

SOUTH AMERICA

# 'We hope it's over'

\*REGIMES, FROM 1L

ing action is being taken to erase lingering vestiges of authoritarian rule.

In June, Argentina's Supreme Court declared unconstitutional laws granting amnesty to low-ranking officers charged with human rights abuses, opening the gates for a possible deluge of prosecutions in a country where as many as 30,000 people died or disappeared during military rule.

In neighboring Uruguay, President Tabaré Vazquez, a longtime opponent of his country's former military government, is allowing the extradition of ex-military officers to other countries to face charges of human rights abuses.

## CHANGES IN CHILE BOLD MOVES ILLUSTRATE FADING MILITARY POWER

Perhaps the most dramatic changes are taking place in Chile, where the regime of Gen. Augusto Pinochet executed or made vanish about 3,000 people after seizing power.

On Tuesday, Chile's Congress is expected to pass long-awaited reforms to its Pinochet-era constitution, allowing, for the first time since the return of democracy, presidents to remove top military commanders and doing away with senatorial posts filled by designees from police and armed forces.

For South Americans who grew up under dictatorships, such bold moves to hold the armed forces accountable for past abuses and to throw out rules that protected members of collapsing dictatorships illustrate an unmistakable shrinking of military influence. "With these reforms, we are closing the book on this history," said Claudio Díaz Uribe, a Chilean attorney appointed by his country's Justice Ministry to help revamp its legal system. "People realize if we're really a democratic country, it's not right to have people in power who are not elected."

Representatives of the Argentine and Chilean armed forces said everyone from top officers to the rank-and-file accepted their diminished powers under civilian leadership.

"The armed forces understand their role in a democratic republic," said Argentine army Lt. Col. Gustavo Adolfo Tamaño. "We see the United States as the model we want to follow. We are outside the political process."

About the human rights prosecutions, Tamaño said, "What happened in the past were police actions defending the state from terrorism being committed against it. But all this will be resolved in the courts. We are walking the road to a definitive solution to all of this."

Chilean army Maj. Elizabeth Richardson said her branch of the military has integrated well into civil society since the Pinochet era. "We are professional soldiers now," she said. "We are soldiers who work for an army that is not politicized."

Only in Uruguay has the military resisted some moves to hold it accountable for past crimes. Army chief Angel Bertolotti has publicly opposed moves to extradite six ex-officers to Chile to face charges that they had protected the killers of a Chilean chemist.

## ATTITUDES CHANGING 'PEOPLE WANT TO SEE JUSTICE'

The current picture stands in stark contrast to the continent's political map a few decades ago.

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## AFTER THE REGIMES

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### COLOMBIA

In 1953 a military coup brought Gen. **Gustavo Rojas Pinilla** to power. He was overthrown by the military in 1957 with the backing of both political parties, and a provisional government was installed.

### VENEZUELA

Following the death of Juan Vicente Gómez in 1955, political struggles eventually forced the military to withdraw from direct involvement in national politics in 1958. Since then, Venezuela has had democratically elected leaders — including current President Hugo Chávez.

### BOUTERSE

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### ECUADOR

Military leaders overthrew José María Velasco Ibarra in 1972, and Gen. **Guillermo Rodríguez Lara** took power and began to rule as dictator. In 1976, the military, however, removed Rodríguez Lara from office and took control of the government. Ecuador returned to democracy in 1979 with the election of Jaime Roldos, who led a new reformist coalition government.

### BRAZIL

In 1964, President Joao Goulart was overthrown by a military coup backed by the CIA, and a military regime lasted 21 years. In 1985, Tancredo Neves, who had been minister of justice in the 1950s, was elected president in an indirect election as the nation returned to civilian rule. He died before being sworn in, and the elected Vice President José Sarney was sworn in as president in his place.

### PERU

The most recent period of military rule (1968-1980) began when Gen. **Juan Velasco Alvarado** overthrew elected President Fernando Belaúnde Terry; Gen. **Francisco Morales Bermúdez** replaced Velasco in 1975. A constitutional assembly was created in 1979, and Morales Bermúdez presided over the return to civilian government in accordance with a new constitution drawn up that year. In the 1980 elections, Terry was returned to office.

### PARAGUAY

The 35-year military dictatorship of **Alfredo Stroessner** — who was re-elected president seven times, with the support of the military and the Colorado Party — was overthrown in a coup headed by Gen. **Andrés Rodríguez**, the Colorado Party candidate, in 1989; Rodríguez easily won the presidency in elections held that year, and elections have been held since, but the Colorado Party still rules.

### BOLIVIA

From 1964 through the 1970s, control of the government changed hands repeatedly, mostly after revolts by military officers. In 1982, the military allowed the return to civilian government, when, 22 years after his first term of office ended (1956-60), **Hernán Siles Zuazo** again became president.

### URUGUAY

In 1968, President Jorge Pacheco Areco declared a state of emergency; that was followed by a further suspension of civil liberties in 1972 by his successor, President Juan María Bordaberry. After the military seized power in 1973, Uruguay soon had the highest per capita percentage of political prisoners in the world. In 1984, massive protests against the dictatorship broke out; elections were held, and Colorado Party leader Julio María Sanguinetti won the presidency, serving 1985-1990.

### CHILE

After the military led by Gen. **Augusto Pinochet** seized power from socialist President Salvador Allende in 1973, Chile was ruled by a military regime that lasted until 1990. In 1980, after a single-candidate presidential plebiscite that was mandated in a new constitution, Pinochet became president for an eight-year term, but in 1988, he was denied a second term. Patricio Aylwin, the candidate of a coalition of 16 political parties, served as president from 1990 to 1994.

### ARGENTINA

The most recent period of dictatorship, 1976-1983, was led by a military junta — Gen. **Jorge Videla**, Adm. **Emilio Massera** and Gen. **Orlando Agosti**. Experts estimate that the military governments imprisoned, tortured and executed about 30,000 people without trials. The British victory in the Falklands war and the country's economic woes were among the factors that forced the military to call free elections. In 1983, voters elected Radical Civic Union leader Raúl Alfonsín president.

Source: www.wikipedia.org; Herald files

Even after countries shed their military rulers, elected leaders were often reluctant to reopen old wounds and nullify laws that protected the armed forces, said Chilean Deputy Patricio Hales, an ally to President Ricardo Lagos.

"In my opinion, in the first five to six years of democracy in Chile, we moved much more slowly than we should have," Hales said. "People were reluctant to challenge the military."

Attitudes began changing after Spanish Judge Baltazar Garzón persuaded British authorities in 1998 to arrest Pinochet during a medical visit to London so the former dictator could stand trial for human rights violations, said Julio Burdman, an Argentine political analyst.

That example, coupled with the rise of left-leaning governments in the region, turned the tide against military leaders, Burdman said.

In South America, Argentine President Néstor Kirchner set the trend by making the prosecution of dictatorship-era abuses a central part of his political agenda.

Chilean and Argentine judges since have regularly issued indictments against

military leaders, emboldening human rights groups to publicize new cases and demand harsher punishments. "Now, the idea that there were crimes against humanity that were not punished enough is a consensus," Burdman said. "Public opinion is people want to see justice."

Even former supporters of military leaders have been publicly criticizing them.

Speaking from her middle-class Santiago house, Mónica Wehrhahn, for years Pinochet's personal camerawoman, said she believed the dictator tried to better the country but left a tainted legacy. She said she was especially angered by recent revelations that Pinochet stashed millions of dollars in the U.S.-based Riggs Bank.

"He's someone I still love but whom I feel pain about now," she said. "I feel our loyalty was converted into a kind of servility."

## JUSTICE AND TRUTH 'WE DON'T HAVE A FULL DEMOCRACY YET'

For some, the recent prosecutions and reforms are only the first steps.

Hales said, for example,

Chilean legislators still need to strengthen government powers to investigate past abuses and revamp a military-era system that he said places inordinate power with the executive branch.

"We don't have a full democracy yet," Hales said. "The transition to democracy isn't finished yet. It's finishing."

Relatives of those killed or disappeared by military regimes are also demanding more reforms, said Rosa Tarlovsky de Roisinblit, vice president of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, an Argentine group representing such relatives.

Thoroughly investigating military abuses and aggressively prosecuting those responsible are crucial steps to completing the transition to democracy, said Tarlovsky, 78. Her then-pregnant daughter, Patricia Julia, was arrested in 1978, never to be seen again.

On July 24, thousands gathered in Buenos Aires to bury the bodies of three founding members of another relatives group, Madres de Plaza de Mayo.

"I need to know what happened," Tarlovsky said. "It's not about revenge. I just want justice and truth."

## VENEZUELA AND CHINA

# In ideology, oil, 2 nations find common ground

■ The ideological journeys of China and Venezuela seem to have brought the two together at a time when one needs energy resources and the other wants energy partners.

BY STEVEN DUDLEY  
sdudley@herald.com

CARACAS — These days, it seems as if China and Venezuela are moving toward the same point but from opposite ends of a vast ocean.

China is the socialist state that has a thriving industrial sector and is embracing elements of capitalism; Venezuela is the capitalist country with massive oil reserves that is starting to talk more and more of socialism.

Their ideological journeys seem to have brought the two together at a time when one is in need of energy resources and the other is looking for new energy partners. And the results of this emerging relationship could influence the global balance of power for decades to come.

The partnership has already begun with promises to build energy infrastructure in China and develop social projects in Venezuela. The Venezuelan government has said it would like to double economic traffic between the two nations and hit \$3 billion by next year.

Fittingly, the deal is being consummated with a journey over the sea. In May, the first tanker with 1.8 million barrels of crude left Venezuela for China — part of a Caracas pledge to supply 30,000 barrels per day to China's starving market.

## DIVERSIFICATION

Critics say this Venezuelan effort to diversify its roster of clients makes for short-term folly because its natural customer is the much-closer United States, while supporters argue it makes long-term sense because China's market promises a much bigger appetite in the years to come.

In the end, it may be a bit of both. Chinese trade to Latin America has boomed in recent years. Even if, as a recent Goldman Sachs report indicated, it hasn't been wholly positive for the region — especially for local textile markets in Mexico and Central America — it has opened up new possibilities, in particular for countries with vast natural resources like Venezuela.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has made no secret of his intentions to increase oil exports to China, a country he lauds as he pulls his country toward socialism. Chávez visited China in January and signed several letters of intent to exchange capital and open up the Venezuelan oil market for Chinese exploration and production projects, as well as develop natural gas fields and upgrade petrochemical plants.

Chávez — a self-described socialist who has begun to create state-run industrial projects and appropriate private lands — has also openly stated that he is seeking to break Venezuela's dependence on U.S. purchases.

Venezuela sends the United States 60 percent of the estimated 2.6 million barrels per day it produces. China represents the new frontier for his country's most important product — oil is half of Venezuela's GDP.

"We have been producing and exporting oil for more than 100 years, but they have been years of dependence on the United States," Chávez said in January.

"Now we are free and we make our resources available to the great country of China," he added, making no effort to hide his admiration for the Beijing model.

On the surface, it makes little economic sense for Venezuela to begin shifting crude exports toward Asia. Demand for crude remains steady in the U.S. market, which oil

tankers can reach in just five days. There is a large refining network, including that of Venezuelan state-oil company PDVSA's downstream arm, Citgo, in the United States, which can handle the heavy crude that accounts for much of Venezuelan exports.

China, on the other hand, is 45 days away. Some analysts estimate that in transportation alone, Venezuela would be losing between \$5 and \$10 per barrel compared to shipments to the United States.

"It doesn't make any sense," said Alberto Bernal, an analyst with the Singapore-based IDEAglobal. "But it doesn't seem to matter to him because [Chávez] is crazy. He has a utopic way of looking at things."

## 'GEOPOLITICAL WEAPON'

Chávez does often see economic policies through a political lens. He has even called oil "a geopolitical weapon." He is providing Cuba and many other Caribbean nations with heavily subsidized oil to win allies, and is seeking to increase oil ties to natural competitors like Brazil and Argentina.

The government has also expressed interest in selling pieces of Citgo, claiming the company is subsidizing the Bush administration. And while demand for crude in China is rising tremendously, China currently does not have the refining technology to deal with Venezuelan heavy crude.

Analysts believe it would be Venezuela and not China, who would take the loss on this deal.

"It seems very clear that they are willing to relinquish some of the economic value," said Alberto Ramos, a senior analyst on Latin America for Goldman Sachs, referring to the Venezuelans. "It follows more of a political rationality, than an economic rationality."

The Venezuelan government, however, look at this as a golden opportunity to diversify the country's market and make friends with a more ideologically similar atuned counterpart.

A high-level PDVSA official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak publicly to the media, told The Herald that analysts are making short-term assumptions about a long-term project with a partner that has massive potential for continued growth.

He also said PDVSA would swap oil — a practice of trading products with third parties, in this case Russia, Indonesia, and Australia — rather than shipping all the oil across the Pacific. He added that Venezuela was not going to cut the United States out as a buyer.

"The United States looks to diversify its buyers and sellers. Why shouldn't we?" he said.

## WIN-WIN SITUATION?

Indeed, analysts say both the United States and Venezuela could stand to diversify their markets and create what Goldman Sachs' Ramos calls a "win-win" situation.

"In the end, we have to see this from a macro-oil perspective," he said. "If there's a shortage in one place, there will be a surplus somewhere else. So it's not anything to be scared about."

Still, there are question marks, not least of which is the health of Venezuela's oil industry. For exports to China to make economic sense, Venezuela would have to increase production. But currently the country, and in particular PDVSA, seems to be going in the opposite direction.

"It's not a good idea to use China to replace the American market right next door, especially if you don't have a policy to expand production," said Alberto Quirós, a former Shell and PDVSA executive. "Without this, it's neither realistic nor economic."

Herald special correspondent Phil Gunson contributed to this report.