Culture in Action:
Chile’s Ousting of General Augusto Pinochet

A thesis presented

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to

The Department of Government
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree with honors
Of Bachelor of Arts
Harvard College
March 2005
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**INTRODUCTION**

*For our generation, this was the moment of our life—October 5th, 1988—the plebiscite.*

**The Empirical Puzzle**

The Chilean plebiscite marked a day of extraordinary political change. For General Augusto Pinochet, it represented a referendum on the legitimacy of his dictatorship, and in one sweeping vote, the dictator was decisively rejected. For Chilean society, the plebiscite embodied a moment of assertion, a moment of hope, a moment of reclamation—after fifteen years of authoritarian rule, forces of opposition at last converged to successfully restore democracy in Chile.

What made the plebiscite particularly remarkable—and its results particularly surprising—were the conditions under which it was conducted. As a simple, yes-or-no vote on Pinochet, the plebiscite was implicitly designed as a mechanism for extending the tenure of the authoritarian regime. Military rulers made sure to exert forces of pressure and intimidation upon opposition elements in society, effectively narrowing the political tactical field with extensive limitations and burdening the electoral system with significant barriers to entry. Opposition political parties were required to prove “high levels of affiliation” before being permitted to even register as official factions (and concomitantly gain official rights to political access and recognition) and individual voters were forced to sustain significant costs in time and money in order to register as part of

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1 Ignacio Walker, personal interview with the author, 6 September 2004. Walker represented the Christian Democrats as part of the Comité por el NO. He is currently the Director of the Corporación de Estudios para Latinoamerica (CIEPLAN).
the electorate (and thus gain access to the ballot box at all).\textsuperscript{2} The rules of the game were, thus, “skewed” against the opposition.\textsuperscript{3}

Rules and restrictions aside, in the years preceding the plebiscite, the opposition was already seriously hindered as a social force by its own shortcomings. In fact, it is imprecise and misleading to refer to the opposition at that time as one entity; for, it was a multifarious conglomeration of numerous social sectors, ridden with extensive fragmentation, internal conflict, and alienation— it was an entity in utter disarray. Moreover, the notion of the opposition movement was perpetually accompanied by a sentiment of glum. The movement’s past—for nearly a decade—was exemplified by multiple failed attempts at social mobilization, relentless protest resulting in no real redress, and persistent underlying fears of repression and helplessness. The opposition had become a disparate and disheartened social being, and was, by its own admission, “completely at the defensive.”\textsuperscript{4}

How, then, did the opposition emerge from such gloomy prospects to reform itself as a powerful social movement and rise up against all indications to fulfill what had, until then, been a mere potentiality? How did it congeal and appeal to a dejected polity—a polity that had already lost hope in the plebiscite process\textsuperscript{5}—to produce a resounding rejection of authoritarianism and a


\textsuperscript{4} Walker.

\textsuperscript{5} Patricio A. Azócar, \textit{El Reencuentro de los Demócratas: del Golpe al Triunfo del No} (Santiago: Ediciones B Chile, 1998), 332.
simultaneous demand for democracy from 54.7 percent of the electorate? These are the underlying questions of the puzzle behind this thesis: put simply, how did the opposition triumph?

A Cultural Explanation

Culture is the place where humanist values are created and established. For that reason, we understand culture in the broadest sense, encompassing everything from the traditions and customs of the different sectors that make up Chilean society, to creative and artistic expressions in their most diverse grades of elaboration; from mass entertainment and recreation, to the most specialized manifestations of art. In culture thus conceived, there coexist tradition and novelty, the historic memory and the utopia, what we have been and what we can be. Culture is, therefore, a dimension of life that involves all citizens of the country, that confers upon them a sense of belonging, purpose, community and nation, and that then binds them with the spirituality of the rest of humanity.

In this thesis, I will argue that culture played a major, facilitative role in the Chilean opposition movement’s realization of democracy. What exactly is meant by culture? Culture is a multidimensional embodiment of human significance. In one aspect, culture is a static entity: descriptive of social disposition, embedded with inherited values, and entangled in past traditions. In another, it is a dynamic force, responsive to social change and influential in the public sphere. I draw upon both of these aspects to illuminate an instrumental role for culture. Since cultures consist of a rich and diverse array of meaningful elements—including inherited traditions, collective myths, and expressive forms among them—they can be conceptualized of as a utile social resource. Through

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cultural construction—the purposeful imposition of meaning upon cultural concepts—social actors can create compelling collective motifs, by selecting from culture’s various elements, and renewing and redefining those elements in novel contexts. By applying such projections of meaning unto real world circumstances, the cultural construct evolves into a framework of action, organizing the given circumstances in the terms of the constructed meaning. In this way, culture can be invoked as part of a strategy for action: it prompts agency and serves as a source of political empowerment. Analyzing the Chilean case in these terms, I extract an even more nuanced explication of culture’s functionality through a two-fold paradigm: Culture *energizes* by evoking reasons for action through an appeal to embedded norms, customs, and value systems. Cultural manifestations in tangible artistic forms also provide individuals with vehicles for change and means for free expression. Culture also *harmonizes* by invoking both individual and collective identities, allowing social actors to foster bonds of solidarity along shared schemes of meaning. These two functional aspects of culture are employable and applicable for furthering defined political ends. Culture can, therefore, have profound tangible effects in the socio-political sphere, as I prove evident in the Chilean case.

Culture is a vital component to explaining the opposition’s success in the Chilean plebiscite. This is particularly so because the four main existing explanations for Pinochet’s fall—international pressures, media access, human rights, and pure miscalculation—remain insufficient. International pressures could not have incited novel change in Chile because they were both long-
standing and long-standingly ineffective. Furthermore, Pinochet was deftly capable of circumventing economic and political censure from abroad. At most, international elements served in conjunction with internal Chilean elements to ensure a safe electoral environment for the plebiscite; since international efforts paralleled work already being done by internal groups on this issue, they may not have been entirely essential. In the end, it was the Chilean populace that was responsible for deciding the outcome of the plebiscite—the energy and agency had to come from cultural forces on the inside.

Media access is often singled out as the decisive element in the plebiscite, since for the first time, opposition forces were guaranteed television airtime for campaign messages; but this also is too narrow of an explanation. While media spots were highly significant to the opposition movement, the existence of the spots themselves could not have determined the outcome of the plebiscite. More important to the ultimate triumph were the source and content of those spots: that there was one unified media message being portrayed, rather than a multitude of opposition interpretations, and that the message sent was one involving identity-invoking symbols and values relevant to democratization. The media explanation thus gives more credit to the role of culture, in bringing the opposition parties together under one umbrella construct and providing meaning-laden elements upon which the campaign message could draw.

Human rights concerns are sometimes cited as being at the forefront of the opposition win. However, while recognizing the extensive and devastating history of human rights infringements under the Pinochet regime, human rights
issues in themselves were never compelling enough to elicit widespread social action. Sadly, Chileans were, to a certain extent, willing to condone human rights violations for the sake of other public goods (security being foremost). Thus, human rights activism failed to be an effective opposition force on its own; the sector was incorporated, however, into the larger culture of the opposition movement that was so effective in 1988. This incorporation into the coalition actually strengthened the human rights cause by lending it an aspect of shared grievance and greater collectivity; the opposition avoided placing human rights concerns at the forefront of their campaign, however, choosing instead to appeal to a common cultural desire for democracy in order to achieve success.

Finally, some blame Pinochet for overestimating his prospects in the plebiscite, and so point to this ‘miscalculation’ as an explanatory factory of his loss. It is important to note that Pinochet actually had good cause to expect to win the plebiscite, since he was facing an opposition movement that was severely fragmented and that had never succeeding in interrupting him thus far. Even if Pinochet did make a miscalculation, however, the default condition favored the incumbent, since Chilean society at the time was also substantially enervated from a sense of intimidation and hopelessness. Thus, the burden of the win was on the opposition, to galvanize the Chilean people into a solid community to express collective resistance. Due credit, then, goes to the opposition for wielding culture to carry the electoral burden and actively instigate the fall of the dictator.

In the end, each of the four existing explanations leaves space for a cultural explanation. How does culture fill this space? An examination of the
culture of the opposition must begin with an examination of culture under Pinochet. Under the Pinochet regime, popular forms of cultural expression showed themselves to be remarkably resilient in the face of nationalist propaganda and severe repression, surviving among marginalized sectors and in alternative venues, in order to reemerge vibrantly at the time of the plebiscite.

Popular culture’s revival as part of the construct of the opposition campaign involved the invocation of specific elements of the Chilean cultural repertoire: first, in terms of values, there was the political culture of democracy. Chile’s embedded history of democratic rule incorporated a deep respect for legitimacy, diversity, and participation in Chilean political culture. The opposition sought a revival of this history and the nostalgic sentiments that surrounded it, encouraging citizens to exercise their participatory rights by voting (energizing) and allowing parties along the broad Chilean political spectrum to collaborate in a common democratic endeavor (harmonizing). Second, in terms of forms, culture manifested itself through multiple mediums, including theater, literature, and music, to provide a means to promote free expression amidst the populace. These cultural manifestations had the ability to incorporate a vast array of people (harmonizing), either as artists themselves or as audience members, to spread the opposition culture of resistance and encourage active expression among the Chilean polity (energizing). Third, in terms of symbols, the opposition chose to draw upon ‘joy’ and optimistic notions of the future to provoke individuals to be forward-looking citizens and to take part in the molding of their nation (energizing); the movement also drew upon an image of the ‘people’, expanding
the conceptualization of the marginalized to include all those left discontent with the Pinochet regime (harmonizing). By drawing upon these three elements, the opposition campaign was able to construct a compelling culture of resistance. Utilizing this cultural construct, the campaign energized and harmonized the Chilean populace and led a powerful social movement to bring democracy back to Chile.

**Methodology and Data**

In order to establish culture as an explanatory variable in the Chilean plebiscite, I will first explore culture as a concept. By blending theories of cultural agency with previously conceived notions of the relationship between culture and politics, I will unleash culture from the restraints of traditional conceptualizations and delineate its functionality in fresh terms, as an energizing and harmonizing socio-political force. I will then examine the four main extant explanations for the success of the Chilean opposition movement and the fall of Pinochet: international pressures, media access, human rights concerns, and miscalculation by the dictator. Reviewing and evaluating each explanation, I will show that neither was sufficient on its own to produce an opposition victory. While certain elements of these explanations may have facilitated the ultimate win, and were incorporated into the final opposition strategy, each will be shown to have been lacking, leaving space for a novel explanation—that of culture. This is where I introduce my hypothesis, applying the cultural theory previously discussed to the particular circumstances of the Chilean plebiscite, and showing
how culture served to galvanize and unite a forlorn Chilean populace to finally oust Pinochet.

With respect to data, I will be drawing from the political discourse of before and after the plebiscite: my primary sources include the published opinions, predictions, and memoirs of activists and intellectuals who took part in the opposition movement, as well as documents and reports from the time. I will also utilize personal interviews conducted with three individuals intimately involved with the events and culture of the opposition movement. Finally, I include some minimal quantitative data monitoring television media broadcast patterns, popular opinion during the military regime, and voter apathy in the years before the plebiscite.

The Plan of the Thesis

The plan of the thesis is as follows: In Chapter One, I will create a working definition for culture, drawing upon both static and dynamic understandings of the term. I will then explicate the construction of culture, showing it to be a source of agency and a tool for energizing and harmonizing a polity.

In Chapter Two, I will address the existing explanations of the Chilean plebiscite. There are four: The first attributes the regime change to international pressures. The second points to media access as the decisive factor in the opposition’s win. The third credits human rights concerns with providing sufficient compelling cause for triumph. The fourth places blame on Pinochet for
failing to properly judge his prospects in the electoral contest. I will refute each explanation and thus make space for my cultural hypothesis.

In Chapter Three, I will describe the nature of culture under Pinochet, as having been both repressed and re-formed. I will then present the culture promoted by the opposition—its values, drawn from the nation’s political culture of democracy, its forms, manifested in popular expression, and its symbols, embodied by compelling representations of meaning. In these respective aspects and overall, I will show that cultural production on the part of the opposition served to energize and harmonize the Chilean populace.

In the end, this thesis offers a transformative reading of culture: If politics comes to conceive of culture as an employable source of empowerment, it will gain an enormously powerful resource for inducing mobilization, encouraging social actors to draw upon cultural repertoire to make political change.
CHAPTER ONE

CULTURE IN THEORY: A RECONCEPTUALIZATION

Culture is not only a body but also a creative, innovative set of practices. As such it cannot be separated from the effects of the surrounding society.\(^8\)

Introduction

Culture suffers from severe ambiguity, multiplicity, and elusiveness as a concept. As a result, I will begin this chapter by offering a glimpse at the myriad definitions of culture extant in the theory, and then narrow the term’s scope in a working definition relevant for application to Chile. I will then outline the relationship between culture and politics, as it has thus far been conceived, and delve into the main thrust of my argument: that culture’s relationship to politics is not restricted to passivity. Rather, culture is instrumental. First constructed and then wielded as a source of agency, it can be a force in society that serves a dual function: energizing and harmonizing.

Defining Culture

Before delving into the cultural analysis that will form the core of this thesis, let me take a moment to define culture. For the purposes of this thesis, it is necessary to confine culture to a narrow, identifiable entity, relevant to the case study. Thus, I shall proceed by drawing from culture’s various previous

\(^8\) Ton Salman, “Culture and Politics in Chile: Political Demands in an ‘Apolitical’ Society,” in The Legacy of the Disinherited, 221-248 (Amsterdam: Center for Latin American Research and Documentation, 1996), 223.
conceptions to mold a definition that effectively captures the essence and intentions of culture for the Chilean case.

Static

In its earliest conceptions, culture took on a static form. Deriving from the Roman colere—“to cultivate, to dwell, to take care, to tend and preserve”—it originally served to describe man’s interaction with nature.9 The concept then developed to encompass not simply the cultivation of nature but the cultivation of mind and person as well—cultura animi, as Cicero termed it. Applied to a political context, it has come to take on a more expansive definition. From Alexis de Tocqueville’s mores—“the whole moral and intellectual state of a people”10—to Max Weber’s Kultur—“most of what comprises the content of people’s everyday lives”11—it has become a descriptor for the general disposition of a citizenry. It is the elements of this disposition that social actors draw upon as important influences in invoking political change: with Chile, this disposition involves a political culture of democracy marked by a desire for legitimacy, dissent, and voice, invoked for the purpose of restoring the Chilean democratic state. In this way, political change can be relevant to the invariable lifestyle embedded within a society.

Culture is not just a way of life, however. It is a force/entity/thing embedded with human meaning. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz reframed culture in precisely these terms when he defined “man as an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.”\textsuperscript{12} For Geertz, culture consists of those webs—with values, ideologies, and worldviews caught within. Moreover, such webs of significance are neither stagnant nor disjunct; their roots lie in past experience and common history, and so fellow anthropologist Marshall Sahlins explains culture to be “the organization of the current situation in terms of the past.”\textsuperscript{13} In this sense, culture is inherited, transmitted, and continuous—precisely so in the case of Chile’s political culture of democracy, where a multiparty system of electoral republicanism formed the foundation of Chilean political history, and in the case of popular modes of artistic expression, which survived the repressive military regime to reemerge at the time of the plebiscite. Both aspects of Chilean culture carried past traditions through into modern contexts, applying their influence to incite change.

\textit{Dynamic}

Especially notable about culture, though, is its dynamism. Indeed, part of what makes culture so difficult to study is its ever-changing character, since “cause-and-effect relationships between culture and other variables like policies,

\textsuperscript{12} Clifford Geertz, \textit{The Interpretation of Cultures} (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.
institutions, and economic development run in both directions.” To better understand this twofold nature, consider this economic conceptualization of culture:

Culture is a broader, macro-level variable. Mental models are a micro-level variable. Mental models apply to individuals and groups of individuals—and are identifiable and changeable. Culture reflects the aggregation of individual mental models and in turn influences the types of mental models that individuals have. The two are linked in a perpetually evolving system.

Thus, culture is not simply a background factor or passive element of society: it is a social force. Unlike Samuel Huntington’s conceptualization, which acknowledges the strong role of culture in social change but limits that role by characterizing culture as a strictly “primordial” aspect of humanity, culture is both malleable and instrumental in nature. It actively creates and is created, constantly influencing social actors and at the same time being redefined itself and infused with new meaning. Moreover, as this infusion takes place, culture also serves as a repository from which individuals may draw strength and agency. For, as social webs of significance are invested more and more with meaning, individuals can “gain access” to that meaning through its manifestations in the public sphere, invoking it and wielding it to empower themselves and their cause. Whether it be through theater, literature, or music, as it is in the Chilean case, or traditional symbols and values redefined in novel contexts, cultural forms

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of expression adjust and respond to the times, empowering social actors with means for free expression and culturo-political participation. “Culture can therefore mean a strategy of containment for irritating change”— an instrument of political agency in its own right.  

From its ancient origins to its modern uses, the concept of culture has undergone extensive transformation over time, and has come to inherit a complex, multidimensional connotation: It is descriptive of human interaction, embedded with meaning, continuous through time, marked by dynamism, responsive to change, and a source of empowerment. While remaining cognizant of this multidimensionality, I am forced—in this paper—to create an unambiguous functional definition of culture; for, if a term comes to mean everything, it means nothing at all. Thus (drawing upon relevant sources) I shall take culture to be “the values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society” that form part of a “repertoire or ‘tool kit’ of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct ‘strategies of action’” and, unlike mere aesthetic objects, can form “the grounds of action and the stakes of action, with real outcomes in the real world and with powerful representations in literature, drama, and art.”

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**Culture and Politics**

With culture defined, let me now look to the relationship between culture and politics—a persistent theme in political theory. Preliminary understandings of this relationship portray culture as a manipulative element in the political sphere—a feature of the polity that molds the character of the state. As early as Plato, in his philosophizing about the ideal state and its decay, governments are thought to vary in accordance with the dispositions of their citizenry. In describing the young American state, Tocqueville insisted that such dispositions—embodied in his *mores*—were primarily responsible for the flourishing of American democracy, allowing the state “to found and maintain the sovereignty of the people.” Weber advances this argument further by boldly attributing the success of American capitalism to the notion of the Protestant calling and crediting Christian culture with instilling in the American people a democratically-conducive social ethic.

Ever since Almond and Verba’s pioneering cross-national investigation on this subject—encouraging the notion of a “political culture of democracy”—modern developmentalists have sought to pick up where Weber left off, causally ascribing the prosperity or underdevelopment of nations to particular ethics and value systems. From

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23 Tocqueville, 53.
Grondona’s “Twenty Contrasting Cultural Factors” to Inglehart’s juxtaposition of “survival values” versus “self-expression values,” the notion of extant “cultural conditions for democracy” has become a prevalent one. Ultimately, these various conceptualizations have come to deal with culture as a social property, influencing the nature of the state and serving in a political capacity as a “principle of organization.” In his study of Indonesia’s customs and culture and their relation to her power dynamic and system of law, Geertz supports this notion, providing a sound, nuanced, structural theorization of how culture and politics interact:

Culture, here, is not cults and customs, but the structures of meaning through which men give shape to their experience; and politics is not coups and constitutions, but one of the principal arenas in which such structures publicly unfold.

Culture thus informs politics—with values, preferences, and norms determining political expectations—and politics, accordingly, reflects culture—the polity being predisposed to a particular type of sovereignty. In the Chilean case, this predisposition is arguably one of democracy, in light of Chile’s entrenched history of democratic rule and embedded value for diverse representation, legitimate processes, and participatory politics. The nation’s political culture of democracy begets a natural preference for democratic rule. At the same time, though, a

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28 Inglehart, “Culture and Democracy,” 94.
29 Arendt, 223.
30 Geertz, 312.
simple invocation of old-style Chilean democracy would not suffice in the modern context, so this is where culture’s dynamism comes to play.

For, the relationship between the two entities of culture and politics is not limited simply to a one-way mechanism: the causal arrow can turn the other way. Politics affects culture, too, as conceptions of democracy changed to include more unity in the face of military repression and cultural forms expanded to reach more vastly across the sectors of Chilean society. Indeed, culture’s dynamic nature makes it highly responsive to political change—for it is certainly “not a constant”31—evolving and transforming with societal progression. Observing the distinct cultural shift in Hawaiian tribal power relations before and after the arrival of Captain Cook, Sahlins notes: “In action or in the world—technically, in acts of reference—cultural categories acquire new functional values. Burdened with the world, the cultural meanings are thus altered.”32 Sahlins goes on to describe this transformation of culture as “a mode of its reproduction”—culture is essentially redefined and renewed each time its political context significantly changes.33 In this way, culture is affected by politics as much as it itself affects politics—the transition renewed Chilean cultural traditions as much as it redefined them—such is the natural intercourse between the two entities.

Still, I insist that one proceed beyond the natural, for culture shows that it has its own inherent association with its surrounding elements. Left untouched, it retains a fluid, yet passive, interplay with politics and society. When commanded,

32 Sahlins, 138.
33 Sahlins, 138.
however, and made purposeful, it can serve in a powerful, instrumental capacity. It is time to consider precisely this sort of cultural utility.

**Cultural in Action**

**Construction**

Considering culture involves the projection of human meaning onto the material world, it would be a mistake to relegate culture to merely an inherited, received object. For individuals, themselves, can actively impose meaning upon cultural concepts and, in this way, invent a culture of their own. This is cultural construction.

The invention of culture requires that individuals “cease to be slaves of their concepts and become the masters.”34 This shift from passive acceptance to active utilization involves the prerequisite recognition that culture is not “the mere logical sum of a series of unrelated historically-independent elements.”35 With that understood, culture can be renegotiated, as Myria Georgiou observes in the Greek Cypriot community of North London, through the discourses of everyday life:36 Cultural concepts are given a “particular empirical inflection of meaning,”37 as they are “reappropriated” in novel contexts.38 New social facts emerge with the

34 Sahlins, x.
36 Myria Georgiou, “Constructing the Public Sphere – Constructing Identities: Using the Ethnic Media in the Cypriot Community Centre of North London,” (London School of Economics and Political Science, 1999), 1.
37 Sahlins, 152.
38 Swidler, 283.
aid of “invented traditions” and “collective memories”; and the existing material reality attains a new collective significance.\textsuperscript{40}

The reconstruction is inevitably a selective one; its architects choose which concepts of the past—which elements of collective experience—to emphasize, and which to downplay. For “all real cultures contain diverse, often conflicting symbols, rituals, stories, and guides to action”—it is up to social actors to select the proper instruments from the cultural “tool kit” to build a unified motif that pushes action in a consistent direction.\textsuperscript{41} Indeed, the process of cultural construction is rather artful:

[It] means selecting certain cultural elements (both such tacit culture as attitudes and styles and, sometimes, such explicit cultural materials as rituals and beliefs) and investing them with particular meanings in concrete life circumstances.\textsuperscript{42}

Given that human experience is arranged “in terms of a priori concepts,” cultural construction allows social actors to re-order that arrangement and re-appropriate the concepts within it to best serve the purposes of the construction and the needs of the particular circumstance.\textsuperscript{43} During the 1930s, both Argentina and Uruguay constructed “a populist nationalism based on the idea of a reviving tradition,” though the result in each country was different: while Argentina revived a state overrun by authoritarian \textit{caudillismo} (strongman rule), Uruguay developed a stable political party system. Each movement, and concomitantly each construction of national identity, invoked different values of their nations’ past,

\textsuperscript{41} Swidler, 277.
\textsuperscript{42} Swidler, 281.
\textsuperscript{43} Sahlins, 146.
one calling upon a sense of strict internalism and the other appealing to
democratic notions. 44 Similarly, Chile had an array of values from which political
actors could construct a national identity—it was the job of the opposition to
choose carefully from these values and from Chile’s complex symbolic history to
convincingly and effectively position democratic ideals at the top of the national
ethos.

The pliability, and eminent usability, of culture through construction
confers a considerable degree of power upon cultural architects. In fact, the
active imposition of meaning onto cultural concepts—cultural construction—can
be seen as “one of the ultimate forms of power.” 45 This is why much of the
politics of identity, according to constructivism theorists, consists of “a continual
contest for control over the power necessary to produce meaning in a social
group.” 46 In the case of the Cacha people of Ecuador, survival in the face of
colonizers meant constructing a distinct oppositional identity: “political education
by activists” sought to create not just a culture, but a counter-culture, highlighting
the “positive aspects [of the Cacha movement] vis-à-vis non-Cachas.” 47 For the
Cacha, a certain sense of contrariness strengthened the cultural struggle. In the
face of Pinochet’s messages of fear and intimidation, the Chilean opposition took
to a similar task. The Chilean opposition, in constructing a forward-looking

44 Alberto Spektorowski, “Collective Identity and Democratic Construction: The Cases of
Argentina and Uruguay,” Constructing Collective Identities and Shaping Public Spheres: Latin
American Paths, ed. Luis Roniger and Mario Sznajder, 103-122, (Portland: Sussex Academic
45 Adler, 103.
46 Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” International
47 Amalia Pallares, “Under the Shadows of Yaruquies: Gaining Indigenous Autonomy in Cacha,
Ecuador,” in Struggles for Social Rights in Latin America, ed. Susan E. Eckstein and Timothy P.
notion of Chilean culture involving hope, vibrancy, democratization, and free expression, concertedly combated Pinochet’s bleak promotion of authoritarian values of political obedience and market efficiency. Convincing the populace of a certain cultural meaning, in this way, is integral to determining the direction that populace will take. For ultimately, it is this meaning, initially constructed at the level of individual social agents, that later evolves into pervasive social norm.48 Therefore, political actors seeking social influence wield culture for their own purposes, first constructing it, as I have delineated in this section, and then applying it toward political ends, as I shall discuss next.

Agency

Agency emerges from the application of culture to the real world. The mechanism is rather straightforward: with the construction of culture comes a concomitant revaluation of human significance and ordering of cultural concepts, which simultaneously begets “the cultural construction of forms of agency” and provides “effectiveness in dealing with powerful others.”49 For, cultural constructions essentially provide a guiding framework for action:

The symbolic experiences, mythic lore, and ritual practices of a group or society create moods and motivations, ways of organizing experience and evaluating reality, modes of regulating conduct, and ways of forming social bonds, which provide resources for constructing strategies of action.50

50 Swidler, 284.
Thus, once a sense of culture is constructed, these resources inherent to the
cultural framework can be wielded to support “human intentionality” and
facilitate “forms of empowerment.” 51 What is more, since the culture that is
constructed invokes collective understandings, the agency that results is also
potentially collective: knowledge and interpretation of the world becomes
knowledge for the world, as individuals discover in their common culture a
newfound “power to change the world.” 52 Thus, culture is reproduced in action,
as people “organize their projects and give significance to their objects from the
existing understandings of the cultural order.” 53 With a cultural framework in
place to facilitate social and political action, the way in which people apply
cultural concepts to classify the world is no longer irrelevant to the manner in
which world politics unfolds. 54 In fact, culture takes on “an independent causal
role” in shaping the “strategies of action” that individuals follow. 55 In Bogotá,
Colombia, where Sommer notes that cultural agency is a widespread and accepted
notion, culture is seen as a social force that “links creativity with social
contributions.” 56 Culture “adds angles for intervention” 57 and empowers
individuals with its multidimensionality, and so “cultural concepts are actively
used to engage the world.” 58 Accordingly, popular cultural elements can be
utilized to incite action, as with the Mexican insurrectionary song of the late 19th
century—the corrido—which served to invoke the nation’s collective memory

52 Adler, 95.
53 Sahlins, vii.
54 Adler, 103.
55 Swidler, 276.
56 Sommer, 5.
57 Sommer, 5.
58 Sahlins, 145.
and point towards a just vision of the world.\textsuperscript{59} As a genre that came to be automatically associated with political struggle, the corrido facilitated individual rebellion, turning its “symbolic guns” on the Porfirian dictatorship and kindling insurgency within the populace.\textsuperscript{60} Indeed, there exist “multiple patterns of constructing identities ... and of developing contextual maps of action” across the array of Latin American societies.\textsuperscript{61} Chile further corroborates this theme, as grass-roots theater movements and popular music trends contributed to social channels of symbolic protest, encouraging individuals to express themselves culturally as part of a collective culture of resistance and politically through voting with the opposition. This is why cultural construction is so important—the agency drawn from it can have “powerful and cohesive” effects.\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Powerful and cohesive: I shall classify culture’s effects—in the political realm and on political actors—in precisely this way. Its utility is twofold: to energize and harmonize.}

\textit{Energize}

Culture engenders action, foremost, through its energizing of the polity. By personifying what is significant in society, it is able to “evoke reasons for


\textsuperscript{60} Héau, 313.


action, individuals’ reasoning processes, and collective understandings within dialogical communities,” and so it can set off social mechanisms for change.  

Culture is particularly effective in galvanizing individuals because it speaks to the very depths of a human being: a cultural construction necessarily becomes a “construction of the needs, desires, and emotions that form the core of personhood in given times and places.” Because cultural constructions address an individual’s inner identity and principal interests, they essentially make “behavioral claims” on that individual. Even those who believe that stimulating action at the level of culture is “a Herculean task” admit that culture’s ability to tap into an individual’s mindset is its “real leverage point” for creating change.

Furthermore, cultural constructions, in a way, remake people by labeling them, re-ordering them within the cultural scheme, and changing the way they perceive themselves in relation to society, “in such a way that they change their identity, status and functions in reaction to the labeling.” Through such labeling, game theorists observe, certain paths of action or methods of involvement “stick out” and “suggest themselves”—they exhibit salience—because they “connect those labels to some aspect of the common experience, culture, or psychology of the players.” These paths of action are thrust into the societal spotlight specifically because of their close tie to culture and to the norms set within a cultural construction since these norms appeal to an individual’s values and

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63 Adler, 98.
64 Ortner, “Introduction,” 5.
65 Checkel, 327.
66 Lindsay, 294.
67 Adler, 103.
priorities and “provide an important kind of motivation for action that is irreducible to rationality.”69 Indeed, cultural norms are presupposed to have “some kind of grip on the mind” or their manipulation would be futile.70 By setting popular participation and free expression as norms in the Chilean cultural construct, the opposition was able to lead individuals to meaningful action at the ballot box, exercising an electoral right that was a natural extension of democratic norms. In this way, because the norms and values inherent to cultural constructions constitute “ex ante sources of action,”71 culture serves to bring particular issues to salience in society and direct the polity in their pursuit.

Since the constructed culture also provides a toolkit of resources and methods for accessing collective understandings, individuals are enabled to utilize novel cultural elements as “vehicles for change” in order to develop and pursue their redefined values and desires.72 To a certain extent, agency represents “the pressures of desires and understandings and intentions on cultural constructions”: individuals re-conceptualize their needs and wants within the framework of the cultural construction, and what results is renewed energy and action.73 In Ortner’s examination of the Nepali Sherpa culture, she notes how the community’s belief system and conceptualization of the world is ordered so that mountain guides feel a certain amount of control over their imposing foreign clients and the looming risk of death—giving them the necessary spiritual and physical energy to

70 Elster, 129.
71 Elster, 125.
72 Sommer, 7.
73 Ortner, “Thick Resistance,” 146.
overcome the pressures of climbing Everest.\textsuperscript{74} In this example, the energy of culture is rather tangible but it shows how, just as in other contexts, individuals draw strength from cultural constructions and are galvanized towards their goals. For when individuals gain access to and employ a cultural construction in such ways, “the rules, norms and cause-effect understandings that make material objects meaningful [within that construction] become the source of people’s reasons, interests and intentional acts.”\textsuperscript{75} Thus, as political agents ask the relevant questions —“‘What kind of situation is this?’ and ‘What should I do now?’”— the values and norms germane to the cultural construction provide relevant answers and encourage their pursuit.\textsuperscript{76} In the Chilean case, as democratization was looming as a real possibility for the future, popular expression and dissent appeared as a fitting corollary to living in a more free society. Individuals’ value for legitimacy and representation, as well as their value for their own political culture of democracy, directed them towards active participation in favor of the NO. Furthermore, popular expression through forms of theater, music, and art aided individuals in their own demonstration of dissent, encouraging individuals by providing them a means for struggle in the face of difficult odds. In this way, cultural constructions provide meaning and direction, and so for those previously discouraged, lonely, or unsupported in their pursuit of particular ends, culture provides resources, tools, and answers, galvanizing those same individuals in a novel way. For this reason, constructing a culture is inevitably about energizing individuals and affecting change.

\textsuperscript{74} Ortner, “Thick Resistance,” 146.
\textsuperscript{75} Adler, 102.
\textsuperscript{76} Checkel, 326.
In the end, however, it is not simply individuals who are affected, but whole communities. Culture—and especially a cultural construction—is a very public and collective entity, since the appropriation of meaning is in itself a public act.\textsuperscript{77} Thus, the resources of significance that culture provides apply to a wide audience of political actors, and such “publicly available meanings facilitate certain patterns of action, making them readily available.”\textsuperscript{78} With these frameworks for action on hand, individuals and communities find themselves galvanized together—as a common audience to the cultural message—collectively pushed towards action because of the collective nature of the entity that pushes them. Particularly in the context of shifting power dynamics and instances of resistance,\textsuperscript{79} (as with the period of the Chilean plebiscite) “cultural acts”—construction, apprehension, and utilization of cultural concepts—become “social events”\textsuperscript{80} and “cultural communities” necessarily become “participatory communities.”\textsuperscript{81} In this way, the polity is energized.

\textit{Harmonize}

In its second function, culture moves past simply inciting action to doing so in a harmonizing manner. Since individuals “make up selves from a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society,” cultural constructions serve to provide a common toolkit from which to draw notions of personal and group

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item Geertz, 12.
\item Swidler, 283.
\item Ortner, “Introduction,” 5.
\item Geertz, 91.
\end{thebibliography}
identity. Under such auspices, cultural constructions are able to especially facilitate cooperation and common enterprise.

Cultural constructions have powerful effects on individual identity: in addition to invoking it to galvanize an individual to action (as discussed above), they go further by shaping it and associating it with a larger collective identity. Thus, membership in a “cultural community” has the effect of structuring and shaping an individual’s conception of self. This manipulating influence transcends “across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions”—meaning that culture brings otherwise unlikely collaborators together through the re-ordering of self-perceptions within the cultural scheme. In Chile’s incredibly diverse and vast political spectrum, party leaders were able to collaborate to form a united opposition by invoking Chile’s political culture of democracy. Conceptualizing themselves as honest Chileans collectively reclaiming their cultural traditions of freedom, democracy served as a lowest common denominator and a piece of common ground for conservatives, reformists, and revolutionaries alike.

This harmonization through cultural identity serves a very useful purpose for actors in the political realm. Once political entities align themselves with a particular identity, they publicly convey a particular set of interests or preferences as being their own. Identities essentially “tell you and others who you are and they tell you who others are”; in doing so, the entities’ domain of action becomes

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82 Appiah, 21.
83 Parekh, 156.
84 Georgiou, 3.
Their choices are more “rigorously constrained by the webs of understanding of the practices, identities, and interests of other actors” and thus, their actions are inevitably more predictable. This allows political actors to associate more freely with each other, and embed actors within a particular group of people that identify in a similar manner under the same cultural scheme. In Chile, that common cultural scheme was embodied by *El Comando por el NO*, through which parties with normally very different political priorities were able to project the same common anti-authoritarian message, despite their differences. In this way, “ties of mutual expectations and common interests” bind actors together, and common bonds foster “a sense of solidarity.”

This effect of culture can go so far as to induce individuals to pursue societal goals in lieu of their own. Speaking in terms of coordination games, Sen argues that the sense of identity interlaid within a cultural construction becomes a central factor in determining players’ preferences, enabling the possibility that “the pursuit of private goals may well be compromised by the consideration of the goals of others in the group with whom the person has some sense of identity.” In fact, the “mores and rules of behaviour” generated by a collective cultural construct can serve to “drive a wedge between behaviour and welfare”—separating out the conflict between public and private interest, and inducing

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85 Hopf, 174.
86 Hopf, 177.
87 Parekh, 156.
88 Parekh, 156.
individuals to take the public interest as their own.\textsuperscript{90} Hence, with a strong sense of collective identity, players’ actions can be directed towards the collective interest and a “non-inferior outcome can well emerge” without formal contract or enforcement.\textsuperscript{91}

In fact, the game itself changes as identities co-opt individuals. Rather than taking the form of a classic Prisoner’s Dilemma, where individuals are constantly tempted (and indeed incentivized) to break their contract, the shift in preferences that cultural identities induce creates a new sort of game—the Assurance game (see Figure 1).\textsuperscript{92}

\[
\begin{bmatrix}
3,3 & 1,4 \\
4,1 & 2,2
\end{bmatrix}
\Rightarrow
\begin{bmatrix}
4,4 & 1,3 \\
3,1 & 2,2
\end{bmatrix}
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Prisoner’s Dilemma \quad \Rightarrow \quad \text{Assurance Game}

\textbf{Figure 1:} Collective cultural identities shift player preferences from the private interest (Prisoner’s Dilemma) to the public interest (Assurance Game).

In this novel arrangement, Sen explains, “Each prisoner will do the right thing if it is simply assured that the other is doing it too.”\textsuperscript{93} The game is no longer one of agonizing conflicting interests, but one of simple coordination—“it is in every

\textsuperscript{91} Sen, “Goals,” 349.
\textsuperscript{92} Avinash Dixit, and Susan Skeath, \textit{Games of Strategy} (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 108.
\textsuperscript{93} Sen, \textit{Choice}, 78.
individual’s private interest to take the socially best action”—and so the solution to the collective action problem becomes much more easily attainable.\footnote{Dixit & Skeath, 371.}

With coordination as the end goal, the cultural construct again plays an integral role in facilitating political harmony. An important prerequisite for success among actors in a coordination game is a mutual understanding of identity: the more a player knows about the other players, the more likely it is that he will trust them. Here, culture becomes an important factor by making “overt signals or symbols of identity” apparent. From “cultural diacritica’ such as language, religion, [and] rituals” to “underlying values, codes of ethics, or standards of morality,” the sharing of meanings within the cultural scheme facilitates trust between actors.\footnote{Janet T. Landa, \textit{Trust, Ethnicity, and Identity} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 16-7.} In his study of the Kula Ring of the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea, Landa observes this cultural symbolism in the appropriated significance of particular tribal gift-exchanging rituals as “symbols of individual and group identity” that help Kula partners identify each other as trustworthy colleagues.\footnote{Landa, xvii.} With such cultural symbols extant as definitive elements of players’ identities,\footnote{Landa.} players acquire greater confidence in the prospect of cooperation, facilitating a greater likelihood that they will land on the more favorable of the two equilibrium points.

In addition to the facilitation of mutual understanding and trust, cultural elements also function as signals in the coordination process. This is an integral function, since signaling lies at the crux of coordination. Consider this example

\footnote{Sen, “Goals.”}
from Schelling: Holmes and Moriarty are in different cars on the same train, and must get off at the same station. The two men cannot use logical or mathematical means to coordinate their disembarkment, and must instead align their behavior according to more ambiguous, circumstantial elements. In such a situation, the players’ success comes to depend “more on imagination than on logic, more on poetry or humor than on mathematics.”

This is where cultural elements come into play—they act as focal points upon which expectations converge. Depending upon the extant cultural construct—and the values, symbols, and norms it encompasses—players’ expectations can vary greatly, as in the case with maxims allocating resources: “divide equally, divide proportionally, do as we did last year, flip a coin.” The coordination of expectations is “meaningful rather than mystical”: players in coordination games are forced to draw from their cultural contexts to find a focal point for concerted action—a “clue to coordination” that makes one equilibrium the obvious choice—and so players who have the advantage of a shared cultural construct are better able to coordinate. A shared past culture of democracy and a projected hope for freedom in the future are what facilitated the positive coordination of the 17 Chilean opposition parties—their faith in that particular aspect of Chilean culture allowed them to trust one another and synchronize their motives. Since such cultural values “have the effect of

99 Elster, 105.
100 Schelling, 72.
101 Dixit & Skeath, 110.
102 Schelling, 90.
focusing and coordinating expectations,” and since “the ‘coordination’ of expectations is analogous to the ‘coordination’ of behavior,” cultural constructs harmonize political actors, allowing them to collaborate towards a common end.

With cooperation facilitated by the cultural construct, the “interests of powerful groups [are brought] into harmony with weaker groups,” and such political harmony can, then, be easily directed toward “a common political project.” Indeed, such collaboration under a “schema that is shared” is often necessary for any significant change, so strategies of action end up depending upon cultural models to style conceptions of self, peer relationship, and cooperation. Chilean cultural forms helped to mold a united opposition front at the level of the political party, but moreover, took this sense of unity to the populace through widespread artistic incorporation, participation, and the overarching democratic cultural message. For this reason, cultural constructions can be “deliberately created to forge a cohesive community”—culture proves to be an excellent facilitator of cooperation and harmony. In this way, culture harmonizes.

103 Elster, 105.
104 Schelling, 71.
105 Adler, 103.
106 Appiah, 29.
108 Swidler, 279.
109 Fennema and Tillie, 35.
Conclusion

Evolving from a mere description of circumstances and disposition to an instrument of social change, culture’s role in the political arena can be a surprisingly forceful one. With the ability to energize and harmonize disparate elements in society, culture can easily be envisioned to be a significant factor in the Chilean transition—a transition marked by lethargy and fragmentation. However, before understanding this role, I will first argue that culture necessarily played a role, by addressing existing explanations in the following chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

CREATING SPACE FOR THE THEORY: INSUFFICIENCIES IN EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

In the absence of cultural (and group) bonds, disgruntled individuals are likely to accept their lot, however grudgingly, or turn to individual, not collective, efforts to address their plight.\(^{110}\)

Introduction

In order to create a space for culture as an explanatory factor in the Chilean plebiscite, it is necessary to show that existing explanations are insufficient. The four main explanations of Pinochet’s fall attribute the plebiscite results to pressures from international actors, access to television media, concerns of the human rights constituency, and miscalculation on the part of Pinochet. In this chapter, I will show each of these explanations to be incomplete and lacking—none alone could be sufficiently responsible for unseating the dictator. While some elements of these explanations were important—and perhaps even necessary—factors in the opposition’s success, they each depended upon another factor—namely, culture—to forge a winning opposition movement.

International Pressures

The first explanation for Pinochet’s defeat in the plebiscite attributes decisive credit to international pressures. While pressures from abroad did exist in multiple forms—economic and political—they could not have solely been

responsible for Chile’s democratization, since such pressures neither had a direct hand in Chile’s internal politics nor were overwhelming, suffocating forces unable to be circumvented by Pinochet. Moreover, the longstanding nature of economic and political tensions from abroad casts doubt on the notion that these tensions were a variable during the time of the plebiscite rather than a background constant. Even during the time of the plebiscite itself, when they may be suspected to have had the most relevant role, the effects of international pressures paralleled those of internal pressures, and so were not necessarily essential to creating a safe and successful plebiscite.

Economic

It is the case with much of Latin America that economic dependence on foreign technology and resources yields nations vulnerable to the shifting concerns of dominant external powers.\textsuperscript{111} In the case of Chile, however, economic deftness and diversification allowed an economy characterized by “international openness” to remain both flexible and resilient.\textsuperscript{112} That, considered in addition to the constancy of economic sanctions over the political term of Pinochet—marking no dramatic changes around the time of the plebiscite—leads to the conclusion that international economic censure could not have been a decisive force in Pinochet’s defeat.

\textsuperscript{111} Eckstein, 52.
Particularly in the Chilean circumstance—where Pinochet’s neo-liberal economic policies drastically re-oriented the nation’s economic interests—one finds that much attention is directed towards the outside. Pinochet’s model opened foreign trade, restricted government intervention, and encouraged private initiative, allowing Chile to tap into international capital and attracting further foreign investment, but simultaneously tying Chile’s economy directly to “the fluctuations of international markets.”\textsuperscript{113}

By taking such dependency into account, the U.S. (among other powers) attempted to apply international pressure to the Pinochet regime through economic means. The Carter administration put special emphasis on negative incentives and sanctions, aiming to isolate Pinochet and punish his regime: In addition to an already extant embargo on arms sales and the training of military officers, the Carter administration, recalled the U.S. military mission in Chile, and retracted Export-Import Bank and Overseas Private Investment Corporation lending guarantees.\textsuperscript{114} The Reagan administration, skeptical of its predecessor, initially removed the latter two sanctions, using a friendly approach in its dealings with Pinochet, but ultimately received no reciprocity. As a result, in 1987, the Reagan administration itself finally resorted to sanctions—this time, mainly symbolic.\textsuperscript{115} In addition to such sanctions, the U.S. consistently acted to limit Chile’s access to international resources, repeatedly voting against or abstaining from loans for Chile in the World Bank and the Inter-American Development

\textsuperscript{113} Portales, C., 252.
\textsuperscript{115} Purcell, 56.
None of these measures truly riveted Chile in any significant way, however. In fact, their impact was minimal; simply put, “the economy did not crumble, ... the policy did not work, ... Pinochet did not change.”

Chile’s ability to remain relatively immune to foreign pressure had its foundations in the country’s exceptional development and economic success, which enabled Pinochet to circumvent sanctions and the like through tactical economic maneuvering in terms of acquiring international resources, diversifying trade sources, and capitalizing upon reputation. In the face of U.S. attempts to limit Chile’s resources, Chile simply sought out resources elsewhere. While governments expressed their disapproval through economic censure, the private sector continued to support Pinochet, with U.S., Western European, and Japanese banks lending generously to the regime. The health of Chile’s economy, particularly coming off of the 1977-1982 period of rapid growth dubbed as the Chilean “economic miracle” and again with its post-1983 recovery from brief recession, helped Chile to accrue a sort of “economic prestige”, facilitating its reincorporation into the international community. Held up as a model for development in the region, Chile gained the support of fellow Latin American countries, which did not join the U.S. in abstaining from World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank votes in the latter 1980s. Foreign exchange “swaps” and other novel measures further increased Chile’s prestige and gave the

117 Purcell, 56.
118 Purcell, 59.
country bargaining power. Playing the “economic card” allowed Chile to gain leverage in foreign debt negotiations and diversify its external connections (especially with regard to the purchase of arms), decreasing its dependency on any one particular country and expanding its overall resource pool. Chile’s economic model was so “widely admired in developed countries, international financial institutions, and the international business community” that Chile was able to use its economic position to its political advantage, essentially defeating the effect of sanctions.

Furthermore, outside attempts to pressure the regime through economic censure were longstanding—sanctions against the Pinochet regime stretched from the early 1970s through to the very end of the 1980s—equally ineffective in the entirety of their duration. Functionality aside, the sanctions remained in place, reduced to serving as mere symbols of hemispheric hegemonic power. In light of such constancy, there is simply not enough of a clear and concerted change in economic pressures—perceived or real—in the late 1980s to credit with inciting the democratic transition itself. Rather, it is clear is that Pinochet’s neo-liberal economic policies produced steady economic growth throughout the period of the regime, with the exception of a few years in the early 1980s, and sanctions (or economic pressures of any kind) could not—and did not—stop his success.

121 Portales, C., 268.
123 Portales, C., 267-8.
124 Purcell, 62.
126 Osvaldo Rosales, “La economía chilena. Tendencias y perspectivas,” in Chile Hacia El 2000:
Political

The political pressures applied to the Pinochet regime from abroad closely mirrored the economic pressures discussed above— but their superficial impact and longstanding status rendered them equally insufficient for explaining the results of the plebiscite.

While the Carter administration maintained a generally hostile disposition towards the dictatorship, U.S. attitudes in the post-Carter era would come to fluctuate with time. For a brief period at the turn of the decade, when Reagan came to power in the U.S. and Thatcher in the U.K., the nature of Chile’s political ties seemed to change in the nation’s favor. Both leaders—strong advocates of the free-market economy—initiated a “benevolent reorientation of their countries’ policies toward authoritarian regimes,” opting for what they called “quiet diplomacy” rather than outright hostility. While this reversal in tone and policy was intended to coax democratic change from the authoritarian regime (as opposed to demand it), the outcome remained the same: there was no change in the behavior of Pinochet. Soon after Pinochet declared a state of siege in Chile in 1984, Reagan’s policy reverted to one more similar to his predecessor’s: expressing disapproval of the military regime and asserting the value of democracy. Thus, the U.S. returned to Carter-style confrontational diplomacy. Ultimately, political pressures for democratization were continually applied by

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Portales, C., 252.

Purcell, 63.

Arriagada, Pinochet, 67.
different administrations over the duration of the regime; various tones and
techniques were used—hostile, benevolent, threatening, intimidating—but in the
dend, Pinochet emerged unscathed, his regime intact. Vague political pressures,
longstanding and on their own, could not oust Pinochet.

In terms of actions taken to promote democracy closer to the time of the
plebiscite itself, several events are worth mentioning as relevant and particular to
the circumstances. First, the amount of international political interest directed at
Chile at the time of the plebiscite was significant. The fact that many of Chile’s
political elite ended up in exile from their homeland “transferred the locus of
domestic politics outside the nation’s boundaries.”

Opposition activity from abroad, then, played a significant role in focusing the attention of international
public opinion and organizations on the Chilean situation.

Second, in the midst of such political interest from the outside,
international influences from the inside took a turn as well. Career diplomat
Harry Barnes was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Chile in 1985, marking a “major
setback” for the military regime. Barnes pushed strongly for a return to
democracy in Chile, speaking publicly and consulting with both opposition and
government forces.

Third, as the global spotlight shone on Chile, outside actors made political
gestures to affect the image of Chile’s various internal actors. U.S. government
officials “conspicuously received leaders of the main opposition political parties,”

130 Portales, C., 251.
131 Arriagada, Pinochet, 67-8.
and the U.S. applied diplomatic pressures through “open and discrete messages, through declarations in Washington and Santiago, through symbolic acts, and through pronouncements in international organizations.” Such signaling was not unidirectional, however. Pinochet retorted with his own show of international support and solidarity: creating networks among developed countries through right-wing sympathizers in the U.S., West Germany, and England; countering high-profile visits of critical leaders with tours from those who supported the regime; and doing his best to balance the image of Chile on the world stage—all of which helped to “blunt” the other political pressures being thrust upon the Chilean government.

It is important to recognize, however, that each of these aspects—increased international attention, increased internal attention, and gestures aimed at influencing Chile’s image abroad—was extremely limited in terms of its actual ability to affect the plebiscite and its result. No aspect spoke to or was concerned with the Chilean people directly; none persuaded them to come together in political expression and vote NO. Instead, such political pressures were largely confined to the sphere of international political gesticulation, and fell fall short of catalyzing tangible change. The necessary work for winning the plebiscite itself—unifying and galvanizing the Chilean populace—still had to be done.

**Electoral Enforcement**

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133 Portales, C., 258.
134 Portales, C., 267.
International pressures are often credited with having ensured that the results of the plebiscite would be followed, particularly in the case that the military regime lost. Indeed, a certain amount of assurance that the results would be enforced can be attributed to anxieties over what was an implicit warning that “the United States might reject the announced result of the plebiscite if it were produced by fraudulent or undemocratic” means.\textsuperscript{135} Such enforcement pressures certainly were extant. However, these pressures existed internally as well, and arguably, more compellingly, because they were—to a certain extent—self-imposed by the regime:

Because the Chilean armed forces feel strongly that the 1980 Constitution is their legacy to the nation and take very seriously the importance of strict adherence to legal norms and constitutional precepts, they would strongly resist any departure from the norms set forth in that document.\textsuperscript{136}

In addition to this recognized and pervasive respect for the law, enforcement pressures also came from internal non-governmental institutions like the Church, the opposition, and civic groups like Participa and Civitas. In order for the military regime to gain the minimum “modicum of credibility and legitimacy” which was the plebiscite’s intent, it was forced to consider such pressures.\textsuperscript{137} Thus, in the end, enforcement of the vote emerged as much—or more—from the regime’s own respect for its Constitution, and internal pressures demanding a fair result, as from international expectations. Thus, enforcement of the vote was not necessarily dependent on international pressures.

\textsuperscript{135} Purcell, 69.
Plebiscite Environment

An important component of ensuring a feasible plebiscite was ensuring that the environment surrounding the plebiscite was a safe one. Concededly, international actors made special efforts to encourage the existence of proper safeguards during the election period: “A climate of freedom and fair competition must be established many months before the actual balloting takes place,” declared the U.S. Secretary of State, “[with] freedom of assembly, association, and expression [in place].”\(^{138}\) Moreover, the presence of “hundreds of foreign observers” (and the need to satisfy them) added validity to the entire process.\(^ {139}\) But equally fervent demands for electoral safeguards came from internal forces, too, such as the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, the Committee for Free Elections, and the opposition political parties— and each was equipped with an army of hundreds of thousands of volunteers committed to maintaining free and fair elections.\(^ {140}\) In this way, international pressures joined with domestic forces to set a proper stage for the plebiscite and ensure legitimate conditions surrounding the election process—the task of winning that election remained to be explained by, among others, cultural forces.\(^ {141}\)

Support for Internal Actors

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\(^{138}\) U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz, quoted in Portales, C., 265.
\(^ {139}\) Portales, C., 267.
\(^ {141}\) Portales, C., 265.
Thus far, international pressures have been confined to indirect, passive, or background effects, influencing the conditions surrounding the actual plebiscite, but not intervening directly. One aspect in which this boundary is traversed is in international forces’ support for internal actors. The Chilean opposition enjoyed “worldwide support” from international public opinion and most foreign organizations and governments of Western nations concertedly backed and encouraged opposition forces in lieu of the military regime.\textsuperscript{142} External influences “encouraged citizens’ campaigns for the October plebiscite”\textsuperscript{143} and facilitated voter registration through agencies such as the Center for Free Elections in Latin America and Civitas, which received $1.2 million from the Agency for International Development.\textsuperscript{144} It is important to remember, however, that Chilean democratization was “neither the only nor often the most important foreign policy goal of any other nation.”\textsuperscript{145} It was not the intention of international actors that they themselves be responsible for unseating Pinochet—for they already knew that “external forces could not destabilize the regime.”\textsuperscript{146} Rather, such forces could only peripherally advocate for gradual transition. The final aim was to facilitate a process “that Chileans on their own could successfully complete.”\textsuperscript{147} For, the real work of democratization—and the ability of the United States and other international forces to contribute—was dependent upon the Chilean people: “the United States can only follow their lead; it cannot, and

\textsuperscript{142} Arriagada, \textit{Pinochet}, 173.
\textsuperscript{143} Portales, C., 270.
\textsuperscript{144} Purcell, 69.
\textsuperscript{145} Portales, C., 257.
\textsuperscript{146} Portales, C., 270.
\textsuperscript{147} Portales, C., 257.
should not, get out in front of them.” In a situation such as with the organization of opposition forces, it was only after the main opposition parties signed the National Accord for a Transition to Full Democracy of 1985 that the U.S. was able to more fervently and forwardly implement concordant policies encouraging democratization. Ultimately, the role of international pressures was, at best, a secondary one: “The massive marshalling of popular will that brought democracy back [to Chile] was a force whose leadership and energy came from within. It was not somehow stimulated and directed from the outside.”

While international pressures were extant in various forms throughout the extent of the Pinochet regime, and during the time of the transition, the real work of winning the plebiscite had to be done from the inside. Economic and political strains from abroad could not have brought about tangible change in the way that social actors of the internal Chilean opposition were able to do. The opposition movement was necessary to address the Chilean populace intimately and confront Pinochet directly; moreover, it was the movement’s adroit use of culture to galvanize a vast polity that led to success.

**Media Access**

A second explanation of the military regime’s downfall credits media spots with the key role in the opposition win. Media time, alone, could not have won a plebiscite, although it is appropriate to recognize their importance in terms

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148 Purcell, 73.
149 Purcell, 65.
of getting the opposition message out. Especially in light of the heavily restricted media coverage of the opposition prior to the plebiscite, the media time made available during the election period was quite significant. Even more significant, however, was the use of that time: a single, unified opposition employed valuable airtime to project a culturally framed message of hope and solidarity.

**Previous Restriction of Media**

The media opportunities made available to the opposition during the time of the transition came in stark contrast to the nature of media coverage under Pinochet, which was dominated by the regime. In a study conducted in June and August of 1986 monitoring mainstream media coverage of two weeks marked by mass mobilization, strikes, and national protest, the military regime emerges as the dominant source of information, with the opposition hardly covered despite its vigorous activities (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Percentages</th>
<th>Channel 7</th>
<th>Channel 11</th>
<th>Channel 13</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<td>82%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<td>ii) Opposition</td>
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<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>iii) Church</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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The disparity is rather bleak: for Channel 7 (Televisión Nacional de Chile), “the opposition did not exist.” The news organization simply “never concerned itself with ... a political or social organization that was expressive of the Chilean...
opposition.” For Channel 13 (Corporación de Televisión de la Universidad Católica de Chile), it was a similar scenario—opposition forces were completely ignored, but for one reference to human rights infringements related to detentions.\textsuperscript{151} Only Channel 11 (Corporación de Televisión de la Universidad de Chile) provided a few (literally two or three) opportunities in which community leaders associated with the opposition had a voice.\textsuperscript{152} Still, mainstream media averages amounted to 76 percent government coverage versus 3 percent opposition coverage; “the quantitative analysis is conclusive: information on television is controlled by the military government and excludes any significant political opposition.”\textsuperscript{153}

What is more, in instances when opposition activity increased—such as during a civil strike—coverage became even more imbalanced.

**Table 2.** Distribution of television airtime by topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Week of June 2- June 6 (TV 1)</th>
<th>Week of June 20- July 4 (TV 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Channel 7</td>
<td>Channel 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV 1</td>
<td>TV 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Government sources increased from 33 percent of total airtime before the mobilization to 48 percent of total airtime after the mobilization (see Table 2), considerably increasing the military regime’s media presence. In these instances,

\textsuperscript{151} Portales and Egaña, 9-10.
\textsuperscript{152} Portales and Egaña, 10.
\textsuperscript{153} Portales and Egaña, 10.
the opposition essentially underwent “disqualification as a social actor”,\textsuperscript{154} as almost half of all information transmitted over the media was “the opinion of the authorities”.\textsuperscript{155}

\textit{Airtime and Its Significance}

In comparison to such conditions, the guarantee of fifteen minutes of free airtime each day provided by the Voting and Scrutiny Law passed in 1988 marked a significant improvement in the opposition’s access to public opinion.\textsuperscript{156} The additional time made available by state-controlled television stations for debate on national politics—though limited—further boosted the opposition’s media presence. In a state of repression where millions of citizens otherwise “excluded from production, consumption, and politics, subdued by mere subsistence, and reclusive in the face of overt force” found television as their primary window to the world,\textsuperscript{157} these measures played a key role: in “unleashing the political liberalization and democratic transition”\textsuperscript{158} embodied by the plebiscite. The media time was “crucial to the opposition’s victory.”\textsuperscript{159}

However, what made that time valuable was the manner in which it was used. Such media openings were neither decisive nor determinative of the plebiscite’s result all in their own. For, the availability of media spots, by itself, did not ensure an opposition victory; rather, it was the manner in which the

\textsuperscript{154} Portales and Egaña, 15.
\textsuperscript{155} Portales and Egaña, 30.
\textsuperscript{156} Portales, C., 267.
\textsuperscript{157} Eugenio Tironi, \textit{El Liberalismo Real: La sociedad chilena y el régimen militar} (Santiago: Ediciones SUR, 1986), 89-90.
\textsuperscript{158} Eugenio Tironi, \textit{El Régimen Autoritario: Para una sociología de Pinochet} (Santiago: Dolmen Ediciones, 2000), 95.
\textsuperscript{159} Portales, C., 267.
opposition wielded those spaces that was the real key to triumph. Here, culture came to play an important role, using the acclaimed “el punto de encuentro de todos los chilenos” (television) to push a unified democratic agenda.\textsuperscript{160}

\textit{Cultural Unification and Framing of the Media Message}

An important aspect of the opposition media campaign during the plebiscite was its unity: One of the reasons social and political opposition organizations had such enormous difficulty obtaining airtime access in previous instances was fragmentation: “groups that generated half of the national news were diffused among themselves.”\textsuperscript{161} In this sense, the opposition’s initial media presence was to a certain extent a reflection of reality—a non-unified group of actors could maintain, at best, an “almost ghostly” social presence.\textsuperscript{162} If such fragmentation had persisted through the period of the plebiscite, the law, which guaranteed “a minimum of television access to all parties”, would simply have facilitated a fragmented array of opposition messages.\textsuperscript{163} In reality, the contrary occurred. Unified under a common cultural construct, the opposition coalition was able to project a single cohesive opposition message, to simply vote NO. As cultural forces were mainly responsible for the forging of political party harmonization in the first place—embodied in the creation of the \textit{Comando por el NO}—such appeals to common-ground notions like Chile’s political culture of

\textsuperscript{160} Tironi, \textit{El Liberalismo}, 90.
\textsuperscript{161} Portales and Egaña, 60.
\textsuperscript{162} Portales and Egaña, 33.
\textsuperscript{163} Tironi, \textit{El Régimen}, 91.
democracy transformed the media into “a great vehicle for mass mobilization,” promoting harmony among the masses. Furthermore, the media’s impact on “morale and self-image of movement activists” and its role as a channel “through which alternative views, symbols, and meanings get expressed” made it an important means of helping to shape collective identity, and promote the collective cultural construct of the opposition. By combating the political propaganda of Pinochet in this way, the opposition was able to wield the media “as a function of integration and cultural stimulation.”

It is important to note that “in communities where cultural traditions reinforce a common identity and a spirit of resistance, collective defiance against commonly held grievances is likely even in the absence of media access.” This considered, culture takes its place at the root and spirit of a resistance, as media broadcasts that spirit to the periphery. While it is important to acknowledge the facilitative role of the media in the opposition campaign—through its provision of access to the public sphere—the effectiveness of the media campaign ultimately came to be contingent upon the effectiveness of the cultural campaign. In the end, the content of the media spots mattered more than their simple existence. Consequently, the opposition’s culturally driven harmonization of political actors and projection of a unified, galvanizing message was the real key to its success.

164 Tironi, El Régimen, 95.
165 Eckstein, 35.
167 Eckstein, 36.
Human Rights

A third explanation for the result of the plebiscite focuses on the human rights struggle. In light of the Pinochet regime’s long history of human rights violations, and a concomitantly long history of failed human rights advocacy on the part of opposition forces, human rights (as an issue) proves unconvincing as a fire-starter of the opposition. Instead, the issue came to coalesce with the larger opposition movement for democratization, taking its place not at the forefront but as a component part of the vast coalition for the NO, effectively incorporated into its cultural of resistance.

A Long History of Infringements

By the time of the plebiscite, Chile had already acquired a long history of human rights infringement. The Pinochet regime was quick to impose a “state of internal war” upon the nation after overtaking the government in 1973; and in the mere first months of its reign, the regime had been credited with several thousand deaths (though the precise figures are yet to be known).\(^{168}\) The state of siege became a political norm throughout most of Pinochet’s dictatorship, and detentions and assassinations only increased as popular protests intensified in the early 1980s.\(^{169}\) Forms of human rights violations varied from torture and

\(^{168}\) Martínez and Díaz, 13.

excessive force, to targeted repression of rebellious neighborhoods,\textsuperscript{170} to high profile political assassinations, to incredible brutalities such as the “slit throats” case of 1985 and the “burned ones” case of 1986.\textsuperscript{171} The violations were relentless, as Resolution 32/118 of the United Nations General Assembly described:

\begin{quote}
The Chilean people continues to be the object of constant and flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental liberties, the absence of adequate constitutional and judicial safeguards to their rights and liberties, attempts against the liberty and integrity of the individual, in particular through methods of systematic intimidation, including torture, disappearance of people for political reasons, arbitrary arrests, detentions, exile and deprivation of Chilean nationality.\textsuperscript{172}
\end{quote}

Ultimately, human rights infringements came to be recognized as a regularity under Pinochet’s authoritarian reign.

\textit{No Compelling Effect}

Despite such extensive violations of human rights on the part of the regime, human rights grievances could not, in themselves, unseat Pinochet. Wide-spread backing for a United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR) special rapporteur for Chile\textsuperscript{173} created an increased scrutiny, and a 1986 US-sponsored UNHCR resolution denouncing Chile’s human rights abuses\textsuperscript{174} sought to “punish and isolate” the Pinochet regime, intending to push them towards a restoration of human rights and democratic processes.\textsuperscript{175}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{170} Example: The annual number of arrests in the Catholic Vicariate of Solidarity went from fewer than 1000 in 1976 to 1213 in 1982, to 4537 in 1983, 5291 in 1984, 5314 in 1985, and 7019 in 1986 — a sevenfold increase.
\textsuperscript{171} Portales, C., 264.
\textsuperscript{172} Resolution 32/118, United Nations General Assembly, quoted in Martínez and Díaz, 15-6.
\textsuperscript{173} Purcell, 58.
\textsuperscript{174} Purcell, 66.
\textsuperscript{175} Purcell, 58.
\end{footnotes}
Moreover, throughout the years of the regime, international efforts to support Chilean human rights organizations—from the Committee for Peace at the start of the regime, to the Vicariate of Solidarity later, and finally the Chilean Commission for Human Rights at the end\textsuperscript{176}—were extant. Regardless, these measures simply did not catalyze change. In fact, concerns expressed by the international community were duly rebuffed with internal support. Early in the regime’s governing period (1978), as the military became the subject of numerous human rights criticisms, Pinochet called a “national consultation”, presenting the populace with the following referendum proposition:

\begin{quote}
In the face of international aggressions against our country, I support President Pinochet in his defense of the dignity of Chile and reaffirm the legitimacy of the government of the republic as sovereign leader in the process of institutionalization of the country.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

Despite the international context of human rights condemnations, Chileans responded with a resounding 75 percent affirmation—a clear win for Pinochet—and a message that the populace was willing to condone human rights violations for the sake of greater security.\textsuperscript{178} Indeed, this sense of tradeoff helps to explain why human rights offenses were not able to incite an upheaval on their own: infringements were, to a certain extent, considered a necessary evil. With regard to the desirability of the military regime, the political stability and economic performance it provided made individuals inclined to “vote for ‘the devil they know.’”\textsuperscript{179} In this sense, the violation of human rights became routine—“as much

\textsuperscript{176} Portales, C., 270.
\textsuperscript{177} Martínez and Díaz, 15-6.
\textsuperscript{178} Valenzuela, 40.
in the relationship between state and society as in the consciousness of the population”\textsuperscript{180}—complacently accepted as part of the Chilean way of life.

\textit{Incorporation into the Cultural Movement}

Though human rights issues, by themselves, did not prove compelling enough to be at the forefront of the opposition movement, they were incorporated into the greater cultural construct projected by the coalition for the NO. For many human rights victims and advocates—ostracized, displaced, “socially and politically excluded from the national culture”—the opposition campaign provided a social place and a political base (and a common culture) from which to move forward.\textsuperscript{181} Identifying as part of the larger holistic opposition movement, activists’ individual grievances became collectively shared. Under the construct of common values, customs, and beliefs that formed the opposition’s “so-called culture of resistance”, human rights infringements evolved into “collective views of violated rights.”\textsuperscript{182} Such exposure and interaction with a ‘collective’ was particularly significant since many human rights grievances were previously confined only to the politically weak; now, forming part of a collective cultural opposition movement strengthened human rights activists and their cause.\textsuperscript{183} This notion of collectivity was in itself significant to such activists, since the emphasis behind protest messages from groups like \textit{Familiares de los Desaparecidos} was

\textsuperscript{180} Tironi, \textit{El Liberalismo}, 80-1.
\textsuperscript{183} Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley, 40.
that rights violations singled out individuals, broke down the solidarity of the
citizenry, and vacated the public sphere.\textsuperscript{184} With an opposition movement
fighting vigorously and collectively against such repression, human rights
activists were able to participate in the re-definition of the public sphere and the
re-conceptualization of Chile’s future—a meaning-making process that involved
confronting the past (“collective self-understanding”) as much as reshaping the
Chilean identity of the future.\textsuperscript{185} In this way, cultural forms of resistance provided
an avenue through which human rights victims and advocates were able to—
indeed, were inclined to—express themselves: “people in subordinate positions ...
generate ballads, folktales, popular theater, religious rites, and other cultural
forms that express their sense of their rights and rights-violations.”\textsuperscript{186} Such
cultural repertoires served to shape collective conceptions of rights and
contributed as part of the larger cultural thrust of the opposition movement.
Ultimately, human rights concerns were incorporated into the opposition’s
promotion of free expression and invocation of Chilean democratic political
culture. Thus, the demand for human rights “coalesced” with the greater
movement for democratic governance.\textsuperscript{187}

Human rights infringements had an entrenched existence in Chilean
society and were a prevalent concern for its citizens, but they had yet to serve as

\textsuperscript{186} Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley, 7.
an effective foundation for anti-Pinochet fervor. Their incorporation into the opposition campaign—through cultural agency—allowed for a broader, more effective democratization movement and helped human rights activists better serve their cause by making their concerns collective. Ultimately, culture helped bring groups like that of the human rights advocates together with other social forces, so that an opposition win would be a win for all.

**Pinochet’s Miscalculation**

A fourth explanation for Pinochet’s failure in the plebiscite points to miscalculation on the dictator’s part: that Pinochet underestimated the strength of the opposition movement and overestimated his own popularity among voters, leading to the mistaken belief that the dictator would win the contest. Considering the underlying fragmentation and consistent failure of opposition forces in the mid-1980s, Pinochet had reasonable cause to expect success. Despite that, as an incumbent facing an enervated polity, even without real effort, Pinochet would have reaped victory from the biases of the status quo. Therefore, it was not simply miscalculation on the part of Pinochet that brought about the plebiscite results—it was an active cultural campaign by the opposition—designed to overcome past weakness of fragmentation and enervation—that forged a triumph.
Expectations

The plebiscite was indeed designed “to consecrate and prolong, not to terminate” Pinochet’s authoritarian reign. Its inclusion in the 1980 Constitution served as a check for legitimacy; to a certain extent, Pinochet had to believe that he would win, or “precipitously alter the rules of the game altogether.” Hence, Pinochet proceeded, submitting himself to referendum, confident that he would gain legitimacy as voters confirmed him in office. Having survived as dictator thus far, Pinochet maintained the optimistic expectation that the military regime and its opponents “will learn to live together in the 1990s.”

Assessment of the Opposition: Fragmentation

While unreasonable in retrospect, Pinochet’s expectations were not completely unfounded. In fact, the opposition movement had yet to prove itself as a capable social force. Its pervasive fragmentation and repeated failure to organize efficiently provided ample grounds for doubt. Throughout the early 1980s, the Chilean opposition was “divided, fragmented, disoriented, frustrated” and generally incompetent. Political leaders disagreed “across party lines” as

well as “within their own parties” and among themselves. There was no consensus on the actual purpose of opposition protests, as more moderate groups initiated movements to “create social pressure to bring the government to negotiate” while other more radical groups intended protest to be “the first step in a policy of mass insurrection,” refusing negotiation altogether. Different sectors of the opposition became fearful of and alienated by each other: the middle classes’ dread of unleashing “the stored-up hatred of the pobladores [poor masses]” acted as “an effective brake” on their opposition activity; the poblaciones [shantytowns] remained “isolated, weak, and unfinanced;” the opposition movement, in its vastness, became “increasingly distant from the social forces” that necessitated it; and civil society came to fear “its own self-destructive tendencies.” From the first major uprising in May of 1983 to the last major protest in July 1986, opposition activity was marked by “growing social segmentation of the protests”—certain demonstrations were led by the middle-classes, others by poblaciones, others by moderate democrats, and still others by paramilitary groups or university students or church-goers. Lack of unity among these various social sectors left mobilizations vulnerable to quick suppression, and indeed, each amounted (at most) to a short-lived aberration in Pinochet’s strongman rule. The opposition movement as a whole was set back

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193 Drake and Jaksic, 6.
194 Arriagada, Negociacion, 4.
196 Arriagada, Pinochet, 61.
197 Martínez and Díaz, 19.
198 Martínez and Díaz, 32.
199 Arriagada, Negociacion, 1.
200 Martínez and Díaz, 32.
201 Arriagada, Negociacion, 2.
upon news of a 1986 assassination attempt on Pinochet and the discovery of Communist party arms arsenals, eliciting, among other things, public sympathy for the dictator.\textsuperscript{202} As opposition activity fell into a cyclical pattern of defeat,\textsuperscript{203} fragmentation and impotence became its icons: “no one would have predicted the opposition’s takeover in the 1990s.”\textsuperscript{204} Not even the Chilean populace: a 1987 public opinion poll showed most Chileans to be “convinced” that the dictator would prevail.\textsuperscript{205}

\textit{The Burden of the Win: Lethargy}

Such glum disposition among the Chilean people begets an additional implication for the plebiscite: even if Pinochet had underestimated the opposition’s strength and ability to coalesce, his miscalculation by itself could not have conceded the election—the lethargy of the Chilean populace had “tilted the balance in favor of the status quo.”\textsuperscript{206} Consequently, the ‘burden of the win’ (so to speak) was on the opposition: it was beset with the task of convincing a disheartened Chilean populace that democratization was possible.

Had the opposition failed to launch an active, energizing campaign, it would have suffered a sure defeat. Chilean civil society was suffering from demoralization and resignation,\textsuperscript{207} and the perception was widespread that “the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{202} Arriagada, \textit{Pinochet}, 175.
\bibitem{204} Drake and Jaksic, 6.
\bibitem{205} Valenzuela, 45.
\bibitem{206} Martínez and Díaz, 20.
\bibitem{207} Arriagada, \textit{Pinochet}, 78.
\end{thebibliography}
regime would last indefinitely." Internationally respected opinion polls from 1987 show the complexity of the situation:

The opposition had three times more support than Pinochet, yet most Chileans believed that the dictator would remain in power beyond 1989. The striking disparity between what Chileans consider politically desirable and what they consider possible offers dramatic testimony to the effects of fifteen years of ‘political recess’ in a country once justly proud of its democratic tradition.209

Potential voters expressed hopelessness and apathy in light of Pinochet’s overwhelming authoritarian power: “People said, ‘Why ... should we register again? I wish that I could vote NO, but Pinochet is going to make it. He is going to win. He is the dictator. He has the power.’”210 This notion was prevalent throughout the public sphere, the popular impression being that “there was ‘no way out’.”211 In the face of such social fatigue, passivity on the part of the opposition—even with the benefit of a miscalculation by Pinochet—would have inevitably resulted in an incumbent victory. To win, the opposition undertook the formidable charge of energizing the populace—an energy forged through cultural means.

Pinochet had reasonable grounds to expect a win in the plebiscite, having designed the process as a mechanism for prolonging rule and having smote the opposition forces several times before. Nevertheless, allowing for the possibility that Pinochet had miscalculated, the dictator failing to put out the necessary effort to win would not have resulted in democratization: the opposition had to put in the effort, or lose. Thus, due credit for the opposition’s success goes to the

208 Garretón, *Incomplete*, 123.
210 Walker.
211 Salman, “Culture,” 236.
opposition movement itself, which—using cultural means—pulled through with the burden of harmonizing a fragmented conglomerate of social forces and energizing an enervated populace to vote the dictator out.

**Conclusion**

Neither international pressures, nor media access, nor human rights advocacy, nor pure miscalculation, can be wholly credited with defeating Pinochet. These factors are, at best, important parts of a greater holistic strategy designed by the opposition—a strategy inevitably involving some other factor responsible for bringing energy and harmony to the movement. With each of the existing explanations shown to be lacking, the door is now open for a cultural explanation.
Politics is never purely instrumental and representative; it always has an affective aspect, and an aspect of historical creation. In conditions of social dissolution—like those of Chile today—that last dimension of politics acquires special relevance: the discourses, organization, and leadership in effect are those that draw from cultural synthesis, from collective representations, from rituals and institutions, setting off to recreate a national community that is tolerant, secular, and democratic.\(^{212}\)

**Introduction**

Cultural construction in Chile did not begin with the opposition movement. In fact, Pinochet was aggressively broadcasting his own notion of Chilean identity during the latter part of his regime, while repressing alternative interpretations. Nevertheless, popular cultural expression survived in Chile throughout the duration of the military regime, and re-emerged with full force during the time of the plebiscite. As part of its strategy of action, the opposition utilized specific elements from Chile’s fluid cultural repertoire of values, forms, and symbols to forge a powerful culture of resistance. These elements each individually, and together, contributed to the overwhelming energy and solid harmony of the opposition movement.

**Culture under Pinochet**

**Repression**

The Pinochet regime was very keen on limiting the cultural expression (both in terms of values and forms) passed down to them from the previous

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\(^{212}\) Tironi, *El Liberalismo*, 162.
democratic period. In terms of suppressing Chile’s political culture of
democracy, the regime was quick to assert its domination over democratic
tendencies. Upon ascending to power, it suspended the activities of all political
parties, and subsequently “banned them altogether.”\textsuperscript{213} Unyielding pressures on
the populace from above resulted in “severe limitation in citizens’ participation”
and, in many cases, “social organizations were dismantled.”\textsuperscript{214} Through coercion,
sweep-and-search operations, and acts of state terrorism, military rulers were able
to “intimidate the poblaciones and deactivate the protests.”\textsuperscript{215} “The social sectors
that defended democracy were expelled from the public space and were placed
under permanent observation.”\textsuperscript{216} Ultimately, the Pinochet regime targeted all of
Chile’s “traditional vehicles of democratic political culture”—political parties,
labor unions, student activists, neighborhood organizations—and subjected them
to severe repression.\textsuperscript{217}

Pinochet also sought to extinguish Chile’s creative cultural side, attacking
various forms of cultural media. Chilean society went from enjoying a free flow
of information to acute censorship; indeed, “all artistic and communication
processes have been affected by censorship and self-censorship.”\textsuperscript{218} Pushing
cultural artists and producers to the margin, the regime’s suppressive

\textsuperscript{213} Ronald H. McDonald and J. Mark Ruhl, “Chile,” in \textit{Party Politics and Elections in Latin
\textsuperscript{214} Portales, C., 251.
\textsuperscript{215} Arriagada, \textit{Pinochet}, 64.
\textsuperscript{216} Manuel A. Jofre, “Culture, Art, and Literature in Chile: 1973-1985,” in “Cultural Production
and the Struggle for Hegemony,” special issue, \textit{Latin American Perspectives} 16, no. 2 (Spring
1989): 73.
\textsuperscript{217} Wren, 146.
\textsuperscript{218} Jofre, 74.
determination “suffocated individual creativity.”

Forms of repression included “the proscription and sometimes burning of ‘dangerous’ books and artistic creations,” the disarticulation of dissenting theatrical traditions, “the prohibition against broadcasting and even possessing recordings of such music as the Nueva Canción Chilena,” among other things. Artistic creation became very limited, particularly because, “in all artistic fields, the maestros were forced to leave.”

Soon, repressive strategies shifted from mere exclusion to utter prohibition:

The process of exclusion also adopted the (more dynamic) modality of prohibition: [involving] censure of publications and TV; prohibition of works of theater and certain types of songs, etc.; discrimination against artists of the opposition in the mass media; [and] legal exclusion of certain currents of thought.

Overall, the Pinochet regime initiated a fundamental “alteration of the national communication apparatus” such that all cultural expression was to be funneled through authoritarian channels, and Chile’s artistic world was indefinitely reordered through the physical elimination of cultural agents, the subjective deterioration of working conditions, and the allowance or prohibition of certain forms and contents in artistic messages.

Promotion

Repression, though drastic and time-consuming, did not mark the end of the Pinochet regime’s treatment of culture; rather, Pinochet promoted a cultural

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219 Tironi, El Liberalismo, 85.
220 Roniger, 186.
221 Isabel Suazo, personal interview with the author, 25 August 2004. Suazo was a student of ballet during the time of the military regime. She is now a professional ballerina, and teaches and performs dance.
222 Tironi, El Liberalismo, 89.
223 Jofre, 73.
224 Jofre, 74.
policy of his own, attempting to instill in the citizenry a sense of nationalistic allegiance to the patria [fatherland] and sanctify such nationalism through Chilean cultural tropes. In fact (and perhaps surprisingly), with Pinochet, culture “began to be used as an organic, politically cohesive strategy” for the promotion of the national regime.\textsuperscript{225} Setting a context for his form of Chilean modernization, Pinochet drew from the construct of the rural Chilean tradition, invoking the notion of the huaso [the herdsman and farmhand] to denote “hard work, sacrifice, and struggle to the campesino [peasant], and power, leisure and privilege to the hacendado [landowner].”\textsuperscript{226} Intentionally delineating such fragmentation as part of the Chilean collective identity created “an obstacle to the possibility of integrating the different parts of Chilean society in a functioning whole”\textsuperscript{227}—precisely what the opposition had to challenge during the time of the transition. Moreover, the vision of the huaso promoted not only the authoritarian societal structure, but also the values necessary for that structure to thrive: values drawn from a constructed notion of rural Chile that “clashes with the values of Chile’s liberal democracy.”\textsuperscript{228} Emphasis was placed upon “individual standards and hierarchies of obedience (in the face of repression) and utility (in the face of the market)” and accordingly adapted to apply to the authoritarian, market-driven Chile of Pinochet.\textsuperscript{229} Indeed, Pinochet’s authoritarian “policies of cultural

\textsuperscript{225} Jofre, 74.
\textsuperscript{227} Sznajder, 211.
\textsuperscript{228} Sznajder, 205-6.
\textsuperscript{229} Tironi, El Liberalismo, 89.
production” — promoted primarily through means of state-controlled television media—underscored the importance of government policy and the free market, and consciously curtailed the role of intellectuals and artists in society. For Pinochet, the ultimate goal of cultural production was not to create an active, cohesive populace; on the contrary, he aimed at creating a state of “dis-aggregation and atomization of individuals from symbols of political and economic power” for the sake of political and economic gain. In this dictatorial paradigm, citizens were to be “receptive and passive” subjects of the authoritarian nation.

**Survival**

Despite harsh repression of democratic values and cultural expression, and particularly despite Pinochet’s push for a Chilean culture of authoritarianism, popular culture managed to survive throughout the years of the regime, until finally re-emerging and conquering the public sphere at the time of the plebiscite. In fact, the military regime’s repressive policies did not block the creation of cultural messages or popular expression so much as it inhibited their free diffusion. Various grass-roots organizations and independent artists kept the opposition spirit alive, continuing their activities underground throughout the

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authoritarian period.\textsuperscript{235} As public settings for cultural articulation became limited, “an internal search for culture began,” with venues of expression materializing in alternative spaces and covert gatherings.\textsuperscript{236} Likewise, the conglomerate of disparate social organizations extant at the time persistently kept “awake the spirit of the struggle” among different sectors of society.”\textsuperscript{237} In this way, ironically, Pinochet’s shutting down of “standard political channels” produced new modes of democratic promotion in fresh underground cultural movements that were “uncontrolled by traditional” constructs.\textsuperscript{238} These “new symbolic spaces” helped in “reconnecting [individuals] with the historical past.”\textsuperscript{239} Thus, even the democratic disposition of the Chilean people endured—notwithstanding weaknesses exposed through the military takeover and “disenchantment about democracy due to the maintenance of ‘authoritarian enclaves’”—Chileans expressed “positive views of the content of democracy” instead of rejecting the regime type as a failure altogether.\textsuperscript{240} Thus, key cultural elements of the opposition lasted through the dictatorial period of Pinochet’s authoritarianism, resisting the repressive might of the military regime:

The repressive nature of the dictatorship did not succeed in preventing opposition sector spaces of social, cultural and political expression. In other words, the state did not absorb society; it repressed, excluded, and controlled it. The expressions of civil society and its organizations were not quelled, though they were

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{236} Suazo.
\textsuperscript{237} Tironi, \textit{El Liberalismo}, 119.
\textsuperscript{238} Drake and Jaksic, 8.
\textsuperscript{239} Jofre, 71.
\end{flushleft}
restricted, and above all, systems of representation before the state were eliminated.241

Ultimately, when this culture finally re-emerged with full force during the time of the transition, it was neither isolated nor novel: it was already rooted in Chilean society— it had simply been in hiding.242 Hence, “the Pinochet dictatorship merely made popular culture more visible,” as the cultural aspect of the opposition campaign fought the authoritarian nationalist push of Pinochet, “it did not produce it.”243 In the end, winning the plebiscite was about winning the a priori spot in cultural concepts of the Chilean collective identity. As Sahlins stated, “Reference to the world is an act of classification.”244 The opposition simply had the task of ensuring that certain elements of Chilean culture—popular expression through cultural forms and symbols and a political culture of democracy—persisted and conquered the remaining others— those used for authoritarian justification.

**Values: Political Culture of Democracy**

**A Long History of Democracy**

As a defining element in its political culture, Chile has a long history of democracy. Stemming from Portales’ vision of the republic,245 a participatory, system-oriented, multi-party democratic rule was established soon after Chile’s

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242 Suazo.
244 Sahlins, 146.
245 Roniger, 181. Diego Portales was a Chilean statesmen during the time of the nation’s independence from Spain. He founded Chile’s constitutional order and re-organized most political, economic, and military aspects of the state.
independence in 1818, and “persisted with few interruptions” until the military takeover in 1973.\textsuperscript{246} Indeed, with the exception of the Pinochet period, the Chilean political system was almost always “constitutional, democratic, and civilian.”\textsuperscript{247} Particularly in the four decades preceding the Pinochet military regime, with widespread civic participation and the incorporation of a multitude of new social groups, the democratic system in Chile was continually evolving and gaining even more vigor and validity.\textsuperscript{248} In this sense, Chile was a clear deviation from the norm of Latin American political systems. On a continent marked by civil wars, anarchy, \textit{caudillismo}, and oligarchical authoritarianism\textsuperscript{249}, in a region “where politics was more often [than not] determined by the will of the armed forces,”\textsuperscript{250} Chile—with its prolonged, persistent and stable democratic-republican institutions—was “exceptional”.\textsuperscript{251} In fact, before the 1973 coup, Chile was considered “the oldest and firmest democratic society in Latin America.”\textsuperscript{252}

\textit{Imperfections}

Some historians have focused their attack on disproving the “myth” of Chile’s political culture of democracy, declaring bluntly, “The democratic system

\textsuperscript{246} McDonald and Ruhl, 185.
\textsuperscript{248} Eugenio Tironi, \textit{Los Silencios de la Revolución} (Santiago: Editorial La Puerta Abierta, 1988), 13.
\textsuperscript{249} Roniger, 181.
\textsuperscript{250} Wren, 160.
\textsuperscript{251} Martínez and Díaz, 8.
\textsuperscript{252} Falcoff, “Chile: A Cognitive Map,” 4.
prior to September 1973 was not perfect.” They point to “two brief military interludes” in Chile’s governance record as evidence that the culture of democracy that Chileans perceive their nation to have is over-exaggerated and romanticized to an unreasonable extent. For the purposes of my argument, this view can easily be accommodated. Indeed, it does not matter whether Chile actually had a flawless history of electoral democracy before Pinochet or if it was plagued by as many coups as the rest of the Latin American nations combined. Recall the dynamics of cultural constructions: What is important here is the collective imagination—the collective memory—which believes in or perceives such a tradition of democracy in it own national conceptualization of, and identification with, Chilean political culture. It is this perception that is most crucial:

> It is critical for understanding Chilean politics today that civilian politicians do not dismiss their pre-1973 democracy as inauthentic. On the contrary, they are proud of their democratic achievements and consider Chilean democracy one of the most advanced in the world. Indeed, had they (and the Chilean public as a whole) concluded that the 1973 coup proved that Chile’s previous democratic tradition was illusory, the prospects for consolidating democracy would be much less than they are today.

Thus, as long as the democratic vision is present in the Chilean mindset, then my argument logically proceeds, as ordained, to show how the Campaign invoked that mindset and identity for re-democratization.

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254 Carter, 3.
255 Rabkin, 132.
Principal Values

Largely attributable to this long, strong history of democracy, one finds Chilean culture to be embedded with democratic political values. For one, a sense of legitimacy is of particular importance, with the expectation that the governance system be an impersonal one, “founded on the respect for an abstract authority” and an immense respect for law.\textsuperscript{256} Elected officials derive their authority from a set legal framework and democratic procedure; a sense of legitimacy is expected as much from the individual politicians as from the system itself: “there is an emphasis on the need for leaders to be, and to seem to be, modest, austere, dedicated to the common good, legally correct, and above all, not to abuse their power.”\textsuperscript{257} Chileans thus developed a persistent habit of obeying legitimate leaders and legitimately established governments.\textsuperscript{258} With this in mind, Pinochet’s rise to power was a clear violation of this value for legitimacy—in natural opposition to the political culture; furthermore, Pinochet’s attempt at creating provisions to legitimate his regime, specifically in the 1980 Constitution, only further emphasized his illicit nature, as such provisions were “in marked contrast to the liberal democratic traditions that, before 1973, had been the hallmark of the Chilean political system.”\textsuperscript{259} Thus, Pinochet interrupted Chile’s

\textsuperscript{256} Roniger, 181.
\textsuperscript{258} Lomnitz and Melnick, 20.
\textsuperscript{259} Wren, 145.
streak of legitimate rule and, in the plebiscite, faced a culture that yearned for that sort of rule once again.

In addition to objective legitimacy, there is also a valued emphasis on diverse representation and a multi-party system. Chile’s tradition involves a parliamentary democracy in which a number of political entities negotiate tirelessly, and where political alliances are indispensable, to reaching policy decisions. This “multiparty system of negotiations and alliances” is thought to be the basis of “social peace” in Chilean politics—a social peace destroyed by Pinochet’s monopolistic control of Chile once the military regime ascended in 1973. Indeed, Pinochet was a major “aberration” that undercut Chile’s dependence on “the strength of constitutional democracy and accommodation by rival political groups for the sake of preserving democratic traditions.” The lack of diversity and the suppression of dissent that marked military rule were to be challenged by a culture that expected constant political jockeying.

Finally, closely associated with the Chilean sense of democracy is a prominence of participatory politics. In its long span of democratic stability, Chilean democracy was accented by an array of political actors. The popular sectors, in particular, were critical to civil society, involving “alternative political activists connected to a growing number of grassroots, or ‘popular’

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260 Martínez and Díaz, ix.
262 Lomnitz and Melnick, 9.
263 Wren, 161.
organisations.” With the coming of Pinochet, Chile became subject to archetypal caudillismo—similar to that found in other South American countries at the time—in which the populace no longer freely participated in political processes. Rather, the participatory urges of the populace were ignored and suppressed—a serious problem for a citizenry that specifies elections and freedom of speech as two of the top three components of democracy. It was these urges that culture served to mediate and unleash during the time of the plebiscite, as the opposition emphasized participation in the plebiscite and expression of dissent as integral to the Chilean way of life. Through the regular expression of these values, among those previously mentioned, Chileans ultimately came to appreciate democracy “as a value in its own right.”

Democracy in the Chilean Consciousness

Chile’s long history of democracy, regardless of slight imperfections, and the democratic values inherent to such a history are embedded in the cultural consciousness of the Chilean people. The perception that Chile is a highly stable, highly legitimate democratic society has been prevalent since the 1830s, with such democratic expectations having been “prominent in the visions of Chilean nationalists.” Indeed, the people of Chile looked upon their political traditions

265 Wren, 145.
266 Lagos, 153.
267 Angell, 9.
268 Roniger, 181.
with “a much romanticized vision of democratic stability.” The cultural construct of the Chilean opposition revived this romantic vision to “resuscitate a vibrant political culture,” providing a basis for supporting the democratization movement that was deeply resonant with the populace. The opposition concertedly took from past tradition: “there was a political culture, a legal culture, of ... an electoral tradition, so we appealed to that.” In this way, the opposition movement was able to capitalize upon historical experience to “create the bases for a revival of a democratic future.” For, despite all its oppressive might, it was implausible that the military regime could extinguish “the fundamental democratic values that had evolved in Chile.” In fact, even while many Chileans favored an end to the chaos that was the Allende years, equally as many (if not more) favored “an immediate return” to democracy. Polls conducted repeatedly during the years of the regime showed that public opinion was “overwhelmingly moderate and democratic”: in surveys conducted between 1985 and 1987, a consistent majority (between 55.5 and 58.1 percent) of individual voters responded with, “Democracy is preferable to any other form of government.” Since the opposition had this continuous, “inherited character” typifying the democratic relationship between state and society, and maintained continuous underlying support for democracy, Chilean political culture was

270 Drake and Jaksic, 11.
271 Walker.
273 McDonald and Ruhl, 207.
274 Valenzuela, 42.
exceedingly in its favor.\textsuperscript{277} The movement could simply invoke this latent desire for democracy, awaken a lethargic populace by reminding it of its historical tradition, and wield the notion of democracy as a harmonizing force for the many sectors of Chilean society posited against the regime. Indeed, as it turned out, democracy’s strong presence amidst Chilean political culture and its “persistent symbolic importance ... was the biggest obstacle to Pinochet’s attempts to remain in power.”\textsuperscript{278} Its renewal in the public sphere added a significant sense of agency to opposition forces.

Drawing upon this culture of democracy, the reproduction of customs, symbols, organizations, and political leaderships of the past tapped into Chileans’ traditionally close identification with politics.\textsuperscript{279} The opposition wielded “the pride of the Chilean people in their democratic traditions”\textsuperscript{280} and reconstructed collective identities “shaped historically around republican, civil ideas.”\textsuperscript{281} As one organizer recalled, “People knew how to vote, for 150 years. So we were telling people, ‘Look, why don’t you go back to your traditions.’”\textsuperscript{282} With the democratic tradition, and particularly its participatory element, “imprinted in” Chileans’ “tenets of identity,”\textsuperscript{283} this invocation of democratic tradition was a motivating, energizing force for the citizenry.

The notion of recovering Chilean democracy as part of Chile’s political culture also served to harmonize the array of political forces fighting in opposition

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\item \textsuperscript{277} Garretón, Incomplete, 119.
\item \textsuperscript{278} Martínez and Díaz, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{279} Tironi, El Liberalismo, 162.
\item \textsuperscript{280} Wren, 160.
\item \textsuperscript{281} Roniger, 185.
\item \textsuperscript{282} Walker.
\item \textsuperscript{283} Roniger, 185.
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\end{footnotesize}
to the regime. In a sense, democracy was the most basic, lowest-common-denominator demand of all parties. It established a clear, “common tactical direction” within the opposition, which all ideological elements were willing to follow. From the begrudged political right disappointed by the “negative experience of authoritarian rule" to the renovated socialist left that viewed democracy as “the structural framework in which the struggle for socialism should take place,” the entire political spectrum showed a surprising capacity for mobilization under the anti-authoritarian, democratic umbrella. At the last moment, even the Communists came out in support of the NO when it seemed possible that the dictator might be defeated. In the end, political parties were most concerned with “bringing down the dictatorship” and less concerned with their own ideological delimitations: Chile’s political culture of democracy was a “force of attraction on the level of ideological and political mobilization that was at once integrative and revolutionary.”

Forms: Cultural Manifestations of Free Expression

A political culture of the past re-invoked in the context of modernity begets manifestation in concrete forms of cultural expression. Intangible values

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284 Martínez and Díaz, 38.
288 Garretón, Incomplete, 81.
289 Garretón, Incomplete, 84.
of political culture are given form and substance through tangible cultural production. Indeed, “themes of meaning, language, forms of shared life, communication, and creativity (that is, culture) are indispensable for the understanding of political culture.”

Thus, during the revival of democratic cultural notions at the time of the plebiscite, Chile was also marked by a “massive search for new forms of social and cultural life” in all sectors of society—“Experimentation in the arts seemed a logical accompaniment to looming democratization.”

Literary, musical, and theatrical statements both fueled and reinforced the opposition cause, giving cultural dimension to political contestation. Individuals expressed themselves using “symbolic transfigurations” through which “social reality dramatize[d] its enigmas.” In doing this, they discovered a cultural outlet for their political frustrations. For a vital core of artists and intellectuals, the experience of military rule “opened a period of self-reflection and deep questioning into the ‘narratives’ underlying the Chilean collective identity and cultural construct. Despite being subject to severe repression in the past, when it came time for the transition, these artists’ ‘cultural recuperation was very strong.’ There was an effort “to expand the place of many of the artists that were hidden, to unite [them]” behind the NO campaign. Their

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290 Lomnitz and Melnick, 16.
291 Ochsenius, 176.
292 Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley, 3.
293 Nelly Richard, Residuos y Metáforas: Ensayos de crítica cultural sobre el Chile de la Transición (Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1998), 23.
294 Roniger, 174.
295 Ricardo Solari, personal interview with the author, 10 September 2004. Solari represented the Socialists as part of the opposition movement. He is currently the Minister of Labor.
296 Suazo.
incorporation as part of the vast opposition movement allowed the channeling of social discontent into cultural forms of collective expression. 297 Culture and politics essentially coincided and coalesced: Opposition cultural activity “took shape” just as political parties looked to “pull together their own forces”—both activities aimed at democratization. 298 This joining of intellectual and artistic circles with political parties and social movements underscored of the opposition’s success. 299 Artistic expression and organizational fervor reinforced each other, and the opposition’s culture of resistance assumed renewed meaning with each popular manifestation. 300

Theater

Theater was a powerful dynamic form of cultural expression during the opposition movement, in terms of both the nature and number of people it reached. Its mechanism was dual—it spoke to people but also gave voice to those who could not speak—and its uses were multiple—serving as a “strategy for social integration, communication, and exchange.” 301 Overall, theater, and its use as a mobilizing cultural form, experienced “major growth” in the late 1980s. 302

The theater of the opposition movement marked a new type of theater—a testimonial theater of contingencies—appearing widespread, in universities, poblaciones, street corners, and other popular venues; forming a part of the vast

297 Garretón, Incomplete, 126.
298 Drake and Jaksic, 11.
299 Arriagada, Pinochet, 172.
300 Eckstein, 56.
301 Ochsenius, 182.
302 Ochsenius, 174.
agrupaciones culturales [cultural groupings]; and representing an opposition movement that had “reconstituted itself” through such cultural activity. The productions were neither prim nor proper, neither exclusive nor formal; they were offered “in every form imaginable, from informal, one-man and one-woman monologues on busy downtown streetcorners to peñas [songfests] in neighborhoods.” Activists and protesters “made new use of the streets, plazas, vacant lots, and public transportation,” overtaking the public sphere with their message in theatrical form:

- In a vicariate of Santiago, a solidarity workshop unexpectedly culminates with dancers running through the building and patios to the rhythm of percussion instruments. Around the bonfire, they represent a tribe returning to its homeland after exile.
- A protest in the Villa Universidad Católica begins with a parade of musicians and singers who march through the passageways summoning the neighbors. It continues with a trio of ‘democratic’ clowns performing skits in the playground and ends after dark with bonfires on the sidewalks.
- Two young lovers board a bus in the center of Santiago. They begin arguing about whom to invite to their wedding. The argument heats up. The boyfriend throws the invitations up in the air and gets off the bus. The girlfriend, offended and embarrassed, follows him. The passengers pick up the papers and discover that they are actually invitations to participate in a demonstration the following day.

Theater was, therefore, highly accessible and prevalent during the period of the plebiscite.

Furthermore, the individuals actually involved in the theater movement, or represented by it, were numerous and varied. Theatrical producers included an “expanding network of nongovernmental institutions” as well as “local spokespersons” looking for a means of promoting the opposition message at a

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303 Jofre, 78.
304 Aman, 3-4.
305 Ochsenius, 176-7.
basic level.\textsuperscript{306} The poor, who were already lacking in resources for expression and mobilization, found themselves able “to express their own lives through theater.”\textsuperscript{307} Individuals afflicted by human rights abuses saw theater as “a convenient and relatively safe way to denounce oppression.”\textsuperscript{308} Theater served even those who could not express themselves, as “actors became the voice of those without a voice.”\textsuperscript{309} The movement included many others:

In Chile’s grass-roots theater movement, the participants may come from urban or rural areas and may include children, youth, adults, indigenous people, women, students, workers, and professionals from a variety of disciplines who work within the popular sectors. Doctors and public health workers, church workers, political and human rights’ activists, feminists, social workers, promoters of nonviolence, community leaders, homemakers, neighbors, and children: All have been represented at one time or another among the actors, playwrights, and producers of popular theater.\textsuperscript{310}

Such diversity facilitated the ability of theater to serve as a harmonizing force among the opposition. Ordinary people used theater to suggest the “collective redefinition” of social interaction in the public sphere—the stage was posed as a “sphere of convergence” for the multitude of individuals posited against the military regime.\textsuperscript{311} In representing and incorporating so many actors among the opposition, theater constituted a cultural force that “agglutinated the fragmented popular movement.”\textsuperscript{312} Harmonizing their audiences and their actors, theatrical producers were able to corroborate a unified opposition identity along with promote “trust and a sense of belonging” within the Chilean opposition.\textsuperscript{313}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{306} Ochsenius, 176-7.
\bibitem{307} Ochsenius, 173.
\bibitem{308} Ochsenius, 175.
\bibitem{309} Jofre, 79.
\bibitem{310} Ochsenius, 174-5.
\bibitem{311} Ochsenius, 177.
\bibitem{312} Jofre, 79.
\bibitem{313} Ochsenius, 175.
\end{thebibliography}
More than a mere harmonizing power, theater also served as a provocative force, encouraging action and expression: most superficially, in artistic terms, but more significantly in political terms. Theatrical venues created opportunities for individuals to act and realize themselves “as persons who actively shape their own lives.” In this way, theater essentially conveyed a sense of empowerment that translated to the political realm. With theater as a backdrop, “the entire country began to enter a process of self-expression.” This was theater’s most important contribution to the opposition cause; indeed, its deeper purpose:

Grass-roots theater is always more than merely the communication of a theatrical message. The second message—the impact the presentation itself has in a particular context—is also decisive.... In fact, theater presented by grass-roots organizations and communities is frequently transformed into a spontaneous instrument of social intervention that goes beyond the form of the production. It becomes an occasion-event through which the group or community acts to recover a sense of belonging—its identity and commitment.

Thus, theater energized the populace, encouraging free expression and solidifying defiant urges. Pointing its audiences toward the opposition path of action, it served as “an attractive vehicle for reminding [the] audience of a rich but perhaps forgotten past” and thus inspired renewed interest in Chile’s democratization. The content of grassroots, opposition theater repeatedly portrayed democratic values in a positive light, and aimed to create “a transforming effect in the consciousness and practice of the audience” such that they would act upon realizing those values. Theater surrounding the plebiscite thus served to galvanize the citizenry.

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314 Ochsenius, 173.
315 Ochsenius, 176-7.
316 Ochsenius, 184.
317 Ochsenius, 175.
318 Jofre, 79.
Ultimately, theater served the opposition movement by both harmonizing and energizing a multiplicity of Chileans. The message was a consistent and corroborative one: “In these works the future of hope is usually based on the characters’ solidarity, and the positive model of society is always the estado de compromiso [the liberal democratic state].”³¹⁹ Thus, theater was a cultural force of the opposition.

**Literature**

Literature served as a rather static source of inspiration for the opposition message. While lacking the fluidity and responsiveness of other mediums, literature was still a potent cultural element, with the power to enthuse and encourage upon invocation.

Literature intricately couches meaning into its lines of text, and with regard to the literature relevant in the case of the Chilean opposition, that meaning had the flexibility of being “official or alternative, a monologue or a dialogue, vertical or horizontal, controlling or marginal, authoritarian or democratic.”³²⁰ It is with this sort of capacity that “literary production is part of worldviews and social practices projected by the diverse power blocs generated within Chilean society.”³²¹ Literature both incorporates and is incorporated into the history and the currency of real politik, as it is both an “intimate articulation of history” and “not just as a theme, because to the extent that literature is historical it forms part

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³¹⁹ Jofre, 79.
³²⁰ Jofre, 80.
³²¹ Jofre, 80.
of the structure of [current social] discourse and is not simply external.” 322 In fact, literature (particularly upon close examination) has the ability to draw attention to “hidden subtleties” of everyday life—subtleties of culture, community, social hardship, belonging—subtleties “often concealed in real life and accordingly ignored by social scientists.” 323 In doing so, it very uniquely speaks to the issues facing individuals and society:

Because literature, like all expressions of culture, is not only a symbolic distillation of reality, it is also constructing it and this is important to understanding its function as a perception of the future. Literature generates images, currents of opinion, forms of apprehending what is real, aggregating symbolic reality to reality. 324

In the Chilean case, literary texts often embodied social struggles and expressed the nuanced views of individuals long afflicted by the pangs of military rule. Though heavily repressed by the regime, literature was still able to express political dissent subtly: “The role of denouncing the situation in Chile through its literature was assumed by using techniques of indirect reference through absence, and by presenting a fragment that pointed to the totality.” 325 An easily accessible, easily distributable cultural form, literature was often turned to as a means of expression in the opposition movement:

Literary activities were undertaken by young writers at literary workshops in universities, cultural groups, or cultural centers in poblaciones. The hardships of political life were recorded and assembled in many of these literary texts, from concentration camps to student literary festivals. 326

323 Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley, 3.
324 Pizarro, 55.
325 Jofre, 81.
326 Jofre, 81.
In addition to such popular literature, more established works were referenced in the movement as sources of inspiration. Pablo Neruda’s *Canto General* and “The Heights of Machu Picchu” served as a “locus classicus” for the opposition, expressing a sense of yet-unrealized collective potential. Julieta Kirkwood’s *Ser política en Chile* aided in the critique of the military regimes, corroborating a turn towards democratization. The Chilean narrative genre of *mea culpa* is particularly interesting as a form of very personal social commentary:

*Los convidados de piedra* (allegorically, the muted or absent guests) by Jorge Edwards, for example, shows the encounter of a group of young people from the high bourgeoisie for a birthday celebration one month after the fall of Allende. The individuals recall their childhood and youth experiences, and the reader perceives how the upper class participated in—and perhaps contributed to—the events leading to the military takeover and the disappearances of many young people. *La secreta obscenidad de cada día* by Marco De la Parra and *La contienda humana* by Juan Radrigan follow the same introspective line. The latter focuses on two sexual criminals who constantly change identities, from torturers to victims, from revolutionaries to housewives. The former deals with the remorse of an individual who did not protect his wife and child from their kidnappers. Diamela Eltit’s *El cuarto mundo* brings together fragmentation, violence and exploitation into a very personalized, introspective and intimate account of the conception and life of twins as they jostle for space in the womb and maintain close and tense relationships in a family consumed by illness, obsession and insanity, in what critics read as a metaphor of Chilean social and political crisis in the 1970s.

The influence of such literature can be recognized for its capacity to provoke the reader: it raised questions of personal responsibility, prompted a re-examination of collective identity, and proposed an alternative model for the future. In this way, literature helped to energize its readers among the opposition movement, illustrating as much through its creative formalities as through its images of “a

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327 Franco, J., 236.
328 Franco, J., 236.
329 Roniger, 175.
330 Franco, J., 236.
desirable future on a symbolic level.” It also bolstered the opposition’s constructed identity, founding a “symbolic space for the unification of [individual and social] consciousness,” and providing a “‘we’ that encompasses the entire history of the oppressed who now for the first time speak through the poet’s words and mouth.” Thus, literature really functioned as an energizing force by helping to solidify the opposition identity and pose the question of social responsibility in a personal way to individual readers and social actors—a prime example of a largely static element influencing the movement in its own unique intimate way.

**Music**

Music served its own alluring role as a cultural form during the time of the transition. Often existing as a backdrop for activism as well as a participatory medium in itself, music helped to energize the opposition movement.

The music that appeared during the late 1980s period of opposition was largely an echo of the past termed *El Canto Nuevo*, a revival of the *Nueva Canción Chilena* that had emerged in the days immediately following the 1973 coup. Groups like *Santiago del Nuevo Extremo* invoked this musical tradition—which used traditional Andean instruments and had become a “trademark” of the pre-1973 era and democracy—to remind citizens of Chile’s

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331 Pizarro, 57.
332 Pizarro, 60.
333 Franco, J., 236.
traditional democratic past.\textsuperscript{335} Even for what was the new generation of activists that did not know the pre-1973 experience, \textit{El Canto Nuevo} had appeal.\textsuperscript{336} Clearly symbolic of the previous democratic period, and loaded with political and ideological lyrics, the songs galvanized individuals toward the opposition. Highly contagious in nature, the music spread to universities and \textit{poblaciones} and became “one of the few modes of expression” available to dissenters in such milieus.\textsuperscript{337} Coupled with the return of several musicians from exile and the reediting and re-release of some actual pre-1973 music, \textit{El Canto Nuevo} “fortified the historical memory, strengthened collective identity, and created a new musical circuit” surrounding the opposition movement.\textsuperscript{338} In this way, music uplifted the populace, resonating with memories of the democratic past, reminding them of their participatory tradition, and energizing them to move forward with the opposition.

\textit{Other Media}

Theater, literature, and music were only a few of the cultural forms that carried through the opposition message, energizing and harmonizing the populace, promoting action and solidarity. Alternative modes of cultural expression abounded during the transition as well; everything from “pamphlets, graffiti, even jokes” became common in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{339} Individuals drew from the symbolic protest repertoire of the past, banging pots and pans as middle

\textsuperscript{335} Salman, “Culture,” 236.
\textsuperscript{336} Jofre, 76.
\textsuperscript{337} Jofre, 75-6.
\textsuperscript{338} Jofre, 75-6.
\textsuperscript{339} Aman, 3-4.
class housewives—the caceroleos or cacerolazos—used to do: this form of protest provided a simple way for intimidated citizens to express dissent, and invoked the notions and sentiments of the pre-1973 democratic period. People gathered en masse to throw Chinganas—a sort of multifaceted cultural festival—helping popular sectors to “recover their voice” through various media of cultural expression and “exercise initiative” through direct participation:

The Chinagana has an undeniable political and cultural function. From the political point of view, it helps create active citizens; from the cultural point of view, it promotes a sense of belonging. Ultimately, it encourages the formation of a collective identity that is broader than specific political groups or isolated neighborhood ghettos.

Whether in the midst of a festival or simply on the side of a street, cultural messages pervaded the Chilean public sphere. Everyday culture among workers, the urban poor, activists, and others transformed, strengthened, and grew: appeals to unify and act “blast out noisily all day long on radios, televisions, billboards, in buses, trains, and modern shopping centres: no one can escape them.”

Political pleas manifest themselves through such symbolic object-oriented means as “quilts, diaries, or furniture arrangements” as well as through more action-oriented daily practices “in the ways of dwelling, of walking, of making do.” In every context, with culture “as stories, legends, myths and religious practices, as educational traits and political articulations... as collective memories” among

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340 Arriagada, Negociacion, 4.
341 Eckstein, 11.
342 Ochsenius, 180.
343 Ochsenius, 180.
344 Salman, “Culture,” 228.
other things, various cultural forms carried particular political meaning. As pervasive and varied as these forms were, they reached Chileans in multiple contexts, encouraging them to act (energizing), and act together (in harmony).

**Symbols: Cultural Tropes of Resistance**

As some aspects of a political campaign are inevitably taken at face value (visual and media aspects, primarily), the symbols employed by the opposition movement—and the meaning invested in them—were compelling cultural components of the overall opposition message. The opposition invoked two main symbols: one of the future—la alegría [joy]—and one of the past—el pueblo [the people].

*La Alegría*

The notion of la alegría was introduced into Chilean society in order to encourage a forward-looking sense of hope, and so energize a voting populace disheartened by the defeats of the past. Such an optimistic appeal to the future was so essential because “the past divided Chile” and images reflecting the past only “reinforced conflictual and disintegrative tendencies.” Hence, the symbol of la alegría—represented by a colorful rainbow—was designed “to overcome the attitude of resignation and skepticism” that had taken root during the intimidating times of the dictatorship:

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347 Walker.
349 Tironi, *La Invisible*, 47.
It was a very joyful campaign. Pinochet and the right forces thought we were going to show the disappeared, the kidnapped, the assassinated people, the tortured ... but it was a campaign about hope ... and so it was an incredible contrast between the two campaigns.\(^{350}\)

While some critics denounced the joyful approach of the NO campaign as “too ‘light’ and ‘soft’”, in the end, its peaceful and optimistic message would prevail.\(^{351}\) The idea was that, through democratization, the Chilean people would move forward to “something that was superior to the dictatorship, something that was [associated with] happiness.”\(^{352}\) The image of popular satisfaction conveyed by \textit{la alegría} thus served as a “motive” for action.\(^{353}\) The ultimate energizing message behind the symbol: “\textit{La alegría ya viene}”—joy is coming.

\textit{El Pueblo}

The symbol of \textit{el pueblo} evolved to become a representation of the collective marginalized in society, and thus served as an image of harmonization for everyone excluded from the Pinochet regime. While the term initially pertained to the poor masses of Chilean society, it came to be interpreted as a reflection of “the true nation” of Chile—the historic polity with which democratic sovereignty should legitimately reside.\(^{354}\) \textit{El pueblo} symbolized the collective power of a unified populace—a collectivity that had been the “genuine protagonist of history.”\(^{355}\) In this way, \textit{el pueblo} exuded a “shared mode of

\(^{350}\) Walker.
\(^{351}\) Rabkin, 136.
\(^{352}\) Solari.
\(^{353}\) Solari.
\(^{354}\) Tironi, \textit{El Liberalismo}, 155.
\(^{355}\) Tironi, \textit{El Liberalismo}, 155.
being,” emphasizing that “political ostracism” on a collective level could constructively unite different currents of opinion. Eventually, the symbol became an embodiment not only of the underprivileged but also of individuals “with fewer opportunities or those who remain, at times, excluded” from the public sphere. It ultimately portrayed a vastly inclusive construction of the opposition movement, incorporating anyone who felt marginalized by authoritarianism—essentially, everyone who supported the movement for democracy. With the inclusion of “middle-class intellectuals, artists, activists in the church, and other opponents of the military regime,” el pueblo acquired a kind of romanticism that gave it broad coherence. Invoked by politicians to elucidate the amalgamate “social construction” of the Chilean nation, el pueblo served to convey a sense of belonging to those left excluded by (and in opposition to) the military regime, and thus symbolically encouraged the harmonization of opposition forces. The ultimate harmonizing message: “El pueblo, unido, jamás será vencido”—the people, united, will never be defeated.

**Chile: Energized and Harmonized**

**Energized**

The invocation of cultural elements in the opposition campaign energized the Chilean populace in a novel way. Operating on a level “more symbolic” than in past struggles, social movements in anticipation of the plebiscite engaged in “a

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356 Urzúa, 50.
357 Rabkin, 120.
359 Aman, 2.
360 Sznajder, 200.
search for their own identities.” Latching on to the projection of democratic culture advocated by the opposition, despondent social actors came to identify with the larger movement for democratization, and transformed into an active collective of citizens. Furthermore, easily accessible cultural forms of expression allowed individual citizens to overcome the “heroic syndrome” (as it has come to be called): a state of social paralysis arising from fear and intimidation, to which “protests and mobilizations under dictatorship and authoritarian states” fall particularly vulnerable. Since citizens perceive themselves to all be “equally defenseless” in relation to such strong central powers, the syndrome induces a mindset that only “action of an extraordinary type can constitute effective resistance.” In Chile, this notion was overcome and replaced by the idea that simple cultural expression offered “an aggregation of small gestures that could be made by the entire population,” removing the burden of heroism from the shoulders of the lone citizen. In this way, popular culture served as a resource and “a building ground for popular protest, self-defense and organizational strength.” From culture, the opposition movement built momentum for the campaign, with historical commemorations, folk myths, and symbolic rituals helping to “create and reinforce cultural expressions of

361 Garretón, Incomplete, 84.
362 Tironi, El Liberalismo, 155.
364 Martínez and Díaz, 21.
365 Martínez and Díaz, 39.
resistance.” Affecting the way individuals perceived their plight, expressed their defiance, and sought recompense, cultural traditions, in themselves, were the “spark” for social mobilization and electoral assertion: “It was amazing,” as one organizer of the movement recalled, “We registered 7 million people, meaning 90 percent of the potential voters, in four months.” At last, the opposition’s utilization of a cultural process meant that it spoke to the most “vital and creative dimension of the human spirit” and projected symbols for effectiveness in the social context—it was able to turn “a social majority, expressed as far back as 1983 in all the public opinion polls, into a political majority that hitherto had not been constituted.”

**Harmonized**

Cultural elements achieved social harmonization as well, equally vital to the opposition’s success. By the beginning of 1988, it became clear that the main challenge facing the plebiscite generation was the “reconstruction [of] one [unified] national community in Chile.” A democratic triumph was conditional—“one of the walls that currently divide the different elements of civil society must collapse”—democracy would only emerge concurrently with new political combinations. With each ideological element of society possessing its own “different collective memory of the past” as well as its own “idealized vision

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367 Eckstein, 36.
368 Eckstein, 5.
369 Eckstein, 36-7.
370 Walker.
371 Urzá, 49.
372 Garretón, Incomplete, 135.
373 Tironi, Los Silencios, 11.
of the future,” Chile’s anti-Pinochet political spectrum could only be unified through the discovery of a “reasonably civilized synthesis” under a common cultural construct.\footnote{Falcoff, “Chile: A Cognitive Map,” 5-6.} The opposition took hold of the “cultural imagination and aesthetic symbolization float[ing] through the landscape of the Chilean transition” to create just that.\footnote{Richard, 14.} Out of a plurality of persons, culture was able to “forge one community” with a distinct, overarching identity, drawn from shared symbols, expressive values, and a political culture of democracy.\footnote{Urzúa, 50.} The ability of the opposition cultural strategy to structure “a common program” linking Chileans across the political spectrum resulted in hitherto unseen political unity in the Chilean public sphere.\footnote{Valenzuela, 48.} Extensive negotiation and cultural persuasion led 17 political parties to band together under the Comando por el NO (February 1988).\footnote{Rabkin, 136.} The opposition salvaged fundamental Chilean socio-political elements as well: “thousands of nongovernmental organizations used by citizens to further ethical and ideological objectives, to represent and defend economic and social interests, and to undertake political projects” were incorporated into the common culture of resistance.\footnote{Arriagada, Pinochet, 172.} In a common push to de-legitimize the dictatorship, civil society underwent a “cultural phase”, bringing the populace as a whole to integrate through cultural elements:

In Chile, gender, human rights, and ecological movements, singers, recitals and even novels cropped up at that time. In other words, a variety of social and cultural expressions appear, creating a climate that little by little unifies the different oppositions, the various ways that civil society rejects the regime’s
reforms and measures, and shepherds them toward a vast democratic movement for human, social and cultural rights.\textsuperscript{381}

Ultimately, “no particular actor could bring down the dictatorship, but each was a major contribution” to the movement that triumphed in the plebiscite.\textsuperscript{382}

Together, the heterogeneous spheres of Chilean society merged through cultural, “symbolic and organic links”\textsuperscript{383} and reinforced the opposition’s “fundamental”\textsuperscript{384} drive for unity to successfully confront Pinochet.

\textit{Conclusion}

In the face of years of repression, cultural expression rose above mere survival to ultimately showcase its resilience and its power during the time of the transition. The opposition’s invoking of cultural values— inherent to Chile’s political culture of democracy, forms—manifest in vibrant free expression, and symbols—embedded with deep social meaning, served to galvanize and unite the anti-Pinochet elements of the Chilean public sphere. In the end, culture demonstrated its eminent instrumentality.

\textsuperscript{381} Garretón, \textit{Incomplete}, 80.
\textsuperscript{382} Drake and Jaksic, 10.
\textsuperscript{383} Garretón, \textit{Incomplete}, 87.
\textsuperscript{384} Solari.
CONCLUSION

Culture is many things, but above all, it is the soul of society.385

In this thesis, I have shown culture to be an instrumental and empowering entity. Drawing from both static and dynamic aspects of culture, social actors can revive ancient values and inherited traditions for application in modern contexts, and construct strategies of action in order to achieve political change. The Chilean case demonstrates such wielding of culture, as the opposition movement invoked democratic values underlying Chile’s political tradition, utilized expressive forms of artistic media, and employed symbols underlying the Chilean consciousness to forge a culture of resistance against Pinochet. This cultural construct allowed opposition forces to energize what was a previously disheartened Chilean polity, and harmonize what had been a severely fragmented anti-Pinochet social array, in order to induce a powerful electoral expression by the populace, and finally bring democracy back to Chile.

The Chilean case is only one, very specific demonstration of the power of culture; and it is a very confined case, at that. Yet, the power of culture is not confined. It is not specific to Latin America or particular to regime change, but rather pertinent to any community with cultural values and forms and relevant to achieving a vast array of political goals. Social actors can easily draw upon culture in any social context; the process essentially reduces to three steps: i) create a cultural construction, ii) utilize that construction as a resource for expression and agency, and iii) specify an outlet for the energized and harmonized

385 Solari.
movement that results (i.e. lead the polity towards an end goal). With the possibility of such widespread applicability, cultural agency in the political sphere cannot—and indeed, must not—be confined to Chile.

There are limitations to culture’s applicability, however. Most notably, there is the restraining notion of path dependency. While certainly not synonymous with determinism, path dependency postulates simply that each society is limited to a confined set of future choices as delineated by past actions. In other words, “where you can get to depends on where you’re coming from.”

The implications of this notion are two-fold when applied to the context of cultural agency and political action: Looking back along a nation’s path, the repertoire of cultural tools available for use at any particular time is “limited and heavily influenced by social structural features and historic traditions.” If a social actor intends to draw upon certain values and traditions to corroborate a particular cause culturally, those values and traditions must—at least to a certain extent—be extant in the nation’s social or political history. The extent of this dependence is a question for further research; especially considering that cultural movements are founded upon cultural constructions. It is enticing to speculate how much of a construction must necessarily be rooted in fact and how much can be derived from national myths, collective imaginations, and historical revisionism. The second implication of path dependency involves looking forward along a nation’s path: if, in the first implication, a social actor is confined to a certain set of cultural means, then in the second implication, that actor is

387 Eckstein, 9.
confined to a certain set of cultural ends. For, the ambition of a cultural construction cannot traverse non-delineated paths—or can it? Again, this is a topic for further research into the nature and strength of cultural constructions, and how the effectiveness of agency drawn from such constructions may vary according to those features. In any case, this second implication is less significant, since culture is more often used as a means—as a tool for change—than as an end. Hence, culture can still be invoked by nations as they confront major developmental “forks in the road”—helping them to achieve whichever path they ultimately chose.

Despite limitations, culture contains grand potential for social change, with its effect reaching a profundity that touches upon the very foundations of what it means to be a citizen of a nation. By asserting itself culturally to gain sovereignty in relation to the state, a polity adds a novel dimension to the nature of individual citizenship. In addition to political, legal, and economic citizenship, there evolves a sense of “symbolic citizenship”—effectively, cultural citizenship. Cultural citizenship denotes a fundamental right to cultural expression: a right not granted by the state but asserted through the citizenry. An active form of struggle, a wielded “right to narrate,” aconcertedly collective demand, and unabashed cultural expression, all contribute to the expansion of the citizenship paradigm into the cultural realm. Collective, cultural-agency-based social struggles (like those discussed in this paper) are prime means for

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389 Bhabha, xx.
such an expansion, as “agency is a key to understanding how citizenship rights actually evolve”\textsuperscript{391} and “collective demands for citizenship rights are essential to make them effective.”\textsuperscript{392} Once the right is asserted and gained by the polity, it comes to be a fundamental part of the national citizenship scheme: citizenship is “no longer easily based on soil or blood” but rather “founded on some variant of those qualities in connection with culture.”\textsuperscript{393} Cultural expression becomes an expectation—not a privilege—of the citizenry, and in this way, cultural citizenship essentially assures the continuation of cultural expression in the public sphere—it is a self-sustaining right. Thus, through concerted cultural action, societies can expand the nature of their relationship to the state, and ensure the perpetuation of their asserted cultural freedoms.

With such fundamental and lasting effects, cultural production proves itself to be a highly valuable asset in a social actor’s mobilization repertoire. Its effects are phenomenal: Vibrant revival and expression of cultural values and forms that foster social sentiments of energy and harmony are sure signs of culture in action. Indeed, culture is a powerful political tool—may it be wielded!

\textsuperscript{392} Oxhorn, 42.
\textsuperscript{393} Miller, 4.
APPENDIX

IMAGES FROM THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT

Figure 1: This humorous illustration depicts the agency of the common man. The notion of three simple steps helps to defeat the sense of paralyzing intimidation characteristic of heroic syndrome. It is a galvanizing image. [Cartoon by Bororo. In Arturo Navarro, ed. Por Que No (Santiago: Comando Nacional por el NO, 1988), 49.]
Figure 2: This campaign poster calls upon *el pueblo* to support the NO.  

Figure 3: The notion of *el pueblo* is latent in this image, as the image itself most clearly depicts ‘the masses’—the downtrodden, the struggling, the marginalized—expressing a forceful and collective rejection of the Pinochet regime.  

Figure 5: Leaders of each political party in the opposition coalition *el Comando por el NO* gather to announce their solidarity. They are surrounded by the harmonizing symbology of the campaign, embodied by the rainbow. [*Photograph. In Arturo Navarro, La Campaña del NO (Santiago: Ediciones Melquiadas, 1989.), 75.*]
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