



Chile

Assessment: Good

Trend: ⇄

Capitol: Santiago

Type of Government: Republic

Head of Government: President Ricardo

Lagos (since 11 March 2000)

Minister of Foreign Relations: Maria Soledad

Alvear Valenzuela

Population: 15,328,467

Human Development Index Ranking: 38

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following its return to democratic rule in 1990, Chile has established a **good** record of democracy promotion. It has contributed consistently to the growing dialogue on democracy in the region, advocated codifying democratic norms in international and multilateral organizations, and has regularly, though not always, spoken out against transgressions of these norms in neighboring countries. Chile has been less consistent, however, in putting these words into action. Often hesitant to lead the international response, Chile's advocacy has faltered when democratic values have collided with other foreign policy concerns. Specifically, considerations of security, economics, and domestic politics have all occasionally compromised Chile's promotion of international democracy.

FOREIGN RELATIONS BACKGROUND

The reestablishment of democracy in 1990 after 17 years of military rule under General Augusto Pinochet allowed Chile to reengage the international community on new terms. Between 1992 and 2002, Chilean foreign policy demonstrated a renewed commitment to pursuing regional cooperation, establishing peace and security along its borders, and developing new trade opportunities. Accordingly, the nation became a partner in the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) in 1994, and an associate member of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) in 1996. It also has negotiated significant trade agreements with Canada, the European Union, and the U.S. (still under negotiation). Furthermore, civilian-led governments have made significant progress toward resolving the country's outstanding border disputes with Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia. Its expanding economy and relatively stable political system have afforded Chile a measure of influence in regional affairs, which it has exercised through international fora such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the smaller Rio Group.

Consolidation of Chilean democracy, which facilitated all these developments, has dominated the domestic agenda throughout the decade. Though the nation elected three civilian presidents (Patricio Aylwin, Eduardo Frei and Ricardo Lagos) and made important strides away from many of Pinochet's repressive policies, legacies of military involvement in politics and restrictions on the press have persisted. While its own democratic transition gave Chile a natural interest in democratic developments abroad, contradictions and tensions at home occasionally restrained Chile's activism in this area. It primarily fashioned itself as a Latin American role model and advocated formal endorsements of democratic norms. Outside of such dialogue, Chile tended to avoid leadership roles, shying away from democracy promotion when it threatened to compromise other national interests.



RESPONSE TO OVERTHROW OF DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED GOVERNMENTS

As a civilian government emerging out of nearly two decades of authoritarian rule, Chile's civilian leadership was particularly attuned to the threat posed by military governments. Accordingly, the Chilean government consistently spoke out against overthrows of the democratic process in the region, offered support to legitimate, deposed governments, and coordinated with multilateral and regional organizations to advocate for the restoration of democracy. However, while ready to apply rhetorical and political pressure, Chile regularly steered clear of economic sanctions or military action.

As host to the 1991 OAS General Assembly, Chile wielded great influence in the creation of one of the region's most significant commitments to democracy. The Santiago Resolution (OAS Resolution 1080) affirmed each OAS member state's commitment to democratic governance and established a mechanism by which the OAS would respond to coups in the region. In announcing that coups were not just domestic disturbances but also transgressions of regionally agreed upon norms and values, Chile clearly sought to shore up its recently restored democracy. In the process, it also helped to establish an influential protocol that would shape regional responses to democratic challenges over the course of the next decade.

When Peruvian President Fujimori executed his *autogolpe* (*self-coup*) in April 1992, Chile was quick to demand an immediate return to democracy. Chile further announced its intention to work within the Rio Group and the OAS to encourage this restoration. Chile also joined Argentina in requesting that Peru be suspended from the OAS, and that suspension from the organization be the response to any future coups as well. While this initiative did not succeed, the OAS did adopt more limited measures calling for censure (not condemnation) and monitoring, while the smaller Rio Group suspended Peruvian participation. Over time, however, Chile's public stance against the Fujimori regime weakened in favor of accommodating other issues on the bilateral agenda and it gradually strengthened its ties to Lima in the following years.

Chile's immediate reaction to Guatemalan President Serrano's copycat *autogolpe* in 1993 was an expression of concern. Clearly less emphatic

than the demands voiced a year earlier during the Peruvian crisis, Chile's muted response may have reflected domestic tensions between the government and the military, still under Pinochet's control, which flared in May and June 1993 over allegations of military corruption and increasing civilian government control over the military. In any event, Chile was supportive of the OAS response initiatives, including a resolution calling for the return to democracy, a diplomatic mission to pressure Serrano out of power, and a Foreign Ministers meeting to contemplate the imposition of economic sanctions on Guatemala. Chile's limited reaction may also reflect the brevity of the crisis; the coup dissolved within days, even before the Foreign Ministers could assemble.

The extended debate over how to respond to the unconstitutional coup in Haiti exposed indecision and disagreement on the part of the Chilean coalition government. As worsening conditions in the island state sent waves of refugees seeking asylum throughout the Caribbean, Chile backed a UN resolution condemning the growing threats to Haitian democracy and human rights. It further voiced support for a Security Council resolution authorizing a US-led military mission to restore democracy, although it declined to contribute troops. However, the Chilean legislature overwhelmingly rejected the UN authorization of military force and pressured the administration to amend its position significantly. Chile then stepped forward in support of a Venezuelan-led diplomatic mission to talk the military leadership out of power and coordinated with the Rio Group to issue a weaker condemnation of the Haitian crisis that did not endorse a military response. Despite its equivocal support for a forced transition of power, Chile remained steadfast in its commitment to the restoration of democracy in Haiti and eventually contributed 50 police officers for technical assistance projects once Aristide returned to power.

When the head of the army staged a coup in Paraguay in 1996, Chile was quick to firmly show support for the legitimate elected leadership. The Chilean Foreign Minister personally traveled to Asuncion to consult with President Wasmosy, and Chile joined the OAS in backing President Wasmosy against unconstitutional interference. The coup quickly dissolved under intense international pressure; however, Chile largely followed the lead of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, which effectively used the democracy clause of Mercosur to facilitate an end to the crisis.¹



A close relationship between newly elected President Lagos and Ecuadorian President Jamil Mahuad prompted Chile to more forceful displays of support for the legitimate government during a coup in that country in January 2000. Lagos made a personal call of support to Mahuad, offering him asylum in Chile and inviting him as a guest into the Chilean embassy in Quito during tense moments of the struggle. The Chilean foreign minister further convened a Rio Group meeting of regional leaders, and worked with the OAS to issue a unanimous condemnation of the coup and a threat of political or economic repercussions if constitutional order was not restored. These measures helped stem the crisis. The unpopular Mahuad was forced to resign and civilian leadership was restored under the democratically elected vice president.

Chile's reaction to the most recent unconstitutional seizure of power in the region was less proactive. When military leaders helped drive Venezuelan President Chavez from power in April 2002, Chile refused to recognize the de facto government and instead urged elections for new Venezuelan leadership as soon as possible; however, like many other governments, Chile declined to call for Chavez's immediate reinstatement. Chile again joined the OAS consensus in issuing a rebuke and assigning a fact-finding mission to investigate the short-lived coup.

RESPONSE TO MANIPULATION OF ELECTORAL PROCESSES

Two seminal cases, both from 2000, demonstrate the limited role Chile has assumed in insisting upon legitimate elections in the region. While it acknowledges incidences of electoral misconduct, Chile has opted to engage de facto governments, rather than to press for new elections or to impose penalties. The case of Haiti seems to reflect a sincere effort at constructive engagement, while Chile's reaction to the Peruvian elections was clearly influenced by other foreign policy concerns.

As controversy over Haiti's spring 2000 elections extended through the summer, Chile, representing the Friends of the UN Secretary General for Haiti, joined an OAS mission to the island in August. The mission's report noted the "political and democratic-institutional crisis in the country," but failed to elicit a punitive response from the OAS. The OAS, however, has remained engaged in resolving the political tension in Haiti, acting as the primary broker in negotiations between the government and the opposition.²

Chile spoke out when Peruvian President Fujimori ran for an unconstitutional third term. However, the brunt of its criticism was directed not at Fujimori, but at the United States. When the United States advocated invoking the Santiago Resolution, in an extension of its established application for coups, Chile joined with several other Latin American nations in rejecting outside interference in domestic political processes. Instead, Chile joined an OAS resolution that, while acknowledging deficiencies in the 2000 election, implicitly recognized Fujimori's presidency; this despite the OAS Electoral Observation Mission's finding that "the Peruvian election process falls far short of what could be called free and fair."³ Furthermore, while Chile avoided Fujimori's inauguration, it accepted his participation at the 2000 Rio Group Summit and his signature on the Declaration of Cartagena, a commitment to democratic principles and practices, which included an explicit reference to legitimate elections.⁴

Chile's lackluster response to the electoral misconduct in Peru derived from its concern for protecting recently strengthened ties with that country. Having resolved troublesome border disputes only the year before, Chile sought to avoid provoking any further conflict with the Peruvian leadership. These same concerns for smooth relations with its neighbor led Chile to compromise its leadership role in democracy advocacy later that year when it blocked a U.S.-led effort to disinvite Peru from the Community of Democracies conference (see below).

Despite its frequent affirmations of democratic values, Chile accepted leaders in both Haiti and Peru who were elected in circumstances deemed highly questionable by the OAS and other independent observers. It did, however, recognize the electoral misconduct and supported OAS diplomatic efforts to resolve the problems through engagement. To this end, Chile has been consistently supportive of OAS election monitoring initiatives, commenting that they are well suited to the promotion and reinforcement of democracy in the Americas.

PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRACY

The protection and expansion of international democracy is widely endorsed as official policy throughout the Chilean government. Accordingly, Chile regularly participates in the regional dialogue on democracy and has signed



many important international protocols and declarations. Its record of political stability and economic prosperity at home further adds to the Chileans' vision of promoting democracy abroad by setting a good example.

Recognizing the exemplary value of this Latin American success story, Poland and the United States invited Chile to serve as a co-convening country for the inaugural Community of Democracies ministerial conference in 2000. The invitation to join the leadership of an initiative dedicated to the consolidation and promotion of democracy worldwide demonstrated both other states' high regard for Chile's democracy and Chile's own commitment to democracy promotion. However, as alluded to above, Chile's performance within this forum was partially compromised by other foreign policy concerns, as it blocked efforts to bar Peru's attendance at the conference despite its flawed elections. Chile is also slated to host the 3rd Community of Democracies conference in 2004.

Beyond the Community of Democracies, Chile is an active member of many regional organizations. However, its record of democracy promotion here is mixed as well, as it has pressed for democratic assurances in some fora, yet totally ignored democratic values in others. Within the OAS, Chile has demonstrated particular leadership in formal democracy promotion. In addition to its major role in crafting the Santiago Resolution, Chile played a leadership role in hosting the Second Summit of the Americas in 1998 at which governments endorsed measures to strengthen democracy and promote human rights. Furthermore, Chile was a significant collaborator in the drafting of the OAS Inter-American Democratic Charter in 2001. This charter details the organization's expectations for democratic governance in the region and refines its mechanisms for institutional responses to disruptions of democracy. During the drafting of this agreement, Chile lobbied to incorporate into it specific democratic norms and standards regarding elections, transparency, and other fundamental democratic principles.⁵ Also in 2001, the Chilean ambassador, as Chair of the OAS Permanent Council, led an international conference on "The Role of Regional and Multilateral Organizations in Strengthening Democracy." Outside the OAS, Chile has developed a substantial partnership with MERCOSUR, a customs union with formal commitments to democracy and democracy promotion.

Outside of Latin America, however, Chile's membership in regional fora primarily reflects its economic interests. In 1994, it joined APEC, seeking to develop ties with the Asian economies. This group has no formal commitment to democracy; in fact, several prominent APEC member states are recognized as non-democratic regimes, and Chile has shown no interest in taking a leadership role to encourage its Asian partners to undertake democratic reforms. This mixed record reflects how Chile's policies balance a sincere interest in international democracy promotion with competing considerations for security and economic development. That its democracy promotion activities are largely centered in Latin America reflects both Chile's stronger political ties in that region and its greater stake in political stability and good governance there.

POLICY TOWARDS ENTRENCHED DICTATORSHIPS

Despite its vocal support for democracy, Chile maintains active relations with several noted dictatorships around the world. This ambivalence reflects domestic political debates, as well as Chile's tendency to give higher priority to its economic pursuits outside of Latin America.

Of all its relations with dictatorships, Chile's ties with Cuba are understandably the most complex. Chile has recognized Castro's regime as the legitimate government in Cuba since 1991. However, center-left governments in Santiago have had to balance pressures from those within their own coalition who favor normal ties with Cuba, against pressure from more conservative elements (including the military) who want to diminish ties with the island nation. The United States has also pressured the Chilean government to join it in condemning Castro's regime.

These pressures, in part, account for Chile's mixed record regarding Cuba. Within the UN, Chile has both opposed U.S. sanctions on Cuba and condemned human rights abuses in Cuba in equal measure, although it abstained from the UN Human Rights Commission vote in 1998, contributing to the failure of that resolution. Chile also hosted Cuba at the Sixth Ibero-American Summit, securing Castro's signature on the Declaration of Vina del Mar, which affirmed each state's commitment to democracy. The government in Santiago has held Cuba to its obligation under that declaration, declining to invite Cuba to the Second Summit of the Americas in Santiago and



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refusing to attend the Ninth Ibero-American Summit in Havana on the grounds that Cuba had failed to produce any meaningful reforms in the area of democratization. In all likelihood, Chile's on-going dispute with Spain over that country's prosecution of former Chilean dictator Pinochet also factored into its decision to skip the Cuban summit. In short, domestic politics and Chilean relations with the U.S. and other third-party states have been the determining factor in Chile's policy toward Cuban dictatorship.

Chile also maintains substantial relationships with several entrenched dictatorships in Asia. These primarily reflect its interest in developing strong economic ties in that region, as evidenced already by its accession to APEC. Notably, China is Chile's fourth largest trade partner, underscoring the economic importance of this relationship. Beyond China, Chile also has taken no visible steps to react to the coups in Fiji, Pakistan, or the Philippines.

¹ "Joint Effort Helps Head Off Coup Threat in Paraguay; U.S., South Americans Pressure General Aside." The Washington Post 26 April 1996; "Failed Coup Made Trade Bloc Stronger." Journal of Commerce 1 May 1996.

² "Negotiations: the Game that is so Hard to Play." Institute for Research in the Sciences of Politics; Organization of American States. Report of the Mission of the OAS to Haiti, August 17-20, 2000. 8 Aug. 2000.

³ "OAS Looks for United Response to Flawed Peru Election." Agence France Presse 5 June 2000; Organization of American States. "Electoral Observation Mission, General Elections, Republic of Peru, 2000: Executive Summary of the Final Report of the Chief of Mission." (AG/doc.3936/00). 5 June 2000.

⁴ "Latin American Presidents Bow out of Peru President's Inauguration." AP Worldstream 20 July 2000.

⁵ Organization of American States. "Comparative Table on the Draft Inter-American Democratic Charter (Rev. 7) with the Proposals, Amendments, and Comments Submitted by Member States." (GT/CDI-6/01). 14 Aug. 2001.