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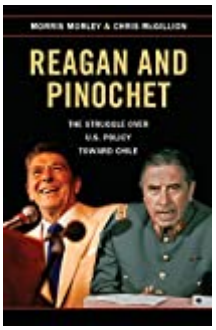

Morris H. Morley, Chris McGillion. *Reagan and Pinochet: The Struggle over U.S. Policy toward Chile.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 352 pp. $95.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-107-08763-7; $34.99 (paper), ISBN 978-1-107-45809-3.

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Morris Morley and Chris McGillion have written a richly documented, process-oriented exposÃ© of the Ronald Reagan administrationâs foreign policy decision making towards Augusto Pinochetâs dictatorship in Chile. The authorsâ combination of declassified and archival sources with interviews of elites (including Chilean leaders from the regime and opposition as well as former Reagan administration officials) makes for exhaustive and meticulous support in unpacking policy decisions and profiling key actors and their evolving positions. The volume provides a tremendous resource for analysts of US policy in Latin America, with a narrative following a clear chronological progression through the Reagan era, backed by numerous cross-referenced quotations, both contemporary and retrospective.

More broadly, the book should be required reading for any analysts who still believe that states fundamentally behave like unitary rational actors. *Reagan and Pinochet* details how US leaders regularly disagreed over desired outcomes in Chile, individuals and coalitions changed positions at several apparent turning points, and uncomfortable gaps emerged between public rhetoric, private diplomacy, and concrete actions. The book is at its best documenting the infighting within and between the State Department and National Security Council (at times the Pentagon and Treasury), and Congress (from Edward Kennedy to Jesse Helms) and the executive branch. Disputes involved a range of issues, such as economic sanctions and multilateral loan authorizations, bilateral military training and equipment provision, and United Nations (UN) votes on human rights censures. Reagan is notably absent from most of the book, passing by at rare moments to endorse a memorandum, supervise a meeting, or issue an enigmatic proclamationâthis is probably an accurate assessment of his role, based on studies of his leadership style. *Reagan and Pinochet* tells a story of personal, organizational, and ideological conflicts within the US government, the fluctuating outcomes of which are hard to predict on the basis of abstract notions of US national interest.

The book is also instructive reading for anyone in the security studies field who calls for one country to pressure another into major policy reform, whether on human rights abuses, economic restructuring, counterterrorism, or nuclear developments, let alone regime change. It may be at least as hard to coerce allies as adversaries: geopolitical alignment does not imply many common interests, friendship translates into precious little leverage, and interdependence deters the use of mutually painful sanctions. Whether one favors US engage-

ment or coercion with respect to regimes in Iran, Pakistan, North Korea, and elsewhere, *Reagan and Pinochet* is a sobering and valuable piece of work.

Despite its strengths, *Reagan and Pinochet* is a maddening read, largely because it offers a pointillist portrait of a fragmented cohort of policy actors who regularly seem confused about their own mission, or at a loss about how to implement it. Aggregating upwards from the mass of declassified cables and memoranda, it is hard to derive clear answers to several fundamental questions. When, if at all, did the Reagan administration develop a policy of democracy promotion with respect to Chile, and why? If the United States did seek Chilean democracy against other priorities, what exactly did it do to achieve this outcome (and why did it not act more forcefully and coherently)? Lastly, what impact did any of this have on the course of events in Chile, and how should we revise our understanding relative to previous works that might have misinterpreted the Reagan-Pinochet relationship?

Reagan and Pinochet could have clarified the yardstick that scholars should use to measure US commitment to democracy promotion. The authors clearly lay out Reagan-era policy contestation and convolution throughout the monograph, but the initial framing seems to stack the deck against any real acknowledgement of policy change. If John F. Kennedyâs Latin American policies in 1961 do not qualify as pro-democracy, and if Jimmy Carter in 1977 was not serious about promoting human rights, then we have a near-impossible standard for claiming that Reagan was committed to Chilean democratization.[1]

The authors propose to assess a âpolicy shift from a âclose embraceâ to a more complex approach that put Chilean democracy on Washingtonâs agenda â¦ a shift in tactics, not a change in historic overarching policy objectivesâ (p. 24). However, one of the more significant documents the authors present, minutes from a National Security Council meeting in November 1986 (from the Reagan Library), reveals a rare indication of Reaganâs own mind. The document reveals that Reagan still opposed regime change, or at least upsetting Pinochet, despite Secretary of State George Shultzâs nearly insubordinate opposition. Instead, Reagan wanted to âindicate that we respect what [Pinochet] has accomplished,â and âmaybe we should think about a state visitâ (p. 191). Nor does this passage indicate that Reagan later changed his mind on Chile. Although the authors state that Shultz won the meeting and went on to push his policies through the administration, they also note on the same page that Shultz did not believe that preventing multilateral loans should be used to pressure Chile (p. 192).

Turning from objectives to instruments, what did the Reagan administration say and do towards Chile, and did this clearly incentivize regime change? The book presents a dispiriting chronicle of hopelessly mixed messages from Washington to Santiago. In the section titled âSigns of Change in Washingtonâ the authors mention Reaganâs 1982 speech to the British parliament âoutlining his global democracy crusadeâ (p. 45). The authors quote an interview with one US ambassador to Chile that the speech meant that âU.S. âunderstandingâ of Pinochet had its limits,â and they argue that âChilean officials were already picking up on that message,â but in the same paragraph they cite a memo from the ambassadorâs predecessor who âemphatically denied that this was part of an attempt to increase the pressure on Chile to quicken the transition away from military ruleâ (p. 47). As the debt crisis broke over the region in 1982-83, Chileâs finance minister âmaintained that Washingtonâs strong and consistent support of Chile during debt negotiations certainly blunted U.S. criticism about the pace of political reformâ (p. 51). A similar situation was replayed when, on consecutive days in 1984, as the authors observe, the State Department criticized Chileâs human rights record and the US representative to the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) voted to authorize a $125 million development loan to Chile (p. 102). How much âmild pressureâ on Chile really resulted from trying (and failing) to postpone the IADB vote on another loan that year, then abstaining from the vote? This is particularly true in light of one US official telling journalists that this would âsend a signal,â while another told businesses that it âdid not signify any policy shiftâ (p. 110).

The 1985 visit of Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Langhorne Motley to Santiago is similarly bizarre because his âactions seemed to undercut the toughness of his messageâ (p. 116). He was ostensibly sent to push Chile toward a transition, but his briefing paper called for another four years of Pinochet rule and he recommended a policy of âconstructive ambiguityâ (p. 113). Motley met with Pinochet and did not â[demand] the implementation of explicit democracy measures or human rights,â but believed he had âlaid down a marker â¦ of our interestâ in democracy (p. 114). He expressed his âpersonal frustrationâ to a Catholic Church leader, but âwaxed sympatheticâ with Pinochetâs foreign minister and told journalists that Chile was âin good handsâ (pp. 116, 116, 117). By 1987, the authors rightly argue that the United States still had âa policy adept at issuing

mixed signals,â and âPinochet was well aware of the limits to what he had to fear from Washington, and thus his ambitions remained undiminishedâ (p. 228).

All of this might make one wish that US policymakers in the 1980s had revisited their copies of Thomas Schellingâs Cold War classics *The Strategy of Conflict* (1960) and *Arms and Influence* (1966). A social scientist following the policy deliberations so carefully ticked out by Morris and McGillion might find himself shouting about costly signals versus cheap talk, commitment and communication, and the role of reassurance in compellent threats. On the one hand, leaders repeatedly mention âcredibilityâ with respect to not issuing threats that could not be carried out, particularly with an eye on reputation with other developing countries (e.g., pp. 190-193). However, Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abramsâs emphasis on âflexibilityâ in future policy (e.g., by symbolically abstaining on loan votes, knowing that they would be approved anyway, rather than actually trying to cut off funds for Chile, p. 119), as opposed to underscoring a clear policy commitment, flies in the face of Schelling.[2] And Abrams, the authors argue, who âtook the initiative in advocating a shift to a more activist democracy-promotion effortâ (p. 96), was probably the Reagan administrationâs most vocal proponent of pushing the Pinochet regime to transition out of powerânearly everyone else wanted to soften the pressure even more, if not to eliminate it altogether.

Reagan and Pinochet demonstrates that democracy promotion was not an overriding policy objective for the Reagan administration. If it were, then US leaders would have recognized that private verbal warnings and abstention in multilateral votes were not clear signals of such an objective. Sanctions that actually put US economic interests at risk, or support for mass demonstrations that risked strengthening the Chilean far Left, would have provided stronger signals of US commitment to democracy. Morley and McGillion make it clear that these were never on the table. Pinochet could reasonably conclude that the White House preferred him to almost all conceivable alternatives and that it was unprepared to run any risk of those outcomes emerging.

Conversely, Pinochet (who, as the authors note, taught geopolitics to the Chilean military) comes off as an exemplar of Schellingâs ârationality of irrationality.â[3] The Chilean dictator proved brusque and obstinate, prone to overreaction, bluster, and crackdown, swift to take offense, and reluctant to compromise. And this worked, sending numerous American policymakers (except those ideological hardliners who celebrated the Pinochet regime) into paroxysms of professional frustration, with reams of memoranda arguing that the Chilean leader simply did not understand US positions (e.g.. pp. 23, 44). Pinochet may actually have understood them at least as well as US leaders did.

This is primarily a book about the process and politics of US policy making, rather than a causal analysis of that policyâs effects on Chilean political outcomes. And, in any event, impact and leverage, the application of power and the efficacy of coercion, are always tough to sort out in foreign policy analysis. However, I would have liked to see the authors push a bit further in the conclusion to assess the consequences of US policy in Chile. Although it may be difficult to write accurately the history of Reagan administration policy in any other way, the concluding language seems rather contorted. Decision makers faced âthe problem of how to influence transitions,â how âto co-opt and shape political transitions,â rather than how to create or cause them (p. 312). Reagan staffers sought âto promote a return to democracyâ in the wake of the widespread Chilean demonstrations beginning in 1983âthat is, to âpromoteâ something which was perhaps already underway (p. 313). Perhaps damning with faint praise, the authors suggest that the United States âhelped establish the groundwork for a successful transitionâ; even though it was ânever in a position to exercise the kind of influence over events in Chile that defined it as a major player â¦ the United States was hardly a passive observerâ (p. 320). âAlthough,â the authors concede, âthe restoration of democracy was more a function of decisions and timetables determined by Chileâs internal dynamics than a response to imperial state pressures, the Reagan administrationâs contributionâ¦ was not without significanceâ (p. 321). And somewhat perplexingly, in the bookâs final sentence, the United States âplayed a less than decisive role in wresting political power from the armed forces,â but nonetheless âwhat ultimately transpired was the best possible outcomeâ for US interests (p. 323).

Meanwhile, the authors recognize that indigenous Chilean conditions were ultimately the most influential factors in regime persistence and transition, but domestic developments in Chile, from economic conditions to mass demonstrations, are taken as exogenous, and are briefly summarized as background before the book returns to the sausage factory of Washington. So too with regional and global shifts such as the debt crisis, the third wave of democratization, and the end of the Cold War. This sustained, close reading of the inter-

play of Reagan staffersâ communications, at which Morley and McGillionâs volume excels, recalls Tom Stoppardâs *Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966): foregrounding a series of arguments that are ultimately peripheral to the main tide of events drawing the hapless characters along. The 1980 Chilean constitution (approved at the voting booth) seems to have provided a clear and surprisingly effective template for transition throughout the decade, but the Reagan administration initially paid it no attention. Likewise, the Chilean oppositionâs formation of the National Accord in 1985 âcaught the Embassy, and thus Washington, completely unawareâ (p. 133). Rather than influencing the course of Chilean events, actors in Washington struggled to keep pace with them, continually updating new fallback goals, improvising a mixture of warnings and cajolery, and taking personal, organizational, and national credit for any perceived progress on the ground.

The authors have made a significant contribution by mustering and synthesizing the most authoritative collection of evidence to date on Reaganâs foreign policy toward Chile, but it is unclear whether the analysis upends conventional wisdom on the US role in Chilean democratization. The argument that Reaganâs policy towards Chile evolved from an initial embrace of the Pinochet regime in 1981-82 to a clear endorsement of the largely autochthonous referendum and election processes in 1988-89, with a great deal of oscillation and intragovernmental bickering in between (and thus that Chile cannot be interpreted as a clear case of successful democracy promotion by the United States), seems to support a great deal of scholarship written shortly after Chileâs democratic transition and without the benefit of declassified sources.[4] Likewise, Morley and McGillion may have an effective counterargument to earlier studies that lauded a relatively consistent and sincere (albeit marginal in policy success) Reagan commitment to Latin American democracy, and those that criticized a cynically instrumental (but systematic and highly effective) projection and manipulation of democratic transitions for transnational corporate interests in the hemisphere.[5] These debates and revisions remain implicit, but should be encouraged in future research on inter-American relations.

Notes

[1]. The authors argue (p. 8) that Carterâs âcommitment to human rights was never as âabsoluteâ or principled as the President insisted it would be in his inaugural address,â and more surprisingly (p. 9) that Carter âhimself ânever reallyâ understood what it meant.â On page 2, in two succeeding sentences, the authors mention the âKennedy administrationâs approval of the January 1961 coup in El Salvadorâ and then âBy the end of the 1960s, the failure of the multibillion dollar Alliance for Progress.â This elides altogether the Allianceâs emphasis (at least initially) on protecting democracy in the Americas, and it omits that the 1961 Salvadoran coup ousted not a democratic regime but rather a previous military junta.

[2]. See, e.g., Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 43-52.

[3]. Although the oft-quoted phrase does not actually appear there, the concept is developed particularly in Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 36-43.

[4]. See Heraldo MuÃ±oz, âChile: The Limits of âSuccessâ,â in *Exporting Democracy: The United States and Latin America,* ed. Abraham F. Lowenthal (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991): 161-174; Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 92-98; Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: US Policy Toward Latin America in the Reagan Years* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 11, 117-18, 145-63, 237, 240-1, 249, 253-54.

[5]. See, respectively, Tony Smith, *Americaâs Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 266-307; William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 146-200.