

Chile's constitutional fate remains uncertain

Jacob Sagers

09/14/2022



Chilean Student Protestors

Jacob Sagers - Chile's vote for a new Constitution was brought to a halt on Sunday. Over 62% of voters rejected the document. It leaves a new constitution uncertain and military dictator Augusto Pinochet's constitutional legacy intact. The Chilean people sought to create a new Constitution through a referendum in 2020 and a Constitutional Convention elected in 2021. The rejection marks a blow to progressive groups, showing how ideology and power influence government. The concept of ideological power comes into play.

Ideological power is the ability to have others do what you want without force and willingly. The new Socialist government led by President Gabriel Boric supported the movement. Protests sparred by student civil disobedience in 2019, and the left-leaning Constitutional Convention spearheaded the effort to overhaul the existing Constitution. The proposed Constitution would have enshrined the right to an abortion, expanded indigenous autonomy, and dismantled the Chilean Senate. Nevertheless, a counter-campaign and right-wing groups portrayed the document as too revolutionary and not reflective of Chile's values. Maria Muse, a saleswoman, with her eighty-four-year-old mother declared, "It was a fiasco what they did... The Constitution wrote is not the Constitution of Chile, of the Chilean people. It is the Constitution of one group." Despite the general sentiment for change, the left-wing coalition proved unable to implement its desires. The portrayal of the new Constitution by opponents as dangerous proved successful. The government was unable to sell the Constitution to the voters. It appeared to favor special interests and not the people. Without ideological power, the government did not have the ability to implement change.

Considering **nationalism** along with ideological power adds further understanding of Chile's politics. Nationalism is a tool to promote a sense of national identity and influence politics. Opposition groups to the Constitution used the indigenous rights provision, which would have established self-governing regions within the state, to invoke Chilean nationalism. They argued that granting regional autonomy would be dangerous and too radical: threatening Chile's stability and identity. Therefore, nationalism can promote or counter ideological power. #Creating a new constitution appears to require a new centrist approach in Chile- for now.