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THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNIDAD POPULAR GOVERNMENT

1. The foreign policy proposals contained in the Programme of the Unidad Popular (UP) showed clearly that its political objectives had an international dimension. This was inevitable because a socialist transformation of Chilean society affected substantial foreign interests. It also disturbed the political status quo in Latin America and introduced an element of strife and disruption into the inter-American system (basically the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR)). It therefore had an influence on the world political scene of which the main feature is the struggle between the capitalist world, led by the United States, and the socialist states led by the Soviet Union.¹

The Chilean political experiment took place at a particular moment in world history and in a particular context. While it remains true that the essential characteristic of our age is the transition from capitalism to socialism — and the UP shares this idea — the UP leadership believed that such a transition takes different forms in distinct circumstances. The specific forms are determined by the concrete circumstances under which the process of transition occurs, and it is these which give it its specific character. In other words, the way in which the transition takes place is dependent upon the circumstances.

The so-called 'cold war' represented one such set of circumstances, while the climate of détente constitutes another. Within the Western hemisphere, whether an event took place before or after the Cuban Revolution is of fundamental relevance. The same applies for the October 1962 crisis at the end of which the United States accepted the presence of a socialist state in Western hemisphere, while at the same time resolving to stop the spread of communism and similar systems on the American continent by any means. This decision led to the formulation of the so-called Johnson Doctrine after the United States intervened in Santo Domingo. In Latin America — more specifically in South America — nationalist regimes and political forces that are

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more or less anti-imperialist predominate at certain times; at other times, however, a quite different situation may emerge as openly pro-U.S. regimes and political forces that cooperate with the United States in achieving its political objectives come to dominate the politics of the subcontinent. The situation for Chile, when the governments in charge in its neighbouring states are friendly and understanding, is quite different from when the country is surrounded by hostile and distrustful neighbours.

All of these factors interrelate at various geo-political levels, from the broad but decisive context of world politics to the situation prevailing in the southern cone of South America. Together these interrelations make up the external context of the UP experiment.

This external context, as well as the international situation prevailing in 1970, was such that the UP's political objectives, though difficult to achieve, were not unrealistic. They might even have been achieved if there had not been, at the same time, many potential obstacles that were capable of postponing, distorting or totally frustrating them.

In saying that the UP's political objectives were not unrealistic, we must remember that there was a link between the external context on the one hand, and internal factors that favoured or opposed the proposed changes on the other.

Let us now examine the links that can exist between the external context of a political system which is undergoing profound change and the internal factors that can be either supportive or destructive to that change. To do this we must distinguish between what might be called a war situation and a peace situation. In the latter, relations between two states are conducted in various ways and through various channels which do not involve armed conflict. In a war situation, on the other hand, the final outcome of a conflict between two states or political systems is determined by military factors.

The part played by internal factors in countries that are party to a conflict will differ according to whether there is a situation of war or peace. When there is peace, the influence of external factors on the internal processes of a system must be channelled through groups and individuals that can be seen to operate within the system. External factors can help to either strengthen or to weaken certain political forces that are already operating in the system and, if the need arises, can contribute to new internal factors becoming involved in the political struggle. In other words, external factors operate through internal ones and thus their impact can only be discerned in relation to these internal forces which they either create or destroy or merely influence in one direction or another.

In a war situation, on the other hand, external factors operate directly on the political system through the application of military force. Here, the balance of internal power is determined by military factors and it is at this level that the conflict is finally resolved.