The Acquisition, Consolidation and Legitimation of Military Power: The Case of Pinochet

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Abstract. A military coup in Chile in 1976 brought an end to a long-standing constitutional tradition. General Pinochet came to power, and his dictatorship had a long and profound impact on Chile. Current research has analyzed Pinochet's regime mainly from a macro perspective. Based on the literature review, this paper will use the theories of Schmitt, Machiavelli, and Weber to fill the research gap from a political perspective and explore the ways in which Pinochet acquired power, consolidated power, and ensured the legitimacy of his regime. While the theories of the three political philosophers can provide support for the Pinochet regime, the flaws in the theories promote further reflection on these lessons, thus helping Chile to better understand the past and look toward the future.

Keywords: Pinochet Regime; Political Philosophy; Legitimation.

1. Introduction

Pinochet's military coup ended Chile's long-standing democratic tradition and was supported by parts of the country's population. Even more, he gained a wave of political supporters after becoming president. Therefore, the study of the way Pinochet acquired and consolidated power and the basis of regime legitimacy is of practical value because authoritarian politics has had a profound impact on Chile's political, economic and social development, creating obstacles to the improvement and deepening of the democratic model by elected governments. For this reason, the interpretation of the past contributes to the understanding of the factor situation of current political developments.

Bawden and Arriagada consider the reasons for the acquisition of power from a military perspective, arguing that military officers played a de facto role in the evolution of the regime. In addition, civilian leaders have a history of using armed force to resolve political unrest [1,2]. Spooner, Constable and other scholars reveal the real changes in the military, whose excellence was gradually distorted under Pinochet's control as a guarantee of its acquisition and consolidation of power in Chile [3,4].

Huneeus and Blake focus on the relationship between the military government and national development, analyzing how Pinochet consolidated his regime. Political and social problems led to a military coup and the emergence of a dictatorship that forced the people into submission through intimidation and violence and continued to be characterized by political coercion. But on the other hand, it also promoted economic freedom. This shaped Chile with two opposing faces [5,6].

Barros explores the nature of Pinochet's absolute power and reflects on the legitimacy and durability of the dictatorship. He points out that the Constitution of 1980, which was created by the military government, effectively bound the authoritarian regime. Thus, multiple subjects can limit an undemocratic system of power [7].

Most scholars have studied the Pinochet regime in macro terms from political, economic, and military perspectives, and few have understood it in terms of political theory. Based on the literature review, this paper will highlight the main features of the theories of Schmitt, Machiavelli and Weber, return to the essence of politics, and better understand the history of the period.

First, the paper analyzes the rivalry and games between Chilean conservatives and communists through the decisive perspective of friend-enemy relations. Second, based on Machiavelli's political and ethical views, it explores the nature of power and analyzes how Pinochet made a choice between morality and power in order to consolidate domination. Finally, the paper applies Weber's viewpoint

to consider the basis of the government operation, that is, the legitimacy, and analyzes whether dictatorial regimes had gained the general approval of the governed.

In the context of the current Chilean reality, Pinochet's free-market reforms are tearing apart the social fabric of Chile, exacerbating inequalities in areas such as pensions and education to the point of violent clashes in 2019. Moreover, while the Carabiniers of Chile is now a respected institution, but its positive image stems from the fact that the population's fear of it is not respect for it [8]. Therefore, only by sorting out the source of these problems and understanding how they developed can we better address livelihood issues and build good political-military relations.

2. Analysis of the Pinochet regime

2.1 The means of seizing power: Based on Schmidt's perspective

First, this paper will analyze the process of Pinochet's seizure of power using Schmitt's view of enemies and friends. In Schmitt's opinion, the distinction between friend and enemy implies that the conflict in the sense of survival reaches a certain intensity, and the antagonism between the two sides is more acute. Looking at the Chilean military coup of 1973 from this perspective, the military, represented by Pinochet, saw the communists, represented by Allende, as enemies, which, in the former's view, was a division between friend and enemy made in a time of national emergency, as the communists threatened the sovereignty of the country's integrity. The armed forces agreed that Marxism had led to the collapse of liberal democracy in Chile, and their priority was to remove the Marxists from civic life and stabilize the economy.

Specifically, the military coup expressed upper-middle-class concerns about the ambitions of the working class. The enemy exists when the former is confronted with a collective similar to the latter. Originally, Pinochet and other generals refused to support illegal preemptive action because it was detrimental to their professional training and constitutional consciousness. But the situation became complicated during Allende's three years in power, when land expropriation, economic disruption, and the government's response to these challenges brought the military together and reinforced a consensus that Allende threatened the integrity of the military and the homeland itself. Thus, the Chilean military, ideologically overcome by their irrational "anti-Marxism", would stop at nothing to carry out a messianic, anti-democratic and anti-people coup [9].

After Pinochet acquired power, the scope of the enemy changed. As Schmitt said, the difference between friend and enemy is not static, and being a friend now does not mean being a friend forever. For example, Bonilla and Augusto Lutz, who had helped Pinochet stage the military coup, opposed Pinochet becoming president of the republic, saying that such a title would negatively affect Chile's international public opinion and the government's legitimacy at home. In response, Pinochet reshuffled his cabinet. He transferred Bonilla from the Interior Ministry to the Defense Ministry, which had little influence in the military regime, sent Lutz to Punta Arenas, 2,000 miles south of the capital, and appointed a trusted ally, General César Benavides, to the Interior Ministry. On top of that, Pinochet ordered the murder of his predecessor, General Carlos Prats, sending a clear political message to soldiers, dissidents and exiles: no one is infallible, not even the former army commander-in-chief. Soon, his personal power was centralized and anyone who tried to cause trouble was punished.

Indeed, Schmidt has been criticized for promoting the concept of the "enemy", which some scholars argue elevates the contingent determinants of hostility to the primary purpose of political unity [10]. Obviously, Pinochet's view of the Communists as enemies was not the only reason for the coup, and the real reason needs to be seen in the context of other theories and circumstances. Moreover, the enemy-friend relationship denies "quiet politics" and includes only "strong politics" [11]. As such, it has limitations and can only explain intense, conflictual, hostile, victory-seeking hot politics like that of the Pinochet period.

2.2 The means of consolidating power: Based on Machiavelli's perspective

Second, this paper will investigate Pinochet's way of consolidating his domination through the lens of Machiavellian political and ethical views. Starting with Socrates, many political thinkers have approached the rationality of power from a moral perspective, viewing morality as the basis of the state's political power and the goodness of ethical concepts as the meaning of domination. However, Machiavelli realizes early on the separation of facts and values, he thinks that means are only technical issues that are outside the scope of morality and have only instrumental significance, which means that it is only necessary to consider whether the means achieve the desired end and whether they are justified or moral. If the politician is bent on pursuing the purely good, then this goal may be deviated and compromised. Politicians who believe in the supreme good can themselves become hypocritical, not fully aware of the task they should undertake, and indulge in a kind of romantic moral exuberance. Therefore, in the political sphere, the purpose is paramount.

Specifically, at the level of the monarch, Machiavelli argues that the monarch, as the ruler of the state, is charged with the noble political task of preserving the state, and must always plan for the worst for people and things, so he cannot simply act morally according to the moral standards of ordinary people, but should have a broader moral scale and moral freedom. Because in political relationships, where acting is often unpredictable and there is a wide gap between how people actually do and how they should do, traditional morality does not always work. If a person gives up what he wants to do for what he should do, then he is not protecting himself, but destroying himself. Like Pinochet, when he came to power, His priority was not to make himself a virtuous man, but to preserve his regime and his country, so he used brutal methods to suppress all dissenters for the political purpose of maintaining the regime and the state. According to Rettig Report, 2,125 people were killed, 1,102 disappeared, some 28,459 others were tortured, and hundreds of thousands fled the country [12]. At the same time, DINA and the intelligence services of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia carried out Operation Condor to assassinate left-wing people in South American countries.

For Machiavelli and Pinochet, both skill and fortune are highly uncertain, and force is the most reliable means of preserving power and the state. Therefore, from the perspective of the value of political purpose, the essence of achieving the political end of preserving the regime and state is the monarch's achievement of the acquisition of power.

More than morality itself, Machiavelli thinks it is more important to gain a reputation for being moral. Because people always prefer to judge by their eyes rather than by the truth, most of them look only at the results. So as long as the monarch achieves the purpose of enriching the country and satisfying the interests of the people, he fulfills his moral mission. No matter what means he takes, they would be called by the people as means worthy of worship and by the people as good monarchs. This could also explain why disappearances, torture, and assassinations still occurred, but Pinochet continued to ignore the protests of the people. In his view, he thought he had taken over a devastated country, but through a military coup, Chile ended the chaos. And through wide-ranging economic reforms, the Chilean miracle emerged. Therefore, he considered himself a true patriot, building a country with a solid foundation and a prosperous future.

However, Machiavelli also emphasizes the capacity for prudence, the moral ethic requires the moral subject to first ensure that he becomes a highly flexible person. He understands that morality is the foundation of politics and that a truly qualitative political life necessarily follows a certain moral code. As a result, he repeatedly stresses "not deviate from what is good, if possible" [13]. In his view, the perfection of a political career is not only reflected in political success, but must also be achieved through the aid of morality, relying on proper and ethical means to achieve the goal. But Pinochet only knew and learned how to do bad things, such as creating DINA to gather intelligence, detain people, and conduct operations without any judicial or legislative oversight. It is clear that moral corruption prevents Pinochet from being fully honored as a Chilean.

The limitations of Machiavelli's thinking can also be seen. He actually supports the interests of the ruling class, which in the long run is not conducive to the development of democracy. Machiavelli

talks about the process of using power itself without discussing the deep economic basis and class relations behind power, just as he discusses politics and morality without any interest in morality at all, which conceals the subject position and fundamental role of the people in political life and provides the reactionary ruling class with seemingly reasonable but illegal justifications.

2.3 The means to strengthen regime legitimacy: Based on Machiavelli's perspective

Finally, this paper will use Weber's theory to argue the case for Pinochet to establish the legitimacy of the regime. First, Pinochet used his transcendental charisma and was regarded as a leader by some Chileans. As Weber says, super-everyday charisma is inherently proactive and creative, showing a heroic quality, especially in times of crisis. In other words, charisma implies political authority appeal, where both leader and followers believe in the authenticity of the leader's mission, which is the source of legitimacy of charismatic authority. Faced with the urgent task of reviving the economy, Pinochet promoted the Chicago boys and implemented neoliberal reforms, which led to a gradual boom in the Chilean economy, with impressive macroeconomic indicators and data. In particular, Chile's neoliberalism provided an opportunity to turn around a country in debt crisis compared to other Latin American countries that were in difficulty in the 1980s. However, the economic crisis of 1983 severely delegitimized the Pinochet government and led to the first mass public demonstrations against the dictatorship [14]. As a result, the will of many groups and organizations to end the regime gradually strengthened and pressure continued to be exerted. It also showed that the foundations of charismatic domination were not strong.

What Weber actually advocates is elite politics. In his view, the new elite is a class of professional politicians with a sense of mission and responsibility, who set new goals, values, and meanings for their followers by breaking old rules, going up the citizenry and leading the masses through their extraordinary qualities, and especially by virtue of their oratorical gifts, they generate enormous appeal. At this level, Pinochet does belong to the Chilean elite, representing the interests of the middle and upper classes. But under his hard-line domination, the loss of the interests of the lower classes was often easily ignored. Therefore, a significant portion of the middle and upper classes recognized this charismatic leader. Following Weber's philosophy, charisma depends on the personal performance of the leader, but relies on the approval of the followers.

However, ideological belief mechanisms are not conducive to long-term domination, and although Pinochet ignored or circumvented laws that did not help his goals, he still wanted to continue Chile's constitutional tradition and provide a stable guarantee of regime legitimacy. As Weber argues, once a strong charismatic authority in its infancy tends to become an enduring and everyday institution for which it seeks successors, it will inevitably enter the orbit of legal authority, especially in an era of advanced rationalization, where the charismatic authority domination will quickly accept bureaucratic organization. Therefore, the military government introduced the Constitution of 1980, which structured the military government with legitimacy at home and abroad, and effectively preserved the military's privileges.

Normally, people's obedience to the legal authority is due to a legally established hierarchy, not to the unique qualities of the leader. The leader and the led are equal from the legal point of view and are both bound by the organization to which they belong. However, the constitution established under Pinochet's manipulation was in the service of his domination. For example, the armed forces retained exclusive control over their retirement and promotion process, and the democratically elected president could appoint the commander-in-chief from among the five most senior officers in each armed body and could not remove a sitting commander-in-chief. All of these institutional structures ensured that a civilian government does not undermine what the military regime had established. Weber ignored this point, believing that legal authority could restrain charismatic authority, and that although charismatic leaders could use the influence of demagogic means to gain popular support, the bureaucracy of rationalized organizations could effectively control the excesses of popular sentiment because charismatic authority could be institutionalized and rationalized in a democracy. But if the passions, emotions and even desires of individuals summoned up by charismatic authority

are not properly released, they can easily be exploited by the leaders and go to the dangerous side. As those who had been unanimous in their support of Pinochet, they believed that it was Pinochet who opened up this country's economy to the world and brought the world to this country. So they had always supported Pinochet, especially the people in the military. Even after Pinochet stepped down, these still caused a lot of problems for President Patricio Aylwin and affected the democratization process.

3. Conclusion

Although this paper uses the theory of political philosophy to explain the starting point of Pinochet's regime and the political foundation on which it rests, it is also necessary to consider Pinochet's behavior from another perspective of the theory. The absoluteness of the friend-enemy theory made Pinochet treat communists and dissidents as enemies, because this antagonistic and hot politics was always present and brought long-lasting fear and disaster to the Chilean people. Moreover, Pinochet implemented policies that resulted in the injury and death of thousands of opponents, and although he succeeded in achieving his goals, he undermined democracy and hurt the people. Therefore, the necessity and rationality of this approach is worth discussing. Finally, even the charismatic domination that made him so confident is questionable: was it necessary to maintain authoritarian power during the transition from authoritarian to liberal government in Chile? Besides, the Constitution of 1980 was only in line with the will of the citizens under government supervision. Therefore, the Pinochet regime only had a veneer of legitimacy, and it is not certain that it was essentially legitimate.

Overall, the analysis in this paper looks both backward and forward. Chile was taken over by a military government for many years, and Pinochet is widely remembered as a dictator. Those who supported him are naturally nostalgic for the economic prosperity of Chile back then, but those who opposed him are still searching for the remains of their missing loved ones. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting what happened in the past, but above all, it is important to build on this foundation with a deeper understanding and reflection so that Chile can better deal with the structural problems inherited from the Pinochet era and look to the future.

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