

The ‘Lessons’ of Dictatorship: Political Learning and the Military in Chile

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This article argues that political learning with regard to civil-military relations in Chile has proved an obstacle to democratization. In the postauthoritarian period, both the armed forces and political parties have referred to history when considering civil-military reform, especially with regard to how to avoid a repeat of the conflict of the *Unidad Popular* period. Meanwhile, the military also utilizes the Spanish example when resisting changes it feels are inimical to its interests. The ‘lessons’ each takes from the past directly influence political strategies and the overall result is that while civilian rule continues, democratic civil-military relations are not necessarily advanced.

Keywords: Chile; Spain; Military Dictatorship; Augusto Pinochet; Civil-Military Relations; Political Learning

Introduction

In Chile, like any country with a recent history of authoritarian rule, the effects of dictatorship do not fade quickly. The past is certainly prologue, but how does it affect democratization specifically? Political actors look to the past for ‘lessons’ but to what degree does that determine political strategies? This article will argue that political learning with regard to civil-military relations has proved an obstacle to democratization in Chile. In the postauthoritarian period, both the armed forces and civilian political parties refer to history with the stated goal of achieving current and future political stability. Moreover, the armed forces consider not only the past in Chile, but in Spain as well.¹ The overall result is that

1 This should not be taken to mean that Spain represents the *only* foreign example for the Chilean military, especially since neighboring countries had already begun the process of democratic transition. Instead, the argument here is that the Spanish process of civil-military reform was the *primary* example with which Chilean officers were concerned.

while civilian rule continues, a democracy 'without adjectives' is not necessarily advanced.²

Transitions from authoritarian rule, of course, do not occur in a temporal vacuum. They often take place within a context of contested collective memory, particularly when the breakdown of civilian rule and subsequent authoritarian regime employed high levels of violence. Different political actors offer diverse explanations of past events, and contestation is even more pronounced when that violence was relatively recent. The term 'political learning' refers to 'the process through which people modify their political beliefs and tactics as a result of severe crises, frustrations, and dramatic changes in environment' (Bermeo, 1992: 274). In countries emerging from dictatorial rule, those crises refer to the upheaval occurring in the context of extreme political conflict. In Chile, whether one is an officer or a civilian, the political lessons revolve around the 1973 coup and its violent aftermath, as both sides make interpretations and seek to ensure that such events never reoccur. The past is thus used to formulate political strategies in civil-military relations.

How propitious for democracy is that 'learning'? The specific effects of history can be difficult to measure, especially since historical memory will be perceived differently by political actors. This article bases its interpretations on personal interviews, public statements, and secondary sources. Members of political parties, like military officers or any other political actors, do not maintain identical perceptions over time, and certain sectors of any group may disagree on specific issues. Nonetheless, in a number of ways political actors have made clear their version of past events and the ways in which those perceptions directly affect their subsequent political attitudes and strategies.

This article focuses on the Chilean military and political parties: the Christian Democrats, the Party for Democracy (PPD), the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, National Renovation (RN), and the Independent Democratic Union (UDI). Of course, these parties all view history in diverse ways. The emphasis is on the nature of their ideas about civil-military relations, with an eye toward what lessons they appear to have learned. Such lessons will greatly affect behavior, since they will be based on strongly held views of how past actions affected political outcomes.

Political parties are important carriers of historical memory, especially when they have existed for many years (Pridham, 2000: 45). They discuss the past, interpreting events and their own reactions; they convey ideas about the past and subsequent policy conclusions to their constituents; and they utilize all of these in the political arena to obtain specific political outcomes. Parties consciously

2 By democracy 'without adjectives,' here we refer specifically to a political system in which the constitutional-legal structure does not include military veto power over civilian policy makers, where there are no enclaves of autonomous military political influence, and where civilians have ultimate oversight over military decisions. The presence of such factors has led analysts to label 'democracies' as protected, neopatrimonial, authoritarian, military-dominated, etc. (Collier and Levitsky, 1997: 431).

connect the past and present. Certainly, there can be other social and political actors that also make such connections, but particularly with regard to civil-military relations the parties represent the most important civilian political voice.

The military is perhaps even more notable for interpreting the past and keeping it a relevant factor for present and future actions. In military schools, journals, and interaction with senior officers, cadets and young officers are constantly reminded of the military's institutional explanations of history. In Latin America, the military (perhaps with some variation between branches) teaches *one* version of history. Very often, it is strikingly different from civilian discourse. The *mesa de diálogo* offers the perfect example of these differences. The military participants emphasized – with no variation between the different branches – the failure of civilians (and the *Unidad Popular* specifically) to mediate political conflict and rejected the notion that the military government had any policy toward elimination of political opponents.³ Meanwhile, civilians argued that the military had a specific plan of political restructuring that involved calculated use of extreme violence.

A number of studies have analyzed the ways in which political parties in Chile have transformed their views as a result of the military regime.⁴ Political leaders of the centre and much of the left have exchanged antagonistic and polarizing strategies for consensus and negotiation. But there is another, more neglected side of the political learning coin, namely the transformation of the military's political views. The views of the armed forces did not remain static during the dictatorship. On the contrary, the military leadership reached definite conclusions about what it would and would not tolerate in the postauthoritarian era. Like their civilian counterparts, military leaders learned from the events that led to the breakdown of democracy in 1973. They went one step further, however, as they looked to the example of Spain and internalized lessons about what type of transition they would *not* allow.

The Chilean military and the past

The Spanish model of transition from authoritarian to civilian rule has often been compared to Spanish America.⁵ Given similar political structures and transition timing, Spain's relative success in forging a democracy and establishing civilian supremacy over the military seems a useful starting point for understanding its former colonies. What these studies have not examined, however, is the degree to which the leaders of the armed forces in Spanish America were aware of the

3 For texts of participant statements, see <http://www.congreso.cl/biblioteca/prensa/mesadialogo.htm>

4 E.g. Garretón 1989; Rabkin 1996. For a recent analysis, see Siavelis (2000). As he notes, 'Ideological and programmatic transformations permitted the parties of the moderate Left to assume easily a role as active participants in the Aylwin government, supporting the Concertación's program of gradual reform within a capitalist model of development' (113).

5 e.g. see Agüero, 1995; Linz and Stepan, 1996.

Spanish example and how that knowledge affected (and still influences) the course of the transition and the manner in which the military has reacted to the process of democratization.

Chileans, even those in the military, did not immediately embrace the government of Francisco Franco (1939–1975). President Pedro Aguirre Cerda (1938–1941) and the left were reluctant to recognize a fascist government, so Chile was the last Latin American country to extend diplomatic recognition (Drake, 1982: 274). That situation would gradually change, as both the right and the armed forces admired Franco's ability to maintain political order and stability. Such admiration reached its pinnacle during the government of General Augusto Pinochet, when Chile maintained close ties to Spain. Diplomatic posts to the Franco government were highly regarded, and Pinochet made a point of attending his funeral in 1975. The Chilean *Benemérito* greatly respected the Spanish *Caudillo*.⁶

Even after Franco's death and the transition to civilian rule in Chile in 1990, some of the most prestigious posts for Chilean officers were in Spain. As the best and the brightest travelled to and studied in Spain (even getting doctorates), they brought back what they considered lessons about how to avoid what they viewed as the excessively weakened position of the armed forces in a democratic context. In the words of one retired Chilean general (a former member of Pinochet's advisory committee), in Spain the military had been subjected to 'slavery.'⁷ The Chilean military leadership sought to ensure that the Spanish example would not be repeated. The belief that Chilean policy makers were attempting to copy Spain was strong enough that in 1995 the army circulated a book entitled *Cómo se entrega una victoria* ('How Victory is Surrendered') that accused the Spanish military leadership of folding under civilian pressure.⁸ In a study analyzing Spain, members of each branch of the Chilean military noted that the Spanish model would not transfer well to Chile given historical and contemporary differences between the two countries.⁹

The Chilean dictatorship has a number of parallels to Spain. In both countries, there was long-term rule by one officer who was the locus of all decision-making. Furthermore, Franco constructed what he called 'organic democracy' where carefully selected candidates were elected to a parliament with no independent authority (Preston, 1994: 489). Similarly, Pinochet built what he termed a

6 When Pinochet retired, the Chilean army granted him the honorary title of Commander in Chief 'Benemérito' ('emeritus'), while Franco encouraged reference to himself as 'el Caudillo,' a Spanish term meaning 'political boss.'

7 Interview with the author, April 20, 1998.

8 Former Director of the Chilean Army War College, personal communication with the author.

9 See Rodrigo 1990. Among the perceived differences were Spain's ability to coordinate with NATO, a better coordination of the different branches in Chile, a stronger history of democracy, and the absence of postauthoritarian coup attempts. The conclusion was that structural civil-military reform in Chile was therefore unnecessary.

‘protected democracy’ in which the power of political parties would be diluted and the representation of the right would be guaranteed (Loveman, 1997). Additionally, both of these rulers presided over regimes that became increasingly civilianized over time.¹⁰ In other words, even though Pinochet remained as president, over time positions in the military government were gradually filled more with civilians rather than military officers.

Instead of following the Spanish example in the postauthoritarian period, however, Chilean officers – especially senior army officers – looked to what they perceived as flaws both in Franco’s policies and the way in which the transition to civilian rule was undertaken. Despite the serious civil-military conflict in the early 1980s, Spain quickly became an example of how democracy and civilian supremacy over the military could be constructed even after decades of authoritarian rule.¹¹ That outcome was precisely what the Chilean military was intent on avoiding. In particular, political parties and individuals in Spain worked quickly in the late 1970s to dismantle the authoritarian structure to which the military was closely tied. For example, a new constitution was written that went through a lengthy process of voting – both in parliament and in a plebiscite – for the purpose of making it legitimate and democratic (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 100). The new political system turned away from Franco’s authoritarian example.

In Chile after 1990, there were several unsuccessful attempts to reduce the influence of the armed forces through legal reform. Although the new civilian governments periodically called for significant constitutional reform that would strengthen civilian supremacy over the military, these efforts also faced consistent and stiff opposition.¹² The idea of writing and passing a new constitution was never a viable option and so, unlike Spain, Chile sought to democratize under an authoritarian constitution that had gone into effect in 1980.

For example, in 1997 a group of Christian Democrats in the Chamber of Deputies tried to re-open a proposal on military justice reform that had been languishing for five years. Specifically, it sought to limit military jurisdiction to those crimes committed only by members of the armed forces in strictly military situations; to eliminate the ability of the Auditor General of the army to join the Supreme Court in cases that had originated in military courts; to allow civilians to carry out investigations in military areas; and to allow civilian courts to judge

10 Agüero, 1995 (esp. chapters 2–3).

11 A failed military coup attempt in 1981 and the uncovering of plans for a second in 1982 had the unexpected effect of strengthening democracy, as the king, political parties, and society at large rejected restoration of military rule (Agüero, 1995: 170–4).

12 Furthermore, a political legacy of the military government was the binomial system, in which two candidates are elected from each congressional district. A single party can win both seats only if it exceeds two-thirds of the total vote, which in practice has ensured a significant presence for the right in Congress. In addition, the constitution provides for nine designated senators, four of which are former commanders in chief of the army, navy, air force, and national police. Finally, the National Security Council, which is composed equally of civilians and commanders in chief, is a way for the military to assert its views since two officers can force convocation.

cases involving military conscripts.¹³ The military insisted that it would not accept such drastic reforms, and therefore the Minister of Defense requested (and Congress accepted) that the reform never be brought to a vote.

The general model of the proposed reforms was very similar to reforms carried out in Spain in 1985, where the jurisdiction of civilian courts was greatly expanded while that of military courts was reduced, especially regarding jurisdiction over civilians. This alone was enough to cast suspicion on the proposal in the minds of Chilean military leaders. The Spanish model was widely criticized within the Chilean ranks since within a few years of Franco's death, civilians made sweeping changes that greatly diminished military influence.

The Chilean military also resisted making changes in the defense structure. In Spain, the Defense Minister's main advisor is the 'Chief of Defense Staff' instead of the separate commanders in chief, and the Defense Minister has wide power over military policy and administration.¹⁴ Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs were given only an advisory position and therefore could not make any autonomous decisions.¹⁵ The overall effect was to eliminate the autonomy of each branch while also increasing civilian control over decision-making.

Thus, increased centralization and civilianization of the defense structure greatly curtailed the military's political influence in Spain. Determined to avoid the same outcome, the Chilean armed forces resisted any changes they felt were based on the same example. The Chilean Ministry of Defense had no political influence during the dictatorship, and consequently it still suffers from an inefficient structure, with duplication of work between the different sub-secretariats and minimal staff.¹⁶ In addition, during the 1990s there were numerous conflicts between the minister and the military leadership, and consequently the latter has shown little interest in making the ministry (with its civilian minister) more important politically.

The Chilean military also learned budgetary lessons from Spain. In the latter years of the Franco dictatorship, military spending was low enough that officers were routinely taking second jobs, leading one active-duty general to claim publicly that the armed forces had become a 'poor relation of Spanish economic development' (García, 1976: 24). Franco had personalized his political power and gradually decreased the independent influence of the military leadership. The fact that he had named Juan Carlos as a monarchical successor in 1969 assuaged military concerns, since the military believed he would ally himself with the armed forces after Franco's death (Agüero, 1995: 56). But after 1977, the Spanish military budget decreased steadily, slowing down only in the 1990s.

13 '¿Y la justicia militar?' *Hoy* July 7–13, 1997.

14 Agüero, 1995: 189–190. The position is much like the chairman of the Joint Chiefs in the United States.

15 The Joint Chiefs model was created in 1977, composed of the heads of each branch in addition to a chair, who was rotated between the branches. It was designated as the 'highest collegiate body in the military chain of command.' Agüero, 1995: 150.

16 Gabriel Gaspar, Subsecretary of War, interview with the author, May 23, 2001.

Given this historical example, the Chilean military was concerned about the same occurring in Chile. The 1924–32 period in Chile had been marked by military dictatorship and civil-military conflict, culminating in the re-establishment of civilian rule, democratic elections, and the military leaving power in disgrace.¹⁷ For over thirty years, civilian governments routinely cut military budgets (even relying on the United States to provide weapons and aid to the armed forces) and left the military out of policy decisions.

Pinochet and his economic advisors, not willing to allow history to repeat itself, assembled a legal structure that would ensure that the Chilean military budget would not be left entirely to the discretion of politicians. Soon after the coup in 1973, the junta based the military budget on the earnings of the national copper company, reserving 10 percent of sales with a floor of \$US90 million (which was raised to \$180US million in 1976). If the 10 percent did not reach that amount, the national treasury would make up the difference. In February 1990, Pinochet created Article 96 of the Organic Laws of the Armed Forces, which provided a budget floor whereby the military would not receive less than its 1989 budget, adjusted for inflation (Rojas, 1994: 247).

The military had thus developed a clear sense of purpose between 1973 and 1990. As one prominent Christian Democrat put it, the military ‘became conscious of a political power they didn’t have before’ (quoted in Garretón and Espinosa, 2000: 51). Put even more bluntly, a retired army general (who became critical of the military regime) asserted the following about the armed forces: ‘Politicians do not dare to touch them, and that wouldn’t be desirable for the armed forces because they would cease being the power factor they have assigned themselves’ (quoted in Garretón and Espinosa, 2000: 54).

Finally, the ‘mythology’ of each regime was that it had resolved a civil war to prevent a communist takeover, spurred on an economic boom, and then after an extended period of authoritarian rule had left a ‘protected’ government that would avoid the conflict and divisions of the past. The key difference between the leaders of the two regimes was that Pinochet believed that Franco had not adequately secured that long-term legacy.

The 1980 constitution is the institutional example of the lessons applied by the Chilean military government. The junta and its constitutional commission applied certain ‘lessons’ through their restructuring of the political system. Since they obviously deemed the 1925 constitution unable to prevent political conflict, they set about to construct a new document. This included putting legal-constitutional restraint on civilian policy makers (especially through the binomial system), ensuring military representation in Congress, and codifying the military’s role as ultimate guarantor of the country. The discussions of the commission made explicit references to the failures of Chilean politics in the past. For example, commission members agreed that the president should not have control over the armed forces. Military obedience ‘refers to the juridical order

17 As Nunn puts it, ‘in the festering sore of Depression-era Chilean politics, society, and economics, the military appeared as gangrene’ (Nunn, 1976: 183).

and not to the person of the President of the Republic, in order to avoid impairing this obedience by converting [the armed forces] into true praetorian guards of the Chief Executive, as the last President attempted to do.¹⁸

History and political parties

The political chaos of the early 1970s and the military regime also transformed the centre and much of the left in Chile. Into the 1990s, their leaders rethought political strategy. The process was often painful and difficult, given how the military government had targeted the left as a political enemy. Those identified with Allende and the left in general were arrested, tortured, killed, exiled, and otherwise harassed. By the 1980s, both the parties of the left and the Christian Democrats discussed openly the ways in which their political worldviews were changing.

Gone were the days of party sectarianism, replaced by a drive for consensus. The major parties and the military shared the common view that extreme politicization and polarization had brought the country to the brink of civil war and thus fostered military intervention. With regard to the idea of coming to terms with the 'errors' of the past, there were exceptions on the left, such as the Communist Party. Not trusting the dictatorship and believing that violence should remain a possible option, the party rejected both the 1988 plebiscite that initiated the transition and the formation of the centre-left 'Concertación' coalition for the 1989 presidential elections, decisions that left it politically weak and largely irrelevant in the postauthoritarian period (Siavelis, 2000: 114).¹⁹

An important effect of the new emphasis on consensus was a concern about antagonizing and/or politicizing the military. The fear of another coup was not necessarily prevalent. Rather, civilians had learned that the military paid close attention to politics and would make its concerns public, thus complicating civil-military relations and overshadowing attempts to forge other government policies. Edgardo Boeninger, a past Vice President of the Christian Democratic Party and cabinet member under President Aylwin, argued that the issue was no longer military intervention, but governability (Boeninger, 1997: 383). Making policy that directly contradicted military interests could have many distracting and highly unpredictable consequences for the government's ability to govern. According to Boeninger, governability was a 'permanent requirement' for democracy, and the government should therefore be careful about contradicting military interests.

One reason for the Christian Democrats' sensitivity about the military is that the party had played an important role in encouraging the 1973 coup. Arguing

18 *Actas Oficiales de la Comisión de Estudio de la Nueva Constitución Política de la República*, Session 379, May 31, 1978.

19 By the late 1990s, the Communist Party began discussions with the Socialist Party about coordinating candidates for different districts, but the first steps are tentative and controversial within the Concertación.

that the Allende government had violated the constitution, the opposition in Congress had called on the military to intervene to restore order (Loveman, 2001: 257). Believing the military junta would soon return power to civilians, the Christian Democrats issued a statement blaming the Allende government for the coup and absolving the armed forces, who 'did not seek power' (Aylwin, 1998: 32). Aylwin would later admit that he and other party members simply did not realize the how terrible the situation could become: 'I must confess that I never imagined that officers and soldiers of our Armed Forces and Police could arrive at those extremes of brutality and cruelty, to the point of violating even the laws of war' (Aylwin, 1998: 15). In the 1990s, the party was determined to avoid any semblance of those past political mistakes.

Nonetheless, when President Aylwin took office in 1990, he brought with him ambitious campaign promises that, in their entirety, would have dismantled much of the military government's legacy (Weeks, 1999: 108–110). In the 1990s the Christian Democrats did periodically introduce congressional bills intended to increase civilian supremacy over the armed forces, but party leaders dropped those measures if military misgivings made them too controversial or, in some cases, if the opposition of the right simply made passage impossible. As Loveman (2001) notes, 'the Concertación government had postponed, if not largely abandoned, its own programs of 1988 and 1989' (327). Events like the *ejercicio de enlace* and the *boinazo* contributed to the inability of the government to follow through with all of its promises.²⁰

Certainly, the Christian Democratic party contributed greatly to the successful transition from authoritarian rule. Under the direction of Christian Democrat presidents, several times in the 1990s *Concertación* administrations successfully ignored military protests regarding certain issues. These included the creation of the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation in 1990 (which became known as the Rettig Commission after its director), which investigated human rights abuses; the National Corporation of Reparation and Reconciliation in 1991 to carry out the recommendations of the Rettig Commission (see Aguilar in this issue); the imprisonment of former intelligence chief Manuel Contreras and the forced resignation of the National Police commander in chief, both in 1995; and the pursuit of a constitutional accusation against Pinochet in 1998.

In addition, the party's Technical Committee had been central in negotiating the transfer of power between 1988 and 1990 (Puryear, 1994: 154). That committee's director was Genaro Arriagada, who had considerable expertise in civil-military relations. Although he had published works with sharp criticisms of Pinochet and the regime in general, he also advocated a better working relationship with the military.²¹ For these reasons, the party was certainly pro-democratic but often hesitant about confronting Pinochet.

20 See Patricio Silva in this edition for an elaboration of these themes

21 For example, as Ambassador to the United States, he argued for the release of General Pinochet from house arrest in England, stating that it was an issue for Chileans, not foreign courts, to decide. 'Beyond Justice,' *Washington Post* October 25, 1998.

For the Socialist Party, the question of governability was even more pronounced. When Allende took office in 1970, the Socialist Party was more radical than the Communist Party and consequently was a primary target of the military regime. Watching friends die while suffering exile, imprisonment, and abuse, then later witnessing the implosion of the Soviet system, many members of the Socialist party rethought their political mission. In the words of a Socialist activist, 'Revolution is possible, but only as a progressive series of partial changes' (quoted in Roberts, 1998: 189).

An important part of this political renovation was heightened sensitivity to the armed forces. During the Aylwin administration (1990–1994), Socialists in the government and in Congress became the primary links to the military, establishing close ties to high-ranking officers and conducting negotiations at key moments. During that period, the protagonist was Enrique Correa, who had been a political activist during the Allende government and had lived in exile after the coup. The experience of dictatorship and exile had transformed Correa's ideas about political strategy, as he became a vocal proponent of civil-military interaction and mutual understanding. Aylwin named him General Secretary of the Government (a position that is not formally involved in government-military relations), yet immediately he forged ties with General Jorge Ballerino, the head of Pinochet's Advisory Committee (Weeks, 2000). Correa was the central government official in defusing civil-military tensions in the early 1990s.

During the Frei administration, that role was often assumed by Senator José Antonio Viera-Gallo. He had worked with Correa and the military, but his role became more prominent after Correa's departure. For example, during the debate over the constitutional accusation against Pinochet, he became an intermediary between the military and the Concertación.²² In short, the military consistently viewed some members of the Socialist Party as a reasonable opposition.

Not all Socialists were comfortable with that role and the obeisance to governability. Indeed, during the dictatorship the party had become deeply fragmented, often with no clear direction.²³ For some, the focus on governability meant that significant reform had become impossible. A leader of the Socialist party, Camilo Escalona, argued that 'It has become obvious that the gradualist strategy has been converted to minimalist' (Escalona, 1999: 55). In some eyes, then, the need to avoid antagonizing the right and the military through the 'politics of the possible' had gutted the left's attempts to foster significant political and economic change. Yet despite the lack of unanimity within the party, the Socialist Party leadership remained cautious about encroaching significantly on military prerogatives.

The fact that many Socialists were thus 'renovated' and vocal proponents of gradualism meant that, especially during the 1990s, the military was often more willing to forge contacts with them rather than with Christian Democrats.

22 Interview with the author, May 11, 1998.

23 For a discussion of the Socialist party during the military regime, see Roberts, 1998 (esp. chapter 4).

Obviously, the military believed that the Socialist and Communist parties were responsible for the political chaos of the pre-coup period. But the military also believed the Christian Democrats had helped bring Chile to the brink of disaster, then repudiated the military intervention they had helped to bring about (and in fact, according to the military, they had requested). As one retired army colonel put it, 'the high command continued to believe that Christian Democrats were ill-defined politically ... that they are people who put Chile one step away from being a copy of Cuba' (quoted in Weeks, 1999: 141–2).

Nonetheless, the party as a whole did work to ensure continued investigation of human rights abuses. For example, in 1991 Socialists worked to greatly modify a bill that would have provided the freeing of political prisoners in exchange for allowing virtual impunity for perpetrators of crimes committed during the military government. In 1993 Socialists and members of the PPD helped to force President Aylwin to remove a bill that would have provided a statute of limitations for prosecutions of such abuses (Loveman, 2001). Advances in the area of human rights have been an important part in the democratization process, and therefore should not be minimized. However, the Socialist party has often struggled as it addressed civil-military issues. For example, in 1998 the party was not unified in support of the constitutional accusation against Pinochet.²⁴

Less prominent (and more broadly 'renovated') than the Socialist Party, the PPD was a new party, an offshoot of the pre-authoritarian left that was created in response to Pinochet's 1988 plebiscite. It was generally more pragmatic, hewing closer to the centre, rejecting the extreme ideologies of the past, and calling for moderation. Often in tandem with the Socialist Party (in fact, Ricardo Lagos had played an active role in the party's formation), the PPD was active in the 1990s in the pursuit of investigations of human rights abuses, but was not always willing to participate in political showdowns with the armed forces. For example, in the midst of the debate surrounding the constitutional accusation levied against Pinochet in 1998, the PPD declared itself opposed to the measure (Weeks, 1999: 266). In their view, the possibility of increased civil-military conflict as well as Concertación-fighting outweighed any potential benefits of pursuing legal action against Pinochet.

The two main parties of the right – Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI) and Renovación Nacional (RN) – were formed in the 1980s as the regime prepared for a return of electoral competition (Garretón, 2000). The former was organized in 1983 and was an attempt by the conservative, corporatist Chilean right to reject the classist orientation of the traditional right by stressing the need for economic liberty for the lower classes (Siavelis, 2000: 117). Reacting to the protests against the military government, UDI became a vehicle for protecting and preserving the military regime's accomplishments. It rejected what it perceived as the 'old way' of politics and instead championed the continuation of the economic and political model that the military and its supporters had constructed.

24 The vote was secret, so it is not possible to know precisely how many members voted in favor. However, Enrique Correa publicly urged a 'no' vote (Weeks, 1999: 266).

What this meant in practice was a resistance to changes in both the authoritarian political-legal structure and the neoliberal economic model. According to UDI, such changes would lead to the return of the statist and anti-military policies that it believed had led the country in the direction of civil war and made intervention inevitable. Bolstered by the electoral system and the military's designated senators, the party made clear to the Concertación governments that substantive reform of the military's political and economic structures would not pass. In the campaign for the presidential election of 2000, UDI candidate Joaquín Lavín stressed the need to avoid the 'politics of the past' and focused on the economic failures of the Concertación governments (Loveman, 2001: 354). The slogan of 'long live change!' most definitely did not refer to the economic and political legacies of the military government.²⁵

In 1987, RN established itself as a more centrist representative of the right. Although both parties are newly formed, they have drawn on a very rich history of conservative politics in Chile. They had different views of Chile's political future, especially in terms of the authoritarian institutional legacy. Generally less dogmatic, RN shared the belief that the *pronunciamiento* (a legal term that the right insists upon over the more pejorative *golpe de estado*) had been a necessary response to the excesses of the *Unidad Popular*.

Furthermore, the military regime had been forced to deal with a totalitarian threat to national security. The difference was that, once the transition to democracy was underway, some members of RN proved willing to hold discussions with the Concertación, especially with regard to removing the institution of designated senators and changing the binomial electoral system. Andrés Allamand, a prominent member of RN, has labeled Chilean politics as full of paradoxes, the most prominent of which is the continuation of certain 'safeguards' (*resguardos*) even when those past security threats no longer exist (Allamand, 1999: 181).

For the far right, whose members were often members of the military government, political learning has been very close to that of the armed forces.²⁶ UDI has emphasized the need to avoid the mistakes of the past by adhering to the political rules of the game established by the military government, which includes an important role for the military.²⁷ Even according to many members of RN, the system constructed by the military should not be altered too drastically. As one

25 At the same time, he did attempt to disassociate his candidacy from the human rights abuses of the military, choosing instead to focus his campaign more on economic and social policies of the Concertación.

26 In fact, some members of UDI are themselves retired officers. In 2001, Navy Commander in Chief Jorge Arancibia resigned in order to become an UDI senatorial candidate. 'La trama detrás de la renuncia de Arancibia,' *La Tercera* June 17, 2001.

27 Typical was the response of UDI's president to the debate over the applicability of the 1978 amnesty. He made a public statement calling for the courts to 'stop the fun and games' (*la chacota*). 'Concertación pide sesión en el Congreso para analizar críticas de Longueira,' *La Tercera* May 15, 2000. For the military and the right, the amnesty was perceived as the best way to preserve the social peace.

member put it, such changes ‘would feed a decomposition of the democratic system that would make the authoritarian temptation grow strongly’ (quoted in Garretón and Espinosa, 2000: 58).

In the late 1990s, UDI gradually became more influential than RN, winning seats in Congress and, with Lavín’s candidacy, defining the political program of the right. Lavín’s very strong showing in the election (which he only narrowly lost to Ricardo Lagos) demonstrated a new surge in popular support for the more conservative and traditional right. Despite his calls for change, he was clearly tied to the Pinochet regime, having served in that government and having written a book praising its economic accomplishments. The moderate right scrambled to rethink its strategies and to reassert itself, even undergoing rapid leadership changes (including the voluntary resignation of the party leaders from their positions in 2001).²⁸ This swell in UDI’s strength makes the prospect of passing constitutional reforms through Congress even more remote in the short-term. Over the longer term, such reforms will depend, in part, on the degree to which RN retains both its centrist position and some measure of electoral strength.

Conclusion

After more than a decade of civilian rule, some observers argue that the strategies of the past are creeping back into Chilean politics. The electoral advances of the right and the economic effects of the neoliberal program have renewed interest in totalizing ideologies, mass mobilization, and militant party recruitment (Hite, 2000: 188). Meanwhile, the military and the right believe that the ‘politics of revenge’ have replaced consensus. So what have the supposed ‘lessons’ achieved?

In a book published just before he was elected president in a runoff election in January 2000, Ricardo Lagos argued that Chileans had ‘abused democracy’ and made ‘serious and grave errors’ that led to military intervention (Lagos, 1999: 17). He also noted that ‘We don’t want the ghosts of the past to disturb us in the present; much less to determine the future of the country’ (ibid.: 114). But those ghosts persisted into his term, and likely will continue to affect Chilean politics.

For many Chilean policymakers, politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s may perhaps resemble Doctor Faustus summoning Mephistopheles (i.e. the ‘call’ for military intervention in 1973) and then suffering the consequences for his decision. The difference is that even Chileans who were opposed to this Faustian bargain were forced to live (and die) with the consequences. The ‘ghosts’ of the past remain a part of national politics in Chile, and the particular combination of civilian and military political learning has created significant obstacles to democratization. Civilian caution, when added to military intransigence, means change remains difficult.

Over the long term, the challenge is to enact structural change and to reform political institutions in order to eliminate the adjectives that accompany analyses

28 ‘Mesa de RN se había agotado,’ *El Mercurio* May 14, 2001.

of Chilean democracy. This includes elimination of military prerogatives, reforming the constitution (which provides for military intervention), and changing the electoral system. Those reforms are precisely the actions that the parties of the centre and left have often been reluctant to push. Even if judicial action against individual officers is successful, those decisions will not necessarily engender structural change.

The armed forces have strongly resisted such changes, since the military was the architect of Chile's current institutions. In the eyes of the military, to dismantle those structures would be a return to the weaknesses of the pre-1973 period, when the venal and inept politicians gave the military no choice but to intervene. In addition, those changes would be too close to the Spanish example, where according to Chilean officers a once glorious army became a docile and uninspiring force. While new army commander in chief Ricardo Izurieta has not stated his opinion on the Spanish example, he clearly shares the view that the military's role as political arbiter should not be altered. In a 2000 speech, he noted that the military's patriotic duty was to 'confront conflict' and 're-establish order' when the 'social peace' was threatened.²⁹ The military government set up the institutions that guaranteed such a role for the armed forces, and in the military's view they were critical for protecting the *patria* (fatherland) itself.

A critical issue, of course, is the degree to which the views of the military and/or civilians change. Is political learning time bound? In other words, at what point do past events become so distant that they no longer represent a driving force in politics? In the Chilean case, the answer is not clear.³⁰ The years of the *Unidad Popular* remain a powerful symbol too recent to forget, while the facts surrounding repression during the military regime continue to be debated publicly. If political parties as well as the military become accepting of more 'substantive' democracy, then authoritarian legacies may start disappearing. The examples of other Latin American militaries do not offer much optimism, since military skepticism about democracy remains widespread.³¹

In addition, if civilians become more assertive in pushing democratic reform without a simultaneous change in the armed forces, then the outcome will very likely become conflictual. Military doctrine, ideology, and historical perceptions change only very slowly. Chilean officers have published many works that take the 'long view' of history, arguing that contemporary events can be understood

29 Ejército de Chile, Comunicado de Prensa, 'Discurso del Comandante en Jefe del Ejército, en la Ceremonia del Natalicio del Libertador General Bernardo O'Higgins Riquelme,' August 20, 2000.

30 Chile after 1932 is instructive in this regard. Within 10–15 years of the final military regime, Chilean leaders proclaimed that democracy had become permanent. In 1948, President Arturo Alessandri gave a speech to Congress, in which he argued that the 'national soul, the very psychology of the people, rejects dictatorships and loves law, liberty and the Constitution.' Senado de Chile, Sesión 8a, November 23, 1948, p. 357.

31 Since the mid-1990s, Ecuador has experienced a military coup, while the allegiance of the armed forces to democratically elected leadership has been in public doubt elsewhere, most notably Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela.

only by going back as far as 1603 or even 1541 (Aldunate, 1993; Molina, 1989). Given that the military believes its central role in politics dates back centuries, conflict may occur if the 'lessons' civilians learn change, especially if the government attempts to change policies related to core military interests (see Weeks, 2000). If political parties of the centre-left attempt to accelerate the tempo of military reforms, then the already uneasy and tenuous agreements reached by parties and the military during the 1990s may be in jeopardy.

For Chile, this is a highly relevant issue. Beginning in 1998, the *mesa de diálogo* met for over a year but, as noted earlier, ultimately the different participants had to agree to disagree about the causes of democracy's downfall in 1973. Establishing such a forum for dialogue was certainly a positive development, especially given the high levels of mutual distrust, and therefore should not be dismissed. But while there was consensus that extreme levels of political conflict and violence must be avoided, it did not appear that anyone's visions of the past had changed significantly. As a result, different parties and the military continue to have divergent views about the need to maintain the political structures inherited in 1990.

The controversy and tension surrounding Pinochet's legal battles – both in Great Britain and subsequently in Chile – reflected the continued tension over the lessons of the past. The Frei government made every effort to bring Pinochet back from Britain, asserting that it was primarily an issue of national sovereignty.³² The Lagos administration also sought to avoid directly confronting the armed forces, and when Chilean courts began investigating charges against Pinochet, the government attempted to remain publicly neutral. Under Lagos, the executive branch has not felt compelled to formulate new policies vis-à-vis the armed forces, choosing instead to follow less conflictive ones already underway, such as the *mesa de diálogo*.

Meanwhile, Chilean courts became more active than ever in pursuing Pinochet, especially for his role in ordering the so-called 'Caravan of Death,' an army operation in northern Chile shortly after the coup, during which political opponents were rounded up and killed. The simple fact that the general could be formally accused of such crimes was a major step forward from the tense days of the early 1990s, yet did not spark any government attempts to push for structural reform of civil-military relations. Both Frei and Lagos were able to claim that the courts were beyond their control, and chose not to antagonize further the military and intransigent right. Pinochet's virtual acquittal for medical reasons in July 2001 may have ended the General's political life, but the interpretations of his past actions remained as polarized as ever.

In sum, political learning as a result of a dictatorship is not necessarily always propitious for democracy, especially in the short term. In the Chilean case, the conflicts of the past engendered caution on the part of many civilian policy makers and intransigence on the part of the armed forces. The 'lessons' of the

32 The Frei administration recalled its ambassador to show its concern, and the Chilean senate issued a statement protesting the British decision (Weeks, 2000: 733).

past reflect completely different interpretations of the origins of, and justification for, the military coup and subsequent government. That, in turn, remains a major obstacle to achieving civilian supremacy over the military and democratization more generally.

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