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RENOVATION IN THE REVOLUTION? DICTATORSHIP,
DEMOCRACY, AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE CHILEAN LEFT

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an analysis of political learning and change in the Chilean Socialist and Communist parties since the overthrow of Salvador Allende in 1973. It argues that 'prodemocratic' patterns of political learning identified by other researchers are not an inevitable outcome of authoritarian experiences. Instead, they are contingent upon the interaction of several organizational and strategic factors. A 'most similar systems' comparison suggests that the flexible organizational structure and relative autonomy of the Socialist Party facilitated ideological and strategic 'renovation' under authoritarian rule, whereas the organizational rigidity and dependence of the Communist Party combined with its environmental constraints to produce a process of radicalization. These divergent patterns of change caused the two parties to reverse their respective positions within the Chilean party system, with important implications for Chile's democratic transition.

RESUMEN

Ell presente trabajo analiza el proceso de cambio y aprendizaje políticos ocurrido desde la caída de Salvador Allende en 1973 en los partidos socialista y comunista chilenos. Sostiene que los patrones 'prodemocráticos' de aprendizaje político identificados por otros investigadores no son un resultado inevitable de las experiencias autoritarias, sino que dependen de la interacción de diversos factores organizativos y estratégicos. Una comparación en términos de 'los sistemas más similares' sugiere que la autonomía relativa del partido socialista y la flexibilidad de su estructura organizativa facilitaron la 'renovación' ideológica y estratégica bajo el régimen autoritario, mientras que la rigidez organizativa y la dependencia del partido comunista se combinaron con las restricciones de su entorno para producir un proceso de radicalización. Esta divergencia en los patrones de cambio hizo que los dos partidos cambiaran su posición relativa dentro del sistema de partidos en Chile, lo que tiene implicaciones importantes para la transición democrática chilena.

As most Latin American nations returned to elected civilian rule in the 1980s, it was widely acknowledged that the regional economic crisis and profound socioeconomic inequalities posed serious challenges to long-term democratization. Despite these structural constraints, many scholars found grounds for optimism in alleged changes in political actors—that is, in patterns of political learning that were said to create a more moderate, tolerant, and accommodating political and ideological climate. In particular, various studies have posited a relationship between the painful experience of authoritarian rule and normative, cognitive, or instrumental changes that are conducive to redemocratization.[1]

Does authoritarianism actually engender a modification of political beliefs and tactics, which Bermeo identifies as the essence of political learning?[2] If so, does such experiential learning necessarily lead in the 'prodemocratic' direction that Bermeo and others have stressed, with a normative 'revaluation' of democracy, a discrediting of authoritarian alternatives, greater tolerance for political pluralism, and a willingness to compromise with competing actors? Or are there conditions under which authoritarianism will have the opposite effect, encouraging political stagnation, sectarianism, or radicalization?[3]

Bermeo concedes that nonlearning is a possibility, and that cognitive or behavioral changes can be uneven across different groups or individuals who do not always draw the same lessons from a given experience.[4] To what extent, then, are groups likely to learn differentially—that is, to draw divergent lessons or interpretations from an authoritarian experience, thus producing highly disparate patterns of political change? And what factors can explain such diverse reactions to a common experience?

Having jointly shared the trauma of democratic breakdown and authoritarian repression—and having responded in very different ways to such experiences—the Chilean

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[1] A recent overview can be found in Nancy Bermeo, "Democracy and the Lessons of Dictatorship," *Comparative Politics* 24, 3 (April 1992): 273-291. See also "Introduction: Elite Transformations and Democratic Regimes" in John Higley and Richard Gunter, eds., *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Guillermo O'Donnell's "Introduction to the Latin American Cases" in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*: *Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 15-18. On the Chilean case, see Manuel Antonio Garretón, "La oposición política partidaria en el régimen militar chileno: Un proceso de aprendizaje para la transición," in Marcelo Cavarozzi and Manuel Antonio Garretón, eds. *Muerte y resurrección: Los partidos políticos en el autoritarismo y las transiciones del cono sur* (Santiago: FLACSO, 1989).

[2] Bermeo, p. 274.

[3] See, for example, Ludolfo Paramio, "La Izquierda ante el fin de siglo," *Leviatán* 28 (Summer 1987): 63-64.

[4] Ibid., pp. 275, 284.

Socialist and Communist Parties offer the opportunity to gain significant insight into the dynamics of political learning and adaptation. As Chile experienced a transition from authoritarian rule between 1988 and 1990, the Socialist Party (PSCh) became the junior partner of the Christian Democratic Party in the newly elected coalition government led by Patricio Aylwin. In contrast, the Socialists' long-time ally, the Communist Party (PCCh), was left standing on the sidelines, excluded from the 17-party *Concertación* coalition which defeated General Augusto Pinochet in a 1988 plebiscite and subsequently elected Aylwin to the presidency in December 1989. Although the Communist Party reluctantly participated in both the 1988 campaign for a 'No' vote against Pinochet and the 1989 general elections, the party awkwardly sought to adapt its insurrectionary strategy of 'popular rebellion' to a rapidly changing political context, and moved quickly to a position of opposition to the *Concertación* government.

The contrasting roles of Chile's two major Left parties in the regime transition could hardly have been predicted when the nation began authoritarian rule some 16 years before. The two parties had been the linchpins on Salvador Allende's proposed 'peaceful road to socialism' between 1970 and 1973, but in that era the Socialists represented the more radical, 'revolutionary' position within Allende's Popular Unity coalition, whereas the Communists adopted a more cautious, moderate approach to political and socioeconomic change. An architect of the *vía pacífica*, the PCCh favored multiclass social and political alliances, gradual and pragmatic changes in property relations, strict adherence to constitutional legality, and negotiated compromise with the Christian Democrats and other political opponents. In contrast, the PSCh favored a strict, class-based 'Workers' Front' alliance and rapid economic socialization; believing revolutionary armed confrontation was inevitable on the road to socialism, the PSCh resisted Allende's efforts to negotiate a compromise with the opposition and sought to create grassroots forms of 'popular power' as the foundation for an alternative political order to 'bourgeois' democracy.

The violent military coup that terminated Allende's brief experiment in democratic socialism initiated a lengthy period of political repression, with the arrest, torture, execution, exile, and 'disappearance' of thousands of party leaders and rank-and-file activists. It also spawned simultaneous but highly divergent processes of self-reflection and critical reassessment in the Socialist and Communist Parties which profoundly marked their subsequent patterns of change. Although both parties experienced major transformations in political beliefs and/or practices during 16 years of authoritarian rule, the paradox of the Chilean Left is that the PSCh and PCCh evolved in opposite directions, ultimately 'crisscrossing' or reversing their positions within the Chilean political system. The two parties developed competing interpretations of Allende's defeat and extracted different lessons with highly divergent implications for the struggle against

authoritarianism. As such, their contrasting patterns of political learning and change produced a bifurcation of the Chilean Left which ruptured the once formidable Socialist-Communist alliance. This schism facilitated the construction of a new Center-Left alliance between the Socialist and Christian Democratic parties which anchored Chile's democratic transition while isolating and largely marginalizing the PCCh.

Previous studies of political learning and change within the Chilean Left, focusing on the so-called process of 'renovation' in the PSCh during the late 1970s and 1980s, are unable to explain this basic paradox. Typically, the changes in the PSCh after 1973 are attributed to a variety of experiential and 'exogenous' factors which encouraged the party to modify its ideology and political strategies—namely, the defeat of Allende's experiment, the traumatic experience with authoritarian rule, the economic restructuring associated with the military regime's neoliberal project, and the crisis of Leninism in the Soviet bloc.[1] But if these painful experiences and environmental influences pushed the PSCh in a more moderate direction, causing the party to embrace 'formal' democratic institutions and centrist allies that it had previously disparaged, how can we explain the very different evolutionary trajectory of the PCCh? The PCCh shared similar experiences and operated in the same basic (though not identical) political and economic context; nevertheless, the PCCh responded with a process of strategic radicalization rather than moderation, ultimately taking up arms to confront the dictatorship and then declaring itself in opposition to the *Concertación* government.

To understand these different responses to authoritarian rule, it is necessary to adopt an integrative approach that explains how exogenous influences interact with endogenous organizational characteristics to shape and constrain patterns of change. A 'most similar systems'[2] comparison of the Chilean Socialist and Communist Parties should help develop such an approach; by studying the different outcomes of two parties operating within the same basic political and economic context, the analysis seeks to identify internal characteristics that distinguish the two parties and differentiate their responses to external pressures or stimuli. This analysis suggests that organizational characteristics heavily condition the two major mechanisms of political learning identified by Bermeo—namely, political interaction and the comparative assessment of political experiences.[3]

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[1] The most prominent study of Chilean socialism since Allende is characteristic of such an approach; see Ignacio Walker, *Socialismo y democracia: Chile y Europa en perspectiva comparada* (Santiago: CIEPLAN, 1986). See also Tomás Moulian, "Dictadura, democracia y socialismo," *Umbral* 2 (May 1980): 9-18.

[2] For a discussion of this comparative method, see Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1970), Chapter Two.

[3] Bermeo, pp. 283-288.

As will be seen, the ideological autonomy and relatively loose organizational structure of the Socialist Party facilitated interaction with other political forces and opened the party to diverse external influences, making it highly adaptable and prone to change in response to exogenous pressures. However, the diffusion and consolidation of the ideological and tactical changes associated with the 'renovation' of the PSCh were contingent upon the existence of an external strategic environment that encouraged and rewarded them in the late 1980s. In contrast, the rigid organizational structure of the Communist Party and its lack of ideological autonomy narrowed its range of political interaction and comparative referents, thus discouraging any process of 'renovation' comparable to that of the PSCh. Instead, the PCCh retained its ideological orthodoxy while experiencing a tactical radicalization as a result of political defeat and strategic constraints.

This comparative study extends the concept of political learning from individual elites to political parties as organized groups and tries to explain the mechanisms of change and continuity within such complex organizations. In so doing, it highlights the importance of internal organizational characteristics in the study of political parties and political change. Finally, it provides insight into the different ways in which Left parties in Latin America have responded to the generalized crisis of their political project. In the wake of Communism's collapse in the former Soviet bloc, there has been widespread speculation regarding the future directions of Left-Wing political movements in Latin America and other regions.[1] The Chilean case is instructive, as it offers competing examples of self-critical reassessment and redefinition in Left parties that long predated Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika*. The political learning of the Chilean Left was rooted in the traumatic domestic experience of having tasted political power and suffered a crushing defeat accompanied by military repression. Patterns of political learning and adaptation were then reinforced by a series of international events and influences, including the crisis of bureaucratic collectivism in the Soviet bloc, the exposure of political exiles to Eurocommunism and social democracy, the Central American revolutionary movements, and the wave of democratic transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America. Long boasting the strongest Socialist and Communist parties on the South American continent—indeed, recognized as the first nation to democratically elect a Marxist head of state—Chile makes an important case study for those who seek to understand how Left parties in Latin America are responding to crisis and defeat by rethinking traditional identities and political projects.

Crisis and Change: The Dimensions of Renovation

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[1] See, for example, Jorge Castañeda, "Latin America and the End of the Cold War," *World Policy Journal* 7, 3 (Summer 1990): 469-492, and Sergio Arancibia et al., *Crisis y renovación* (Santiago: Ediciones Medusa-ICAL, 1990).

If traumatic experiences produce political learning, there would be few better examples than the Latin American Left, which bore the brunt of the political defeats and violent repression wrought by bureaucratic-authoritarianism from the 1960s to the 1980s.[1] A generation ago, the Latin American Left was swept by a wave of revolutionary idealism,[2] inspired by the examples of Cuba and Che Guevara and instructed by *dependencista* approaches which gainsayed the prospects for democratic reform. A quarter of a century later—with the Cuban Revolution increasingly isolated, the Sandinistas operating as an electoral opposition, East European socialism a discredited memory, and neoliberalism on the ideological ascendance—the Latin American Left faces the daunting task of critically re-evaluating and redefining its political project. The deaths of Guevara and Allende symbolized the defeat of both the *vía armada* and the *vía pacífica* as paths to socialism, while the decay and eventual collapse of the Soviet bloc heightened the sense of crisis in a regional Left noted for its cultural and intellectual dependence on European Marxism in general and Leninism in particular.[3] Therefore, if 'revolution' was the catchword of the 1960s, 'renovation' has emerged as a dominant theme of the new political era as Left parties struggle to articulate a political and economic alternative to Latin America's crisis-ridden status quo.

In its most fundamental sense, 'renovation' refers to the renewal and reconceptualization of socialist thought and practice; as stated by a prominent Chilean protagonist, it means to "fortify and extract the positive from the past, and to dare to support what is new."[4] As a response to the accumulated lessons of historical experience, and to both the hemispheric and global events of recent decades, renovation entails an explicit process of political learning and adaptation. It is,

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[1] For the Chilean case, see Karen Remmer, "Political Demobilization in Chile," *Comparative Politics* 23 (July 1991): 439-458.

[2] The spirit of the era—often referred to as a period of 'ideological inflation' in Latin America—was perhaps best captured in Regis Debray's classic indictment of the political inertia and moderation of the regional Soviet-backed Communist parties and his advocacy of Guevarist guerrilla *focos*; see *Revolution in the Revolution?* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

[3] This intellectual dependence is discussed in José Aricó, "El Marxismo en América Latina. Ideas para abordar de otro modo una vieja cuestión," in Fernando Calderón, ed. *Socialismo, autoritarismo y democracia* (Lima and Buenos Aires: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos-CLACSO, 1989). For the Chilean case, see Tomás Moulian, "Evolución histórica de la Izquierda chilena: La influencia cultural de Marxismo," in his collection of essays entitled *Democracia y socialismo en Chile* (Santiago: FLACSO, 1983). It is worth noting that in the Latin American Left, the trenchant debate in the 1960s between the *vía armada* and the *vía pacífica* generally did not pit social democrats against revolutionary Marxist-Leninists, as in the European tradition. Instead, it was an intra-Leninist debate between the orthodox, Soviet-backed Communist parties, which generally supported the peaceful road, and the 'New Left' Guevarist or Maoist proponents of armed struggle.

[4] Ricardo Lagos, "Dos conceptos clave de la Renovación Socialista en Chile," *Nueva Sociedad* 101 (May-June 1989): 114.

in part, a regional variant of a global process of political redefinition that predated *perestroika* but has accelerated in the wake of Communism's collapse in the ex-Soviet bloc. However, renovation also has unique characteristics that are attributable to the specific experiences of the Latin American Left with political defeat, authoritarian repression, and redemocratization from the 1960s to the 1980s. The trauma of these decades made an indelible imprint on the regional Left, profoundly affecting traditional conceptions of politics and social change.[1]

Having experienced political defeat and repression in an unusually severe fashion, the Chilean Left has engaged in an especially spirited debate about the nature and scope of the renovation process. By the late 1980s the concept of 'renovation' had entered the official discourse of both the Socialist and Communist Parties, although it was subject to a variety of different interpretations and was used to refer to highly divergent patterns of change, as will be seen below. In common parlance, however, renovation refers to a complex, multidimensional process of change that cuts across the spheres of party ideology, strategy, and organization. Highly variable in scope, form, and content,[2] the concept of renovation reflects a commitment to adapt traditional modes of thought and practice to new political realities.

Renovation, then, is a multidimensional phenomenon that corresponds to the multifaceted crisis of Left parties in Latin America. This crisis has three principal components—that of teleology, of strategy, and of agency. The *crisis of teleology* is perhaps the most fundamental, as it refers to the delegitimation of existing or historical models of socialism and the inability to build a consensus around a new vision of socialism as an alternative to capitalism. It is, in essence, a conceptual problem in which the ultimate objectives or content of socialism are left opaque or undefined. Whereas the teleological crisis pertains to the ends of socialism, the *strategic crisis* pertains to its means—that is, to the problem of developing a plan of action to transform the socialist ideal into a political reality. This crisis is indicative of an inability to identify and implement a viable strategy to translate the social majority represented by popular sectors into a majoritarian political force capable of transforming society. Finally, the *crisis of agency* refers to the problem of constructing an adequate political or organizational agent for the strategic task of mobilizing social and political forces behind a socialist project. This crisis

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[1]   For insightful overviews of intellectual debates within the Left, and in particular the conceptual shift from revolutionary to democratic themes, see Robert Barros, "The Left and Democracy: Recent Debates in Latin America," *Telos* 68 (Summer 1986): 49-70, and Norbert Lechner, "De la revolución a la democracia," in his *Los patios interiores de la democracia* (Santiago: FLACSO, 1988).

[2]   That is, a process of renovation in any given party may emphasize one of these dimensions over others, or involve distinct mixes or types of change within the different dimensions. Therefore, renovation should not be conceived as a unimodal pattern of change, much less a universal one.

focuses attention on the process by which collective political subjects are created, mobilized, and endowed with organic structures by political parties or social organizations within civil society.

As the comparative analysis of the PSCh and PCCh suggests, these components of crisis are integrally linked, even if they are conceptually distinct. So, too, are the three dimensions of renovation to which they correspond—those of ideology, political praxis, and organization.[1] In the *ideological* dimension, renovation involves the reassessment of traditional Marxist and Leninist conceptions of the state, civil society, and socialism as an alternative social order to capitalism. In the *praxiological* dimension, it entails a re-evaluation of both revolutionary and reformist models of political action and social transformation. In the *organizational* dimension, renovation has challenged traditional assumptions about the character and role of political parties and popular organizations as agents of social transformation.

By 1990, the scope of debate in both the PSCh and the PCCh was sufficiently broad to cut across these three different dimensions. Nevertheless, although the underlying themes were comparable, the terms of debate were markedly distinct in the two parties, as organizational dynamics conditioned modes of self-criticism, political learning, and innovation. The process of renovation ranged much broader and deeper within the PSCh, where some sectors made a clear break with Marxism as both a political doctrine and an analytical instrument for interpreting social reality. In contrast, the debate within the PCCh tended to stay within the confines of Marxism; although proponents of renovation became highly critical of the dogmatization of the party's Marxist-Leninist ideology, most did not renounce Marxism as a theoretical or analytical instrument, thus making the strategic and organizational dimensions the main points of contention. A brief overview of change in the two parties is provided in the following section, which links cognitive and tactical adaptation to political experiences and changes in the strategic environment.

Political Learning and Adaptation: The Chilean Experience

In the early years following the September 1973 coup, both the Socialist and Communist Parties sought to interpret the causes for the defeat of Allende's experiment. Ironically, the

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[1] It is possible for an incongruence to exist between party ideology and practice or organization, as in a party with a revolutionary ideology and a parliamentary strategy, or a party with a Leninist doctrine that fails to operate according to the norms of democratic centralism. However, such incongruencies generate internal tensions and contradictions within a party, and changes in one area typically create pressure for adjustment in the others as well. For example, a party that shifts from a Leninist to a Gramscian ideological orientation is likely to make corresponding shifts in its political strategies, much as the ideological influence of *perestroika* tends to be associated with a loosening of Leninist organizational rigidity.

process of self-criticism that resulted led each party to reject much of its own precoup political strategy and grant at least partial legitimacy to the other party's line in the heated debates that plagued the Popular Unity coalition. These self-criticisms and reassessments heavily conditioned evolutionary patterns in the two parties under authoritarian rule.

In the Communist Party, the first response was to affirm the party's faith in the *vía pacífica* and the validity of its pragmatic strategy under the Allende government, when the PCCh sought to negotiate a compromise with Allende's opponents and moderate the scope and pace of economic reforms. The party attributed Allende's defeat to the political isolation of his government, in particular its alienation of the middle class, and blamed 'ultra-Left' sectors inside and outside the Popular Unity coalition for exacerbating conflict, polarizing the political arena, and driving the middle class into an opposition alliance with the Right.[1] By the mid-1970s, however, a new twist was added to this 'political' interpretation of Allende's defeat—an emphasis on military factors and the inability of the Popular Unity government to defend itself from the efforts of civilian and military opponents to subvert the democratic order.[2] By the time of the first postcoup meeting of the PCCh Central Committee (in exile) in 1977, the party's interpretation placed greater emphasis on its *vacío histórico*—that is, its historic failure to design a 'military policy' that would entail both a strategy to influence (or at least neutralize) the Chilean armed forces and, of far greater significance, to develop the party's own capability to operate within the military terrain in accordance with changes in the political context.[3]

This fundamental shift in strategic emphasis from political to military factors was a precursor to the party's 1980 advocacy of 'mass popular rebellion' against the Pinochet dictatorship. For seven years, the PCCh sought in vain to unify the remnants of the Popular Unity coalition with the Christian Democrats and all other 'democratic' forces in the broadest possible 'anti-Fascist front' to contest the dictatorship.[4] However, frustrated by the Christian Democrats' intransigent opposition to any alliance with the PCCh, inspired by the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, and fearful of Pinochet's attempt to institutionalize his authoritarian regime with a new 1980 constitution, the PCCh abruptly declared its support for popular insurrection in September 1980. The party urged the Chilean people to utilize 'all forms of struggle'—including revolutionary

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[1] See the party manifesto "A los trabajadores de Chile," released in September 1973 in the aftermath of the coup.

[2] This shift in emphasis, which corresponded with Soviet and Cuban assessments of the Allende experience, can be seen in Volodia Teitelboim, "Reflexiones sobre los 1000 días de gobierno de la Unidad Popular," *Revista Internacional* (1977): 32-37.

[3] See "La revolución chilena, la dictadura fascista y la lucha por derribarla y crear una nueva democracia," Report to the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Chilean Communist Party, August 1977.

[4] See, for example, the manifesto "Llamamiento al Pueblo de Chile a formar un frente antifascista para derrotar a la dictadura," May 1974.

violence—to topple a dictatorship that refused to yield to political pressure alone. By 1983, the PCCh had taken the lead in creating a new revolutionary guerrilla force, the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez* (FPMR), as well as popular militia units (predominantly among shantytown youth) which were active in the wave of mass demonstrations that swept across the Chilean political landscape between May 1983 and July 1986.

The strategy of popular rebellion and the decision to create military forces linked to the PCCh represented a fundamental strategic reorientation for a party renowned for its historical concentration on electoral politics and trade union representation. But if this strategic shift challenged the party's traditional political practices, it did not require any major changes in ideological principles or identities. Indeed, the strategic shift was portrayed as a recuperation of a basic Leninist tenet that the party had long neglected—the need to adapt tactics and forms of struggle in accordance with changes in the political context. It was, then, the party's reassessment of the strategic context and of its own limited options and political constraints that brought about the strategic shift, rather than any fundamental changes in political beliefs. The new strategic orientation was not seen as a disavowal of the party's traditional forms of political struggle but as a supplement required for a more flexible and integral revolutionary strategy that would be applicable under different conditions.

In the Socialist Party, the process of self-critical reassessment was more profound and contentious, being intertwined with the factionalism that plagued the party before and especially after the 1973 coup.[1]   In the early aftermath of the coup, the party's clandestine Internal Directorate adopted a 'political' interpretation of Allende's defeat which was similar to the initial assessment of the Communist Party, going so far as to declare the Socialist Party "the principal bearer of the political dispersion that impeded the consolidation of the hegemony of the working class."[2] This interpretation challenged the party's Workers' Front strategy, and thus drew the ire of the more radical sectors which dominated the party before 1973.[3] A faction known as the *Coordinadora Nacional de Regiones* (CNR) competed with the official Internal Directorate for

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[1]   The PSCh had experienced a period of ideological radicalization in the 1960s, when it declared itself a Leninist party for the first time and made a doctrinal commitment to revolutionary armed struggle. These positions were points of contention between the party's multiple internal factions, however, and they sharpened the contradictions between the party's formal doctrine and its daily political practices, which continued to involve the PSCh in electoral, parliamentary, and trade union politics. See Walker, *Socialismo y democracia*, Chapter 4, or Benny Pollack and Hernan Rosenkranz, *Revolutionary Social Democracy: The Chilean Socialist Party* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1986).

[2]   "Documento del Comite Central del Partido Socialista de Chile," Santiago, March 1974, p. 43, better known as the "March Document."

[3]   On the other hand, the Leninist ideological orthodoxy of this document alienated sectors of the party that sought to retain its distinctive character vis-à-vis the Communist Party.

leadership of the party inside Chile; politically close to the radical *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario* (MIR), the CNR attributed Allende's defeat to the lack of an integral revolutionary strategy with a military capability, as did the initial interpretations of exiled Secretary General Carlos Altamirano.[1] The Internal Directorate, the CNR, and Altamirano all concurred that some form of military force would ultimately be required to bring down Pinochet, although the Internal Directorate and Altamirano expressed support for a broad social and political coalition to confront the dictatorship.

Political debate within the PSCh began to change dramatically, however, under the influence of disparate groups of intellectuals who became the initial proponents of the 'Socialist renovation' in Chile.[2] Like the Internal Directorate, these intellectuals adopted a 'political interpretation' of Allende's defeat, blaming the coup on Allende's political isolation.[3] However, in contrast to the Internal Directorate—which blended strategic moderation with strict Marxist-Leninist ideological orthodoxy—the dissident intellectuals integrated their strategic analysis with a profound ideological critique of Leninism. Drawing initially from Gramsci, the intellectuals claimed that the popularized Marxism-Leninism of the Chilean Left was too sectarian, dogmatic, and exclusive to provide a foundation for a new multiclass political hegemony. As such, it segregated the Left politically and blocked the construction of the majoritarian sociopolitical bloc required to sustain any project for social transformation. Likewise, Leninism's Manichean vision of politics, with its emphasis on the conquest of state power, created a logic of warfare which was intolerant of pluralism, incapable of compromise, and prone to polarization and confrontation. By rationalizing an elite revolutionary vanguard with exclusive claims to doctrinal legitimacy, Leninism was tied to a top-down model of change with centralized political authority which clashed with socialist ideals for mass democratic participation.[4] The Gramscian influence also encouraged a conceptual shift from the state to civil society as the primary locus of revolutionary

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[1] Altamirano's assessment is provided in his *Dialéctica de una derrota* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1977). A symbol of the party's radical wing since the 1960s, Altamirano became Secretary General of the PSCh in 1971. As will be seen, his political orientation changed dramatically during his years of exile in Western Europe, when he became a major proponent of ideological renovation.

[2] In reality, the most prominent of these intellectuals were affiliated initially with the small parties of the Christian Left which participated in the Popular Unity government—the *Movimiento de Acción Popular* (MAPU), *MAPU-Obrero Campesino*, and the *Izquierda Cristiana*. Operating in exile centers like Rome and Paris, and in Chilean think tanks with international support like FLACSO, these intellectuals diffused the main themes of the renovation to party leaders and intellectuals of the PSCh in exile. In the 1980s, the parties of the Christian Left were gradually incorporated into the PSCh through a process of ideological and organizational convergence.

[3] A representative example is Manuel Antonio Garretón and Tomás Moulian, *La Unidad Popular y el conflicto político en Chile* (Santiago: Ediciones Minga, 1983).

[4] For a collection of pathbreaking early essays posing these theoretical and ideological critiques, see Moulian's, *Democracia y socialismo en Chile*.

initiative, with a corresponding emphasis upon grassroots popular organizations as autonomous political protagonists and as agents for social change. These constituent groups in civil society were seen as organs of popular power and as the breeding grounds for a new hegemony with a more radically democratic ethos based upon equality, direct participation, and community solidarity.[1]

These critiques and theoretical reconceptualizations led inexorably to a rejection of state-centric, bureaucratic models of socialism, and a normative 'revaluation' of democracy became the centerpiece of the renovation process. Democracy was conceived not as an instrument for the attainment of other values but as an integral component of the socialist project itself. Indeed, socialism came to be viewed less as a preconceived model of society—as an alternative mode of production or political order—and more as an open-ended process of social transformation achieved through the progressive extension or 'deepening' of democratic norms to new spheres of social, political, or economic relations.[2]

Initially, the debate over ideological renovation was restricted to small groups of intellectuals at think tanks in Chile and in exile, especially in Western Europe where contact with Eurocommunist and social democratic ideas had a powerful impact. By the late 1970s the main themes of the renovation process had been circulated at conferences of Chilean exiles in Italy and France and had begun to penetrate the exiled leadership of the PSCh. In 1979, the external organization of the PSCh split when the clandestine Internal Directorate removed the exiled Altamirano as Secretary General. Part of the external party organization stayed loyal to Altamirano; still claiming to represent the 'true' PSCh, this sector became the principal locus of ideological and strategic renovation in the 1980s. The other major external faction, led by Allende's former Foreign Minister Clodomiro Almeyda, had the support of the Internal Directorate and the vast majority of the party's dispersed militancy inside Chile. With its exile headquarters in

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[1]   Eventually, some intellectual tendencies within the renovation process made a sharper break with the Left's traditional ideological positions by backing away from Marx and Gramsci as well as Lenin, embracing a liberal representative model of democracy, and reevaluating the positive aspects of the market and private property; see, for example, Eugenio Tironi Barrios, *La Torre de Babel: Ensayos de crítica y renovación política* (Santiago: Ediciones Sur, 1984), and José Joaquín Brunner, "Cultura y política en la lucha por la democracia," in *Siete ensayos sobre democracia y socialismo en Chile* (Santiago: Vector-Ediciones Documentas, 1986). These sectors clearly aimed to refound Chilean socialism on new theoretical and ideological underpinnings, and transform the PSCh into a patently Center-Left party such as the Spanish Socialist Workers Party. Their positions entered into repeated conflict by the late 1980s with other sectors that accepted the core values of the renovation process—i.e., the reconciliation between socialism and democracy—but retained more traditional Left ideals and identities.

[2]   See Manuel Antonio Garretón, "En que consistió la Renovación Socialista? Síntesis y evaluación de sus contenidos" in *La Renovación Socialista: Balance y perspectivas de un proceso Vigente* (Santiago: Ediciones Valentín Letelier, 1987): 32-33.

Berlin and close ties to the Soviet bloc, the Almeyda sector of the party retained a more orthodox Marxist-Leninist ideology and the traditional alliance with the PCCh.

In contrast, the Altamirano sector[1] initially existed almost entirely in exile, although it began a slow process of party-building inside Chile in the 1980s by promoting a political and organizational 'convergence' among scattered fragments of the old PSCh, sectors of the smaller Christian Left parties, and independent groups of Left intellectuals. The Altamirano sector promoted not only an ideological renovation but also a fundamental change in the party's traditional strategic posture; breaking with the long-standing Workers' Front strategy, with its faith in a class-based united-Left political coalition, this sector actively sought a Center-Left alliance with the Christian Democrats to confront the military dictatorship and stabilize any future democratic regime. Although the Christian Democrats had steadfastly refused any alliance with the Communist Party, they were inclined to cooperate with this new, more moderate manifestation of the PSCh; in 1983, these two parties helped create the Democratic Alliance, the first in a series of multiparty pacts which eventually culminated in the *Concertación* coalition.

The alliance with the Christian Democrats helped make the Altamirano sector more visible and influential, but it remained a minority faction among socialists inside Chile until late in the decade. Its strength was among exiles and middle-class groups of socialist intellectuals and professionals, with some scattered support in the labor movement. In contrast, the PS-Almeyda—the organizational descendant of the Internal Directorate—had a stronger base in student, labor, women's, and shantytown organizations. This base-level organization made the PS-Almeyda an important ally of the Communist Party during the 1983-1986 protest period, when the two parties led the Left-Wing coalition known as the Popular Democratic Movement (MDP). The PS-Almeyda accepted the basic tenets of the Communists' popular rebellion strategy during this period, although it placed less emphasis in practice on the military aspects of rebellion.[2]

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[1] Since both sectors of the party claimed the name PSCh, I will continue to use Altamirano's name to identify his sector; although Altamirano himself stepped down as secretary general in 1980, to be succeeded by a series of political lieutenants, he remained an influential figure within the process of renovation.

[2] Insight into the strategic thinking of the PS-Almeyda can be found in Juan Carvajal, "Acerca de la perspectiva insurreccional," *Cuadernos de Orientación Socialista* 9 (November 1981): 39-56. Although the PS-Almeyda welcomed the Communists' strategic shift in 1980 as an approximation to its own long-standing position, in reality the party never had the requisite organizational strength or internal cohesion to seriously initiate an armed struggle, as the Communist Party was able to do. As Almeyda told the author in an interview in Santiago on July 4, 1990, although his party recognized the right of the people to rebel and employ 'all forms of struggle' against the dictatorship, it never adopted a militaristic conception of this rebellion. In contrast to the Communist Party, "We never thought…that our own military force was going to play a central role. We thought the party had to play the role of an agent of mobilization of the masses, to be an organizer of the masses and the protests. The Communist Party, at least those within the FPMR, were thinking of a military confrontation, but we never thought of that."

Consequently, the two strongest parties of the Chilean Left—the Communist Party and the PS-Almeyda—retained an insurrectionary strategy and the core ideological principles of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy through the mid-1980s, rendering the strategic and ideological proposals of the socialist renovation to the margins of the Left during the period of mass protests. Although the Altamirano sector supported the popular protests as a form of civil disobedience to put political pressure on the dictatorship, it rejected the more violent manifestations of protest and denounced the popular rebellion strategy of the PCCh. Throughout the 1983-1986 protest period, then, the opposition to Pinochet was divided into competing and often antagonistic camps: the Democratic Alliance led by the Christian Democrats and the Altamirano socialists supported popular mobilization to create pressure for a negotiated transition to democracy, while the Popular Democratic Movement led by the Communist Party and the PS-Almeyda favored popular mobilization as part of a more 'integral' insurrectionary process that would culminate in a complete rupture with the military dictatorship.

However, a significant change in the strategic environment brought about a realignment of political forces in late 1986 and 1987, in the process strengthening the forces for renovation in the Left and undermining the strategic position of the insurrectionary sectors. Riven by tactical and partisan divisions, and increasingly restricted to student and shantytown activists, the protest movement crested and then waned after July 1986. In August and September, two events deepened the cleavage between the more moderate and radical wings of the opposition movement; in August, the military government discovered a large cache of weapons in Chile's northern desert that the FPMR had imported with Cuban assistance, and in early September the FPMR wounded but failed to assassinate Pinochet in a daring Andean ambush of the dictator's motorcade. The military regime responded with a new wave of repression, while the Christian Democrats and Altamirano Socialists denounced the Communists' violent tactics[1] and became increasingly tepid in their support for mass mobilization. The Chilean armed forces rallied behind their commander in chief, and Pinochet began a thinly-veiled campaign to have himself nominated as the sole candidate in the plebiscite scheduled for 1988.

As such, there was a shift in the principal locus of political confrontation by 1987—from the terrain of street protests and shantytown barricades, where opposition activists directly challenged the naked force of the military dictatorship, to the terrain of electoral mobilization. Led by the Christian Democrats and the Altamirano Socialists, most of the opposition gradually, if reluctantly, acknowledged that the military regime could not be forced from power; instead, it

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[1]   The then-secretary general of the Altamirano sector, Ricardo Nuñez, sent an 'open letter' to the Chilean Left shortly after the assassination attempt in which he warned that 'militarized radicalization' weakened and divided the opposition movement while exposing it to greater repression.

would have to be defeated politically within the institutional framework established by the dictator's 1980 constitution by voting 'No' in the plebiscite. The Christian Democratic Party opted to register its militants to vote against Pinochet, and the Altamirano Socialists followed suit by creating a so-called 'instrumental' party known as the *Partido Por la Democracia* (PPD) to circumvent the dictatorship's legal ban on the traditional Left parties.

The clearest indicator of the new strategic environment, however, was the decision of the PS-Almeyda in 1987 to participate in the *Concertación* coalition and the 'No' campaign against Pinochet. Although the party did not formally break its alliance with the Communist Party, it did move into a de facto tactical alliance with the Christian Democrats and the Altamirano Socialists, effectively isolating the PCCh in its insistence on maintaining a strategy of military insurrection. The PCCh initially denounced the decision of the other opposition parties to participate in the plebiscite, claiming that it would only legitimize an electoral process that was likely to be fraudulent and was clearly designed to institutionalize authoritarian rule. However, in growing political and strategic isolation, the PCCh made a tardy decision in 1988 to allow its militants to register and vote against Pinochet in the plebiscite, although the party continued to insist on the validity and necessity of its popular rebellion strategy.

The strategic shift of the PS-Almeyda in 1987 was attributable to several factors. In part, it reflected the growing penetration of the major ideas associated with the renovation process within sectors of the party leadership. Indeed, the PS-Almeyda had never been as internally homogeneous and orthodox as its discourse suggested, as part of the younger leadership that clandestinely rebuilt the party after the repression of the mid-1970s was in the moderate *Allendista* tradition of Chilean socialism and was thus sympathetic to renovation themes such as the reconciliation between democracy and socialism. The diffusion of renovation themes to the PS-Almeyda was facilitated by Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union, which challenged the party's more orthodox political identities.

Nevertheless, the more orthodox ideological discourse and the more radical strategic posture were predominant in the party through the mid-1980s, as they were continually reinforced by the highly confrontational, quasi-insurrectionary character of the protest movement. But if the military regime looked vulnerable during this period, when the shantytowns were ablaze and the economy suffered a severe recession, it looked much more formidable after 1986 as the economy recovered, the protests waned, and Pinochet began to campaign for a plebiscite that could ratify his authority for eight more years. In the new political and strategic context, the PS-Almeyda was forced into a painful reassessment of the prospects for forcing Pinochet from power; since the regime retained an overwhelming advantage in military force, and had proven its ability to withstand economic crisis and mass popular resistance, the party concluded that the

dictatorship could best be defeated in the political-electoral terrain, where its popularity was highly suspect.

The new strategic environment thus reinforced the moderate tendency within the PS-Almeyda, and it facilitated a tactical convergence between the Almeyda and Altamirano sectors of the PSCh which helped erode their still significant ideological differences. It also strengthened the relative position of the Altamirano Socialists within the Chilean Left, as they pioneered the shift toward electoral forms of contestation and took advantage of electoral registration procedures to create the PPD and attract new adherents at a time when the PS-Almeyda still had many of its cadres in semi-clandestinity. The two major sectors of the PSCh, along with smaller fragments of the PSCh and the Christian Left, eventually opted to reunify in December 1989 after Aylwin was elected president, creating a new, internally pluralistic PSCh that was explicitly designed to incorporate diverse political and ideological tendencies. Although based on a political compromise, the reunified party—which placed six of its leaders in Aylwin's cabinet—followed the major ideological and strategic postulates of the Socialist renovation, with more 'traditional' sectors articulating a strong dissident voice to this new hegemony.[1]

Not surprisingly, the changes in the domestic and international environment in the late 1980s created shock waves in the Communist Party as well, though they did not lead to the consolidation of a hegemonic position for proponents of renovation, as in the PSCh. Many Communist militants had been uncertain or wary of the abrupt shift to a strategy of popular rebellion in 1980; few party members had been privy to the internal debates that precipitated the policy shift, and the tactical use of violence entailed major changes in the party's political culture and practices even if it was congruent with Leninist ideological principles. The vast majority of militants, however, adhered loyally to the party's decision; the explosion of popular protests in 1983 seemed to vindicate (and provide content to) the new strategy, and the party's youth and shantytown sectors, in particular, became active protagonists of popular rebellion.

Nevertheless, some militants were uneasy with the growing military emphasis within popular rebellion, fearing that the mass mobilization component of the strategy was becoming subordinated to guerrilla operations such as bombings and the assassination attempt against

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[1] The new dissidents, drawn primarily from the more orthodox sectors of the former Almeyda branch, generally grouped behind the leadership of the young congressional deputy Camilo Escalona. This sector upheld the party's Marxist tradition and advocated deeper reforms and a less conciliatory approach during the democratic transition. It also sought to maintain a Left profile that would clearly distinguish the PSCh from the PPD and the Christian Democrats, without breaking with the *Concertación* coalition or reverting to the party's traditional alliance with the PCCh. Although strong and well organized at the base level, this sector of the party has generally lacked the high profile public leadership of the more moderate sectors that led the process of renovation; nevertheless, it has proven capable of garnering 30-40 per cent of the vote in internal elections for the party leadership in 1990 and 1992.

Pinochet. As the strategic environment changed in 1986-1987, prominent cultural, intellectual, and political figures in the party began to express dissent, arguing that the party had to adapt its tactics to a new context, avoid political isolation, and join the other opposition parties in the 'No' campaign to deliver a political defeat to the dictatorship. Although the party made a belated entry into the electoral process, it was excluded from the *Concertación* and denied representation in Congress as a result of its political isolation and a highly skewed electoral law. In the midst of the democratic transition, the party ambiguously retained its strategy of popular rebellion, arguing that it could be adapted to a new political context and used to support democratic reforms rather than confront the Aylwin government. After initially declaring a position of 'constructive independence' toward the *Concertación* government, the party moved quickly to an opposition stance and actively promoted labor and other social mobilizations designed to pressure the government for deeper reforms. In the eyes of the PCCh, the new government was too conciliatory with the Right and the armed forces and represented a continuation of the military regime's social and economic policies.[1]

The Communist Party's political isolation and its relative marginalization from the democratic transition brought internal dissent to an unprecedented level, which culminated in a painful division and the exodus of many of the party's most prominent intellectuals and professionals in 1990. Some dissidents, like pre-1973 congressman Luís Guastavino, had always had reservations about the strategy of popular rebellion; others, such as Central Committee members Augusto Samaniego and Manuel Contreras, had been intellectual architects of the strategy in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but believed the party had failed to recognize and adapt to the changing political context of the late 1980s.[2] The dissidents concurred on the need for the PCCh to escape isolation by relinquishing its insurrectionary pretensions, fully supporting and joining the democratic transition, and building bridges to the *Concertación* alliance.

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[1] Interview by the author with Political Commission member Jorge Insunza, August 5, 1991.

[2] Contreras, for example, had been a member of an East Germany–based group of PCCh intellectuals known as the 'Grupo de Leipzig' which helped lay the theoretical formulations for the party's military policy. Contreras had seen popular rebellion as a form of 'renovation' within the PCCh which would correct the party's reformist legacy, its lack of genuine popular protagonism, and its unrealistic belief that the Pinochet regime was so weak and isolated that political pressure alone could bring about its collapse; see Manuel Fernando Contreras, "Bases para debatir la renovación revolucionaria de nuestro partido," unpublished manuscript, 1990. As the term 'renovation' came into vogue in the 1980s in Chile, it became commonplace for the PCCh to advocate a process of renovation that would maintain and reinforce, rather than dissolve, the party's revolutionary character. Although this use of the term was radically different from that which predominated in the Socialist Party, it enabled all sectors of the Chilean Left to claim a commitment to change with the times.

This growing dissent over strategic issues, rooted in the failure of the party's popular rebellion strategy to dictate the course of Chile's regime transition, was buttressed by radical changes in the party's international environment—namely, the process of *perestroika* and the burgeoning crisis and eventual collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Long noted for its loyalty to Kremlin orthodoxy, the PCCh was poorly equipped to manage the ideological challenge posed by *perestroika*, especially when the international changes were coupled with the party's domestic failures in the late 1980s. Gorbachev's reforms undermined the ideological certainty of the PCCh and offered a cloak of legitimacy to ideological dissent, enabling internal critics to move quickly from strategic issues to more fundamental ideological principles—the party's filial dependence on Moscow, its rigid and doctrinaire Leninism, and the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Like Socialist and Left Christian intellectuals a decade before, dissident Communist intellectuals embraced Gramsci for an alternative perspective within the Marxist tradition, placing new emphasis on civil society and the notion of hegemony as the basis for a more democratic vision of socialism.[1]

Coming on top of the strategic dissent, the winds of ideological renovation within the party intelligentsia severely challenged the PCCh leadership. The party had long waged an ideological struggle against the proponents of renovation in the Socialist sphere,[2] charging them with abandoning fundamental Marxist principles, class identities, and revolutionary objectives. Although the party officially welcomed *perestroika* as an effort to correct bureaucratization and democratic deficiencies in the Soviet bloc, it embraced Cuba's orthodox model more closely and held fast to core ideological principles, proclaiming that 'renovation' was necessary primarily to 'perfect democratic centralism' and reinforce, not renounce, the party's revolutionary commitments.[3] Party leaders attributed the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union to human failings, while defending the validity of Communism's core ideas.[4] More important, they did not budge from their tradition of prohibiting internal factionalism and public dissent; the PCCh branded internal critics as 'social democrats' who sought to abandon the party's revolutionary character,[5] and the leadership imposed sanctions on prominent dissidents, provoking a schism of the party during the second half of 1990.

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[1]   See, for example, José Antonio Leal, "Gramsci y el partido moderno," *Análisis* (May 21-27, 1990): 46-47, or his *Gramsci: La cuidad futura* (Santiago: Ediciones Documntas, 1991).

[2]   An 'official' ideological critique of the socialist renovation can be found in Jorge Insunza, "Renovar y no renegar," *Araucaria de Chile* 23 (1983): 139-169.

[3]   See *Conferencia Nacional,* Partido Comunista de Chile, June 1990, p. 31.

[4]   See, for example, the interview with party leader Gladys Marín in *Hoy* (July 6-12, 1992): 24.

[5]   "Dirección del PC respondió a críticas de Guastavino," *La Época,* (June 23, 1990): 11.

Given the hierarchical authority and strict disciplinary norms of the PCCh, it is hardly surprising that dissidents who promoted a renovation of strategic and ideological principles developed a powerful critique of the party's organizational structure and practices as well. Dissidents attacked the party structure for preventing them from airing their views or promoting an internal discussion of ideological and strategic questions. The critics contended that the party structure and operational norms prohibited the development of an internal democratic culture by suppressing open discussion and debate, discouraging participation from below, and socializing party militants to be obedient recipients of directives issued from above. Consequently, they promoted a revision of the norms of democratic centralism to eliminate authoritarian 'Stalinist' tendencies and "increase the transformative potential of the party" by opening it up to the creative energy of free expression and direct participation.[1]

The theme of organizational renovation directed attention to questions of political agency—that is, to the types of political organizations that could best aggregate and mobilize diverse social forces behind a project for social and economic change. These themes had also emerged in the debate over renovation in the Socialist Party, when calls were made for a party organization that would be more democratic, flexible, and pluralistic in internal affairs and more respectful of the political autonomy of social organizations in civil society.[2] But if organizational questions were a subtheme within the process of renovation in the PSCh, they were a primary focus of conflict in the PCCh, as the party's centralized and monolithic structure blocked the flow of information, suppressed internal pluralism, and impeded open discussion of ideological and strategic questions.[3]

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[1] Leal, "Gramsci y el partido moderno," pp. 46-47. See also Eduardo Santa Cruz, *El Estalinismo en el Partido Comunista de Chile,* Documento de Trabajo (Santiago: Ediciones CISPO, 1990).

[2] A leading treatment of these themes is found in Manuel Antonio Garretón, "Partido y sociedad en un proyecto socialista," *Opciones* 7 (September-December 1985): 182-190. See also Clodomiro Almeyda, "Cambiar también la organización partidaria," *Convergencia* 19-20 (February-March 1991): 32-37.

[3] The main group of dissidents exited the party in November 1990. Some subsequently opted to join the newly-reunified PSCh while others created a new organization known as *Participación Democrática Izquierda* (PDI). The exodus weakened the party's professional and intellectual base and ruptured its youth leadership, but the central core of the party leadership remained intact. Although many base-level militants ceased active participation during this period of internal crisis, relatively few left the PCCh for the PDI or other parties; the party retained sufficient loyalty to register over 58,000 militants and sympathizers as required for its process of legalization in 1990. Indeed, the party surprised many observers by obtaining 6.6 per cent of the vote in 1992 municipal elections, a figure below the party's historical level of support but higher than that expected by those who thought the PCCh was about to disappear in the wake of the domestic and international defeats of recent years. The vote was indicative of the enduring strength of the party's subcultural identities as well as its ability to mobilize a protest vote among Chileans disillusioned with the course of Chile's pacted democratic transition. The PCCh vote was only marginally less than the 8 percent garnered by the PSCh, which was out-polled by its

As such, the organizational characteristics of the PCCh shaped the terms and content of debate within the party. But do organizational factors also shape and constrain the process by which parties learn and adapt or the ways in which they respond to external pressures and influences? The comparative analysis of the PSCh and the PCCh suggests that the two parties not only evolved in diametrically different directions under authoritarian rule but also differed in their depth and scope of change. Both parties made significant changes in their strategic orientation, but the PSCh also experienced fundamental ideological revisions, in contrast to the high level of ideological continuity in the PCCh. These differences cannot be explained by conventional analyses which focus strictly on external influences; a more complete explanation requires an analysis of how external influences interact with the organizational characteristics that frequently distinguish political parties.

Organizational Characteristics and Political Change

There are a number of ways in which organizational characteristics affect the political interactions and comparisons that Bermeo identifies as the mechanisms of learning. Organizational characteristics can determine how external influences are filtered, screened out, or absorbed within an individual party; they can open or close different response options; they shape the internal rules and procedures for debate, dissent, decision-making, and policy implementation; they condition the process by which competing positions or factions can mobilize resources or interpret political experiences; and they structure internal cleavages and power relationships.

These dynamics can be seen at work within the PSCh and the PCCh, which differed on two major endogenous variables—their organizational structure and their degree of ideological autonomy. These variables made the PSCh a very diverse, flexible, and open party which was highly predisposed to change in response to external pressures or stimuli and highly subject to the influence of the 'renovated' currents that marked the international Left in the 1980s. In contrast, the PCCh was a more homogeneous and insular party which was not easily penetrated nor heavily exposed to diverse external influences. The PCCh had a limited capacity for change and a relatively narrow range of response options; while these organizational characteristics did not preclude change, they did limit its scope and depth by encouraging continuity and inhibiting any process of ideological renovation.

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erstwhile 'instrumental' offspring, the PPD (9 per cent). The PPD has acquired a resilience and autonomous identity that was not anticipated when it was created to circumvent the military regime's proscription of the electoral registration of the PSCh.

Organizational Structure

Political parties differ greatly in their degree of internal structuration and institutionalization. According to Angelo Panebianco, parties that are highly structured and institutionalized—that is, those with a strict vertical chain of command, centralized authority, well developed bureaucracies, highly defined operational rules and disciplinary norms, and homogeneous local and regional subunits—are better able to resist environmental pressures or perturbations.[1] These parties tend to be more insulated from their environment and more homogeneous in nature, as subunits are under the direct control of hierarchical authority. Internal pluralism or factions are not allowed, giving a monolithic character to the party organization. Highly structured parties are less permeable to external influences and are slower to change in response to exogenous factors; subunits or factions cannot autonomously initiate change or interact with the environment, making innovation contingent upon the initiative of entrenched authorities or a leadership succession.[2] High levels of structuration and institutionalization thus facilitate organizational stability and continuity by creating orderly rules, routines, and internal relationships.[3]

In contrast, parties that are less highly structured or institutionalized have weaker central authority, less developed bureaucracies, more flexible operational norms, and more subunit autonomy and heterogeneity. These parties are more highly differentiated and pluralistic internally; they are prone to factionalism, since they have lax disciplinary norms, a weaker vertical chain of command, and more autonomy for subunits to compete with one another and interact directly with the environment. According to Panebianco, these parties provide multiple points of entry to external influences and multiple loci for the initiation of change. As such, they are less insular, more permeable to environmental perturbations, and less resistant to exogenous pressures for change.[4]

In short, a highly structured and institutionalized party organization can inhibit change in three basic ways: by closing political space for the autonomous generation of internal

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[1] Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Chapter Four.

[2] As the Soviet experience suggests, a leadership succession might place reformers in charge of the hierarchical controls of such a party, with considerable leverage to initiate change; normally, however, organizational screening devices prohibit radical reformers from reaching the top of such a centralized and self-reproducing party hierarchy, and bureaucratic inertia is likely to frustrate innovative change, as Gorbachev learned.

[3] See James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), especially Chapter Two.

[4] Panebianco, Chapter Four.

innovations; by erecting barriers to the penetration of external influences; and by limiting interaction with the external environment and its political actors. The opposite is true of less highly structured or institutionalized party organizations: they can facilitate change by opening political space for internal pluralism, debate, and innovation; they tend to be easily penetrated by external influences; and they allow multiple levels and forms of contact with the external environment.

The PSCh and PCCh provide classic examples of these very different types of organizational structures. The PCCh has long been a classic Leninist organization, with a powerful central authority exercising hierarchical control over an extensive party apparatus and a highly developed cellular structure with disciplined party cadres operating in workplaces, shantytown communities, and cultural or professional circles. Traditionally, a vertical chain of command linked party cells and local committees to regional committees, the Central Committee, and the Political Commission. In accordance with the norms of democratic centralism, subunits acted in accordance with directives from above and neither structured tendencies nor public dissent from the party line were tolerated. The party hierarchy was capable of imposing a range of sanctions, including expulsions, on militants who violated disciplinary norms.

According to traditional party statutes, the PSCh was similarly structured, at least on paper. But if the party proclaimed adherence to the norms of democratic centralism, the practice was very different from Leninist organizational and operational guidelines.[1] The PSCh never succeeded in establishing a solid cellular structure; as Clodomiro Almeyda has stated, cells or *núcleos* historically had an 'ephemeral life,' existing "solely to designate delegates and then disappear, until the next congress."[2] Where *núcleos* did operate, they frequently functioned as deliberative caucuses rather than disciplined cells and were often displaced in the party's base-level political work by more open and informal local assemblies known as *amplios* or sectoral groups known as *brigadas*.[3] The relatively loose base-level structure enabled local or regional

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[1] As former Secretary General Clodomiro Almeyda has acknowledged, there was always a considerable gap between the 'real party' and the 'legal party' outlined in formal organizational statues; see Almeyda's "Cambiar también la organización partidaria," p. 34. This gap led to repeated efforts between the 1930s and 1970s to bring the party's operating principles into conformity with Leninist norms of democratic centralism, in particular by establishing more effective forms of central authority and imposing discipline on party subunits. Most of these efforts met with little success; see Pollack and Rosenkranz, Chapter Four.

[2] Almeyda, p. 34.

[3] *Brigadas* generally comprised the base level organizational structure of the PSCh in labor unions, but they operated with a high degree of autonomy from party control, and were often activated only for the purposes of union or national election campaigns. The labor commission or department of the party had a weak organizational presence outside Santiago and served primarily to provide information and assistance to the *brigadas* rather than coordinate their activities or exercise political control. See Alan Angell, *Partidos políticos y movimiento obrero en Chile* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1974): 140-145.

personalities to dominate lower level party units, often in alliance with Central Committee members, making the PSCh renowned for its internal *caudillismo.* Local and regional *caudillos* mobilized their own political bases and resources, which granted them a relatively high degree of autonomy from the party hierarchy and undermined central authority and organizational discipline. Historically, the Secretary General had little authority over the Central and regional committees or the *núcleos,* which frequently defied hierarchical directives,[1] and the party had limited control over members exercising governmental responsibilities. The organizational weakness of the PSCh was reflected in the fact that party officials were voluntary, part-time, and unpaid representatives, leading to uneven bureaucratic development.

Given the lack of central authority and hierarchical discipline, it was easy for political, ideological, or personalistic factions to develop within the PSCh. This phenomenon was exacerbated by the fact that the PSCh was founded through the merger of smaller, pre-existing organizations in 1933 and served historically as an absorptive or catch-all meeting ground for diverse Chilean Leftists who could not tolerate the Communist Party's more monolithic political and organizational principles. Therefore, from the very outset the PSCh contained distinct political and ideological tendencies, including democratic socialists, freemasons, independent Marxists, Trotskyists, anarcho-sindicalists, and eventually Guevarists.[2] This factionalism ensured very high levels of internal ideological debate—at times, different factions published competing independent newspapers and ideological tracts—as well as overt political conflict, which caused repeated divisions and schisms within the party organization.

The organizational laxity of the PSCh, however, made it a very open, dynamic, and flexible party, with a high predisposition to change and adapt. The loose organizational structure encouraged change through three principal mechanisms. The first mechanism—that of *ideological penetration*—is commonplace among parties with low levels of institutionalization, since their fluid boundaries and limited autonomy vis-à-vis the external environment make them highly permeable to exogenous influences and ideas. With weak central authority and lax discipline, there are few screening devices to block out external influences or impose doctrinal orthodoxy. Likewise, internal pluralism and subunit autonomy enhance interaction with other

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[1] For example, local and regional committees often entered into electoral alliances with the MIR in the 1960s in violation of the party's official alliance policy which favored the more moderate PCCh; see Pollack and Rosenkranz, p. 60.

[2] According to Pollack and Rosenkranz, pp. 109-110, the ideological diversity of the PSCh congealed into four principal tendencies throughout the 1940-1970 period: (1) a radical Left tendency, which predominated in the internal life of the party; (2) a smaller, doctrinaire Trotskyist faction; (3) a social democratic faction, whose principal leader was Allende; and (4) a moderate or 'pragmatic' tendency which largely eschewed ideological questions.

political forces; they provide multiple points of contact to the external environment and multiple points of entry to external ideas.

Therefore, just as the ideas of Che Guevara and the example of the Cuban Revolution had a profound impact on the PSCh in the 1960s, so did the ideas of Gramsci, Eurocommunism, social democracy, and the Christian Left penetrate the party in the 1970s and 1980s. The fragmentation and dispersion of the PSCh under authoritarian rule and exile after 1973 facilitated this ideological penetration; it not only exposed the party to diverse novel European perspectives, but ensured that there was no central authority to enforce ideological orthodoxy or otherwise block the importation of 'heretical' ideas. Indeed, there existed competing 'centers' both inside and outside of Chile which established their own external contacts and served as vehicles for the importation of different 'models' or ideas into the PSCh. This fragmentation gave the Altamirano sector considerable latitude to introduce innovative beliefs and practices, borrowing explicitly from European perspectives and experiences.

The second mechanism of change—that of *organizational absorption*—suggests that the PSCh was open to new social and political forces as well as new ideas. As previously mentioned, much of the initial impetus for renovation came not from the PSCh but from intellectuals associated with the parties of Chile's Christian Left—MAPU, MAPU-OC, and the *Izquierda Cristiana*. Exiled political leaders and intellectuals from the PSCh engaged in continuous dialogue and debate with their Left Christian cohorts over the Allende experience, Marxist political theory, and the relationship between socialism and democracy. The self-critical exchange of ideas not only influenced the political leadership of the PSCh in exile but also elicited a process of organizational convergence as the Altamirano wing of the PSCh, and later the reunified PSCh, gradually absorbed the former Left Christian parties (as well as Left-Wing members of the Radical Party). This type of absorption was heavily dependent upon the flexible organizational structure and internal pluralism of the PSCh.

The incorporation of new political forces was an impetus for change in the PSCh, as it brought new blood and fresh ideas into the party from sectors with a strong commitment to socioeconomic change but distinct philosophical origins. It reinforced the organizational and ideological pluralism of the PSCh and buttressed the party's professional and intellectual base where the ideas of the renovation were strongest. As such, it shifted the internal balance of forces within the party and demonstrated the dynamism and absorptive capabilities of the renovation process.[1]

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[1] It also, however, provoked resentment from 'traditional' Socialists, especially in the ex-Almeyda sector of the party, who objected to a perceived 'capture' of the party leadership by former *Mapucistas* and Radicals. These resentments surfaced in 1991 when a Socialist deputy

The third mechanism of change is that of *endogenous innovation*—the internal initiation and promotion of new ideas or practices. Endogenous innovation is heavily conditioned by the degree of tolerance or internal political space for debate, dissent, and political advocacy. In a party with highly centralized power, hierarchical patterns of authority, and rigid doctrinal and disciplinary norms, debate is generally circumscribed and concentrated at the top of the organizational hierarchy. Likewise, political innovation tends to originate at the elite level and be accepted or rejected by an inner core of officials—often secretively—before being presented to lower level sectors of the party. In contrast, where the organizational structure permits internal pluralism and subunit autonomy, there are multiple loci and opportunities for debate, dissent, and innovation. Initiatives for change can originate and be promoted at various points within the party and are given the space to develop and compete for acceptance without being suppressed by organizational hierarchies or ideological litmus tests.

This was the case in the PSCh, as the party's factionalism and lack of central authority provided ample space for new political initiatives, especially given the inability of the leadership to establish any sort of coherent control over the fragmented internal and external party apparatus after 1973. Party leaders and sectional committees in exile operated with a high degree of autonomy, borrowing freely from ideas and experiences encountered in their new environments and actively promoting the fundamental changes associated with the process of renovation. Socialist intellectuals and other agents of change were afforded considerable latitude for political debate and self-criticism, and were free to organize a series of conferences in Italy and France which not only diffused the principal ideas of the renovation process but also established the personal networks that laid the foundation for the convergence with the Christian Left and the reorganization of the PSCh around new ideological principles. In the absence of hierarchical authority to suppress dissent and discipline minorities, the impetus for renovation developed in decentralized locations, from Italy, Holland, France, and Spain to Mexico, Venezuela, and research institutes in Chile. It then diffused horizontally through unofficial publications, intellectual networks, organized conferences, and active proselytization. What thus emerged as an elite intellectual dissent developed into an amorphous and decentralized political tendency. This gradually consolidated itself and established hegemony within the 'socialist sphere' by absorbing the former Christian Left into an open partisan culture and taking advantage of a new strategic environment to win over key elements of the PS-Almeyda in the late 1980s.[1]

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from the ex-Almeyda sector, Mario Palestro, publicly challenged the socialist credentials of such prominent party leaders as Ricardo Lagos and Jorge Arrate for their non-PSCh origins.

[1]   The internal pluralism of the PSCh also facilitated change because the principal themes of the renovation process were not altogether new or alien to the party. Although the PSCh formally adopted Leninist organizational principles and advocated an armed struggle/revolutionary line in

The dynamics were very different in the PCCh, where centralized and hierarchical authority inhibited these external influences from penetrating the party and prevented internal factions from developing to initiate change, at least until a series of devastating political defeats at home and abroad caused an ideological crisis to erupt in the late 1980s. If the organizational life of the PSCh was characterized by pluralism and openness, that of the PCCh was marked by relative homogeneity and closure, with an organization that was more insulated from its environment and more deeply inbred in its political subculture. To begin with, the party's organizational discipline and doctrinal rigidity prevented ideological penetration from sources outside the traditional Soviet sphere of influence. Although the PCCh was heavily influenced by Soviet and, increasingly, Cuban and Nicaraguan perspectives, the party was largely closed to non-Leninist ideological influences and remarkably insulated from the intellectual debates over Marxism, socialism, and democracy that so profoundly affected the PSCh in exile. While Chilean socialists and Left Christians were active participants in the European and Latin American debates over the 'crisis of Marxism,' the Chilean communists stood on the sidelines and interacted primarily with their orthodox kin from the Soviet bloc, content to let their 'official' intellectuals condemn the 'heretical' currents swirling within the process of renovation.

Unlike the PSCh, whose formal commitment to Marxism-Leninism was always partial and contentious,[1] that of the PCCh was total and fully socialized within the different levels of the party apparatus, becoming a central and defining characteristic of the party's identity and cultural life. Given the party's doctrinal homogeneity and organizational discipline, there did not exist internal factions to serve as vehicles for the importation of innovative ideas. Likewise, hierarchical control of party subunits limited their autonomy to interact with external forces or borrow from outside perspectives. Indeed, new perspectives were screened out until they had emerged within the

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the late 1960s and 1970s, the party was far from united on such principles and never fully implemented them, whatever its rhetoric. The basic ideas of the renovation process were starkly opposed to the Leninist tendency in the party, but they had deep roots in the party's rich historical tradition of political thought and practice. Indeed, the process of renovation represented a strong line of continuity with the Salvador Allende/Eugenio González wing of Chilean socialism, with its syncretic belief in the harmony of socialist and democratic principles. Although this tendency was on the defensive in the 1960s and early 1970s, it continued to exist within the heterogeneous internal life of the party and was well positioned to make a comeback in the domestic and international political context of the late 1970s and 1980s. Not surprisingly, then, proponents of renovation were quick to portray the Leninist radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s as an aberration, and lay claim to the party's heritage of independent, nonorthodox democratic socialism; see Jorge Arrate, *El socialismo chileno: Rescate y renovación* (Rotterdam, Holland: Ediciones del Instituto para el Nuevo Chile, 1983).

[1]   That is, Marxism-Leninism was always one among several competing tendencies within the fractious PSCh; although it predominated in the internal life of the party in the 1960s and 1970s, it never obtained full acceptance and its relative influence ebbed and flowed in accordance with domestic and international events. In contrast, Marxism-Leninism was an official and defining feature of the PCCh since the party was established in 1922 in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, and adherence to the doctrine was obligatory for all members.

Soviet Union itself under Gorbachev, and even then they were only partially admitted by a PCCh leadership that denied their relevance for the Chilean context.

Second, the organizational closure, ideological homogeneity, and relative insularity of the PCCh prevented it from absorbing external political forces as the PSCh did with the Christian Left. As a highly institutionalized party, the PCCh was clearly demarcated from other political actors, and its doctrinal rigidity and relatively homogeneous, inbred partisan subculture made it resistant to aggregating diverse social or political forces. Although individuals could enter the PCCh from other parties, they could only do so through a process of conversion and complete submission to the party's doctrinal and organizational orthodoxy; unlike the more flexible and pluralistic PSCh, the PCCh could not absorb larger groups that retained elements of their previous identities or any measure of ideological autonomy.

Consequently, as micro-groups from Chile's Christian Left parties, Left-Wing radicals, and even the MIR decided to participate in a larger and more influential party organization in the 1980s, they overwhelmingly opted for the more open, flexible, and heterogeneous PSCh than the more closed and homogeneous PCCh, even though many initially sided with the PCCh on tactical issues. The PCCh successfully incorporated new political actors—particularly shantytown youth—who could be socialized politically within the party's own subculture of rebellion in the 1980s, but found it difficult to absorb political actors originating in alternative partisan subcultures, as the PSCh succeeded in doing.

Finally, the organizational structure and ideological homogeneity of the PCCh provided little political space for endogenous innovation. The bitter defeat of the Allende experiment opened space for internal debate over tactical and strategic issues relating to alliances and the role of military force in politics and eventually encouraged the tactical changes associated with the strategy of popular rebellion. However, in contrast to the PSCh and the Christian Left, whose distinct tendencies publicly debated major issues, the debates in the PCCh were more secretive and encapsulated within the party hierarchy, which rigidly controlled the impetus for tactical innovation. Although the PCCh was badly damaged by repression,[1] its organization did not fragment or lose its central authority, as occurred in the PSCh. Party leadership was temporarily relocated to Moscow during the mid-1970s wave of repression, but the exiled Political Commission collaborated closely with the clandestine apparatus inside Chile, which was reconstructed after 1978 under the leadership of Gladys Marín. Unlike the PSCh, whose internal

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[1] Both the PCCh and the PSCh had their leadership inside Chile 'decapitated' three times between the September 1973 coup and early 1976, with successive Central Committees lost through 'disappearances' or forced exile.

and external branches battled over ideology, political authority, and personality, the PCCh maintained a coherent and unified leadership structure.[1]

Consequently, while debate in the fragmented PSCh and the Christian Left parties quickly touched on fundamental theoretical and ideological tenets of Marxism-Leninism, such issues were off the agenda in the PCCh, where the party hierarchy tolerated a limited debate over how to apply Marxist-Leninist principles but never over their relevance and veracity. On the rare occasions when party members challenged basic ideological principles, the party apparatus blocked them from taking their criticisms to base-level party units or circulating their views within the broader membership. For example, in the late 1970s a small group of leaders from the party youth organization in exile in Western Europe developed sympathies for Eurocommunism and became critical of both the Soviet Union and the PCCh for their 'Stalinist' tendencies. These young dissidents became highly critical of popular rebellion in the early 1980s when they returned to Chile, but they were marginalized by the party apparatus from effective participation and subsequently abandoned the party.[2] Even as party discipline began to fray during the ideological crisis of the early 1990s, dissidents complained that they were effectively blocked from articulating their criticisms before base-level cells.[3] Those who dissented publicly were severely sanctioned for promoting factionalism and floating party disciplinary norms, and were ultimately 'separated' from the ranks of the party.

Consequently, the dissent that existed—prior to the late 1980s—was largely confined to militants who were skeptical of popular rebellion and was almost entirely individual in nature, since the organizational structure discouraged horizontal contact and prohibited the development of identifiable factions. The constraints of clandestine operation reinforced these pre-existing organizational propensities by sharply limiting horizontal contact and open internal debate. It is hardly surprising, then, that the more ideological dissent of the late 1980s and early 1990s led

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[1]   Marín—who had been the party youth leader and a member of Congress under the Allende government—was secretly sent back to Chile in 1978 by the exiled Political Commission to help rebuild the party apparatus. In practice, she took charge of the party's clandestine work as well as the implementation of the popular rebellion strategy in the 1980s, which gave her considerable control over the party's political and military cadres inside Chile. As the party prepared to abandon clandestinity and engage in legal forms of political struggle in 1989-1990, Marín emerged as the most powerful figure in the party, surpassing the older generation of leaders who spent long years in exile such as Luís Corvalán and Volodia Teitelboim. Marín and her cohorts with experience in clandestine political-military organization have been largely responsible for maintaining the party's hard line during the early years of the regime transition.

[2]   Interview with former youth leader Hugo Rivas, Santiago, August 19, 1991.

[3]   Press conference of former Central Committee member Augusto Samaniego, Santiago, June 20, 1990.

internal critics to attack the PCCh's hierarchical control, authoritarian style, and submissive subculture, while demanding a democratic renovation of the party organization.[1]

In summary, the organizational structure of the PCCh screened out innovative or 'heretical' ideas that emanated from external sources while suppressing the emergence of such ideas from within the party itself. Indeed, these two mechanisms of continuity were mutually reinforcing: new ideas could not penetrate through the interstices opened by factional distinctions and internal differentiation was inhibited by the rigid ideological closure to any non-Leninist influences. With the range of debate—and the scope of change—clearly circumscribed, the party responded to its strategic constraints under authoritarian rule with ideological continuity and strategic radicalization. This combination plunged the PCCh into crisis in the late 1980s, when the party's insurrectionary strategy failed to alter the course of Chile's conservative democratic transition and its ideological universe was shaken by the collapse of East European communism.

Organizational Dependence and the Flexibility of International Referents

The effects of the organizational structures of the PSCh and the PCCh were reinforced by differences in their organizational dependence and the flexibility of their international referents. Organizational dependence can take both material and ideological forms. In a context of severe repression and widespread exile, both the PCCh and the PSCh became dependent upon external financial support and political solidarity. However, the two parties faced different opportunities and constraints in the international environment as they explored potential sources of support. Although the PSCh received considerable assistance from East Germany, which hosted the party's External Secretariat in the 1970s and the leadership of the PS-Almeyda in the 1980s, the Altamirano wing established a strong network of political relationships with West European social democratic parties and their affiliated foundations. Indeed, the Chilean exile coincided with a strong push by the Socialist International to develop Latin American affiliates in the mid-1970s; having broken with the more orthodox PS-Almeyda, and with the bulk of its most important leaders based in Western Europe, the PS-Altamirano was well situated to benefit from this social democratic initiative. The opportunities for such political and financial support, along with the

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[1] Interviews by the author with over two dozen base-level party militants suggested that criticisms of the party's enclosed, vertical decision-making patterns were common, as were demands for a more democratic and participatory style of internal politics. Interestingly, even militants who sharply rebuked the 'social democratic' political or strategic orientation of the intellectual dissidents often found sympathy for their criticisms of the party's organizational style. Many radical youth—the backbone of popular rebellion—perceived it as a process of grassroots political protagonism, and demanded the right to be heard as political subjects in the internal life of their party. The internal crisis of the 1990s thus had a number of crosscutting cleavages and some rather unexpected bedfellows.

diffusion of new ideas and experiences, gave added impetus to the currents of renovation within this sector of Chilean socialism.

Given its strict historical alliance with the Soviet bloc, the PCCh did not have such diverse options for international solidarity. In fact, it had little need for them, since the Soviet Union and its allies helped finance and sustain the party's organization both inside Chile and in exile. The travails of dictatorship, however, strengthened the party's long-standing organizational dependence on the Soviet Union, which discouraged any movement toward ideological renovation. The net effect was to reproduce the PCCh's historical lack of ideological autonomy and its singular identification with Soviet bloc international referents.

The lack of ideological autonomy that accompanies doctrinal fealty to a fixed international referent can be a serious impediment to political learning and change. Such dependence locks a party within a particular conceptual frame of reference and discourages the comparative assessments that Bermeo considers essential to cognitive change. In short, it impedes the consideration of alternative interpretations, ideological paradigms, or international experiences, and deprives a party of the 'conceptual' autonomy required to initiate changes of its own accord.[1] As such, any process of change is likely to require the ideological imprimatur of the authoritative external referent. In contrast, a flexible approach to international referents can facilitate change by encouraging ideological debate and promoting the comparative assessment of diverse international experiences. It provides a party with the ideological autonomy to derive insights from different experiences or conceptual frameworks and assess their relevance to the political context in which the party must operate.

Historically, both the PSCh and the PCCh have been heavily influenced by their exposure to international socialist experiences and ideological referents. There have always been important differences, however, in their relative degrees of autonomy, the breadth and diversity of their exposure, and the nature of their international loyalties and identities. Although the PCCh developed from a national process of worker organization, it was deprived of much of its political autonomy after joining the Third International and subscribing to the organizational and ideological dictates of Moscow in the 1920s.[2] The Soviet Union not only provided a 'model' of socialism for the PCCh, thus defining its particular vision of the socialist utopia, but also served as

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[1]   For a discussion of the problem of 'conceptual autonomy,' see José Rodríguez Elizondo, *La crísis de las Izquierdas en América Latina* (Madrid and Carácas: Instituto de Cooperación-Editorial Nueva Sociedad, 1990).

[2]   The PCCh was founded in 1922 when the *Partido Obrero Socialista* (POS), a national, working-class party led by Luís Emilio Recabarren, changed its name in order to conform to Comintern dictates. Following the East European debacle of 1989, the PCCh tried to stress its nationalist credentials by reclaiming the pre-Bolshevik Revolution birth date of 1912, when Recabarren founded the POS in the mining centers of Chile's northern desert.

a source of ideological and strategic authority. The party's early 'class against class' line, its adoption of the Popular Front strategy in the 1930s, and its adherence to the *vía pacífica* from the 1950s to the 1970s all corresponded to Soviet international positions. Although the adoption of the popular rebellion strategy in 1980 reflected the warming of relations with Cuba after the 1973 coup and the powerful impact of the Nicaraguan Revolution, it was also congruent with Soviet interpretations of the Allende experience and Soviet reassessments of the potential for revolutionary struggle in Latin America.[1] Consequently, the appeal of the Nicaraguan Revolution was easily accommodated within the ideological framework of the PCCh, even if it challenged the party's traditional political tactics; indeed, the PCCh's interpretation of the Nicaraguan experience was colored by this ideological framework and by the influences of Cuba and the Soviet Union.[2]

In short, the tactical and strategic shifts of the PCCh invariably corresponded with Soviet positions and stayed within an overarching ideological paradigm that was highly resistant to change, even after the advent of Gorbachev's reforms and the crisis of 'real socialism' in the Soviet bloc. That this paradigm was never seriously questioned in the PCCh until it was already under challenge within the Soviet Union by *perestroika* is perhaps the single greatest indicator of the party's lack of 'conceptual autonomy' vis-à-vis its international referent. The Soviet Union's subsequent abandonment of communism confronted the PCCh with an intractable contradiction between its ideological identities and international loyalties; in opting for ideological continuity, the PCCh made its most serious demonstration of political autonomy but also manifested the ideological impermeability that helped plunged the party into an unprecedented crisis. This rigidity prevented the party from exploring the relevance of alternative ideological sources or political models, while reinforcing the organizational barriers to the penetration of non-Leninist external influences. It thus locked the PCCh within a narrow, exclusive, and uniform frame of reference that discouraged change and adaptation in response to changing domestic conditions. Even the party dissidents who disagreed with popular rebellion limited their criticisms largely to

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[1]   For a leading example of the Soviet interpretation of the Allende experience, see Boris Ponomaryov, "The World Situation and the Revolutionary Process," *World Marxist Review* 17 (6) (June 1974): 3-15. According to Ponomaryov (p. 10), the failure of the Popular Unity experiment demonstrated the "tremendous importance of being prepared to promptly change forms of struggle," as well as the need to develop the "ability to repel the counter-revolutionary violence of the bourgeoisie with revolutionary violence." This interpretation corresponded fully with the PCCh's mid-1970s self-criticism of its *vacío histórico.*

[2]   Like the Cuban experience, the Nicaraguan Revolution demonstrated that a pro-Soviet Communist Party could fail to recognize the development of a revolutionary situation, and be superseded by a new 'vanguard' movement which channels popular discontent in a revolutionary direction. The PCCh thus interpreted the Nicaraguan experience as a demonstration of the need for a unified political-military vanguard capable of integrating different forms of struggle. It also saw Nicaragua as proof that such a vanguard could assert its hegemony over diverse social and political sectors if it demonstrated its political and military power.   See Graco Darién, "Enseñanzas teóricas de la Revolución Nicaraguense," *Araucaria de Chile* 31 (1985): 59-72.

strategic and tactical issues until the crisis erupted in the Soviet bloc itself in the late 1980s. Although the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe eliminated the party's principal international referent, it did not fundamentally alter the ideological identities of the party hierarchy, which declared *perestroika* to be a specifically Soviet experience and proclaimed the primacy of Cuba's orthodox model.[1]

The PSCh, in contrast, has long been noted for its ideological autonomy and the heterogeneity and flexibility of its international referents. From its foundation in 1933, the party was designed to be a nationalist alternative to the PCCh and its international loyalties, with the express purpose of crafting a more critical and autonomous option within Marxism.[2] Along with the party's organizational weakness and factionalism, the absence of a fixed external referent made it highly permeable to diverse international influences; indeed, the PSCh has manifested considerable 'trendiness' in its international identities, ranging from an early attachment to the *latinoamericanismo* of Peru's APRA to Yugoslavian socialism in the 1950s and the Cuban Revolution in the 1960s. The post-1973 period of repression and exile coincided with the 'crisis of Marxism' in West European intellectual circles, placing PSCh political and intellectual leaders in an exile environment that was highly conducive to a critique of orthodoxy and a discovery of Gramsci, Eurocommunism, and social democracy. The party's long-standing autonomy from Soviet ideological orthodoxy facilitated the critique of 'real socialism,' which derived added impetus from the alienating experiences of some Socialist leaders in East European exile.[3] This critique, which thoroughly transformed the Soviet model into a 'negative referent,' became a centerpiece of the renovation process and an essential guidepost for efforts to develop non-statist, democratic concepts of socialism.

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[1]   As stated by Gladys Marín, "I do not believe that we have global referents anymore. In any case, we look with greater sympathy and closeness to what occurs in Latin America. Frankly, for us, what occurs in Cuba interprets our situation much better, because it is Latin American." Interview in *APSI* 358 (August 15-21, 1990): 15.

[2]   It is not surprising, then, that one of the underlying tensions in the 1979 split in the PSCh was the belief in the Altamirano sector that Almeyda's followers were eroding the party's autonomy by trying to make it into a replica of the PCCh, in part by allowing cadres to receive political training in East Belin schools. See the interview with Jorge Arrate in "La crísis en el socialismo chileno," *Chile-América* 54-55 (June-July 1979): 98.

[3]   Altamirano, for example, claims to have been disillusioned upon arriving in East Germany and discovering that it was not the 'paradise' that many Chilean Leftists assumed; in his words, "I was enormously struck by the absence of liberty. It was a coercive society, in which the decisions were made from above and commands passed downward, limiting liberty enormously." See Patricia Politzer, *Altamirano* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Melquíades, 1989): 150. Upon relocating to Western Europe, Altamirano said he dramatically changed his opinion of social democracy, since he "learned other realities" and acquired "new visions of the world" that were "impossible to conceive exclusively from the Latin American perspective" (p. 160).

Therefore, with the division of the PSCh in 1979, one sector continued to look to the Soviet bloc and Central America as positive referents while the other turned to Italy, France, and, increasingly, the post-dictatorship Spain of Felipe González. While the crisis and collapse of the Soviet model in Eastern Europe accelerated its demise as a pole of ideological attraction for the PSCh, the post-1973 political solidarity and financial support of West European governments, social democratic parties, and nongovernmental foundations strengthened the personal ties and political sympathies for new international referents.[1] Although the growing identification with European social democracy faced substantial resistance among party militants who were socialized in a different political tradition,[2] external support strengthened the political and intellectual elites who promoted the renovationist position in the internal struggle for hegemony within Chilean socialism.

Clearly, political and intellectual leaders of the PCCh were exposed to some of these same exile experiences. Although the hierarchy of the party in exile was based in Moscow, many leaders—including prominent future dissidents such as Luís Guastavino, Augusto Samaniego, and José Antonio Leal—spent years of exile in West European and Latin American nations. Operating in a party organization that prohibited factionalism and was highly dependent upon a fixed international referent, however, these elites did not seriously challenge the PCCh's ideological orthodoxy until such challenges had arisen within the Soviet Union itself. Whereas the Socialist diaspora encouraged an immediate insertion into European intellectual debates, with the fragmented party exercising minimal control over the scope and positions of debate, the PCCh's organizational discipline limited debate to a more narrow range of tactical issues until the ideological crisis of the late 1980s could no longer be contained. Consequently, the organizational structure and international ideological identities were mutually reinforcing for both the PCCh and the PSCh; the fixed international referent of the PCCh matched its organizational homogeneity and rigidity, whereas the multiple and fluid referents of the PSCh were consistent with the party's organizational diversity and flexibility.

Conclusion

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[1] See Jorge Arrate and Paulo Hidalgo, *Pasión y razon del socialismo chileno* (Santiago: Las Ediciones del Ornitorrinco, 1989): 97-98.

[2] Indeed, within sectors of the party militancy—especially from the ex-Almeyda wing of the party—there remains considerable opposition to the 'social democratization' of the PSCh, as well as deep resentment toward political and intellectual leaders of the renovation process. The author's interviews with base-level Socialist militants found frequent criticisms of these leaders for having lived abroad during the difficult years of dictatorship, for having 'European' perspectives and 'comfortable' lifestyles that separate them from grassroots sectors, for taking financial assistance from international foundations to support their political and intellectual positions, and for 'renouncing' the historical legacies and principles of the PSCh.

This study suggests that the 'prodemocratic' learning stressed by the democratization literature is highly variable and contingent. As the analysis of the PCCh indicates, certain kinds of organizational characteristics inhibit change by limiting the range of political interaction, screening out innovative ideas, suppressing political debate and pluralism, and narrowing the scope of comparative insights. While the study of the PSCh helps identify organizational characteristics that may be conducive to political learning and adaptation, it also demonstrates that a process of change as profound as that of the 'socialist renovation may be highly contingent upon the existence of a favorable strategic environment to constrain political alternatives and punish or reward actors in accordance with their strategic behavior and ideology. The process of renovation remained a small, fragmented, and largely intellectual tendency within the Chilean Left until it was reinforced by the dramatic change in the strategic context in the late 1980s, and it continues to ignite resistance from a significant sector of Socialist base-level militants.

Analyses of political learning and adaptation need to take account of how organizational characteristics condition patterns of change and continuity and how they differentiate among political actors. Likewise, the impact of changing strategic environments must be recognized; for the concept of political learning to have analytical utility, enduring changes in political beliefs or practices must be distinguished from conjunctural tactical adaptations to a fluid strategic environment. Authoritarian regimes invariably alter the strategic environment by modifying the structure of opportunities and constraints. As such, they routinely reshuffle the alliances and tactics of different political actors. A true measure of political learning thus requires a longitudinal analysis of changes that endure beyond specific conjunctural contexts with unique strategic constraints, such as a democratic transition. Although the striking changes in the PSCh since 1973 should not be minimized, their depth will be difficult to gauge until they are tested in a less favorable strategic environment—for example, a political context that reinforces the competitive rather than cooperative components of the party's uneasy relationship with the Christian Democrats, or one that includes a rebirth of popular mobilization against socioeconomic inequalities or a significant slowdown in the nation's recent economic expansion.

In particular, the adherence of base-level party militants to the process of renovation is likely to remain suspect so long as the PSCh is operating in the cautious context of an elite-pacted democratic transition. The literature on political learning and democratization says little about the impact of elite-initiated changes on more popular actors, or about how contextual variables may condition their acceptance (or rejection) of such changes. Likewise, it says next to nothing about how base-level constituencies may constrain elite initiatives or maneuverability. As we have seen, the post-1986 strategic environment in Chile served to neutralize base-level

proponents of an insurrectionary strategy and open new doors for proponents of the socialist renovation. While a return to an insurrectionary environment is highly unlikely, a resumption of popular mobilization cannot be ruled out as Chile treads the uncertain terrain of political democracy and neoliberal economics. This potentially volatile terrain could place new constraints on Left party elites if it elicits a sudden change in the strategic environment—something the Socialist leadership presently fears, and the Communist hierarchy awaits.