



**THE POLITICAL MODEL OF THE FUTURE:
AUTHORITARIANISM OR DEMOCRACY.**

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Abstract

It is clear that the only point of consensus within the ruling coalition regards the necessity to maintain the military regime for an extended period of time, longer even than the officially designated period of 'transition', which, in accordance with the 1980 political constitution, should conclude in 1989¹.

This consensus tends to dissolve when a political model to succeed the military regime is discussed. Some sectors believe that it is necessary to maintain the military regime indefinite since their own positions of power and influence depend upon the *very* existence of the political-military model. Finally, the plan proposed by the *hegemonies block*, is a political system based upon an authoritarian regime with restricted political representation, a very strong mechanism for political exclusion, which would relegate to the armed forces the role of arbiters

¹ Quoted from "Constitucion Politica de Republica de Chile". March 1981. Official Documents of the

Resumen

Es evidente que el único punto de consenso en el seno de la coalición gobernante, es la necesidad de mantener el régimen militar durante un largo período de tiempo, más largo incluso que el designado oficialmente período de 'transición', que, de conformidad con la Constitución política de 1980, Debería concluir en 1989.

Este consenso tiende a disolver cuando un modelo político para tener éxito el régimen militar se discute. Algunos sectores creen que es necesario mantener el régimen militar indefinida desde sus propias posiciones de poder e influencia dependen de la existencia misma del modelo político-militar. Por último, el plan propuesto por el bloque de hegemonías, es un sistema político basado en un régimen autoritario con restricciones de la representación política, un fuerte mecanismo de la exclusión política, que relegan a las fuerzas armadas el papel de árbitros

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This political model, which is endeavoring to establish itself, combines a critical vision of the social and economic development of Chile in the last few decades with a theoretical concept in which political freedom entails private ownership of property. As far as the first concept is concerned, and in accord with the militaristic mentality, the Chilean political society of recent decades is regarded as predominantly *statistit*, a society characterized by a bitter polarization and partisan struggle which lead to the fragmentation of civil society, to chaos and stagnation.

The principal point of military criticism here is the rote of the state within the traditional democracy: interfering or obstructionist, inefficient and demagogical. Hand in hand with this *militaristic* view of civil society, in which the market seems to be its fundamental component, is the concept of the state whose rote as economic agent and whose redistributive capacity and authoritative control of social life are fortified.

What is overly utopian about this project is that it proposes limit organized collective demands, political activity and social change. In order to do this it would be necessary to resort to military power and methods of exclusion borrowed from ideological and political systems

³ Diaz David, "Control Militar-Corporativo", 2-5. "Transicion Politica y Democracia. Paper presented at

which could be considered classic authoritarianism, against the former political order. Such methods, prescribed in the new political Constitution of 1980, assure a political arena and system of representation with limited powers only for those social actors and subjects considered *acceptable*.

The possibility of implementation of this political project depends upon the realization of several conditions, as well as the stability and duration of the military regime. Garreton (1982) describes two of these conditions. The first refers to a global transformation of society based in term of principles on principles mercantile competition, the individual's initiative as the motivating force of society, limited government interference the economy and the atomization of social demand, that is, the ideological maturity of a new type of social relations⁴. The second condition refers to the creation of a new political class to succeed the military regime.

The authoritarian political model, even though it differs to the model of a military regime, is dependent upon it for its *very* existence. In this political model are harmonized or conjoined concepts like nationalism, anti-Marxism, traditionalism, authority, subsidiary, free market orientation and the contrasting concept of the ideology of national security (Comblin, 1977).

But, the most significant difference between this authoritarian model and the political regime operating in Chile until 1973 is that it does not base stability and legitimacy on a *consensus* arrived at in a partisan political system, but rather on the combination of a transformed civil society and an institutional system backed by the military. But it is clear that creation of a *new*

XIV Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología (San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1981), 1-46.

⁴ Regarding the cultural model of the authoritarian model, see Brunner, J., "La Cultura Autoritaria en Chile," (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales –FLACSO-, Materiales de Discusion, 1979).

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social order and its expression in a political model present several problems. on the one hand, the extreme vulnerability the country's economic base, illustrated by the current disastrous economic situation combined with mounting political unrest have all create pressure, uncertainty and repercussion with call into question of the proposed authoritarian model.

On the other hand, the changes in civil society were institucionally imposed by legal decrees, and a new political constitution, but they do not directly guaranteea change in the value system of tje citizens. A complete generation would be needed, along with its absolute isolation, and even then the valorative adhesion to the neew social order could not assured. The presence of an opposition, however repressed, provides the perception of a political alternative.

All these obstacles, schematically put forth here, are expressed in the success the military regime has had undermined the previous social and political order ans its inability to create a new one.

Postscript.

At the beginning of the essay I hypothesized that much of rhetoric of democracy used by the military regimes in Latin America is used to conceal strategies which try to institutionalize an authoritarian model in order to insure the everlasting dominance of the military over civilian society.

The purpose of this paper was to analyze the current political institutionalization of the military regime in Chile but more central to it was the analysis of the political options that

regime offers: **democracy or authoritarianism.**

In the first place, I analyzed the process of institutionalization of the regime de facto. But what is institutionalized is a military regime that seems to be a necessary condition or antecedent of an authoritarian model.

In this context, the military regime, as a transitional institution, appears as a political model in which the goal is not democracy (in any real sense of the term), but merely a democratic facade in which authoritarianism and exclusivism are the real goals. From this viewpoint, democracy does not appear to be the inevitable end of such political transition.

In the current political situation of Chile, the different meanings of democracy depend on which sector of society is being examined. In the case of Chile, from the point of view of the ruling coalition, political transition to democracy represents the passage from a strictly military regime to an authoritarian regime, with limited political arena and representative mechanisms guaranteed by the military. This is what democracy means for them, a system in which the possibility of social change is eliminated or excluded, and therefore, any group representing such alternatives for a change in society is eliminated from the political space.

For the opposition, the theme of the political transition has a different meaning. For some sectors of *the opposition transition* should mean a passage from a military regime to a democratic political regime. In general terms, the goal continues to be the recovery of the past political regime, and the reconstruction of a civil society.

The problem is that this goal of *reestablishing* the former political system is being proposed for a society which is profoundly *transformed and divided not so much because of the implementation of the new social order* but rather because of *the dislocation of the former political regime*. The call for the return to democracy in a society which has undergone profound structural changes, a society in which the articulation of its social bases and its traditional organs of political representation have been disrupted and profound changes in the role of the state have occurred, make the social demand to return to traditional democracy seem unrealistic; although democracy as a global political order appears to be the only political alternative.

Therefore, what, politically speaking, is the alternative to a military regime and its authoritarian utopia? I believe it to be beyond the scope of this essay to create *a science fiction* regarding the political future of a society. However, if the only alternative to a military regime is democracy, in whatever guise it *may* take, I feel that whatever steps are needed to break the current system, which seems to be prolonging itself and solidating its power, should be taken. Further, the crisis of the military regimes in Latin America in terms of their political and economical goals has brought out the theme of the political transition of these regimes. Because of this, democracy becomes nonetheless a topic of discussion, in representatives sectors of civil society.

The recent political development in Brazil, Argentina and Chile seem to be an example of the inevitable end of the military rule and the resurfacing of the democratic model. But democracy is a very broad concept which can have different meanings, only according to the national context being analyzed, but also for the social protagonist of whom we speak. I think that the



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crisis will force the militaries to turn over its power once they have established institutional guarantees to safeguard their mode, of society, safeguard the existence of its protagonists and maintain the power of veto or arbiter in the political developments of the civil society. Thus, the authoritarian model that we have analyzed in this work would be carried out.

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