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The international dimensions of the Pinochet dictatorship

Abstract

Throughout the Pinochet dictatorship's lifespan, the radical changes implemented by the regime at home had significant repercussions for Chile's place in the wider world, and in turn international events shaped the dictatorship's domestic development. Through an examination of the secondary literature and the incorporation of primary source material, this chapter explores the international history of the Pinochet dictatorship, from its inception in 1973 to the beginning of the process of democratisation in 1988. It begins by examining Chile's place in the rise of the international human rights movement and solidarity movements, before turning to the dictatorship's worldview and its own diplomatic efforts to overcome international isolation, highlighting the connection between the dictatorship's foreign policy and domestic efforts to secure the institutional bases of the regime. Next, the dictatorship's engagement in Central America is used to draw out the competing impulses behind its foreign policy in at the turn of the 1980s. Finally, this chapter examines the important role international actors played in the return of mass opposition – both peaceful and armed – to Chile in the 1980s, and the implications of this phenomenon for the 1988 plebiscite that marked the beginning of the dictatorship's end.

Introduction

From its inception, the Pinochet dictatorship shaped, and was shaped by, international politics. In the days following 11 September 1973 graphic images of the coup, and most notably the bombing of the Chilean presidential palace, La Moneda, appeared on television screens worldwide, and events in Chile received front page coverage in newspapers on every continent. Demonstrations took place across the globe in solidarity with the Allende government and in opposition to the new military junta. Given Chile's size – a little over ten million people in 1973 – and geographical position *al fin del mundo* ('at the end of the world'), it is in some ways remarkable that events there in the 1970s and 1980s garnered such sustained international attention. And indeed, this is among the

questions that this chapter seeks to answer in its exploration of the international dimensions of the Pinochet dictatorship over the course of its lifespan: why was the international response to the 1973 coup so strong? And how did the coup, and subsequent repression in Chile, influence the rise of the international human rights movement? How did this activism in turn affect the dictatorship's international standing?

More broadly, this chapter will probe how the dictatorship responded to its pariah status, and the way in which domestic politics shaped its foreign policy. It will explore what the dictatorship did to combat its perennial isolation and the way in which it sought to present itself to the world as a model for authoritarian 'protected democracy'. And it will examine how events in Chile itself – most notably the economic crisis of the early 1980s and the eruption of mass protest in 1983 – served to undermine these efforts. Through these lines of enquiry, this chapter will situate the Pinochet dictatorship and the radical change it engendered within the international history of the 1970s and 1980s, exploring its important place within international politics in the final two decades of the Cold War.

It is worth noting, however, that for many years international histories of the 1973 coup and the subsequent dictatorship (particularly those written in English) adopted a more narrow focus, centring largely on the question of US complicity and support.¹ While this work has provided us with a detailed knowledge of the internal machinations of the Nixon administration, it did little to illuminate the wider international dimensions of the dictatorship, and often failed to centre the agency of Chileans in their own history. Yet over the last decade and a half a new wave of scholarship on Latin America's Cold War, and on Pinochet's Chile specifically, has expanded the field, allowing historians to understand the dictatorship's place within the wider global history of the 1970s and 1980s

¹ See, for example Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (New York: New Press, 2003); Jonathan Haslam, *The Nixon Administration and the Death of Allende's Chile: A Case of Assisted Suicide* (London: Verso, 2005).

and the vital changes that occurred in this period.² This expansion has only increased in pace with the profusion of special issues and edited volumes timed around the fiftieth anniversary of Salvador Allende's election (2020) and the 1973 coup (2023). This chapter aims to provide an overview of these wider international dimensions of the Pinochet dictatorship by drawing on this more recent secondary literature as well as incorporating archival material from my own research into the regime's anticommunist internationalism in Central America in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

This newer scholarship on the international history of the dictatorship has benefitted enormously from excellent access to archival sources relevant to the topic, first and foremost those held in the archives of the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (Foreign Ministry) in Santiago. These sources have been complemented by those held in government repositories in other countries, ranging from those elsewhere in Latin America to the United States, Europe and beyond. Together, these sources have allowed for the exploration of international perspectives on the Pinochet dictatorship at regional, hemispheric, and global levels. Perhaps as importantly, the turn toward transnational history in this same period has led to the integration of a wealth of sources from beyond the state – from trade unions and solidarity campaign groups to transnational anticommunist organisations – which have bolstered our understanding of how events in Chile captured the attention of a huge range of different actors worldwide.

This chapter is divided in four sections. The first section begins by exploring the international fallout of the 1973 coup and the international dimensions of, and responses to, the dictatorship's repression between 1973 and 1977, including Chilean participation in Operation Condor. It explores why and how Chile became such an important focus of the nascent international human rights movement and traces the implications of this unprecedented international scrutiny for the dictatorship's international position. The second section turns to the dictatorship's foreign policy, examining how the regime

² The pivotal work in this respect remains Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

sought to alleviate its deep international isolation through building ties with fellow anticommunist dictatorships and far-Right movements, as well as the way in which the process of institutionalisation at home – culminating in the 1980 constitution – shaped the way the dictatorship presented itself overseas. The third section uses the case of Chilean engagement with Central American politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s to explore this phenomenon in greater detail. Following the thread of the connection between domestic and international politics, the fourth and last section explores how the economic crisis of the early 1980s and the resurgence of mass protest from 1983 served to undermine Chile’s international position yet further, and the important role that international support played in strengthening the armed and peaceful opposition movements of the 1980s. The chapter concludes by stepping back to reflect on the significance of the Pinochet dictatorship for the wider international history of the 1970s and 1980s, underscoring its outsized influence on the world stage.

The coup, human rights and isolation, 1973-77

It is only possible to understand the global significance of the 1973 coup and the hostile international reception the dictatorship received in the context of what came before. Since the election of Salvador Allende in September 1970, the eyes of the world had been on Chile. As Alessandro Santoni argues, the Allende years were second only to the Cuban Revolution as ‘the Latin American historical landmark of the last century that most interested the outside world, in terms of media attention, passions and controversies aroused in the political world, in the media and in civil society’.³ As a democratically elected Marxist government embarking on the ‘Chilean road to socialism’, the UP government captured imaginations across the globe, and its defeat prompted vigorous debate about what lessons could be learned from events in Chile, often refracted through specific local contexts.⁴

³ Alessandro Santoni, ‘El Partido Comunista Italiano, La Lección de Chile y La Lógica de Los Bloques’, in *Chile y la Guerra Fría Global*, by Tanya Harmer and Alfredo Riquelme (Santiago: RIL, 2014), 122.

⁴ Mariano Zarowsky, ‘The Unidad Popular Process as Represented through Siglo XXI Publishers: Between Local Reception and the Construction of a Global Event’, *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 42, no. 4 (2023):

In addition, the global prominence of Allende's Popular Unity (UP) government had been enhanced through its engagement in the Third Worldist projects of the early 1970s. In 1972, Chile hosted the third UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD III), bringing leaders from across the world to Chile, gathering in a purpose-built building in central Santiago. Both through UNCTAD and in his government's wider economic and foreign policy, Allende made a vital contribution to Third World proposals for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and built strong links with other prominent Third World countries, for instance Algeria. As a result, the coup was not only seen as an attack on the Chilean Left, but, as the Tricontinental Institute reiterated in its 50th anniversary dossier in 2023, it was a 'coup against the Third World'.⁵

From its very outset, then, international perceptions of the Pinochet dictatorship were shaped by comparisons with the unprecedented experiment in democratic Marxism that the coup had extinguished. For instance, in their visual analysis of newspaper coverage of the coup across five countries between 12 September and 17 October 1973, Abarca et al emphasise the consistent inclusion of images of Allende in articles about the coup, meaning that the accompanying images of the course of the coup, and of Pinochet (and less frequently, other members of the junta), were literally directly contrasted against what had come before.⁶ Unsurprisingly, left-leaning newspapers built on this contrast with a narrative of loss: as an editorial in British left-leaning newspaper *The Observer* put it

495; Eugenia Palieraki, 'Allende in Athens: The Political and Cultural Impact of the Chilean 1970s in Greece during the Colonels' Dictatorship and the Metapolitefsi (1970–1981)', *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 42, no. 4 (2023): 526–38.

⁵ Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 'The Coup Against The Third World: Chile, 1973' Dossier No. 68 (September 2023).

⁶ Ximena Fáunderz Abarca, Omar Sagredo Mazuela, and Fuad Hatibovic Díaz, 'Imágenes del Golpe de Estado chileno en medios extranjeros: narrativas visuales entre el 12 de septiembre y el 17 de octubre del año 1973', *Confluente. Rivista di Studi Iberoamericani* 15, no. 2 (2023): 275–310, <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2036-0967/17852>.

on 16 September 1973, the coup marked the ‘death of a hope’.⁷ As we shall see, the dictatorship never proved able to escape the ghosts of the Allende years.

The global fame of the Allende government paired with this widespread coverage of the coup therefore fundamentally affected the dictatorship’s international position at its very outset. These effects can be understood in terms of both Chile’s diplomatic relations, and the wider popular mobilisation against the dictatorship beyond Chile. The junta’s violent overthrow of the Allende government – and with it, Chile’s longstanding democratic system – did enormous harm to Chilean relations with the countries with which the Allende government had enjoyed the most support. Despite the explicitly anticommunist basis of the regime, spelled out in the First Communiqué of the Military Junta (13 September 1973) and elaborated on later in the Declaration of Principles of the Government of Chile (11 March 1974), at the outset – no doubt mindful of the risks posed by international isolation – the dictatorship sought to maintain all existing diplomatic relationships, including those with the Eastern bloc.⁸ Within days of the coup, the junta sent messages to reassure Eastern bloc countries to whom the Allende government had built up debts that it intended to honour all existing obligations, while the Soviet ambassador to Chile, B. Tsyganchuk, received a formal invitation from the newly-appointed foreign minister, Admiral Patricio Carvajal, to a meeting where Carvajal expressed the junta’s interest in maintaining normal diplomatic relations.⁹ Yet these

⁷ ‘CHILE: Death of a hope’, *The Observer*, 16 September 1973, p. 12 <https://www-proquest-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/historical-newspapers/chile-death-hope/docview/476166709/se-2?accountid=13828> [accessed 25 March 2024].

⁸ ‘Primer comunicado de la Junta Militar’, 13 September 1973, via *Memoria Chilena* <https://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-92134.html> [accessed 25 March 2024]; ‘Declaración de principios del Gobierno de Chile’, 11 March 1974, via Archivo Chile https://www.archivochile.com/Dictadura_militar/doc_jm_gob_pino8/DMdocjm0005.pdf [accessed 25 March 2024].

⁹ Michal Zourek, *Checoslovaquia y El Cono Sur 1945-1989. Relaciones Políticas, Económicas y Culturales Durante La Guerra Fría: Relaciones Políticas, Económicas y Culturales Durante La Guerra Fría* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2015), 166; Olga Ulianova, ‘La Unidad Popular y el golpe militar en Chile: Percepciones y

efforts had little impact. Despite these recent overtures, on 17 September Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev used a speech in Sofia, Bulgaria, to denounce the actions of the Chilean military as a 'fascist coup', and on 21 September the Soviet Union severed diplomatic relations with Chile.¹⁰ In the days that followed, the rest of the Eastern Bloc countries followed suit, with the exception of Romania and the People's Republic of China.¹¹

This severing of diplomatic relations is particularly significant because it is not something that occurred in the analogous military coups in Brazil (1964), Uruguay (June 1973) or, two and a half years later, in Argentina (1976). In fact, the Argentine military dictatorship enjoyed a significant economic relationship with the Soviet Union throughout its duration (1976-83). While Olga Ulianova has highlighted the absence of any such significant economic ties as an important factor in making the severing of relations less costly to the Soviet Union in the Chilean case, the decision was as much driven by the identification of the UP government as a revolutionary process, alongside the depth of global media coverage of events in Chile.¹² The combination of the unique nature and global fame of the Allende government and the drama of the coup, playing out on television sets worldwide, meant that the Pinochet dictatorship received a uniquely hostile international reception, particularly when compared to that of similar anticommunist military dictatorships in the region.

Beyond this immediate increase in diplomatic isolation, the global prominence of the UP government and the existing international ties many of its principal politicians possessed laid the foundation for the rapid emergence of solidarity movements and human rights

análisis soviéticos', *Estudios Públicos*, no. 79 (1 June 2000): 30,
<https://www.estudiospublicos.cl/index.php/cep/article/view/889>.

¹⁰ Zourek, *Checoslovaquia y El Cono Sur 1945-1989. Relaciones Políticas, Económicas y Culturales Durante La Guerra Fría*, 166.

¹¹ Zourek, 165-66; On the PRC decision to maintain diplomatic relations, see Pablo Ignacio Ampuero Ruiz, 'Diplomacia en transición. La República Popular China frente a la dictadura cívico-militar en Chile', *Estudios Políticos*, no. 49 (December 2016): 35-54.

¹² Ulianova, 'La Unidad Popular y el golpe militar en Chile', 31.

activism centred on events in Chile, with Chilean exiles often the central protagonists. This explosion in non-state engagement with and scrutiny of the dictatorship from its opening act placed the Chilean junta at the heart of the emerging international human rights movement, and in turn exerted strong pressure on those governments that maintained diplomatic relations to limit economic and political engagement with the Pinochet dictatorship.

Before 1973, solidarity groups had already emerged in support of the UP government. Following the coup, these groups soon transformed in purpose, playing an integral role in rallying initial opposition to the coup and springing into action to raise funds and help organise safe passage into exile for Chilean leftists. As Fernando Camacho Padilla's work on the Swedish Chile solidarity movement has shown, solidarity groups drew in a wide range of local actors – from militants within leftist parties to students, trade unions and beyond – all united around the Chilean cause.¹³ Margaret Power has described how the 1973 coup catalysed the US Chile solidarity movement, converting it from 'a small group of committed anti-imperialist activists to a larger movement that had a significant impact on the consciousness of broad sectors of the North American public'.¹⁴ In the United States, the movement benefitted from the widespread perception of US government complicity in the coup, which allowed the movement to cohere around two common and interlinked goals: educating the US public on events in Chile and the US role in those events; and influencing US government policy toward the Pinochet dictatorship.¹⁵

The exile of many prominent UP-supporting politicians, intellectuals and academics from late 1973 onwards – often following spells in the dictatorship's newly established concentration camps – provided a further boost to these human rights and solidarity

¹³ Fernando Camacho Padilla, 'El movimiento de solidaridad sueco con Chile durante la Guerra Fría', in *Chile y la Guerra Fría Global*, by Tanya Harmer and Alfredo Riquelme (Santiago: RIL, 2014).

¹⁴ Margaret Power, 'The U.S. Movement in Solidarity with Chile in the 1970s', *Latin American Perspectives* 36, no. 6 (2009): 52.

¹⁵ Power, 53.

movements on a truly global scale, with exiles arriving on every continent.¹⁶ Not only did these exiles bring first-hand accounts of military repression that were quickly disseminated, but more importantly, solidarity movements offered the different constituent parties of the UP the resources and networks they needed to rebuild their organisations in exile. Mariana Perry has shown how, once organised, Chilean exiles were uniquely placed to centre international debates and scrutiny on the Pinochet dictatorship.¹⁷

The size and scale of the Chilean solidarity movements and the well-organised nature of the Chilean opposition in exile meant that international campaigns against the junta and its human rights abuses eclipsed any comparable contemporary activism centred on events elsewhere in Latin America, even where the associated human cost of dictatorship and conflict reached much greater heights.¹⁸ And the scale of this global activism for Chile had enormous practical implications for the Pinochet dictatorship's international position. In the United Kingdom, for instance, Grace Livingstone has explored the Chile Solidarity Campaign's role in bringing about policy change during Harold Wilson's Labour government (1974-79). Soon after taking office, the Wilson government announced a slew of policy changes on Chile, including an end to new export licences for arms, the suspension of aid, the introduction of a more flexible refugee policy and British support for UN and European Community efforts to put pressure on Chile.¹⁹ In contrast, the 1976 coup in Argentina had little comparable impact in Britain; Livingstone found that 'the cause of Argentina never entered the British domestic political debate in the way that Chile had' with the smaller Argentina Solidarity Campaign failing to match the scale nor

¹⁶ Mariana Perry Fauré, *Exilio y Renovación: Transferencia política del socialismo chileno en Europa Occidental, 1973-1988* (Ariadna Ediciones, 2021), 9.

¹⁷ Perry Fauré, 138.

¹⁸ While torture was much more widespread, the official number of those killed or forcibly disappeared in Chile stands at 3,065. In Argentina the equivalent number is 30,000, and in Guatemala the 1998 truth commission report estimated more than 200,000 deaths over the course of the Civil War (1960-1996).

¹⁹ Grace Livingstone, 'British Campaigns for Solidarity with Argentina and Chile', *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 39, no. 5 (2020): 619.

achievements of its older sibling.²⁰ A similar story can be found in the United States, where sympathy for the Allende government paired with heated debate over the degree of US complicity in its destabilisation and eventual overthrow led to earlier and more stringent congressional restrictions on US military and economic relations with the dictatorship.²¹ These restrictions on bilateral relations limited the Pinochet dictatorship's access to international support, while activists' appeals to the human rights mechanisms within international organisations – most notably the United Nations and the Organization of American States – served to intensify international scrutiny of the regime's human rights abuses, deepening the regime's international isolation.

Where the global response to the 1973 coup made a degree of international isolation inevitable at the outset of the dictatorship's lifespan, the regime's actions at home and its foreign policy over its first five years also served to deepen its predicament. First, the fierce repression and widespread human rights abuses within Chile following the coup, paired with the dictatorship's decision to exile many of the most prominent UP politicians, academics and intellectuals, fuelled the ongoing international condemnation of the dictatorship that had been initially prompted in response to the widespread and graphic global media coverage of the coup itself. The 1973-77 period marked the depths of repression under the Pinochet dictatorship, and correspondingly the worst of international opprobrium. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the virulent anticommunism at the heart of the Pinochet dictatorship completely defined the regime's foreign policy in its early years.

For those at the heart of the dictatorship, the Cold War was much more than simply a competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. Where superpower relations in the mid-1970s were characterised by *détente* - a concerted effort to ease tensions – the

²⁰ Livingstone, 620.

²¹ For an overview of the role of Chile in the development of US human rights policy see chapter 1 of Vanessa Walker, *Principles in Power: Latin America and the Politics of U.S. Human Rights Diplomacy*, United States in the World (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021).

Pinochet dictatorship had a very different understanding of the state of play in the global ideological struggle. As Alfredo Riquelme argues, ‘in the imagination of the military officers in power and their civilian supporters... the [Cold] War had ceased to be a metaphor. For the new Chilean elite in power, the discourse of détente masked the continuity of a global war between the free world and communist totalitarianism, in which Chile was directly confronting the Soviet Union, upon whom they imagined they had inflicted a strategic defeat by overthrowing the Allende government.’²² This notion, that Chile was ground zero in a global ideological conflict and that the Chilean military had heroically saved the country from communist totalitarianism, was widely propagated through the Chilean media (now under strict government control) and used to justify the ensuing repression, as the dictatorship fought this ‘imagined war’ both at home and abroad.²³ In this respect, the coup marked a complete reorientation in Chilean foreign relations, away from Allende’s Third Worldist and internationalist outlook and toward an explicit positioning of the dictatorship as a leading force in this so-called struggle against subversion, with this shift helped along by the replacement of the vast majority of Chile’s civilian career diplomats with military officers, who on the whole lacked any diplomatic experience. The junta’s decision to occupy the UNCTAD III building as its headquarters soon after September 1973, renaming it after early independence leader Diego Portales, embodied this about turn in foreign relations, setting the course for the dictatorship’s international engagement thereafter.

On one hand, this voracious anticommunism won the Pinochet dictatorship support among a small segment of the international community: that composed of similarly minded authoritarian regimes, including regional authoritarian anticommunist allies, such as the Brazilian military dictatorship, which had played a supporting role in the 1973

²² Alfredo Riquelme, ‘La Guerra Fría En Chile: Los Intrincados Nexos Entre Lo Nacional y Lo Global’, in *Chile y La Guerra Fría Global*, ed. Tanya Harmer and Alfredo Riquelme (Santiago: RIL, 2014), 24.

²³ Riquelme, 26.

coup.²⁴ More widely, the September 1973 coup was celebrated in transnational anticommunist organisations, most notably within the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) and its Latin American chapter, the *Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana* (CAL, Latin American Anticommunist Confederation). These organisations had grown out of the Asian People's Anti-Communist League (APACL), founded in East Asia in the 1950s, with WACL established in 1967 and CAL in 1972. WACL received funding from its different constituent chapters, with the Taiwanese and South Korean chapters the most generous. By the 1970s, the geographic centre of the organisation had shifted toward Latin America, with the WACL conference hosted in Mexico City in 1972 and in Asunción, Paraguay in 1979, while the regional grouping – CAL – brought members together on an annual basis in different Latin American cities throughout the decade.

For other Latin American members of WACL and CAL, who were generally drawn from far-Right political parties or anticommunist dictatorships, the 1973 coup and the Pinochet dictatorship more broadly was a *cause célèbre* for having, in their view, successfully defeated communism at home. A few weeks after the coup, on 5 October 1973, the WACL secretariat called on all members to write to Pinochet to congratulate him on 'the strong measures he is taking to extirpate Marxism in his country for the sake of the independence and freedoms of the Chilean people'.²⁵ The following year, in September 1974, the Brazilian WACL/CAL chapter, SEPES, held a week of solidarity with the Pinochet dictatorship and in 1975 WACL requested that all member units participate in solidarity

²⁴ On the Brazilian role in the 1973 coup see Tanya Harmer, 'Brazil's Cold War in the Southern Cone, 1970–1975', *Cold War History* 12, no. 4 (1 November 2012): 659–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2011.641953>; Mila Burns, 'El modelo brasileño: la influencia de Roberto Campos y Câmara Canto en la dictadura chilena', *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos Debates* (2016).

²⁵ WACL Circular No. 12, Se pide a todos los miembros aliados y simpatizadores de la WACL que mandan telegramas al president de los Estados Unidos, Hon. Richard Nixon, y al Excmo. SP. Presidente de Chile, General Augusto Pinochet, en el sentido solicitado por la Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana (CAL), 5 October 1973, R198F2595-97, Centro de Documentación y Archivo para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, Asunción, Paraguay (herein CDyA).

activities on the coup's second anniversary.²⁶ Pinochet received reports on WACL and CAL conferences and sometimes sent personal messages, or dispatched senior representatives of the regime to represent Chile.²⁷ For instance, junta member and Commander in Chief of the Chilean Air Force, General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán attended the 1974 CAL Congress in Rio de Janeiro, and the 1977 CAL conference in Asunción, Paraguay, and that same year he travelled to WACL's headquarters, the 'Freedom Center', located in South Korea.²⁸ This engagement with WACL and CAL points to the way in which the anticommunism at the heart of the dictatorship's ideology drove an anticommunist internationalist impulse in its international engagement, as it sought to work across borders against the perceived so-called 'subversive threat'.

WACL and CAL meetings were full of energetic declarations against the global communist threat, as well as pointed attacks on US engagement with détente, which WACL members variously denounced as a 'nefarious policy of rapprochement and collaboration with Red China and the Soviet Union' and 'fuel for the flames of Communist expansion'.²⁹ While

²⁶ Informe sobre el desarrollo de la 'semana de solidaridad a Chile', SEPES (Sociedade de Estudos Políticos Econômicos e Sociais), September 1974, R108F1879-81; Circular 008/75, a todos los miembros de la Liga Anticomunista Mundial, 2º Aniversario de la Revolución Chilena, São Paulo, September 1975, R198F2617, CDyA.

²⁷ Oficio, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores al Jefe del Estado Mayor Presidencial, Homenaje a S.E. en X Conferencia de Liga Anticomunista Mundial, 7 June 1977, 480, Presidencia, Fondo Ministerios, Archivo Histórico del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Santiago, Chile (herein AMRE).

²⁸ Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 257 (note 96).; Delegaciones extranjeras - III Congreso CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0029-30, CDyA; Discurso del General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán, Comandante de la Fuerza Aerea y miembro de la Junta de Gobierno de Chile, en la apertura del III Congreso de la CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0021-23, CDyA; Report of the WACL Secretary General to the 11th Conference, May 1, 1977 – March 31, 1978, Folder 2 – WACL Conference File, 1978, Box 60, KDP, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, California, United States (herein HILA).

²⁹ WACL Circular No. 12, Se pide a todos los miembros aliados y simpatizadores de la WACL que mandan telegramas al president de los Estados Unidos, Hon. Richard Nixon, y al Excmo. SP. Presidente de Chile, General Augusto Pinochet, en el sentido solicitado por la Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana

Chilean engagement with these transnational anticommunist spaces did little to alleviate its overall international isolation, in WACL the Pinochet dictatorship found a small group of ideological bedfellows, and the organisation provided transnational cover for closer ties with these allies, away from international scrutiny.

Although the Pinochet dictatorship's staunch anticommunism won it support among a small group of similarly radical anticommunist regimes worldwide, it acted as a source of friction in the dictatorship's relationship with the United States. In her analysis of US-Chilean relations, 1973-77, Tanya Harmer has shown how despite US complicity in the 1973 coup the Pinochet dictatorship and the Nixon/Ford administrations had very different conceptions of the Cold War.³⁰ Rather than a loyal junior ally in the relationship, Chile-US relations in this period were characterised by constant contention. Echoing criticisms made in WACL and CAL, senior leaders within the dictatorship, as well as the regime-controlled Chilean media, repeatedly raised concerns about détente, arguing the United States was not doing enough in the struggle against communism.³¹ In this respect, the Pinochet dictatorship was one of a 'new variety of Cold War warriors in the global South' in the 1970s who were 'more papal than the pope'.³² Thus while the dictatorship's ideology-driven foreign policy did little to alleviate the regime's international isolation in the mid-1970s, studying this period in Chilean foreign relations nonetheless allows us to better understand the diverse views that existed within the so-called 'Western bloc' in this period, underscoring the agency of the Pinochet dictatorship vis a vis the United States.

Indeed, the most well-known aspect of the Pinochet dictatorship's international activities in this period – Operation Condor – eventually drove a much larger wedge between the

(CAL), 5 October 1973, R198F2595-97, CDyA; 'New Endeavours for a New Situation!' Address by Dr Ku Cheng-Kang, Chairman Captive Nations Week Rally of the ROC, 15 July 1975, R198F2640-46, CDyA.

³⁰ Tanya Harmer, 'Fractious Allies: Chile, the United States, and the Cold War, 1973-76', *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 1 (2013): 109-43.

³¹ Harmer, 129.

³² Harmer, 112.

United States and the dictatorship. From its foundation in November 1975, the Pinochet dictatorship played a vital role in Operation Condor, the transnational collaboration between Southern Cone security forces allowing each to pursue 'subversives' across the region and far beyond in the mid-1970s.³³ Chilean participation in Condor was organised through the DINA (*Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional*, the secret police). Operating under the direction of known army hard-liner and rabid anticommunist General Manuel Contreras, from June 1974 the DINA moved outside of the formal remit of the Chilean armed forces and, through Contreras, answered directly to Pinochet, not the junta, forming an important element of his personal power. Between 1973 and its dissolution in 1977 the DINA committed some of the worst human rights abuses of the dictatorship, both through Operation Condor and far beyond.

While the US government was directly aware of Condor activities, operations were driven by its member states. And whereas the junta could to some degree control the spread of information relating to its human rights abuses at home, the same could not be said for Operation Condor. The flagrant abuse of international law and blatant targeting of the dictatorship's most effective critics left little question over its responsibility for these crimes. While Condor's overseas victims included assassinations and assassination attempts from Buenos Aires (former General Carlos Prats) to Rome (Bernardo Leighton, Christian Democrat politician), its most famous victim remains Orlando Letelier. A Socialist Party politician, Letelier was a close ally of Allende's and served in multiple roles during the UP government, including as Chilean ambassador to the United States, and as Foreign Minister and Defence Minister. Following a year's imprisonment, in September 1974 Letelier went into exile, moving to Washington D.C. the following year, where he soon became a key activist in the anti-Pinochet struggle.

³³ On Condor, see J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005); Francesca Lessa, *The Condor Trials: Transnational Repression and Human Rights in South America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).

On the morning of 21 September 1976, a bomb taped to the bottom of Orlando Letelier's car detonated as he drove to work, killing both Letelier and the front seat passenger, his colleague Ronni Moffitt, a US citizen. Moffitt's husband, Michael Moffitt, who had been sitting in the back of the car, survived. To this day, the Letelier assassination remains the only state-sponsored assassination on US soil.³⁴ The subsequent investigation into the assassination led back to the DINA, with the operation carried out with the help of an American-Chilean and a handful of Cuban Americans. The assassination prompted immediate outrage in the United States. As the investigation progressed, the Pinochet dictatorship refused to allow the extradition of the culprits from Chile to the United States, and as a result the assassination came to dominate US-Chile relations for the remainder of the dictatorship's lifespan, continuing to act as an obstacle even once anticommunist crusader Ronald Reagan was elected US president in 1980.

It is difficult to assess whether the dictatorship could have foreseen the fallout of the assassination and anticipated its long-term impact on US-Chile relations. Yet the fact that the DINA went through with such an audacious act - with direct approval from Pinochet - is a testament to the threat that Letelier and other Chileans exiles working against the dictatorship from beyond its borders posed to the regime. In this respect, the assassination offers concrete evidence of the damage that the international human rights movement had wrought on the dictatorship's international position.

A little under two months after the Letelier assassination, Jimmy Carter won the US presidential elections, pledging to restore morality to US foreign policy and placing respect for human rights at the heart of his campaign platform. Carter's inauguration in 1977 - and the rupture his presidency provoked between the United States and its traditional allies among Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships - marked the nadir in the Pinochet dictatorship's international isolation, placing it almost on the same level

³⁴ For an exhaustive account of the Letelier assassination, see Alan L McPherson, *Ghosts of Sheridan Circle: How a Washington Assassination Brought Pinochet's Terror State to Justice*, 2019.

as apartheid South Africa in its pariah status.³⁵ As the junta looked ahead toward the close of the decade, something had to change.

Combating isolation and promoting a Chilean ‘model’, 1977-83

The Pinochet dictatorship’s deep international isolation by 1977 prompted a set of interconnected changes to both its domestic political project and engagement with international politics. These changes illuminate the importance of the international dimensions of the Pinochet dictatorship as vital context to understand its domestic development, and vice versa. If the Pinochet dictatorship had struggled to assert its legitimacy in 1973 – representing, as it did, an aberration in Chile’s democratic tradition – then by 1977 the junta were under even more severe pressure to secure the regime’s future. It is therefore no coincidence that at precisely this point, the dictatorship embarked on its process of institutionalisation.

In July 1977, Pinochet made a speech at Chacarillas (a hill in Santiago), laying out the regime’s path towards a new form of ‘authoritarian’ and ‘protected’ democracy, framed explicitly in terms of the protection of Chilean sovereignty in the midst of an ‘unequal struggle against external intervention of diverse origins and forms’ including both ‘enemy aggression’ and ‘friendly pressure’ (an allusion to US human rights policy).³⁶ This speech was followed by a plebiscite in January 1978 (widely understood to be fraudulent), in which Chileans were asked to vote ‘yes’ or ‘no’ in response to this statement: ‘In the face of the international aggression unleashed against the Government of our country, I support President Pinochet in his defence of Chile's dignity, and I reaffirm the legitimacy of the Government of the Republic to sovereignly lead the process of institutionalisation

³⁵ Francisco Rojas Aravena, ‘Chile: Cambio Político e Inserción Internacional 1964-1997’, *Estudios Internacionales* 30, no. 119/120 (1997): 388.

³⁶ Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, ‘Discurso En Cerro Chacarillas, Con Ocasión Del Día de La Juventud, El 9 de Julio de 1977’, in *Nueva Institucionalidad En Chile: Discursos de S.E. El Presidente de La República General de Ejército D. Augusto Pinochet Ugarte 1977* (Santiago, 1977), 12, via Memoria Chilena, <https://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-127202.html> [accessed 28 March 2024].

of the country.³⁷ This process of institutionalisation witnessed the dissolution of the DINA, the lifting of the state of siege that had been in place since the coup, and civilians' entry into influential government posts. It culminated in the introduction of the 1980 constitution.³⁸ The wording of the 1978 plebiscite leaves little doubt as to the international dimensions of this process. As Altman et al have argued, these monumental changes to the domestic basis of the dictatorship must be understood as 'a response to international pressure and the controversy regarding the legitimacy of the regime' outlined above.³⁹

These connections between domestic institutionalisation and the international dimensions of the Pinochet dictatorship also worked in the other direction. Just as the uncompromising ideological bent to Chilean foreign policy in the first four years of the dictatorship reflected the junta's consolidation of power and the heightened repression at home, as the dictatorship embarked on the process of institutionalisation from 1977, its international engagement also underwent a notable shift, both in terms of the organising principles of its foreign policy and in the way in which Chilean diplomats sought to present the dictatorship and its newly minted 'protected democracy' to the outside world.

Pinochet's decision to appoint Hernán Cubillos Sallato, then president of the newspaper *El Mercurio*, as foreign minister in April 1978 marked a shift in the dictatorship's foreign policy at the very highest level. As the dictatorship's first civilian foreign minister, Cubillos' began a 'radical reorganisation' of Chile foreign policy and his tenure (1978-80) signalled a

³⁷ Decreto 1308, Convoca y reglamenta consulta nacional, 27 December 1977, Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, Ley Chile, <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=264163&idVersion=1978-01-03> [accessed 28 March 2024].

³⁸ The 1980 constitution remains in place in Chile today and became a central target of the protests that erupted in October 2019. For a discussion of the process of *institucionalización*, see Carlos Huneeus, *The Pinochet Regime* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2007), Ch. 5.

³⁹ David Altman, Sergio Toro, and Rafael Piñero, 'International Influences on Democratic Transitions: The Successful Case of Chile', *CDDRL Working Papers*, no. 86 (n.d.): 6.

short but significant period during which Chile pursued a pragmatic foreign policy.⁴⁰ Cubillos embarked on an *apertura* (opening) in Chilean foreign policy, through the deepening of diplomatic ties with governments of diverse ideologies, most notably Communist China.⁴¹ In line with this position, he sought to emphasise that ‘Chile does not seek to be an anticommunist leader’ and that its foreign policy would no longer be defined by ideology but by pragmatism.⁴²

In part, the opening to the People’s Republic of China can be understood in economic terms. For the Pinochet dictatorship, the expansion of international trade comprised an important element of its radical neoliberal economic reforms in this period, which had been implemented by the ‘Chicago Boys’ (a group of University of Chicago-trained economists) from 1974 onwards. On the other side, 1978 had marked the beginning of the PRC’s economic reform and opening to the international economy, providing an incentive for Chinese engagement with Chile. Nonetheless, the dictatorship’s pursuit of closer relations with the PRC also engendered a wider set of changes in terms of the ideological bent of Chilean foreign policy and a moderation of the virulent anticommunism at its heart, at least at surface level. An exchange between the foreign ministry and the presidential general staff in mid-1979 encapsulates this shift. In July 1979, the Vice Minister for Foreign Relations, Army General Enrique Valdés Puga, wrote to the presidential general staff to express his preoccupation regarding how ‘on several occasions, government officials have based their censures and attacks on the Soviet Union on the Soviet Union's Marxist status’.⁴³ Valdés Puga pointed out that such attacks could be interpreted negatively by the communist governments with which Chile

⁴⁰ J. Fernandois, *Mundo y fin de mundo: Chile en la política mundial, 1900-2004* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2005), 412.

⁴¹ ‘Canciller Cubillos: ‘El Pacífico une a Chile con China’ *Revista Ercilla*, 4 October 1978, Informaciones de Prensa, Sep-Dic 1978, Box 2, Hernán Cubillos Sallato Papers, HILA.

⁴² ‘Chile no pretende ser líder del anticomunismo’ *La Tercera*, 18 May 1978, Informaciones de Prensa, Abril-Junio 1978, Box 1, Hernán Cubillos Sallato Papers, HILA.

⁴³ Oficio, ‘Propone elaborar Circular para evitar erróneas interpretaciones por ataques al marxismo’, 4 July 1979. Vol. 555 - Presidencia, 1979, Fondo Ministerios, AMRE.

maintained good diplomatic relations, notably communist China and Romania. Instead, he suggested replacing references to 'Soviet Marxism' with 'Soviet imperialist power', a linguistic change that would allow members of the government to pinpoint the fundamental problem with the Soviet Union: its 'lack of respect for one of the fundamental principles of international coexistence: non-intervention'.⁴⁴ Valdés Puga received a positive response from the Chief of the Presidential General Staff, Brigadier General Rene Escauriaza Alvarado. He was instructed to draft a circular on the matter, making sure that its wording did not contradict existing statements by the government or Pinochet himself on the matter, and provided that it clearly distinguished between 'internal affairs and the pragmatism of our foreign policy'.⁴⁵ This marked a shift in the dictatorship's foreign policy, as it sought to present a more moderate and pragmatic image to the outside world.

This desire to broaden the scope of Chilean diplomatic relations was not only a response to international isolation induced by international human rights scrutiny and condemnation. In fact, these changes must also be understood in terms of a perceived threat to the dictatorship emanating from much closer to home and which increased the need to cultivate diplomatic support overseas: the resurfacing of the potential for war with Argentina over the two countries' long-disputed southern border. The possibility of open conflict over Chile's multiple and concurrent border disputes with its neighbours had been among the junta's primary concerns since 1973. Where military concerns had initially focused on the perceived threat posed by the military government in Peru to the north, it was the possibility of war with Argentina in the south that became the central preoccupation of Chilean foreign policy during Cubillos' first year in office.

The source of the tension was the two countries' long-running dispute over the status of a group of islands in the Beagle Channel that formed part of their southern border in

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Oficio, 'Elaboración de circular sobre utilización del término "marxismo"', 28 July 1979. Vol. 555 - Presidencia, 1979, Fondo Ministerios, AMRE.

Patagonia. Under an agreement negotiated by Presidents Salvador Allende and Alejandro Lanusse, in 1971 the Chilean and Argentine governments agreed to submit the dispute to binding arbitration under the auspices of the UK government. In May 1977, the British court ruled in favour of Chile, and in January 1978 the Argentine dictatorship repudiated the decision. Over the next twelve months Argentina and Chile came to the brink of war, with an Argentine invasion of the islands in December 1978 only aborted following an intervention from the Pope, which set the course for the eventual signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1984. Throughout 1978, however, this peaceful outcome remained a remote possibility for both sides, and the conflict over the border dominated Chilean foreign policy as the dictatorship sought to win international support for the Chilean claim to the islands wherever they could.

The Pinochet dictatorship and Central America

The dictatorship's engagement with the escalation of the civil wars in Central America in the late 1970s demonstrates the melding of this pragmatic foreign policy with the regime's anticommunist ideology as well as the influence of domestic developments – namely institutionalisation – on how the dictatorship presented itself overseas. As the Pinochet dictatorship looked to alleviate its international isolation and win support for its position in the Beagle Channel dispute in the late 1970s, the Central American republics were an obvious place to look. In 1977, four out of the five countries were ruled by anticommunist dictatorships. The military regimes in Guatemala and El Salvador in particular were natural allies of the Pinochet dictatorship, and in fact the Chilean military had enjoyed a decades-long special relationship with its Salvadoran counterpart.⁴⁶ Records from the Chilean Foreign Ministry show how over the course of 1978, Chilean diplomats in Central America explicitly framed their efforts to build closer diplomatic

⁴⁶ Humberto Corado Figueroa, *Ejército de Chile en El Salvador: historia de una centenaria relación de amistad y cooperación* (Santiago, Chile: Academia de Historia Militar de Chile, 2016); Roberto Arancibia Clavel, *La Influencia de Ejército Chileno En América Latina 1900-1950* (Santiago de Chile: Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Militares (CESIM), 2002) chapter 3.

relations in terms of the Beagle dispute and Chile's wider international isolation and closely observed Argentine diplomatic initiatives in the region.⁴⁷

However, the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua by the marxist FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, commonly referred to as the Sandinistas) in July 1979 established Central America as a vital geopolitical arena in the Cold War, and consequently by the end of the decade, Chilean engagement with the region became increasingly defined by ideological imperatives. As I have discussed elsewhere, the Pinochet dictatorship understood the Nicaraguan Revolution of July 1979 as a major event in the global Cold War.⁴⁸ The Sandinista victory in Nicaragua placed Guatemala and El Salvador under 'the constant threat of contagion' and this perceived subversive threat in Central America was, in the eyes of Chilean diplomats, made all the worse by the 'ostensible intervention of the United States in relation to human rights' which was 'opening the door to Marxism in Central America'.⁴⁹ In fact, the Pinochet dictatorship understood events in Central America, and especially El Salvador, as intimately connected to the so-called 'struggle against subversion' on which the regime staked its legitimacy at home. This perception was aided by the presence of Chilean leftists fighting alongside the guerrillas in Central America.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ EmbaGuatemala, 17 April 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE; Cable secreto, San Salvador, 12 October 1978, No. 256, AH/0009, DAL, MREC; EmbaSanSalvador, 26 December 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 30 January 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.

⁴⁸ Molly Avery, 'Connecting Central America to the Southern Cone: The Chilean and Argentine Response to the Nicaraguan Revolution', *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Latin American History* 78, no. 4 (2021): 553–79.

⁴⁹ Avery, 561–63.

⁵⁰ Molly Avery, 'Promoting a "Pinochetazo": The Chilean Dictatorship's Foreign Policy in El Salvador during the Carter Years, 1977–81', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 52, no. 4 (2020): 771; Tanya Harmer and Alfredo Riquelme, *Chile y La Guerra Fría Global* (Santiago: RIL, 2014), 29; On Chilean leftists in Central America, see Cristián Pérez, 'Compañeros, a las armas: Combatientes chilenos en Centroamérica (1979-1989)', *Estudios Públicos*, 2013, 24.

Despite Cubillos' public insistence that Chile did not seek to act as an anticommunist leader, behind closed doors the dictatorship's diplomats and military leaders presented Chile – and the military's actions since 1973 - as a model for their Central American counterparts. If the escalating civil wars in Central America were driven by the same transnational and international communist threat that had, in the dictatorship's narrative, seized control of Chile between 1970 and 1973, it followed that the dictatorship was uniquely qualified to aid the militaries and far-Right in Guatemala and El Salvador. Accordingly, the Chilean armed forces expanded scholarships for military training available to Central Americans, as well as offering wider political, military and ideological support.⁵¹ Importantly, this aid also reflected the dictatorship's ongoing institutionalisation at home: alongside military support, prominent individuals from within the dictatorship were dispatched to Central America to promote the Chilean 'model' embodied by the 1980 constitution. In February 1979, for instance, Jaime Guzmán, one of the chief architects of the 1980 constitution and most influential civilians within the dictatorship, visited El Salvador, where he was hosted by the private business group ANEP (*Asociación Nacional de Empresa Privada*, National Association of Private Business) and extolled the virtues of Chile's developmental model.⁵²

In the dictatorship's engagement with Central America in the late 1970s we can therefore find the fusing of the anticommunist internationalism of its early years with the new pragmatic foreign policy of this later period. In public, the dictatorship sought to emphasise its new pragmatic foreign policy and willingness to build relations with governments of diverse ideological outlooks.⁵³ But behind closed doors, the dictatorship

⁵¹ For more detail, see Avery, 'Promoting a "Pinochetazo": The Chilean Dictatorship's Foreign Policy in El Salvador during the Carter Years, 1977–81'; Avery, 'Connecting Central America to the Southern Cone: The Chilean and Argentine Response to the Nicaraguan Revolution'.

⁵² Avery, 'Promoting a "Pinochetazo": The Chilean Dictatorship's Foreign Policy in El Salvador during the Carter Years, 1977–81', 772.

⁵³ This pragmatism did continue to shape Chilean foreign policy in Central America, as the dictatorship maintained relations with revolutionary Nicaragua. See, for example, Fernando Camacho Padilla, 'Las

continued to enjoy the closest relations with the governments that shared its uncompromising anticommunist worldview, and in Central America, this led to unprecedented Chilean engagement with the escalating civil wars on the isthmus in the late 1970s. Here, in a reflection of the domestic changes afoot in Chile, the dictatorship could offer itself as a model for anticommunist governance through ‘protected democracy’.

Events in Central America also performed an important rhetorical function for the dictatorship in that the Nicaraguan Revolution and guerrilla activity across the isthmus provided the perfect evidence of the ongoing communist threat on which the dictatorship justified its existence. For instance, Jaime Guzmán brandished Somoza’s downfall as evidence of the flaws in his personalistic, dictatorial regime, and touted the virtues of adopting a strong institutional basis to resist all threats to law and order. In an article in conservative magazine *Ercilla* just a week after Somoza fled Nicaragua, Guzmán drew an explicit connection between events in Central America and Chile’s *nueva institucionalidad*. Somoza’s regime, he argued, had been weakened by its dependence on the United States and its deep corruption and attendant ‘lack of civic conscience’, leading to its ultimate downfall. In contrast, the *nueva institucionalidad* and Pinochet’s own leadership made Chile strong and independent in the face of the Marxist threat.⁵⁴ In August 1979, Guzmán made a similar argument in an editorial for magazine *Realidad*, emphasising Nicaragua’s ‘complete lack of political culture’ and high levels of illiteracy and poverty as factors distinguishing it from Chile, where, according to Guzmán, the coup of 11 September and subsequent regime owed nothing to the United States and represented ‘a genuine expression of impassable sovereignty’.⁵⁵ Guzmán reprised this theme – why the Pinochet

relaciones interamericanas durante la última década de la guerra fría. La reacción del régimen de Pinochet a la revolución sandinista (1978-1985)’, *Secuencia* 0, no. 108 (2020).

⁵⁴ Jaime Guzmán, ‘El contraste entre Nicaragua y Chile’, 25 July 1979, *Ercilla*, via Archivo Fundación Jaime Guzmán, CJG 79.06.

⁵⁵ Jaime Guzmán, ‘Nicaragua o el desplome de los protectorados’, *Realidad*, August 1979, via Archivo Fundación Jaime Guzmán, <https://archivojaimeguzman.cl/uploads/r/archivo-jaime-guzman-e->

regime was not susceptible to the weaknesses that befell Somoza - at least once again in 1984.⁵⁶ Here, then, the Nicaraguan Revolution offered a useful case study to contrast against the Pinochet dictatorship's political project, demonstrating the importance of the international dimensions of the dictatorship for comprehending the changes that occurred at a domestic level in this period.

The question remains, then: how successful was the reorientation of the Pinochet dictatorship's foreign policy in the late 1970s in alleviating its international isolation and improving its international standing? While the dictatorship certainly built closer relations with some governments in this period – including the PRC – in the early 1980s the regime remained fairly isolated and politically unsavoury. Indeed, the circumstances of Hernán Cubillos' downfall point to his ultimate failure in improving the dictatorship's international reputation. In March 1980, Pinochet travelled to the Philippines at the invitation of fellow strongman Ferdinand Marcos. Yet with the Chilean delegation already en route, Marcos bowed to domestic protest and pressure from the Catholic Church and cancelled the invitation, forcing Pinochet and his entourage to land on the Fiji islands, where the local government refused to allow them to disembark, leaving them to endure 'ten hours in the heat of the airfield while protesters tossed eggs against their stranded airplane'.⁵⁷ The incident prompted enormous international embarrassment, and Cubillos was its most prominent victim, fired from his post soon after. In all, the Philippines incident points to the inability of the dictatorship to shake off its toxic reputation, while tensions on the Argentine border and ongoing international human rights scrutiny served only to make its isolation more concrete.

[3/c/8/9/c89f945d6cb1dd0f1e431c4ea96d1b06a5794bffdd325636f56548255e76163a/197908_Realidad_1_3_Editorial_1_Nicaragua_o_el_desplome_de_los_protectorados_3-5.pdf](https://www.repositorio.cepal.org/publicaciones/3/c/8/9/c89f945d6cb1dd0f1e431c4ea96d1b06a5794bffdd325636f56548255e76163a/197908_Realidad_1_3_Editorial_1_Nicaragua_o_el_desplome_de_los_protectorados_3-5.pdf), last accessed 8 January 2024.

⁵⁶ Jaime Guzmán, 'Para que Chile no sea otra Nicaragua', 23 March 1984, *La Segunda*, via Archivo Fundación Jaime Guzmán, CJG 84.10.

⁵⁷ Tobias Rupprecht, 'The General on His Journeys. Augusto Pinochet's International Trips and Diverging Transnational Justice and Memory Agendas in the Aftermath of the Cold War', *Global Society*, 29 March 2019, 424.

In an exception to this general rule, it is worth noting that the Pinochet dictatorship did find a firm friend in British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-1992). Where the two leaders already saw eye-to-eye on many matters, including economic policy, Chilean actions during the Falklands-Malvinas War of 1982 secured the close relationship. In contrast to the vast majority of other Latin American nations, the Chilean dictatorship officially remained neutral on the conflict, while providing clandestine support to the British military effort (largely intelligence and surveillance) in exchange for access to Hawker Hunter jets and other aircraft.⁵⁸ While this secured British-Chilean relations, it nonetheless did little to alleviate Chilean isolation beyond this bilateral relationship. Thus while many elements of Cubillos' pragmatic foreign policy outlasted him, and while the dictatorship made some gains in its relations with a choice set of international interlocutors – primarily those which shared its anticommunism alongside a few important exceptions – its efforts to overcome its international isolation in the late 1970s and early 1980s were largely ineffective in shifting the dial more broadly.

Protest, resistance and democratisation, 1983-88

If the late 1970s and beginning of the 1980s witnessed a concerted effort on the part of the dictatorship to address its international isolation, from 1983 events at home drew the dictatorship's focus away from international politics. Amidst a regional and global economic crisis, the mass protests that broke out in Chile from 1983 completely shattered the illusion that Chile represented 'a visible example of peace' and 'tranquillity' for other countries to follow.⁵⁹ As Steve Stern puts it, 'the bursting apart of official Chile began in May 1983' with the 'the Day of the first great National Protest' on the 11th of that month.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ On the nature of Chilean assistance, see Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*, vol. 2 (Routledge, 2004) chapter 27; On the Latin American response to the war, see Stella Krepp, 'A View from the South: The Falklands/Malvinas and Latin America', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 15, no. 4 (1 December 2017): 348–65.

⁵⁹ These were the words used by the Chilean ambassador to describe Guatemalan perceptions of Chile in 1980, EmbaSanSalvador, 28 April 1980, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1980/AMRE.

⁶⁰ Steve J. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973-1988*, Memory Box of Pinochet's Chile (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 250.

At 8pm, in both Santiago and nationwide, ‘windows opened and banging pots set off a crescendo of sound’, that the *cacerolazo* was joined by the honking of cars in the capital’s middle-class and prosperous neighbourhoods indicated that the discontent had penetrated the dictatorship’s core base. In response, the regime tightened repression and ‘Pinochet appeared on television to explain that Chile once again “faced a problem of international character, guided and led by Russia.”’⁶¹ Despite mounting repression, massive street protests occurred almost monthly from May 1983 until the dictatorship imposed a state of siege in November 1984. The songs and slogans of the Popular Unity government returned to the streets and the dictatorship’s claims of having crushed the supposed ‘subversive threat’ in Chile once and for all – widely touted in the late 1970s – appeared foolhardy.

The protests in turn prompted the dictatorship to adjust its political model. In the new civilian-military cabinet of August 1983, former National Party president Sergio Onofre Jarpa became Interior Minister and oversaw a moderate *apertura*, allowing for a short-lived dialogue between the regime and the non-violent, moderate opposition (under the banner of the Democratic Alliance, AD), the return of exiles from abroad, elections to professional associations and the approval of more dissident media, including the magazine *Cauce* in November that year. In early 1984, elements of the *apertura* spun out of the regime’s control, with *Cauce* in particular publishing a series of incendiary articles directly targeting excess and corruption committed by Pinochet and his family, destroying the regime’s official narrative – constructed soon after that 1973 coup - that emphasised Pinochet’s ‘patriotic probity’ in contrast to the image of Allende as profligate and decadent.⁶² While the junta’s declaration of a state of siege in early November 1984 served to re-establish control, by this stage the genie was out of the bottle.

These challenges to the dictatorship’s domestic stability and its response had a profound impact on its international standing. First, the dictatorship’s diplomats could no longer

⁶¹ This summary draws on Stern’s narrative, see Stern, 250–52.

⁶² Stern, 304–5.

flog the regime abroad as a 'model' of anticommunist 'protected democracy': the shine – if it ever existed - had worn off the 1980 constitution and the dictatorship's legitimacy had once more been forcefully called into question. More importantly yet, in Alison Bruey's words, the protests 'encouraged visions of a Chile without dictatorship, conjuring a world of possibility that people populated with their own dreams of what democracy would look like'.⁶³ While this had its own set of profound implications for Chileans, on the international stage, it meant that the dictatorship's allies and enemies began looking to the post-Pinochet future, in the knowledge that such a future would now likely arrive within the next decade.

While the strength of the international solidarity movement had declined by the 1980s, the explosion of mass protest in May 1983 drew considerable international attention, and from this point until the 1988 plebiscite international support – primarily financial - played a vital role in sustaining the Chilean peaceful opposition movement. Here, mirroring the international response to the 1973 coup, levels of international interest in events in Chile far outstripped those in democratisation processes ongoing elsewhere in Latin America. When Chilean exiles began to return from 1983, they retained their international ties, meaning they were in a position to receive considerable overseas funding. More broadly, Chile continued to capture the imagination of governments, NGOs, and the wider Western European public, receiving millions of dollars in assistance, primarily from private foundations, Western European governments as well as the European Parliament itself. In a political environment where open political mobilisation remained difficult, this international support played a vital role in providing the resources to create spaces for political organisation. For instance, Alan Angell has shown how academic research institutes - which were overwhelmingly funded from outside of Chile - acted as 'the headquarters of the party in academic disguise', with three of Chile's largest – CED, ILET, and SUR – coming together to form the CIS, a campaign group which proved crucial in

⁶³ Alison Bruey, *Bread, Justice, and Liberty: Grassroots Activism and Human Rights in Pinochet's Chile* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), 173.

coordinating the 'No' vote which defeated Pinochet in the 1988 plebiscite.⁶⁴ Thus while the roots of the Chilean opposition movement lay at home, the journey from spontaneous protests in 1983 to a coherent and well-organised opposition movement in 1988 cannot be understood without attention to the international support received by Chile's NGOs, academic institutes, trade unions and other civil society organisations.

As the peaceful democratic opposition movement coalesced over the course of the 1980s, Chilean politics was also shaped by the escalation of armed struggle against the dictatorship, principally driven by the MIR (Movimiento Izquierdista Revolucionario) and the Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez (FPMR), the armed wing of the Partido Comunista de Chile (PCCh). Here too, the international dimension of this history are clear.

Throughout the 1970s, militants of both groups had received military training from Cuba and the Soviet Union, with these countries later assisting militants as they returned to Chile, beginning in 1978 and increasing in number amidst the tumult of the early 1980s (in part inspired by the triumph of the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1979).⁶⁵ Subsequently, the PCCh successfully smuggled weapons of Cuban, Soviet and Vietnamese origin into Chile, and these resources helped sustain the armed struggle as it escalated, most notably with the FPMR's assassination attempt on Pinochet in 1986.⁶⁶ While the armed struggle did not in the end reach the level of a full-scale insurgency, it nonetheless had an enormous impact in raising the very possibility of an armed overthrow of the Pinochet dictatorship, with important implications for the broader international dimensions of Chilean politics in this period.

⁶⁴ Alan Angell, 'International Support for the Chilean Opposition, 1973–1989: Political Parties and the Role of Exiles', in *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas*, ed. Laurence Whitehead, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 188–89.

⁶⁵ Victor Figueroa Clark, 'The Forgotten History of the Chilean Transition: Armed Resistance Against Pinochet and US Policy towards Chile in the 1980s', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 47, no. 3 (2015): 491–520.

⁶⁶ Figueroa Clark; Cristián Pérez, '¡A las armas, camaradas!:: Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez (1983-1990).', *Naveg@merica. Revista electrónica editada por la Asociación Española de Americanistas*, no. 9 (26 October 2012): 14–16.

Most importantly, the existence of the armed struggle helped drive an important reorientation of US policy toward the dictatorship. With the dictatorship's end appearing increasingly inevitable, the Reagan administration grew all the more wary of the presence of a growing armed Left in Chile. As a result, by the mid-1980s the main priority of US policy was to ensure that *when* the transition occurred, it would produce a government beneficial to US interests. Morley and McGillion have shown how this represented a fundamental change in US policy toward Chile, away from acceptance of the Pinochet dictatorship as a 'fact of life' and toward active efforts to promote a transition which would allow for power to pass to the moderate opposition rather than the groups associated with the armed Left.⁶⁷ As a result, the United States joined with efforts to sustain and support the opposition parties, including channelling support to the 'No' campaign in the 1988 plebiscite and publicly insisting that the dictatorship respect its outcome. Thus while the fundamental motives behind US policy toward Chile remained broadly similar to those which underpinned support for the 1973 coup – anticommunism and the desire for a pro-US government in Chile – the radical changes both within Chile and on the international stage in the 1980s produced a very different policy outcome, placing the final nail in the dictatorship's coffin.

Conclusion: what does the study of the Pinochet dictatorship offer to the international history of the 1970s and 1980s?

This chapter has shown how, from its very inception, the Pinochet dictatorship was enormously influenced by events outside of its borders, while the junta's actions at home also had an enormous, and perhaps outsized, impact beyond Chile. There is little doubt, then, that the international dimension is vital in comprehending the history of the Pinochet dictatorship, 1973-1990, and the radical change which the dictatorship encompassed.

⁶⁷ Morris Morley and Chris McGillion, 'Soldiering On: The Reagan Administration and Redemocratisation in Chile, 1983-1986', *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 25, no. 1 (2006): 19; 4-8.

But what, then, does the study of the Pinochet dictatorship offer to the international history of the 1970s and 1980s more broadly? First, studying the radical change within Chile in this period from an international perspective offers us insight into how seemingly distant events in small countries could have a truly global impact. As Marcelo Casals and Mariana Perry put it in their special issue on the 50th anniversary of the coup, ‘the global impact of the Chilean experience reminds us of the mobilising capacity that countries in the Third World had beyond the Third World itself, including the centres of world power’.⁶⁸ Perhaps nowhere is this global influence more evident than in the pivotal role Chile came to play in the rise of the international human rights movement of the 1970s. The enormous outburst of solidarity activism in response to the coup, combined with the huge number of exiles who were transformed almost overnight into transnational human rights activists, meant that ‘for one of the first times in history, a state [the Pinochet dictatorship] was in the position of having to answer to the world community for the sovereign conduct of its leaders’, setting a precedent for the decades to follow and for the supranational human rights norms established today.⁶⁹

When we turn to the dictatorship’s own engagement with international politics, centring the Pinochet dictatorship can help us question US hegemony within the Western bloc, particularly in the era of détente. The dictatorship’s fractious relations with the United States and its particular worldview underscore the heterogenous nature of the ‘Right’ in Latin America during the Cold War, with the dictatorship’s radical anticommunism very often going above and beyond that of the so-called leader of the free world. Moreover, when we look beyond bilateral relations, and locate the Pinochet dictatorship within broader histories of anticommunist internationalism in the 1970s and 1980s, we are able to grasp how the radical changes enacted under the Pinochet dictatorship were understood by others on the Right – both within Latin America and beyond – as a distinct

⁶⁸ Mariana Perry and Marcelo Casals, ‘Introduction: A Global Coup. The Chilean 1970s in Transnational Perspective’, *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 42, no. 4 (2023): 488.

⁶⁹ Patrick William Kelly, ‘The 1973 Chilean Coup and the Origins of Transnational Human Rights Activism’, *Journal of Global History* 8, no. 1 (2013): 185.

model for anticommunist ‘protected democracy’ capable of withstanding the perceived subversive communist threat.

Finally, the history of the final years of the dictatorship, from the outburst of mass protest in 1983 through to the democratisation process of 1988-90, offers insight into the intersection of the third wave of democratisation with late Cold War politics. Examining the outcome of this process – which effectively preserved a capitalist economy in Chile which sat firmly within the US orbit – can help us to understand the radical change under the Pinochet dictatorship as part of the wider defeat of the radical third worldist visions for the organisation of global politics and economics that had emerged from the era of decolonisation and which the UP government had embodied. Although Chile regained its democracy, by 1988 the hopes for a New International Economic Order and the wider political project that that initiative sat within were long defeated.

Why, then, did events in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship take on such international importance? For Alan Angell, it was ‘partly a consequence of exile, partly a consequence of a political structure similar in many ways to Western democracies, partly because of sympathy for the overall objectives of the Allende government, partly because of the reaction to the brutality of the coup, and partly because of all these factors combined to make Chile a symbol of democracy versus dictatorship’.⁷⁰ This final point, on the contrast between democracy and dictatorship, points to the concept of ‘radical change’ in Pinochet’s Chile at the heart of this volume. This chapter has argued that to understand the changes that occurred within Chile, we must be attentive to the international dimensions of the Pinochet dictatorship. Only then can we grasp how, at the same time, events in Chile wrought such an influence on international politics.

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⁷⁰ Angell, ‘International Support for the Chilean Opposition, 1973–1989: Political Parties and the Role of Exiles’, 196.

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