

**Session 14: The Transition to Democracy in Chile and Elsewhere**

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**Chile: The Old Regime and Re-Democratization**

**After the coup....**

Ruling junta

- Pinochet, representing Army (53,000 troops)
  - declares political hiatus
  - return of law and order
- Gustavo Leigh, representing Air Force (11,000 troops)
  - U.S.-trained
  - strident anti-Marxist
- José Merino, representing Navy
  - British tradition
  - Moderate
  - emphasizes Allende's personal responsibility
- César Mendoza, representing *carabineros* (35,000)
  - thuggish, dumb, and politically unsophisticated
- Rule by consensus, though Pinochet is *primus inter pares*

Military government

- Mostly military cabinet; two civilians
  - Army gets Interior Ministry and thus intelligence services
  - Economy to right-wing economists
  - Civil service to Christian Democrats
- 28 officers appointed to administer government at regional level

Relatively rapid military control over country

- little armed resistance

Regime proves very hard to dislodge

- impervious to domestic and foreign pressure
- transition occurs faster than Pinochet hoped, but on his schedule
- lots of authoritarian enclaves persist in new democratic system

## Consolidation of personalistic dictatorship

Pinochet gradually emerges as personalistic ruler, 1973-77 How?

- Intelligence agencies
  - Decree 521 fuses service intelligence agencies into a new agency, the DINA
  - Juan Manuel Contreras appointed as its head
  - Reports to Chief of Staff of Defense Ministry, later placed under the SENDET (Secretaría Ejecutiva Nacional de Detenidos)
  - In reality, reports directly to Pinochet
  - Used to crack down on all civilian political opponents and potential rivals
  - Murders of intel chief Augusto Lutz and Gen. Oscar Bonilla (March 1975) inside military
  - Murders of Prats (September 24, 1974) and Letelier abroad
  - Links with Patria y Libertad, Italian neofascists, anti-Castro Cubans
  - Operation Condor (collaboration among militaries in Southern Cone)
  - Rivalry with Comando Conjunto (Air Force), which targets Communists
  - Pinochet uses status as head of largest branch of the services to consolidate executive power
- Army-dominated advisory board recommends President be appointed
  - Decree 527 designates Pinochet as President (June 24, 1974)
  - rest of junta is legislature
  - Pinochet now controls state apparatus; reshuffles Cabinet repeatedly
  - Pinochet places economic policy in the hands of civilians
  - Nationalized properties, mostly bankrupt, sold off (many to former owners)
  - "Chicago Boys"
  - Strict austerity measures and emphasis on reduction of inflation
  - Massive economic shrinkage in 1975 (16.6%), then recovery
  - Rapid trade liberalization over objections of business sector
  - Bourgeoisie goes along because of Allende experience
  - Civil service turned over to Christian Democrats
- Pinochet uses his post as head of army to control that branch
  - Pinochet carefully controls army appointments and promotions
  - 1976 decree allows promotion past mandatory retirement age
  - Continued isolation and pampering of officer corps
  - July 24, 1978 Gustavo Leigh (Air Force) is removed from junta;

## Legitimation of the regime

Regime is now in full control of country, but it faces the need for legitimation at home and abroad

- Excoriated in every international forum
- Terrible relations with neighbors
  - Near-war with Argentina over worthless real estate
- Initially, right-wing civilian advisors as propagandists
  - Corporatist, synarchist, quasi-fascist vision
  - This is not going to do it

By the end of 1977, regime is consolidated but lacks legitimacy and *raison d'être*

- In 1977, DINA plants bombs in capital to give appearance of terrorist threat
- This doesn't go over very well
- On 8/13/77, DINA restructured as CNI

Possibility for future reform limited by authoritarian enclaves written into the Constitution, by conservative control of courts and central bank, and by threat of a military coup

- "The day they touch any of my men will be the end of the rule of law" (Augusto Pinochet)

Pinochet regime lasts longer than most bureaucratic authoritarian regimes in Latin America. Four main reasons:

- o regime is controlled by Pinochet himself; fewer divisions in regime; others had preferred to turn over power to civilians earlier
- o Economy does well
- o Little corruption
- o As a result of 2-3, plus Allende experience, business goes along with regime

What is state of democracy in Chile now?

- Marta Lagos, Chilean pollster (Latinobarametro) asked people in different Latin American countries four questions:
  - o % who agree with statement "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government"
  - o Percent who report being "very satisfied or fairly satisfied" with the way democracy works in Chile
  - o Percent who say they would be willing to defend democracy if it were under threat
  - o Percent who considered democracy to be fully established (rather than "there are still things to be done for there to be full democracy")
- Chile, answers are 54%, 27%, 53%, and 10%

Overall average of first three is 44.7%, one of lowest in hemisphere (only Mexico and Guatemala were lower, and this was before democratic transition in Mexico)

### **Consolidation of Pinochet's rule**

1977-80	National and international acceptance of regime Public relations upgrade Links to Israel, Taiwan, U.S. and U.K. after conservative triumphs Economic meltdown in 1980, but recovery and strong performance
after	
January 4, 1978	Pinochet orchestrates referendum against United Nations; 75% support
September 8, 1979	Non-aggression pact signed with Bolivia and Peru
August 10, 1980	New Constitution; calls for plebiscite on return to civilian rule in 1988

### **Democratic transition in Chile**

1983	Parties resurface; labor movement weakened by high unemployment
December 1987	Chileans begin to register for referendum
August 1988	Pinochet named candidate; two of four junta members opposed
1988	Opposition unites to contest plebiscite Plebiscite held; reasonably fair despite some intimidation and fraud <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communists agree not to disrupt through street demonstrations</li><li>• Pinochet loses(55% to 43%); very surprised and enraged</li><li>• 97% of registered voters (92% of eligible population)</li><li>• Other services announce results; they support "legality"</li></ul>

- 1989 Presidential campaign; opposition gets some key media time  
Opposition again able to unite behind single presidential candidate  
By now, threat of leftist violence or revolution has receded
- December 15, 1989 Opposition alliance, representing left and center, wins
- |                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Patricio Aylwin:            | 55% |
| Hernán Buchi:               | 29% |
| Francisco Javier Errázuriz: | 14% |
- Pinochet remains Commander-in-Chief  
Most of economic model retained
- March 11, 1990 Pinochet's last day in office
- 1990 Congressional elections
- 1997 Pinochet retires from Army command; becomes Senator-for-Life
- 1998 Arrested in Great Britain on orders of Spanish judge

### What happened in Latin America?

We touched briefly on the authoritarian regimes that dominated much of Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. For the most part, these were military dictatorships. Many had come to power in response to a perceived leftist threat (Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, El Salvador, etc.) and were clearly aligned with more conservative forces in society. That is, they opposed labor unions, popular organizations, and even middle-class reformist groups; they tended to favor. However, there was often tension between military regimes and economic elites (whether landowners or members of the business class), and these tensions were greater where military governments adopted socially reformist agendas themselves (e.g., Peru and Ecuador).

- Why would there be such tensions?

In the 1980s and 1990s, these regimes were swept away by a hemisphere-wide wave of democratization. (Handout Transitions from Authoritarian Rule)

- Economic downturn
- Mass disgust with human rights violations during the period of dictatorship
- Changing international attitudes toward democracy
- Worries about corrupting armed forces (professional institution)
  - Military-as-government vs. military-as-institution

Pinochet regime lasts longer than most bureaucratic authoritarian regimes in Latin America.

- Economy does well
- Little corruption
- As a result, plus Allende experience, business goes along with regime

Despite some reversals (Peru, Haiti, Venezuela) every country in Latin America except Cuba had a democratically elected government by the end of the 1990s.

This obviously raises the question of what is democracy

- Some scholars adhere to minimalist definitions of democracy that focus on elections. According to this line of reasoning, regimes that hold regular, free, fair, and inclusive elections are democracies.

- Although “electoralist” definitions of democracy have enjoyed a degree of currency in recent years, many eminent scholars have argued that the essence of democracy is not any particular set of (electoral) institutions. Rather, they argue, democracy consists of the practical approximation of a set of principles – variously defined as the balance of majority rule with minority rights, the combination of political contestation and popular participation, the timely translation of citizens’ preferences into public policies, and the accountability of rulers to the ruled. All of these principle-based definitions reflect the notion that public policy in a democratic system is supposed to reflect the wishes and demands of its citizens. From this perspective, then, democracy is a political system that successfully puts into practice the principle of popular self-governance.
- Elections just one tools
- Often, elections in themselves fail to provide political accountability.
- **WHY?**
  - Repression and radical inequalities in campaign resources (media coverage, campaign financing, etc.) may constrain competition.
  - Fear and coercion, rather than popular volition, may determine voters’ choices.
  - Suffrage restrictions, gerrymandering, fraud, and other failings may unfairly bias the electoral playing field in favor of certain contenders.
  - In addition, leaders who have been chosen in free and fair elections may not be able to exercise power as the citizens who elected them had expected.
    - For instance, unelected and unaccountable actors (military officers, property-owners, mafiosi, etc.) may exercise informal vetoes over certain policy arenas.
    - In addition, corruption and bureaucratic inertia might retard or warp policy implementation, thus preventing duly enacted laws from actually taking effect.

Often, problems like these make political systems based on regular elections something less than democratic. Precisely for this reason, many Latin American countries fall into the gray zone between democracy and authoritarianism.

- You’re a dictator and you’re giving up power. You have to produce something that looks like a democracy, but want to retain as much influence as you can.
  - Electoral system: appointment of legislators, gerrymandering, electoral rules, campaign finance, distribution of media
  - Policy making: carve out spheres of autonomy; example: economic policy
  - Policy implementation: pack bureaucracy, courts
- All the outgoing regimes are playing this game, with varying degrees of success

Pinochet regime best at it

- Possibility for future reform limited by authoritarian enclaves written into the Constitution, by conservative control of courts and central bank, and by threat of a military coup
- “The day they touch any of my men will be the end of the rule of law” (Augusto Pinochet)
- Authoritarian enclaves in Chilean case
  1. Electoral rules
  2. Senators (appointed and for life)
  3. Internal military autonomy; 10% of copper; CINC
  4. Central Bank autonomy
  5. Supreme Court and lower courts
  6. Media cartelized in friendly, private hands

What is state of democracy in Chile in late 1990s?

- Marta Lagos, Chilean pollster (Latinobarametro) asked people in different Latin American countries four questions:
  - % who agree with statement "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government"
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### **One big challenge is dealing with old regime—whether to punish?**

What happened in Brazil? (Wendy Hunter)

- Civilians really bided their time
- Appears to have worked, for the most part
- Military budgets cut, military industries privatized; military less of a political player than ever before in Brazil
- One thing they didn't get, and will never get, is punishment for abuses committed under their regime

Chile, now seem to be getting it all

### **What is democracy? Democratization? Is Chile Democratic?**

What is democracy?

- Discuss "accountability"
- Present "democratic chain"

What is democratization?

- Obvious answer: Becoming more democratic
- Helpful to think in terms of three stages
  - Breakdown of old authoritarian institutions
  - Crisis/decision
  - Consolidation on new (democratic) institutions
- Consolidation: norms become widely shared and generally endorsed
- Democratization of partial regimes
  - Process of breakdown, crisis, and consolidation in each element of political system (electoral system, policy-making, etc.)

Incomplete democratization

- New institutions aren't consolidated
  - Accepted on contingent basis
  - Shallow roots
- New institutions aren't really democratic
  - Mix of old and new
  - Some areas of the country but not others (e.g., U.S. South)
- **How would you cook this system? You're a dictator and you're giving up power. You have to produce something that looks like a democracy, but want to retain as much influence as you can.**

- Electoral system: appointment of legislators, gerrymandering, electoral rules, campaign finance, distribution of media
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### **Main patterns of democratization**

Variation in completeness

- Paraguay and Guatemala to Chile
- Collapse in some places (Venezuela)

Mexico on its own trajectory

- No military regime; military not a political player since 1950s
- Long history of one-party rule instead
- Opposition from both Right and Left
- Democratization focused on elections, parties
- Gradual process of electoral reform, eventually opposition victory
- Still lots of authoritarian enclaves; Left feels shut out

General decline in state capacity with democracy, at least at first and in sphere of rule of law

- Brazilian policing
- Mexican policing

Attitudes

- First, countries like Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Argentina – generally regarded as the most democratic countries in the hemisphere – score highest on perceptions of democracy and on the values that are normally associated with democratic governance. In fact, their scores are roughly equivalent to those of European countries that have recently made the transition to democracy (such as Spain). Countries like Mexico, Chile, Brazil, and Guatemala -- whose transitions have been incomplete and partial -- score less well.
- Second, people in virtually every country perceive a tremendous gap between how democracy should work and how it actually works in practice. In other words, they endorse democratic values but remain deeply dissatisfied with what democracy has produced so far. In large measure, these figures probably reflect the economic hardship many Latin Americans have experienced over the last two decades, as well as serious governance-related problems – corruption, crime, and social inequality -- that have persisted under democratic regimes.

Different from earlier “waves”?

- Full suffrage (not in Andean countries before)
- Civil society
- Discrediting of military rule
- International context
  - Absence of Cold War; change in U.S. foreign policy
  - Discrediting of Marxism
  - Generalized democratization; rough international consensus
- First cohort of leaders more conservative; leftists and indigenous leaders then emerge