



## INDIGENOUS TERRITORIAL AUTONOMY AND SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE DIVERSE AMERICAS

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# A Future Crossroads in Rebellious and Pandemic Times: National Pluralism and Indigenous Self-government in Chile

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## Introduction

This chapter does not analyze a specific experience of Indigenous self-government.<sup>1</sup> In Chile there have been no instances of Indigenous self-government, hence my intention here is more limited. I describe the country's progress in terms of Indigenous peoples' self-determination and self-government in a place where demands for political autonomy<sup>2</sup> are, for now, limited to discourse and to utopian claims. Some Mapuche<sup>3</sup> have been fighting for self-government since the return to democracy (1990),<sup>4</sup> without any significant changes on the horizon in terms of meeting this demand. The elites in control of the successive post-dictatorship governments and of the State in general (members of the dominant nation-state in Chile: Chileans) have refused to open up the State to ethnonational pluralism in terms of Indigenous self-government.

The social explosion unleashed in Chile in October 2019, and expressed by way of citizen mobilizations that continue to the time of writing (only slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020), challenges the

power of the elites in control of the executive and the State, and seeks to improve the material living conditions of all the country's residents. Wielding the slogan "dignity," this uprising has called into question the elites' narratives on issues as diverse as gender, environment, health, justice, immigration, corruption, educational content and age discrimination.<sup>5</sup> Along with all of this, it has called into question the nationalist-assimilationist discourse of these elites, expressing an openness to and acceptance of ethnonational pluralism, rendering the discussion of the issue inescapable in neighborhood assemblies, the press, the national congress and even the government. Has the time come for the Chilean State to attend to demands for autonomy and for Mapuche self-government?

Given the country's current political juncture, this chapter examines the possibilities for progress toward Indigenous self-government (political autonomy), attending to the discursive political-ideological determinants that might facilitate or impede such progress. Accordingly, it aims to respond to the question posed at the end of the previous paragraph. To do so, I focus on the political practices and speeches of this explosive juncture — which express the antagonistic relationship between Chilean elites in control of the executive and both the Chilean "people" (those who are not among the elite and who are in movement) and the Mapuche demanding autonomy — in terms of a future political coexistence.

The thesis guiding the narrative here is based on the following assumption: while ongoing mobilizations have helped highlight the issue of the inclusion of Indigenous peoples' political demands, the way out of the crisis in terms of Indigenous self-government nonetheless follows the course<sup>6</sup> charted by how Chilean nationalist elites comprehend — ideologically and politically — "their" State and the type of issues that Indigenous peoples represent within said State. This is related to the power the elites have to impose their ideas, even when they have become unpopular and appear to be weakened. The understanding of political processes by both political elites and Mapuche autonomists oscillates between, on the one hand, Mapuche participation and integration in the political process of the nation-state, and on the other, isolationism. The latter entails the self-exclusion of the Mapuche from the constitutional political process underway in the country.

I address the issue in a descriptive, explanatory and conjectural fashion with respect to the future. The chapter has three sections in addition to a general discussion and a conclusion. The first section is largely descriptive;

I outline the series of events that led to the recent protests in Chile which opened a door to possible changes in State-society relations that may affect Indigenous peoples in a positive way. The second section summarizes the explanations that members of both the nation-state and Indigenous peoples provide as to their understanding of the political moment or juncture. The third section highlights the political context of the nation-state following the jolt provided by the latest protest movement and the complex reordering of the political context as a result. The fourth section discusses expectations with respect to this episode of discontent: is Chile moving toward the construction of a plurinational state with Indigenous self-government? I compare the discussion of reserved seats in the constitutional assembly that is to begin in 2021 with other moments in the history of relations between Indigenous peoples and the Chilean elite, seeking continuities and qualitative leaps in the positions of these antagonists. Finally, in the conclusion, I speculate about an openness to a re-founding of the State with respect to the Mapuche demand for autonomy and self-government.

## What happened in October 2019 in Chile? The context

October 2019 was to be a month like any other in Chile (which the president called an “oasis” in a television interview).<sup>7</sup> However, something happened that was not even in the president’s worst nightmares nor those of his administration or the coalition of parties that supported him.<sup>8</sup> It was not even in the minds of those who transformed their role in the opposition<sup>9</sup> into a bureaucratic matter, disconnected from their constituents: the voters. They were enjoying the high politics of parliament, while nothing came out of there that would alleviate the suffering of the citizens.<sup>10</sup> The same can be said of the social movement branches of the opposition parties, such as the national trade union movement (CUT, Central Única de Trabajadores),<sup>11</sup> which should have detected warning signs of the ground-breaking social movement that was to come. (Often co-opted by nation-state parties, the trade unions have followed behind social movements during the post-dictatorship period, only rarely leading them.) Starting on 18 October 2019 (18-O), a social explosion<sup>12</sup> of a scale previously unknown shook the country from end to end.

The politicians’ nightmare developed as follows. On 4 October, a group of transportation experts focusing on economic criteria (concerned about the

international rise in the price of oil) suggested that the government increase the cost of public transit, especially the subway, by 30 pesos (approximately USD \$0.04 at that time). This amount represented nothing at all for elites, who do not use public transit and do not even know the price of a subway ticket (Pérez, 2017). However, this increase would have disastrous effects for the country's most impoverished sectors, whose expenses are greater than their income. That is, they live in debt (Durán and Kremmerman, 2019; Mayol, 2019).

The increase would go into effect that weekend (6 October), and the Minister of the Economy suggested (7 October) that those who did not like it should get up earlier to take advantage of the cheaper fares (a statement for which he would have to apologize publicly on 24 October).<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, that same day, a group of high school students, understanding the consequences of the measure, organized a fare evasion, which would be replicated by others in the days that followed. Interestingly, these first evasions did not entail large financial costs for the state, because many students jumped the turnstiles without actually using public transit, limiting themselves to the performance or the invitation to others to follow. Furthermore, the increase did not apply to students (though it did affect their parents, relatives and friends). They were only trying to show society a way to rebel and carry out civil disobedience in response to a charge seen as abusive.<sup>14</sup>

By 14 October, with adults joining, the action of “evading” had become widespread, developing into a true “evasion” movement. The government then made the worst move among the political options it had at hand. It sent the police to guard the subway stations, closing some of them — leaving riders who were not participating in the protest without service — and the police started to repress the evaders inside the subway buildings. The teargas and widespread and indiscriminate beatings ended up bothering everyone and many more joined the movement of discontent.

During this time, objectionable phrases became a national sport and served to fan the flames (Mayol, Big-Bang, 2019). On 17 October, a member of the Expert Panel, Juan Coeymans, justifying his recommendation to the government, mentioned that when some food products go up in price, nobody protests. The movement's response was to step up the evasion, and, this time, turnstiles and other infrastructure in the stations were destroyed. The Minister of Transportation then came onto the scene to declare with authority that the measure had already been taken and would be enforced (Equipo

actualidad y multimedia, 2019). She insinuated that the government would consider applying the Anti-Terrorist Law if necessary (CNN Chile, 2019).

The Minister's words, far from calming things down by calling for dialogue, did not intimidate anyone and did nothing to stop the movement. On the 18 October, faced with uncontrollable evasions and protests, the subway shut down a few of its lines right after noon. By later that afternoon, when people were returning home from their workplaces, the entire system had been suspended. The population of Santiago was walking in chaos for hours. At the same time, the government officially announced the application of the National Security Law — the Anti-Terrorist Law — against the evaders deemed violent. The country then saw its largest-ever social uprising.

Spontaneously, expressing a discontent held in for a long time, people took to the streets by the thousands all over the country, banging pots and pans as a way to express their disgust with the government and with all politicians. The popular outrage was not only to reject the 30-peso subway fare hike; the range of complaints and demands on people's signs reflected a rejection of 30 years of abuses (which, for Indigenous peoples in Chile, was more like 500 years of abuses). The entire history of the return to democracy after the dictatorship and its economic (that is, macroeconomic) achievements were called into question. The successful Chilean model—an idea widely disseminated abroad (Davis, 2020)—had entailed subjecting Chile's citizens to a precarious life, with extreme debt and an uncertain future, experienced and suffered by each person in isolation, like a silent burden. With the protest, the model cracked and was on the verge of falling apart.<sup>15</sup>

Among the demands that emerged from the uprising, the following stand out: 1) an end to the system of Pension Fund Administrators (AFPs, *Administradoras de Fondos de Pensiones*); 2) efficient and preventive health care coverage and protection, with better hospitals, better treatment and addressing the lack of specialists and supplies; 3) free, high-quality education and social mobility to put an end to classist, racist, sexist segregation, and declare null and void the debts held by middle- and lower-class students; 4) stop the privatization of water, declare it a national asset, and lower the costs of water and electricity; 5) efficient public transportation with fares commensurate with users' wages; 6) an end to the corruption and abuses of power and punishment for collusion and for embezzling the treasury; 7) help for the environment, put an end to zones of sacrifice,<sup>16</sup> to droughts brought about on

purpose by plantations, and to the rerouting of rivers, and act against desertification and the destruction of glaciers.

More subjectively, a demand arose to put an end to the country's current constitution (the 1980 Constitution) and change to a new one produced through deliberation by the citizenry (local assemblies: *cabildos*). Chile is governed by a constitution that was developed during the military dictatorship, without any participation from any opposition, validated in a plebiscite without any electoral records and written to benefit the sectors in power at the time with the aim of perpetuating their political, social, economic, ideological and Euro/ethnocentric principles.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the country's three most important constitutions (1833, 1925, 1980) have all been imposed upon the citizenry with political and military violence sponsored and promoted by elites with a generally conservative ideology.

In the popular assemblies, strong debates about Indigenous peoples began to develop regarding the demand to construct a new type of State — a plurinational State or State that recognizes that the country is constituted by multiple nations and not just one (the nation constructed by the State following the emancipation of the colony of Chile from Spain). To maintain the unity of the country, these subjugated nations should recover their political rights, such as the peoples' right to self-determination, even if it is in a "domestic" sense and not a matter of secession. In fact, the idea of plurinationality is not only put forward by the Indigenous peoples, nor is it original to the current juncture (though its first use can be traced back to Indigenous peoples). Indeed, the notion is promoted both by Chileans and by members of Indigenous nations. Without going too far back in the previous government—Michelle Bachelet's second administration—the constitutional discussion at the time shows that plurinationality was already part of the political will of those participating (Chileans and Indigenous peoples), as shown in the summaries of the proceedings (Archivo, 2017; Proceso Participativo Constituyente Indígena, 2017).<sup>18</sup>

The political ideas within the Indigenous world, and particularly the Mapuche world, currently reflect discursive complexity and disparate political intentions. There have been Mapuche organizations — and organizations with Mapuche members, such as political parties, that aim to represent all the country's inhabitants — since the beginning of the uprising that endorsed the ethnonational pluralism with political empowerment that the grassroots movement on the streets and Indigenous peoples were calling for. (In fact,

they had already promoted this in the Bachelet constitutional process, mentioned above.)

Others removed themselves from the political process, positioning themselves instead as spectators of a fight among Chileans and pointing out that for Indigenous peoples, there is a different path, built by international law, that leads to the self-determination of peoples, without specifying what this might mean<sup>19</sup> but leaving a whiff of secessionism in the air. And there were yet others, politically oblivious, who continued and continue to advance their own agenda to take back what Chileans have usurped, asking nobody's permission and with no connection to the political process occurring inside the Chilean state.<sup>20</sup> This has helped transform the Araucanía region into a context of violent ethnonational relations, which is starting to take both Mapuche and Chilean lives (*El Mostrador*, PS condena, 2000; Díaz, 2020).

Unfortunately for the prospects of advancing a single national project of self-determination for all Mapuche, the different opinions described above do not engage in dialogue with one another. At times, there has even been hostility between them (Díaz, 2020).

## The political: Explaining the context and its effects for Indigenous peoples.

Why did this happen in Chile? And what effects might it have for Mapuche claims of autonomy and self-government? This question is on the minds of all those trying to understand the current political moment in the country and to envision ways out of the crisis. In the professional, intellectual, academic and political world and in the world of social leaders, both of the nation-State and of Indigenous nations, explanations have been put forth both to address the need for clarification and knowledge and for more pragmatic reasons related to properly channelling the needs, interests and expectations of the social majority in these turbulent times. A brief sampling of these reflections and explanations offers the following clues.<sup>21</sup>

In Chilean think tanks, some believe these events reveal “a crisis of emotions without a narrative,” where irrationality prevails. That is, all the actors and antagonists are acting based on their emotions: fear, distress, worry, uncertainty, hope. In this view, it is a social-emotional crisis that is shaking the country, in contrast to how politicians in the government see the issue, which is as a crisis of public order (Roberto Izikon of Asuntos Públicos/Estudios



Cuantitativos CADEM) (Cámara, 2020). Along these lines, others believe that there has been a “decoupling of subjectivities” due to insensitive statements by political technocrats with no connections to the population they govern. In other words, it is not about disputes between political and ideological projects in the political sphere, but about human groups with different amounts of power who share no connections in terms of language, intentions or emotions. For example, the word “growth”, so valued by elites, means nothing to ordinary people, who do not see the economic model as having any positive effects on their lives. Rather, they feel that when there is growth, the rich win, but when the economy stagnates or declines, it is the middle classes and the poor who lose (Matías Chaparro, Criteria Research) (Cámara, 2020).

An economic emphasis attributes the “political crisis” to Chile having stopped growing over the last decade, thus speeches promising a better future enthuse nobody. Although recent decades have seen a reduction of poverty, an expansion and improvement of education and services, declining inequality (still large) and an expansion of the middle class, people feel like they live in a society where they are not valued (a meritocracy) and where social mobility is non-existent. To top it off, powerful groups abuse the rest with impunity, which has led the population to lose trust in its institutions: government, parliament, justice, church, political parties, police and military (Silvia Eyzaguirre, Centro de Estudios Públicos) (Cámara, 2020). Furthermore, this Chile that made so much progress combating poverty during previous governments was not able to engage the subjectivity of its citizens, who did not see true well-being in their lives. They did see, however, corruption and abuses of all kinds coming from people in positions of power (Gloria de la Fuente, Fundación Chile XXI) (Cámara, 2020).

Intellectuals and academics, meanwhile, think that the anger shown by Chileans has crossed “a threshold of mistrust” beyond which democracies are not viable. The country’s citizens have stopped believing in politicians when it comes to solving their problems. We face a civilizational crisis in which those who hold most strongly to right-wing values believe that the left is incapable of governing competently, and those on the left see the right as unable to govern fairly (Marco Morenos, Observatorio Política y Redes Sociales, Universidad Central UCEN) (Cámara, 2020). These citizens feel “suffocated” in a system that manages them without their having any control over it and that sentences them to anonymity — a system in which they will not enjoy better lives than those of their parents. The inequality experienced by people

and that exhausts them is not about assets but about life prospects. The country, in this view, has lost its narrative — it has lost an explanation able to instill a sense of patience in the population. In this context, the example of the yellow vests in France helped inspire a collective sense of discontent (Eugenio Tironi, Consultant) (Cámara, 2020). Furthermore, this disconnect between narrative and prospects goes back to moments long past. The Coalition of Parties for Democracy — the political conglomerate that followed the dictatorship — lost more than a million votes in the 1997 parliamentary elections, while null votes rose. At that point, the divorce between citizens and politics had already taken place, leading to the discontent that would grow until 18-O (Alfredo Joańan, Universidad Diego Portales) (Cámara, 2020).

Others declare that uprisings are events that cannot be foreseen and that they express a crisis of the social and political rules in society. The uprising in Chile reflects a crisis of discourses. It is a hermeneutical crisis — a crisis of explanation. There is no narrative. Unlike the events of 1973 that ultimately gave way to the dictatorship, there are no well-articulated groups facing off territorially. It is the people against those in power (those not of the people). The political discontent is with institutions, and it is expressed without any leaders expecting that these same institutions will resolve the conflict. Violence is part of how the people express themselves in situations like this (Hugo Herrera, Universidad Diego Portales) (Cámara, 2020). In accordance with this vision, the uprising is seen as violence without semantics, a phenomenon of dimensions that are impossible to measure, with a meaning we do not understand. Discontent underlies things, but it is a discontent with politics (Alberto Mayol, Universidad de Santiago) (Cámara, 2020).<sup>22</sup>

Within a more traditional approach, some think that the uprising, which they prefer to call a rebellion, has to do with the more than forty years of the Chilean model of neoliberal exploitation, wherein the wealthy sectors of society have accumulated wealth by sacrificing the environment, without any mediating force or mechanism that might prevent such devastation. This caused the citizen masses to be indifferent to the model, to politicians and to the democracy tailored for the model, which the dictatorship established in Chile — masses that today are in the streets, expressing their discontent, without any leadership (Juan Carlos Gómez Leyton on *Telesur*, 2019).

Finally, there are those that maintain that the social uprising cannot be explained through solely socioeconomic analyses, even though there are profound structural inequalities. People can understand economic differences

and even accept them, but what they cannot understand or accept is the unequal treatment that results from these differences. There is a symbolic ingredient at work in the uprising that is related to how people feel abused in matters of gender, poverty and ethnicity. For example, someone might accept that another earns a salary twenty times higher than their own, but to be admitted, treated badly and humiliated in a hospital merely for being poor is intolerable and generates rage and hate. Add to this the distrust of a political world with permanent displays of corruption, with a justice system that promotes impunity for those with money and hellish sentences for those without, and the situation becomes explosive. At some point, the discontent previously endured becomes expressed as rebellion. People experiencing inequality and poor treatment came to have a goal: to put an end to it (Marcela Ríos, Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo PNUD) (Cámara, 2020).

With respect to Indigenous peoples and nations, only a few have discussed the causes that account for the social uprising. Among the exceptions is the voice of the Mapuche History Community (CHM, Comunidad de Historia Mapuche). They think that the country is seeing a crisis of moral illegitimacy, in which the privileged groups of society have abused the rest of society, both Chileans and the Indigenous, without facing any consequences themselves. This is how influence peddling, collusion, cruelty and human rights violations have come to be the norm in relations between powerful groups and those without power. This became intolerable, hence the uprising (CHM, November 2019). The Rüntun Research Centre (CER, Centro de Estudios Rüntun) released a manifesto addressed to the Chilean national society and to Mapuche society in particular, declaring that the uprising is a consequence of institutionalized abuses long inflicted upon the country's plurinational population, with a great deal of emphasis on human rights violations, especially in the case of the Mapuche (Centro, 2019).

As a corollary to these explanations, things in Chile were not going as well as it had seemed (the triumphalism<sup>23</sup> of electoral democracy and the post-dictatorship economic model led elites to see themselves as the jaguar of Latin America, along the lines of the Asian tigers). The need for change became clear, echoing the cries in the streets coming from social movements. However, just as there are differences or nuances when it comes to explaining why the country is where it is, it would be a mistake to assume that everyone shares all of the movement's demands, especially as the assessments summarized above reflect perspectives from the entire political spectrum,

including supporters of the government and the political alliance that sustains it. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that, in general, these reflections move in the direction of favoring changes to the nation-state and society. These changes include the notion that the relationship between the State and Indigenous peoples must improve, taking paths other than those pursued to date. We shall see in the sections that follow where these diagnoses lead us or how far they take us in terms of opportunities for the country's Indigenous peoples in the current juncture.

## **Politics: The social uprising shakes up the domestic politics of the Chilean nation-state, including Indigenous peoples**

Until 17 October 2019, political life in Chile followed a routine that did not significantly change the position of power held by elites who, since the transition from the dictatorship to the current electoral democracy,<sup>24</sup> had fashioned a more or less secure area in which to operate their lives and businesses (Matamala, 2018).<sup>25</sup> The great promise of the transition was expressed in the campaign slogan that made the way for post-dictatorship democratic governments — “Chile, happiness is on its way.” It managed to mollify many who believed their lives would improve (which they did, compared to the times of the dictatorship). By the late 1990s, this promise began to lose its appeal as a seductive narrative — it lost its capacity to instill patience, as identified by Tironi in the previous section. Citizens began to see the country's achievements as insufficient, especially for the newer generations with new expectations, and as new abuses became increasingly evident.<sup>26</sup> A defiance of authority began to emerge.

The 2000s saw people in the streets, protesting for a variety of reasons. In 2006, the movement of the so-called penguins<sup>27</sup> had a significant impact, with high school students protesting the State and the neglect of public education compared to private education. Their protests called attention to the fate of young people from the most vulnerable sectors in the country with respect to their ability to change their lives through the promise of education as a vehicle for upward mobility (IRG, 2007). In 2011, the students were once again in the streets, fighting against for-profit education and for free education at every level. At the same time, the environmental movement tried to prevent projects that would interfere with rivers, glaciers and the ocean and to avert plans

to construct coal-based or river-based power plants. The years that followed would see the rise of a movement against the pension system (AFPs). Marches that started with hundreds of people became larger and more frequent, ultimately summoning a million protesters in 2016 (AFP/Caracol televisión, 2016).

Indigenous peoples, too, carried out political mobilizations for their demands (in addition to participating in all the other protests). To an extent, they preceded the Chilean social movement with their own demands (at least the Mapuche did); by the early 1990s, in the first years of the first post-dictatorship government, the Council of All Lands (CTT, Consejo de Todas las Tierras) had already been formed to recover lands usurped by Chilean settlers dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This initiative was followed by others in the late 1990s (for example, the Coordinadora Arauco-Malleco (CAM)). The Mapuche demand for autonomy and self-government, the seeds for which had already been planted by some Mapuche professionals and intellectuals, began to take shape, grow and develop in these acts of rebellion (Marimán, 1990a; 1990b). By the 2000s, there was an autonomist segment or current inside the Mapuche movement (Foerster, 1999).

In the meantime, another part of this movement had reached an agreement with those governing the transition to secure perks unrelated to political empowerment, promising votes and political loyalty in return (Acta de Compromiso, in Nueva Imperial, 1989).<sup>28</sup> By the late 1990s, they had been let down by the new ruling elites. The “permitted Indians,” as some social scientists have called them (Hale, 2007), began to express their discontent as well, and some even adopted the discourse of plurinationality and the self-determination of peoples.

Starting in the 2000s, governments of the Coalition of Parties for Democracy,<sup>29</sup> the coalition that governed the country with four different presidents for twenty-two years, began to violently repress the Mapuche engaging in the recovery of their lands (applying the Anti-Terrorist Law). Since 2001, 17 Mapuche have been killed by the police and other forces of repression (La Izquierda Diario, 2018; Palma, 2021 and Alarcón & Huenchumil, 2022), and many have spent long periods of time in jail or remain there still (without sentences and only as a precautionary measure, or in questionable processes that used concealed witnesses or fabricated evidence tailored to secure convictions), creating what the Mapuche world and the Indigenous world more broadly call “Mapuche political prisoners.”<sup>30</sup>

While this political context started to bother elites and their political system (fashioned during the dictatorship), reflected in the increasingly frequent use of repression and even the Anti-Terrorist Law, it did not keep the elites up at night. Acts of non-conformity happen to one degree or another in every country in the world, according to Piñera's Minister of Foreign Relations, Andrés Allamand: "countries with successful trajectories are not immune to social protest. The Arab Spring, for example, started in Tunisia, the most highly developed country in North Africa" (*El Mostrador*, Se le olvidaron, 2020). The president thus gave himself the luxury, as mentioned above, of calling Chile an "oasis" in Latin America.

This all changed on 18-O, when Chile exploded. What followed has been a story of political mistakes and panic by politicians and elites in general, worthy of academic analysis if not psychological study. Seeing that people were not returning to their homes even late into the night, and that they were raising barricades and starting to loot businesses in many parts of Santiago and throughout the country, the government declared a state of emergency and sent the military in to patrol the streets and break up the protests. Yet the people did not give up their movement. They withstood the police and military onslaught at the cost of human lives<sup>31</sup> and harassment of all kinds, in addition to the imprisonment of many.<sup>32</sup> On 19 October, aiming to de-escalate the protest, Piñera undermined his Minister of Transportation, saying that they had heard the people and were reversing the 30 peso fare hike. It was too late, though; the people wanted more (and continue to push for more). On the night of 20 October, the president declared war on his people (T13, *Presidente Piñera*, 2019):

We are at war against a powerful, relentless enemy, who does not respect anything or anyone, who is willing to use violence and crime without any limits, who is willing to burn our hospitals, the subway, the supermarkets, with the only aim being to cause as much damage as possible. (Prensaruil, 2020)

This would prove to be Chile's shortest war. It was, in fact, a war of bluster that did not last long. First, because the military official in charge of the state of emergency declared on 21 October, "I am a happy man; the truth is that I am not at war with anyone" (Basoalto, 2019), thereby dashing any hopes for something like a self-inflicted coup as a way out — an idea that had been

floating around at the time.<sup>33</sup> The second reason for the war's short duration was that on 25 October, Chile saw its largest ever peaceful demonstration. With the president unable to use the military at will and with the people holding their ground on the streets, he and his government had to soften their warmongering discourse and try their luck by offering more to the insurrectionists. Between resigning and calling new elections or sacrificing something of similar value in symbolic terms (since other gestures to help the poor — such as a social agenda — did not placate anyone), the president ended by offering up the 1980 Constitution (the dictator's constitution) for the sake of social peace.

Late on the night of 15 November, without consulting the insurgent movement, the coalition of government parties and the opposition signed an "Agreement for Social Peace and a New Constitution" (without the consent of everyone inside each party), making it possible to eliminate the 1980 Constitution. The agreement included the following points: 1) a plebiscite to "approve" or "reject" a new constitution (non-compulsory vote); 2) if the approve option wins, a choice between either a Mixed Convention (equal percentage of Congress people and elected citizens) or a Constitutional Convention (exclusively elected citizens); 3) a 2/3 mechanism for approving future constitutional laws; 4) a compulsory plebiscite to ratify the new constitution at the end of the process; and 5) a Technical Commission to determine the details of the agreement, including gender parity and the possibility of reserved seats for Indigenous peoples in the Constitutional Convention.<sup>34</sup> The doors were thus opened to a re-founding of the electoral democracy inherited from the dictatorship and to changing the centralist, subsidiary, uninational state model into a new one by means of a new constitution.

How did different political actors react to this agreement? The political context took a new turn, which continued more or less the same until the plebiscite on 25 October 2020; having only partly recovered from the impact of 18-O in 2019, the political parties regained some of the power they had lost in the uprising. At the same time, the social movement reacted to the agreement with astonishment and dismay. They wondered who had authorized the center and left-wing politicians who signed it<sup>35</sup> to negotiate on behalf of the movement. It would cost some of them dearly. The Broad Front (FA, Frente Amplio) — created mainly by former student leaders that led the protests of previous years, with the most refreshing discourse in progressive terms within the nation-state society — ended up divided and accused of having stooped

to the same types of political practices as the rest of the parties (Marín, 2019). One wing, rejecting the agreement, left the alliance to pursue a direction that remains uncertain, though they did join the “approve” campaign for a new constitution. The Communist Party did not join the agreement and criticized it from the outside, yet at the same time it accepted it (T13, Por qué el Partido Comunista, 2019).

The Chilean right felt some relief with the agreement, as reflected in the words of Senator Jacqueline Van Rysselberghe, activist and leader of the Independent Democratic Union (UDI, Unión Demócrata Independiente), the most important right-wing party: “sitting here is an effort at dialogue in an environment that had been infused with fear, violence, and a lack of peace ...” (Senado, 2019). But once recovered from the initial blow and seeing that the shaking and the aftershocks were weakening, some began to turn away from the idea of a new constitution, advocating rejecting it in the plebiscite (Alvarado, 2020). This ended up dividing the right between those who campaigned to “approve” a new constitution and those who campaigned to “reject” it (a division that has had consequences for passing laws, with the government losing some legislative battles, as well as with respect to ethnopolitics).<sup>36</sup>

In addition to these groups, which have taken turns in controlling the executive over the past thirty years, there are also those with more maximalist positions on each side. On the right, there are those still nostalgic about the dictatorship, grouped in a party that became known in the last presidential elections as the Republican Party (PR, Partido Republicano). From the start they were against changing the constitution and condemned Piñera’s government for sacrificing the constitution of their champion: the dictator Augusto Pinochet. As they could not prevent the plebiscite, they called on people to vote to reject a new constitution (*Diario Financiero*, 2020). On the left, from the margins of the system, others supported not participating in the constitutional process and not exercising the right to vote. This political position, in their logic, would truly represent people’s discontent with politicians and the current political system and prevent endorsing a new instrument of domination (Gómez, 2019).

Similarly, the Mapuche have not responded with a single position or voice to issues of relevance in the current conjuncture. As suggested in the previous section, there are those who have welcomed the agreement and participated in the initiative, seeing a door open to their hopes of autonomy and self-government. Some Mapuche who hold this position are seen by the



movement as being right-wing: Aithue Foundation (Fundación Aithue) and Mapuche Enama Corporation (Mapuche Enama Corporation) are two examples. The Mapuche in the center and left are generally those active in nation-state parties, from Christian Democracy (PDC, Democracia Cristiana) to the Communist Party (PC, Partido Comunista), the Socialist Party (PS, Partido Socialista), and the Broad Front (FA). The Mapuche who self-identify as autonomists include the Association of Mapuche Mayors (AMCAM, Asociación de Alcaldes Mapuche), the Mapuche History Community (CHM), the Rüntun Research Centre (CER), and the Mapuche party, Wallmapuwen (WMW).

Others, also self-identifying as autonomists, are staying out of the nation-state constitutional process, arguing that it does not involve them, that it is a matter for Chileans, and that the Mapuche should carry out their own constitutional process (*El Mostrador*, *Dirigentes mapuche*, 2019). This is the case of the Council of All Lands, for example. Their leader, Aucán Huilcamán, has said that this process was underway even before the uprising:

We would like to reaffirm our right to self-determination to this Commission on Constitution, Legislation, Justice and related regulation and to the Chilean Senate, for it to recognize and accept the Mapuche Constitutional Process we have been carrying out since before Chile's social uprising and which we have already entered into the record in a Session of the Chamber of Deputies on 12 June 2019, where we announced that we would definitively pursue the path of self-determination until a Mapuche government is created in the south. This government will be formed under the protection of international law, as the multilateral organizations that created international law have taken enormous steps against the Doctrine of Denial that the Chilean state has upheld with respect to the Mapuche People and their rights. (*Clarín*, 2020)

There are yet others not even paying attention to the process, as they are focused on conquering lands where they can create a territory and develop autonomy and self-government, *de facto*, without asking for anyone's permission (*El Libero*, 2019). Héctor Llaitúl, leader of the CAM and of the idea

of rebuilding the Mapuche nation through political action and praxis (taking self-defence into consideration), puts it this way:

The constitutional process does not guarantee a structural transformation that can resolve the underlying problems and the colonial violence to which we are subjected. It is therefore contradictory for some “enlightened” individuals, supposed intellectuals of our history and the history of the peoples in Abya Yala, to aspire to participate in these lofty institutional spaces with plurinational features that have been used at the continental level to intensify the neoliberal cooptation of ambivalent sectors who are accustomed to pleading with elites for political representation. (Díaz, 2020)

In synthesis, all the actors in Chilean nation-state politics are to some extent injured or fragmented and coming to the Approve or Reject plebiscite on a new constitution — seen as the mother of all battles for some, as “happiness is on its way” (irony) for others — unable to overcome their internal disagreements. The social uprising made the entire political system in Chile tremble and even caused panic among the ruling elites and permanent residents of the State. And although it has managed to excite citizens of different social strata, genders, ethnicity and ages, inspiring them to dream of a better or more dignified future, as they call it, things are not so clear in terms of a force able to carry out a plan for the country. The movement itself, lacking leadership as discussed above, does not have a long-term plan. Rather, it has short-term motivations: a set of complaints and demands already described in the first section of this paper.

The current environment in Chile resembles a war of positions in which everyone is fighting and reproaching everyone else and where the messianism of each limits the possibilities of articulating a general alliance against the current rulers and the model they support (rulers who, according to polls, could even form another government (*El Mostrador*, *El presidenciable*, 2020)). Indigenous peoples are not beyond this political game, in which the re-founding of the State that some talk about<sup>37</sup> seems captivating but has only an uncertain likelihood of becoming reality, at least in the short or medium term and in a fully comprehensive sense.

## Discussion: Hallucinating a “decent” Chile, yet staying grounded

Are we currently seeing momentum to re-found the State in Chile? On 25 October 2020, there could be no more doubts about what Chile’s inhabitants wanted in terms of the constitution. The “approve” option won the plebiscite that came out of the agreement on 15 November 2019 by a resounding 78.27% (*El Mostrador*, Con pandemia, 2020). The option for a Constitutional Convention won by 78.99%. These numbers have become the epitaph for the tombstone that will mark Pinochet’s constitution once the new one emerges. Yet they also describe a Chile that is not divided like the propaganda in favor of “rejecting” claimed. They describe a country held captive by political and socioeconomic elites who live in three districts in Santiago, where the “reject” option won, but not even overwhelmingly. (The “reject” option won in only five districts in the whole country, two of which are in the extreme north and extreme south of the country and three in Santiago’s rich neighborhoods).

The immediate consequences of the vote were a new slap in the face to the political system, and more precisely, to the political parties and blocs that have been alternating in controlling the executive (conservatives or the right vs. progressives or the centre and centre-left). The right, in particular, was resoundingly defeated. The part that insisted on defending the dictator’s constitution fell with their beloved constitution. The centre and centre-left, or the reformed left of the 1990s, tried to capitalize on the win, but there are those in the movement who do not forget that the governments it led as part of the Coalition of Parties for Democracy are as guilty as the right for the consequences of introducing the free-market model (with extreme privatizations in the economic sphere) and the neoliberal model (individualistic in the ideological sphere). Lastly, the maximalist left,<sup>38</sup> revealing its opportunism without a plan, tried to capitalize on the 49% of voters who did not vote in the plebiscite, with the idea that “the party of the NON-VOTERS continues to be the majority” (Gómez, 2020).<sup>39</sup>

However, not all is said and done to ensure a happy ending to this story. In the months to come there will be another vote to elect the constitutional members who will write the new constitution (11 April 2021). And here there is something to which we should pay attention, because it has and will continue to have a decisive impact on Indigenous peoples and their ability to move the agenda toward autonomy and self-government. As described in

the previous section, the agreement from 15 November 2019 had a fifth point (item ten in the official document) that says that a Technical Commission<sup>40</sup> would determine how Indigenous peoples would participate in developing the new constitution. Well, no progress was made at all in this regard between 18 October 2019 and 25 October 2020, which suggests that although a year of protest ended up laying some ghosts to rest (the weight of the dictator, his dictatorship and his constitution, for example), others continue to flutter about.

Let me elaborate. The procedure in the Technical Commission for agreeing to establish gender parity in the Constitutional Convention was more or less straightforward. Parliament took up the Commission's proposal (and the wish of the feminist movement) and issued a law to allow parity. Chile will be among the world's first cases where a constitutional process will have 50% of its members from each gender. In contrast, the idea of granting reserved seats to Indigenous peoples for the same Convention has become an almost insurmountable obstacle. This obstacle has transformed into a debate about who is Indigenous and who can vote as such.

Party elites in the right-wing government have proposed creating an Indigenous voter registry (and they are not budging from this position), in which people would have to register if they hold a document certifying they are Indigenous issued by the State institution that certifies indigeneity: the National Indigenous Development Corporation (CONADI, Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena (González, 2020)).<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, representatives of Indigenous peoples and opposition forces contend the following: 1) it is too late to do this; 2) Indigenous status is already determined by the Indigenous Law in effect in the country since 1994 (No. 19,253) and by the censuses conducted over recent decades in the country, which use self-identification (self-ascription) to determine the ethnicity of the State's population; and 3) insisting on such a registry would leave more than half of the country's Indigenous peoples out of the process, as they do not have the required certification. It would also reduce their representation in the constitutional process, which should be proportional to the sociological significance of the Indigenous population as found in the last census of the population in 2017: 12.8% (Carvajal, 2020).

Certainly, there are those who see no advantage in participating in the discussion if they do get reserved seats. They see the debate as an:

arbitrary imposition seeking to establish a colonialism regardless of the right to self-determination...[that] is utterly lacking in legitimacy due to the flawed process that has been established. In practice, in Latin America and the Caribbean, reserved seats are a failed political formula. (*El Desconcierto*, Aucán Huilcamán, 2020)

Apart from this last position, political life continues to debate the issue of reserved seats, although this discussion has become a drama as the date for electing the constitutional members nears (candidates must still be chosen, signatures collected to endorse them, campaigns waged, etc.). The frustration of not having assured Indigenous representation in the constitutional process a whole year after 18-O has been expressed as follows by the only two Mapuche parliamentarians, who occupy seats in both the chamber of deputies and in the senate and who have been spearheading the debates in the Congress:

The right should assume its responsibility to the country... the representatives of the executive and the ruling party have maintained a permanent position of requiring Indigenous voters to build a special [voter] registry... Indigenous representation in the Convention may be equivalent to 12.8 percent of the Indigenous population, in line with the 2017 Census (Senator Francisco Huenhumilla, PDC, in: *Cambio 21*, 2020).

Today, and given the current context, they are demanding that Indigenous people register in a special registry, and it is based on enrollment in this registry that they will calculate the percentage of reserved seats, which seems ridiculous to me, they just want to reduce Indigenous participation to a minimum. The government and the economic powers surely do not like us being able to write a constitution, because they are afraid of the Indigenous view with respect to territorial and political rights, which they have always denied us.... The Pre-Existing Nations are almost 13 percent of the population according to the national census, and as such, our representation should be in proportion to this percentage of the population in order to have legitimate

and democratic participation when writing a New Plurinational Constitution. (Deputy Emilia Nuyado, PS, in: *Clarín*, 2020)

These arguments, which reveal frustration, reflect how the elites — primarily but not exclusively of the right<sup>42</sup> — seek to manoeuvre things to exclude Indigenous peoples from the constitutional process, or at least to reduce their representation in the process as much as possible. They thus buy time with their tricks until, out of exhaustion, it can be declared that no agreements could be reached with respect to reserved seats for Indigenous peoples, thereby excluding Indigenous peoples from the process. Indeed, the representatives of this position think that having been willing to consider reserved seats is already a concession or exceptionality in itself, because “in comparative constitutional law,” it is understood that something like this would go “against representative democracies” (opinion of Natalia González (2020), member of the right-wing think tank Libertad y Desarrollo (Liberty and Development), a think tank with a high degree of influence with the current government). But, according to this view, accepting self-identification to determine who can vote as an Indigenous person would be going too far, because:

a system of self-identification has many problems that go against the justification for reserved seats—which is to guarantee the representation of members of First Nations—and this system creates electoral uncertainty and permits a potentially implicit double representation. (opinion of Luciano Simonetti, Libertad y Desarrollo, in González, 2020)

Finally, they note that granting the number of reserved seats requested by their antagonists would mean a failure to respect other Chileans, whose votes would have less weight than Indigenous constituents because, they claim, there are very large districts in the country, “mega districts like Maipú, with more than one million voters, that have the right to elect eight seats. Failing to consider this in the debate threatens the principle of equality and proportionality of the citizens’ vote” (*El Mostrador*, *Escaños reservados*, 2020). They have therefore offered 15 seats out of the 155 constituents to be elected. This is five seats less than what should correspond to Indigenous peoples, considering that they make up 12.8% of Chile’s population (according to the 2017 census there are 2,185,792 people who identify as Indigenous). This particularly

affects the potential Mapuche representation, as they alone make up 87% of the country's Indigenous population. Proponents of this view continue to argue that "the participation and representativity of Indigenous peoples" must be combined with "the principle of equality and proportionality of the vote that prevails in our electoral system" (*El Mostrador*, Escaños reservados, 2020). With this argument, they seek to have the representation of Indigenous peoples meet the requirements of "best practices at the global level" in terms of minority representation (*El Mostrador*, Escaños reservados, 2020).

After losing the plebiscite so overwhelmingly, why does the right continue to act against the popular will, which, in line with the spirit of the vote on 25 October 2020, clearly favors the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the constitutional assembly in proportion to their population in the country? Perhaps we have to look further back in the immediate history of the country's post-dictatorship democracy to understand this attitude. As Nuyado suggests above, elites fear the political empowerment of Indigenous peoples because they associate it with the atomization of the country (leaving aside explanations that allude to racism, as seen in Richards (2016)). The great fear of these elites is reflected in a debate that took place in parliament two decades ago. On 16 June 1999,<sup>43</sup> in a climate full of tension between the national executive and the Mapuche, when the Minister of Planning and Cooperation asked to revisit the long-stalled discussion about the constitutional recognition of the country's Indigenous peoples and approving ILO Convention 169, the right responded as I summarize below.

First, constitutional recognition, bilingual and intercultural education, and permitting international organizations to become involved in our affairs is bad policy. It would lead the country to a disintegration like Kosovo. Furthermore, in contrast to all the historical, anthropological and archaeological research that says otherwise, according to the right, the Mapuche cannot claim territory in Chile because it is a group that came from Argentina in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and as such, it is an extraterritorial minority (military-appointed senator Martínez Bush). Second, no subjects can be recognized as distinct from Chileans when they are part of Chile. The Mapuche are Chileans, and like any other Chilean, they have particular ancestral origins, but these do not make them special. As a result, their claims of autonomy seek to divide the country that has been so difficult to create. Granting them land, on the other hand, would be to condemn them to misery. Human development goes hand in hand with technological progress. They must be educated so they can

best be incorporated into Chilean civilization (Senator Sergio Diez, former Minister of Foreign Affairs under Pinochet and landowner in the Araucanía region).<sup>44</sup>

There is clearly, then, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century assimilationist nationalism in the subconscious ideology of the Chilean nationalist elites, who believe that every nation should have a State and that the Mapuche are Chileans, as that is the nation of the State. It is not that this nationalism has not evolved over time (with new generations). In a 2012 investigation by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), one of the chapters with interviews of Mapuche notes that today's young settlers and landowners in territory that was once exclusively Mapuche treat the Mapuche better than their parents and other ancestors did. Moreover, sometimes they do not even treat them in any way at all, because they live in Santiago or other important cities and leave their estates and properties in the hands of overseers who understand and relate to the local population (De la Maza & Marimán, 2013).<sup>45</sup>

According to this argument advanced not very long ago, then, constitutional recognition (a demand currently formulated as a plurinational state) could not be granted because it would be a prelude to a division of the State. Much less could autonomy or self-government be conceded, because Chile is a unitary State with a single government, and this too would make a fragmentation of the State more likely. These elites have since shifted to language that is more politically correct but effective nonetheless when it comes to preventing progress toward the political empowerment of Indigenous peoples, which is viewed with the same fears now as it was then. Ultimately, these elites, in terms of political culture and nationalistic ideology based on the nation-state, continue to be — or to operate unconsciously with the logic of — the large landowners (*encomenderos*) of the past, only in Christian Dior suits.

This is the big obstacle to progress toward Indigenous autonomy and self-government in Chile in the short term: the existence of (an) elite(s), anachronistic in their manner of facing the “other” and unable to recognize the other as a subject with political rights. Their delay in ratifying ILO Convention 169 gives them away (it was not ratified until 2008, almost twenty years after the first countries ratified it, and they only finally did so because they were facing a true Mapuche rebellion due to the murder of a young activist). Their failure to then implement C169 in good faith further betrays them, as seen with the precariousness of consultations and decision-making processes that would take into account what Indigenous peoples want, repeatedly



denounced by Indigenous peoples. It has thus been and will continue to be difficult to advance toward Mapuche autonomy and self-government in Chile as long as there are no changes to this 19<sup>th</sup>-century nationalist political culture and prevailing conservatism of the elites (including among those who deem themselves progressive).

Nor does the attitude of some citizens in the Indigenous community help toward this goal; they marginalize themselves from the political processes in the nation-state society, arguing that such processes do not concern them because they are an issue for the Western world, while they have their own issues. They ignore the fact that solutions depend on opening up the nation-state society from the top, freeing it from the padlocks the dictatorship placed on it forty years ago with its constitution, and making the country more decentralized politically and more inclusive in democratic terms than it is today, when it is currently considered the most centralized country in the world after North Korea (Valenzuela, 2017). And they believe that it is only with their own strength that they can defeat the ethnonational enemy, while they are a minority even in the very territory they claim and lack the social and military strength there to carry out such a strategy successfully (though some play with it, dangerously).<sup>46</sup>

Finally, waving C169 or the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the faces of their national antagonist, Chileans, or filing complaints in international organizations without the support of their own, has proven to be no better a strategy than direct confrontation. The current juncture shows that articulating alliances with those members inside the dominant nation-state who are receptive to the changes we want can lead to wins (however partial). Of course, these alliances cannot be built in the same way as Mapuche who are active in Chilean nation-state parties build alliances. Although they act with good intentions toward their ethnic group and may be good allies to them there, 30 years of post-dictatorship governments have shown that their actions from within these parties are of little to no weight when it comes to the transcendental political decisions of these political forces. And in some cases, their activism ends up being compromised in their positions of power, resulting in abusive acts toward their brothers and sisters: the activists in the autonomist Mapuche movement.

Yet, what weighs most negatively upon the Mapuche movement, while also a reason for pride for some, is its fragmentation when it comes to presenting its demands and fighting for them. Not having a single State-based

form of representation for all the Mapuche may have been a successful strategy for societal survival in the past, but it does not currently benefit the Mapuche in the context of today's nation-state macropolitics. Each organization thinks it has the right to reach its own agreements, although they all negotiate as if they were doing so on behalf of their "people" as a whole (the language in their declarations). The nation's dominant elites, depending on their political stripes, seek their own Mapuche with whom to negotiate. They create their "permitted Indian" that allows them to legitimize what are often integrationist and assimilationist Indigenous policies, thereby avoiding the political demand for autonomy and self-government. Along the way, they create in-fighting within the national Mapuche society, leading some to classify others as sell-outs, receiving in return the label of subversive or terrorist. If no efforts are made in the current, possibly more favourable, juncture toward a national Mapuche unity, it will be difficult for the rise of a united Mapuche nation — with the weight of almost two million inhabitants — to take hold and fight for autonomy and self-government.

## Conclusion

More than a year ago, at the Salvador Allende Museum of Solidarity, the self-organized neighbors in the República Stgo neighborhood demanded a People's Constitutional Assembly, a Chile with more culture, a state that guaranteed human rights and social rights, more democracy, more neighborhood organization, some fought for the end of neoliberal capitalism, the self-determination of the Mapuche people and nation, and for life without inequality. One year since that assembly, these demands continue to enjoy good health in the Self-Organized Assembly of the República neighborhood, so we are basically celebrating its birthday today, 24 October, and that is worth celebrating.

These words were written in a Facebook post by one of my former students in Chile<sup>47</sup> and shared among circles of friends. Her words describe the motivations of the people in her neighborhood, expressed in a self-organized assembly in the heat of the protests in Chile. Her as-yet-unmet expectations, though they "enjoy good health," may never be fulfilled. At least those that

seem too ambitious, like the end of capitalism. Among other reasons, this is because the elites of the Chilean right (sometimes tempered by the consent of other, more progressive, elites), despite the blow of the uprising, remain strong and continue to manage to stop processes like the participation of Indigenous peoples in the constitutional assembly. These elites know and fear what Indigenous peoples will promote in this shared space: the opening up of the nation-state society to the political rights of Indigenous peoples, which include autonomy, self-government and the recognition of the plurinational nature of the State.

The battle for this space continues at the time of this writing, and there may yet be some type of favorable outcome to what the Mapuche are requesting (being optimistic), but this will undoubtedly not be the final battle. The Chilean right, and the nationalist Chilean elites more generally, no matter their political stripes, have not made the road to political empowerment an easy one for Indigenous peoples, either in the past or today, and nothing indicates that they will do so tomorrow, because their nationalist ideology compels them to act politically in this manner. If the right does not change its 19<sup>th</sup>-century way of thinking in terms of the nationalism it professes and its Cold War thinking in terms of seeing everything that threatens its privileges as communism, it will be difficult for it to promote a coexistence between nations that is any different from what we see today. Ideological and cultural changes tend to be slower. Even though the right is currently in a precarious state following the results of the plebiscite, we do not know if, after licking its wounds, it will turn a new page or hunker down and do more of the same (which is how we see its negotiators operating with respect to the reserved seats for Indigenous peoples).

Yet, tomorrow is a new day (so we shall see if Indigenous peoples indeed participate in the constitutional assembly and help bend history in its favor, even if just a bit). Other obstacles will have to be overcome if we are to continue to advance toward the objective of politically empowering Indigenous peoples within the Chilean nation-state society. It is worth taking a rest, enjoying and savoring for a moment having overcome one of the greatest obstacles on the road toward the empowerment of Indigenous peoples: getting the dictator's constitution out of the way. The converging wills of citizens from all the nations in the country made this moment of enjoyment possible. And it is not only a great victory. It is also a great lesson for Indigenous peoples — valuing what can be done along with “others” in alliance.

The words of my former student radiate hope, passion, and still one year after the events that triggered the developments described here, enthusiasm. They make us — those who in addition to our training as social scientists belong to the independent Mapuche nation — see that there are people among the “others” in the nation-state who also want to see us free or as free as possible, just as some of us wish the same for them. Given demonstrations of good faith and empathy such as these, it seems misguided to consider this a struggle in which all the “others” are our enemy (at least in the Chilean nation-state context). We must go beyond such polarized views of the conflict and take on our challenges united, both within the nation to which we belong and at the level of all the nations in the state. Perhaps it is too early to speak of re-founding the State. Surely, there is more road to travel. Yet there is no doubt that it is a desirable objective; it is the road we must travel.

## NOTES

- 1 This chapter uses the concept “Indigenous” to denote the descendants of the pre-Columbian population, in contrast to the descendants of Hispano-European colonizers. The contrast entails the notion that the descendants of the pre-Columbian population were violated and dispossessed of their assets by the non-native population descended from Hispano-Europeans, with the most important asset being land.
- 2 Political autonomy is understood here as a form of peoples’ right to self-determination, which does not involve secession but rather the exercise of government by Indigenous peoples inside a State.
- 3 Mapuche is used in this text without an “s” for the plural form. The word means/ is translated as people of the land (mapu=land; che=people). That is, it is already pluralized. The Mapuche are the largest Indigenous population in Chile. With 1.7 million people, they make up 87% of the country’s Indigenous population and approximately 10% of the country’s entire population (Serval, 2017).
- 4 Chile lived under a military dictatorship from September 1973 to March 1990.
- 5 The main contradiction in Chile is not between some kind of socialism vs. capitalism but between a life with dignity for all the country’s inhabitants and a form of (free-market, neoliberal) capitalism. It is about “going from a right-wing state [*de derecha*] to a state of law [*de derecho*]” (La Cosa Nostra, *La alegría*, 2020). Translator’s note: the quote plays with the similarities between the Spanish words for “right-wing” and “law”.
- 6 By “course” I imply a continuity in the ideas and political praxis of the elites in terms of excluding other social and ethnonational sectors from State power (government-State).
- 7 On 8 October 2019, President Piñera described Chile as an oasis amid a Latin America in upheaval. In his words, Chile was a stable democracy with employment on the rise (Romero, 2019).

- 8 The government coalition, “Let’s go, Chile” (Chile vamos), is made up of the following parties: National Renewal (RN, Renovación Nacional), Independent Democratic Union (UDI, Unión Demócrata Independiente) and Political Evolution (Evopoli, Evolución Política).
- 9 The opposition is made up of the following parties: Christian Democracy, Socialist Party, Radical Party, Party for Democracy, Communist Party and Broad Front (FA, Frente Amplio). There are also very small parties outside the institutional framework, whose strength and impact are difficult to measure (anarchists, Trotskyists and others).
- 10 As a result of the social uprising, parliament has debated and passed laws at a speed never before seen (*El Desconcierto*, De dos años a 15 días, 2020).
- 11 Co-opted by political parties since its origins and with enormous problems of political corruption within, as described in the article by Macarena Segovia (2019).
- 12 Social explosion is the term I use to refer to the mobilization of protest. The concept describes an uprising without political leadership, lacking the leadership of any political force.
- 13 Some workers travel for up to two hours on public transit to get to their jobs and then to return home. Getting up earlier in this context is no joke. It has an enormous impact on their family lives.
- 14 Associated with the evasion movement, graffiti began to appear inviting people to evade and using the image and name of President Sebastián Piñera. In a case widely publicized in the press just a few months before, the president had reached an agreement with Chile’s Internal Tax Service (SII, Servicio de Impuestos Internos), requiring him to pay five years of contributions for a recreation/holiday property for which he had not paid the corresponding taxes for thirty years (Carreño, 2019). The Chilean population saw this verdict as an example of benevolent justice for the rich and ruthless justice for the country’s impoverished sectors.
- 15 Some add to these 30 years the 17 years of the dictatorship, making it a half-century.
- 16 Zones of sacrifice in Chile are geographic places inhabited by humans where highly polluting economic projects are carried out. These projects are harmful for human life, causing diseases and miserable living conditions in the population as a result of water contamination, toxic fumes and more.
- 17 It is true that the 1980 Constitution has been reformed since its original version, but its essence and its main articles remain unchanged.
- 18 A process that Michelle Bachelet tried to move forward in the final months of her mandate, expressing very little political will to achieve it (along with the centre and centre-left parties in her coalition) and ending in nothing (Navia, 2018). Another instance of disrepute for the politicians, now in the opposition.
- 19 Position of the Council of All Lands (CTT, Consejo de Todas las Tierras) (*El Mostrador*, Dirigentes mapuche, 2019).
- 20 Position of the organization Coordinadora Arauco-Malleco (CAM) (El Libero, 2019).
- 21 The opinions mentioned here have been taken from lengthy debates and summarized considerably.

- 22 In the last two presidential elections, 42% and 48% of registered voters voted, respectively. Some attribute these numbers to the fact that since Piñera's first mandate (2010–2014), voting has been voluntary. Others, in contrast, attribute it to a disenchantment with the political system (T13, PNUD, 2016).
- 23 Triumphalism, according to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, is “extreme or ostentatious pride or excessive exultation over one’s achievements or those of one’s country, party, etc.” (Barber, 2004).
- 24 Electoral democracy, because it includes voting every certain number of years for political authorities, without any other form of citizen participation or citizen control such as the revocation of mandates, citizen initiatives or frequent plebiscites or consultations on matters of national interest or matters that affect the lives of all.
- 25 Thirty years of post-dictatorship democracy have seen the emergence of a political-corporate elite tied both to those formerly in opposition to the dictatorship and to those who sympathize with it, who alternately participate in governments and on the executive boards of companies (a perverse relationship that favours lobbying and corruption). The long list of names is available in the following sources: De Ovalle, 2019; WenaChile, 2020; Miranda; 2020; Meganoticias.cl, 2019; CNN Chile, *10 años*, 2018.
- 26 Example: university students in Chile from the lower and middle social strata must secure student loans that keep them indebted to the banks for 15 to 20 years (Freixas, 2018).
- 27 The uniform for high school students—usually grey, blue and white—is similar to the color of penguins.
- 28 The organizations that signed this agreement were those that confronted the dictatorship starting in 1979 and 1980. Most were fractions of the first and most important such organization that decade: Ad-mapu. Most ended in the mid-1980s, transformed into branches of nation-state parties: Ad-mapu (controlled by the Communist Party), Nehuen mapu (controlled by the Christian Democracy party), and Calfulicán (controlled by a fraction of the Socialist Party). There are also smaller ones (see Marimán, 1990).
- 29 Made up of the Christian Democracy, Socialist, Radical and For Democracy parties, and which the Communist and Democratic Revolution parties joined in Bachelet’s second administration under a new label: New Majority.
- 30 Several international rapporteurs sent by the UN have called attention to Chilean governments due to procedural abuses against the Mapuche. See, for example, the report by rapporteur Ben Emmerson (EFE, 2013).
- 31 The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 26 deaths in just the first month of protest (oficina Alto Comisionado, 2019).
- 32 According to Chile’s National Human Rights Institute (INDH, Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos), there were 4,075 human rights violations between October 2019 and March 2020, including 3,230 cases of physical violence, 432 of sexual violence and 309 of psychological violence. The uniformed police — the *carabineros* — are the main accused party, implicated in 93% of the cases (INDH, 2020). Amnesty International, citing Chile’s Ministry of Health as its source, mentioned that 12,500

people had gone to hospital emergency rooms as a result of the protests, and 347 had suffered eye damage. Amnesty International further denounced that, according to the Public Prosecutor's Office, 5,558 had been abused by State agents, with 1,938 hurt by firearms. Furthermore, almost 1,000 children and adolescents had been affected and approximately 250 people suffered sexual violence (Amnesty International, 2020). The Minister of the Interior has acknowledged abuses (T13, Ministro Brumel, 2019).

- 33 This was a rumor at the time which has since been confirmed implicitly by the former mayor of the Santiago Region and current minister in Piñera's government, Karla Rubilar, in a recent television appearance. See "Tolerancia Cero," CNN Chile 19/Oct/2020.
- 34 Given its importance, I shall return to this point in the next section. Full text of the agreement: <https://bit.ly/3pEDNIT>
- 35 Throughout the protests from 18 October 2019 to 25 October 2020, and with very few exceptions, no politicians have been allowed to join the marches and no space has been made for their signs or publicity. The protesters' rejection of politicians is so large and wide-ranging that it has protected the movement from being utilized instrumentally to benefit any particular political party.
- 36 As an example, despite talking a lot about social support in times of economic difficulty and during the pandemic, the government has not done much to mitigate people's suffering. Parliament intervened and passed a law, without the government's consent but supported by votes from legislators in the governing coalition (causing a rupture in the coalition), to allow Chileans to withdraw 10% of their retirement savings. This was celebrated by the population and represented a huge relief for many. It ended up leading to a reactivation of the economy in the short term (Cooperativa.cl, 2020).
- 37 On refunding, see the seminars organized by "La Cosa Nostra" (2020).
- 38 This includes small groups self-identified as anarchists (they tag their graffiti with the A in a circle), Trotskyists, the proletariat Communist Party, the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR, Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario) and others. In general, their struggle is to end capitalism right now, without clarity about what will replace it. Their influence on institutional political processes is minimal.
- 39 50.90% of registered voters voted in the plebiscite, which is considered the country's highest participation in a non-mandatory voting process. More than 7.5 million people voted (Serval, 2020). While the march of more than a million people had an impact on what has happened since October 2019, the more than 5.8 million "approve" votes conclude the transition to a post-dictatorship democracy and put an end to the right's guardianship of the political system.
- 40 The Technical Commission is a group of professionals, with diverse expertise from universities and research centers, who were put forward by all the parties who signed the Agreement to work on the details of the Agreement not resolved on 15 November 2019. Their resolutions are non-binding proposals. The details they were tasked with include the gender parity issue (already resolved), the question of reserved seats for Indigenous peoples and representation for disabled people in the constitutional process (still under discussion). There are no representatives of Indigenous peoples on this Commission.

- 41 This was an original proposal by right-wing senators Ena Von Baer (UDI), Rodrigo Galilea (RN) and Felipe Kast (Evo), later complemented with other additions by like-minded senators Luz Ebensperger (UDI), Julio Durana (UDI), Francisco Chahuán (RN) and Kenneth Pugh (independent).
- 42 I have already described how the Coalition of Parties for Democracy started to use a heavy hand with the Mapuche starting in 2000, which has led to the loss of human life. What characterizes part of the center-progressive elite is their hypocritical actions in more “politically correct” terms, as they seek to put on a good face with respect to the challenges presented by Indigenous demands, yet they either work against these demands when they could be helping to advance solutions like the ones requested or they just respond with repression.
- 43 This corresponds to the 6th Session of the 340th Ordinary Legislative Assembly, titled “Debate about the ‘Indigenous question’ in the Chilean senate: Summary of the Ministry of Planning Report and debate.”
- 44 Both of these summaries of opinions come from interventions in the 6th Session of the 340th Ordinary Legislative Assembly.
- 45 European settlers moved into the area, brought by Chilean governments to colonize the Araucanía region with a non-Indigenous population in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the great-grandchildren of these early settlers live in large cities (for professional or other reasons), leaving their inheritances in the hands of local workers. Contact between the owners of large properties and Mapuche often either does not exist, is very infrequent or is mediated by those who work on the property (Betancur, 2020).
- 46 Araucanía is certainly no Nagorno-Karabakh, with its own army and the support of an Armenia or a Russia that can ultimately run to protect it if the danger becomes too imminent.
- 47 Ximena Sepúlveda. Name provided with her authorization.

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