correspond to those problems citizens identify as most important. The second compares the levels of support and satisfaction with democracy of both citizens and politicians. Finally, the third seeks to identify the values or opinions of the electorate on the right, examining the opinions of both citizens and politicians concerning abortion, divorce and homosexuality.⁴

LUCÍA MIRANDA is a doctoral candidate in Latin American Studies and is a Researcher at the Observatory of Representative Institutions Project at the Instituto de Iberoamérica of the Universidad de Salamanca.

¹ Here I adopt Inglehart's (1984:25) definition of cleavage: "relatively stable patterns of polarization in which certain groups support certain parties."

² The cases selected from each of the data bases described below were those in which respondents aligned themselves between 6 and 10 on the ideological scale, where 1 corresponds to the left and 10 to the right. In the LAPOP survey, the question was stated as follows: "On this card there is a 1-10 scale that goes from left to right. One means left and 10 means right. Nowadays, when we speak of political leanings, we talk of those on the left and those on the right. In other words, some people sympathize more with the left and others with the right. According to the meaning that the terms "left" and "right" have for you, and thinking of your own political leanings, where would you place yourself on this scale?" The PELA question was: "As you recall, when talking about politics, we normally use the terms "left" and "right." On this card is a series of boxes that go from left to right. In which box would you place your political beliefs? "

³ The data analyzed in this paper were provided by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) <http://www.LapopSurveys.org>. However, the interpretation of the data is the sole responsibility of the author. LAPOP's principal funders are the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA) and Vanderbilt University.

⁴ In the absence of coordinated questions on these issues between the two questionnaires, the questions regarding homosexuality (LAPOP) and abortion and divorce (PELA) were analyzed separately.

Table I. Dimensions of Analysis

Dimensions	Elite Positions	Citizen Positions
1.Programmatic	Most important problem Political agenda	Most important problem
2.Authoritarianism- Democracy	Preference for democracy Satisfaction with democracy Confidence in institutions	Preference for democracy Satisfaction with democracy Confidence in institutions
3.Conservatism- Progressivism	Position towards abortion and divorce	Position towards homosexuality and abortion

Source: PELA and LAPOP (2006).

What Does it Mean to Be on the Right in Latin America?

Various studies demonstrate that candidates' political proposals based on ideology vary as a function of the national context. Being on the right does not mean the same thing in Honduras in Chile (Gramacho and Llamazares, 2007; Ruiz Rodríguez, 2006). In fact, the way that citizens define themselves varies between countries as the result of historic conditions. Despite this, Latin Americans are able to identify themselves ideologically, employing the scale as a heuristic to simplify their interpretations of political reality.

Traditionally, the dimensions of analyses in the study of left-right alignment are: i) the economic intervention of the State; ii) the role of the Church, and iii) orientations towards authoritarianism or democracy (Llamazares and Sandell, 2001). However, recent studies demonstrate that it would be an error to assume the existence of an economic component in the left-right alignment of all of the countries in the region. Zechmeister and Corral (2010:6) argue that, in some countries, support for an active role for the state in economic policy does not translate to a self-identification on the left, just as attitudes towards free market policies do not necessarily translate into self-identification on the right. Thus, this analytical dimension will be not taken into consideration in this study of the implications of being on the right.

I expect that the data will show that the values and preferences of voters on the right favor maintaining the status quo. I aim to assess the degree of coincidence between politicians and citizens, to determine if citizens' values and opinions are represented by politicians on the same end of the ideological spectrum. Thus, I hope to understand whether the opinions of the right in each of the countries studied are preponderantly liberal or conservative.⁵

The Programmatic Dimension

The interaction between political program and ideological alignment is the key element that defines the ideology of a political party, which has a strong bearing on the configuration of the political system as well as party competition. Nonetheless, the search is to recognize, in first place: if there exists an agreement between the perceptions of politicians and citizens regarding the most relevant problems experienced in each country. In second place, this work attempts to identify if the programs made by politicians respond to the demands raised by parts of the citizenry, if the political programs proposed by politicians aligned on

⁵ Conservatism is associated with more confidence in institutions, customs and hierarchy; with caution with respect to progress (pro status quo); and elitism. Liberalism is associated with a demand for liberty as a principle of individual and national prosperity, giving the individual responsibility for his or her own acts (Marco, 2005).

the right-wing attempt to respond to the themes identified as most relevant by citizens aligned on the same side of the ideological spectrum. To show this, table II shows which themes were identified as most problematic or relevant for both citizens and politicians. (Table 2)

Table 2. Most Important Problems Facing Country (in percentages)

Country	Most important problem facing country	
	Elites	Citizens
Bolivia	Unemployment (31.9%)	Economic crisis (25.0%)
Chile	Violence (27.8%)	Violence (42.6%)
Colombia	Violence (35.6%)	Violence (34.8%)
Costa Rica	Economic crisis (19.2%)	Economic crisis (19.2%)
Dominican Republic	Energy (33.3%)	Crime (51.7%)
El Salvador	Violence (64.7%)	Violence (43.9%)
Honduras	Economic problems (27.3%)	Violence (33.3%)
Mexico	Lack of consensus (17.9%)	Unemployment (21.5%)

Source: Prepared based on PELA and LAPOP data (2006).

The countries in which both citizens and politicians agree with regards to the most important problems facing the government or the country are El Salvador, Chile, Colombia, and Costa Rica.⁶ Among these countries there is an agreement on what should be the focus of government in three of them. In El Salvador, Chile and Colombia, violence or citizen insecurity are identified as the most important problem. Looking at the particular contexts of these countries, the high degree of violence perceived in Chile catches one's attention, given that it is a country with relatively low levels of violence compared to the crime levels of other countries of the region.⁷

In the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Bolivia and Mexico, there is no agreement between the perceptions of elites and citizens self-identified as being on the right regarding the most problematic issues. It is significant that the Mexican political elite identified as the principle source of problems the lack of consensus between political forces, clearly reflecting the strong political polarization following the 2006 elections, while citizens on the right are concerned about the level of unemployment.

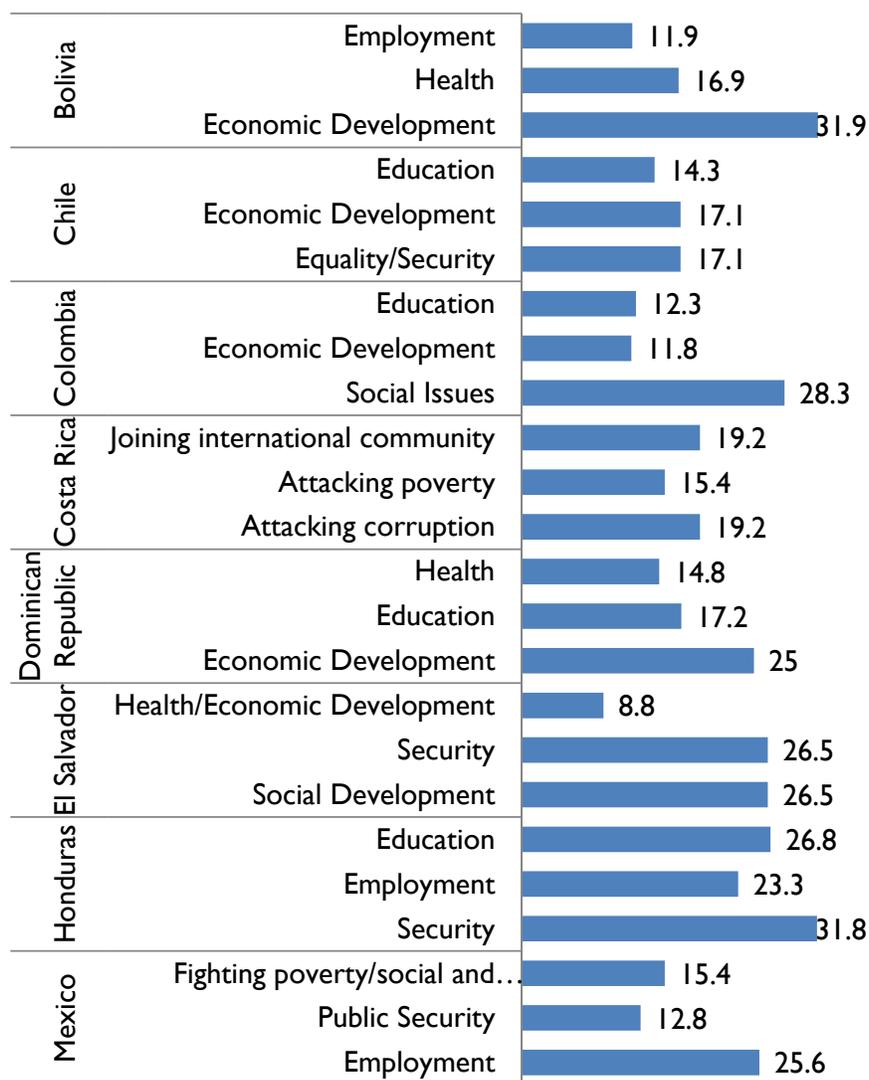
Now that the most problematic topics for both the elite and citizens are identified, we can analyze if the political platform proposed by the elite in each country responds to the problems identified by citizens. Figure 2 shows the three most important campaign elements described by politicians on the right in each of the countries studied.

⁶ In the LAPOP Survey, the question is stated as follows: "To begin with, in your opinion, what is the most serious problem facing the country?" The interviewer records the item identified by the respondent as most problematic. In the survey applied to the politicians the question is announced as following: "In your opinion as a representative, what is the first and most important problem that the government is currently facing? And the second?"

⁷ According to the Panamerican Health Organization, a normal criminality index varies between 0 to 5 homicides for 100,000 inhabitants. Chile in 2006 registered 5.3 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (one of the lowest levels in the region along with Uruguay, with an index of 5.2 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants). (Kliksberg, 2007)

Given the results shown in Figure I, we can conclude that rightist citizens in these countries are coherently represented by politicians of the same ideological position. While there may be no exact match on the main problem affecting the country, the problems identified by citizens are in some part included in the policy agenda put forth by candidates. There are, however, some striking cases, such as Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. In Costa Rica, both the political elite and the citizens agreed in their identification of the main problem as being the economic crisis, but the three most important elements in the campaigns of political elites on the right are: 1) tackling corruption, 2) attacking poverty, and 3) inserting the country into the international system. In the case of the Dominican Republic, the political elite identified as the main problem the country's energy infrastructure, while the citizens seemed more concerned about crime. Nonetheless, the political program of the elite most prominently mentions: 1) economic development, 2) education and 3) health.

Figure I. Parties' Principal Campaign Topics (in Percentages)

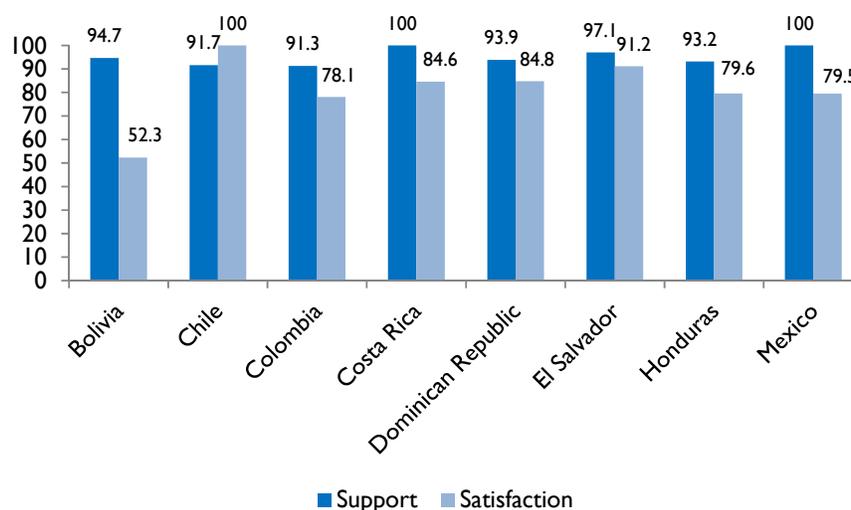


Source: PELA (2006)

The Authoritarianism-Democracy Dimension

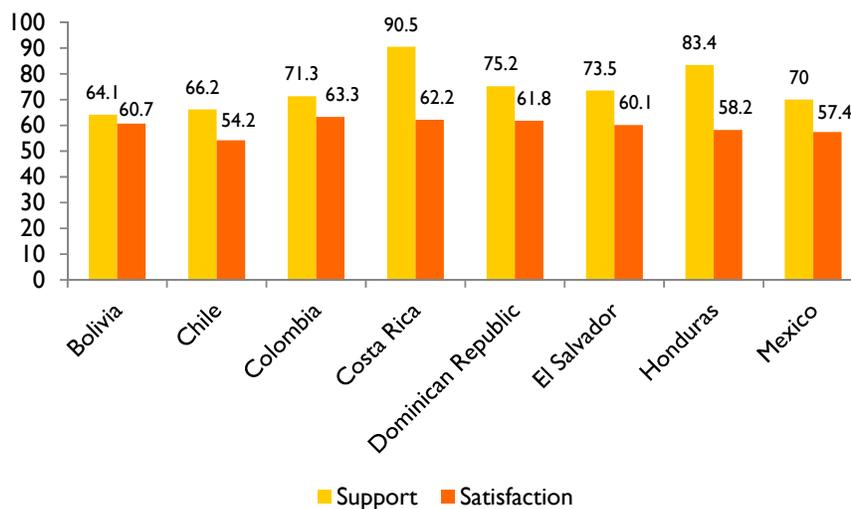
When attempting to measure a society’s democratic values, we distinguish first “diffuse support” and secondly “specific support” for democracy as the best political regime. Diffuse support refers to the preference for democracy as the best option, while specific support refers to the assessment of democratic performance in practical terms. This dimension of analysis includes an assessment of the functioning of the institutions present in a democratic regime, such as the judiciary, the legislature or political parties. Here, Figures 2 and 3 display the rates of diffuse support and satisfaction (specific support) with democracy among the elite (Figure 2) and then among citizens (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Rates of Support and Satisfaction with Democracy among Political Elites



Source: PELA (2006).

Figure 3. Rates of Support and Satisfaction with Democracy among Citizens



Source: LAPOP (2006).

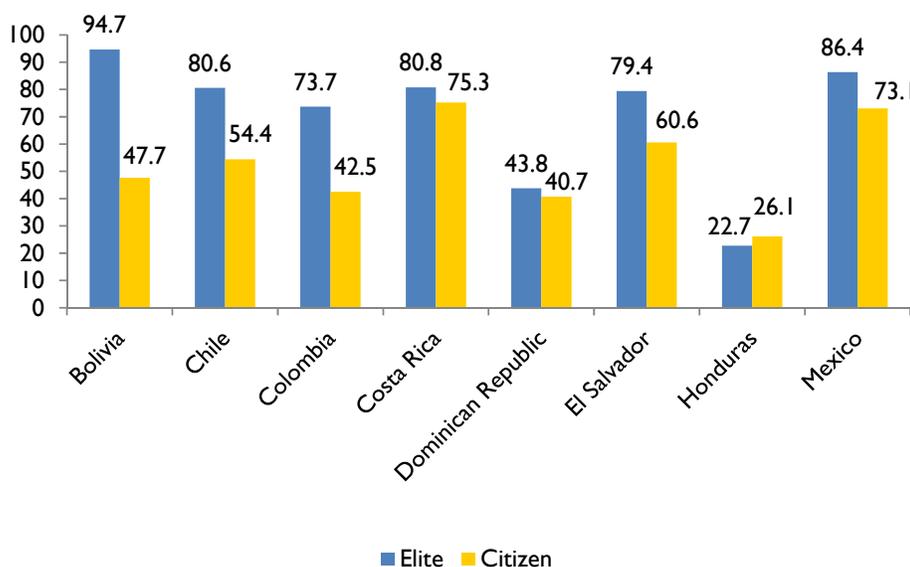
These graphs show that rates of support for democracy are higher than rates of satisfaction with the current democratic regime. This is observable among both the parliamentary elite and citizens on the right in each country. The highest levels of diffuse support for democracy are present in Costa Rica, Honduras and the Dominican Republic, while citizens with the highest levels of specific support (satisfaction) with democracy are those of Colombia, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic.

Parliamentarians on the right show relatively uniform levels of support for and satisfaction with democracy. Nonetheless, there are two paradigmatic cases: one is that of Bolivia, whose rightist political elites seem particularly disappointed with how democracy works, and the other case is Chile, where political elites on the right show very broad specific support for democracy; that is, these elites are particularly satisfied with the performance of democracy (with 100% support).

Regarding the confidence expressed in institutions, those that receive higher levels of trust are the Catholic Church, the armed forces, and the media (in that order; see Appendix 2). The least trusted institutions were the judiciary, the police and, in last place, political parties. Confidence in the Electoral Court and in Parliament takes intermediate values between these groups.

However, the level of confidence Bolivian legislators on the right express in the Electoral Tribunal is striking when contrasted with the lack of support of citizens on the right. Moreover, given the tight election results experienced in 2006, Honduras and Mexico have very different levels of trust in their respective institutions. It should be recalled that in the 2006 elections in Costa Rica, Honduras and Mexico, results from vote counting were narrow, generating complaints and challenges to the electoral bodies. While in Costa Rica and Honduras the differences were settled through institutional means, in Mexico the end result was not accepted by the PRD, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and instability (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Confidence in the Electoral Tribunal

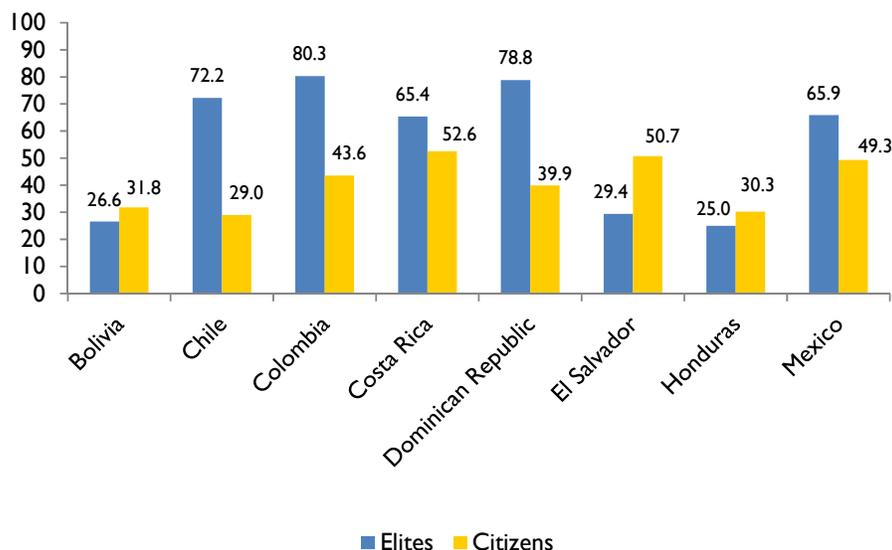


Source: PELA (2006) and LAPOP (2006).

Figure 4 shows that the citizens of Honduras express low levels of trust with regards to the Electoral Tribunal, while in Mexico both politicians and citizens on the right profess high trust. The results may show that voters and politicians on the right were satisfied with the final election result, feeling well represented by the president elected. An opposite situation occurred in the case of Honduras, where voters on the right were reticent about supporting the final verdict issued by the Electoral Tribunal.⁸

Another institution that has mixed levels of confidence is the judiciary, which is widely supported by politicians on the right in Chile, Colombia and the Dominican Republic, while in El Salvador, Bolivia and Honduras, the judiciary receives higher levels of confidence from citizens on the right (Figure 5). This might suggest the presence of some other overlapping cleavage.

Figure 5. Confidence in the Judiciary

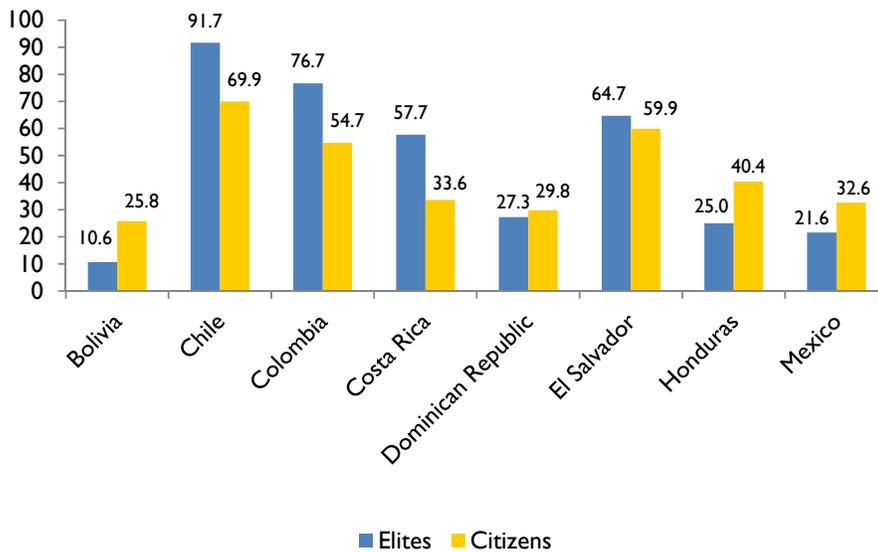


Source: PELA (2006) and LAPOP (2006).

Support for the police also varies. In Chile, Colombia, El Salvador and Costa Rica, the police receive relatively high levels of support from both voters and elites aligned on the right. In the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico and Bolivia, this institution receives higher trust from the citizens aligned on the right. One notable finding is the consensus among Chilean legislators with respect to the police, with about 92% trusting in the institution, in comparison to 70% of citizens.

⁸ As a reminder, it should be mentioned that the small difference between the votes for Manuel Zelaya of the Liberal Party and Porfirio Lobo, of the National Party, during the presidential elections in Honduras in December 2005, caused a crisis in the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), when Lobo rejected the rapid vote tallying of the Organization of American States (OAS) and insisted on counting the results of the voting precincts. The crisis was resolved when Lobo quickly changed his position and accepted the original outcome (perhaps a temporary form of relief RELIEF FROM WHAT? but one that proved ineffective in light of the coup d'état that occurred in June 2009).

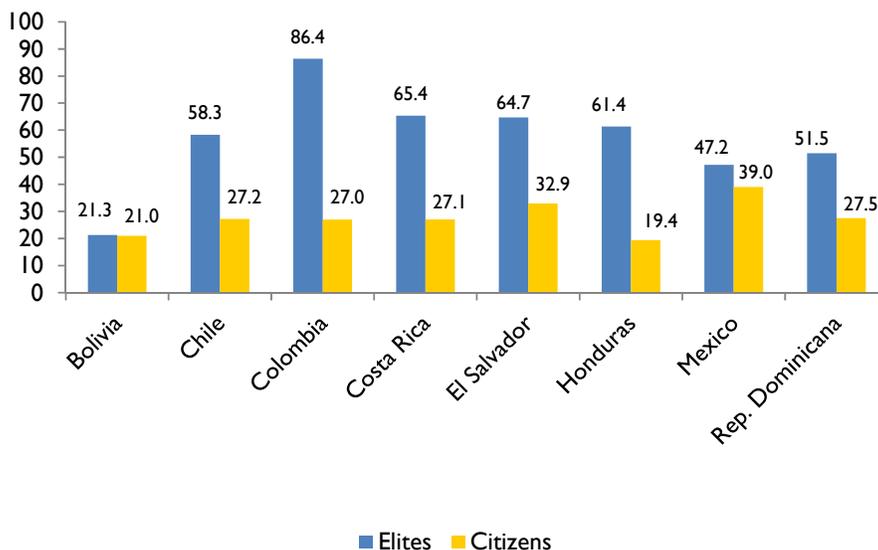
Figure 6. Confidence in the Police



Source: PELA (2006) and LAPOP (2006).

Figure 7 shows citizens’ and parliamentary elites’ trust in political parties. Overall, elites have more confidence in political parties than the citizenry, something that is not surprising considering that this institution is the means of access to public office for politicians. Notwithstanding this fact, Bolivian political elites express lower levels of confidence in this institution, which probably also reflect the important political and institutional crisis experienced by the country in the period prior to the survey being conducted. Conversely, Colombian representatives on the right express the highest levels of confidence in the institution with 86.4% of confidence.

Figure 7. Confidence in Political Parties among the Political Elite and the Citizenry



Source: PELA (2006) and LAPOP (2006)

From the perspective of citizens, political parties are most trusted by voters on the right in Mexico (39%), which may reflect a greater percentage of representation or satisfaction with the way that parties aligned on the right end of the ideological spectrum represent the electorate. Honduran and Bolivian citizens on the right manifested the lowest levels of trust in political parties, with 19.4% and 21% confidence, respectively.

The next series of questions will be useful in identifying whether there is a predominance of authoritarian values among the elite and voters on the right. The questions ask under what situation(s) a coup d'état would be justified. This question was worded differently among parliamentarians than among citizens, given that political elites are expected to accept democracy as "the only game in town." Costa Rica was excluded from the analysis because the country's history (the oldest democracy in the region) and its specific institutions (no military) make it culturally impossible to interpret this question in the same way in that country as in the other countries.⁹

Table 3. Situations that Might Endanger Democracy

Country	Possibility of Coups/Threats to Democracy	
	Elites	Citizens
Bolivia	Economic Crisis (84.0%)	Social Disorder (48.9%)
Chile	Poverty (75.0%)	Crime (40.3%)
Colombia	Terrorism (100.0%)	Corruption (54.7%)
Dominican Republic	Poverty (83.9%)	Crime (41.2%)
El Salvador	Crime (88.2%)	Crime (60.2%)
Honduras	Economic Crisis (95.4%)	Crime (57.8%)
Mexico	Poverty (81.0%)	Crime (62.0%)

Source: PELA and LAPOP (2006).

From Table 3 we can conclude that both the elite and citizens aligned on the right identify any situation which may lead to high social disorder as a source of danger to democracy, including crime, economic crisis and increases in poverty or corruption. Thus, citizens on the right are more supportive of order and the status quo. To delve deeper into these findings we proceed to assess if the values of citizenry aligned on the right are more conservative or progressive.

The Conservative-Progressive Dimension

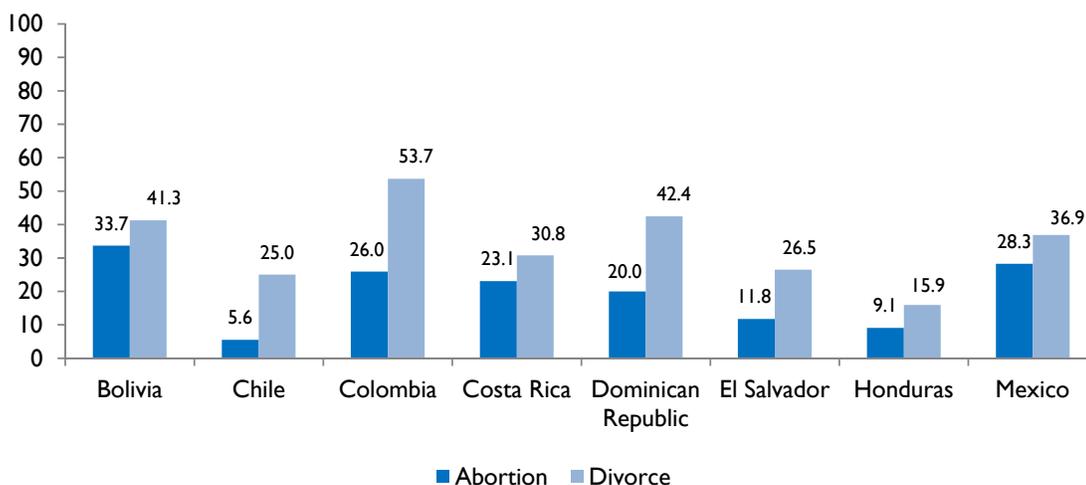
This dimension of analysis attempts to observe whether the electorate on the right is more inclined to a conservative (traditionalist) or a more liberal (progressive) position in terms of individual rights. Therefore, questions have been used that were designed to measure positions regarding abortion, divorce and homosexuality. In the case of the parliamentary elite, these questions have been asked systematically. In the LAPOP studies, the question

⁹ In the LAPOP survey, the question was stated as follows: "The military would be justified in taking power in the context of ..."and where the response options are: 1) justified ...; 2) not justified ... 3) not known. In the PELA survey, the question was stated as follows: "Currently, there are a number of issues that may pose a threat or a risk to the consolidation of democracy in the country. Of the following topics that I will name, to what extent: a lot, somewhat, little or nothing, do you think are now a threat to democracy?" (valid percentages were selected for the answers "A lot" and "fairly").

about the position regarding abortion was only been asked in some of the countries studied here, so the positions of elites and citizens may only be compared in some cases.

First, observe the levels of acceptance by the elite aligned on the right regarding the practices of abortion and divorce. The responses to both questions are on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 10 “strongly agree.”¹⁰ To determine the degree of acceptance, it has been assumed that all respondents who position themselves at a level 7 or higher were expressing moderate to strong agreement. The percentage of all valid responses are presented in the following results.

Figure 8. Rightist Elites’ Acceptance of Abortion and Divorce



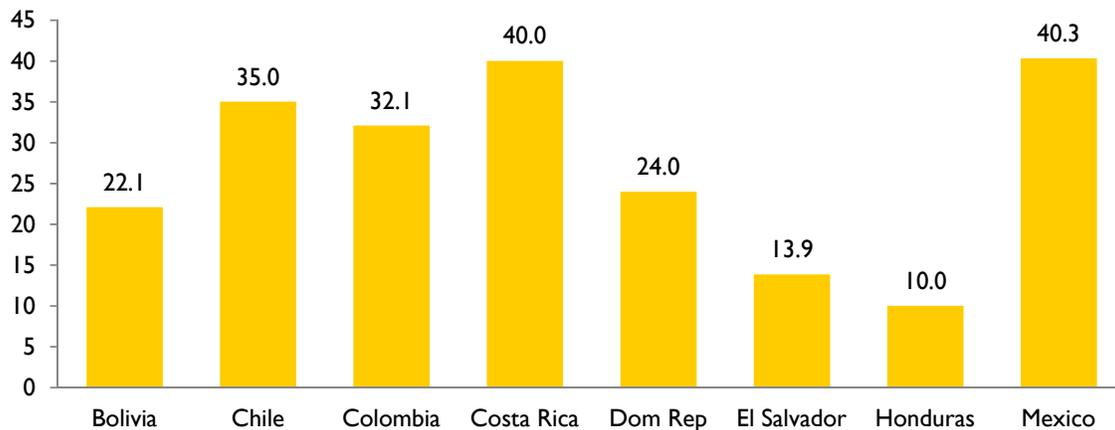
Source: PELA (2006) and LAPOP (2006).

Based on the data, we can infer that in Colombia divorce is accepted by more than half of the elite aligned on the right. In the Dominican Republic and Bolivia, acceptance only exceeds 40%, and in Mexico and Costa Rica 30%, with even lower values of acceptance in other countries. On abortion, elites appear in general more reluctant to show support. However, in Bolivia elites have somewhat more permissive attitudes towards a women's right to terminate her pregnancy, followed by elites in Mexico and Colombia.

Politicians who most strongly reject abortion are the Chileans, Hondurans and Salvadorans; in these countries the elite on the right also appears to be the most hostile towards divorce (Figure 9).

¹⁰ The question on abortion was stated as follows: "Indicate on the scale below your personal opinion about abortion, where '1' means the state should outlaw and penalize abortion as an offense, and '10' means the pregnant woman is the only one who has the right to decide on the morality of abortion and its practice. The question on divorce was stated as follows: "where do you lie on the following scale where '1' means being totally opposed and '10' totally in favor about divorce?"

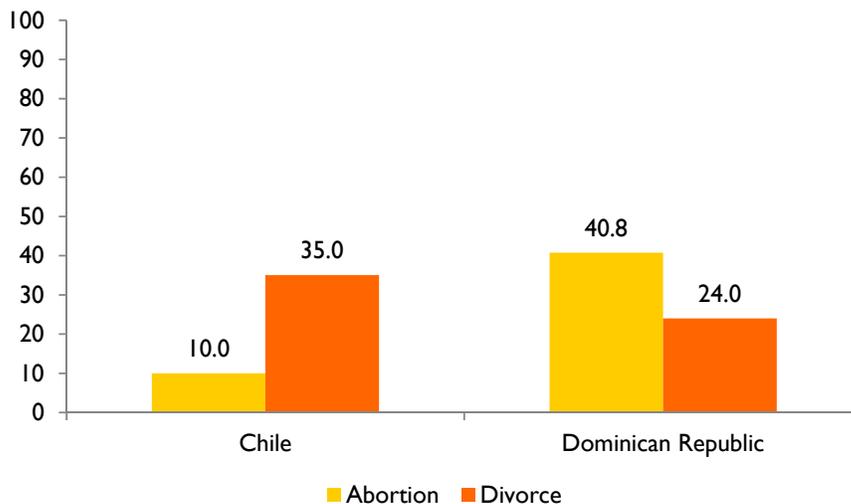
Figure 9. Citizens' Acceptance of Gays Running for Public Office



Source: LAPOP (2006).

Based on the data shown in Figure 9, there is generally greater acceptance of homosexuals running for public office among citizens in Mexico, Costa Rica, Chile and Colombia, although these values are only between 30% and 40%. The least supportive citizens are in El Salvador and Honduras. The electorate aligned on the right in the Dominican Republic and Bolivia are located between these two extremes. The following figure contrasts the levels of acceptance of divorce and abortion among the citizens in the countries in which the questions were applied (Chile and the Dominican Republic).

Figure 10. Acceptance of Divorce and Abortion among Citizens from Chile and the Dominican Republic



Source: LAPOP (2006).

Observing Figure 12 one can see that while in Chile acceptance of divorce exceeds tolerance of abortion, in the Dominican Republic abortion is more widely accepted than divorce. In this regard, we might have to take into account some nuances, such as the fact that the question was posed quite differently for each case. In Chile the abortion question was stated as follows: "Now, again using a scale of 1 to 10, I'll ask you to tell me how far you

believe that the following situations are justifiable. In this case, 1 indicates that you believe that the situation is never justified and 10 indicates that you believe the situation is always justified. So, how justified do you think abortion is?"

In the Dominican Republic the abortion question was stated differently: "Do you agree with the interruption of pregnancy when the health of the mother is in danger, and in cases of incest or rape, or do not agree under any circumstances?" Responses were coded as "agree," "disagree," "Do not know," or "No answer."

Therefore there could be a bias in the way the question has been stated. Another issue that may affect the measurement of this value is that, given the historical and political context of the Dominican Republic, the population has particular difficulty in identifying with the right. Thus, although most respondents have positioned themselves on the right, it is likely that their political culture is shaped by values different from those of the right.¹¹ When stating a position about abortion, many respondents who self-locate on the right of the ideological spectrum will actually defend progressive values.

Conclusions

The analysis indicates that in general there is some consistency around values and perceptions between elites and the electorate aligned on the right in the 2006-2010 legislative period. However, the Dominican Republic appears to be a special case in this regard, making it difficult to study from a perspective of left-right cleavage.

On the programmatic and ideological dimensions, the political agendas of the parties on right side of the ideological spectrum respond to the demands of people on the right, agreeing on which issues need special attention. It would be important to monitor the extent to which parliamentary elites aligned on the right follow up by effectively implementing their policy proposals, and to do the same for parties on the left. This would enable one to determine whether the parties' political proposals are the result of a long-term agenda or are simply proposals in response to temporary crisis situations.

On the authoritarianism-democracy dimension, although both the political elite and the citizenry on the right show a greater tendency towards maintaining the status quo and rejecting any potential source of social disorder, democracy is still generally recognized as the best option for government. It is necessary to point out, however, the particular dissatisfaction with democratic performance in the case of Bolivian legislators, which may be influenced by the intense events that occurred in the country during 2004 and 2005. It would be important to contrast this information against a measure of the changes in the levels of specific support for democracy among the Bolivian parliamentary elite over this time period.

Finally, in terms of conservatism and liberalism, elites and citizens on the right are most liberal in Colombia, Mexico and Costa Rica, while they are most conservative in El Salvador and Honduras. Since knowing the similarities and differences of values and perceptions among the elite and citizenry of the same side of the ideological spectrum is of great benefit and interest in advancing the interpretation of the party systems in each country (Llamazares and Sandell, 2001), it is important to continue with comparative studies to infer

¹¹ The table, Annex N, recorded for the study of this country is particularly high, picking up almost the entire sample.

whether there are differences among the electorate aligned on the left, or if these issues (abortion, divorce, homosexuality) are still considered taboo for society in general.

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Appendix 1

Number of Cases Identifying on the Right by Country, Margin of Error, And Date of Data Collection

Country	2006 PELA data				2006 LAPOP data	
	N	Field Work	ERROR	Date of Election	N	ERROR
Bolivia	20	August-September	± 5.24	December 2005	981	/
Chile	36	August-September	± 5.52	January 2006	561	± 2.57
Colombia	37	August-September	± 5.14	May 2006	659	± 2.54
Costa Rica	26	June	±0.0	February 2006	589	± 2.8
El Salvador	34	August	± 4.61	(no close elections)	700	± 2.4
Honduras	44	July	± 5.78	November 2005	841	± 2.5
Mexico	39	September-December	± 7.87	July 2006	712	± 2.8
Dominican Republic	33	October	± 7.12	May 2006	1585	± 2.5

Source: PELA (2006) and LAPOP (2006).

Appendix 2

Levels of Confidence in Institutions

Country		Judiciary	Political Parties	Military	Church	Parliament	Media	Police	Electoral Tribunal
Colombia	Elites	80.3	86.4	85.5	79.4	97.5	73.1	76.7	73.7
	Citizens	43.6	27.0	65.7	71.3	40.0	60.5	54.7	42.5
Dominican Republic	Elites	78.8	51.5	69.7	75.0	81.8	57.6	27.3	43.8
	Citizens	39.9	27.5	65.9	72.7	49.8	73.3	29.8	40.7
Chile	Elites	72.2	58.3	77.8	86.1	77.8	75.0	91.7	80.6
	Citizens	29.0	27.2	74.1	64.0	45.4	66.2	69.9	54.4
Mexico	Elites	65.9	47.2	91.6	72.0	56.8	56.6	21.6	86.4
	Citizens	49.3	39.0	76.4	76.3	60.7	74.1	32.6	73.1
Costa Rica	Elites	65.4	65.4	-	69.2	88.5	65.4	57.7	80.8
	Citizens	52.6	27.1	-	63.0	45.8	72.9	33.6	75.3
El Salvador	Elites	29.4	64.7	97.1	82.4	79.4	88.2	64.7	79.4
	Citizens	50.7	32.9	71.0	62.7	52.8	70.4	59.9	60.6
Bolivia	Elites	26.6	21.3	47.0	78.7	52.3	47.0	10.6	94.7
	Citizens	31.8	21.0	50.1	72.8	36.6	53.0	25.8	47.7
Honduras	Elites	25.0	61.4	46.5	77.3	75.0	45.5	25.0	22.7
	Citizens	30.3	19.4	55.3	68.4	32.4	67.9	40.4	26.1

Source: PELA (2006) and LAPOP (2006).