
STUDY

**THE ORIGINS OF DEMOCRACY: THEORETICAL
REFLECTIONS ON THE CHILEAN CASE***

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Chile was one of the most democratic countries in the world, not only in the 1960s but also during the last century and a half. Political institutions in Chile evolved in a similar way to comparable institutions in Europe and the United States, in conditions generally considered to be unfavorable for the development of representative processes and procedures. Based on the Chilean case, this article seeks to help explain the origin and consolidation of democratic regimes. In the author's opinion, the Chilean case calls into question the general validity of the most accepted theories of the gestation of democratic regimes. The article provides an historical interpretation of the evolution of Chile's institutional structures compared to other western democracies; it then points out the shortcomings in cultural and economic theories of the origin of democracy; and lastly, it stresses the value that a historical and political approach can provide to the gestation of democratic institutions, as can be inferred from the Chilean case in the 19th century.

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After World War II there was a fundamental shift in the analysis of democratic regimes. Guided in part by the pessimism of authors such as Michels, Mosca and Pareto, who became skeptical of the ability of European societies to practice democratic ideals, the theorists of politics moved away from a preoccupation with constitutionalism and the normative implications of regime types, to a concern for understanding the actual operation of democracy in complex contemporary nation-states. A few scholars, notably Robert Dahl, made major contributions to democratic theory by articulating the principal features of functioning democracies, or polyarchies, as he preferred to call them, since most fail to meet fully the democratic ideal.¹ Other scholars made use of new techniques, such as survey research, which tended to reinforce a sober view of the actual commitment of mass publics in democratic societies to the norms of participation and political tolerance.² And, more recently, authors interested in “empirical democratic theory” have turned to cross-national quantitative techniques in an attempt to specify the incidence of democracy in the contemporary world. They have also sought to explain why some countries develop democratic systems and others do not by examining a wide range of socio-economic determinants which are associated (in greater or lesser degree) with democratic politics.³

¹ See Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956); *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

² Studies questioning commitment to the “democratic creed” as a basis for democracy include the classic study by Samuel Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties* (New York: 1955). See also the influential articles by James W. Prothro and Charles M. Grigg, “Fundamental Principles of Democracy: Bases of Agreement and Disagreement”, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 22, N° 2 (May, 1960), pp. 276-94; and Herbert McClosky, “Consensus and Ideology in American Politics”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 58, N° 2 (June, 1964), pp. 361-82. For a discussion of these issues, emphasizing the importance of leadership, see Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?*, Chapter 28. In their path-breaking cross national study, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (*The Civic Culture* (Boston: Little Brown, 1965)) concluded that democratic regimes require not only “participant” attitudes but also “subject” ones —i.e. a measure of traditionalism and deference to authority such as that found in England. On deference, see also Harry Eckstein, “A Theory of Stable Democracy”, Center for International Affairs, Princeton University, Research Monograph N° 10, 1961; Robert T. Mackenzie and Allan Silver, *Angels in Marble; Working Class Conservatives in Urban England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968); and Eric Nordlinger, *The Working Class Tories, Authority, Deference and Stable Democracy* (Berkeley, 1967).

³ Seymour Martin Lipset began these studies with his influential “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 53, N° 1 (March, 1959), pp. 69-105. Other studies include Phillips Cutright, “National Political Development: Measurement and Analysis,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 28 (April, 1963), pp. 253-64; Donald J. McCrone and Charles F. Cnudde, “Toward a Communication Theory of Political Development: A Causal Model”,

Almond notes that these cross-national studies are one of the best examples of cumulative efforts in the field, as different authors have attempted to redefine their indices and improve their explanatory models.⁴ However, these studies provide little insight into the reasons why some countries become democratic and others not, beyond a rather general statement of association between democracy and certain socio-economic variables. Furthermore, the examination of a large number of cases repeatedly comes up with several deviant cases which would have to be explained if causal inferences are to be made between economic and social determinants and regime type. Indeed, because of the existence of these deviant cases some scholars, like Juan Linz, questioned the validity and reliability of the associations uncovered in this literature.⁵

Among the most prominent of these deviant cases are two Latin American ones: Argentina, in which the absence of democracy belies the high degree of societal modernization; and Chile, which appeared in most studies as one of the most democratic countries in the World, despite its status as a relatively “underdeveloped” country. In one of the most recent articles on the subject, utilizing the largest sample of countries, Chile ranked among the 15% most democratic countries of the world with a score in 1965 higher than that of the United States, France, Italy and West Germany. For 1960 the score was higher than that of Great Britain.⁶

American Political Science Review, Vol. 61, N° 1 (March, 1967), pp. 72-79; Deane E. Neubauer, “Some Conditions of Democracy”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 61, N° 4 (December, 1967), pp. 1002-09; Arthur K. Smith, Jr., “Socio-Economic Development and Political Democracy: A Causal Analysis”, *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 13 (1969), pp. 95-125; Robert W. Jackman, “On the Relation of Economic Development to Democratic Performance”, *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 17, N° 3 (August, 1973), pp. 611-21; Robert W. Jackman, “Political Democracy and Social Equality: A Comparative Analysis”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 39, N° 1 (February, 1974), pp. 29-44; Kenneth A. Bollen, “Comparative Measurement of Political Democracy”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 45, N° 3 (June, 1980), pp. 370-90. For reprints of some of these and other articles see J. V. Gillespie and B. A. Nesvold (eds.), *Macro-quantitative Analysis: Conflict, Development and Democratization* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1971); and Charles Cnudde and Deane Neubauer, *Empirical Democratic Theory* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1969). For an excellent review of some of this literature see Leonardo Morlino, “Misure di Democrazia e di Liberta: Discusione di Alcune Analisi Empiriche”, *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, Vol. 5, N° 1 (April, 1975), pp. 131-166.

⁴ Gabriel Almond, “Approach to Development Causation”, in Gabriel Almond, Scott Flanigan, and Robert Mundt, *Crisis, Choice and Change: Historical Studies of Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, Inc., 1973), p. 11.

⁵ Juan Linz, “Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes”, in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.), *Handbook of Political Science* Volume 3 (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1975), p. 182.

⁶ See Bolen. It should be noted that the author cautions against concluding that closely ranked countries are any different in level of development.

The Chilean case is the most intriguing of the two, because it so clearly departed from the standard of Latin America and the Third World as a whole. This “surprising” finding led Phillips Cutright to suggest that Chile would be one of the best cases to examine in detail “to see the institutional mechanisms or other national characteristics that allow a nation to wander far from the regression line for many years.”⁷ For this reason, Chile figured prominently in Dahl’s Study focusing on the development of “polyarchies.”⁸

It is obvious that if those those studies had considered Chile after the military coup of 1973, the country would have ranked not among the highest, but among the lowest on all indices of democratic performance.⁹ Chilean exceptionalism, however, was not merely a statistical fluke. What the synchronic associational studies were not able to show is that Chile had a democracy that would have persistently ranked with the most democratic countries in the World not only in the 1960s, but for the last century and a half. Chile’s political institutions evolved, in a strikingly similar manner to the evolution of comparable institutions in Europe and the United States under circumstances which have generally been viewed as deleterious to the development of representative processes and procedures.

This paper is a preliminary statement of a larger study which attempts to discern from the Chilean experience certain patterns which can then help us assess the value of various competing theories which seek to explain the origin and consolidation of democratic regimes. Naturally, whatever propositions can be derived from the Chilean case can only remain tentative until subjected to comparative examination with other cases carefully chosen to test these propositions. Without carefully structured comparative evidence it would be difficult to identify those factors from the Chilean case which are generalizable to the phenomena in question, and those which are fundamentally, if inadvertently, wrong in explaining the Chilean case itself. Much of the effort to systematize propositions from the Chilean case and the effort to examine them in the light of other cases remains to be done. The reader, however, should get a feel for the direction of the project in these pages.

The task of explaining the Chilean case is not an easy one, for there are no systematic studies which address these questions for Chile, nor is

⁷ See Cutright, “National Political Development”, reprinted in Cnudde and Neubauer, p. 205.

⁸ Dahl, *Polyarchy*.

⁹ For an analysis of the breakdown of Chilean democracy see Arturo Valenzuela, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Chile* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

Chile considered, with the exception of Dahl's work, in the general literature on the origins and evolution of democratic institutions.¹⁰

The principal contention of this project is that the available theoretical contributions are not adequate to explain the Chilean case, thereby casting doubt on even the more general validity of these theories. The paper will briefly review them to note their shortcomings in accounting for the Chilean pattern of political development. It will also provide a synopsis of the main features of the evolution of Chilean democracy, suggesting how these features can provide a basis for the development of an alternative theoretical conceptualization. However, before turning to those themes, it is necessary to provide a sketch of the evolution of Chilean political institutions aimed at documenting the assertion that Chile succeeded early in the 19th century in developing representative institutions similar to those being developed in Europe.¹¹

Elements of Chilean Exceptionality

Robert Dahl has noted that the principal requirements for democracy to exist among a large number of people can be summarized in two different theoretical dimensions. The first refers to the degree of "liberalization" or "contestation" in a political system, or the extent to which opposing elements can peacefully challenge the regime through mechanisms such as suffrage and institutions such as representative assemblies or parliaments. As Dahl notes, the existence of an opposition party is "very nearly the most distinctive characteristic of democracy itself; and we take the absence of an opposition party as evidence, if not always conclusive proof, for the absence of democracy."¹² The second

¹⁰ Not only has Chile not been given much consideration in the literature; Latin America in general has been left out. The volumes of the Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social Science Research Council had only a few studies dealing with Latin America, and Latin America did not figure prominently in the theoretical efforts of the 1960s. In part, this was due to the fact that Latin America did not fit as neatly into the modernization schema as did countries in Africa or Asia. In his excellent study of parties in Western Democracies, Epstein acknowledges that a few Latin American countries meet his criteria for inclusion in his study, but leaves them out "mainly because the whole of Latin America is customarily treated along with developing nations." (Emphasis added). See Leon Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 4.

¹¹ Because the empirical material on the Chilean case in this colloquium paper draws from a larger work, involving considerable primary research, references will not be provided for the material presented that deals directly with Chile.

¹² See his introduction to the volume he edited on *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966), p. xviii. For a development of the framework see *Polyarchy* Chapter 1. Juan Linz defines democracy stressing similar elements, as does Barrington Moore. See Linz, *Handbook*, p. 183 and Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966) p. 429.

characteristic, “participation” or “inclusiveness”, refers to the degree of popular involvement in the system of public contestation. These dimensions vary somewhat independently with a democratic regime being characterized by high degrees both of contestation and participation. Most democracies evolved slowly toward full participation after first developing systems of public contestation in which a progressively larger portion of the citizenry was allowed to participate.¹³ As Dahl notes, in the 19th century most of the European democracies and the United States were “oligarchical democracies”, with relatively high degrees of political liberalization and tolerance for opposition and relatively low levels of political participation.¹⁴

Chile, by contrast with other Latin American countries, developed a relatively high level of competitive politics early in the 19th Century, ahead of the development of similar institutions in many European countries. The Chilean Congress was an important center of public authority from the very beginning, and between 1830 and 1970 virtually all presidents and congressmen were elected to office following the electoral practices of the time, which did of course change. The short lived political crisis of 1851, 1859, 1891, 1924-5, and 1931-2, did not alter what can be seen in the long run as an essentially linear development towards more competitiveness and participation.

The establishment of an “oligarchical democracy” in Chile was not a simple process. Particularly in the early part of the century constitutional procedures were severely challenged on a number of occasions. At the same time, executive authority was paramount in the early years, and effective participation was limited both by suffrage restrictions and by intervention in the electoral process. The Chilean executive, until his powers were eroded by the third quarter of the 19th century, served a five year term which could be renewed once.

The president had the power to appoint and remove ministers, and name all judges, public employees and clergy. He could call extra-ordinary

¹³ This dimension is close to Rokkan's argument that “incorporation and representation” are the two most significant dimensions in the development of European democracies. For a compendium of his writings which have made a major contribution to the field see *Citizens, Elections, Parties* (New York: David McKay Co, Inc. 1970), especially Chapters 3 and 7. The literature on “crisis and development” points to similar dimensions. However, because the concern is with overall political development, and not simply with democratization, the concept of “authority” usually carries very different connotations from the notion of representation or contestation. For work in this vein see Leonard Binder et al. *Crises and Sequences in Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.). Some of these studies will be noted again later in the paper.

¹⁴ See Dahl, *Polyarchy*.

sessions of the legislature to consider initiatives of his choosing and had an absolute veto over ordinary legislation. The control that the executive had over the electoral process meant that from 1830 to 1870, presidents Prieto, Bulnes, Montt and Perez served two terms each, and it was not until 1860 that the president failed to impose his successor.

Though the president was clearly the dominant figure in Chilean politics for much of the 19th Century, the bi-cameral congress had final authority over the approval of periodic laws prescribed in the Constitution, including budget and taxation measures, legislation creating public employment and the deployment of the armed forces. In addition, it was charged with reviewing the performance of executive agencies. Legislators could raise questions about governmental performance which cabinet officers had to answer in the chamber, and could censor ministers over policy disagreements. The executive, however, could not dissolve parliament and call for new elections. Thus, Chile had some of the features of parliamentary systems which weakened its executive authority.

In the early years the executive was able to ensure relatively docile legislatures both because of its prominence and the control which ministries exercised over the electoral process. However, as early as 1839, 12 opposition deputies were elected to the Chamber, and executives soon faced the reality that they could not ensure the undivided loyalty of legislators elected under ministry sponsorship. The absence of well structured parties, and the increased saliency of key issues, such as the conflict between church and state, forced the executive to become more sensitive to shifting parliamentary majorities. In 1841, the Congress held up the budget resolution in order to force the executive to add to the agenda of an extra-ordinary legislative session a couple of measures that had initiated in the legislature. In 1849, a cabinet was censored, and by the 1850s the legislature resorted to delaying tactics on key measures to force the executive to change policies and ministries.

The gradual development of parliamentary accountability of the executive led in the 1870s to a series of constitutional reforms ratifying the increased importance of the legislature and the declining power of the executive. The president was restricted to one five year term, the Senate was elected by popular vote (40 years before the XVII Amendment in the United States), the executive's veto power was limited, and various measures were enacted as part of electoral reform legislation in an attempt to deprive the executive of its continued influence in the electoral process. The struggle between the executive and the legislature finally led to civil war in 1891 when President Balmaceda, unlike his predecessors, refused to acknowledge the congressional prerogative of delaying budgetary

legislation in order to force policy changes. After the victory of congressional forces, Chile virtually became a parliamentary system, rather than a presidential one, as ministries were structured solely to reflect the shifting coalitions in both chambers of the legislature. Not until the Constitutional revisions of 1925 did the executive regain the position of primary actor in the political system.

While Chile's executive dominated the political process during most of the nineteenth century, it must be emphasized that he was an *elected* leader for a *fixed* term. In Europe, with rare exceptions, executive authority rested with unelected monarchs. As Epstein notes, "political power was often not effectively transferred from hereditary rulers to representative assemblies no matter how narrow their electorates until late in the nineteenth century."¹⁵ Some countries, including Britain and Norway, developed political contestation with parliamentary responsibility before Chile. Other countries, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, began to develop parliamentary influence around the same time as Chile did. The Swedish king and the German Kaiser were able to choose ministers without regard to parliamentary majorities up until 1917, though the parliament's views were taken into consideration earlier. Italy was not finally unified until 1870 and did not establish a system of parliamentary rule until the 1880s. Republican and democratic rule in France consolidates only with the Third Republic beginning in 1871-1876, and many observers noting the importance of the Napoleonic bureaucracy question the degree of authority wielded by the French parliament.¹⁶ Chile in fact has greater similarity with the United States than with Europe in the nineteenth century.

As in most of Europe with the notable exception of France, the second dimension of democracy, political inclusiveness, expanded only gradually in Chile during the 19th Century. Until 1874, the suffrage was restricted to males with property or a trade or profession which was equivalent to the property requirement. Voter participation remained very limited. In 1846, approximately 2% of the population voted, a figure which was nevertheless comparable to the voting population in Britain in 1830, Luxembourg in 1848, the Netherlands in 1851, and Italy in 1871.¹⁷ After that date voting remained at the same level, or actually declined, as registries

¹⁵ Epstein, *Political Parties*, p. 1924.

¹⁶ For discussion of the rise of political opposition in Europe see the excellent collection of studies in Dahl, *Political Oppositions*, with essays on most European countries by leading authorities.)

¹⁷ See J. Samuel Valenzuela, *Democratización a través de reformas: Los conservadores y la expansión del sufragio en el siglo diecinueve chileno* (Buenos Aires: IDEP, 1983), Appendix, for 19th century Chilean electoral data. European data can be found in Rokkan, *Citizens*, pp. 83-84.

were renewed every three years and executives sought to limit participation to supporters, including public employees and members of the civil guard. In 1874, the legislature, over the objections of the executive enacted a fundamental reform of the electoral system which extended the suffrage to all literate adult males. As a result, the number of registered voters increased from 49,000 in 1873 to 149,000 in 1879.¹⁸ Norway, with a comparable adult male population to Chile's, had 84,000 registered voters in 1876.¹⁹ Chile would later lag behind European nations both in the rate of increase of male voters as well as in granting women the right to vote (with the exception of Switzerland) and would not abolish the literacy requirement until 1970. For all intents and purposes, however, the development of institutions of contestation and participation compare favorably in Chile to the development of comparable institutions in Europe and in the United States.

Cultural and Economic Interpretations of the Origins of Democracy: Problems with the Chilean case

The emergence of institutions of participation and contestation is a relatively recent phenomenon which is roughly contemporaneous with the rise of modern industrial societies. Consequently, there is a strong assumption in much of the literature on the subject that democracy was the end point in a general process of modernization. In addition, since democracy had less difficulty in the North than in the South of Europe, the analysts have linked its successful establishment with Protestant rather than Catholic values.

Authors vary considerably on whether they give greater emphasis to the value or ideological dimensions of the origins of democracy, or to the economic or structural dimensions, and many combine both elements in a more or less systematic fashion. Most authors, however, view either cultural or economic determinants as the major explanatory variables in accounting for the rise or failure of democracy. We will focus on each approach, noting their relevance for understanding the Chilean case.

A. Value Explanations

Value explanations have figured prominently in efforts to explain the failure of democracy in Latin America and the success of democracy in the

¹⁸ J. S. Valenzuela, *idem*.

¹⁹ For Norway see the essay by Stein Rokkan, "Norway: Numerical Democracy and Corporate Pluralism," in Dahl, *Political Oppositions*, p. 76.

North American colonies. In his highly influential interpretation of United States development, Louis Hartz has argued that democracy too root in the United States because the American colonies were populated by settlers who brought with them a highly individualistic protestant culture. “Whatever the Americans thought,” he wrote, “their republican virtue was insured by a cultural heritage of the past, ultimately out of the first of the seventeenth century migrations. It was a heritage which had given them a Tempered Enlightenment, a traditionalistic revolution, ultimately a successful republican constitution.”²⁰

While the North American fragment of Europe brought the values of the Enlightenment to the New World, their Latin American counterparts brought aristocratic and feudal values which made it difficult for representative institutions to flourish. Thus, Hartz notes that the “tradition of popular assemblies” which ensured a continuity of government in the British colonies not only did not exist in the Spanish colonies, they would not have been possible because of the absence of an appropriate value structure to sustain participatory politics. The exclusion of the creole from participation in colonial administration “did to be sure, produce an alienated class which turned toward French Thought. But the Creole was an aristocrat, and even if he had been taken into the Spanish system as the Canadian Seigneur was taken into the French, there would still have been the passivity of the mass of the people as there was in Canada.”²¹

Underlying the difference between the North and South American value structures was the difference between a protestant and a catholic fragment. Pierre Trudeau has argued that “Catholic nations have not always been ardent supporters of democracy. They are authoritarian in spiritual matters; and since the dividing line between the spiritual and the temporal may be very fine and even confused, they are often disinclined to seek solutions in temporal affairs through the mere counting of heads.”²² As David Martin has argued in his *A General Theory of Secularization*, “the incidence of pluralism and democracy is related to the incidence of those religious bodies which are themselves inherently pluralistic and democratic... Such bodies... are much more prevalent in the Anglo-

²⁰ See Louis Hartz, “United States History in a New Perspective”, in Hartz (ed.), *The Founding of New Societies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), p. 80. Hartz’ classic study on the United States is *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955).

²¹ Hartz, 75.

²² Cited by Seymour Martin Lipset in his “Values, Education and Entrepreneurship”, in Seymour Martin Lipset and Aldo Solari (eds.) *Elites in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.), p. 12.

American situation than elsewhere... In Russia and Latin America democratic and individualistic Protestantism arrived late in the process and could not have an important effect..."²³

Richard Morse has stressed the cultural and ideological features of Latin America and related them to the evolution of society and politics. Morse argues that the "cultural determinants for society and personality in Latin America" stem from the creole's "medieval Catholic concern with hierarchy, with honor and personal loyalty, with rhetoric, with casuistry, with expressiveness, with the wholeness of things; their creole ambivalences, sensibilities, self denigration and braggadocio habits of command and deference; and their stock of half-absorbed ideas from the arsenals of Anglo-French 'enlightenment' thought."²⁴ More recently, the negative implications for Anglo-American style democracy of a cultural heritage derived from Catholic Spain have been extremely well articulated by Howard Wiarda who has underscored the organicist, patrimonialist and corporatist implications of the Iberic-Latin American tradition for Latin American political development.²⁵

According to Morse and most Latin American historians, the Wars of Independence, which were often Civil Wars with a large portion of the population seeking to maintain royal authority or to impose a new form of monarchical rule, had devastating consequences for Latin America's newly independent states. With the demise of the authority of the crown in the wake of the Napoleonic invasions, and in the absence of both a tradition of representative government and a value system consonant with the "liberal

²³ David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978.), p. 25. Martin explicitly notes that the Latin pattern of Catholicism is associated with unstable democracy. See p. 59.

²⁴ Richard Morse, "The Heritage of Latin America", in Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies*, p. 137. The personality characteristics which presumably have impeded democracy in Latin America and which stem from traditional catholic antecedents have been stressed by many authors including several anthropologists. See for example some of the essays reprinted in D.B. Heath and R.N. Adams (eds.) *Contemporary Cultures and Societies in Latin America* (New York: 1965). These personality characteristics are noted by Robert Dix as being at the root of the difficulties found in Latin America for the acceptance of opposition. Dix adds that Latin Americans suffer from some of the same qualities of "amoral familism" which Banfield attributes to Southern Italy. See Robert H. Dix, "Latin America: Oppositions and Development", in Robert A. Dahl, *Regimes and Oppositions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 261-305. It is also part of James Payne's explanation which features the search for status as the underlying motivation for politics in Latin American cultures. See James Payne, *Patterns of Conflict in Colombia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

²⁵ See his "Toward a Framework for the Study of Political Change in the Iberic-Latin Tradition: The Corporative Model", *World Politics*, XXV (January, 1973) and his "Democracy and Human Rights in Latin America: Toward a New Conceptualization", in Howard Wiarda (ed.), *Human Rights and U.S. Human Rights Policy* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1982).

constitutions” adopted at the time, most of Spanish America fell into anarchy punctuated by *caudillo* rule. As Morse says “decapitated, the government could not function, for the patrimonial regime had developed neither: 1.) the underpinning of contractual vassal relationships that capacitate component parts of a *feudal* regime for autonomous life; nor 2.) a rationalized *legal* order not dependent for its operation and claims to assent upon personalistic intervention of the highest order.²⁶ Jacques Lambert adds, “in the void created by the disappearance of (royal) authority, all of Spanish America went through a period when centrifugal forces threatened to provoke an endless parceling of territories into small sovereignties... Caudillismo results from the political immaturity of Spanish American societies in the nineteenth century.²⁷

But if the absence of democracy in Latin America is explained by cultural antecedents, how then do we account for the Chilean case? There are two possible approaches which can be followed to account for Chilean exceptionality in light of cultural theories. The first involves the elaboration of an argument that somehow Chile did not conform to the Spanish American fragment—that it had come closer in some respect to the “liberal” fragment of North America. In attempting to account for puzzle of the Chilean case, Robert Dahl comes close to this approach by suggesting that the Chilean case can be explained by “considerable equality in distribution of land and instruments of coercion, reinforced by norms favoring social and political equality.”²⁸

The historical record, however, does not bear out this assertion, nor does it bear out Francisco Encina’s suggestions that Chilean politics took the direction they did because of the greater enlightenment of a Basque upper class.²⁹ Chile was among the most traditional colonies. Royalist sentiment in Chile was stronger than it was in many other colonies, with Spanish forces recruiting most of their troops internally for the fight against the rebels. At the same time, the Chilean social structure was characterized

²⁶ Morse, in Hartz, p. 161.

²⁷ Jacques Lambert, *Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 150, 56.

²⁸ Dahl, *Polyarchy*, p. 140.

²⁹ The great Chilean historian, Francisco Encina in all of his writings tends to suggest that the Chilean elites somehow had superior stock. See his *Historia de Chile* 20 Volumes (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1941-42.) Explanations drawing on the wisdom of the upper class are also common in Julio Heise Gonzalez, otherwise excellent *Historia de Chile* (Santiago: Editorial Andres Bello, 1974.) For example, Heise observes that “public life in the final analysis depends on culture, on the habits and characteristics of all of the social group. For any form of political community to express itself with success... certain spiritual predispositions are required in all the people...” Heise, p. 273.

by large landed estates with semi-feudal class relations. The wars of independence brought about fewer changes than in the other colonies. In his excellent analysis of political independence in various colonies, Jorge Domínguez notes that “Chile lagged behind the other colonies, although it had experienced economic growth and mobilization. Its society had been transformed the least. The social bonds within it remained strong. Centralization had not been advanced nor had society been pluralized. Traditional elites remained strong, and traditional orientations prevailed.”³⁰ Furthermore, during the first twenty years or so of the country’s political life, Chile, like its neighbors, was racked by civil conflicts and dissention as regional, family and personalistic rivalries held sway.³¹

The second and standard approach is to argue that while Chile did indeed develop stable institutions, these were not liberal. Morse writes that “Chile was an example perhaps unparalleled of a Spanish American country which managed, after a twelve-year transitional period, to avoid the extremes of tyranny and anarchy with a political system unencumbered by the mechanisms and party rhetoric of an exotic liberalism... Thus, the structure of the Spanish patrimonial state was recreated with only those minimum concessions to Anglo-French constitutionalism that were necessary for a nineteenth-century republic which had just rejected monarchical rule.”³² Hartz characterizes the regime more directly as a dictatorship and notes that the emergence of a “liberalism within Congress bent on controlling the clergy and extending suffrage” contributed to anarchy which “lead to the emergence of a new dictatorship.” He concludes that this “reminds us merely that participative responsibility in the Jacksonian sense involves sobriety as well as ‘rationality’ -The Temperate Enlightenment of the Revolutionary era again... the progressives in Chile were perpetually frustrated because they could not count on a liberal society to back them up.”³³

This view of Chilean political development, echoing many of the standard accounts in Chilean historiography, holds more specifically that Diego Portales, as “dictator” (in Hartz’ terms), imposed an absolutist authority which restored harmony by not experimenting with liberal ideals

³⁰ See Jorge I. Domínguez, *Insurrection or Loyalty* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) p. 141. For discussion of Chilean support for the royalist cause see p. 201. The literature on Colonial Chile is voluminous. In particular see the works of Jaime Eyzaguirre and Sergio Villalobos. A marxist perspective is provided by Hernán Ramírez Necochea.

³¹ See for example, Mary Lowenthal Felstinger, “Kinship Politics in the Chilean Independence Movement”, *Hahr*, Volume 56, # 1 (February 1976).

³² Morse, in Hartz, pp. 163-4.

³³ Hartz, in Hartz, p. 88.

from the new United States or from European progressive circles. John Johnson articulates this thesis forcefully when he says that “Portales used demotions and executions to remove liberal oriented officers and other ‘undesirables’ from the military and brought the institution under control... Barracks revolts or coup d’etats practically standard practice elsewhere in Latin America ended.”³⁴

There are serious reasons to question the thesis that Portales was the forger of Chilean institutions. He was never president, served as minister for less than three years, and lived most of the Prieto presidency in Valparaiso. He had little to do with the 1833 Constitution, and was assassinated in 1837 by disgruntled former supporters (military men) unhappy with his policies.³⁵

But, whether or not the Portales account is plausible, the main difficulty with this interpretation has already been anticipated in the discussion outlining the features of the Chilean political regime in the 19th Century. By comparison with the European experience at the time, and even by comparison with the United States, the Chilean regime was hardly characterized by “minimal concessions” to republican rule, nor were the liberals “perpetually frustrated.”

Even though the early Nineteenth Century regime in Chile was hardly by current standards a full-blown democracy, it is seriously mistaken to equate it with the colonial period. Chilean presidents owed their authority to a fundamentally different legitimacy base than the Spanish monarchs or even most Constitutional monarchs of the period. They were selected for fixed terms in competitive elections to a constitutionally defined post with several important limitations and checks by other branches of government. With independence Chile moved, in Weberian terms, to a “rational legal” style of authority and did not reproduce the traditional authority of the past. Indeed, its republican political system was much more similar to that of the United States than it was to most regimes of contemporary Europe, let alone the patrimonial regime of 18th Century

³⁴ See John J. Johnson, *The Military and Society in Latin America* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1964), p. 24. See also the excellent history by Fredrick Pike, *Chile and the United States, 1880-1962* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), p. 11. Perhaps the most extreme version of this thesis is Francisco Jose Moreno’s, who argues that the strong man Chilean regime was succesful because it led to a regime which coincided with the “authoritistic” tendencies in the Chilean national character. See his *Legitimacy and Stability in Latin America* (New York: New Yor University Press, 1969).

³⁵ For an elaboration of this argument see Arturo Valenzuela, *Political Brokers in Chile: Local Government in Centralized Polity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1977.)

Spain.³⁶ President Joaquin Prieto left office in 1840 after two terms to make way for Manuel Bulnes who in turn was succeeded by Manuel Montt. When Montt tried to impose his successor, the outcry was such that his choice to succeed him withdrew from the race leading to the election of President Perez, who incorporated the leading opponents of Manuel Montt into his cabinet. This transition to opponents occurred earlier than in many European countries, and much earlier than in France, the leading European republic.

Martz, Morse, and others, characterizing the Chilean regime and interpreting Chilean events, have been misled by an excessive reliance on the writings of leading Chilean essayists and historians such as Diego Barros Arana, Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna and José Victorino Lastarria, who were actively involved in Chilean politics and were strong advocates of most advanced liberal policies. In fact, Hartz cites Francisco Bilbao's account of "Chilean feudalism" in arguing that Chile was undistinguishable from other Latin countries where creoles united with the "church hierarchy and the new military corps to resist a leftward trend."³⁷ Bilbao, however, was hardly an objective source having been the leader of the Chilean socialist movement in mid-century, strongly influenced by the Paris commune which he witnessed in person. Undoubtedly, his ideas would have been as "foreign" in the United States in 1849 as they were in Chile. Bilbao's "dictator", President Montt, was the same chief executive who gave assylum and protection to Sarmiento in his exile from the Rozas regime in Argentina, and sent Sarmiento to the United States to develop an educational policy for Chile based on the North American example. He is also a president who went against the interests of the Church, leading ultramontane catholics to set up Chile's first coherent opposition party to battle the secularizing of the State. Though there is little question that the leading liberals of the period were "frustrated", they made as much, if not more headway in Chile than they did in most of Europe, including Protestant Europe. Lastarria, one of the key critics of the period and a champion of liberal causes, was elected to Congress in 1849 (20 years before the start of the Third Republic) and served until 1882, occupying Ministerial positions in 1862 and 1876.

³⁶ For Weber's discussion of authority see H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 78ff, 216ff, 295ff. The fundamentally different character of republican rule is stressed by Lipset when he notes the pressures which existed in the United States toward granting Washington some kind of monarchical legitimacy. See his *The First New Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

³⁷ Hartz, p. 29.

The failure of cultural explanations to account for the Chilean case raises serious questions about the underlying assumption that there is a direct fit between societal values and political institutions. Though the evidence historically is hard to come by, it is extremely unlikely that Chile had societal values comparable to Norway, Britain or the United States, even though the political outcomes may have been similar. Indeed, several students of democracy have argued that “stable” democracy is the product not only of liberal and participatory values, but of a mix of participatory and deferential values, and that the crucial element is not so much the content of those values but the congruence between values and authority patterns in society and in the political sphere.³⁸ The problem, however, is that in the absence of a clearly defined set of values which relate to democracy, it is difficult to ascertain which mix of values is appropriate. As a result there is a real temptation to engage in circular reasoning: if a particular regime was stable or had the requisite democratic characteristics, then its value structures or authority structures were *ipso facto* appropriate.

In concluding this section, it should be noted that some authors have pointed to the corporatist or organic statist features of Latin American politics, without attributing them to an underlying set of values or attitudes within the population. For Alfred Stepan and Phillippe Schmitter, for example, the prevalence of political institutions of an authoritarian or corporate variety are more closely related to the evolution of political institutions themselves which stem in some measure from the colonial experience, but are also related to conscious choices on the part of relevant political elites. While these authors have made an important contribution to our understanding of Latin America, their focus on a more “voluntaristic” explanation for the corporate or authoritarian phenomena provides us with no systematic explanations for why another path may have been chosen in the Latin American context. Stepan, for instance, presents a typology of “organic-statist” regimes which allows no room for alternative paths such as the Chilean one before 1973.³⁹

³⁸ See Eckstein, “A Theory of Stable Democracy” for the argument that the political system must be congruent with authority patterns in society.

³⁹ See Alfred Stepan, *The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 59, where he argues against the notion that corporatism is a cultural legacy and is more a response on the part of elites to various political crises.

B. Economic Explanations

While there is a broad variation in studies emphasizing the economic determinants of democracy, for simplicity's sake they can be divided into two categories: those drawing on broad economic factors related to modernization, and those which point to certain particular class or group formations which result from the development process.

Drawing on the classic distinction between “traditional” and “modern” societies suggested by several leading 19th century thinkers seeking to explain those factors contributing to the development of modern industrial societies, several social scientists writing in the post-war period have argued that democracy is a logical result of economic development. With the shift towards industrialization from traditional agriculture, societies became more complex, differentiated and secularized, opening the way for the rise of new groups and institutions capable of challenging traditional authority structures. One of the best known studies to make this relationship explicit is Daniel Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society*, in which Lerner argued that urbanization resulting from economic transformations directly led to societal complexity, widespread literacy and a growing ability of people to work with others, resulting in turn in democratic politics.⁴⁰ Though the literature on political development, particularly after the prompting of Samuel Huntington moved away from this linear tie-in between economic development and political development, there remained a widespread assumption that whether or not political development was democratic development, democracy would best succeed in economically developed contexts.⁴¹

⁴⁰ See Daniel Lerner. *The Passing of Traditional Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1958) .

⁴¹ Political scientists attempting to develop a theory of political development were concerned by the charge that the effort was basically ethnocentric, and thus deliberately turned from a preoccupation with democracy to a consideration of the more universal features of the development experience. Thus, most of the volumes of the SSRC Committee on Comparative Politics deal with development at a more abstract level, looking at concepts such as legitimacy, authority and participation which could apply equally to democratic and non-democratic regimes. It is instructive that in most of the volumes in the series published by Princeton University Press, democracy is not included in the index. Under the influence particularly of Huntington's critique of the “political development” literature, scholars turned away from a preoccupation with development, to a preoccupation with political order. See Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). Even in the studies focusing on “crises” and sequences in development, the main concern is not with the development of democracy, but with the development of stable regimes. See Binder, *Crises and Sequences*. For an excellent volume of historical essays applying the framework, see Raymond Grew, (ed.) *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.).

Thus, most of the studies in the literature on “empirical democratic” theory noted in the introduction to this paper have sought, by examining a cross-section of countries at one point in time, to determine the economic and social correlates of democracy. In summarizing much of this work, Cnudde and Neubauer echo Lerner when they note that “in general democracy is most successful in what we have come to call modernizing societies. In those societies, the major social and economic conflicts have been solved or papered-over by the ameliorative effects of economic growth. Democracy seems too fragile to survive the conflicts of poorer, less developed social environments.” Elsewhere they note that “democracy is the result of a developmental sequence from historic events to industrialization to urbanization to education to literacy to mass communications to democracy.”⁴²

But, the main problem is not the lack of certainty about the causal relationships or the presence of significant deviant cases. The problem is that the literature is a-historical, ignoring the fact that several countries could only be characterized as democratic (scoring highly on all of the indices of democratization used in the various studies with the partial exception of the participation index) at a time when their societies were clearly rural and economically underdeveloped. Dahl, for one, points to the United States as a case in point which in the early 19th century would not have met any of the development criteria and yet clearly met the political criteria.⁴³ It is also clear that if the Chilean case was a deviant case in mid-twentieth century, it was much more of a deviant case in the nineteenth century when it was an overwhelmingly rural society with an export enclave in the mining field. As Linz notes, explanations which draw on the overall level of economic growth and development do not contribute much to understanding the origins and evolution of democratic politics.⁴⁴

Economic explanations, however, are not limited to those that focus on overall indices of development or modernization. Several authors, both Marxist and non-Marxist, have argued that the key factor is not economic development *per se*, but how that development affects the social structure, and, in turn, how the social structure affects the evolution of political regimes. Seymour Martin Lipset, for example, specifically argues for this

⁴² Cnudde and Neubauer *Empirical Democratic Theory*, pp. 516 and 518. And yet, while these studies show an association between the incidence of democracy and levels of developments, any causal linkages have not been established and, as noted earlier, several deviant cases including the Chilean one appeared which require explanation.

⁴³ However, as will be noted below, Dahl does not associate the U.S. in the 19th Century with current underdeveloped countries. See Dahl *Polyarchy*, p. 72.

⁴⁴ Linz, “Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism”, in *Handbook*, p. 182.

“social structural” as opposed to “cultural” explanation. He notes that the “clue to understanding economic backwardness and political instability of Brazil and much of Spanish America lies in their structural similarities with the American South, rather than in those values which stem from Iberian or Catholic origins.”⁴⁵ Likewise, William Chambers, in disagreeing with Hartz exclusive emphasis on cultural values notes that “the absence of a feudal past and the peculiar nature of the American Revolution do not constitute a sufficient explanation... American society even in the colonial years of the enlightenment century was not so sharply graded into ranks or classes, much less orders or estates, as European society...”⁴⁶ Robert Dahl, while objecting to the correlation between democracy and overall levels of economic development, points to a multitude of cultural and structural variables in emphasizing the differences between the United States in the 19th century and contemporary third world countries with “widespread illiteracy, a tradition bound pre-literate, pre scientific culture, weak or fragmented systems of communication, severe inequalities in wealth status and power— a tiny or non-existent independent middle class and frequently a tradition of autocratic or authoritarian rulership.”⁴⁷

Marxist scholars have written little about the relationship between social structure and democratic regimes or their origins. Though they have in recent years qualified the simplistic notion of the state as merely the executive committee of the bourgeoisie, as Goran Therborn notes, most of their work has either consisted of a highly abstract treatment of the capitalist state in general or on non democratic forms or absolutist forms of the state.⁴⁸

Therborn in fact is one of the few Marxists to concern himself explicitly with the origins and evolutions of democratic, as opposed to

⁴⁵ Lipset, “Values Education and Entrepreneurship”, in Lipset and Solari, p. 11. It should be noted, however, that in this article Lipset is rarely systematic, attributing much of Latin American underdevelopment to inappropriate values which can only be overcome with education.

⁴⁶ William Nisbet Chambers, “Partys Development and the American Mainstream”, in William Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham, (eds.) *The American Party System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 25.

⁴⁷ See Dahl 72. While Dahl’s book is a fundamental contribution to the debate on origins of democracy, it is frustrating because of the lack of systematic attention to causal factors. Thus, at another point he argues that competitive politics in Chile was aided by a free farmer agrarian structure, p. 53. He also says that the “continental proportions and the enormous length ...reduced the prospects for a successful monopoly of violence by any one stratum of the population.” The irony is that occasionally the smallness of Chile, not its vastness have been advanced to interpret the Chilean case. See Dahl p. 140.

⁴⁸ Goran Therborn, “The Rule of Capital and the Rise of Democracy”, *New Left Review* N° 103 (May-June, 1977), pp. 3-41. For examples of the former see the work of Nicos Poulantzas, and of the latter see that of Perry Anderson.

authoritarian state structures. His analysis, however, is flawed by an overly rigid definition of democracy as focusing almost exclusively on the participation dimension, to the exclusion of the contestation one. He thus argues that the United States and Switzerland did not become democratic until 1970 and 1971, respectively, because electoral restrictions were maintained. Despite this problem, Therborn attempts to systematize some of the structural variables which presumably relate to the development of democratic regimes. Though he notes that contingent factors, such as war in Europe was an important variable in bringing about a sense of national purpose leading to bourgeois democracy, his primary emphasis is on the emergence of certain bourgeois groups, including “an agrarian petty bourgeoisie and a small and medium agrarian bourgeoisie (those using hired labor). The strength of these agrarian classes and the degree of their independence from the landowning aristocracy and urban big capital were crucial factors in the development of democracy.⁴⁹ Therborn adds that the rareness of bourgeois democracy in capitalist third world countries is due to the vulnerability of commodity oriented economies giving the “indigenous bourgeoisie little room for manoeuvre vis-a-vis the exploited classes”, a lack of differentiation of a capitalist class dependent on the center and the “intertwining of capitalist with feudal, slave or other pre-capitalist modes of exploitation, as well as the combination of enclave capitalism with subsistence farming (which) has impeded the development of the impersonal rule of capital and free labour market, thereby seriously limiting the growth of both the labour movement and of an agrarian small and petty bourgeoisie.”⁵⁰

Barrington Moore goes much further presenting a more complex and sophisticated argument in attempting to explain the “democratic path” to the modern world. Moore stresses that democracy in Britain and France came about not only with the emergence of a bourgeois element, although the bourgeois element was clearly central.⁵¹ For Moore, the crucial issue, however, is the way in which agriculture is commercialized, whether it becomes “labor repressive”, or “market commercial.” In the latter case,

⁴⁹ Therborn, p. 24.

⁵⁰ Therborn 1,32. Though he is not dealing with the development of democracy *per se*, Immanuel Wallerstein argues that peripheral states in the world system were much weaker in part because the social structure of export economies did not permit the development of bourgeois sectors. See Wallerstein, *Modern World System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

⁵¹ See for example his statement that “it is the development of a group in society with an independent economic base, which attacks obstacles to a democratic version of capitalism that have been inherited from the past.” Moore, *Social Origins*, p. xv.

characteristic of the English, French and U. S. cases, revolutions or the civil war contributed decidedly to a market agriculture, which produced allies for more powerful and democratically inclined bourgeois sectors. However, where “bourgeois revolutions” did not take place, and agriculture was commercialized in a “labor repressive” fashion, as in Germany or Japan, the stronger agrarian sectors ally with a weaker urban bourgeoisie to impose a fascist model based on exploitation of the peasantry with the use of traditional relations of servitude. As Moore notes, for democracy to emerge successfully “the political hegemony of the landed upper class had to be broken or transformed. The peasant had to be turned into a farmer producing for the market instead of for his own consumption and that of the overlord. In this process the landed upper classes either became an important part of the capitalist and democratic tide, as in England, or, if they came to oppose it, they were swept aside in the convulsions of revolution (France) or civil war (U.S.) In a word the landed upper classes either helped to make the bourgeois revolution or were destroyed by it.”⁵².

As with value explanations, it is difficult to see how most available economic explanations apply to the Chilean case. Dahl, in attempting to account for Chilean exceptionality, argues that Chile was, like Australia and the United States, basically a free farmer society and not a peasant society with “a very high propensity for inequality, hierarchy, and political hegemony.”⁵³ However, Dahl cites no sources for this assertion, and no one even superficially familiar with Chile would argue that its land tenure system was one of free farmers. The fact is that Chilean agriculture well into the twentieth century was characterized by a high concentration of ownership and the prevalence of highly traditional serf-like relationships between lord and peasant through the institution of the *inquilinaje*. While, as Dominguez notes, Chilean agriculture was geared by the 18th century to the export of wheat, wheat production was never commercialized like in North America. As in czarist Russia, it was expanded with only minimal modifications in the traditional manorial system.⁵⁴

⁵² Moore pp. 429-30. Moore’s analysis, though brilliant in scope, leaves much to be desired in terms of clarity. For an extremely valuable interpretation and critique see Theda Skocpol, “A Critical Review of Barrington Moore’s Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy”, *Politics and Society*, Vol. 4, N° 1 (Fall, 1973), pp. 1-34. See also Ronald Dore, “Making Sense of History”, *Archive Europeenes de Sociology*, Vol. X (1969), pp. 295-305. Several reviewers have questioned many of Moore’s conclusions on various cases, and in particular the extent to which an agricultural peasant class was destroyed in England. For instance, see Joseph V. Femia, “Barrington Moore and the Preconditions for Democracy” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 2 N° 1 (January, 1972), pp. 21-46.

⁵³ See Dahl, *Polyarchy*, p. 53. He repeats this in Greenstein and Polsby, *Handbook*, p. 139.

⁵⁴ Dominguez, *Insurrection or Loyalty*, p. 131.

By the same token, and despite some interpretations of Chilean history that stress the rise of an urban bourgeoisie as the key liberalizing force, Chile did not develop a strong and independent urban based bourgeoisie, which is central to Moore and other scholars.⁵⁵ Throughout the nineteenth century Chile remained a fundamentally rural economy. Chile did depend on a mining enclave (copper and later nitrates) for much of its foreign exchange and for government budget revenues. However, the close ties of mining elements with landed elites, and the absence of a separate industrial base, left Chile at best, in Moore's terms, with a weak bourgeoisie. Indeed, most of the prominent political leaders of the liberal party depended on the state, and not on commerce or industry for their livelihoods.

However, it is not only the absence of a large middle class and a commercially oriented agricultural sector of free farmers and the presence of a significant and traditional landed aristocracy which leads one to question the applicability of the economic determinants of democracy literature to the Chilean case. A careful examination of Chilean history reveals that the sectors which pushed for many of the most important reforms associated with the rise of democracy in Chile, such as limitations on presidential authority and the concomitant expansion of legislative prerogatives, as well as the critical expansion of suffrage, were not "liberal" elements but "conservative" elites closely tied to the traditional landed interests, often in alliance with a small group of ideological liberals with whom they disagreed on most other issues. We will return to this theme in examining more closely the key elements of the Chilean case.

Historical and Political Interpretations of the Origins of Democracy: Lessons from the Chilean Case

As the previous examination of cultural and economic perspectives on the origins of democracy makes clear, both approaches are excessively deterministic. Once the modernization process, depending on the particular perspective, introduces either the requisite norms or values or creates the necessary groups or social actors, then democratic alternatives are likely. But these approaches neglect the fact that the development of democratic institutions is highly problematic and contingent. Our examination of the Chilean case suggests that the study of democracy must take into account

⁵⁵ For interpretations attempting to fit Chilean developments into a Marxist framework see the excellent studies of Luis Vitale and Ramirez Necochea.

certain fortuitous events as well as the role of political leadership and of conscious choice on the part of elites. Democratic institutions owe their development or consolidation to critical historical moments in which the balance of political forces tilts in favor of elites and social forces often of very different ideologies, who press for the consolidation of democratic institutions in the expectation that they will be advantageous for consolidating or increasing their power, safeguarding their interests, and or resolving in the least costly manner a political crisis.⁵⁶

This stress on discrete political phenomena, on the role of leadership and on historical accidents should not be taken as a rejection of the importance of other factors of either a normative or economic dimension. They should not imply that the existence of a “liberal tradition” or of free farmers, is not conducive to the development of institutions of political contestation and participation. Nor do they mean that the existence of traditional values, or the lack of experience in institutions of self rule, or the existence of highly inegalitarian land tenure systems are not severe obstacles to the establishment of representative institutions. These factors are undoubtedly important in providing the climate, or the context, for the development of certain kinds of political structures and practices. However, the Chilean case, and that of other Latin American countries such as Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Colombia, which also experienced long periods of democratic rule at a later date, suggests that the absence of certain factors which may be conducive to the development of democracy, and the presence of others which may be negative, do not in themselves preclude the emergence of institutions comparable to those that developed in the most progressive European countries. Economic and cultural conditions may be contributory factors; they are not sufficient ones.

A stress on historical and political variables should not be taken to imply that we are advocating a kind of historicism —where each case can be understood only on its own merits by delving into the past. To the contrary, research on the process of development of democratic institutions should specify the major structural and ideological parameters which constitute the context for political and contingent events. Furthermore, while there is much which is apparently historically accidental in the process of building democratic institutions, general patterns can be identified in an effort to explain the conditions which lead certain political

⁵⁶ Our perspective comes closest to that developed by Almond, Flanigan and Mundt in their *Crisis, Choice, and Change*. Our emphasis on choice leads us to incline more towards a rationalist view that emphasizes individual and group choice. See Ronald Rogowski, *Rational Legitimacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

forces to advocate or support democratic rather than other solutions at critical moments, and the circumstances that will help them prevail. A perspective which holds that political factors can and should be understood as independent variables need not eschew the economic and cultural constants nor shy away from developing generalizations that relate socio-economic variables to political variables or that seek to establish uniformities in political phenomena..

In this task we are aided by considerable progress in the literature of comparative politics which has moved away from a generalized modernization focus and a belief in a unilinear process of political change. In particular the most recent work of the SSRC Committee in Comparative Politics on “crisis and development”, and studies which have focused on the question of timing and sequence of various developmental problems, offer much promise in helping to account for variations in patterns of regime formation.⁵⁷ As Eric Nordlinger has suggested, this literature permitted specialists to move away from an effort to “identify a general pattern according to which political systems develop...” to one which entails looking “at the various developmental patterns and ask questions about their different *consequences*.”⁵⁸

According to the “crisis” literature, every political system faces certain severe problems or challenges which need to be successfully resolved in order to contribute to regime stability (implicitly or explicitly) understood as democratic stability. Though the “crises” vary in kind and number, most authors view the problem of national identity (creating national over parochial loyalty), authority (the development of viable state structures) and participation (the incorporation of the masses into the political system) as the crucial problems. In turn, the sequence and the timing of the appearance of these problems on the historical scene are judged crucial to the eventual political outcome. Thus, Nordlinger argues that the “probabilities of a political system developing in a nonviolent, non authoritarian, and eventually democratically viable manner are maximized when a national identity emerges first, followed by the institutionalization

⁵⁷ See Binder, *et al.*, *Crises and Sequences*. For application of the framework to various countries see Grew, *Crises of Political Development*. See also Dankwart Rustow, *A World of Nations* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1967). An extremely important contribution to the literature which attempts to relate crises to societal cleavages is Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan’s “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction”, in Lipset and Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (New York: The Free Press, 1967).

⁵⁸ Eric Nordlinger, “Political Development, Time Sequences and Rates of Change”, in Jason L. Finkle and Robert W. Gable (eds.), *Political Development and Social Change*, 2nd Edition (New York: John Wiley, 1971).

of the central government, and then by the emergence of mass parties and a mass electorate. With respect to rates of change, it is argued that a national identity cannot be created in a rapid fashion and if the attempt is made, it will lead to authoritarian abuses and widespread violence.” And, when “mass parties are rapidly formed, and when mass electoral participation is ushered in practically overnight, the outcome is likely to be widespread violence and repressive rule, which make it far more difficult to establish a democratic system and, further, assure that if such a system is established, its stability, representativeness and decisional effectiveness will suffer.”⁵⁹

The problem, however, is that these kinds of propositions remain at too high level of abstraction to be useful in applying to a case which was not considered in the original conceptualization, such as the Chilean case. Indeed, the crisis literature succeeds only to a point in explaining why Chile differed from other Latin American countries. Like other theoretical explanations reviewed earlier, this literature treats Latin America as a failure of democracy without coming to grips with the problem of deviant cases in the Latin American context. Thus, Chile did not develop a strong sense of national identity over centuries as Britain or Norway did, and was plagued in its early years by factional, regional and family rivalries. If national identity came about, it developed much more quickly than the theorists imply that it can, and developed simultaneously with the development of central authority structures- a risky process for long term political stability.

The second half of the proposition applies much more clearly to the Chilean case. Chile, like Britain, and unlike France, or for that matter, Argentina or Colombia, extended suffrage slowly allowing a measured incorporation of citizens over a long period of time. Paradoxically, however, and contrary to the implications in the literature in question, the slow development of the electorate in Chile, clearly sponsored by the traditional parliamentary elites, did not contribute to a “consensual” party system. Though the evolution of Chile’s political institutions, the strength of its governmental processes, and its pattern of suffrage expansion parallel that of Britain or Norway; its partisan cleavages, which include a militant and not a reformist working class and the development of one of the strongest communist parties in the west, was much closer to that of France and Italy.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Nordlinger, “Political Development”, p. 458. See also Rustow, *A World of Nations*.

⁶⁰ For the suggestion that gradual suffrage expansion, coming on the heels of the prior establishment of strong government authority leads to a less alienated and conflicted party system see Nordlinger 465. See also Lipset and Rokkan, “Cleavage Structures.” J.

Toward a Revisionary Interpretation of Chilean Development

As noted earlier, Chile did not deviate substantially from the norm of Latin American colonies. Its colonial institutions were comparable to those of the rest of Hispanic America, and the role of a conservative church was as strong, or stronger than in other colonies. As elsewhere, the wars of independence were actually civil wars in which a large portion of the politically relevant population supported the royalist cause. Indeed after the Spanish reconquest with primarily local forces, independence came about only when the external army of General San Martín, supported by Chilean rebel forces, finally subdued the royalists.

And, despite the myth that Chilean elites behaved differently after independence, Chile was characterized by fierce personal, factional, family and regional fighting. The forces of O'Higgins clashed bitterly with those of the Carrera brothers —a conflict which extended into mid century when Carrera's son was one of the leaders of the abortive civil war of 1859. And regional interests in Copiapo and particularly Concepcion, challenged central government authority in various civil conflicts before 1830 and in 1851 and 1859. Portales and his political allies were able to establish national authority after the Battle of Lircay in 1830, but the establishment of such authority, including the republican constitution of 1833, was highly tenuous and should not be taken to mean that national institutions had been consolidated. They were clearly fragile institutions, which might have crumbled at several key points. Indeed Portales himself was assassinated in one of several mutinies which threatened to bring the Prieto government down.

Four key factors, however, contributed to the success of the authorities of the incipient state structures in warding off challenges which would have merely reified a pattern of caudillo politics such as that found in most neighboring countries. In the first place, Chile fought a war with perennial commercial rivals Peru and Bolivia in 1837 and won. The war effort brought together in the face of a common enemy various personalities and factions which had been on opposing sides in the War against Spain and in the numerous skirmishes which followed. Defeat, as Encina notes, would have brought the government down and only aggravated the latent centrifugal forces in Chilean society. Victory, however, brought about an at

Samuel Valenzuela in his "The Chilean and French Labor Movements: A Comparative Analysis", Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1979, explains the non consensual character of Chilean politics in relation to elites and cleavages.

least temporary sense of unity among elite elements and a degree of pride in an emerging (though clearly not fully forged) national identity.⁶¹

Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, the War produced a hero who became president, leading to the first successful peaceful transition in Chilean history, a transition aided by the fact that outgoing President Prieto was a relative of incoming President Bulnes. What is important, however, is not that Bulnes became president, but the fact that he deliberately eschewed the role of charismatic leader, one which he could have easily played in the wake of one of the few decisive military victories in Spanish America. Instead of projecting himself as a Rosas, Santa Ana or Paez, he followed more closely in the steps of a Washington, observing the main features of constitutional procedures and inaugurating many elements of Chilean institutionalization, including the use of cabinet government and the acceptance (at times reluctant) of an expanding role for the legislature. His willingness to step down at the end of his term, and turn over the government to a civilian and a career civil servant, underscored his commitment to constitutional practice.

The third factor was a sharp control of the military on the part of government authorities. Bulnes, deliberately dismantled much of the victorious expeditionary force to Peru, and following a pattern prevalent in the United States, favored the growth of a national guard closely controlled by political patronage.⁶² It is instructive that the Civil War of 1851 was led by disgruntled army officers, and was put down by Bulnes himself who turned against his former military colleagues (mostly from his native Concepcion, the key regional challenger to the hegemony of Santiago) to ensure the survival of government continuity.

The fourth factor is that the government in its early years did not challenge the interests of the dominant economic groups, the landowning aristocracy, but work effectively at ensuring the growth of the export economy by placing the international economic and diplomatic relations of the nation in good order, and ensuring the development of port and shipping facilities. National government was still very weak, and impinged little on the autonomy of the manorial estates.

It should be emphasized, however, that these factors peculiar to the Chilean case only helped to preclude challenges to state authority, and

⁶¹ See Encina, *Historia*, Vol. XI, p. 483.

⁶² For the role of the National Guard in the U.S. and the anti-military ideology, which had strong parallels in Chile, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964). On the control of the military in Chile see Arturo Valenzuela "The Chilean Political System and the Armed Forces, 1830-1920" Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1967.

allowed state elites to weather challenges when they occurred. They do not in themselves explain the consolidation of representative procedures and institutions. As in other countries, powerful elites had a natural fear of any encroachment on their interests and autonomy by the state, a feeling shared by the catholic ultramontane Church.

Much to the chagrin of those very sectors, government elites, drawing on their early success in surviving attempts to oust them by force, soon began to expand their authority. It is crucial to note that government officials, contrary to the implications in much of the Chilean historical literature, were not tools of the landed elites, or for that matter of any elite groups. They represented a new social formation in Chilean politics, one of career civil servants who depended primarily on state employment for their livelihood, and developed their own interests and their own agenda. In essence this involved the expansion and consolidation of a secular and autonomous state —one able to assert control over local and regional interests and curb the privileged position of the church in temporal matters (a position which provided much of the ideological rationale for a maintenance of the traditional inegalitarian social order).⁶³

By the time the traditional elites realized the ramifications of state power, it was too late for them to directly challenge it. The revolution of 1859, backed by a coalition of liberal and pro-church conservative critics of the government, failed in its attempt to break the power of the state. The absence of a viable military force which could have served as an ally of the oppositions, was a crucial element in their lack of success in imposing by force a new direction to state policies.⁶⁴

The oppositions, including the Conservatives, then realized that they had no choice but to push for an expanded and freer suffrage if they were ever to succeed in preventing state elites from simply designating their successors by ensuring through electoral intervention the victory of the official state of candidates. The fact that even the conservatives had to resort to “liberal” practices explains one of the most extraordinary paradoxes of Chilean history -the alliance in the legislature as opposition forces of ultra-montane catholics and radical, even anticlerical liberals, both

⁶³ For the concept of state autonomy, in relation to democratic regimes see the path-breaking theoretical treatment by Eric Nordlinger, *On the Autonomy of the Democratic State* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981). State expansion in Chile is discussed in Arturo Valenzuela, *Political Brokers*, Chapter 8.

⁶⁴ This lack of a military option is stressed strongly by Allan Silver when he argues that the British upper class opted for suffrage reform in a similar fashion to the Chilean Conservatives. See Silver, “Social and Ideological Bases of British Elite Reactions to Domestic Crisis in 1829-1832”, *Politics and Society*, Vol. 1, N° 2 (1970-71), pp. 179-201.

seeking, for different reasons, the fulfillment of enlightenment ideals. Clearly the Conservatives did not become democrats simply because of an ideological conversion. They correctly perceived that representative institutions were in their best interests and the only alternative they had once the military solution was precluded. They were forced to make the liberal creed their own, because they had lost ground to a new political class which had succeeded in gaining strength by occupying key administrative roles in an expanding state apparatus. In turn, the Chilean “moderate liberals” who controlled the state apparatus were not acting irrationally when they resisted attempts to expand suffrage and maintain the intervention of the Minister of the Interior in the electoral process. Though many were committed to liberal ideals, they also held power and did not wish to allow the uncertainty of results stemming from fully free elections, especially given the misgivings over whether a government by their opponents would not apply the same electoral intervention techniques to preclude them from eventually returning to power. Conservatives and opposition Radicals and Liberals thus became the champions of electoral reforms in 1874, and Manuel Jose Irarrazabal, the leader of the Conservative party, became the principal exponent of the Law of Municipal autonomy of 1891, which ensured landlord control of the electoral process and guaranteed local autonomy.⁶⁵ Local autonomy and electoral reform were crucial elements in the continuing struggle of the various oppositions against the expanding state which culminated in the Revolution of 1891 and the advent of parliamentarianism, in which the Conservative Party, for the first time in over half a century, became the dominant force in national politics.

Is the support of the Conservatives in Chile of liberal rules merely a minor footnote in history? In fact it has central theoretical importance. It led to the creation in Chile of a conservative party committed to representative institutions with no exact parallel in Latin America or in Latin Europe. Like Britain and Norway, but unlike Latin Europe, Chile extended suffrage

⁶⁵ The role of the Conservatives in the passage of the 1874 electoral law is documented in J. Samuel Valenzuela, *Democratización*. It was, in fact, Zorobabel Rodríguez who suggested the necessary formula, the “presunción de derecho” which permitted granting the vote to literate males—regardless of the constitutionally mandated censitary requirements—without having to reform the Constitution. See *Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados*, sesión ordinaria del 16 de junio de 1872, p. 24. For a discussion of the law of Municipal autonomy see Arturo Valenzuela, *Political Brokers*, part II. A stress on the instrumental objectives of the conservatives in supporting suffrage expansion should not be taken to mean that the leading proponents did not firmly believe in suffrage as an ideological commitment. The key is that the ideological proponents were able to succeed because their political objectives coincided with those of a majority of the Conservative group—many of whom were skeptical of liberalizing trends.

gradually, less in response to pressures from below than as a consequence of elite strategies to maximize electoral gain in the absence of alternative and less peaceful strategies. And like Britain, but unlike Latin Europe, Chile found in the elites of the Conservative party (the party of rural, clerical defense) a driving force behind the first pivotal extension of suffrage in 1874. This took place a dozen years before the Third Republic teetered on the brink with Boulangism and 25 years before the French right, still resisting republicanism and democracy, was in the throes of the Dreyfus affair. It took place 40 years before the Pope lifted the *non-expedit* barring Catholics from participating in Italian elections, and 42 years before the Saenz Peña Law in Argentina forced reluctant conservatives to allow an electoral system to bring Radicals into the political process. And, though the Argentine conservatives left office in the wake of their electoral defeat, they maintained a close alliance with the military which continued in the twentieth century, as it was in the nineteenth, to be a dominant feature of Argentine politics.

If the party of the traditional land owning class and of clerical defense went the route of suffrage and supported the development of democratic institutions, can it really be said that the contextual economic or cultural factors explain the political differences between the United States, Britain and Sweden on the one hand and Latin Europe on the other? This leads to a central proposition of this study: the evolution of democratic institutions and procedures is determined more by the opportunities which significant elites have to gain power, and the positions that afford power, rather than cultural or economic factors. It is the result of the interplay of certain choices which are arrived at given a variety of options and constraints.

This study will document this alternative view of the evolution of Chilean politics outlined above, carrying forward the implications of Chilean developments for political trends in the twentieth century, including the rise of working class parties and eventually the breakdown of Chilean democracy. As noted in the introduction, it is also the intention of this study to elaborate from the Chilean case a series of propositions which can serve as a guide for comparative analysis with other cases, both in Latin America and in Europe without which it would be difficult to isolate those features of this framework which speak to the generic problem of the origins and evolution of democratic regimes.

In elaborating this guide we begin with the assumption that our analysis is only applicable to historical cases where strong pre-democratic regimes existed, and thus exclude cases like the United States or Australia

which as fragments of Europe left the anti-democratic forces behind. While we would argue that even in these latter cases the path to democratization needs to be explained in political as well as in cultural terms, the political forces involved and the various cultural, structural and economic constraints in the road to democracy are fundamentally different from democratization in contexts where preexisting anti-democratic elements held away.

Focusing on regimes with strong pre-democratic forces there seem to be two routes which 19th Century regimes took toward a democratic outcome. In the first one there was a sharp political discontinuity as the forces opposed to democracy resisted transformation and excluded new social elements and classes from the political process, forcing the latter to push their way onto the historical stage by destroying or attempting to destroy old procedures and institutions. In the second route pre-democratic or openly anti-democratic forces chose (or were forced) to become supporters or even champions of democratic rules and procedures in order to assure their continuing influence in the body politic. The first route is dotted with breakdowns and new beginnings and was followed by most major Latin European and American countries. The second route gives the impression of a gradual and incremental evolution toward democracy and contributed to the consolidation of long standing democratic institutions. It was followed by Great Britain, and Chile. A major difference between the two lies in the fact that the second route typically lead to strong conservative parties, a result of traditional elite sponsorship of mass mobilization and its ability to adapt to the requirements of electoral competition.

Based on our examination of the Chilean case, the conditions favoring the second route, which comparative research can help clarify, modify and elaborate further, include the following: *First*, liberal or democratic institutions, as they were in the 19th century must be perceived as sufficiently legitimate and prevalent so that different groups could adapt them to their cause, a condition which may be problematic in the Twentieth Century where alternative models such as the Communist one are viewed not only as tenable, but perhaps desirable. *Second*, it is necessary that the pre-democratic state develops to the point that the actions of its agents have develops a decisive impact, either favorably or unfavorably on the interests of elites throughout the national territory. This pressures the elites to devise strategies to control the influence of state agents, which becomes particularly important once a *third* condition develops, namely, the emergence of sharp conflicts between different and clear cut factions

among the elites in which control of the state becomes decisive in advancing or protecting different interests. A *fourth* condition is that aggrieved sectors of the elites should be precluded from the possibility of resorting to a secessionist movement or of capturing the state through the use of force, forcing them to turn to democratic rules in procedures to gain the upper hand. These conditions say nothing about the specific interests of the various factions or of their basic programs, for these can vary widely.

In sum, a deviant case in Latin America which fails to conform to many of the generalizations found in the social science literature which attempts to explain the origins and evolutions of democratic politics is in a unique position to provide insights which can be used to formulate an alternative perspective focusing on the interplay of contextual features of a cultural and economic character and more discrete political phenomena. □