

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

Chilean Democracy, Past and Present

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This essay reviews the following works:

Anatomía de la derecha chilena: Estado, mercado y valores en tiempos de cambio. Edited by Stéphanie Alenda. Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica and Universidad Andrés Bello, 2020. Pp. 380. \$19.04 paperback. ISBN: 9789562892025.

Presidencialismo a la chilena: Coaliciones y cooperación política, 1990–2018. By Mireya Dávila Avendaño. Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 2020. Pp. 312. \$20.36 paperback. ISBN: 9789561126923.

La transición inacabada: El proceso político chileno 1990–2020. By Claudio Fuentes S. Santiago: Catalonia, 2021. Pp. 392. \$22.64 paperback. ISBN: 9789563248388.

Política y movimientos sociales en Chile: Antecedentes y proyecciones del estallido social de octubre 2019. Edited by Manuel Antonio Garretón. Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2021. Pp. 308. \$17.97 paperback. ISBN: 9789560014061.

La democracia semisoberana: Chile después de Pinochet. By Carlos Huneeus. Santiago: Taurus, 2014. Pp. 614. \$32.34 paperback. ISBN: 9789563477832.

The Left Hand of Capital: Neoliberalism and the Left in Chile. By Fernando Ignacio Leiva. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021. Pp. viii + 391. \$33.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781438483610.

En vez del optimismo: Crisis de representación política en el Chile actual. By Juan Pablo Luna. Santiago: Catalonia, 2017. Pp. 151. \$12.58 paperback. ISBN: 9789563245431.

La chusma inconsciente: La crisis de un país atendido por sus propios dueños. By Juan Pablo Luna. Santiago: Catalonia, 2021. Pp. 377. \$14.02 paperback. ISBN: 9789563248999.

Neoliberal Resilience: Lessons in Democracy and Development from Latin America and Eastern Europe. By Aldo Madariaga. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020. Pp. vii + 348. \$43.81 hardcover. ISBN: 9780691182599.

Octubre chileno: La irrupción de un nuevo pueblo. By Carlos Ruiz Encina. Santiago: Penguin Random House, 2020. Pp. 117. \$10.78. ISBN: 9789566042259.

Chilean politics and society have often puzzled scholars of Latin America. Why has Chile historically developed a continental-style multiparty system? Why was the first democratically elected socialist president Chilean (Salvador Allende in 1970)? Why did Chile adopt neoliberalism so early? Why did Chile experience a massive social uprising in late 2019, despite leading Latin American rankings of human development? How could thirty-five-year-old Gabriel Boric, who was leading student protests a decade ago, win the presidency of Chile in late 2021?

Chile transitioned to democracy in 1990, after a plebiscite in 1988 in which citizens ousted dictator Augusto Pinochet. Then it was governed consecutively by four administrations (1990–2010) of the center-left coalition Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia. Averaging a 5.2 percent annual GDP growth rate (World Bank indicators), the four Concertación governments successfully combated poverty and modernized the country. However, the Concertación could not reduce inequality substantially or provide robust protection networks for the popular sectors. Perhaps more dramatic for democratic institutions, during this period turnout rates declined sustainedly, as did the general population's trust in congress, government, and political parties. In other words, economic growth and material improvements did not translate into political legitimacy.

The Concertación cycle ended in 2010 with the ascendancy of a center-right coalition led by Sebastián Piñera. This opened a decade signed by political alternation between center-right and center-left, and civil society activation and protests spearheaded by students. The 2010s closed with the late-2019 popular rebellion, which unleashed a process of constitutional change now underway. The 2020s presage a new political cycle marked by five characteristics: younger generations reaching power (epitomized in the new government of Boric); a renovation in the left and the right; an atomized but politically activated civil society; a broad agreement for reforming Chile's neoliberal model; and, eventually, a new constitution.

Indeed, Gabriel Boric's meteoric political trajectory reflects many recent changes in Chilean politics. Boric was president of the Universidad de Chile's student federation in 2012, during the peak of student mobilizations; deputy since 2013 representing his native region of Magallanes, where he ran as an independent and obtained the first majority (being reelected in 2017); founder of the Broad Front coalition in 2017 along with other former student leaders; and he is president of Chile since March 2022, only a decade after he was a student leader. Does the rise of Boric reveal a broader "unfreezing" of Chile's party system, a sudden renewal of its political elites, or a new style of representing the electorate?

The ten books reviewed here help understand the puzzles and developments of Chilean politics and society as well as the challenges ahead. I group them in four sections: the deficits of Chilean democracy; citizen reactions to such deficits via social movements and collective protest; the changes in the political right and the inner workings of governing coalitions; and the tensions between democracy and neoliberalism.

What is wrong with Chilean democracy?

Chile is usually at the top of democracy rankings in Latin America.¹ But Carlos Huneeus, Claudio Fuentes, and Juan Pablo Luna reveal the country's growing tensions and contradictions.² In the massive *La democracia semisoberana: Chile después de Pinochet*, Carlos

¹ See Congressional Research Service, *Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Compilation of Selected Indices*, updated May 24, 2021, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R46016.pdf>.

² On these themes, see also Augusto Varas, *La democracia frente al poder: Chile, 1990–2010* (Santiago: Catalonia, 2012); or Kirsten Sehnbruch and Peter Siavelis, eds., *Democratic Chile: The Politics and Policies of a Historic Coalition, 1990–2010* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004).

Huneus provides a comprehensive account of Chilean politics since the transition from 1990 until 2010.³ Adopting Katzenstein's concept of a "semi-sovereign democracy," Huneus claims that Chile's democratic institutions—like the Congress and the presidency—are not fully democratic but suffer from severe limitations for performing according to popular mandates. The problem derives from the legacy of Pinochet's dictatorship—the 1980 Constitution, Pinochet's role as commander in chief of the army until 1998, the designated senators, and the binominal electoral system. While scholars on Chile usually agree with this point,⁴ Huneus's twist comes from paying attention to the role of Patricio Aylwin's government, the first one after the transition. Aylwin pursued human rights issues instead of reforming the economic model inherited from the dictatorship, which was yielding impressive GDP growth rates (around 7 percent annually during his administration). This set a precedent for further presidents, and Chile's economy developed within a neoliberal framework that was at odds with the center-left views of the governing coalition. This led to economic overdevelopment but political underdevelopment—a "primacy of the economy over politics."

Huneus also criticizes the overuse of technocrats in government positions for addressing essentially political (instead of technical) problems. He also points at the lack of a clear separation between the private and public realms. The book ends with suggested reforms for promoting a full-fledged democracy, but Huneus is not confident politicians will follow his advice because these measures are politically costly.

Huneus's research strategy is varied. He combines historical narrative and case studies (in which his erudition is unsurpassed) with descriptive quantitative economic and public opinion data. One finds occasional comparisons with Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Spain, or Germany. Arguments are strongly historical-institutionalist, emphasizing sequences, path dependencies, and consequential decisions at critical junctures.

Despite its comprehensiveness, there is little coverage on the role of the rightist opposition to the Concertación governments and on protest politics and social movements. Huneus gives special attention to the 1990s, less to the 2000s, and understandably—the book dates from 2014—he does not address the second half of the 2010s, in which important changes took place. Fortunately, this is taken up in Claudio Fuentes's book, reviewed next.

In *La transición inacabada: El proceso político chileno 1990–2020*, Claudio Fuentes provides a definitive account of the transformations of Chilean politics since 1990, a topic on which he has long been working.⁵ Fuentes chooses several themes he knows well, such as the subordination of the military to civilian power (chapter 3), the emergence of civil society and social movements (chapter 4), and the obstacles to recognizing Indigenous citizenship (chapter 9). However, the dominant theme of the book, and the focus of four chapters, revolves around the several failed attempts to change Chile's constitution. In fact, for Fuentes, the transition to democracy will remain unfinished until Chile forges a new constitution in democracy.

Fuentes scrutinizes attempts to change the constitution from above, especially the reform by President Ricardo Lagos in 2005 and Michelle Bachelet's failed attempt to create a new constitution during her second term (2014–2018). He also looks at many failed citizen initiatives. Yet, he argues, these were essential milestones for the current

³ This can be seen as a sequel to Carlos Huneus, *The Pinochet Regime* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007).

⁴ For an influential formulation, see Manuel Antonio Garretón, *Incomplete Democracy: Political Democratization in Chile and Latin America*, translated by R. Kelly Washbourne with Gregory Horvath (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁵ Also from Claudio Fuentes: *La erosión de la democracia* (Santiago: Catalonia, 2019); and *El pacto: Poder, Constitución y prácticas políticas en Chile (1990–2000)* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2012).

constitutional process. This political and civic learning coalesced in the political agreement of November 15, 2019. After almost one month of a massive social uprising, parties across the political spectrum agreed to launch a constitutional process. The prolonged transition that began in 1990 may end in 2022 if citizens approve the proposed constitution.

Beyond the constitutional issue, Fuentes identifies two forces driving Chilean politics: political power balances and the sequence of institutional reforms. Chapter 1 traces the changes in power balances between 1990 and 2020 through electoral results and the share of congressional seats for parties and coalitions. The conclusion is clear: center parties declined over time, increasing polarization and fragmentation. Chapter 2 looks at the sequences of institutional reforms (electoral system, political accountability, justice, and education) approved during this period. Power balances and institutional reforms interact, claims Fuentes, creating critical junctures in which actors decide either to maintain the status quo or to change it, as was the case in 2005 or 2019.

Fuentes's framework is eclectic yet coherent. It combines historical institutionalism, power resources theory, and the critical junctures approach. While Huneeus emphasizes the impact of the first democratic government, Fuentes emphasizes later events like the 2005 constitutional reform or the 2019 social uprising. Similar to Huneeus's concern with technocrats, Fuentes devotes an entire chapter to the "epistemic communities" that shaped the debates on constitutional reforms, a community dominated by male lawyers located in Chile's central region and affiliated to top universities. To the conventional argument in Chile that the political arena moved away from civil society, Fuentes adds that the epistemic community remained close and influential on political elites. Despite summarizing a considerable mass of qualitative and quantitative data, the book is easy to follow and shows mastery of several topics. The presidential triumph of Gabriel Boric in late 2021 only confirms Fuente's intuition that the transition is reaching its completion and that a new generation is taking power.

Huneeus and Fuentes show how institutional legacies and leader decisions at critical junctures account for the problems of Chilean democracy. In contrast, in *En vez del optimismo: Crisis de representación política en el Chile actual*, Juan Pablo Luna examines these problems as a crisis of political representation. Luna's dilemma is that Chile's political system can hardly represent a citizenry that has become too complex, fragmented, and opaque to the political class.

His strategy is different, too. While Huneeus and Fuentes provide comprehensive coverages since 1990, Luna's book is a compilation of fourteen op-eds on conjunctural politics published between 2016 and 2017 in CIPER, Centro de Investigación Periodística. Luna combines academic debates with personal anecdotes and his fieldwork results with a general audience in mind. The result is a refreshing tapestry of insights, findings, and conceptual connections that disrupt common assumptions.

The representation crisis has two terms: a problem of political supply (at times resembling Huneeus's critical diagnostic of political elites); and a society that cannot be represented by the latter (a theme also considered by Garretón and Ruiz, reviewed below). The political supply dimension has much to do with the representation deficits of political parties, an issue he has examined in depth.⁶ But these deficits cannot be solved through an obsessive search for transparency, which may make things worse (op-ed 6). The magic of politics, claims Luna, requires opacity, without which party leaders cannot enchant citizens.

More generally, neither social-democratic, neoliberal, nor developmentalist models will do the trick. Fashionable concepts like transparency, modernization, and decentralization

⁶ See Juan Pablo Luna, *Segmented Representation: Political Party Strategies in Unequal Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

may deepen the representation crisis. Copying foreign models is hardly an option, as argued in op-ed 8, which compares the Uruguayan Frente Amplio with its younger Chilean namesake. Will the Chilean Frente Amplio, in power since 2022, build the deep societal roots that helped its Uruguayan (and older) cousin rule and succeed?

Against the usual circumspection of social scientists, Luna engages in prognostic exercises. Op-ed 7 suggests that Chile's party system may look in the future like the Peruvian one—atomized, weak, personalistic, and partially funded by drug cartels. By 2022 Chile has not yet taken this route. But the 2021 elections have shown that political movements led by tragicomic outsiders may attract considerable segments of the electorate.

Luna uses sociological concepts (like anomie, atomization, or ritualism) to explain why Chilean society is so refractory to representation. Evoking the sociology of time,⁷ he notes that the times and rhythms of politics are too slow for catching up with a fast-changing society, in which the irruption of surveys and digital media produce a “temporal compression.” The problem is compounded by the rise of monothematic citizens, which vehemently defend single causes that cannot be integrated into more comprehensive party platforms (op-ed 4). In a more structural vein, Luna claims that Chile's stark territorial and socioeconomic inequalities have motivated parties to alternate programmatic or clientelistic linkages with different constituencies (op-ed 1). But segmented representation strategies ultimately fail to represent the people. Political elites remain encapsulated in their narrow, privileged worlds and cannot empathize or even understand popular demands. In the meantime, drug cartels capture popular neighborhoods and make deals with local police and political authorities (op-ed 12).

In 2021 Luna published *La chusma inconsciente*, which follows the same format as the earlier book—a compilation of op-eds published during the last three or four years on varied public topics. The focus is on the three events that marked the 2018–2021 period in Chile: the social uprising, the constitutional process, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Op-eds are arranged in five themes: the causes and development of the uprising, the stagnation of Chile's development model, political crisis, the weakness of the Chilean state, and the disorientation of political elites. While Luna retrieves and elaborates on many theses of *En vez del optimismo*, some new themes appear.

For me, the biggest surprise is that Luna (reluctantly) suggests a possible solution to the crisis: a “social pact” in which workers, communities, state agents, and businesses negotiate new and legitimate norms of coexistence, including the distribution of the costs and rewards of development. These norms and arrangements must proceed bottom-up to become socially embedded and legitimate (forget old top-down solutions, of either a political or technocratic nature). Interestingly, for Luna, the constitutional process is necessary but insufficient to create such a pact. Luna adds four possible scenarios to the crisis, which involve going back to the situation before the uprising, a populist detour, the hyperfragmentation (Peruvian-style) of the political system, and the (desirable) social pact alternative.

Second, *La chusma inconsciente* emphasizes the weakness of the Chilean state and the problems of public policies based on myopic diagnostics. Although often leading comparative rankings of state strength, the Chilean state has severe problems. Private companies have bypassed its information systems, and official data on the population remain biased and incomplete. It cannot control some parts of the national territory which have been ceded to (or when police collude with) drug gangs (in this respect, op-eds 16 to 19 debunk several myths about gang activity, for example, that organized crime always produces violence). Likewise, the state cannot tame radical Indigenous organizations, which are repressed only for such repression to backfire (op-ed 15 illustrates how careful academic research can help improve public policy diagnostics). Of course, such a state had problems

⁷ See Felipe Torres, *Temporal Regimes: Materiality, Politics, Technology* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

dealing with the social uprising and delivering material help during the worst days of the pandemic (op-eds 6, 7, and 11).

Third, new themes appear. One is the crisis of the traditional media industry and the emergence of alternative media, which pluralized the views and information during the uprising (op-ed 10). Another one refers to the problems of trying to fix democracy's crisis with artificial intelligence and algorithms (op-ed 21). Also, Luna warns that the typical culprits of Latin America's problems (like clientelism, populism, and centralization) are less toxic than often presumed. In the end, the problem is "the incapacity of contemporary elections to generate a legitimate order, structured around relatively stable social bases," and the polarizing fragmentation, "which crystallizes in evanescent electoral movements whose capacity to maintain people's favor lasts a few months" (291).

In sum, readers of Huneeus, Fuentes, and Luna will get a balanced view of Chilean democracy and its challenges. Next, I raise three questions that could be pursued for further advancing this quest (for Chile and eventually Latin America).

First, what is the role of digital communication technologies on democratic deficits? How has the spread of information about political corruption and policy mistakes undermined citizens' trust in democracy? Can we blame the new technologies for weakening the linkages between politicians and citizens? Alternatively, have they created opportunities for outsiders? For this, consider the case of Franco Parisi, an outsider residing in the United States, who campaigned for the last presidential Chilean election and placed third with 13 percent of the vote.

Second, how does the social background of politicians affect their capacity to connect with citizens? Twice-president Sebastián Piñera epitomizes the millionaire technocrat encapsulated in his own world and unable to connect with popular understandings. Chilean congresses and executives during the last decades have been mostly composed of upper-class individuals, possibly more than, say, Argentina and Uruguay, which have not experienced social uprisings in two decades.

Finally, how have the practices and conceptions of democracy changed among Chileans in the twenty-first century? To what extent do they fit the underlying Chilean representative institutions—nineteenth-century creations? Why, according to public opinion polls, do one quarter of Chileans (or more) still prefer political regimes other than democracy?⁸ Does this open an opportunity for candidates with dubious democratic credentials?

Citizen reactions to democratic deficits

How has Chilean society reacted to the representation deficits diagnosed by Luna, Huneeus, and Fuentes? Social movements and collective protests have erupted in Chile during the last two decades, with the uprising of late 2019 being its latest and most formidable manifestation.⁹ Two recent books by sociologists Manuel Antonio Garretón and Carlos Ruiz analyze this reaction.

In 2016, motivated by the massive 2011–2012 protests, the renowned Chilean sociologist Manuel Antonio Garretón edited a book about the crack between social movements and institutional politics.¹⁰ In a sequel published first in 2018 and in a new edition in 2021 (*Política y movimientos sociales en Chile: Antecedentes y proyecciones del estallido social de octubre 2019*), Garretón invited scholars and activists to bring an updated view on the same topic.

⁸ See Matías Bargsted and Nicolás M. Somma, "La cultura política: Diagnóstico y evolución," in *El sistema político de Chile*, ed. Carlos Huneeus and Octavio Avendaño (Santiago: LOM Ediciones), 200.

⁹ For a panoramic view on this topic, see Sofía Donoso and Marisa von Bülow, *Social Movements in Chile: Organization, Trajectories, and Political Consequences* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

¹⁰ Manuel Antonio Garretón, *La gran ruptura: Institucionalidad política y actores sociales en el Chile del siglo XXI* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2016).

The 2021 edition includes chapters about feminist mobilizations and postscripts about the 2019 social uprising. The inclusion of activists provides fresh insights into often predictable academic debates. It also brings ideas for building bridges among institutional players and movements. These are badly needed: indeed, the book's overall theme is about the difficulties of articulating institutional politics and movements.

Four chapters provide different perspectives on Chilean society. In the introductory chapter, Garretón presents a general contextualization of Chilean society (which could apply to many others). He claims that “communication” and “consumption” have become its organizing “axes” beyond the more classical “economy” and “politics.” Chilean society has become more globalized, and people now use to challenge traditional authorities. Parties and churches have lost ground, and the meaning of democracy has changed.

Some of these themes reappear in the second part of the book in Kathya Araujo's chapter, which surveys some recent changes in Chilean society and how they relate to politics. One of the most original sociologists in Chile, Araujo argues that the structural transformations during the last decades compelled Chileans to find new ways of adapting to neoliberalism.¹¹ This resulted in stronger, self-controlled individuals who remain unprotected from the state and must invest in family and friendship ties. These individuals collide with the elitist and vertical form of authority that marked the transition to democracy—a theme for Huneeus, Luna, and Fuentes.

Four other chapters examine critical areas of social mobilization: territorial movements, education, and Indigenous and labor mobilization. All show the barriers to fully incorporating organized groups into institutional politics, thus complementing, from the other side of the desk, the democratic deficits examined by Huneeus, Fuentes, and Luna. Ignacia Fernández studies the socio-territorial conflicts that have emerged in Chile during the last decade as a reaction to an extractivist economy. If, during the 1990s, the challenge was to combine economic growth with equality, now a third key goal is attaining environmental sustainability. Sofia Donoso argues that despite the massiveness and impact of student protests, there have not been structural educational changes. The Frente Amplio coalition, to a large extent an outgrowth of the student movement, aimed at institutionalizing student demands but suffered from important divisions. Salvador Millaleo highlights the socioeconomic disadvantages of Chile's Indigenous population and its relative organizational weakness compared to other Latin American countries. Governments have not incorporated them into the political process. Instead, policies have tried to protect superficially scattered aspects of Indigenous culture (like health practices, education, and language) while protecting global economic interests and repressing radical Indigenous challengers. Given this historical conflict, the 2019 uprising was not surprising for much of the Indigenous world.¹² Finally, Bárbara Figueroa, a former president of Chile's main labor confederation, claims that social movements and political parties must converge around unifying ideals centered on equality if Chilean democracy is to become robust and inclusive.

The book's third part focuses on the recent feminist mobilizations in Chile, which has strengthened since 2018. Araceli Farías provides a fascinating look at the challenges and tensions of feminist mobilizations in universities during 2018. She reveals the painful internal work required for women to recognize themselves as victims of gender and sexual violence. She also discloses the patriarchal practices within the student movement and universities. Virginia Guzmán provides a historical review of Chilean feminist mobilization

¹¹ See Kathya Araujo, *Desafíos comunes: Retrato de la sociedad chilena y sus individuos* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2012).

¹² On this topic, see the review by Sebastián López Vergara and José Antonio Lucero, “Wallmapu Rising: New Paths in Mapuche Studies,” *Latin American Research Review* 53, no.3 (2018): 648–654, doi:10.25222/larr.298.

since the nineteenth century, showing its changing demands and emphasizing the role of women in the struggle against Pinochet's dictatorship.

Garretón's compilation offers a chorus of voices on how Chilean activists reacted to democratic deficits. Instead, in *Octubre chileno: La irrupción de un nuevo pueblo*, Carlos Ruiz Encina offers a unified account of the mobilizations of the last two decades. However, his primary motivation is the 2019 uprising, an event that has already received considerable scholarly attention.¹³ Ruiz opens this short book by narrating the main events of the uprising, which will suffice for anyone unfamiliar with it. But he adds an explanation often ignored in uprising accounts: that it had much to do with the ways Sebastián Piñera's government harassed youngsters through identity controls and persecutions in streets and schools. This helps explain why, in October 2019, high school students began what ended up as a national uprising.

Ruiz's book is exceptional among those reviewed here due to its genre: an essay rather than a conventional academic book. He writes freely. His style is vibrant and, at times, baroque. Ruiz does not cite sources or references yet has a firm grasp on themes and events, as demonstrated by his research pedigree.¹⁴ Some arguments appear over and over across different chapters, and there are no attempts to prove hypotheses or present "data." For a reader wishing to avoid this linguistic jungle, one can dissect the argument into five ideas:

- 1) Chilean mobilizations, including the 2019 uprising, have much to do with Chile's neoliberal model, which has commodified several areas of people's life (pensions, health, education, child protection, water, jails, roads, etc.). At the top of neoliberalism is what Ruiz indistinctly calls the "oligarchy," "elite," or "caste," which grew rich by exploiting Chile's natural resources and abusing its people. The Concertación contributed to this scenario because it resigned to reform the social and economic order.
- 2) Neoliberalism produces a "new people" (*nuevo pueblo*). It contains new professionals that obtained their degrees in low-quality private universities; "post-misery" poor, with access to modern consumption goods but suffering from informal jobs; and owners of small companies exploited by big abusive companies. Ruiz brings social structure and job markets to the study of mobilization, two ingredients that mainstream social movement theories typically ignore.
- 3) The new people's lives combine uncertainty, vertigo, and despair. Because neoliberalism weakens collective identities, they experience these emotions as individual dramas.
- 4) When the new people become aware of the abuses and corruption of the elites, they protest and find themselves in the streets. They recognize each other and develop hope and other positive, mobilizing emotions.
- 5) The new people seek goals like real freedom (not the one granted by consumption), autonomy, and self-determination to build a society in which they can fully realize themselves.

The last two chapters present suggestions for a left willing to hone the aspirations of the new people. Old leftist models (state bureaucracy, communism, social democracy) are useless; they are "corpses," says Ruiz. "Neoliberal progressives" and the "childish left" will

¹³ Two books on the uprising are Bernardo Navarrete and Victor Tricot, eds., *The Social Outburst and Political Representation in Chile* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020); and Carlos Peña, *Pensar el malestar: La crisis de octubre y la cuestión constitucional* (Santiago: Taurus, 2020).

¹⁴ For instance, see Carlos Ruiz and Giorgio Boccardo, *Los chilenos bajo el neoliberalismo: Clases y conflicto social* (Santiago: Fundación Nodo Veintiuno, 2014).

not make it either. Ruiz presents suggestive terms without much elaboration, such as “new humanism” or “new and more universal forms of love.” If correctly decoded, Ruiz’s book may provide interesting avenues for a renewal of the Chilean left.

While the books by Garretón and Ruiz cover considerable terrain, they say little about other important issues in the study of collective action and social movements. I highlight three. First, too much attention has been given to the role of citizen grievances and discontent in Chile, ignoring the role of collective resources and political opportunities. It is easy to identify an aggrieved group behind any collective protest. Yet this does not mean that grievances explain collective action, a point made five decades ago by resource mobilization theorists. Second, one should not ignore the international context. Local movements often result from international protest waves, which provide the initial impetus for mobilization. One cannot explain the Chilean “feminist wave” of 2018 (see the last chapters in Garretón’s book) without considering the global feminist wave of the time. Likewise, Chilean students protesting in 2011 inspired their counterparts in other Latin American countries (e.g., Colombia). Finally, the ascension to the presidency of Gabriel Boric (a former student leader) brings the question of how social movements institutionalize and become electorally successful parties. This is a classical question in the region (consider the MAS in Bolivia or the Workers’ Party in Brazil). But it is novel for contemporary Chile. Is this the beginning of the end of the disconnection between civil society and institutional politics?

Inside government coalitions and varieties of the right

The five books reviewed above revolve around two general ideas: Chilean democracy has problems, and citizens have reacted to them through collective mobilization. And yet, since the democratic transition, all Chilean administrations ended their terms as expected, with no president being ousted as in many other Latin American countries.¹⁵ This even applies to Sebastián Piñera, who recently faced a massive social uprising and two impeachment attempts in Congress. How have Chilean governments stayed in power despite democratic limitations and popular protests?

In *Presidencialismo a la chilena: Coaliciones y cooperación política, 1990–2018*, Mireya Dávila addresses this issue with a special focus on the four consecutive administrations of the Concertación (1990–2010), one of the most successful contemporary Latin American coalitions. She explores how presidents shared power with their coalition partners in ways that granted stability. Dávila credits institutional arguments like those advanced by Huneus and Fuentes. But she presents another explanation: the stability of the Concertación depended on the application of four informal rules for sharing power among parties. They are super-partisanship (presidents have the autonomy to name their cabinets); proportionality (distribution of ministers and undersecretaries roughly match the size of parties, although some over- or underrepresentation does not hurt); transversal composition (no party monopolizes the top positions of a ministry); and political use of technocrats (which help to insulate some issues from public opinion and partisan debates).

To develop her explanation, Dávila examines changes in the proportionality index for ministers and undersecretaries across time and the anatomy of cabinet changes. She covers the six presidential administrations between 1990 and 2018. Dávila begins with a statistical description of cabinets—at times a bit cumbersome—for each administration. Then she uses interviews and press materials to reveal the calculations, expectations, and bargains that make sense of the statistical findings.

¹⁵ Gretchen Helmke, “Presidential Crises in Contemporary Latin America,” in *The Politics of Institutional Weakness in Latin America*, ed. Daniel Brinks, Steven Levitsky, and María Victoria Murillo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Using this strategy, Dávila presents interesting findings. For instance, the president's party tends to be underrepresented among ministers but overrepresented among under-secretaries. But comparisons across administrations bring the most exciting results. We learn that Concertación governments were more stable than pre-1973 governments, but the first government after the transition (Patricio Aylwin's) was the most stable. Also, Piñera's first administration was the most unstable since 1990, with the lowest average duration of ministers. Piñera designated many "pure" business technocrats with few partisan links, and independents, straining his relations with his coalition partners. Finally, Michelle Bachelet's second administration also ignored coalition parties in some designations, which brought tensions within the ruling coalition. In sum, wise presidents should not ignore the parties that brought them to power. In Chile at least, any incoming president should seriously consider Dávila's findings.

While very focused on the internal dynamics of governments, Dávila's findings connect nicely with some themes reviewed above: the negative consequences of technocracy (Huneus, Fuentes, Luna); how divisions within the government motivate mobilizations (Ruiz, Garretón); or the growing instability of cabinets, which recalls Luna's hypothesis about Chile's "Peruanization." Perhaps more important, Dávila shows that behind the often-condemned spoils politics, there may be genuine interests in crafting stable coalitions, with all the problems this may create for representing citizen demands if stability turns into ossification.

The Concertación's dominance throughout two decades motivated many studies about the Chilean center-left, creating a comparative lack of studies about Chile's contemporary political right. Stéphanie Alenda's edited book *Anatomía de la derecha chilena: Estado, mercado y valores en tiempos de cambio* gathers a variety of scholars to address this gap. The book contains seven chapters on the Chilean right and two additional chapters on Argentina and Brazil. Many chapters on Chile use a unique survey of almost one thousand leaders of Chile Vamos, the rightist coalition that governed Chile twice. This allows mapping the differences among right parties such as Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI), Renovación Nacional (RN), and Evolución Política (Evópoli). Thus a central quest of the book is whether there are different "rights" in Chile, what characterizes them, and whether they are aligned with party membership or not. Chapter 2, for instance, identifies three different "political sensibilities" in Chile Vamos—the subsidiary, the solidary, and the ultra-liberal—which vary in their views of the economy, Pinochet's dictatorship, same-sex marriage, and abortion. Party leaders show that party members do not always share the same sensibility. Chapter 4, by Alenda, Carmen Le Foulon, and Sebastián del Hoyo, studies Evópoli, a new party with liberal views on the economy and social issues. It claims that Evópoli succeeded because its message fit well in a more liberal and secular society, especially among the youth. In chapter 6, Javier Sajuria, Tomás Došek, and Alenda show the organizational differences among rightist parties. Older parties, like the UDI, have stronger links to business sectors and hierarchical decision-making structures. Newer parties, like Evópoli, are more horizontal and participative. Party differences presumably result from different stages in their life cycle. Dispelling common assumptions, these chapters show considerable heterogeneity and tensions within the Chilean right, tensions that became evident in the last presidential election.

Other chapters focus on the right's organizational, electoral, and political changes. Chapter 1, by Joaquín Fernández and Sebastián Rumié, argues that, between the 1930s and the 2010s, the Chilean right adopted strategies of adaptation or renovation depending on the political context. Adaptive strategies prevailed when its power bases were not threatened (e.g., in the 1930s–1960s). But the right embarked on offensive renovation strategies (like supporting authoritarian moves or joining forces with the military) when they felt threatened, as in the 1970s. Chapter 5, by Julieta Suárez-Cao and Benjamín Muñoz, shows that the demographic and economic variables at the communal (equivalent to

county) level do not predict the voting share toward right parties, suggesting that the personal skills of candidates may instead explain variation. Chapter 3, by Alenda, Andrea Gartenlaub, and Karin Fischer, analyzes the evolution of rightist think tanks, their growing role in public debates, and their role in Piñera's administrations.

As Kevin Middlebrook claims in the prologue, the book shows that the Chilean right adheres to a market economy and democratic procedures; it moved away from the authoritarian instincts of the 1970s. Yet the Chilean center-left has also been democratic and market-friendly. Thus the business sector has also financed center and leftist parties, gaining privileged access to the entire political spectrum (chapter 7 by Alejandro Pelfini and Vicente Rueda).

The two final chapters move beyond Chile. The chapter on Argentina by Gabriel Vommaro, which studies Mauricio Macri's movement, shows that the Argentinean right was successful because it managed to connect with new middle classes and the world of business and voluntary organizations. These politically orphan groups thus found a suitable collective project which incorporated their rituals and ceremonies. The chapter on Brazil, by Bruno Bolognesi, Adriano Codato, Flávia R. Babireski, and Karolina M. Roeder, shows the decline of the traditional right and the consolidation of a new right connected to religious and mass opinion leaders. The Argentinean and Brazilian detours of the right do not resemble each other, nor does Chile, begging the question about how national conditions shape rightist trajectories.

While the book is very recent (2020), the motivations and opportunities for studying the Chilean right have just broadened. Far-right forces have coalesced under the leadership of former UDI deputy José Antonio Kast, who came second in the 2021 presidential elections and whose political movement won fifteen deputies and one senator in the new congress. Partially resembling Bolsonaro's right in Brazil, the new Chilean radical right is heterogeneous, rooted in Evangelical, nationalistic, and pro-Pinochet communities. Continuing Alenda's initiative, a sequel could compare the "new" liberal right of the 2010s with the radical, ultraconservative right of the 2020s; identify the latter's similarities and differences with its Latin American counterparts; and explore its strategies of adaptation and survival in the context of the new leftist government. After decades of ideological convergence, the Chilean political map may present again more crystallized programmatic stances that might revitalize turnout.

Neoliberalism and democracy

The books reviewed above say little about the economy. Yet it is difficult to make sense of the challenges to Chilean democracy without considering its neoliberal model of economic development—a world pioneer in the early 1970s, even predating Britain and the United States.¹⁶ Fernando Leiva's and Aldo Madariaga's books do exactly that. They explore how different social and political actors interacted to produce a particular combination of neoliberalism and democracy fraught with tensions. They do so from different perspectives, however.

In *The Left Hand of Capital: Neoliberalism and the Left in Chile*, Fernando Leiva claims that the Concertación, in theory a center-left coalition, has nonetheless institutionalized, legitimized, and renovated Chile's neoliberal domination system. Few would dispute the affinities between the Concertación and neoliberalism. But Leiva is more emphatic: the Concertación not only managed neoliberalism but also took it to an extreme, allowing capital to "colonize" all spaces of society. Leiva uses a "critical cultural political economy" approach to develop this claim. This sets him apart from more

¹⁶ For a review of books on this topic, see César Guzmán-Concha, "Chilean Neoliberalism under Scrutiny: Class, Power, and Conflict Are Back in Town," *Latin American Research Review* 52, no. 1 (2017): 183–189, doi:10.25222/larr.96.

conventional critical approaches to the Concertación, like that of Ruiz. In a Foucaultian vein, Leiva studies the “political technologies” deployed by the Concertación, that is, the “capabilities aimed at capturing, orienting, modeling, or controlling behaviors of living beings for the purpose of achieving certain political aims” (9). Such aims may include weakening the opposition, creating social cohesion and governability, or solving societal problems.

Leiva identifies three (somewhat confusing) types of “political technologies.” One refers to mechanisms of co-optation and social control of popular movements, which rely on political institutions and parties to craft consensus. The second one is “hegemonic participatory politics,” or carefully delimited spaces of participation aimed at destroying autonomous social organizations. This requires taming resistance to government projects, depoliticizing citizens, and persuading them that their problems are individual instead of collective. For instance, by solving the conflicts between Indigenous communities and companies, the Orígenes program of the Concertación asserts capitalism without questioning its morality or asking Indigenous communities what they want. The final political technology refers to “commodified social rights.” These occur when governments expand social rights through market providers to foster popular legitimacy and capital accumulation.

Why would leftist forces want to deepen neoliberalism? For Leiva, this is not only because Concertación leaders changed ideologically, as assumed by the “socialist renovation” thesis. Rather, it is because Concertación elites obtained material benefits by occupying positions first in the state and then in business directorates. Simply put, capitalist companies bought the Concertación by funding its electoral campaigns (legally and illegally) and paying its leaders for participating in their boards.

Chapter 6 illustrates this argument through a case study of the Luksic economic group, one of the largest ones in Chile. It evidences how Luksic financed Michelle Bachelet’s second (and successful) electoral bid as well as leftist think tanks, and opened its directorates to leftist politicians. Therefore, the Luksic group managed to shape “rules, ideas, and subjectivity” (18). Other chapters show how the Concertación helped national and transnational capital through education, pensions, and health reforms.

Chapter 5, my favorite, shows the popular reactions to this accommodation. Using protest events data, Leiva shows that from the mid-2000s, labor protests became more radical and autonomous, emerging from grassroots organizations and resorting to extralegal tactics. He argues that this change was a reaction of rank-and-file workers to the co-optation of Chile’s main labor confederation (the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, or CUT) by the Concertación as well as to the CUT’s obscure and corrupt practices.

While Leiva’s main thesis has the virtue of clarity, it grants too much power to Concertación governments over people’s behaviors and desires; Michelle Bachelet would have dreamed about having such domination over protesting students in 2006. It also ignores other factors like the obstruction of the right in Congress, authoritarian enclaves, or the constraints of the global economy on government choices. Few would dispute that the Concertación attempted to favor capital accumulation, but few would agree that the Concertación was simply an instrument of big capital. Fred Block once provided a more straightforward explanation about why (even leftist) governments favor business in capitalist societies: they need to keep private investment up to get fiscal resources for funding their policies.¹⁷ Beyond these reservations, Leiva’s bold book excels at connecting politics, economy, and culture in innovative ways.

Many books attempt to explain the origins of neoliberalism or its collective challengers, in Chile and abroad.¹⁸ Aldo Madariaga chooses different questions in *Neoliberal Resilience*:

¹⁷ Fred Block, “The Ruling Class Does Not Rule: Notes on the Marxist Theory of the State,” *Socialist Revolution* 33 (1977): 6–29.

¹⁸ A classic is David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Lessons in Democracy and Development from Latin America and Eastern Europe. Why has neoliberalism lasted so long? Which mechanisms make it so resilient despite its proneness to produce crisis and social inequalities? He adopts a comparative political economy approach: as for Ruiz and Leiva, for Madariaga, neoliberalism is not just economic policies and doctrine but also about politics—specifically, restricted democratic institutions that insulate people from undoing the economic dimension.

While all previous books reviewed here focus on Chile, Madariaga chooses four countries where neoliberalism was implemented with varying resilience. Neoliberalism was challenged and weakened in two of them (Argentina and Poland). In the other two (Chile and Estonia), it remained resilient and strong. Madariaga is bold in moving beyond the core capitalist countries and choosing two seldom compared regions (Latin America and Central Europe). But it has a payoff because it brings to explanations of neoliberalism some elements often ignored, like the role of communist or authoritarian military legacies in shaping capitalism. Empirically, Madariaga focuses on two policy areas—exchange rates and industrial policies—which are key to neoliberal survival. He creatively combines qualitative and quantitative data and methods.

The most general claim of the book is that neoliberalism gained resilience because its supporters managed to reduce the representative component of democracy. Neoliberals are fine with free and fair elections, provided that democratically elected leaders cannot reverse neoliberal economic policies. How do they do that?

Using power resources theory, Madariaga identifies three mechanisms. One is opposition blockade: weakening the power resources of actors that could challenge neoliberalism. This entails, for instance, reforming electoral systems or strengthening veto players in ways that undermine labor movements and leftist parties. The second one is support creation: increasing the power resources of business sectors benefiting from neoliberalism, for instance, through privatization of public companies. The last mechanism is constitutional lock-in: enshrining policies akin to neoliberalism (like independent central banks and fiscal spending rules) in constitutions that are hard to reform. Across the book, Madariaga shows how variations in the operation of these mechanisms explain neoliberal resilience in Chile and Estonia, moderation in Poland, and temporary reversal in Argentina. The argument resonates with neo-Marxist approaches on the tensions between capitalism and democracy, both recent and older.¹⁹

Regarding Chile, Madariaga seems aligned with claims reviewed above about Chilean neoliberal exceptionalism and its democratic deficits. But by identifying mechanisms, he dissects the links between the economy and the polity better than others do. In this respect, his approach is comparable to Leiva's, although Madariaga remains firmly within historical institutionalism and lacks a Foucaultian tone.

Madariaga's claim about neoliberal resilience is particularly intriguing given Chile's current juncture. Will the incoming government of Gabriel Boric, a severe critic of neoliberalism, be able to reform it? Will the constitutional convention, in which anti-neoliberal forces prevail, be capable of breaking Chile's neoliberal resilience? If so, will this be achieved by reversing the mechanisms identified by Madariaga or through other ones?

The book opens new research avenues. For instance, it would be interesting to use a large sample of countries and multivariate panel methods to test the claim that neoliberalism prospers if it reduces democratic representation. The book also contributes to debates on the death of democracies²⁰ by showing the role of constitutional legacies and business groups in democratic constraints.

¹⁹ Wolfgang Streeck, *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*, translated by Patrick Camiller (New York: Verso, 2014); Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1975).

²⁰ Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Broadway Books, 2018).

More generally, Madariaga's and Leiva's books show different strategies for incorporating the economy into political analysis in Latin America. This is a promising path in a region with varied contemporary development models, from neoliberalism to social democracy and from corporatism to "twenty-first-century socialism," and with varied political regimes, from democracies to authoritarianism. Indeed, it has been pursued by a growing community of scholars in the region, as illustrated by Palgrave's new book series on Latin American political economy, the *Red para el Estudio de la Economía Política de América Latina* (REPAL), and the publication of an *Oxford Handbook of Latin American Political Economy*. For the Chilean case in comparative perspective, I highlight three sets of political economy questions not pursued by Leiva and Madariaga.

First, are there cross-regional variations in the extent to which Latin American governments rely on capital accumulation by large economic groups to pursue their policies? Are leftist governments penalized by electors when they remain too close to capital? Which are the strategies of leftist governments for dealing with the cross-pressures of capital interests and local communities affected by extractivism?

Second, to what extent does governmental mismanagement of economic crisis explain popular rebellions like those recently in Chile, Colombia, or Nicaragua (let alone Argentina in 2001 or Venezuela in 1989)? Can we extract common lessons from such disparate cases?

Third, how does the governmental management of the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic affect reelection prospects? Does more fiscal spending via direct transfers mean better reelection chances? What is the electoral impact of keeping inflation at bay or deploying more successful vaccination campaigns? Will the pandemic boost more taxes to business groups to support post-pandemic recovery? Or will the costs of the crisis fall on the popular sectors and their future pension funds, as in Chile?

These ten books show the problems and contradictions that slowly developed in Chilean democracy since the transition of the 1990s. During the last decade, political elites have responded to citizen reactions with institutional reforms to the electoral regime, new political party laws, and mechanisms for improving accountability and transparency. Although these have not weakened collective protests and social movements, they have opened opportunities for the emergence and institutionalization of new political forces across the political spectrum. After the 2019 social uprising, Chilean politics may be ending a cycle that began in 1990 and starting a new one. This one is signaled by a constitutional change process (to be decided sometime in 2022) and, since March 2022, a new leftist government led by a new generation. Boric's government will face a major challenge: how to meet an accumulation of citizen expectations for redistribution and dignity while dealing with a fragmented Congress, a bleak economic prospect, the pandemic, and tensions inside the government coalition—not to mention the constraints emanated from an eventual new constitution. Will Chilean democracy survive these challenges? Might they become an opportunity for democratic revitalization?

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