

Dominant frames in Michelle Bachelet's presidential messages for a new Constitution in Chile: 2014-2017*

Marcos dominantes en mensajes presidenciales de Michelle Bachelet por una nueva Constitución en Chile (2014-2017)

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Abstract

Following the framing theory, this study analyzes the dominant interpretive frameworks in the discursive's sense-making of Michelle Bachelet's presidential messages when proposing a new Political Constitution of the State (CPE), in Chile, during her second presidential term (2014 to 2017). Under this framework, the article explores discursive strategies through which the demand for a new CPE is legitimized. Also, the article points out the need for a constituent process arising from the current institutional framework and, at the same time, a new constitution requires a wide political agreement. Regarding the discursive argumentation analyzed, the dictatorial and non-democratic roots of the current Chilean Constitution have been ignored. Indeed, the discourses analyzed reinforce the principles of democratic consensus, which brings back the founding ideals inspiring a National Accord under which the political transition to democracy was designed in the late 1980s.

Keywords: Framing, presidential messages, discursive strategies, dominant frameworks, constituent process

Resumen

Este estudio analiza desde la teoría del *framing* los marcos dominantes en la construcción del sentido discursivo de los mensajes presidenciales de Michelle Bachelet por una nueva Constitución Política del Estado (CPE) en Chile, durante su segundo período presidencial entre los años 2014 y 2017. Desde este enfoque se analizan las estrategias discursivas con que se legitima la demanda de una nueva CPE y la necesidad de un proceso constituyente que se erija desde la institucionalidad vigente y sobre la base de un acuerdo político-nacional que fundamente una constitución pactada. En la argumentación discursiva, se obvia el origen dictatorial y los fundamentos antidemocráticos de la actual Carta Magna, reforzando los principios del consenso democrático, que retrotraen los idearios fundantes del Gran Acuerdo Nacional con que se diseñó la transición a la democracia a fines de la década de los 80.

Palabras clave: *Framing*, mensajes presidenciales, estrategias discursivas, marcos dominantes, proceso constituyente

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1. Introduction¹

During the decade of the 2010s, the debate for a new constitution in Chile went from its positioning in the public and socio-political agenda to its fade out at the end of Michelle Bachelet's (MB) second presidential term.

This deconstruction of meaning regarding the constitutional debate brought us the following research question: Which discursive framework has the hegemonic power deconstructing the meaning of the people's demand for a new national political constitution, during the last administration of MB, perpetuating the lack of constituent power and nullifying its exercise? Therefore, we characterized the dominating frameworks under which MB addressed the claim for a new Constitution, both in the government plan and in the four presidential speeches delivered during her second term.

With this objective in mind, we analyzed the discursive strategies deployed by the leader in her discourse for a national agreement, dismissing the dictatorial and anti-democratic roots of the current charter of rights ratified in 1980 during the regime of Augusto Pinochet. The political rhetoric of MB aimed to take on the demand for a constituent debate that would restore people's sovereignty. Yet, during the period of her term, the discursive meaning of her speeches went deposing the demand until it disappeared.

The discourse is based on the current institutionality, the same that, paradoxically, plans to be dismantled with a new constitution. In such "republican practice" the historic lack of constituent power that has shaped Chile's republican history, defining the debate for an eighth constitution. Interestingly, two years after this study, the social crisis of October 2019 in Chile restored the same unsolved debate: the claim for a constituent assembly, challenging a hegemonic, oligarchic, power that pretends to seem open to the debate, but based on the current rules; rules that, again, entail the lack of constituent power.

1.1. Background

Reviewing the constituent processes in Chile reveals the pending conflict between the dominant and constituent powers. Popular social history has shown that, over two centuries, the dominant class has never acknowledged any public performance of the constituent power because it would mean the "historic death" of the ruling class (Salazar, 2011, p.29).

The mismatch between the authoritarian roots of the current charter of rights and its post-dictatorship regency, faces "a population that, being the source of its legitimacy, does not recognize it as its own" (Bassa, 2015, p.13). But this disassociation between the ruling class and the constituent power, as sovereign citizens to "build its deliberate and freely expressed will... is what has not been able to constitute in a constitutional body for four decades" (Salazar, 2011, p.27).

Although limited, the first calls for a new constitution were made during the dictatorship (1973-1989). Thirty years later, the debate gained momentum until it became part of both the political and public agendas, given that the demand for a free, outstanding, public education would never become true with minimal reforms. A new political and institutional model would guarantee basic rights, redefine the type of government, and the configuration of the power of the State and its responsibilities, as well as the procedures implying in a direct and participatory democracy (Iriarte, 2015).

The civil action "Marca tu Voto" launched during the 2013 elections sought to register on the ballots the acronym "AC" referring to a Constituent Assembly. Such action aimed to shed light on a social movement pushing for constitutional amendments, putting the political class under pressure and challenging the status quo. In doing so, the AC movement attempted to promote a public debate as a way to compensate the weakening and fragmenting of the civil society and citizen participation (Garretón, 2007; Delamaza, 2017).

In this context, the electoral process mentioned above took on the demand for a new constitution, injecting it into public and political debates during the 2013 presidential campaigns. Moreover, the candidate and later president-elect Michelle Bachelet included it in her government program (2014-2017).

The constitutional reform appearance into the public debate and the media agenda (Soto, 2014) shed light on the active participation of politicians, businessmen, women, and citizens on the dynamics that supported the legitimacy of the constitutional and institutional reforms.

Nevertheless, Bachelet rallied for a constituent process within the current institutionality, both stated in her government plan as well as in her four yearly speeches. On April 28, 2015, on national broadcasting², MB announced that September 2016 would mark the “beginning of the Constituent Process... which should lead to a new charter of rights, fully democratic, and written down by the people, that we all deserve”.³

(...) we need a new constitution, the people’s demand is key and my commitment to it is solid (...). We will carry out a process that guarantees an appropriate balance between a truly citizens’ participation and a legitimate and reliable institutional moment (...). And it should occur in the context of a widespread, transparent, and national political agreement supporting such process⁴.

Two months later, President MB changed her speech, distancing herself from the commitment to begin the constituent process: “(...) it is fundamental that we explain what a constitution is, how it affects our daily lives, and why we must change it. And after that, when everyone knows what it is about (...), a few months later the participatory and dialogue process will begin”⁵.

In the middle of her second term, Bachelet announced that the congress elected in 2017 would have the responsibility to choose the method to change the constitution⁶. In other words, the process must be assumed by the following administration, thus deferring aside the possibility of a constituent process.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Constituent Processes

Several authors have addressed the constituent process as an object of research interests (Do-

medel & Peña and Lillo, 2008; Cañete, 2008; Paz, 2010; Jaramillo, 2013). Studies about constituent processes analyzes constitutional law, social historiography, and traditional historiography; question the legitimacy of the Chilean charter of rights and the pertinence of a constituent assembly for drafting a new Political Constitution of the State (Grez, 2009; Salazar, 2011; VV.AA., 2013; Soto, 2014; Correa, 2015). Basically, because the issue of the current constitution lies in the unresolved debate regarding its legitimacy and the mismatching between its authoritarian roots and its post-dictatorship regency, supported by 30 years of democratic governments since 1990, which faces “a population that (...) does not recognize it as its own” (Bassa, 2015, p.13).

This disassociation between the constituent power and the élites is what has not been able to take shape in a constitutional body (Salazar, 2011, p.27), despite the amendments the governments of *Concertación* and the *Nueva Mayoría* have carried out and that lead us to question the discursive frames with which the demand is broken down and the lack of a constituent power. To answer this question, it is necessary starting from the building of the frames and discursive realities.

2.2. Frames and construction of realities

The concept of interpretive frame has an important role in the comprehension of social processes that contemplate the social organization of the experience, the attitudes and value judgements that derive from such personal or collective constructions and that are expressed via the discursive complexity. It is fundamental to highlight Goffman’s work (2006) on the framing theory that has had an important impact on interdisciplinary research on the social construction of meaning from its conception of organizing structural devices of the personal experience based on socially-shared categories.

In the study of social movements, the concept “frame” is associated with a dimension of work of the organizations committed to collective action and it has been the subject of a progressive theorization since 1990. In that sense, sociology of social movements has given such importance to

the interpretative frame that implies a frame, in so much as the way of organizing the social reality as well as the process through which such frames are produced and reproduced via various media inside communities.

Building up interpretative frames is not only the result of an ability of action in the public sphere, but also a capacity of internal alignment of the organizations committed to the social movement (Benford & Snow, 1988, 2000).

The process of framing has become fundamental to better understand the process of semantic framing that involves all actions of organized, collective, action (Benford & Snow, 1988, 2000; Cefai, 2001). A frame directs attention towards certain features or characteristics, ignoring others. Depending on the perspective under which framing is studied (Aruguete & Zunino, 2011), the frame is a process of sharing meanings capable of generating frames producing, and at the same time limiting, the meaning given to the issues, providing different interpretations to understand reality (Koziner, 2013).

In this context, the framing theory has been prolifically applied to political discourses, providing analytic categories that, as referential frames, guide the comprehension of the socio-political and cultural realities, interpreting and discussing diverse issues and objects of study. It is also important to mention the work in the Anglo-Saxon context regarding the presidential political speeches, framed under the study of *rhetorical presidency* (Tulis, 1987). Such research has focused on the stylistic changes in presidential rhetoric, its evolution into a more conversational discourse, and their impact on public opinion, highlighting the works of Beasley (2004), Zarefsky (2004), Medhurst (2006), Vaughn & Villalobos (2006), Stuckey (2010), Montgomery, Rogol & Kingsland (2019).

In the Latin American context, García (2006), Chihu (2012), Segovia (2012), Cissel (2012), Urra & Olave (2015), Ardévol-Abreu (2015), Echeverría (2017), and Durán (2017), among others, have contributed transdisciplinary to the analysis of the discursive construction. Authors as such have contributed to better understand creating and reconstructing realities under the frame of political discourse, understanding what it is in, regarding the dis-

courses where the power relations are produced and reproduced and the ideologies that, finally, act as a compass to people's actions (Van Dijk, 2012). Paraphrasing Van Dijk, if politics constitutes one of the social spheres whose practices are exclusively discursive, the importance of this study lies in the context of the relationships occurring among the political cognitions and discourses, where higher rhetorical clarity works the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others, polarizing the speech to determine which values and attributes are associated to one or the other.

Ideologies satisfy a specific role in defining political systems, organizations, movements, practices, and cognitions, whether reinforcing or reproducing them in the discourse. In these speeches, the underlying ideologies are expressed to place emphasis on –“certain things”–, ignoring others; a strategy that can articulate all the dimensions of a discourse (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 45).

If we also consider that the cognitive resources for the deconstruction of the dominant discourses are generally not at the reach of those historically-discriminated players (Chilton & Schäffner, 2000; Bourdieu, 2008), this asymmetry will contribute to legitimizing and naturalizing a discourse that will perpetuate the inequality and socio-cultural hegemony, build upon mental models, social imaginaries, and ideologies guiding social action (Pardo, 2012a), consolidating anti-democratic practices and sociocultural and political inequality (Cegarra, 2012).

Understanding that frames contribute to building up realities, authors like Chihu (2012) and Ardévol-Abreu (2015) propose an interdisciplinary approach to studying the social players as producers of a policy of meaning, applying the framing theory to the analysis of the political, social, and cultural processes. They suggest to follow three procedures: defining the study, location of the political arena, and, lastly, framing. In public discourse, the communication figures take part in a performance of meaning-making on both political and social controversies without sparing efforts; so, their ideas and conceptions predominate over those of the other players with the goal of achieving legitimacy, credibility, and persuasively impose their position.

3. Methodology

We carried out a hermeneutic, qualitative, methodology to comparatively characterize the frames in the presidential speeches of Michelle Bachelet regarding the debate about a constituent process. We conceive the presidential messages as public and political discourses, in the context of the speech that the country's president makes annually addressing the congress and the nation, too, through mass media.

The corpus analyzed included the MB's government program (2013) and the four presidential speeches known as *cuentas públicas*, annually delivered to the congress from 2014 to 2017. This period allowed us to compare the content of her agenda to the presidential addresses in order to identify the development, modification, postponement, and ignoring of the government promises taken on by MB before the people regarding the constituent process, after her presidential election.

The president's yearly address before Congress represents an official and institutional event. Since 2014, it has fueled citizens' expectations regarding presidential announcements, such as the timeline and procedures to deliver an eventual reform to the constitution leading to drafting a new chart of rights. In that sense, by definition, the political discourse is strategic, masking contradictions, deploying a tactical-rhetorical game based on semantic selection and alignment to achieve its goals. The person who gives, leads, embodies it publicly expresses a commitment, taking on a position (Chihu, 2010).

In summary, we understand the political discourse under the perspective of framing as a set of texts addressing a situation regarding a political problem. The analysis of such context is what Chihu calls the political arena. "From this place the problem can be seen by the figures and the audience, bringing political controversies and conflicts to life" (2010, pp. 25-26).

Socio-politically, the frame provides a methodology to undertake a comparative analysis of the political discourse with the purpose of dismantling those meaning constructions that contribute to legitimize and naturalize imaginaries and ideologies, guiding social action from political discourse (Pardo,

2012b). In order to achieve our research goal, an analysis matrix was designed based on the framing theory (Tejerina & Ibarra, 1998; Tarrow, 1999; Goffmann, 2006; Snow & Benford, 2006; Chihu 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012; Echeverría, 2017), that allowed us to code the discursive tracks defining the political context about an issue (constituent process for a new constitution); to identify the discursive strategies used to driving a social consensus or a social movement; to establish the main players and adversaries linked to the issue, all of what allow to identify the dominant frames through which the presidential discourse makes a diagnosis and develop a prognosis (solutions) (See Table 1).

4.- Findings

The analysis of the meaning-making process and discursive strategies based on the framing theory of the government plan and the four MB presidential addresses allowed us to identify, characterize, and compare the dominant frames on which the legitimization of the demand for a new CPE is argued, yet from a constituent process using the current institutionality. In other words, from the same chart of rights that is intended to be changed, showing its illegitimate and anti-democratic roots (Salazar, 2011; Atria, Salgado & Wilenmann, 2017).

4.1. Dominant Frames: Political arena

The frame that defines the political arena is the "new socio-political context that the country is experiencing" and that will serve as a backdrop for the four presidential addresses by MB from 2014 to 2017. In the five discourses, descriptions of the political context do not mention antagonists. All to the contrary, it showcases consensus, agreements, overlooking partisan and/or ideological views.

Both the management agenda and the four addresses reinforce the concept of the "Great National Accord" that seamlessly emerges from the citizens' support demanding a new political constitution of the State. In its five versions, it is a political discourse characterized by overlooking the historic memory of Chile during the dictatorship, ignoring

Table 1: Methodological matrix applied to presidential speeches

Discourse	
Source	
Date	
Theme	
Discursive Unit	
POLITICAL ARENA	
Location of the discourse in the political situation: Figures: main players and adversaries arguing the interpretation and construction of the reality in place in a given political situation, revealing social and political problems.	
DOMINANT FRAMES	
Social Movement:: The discourse is drafted from shared views calling for negotiation with certain characteristics that situate it in a specific cultural context.	
DOMINANT FRAMES	
Strategic action(s) to trigger effects on a discursive level: The discourse appeals and is directed toward certain discursive worlds throughout argumentative and rhetorical elements.	
DOMINANT FRAMES	
FRAMING PROCESSES	
Diagnosis: Defining the problem, its causes, responsible agents, main players, adversaries, and the moral judgement involved.	
Fields of identity: Main players, adversaries, audience. The main players are defined as those adhering and sympathizing with the diagnosis, sharing values, beliefs, and goals. The fields of identity represent collective identity markers. The adversaries are the organizations, people opposing main players' values, beliefs, goals, and practices, represented in the field of identity as the opponents. The audiences , fields of identity of individuals, collectivities appealing to them with resonating frames to promote their joining, sympathizing, and participation, especially those who are considered as neutral observers.	
DOMINANT FRAMES	
Prognosis: proposes solutions, an alternative order, goals, actions to carry out, strategies and tactics, those who will enact them, motivations for change, corrective action.	
EXPLANATORY FRAMES: Arguments to generate participation and make changes happen.	
DOMINANT FRAMES: Analysis of frames of meaning: dominant frames that define the political arena, condition the diagnosis, the prognosis, and in terms of certain socio-political imaginaries destined to transform the global interpretive frames that interpret events and situations from a different key, and on which other minor frames are supported. These frames show the symbolic production that seeks to influence in different social environments in order to bring about a change in values.	

Source: Authors.

the contested inception of the current constitution. The great frame the discourse brings back, as its objective, to legitimize, install, and instill the demand for a new Political Constitution, is the Great National Accord and that will be the backbone of this political discourse during Bachelet's entire presidential term.

The defining of the political arena both in its government plan and in all its presidential addresses until the end of her term, frames the socio-political context like a "new historic period", in a "politically and economically mature country", that is "before the largest transformative processes of its history", and is thanks to a "citizens' demand to build up a more egalitarian society, brought together in peace"⁷.

4.1.1. Dominant Frames: Diagnosis of the problem

The discourses reinforce the implicit argument that the country has transitioned from childhood to adulthood, a paternalistic diagnosis that perpetuates the subordination and delegation of the political power of the people to the hegemonic power. In the 2016 presidential address, the president announced that the congress under the next administration would be the body deciding the mechanism to draft a new bill of rights; in other words, a constituent congress. Once again, those who have the monopoly on political and economic power will decide which transformations to carry out on the political power, as well as when and how.

"This mature country" according to the dominant frame in which the political, cultural, and social context is situated "today faces (...) the imperious need for a new constitution" in order to "resolve its social and political inequalities". The discourse in its different versions explains the origin of the constitution problem stemming from its own legal basis, and is what definitely causes mistrust and "does not promote pluralism"⁸.

No section establishes a relation between the demand for a CPE with the need to legitimize the political power structure based on a democratic principle. Neither is there a reference to the institutional crisis of the State, politics,⁹ nor to the

relationship between the current CPE and the neutralization of the democratic power, as well as the guardianship of the neoliberal model imposed by it.

4.1.2. Social Articulation

The argumentative strategy builds meaning appealing to the social articulation around discursive perspectives that appeals to social change. In that sense, it is suggested "the historic demand" relying upon "a discourse shared by society as a whole, social players, and social organizations"¹⁰ representing all areas. In order to reinforce this frame of such historic and collective demand, argumentative and rhetorical features are driven, such as the new CPE represents a "challenge", "an imperative"¹¹ that requires "a good government, good politics, and a good economy"¹².

Following this strategy to join forces, that encompasses more than alienates, the political discourse emphasizes social order, reinforcing the idea that the new CPE will guarantee "the safety and political stability of all players"¹³. In this persuasive strategy, the discourse reaffirms that the constituent process will assure social and political order, the current institutionality to uproot any uncertainty or hint of political instability that could bring Chilean society back to past political crises. Therefore, the dominant frames of a new institutionality rise from the already established status quo in the current Constitution.

Under such a frame, the discourse becomes inclusive and consensual to the entire political spectrum (opposition as well as dominant players), as the "transformation will be carried out confidently by the institutions, with society as a whole playing an active role, encouraging social participation, and political dialogue"¹⁴. The rhetorical effort aims to present to the audience a sole discursive universe to "respond to solutions the majority demands",¹⁵ emphasizing universal values shared by all parties, "the focus of the new charter of rights will be human rights, democracy, and good politics", supported by "a long-term process with gradualness and governability, social order, peace, transparent agreements made with the people, a government by the citizens"¹⁶.

The political process is constantly framed on the basis of two great agreements that come from the very discourse for the transition to democracy that has influenced Chilean politics since the decade of the 90s. What this discourse does not clearly depict is that “the decisions born from great agreements are neutralized decisions and incapable of producing significant transformations. The underlying message is that no major controversies will arise among established powers” (Atria, 2013).

Changes arise from citizen's hearts and efforts, aspiring to a fairer country that is thriving and good; with the right to review and modify the Constitution... Chile must once again take up its republican traditions and begin the process of drafting the New Constitution, in which the liberal, democratic, and social constitutional traditions merge and is a result of an authentic constitutional consensus¹⁷.

This Republican value frame is declared and guaranteed in Michelle Bachelet's 2013 government plan. These values are considered in the four presidential addresses, even when the presidential commitment to lead the process towards a new constitution for the country begins to wane.

4.1.3. Dominant Frames: Prognosis

Dominant frames promote the concept of a representative democracy that is subject to the presidential guidelines and overseen by both the political and State powers. These are the frames that Bachelet establishes when running for president and that she reinforces throughout her four-year term, especially in her 2014 and 2015 Presidential Speeches, previous to the 2016 citizens consultation and town hall meetings.

4.2.- Change in Discourse 2016-2017

4.2.1. Protagonists versus antagonists

Since 2016, the dominant frames that position the true key players of the new political arena reinforce the legacy of the *Concertación de Partidos por*

la Democracia, later known as *Nueva Mayoría*. As a political coalition, they worked on “a new face for Chile”. They are presented as the masterminds, protagonists, political figures, and responsible parties of the mature Chile, of the country's current historic, and privileged status. The emphasis is on political payoffs.

The discourse recognizes the existence of pending issues, unresolved in political and social arenas, but justifies them because “nothing more could be done, the conditions were not present to make the reforms”,¹⁸ implicitly suggesting the lack of majority in Congress during previous terms, the antagonist is the political opposition, the right wing represented by *La Alianza por Chile*. To strengthen the role that this coalition has played in this new period, MB's political discourse makes a collective mea culpa, assuming “that the political system has not satisfied the citizens demands”¹⁹, but subtly addressing that responsibility on the right wing opposition's shoulders.

Despite this antagonist, the new socio-political situation of the *Nueva Mayoría* (center-left-wing coalition that includes the Communist Party) provides a unique opportunity to acknowledge the “citizens demands” and lead this process, like a protagonist hero that will take on the role as leader in this new republican phase. In this scenario, the citizens order arises to give Chile a new face, a modern democracy to a country that has come to age, sensible. It is a command for the government to get to work and make the changes”²⁰.

4.2.2. Dominant frames of social articulation

The frames of social articulation do not change in the last period of MB's government: concepts such as “citizen demand”, “changes that will be made with stability, institutional order”²¹ still. The discourse claims to all join a *Nueva Democracia*, built this time by a wide range of social and political players.

4.2.3. Prognosis

In this scenario the new CPE should occur as the result of a great consensus by a “mature, sensible country”. The discourse of MB promises that the new charter of rights will carry “the republican legacy” that, as implied, the current one does not have. The new CPE will rise “with a new, participative, and diverse democracy”. These are the three dominant frames from which the new constitution can be understood, take on meaning and transcend.

The prognostic frames highlight citizen participation in the constituent process. Also, in order to prove the process’ inclusive character, discourses mention that there will be “indigenous peoples’ consultation” -not necessarily binding-, allowing a new participative spirit to inspire the future CPE. Despite these announcements, the breakdown of the demand for a new Constitution is evident, the imposition of the concept “presidential constituent process” -despite the intrinsic contradiction that this topic implies - which in the last period of Bachelet is downsized on her government’s political agenda until its disappearance in her last presidential speech.

Finally, the comparative exercise allows us to identify dominant frames inherited from the dictatorship: the great National Accord, which frames the debate on the constituent process versus the frames based on a representative, supervised, democracy that aims to be participative and inclusive in the political discourse of MB on the constituent process.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of MB discourses regarding the constituent process reveals two moments: the first assembles meaning in regards to the citizens demand and, the second, disassembles and empties meaning of the constituent power, neutralizing it. In other words, it manipulates the salience of certain attributes like constitutional change, but ignores others, like citizen sovereignty. Discursively, the historic relationships of power, hegemony, and subordination are reproduced through neutralizing the political power, framing people’s actions.

The first consists of the first two years of her term (2014-2015). The discourse frames the new constitution in the “social and political legitimization” that rests on the “people’s demand” requiring “to build up a more democratic, egalitarian, cohesive, peaceful society”. The political rhetoric appeals to the “citizen’s challenge” that has influenced institutionalized power since the social mobilizations during 2011, overlooking even demands pending from the beginning of the democratic transition: “The historic, politically transformative time” that the country is experiencing makes way to satisfy the demand for a new charter of rights because “we are now a grown-up country”, “economically, politically, socially, and culturally stable”.

Based on this frame, the hegemonic power, holding on monopoly on political and economic decision-making processes, in the context of a representative, supervised democracy, accepts giving its quota of sovereignty to the citizens. In that realm, the government is committed to a new constitution, considering democratic changes, but “in a context of dialogue, of governability, and perdurability” aiming to “modernize democracy and the State”.

The four presidential addresses continue the government plan, reinforcing a partisan hegemonic, democratic, vision made from consensus: the “Democracy of Accords”, ratified; the model of the political transition that lasts and that has been questioned by the social crisis Chile has experienced since October 2019.

By default, the four discourses, including the management agenda, omit and curb the antidemocratic character of the current Constitution of illegitimate and dictatorial origin. With it they elude the political root problem of Chilean institutionality: the sovereign people are governed by a Constitution that does not represent it. In this frame of political neutralization, the discourses do not consider people as a protagonist and sovereign of political decisions, but rather as passive receivers of decisions made by the political power when ready regarding the mechanisms to resolve the new charter of rights.

During the second period identified (2016-2017), the deconstruction of the constituent power is clearly seen. The 2016 presidential address frames the constituent process within the current institu-

tionality, opening this process to the citizens via public debates, town-hall meetings, non-binding, which give it a supervised role, guided in the political transformation processes. The sovereign people are undrawn, neutralized, and stripped from the decision-making process.

In this delaying strategy, the discourse highlights the political figure of the *Nueva Mayoría* as "great maker" of the political transformations, being the "elimination of the bipartisan system" its fundamental argumentative resource. Finally, the last presidential speech lays to rest the constitutional change when it announces that it will be the incoming congress –elected in 2017– who will carry out the process of drafting a new constitution.

The announcements for the forming of a constituent convention and indigenous constituent consultations carried out in 2016 never actually materialized. The commitment of the political power to a new charter of rights disappeared from political discourse until the social revolt on October 18th, 2019, returning it to the public agenda. In both situations, the discourse of the hegemonic power, of the political and economic elites, share the same dominant frame as prognosis:²⁵ a constituent process supported by citizen participation, but empty of constituent power and content. This is the model of the Constitution Pact.

The Executive Office in alliance with partisan coalitions shares its affiliation with the dominant power, a paternalist discourse, guardian of the democracy and republican values, that commits before the citizens to ensure the protection of the constituent order, economic, political, and democratic stability. In both cases, political power gives its consent to start this process, perpetuating the political neutralization of the sovereign people. The ideology that supports the "institutional consensus" proposed by the government, in representation of the elite and established powers, appeal to reviving "the liberal constitutional traditions" with which it gives a sign of safety to economic, political powers "to ensure the continuity of the democratic and social legacy".

This frame of Pact Constitution, of constitutional consensus, represents the deconstruction of the meaning of sovereignty, of constituent power, of the annulment of its government, the neutraliza-

tion of its decisions, and dissolution of conflicts and tensions. Without a doubt, political discourse, especially presidential, offers great analytical potential, given that it illustrates a common discursive strategy that elites showcase, especially when it comes to Latin America.

Therefore, the emergence of new methodological strategies, such as those offered by framing analysis, allows for analyzing rarely explored dimensions in theoretical perspectives like *rhetorical presidency* that assume a priori a determined context (Stuckey, 2010) of a very particular reality like that of the United States that is insufficient to explore and understand other political situations such as those of Latin America.

Notes

1 October 18, 2019 marked the beginning of a series of movements throughout the country due to the 30-pesos increase in the price of Santiago Chile's subway system fare. From this date to the submission of this article, the people have challenged the country's political and economic powers, clashing with police forces, demanding a new constitution and the resignation of President Sebastián Piñera.

2 Presidential messages televised throughout the whole national broadcasting system, both public and private, when the President speaks to the nation when delivering a key announcement is known as "Cadena Oficial" or "Cadena Nacional".

3 Constituent Process or UFO? (2015, first 15 days of August). *El Ciudadano*. p. 4-5

4 Bachelet and the constituent process: its phrases. (2015, first 15 days of August). *El Ciudadano*. p. 16

5 Cádiz, P. (2015, May 21). Bachelet: Constituent process "should occur in the context of a widespread political agreement". Retrieved at <http://www.t13.cl/noticia/politica/bachelet-dice-que-proceso-constituyente-debe-ocurrir-en-el-contexto-de-un-acuerdo-politico-amplio>.

6 (2015, October 9). *La Tercera*, online newspaper.

7 The expressions that frame the political arena appear for the first time in the government plan and are later reinforced in each one of the presidential speeches.

8 Presidential Speech of May 21, 2014.

9 Cases of corruption that have caused an institutional crisis in the armed forces, police forces, corporate

groups, and campaign funding; not to mention the high levels of voter abstention attributed to the lack of prestige in Chilean politics.

10 Government plan and Presidential Speeches, 2014 and 2015.

11 Government plan and Presidential Speeches, 2014 and 2015.

12 Government plan and Presidential Speeches, 2014 to 2016.

13 Statements made in all speeches made during the second term.

14 Government plan and four Presidential Speeches.

15 Government plan and four Presidential Speeches.

16 2016 and 2017 Speeches.

17 *Chile de Todos: Programa de Gobierno Michelle Bachelet 2014 - 2018* [Chile for everyone: Government plan, Michelle Bachelet 2014-2018], <http://www.onar.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/ProgramaMB.pdf>.

18 2016 Presidential Speech.

19 2016 Presidential Speech.

20 2016 Presidential Speech.

21 2016-2017 Speeches.

22 2014 to 2016 Speeches.

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