How Effective Are Covert Operations?
The CIA's Intervention in Chile, 1964–73

James Lockhart, PhD

Abstract: This article reassesses the effectiveness of the CIA's interventions in Chilean elections from 1964 to 1973. The author finds that these covert operations were not decisive and were no more than modestly effective. Rather, a pattern of shifting coalitions on the ground in Chile better explains the electoral outcomes that occurred during these years. This suggests that these findings might offer insight into our conversations about Russian intervention in American presidential elections in 2016, thus contributing to ongoing discussions on applied history, politics, and policy making.

Keywords: security and intelligence studies, covert operations, influence campaigns, President Eduardo Frei, President Salvador Allende, Chilean coup of 1973, Augusto Pinochet dictatorship, Latin America, Cold War

As it was becoming clear that the Russian government attempted to influence the U.S. presidential elections in 2016, Chilean-American novelist Ariel Dorfman savored the moment, citing the irony "at the sight of Americans squirming in indignation at the spectacle of their democracy subjected to foreign interference." The United States "cannot in good faith decry what has been done to its decent citizens until it is ready to face what it did so often to the equally decent citizens of other nations." Yet, Dorfman shared the Americans' concerns. No one should have their leaders chosen by "someone in a remote room abroad. . . . Nothing warrants that citizens anywhere

James Lockhart, an assistant professor of history at the American University in Dubai, specializes in international affairs, American foreign relations, and intelligence history. His first book, *Chile, the CIA and the Cold War: A Transatlantic Perspective* (2019), interprets Chile's Cold War experience within the context of Atlantic history.

should have their destiny manipulated by forces outside the land they inhabit."[1]

Dorfman was comparing Moscow's intervention in American elections in 2016 to Washington's intervention in Chilean elections in 1970. He emphasized U.S. influence over Chilean agency while connecting the intervention in 1970 to Plan Cochayuyo (Seaweed), Vice Admiral José Toribio Merino's operation that overthrew Chilean president Salvador Allende in 1973. Merino was the commanding officer of PRIZONA (Primera Zona Naval), Chilean fleet headquarters at Valparaíso. After two stormy meetings with Allende and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Raúl Montero in Santiago on 5 and 7 September 1973, Merino revised Plan Cochayuyo, which he had drafted earlier that year as the navy's contingency plan to restore security in the event the government declared a state of emergency, transforming it into a plan for a coup d'état. Then, on the morning of 11 September, with Chief of Staff General Augusto Pinochet and acting commander of the Chilean Air Force General Gustavo Leigh's cooperation, he assumed command of the navy and ordered the execution of the operation. They prevailed by 2000 that evening. When Dorfman reminded Americans of "the many crimes the C.I.A. [Central Intelligence Agency] had been committing, [and] the multiple ways in which it had destroyed democracy elsewhere" during the Cold War, he was merely reciting key elements of a well-known narrative that has attributed this coup to the U.S. intelligence community since the 1970s.[2]

Novelist Gabriel García Márquez, attorney Thomas Hauser, and Hollywood filmmaker Costa-Gavras articulated this narrative, which found its ultimate expression in *Missing*, a movie starring Jack Lemmon and Sissy Spacek, between the mid-1970s and early 1980s. According to them, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), using the U.S. ambassador in Santiago, MILGROUP (the U.S. military's advisory group in Valparaíso), and the UNITAS (Latin for unity) exercises off the Chilean coast as cover, perpetrated the coup and killed Allende. They had an American citizen detained, tortured, and murdered to cover it up.[3]

As these accusations may suggest, the contextualization and writing of Chile's Cold War history has been bitterly contested ever since. Although many moderated their language and tone in the decades that followed, the narrative and the literature that it produced remain centered on these allegations. Historians Simon Collier, William F. Sater, and Tanya Harmer characterized it as "axe-grinding" and "a narrow historiography of blame" as late as 2011.[4]

This narrative was dominating the research agenda and the production of knowledge on Chile's Cold War experience by the early 1990s. Political scientist Paul E. Sigmund challenged it, pointing out the importance of accounting for Chilean politics and history, to little avail. As he observed,

> Ask an educated American what he or she knows about Chile,

> and you are likely to get a response that alludes to the U.S.'s role in overthrowing a Marxist regime in 1973 and in "propping up" a brutal dictatorship that followed. If that person has seen the film *Missing*, you may even get a reference to the murder of Charles Horman "because he knew too much" about that role.[5]

This conversation became calmer, less emotional, and more open to exploring the multifaceted nature of the coup and the subsequent Pinochet dictatorship in the 2000s. New archives opened, allowing for a more international Cold War history. Also, the British government detained Pinochet for human rights crimes in 1998. The general had granted himself immunity before stepping down from power and was not likely to have been prosecuted in Chile. The William J. "Bill" Clinton administration cooperated with this, ordering a massive declassification of government documents relating to the coup and the dictatorship's use of state-sponsored terrorism, although London released Pinochet, who had aged a great deal and was showing signs of dementia—or so his lawyers argued.[6]

This notwithstanding, historians still tend to defer to the above-described narrative and its charges while attributing the coup to American intelligence services. According to international relations historian Jonathan Haslam, "The United States would prepare the ground and do everything short of seizing power themselves. The coup would be effected from the Pentagon, using DIA and naval intelligence working with and through the Chilean armed forces." In Mark Atwood Lawrence's estimation, although the Allende administration was overthrown "partly under the weight of its own tactical blunders. . . . The [Richard M.] Nixon administration bears primary responsibility for fomenting the coup." Historian Lubna Z. Qureshi insists that "Washington directed this sordid drama." Stephen G. Rabe, following Haslam, wrote that Deputy Director of Central Intelligence Lieutenant General Vernon A. Walters traveled to Santiago, set up shop in a downtown hotel that overlooked the presidential palace, and coordinated the Chilean armed forces' communications, presumably acting as forward observer. Thus, historians still tend to maintain that President Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger "took credit for destroying the constitutional regime of Salvador Allende."[7]

Some historians cited this narrative not as a research agenda but rather as a point of departure. Jody Pavilack, who explored Chile's Cold War history in the 1940s, explicitly rejected "the myth of smooth, peaceful Chilean democracy up to 1973." Chilean history was actually quite jagged. Kristian Gustafson concluded that the narrative exaggerated the CIA's role and effectiveness while commenting that Chilean armed forces did not need American assistance to

conceive and carry out the coup. Harmer, who included Brazilian and Cuban intervention in an increasingly global inter-American Cold War history, found that

> Chileans were the key determiners of their country's foreign relations and its future rather than being passive bystanders viewing—and being affected by—the actions of outsiders . . . it was Chilean military leaders who launched the coup with the help of sympathetic Brazilian friends, not the United States. And our effort to understand why they did inevitably leads us back to Cuban involvement in Chile and Latin America.[8]

These interpretations have drawn both praise and pushback. Harmer's interest in Havana led a concerned scholar to ask her "whether my researching the details of Cuba's role in Chile meant that I thought the United States was justified in destabilizing Chilean democracy." Parts of the narrative remain so deeply entrenched in our history that they have become impregnable—for example, accusations about the execution or assassination of Allende. Chilean authorities have conducted three autopsies since 1973. The last one, performed in 2011, assembled an international team of experts, including a ballistics specialist from Scotland Yard. These examinations all produced the same result: Allende, tragically, took his own life. Yet, suspicions that the coup's perpetrators merely staged his suicide and that authorities have lied to conceal it persist—even after the Chilean Supreme Court closed the case in 2014.[9]

This article contributes to these new trends. It moves beyond what historian Sally Marks has called "the world according to Washington" to reassess the effectiveness of the agency's interventions in Chilean elections in September 1964, September 1970, and March 1973. This matters because many seem to accept Nixon and Kissinger's words at face value while taking the CIA's effectiveness for granted—some even attribute a godlike omnipotence to it. But if the agency were as effective as these critics imagined, then Fidel Castro ought to have been assassinated, the Bay of Pigs should have reversed the Cuban Revolution, President Eduardo Frei would have inaugurated a Christian Democratic dynasty in Chile, the Phoenix program ought to have eradicated the Vietcong in South Vietnam, Allende should never have been elected *or* inaugurated, and it would not have taken a decade to locate and kill Osama bin Laden.[10]

The article does not evaluate Plan Cochayuyo, the coup. Cochayuyo remains a Chilean, not an American, operation. This point remains true regardless of whether it pleased Nixon and Kissinger or whether the CIA knew about it. Of course, the agency knew about it—so did the Soviet Union's Committee for State Security (KGB, Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti) and other foreign intelligence services. But taking pleasure from something, and knowing

about it and reporting on it, are one thing, while actually doing it is another. Further, regardless of whose operation the coup was, it was not an attempt to influence an election. Thus, it falls outside of this article's agenda.[11]

The author finds that a pattern of shifting coalitions better explains electoral outcomes in Chile than the CIA's covert operations do. Chileans' political leanings remained relatively stable in the 1960s and early 1970s, but their political parties' tactical alignments and positioning changed from election to election. This rise and fall of coalitions—not the agency's operations—remains the ball that we should keep our eye on. The author also finds that the CIA's operations were most effective when they backed successful coalitions and other prevailing currents in politics and public opinion, whose results would likely have been similar even had the agency not intervened. Its operations were least effective when they opposed these coalitions or when they tried to impose outcomes that were more convenient for the United States than for key institutions, groups, and individuals on the ground in Chile.

This suggests that covert operations meant to influence elections—no matter how powerful the government or intelligence service that runs them, no matter how well conceived, lavishly funded, or carefully implemented they may be—do not determine the results. These operations certainly remain relevant to any comprehensive explanation, but their contribution remains modest. Dorfman fails to consider this and consequently overstates their effectiveness in both the Chilean past and the American present. Nevertheless, his piece offers an opportunity to reevaluate the agency's activities in Chile while rethinking our assumptions and beliefs about the effectiveness of covert intervention in elections in general. This might give us some insight into our evolving impressions and perceptions about the still murky relationship between Russian intervention and the victory of President Donald J. Trump in 2016.

This article also reveals some of the costs and liabilities that have followed the CIA's covert operations. When the Senate attributed the operations in Chile to the John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard Nixon administrations, it exposed the American government as one that disregarded its commitments to nonintervention whenever it pleased. This matters because policy makers tend to present the United States as the leader of "an inexorably expanding cooperative order of states observing common rules and norms, embracing liberal economic systems, forswearing territorial conquest, respecting national sovereignty, and adopting participatory and democratic systems of governance" that some historians trace back to the Peace of Westphalia. Washington's use of covert operations during the Cold War eroded its credibility in this regard. This has complicated the conduct of foreign relations, even decades later. It has rendered Americans vulnerable to Dorfman and others' "whataboutism" whenever Russian intervention is brought up, which distracts and prevents us

from confronting the security problems that the Vladimir Putin regime presents. These issues, including the above narrative, have manifested repeatedly at home and abroad.[12]

For example, in 2003, when the George W. Bush administration attempted to justify its decision to invade Iraq, a student asked Secretary of State Colin L. Powell how the president could argue for action against Saddam Hussein in Baghdad for violating international agreements when previous administrations had

> staged a coup in Chile . . . despite the wishes of the Chilean populace against the coup, and in support—and the populace in support of the democratically elected President Salvador Allende, the CIA, regardless, supported the coup of Augusto Pinochet and that resulted in mass deaths.[13]

More than a decade later, Chileans asked President Barack H. Obama to apologize for the coup.[14]

September 1964: The Election of Eduardo Frei

The Dwight D. Eisenhower administration overthrew President Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala in 1954, partly for anti-Communist motives. But neither the United States nor the Soviet Union approached Latin America as an active and sustained Cold War theater until after the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Washington led the creation of the Inter-American Development Bank, helped launch the Alliance for Progress and such successive aid programs as the Peace Corps and the Ronald W. Reagan administration's Caribbean Basin Initiative, and oversaw counterinsurgency and covert operations from the late 1950s until Nicaraguans voted the Sandinistas out of office as the Cold War was winding down in 1990.

The Kennedy administration encountered Chilean senator Eduardo Frei in this context. Frei's center-left Christian Democratic Party (PDC, Partido Demócrata Cristiano) had become the most influential one in Chile by the early 1960s. Christian Democrats had collaborated with Radicals, Socialists, and others to expand citizenship and voting rights while reforming their country's multiparty democracy in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They helped the Communist Party of Chile (PCCh, Partido Comunista de Chile) return to legal, aboveground politics—the party had been driven underground by the Gabriel González Videla administration in 1948. They did this to prevent Conservatives and Liberals—particularly landowners, who had controlled peasant voting since independence—from continuing to exercise a de facto veto over Chilean legislation and reform.

Christian Democrats offered a center-left, reformist alternative to Con-

servatives, Liberals, and Radicals' status quo on the right, and Socialists and Communists' Marxist-Leninist program on the far left. Frei promised land redistribution, investment in housing and education, and "promoción popular," or the inclusion of marginalized people from rural labor to shantytown dwellers and women. He premised this "Revolution in Liberty" on his belief that his party could win enough of the electorate's loyalty to guarantee Christian Democratic governance into the future.[15]

The Kennedy administration noticed Frei in spring 1962. He was in the United States for a forum at Georgetown University to discuss his party's politics and its views on the Alliance for Progress. He continued this discussion at Columbia University in New York. He chatted with Kennedy aide Ralph A. Dungan back in Washington on his way home.[16]

It remains well-known that the Johnson administration supported Frei in Chile's presidential elections two years later, in September 1964, and that Frei won 55.6 percent of the vote; Allende garnered 38.6 percent; and Julio Durán came in a distant third with 5 percent. Dungan coordinated this action from the National Security Council (NSC), where he directed the CIA to employ the same methods it had used in Italy in 1947. The NSC distributed about $2.6 million to Frei's campaign, while spending another $3 million against Allende.[17]

For two reasons, this influence campaign has always seemed more effective than it really was. First, the Johnson administration approached Chile and the rest of Latin America very ambitiously, and the amounts it spent for Frei and against Allende totaled in the millions. Second, some government sources, such as the Senate's Church Committee (formally the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities), dozens of Hollywood films, and a stream of sensational press coverage and journalistic accounts, have cultivated an unreal mystique about the agency's capabilities and impact since the 1970s. So, perhaps it seemed intuitive to look no further than Washington's financial contributions and conclude that Allende and his coalition were defeated because "they had been badly outspent by the Christian Democrats, the U.S. embassy, and the CIA."[18]

Johnson officials were caught up in this mystique too. Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) John A. McCone speculated that "without the large-scale covert support provided for the campaign, Frei would have gained, at most, a bare plurality." Then he added, as an afterthought, that "the voters, themselves, in Chile deserved some commendation" as well.[19]

But when we examine the formation and politics of the coalitions that competed in these presidential elections, it becomes clear that Frei's advantage accrued from the conservative establishment's longstanding dread of Marxism and a special congressional election in Curicó in early 1964. The results of this election frightened Conservatives and Liberals. And it was this scare—not

American advice, propaganda, or money—that motivated these two parties to throw their weight behind the Frei campaign that March.

When Socialist Deputy Oscar Naranjo Jara, who represented Curicó, died in office in December 1963, Chileans approached the election to replace him as a kind of plebiscite that would predict the upcoming presidential contest, which remained a three-way race. Conservatives, Liberals, and Radicals had united under the Democratic Front of Chile coalition on the right. Christian Democrats running alone occupied the center-left. And Allende's Frente de Acción Popular (FRAP) coalition of Communists, Socialists, and others represented the far left. The Democratic Front's leaders assured themselves, based on previous performance, that they controlled around one-half the vote. They believed that their candidate, Rodolfo Ramírez, would prevail against FRAP nominee Oscar Naranjo Arias, the deceased deputy's son. In fact, Naranjo received 39 percent of the vote and won the election. Ramírez took 33 percent, and the Christian Democrats 28 percent. This led to the collapse of the Democratic Front.[20] Conservatives and Liberals hastily realigned their parties behind Christian Democrats as the lesser of two evils. They attempted to moderate Frei's platform as the price of their support. But he refused to concede anything to them.

Frei's confidence came from many sources, mostly from his feeling that he was on the right side of history and his understanding that Conservatives and Liberals had nowhere else to go. Frei was also aware that, in the aftermath of Curicó, the Johnson administration had decided to back his campaign. In Curicó, as the Department of State's Chilean desk officer, Ralph W. Richardson, phrased it, "our 'decision' to swing behind Frei was made for us." Washington still preferred the U.S.-friendly Democratic Front, but it had disintegrated. Radicals were increasingly perceived as opportunists by Chilean voters and were unable to bring themselves to support Christian Democrats, who they perceived as too pro-Roman Catholic Church for their liking. The United States could, however, because Christian Democrats' criticism of liberal capitalism notwithstanding, they remained interested in the alliance, they were anti-Communist, and that sufficed.[21]

Frei lost no time asking the American embassy to give his campaign $1 million. He could have continued on his own budget of approximately $100,000 per month without it. But with it, he would be able to spend about $300,000 per month and press his post-Curicó advantage. Dungan's task force sent $750,000.[22]

The agency passed this money to Frei for the next six months, during which he complained that somewhere in the pipeline someone was letting it slip that the United States was backing him. He thought the embassy's "activities had been well handled in this regard and implied that he saw no reason why discreet

contacts between Embassy and select PDC leaders should not continue," but he wanted the embassy to help him prevent these leaks. He also asked the embassy for any information it might have that he could use against Allende.[23]

Thus, the CIA helped Frei press his post-Curicó advantage. Frei knew this, and he welcomed it, thanking the embassy for "its discretion and cooperation." This, however, did not decide the election's outcome. Frei's advantage remained in his coalition and the "red scare" that held it together. Indeed, it seems impossible to imagine any other plausible result. Christian Democrats remained Chile's largest single party at the time. Their Conservative and Liberal partners allowed them to nearly double the votes they could count on—totaling at least 50 percent of Chilean voters—based on partisan loyalty and indigenous anti-Communism alone.[24]

This became clear when Frei's coalition fell apart and the Christian Democratic Party returned to its pre-Curicó strength in the mid- to late 1960s. Conservatives and Liberals bolted to reinvent themselves as the National Party in 1966. Then the PDC's left wing splintered, renaming itself the Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitaria (MAPU), which joined Allende's Unidad Popular coalition in 1969. Not even $1 billion in Alliance funds during the next six years could prevent this.

Meanwhile, Frei appointed Senator Radomiro Tomic his ambassador to the United States. The new ambassador traveled to Washington in October 1964. As he clarified to his counterparts in the Department of State, Curicó had simplified and transformed what had been a three-way race into a "choice between Frei's democratic reform program and the Marxist alternative offered by Allende."[25]

September 1970: The Election and Inauguration of Salvador Allende

Chilean society had become polarized and unstable by the time the next presidential elections were held in September 1970. By then, the Alliance for Progress had lost momentum and Chile and the rest of Latin America had become peripheral in Washington. This was because Nixon and Kissinger did not share Kennedy and Johnson's prioritization of the region's security and development. Henry Kissinger made this clear to his CIA briefers during the transition when he stopped their presentation on Panama and asked them why they were even bringing it up. He clarified that "our attention, the attention of Mr. Nixon and myself, is going to be centered on the Soviet Union and Western Europe."[26]

Following the appearance of the antiwar movement in the United States and the *Ramparts* (a West Coast periodical) scandal, where an outraged student officer of the National Student Association exposed the agency's covert financing of it and other student groups in 1967, the Johnson and Nixon admin-

istrations let their predecessors' covert practices in funding foreign elections, cultural fronts, and press outlets lag. In the aftermath of this scandal, the CIA became risk-averse to a point of absurdity "that was carried to its logical conclusion when headquarters ordered the termination of a productive agent who had thoughtlessly enrolled in a night course," as one case officer complained. In this atmosphere, Senator J. William Fulbright (D-AR), who chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and knew about the agency's involvement in Frei's election, warned DCI Richard M. Helms that "if I catch you trying to upset the Chilean election, I will get up on the Senate floor and blow the operation."[27]

Washington was already cautious about covert operations in Chile. In October 1969, Brigadier General Roberto Viaux, commander of the 1st Division of the Chilean Army, and backed by many officers and soldiers throughout the country, attempted to overthrow the Frei administration, or at least force Frei to change his defense policy while replacing the minister and the high command. The uprising, known as the Tacnazo, after the regimental headquarters where it occurred, reflected widespread concern within the professional officer corps about Frei's policies, his emphasis on civic action programs, and the perceived neglect of conventional military readiness. Further, officers, noncommissioned officers, and their families remained unhappy with the administration, the minister of defense, and the high command for failing to keep their agreement to deal with the pay and benefits problems, as they had promised in May 1968. Army pay and benefits had failed to keep up with inflation for more than a decade, leaving officers and soldiers in need of second jobs while still serving and impoverishing them in retirement.

The Tacnazo fizzled within a day, but it rattled the Frei administration and shook up the Ministry of Defense and the high command. Complicating matters, the *Washington Post* quoted an unattributed source who had bragged that the CIA "was aware of the situation for six weeks" the day after Viaux's movement agreed to lay down its arms. This alarmed the administration. Foreign Minister Juan Gabriel Valdés and the Foreign Ministry's Patricio Silva and Eduardo Palma went so far as to suggest that the United States had been responsible for it.[28]

Ambassador Edward M. Korry and Deputy Chief of Mission Harry W. Shlaudeman denied this, reminding Frei and Valdés that their friendship toward the administration was too well established for any of its officials to entertain such notions. In public, Frei accepted these denials, but privately, he and his inner circle were shocked and unsure what to think. This increased Korry's wariness about intervening in Chilean elections. But the ambassador need not have worried. In Washington, the Nixon administration declined to back any candidate in 1970.[29]

Through 1970, former president Jorge Alessandri Rodríguez campaigned as an independent who despised politics. He enjoyed the National Party's support on the right and many middle-class professionals as well. He expected to win a plurality by more than 100,000 votes and then use those votes to prevail in the constitutionally mandated congressional runoff that would follow. Ambassador Tomic, representing Christian Democrats, ran to the left of the Frei administration. And Allende, who led the Unidad Popular coalition, campaigned on the far left on a platform that promised to bring about a peaceful revolution. Washington authorized a spoiling operation against Allende, but nothing else.

That July, Nixon asked Kissinger to define their options should Allende win, which most observers considered possible but unlikely. The NSC proposed four options the following month. The United States could seek a modus vivendi with Allende. It might adopt a cool, correct, and restrained posture toward him in public while opposing him in private. It could try to isolate him. Or, if Allende were deemed a threat, it might attempt to overthrow him. The NSC preferred the restrained posture toward Allende for its flexibility while warning that overthrowing him entailed the highest risk. Kissinger deferred further discussion on these recommendations the day he received them. Ambassador Korry's reporting, which contained a stream of agitated commentary from Santiago, had distracted him.[30]

It was in this environment that, on 4 September, Allende won an unexpected plurality of 36.6 percent, surprising his own coalition and Alessandri, who followed him with 34.9 percent while Tomic trailed with 27.8 percent. Since Alessandri declined to concede, the Chilean Congress would decide between the top two candidates—who remained separated by only 40,000 votes, making anything possible during the runoff—on 24 October. This generated, among other things, six weeks of confusion, backroom negotiations, and improvised covert operations and coup plotting, as all eyes turned toward Alessandri, Frei, Chief of Staff General René Schneider, Major General Carlos Prats (who also served in the high command), and Brigadier General Viaux, who had led the Tacnazo and been sent into retirement afterward.[31]

Alessandri and those who voted for him desperately wanted to deny the presidency to Allende. But Alessandri did not see how he could take office, having come in second. He could accomplish this by making himself available to win the runoff while clarifying that he would resign the office immediately. This would prompt a new election in which Frei could run. Attorney Pablo Rodríguez and other Alessandri supporters hoped that this might galvanize anti-Communists as Curicó had in 1964, and that Chileans would see the election as a choice between freedom and Communism and vote accordingly. After

all, Allende had only garnered 36.6 percent, leaving 63.4 percent of voters ready to be unified against him on an anti-Communist unity ticket, if such a coalition could be put together.[32]

Frei's position seems to remain largely redacted from the declassified American record today. But Ambassador Korry's confidential conversations with Christian Democrats, the CIA's reporting from Santiago, and General Schneider and Major General Prats's impressions suggest that the president wanted the Chilean Army to intervene to ensure that Alessandri's scenario unfolded. In no case should Allende win, even if it meant that the military seized power—either by accepting key positions in the outgoing administration under one pretext or another, and then using these positions to stage an *autogolpe*, or coup from within, or by moving more directly to do so against the government with Frei's tacit approval. The president seems to have wanted this to happen without ordering it, thereby affording him plausible deniability and a clear conscience.[33]

Generals Schneider and Prats had been attempting, and failing, to reestablish civilian-dominated civil-military relations and respect for the chain of command within an agitated and politicized professional officer corps since the Tacnazo. They met on 5 September, agreeing that the election would end in one of four ways. First, Christian Democrats could vote for Alessandri in the runoff, almost certainly triggering civil war. Second, Allende might strike a deal with Christian Democrats, promising to respect the constitutional order in exchange for their votes in the runoff. A protracted conflict between the executive branch, under Allende's control, and the legislative and judicial branches, in National and Christian Democratic hands, would follow. Third, Allende could refuse to compromise with Christian Democrats and force his way into power on the strength of his plurality of 40,000 votes. Schneider thought that this would produce a proletarian dictatorship and an anti-Communist reaction, likely spearheaded by elements from within the military. Fourth, Viaux, who remained active in Chilean politics, might try to seize power before the runoff, which would probably drag the country into civil war.[34]

Schneider and Prats agreed that they should keep the army out of this mess, which civilian politicians had made and should clean up on their own. Their best course of action was to protect the existing constitutional order, bolster their institution's professionalism, and restore military discipline. They explained this to their subordinates, hoping to inoculate them against Viaux, who they suspected, rightly, it turned out, was already approaching key officers to identify those who would back him in a coup.[35]

That same day, Schneider and Prats joined a larger group of ranking officers from the other services in a private meeting in commander of the air force general Carlos Guerraty's home. Those in attendance included Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Fernando Porta; General Vicente Huerta, director

of the *Carabineros*, Chile's national police force; and Brigadier General Camilo Valenzuela, in command of the army's garrison in Santiago. Valenzuela's unit would assume direct control of the capital in the event of a declared state of emergency. According to Guerraty, who summarized the gathering to a CIA informant, these officers sounded each other out on the possibility of organizing a coup. They talked about forming a military cabinet, removing Frei to a third country, then calling for new elections. Schneider opposed this, Prats and others remained silent, and the meeting ended inconclusively.[36]

Valenzuela, who had taken the lead in this meeting, saw Viaux the following day, on 6 September. Afterward, he asked the U.S. Army attaché, Colonel Paul M. Wimert, to solicit Ambassador Korry's views on the discussion at Guerraty's residence, to see whether the ambassador might be willing to use his influence with Frei to persuade him to at least passively acquiesce to this nascent plan. Korry sent word to Valenzuela that he was "very satisfied" to learn that these officers had reached the same conclusions he had with respect to what an Allende administration would mean. Korry insisted that these were his personal views and not Washington's, when he advised the Department of State that the situation was more or less stalemated, with Frei looking for the generals to move on their own while the generals waited for Frei to give the order.[37]

Meanwhile, as General Schneider predicted, Allende took the initiative, negotiating an understanding with Christian Democrats. He would guarantee the constitutional order in exchange for their votes in the runoff, which would put him over the top. He also reached out to the military. Frei had given service commanders permission to brief Alessandri and Allende's campaigns on routine defense matters, as was customary during transitions. These conversations typically related to budgetary requirements and other prosaic matters. Alessandri's people, who already had experience in government, passed on these meetings, but Allende took advantage of them to make his case to the armed forces.

Allende reserved the right to appoint ministers of defense and their deputies and to name service commanders as well. But he promised not to politicize the professional officer corps, bypass the chain of command, or interfere with promotions. He would also respect existing military assistance agreements. Generals Schneider and Prats, both anticipating that they would be among those soon retired, accepted Allende's assurances while encouraging their subordinates to do so too.

Allende also spoke to Admiral Porta, Vice Admiral Raúl Montero, Rear Admiral José Toribio Merino, and others in the navy. Allende's campaign had perhaps distressed these officers the most, as he had promised to withdraw from the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Defense Board, and to break all military relations with the United States, from the Rio Pact (or Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance) to UNITAS, thereby

revising Chile's Cold War position, which, in their view, would weaken the navy and, consequently, national security. They also worried that Allende might create people's militias—he was already using a Cuban-trained protection detail rather than the police, who he dismissed as bourgeois puppets—and use them to subject the navy to party discipline.[38]

Allende reassured these admirals that his administration would respect the navy's wishes. Chile would remain within the Western community of nations and the OAS while maintaining its existing relationships with the United States, from whom the navy was currently purchasing seven warships. This satisfied Porta, who shared Schneider's position that the armed services should remain focused on national security, internal order, and institutional integrity while leaving politics to politicians.

In Washington, the NSC was as surprised as everyone by the results of 4 September, since the latest polls had indicated an Alessandri victory. But the NSC's specialist in Latin America, Viron P. Vaky, and others on the staff remained unperturbed. Vaky summarized the intelligence community's views at the time. The United States had "no vital interests within Chile. . . . The world military balance of power would not be significantly altered." Allende's election "would represent a definite psychological set-back to the U.S. and a definite psychological advance for the Marxist idea. . . . There would be tangible economic losses." Still, Allende did not threaten American national security.[39]

Although Ambassador Korry had seen "very little possibility of a duly-elected and inaugurated Allende being overthrown" in the NSC's contingency planning before the elections, he believed it might be possible to influence the runoff, perhaps by bribery. The CIA cited "ample precedent for the purchase of congressional favors" and estimated that if Alessandri came in first and Allende a close second, it could probably pay off enough Chilean legislators to ensure that the balance remained in Alessandri's favor. But these bribes could only buttress "courses of action upon which Chileans themselves have already decided to embark" and would therefore play no more than an ancillary role. At the same time, the agency warned the NSC that, were Allende to come in first, even by a slight margin, "popular forces rallying to his support may soon prove to be overpowering."[40]

When the NSC met after the election, on 8 September, Kissinger set these earlier discussions aside, and asked Ambassador Korry and Chief of Station Henry D. Hecksher to determine whether an American-backed coup to preempt the runoff would succeed. They replied that such action remained "impossible" and "nonexistent." Korry explained that he was still exchanging views with Christian Democrats in the administration and Congress on the maneuver that could lead to a new election, but the CIA characterized this maneuver as "a very long shot."[41]

The NSC talked about this again on 14 September, deciding to concentrate its efforts on the maneuver, which it was calling "the Frei reelection gambit." Korry and Hecksher were to approach key Christian Democrats and Chilean military officers and tell them that, if they carried this out, the United States would support them. As Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs U. Alexis Johnson put it in Korry's instructions, Washington was ordering Korry to stay on the safe side of a blurry line: "We do not want you to get out in front and we do not want you to 'take over.' Yet we do not want their will to flag for lack of support."[42]

Johnson had chosen his words carefully. Secretary of State William P. Rogers and the NSC's Vaky were concerned about Ambassador Korry's behavior. Rogers told Kissinger that Korry's messages seemed "frenetic and somewhat irrational." Vaky speculated that the ambassador was "under too much stress, almost hysterical." He feared that he was exceeding his instructions, that he had probably committed the administration to courses of action it had not yet duly considered or authorized, and he wanted to rein him in.[43]

From his position at the NSC, Vaky fought a rearguard action during the next several weeks. He wanted to direct Kissinger's attention back to practical and realistic policy making—"to stop mucking around." "We stand vulnerable," he warned, "to the charge that we did not reach policy decisions through the reasoned NSC system of examination of the situation and alternatives on which we have prided ourselves." Vaky implored Kissinger to reach "*a policy decision . . . and a controlled implementation of that decision*."[44]

Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Charles A. Meyer brought this up in one NSC meeting, and Kissinger shot it down:

> [Nixon] had no intention of conceding before the 24th [of October]; on the contrary, he wanted no stone left unturned . . . [Kissinger] went on to note the inevitable contrast of [Nixon's] advising heads of state in Europe of the absolute undesirability of an Allende regime in Chile while back home the bureaucracy performed a slow gavotte over what our posture should be.[45]

Nixon's perceptions seemed to have been partly derived from Ambassador Korry's reporting. The president underlined several sentences in the ambassador's first post-election cable: "We have been living with a corpse in our midst for some time and its name is Chile. . . . Chileans like to die peacefully with their mouths open. . . . The political right depend upon the economic right" before pronouncing it "an excellent perceptive job of analysis." By the following week, Nixon was comparing Chile to Czechoslovakia and Cuba.[46]

Other advice came to Nixon's increasingly flustered White House. Donald

M. Kendall, a campaign contributor who occasionally offered unsolicited foreign policy advice, brought Chilean publisher Agustín Edwards to Washington on 14 September. Kendall, Edwards, and an unlisted Chilean associate had breakfast with Kissinger and Attorney General John N. Mitchell before being debriefed by DCI Helms. Both Kissinger and Helms cited Edwards when explaining the president's outburst that followed.[47]

The declassified record remains redacted and only contains part of what Edwards and his associate said. They described the political dispositions of the commanders of the Chilean armed forces while outlining each of the services' states of readiness. General Schneider and Admiral Porta would not act outside of constitutional procedures, but all of the other commanders wanted to block Allende's inauguration. Brigadier General Valenzuela was prepared to back Major General Prats as Schneider's successor, provided the latter was given an honorable exit. He was even ready to move alone, if necessary. Edwards clearly wanted Nixon's support for a coup, and he thought it should be "a serious effort" rather than one led by Brigadier General Viaux "or some other nut." Edwards implored to Nixon that there was just too much at stake to rely wholly on the Frei reelection gambit.[48]

Nixon summoned Kissinger, Attorney General Mitchell, and DCI Helms to his office the next day. He directed the CIA to instigate a military coup in Chile regardless of the cost. He told him to do this outside of the NSC system, which normally vetted covert operations, and without the Department of State, Ambassador Korry, or the embassy's knowledge. Kissinger later characterized this as "a passionate desire, unfocused and born of frustration, to do 'something'," suggesting that no one who knew the president would have taken these instructions seriously.[49]

Helms took exception to that:

> I do not consider myself to have been an unwary or even casual recipient of instructions by the President from behind his desk in the Oval Office. President Nixon had ordered me to instigate a military coup in Chile. . . . By what superior judgment was I to leave the White House and then decide that the President did not mean what he had just said?[50]

Thus, Helms formed a task force, codenamed Project FUBELT, to carry out this directive the following day. FUBELT was a task force of one—Chief of Station Rio de Janeiro David Atlee Philips, who returned to Langley, Virginia, working and sleeping in Deputy Director for Plans (DDP) Thomas H. Karamessines's offices for its duration, from 16 September to 3 November 1970. Phillips, the agency's director of Latin American operations, William V. Broe, and DDP Karamessines reported to Kissinger and his assistant, Brigadier

General Alexander M. Haig, who subjected them to "just constant, constant. . . . Just continual pressure." The case officers at the CIA's Santiago Station objected that they had been given an impossible mission. But they duly combed the professional officer corps, as ordered. Using Edwards's intelligence and Colonel Wimert's contacts, they found Brigadier Generals Viaux and Valenzuela.[51]

Viaux and Valenzuela had already sought each other out. They agreed that they could not permit "the enthronement of communism in Chile." They believed that key members of the administration, including the minister of interior, Minister of Defense Sergio Ossa, and the minister of economy were passively encouraging them to act, and they counted on the support of a larger group of sympathetic officers.[52]

As Viaux lamented, however, "the problem of the chief of staff remained." General Schneider would not support any extraconstitutional move. Viaux and Valenzuela's group tried to change his mind, but he refused even to listen to them, prompting one frustrated conspirator to remark to an agency informant that the plotters did not need American advice or money—they needed "a general with balls."[53]

Viaux reached out to Major General Prats via an intermediary, asking for a private meeting. Prats flatly turned the intermediary down: "Nothing personal, but I have never shared his [Viaux] views, which I consider offensive to the army. If he wants to discuss some plot to change the election's results, I will be obligated to report it. If he wants to talk about some other, non-political business, he can come to my office." Viaux sent word back that there must have been a misunderstanding and dropped it.[54]

Around this time, on the evening of 6 October, Minister of Defense Ossa approached Ambassador Korry, asking whether the Nixon administration supported Brigadier Generals Valenzuela and Viaux. There remain many ways to interpret this, and current redactions in the declassified record render it inconclusive, but Frei may have been using Ossa to sound Korry out while deciding whether he should cross the Rubicon with Valenzuela and Viaux. If so, Korry discouraged Frei. He said that he spoke for the United States in all things in Chile, and that he opposed Valenzuela and Viaux's conspiracy. Then he instructed Chief of Station Hecksher to break contact with the two generals, explaining that it would look better if Washington were "totally surprised by whatever might develop." Kissinger belayed this, but he could not retract what Korry had told Ossa at what might have been a pivotal moment.[55]

It became clear to everyone but Ambassador Korry that the Frei reelection gambit was not going anywhere, while at the same time everyone involved but Nixon and Kissinger concluded that neither the CIA nor Brigadier Generals Viaux and Valenzuela were positioned to preempt the runoff by mid-

October. Indeed, Viaux and Valenzuela had shaken the agency's confidence by requesting external arms drops as part of, in Chief of Station Hecksher's view, an ill-conceived coup attempt that would fail, expose the U.S. involvement, and strengthen Allende's position.[56]

At CIA headquarters in Langley, the leadership understood that Brigadier General Viaux was planning to abduct General Schneider on his own but found it improbable and quite reckless. Further, Brigadier General Valenzuela and the others' will appeared to be slackening. Viaux alone seemed to hope that Valenzuela, Major General Prats, and the others would fall in behind him and that all would end well. This was not enough.

DDP Karamessines took Viaux's plan to Kissinger and Haig at the White House on 15 October, finally persuading them that it would not only fail but worsen the situation. As Kissinger told Nixon later that evening, "I saw Karamessines today. That looks hopeless. I turned it off. Nothing would be worse than an abortive coup." He still wanted to keep Valenzuela and Viaux in reserve, so he directed the agency to instruct them to preserve their assets and wait for a better moment.[57]

Viaux ignored these instructions. As the Church Committee would later observe, "American officials had exaggerated notions about their ability to control the actions of coup leaders. . . . Events demonstrated that the United States had no such power." This was one of those events. How did it unfold?[58]

Frei had relieved Admiral Porta earlier that day, on 15 October, citing the admiral's meetings with Allende as the reason. He named Admiral Hugo Tirado, who was friendly to Valenzuela and Viaux's plotting, as the new chief of naval operations. As the DIA speculated, this "may have made the navy more likely to participate in a coup." Valenzuela and Viaux approached Santiago Station again, asking for a handful of untraceable submachine guns and teargas canisters on Saturday evening, 17 October. This puzzled Karamessines, Broe, and Philips, who were unaware of these breaking developments. They urgently queried, "What happened between morning 17 October and evening 17 October to change [redacted] from despondency to measured optimism? Who exactly is involved in coup attempt? Who are leaders and which units will support them?"[59]

The answer was that Valenzuela, Viaux, and the others had come together in high spirits after Tirado's promotion. They could now count on all service commanders except Schneider. They agreed to execute Viaux's plan forthwith; they would abduct Schneider. General Huerta's *Carabineros* would "reveal" several leftist arms caches around Santiago, while Viaux alerted Chileans to the Communist danger that was upon them. Frei would declare a state of emergency and mobilize the capital's garrison, which remained under Valenzuela. Once this happened, Tirado would form a military government. Then the president

would leave the country, Valenzuela would release Schneider, presenting him with a fait accompli, to which he would acquiesce, and new elections would follow.[60]

Valenzuela insisted that someone other than Chilean soldiers grab Schneider. It was too much for him to consent to a military operation directed against a sitting chief of staff. Viaux was ready for this. He had recruited Juan Diego Dávila, Luis Gallardo, Jaime Melgoza, and other civilians from the Alessandri campaign. These men had no military or police training. Melgoza had driven buses and sold cars, but he presented himself as a martial arts expert who could do the job. The handful of others had similar backgrounds.

Brigadier General Viaux instructed Gallardo's people to execute the plan late on 17 October. They would take Schneider to "a place only Dávila and I knew about." Then "a message would be sent to Frei, in the name of an imaginary organization, demanding that he designate a military cabinet as a condition of the general's release." They had handguns, chloroform, and pepper. They expected everything to be completed in a smooth 48 hours.[61]

Brigadier General Valenzuela arranged a dinner on the pretext of celebrating General Schneider's one-year anniversary as chief of staff on Monday evening, 19 October, thus luring him to his official residence in Las Condes. Valenzuela would ensure that the party ended around 0100 and that Schneider left alone. General Huerta would redirect the police's patrol cars away from the neighborhood, leaving him unprotected.[62]

Gallardo waited outside the residence at the correct time, but the events did not go as planned. Although Schneider had arrived in his official Mercedes, he drove home in his private car, which had been parked elsewhere. Gallardo was watching the official vehicle, so he never saw the general leave that night. Gallardo improvised another plan the following day, but none of his people had a car that could keep up with Schneider's Mercedes, and it failed.

Brigadier General Viaux met Gallardo again, possibly passing submachine guns and teargas from the CIA to them, which they might have acquired from Colonel Wimert on Wednesday evening, 21 October. They assembled a larger force, consisting of approximately 20 cars. These vehicles would create the appearance of a traffic jam the following morning, forcing General Schneider's car onto a side street near Américo Vespucio and Martín de Zamora. Then one of them would crash into the Mercedes while three or four others surrounded it. Melgoza would disable the general's driver, a corporal, "with a karate chop," while the others used sledgehammers to intimidate and take him.[63]

The plan proved a catastrophic failure in the execution on Thursday morning, 22 October. Schneider was not intimidated, and he resisted. One of Gallardo's people shot him before the others panicked and scattered. The general died in a military hospital three days later. Frei declared a state of emergency while

Minister of Defense Ossa, Major General Prats, and the other service commanders denounced the attack, promising swift justice. Prats placed army units on alert throughout the nation, describing "a general feeling of indignation, not only for the seriousness [of] such an attack against our respected superior and colleague represented, but because it was also an attack against the army itself." When he asked Brigadier General Valenzuela, who had assumed operational control of all forces in the capital, for a situation report, he found him demoralized and uncommunicative.[64]

Brigadier General Viaux, however, believed that his moment had finally come. Nixon, Kissinger, and everyone following these events in Langley leaned forward to see what would happen next. They were all disappointed. Chief of Station Hecksher rejected Viaux's frantic request that he and Ambassador Korry tell Frei that this had been a Communist move, and Valenzuela would not even take his calls. One of the assailants was reportedly in hiding and offering to name everyone involved. These names included high-ranking government and military officials who had promised "that if Schneider was kidnapped there would be a coup," but who had failed to follow through and were "desperately trying to find a way to prevent public revelation of their involvement." Allende was elected days later. The CIA found "no indications that Valenzuela's or Viaux's group are planning a coup" after he was inaugurated. It was over, except for the courts-martial.[65]

Many have reconstructed and analyzed the part that the agency's covert operations played in the events surrounding the election and inauguration of Allende. Most failed to recognize these operations for the series of failures that they were. First, Nixon directed the CIA to spoil Allende's victory, which failed when he won a plurality. Next, Nixon, Kissinger, and Ambassador Korry explored the Frei reelection gambit, only to find, as the NSC's Vaky phrased it, that "Korry is grabbing at straws, but each one breaks when he grabs it. . . . We are kidding ourselves to believe that there are any more gambits that can work." Then the president ordered the agency to instigate a coup to preempt the congressional runoff, which failed as well. These failures occurred, not as intelligence failures, but rather because no covert operation, no matter how well conceived, funded, or implemented, was capable of deciding these issues.[66]

But coalition politics in Chile could. Ambassador Tomic was not a viable successor to Frei in 1970 because the Christian-Democratic–Conservative-Liberal coalition that had elected Frei had fallen apart—indeed, given the policy differences that divided the PDC, on the one hand, and Conservatives and Liberals, on the other, particularly on land reform, this coalition may have been destined to fail. Tomic was not only unable to form a new coalition with other influential parties, but he failed to keep Christian Democrats—who had

left, center-left, and center-right factions by the late 1960s—together as well. Leftist Christian Democrats splintered and joined Allende's Unidad Popular, strengthening it at the PDC's expense. The Unidad Popular adroitly exploited this situation and won the election, even if only barely. Allende reached out to Tomic and those Christian Democrats who were already inclined to back him in the runoff, and they negotiated constitutional guarantees in exchange for the PDC's support. Once they shook hands on this agreement, the electoral outcome was beyond the reach of Nixon, Kissinger, and the CIA, no matter how they might have approached it.

March 1973: Midterm Congressional Elections

In November 1970, Nixon and Kissinger decided to adopt the NSC's option of a cool, correct, and restrained posture toward the Allende government in public while opposing it in private. They would covertly support opposition parties, back publisher Edwards and other anti-Communist voices in the Chilean press, and try to complicate or harass Allende's ability to consolidate his position and implement his program. They would welcome a coup should one occur. But by that November, Nixon and Kissinger had given up on the idea that they themselves could produce one. The agency closed down Project FUBELT, and Santiago Station and the defense attachés assigned to the embassy returned to passive intelligence collection, liaison, and reporting.[67]

The next round of CIA covert operations were intended to influence the midterm congressional elections in March 1973. By then, General Schneider's scenario of a protracted conflict between the executive branch, under Allende's control, and the legislative and judicial branches, in the opposition's hands, had materialized. This conflict was aggravated by Allende's rhetoric and policies, particularly his Escuela Nacional Unificada initiative, which would have increased government direction of primary and secondary education while imposing, some feared, a Marxist-Leninist curriculum. This helped bring Christian Democrats and Nationalists into the Confederación de la Democracia (CODE), an anti-Communist and antigovernment coalition. Partisans from the upper, middle, and working classes, including copper miners, truck drivers, women, and Patria y Libertad (Fatherland and Liberty), which explicitly targeted the military and pressed it to overthrow the government, had been protesting and staging strikes in an increasingly chaotic nation for months.

CODE approached the congressional elections as an opportunity to gain the two-thirds majority it needed to impeach Allende, or at least to tie him down with legislation and hearings. The Unidad Popular hoped to bolster the government's legitimacy and reinvigorate its program by winning the parliamentary majority that the peaceful road to socialism required. Washington supported CODE and Moscow supported Unidad Popular. The NSC contributed

approximately $1.6 million and the Politburo around $100,000—a 16 to 1 difference. Both the CIA and KGB's operations attempted to improve their coalition's position while dividing and weakening the other side. Both endeavored to influence public opinion inside and outside of Chile. Both claimed moderate success but nevertheless failed to achieve their objectives. CODE reaffirmed its 55 percent majority (nearly identical to the outcome of the presidential elections in 1964, the last time these parties ran together), but fell short of the larger majority it wanted. Unidad Popular took about 44 percent—an increase when measured against the presidential elections of 1970, but a decrease from its performance in the municipal elections in 1971—and its parliamentary majority continued to elude it.[68]

These results disappointed some and frustrated others. From CODE's perspective, these elections represented the exhaustion of the constitutional means of removing Allende. Tensions and talk of mutinies and civil war increased. When an armored regiment rose on its own to overthrow the government that June, the president's naval attaché was gunned down in July, and large numbers of army officers and their wives forced General Prats's resignation in August, it became clear to many that something had to give.

Prats had been the first to understand this. He was serving the Allende administration as minister of the interior while still chief of staff of the army that March. After the election, he advised the president that the situation had become untenable. Allende could either reconcile his differences with CODE as a whole, or perhaps reach an understanding with or possibly build a new governing coalition that included Christian Democrats, which required substantial compromise either way. Or he could choose to continue taking a confrontational, maximalist route from his increasingly isolated position. If he chose the former, the service commanders might be able to remain in the cabinet long enough to help broker a deal between Unidad Popular and the PDC, but they would have to withdraw should he choose the latter. Prats also informed Allende that the professional officer corps was becoming even more agitated in response to the administration's talk of acquiring Soviet weapons and military advisors. They were signaling that "Chile remained outside of the Soviet sphere of influence," and that they would not accept any kind of dependency relationship with Moscow.[69]

Allende promised to consider it, but he never got around to it. A wedge drove Prats and the other service commanders, on the one hand, and their subordinates, on the other, apart during the following months. Prats continued trying to reason with Allende, but found him "swimming in a sea of illusions" until the end. All of this and more made the coup that came six months later more likely. Although the CIA and the rest of the intelligence community saw it coming and closely reported on it, it was a Chilean, not an American,

Table 1. Chilean elections in 1964, 1970, and 1973

Election	Far left	Center left (percent of vote)	Right
Curicó, March 1964	FRAP 39	PDC 28	FD 33
President, September 1964	FRAP 38.6	PDC 55.6	
President, September 1970	UP 36.6	PDC 27.8	PN 34.9
Congress, March 1973	UP 44	CODE 55	

Notes: FRAP = Frente de Acción Popular; PDC = Christian Democratic Party; FD = Democratic Front of Chile; UP = Unidad Popular; PN = National Party; and CODE = Confederación de la Democracia.
Source: courtesy of the author

operation. This does not absolve the Nixon administration or the intelligence community from involvement and partial responsibility. As the agency has acknowledged: "Although [the] CIA did not instigate the coup that ended Allende's government on 11 September 1973, it was aware of coup-plotting by the military, had ongoing intelligence collection relationships with some plotters, and—because CIA did not discourage the takeover and had sought to instigate a coup in 1970—probably appeared to condone it."[70]

Conclusion

Table 1 summarizes the elections this article has discussed. There remain several ways to interpret these results, and this article does not offer the final word. Reading these outcomes and using Curicó as the baseline, where no known foreign intervention occurred, shows that Chileans' political leanings remained relatively stable from 1964 to 1973. Their circumstances, however, changed, and it was primarily their political parties' tactical alignments, positioning, and repositioning in response to these changes, not the CIA's covert operations and propaganda, that account for their voting behavior and these outcomes.

Chilean anti-Communists maintained a stable majority of about 55 percent of the vote when they formed coalitions together in September 1964 and March 1973. If we combine the center left and right into a hypothetical other-than-Marxist bloc, as some of Alessandri's partisans, particularly Patria y Libertad's Rodriguez and American officials like Kissinger did, then this anti-Communist majority peaked at 61 percent, with no U.S. intervention or backing, in March 1964, and 63 percent in September 1970. We could also group the far left and center left together to challenge this, to show that more than 60 percent preferred one form or another of accelerated leftward governance in these same two elections.

Chilean Marxist-Leninists—Communists, Socialists, and those smaller

parties that joined them—remained a stable and determined minority that consistently received from 36 to 44 percent of the vote, both without the CIA's anti-Communist propaganda operations, in March 1964, and in spite of them, in September 1964, September 1970, and March 1973. This remains consistent with global trends in the twentieth century. As historian Odd Arne Westad has explained, Marxists "never constituted more than small groups, but they had an influence far greater than their numbers. What characterized them were to a large extent the intensity of their beliefs and their fundamental internationalism."[71]

If the agency's covert operations remained no more than modestly effective in influencing Chilean elections, and if these operations entailed the kinds of costs and liabilities listed in the introduction, then why did the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations use them? They did so partly because they often failed to understand the nature, particularly the limitations, costs, and liabilities of intelligence operations, and they sometimes directed the CIA to perform unreasonable tasks, such as Nixon's order that DCI Helms somehow push a button to instigate an instant coup in Chile in September 1970. As DCI Walter Bedell Smith and a few other professional intelligence officers tried to warn administrations and the Pentagon from the Korean War forward, there was "a high degree of wishful thinking and unreality . . . as to what could be accomplished by special operations" in Washington. Also, it seems that, with the stakes as high as they were in the developing world, the American government played every card in the deck, as Nixon did when he told Helms to spare no effort in Chile even if there were only a 1 in 10 chance it would succeed. This seems understandable. However, presidents and policy makers would be well advised to better familiarize themselves with covert operations' limitations and long-term costs and liabilities, all of which tend to outweigh any short-term benefits they might achieve, before instructing the agency to execute them in the future.[72]

How might this discussion help us better appreciate the effectiveness of Russia's intervention in American politics today? Moscow has been running collection efforts and covert operations in the United States and Latin America since World War II, as the cases of Aldrich H. Ames (former CIA), Robert P. Hanssen (former FBI), and Maria Butina (Russian gun-rights activist and spy) reconfirm. Former KBG officers Lieutenant General Nikolai S. Leonov and Major General Oleg D. Kalugin have acknowledged that they had to confront the same issues their counterparts in the CIA did, at least during the Cold War. That is, they were never able to create public opinion out of whole cloth or to impose results from Moscow that were not already happening, or inclined to occur, on the ground wherever they were operating.[73]

Today, the Putin regime continues in its attempts to exacerbate confusion

and division in the United States and Europe with the ultimate objective of weakening the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which Moscow seems to deem necessary to maximize its own security. This may seem formidable, particularly when an exotic new vocabulary, such as cyberoperations and hybrid warfare, comes into play, but the above limitations likely remain. And if this remains true, then our best course of action would be to clean our own house to resolve our own disagreements and problems on the ground at the national, state, and local levels. We should continue to draw attention to Russia's covert operations through imaginative counterintelligence and painstaking law-enforcement investigations, but we must concentrate our efforts on denying Moscow anything to exploit. Thus, the problem and solution, in Chile during the Cold War and in America today, lies in these nations themselves and not in Dorfman's outside forces working from remote rooms abroad. Indeed, blaming these external forces remains, as Harvard Law's Yochai Benkler has phrased it, a cop-out.[74]

Notes

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2. Dorfman, "Now, America, You Know How Chileans Felt." For the planning and execution of Cochayuyo, see José Toribio Merino, *Bitácora de un almirante*: *memorias* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1998), 206–59. Find Merino's handwritten plea to Pinochet and Leigh and their response—*conforme*, or agreed—dated 9 September 1973, on pp. 230–31.
3. Gabriel García Márquez, "The Death of Salvador Allende," *Harper's Magazine*, March 1974, 46–53; Thomas Hauser, *The Execution of Charles Horman*: *An American Sacrifice* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978); and Costa-Gavras, *Missing* (Universal Pictures, 1982). For responses, see Nathaniel Davis, *The Last Two Years of Salvador Allende* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); and LtCol Patrick J. Ryan (USMC), *Allende's Chile: 1000 Bungled Days* (New York: American-Chilean Council, 1976).
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5. Paul E. Sigmund, *The United States and Democracy in Chile* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), xi; and Paul E. Sigmund, *The Overthrow of Allende and the Politics of Chile*, *1964–1976* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977).
6. See "Pinochet Arrested in London," BBC, 17 October 1998; John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (New York: New Press, 2005); and Thomas C. Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).
7. Jonathan Haslam, *The Nixon Administration and the Death of Allende's Chile: A Case of Assisted Suicide* (London: Verso, 2005), 169–70, 182, 219, 230; Mark Atwood Lawrence, "History from Below: The United States and Latin America in the Nixon Years," in *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969–1977*, ed. Fredrik Logevall and Andrew Preston (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 278; Lubna Z. Qureshi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende: U.S. Involvement in the 1973 Coup in Chile* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 101; and Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The Unit-*

ed States Wages Cold War in Latin America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 133, 136. Rabe seems to have deleted the story about Walters from the second edition of *Killing Zone*.

8. Kristian Gustafson, *Hostile Intent: U.S. Covert Operations in Chile, 1964–1974* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007); Jody Pavilack, *Mining for the Nation: The Politics of Chile's Coal Communities from the Popular Front to the Cold War* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2011), 339; and Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War*, 6, 17.
9. Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War*, 255. For the final autopsy, see "Allende: director del SML dice que informe ratifica autopsia de 1973," *La Nacíon*, 19 July 2011. For the Supreme Court's decision, see "Chile: Court Closes Probe into Ex-President Allende's Death," BBC, 7 January 2014.
10. Sally Marks, "The World According to Washington," *Diplomatic History* 11, no. 3 (July 1987): 265–82, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1987.tb00018.x.
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47. Kenneth Millian, "Discussion of Chilean Political Situation," 14 September 1970, in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, vol. XXI, document 89. Also see Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 673–74; and United States Senate, *Alleged Assassination Plots*, 228n1.
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51. United States Senate, *Alleged Assassination Plots*, 235; and William Broe, "Genesis of Project FUBELT," 16 September 1970, in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, vol. XXI, document 94. See also David Atlee Phillips, *The Night Watch*: *25 Years of Peculiar Service* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), 219–23.
52. Varas, *Conversaciones con Viaux*, 127–28.
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54. Prats, *Memorias*, 182.
55. Jessup, "Minutes of the Meeting of the 40 Committee, 6 October 1970"; and Korry to Johnson, 6 October 1970, in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, vol. XXI, document 136. Approximately two weeks earlier, Kissinger and the CIA had sent an emissary to promise Frei "that he will have twice the amount he had for the 1964 election and also that military aid will continue. [The emissary] is also to assure Frei that, if Frei makes the effort and it fails, we will help Frei to get himself resettled overseas if that is what he chooses to do." The effect of this message on Frei remains unrecorded or redacted from the declassified record today, assuming that it was even delivered. Ossa's approach to Korry may have represented Frei's attempt to reconfirm these promises while seeking further reassurance. See Thomas Karamessines, "Chile—22 September 1970," 22 September 1970, in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, vol. XXI, document 112.

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61. Varas, *Conversaciones con Viaux*, 159, 162, 165.
62. Luis Gallardo's statement; Varas, *Conversaciones con Viaux*, 148–70; Prats, *Memorias*, 183–84; Santiago Station to CIA, 20 October 1970; and the station's second cable the same day, in CDP.
63. Varas, *Conversaciones con Viaux*, 167. Col Paul Wimert passed three .45-caliber submachine guns, ammunition, six teargas canisters, and $50,000 to BGen Valenzuela around this time. The CIA had sent the weapons to Santiago via diplomatic pouch. Wimert recovered these weapons, reportedly unused, and threw them into the sea after Gallardo's people shot Gen Schneider. United States Senate, *Alleged Assassination Plots*, 243–45. All agree that those who murdered Schneider used weapons other than these submachine guns.
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65. "Special Report," 26 October 1970; "Track II"; and Santiago Station to CIA, 24 October 1970, in CDP. Also see Lewis Diuguid, "Chilean Army Chief Dies; Right-Wing Plot Described," *Washington Post*, 26 October 1970.
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68. CIA to 40 Committee, "Outcome of 4 March 1973 Chilean Congressional Elections," 6 April 1973, in CDP. Also see Díaz, *Patria y Libertad*, 196–206; and Andrew and Mitrohkin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 79–83.
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