

## Fractious Allies: Chile, the United States, and the Cold War, 1973–76

In June 1976 Secretary of State Henry Kissinger arrived in Chile to attend a meeting of the Organization of American States. As he told the country's right-wing military dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, he felt honored to be there. Despite the controversy that his trip had caused back in the United States and the international criticism that Washington had received for its relationship with Pinochet's regime, Kissinger also promised all the support he could muster when it came to securing economic and military assistance from an uncompromising U.S. Congress. As the Secretary reassured his host, he had not come to Santiago to give any lectures on human rights. What mattered to Kissinger was that the Pinochet regime succeeded. "We want to help, not undermine you," he promised, "It is my evaluation that you are a victim of all left-wing groups around the world, and that your greatest sin was that you overthrew a government that was going Communist. . . . You did a great service to the West in overthrowing Allende. Otherwise Chile would have followed Cuba."<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding Kissinger's disregard for the Chilean dictatorship's violation of human rights and his questionable reading of Chile's future under Allende, there is nothing particularly startling about this comment. Rightly or wrongly, the threat of "another Cuba" dominated U.S. policy toward Latin America for at least three decades after 1959 and Washington supported numerous right-wing dictatorships during the Cold War politically, economically, and militarily. Chile was no exception in this respect; the United States had even created what Kissinger called "the conditions as great as possible" for the Chilean coup that brought Pinochet to power on September 11, 1973.<sup>2</sup> The coup also had all the hallmarks of a classic Cold War victory: An anticommunist right-wing military junta had overthrown a left-wing revolutionary government with close ties to Castro's Cuba. Within a month of it taking place Washington had therefore given Pinochet a loan of \$24 million for wheat purchases (eight times the total commodity credit offered to

1. Memorandum of Conversation, General Augusto Pinochet, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger et al., June 8, 1976, Digital National Security Archive, online at <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com/marketing/index.jsp>.

2. Telcon, Kissinger and Nixon, September 16, 1973, Box 22, HAK Telcons, National Security Files, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NSCF/NPMP).

Allende's government). And a year later Chile—which accounted for three percent of Latin America's population—was receiving 48 percent of U.S. "Food for Peace" (PL480) grants to the region. In the three years that followed the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Inter-American Development Bank then respectively granted Chile 88 percent of its housing guarantees and \$237.8 million. Furthermore, Pinochet's government became the fifth largest customer of U.S. military equipment until July 1976, when Congress put a decisive stop to all military assistance to Chile on human rights grounds despite Kissinger's best efforts to prevent this from happening.<sup>3</sup>

The relationship between the Chilean dictatorship and the United States in the three years after September 11, 1973, was nevertheless far more fractious than these facts suggest. The problem was not that the Nixon and Ford administrations did not support Pinochet. Rather, tensions arose as a result of the Chilean regime's belief that this was not enough. After expressing his heartfelt support to Pinochet in Santiago, Kissinger had to listen to his host chastise the United States for not offering his regime more help and for abandoning its Cold War responsibilities. On the one hand, Pinochet complained that Chilean political opponents of his regime were allowed a "strong voice" in Washington, had access to Congress and were giving it "false information" that undermined his regime's image (he reserved particular scorn for Allende's former minister, Orlando Letelier, whom Chilean intelligence agents would assassinate three months later). On the other hand, he pressed Kissinger at length on the question of U.S. military support and Washington's position should hostilities break out between Chile and Peru's revolutionary nationalist military government, as the Chileans obsessively believed they would. What would the United States do to help Chile militarily in a war against Soviet-supplied Peruvian tanks, Pinochet asked? Would it support Chile if thousands of Cubans intervened on Lima's behalf? When Kissinger equivocated, the Chilean dictator got angry. "Russia supports their people 100%," he said, "We are behind you. You are the leader. But... you have a punitive system for your friends."<sup>4</sup>

Until now, Pinochet's criticism of the United States at this meeting and its wider implications have been somewhat overlooked by scholarly focus on Kissinger's immorality in supporting Chile's dictatorship. As historians have ably shown, Kissinger remained a steadfast supporter of Pinochet's murderous dictatorship and believed that helping his regime survive was in the United States' national interest.<sup>5</sup> His position on human rights is also notorious.

3. Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (New York, 2003), 212–14, 231. PL480 allocations dropped to 40 percent in 1975 and 28 percent in 1976. See Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 360–61.

4. Memorandum of Conversation, Pinochet, Kissinger, et al., June 8, 1976.

5. See, for example, Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, Christopher Hitchens, *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (London, 2001), John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and his Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (New York, 2004), and David F. Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1965–1989* (Cambridge, 2006).

As Kissinger told the country's foreign minister in 1975, he did not want to "harass" Chile on the matter and thought that it was a "total injustice" to condemn the Chileans on this issue.<sup>6</sup> However, we still know relatively little about how the broader bilateral U.S.–Chilean relationship worked in practice and how it was perceived in Santiago. This reflects a more general historical trend when it comes to understanding how Washington's Third World allies perceived the United States during the Cold War. How harmonious were the relationships Washington forged with right-wing dictators during these decades and to what extent were they founded on a mutual conceptualization of the struggle against the Soviet Union and communism? Did anticommunist regimes in the global South see themselves as partaking in a fight led by Washington? To what extent did they use anticommunism as a way to extract aid and support? And how much control did the United States ultimately have over them?

This article examines the relationship between Chile and the United States between 1973 and 1976 to address these questions. It concludes that Kissinger's sycophantic comments and equivocations to Pinochet in 1976 were both a reflection of the Secretary's personal inclination to support the Chilean dictator and a more immediate, serious rearguard effort to improve bilateral relations after a period of relative tension. It also argues that Pinochet's criticism of the United States in June 1976 did not come out of the blue but rather repeated prior allegations of neglect that Chile's military regime had made to U.S. officials. Two years earlier, for example, Chilean military leaders had already complained about having to "fight alone against half of the world."<sup>7</sup> In early 1974, General Augusto Pinochet had told U.S. Secretary of the Treasury George Schultz that it was the Chileans, and by implication *not* the United States, who were "the ones stopping communism."<sup>8</sup> In 1975, he had then publicly spoken out against what he saw as U.S. neglect in the face of a Soviet-led international communist conspiracy to overthrow his regime. "[T]he world which can defend us, with a cowardice that I do not know how to judge," Pinochet decried, "hides its head and leaves this David [Chile] fighting against Goliath."<sup>9</sup>

To be sure, these complaints took the form of a serious disagreement between allies as opposed to a spat between enemies. They were also directly related to U.S.

6. Kissinger to Carvajal as quoted in Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 228.

7. Record of Conversation, Admiral Huerta and John Scali, September 25, 1974, Electronic Telegram, U.S. Mission USUN NY to SecState, September 25, 1974, Electronic Telegrams, State Department Central Foreign Policy Files (1973–75), National Archives and Records Administration Access to Archival Databases, online at: <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series--description.jsp?s=4073> (hereafter DOS/CFP).

8. Record of Conversation, Pinochet and George Schultz, April 2, 1974, Telegram, AmEmbassy Panama to Secretary Schultz and Hennessy, April 3, 1974, Records of the Secretary of the Treasury George P. Schultz, 1971–74, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, National Archives, College Park, Maryland. I would like to thank Duccio Bassosi for sharing this document with me.

9. Pinochet, July 4, 1975, as quoted in Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, July 5, 1975, DOS/CFP.

congressional efforts to constrain the Nixon and Ford administration's foreign policy as opposed to a response to any concerted effort on the part of the White House to reduce its support for the Chile. Moreover, before Letelier's assassination in September 1976 and Jimmy Carter's emphasis on human rights, the most explicit disagreements between the United States and Chile occurred behind closed doors. But at their core, they revealed the United States' declining prestige and leadership among Third World anticommunist states as well as the complexities of courting right-wing dictatorships in the name of the Cold War. The friction between Chile and the United States also provides an interesting window onto global perceptions of détente, the difficulties that Kissinger confronted in executing his foreign policy at home and abroad, and the fragmentation of the global Cold War in the mid-1970s into regional, often even more alarming, variations of its former self.

Indeed, the period between 1973 and 1976 was a time when the guiding framework that had governed the Cold War was brought into question. It was also one of unprecedented post-war U.S. weakness as a result of the Vietnam War, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the oil crisis, and Watergate. In this context it is true that the Nixon and Ford administrations still thought largely in terms of an ideological struggle between communism and capitalism, believed that détente was the best way of containing the Soviet Union, and delighted at any defeat of what they saw to be "communist advances." Yet the Chilean case also reveals that one of the very allies that would have logically benefitted from Washington's dedication to the Cold War of previous decades now seemed to doubt U.S. commitment to that struggle at the crucial moment when *it* believed it needed its steadfast support most. As such, instead of the United States, the new installed dictatorship in Santiago looked increasingly to likeminded regimes in Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, South Africa, Greece, and Southeast Asia in search of allies. It also sought a more active coordinated response to what it saw as World War III on the horizon, which in turn led to the creation of Operation Condor. In their zealous pursuit of enemies, Chilean military leaders therefore epitomized a new, decentralized, and bitter phase of the Cold War that swept from the global North to the global South in the late 1970s and 1980s, engulfing southern Africa, Central and South America, and parts of Asia in the process.

In this new phase, the United States' ability to comprehend, lead, or dictate the rules of the game shrunk. Not only was it weaker than it once was, but it also had to work with a new variety of Cold War warriors in the global South that had sprung up on the international scene since the conflict began and who were, for want of a better phrase, more papal than the pope. Indeed, what is so striking about newly declassified Chilean and U.S. documents is that they show how independently, ideologically, and irrationally driven the Pinochet regime was when it came to conceptualizing the Cold War and its own mission to fight it. Despite the high levels of support and sympathy Santiago's military leaders received from the Nixon and Ford administrations, the Chilean case does not therefore bear out the view on

the Left and among some scholars of U.S.–Latin American relations that right-wing dictators served as U.S. puppets and foot soldiers during the Cold War.

To the contrary, Pinochet's comments to Kissinger in June 1976 reveal that he resented the U.S. government for not taking *more* of a Cold War leadership role when it came to fighting communism in Latin America. As one U.S. diplomat recorded, Pinochet increasingly “painted [a] picture of Chile with [its] back against the wall, but unbending and sure of its morally right course.”<sup>10</sup> A U.S. State Department Briefing Paper in April 1975 also ultimately concluded that Santiago's right-wing military leaders saw themselves “as victims of détente” and interpreted the imminent fall of South Vietnam on the other side of the world “as a vindication of their Cold War outlook.”<sup>11</sup> All of which begs the question as to what *their* Cold War outlook was, how it differed from Washington's, and what consequences these differences had for the relationship between them.

Intriguingly, when Chile's armed forces seized power on September 11, 1973, U.S. officials doubted their determination to hold on to it. In the months leading up to the coup, the Nixon administration had derided the Chilean military's disunity and its hesitation to relinquish its traditionally constitutional role, questioned whether it would act, and worried that it would not withstand left-wing resistance if it did.<sup>12</sup> A U.S. Interagency Group also lamented three days before the coup that there was no “indication of any widespread sense of ‘mission’ among the Chilean military to take over and run the country.”<sup>13</sup> But as the United States would quickly discover after the event the Chilean military leaders proved themselves to be highly capable of consolidating power and did not lack a sense of mission at all. Certainly, all three branches of the armed forces acted with ruthless determination to overthrow Allende once the decision had been taken, disappearing or murdering over 3,000 Chileans and torturing tens of thousands more in the years that followed. Writing to Pinochet and the commander in chief of the Air Force, Gustavo Leigh, on September 9, 1973, the principal orchestrator of the coup, Admiral José Toribio Merino, had quite simply argued that if the Armed Forces did not use their full force from day one, they would “not live to see the future.”<sup>14</sup> Henceforth, the military junta issued repeated proclamations about

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10. Pinochet, November 14, 1974, as quoted in Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, November 15, 1974, DOS/CFP.

11. Briefing Paper, Department of State, “Bilateral Talks During OASGA: Chile—Foreign Minister Carvajal,” April 1975, Box 217, Executive Secretariat—Briefing Books 1958–1976, General Records of the Department of State, National Archives, Maryland, College Park (hereafter ExecSec/RG59/NARA).

12. Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill, 2011), 223–30.

13. Ad Hoc Interagency Working Group on Chile, “Chile Contingency Paper: Possible Military Action,” enclosure, Memorandum, Pickering to Scowcroft, September 8, 1973, Box 2196/RG59/NARA.

14. Patricia Verdugo, *Interferencia Secreta: 11 de Septiembre de 1973* (Santiago, 1998), 23–24.

“eradicating Marxist cancer from Chilean life.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, in sharp contrast to earlier qualms about a lack of “mission,” an internal State Department Briefing memo observed two months after the coup that the Chilean military were exhibiting “a puritanical crusading spirit—a determination to cleanse and rejuvenate Chile.”<sup>16</sup>

So where did this crusading spirit and anti-Marxist character come from? Anticommunism was not a new Chilean phenomenon in 1973. Moreover, the Cold War “did not introduce anticommunism into Latin America,” as Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough have argued in reference to Latin American elites’ political concerns dating back to 1917.<sup>17</sup> In the late 1940s, Chile’s Communist Party had been outlawed by President Gabriel Gonzalez Videla and its members sent to prison camps in the Atacama Desert (a younger Augusto Pinochet being one of the soldiers that guarded them).<sup>18</sup> Anticommunism had then intensified in response to Cuba’s revolutionary influence in Chile and Allende’s efforts to lead his country toward socialism. During Chile’s presidential election in 1964 and 1970, advertisements in the national newspaper, *El Mercurio*, warned of the country being at a crossroads. The electorate held the future of Chile in their hands, one full-page spread in the paper just days before the 1970 elections warned: Allende spelled communism and his opponent, the conservative ex-president, Jorge Alessandri, spelled “freedom.”<sup>19</sup>

In the early 1970s, the specter of civil war had then come to dominate Chilean politics, exacerbated by right-wing paramilitary violence, evidence that left-wing groups were arming with Cuban assistance, and far Left pronouncements that Allende’s peaceful democratic road to socialism would soon be accelerated. Meanwhile, the Chilean Right vastly overestimated the Left’s potential to accelerate its socialist goals and increasingly believed its own alarmist propaganda about 15,000 foreign extremists roaming the country. The Allende government had no cohesive strategy for launching an *auto-golpe* against its opponents or even militarily defending itself, far less a foreign army of thousands to help it do so. Even so, months before the coup, Admiral Ismael Huerta Díaz, who would become the military junta’s first Foreign Minister, wrote in his diary that Chile had become a

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15. Airgram, Davis to Department of State, “The Military Junta at One Month,” October 12, 1973, Box 2198/RG59/NARA.

16. Briefing Memorandum, Kubisch to The Secretary, November 27, 1973 in Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 174–76.

17. Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough, “Latin America between the Second World War and the Cold War: Some Reflections on the 1945–8 Conjuncture,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 20, no. 1 (May 1988), 179.

18. Pamela Constable and Arturo Valenzuela, *A Nation of Enemies: Chile Under Pinochet* (New York, 1991), 46.

19. Marcelo Casals, “Chile en la encrucijada. Anticomunismo y propaganda el la ‘campaña del terror’ de las elecciones presidenciales de 1964,” in *Chile y la Guerra: Mas Allá que Washignton y Moscú*, ed. Tanya Harmer and Alfredo Riquelme (forthcoming) and *El Mercurio*, September 1–3, 1970.

“tragic” “laboratory” for “foreign ideologies, foreign personalities.”<sup>20</sup> On the day of the coup, military leaders were so scared of the Left’s strength and Cuba’s ability to lead armed resistance that they used jets to bomb the presidential palace and besieged the Cuban embassy, expelling all Cubans from Chile as a matter of priority (there were just over a hundred Cubans in the country rather than thousands).<sup>21</sup>

During the Allende years, coup plotters had also been increasingly averse to what they saw as the “politicization” of Chile’s armed forces. Not only had military leaders been brought into Allende’s cabinet at the end of 1972 but as Admiral Merino told Allende’s Defense Minister at a tense private meeting in early September 1973, the Navy “did not wish to be Marxist” and would “reject a system contrary to its principles.”<sup>22</sup> Military leaders had also heckled the government’s education minister over the government’s proposal for a new Unified Education System (ENU) in early 1973. While the government tried to argue that the proposition pragmatically addressed a crisis in Chile’s educational system, its objectives—and opposition to it—were ideological. Certainly, members of the armed forces joined the right-wing in publicly denouncing the ENU, which promised to replace “authoritarian, competitive and traditionalist” education with schooling that promoted “the values of humanistic socialism,” as the imposition of Marxist thought on a new generation.<sup>23</sup> The discovery of a far Left subversive plot within the Navy at the end of August had not helped calm military fears that the armed forces were in danger of being taken over by Allende’s political project. Only days before, military leaders had written to General Pinochet, as he took over as the Army’s commander in chief, reminding him that the Armed Forces were “ideologically . . . antagonistic” to Marxism and urging him to take action.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, members of Chile’s historically constitutional armed forces had increasingly lost respect for civilian politics, which they saw as having brought their country to the brink of collapse. As left-wing parties fought among themselves in the early 1970s, battling against their powerful center-right and right-wing political opponents at the same time, military leaders complained

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20. Huerta, c. July 1973, as quoted in Joaquín Fernandois, *Mundo y Fin de Mundo: Chile en la Política Mundial 1900-2004* (Santiago, 2005), 357.

21. See Harmer, *Allende’s Chile*, 254.

22. Memorandum of Conversation, Ministro Def. Letelier et al., Valparaíso, September 3, 1973, Fondo José Toribio Merino, Centro de Investigación y Documentación, Universidad Finis Terrae, Santiago, Chile (hereafter FJTM/CIDOC).

23. Jonathan Haslam, *The Nixon Administration and the Death of Allende’s Chile: A Case of Assisted Suicide* (London, 2005), 165, Carlos Prats, *Memorias: Testimonio de un Soldado* (Santiago, 1985), 378–79, and “PDC Rechaza la Escuela Nacional Unificada,” *El Mercurio*, April 6, 1973, *Los Mil Días de Allende*, ed. Gonzalez Pino and Fontaine Talvaera (Santiago, 1997), 378–79.

24. Memorandum to Pinochet, “Memorandum sobre la Situación Nacional,” August 27, 1973 as quoted in Patricio Quiroga, *Compañeros: El GAP, La Escolta de Allende* (Santiago, 2001), 124–25.

that the “political party had become more important than the country.”<sup>25</sup> In their view, patriotism was quite simply being undermined by politics.<sup>26</sup> Despite historically existing in what Pamela Constable and Arturo Valenzuela have called a “hermetic and hierarchical world...hostile to all outsiders,” Chile’s armed forces therefore began to see themselves as the nation’s truest patriots and potential leaders.<sup>27</sup> As a Navy Captain recalled years later, he received a standing ovation from fellow naval officers just before the coup when he proclaimed that only the Armed Forces were in a position to honor Chile’s flag and its national heroes.<sup>28</sup>

The coup plotters’ faith in the armed forces’ ability to accelerate Chilean modernization and economic development encouraged them to assume this self-anointed mantle as the country’s only patriots. At one level, they perceived security as being pivotal to Chile’s road to recovery and prosperity and considered the armed forces as being the only sector of Chilean society able to provide this.<sup>29</sup> In this respect, the military high command’s training had traditionally centered on the prospect of a war between Chile and her neighbors, and in 1973 the Chilean military was focused on the idea that Juan Velasco Alvarado’s left-leaning military government in Peru posed a serious threat. Even before the coup, Lima’s purchase of Soviet weapons had stoked fears within military circles that Peru was poised to take advantage of Chile’s internal weakness to recover the territory it had lost during the Pacific War (1879–83). After September 11, the fear that the USSR would push Velasco to invade Chile as a means of avenging Allende’s death made the question of security seem even more urgent.

So concerned were they that the Peruvian Armed Forces would take advantage of Chilean weakness after a coup to invade disputed territories that Admiral Merino had sent a special clandestine emissary to Brazil in August 1973 to consult the country’s intelligence services about any information they might have on Lima’s intentions before the coup was launched. Although the Brazilians would fail to reassure the junta about Peruvian intentions in years to come, they had had enough information on this occasion to offer the green light to military plotters.<sup>30</sup> Yet the military regime remained obsessive about securing Chile’s northern border with Peru. As Pinochet wrote in a book he published in 1968, the science of

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25. Ibid. On the military’s distrust of civilians and vice versa see Joaquín Fernando, “Modernización, Desarrollo, Dictadura: El Papel de Sergio de Castro,” *Estudios Públicos* 108 (Spring 2007), 298.

26. Telegram, Col. Gerald H. Sills, G2 USARSO to MG Aaron, ACSI, DA, April 11, 1974, Central Intelligence Agency Records Search Tool, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter CREST).

27. Constable and Valenzuela, *Nation of Enemies*, 12.

28. Letter, Captain Rolando Garcia Le-Blanc to Admiral Merino, March 4, 1978, FJTM/CIDOC.

29. Estado Mayor General del Ejercito, “Analysis of la Seguridad en la Actual Situación de América,” XI Conferencia de Ejercitos Americanos, Montevideo, [October 19–25] 1975, FJTM/CIDOC.

30. *Conversando con Roberto Kelly V.: Recuerdos de una Vida*, ed. Patricia Arancibia Claval (Santiago, 2005), 144–47.



Geopolitics held that states were just like human beings: They were born, they grew, and they died. What distinguished states from other living organisms, however, was that they could be reborn and remade after they had died. But in the case of rebirth—renewal being one of the junta's most well-used mantras—a nation's borders and its internal strength were fundamentally important to the health, strength, and survival of the nation, and in this respect the role of a country's armed forces was key.<sup>31</sup>

The fear of internal weakness and subversion from within also drove the military to act the way it did. As Pinochet had previously argued, if a country had a strong, cohesive heartland, its frontiers would automatically be more secure. But when a country was internally weak, it was dangerously vulnerable to attack. The polarization of Chilean society during the Allende years and the economic crisis the country faced in 1973 encouraged such fears. When it came to the different types of attack a country might face beyond traditional invasion by a hostile power, Pinochet had also expressed clear views prior to assuming power that undoubtedly shaped the way in which he viewed the question of security. As he put it in 1968, all nations were engaged in a permanent battle for survival and power. And in seeking to gain advantage over other nations, states would always use economic and psychological instruments to defeat a nation before resorting to direct military intervention. He was particularly impressed with Hitler's recognition of the power of psychology in this respect, citing *Mein Kampf's* explanation of the power that propaganda had to create a "barrage of fire" that could "psychologically destroy" an enemy, something that he acted upon against his own enemies but that also clearly came to haunt him after 1973 when it came to responding to those who opposed his dictatorship.<sup>32</sup>

These ideas and fears coincided with external influences. Between 1950 and 1979, almost 7,000 Chilean officers out of a total 87,000 members of the country's armed forces were schooled in concepts of counterinsurgency at the United States' School of the Americas in Panama. According to what became known as the National Security Doctrine throughout Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, those who underwent this kind of training learnt that the military's prime concern had to be its capacity to fight a total revolutionary war against communist subversives rather than an interstate warfare with its accompanying strategic battle plans.<sup>33</sup> Brazilian military officials—themselves heavily influenced by French counterinsurgency doctrines developed in Algeria—also shared considerable insights on the National Security Doctrine, repression, torture and authoritarian

31. Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, *Geopolítica* (Santiago, 1974), 229.

32. *Ibid.*, 157, 167–70.

33. On the impact of the National Security Doctrine on Argentina, for example, see David M. K. Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States: An Alliance Contained* (Athens, GA, 2006), 122–23. On the rise of U.S.-led counter-insurgency programs and military training in the 1960s, see Stephen Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 2000).

rule with their Chilean counterparts, having actively conspired with coup plotters and then participated in the junta's brutal crackdown after September 11, 1973.<sup>34</sup>

At a second level, coup leaders regarded the military as an essential component of any effort to rebuild Chile from within. The idea that Latin America's armed forces could play a significant role in modernizing their countries had become increasingly popular throughout the Americas in the 1960s.<sup>35</sup> Military regimes in Brazil and Peru may have been ideologically different but they both emphasized the role that the army could play and the imperative of involving the armed forces in the quest for development and modernization. Having been traditionally less politicized than their South American counterparts, the Chilean military were also now thinking along these lines. Following the coup, the U.S. Ambassador in Santiago reported back that the Chilean military prioritized economic stability and a "healthy social structure" as essential pillars of defense. According to this "broader interpretation," the ambassador observed, "officers [had] looked on in anger as they saw the Allende government plunge Chile into economic disaster and increased foreign dependency, and watched the UP parties and extreme left elements actively seek to undermine traditional military precepts of discipline and chain of command."<sup>36</sup> Moreover, as the Chilean Army's General Staff outlined in 1975, the Chilean armed forces believed that they were "depositories of a population's best values, of its vulnerabilities and greatness" and were in "superb conditions to promote programs that favored socio-economic reordering"; "military instruction provided . . . moral habits, discipline and a sense of duty etc."<sup>37</sup> Given that Pinochet believed development depended on national "vitality," cohesion, engineering feats, and the ability to dominate nature, as he had articulated in 1968, this analysis of the armed forces' strengths was important. In Pinochet's view, underdevelopment derived from "weak, slow, or depressed" populations. Therefore, by being stronger, quicker, and more exultant, the armed forces would be able to overcome Chile's backwardness.<sup>38</sup>

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34. Constable and Valenzuela, *Nation of Enemies*, 47, 71, Marie-Monique Robin, *Escuadrones de la Muerte: La Escuela Francesa*, documentary film (2003). On Brazil's role in the coup, see also Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 228–29, 250–51, Tanya Harmer, "Brazil's Cold War in the Southern Cone," *Cold War History* 12, no. 4 (November 2012) and "Brazil Conspired with U.S. to Overthrow Allende," National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book 282, August 16, 2009, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book 282, online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB282/index.htm>.

35. On U.S. views of the military's role in modernization processes, see Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area of the World* and Nelson Rockefeller, "The Official Report of a United States Presidential Mission For the Western Hemisphere," August 30, 1969, in *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary History*, ed. Robert Holden and Eric Zolov (New York, 2000).

36. Airgram, Davis to Department of State, "The Military Junta at One Month," October 12, 1973.

37. Estado Mayor General del Ejercito, "Analysis de la Seguridad en la Actual Situación de América."

38. Pinochet, *Geopolítica*, 38, 213.

As fervent nationalists imbued with racially conceived notions of grandeur, the coup plotters also believed that military control of the country would allow Chile to rise up out of the ranks of the Third World and assume a leading position in South America. Pinochet explained to Kissinger in 1976, “We are a people with energy. We have no Indians.”<sup>39</sup> An economic advisor to Chile’s Foreign Ministry after the coup was explicit about what this meant: Chile should stop associating with “third-class” Andean countries (he noted Venezuela as an exception on account of its oil wealth) and identify with a “higher class” of nations such as Brazil, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand and, beyond that, the United States, Western Europe, and oil-rich Arab states.<sup>40</sup> Whether or not these countries were prepared to associate with Chile, and how successful Chile would be at maneuvering itself into the position it sought was nevertheless unclear when the coup shook world opinion and changed the character of Chilean politics forever. The Chilean military’s aspirations would be also be severely undermined as the country became an internationally condemned pariah.

In sum, concerns related to the battle for security, development and progress, not to mention the balance of power in the Southern Cone and Andean region, were central to why the military acted on September 11, 1973. The armed forces’ mission was a nationalist one, but it was conceptualized in terms of a nation engaged in a permanent war of survival and a race to outclass regional competitors while simultaneously fighting against an international communist conspiracy. In its eyes, this threat had previously managed to infiltrate Chile on account of weak civilian politicians and now stood inside and outside the country waiting to get its revenge for the coup through psychological warfare, subversion, or invasion. And it was this thinking, more than U.S. puppet strings or smoking guns, that drove Chilean military leaders to act. Having been rather scathing about the Chilean armed forces’ ability to launch a coup, U.S. officials rapidly had to get to know the military leaders now in charge of the country and how their sense of mission would affect relations with the United States. As the ambassador in Santiago predicted a month after the coup:

[T]he military men who now rule Chile are nationalistic as is evidenced in their extreme pride that they managed their own coup without the assistance of the USG of other nations. No matter how fervent their desire to reach an understanding with the USG may be, they can be expected to defend vigorously what they interpret to be Chilean national interests.<sup>41</sup>

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39. Memorandum of Conversation, Pinochet, Kissinger et al., June 8, 1976.

40. Memorandum Secreto, Sr. Tomas Lackington H. (Asesor y Director Economico de la Cancillera) to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Almirante Sr. Patricio Carvajal Prado, “Relaciones Políticas Bilaterales, Chile-Estados Unidos,” March 1, 1976, FJTM/CIDOC.

41. Airgram, Nathaniel Davis to SecState, “The Military Junta at One Month,” October 12, 1973.

After September 11, U.S. policymakers began addressing the extent to which the military regime's fervent attachment to perceived national interests would affect bilateral ties and what impact Chilean developments would have on the United States' wider foreign relations. As they did, however, these questions intersected with condemnation of the new military regime's human rights abuses and accusations of U.S. responsibility for them. Meanwhile, the Chilean junta increasingly saw itself as under siege, which in turn strengthened its determination to destroy those it classed as enemies and stand resolute against any criticism it received. Given this predicament, the Nixon administration had a hard time marrying its desire, on the one hand, to strengthen bilateral ties with Santiago's new leaders and, on the other, to protect the United States' reputation and the administration's ability to persuade Congress to maintain levels of assistance to Chile. The issue, as policymakers crudely put it, was how to "square away the human rights issue" so as to be able to sustain their support for Pinochet's military dictatorship.<sup>42</sup> Yet, ironically, as the administration tried to work out how best to do this, the Chilean regime grew disillusioned with what it considered to be the United States' lackluster support.

Before September 11, 1973, U.S. officials had previously known relatively little about Pinochet, even if they encouraged the coup, willed it to succeed, and quickly regarded the junta's leader as being "honest, hard working, dedicated."<sup>43</sup> Days after the coup, their understanding of what Pinochet stood for was still ambiguous with early reporting labeling him a "possible influence within the junta for restoring civilian rule at an early date."<sup>44</sup> Even so, it soon became clear that Pinochet and his colleagues seemed far more ready to destroy left-wing influences in Chile than initially predicted. Ten days after the coup, Washington's ambassador in Santiago reported, "the prevailing mood among the Chilean military is to use the current opportunity to stamp out all vestiges of communism in Chile for good. Severe repression is planned."<sup>45</sup> Having previously described repression as "necessary" and a situation in which "after some, perhaps considerable, bloodletting, Chile could eventually achieve a greater measure of political and social stability" as

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42. "The Secretary's 8:00 a.m. Regional Staff Meeting, Tuesday, December 3, 1974," December 5, 1974, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, no. 110, online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB110/index.htm>.

43. DCI Briefing, WSAG Meeting, September 14, 1973, "Chile Declassification Project," Freedom Of Information Act Reading Room, Department of State, NSC Documents, online at: <http://foia.state.gov/SearchColls/NSC.asp> (hereafter CDP-NSC), Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 155, and Record of Conversation, Davis and Pinochet, October 12, 1973, Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy to SecState, October 12, 1973, DOS/CFP.

44. Briefing Paper "Economic Assistance Needs of the New Government of Chile and Possible Responses," enclosure, Memorandum Pickering to Scowcroft, September 14, 1973, Box 2196/RG59/NARA.

45. CIA Information Report, September 21, 1973, "Chile Declassification Project," Freedom of Information Act Reading Room, CIA Documents, online at: <http://foia.state.gov/SearchColls/CIA.asp> (hereafter CDP-CIA).

“favorable,” the CIA also now praised what it saw.<sup>46</sup> As Kissinger told U.S. labor leaders three days after the coup, he had “no illusions that [he was] dealing with a bunch of nice guys,” but equally he wanted to help them.<sup>47</sup>

This praise notwithstanding, the new regime’s repression posed specific challenges for the Nixon administration at home and abroad. For Kissinger, there was no doubt that strengthening the new Chilean government came first. In his view, it was an “absurd situation where we have to apologize for the overthrow of . . . a government hostile to us.”<sup>48</sup> He also believed that any decline of U.S. support would be “wildly against the national interest” of the United States. Others within the State Department worried more about the implications of close ties with a murderous dictatorship both for the United States’ international standing and the administration’s domestic position. However, they did not question the desirability of helping the Chilean military to succeed. To the contrary, every effort was made to play down human rights abuses and persuade the junta that the United States remained committed to helping it.<sup>49</sup> As Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush told the Belgian Foreign Minister when he enquired about the Chilean situation: “While there were always excesses in a revolution of this type, there tended to be exaggeration by many refugees who confused fear with fact and we did not believe the situation was as bad as many made out.”<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, Washington offered the Chilean regime reassurances of support. Speaking personally to Chile’s new Foreign Minister, Admiral Ismael Huerta, in early October, the Secretary promised “emphatically that U.S. policy would not be modified by mistaken information in the press.”<sup>51</sup> Indeed, U.S. government officials soon found themselves apologizing profusely for the criticism the Chilean junta was receiving in the United States. By way of explaining away this criticism, Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs Jack Kubisch explained to Huerta that there was a difference between the U.S. government and the people of the United States. The United States was a “complex society” and although the

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46. Intelligence Memorandum, “Consequences of a Military Coup in Chile,” August 1, 1973, CDP-CIA.

47. Memorandum of Conversation, Kissinger, Richard P. Campbell, George Meany and Jay Lovestone, George Meany’s Office, September 14, 1973, Box 1027, HAK and RN Memcons/NSCF/NPMP.

48. Telcon, Kissinger and Rush, September 13, 1973, Box 22/HAK Telcons/NSCF/NPMP.

49. “The Secretary’s Principals and Regionals Staff Meeting, Friday, December 20, 1974, 8: a.m.,” December 20, 1974 and “The Secretary’s Regionals’ and Principles’ Staff Meeting, Monday, December 23, 1974, 8:00 a.m.,” December 23, 1974, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, no. 110, online at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB110/index.htm>.

50. Memorandum of Conversation, Deputy Secretary Rush with Renaat Van Elslande, Foreign Minister of Belgium and Walter Loridan, Belgian Ambassador to Washington, October 9, 1973, Box 2198/RG59/NARA.

51. Record of Conversation, Huerta and Kissinger, October 12, 1973, Telex, EmbaChile to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, October 12, 1973, Telex: R.491-, Embajada de Chile en los Estados Unidos, 1973, Archivo General Histórico, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Santiago, Chile (hereafter EEUU/1973/AMRE).

administration could not control the press, he assured Huerta that it was “USG policy . . . to support and cooperate with the GOC.”<sup>52</sup>

U.S. government officials nevertheless tentatively began suggesting that the military could do something on the issue of human rights, as a means of helping the United States to help Chile. In April 1974, Kubisch delivered this message when he visited Santiago. Having first disclosed the good news that the U.S. would be able to sell Chile arms—albeit asking the Chilean regime to keep this information confidential for as long as possible to avoid criticism—he then asked if there was any possibility that the Chilean government would consider freeing former members of Allende’s cabinet from detention.<sup>53</sup> Tentative as these suggestions were, the military regime’s response was defiant. As one Chilean Foreign Ministry advisor would note in subsequent years, the United States and Chile had “diametrically opposed conceptions of what [was] considered just.” And this, in turn, led to complications in the relationship between them.<sup>54</sup> The junta also began questioning the United States’ dependability as an ally. True, Chile’s new ambassador in Washington, Walter Heitman, singled Kissinger out as a “bas-tion” of support in the United States and reported that financial sectors offered “enthusiastic backing.” However, a year after the coup, Chilean diplomats in Washington were warning their superiors back home about the United States’ “liberal press” and “democratic” or “liberal” tendencies in the State Department. As Heitman put it, an “active leftist minority” had “infiltrated” the U.S. administration.<sup>55</sup>

Kissinger tended to agree and even encouraged such views. As he would tell the Chilean Foreign Minister a year later, “I read the Briefing Paper for this meeting and it was nothing but Human Rights. The State Department is made up of people who have a vocation for the ministry. Because there were not enough churches for them, they went into the Department of State.”<sup>56</sup> Yet Kissinger’s acknowledgment that there were people who opposed Chile’s repressive character at Foggy Bottom did not ameliorate the Chileans’ views. Rather than accept Kissinger’s reassurances or question the reasons for such criticism of the Chilean regime in

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52. Record of Conversation Kubisch, Popper and Huerta, no date, Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy to SecState, February 11, 1974, DOS/CFP.

53. He specifically mentioned Allende’s Foreign Minister, Clodomiro Almeyda, and one time Ambassador and Minister, Orlando Letelier. Record of Conversation, Heitman, Kubisch, and Shlaudeman, April 25, 1974, Oficio Estrictamente Conf., EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, May 3, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE. See also Record of Conversation, Heitman and Rogers, October 14, 1974 in Oficio Sec., EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, October 17, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE.

54. Memorandum Secreto, Lackington to Carvajal, “Políticas Bilaterales, Chile-Estados Unidos,” March 1, 1976.

55. Oficio Secreto, Heitman to Señor Ministro, October 29, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE.

56. Memorandum of Conversation, Secretary’s Meeting with Foreign Minister Carvajal, September 29, 1975, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, no. 110, online at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB110/index.htm>.

the first place, Heitman argued that the place Chile was assuming in domestic U.S. politics had more to do with the nature of political wrangling in Washington than what was happening back home. As he reported, the question of human rights was merely being used as a useful pretext by Democrats who were campaigning to win back power from the Republicans.<sup>57</sup>

In fact, as far as the new Chilean regime was concerned, the relationship with democratic, liberal, and politically unstable Washington was not nearly as natural as ties with other right-wing Latin American dictatorships. After all, it was not the U.S. democratic system that the military leaders were seeking to emulate, but rather the military regime in Brasilia. Unsurprisingly, given Brazil's role in helping to bring about the coup, officials at Itamaraty also instantly conveyed their "intimate satisfaction" with the overthrow of Allende, leading Santiago's new ambassador in Brasilia to talk about a "profound friendship" between both countries.<sup>58</sup> At the very least, the Brazilians appeared to comprehend the junta's aims and the problems that it was encountering in the international arena in a way that U.S. officials did not. As Brazil's Foreign Minister Gibson Barbosa told Chile's ambassador in December 1973, Brazil had lived through a similar experience after its own coup in 1964. It had also faced international criticism, though Barbosa had to admit that he had never seen an international campaign so "concentrated and violent" as the one being launched against Chile's new military dictatorship. In his view, Chile and Brazil were in the same "trench," which explains why Brazil's permanent representative at the UN helped draft Admiral Huerta's speech when he spoke before its General Assembly in October 1973.<sup>59</sup>

As well as being able to offer moral support, the Brazilians also appeared to be forthcoming on economic assistance in the months immediately following the coup. By the end of October 1973, the Chileans may not have got as much as they hoped for from Brasilia, but they nevertheless received \$50 million in finance credits, \$35 million to buy Brazilian goods, and \$50 million for consumable goods, and promises to provide yet more funds to Chile's armed forces.<sup>60</sup> U.S. officials welcomed this regional cooperation, not least because it allowed them to be more circumspect. "Brazil may be particularly important because of its likely ideological identification with the new GOC and its substantial and growing economic strength," an Economic Briefing Paper for the Washington Special Action Group underlined a few days after the coup. As it stated, "for financial and

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57. Oficio Secreto, EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, December 6, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE.

58. Oficios, EmbaChile Brasilia to Señor Ministro, September 13 and 27, 1973, Oficios Conf., E., R., Embajada de Chile en Brasil, 1973, Archivo General Histórico, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Santiago (hereafter Brasil/1973/AMRE).

59. Record of Conversation, Hernán Cubillos and Gibson Barbosa, December 7, 1973, Oficio, EmbaChile Brasilia to Señor Ministro, December 7, 1973, Oficios Conf., E., R., Brasil/1973/AMRE and Cable, Scali to SecState, October 10, 1973, DOS/CFP.

60. Oficio, EmbaChile Brasilia to Señor Ministro, "Visita de Misión Económica," October 29, 1973, Oficios Conf., E., R., Brasil/1973/AMRE.

technical as well as political reasons,” it was better for the United States to be “part of a larger effort of various international and other sources of assistance” rather than a unilateral sponsor for the new dictatorship.<sup>61</sup> Pinochet and the Brazilians were more than happy to explore what the ambassador called “third country channeling of aid.”<sup>62</sup> When it came to fighting “urban terrorism,” the U.S. ambassador in Santiago also reminded the Chileans that they should seek advice from those in Latin America with “considerable experience,” and Kissinger personally told Foreign Minister Huerta to acquire military equipment from Brazil.<sup>63</sup>

Brazil was then the first country that Pinochet visited after seizing power, where he took the opportunity to discuss the prospect of confronting international Marxism together with Brazil’s incoming President Ernesto Geisel. Uruguay’s right-wing president, José María Bordaberry, whom Pinochet admired, also met him in Brasília, extending a hand of friendship (and the prospect of increased meat exports to Chile).<sup>64</sup> As the U.S. ambassador in Montevideo reported, there were many in Uruguay who looked on Pinochet’s regime with gratitude; “if Chile had not taken the brunt of the attack of the Marxists,” the country’s leadership believed, “Uruguay would have been the preferred target.”<sup>65</sup>

Even so, this early support from Brazil did not eclipse Chilean military leaders’ recognition that a good relationship with the United States was absolutely essential for economic, financial and military reasons. The so-called Chilean economic “miracle” of future years was still a long way off. In the first few months after the coup, the CIA estimated food prices rose by 200–400 percent, the country suffered from minimal foreign exchange reserves (\$12.9 million was left by 1973 of nearly \$400 million Allende had inherited three years before) and needed \$600 million to cover its budget deficit by the end of 1974. It had to import 72 percent of its oil at the height of the global oil crisis, and toward the end of 1974 the price of copper—80 percent of Chile’s source of income—dropped to such an extent that Chile’s copper earnings were basically halved from \$1,623 million in 1974 to \$868.2 million in 1975.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, by 1975, the situation was so bad that U.S. sources were commenting on an “agonizing process of readjustment” and a “slowly

61. Briefing Paper “Economic Assistance Needs of the New Government of Chile and Possible Responses,” enclosure, Memorandum, Pickering to Scowcroft, September 14, 1973.

62. Record of Conversation, Davis and Pinochet, October 18, 1973, Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, October 18, 1973, DOS/CFP.

63. Record of Conversation, Davis and Heitman, Ambassador Designate, September 27, 1973, Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, September 28, 1973, DOS/CFP and Record of Conversation, Huerta and Kissinger, October 12, 1973, Telex, EmbaChile to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, October 12, 1973.

64. Oficio, Embachile Brasília to Señor Ministro, March 22, 1974, Oficios Conf., E., R., Brasil/1974/AMRE. On Pinochet’s admiration for Bordaberry, see Constable and Valenzuela, *Nation of Enemies*, 71.

65. Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Montevideo to SecState, August 19, 1975, DOS/CFP.

66. DCI Briefing for Senate Armed Services Committee, 10 a.m., January 24, 1974, CREST and Margaret H. Spooner, *Soldiers in a Narrow Land: The Pinochet Regime in Chile* (Berkeley, 1994), 93, 105.



tightening noose around a country that is fighting for economic survival.”<sup>67</sup> Clearly, the early haphazard shock measures used to try and solve these situations had not brought about conclusive results either. Although public spending dropped by 10 percent in the latter half of 1974, Chile’s economy actually shrank in 1975 while unemployment doubled between 1974 and 1975 reaching 18 percent in 1975 and 22 percent the year after.<sup>68</sup>

Given these growing economic difficulties, Pinochet personally appealed to the U.S. government for more support. With implicit references to Modernization Theory, Pinochet appealed directly to the Secretary of the Treasury in April 1974 for more assistance on the grounds that “Chile urgently needed foreign resources to bring it to the point of economic take-off.” As he argued, the state controlled industries that the regime had inherited from Allende were “in bad shape and needed ‘an injection’ to put them into condition for productive and profitable work.” He also underlined the new regime’s intention to resolve inherited compensation disputes with private U.S. companies. Alluding to Allende’s government, which had deducted what it had calculated to have been “excess profits” from compensation it owed expropriated entities, Pinochet also insisted that his was “not a thieving government.”<sup>69</sup>

The Nixon and Ford administrations were clearly predisposed to help Pinochet’s dictatorship survive and had been belatedly impressed by the steadfast determination with which coup leaders clamped down on resistance. However, they were clearly not satisfying the Chileans in the way that the latter had hoped they would either in terms of their suitability as an ally or material assistance. When U.S. officials indicated that they would be able to help more if the dictatorship moderated its repressive policies in accordance with international demands, Santiago’s new military regime also obstinately refused. As U.S. officials had predicted from the start, Pinochet’s regime was simply unwilling to adapt its behavior for the sake of an easier alliance with Washington, regardless of how necessary this was for its economic survival. This lack of pragmatism was rooted in the military regime’s fanatical belief that Chile, Latin America, and the world as a whole, faced of an ongoing, even accelerating, total war against international communism. And as this zealous faith became clearer and more articulated in relation to a burgeoning dispute between Chile and Peru in 1974 and 1975, it preoccupied Nixon-Ford administration officials, who once again found themselves surprised by the determination of allies they were dealing with.

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67. CIA Intelligence Memorandum, “Chile After Two Years of Military Rule,” October 21, 1975, CREST and Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, March 27, 1974, DOS/CFP.

68. Spooner, *Soldiers in a Narrow Land*, 106.

69. Record of Conversation, Pinochet and George Schultz, April 2, 1974. As a result of the settlement that Pinochet’s government reached with private U.S. companies in 1974, Chile paid ITT \$100 million, Anaconda \$253 million, Cerro \$41.8 million, and Kennecott \$53 million. See Spooner, *Soldiers in a Narrow Land*, 95.

Key to the Chileans' Cold War belligerence was their fear that they faced an imminent Peruvian invasion. Instead of prioritizing economic assistance, Pinochet first and foremost wanted U.S. military hardware to catch up with Peru's modernization programs such as M-60 tanks and F5 fighter jets, armored personnel carriers, rifles, ammunition, communications systems.<sup>70</sup> After a visit to Chile in March 1974, one U.S. military official went so far as to observe that "the Peruvian threat supersedes all of Chile's other major problems, even though the country is waging a great battle for economic and political survival."<sup>71</sup> Underlining the centrality of Chile's frontline battle against Peru, Pinochet told the Secretary of the Treasury George Schultz during the latter's visit to Washington the following month that if his regime fell as a result of a Peruvian invasion "the repercussions would be immediate, not only in Chile but also in all of Latin America, Central America and Mexico. And even further north."

The communists understood what the Chilean experience meant to them, and they realized that this experience had had a destructive effect on their doctrine. Thus they were seeking by every means to bring down the Junta. They had been able to provoke tension between Chile and Peru. They were trying to enlarge their foothold in Peru and extend it from that point to the rest of America.<sup>72</sup>

When the Chileans voiced such fears to U.S. representatives they nevertheless received non-committal sympathy.<sup>73</sup> The Nixon and Ford administrations understood that Lima's leaders were not Marxist, and that certain branches of Peru's armed forces were actually rather suspicious about the Soviet Union and Cuba, which had led Lima to impose strict limits on the number of advisors entering Peru from both countries.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the general consensus in Washington throughout 1974 and 1975 was that despite having the military equipment needed to attack Chile, Peru lacked the "will and competence" to do so.<sup>75</sup> U.S. diplomats and CIA officials were also receptive to the Peruvian claim that Chile was the aggressor rather than the other way round. As Peru's Foreign Minister de la Flor explained to Assistant Secretary William Rogers in November 1974, his government's

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70. Record of Conversation, Heitman and Rogers, October 14, 1974, Oficio Secreto, EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, October 17, 1974, Oficio Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE. On requests for M-60 tanks see Record of Conversation, Popper, Pinochet and William B. Rosson (USCINSO), April 16, 1974, Electronic Telegram, SecState to USDel Atlanta (For Assistant Secretary Kubish), April 22, 1974, DOS/CFP and Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 205–6.

71. Telegram, Col. Gerald H. Sills, G2 USARSO to MG Aaron, ACSI, DA, April 11, 1974.

72. Record of Conversation, General Pinochet and George Schultz, April 2, 1974.

73. Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy to SecState, March 29, 1974, DOS/CFP.

74. On U.S. appraisals of Peru prior to 1973, see Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 174–76. See also CIA Weekly Summary Special Report, "Peru: The Revolution Moves On," September 6, 1974, CREST.

75. Briefing Paper, DOS, "Bilateral Talks During OASGA: Chile—Foreign Minister Carvajal," April 1975.

armament program had begun well before the Chilean coup and could therefore not be counted as an act of revenge. Meanwhile “the Chilean press were [*sic*] creating a war psychosis.”

Peru was not now and would never be a Communist country. Peru would never attack. For every Chilean unit moved north, a Peruvian unit would move south. If tensions continued to develop, a match could be lit at any point... [but] revolutionary governments had historically never been aggressors.<sup>76</sup>

Be that as it may, U.S. observers acknowledged the Chileans would be outnumbered and outclassed by superior weaponry if the Peruvians ever decided to intervene. And in this context, the junta was becoming increasingly restless about Washington’s support even *before* Senator Ted Kennedy tabled an amendment to restrict military assistance for Chile. The junta had also not been shy about voicing its restlessness. As Pinochet told the U.S. ambassador in late April 1974:

Chile had performed [a] great service in displacing Allende’s Marxist government. It was unique in the world in that Chile had accomplished this action with no outside assistance. Chile has ousted the communists and would continue to oppose them. But as regards [to] armaments [the] U.S. had not taken Chile’s outstretched hands.<sup>77</sup>

When the U.S. Congress was studying its Foreign Assistance Bill for 1975 two months later, the Chilean government got even more nervous that Latin America—and Chile in particular—would be neglected. As Heitman reported, 80 percent of the \$985 million that Nixon was asking for from Congress for Military Assistance Programs (MAP) was for the Middle East and Asia while Latin America programs had been reduced despite the Pentagon recommending they needed to be *increased*.<sup>78</sup> In total, the U.S. government proposed to offer Chile just under \$85 million, of which roughly a quarter would be destined toward military assistance and three quarters would be made up of economic AID programs, Peace Corps, and PL480 credits.

When Kennedy attached his amendment to the Foreign Aid Bill cutting these figures back and suspending military assistance to Chile altogether toward the end of 1974, Santiago then panicked. True, military leaders received U.S. governmental assurances that the new Ford administration would do everything to challenge

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76. Record of Conversation, Rogers and de la Flor et al., November 11, 1974, Telegram, AmEmbassy Quito to SecState, November 11, 1974, Box 211/ExecSec/RG59/NARA and CIA Weekly Summary Special Report, “Peru: The Revolution Moves On,” September 6, 1975. On Peru’s fears that it was actually Chile that was poised to attack, see also, José Rodríguez Elizondo, *Chile-Perú: El Siglo que Vivimos en Peligro* (Santiago, 2004). On U.S. assessments of implausibility of a Peruvian threat, see Electronic Telegram, Amembassy Lima to SecState, “Peruvian Military Equipment and Intentions Toward Chile,” July 9, 1975, DOS/CFP.

77. Record of meeting, Popper, Pinochet and William B. Rosson (USCINSO), April 16, 1974.

78. Oficio, EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, June 28, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE.

or override restrictions. And as events turned out, the executive subsequently proved particularly adept at ignoring both Senator Ted Kennedy's proposed ceiling of \$25 million on economic aid and his call for all military assistance be suspended by using commercial arms sales to plug the gap. But congressional talk of cutting off support lines to Chile nevertheless fuelled tension between the U.S. government and Santiago. Crucially, Chile's ambassador and military attaché in Washington warned that Kennedy's proposed ceilings could constitute a "serious deterioration in Chile's national security," with disadvantageous consequences for Chile's position vis-à-vis Peru.<sup>79</sup> Ambassador Heitman also argued that U.S. government assurances—Kissinger's included—were simply no longer enough; in his view the lack of greater material support was "unjust" considering "what Chile had done for the United States."<sup>80</sup>

Rather than compromise or moderate its repressive character, the Chilean regime therefore fought back. As Ambassador Heitman emphasized in numerous reports back to Santiago in late 1974 and 1975, the key to improving Chile's national security now lay in launching an offensive campaign against Chile's critics in the United States and what the military dictatorship's representatives believed to be a full-scale "psychological warfare" directed by Moscow and "synchronized" by a well-funded Soviet and Cuban "machinery."<sup>81</sup> Reminiscent of alarmist U.S. telegrams regarding the size of Soviet and Cuban embassies in Chile during the Allende years, the Chilean ambassador now warned that the Soviet Union's embassy in Washington was employing 111 people, and that it had a large delegation at the United Nations and consulates all around the country. For its anti-Chilean work, Heitman warned, Moscow could also count on the Cuban delegation at the UN and the "numerous Cubans" infiltrated into the Cuban exile community in the United States, which together helped create façade organizations destined to bring down Chile's new government. He also argued that the Soviet anti-Chilean campaign had managed to penetrate religious, artistic, intellectual, university and congressional U.S. circles. The Chilean embassy therefore recommended pairing up with the well-organized and sympathetic Cuban exiles, and simultaneously stepped up its own infiltration and vigilance. When Allende's widow, Hortensia Allende Bussi, had been allowed into the United States in spite of appeals by the Chilean embassy in Washington to refuse her a visa, for example, it expended considerable efforts on infiltrating solidarity group meetings. And, interestingly, the two issues that infiltrators took particular notice of were mentions of "fascist Chilean

79. Oficio, EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, October 11, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU1974/AMRE and Oficio del Agrado Militar a la Embajada de Chile en EEUU, October 22, 1974, enclosure, Oficio Secreto, EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, November 17, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE.

80. Oficio Secreto, Heitman to Señor Ministro, October 29, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE.

81. Oficio Secreto, EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, October 29, 1974 and Oficio Secreto, EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, November 17, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE.

aggression towards Peru” and the notion put forward by the dictatorship’s opponents that the United States had been responsible for the coup. Indeed, both were antithetical to military leaders, the way they perceived themselves, and the threat they faced.<sup>82</sup>

Meanwhile, Pinochet was simultaneously lashing out at the criticism his regime was receiving at the UN, labeling it a “perverse and brutal campaign of persecution” headed by “Soviet communists.” Pinochet argued that the Soviet Union appeared to be “in vogue” in the UN and had “infiltrated” the organization to such “unforeseeable extremes” that “dozens of countries bowed before the audacity of red totalitarianism.” To Pinochet, this spelt the “apparent weakening and deception of western democratic institutions” and underscored that ‘western civilization’ was in “profound crisis.”<sup>83</sup>

According to the Chilean military regime, this vulnerability was in turn compounded by dangerous trends in U.S. foreign policy. As Huerta warned the United States’ Permanent Representative at the UN John Scali, “communism makes progress during periods of détente.”<sup>84</sup> Toward the end of 1974, similar warnings began appearing in Chilean news editorials (all of which were fully censored and controlled by Pinochet’s regime).<sup>85</sup> *El Mercurio*, the recipient of covert U.S. funding during the Allende years, was adamant that the United States was falling behind in the battle against communism rather than recovering ground. Moreover, it argued that Washington looked set to “move even further toward détente and therefore separate itself from [the] new Chilean way” as a result of Nixon’s resignation and democratic electoral gains in November 1974.<sup>86</sup> As U.S. diplomats in Santiago noted, the Chileans were beginning to worry that the Americans had interests beyond Chile and that “when interests conflict (as in the case of détente policy), Chile may place second.”<sup>87</sup> “People who had counted on the U.S. to help them fight what they considered our common (anticommunist) cause feel that we have let them down,” another U.S. embassy telegram from Santiago reported.<sup>88</sup>

International condemnation of the Chilean regime, congressional sanctions and the prevailing pattern of détente thus persuaded Santiago’s leaders to begin looking further afield for assistance. As one Chilean Foreign Ministry memorandum at the end of 1974 concluded, the country faced one of its most critical

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82. Oficio Secreto, EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, November 21, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE.

83. Pinochet, November 14, 1974, as quoted in Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, November 15, 1974.

84. Electronic Telegram, U.S. Mission USUN NY to SecState, September 25, 1974, DOS/CFP.

85. Spooner, *Soldiers in a Narrow Land*, 89.

86. *El Mercurio* as quoted in Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, November 12, 1974, DOS/CFP.

87. Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, November 12, 1974.

88. Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, December 26, 1974, DOS/CFP.

international predicaments it had ever experienced and now found itself in a similar isolated position to Greek military generals and South Africa's apartheid regime. Rather than advocating a change in policy, Foreign Ministry officials pointed their fingers abroad. As they saw it, international Marxism was responsible for making it difficult for Chile to renegotiate its debt, for closing traditional sources of financial assistance in Europe, for slowing down the process of investment in Chile, for causing problems when it came to Santiago acquiring arms, and for inciting Peru to re-stoke the fires of territorial disputes with Chile. All of which, in the Foreign Ministry's view, made it essential to adopt emergency measures, if only others would take the threat of communism more seriously. As the memorandum's authors noted, the problem was that détente was being "unconditionally" serviced by the United States, by Western Europe—and even by Brazil, which under Geisel's watch from 1974 onward had launched a foreign policy of *abertura*—making it "inconvenient" for them to join Chile in a necessary "ideological crusade" against international Marxism and Soviet "imperialism."<sup>89</sup>

In this context, the Foreign Ministry determined it would be dangerous to let external pressure dictate policy, proposed to uphold its so-called morality by successfully defeating Marxism at home and simultaneously decided to open or strengthen embassies abroad wherever possible as a means of improving Chile's international position. Beyond the affinity that Santiago had with other right-wing regimes in the Southern Cone, Chilean diplomats suggested concentrating on sub-Saharan Africa (because they believed it to have a "less advanced conscience" when it came to human rights), Indonesia, the Philippines, South Korea, Central America, and Israel (on account of political sympathies). As the Pinochet regime saw it, the alternative—namely appeasing critics of his dictatorship—was perilous because when the so-called pretext of human rights disappeared, international communism and its leaders in Moscow and Havana would merely find something else until they succeeded in bringing Santiago's leaders down. Moreover, Santiago's leaders believed that any attempt to replace the military with "another 'democratic-progressive' government" would only serve as "a bridge for the advance of Marxism" as it had previously done in Chile before the coup.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, two years after seizing power, Pinochet's views on democracy were patently clear. As the CIA reported, he saw "unrestricted ideological pluralism" as "outmoded" and vowed it would never return to his country.<sup>91</sup>

Secretary of State Kissinger was sympathetic to the Chilean military regime's frustrations and the siege mentality that consumed its leaders. True, the consensus in Washington was that Pinochet was hysterically exaggerating the threat that he

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89. Memorandum Confidencial de la Cancillería Chilena [Distributed by Centro de Informaciones—Comité Chileno de Solidaridad con la Resistencia Antifascista], 9 December 1974, Document 5, Folder 3, Box 2, Fondo Orlando Letelier, Archivo Nacional, Santiago, Chile.

90. Ibid.

91. CIA Intelligence Memorandum, "Chile After Two Years of Military Rule," October 21, 1975.

faced. A full year earlier, for example, the director of Central Intelligence had reported to the Senate Armed Services Committee that “resistance to the new government has been limited to sporadic acts of sabotage and scattered attacks on security forces” and the situation had not changed since.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, Kissinger was furious about Kennedy’s amendment, which he called “a disaster.” When the possibility of providing \$10 million of military assistance as a compromise for cutting off assistance altogether was proposed, Kissinger exploded.

Oh, come on! Ten million dollars—when the Cubans are putting instructors and the Soviets are putting tanks into Peru? . . . Ten million aid is clearly an insult . . . what kind of goddam compromise is 10 million dollars to a country whose neighbor is getting large amounts of tanks and in which it’s scared out of its mind? It’s nothing.<sup>93</sup>

“Are we not going to rest until we get a left wing government that forces them toward the Arabs or Chinese or somebody?” he asked. He also astutely predicted that any assurances the U.S. government made after 1974 would henceforth seem hollow to the Chileans. “Assurances is total nonsense. It is total, unadulterated nonsense. The United States has no guarantee—no right to give a guarantee to Chile that will never be implemented, so we better work out something.”<sup>94</sup>

Kissinger had good reason to worry about the Chilean regime’s rejection of meaningless U.S. guarantees. In November 1974, he had already sent a small delegation of State Department Planning Staff to Chile for informal “exploratory discussions” with high-ranking Chilean ministers as a means of improving relations. But far from improving the situation, tensions had mounted when delegates disagreed about the imminence of Cold War threats.<sup>95</sup> Chile’s new Foreign Minister since June 1974, Admiral Patricio Carvajal, had predictably opened the meeting by emphasizing the threat of Soviet-sponsored Peruvian aggression against Chile. Apparently ignoring the issue of Peru, the deputy director of the U.S. State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, Samuel Lewis, then responded by explaining how the evolution of détente since the late 1960s had changed the international balance of power in the world and U.S. foreign policy perspectives. Now, it was the United States’ goal to reduce or remove competition with the

92. DCI Briefing for the Senate Armed Services Committee, 10 a.m., January 24, 1974.

93. “The Secretary’s 8:00 a.m. Regional Staff Meeting, Tuesday, December 3, 1974,” December 5, 1974.

94. “The Secretary’s Principals and Regionals Staff Meeting, Friday, December 20, 1974, 8 a.m.,” December 20, 1974.

95. On the proposal for such a visit see Letter, Kissinger to His Excellency Admiral Patricio Carvajal Prado, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, October 10, 1974, enclosure, Oficio Secreto, MinRelaciones to Señor Embajador de Chile en Washington, November 12, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE. For minutes of the meeting, see Memorandum, Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales al Señor Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores: “Reunión de planificación chileno-norteamericana (18 y 19 noviembre de 1974),” no date, enclosure, Oficio, MinRelaciones to Señor Embajador de Chile en Washington, December 11, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE.

Soviet Union, he argued. Another U.S. delegate went on to explain the origins of détente—the need to end the Vietnam War and to improve relations with China and the Soviet Union to avoid nuclear war—underlining that it did not entail sacrificing the United States’ allies. To the contrary, U.S. representatives tried to suggest, traditional alliances were an important element of détente due to the “traumatic” experience of Vietnam and the United States’ inability to resolve problems by itself.

After discussions moved on to Chilean economic needs and Washington’s desire to help, which proved relatively straightforward, delegates returned to security issues and to what the Chileans really wanted to talk about: Peru. General Hector Bravo underlined that the USSR was behind Peru and Manuel Contreras, head of the military regime’s notorious National Intelligence Directorate (DINA), gave a summary of so-called extremist actions in Chile and external funding for them (facts that the CIA undoubtedly already had on account of the continuing close relationship it had with Contreras).<sup>96</sup> But again, the Chilean representatives failed to elicit the response they were looking for. Instead, U.S. representatives began asking the Chileans to “avoid conflicts” and “provocations” and pursue a regional “equilibrium.” Lewis explained that the United States would always be on Chile’s side, since it admired Chilean history and supported the present government. On the issue of Peru, however, Lewis voiced profound skepticism. The United States did not want to see a conflict in Latin America, he said, and Washington would therefore do everything possible through the inter-American system to avoid one breaking out. But at the same time, he noted that he was simply not persuaded that Peru was the focus of an imminent Soviet offensive against Chile, especially as Washington viewed Moscow as currently pursuing a cautious foreign policy. Yes, the administration was prepared to provide *defensive* armaments to Chile, he added, but on the issue of helping Santiago to ward off international ostracism, the military regime would have to modify its internal human rights policies as well. And, no, he underlined, proposed U.S. congressional restrictions on military assistance were not merely the result of an international communist plot as the military government alleged, but rather the consequence of real concern about the situation in Chile.

Another member of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, Luigi Einaudi, went even further, suggesting that Peru was the one that felt under threat. As a result of recent tensions and nationalization disputes with the United States, he suggested that Lima’s relationship with Moscow was based on co-opting its enemy’s enemy and making it a friend. The Soviet Union’s relationship with Lima was independent of what was going on in Chile, U.S. delegates underlined, and it was hard to believe that Peru would be the focus of Soviet action in Latin America. This did not go down well. Ricardo Claro, an advisor at the Foreign Ministry, quite simply said that the meeting had reached a “difficult

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96. On the CIA’s relationship with Contreras, see Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 212–17.



moment” and blamed the different emphasis each delegation placed on the importance “ideology.” For Chile, Peru—and Soviet intervention in that country—was not just “another problem, it was ‘essential,’” he said. When Foreign Minister Carvajal returned to the question of arms purchases after lunch, Lewis seemed concerned enough about the way the meeting was going to offer new assurances, expressing hopes that the United States would be able to provide Chile a positive response to demands for military equipment, that the United States would help with the process of renegotiating Chilean debt in 1975, and that the United States would collaborate with others in the Inter-American Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank so that the question of international credits to Chile would not be dealt with politically.

Not assuaged by such offers, however, Carvajal raised the question of Peru *again*, this time asking outright if the United States believed the Chileans or not. When Lewis once more downplayed the danger, Claro tried another tack: If détente meant that the Soviet Union was playing fair, he asked, was it not the case that it was simply trying to maintain this façade by using Cuba to do its dirty work. Lewis conceded that this might be true “from time to time” but rather than let the conversation drag on, he repeated that détente did not entail sacrificing the United States’ allies in Latin America.<sup>97</sup> (As it turned out, a U.S. intelligence report at a few months earlier had concluded that Cuba support for revolutionary insurgency in Latin America had reached its “nadir” and was “negligible.”<sup>98</sup>)

As Kissinger realized, this awkward encounter between U.S. and Chilean delegates was an indication of the kind of issues that would increasingly shape bilateral relations. While the Chileans accelerated their diplomatic offensive and put pressure on U.S. government officials to listen to their concerns, Washington did its best to play down the threats Pinochet faced.<sup>99</sup> Chile *was* just “another problem” for the United States and U.S. observers had also long since concluded that the Soviets would not sacrifice détente for Chile.<sup>100</sup> To be sure, in private, administration officials continued to concede that the arms imbalance between Chile and Peru was destabilizing, especially as European markets had effectively closed to Santiago. Kissinger also worried that insufficient U.S. support for Chile would have a negative impact on Washington’s relationships with other anticommunist regimes. But as Chile’s leaders began to “desperately . . . cast about for whatever they can pick up in shadowy international arms markets”—or when Chilean

97. Memorandum, Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales al Señor Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores: “Reunión de planificación chileno-norteamericana (18 y 19 noviembre de 1974).”

98. CIA Memorandum, “The Limits of Cuban Subversion in Latin America,” Secret Sensitive, NODIS, August 28, 1974, CREST.

99. Oficio Sec., EmbaChile to Señor Ministro, December 6, 1974, Oficios Sec., Res., Conf., EEUU/1974/AMRE. On U.S. assessments of limited and “sporadic” threats to Pinochet’s regime see DCI Briefing for the Senate Armed Services Committee—10 a.m., January 24, 1974 and CIA Intelligence Memorandum, “Chile After Two Years of Military Rule,” October 21, 1975.

100. Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Moscow to SecState, “Brezhnev on Chile: Moderate Line Continues,” September 20, 1973, DOS/CFP.

diplomats explicitly asked Assistant Secretary Rogers whether the United States would guarantee Chile's territorial integrity during a routine meeting—U.S. officials stymied by Congress declined to give them any definitive answers.<sup>101</sup>

The Chilean regime's warnings thus got even more alarmist and fanciful. In conversation with the United States' new ambassador in Santiago, David Popper, in early 1975, commander in chief of Chile's Air Force, General Gustavo Leigh, referred to Peru having 550 Soviet tanks, preparing to receive MiG 23 jets, and hosting Soviet and Soviet bloc advisors in the "jungles of Eastern Peru." Apparently trying to evoke the prospect of a Peruvian Missile Crisis, he then wondered out loud "whether they might not be there to emplace missiles which could be used against other South American countries or even the United States." According to his own record of this conversation, Popper was immediately dismissive of Leigh's suppositions: "it hardly seemed likely that the Russians, who could target the United States from home territory, would seek to do so from the Peruvian jungle," he replied. He was also openly skeptical—and no doubt horrified by the prospect—of Leigh's insinuation that the "festering situation" between Chile and Peru would turn into a new Vietnam.<sup>102</sup> However, Chile's Defense Minister, General Brady, subsequently delivered a similar message to the U.S. ambassador in June 1975, this time referring Peru's having more than 300 T-54 and T-55 Russian Tanks (U.S. intelligence sources estimated this was double the real number), 120 French AMX 13 tanks and 40 Sherman M41 tanks, 200 Russian military advisors, 600 Cuban civilian advisors, Czech advisors, and other "iron curtain nationals." As Brady threatened, "if Chile went down, it would be because...Chile's friends did not aid it in time. He wondered whether we meant to repeat the mistake we had made in permitting the establishment of a communist government in Cuba."<sup>103</sup>

At least in part, by 1975, these Chilean complaints were responding to wider international developments and the military regime's interpretation of how this affected their position. Following South Vietnam's collapse in April of that year, specific denunciations about decreasing levels of support for Washington's allies and disdain for détente had turned into a more general critique of the "deteriorating position of [the] U.S. in [the] struggle against imperialist advance of USSR." News editorials thus concluded that it was the world situation and *not* the Chilean regime's policies that was to blame for the country's isolation: The

101. Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, "US-Chile Relations in 1975," December 26, 1974, DOS/CFP. On Kissinger's anger, see Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 226–27. See also, Record of Conversation, Guzmán, General Carrasco, Admiral Paredes, Colonel Videll and Rogers, December 19, 1974, in Electronic Telegram, SecState to AmEmbassy Santiago, December 21, 1974, DOS/CFP.

102. Record of Conversation, Popper and Leigh, January 17, 1975, Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, "Junta Member Views the Peruvian Threat," January 17, 1975, DOS/CFP.

103. Record of Conversation, Popper, Pinochet, Brady et al., June 30, 1975, Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy to SecState (For Assistant Secretary Rogers from Popper), June 30, 1975, DOS/CFP.

“course of events (i.e. Vietnam, Cambodia, Portugal, etc.),” one *El Mercurio* editorial stated in reference to the imminent collapse of South Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge’s seizure of power and the fall of Portugal’s dictatorship, “indicates [the] attack on Chile comes at [the] meridian of Soviet power and grave political decline of U.S.” While international opinion continued to ignore “atrocities of communism,” it continued, the “emerging imperial power imposes its values and norms of conduct.” With obvious insinuation about Chile’s own experience, the newspaper suggested that the U.S. Congress and the “average American” were responsible for the “bloodbath” that was poised to wash over South Vietnam through their abandonment of the country. As the U.S. ambassador in Santiago wrote home, the Chileans’ propensity to say “we told you so” was growing daily.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, when *El Mercurio* published an apparently doctored letter from Kissinger to Pinochet saying that “the leaders of Chile, better than others, can understand the tragedy of Indochina and its importance,” it cited this as “proof” that poor deluded Kissinger had finally “discovered the deceit of those he has been negotiating with on peace in Vietnam.”<sup>105</sup> In this vein, in July 1975, Pinochet had also spoken “frankly” to the U.S. ambassador in Santiago explaining that:

Chile was a true friend of the United States . . . Chile had proved its friendship in compensating expropriated U.S. copper companies and in other ways. It saddened him to see [the] U.S. losing ground everywhere in [the] face of communist-dejected [*sic*] developments. . . True friends were scarce in such situations, and sometimes actions taken in name of democracy turned out to be nothing but cover for communist maneuvers.<sup>106</sup>

When Pinochet and his advisors then met Kissinger the following year in Santiago, they once again hammered home the message that the United States was losing a global war against the Soviets. When it came Cuba’s recent intervention in the civil war in Angola, Pinochet’s Foreign Ministry advisor, Ricardo Claro, quite plainly told Kissinger that U.S. officials had been proven wrong on assessments of the imminent threat posed by Moscow and Havana: “Your planners were down here in 1974. They did not believe that there was a Cuba threat. The Soviets use Cuba for aggression, I argued. Angola has since confirmed this.” Kissinger reassured his hosts that the United States would “not tolerate another Cuban military move” and that he felt “stronger” when it came to not accepting a combination “coexistence and ideological subversion.”<sup>107</sup> But just as he had feared, Pinochet was not

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104. *El Mercurio*, April 13 and 14, 1975 as quoted in Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, April 14, 1975, DOS/CFP.

105. *El Mercurio*, April 22, 1975 as quoted in Electronic Telegram, April 22, 1975, DOS/CFP.

106. Record of Conversation, Pinochet, Popper et al., July 28, 1975, Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, July 28, 1975, DOS/CFP.

107. Memorandum of Conversation, Pinochet, Kissinger et al., June 8, 1976.

swayed by his assurances. As a State Department Briefing paper summarized in August 1976:

The military regimes of the southern cone of South America see themselves as embattled:

- on the one side by international Marxism and its terrorist exponents, and
- on the other by the hostility of the uncomprehending industrial democracies misled by Marxist propaganda

[As a result] . . . the military leaders, despite near decimation of the Marxist left in Chile and Uruguay, along with accelerating progress toward that goal in Argentina, insist that the threat remains and the war must go on. Some talk of the “Third World War,” with the countries of the southern cone as the last bastion of Christian civilization.<sup>108</sup>

The perceived imminence of a “Third World War” and of having to fight it without wholehearted U.S. support had already led Chile to place increasing emphasis on strengthening its alliances with likeminded dictatorships in the southern cone. As a secret Chilean Army analysis prepared in advance of the XI Conference of American Armies to be held in Montevideo in October 1975 argued, the great powers had “imposed” détente and benefitted from it themselves while they used local allies to continue carrying out their grand designs. In this context, the threat of direct extra-continental armed intervention may have been greatly reduced, but it had been “substituted” for other instruments of aggression that were no less dangerous. Quoting from Soviet declarations in 1960 that underscored that peaceful coexistence was not an abandonment of class struggle but rather a strategy to create favorable conditions for it, the General Staff of the Chilean Army argued that levels of subversion in the Americas “deceived the spirit of détente,” that “revolutionary ideology” was penetrating every country in Latin America, and that psychological warfare was being launched against them by a common, and united enemy: “international communism” headed by the Soviet Union with its “forward arm” in Cuba. Pivotaly, the General Staff also pointed to the threat posed by the transnational left-wing guerrilla organization, the Junta Coordinadora Revolucionaria (JCR), as a reason for greater coordination between the hemisphere’s armed forces. (The JCR had actually never received backing from the USSR and had also received only limited support from Cuba. Moreover, it was weak, vulnerable and had already been successfully targeted by the Southern Cone’s military intelligence services by late 1975.)<sup>109</sup>

The Chilean regime’s appeal worked. A month after the meeting of XI Conference of American Armies in Montevideo, South American intelligence chiefs

108. ARA Monthly Report (July), Shlaudeman to The Secretary, August 3, 1976, in Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 383–84.

109. Estado Mayor General del Ejercito, “Analysis de la Seguridad en la Actual Situación de América.” On the JCR, see Dinges, *Condor Years*, 41–62.

from Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Brazil arrived in Santiago by invitation of the DINA to attend what was being called the “First Inter-American Meeting on National Intelligence.” Although Chilean intelligence services had been closely working with their counterparts in the Southern Cone since September 1973, this meeting inaugurated a qualitatively new formal collaborative network known as Operation Condor. The head of the DINA, Manuel Contreras, proposed a three-phase operation to those gathered in Santiago that aimed quite literally at eliminating those considered to be enemies all over the world.<sup>110</sup> As the State Department noted in August 1976 in reference to the Southern Cone dictatorships,

They now coordinate intelligence, operate in the territory of one another’s countries... to find and kill terrorists of the Revolutionary Coordinating Committee [the JRC] in their own countries and in Europe... the broader implications for us and for future trends in the hemisphere are disturbing. The use of bloody counter-terrorism by these regimes threatens their increasing isolation from the West and the opening of deep ideological divisions among the countries of the hemisphere.<sup>111</sup>

Although U.S. complicity in the state terrorist network is well known—particularly when it came to the CIA’s relationship with Contreras—Condor was mostly a Chilean-led operation coordinated with like-minded allies in the Southern Cone and arising their own particular view the struggle against international communism in the era of détente. Indeed, compared to Uruguay, Argentina, and Paraguay, those who had been the Chilean coup’s principal backers back in 1973—Brazil and the United States—were now only partially involved. True, Brazil had only been an observer at the November 1975 Santiago meeting of intelligence chiefs and was “cooperating short of murder operations.”<sup>112</sup> But it was also distancing itself from the Chilean government’s ideological crusade. As the U.S. Ambassador in Brasilia reported, despite being sympathetic to the Chilean coup and wanting to help its leaders, Geisel’s regime was becoming increasingly wary of getting too close to Chile and exasperated when Santiago refused to take its advice on enhancing its international image in the area of human rights, which was far worse than Brazil’s.<sup>113</sup>

Meanwhile, the Ford administration was on the back foot when it came to its relationship with Santiago’s leaders and the degree of influence it had over the dictatorship. Despite Kissinger’s private instructions for U.S. officials to reassure Pinochet’s regime of continuing support, Chilean observers regarded even the Secretary’s support for the regime as having “frozen.”<sup>114</sup> After all, in his efforts

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110. Dinges, *Condor Years*, 11–15 and ARA Monthly Report (July), Shlaudeman to The Secretary, August 3, 1976.

111. ARA Monthly Report (July), Shlaudeman to The Secretary, August 3, 1976.

112. Dinges, *Condor Years*, 15.

113. Electronic Telegram, AmEmbassy Brasilia to AmEmbassy Santiago, April 11, 1975, DOS/CFP.

114. Memorandum Secreto, Lackington to Carvajal, March 1, 1976.

to try and sustain U.S. assistance to the regime, he had gently asked Chile's Foreign Minister to come up with something to show that Chile was examining the human rights question. "It would help enormously if something can be done," he requested, "if you do something, let us know so we can use it with Congress."<sup>115</sup> Specifically, Kissinger was responding to what the State Department called the Chileans' continuing "ineptness" when it came to helping the United States to help them, a view that was exacerbated after Pinochet announced he was cancelling a visit to Chile by UN Human Rights Commission representatives in July 1975.<sup>116</sup> The Church Committee's publication of a damning report on U.S. *Covert Operations in Chile* in December 1975, along with pending decisions on the suspension of all arms sales to Chile and a ceiling of \$27.5 million in economic aid obviously undermined Kissinger's efforts to prove his support even further.<sup>117</sup>

It was in this context that Kissinger met Pinochet in Santiago and offered bucket loads of assurances while continuing to make gentle appeals for moderation on human rights. Yet these mixed messages amounted to little more than a flashing amber light for a leader already careering along a highway in a high-speed car chase abiding by its own rules and no one else's. They certainly failed to dissuade Pinochet and his associates from murdering opponents of his regime abroad, as Orlando Letelier's assassination in downtown Washington D.C. just three months after Kissinger's trip to Chile illustrates. To the contrary, newly declassified Chilean sources and a close examination of the relationship between Santiago and Washington in the years between 1973 and 1976 suggest that a cocktail of military sanctions and congressional denunciations, U.S. commitment to détente and communist victories in the Third World mixed with reassurances, sympathy, and praise from Kissinger, persuaded the dictatorship that it could and should take full ownership of the Cold War and find its own ways of fighting it given the limited room for maneuver that the Ford administration found itself to be in.

On one level, this meant teaming up with others who shared their own beliefs about the imperative of fighting an immediate ideological crusade, such as military regimes across the Southern Cone and Cuban exile groups in the United States, the latter of which ended up playing a direct role in Operation Condor activities. On another level, it meant rejecting international law and other governments' sovereignty or opinions when they differed from the military's own views of the threats Chile faced. Of course it is possible that the Pinochet regime would have followed this course of action regardless of any change in U.S. policy. Given the intensity of its mission, it is also unclear whether firmer warnings to desist from hunting down enemies abroad in 1975–76 would have stopped the assassination of

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115. Memorandum of Conversation, Secretary's Meeting with Foreign Minister Carvajal, September 29, 1975.

116. Briefing Paper, DOS, "Bilateral Talks During OASGA: Chile—Foreign Minister Carvajal," April 1975.

117. Heraldo Muñoz and Carlos Portales, *Evasive Friendship: A Survey of U.S.—Chilean Relations* (Boulder, CO, 1991), 51.

Letelier. By the time Pinochet met Kissinger, he had long since given up deferring to the United States' advice and leadership when it came to Chilean affairs, Latin America's battle against international communism, and the global Cold War. He would also not be shifted off course by Jimmy Carter's presidency and ongoing military sanctions against his government. However, it is difficult to know for certain what impact a more negative stance would have had earlier on. Quite simply, despite the Chileans' refusal to listen to U.S. policymakers, Santiago's critique of Washington's foreign policy, and disagreements over the question of Peru, the Nixon and Ford administrations, and Kissinger himself, never seriously contemplated finding out.

Exploring both sides of the U.S.–Chilean relationship in depth reveals that this was not a simple alliance between the United States and a puppet dictator rooted in a mutual perception of the Cold War. The growing problems that U.S. government officials had in managing its relations with Santiago were not only the result of Congress infringing on the Executive's ability to manage Washington's foreign relations or U.S. policymakers' growing worries about unrepentant Chileans either. They were just as equally, if not more so, the result of a negative Chilean reappraisal of the United States, what Santiago's representatives in Washington saw as its dangerously democratic and liberal political system, and U.S. prescriptions for peaceful equilibrium the Soviet Union and Peru. As Pinochet's regime believed, all countries should have been fighting an immediate, unforgiving, ideological battle against international communism and preparing for World War III rather than negotiating with the enemy or allowing it to operate against Chile in the United States, in Peru, Western Europe, and international forums. For the Chileans in power, the question was not whether the U.S. government believed Pinochet to be on *its side*, but, instead, whether they saw the United States as fighting on *their side*, which quite clearly they did not. In fact, having initially worried that Chilean military leaders might not be determined or political enough to overthrow Allende and govern Chile, U.S. officials then found themselves being criticized for having lost *their* sense of mission, particularly when it came to safeguarding Chile from Peru.

Meanwhile, the Chilean military regime's criticisms of Washington's policy toward it, its rejection of détente, and its allusions to the dangers of falling behind in a battle against the Soviet Union were neither anachronistic nor unique. Rather, they were a reflection the geographical and conceptual limitation of détente's architecture when it came to the Third World and a stark precursor to the wave of criticism that détente received from the right wing of the Republican Party in the United States. This, in turn, raises questions about how international critiques of the process may have fed into domestic currents within the United States. Certainly, these critiques were emblematic of the global South's growing predominance in the renewed Cold War hostilities that broke out at the end of the 1970s and the brutality of the conflicts that were increasingly fought in the Third World thereafter. "Distant and small though it is," one of Kissinger's advisors had

told him back in 1974, Chile “is in a sense in the front line of world ideological conflict.”<sup>118</sup>

All of which should serve as a reminder that history did not always travel from North to South. Recently released U.S. and Chilean sources reveal that the Chileans had as much agency in shaping the U.S.–Chilean relationship as policy-makers sitting in Washington. True, agency does not necessarily translate into the power to influence others’ actions, particularly where Congress was concerned. But rather than the tail wagging the dog, the U.S.–Chile relationship in the early years of the Pinochet dictatorship serves as a perfect illustration of Max P. Friedman’s 2003 observation in this journal that very often in U.S.–Latin American relations “there was no dog and no tail, but two distinct animals . . . one stronger than the other, to be sure, but both engaging in active attempts to pursue their interests.”<sup>119</sup>

In this type of dynamic and interactive relationship, Chile was important in shaping the tense character of the bilateral relationship between Washington and Santiago and the way it evolved. The Chileans’ own conception of what the Cold War meant and how to fight it also had a lot to do with the process by which the conflict morphed into kaleidoscopic shards of what it had once been. By the end of the 1970s, it is quite clear that previous Cold War battles and experiences had produced a variety of many, new, different cold war species, each with their own interests, their own preoccupations and their own ways of interpreting the world around them. And in this context, Latin America was not merely inserted (or pulled) into a global Cold War struggle, but rather participated and shaped the way in which that conflict evolved within the region and beyond.

In terms of understanding how and why this happened with regards to Latin America and other regions of the Third World, we still have considerably more to learn about Washington’s alliances with right-wing regimes. The growing consensus of those who have delved into the nature of U.S. twentieth-century involvement Latin America is that Washington’s influence was rather more limited that it first appeared and certainly less potent than left-wing critiques of it stage managing all that was bad in the world at a national, regional, and global level. Yet we need far more research on these questions from U.S. and non-U.S.-centered perspectives alike if are to fully understand what an alliance with the United States during the Cold War meant around the globe to different people at different times. In short, distasteful as they might have been, as well as studying the victims of the Cold War, we need to look at how and why right-wing authoritarian regimes across the world fought the Cold War, and how their foreign relations helped to reinforce or alter domestic ideas of what their ultimate mission should consist of.

In the case of the Chile, the military leaders who overthrew Allende in Chile were diehard nationalists and virulent anticommunists who self-appointed

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118. Quotation from Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, xiv.

119. Max Paul Friedman, “Retiring the Puppets, Bringing Latin America Back In: Recent Scholarship on United States–Latin American Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 5 (2003): 627.



themselves as supposed saviors of their own nation and the Southern Cone. The origins of these beliefs came from home and from abroad, being molded into a particularly vicious Cold War mentality by the particular experiences that Chile had lived through. As U.S. officials learnt more about these views, even they bemoaned Pinochet regime's "shrill," "self righteous," and "hard-hitting Cold War type rhetoric," despite having just provoked a military takeover of Chile *because* of the Cold War.<sup>120</sup> And yet, prior to the recent declassification of Chilean and U.S. documents, it was easy to dismiss the Chilean dictatorship's crusading anticommunist language as an opportunistic effort to consolidate dictatorial control. By this argument, rather than believing that a communist threat really existed, Latin American leaders who spoke out loudly against the communist threat in Latin America were simply obeying a paradigm of international relations imposed by U.S. hegemonic control of the region and using it as a ploy to get more aid and assistance. Pinochet's regime was not, however, playing at a Cold War game. If its goal had simply been to get more assistance, it would have made far more sense for the military regime to make concessions and restrain its crusading zeal, as it appears that U.S. administration officials were privately urging them to do from 1974 onward. Faced with the imminence of a second Kennedy amendment banning all arms sales to Chile once and for all, even Kissinger asked Pinochet to help the United States help Chile when he met the dictator in 1976:

It would really help if you would let us know the measures you are taking in the human rights field. None of this is said with the hope of undermining your government. I want you to succeed and I want to retain the possibility of aid . . . But as friends, I must tell you that we face a situation in the United States where we must be able to point to events here in Chile, or we will be defeated.<sup>121</sup>

Pinochet, of course, refused to listen. While Letelier's assassination three months later proved suicidal for the Chilean regime when it came to any chance of increasing U.S. assistance to Chile in the 1970s, it was in many ways the culmination of an effort to pre-empt a hypothetical World War III which it believed it would have to fight alone. As John Dinges has argued, Operation Condor arose out of right-wing military dictatorships' shock at the collapse of South Vietnam, a U.S. ally with which they identified.<sup>122</sup> This article has gone further than this, showing how deepening fears about the United States' responsiveness to Chile's Cold War battles in the preceding year—including, but by no means exclusively related to the fall of South Vietnam—encouraged this mindset.

All of which has an impact on how we view the efficacy of the United States' policy toward Chile after September 11, 1973. Whether you agree with Kissinger

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120. Electronic Telegrams, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, November 12 and 15, 1974, DOS/CFP and Record of Conversation Popper and Leigh, January 17, 1975.

121. Memorandum of Conversation, Pinochet, Kissinger et al., June 8, 1976.

122. Dinges, *Condor Years*, 11.

or not, he quite clearly empathized with the fanatical Chilean military regime more than most and was right when he voiced concerns that U.S. military sanctions would alienate its leaders and make all reassurances to them seem hollow. For him, what mattered was maintaining a strong U.S.-led Cold War alliance system in the Third World and persuading right-wing regimes that the United States remained an able, willing and determined leader in the struggle against the Soviet Union and Cuba. In this context, Chile was important to him as he viewed legislative efforts to constrain U.S. ties with Pinochet as a dangerous precedent. The “reason I am fighting it in Chile,” Kissinger explained to his staff when he heard that the first Kennedy amendment had been passed constraining his ability to support Pinochet’s regime, is that “if we lose it in Chile, if Chile does certain things, they will do it in the Philippines, Korea, South Viet-Nam, and we will be lost.”<sup>123</sup>

This commitment to sustaining anticommunist regional strongmen did not contradict Kissinger’s commitment to superpower détente. To the contrary, being able to work with regional allies and share the burden of fighting the Cold War in the Third World with regional allies—the Nixon Doctrine—had always been an essential component of the way in which Nixon and Kissinger, and then Ford, had conceptualized their strategy to bring about a so-called architecture of peace in international affairs. Only by ensuring that regional strongmen were in place to guard against communist incursions in the global South did they believe that Washington could enter into negotiations over arms control agreements with Moscow without risking “another Cuba.” The problem with this strategy was that both the strongmen themselves and U.S. legislators responsible for making sure it worked rejected it.

First, the Third World leaders that the United States wanted to share the burden of fighting the Cold War with wanted a wholehearted unquestioning sponsor rather than a paternalistic ally. Second, they simply could not understand why the United States was prepared to negotiate with the enemy while they were engaged in what they fanatically perceived to be a battle for survival against the very same enemy’s accomplices in their own neighborhoods. When U.S. representatives sincerely told the Chileans that the Soviets would not sacrifice détente to intervene in Chile or that a Peruvian Missile Crisis was not, in their view, on the horizon, they were simply unable to persuade them and received nothing but scorn when events in Vietnam and Angola proved Kissinger’s architecture of détente to be unable to contain Soviet and Cuban influence. Military leaders in Santiago may have vastly exaggerated the threat they faced and, through overly simplistic paranoia, confused resistance to their repressive regimes from all sides of the political spectrum with Soviet-led conspiracies, but, for better or worse, this was how they interpreted the Cold War struggle they faced and it simply did not tally with détente.

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123. “The Secretary’s Regionals’ and Principles’ Staff Meeting, Monday, December 23, 1974, 8:00 a.m.,” December 23, 1974.

Meanwhile, in Washington, Kissinger could not convince the U.S. Congress or the U.S. public that replacing an era of confrontation with an era of negotiation, as Nixon had promised to do back in 1969 when he initiated *détente*, was consistent with cozying up to those who were fighting a violent war against their own people. Faced with having to enact military sanctions against Chile in the name of human rights, Kissinger decried what he saw as a “fundamental problem” with U.S. foreign policy: In his words, it was “being pulled apart . . . thread by thread, under one pretext or another . . . I have never known a country that deliberately pushed other countries into opposition to itself for no reason that concerned it directly.”<sup>124</sup>

For those like Ted Kennedy or Frank Church, however, supporting Pinochet’s dictatorship did concern them *directly* as it clashed with U.S. democratic values. And as Congress fought over these inconsistencies in the shadow of Watergate, questioning why the United States was fighting freedom by supporting regimes that murdered and imprisoned their own people, Kissinger’s strategy was undermined. True, he had been able to sustain a policy of support toward Chile for three years. But he had not been able to grant as much assistance to Pinochet as he had wanted to and had also had to fight hard to provide what the Nixon and Ford administrations were able to offer. More important for the evolution of U.S.–Chilean relations, he could never guarantee that support would continue. The Chileans quite clearly understood this. And, together with their increasingly differing concepts of the nature of the Cold War struggle in the mid-1970s, this weakness in Kissinger’s strategy underpinned the fractious nature of the alliance between them.

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124. *Ibid.*