



MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Historical: Chilean Coup d'État

Chair: Peper Granskog '26

Rapporteur: Annie Washko '28

Dear Delegates,

My name is Peper Granskog, and I will be your chair for this year! I am a Senior day student and have been involved with Model UN since my 7th grade year in Nairobi, Kenya. I have continued my MUN career at CA, attending multiple conferences and being a part of the CAMUN staff. Of all the conferences, I can honestly say CAMUN is one of the best experiences I've had during my time as a MUNer. I hope you will feel the same way! Outside of school, you can catch me songwriting and singing with friends, playing tennis (when it's sunny, please let spring come soon), and taking walks around Concord.

My name is Annie Washko, the Rapporteur; I am currently a sophomore at Concord Academy. I've been involved in Model UN since 2022, and I love(d) how these experiences have taught me how to work with others on a common issue. I am so excited to get to help organize this committee and see what ideas will be sparked through collaborative problem solving! I hope to make this committee as fun, engaging and inclusive as possible. I can't wait to get to meet you all in April!

I highly recommend that you read this background guide carefully, as it will help you not only understand the topic but also the roles each delegate will enact. Through this committee, we hope to see thoughtful and dynamic debate. The historical events surrounding the election of Salvador Allende and the subsequent rise of the Chilean military dictatorship raise complex questions about democracy, sovereignty, and foreign intervention, and are important lessons in history. As delegates, you will each represent figures who experienced these tensions firsthand, and your perspectives may differ widely depending on your role.

Above all, we hope this committee will be a space where you feel comfortable speaking, questioning assumptions, and developing new ideas together. We look forward to an engaging and memorable debate, and we can't wait to see the directions this committee takes.

Feel free to email us if you have questions. See you in April!

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Introduction

During the Cold War, the United States pursued an aggressive global strategy to contain communism, intervening politically, economically, and militarily across multiple regions. In Chile, this strategy evolved from covert electoral influence in the 1964 presidential election to economic destabilization and tacit support for military intervention after the democratic election of a Marxist president, Salvador Allende, in 1970.

Following years of polarization, economic crisis, and political deadlock, the Chilean armed forces overthrew Allende on September 11, 1973. The resulting military regime, led by Augusto Pinochet, suspended democratic institutions and initiated a campaign of repression involving mass detention, torture, executions, and cultural censorship, including book burnings and the persecution of artists and intellectuals.

This committee will examine whether the Chilean dictatorship can be justified as a Cold War security measure, or whether it represents an illegitimate overthrow of democracy enabled by foreign interference. Delegates will assume the roles of key political, military, and international figures involved in the events leading up to and surrounding the coup, bringing their perspectives and priorities into the debate.

Background

U.S. efforts to combat Communism worldwide escalated in the 1960s. In East Asia, for example, U.S. armed forces massively intervened in the Vietnamese civil war, with half a million men committed to the fight by 1968. After the failed attempt to overthrow Fidel Castro's revolution in 1961 (the Bay of Pigs invasion), U.S. policy makers had to contend with a Cuban government that moved closer and closer to Moscow, triggering the famous Missile Crisis of 1962. Communism had entered the U.S.'s

“backyard,” and its contagion had to be stopped. During the 1964 presidential election in Chile, the U.S. government (in particular, the Central Intelligence Agency or CIA) unveiled a new form of anti-Communist warfare. The 1964 election pitted the Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei against the Socialist Salvador Allende. Note that this was the 1964 election, six years before Allende's electoral victory. Frei's victory was a result of his campaign to scare Chilean voters about the threat of Communism, a campaign in which the CIA was “heavily involved.”

However, in 1970, the election of an avowed Marxist, Salvador Allende, as president of Chile came as a shock to many conservative Chileans and to the virulently anti-communist US government. Allende's administration quickly embarked on efforts to restructure the Chilean economy by nationalizing the copper mines (mostly owned by US companies) and banks, enacting extensive land reforms, and investing heavily in social services like housing, public health, and education. These major structural changes were attempted without a congressional majority or support from the judiciary, and with considerable resistance from within the armed forces and the police. The Nixon administration opposed Allende's program as well. National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger boldly announced: “I don't see why we have to let a country go Marxist just because its people are irresponsible.” With the covert support of the US Central Intelligence Agency, Allende's opponents launched a series of attacks on the fragile Chilean economy that produced soaring inflation rates and growing middle-class opposition. An aborted coup in June 1973, although suppressed by loyal army officers, led to calls for the arming of workers, which further heightened tensions. On September 11, 1973, an armed forces junta led by General Augusto Pinochet overthrew the Allende government and proceeded to jail, torture, and execute thousands of its political enemies.

The military coup that overthrew the democratic Salvador Allende government in September 1973 ushered in a reign of terror without precedent in Chilean history. Many thousands of Allende's followers were tortured and executed.

The overthrow of Salvador Allende remains one of the most contested moments of the Cold War, raising difficult questions about sovereignty, ideological conflict, and the limits of foreign intervention. Was the military coup a necessary response to political and economic instability, or did it represent a dangerous precedent in which democratic institutions were undermined in the name of ideological security? By examining these competing interpretations and the decisions made by those involved, delegates will explore how fragile democratic systems can become in times of intense political division and global rivalry. Through debate and collaboration, this committee will seek to better understand the forces that led to the rise of the Pinochet regime and the broader implications these events hold for democracy, international relations, and the responsibilities of political leadership.

Committee Positions:

Chilean Political & Military Actors:

1. **Salvador Allende** – Overthrown president (for the continuity of the timeline, for this committee, Allende survived the initial bombing)
2. **Augusto Pinochet** – Army commander/junta leader
3. **Carlos Prats** – Constitutional military loyalist
4. **José Toribio Merino** – Navy leader in the coup
5. **Gustavo Leigh** – Air Force commander
6. **Patricio Aylwin** – Opposition civilian leader
7. **Eduardo Frei** – U.S backed candidate in 1970 election, and former Chilean president (1964 to 1970.)
8. **Jorge Alessandri** – Former president of Chile (1958 - 1964) and presidential candidate in the 1970 election.

United States Government & Intelligence

9. **Richard Nixon** – U.S. President
10. **Henry Kissinger** – National Security Adviser
11. **Richard Helms** – CIA Director
12. **David Atlee Phillips** – CIA covert operations
13. **Edward Korry** – U.S. Ambassador to Chile (1967–1971)
14. **Michael Townley** – U.S.-born DINA agent under Pinochet

Cold War & International Actors

15. **Fidel Castro** – Leader of the Cuban revolution (and a symbol of Communist expansion)
16. **Leonid Brezhnev** – USSR response to Chile
17. **Juan Perón** – Regional authoritarian precedent
18. **Eduardo Frei Montalva** – Christian Democrat predecessor
19. **Orlando Letelier** – Exiled opposition voice
20. **Victor Jara** – Cultural repression victim
21. **Pablo Neruda** – Cultural symbol and dissident

Questions to Consider

1. *The legitimacy of foreign influence in electoral processes*
Should external powers interfere in a country's elections? Is it more justified when countering an ideology deemed threatening? What international standards govern electoral sovereignty?
2. *Democratic choice vs. ideological containment*
Did Allende's election represent a legitimate choice by Chile's electorate, or did Cold War fears justify opposition by domestic and foreign actors? How should the international community balance ideological concerns with democratic norms?
3. *Economic pressure as a form of political warfare*
To what extent can economic sanctions, covert funding, or market interference be considered a breach of sovereignty? What protections should exist for sovereign economic policymaking?
4. *Responsibility for the breakdown of Chilean democracy*
Was the 1973 coup an inevitable result of Chile's internal polarization, a reaction to socio-economic changes, a product of Cold War geopolitics, or a combination of these factors? Who bears responsibility—domestic actors, foreign governments, or both?

Resources for Further Research

1. "50 Years Later, the Coup in Chile and Its Lessons on Democracy | Wake Forest News." Accessed March 4, 2026. <https://news.wfu.edu/2023/09/11/50-years-later-the-coup-in-chile-and-its-lessons-on-democracy/>.
2. "1973 Chilean Coup d'état | Salvador Allende, Augusto Pinochet, CIA, History, Chile, & Facts | Britannica." Accessed March 4, 2026. <https://www.britannica.com/event/1973-Chilean-coup-d-etat>.
3. "Chile and the United States: Declassified Documents Relating to the Military Coup, September 11, 1973." Accessed March 4, 2026. Latin America. *NPR*, September 10, 2023. <https://www.npr.org/2023/09/10/1193755188/chile-coup-50-years-pinochet-kissinger-human-rights-allende>.
4. "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian." Accessed March 4, 2026. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/allende>.

5. Snyder, Edward. "Dirty Legal War: Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Chile 1973-1995, The." *Tulsa Journal of Comparative and International Law* 2, no. 2 (1995): 253.
6. "The Coup In Chile: CIA Releases Top Secret 9/11/1973 President's Daily Brief | National Security Archive." Accessed March 4, 2026.
<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/chile/2023-08-25/coup-chile-cia-releases-top-secret-9111973-presidents-daily-brief>.
7. "The Overthrow of Democracy in Chile — A Timeline - Zinn Education Project." Accessed March 4, 2026. <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/chile-coup-timeline/>.