

The Longue Durée of Chilean Exceptionalism:  
Settler Colonialism, Political Violence, and Popular Culture

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**Abstract**

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The nationwide protests that began in Santiago in October 2019 laid bare the tensions churning underneath the narrative of Chilean economic prosperity, democracy, and stability known as Chilean exceptionalism. Protestors carrying signs stating “it’s not about 30 pesos, it’s about 30 years” exhibited the public’s understanding that the triumphalist discourse of the democratic transition from the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in 1990 was not as complete as advertised. However, even the slogan’s transformed understanding of the transition does not consider the continuity of settler-colonial logics of elimination and counter-insurgent violence that started with the dispossession of Indigenous land. I argue that the roots of the tensions that boiled over in October 2019 are not 30 but rather 500 years old. Through a dialogue between an archive of “high politics” comprised of official documents and an archive of “low data,” the 2017 docudrama series *Una historia necesaria*, I demonstrate how settler-colonial violence is an essential to Chilean statecraft. Finally, I contend that the fallout from the protests has provided an opening for new forms of justice that can address the settler-colonial sources of violence.

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## **Introduction**

### **The Myth of Chilean Exceptionalism**

*Chile, with its institutionalized party system, its strong and nonpoliticized state institutions, and its continued economic dynamism, represents the goals to which most Latin American countries can only aspire.*

*-Philip Oxfhorn, 1998*

“It’s not 30 pesos, it’s 30 years” was one of the popular slogans in the country-wide protests taking place in Chile.<sup>1</sup> The slogan calls attention to the pervasive structural inequalities and injustices in a state that is “the most unequal country” in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development despite being “...Latin America’s golden boy for its clean governance, transparency and investor-friendly environment” (Laing et al., 2019). Ostensibly in response to a 30-peso (roughly four cents in 2019 USD) fare increase for the subway in Santiago starting on October 6, 2019, the first wave of protests began on October 7, 2019, and consisted primarily of students participating in a coordinated fare-evasion effort. Attempts by law enforcement to suppress instances of fare evasion contributed to an escalation in the intensity of confrontations between protestors and police. Protestors were accused of destroying or vandalizing property at multiple subway stations in Santiago, and the forcible tactics law enforcement deployed to demobilize the protestors generated an opposite-of-intended effect.

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<sup>1</sup> No son 30 pesos, son 30 años



*Figure 1 “Protesters demonstrate in Santiago, Chile, as clashes with riot police continue for a fourth straight day. Violence erupted during protests against a now-suspended hike in metro ticket prices on October 21, 2019.” (Bernetti et al., 2019).*

The protests grew larger, the police responded with more violence, more public property was destroyed, and eventually, authorities closed large portions of the subway system in Santiago. By October 18, 2019, the then-President Piñera declared a state of emergency in Santiago, stating that “we are at war with a powerful enemy,” and for the first time since the transition from the junta, soldiers patrolled the streets of the capital, enforcing a curfew, restricting the movement of residents, and constraining the right to assemble (Bartlett, 2019; Sutherland & Reeves, 2019). However, even with the deployment of 10,000 soldiers and riot police in Chile’s largest city, the protests did not cease. Instead, the protests spread to other cities across Chile, leading Piñera to extend the state of emergency order across the country. In an

email to CNBC, Economist Intelligence Unit analyst Mark Keller commented that, “The fact that the protests spread beyond Santiago quickly show there’s deep underlying discontent nationwide” (Meredith, 2019).

Official and popular narratives of Chile's transition have celebrated the country's democratic exit from the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet and lauded its economic success. Nevertheless, Chile has been the site of growing dissent and polarization in ways that belie the triumphalist discourse of a democratic transition. What does the story of transitional justice leave out? What do the silences in popular stories about post-transitional Chile reveal about the unresolved tensions in that country? The beginning of an answer to these questions was suggested by the Mapuche flags that flew conspicuously alongside Chilean flags, a significant juxtaposition considering that Chile is the only state in Latin America that does not constitutionally recognize any Indigenous group “as a people” (Waldman, 2012, p. 61). This also raises a crucial question. Should “it’s not 30 pesos, it’s 30 years” be revised to read “it's not 30 pesos, its 500 years” to include the on-going colonial experience of Chile?

### **A Revised Timeline of “Transition”**

According to the official accounts, Chile’s descent into deleterious authoritarianism begins in the mid-1960s with the social reforms introduced during the presidency of Eduardo Frei Montalva. In this telling, Frei’s reforms initiate a hyper-polarization of Chilean society. However, the polarization reached its peak with the election of socialist presidential candidate Salvador Allende Gossens and his ruling coalitions’ stated efforts at democratically transitioning Chile into a socialist state. The subsequent military coup in 1973 and the political violence of the Pinochet regime was a radical response to an existential crisis facing the Chilean state and though deplorable, were necessary (albeit evil) means to achieving the so-called Chilean miracle



(Stern, 2004). The years of dictatorship were, in this view, a return to a longer history of order and stability-driven exceptional macro-economic prosperity (Stern, 2004). This conventional narrative, exemplified through transitional justice efforts like the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, portrays political violence in Chile as a temporally bounded anomaly in Chilean history, an anomaly only possible because of the insidious nature of either the socialist contagion or the evil of Pinochet's rule. (Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1993).

The historiography of Chilean history, according to this official narrative, can be delineated into four periods: the colonial period and the fight for independence, independence followed by the flourishing of democracy until foreign ideologies perverted the institutions that made Chilean success possible, a painful, but unavoidable, exorcism of the demons introduced by foreign ideologies with the coup coupled with the solid economic policies, and then the return of a flourishing democracy that combined the best aspects of the pre-coup flourishing democracy and the successful economic policies of the coup. This sanguine perception of Chilean history ignores the brutal aspects of state formation that led to the death of thousands of Indigenous people, the dispossession of Indigenous land, the discursive erasure of Indigenous people, and the continued willingness of the state to employ repressive measures in the face of political activism up to the present.

I am arguing for an alternative timeline in which state-sanctioned violence in Chile during the Pinochet regime is viewed as a continuation of counter-insurgent settler-colonial logic. This alternative timeline I am proposing distinguishes between time as it is experienced chronologically and time as it is experienced affectively by those living under the *longue-durée* of structural violence in a settler-colonial state. In this conceptualization, chronological time

represents the linear, Western understanding of time where reality (and our perception of reality) *only* moves in one direction, forward (Thomas, 2016). However, affective time does not necessarily stick to this dogmatic understanding of the linear flow of time; rather, as Steve J. Stern argues, “Despite vast changes, the present seems not so much to replace the past as to superimpose itself on it, only partly altering and displacing it. Time as linear sequence, and the related notion of time as progress, seem questionable” (1996, p. 371). Deborah Thomas uses the concept of quantum entanglement as the theoretical basis of an affective temporal framing where “everyday patterns of structural and symbolic violence, lead to an experience of time neither as linear nor cyclical, but as simultaneous, where the future, past, and present are mutually constitutive and have the potential to be coincidentally influential” (2016, p. 5). Using this affective temporal framing, I propose that the state of Chilean society can be interpreted as a result of the failures of the transition to address the “psychic wound” created by the oppression of Indigenous people and the dispossession of their land that has been a source of social and material tensions since the state was founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This “psychic wound” will continue to negatively affect Chile until the state takes tangible steps to recognize and remedy the injustices suffered by Indigenous communities who continue to live in what is now Chile (Saldaña-Portillo, 2011).

### **Theoretical Approach Settler Colonialism**

In addition to an alternative conceptualization of time, this analysis will draw heavily on the logic of settler-colonial state formation. In this framework, the creation of a modern Chilean nation-state required (and requires) settler violence against Indigenous peoples. This violence has taken many forms as it has been meted out over the centuries, but a common thread running through them all is the goal of the eradication/erasure of indigeneity, the “logic of elimination,”

in an effort to reconcile the tension between the settler reliance on the rule of law to justify claims to Indigenous land (Wolfe, 2006). The logic of elimination employed in Chile and elsewhere in the Americas presented Indigenous people with a “Faustian” bargain, assimilate with assurances of access to a measure of the rights allocated to settlers at the expense of claims to territorial and cultural inheritance, or refuse and be labeled subversive, “barbarians” whose presence had to be eradicated through a counter-insurgency campaign in the name of settler security (Wolfe, 2006). A critical part of counter-insurgency operations is gathering information on potential insurgents. Dustin Wax succinctly voices the imperative for conquering powers to obtain a utilitarian understanding of the populations they are governing, “Adequate knowledge and understanding of the conquered Other has been central to the Enlightenment ideal of benevolent rule and has been seen as the key to resolving and, better yet, preventing the development of dissent into revolt” (2014, p. 153).

James C. Scott’s famous concept of state formation as a project of “legibility” provides an analytical framework that I will use to examine the efforts of the Chilean state to make the population and territory it is governing legible in the context of an ongoing settler-colonial project. As Scott points out, making things legible is a process of essentializing and categorizing populations, policy choices, and other phenomena to meet the perceived informational needs of the modern state in order to govern a population in a rationally bounded environment (1998). In the case of Chile (and other settler-colonial states), state identity formation and territorial consolidation required the homogenization of Chilean identity and history into a neatly packaged, easily comprehensible narrative. The ideology of Chilean exceptionalism relies on a reductive and essentialized vision of Chilean historiography where repressive violence is construed as necessary steps in the linear march towards modernity.

## Method

I am putting two archives into conversation. The first archive is comprised of official documents: the first long-term official Chilean constitution<sup>2</sup> promulgated in 1833; Decreto Ley 1 and Ley 18.314 ratified during the Pinochet regime; and the official reports based on the findings of the three official post-transition Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC), Rettig, Valech I, and Valech II. Admittedly, this is an eclectic, even unconventional archive at first glance. However, I contend that these documents correspond with the inflection points in Chilean history that I will be analyzing in this thesis, the founding of the state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the dictatorship of Pinochet from 1973 to 1990, and the “re-founding” of the state that began with the transition in 1990. Framing these documents as a single archive provides an opportunity for me to exhibit the common threads across time in the official documents *and* how these threads are reproduced in popular culture as exemplified by my second archive. The second archive is the 2017 docudrama series, *Una historia necesaria*, which is largely based on the Rettig Report. Given the relationship between *Una historia necesaria* and the Rettig Report, I will spend significantly more time exploring the dialogue present between the series and the Rettig Report. Through the archival conversation I am staging, I will demonstrate how the political violence that characterized the Pinochet-led junta is a durable feature of the Chilean state from its inception to the present rather than an anomaly (Saldaña Portillo, 2011). Using the methodological framework of high politics and low data, I will demonstrate continuities between the consistent discourse of homogenization and erasure in official documents of the Chilean state and the

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<sup>2</sup> After formally gaining independence in 1818, the new state promulgated new constitutions in 1822, 1823, and 1828 before the creation of the 1833 constitution, which stayed in effect until 1925. The 1925 constitution lasted until Pinochet crafted a new constitution in 1980, a constitution that is still in effect. However, a constitutional convention is in session to craft a new constitution, and on September 4, 2022, Chileans will participate in an exit plebiscite to determine if the draft constitution the convention created is approved or rejected (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional, n.d.a; Martínez & Fuentes, 2022).

content of the docudrama series (Weldes, 2015). High politics can be understood as “those issues that are integral to the existential nature of the state itself (Youde, 2016, p. 157)” while low data is data obtained from “irrelevant” or “frivolous” popular culture sources (Weldes, 2015, p. 230). However, as Weldes has pointed out, high politics and low data are interdependent because the policy choices of the state “have a fundamentally cultural basis” and these choices are “made commonsensical through everyday cultural meanings, including those circulating in popular culture” (2015, p. 230).

Decreto Ley 1 is a law, promulgated on September 11, 1973, and published on September 18, 1973, that declared the legal formation of the military junta (consisting of the heads of the four branches of the military, Army, Navy, Air Force, and National Police) that seized control of Chile September 11, 1973, and installed Augusto Pinochet (commander-in-chief of the Army) as President of the junta (Chile). This document is an important element of my analysis because it claims that the presence of existential threats to “Chilean” national identity and values can only be solved through a military takeover. The rhetoric in the “law” paints the junta (and the military more broadly) as protectors of the moral and physical sanctity of Chile and “true” Chileans. This implies that enemies of the junta are not just political opponents but rather tendrils of a devious and alien virus that seeks to permanently taint the purity of the DNA of the Chilean state and its people. Of course, no mention is made of the Mapuche or other Indigenous people in Chile; through their erasure they have been subsumed and forgotten. Finally, Decreto Ley 1 seems like an apt metaphor for the relative continuity in the socio-economic structure and the political goals between pre-Pinochet Chile, Pinochet’s Chile, and post-transition Chile because it replicates the foundational violence of the first decrees of the republic and given that the numbering system of

post-transition Chile legislation continues where Pinochet-era legislation ended, illustrates a continuous project of counter-insurgent governance.

Additional evidence of literal continuity from Pinochet to the present is the continued use of Ley 18.314, an anti-terrorism measure introduced under Pinochet in 1984 (Ministerio del Interior). This law permits anonymous testimony from witnesses and more restrictive pre-trial detention for those accused of terrorist offences. Additionally, it enhances the sentences for those convicted of terrorist offenses. Post-transition it has primarily been used against Mapuche activists and has been subject to condemnation by the UN and the Inter-American Court, among other national and international actors, although it has many national supporters (*Norín Catrimán et al. v. Chile*, 2014; Pairican & Urrutia, 2021; Richards, 2010). This law is important because it and the national controversy over its application, provides evidence for the alternative, longue durée timeline, when examining state violence in Chile that I have suggested is necessary to understand current tensions within the state. In my interpretation, this law is an indication that Chilean society has never moved past Pinochet-era polarization and entrenched desires to deploy state-sanctioned violence against Indigenous people in Chile to further settler-colonial goals of expropriation and extraction.

The transitional justice reports of Rettig, Valech I, and Valech II present the findings from the three state-sanctioned truth commissions that have taken place in Chile to acknowledge victims of political violence during the Pinochet regime. Recognition in these reports is consequential both materially and symbolically. Victims of political violence and their family members are given access to various reparative programs that convey financial and health-related benefits. Symbolically, these reports play a massive role in shaping discourse on what and who

constitutes a victim of state violence and *deserves* to be recognized as such; they help determine whose suffering counts officially and culturally.

Much of the historical credibility of *Una historia necesaria* is based on the reconstruction of events detailed in the Rettig Report. Jara et al. note in their 2018 study of the three reports that Mapuche and Indigenous peoples are barely present in the Rettig Report (15 mentions of Mapuche and one time of Indigenous people, respectively) and essentially do not appear at all in the Valech reports (one use of Indigenous in Valech I, (p. 489). Thus, these documents (along with the analytical work of Jara et al.) provide strong support for interpreting the transitional justice efforts as part of a longer project aimed at erasing indigeneity from the Chilean present.

*Una historia necesaria* (UHN) is a 2018 Emmy-award winning docudrama (Contreras, November 20, 2018) anthology of 16 short episodes (the longest episode is 05:03 minutes) focusing on political violence that took place during the Pinochet regime. Professor Hernán Caffiero directed the series, although some of the individual episodes were directed by students at The Chilean Film School. The National Television Counsel of Chile funded the series, which was produced via a collaboration between The Chilean Film School and Tridi 3D Films Company and initially aired on a Chilean cable television network, canal 13c (each episode is now available officially on YouTube), on the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coup, 9/11/2017 (Periódico Resumen, 2020).

Every episode is titled with a name or names that corresponds to at least one of the names of the victim(s) of “disappearance” that is the subject of the episode, and the episodes are narrated by a family member or loved one of the titular character(s). All 16 episodes begin with the same box of text explaining that the episode’s content is based on the evidence collected in the Rettig Report (initial truth commission), judicial documents, and testimony from the family

members of the disappeared. Similarly, the episodes all end with the names, pictures, and prison sentences (when there were charges filed and convictions obtained) of the individuals convicted for the disappearance(s). Although there is an overlap in the general historical context and the identities of convicted persons from episode to episode, each episode is a discrete story.

Before delving into the importance of the actual content of the episodes, the unexpected translation of the title of the series provides evidence of the intent of the filmmaker(s). *Una historia necesaria* (UHN) could be translated into English as “A Necessary Story,” but the English name of the series is given as “The Suspended Mourning.” This naming decision and the fact that the YouTube channel has "official" English subtitles lead me to believe that the series is designed with two separate audiences in mind. For Chileans (and Spanish speakers more broadly), the title indicates to the audience that these are stories that need to be told, implying that there is an ongoing effort to forget or silence the stories. However, for English-speaking audiences, the intent seems to be to try and describe the transformative nature of trauma and uncertainty that state-sanctioned disappearing forces on a family (and society) that is left to try and continue to live some semblance of a normal life.

The meta-narrative told from the first to the last episode is that nobody was safe from the carnage of the morally bankrupt Pinochet regime. Social status, profession, family and political connections, friendships, and/or social mores could not offer complete protection. It seems that the series is trying to say that the story of Pinochet’s Chile is a necessary one because it could have been any of “us” and therefore was all of “us.” Until all the victims of Pinochet have been identified, their bodies laid to rest, and justice served, Chilean society will continue to live an un-life of suspended mourning.



Although this series appears to attempt to tell a story that relates to all Chileans, it also perpetuates erasure of the Mapuche people and other Indigenous people in Chile. None of the victims in the series are identified/identify as Mapuche or otherwise Indigenous. The context of one episode tells a story that evokes efforts of the Chilean state in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to conflate the Mapuche with settler-farmers (*campesinos*) in southern Chile or Wallmapu; thereby transforming legal and ethical arguments and claims about land rights, sovereignty, and recognition into political arguments about land distribution. In Chapter three, *Different Day, Same Repression*, we will explore this case in more detail and its relationship to a project of cultural construction of and recognition of victimhood that serves to further policies and rhetoric aimed at relegating indigeneity in Chile to a long, long time ago past.

As a data set, UHN is useful for addressing the central concern of this study in several ways. According to the narrators, justice has not been served. They have not been able to make a seamless transition to a post-Pinochet life. Based on their testimony alone, the official narrative of a successful transitional justice effort is called into question. Moreover, the fact that this story needs to be told implies that there is more than a contested discourse in Chilean society around the legacy of Pinochet and the physical and symbolic violence he perpetrated. Furthermore, the absence of indigeneity echoes assertions by activists that the Chilean state is officially and unofficially engaged in a long-term project of erasure and expropriation against the Indigenous people (primarily Mapuche) who inhabited and continue to inhabit their traditional lands. This point is particularly salient because the series uses rhetoric and imagery with powerful emotional appeal to condemn the horrors of state violence yet does not speak on continued incidences of state violence. All this despite public awareness at the time of filming that the Mapuche are disproportionately the targets of Pinochet-era anti-terrorism legislation *and* are actively living

under a state of siege enforced by police (carabineros) in southern Chile who operate under Pinochet-era “state of emergency” deployment orders. Finally, the series never mentions the neoliberal structural changes implemented by Pinochet that are still in place in Chile. The filmmakers might argue that neoliberal "reforms" are outside the series' scope. However, to ignore the structural violence Pinochet's policies inflicted through the exacerbation of socioeconomic disparities is to miss a large part of the story.

### **Structure of Thesis**

In Chapter One: Seeing like a commission, I delve into TRC efforts to make violence legible through a process of constructing victimhood and crafting the narratives of which archetypal victims are a key component. This process requires defining certain kinds of violence as constituting state violence (thus privileging certain victims) and ignoring other types of violence that do not fit within that definition (thus erasing other victims). I will use a conversation between the TRC reports, particularly the Rettig Report, and *Una historia necesaria* to make my argument in this chapter.

Chapter Two: Settlers and counterinsurgency, will explore how the logic of settler counter-insurgent violence can be used to target groups within the settlers. In this chapter, I will initiate a conversation between Decreto Ley 1 and *Una historia necesaria* to show how quickly members of a society can be dehumanized or made alien justifying the violence against them.

Chapter Three: Different day, same repression, will focus on the initial targets of state violence in Chile, indigenous peoples, particularly the Mapuche. In this chapter, I will demonstrate the continuity of political aims of the settler-colonial state from its inception to the

modern-day. I can then show how the psychic wound of settler-colonial violence will continue to fester until it is addressed with a temporally unbounded application of transitional justice.

Finally, I will conclude with an overview of recent socio-political events in Chile and how these events have coalesced into a potential inflection point in Chilean history. Along with an overview of current events, I am going to demonstrate why we should view the potential for a transformation in Chilean society with ambivalence, given the backlash against and outcomes of three previous potential inflection points that presented themselves shortly after independence from Spain, the socio-political project of the Allende administration, and the transition towards a democracy, respectively.

## **Chapter One: Seeing like a commission**

*How can those who tortured and those who were tortured coexist in the same land? How to heal a country that has been traumatized by repression if the fear to speak out is still omnipresent everywhere?... Is it legitimate to sacrifice the truth to insure peace? And what are the consequences of suppressing that past and the truth it is whispering or howling to us?*

*-Ariel Dorfman, Death and the Maiden, 1994*

Try to imagine you have just had a healthy baby, the mixture of joy, relief, anxiety, and pride you feel. Then imagine that after 18 days of adjusting to new family dynamics, your beloved spouse disappears. Frantically, you begin the process of searching for them in all the usual places before you begin to visit prisons, hoping the state can provide answers. Nobody will tell you anything. You are left alone to continue the search while doing your best to care for your newborn, but you refuse to give up hope. Eventually, you meet someone who is going through a similar experience. It makes sense to team up and look for answers together. The two of you grow close, and eventually, love blossoms. You get engaged, but your missing spouse is never far from your mind. Your new partner and their family provide the support and love you and your child need. You are as happy as possible under the circumstances, but the possibility of losing your new partner is never far from your mind; it is the perpetually present dark cloud that mars a sunny day. Then one day, it happens, your new partner does not come home, and days later their body is found dumped in a landfill with 13 bullets in their head. Why have you been made to suffer so much? Why again?

Although seemingly a work of fiction, this was Silvia Vera's reality. She tells the story of losing her first husband, Alfredo García, on January 18, 1975, and then her second husband, Pepe Carrasco, on September 8, 1986, in the first episode of *Una historia necesaria* (2017). She allows the audience access to her experience through a letter she has written to Alfredo. The

scenes accompanying the letter are dramatic recreations at first, but as the letter concludes, the scene transitions to an older woman, a middle-aged man, and two young women sitting on a couch in a living room. Silvia finishes her letter, “Dear Alfredo, I have not seen you again for 26 years but today I come to give you good news our Alfredito is going to be a dad of a little girl, that means, you are going to be a grandfather. As you can see, despite everything They did not manage to make you disappear.”<sup>3</sup> Before the episode ends, we are informed that Alfredo García received some measure of justice through the legal system: the pictures, names, occupations, and prison sentences of the five men convicted of his disappearance are shown. Justice for the murder of Pepe Carrasco is not addressed, his death a tragedy but secondary to the story of the resilience of Silvia, despite all of the horrors thrown at her by the massive human rights violations of the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. The choice to begin *Una historia necesaria* with Silvia’s story makes sense, the resilience of Silvia and her descendants exemplifies the resilience of innate Chilean democratic values that refuse(d) to be erased despite the efforts of the state. At the same time, the story portrays her present being defined by her past, suspended as a result of her mourning. In a country that has made official efforts to “close the door” on the past, we can expand Silvia’s suspension as a metaphor for the nation as a whole being trapped in a past not fully reckoned with (Bonner, 2013, p. 130; Stern, 2004).

### **Chapter Argument**

During Pinochet’s rule, state institutions weaponized doubt and fear, reframing political difference as an existential threat that justified deploying violent measures to resolve. Systematic use of violence like this leaves visible marks on a society's psyche and social fabric that metastasize as the instances of violence accumulate. In 1989, using survey and interview data

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<sup>3</sup> Querido Alfredo, hace 26 años que no te he vuelto a ver pero hoy vengo a darte una buena noticia nuestro Alfredito va a ser papá de una niñita, o sea, que vas a ser abuelo. Como ya ves, a pesar de todo no consiguieron desaparecerte.

from the ongoing civil war in El Salvador, Ignacio Martín-Baró, a psychologist, Jesuit priest, and victim of a Salvadoran death squad the same year this study was published (Gil, 2019), employed the concept of “psychosocial trauma” to describe the collateral psychological consequences –such as reduced interpersonal trust characterized by paranoia, an inability to separate propaganda from lived experience, and hopelessness brought about by a sense of lacking agency over one’s fate– that political violence will have, to varying degrees, on all members of society, even those who did not endure or witness acts of political violence (1989, pp. 14-17). His conceptualization accentuates that in the context of political violence, the members of a population may or may not be exposed to individual traumatic experiences. However, they are all exposed to a broader societal or collective trauma due to the societal origins of the violence (1989). Based on her clinical work and research in Chile, Elizabeth Lira Kornfield argued that the trauma suffered by Chileans because of the political violence during the Pinochet regime did not resolve itself with the transition to democracy and would have long-lasting effects on the population (1995).

This chapter seeks to illuminate how the official efforts at making the abuses of Pinochet legible, i.e., the official narrative, exemplified by Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, merged with complementary popular narratives surrounding the crimes of Pinochet that led to the reproduction of the official narrative through the stories presented in *Una historia necesaria*. I am arguing that the choices that Hernán Caffiero and his production team made regarding the stories that they felt needed to be told 27 years after the transition are indicative of a broader social effort to reproduce and reinforce a socially palatable construction of how Pinochet harmed Chilean society and whom his regime harmed. Moreover, I will argue that the series, like Silvia and Chilean society more generally, is trapped in a liminal state of transition, forced to keep

moving forward but never ceasing to look back; a concept echoed in the producers' decision to name the English translation of *Una historia necesaria*, *The Suspended Mourning*.

### **Rise and fall of Pinochet**

The socio-political history of Chile before, during, and after Pinochet has been explored in a far more substantive fashion by more established scholars.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, I do not explore the specific social movements, events, or the policies of the Frei and Allende administrations, the Pinochet regime, or the post-Pinochet administrations beyond the narrative acknowledged in the three official truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) reports published by the state. I focus primarily on the Rettig Report and the facts contained therein as portrayed in *Una historia necesaria*.

For analytical clarity, I believe it is useful to briefly describe the narrative of the rise and fall of Pinochet and the junta as it is officially established as fact in the TRC reports. The administration of President Frei began a series of social reforms despite opposition from business interests which were expanded and taken to new heights when the socialist candidate Salvador Allende and his leftist coalition secured a pluralist victory in the 1969 presidential elections. After a failed coup attempt earlier in the year, on September 11, 1973, General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte led a successful coup d'état and installed a military junta with himself at its head. Pinochet was formally installed as President of Chile in 1974.

Between 1973 and 1977, National Intelligence Directorate (DINA) agents and other government entities, including the carabineros (national police), carried out coordinated executions, torture, sexual assaults, detentions, and enforced disappearances of political against perceived enemies of the state. In the first four years of military rule, 30,385 Chileans were

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Moulian, 2002; Stern, 2004; & Valenzuela, 1978.

detained one or more times for an extended length of time, and 94% of those individuals were considered victims of torture. That equates to 82.2% of the official total number of detainees for the duration of the junta. Moreover, of the 3,065 officially recognized executions and forced disappearances, at least 1,853 occurred within the first four years of the regime (BBC, 2011; Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1993, pp. 9, 1124-1125; Comisión Valech I, 2004, pp. 205-213; Comisión Valech II, 2010, p. 40). Even with their legislative control and judicial influence, the junta was concerned enough about the illegality of these acts that in 1978, they decreed an amnesty law to preclude any possibility of future prosecutions of the perpetrators. Although the statistics demonstrate that most officially recognized violations occurred in the junta's early years, a significant number of violations, both recognized and unrecognized, occurred after the 1978 amnesty law. A new constitution was promulgated in 1980, which, among many changes designed to forestall any future resurgence of political opposition, legally extended the rule of President Pinochet until 1988, at which point a plebiscite would be held to determine if he would have his mandate extended for eight more years. Surprisingly, 55.99% of Chileans voted no, and preparations for a democratic transition began in earnest, culminating in the democratic 1989 presidential election. Of course, it is worth mentioning that if roughly 56% of a population voted to end a dictatorship, that means 44% of the population voted to keep the authoritarian government in place (Johnson et al., 2022).

### **The Transition**

On March 11, 1990, Patricio Aylwin Azócar took office as Chile's first democratically elected president since Allende. For a society steeped in the ideology of Chilean exceptionalism, an imaginary of Chile as a bastion of democracy, the rule of law, and stability within the volatile storm of Latin American politics, the sequence of events leading up to the coup and the



subsequent violence initiated by Pinochet was and is viewed as an aberration, a long (and to some, necessary) nightmare (Bonner, 2013; Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1993; Stern, 2004), but a nightmare that was put to rest with the return of democratic elections. Chilean society could put the past behind it and regain its place as the exception to the Latin American rule. During his campaign and after, Aylwin and other political elites made a concerted effort to demonstrate that this was a new Chile, or perhaps more accurately, a return to Chile in its natural state. A Chile that incorporated the beneficial neoliberal reforms of the “Chilean Miracle” with the moral legitimacy return of democracy and the rule of law. “With Patricio Aylwin’s election in 1990, Nelly Richard ([1988] 2004) notes, the ‘transition’ consolidated itself as a pervasive ideology that promoted democracy while institutionalising consensus in its desire to project onto the global scene images of Chile’s rebirth, sanitisation and transparency” (O’Byrne, 2011, p. 480). A large part of this transition ideology was the design and implementation of transitional justice mechanisms to demonstrate the willingness of the state to make itself accountable to its citizens. Aylwin and his political coalition created a justice truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) to investigate the worst human rights violations carried out during the years of military rule, guaranteeing “the whole truth, and justice to the extent possible,” i.e., accountability and transparency, to a point (Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1993, p. 15). There were severe political limitations to this commission and the re-democratized political institutions. General Pinochet remained the head of the armed forces in Chile. His supporters were guaranteed half of the positions on the commission, and “...warnings that the armed forces would not tolerate a repeal of the amnesty decree were repeatedly made before and after President Aylwin was inaugurated” (Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1993, p. 10; Johnson et al., 2022).

## **Transitional justice**

Transitional justice aims to provide a societal-level redress to instances of political violence and is a concept that has become more and more popular with stakeholders in transitional contexts once it became widely known in the 1980s after its implementation in post-authoritarian states in Latin America (David, 2017; De Greiff, 2012, 2014; Hamber, 2009; Vasallo, 2009). At its most inclusive, transitional justice can be conceptualized as a multi-mechanism attempt by a society to address political violence and/or large-scale human rights violations by recognizing the victims, facilitating a return of the rule of law, restoring community trust and trust in public institutions, and promoting societal reconciliation (David, 2017; De Greiff, 2012, 2014; Hamber, 2009). “Given its historical foundations and its current association with broader rule of law reform programmes, transitional justice is oriented towards laying the foundations for a legitimized, or relegitimized, democratic nation-state” (Balint et al., 2014, p.201).

There are several transitional justice mechanisms, including (but not limited to) truth and reconciliation commissions (truth-sharing), reparations policies, removal of perpetrators of violence from official positions (vetting), criminal prosecutions, and creation of official memorials (David, 2017; De Greiff 2012; Hamber, 2009; Kornfield, 1995; Pham et al., 2010; Vasallo, 2009). In his comparative analysis of the truth and reconciliation commissions in Chile and El Salvador, Vasallo argues that they provide a flexible way to supply a measure of justice, provide closure, and begin the process of building trust in the institutions and intentions of the transitional government, particularly when the political and/or legislative context creates concerns over the efficacy or viability of criminal proceedings, like the situation in Chile. Moreover, he makes a case for effective truth and reconciliation commissions serving as a

harbinger for future efforts to rebuild the fabric of a society torn by political violence (2009). All these efforts require a methodology to determine which sort of violent acts qualify as political violence, to investigate accusations of violence, to identify and recognize victims, and instruments to provide redress. They “distill a violent past into a manageable, lucid story, one that portrays terror as an inversion of a democratic society” (Grandin, 2005, pp. 47-48). In other words, state-sanctioned human rights violations packaged in a manner amenable to the conflation of democratic governance and an absence of political violence.

### **Making Things Legible**

Recognizing and remembering state violence requires a conscious effort to make things legible, a process of constructing victimhood and crafting the narratives that archetypal victims fit within. This process requires defining certain kinds of violence as constituting state violence (thus privileging certain victims) and ignoring other types of violence that don't fit within that definition (thus erasing other victims). James C. Scott uses the analogy of map making to describe state efforts to simplify or "make legible" complex natural and social phenomena in his book *Seeing Like a State*. A map only provides the details that the mapmaker believes are essential, and even the details featured are depicted in a simplified and abstract form. Likewise, state efforts to make natural and social processes legible necessitates focusing on only the variables of interest and simplifying them to make them useful tools for obtaining the state's goals. Scott generally limits his analysis of state endeavors for legibility to how they apply to "high-modern" development policies and programs (1998). However, the logic of making things legible applies to state-led transitional justice efforts as well. According to Scott, "...there are virtually no other facts for the state than those that are contained in documents standardized for that purpose" (1998, p. 83). The phenomena in question are defined and categorized in these

documents, and experiences that do not fit within the definition or taxonomies are subsequently ignored or stripped of the idiosyncrasies that make them harder to “see.” In the eyes of the state, what is not legible is not seen.

They produced a narrative of violence in order to come to terms with the abuses of the dictatorship, in which they stated how events happened, acknowledged victims of human rights violations and specified various forms of reparation (symbolic and material) for victims. According to the TCs, to be recognized as a victim of human rights violations, political motivations had to be demonstrated and the crime had to have been committed by agents of the state or people in its service. These definitions were important, as they circumscribed what kinds of violence the state should investigate, compensate or clarify (Jara et al., 2018, p 488).

For the purposes of state-led transitional justice in Chile, the TRC reports were the repositories of the “facts” of the violence carried out and the identities of the victims. The reports detailed the criteria for human rights violations that the commission deemed worthy of recognition and the instances of violations that fit within the criteria. Recognition carries tangible material consequences, officially recognized victims and their families are provided with financial reparations and free access to healthcare services, including mental health care (Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1993; U.N. CED, 2019). Moreover, official recognition has powerful symbolic consequences. For family members of victims of enforced disappearances, recognition in a TRC theoretically provides a measure of closure.

In addition to defining the types of state violence and human rights violations to acknowledge and investigate, transitional justice efforts also define the points in time when victims can start and stop being “seen.”

Transitional justice is premised on the idea of a ‘point of rupture,’ a specific point of change from violence and oppression to a ‘new dawn.’ The model assumes a moment of political change and upheaval, an overt change of regime to democracy. This, in turn, leads to a certain understanding of the past, the present and the future as discrete and sequential (Balint et al., 2014, p. 200).

Left unsaid, but implied in this quote, is that the inverse is also true; another point of rupture occurred when the oppressive regime came to power, a “new dusk.” Victims of political violence that do not fall within this specified period of visibility are relegated to being victims of circumstance rather than victims of massive human rights violations at the hands of the state because it is assumed that cases of violations occurring both “before” and “after” the oppressive regime, took place under a (presumably) democratic government where the rule of law was in place. “Truth commissions sequester the “violence of foundation”—transmuting the atrocities of military regimes into touchstones on which to affirm a new liberal order—while concealing the “violence of conservation” that maintains that order, which in the cases discussed here mean the ongoing power and impunity of the military” (Grandin, 2005, p. 64). According to the official narrative in Chile, the initial point of (complete) rupture takes place on September 11, 1973, and the final point of rupture occurs on March 11, 1990. However, over the course of the next chapter, I will show that the real point of rupture, the actual fall of a new dusk in Chile, is not September 11, 1973, but rather the birth of the polity when settler-colonial violence began to be carried out against the Indigenous people inhabiting the territories that the settlers christened Chile. In Latin America (and elsewhere), linear time is not the only form of temporality at work. The past and present bump up against each other in unexpected ways, demonstrating what Stern terms “the tricks of time” (1996).

## Legible Victims

The first TRC known as the Rettig Report, focused solely on cases of disappearances, executions, and other murders that could be explicitly linked to counterinsurgent activities carried out by the Pinochet regime. Each episode of *Una historia necesaria* begins in the same fashion, with credits showcasing the funding organization and the production companies<sup>5</sup>, followed by the quote, “This series is based on real life stories occurred in Chile during the civil-military dictatorship supported in the Rettig report, in judicial documents and in the testimonies of relatives of Disappeared Detainees” (2017).<sup>6</sup> We the audience, are reminded that as terrible as the story we are about to witness might be, it is based on real life, as recorded in the Rettig Report. These docudrama episodes and the victims' stories are legitimate not only due to the testimony of their relatives and loved ones, but because they have been officially acknowledged and documented, they have been made legible to the state and packaged as a narrative fit for public consumption. A point worth mentioning is that enforced disappearances are the hallmark of the Pinochet regime’s violent legacy.

Disappearances are perhaps the cruelest form of government abuse, causing agony not only to the detainees but to their relatives as well. Detainees are cut off from the outside world, deprived of any legal protection, and subject to the whim of their captors. Most often they are tortured and then secretly killed. The relatives of detainees, meanwhile, are unable to ascertain their fate-whether and where they are being held, whether they are even dead or alive. Usually, the relatives are kept in the dark long after the detainee has

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<sup>5</sup> Recall from the introduction that the National Television Counsel of Chile (CNTV) funded the series, and it was produced via a collaboration between Tridi 3D Films Company and The Chilean Film School.

<sup>6</sup> Esta serie está basada en historias reales ocurridas en Chile durante la dictadura cívico-militar, respaldadas en el informe Rettig, en documentos judiciales y en los testimonios de familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos.

been killed and are thus unable to start life anew or even to deal with the legal practicalities of a death in the family (Brody & Gonzalez, 2007, p. 366).

The widespread use of disappearances as an instrument of government terror contributed to the formation of a “culture of terror” in Chile (Taussig, 1984). As German Gunert tells the audience in *Álvaro Barrios*, the seventh episode of *Una historia necesaria*, “The dictatorship forced the majority of Chileans to live in terror, to look down, to feel ashamed of ourselves” (2017).<sup>7</sup>

The logic underpinning the creation of a culture of terror has its roots in colonialism, and I will explore this history as well as its reimagining during the Pinochet era in more detail in the next chapter. In the eighth episode of *Una historia*, the audience is confronted with the tangible damage that disappearing someone does to the loved ones of the disappeared, with the narrator informing the audience, “My friend Max Santelices died officially on February 18, 2007, but he had died long before. Max really died the day that his beloved wife, Reinalda del Carmen, disappeared pregnant to never come back” (2017).<sup>8</sup> Later in the episode we are provided the date that Reinalda del Carmen Pereira became a *detenido desaparecido*, a disappeared detainee or “disappeared,” December 15, 1976.<sup>9</sup> Max died 17 years after Chile’s transition back to a democracy, ostensibly from a psychic wound inflicted by the state 14 years prior to the transition. Max died without knowing that his wife and unborn child were beaten, electrocuted, and eventually killed with a cyanide injection. His friend asks herself if Max would have liked to have known these details before his death, and she concludes yes, “probably Max had preferred

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<sup>7</sup> La dictadura obligó a la mayoría de los chilenos a vivir en el terror, a bajar la mirada, a sentir vergüenza de nosotros mismos....

<sup>8</sup> “Mi amigo Max Santelices murió oficialmente el 18 de febrero de 2007 pero él ya había muerto mucho antes. Max murió realmente el día que su amada esposa, Reinalda del Carmen, desapareció embarazada para nunca más volver.

<sup>9</sup> In this thesis, I provide the English translations of many Spanish-language sources. I chose not to italicize the Spanish as a small gesture against “Othering” the voices from non-anglophone sources.

to know the truth. Well, although painful, it would have finished with the anguish, with the suspended mourning”.<sup>10</sup>

A reoccurring motif in the series is the number of episodes that feature pregnant women being disappeared. In addition to Reinalda, three other episodes feature female victims who were disappeared while pregnant: four episodes out of a total of 16. Taken at face value, this could be seen as an indictment of the objective inhumanity of the Pinochet regime's actions, as demonstrated through its willingness to break relatively universal taboos regarding violence against pregnant women. On a deeper level, it could also be read as an indictment of the regime's activities that intentionally sought to eradicate the politics of (a different) futurity for the nation via literal feticide. Erasing the potentiality of a different, and thus unacceptable (to supporters of the junta) conceptualization of Chileanness replicates the ghastly logic of “a final solution.” This brutal strategy of erasing carriers of an undesirable – in this case foreign, Marxist taint – trait *and* the future generations that would hold this trait harkens back to – indeed, draws its logic from – the ultimate aim of the settler-colonial project, the genocide – either culturally through assimilation or literally through physical eradication - of Indigenous people (undesirable for their claims to land) in settler-colonial states, known as the “logic of elimination” (Wolfe, 2006). At the same time, it is important to note again that the filmmakers make no effort to represent Native people. I suggest that the portrayal of the logics of elimination without acknowledging the existence of Indigenous peoples is yet one more illustration of the coloniality of Chilean society. Hernán Caffiero, perhaps recognizing post factum the role that *Una historia necesaria* played in reproducing the logics of elimination, took advantage of the platform he was given when accepting the Best Short Series award at the International Emmy Awards to bring attention to the

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<sup>10</sup> probablemente Max hubiese preferido saber la verdad pues, aunque dolorosa, hubiese terminado con la angustia, con el duelo suspendido.



ongoing struggle of the Mapuche and the murder of Camilo Catrillanca, “To Camilo Catrillanca and his family, and to all the peñis who are fighting in La Araucanía” (CNN Chile, 2018).<sup>11</sup>

Chile's history of employing a logic of elimination against undesirables, starting with the Indigenous population within its self-proclaimed borders, particularly the Mapuche, is the next chapter's subject. However, it is essential to understand that the logic of disappearing "subversive" elements did not begin or end with Pinochet. In Silvia Vera's letter, she acknowledges that she interprets the state's actions as an attempt at erasure while simultaneously revealing the ineffectiveness of this solution when she appears with her son and granddaughters and tells her partner that the state tried, but failed, to erase you. It is a scene designed to show the resilience of “true” Chilean exceptionalism, seemingly so inherent to the country’s identity that not even disappearances and feticide can erase it.

While the first episode is a story of a private resilience, the last episode tells the story of Anita (Ana) González de Recabarren, who became an activist after the state took two of her sons, her pregnant daughter-in-law, an unborn grandchild, and her husband. She states that it was her work and being introduced to other activists suffering like her that gave her the strength to continue her fight. At the end, she articulates her commitment to, and the necessity for, an unwavering crusade to continue the fight for justice until justice has been had for all the families of victims.

I lost four loved ones, but I had to remain being a mother, I had to turn grief into hope and start looking for ours, that's how we went out to the street and started to fight. They destroyed many families, but they forgot of a very beautiful word, love, they never believed that for love we were going to resist and grow. I was never alone, I met a lot of

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<sup>11</sup> Peñis is a word in the Mapudungun language of the Mapuche meaning “brothers and sisters” (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 2012).

people in the same situation that gave me the strength necessary to continue, I know that we are not gonna find them alive, but we survived to give testimony, so that this never happens again in Chile. And if the bodies of Manuel, my children, my daughter-in-law and my unborn grandson appear, I would continue to struggle to know the truth. While there is still one single disappeared and I have strength, I will continue looking for justice. My tears I turned them into fight, but I wanna cry, I want to cry a lot, but when we know the truth, when there is justice. And if I do not get to cry, others will cry for me.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to “enemy” political activists (episodes six, seven, ten, fifteen, and sixteen), priests (episode two), professors (episode thirteen), bureaucrats (episode eleven), journalists (episodes one and fourteen), politicians (episodes one and three), members of the security apparatus (episode four), relatives of members of the security apparatus (episodes nine and twelve), and even hard-working farmers (episode five) were all fair game for disappearance. It seems that the series is trying to say that the story of Pinochet’s Chile is a “necessary” one because it could have been any of “us” and therefore was all of “us.” At the same time, this logic applies to the resilience, the acts of defiance, and the commitment to activism showcased in the series that ultimately led to the reemergence of Chilean democracy, and Chilean exceptionalism. The message is that we all suffered, but all fought back and found strength in one another, that

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<sup>12</sup> Perdí a cuatros seres queridos, pero tuve que seguir siendo madre, tuve que convertir la pena en esperanza y empezar a buscar a los nuestros, fue así como salimos a la calle y comenzamos a luchar. Destruyeron a muchas familias, pero ellos se olvidaron de una palabra muy hermosa, del amor, nunca creyeron que por amor nosotros íbamos a resistir y crecer. Nunca estuve sola, conocí a mucha gente en la misma situación que me dieron la fuerza necesaria para seguir, Yo sé que vivos no los vamos a encontrar, pero sobrevivimos para dar testimonio, para que nunca más suceda esto en Chile. Y si aparecieran los cuerpos de Manuel, mis hijos, mi nuera y de mi nieto que venía en camino, seguiría luchando por saber la verdad. Mientras exista un solo desaparecido y tenga fuerzas, seguiré buscando la justicia. Mis lágrimas las convertí en lucha, pero yo quiero llorar, quiero llorar a mares, pero cuando se sepa la verdad, cuando haya justicia. Y si no alcanzo a llorar, otros llorarán por mí

Chilean national unity and exceptionalism are unbreakable. As a society, Chile will continue seeking justice for victims like those portrayed in *Una historia necesaria*.

### **Conclusion**

In his (nearly) 17-year rule, Pinochet oversaw the systematic detention, torture, and in many cases, murder of thousands of citizens. This institutionalized violence created a culture of terror in Chile, where anyone was a conceivable victim *and* a potential informant. Despite this culture of terror, there was activism, and eventually, Pinochet was forced to step down as president. With the return of democracy came calls to provide justice for all the victims of the junta; to accomplish a successful transition, transitional justice was required. The scope of the abuses carried out by the very institutions whose role was purportedly to protect citizens could not be easily swept under the rug. Perhaps more importantly, Chilean exceptionalism needed to be re-established, but the articulation of this exceptionalism placed more value on stability than justice. The abuses of the regime and the victims of that abuse had to be made legible in a way that would not endanger the newly reinstated democracy; policymakers decided that a compromise had to be made in the way transitional justice in Chile would be implemented. Therefore, the first TRC, Rettig, focused solely on the most heinous of violence, murder/execution and disappearances, actions which even the most ardent Pinochet supporter would have difficulty justifying. Moreover, the report framed much of the actions of junta in a sympathetic light, the coup was a drastic response to an existential crisis.

In so doing, it produced an analysis that understood terror not as a result of state decomposition, a failure of the institutions and morals that guarantee rights and afford protection, but rather as a component of state formation, as the foundation of the

military's plan of national stabilization through a return to constitutional rule (Grandin, 2005, p. 50).

As Joanna Crow explains, “A complicated military conflict does not fit with the dominant narrative of political stability, otherwise known as Chilean exceptionalism in Latin America” (2013, p. 25). Interestingly, Crow is discussing a conflict known as “The Pacification of Araucanía” that took place roughly a century prior to the coup with this quote, but it just as easily could be applied to the Pinochet regime’s “war” against guerilla forces. In the next chapter, we will explore how the dominant narrative of stability and democratic rule known as Chilean exceptionalism is complicated by a broader historical frame that illuminates how that stability is a facade that obfuscates the pervasive violence required to maintain its illusion.

## **Chapter Two: Settler's counterinsurgency**

*The Spanish grabbed the land through fire and bloodshed; and later, Chileans did the same, imposing a regime of comunidades [communities] . . . thousands and thousands died; their women were raped, their rucas [traditional thatched huts] burned, expelled from their dominions to the cordillera or to the infertile soils in order to openly and ruthlessly privilege foreigners and Chilean colonists.*

*-Antonio Mulato Ñunque, 1971 (Pairican & Urrutia, 2021, p. 3)*

### **Birth of Chile**

The birth of the Chilean begins with the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the subsequent dispossession of Indigenous land. However, despite several attempts, the Spanish were unable to conquer the region to the south of the Bío Bío River – called Wallmapu by present-day Mapuche and named Araucanía by the Spanish – that was controlled by the Mapuche people. Eventually, the Spanish crown legally recognized the autonomy of the Mapuche and their land via the signing of several treaties that named “the Bío-Bío River as the official border between the Kingdom of Chile and Mapuche territory” (Crow, 2017, p. 285). As a result, the population under the nominal control of the Spanish crown was confined predominately to the Central Valley, a region spanning roughly from the modern Chilean border with Peru to the Bío-Bío River. Like other Spanish colonies in the Americas, the population of the Kingdom of Chile lived within racialized hierarchical social systems that generally afforded more privilege to native-born Spaniards, or peninsulares, followed by individuals of “pure” Spanish ancestry who were born in the Americas or criollos, then mestizos, a broad category that included individuals of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry, Indigenous people, and enslaved Africans.

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, colonial elites, predominately criollos, in Chile began agitating for more self-governance. Eventually, on September 18, 1810, a governing body known as the First Government Junta of Chile issued a proclamation that Chile's political

status was now an autonomous republic within the Kingdom of Spain. This proclamation heralded the beginning of an open conflict with royalist forces that ended eight years later with the formal Chilean declaration of independence on February 12, 1818 (Collier & Sater, 1996; Johnson et al., 2022). However, independence from Spain did not entail the cessation of violence in Chile. Now the inherently bloody process of state formation and consolidation could begin in earnest. Chilean exceptionalism was birthed in this period but unimpeachably stands outside of it. Careful examination of contemporary accounts illustrates that Chile's exceptionalism is based largely on its willingness to deploy extreme violence on those deemed to be standing in the way of Chile's rightful destiny (Crow, 2017; Di Giminiani et al., 2021).

**Archives in Conversation: A Long Arc of Counter-Insurgency** This chapter will focus on how the processes employed by the newly independent Republic of Chile to construct a national identity are redeployed by the state in response to perceived existential threats. I will stage a conversation between key documents of a legal archive (the 1833 constitution, Decreto Ley 1) and specific episodes from a twenty-first-century visual archive, the docu-drama *Una Historia Necessary* to demonstrate the “family resemblances” between the logics and security apparatuses that underpin settler counter-insurgent violence against Indigenous groups in the nineteenth century with those used to target “subversive” groups within the settler population. This extension of counter-insurgent violence towards settlers is justified through rhetoric that portrays the target group as an alien influence corrupting society and threatening Chilean values and identity, much as Indigenous populations who refused to assimilate were subject to discourse that portrayed them as hindering Chile's ascension to modernity. Through this conversation, I will provide evidence to argue that the imaginary of Chilean exceptionalism is only made possible by the continued deployment of settler colonial violence.

## Settler Colonialism and the Logic of Elimination

The goal at the heart of all settler-colonial projects is the permanent expropriation of land or territoriality at the expense of Indigenous inhabitants (Castellanos, 2017; Wolfe, 2006). To achieve this goal, settlers employ a logic of elimination to systematically eradicate Indigenous groups. However, the methods employed by settler colonial powers and their successor states to carry out this logic of elimination are context-specific and take place over varying lengths of time. Wolfe importantly points out that in all cases “settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event.” It is a violent structure, “settler colonialism destroys to replace” (2006, p. 388).” The logic of elimination employs a dichotomy of civilized and barbarian/savage to delineate land controlled by the settlers and/or cooperative Indigenous groups from land still in the hands of Indigenous peoples who resisted the dispossession of their lands.

In the Americas, the United States and Canada offer textbook examples of what we could call the Anglophone variety of settler colonialist logics of elimination that relied heavily on a very literal understanding of elimination and dispossession through liberal use of various combinations of physical genocide, enclosure or segregation, and various policies implemented to “kill the Indian, save the man,” i.e., commit cultural genocide and assimilate the “saved” populations (Wolfe, 2006).<sup>13</sup> Wolfe goes on to point out that, “Settler colonialism is inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal” (2006, p. 387).

These logics of elimination were also employed in Latin America. However, scholars of state formation in Latin America have traditionally emphasized the prevalence of the ideology of

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<sup>13</sup> The infamous “Indian Schools” in the United States are an archetypal example of systematic efforts by states to commit cultural genocide. Indigenous children were abducted from their families and placed in boarding schools. At these boarding schools, the children were forced to adopt Western dress, speak in English, and attend a school with a curriculum aimed at assimilating them into American society. They were punished for speaking in their native language, for partaking in any Indigenous cultural practices, and in many cases for attempting to contact family members (Pember, 2019).

mestizaje or the generational process of interracial and intercultural mixing so that (almost) everyone has some Indigenous ancestry (some much more than others), but racialized social structures continue to privilege those who are predominantly of European ancestry (Castellanos, 2017, p. 779). In Chile, where a large proportion of the population considered themselves predominantly European, a variant of mestizaje became known as criollismo.

Criollismo, the national version of mestizaje, has tended to depict Chile as a cohesive nation centred on a mixed-race subject known as criollo/a. Settler ideologies and criollismo coexist in such a way that indigenous rights can be discursively denied by evoking inter-racial national cohesion at the same time as settlers' key role in nation-making is openly celebrated (Di Giminiani et al., 2021, p. 87).

This ideology of mestizaje or criollismo reflects Wolfe's point that the eliminatory nature of settler colonialism does not require intentional genocide of Indigenous populations on the part of the settlers. Moreover, mestizaje or criollismo provided the successor states of former Spanish colonies with a claim to rule over a territory that somewhat paradoxically draws legitimacy from settler-colonial logics of *terra nullius* and Indigenous claims to the land. The construction of an imaginary of these new states as inclusive communities (albeit discursively absent of Indigeneity) formed through mestizaje provides a sharp contrast to the United States, where a more explicit regime of white settler supremacy discourse was the justification for the territorial expansion of the state (Wade, 2005, p. 241).

### **Creation of Chilean identity**

After declaring independence, the authorities in the new state began the task of constructing a Chilean national identity and consolidating territorial boundaries. Indigenous groups within the state's borders were provided with an opportunity to subsume their native



identity (as much as possible within a racialized system) and assimilate into the new criollo-led society. Assimilation into Chilean citizenship offered the benefit of civil rights and private property protected by the rule of law at the expense of Indigenous identity and communal land claims. Patrick Wolfe aptly describes this bargain as being Faustian in nature, “Here, in essence, is assimilation’s Faustian bargain—have our settler world, but lose your Indigenous soul. Beyond any doubt, this is a kind of death” (2006, p. 397). The socio-political construction of a Chilean identity was quite successful in the Central Valley region as much of the Chilean population already self-identified as mestizos by the time of independence. As Postero et al. note, “Compared to its northern neighboring countries, Perú and Bolivia, Chile was considered a ‘white’ mestizo nation and indigeneity was largely eliminated from consideration in public policies on both right and left of the political spectrum” (2018, p. 205).

This homogenizing narrative of a nation populated by mestizos was complicated by the continued cultural and political autonomy of the Mapuche south of the Bío-Bío River well after the formation of the independent Republic of Chile.<sup>14</sup> Per an 1819 proclamation by Bernardo O’Higgins (the first leader of independent Chile), the republic considered the Mapuche Chilean citizens in a formal legal sense, *and* their land was considered an indivisible part of Chile (Ramay, 2009, p.16). The 1833 constitution made the following same territorial claim regarding

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<sup>14</sup> According to Chile’s 2017 census, 2,185,792 Chileans identify as Indigenous, roughly 12.8% of the population. This thesis has focused on the Mapuche primarily because Mapuche make up nearly 1,800,000 of those individual who identify as Indigenous (~80%), and because the Mapuche struggle against dispossession has the most available data. However, there are nine other Indigenous groups who live in what is now Chile, the Aymara (located primarily in the north along the border with Bolivia), Rapanui (located primarily on Rapa Nui or Easter Island), Atacameño or Likan Antai (located primarily in the Antofagasta Region), Quechua (located primarily in the Antofagasta Region), Colla (located primarily in the Atacama Region), Chango (located primarily along the northern coast), Diaguita (located primarily in the Huasco Valley), Kawésqar (located primarily in the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic Region), and Yagán (located primarily in Magallanes Region) peoples. Of those nine groups, the Aymara are the second largest in Chile with around 156,000 individuals, and the Diaguita are made up of roughly 88,000 individuals. Finally, it is important to note that the locations provided are a small fraction of the traditional lands of these Natives (IWGIA, n.d.; Marca Chile, 2021).

the state's borders: "Chilean sovereignty extends from the Atacama Desert in the north to Cape Horn in the south and from the Andes Mountains in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west, including the Chiloé archipelago and the islands of Juan Fernández, Mocha and Santa María" (Chile, 1833, Cap 1 Art 1).<sup>15</sup> Despite the republic's claimed sovereignty over their land, the Mapuche continued to exercise de facto sovereignty in a manner that split the Chilean-governed territory into two non-contiguous enclaves.

Joanna Crow opens her 2013 book, *The Mapuche in Modern Chile: A Cultural History* with a quote from a Polish immigrant to Chile, Ignacio Domeyko, dated 1845, that is demonstrative of the incongruency between the territory the republic claimed sovereignty over and the territory that it exercised de facto sovereignty over when he showed his consternation that a 'free and sovereign nation'—was divided in two by "a handful of people [who remained] submerged in barbarism" (p. 1). Crow goes on to describe how official maps "of the period often portrayed Chile as a long, continuous whole, but most of the territory between Concepción and Valdivia was controlled by the Mapuche."

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<sup>15</sup> ARTÍCULO 1. ° El territorio de Chile se estiende desde el Desierto de Atacama hasta el Cabo de Hornos, y desde las Cordilleras de los Andes hasta el Mar pacífico, comprendiendo el Archipiélago de Chiloé, todas las Islas adyacentes, y las de Juan Fernandez.



Figure 2 Map of Mapuche territory (Stratfor & Solis, 2017).

Moreover, non-Mapuche attempting to travel to Valdivia from Concepción either had to make the journey by boat or obtain approval from the Mapuche to travel overland through the autonomous Mapuche territory (p. 1). General acknowledgement of this autonomy by Chilean citizenry and officials is visible discursively in the colloquial name used to describe the Wallmapu region, “La Frontera (the frontier)”, a name which is still used today to describe the territory (Di Giminiani et al., 2021, p. 88). Ignacio Domeyko’s description of the Mapuche as “a handful of people submerged in barbarism” is illustrative of the rhetoric that was becoming increasingly more common in public discourse in Chile during the mid-19th century particularly

as settlers began to encroach further and further into Wallmapu. The savagery of the Mapuche was holding Chileans back from their rightful march to modernity.

The diplomatic and military prowess that allowed the Mapuche to retain their sovereignty despite the efforts of the Spanish crown and then the early Chilean republic was a source of tension in the intertwined processes of the construction of a Chilean identity and the project of territorial consolidation. In 1852, the republic officially administered Wallmapu through the newly christened Province of Arauco. However, this act was more symbolic than anything else. “As the Argentine writer and statesman Domingo Faustino Sarmiento commented in 1854, Arauco (or Araucanía) could not be conceived as a province of Chile ‘if Chile means a country where her flag is flown and her laws are obeyed’” (Crow, 2013, p. 1). In the context of the ideology of mestizaje/criollismo as a foundation for national identity, Mapuche independence during the colonial period was framed as an ancestral source of the virility and military fortitude that their criollo successors demonstrated in the war for independence (Larrain, 2006). However, by refusing the republic’s “gift” of an offer to assimilate, the Mapuche were demonstrating their innate barbarism, a trait that required their extermination for the good of the state, “No longer part of the national spirit, the mid-century Mapuche were seen as distinct from their ancestors, ‘enemies of civilization and progress’ that needed to be eliminated in ‘guerra a muerte’ (war to the death)” (Sauer, 2022, p. 8). The destiny preordained by Chilean exceptionalism demanded that obstacles be removed by any means necessary.

### **Counter-insurgent Logic**

According to the U.S. Army, counterinsurgency consists of all “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.” Counterinsurgency then is a concerted effort at the state level to defend and

maintain the status quo from subversive action” (Wax, 2010, p. 153). Counter-insurgent logic is, therefore, the system of reasoning that undergirds a counterinsurgency campaign. It is important to note that for a settler-colonial state like Chile, the status quo is an ongoing political project of erasure and violence aimed at naturalizing the dispossession of Indigenous land. The status quo desired by the state in the case of “the Pacification of Araucanía” never existed in actuality.

In the previous section, I demonstrated that the settler society understood that the Mapuche retained control over Wallmapu/Araucanía before and after Chilean independence. However, in official discourse - like the 1833 Constitution in which Article One (of the original version) stated that “Chilean sovereignty extends from the Atacama Desert in the north to Cape Horn in the south” - Wallmapu was a *de jure and de facto* part of the Republic of Chile (Chile). To the settler-colonial state, Indigenous resistance to becoming “civilized” is an act of rebellion against the legitimate, sovereign authority of the (settler) state (Sen, 2022). “The state, however, regarded the occupation of Araucanía as a legitimate takeover of a territory that belonged to Chile” (Waldman, 2012, pp. 57-58). Moreover, the application of a politics of difference to construct a civilized/savage dichotomization creates a justification for the official deployment of violence in response to any resistance that would be outside the bounds of acceptable state behavior if conducted against “civilized” individuals (Hevia, 2010, p. 171). The Mapuche were “savages” or “barbarians” whose resistance to ceding control of their land was an affront to Chilean sovereignty, stifled economic development, the drive towards modernization, and, ultimately, created an existential security threat to the stability of the state (Grajales, 2013; Nahuelpán et al., 2021). These “savages,” through their rejection of the state’s authority and, by extension, civilization, were therefore not subject to the rights and protections provided through the rule of law to a civilized society. As Sauer’s quote illustrates, in Chile’s political and popular

discourse at the time, the resistance of the Mapuche to the dispossession of their land was construed as a threat to the state that could only be resolved through their elimination.

In a settler-colonial political context, the logic of elimination is predicated on the ability of settlers to employ counter-insurgent logic to justify heinous acts to secure security in the face of resistance by Indigenous groups. However, counter-insurgent logics underpin state responses to perceived sources of insecurity well after the formation of the state is complete. Pinochet used counter-insurgent logic as part of a discursive strategy of dichotomizing “enemies of the state,” i.e., Allende supporters, regime critics, and other undesirables, from loyal Chileans to justify acts of violence against the supposed “enemies of the state.” By framing opponents of the regime as un-Chilean and beholden to foreign powers, they were transformed in the public imaginary (at least the public who were initially supportive of or ambivalent about the Pinochet regime) into a national security threat that justly compelled the state to employ extrajudicial means to combat. “The other justification was a distorted concept of national security, which as a supreme value was regarded as being above ethics. This amounted to a revival of what used to be called *raisons d'etat*: once again in extreme cases (which government authorities could themselves appraise) the rights of individuals could be violated by reason of an alleged general interest” (Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1993, p. 78).

The use of the discourse of pacification is a hallmark of counterinsurgency campaigns. It seeks to transform the nature of the violence from aggressive to protective, thus justifying the use of force to eliminate or suppress political activism, i.e., an insurgency. “The strategy of pacification has been around as long as the nasty services it justifies have appealed to ambitious occupiers” (Jacobsen, 2010, p. 180). A key component to the longevity of the strategy of pacification is the tactical flexibility afforded to counterinsurgency forces in achieving the

strategic aim of suppressing political activism. Therefore, the manner in which a pacification strategy is carried out may differ. However, all forms of pacification share a broad goal of suppressing a restive population, and they use different combinations of tactics to achieve it. Kurt Jacobsen bluntly states, “You do not pacify criminal gangs or bands of malcontents; you pacify entire populations” (2010, p. 180).

Ludwig Wittgenstein devised the concept of “family resemblance” to categorize and make comparisons of phenomena that do not all share one (or more) common features but do fit into a “family.” In his construction of this concept, Wittgenstein used the example of games to demonstrate how the seemingly disparate activities that make up every conceivable game share different combinations of features with each other and are all members of the “game family” (Manser, 1967, pp. 210-211). I am using the concept of family resemblance in terms of pacifications and counterinsurgencies. Pacification in 19<sup>th</sup> century Americas generally entailed the genocide of “rebellious” populations, as seen in “The Pacification of Araucanía” in Chile or the “Indian Wars” in the United States (Wolfe, 2006). The destruction of most of the population renders the threat the survivors pose relatively insignificant. Meanwhile, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite the increased capacity for destruction that counterinsurgent forces possessed, violence was deployed in a more surgical sense in order to foster a “culture of terror” and thereby demobilize activists through intimidation rather than brute force alone, as seen in South America with Operation Condor the 1970s and 1980s (Tremlett, 2020).<sup>16</sup> Despite the differences in tactics over the centuries, there is a family resemblance between them as members of the “family” of pacification. In Chile, the description of the war of conquest of Wallmapu as “The Pacification

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<sup>16</sup> Operation Condor was a US-backed network of eight right-wing military dictatorships in South America, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay, who suppressed political opponents (particularly leftists), used similar methods of disappearing people, and cooperated to attack opponents across national borders (Tremlett, 2020).

of Araucanía” is a perfect example of legitimization efforts where the Chilean state deployed military forces to appease “disputes between early settlers and native populations” rather than to conquer a rebellious population (Di Giminiani et al., 2021, p. 88). Care was taken to avoid bellicose language and emphasize the peaceful nature of the military’s presence in the official discourse of the time concerning the ongoing occupation. One Chilean military commander went as far as to claim that they achieved the occupation of Araucanía “without spilling a drop of blood” (Crow, 2013, pp. 26-29).

### **Colonial Mirror**

Despite the elites’ attempts at constructing a narrative of peaceful integration, the reality was much bloodier. From the start of the “Pacification” in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, through the lulls in conflict, until its “end” in 1883, newspapers of the time were full of lurid accounts of Mapuche warriors torturing, maiming, and killing soldiers (including the wounded) and more outrageously, civilians. Sensationalist media reports of insurgent misconduct are not a new phenomenon, but testimony from Mapuche and non-Mapuche interlocutors more or less corroborates the newspaper accounts (Crow, 2013, pp. 30). Contemporary accounts of the conduct of Chilean soldiers and settlers also belie a bloodless narrative. In fact, they tell a story of a level of viciousness that was beyond the pale, even for Indigenous victims; a newspaper report from 1869 “described the war being waged “against the savages” as an “inhumane, imprudent, and immoral war that brings no glory to our soldiers” (Crow, 2013, p. 33).

Michael Taussig uses the concept of a colonial mirror to describe the process through which the abhorrent violence necessary to uphold a repressive colonial regime is naturalized through the dehumanization of the victims *and* the resulting dehumanization of the perpetrator. “This reciprocating yet distorted mimesis has been and continues to be of great importance in the



construction of colonial culture-the colonial mirror which reflects back onto the colonists the barbarity of their own social relations, but as imputed to the savage or evil figures they wish to colonize” (Taussig, 1984, p. 495).

The concept of a colonial mirror effect extends to participants in counterinsurgency campaigns; in the case of “the Pacification of Araucanía” evidence of the colonial mirror is seen in the instinctive recoiling of “civilized” society from the inhuman behavior of the Chilean soldiers. However, the commanders of the occupation were aware of the nature of the violence that a successful occupation required.

Because of the type of lands controlled by the savage Araucanians, and the fact that they can easily avoid or escape the clutches of our soldiers, the latter are left with no other option than the worst and most repugnant of actions. That is to say they burn down the [Indians’] farms, kidnap their families, steal their livestock, and [then] destroy everything that cannot be taken away (Crow, 2013, p. 33).

Likewise, according to the Rettig Report, the Pinochet regime indoctrinated members of the security forces into accepting their dehumanization in order to preserve the welfare of the state and society. It is worth quoting the Report at length.

Counterinsurgency must confront guerrilla warfare with its own methods lest it place itself at a disadvantage, for the fundamental values of the nation, the state, society, and so forth are at stake. Counterinsurgency doctrine was to one degree or another reflected in the information and practice received in training sessions for antiguerrilla warfare, such as the secret nature of operations; "interrogation techniques"; education in "special" forms of fighting and killing and in how to lay ambushes; and "survival" training sessions, which often included actions that were cruel or degrading to one's own dignity.

All this gradually accustomed the students to the fact that ethical limits were receding and diminishing, sometimes to the vanishing point. Paradoxically, however, counterinsurgency had been devised to save the very ethic which its actions-intended to respond to purported similar actions by the guerrillas-denied. Hence two new justifications were employed to round out the doctrine. One was the notion that the counterinsurgent, the one combatting the guerrillas, was a kind of hero who was sacrificing not only his physical life, if necessary, but his moral integrity so that others might enjoy that integrity and the benefits provided by a free society (1993, p. 78).

In both examples, the perpetrators of inhumane violence are presented as being forced to “sink to the level” of the “insurgents” because of the existential threat they pose and the uncivilized tactics they employ.

“Rodolfo González,” the fourth episode of UHN begins with a member of the security forces, Rodolfo González Pérez, beginning the process of dehumanization as he joins DINA, “So you're buying a tie, a suit, leave the uniform at home and transform into the invisible man. Ok? Everything you do from now on, sir, it's a state secret. Understand?”<sup>17</sup> He is instructed to become invisible, to discard his identity and his ability to tell friends or family what he does. Unfortunately for Rodolfo, his morals impede the transformation. He begins to render aid to torture victims in their cells, passes notes, and eventually warns the “insurgents” of an upcoming raid. Rodolfo is killed for his conscious (2017). The lesson is clear: those who cannot sacrifice their humanity for the state are enemies of the state.

### **From Fellow Citizen to Enemy**

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<sup>17</sup> Así que se me compra una corbata, un terno, me guarda el uniforme en la casa y se transforma en el hombre invisible. ¿Ya? Todo lo que haga de ahora en adelante, señor, es secreto de Estado -¿Entendió? (2017).

Although the Mapuche were technically citizens of Chile at the time of the occupation of Wallmapu, the politics of difference at play in the racialized social structure of Chile, combined with their unwillingness to assimilate and relinquish their land to settlers meant that a counterinsurgency campaign against the “savages” was easily justifiable to the general public. “The vast majority of Chileans came to view their society as mono-cultural, Christian, western and racially homogeneous. This discourse worked as an ideological justification for the Chilean army’s ‘pacification’ of Araucanía, which was done to foster the nation’s development through immigrants interested in settling and farming in the territory” (Waldman, 2012, p. 57). For Pinochet, the counterinsurgency campaign targeting individuals who were considered “full” citizens required the construction of a different manner of “othering” the citizens in question, thereby removing the protections offered by in-group membership. At the individual level, criminality, or some other sort of “socially deviant” behavior is sufficient, but at a state-wide level manufacturing an existential crisis assigned to the target group is necessary. Movements like Allende’s Unidad Popular (UP) that sought to radically alter the relationship between private property and the state constitute such an existential crisis for the beneficiaries of the status quo. Decreto Ley 1, the declaration heralding the formation of the junta on September 11, 1973, employed rhetoric that emphasized the existential threat to Chilean identity that necessitated the coup. Again, it is notable that this is Decree 1, the first act of a new moment of violent re-foundation. We should take that view of history seriously. Allende and his supporters, under the sway of the alien ideology of Marxism-Leninism, were dedicated to the destruction of Chile (Chile). It is worth citing the decree at length because it allows for a holistic appreciation of the way that the rhetoric in the document draws from the logic of elimination and settler-colonial

violence. I am placing a screen capture of the electronic version of the document from the Chilean Library of Congress in its original Spanish, followed by an English translation.

ACTA DE CONSTITUCION DE LA JUNTA DE GOBIERNO

Decreto ley N.o 1.- Santiago de Chile, a 11 de Septiembre de 1973.

El Comandante en Jefe del Ejército, General de Ejército don Augusto Pinochet Ugartte; el Comandante en Jefe de la Armada, Almirante don José Toribio Merino Castro; el Comandante en Jefe de la Fuerza Aérea, General del Aire don Gustavo Leigh Guzmán y el Director General de Carabineros, General don César Mendoza Durán, reunidos en esta fecha, y

Considerando:

1.o- Que la Fuerza Pública, formada constitucionalmente por el Ejército, la Armada, la Fuerza Aérea y el Cuerpo de Carabineros, representa la organización que el Estado se ha dado para el resguardo y defensa de su integridad física y moral y de su identidad histórico-cultural;

2.o- Que, por consiguiente, su misión suprema es la de asegurar por sobre toda otra consideración, la supervivencia de dichas realidades y valores, que son los superiores y permanentes de la nacionalidad chilena, y

3.o- Que Chile se encuentra en un proceso de destrucción sistemática e integral de estos elementos constitutivos de su ser, por efecto de la intromisión de una ideología dogmática y excluyente, inspirada en los principios foráneos del marxismo-leninismo;

Han acordado, en cumplimiento del impostergable deber que tal misión impone a los organismos defensores del Estado, dictar el siguiente,

Decreto-ley:

1.o- Con esta fecha se constituyen en Junta de Gobierno y asumen el Mando Supremo de la Nación, con el patriótico compromiso de restaurar la chilenidad, la justicia y la institucionalidad quebrantadas, conscientes de que ésta es la única forma de ser fieles a las tradiciones nacionales, al legado de los Padres de la Patria y a la Historia de Chile, y de permitir que la evolución y el progreso del país se encaucen vigorosamente por los caminos que la dinámica de los tiempos actuales exigen a Chile en el concierto de la comunidad internacional de que forma parte.

2.o- Designan al General de Ejército don Augusto Pinochet Ugartte como Presidente de la Junta, quien asume con esta fecha dicho cargo.

3.o- Declaran que la Junta, en el ejército de su misión, garantizará la plena eficacia de las atribuciones del Poder Judicial y respetará la Constitución y las leyes de la República, en la medida en que la actual situación del país lo permitan para el mejor cumplimiento de los postulados que ella se propone.

Regístrese en la Contraloría General de la República, publíquese en el Diario Oficial e insértese en los Boletines Oficiales del Ejército, Armada, Fuerza Aérea, Carabineros e Investigaciones y en la Recopilación Oficial de dicha Contraloría.

Considering:

1st- That the Public Force, constitutionally formed by the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Police Corps, represents the organization that the State has given itself for the protection and defense of its physical and moral integrity and its historical-cultural identity;

2nd- That, therefore, its supreme mission is to ensure, above all other considerations, the survival of said realities and values, which are the superior and permanent ones of the Chilean nationality, and

3rd- That Chile is in a process of systematic and comprehensive destruction of these constitutive elements of its being, due to the interference of a dogmatic and exclusive ideology, inspired by the foreign principles of Marxism-Leninism;

They have agreed, in compliance with the urgent duty that such a mission imposes on the defense agencies of the State, to dictate the following,

Decree-law:

1st- With this date they constitute the Governing Board and assume the Supreme Command of the Nation, with the patriotic commitment to restore broken Chilean identity, justice and institutions, aware that this is the only way to be faithful to national traditions, the legacy of the Fathers of the Nation and the History of Chile, and to allow the evolution and progress of the country to be vigorously channeled along the paths that the dynamics of current times require of Chile in the concert of the international community of which it is a part.

2nd- Appoint Army General Mr. Augusto Pinochet Ugarte as Chairman of the Board, who assumes said position with this date.

3rd- Declare that the Board, in the army of its mission, will guarantee the full effectiveness of the attributions of the Judicial Power and will respect the Constitution and the laws of the Republic, to the extent that the current situation of the country allows it to the best fulfillment of the postulates that it proposes.

Register with the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic, publish it in the Official Gazette and insert it in the Official Gazettes of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Police and Investigations and in the Official Compilation of said Office of the Comptroller (Chile, 1973).

As the Decreto Ley states, the foreign-born contagion of Marxism and the unpatriotic Chileans who adhered to its ideology were slowly destroying Chile from the inside out. Moreover, with the first article of the “Decree-law” gender and race are explicitly tied to Chilean identity alongside ideology. The restoration of a “broken Chilean identity” in order to preserve “the legacy of the Fathers of the Nation” is a crucial component of the theory of change that the junta is presenting to the Chilean people as a justification for the coup. Under this framing, the font of Chilean success, of Chilean exceptionalism, is the law and order generated by a social contract that affirmed a conservative, patriarchal and racially uniform society, and Allende’s attempts at socialist reforms that included efforts at “awakening a female consciousness” and providing recognition and redress to Indigenous peoples through land reform threatened the foundational elements of Chile (Alfaro Monsalve, 2021, p. 4; Bonner, 2013; Pairican & Urrutia, 2021). It was only thanks to the willingness of the military to root out this contagion and protect Chilean identity that the state’s survival remained feasible.

In the second episode of UHN, Antonio Llidó, a priest, the titular Antonio Llidó, is being tortured by members of the state security apparatus because he is suspected of knowing where enemies of the state were safely hiding. The father continuously tells his assailants that he does not know anything, so the torture continues over days. At one point of the interrogators tells him, “You’re not a fucking priest, you’re a Marxist”.<sup>18</sup> In the eyes of the state, embodied by this interrogator, a priest who is suspected of being affiliated with enemies of the state is no longer a priest, no longer a respected member of society, just a threat to society, a threat that was eventually eradicated. There is a certain irony in the Pinochet-era transmutation of a priest into a

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<sup>18</sup> Vos no sos cura conchetumare, vos sos marxista (Cap 2, UHN, 2017).



Marxist; in the 1833 Constitution, it is explicitly stated in Article Four<sup>19</sup> that, “The Religion of the Republic of Chile is Roman Catholic Apostolic; excluding the public exercise of any other” (Chile, 1893).<sup>20</sup> Clearly, in the minds of the Pinochet regime, eliminating perceived enemies of the state trumped historical-cultural identity. As with the case of Chilean territorial claims during the nineteenth century “Pacification of Araucanía,” in a twentieth-century Chilean counterinsurgency campaign, the status quo the state is purportedly protecting need not be more than an imaginary as long as the perceived obstacles in the path of progress are eliminated.

### Conclusion

*Indeed, in El botón de nácar (The Pearl Button, 2015) ...set in the south of Chile, Guzmán presents...the stories of the indigenous inhabitants who were subjugated and interned, hunted and murdered, during the ‘foundational’ years of the Chilean state and links that history of persecution with that which accompanied the dictatorship, which transformed part of Dawson Island – where, as Guzmán notes, hundreds of indigenous people died in Catholic missions – into another concentration camp.*

*-Brad Epps, 2017*

Common threads can be seen running through both the “Pacification of Araucanía” and the Pinochet regime. In both campaigns, the military carried out brutal acts against other citizens. This was made possible through the military’s discursive transformation of certain citizens into the enemy, “As soon as the military defined fellow countrymen as enemies against whom all-out war had to be waged, every conceivable repressive measure became justifiable” (Valenzuela, 1978, p. 109). Another of these threads is the need to create an identity dichotomy between “us” and “them.” In both cases explored in this chapter, the “us” meant Chileans, but the definition of Chilean used by the counterinsurgent forces realigned itself to fit the times and the campaign's

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<sup>19</sup> In digital scan of the 1833 Constitution, this was listed as Article Five, but in the electronic version of the constitution available in the Chilean Library of Congress the numbering has been updated to account for the legislative decision to remove the original Article One that details the claimed territorial boundaries of Chile (Chile, 1833; Chile, 1893).

<sup>20</sup> La Religión de la República de Chile es la Católica Apostólica Romana; con exclusión del ejercicio público de cualquiera otra (Chile, 1893).

end goal. When carried out against Indigenous groups, the goal is primarily the expropriation of land and the erasure of Indigenous identity and land claims that accompany that identity.

The eradication of perceived threats and insurgencies is a means to this expropriation rather than the primary end. “Whatever settlers may say— and they generally have a lot to say—the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). When carried out against settlers the aim is the protection of the status quo or the restoration of an imagined past. We see this with the justification provided by Decreto Ley 1 where the junta declares that it is conducting a coup to defend the “physical and moral integrity and its historical-cultural identity” of the Chilean state which is currently under an attack driven by individuals corrupted by “the foreign principles of Marxism-Leninism” (Chile, 1973). During the occupation of Wallmapu, Chilean meant settler, whereas, during the Pinochet regime, Chilean meant supporters of the regime. Finally, there is the whitewashing of Chilean historiography. The “Pacification” was celebrated as a necessary evolution toward a civilized future for all involved well into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, the Pinochet regime is heralded as the impetus for the Chilean Miracle, an economic transformation that eventually led to Chile’s acceptance in the OECD, the first South American state to hold that “honor”.<sup>22</sup> These whitewashed histories both prominently feature but erase Mapuche resistance, cooperation, and ambivalence towards the state. In the next chapter, I will provide evidence to support my claim that the erasure of the Mapuche in the Chilean historiography, both official

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<sup>21</sup> “Visitors to the National History Museum in Santiago used to be told in the exhibit placards that ‘the Mapuche resisted [occupation] but the superiority of the Chilean military forces was unstoppable, as was the civilizing ideology that justified the advance of the troops’” (Crow, 2013, p. 24).

<sup>22</sup> Chile ratified the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, to join the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on May 7, 2010, nearly a decade to the day before the second South American state, Colombia joined on April 28, 2020 (OECD, n.d.).

discourse and pop culture, is the canary in the coal mine exemplifying how the imaginary of Chilean exceptionalism is built on a foundation of the willingness to use exceptional violence.

### **Chapter Three: Different day, same repression**

*For the Mapuche, the dictatorship was not an 'exceptional' time of violence and abuse, but rather one more episode, a significant one, in a long history of mistreatment and suffering*

*-Daniela Jara, Manuela Badilla, Ana Figueiredo, Marcela Cornejo, and Victoria Riveros, 2018*

Early on September 3, 2005, a young Mapuche man, José Gerardo Huenante Huenante, was drinking beer with friends near his home in the city of Puerto Montt when the group was approached by a patrol car of the Carabineros, car number 1375 from the Fifth Police Station, ostensibly for throwing rocks at the car. Three officers, Sergeant Juan Ricardo Altamirano Figueroa, First Corporal Patricio Alejandro Mena Hernández, and Second Corporal César Antonio Vidal Cárdenas placed José inside the car and drove off. José was never seen again; he was 16 years old.

After witness statements and public outcry, the Carabineros were eventually charged on March 16, 2009, with the disappearance of a minor and obstruction of justice. After their arrest, the men were dismissed from the Carabineros. However, soon after the charges were announced, the case was transferred to the Puerto Varas Military Prosecutor's Office, where it stalled. Nearly a decade after José's disappearance, all three of the officers involved were reinstated into active duty at the Fifth Police Station of Puerto Montt. This case is considered to be the first enforced disappearance in Chile since the transition (Flores, 2021; Núñez et al., 2011). Fifteen years after the transition toward democracy; members of the security apparatus employed a technique designed to sow doubt and terror, to pacify populations, the technique perfected and made infamous during the Pinochet-era, on a minor for allegedly committing the "insurgent" act of throwing rocks at a squad car.

#### **The Faustian Bargain of Chilean Exceptionalism**

Over the course of this chapter, I will use evidence drawn from Mapuche interactions with the state security apparatus and the state's response to the country-wide protests that began in October 2019 to argue that the narrative of the transition being a renaissance of Chilean democratic stability and the rule of law is a myth. Moreover, it is a myth that relies on the general willingness of Chilean society to accept the bargain of relative stability for the non-marginalized in exchange for rationalizing or “forgetting” the violence and illiberalism against the marginalized that makes that stability possible.

As the previous chapters have documented, the authoritarian rule of the Pinochet regime has been framed as an aberration brought on by the turbulence of the Allende administration (Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, 1993; Grandin, 2005). This framing is reinforced by the celebration of Chile's “successful” transition back to being, as Piñera put it “a shining ‘oasis’ of stability and progress in Latin America” (Harmer, 2021, p. 10).

Yet, the violence of Pinochet was not an aberration; it was a continuation of a very long tradition of colonial counterinsurgency dating to the foundation of the state. Calls for eliminating the Mapuche began even before the Republic of Chile was founded and continued until the “Pacification of Araucanía”. The “Pacification of Araucanía” officially took place from 1861 to 1883, and it was the site of violence employed by the Chilean military that was so brutal that even supporters of the occupation denounced the soldiers' actions as “inhumane” (Crow, 2013, p. 33). Still, the historiography of the “Pacification” portrays it as a relatively bloodless, necessary, and beneficial step in the formation of the state (Crow, 2013; Jara et al., 18; Postero et al., 2018). As in other settler-colonial contexts, the elimination of the Native was a prelude to the formation of the new settler-colonial state.

A remarkably similar process of history writing and public memory-making has occurred around the narration of the rise and fall of Pinochet's regime. As Greg Grandin notes, a widespread narrative "understood [Pinochet's] terror not as a result of state decomposition...but rather as the foundation of the military's plan of national stabilization through a return to constitutional rule" (2005, p.50). The Rettig Report, Chile's version of Truth and Reconciliation was limited by design and constrained by the political necessities of an uncertain transition. As then-President Aylwin put it, it was intended to provide "all the truth and as much justice as possible" (Roht-Arriaza, 1998, p. 313). More contentiously, Grandin and others suggest that the report had the unintended consequence of legitimizing the repressive actions of the state by placing the costs of violence into a utilitarian framework where the perceived benefits of (relative) political stability and economic growth outweighed the social and moral costs of the culture of terror the regime systematically constructed. This reading of the transition gains more credence when one foregrounds the pre- and post-Pinochet Chilean state's handling the "Mapuche problem." From the invasion of Wallmapu/Araucanía, the coup against Allende, and, finally, to the post-transition suppression of calls for reform in Wallmapu justified as combatting terrorism, the state has demonstrated its reliance on securitizing and pacifying perceived threats and obstacles to the stability and prosperity (Bonner, 2013).

Since its inception, the Chilean state has continuously employed political violence justified by counter-insurgent logic. Over the course of each of the various counterinsurgency campaigns initiated by the state, the Mapuche (and other Indigenous peoples) have been a target of oppression because of their continued resistance to assimilation and dispossession. "When protesters are from the popular sectors or are indigenous, their repression is not shocking for many Chileans but rather historically consistent. In these cases, Chileans may choose public

order over the protection of rights” (Bonner, 2013, p. 138). As seen with the Pinochet regime, the state’s conceptualization of “insurgent” readily expands to include other “undesirables” who threaten the maintenance of the public order, the status quo, and ipso facto, national security (Bonner, 2013, pp. 124-125). Realignment in the methods of violence and pacification deployed against the Mapuche and other low-rights individuals is, in many ways, a harbinger of violence against the non-Indigenous population.

### **Discursive Erasure**

Throughout this thesis, I have drawn from the docu-drama series, *Una Historia Necesaria*, to highlight how popular culture reifies and reproduces the homogenization of victimhood during Chile’s “exceptional” encounter with violence during the Pinochet era. None of the victims in the series are identified/identify as Mapuche or otherwise Indigenous despite the fact that at least 135 of the individuals who were disappeared, executed, or died as a result of torture were Mapuche (Comisión Rettig, 1996).<sup>23</sup> Episode five tells the story of a family of self-described campesinos who are attacked by their neighbors and Carabineros, resulting in the execution of the father and brother (Sergio D’Apollonio Peterman and Carlos Jacinto D’Apollonio Zapata) and the theft of the family’s crops. “The same ones who took our loved ones went to look for fruits and vegetables in the fields. Civilians and soldiers, sympathizers of the dictatorship, who repressed peasants and workers in southern Chile (2017).<sup>24</sup>

After their execution, the men’s bodies were thrown into the Bío Bío River. The family is only able to recover Carlos’ body, but during his wake the security forces return to the family

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<sup>23</sup> According to research by Curñir Lincoqueo et al., the true number of Mapuche who were disappeared, executed, or died from torture is at least 171 (2016). However, the methodology they employed, using an analysis of first and last names of victims, is “questionable” (Jara et al., 2018).

<sup>24</sup> Los mismos que se llevaron a nuestros seres queridos iban a buscar frutas y verduras al campo. Civiles y uniformados, simpatizantes de la dictadura, que reprimieron a campesinos y trabajadores en el sur de Chile (Cap 5, UHN, 2017).

home and take the body, dumping it back in the Bío Bío River, after which it was not seen again (Comisión Rettig, 1996, pp. 346-347; 2017). Sergio and Carlos Jacinto were not Mapuche, their ethnicity is stated to be Chilean in official documents (this labeling in and of itself speaks to the logic of elimination at work, being Chilean means not Mapuche), and this is not the only account in the Rettig Report that details farmers being murdered and robbed by Carabineros working with civilians in the provinces that are also the traditional Mapuche homelands of Wallmapu. The Rettig Report makes a note of the treatment Mapuche received, “We should emphasize the harsh treatment given to the Mapuches and their families and how difficult it has been for these people in the most rural areas to have to live alongside those who killed their loved ones, sometimes even to the present” (1993, pp. 509-510). This decision to tell the story of Sergio and Carlos Jacinto was a missed opportunity to include a visible Mapuche presence in the series. More seriously, this move also mirrors efforts of the Chilean state in the 20th century to conflate Mapuche peoples with settler-farmers (*campesinos*) in Wallmapu. Indeed “the obliteration of indigenous identity has been a feature of multiple processes of state making, such as the revolutionary project of land reform, in which the Mapuche were not considered indigenous but rather as peasants” (Jara et al., 2018, p. 489).

The Rettig Report rarely acknowledges violence perpetrated against the Mapuche (Mapuche” is used 15 times total in a document that is 1,369 pages long before considering an auxiliary 422-page alphabetical list of the victims and their basic biographical information) (Comisión Rettig, 1996). More common in the report is a vague recognition of attacks against Mapuche households and other perceived beneficiaries of Allende’s land reform efforts in southern Chile by their neighbors who desired to seize the land they owned (Jara et al., 2018, p. 490; 1996). The lack of a Mapuche presence in a series that is part of a project of cultural



construction of and recognition of victimhood serves to further policies and rhetoric that aim to relegate indigeneity in Chile to a “long, long time ago” past.

Furthermore, given the fact that the series received funding from the agency for public television, National Television Council (CNTV) (Cooperativa.cl., 2022), the absence of indigeneity echoes assertions by activists that the Chilean state is officially and unofficially engaged in a long-term project of erasure of the Indigenous people who inhabited and continue to inhabit their traditional lands (IWGIA, n.d.; Marca Chile, 2021; Nahuelpán et al., 2021; Ramay, 2009; Richards, 2010). This point is particularly salient because the series uses rhetoric and imagery with powerful emotional appeal to condemn the horrors of state violence yet does not speak on continued incidences of state violence. All this despite public awareness at the time of filming (2016) that the Mapuche were disproportionately the targets of illiberal Pinochet-era anti-terrorism legislation and in southern Chile are actively living under a state of siege enforced by Carabineros in southern Chile who operate under Pinochet-era “state of emergency” deployment orders (*Norín Catrimán et al. v. Chile*, 2014).

### **Militarization of Wallmapu**

Without context, construing the Carabineros’ perception of José throwing rocks at a squad car as an act of “insurgency” may seem like an interpretive overextension. However, by 2005, the Carabineros had been reprising their Pinochet-era role in the suppression of an “insurgency” for roughly a decade. In place of Marxist “insurgents” Mapuche “terrorists” were now the agents of subversion. Lost in the labeling of “terrorist” activity was the action that Mapuche were taking to protest the state-supported dispossession of their land in Wallmapu for use in development projects like dams and export-oriented forestry plantations. Perhaps surprisingly, the post-transition militarization of Wallmapu in response to the “Mapuche

problem” began in earnest not during the time of right-wing governments but under the center-left Concertación administration of President Ricardo Lagos Escobar in 2001. Anti-Mapuche violence ramped up after the 2006 election. Concertación successor, President Michelle Bachelet Jeria (herself a victim of political violence during the Pinochet-era). Newspaper headlines from the 2000s demonstrated concerted efforts to explicitly link Mapuche activists with both the “savages” of the 1800s and the War on Terror: consider only a few such headlines:

'Alert in Arauco, Fearing Wave of Mapuche Violence'

'The Mapuche Intifada: The Indigenous Uprising Worsens'

'Mapuches Threaten'

'Indigenous Communities on the War Path (Quoted in Richards, 2010, p. 75).

These “terrorists” have taken part in protests calling for the return of land, recognition of indigeneity in the Chilean constitution, and autonomy for Wallmapu; (re)occupied land in a manner reminiscent of the Allende-era land reforms; committed acts of arson against logging trucks and other private property; and allegedly perpetrated instances of assault with firearms against corporate agents and journalists (i.e., shot). The state’s response to the “Mapuche problem” has been predictable when viewed within the framework of the *longue-durée* of Chilean counter-insurgent logic; large numbers of Carabineros equipped with armored vehicles and helicopters have been deployed to the area to pacify and demobilize protestors. “The central state makes itself visible through the ever-present Carabineros.... The violent face of the state is often felt in militarized Mapuche communities” (Postero et al., 2018, p. 206). Hundreds of protestors (in 2021, there were 462 arrests by October) have been arrested and many have been charged many under the 1984 anti-terrorism law (Ley 18.314), although in many cases, the

charges were later dropped (BBC News Mundo, 2021; Eichler & Barnier-Khawan, 2021; Ministerio del Interior).

Under Ley 18.314, defendants face extended sentences, anonymous witness testimony, “a reverse burden of proof requiring the accused to establish the absence of a terrorist motive (thus violating the presumption of innocence),” and stringent pre-trial detention protocols. The deployment of the Carabineros and the use of the anti-terrorism law has continued across presidential administrations on the political Left and Right, despite national and international condemnation. In 2014, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Inter-American Court)<sup>25</sup> overturned the convictions of eight Mapuche activists ruling that the use of the anti-terrorism legislation violated the rights granted to them under the American Convention of Human Rights and that, “the case distinguishes itself by its selective application of anti-terrorist legislation to the detriment of indigenous Mapuche people in Chile” (Carruthers & Rodriguez, 2009; Crow, 2013; Eichler & Barnier-Khawan, 2021, p. 362, p. 371; Ministerio del Interior, 1984; Nahuelpán et al., 2021; *Norín Catrimán et al. v. Chile*, 2014).

On November 18, 2018, four “Jungle Commandos,” members of the special forces Grupo de Operaciones Policiales Especiales (GOPE) unit of the Carabineros killed Camilo Marcelo Catrillanca Marín, a 24-year-old Mapuche activist and grandson of a Mapuche lonko (chief), with a shot to the back of the neck as he was riding on a tractor with a 15-year-old boy in the Mapuche community of Temucuicui in Wallmapu/Araucanía.

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<sup>25</sup> The Inter-American Court is an autonomous juridical organ of the Organization of American States (OAS) that together with the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) forms the Inter-American System of Human Rights. This system began with the adoption of the American Convention on Human Rights in 1969, subsequently went into effect in 1978, and is headquartered in San Jose, Costa Rica. Of the 35 member states of the OAS, 25 states including Chile have ratified the Convention and consented to cede jurisdiction to the Inter-American Court to make and enforce rulings on cases involving alleged human rights violations or other instances of non-compliance with the Convention (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2022).



*Figure 3 GOPE forces in Wallmapu/La Araucanía, Chile (Aton Chile, 2018).*

At the time of his death, Camilo was (at least) the fourth Mapuche activist killed by the Carabineros in Wallmapu since 2002. According to the GOPE officers, they were attempting to apprehend Camilo on suspicion of car theft, and he attempted to allude arrest, so they were forced to fire on him. The teenage boy was held and assaulted by the officers but left with his life, and he was able to testify that the officers had deleted camera footage of the shooting to cover up the crime. As word spread of the murder of Camilo and the cover-up attempt, nationwide protests were calling for the demilitarization of Wallmapu, the disbandment of GOPE, and the resignations of Interior Minister and Carabinero officials (Bonney, 2018). Just like the newspapers decrying the actions of Chilean soldiers in Wallmapu during the conquest<sup>26</sup> and the protestors who mobilized against Pinochet in the late 1970s and 1980s, when confronted with the realities of counter-insurgent violence, a large swath of Chilean society recoiled when

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<sup>26</sup> In the first chapter of her book, *The Mapuche in Modern Chile: A Cultural History*, Joanna Crow provides numerous examples of newspaper and private correspondence outrage and shame at the military's treatment of Mapuche during the "Pacification" (2013, pp. 32-36).

forced to confront their complicity in benefiting from the poison fruit of counter-insurgent based stability (Stern, 2004; UHN Cap 16, 2017).

### **A Critical Juncture: The 2019 Protests**

The state's response to Mapuche activism in Wallmapu and the heightened activist ardor after Camilo's murder was a harbinger of things to come. Different strands of public discontent with post-transition governance in Chile rapidly coalesced after the murder of Camilo. A proposed fare hike for the metro and other public transportation in the Greater Santiago area, scheduled to begin October 6, 2019, was the catalyst for massive protests across the country calling for greater equity and social justice in Chilean society, in part through a new constitution. The current constitution was another relic of the Pinochet era, promulgated in 1980 and designed to protect the conservative and business interests that formed the consistent support base for Pinochet (McSherry, 2020). At first, the protestors were primarily students evading fares on the metro and marching in the streets, but as the number of protestors grew, confrontations with the Carabineros grew tenser, and acts of vandalism began to increase in number and intensity. By October 18, the state under then-President Sebastián Piñera decided to escalate its securitization of the protests. Carabineros in riot gear confronted protestors with tear gas and water cannons, but this initial attempt at coerced demobilization failed. On October 19, a 15-day state of emergency was declared in Santiago (later extended to the rest of the country), and for the first time since the transition, the military joined the Carabineros in patrolling the city and enforcing a curfew (Bartlett, 2019; Laing & Ramos Miranda, 2019; McSherry, 2020).

In a news conference, Piñera stated that "We are at war against a powerful enemy, who is willing to use violence without any limits" (Laing & Ramos Miranda, 2019). Tanya Harmer provides a similar analysis of continuity in Chilean strategy and tactics when dealing with unrest,

“Just as the military’s recourse to repression and the president’s talk of a ‘war’ against civilian opponents showed how little had changed since the years of dictatorship – how enduring violent methods and mindsets were despite three decades of democracy – the rhetoric of foreign intervention was yet another throwback to the 1960s and early 1970s” (2021, p. 2), but by only following the thread of continuity from the rise of Pinochet, her analysis stops short of recognizing the role of counter-insurgency logic in the formation and maintenance of the Chilean state and the construct of Chilean exceptionalism. As seen with the ongoing “Mapuche conflict” and hearkening back to Pinochet, the state quickly escalated its response to the protests using counter-insurgent logic, deploying the heavily armed Carabineros and the military to physically confront protestors while employing a discursive strategy aimed at justifying the use of violence by portraying the protestors as un-Chilean and beholden to foreign interests.

Over the rest of 2019, protests continued, as did “counter-insurgent” violence, even after a massive protest in Santiago on October 25, 2019, attended by over 1.2 million people, led to Piñera and the legislature agreeing to reforms, including a referendum in 2020 to determine if the constitution should be rewritten. The Carabineros were accused of a plethora of human rights violations, including sexual assault and torture of protestors. Moreover, by early 2020 at least 36 people died in the protests, thousands were injured, and the use of “non-lethal” rounds led to significant eye damage for hundreds, so much so that bandaged eyes became a symbol of the protests. Thousands more were detained (McSherry, 2020). However, the referendum for rewriting the constitution was successfully held in October of 2020 and passed by an overwhelming margin; 78% of Chileans voted to rewrite the constitution with a record – since the 1988 plebiscite – 7.5 million-plus voters casting a ballot (Chappell, 2020). Despite the repression of the protests in 2019 and 2020, despite the damage wrought by the COVID-19

pandemic, Chile was presented with the possibility of an inflection point, a true rebirth from the ashes of Pinochet and the legacy of violence that has defined Chile.

### **Conclusion**

The potential for hope and despair for structural change in Chile was echoed in the legal system in 2021, when the four officers involved in the murder of Camilo, three other officers complicit in the cover-up, and a Carabinero lawyer were convicted of homicide and obstruction of justice, among other charges (Gonzalez F., 2021). However, the same year that Camilo and his family obtained a small measure of justice, President Piñera declared a state of emergency in Wallmapu/Araucanía and sent in members of the military to supplement the omnipresent Carabinero garrisons. The uptick in violence and counterinsurgency in Wallmapu was emblematic of the cleavages in Chilean society as the 2021 elections approached. A vocal proportion of Chileans supported the “counterinsurgency” efforts in Wallmapu, favored a constitution that continued to protect business interests, and viewed changes to the status quo as an existential threat to Chilean identity and the state itself (Concha Bell, 2022; Deutsche Welle, 2022; Stuenkel, 2021). Once again, Chile was at a crossroads with potential instability but transformative change possible in one direction and stability through repression possible in the other. Over the course of the next and final chapter, I will explore the most up-to-date happenings in Chile regarding the 2021 elections, the constitutional rewrite, and the opportunities and dangers present in the current socio-political climate as they relate to the narrative of the *longue-durée* of exceptional violence in Chile.

## Conclusion

*In the current debate, little is being heard from that submerged zone of our species who live far from the centers of power but are often near the quick center of suffering where ethical choices determine the immediate shape of things to come and things to be postponed.*

*-Ariel Dorfman, Death and the Maiden, 1994*

The Chilean electorate woke up on the morning of December 19, 2021, tasked with making a monumental choice in the final round of voting between two presidential candidates who offered two very different visions of the future. On one side of the ballot stood José Antonio Kast Rist, a lawyer with familial and ideological ties to the Pinochet regime. On the other side was Gabriel Boric Font, a former student leader who was part of a coalition that included the Communist Party.

The election offered a choice between two extreme ends of the political spectrum in Chile after three decades (since the transition) of presidential elections dominated by the center-left or center-right (Stuenkel, 2021).<sup>27</sup> According to Kast, “We are going to choose between freedom and communism – between democracy and communism” (Bartlett, November 22, 2021). For his part, Boric made it clear that the macroeconomic success Chile has enjoyed since the transition is not benefiting most Chileans, “The ‘Chilean Miracle’ was just for the outside world, not for us” (Bartlett, November 18, 2021). The winner would oversee the plebiscite of the draft text of a new constitution in addition to navigating the host of social, economic, and public health issues facing Chile.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> From 1990-2010 all four presidents (Patricio Aylwin, Eduardo Frei, Ricardo Lagos, and Michelle Bachelet) were members of the center-left coalition, Concertación. In 2010, center-right candidate, Sebastián Piñera became the first democratically-elected rightist president since Jorge Alessandri won in 1958. After Piñera’s term, Bachelet was in office for a second term, followed by a second term for Piñera (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional, n.d.b)

<sup>28</sup> In a hopeful opinion piece that he wrote days after the inauguration of Boric, Ariel Dorfman details how Boric’s administration faces the a variety of vexing issues including: pension and health system funding crises,



The gulf between the two candidates' contrasting ideologies was evident in their plans for dealing with the "Mapuche problem" in Wallmapu. Boric voiced support for the Mapuche demands of the demilitarization of Wallmapu, return of land, and autonomy, "I believe that the militarization in La Araucanía is a bad path. It seems to me that we must maintain a dialogue with a historical perspective. This is a conflict that is not solved only from the perspective of public order, here there is an underlying political problem where it is necessary reestablish trust and we have to talk about the reconstruction of the territory of the Mapuche nation people, of autonomy and of allowing a people to have its own worldview and exercise it within that territory" El Mostrador, 2021.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, Kast who made enforcing law and order in Wallmapu a key part of his platform countered with, "you cannot have dialogue with weapons on the table, much less continue to validate terrorism, murders, fires, robberies and threats. They are not semantic issues as you said. We have to restore order, security, justice and peace. That is everyone's task" (El Mostrador, 2021).<sup>30</sup> The election was not just a battle of competing ideologies, of "communism" versus "fascism," it was a battle for the futurity of the construct of Chilean identity. Would Chileans continue the centuries-long processes of the erasure and assimilation of Indigenous people through an imaginary of Chilean identity as "mono-cultural, Christian, western and racially homogeneous," or choose a more uncertain path where the

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disproportionate tax burden on the poor (limiting revenues available to combat the aforementioned crises), an unlivable minimum wage, the continued oppression of Indigenous communities, discrimination against women, a migration crisis in the north, and rising crime rates accompanied by police brutality (2022).

<sup>29</sup> Creo que la militarización en La Araucanía es un mal camino. Me parece que debemos sostener un diálogo con perspectiva histórica. Este es un conflicto que no se soluciona solo desde la perspectiva del orden público, acá hay un problema político de fondo donde se necesita restablecer las confianzas y tenemos que hablar de la reconstrucción del territorio del pueblo nación mapuche, de la autonomía y de permitir que un pueblo pueda tener su propia cosmovisión y ejercerla dentro de ese territorio.

<sup>30</sup> No se puede dialogar con armas sobre la mesa, ni menos seguir validando el terrorismo, los asesinatos, incendios, robos y amenazas. No son temas semánticos como dijo usted. Tenemos que recuperar el orden, la seguridad, la justicia y la paz. Eso es tarea de todos.

“historical debt” owed to the Mapuche people was acknowledged by state and society (Waldman, 2012, p. 57, p. 64)?

A majority of Chileans (~56%) chose change, and Boric was declared the winner of the election (Cuffe, 2021). During his inauguration speech, he reiterated his desire to find a solution in Wallmapu,

We also have a problem in the South. In the past, it was talked about as the pacification of Araucanía—a crass and unfair term. Later, some people called it the Mapuche conflict. It is not the Mapuche conflict: it is the conflict between the Chilean state and a people who have the right to exist. There, the solution is not and will not be violence. We will work tirelessly to rebuild trust after so many decades of abuse and dispossession. The recognition of existence of a people, with all that this implies, will be our objective, and the path will be dialogue, peace, rights, and empathy with all the victims—yes, all the victims. Let us cultivate reciprocity, let us not see each other as enemies. We must come together again (2022).

This certainly does represent a new direction. However, some qualifications are in order.

Despite the rhetoric of inclusivity and dialogue, of abandoning counter-insurgent dichotomies in favor of reciprocity, it would be unwise to view Boric’s election in and of itself as a transformative moment for Chile. Beyond the political maneuvering that Boric will need to manage when trying to pass progressive legislation in a Congress that is roughly evenly divided between parties from the right and left (France 24, 2022), none of Boric’s female-majority cabinet of 24 ministers are Indigenous even though over 12% of the population identifies as Indigenous (Concha Bell, 2022).

Nevertheless, there have been some positive signs that the Boric administration is serious about demilitarizing Wallmapu. Two weeks after Boric took office on March 11, 2022, his administration did not ask Congress for a renewal of the state of emergency that had been in place since October 2021. The military officially left when the existing the state of emergency ended on March 26, 2022 (Deutsche Welle, 2022). Yet, statements made by the Undersecretary of the Interior regarding the withdrawal of the armed forces call into question if the absence of the military truly results in an end to counterinsurgency operations in the region when the Carabineros will still be active in Wallmapu, "clearly we have sought to strengthen the number of people, strengthen operational capacities in terms of equipment and this also implies having police strategies that allow us to fulfill the task of guaranteeing security in the Biobío Region and in the Araucanía Region" (El Mostrador, 2022).<sup>31</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, a majority of the abuses documented in post-transition Wallmapu and during the 2019 protests were at the hands of the Carabineros rather than the military (McSherry, 2020). Although the removal of the military and the cessation of the state of emergency certainly carries symbolic importance, the continued presence and strengthened "operational capacity" in terms of personnel and equipment of the Carabineros in Wallmapu indicates that the state has no intentions of completely changing the strategy of counter-insurgent operations.

The election of Gabriel Boric, the creation of a constitutional convention to draft a new constitution – one that will presumably give constitutional recognition to the Indigenous people of Chile for the first time in Chilean history ( Cuffe, 2021) - and the 2021 selection of a Mapuche woman, Elisa Loncón Antileo, as President of the Constitutional Convention (Ontiveros, 2021)

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<sup>31</sup> claramente hemos buscado fortalecer la dotación de personas, fortalecer las capacidades operativas en materia de equipamiento y también esto implica disponer de estrategias policiales que permitan cumplir con la tarea de garantizar la seguridad en la Región del Biobío y en la Región de La Araucanía.

all provide hope that we are witnessing an inflection point in the story of Chile, a shift from repressive and exclusionary state formation and preservation to inclusive and restorative state justice. However, this is not the first time Chilean society has been presented with one of these inflection points.

Three moments stand out given their pertinence to the narrative of the *longue-durée* of counter-insurgent violence in Chilean statecraft at the heart of this thesis. First, the period between Chile's independence from Spain and the occupation *Wallmapu* represents a foundational moment for republican and liberal rule. Second the election of Allende can be understood as a short-lived revolutionary rupture that is put to a brutal end by the reactionary and neoliberal violence of Pinochet. Third, there is the transition from Pinochet, which nevertheless is not a transition away from either neoliberalism or counter-insurgency. At each of these points, there was an opening for recognizing and reconciling the tensions inherent in the construction of a settler-colonial, capitalist state, but as this thesis has explored, the comfort of maintaining the imaginary of stability has thus far proven more influential than the potentiality of fully implementing the principles at the heart of a democracy.

Consider some nineteenth-century evidence. Article Five of the 1833 Constitution declared, "The inviolability of all properties, without distinction of those belonging to individuals or communities, and without anyone being deprived of their domain, or of a part of it, no matter how small, or of the right they have to it, but by virtue of a judicial sentence; except in the case in which the utility of the State, qualified by a law, requires the use or alienation of any; what will take place giving previously to the owner the indemnification that will be adjusted with him, or will be valued in the opinion of good men;" and Article Twelve stated, "In Chile there is no privileged class" (Chile, 1893). Less than 30 years after this constitution was promulgated, the

“Pacification” demonstrated that the legal inviolability of property was subordinate to the logic of elimination and state territorial consolidation.

Clearly, the de jure absence of privileged classes, or in the context of the Mapuche, the de jure absence of an unprivileged class in Chile was a codified aspiration rather than a reality. Allende’s administration began to redress the (unconstitutional) dispossession of Mapuche land and broader inequities through his land reform policies. These efforts led to a reactionary backlash in the form of Pinochet. Finally, the return to democracy yielded 30 years of centrist administrations who professed a desire for truth and reconciliation while taking advantage of the technologies of counter-insurgent repression perfected under Pinochet to respond to political protest, particularly in Wallmapu.

### **Transitional Erasure**

Over the course of this thesis, I have argued that there has been a concerted effort by the post-Pinochet state to portray the violence of the Pinochet regime as an anomaly despite pre- and post-Pinochet evidence to the contrary; simultaneously making (some of) the crimes of Pinochet visible while invisibilizing the continuity in state violence from the formation of the state up to the present. This effort has been reified and reproduced in popular culture like *Una historia necesaria*. Consider one of the final episodes in the series; Ana Arón’s sister, Diana, was a journalist who was considered an enemy of the state during the junta, and she was the victim of enforced disappearance while pregnant. Conceivably influenced by the trauma of losing her sister, Ana became a psychologist specializing in treating traumatic grief. 31 years later Ana, accepted a request from the military to treat young conscripts who survived a training exercise fiasco carried out on the Antuco volcano, “...because of the Antuco Tragedy, the same institution that years before destroyed my family, now turned to me to provide them emotional

and psychological support to their conscripts” (UHN Cap 14, 2017).<sup>32</sup> Ana details the rationale behind her decision to aid the soldiers, and in doing so verbalizes and through her actions, exemplifies, the implicitly intended outcome of transitional justice, to reconcile and reknit the fabric of society. “So, why help the military to overcome their grief when they have not even said what did they do with my sister? But no, the young survivors of Antuco weren't the ones who killed Diana. They were just boys who needed my help, and I gave it to them. Without any resentment, without any thoughts of revenge” (2017).<sup>33</sup> Ana’s willingness to aid the young soldiers despite her familial history with the military is an example of the moral superiority of Chilean exceptionalism, of the fruits of democratic stability; despite everything her family has gone through, she “went high” even though they “went low,” and in doing so provides an example for the audience. They should not forget the “aberration” of Pinochet, but the “rebirth” of Chile requires that they set aside their grievances in the name national unity (Bonner, 2013, p. 130).

The institutions that executed the horrors of the junta still exist, but the personnel have changed, and thus, those who experienced repression are morally obligated to remember that “The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father (New King James Version, 2013, Ezekiel 18:20)” in the name of national healing and stability. There is a reason why state funding from CNTV was allocated to produce UHN. The series helps a new generation reproduce the process of making the crimes of the Pinochet regime legible that the state employed during the TRC that produced the Rettig Report, the document that the series used as source material. This process of

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<sup>32</sup> debido a la tragedia de Antuco, la misma institución que años antes destruyera a mí familia, ahora recurría a mí para brindarle apoyo emocional y psicológico a sus conscriptos

<sup>33</sup> Entonces, ¿por qué ayudar a los militares a superar su duelo cuando ellos ni siquiera han dicho lo que hicieron con mi hermana? Pero no, los jóvenes sobrevivientes de Antuco no fueron los que mataron a Diana. Ellos eran simplemente muchachos que necesitaban de mi ayuda, y yo se las di. Sin resentimientos, sin revanchismos.

constructing and homogenizing victimhood reifies the imaginary of the human rights violations that took place under Pinochet as an exceptional departure from the natural order of political activity in Chile. Moreover, this process perpetuates the erasure of Indigeneity by concealing the various types of violence the state inflicted on the Mapuche and other Indigenous people before, during, and after the dictatorship. The violence inflicted on the Mapuche and others has been justified over the past centuries through the discourse of bringing civilization to savages and/or fighting terrorism and the discursive erasure of Indigeneity through the conflation of peasants and Indigeneity.

### **Transitions and the Tricks of Time**

The English name for UHN is *The Suspended Mourning*, explicitly acknowledging the capacity of grief to impede the individual lives of the living. For the friends and family of the disappeared, the compounding harms of the death of a loved one and the lack of a body to materialize the loss haunts them. UHN demonstrates one potential consequence of this haunting effect in episode eight when it tells the story of Max, who “died” 31 years before his physical death when his wife and unborn daughter were disappeared. Historical injustices like settler colonialism create a haunting effect, but it is not just limited to a particular social circle, it affects entire societies.

Historian Steve J. Stern referred to this haunting effect in the context of Latin America, as “the tricks of time,” where “The colonial past is an unclosed chapter in Latin America. Its history seems to bequeath to its post-colonial successor an unresolved inheritance” (1996, p. 371). In Chile, the state’s (non) efforts to deal with the unresolved inheritance of colonialism are visible in the counterinsurgency campaign to repress the ongoing political activism of the

Mapuche in Wallmapu seeking redress for the dispossession of their land, seeking the conveyance of the historical debt the state began incurring with the occupation of Wallmapu.

As transitional justice has grown in popularity as a solution to dealing with the fallout of a society exposed to repression and human rights violations, theorists and practitioners inside and outside the field have subjected the logical framework undergirding transitional justice to increased scrutiny. One common criticism of current applications of transitional justice is how it necessitates a process of making violations and victims legible, erasing or silencing those experiences that are considered “eligible” violations, that do not fall within an established time period bookended by two points of rupture, or that were not perpetrated at the hands of the “right” group of people or for the “right” motivations.

This thesis has explored how this legibility effort in Chile has led to the erasure of state transgressions against Indigenous groups and how the legibility process is reproduced and reified through a popular culture representation of the “exceptional” violence of the Pinochet regime. There is another critique that I have, until this point, addressed obliquely. That is the focus of transitional justice mechanisms on recognizing and redressing individual harm instead of a broader, societal conceptualization of harm. However, this criticism of individualism also provides an opportunity to expand the application of transitional justice to achieve structural justice, Balint et al. argue “...the flexibility and potentiality of transitional justice as a broader justice model makes it an attractive approach for addressing the historical injustices of settler colonialism that to date have not been addressed as harms” (2014, p. 196).

The Boric administration’s stated willingness to enter meaningful dialogue with the Mapuche raises the possibility of employing a transitional justice framework designed to address the societal harms of the settler-colonialist project in Chile. Izkia Siches, Interior Ministry of



Chile, recently signaled that the government favors a rapprochement process that employs transitional justice mechanisms, “We have talked about the importance of having a truth, justice and reparation committee for all the victims” (MercoPress, 2022). However, any application of transitional justice to the legacy of colonialism requires a realignment of transitional justice from an individualist to a collective and *longue-durée* understanding of harms. Balint et al.’s argument that, “An enriched transitional justice may enable greater recognition of colonial harm and hence foster conceptual and practical approaches to more substantively address the structural injustices that persist in settler colonial, postcolonial and even postconflict states” (2014, p. 214), elucidates how the benefits of an “enriched” conceptualization of transitional justice would be germane to all of the instances of human rights violations that the government has carried out in the face of political unrest. A state that is willing to recognize and redress the structural harms of settler colonialism is also (likely) a state that is willing to recognize and redress the structural harms that occurred as a result of the dictatorship. Moreover, the naturalization of state acknowledgement and reparation of state-sanctioned violence creates a feed-forward effect that helps to mitigate the risk of the state committing human rights violations in the future.

This thesis has traced the genealogy of counter-insurgent violence in Chile from the formation of the state to the present and the general willingness of Chilean society to consign recognition and redress of this violence to oblivion in return for the imaginary of stability. Chile is not the only settler state in the Americas to employ this logic of elimination and willful disregard of the costs of “modernity,” but just as Chile was an “incubator” for neoliberal governance under Pinochet, it has an opportunity to become the site for the cultivation for new forms of justice that go beyond the paradigm of “transitional justice” and address the settler-colonial sources of violence.

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