Contextualizing the 2019 “Chile Despertó” Movement: The Impact of Historical Relational Processes on Mobilization and Repression

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Contextualizing the 2019 “Chile Despertó” Movement:
The Impact of Historical Relational Processes on Mobilization and Repression

A Thesis by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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May 2022

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May 2022
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Last, but in no way least, I would like to thank my parents. Thank you, Julia Avila De Leon and Alejandro Leon for teaching me to stand up for what I believe in, to be kind, and to be brave.
ABSTRACT

Contextualizing the 2019 “Chile Despertó” Movement:
The Impact of Historical Relational Processes on Mobilization and Repression

by Tanya Lizette Leon

To expand our theoretical and empirical understanding of mobilization and repression in Latin America, this thesis asks three critical questions. Are economic indicators sufficient predictors of social movement emergence in Latin America? What other factors contribute to large-scale mobilization in Latin America? How do government’s respond to large-scale Latin American social movements? Specifically, when, and why do democratic governments choose to employ repression against social movements? Accordingly, I construct a quantitative model to test the correlation between rise in protest and worsened economic conditions. I apply it to a comprehensive dataset of political events in multiple South American countries throughout the first quarter of 2018 and the last quarter of 2021. Then, I turn my attention to Chile specifically, to illustrate how economic indicators alone cannot produce a fully predictive model. I contextualize the most recent “Chile Despertó” movement and situate it within the longer historical process of democratization and social movements in Chile. I argue that Federico M. Rossi’s concepts of “repertoire of strategies” and “stock of legacies” fills the gaps in the quantitative data by allowing researchers to analyze how public actions emerge because of both institutional constraints and identity-framing processes. Similarly, the state responds in ways that are consistent with their own institutional and constructed identity. Finally, there is strong evidence that the relationship between social movements and repression is in fact relational and interdependent.
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<tr>
<td>ACLED</td>
<td>Armed Conflict Location &amp; Event Data Project</td>
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<td>CEPI</td>
<td>Special Commission of Indigenous Peoples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONADI</td>
<td>National Commission for Indigenous Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTC</td>
<td>Union of Copper Mineworkers</td>
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<td>EZLN</td>
<td>Zapatista Army of National Liberation</td>
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<td>LOCE</td>
<td>Constitutional Law of Education</td>
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<td>Social Movement Organization</td>
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1 Introduction

Characterized by an unprecedented increase in global mass protests, the last decade has reinvigorated interest in social movement theory. Although notable movements such as the Arab Spring, the Hong Kong Umbrella Revolution, the “Chile Despertó” (Chile Woke Up) movement, and the global Black Lives Matter movement captivated spectators—they are, in fact, only an acute manifestation of a longer historical process (Brannen, Schmidt, & Haig, 2020). These contemporary social movements have called for an end to inequality, the expansion of political rights, and the dismantling of the neoliberal project. For this reason, many scholars and media have asserted that grievance claims—particularly those linked to deteriorating economic conditions—best explain the increase in global mobilization.

Nonetheless, economic indicators alone are insufficient to fully predict the ebbs and flows of the broader mobilization process. Indeed, it is the case that some movements highlight their “radical discomfort with the unequal distribution of political power and material, cultural, educational, and legal benefits within the framework of neoliberal policies” (Osorio-Vargas, 2022, 3). Still, there are many more spatial and temporal instances in which the same injustices fail to mobilize disgruntled constituents.

Such instances are highlighted throughout the Latin American experience. The imposition of neoliberal policies on this region throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s had a profound and lasting impact on their societies, producing multiple social movements of varied strength and longevity. Citizens within the South American states suffered most from US intervention, military
dictatorships, and stringent austerity measures from the 1980s onwards. Indeed, any description of economic policy in the region during this time would be incomplete without mentioning its three key elements. 1. The debt crisis followed by economic stagnation 2. The reemergence of military and authoritarian regimes 3. The implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) a package of austerity measures including deregulation, privatization, currency devaluation, and liberalization (among other measures) spearheaded by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Veltmeyer, 1997). The middle and lower social classes “were especially hard-hit as wages declined and unemployment and precarious employment expanded (Rossi & Silva, 2018, 3).” Nevertheless, significant social movements characterized by sustained campaigns of contentious collective action (Tilly, 2006) did not always follow increasingly precarious economic and political conditions.

Additionally, as many authors have noted, neoliberal reforms in Latin America often came with a political corollary: the consolidation of liberal, representative democracy, and state reform (Silva, 2009, 25). Following the region’s 1980s wave of re-democratization, the principles of capitalism dictated the allocation of capital, labor, and land in South American states. The politics of the new and recovered democracies were predicated on classic liberal principles in that the state, its democratic institutions, and social policies were restructured to minimally interfere with the free market (Silva, 2009). Proponents of neoliberal reform tout state reconstruction as an achievement in human rights because of the conviction that democracies are less likely to employ repressive measures (Kenny, 2015). Nevertheless, emerging social science research suggests that “social control and repression of social movements now bypasses the borders between liberal democracies, authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes” (Fadaee & Pleyers, 2018). Examples
Thus, to expand and deepen our theoretical and empirical understanding of mobilization and repression in Latin America, this thesis asks three critical questions. *Are economic indicators sufficient predictors of social movement emergence in Latin America? What other factors contribute to large-scale mobilization in Latin America? How do government's respond to large-scale Latin American social movements?* Specifically, *when, and why do democratic governments choose to employ repression against social movements?*

Accordingly, the investigation continues as follows: first is a review of traditional social movement and repression theories to identify variables suspected of having a significant impact on mobilization and state violence. I find that the most popular theories stress the importance of economic indicators and political opportunity in predicting mobilization. Repression theories stress regime type as a conditioning factor of repression.

Second, based on findings from the literature, I construct a quantitative model and apply it to a dataset of political events in the South American countries of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay throughout the first quarter of 2018 and the last quarter of 2021. These countries were selected because they represent the most paradigmatic instances of neoliberal institutionalization and oppositional social movements.

Then, because the narrow economic and democratic indicators discussed throughout the literature are not enough to produce a fully quantitative model, I draw on Argentine scholar Federico M. Rossi’s concepts of *“repertoire of strategies”* and *“stock of legacies”* (Rossi, 2015). Rossi’s theoretical framework thus informs my analysis of two Chilean social movements that...
occurred in the most recent period of electoral democracy. Then I contextualize the most recent Chilean social movement “Chile Despertó” (Chile Woke Up), to illustrate the factors contributing to its emergence and outcomes. The social movements discussed are:

- the indigenous Mapuche social movement 1990 – present.
- the evolution of the Chilean student movement 1990 – present.
- and the most recent “Chile Despertó” movement.

My empirical findings in this section are based on online editions of national newspapers, and numerous documents produced by respective social movement leaders, allies, key state brokers, national outlets, and journalists.

Rossi’s theoretical framework fills the gaps in the quantitative data by allowing me to analyze how in some cases, public actions emerge because several other non-public (therefore not recorded) actions were performed and led to a contentious result (Rossi, 2015). Finally, the thesis concludes with suggestions for future research in social movement and repression literature.

2 Literature Review

Social movements are defined as the voluntary association of people in joint action with the goal of initiating societal change based on a common set of demands (Almeida, 2019). Social movement theories study their origins and trajectories and many focus on specific subfields such as movement emergence, ideology, recruiting networks, micro-level processes, emotions, and identities, as well as movement outcomes to develop a holistic understanding of the important process. In this section, I discuss the evolution of social movement frameworks and focus on two in particular. I focus on political process theory, as its significant influence on contemporary research is worth noting, and I focus on emerging theories of collective identity. Though often
constructed as dichotomous by proponents of both, I then discuss even newer theories that draw from both traditions to illustrate the relational process between institutional and political constraints and historically rooted conceptions of identity.

Although a branch of mobilization theory has acknowledged that movements often direct their demands to entities outside of the state including corporations or supranational institutions (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008), this is outside the scope of this study. As many historical Chilean movements have been directed at institutional constraints, and because the “Chile Despertó” movement directly challenges the government's most fundamental document – the constitution – political process theory best fits the analysis of this moment in Chilean history. Thus, by acknowledging that mobilization typically challenges the state we must acknowledge that mobilization involves varied levels of risk. The levels of risk depend on both the nature of the demands and the collective identities of both movement participants and the state.

Towards this end, the second part of this section reviews the literature on the relationship between the state and social movements as well as theories on how the state's actions are mitigated by its own historical conception of self and institutional constraints. As repression is typically the primary focus of studies of state/social movement interactions and because repression is regularly employed in Chilean civil society– the focus of this second section emphasizes the relevant repression literature.

A final section, titled “Theoretical Framework: Political, Economic, and Cultural Environments” summarizes the conclusions of the preceding discussion and argues that Rossi’s concepts of “repertoire of strategies” and “stock of legacies” built on Tilly’s traditional notions of repertoire but which dissipate the structuralist foundation Tilly’s work relies on, constitutes a more
“open paradigm that allows for contradiction and fluidity…” (Munck, 2020, 32) to comprehend the complexity of social protests in Latin America.

2.1 The Evolution of Social Movement Frameworks

Preliminary studies of collective action came from sociological traditions and included the works of Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Durkheim noted that industrialization created the need for associations, such as labor unions, that helped individuals integrate into the burgeoning industrial society (Emirbayer, 1996). Additionally, Durkheim suggested that beyond associations based on common experiences, emotionally charged face-to-face interactions sustained collective action (Collins, 2004). Similarly, Max Weber considered the rationales behind collective action and suggested that they were most effective when structured bureaucratically (Gamson, 1990). Karl Marx and Engels contrarily, believed that industrialization, which was the next step in capitalist development, would lead exploited workers to launch collective resistance movements as the worker density increased (Almeida, 2019). Though these are among the preliminary ruminations on collective action, Connell (2007) notes that apart from Marx and variants of neo-Marxism, particularly in Latin America, the former are not typically incorporated in contemporary social movement research (Almeida, 2019).

The first serious consideration of non-political drivers of collective action came from the struggles for racial and gender equality. W.E.B Du Bois believed that the “color line” would be a critical component of future social movement struggles (Morris, 2015). Feminist thinkers, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, instead argued that gender inequality in the 20th century would guide future movements (Finlay, 2007).
As the field of social movement theory evolved additional factors were considered in discussions of movement emergence. Throughout the twentieth century, three main paradigmatic shifts occurred that can be separated by the classical theories, resource mobilization theories, and political process theory. At the end of the 20th century and through the present day there has been a fourth paradigmatic shift sometimes called the *postmodern* shift in the political science literature. To my knowledge, there is no name yet for this shift— that is likely not over— in the field of sociology, so in this review, I will categorize the emerging theories as “challengers” only.

**Classical Theories**

First-wave social theories are similar in that they all assume that the political system is pluralistic and accessible through multiple avenues by various people (Lukes, 2005). Thus, classical proponents argue that collective action is *irrational* given that institutional avenues for social change exist within democracies. By taking nominal democratic procedures for granted, classical scholars provide minimal comments on the role of social or political exclusion on movement emergence. Instead, scholars focus on “system strains or breakdowns in society that lead to psychological distress” and eventually collective action (Almeida, 2019).

**Resource Mobilization and Relative Power**

Amid unprecedented global protests in the 1960s and 1970s scholars began to reconsider the “*irrationality*” of large-scale social movements. By observing the various global civil rights, anti-war, feminist, gay-rights, disability-rights, and anticolonial struggles, describing these movements as isolated events resulting from broken political systems was no longer convincing. Instead, scholars noted that mobilization was *rational* given that rather than dispersed throughout society, power was concentrated in the hands of economic and political elites. Thus, marginalized groups needed a mechanism by which to pressure elites to meet their demands. It is important to
note that there is a body of research that focuses on the rationality of individuals joining social movements despite potential repercussions (Olson, 1965; Lichbach, 1987) but because individual-level analyses of movement emergence are applicable to neither the cultural nor historical reality of Latin American movements (Munck, 2020)

1 Argentine sociologist Ronaldo Munck notes that many Latin American scholars have criticized the methodological individualism the aforementioned theories rely on as they fail to take race, gender, ethnicity, or Latin American culture into consideration.

The school of thought that recognized that mobilization did not occur because of the actions of one person but the accumulation of many, came to be known as resource mobilization theory. John McCarthy and Meyer Zald (1973) focused on the professionalization of social movement organizations (SMOs) and the resources available to them because of the generosity of privileged elites (Almeida, 2019). They argued that because elites have access to resources such as time, money, knowledge, labor, and power, they are most likely to influence which causes are pushed to the forefront of the sociopolitical agenda. Noting that within neoliberal and capitalist societies, money begets power (Goodin & Dryzek, 1980), Solt suggests that elites naturally organize to support policies aligned with their interests (Solt, 2008). Thus, although their conspiration may not be malicious, elitist interests shadow those of the masses by dominating the political agenda. Consequently, a lack of resources leads to demobilization/acceptance of an elite economic agenda by the disadvantaged majority.

While the consideration of resources is an important addition to social movement literature and highlights how economic disparities create disadvantages for individuals within capitalist societies. 

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1 Argentine sociologist Ronaldo Munck notes that many Latin American scholars have criticized the methodological individualism the aforementioned theories rely on as they fail to take race, gender, ethnicity, or Latin American culture into consideration.
societies, it must be noted that this theory was developed in the global North and therefore did not consider the unique experiences of the global South.

There is a vast record of counter-hegemonic movements in Latin America despite the participants’ “lack” of resources. Such movements have included the Brazilian landless workers’ movement (MST), the Argentine Piqueteros movement, and the Indigenous-Mexican Zapatista (EZLN) movement. The Zapatista movement in particular exemplifies the disconnect between the economic-political elite and the movement participants. Shaken by the movement’s class-based armed struggle the intelligentsia and the PRD, Mexico’s center-left political party, generally gave the EZLN an ambiguous response; they sympathized with their aims but largely objected to their methods (Veltmeyer, 1997).

Though some resources suggested by Northern scholars do not easily translate into the Latin American experience, others do. One such resource is existing institutions and organizations (McAdam, 1999). Many scholars have observed that collective processes require trust and solidarity. Thus, associations such as religious organizations, recreational soccer teams, and other communal locations for social interaction foster feelings of solidarity and mutual support (Koskela-Huotari & Vargo, 2016). On various occasions, religious and other everyday-life associations have been instrumental to the emergence of Latin American social movements. Other resources include human capital (Ganz, 2009) and alliances with other groups.

**Social/Cultural Constructionism: Collective Identities**

Critics of the heavy focus on objective resources common in *resource mobilization* theories argue that grievances must be placed in the appropriate cultural context (Snow et al. 1986); otherwise, they fail to motivate supporters to act. Thus, leaders must *frame* their demands through
three processes: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing. That is, they must first identify the problem and the perpetrator, identify a solution, and most importantly make appeals that resonate within the cultural milieu of the populations targeted for collective action (Snow & Corrigall-Brown, 2005).

Similarly, scholars stress the importance of identity and framing in shaping behavioral patterns and the participants’ perception of self and others. Such theorists argue that constructivist notions of emotion and identity determine *how* rather than *why* social movements organize. Scholars in this field argue that dissident political participation depends on one's perception of "self" related to the broader movement goals. Accordingly, a sense of collective identity is key to mobilization, as well as how the collective’s experiences are framed. Scholars note that the injustice frame is most conducive to movement building as movements examined through this paradigm are regarded as emotionally charged.

Scholar David R. Heise (1998) postulates that people are more likely to participate in dissident movements when they share emotional responses with people already involved. Researchers expand their hypotheses by distinguishing between reflexive and stable emotions. The former are "transitory responses to external events," while the latter are "stable feelings, positive or negative, about others" (Jasper, 2011). Consequently, stable emotions increase the sense of solidarity among in-groups and increase their commitment to what they perceive as legitimate causes. For this reason, “*moral shocks*" like severe state repression are potent catalysts for political participation even if the physical costs of engagement are very high.
**Political Process Theory - Opportunity and Threat**

Political process theory borrows from both resource and framing theories and has become the most influential social movement framework in contemporary research. This theory considers resources, framing, and the surrounding political and economic environment since the context in which grievances are experienced influences the emergence of collective action.

**Political Opportunity**

To illustrate how the context in which mobilization occurs affects participation, Doug McAdam (1999), Sidney Tarrow (1998), and Charles Tilly (1978) elaborate on their variable understandings of the influential "political opportunity" concept. These authors no longer maintain that social movements conform to general laws or presuppose “to pour all forms of contention into the same great mold” (Munck, 2020, 25). Rather, these authors add nuance to mobilization strategies by grounding them in their spatial and temporal realities. They maintain that the tenacious existence of many aggrieved and disadvantaged people in every society results from the ubiquity of inequality. Consequently, it follows that this group is most likely to benefit from, and therefore support, movements towards significant social change but their mobilization depends on whether it is likely that their demands will be met. An environment understood as likely to meet movement demands is called a “good-news environment;” it is one in which opportunities exist that encourage movement emergence. Such movements are defined as the vulnerability of the existing political system to challenge, electoral instability, or increased receptivity to protests (Meyer, 2004; Tarrow, 1998).

In particular, the opportunities most conducive to movement propagation (McAdam, Tilly, & Tarrow, 2008) are noted below and illustrated in Figure 1.
1. Institutional access  
2. Conflict among elites  
3. Changing political alignments/elections  
4. Relaxation in governmental repression  
5. Multiple centers of power within the regime  

**Figure 1**

*Good News “Opportunity” Model of Collective Action*

(Almeida, 2019, 53).

**Political Threat**

Similarly, political threats create an environment in which movements are likely to occur. Scholars note that threats heighten existing grievances as well as create new ones (Pinard, 2014). The threats that consistently influence mobilization are (Almeida, 2019):

1. Economic Problems  
2. Environmental/Public Health Threats  
3. Erosion of Rights  
4. State Repression
The issue of economic problems must be given particular attention in the context of Latin American social movements. As mentioned above, the neo-Marxist perspective is especially popular in the global South. It is arguably most popular in Latin America. Latin-American neo-Marxists center self-apparent economic grievances in their analysis of social movements (Veltmeyer, 1997). Their analysis is rooted in the historical reality of the region. These scholars aptly critique Eurocentric and Western analyses that focus on economic grievances without contextualizing the environment in which their respective economies exist. Scholars note that for semi peripheral and peripheral countries the modernization process and capitalist development has an exacerbated role in the deterioration of their material conditions.

Thus, rather than directing their demands only towards their governments, movement participants consistently cite the effect of foreign imposition on their economic policies (Veltmeyer, 1997). A tremendous amount of anecdotal and quantitative evidence supports these scholars’ claims. Finally, it must be mentioned that threats and opportunities can operate simultaneously to create an ideal environment for social mobilization (Almeida, 2019).

**Movement Strategies**

Finally, a subfield of social movement theories focuses on varied social movement strategies. The principal theoretical approach to strategizing is Tilly’s concept of “repertoire of contention” (Tilly, 1993). Tilly defined his concept as a “limited set of actions based on a… deliberate process of choice, in which social relations cluster together in recurrent patterns based on social and cultural capital accumulated through struggle” (Rossi, 2015, 35). Notably, this concept limits the study of social movements to disruptive public events. As acknowledged by Tilly himself, this analysis ignores other forms of resistance as well as the routine political operations performed by political parties, unions, or other relevant collective actions “except when
they produce visible contention” (Tilly, 1993, 270). Thus, what is left out of this analysis is the study of preceding actions or conditions that facilitated the conduction of a public contentious action. Tilly’s concept then is unable to examine “situations where contention does not emerge, and second, the relationship between the public and contentious events not reported in the media… because they were not performed in the public space” (Rossi, 2015, 35).

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Political, Economic, and Cultural Environments

Latin American neo-Marxists are correct in questioning the postmodern analysis of social movements. It is true that to this day most social movements, especially Latin American ones, center economic injustice as their principal grievance. It is unwise, however, to focus only on this claim. Such an analysis decontextualizes mobilizations that are informed by more than just their economic realities. Instead, though political process theorists fail to incorporate historical perspectives on the environment in which movements occur, and instead focus on the current resource infrastructures and framing processes, they are correct in assuming that resources and framing play some role in mobilization. To create a more holistic understanding of social movements, however, a more nuanced model which takes “objective” conditions into consideration on the one hand, and subjective aspects of political and societal culture on the other, is necessary.

Newer Social Movement Theories: Challengers

Such a model is used in Gavin Smith’s (1989) study that contends with the complementarity of the three concepts. Smith analyzes an indigenous Peruvian community and explores the relationship between community and class. In analyzing the Huasincanchinos, Smith finds that rather than an organic whole tied together by subjective notions of identity and
belonging, the varied class relations within the community create stakeholders with complex and divergent interests. Additionally, historical interactions with the state and land-owning elite mitigate their strategic choices. Options that had worked before, were more likely to be employed again (Smith, 1989). Thus, strategy-making is analyzed “as a relational process in which the responses of the political establishment to movement demands shape the subsequent formulation of petitions and tactics to employ” (Donoso, 2017, 66).

One of the most prominent emerging theories on the interaction between political, economic, and cultural environments is Argentine scholar Federico M. Rossi’s innovative conceptual framework that retains aspects of Tilly’s contextualized political analysis while adding in new concepts to help avoid universalizing that which is time specific. His concepts “repertoire of strategies” and “stock of legacies” illustrate historically rooted processes of mobilization and action.

Unlike Tilly’s conceptual framework which only accounts for contentious public action, Rossi’s framework allows researchers to discuss cases in which mobilization did not occur or in which mobilization did not occur publicly. Rossi suggests that contentious, or unconventional political actions, must be considered with routine, conventional actions simultaneously (Rossi, 2015). Rossi’s “repertoire of strategies” refers to the “historically constrained set of available options for strategic action in public, semi-public, or private arenas” (Rossi, 2015, 22). Rossi, like Tilly, argues that collective actors, not individual agents, execute strategies, contentious or not, through shared discourse. As in Smith’s study, Rossi demonstrates that in Argentina’s piquetero movement, collective actors of varied ideologies and access to resources, acted similarly (marching, picketing), based on the broader movement goals, and differently (non-public meetings
with politicians, NGO-ization) based on their varied repertoire of strategies though their repertoire of contention (public) was the same.

The “stock of legacies” concept is what delimits the collective actors’ perception of feasible strategies and is closely related to the collective identity theories that contextualize cultures. Inspired by Shutz’s (1967) “stock of experience” concept, Rossi defines the “stock of legacies” as “the concatenation of past struggles… that produces an accumulation of experience that adds or eliminates specific strategies from the repertoire of strategies as both a self-conscious and oblivious process” (Rossi, 2015, 31). Thus, rather than purely structural limitations as suggested by the former political opportunists (Meyer, 2004; Tarrow, 2001; Tilly, 2008; Zald, 1973), Rossi suggests that some actions are limited by socialization. This concept is especially useful in explaining why mobilization occurs more frequently in certain places.

In an interview with the leader of an influential piquetero organization, Rossi found an explanation for why within Argentina there were three predominant locations where movement actions emerged. The interviewee explained in the following way:

A: The experience of struggle. Despite the crises, which always happen, the lessons of past experiences always linger. In other words, you don’t go back to zero. You don’t go back to the beginning. Situations recur, but with the accumulation of learnt experience. The southern zone [of Greater Buenos Aires] was combative in the 1970s. These were industrial areas, with a relatively high level of industrialization. All this was later dismantled, but the experience of struggle and resistance still lingers, and it re-emerges every now and then- as if going into crisis mode (Rossi, 2015, 31-32).

Certainly, Smith, Donoso, and Rossi’s theoretical contributions add nuance to the typically stale dichotomous debate between structuralists and constructionists. The scholars understand social mobilization as the product of the accumulation of historical “objective” and “subjective”
legacies as well as the result of time-specific in-the-moment conversations between collective actors and interactions with opponents.

2.3 Repression

To explore repression within this study I use Christian Davenport’s (2007) definition of the oft ill-understood concept. Davenport defines repression as “simply one strategy among many employed by political authorities against those within their territorial jurisdiction” (Davenport, 2007, 37). Repression can include arrests, imprisonment, surveillance, disappearance, political bans, pepper-spraying, and mass-killing (Davenport, 2007). Repression is often considered indicative of political malfunction (O’Kane, 1996). A “neutral” definition of repression, however, allows researchers to construct comprehensive analyses of its occurrence. Thus, in this section I discuss repression literature to explore what the term consists of as well as why it is used by some states in some cases, and not in others. The literature is reviewed along with an analysis of its applicability to Latin America’s historical experience.

Nature of The State

Repression scholars generally fall into two categories; those that believe repression is a rare phenomenon in modern political systems and those that believe it is frequent. The scholars are unified, however, in agreeing that it is nonetheless “always essential to the very definition of the state… it is a mechanism of force wielded by the government… that is always available to the political authorities” (Davenport, 2007, 35).
Regime Type as a Conditioning Factor: Liberal (and Neoliberal) Peace

The position that repression is rare and indicative of political malfunction is on par with the general assumptions of the liberal peace theory. Developed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, liberal and democratic peace theories remain among the most popular theories of inter and intrastate behavior (Grugel & Bishop, 2013). Intimately tied to the expansion of capitalism, liberalism stresses the role of the government in protecting the individual’s “natural rights,” including life, liberty, and property (Locke, 1689). Philosophers elaborate that the governments most likely to protect man’s “natural rights” are representative democracies due to their negotiated constitutions with the governed. Thus, because effective political institutions restrain elites and small interest groups, nation-states are less likely to resort to repression considering oppositional politics. Repression then, is considered a problem of authoritarian or other undemocratic regimes.

Neoliberalism

Similarly, federal economic policies like regime type, are thought by some to influence state action. Northern scholars (Harvey 2007; Smart 2005; Stiglitz 2002; Klein 2007) treat neoliberalism primarily as a set of ideas developed in the global North that shifted away from the [then] dominant ideology of capitalist society (Connell & Dados, 2014).

Accordingly, neoliberalism borrows the principal tenets of classical liberalism and similarly holds individual freedoms in high regard (Harvey, 2007). Prominent neoliberal economist Milton Friedman illustrates this concept by arguing that “neoliberalism… accepts the nineteenth-century liberal emphasis on the fundamental importance of the individual, but it substitutes the nineteenth-century goal of laissez-faire as a means to this end” (Levy & Peart, 2020, 241).
Instead, neoliberal states recognize the importance of actively creating the necessary conditions for market liberalization. This includes defending a legal framework that protects individual private property rights, prevents monopolies, supports deregulation, eliminates price controls, promotes free trade, and reduces public spending to maximize the role of the private sector in the economy and society (Harvey, 2007). It also involves the state’s active support of supranational institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to encourage global economic enmeshment.

A neoliberal idealist would contend that when supported by a “fixed, neutral, universal legal framework within which market forces operate spontaneously… [neoliberal policies] can maximize liberty and opportunity” within democratic societies (Metcalf, 2017). Rather than a result of statist elites seeking to retain power, political violence is instead built on assumptions of rationality and strategy. The state is a rational actor sensitive to economic loss and the preferences of powerful domestic actors; therefore, it will resist violent policy options so as not to disrupt economic activity.

This theoretical assumption has generally remained popular in conservative circles despite evidence to the contrary in many regions. In particular, when examining regions with colonial legacies, there are a few fundamental flaws in the logic of applying ideas of democratic peace on countries whose democracies were often violently constructed by the global North.

The principal problem with comparing Northern democratic traditions with Southern ones is that they were developed within vastly different contexts. Indeed, the Latin American path towards development has been strongly conditioned by its colonial past (Rodriguez, 2021). Particularly in Latin America, agricultural concerns and matters of land ownership were central in
the path towards national liberation, development politics, and economic self-sufficiency (Connell & Dados, 2014). Thus, while Northern theorists contend that “economic integration and institutional enmeshment exercises a constraining force on conflict” (Gonzalez-Vicente, 2020, 100) the Latin American sociopolitical trajectory is uniquely affected by its historical reality.

**Increased Instances of Repression: State Self-Preservation**

Contrarily, other scholars note that repression is a necessary component of all nation-states regardless of their regime type. Max Weber’s Classical Theory of Power differentiates between the power that depends on individual resources and power that emanates from legitimate authority (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Weber defines the state “as a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Weber, 1919, 33). Charles Tilly elaborates in *War Making and State Making as Organized Crime* (1985), by defining the state as a criminal enterprise of war-making elites who use their power and status to penetrate society and, with force, extract wealth from it (Tilly, 1985). Tilly suggests that governments exercise this control by using “arms, troops, guards, and jails “to maintain what elites consider public order” (Tilly, 2003, 27).

Tilly’s analysis is intimately related to the political opportunity structures discussed within the mobilization literature. By identifying dissidence as a “political threat,” states are incentivized to counter challengers who could otherwise alter the political-economic system in ways unfavorable to the state.

**Authoritarian Neoliberalism**

Additionally, in contrast to neoliberal peace proponents, scholars of a more critical bend note that the neoliberal state ultimately sustains itself by resorting to increasingly authoritarian
policy options (Bruff & Tansel, 2017). In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2007), David Harvey contends that the neoliberl project institutionalized inequality within democratic states. He elaborates that far from just a set of economic policies, neoliberalism is a corporatist-class political project that arose in the late 1960s and 1970s in response to a perceived threat to their wealth (Harvey, 2016). Using the language and primary tenets of classical liberalism, neoliberal policies manipulate state policies to benefit a particular elite class.

While, in theory, people in liberal democracies enjoy equal benefits from market liberalization and privatization, history demonstrates that capital and wealth are concentrated in the hands of a few. The insistence that asymmetries of power and unequal access to capital are nonexistent is “either innocently utopian or deliberate obfuscation of processes that lead to the concentration of wealth and, therefore, the restoration of class power” (Harvey, 2007, 68).

Thus, neoliberal policies are antithetical to a representative democratic framework. First, because they rely on unaccountable supranational institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. Second, because although they are theoretically concerned with individualism and freedom of choice, the choice to construct strong collective institutions or vote for increased state market intervention is antithetical to neoliberalism's goals. Therefore, the state is compelled to resort to raw force and police power to suppress oppositional movements.

Elaborating on this point, Ian Bruff and Cemal Tansel discuss “authoritarian neoliberalism” in their book *States of Discipline* (2017). Bruff notes that in addition to relying on undemocratic institutions, the state reconfigures itself into a less than democratic entity through constitutional or legal changes while seeking to implement neoliberal policies. Though they were writing after the 2008 economic crisis and argued that this crisis compelled governing
bodies to “reinforce and rely upon practices that seek to marginalize, discipline and control dissenting social groups and oppositional politics” (Bruff & Tansel, 2018, 234), case studies have shown that in recent mass protests, the line between repressive tactics commonly associated with authoritarian regimes are also often employed by democratic states (Fadaee & Pleyers, 2018).

Importantly, Latin American scholars have also documented how and why neoliberalism became the institutionalized framework of state policy. As mentioned earlier, the 1980s debt crisis facilitated Latin America’s willingness to accept austerity measures heavily supported by Western supranational institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. Still, these measures were largely seen as an imposition by core countries since regional scholars have stressed the deliberate underdevelopment of peripheral countries that have forced them to accept harsh foreign measures (Gunder Frank, 1974). Given that the first broad neoliberal reforms were implemented in the far Southern country of Chile in the 1970s (Silva, 1996) under the authoritarian rule of General Augusto Pinochet and during a time when neoliberalism was not mainstream even in the United States, their input on the matter is invaluable.

Scholars have critiqued the focus on Friedman and the “Chicago Boys” influence in shaping Chile’s economic policies. Researchers note that Chilean General Pinochet’s decision to consolidate his power through the institutionalization of drastic economic reforms can be explained without too much reference to American economists.

Instead, scholars argue that Pinochet pursued the economic agenda that was most suited to legitimize his military dictatorship and quell the opposition. Neoliberalism “offered a solution to his main political problem: how to get legitimacy by economic growth, satisfy his backers in the Chilean propertied class, and keep the diplomatic support of the United States, without giving
an opening to his opponents in the political parties and labor movement” (Connell & Dados, 2014, 122). Again, this unique experience pertinent across Latin America highlights the marked difference between development in the global North and South. The neoliberal turn opened Latin American economies to the international market and shifted their economic focus to exports. Industrialization was largely abandoned and so the industrial working class and related unions that influenced early social movements in the North did not develop equally in the South (Connell & Dados, 2014).

**Protest Repression Nexus**

Finally, the preceding reflections on repression focus on the concept only as a function of the state and do not theorize what factors account for its varied levels. To that end, theories that explore the relationship between social movements or other oppositional actors and repression offer valuable insights on repression variation. This area of research is often called the protest repression nexus.

Sabina Carey’s 2006 investigation noted that while most research focused on one-directional relationships between protests and repressions, the most common relationship is reciprocal. She finds that where repression leads to more protest, protest usually leads to more repression. She also finds that harsh actions by one actor generally do not solicit accommodating behavior by the other (Carey, 2006). However, while some difference exists between democracies, semi-democracies, and autocracies, the relationship is largely consistent across time and space.

Additionally, in their article titled “Protest Mobilization, Protest Repression, and Their Interaction”, Clark McPhail and John D. McCarthy add that repression is not only affected by
regime type or dissent, but it is also affected by the repressive agents’ own “stock of legacy.” They challenge the claim that repressive agents within a single democratic system operate uniformly. The authors note that decentralized mobilizing structures facilitate diverse patterns of contention and that “one should not expect random variation: repressive agents are influenced by not only their own history but also what takes place in areas around them; habit, diffusion, and contagion” (McCarthy & McPhail, xvii).

Similarly, German Bidegain (2017) argues that demand types affect their political impact and the reaction of the adversaries. Particularly, Hanspeter Kriesi (Kreisi et al, 1995) differentiates high-profile demands and low-profile demands. They note that “while high-profile issues put at stake the most important structures of a polity… low-profile issues concern less relevant (and more easily attainable) topics” (Bidegain, 2017, 100). Thus, when movements center low-profile issues in their demands the interaction between the state and the movement is more likely to be cooperative. Whereas, when movement demands threaten the state’s conception of their role and interests, the interaction is more likely to end in confrontation.

**Literature Review Conclusion: Social Movements and Repression**

Explanatory factors of social movement propagation have received markedly increased attention over the past two decades (Almeida, 2019). Of equal intellectual interest, are the attempts to theorize why some movements gain more momentum and concessions than others. This thought project naturally lends itself to the investigation of how social movement organizations (SMOs) construct their claims and formulate strategies; as well as to how governments respond to and interact with mobilization processes. The literature review discussed the general evolution of both social movement and repression theories and touched on their varied applicability to the Latin American region. The objective of situating theoretical approaches within this context was to
demonstrate how hybrid theories that draw from multiple traditions best illustrate the relational process between institutional and political constraints and historical conceptions of identity. As other Latin American scholars have noted “open paradigm(s) that allow for contradiction and fluidity…” (Munck, 2020, 32) are necessary to comprehend the complexity of social protests in Latin America.

3 Methodology

The research was conducted in two parts. The first part concerns the quantitative model constructed to test the dominant theory of social movement emergence. Though I am also interested mobilization strategies, a comprehensive data set on tactics used throughout a movement does not exist. As noted in the literature review, social movement action often consists of actions that are neither contentious nor public. Due to lack of data on actions that did not occur, or actions that were not public, the quantitative analysis within this section is concerned only with observable instances of mobilization. Though Chile is the primary country of interest in this study, the entire South American region (with a few exceptions) is included in this model.

In the quantitative section I test the political process theory which suggests economic grievances are the most common causal factors of mobilization. Accordingly, the dependent variables are the Gini coefficient (a measure of inequality), the unemployment rate, and the inflation rate.

The second part of the study involves qualitative analysis of two prominent social movements that occurred in Chile during the most recent period of electoral democracy. I begin by contextualizing the Chilean political culture. To do so, I discuss the legacy of trauma left by
the previous military regime, then continue by discussing the transitional remembrance policy of the subsequent democratic government. I examine both to demonstrate how they shaped contemporary Chilean civil society. The goal of tracing the two Chilean social movements is to illustrate how varied actors, demands, and the state interact with one another. Finally, I conclude by discussing the 2019 “Chile Despertó” movement and situating its relative success within the larger history of Chilean social movements and political culture.

3.1 Quantitative Modeling: Experimental Design

Data: Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in my design were the instances of contentious public action. Data were extracted from The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) as it provides the most comprehensive record of protest activity within Latin America. ACLED is a disaggregated dataset that collects the dates, actors, locations, number of fatalities of every protest event. ACLED also records the type of political violence (if any) experienced by protest participants (Kishi, Raleigh, & Russell, 2022).

The project began Latin American coverage in 2018. Therefore, the relatively small amount of data available necessitated the organization of data by quarter and country. The quarters studied are the first quarter of 2018 to the fourth quarter of 2021. While the use of yearly country-specific data is preferable for a nuanced understanding of long-term social movement trends in one state, the limited availability of regional data resulted in quarterly change across many countries instead of the yearly change in one.
The countries included in this study are the South American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. These countries are included for their shared experience of colonization, militarization, and similar trajectories on the path to democracy. Notably, they are included because they all are nominal democracies. Thus, the three South American countries, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana, are not included because they do not share similar experiences or regime type. Ultimately the design included 49,190 protest events organized into 134 quarters, resulting in 132 observations. The majority of protests concerned both economic and racial grievances that were often intertwined. The former were expressed by most if not all movements, while the former were articulated most often by indigenous peoples who are oppressed along multiple economic, social, and cultural axes.

Measuring Social Movement Emergence – Dependent Variable 1

Due to the omission of conventional political participation within the dominant social movement literature, when measuring movement mobilization institutionalized forms of interacting with representative government, i.e., voting, making campaign donations, serving in public office, etc. (Kaim, 2021) are not considered. Instead, the events recorded as instances of mobilization are protest events that were facilitated by civilians, protestors, or rioters. The study omits ACLED recordings of political violence by actors such as rebel groups, political militias, identity militias, or external forces. Though some have stigmatized rioters and invalidated their role in mobilization because of their use of violence, this study agrees with author Charles Tilly’s thesis in his 1978 book From Mobilization to Revolution that "group violence ordinarily grows out of collective actions that are not intrinsically violent… without them, collective violence could hardly occur" (Tilly, 1978, 79).
Measuring Independent Variables – Economic Indicators

A significant portion of the macroeconomic data for each country was collected from the financial and economic database, CEIC. CEIC data includes the Gini Coefficient (a measure of inequality), the unemployment rate per country and national quarterly CPI variations. Almeida (2019) notes that unemployment and inflation rates are among the most common economic grievances noted in the movement literature and they are therefore included in this study.

3.2 The Quantitative Model

The principal goal of the primary part of the study is to explore if economic grievances have a significant impact on social movement emergence as suggested by the dominant social movement theory. Thus, the equation for the model tested is as follows:

\[ Y1_{protesteventsrecorded} = \beta_0 + \beta_1X1_{unemployment\ rate} + \beta_2X2_{gini\ coefficient} + \beta_3X3_{nationalquarterlyCPIvariations} + e. \]

The hypothesis are as follows:

\( H0: \) Unemployment rate, the Gini coefficient and quarterly variations in CPI have no significant relationship with the number of protest events recorded in a country.

\( H1: \) Unemployment rate, the Gini coefficient, and quarterly variations in CPI have a significant relationship with the number of protest events recorded in a country.
4 Results

The adjusted R square score was the principal metric by which the models’ accuracy was tested. Since the adjusted R square score demonstrates the proportion of variation in protest events recorded explained by all the independent variables, adjusted for the number of variables used and the sample size, the adjusted score was the most advantageous in distinguishing the fit of the equation. The score of the quantitative model tested is recorded in Figure 2.

Figure 2

*Summary Output of Multivariate Linear Regression Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Observation s</td>
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**ANOVA**

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<td>Total</td>
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<table>
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<th>P-value</th>
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<th>Upper 95%</th>
<th>Lower 95.0%</th>
<th>Upper 95.0%</th>
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<td>-1763.3278</td>
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<td>-1763.32788</td>
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<tr>
<td>X2: Unempolyme nt Rate</td>
<td>24.793049</td>
<td>11.8078417</td>
<td>2.09974521</td>
<td>0.03771463</td>
<td>1.42962688</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>3.55232021</td>
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</table>

A summary of the important regression statistics produced by the model are represented in Figure 3.
Figure 3

Important Regression Statistics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
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<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>X2: Unemployment Rate</td>
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<td>X5: Gini Coefficient</td>
<td>23.52</td>
<td>8.68</td>
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<td>X6: National Quarterly CPI Variations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Multiple linear regression was calculated to predict the number of protest events based on the quarterly unemployment rate, quarterly variations in the consumer price index, and the Gini coefficient within South American countries. A significant regression equation was found:

\( F(3,128) = 20.21 \ p < 8.74 \), with an adjusted R square of .316.

Protest events recorded are equal to 

\[-1025.98 + 24.79(\text{Unemployment Rate}) + 23.52(\text{Gini Coefficient}) + 5.93(\text{Quarterly CPI Variations})\]

where unemployment is measured as the rate of unemployment as reported by the respective governments, the Gini coefficient is coded as that reported by the respective governments, and quarterly CPI variations are calculated based on government statistics on monthly CPI.

Protest events increased by approximately 24.79 for each percentage point increase in unemployment, and by about 23.52 for each point increase in Gini Coefficient. Both unemployment and Gini coefficient were significant predictors of protest events, while quarterly CPI variations were not. Thus, the null hypothesis is only partly rejected.
5 Analysis

The quantitative model resulted in an adjusted R square score of .305. This means that about 30.5 percent of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by variation in the independent variables (unemployment rate, Gini coefficient, and inflation rate (or quarterly CPI variations). The model was applied to every instance of protest activity and not just to a sample, therefore a variation rate of over 30 percent is highly significant. As illustrated in Figure 3, unemployment and Gini coefficient were significant predictors of protest events. A one percent increase in the unemployment rate was correlated with a slight increase in protest events. Similarly, a one-point increase in the Gini coefficient was correlated with a similar increase in protest events. This suggests that the grievance theory and its insistence that economic indicators affect movement emergence is supported by the empirical evidence situated within South America.

The results indicate that there is empirical evidence for the economic grievance framework of social movements. This is consistent with the theoretical framework discussed within the literature review. Although 30 percent is significant, the case study of Chilean social movements below demonstrate that additional variables, such as an analysis of institutional constraints and culture, gives researchers a more holistic understanding of social movement emergence and repression.

6 Qualitative Analysis: Chilean Case Study

Confrontations between large-scale social mobilizations and the governments they challenge are critical events in contemporary politics (Bjork-James, 2020). Such events frequently
demand international attention for the dramatic concessions that can occur and because they are often the scenes of egregious human rights violations even in nominal democracies. The 2019 ‘Chile Despertó’ (Chile Woke Up) movement exemplifies such a case.

On October 18, 2019, after a $0.04 increase in metro fares Chilean citizens and organizations took to the streets to demand decent wages, public healthcare, affordable education, affordable transportation, an overhaul of Chile’s private pension system, President Piñera’s resignation and most importantly, a new constitution. Though demonstrations were mostly peaceful as shown in Figure 4, 44 percent of these protests were met with state violence.

**Figure 4**

*Protest Type Oct’19 - Dec’19*

![Pie charts showing protest types and state violence](image)


Riots are defined as “violent events where demonstrators or mobs engage in disruptive acts, including but not limited to rock throwing, property destruction, etc. They may target other individuals, property, businesses, other rioting groups or armed actors.”
Additionally, President Piñera’s declaration of a state of emergency shocked demonstrators as this sort of declaration and subsequent military-enforced curfew had not been experienced since Augusto Pinochet’s 1973-1990 military dictatorship. Shocks also came in the form of egregious human rights violations.

In the first month of the movement alone, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented 133 acts of torture and 24 cases of sexual violence, most of which occurred during arrest or while in detention (OHCHR, 2019). Similarly, Chile’s National Institute of Human Rights (INDH) reported over 2,400 arrests, 200 of which involved minors, and over 200 instances of ocular trauma due to the Carabineros (Chilean National Police) use of shotguns loaded with nonlethal ammunition (Cuffe, 2019). Additionally, in their 2019 human rights report, the United States embassy in Chile noted that the INDH filed over 270 accusations of torture and over 60 of sexual assault.

The irony is that until this particular period of mobilization international technocrats had dubbed Chile “the Latin American tiger” (Langman, 2019) and viewed the nation-state as an island of political stability and economic success (Piscopo & Siavelis, 2021) in an otherwise unpredictable and tumultuous region. Chile was bestowed this honor largely based on aggregate calculations, like its regionally high GDP per capita, and declining levels of poverty, that were the result of institutionally embedded neoliberal policies that opened its markets to the world. Even a few days before he decreed martial law, Piñera had boasted as much in an interview with the Financial Times (Mander & Stott, 2019).

Yet, at the intrastate level, class-based social conflict has always been an undeniable constitutive element of the Chilean economic model. Chile is one of the most expensive and
unequal countries in Latin America. Compared to its fellow Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member states, Chile has the third-highest GINI coefficient, with over a third of its wealth concentrated at the top one percent of Chile’s population (Vyas, 2019).

Since that fateful day in October 2019 and until October 2020, Chileans engaged in country-wide protests despite Pinera’s concessions that “reversed subway fares, eliminated hikes in electricity charges, boosted minimum wages, raised taxes on the wealthy, a reshuffled cabinet” (Krygier, 2019) and ultimately in October of 2020, initiated a constitutional referendum. In a historically significant plebiscite nearly 80 percent of Chileans voted to begin the process of rewriting their constitution. The former had been imposed during Pinochet’s rule and had always been recognized as “hostile to all forms of social solidarity that puts restraints on capital accumulation” (Harvey, 2007). This long held tension is reflected in the 2019 revolt’s slogan, “It’s not about 30 pesos, it’s about 30 years” (Rebolledo, 2019).

Such radical institutional change is a rare outcome of social mobilizations thus raising three important questions- to what extent did economic grievances and social-psychological mechanisms impact the mobilization strategies employed as well as their intensity? To what extent did economic grievances and social-psychological mechanisms impact repression employment and intensity? And finally, why were such large concessions won as a result of the ‘Chile Despertò’ movement as opposed to those prior?

My goal in this case study is to contextualize the “Chile Despertò” mobilization and the government’s response. To that end, I explore the country’s political culture by analyzing its structural foundations as created by Pinochet-era laws. Then I discuss Chile’s 1998 transitional
remembrance policy and elaborate on how it shaped political culture in the post-dictatorship era. Afterwards I consider how both the structural elements of Chilean legislation and the more constructionist elements of memory (whose construction was led by the state’s transitional remembrance policy) has influenced mobilization in the country and their repertoire of strategies. Next, I consider the application of extreme force during the current period of electoral democracy and illustrate how it is influenced by the military/police force’s own repertoire of strategies and collective identity mitigated by both elements mentioned above. Finally, as contentious actions by public actors, unions, or other community organizations are not the only constitutive elements of the political culture, I also explore how the culture is understood by both activists and nonactivists by analyzing popular attitudes towards protest and repression, and the words and actions of public leaders. I conclude by extending this analysis to the 2019 “Chile Despertó” movement.

6.1 Structural Foundations of Chilean Political Culture

It is unwise to consider the culture of Chilean social movements without acknowledging the deep trauma caused by the 1973-1990 military dictatorship. The coup d’état against the democratically elected socialist regime of Salvador Allende was led by a military junta composed of general Augusto Pinochet Ugarte - the commander-in-chief of the army, and leaders of the Air Force, Navy, and the country-wide police force (Carabineros) (Ratke-Majewska, 2017). In their first decree they declared that the government overthrow was their obligation as law enforcement officials; it was construed as a short-term solution in defense of national traditions and order (Acta de constitucion..., 1973).

The junta maintained that their actions were a response to the political, economic, and social chaos that preceded their rule. During this time Chile was plagued by strikes, intensified
paramilitary activity, and general unrest. At the time, the country was governed by the *Unidad Popular* (Popular Unity) coalition of left-wing parties, headed by democratically elected President Salvador Allende. While Allende had won the electorate majority, his administration and reform efforts were heavily critiqued by elites both domestically and abroad. In particular, the role of the United States in supporting the junta’s coup d’état has been well-documented elsewhere (Bonnefoy, 2017).

The junta quelled social instability through a terror campaign that lasted 17 years. Despite initial promises that the constitutional order would be respected, the terror used against the junta’s opponents (Marxists, leftists, students, working-class people) entrenched existing social divisions. A series of laws passed during the Pinochet years consolidated his own, and the military’s power, as well as “transformed the [Chilean] political system permanently so that strong-arm government with principles promoted by the junta would become its inseparable element” (Ratke-Majewska, 2017, 34). Owning to this, although Pinochet eventually handed over power to democratically elected officials, the political culture he created during his reign persisted affecting both mobilization strategies and government response in the post-dictatorship era.

Such principles are exemplified in the 1980 Chilean Constitution. The language of the law made clear that the author’s intentions were that the decrees that limited civil rights and freedoms as well as institutionalized neoliberal economic policies would remain a permanent part of the system. Decrees that limited civil rights included those that violated the right to assembly, freedom of press, fair representation in court, freedom from unlawful detention without charge, as well as freedom of speech and affiliation. In particular, constitutional articles 8, 9, and 19, Chile’s Anti-Terrorism Law 18.314, Chilean Penal Code Article 292, as well as various specialized regulations on public education serve the aforementioned purposes.
Article 8 concerned illicit associations that included those that “threatened” the family, advocated violence, threatened the state of legal order or organized a movement based on the notion of class struggle (Chilean Constitution, art 8). This effectively criminalized anyone not supportive of the junta’s government and had the potential to subject them or their families to brutal repression. Similarly, article 292 in the Chilean Penal Code continues by adding that such associations organized against “good custom, people or property…” are in contempt of the law. The clear ideological character of the legislation overwhelmingly benefits elite interests and demonizes the opposition creating a dampening effect on large-scale social movements. Though both articles were later repealed after democratization (gradually), Chilean movement culture did not typically include the expectation that the government would negotiate with them.

Additionally, article 9 and Chile’s Anti-Terrorism Law further demonstrate how the authorities used legislation to outline citizen rights and obligations to shape the political identity of Chilean society.

The Chilean Law of Terrorist Conduct, Law No. 18.314, emphasizes property destruction as an act of terrorism and, therefore, positions material wealth above citizens' well-being. This law, unlike article 8 and 292 has not been repealed.

It defines acts of terror as follows:

1. “Homicide, injury, kidnapping and withholding of persons as hostages, child abduction; sending explosive artifacts, arson and ravages, infractions against public health, and derailment.”
2. “Seizing or attempting against a vessel, airplane, train, bus or other modes of public transportation, or carrying out acts that endanger the life and physical integrity or health of passengers or crew members.”
3. “Attempting against the life or physical integrity of a Chief of State or other public, judicial, military, police or religious authority, or internationally protected person for their position.”
4. “Placing, throwing or shooting bombs or explosive artifacts, or incendiary devices of any kind that affect or could affect the physical integrity of people, or cause damages.”
5. “Illicit association when seeking to commit crimes that qualify as terrorist according to the previous segments and article 1” (Chilean Law 18.314, art. 1)

Most notably, it positions crimes against property as terrorist acts in contradiction to international treaties which place them under the ordinary criminal code (Richards, 2013). The law also allows the prosecution to conduct more protracted clandestine investigations and widens their power to inspect personal property beyond what is permitted by ordinary criminal code. The accused are denied pretrial release and are not told the names of their accusers. Reminiscent of military tribunals, accusers testify behind screens and continue the tradition of otherizing political opponents thus making it dangerous for people to participate in oppositional politics. Furthermore, the “terrorist” construction became especially damning in the context of the “global war on terror” and it demonstrated a historical continuity with the Pinochet dictatorship (Richards, 2013).

Additionally, article 9 stipulates that the accused will lose the right to “exercise public functions or positions, whether or not of popular election” including those that are “local, professional, entrepreneurial, syndical, student or trade union in character” for fifteen years. Moreover, individuals so much as charged for terrorist crimes would lose their right to vote and their citizenship. Thus, the legislation creates unusually high stakes for oppositional movement participants.

Finally, Article 19.21 ensures that the state remains outside of the market and stipulates that “the State and its organisms can develop entrepreneurial activities… only if a law of qualified quorum authorizes it” (Chilean Constitution, art 19.21). Unlike other Latin American countries
with the experience of state-sponsored healthcare, education, and social security (albeit often fractured or minimal), Pinochet’s electoral system made it almost impossible for any succeeding party to gain the necessary quorum to change the laws established. Consequently, the objective of creating a new Chilean political identity as one that honors national order and decorum dictated by the values of the junta was successfully entrenched; irrespective of personal changed at the helm of state authority (Ratke-Majewska, 2017).

Lastly, because the two largest social movements in the post-dictatorship period have been student-led, it is important to discuss the Pinochet-era regulations that shaped the current educational environment. Neoliberal reforms in the 1980s were far-reaching and influenced almost every sector of Chilean society. The education system in particular, and its extreme degree of marketization shaped the grievances of students in 2006 and in 2011.

The reforms included public school funding per capita, universal academic achievement tests, public support for private schools, evaluation systems, and monetary incentives for teachers (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013). The critical characteristics of the Chilean education system that make it the most privatized system globally, are the elements of abundant school choice, competition among schools, and privatization of education (Howell & Petersen, 2006).

Proponents of market liberalization argue that the logic of market competition produces the best quality education for Chilean students. Furthermore, the voucher system implemented under Pinochet promotes the public funding of private institutions. The “market logic” embedded in The Chilean school system contributed to the minimum requirements for new institutions. Consequently, schools vary greatly in the quality of education they give as well as the cost of tuition. State forces argue that because of the voucher system (state-subsidized) that parents give
to schools of their choice- public schools can be state-funded in Chile. Observations, however, have noted that because there are no regulations on the high cost of education- Chilean students and their families pay incredible fees for unequal education. These policies and stratification were crystallized in Pinochet’s Constitutional Law of Education (LOCE), which provided the legal framework for the educational system.

6.2 Transitional Remembrance Policy: How it Shaped Political Culture in the Post-Dictatorship Era

Chile’s transition to democracy was carefully protected by the Concentracion de Partidos Por La Democracia (Coalition of Parties for Democracy), headed by President Patricio Aylwin Azocar. It should be noted that though Pinochet’s 1980 constitution included provisions concerning the eventual transfer of power from the junta to other civil actors it was not expected to succeed. The constitution allowed for a 1988 plebiscite in which citizens could vote for whether they believed Pinochet and the junta should remain in power until 1997. Though a coalition of oppositional parties originally rejected the validity of the constitution they eventually began to see it as an opportunity to regain power through Pinochet’s own political apparatus. Towards that end, the consolidated opposition formed a united democratic movement called the Concertacion de Partidos Por El No (the Coalition of Parties For NO). Their name referred to what they would vote in the plebiscite that put Pinochet’s continued rule on the ballot.

There are many factors that contributed to the movement’s success. The first was the condition of the economy in the early 1980s, the deteriorated living standard that accompanied it, and changing social awareness.
The economic crisis caused by the international community turning away from Chile (and many Latin American countries) led Chile into a deep economic recession (Rowe Jr, 1985). Many factions of Chilean society felt the repercussions, but it was the Trabajadores de Cobre (CTC) union of copper mineworkers that instigated the first major mobilization aimed at challenging the military regime on May 11, 1983 (Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 2021). Noting that the government’s labor code made striking a no-win situation for union workers, the workers called for a national protest. CTC President Rodolfo Seguel commented that “the labor code… permits the strengthening, accumulation, and concentration of economic power in Chile. And today this economic power imposes its decisions and has the power to obligate us to work in the conflations in decides, assuring the functioning of the economic model” (Ratke-Majewska, 2017). The call had an overwhelming response.

Neighborhoods across the country joined by banging pots and pans to signal their lack of food (cacerolazo), hosted mass protests, slowed down their economic activity, and distributed pamphlets. Indeed, while the CTC may have instigated the mobilization, they were by no means the only clandestine oppositional actor waiting for the right moment to demand re democratization.

The memories of the many “disappeared”, tortured, and killed victims were until that time considered only in the private sphere or expressed “in an oblique way” by artists. As mentioned above, the military had made tremendous efforts to demonize the people they targeted to justify their imprisonment. Yet, organizations such as the socialist party, communist party, feminist organizations, the Christian Democratic party, factions of the Catholic Church and human rights organizations such as the cooperation committee for peace in Chile and the Vicariate of Solidarity played a crucial role in shaping social expectations and awareness through underground networks.
that persisted through the dictatorship but that until the early 1980s had not had the opportunity to protest publicly.

**Figure 5**

*No ¡Hasta Vencer! 1988*

![Image of No ¡Hasta Vencer! 1988 poster](image)

(Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 2021)

**Figure 6**

*Concentracion Por El No, 1988*

![Image of Concentracion Por El No poster](image)

(Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 2021)
Figure 7

*Pan, Trabajo, Justicia Y Libertad*

(Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 2021)

Figure 8

¡A La Calle el 7 De Octubre! 1983-1988

(Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 2021)
Still, neither the Chilean government nor international onlookers suspected that Pinochet would lose the October 5 plebiscite in 1988 (Robinson, 1988). Indeed, the No vote won by a small margin. 43 percent of Chilean citizens had voted for Pinochet (Davis, 2007); the fact that a large portion of the populace continued to support the junta coupled with the constraining rule-of-law, meant that the subsequent administration would have to balance their desire for change with their fear of the army once again violating democratic norms.

President Aylwin and the *Concertation* would thus prioritize reaching a negotiated peace with the former authorities who still had considerable power post-democratization and finding a way to pull Chile into the future. Aylwin made this goal clear in a speech delivered in Sweden during which he noted that one must stop being a prisoner to the past and look instead to the future (Aylwin, 1992). Towards this end, the *Concertation* noted that unity within the varied pro-
democracy parties was of critical importance. Of equal importance was the need to acknowledge the trauma of the dictatorship as carefully as possible so as not to re-intensify divisions.

The first public display of democratic unity and respect among political parties was former President Salvador Allende’s official funeral that took place 17 years after his death on September 5th, 1990. Though no military officials were present, representatives of the new political parties attended demonstrating respect towards a man who represented the democratic political process. In terms of symbolic and spatial forms of commemoration, while it was notable that the new civil authorities paid homage to their democratic past, it is worth noting that they also protected their fragile democracy by deciding not to remove Pinochet-era commemorations that honored military members and the general himself.

**Figure 10**

*Un Día Como Hoy Hace 30 Años. El Funeral Oficial de Salvador Allende G.*

Additionally, the new government strived to formulate a strategy of peaceful coexistence with the structure left by the preceding regime. Thus, the civil authorities used the mechanisms of existing legislation to introduce amendments, though incomplete, to the most controversial provisions of the former laws. In the subsequent plebiscite 85.7% of the vote approved amendments that repealed article 8, increased the senate, limited the powers of the national security council, and limited the terms of presidential office. Importantly, no amendment was passed on the immunity military officials received post-democratization.

Instead, President Aylwin aimed to create a sense of closure for Chileans by creating the Comisión Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliación (National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation) on April 24th, 1990. The committee consisted of representatives of both the new and former governments. They were charged with discovering the truth about the most serious
human rights violations as well as investigating the deaths that occurred throughout the military regime. Their final report documented the name of 2,298 people who had died during the dictatorship but did not discuss those who had been tortured or disappeared (Berryman, 1993). This incomplete closure created an unsteady peace within Chilean society. As written by Anne Ratke-Majewska “for the sake of national unity - although the truth about the regime’s victims was to be disclosed and their families were to be compensated - history could not be made the central point of the transformation” (Ratke-Majewska, 27).

Finally, Chile’s transitional remembrance policy attempted to consolidate the new political order but did not make any significant change to the economic model. The new administration (and those that followed) retained the neoliberal model and instead focused on aiding those most disparately affected. Goals included eliminating extreme poverty, lessening unemployment, removing educational barriers, and diversifying their export economy. Thus, the transitional remembrance policy influenced Chile’s political culture in four important ways. First, it framed Chilean society as one which values democratic norms. Second, it made no significant change to the privileges and power granted to the military. Third, it made no change to the economic model. And lastly, it negotiated an unstable peace between victims of the former regime and the new civil authorities.

6.3 Post-Dictatorship Mobilization in Chile: Mapuche Movement Waves

The goal of the previous sections has been to contextualize the institutional and cultural environment in which social movements operate in Chile. The following section very briefly traces the development of two major movements during the period of electoral democracy. I trace the development of the Mapuche movement as well as the waves of student movements to describe
the relational process by which mobilization strategies and institutional responses are shaped by historical and political constraints.

The Mapuche people are the largest ethnic minority in Chile (Bidegain, 2017). Their ancestral lands are in the South of Chile in the Araucana region. After Chilean independence, their land was annexed into the Chilean state, and they were relocated to reservations across the area. Their land was reduced to only 500,000 hectares; 95 percent less than what they had controlled pre-annexation. Additionally, as a result of Chilean independence, the Mapuche were stripped of their political autonomy.

During Pinochet’s military regime all social and contentious activity was severely repressed. Thus, indigenous mobilization efforts during this period are not well-documented. Movement emergence immediately after democratization, however, has received extensive academic attention. Unlike other social movements within the Chilean context— the Mapuche movement is the only one that has remained persistent from the time immediately following the dictatorship until the present day. Reasons for this are elaborated in the following section.

This section continues by tracing the evolution of the Mapuche movement and divides it into two markedly different periods. The first beginning in 1990 and ending in 1997– is marked by the Mapuche insider strategy or cooperation. The second period is marked instead by confrontation. The second period immediately follows the first and has arguably continued to the present. By tracing the evolution of the Mapuche movement researchers can understand how strategies have shifted based on institutional constraints, relational processes, and identity frameshifts.
The Cooperative Period of Mapuche Mobilization

At the beginning of the 1990s, Mapuche leaders believed that active cooperation with the Chilean state as well as the co-creation of indigenous institutions was the best way of meeting their demands. The demands can be summarized as follows: 1. The extension and protection of indigenous lands 2. The abolition of Pinochet-era law Decree 2.568 aimed to divide and suppress the Mapuche community 3. The creation of a new indigenous law 4. The recognition of ancient collective land titles 5. The recognition of collective rights over their historical territory and natural resources and 6. Political recognition (Bidegain, 2017). Clearly, the last two demands constitute “high-profile” demands in line with Kriesi et al.’s definition (1995). Political recognition would necessitate consultation of indigenous leaders regarding all projects developed on historical Mapuche land. The Araucana region is the most resource-dense region within Chile’s national borders so the concession of the last two demands in particular; would directly impact the state’s ability to operate autonomously within its extractive economic development model.

The principal movement leaders in the 1990s, however, believed concessions would be granted through cooperation. Accordingly, following democratization leaders and government representatives signed the Nueva Imperial Agreement in December of 1989 that committed both parties to work with one another (Kowalczyk, 2013) On the one hand, the government would recognize the Mapuche people in the constitution, repeal Decree 2.568, create a new Indigenous Law, create indigenous associations to formalize the relationship and ratify ILO Convention No. 169 which recognizes the right of indigenous people to be consulting in issues regarding their ancestral lands (Bidegain, 2017). The Mapuche on the other hand would commit to supporting future governments and address their grievances through institutional channels of claim-making only.
Accordingly, the creation of two important institutions became key components of this period. The first is Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena (CONADI) (National Corporation for Indigenous Development) which was charged with supervising indigenous policies such as cultural recognition and economic development. The second is the Special Commission of Indigenous Peoples (CEPI), which was a coalition of indigenous movement leaders and government representatives charged with assessing the situation of indigenous people in Chile and advising the government on indigenous politics (Bidegain, 2017). The development of these institutions, however, was the only concession that came out of this period.

While the associations had drafted a new Indigenous Law, the one that was passed was far less impactful than the original. Due to tough parliamentarian debate, the new Indigenous law did not recognize the Mapuche people in the constitution or their political rights, and the ILO Convention No. 169 was not ratified. The creation of CONADI, however, was nonetheless thought of as a positive development.

Near the turn of the century, however, Mapuche youth had grown tired of the piecemeal concessions granted by the state. There were two instances, in particular, that radicalized younger movement participants and strengthened their commitment to disruptive actions to achieve their autonomy (Bidegain, 2017).

German Bidegain describes these instances as transformational moments in that they marked a critical shift in previous movement strategies. The first moment occurred in 1997 when three logging trucks were vandalized by indigenous activists. Citing the executive’s preference for developing the extractive economy and foreign investment, particularly by logging companies,
what came to be known as the *Lumaco* incident began the integration of disruptive protest into the Mapuche movement’s *repertoire of strategies*.

The second transformational moment concerned the construction of the Ralco hydroelectric dam that was set to be built on indigenous territory. In the first round of negotiations, both the state and indigenous leaders attempted to use institutional methods of cooperation. Negotiations between executive representatives and CONADI ultimately reached a standstill when then-CONADI director Mauricio Huenchulaf opposed the project’s development (Bidegain, 2017). Huenchulaf was quickly replaced and when his substitute similarly refused to sign off on the project, he was replaced with CONADI’s first non-indigenous director who approved the plan and acted as a “rubber-stamp” appointment. This moment solidified the notion held by militant Mapuche activists that institutional processes of claim-making were futile.

Just as Mapuche strategies changed as a result of state actions, state actions shifted in response to the Mapuche demand shift. The increased focus on political autonomy resulted in increasingly repressive measures justified by the Anti-terror Law introduced decades prior. Some Mapuche activists, however, would argue that the relationship between their movement and the state had always been contentious despite the brief period of cooperation. Thus, Mapuche leaders frame their identities and struggles as existing outside of institutional concern.

Unlike indigenous peoples, however, large-forestry corporations are considered by institutional policies. During Pinochet’s regime corporations were granted extensive subsidies and generous tax incentives to work on the Mapuche’s ancestral land. As democratization had led to procedural political change but not economic change, these policies were strengthened under the subsequent democratic governments. Regardless of the administration’s ideology, they all
protected their economic endeavors on indigenous lands with frequent military and police checkpoints, military tanks, and heavily armed Carabineros (Richards, 2013).

In 2002 right-wing Renovacion Nacional Senator Alberto Espina presented a 160-page report to the senate accusing the Mapuche people of “threatening the physical integrity and way of life of farmers, campesinos, and lumber transporters” (Richards, 2013). Even left-wing administrations employed violence to protect the state and its policies. In the early 2000s, President Ricardo Lagos supported Operation Patience, an intelligence operation meant to incriminate the Mapuche activist organization Coordinadora Arauco-Malleco (CAM) (Richards, 2013). Additionally, though socialist President Michelle Bachelet ran on a campaign that promised her government would not use the anti-terrorism law, it was applied various times throughout her presidency resulting in the death of at least Matias Catrilelo (2008), and Jaime Mendoza Collio (2009) (Richards, 2013).

In more recent years, Presidential candidates have even called for the strengthening of the anti-terrorism law. In 2009, then-presidential candidate Sebastian Pinera stated that the “rule of law” in Araucana was lost and needed reinforcement. Even more recently, Pinera has stated that “the terrorists should not be given even a millimeter of advantage; they must be combated with all the rigor of the law” (Barrera, 2017). The “terrorists” in question, of course, are Mapuche leaders who in response to increased state violence and surveillance have adjusted their strategies accordingly. Thus, though the Mapuche movement and state relationship had begun as cooperative, the relational process of both actors influenced the evolution of movement strategies on one hand and repressive state responses on the other.
6.4 Post-Dictatorship Mobilization in Chile: Student Movements in 2006 and 2011

Though the indigenous Mapuche community continually engaged with the state post-dictatorship, they were and continue to be, excluded from the state’s collective identity. Indeed, Chile is the only South American state that does not recognize indigenous people in its constitution (IWGIA, 2020). Though sometimes referenced in more recent mobilizations, indigenous issues are rarely the chief concern of urban movements. Thus, beyond indigenous movements, general social mobilization has been rare in the post-dictatorship period. As discussed above, the erasure of trauma formed the general discourse of transition since it was thought to be an effective way to limit conflict that might threaten the fragile new democracy (Moulian, 1998).

The generation of youth that had witnessed Chile’s democratic rebirth was characterized as the “whatever” generation (La Generacion “No Estoy Ni Ahi”) due to their supposed apathetic attitudes toward the new democratic procedures (Moulian, 1998). Historians note, however, that the deliberate process of de-politicization and demobilization characteristic of the first democratic administration post-Pinochet might have contributed to these notions of apathy. Additionally, as is common after traumatic experiences, silence regarding the pain of the past contributed to decreased confrontation in the post-dictatorship period (Frei, 2020).

Thus, the 2006 “Penguin Revolution” and the 2011 “Chilean Winter” were the first sustained mass mobilizations since the return to democracy (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013). This section describes the evolution of both movements and argues that the institutional context of the country explained above, as well as the experience of smaller pre-2006 mobilizations, influenced the strategies and concessions gained during the “Penguin Revolution.” Subsequently, the “Penguin Revolution” influenced the “Chilean Winter.” In the discussion on the “Chilean Winter”, I include
second-hand data from interviews conducted by sociologist Nicolas Ortiz Ruiz with young activists. The activists’ explanation of their political subjectivation illustrates how postmemory, memories that are not their own but passed down by influential actors in their lives, frame the activists’ perspectives of their own struggles and influence their mobilization strategies. In the case of all the activists interviewed, the actors that influenced them most were their parents who had struggled against the military regime in the 70s and 80s.

**The 2006 “Penguin Revolution”**

In the spring of 2006, thousands of high school-age students took to the streets to demand the Chilean state restructure its education system. The movement broke the generation-long silence that had quelled political confrontation for the preceding two decades (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013). The movement was called the “Penguin Revolution” because of the black and white uniforms worn by the secondary students.

The students were reacting to the cost of transportation passes for students and the cost of university admission exams. Over time, however, their discourse evolved to include 1. Completely free education 2. Quality state-subsidized education 3. A rejection of for-profit educational providers and 4. The elimination of discriminatory practices in schools (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013). Though the movement’s demands were concrete issues of educational policy, mitigated by economic and basic needs claims, they were by no means disinterested in electoral and partisan politics. There is strong evidence that Chilean students had “profound criticisms of society… and a high interest in public and social problems” (Duarte Quapper, 2000). Students articulated this interest by targeting the Constitutional Law of Education (LOCE), as well as the Chilean constitution, the voucher law, and several other education regulations.
The mobilization strategies employed towards that end can be identified by several features. The first is the persistence of public demonstrations. A key component of the 2006 protests was the *mochilazos* (demonstrations with backpacks). They were a direct approach borrowed from previous 2001 student protests similarly aimed at lowering transportation fares and demanding better educational conditions. Additionally, the 2006 protests were predominantly organized by student assemblies that differed from traditional student councils. They were effective in articulating demands and coordinating contentious actions. In their protests, like during the dictatorship and in smaller movements afterward, participants took advantage of traditional and new media to gather public support. Traditional media included pamphlets, flyers, graffiti, word-of-mouth, and music, while new media referred to emerging communication methods through social media websites.

The 2006 “Penguin Revolution” had a tremendous impact on Chilean society. It marked the beginning of a “new generation” of political actors that were no longer concerned with the political compromises the preceding generation had felt were necessary to protect a fledgling democracy (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013). Far from emerging within in a vacuum, participants contextualized their struggles by considering the contemporary political reality as well by alluding to institutional constraints imposed by the past. Importantly, it is noted that existing teachers’ unions and other actors heavily supported these students and applauded their efforts to finally break the generational silence.

The efforts of the secondary students were not unfruitful. The tremendous political attention and the novelty of their associations compelled the government to engage with their demands. Unlike with the Mapuche mobilization, the government was willing to cooperate with participants though their demands similarly challenged institutional pillars of the state. Thus, the
state identified the student participants as important political actors. Then socialist President Michelle Bachelet created the Advisory Presidential Council for Quality Education to produce a report with policy guidelines for improving the quality of education in Chile. Their recommendations resulted in her proposal of variations ambitious legal reforms including the removal of LOCE and the creation of a new General Law of Education; the creation of an Agency for Quality in Education; changes in the structure of educational cycles; and the reform of the administration of the public schools (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013). All but the last reforms were approved.

**The 2011 “Chilean Winter”**

Inspired by the 2006 “Penguin Revolution” the 2011 “Chilean Winter” intensified mobilizations aimed at reforming the market-based education system. In April of 2011, 8,000 university students protested across the country citing similar grievances as the ones that had been articulated 5 years prior (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013). The movement continued for seven months and gathered significant domestic and international support. Like Bachelet’s administration during the previous student uprising, center-right President Sebastian Pinera attempted to placate protestors by offering incomplete concessions. Pinera refused to consider free education for all, but he did create new university scholarships to support students from lower socioeconomic quintiles (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013). As this measure does not contend with the high cost of tuition fees or the high rates of interest for loans that students already have, this was not a sufficient measure to quell protests.

The 2011 protests, like that in 2006, constructed their *repertoire of strategies* based on the historical experience of similar movements before theirs. Thus, the participants revived the
mochilazos, and continued to rely on student assemblies to articulate demands. They used traditional media such as pamphlets, flyers, graffiti, word-of-mouth, and music as well as even more sophisticated new media, and added sit-ins. Importantly, in this period of mobilization, more so than in the last, charismatic leaders were crucial elements of successful strategies.

Leaders like Camila Vallejo, President of the Student Federation of the University of Chile (FECH), and Giorgio Jackson, President of the Student Federation of the Catholic University (FEUC) were instrumental in setting the public agenda for education. Indeed, political leaders at the time recognized their value as political actors that could frame the movement in a way that resonated with the masses, and thus, these leaders negotiated directly with the Minister of Education and the Chilean Congress to discuss the 2012 National Budget Law.

Interviews with activists during this period add to our understanding of other factors that shaped their perspective of contemporary struggles. In an interview with 26-year-old activist Laura, Nicolas Ruiz notes that public commemoration events that break the silence typical of the first democratic administration are critical to the framing of the current generation’s political subjectivation. Indeed, as young adults described their experience learning about the military regime and the horrors experienced by their own parents, they often situated their own activism in the historical experience of their older family members. Thus, in the same way, that their parents organized for democratization under the military regime— younger activists see it as their duty to organize against unjust neoliberal policies and remnants of the Pinochet era.

This caveat constitutes the major difference between the state’s reaction to student protests and the state’s reactions to indigenous mobilizations. This section discussed a variety of
concessions that resulted from various student efforts. That is not to downplay, however, the severe repression that the state employed in the process of interacting with these movements.

Indeed, Figure 12 demonstrates that Chile is the most repressive South American state in terms of how often the state reacts violently to protest participants. Historically, repressive measures have included “disappearances,” sexual assault, detention without trial, the extensive use of tear gas and rubber bullets, among other repressive measures. Despite this truth, it is still important to note that student protests ultimately gained more concessions than indigenous movements. It can be argued that targeting regulations that embed neoliberal policies into the educational system is a high-profile issue. The Chilean student movements, however, seek in their strategies to cooperate in meaningful ways with the state. Though they seek to alter its founding documents (the constitution) they still acknowledge that the state itself is an important actor whereas the Mapuche movement seeks complete political autonomy. Thus, the latter poses an increased existential threat to the state in ways that are markedly different than the first. Additionally, as noted by indigenous leaders and other scholars (Richards, 2013), the Chilean state and has had a historically contentious relationship with the Mapuche and their interaction has been haunted by race-based conflict.
Figure 12

Percent of Protest Events Met with State Violence


7 Contextualizing the 2019 “Chile Despertó” Movement

The 2019 “Chile Despertó” social movement is rooted in historical and political constraints just as the Mapuche and multiple student movements were. The subjective collective identities of movement participants likewise inform the movement strategies. Like the influential movements preceding it, the 2019 “Chile Woke Up” movement primarily targeted Pinochet-era
legislation. They identified neoliberal reforms as the source of inequality and stratification within Chilean civil society. The emblematic slogan “No son 30 pesos, son 30 años” best articulates the profound dissatisfaction with the longstanding market liberalization process. Participants communicated their discontent through placards demonstrating their understanding that neoliberalism heightens inequality and that the commodification of things such as health and education creates inequitable access to these basic rights. Though many strategies employed by the mobilization participants borrow from familiar repertoires of contention such as protests, strikes, sit-ins, graffiti, pamphlets, cacerolazos, etc., “Chile Despertó” differs from prior mobilizations in many important ways.

First, the mobilization occurred without the support of any formal political parties or SMOs. Though students had previously been identified as political actors, the 2019 protests were in response to the immediate hike in transportation costs. Secondary students led the movement much like they had in 2006 and rebelled by jumping turnstiles and evading transportation fees (Dides, 2021). Over the next few days, other commuters joined the students but there was not a principal organization or leader guiding the movement’s strategy like there was during the “Chilean Winter.” The scope of grievances was quickly expanded to go beyond the increased transportation fees.

Second, the 2019 protests were not influential only because of their spontaneity and size, but also because of their unprecedented use of violence in ways that were not common in previous urban mobilizations. Most protests were, in fact, peaceful as demonstrated at the beginning of this case study, but there was a significant increase in violent actions including burning metro stations, burning businesses emblematic of the neoliberal process, raiding stores, and raiding banks (Dides, 2021). In the case of Mapuche mobilization, it was noted that strategies evolved from peaceful to
confrontational once old mechanisms of interactions ceased to benefit movement participants. Perhaps, the volatility of contemporary strategies suggests that participants framed the government’s additional unfair economic measure (metro fare hike) as an existential threat to their well-being as citizens.

Lastly, the movement’s claim-making process was markedly different from those prior. Citizens organized themselves into spontaneous “cabildos” or citizen councils to discuss their grievances and formulate strategies by which to gain concessions. The use of the word “cabildo” is important here. It is reminiscent of the colonial era and a time when cabildos were critical planning locations for the Chilean independence struggle (Dides, 2021). The councils reflected a continuation of the organizational shift that began with the student movements. In student assemblies, the organizational structure was horizontal though membership was dictated by an individual’s identity as a “student.” Cabildos took the horizontal organization structure one step further by opening membership to anyone interested in the general struggle for reformation and emancipation from the legacy of Pinochet. This frame was successful in unifying large amounts of people, in contrast perhaps, to the Mapuche’s ethnic-based framing which sheds and uncomfortable light on Chilean unequal race relations.

In light of its unique characteristics President Sebastian Pinera responded with extreme repression. As was the case in Mapuche-state interactions- such violent mobilization strategies likely posed an existential threat to the state and it was forced to rely on historical repertoires to deploy the full force of the armed forces. This, of course, was still within the government’s institutional framework so its use is not surprising.
What was surprising, however, for many onlookers was the concessions won by the movement. Eventually, though many were injured, assaulted, or disappeared before this happened, a referendum was held in October of 2020 to decide whether the constitution should be amended. Remarkably, the plebiscite was passed. Such a dramatic concession is a rare outcome of any mobilization. While the current constitutional assembly is still in the process of conceptualizing their reforms before presenting them to the congress and to the public, the very existence of constitutional assembly is a result of years’ worth of mobilization and framing. Social movements do not occur in a vacuum. Economic grievances have always troubled Chileans but were it not for the eventual “remembering” of Pinochet-era repression, collective identity, and injustice frames, the large-scale social mobilization would not have been possible in 2019. Similarly, repression does not develop in a vacuum. So long as institutional constraints are embedded in that state’s foundational documents and the opposition is constructed as an existential threat, repression will be employed.

8 Conclusion

While contemporary demands for public healthcare, re-nationalized social security, and public education seem like questions of public policy, in Chile they are actually matters of constitutional constraint (Vergara, 2019). The 2019 “Chile Despertó” movement demonstrated that the very notion of what is possible to achieve was molded by historical and political constraints (Donoso, 2017). The legacy of prior social movements as well as the participants conception of self-have informed their claim-making mechanisms as well as their list of demands. Similarly, the state responded to their claims based on their own past experiences with mobilization. Thus, the relationship between social movements and repression is dynamic and interdependent. While the
emergence of social movements is often accompanied by grievances and generally follow the tenets of the political process theory, in cases where they do not, researchers would be wise to consider the specific cultures within which movements develop.

The quantitative model constructed here illustrated the inability of economic indicators alone to create a comprehensive understanding of any instance of mobilization. It has been argued here that social movements do not occur in a vacuum. They are always situated within longer historical process of state-making and contention. Thus, while an inventory of current political and economic constraints/grievances offers some insight to the deeper dynamics within mass movements, Federico M. Rossi’s concepts of “repertoire of strategies” and “stock of legacies” fills the gaps by giving researchers the tools to analyze history and identity-framing processes from a culturally responsive lens. Similarly, the state repression is best analyzed through the same historical lens. By noting the interaction of the state and movements participants, researchers can observe the strong interdependence between the two.
9 References


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