FORGING A SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL COALITION IN CHILE

Denise Williams

As human beings we are all equal in dignity, but we are different; we have different religious beliefs, political opinions, tastes, passions, abilities, callings, and social conditions, but despite all of those differences, there is more that unites us than that which separates us, and those differences may convert us in some moment into adversaries, but never again, never again into enemies, Chileans against Chileans.

—Patricio Aylwin

INTRODUCTION

When I was a student in Tamotsu Shibutani's courses, he would often provide a description of a person's behavior and ask us how this situation could come about. In regard to my interest in national coalitions, Tom might describe a politician who previously hated and refused to speak with members of another political party until she discovered that her grandfather belonged to this party. Following this revelation, she began to invite members of this party to her home and study their history with growing admiration. Tom would likely be even more interested in a contradictory example that asked us to consider more of her unrecognized assumptions. Through such discussions we began to realize the importance of peoples' orientations towards themselves and others for explaining behaviors and the ways in which one's perceptions of experiences create and recreate these orientations. From Tom, I have come to understand that a political coalition is made up of many individuals simultaneously
influenced by the dynamics of both their personal and group orientations. This is one of the many ways in which Tom explored social life with us by using an "interactionist" approach.

An interactionist approach is one in which both an individual's behavior, such as one's decision to vote for a particular candidate, and the organized behavior of many people, such as an army at war, are both understood as a social process. The unit of analysis becomes a transaction, rather than a separate individual or group. Because every transaction involves interdependent individuals, no transaction can be explained by individual characteristics alone. Even the language we use to think, and the ways in which we evaluate different options involve perceptions of interactions with others. The following discussion is based on my application of an interactive approach to the problem of coalition formation and maintenance in the recent transition to democracy in Chile.

In their review of other attempts to integrate social structure and human agency to explain coalition formation, maintenance, and transitions to democracy, Mahoney and Snyder (1994) identify three strategies:

(1) Funnel strategies of research seek to integrate agency and structure by constructing a 'funnel of causality' that systematically incorporates variables from multiple levels of analysis [e.g. Linz and Stepan 1978; Almond, Flanagan, and Mundt 1973].
(2) Path-dependent strategies attempt to link antecedent historical-structural conditions with subsequent actor choices during periods of regime change [e.g. Collier and Collier 1991; Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992].
(3) Eclectic strategies draw on both voluntarist and structural variables to identify factors that correlate with varied regime outcomes [e.g. Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1990; Huntington 1991] (p. i).

Mahoney and Snyder identify the major weaknesses of the first strategy as privileging structure over agency and seeing structure as "disengaged" from agency. Leadership is considered "as a 'black box' variable" (p. 21) and "causation becomes a one way street" (p. 16). The second strategy assumes a structurally predetermined outcome that ignores "constant, incremental change" (p. 27). These approaches assume that history completely determines micro behaviors, except at "critical junctures" in which individuals have momentary opportunities to influence events, thus ignoring the ways in which human beings are constantly interacting with (shaped by and shaping) macro social processes. Without the inclusion of cognition and interactive processes these studies are not accurately interpreting the events they study. The third set of approaches either "lack clear guidelines for weighing different types of variables and specifying 'what matters when'" (p. 34), or again divides reality into "causes" and "causers," thus ignoring social interactive processes.
An interactionist approach avoids the pitfalls described above and still manages to integrate effectively social structure and human agency. While this approach does organize "what matters when" by privileging how individual actors' perceptions influence coalition formation and maintenance, it also takes into account structural constraints and attempts to identify useful generalizations. I identify and explore these perceptions primarily by observing what the individuals actually do and how they account for their behaviors. Again, the approach does not limit my analysis to perceptions of the actors. While the actors themselves identify perceptions of both micro and macro interactions, I also consult and draw on sources beyond the actors themselves. An interactionist approach includes consideration of more abstract information, such as domestic and international economic and political processes. My focus is how such larger events and measurements interact with the individual members of the coalitions in question.

My observations are inspired from the methods Tamotsu Shibutani developed from the Chicago School. Many of my observations are explained by his most recent book *Social Processes* (1986), as well as *Society and Personality* (1987). Tom's book with Kian Kwan, *Ethnic Stratification: A Comparative Approach* (1965), the book that led me to Tom, provided the theoretical foundation that explains how enemies can become comrades. Shibutani and Kwan examined four major processes of ethnic stratification: (1) differentiating processes - the formation of a color line; (2) sustaining processes - the maintenance of a color line; (3) disjunctive processes - the breakdown of a color line; and (4) integrative processes - the transformation of a color line. This framework can be used to study the transformation of political order: (1) the ascendancy of a political regime; (2) the continuation of a political rule; (3) the decline of a political establishment; and (4) the rise of a new political order.

A key strength of an interactionist approach is its assumption that most behavior is based on an individual's definition of the situation rather than an "objective reality." Some researchers consider its interpretive emphasis to be a weakness; however, any qualitative or quantitative method is interpretive. The interactive approach constructs hypotheses on the basis of observable behavior—including hypotheses about emotion and perception.

Subjects, like researchers, usually organize their perceptions into stories that give them a sense of control over the events in their lives. Especially when one is considering the perceptions of another individual, the resulting hypotheses and the assumptions upon which they are based must always be compared to new information and refined, even as one realizes that such new interpretations carry similar limitations. Hence, an interactive method requires that researchers describe, as much as possible, the elements upon which their conclusions are drawn.
In my study of national coalition formation the unit of analysis can be formally defined as national organizations which make up a coalition. However, to understand those organizations, I need to consider the perceptions of individuals and how these relate to the transactions of the national organizations under consideration. Thus, 56 individuals at various levels of each organization under consideration were interviewed for this study from 1989 to 1994. I specifically sought individuals who were well known for their work in carrying out or observing the coalitions under consideration. However, along the way I formally interviewed lesser known individuals I encountered, or who were recommended to me by other interviewees. At the end of each interview I asked the interviewee for suggestions about others whom I should interview. Perceptions of the organizations were also taken from outside observers including views and works published in academic books and journals, as well as popular media sources and interviews.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In 1970, Chile democratically elected a Socialist president. The social and political struggles in Chile leading up to this election, and the escalation of those conflicts in the years that followed, created a very divided society. In 1973, with help from the United States, President Salvador Allende was overthrown in a military coup, thus ending a long tradition of democratic government (Constable and Valenzuela 1991, p. 37; Oppenheim 1993, pp. 122-123). A military junta, later overtaken by General Augusto Pinochet, ruled the country until 1988. During the dictatorship thousands of Chileans were murdered by government forces, tens of thousands were arrested, and many of those were tortured. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs. In the first decade of dictatorship tens of thousands of Chileans left their homes and their country as exiles. On October 5, 1988, however, 15 years of Chilean military rule began to crumble. On that day a vote was held where Chileans were asked whether or not they supported the presidency of General Augusto Pinochet for another 8 years. The plebescite was rejected.

The end of Pinochet's rule was largely a result of the campaign of a coalition of 17 opposition parties. The very existence of the coalition was, in itself, a victory. The coalition was built under an extremely oppressive and divisive dictatorship. The parties in the coalition represented points along a spectrum from the right to the far left, often including the cooperation of the Chilean Communist Party. The parties were tremendously diverse in their views and political tactics. While some party members worked well together throughout the dictatorship, many other party members had a strong, historically rooted distrust of one another. Some had not spoken to one another for years, while others, despite a great deal of communication, still feared and hated one
another. However, in 1988 the opposition coalition survived and waged a very effective campaign. After the 1988 Plebescite, the coalition went on to reorganize as the Concertación for Democracy for a general election held on December 14, 1990. While the election rules often made it difficult for opposition candidates to win against the government candidates, the coalition gained major victories. The Concertación for Democracy's candidate for President of Chile, Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, won the election. How was it possible for such a diverse coalition to unite and take control of the country? In the discussion presented here I briefly explore how the coalition managed to form and benefit from both campaigns.

BUILDING COALITIONS

How did the various groups opposing dictatorship in Chile overcome their longstanding hostilities towards one another to the degree that they were able to form coalitions that triumphed in the 1988 Plebescite and the 1989 elections? An analysis of my interviews, the available literature, and several documentaries revealed eight organizing processes:

- The people within the organizations perceive an intolerable problem;
- The people perceive that in order to confront their own perceived intolerable problem successfully, their organizations must work together constructively;
- The people develop a shared pragmatic definition of their problem;
- The people develop and sustain a sense of hope about their ability to confront the problem;
- The coalition efficiently evaluates its resources and potential options to develop informed strategies;
- The coalition attempts to employ its strategies;
- The coalition honestly evaluates and adjusts its strategies;
- The coalition's organization and the people create an emotional climate of mutual respect and support;

These interactive processes occurred where the coalitions were effective, and one or more of the processes were absent in situations in which the coalitions were ineffective. While the processes were generally most visible in the order presented here, their occurrences often overlapped, and there was significant feedback among the processes. The processes did not appear out of thin air in 1988. Rather, from the beginning of the dictatorship, and even before its inception, most of the opposition experienced years of painful separations and broken agreements in which one or more of the processes was missing. By 1988 those opposed to the dictatorship were largely aware of their interdependence,
their need to create an environment that respected human rights and dignity, and the strengths and limits of social science.

Perception of an Intolerable Situation

The Chilean economy began a serious decline with the national and international turmoil of the Allende period and managed to fall even further under the dictatorship. In 1980, after the Reagan administration had flooded Chile with foreign credit, and the 1979 frozen dollar began to take effect, suddenly everyone but the very poor could buy imports and feel prosperous (Arriagada 1988, pp. 40-41). The controlled media services ran the slogan “We’re doing well today, and we’ll be doing better tomorrow.” Shortly before the 1980 Plebiscite was announced the Minister of Labor, José Piñera, was proclaiming that by 1990 “Chile will be a developed country” (El Mercurio, August 28, 1980; cited in Arriagada 1988, p. 40). Beginning in 1979 farmers were encouraged to take out loans on their land from private foreign banks. However, at the end of 1981, Chile’s economic miracle turned into a disaster that did not end until 1985. Most foreign loans went into consumption rather than investment. One family I knew in the central valley had a farm of several hundred acres that was passed down from generation to generation. Its production focused on timber and cattle. For years the family longed to live closer to the town where their daughter went to school. Like many of the landed aristocracy in 1980, they decided to take advantage of the loans. By the end of 1982, the family that moved to town could not afford to pay the new exchange rates, and they lost their farm and all of their assets. If not for the intervention of the local Rotary Club and others, the ex-landowners would have lived in extreme poverty. I wonder what happened to the many families that lived and worked on that farm? In its first decade, the dictatorship inadvertently destroyed much of the unproductive latifundium system. Until the 1950s, the majority of Chileans were peasants who lived on the land and gave their labor to their landlord in exchange for permission to live on his land. This had changed dramatically by the early 1970s when less than 25 percent of the population lived in the countryside (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1981, p. 250; Scully 1992, p. 123). During the dictatorship the number of agricultural salaried workers increased, but their wages decreased substantially. With so many farm bankruptcies, many peasants were forced off the land. Peasants moved to the cities to try to find work. Agricultural production was largely taken over by big farms using modern techniques. Although there was no real economic progress in 1980, expectations were high. By 1982, when expectations for prosperity had been dashed, the street protests increased dramatically. Davies’ (1962) study accurately fit the Chilean case, when focused strictly on how a society’s rising expectations that are crushed tend to bring about massive social protest. However, in this case the Chilean protests did
not result in an end of the dictatorship. Disappointed expectations alone do not explain social transformations, but they do indicate the importance of actors' perceptions in interactions with social transformation.

Over and over again, members of every group among the opposition spoke of the need for a minimum space of protected human rights symbolized by free elections. From the coup in 1973 until the election in 1989, members of the opposition experienced torture, disappearance, exile, the banning of political meetings, censored press, the absence of an impartial judicial process, and employment discrimination. These violations of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights were unacceptable to most members of the opposition. The violations were generally perceived as symbolic of the Pinochet dictatorship, a dictatorship which all members of the opposition were committed to ending. Because of the changes in communist and socialist parties throughout the world, as well as the human rights violations witnessed or experienced by Chileans, many Chilean Marxists became convinced that democracy was not just a tool for revolution, but a requirement that could not be separated from the ideals of Marxism. One feminist member of the National Concertación of Women for Democracy (an organization which supported the efforts of the Concertación for Democracy) described her goal during the campaigns:

There is a minimum space, minimum, a minimum space that gives a possibility to live, and I am fighting for that minimum space; and in that way I fight so that there is democracy, or whatever, but this isn't my great fight; and I don't want to speak of fighting either [referring to her search for a language outside of patriarchy] (interview 33, 2/91).

Awareness of the need for basic human rights was reinforced throughout the existence of both the 1988 and the 1989 coalitions. However, other human rights issues, such as the rights of women before the law, the rights of workers, the rights to social services, and the process used to address violations of human rights were often not seen as common problems (interview 23, 12/89; interview 33, 2/91).

Potential coalition members may have many differences, but they generally have at least one shared problem which they are each strongly motivated to resolve (Shibutani 1986, p. 429). To the degree that an authoritarian regime is experienced as closed, it provides a shared problem to those denied access to governmental power (Goodwin and Skocpol 1989). Individuals and particular organizations were not alone in their need for a minimum space of protected human rights. While the dictatorship, using censorship, employment discrimination, torture, exile, and assassination, was for many years fairly successful at repressing the voice of the opposition within Chile, the dictatorship was experienced, albeit differently, by all Chileans. Through soup kitchens, student interactions, activities sponsored by religious organizations,
clandestine political meetings, publications from abroad and eventually within Chile, as well as day-to-day interactions, people opposed to the dictatorship realized that there was widespread dissatisfaction. Private research institutions financed by grants from abroad gave some academics from the opposition a place to work and discuss issues more openly than was possible in the military controlled educational system. Exiles met freely and worked to get their views to those in Chile as well as to the international community. Organizations including Amnesty International, the United Nations, the Ford Foundation, and others, helped to give the opposition a more powerful voice. Awareness that the problems were shared—although not equally shared—was reinforced throughout the 1988 and 1989 campaigns. This reduced each individual’s sense of isolation; despite their individual problems, their struggle was common: they were not alone.

Necessity of Constructive Cooperation Recognized

From the interviews, it was apparent that many people experienced the dictatorship as problematic in different ways, but they believed that their own problem would be resolved or reduced by a return to democracy. Even enemies can become comrades if they share a common compelling problem whose solution requires a united effort (e.g., Sherif 1961). This shared symbol of the dictatorship made it easier to unite as one coalition. However, groups also come together because they perceive that they must work together in order to achieve different goals, as long as they develop a definition of their problem in such a way that it connects the groups together in their struggle - and the members of the groups clearly perceive this connection.

While parties in conflict will seek as small a coalition as possible to achieve their goal (Schelling 1960), in the case of Chile the obstacles to overcoming the shared problem were so great that the opposition needed every party it could get. In addition, the majority of people in Chile were tired of fighting and wanted to see politicians work together. A Socialist politician noted, “It was the only way for the political parties of power to get to more democratic times. They need the absolute support of the people [and the surveys were showing that] the people wanted a united front” (interview 49, 3/91).

In 1987 there was an international conference in Santiago on transitions to democracy. The conference presenters were very pessimistic that the Chilean opposition would be able to come together and maintain a coalition. A story informally told to Chileans by one of the conference presenters went as follows:

There are two ways to get rid of Pinochet. The first is the normal way, and the second is through a miracle. The normal way is that arch angels come and take Pinochet away. The miracle would be if the parties were to stay together (interview 30, 2/91).
Because what one perceives depends on what one has experienced and is doing, the realization of the need to work together reinforced itself, reducing the social distance among members of the organizations. As social distance decreases, "efficient communication" increases (Shibutani and Kwan 1965, p. 574). Reflecting back on the coalition experience, one center-right member of the coalition said, "We had serious legitimate differences, but we had a bigger common problem" (interview 17, 3/91). As noted by Shibutani and Kwan, "What is of decisive importance is that human beings interact not so much in terms of what they actually are but in terms of the conceptions that they form of themselves and of one another" (p. 38).

The process was greatly strengthened because the peoples' work together involved significant contact over a substantial period of time. Those directly involved in the campaign spent a great deal of time working closely with representatives from each party. While just the perception of the need to work together can unite a coalition, it is confronting this belief with daily interactions in a variety of contexts that integrates the belief into the behavior of each individual and the organization of the parties and the coalition as a whole.

The process described above led to increased empathetic experiences with one another, as well as the development of positive sentiments and the breakdown of their "enemy" images of each other. Once the members of the coalition are united by a common issue, the members' own selective perception and cognition processes lead them to focus on what they share with other coalition members and to attribute differences to parties outside of the coalition (Shibutani 1986; 1987). As a coalition begins to face outsiders who are threatening the coalition's goal, the boundaries between coalition members and outsiders increases (Coser 1956). Differential association increases similarities among those within the coalition. When the members of different organizations are identified as being a part of a coalition, they are also likely to be treated similarly by those outside of the coalition. Repeatedly members of the coalition made statements like, "We learned to be friends; to live and work together" (interview 27, 2/91).

While a coalition cannot form without agreement among the members' recognized leadership (Burton, Gunther and Higley 1992, p. 9), the important roles of those outside of the elite, especially in the "No campaign," in supporting and shaping the coalition is often ignored in the literature on Chile. Most of the academic literature (e.g. Garretón 1990; Cavarozzi 1992) argues that the awareness of the need to work together in Chile came from the top. Some of my interviews assumed the opposite. For example, a Socialist leader explained:

More than anything else, what held us together was the awareness of the necessity to do it this way—[by 1988] the great majority believed this. How did they know this was the way? The processes were very complicated to analyze. It didn't come from the politicians.
abandoned its tradition of hegemony for coalition-building (interview 31, 12/89), and, while refusing to merge their party with the PPD, the leaders announced a willingness to work together with the other parties of the opposition to get a majority “No” vote in the Plebiscite. By 1988, that coalition amounted to 17 different parties: the Concertación for No. A Socialist described the event as follows:

It was a turning point in the conception of politics in Chile. In 1973 the axis that formed today was on the brink of killing one another - the Christian Democratic center and the socialists on the left. Never before were the Christian Democrats able to create an alliance (interview 30, 2/91).

One of the biggest struggles of the Concertación for No, and its forerunners, was their relationship with the Communist Party. Most members of both the 1988 and 1989 campaigns described the issue as one of attempting to convince the Communist Party to set aside its violent efforts and work wholeheartedly with the other parties. Surveys were showing that the people of Chile were tired of violence (interview 28, 2/91). According to a Christian Democrat, “We learned that more people participated if the protests didn’t appear radical” (interview 25, 12/89). Many members of the Concertación for No, especially the Christian Democrats, did not believe in violence as a legitimate way of removing Pinochet. While for some this belief was based on strongly held convictions about nonviolence obtained through religion or personal experiences with violence, for others violent opposition against Pinochet and the military government was seen as hopeless suicide. Given the Communist Party’s own practices, still others doubted that the Communists would democratize Chile, even if by some miracle they were able to defeat Pinochet. Nevertheless, some members of both coalitions as well as Communists noted that there was much pressure within each coalition to avoid alienating the right within and outside of the Concertaciones by appearing to work with the Communist Party. The Communist Party refused to give up its armed activities against the dictatorship, believing that Pinochet would not hold fair elections, nor stand by the results even if he were to lose. The Communists, however, did largely cooperate with both Concertaciones. As one Communist Party official explained, “To divide the forces of democracy was to support the dictatorship” (interview 39, 2/91). Thus they did ask their people to support the Concertación for No in the final days of the campaign and coordinated their slates with the Concertación for No in the 1989 campaign (interview 9, 3/91; interview 14, 3/91; interview 17, 3/91; interview 18, 2/91; interview 21, 3/91; interview 24, 2/91; interview 29, 1/91; interview 31, 12/89; interview 32, 12/89; interview 35, 12/89; interview 39, 2/91; interview 44, 2/91; interview 50, 2/91).
The potential and actual coalition members needed to strike a healthy balance between unity and competition (Garretón 1990, p. 77). The 1989 elections were largely successful in this respect. However, when every seat for the opposition was crucial, there were some costly instances of party and personality competition at the expense of researched strategies. A particular loss was Zaldívar’s victory over Lagos in the race for Senator in Santiago. Both of them were likely winners, and they probably would have achieved an extra seat for the Concertación if they had run separately. However, as potential presidential candidates in future elections, they wanted to compete with one another (interview 31, 12/89; 17, 3/91; interview 26, 12/89). Nevertheless, for the most part there was a widespread effort within the Concertación to foster a climate of mutual respect and to win as many seats as possible (interview 41, 12/89; interview 25, 2/91). Despite real differences in power, because there had been no real elections, and because the coalitions were presented as a short-term arrangement, it was not very difficult to maintain this style of interaction (Walker 1989, p. 166).

Shared Pragmatic View of Problem

According to Shibutani and Kwan (1965) “the efficiency with which concerted action can be carried out depends upon the extent to which consensus exists among the participants” (p. 572). As we saw in the previous section, a necessary condition of “the extent to which different individuals are able to develop consensus depends on their participation in common communication channels” (p. 573). The people in the coalition are more likely to reach their objectives if they develop a shared pragmatic definition of their problem. A pragmatic definition is based on their ability to identify the needs and interests of their individual organizations, as compared with their previously expressed expectations and ideologies. With that understanding they can then define their shared interests - interests in which a degree of interdependence is recognized that restrains members from ignoring the basic needs of other members of the coalition. This pragmatic definition itself becomes a kind of ideology, freed of many past contradictory assumptions, yet continuing a shared historical experience. Once the new shared pragmatic definition is established, it enhances a climate of trust among the members.

From the coup until the election in 1989, members of the opposition struggled more or less ineffectively to impose their understandings and definitions of the problem they faced on one another. Formal efforts began within clandestine meetings of the “illegal” political parties, followed by the study groups regarding the 1980 constitution, the National Accord, the National Assembly, the Party for Democracy (PPD), and culminating in the unofficial, and then official research or technical committees which were absorbed into the Concertación for No.
The technical committees, developed largely through private research groups, provided a dramatic shift from Chile's past political experience, and indeed from all but the most recent transitions in other countries, in that its members had a huge impact on decision-making (though the committee largely included experts rather than experienced political leaders). The term "technical" was used to emphasize the committee members' technical expertise in areas such as survey research and publicity. Especially near the beginning of the 1988 campaign, this change in decision-making created some conflicts. These conflicts were generally restrained because those at the very top were convinced of the need to follow the advice of the technical committees, and because the committees' advice generally led to the desired results (interview 12, 3/91; interview 15, 3/91; interview 26, 12/89).

With the help of the technical committees, the pressure of public opinion, and some of the opposition media, the people within the forming Concertación for No developed a consensus that their problem was first to get a verifiable "No" majority vote in the 1988 Plebiscite (interview 30, 2/91; interview 41, 12/89; Garretón 1990, p. 65), and then the problem was redefined in 1989 as the need to get as many opposition candidates into office as possible, and to agree on a plan for an effective transition to representative democracy (Garretón 1990, p. 69). One former Communist said that even before the Plebiscite, "The People made it clear that universal suffrage was the way they wanted to end the dictatorship" (interview 44, 2/91). A Socialist active in the campaign said:

Like chess, once we decided to win, we had to maintain the way to defeat the dictatorship. Since the dictatorship was not totally defeated at the plebiscite, we therefore decided to have a candidate. One can't just have a candidate for government without having a coalition for the government.... A president needs a parliament and to transform the electoral laws... we needed to say 'no' means a government of the people who win. The Concertación and parliamentary agreements were signed as agreements for the next 5 years (interview 30, 2/91).

Another challenge was presented by Pinochet's economic reforms. There was a struggle within the left as to whether socialists should continue to fight for real change in terms of the socialist projects, or merely to reform the existing capitalist programs. Despite its social costs, the new Chilean economy was admired throughout the world. This national and international pressure, the collapse of communist and socialist systems internationally, as well as the continuing danger still presented by Pinochet brought most of the left within the Concertaciones to agree to strive, at least in the short run, only for minor reforms of the Chilean economy (interview 3, 8/92; interview 4, 2/94; interview 28, 2/91; interview 41, 12/89).
Hope and Confidence

Proponents of strategic choice analysis point out that apart from the practical implications of such a choice, people may switch sides in their desire to be associated with the winner (Collier and Norden 1992, p. 230). However, at a fundamental level when people take hold of a vision of hope they become more motivated to work towards that vision. They are easier to mobilize in large numbers. In addition, people’s abilities to think clearly are reduced with strong emotions of despair. Although the euphoria of too much hope can also be dangerous, it was not generally a problem in the Chilean campaigns because of the ever present reminders of the challenges faced.

Despair and fear played a large role in the continuation of dictatorship following the coup. The formation and success of the Concertación for No was the last in a series of attempts to end dictatorship in Chile. Hardly the favored option, the Concertación for No was based on winning the 1988 Plebescite - a plebescite that most of the opposition considered illegitimate and likely to be as full of fraud as the 1980 referendum. As it appeared to be the last opportunity to keep the country from eight more years of dictatorship, however, most of the opposition came to consider the 1988 Plebescite as a serious option. Confidence in this option was not immediate, but a long process of constant study of the electorate, outreach, and mutual reinforcement.

“Happiness is coming” (“la alegría ya viene”) was the title of the campaign song. This theme was expressed throughout the campaign in music, posters, television adds, and other forms of publicity. It was a theme through which people were asked to believe in hope more than fear. There were constant efforts to keep the campaign positive. A Humanist party member said: “The campaign transformed the ‘no’ into something happy, like the song that was written for the campaign. Artists had an important role in showing people how to say no without fear” (interview 43, 2/91).

Chile, up until the coup in 1973, had a long tradition of democratic rule and an unusual degree of political party permeation in the lives of Chilean citizens; nevertheless, the Concertación for No members now had to educate new voters and rebuild many Chileans’ trust in the ability of political parties to work constructively and nonviolently - which the Concertación for No often did through the powerful symbol of its very existence.

There were many heroic moments of opposition. One of the most memorable and often cited was that of the appearance of Socialist Ricardo Lagos on a live broadcast television interview on April 25, 1988 - in the midst of the campaign. As he had done in many of his public talks since December 1987, (Turkeltaub 1988, pp. 11-12), Lagos suddenly launched into an imaginary conversation with Pinochet:
Turning to the camera, he pointed his finger at an imaginary Pinochet. 'You promise the country eight more years of torture, assassination, and human rights violations,' he charged. 'To me, it seems inadmissible that a Chilean would be so ambitious for power as to pretend to hold it for twenty-five years.' When the interviewers tried to cut him off, he politely persisted, saying, 'I speak for 15 years of silence' (Constable and Valenzuela 1991, p. 306).

By the end of the interview Pinochet had ordered 18,000 soldiers into the street. The soldiers were soon recalled because the streets were empty. Although the dictator assigned his lawyers to find something for which to arrest Lagos, Lagos was not arrested (Turkeltaub 1988, p. 12). Though merely symbolic, events like this did significant damage to the dictator's image of complete control and invincibility. According to Turkeltaub and my own informal observations, throughout Chile members of the opposition began to point their own fingers at an imaginary Pinochet and find new hope in the No campaign.

Informed Strategies

Potential resources are enormous. The coalition members must efficiently evaluate their ability to mobilize physical resources, as well as the potential strategies available for organizing those resources, all within the context of their own past experience and current situation. Strategies need to be evaluated carefully in terms of potential short and long term outcomes. Having a shared pragmatic definition, as discussed earlier, is crucial to the efficiency of this sixth process. One of the most difficult aspects of this process is for the individuals involved to set aside fears and doubts in order that they may be able to perceive and generate options fully, and then to be able to evaluate those options realistically. This process also requires a careful analysis of the adversaries' resources and interests, as well as an evaluation of strategies in terms of their legitimacy to those involved with and affected by them. Przeworski (1986) states that a dictatorship “does not collapse unless and until some alternative is organized in such a way as to present a real choice for isolated individuals” (p. 52; see also Kriesberg 1982).

The opposition to the dictatorship needed to construct an arena in which it was able to influence change. By 1988, the coalition that became the Concertación for No decided that it would have a better chance of ending the dictatorship if it used methods considered legitimate by the dictatorship itself, rather than if it tried to overthrow the dictatorship (Garretón 1990, p. 65). Although Pinochet overthrew democratically elected President Salvador Allende in 1973, Pinochet's speeches and reactions to events seemed to indicate an identity based on a compelling desire to create order and respect for authority. By following Pinochet's own rules and carrying out orderly and 'legal' political activities, and through participation in Pinochet's Plebiscite itself, the Concertación for No helped to increase the legitimacy of their actions as perceived by the right, even in the eyes of those who did not consider the
opposition to be quite human. While there were still "illegal" protests and terrorist attacks by members of the opposition—even though some of these terrorist attacks were later attributed to members of the extreme right—these activities were not so easily associated with the Concertaciones. For some on the left, however, nonviolent tactics by the Concertaciones—especially participation in the 1988 Plebescite—amounted to "collaboration" with the dictatorship (interview 31, 12/89; interview 18, 2/91; interview 44, 3/91).

From 1982 to 1987 the protests in the streets were used by the opposition as forums to confront the dictatorship and encourage negotiations, but because the opposition was so easily divided these efforts did not succeed in ending the dictatorship. However, the opposition was able to increase national and international attention to its struggles, as well as increase the return of exiles, and the publication of opposition literature.

The technical committees, appointed more by merit than association, were a vital structure of the coalition, both in terms of developing good strategy and in creating a sense of legitimacy and respect among most of the people in the Concertaciones toward the strategies they were being asked to implement. Every party had representatives on the main technical committee and within the committees under the direction of the main committee. According to a Socialist technical committee member:

As a sociologist I am dedicated to improving the relations among the politicians and the public life ... in order to be effective I can't be involved in politics; I have to be outside. I try to understand, respect, and accept what the people think and do. The most important role of a member of the technical committee was to concentrate within a common language some shared criteria with which to arbitrate differences—how to resolve conflicts. Never before had they been able to overcome these differences ... Everyone agreed to use this language, this political criteria. There was a strong sensitivity to public opinion as the primary product. The aspirations of a diverse sector of the population were collected. The diversity which at first appeared to be a weakness, was transformed into a factor in our favor ... The conclusion that a technical approach was needed was arrived at because other roads were tried without success and also as a result of modernization ... The marketeers were very modern and the political class had confidence in them. This resulted in the creation and administration of a global logic emanating from the technical committee (interview 37, 2/91).

Throughout the dictatorship the opposition struggled to mobilize international opinion and behavior in their favor. The international community provided financial resources to the Concertación. Another dimension of this support was described by a Green campaign worker in the following way:

A great help was the moral support of the international community. During the Plebescite there was a lot of international press. We realized that we were not fighting the dictatorship alone, and this was very important (interview 47, 2/91).
In both campaigns, the Concertaciones were able to learn about the importance of unity, the mechanics of reducing election fraud, and some strategies for approaching issues of justice and reconciliation from international experiences, especially those of the Philippines, South Korea, Uruguay, and Argentina (interview 25, 2/91; interview 26, 12/89). With international advice, the Concertación for No quickly adopted efforts from the Chilean Committee for Free Elections to enhance plans already underway to set up a computerized election monitoring system with some financial support from international agencies. This enabled the Concertación for No to ease fears from past experience pertaining to election fraud and persecution (interview 13, 3/91).

Because social networks powerfully influence how people define and react to their experiences (Petras, Vieux and Zeitlin 1967; Portes 1971) and how they vote (Coleman 1990, pp. 289-292), a great deal of effort was also put into activating and reactivating social networks to convince people to register and to vote for the opposition (interview 14; 3/91).

The technical committees used surveys and focus groups together with the latest advertising and election technologies. The research showed that people were tired of violence and fear. Those on the right expressed a fear of returning to their experiences of disorder, loss of private property, and threats of violence during the Allende presidency. Those on the left spoke of their fear of torture, murder, exile and other forms of intimidation they had experienced under the dictatorship. The country felt as if it was forever at war with itself. As previously noted, one of the most significant local factors influencing the strategies of both campaigns was that of transforming fear into hope.

In the second campaign there were several candidates being proposed and actively campaigning to become the Concertación for Democracy’s presidential candidate. There was a general consensus that only one candidate from the opposition should run. A Socialist said: “From the beginning we were committed [to one candidate]…here we learned from the experience of South Korea where they had to have only one candidate” [the opposition lost the presidency because they split their forces] (interview 28, 2/91).

Patricio Aylwin became the Concertación for Democracy’s presidential candidate because he led the most powerful party of the Concertación for Democracy. However, his leadership in the 1988 campaign was generally admired. (Many on the left hated and distrusted him because as President of the Senate, he had worked to impede dialogue with Allende, and he had supported the coup.) By December of 1989 most people in the opposition perceived that Aylwin, as compared to other proposed candidates, stood the best chance of being able to win. He was also seen as the opposition candidate most likely to be able to negotiate effectively with the right for the changes that would have to be made to bring about a fuller transition to democracy (interview 32, 3/91; interview 18, 2/91; interview 39, 3/91; interview 17, 3/91; interview 26, 3/91). One dissident Communist said that he felt Aylwin
would be the best candidate because Aylwin would not want to go down in history as the man who helped bring about the coup of 1973 (interview 18, 2/91). In addition, many on the left felt Aylwin was sincere in his statements of regret regarding his behavior in 1973 (interview 18, 2/91; interview 39, 2/91). A member of the PPD supported Aylwin because: “You can’t negotiate until you get a minimum space of human rights … we didn’t ask for anything more radical because it was clear that we first had to get rid of Pinochet. This was clear among the poor people I work with as well” (interview 44, 2/91).

One Christian Democrat described Aylwin as follows:

Aylwin guaranteed for the people of the Concertación that there would be respect for the different sectors of the opposition. He guaranteed unity and diversity at the same time. He had an image of honesty and fatherliness - less severe than the father before [Pinochet]. A fatherly image is very common for presidents of Chile, like Frei. He also looks like a common Chilean … he is from a middle class family (interview 17, 3/91).

A Humanist party campaign worker noted similar qualities but emphasized his conciliatory nature:

Aylwin is needed by Chile because of his personal characteristics. Chile needs a good, benevolent father, not conflictive, not aggressive, but rather serene. Aylwin was supported for his moral stature. He’s not one to go looking for a fight. The other candidates didn’t have Aylwin’s stature. He represented the continuity of the earlier republic to this new one; to walk with the Socialists, acknowledging his errors of the past, and in all of his actions conveying great personal humility. Aylwin was seen as a man of great principle (interview 43, 2/91).

Putting Practicable Strategies Into Action

Strategy and reality do not often coincide, making it vital to prepare for and adjust to a variety of changing situations. Although the dictatorship still used arrests, disappearances, harassment, torture, and censorship in both campaigns (Constable and Valenzuela 1991, pp. 302-303; interview 49, 3/91), the Concertaciones were prepared for the worst, and were able to employ most of their strategies effectively (interview 26, 12/89; interview 33, 12/89; interview 41, 12/89; interview 36, 1/91; interview 37, 2/91).

The conservative appointees of the Constitutional Tribunal in charge of setting up the election took their job seriously, making it easier for the Concertación for No to monitor the 1988 Plebiscite results. In part, the Opposition benefitted from Pinochet’s belief that he would win the Plebiscite. When the Opposition’s advertisements were finally permitted very limited access on television - the first access in 15 years—they became a huge success (Constable and Valenzuela 1991, pp. 303-307; interview 26, 12/91; interview 19, 2/91).
On October 5, 1988, the majority of Chileans expressed their desire to bring about change through the plebiscite. One former Communist said that even before the plebiscite, “The People made it clear that universal suffrage was the way they wanted to end the dictatorship” (interview 44, 2/91). A few days before the plebiscite there were rumors that the dictatorship and extremist right wing groups were planning to provoke violence and, according to the United States Ambassador, “cancel the plebiscite or overturn the results” (Constable and Valenzuela 1991, p. 308). On October 2, Chile’s ambassador received the United States’ “grave concern” over the rumors at the State Department. Leaders of the Concertación for No exchanged personal phone numbers with General Jorge Zincke, commander of the “security zone” around Santiago for the day of the plebiscite. The opposition controlled radio station, “Radio Cooperativa,” called on the opposition to vote early, go home, and ignore “official reports.” Voters were asked to listen for the reports by the No campaign (Constable and Valenzuela 1991, p. 308). By four in the afternoon, most Chileans had voted and gone home (interview 44, 2/91).

Using its centralized computer system, the Concertación for No realized on the evening of the 5th that they were winning with a clear majority. Foreign surveys of those leaving the polls also indicated that the No had a clear majority. However, the national television, controlled by the dictatorship only reported that the “yes” vote was winning. The television showed reruns of the North American comedy series “Moonlighting” and cartoons. At 9 p.m. the government realized it was losing the election, and called General Zincke to open up the security zone around Santiago to allow yes supporters to celebrate - sure that this would provoke confrontations. The police refused (Conejeros 1990, pp. 271-286; Constable and Valenzuela p. 309). It is possible that the opposition’s successful efforts to meet with General Jorge Zincke before the plebiscite helped influence this decision.

Genaro Arriagada, the director of the parallel computing system, worried that people would become impatient. He began broadcasting by radio his own results. By 11 p.m. he had 40 percent of the vote counted showing the No with 58 percent and the Yes with 40 percent. The dictatorship announced that the yes was winning, with 3.4 percent of the vote counted. Arriagada called friends at Renovación Nacional headquarters and convinced them of his count. Renovación Nacional leaders pleaded with the Interior Ministry to announce new results. When no new results were announced, long-time adversaries Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin and Renovación Nacional (RN) leader Sergio Onofre Jarpa went on Catholic University television together to say, “calmly” that the results so far indicated that the No was winning. Half an hour later one of the members of the ruling junta, General Matthei, told reporters, “I am certain the No has won, but we are calm,” as he entered La Moneda to meet with Pinochet and the other commanders (Constable and Valenzuela 1991, p. 309). In informal conversations I heard
more than one person express an ironic appreciation for Matthei’s courageous comment. With one sentence he had made the dictator’s ability to challenge the results nearly impossible. Pinochet reportedly asked for emergency powers, threatening to resign if he didn’t get them. He was enraged that he had been “betrayed by his advisers and outflanked by his enemies,” but with the consistent feedback from the other generals that they had all sworn to uphold the Constitution, Pinochet finally sunk back in his chair and muttered “All right, do whatever you want” (Constable and Valenzuela 1991, p. 309). At 2:40, with 71 percent of the vote counted, the under secretary of the interior announced on television that the No was leading 53 percent to 44 percent. People in the opposition rushed out into empty streets to celebrate. They were so happy they even hugged police officers.

The No vote received 55 percent and the yes vote received 43 percent (p. 310). The results of the plebescite made it clear that Pinochet still had strong support, which many members of the Concertación for No found surprising (interview 41, 12/89; interview 44, 2/91; interview 25, 12/89). Nevertheless, the sense of victory among the opposition was tremendous.

Realistic Evaluation and Adjustment

Unlike Pinochet’s regime, both Concertaciones actively supported campaign research and critical feedback. If the members of political parties trying to bring about a transition to a democratic government are responding to the expressed needs of their constituents, then they are more likely to gain the confidence of those they want to represent. Focus groups, where researchers analyzed group discussions from various segments of the population, were particularly helpful at adjusting strategies that weren’t having the desired effects (interview 48, 2/91). There was a great deal of pressure from sectors of the opposition to stress the dictatorship’s human rights abuse record - especially in response to the dictatorship’s advertisements indicating that the Concertación for No was violent. The technical committees’ research indicated, however, that most Chileans were turned off by violence, and desperately sought a message of hope. After considerable discussion, a publicity campaign was implemented in which violence was largely ignored and hope was stressed (interview 48, 2/91; interview 49, 3/91).

Similarly, early in the first campaign a technical committee realized that many young people were not registering to vote. The committee set up focus groups and determined that many youth felt helpless. In response the committee targeted a campaign to the young in which registering to vote was framed as a heroic act. The strategy worked and voter registration increased (interview 49, 3/91).
Climate of Mutual Respect

While there must be room for feedback, competition, and differences, everyone in the coalition needs to feel that she or he is an important part of the team (e.g. Swanson 1992, p. 106). Members need to feel heard and respected. Disagreements will occur, but must not be allowed to escalate to the point where people refuse to work with one another. Unless there is a general atmosphere of mutual respect, and this can be manifested differently from one culture to another, demoralization is likely to occur.

There were several skilled facilitators who consciously worked to nurture this climate in both Concertaciones. The technical committees were forums in which everyone had a chance to speak. When there was a dispute the leadership would call the parties involved and listen to all sides. Decisions were usually made by consensus among all of the parties (interview 17, 3/91). However, once the big parties had come to an agreement, the smaller parties often felt they had no other option but to go along (interview 21, 2/91; interview 17, 3/91; interview 22, 3/91), though this did not always happen (interview 21, 2/91). Nevertheless, there was a formal show of carefully listening to each party's representatives. A Socialist described his approach to negotiation within the Concertaciones:

First there is no perfect negotiation. Everyone is not going to be in agreement. Second is the feeling that the state of the country, the national interests, should be first, before the interests of the party - meaning no fighting. As the Concertación developed, within it a culture was created beyond that of an instrumental party, dedicated to constructing a good government.... One has to take into account the interests and the passions of others and of their constituents (interview 28, 2/91).

Nearly all those interviewed from both Concertaciones noted how much they valued the friendships made during the campaigns. Following the 1989 election, however, there were calls from some small-business people, feminists, social workers, and academics for deeper democracy and more horizontal forums for communication. They were frustrated with what they perceived as an attempt to gain control over nongovernmental organizations, resources, and communication channels by the political parties of the Concertación for Democracy (interview 3, 8/92; interview 33, 2/91; interview 32, 3/91; interview 36, 1/91). In reference to the establishment of the new national office for women, a feminist brought up a traditional debate within this new context:

We want to be both autonomous and not autonomous because if we depend entirely on the government we will be eliminated; because it's a government only for four years. The government's Office of the Woman will be an organization of the government. We want to be related to the government but not assimilated by the government, but this has yet to be defined. We are in a machista world, politics are machista; we need our independence (interview 32, 12/89).
One social worker described his concerns for his work with a nongovernmental agency:

I am concerned by the lack of participation of civil society in the decisions that concern the society. There is a democracy in those that are elected, but the society does not have decision-making power in comparison with the well organized economic powers. Therefore, my fundamental work is to enlarge civil society in order to give voice to its individual and common development and to propose an expression of its perspective (interview 3, 8/92).

Both within and beyond the Concertaciones as a political force, there was a deep structural change in the manner of conducting political relationships. One Christian Democrat noted that her party had a history that was very “impregnated with problems in reaching agreement.” But in the 1970s the Christian Democrats were not alone; all of the parties experienced this crisis. She said, “The learning has been common” (interview 17, 3/91). When I asked her about negotiating with enemies, she corrected me by saying “To negotiate with an ‘adversary’ - first of all we have learned to eliminate from our vocabulary the word ‘enemy.’” To do this she said, “You need a certain basic consensus; this means to establish relationships.” Lippmann (1963), once stated that “Indeed there is such a thing as the public philosophy of civility. It does not have to be discovered or invented. It is known. But it does have to be revived and renewed….” (p. 179). The Concertación for No was reviving the “public philosophy of civility.”

Events Following the Two Campaigns: 1989 to 1994

Many observers assumed that the Concertación for No would dissolve into hostile factions as soon as the 1988 Plebescite was over. Then in 1989 many assumed that the Concertación for Democracy would dissolve after the election (interview 26, 12/89; interview 31, 12/89). Dissolution did not occur in either case. Many of the member organizations themselves have split and regrouped, but the Concertación for Democracy has remained largely intact and effective. According to Turner and Killian (1987), once a coalition has overthrown the power against which it united, it is likely to break into conflicting factions when determining the organization of the new power (p. 385). As of 1994 the former dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, is still in charge of the army, his appointed senators are still in office, and Operation Condor, an intelligence network that coordinated repression in the Southern Cone is still active (Blixen 1983, p. 1). Under the current electoral laws, no individual party within the Concertación for Democracy is strong enough to win a majority. Apart from potential electoral defeats, the threat of what might happen if serious conflict is allowed to escalate may play a stabilizing role (see Lijphart 1969). The degree to which this threat is actually a “paper tiger” (Collier and Norden 1992, p. 238) is in dispute. To date, the Concertación for Democracy still assures greater resources to its members if they work together.
While both the campaigns of the Concertación for No and the Concertación for Democracy were generally very successful, there were many challenges and some defeats. Although each context is unique, and additional comparisons with other case studies are needed, the eight processes provide a systematic framework for strategists to consider in other emerging democratic transitions. The exceptionally rich history of Chilean participation in politics also makes the demands in Chile for deeper democracy and more horizontal forums for communication in need of further study.

SUMMARY

As a nonviolent return to a more democratic form of government, the Chilean case does not fit the classic models of transitions to democracy. Tamotsu Shibutani’s interactionist approach helps make sense of both this Chilean situation and previous models. The eight organizing processes I observed were largely clarified through Tom’s work, especially Social Processes (1986), and Society and Personality (1987). Ethnic Stratification: A Comparative Approach (1965) provides a framework that largely explains how enemies can become comrades. This latter book, which has helped many people understand painful ethnic conflicts, also has helped me to better understand non-ethnic, but equally destructive social processes. The framework shows how people can, and sometimes do, work through conflicts and change stratification systems and sustained opposition without turning the other into an enemy.

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NOTE

1. This is similar to what Foran (1993) calls “political cultures of opposition” (p. 13).

REFERENCES


