



Waiting for Cincinnatus: the role of Pinochet in post-authoritarian Chile

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ABSTRACT *This article explains the persistent influence of General Augusto Pinochet in Chilean politics. After leaving the presidency in 1990, he managed to fuse his personal position with that not only of the institution of the army but of the armed forces as a whole, making Pinochet and the military almost indistinguishable. By doing so Pinochet sought to equate any attack on him with an attack on the institution. The military, in turn, accepted him as its spokesman and defender. He viewed his role as that of Cincinnatus, an emperor twice called to save ancient Rome. Throughout the 1990s Pinochet represented a serious obstacle to democratisation. With his intimate ties to the military institution, his influence—perhaps even after death—can never be discounted.*

In Chile the transition from military to civilian rule in March 1990 did not erase the presence of the armed forces in political life. The Commander in Chief of the army, General Augusto Pinochet, who had quickly taken control of the military junta installed on 11 September 1973, became the self-proclaimed President of the Republic the following year and remained in that position until he handed the presidential sash to newly elected Patricio Aylwin. Pinochet remained the head of the army, a position granted him for eight more years by laws passed in the last days of the dictatorship. When his retirement from the armed forces finally came to pass on 10 March 1998 Pinochet's national role still did not end. He became a 'senator for life' (*senador vitalicio*) in accord with the 1980 Constitution. Article 45 provided any ex-president who had served for at least six years the right to a lifetime seat in the senate.

Pinochet's presence as army chief had a tremendous impact on civil-military relations in the 1990s, as at times he resorted to shows of force to extract concessions from civilian policy makers and to protect 'his men' from judgment on human rights abuses.¹ After retirement, from his ascension to the senate to his arrest in the UK in October 1998, he remained a highly visible and polarising national figure. His very presence in Chilean politics (even when under house arrest in the UK) created an adversarial atmosphere. Pinochet effectively impeded efforts to establish civilian supremacy of the armed forces, thus representing a major obstacle to the process of democratic consolidation in Chile.

How can we explain this phenomenon of an ex-dictator successfully remaining at the centre of national politics with a position of influence? A point of

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departure is Karen Remmer's concept of neopatrimonialism. In an analysis of the military regime in Chile, she posited that Pinochet had managed to concentrate power in his own hands rather than in the military as an institution. Using the intelligence agency (DINA) and basing career advancement for loyalists on personal relationships allowed him to establish what she terms 'neopatrimonial' relations. As opposed to patrimonialism, which suggests a more backward society, neopatrimonialism is a 'form of patrimonial rule that coexists with a professional military, technocratic administrative staff, and all the other elements of a comparatively modernized and industrialized society'.²

According to Remmer, Pinochet distanced himself from the military institution by reducing the autonomous voice of the officer corps. The Commander in Chief himself would resolve pending issues, purging officers (even in other branches) who opposed his policies. Yet as his presidency drew to a close, Pinochet began changing that strategy, drawing himself closer to the institution and emphasising his leadership qualities, which according to him would preserve the military's integrity in a time of uncertainty.

Nearly 17 years of rule, during which Pinochet far surpassed the average age of a general (normally, generals are compelled to retire after 37 total years of service and Pinochet was first commissioned in 1937), ensured that by the 1980s none of his peers remained in active duty.³ As a result he became a revered figure within the ranks, untouchable in terms of years of duty and dedication to the '*bien común*' (common good). With neopatrimonial rule, Pinochet ensured that he would not fade away after the transition.

The contention of this article is that once out of power, Pinochet used the fruits of these previous efforts to his advantage, managing ultimately to fuse his personal position with that not only of the institution of the army but of the armed forces as a whole, making Pinochet and the military almost indistinguishable. No longer the chief executive, Pinochet lost neopatrimonial control over the air force and navy, yet managed to garner support that provided him with a high level of leverage *vis-à-vis* the government.

Embodying the military institution entailed extolling the virtues of the military regime, publicly protecting military officers from political judgment, and defending the role of the armed forces in a democratic context. By doing so, Pinochet sought to equate any attack on him with an attack on the institution. Such an assault would be met with whatever force or threat of force was necessary to repel it, thus simultaneously protecting his own position and increasing the unity of the military against what it viewed (and continues to view) as the onslaughts of irresponsible and vindictive politicians. The irony of this situation is that Pinochet, whose public statements embody the concept of 'antipolitics', employed considerable political acumen to become one with the institution of the Chilean armed forces.⁴

The general's efforts represented a major obstacle to civilian supremacy. While Commander in Chief, Pinochet pressured the civilian government to change a variety of policies related to the military. These efforts were successful largely because the government was forced to accept the fact that Pinochet's actions and words carried enormous weight. Any endeavor to ignore or repudiate

him would resonate among the officer corps as a whole, the effect of which would therefore have serious repercussions.

In 1988 Pinochet granted an interview to *Le Monde* in which he compared himself to the Roman emperor Cincinnatus, an allusion that would recur in numerous subsequent interviews.⁵ In ancient Rome the senate, when faced with crisis, would periodically grant dictatorial powers to certain individuals who were considered upstanding citizens. Cincinnatus was one such person, who was called from his plough to save the Republic, then quickly returned to his farm. When Rome was attacked again years later, he was sought out and, as an old man, saved the empire once more.

Pinochet's identification with Cincinnatus is especially striking because the population feared the Roman dictator. Livy writes that, after being chosen, Cincinnatus 'was then escorted to his residence through streets lined with great crowds of common folk who, be it said, were by no means pleased to see the new Dictator, as they thought his power excessive and dreaded the way in which he would likely use it'.⁶ Simply put, for Pinochet the concepts of 'duty' and 'obligation' (as he defined them) were more important than popularity.

Metaphor, backed by both statements and actions, left no doubt about Pinochet's attitude. The armed forces had not saved the country and reconstructed its institutions for nothing. If they were put at risk and he was 'called', then he would drop his plough immediately and solve the problem by force. If he believed action was necessary, he would not allow dissenting voices to dissuade him.

Pinochet thus fused himself with the military as an institution, making himself its spokesman and defender. He wanted to ensure that political attacks on him, which he expected once he was no longer president and freer speech was reinstated, would be considered as an attack on the entire institution. In April 1989 he spoke to both high-ranking and low-ranking officers and asked them to support him as he fought what he said were the the governing coalition's (the *Concertación*) attempts to cut the size and funding of the armed forces.

The army's Public Relations Department also issued a statement expressing the high command's concern about comments made by the political opposition against Pinochet, which 'affect the dignity and future situation of His Excellency the President of the Republic and Commander in Chief of the Army ... and are perceived as directed against each and every one of the members of the institution'.⁷ By mid-1989 he asserted that 'I am prepared for everything. My enemies, however, shouldn't forget something: the Army will always protect my back'.⁸

The root of Pinochet's support

The military left power with two fundamental political beliefs. First, that it had saved the nation from the chaos fostered by politicians and Marxists. In this view, military action in 1973 was essential for avoiding both national disintegration and Soviet domination.⁹ Second, it believed it had designed a new political system that would serve to avert any such problems in the future. This system was enshrined in the 1980 constitution.

Pride in their role as saviour of the nation exists among all three military branches and is clear from their respective journals. An editorial in the navy's *Revista de Marina* sums up the sentiment: 'the Armed Forces and Police of Chile together share the satisfaction of a duty fulfilled and that the citizenry appreciate the value of their unyielding commitment to the essential values of nationality.'¹⁰ From that perspective, Pinochet's leadership had been instrumental in guiding the nation away from the destructive and corrupt past for which inept civilians were responsible.

The military also maintains the strong belief that it created a stronger, more effective institutional order. The constitution was written and ratified during the military regime, and what many civilians consider elements of a 'protected' democracy are seen by the military as guarantees of stability. In particular, the armed forces consider the National Security Council a major improvement over the past since it gives the military a voice in issues involving national security.¹¹ In the words of one army intellectual (and active duty general), the constitution provides the military with 'an irreplaceable role in the promotion of national development'.¹²

All three branches share these sentiments, albeit to differing degrees. Not surprisingly, the army has been the most vocal in expressing them. Under Pinochet's direction it quickly dominated the military junta and consequently the country's political development. For this reason it had a tremendous stake in preserving and lauding its achievements. The navy was also very supportive. Historically a conservative institution, it had been instrumental in planning the coup and although its institutional stake was smaller it believed that dismantling the military regime's accomplishments would be a return to political chaos.

The air force's beliefs strayed the furthest. It had played an important role in the coup, especially by bombing the presidential palace. Yet within a few years its Commander in Chief, General Gustavo Leigh, openly mused about the desirability of a transition back to civilian rule. That led to his ouster in 1978, a virtual internal coup that consolidated Pinochet's dominant position. Then during the 1988 plebiscite that initiated the transition, Commander in Chief Fernando Matthei sealed the opposition's victory with a late-night, public recognition that the 'No' vote had won the plebiscite, thereby rejecting another eight years of Pinochet's rule.

Nonetheless, the air force approved of the military regime's transformation of Chilean politics and therefore had no incentive to contradict the stronger statements and actions taken by the navy and army. No less than the other branches, the air force believed the military had saved the country and that it continued to represent the 'moral reserve of the Fatherland'.¹³ Moreover, it agreed wholeheartedly with the idea that politicians were dangerous. As one colonel put it, political parties never tackle any problem that might involve a political cost, so 'they introduce in the soul of the people a sense of frustration and despair that fosters hate and then violence'.¹⁴

Since the army was the most active politically, both Patricio Aylwin (1990–94) and Eduardo Frei (1994–2000), along with their defence ministers, focused much of their energy on establishing civilian supremacy over that branch. Relations with the navy and air force were proper, if not initially amiable. By

and large, policy makers did not believe those branches would cause political conflict. The government's primary problem was assessing the degree to which the other armed forces and national police would support Pinochet and the army, especially in times of political crisis. During the early civil-military conflicts, the Aylwin administration soon realised that, even if the other branches did not actively support the army's actions, they would be silent partners and would not issue any negative judgments. Pinochet's ability to fuse himself to the institution as a whole thereby thwarted government efforts at asserting civilian supremacy over the armed forces.

By the end of 1990 the army had made its views about Pinochet quite clear. Its support was firm and unquestioned. Meanwhile, the general was resisting all civilian initiatives to enact reform or to bring officers to justice in civilian courts. His support within the officer corps lent credence to the threats he periodically made. He stated publicly on more than one occasion that, if the country suffered another crisis like 1973, he would take the same steps to deal with the problem.¹⁵ The overall message could hardly be misinterpreted. Pinochet would oversee the politicians at work while the army protected him.

Military support for Pinochet's personal agenda and his successful fusion of Pinochet, the individual, with Pinochet, the military commander, constituted an essential element in his continued influence in the post-authoritarian era. He was able to achieve this fusion because of his own credibility. He was widely respected by fellow officers (in all branches) and was therefore successful in convincing them that he would vigorously protect them from the machinations of politicians. In turn, when he negotiated with the new administration he could confidently assert that his views were shared by the entire military.

In this effort Pinochet would emit comments that made even the civilian right uneasy. In 1989 he stated, 'The day they touch one of my men, the state of law [*estado de Derecho*] will be over. I have said this one time and I won't repeat it anymore, but know that it will be so.'¹⁶ However, Pinochet's words were aimed more at the military ranks than at civilians—once again, he was sending strong signals that he would be both spokesman and protector.

Civilian opportunities for significant change revolved around prising him apart from the institution, which would have two simultaneous consequences. First, the separation would allow him to be judged and removed without a high level of army backlash. Second, his exit from the army would open the door to bringing in a younger commander in chief who perhaps would be more accommodating. However, attempts during the 1990s to force that separation resulted in serious civil-military conflict.

Government-army conflicts during the Aylwin government

The first major civil-military conflict of the post-authoritarian era took place in December 1990. It was sparked by a congressional investigation into a cheque fraud scheme involving General Pinochet's son, Augusto Pinochet Hiriart. The so-called 'Pinocheques' appeared to offer the perfect mechanism for separating Pinochet from the military institution as a whole, since proof of impropriety would almost certainly leave Pinochet no choice but to resign. The controversy

centred around whether Pinochet's son had benefited financially from insider deals with the army. A congressional commission began to investigate the matter in October 1990.

At the same time, Defence Minister Patricio Rojas was particularly interested in forcing Pinochet's resignation. In a meeting with the general, he sought to achieve that end, with the result of provoking Pinochet. Civil-military dialogue abruptly ended as Pinochet called the army to its barracks, a manoeuvre commonly associated with becoming combat-ready (the so-called 'exercise of security, readiness and coordination', or *ejercicio de seguridad, alistamiento y enlace*).¹⁷ Only a series of behind the scenes discussions between administration officials and senior officers defused the crisis. These meetings included an agreement to shelve the 'Pinocheques' investigation.

Later in President Aylwin's term, the Subsecretary of War (the cabinet officer within the Ministry of Defence who interacts specifically with the army) was slow to process a number of promotions and duty assignments. The army also interpreted other bureaucratic delays as deliberate efforts by the government to harass Pinochet and signal to the army that only with a new commander would conditions improve. Army officers perceived this as an effort to create discontent within the ranks and to put pressure on Pinochet to resign.

The army distrusted Defence Minister Rojas. In any case, the ministry had been viewed historically as an administrative channel, not a place where defence and security policy was decided. The Ministry of Defence had been irrelevant to policy making during the military regime, and Pinochet did not feel that he needed a bureaucratic intermediary between himself and the president. In addition, Rojas was often the most vocal cabinet member within the Aylwin administration arguing for Pinochet's retirement. Pinochet, along with his Advisory Committee, grew increasingly disgusted. Officers did not distinguish between slights against the army and against Pinochet.

In the midst of this discontent, the government's newspaper (*La Nación*) reported that the cheque case was being reopened. The result was the '*boinazo*', as soldiers wearing berets (*boinas*) came into the street on Santiago's main thoroughfare, ostensibly to protect the meeting of generals going on inside army headquarters, the Edificio de las Fuerzas Armadas.¹⁸ Their presence left no doubt that the army would protect the general's honour by force if necessary. Once more, prolonged discussions between officers and selected administration officials produced a solution, which in this case included the formation of a working group intended to address the military's concern about its treatment. The *boinazo* occurred with Aylwin on a visit to Europe, embarrassing the president on a tour that celebrated the restoration of democracy in Chile. Pinochet and his advisors could not have misunderstood the seriousness of this slap in Aylwin's face, while the civilian government could not misunderstand the message: an attack on Pinochet would mobilise the armed forces in his support.

Neither the navy nor the air force indicated that their support for Pinochet as army commander in chief had changed during these conflicts, or as a result of them. No matter their opinion regarding the tactics Pinochet employed, neither branch advocated allowing the civilian government to relieve him of his post. The 1980 constitution had taken the right to fire commanders in chief away from

presidents in order to remove 'politics' from that decision as much as possible. Furthermore, such a concession could eventually have repercussions within their own institutions, specifically a loss of institutional autonomy, thus leaving the respective commanders in chief united in opposition to granting the government that prerogative.

When Aylwin left office in 1994 civil-military relations were tense. Friction had become the norm. The mere presence of a former dictator as army commander made that situation virtually unavoidable, but the government's efforts to force Pinochet's retirement caused significant backlash. Furthermore, the army's refusal to channel civil-military relations through the Ministry of Defence gave Pinochet more leverage as he advanced the cause of his followers within the ranks.

Attempts to 'normalise' relations: the Frei government

President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle represented a notable change from the anti-Pinochet rhetoric of the Aylwin government. Although he never criticised Aylwin or his policies, Frei did not publicly question whether or not Pinochet should remain as commander in chief. The issue of human rights was de-emphasised and in general his strategy was to accept that Pinochet had a part to play in the evolution of post-authoritarian civil-military relations. In fact, during civil-military crises President Frei sought to quieten the more vocally anti-Pinochet members of the *Concertación*, thereby ratcheting down the civil-military rhetoric. These efforts were largely unsuccessful, since too many members of congress and society hoped to bring Pinochet to justice in some manner or at least to prevent his social impunity if criminal sanction could not be achieved.

The first civil-military crisis of the Frei administration occurred when the Supreme Court ruled against retired General (and former intelligence chief) Manuel Contreras in 1995 for the murder of Orlando Letelier in Washington, DC. Letelier was a former ambassador to the USA during the Allende administration. Contreras spent months in a naval hospital, complaining of a hernia problem and refusing to accede to the civilian court order for his detention, finally emerging and entering prison after Pinochet extracted numerous concessions from the government, including a pay raise. Yet even Contreras' movements were meant to remind civilians of the military's power, as soldiers came to collect him in an armed helicopter in a public show of force.

In the midst of the Contreras crisis Frei called for national reconciliation as the controversy threatened to harden the rightist opposition's response to any bills put forth by the government. He also assured the army—which had been protesting publicly in solidarity—that the government would not make the pursuit of further cases a priority. The agreement included the cases against Pinochet himself, which Frei ended by presidential decree.

The mere fact that Contreras eventually went, against his will, to live in a jail cell was an important landmark for the civilian judicial system. Nonetheless, once again Pinochet demonstrated his ability to extract benefits for the military. Even as Pinochet's term as Commander in Chief grew short, his support had not

waned. At the same time, despite Frei's efforts to downplay civil-military discord, he could not restrain members of his own party from launching a constitutional accusation against Pinochet in January 1998. Such an accusation, which is similar to impeachment, has many precedents and deep historical roots in Chile.¹⁹

The accusation was a final endeavour to separate him from the military institution, to judge him personally without implicating the entire officer corps. Such efforts had proved futile in the past and, especially in the case of the '*ejercicio de enlace*,' brought the armed forces behind Pinochet in support. The accusation was carefully constructed so that it clearly impugned Pinochet alone and did not seek to cast doubt on the integrity of the armed forces as a whole.

Its first section asserted that 'it is necessary to state precisely that we are not accusing the Army, but rather one of its retired generals. The facts that constitute the grounds of the accusation that we attribute are personal; they were committed by the accused, not by the institution that he commanded ... [I]n the same manner that to accuse a Minister of State is not to accuse the entire government, to accuse a general is not to accuse the institution to which he belonged.'²⁰ In this manner, its authors hoped that the armed forces would allow it to go forward.

In a major sign of army discontent, as the congressional hearings progressed, the Army Corps of Generals announced that they had proclaimed Pinochet to be Commander in Chief '*Benemérito*'. To increase the impact of the decision, the army did not inform the Ministry of Defence, but rather leaked it to the CNN International TV station shortly before General Villaroel made the announcement speech.²¹

The new title meant that, although Pinochet would be a senator for life after retiring as army commander, in the eyes of the army he would always be seen as Commander in Chief. The government summoned constitutional scholars to determine the juridical content of the new title, and concluded that it was purely honorary. It was a term dating back to the Middle Ages, and neither the 1980 constitution nor the organic laws of the armed forces referred to it.²² The only reference to be found was in the 1823 constitution, where citizens could be granted the title '*patriota benemérito en grado heroico*' to recognise their contributions to the nation, but it did not provide those citizens with any special privileges or immunities.

In sum, even though Pinochet was retiring from the army, the institution still supported him fully. The army's support was made as explicit as possible, with a senior general stating that the army's intention was 'to show in this way the obligation of gratitude, backing, and support forever'.²³ The constitutional accusation's attempt to separate him from the ranks was not succeeding. In fact, the army's primary reaction was to reaffirm its close identification with the retired general. The institution would not accept what it believed to be a smear campaign against its leader.

Congressional debate on the matter included reference to Pinochet's self-proclaimed role as the Chilean Cincinnatus. Socialist Camilo Escalona referred to the 'deteriorating caudillo' and mocked Pinochet's association with the Roman emperor: 'Nothing in Pinochet's life compares with that [Roman]

example. If one dug deeply into Roman history with rigor, one would associate him with another figure. With respect to that figure, don Augusto is a clone as perfect as Dolly, the cloned sheep. I refer to Caligula ...'²⁴ This enraged the RN and UDI party members to the point where they left the chamber in the middle of the discussion.

Ultimately, the accusation failed. Former president Aylwin did not support it and several former cabinet ministers actively lobbied against passage, particularly since it would represent a negative judgment on the administration's civil-military policies. The debate created schisms within the *Concertación* and led spokespersons for the right to declare that Frei was so ineffective that he could not control his own party.²⁵

Events during the 1990s, capped by the unsuccessful constitutional accusation, demonstrated that Pinochet could not easily be judged within Chile. Given institutional constraints, public opinion and political alignments, his protected status in Chilean politics appeared assured. He was 82 when the accusation was voted down, and there was every reason to believe that he would end his long life in Chile as a *senador vitalicio*.

Pinochet's arrest and its effects

The term '*benemérito*' showed clearly that the army considered Pinochet its permanent leader, even when he was no longer an active officer. When he was arrested on 16 October 1998 in the UK on the orders of Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzón, the army responded immediately with a public statement. It affirmed that General Pinochet maintained the 'permanent support and solidarity of the Institution' and that the situation 'constitutes an unusual and unacceptable fact for the members of the Institution'.²⁶ Retired General Alejandro Medina, who had played the role of unofficial army spokesman for a decade, remarked that 'if this keeps up, victims will start falling on all sides'.²⁷

The Chilean senate responded with a statement protesting at the actions of the British government.²⁸ Meanwhile, in the Chamber of Deputies the two parties of the right (UDI and also the centre-right Renovación Nacional) left the chamber to register their protest against the 'kidnapping' of a fellow congressional member.²⁹ Even the Chilean public showed concern about the arrest, as a plurality (42%) believed that the arrest divided Chileans. Only 35% of respondents favoured the British detainment of the general.³⁰ The military's response, therefore, was not being taken in a political vacuum. Many Chileans shared the armed forces' belief that their leader was being treated improperly, and that the British decision offended Chilean honour.

The Frei administration made public its opposition to the arrest and possibility of extradition as well, stating that the decision damaged Chilean sovereignty.³¹ Frei found himself again in the middle of a crossfire not of his own making. He had been much more careful than Aylwin to cultivate a positive working relationship with the armed forces, which had culminated in the lengthy debate and split voting on the impeachment issue.

The Frei government had not pursued Aylwin's strategy of seeking to separate Pinochet from the institution. After the arrest it continued to call for his release.

This stance was harshly criticised by the left as once again caving in to military pressure. Sociologist Tomás Moulian described the government's reaction as 'knee-jerk', asserting that it was 'repeating the same pattern of fearful behavior that marked the administration of Patricio Aylwin when it faced saber-rattling from the army'.³² Yet Frei was criticised from the right as well for failing to apply sufficient political pressure to the British government.

The government's inability to secure Pinochet's release put General Izurieta in a difficult position. Already, Pinochet's immense shadow represented a challenge to his leadership and to the army's relationship with the Frei administration. The arrest forced him into a confrontational position that also necessitated his continued vocal support of Pinochet.

Izurieta assured politicians and the ranks alike that he would not rest until Pinochet was brought back to Chile. As the British courts and House of Lords affirmed the extradition in the face of appeals, the army explicitly repeated its belief that Pinochet was a national hero because he had saved the country:

The Chilean army reiterates its support for its ex-Commander in Chief as well as the values and principles that the military government maintained; in that historic period, the citizens and armed forces established a new institutionality. They created the necessary conditions for sustainable development and they recovered democracy for Chile, after the worst crisis of its history.³³

The navy followed suit, affirming its 'fraternal support' for the army as well as its absolute support for the military government, 'whose gigantic work of national recuperation cannot be tarnished by a thousand lies'.³⁴ Finally, the Commander in Chief of the Air Force stated that the democratic transition 'is being threatened by a climate of division similar to that which we lived through in that sad phase of our national history'.³⁵

To make certain that such views did not escape anyone, members of the rightist parties, particularly from UDI, spoke for the army as well.³⁶ In April 1999 Izurieta visited Pinochet in London, and a UDI senator indicated that the visit 'reaffirms very clearly that the institution gives its full plain support to the general'.³⁷ As the military had done, the senator continued to note the importance of the military's intervention in the political system, stating that Izurieta's trip was 'a reaffirmation almost twenty-six years later of what occurred then'.³⁸

Pinochet's return to Chile in March 2000 reaffirmed the army's position. To the government's chagrin, he was received with a public welcome. General Izurieta issued a statement through the army's press office, affirming that 'the institution will continue lending its permanent support and solidarity to Captain General Augusto Pinochet...'.³⁹ Neither arrest nor exile diminished the institution's view of the general.

As he returned, political activists were already initiating legal efforts to strip him of his senatorial immunity (*fuero*). The armed forces, both active and retired, immediately closed ranks. The Commander in Chief of the Navy remarked that there was 'disquiet' (*inquietud*) within the ranks of each branch as a result of the *desafuero* process.⁴⁰ In May 2000 the commanders in chief of every branch (including the national police) had a public meeting in a Santiago restaurant to demonstrate their unity regarding Pinochet's fate, the court cases

involving other officers, and the nascent discussions of the civil–military roundtable (*mesa de diálogo*).⁴¹ They left no doubt about their continued firm support for the ‘*benemérito*’.

Conclusion

One of the ways in which we can appreciate the degree of Pinochet’s influence in post-authoritarian Chile comes in the form of language. A new verb has come into being: ‘pinochetizar’ means ‘to make Pinochet an issue’.⁴² Even during the dictatorship the general’s name had international legal repercussions. In 1978 an Italian policeman was sanctioned for having referred to several fellow officers as ‘Pinochets’. The tribunal deemed that the term ‘has an element of identification and at the same time an injurious label; it indicates not only that one is the head of an organization, but also that the government of that organization adopts methods of an authoritarian and repressive nature’.⁴³

Pinochet became more than a dictator. He remains a phenomenon, a larger-than-life figure who embodies for different groups the best and worst of humanity. Whether monster or saviour, he has persevered as a central figure in Chilean politics and even international relations. His name alone conjures up images of abuse, honour, betrayal, courage, repression and leadership.

Pinochet has cultivated an intensely loyal following. His neopatrimonial control over the military government, plus nearly a decade of acting as *de facto* military protector and spokesman, put him in a unique and symbolic position. For the armed forces negative judgment on the man equates to the general defamation of their historic role in saving the Fatherland.

The international actions taken against Pinochet certainly complicated Chilean civil–military relations.⁴⁴ His fusion with the military institution meant that the effects of his case were felt deeply within the ranks. For the armed forces, Pinochet represents the saviour of the country, the officer who took a stand to pull Chile out of socialist chaos. From the military’s perspective he ‘exalts the noble military tradition and without doubt will serve as an example to the soldiers of the future’.⁴⁵

Just before he was arrested, Pinochet noted that, ‘Lamentably, almost everyone in the world today is a Marxist—even if they don’t know it themselves. They continue to have Marxist ideas.’⁴⁶ For Pinochet the military’s presence in politics remains crucial as a bulwark against socialist backsliding. He and his military disciples have not wavered in these beliefs. For them General Pinochet deserves praise, not sanction. His detention has solidified his exalted position and further convinced his supporters that he is being judged unfairly. In a public letter a month after his arrest, he wrote that ‘those who promoted and preached to our people the sinister ideology of Marxist socialism are those who today act as my judges’.⁴⁷

The Chilean senate further advanced these ideas. According to designated Senator (and former Vice Commander in Chief) Julio Canessa, the calls for Pinochet’s extradition ‘come from the political sector that in the past also opted to favor an internationalist ideology and a foreign power—“Big Brother”—to the detriment of Chile’s general interest and the peace and well-being of its

population'.⁴⁸ For the military and the right, his arrest reaffirmed the belief that Pinochet was a great leader and that his opponents were bitter Marxists lashing out in frustration at their ideological defeat.

Pinochet's success in fostering these ideas means that his presence and words will continue to resonate throughout the military institution. As a Chilean historian has noted, Pinochet is fundamentally a *survivor* and therefore the country continues to revolve around him to a certain degree.⁴⁹ Now well over the octogenarian mark, Cincinnatus will probably not leave his plough again, but with his intimate ties to the military institution, his influence—perhaps even after death—can never be discounted. His successor certainly echoes many of the sentiments that Pinochet has iterated so many times. In a speech to the Academy of Military History in late 1999, General Izurieta excoriated those who facilitated Pinochet's detention and asserted that 'we have lost our confidence in the juridical path as an alternative solution'.⁵⁰ Given his advanced age and health problems, Chile might be waiting for Godot rather than a Roman emperor, but with his stature within the military, the legacy and memory of the Chilean Cincinnatus will not soon diminish.

Notes

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¹ For an extensive analysis of Chilean civil—military relations, see G Weeks, 'The Long Road to Civilian Supremacy Over the Military: Chile, 1988–1998'. PhD dissertation University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1999.

² K Remmer, 'Neopatrimonialism: the politics of military rule in Chile', *Comparative Politics*, 21(2), 1989, p 165. Hartlyn offers a different definition of neopatrimonialism, especially with regard to the 'blurring of public and private interests and purposes within the administration'. J Hartlyn, *The Struggle for Democratic Politics in the Dominican Republic*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998, p 14. Without engaging in lengthy terminological debate, for the purposes of this article the key definitional aspect is 'the centralization of power in the hands of the ruler who seeks to reduce the autonomy of his followers by generating ties of loyalty and dependence, commonly through complex patron–client linkages' (*ibid*).

³ See G Arriagada, *Pinochet: The Politics of Power*, Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1988, esp ch 14, for a discussion of Pinochet's manipulation of promotions during the dictatorship. For example, by 1984 only two generals out of a total of 50 were commissioned within 10 years of Pinochet.

⁴ For a discussion of the Latin American military's antipolitical beliefs, see B Loveman & T Davies, Jr, 'Military antipolitics and the Latin American tradition' in Loveman & Davies (eds), *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America*, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997. 'One widely held assumption of Latin American military officers, and one also shared by many conservative civilian groups, was that "politics" was largely responsible for the poverty, instability, and economic backwardness of their nations' (pp 4–5).

⁵ For example, see 'Qué trama el general?', *Hoy*, 9–15 January 1988.

⁶ See Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, London: Penguin Books, 1960, p 197.

⁷ 'A quién apuntaló el Ejército', *Hoy*, 17–23 April 1989.

⁸ 'Me iré al cielo', *Hoy*, 10–16 July 1989.

⁹ There are countless examples of this attitude. A former Army Vice Commander in Chief offers the following assessment of the military regime: 'Its results can be synthesized into the motto "mission accomplished!" Overcoming many difficulties, *la patria* was restored. The people, shackled by narrow ideological conceptions, were returned their liberty.' J Canessa & F Balart, *Pinochet y la restauración del consenso nacional*, Santiago: Geniart, 1998, p 372.

¹⁰ Editorial, 'Una Patria libre y próspera', *Revista de Marina*, 106(793), 1989, p 593.

- ¹¹ It is composed of four civilians, including the president, and the Commanders in Chief of the three branches as well as the National Police. Since it can be convoked by any two members the military can force a meeting even if civilians oppose it.
- ¹² C Molina, 'Las Fuerzas Armadas y su papel en la sociedad', *Memorial del Ejército de Chile*, 439, 1992, p 4.
- ¹³ J Fritz, 'El mando, arte profesional del oficial', *Minerva*, XI(31), 1993, p 24.
- ¹⁴ C Romero, 'Trilogía: subversión, terrorismo y drogas en Iberoamérica', *Minerva*, VII(19), 1989, p 46.
- ¹⁵ 'General Pinochet dijo que en situación similar al año 73 actuaría de la misma forma', *El Mercurio*, 12 September 1990.
- ¹⁶ 'Qué hay detrás de las amenazas', *Hoy* 23–29 October 1989.
- ¹⁷ For a discussion of the 'ejercicio de enlace' as well as the military's discourse, see C Fuentes, *El discurso militar en la transición chilena*, Santiago: Nueva Serie FLACSO, 1996.
- ¹⁸ For a narrative of the events surrounding the 'boinazo', see R Otano, *Crónica de la transición*, Santiago: Planeta, 1995, pp 306–320.
- ¹⁹ For a historical survey of the use of the constitutional accusation in Chilean politics, see B Loveman & E Lira, *Las acusaciones constitucionales en Chile, Una perspectiva histórica*, Santiago: LOM-FLACSO, 2000.
- ²⁰ 'Texto completo: acusación constitucional en contra de Augusto Pinochet Ugarte', *La Hora*, 17 March 1998.
- ²¹ See 'La recta final', *Qué Pasa*, 14 March 1998. Roughly translated, the term means 'emeritus'.
- ²² 'From the very heart of the Spanish Middle Ages there had been derived the profound conviction that the conquistador who had rendered signal service, the *benemérito*, especially the one who had served a *su costa y minción*, without placing any financial burden on the king, had a prescriptive right to a reward in the lands he had conquered.' Quoted in M Góngora, *Studies in the Colonial History of Spanish America*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p 21.
- ²³ 'Pinochet, comandante benemérito del Ejército', *La Epoca*, 7 March 1998.
- ²⁴ Cámara de Diputados, *Boletín de Sesiones*, Sesión 26, 14 January 1998.
- ²⁵ 'Derecha: DC "le quitó el piso" a Frei', *La Epoca*, 11 March 1998.
- ²⁶ *Comunicado oficial del Ejército de Chile*, Ejército de Chile, Comandancia en Jefe, Departamento Comunicacional, 17 October 1998.
- ²⁷ Quoted in L Salinas, *The London Clinic*, Santiago: Ediciones Lom, 1999, p 87.
- ²⁸ Senado de Chile, Legislatura Extraordinaria 339, Sesión 2, 20 October 1998.
- ²⁹ Cámara de Diputados de Chile, Legislatura Extraordinaria 341, Sesión 7, 20 October 1998.
- ³⁰ 'De amor y de odio', *Qué Pasa*, 26 October–2 November 1998. In addition, 39% labelled themselves as Pinochet supporters, versus only 3% who placed themselves in the opposition.
- ³¹ For a discussion of the arrest, see G Weeks, 'Autumn of the general: Pinochet and the search for justice in Chile', *Hemisphere*, 9(2), 2000, pp 6–8.
- ³² T Moulian, 'The arrest and its aftermath', *NACLA Report on the Americas*, XXXII(6), 1999, p 15.
- ³³ 'Declaración oficial del Ejército de Chile', Ejército de Chile, Comandancia en Jefe, Departamento Comunicacional, 9 December 1998.
- ³⁴ *Comunicado Oficial de Prensa*, Servicio de Relaciones Públicas de la Armada de Chile, 10 December 1998.
- ³⁵ 'Difícil período de Rojas Vender', *La Tercera*, 30 July 1999.
- ³⁶ With regard to UDI making pronouncements on behalf of the army, Garretón notes that the Pinochet case made evident that 'the political right is nothing other than the faithful expression of Pinochetism and that all ideas, projects or positions within it are subordinate to this essential truth'. M Garretón, 'Chile 1997–1998: the revenge of incomplete democratization', *International Affairs*, 75(2), 1999, p 266.
- ³⁷ 'Urenda: visita de Izurieta a Pinochet demuestra apoyo del Ejército', *La Tercera*, 20 April 1999.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ *Comunicado oficial del Ejército de Chile*, Ejército de Chile, Comandancia en Jefe, Departamento Comunicacional, 3 March 2000.
- ⁴⁰ 'FF.AA. manifiestan inquietud al interior de sus filas por proceso de desafuero de Pinochet', *La Tercera*, 27 April 2000.
- ⁴¹ 'Lagos molesto por reunión de jefes militares', *La Tercera*, 16 May 2000.
- ⁴² For example, see 'Se Pinochetizó La Cumbre', *La Hora*, 15 November 1999; 'Se Pinochetizó la elección', *La Hora*, 12 January 2000.
- ⁴³ Quoted in P Azócar, *Pinochet: Epitafio para un tirano*, Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1999, pp 202–203.
- ⁴⁴ Although they are beyond the scope of this paper, other issues have also entered into the civil-military equation. The Chilean courts have ruled that a 'disappeared' person who cannot be ruled deceased does not fall under the 1978 amnesty, meaning that officers are being ordered to stand trial. For example, see 'Señales para un amnistio', *Qué Pasa* 21–28 June 1999. In addition, Defence Minister Edmundundo Pérez Yoma convoked a 'roundtable dialogue' (*mesa de diálogo*) to bring the military and various civilian experts together to discuss pending human rights issues. On the latter, see for example 'Pérez Yoma satisfecho con nueva sesión', *La Tercera*, 5 December 1999.

⁴⁵ Canessa & Balart, *Pinochet y la restauración del consenso nacional*, p 381.

⁴⁶ J Anderson, 'Profile: the dictator', *The New Yorker*, 19 October 1998, p 44.

⁴⁷ 'La carta que envió Pinochet', *La Tercera*, 11 December 1998. Even conservatives in the USA agreed with this statement. A *Wall Street Journal* editorial called the case a 'personal vendetta' and noted that one of the Spanish lawyers working for Judge Garzón was Joan Garcés, who had been an advisor to Salvador Allende. 'Prosecution or persecution?', *Wall Street Journal*, 19 April 1999.

⁴⁸ Senado de Chile, *Legislatura 339 Extraordinaria*, Sesión 11, 15 December 1998.

⁴⁹ A Jocelyn-Holt, *El Chile perplejo*, Santiago: Planeta/Ariel, 1998, p 319.

⁵⁰ 'Discurso de agradecimiento del Comandante en Jefe del Ejército, Teniente General Ricardo Izurieta Caffarena, con motivo del homenaje por parte de la Academia de Historia Militar', *Comunicado de Prensa, Ejército de Chile*, 9 November 1999.

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