

Is Chile still haunted by Guzmán's specter ?

A reflection on the legacy of Pinochetist ideologue on contemporary Chile

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Two preliminary remarks

- **1.** « Sciences » is considered in its broadest sense : as an **academic area of expertise**

> Here, by « science », we will understand : “**juridical**” or “**constitutional**” sciences

- **2.** Since Chilean contemporary history may be new to most of you, the **general and political context** will be **explicitly presented** and developed.

> So, this presentation can be seen as **an introduction to Chilean politics**

Main goal : a reflection on structural legacies

> General interest : the **lingering effects** of the Chilean dictatorship today

- We will try to understand :
 - In what extent could be Guzmán considered as **one of the main civil servant** of the military junta ?
 - How did Guzman use **his scientific expertise** and theoretical knowledge with the aim at legitimizing the Chilean dictatorship?
 - Why can we consider that the **contemporary Chilean democracy** is still undermined by Guzmán's reactionary views or ultraconservative principles?



Jaime Guzmán (1945-1991)

Opening : December 2025, Chilean presidential election won by far-right candidate (1/2)



> Leftist candidate **Jannette Jara** gathered only 42 % of the vote in the second round of the presidential election, the **worst result** ever achieved **by a Chilean left-wing coalition** since the return to democracy, in 1990.



> After his large victory in the December presidential election, **Jose Antonio Kast** will assume as President on **March 15, 2026**

Opening : December 2025, Chilean presidential election won by far-right candidate (2/2)

- According to French newspaper [*Le Monde*](#), Kast would have had a **decisive meeting** with Jaime Guzmán in 1996, who had encouraged him to enter politics, by joining the **Independent Democratic Union (IDU)**, founded by Guzmán in 1983.
- **Guzman's influence** on Kast was very significant, given that his older brother, **Miguel Kast** (future “**Chicago Boy**”), was one of J.Guzman's best friends, with whom he founded an **ultra-Catholic right-wing student association** called “Gremialismo” in the mid-1960s.

> How and through what intellectual and institutional channels did this “Guzmanian influence” take shape and develop?



> **J.A. Kast** (1966- ...)
- next president of Chile (2026-2030)



> **Miguel Kast** (1948-1983),
Former Chicago Boy, Minister of Labor (1980-1982),
and CEO of the Central Bank (1982)

Who was Jaime Guzmán ? A golden childhood

- Jaime Guzmán Errazuriz was born in 1946 in a family belonging to the “**Republican Aristocracy**” : his mother was member of Edwards family, wealthy bank owners, and linked to “**El Mercurio**” press group. His grandfather was a conservative member of Congress.
- At school, he was famous to be a **brilliant student** and **chess champion**.
- As a teenager he expressed the **desire to become a priest**, but he was passionate about politics.
- At the age of 12, he joined the ranks of the **Conservative Party's youth movement**, where he became involved in Alessandri's successful presidential campaign in 1958.



> J. Guzmán, a devout child in the mid 50's

The PCU years (1962-1969)

> At the age of 16, he entered the Pontifical Catholic University (PCU), where he strengthened his **reactionary convictions** : corporatism, traditional Catholicism, carlism, Francoism, counter-revolutionary values, elitism.

- He abhor the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

- During his five years studying law, he **excelled both academically** and in his **political and activist involvement**.

- In 1967, he **led the opposition to university reform** and founded the “**gremialista**” movement, which brought together **anti-Marxist students** and became **the proto-partisan matrix** for a whole generation of actors committed to the right and the far-right until today, as [Stephanie Alenda](#) (2014) & [Elsa Marsande](#) (2025)’s works have shown.



> J. Guzmán, in his twenties



> Student protests for university governance reform (mid 60's)

Fierce opposition to Allende's government (1970-1973)

- Guzmán decided to renounce the priesthood and quickly established himself as a **media figure** (press, radio, TV).
- In 1969, he became **professor of constitutional law** and political theory at the PUC (1969), and was part of academic staff with his former “economics comrades”, the famous **Chicago Boys**.
- Being one of the main virulent critics of Allende administration, Jaime Guzmán was also rumored to have close ties to the **far-right faction *Patria y Libertad***.
- He applauded the **coup d'état of September 11, 1973**, and putting himself at the service of the military junta.

Military assault on **Moneda presidential palace**, on September 11 1973 >



> Guzmán attending a gremialista meeting (late 60's – early 70's)



In the service of Pinochet

- > On September, 11, 1973, a document drafted by Guzmán was published by the junta to justify the overthrow of an “illegitimate, immoral, and unrepresentative government”.
- > in October 1973, Guzmán integrated the executive power. In charge of propaganda, he was in charge of promoting the regime among women and among young people, particularly thanks to the newly created **National Youth Secretariat** (SNJ).
- > According to historian [Daniel Mansuy](#), Guzmán introduced the Chicago Boys to Pinochet. From 1975 on, they took control of ODEPLAN, a planning administrative department, from which, ironically, they organized the **dismantling of public institutions**. Under Chicago Boys’ supervision, Chile became the **laboratory of neoliberalism**.



Guzmán and Pinochet (date unknown, probably in the mid-80's)

The chief jurist of the dictatorship

> September 1973, Guzmán integrated the Ortúzar Commission tasked with drafting the **future Constitution** of the regime (1980).

> Guzmán authored the 2 main doctrinal milestones of the Chilean dictatorship:

- the **Declaration of Principles of the Government of Chile** of March 11, 1974 : A revelation of “**Guzman’s obsessions**” : anti-Marxism, ultrapresidentialism, subsidiarity
- the **Chacarillas Speech** of July 9, 1977.
 - Reaffirmation of **authoritarian guidelines**, and announcement of a **gradual process of democratic transition**
 - Democracy is defined as “**authoritarian**”, “**protected**”, “**integrative**”, “**technicized**”, and “**authentically participatory on the social level**”

> Guzmán envisaged three stages: “**recovery**,” “**transition**,” and “**normality**”: an example of “**transitional dictatorship**” for Hayek



Ortuzar Commission (1973-1980)



Chacarillas Speech (July 1977)



> **Hayek’s interview** by Jaime Guzmán (*Revista Realidad*, April 1981)

The (Hayekian) Constitution of 1980

- > The project of a new Constitution has been drafted by the **Ortúzar Commission** between 1973 and 1979.
- the constitutional text was made public on August 10, 1980.

> **Guzmán's influence** is omnipresent and evident from the very first article which combines ultra-catholic vision (corporativism) and the protection of private interests (principal of **subsidiarity**).

*Title I: Foundations of **Institutionality***

Article 1. All persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

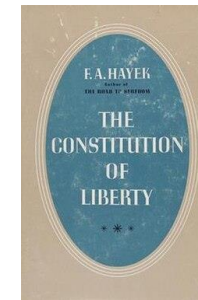
The family is the fundamental nucleus of society.

*The State recognizes and **protects** the **intermediate groups** through which society is organized and structured, and **guarantees them adequate autonomy** to fulfill their own specific purposes.*

- > Ratification by a **rigged plebiscite** in September 11, 1980



Meeting between **Friedman** and **Pinochet**, March 1975



> **Hayek's book** allegedly offered to Pinochet in November 1977 and presented to the State council in March 1979



Ballot paper in favor of "Yes" in the September 1980 **constitutional plebiscite**

A « Guzmanian » transition to democracy

> The 1980 Constitution : more **an instrument of dictatorial stabilization** than a tool for democratic transition.

- 1980-1990 : 10 long years democratic process (as planned by Guzmán in Chacarrillas' speech)

> Some “**autocratic enclaves**” or “autocratic locks” in the 1980 Magna Carta :

- a **Defense Council** dominated by military forces which can convene itself.

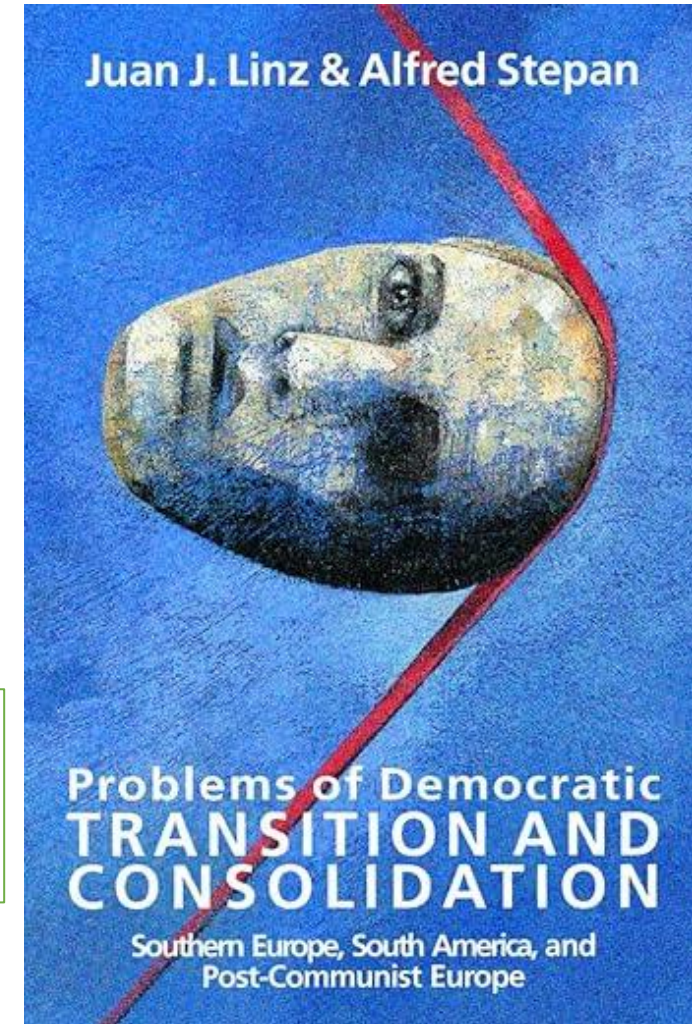
- **irrevocability** of military officers,

- creation of irrevocable Senators

- **discretionary appointment of senators** by the president.

> Different « **veto players** » in Georges Tsebelis's sense (which prevent any possibility of reform)

> For Linz and Stepan, Chile's democratic transition has been qualified as “**incomplete.**”



The architect of the "new right."

After the approval of the 1980 Constitution, Guzmán remained one of the main protagonist of to the "new democratic institutionalism".

Politically, Guzmán started to assume a new dominant political role, founding the **Independent democratic union (IDU)** in 1983.

> For [Stephanie Alenda](#), the creation of this party served a dual purpose: to ensure, on the one hand, "the safeguarding of the **traditional moral values**" and to protect, on the other, "the **economic and institutional heritage of the Pinochet regime**".

> Future president Kast was member of IDU.



> Joaquín Lavín, Hernán Larraín, Andrés Chadwick, Jovino Novoa, Julio Dittborn, Pablo Longueira and Eugenio Cantuarias, in a **general council of the IDU** (mid-80's)

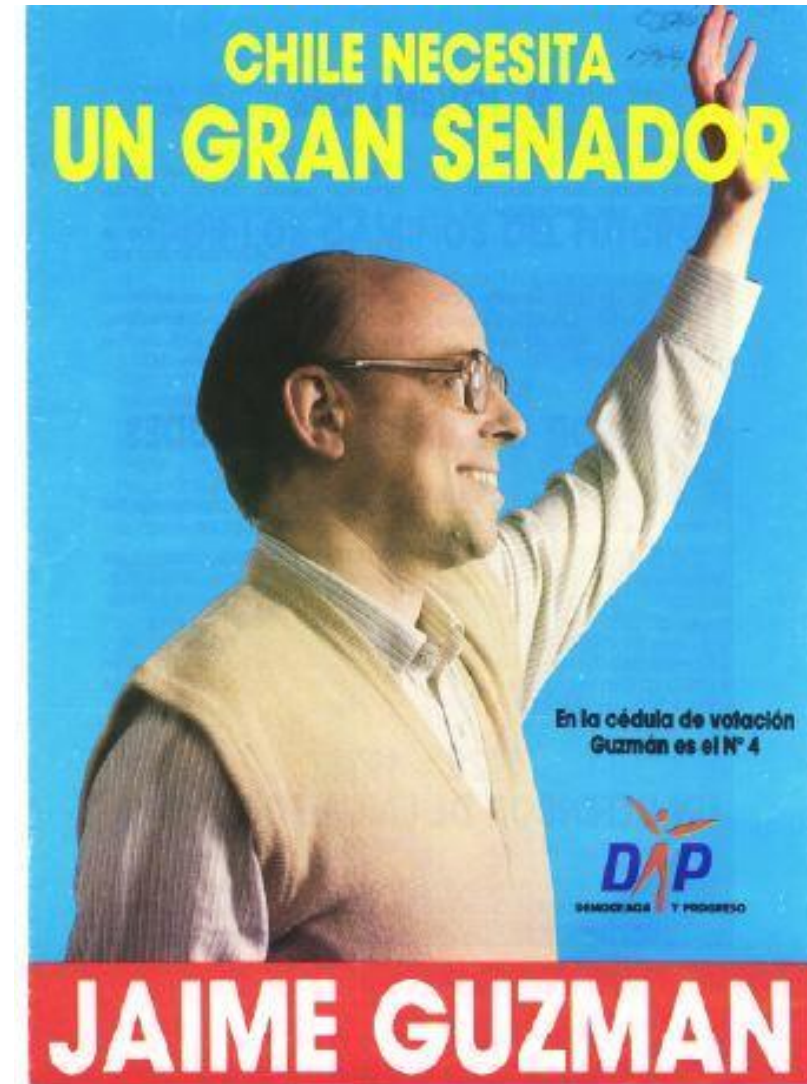


> Guzmán attending a **meeting of the IDU** (mid-80's) with Andrés Chadwick, future Minister of Home Affairs (2012-2014 & 2018-2019) in both Piñera governments

Protecting democracy from itself

> In 1988, Guzmán endorsed an organic law (n°18800) which invented a **unique voting system** that prevents the right from losing.

Candidates	Lists (scores)	Parties	Votes	Percent age	Results
Candidate A	Concertation for Democracy (62%)	Party Cristian-Democrat	408 200	31,5 %	Elected senator
Ricardo Lagos		Party for democracy	399 700	30,5 %	
Jaime Guzmán	Democracy and progress (32,5 %)	Independent democrat union	224 400	17 %	Elected senator
Candidate D		National Renovation	199 900	15,5 %	
Candidate E		Independent Coalition (5,5 %)	X	59 800	4,5 %
Candidate F	X		13 400	1 %	



Guzman's campaign poster for the 1989 Senate elections

Table 1: Rounded results of the 1989 elections in Senate District No. 7 (West Santiago)

The godfather and martyr of the new Chilean right wing

> Guzmán has been elected **Senator** in 1989.

> April 1991, the 1st: **assassination** of Jaime Guzmán by a revolutionary group in the campus of the Catholic university.

In 1992 : creation of the **Jaime Guzmán Foundation**, a ultraconservative think tank, whose role is to preserve the 1980 Constitution and the ideological heritage of Jaime Guzmán.

In 2008, inauguration a **Memorial** in honor of Jaime Guzmán, in Vitacura, a wealthy district of Santiago



> Front page of the daily Newspaper « *Las Últimas noticias* », announcing **Guzmán's assassination**, April 2, 1991



Memorial to Jaime Guzmán inaugurated in November 2008, Vitacura (Santiago)

A political figure praised or hatred

- > Until today, the figure of Guzmán generates **visceral passions**.
- > For the right wing, Guzmán is a **martyr** of democratic restoration.
- > For the extreme or hard left, Guzmán is a **hatred symbol** of the dictatorship.
- > For a part of the left, he was a **political adversary**. The social-democratic left still respects his memory and recognizes his political intelligence.
- > Some (former leftist comrades) owe their life to Guzmán.



- > Jaime Guzman's grave is regularly vandalized, especially on the anniversary of the coup (September 11th).

Conclusion : a « Machiavellian genius »

> Guzmán succeeded in building an unreformable constitution. The **failure of the constituent process** (between 2019-2023) sounds like a **posthumous victory** for him.

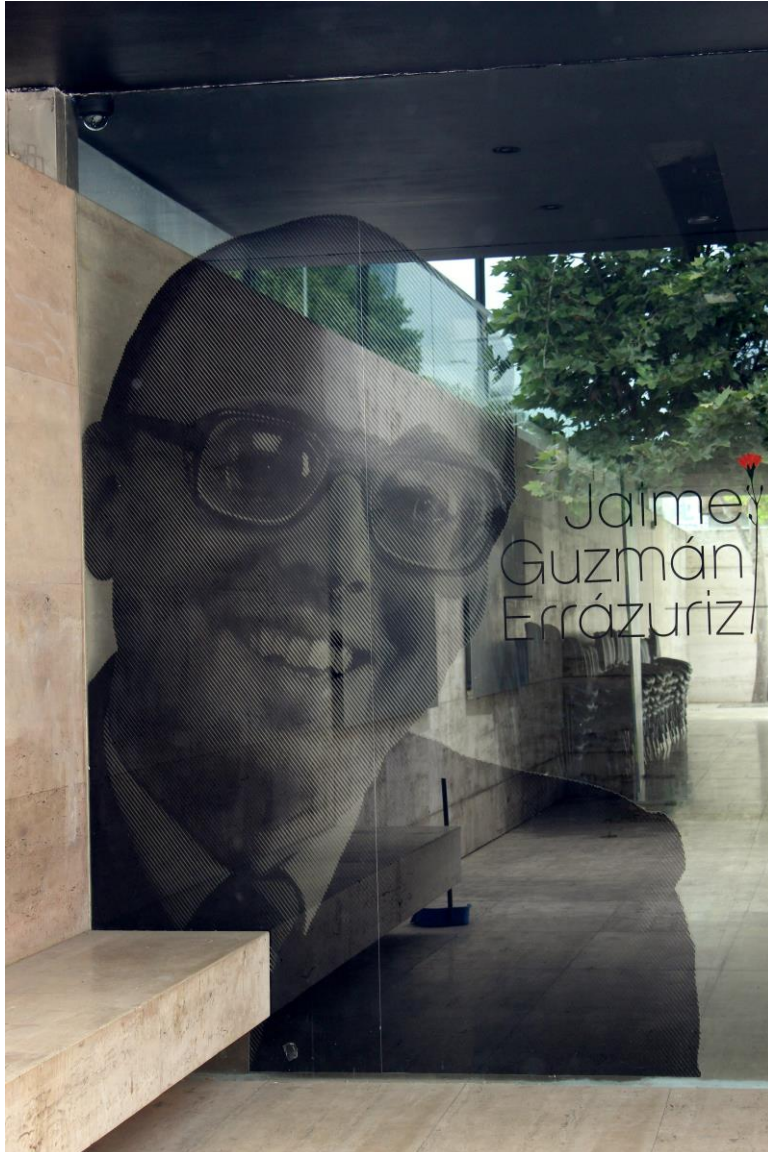
> Today it is still almost impossible for the left to modify the neoliberal framework of the 1980 Constitution. Guzmán succeeded in **guaranteeing the imperious law of free market** and **restricting the "range of possibilities"** for its political opponents.

> Even when governed by the Left, Chile has remained **constitutionally a neoliberal laboratory**.



« **Neoliberalism is killing us** ». Metro Bellas Artes (October 2019)

Jaime Guzmán or the other specter...



Photomontage by Abel Poucet for [La Vie des idées](#) (December 9, 2025)

Thank you for your attention !

> Photo of J.Guzmán in transparency (Mémorial JG, n.d)