

Logistical Exploration of the Chilean Coup (1973): Networks of Power and Biopower in the Pre-Digital Age

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Abstract

On September 11, 1973, the socialist government of Salvador Allende in Chile was overthrown by a junta led by General Augusto Pinochet, illustrating how an operation could combine a comprehensive strategy with on-the-ground execution to rapidly transform a democracy into a violent dictatorship. Success relied less on the spread of anti-communist ideology than on precise logistical timing. In a pre-digital context, the junta mobilized its forces with precision, identified vulnerabilities, and seized control of strategic nodes, highlighting the importance of advance planning and contextual adaptation. The study of the Chilean coup, viewed through the lens of pre-digital networks and drawing on Curzio Malaparte's conceptualization of the coup, shows how the orchestration of material and information flows, actor flexibility, and meticulous preparation, supported by the United States, enabled the effective neutralization of a legitimate government. This dramatic event offers lessons on resilience and the management of complex systems, which have since inspired contemporary commercial supply chain practices in many Western countries.

Keywords: Chilean coup, clandestine operations, network coordination, pre-digital era, resilience, strategic planning, supply chain management (SCM)

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1. Introduction

Recent political history is marked by numerous overthrows of power, often analyzed through ideological, social, or economic lenses (Gassebner *et al.*, 2016; Lehoucq, 2021). Traditional explanations frame coups as expressions of political narratives: the last recourse of marginalized groups, the triumph of authoritarian ambitions, or manifestations of ethnic or class tensions. While informative, these perspectives privilege discourse and symbolic meaning, overlooking operational and material factors that determine feasibility and success. In particular, they neglect the State's infrastructural vulnerabilities, organizational capacities, and the orchestration required to seize or disrupt control. A comprehensive understanding of a coup necessitates examining how physical and informational flows are manipulated, which nodes are targeted, and the timing of coordinated actions. It also requires attention to how relevant information is accessed, transmitted, interpreted, and mobilized across organizational units, since the ability to coordinate action depends not only on controlling infrastructures but also on connecting dispersed knowledge to decision-making. Power is not seized through ideology alone; it depends on planning, synchronization, and disruption of critical networks—a dynamic explored in classical military and organizational literature (Luttwak, 2016 [1968]). More broadly, such perspective resonates with the growing “historical turn” in organizational research, which seeks to integrate historical analysis with theoretical development in order to illuminate complex organizational processes (Paché, 2026). By emphasizing the “logistics of power” (Scott, 2010), this article reframes coups as operations comparable to high-stakes supply chains, where efficiency, sequencing, and infrastructural leverage shape outcomes rather than the intensity of political support or rhetoric.

In this context, Curzio Malaparte's early 1930s analysis offers a radical reinterpretation of conventional readings (Malaparte, 1932). Rejecting moralistic or purely ideological interpretations, he conceptualized coups as technical undertakings executed through interventions in the operational nodes of the State rather than through street confrontations or mass mobilizations. Critical infrastructures—including communication networks, transport corridors, administrative centers, and symbolic sites—served as primary arenas of control. Success required manipulation of flows, neutralization of opposing circuits, and synchronized execution across domains. Malaparte's (1932) approach illuminates the mechanics of political seizure, demonstrating that operational mastery, timing, and coordination of material and informational resources were decisive in shaping outcomes.

From a knowledge perspective, such coordination also points to the importance of knowing where critical information resides, how it travels through an organization, and how disruptions in these channels can affect collective action. By conceiving coups as engineered disruptions of organizational networks, he anticipated a conceptual bridge between political science and supply chain management (SCM), revealing structural parallels between State control and operational systems. The resulting focus on operational disruption also raises a question about the forms of power embedded within these systems, extending from sovereign authority to the biopolitical and governmental mechanisms through which populations and resources are organized. Political events consequently appear not as spontaneous or purely ideological phenomena but as orchestrated interventions in which sequencing, prioritization, and control over critical nodes dictated the trajectory of success and authority consolidation.

Applying Malaparte's (1932) framework to the September 11, 1973, Chilean coup underscores the enduring relevance of his insights. Conventional accounts tend to focus on the ideological confrontation between socialist President Salvador Allende, democratically elected in September 1970, and domestic anti-communist forces supported by the United States (Guardiola-Rivera, 2023). However, examining the operational dimension reveals critical factors often overlooked. As highlighted in interviews conducted by Régis Debray with Allende in January 1971 (Debray, 2023 [1971]), the Chilean government was keenly aware of its structural vulnerabilities and the necessity of securing communication, transport, and administrative networks, illustrating that even elected administrations must actively manage operational nodes to maintain authority. Allende can therefore be approached as a locus of sovereign authority, while the infrastructures through which the State organized populations, circulated information, and administered resources point toward broader forms of biopower and governmentality. The Chilean case consequently raises the question of whether disrupting sovereign authority also disrupts these mechanisms, or whether they can instead be appropriated and reconfigured by a new political order. Despite these efforts, the junta capitalized on existing weaknesses during the coup. The swift seizure of La Moneda (the seat of government), occupation of communication hubs, and disruption of transport networks reflected a carefully sequenced strategy aimed at minimizing urban combat. Preemptive economic measures, such as the 1972 carriers' strike that immobilized the country for several weeks (Angell, 1973), combined with rapid control of strategic nodes, exposed the systemic logic underlying the operation. These actions demonstrate the decisive role of timing, sequencing, and coordination across multiple domains.

Contemporary advances in supply chain and network theory further clarify parallels between political operations and high-performance networks. Hearnshaw and Wilson (2013) propose that efficient supply chains function as scale-free networks, characterized by short path lengths, clustering, and power-law connectivity distributions. These features underscore the importance of hub nodes, redundancy, and contingency mechanisms to prevent cascading failures and enhance resilience. Applied to the memory of historical coups, counterinsurgency programs, or clandestine operations, these principles demonstrate why control over critical nodes, sequencing of actions, and synchronization of personnel, resources, and information are decisive. Conceptualizing these interventions as adaptive systems allows scholars to appreciate how centralized objectives coexist with decentralized flexibility to maintain effectiveness. Networked thinking highlights vulnerabilities, interdependence of nodes, and the potential for ripple effects if coordination fails. Integrating network theory into the study of pre-digital operations provides a framework for analyzing the orchestration of high-stakes interventions, the dynamics of infrastructures, and the conditions enabling operational mastery in uncertain environments, illustrating the enduring relevance of supply chain and network perspectives beyond contemporary industrial applications. In this respect, historical cases provide an opportunity to examine knowledge flows, coordination, and organizational resilience in settings where information infrastructures were largely physical, thereby extending knowledge-management concerns beyond contemporary digital organizations.

2. Conceptual Foundations

In *Coup d'Etat: The technique of revolution*, first published in Italian in 1931, Malaparte (1932) investigates the practical conditions necessary for the seizure of power in early 20th-century Europe, foregrounding the logistical dimension of revolutionary action. Initially aligned with Mussolini's fascist circles, he gradually distanced himself from ideological commitments, disillusioned by authoritarian excesses. His trajectory oscillated between support and criticism of fascism, reflecting a complex evolution that led to a pragmatic stance on political violence. Malaparte (1932) adopts a methodical and operational approach, deliberately separating the analysis from moralistic or ideological considerations. He examines the gestures, strategies, and mechanisms essential to overthrowing authority, emphasizing rapid coordination of forces and the prompt occupation of critical infrastructures needed to consolidate power. Viewed through the lens of organizational sociology, contingency

theory, and the geography of flows, coups emerge as systematic logistical operations rather than ephemeral political events. Mobilization of personnel, materials, and information networks proves decisive for revolutionary success, demonstrating how social and operational factors converge to shape outcomes. By framing coups in terms of resource orchestration and networked management, Malaparte (1932) provides a conceptual bridge connecting political history with SCM principles, highlighting how efficiency, sequencing, and infrastructural leverage determine operational results independently of ideological intensity.

2.1. Coup: Operational Design

From the outset, Malaparte (1932) distinguishes the operational organizer from the heroic or ideological figures celebrated in conventional accounts. Success in overthrowing authority depends not on speeches, demonstrations, or fervent ideology, but on the precise sequencing and spatial distribution of actions. Scott's (2010) notion of the "*logistics of violence*" highlights how political objectives materialize through manipulation of the material environment, rapid mobilization of forces, and efficient deployment of scarce resources. Modern States operate as tightly interwoven administrative and logistical systems in which flows of personnel, information, and goods are so interdependent that disruption of a single critical node can destabilize the entire structure (Barabási, 2002; Christopher and Peck, 2004). Viewed in this way, a coup resembles an orchestrated enterprise synchronizing military operations, communications, transport, and bureaucratic networks rather than an ideological performance. Operational mastery, rather than rhetoric, determines outcomes, positioning the planner as a strategist adept at aligning human, material, and informational flows. Political power emerges not solely from legitimacy but from the ability to manage complex operational systems, reinforcing insights into segmentation and control developed by López (2020).

Malaparte's (1932) operational conception belongs to a broader historical trajectory in which military logistics became a source of modern organizational and analytical practice. Although systematic approaches to logistics long predated WWII, the conflict accelerated the formalization of quantitative methods for addressing complex operational problems. Operations research brought scientists, military planners, and technical specialists together to address resource allocation, deployment, maintenance, detection, transport, and uncertainty, transforming practical military problems into objects of systematic analysis (McCloskey, 1987). After 1945, wartime methods and expertise increasingly entered civilian organizations, contributing to operations management and industrial decision-making. Rooted in wartime experience with the U.S. Navy, Morse and Kimball (1951 [2012]) exemplify the transition from military analysis to broader applications in industry and government. The historical convergence is relevant to Malaparte's (1932) framework not because he directly anticipated operations research or contemporary SCM, but because military environments provided a setting in which coordination, optimization, sequencing, and resource allocation were formalized. The transfer of analytical techniques from military institutions to industry helped establish a conceptual foundation for modern supply chain management, where interdependent flows must likewise be coordinated under uncertainty and constraint. Read against this history, Malaparte's (1932) account acquires particular analytical relevance: rather than presenting logistics as a narrowly military concern, it foregrounds operational principles later formalized across military and industrial organizations.

Malaparte (1932) illustrates the operational logic through Lenin, Trotsky, and Mussolini, portraying them as logisticians of power rather than merely ideological leaders (Klug, 2023). Strategic sites such as the Winter Palace, Rome's ministries, and critical transport and communication nodes were treated as interconnected infrastructures to be mapped and secured. Their methods can be read not simply as anticipating practices later formalized in high-reliability organizations, but as articulating a transferable vocabulary of operational control, in which anticipation of risks, coordination of interdependent elements, and mitigation of failures become central to political action (Weick, 1987; Roberts, 1990). Every element—personnel, weapons, or communication channels—functioned as a decisive node in network performance. López (2020) further notes that asymmetries in elite rights and privileges facilitated uninterrupted operations, reducing resistance and strengthening execution. Coups appear, therefore, as logistical enterprises shaped simultaneously by structural control and social hierarchy. Malaparte's (1932) reflections bridge political history and logistics studies, offering a foundation for applying supply chain and network concepts to coups and crisis operations in other domains. Operational competence and strategic foresight emerge as the true determinants of success, surpassing rhetoric and demonstrating the enduring value of network-based coordination.

2.2. Coup: Operational Coordination

Building on this operational perspective, the analysis can be extended from the design of individual interventions to the coordination of interdependent elements within a broader system. Malaparte's (1932) account shows that

infrastructures, communication channels, personnel, timing, and counter-power do not operate as isolated components but as interconnected elements whose relationships shape both operational effectiveness and systemic vulnerability. This shifts attention from the ideological content of a coup to the organizational configuration that makes intervention possible, emphasizing that vulnerabilities emerge from interactions among nodes, flows, timing, and institutional dependencies rather than from isolated weaknesses. A systems-oriented reading also clarifies the broader analytical value of Malaparte's (1932) framework: rather than suggesting that he anticipated contemporary systems thinking in a linear historical sense, it highlights how his categories can be transferred across contexts to examine different forms of systemic political violence. Malaparte (1932) thus provides a portable analytical grammar for understanding how political power can be disrupted through the coordination of flows, the targeting of critical nodes, and the management of interdependencies. Its relevance lies not in predicting later networked organizations, but in showing how operational relationships can expose points of fragility within complex political systems while preserving attention to the interactions that connect their constituent elements.

By redefining upheavals as operational challenges, Malaparte (1932) shows that synchronization of personnel, materials, and information amplifies each intervention while reducing the risk of systemic breakdown. Effective orchestration across military units, communication systems, and administrative networks highlights the importance of sequencing, redundancy, and contingency planning. López's (2020) perspective on segmentation illustrates how unequal distribution of privileges shapes incentives, permitting faster execution and lowering the probability of redistribution pressures during transitions. From a systems perspective, success depends on strategic integration of resources, management of hierarchies, and anticipation of interdependencies—principles aligned with modern theories of resilience and network design. Analysis of timing, connectivity, and resource control demonstrates that outcomes hinge more on organizational mastery than ideological conviction. Historical coups thus emerge as sophisticated logistical operations whose lessons extend to contemporary high-risk environments. Precision, foresight, and adaptive coordination remain indispensable for achieving objectives under volatile conditions, highlighting the centrality of logistics to political and organizational success. This emphasis on informational synchronization is consistent with supply chain research, which identifies information sharing as a fundamental mechanism of coordination among interdependent actors, particularly because decisions taken at one level of a network can affect performance across the entire supply chain (Deghedi, 2014).

Logistical control in a coup extends beyond the movement of personnel, weapons, and messages; it also requires preemptive neutralization of potential resistance. Malaparte (1932) stresses that success demands identification of individuals and groups capable of organizing counteroffensives. Compiling lists of military officers, political and union leaders, and influential intellectuals allows for rapid targeting. Locations, routines, and networks become information as strategically vital as railway timetables. Anticipation requires immediate suppression of retaliatory actions, through isolation or surprise immobilization. Mussolini, in 1922, ensured the inaction of King Victor Emmanuel III and the General Staff to neutralize counter-power. As Mann (2012) observes, power operates through multiple networks, whose disruption determines the outcome of revolutionary endeavors, echoing Foucault's (1990 [1978]) concepts of biopower and governmentality, through which modern power operates by organizing populations, infrastructures, and knowledge systems. Elimination of opponents becomes a distinct operational task, demanding meticulous preparation, intelligence gathering, and precise coordination with the seizure of critical nodes. Targeting military, political, or union figures achieves full effect only when linked to the occupation of strategic sites that control material and informational flows sustaining existing authority.

2.3. Coup: Networked Command

Malaparte's (1932) spatial analysis of power frames coups as operations shaped by infrastructures rather than abstract ideologies. Territory is not a static backdrop but a network of interconnected facilities, where the neutralization of transport hubs, ministries, communication centers, and energy plants directly influences outcomes (Graham and Marvin, 2001). Network theory emphasizes the disproportionate role of critical nodes: disruption at one point can trigger cascading effects that destabilize the entire system (Barabási, 2002). Nweke (2012), drawing on Actor-Network Theory, further emphasizes the interconnectedness of human and technological actors within communication networks, showing how information flows and digital infrastructures facilitate coordination and collective action. From this perspective, coups function as deliberate acts of infrastructural orchestration, in which flows of personnel, resources, and information are rerouted, blocked, or accelerated to achieve operational priorities (DeLanda, 2006; Cowen, 2014). Tactical measures such as seizing radio stations, blocking transport arteries, or occupying telephone exchanges are not isolated gestures but interventions designed to paralyze the State apparatus with minimal confrontation. The logic closely parallels

supply chain disruptions in modern contexts, where failure at a single hub can propagate throughout the system, as vividly demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. In both settings, operational mastery and precise coordination determine success more than symbolic declarations, underlining that control derives from interdependent flows.

Physical occupation of infrastructure, however, is insufficient without the integration of human, material, and informational flows into a coherent design. Nodes such as transport networks, energy grids, communication lines, and administrative centers must be embedded in temporal and spatial blueprints that ensure complementarities rather than contradictions between interventions. Preemptive actions—economic sabotage, selective strikes, or logistical disruption—can weaken systemic resilience and reduce the likelihood of organized resistance before the decisive phase begins (Petras and Morley, 1975; Loveman, 1979; Kornbluh, 2013). Seen through the lens of network planning, such strategies reflect principles of redundancy, prioritization of high-impact nodes, and contingency preparation. Each decision at a nodal point has multiplier effects, magnifying the influence of well-sequenced actions and limiting adversarial capacity to respond. Success, therefore, depends not only on tactical occupation but on the orchestration of interdependencies that transforms static infrastructures into dynamic systems responsive to coordinated intervention. Malaparte's (1932) approach anticipates modern theories of systemic resilience, where foresight and planning prevent cascading failures that otherwise emerge in fragile networks.

Operational control must also be situated within wider international and legal contexts that influence both domestic and external strategies. Since the end of the WWII, States have faced growing constraints when intervening in internal affairs, as sovereignty, legitimacy, and accountability became entrenched principles of international order. Legal and diplomatic pressures shape how external actors plan interventions, while domestic leaders must calculate not only tactical feasibility but also potential sanctions and reputational risks (Rattan, 2019). Integrating these considerations into the sequencing of actions and allocation of resources ensures coherence between operational goals and political legitimacy. Mastery of networks thus extends beyond tactical execution to include anticipation of normative frameworks and the alignment of elite decision-making with broader social recognition. Outcomes that combine logistical precision with compliance to—or strategic manipulation of—international expectations achieve not only operational effectiveness but also sustainability in the aftermath of intervention. Malaparte's (1932) framework retains enduring relevance by showing that control over infrastructures, human flows, and external constraints is essential for crisis management in environments where legitimacy and efficiency must converge. Table 1 synthesizes the operational dimensions highlighted by Malaparte (1932), illustrating how early 20th-century European coups relied on precise sequencing, infrastructural control, human mediation, redundancy, and the elimination of opponents.

3. Case Study—Chile 1973

The events of September 11, 1973, in Chile illustrate how political outcomes can hinge on the orchestration of resources, information, and mobility rather than ideological fervor. Command over transport, communication, and energy infrastructures transformed Santiago into a structured operational arena in which each node and flow had critical consequences. Preceding disruptions, such as economic strikes and procurement shortages, weakened systemic resilience and enabled rapid dominance once the coup began. Success depended on combining centralized objectives with decentralized execution, allowing local units to respond flexibly to unforeseen challenges while maintaining overall coherence. Viewed through a network-oriented lens, patterns of sequencing, redundancy, and timing emerge that parallel contemporary principles of crisis management. Physical occupation of strategic sites, manipulation of information flows, and adaptive responses produced ripple effects across social and institutional networks. Framing the Chilean coup as an operational system highlights how planners synchronized human, material, and informational flows to determine outcomes decisively. This approach provides scholars and practitioners with a model for understanding how planning, adaptive execution, and precise node management converge under conditions of uncertainty, demonstrating that coups rely on logistical mastery as much as ideology.

Table 1. Coup as a Logistical Operation: Insights from Malaparte (1932)

Dimensions	Historical illustrations	Logistical principles	Theoretical implications
<i>Separation from ideology</i>	Lenine and Trotsky seized Petrograd in October 1917 through rapid occupation of government buildings rather than mass ideological mobilization (Smith, 1983).	Effective power transfer relies on control of operational nodes rather than mass persuasion.	Demonstrating that orchestrating operational processes determines political success more than ideological influence.
<i>Occupation of infrastructures</i>	Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922 involved the occupation of ministries, communication hubs, and strategic transport points (Albanese, 2019).	Strategic infrastructures function as chokepoints enabling or disabling collective action.	Showing that controlling key infrastructures shapes the material possibilities for achieving political objectives.
<i>Mastery of timing and sequencing</i>	During the Kapp Putsch in Germany (1920), insurgent forces coordinated simultaneous actions across Berlin to seize administrative centers (Mulligan, 2004).	Logistical success depends on synchronizing dispersed units to produce cascading effects.	Highlighting that precise temporal coordination and sequencing are decisive factors in operational outcomes.
<i>Human mediation in decision-making</i>	Leninist cadres in Petrograd adapted orders locally when central directives could not arrive promptly (Smith, 1983).	Organizational resilience requires human judgment at the interface of plans and contingencies.	Integrating systemized planning with adaptive human decision-making to ensure operational effectiveness.
<i>Information and redundancy</i>	Petrograd revolutionaries relied on multiple messenger networks, telegraph lines, and party circuits to transmit orders (Smith, 1983).	Redundancy secures continuity by reducing vulnerability to disruption.	Maintaining multiple communication pathways to ensure operational continuity under uncertainty.
<i>Identification and elimination of opponents</i>	Mussolini neutralized potential counter-power by securing inaction from King Victor Emmanuel III and disarming loyal military units (Foot, 2023).	Logistical control entails rapid removal of actors capable of disrupting operations.	Eliminating potential opposition as a critical component of operational control.

Source: The author.

Methodological Positioning

The study of the Chilean coup adopts a qualitative and historical case study method, drawing primarily on secondary sources such as peer-reviewed articles and academic monographs. This choice aligns with the exploratory aim of reconstructing network organization during a major institutional disruption and examining crisis-driven coordination. Research in SCM and organizational theory stresses the relevance of historical case studies for analyzing atypical organizational forms in high-risk contexts (Wadhwani and Bucheli, 2014; Paché, 2026). Documentary analysis integrates insights from political sociology, military history, and management, creating a multidisciplinary framework. This approach also resonates with calls to broaden the “historical turn” in management studies by incorporating historical experiences from outside dominant Anglo-Saxon contexts, particularly those emerging from Latin America (Wanderley and Barros, 2019). Although some archival materials remain inaccessible, secondary evidence provides a robust basis for tracing operational sequences and the control of flows during the coup (Ketokivi and Choi, 2014). The analysis therefore treats documentary evidence not simply as historical description, but as a means of reconstructing relationships among actors, infrastructures, and organizational processes under conditions of institutional disruption.

An abductive approach brings these empirical observations into dialogue with network theories, enabling their iterative interpretation through Malaparte's (1932) conceptual lens. This also creates a dialogue with Actor-Network Theory (ANT), particularly its attention to the relational constitution of networks and to associations among heterogeneous human and non-human entities. Callon's (1984) concept of translation is relevant here, as it conceptualizes network formation as a process through which heterogeneous actors are defined, connected, and enrolled around a common problem. This perspective draws attention to how infrastructures, communication systems, military units, institutions, and individuals acquire operational significance through the relationships and dependencies that connect them. ANT is not adopted as the study's methodological framework but serves as a complementary analytical lens within the historical and documentary approach, while the analysis remains attentive to relational and material dimensions without presuming a symmetrical attribution of agency. The abductive process generates heuristic insights into continuities, disruptions, and improvisational responses in organizational flows under extreme pressure (Decker *et al.*, 2015), supporting the analysis of flow management, coordination, and adaptive improvisation in systemic disruptions.

3.1. *The Tanquetazo: Failure and Organizational Rehearsal*

The failed Tanquetazo of June 29, 1973, provides an important organizational precursor to the September coup. Led by Lieutenant Colonel Roberto Souper, the uprising involved the deployment of armored units toward the Ministry of Defense and La Moneda but remained confined to a limited segment of the military. General Carlos Prats and forces loyal to the constitutional order were able to contain the rebellion within hours, demonstrating that access to personnel, equipment, and mobility was insufficient without coordination across command levels and military units. The episode revealed the importance of information as a key resource: prior knowledge of suspicious activities enabled loyalist commanders to anticipate the intervention and mobilize an effective response. The failure therefore exposed weaknesses in the insurgents' network of connections, particularly their inability to secure broader institutional participation and prevent counter-mobilization. Yet its consequences extended beyond the immediate suppression of the uprising. The Tanquetazo contributed to an internal transformation of the armed forces, as constitutionalist personnel were increasingly identified as potential obstacles to military intervention and domestic political conflict was progressively interpreted through the National Security Doctrine and the notion of internal enemy (Schlotterbeck, 2024). The episode can consequently be understood as an “*effective failure*” that generated learning about critical dependencies, command loyalties, and potential sources of resistance.

Between June and September, such vulnerabilities were progressively incorporated into a broader operational environment. The resignation of General Prats in August and the subsequent appointment of General Augusto Pinochet altered the distribution of authority within the Army, while the armed forces increasingly developed the command and security arrangements required for coordinated intervention (Seguel, 2026). At the same time, military operations under the Arms Control Law increasingly targeted factories, working-class neighborhoods, and the *cordones industriales*, weakening the social networks through which supporters of Allende could mobilize (Gaudichaud, 2013). The September operation consequently differed from the Tanquetazo not simply in scale, but in logistical architecture: military action was no longer dependent on an isolated unit but could draw upon increasingly coordinated relationships among the armed services, command structures, communications, and regional forces. The transition from June to September thus illustrates a process of organizational learning in which failure exposed dependencies that subsequent military organization was increasingly positioned to overcome. Information about potential opponents, command loyalties, and local political structures became increasingly valuable to the operation. From a network perspective, the key transformation was therefore a movement from a fragmented configuration, vulnerable to rapid counter-mobilization, toward a more integrated operational structure capable of synchronizing dispersed resources. The Tanquetazo can consequently be understood not merely as a failed coup attempt, but as a revealing episode through which military actors identified weaknesses that the September operation was subsequently better equipped to overcome.

The true significance of the Tanquetazo therefore lies in the logistical data that its failure made available. The uprising demonstrated that military intervention could be defeated when command loyalties remained divided, information circulated rapidly enough to facilitate counter-mobilization, and operational forces remained isolated from one another. Between June and September, these vulnerabilities became increasingly less pronounced as authority was consolidated, constitutionalist resistance within the senior command weakened, and military institutions developed greater capacity to coordinate operations across units and regions. This process should not be understood as evidence that the September coup simply reproduced or mechanically improved upon the Tanquetazo. Rather, the two episodes reveal a transformation in the conditions under which military action could succeed. What had been a localized and poorly integrated intervention in June became, by September, a coordinated logistical operation capable of combining command authority, intelligence, communications, mobility, and regional deployment. The Tanquetazo can therefore be understood as an *organizational rehearsal* whose failure exposed critical dependencies that the September operation was subsequently better positioned to overcome. In short, this shift—from fragmented intervention to coordinated control—provides the analytical bridge to the infrastructure and flow-control mechanisms examined below.

3.2. *Infrastructure Over Ideology*

The Chilean coup can be understood not only as an ideological confrontation but also as a highly coordinated operational intervention, contrasting sharply with the fragmented military action of the Tanquetazo. A logistics-centered perspective draws attention to the systematic neutralization of critical infrastructures and the control of essential flows, including transport, communications, and energy. Harmer (2011) emphasizes the strategic coordination of military and civilian actors and the manipulation of economic and political channels, highlighting the material organization underpinning the seizure of power. Pinochet's forces rapidly secured strategically important nodes, including airports, highways, railways, and media outlets, constraining the Allende

administration while limiting opportunities for organized resistance (Steenland, 1974). Pre-coup economic disruptions, including strikes and supply shortages, further weakened systemic resilience and amplified the effects of military intervention. From a network-control perspective, intervention at strategically positioned nodes enabled military forces to interrupt or redirect broader flows of personnel, information, and resources. Operational effectiveness consequently depended not only on ideological alignment, but also on sequencing, coordination, and the exploitation of infrastructural dependencies. The coup's effectiveness lay in transforming control over selected sites into broader constraints on governmental responsiveness, allowing relatively localized military actions to generate systemic consequences across Chile's urban and institutional environment.

Nunn (1975) provides an organizational account of how the institutional conditions underpinning military subordination to civilian authority progressively deteriorated under Allende. Chile's armed forces had historically operated within a governance arrangement in which civilian control was reinforced through ministerial appointments, senior command selection, and deeply institutionalized norms of military professionalism. Under Allende, however, the expanding involvement of senior officers in governmental administration, economic management, and the containment of political conflict increasingly blurred the boundary between military professionalism and political responsibility. Nunn (1975) distinguishes between constitutionalists, who regarded adherence to elected authority as integral to institutional legitimacy, and institutionalists, who became increasingly concerned with politicization, organizational cohesion, and military autonomy. Although the incorporation of officers into government initially facilitated cooperation, it simultaneously altered the organizational conditions sustaining military neutrality. By 1973, escalating conflict, strikes, violence, and governmental paralysis had intensified these internal tensions, while the forced resignation of General Prats removed a principal institutional constraint on military intervention. Ratcliff (1974) complements such account by showing how the military leadership's alignment with powerful propertied interests transformed institutional disaffection into a broader counter-revolutionary project. The coup therefore emerged from the interaction of organizational fragmentation, shifting civil-military boundaries, and coalition realignment rather than from ideological polarization alone.

The Chilean case clearly illustrates the portability of Malaparte's (1932) operational vocabulary across historical and institutional contexts. The coup did not reproduce the specific circumstances described in his book, nor does its organization imply a direct application of Malaparte's framework. Its analytical value instead lies in revealing a grammar of political seizure in which authority becomes vulnerable through coordinated disruption of infrastructures, information channels, and organizational capacities. Conventional accounts centered on ideology or political legitimacy can overlook relationships among nodes and flows that determine the consequences of individual interventions. Applied to Chile, Malaparte's (1932) vocabulary draws attention to a configuration in which the seizure of one infrastructure could restrict circulation elsewhere, while disruption of communication or mobility could magnify actions undertaken at other locations. Network control theory further clarifies the asymmetry between intervention effort and systemic consequence. Parkes *et al.* (2024) argue that control energy determines the effort required to shift a network's State; targeting high-impact nodes such as communication hubs, and transport arteries could therefore produce effects disproportionate to the resources committed. The framework offers a heuristic account of systemic political violence as interdependent operational control, without requiring the military planners themselves to have employed formal network theory. The analytical gain lies precisely in reconstructing relationships among objectives, dependencies, and effects from the historical record.

External actors also shaped the operational environment in which the coup unfolded. Through the FUBELT Program, the United States influenced economic channels, restricted credit, contributed to food shortages, and intensified pressures on the Allende government before military intervention (Gustafson, 2003). Qureshi (2008) details the involvement of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, emphasizing deliberate economic and political measures designed to weaken the administration and increase the costs of maintaining its position. Livingstone (2018) further shows that the British government welcomed the coup and promoted a favorable image of the emerging regime, demonstrating that international support extended beyond direct material intervention to the management of political legitimacy. The coup therefore operated across domestic and transnational networks, linking economic pressure, infrastructural vulnerability, information management, and military action. From a supply-chain perspective, effectiveness depended on anticipating dependencies, concentrating resources at leverage points, and coordinating interventions across different temporal and spatial scales. Such reading does not displace ideology or geopolitics; it complements them by showing how political objectives acquired operational force through the organization and disruption of material and informational flows. International influence consequently appears not as a separate explanatory layer, but as part of the wider operational environment within which domestic actors acted.

3.3. Flow Control

The Chilean coup relied on precise orchestration of urban and institutional nodes to neutralize governmental responsiveness. Key locations—La Moneda, ministerial offices, and principal media outlets, including radio and television stations—were swiftly secured to disrupt decision-making processes and shape public messaging (Sigmund, 1980). Simultaneously, transport networks were blocked to prevent reinforcements and restrict civilian movement. Beyond Santiago, strategic regional points were occupied: in Valparaíso, the Third Infantry Division and naval forces seized ports, communication centers, and local administrative structures, while in Talcahuano, the naval base was taken to neutralize fleet mobility and secure maritime dominance (McElveen and Siekmeier, 2014). Economic disruptions preceding the coup, including strikes and supply interruptions, further weakened systemic resilience and amplified operational effects. Each occupied site acted as a leverage point, generating cascading impacts across institutional and social networks. Centralized planning combined with decentralized execution ensured emergent contingencies did not compromise objectives. The operations exemplify foundational principles of network management, emphasizing redundancy, sequencing, and temporal precision, while offering insights into risk mitigation in pre-digital urban contexts. Conceptualizing the coup before the advent of the digital age provides a framework for understanding multi-layered control and the integration of societal, economic, and infrastructural levers.

The selection of nodes was not determined by symbolic importance alone but reflected a combination of political visibility, operational centrality, mobility, risk, and anticipated downstream effects. La Moneda was a powerful *political symbol of executive authority*: since 1846, it had represented the exercise of political power and the Republic itself (Santander and Aimone, 2006). Yet the military did not initially regard the palace as the principal locus of resistance, anticipating stronger opposition in Santiago's shantytowns and industrial areas (Cavallo Castro *et al.*, 2008). Operational planning consequently extended beyond government buildings. As Téllez Lúgaro (2021) demonstrates through an analysis of declassified U.S. documents, the *Lautaro* framework combined centralized coordination with separate but concurrent plans for the three services, assigning specific roles to military units, *Carabineros*, communications facilities, and regional commands. Radio stations and telecommunications infrastructure offered leverage over governmental coordination and public information, while ports, airports, roads, and military installations facilitated the movement and concentration of forces. The resulting target architecture therefore reflected distinct forms of operational value rather than a single hierarchy of importance.

The distinction between these forms of operational value also points beyond military effectiveness to the different modalities of power that the coup sought to capture and reconfigure. Such a configuration invites a reconsideration of sovereign power, biopower, and governmentality in the Chilean case. Allende should not be understood merely as the object of a networked operation, but as the embodiment of sovereign authority. The coup therefore sought not only to disrupt governmental infrastructures, but to sever the connection between sovereign authority and the administrative, informational, and social arrangements through which it was exercised. Agamben's (1998) account of sovereignty and the political management of life, alongside Esposito's (2008) reconceptualization of biopolitics, helps illuminate this transformation. The Chilean case reveals not simply the vulnerability of biopower and governmentality, but their dependence on institutional configurations that can be appropriated and radically reorganized. The coup did not abolish these mechanisms; it redirected them by placing administration, surveillance, coercion, and population management within a transformed sovereign order. Disruption thus appears not as an external interruption of governmental power, but as a process through which its institutional conditions and political orientation were fundamentally reconfigured.

3.4. People Control

A target could become consequential because securing it facilitated action elsewhere, while its disruption could deprive opponents of the means to respond, reinforce, or communicate. The planned sequence consequently transformed individual objectives into a mutually reinforcing set of interventions: control over communications constrained coordination; control over transport routes affected the movement of personnel and matériel; and control over regional military positions altered the balance of forces available to Santiago. Regional actions in Valparaíso and Talcahuano illustrate the same principle, combining the neutralization of potential opposition with control of infrastructure linking local and national operations (McElveen and Siekmeier, 2014). Such relationships suggest that the planners, i.e., the officers responsible for operational planning (see Table 2), assessed targets not only according to their immediate vulnerability or intrinsic importance, but also according to the consequences that followed from their seizure or disruption. The evidence therefore supports an interpretation of node selection as an implicit assessment of interdependence: some targets mattered because of what they contained, while others mattered because of what their disruption prevented elsewhere. No formal

network theory need be attributed to these military planners; rather, the networked character of the operation emerges from the observable relationships among objectives, sequence, and operational effects.

Table 2. Key Military Planners and Commanders in the 1973 Chilean coup

Levels	Officers	Positions in 1973	Roles and contributions to the coup
Core planners and coordinators	Admiral Patricio Carvajal Prado	Chief of the National Defense Staff	Principal operational coordinator. Helped coordinate the separate military conspiracies and establish a joint command structure. Played a central role in communications and coordination on September 11.
	Admiral José Toribio Merino	Commander-in-Chief of the Navy	Principal Navy organizer and conspirator. Helped push the Navy toward decisive action and coordinated with the other services. His role was critical in securing the Navy's participation and establishing the operational timetable.
	General Augusto Pinochet	Commander-in-Chief of the Army	Senior army leader and eventual unifying commander. His commitment brought the army—the largest armed service—fully into the conspiracy. His participation was decisive to the coup's success, and he subsequently became its dominant political figure.
	General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán	Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force	Senior air force conspirator. Committed the Air Force to the operation and supported plans for the seizure of key government facilities. His participation ensured that all three armed services were committed to the overthrow.
Senior operational planners	General Sergio Arellano Stark	Senior Army general	Key army intermediary and conspirator. Helped consolidate support within the army and played an important role in securing its final commitment to the coup.
	Admiral Ismael Huerta Díaz	Senior Navy officer	Important navy conspirator. Participated in the Navy's preparations and in the network coordinating military opposition to Allende, reinforcing the Navy's institutional commitment.
	Other senior Army, Navy and Air Force officers	Various senior command positions	Operational planners. Translated the strategic decision to overthrow Allende into concrete plans involving troop movements, communications, strategic targets and command arrangements.
Institutional and field commanders	General Cesar Mendoza Durán	Director-General of Carabineros	Head of the national police force. Brought Carabineros into the coup and under the control of the junta, thereby removing a major potential source of armed resistance to the military takeover.
	Senior Carabineros commanders	National police leadership	Institutional enablers. Ensured that police units did not effectively defend the constitutional government and subsequently helped enforce the new regime's authority.
	Regional and field commanders	Army, Navy and Air Force	Execution-level commanders. Implemented the operational plans, seized strategic facilities, detained government supporters and suppressed resistance, converting the central command decision into effective control.

Source: The author.

Operational authority extended beyond immediate tactical targets to encompass physical infrastructure, media control, transport networks, and aerial dominance. Seizure of media infrastructure allowed the junta to shape narratives and legitimize interventions, while coordinated occupation of transport and economic nodes constrained mobility and limited the government's operational options (Grandin, 2011). Air Force squadrons deployed across regional airfields neutralized government aircraft and maintained control over critical aerial corridors, preventing reinforcements or escapes (Dorfman *et al.*, 2006). By combining rapid occupation of strategic nodes with targeted pre-coup economic measures, planners established a controlled environment in which coordinated governmental response was severely restricted. Each site served as a critical leverage point,

ensuring cascading effects across both institutional and societal networks. A Foucauldian reading offers a cautious parallel: disciplinary power operates partly through making individuals increasingly visible, identifiable, and classifiable, thereby rendering them amenable to differentiated forms of intervention (Foucault, 2020 [1975]). Such a comparison does not imply that the coup planners consciously followed a disciplinary model; rather, it highlights how control of territory and infrastructure could extend into the identification and targeting of particular persons. The integration of physical, aerial, informational, and economic dimensions across temporal and spatial scales illustrates principles of effective flow management, paralleling contemporary risk management and industrial logistics practices. Viewing these operations as structured logistical interventions provides scholars with insights into orchestrating interdependent networks and demonstrates how coordinated measures decisively shape outcomes under extreme uncertainty.

The coup's success relied not only on the seizure of key infrastructure but also on the systematic identification and neutralization of individuals capable of organizing resistance. Well before digital surveillance technologies existed, intelligence gathering and U.S. support contributed to the identification of political opponents and to the development of counterinsurgency practices that facilitated rapid, targeted repression. Arrests began on the day of the coup, as the new authorities moved against political figures, military personnel, and other potential sources of opposition. General Alberto Bachelet, for instance, was imprisoned and subjected to torture before dying in custody, while Communist Party deputy Wladimir Díaz Chávez was arrested and subsequently disappeared, illustrating the targeting of figures who might have contributed to institutional or political resistance (Hertz *et al.*, 2016). The National Stadium was transformed into a mass detention and interrogation site, while the so-called "*Caravan of Death*" carried out executions in several regions of the country (Corral, 2012). Beyond such documented cases of detention, torture, and disappearance, the death of poet Pablo Neruda shortly after the coup has also remained the subject of controversy. Although allegations of poisoning have persisted, the precise cause and manner of his death remain contested (Gómez Olivares, 2026). Taken together, the criminal practices combined prior identification, intelligence gathering, detention, torture, disappearance, and extrajudicial execution to disrupt the organizational capacities of the opposition. The repression therefore operated not simply through control of physical infrastructure, but through the pre-emptive removal of individuals considered capable of sustaining political or institutional resistance.

3.5. Adaptive Execution

Despite this meticulous pre-planning, the Chilean coup's success depended fundamentally on real-time responsiveness to local contingencies and unexpected resistance. Pinochet's commanders implemented decentralized decision-making structures, empowering field officers to adjust tactics to evolving circumstances while maintaining strategic coherence. Checkpoints, mobile units, and rapid communication networks ensured that operational blockages remained effective even in the face of civilian or institutional disruptions (Weick, 1993). Tactical improvisation reflected Malaparte's (1932) assertion that operational flexibility is essential in high-stakes political seizures, where rigid adherence to pre-established plans risks failure. From a systems perspective, adaptability encompassed contingency planning, rapid rerouting, and dynamic coordination in response to disruptions, highlighting the indispensable role of human judgment in environments where automated or inflexible mechanisms could not suffice. Strategic foresight combined with agile execution allowed orchestrators to sustain operational momentum, neutralize potential counteractions, and synchronize timing, sequencing, and resource deployment with overarching objectives. Table 3 summarizes the key logistical levers, operational blockages, and resulting consequences, illustrating how these elements collectively shaped the coup's effectiveness. Examining this interplay yields lessons for organizations operating in volatile, high-pressure contexts, emphasizing that robust outcomes under extreme uncertainty depend on adaptive execution integrated with preemptive planning, flow control, and the effective management of critical nodes.

Table 3. Chilean Coup: Logistics of Blockades and Node Control

Logistical levers	Operational blocking dimensions	Consequences and effects
<i>Control of key infrastructure (airports, ports, highways)</i>	Military occupation of Santiago's airport, blocking of highways	Disrupted communication with the outside world, halted air traffic, difficulty in reinforcements
<i>Disruption of transport networks</i>	Military blockades on major roads and railway lines	Severed connections between regions, supply shortages, and delays in military movements
<i>Seizure of communication infrastructure</i>	Occupation of radio stations, interruption of telecommunication lines	Limited information for civilians, widespread uncertainty, and control of public narrative
<i>Control over energy and fuel supplies</i>	Shutdown of power plants and fuel depots in key locations	Blackouts, shortages of gasoline, and fuel for military and civilian use
<i>Military coordination with civilian logistics</i>	Use of trucks and buses for troop movement, civilian vehicles seized	Accelerated deployment of troops, minimal resistance in military operations
<i>Strategic targeting of public institutions</i>	Storming government buildings, blocking access to vital State offices	Swift collapse of the Allende administration, paralysis of governmental functions
<i>Suppression of organized civilian resistance</i>	Use of military checkpoints and armed patrols across urban areas	Intimidation of civilian population, halted protests, establishment of control, torture
<i>Psychological warfare and public fear</i>	Enforced curfews, aerial bombing, and media control	Heightened fear and compliance, the breakdown of public order, and reduced resistance capacity

Source. The author.

Systematic coordination of communication, transport, energy, and public networks underpinned the Chilean coup and illustrates that regime change relied as much on operational acumen as on ideological positioning (Grandin, 2011; Kornbluh, 2013). Preemptive orchestration, coupled with local flexibility, enabled junta forces to neutralize resistance efficiently, maintain public order through calculated intimidation, and consolidate authority across State apparatus. From a supply chain perspective, the coup can be conceptualized as a highly interconnected system in which timing, sequencing, and oversight of nodes determined outcomes. Each tactical decision, occupation of critical infrastructure, and flow disruption produced cascading effects analogous to critical node failures in industrial logistics, demonstrating the interdependence of operational elements. This perspective also reveals how the effectiveness of each intervention depended on the capacity to absorb disruption without losing coherence, allowing local adjustments to reinforce rather than undermine the broader operational architecture of the operation. Analyzing the coup as a structured logistical undertaking provides insights into adaptability, contingency planning, and the orchestration of high-impact operations. The Chilean case demonstrates that successful interventions demand not only precise planning but also the integration of multiple levers—physical, informational, and economic—into a coherent, rapidly executable operational strategy capable of sustaining momentum under dynamic and uncertain conditions.

The repercussions of the Chilean coup extended far beyond immediate operational achievement, leaving enduring human, political, and economic consequences. Pinochet's dictatorship (1973–1990) was characterized by widespread human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, systematic torture at sites such as Villa Grimaldi—the DINA's largest detention and torture center in Santiago—and political executions, while thousands were exiled or silenced. Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate (2003) contextualizes the social shock experienced by Chilean society, emphasizing the terror and disorientation imposed on civilians by military repression and the systematic denial of responsibility by the armed forces. The regime disrupted social cohesion by criminalizing opposition and restricting civil liberties, fundamentally reshaping societal structures. Economically, radical neoliberal reforms implemented under Milton Friedman's "*Chicago Boys*"—including privatization, deregulation, labor flexibility, and rollback of land reforms—stabilized macroeconomic indicators, attracted foreign investment, and spurred growth, but simultaneously exacerbated inequality and intensified societal polarization (Taylor, 2003; Fernández Jilberto, 2004). Marginalized communities faced fragmented or lower-quality public services, while economic elites consolidated institutional and financial control. Media narratives frequently downplayed human rights abuses, prioritizing accounts of economic recovery and modernization (Watkins and Urbina-Montana, 2022). This period demonstrates that meticulously orchestrated operational

strategies can shape not only political outcomes but also long-term societal structures, offering critical lessons on the intersection of logistics, governance, and social consequences. Recent research further suggests that the spatial reconstruction of repression can turn fragmented experiences and dispersed memories into shared forms of public knowledge, revealing how the circulation and preservation of information shape the long-term legacy of political violence (Bernasconi *et al.*, 2026).

4. Comparative Insights

Military and police networks established during the 1960s and 1970s offer a vital lens for analyzing how States sought to manage societies under the geopolitical pressures of the Cold War. These networks integrated intelligence collection, psychological operations, and centralized oversight of critical infrastructure, creating sophisticated mechanisms of control across multiple domains of social life. Their originality lay in functioning as coordinated operational systems, prefiguring principles later associated with digital networking. Counterinsurgency campaigns, transnational interventions, and internal surveillance strategies pursued objectives beyond mere repression: they manipulated information flows, exploited structural vulnerabilities, and prevented rival groups from consolidating power. Comparative study across national experiences, whether or not they resulted in coups, demonstrates recurring operational constants, including the strategic value of critical nodes, the significance of logistical timing, and the seamless interaction between high-level planning and local execution. Interpreted through a network-oriented perspective, these systems transcend ideological explanations, providing a robust analytical framework to study pre-digital clandestine operations whose structural logic foreshadowed later applications of a networked control. This comparative lens underscores that operational mastery depended on synchronized sequencing and resource coordination, not simply political motivation.

4.1. Pre-Digital Precedents

Analyzing the Chilean coup of 1973 alongside pre-digital clandestine operations highlights how logistical and flow-control principles functioned without digital communication. Relevant precedents include the Phoenix Program in Vietnam, Operation Condor in Latin America, Operation OBAN in Brazil, and COINTELPRO in the United States (see Table 4). Despite differences in scale, objectives, and institutional settings, these operations relied on the coordinated management of information, personnel, infrastructure, and organizational networks. In Vietnam, Phoenix mobilized intelligence units, paramilitary teams, and bureaucratic structures to dismantle Viet Cong networks through identification, surveillance, and targeted elimination (Johnson, 1983; Karnow, 1997). Operation Condor extended comparable practices across national borders by integrating intelligence sharing, surveillance, and coordinated repression among military regimes (McSherry, 2005). OBAN and COINTELPRO similarly disrupted domestic opposition through centralized coordination, infiltration, disinformation, and monitoring (Dinges, 2004; Churchill and Vander Wall, 2022). The Chilean coup combined these dimensions with the rapid seizure of communications, transport, and energy infrastructures. In historical irony, Allende's *Cybersyn* project had itself sought to centralize supply-chain monitoring and decision-making in real time (Paché, 2024), while the coup leaders applied centralized coordination to military operations. Across these cases, effectiveness depended on organizing dispersed resources and information under conditions of uncertainty rather than on ideological commitment alone.

Table 4. Comparative Overview of Clandestine Operations

Operation or program	Primary objective	Key actors	Logistical methods	Consequences
<i>Phoenix Program (Vietnam, 1967–1972)</i>	Dismantle Viet Cong insurgent networks	CIA, U.S. military, South Vietnamese security forces	Intelligence gathering; local enforcement actions; targeted eliminations	Tens of thousands killed or detained; civilian trauma; contested effectiveness
<i>Operation OBAN (Brazil, 1969)</i>	Suppress leftist opposition and guerrilla groups	Brazilian army, police, business elites (financial support)	Centralized coordination, surveillance, torture, secret detention centers	Institutionalization of torture; widespread human rights abuses
<i>Operation Condor (Latin America, 1975–1980s)</i>	Transnational elimination of political opponents	Military regimes of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia	Cross-border intelligence sharing, coordinated kidnappings, targeted assassinations, control of transport	Thousands disappeared; opposition movements dismantled; repression systematized
<i>COINTELPRO (United States, 1956–1971)</i>	Neutralization of domestic dissent (civil rights, leftist groups)	FBI, local police forces	Infiltration; disinformation; surveillance	Weakening of social movements; erosion of trust in institutions; later public scandal
<i>Chilean coup (Chile, 1973)</i>	Overthrow Allende government and consolidate military rule	Chilean armed forces, economic elites, U.S. support (FUBELT Program)	Control of communications, transport, and energy; pre-coup economic sabotage; sequencing of operations	Thousands killed, tortured, or exiled; establishment of Pinochet's dictatorship; neoliberal reforms

Source. The author.

Read comparatively, these cases also invite a reconsideration of how Malaparte's (1932) framework travelled beyond the European coups that originally informed it. This does not require establishing a direct chain of intellectual influence connecting his book to each subsequent clandestine operation. Rather, its significance can be approached through the portability of the analytical categories it foregrounded. Malaparte's (1932) attention to critical infrastructures, communication channels, organizational dependencies, timing, and counter-power provides a vocabulary through which political disruption can be examined as an operational problem. Such categories are not confined to the particular historical circumstances of Lenin's, Trotsky's, or Mussolini's actions; they can be reapplied to settings in which authority is challenged through the manipulation of interconnected organizational systems. Their analytical value lies precisely in enabling comparison across cases without reducing their historical specificity, thereby revealing recurrent organizational mechanisms while preserving differences in institutional context, technological capacity, and political purpose. The question is therefore less whether later actors reproduced Malaparte's (1932) prescriptions than whether his analytical distinctions offer a productive means of recognizing recurrent mechanisms across otherwise dissimilar operations. In this sense, "travel" refers not necessarily to textual transmission or doctrinal adoption, but to the capacity of a conceptual framework to be detached from its original setting and used to make other forms of political violence intelligible.

The comparative value of this framework becomes clearer when the cases are considered in terms of their organizational mechanisms rather than their ideological objectives. Phoenix, Condor, OBAN, COINTELPRO, and the Chilean coup differed substantially in political context, institutional structure, geographical scale, and forms of repression, yet each involved efforts to identify points of leverage, gather and distribute information, constrain opposing networks, and coordinate actions across multiple organizational levels. The Chilean case is therefore not presented as an implementation of Malaparte's (1932) blueprint, just as Phoenix or Condor should not be treated as straightforward descendants of his work. Instead, these cases make visible an operational grammar that Malaparte (1932) helped articulate: political authority can be disrupted by intervening selectively in the infrastructures, relationships, and flows on which collective action depends. This distinction separates historical influence from analytical portability and allows comparison without presupposing ideological continuity or direct causal transmission. Contemporary supply chain and network theories subsequently provide a different vocabulary for formalizing these mechanisms, particularly through concepts of bottlenecks, redundancy, vulnerability, and resource allocation. The pre-digital cases thus offer a historical field in which the

organizational logic of coordinated intervention can be examined before its subsequent formalization in digitally connected systems.

4.2. Intelligence and Coordination

The surveillance of populations and political opponents, particularly those classified as radical, subversive, or dangerous, long predates digital technologies. Intelligence history shows that States developed systematic forms of political surveillance and counter-subversive policing well before computerized databases or networked communication (Andrew, 2018). In late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, for instance, the surveillance of organized radicalism contributed to the emergence of an institutionalized political-policing apparatus, as bureaucrats, police officers, and politicians developed coordinated strategies for monitoring and containing perceived threats (Solomon, 2021). Such practices also extended across national borders: European governments monitored anticolonial activists through interconnected networks of police, informants, and intelligence agencies decades before digital communication (Brückenhaus, 2020). These precedents suggest that digital surveillance should be understood less as the invention of a new logic of political control than as a *technological intensification of established practices*. Across different historical settings, intelligence systems performed enduring functions: identifying potential adversaries, assembling fragmented information, assessing threats, and transmitting knowledge between actors responsible for decision-making and intervention. What changed was not the fundamental purpose of surveillance, but the scale, speed, connectivity, and persistence with which data could be collected, linked, and operationalized.

The distinction becomes particularly visible in the Phoenix Program and Operation Condor. Phoenix Program deployed localized intelligence units, paramilitary teams, and bureaucratic structures to systematically collect, verify, and cross-reference data on insurgent networks, coordinating arrests, monitoring enemy movements, and blocking communication routes across South Vietnamese provinces such as Quảng Ngãi, Bình Định, and Tây Ninh (Johnson, 1983). Operation Condor integrated intelligence sharing, surveillance of political opponents, and coordination among military and police forces across Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay, exemplifying multi-agent orchestration (McSherry, 2005). The two cases demonstrate how information gathered through dispersed organizational units could be transformed into coordinated action across geographically fragmented networks. Their significance for the present analysis lies less in reproducing the broader claim about operational mastery than in showing how human judgment, communication reliability, and local adaptation mediated the relationship between centralized objectives and field-level execution. The orchestration of physical and informational flows therefore provides a basis for analysing pre-digital intelligence systems, showing the continuing relevance of human judgment and operational flexibility in complex environments where timing and coordination shape outcomes. Rather than simply confirming the importance of network control, these cases reveal the organizational work required to translate information into synchronized intervention.

Strategic principles from the Phoenix Program and Operation Condor correspond closely with contemporary SCM theories, especially regarding bottleneck identification, anticipation of disruptions, and resilience to external shocks. High-risk industries, including semiconductors and electronics, rely on redundancy, source diversification, and rigorous preparation for extreme scenarios to maintain continuity. Studies on the Colombian defense sector stress adaptability, vulnerability mapping, and local governance as essential to mitigating crises during and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Cabrera *et al.*, 2023). Although scholarly work rarely addresses covert operations directly, supply chain frameworks illuminate the operational logic underpinning historical interventions. In the Phoenix Program, Operation Condor, and the Chilean coup, success depended on synchronizing physical flows, such as troop movements, with data flows generated through surveillance, intelligence, and disinformation (Ciment, 1999). This alignment minimized systemic failures, allowing fragile networks to be redirected under volatile conditions. These precedents demonstrate that foresight, adaptive execution, and meticulous sequencing are indispensable for preserving system integrity, offering insights for managing complex, high-risk networks historically and in contemporary settings, and reinforcing the operational rationale behind coordinated interventions under uncertainty.

An often-overlooked dimension in analyzing clandestine operations lies in identifying individuals capable of thwarting objectives. As noted previously, in the 1973 Chilean coup, the junta not only secured strategic infrastructure but also cataloged figures likely to organize resistance, including military personnel loyal to Allende, union leaders, members of Congress, and influential intellectuals. Similarly, the Phoenix Program and Operation Condor demonstrated the effectiveness of systematically identifying potential adversaries before field action. Phoenix Program members killed 26,369 individuals suspected of Viet Cong affiliation in South Vietnam, according to official statistics (Andradé, 1990). Operation Condor involved coordinated action among six South American dictatorships to eliminate political opponents, including exiles, through transnational kidnappings and

assassinations, notably Uruguayans Zelmar Michelini and Héctor Gutiérrez Ruiz, a former senator and former president of the Chamber of Deputies, murdered in Buenos Aires in 1976 (McSherry, 2019). These examples confirm that controlling infrastructure alone is insufficient: preemptive neutralization of resistance networks through methodical intelligence collection constitutes a critical operational lever, ensuring the execution of clandestine operations and reducing the risk of counteroffensive actions, while demonstrating the centrality of operational foresight and coordination in high-risk interventions.

4.3. *Lessons in Resilience*

The study of pre-digital clandestine operations provides critical insights into constraints and strategic choices that remain relevant for supply chain networks. The absence of real-time digital communication forced reliance on hierarchical planning, detailed scheduling, decentralized execution, and precisely timed interventions across extensive geographic areas. Operation Condor exemplified these conditions, functioning through standardized procedures, trusted networks, secure communication channels, and meticulous pre-planning rather than immediate oversight (Dinges, 2004; McSherry, 2005). The Chilean coup similarly relied on the coordinated control of mechanized military assets, urban transport, communication hubs, media channels, and governmental access points to achieve rapid, synchronized operations. These cases emphasize the importance of redundancy, scenario-based planning, and verification of critical information, principles central to SCM, particularly under high uncertainty (Christopher and Peck, 2004; Sheffi and Rice, 2005). Human judgment remained decisive, integrating foresight, improvisation, timing, and resource allocation. Examined through a network design perspective, these operations offer lessons in resilient and agile coordination and the management of interdependent physical and informational flows, providing insights for scholars and practitioners navigating high-risk, interconnected systems (Choulis *et al.*, 2023), while also anticipating the shift to electronic infrastructures in which memory itself, as Packard (2016) argues, becomes an autonomous resource shaping control and coordination.

Coups and transnational clandestine programs further illuminate the operational dimensions of decentralized yet coordinated responses. Mapping critical nodes, simulating potential disruptions, and establishing contingency protocols were as vital in Operation Condor and the Chilean coup as they are in contemporary supply chains exposed to sudden shocks. Preemptive strategies, including strategic stockpiling, diversification of procurement sources, and redundancy planning, mirror historical practices designed to maintain system-wide integrity under extreme conditions (Sheffi, 2017). The combination of centralized strategic oversight with empowered local units capable of rapid decision-making ensured that operational flexibility complemented overarching objectives. Across multiple domains, from humanitarian logistics to global manufacturing, critical infrastructure management, and international trade, the universality of multi-agent coordination is evident. These historical interventions illustrate that forward-looking planning, adaptive execution, and precise control over essential flows are indispensable for sustaining performance, mitigating cascading failures, and responding effectively to unpredictable events.

Examining pre-digital clandestine operations through a supply chain lens reveals striking parallels between intelligence-driven orchestration and modern SCM principles. Programs such as the Phoenix Program in Vietnam combined localized intelligence units, paramilitary teams, and bureaucratic structures to systematically collect, verify, and cross-reference data on insurgent networks, while coordinating arrests, monitoring enemy movements, and blocking communication routes across South Vietnamese provinces (Johnson, 1983). Operation Condor relied on cross-border intelligence sharing, surveillance of political opponents, and multi-agent coordination across Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay (McSherry, 2005). In all cases, success depended on mastering physical flows while simultaneously managing information flows through espionage, surveillance, and disinformation, and synchronizing actions with precision. These operational parallels emphasize the value of network mapping, critical node identification, redundancy, and scenario-based planning, demonstrating that integrating foresight, adaptive execution, and control over flows remains central to effective coordination. Historical lessons thus provide actionable insights for managing complex networks under extreme uncertainty, bridging covert operations and contemporary risk management frameworks (Tang, 2006; Sheffi, 2017).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Viewing the Chilean coup of 1973 through a network perspective shifts the analytical lens from ideology to the orchestration of operations under extreme conditions. Success in such contexts relied less on symbolic authority than on precise timing, coordination, and control over pivotal nodes. The coup demonstrates the interplay between preemptive planning, adaptive execution, and systemic interdependencies, revealing how material,

informational, and human flows must be managed to convert potential disorder into effective control. Analyzing structural and tactical dimensions clarifies mechanisms that ensure operational continuity, offering lessons for organizational resilience, crisis management, and the design of complex networks. Mapping interdependent pathways, anticipating contingencies, and synchronizing actions uncovers patterns applicable beyond political operations, emphasizing foresight, adaptability, and coordination. Linking historical events with contemporary management challenges illustrates strategies relevant to high-risk systems in which each node and flow carries significant weight. The Chilean coup functions as a paradigm for understanding the governance of volatile and interconnected networks across temporal, cultural, and sectoral boundaries, providing enduring insights for managing uncertainty in complex operational environments.

5.1. Contributions

The first contribution lies in showing what becomes visible when a political rupture is examined through an operational rather than primarily ideological lens. The Chilean coup can be understood as an operation conducted across an interdependent system in which political authority, communications, transport, military units, and urban strongholds were mutually connected. Such a perspective moves beyond identifying individual critical assets to examine why particular nodes acquired operational value in relation to others, how their disruption altered the wider system, and how intervention was sequenced to constrain coordinated resistance. Malaparte's (1932) emphasis on the seizure of strategic points provides an important starting point, but a network and supply chain perspective adds a relational dimension: the significance of a node depended not only on its intrinsic importance but also on the flows, dependencies, and alternative routes connected to it. The contribution therefore lies less in importing SCM terminology into a historical case than in using SCM concepts to reconstruct the operational logic linking target selection, coordination, sequencing, and system-wide effects. Such an approach makes forms of interdependence visible that remain less apparent when political violence is examined primarily through institutions, ideology, or individual actors.

The second contribution concerns the relationship between centralized planning and decentralized execution. The evidence indicates that the operation was neither a rigidly scripted sequence nor an improvised response to rapidly changing circumstances. Strategic objectives and broad coordination mechanisms were established in advance, while individual commands retained latitude to adapt their actions to local conditions and emerging resistance. Such an arrangement helps refine conventional SCM discussions of agility and resilience by highlighting the organizational problem of translating distributed information into timely, coordinated action under conditions of extreme uncertainty and incomplete information and time pressure. Resilience, in that sense, cannot be reduced to redundancy or continuity of supply; it also depends on the capacity to connect information dispersed across a network with decisions made at the appropriate organizational level. The Chilean case consequently illustrates how centralized intent can coexist with localized adaptation, provided that communication channels, authority relationships, and operational priorities remain sufficiently aligned. The finding extends the conventional planning-versus-flexibility debate by suggesting that effective coordination under disruption depends not on choosing between the two, but on establishing an architecture in which predetermined objectives can accommodate changing local circumstances without losing strategic coherence.

The historical analysis further clarifies the importance of cascading effects within an interconnected system. Disrupting a node could produce consequences extending well beyond its immediate physical or institutional function: restricting communications could impair coordination elsewhere, controlling transport infrastructure could constrain reinforcement and mobility, while securing regional military positions could reduce the capacity of opposing forces to reorganize. Such effects resemble propagation mechanisms examined in network and supply chain research, but the case adds an important dimension by showing how actors may deliberately engineer cascades rather than merely seek to absorb them. The distinction matters for management theory because vulnerability assessment should consider not only the probability and direct cost of failure, but also the dependencies through which disruption can propagate across a wider system. In this respect, the coup provides a historically grounded setting in which network centrality, chokepoints, contingency planning, information flows, and sequencing can be examined as interacting operational variables rather than isolated managerial principles. The analytical gain lies in connecting local interventions to system-level consequences and in treating disruption as a process whose effects emerge through relationships among nodes rather than from the failure of any single asset.

The analytical value of the framework becomes clearer when applied beyond the pre-digital environment in which the Chilean operation unfolded. Contemporary coups operate within infrastructures that allow information, surveillance, communication, and coordination to circulate at considerably greater speed, while preserving many of the underlying organizational problems identified above. The February 2021 military coup in

Myanmar, in Southeast Asia, and the 2020 coup in Mali, in West Africa, provide contrasting examples in which digital surveillance, cyber operations, information control, and rapid coordination interacted with the seizure of strategic positions and the neutralization of political opponents. The comparison does not imply that contemporary coups simply reproduce the Chilean model, nor that digital technologies determine their outcomes. Rather, technological change modifies the speed, reach, and precision of operational coordination while leaving intact a more fundamental problem: identifying critical nodes, anticipating interdependencies, controlling essential flows, and adapting execution as conditions evolve. The framework therefore connects historical political operations with contemporary networked systems without claiming a direct historical lineage from Malaparte (1932) to SCM. Its contribution is instead comparative and analytical: it shows how problems of interdependence, coordination, and cascading disruption persist even as the infrastructures through which political operations are organized undergo profound technological transformation.

5.2. Limitations and Research Avenues

A logistics-focused perspective brings into view dimensions of the Chilean coup that remain less visible through conventional political or institutional accounts, yet the analytical gain comes with a narrower field of inquiry. Concentrating on operational organization and the control of flows necessarily abstracts from the socio-political, cultural, and human forces that shaped the outcome. Popular sentiment, elite alliances, ideological commitments, and international diplomatic pressures cannot be fully captured through node mapping or infrastructure analysis, even though they influenced the availability of resources, the alignment of actors, and their willingness to mobilize. A strong emphasis on logistical mechanisms may likewise encourage deterministic readings that reduce complex historical dynamics to patterns of coordination and control. The Chilean case is further bounded by its temporal, geographical, and cultural specificity: institutional arrangements, societal responses, and historical contingencies vary across political and organizational settings, limiting the direct transferability of a logistics-based framework. Attention to operational nodes may understate the unpredictability of human behavior and decision-making under stress, uncertainty, and conflicting interests. The resulting limitations fall into two domains. The first concerns the scope and standpoint of the operational lens; the second concerns the historical and technological specificity of the Chilean case. An analytically balanced account therefore requires attention to the human agency, political context, and cultural meanings that condition logistical execution.

The analytical standpoint adopted in the article warrants particular scrutiny. The operational lens distinguishes the mechanics of coordination from the ideological and political motivations surrounding the coup, yet the distinction cannot be regarded as fully neutral. Reconstructing the operation from the perspective of actors seeking to make it succeed foregrounds critical nodes, control of flows, and the disruption or neutralization of opposing actors. Such categories describe an operational logic without constituting politically or normatively neutral managerial practices. Translating historically situated forms of political coercion into concepts such as resilience, crisis management, or network effectiveness can obscure the violence and political consequences embedded in the practices under examination. Managerial implications should consequently be treated as *heuristic* rather than prescriptive. The analytical value of the Chilean case lies less in offering a transferable toolkit for managing disruption than in revealing how power becomes operationally organized through infrastructures, information, people, and interdependencies. An organizational analysis of political violence gains theoretical value when it makes the mechanisms of coordination visible without reproducing the perspective or priorities of the actors who exercised them.

The logistics-oriented framework leaves important dimensions of political power only partially captured. Operational control in Chile was accompanied by a profound reconfiguration of sovereign authority. Allende was not simply an actor situated within a disrupted political network; as President, he embodied the constitutional authority that the coup sought to displace, while La Moneda constituted the institutional site in which that authority was concentrated and ultimately confronted. The case consequently raises broader questions about the relationship among sovereignty, biopower, and governmentality. The regulation of populations and the administration of social life cannot be separated from the sovereign capacity to determine who holds legitimate authority and whose decisions become politically binding. The overthrow reveals a potential fragility within biopolitical and governmental arrangements: when sovereign authority is violently interrupted, mechanisms of population governance may be reorganized, suspended, or redirected. Conversely, consolidation of a new regime can transform a rupture in sovereignty into conditions for subsequent forms of governmental and biopolitical ordering. Political disruption therefore warrants attention to the interaction and reconfiguration of multiple modalities of power rather than to operational control alone.

The framework's applicability is likewise shaped by the historical and technological context of the Chilean case. The 1973 coup unfolded in a pre-digital environment in which information circulated through manual reporting,

hierarchical chains, and face-to-face communication, making delays in transmission and local judgment central to operational coordination. Contemporary networks operate through technological ecosystems characterized by instantaneous data transmission, predictive algorithms, automated monitoring, and sophisticated communication platforms, reshaping the relationship between centralized oversight and decentralized execution. Digital technologies can accelerate coordination and improve real-time responsiveness while introducing new vulnerabilities through cyber-physical exposure, cascading failures, and dense interdependencies. Comparisons between the Chilean case and contemporary logistical systems must therefore account for substantial differences in infrastructure, operational tempo, and patterns of interdependence. Modern organizations operate within globalized networks subject to regulatory scrutiny, cyber threats, and multilayered dependencies that were largely absent in the early 1970s. The historical case consequently provides a basis for critical reflection on contingency planning and crisis management rather than a repertoire of practices that can be transferred directly across technological and institutional contexts.

Several avenues for future research follow from the issues raised above. First, comparative studies of coups across regions and historical periods could distinguish recurring logistical principles from adaptations shaped by institutional, political, and technological conditions. Such work could examine how node control, contingency planning, and flow orchestration vary across political cultures and institutional architectures, while tracing how sovereignty and other forms of power are reconfigured during political disruption. Second, research could incorporate the perspective of actors facing disruption alongside that of those seeking to impose it. In Chile, reconstructing whether the Allende government recognized vulnerabilities in communications, transport, military deployments, or political institutions could reveal how competing actors perceived the same system and whether differences in system representation contributed to the coup's effectiveness. Third, extending the framework to insurgencies, intelligence campaigns, humanitarian interventions, and other disruption-driven operations could clarify how coordination, flow management, and network disruption vary across contexts. Research could examine how digital technologies reshape such dynamics through real-time data, predictive algorithms, and automated coordination, particularly in relation to centralized decision-making, local autonomy, and adaptive capacity. Such extensions could clarify which insights are context-dependent and which reflect more general principles of organizing under extreme disruption.

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