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The United States and Chile:  
Some American Perceptions Among  
Congressional and Political Elites

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Although Chile is of marginal economic and strategic importance to the United States, it has been, in some instances, the focus of special attention in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy in the last few decades.

Chile is thousands of miles south of the United States; it has a population equivalent to less than five percent of the U.S. population; and it represents less than 0.35 per cent of total U.S. foreign trade. However, during the second half of the 20th century, Chile has generated issues and discussions between the Executive and the Legislative branches of the U.S. government that have had a significant impact on U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America.<sup>1</sup>

What is the explanation for this special attention which American political elites have periodically paid to Chile?

This discussion will first focus on the political environment. U.S. power elites, particularly political practitioners and scholars, have traditionally perceived the Chilean nation to be politically modern and stable relative to other Third World countries, especially in Latin America. This perception is articulated by former Ambassador Korry. He points out that, in 1974, Chile was "...the most stable, tested, freest democracy in South America, a democracy which has a totally different profile than any other country in Latin America..."<sup>2</sup>

Chilean institutional and political development evident in the early seventies earned the South American nation a high level

of international prestige among Western countries before the breakdown of the democratic process. Chile was regarded as an alternative democratic political model in Latin America; during the Kennedy Administration's Alliance for Progress, the U.S. chose Chile as a showcase in juxtaposition to the Cuban model.<sup>3</sup> It was during this period that life-long relations developed between U.S elites involved in Latin American affairs and Chilean political and intellectual leaders.

Chile's socialist experiment in the early seventies altered American decision-makers' image of Chile as a regional democratic model. Later, the military coup that ended the existing democratic regime in 1973 further altered this perception. Both of these historical processes changed traditional American perceptions of Chile. The developments and transformations of the Chilean political process also divided and aligned U.S. political players and elites along ideological lines.

Congressional and interest groups' investigations of the alleged participation of the U.S. government in the destabilization of the democratically-elected president of Chile, and the subsequent human rights violations under the military government, contributed to the deterioration of the Nixon-Ford Administration in the United States. It also fostered a departure from the generally positive perception of Chile and a corollary disillusionment within important sectors of American society. As a result, Chile became a test case of the human rights policies initiated and supported by the U.S. Congress,

especially when controlled by Democrats who used Chile to exert pressure on Republican administrations.

The societal conditions in Chile during the military regime elicited unusual attention and concern in the United States, particularly in some circles of the Congress. Later, under the Carter administration, these concerns became more acute with the resurgence of democracy elsewhere in Latin America. In our case study, the re-democratization of Chilean society, the opening to the outside world, and the consolidation of an open-market economy in the late 1980s unlocked increasing expectations among certain circles in the U.S. to reconsider Chile as a regional model.

In the following pages, several issues will be analyzed:

First, what are the elements and tendencies of continuity and change that influence the traditional American image of Chile? How has Chile risen and fallen in the U.S. foreign policy agenda and why?

Second, to what extent are the Chilean events of the early seventies related to the enhanced role of Congress in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy?

Third, to what extent have the Congressional, scholars', and interest groups' perceptions of Chile changed in the last few years as they have observed the evolution of the Chilean political and economic process, and what have been the domestic and international factors that have propelled change?

Lastly, given the recent changes in Chilean society, what are the critical issues and questions that will emerge in the future bilateral relationship between Chile and the United States?

The analyses of these questions should substantiate and explain the hypothesis: namely, that U.S. political elites have traditionally held a positive image of Chile. This good will, built during the pre-Pinochet era, allowed Chile to quickly regain its positive standing once the transition to democracy was underway.

Specifically, the U.S. Congress' perceptions and policies regarding human rights and democracy in Chile will be identified and evaluated, particularly following the dramatic changes in the Chilean political system, which coincided with active participation of U.S. interest groups in the seventies and with the renewed role of the U.S. Congress in foreign policy formulation. Another important task is to analyze the evolution of these perceptions up until now in view of the new political and economic scenario presented by the current Chilean political climate of democratization.

This research will be based on personal interviews with members of the U.S. Congress, Chile and Latin American Affairs scholars, as well as U.S. representatives of various organizations associated with human rights and democracy in Chile.



## II. DOMINANT TRENDS OF U.S.-CHILEAN RELATIONS

The triumph of the Cuban revolution profoundly marked U.S. policy toward Latin America. It impacted U.S.-Chilean relations with the implementation of President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress Program in the sixties. The U.S. promoted a plan of economic and military assistance and support tied to political and social changes in Latin American countries to counter-balance the Cuban threat to the region and to contribute to the development of Latin America. In other words, Latin American countries had to be committed to the dual priorities of development and democracy if they were to receive the direct support of the United States.

In recognition of its democratic character, Chile became a model or a showcase of the socio-economic change promoted within the framework of the U.S. Alliance for Progress strategy in the region. The establishment of a stable, reformist government in Chile, headed by President Frei, offered an alternative to the Cuban Marxist model. It became the regime of choice to embody the U.S. regional strategy. Therefore, the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations granted direct and indirect support and assistance to the Chilean State and to the political and social forces that best represented the interests and objectives of U.S. foreign policy. While in 1960 Chile received 12.5% of U.S. economic assistance in Latin America, by 1965 assistance to Chile had risen to 15.3%. According to Richard Fagen, between 1958 and 1970 the U.S. committed, directly or indirectly, "...perhaps a

billion dollars in public funds..." as a means to preserve democracy and prevent Communism.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency supported and financed the candidacy of President Frei in 1964 as a means to insure the defeat of the Chilean Left.<sup>5</sup>

The Kennedy and Johnson Administrations' efforts to showcase Chile as a model democratic alternative in the region, promoting and supporting the emulation of moderate Chilean social and economic reform policies throughout the region, would suffer a significant setback with the advent of President Allende's socialist experiment in the seventies. As a matter of fact, Allende's proposed program of social and economic reform represented a substantial threat to U.S. perceptions and interests in the region. Thus, President Nixon used various means in his attempt first to foil Allende's ascension to power and later to prevent the implementation of the proposed transition to socialism which Allende sought to promote.<sup>6</sup>

The U.S. government perceived the Chilean socialist government as a threat. The various factors associated with this perception include the following: the impact that the Chilean experience might have had on European and Latin American governments; the viability of electoral politics as a means of establishing a Marxist regime, which might provide a useful paradigm to the democracies in Italy and France; and concerns over the domino effect which might result in the transformation of Peru, Bolivia and Argentina into Communist regimes as a

consequence of Allende's election, thereby contributing to the disruption of the continent.<sup>7</sup>

Given the Nixon Administration's definition of the Chilean reality, the election of President Allende became the determinant factor in bilateral relations during this period. The divergent positions in international political affairs between the two countries, as well as the way in which Allende's policies affected U.S. interests in Chile and Latin America, reinforced the predetermined orientation and tendencies of the U.S. government. In other words, in the mind of the U.S. leadership, Chile had gone from a model of democracy in the region to become a problem area in the Western hemisphere.

Although bilateral relations visibly declined during the socialist regime,<sup>8</sup> the total loss of Chile's democratic image in the U.S. occurred with the establishment of an authoritarian regime after the military coup in 1973. According to the revised Fitzgibbon and Johnson index of democracy in Latin America, Chile fell from second place in 1970 to eighteenth place in 1975.<sup>9</sup> (See Appendix A, Table No.1.)

The disclosure of covert U.S. activities in Chile, and the violent repression of the Chilean military government, would have a direct impact on bilateral relations and on U.S. foreign policy, particularly under President Carter. The growing concern among various interest groups and diverse sectors of American society about the violation of human rights in Chile acquired a critical dimension with the assassination of Allende's former

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Orlando Letelier, and Rene Moffit, a U.S. citizen, in September 1976 in Washington D.C. The refusal of Chilean authorities to comply with the U.S. request for the extradition of the alleged masterminds of the assassination generated a series of diplomatic, military and economic sanctions by the U.S. Congress, some of which would remain in effect even after the end of the Pinochet military regime.

During the first Reagan Administration, U.S. policy toward Chile pointed to a rapprochement with the military government. Several American leaders' attitudes were congruent with the perceived decrease of military repression and with institutional changes that indicated a long-term trend toward a democratic transition, as well as with Chile's economic growth, which had been attained through the implementation of market-oriented economic policies favored by the Administration.

This new U.S. foreign policy replaced the political activism in support of human rights favored by the Carter Administration. Factors that contributed to a more favorable bilateral climate include: the international context of ideological confrontation; the containment policy of the Reagan Administration; and a new approach of "quiet diplomacy" toward those authoritarian regimes that were considered to be of importance to the regional security interests of the United States.

The change of perceptions among some role-players in the formulation of U.S. policy toward Chile was a positive development. It resulted from the establishment of a free-market

economic model and the expansion and diversification of Chilean foreign trade. However, the authoritarian government's persistent restriction of human rights, and the lack of political will to effectively move toward democratic reform, eventually forced the Reagan Administration to reconsider its foreign policy of openness toward Chile.

The second Reagan Administration formulated a more pragmatic foreign policy. In response to mounting fear of the potential polarization of Chilean society, as was occurring in Central America, and also in response to Chilean political elites' growing need to reinstate their historical political and institutional traditions, this second Reagan Administration mobilized its efforts and influence to promote an effective transition to democracy in Chile. This did not, however, prevent the U.S. government from supporting the Chilean regime's market-oriented economic policy, the renegotiation of its foreign debt, and multilateral credit to its economy. Subsequently, American foreign policy shifted to support democratic processes across the board.

During the Bush Administration, American decisionmakers in the Executive and Legislative branches of government were encouraged both by the consolidation of the democratic regime and the success of a free-market economy in Chile, as well as by the perception of a new opportunity to reinstate the historic Chilean model in the region. The peaceful transition to democracy in March 1990, the emergence of a moderate government in Chile, and

the end of the Cold War, in addition to the elements described above, opened a new and complementary perspective in bilateral relations. This more positive international environment increased the likelihood of mutual understanding and of political and economic agreements between Chile and the United States.

In June 1990, President Bush unveiled his Initiative for the Americas Program. It reflected a new American attitude toward Latin America based on the region's commitment to economic reform, freedom, and democracy. Considering Chile's early success in attaining the economic objectives outlined in the Initiative, and the political stability achieved during the democratic transition, Chile was well-positioned to be regarded as a potential economic partner in the hemisphere. The Chilean-North American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) joined the Chilean government and the national private sector to promote a bilateral free trade agreement. To this effect, in 1991, AMCHAM opened an independent office in Washington to coordinate the efforts of the private sector, Congress, and the Bush Administration. In fact, on the 14th of June, 1992, President Bush announced that after negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico, the U.S. should negotiate a Free-Trade Agreement with Chile.

Free-trade agreements, particularly NAFTA, may generate internal debates within the American political system, and many other issues may arise among sectors of U.S. society in the future. However, it is clear that American leaders once again

look upon Chile's as a model to be emulated by other countries in Latin America.<sup>10</sup>

### III. THE U.S. CONGRESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHILE

In the late sixties and early seventies, the U.S. foreign policy decision-making process underwent substantive changes. The equilibrium and modus vivendi existing between the Executive and the Legislative powers since World War II was eroded by the general dissatisfaction with the role the Executive played during the Vietnam War, and specifically with the Nixon Administration involvement in the Watergate scandal. The confrontation between the two branches of government culminated with the reaffirmation of the importance of the role of Congress in national security and foreign policy decision-making processes.<sup>11</sup>

Congress began to assume an active role in a broad spectrum of foreign policy matters, becoming a decisive and influential player and defining the range of options the Executive would consider in international affairs. Legislation passed by Congress in the early seventies restricted the Executive's power to send troops abroad in a crisis, and it also limited and monitored Executive authority in the following areas: the sale of arms, the conduct of foreign intelligence operations, and the provision of foreign assistance vis-a-vis human rights.

Beyond the breakdown of the balance and consensus between the Executive and the Legislative powers from an institutional point of view, the Congressional revolt would also be

characterized by internal turmoil. The proliferation of sub-committees, the increase of staff, the allocation of more resources to investigation, and generational changes within Congress generated a new force that reaffirmed Congressional authority to monitor, to restrict, and occasionally to block Executive initiatives.<sup>12</sup>

The War Powers Resolution, passed by Congress in November of 1973, represented the highest expression of the post-Vietnam era desire to prevent a similar situation in the future. It restricted the presidential prerogative to declare war and to send troops abroad, and it marked the dawn of co-determination in foreign affairs.

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1973 and its amendments reaffirmed the Congressional role in foreign military assistance and arms sales programs. The Act established that both would require Congressional approval and review; it forced the Executive branch to negotiate and compromise with the Legislative branch.

The intelligence community's abuse of power in matters of national security policy, best illustrated by the Watergate incident, prompted the Senate Select Committee to examine the Executive control over intelligence gathering efforts; this would result first in the Hughes-Ryan Amendment of 1974, and, later, in the Intelligence Oversight Act of 1980.

Congressional activism in U.S. foreign policy also reflected an era of change in American society. Various segments of the



society demanded increased participation and input in foreign affairs. These new and diverse interest groups were linked by domestic and international issues. They attempted to exercise pressure on the foreign affairs decision-making process through Congress. As a result, human rights and nuclear non-proliferation concerns, neglected by the Executive branch, were elevated to foreign policy objectives.<sup>13</sup>

During this period, the protection of human rights became an important component of Congressional foreign policy towards the Third World in general and towards Latin America in particular. From then on, human rights concerns had an impact on economic and military assistance, as well as on U.S. support of any petitioners' credit application to bilateral and multilateral development agencies.

To safeguard human rights, activist organizations in the U.S. mobilized their efforts and influence to create the basis of a new foreign policy through the publication of field studies, through educational and lobbying efforts in Congress, and, later, under the Carter Administration, through the U.S. Department of State bureaucracy.<sup>14</sup>

In 1973, Congress passed an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act; section 32 requested that the president deny aid to governments holding political prisoners. This marked the year when human rights issues became vitally important to American foreign aid programs. Congress took the leadership role in the protection of human rights; it developed and issued a significant

amount of reports and legislation about humanitarian concerns throughout the decade. However, it was not until the passage of the Foreign Assistance Act Amendment of 1976 that Legislative leadership reached its peak.

Section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1976 established the general guidelines that the U.S. government should follow to promote and stimulate respect for human rights and basic freedoms throughout the world, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and with the Constitutional tradition of the United States. At the same time, the Act required that, upon request, the Secretary of State submit a Report to Congress about U.S. assistance to any country, including information about the recipient government's human rights record. To oversee compliance, Congress created the position of Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. The Act also provided Congress with the means to suspend military assistance to any country known to violate human rights.

An additional provision of the Foreign Assistance Act reserved the Congress' right to direct American representatives in international financial organizations to support assistance only to countries which were not gross human rights violators. The same directive applied to the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), which insures American investments abroad.<sup>15</sup>

This preoccupation with international human rights protection had no parallel in the history of the United States. The fact that a significant liberal majority in the 94th Congress

ratified the passage of Section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act may be explained as a reaction to the Nixon-Ford administration, which ignored Congressional advice to deny military assistance to countries that were open human rights violators.<sup>16</sup>

What was the impact of the Chilean situation on the renewed role of Congress in foreign policy and on the resurgence of Congressional interest in humanitarian issues in the early 70's?

According to Mark Falcoff, a U.S. expert on Latin American Affairs, a series of synchronistic events prompted this widening Congressional role: the fall of the democratic government in Chile; the military government's human rights violations, which were perceived by Americans as reminiscent of Nazism; the beginning of the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam; and the Watergate affair and subsequent Nixon resignation.

All of the above contributed to a new political scenario, the "Vietnam syndrome," which has had a profound impact on American society. Chile's authoritarian regime became the target of widespread repudiation by other governments, akin to the opprobrium suffered by South Vietnam.<sup>17</sup>

Congressional preoccupation with Chilean events was also analyzed from the perspective of the Executive branch's past excesses in the Third World. Richard Fagen points out "...that victims of our sporadic, malevolent attention to the Third World can only hope that the worst excesses of the foreign policy

apparatus will be curbed by the legislators and citizens fed up with the politics of Watergate, Vietnam and Chile."<sup>18</sup>

Congressional investigations of human rights violations were initiated and developed based on concrete historical experiences with authoritarian regimes such as those of Greece, Brazil and Chile. The U.S. Congress, particularly the wing of the Democratic party represented by Senator Kennedy, became concerned with human rights violations and refugee assistance shortly after the Chilean military coup. According to Mark Schneider, former aide to Senator Edward Kennedy, who participated in a significant number of Senate-sponsored hearings, Congress was receptive to resolutions condemning repression in Chile and supportive of refugee assistance programs. The notion that "the State Department had not done enough to protect the life and safety of American citizens in Chile" further galvanized Congress.<sup>19</sup>

In September of 1973, shortly after the Chilean military coup, a subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. Senate, chaired by Senator Kennedy, was charged with the investigation of U.S. policy toward Chile. Human rights abuses, political refugees, and other humanitarian problems caused by the fall of the Allende Government were of primary concern. After hearing testimony from State Department officials and from numerous American citizens who had recently returned from Chile, the subcommittee decided to send a study mission to Chile in response to concerns "...not only over the end of Latin Americas's longest tradition in democratic rule, but also over

the human tragedy produced by the violent overthrow of the Allende Government...." <sup>20</sup> The mission included Ralph Dugan, former Ambassador to Chile; John Flank, former Director of Research and Analysis for the State Department's Latin American Intelligence and Research Bureau; and Mark Schneider, a member of the Kennedy staff.

The same subcommittee established the evaluation criteria used to assess U.S. policy toward Chile based on the human rights conditions in that country: "... particularly when the current military government receives both economic and military assistance from the United States." <sup>21</sup>

In 1974, based on the hearings of the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements (part of the Foreign Affairs Committee), which had investigated allegations of torture in Brazil and Chile, the House of Representatives formulated recommendations to Congress to oversee the international protection of human rights through the extension of the role of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Congressional hearings included testimony from individuals who were knowledgeable about the country concerned, from representatives of non-governmental organizations, and from government officials. When the democratically-elected government of Chile fell in 1973, the U.S. Congress held numerous hearings on human rights, particularly between 1973 and 1974. The members of the House of Representatives who played important roles in the area of human rights in Chile were: Donald M. Fraser, Chairman

of the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements; Dante B. Fascell, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs; and Tom Harkin, member of the House Committee on Banking. In the Senate, noteworthy players included Senator Edward Kennedy, Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Judiciary, and George McGovern and James Abourezk, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Throughout the seventies, Congressional sanctions against countries that systematically violated human rights focused on bilateral military assistance and economic aid. However, Senator Kennedy's efforts to cut all but humanitarian assistance to Chile reflected the extent of Congressional concern about Chilean events.

Nevertheless, it was not until 1976 that Congressional action materialized into specific policies with the passage of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1976. Both chambers of Congress adopted resolutions opposing military assistance and sales credits to Chile. The first resolution, in accordance with the new Section 502B of the Act, prohibited the use of government funds to provide military education and training to any Chilean citizen; the second resolution added a restriction to the economic assistance allocated to Chile from July 1976 until September 1977. This restriction was also in effect for all U.S. departments and agencies, including the Export-Import Bank, OPIC, and the Commodity Credit Corporation.<sup>22</sup>

The Carter Administration enforced the legislation approved by Congress in 1976 when it became necessary to exercise pressure on the Chilean military regime due to its repeated violations of human rights. This explains the economic and diplomatic sanctions that the U.S. government imposed on Chile in 1979, prompted by the Chilean government's refusal to extradite the military officers who had participated in the assassination of Orlando Letelier and René Moffit in Washington D.C. in September 1976. In response to the Chilean refusal to honor the U.S. Department of Justice extradition petition, the Carter Administration adopted a series of measures which included the prohibition of future credit agreements or warranties for American projects in Chile by the Export-Import Bank and OPIC. At the same time, all military credits and supplies to Chile were suspended.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, Congress consolidated its active role in the co-determination of American foreign policy. Notwithstanding shifting orientations in the Executive and Legislative branches of government, this new role became institutionalized in the next decades. Although the first Reagan Administration attempted to minimize human rights concerns, they continued to be a factor in the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

#### IV. CONGRESSIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF CHILEAN DEMOCRATIZATION

"Any initiatives originating from the U.S. Congress concerning human rights and democracy should have broad-based bipartisan support, including the endorsement of the Administration."<sup>24</sup>

In the early eighties, U.S. foreign policy toward Chile reflected different perceptions and behaviors in the Executive and Legislative branches of government and even diverse positions within Congress. Chile's return to democracy in the late eighties evolved as much from the desire of the majority of Chileans to determine their own destiny as from the bipartisan policy developed by the U.S. government to support the political liberation and democratic resurgence in Chile.

The first Reagan Administration hoped that a combination of quiet diplomacy and economic incentives would allow the military regime to open the democratic process. To this end, it initiated a rapprochement towards the authoritarian government in Chile. Reagan initially preferred to communicate directly and bilaterally about human rights issues and democratic concerns rather than through the public condemnations common during the previous Administration.

In the economic domain, the first Reagan Administration lifted the Congressional ban on credit to Chile. This ban had been imposed on international banking institutions (the Eximbank, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank) by the International Financial Institutions Act of 1977, which had



barred "... U.S. support for most such loans to countries with a pattern of gross human rights violations."<sup>25</sup>

Even though the Administration had changed its policy toward Chile, Congress continued to debate the problem of human rights and the need to maintain the restrictions and the bans on security programs and economic assistance to Chile. On behalf of Chilean military authorities, Jesse Helms requested the suspension of the 1976 Humphrey-Kennedy Amendment's ban on arms sales to Chile. The agreement reached in the Senate between Kennedy Democrats and moderate Republican Senators to block this suspension was seen as a reflection of Congressional concern.

The Congressional position on human rights in Chile was clearly described in Section 726 of the International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1981. This law specifically states that:

...security assistance to Chile is prohibited until the President certifies that the Government of Chile has improved its human rights record, that such assistance is in our national interest, that Chile is not aiding or abetting international terrorism, and that Chile has taken appropriate steps to cooperate to bring to justice by all legal means available in the United States or Chile those indicted by the United States Grand Jury in connection with the murders of Orlando Letelier and Rene Moffit.<sup>26</sup>

In this way, Congress reiterated the limitations within which the Executive could carry out its rapprochement to the Chilean military government. At the same time, it displayed its perceptions of and concerns about U.S. policy toward Chile. This requirement of the certification of improved of human rights in

Chile imposed by Congress would become the most important frame of reference used to evaluate the outcomes of the Administration's quiet diplomacy and progress toward democracy in Chilean society.

Nineteen eighty-five marks a turning point in U.S.- Chile relations. The mounting political polarization in Chile provoked by the military regime's repression of the opposition's demands for democratization prompted the U.S. Congress to exert new pressures on the military regime. These pressures materialized in economic sanctions against Chile through the use of U.S. veto power in international financial institutions.

Early that year, the Reagan Administration registered its protest against the state of siege imposed by the Chilean government by abstaining in the Inter-American Development Bank decision to grant additional credit to Chile. In turn, the House of Representatives passed a resolution calling for the reestablishment of democracy in Chile; it declared its support of the Chilean people in their efforts to restore traditional democratic institutions and human rights; and it urged the Chilean government to negotiate with the democratic opposition for a peaceful return to democracy. In section 2, it resolved that as long as Chile did not meet these guidelines, the United States must continue to deny military assistance as well as "...all forms of economic assistance to the Government of Chile..., and should oppose all loans and grants to Chile by the international financial institutions."<sup>27</sup>

Even though the resolution, introduced by representative Ted Weiss (D), did not have sufficient bipartisan support in Congress, it was an important sign of the growing sentiment against the Chilean military regime in Congress. Among some sectors of the Administration there was also a growing perception of the failure of quiet diplomacy in Chile; the Sub-secretary of State for Human Rights Affairs publicly declared his rejection of the human rights conditions in Chile.

Humanitarian organizations in the United States, working closely with their Chilean counterparts, played a significant role in bilateral relations. They were a determinant factor influencing Congressional perceptions and responses to the Chilean situation. For example, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) focused its efforts on lobbying multilateral financial organizations against granting credit to Chile.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the year, Congress expressed its support for a potential peaceful transition to democracy in Chile. It promoted efforts to establish a dialogue between the democratic opposition forces and the democratic sectors connected to the military regime. One outcome of this dialogue was U.S. support of the National Agreement toward the Transition to an Absolute Democracy in Chile.<sup>29</sup> This was a pivotal point in U.S. policy towards Chile. For the first time, after many years under an authoritarian regime, a real democratic alternative came to light. According to Mark Falcoff, it represented "...the best hope for a workable compromise" not only for the Chilean

democratic sectors, but also for a change in the U.S. government policy toward Chile.<sup>30</sup>

The National Agreement failed due to the terms and conditions established by the Chilean Political Constitution of 1980 and due to the personal involvement of General Pinochet, despite the efforts of diverse sectors of the political spectrum in Chile. Pinochet thought that his political and government objectives had not been met. Therefore, the political transition to democracy in Chile was delayed according to the stages outlined by the aforementioned Constitutional provisions. In the United States, Congress continued to debate the failure of quiet diplomacy in Chile, while the Executive's policy in Latin America ranged from an openly aggressive posture toward the Sandinista Government of Nicaragua to tolerance toward the Chilean military regime. Liberal sectors of Congress, attempting to influence the character of U.S. policy towards support of democracy in Chile, proposed a trade-off in their positions towards both authoritarian regimes.<sup>31</sup>

The Reagan policy shift away from its support of the Chilean regime was multifactorial. Contributing factors included Congressional pressure and the return to democracy in other South American countries, notably Haiti and the Philippines. By the end of 1986, the primary objective of U.S. policy toward Chile was the establishment of a democratic government.

Former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance articulates this change in U.S. policy, pointing out in 1986:

...moreover, U.S. policy toward Chile has begun to change. From the outset, the Reagan administration opposed a U.N. resolution condemning Chile for human rights abuses. In March 1986, however, the administration changed its position and sponsored its own resolution condemning Chile. Much credit must go to America's courageous Ambassador Harry Barnes, Jr., to Secretary of State George Schultz, and those members of Congress who have long pressed the Chilean government to restore respect for human rights and to hold early, free and fair elections.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, the Reagan Administration disregarded these changes in the area of human rights; it continued to support the Chilean economy under the military regime, particularly in the realm of the renegotiation of the Chilean foreign debt and also in the award of credits to Chile by multilateral banks.

The emerging bipartisan agreement to support the effective transition to democracy in Chile grew rapidly. The House of Representatives recognized the efforts of the White House to this effect: "[t]he administration's policy of criticizing Chile in international organizations, coupled with public statements supporting the restoration of democracy made by administration officials, have been largely well-received by the U.S. Congress and a great many Chileans, including opposition and human rights figures."<sup>33</sup>

This consensus among the Executive and Legislative branches of the American government would become more visible in 1987, when the Chilean military regime started formulating political laws and recognizing the legal existence of political parties who would participate in the national referendum in 1988. The call for a plebiscite in Chile elicited a great deal of official and

public attention in the U.S.; the Chilean military regime expressed its assurances that it would be a clean process and that the Chilean people would be able to freely exercise their right to vote.

In 1988, the U.S. House of Representatives held hearings on the Chilean plebiscite, providing a platform for humanitarian organizations to express their interest and concern through statements and petitions. In this forum, Cynthia Brown, Associate Director of Americas' Watch, urged Congress and the Administration to continue to monitor the political developments in Chile since "...it is our fear that this is going to be a violent year in Chile... that many things can change and many things can happen.... I think that the conditions that I have described ensure that the plebiscite will occur in a climate of intensive insecurity."<sup>34</sup> In mid-1988, Congress adopted a joint resolution which expressed the support of the United States "...for the restoration of full and genuine democracy in Chile and called upon the Government of Chile to take the steps necessary to assure that the will of the Chilean people [would be] freely, fully and accurately expressed in the upcoming plebiscite."<sup>35</sup>

Under intense scrutiny from national and international democratic forces, the plebiscite took place in October of 1988. Thus, for the first time since 1970, the Chilean people had the opportunity to exercise their right to vote and to self-determination. The referendum ratified the triumph of democratic

forces in opposition to the military regime; it called for the beginning of a real democratic transition process. The first stage of this process culminated in March of 1990 with the election of a civilian democratic government.

Throughout the long and traumatic road to the reestablishment of democracy in Chile, the political and social forces counted with the support of sectors of the U.S. Congress, non-governmental humanitarian organizations, and finally with the approval and support of the Reagan administration.

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED), proposed by Reagan a few years earlier and ratified by Congress to promote democracy around the world, played a significant role in the restoration of democratic traditions in Chile; it supported the electoral process and Chilean political parties. The NED worked closely with Chilean political players in areas such as civic education, public opinion polls, and political surveys; it contributed to the monitoring of the electoral process between 1988-90.<sup>36</sup>

Chile's return to democracy in the late eighties marked the dawn of new, more constructive bilateral relations. The U.S. no longer considered Chile a problem area in the region.

What real impact did the U.S. Congress' human rights and democracy policies have on Chile? It is evident that the constant preoccupation of sectors of Congress with the issues of human rights and democracy in Chile had a positive effect on the transformation of the Chilean political culture in the late

eighties. The bipartisan support for human rights, attained after numerous hearings, resolutions, and laws proposed by the U.S. Congress, succeeded in obtaining the support of the Republican Administration. This success persuaded Chilean political leaders of the importance which the U.S. gave to humanitarian issues and democracy in the formulation of American foreign policy. Thus, the support the Chilean people received from U.S. Congressmen and human rights groups during the military regime demonstrated from the beginning that "[t]he Chilean military authorities did not act with impunity, and that those who fought against the dictatorship in Chile were not alone in their objectives."<sup>37</sup>

The U.S. economic sanctions against Chile also promoted the democratization process. However, it is important to note that the final responsibility for the rebirth of democracy in Chile was due to the will and action of the Chilean people. "No one thought that these policies could have brought down the military regime; they were small steps and symbolic gestures in support of Chilean democracy, because symbolism is very important in U.S. foreign policy."<sup>38</sup> In other words, "[i]t was the hope of Congress to move from dictatorship to democracy in Chile."<sup>39</sup>

## V. CONCLUSIONS

"We see Chile as a political model for all of Latin America, because of its history, the steps it has taken, and for the economic measures it has adopted."



Chile's return to democracy in 1990 represented a challenge both for Chilean society and for the different actors within the U.S. political system who had supported Chile's political process.

In Chile, a national consensus emanated from the military regime's political repression and the high social costs exacted by drastic economic measures necessary to restructure the Chilean economy along market-oriented lines. From the U.S. perspective, Chile's return to democracy in 1990 had been the primary objective of a bipartisan policy formulated in the late eighties to advocate the absolute reestablishment of Chile's democratic government and institutions. U.S. assistance had centered on supporting the electoral processes and on giving technical and financial support to politicians, whether they supported or opposed the military regime.

During the presidential campaign of 1989, the American government declared its neutrality. It kept a low profile and refrained from interfering in either Chilean politics or in the evolving the transition to democracy. Upon the return to democracy, Chile regained its traditional image among political elites in the United States, particularly among those who had defended and promoted human rights and democracy since the beginning of the dictatorship.

From the time President Aylwin took office on March 11, 1990, he supported a political process to resuscitate and nurture Chilean democratic traditions and institutions. This political

renewal was grounded on a sound economic and social base. The leadership of the Aylwin administration has been predicated on rebuilding democracy throughout the country, on maintaining and enhancing the macroeconomic improvements registered during the former government, and on the sustained growth of the GNP, investment stimulus, export diversification, balanced fiscal accounts, and the reduction of the foreign debt.

The promise of Chilean democracy was tested in the context of the renewal of bilateral relations between the U.S. and Chile, which had been substantially damaged by the authoritarian regime. The new U.S. policy was both conscious and cautious of the political lines followed by the new democratic regime in Chile. Not surprisingly, it was particularly concerned with steps taken in support of human rights, with the strengthening of civilian over military authority, and with pending issues of the bilateral agenda.

The normalization of bilateral relations was a slow and incremental process. Issues inherited from the military regime were sensitive, as was the potential impact on the internal affairs of both countries.

In late 1990, in response to President Aylwin's efforts and successes in restoring human rights and consolidating democracy, President Bush reestablished the OPIC insurance of American investments in Chile and ratified its GSP status at GATT. At the same time, he approved the necessary certification to lift the Kennedy Amendment imposed by Congress in 1976.

In January 1992 the bilateral Bryan Commission ruled on the longstanding Letelier-Moffit affair. The commission ordered the Chilean government to pay financial compensation to the members of the Letelier-Moffit families; the Chilean government also agreed to proceed with the judicial investigation of the murders. Senator Richard Lugar stated, "We respect the work of the Commission, which has followed our country's legal process, and we are satisfied with its findings. We also appreciate the Chilean government responsiveness to our concerns on this matter."<sup>41</sup>

Since 1992, with the Chilean democratic process underway and critical bilateral issues resolved, the U.S.-Chile agenda focuses on economic issues. The Bush Administration's pronouncements encouraging Chile's expectation of establishing a Free Trade Agreement with the United States contributed to the resurgence of Chile's traditional image among the American political elite, which was enhanced by Chilean economic and democratic successes. All of these factors support Chile's aspiration to become the next partner in the North American Free Trade Agreement.<sup>42</sup>

Diverse sectors of the American political system concur in their perception of Chile as a successful country to be emulated in Latin America. Its thriving democratic and market-economic policies contribute to further democratic objectives in Latin America.<sup>43</sup> Others have pointed out that the current Chilean regime demonstrates "that it is possible to be successful in Latin America through democracy and a free market economy. Chile

has contributed to regional self-confidence, therefore it is the Latin American country best positioned to participate in NAFTA."<sup>44</sup> Lastly, there are some who see Chile as an economic model that supports the American democratic system. They support Chile's admittance into NAFTA as an example of the potential creation of market economies through democratic means in the Third World.<sup>45</sup>

A new consensus in the U.S. has encouraged both sectors of the political spectrum, those who supported the military regime and those who supported human rights and democracy in Chile, to seek a new relationship with Chile based on the market economy and the unfolding of democratic political processes.<sup>46</sup> U.S.-Chile relations have undergone substantial changes since 1990. Bilateral expectations of cooperation and exchange have surged in both countries' economic and political circles. However, Chilean aspirations to augment commercial and economic trade with the U.S. and to be included in the North American Free Trade Agreement may be delayed until the Clinton Administration gives clear signals to proceed with free trade policies in the region.

APPENDIX ATABLE NO. 1

Revised Fitzgibbon-Johnson index: U.S. image of political democracy in Latin America,<sup>1</sup> 1945-75; five key criteria<sup>2</sup>;

Country                      1945 1950 1955 1960 1965 1970<sup>3</sup>1975

Argentina	9	15	15	4	7	14	5
Bolivia	16	13	12	15	16	15	15
Brasil	12	6	4	6	10	17	16
Chile	3	2	3	3	2	2	18
Colombia	3	6	9	5	5	5	3
Costa Rica	2	4	2	2	1	1	1
Cuba	5	3	10	16	19	19	14
Rep. Dominicana	20	20	20	20	14	10	6
Ecuador	12	7	6	9	12	7	10
El Salvador	14	14	8	13	11	8	8
Guatemala	11	11	13	12	13	9	9
Haiti	19	17	14	18	20	20	20
Honduras	17	8	11	14	14	12	12
Mexico	7	9	5	7	6	6	14
Nicaragua	15	18	19	17	17	26	17
Panama	6	10	7	11	9	11	11
Paraguay	18	19	18	19	18	18	19
Peru	8	15	17	10	8	13	13
Uruguay	1	1	1	1	2	3	7
Venezuela	10	12	10	8	4	4	2

<sup>1</sup> Excludes Latin American respondents added to the survey beginning early 1970 to avoid methodological problems affecting earlier data.

<sup>2</sup> The five criteria are: 1) freedom of expression, 2) Free elections, 3) Freedom of political assembly, 4) An independent Judiciary, 5) Civilian supremacy.

<sup>3</sup> Based on Wilkie's calculations of the antecedents of Johnson's table 3204.

Source: Kenneth F. Johnson " Research Perspectives on the Revised Fitzgibbon-Johnson Index of the Image of Political Democracy in Latin America, 1945-1975" in Wilkie, James and Ruddle, Kenneth, Eds. Quantitative Latin American Studies. Los Angeles: University of California, 1977, p. 89.

## ENDNOTES

1. In this regard, it is important to mention the congressional investigations of the U.S. intelligence and covert actions in Chile. See: U.S. Senate, Covert action in Chile: 1963-1973 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975). In 1976, candidate Jimmy Carter, discussing human rights policies in a presidential debate with President Ford cites the Chilean case as an example of the human rights violations that the United States should prevent in Latin America.

See Schoultz, Lars, Human Rights and United States Policy Toward Latin America. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

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3. Falcoff, Mark, Modern Chile 1970-1989: A Critical History London: Transaction Publishers, 1989, p. 6.

4. Fagen, Richard R., "The United States and Chile: Roots and Branches", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 53, No. 2, January, 1975, p. 304.

For information about U.S. economic support and assistance to the Eduardo Frei government in Chile see also, Muñoz, Heraldo and Portales, Carlos, Una Amistad Esquiva: Las Relaciones de Estados Unidos y Chile. Santiago: Pehuen Editores, 1987, pp. 68-69.

5. U.S. Senate - Covert Action in Chile: 1963-1973, op.cit., p. 9

6. U.S. Senate- Covert Action, op.cit., pp.23-27. See also U.S. Senate Multinational Corporations and United States Foreign Policy (Hearings before the Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations of the Committee on Foreign Relations), United States Senate. 93rd. Congress, part 2, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973, pp. 542-543.

7. See Richard Fagen, op.cit. pp. 301-303
8. The deterioration of bilateral relations is reflected in the balance of trade: the dollar amount paid by Chile to import goods and services from the U.S. declined from \$158.9 millions of dollars to \$80.2 millions between 1970 and 1972. The value of U.S imports from Chile declined from \$350 millions to \$240.3 millions during that period. Source: Banco Central de Chile.  
  
From 1965-1970, the Eximbank granted Chile \$262.7 millions of dollars, as compared with \$4.7 millions granted between 1971-1973. Source: U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants and Assistance from International Organizations. Washington D.C.: Office of Public Affairs, Agency for International Development.
9. See Heraldo Muñoz, Las Relaciones Exteriores del Gobierno Militar Chileno Santiago: Las Ediciones del Ornitorrinco, 1986, p. 22.
10. Falcoff, Mark, "Chile is the Next Necessary Step in the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative", Latin American Outlook, Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Research, August, 1992. p. 1.
11. Nathan, James A., Oliver James K., Foreign Policy Making and the American Political System, Boston, Toronto: Little Brown & Co., 2nd ed., 1987, pp. 9-10.  
  
See also, Tower, John G., "Congress Versus the President: The Formulation and implementation of American Foreign Policy", Foreign Affairs, Winter 1981/82, p. 230.
12. Friedberg, Aaron L. "Is the United States Capable of Acting Strategically? Congress and the President" in Kegley, W. Jr. and Wittkopff, Eugene R., Eds. The Future of American Foreign Policy. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, pp. 104-105.
13. Destler, I. M., "Dateline Washington: Congress as Boss?" Foreign Policy No. 42, Spring 1981, p. 167.
14. Personal interview with Rachel Neild, Associate of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) on April 13, 1993, Washington D.C.
15. Buckley, William F., Jr., "Human Rights and Foreign Policy: A Proposal", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 58, No. 4, Spring 1980, pp. 785-787.

16. See Schoultz, Lars, op. cit., pp. 253-254.
17. Interview with Mark Falcoff, Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute on March 16, 1993, Washington D.C.
18. Fagen, Richard R., op. cit., p. 313.
19. Personal Interview with Mark Schneider, Former Aide to Senator Edward Kennedy, and former Deputy-Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, April 14, 1993, Washington D.C.
20. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Hearing before the Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees. 93rd. Congress, 2nd. session, July 23, 1974, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974, p. 1.
21. Ibid., p. 2
22. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations (Report No.94-1144) International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976. 94th Congress, 2nd. session, May 14, 1976. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976, p. 46-47.  
  
See also, U.s. Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (Report N94-876) International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976-1977. 94th Congress, 2d. session, May 14, 1976. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976, p. 56.
23. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. Economic Sanctions Against Chile, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981.
24. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights and the Prospects for Democracy in Chile, Report of a Staff Study Mission to Chile, November 28-December 7, 1987. 100th Congress, 2nd. Session, July 1988. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988, p.17.
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34. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Hearings and Markup before the Committee on Foreign Affairs and its Subcommittee on Human rights and International Organizations and on Western Hemisphere Affairs. 100th Congress, 2nd. Session, April 12, May 17, July 28, August 2, and 3, 1988. Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, p.75.
35. U.S. Congress, House of representatives, H. Joint Resolution 620. 100th Congress, 2nd. Session, July 14, 1988.
36. Personal interview with Sally A. Shelton, Former Founding Board Member of the National Endowment for Democracy, April 19, 1993, Washington D.C.
37. Personal interview with Mark, L. Schneider, April 14, 1993, Washington D.C.

38. Personal interview with Vic Johnson, Staff Director - Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, House of Representatives, U.S. Congress, April 14, 1993, Washington D.C.
39. Personal interview with Vince Sinfuentes, Legislative Assistant to Senator Paul S. Sarbanes, U.S. Senate, April 13, 1993.
40. Statement made by Bill Richardson (D), New Mexico during his visit to Santiago, Chile. See El Mercurio, May 14, 1990, p. C 3. (The translation is mine).
41. Statement made by Senator Richard Lugar during his visit to Santiago, El Mercurio, January 17, 1992. (The translation is mine).
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45. Personal interview with Mark Schneider, April 14, 1993, Washington D.C.
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