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# **Political Dissatisfaction and Elite Networks in Chile**

an empirical case study on social unrest in Chile

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## Introduction

Ever since Chile's transition to democracy in 1990, economic and political conditions have improved greatly. During Augusto Pinochet's presidency in the military government from 1973 to 1990, a reorientation of the Chilean economy was introduced to stimulate economic growth. Under Pinochet's dictatorial rule, neoliberal prescriptions set in place the foundations for a prosperous economy, one of the most flourishing in Latin America (Olavarría, 2003). Today, Chile is viewed as a successful example of a peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy whilst experiencing high rates of economic growth.

Despite this progress, massive student-led protests since 2006 have voiced the discontent about the Chilean education system, and specifically the profit-making in higher education. Nearly one million Chilean students marched, and over 950 high schools participated in the demonstrations (Cummings, 2015). Union members, opposition parties and government-workers were among those demonstrating. Events took dramatic turns when in the 2011-2013 protests, one minor was fatally shot, hundreds of people were arrested and the demonstrations turned violent with demonstrators rioting and police forces using tear gas to contain the demonstrations (BBC, 2013). Since 2006 protests have become more influential, hence the ongoing demonstrations which include students as well as representatives of many other social movements, such as unions of various labour sectors and civil society organizations (Siavelis, 2016).

This discontent about the organization of the education system stems from increasing levels of social inequality in the country (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013; Donoso, 2013; Kubal & Fisher, 2016). To the present day, the majority of the Chilean society supports the protests and in April 2018 thousands of demonstrators have once again marched in Chilean cities to convey their level of political dissatisfaction. Here, Luna (2014) argues that dissatisfaction within the Chilean society is evident and noteworthy when one looks at the low levels of partisan identification compared to a highly stable party system. These have fallen dramatically and protests have become more regular, often organized through unconventional canals instead of within established institutions such as political parties. Therefore, scholars speak of a crisis of representation in post-dictatorial Chile and question the durability of its constitution (Cummings, 2015; Posner, 1999; Siavelis, 2016).

This paradox of political dissatisfaction on the one hand and economic prosperity on the other demands investigation. While Chile is no exception in the world dealing with a crisis of representation, research is needed to understand why these protests are so common in a fully

developed, democratic state. Is the degree of political dissatisfaction high because of the historic-institutional path which Latin American countries share?

### **The historic-institutionalist addition**

One possible explanation is the persistence of “extractive elements” of Chile’s political and economic institutions which authors Acemoglu & Robinson (2008) discuss. The authors state that inclusive political institutions are pluralistic and centralized institutions. When a political institution is not pluralistic or centralized, it is considered to be an extractive political institution (2008). In this study, I argue that the theory on the decline of partisanship is not decisive and does not suffice to explain social unrest in Chile. Rather I find that elite networks have not been modified during the democratization process of Chile. These networks are maintained by political elites, who “prefer biased policies in favor of particular economic interests at the expense of the general public” (Persson, Tabellini, & Trebbi, 2003, p. 960).

In other words, there is an extractive legacy of Chile’s institutional path, and this is suggested as a direct cause for high levels of social unrest which is illustrated through the mass demonstrations. In Chile’s post-authoritarian political system over 60 percent of congress members were re-elected for a second legislative term, emphasizing the elite control over the nomination processes and a lack of pluralism (Bargsted & Manado, 2018). Moreover, the Chilean party system has become increasingly reliant on elite networks and the structure of Chile’s authoritarian constitution allows elite networks to firmly continue to dominate the political system (Bargsted & Manado, 2018). As a result, the gap between political elites and civil society organizations is widened even more. Therefore, I will use Acemoglu & Robinson’s historic-institutional theory to further develop my argument. Acemoglu & Robinson’s institutionalist theory is thus an addition to the theories on a decline of party affiliation, stressing the importance of the institutional path Latin American countries have followed and the effect this path has had on the formation of political and economic institutions within the democratic system of Chile today.

To sum up, this study aims to answer the following question: *why is social unrest evident in an economically prosperous Chile?* With this study I aim to show the strengths as well as shortcomings of the party affiliation theory on social unrest, and thereupon demonstrate the additional historic-institutionalist theory. The academic relevance of this study is to add a historic-institutionalist perspective to existing literature on social unrest in Chile, so better ideas can be generated on the implications of a decline in partisan identification on the future of the Chilean political system and the roots of social unrest in the non-advanced democracy of Chile.

## **Methodology**

To research the thesis question, a structured method to obtain relevant information is required. In this study, a case study design complemented with content analysis has been used in order to answer the research question. Using content analysis, data based on surveys which have been issued in different points in time help to substantiate the argument of this research. In addition, opinion polls have been used to supplement these findings. A case study benefits this research as the unit of analysis is Chile and it entails an intensive and detailed analysis of the phenomenon social unrest in Chile. The use of content analysis is a transparent and therefore objective method of analysis, according to Alan Bryman (2012, p. 304). The aim of this empirical case study is to demonstrate connections between the student demonstrations, which is the dependent variable, and the historic-institutionalist theory on the persistence of elite networks. Demonstrations are abundant sources of information. Accordingly, it is important to specify a timeframe. All student demonstrations of over 10,000 participants from 2006 to the present day will be analysed, as these massive demonstrations are unprecedented in the new democracy.

The examined surveys and opinion polls are conducted by various internationally recognized centres and organisations such as the think tank Centre for Public Studies (CEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Social unrest is the result of collective dissatisfaction of people in a society, and it is illustrated by atypical behaviour which disrupts a usual order in society (such as mass demonstrations). As Bryman (2012, p. 68) argues, ‘...case studies are frequently sites for the employment of both quantitative and qualitative research...’. In this study, arguments are derived from both qualitative methods and quantitative findings such as inquiries, newspapers, surveys, graphs and literature in secondary sources.

This study is organized as follows. First of all, theories on the decline of partisan identification will be analysed. Secondly, an overview of relevant political history is discussed, applied to the historic-institutionalist theory of the scholars Acemoglu & Robinson (2008) on the institutional path of Latin-American countries, including Chile. This theory supports and emphasizes the importance of the history of political and economic institutions, as they have an effect on social unrest in modern Chile. It explains the extractive legacy which are elite networks, relevant and still present in the Chilean society of today. Thirdly, the student demonstrations from 2006 to 2018 will be studied to comprehend if and how political dissatisfaction translates itself into demonstrations and consequently into social unrest. Lastly, a conclusion will be drawn and a discussion will be initiated.

### Party affiliation and institutional heritage

In this chapter, firstly theories on party affiliation and social unrest will be examined. The ongoing crisis of representation and decline in partisan identification in Chile will be studied to comprehend the roots of social unrest. Furthermore, the necessity for an additional theory will be discussed.

Since 2006 Chilean citizens, particularly students, have found a decision-making mechanism to challenge Chile's political system. This mechanism is the mobilisation of Chileans to voice their dissatisfaction through organizing demonstrations. The demonstrations have proven to be influential in changing Chilean politics, as governments have implemented policy reforms as a reaction to the demonstrations (Jara, 2014, p. 25). Even though the demonstrations have also caused scholars to raise questions about the success of Chile's democratization process, political dissatisfaction, citizen discontent and distrust in politics are phenomena recognized in many states all over the globe. Chile is no exception on this matter. Most Latin American countries have experienced a decline in partisan identification, although this trend has been most noticeable in Chile (Cummings, 2015, p. 49). Partisan identification is determined by an individual supporting a political party (for instance by voting). Figure 1 (CEP, 2017, p. 157) shows the falling average line of declining partisanship of Chileans between 1990 and 2016:

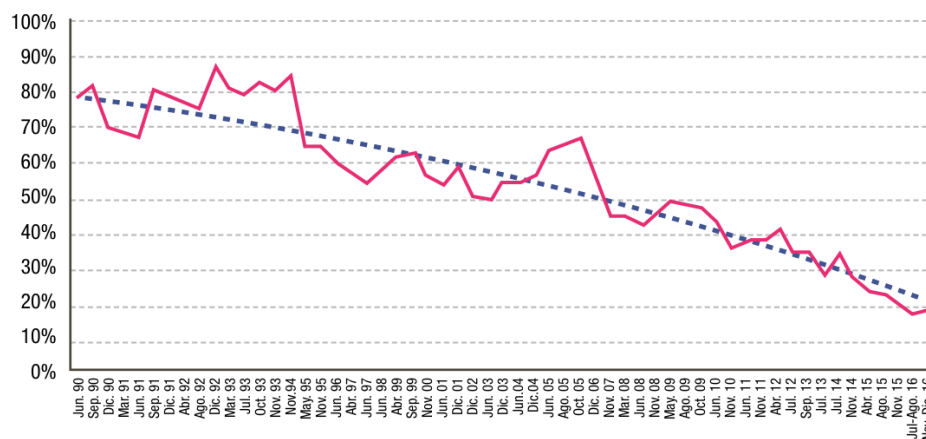


Figure 1: *Percentage of Chileans who identify with a political party, 1990-2016*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The percentage represents Chileans who stated the name of the political party before the following question was asked: “at the moment, with which of the following political parties mentioned on this map do you identify?” If the name of the political party was not mentioned on the map, it was recorded in the category ‘others’ and the name of the party would be noted. Reprinted from González, R. (2017). *¿Malestar en Chile? Informe Encuesta Centro de Estudios Públicos 2016*, p. 157.

Published by the Centre for Public Studies, the decline embodies the concern of many authors about the future of Chile's representative democracy. The CEP carries out national surveys and publishes reports in order to strengthen political decision-making and study societal expectations in relation to political capabilities. Since Pinochet's military rule, the relationship between the political elite and the Chilean population has been scarce and thin (CEP, 2016, p. 5).

In a representative democracy, political parties fulfil an intermediary role between the state and civil society. The interests of society are represented by those parties, they are articulated around them and parties observe and mind the hierarchy of interests and the selection of people who hold positions in governmental institutions (CEP, 2017, p. 157). In a multiparty system and representative democracy as Chile, the participation of civil society within the institutionalized structure is realized through representation of political parties. In 2012, an automatic registration and voluntary voting system was established to increase political participation (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013, p. 108). Nevertheless, low voter turnout and partisan identification levels have fallen ever since the return to democracy in 1990, the latter is evident in figure 1. In September 1990, over 80 percent of Chileans identified with a political party, however the number has dropped to 19 percent in July 2016. The gap between the political elite and Chilean citizens became a point of concern. The low level of party affiliation, and moreover, the trend of citizen identification with political parties which has fallen persistently emphasizes a crisis of representation in Chile.

There are a number of theories on the representation problem. Cácares & Andrés state that the construction of centralism in Chile restricted the independence and capacities of local bodies, and that centralism disintegrated social and political stability at the local level whilst reinforcing elite leadership. This meant that organizations striving for independence at the local level could not be realized to their full potential, dissatisfying local institutions and agents (2014, p. 220). In contemporary Chile, social actors have sought new channels to help them participate in politics. The student demonstrations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have created a realm in which public opinion has become stronger. This poses as a serious problem to the stability of the political system. As Bargsted & Maldonado argue, "weakly supported political parties are expected to encounter more difficulties when performing tasks that are essential to a democracy, such as gathering political support for new policies, recruiting prospective political candidates, mobilizing voters to participate in the democratic process, and articulating heterogeneous social and political interests" (2018, p. 31). This argument emphasizes the problem that a crisis of representation poses to the future of the Chilean democracy. Chile counts as a high-income

country and its Human Development Index has steadily risen from .70 in 1990 to .85 in 2015, ranking the country number 38 in the world and number one of all Central and South-America (UNDP, 2016).

In contrast, Chile is among the states with the highest Gini coefficient index, respectably at 0.45 (which signifies high inequality), according to the latest data published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2015). From an economic point of view, Chile is very prosperous. Nevertheless, the Gini coefficient demonstrates inequality. The index is a measure to calculate the distribution of wealth, which is evidently highly unequal and stresses the issue that only a small percentage of Chileans share in wealth. So despite all progress, socioeconomic inequality in Chile is a persistent and politicized issue (Luna, 2016, p. 130). Chilean citizens, especially the non-elite and citizens with a low income, have experienced the consequences of socioeconomic inequality for decades and have become distrustful of the political parties and consequently of the elected governors (Bargsted & Maldonado, 2018, p. 32). As a consequence, the decline of both the voters' experience as well as the interaction with political parties ultimately decreases the voters' ability to identify and affiliate with these parties. The distrust Chilean citizens have is evident in the results of the CEP survey of 2015 in which the respondents were asked about the two main reasons they had little or no confidence in the political activities in Chile.



Figure 2: *Reasons for distrust in politics, 2015*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked: “thinking of people who have little or no confidence in political activities, which of the following reasons do you think is the main reason for the distrust? And in second place?” Total mentions: 200 percent. Reprinted from González, R. (2017). *¿Malestar en Chile? Informe Encuesta Centro de Estudios Públicos 2016*, p. 171.

Figure 2 (CEP, 2017, p. 171) lists the main reasons why Chileans distrust politics and the political system, and as shown, corruption ('la corrupción') is the main reason for distrust and even listed far above one of the last reasons that political parties do not function ('el mal funcionamiento de los partidos políticos'). Even though political parties are thus not the main concern for distrust in politics but, González argues, such distrust is expressed through a declining partisan identification (González, 2017, p. 20-22). The following figure clarifies the distrust in political parties in relation to the perception of corruption in Chile's institutions:

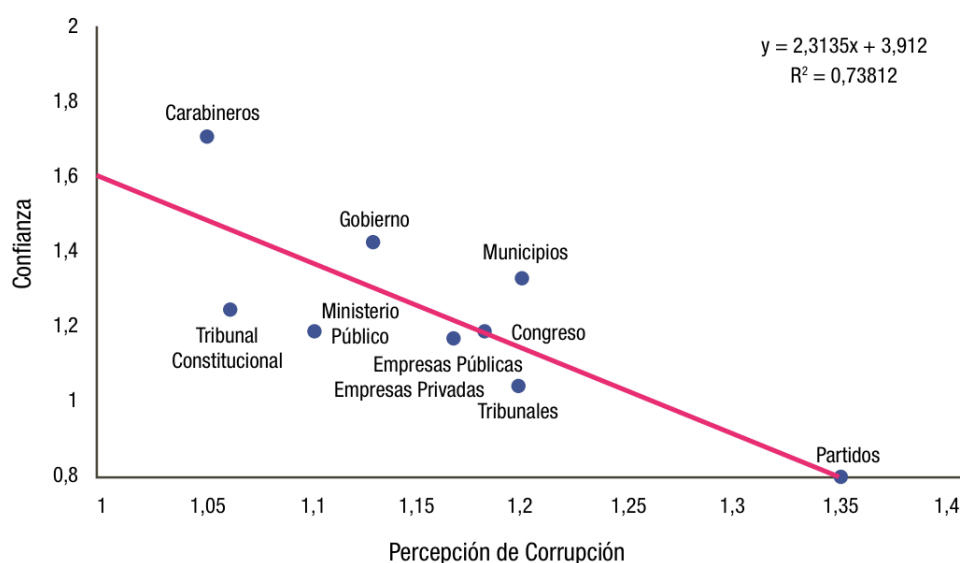


Figure 3: *Relationship between trust (vertical line) and the perception of corruption (horizontal line) in the institutions*<sup>3</sup>

The data in Figure 3 (CEP, 2017, p. 174) show that on average when citizens perceive a low perception of corruption, they tend to have more trust in the institution. The political parties are the institutions with the highest perception in corruption and the lowest case of trust in them, emphasizing the eroding function of political parties.

The discomfort of citizens about Chile's political parties is not only expressed by low level of citizen identification with political parties. It also directly connects with declining

<sup>3</sup> Figure 3 shows the correlation between the average confidence that individuals declare for each institution and the average perception of corruption. The higher the confidence indicator, the more confidence individuals have, on average, in an institution. The higher the corruption indicator, the more corruption individuals perceive, on average, in an institution. The data is based on the Audit Survey of Democracy in 2010. Reprinted from González, R. (2017). ¿Malestar en Chile? Informe Encuesta Centro de Estudios Públicos 2016, p. 174.



electoral participation since 1990. Moreover, low levels of trust in political institutions and an increasing number of citizens who actively want to participate in politics emphasizes the discomfort, because the government has failed to accommodate such means (González, 2017, p. 21). Olavarria, (2003, p. 10) gives an explanation for decline of electoral participation. Chile's neoliberalist prescriptions for its economy which were founded under Pinochet's regime, have reduced the role of the government in providing a good system of social welfare and in regulating economic activities. The data of the study strongly suggest that the Chilean party system is developed in 'a network of exclusionary institutions designed to protect a restricted democracy', which has thwarted democratic and representative performance (Olavarria, 2003, p. 10). It also negatively impacted the legitimacy of the system and this is shown through the decline of electoral participation.

All these factors contributing to low levels of partisan identification add to an existing crisis of representation, as stated by numerous authors on this subject (Albala, 2017; Bargsted & Maldonado, 2018; Luna, 2016; Olavarria, 2003; Siavelis, 2016). A study from Siavelis (2016, pp. 62-64) suggests that the democratization process of Latin American countries has happened alongside a trend of weakening the military, yet in Chile this is not the case. Ever since the 1980 plebiscite which approved the Constitution (created under dictator Augusto Pinochet's military rule), the military has played an important and strong role in the tight government control over its political processes. The post-authoritarian context is criticised over its questionable integrity as 'the strong limits to representation are embodied in the 1980 Constitution' (Siavelis, 2016, p. 64). In the post-authoritarian political system, established societal cleavages corresponded with citizens' commitment to parties and parties relied on the hierarchical structure to realize all its functions. However, since 2011 scholars have noticed that the influence of social movements and protests has become leading in putting major issues on the political agenda, instead of political parties doing so. Social movements can be defined as 'networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities' (Diani, 1992, p. 2). These movements have thus become more influential. As Siavelis states:

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While Concertación leaders often avoided controversial reforms or came to the table with incremental reforms, more substantial reform initiatives have been forced on to the agenda by more assertive social movements and protests. While this dynamic is most notable in the area of educational

reforms, it has also been the case for gender-progressive legislation, divorce, birth control, abortion, and gay marriage. This suggests that the pattern of *democracia de los consensos* (consensus democracy) and inter-elite accommodation no longer satisfy the Chilean public, and nor do the resultant reforms that have emerged from this pattern of politics. (Siavelis, 2016, p. 80)

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The theories on the decline of party affiliation do not suffice as an answer to the thesis question because they overlook the importance of Chile's institutional heritage. In this study, I argue that the elite networks which are present in Chile's modern day politics are inherited from its historic-institutional path. This institutional path entails elements which are 'extractive'; not pluralistic (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008). Elite networks contribute to persistent socioeconomic inequality and a continuous lack of pluralism, resulting in political discontent among Chilean society. This will be demonstrated in the following chapters. In contrast to the theories discussed in the previous chapter, Chile's political past as well as legacies from its institutional path need to be taken into consideration when studying political dissatisfaction.

The argument that this study derives from the dynamic influence of social movements since 2006 is as follows: the mass based ideological political parties which mobilized citizens and enabled citizens to identify with certain parties, are no longer evident in the Chilean contemporary level playing field. That model of representation does not longer exist, instead it is replaced by participation within the political system by actions of social movements. Such as students mobilizing many different organizations to demand political change. The previously discussed theories on partisanship show that it has been weakened and citizens have found alternatives to voice their discontent. However, these theories alone are not sufficient to thoroughly analyse the presence of social unrest in Chilean society. A new generation of Chilean students, sharing the identity of "la generación sin miedo" (the fearless generation) have led massive protests in Chile, expressing their political discontent (Cummings, 2015, p. 50). Chile has been the stage for many protests based on social demands and students are successfully protesting against the inequality of the neoliberal education model (Albala, 2017, p. 1). The next chapters will analyse the roots of social unrest by discussing the additional theory of Acemoglu & Robinson on Chile's historic-institutional path.

### Chile's historical-institutionalist path

Existing literature on political dissatisfaction and social unrest in Chile has been discussed by many scholars. In order to understand the constitutional process and civil conflicts in Chile, and the roots of political dissatisfaction and social unrest today, first of all a brief history on the transition of political power in Chile from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards will be analysed. Then, key elements and theories about the existing elite networks within Chile's democratic system will be analysed to formulate an additional explanation for social unrest. Lastly, the mass demonstrations in 2006, 2011-2013 and the most recent protests in 2018 will be discussed to find evidence for the additional theory.

In 16<sup>th</sup> century Latin America, there was no constitutional process that espoused the foundations for the adoption of democratic principles. The colonization of the Americas under the Spanish expansion began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 11). Chile belonged to the colonial state of Spain where the Spanish and Latin-American powerful elites ruled in an institutional environment called '*encomienda*'. The *encomienda* was a legal system in which indigenous people were granted to a Spaniard and had to perform labour services in exchange for conversion to Christianity (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 13). '*Haciendas*' were systems of large land holdings and proved to be 'one of the most stable and enduring of Chilean institutions' (Collier, 2004, p. 11). The geographically isolated and remote Chile was not as resourceful to the colonial powers as other Latin American countries, because it did not have dense populations of indigenous peoples within its main lands and the population was already centred in a small part of Chile (Robinson, 2013, p. 9). The absolutist control of colonial powers over political institutions and the accompanying extractive economic institutions thwarted economic incentives. The Americas were interesting just for grabbing natural resources and shipping them to Spain, but as Chile was not as attractive as other Latin American countries, it was regarded as peripheral. There was much poverty and because of a lack of mineral riches or indigenous peoples, the region was neglected (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 114).

After the collapse of the Spanish state in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the elite Latin Americans united to try to start an independence movement. A small upper class of *peninsulares* (colonial residents from Spain) and *creoles* (people of European descent born in the Americas) had formed at the beginning of the colonization. However, the colonial elite networks changed drastically in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when mass migration from the Spanish Empire to Chile took place. There was an authoritarian structure which was a legacy of the Spanish empire and consequently there was a lack of popular election opportunities. A pro-

independence movement became relevant at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Spain was challenged by the forces of Napoleon during the Peninsular War (1808-1813). The movement resulted in a civil war between elitist independents and elitist royalists to the Spanish Empire. Since the declaration of Chilean independence in 1818, civil conflict continued. The elite controlled the oligarchic democracy Chile had become. They formed the foundation for the elite networks in Chile. Popular participation was never stimulated in any Latin American country; neither by the Spaniards during colonial rule nor by the local elites after decolonization (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 29; Collier, 2004, pp. 36-38).

Oligarchic predominance, military intervention and authoritarian rule were prevailing in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A coup in September 1932 ended the Chilean Socialist Republic and led to a power transfer to the chair of the Chilean Supreme Court, who as acting president of Chile decided to host new elections. Between 1932 and 1973, Chile enjoyed democratic rule and held democratic elections to select its political leaders. Liberal and socialist models of economics and politics controlled Chilean policies (Collier, 2004, pp. 359-370). Populism was present in politics in the 1950s and 1970s, resulting in ideologically charged politics and a polarization of opinions. These rapid and violent changes are relevant to Chile's current political situation. Acemoglu & Robinson state that "inequities persisting for centuries under extractive regimes make voters in newly emerging democracies vote in favor of politicians with extreme policies" and that it is "the underlying extractive institutions that make politics so attractive to, and so biased in favor of, strongmen,... rather than an effective party system producing socially desirable alternatives" (2008, p. 387). In Chile, a history of disruptive politics and constant violent regime changes has not comforted its citizens and is still not comforting as figure 3 on page 10 of this study shows.

In 1973, the growing political crisis led to a violent military coup d'état which resulted in an authoritarian and dictatorial regime which would last until 1990. The leader of the dictatorial regime, general Augusto Pinochet, wanted to construct a 'protected' democracy in Chile and created a new constitution. Its nature was markedly authoritarian. A controversial plebiscite was held in 1988 to endorse or eject Pinochet as president for another term. Only then it approved the new Chilean political constitution of 1980 (Collier, 2004, pp. 370-390). As stated, scholars argue that under Pinochet's dictatorial rule neoliberal prescriptions and market-orientated policies resulted in Chile becoming a high-income economy.

However, the 1991 National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation Report in Chile determined that Pinochet's regime was responsible for over 2200 deaths for political reasons in order to bring about the reforms (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 38). The neo-liberal

economic reforms caused an unprecedented stabilization of the Chilean economic growth but could do so by the development of extractive elements in political institutions (such as the creation of the authoritarian structure of Chile's constitution). It was at the expense of the democratic principles Chile had pursued and implemented. Throughout Chile's democratization process, certain extractive elements of the economic and political institutions were not modified. The most important extractive element present in Chile's political system today is the existence of elite networks. In Chile, political institutions were created which made the politically powerful rich at the expense of the mass population. The economic and political elites were closely embedded in social networks, because early population was centred and elite networks consequently fused together. This made the elite networks strong from the beginning and it is a possible explanation for the persistence of said networks (Robinson, 2013, p. 10).

### **The foundations of elite networks in the current political system**

In the following paragraphs, the relation between inclusive or extractive political and economic institutions will be discussed, as stated by Acemoglu & Robinson in their book 'Why Nations Fail' (2008). The comprehension of this institutional theory of Acemoglu & Robinson is necessary to comprehend the current elite elements persistently present in Chile's political system, which will be discussed afterwards.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Chile was marked by an institutional pattern or 'path-dependent' change which generated economic stagnation, implemented mass agrarian reforms and caused political instability and social unrest resulting in violent regime changes, as discussed in the previous chapter (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 37). The scholars argue that politics and political institutions determine what economic institutions a country has and they emphasize the importance of economic institutions into determining whether a country is poor or prosperous. The political powerful concentrate or distribute power and directly influence economic institutions. Most societies with inclusive political and economic institutions have a history of creating inclusive regimes in which institutions can develop in a democratic manner whilst the mass population benefits from its success (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 362). Extractive economic institutions do not stimulate sustainable growth and therefore can be a cause for social unrest. Nevertheless, economic growth is possible under extractive economic institutions. Growth is induced when elites finance high-productivity activities in areas under their own control (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 92). Nevertheless, this growth under extractive economic institutions is not durable and it cannot generate technological changes

because of a lack of economic incentives and a resistance to technological change controlled by the politically powerful elites (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 128).

I argue that the inequalities between the elite networks and the ordinary Chilean peoples today can be understood when one looks at the institutional differences with historical roots – roots that are based on the elite mobilization structure that was developed during the colonial rule. The political and economic institutions not only in Chile but in almost all Latin American countries were created with one intention: to exploit the indigenous peoples. Even though Chile was in this context not as attractive to their colonial power as its other Latin American neighbours, the foundations for the institutions were created in Chile as well to generate wealth for the Spanish empire. Acemoglu & Robinson (2008, p. 19) state that “though these institutions generated a lot of wealth for the Spanish Crown and made the conquistadors and their descendants very rich, they also turned Latin America into the most unequal continent in the world and sapped much of its economic potential.” The institutions were based on a creation of monopolies and exploitation, which thwarted economic incentives or participation of the great mass. Private property was only for the Spaniards and there was no level playing field or legal system to support the mass. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the world was changing rapidly and colonial powers benefitted from a wave of globalization and technological innovations which improved international trade. Still, Latin American countries did not get rid of the extractive economic institutions to gain profit. The ‘open frontiers’ in Latin America were allocated to the political elite, as a result of the political institutions which made sure the valuable resources were distributed only to make the politically powerful more wealthy. The institutional path in Latin America is a consistent pattern, as a list of the nations from richest to poorest has not changed much. In other words, there is “a definite and persistent divide between the rich and poor nations within Latin America” (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 46).

Chile has become a democracy and created inclusive political and economic institutions. However, a persistent case of social inequality and a decline of partisan identification show that there are certain extractive elements still at play within Chilean institutions, resulting in a number of consequences. Although the emerged democracy in Chile opposes elite rule and aims for a pluralistic political system, there is first of all still an important aspect present in Chilean politics which contributes to social unrest: a persistent elite-controlled political network as will be demonstrated in the following chapter. Secondly, this aspect is a challenge to Chile’s democracy as the Chilean party system has increasingly become more reliant on elite networks and is elite-driven (Bargsted & Maldonado, 2018, p. 32; Robinson, 2013, p. 17). Thirdly, the mass peoples have a less direct interaction with parties as the system interacts with the

politically powerful elite networks. Moreover, it decreases voters' inclination to identify with parties (Bargsted & Maldonado, 2018, p. 32). It also suggests that political discontent in relation to a decline in party identification can result in mass demonstrations, as new generations become more aware of the elite structure in their political affairs and want to convey their dissatisfaction (Cummings, 2015; Luna, 2016).

A 2013–2014 opinion poll sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the representation problem in Chile found a gap between 'social elites' who were in favor of changing the institutionalized manners of decision making, including the development of a new constitution, and 'political elites' who opposed those changes (Luna, 2016, p. 129). The UNDP study separates social, political, economic and symbolic elites, where social elites are identified as "those who mobilize and represent citizen interests outside political parties" and political elites are "those who occupy the most important institutional and political positions in government and the party system" (Luna, 2016, p. 138). The reasons why political elite networks have not been modified since Chile's transition to democracy are firstly because in a time of a democratization process after nearly two decades of military rule, guaranteeing stability was of the utmost importance. Civil society needed to be demobilized so the elite could keep law and order and protect the country's stability. Secondly, a lack of adequate channels of vertical accountability (the electoral relationship between the governed and the governors) contributed and still contributes to a crisis of representation, legitimacy and integrity. The needs and wants of Chilean society are not fully represented in the competitive party system. Therefore, developing a fully representative political system is difficult in a time when the transition to a stabilized democracy is still in progress (Luna, 2016, p. 131; Luna & Altman, 2011, p. 5). There are deep socioeconomic inequality roots embedded in the system, stemming from its historic-institutional path.

Michelle Bachelet, president of Chile from 2006 to 2010 and from 2014 to March 2018, implemented a constituent process in 2016 in which the government was committed to replace the 1980 constitution developed under Pinochet's military rule. It has been a longstanding wish of social movements to replace and amend the constitution, and it has also been a motive for the student-led organizations which will be discussed in the next chapters. The constituent process aims to replace the elite nature of the constitution, as majoritarian laws control fundamental policies on important issues such as education and local government (McManus, 2016). These laws are the heritage of the authoritarian 1980 constitution. The Constitutional Court is powerful in regulating and countering progressive political projects and blocking reforms. Constitutional reforms have been on the political agenda long before Bachelet's

second presidential term, as the earliest constitutional reform took place after 2005. The Ricardo Lagos administration (2000-2006) emphasized the importance of constitutional reform by making critical changes. For example, the appointment of senators was eliminated and the provision for a seat for life for former presidents struck.

However, the structure of the authoritarian constitution remains and it limits representation for many ethnic groups and civil mobilizations. McManus (2016) argues that elites cannot respond easily to the interests of social movements. Legislature in Chile does not support many channels for direct citizen input in decision making. Accordingly, scholars argue that congressional candidates get selected in a party-dominated and elite-driven process where there is a lack of pluralism (Field & Siavelis, 2011; Luna & Mardones 2010; Navia, 2005). The formal binominal electoral system in Chile made it easier for the political elites to hold on to the control of the nomination processes (for legislative candidates as well as party leadership candidates), which meant that elites “consistently nominated legislative candidates with hardly any feedback from party members or activists, whether through election primaries or any other internal democratic decision mechanism” (Bargsted & Maldonado, 2018, p. 36).

Furthermore, political elites can be re-elected or asked to participate in other electoral districts which means that leadership positions are less available to new candidates. A parliamentary survey from The Political Elites in Latin America (PELA) provided data that showed that between 1994 and 2006 61.4 percent of Chilean congress members were re-elected for at least a second legislative term whilst the average in Latin America was 33.4 percent (Bargsted & Maldonado, 2018, p. 36). Michelle Bachelet has also been elected for the second time to be president of Chile and in January 2017 Reuters headlined that Ricardo Lagos who was acting president from 2000 to 2006 had accepted his party’s nomination and ran in the 2017 presidential election. In March 2018, The New York Times wrote: “In Chile, a Billionaire Takes the Reins From a Socialist, Yet Again” (The New York Times, 2018). Directed at the re-election of current President Sebastian Piñera, it emphasizes the embedded power and control the political elites hold in the system. The gap between political elites and social movements and organizations has not been changed since the authoritarian period and this means that the Chilean party system is not closely connected to society and civil society organizations (Bargsted & Maldonado, 2018, p. 37).

The latest administration, Bachelet’s 2014-2018 administration, has noticed the need for change but the recent protests in April 2018 prove social movements are not satisfied. Students lack basic skills after they followed education, the outcome of unequal and/or low quality of education, evident in the following figure:



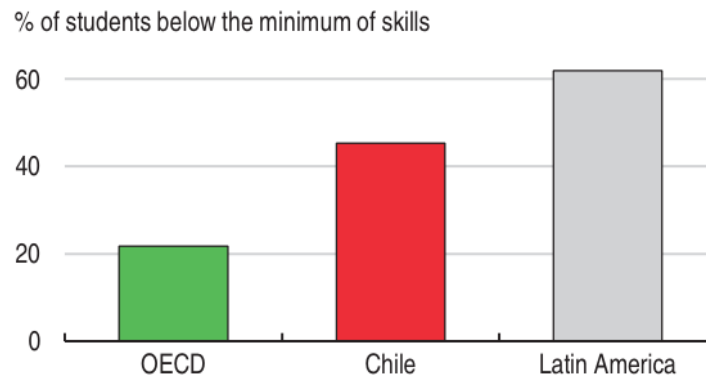


Figure 4: *Percentage of students lacking minimum skills*<sup>4</sup>

Constitutional reforms as well as educational reforms are necessary to close the socioeconomic gap. Figure 4 (OECD, 2015, p. 2) shows the high percentage of Chilean students (above 40 percent of all students) who lack the minimum of skills as measured by the OECD and compared to the average of other OECD member states (2015, p. 2). The quality of education in Chile is unequal and this is evident in post-primary, secondary and tertiary education. School enrolment numbers are high, but the for-profit school system and the best quality of schools being reserved for the middle class and elites are extractive elements deriving from Pinochet's constitution (OECD, 2015). It is evident that these extractive features are present today, almost thirty years after Chile began its democratic transition. As shown, movements are made to change these elements: Bachelet proposed legislation to implement a new constitution which eliminates the need for a majority to pass laws which promote for example equal pay for men and women and the right to strike for voters (Reuters, 2018). Even though Bachelet has not been able to push this reform through Congress before the end of her term, President Piñera will have to take the proposals into his current presidential term and civil mobilizations seem to stay active as long as those changes are not realized. In 2006, 2011-2013 and 2018, massive protests have gained international attention. The following chapter will study the motives for and impacts of these demonstrations which are the embodiment of social unrest in Chile.

### **The Pingüino movement and the Chilean Winter**

In this chapter, the student demonstrations from 2006 to 2018 will be studied. Data from inquiries, opinion polls and surveys will be analysed to compare the motives for the demonstrations and to study its relation to social unrest in Chile.

<sup>4</sup> Reprinted from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2015). *Economic Surveys Chile*, p. 2

Political dissatisfaction, as analysed in the first chapter of this study, is evident in Chile. Low levels of political participation emphasize the problem of political representation. The evolution of trust in political institutions has briefly been discussed on pages 7 and 8 of this study. To elaborate on these figures, a 2012 CEP survey found that the negative trend of government approval meant that the legitimacy of political institutions had eroded. Figure 5 (Jara, 2014, p. 32) demonstrates the levels of support for the democratic governments from 1991 until April 2012:

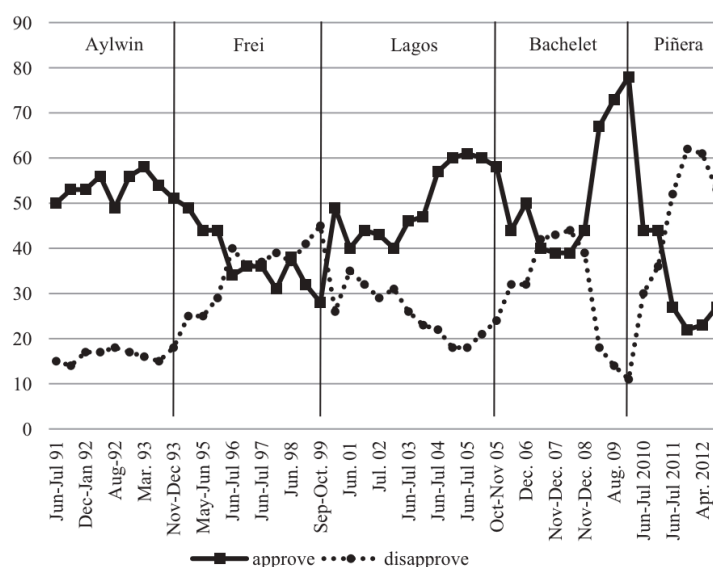


Figure 5: *Evolution of approval and disapproval of democratic governments*<sup>5</sup>

Piñera's administration was at its lowest level of approval when it dropped from 44 percent to 22 percent after the first wave of the 2011 student demonstrations. Bachelet's administration profited from the 2006 protests by implementing reforms, but when Piñera's conservative government took over the disapproval rate of the democratic government plummeted. In 2006, the largest protest movement took place in Chile since its transition to democracy in 1990. Since then, many more students led mass movements to voice their dissatisfaction with the education system in Chile, as shown in the following figures:

<sup>5</sup> Reprinted from Jara, C. (2014). Democratic Legitimacy under Strain? Declining Political Support and Mass Demonstrations in Chile. *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* (97), p. 32

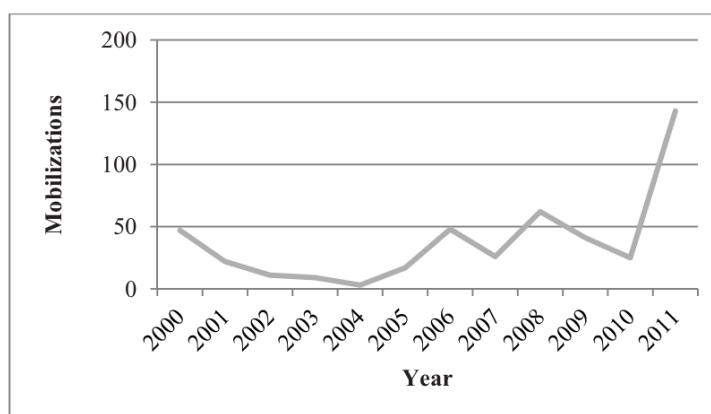


Figure 6: *Protest Events with Education Demands*<sup>6</sup>

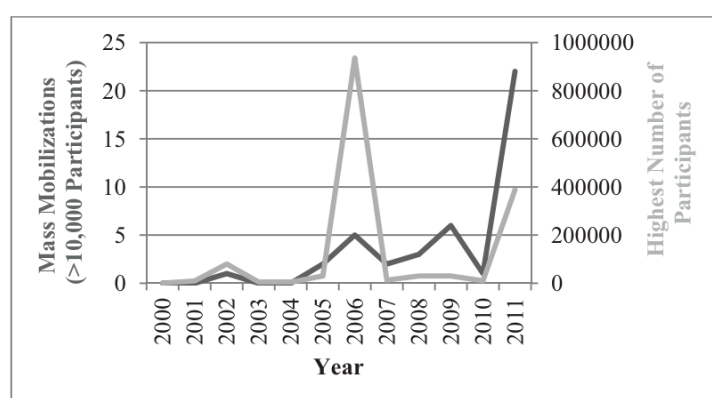


Figure 7: *Magnitude of Education Protest Events*<sup>7</sup>

Figure 6 (Cummings, 2015, p. 55) shows the number of protests about education demands from 2000 to 2011, and Figure 7 (Cummings, 2015, p. 56) shows the accompanied number of participants demonstrating. Before 2005, there had been almost 50 mobilizations per year (for example 47 mobilizations in 2000) but none had over 10,000 participants. The 2006 student demonstration thus drew unprecedented numbers in mobilization and movements. It caused social unrest as it took all of Chile by surprise. The fourth consecutive administration of the ‘Concertación’ (the centre-left coalition) had just started with socialist Michelle Bachelet as president (Kubal & Fischer, 2016, p. 217). High school students addressed the persistent case of economic inequality and inequality in the neoliberal school system which was implemented under Pinochet’s military regime (1973-1990). A General Education Law was adopted in 2009

<sup>6</sup> Reprinted from Cummings, P. M. (2015). Democracy and Student Discontent: Chilean Student Protest in the Post-Pinochet Era. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 7(3), p. 55

<sup>7</sup> Reprinted from Cummings, P. M. (2015). Democracy and Student Discontent: Chilean Student Protest in the Post-Pinochet Era. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 7(3), p. 56

to tighten the gap of inequality, however it did not fundamentally change the profit based education system.

The 2006 protestors were named ‘the Pingüino movement’ as the thousands of students aged 15 to 18 wore their white-black uniforms (Donoso, 2013, p. 2). The motives of demonstrations of the Pingüino movement came down to four reasons. First of all, the students demanded their education to be free of charge. Public and private schools in Chile were government-funded whilst formally education in Chile is free. Chile was the country with the highest rates of private spending on education of all OECD countries which meant that the increased expansion of post-secondary education was funded by households and not the state, increasing dissatisfaction among Chilean citizens (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013, pp. 112-113; OECD, 2011). Secondly, students campaigned for public education. From 1980 onwards, municipal officials were responsible for public, state-led and free primary and secondary schools. They competed with private for-profit schools, however since 1980 there has been a trend of privatization of publicly funded schools as shown in the Figure 8 (Kubal & Fisher, 2016, 222):

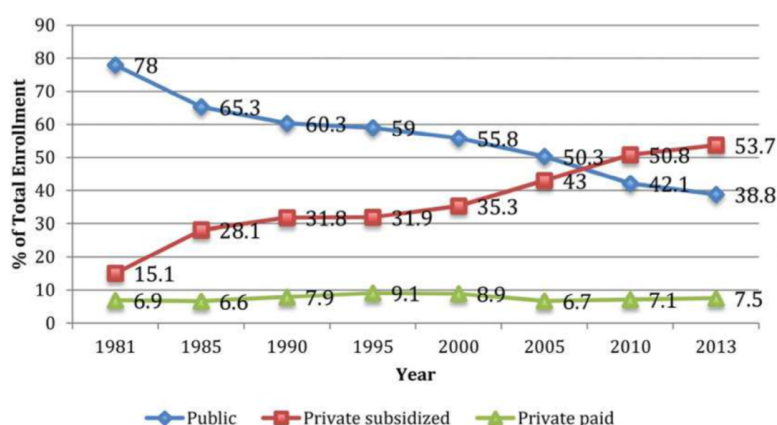


Figure 8: *Enrolment in Public, Private subsidized and Private paid Schools 1981-2013*<sup>8</sup>

In 2013, private subsidized schools enrolled 15 percent more students than public schools, the highest difference in percentage since 1981. Private subsidized and high-quality schools could select their students and be run for profit. As a consequence, poor, rural areas are usually not the site for the construction of new schools. Therefore, ‘more talented’ students from middle-class families do not have a higher threshold to be welcomed in such schools (Kubal & Fisher, 2016, p. 222). The gap between the social class segments in Chile cannot be tightened in this education system. The thought that good education can only be bought especially applies to

<sup>8</sup> Based on data from Ministerio de Educación (2008, 15; 2013, 28). Reprinted from Kubal, M.R., & Fisher, E. (2016). The politics of Student Protest and Education Reform in Chile: Challenging the Neoliberal State. *The Latin Americanist*, p. 222

low-income households who do not have many school options. This is shown in the following table:

Table 1: *Distribution of Socioeconomic Group by School Type*<sup>9</sup>

<b>Socioeconomic Group</b>	<b>% Enrollment Public</b>	<b>% Enrollment Private Subsidized</b>	<b>% Enrollment Private Paid</b>
A (Low)	79.4	20.6	0
B (Low middle)	81.9	18.1	0
C (Middle)	47.6	52.3	0
D (High middle)	13	81.6	5.4
E (High)	0	6.1	93.9

In Table 1 (Kubal & Fisher, 2016, p. 223), socioeconomic groups A, B and C have zero percent enrolment in Private Paid school and only a small percentage of the groups is enrolled in Private Subsidized schools. Elite networks and highly influential interest groups (with ties to political parties and/or ties to powerful organisations such as the Catholic Church) can lobby for their interests through the Federation of Private Education Institutions (Federación de Instituciones de Educación Particular, FIDE) which is one of the two major interest groups advocating for the education system (Kubal & Fisher, 2016, p. 223). Against the arguments made by FIDE, the students of the 2006 demonstrations felt the need to voice their discontent about the for-profit private providers of education. The third motive for the demonstrations was thus to reject state subsidies to for-profit institutions and consequently the neoliberal practices implemented in Chile's educational system. Finally, students demonstrated to reject discriminatory approaches of schools to select student enrolment which contributes to social segregation in education (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013, p. 112). Bellei & Cabalin state that "primary and secondary schools select students based on past performance, prediction of future performance, student's behaviour, family income, and other family characteristics" (2013, p. 113). These selective mechanisms are common in private institutions, especially in schools which receive state funding (Bellei, 2009; Contreras, Sepúlveda, & Bustos, 2010). Still, Chilean judicial and political institutions argue that educational providers must be able to create and maintain control over their own rules and that free enterprise in the Chilean education system is a right to be defended. These arguments disregard the notion of high numbers of socioeconomic segregation.

The 2011-2013 demonstrations drew even more students and other protestors to the streets. Eventually, it has been denominated as 'the Chilean Winter' by the Chilean media

<sup>9</sup> Note. Original general table note. Reprinted from Kubal, M.R., & Fisher, E. (2016). The politics of Student Protest and Education Reform in Chile: Challenging the Neoliberal State. *The Latin Americanist*, p. 223

parallel to demonstrations happening elsewhere in the world (such as the Arab Spring and Occupy movements). The demonstrations were based on the motives for the 2006 demonstrations, but this time civil society actors started occupying public spaces and changed dialogue from discussing educational reforms to demanding an end to neoliberal prescriptions in Chilean's political system (Kubal & Fisher, 2016, p. 230). National strikes, flash mobs, barricades, hunger strikes and kiss-ins were used as well to gain international attention for the matter and to voice discontent in a peaceful way. Yet the death of a fourteen-year-old quickly changed the situation for the worse as protestors claimed he was killed by a police bullet, a statement denied by authorities. Over 1300 protestors were arrested, two of them shot, and many police officers were wounded (BBC, 2013). The situation got violent and unpredictable, which is why the Piñera administration needed to act.

However, the Piñera administration (2010-2014) was not interested in negotiating with the movement leaders. It made educational reforms, but these according to the students “failed to address the heart of their demands that would change the fundamental outlines for economic and educational models” (Kubal & Fisher, 2016, p. 231). This is why in April of this year, over 120,000 students and professors again marched the Chilean streets (The Santiago Times, 2018). They fight the business structure of the education system and the loopholes in the law which protect the for-profit companies in controlling universities. In relative terms, tuition and fees at Chilean universities are one of the most expensive among OECD countries and the need for structural change is very high (OECD, 2011). In 2015, 80 percent of higher education students are enrolled in private institutions (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2018). Chile has the fourth most expensive university system in the world which subsequently means that graduates are tied to enormous debts (OECD, 2011). The positive effect the demonstrations had on enforcing change in Chile's educational system spread to other movements as well. For example, in the Patagonian region of Aysén people demanded more regional resources and in Calama people now had the courage to demand a greater share in the mining profits (Jara, 2014, p. 32). Entire towns went to strike and demonstrate, and there were clashes with the police. The Piñera administration recognized the issues and met the demands of the protestors. It was because of these student demonstrations that the “Chilean civil society went from a top-down oriented transition to one in which citizens took control of the public agenda, defining which issues were given top priority, the most urgent law projects and media content, as well as organizing public debates within civil groups” (Jara, 2014, p. 32). The demonstrations led the Chilean society to believe that change could be enforced by collectively demanding it.

So, the student demonstrations continued. The 2018 CEP survey states that higher education still does not prove to adequately prepare students for the labour market and that it has relatively larger performance gaps relating to gender compared to all OECD countries (pp. 37-41). The findings of the CEP survey demonstrate the need for a continuous process of the Chilean society fighting for a democratic and equal Chile. The student demonstrations challenge the political establishment and effectively demand education reforms, which is why other demonstrations will follow until all their demands are met.

## Conclusion

The discontent of students about the education system in Chile has caused political dissatisfaction to turn into mass demonstrations, consequently causing social unrest. Levels of partisan identification have fallen because of a widening gap between voters and political parties, which has thwarted democratic and representative performance and has caused voters to distrust the political system. This study has demonstrated that theories on Chile's crisis of representation do not allow for an all-encompassing answer to the thesis question '*why is social unrest evident in an economically prosperous Chile?*', because they disregard Chile's political and institutional path. To elaborate, this study has demonstrated that elite networks are inherited from Chile's historic-institutionalist path as determined by the theory of Acemoglu & Robinson. A historic-institutionalist theory is added to comprehend why extractive elements are present in Chile's contemporary political system, and how they translate into social unrest. Namely, these elements have caused students to mobilize and demonstrate against them.

So, whilst Chile is economically prosperous, social unrest is evident because of the extractive heritage in Chile's historic-institutionalist path. The student demonstrations stem from the socioeconomic inequality which is embedded in Chile's political system and maintained by powerful elite networks. The control of the Spanish empire left behind an authoritarian political system after Chile's colonization. This political control strengthened elite networks and empowered the elite mobilization structure. The structure was maintained because it was important to uphold political stability during the transition. Also, a lack of vertical accountability affected the representation of Chilean society, increasingly empowering the political elite. The analysis of the demonstrations from 2006 until present day prove that political dissatisfaction remains evident in modern Chile, because no reforms have been implemented which effectively change its authoritarian, for-profit and unequal structure.

Hence, students, professors, labour unions and other movements are likely to continue to protest. Unaffordable education may eventually lead to less enrolment in schools and

universities. Also, the majority of the population does not have the essential skills to attain good jobs, even after graduation (OECD, 2018). Therefore, political institutions need to be reformed in order to tackle economic inequality and support the poor in being able to afford education. Moreover, low income students should be targeted better by financial aid systems. Corruption and other transparency issues have to be eliminated so Chileans can begin to trust their political institutions and can get good political representation. The new generations have a loud and important voice in holding the government and elite to account and they have found this voice to show their discontent. The demonstrations in Chile can be seen as a new, comprehensive political strategy to effectively politicize public discussion and integrate social demands in a collective movement.



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