

State Building and Democratization in Chile (1830-1874)

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Introduction

State building entails the centralization of political authority. On the other hand, democratization often grants political power to groups with incentives to block the expansion of the state.¹ Given these conflicting incentives, the co-emergence of state capacity and democracy is paradoxical. Studying late-19th century Chile—a case known for the early development of state capacity and a competitive regime²—this paper focuses on the transformation of territorial peripheries³ and shows its simultaneous effects on state capacity and democratization.

Specifically, the paper shows how the war-like effort to penetrate and transform peripheries in the north and south of the country demanded the end of deals of intermediation between the central government and local elites, and a large overhauling of the bureaucracy. Secondly—and paradoxically—the state building coalition left a large territory detached from the control of the state in order to benefit landowners, who secured political and economic survival by keeping a clientelistic base within haciendas. Landlords' control over peasants worked as insurance against expropriation, decreasing the costs for the conservative party to participate in democracy. Finally, centralization attempts by the central government activated the center-periphery cleavage, encouraging party formation across provinces.

I argue that the reason behind the central government's project of penetration lies in the first major crisis in the country's economic model (1857). The decline in the international prices of silver, added to the end of high-quality deposits, pushed the central government to shift its focus

¹ These actors include local notables during the 19th c., or political machines and bosses in the 20th c. They commonly hinder the formation of a skilled bureaucracy by creating networks of patronage.

² For state building, see Centeno (2002), Kurtz (2013), Saylor (2014), Soifer (2015), and Schenoni (2021). For regime, see A. Valenzuela (1977), J. S. Valenzuela (1985; 1997), and Drake (2009).

³ The concept of periphery transformation is akin to “transition to direct rule” (Tilly 1992).

towards agricultural commodities and eliminate inefficiencies in tax collection. Yet doing so came with the risky, costly project of periphery transformation.

At the beginning of the period under study, an oligarchic regime governed the country, mine owners' guilds replaced and coopted the state in the northern provinces, while a frontier culture and economy had developed in the south for hundreds of years. Meanwhile, in the center of the country, a feudal-like system of service tenantry had been in place by the Spanish conquistadores since the 1500s. By the end of the period, however, the latter was the only local political order that remained in place, as the state transformed both peripheries, and an incipient competitive regime was born.

In what follows, I present the main argument, research design, and historical evidence that links the motivations behind state building elites to the outcomes of interest: Increased state capacity and the stabilization of an incipient competitive regime. After analyzing economic, political, and territorial actors, I describe how the 1857 crisis affected local politics across provinces, and how the conflict resulted in the state transforming each periphery. Finally, I show data about how this process led to increased state capacity combined with a competitive regime.

Main Argument

Why did Chilean elites engage in the costly, risky project of penetration? Constrained by the uncertainty of international markets after the 1857 global financial crisis, the central government shifted its behavior towards exporting more reliable agricultural commodities as they foresaw the opening of new markets for grain in the upcoming years.

The industrial revolution made the export of bulky foods possible in two ways: First, by creating the technological improvements in steam navigation and railroads that permitted the transportation of food across continents and, secondly, by encouraging the demand for agricultural goods. Advances in navigation also opened the European and American east coast

through the Strait of Magellan for Chilean wheat.⁴ While the Long Depression of the late 1870s—prompted by an abrupt increase in the supply of bulky foods—was a fatal blow to the wheat export economy, in 1884, Chile annexed Peruvian and Bolivian territories rich in potassium nitrate (*salitre*), a fertilizer that brought Chile back to international markets.

The 1857 crisis also pushed the central government to streamline tax collection. Businessmen across provinces owned and operated ports, and collected taxes. This situation encouraged tax evasion and smuggling. Avoiding a fiscal crisis, then, not only included increasing the tax rate but also collecting taxes directly, which demanded a state building effort, as the central government had to improve customs offices and deploy bureaucrats across provinces.

Political elites predicted a decline in profits and a fiscal crisis coming soon if they did not find the means to keep the economy afloat. Yet changing the country's economic profile was no easy task, as the government did not have a real, permanent presence in the peripheries that would help them make changes in tax collection and increase agricultural output. Moreover, local elites were against the capital's plans, which included increased taxation and the dissolution of local economic networks.

Across the country, local notables were key political figures and replaced the state in crucial areas like tax collection, policing, and infrastructure development. In the northern Coquimbo province, mine owners' guilds organized tax collection and public goods provision in and around mining camps. At the same time, in the south, a militarized, royalist society had created a frontier economy and culture with the Mapuche indigenous people. Taking advantage of the agricultural export economy meant ending local notables' traditional sources of economic and political power and ending deals of indirect rule that allowed local elites to exercise considerable discretion across provinces.

Chile's state building project revolved around transforming territorial peripheries for economic gains. Yet if state building coalitions change local social orders in pursuing rational goals, they should also promote state weakness if beneficial. Secondly, I argue that landowners kept the hacienda social order intact—a semi-feudal production system—by sanctioning laws that gave

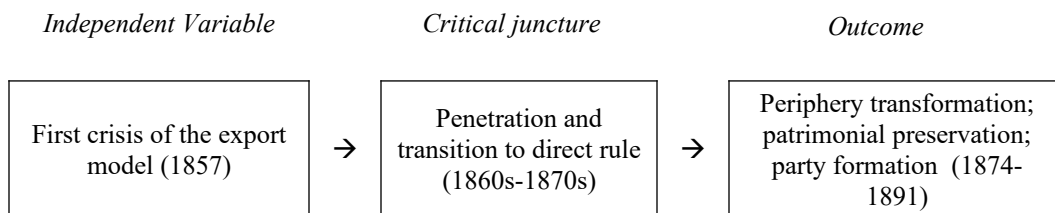
⁴ Located in the southern tip of the continent, the Strait of Magellan connects the Pacific and Atlantic oceans while avoiding the Drake Passage south of Cape Horn, a longer and more hazardous route.

them autonomy to maintain a highly autonomous, patrimonial social order. Two laws in 1874 and 1891 created the conditions to strengthen their political control over the peasantry.

Finally, penetration projects by the government activated the center-periphery cleavage across provinces, as local elites coordinated to resist and created networks of collective action that eventually resulted in the formation of parties. The Radical party, an essential part of the competitive regime born in the 1870s, brought representatives from emerging sectors to representative positions.

Figure 1 shows the main argument using an abbreviated critical juncture template (D. Collier 2022). The first block refers to the external shock that opened the critical juncture. In this case, the economic crisis made the central government reorient its export model. The second block shows the critical juncture, a period of expanded agency where several options were available. The outcome, observable since the 1870s, was the transformation of peripheries, the preservation of patrimonialism in the center, and party formation.

Figure 1: Main argument



Alternative explanations

Recent works in comparative politics have revitalized the state-regime nexus debate, focusing on the origins of high-capacity democracies. While large-n works show a long-run positive association between democracy and state capacity (Beramendi, Dincecco, and Rogers 2018; Brambor et al. 2020), studies of post-colonial societies show that state building efforts are

usually associated with authoritarianism, not democracy (Slater 2010; Eibl, Hertog, and Slater 2019). A second trend in the debate is about sequence. Classic and contemporary arguments in favor of the “state first” thesis claim that a high-capacity state is necessary for the success of democracy (Huntington 1968; Shefter 1994; Linz and Stepan 1996; Fukuyama 2004; D’Arcy and Nistotskaya 2017), while critics argue that contestation can positively affect administrative capacity, direct taxation, and the supply of public goods. (Carbone and Memoli 2015; Wang and Xu 2018; Emmenegger, Leemann, and Walter 2021).

While democratization and state building are two of the most studied topics in Latin America, their association has been neglected. While recent works have shown that democratic failures may be rooted in the state's inability to provide access to essential public goods (O’Donnell 1993; Handlin 2017; Mazzuca and Munck 2020) no work to date has assessed the origins of cases where capacity-building was combined with democratization.

A growing consensus claims the aftermath of the early-19th century independence wars was a critical juncture that had long-term repercussions on state capacity. While stressing different causal factors, these works share two fundamental conclusions: First, the outcome of the process was generalized state weakness and, as a result, governments today fail to supply high-quality public goods. Secondly, this pattern has three exceptions: Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay (e.g., Centeno 2002; Saylor 2014; Soifer 2015; Mazzuca 2021).

Works on democratization have given less importance to the late 19th century, assuming the centralization of authority and the formation of a competitive oligarchy (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992). More commonly, studies about regime change in the region have focused on the third wave of democratization, showing that Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay have a solid democratic tradition (O’Donnell 1993, 1358), the most robust party systems (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Kitschelt et al. 2010) and score the highest in indices of democratic quality (Mainwaring and Scully 2010, 39; Mazzuca 2010, 335).

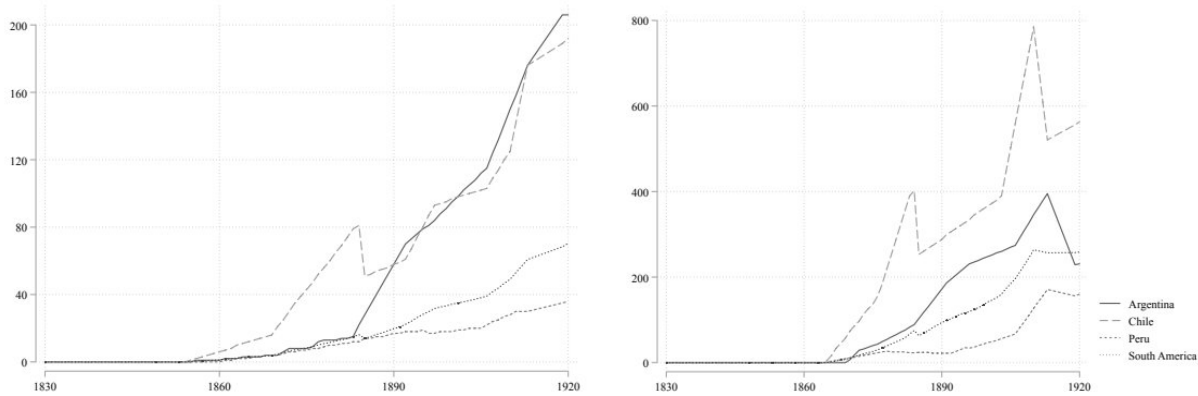
In summary, Latin America's democratization and state building theories show a striking correlation between institutional development across countries. Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay show above-average performance in dimensions of state capacity of democratization, while the

Andean countries are usually below. Importantly, these trajectories persist over time. The question of why states and regimes co-vary in their quality, however, remains unanswered.

Case selection

One of the effects of the periphery transformation endeavor was an early development of state capacity. Figure 2 shows the development of railroads and telegraph lines per square kilometer in Chile, Argentina, Peru (countries that share borders with Chile), and South America’s average. Chile developed infrastructural power⁵ earlier and to a larger degree than the regional mean. According to both indicators, the change began in 1860 just as the project of periphery transformation took off. The need to increase wheat production prompted considerable investments in infrastructure for transportation and communication between the central government, its new offices, and business centers. Investment by the central government to build roads and bridges in the Central Valley alone increased by 300% in the 1850s (Sanhueza Benavente 2018).

Figure 3: Railroads and telegraph lines per square kilometer in Argentina, Chile, and Peru



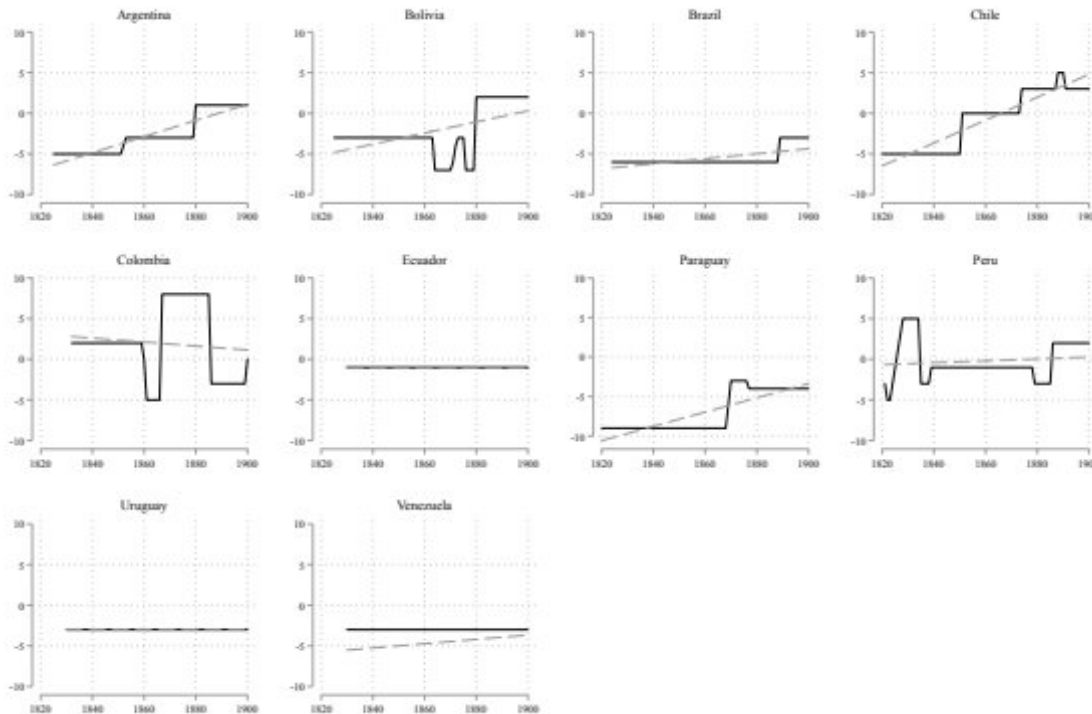
Source: Banks, Arthur S., Wilson, Kenneth A. 2021. Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive. Databanks International. Jerusalem, Israel.

Figure 4 shows the evolution of political regimes in South America in the 19th century. Similar to Figure 3, Chile shows the steepest increase towards democracy. The change begins by the mid-

⁵ The development of infrastructure is typical indicator of state capacity (e.g., Soifer 2015).

1850s, at the moment in which the center-periphery cleavage became active. While Argentina and Bolivia see some increments, only Chile reached a level above around 5 by the end of the period, which indicates a movement toward democracy.⁶

Figure 4: Political regimes in South America in the 19th century.



Source: Polity Project. Available at <https://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html>.

Research Design

Concepts

I adopt a minimalist, procedural definition of regime type (Schumpeter 1942; Przeworski 2003). Instead of dichotomizing regimes into autocracies and democracies, I follow Dahl (1971) in seeing democracy as an ideal type to which regimes approximate according to two dimensions:

⁶ In the composite score DEMOC used for Figure 4, a -10 denotes full autocracy, and 10 full democracy. Scores above 0 indicate that the regime is more democratic than dictatorial. The score combines measures of competitiveness and participation (Marshall and Gurr 2018, 14–15).

competitiveness and inclusiveness. Regimes approach democracy by becoming more inclusive—expanding the franchise—or more competitive by allowing opposition parties to compete in free and fair elections. Democratization is, therefore, the process by which regimes get closer to the ideal type of democracy and can be better assessed by looking at long time intervals that involve progress and setbacks (Tilly 2007; Capoccia and Ziblatt 2010; Ziblatt 2017, 12). I understand democratization as the increase in competitiveness many countries went through in the second half of the 19th century. While no Latin American country became fully democratic in this period, several moments of democratization and general regime patterns became apparent.

I follow Max Weber's (1965) classic definition of states as communities that claim the monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a territory. On the other hand, State building is the process by which the central government expands its territorial scope by “dispossessing the autonomous, ‘private’ agents of administrative power” (Weber 1965: 37).⁷ In Latin America, such private agents were peripheral elites born out of the colonial period, the independence wars, and the process of economic modernization. My argument makes a conceptual and empirical distinction between political order and state building. The first one entails only the monopoly of violence, while the latter denotes a remarkable effort by the central government to penetrate territorial peripheries.⁸

I define state building as the concentration of political power in the hands of the central government. While a unitary form of governance is not a necessary condition for state capacity (Germany is a high-capacity decentralized state), state building entails the central government's administrative and political superiority. In the period under study, requests for local autonomy by peripheral elites were a vital part of the center-periphery conflict.

The definition of state building as the confrontation between central rulers and private actors does not apply to contemporary examples where public-private partnerships are crucial for developing state capacity. The concept of the developmental state, for example, entails the use of the state to foster economic growth and planning within a capitalist framework. Such

⁷ A similar idea has been put forward in classic works by Michael Mann (1984), Charles Tilly (1992), and James C. Scott (1998; 2009). In these accounts, agents of the state seek to penetrate territorial peripheries and broadcast political authority.

⁸ Mazzuca (2021) makes a similar distinction by arguing that in Latin America *state formation* did not include *state building*.

relationships can incentivize state capacity through bureaucratic reforms (e.g., Evans 1995; Woo-Cummings 1999).

Operationalization and methods

Given the joint nature of the outcome, I use different indicators for each portion. For regime, I observe reforms aimed at making the regime more competitive and inclusive (e.g., electoral system and enfranchisement reforms) and the emergence of competitive parties and party systems. Regarding state capacity and due to data sparseness, I assess different dimensions, including the administrative, extractive, and infrastructural ones. For state capacity, I use Max Weber's (1978, 1028–31) conceptualization of the development of the state as the transition from patrimonial to bureaucratic rule. In a patrimonial administration, the state is the personal affair of the ruler, and their exercise of power is discretionary.

On the other hand, impersonal, rational norms define bureaucratic administrations. Officials are obedient to rules rather than the ruler (Weber 1978: 954). I observe professionalization reforms and the development of specialized bureaucratic offices. Data sources for every indicator include local historiography, administrative data from ministries' budgets, and other official documents.

This project lies within the comparative-historical analysis tradition (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Mahoney and Thelen 2015), an approach characterized by systematic comparisons of territorial units over time. Its methodological strength relies on the deep study of historically grounded questions, using few cases to generate and test hypotheses and uncover deep, slow-moving, large-scale political phenomena. I use a critical juncture approach, appropriate for studying “condensed change, followed by enduring legacies” (D. Collier 2022, 39). Critics argue that given that “endogeneity is the motor of history” (Przeworski 2007), making causal claims using this method warrants caution.⁹ Authors can reduce this problem by relying on theoretical blueprints to distinguish between contending historical accounts and for purposes of case selection.

⁹ A good example is the potential outcomes framework, which famously claims there is “no causation without manipulation,” making it impossible to infer causality from highly endogenous historical processes where clearly delineated states of treatment and control cannot be defined (Holland 1986; Morgan and Winship 2015).

Overview: Chile in the 19th century

Provinces in the transition to independence

Chile was a periphery of the Spanish empire. Its primary purpose was to keep expanding the frontier by fighting wars against the indigenous Mapuche people and supplying Lima—the heart of the empire—with wheat. Three provinces formed Chile after independence in 1818.¹⁰ From north to south: Coquimbo, Santiago, and Concepción. The first two had been given the status of intendancy by the Bourbon reforms in 1786, while the latter negotiated its introduction as province in 1812. While the country nominally extended from the southern part of the Atacama Desert until the southern end of western Patagonia, the Biobío River was a factual frontier with indigenous Mapuche territories—the *Araucanía*¹¹—created over hundreds of years of interactions between colonizers and the Mapuche people. South of this political boundary, a Chilean enclave existed around Valdivia and Chiloé, while Patagonia remained beyond the reach of the state for most of the 19th century.¹² The country had five seaports with customs through which commodities were exported: Coquimbo, Huasco, Copiapó, Valparaíso, and Talcahuano. Figure 3 shows a map of Chile by independence in 1818. At the time, the country extended for roughly 1,500 km. Given the annexation of former Peruvian and Bolivian territories after the War of the Pacific (1879-84) and the colonization of western Patagonia in the early 20th century, the country now spans roughly 4,350 km.

¹⁰ While Chile became independent 1810 as many Latin American countries did, there was a brief interlude of royalist restoration (1814-1817).

¹¹ Araucanía comes from “Araucano,” the name given to the Mapuche by Spanish colonizers.

¹² Even though more provinces were created starting in 1826, the original three were the main centers of political and economic power that came out of the colonial period, being the main players of politics throughout the century and thus the object of this chapter.

Figure 2: Chilean Territory by Independence (1818)



Source: Pinkerton, John. 1818. *A Modern Atlas*. London: T. Bensley

Less relevant in colonial times, Coquimbo became important after the discovery of silver mines in Chañarcillo in 1832 and the increased demand for copper since the mid-1840s, which elevated the city of Copiapó as the center of operations of a new elite. The *Junta de Minería*—a mine owners guild reminiscent of associations from the colonial period—replaced the state in crucial tasks like policing, tax collection, and infrastructure development in and around mining towns. Initially tightly aligned with the central government, the 1850s economic crisis created a split within the *Junta* between owners of small, unproductive mines and wealthy miners who also had interests in finance.

The Santiago province included the capital Santiago, the Central Valley,¹³ home of the traditional hacienda system since the early colonial period; and Valparaíso, the country's largest port. Wheat was the primary source of wealth for Central Valley landlords due to their status as Lima's sole supplier. After independence, landlords aimed to secure the Peruvian market—including a successful war against the newly formed Peru-Bolivian confederation. A powerful Confederation could threaten landlords' monopoly and the predominance of the Valparaíso port within the South Pacific.

Concepción stretched from the Central Valley until the Biobío River. Its elites were historically royalist, as constant conflict with the Mapuche guaranteed the presence of the military. While as relevant as Santiago in the colonial period, independence caused political and economic decline in the province as large-scale banditry, civil conflict, and occupations by patriots and royalists brought taxation, expropriation of land, and forced conscription. Local elites favored the independence process because they anticipated economic opportunities if international markets opened (Cartes Montory 2017, 132).¹⁴ Yet, the local crisis associated with independence made the province too weak to attempt to strike a good bargain with Santiago for two decades (Cartes Montory 2020, 298). Concepción recovered economically by the late 1840s with the wheat booms, the discovery of coal near Lota, and the beginning of the milling industry.

¹³ The term Central Valley refers to a set of valleys located roughly between Rancagua and Talca.

¹⁴ The colonial commercial route Lima-Valparaíso-Uspallata left the Concepción province as a periphery to international trade.

While technically not a province, Araucanía was the territory that saw the most intervention by the state beginning in the 1860s. Initially also settled in the Central Valley, the Mapuche stopped the advancement of the Spanish army at the Biobío River, south of Concepción (Bengoa 2015, I:23). After a century of war, Concepción and Mapuche elites eventually reached peace and formed a frontier economy that included trade between local notables, Mapuche leaders, and trans-Andean commercial routes (Pinto Rodríguez 2020). The central government broke Araucanía's traditional economy once it began confiscating land and building the necessary infrastructure to increase wheat production. To do this, they sanctioned laws that brought the Mapuche to reservations, gave land to members of the coalition, and got local production to Valparaíso.

Coalitions and cleavages

The relationship between ruling elites and local politics is key to understand patterns of state building. Since coalescing with peripheral notables or attempting to rule directly over province is a main driver of state capacity, understanding how coalitional politics and the cleavages that develop within elites is crucial

As in much of Latin America, two broadly defined coalitions came out of the independence process in Chile: conservatives and liberals. The conservative coalition—the *Pelucones* (“The Wigs”—included landowners (*Hacendados*) from the Central Valley, urban monopolistic merchants (*Estanqueros*), and the conservative faction of peripheral elites. The liberals—or *Pipiolos*—were intellectuals and artisans from Santiago who allied with local notables against the central government. A third short-lived group, the *Filopolitas*, split from the Conservative coalition due to their rejection of coercive methods toward political and religious dissidents (J. S. Valenzuela 1985, 78). Organized parties would appear in the 1870s, including the Conservatives, Liberals, and Radicals. Born as “radically liberals,” Radicals favored the secularization of the state and democratization.

Table 1: Coalitions and interests

Coalition	Composition	Economic interests	Tenure in the Executive
Conservative— <i>Pelucones</i>	Landowners from the Central Valley, merchants from Santiago and Valparaíso.	Create a national export economy that benefits the Valparaíso port and its related commercial routes.	1830-1861
Conservative-Liberal Fusion	Coalition against the Montt government (1851-1861) over religious and electoral issues	National unification government aimed at pacification after the 1850s civil wars.	1861-71
Liberal— <i>Pipiolos</i>	Students/Artisans; Peripheral elites	Alliance against the central government	1871-1891

Religious issues formed the primary cleavage. Conservatives favored the colonial legal nexus between the Church and the state that outlawed any non-Catholic faith, while Liberals—even though still Catholics—proposed religious freedom and the creation of state agencies in charge of civil registries and cemeteries, issues that pertained only to the Church.

A second, less analyzed cleavage is the conflict between center and peripheries. Beyond religious issues, struggles over taxes and public goods dominated much of politics at the time, and thus must be understood to explain political trajectories. A dominant claim within Chilean historiography contends that the elite acted as a unified oligarchy where material differences were irrelevant because elite members had investments in different sectors of the export economy, making conflict among them unlikely (e.g., Bauer 1975: 45-46; Collier 2003: 15). However, this claim misses the fact that until the 1870s, the center-periphery cleavage was a crucial part of national politics, that led to repeated episodes of civil conflict in the 1820s and 1850s. By the late 19th century, these tensions did indeed ease because the political system incorporated liberals, peripheral elites diversified their investments, and elites blended through marriage and by sending their children to the same schools.

The center-periphery cleavage was composed of two conflicts: Public finance for infrastructure and moneylending. Economic growth encouraged the central government to invest in public works. Yet, these projects were not distributed evenly, as Montt's government (1851-1861) financed projects only where members of the conservative requested it. Despite demands by

miners and farmers from peripheries, the government did not provide the funds (Zeitlin 1984, 38). Other infrastructure projects followed the same logic. “The construction of irrigation canals, roads, and bridges in the Central Valley, although often carried out by private capital, was also financed heavily by the state” (Zeitlin 1984, 41). This conflict created resentment in local elites and would eventually provide legitimacy to the 1850s rebellions.

Moneylending was the second point of conflict between Santiago and the provinces. Wheat farmers from Concepción were indebted to Central Valley landowners and Valparaíso merchants through an informal system. Mine owners from Copiapó also depended on a predatory lending system—*habilitación*. Concepción elites were not only indebted to large-scale landowners; they also feared their expansion and considered them a threat (Zeitlin 1984, 44). The central government heavily taxed mining resources, while agricultural exports paid no taxes. Copper and silver paid taxes at about 35 times the amount paid by agricultural exports in 1850 (Segall 1953, 43). The provinces also received little in terms of public goods from the state. Montt’s government financed railroads, irrigation canals, bridges, and roads only in the Central Valley, within the domains of its coalition member (Oppenheimer 1982, 69–70).

Independence hero Bernardo O’Higgins ruled the country between 1818 and 1823 when the provinces rebelled against centralization attempts. After an interlude that included a federalist constitution (1823-1830), the conservative coalition came to power in 1830 after a brief civil war. In 1833 the regime sanctioned a new, unitary Constitution, bestowing large preeminence to Santiago over the provinces. But the centralist nature of the Constitution was nominal rather than real, as local notables retained significant agency to draft policies and even distribute public goods. The central government thoroughly controlled the electoral apparatus, and Congress was its docile extension. Presidents were “great electors,” choosing their successors through 1890 when an electoral reform cut the Executive’s electoral control.

The center-periphery conflict intensified in the 1850s and prompted two armed rebellions against the central government. While the central government emerged victorious in both, the conservative coalition was too weak by the end of the decade. Montt was deeply conflicted with his coalition over religious issues,¹⁵ who abandoned him. Two grievances against Montt—

¹⁵ The episode is known as the *Cuestión del Sacristán*—when Montt sided with the Supreme court over a labor lawsuit against the Santiago Archbishop in 1856, bringing ultramontane sectors against him.

authoritarianism, and clericalism—brought Liberals and most Conservatives together. They formed the Conservative-Liberal Fusion and formed a new government, led by José Joaquín Pérez (1861-1871). The Fusion brought a new political pact. Liberals and defeated elites from the civil wars abandoned the insurrectionary way and accepted centralization in exchange for competitive elections. (Illanes 2003, 386). Modern political parties were born, and elections became increasingly competitive after constitutional reforms in the 1870s. The Liberal coalition governed the country until 1891.

Table 2: Provinces’ coalitions and resources

Province	Political composition	Economic resources
Coquimbo	Initially allied with the central government, it turned mostly liberal by the 1850s	Copper and silver mines. Booms in prices since the mid-1840s.
Santiago	Conservative landowners from the Central Valley, merchants, and financiers from Santiago and Valparaíso	Lands of high agronomical value. Wheat was the main export
Concepción	Military outpost, politically and economically as relevant as Santiago during the colonial period	Large frontier economy before independence. After the economic crises (1818-1840), wheat booms and the milling industry incentivized exports

The rise and decline of the first export model

The stability of the *Pelucón* regime was due in part to its success in creating an export economy. Copper exports began in the late colonial period. Still, the spread of the use of electricity due to the industrial revolution¹⁶ increased the international demand for it, and Chile rapidly became the world’s first producer. Added to the discovery of silver deposits in Chañarcillo in 1832, the country became a mining export economy.

These exports allowed the regime to pay debts related to the independence wars¹⁷ and eased center-periphery relations, as mine owners in Coquimbo enjoyed the windfall of fresh income. At the same time, Concepción’s economy underwent a renaissance after the turbulent 1820s. In

¹⁶ Within non-precious metals, copper is the best electrical conductor.

¹⁷ Chile acquired debts to finance the *Ejército Libertador* military expedition to push for Peru’s independence in the early 1820. This debt became the state’s main expense until the 1830s (López Taverne 2014, 109).

the mid-1850s, however, a series of contingent events drastically changed Chile's insertion into the world economy (Encina 1949, XIII:586).¹⁸ Silver deposits were exhausted, and international prices had stagnated in the years prior (Encina 1949, XIII:589).¹⁹ The lack of silver limited the currency supply, as coins were made out of precious metals (Edwards 1932, 147; Humud Tleel 1974, 78–79). In addition, severe drought in the Central Valley stressed landowners' economic position, creating a period of general stagnation.

The 1857 “Panic” put the nail in the coffin of the first export model (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 131; Sunkel 2011, 84–85). The trade balance became negative for the first time starting in the early 1860s (Edwards 1932, 146; Humud Tleel 1974, 74), and fiscal income stagnated in the 1865–1885 period (Humud Tleel 1974, 22). Revenue from custom duties declined consistently after 1856. The crisis created significant frictions across provinces since the central government's first response was to increase taxes on mineral exports, which decidedly pushed Coquimbo's elite to distance itself from the *Pelucón* regime (Venegas Valdebenito 2008, 223). In Concepción, the abrupt closure of the California and Australian markets strongly hit its incipient milling and wheat industry.

While wheat exports increased in the late 1840s thanks to the California gold rush and the opening of the Australian market, both destinations began growing their supply soon enough, closing their doors to Chilean wheat (Bauer 1975, 64; Vitale 1971a, 250; Bengoa 2015, I:130). Even though somewhat alleviated by the interrupted importance of grain, the crisis only ended after the annexation of Bolivian territories rich in saltpeter in the early 1880s (Cariola and Sunkel 1982, 33–35; Encina 1949, XIII:590–92).

State elites used two methods to obtain capital after the crisis hit. First, they drastically incentivized agricultural exports (Pinto Rodríguez 1992, 98). While betting on wheat exports after the abrupt closure of the Pacific Ocean markets could seem irrational, elites foresaw a

¹⁸ Some historiographic works claim the end of Chile's first cycle of expansion coincided with the Long Depression (1876), and assign a lesser role to the mid-1850s events (Cariola and Sunkel 1982; A. Pinto 1959; Correa Sutil 2015). I prefer to delimit the period in a different way given the effect the crisis had on stimulating a state building project.

¹⁹ The copper industry survived thanks to smelting technologies that reduced the need for labor (Fernández Abara and Jerez Leiva 2020, 95). Additionally, the discovery of coal mines in Concepción lowered fuel costs (L. Valenzuela 1992, 507).

promising future for it, given the improvement in navigation through the Strait of Magellan, the opening of European, Argentine, Brazilian, and the US east coast markets, and the increase in international demand for bulky foods (Pinto Rodríguez 2020, 342–43). Additionally, throughout the 1857 crisis lasted, wheat was the only profitable commodity (Cariola and Sunkel 1982, 34). Thus, increasing wheat production became a priority for the central government. Since the only land suitable for wheat growth was the Araucanía, increasing agricultural surplus came with the risky, costly project of penetration. Secondly, the government attempted to eliminate tax inefficiencies and eliminate intermediaries. Until the late 1860s, private actors built and operated their ports, which led to inefficient tax collection and smuggling. The state not only sought to increase taxes but also created publicly-owned ports with deployed bureaucrats (Godoy Orellana 2018, 171).

The turn towards agriculture as the country's primary income was drastic but short-lived. The Long Depression (1873-1896) brought down prices of agricultural commodities due to cheaper transportation methods and the incorporation of new producers such as Canada, Argentina, Australia, and Ukraine.

Political order and periphery transformation

At least nominally, the 1833 Constitution gave the central government control over the provinces. The regime eliminated provincial assemblies and colonial *cabildos* (neighbors associations) and reduced the authority of municipalities—the only representative institution²⁰ (Arias Yurisch 2010, 49–50; Estefane 2017, 98). The regime also changed the design of three equal provinces, creating a chain of command between Santiago and its designated bureaucrats (Arias Yurisch 2010, 46). According to the Constitution, “[e]ach province was governed by an Intendant, each department by a *gobernador*, [governor] and each *subdelegación* [under-delegation] [...] by a *subdelegado* [under-delegate]” (S. Collier 2003, 24–25). *Intendentes* appointed *subdelegados*, enforced regulations, and settled local conflicts (Collier 2003, 31).

²⁰ Municipalities were led by *Regidores*, the contemporary synonym of *Alcalde* (Mayor).

Intendentes needed to be in the Executive’s good graces, or they could be excluded from the “official list” in the next elections.

Yet at least until the late 1860s, the state did not have a real, permanent presence across provinces, making the capital’s supposed supremacy nominal rather than real. The hierarchical relationship between provinces described in the Constitution rested on brittle political alignments within the conservative coalition. While named by the President, *intendentes* were usually chosen in agreement with local elites. In Coquimbo, for instance, the *Junta de Minería* crafted a list of candidates for the position and, in practice, was in charge of distributing public goods and enforcing regulations. While the Executive controlled the electoral machine, local notables were frequently autonomous. Official lists, for instance, had to be drafted in close alignment and recognize the interests of local elites’ sensibilities Valenzuela (1997).

Table 3: Territorial and administrative organization in Chile c. 1850

Territorial Organization	Position	Deployment
Province	Intendente	Named by the central government in accordance with local notables
Department	Gobernador-Subdelegado	Named by the intendente
Municipality	Regidor (mayor)	Representative institution—No practical authority. Policies were overridden by the intendente, especially after the 1854 Law of Municipalities

The transformation of a periphery is the “substitution of local political traditions by a general set of institutions enforced by the center throughout the incorporated territories” (Mazzuca 2021, 27), which is what the central government did in an accelerated fashion beginning in the 1860s. To avoid a fiscal crisis, the central government had to (a) boost tax extraction (increase the rate and improve collection method), which a system of indirect rule prevented, and (b) increase the production of wheat, for which it needed to go through the effort of displacing the Mapuche, privatizing land, and enforcing property rights.

Coquimbo

The central government was absent in the Coquimbo province and ruled through local intermediaries that collected taxes and distributed public goods. After the province rebelled against the regime in 1859, however, the government overrode local actors and began ruling the area directly. This change became palpable by the 1870s, when state institutions settled in the area and the number of bureaucrats increased.

After independence, local elites pushed for federalism and provincial autonomy, and continuously defied penetration attempts by Santiago before 1830 (S. Collier 1967, 310–12). The *Pelucón* regime, however, managed to tightly coalesce with mining businessmen, continually electing conservatives from Santiago for Congress. As local elites reached prominence within local politics, they made it into Congress by the late 1840s, always supporting the conservative coalition.

Europeans and American entrepreneurs arrived in the province in the 1830s, aiming to find new mineral deposits, turning mining into the country's most dynamic sector. (Villalobos 2006, 48–49). The most important family was the Gallo. Its origin dates back to José Gallo Bocalandro, who arrived to the province from Genova in the late colonial period (Fernández Abara and Jerez Leiva 2020, 102). His son Miguel and Juan Godoy discovered the Chañarcillo silver mine in 1832 (Molina 2008). After marrying Candelaria Goyenechea—heir to a large fortune—the Gallo became the province's most influential family. Their children and business associates would become Deputies and Senators, lead the rebellion against the Montt government in 1859, and formed the Radical party in the 1860s. The Gallo family, business partners, and highly-educated employees formed Copiapó's political elite (Fernández Abara 2016, 44).

By the early 1840s, the area was still stateless despite its fast economic growth. Rapid urbanization followed wherever a new mineral deposit was discovered, and mine owners soon had to finance essential public goods like infrastructure and policing (Godoy Orellana 2018, 149). Given rapid economic growth, the province saw the formation of an incipient middle class, mainly artisans who accessed the franchise in the 1850s, and a modern public sphere due to the appearance of several newspapers (Fernández Abara and Jerez Leiva 2020, 103–4).

Elite networks were in charge of filling posts in the local public administration. Since many of them were *ad-honorem*, they could only be assigned to wealthy men who could do the job without the necessity of an income. (Godoy Orellana 2018, 156; 161–63). While the intendant and delegate were named by the Executive, bureaucrats below them were all part of the local elites, and the tacit understanding was that intendants made decisions in accordance with them (Fernández Abara and Jerez Leiva 2020, 111-112).

Informal moneylending became a significant source of conflict between small and large mine owners. The first obtained capital through a predatory system called *habilitación*, which made them dependent on large-scale mine owners. The latter had diversified their assets by purchasing haciendas in the Central Valley, a trading house in Santiago (Balmori and Oppenheimer 1979, 234), or coal mines in Concepción (L. Mazzei de Grazia 2015, 23). *Habilitación* was based on lending at high-interest rates by Valparaíso financiers linked to British capital, who demanded the production as a guarantee (Illanes 2003, 126). Sudden changes in international prices or losses in productivity pushed smaller mine owners to bankruptcy almost immediately (Illanes 1992, 43).

The state re-created the *Junta de Minería* in 1848 to have a direct interlocutor in the province. The *Junta* was responsible for developing infrastructure and policing projects and acted through a web of local intermediaries across departments (Fernández Abara and Jerez Leiva 2020, 113-114). Led by the *Junta*, local notables coopted the incipient public administration. The tacit agreement was that the *Junta* would organize the police and appoint administrative, political, judiciary, and religious authorities within the mining districts (Venegas Valdebenito 2008, 88–90; Fernández Abara 2016, 51). The *Junta* collected taxes, set the tax rate, and used those resources to finance its operations. Local elites even appointed and paid the *subdelegado*'s income, proposed a list of names to fill the *intendente* position, and invested in infrastructure. (Fernández Abara 2016, 51).

This system of indirect rule ended in Coquimbo after the mid-1850s crisis created a schism between small and large mine owners over *habilitación*, the lending system. Unable to pay back loans, small mine owners got their production expropriated, which helped tip the political balance and led them to support the liberals. By 1859, all of Coquimbo's elite turned against the

central government. From the state's point of view, the crisis demanded increasing the tax rate and improving tax collection. Since businessmen built and operated their docks and ports, they also handled merchandise flow. They continually avoided paying import and export duties and participated in bribery and smuggling schemes (Godoy Orellana 2018, 166–67). Changing this situation demanded a more significant central government presence, financing customs employees, and building state-operated ports (Godoy Orellana 2018: 171).

The partnership between the central government and local elites became brittle once the government's centralizing disposition increased and the 1857 crisis hit. Small-scale miners allied with artisans and the new middle sector and built a pro-autonomy coalition with liberals from Santiago (Fernández Abara and Jerez Leiva 2020, 115-115). Eventually, Montt's penetration attempts revived the center-periphery conflict and brought the most elite families against him. The Matta Goyenechea, Gallo Goyenechea, and Carvallo Matta families joined the liberals and artisans (Fernández Abara and Jerez Leiva 2020, 118) and formed an anti-conservative coalition composed of liberals and disaffected conservatives.²¹

The new local liberal coalition won the elections to lead the *Junta* in 1855 and attempted to decrease the tax rate while demanding investments in infrastructure. The central government responded with increased coercion. In 1856, Montt intervened the new *Junta* and appointed a new, friendly board (Fernández Abara 2016, 103–4). Liberal hegemony had become the most severe threat to the incumbent coalition's control of the province.

The central government also lost the legislative elections in 1858. The official list did not align the provinces with the regime for the first time. (Fernández Abara and Jerez Leiva 2020, 118). Added to the prohibition of organizing political parties, these were the direct antecedents of the 1859 rebellion, led by the Gallo family and their associates. The Departments of Caldera and Copiapó saw the most battles, and the rebel army even sieged them, always guided by Gallo, his private police force, artisans, and other types of his employees (Fernández Abara and Jerez Leiva 2020, 120–21). Gallo's army took Vallenar and Freirina but was defeated in the Battle of Cerro Grande in La Serena.

²¹ The local chapter of the Fusion coalition was called *fusionista*, or “pro-fusion”. A more radical faction, the Reds, also became part of the scenario. Unlike the *fusionistas*, they were more pro-democracy and anti-oligarchic.

While the central government won the war, its relationship with local notables would never be the same. While the rebels were given amnesty and even participated actively in the public arena, the state would replace the *Junta* and other local intermediaries and mark a definite presence in the province. The judiciary began developing in the 1860s in each Department, with a judge deployed by the capital and municipal police forces (Godoy Orellana 2018, 156). State agencies grew in number, relevance, and capacity to distribute public goods (Godoy Orellana 2018, 149). The aim was to enforce property rights and settle conflicts, policing, and infrastructure projects.

The state became present in the 1860s, effectively replacing local elites in tax collection and the distribution of public goods. However, this transformation was done in close alliance with local notables, who had demanded public goods for decades. The presence of the judiciary and the infrastructure development was crucial for the province's economic growth. Table 4 shows the spread of public employees in the Coquimbo and Atacama provinces in the censuses of 1875 and 1885. Most Departments increased their number of registered bureaucrats over time both in absolute terms and per capita. Atacama went through an increase of 25%, while Coquimbo increased by 100%.

Table 4: Spread of Bureaucrats in the Coquimbo and Atacama Provinces²²

Department	1875	1885
Atacama		
Copiapó	56	120
Vallenar	16	14
Freirina	54	31
Caldera	68	--
Chañaral	--	35
Taltal	--	42
Total	194	242
Bureacrats per capita	0.002	0.0031
Coquimbo		
Serena	24	59
Coquimbo	35	78
Illapel	8	17
Combarbalá	1	9
Ovalle	25	25
Elqui	10	18
Total	103	206
Bureaucrats per capita	0.00065	0.00116

Source: *Censo Jeneral de la República* 1875, and 1885

²² The historical Coquimbo province was divided into the Atacama and Coquimbo provinces by 1865.

Concepción

Despite Concepción's development as a key player since the early colonial period, the local crisis brought by independence prevented the province from competing against Santiago for political and economic supremacy. The generalized disorder and violence added to the closure of the Peruvian wheat market weakened elites, and many families left (Pinto Rodríguez 2020, 288). Similar to Coquimbo, a new elite arrived at the province after the War to the Death in search of economic opportunities. Composed of mainly French, English and Americans, they worked mostly in shipyards (Campos Harriet 1979, 263) and later played a crucial role in developing the milling industry. Milling also encouraged wheat production in the province's hinterland, benefiting small producers (L. Mazzei de Grazia 2015, 37). Soon, the new elite reached national relevance, given their diversification into financial and mining interests in other parts of the country and the discovery of coal mines within the province. Just as in the northern province, the new elite blended with the province's traditional elite through marriage (Ovalle Letelier 2020, 158).

While the presence of the central government was precarious in the area until at least the 1860s, the situation was not a "far west" kind of arrangement as in Copiapó. Instead, centuries of institutional development allowed its elites to develop a larger supply of public goods. The province kept its independence as an economic unit due to the maintenance of the frontier economy and independent trade routes through which they exported their goods—until the 1860s when the central government began transforming the province's politics and economy.

The central government and Concepción's elites remained tightly coalesced for the first fifteen years of the *Pelucón* tenure. Yet the 1844 *Ley de Régimen Interior* added to the local political²³ effects of the 1848 revolutions and the international economic crisis it prompted (Vitale 1971b, 8). A local *caudillo*, José María de la Cruz, launched a rebellion in 1851. This attempt was the last-ditch effort to face the central government in search of autonomy. Like in Coquimbo, a schism within the local elite occurred in the years before the rebellion. While the province's conservatives had a significant role in forming the *Pelucón* coalition, liberalism gained traction in the late 1840s due to the rise of the new elite. A central issue in the conflict was the demand

²³ The 1848 revolutions prompted the emergence of pro-democracy social movements. The most important one, the *Sociedad de la Igualdad* (Society for Equality) attempted to coalesce with peripheral elites at various times.

for public goods from the central government to keep expanding the economy—mainly infrastructure.

After what local elites considered fraud in the 1851 elections, the province followed de la Cruz and rebelled. From the central government’s point of view, the frontier economy and the political and economic aspirations of Concepción’s elites had become a threat to the conservative coalition’s control of the country because, given its capacity to be an independent economic and political unit, could disrupt its power (Pinto Rodríguez 2020, 324).

The 1851 civil war left the province again in a political and economic crisis (Campos Harriet 1979, 277). This outcome diminished the costs for local elites to accept Santiago’s project of periphery transformation. There was no geopolitical project or embryonic economy and state to defend any longer. From then on, they integrated into the Santiago-Valparaíso circuit and supported the penetration of Araucanía in the 1860s. Like in Coquimbo, local notables from Concepción played a crucial role in forming the Radical and Liberal parties (Campos Harriet 1979, 280), giving shape to the emergence of a competitive regime.

Table 5 shows the spread of bureaucrats in the Concepción province over time. The pattern is similar to the one in Table 4 with a small, but persistent increase of bureaucrats over time, both in absolute terms and per capita. The steepest increases are in the largest city, Concepción, but the spread also affects rural localities.

Table 5: Spread of bureaucrats in the Concepción province

Department	1865	1875	1885
Concepción	34	78	91
Lautaro	20	46	41
Rere	8	14	50
Talcahuano	32	22	52
Coelemu	18	29	19
Puchacai	6	14	5
Total	118	203	258
Bureaucrats per capita	0.00080	0.0013	0.0014

Source: *Censo Jeneral de la República* 1865, 1875, 1885.

Araucanía

Finally, the largest gains in state capacity came from the transformation of Araucanía. There, the government not only substituted local intermediaries, but they also displaced the Mapuche, created and enforced property rights, built towns, developed infrastructure from scratch, and changed the use of land, from pastoral to agricultural.

By the mid-18th century, a frontier economy and culture had developed in the area, the wars between the Mapuche and the Spanish were forgotten, and the local economy worked to everyone's advantage (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 55–56). Yet the 19th century would bring fundamental to the region. First, the wars of independence altered the frontier economy since Mapuche leadership did not see independence favorably. They even allied with Concepción's royalist factions and fought the independentist army (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 64; Bengoa 2002, 28). However, the Concepción-Araucanía frontier would return to normalcy between the end of hostilities and Santiago's penetration in the 1860s. The second change would be permanent.

The Araucanía possessed two attributes that made it attractive to the central government: First, it was the last available region suitable for wheat growing. To increase agricultural production, the state was obligated to go through the effort of displacing the Mapuche. Secondly, the Araucanía could give the state a new entrance into the Atlantic Ocean through the Antuco-Neuquén pass, through the Andes. This could eventually open the Argentine, Brazilian, European, and American east coast markets for Chilean wheat if successful. Until then, Chilean wheat was sold only to markets with access to the Pacific Ocean, primarily California and Australia (Pinto Rodríguez 1992, 100–101).

While the transformation of Araucanía was necessary for the state to avoid a deepening economic crisis (Pinto Rodríguez 1992, 86; Bengoa 2000, 179), making the decision was no easy task. An embryonic nationalistic sentiment within the elite identified with the Mapuche resistance to Iberian control. Yet shortly after the 1857 crisis, conservative newspaper *El Mercurio* began writing editorials justifying a potential incursion into Mapuche territory. The main argument was the region was the country's best arable land and that the Mapuche did not cultivate it was an unnecessary waste (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 140). Even though the project

began as an idea during Manuel Montt's conservative government, by the 1860s, the liberal governments and party elites fully believed in the need of "pacifying" the Araucanía," including Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, who led opposition movements against authoritarianism in the 1850s (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 167–68).

In this context, Mapuche's support of the 1859 rebellion was a reaction to the state's apparent plans to penetrate Araucanía (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 146–48). This response eased the path for Concepción's elites to support the invasion, as now the attack was legitimate given the rebellion against the state. Concepción's elites would also gain by buying the land taken from the Mapuche in fraudulent ways and increasing their wheat export businesses (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 145).

A central instrument the state used to transform the area was the *Ley de Reducciones* (1866) which created Mapuche reservations. Through forced displacement and the creation of sedentary communities, the law dissolved Mapuche networks of exchange, trade, and migration (Klubock 2014, 31). Forests—an essential element of Mapuche cosmology, diet, and economy—were seen by the state as unmanaged nature. The government cleared them, sold land plots, and established property rights (Bengoa 2002, 54; Klubock 2014, 31). Alongside the state, private companies came from Santiago to collect local grain production to send it up north (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 326–27). The newly created city of Temuco—in the heart of Araucanía—became the center where production from the province came to be distributed.

This instrument allowed the state to change the land use from pastoral to arable farming to produce cereals (Pinto Rodríguez 2021, 77). The project included expropriating indigenous territories and building towns, roads, railroads, and bridges. Alongside the state, private companies came from Santiago to collect local wheat production to send it up north. The newly created city of Temuco—in the heart of Araucanía—became the epicenter where production was distributed. Seventeen towns were founded between 1868 and 1883 in the area (Pinto Rodríguez 2020, 348). The military also entered Araucanía once the end of the War of the Pacific made troops available. They were in charge of building infrastructure, founding towns, and preparing the terrain for engineers and surveyors (Bengoa 2002, 46).

A vital part of the occupation was creating and enforcing property rights through the administration of justice. These were the main instruments to transform the political and economic logic of the frontier and make the region productive (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 186). Cornelio Saavedra realized that without the administration of justice, the private property was *letra muerta*—dead letter (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 191). The transformation of Araucanía meant, in practice, the end of the frontier economy and culture built upon centuries. (Pinto Rodríguez 2020, 330). New wheat production now would be sent to Valparaíso for export (Pinto Rodríguez 2003, 326–27), and land previously used for pastoral purposes was now dedicated to growing wheat. Thus, the region lost its status as an independent economic unit

Outcome: State and regime building

Periphery transformation as the main driver of state capacity

The effects of the periphery transformation endeavor was manifested through a steep growth in the number of bureaucrats deployed by the central government and relevant reforms in the Treasury and Comptroller's offices. The annual budget reflected the change and development of the central government. Public spending increased at a yearly rate of 5.7% between 1860 and 1879 (Humud Tleel 1969; López Taverne 2017, 66–69). The central government also diversified its investments for the first time instead of spending most of the budget on defense (López Taverne 2014, 128).

The public administration became increasingly centralized. The government reorganized Treasury services in 1852, imposed a new accounting system, and established a more robust Comptroller's office, the *Contaduría Mayor* (S. Pinto, Beltrán, and Quiroz 1977, 230–31). This is the immediate antecessor of the contemporary *Contraloría General de la República*, created in 1925. As shown in Figure 4, the first increase in the state's total budget was in the late 1850s and accelerated by 1865. While expenses did not increase in the first half of the 1860s, the 1865–1875 period shows the steepest increase in the national budget. These changes coincide temporally with the historical analysis shown above, namely the need to streamline tax collection through custom duties and the transformation of Araucanía.

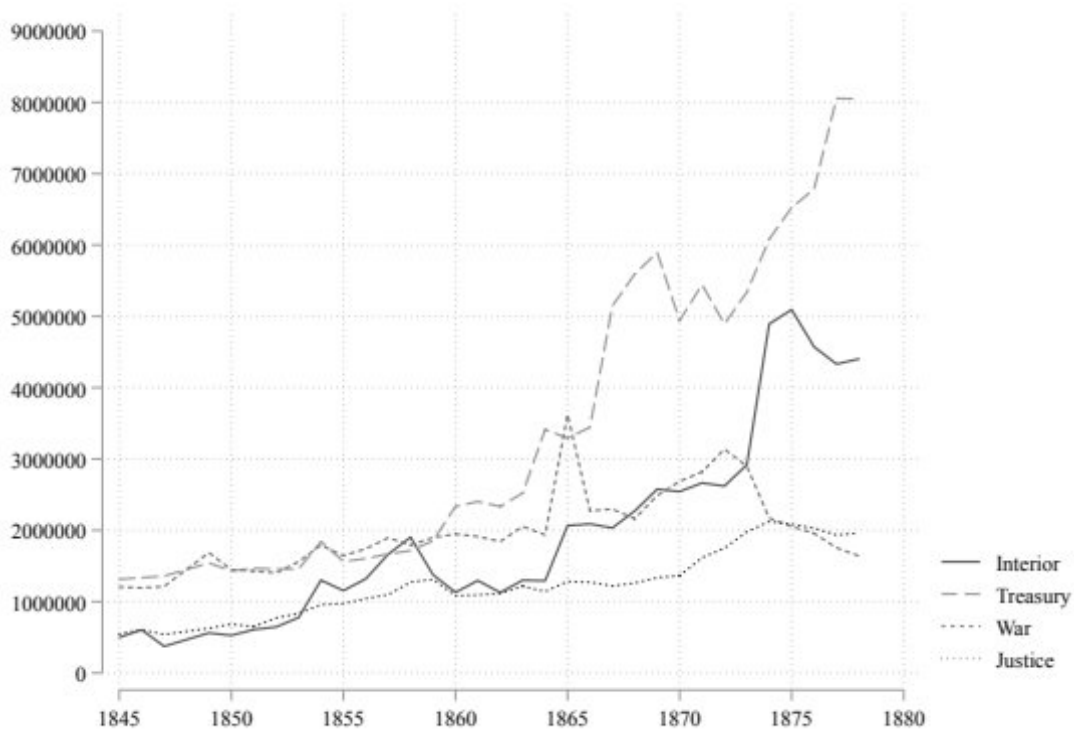
Figure 4: Annual total budget in Chilean pesos (1845-1878)



Source: Budget laws 1845-1878

Figure 5 shows the central government's annual budget by the Ministry. While Treasury and War spent the most until the 1860s, Treasury's budget—mainly salaries across the public administration—saw the steepest increase starting in the 1860s, being the Ministry with the most significant expenses. This change means that the development of a bureaucratic body was the state's main expense beginning in the 1860s, the decade in which the state began to develop across provinces.

Figure 5: Annual budget by Ministry in Chilean pesos (1845-1880)



Source: Budget laws 1845-1878²⁴

Table 4 shows the Treasury ministry’s disaggregated budget between 1845 and 1880. The disproportionate increase in the number of employees employed in Customs and, to a lesser degree, the Treasury resembles the change towards a direct form of tax collection. The Interior Ministry, which saw the second steepest increase in expenses, increased its number of employees destined to *Intendencias* and *Gobernaciones* from 73 in 1845 to 150 in 1860, a 200% increase (Humud Tleel 1969, 245-47). Consistent with the main argument, the steepest increase in bureaucrats across provinces is observed only after 1860.

²⁴ The Justice Ministry expenses included the organization of the Catholic church and the provision of education. It was formally called *Ministerio de Justicia, Culto e Instrucción* until 1887

Table 4: Treasury Ministry Employees, 1845-1880

Section	1845	1850	1860	1880
Secretary	8	9	10	12
Contaduría Mayor	29	27	33	34
Treasury	31	27	25	51
Mint	37	28	28	24
Customs	276	307	451	581
Estanco	50	--	18	17
Other	5	37	--	--
Total	436	435	565	719

Source: Humud Tleel (1969, 245–49).

Finally, Table 5 shows the judiciary development across districts resembling Chile’s three original zones of political and economic influence. The total amount of courts (*Juzgados de Letras*) increased by 59% between 1865 and 1885, but most of it was in Concepción. Since courts are in charge of enforcing contracts and property rights, their spread throughout a territory is an indicator of state capacity. Consistent with the main argument, this was due to the need to enforce property rights after the transformation of Araucanía.

Table 5: Development of the Judiciary across provinces

Judicial district	1865	1875	1885
La Serena	6	7	7
Santiago	19	26	26
Concepción	7	16	18
Total	32	49	51

Preservation of patrimonialism in the Central Valley

Discussing Chile’s political development, conservative historian Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt (1997) asked what he thought was the greatest puzzle in Chilean history: the coexistence of a liberal, competitive regime and the persistence of the seigneurial system—a highly authoritarian social order confined within the Central Valley²⁵ and detached from regulation by the state. He did not provide an answer right away.

²⁵ While some haciendas were located outside of the Central Valley, the hacienda social order was born and strengthened within it.

Yet the response was embedded in the question itself. Preserving clientelism for the benefit of a sector of the elite can guarantee political survival, decreasing the costs for its beneficiary to participate in the democratic game.²⁶ Given that landowners are typically the most anti-democratic sector of the elite, maintaining a social base can work as insurance for the regime's stability.²⁷ Landlords' support for democracy began when, after a competitive regime was born in the 1870s, they pushed laws that allowed them to maintain the hacienda social order detached from the state in 1874 and ended with the introduction of the secret ballot in 1958 and agrarian reforms of the 1960s that took away their political control over the peasantry.

After Pedro de Valdivia failed to colonize Araucanía, the Central Valley gained new momentum and became the colony's main economic unit. Landowners built an export economy based on leather and wheat exports thanks to the Potosí silver circuit (Pinto Rodríguez 1992, 99). Land was organized by imitating the Spanish feudal order where landlords received a small number of *inquilinos*—permanent laborers—and their families into haciendas. A highly patrimonial, paternalistic social order developed within them. Landlords performed a social role in the hacienda's life, usually providing essential services and becoming godfathers to *inquilinos* children. In Weberian terms, *hacendados* are a perfect example of a patrimonial relationship, where the difference between private and public power is blurry (Weber II:1978b, 1028–29).

Over time, haciendas became a highly authoritarian, self-contained system. The administration of elections, schooling, policing, and health clinics all relied upon the realm of the hacienda. While cities “had effective police forces, the countryside until the 1920s depended on a handful of ill-equipped, constables, ad-hoc vigilante units led by the *Hacendados*, and the watchfulness of the tenantry” (Bauer 1975, 166). Landlords also “controlled entry and exit into the rural property [which] meant de facto territorial sovereignty over large proportions of the administrative jurisdiction.” (Loveman 1976, 34). Unlike in many parts of Europe and Latin America, peasant communities detached from the hacienda order were inexistent (Bauer 1995; Salazar 2000, 45).

Haciendas were also “removed from the struggles and conflicts that characterized life in cities. At the bottom of this structure, the rural workers [...] lived and worked on the estates and

²⁶ Conservative parties participation in the democratic game can be a source of stability. See Ziblatt (2017).

²⁷ An important tradition in comparative politics has shown that landlords are usually the sector of the elite that resists democratization the most, since the highly taxable nature of land exposes them to expropriation. See Moore (1966), Mahoney (2001), Albertus (2017).

depended on the patron for housing, for medical attention, for food, and the small plot of ground necessary for subsistence” (Kaufman 1972, 22). The *patrón* (owner) could arbitrarily change work requirements and land allotted to each family at any point (Petras and Zemelman Merino 1972, 54)

The periphery transformation endeavor resulted in what historian José Bengoa called *Pax Hacendal* (2000, 174), the triumph of Central Valley landowners over rival groups. The victory allowed them to successfully draft strategies to maintain and increase their political influence even after losing the Executive in 1871. The preservation of *inquilinaje* after the political regime became highly competitive in the 1870s was vital for the survival of landlords’ political goals. If they allowed inquilinos to migrate to cities and became part of the urban poor, they would have likely become part of the Left’s political base. On the other hand, a transition to wage labor would have ended the intrinsic paternalistic feature of *inquilinaje*, hurting landlords’ chances to keep peasants as an electoral base (Bauer 1995, 26-28. By maintaining the hacienda social order, on the other hand, landlords could maintain the system of domination and, more importantly, handle peasants’ votes (Bauer 1995, 30). The advantage of landlords’ strategy for political control over peasants is summarily explained by Bauer (1995, 33-34):

“In the absence of a village or cultural base for political action, the large estate, with its hierarchy of overseers and foremen often drawn from among the most reliable inquilinos, was generally able to placate, coopt, and control the rural workforce through a paternalism at best benign and occasionally tyrannical.”

Landowners used two legal strategies to preserve *inquilinaje* and avoid regulation. First, they helped pass a law in 1874 that enfranchised literate males. While seemingly progressive, this was aimed at enfranchising peasants (Bauer 1995, 30). The literacy requirement was not enforced in the countryside, which gave them an advantage vis-à-vis the enfranchisement of urban workers by the Left. The number of peasants enfranchised increased disproportionately between 1872 and 1876 across the Central Valley (J. S. Valenzuela 1985, 119).

For the strategy to succeed, haciendas needed to be detached from state regulation to the highest possible extent. In 1891, and after a civil war, Conservatives pushed for a law of autonomous

municipalities that, in practice, allowed them to control elections and take over local governments. Clientelism ended only after the introduction of the secret ballot in 1958, when peasants were allowed to vote without the control of their *patrones*.²⁸ Conservatives maintained a majority in both chambers until the 1920s (Bauer 1995, 33).

The hacienda system did not change significantly until the 1930s, when labor inspectors began visiting haciendas, and leftist movements attempted to create rural workers' unions (Loveman 1976, 31). Afterward, peasants migrated to other parts of the country en masse, becoming proletariats and a source of support for Left parties. Real change, however, would not come until later with land reforms and appropriation in the 1960s, when expropriation took land away from landlords and their control over peasants' political behavior.

Activation of the center-periphery cleavage

The penetration project led by Santiago also stimulated collective action across provinces. Eventually, it led to the formation of the Liberal and Radical parties, giving shape to the country's first party system. While conventional wisdom has focused mainly on the religious conflict,²⁹ which created the Liberal-Conservative fusion, much less emphasis has been given to how the state building project activated the center-periphery cleavage.

The Radical party was born out of this struggle. After the 1859 war, the liberal coalition in Coquimbo converged and formed the basis of the Radical party in 1863 (Fernández Abara and Jerez Leiva 2020, 124), while Concepción elites also played a key role in creating the Radical and Liberal parties in the 1860s (Campos Harriet 1979, 280). The radical party was a quintessential democratizing element and forced turnover across the legislature. The leaders of the Copiapó rebellion, for example, became senators. The radicals also elected people from emerging sectors bringing the middle class to leadership positions. The Radical party also played a significant role in the stability of Chile's first democratic regime. After the rise of the Left,

²⁸ Baland and Robinson (2008) show that right wing parties lost significant support in localities closer to haciendas after the introduction of the secret ballot.

²⁹ See Scully (1992).

Radicals became a centrist party, usually allying with the Left and working as a fulcrum until the emergence of the Christian Democracy in the 1960s, also performing a pivotal role in stabilizing the regime.

Conclusions

When do countries escape the state building-democratization paradox? This paper has shown that the war-like effort to transform territorial peripheries in search of economic gains can drive large-scale institutional development. It does so in three ways: First, the need to govern newly acquired territories demands an overhaul and growth of the bureaucracy and infrastructural development. Secondly, penetration can shape political regimes by activating the center-periphery cleavage and collective action around it and allowing state building coalitions to maintain clienteles captive.

The findings of this paper create two lessons for comparative political development. First, state-building elites do not always need to maximize territorial control. Conversely, territory-maximization follows a strict logic that central governments follow only when constrained by economic factors, as centralization projects are costly and uncertain. Secondly, the maintenance of a social base, detached from regulation by the state, can be a form of insurance against expropriation and decrease the costs for landowners to participate in the democratic game.

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