

Elite Family Networks and the 1891 Civil War in Chile.

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Abstract

We study the elite family networks in the Chilean Congress during the three Congresses, 1888-1891, 1891, 1891-1894, and 1894-1897 that bracketed the 1891 Civil war. Analyzing the 380 legislators who served in at least one of the three Congresses we find the network consists of a giant central component, a few smaller connected groups, and many legislators with no family connections. Before and during the Civil War levels of concentration in Congress were high, but for the two post-conflict Congresses concentration became even more pronounced. The end result of the Civil War appears to have been a further concentration of a family based elite in Congress.

Introduction

In this paper we use data on family ties to measure the degree of cliquishness that prevailed among the Chilean elite during the period overlapping that country's 1891 Civil War. We measure ties as direct family relations linking pairs of individuals serving in the both chambers of Congress. This provides us with a picture not only of the set of family groups that composed the governing elite, but also of their degree of interconnectedness.

We take four cross sectional profiles of the elite during this troubled period. Our first coincides with the Congress elected in 1888, and which served until the beginning of 1891, when conflict between Congress and President Balmaceda over the budget escalated into Civil War, with a substantial fraction of Congress leaving in January 1891 for northern Chile to fight against the Government.

Balmaceda then presided over a new Congress, that of 1891, which was loyal to him, and we examine family ties within the group encompassing both chambers of Congress. Then, after the precipitous loss of the Balmaceda faction in the culminating battles of the war, a new Cabinet and Congress of the victors came to power. This group served from 1891 to 1894, and they constitute our third cross section. We also examine the first fully post-war Congress, which served from 1894 until 1897.

We have pooled data across the four sessions of Congress. We can then restrict the network to include only members actively in service and also to analyze the entire group as a single network.

We find that far from being a confrontation between Balmaceda the radical reformer and an entrenched oligarchic elite, a sort of reprise of the English Civil War, the conflict of 1891 has more in common with the War of the Roses, pitting one elite coalition against another for dominance in what was mostly an ongoing *status quo*.

1 Background

Chile's 1891 Civil War was the bloodiest conflict in modern Chilean history. The episode culminated in the defeat of President José Manuel Balmaceda and his allies, and is seen as influencing the subsequent political development of the country. As such, this is an episode that has been studied extensively in the literature, and from different angles. In Chilean historiography the war has been analyzed as:

- A “restoration” of the oligarchy, in the face of its displacement by a government that appeared to be reformist Vial (1982)
- A growing tension in the face of renewed presidential patronage in national politics, this in a context where in the 1886 election Balmaceda had been elected with the help of unseemly electoral interventionism (Collier and Sater, 1996; Salas Edwards, 1914; Valenzuela, 1985)
- A conflict between congressional and presidential groups over the interpretation of current constitutional norms (Bañados Espinosa, 1894; Heise González, 1982; Valenzuela, 1985)
- A struggle between President Balmaceda and different economic and social interests, apprehensive about the revolutionary nature of his government (Ramírez Necochea, 1958)
- A result of president's flawed interpersonal skills, which translated into a lack of support from political coalitions (Salas Edwards, 1914)

In this way, this conflict has been seen as the beginning of an oligarchic-parliamentary period

in Chile, although in the context of the existing Constitution (the Constitution of 1833, which had been reformed in 1874, 1876). However, as Heise González (1982) and Blakemore and Ortega (1991) have argued, some of the explanations we have just outlined are not consistent with other historical precedents. For one thing, Congress long since assumed a supervisory role over the Executive, even before the 1874 reforms. In this regard, two developments became points of sharp conflict, first a series of appointment to the cabinet of ministers without the consent of Congress nor of its supporters, and second Balmaceda’s announcement of a constitutional reform to replace the ”parliamentary” system” with a presidential regime. Both developments intensified anti-authoritarian and anti-presidentialist sentiment in Congress, and so increased opposition to Balmaceda.

2 The Data

We have used genealogical sources to assemble data on the inter-relatedness of the 380 members of Congress, including both the Senate, and the Chamber of Deputies. We include data on cousins out to the second degree, uncles, nephews, fathers and sons. We also include in-laws out to first cousins once removed.

We treat any of these relationships as creating an undirected link between the two individuals concerned. We then build up a map of connections among the all 380 individuals who served in at least one of our four Congresses. We can then compare Congresses by restricting our attention to links among members who served in a given Congress.

| Relationship | Tally | Relationship | Tally |
|---------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|-------|
| Father/Son | 11 | Father/Son in Law | 10 |
| Brother | 112 | Brother in Law | 24 |
| Uncle/Nephew | 41 | Uncle/Nephew in Law | 29 |
| First Cousin | 180 | First Cousin in Law | 27 |
| First Cousin once Removed | 76 | First Cousin Once Removed in Law | 2 |
| Second Cousin | 177 | Second Cousin in Law | 24 |

Most of the relationships are among coevals, brothers and cousins, while father-son pairs, as well as father and son in law pairs, are comparatively rare. There seems to be an age at which people serve in Congress, and it does not span two generations. The slightly greater frequency of uncles and nephews seems to be due to the overlap of generations, as the younger children of one’s parents and the older children of one’s elder siblings tend to be closer in age than are fathers and sons.

Once we have assembled the map, we calculate the connectedness of our nodes and for each we compute its degree, that is, the number of other nodes each is connected with by way of some sort of direct family relationship (Jackson, 2008).

We also employ a second measure of connectedness, namely the Eigenvalue Centrality of each member (Bonacich, 1993). This gauges how centrally situated in the network of family connections an individual is. More central people can forge links and call in favors from a larger range of people, and act as intermediaries connecting larger numbers of other legislators than do their less well connected counterparts. This and similar measures were used by Padgett and Ansell (1993) to identify the relative centrality of medieval Florentine families in the ruthless politics of that era.

3 Networks

First consider the grand network comprised of individuals who served in any of the four Congresses we study. This group consists of 380 people, and it divides into a single component involving 161 individuals, a smattering of smaller connected blocks¹ and 171 isolated individuals with no close family connections with the other legislators.

| Network | Component | Size | Diameter | Average Degree | Centrality |
|---------------------|---------------|------|----------|----------------|------------|
| All Four Congresses | $C_{all,161}$ | 161 | 11 | 5.540 | −0.035 |
| | $C_{all,7}$ | 7 | 3 | 2.286 | −0.015 |
| | $C_{all,6}$ | 6 | 3 | 1.667 | 0 |
| | $C_{all,3a}$ | 3 | 2 | 1.333 | 0 |
| | $C_{all,3b}$ | 3 | 2 | 1.333 | 0 |
| | $C_{all,3c}$ | 3 | 2 | 1.333 | 0 |
| | $C_{all,3d}$ | 3 | 2 | 1.333 | 0 |
| | $C_{all,3e}$ | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 |

The diameter of the 161 person omphalos² is 11. As is common with large components, the diameter of the epicenter of the Congressional network is much less than proportional to its size. The seven member locus with $\frac{1}{23}$ the magnitude has a diameter of 3, which is over a quarter that of the omphalos.

| Network | Component | Size | Diameter | Average Degree | Centrality |
|----------------------|----------------|------|----------|----------------|------------|
| 1888 – 1891 Congress | $C_{88-91,35}$ | 35 | 11 | 3.600 | −0.049 |
| | $C_{all,18}$ | 18 | 7 | 3.392 | −0.011 |
| | $C_{all,7}$ | 7 | 4 | 2.238 | −0.002 |
| | $C_{all,6}$ | 6 | 3 | 2.563 | −0.006 |
| | $C_{all,4}$ | 4 | 2 | 1.750 | 0 |
| | $C_{all,3}$ | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 |

By definition the components partition the network matrix into orthogonal blocks, so that each eigenvector takes on non-zero values only for elements of a single component. Eigen-value centrality, which corresponds with the first Eigen-vector, only yields non-zero values for members

of the mega-component³ For the network as a whole the average Eigenvalue Centrality is -0.0150 , whereas for the 1888 – 1891 Congress it attains a value of -0.0137 . Notice that the $C_{88-91,35}$, $C_{88-91,18}$, $C_{88-91,7}$, and $C_{88-91,6}$ components are comprised entirely of members belonging to the $C_{all,161}$ component of the combined network. However, to connect across these components, one would need to include a member of a future Congress.

Turning to the Balmaceda Congress of 1891 – 1891 we encounter an average Eigen-value Centrality of -0.0144 for the entire Congress. The $C_{88-91,20}$, $C_{88-91,5}$, $C_{88-91,4}$, and $C_{88-91,3b}$ components are all made up of individuals belonging to the $C_{all,161}$ nexus. Notice that the average centrality of members of the Balmaceda Congress is only slightly smaller than for the earlier 1888 – 1891 Congress, notwithstanding the much smaller size of the largest component, which in this case consists of a mere score of legislators. However, these legislators were not drawn at random! Instead they consist of Balmaceda’s coterie, with an average Eigen-value Centrality in the overall network of -0.081 . The remainder of the Congress were much less central. The process of continuity between the 1891 – 1888 Congress emerged from a mixture of previously elected members staying on, while others left to join the rebellion, and yet others were put in place by the heavy hand of President Balmaceda.

| Network | Component | Size | Diameter | Average Degree | Centrality |
|----------------------|----------------|------|----------|----------------|------------|
| 1891 – 1891 Congress | $C_{91-91,20}$ | 20 | 6 | 3.600 | -0.081 |
| , | $C_{91-91,5}$ | 5 | 2 | 2.563 | -0.0003 |
| | $C_{91-91,4}$ | 4 | 2 | 1.750 | -0.0002 |
| | $C_{91-91,3a}$ | 3 | 2 | 1.333 | 0 |
| | $C_{91-91,3b}$ | 3 | 1 | 2 | -0.002 |

Post-Balmaceda there is a sharp increase in centrality. For the Congress of 1891 – 1894 we encounter an average Eigen-value Centrality of -0.01820146 for the entire Congress. This exceeds the average for our four Congresses. The very large $C_{88-91,46}$ component, along with the $C_{88-91,4}$, $C_{88-91,3a}$, $C_{88-91,3b}$, $C_{88-91,3c}$, and $C_{88-91,3f}$ blocks are entirely composed of members belonging to $C_{all,161}$. This Congress included some ongoing Senators with less antipathy for Balmaceda, but a salient characteristic of the 1891 – 1894 Congress was the exit of Balmacedas hierophants and the return of his enemies.

| Network | Component | Size | Diameter | Average Degree | Centrality |
|----------------------|----------------|------|----------|----------------|------------|
| 1891 – 1894 Congress | $C_{91-94,46}$ | 46 | 12 | 3.600 | −0.047 |
| , | $C_{91-94,4}$ | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| | $C_{91-91,3a}$ | 3 | 2 | 2 | −0.0002 |
| | $C_{91-91,3b}$ | 3 | 1 | 2 | −0.003 |
| | $C_{91-91,3c}$ | 3 | 1 | 2 | −0.002 |
| | $C_{91-91,3d}$ | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| | $C_{91-91,3e}$ | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| | $C_{91-91,3f}$ | 3 | 1 | 2 | −0.080 |

The dissonance between the size and centrality measure for the $C_{91-91,3f}$ component, consisting of "Macario Ossa Cerda" (−0.059), "Francisco Ramón Undurraga Vicuña" (−0.093), and "Claudio Vicuña Guerrero" (−0.088) is worth remark. Composed of legislators who are directly connected with almost half the central component of the Balmaceda Congress⁴ none of whom made it into the 1891 – 1894 Congress, these three who did not participate in Balmaceda's legislature were nevertheless able to win seats in the post-Civil War Congress. That they able to do this despite their family's position at the epicenter of the then stigmatized Balmaceda alliance is stark testimony to the resilience of this important political clan.

The 1891 – 1894 Congress took it's seats even as firing squads were carrying out their macabre task on the streets of Valparaíso. Perhaps a better gauge of the postbellum norm is the legislature that was seated after that, the 1894 – 1897 Congress. While the large $C_{88-91,46}$ block was supplanted by components $C_{91-94,30}$ and $C_{91-94,15}$, both of these plus the smaller $C_{91-94,3a}$ and $C_{91-94,3b}$ components were part of the underlying $C_{all,161}$ nexus. Moreover, the average Eigenvalue Centrality for this Congress with respect to the underlying network that spans all four legislatures in our study is −0.0234, substantially higher than for any of the others.

| Network | Component | Size | Diameter | Average Degree | Centrality |
|----------------------|----------------|------|----------|----------------|------------|
| 1891 – 1894 Congress | $C_{94-97,30}$ | 30 | 11 | 5.067 | −0.008 |
| , | $C_{94-97,15}$ | 15 | 4 | 10.667 | −0.171 |
| | $C_{94-97,3a}$ | 3 | 2 | 4.667 | −0.0001 |
| | $C_{94-97,3b}$ | 3 | 2 | 4.667 | −0.0002 |

All four blocks with three or more members are comprised of members of the giant $C_{all,161}$ component. Two members of Balmaceda's family, José Rafael Balmaceda Fernández and José María Balmaceda Fernández, who served in the 1891 Congress and were part of the $C_{91-91,20}$ component were back in the 1894 – 1897 Congress, as part of the $C_{94-97,3a}$ component, though they were thoroughly marginalized with in the new Congress. The smaller of the two large blocks in the 1894 – 1897 legislature was in fact the better connected of the two, including high clout legislators belonging to the Errázuriz and Echaurren families⁵.

4 Conclusions

The overall picture that emerges from this analysis is that while the centrality of members of the 1891 legislature was less evenly distributed than for its predecessor, both the 1888 – 1891 and Balmaceda Congresses exhibited similar levels of centrality in terms of family connections. In contrast, the anti-Balmaceda group who supplanted the earlier political ecosystem had much closer family ties—the Congress of 1894 – 1897 exhibited an average centrality measure that was 70% higher than for the pro-Balmaceda Congress of 1888 – 1891 and the Balmaceda controlled Congress of 1891. While the political rhetoric used by the rebels. What remains to resolve the degree to which the 1888 – 1891 Congress represented the *status quo* prior to Balmaceda’s coming to power and the degree to which it reflects Balmaceda reducing the role of family networks in Congress. The next step in this research project is to include the pre-pre-Civil war Congress of 1885 – 1888 the more fully to assess the question of whether the 1888 – 1891 Congress was itself a departure from the *status quo ante*⁶.

We think that even these preliminary results put the potential for network analysis to convey insights about politics into sharp relief. That we can use readily available genealogical evidence to learn lessons about the nature of a major civil conflict about which there is still substantial disagreement shows the potential of networks as a research tool in political science.

Notes

¹There is a block with seven members, another with six, there are five triads, and six dyads.

²<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/omphalos>

³We note in passing that the correspondence between components and eigenvectors allows for a streamlined identification of the components of any network matrix.

⁴These were Julio Bañados Espinosa, Juan Eduardo Mackenna Astorga, Félix Mackenna Vicuña, Calixto Ovalle Vicuña, Ruperto Ovalle Vicuña, Ramón Vicuña Subercaseaux, Ignacio Alfredo Sandalio Ovalle Vicuña, Nemesio Vicuña Mackenna, and Ricardo Vicuña Guerrero.

⁵These were Ladislao Errázuriz Echaurren (-0.306) Federico Errázuriz Echaurren (-0.270) Francisco Javier Errázuriz Echaurren (-0.256) Rafael Errázuriz Echaurren (-0.256) Rafael Errázuriz Urmeneta (-0.243) Nicolás González Errázuriz (-0.220) Silvestre Ochagavía Echaurren (-0.216) José Rafael Salas Errázuriz (-0.200) Agustín Lazcano Echaurren (-0.170) Fernando Liborio Lazcano Echaurren (-0.170).

⁶Also useful, though impractical in the absence on much more extensive data from the period, would be a set of measurements of the business and exchange network linking the legislators of the Civil War era.

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