Why Women Protest

Why do women protest? Under what conditions do women protest on the basis of their gender identity? Lisa Baldez answers this question in terms of three concepts: tipping, timing, and framing. She relies on the concept of tipping to identify the main object of study – the point at which diverse organizations converge to form a women's movement. She argues that two conditions trigger this cascade of mobilization among women: partisan realignment, understood as the emergence of a new set of issues around which political elites define themselves, and women's decision to frame realignment in terms of widely held norms about gender difference. To illustrate these claims, she compares two very different women's movements in Chile: the mobilization of women against President Salvador Allende (1970–3) and that against General Augusto Pinochet (1973–90). Despite important differences between these two movements, both emerged amidst a context of partisan realignment and framed their concerns in terms of women's exclusion from the political arena.

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For John

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Preface

On October 16, 1998, British authorities arrested Chile's former military dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, as he recovered from back surgery at a private London clinic. Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón had requested that London police detain Pinochet so that he could be extradited to Spain and tried for human-rights violations. Just prior to the arrest, Pinochet seemed to be basking in glory and ease, symbolized by his friendship with Margaret Thatcher, Pinochet's free-market heroine. Pinochet's arrest focused the world's attention on Chile. In Chile, the event galvanized the dictator's old supporters into action. Scores of women flew to London on chartered jets to support the general. They held vigils to pray for Pinochet's return to Chile. Their speeches invoked the same rhetoric they had used against Chilean President Salvador Allende nearly three decades earlier. "We women will fight until the end so that a Marxist government never returns to power in this country," said Patricia Maldonado, leader of a group called "Women for the Dignity of Chile," according to the *Santiago Times* (December 16, 1998). In Santiago, pro-Pinochet women burned British flags outside the British and Spanish embassies to demand his return.

Women's fervor for Pinochet provides a stark contrast to the view of Latin American women as *supporters* of democracy. Most of the news about women in Latin America in the past two decades has highlighted women's efforts to promote the return to civilian rule and bring human-rights violators to justice. In Chile, for example, women formed a movement against the military in the late 1970s and 1980s. These two different perspectives on women's mobilization could not have been more clear to me than when I interviewed activists from both movements in the early 1990s. Before I left to do my fieldwork, I worried that activists from the

anti-Allende movement would not want to talk with me. Given the international community's uniform condemnation of the dictatorship, I felt sure they would feel ashamed of having supported the 1973 coup. My fears proved to be unwarranted. Most of the anti-Allende women I contacted readily granted me interviews and recalled their activist past with fondness and enthusiasm. Several of them showed me miniature "empty pot" pins that had been made to commemorate their participation in the famous "March of the Empty Pots" against Allende. One of the women I interviewed gave me one that was made of bronze, but claimed to have one "made of solid gold, from Cartier in Paris." These women believed that Pinochet had saved Chile from ruin at the hands of a socialist leader. During one interview, activist María Correa choked back tears as she read aloud a poem about women's opposition to Allende. The poem, "Knocking on the Doors of the Barracks," starts like this:

> Sobbing, we knocked on the doors of the barracks, calling to the blue sailors, begging the soldiers, the air force pilots, to those born here, by God rescue the country we once had from this ignominy![1]

Of the women I interviewed who were associated with the Right, not one expressed remorse about what had happened during the military regime. On the contrary: Pinochet's arrest reawakened women's passionate feelings of loyalty and gratitude for the dictator.

Certainly not all women in Chile supported the military dictatorship. Many of those who had helped bring Pinochet to power in 1973 later became involved in the mobilization of women *against* Pinochet. They felt deep shame for their role in anti-Allende activities. When I asked a former Christian Democratic congresswoman to talk about the March of the Empty Pots, she closed her eyes and said, "I don't want to remember all that. I never banged on empty pots. In reality, I never thought that a coup was the solution. . . . I went to the march to see what was happening, but I did not actually march. I tell you now, I did not go. I always thought that the thing to do was hold a plebiscite [on the Popular Unity]. In my memory, in my conscience, I was never a *golpista*." The pain my questions caused this woman gives eloquent testimony to her feelings of regret about the way the military regime turned out. In some ways it has only recently

[1] The complete text of this poem, "Golpeando las puertas de los cuarteles" by Nina Donoso, appears in María Correa, *Guerra de las mujeres* (Santiago: Editorial Universidad Técnica del Estado, 1974), 144–5.

become possible to consider these two movements dispassionately, after more than a decade of efforts to reconcile the past.

Methodology

This study forwards a general framework to explain the emergence and evolution of women's protest movements. I treat the two movements in question here as separate cases in order to generate multiple observations from a single country, and thus increase the validity of the inferences I draw about the conditions that foster mobilization among women. These movements constitute "most different cases" because of their distinct and mutually opposed ideological orientations. By comparing two such dramatically different cases, this study throws into relief the similarities they share. Within each case I examine failed and successful efforts to catalyze a movement, providing variation on the dependent variable. The research design and theoretical emphasis of this study represent an effort to enhance the fundamental claims of a literature that has been largely descriptive.

This research builds on fifty extensive interviews conducted with activists in the anti-Allende and anti-Pinochet movements (twenty-five each, from both leaders and followers) and more than twenty-five interviews with Chilean academics, party leaders, and government officials. These interviews took place during trips to Santiago in 1990, 1993–4, 1996, 1998, and 1999. This study also draws heavily from archival materials, particularly Chilean newspapers and magazines. Media coverage of women's activities provided me with information about the details of particular protests as well as the rhetorical "spin" that different groups put on these events. I also relied on movement documents provided to me by activists, and the excellent microfilm collection of pamphlets on Chilean women's organizations created by Peter T. Johnson, Bibliographer for Latin America, Spain, and Portugal at the Princeton University Library.

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The ideas presented in this book benefited a great deal from comments I received at conferences and seminars. I thank Norman Schofield, Itai Sened, and Sunita Parikh for giving me the opportunity to present my work at the annual conferences at the Center for Political Economy at Washington University. I first tried out the main argument of this book at the "Political Institutions, Cultural Norms and Mobilization" conference there in December 1999 and received astute suggestions from Randy Calvert, Ken Shepsle, and Margaret Levi. I have presented other parts of the book at the annual meetings of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), the American Political Science Association, and the Midwest Political Science Association. I made substantial revisions to the manuscript during two stints at Harvard University in 1999 and 2001. I am grateful to Jorge Dominguez at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and to Jim Alt and Gary King at the Center for Basic Research in the Social Sciences at Harvard for providing all the resources I needed to think and write, as well as an intellectually stimulating environment.

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very first day of fieldwork in Chile to the final editing. Our friendship and our weekly phonecalls have sustained me.

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In *Peer Gynt*, Henrik Ibsen wrote: "to live, that is to do battle with the trolls; to write, that is to sit in judgement on one's self." My friend Margaret Talcott used this as her senior quote in our college yearbook and it has resonated with me ever since. At times I judged myself quite harshly while writing this book, but my dad, Joe Baldez, intervened at a critical moment to rescue me from all that. Thanks Dad!

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