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How the Spanish Civil War Became Europe's Battlefield

Course Guidebook

Pamela B. Radcliff

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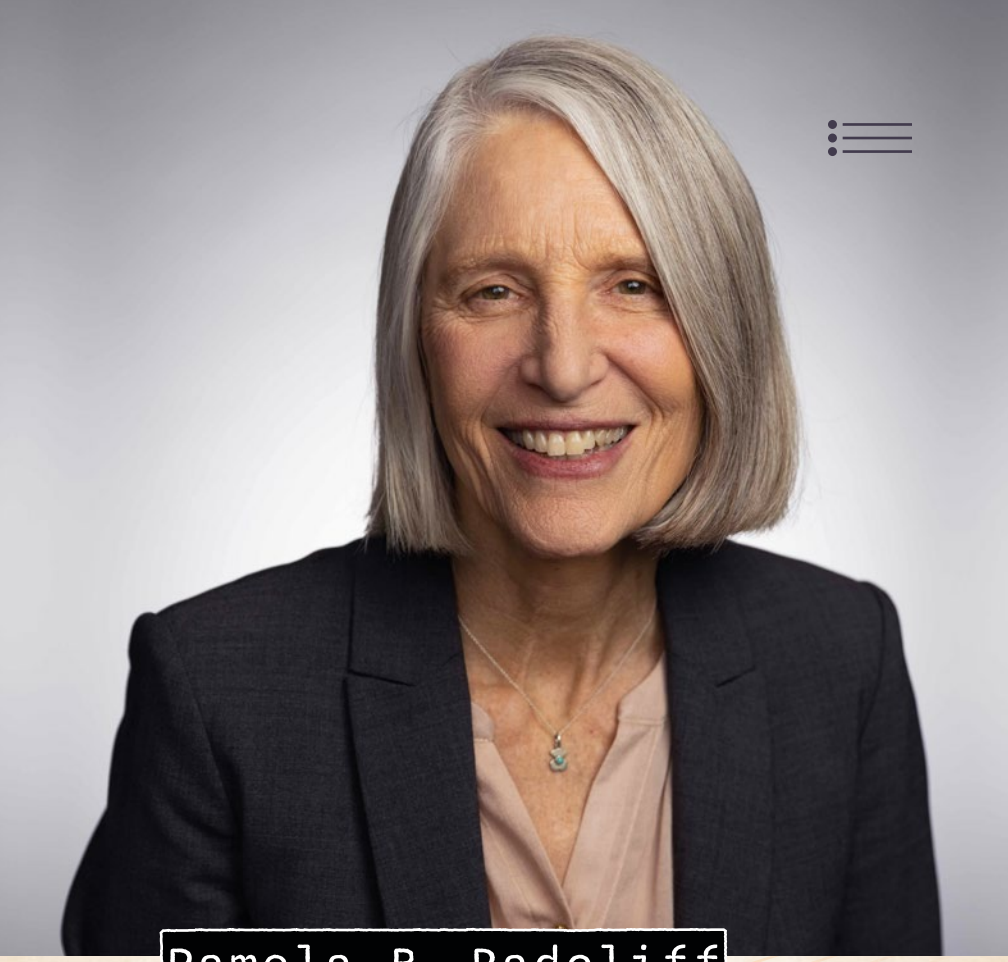

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1 The Spanish Civil War in a European Context

Why does the Spanish Civil War, a conflict that officially ended 80 years ago, still divide historians and the population at large? And beyond Spain, what can a single case tell us about civil wars and about Europe on the brink of the most destructive war in its history? This course aims to answer these questions in five sections. In the first section, we look at the war's origins. The second explores the internal dynamics of the war. In the third, we analyze why and how the war attracted the attention of most of the great powers. Fourth, we follow the evolution of the war itself. And finally, we examine the afterlife of the war in public memory and history.

A Failed Coup Becomes a War

In July 1936, Spanish military leaders conspired to overthrow the democratically elected Spanish Republic. Their stated goal was to restore order and authority to what they claimed was an unraveling political system. With the aid of Nazi planes, they launched an audacious airlift of colonial troops from Morocco to the mainland, accompanied by violent uprisings across the country as the rebels called on all the military garrisons in Spain to join them. They expected this show of force to bring the Republic to its knees without a fight.

Instead, a combination of loyal troops and hastily organized volunteer militia units defeated the uprising in most but not all places. Within a couple of weeks, it was clear that neither side had been completely victorious or defeated. Soon there were two armies and two states claiming sovereignty over Spain.

What began as a failed coup turned into a three-year-long total war that would not officially end until April 1939, just months before the Nazi invasion of Poland signaled the outbreak of the Second World War. It would leave few Spaniards unscathed.

In political terms, it ended the Second Republic, Spain's first major democratic experiment, and inaugurated a 40-year repressive right-wing regime that lasted until the late 1970s. It left the legacy of a fratricidal conflict that continues to shape current politics and society.

The civil war has often been viewed as simply a dress rehearsal for the bigger European struggle between communism, democracy, and fascism. It was one of several civil wars on Europe's periphery in the first half of the 20th century, but it was also its own internal Spanish conflict that emerged out of the particular problems of Spanish history. Even decades later, the civil war still inflames passions and scholarly debates.

Indeed, the Spanish Civil War is the key turning point in what we can call competing moral narratives, which are stories that make sense of the past to explain the present and provide a road map to the future. The conservative moral narrative argues that the rebels saved Spain and Christian civilization from communist totalitarianism. The left version insists that a fascist

victory pushed Spain off the path of modernity for the next 40 years. Both narratives are alive in Spain today, and there's no consensus narrative about the significance of the Spanish Civil War or the lessons learned.

Early Colonial Pacification Campaigns

Spain's civil war fit into a trajectory of increasingly lethal military operations that began in the colonial world in the late 19th century and inside Europe in the First World War, culminating in the Second World War. Scholars have used the term *total war* to define this trend toward these kinds of military conflicts. In the purest terms, a truly total war would be "without limits."

The descent into total warfare was characterized by new weapons of mass destruction, from the machine gun to aerial bombing, gas chambers, and nuclear bombs. At the same time, the vilification of the enemy in radical exclusionary terms justified the growing civilianization of warfare, in which noncombatants became direct targets.

When did this total war dynamic begin? Some scholars emphasize the brutalizing impact of colonial pacification campaigns from the end of the 19th century, which included mass killings and herding subjugated populations into concentration camps. In German southwest Africa, the suppression between 1904 and 1907 of a revolt by Herero tribespeople against the colonial power resulted in the death of between 75% and 80% of the population.

In Spanish-controlled Cuba, the colonial government tried to crush the independence movement of the late 1890s with a brutal pacification campaign that included the massive, forced relocation of half a million people into camps, resulting in the deaths of up to 170,000 civilians.

During the Second Boer War between 1899 to 1902, British armies employed a scorched-earth policy to eradicate the human and matériel support infrastructure for the enemy's guerrilla war. To this end, the British forces depopulated entire regions.

In these colonial spaces, a combination of biological racism and lack of oversight created special conditions that precipitated mass killing and the death of noncombatants. It is compelling to see these "dirty wars" as precedents that eased the path for future escalation in Europe itself.

Dynamic of Destruction

Within Europe, it was the battlefield experience of World War I, where tens of thousands of men could die in a day, that transgressed the former boundaries of warfare. Some have argued that the normalization of mass death brutalized both the veterans and the home front, creating a permanent war culture that normalized violent solutions to political problems after the war. This war culture then seeped into postwar politics, the argument goes, and encouraged exclusionary radical political projects like fascism and communism that accepted the elimination of the "other" as a legitimate goal.

The first half of the 20th century saw an unfolding "dynamic of destruction," a concept coined by the historian Alan Kramer in his book about the First World War. This dynamic transformed the face of warfare toward ever greater devastation and death. Even though Spain did not participate in the two world wars, its civil war drew from and exemplified this dynamic, perhaps most evident in the accelerating violence against civilians. In terms of civilian casualties, the Spanish Civil War holds an intermediate place between the First and Second World Wars.

What explains this explosion of mass killing? The radicalizing dynamic of warfare itself is one factor. This was evident even in the fascist states of Nazi Germany and Italy, where civilian killings skyrocketed under the loosened constraints of wartime. Some of this radicalization emerged from the decisions made on the ground, whether in the Spanish Republican rear guard or in the German army on the Russian front in World War II. Fear, peer pressure, hatred, and the suspension of normal authority opened the floodgates. Civilian deaths tended to be higher in situations where state power had either collapsed or weakened.

In the wake of the exhumations and the identification of at least 2,000 mass graves, the question of how to name the mass violence has become especially pertinent. Some historians have described the repression as a war of extermination, genocide, or holocaust. Others have argued that terms like *terror*, *crimes against humanity*, *war of occupation,* or *politicide* can communicate the level of repression with greater precision, without minimizing it.

Because the dictatorship covered up its atrocities for 40 years, the full extent of the brutality of the Spanish war has only emerged in recent years. Most recent estimates put the number of executions by the Nationalists between 130,000 and 150,000, about 100,000 of these during the war, with 50,000 to 60,000 carried out by the Republican side.

In comparative terms, scholars still argue about whether the Nazi genocidal project belongs to its own category of mass violence that emerged out of a process of extreme radicalization unique to the Nazi state. The other option is that it was on a continuum of the escalating violence of total warfare that began with the Herero massacre. Using terms like *holocaust* and *genocide* would imply at least continuity and perhaps affiliation with the Nazi project. Rejecting those terms would acknowledge the novelty and rupture of Nazi violence.

International Intervention

The mass murder in Spain was distinct from the Nazi case because it took place in the context of a civil war, which generated its own violent logic. While civil wars were not new, the trend toward total war transformed the dynamics of civil wars in the 20th century. They took place in peripheral countries and sparked external intervention or involvement that was linked to the broader geopolitical and ideological struggles of the era.

These civil wars exemplified the struggle between left-wing revolution, liberal democracy, and authoritarianism or fascism. There were complex alliances where popular front coalitions between liberal democrats and revolutionaries complicated the left-right paradigm. These alliances also generated a field of experimentation that blurred the boundaries between democracy and socialism.

Scholars still debate whether the popular front in Spain or elsewhere offered an unprecedented path to an inclusive "new style" social democracy, or whether it was simply a camouflage for Stalinist revolution, or perhaps an unstable tension between both forces. This debate influenced the great powers' decision to intervene or not.

In both Spain and Greece, the Western democratic powers saw revolution, not popular democracy, in their popular fronts. Only during the Yugoslavian civil war of 1941 to 1943, when anti-fascist Soviet and Western powers were briefly allied, did the international context favor intervention on behalf of the popular front forces. In all of these wars, external intervention or a lack thereof was a decisive element in determining the victor.

Unique Elements of the Spanish Civil War

Of all these civil wars, the Spanish Civil War was the only one with a purely domestic origin. And a key source of this strife was rooted in a religious war between Catholics and anticlericals, which produced the most religious violence of any of the civil wars. The war itself also unfolded as a conventional military operation, which sets it apart from the largely guerrilla struggle in Greece and Yugoslavia.

Equally significant was the distinct context in which the Spanish Civil War ended in 1939. At war's end, the right-wing regime that had won was under no pressure to pursue an inclusive postwar settlement, either from its fascist allies or from the democratic powers, whose attention was turned to the outbreak of war in Poland.

After the end of World War II, supporters of the overthrown Republic hoped the Allied powers would intervene in their favor, but their last hopes were dashed. Instead, Spain would break with the trajectory of post–World War II Western democratic Europe and join Portugal and later Greece in a southern European zone of right-wing dictatorship that lasted until the 1970s.

Even among the southern European dictatorships, the Spanish regime had a more profound legacy of violence and repression because of its origin in a civil war. Thus, the Spanish trajectory was closer to the Russian experience of civil war and left-wing dictatorship than it was to the other right-wing southern European dictatorships, which did not emerge out of civil wars. Because of these circumstances, Spain's civil war did not really end in April 1939 when the fighting stopped. Some would argue it didn't really end until the death of the dictator decades later.

Reading

Baumeister, Martin, and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, eds. *"If You Tolerate This…": The Spanish Civil War in the Age of Total War*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2008. (Situates the Spanish war in the broader framework of "total war.")

Casanova, Julian. "Civil Wars, Revolutions and Counterrevolutions in Finland, Spain and Greece (1918–1949): A Comparative Analysis." *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 13, no. 3 (2000): 515–537.

Holguin, Sandie. "How Did the Spanish Civil War End? ... Not So Well." *The American Historical Review* 120 (2015): 1767–1783. (Argues that the civil war didn't really end until the death of Franco.)

Kramer, Alan. *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. (This book coined the concept dynamic of destruction to define the trajectory of 20th-century warfare.)

Mosse, George. *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. (This book introduced the concept of brutalization as a result of war experience.)

Preston, Paul. *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in 20th Century Spain*. London: Norton, 2010. (The first major synthesis in English of the Nationalist repression, whose title provoked debate.)

Snyder, Timothy. *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2010. (This book analyzes the massive killings by both Soviet and Nazi armies in the stateless territory of Ukraine and Poland during World War II.)

Question

1 What was your biggest takeaway from being introduced to the broader concept and trajectory of "total war" as a way to contextualize the Spanish Civil War?

2

Two Spains? Long-Term Origins of War

In this lecture, we delve into the preexisting cleavages that were rooted in Spain's own unique past. We consider the role that differing views on national identity, modernization, and religion played in the origin of the civil war. And we look at the peninsula's geography to see how these divisions showed up in the years leading up to the war.

Two Spains

In 1922, when King Alfonso XIII visited a poor village in rural Spain, he reportedly said that he was horrified and could see no more. His visit gives us an image of two vastly different Spains existing in uneasy parallel—the modern, urban monarch in marked contrast to an impoverished rural landscape that he had never seen.

Fifteen years later, during the civil war, Ernest Hemingway and other foreign supporters of the Republic made a documentary, *The Spanish Earth*, that showed the modern irrigation system that the Republic was installing to lift people out of poverty. The implicit message was that the Republic represented the forces of modern Spain that were fighting a noble struggle against an arrogant, traditional elite resistant to change and indifferent to the fate of those that had been left behind in premodern squalor.

These images of Spain before and during civil war thematically echo what has been, until recently, the dominant explanation for the war. It identifies a process of flawed development and long-term divisions that led inevitably to the civil war of the 1930s. This long-term view was rooted in a pessimistic vision of modern Spanish history following the Spanish-American War.

In that conflict, Spain lost its last major colonies to the United States in the humiliating so-called disaster of 1898. The Generation of '98 interpreted the US victory as evidence of Spanish decadence and backwardness. Spain had failed to follow the normal path of modernization and was losing its status as a global and imperial power.

Inside Spain, critics bemoaned the existence of "two Spains," one more modern and the other still steeped in tradition, who were divided by geography, class, religion, politics, and two ways of life—rural and urban. The metaphor of the two Spains stuck, and the civil war only seemed to confirm the diagnosis.

Most historians today would argue that the two sides in the Spanish Civil War didn't really consolidate until the war itself forced everyone to align themselves.

But the metaphor doesn't really hold up as an origin story for the civil war. There were never really two coherent Spains. That division is more of a product of the war than its cause. But postwar historians tended to read backward from the end of the war when the country really was divided into victors and vanquished—a binary division that the Franco regime continually reinforced for the next four decades.

Competing Identities

In general, scholars are more skeptical that any complex event was caused only by long-term structural factors; instead, they could only be part of a multifactorial analysis that has to explain the specific context in which deep-rooted divisions are mobilized for war. The challenge, then, is to weigh the importance of long-term versus short-term causes in the breakdown of Spain's democracy, while acknowledging that both played a role.

One way to approach this issue starts with the scholarly debates about what factors aid or undermine the consolidation of new democratic regimes. Can democratic institutions hold together populations divided by religion, cultural values, ethnic and racial identities, and economic inequality? These cleavages might not lead inevitably to civil war. But structural divisions make it easier for political opponents to mobilize around competing identities and fears that their way of life is under threat if the other side wins an election.

In the 19th century, conservatives rejected the idea that Spain had to modernize. They were proud of a traditional identity rooted in Catholicism, monarchy, and the heroic religious conquest of Spain from the Moorish rulers in the medieval era. Liberals like the Generation of '98 argued that this Catholic identity was part of an archaic past that was holding Spain back. Instead, Spain's future lay in the modern political ideas from the French Revolution, epitomized by the 1812 Constitution of Cádiz, Spain's first democratic constitution.

After the war, the battling national histories continued. The conservative victors who established the Franco dictatorship argued that they had fought the war to defend a traditional Spain rooted in rural and Christian values, whose way of life was under threat from an enemy that pretended to be Spanish but was really the puppet of international communism. This framework served the Franco regime well as it reinvented itself during the Cold War as an anti-communist ally of the West.

The alternative narrative among the defeated accepted the general two-Spains framework but viewed the defeat through the structural lens of Spain's so-called failed modernization. That modernization in Spain was being held back from within purportedly explained the greater strength of the anti-modern forces in the civil war.

The liberal version of this narrative assumed that there was a uniform process of becoming modern. Spain's failure to follow the "normal" path of economic and social development weakened the modern political forces and explained their defeat in the civil war.

Uneven Development

The most recent consensus on economic development in Spain over the century before the civil war is that there was uneven and gradual development rather than backwardness or failure to develop. If we look at the entire European context, Spain followed an intermediate pace of industrialization, urbanization, and technological development that accelerated in the decades before the Republic of the 1930s.

The unevenness of Spain's process likely did contribute to structural divisions. Industrialization was concentrated in three main regions: Asturias, the Basque Country, and Catalonia. In the process, each of these regions produced many of the classic features of modernization. Urban centers grew. A commercial and industrial middle and upper class emerged, as well as a large working class. Many of the latter joined trade unions to defend their interests, as occurred across Europe. In addition, these areas had higher levels of literacy, education, and living standards, but with strong class divisions in the quality of life.

A more unusual feature of these areas is that they are all located on the geographic periphery. This fact helped to consolidate a more binary image of the two Spains, divided into a modern periphery that was open to the outside world and an isolated backward center resistant to change.

Divisions within the Heartland

There is an element of truth to the center-versus-periphery metaphor. The interior of the country was largely rural and agricultural, and Spain's arid climate and low rainfall kept agricultural productivity low, which served as a contrast to the more dynamic industrial periphery.

Where the metaphor breaks down is that there were also deep divisions within the rural and agricultural heartland. In simple terms, there were two main types of agrarian communities, defined by distinct landholding patterns. In the center and north of the peninsula, in Castille and Leon, small and medium-sized farms dominated. Here, generally prosperous rural communities enjoyed higher standards of living and literacy and were held together by strong Catholic beliefs.

In contrast, the southwestern agricultural regions of Extremadura and Andalusia were dominated by huge properties, or latifundia, which were owned by a small number of wealthy landowners who hired landless laborers, or braceros, to work the land. Low wages and seasonal employment created the worst conditions for workers in any area of Spain, as well as the greatest level of inequality and poverty. Many braceros embraced revolutionary politics and rejected the Catholic Church as being complicit in upholding the status quo.

The Spanish Republic came into power in 1931 with a mission to solve the agrarian problem. The stark disparity between the pious wealthy farmers of the North and the anticlerical landless laborers of the South made for divisive structural knots that were hard to untangle.

Religious Divisions

Compared to the other European civil wars of the 20th century, religious violence in the Spanish Civil War was far more extensive. This might seem puzzling at first, if we consider that governments since the 15th century had successfully extinguished religious pluralism from the peninsula.

But there was never any effort to separate church and state as in the US Constitution. So how did such an apparently unifying feature of Spanish culture become one of its most divisive by the 1930s?

The backdrop of the story is the global rift that opened in Europe with the French Revolution, between new secular liberal democratic politics and a Catholic Church that increasingly allied itself with absolutist, aristocratic, and anti-liberal forces throughout the 19th century. This rift had very different political implications depending on the balance of religious and political forces in each country. The Spanish case was distinct in that the church maintained its close relationship with the Spanish state until the Second Republic.

The problem was that the more the church was associated with the conservative monarchical Spanish state, the less it seemed to represent those left out of an elitist and hierarchical system. Many Spaniards who considered themselves political progressives or reformers increasingly viewed the church as an archaic political institution that was holding Spain back from progress.

This growing alienation expressed itself in a decline in religiosity among these populations. More aggressively, an underground culture of anticlericalism permeated opposition newspapers and ran the gamut of political persuasion, from Republicans to socialists to anarchists. There were a few outbreaks of anticlerical violence before the 1930s.

Anticlericalism was not about banning religious practice or supporting atheism; it aimed to mitigate what they viewed as the excessive power of the clerics in public life. Anticlericals agreed that Spain could never fully modernize while the church maintained its grip on political and public life. A lot of their propaganda and cartoons demonized clerics.

Conclusion

What seems uncontestable is that these preexisting cleavages made it more difficult for the democratic Republic to unify a working majority that could stabilize and consolidate the democracy. And when the war broke out, these same divisions predisposed Spaniards to pick sides. Those who lived in urban areas of the periphery or belonged to the working classes sympathized with the Republican side, while practicing Catholics, farmers, and the upper classes were more likely to favor the Nationalist side.

But what the structural rifts don't explain are the political decisions that pushed toward polarization and led the rebels to take up arms against a legitimate elected government. In the scholarly debates about why democracies fail, most would emphasize human agency over structural factors.

Thus, while it's easy to look back from 1936 and assume that all the cleavages foregrounded by the war made it inevitable, human actors made the decisions that augmented and mobilized these cleavages into mandates for civil war. In the next lecture, we'll turn to these short-term origins of the war.

Reading

Grugel, Jean, and Matthew Louis Bishop. *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*. 2nd ed. Houndsmill and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. (A short survey of theories of democratization.)

Lannon, Frances. *Privilege, Persecution and Prophecy: The Catholic Church in Spain, 1875–1975*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. (Provides a more in-depth analysis of the role of religion in Spanish politics and society.)

Ringrose, David. *Spain, Europe and the Spanish Miracle, 1700–1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. (A fundamental text that argued for Spain's "normal" economic development within European patterns.)

Simpson, James, and Juan Jose Carmona Amaya. *Why Democracy Failed: The Agrarian Origins of the Spanish Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. (Analyzes the complexity of the "agrarian question" in the Second Republic.)

Question

1 In terms of evaluating the impact of deep social, economic, and cultural divisions on the potential consolidation of a democratic regime, what do you think about the contested claim that thriving democracies require a relatively egalitarian and homogeneous society?

3

The Second Republic: Short-Term Origins of War

This lecture examines the five-year period leading up to the Spanish Civil War. It outlines the competing visions and agendas for the new democracy and the conflicts and resistance that resulted. The process of progressive polarization culminated in the fraught elections of 1936, which were framed as a life-and-death showdown between fascism and democracy, according to the left coalition, or between Christian civilization and communism, according to conservatives.

Spain's New Democracy


King Alfonso XIII

On April 14, 1931, celebrations across Spain marked the inauguration of a democratic Republic. King Alfonso XIII had hoped to restore the constitutional monarchy following a period of rule by a dictator. But the elections saw an overwhelming vote against monarchist candidates and for political parties that promised democracy and a Republic. The king resigned and left the country, dying in exile a decade later.

The Second Republic was proclaimed, and national elections were held in June to choose a new parliament that would write a democratic constitution. So, what happened between 1931 and 1936 that pushed the democracy to the edge of civil war? How did the decisions made by leaders and other political actors affect the ability of the new democracy to consolidate?

To consolidate, a democracy needs to create an institutional framework that a solid majority believes represents their interests and aspirations. Equally, the people have to be willing to accept defeat if their party loses the election, because they trust that the system will give them another opportunity in the future. In political science lingo, the major political parties have to be "unconditionally" committed to the procedural "rules of the game," whatever their substantive goals, as Juan Linz argued in his classic 1978 study on democratic breakdown. In other words, there's a distinction between the mechanics and procedures, on which there has to be broad agreement, and the specific policies and laws, on which groups can disagree.

Applying these criteria to the Second Republic, we can see many red flags: First, the constitution was written by and for one political sector of the population; second, most of the major political parties were only conditional supporters of the democratic system; and third, no political group could construct a stable majority coalition.

The First Biennium

The Republic is usually divided into three periods, each inaugurated by national elections: the first in June 1931, the second in November 1933, and the third in February 1936. There were efforts in the first and second periods, or biennia, to establish alternative majority coalitions that could consolidate the democracy, but neither held together.

The First Biennium was defined by the ambitious social reform agenda of the majority center-left coalition, which included women's rights, universal education, land reform, worker rights, regional autonomy, and secularization. The coalition included a number of small Republican parties, the most important led by the new prime minister, Manuel Azaña, as well as the Socialist Party, which received the most votes. The Socialist Party's conditional support of the democratic system was based on the substance of its policies.

Manuel Azaña was the epitome of the progressive intellectual. He identified three problems to be addressed: the problem of local autonomies, the social problem, and the religious problem. The mission of the First Biennium coalition was to transform Spain "to its roots," but through democratic means, using both the constitution and subsequent legislation.

Resolving the problem of local autonomies meant giving regions like Catalonia and the Basque Country their own regional governments with some delegated powers, like the states in the US federal system. Resolving the social problem required reducing the huge gap between rich and poor. And the religious problem, which referred to the church's excessive influence in Spanish public institutions, would be addressed by a process of secularization.

The First Biennium's new constitution ended state funding for the church and ordered the closure of religious schools, to be replaced with a new universal system of public and secular education. For the first time, there was no mention or acknowledgment of the special role of Catholicism in the Spanish nation.

Rejections to the Constitution

For those in the center-left coalition, the agenda included fundamental reforms necessary to democratize and modernize the country. But for those outside the coalition, the constitution was "exclusive" and "intolerant," with devout Catholics feeling most excluded. Many conservative clerics rejected even the basic propositions of modern democracies.

The upper classes also felt threatened and excluded by the worker-focused constitution and the Socialist-led labor legislation that was explicitly indifferent or even hostile to the capitalist bourgeois class. And while the Republican coalition didn't set out to exclude the significant population of small employers and farmers, their invisibility in the pro-worker and anti-capitalist rhetoric made them feel marginalized and vulnerable.

It's easy to see in these excluded groups the constituency of the new conservative party called the CEDA, formed in 1933 as a political voice for these interests. The bigger question is whether these groups could trust that the constitutional framework was flexible enough to accommodate their interests.

Although the agenda of the First Biennium leaders excluded some groups, it was a powerful vision that perhaps did represent a majority. But equally importantly, the First Biennium failed to consolidate a majority coalition because it couldn't meet the high expectations of its own constituents, particularly its working-class voters.

Here's where both the structural divisions between rich and poor and the conditional support of the Socialist Party converged. The Socialist Party staked its participation in the democratic government on delivering substantive improvements for its working-class members. But in a country like Spain with a high level of poverty and inequality, it's difficult to achieve a dramatic transformation within the plodding pace of a multiparty parliamentary system. The agrarian reform that angered and terrified owners didn't deliver for the workers either, and other factors contributed to limited concrete improvements for many workers' lives.

Not surprisingly, some of those workers questioned the promise of the social democracy that was at the heart of the First Biennium agenda. It was easy to imagine the power of revolution to create a new economically egalitarian society designed by and for workers, embodied by the idealized vision of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The Socialist Party itself was internally divided about the evolutionary versus revolutionary paths. That's precisely what made them conditional supporters of democracy in the interwar era.

Another working-class organization, the anarcho-syndicalist CNT, both competed with the Socialists for followers and advocated a more aggressive strategy of pressuring the Republic with strikes and insurrections. It was divided between radicals and reformists, who were willing to work with the democratic state if it could deliver basic reforms. Relationships between the Socialists and the CNT were very complex, but the main point is that the reformist or social democratic wings of the worker movements would be bolstered or weakened by tangible social results that significantly improved the workers' standard of living.

The Second Biennium

The collapse of the Socialist-Republican coalition around these tensions led to the elections of November 1933 and the Second Biennium. Now a center-right government would take over, with an opportunity to build an alternative majority coalition of all the groups excluded in the First Biennium.

The largest party was the newly created CEDA, the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas, or "Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right," led by José María Gil Robles. The CEDA was another conditional party, non-Republican but willing to work within a democratic republic as long as it reflected their priorities. Among them were a "complete revision" of the constitution, gutting social reforms, and maintaining Spain's official Catholic identity by protecting religious education, religious orders, and restoring state funding of the church.

At the same time, there was an ultra-conservative flank of the party that admired Mussolini and imitated fascist language and images. The self-defined fascist party, the Falange, received only a handful of votes and played little role until the civil war.

The other main party in this center-right coalition was the Radical Republican Party, led by Alejandro Lerroux. This was a solidly liberal democratic party with a base of middle- and lower-middle-class employers and businessmen who were frightened by socialism but perhaps more urban and less fervent Catholics than the rural and religious CEDA voters.

In many ways, the Second Biennium's problems were the mirror image of the first. The governing coalition was internally divided, and its policies inflamed and mobilized the opposition parties. The Socialists tried to launch a national insurrection in October 1934, to defend the "true" Republic against what they exaggerated as the "fascist" direction of the conservative government. The insurrection was a failure, and the aftermath, which included a brutal repression by the government, helped reunite the left coalition in preparation for the next election.

On the other side of the political spectrum, conservatives interpreted the insurrection as an attempted communist revolution. That perspective also helped mobilize their voters and raise the stakes in the next election. But the center-right coalition also had its internal weaknesses.

And finally, the CEDA did little to stabilize a conservative democratic majority. Instead, its ambivalent rhetoric defended authoritarianism as a legitimate alternative to impose its agenda of "religion, the fatherland, the family, order, property, and work" against the exaggerated threat of communist disorder.

Polarized Political Landscape

In the final election of the Republic in February 1936, Spanish voters were faced with a polarized choice between two major coalitions. The right claimed to defend Christian civilization against atheism and communism, while the left popular front claimed to defend democracy against fascism, even though there were few self-defined fascists or communists in Spain at that point.

In a closely divided election, the left coalition won, but it was never able to consolidate a government. Many workers had lost patience with waiting for the slow process of government reforms to kick in, and some took matters into their own hands, declaring collective ownership of large farms through direct occupation. Public order was also disrupted by urban labor conflicts, anticlerical violence against church property, and street battles between fascist and left-wing groups.

Much of the defeated opposition were not willing to abide by the democratic rules of the game from the outset. The CEDA had only promised to collaborate with a democracy that was to its liking, and after its defeat, support for the CEDA plummeted. The military began conspiring to overthrow the Republic right after the election. Others began to shift from the CEDA to fill the ranks of what had been, up to that point, the tiny fascist Falange.

It's appropriate to ask whether it was plausible in the context of the experimental democracies of the 1930s—or Spain's own deep structural divisions—to expect them to have followed the rules of the game. The friction between long-term structural cleavages and short-term political actions that excluded and demonized opponents eventually created a polarized environment. Each side believed that their entire way of life was at stake.

The big hypothetical question is whether they could have worked it out if the military had not stepped in. The conservative narrative promoted by the military leaders asserted that the democracy was in free fall, on the edge of communist revolution. The left narrative puts full blame on the military coup as the proximate cause of the war. We'll turn to that next time.

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Question

1 How would you rank the balance between long- and short-term origins of war, and what specific causal factors did you find most compelling?

4

The Opening Act: 1936's Military Coup

On July 17, 1936, the military garrisons in the Spanish colonial outposts in Morocco rose in revolt against the Republican government. Days later, a number of military garrisons within Spain joined the revolt. But not all went as planned. Some uprisings were defeated by a combination of worker militias and loyal police and military units. Within a couple of weeks, it was clear that the coup had failed, leaving a divided territory. In this lecture, we look at how the coup came together and why it failed, unleashing civil war.

Key Military Conspirators

After declaring support for the coup that began on July 17, General Francisco Franco flew to Morocco to take charge of the Spanish colonial Army of Africa. On July 24, the insurgents constituted the Junta de Defensa Nacional, "National Defense Committee," in the city of Burgos, to "assume all the powers of the State and be the legitimate representative of the country to foreign powers."

Francisco Franco was promoted to the rank of general in 1922, at the age of 33—the youngest general in Europe since Napoleon.

Francisco Franco

The conspiracy was a fundamentally military operation, organized by a group of military leaders led by General Emilio Mola. They had been meeting since just after the February popular front election, which brought the left coalition to power. The older officers, like Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, Joaquín Fanjul, and José Sanjurjo, had fought against the independence of Cuba in 1896 to 1898, while younger ones, like Emilio Mola, Manuel Goded, and Francisco Franco, earned their promotions in battle in the Rif War in Morocco in the 1910s and early 1920s.

The colonial connections of this younger group of conspirators secured the loyalty of the Army of Africa, 40,000 troops stationed in Morocco in July of 1936. It was the best-trained and most disciplined division in the Spanish army. While the networks and loyalties among this group of conspirators were key to the organizing momentum of the coup, it also benefited from broader discontent within the military.

Opposition to the Republic among sectors of the military had been growing since the First Biennium, provoked by a combination of professional grievances, conservative monarchist politics, and Spanish nationalism. Many military members also bristled against the reorganization of the military, which aimed to bring it more firmly under civilian control and reduce what Prime Minister Azaña believed was a top-heavy officer corps.

The military had a long history of intervention in politics that began in the early 19th century, when most changes of government were sparked by a so-called *pronunciamiento*, literally "pronouncement." Army leaders announced that they had withdrawn their support for the current administration and insisted on the formation of a new civilian government, but from the opposing party. The *pronunciamiento* tradition was, therefore, different from what we would call a military coup today, in which the army overthrows a civilian government and sets up a military dictatorship.

In the First Biennium, Prime Minister Azaña's military reforms sparked discontent. Monarchists and military leaders joined in an early coup attempt in August 1932, led by General José Sanjurjo. The coup was easily defeated, and Sanjurjo and Manuel Goded, among other leaders, were imprisoned and relieved of their posts. But during the Second Biennium, leaders amnestied all of the conspirators and reinstated most of them in their positions.

In October 1934, Goded, along with General Franco, led the brutal military operation to repress the left-wing rebellion in Asturias, which fed a conservative narrative that the Republic was unraveling as a result of left-wing chaos. The conservative CEDA leader Gil Robles was named Minister of War in 1935, and from his position, he nominated a number of right-wing military officers to key positions, including appointing Franco as the Chief of the General Staff. Lower down the ranks, a clandestine military organization called the Spanish Military Union, or UME, had formed at the end of 1933, which expressed many of the same grievances.

Planning the Coup

The military conspirators were another group of conditional supporters of the rules of the game, who withdrew their support from the institutions of the Republic when their political candidates lost. The key turning point was the February 1936 elections.

A core group, including Franco and Mola, met on March 8 to "agree on a rising to re-establish internal order and the international prestige of Spain." It's important to note that, at this point, there was no single leader among the half a dozen or so top generals. Over the next few months, other key military leaders like Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, head of the Carabinero forces, or border police, were brought on board to launch simultaneous uprisings in military garrisons across the country. Another conspirator was General Sanjurjo, who was not directly involved in the planning since he was living in exile in Portugal due to his role in the 1932 failed coup.

In addition, the conspirators negotiated to gain the support of nonmilitary right-wing organizations like the Carlists and the Falange, each of which included paramilitary forces. Since the February election, the Falange, which was the small fascist party, had been growing with conservatives who abandoned legitimate political parties after they were defeated. Falangists and Carlists each had very different goals and visions for the future, but they shared an opposition to the Republic.

By the end of June, most of the plans were in place, and the militias stood by, awaiting the call to arms. The popular front Republican government knew there was danger of a military revolt, and the new government tried to reverse some of the right-wing appointments that Gil Robles had made. Franco was fired as Chief of the General Staff and posted to the Canary Islands. Goded was sent to the Balearic Islands and Mola to Pamplona. Joaquín Fanjul was left without any post, living in Madrid. But these moves did not deter the conspiracy, and the Republican government did not follow up with more concrete measures to defend itself against a possible military defection.

The Final Spark

The final spark that convinced the plotters to act was the political assassination of an important right-wing politician, José Calvo Sotelo, on July 13, by members of the Republican Assault Guard in Madrid. The murder was an act of revenge for the killing of one of their Assault Guard colleagues, José del Castillo, the day before.

Between February and July 13, historians have identified at least 250 deaths due to this type of political violence, which fed the conspirators' narrative of unraveling public order and chaos, even though their own followers contributed to the violence. What seems clear from the outset is that the military leaders were following in the long tradition of military intervention to "save" Spain from purported chaos and inept politicians, but they had no clear vision for the future.

Following the successful uprising of the colonial army in Morocco on July 17, commanders across the peninsula led their garrisons to rise up and support the call to rebel. Goded, Fanjul, and Mola led uprisings in their locations of exile.

About a third of all garrisons successfully rebelled, while the rest either remained loyal or were defeated in battle. Fanjul in Madrid and Goded, now in Barcelona, were captured in the initial battles that defeated the rebels, and both were tried and shot in August of 1936. It was expected that General Sanjurjo would return to Spain and take command of the rebellion. Instead, his plane exploded on the runway in Portugal.

At the July 24 convocation of the Junta de Defensa Nacional, the two remaining senior generals, Mola and Franco, were each given command of the main armies in the North and the South. Crucial to the viability of the army of the South was the colonial Army of Africa, under Franco's command but still on the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar.

On July 26, representatives of the Junta met with Hitler and other Nazi officials in Germany to ask for help in transporting these troops to the peninsula. Although the air force leader, Goering, was apparently not

enthusiastic, Hitler was and approved the purchase of planes. From July 29, the planes made as many as four flights a day from Morocco over several months, carrying out the first big military airlift in history.

The Nazi foreign aid was even more essential once it was clear that the coup had failed. A successful coup would have left the rebels in control of the Spanish state and government, along with all of its financial and institutional resources. But the Republican government in Madrid had defeated the uprising in the capital and still maintained about two-thirds of the territory and most of the population and industry when the dust settled from the initial rebellions. So, the rebels, despite their claims to be the "legitimate representative," were an outlaw force that would depend on loans and credit from friendly powers, in this case fascist Italy and Germany.

Some historians argue that without the initial infusion of the Army of Africa, the coup would have failed altogether. According to this plausible claim, the foreign aid from the Nazi regime was an essential factor in their victory, almost literally from the first day.

Why Did the Coup Fail?

The simple answer to why the coup failed is that, despite the high-ranking defections, the military and police forces, such as the Civil Guard and the Assault Guards, turned out to be deeply divided about the coup. As a result, the outcome of the uprisings in each location closely correlated with the position taken by the local troops and police units.

A general principle in regime changes is that if the military is united in withdrawing its support from the current regime, that regime cannot survive. On the other extreme, even popular revolutionary movements are highly unlikely to topple governments if the military holds firm in support of the status quo.

Another less easily measured factor in the partial Republican victory was the support of the local population. There has been a long-held heroic myth that the ad hoc militias were the decisive element in early Republican victories, but most historians now agree that the military impact of these untrained volunteer units was secondary at most. In Republican strongholds like Sevilla and Zaragoza, where enthusiastic worker militias tried to fend off a united military assault, they were crushed. But in Valencia and Madrid, where militias collaborated with police and loyal troops, the uprisings were easily defeated.

In general, the uprising succeeded in the conservative agrarian heartland where the right-wing coalition had won large majorities, while it failed in most major cities, industrial centers, and coastal regions, which voted for the left. This tell us is that the military uprising did not emerge out of nowhere. It reflected and amplified both the short-term political and the long-term structural cleavages of a divided Spain.

At the same time, deep divisions alone do not automatically lead to civil war. It was the military conspirators' decision to renounce the constitutional rules of the game, requiring them to defend the existing legal order, that ultimately doomed the fragile new democracy. Their justification that they were stepping in to "save" Spain from chaos belies the reality that their defection unleashed the floodgates of an infinitely more destructive level of chaos.

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Question

1 The lecture ends by pointing out the closely overlapping maps of structural divisions, electoral boundaries, and the initial division of territory into Republican versus Nationalist zones. How did it affect your understanding of the origins of the civil war?

5

A Hot Summer: The War's First Months

The partial failure of the military coup unleashed a period of chaos and uncertainty that opened the floodgates of communal violence. Although the war dragged on for another three years, the summer of 1936 was the deadliest for the civilian population, who were caught in the crossfire. In this lecture, we examine the violence committed by both sides as the country shifted from peacetime to civil war.

Between 60% and 80% of all the civilian deaths during the war occurred during the "hot" summer of 1936. Around 100,000 civilians were massacred on both sides during this period.

Disorganized Violence

The coup and defection of part of the military in the first days after the uprising in Morocco on July 17 had led to the virtual collapse of the Republican state and army, along with the constraints of the rule of law. The resulting vacuum of power during these first few months transformed much of the country into a "wild west" landscape where multiple armed forces imposed their own frontier justice.

While there were long-simmering hatreds, class hatreds, and a tradition of anticlericalism that help explain the choice of victims, they only go so far to explain the scope and the geography of violence. Hatred can only be transformed into mass killing where the usual constraints of public order have been removed, which is exactly what happened in July of 1936. Thus, the temporary collapse of state institutions that maintained security and order in the wake of the unsuccessful coup helped create what social scientists call an opportunity structure of violence.

In the weeks after the uprising, the militias consolidated and diversified into ad hoc local governing committees. They took charge of everything from food provisioning to military and police operations in villages, towns, and cities across the Republican zone. Outside the normal rule of law, the local and sometimes provincial committees took justice into their own hands, levying summary death sentences against clergy, landowners, and conservative politicians—groups perceived to be part of the counterrevolutionary enemy.

On the rebel side, the initial dynamic of disorganized violence against civilians shared similar elements. Some of the killings were perpetrated by the local volunteer militias of Falangists and Carlists, which looted and terrorized mostly working-class neighborhoods because they could.

But regular army units also committed atrocities, particularly those from the colonial Army of Africa. The rebel units targeted workers as "class enemies," along with anyone who belonged to one of the Republican parties or trade unions affiliated with the popular front. They also considered intellectuals and teachers associated with the secularizing education project of the Republic as enemies, regardless of specific political affiliation.

Nationalist Violence

As the dynamic of disorganized violence unfolded across rebel territories, the leaders of the rebellion also developed an official policy that justified civilian killings as part of a rhetoric to eliminate the "foreign" communist virus from Spain and "purify" the national community. In the meantime, local factors determined how the parallel uprisings of the rebel forces unfolded on the ground. In the southern theater, the presence of Army of Africa troops was a key factor in the immediate explosion of noncombat violence.

One of the worst concentrated civilian massacres of the war occurred in Badajoz, where American journalist Jay Allen witnessed some of the killing. Allen's stories in the *Chicago Tribune* would cause an international furor. In his July 27 interview with Franco, the general said that there would be "no compromise," and that Spain would be pacified "at any cost."

In Cádiz, the Moroccan troops helped defeat the limited Republican resistance. Following their surrender, the main killings occurred, which made clear that merely taking power was not the primary motive. Government officials were arrested and charged with rebellion, even though they had been loyal to the legitimate government. Later, they were taken en masse from the prisons during the night and executed out of the public eye—a practice that became known as a *saca*, which literally means to "pull out."

There was also plenty of defiant public violence, often spearheaded by the militias. In Cádiz, a combination of Falangists, Moroccan units, and Civil Guards carried out house-to-house searches in working-class neighborhoods, targeting known trade union members and other leftists.

The men were dragged out and either summarily shot in the street, arrested and tortured, or marched with others to the outskirts where they were ordered to dig their own mass grave and then shot. Women were raped and had their heads shaved as "collaborators," a practice that was particularly common among the Moroccan troops.

At the same time as this grassroots, wild terror progressed, the new commander of the Second Military Division based in Seville, Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, issued orders that generalized and extended these tactics in the region of western Andalusia, where the insurgents still faced significant resistance. Queipo was able to conquer the city of Seville with the help of the Army of Africa units. He then sent the troops through the province, ordering "energetic" and rapid "pacification," so that the troops would be freed up for the assault on the capital city of Madrid.

Queipo also justified retributive violence, which embraced the exemplary role of public executions. On July 24, he announced that when the army entered a town in which Republican "acts of cruelty" had been committed before their arrival, "all the leaders of any existing Marxist or communist organization will be executed without any legal procedure." If these leaders could not be apprehended, an "equal number of arbitrarily selected affiliates to the same organizations" would be executed.

On August 1, the first column of the Army of Africa left Seville for Madrid, followed by others, which moved slowly through the provinces of Andalusia and Extremadura, targeting political officials, educators, and working-class neighborhoods, and leaving a swath of mass graves in their wake.

Over the next few months, the nature of the repression on the rebel side changed, but not the scope. As the military operations in the South and the North merged into a single command, under the leadership of General Franco, the high command moved to bring all units, including the militias, under centralized control. As part of this centralization, they sought to replace the kinds of wild public mass killings that had been routine in the South with a more secretive, systematic, and controlled process, but with the same outcome.

Throughout the fall of 1936, the rebels continued to pursue a campaign of mass extermination against individuals from popular front political organizations and trade unions without any formal judicial process. It was not until early 1937 that the rebel state began to shift its repressive strategy to military trial and prison, a pattern that continued into the early 1940s.

Republican Violence

In the much larger Republican territory, similar patterns of wild civilian killings emerged in the hot summer of 1936. Militia units untethered to state or military authorities adopted a rhetoric of cleansing and demonization of the enemy to justify summary executions as part of their revolutionary project to reshape Spain into an egalitarian workers' paradise.

Other motives included a combination of rage, retribution, fear, and ideology. Militias targeted wealthy landowners and businessmen as class enemies along with members of conservative political organizations, all of whom were lumped into a single category of "fascist" enemies of the people. Religious personnel were also targeted, including priests, monks, friars, and nuns.

As in the rebel zone, some of the executions were carried out in public. Vigilante patrols, often aided by "blacklists" provided by residents, detained individuals who belonged to the suspect categories. In some small communities, residents congregated in the public square for "popular trials." In other cases, suspects were jailed and then taken out at night and shot secretly before their trials. Sometimes prisoners were killed in direct retribution for rebel atrocities, as occurred after the Badajoz massacre.

Some of the worst vigilante justice occurred in the capital city of Madrid, which developed a siege mentality as the population awaited the arrival of the Army of Africa. Fears and rumors of "fifth column" traitors ready to collaborate with the nationalist troops created a heightened sense of vulnerability. The result: increased efforts to root out suspected traitors. More than 60 detention centers were established around the city, dedicated to detaining, judging, and executing suspects, often on the spot. Thousands of civilians were killed in this extrajudicial process.

One of the Republicans' most high-profile targets was the clergy. In total, the war would claim an estimated 6,800 clerical victims, almost half of whom were killed in the summer of 1936. Members of the clergy, sacred icons, and religious structures were targeted as class and political enemies as well as religious ones. Anticlerical violence was the brutal realization of a vision that saw no place for the church in its revolutionary future. Whatever preexisting Nationalist sympathies the Spanish church may have had were only strengthened by the sight of murdered clergy and burning churches.

No other Republican violence so dramatically undermined their cause than their anticlerical violence. Within Spain, the church found a sympathetic ally in the Nationalists. Abroad, Catholic organizations in the Western democratic countries lobbied their governments not to help the atheistic Republic.

On the Republican side, ideologically motivated killings were committed by all political groups in the popular front. Sometimes they did so with the approval, complicity, or indifference of local and provincial authorities. At the same time, there is no evidence that the Republican government coordinated a plan of extermination as the other camp did. Instead, violence seems to have exploded amid a state of lawlessness that allowed fear and hatred to escalate into lethal actions.

Broad Lessons

The first lesson we take from the violence unleashed by the military coup is the radicalizing dynamic of warfare itself, which normalizes killing as a solution to conflict. Thus, while only a few hundred politically motivated assassinations were carried out in the spring of 1936, tens of thousands of civilians were killed once the floodgates of war opened.

The second lesson is that, while warring states certainly played a role in mass killings, civilian death tolls could be higher in situations where state power had either weakened or collapsed. At least some of the civilianization of warfare emerged from decisions made not by conventional authorities but on the ground, whether in the Republican or Nationalist rear guards.

The last lesson is about the special haunting legacy of mass civilian violence during a civil war, at least some of which was carried out by local residents against their neighbors. This intimate and devastating fracture of community coexistence in towns and cities across the country partly explains Spain's ongoing struggle to come to terms with its dirty past almost a century later.

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Question

1 In understanding the explosion of mass violence, what did you think about the argument that puts more explanatory weight on the "opportunity" of state collapse versus the ideologies and emotions that motivated perpetrators?

6

The Two Sides: Nationalists and Republicans

By the end of the summer 1936, Spanish society was riven in two, and the Nationalist and Republican sides had consolidated into opposing camps. Defined monolithically by their opponents as either “reds” or “fascists,” each side was in fact a diverse mix of groups with a variety of goals and aspirations. In this lecture, we explore the diversity of each side and the common principles or values that bridged—or tried to bridge—these differences.

The Falange and the Nationalist Platform

On the Nationalist side, the military leaders of the coup had not given much thought to articulating a political program, beyond "saving" Spain from anarchy and perhaps setting up what Mola called a "republican military dictatorship." They had planned a military operation, not a political revolution. The task of crafting a program that could bring together a diverse set of groups under a single umbrella was not straightforward. But over the summer of 1936, a platform of Catholicism, Spanish nationalism, and elements of fascist symbolism began to coalesce.

The Spanish fascist party was small compared to its Italian and German counterparts, but membership ballooned from 5,000 in February 1936 to 1 million by August. After failing as an electoral force, the fascist movement, which celebrated violence as a foundational principle, blossomed in the new lawless context where uncontrolled violence and radicalism ruled. The movement in Spain was really more of a product of the coup and ensuing war than its cause, in contrast to Italy or Germany.

The founder of the Spanish fascist movement and the leader of the Sección Femenina, a women's branch that provided auxiliary support for the war effort, were the son and daughter of the 1920s dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera. Pilar Primo de Rivera would become the most powerful woman in the Nationalist camp and a true fascist believer, along with her brother. José Antonio began his own political life affiliated with one of the small monarchist parties in the Second Republic in 1931. But he soon became impatient with participating on the margins of democratic politics and moved from the conservative right to the radical revolutionary right, especially after watching Hitler's rise to power in Germany in January 1933, which he hoped to imitate in Spain.

José Antonio wrote the manifesto of the Falange, the so-called "Twenty-Seven Points," in 1934, and he continued to lead the party until his capture in July 1936 and then execution by the Republicans in November. Like the Italian fascists, the platform promised an economic "third way," between divisive Marxism that pitted classes against each other and the exploitative capitalist system.

Some of its principles and aspirations would eventually be incorporated into the rebel program, but equally important would be the adoption of their symbols. For instance, the open-hand fascist salute would be embraced as a ubiquitous Nationalist gesture.

A Crusade for Christian Spain

The embrace of Catholicism by the Spanish Falange would be an important bridge to the otherwise very different Carlist forces. The Carlist movement had emerged in the early 19th century as an ultra-Catholic, monarchist organization that railed against the forces of liberalism and secularism.

Carlists did not want to build a new order. They were embedded in tight-knit rural communities that wanted to preserve their traditional way of life, and at the core of that way of life was religious devotion. They were the first to frame this struggle as another crusade against the infidels, similar to what their ancestors had waged against the so-called Moors—a term invented to define the North African Muslim populations who invaded and occupied the peninsula for nearly a millennium. The gradual Christian reconquest of the peninsula from the 8th to the 15th centuries was a foundational myth of conservative Spanish nationalism.

The language of religious crusade, which played no part in the conspirators' initial communications, would become one of the cornerstones of the rebel platform and propaganda. It was, of course, more than ironic that the Nationalists utilized Muslim Moroccan and other foreign troops in their crusade for Christian Spain, but this uncomfortable reality was only pointed out by the Republicans, who tried to exploit it in their own propaganda.

Individual clergy had supported the uprising from the start, but it was not until July of 1937 that the Spanish bishops issued a collective letter officially joining what they framed as a life-and-death battle for Catholic Spain. In addition to Catholicism, the Nationalists adopted a version of the old Monarchist flag as their banner. So, by the end of the summer, the Nationalists had a name, a flag, a salute, and an umbrella ideology of National Catholicism to justify the war they had started.

Los Nacionales

MINISTERIO DE PROPAGANDA

Franco Becomes Leader

What they still did not have in the summer of 1936 was a leader. It was not until the October 1, 1936, declaration by the Junta Directiva that the choice became clear. Francisco Franco would be appointed head of state.

That outcome was a combination of his scheming and his good fortune. Remember that several of the top military conspirators either died or were captured in the first weeks of the war. Other potential nonmilitary rivals were also either dead or in prison.

But Franco was also a strategist. Most members of the Junta at the October 1 meeting thought they were anointing Franco as generalissimo, or supreme military leader. Instead, Franco's advisors convinced the others that he needed political authority to lead the Nationalists to victory. The proclamation made him head of state, and Franco became the *caudillo*—a Spanish translation of "führer."

In Franco's speech at his investiture, he made vague references to respecting the church, protecting workers against the domination of capital, promoting the independence of the peasants, and replacing voting with a "better way of expressing the popular will." While each of these points gestured to one of the Nationalists' constituencies, it was the authoritarian hierarchy of "One State. One Country. One Chief," as posters proclaimed, that most effectively unified the Nationalist camp.

The Popular Front

In some ways, those who remained loyal to the Republican government had less work to define who they were or to justify their cause. They mostly represented a continuation of the legally elected popular front coalition of February 1936.

The popular front in Spain was a diverse coalition that included liberal and social democrats, Marxist socialists, anarchists, and what was at first a small Communist Party. Their goals were also diverse. The glue that held this broad spectrum together was the umbrella of anti-fascism and the need to band together against the fascist enemy in the name of the Spanish people.

The popular front was a broader European phenomenon that came together in the wake of the fascist victory in Germany in 1933, around the belief that all the opposition parties from liberal democrats to communists had to unite to prevent fascist takeover elsewhere. However, popular front coalitions only governed briefly in France and in Spain, and in neither country was it able to prevent an authoritarian takeover.

The most important figure on the Republican side was Manuel Azaña, who was now the president instead of prime minister, and leader of the main liberal democratic party, Izquierda Republicana. But the most powerful forces on the ground were the socialists and the anarcho-syndicalist CNT, which defended worker revolution, not liberal democracy.

As a result of the coup, the collapse of state authority, and the arming of the militias, the center of gravity within the popular front coalition shifted dramatically. The liberal democratic Republican parties were no longer the core of the coalition. Instead, the worker parties and unions, whose large membership base formed the armed militias and local ad hoc governing committees, occupied center stage.

There were probably more than 1.5 million workers affiliated with one of the union movements in the spring of 1936, which were much more than associations to defend labor interests. The dense formal and informal networks constructed by the unions over the previous decades, especially in working-class communities, formed the basic structure on which local authority would be reconstituted from the ground up during the chaotic summer of 1936.

The coup and the ensuing war also unleashed the simmering tension between democrats and revolutionaries. During the peacetime Second Republic, the socialist and anarcho-syndicalist movements debated internally about whether to support implementation of social reforms within the democratic system or try to overthrow the system to establish the egalitarian worker society of the future. Neither the CNT nor the UGT/PSOE had any plans to unleash a revolution in the spring of 1936. The key turning point was the July coup and not the February election, as the military conspirators claimed.

It's ironic that the coup waged in the name of preventing communist revolution actually created the conditions that enabled it. In the vacuum of power, the working-class organizations, particularly the CNT, now seized the chance to act on their revolutionary dreams of a proletarian utopia.

The Spanish Communist Party

Despite the conspirators' rhetoric about imminent communist revolution, there were few real communists in Spain before the civil war. The party had formed back in 1921, along with most of the European communist parties, which split off from the insufficiently revolutionary Marxist socialist movement in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Until the civil war, the Spanish Communist Party, or PCE, had been a marginal political force, basically because the political space for the Communist Party on the revolutionary left of the spectrum was already occupied by the anarchist movement. In Spain, it was the anarcho-syndicalist CNT that promoted the uncompromising "revolution now" position that international communists, as represented by the Third International federation, defended throughout the 1920s and early 1930s.

In 1935, however, the Third International began promoting the concept of a broad anti-fascist popular front, which allowed Spain's party to join the victorious popular front electoral coalition in February 1936, when the PCE elected 17 deputies to the Cortes, Spain's elected legislative body. They were still far from a mass movement and very far from the membership boasted by the CNT and UGT/PSOE.

What really opened the door to mass expansion of the PCE was the influx of Soviet foreign aid from October of 1936, just as fascist foreign aid had bolstered the Falange. The constellation of foreign aid on both sides helped shape the balance of forces and specifically raised the profile of two movements that had been marginal in Spanish politics before the war: fascism and communism.

But it wasn't just the foreign aid that raised the status of the Communist Party in the Republican camp. The Communists continued to push the concept of the broad popular front coalition and opposed radical revolution as divisive and detrimental to the war effort. Ironically, this position gained them the support of many non-working-class Republicans, who opposed fascism but were frightened by economic collectivization. By the end of 1937, membership in the party had ballooned to 1 million.

In the next lecture, we'll explore some of the many visions of what the anti-fascist future would look like.

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Question

1 Looking at the two sides in July of 1936, what surprised you most about the diversity or unifying principles of each zone, and would you have predicted the Nationalists coming together as a more coherent force?

7

Republican Revolution and Local Power

With the decentralization of power that occurred during the summer of 1936, the diverse Republican side saw a unique opportunity to put the revolutionary dreams of its left-wing groups into practice. While there was no coordinated plan for what this new Spain would look like, the vacuum of power opened the space for myriad grassroots initiatives, from economic collectivization to overturning social hierarchies to creating new forms of culture. The result was the most extensive unplanned revolutionary process in early-20th-century Europe. This lecture presents the multiple and contradictory faces of the revolutionary process, which was at once terrifying, alienating, inspiring, and fascinating.


CAMARADA
EN EL TRABAJO
EN LA
LUCHA
UNE A TU VOLUNTAD
LA DISCIPLINA
CNT FAI
LIT. SANGUESA - BAILEN 197 - BARNA.

Economic Redistribution

Because of the revolution's improvisational and decentralized nature, it is misleading to talk about it as a single phenomenon. And yet many Spaniards believed that the end goal was not simply defeating the fascists but constructing a new social, economic, and political order from the ground up.

On an economic level, there was no uniform process of economic expropriation or collectivization. Instead, the economy remained a hybrid of private and collective enterprises. In Barcelona, it has been estimated that as many as 3,000 businesses, including 70% of large factories, were collectivized, while many of their owners and managers fled, including the American directors of the General Motors auto plant.

In other cities, however, lower levels of collectivization were combined with cooperative arrangements, in which small businesses were run in partnership between owners and workers. Even within a single region, there could be dramatic variation, depending on the balance of local political forces or even the attitudes of individual leaders.

In general, the most committed revolutionaries were the anarchists of the CNT. Their ideology of local power and worker control was tailor-made for this historical moment. But even within the CNT there was disagreement over whether the small shop owner or farmer, the so-called petty bourgeoisie, was a potential ally or was lumped with the capitalist enemy.

Industrial collectivization was the most systematic in Catalonia. There, the regional Generalitat government coordinated with the dominant CNT unions to issue a formal decree. It declared that businesses with more than 100 employees or with owners who supported the rebels would be collectivized, with the assembly of workers choosing a council that would administer production. Smaller establishments could remain in private hands and be administered by the owners with the collaboration of a workers' control committee.

In December 1936, a general assembly was held at the National Palace of Montjuich to discuss implementation of the collectivization plan. Between 15,000 and 20,000 workers attended. While there was much excitement on the ground, it's unlikely that everyone was on board for the calls to sacrifice "special comforts" and work longer hours in service to the communal struggle, as several other speakers urged.

Reading between the lines of posters, broadsheets, and newspapers that pleaded, scolded, and shamed, it seems clear that at least some workers were less interested in sacrifice for the revolution and more consumed with their individual goals and aspirations. One poster that read "Comrade! Work more and better" provides a good example of such pleading, with the obvious implication that many were not working hard enough in the minds of revolutionary leaders.

Unfortunately for the Republicans, the ideal region for collectivization would have been the latifundia territory of the South, where there were few owners and many landless laborers, but this had fallen quickly into Nationalist territory at the hands of the Army of Africa. Instead, the Republic was faced with more complex landholding patterns with a mix of small farmers and large landlords.

Local decisions about how to treat small owners led to a huge range in levels of collectivization. Overall, about 40% of the agricultural land in Republican territory was expropriated and collectivized. The main region of agrarian collectivization was eastern Aragon, where an estimated 800 collectives operated by 400,000 people were established. Although most of these collectivizations had started in individual villages, by the fall of 1936 the CNT had set up a central body, the rural Regional Defense Council of Aragon, to manage the collectives, food production, and distribution.

The experience of collectivization among the rural population obviously differed between landless laborers and peasant owners. Even during the war, there were fierce debates on the Republican side about whether the process was coercive or liberating. Few were opposed to expropriation of large landowners, many of whom had fled or had been killed, but the role of small farms was more controversial. Defenders of collectivization insisted that they were putting libertarian communism into practice.

Antiauthoritarian Military Structure

In the chaos and desperation of the parallel garrison uprisings, the Republican government had distributed arms to the trade unions, which had formed ad hoc militia units. In the revolutionary context, these militias were embraced by some as a permanent alternative to the hierarchical and authoritarian military culture of the old society. Even after the initial division of the military into loyal and rebel units, distrust of the regular soldiers lingered on the Republican side. The military had often repressed strikes and demonstrations during the Republic, and many workers still harbored some suspicion toward the military.

The revolution also challenged gender roles, most famously symbolized by the iconic image of the *miliciana*: the woman dressed in blue overalls with a rifle slung over her shoulder. This challenge to traditional gender norms did not last, but the *miliciana* became part of the mythology that the Republic had liberated women while the Nationalists kept them subordinated.

During the first few months after the coup, there was an uneasy relationship between the autonomous militias and the regular army units, reinforced by conscription and recruitment, but sometimes the militias refused to follow orders or abandoned their posts. This led some to call for a more centralized, conventional Republican military to coordinate the war effort.

But many revolutionaries feared that a centralized, hierarchical military would amount to a continuation of the old state and society. Instead, they wanted to keep the militias, which for them was not simply a practical issue but a building block of the new egalitarian society.

Revolutionizing Spanish Culture

In neighborhoods, the physical geography was altered as churches were burned or repurposed as garages or militia barracks, and luxury buildings, like private clubs or mansions, were occupied by worker organizations, which hung their revolutionary banners from the windows and plastered posters on the walls. Symbolically, the workers who had lived in the poor peripheral neighborhoods of cities took ownership of the wealthy city centers and streets. In Barcelona, the hospitality workers' union took over several dozen eating establishments and turned them into "peoples' restaurants."

Beyond optics, revolutionaries thought a lot about the cultural foundation of the new society, although once again there was no specific blueprint. There was, however, a long tradition on the left of reverence for education and culture as tools of empowerment, and this was integral to the revolutionary project. On the one hand, revolutionaries wanted workers to have access to the same cultural benefits once restricted to those who could afford tickets. Lack of culture was equated with fascism, brutally symbolized by the Nationalist assassination of the poet and playwright Federico García Lorca.

On the other hand, there were also debates about whether the dissemination of this traditional high culture was suited for the new society. The Soviet Union provided one model of socialist realism, in which revolutionary art should glorify the worker experience and the noble

proletarian while discarding the remnants of so-called bourgeois culture and bourgeois role models. This aesthetic is evident in virtually all of the propaganda posters produced by the various Republican organizations. However, there was no wholesale adoption of a workerist cultural aesthetic, as in the Soviet Union. Instead, the Republican side boasted what we might call a cultural hybridity.

In reality, the only common thread of revolutionary culture in Spain was its militant secularism or anticlericalism. Many scholars have sought to interpret the dramatic symbolism of iconoclastic violence and explain why revolutionaries directed their energies into what can seem from the outside like gratuitous sacrilegious rituals. For example, before setting a church alight, the perpetrators would often pull out all the sacred icons and pile them in the street. Statues and icons were "executed," dragged through the streets, disfigured, or simply burned in a public bonfire. Corpses of long-dead clergy were exhumed, mutilated, and publicly displayed. In some cases, religious artifacts were even removed from private homes.

While the perpetrators of this religious symbolic warfare were a minority, it was pervasive enough to make it one of the special features of the revolutionary experience for many Spaniards. Given the deep roots of Catholic culture in the old society, we can at least begin to understand why it became a target for many who aspired to create an entirely new social order.

Impacts of the Revolutionary Process

The role of the revolutionary process in the civil war was complex, and it clearly had a contradictory impact on the Republican cause. On the one hand, these radical projects probably did inspire many workers to fight harder for the Republic. In the 1930s, Spanish workers could believe they were on the vanguard of the world revolution, which was widely expected and anticipated by their comrades across Europe and the Americas in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution.

On the other hand, the specter of proletarian revolution no doubt pushed some initial Republican sympathizers into the Nationalist camp. Many in the middle classes were alienated and frightened or felt coerced into a collectivization process in which they had the most to lose. But even workers with no property to lose were not always enthusiastic about working hard for the community instead of themselves, or about the coercive and violent side of the revolution. There was also the practical question of how radical economic transformation may have disrupted production and consumption.

There was clearly a link between revolutionary dreams and revolutionary violence. Most revolutionary processes carry the contradictory seeds of constructing a beautiful new society while legitimating the violence needed to clear away the old. In practice, however, the urgent dream of a new egalitarian society came with a destructive side—in this case, the wild killing of landlords, employers, and other capitalists, as well as the effort to destroy all remnants of the Catholic Church.

The revolution was never institutionalized or consolidated. By the end of 1937, it was effectively dismantled, with the dissolution of militias, collectivized farms, and worker-controlled factories, as the anarchists' local autonomy was crushed. The social revolution may or may not have undermined the war effort, as the majority argued. But the relative ease of its dismantling demonstrated its fragile foundations.

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Question

1 In the early 21st century, the idea of a revolutionary transformation of society has lost most of the positive connotations it had for many in the early 20th century, given the terror and violence inflicted in the course of various revolutionary experiments. In this context, is it possible to develop empathy and understanding within a critical perspective?

8

Rebuilding a Fractured Republican State

After the summer of 1936, the Republic entered a new phase that began a slow process of reconstituting state authority over all of the ad hoc provincial and local governing bodies that had sprung up in the vacuum of power opened by the coup. The main goals were to create a more legitimate and inclusive government that could restore central authority and pursue a coordinated and more effective war effort. This lecture looks at the successes and challenges of the new government during this time.

Change in Leadership

When the war broke out, the balance of power had shifted away from liberal democratic Republicans and toward the socialist and anarchist working-class parties and trade unions, which wielded de facto power in many localities. The imperativeness to form a new government was obvious to everyone. Prime Minister José Giral's cabinet, made up exclusively of the liberal democratic Republican parties, simply didn't represent the reality on the ground. When his government resigned in September 1936, he asked President Azaña to form a new, more inclusive government. Giral would continue to serve the Republic.

The new government, led by Socialist prime minister Francisco Largo Caballero, embarked on a three-pronged plan. Its objectives were to

- integrate the voluntary militias into a regular military structure;
- reconstitute state institutions at all levels, from the judiciary to local governments; and
- channel economic resources into the war instead of local revolutions.

Francisco Largo Caballero

Largo Caballero seemed well suited to the new context. A longtime trade union organizer and Socialist Party leader, he was the main voice of the party's more radical wing. He had served as labor minister in the 1931 Azaña government and had been the main architect of the legislation that included higher wages, agrarian reform, and collective bargaining, but he became disillusioned with the meager results of social democracy and had begun talking about pushing forward to the socialist revolution even before the war.

The new government was the first and only in Spanish history to be led by a worker and labor leader. The hope was that Largo Caballero's credibility among the trade union rank and file would help him both restore authority and legitimacy to the government and convince militia members to give up their independence to join the army.

Government of National Unity

The new government of national unity, as it was called, began with a promising diversity that included communists, Republicans, and representatives of the Basque and Catalan parties, along with a majority of socialists from Prime Minster Largo Caballero's own party. Beyond the mere fact of inclusion, this government was a unique political experiment. It was the first coalition government to join liberal and social democrats with revolutionary parties. Hope prevailed that the new coalition government was the wave of the future.

Giral and two of his cabinet members stayed on to provide continuity and represent the liberal democratic Republican parties. The Basque Nationalist representative agreed to join in exchange for a promise to quickly pass an autonomy statute for the Basque Country, similar to what Catalonia had enjoyed since 1932.

The Communist Party was also invited to join the government for the first time. Two ministers held the education and agriculture portfolios. Although the Communist Party had joined the popular front electoral coalitions across Europe, including in France, this was the first time that they joined a government outside the Soviet Union.

The Communist Party in Spain, the PCE, tried to promote a strategy of popular front unity. They wanted centralized direction of the war and the suppression of local revolutionary powers that, in their minds, distracted from the main goal of winning the war. As a result of its position, the PCE carved out a significant constituency between the revolutionary trade unions on the one side and the weak liberal democratic Republican parties on the other.

The last and perhaps most surprising group to join this government of unity were the anarchists. At first the CNT refused to participate directly, but the majority of its leaders ultimately concluded that the emergency of the war and the fascist threat justified the unprecedented compromise of participating in a government. Thus, four anarchist ministers accepted invitations to join the government in November as ministers of trade, industry, justice, and health.

One of them was the first female minister in Spain, and one of the first in Europe, following Aleksandra Kollontay, who had served in the first Bolshevik government in the new Soviet Union in 1918. Federica Montseny, minister of health, was the daughter of two of Spain's most famous anarchist intellectuals and publicists. She was an inspiring orator and one of the best-known CNT leaders in Spain during the Republic. Her decision to join the government carried a lot of moral weight for other anarchists struggling with what, for them, was an agonizing conundrum.

Restoring Central Authority

Even with its broad inclusiveness, the new government faced huge challenges, beginning with the dire military situation. November marked the beginning of the Nationalist siege of Madrid, and one of the new government's first decisions was to move to Valencia, where it remained until the end of the war. Franco concentrated all his forces on the capital with a plan to bring the war to a swift end by capturing the city and crushing Republican resistance.

This evidence helped to convince most of the Republican coalition as well as the militia units of the need for a more centralized army structure, which became one of the main goals of the new government. Largo Caballero created a new central high command and appointed Vicente Rojo, a lieutenant colonel, to the new position. Rojo took the lead in the defense of Madrid but also organized the fronts into four theaters of operations: the center army, Aragon in the northeast, the northern army, and Andalusia in the south.

Rojo ordered the creation of mixed battalions to break up the units that had been formed by socialist, anarchist, or communist unions. By early 1937, the militarization had largely been completed, although the new People's Army retained some of the symbolism of a revolutionary force.

On the political and administrative front, the government's goal was to rebuild central authority and the institutional hierarchy that would enforce it. One task was to replace the hodgepodge of self-appointed local committees with formal municipal councils that would proportionally represent all the local forces. These councils would then be subordinated to the provincial civil governors, who in turn took orders from Madrid. By early 1937, this structure was mostly in place.

Another major goal was to reestablish a formal judicial structure that would rein in the revolutionary tribunals and wild killings that had produced so many civilian deaths in the summer of 1936. Continuing the work of Giral's government, the new government established a full network of tribunals. Given the dramatic decline in civilian executions after November on the Republican side, there is evidence of some degree of normalization in the judicial process. However, the special tribunals did not restore the liberal democratic due process of the peacetime Republic, either. In addition, Catalonia and the Basque Country operated their own court systems as part of their autonomous powers, so there was still no uniform justice system.

Challenges to Central Authority

By the spring of 1937, the new government had made substantial progress in reining in much of the chaos and violence. However, it was still far from united or even well coordinated, which explains why it unraveled in the midst of what observers called the civil war within the civil war.

On an administrative level, state authority was still limited by regional centers of power that remained more or less autonomous. In part, this was a feature of the autonomous statutes in Catalonia and, since October 1936, the Basque Country. The Generalitat government in Catalonia had full

power over police, public order, and economic organization, which meant that the majority of Spain's industry was not under central government control.

In addition to those regions, there was an ad hoc Regional Defense Council of Aragon, which had been set up by anarchist militia units in October 1936 to coordinate the rural collectives and military operations. When the CNT entered the government, Largo Caballero responded by legalizing the council and trying to integrate it into the new government structure. Despite his efforts, it remained largely independent, with its own police force, justice system, and economic control over the agricultural collectives.

With all these regional centers of power, it remained difficult for the central government to impose uniform policies or institutions on the entire Republican territory. The government also could not bridge the major political differences within the Republican coalition. The communist and Republican parties viewed the anarchist CNT as disruptive and too undisciplined to achieve the kind of centralized authority they viewed as essential to win the war.

Consequently, they pushed to oust the CNT from the coalition. They also wanted to expel the trade union wing of the Socialist Party and create a more conventional government of just political parties. And the communist ministers were pushing for a merger of the communist and socialist parties under a single leadership. The internal criticisms got stronger after a major military defeat in February 1937, when the anarchist-defended city of Málaga fell to the Nationalists.

May Days

These simmering tensions came to a head in Barcelona during the so-called May Days. Barcelona epitomized the challenge of anarchist revolutionary power and regional autonomy. On May 3, fighting began when the government decided to evict the CNT from the building that had been their regional headquarters since July 1936. Over the course of several days, armed groups fought each other across barricades, with official casualty figures of 400 dead and 1,000 wounded. The government brought

in military columns from the front to crush the resistance of mostly CNT armed groups as well as a small dissident communist party called the POUM.

In the aftermath, it would become clear that the government of unity couldn't fulfill its unifying promise, and it would soon collapse. The political transition also led to the dissolution of the Regional Defense Council of Aragon, the ouster of the CNT and UGT trade unions from the government, and the increasing marginalization of the anarchists, which accompanied the dissolution of their local revolutionary power.

There have been endless debates about who was most to blame for this dispiriting internecine violence, but there is no question that the Republic never fully recovered from this self-inflicted wound. One of the main debates about the Republican defeat continues to be how much its potential victory was hobbled by these internal divisions versus by a lack of foreign aid imposed by the nonintervention pact.

It might be accurate to say that internal divisions were more important during the first and second phases of the Republic, up to the low point of May 1937. After that, international dynamics held increasing sway over the outcome of the war.

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Question

1 What would you have done differently as prime minister of the Republic? Can you imagine another path that would have more successfully negotiated the tensions, divisions, and competing interests in the popular front coalition?

9

Francisco Franco Forms a Nationalist State

In the year between his appointment as head of state in October 1936 and the formation of the first government in January 1938, Franco utilized his military success, his trusted family advisers, and his growing sense of personal mission to turn a military rebellion into an alternative governing structure that revolved around his absolute authority. In this lecture, we examine the formation of a rebel state and Franco's hybrid regime that fused elements of traditional conservatism and modern mass mobilization. The result was a distinctive product of Spanish politics and history and a fascinating case study of a wider transformation in Europe.

Franco's Rise to Power

When the Nationalist campaign to take the capital city of Madrid in November 1936 failed, the military leadership knew they had come to a turning point that required a more institutional structure. They had already begun the process of consolidating authority around the leadership of General Francisco Franco. He was appointed both supreme military and political leader by early October. But with the stalemate of the war, Franco decided not to wait to begin the process of constructing a new Nationalist state to further legitimate the shaky authority of the insurgents. Franco was the unquestioned architect of what he called the New State, which would revolve around his personal rule as *el caudillo*, or "the leader."

Francisco Franco came from an upper-class military family that had produced six generations of naval officers. Having entered the army instead of the navy, he rose through the ranks in the colonial army in Morocco and became one of the youngest generals ever in 1926, at age 33. On a personal level, he seemed to be a genuinely devout Catholic, monarchist, and fervent Spanish nationalist. There is no evidence that he was attracted by the antiestablishment, radical fascist ideas that aimed to overturn the existing order that he cherished. He stepped into the breach at a moment of crisis and decided he was the one to take charge.

Leaning into his reputation as a successful military commander, he gathered astute political advisers to make the transition from military to political leader. Nevertheless, the transition was a gradual one, consistent with Franco's cautious personality. Throughout the first summer, he still responded to foreign reporters that the rebellion was not being waged against the institutions of the Republic and that he envisioned at most a brief dictatorship to restore order.

But as his military accomplishments pushed him into the forefront of the Nationalist leadership, his circle of personal advisers—including his brother, his brother-in-law, and his wife—all encouraged his ambition. In fact, the combination of his lack of political experience or affiliation with any of the distinct Nationalist ideological groupings made him an ideal unifying candidate.

General Francisco Franco and his wife Carmen Franco

Creation of the Movimiento

Beyond his exalted sense of personal mission, Franco's consolidation of power was aided by an astute pragmatism that helped bring the diverse groups in the coalition on board. Although he demanded unquestioned obedience, he also tolerated some limited ideological diversity.

The best example of this leadership style was Franco's creation of a new single party that combined hierarchy and limited pluralism. Thus, the various political currents within the rebel camp, ranging from Falangists, Carlists, and Alfonsine monarchists to Catholics, were forcibly merged in April 1937 into the Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (Traditionalist Spanish Phalanx of the Juntas of the National Syndicalist Offensive). It was an ungainly but strategically inclusive name, which symbolically acknowledged the discrete components. In practice, it became known as the Movimiento, or "Movement," to signify the unification of all the forces of the uprising or "National Movement."

This entity was dominated by the two main sources of volunteers, the Falange and the Traditionalist Communion (or Carlists). There was also a branch called the Sección Femenina, the "Women's Section," which formulated a conservative vision of womanhood to counter the Republican "modern" woman.

The basic unifying themes were the defense of Catholicism and nationalism, but the visual and symbolic and institutional culture was a mixture of fascist symbols, Carlist rhetoric about the new reconquest of Spain from the infidels, and Catholic rituals officiated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Creation of the New State

After the creation of the Movimiento, the first Francoist government was formed in January 1938 to set about creating the institutional framework for the authoritarian "New State" that would parallel its Republican counterpart until the end of the war. It continued to expand into new regions until the declaration of victory in April 1939 finally made it the only political authority in Spain.

Franco was the president and head of state, and all ministers had to swear fealty to him and the Nationalist state. His brother Nicolás was appointed general secretary, which was essentially a second-in-command whose absolute loyalty Franco could rely on. The cabinet included representatives of all the political groups and was made up mainly of civilians, including his Falangist brother-in-law as minister of the interior.

Among the first important laws passed in 1938 were the reinstatement of the death penalty, which had been abolished by the Republic; the abolition of the Catalan autonomy statute; a draconian press censorship law; and a new education framework that gave absolute power to the church to design curricula for secondary schools.

The following year, a few months before the end of the war, the government passed one of the most consequential pieces of legislation: the Law of Political Responsibilities. It effectively backdated treasonable offenses to anyone who had supported the legal Republic in July 1936, justifying an even broader scope of postwar repression and retribution.

The New State also included more specifically fascist-inspired rhetoric and institutions, including its very definition as "authoritarian, national syndicalist and imperialist." More substantively, the regime adopted the Fuero de Trabajo, or the labor charter. Modeled on the Italian fascist labor system, it was emblematic of the economic "third way" that fascists

claimed to carve out between collectivist Marxism and exploitative capitalism. It proposed a cooperative relationship between employers and workers in which all would work together for the common good of the national economy.

This cooperative relationship was symbolized by the national vertical syndicates. These were essentially 28 trade unions associated with different economic sectors. Affiliation was mandatory for all "producers"—that is, owners, managers, and workers. The basic framework protected private property for the owners but, at least in theory, included a mandate to dispense "social justice" to the workers, with benefits like vacations, pensions, and a minimum wage, as well as healthy and safe working conditions. In practice, though, the vertical syndicates served as tools of the employers, who still had all the power, while strikes and independent unions were forbidden and harshly repressed.

A Hybrid Regime

Because of the hybrid identity of the new state, there's still debate about how to categorize it among the spectrum of right-wing authoritarian regimes of the era. While fascist ideas were diluted by integration into a more inclusive unified party, they were still part of the program. Franco adapted them for his own purposes, appropriating fascist rhetoric and establishing fascistic institutions like the Fuero de Trabajo.

At the same time, he equally drew on the traditionalist rhetoric of divine authority and religious crusade. Catholic symbolism pervaded public events. A letter issued on July 1, 1937, constituted an official statement of the Spanish church and laid out the terms of the struggle—on one side, Christian civilization defended by the Nationalists, and on the other, anti-Christian communism. From then on, with each Nationalist conquest, religious figures were prominent in their attendance at victory parades and rallies.

Finally, it is important that Franco derived his authority from his role as military leader in a conflict that had begun with a top-down military coup and during which the military never relinquished full control. The

tradition of military leaders stepping in and replacing civilian governments in moments of crisis had a long pedigree in Spanish history, going back to the early 19th century, but most recently with General Primo de Rivera in 1923.

The true hybridity of the regime speaks to a broader transformation in modern right-wing movements, as traditionalist and modern trajectories began to converge. "Movement politics" and Catholic values fused to compete in this new arena of mass politics, which formerly had been the preserve of left-wing political movements.

Exemplary of this fusion were the Carlist militias, or Requetés. Though traditionalist in principle, the monarchist Requetés shared many functional attributes with the fascist Falange. Likewise, the female section of the Falange rhetorically celebrated women's traditional piety and domesticity. Meanwhile, they mobilized women into an auxiliary force whose activities were anything but traditional.

So, the National Catholicism that coalesced during the war was not really paradox but fusion. It merged traditional conservatism and modern mass mobilization in a new hybrid synthesis. National Catholicism quickly became interchangeable with Spanish identity and Spanish civilization. Those who opposed it were deemed to be enemies of Spain and were subjected to harsh repression. In fact, anyone who supported the Republic was included as an enemy, leading to hundreds of thousands of investigations over the next few years.

Rather than being wholly traditional or wholly fascist, the Franco regime consisted of an evolving balance between military authoritarianism, mass mobilization, fascist revolutionary rhetoric, and religious crusade.

Nationalist Repression

Despite formal military tribunals, which did reduce the number of extrajudicial killings after the first few months, the scale of repression certainly transcended any traditional military or political strategy of warfare. The Nationalists embraced a radical project of "cleansing" the population. Little else can explain the enormous scale of incarceration and the estimated 100,000 judicial and extrajudicial executions during the war. Nationalist repression aimed not just to achieve victory or restore order, but to eliminate those perceived as beyond the boundaries of Spanish civilization.

The fact that repression appeared alongside growing fascist influence might suggest that fascism was the cause of this repression. However, there was a huge disparity in domestic violence perpetrated by fascist-inspired regimes in Germany, Italy, and Spain. Most of the extreme violence perpetrated by the Italian and German fascist regimes was against foreign peoples or those defined as foreigners, as in the case of German Jews. In Spain, the targets were Spaniards.

It seems more plausible that it was the civil war that unleashed a dynamic of destruction in Spain that justified extreme violence against its own population, which was not explicitly the goal of fascist violence. And when the civil war ended, repression continued with impunity because the regime felt no international pressure to reconcile with the defeated. At its foundation, the regime that emerged victorious from the civil war was built on the cultural, social, and political exclusion of the defeated.

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Question

1 Most historians today reject the simplicity of the "great man theory of history," in which individual protagonists were given almost unlimited agency in explaining historical change, but we are still left with the challenge of inserting these "great men" into a larger framework. How would you acknowledge Franco's importance while situating him within the larger canvas of the civil war?

10

Women in the War: Workers, Nurses, Soldiers

In the "total wars" of the 20th century, the home front was as much a part of the story as the fighting front. This new reality created a central role for women in the history of modern warfare. At the same time, civil wars exacerbate competing visions over the role of women in each side's ideal social order, and these visions don't always line up with the reality on the ground. In this lecture, we explore the gendered history of the Spanish Civil War, which deserves to be told as a single story even though, at first glance, Republican and Nationalist women had little in common.

Gender Roles Transformed

Incorporated into the Nationalist defense of Catholicism was a traditionalist vision of women as devout mothers and wives. This vision would be reinforced with legislation such as the Fuero de Trabajo, which restricted women's access to the labor force, and pronatalist laws that illegalized birth control while providing monetary incentives to have more children. A reinstated 19th-century civil code subjected wives to the absolute authority of their husbands.

On the other side, one of the pillars of Republican reform since 1931 had been the emancipation of women, including the dramatic decision to enfranchise women after a contested parliamentary debate leading up to the Constitution. In theory, their vision of women matched the European image of the modern woman that had emerged after the First World War, defined by independence, civil and political equality, and access to the public sphere.

In practice, the experience of total war pulled women in both zones out of their traditional family roles. Thus, rearguard mobilization opened new public spaces and transformed gender roles on both sides, even if inadvertently in the case of the Nationalists. Also on both sides, the civilianization of warfare meant that women could be direct victims of the rearguard violence, from the bombing of civilian targets to the gendered forms of rape and shaving of heads.

The most ubiquitous gendered experience of the war was the struggle to provision and protect families. Across the political spectrum, this was an extension of the traditional role of wives and mothers. Women spent hours standing in lines to buy scarce rationed goods, braving rain, snow, and heat, like their husbands and sons at the front. To augment diminishing resources, women learned how to make shoes, bleach, soap, and clothing, which they sold or exchanged for food and fuel.

In rural areas, they scrounged for wood for cooking and heating, or tended vegetable gardens and carried the produce into town to sell, sometimes on the growing black market. Women and children were also often called on to build bomb shelters to protect their families from the novel strategy of shelling civilian targets.

Women were also recruited into jobs from which they had always been excluded. In farming communities, they took over the traditional masculine tasks of plowing and harvesting. In the major Republican cities, they were recruited into the munitions industries. In Barcelona, an institute was established to train women, and over the course of the war, it trained thousands of women for factory labor. Other women worked as nurses, bus drivers, or couriers.

Dolores Ibárruri and the AMA

The entry of women into the political sphere had been a slow process, but the crisis of the war and the need for total mobilization reduced the traditional barriers to female associationism on both sides. The AMA, the Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas, or "Association of Antifascist Women," was the oldest and most established women's organization on the Republican side. It had 60,000 affiliates and included socialists, Republicans, and Basque Catholics. It was a branch of the international federation, formed by the Communist International in 1933, to coordinate the global struggle against fascism in the wake of the Nazi seizure of power.

The AMA's local branches organized literacy classes for women and training courses to teach them job skills. They also published newspapers that aimed to provide a working-class female audience with a broader vision and understanding of the world beyond their limited daily lives.

The model for these women was the founder herself, Dolores Ibárruri, who was one of the rare, prominent female labor leaders of the era, in Spain or elsewhere. Her initial trajectory was typical for a woman of her class. Her path began to deviate during the 1917 general strike, when her talents as an orator and propagandist thrust her into the limelight. When the Socialist Party underwent its painful split in 1921, she joined the faction that established the Spanish Communist Party, the PCE. In the popular front election of February 1936, when the Communist Party sent its first elected representatives to the Cortes, she was one of them.

Ibárruri also played a more controversial role in the internal struggles within the Republican camp, defending the Communist Party pursuit of unity and discipline, which many interpreted as an effort to dominate and control. Nevertheless, she remained a rallying figure during Franco's dictatorship as a member of the Communist Party in exile, which continued to organize and encourage resistance. She remained the AMA's president throughout the civil war.

Dolores Ibárruri

During the civil war, Dolores Ibárruri became immortalized through her impassioned speeches, which confirmed her pen name, La Pasionaria, a name that stuck with her throughout her life. In one speech she coined the phrase "*No pasarán*," "They shall not pass," which would become the ubiquitous motto of the Republican side.

Amparo Poch and the ML

The other major women's organization on the Republican side was the ML, Mujeres Libres, "Free Women," which had 20,000 members in 155 groups. It was associated with the anarchist movement although it was independent from the CNT trade union structure. One of its founders was Amparo Poch, another unusually accomplished woman. She was one of the handful of female doctors in 1930s Spain. During the civil war, Poch worked with anarchist health minister Federica Montseny as director of social assistance in the establishment of field hospitals.

Poch and several other women founded Mujeres Libres in the spring of 1936 and published the first edition of the newspaper of the same name before the outbreak of the war. In contrast to the AMA, Mujeres Libres explicitly embraced the emancipation of women as a goal, which they believed could only come along with economic liberation from capitalist exploitation, and thus they were enthusiastic supporters of the revolutionary process that had been unleashed with the civil war. In practice, they focused on practical activities like literacy classes and childcare centers, but their journal introduced readers to what were radical ideas at the time—for example, free love and women's independence from the patriarchal constraints of the traditional family.

In 1934, Amparo Poch opened a practice in a working-class neighborhood of Madrid where she specialized in mother and infant health. She also promoted the establishment in Barcelona of homes for prostitutes, where they could receive health care, education, and training to help them transition into legitimate professions.

They also demanded leadership positions in the anarchist CNT and a more extensive integration of women into the trade unions, but to no avail. Like revolutionaries across Europe in this period, the male leaders gave lip service to women's emancipation in theory, but in practice they held the same assumptions of gender hierarchy as their conservative counterparts. This helps explain why the new opportunities opened for women by the rupture of the war did not lead to a wholesale transformation into what we can call the gender system. A gender system signifies the expectations for male and female roles in any society and guides acceptable behavior for men and women.

In this case, Spain was still a deeply patriarchal society. Thus, the women who broke the barrier into "male" occupations as drivers, mechanics, or in arms factories were, in fact, exceptional. Most exceptional of all were the female soldiers, the *milicianas*, whose already small number all but disappeared after the first few months, as the slogan "The Men to the Front, the Women to the Rearguard" became official policy. Amparo Poch herself joined an anarchist militia unit in July 1936, serving as a medic. From September 1936 onward, women were forced to leave the front, and by early 1937 there were very few still fighting.

Pilar Primo de Rivera and the SF

On the Nationalist side, the most important women's organization was the SF, Sección Femenina, or "Women's Section," of the Falange, which grew from 2,500 at the beginning of the war to 600,000 by the end. Despite an ideology that celebrated women's exclusively domestic role, their female organizations recruited more members into public service than on the Republican side. It's leader, Pilar Primo de Rivera, embodied this paradox. She used the SF to inculcate the principles of obedience and subordination into several generations of Spanish women until its dissolution in 1977. However, she herself never married and remained in public service as one of the cadre of female political elites in the dictatorship.

She formed her conservative political views at a young age, growing up in a household with her father, the 1920s dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera, and her brother, José Antonio, who founded the Falange fascist party in 1933.

When her brother was executed in November 1936 by the Republicans, she made it her life's work to promote and defend his fascist ideas and his legacy, always subordinating her role to that of a surrogate. At first, she resisted the creation of the Movimiento, the hybrid Nationalist party, as she feared it would dilute the fascist values of the Falange, but she accommodated herself to Franco's leadership and used her position and political skills to carve out a dominant role for the SF in the dictatorship.

When the war broke out, female membership exploded as the organization took on a new range of responsibilities, including nursing, making uniforms, acting as pen pals for frontline troops, fundraising, and working on the land. In addition, clandestine SF groups in Republican territory organized safe houses, embassy escape lines, and welfare aid for religious personnel and others threatened by Republican violence. In contrast to the Republican AMA and ML, there was no explicit mission to educate, train, or emancipate women, but SF members performed many of the same tasks that crossed traditional gender boundaries.

Pilar Primo de Rivera was the most visible public female figure on the Nationalist side, visiting the SF nurses at the front, appearing with other leaders on the stage at Franco's speeches, and even traveling to Germany to meet with Hitler in 1938. After the war, she urged women to return to their domestic and maternal duties, but she herself remained in the political spotlight for the next 40 years.

Pilar Primo de Rivera

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Question

1 Were you surprised by the paradoxes and tensions between the distinct ideologies regarding women's roles in each camp and the similarities in practice and everyday experience across both sides of the civil war?

11

Western Powers Agree to Nonintervention

Beginning with this lecture, we turn from the domestic origins and unfolding of the conflict to the international stage, where the politics of whether or not to intervene in the Spanish Civil War would have enormous repercussions on the outcome. One of the enduring historical debates is the degree to which foreign intervention or nonintervention was the decisive factor in the defeat of the Republic and the victory of the Nationalists. In this lecture, we look at factors that influenced France, Britain, and the United States to take the stances they did toward Spain.

The Nonintervention Pact

For many, the Spanish war came to symbolize the grand ideological and political struggles of the era, which catapulted it into the international spotlight. The Nationalist forces had immediately aligned themselves with the rising fascist powers when they secured foreign aid from Mussolini and Hitler for the initial coup and airlift of the Army of Africa. The thorny question was how the democratic powers would respond to this international challenge.

France and Britain were the two key players, with the United States playing a supporting role. The governments in each of these countries had very different sympathies, priorities, and ideological orientations. However, they all agreed to ban military aid to their fellow democratic government in Spain. France and Britain did this through the nonintervention pact, and the US through an arms embargo.

The nonintervention pact prohibited the sale and transport of arms and munitions to either side. Most of the European countries signed the pact in August 1936. In September, the signatories formed a committee that would supposedly monitor that the conditions of the pact were followed, but the requirements for submitting a complaint were stringent. Even if an accusation were allowed to go forward, there was no provision for sanctions should it be validated.

In retrospect, one could argue that it was not the pact per se that sealed the Republic's defeat, but the complete failure to implement it. In any case, the pact and the US embargo resulted in a huge military disadvantage for the Republican forces. How do we make sense of the democratic states' decisions?

France's Perspective

At first it seemed obvious that the government of France led by the Socialist prime minister Léon Blum would wholeheartedly support the Republican popular front. Strategically, France had always viewed a benevolent Spanish regime as key to its own national security, and the potential of a German or Italian satellite state was disturbing, to say the least.

But most important was their ideological affinity. France was the only other country to elect a popular front government, in May 1936, three months after the Spanish election. The government contained the same heterogeneous mix of Republicans, socialists, and communists as in Spain and the same mission to form a grand alliance against the spread of fascism.

In fact, Blum did issue immediate declarations of support and promised to send military aid after receiving a request from the Spanish prime minister on the night of July 19. The next day, Blum met with his ministers and ordered the first shipment of airplanes.

But this alliance began to unravel almost immediately. Ultimately, the complex national and European political struggles of the era would lead Blum and his popular front government to abandon their Spanish counterpart. Even more ironically, Blum would end up leading the charge for nonintervention.

Léon Blum

The democratic powers worried about the competing threat from the communist Soviet Union on the one hand and the fascist powers of Italy and especially Germany on the other. But Europe was divided over the degree to which the two threats were evaluated and prioritized. For the left, the Spanish Civil War was a showdown between democracy and fascism, while for the right, it was communism versus Western civilization, which included the defense of the Christian religion.

In the French case, as soon as the public knew of Blum's decision to send aid to the Spanish Republic, he was lambasted by the strong conservative opposition in parliament and the press, which accused him of being a puppet of Moscow. Given these internal political divisions, Blum apparently feared a civil war in his own country and reportedly lacked confidence that the conservative armed forces would follow orders to assist the Spanish Republic. Equally important was the pressure from Britain, France's major ally. Blum decided to shift from support to neutrality.

On August 1, he proposed an international pact of nonintervention as what he hoped would be a compromise solution. Even before it was signed, the French government officially suspended arms shipments to Spain. At the time, it was a mortal wound for Blum's government, and he resigned in June 1937.

France's strong conservative opposition would become the core of the future Vichy government and its popular base, so it represented a powerful current of French politics. Although the Vichy regime was enabled by the Nazi invasion of France in June 1940, the dominant view today is that it represented a homegrown ultraconservative authoritarian tradition.

Britain's Perspective

The British government's disinclination to intervene is easier to understand, given the comfortable Conservative majority government. British diplomats in Spain were uniformly critical of the Republic, and this hostility colored the reports that were sent back to the Foreign Office. The British Consul in Barcelona had indicated in a telegram that "the situation is critical, inasmuch as the government appears to be at the mercy of the workers." For Conservatives, *workers* was a code word in the language of the era for communism and class struggle, and they had no doubt that a workers' revolution in Spain would lead to a Soviet outpost in Western Europe.

Despite the dominance of these views and the Conservative majority, the government did face strong opposition from the Labour Party and the left-wing press. As a result, the British government's promotion of the nonintervention pact had both domestic and international strategic goals. In a parliamentary debate in June of 1937 between then Conservative prime minister Neville Chamberlain and Labour opposition leaders, Chamberlain reiterated the government's goal to "maintain the peace of Europe by confining the war to Spain."

It is easy to follow the trail from Chamberlain's argument in the Spanish case to his position on appeasement with Nazi Germany, culminating in the Munich Agreement in September 1938, in which Britain and France agreed to the Nazi annexation of a piece of Czechoslovakia in exchange for a pledge of peace from Hitler. More directly related to Spain was the November 1938 Anglo-Italian Agreement. In signing, Chamberlain acceded to the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, or Ethiopia, demanding in return that Italy withdraw its soldiers from Spain, who were there in clear violation of the nonintervention pact. Spain was no more than a pawn in Chamberlain's internal calculations.

The social democratic Labour Party attacked what one of its leaders called Britain's "malevolent neutrality" toward Spain's democratically elected government. In August 1936, one member argued that the Conservative government's blind fear of Bolshevism was facilitating the creation of a fascist state in Spain that would in fact threaten British security.

But it was later that internal opposition mounted, as it became increasingly clear that the British government was not committed to enforcing the pact against the fascist powers. At the parliamentary debate of June 1937, the Labour leader (and future prime minister) Clement Attlee argued that the international rule of law had been breached in Spain by the military coup, aided by the foreign fascist powers. The lack of "any genuine attempt to carry out the agreement," he concluded, made the British government an accessory to these massacres.

The United States's Perspective

The United States was the third major democratic power to endorse neutrality in the Spanish conflict. Its decision was hardly surprising, given the well-known isolationism of American foreign policy in the interwar period. The US Senate had famously refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles or join the League of Nations, despite the advocacy of President Woodrow Wilson.

In truth, the US was less isolationist than unilateralist. That is, the US wasn't opposed to international involvement on principle, but it was uninterested in joining international organizations or treaties that limited its sovereignty or committed it to intervene in foreign conflicts. In addition, the US version of isolationism only applied to its avowed commitment to remain neutral in European affairs. It was ready to pursue interventionist policies in the American hemisphere under the umbrella of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, which asserted US hegemony in the region.

Despite the embargo, several large US companies, notably petroleum producers, supplied the Nationalists with three-quarters of all the gasoline consumed by their army over the course of the war. Their biggest supporter was Texaco, whose president was openly sympathetic to the fascist cause, and the company continued its sales even after it became illegal, falsifying the destination of its ships to avoid discovery.

As a social democrat, President Franklin Roosevelt was more sympathetic to the Spanish Republic than were the British Conservatives. But he faced an isolationist public, a strong current of anti-communism, and the ultraconservative profile of the professional diplomatic corps. This combination stacked the deck against Roosevelt breaking with established American policy to aid Spain.

Roosevelt signed the first Neutrality Act in August 1935, well before the war in Spain began. The law was later extended in February 1936 for another 14 months, coinciding with the opening months of the Spanish Civil War. The law imposed an automatic arms embargo against the sale of weapons to any belligerent in a foreign war, whether aggressor or victim, as well as a prohibition on loans to the belligerent parties. At the same time, it excluded the American continent from the agreement.

There was a small loophole in that the US Neutrality Act did not officially apply to the two parties in a civil war, but the US State Department justified its application in Spain as a moral equivalent. Instead of joining the nonintervention pact, the US declared a "moral embargo" of arms to Spain on August 11, 1936, in fulfillment of the spirit—if not the letter—of its Neutrality Act. In January 1937, the moral embargo became a legal and enforceable embargo. Even though popular sympathy for the Republic did increase over time, the embargo remained in place until the end of the war.

The decisions of the major democracies of France, Britain, and the US to pursue neutrality instead of support for a fellow democracy only make sense within the complex calculation of domestic and geostrategic politics in the late 1930s, which was different for each of the three countries. Defenders of the Republican cause at the time and since have excoriated the decision to deny the rights of a legally elected democratic regime to purchase weapons to defend itself. The great irony is that this decision forced the Republic to depend on the one nation that did step into the breach: the Soviet Union.

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Question

1 The debates over intervention in the Spanish Civil War within the democratic states evoke familiar trade-offs between national security, geostrategic goals, international law, and humanitarian concerns. How would you evaluate and prioritize these competing goals in the Spanish case, and what lessons do you see for current and future international conflicts?

12

The USSR and Mexico Aid the Republic

There is more debate about the impact of Soviet intervention on the political balance of power, both within the Republican government and in Europe as a whole. The one democratic country willing to aid the Republic was Mexico, but its resources were limited. Its role has received little attention, despite the novelty of a poor postcolonial nation making the unprecedented decision to send aid to its former European colonial master. In this lecture, we examine the types of aid these governments supplied and their motives for getting involved.

Soviet Aid

Seeing the Republic in crisis, the Soviet Union made the decision to break the nonintervention pact and, from October 1936, became the main source of weapons and other supplies for the Republic. The question of the quantity, quality, and timing of military supplies was only resolved in the 1990s with the opening of the Soviet archives and access to previously secret records. Research has revealed not only a lower quantity of arms than previously claimed, but an inferior quality, which was probably even more decisive, as Gerald Howson argued in his classic study *Arms for Spain*.

Aside from the airplanes and tanks, much of the weaponry sold to Spain was out of date and discarded, in marked contrast to the Nazi armaments provided to the Nationalist forces that Hitler wanted to test before unleashing his own military ambitions. None of the modern Soviet weapons arrived until the spring and summer of 1937. And scholars estimate that the Republic was gouged more than $50 million in arms sales from the USSR.

The timing of Soviet deliveries was also suboptimal. The Republic was virtually starved for weapons at crucial points—during the summer of 1936, before the start of Soviet aid, and from the end of 1938. Of the 66 shipments from the USSR, 52 arrived between October 1936 and the end of 1937. Whatever its limits, there is no question that the first shipments of Soviet weapons beginning on October 4 were crucial in helping prevent the imminent defeat of the Republican army in the Battle of Madrid.

After the USSR declared its intention to arm the Republic, the Spanish government sent three-fourths of the Bank of Spain gold reserves to the USSR, estimated at 510 tons of ore. The rest of it was deposited in the Bank of France, to pay for the goods channeled through France.

The rest of the arms were purchased from arms dealers in Poland and Czechoslovakia, which was the largest arms exporter in the world at the time, along with some camouflaged shipments from France. To pay for all of this military equipment, the Republic drew on the gold reserves of the Spanish state, which were the fourth largest in the world. They sent most of the gold to Moscow for several reasons, including the fear of Nationalist troops on the outskirts of Madrid. The Spanish government also hoped to avoid the financial obstacles in the Western banking system that resulted from the nonintervention pact, which made it difficult to complete international purchases of military equipment from Spain.

Stalin's Motives

So why did the Soviet Union decide to intervene? The Soviet Union had been a big ideological supporter of the popular front strategy, which the Communist International, or Comintern, had adopted as a policy in May of 1935. When war broke out, all of the international communist parties issued immediate declarations of support for the Republic and expected the Soviet Union to intervene against fascist aggression.

However, for the USSR, this same global strategy mitigated against aiding the Spanish popular front government. Stalin had his eyes on the emerging fascist bloc and had been trying to cultivate an alliance with the Western democracies to counter the fascist threat. He worried that sending direct Soviet aid to Spain would undermine his own popular front diplomatic efforts to cultivate friendly relations with France and Britain.

The USSR had already signed a defensive treaty with France in May 1935, after Hitler had announced his intention to pursue the rearmament of Germany, although the treaty was more symbolic than substantive. In the effort to continue this rapprochement, Stalin agreed to support the British and French initiative of nonintervention. He apparently hoped, like Blum in France, that the nonintervention pact would actually function to contain the Spanish war and stop the influx of weapons from the fascist states to the Nationalists. Unlike Blum, however, Stalin was only willing to support

the policy if it worked, and if Germany and Italy continued arming the insurgents, then the USSR would reconsider its decision to abide by the pact. In effect, this was what happened.

So, was the aid part of Stalin's larger strategy to protect the Soviet Union and contain the fascist powers? Or was it a cynical effort to turn Spain into a Soviet satellite state? Since the opening of Soviet archives, most academic historians who have begun to explore the vast repository of primary sources have argued for a much more limited view of Soviet intervention and control.

The USSR sent different messages to its different audiences that were often contradictory. The consistent message to the Western powers was that the USSR wanted to pursue a popular front alliance of democracy and communism to defeat the threat of fascism, which would benefit the collective security of all.

In the USSR, on the other hand, Stalin mobilized support for the Spanish "workers' revolution" against fascism, which was a useful distraction from the massive purging of Communist Party leaders that was underway in the mid-1930s. In this narrative, which was also delivered to the international communist parties through the Comintern, aid to the Republic was part of an altruistic but ultimately revolutionary impulse to support the workers of the world in their struggles against the capitalist enemy.

But claims of altruism are undercut by the price-gouging calculations of Soviet aid, especially when contrasted with the extensive credit offered by the fascist powers to the Nationalists. And if Stalin was eager to promote a workers' revolution in Spain to establish a Soviet satellite, it would seem odd to wait so long to decide to send aid.

Perhaps more important than Stalin's true intentions was the reality on the ground. And there is no question that the influx of aid from the USSR, as well as the presence of Soviet military advisers, increased the influence of the Communist Party in the popular front government.

But, contrary to the assumptions of Western Cold War policy, Stalin was not an all-powerful leader who seamlessly translated his will into policy through the mechanisms of the totalitarian state. Stalin's foreign policy in the 1930s was defined by weakness, not strength. The Soviet Union was

isolated and vulnerable, and Stalin had not yet fully consolidated his power at home. Thus, when he realized that aid to the Republic was not achieving any of his geostrategic aims, he began to wind down the flow of aid, as reflected in the timing of the shipments, although the Soviet advisers remained until the end.

Mexico's Contribution


Lázaro Cárdenas

In contrast to the USSR, whose role has been meticulously analyzed and debated, Mexico's much smaller contribution has received less attention. In part, this is because of the lesser monetary value, but it also reflects the vastly different geopolitical importance of the Soviet Union in comparison to Mexico. Nevertheless, Mexico was the Republic's most loyal ally, and remained so to the bitter end, welcoming thousands of Spanish refugees and hosting the Republic's government in exile.

The motives that led Mexico to intervene are complex. The affinity between the Spanish and Mexican Republics preceded the civil war and culminated during the government of Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas from 1934 to 1940, particularly after the election in Spain in February 1936. Both Cárdenas and the popular front government in Spain pursued a strong social democratic agenda, including the commitment to legal land redistribution and workers' rights, as well as secularization and anticlericalism.

For Mexico, supporting the Spanish Republic did not have to directly defy US or European demands. At the same time, it was a daring moment in the history of Mexican diplomacy. It was the first time that Mexico inserted itself into an international conflict beyond the Americas.

But Mexico's support for the Spanish Republic had its own geostrategic and domestic motives. Cárdenas was trying to pursue a more independent foreign policy and wanted to use Mexico's presence in the League of Nations to make the country visible on the world stage. The policy marked Mexico's independence from the US and other major powers without pushing a direct confrontation. As a non-European country, Mexico was not pressured to join the nonintervention pact, and the US's boycott was a unilateral policy that required no adhesion from other countries.

From a domestic perspective, Cárdenas considered the aid to the Republic as directly benefitting the Mexican revolutionary regime. Mexico was politically divided, and Cárdenas feared a possible right-wing uprising against his left-wing reformist agenda. Mexico had a strong and growing conservative movement, some of it openly pro-fascist, and much of the middle- and upper-class population supported the Nationalists.

And so, in the first few weeks after the coup, Cárdenas ordered the first shipment of 20,000 rifles and ammunition. Since this constituted most of the stock produced by Mexico's national armaments factory, the government hired more munitions workers to increase production. However, estimates put the total value of goods sold at $2 million, which reveals the modest scope of Mexican arms production and shipping capabilities.

Cárdenas also empowered Mexican diplomats to mediate arms purchases and to argue against the nonintervention pact in the League of Nations. As the war drew to a close, Mexican diplomatic officials in France worked to help settle and relocate the stream of refugees pouring over the border, thousands of whom ended up in Mexico.

The question of how much foreign aid reached the Republic has always been more than a quantitative debate about resources. However, most historians would agree that the quantitative and qualitative doubts have largely been resolved. The truth is the tepid support of the Soviet Union and the spirited but paltry contributions of Mexico were inferior to the fascist aid to the Nationalists. As a result, the Republic lacked consistent access to a sufficient number of high-quality armaments, and this deficiency was an indisputable element in the Republic's defeat.

Probably the most important deal facilitated by the Mexican government was the sale of several dozen airplanes from France in August of 1936. The Blum government had planned to send these planes directly but had to change course because of the nonintervention agreement. The Spanish ambassador in Paris asked the Mexican ambassador if Mexico would complete the purchase, and the sympathetic French minister of aviation agreed to the arrangement.

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Question

1 The Cold War's impact on the historical interpretation of Soviet intervention into the Spanish Civil War illustrates how much the present influences our view of the past. How did you interpret and sort through the debates about Stalin's motives and the Soviet role?

13

International Brigades Join the Civil War

The internationalization of the civil war went beyond diplomacy and foreign aid. It had a human face in the form of the volunteers from all over the world who came to Spain, ready to fight. Most of them fought in the International Brigades for the Republican side, and up to a third lost their lives. In this lecture, we consider two narratives that have created opposing memories of the International Brigades, one completely rosy and the other scathingly critical. Between these extremes, we can distinguish two different stories. The first focuses on the motives and goals of the volunteers. The other is about the complex reality they encountered on the ground. The question is, what role did the Comintern and the USSR play in the day-to-day functioning of the Brigades, and how did this shape the volunteers' experience of the war?

Formation of the Brigades

The idea for the International Brigades originated in the USSR as part of Stalin's shift in Soviet policy in September 1936 from neutrality to direct support of the Republic. They would recruit volunteers from all over the world to fight in Spain in the name of anti-fascism. Over the course of the war, around 35,000 to 40,000 foreign volunteers arrived from over 50 countries.

Franco weaponized the exaggerated presence of foreign fighters as further evidence of Stalin's supposed grip on the Republic. At the same time, it was the Nationalists who set the precedent of accepting foreign soldiers, leaving them open to a similar charge about the influence of the fascist powers on their side.

Despite Franco's claim, Russians were not present in the Brigades. The USSR sent about 2,000 Russian military advisors, technicians, and pilots, but these joined a separate Red Army military unit called Operation X.

The Brigades were meant to counter the presence of foreign troops on the Nationalist side but also to shame the democratic states into getting off the fence. Implementation was left to the Comintern, which was led by leaders from European communist parties, and which further delegated recruitment to local chapters. The role of Stalin or the USSR was purposefully minimized, whether for nefarious purposes or to emphasize the inclusive anti-fascist nature of the project.

The majority of the brigadiers were members of communist parties, answering the direct call of the Communist International to take up the anti-fascist cause in Spain. Up to a third of the volunteers were not Communist Party members but were equally attracted to the cause. There were Americans, British, and French who were frustrated by their countries' weak claims of neutrality, and Germans and Italians who had escaped fascist regimes and were living in exile. Unemployed workers felt abandoned by democratic governments who had no apparent response to the economic depression.

Almost a quarter of all volunteers were Jews from across Europe and the US, and a few from Israel who communicated in the international Jewish language of Yiddish. Some of the older volunteers had military experience either in World War I or in the Irish War of Independence.

American volunteers mostly joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, which eventually comprised 3,000 men, 681 of whom died in Spain. While many came from the labor movement, fewer of the American volunteers had military experience, given the US's much smaller presence in World War I. And while the majority of them were white, the unit also had the distinction of being racially integrated with 85 African American soldiers. One of them, Oliver Law, was promoted to officer status, giving him command over a mixed-race unit at a time when the US Army was still segregated.

For many African Americans, the pairing of racism, colonialism, and fascism had been confirmed with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, the only independent African nation. African Americans were outraged by the 1935 invasion, but both the US and Ethiopia discouraged foreign volunteers.

As a journalist, Langston Hughes traveled to Spain to cover the African American activities in the International Brigades. He explicitly made the connection between racial justice and anti-fascism when he equated the Nationalists with the Ku Klux Klan and fascism with the Jim Crow regime. Conversely, he painted a picture of a multiracial anti-fascist coalition that would dismantle colonialism as well as fascism.

Deployment of the Brigades

Altogether the International Brigades constituted about 2% of the Republican forces, but they had great symbolic and sometimes military significance, both in Spain and in their home countries. The stories of *brigadistas* leaving for Spain in late 1936, or of the survivors returning two years later, brought the war home for many people outside of Spain who otherwise had no connection with the conflict.

Paris was the hub for brigadiers arriving from around the world, who were given passports, instructions, and travel arrangements to go to Spain by boat or train. Brigades were constituted as much as possible according to language, but the early organization was unsystematic and improvised. The goal was simply to get as many as possible to the Madrid front.

The 11th International Brigade, which was dispatched to Madrid in early November 1936, included the mostly Austro-German Edgar André Battalion, a company of British gunners, the Franco-Belgian Commune of Paris Battalion, and the mostly Polish Dabrowski Battalion. The first Americans arrived in January and February, after the Battle of Madrid. They joined the 15th International Brigade, which was on the Jarama front, where the rebels tried and failed to cut off the road between Madrid and Valencia, where the government had moved in November.

The Brigades were used as shock troops in all the major battles of the war and incurred higher rates of casualties than other Republican divisions. Estimates range between 15% and 30% mortality overall, compared with 6% for Spanish troops.

The Brigades' military contribution to the Republican effort is difficult to quantify, but they were on the front lines and fought bravely, by all accounts, if at different skill levels. Their most visible contribution was in the Battle of Madrid, where their arrival, along with the first Soviet planes and tanks, provided a huge military and morale boost to the struggling Republican army.

After August of 1937, the Brigades were integrated into the Republican army, and by early 1938, a combination of high casualty rates and slowed recruitment abroad made Spaniards the majority of the International

Brigades. In September 1938, Negrín disbanded the International Brigades and sent home the remaining 10,000 volunteers as part of the Republican government's last-ditch strategy to get the democratic states to drop their neutrality. Still, the authorities held a massive send-off ceremony in Barcelona. It was attended by up to 300,000 people and marked by inspiring speeches of gratitude and international solidarity.

The Brigadiers' Experience

Most likely, each soldier experienced the full range of emotions, from solidarity and inspiration to frustration, fear, and disappointment. The multiple languages spoken among the volunteers could seem in one moment the very embodiment of international solidarity, as when encampments would fill with revolutionary songs from different countries.

But the same diversity could be a barrier to effective communication in battle. Translators, especially for the minority languages, were scarce, so multilingual volunteers often played key roles. But commands could get muddled by multiple translations. After the April 1937 reorganization, when Spanish troops were integrated into every battalion, the Republican authorities encouraged the foreigners to learn Spanish. They even offered language instruction, but apparently not all were willing to put in the effort.

On a more mundane level, volunteers could be demoralized by the shortage of goods, uniforms, weapons, and food that often left them poorly clothed and armed. Their experience was part of a larger shortage of materials on the Republican side as a result of the nonintervention pact. But on the ground level, many blamed what they viewed as a disorganized or ineffective war effort by the Republican army, or even sabotage by "fifth column" or Trotskyist agents.

Suspicion about unequal distribution of goods could cause resentments between national groups. And some International Brigade troops claimed they were treated as second-class units, while some Spanish troops complained that the foreign volunteers were not deferential enough to the home troops.


HOMENAJE A LAS
BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES
El Frente Popular de
MADRID
al Frente Popular del
MUNDO
BARDASANO
GRAFICAS REUNIDAS C.N.T. MADRID

Prominent writers immortalized the volunteers, as in Ernest Hemingway's 1940 novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Although Hemingway was not a volunteer, he visited and befriended several of them, including officer Robert Merriman, on whom the book's hero, Robert Jordan, was based. Most brigadiers at the time emphasized the heroic and selfless sacrifice of those who put their lives on the line for the anti-fascist cause.

Opposing Narratives

Such everyday tensions between troops could have occurred in any war. The debates center on the bigger picture behind these problems. The anti-communist narrative argues that the volunteers were abused and betrayed by their Soviet handlers. Instead of normal military discipline, this narrative claims that the Soviet commissars imposed terroristic purges, akin to what was happening in the Stalinist USSR.

There is clear evidence of harsh penalties imposed for desertion as well as suspicion of sabotage. But there is disagreement about whether these were a product of the need for strict discipline in a demoralized and defeated army or evidence of a dominant Stalinist culture of fear and denunciation. Overall, no more than a few dozen brigadiers ended up court-martialed. More broadly, the Soviets simply didn't have the kind of totalitarian power in the plural political environment of Republican Spain that they had at home.

At the same time, there are plenty of accounts that reveal a culture of suspicion and conspiracy, especially aimed at the dissident communist Trotskyists of the POUM party and the anarchists. These groups were conveniently blamed for military failures and accused of fomenting defeatism and sabotage.

Those noncommunist foreigners who joined POUM or anarchist militias wrote scathing left-wing critiques of their treatment at the hands of Spanish or Soviet communists. The most famous was George Orwell's account in his book *Homage to Catalonia*. More familiar to American readers is his 1945 dystopian novel *Animal Farm*, a dark parody of the Russian Revolution but informed by his personal experiences in Spain.

In the brigadiers' own memoirs, a few share this critical view. But the majority identify the real betrayal as the one inflicted by the Western democracies who had abandoned Spain. As veteran Bill Bailey put it in the 1984 American documentary *The Good Fight*,

> All sorts of countries could have done it, come to the aid, but they didn't. And that's the fitting part of it; the sad story about Spain itself is the fact that the rest of the world sold Spain out. They had a moment of truth when they could've stopped Hitler and the bastards missed the ball.

For the Republic, the volunteers symbolized the international solidarity shown by ordinary people in the face of the indifference of most of their governments. But their presence could not compensate for the lopsided quantity of resources flowing across the border for their Nationalist enemy.

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Question

1 The story of the foreign volunteers of the International Brigades continues to spark interest, as is clear from the ongoing publication of books and articles. From the US perspective, can you understand the continued fascination with the few thousand volunteers who went to Spain in the 1930s?

14

The Fascist Powers Aid the Nationalists

From the initial moment of the coup, the Nationalists depended on loans, aid, soldiers, and weapons from the fascist powers, which were more forthcoming than the democratic powers. In this lecture, we consider several questions about the impact of this foreign aid. First, how did it impact the outcome of the war? Second, how much did fascist aid push the leaders to adopt more fascist policies, rhetoric, and symbols, and how much did it increase the influence of the fascist sector of the hybrid coalition?

Initial Assistance

On July 19, 1936, Franco sent personal emissaries to Rome and Berlin asking for aid, the same day that the president of the Republic sent his request to France. At this point, Franco asked only for help in transporting his colonial troops from Morocco to the mainland, where they would begin the march to Madrid. The rebels needed help bypassing an unexpected blockade of the Strait of Gibraltar by the Republican navy, the majority of which remained loyal to the government.

After weighing the risks and opportunities of aiding the rebels, Hitler and Mussolini independently approved an initial limited package of aid of planes and warships, apparently without knowledge of what the other was doing. The planes played a crucial role in bypassing the naval blockade. Between July and October, Operation Feuerzauber flew 13,500 soldiers across the straits, constituting the first large-scale airlift in history.

It is entirely possible that without this initial specific form of assistance, the Nationalist coup would have ground to a halt. The colonial troops, along with the Moroccan mercenaries, played a key role in the rapid conquest of the southwest in the first months of the war. In and of itself, the transport operation would not have been enough to secure Nationalist victory, but its absence might have led to immediate defeat.

Motives for Continued Aid

After the initial deliveries, both fascist leaders calculated that the risks of carrying on a plan of secret and limited military aid were low, if paired with official public support for the nonintervention agreement. No major power was invested in stopping them.

The payoff for the fascist states was a possible shift in the balance of power in western Europe. Both Mussolini and Hitler viewed geostrategic advantages in a possible friendly authoritarian regime in the southwestern

corner of Europe. It would weaken France and force her to invest resources into protecting her southern flank. Mussolini also hoped a Spanish ally would help him challenge French and British control of the Western Mediterranean.

In contrast, a Republican victory would create a strong French-Spanish democratic axis, perhaps incorporating the USSR, which already had a defensive treaty with France. This was essentially the same argument that the French and British made in favor of helping the Republic. However, their logic was rejected by the conservatives, who feared communism more than they feared the authoritarian right.

Salazar's authoritarian government in Portugal had made the same calculations and also did what it could to support the Nationalist cause. Salazar was worried about the threat to his own right-wing authoritarian government if the Republicans won. Between 8,000 and 12,000 Portuguese volunteered as individual soldiers in the Spanish Foreign Legion under Nationalist command.

More importantly, Salazar permitted the fascist powers to ship their weapons and supplies through Lisbon into Spain in order to disguise their origin. He refused to allow international observers to monitor the border, arguing it was a violation of Portuguese sovereignty. The result was the Nationalists' most reliable route to receive weapons and materials.

As the war dragged on, Germany and Italy developed other reasons—economic, military, and ideological—for continuing to support the Nationalists. They claimed that their support was part of a joint European anti-communist alliance and crusade. While Hitler and Mussolini were genuine anti-communists, their rhetoric was probably strategic. In particular, they knew it would be viewed sympathetically on the part of British and French conservatives.

At the same time, this crusade helped bring the two fascist countries into closer alignment and set the groundwork for the Axis alliance. Both leaders utilized the slogan of anti-communism to explain the Rome-Berlin entente of October 1936. The following month, it was christened in a speech by Mussolini as the "Axis." Also in October, Germany and Japan agreed to a vague Anti-Comintern Pact, which Mussolini joined a year later.

A Military Testing Ground

The years of the Spanish Civil War overlapped with massive military buildup in both Germany and Italy. Germany in particular had arsenals full of untested equipment. The country had been forbidden by the terms of the punitive Versailles Treaty after World War I to have a standing army. In March of 1935, Hitler announced he was abrogating the treaty with the passage of a law to recreate the national defense forces or army.

In June of that year, Germany negotiated the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, which permitted Germany to build a navy a third of the size of the British, but with parity in submarines. The agreement marked the beginning of the British policy of appeasement toward the Nazis.

Significantly, the Germans had refused Franco's request to incorporate all foreign soldiers into the Spanish Foreign Legion under his command. Instead, the Nazis developed their own autonomous units. Over the course of the war, 19,000 German soldiers cycled into the Condor Legion, with no more than 5,000 in Spain at any time. Germany also cycled weapons through Spain, testing models and improving them with updated versions.

The Spanish Civil War emerged as an opportunity for the German military to try out new tactics and weapons and provide battle experience for its soldiers. Most famously, the German Condor Legion led the aerial bombing of the town of Guernica, in one of the first instances of using this tactic solely to terrorize civilian populations.

In terms of new tactics, the Germans developed a three-wave bombing strategy and ended up dropping more than 21 million tons of bombs during the war. Likewise, the independent Italian units requested permission to implement their own new military tactics. In particular, they previewed the *guerre celere*, or the "lightning offensive." This was employed successfully in the Nationalist victory at Málaga, and later in the disastrous Battle of Guadalajara.

Nazi Germany also benefited economically. They took advantage of the Nationalist need for weapons and supplies to set up a lucrative exchange between German manufactured goods and Spanish raw materials. Thus, the agreements signed between Hitler and Franco included commercial rights to the sale of minerals as well as the establishment of Spanish-German companies that monopolized the export trade.

Escalation of Aid

German and Italian aid and public support accelerated when the Soviets decided to abandon the nonintervention pact in October 1936. Most dramatically, the Italian and German ambassadors to Spain traveled to Burgos in November to recognize the establishment of the official Nationalist government. More substantively, Hitler made the decision to form the Condor Legion, which arrived in Spain by sea in early November.

Mussolini underwent an even more dramatic evolution. Initially reluctant and cautious, his military commitment far surpassed the limited German engagement by the end of the war. The key turning point came on November 28, 1936, when Mussolini signed a secret anti-communist treaty with the Nationalists. The treaty promised aid in return for Italian military bases on the Spanish island of Majorca, in the case of a war with France.

As a result of this treaty, Italy sent an entire division of armed forces under Italian command, with a permanent presence of 40,000 soldiers. More than 80,000 Italian troops cycled through Spain during the war, which was the largest concentration of foreign soldiers in the war. In addition to submarines and other weapons and ammunition, Mussolini also sent over 700 planes, about a third of them manned with Italian pilots. Italy's overall expenditure on the war was $354 million, versus $215 million from Germany.

In March 1937, Italian troops suffered a spectacular defeat in the Battle of Guadalajara, after which hundreds of Italian troops were taken as prisoners of war. In rage and humiliation, Mussolini doubled down on his commitment to supply the Nationalists until their victory against the reds.

Hitler's priorities were elsewhere. He didn't want to undercut his rearmament goals with excessive aid in a corner of Europe where Germany had no permanent interests. The Rome-Berlin entente included an oral provision recognizing the Mediterranean as "an Italian sea," while Germany was to have free reign in the Baltic Sea. After that agreement, the Germans pulled back on further commitments of troops and personnel in Spain and refused requests to send in army divisions.

Only at the very end of the war did Mussolini decide that it was time to shift his resources to battlegrounds that would reap concrete benefits for Italy, following Hitler's lead. Some analysts have suggested that Mussolini's expenditure on the Spanish war weakened Italy's military capacity in the Second World War.

Impact of Fascist Aid

How important was this fascist foreign aid to the Nationalist victory? On the one hand, without this aid, the Nationalists would not have had a fighting chance. The conspirators' original plan expected a full military revolt, which would have immediately put all the resources of Spain's armed forces into their hands. The failed coup left the Nationalists completely dependent on sympathetic governments.

While Hitler and Mussolini each had their own strategic reasons for stepping into the breach, the attraction of an anti-communist, authoritarian, nationalist regime in Spain was part of the appeal for both fascist leaders. Even so, the vulnerable Nationalists had the most to gain.

It seems clear that this fascist infusion of aid and support had an impact on the ideological and rhetorical face of the regime. It inevitably raised the profile of this sector of the coalition. More broadly, it brought home two realities that seemed to indicate which direction Europe was heading: the rising tide of fascism and the cowering of the democratic powers.

At the same time, Franco's opportunism is evident with how easily he began to shift course from the end of 1942, as the fascist star began to dim and the defeat of the Axis powers became increasingly clear. Conversely, if the Axis powers had won the war, Franco and the Nationalists would have fit comfortably into the parameters of a fascist Europe, albeit as a subordinate cog in the hierarchical reordering of the continent.

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Question

1 After listening to the evidence about the foreign aid received by both sides, what are your initial conclusions about the impact of foreign intervention in the Spanish Civil War? Which elements or factors struck you as most important in shaping this impact?

15

Vatican and Church in Spain's Religious War

One of the unique aspects of the Spanish Civil War was that it was a war of religion. Republicans saw the church as an obstacle to progress, democracy, and social justice. And it was true that the Catholic Church had been institutionally and ideologically entwined with the conservative, monarchist, and wealthy forces of the country throughout the modern period. In this lecture, we look at the evolution of the church's support for the Nationalists and how the defense of religion mobilized Catholic support outside of Spain, eventually including the international Catholic authority of the Vatican.

Mobilization of a Holy War

Inside Spain, the religious divide opened in the early 19th century, with the abolition of the absolutist monarchy and the expropriation of church and monastic properties. After that, Spain's constitutional regimes reconciled with the church. They retained Catholicism as the official religion of the state and included financial support to replace the income lost through expropriation. At the same time, the church turned to wealthy donors to augment its resources.

The first president of the Republic, Niceto Alcalá Zamora, advocated for a "gradual, peaceful" secularization of the state. Instead, the Republican coalition rejected Alcalá Zamora's advice and embarked on an aggressive secularization campaign. They cut off state funding to the church but also went further to map out a plan for the closure of many convents and monasteries and all private Catholic schools.

Niceto Alcalá Zamora

Once the war broke out, positions hardened. On one side, a minority of radical anticlericals unleashed violence against church personnel and property. On the other side, the church officially joined the Nationalist coalition. The key document was the "Collective Letter from the Spanish Bishops to the Bishops of the World." Issued on July 1, 1937, the letter launched an international appeal for support. It aimed to mobilize Catholic populations around the world in the name of the struggle between Christian civilization and atheist communism. In turn, the Republicans accused the church of allying itself with global fascism.

The mobilization of the holy war and the anticlerical violence emerged simultaneously with the outbreak of the war and the resultant collapse of central authority. Many ordinary Catholics saw themselves as soldiers in a holy war against atheistic forces. The Nationalists effectively mobilized and channeled this moral fervor, but they did not create it. Even after the war, there was a steep increase in Spaniards entering religious orders, part of a popular Catholic revival that was not simply invented by the pious Nationalist state.

During the first year of the war, the position of the Spanish church hierarchy shifted. It began with cautious reserve at the outbreak of the military rebellion. By early August, individual clergy members like Enrique Pla y Deniel, the bishop of Salamanca, began to publicly support the Nationalist cause. Finally, the collective letter of July 1937 signaled official endorsement of the Spanish church.

Pope Pius XI's Discourse

Everyone was waiting for the pope to make an official pronouncement after the first two months of silence. In general, the Vatican and Pope Pius XI shared the social and political conservatism of the Spanish church, and the Nationalist leaders assumed that a public pronouncement would be forthcoming.

But it was not until September 14, 1936, that the pope made a speech to an audience of 500 Spanish clerics. Most were hoping that Pius XI would give his blessing to the sanctification of the civil war. But what he offered instead was a remarkably balanced discourse that avoided endowing the civil war with the status of a holy war.

Perhaps more remarkable was how the pope's discourse was manipulated and mobilized by all sides in the international propaganda war. While it was widely disseminated and cited, each side highlighted only the parts that favored their cause. In the Nationalist zone in Spain, the official press distributed a truncated version that only included the parts condemning communism and praising the Christian virtues and heroism of the clerics who had become true martyrs.

The Nationalist version left out the other half of his message, which expressed horror at the fratricidal nature of the war. And while he gave his blessing to those who were defending God and religion, he also cautioned against the tendency toward unjustifiable excess in pursuit of this goal. More pointedly, he urged them to love those enemies, who were also beloved children and siblings, and treat them with compassion and mercy.

It was the Nationalists' truncated version of Pope Pius XI's discourse that convinced Bishop Pla y Deniel that the pope had given his blessing for a holy war, leading to the publication of his immensely influential pastoral letter, "The Two Cities." Even when Pla y Deniel realized he had been given a partial text, he did not retract his own uncompromising embrace of a holy war.

Nationalist Violence against Clerics

Despite the willful selective reading of the pope's pronouncement, the Vatican continued to move cautiously. Only when the pope was convinced of the military inevitability of victory in May 1938 would the Vatican concede the official recognition that the Nationalists craved. Why did the Vatican hesitate? On a basic level, the pope was apparently genuinely reluctant to embroil the Vatican in a civil war. Moreover, he was faced with contradictory evidence—that is, a majority of Basque clerics had defended the Republic against the Nationalist uprising.

Even more troubling, in November of 1936, the pope had received a report from the bishop of Vitoria, Mateo Múgica. It explained how he had been forcibly expelled from his post for protesting to the Nationalists their execution of 14 priests in his diocese and the arrest of many others.

The final toll of 19 clerics killed by the Nationalists, all in the Basque Country, was obviously miniscule compared to the 6,800 murdered by the Republicans. Nevertheless, the killing of any clergy was enough to disturb the pope. In the Basque Country, the Vatican saw a dissonance between claims to defend God and religion and the persecution of religious personnel.

The killing of clergy in the Basque Country was a special case, rooted in the history of regional nationalism and its relationship to Spanish nationalism. Both Catalonia and the Basque Country had been advocating for regional autonomy, which the Republican government supported. For Catalonia, it had already approved a statute in 1932 that created the Catalan Generalitat.

Negotiations had been underway with the Basque Nationalist Party, the PNV, to do the same for the Basque Country, but the outbreak of the civil war interrupted the process. Nevertheless, the promise of autonomy convinced the majority of Basques, including the devoutly Catholic PNV, to support the Republican side. For their loyalty, they were rewarded with an autonomy statute on October 1, 1936. Significantly, with the PNV in charge, there was no anticlerical violence, church burning, or assassination of clerics—with the exception of those killed by the Nationalists.

What led to these killings? For the Nationalists, a unified and homogeneous vision of the Spanish nation opposed all regionalisms as existential threats. This version of a monolithic Spanish nation had been defended by conservatives since the beginning of the 19th century. In their view, there was no distinction between regional autonomy and separatism.

Some historians have argued that the uncompromising centralism of the Spanish state actually produced its nemesis. By refusing to incorporate regional identities into a multicultural Spanish nation, they ended up promoting the very separatism they feared.

It was only in the one Nationalist outpost of Vitoria where the rebels encountered clerics affiliated with Basque regionalism and Republicanism. It was in Vitoria that the rebels shot 14 Basque clerics as "separatists." And it was this event that sparked Bishop Mateo Múgica's protest to the Nationalist Junta and his expulsion from his post.

Significantly, Bishop Múgica was not a Republican sympathizer. However, the killing of clerics was one step too far. He fled Spain to spend the rest of the war in the Vatican City, along with Bishop Vidal y Barraquer. The latter was shunned for promoting the reconciliatory part of the pope's message as well as his Catalanist leanings. These two bishops were among the five who refused to sign the collective letter of July 1937, a small minority compared to the 43 bishops whose names appeared.

Impact of the Church's Support

The bishops' letter was less a declaration of principles than an act of international propaganda. It had been explicitly requested by Franco and orchestrated by Cardinal Goma, who was also serving as the pope's special envoy to Franco during this period. Franco wanted to circulate the letter in the international Catholic press as evidence of overwhelming church support for the Nationalist cause. Its aim was to neutralize the bad press about the assassinated Basque clerics and the broader pattern of Nationalist violence against Republican civilians.

As such, it took a very different tone than the pastoral letters directed at a domestic Spanish public. It explicitly rejected the label of holy war. Instead, it narrated a simple cause-and-effect story of anticlerical violence followed by reluctant self-defense. It also declared the bishops' intention to resist the influence of "foreign ideologies," implicitly including Nazism and fascism as well as the communism of the enemy. In its wide and effective dissemination in the international Catholic press, it was often accompanied by dramatic photos of gutted churches, acts of sacrilege, and mutilated corpses. The total effect was devastating for the Republican cause in the international court of public opinion, especially among Catholics in the democratic countries.

By the time that Franco declared victory on April 1, 1939, the Catholic Church in Spain as well as the Vatican had given their full institutional and moral support to the new regime. The church highlighted the regime's Catholic identity and brushed over its unsavory relations with fascist and Nazi dictators. In a religious ceremony full of medieval pomp and attended by military and religious authorities, Franco embraced the language of Catholic victory.

This National Catholic alliance began to unravel only decades later. The turning point was the Vatican II congress in the 1960s, when the Catholic Church fully embraced liberal democracy as well as social justice issues. Vatican II would in turn inspire a young generation of priests inside Spain to reject the Francoist dictatorship as being opposed to true Christian values. One of these values was the reconciliation that Pius XI had defended decades earlier. This process culminated in the 1970s when the church dramatically repudiated its affiliation with the dictatorship and its having taken sides in the civil war.

At the same time, the apology did not immediately repair the damage from the church's affiliation with a repressive dictatorship. There was a dramatic decline in observant Catholics during the last decades of the dictatorship and beyond. This apparent conundrum serves as powerful evidence as to how the effort to enforce and politicize unified religious practice can backfire. Like other aspects of the conflict, Spain's religious war had a lasting impact that continues to shape Spanish society up to the present day.

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Question

1 The religious aspect of the war is an excellent case study for weighing the impact of deep structural divisions versus short-term decisions. Where would you stand on the debate over the inevitability of the religious war in Spain in the 1930s?

16

The Propaganda War in a Divided Spain

The thought of war may not conjure up visions of poetry, posters, paintings, and films. But in the early 20th century, a close relationship emerged between these media and the demands of total war. The relationship was cemented during the First World War, which required mass mobilization of the millions of young men called on to fight, and of those who remained at home to work and sacrifice for the war effort. The Spanish Civil War fits into this trajectory of total war and propaganda. It also has an added international and popular dimension that was distinct from either of the world wars. In this lecture we examine how the Republican and Nationalist governments tried to mobilize their own populations while private citizens inside and outside Spain took the lead in pleading their cause to the world.

International Propaganda

In common parlance, we often apply the word *propaganda* to speech that is intentionally false or manipulative rather than objective. But it really has a broader meaning. *Propaganda* refers to any speech and other artifacts designed to persuade the audience, which also implies an emotional dimension.

The vast majority of international propaganda supported the Republican or anti-fascist cause, most visibly propaganda produced by prominent artists and intellectuals, from George Orwell to Ernest Hemingway and Pablo Picasso. What explains this explosion of public political commitment on the part of artists and intellectuals?

On the one hand, it was both a symptom and a cause of the internationalization of the civil war. As we know, the war came to symbolize the black-and-white moral choices of a polarized political landscape: Christian civilization versus communist atheism, or anti-fascism and democracy versus fascism.

On the other hand, it was also a specific response to the nonintervention of democratic governments on the Republican side. This decision created, for many, a moral imperative for democratic citizens to intervene themselves. Some heeded this imperative by volunteering for the International Brigades; others produced art, music, theater, and literature that aimed to touch the hearts and minds of ordinary citizens, as well as to shame their governments into stepping up.

The smaller number of conservatives outside Spain who contributed to pro-Nationalist propaganda mostly belonged to Catholic networks in the democratic countries. This propaganda was less focused on supporting the Nationalist cause per se than on demonizing the Republicans through publicizing the anticlerical violence.

We can see evidence for the lopsided international support for the Republic among contemporary intellectuals in the response to a collective document called "Spain: The Question." It was issued in June of 1937 by a group of prominent writers, including Nancy Cunard, W. H. Auden, Pablo Neruda, and Stephen Spender.

It began with the declaration that intellectuals were compelled to take sides in the global struggle against fascism, which was currently playing out in Spain. The question was simple: Were you for or against the legal government and the people of Republican Spain, or for or against Franco and fascism? Of those 148 who contributed their responses, 127 declared themselves for the Republic, 16 declared neutrality, and 5 were against.

The question invoked the recent bombing of Guernica on April 26, 1937, by the German Condor Legion as part of the evidence of the murder and destruction wrought by fascism. Images of the town's destruction would become a key motif in pro-Republican efforts to simplify the moral stakes of the war.

The documentary film *The Spanish Earth* was produced in early 1937 by a group of American writers and filmmakers who wanted to show their support for the Republic and for the American volunteers of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. The group included Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Lillian Hellman, Dorothy Parker, and Orson Welles. They formed a company to fund the project of the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens. Aimed at a US audience, the key points were to highlight the affiliation between the Nationalists and Nazism and to minimize the link between the Republican people and Soviet communism.

The Republican and Nationalist governments made their own contributions to efforts to sway foreign audiences. Both sides often employed visual images of suffering and victimhood to generate sympathy. The Nationalists relied heavily on photos of anticlerical destruction, which were circulated through an international network of Catholic publications and organizations. The Republicans exported posters of frightened women and children cowering under Nazi planes with visible swastikas, to drive home the Nationalist slaughter of innocent civilians.

Children's drawings, collected by the Ministry of Education from schools in Madrid and Valencia, were distributed abroad with the help of the Carnegie Institute of Spain. More than 600 drawings were published in the US in 1938 in a book titled *They Still Draw Pictures*. They simply but dramatically illustrate the horrors and realities of war.

¡ESTO ES EL FASCISMO!

SOCORRO ROJO INTERNACIONAL

PARIAL

Picasso's *Guernica*

British journalist George Steer wrote an influential on-the-ground account of the Guernica attack that was published on April 28 in the major French, British, and American newspapers. He emphasized the novelty and quantity of heavy bombs and the evidence of Luftwaffe insignia as proof of Nazi noncompliance with the nonintervention pact.

Steer's account caught the attention of the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso, who had been living and working in Paris for many years. Picasso had been considering ideas for a painting that the Spanish Republican government had commissioned for the upcoming international exposition in Paris in July. After the bombing, he began working feverishly on the enormous canvas that would become one of the most famous propaganda pieces of the 20th century.

The Paris exposition where *Guernica* would be displayed was itself a major staging ground for international propaganda. Notably, the two most imposing structures were the 15-story Nazi pavilion and the equally monumental Soviet pavilion, which faced each other on either side of the Eiffel Tower.

The Spanish pavilion was designed as an appeal for international aid and solidarity for a nation under siege. The entrance featured a photomural of Republican soldiers with declarative phrases embodying the message that the Republic represented the freedom of the people of Spain against a foreign-financed fascist enemy.

Inside the pavilion, Picasso's painting covered one wall. On another wall, the Spanish painter Joan Miró painted his mural *The Reaper*, also known as *Catalan Peasant in Revolt*. In retrospect, the pavilion was a dazzling and poignant display of world-class art, brought together under the most unfavorable conditions by an embattled Republic at war. In the moment, however, it was largely a failure. The Spanish pavilion's humble structure and the challenging modernist aesthetic of Picasso and Miró's paintings left many viewers underwhelmed or confused.

However, *Guernica*'s reputation gathered steam in a series of traveling exhibitions that began after the exposition. In September 1938, it traveled alone to London, in an exhibit arranged by the British Labour leader, Clement Attlee, a strong supporter of the Republican cause. Another exhibit was arranged by an organization that collected donations for Republican Spain. After the war, the painting began a tour in the United States to raise funds for Spanish Republican refugees. The tour culminated in a retrospective Picasso exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York at the end of 1939.

Picasso entrusted MoMA with *Guernica*'s safekeeping, along with the instruction that it not be returned to Spain until liberty, democracy, and a republic had been restored. These conditions only emerged after 1978, after Picasso's death, and the painting finally arrived in 1981. It is now housed in Madrid's Reina Sofia modern art museum as part of an extensive exhibit of civil war artifacts.

Domestic Propaganda

Each side dedicated propaganda to mobilizing the support of the population living in the Republican and Nationalist zones. Radio was the new mass communication technology of the era, but ownership was much lower than in the US or in Nazi Germany.

In Spain, printed propaganda was still primary. And in a country with high illiteracy, the poster was the fundamental medium. They were plastered everywhere in cities and towns. Their combination of arresting images and few words, along with the ease of reproduction and distribution, made them efficient instruments to disseminate each side's message among the Spanish population.

It shouldn't be surprising that the variety and quantity of Republican posters outstripped the Nationalist production, simply as a result of the greater heterogeneity and decentralization in the Republican zone. Each party or trade union or local committee issued its own posters to mark its place in the popular front. There were posters aimed at the soldiers fighting the war. Others pushed to mobilize the rearguard economy. And there were the posters defining the enemy.

There was another independent propaganda organ on the Republican side: the International Association of Friends of the Soviet Union. At times in sync with the Republican government and at times at cross-purposes, this association was formed before the war as part of the USSR's own international propaganda campaign.

In order to counter the juggernaut of anti-communist propaganda around the world, the Comintern encouraged the establishment of branches of the association in every country. With the outbreak of the civil war, the Spanish branch was reorganized and expanded. It benefited greatly from the widespread sympathy in Spain that followed the USSR decision to send aid to the Republic. It continued to celebrate the accomplishments of the USSR but added the goal of publicizing Soviet generosity in helping its Spanish brothers and sisters.

For the most part, the association echoed the main themes of the Republican government, which was also grateful for Soviet aid. Reflecting the Spanish popular front's effort to emphasize its democratic identity, the association insisted that it was completely independent from the Communist Party or any political platform. However, it was also promoting the interests of a communist foreign government, which could undermine the Republic's democratic image.

The Nationalist posters were generally more uniform, reflecting the fact that the Nationalist operation was more centralized and hierarchical. In addition, there was certainly no independent Nazi or Italian propaganda circulating in the rebel zone.

Both sides shared the tendency to define the enemy in simplistic terms. Thus, the popular front was equated with bolshevism and anarchism, which in turn were linked with destruction. Outside of Spain, the focus was solely on communism, because few outside Spain had heard of anarchism.

But Nationalist propaganda differed from the Republican side when it came to defining their own cause. While Republican propaganda reflected a diverse and fractious population, the Nationalists were united under authoritarian leadership. As a result, we don't see the same tensions and mixed messages in Nationalist propaganda. Posters that defined what they were fighting for focused on a few simple themes; these included the unity and greatness of Spain, the figure of the leader, and the religious crusade.

It's clear that propaganda was a fundamental feature of the Spanish Civil War, both internationally and domestically. In a war that depended on foreign aid and volunteers but was restrained by a poorly implemented pact of nonintervention, thousands of individual citizens and groups stepped into the breach left by passive governments. Against a deeply polarized ideological backdrop, many observers believed that not taking sides was no longer an option in what they were convinced was the grand struggle over the future of Western civilization.

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Question

1 The mobilization of art and literature for political causes dramatically expanded in the 20th century, leading to ongoing debates about the role of artists and intellectuals in modern society. Should artists be involved in "pure" and "universal" creative production, or are they inevitably and understandably caught up in the causes of their time? What are your thoughts about this debate in reflecting on their advocacy in the Spanish Civil War?

17

Military Campaigns in the Spanish Civil War

The military history of the Spanish Civil War has always taken a back seat to the political drama, but it was on the battlefield that the Nationalists won and the Republicans lost the war. It's hard to pinpoint the key turning point after which defeat for the Republicans became inevitable, but the war steadily turned against them after the end of 1936. The successful defense of Madrid that fall was the high point for the Republicans. It slowed the advance of the Nationalists, but their military forces never gained the upper hand. This lecture examines several key battles and how the outcomes affected the strategies on each side.

Early Days and the Siege of the Alcazar

Republican forces managed to crush a few islands of initial Nationalist resistance within their territory. The rebel garrisons of Oviedo and Gijón inside the Republican stronghold of Asturias were defeated in the first few weeks by militias comprised of socialist and anarchist trade union members. It would take the Nationalist army another year to conclude the conquest of the northern industrial corridor from Bilbao to Asturias.

The other major Nationalist outpost was the *alcázar*, or "fortress," in the Republican-controlled province of Toledo. In contrast to Asturias, this high-profile contest was resolved in favor of the Nationalists after months of stalemate.

The conflict began after the outbreak of the coup, when the rebel military governor of the province, José Moscardó, had holed up in the old alcazar of the capital. He was accompanied by hundreds of Civil Guard troops and their families, along with all the ammunition from a nearby munitions factory. Despite launching numerous attacks and destroying many of the outer buildings, Republican troops could not dislodge the defenders.

The siege was finally broken when General Franco decided to deviate the course of the Army of Africa from its march to Madrid. The army arrived at the outskirts of Toledo at the end of September 1936. Many militia units fled rather than directly engage, but those trapped in the city were massacred on the spot. Nationalist propaganda ignored the carnage and focused on the heroic encounter between Franco and Moscardó, who became a Nationalist hero who was first promoted to general and later appointed count of the Alcázar of Toledo.

Although it had little military significance for either side, the siege and rescue of the alcazar became a cornerstone of Nationalist propaganda and mythology. Its symbolic significance was enhanced by the fact that Toledo was the first major city reconquered by the Christian armies against the Moors in the 11th century.

Short-Lived Republican Successes

The rescue of the alcazar may have contributed to the first major setback for the Nationalists—the Battle of Madrid. Franco's delay of troops gave the Republicans more time to prepare their defenses. They could also take advantage of the first shipments of Soviet arms and tanks, as well as the incorporation of the first International Brigades. The tide turned briefly toward the Republicans.

The Nationalists continued their efforts to capture Madrid over the next couple of months. However, the Republicans successfully resisted these attacks at the Battles of Jarama and Guadalajara in February and March of 1937.

As a result of Republican victories in the Madrid region between November of 1936 and March of 1937, the front remained more or less stable during this period. The only major Nationalist victory during the period was in the far south at Málaga in February 1937.

By the fall of 1936, the city of Málaga was a Republican outpost in largely Nationalist territory. It was defended by anarchist and communist militia units, which operated independently and followed no chain of command. Like Toledo, it had more symbolic than military significance. For militia supporters, it offered proof that the revolutionary mobilization of the people could defeat the fascist enemy.

But the 12,000 untrained anarchist militiamen with fewer than 8,000 modern rifles were no match for the 10,000 Italian and 15,000 Nationalist troops that converged on the city from four directions at the end of January 1937. Within five days, the Nationalists had captured the city and consolidated control over western Andalusia. The defeat exacerbated the internal political divisions on the Republican side.

This Republican victory in the Battle of Jarama came at a cost. The British and American brigades lost between a fourth and a third of their men. At the Battle of Guadalajara, Italian troops suffered a humiliating defeat, after which the Nationalists shifted their attention away from capturing Spain's capital.

Nationalist Conquest of the North

After their failure to capture Madrid, the Nationalists developed a systematic strategic plan to conquer Republican territory piece by piece, while the Republican government was in the midst of a divisive political crisis. The first phase in the plan was the conquest of the northern corridor of the Basque Country, Santander, and Asturias.

These regions were of special interest to the Nationalists for their enormous industrial capacity. Conquest would also give them the majority of the country's population. While the Nationalists plotted the pivotal offensive to the north, the Republican army could only manage diversionary defensive fronts at Brunete and Belchite, which were ill-fated attempts at drawing Nationalist resources away from the northern front.

The conquest of the North began in the Basque Country in March of 1937. The German Condor Legion led the Nationalist domination of the sky, bombing both military and civilian targets, including the infamous bombing of the town of Guernica.

The Republican army and government in the main province of Vizcaya was under the control of the new Basque autonomous government. Political and military control in the Basque region was in the hands of the Basque Nationalist Party, which was conservative and Catholic. They supported the Republic because it had delivered them regional autonomy, but there had been minimal violence. Still, the Basque army suffered from the same lack of guns, ammunition, and trained officers as the rest of the Republican army. It is telling that even in a place with minimal infighting or economic disruption, the purely military disadvantage of the Republican army proved decisive. Fierce fighting in the well-fortified city of Bilbao did slow the Nationalist advance across the North, but by mid-June, the Basque authorities capitulated.

Over the next few months, the Nationalist army plowed west through Santander, decimating more than half of the Asturian brigades sent to halt the advance. They finally entered the Asturian capital of Oviedo on October 15 and the port city of Gijón on the 21st. Some escaped by sea, and a few retreated to the mountains, where they formed guerilla units. The victors inflicted the usual indiscriminate punishment on the perceived left-wing population that remained behind.

Nationalists Push East

A decisive phase of the war followed, from November 1937 to the summer of 1938. The Nationalist army drove east through Aragon toward the Mediterranean coast, hoping to cut what was left of the Republican territory in two. The remaining contiguous Republican territory was bordered on the northwest by Madrid, on the northeast by Valencia, and on the southwest by Granada. During this period, the Republican army continued to fight a defensive war. As before, they poured resources into a series of diversionary campaigns, but they were as ineffective as they were costly.

The Battle of Teruel in the winter of 1937 to 1938 was one of the most violent confrontations of the war. The Republican offensive cost at least an estimated 60,000 Republican and 40,000 Nationalist casualties, and critically weakened Republican forces.

Faced by a six-week Nationalist counteroffensive, the Republican forces were too worn down to hold their position. The defeat then left the Republican forces too depleted and weak to face the Nationalist offensive in Aragon that began in early March 1938. The 15th International Brigade, which contained the American, Canadian, and British battalions, was moved to the Aragon front and suffered catastrophic losses amidst the general rout of the Republican forces. On April 1, most of the remaining Abraham Lincoln Brigade was killed or captured outside Gandesa.

On the Nationalist side, both German and Italian planes played a major role in strategic bombing of troops and civilians fleeing the zone. On April 15, the Nationalist army reached the Mediterranean Sea at Vinaroz, and the Republic was cut in two. And so the stage was set for the last phase of the war, from summer 1938 until the conquest of Catalonia in February 1939.

The Battle of the Ebro

These were desperate months for the Republic. As the Nationalists closed in, prolonging the war became a last-ditch strategy. Perhaps if they could hold on long enough, the European democracies would finally intervene or at least push for a negotiated peace.

The Republican army staged a last stand in the Battle of the Ebro. The attack began in July 1938 to stop the Nationalist advance on the capital of Valencia. The Republicans benefited from the brief opening of the French-Spanish border, which allowed a replenishment of arms and supplies. On July 24, 80,000 Republican troops successfully crossed the Ebro River. They established a beachhead along a sparsely defended front, penetrating 13 miles into Nationalist territory.

Franco was apparently taken off guard. There was even some grumbling about his leadership and his decision to concentrate his full forces in repelling the advance. His decision unleashed the deadliest battle of the civil war. The Battle of the Ebro ended four months later, with up to 70,000 Republican and 60,000 Nationalist casualties.

Once the Nationalists sent in reinforcements, the battle settled into a costly stalemate at Gandesa, where the Abraham Lincoln Brigade had been decimated several months earlier. The Republican forces returned to the defensive, digging in against yet another overpowering counteroffensive that displayed the Nationalists' superior firepower and resources.

Still, they held on for more than three months. A combination of strategic mistakes, faltering chain of command, and inexperienced new recruits in the Nationalist army played into Republican hands. Eventually, however, the last of the Republican forces withdrew on November 16 to defend Catalonia.

The Fall of Catalonia

The Nationalists launched their frontal attack on Catalonia on December 23, 1938. On January 3, they broke through the last major Republican defenses protecting the advance on Barcelona, although heavy bombing of the city began earlier. The government fled Barcelona on January 23, and the Nationalists marched into the capital three days later.

After the fall of Catalonia, Britain and France recognized Franco's regime on February 27, and President Azaña resigned. However, Prime Minister Juan Negrín and his government continued to resist surrender at all costs. But by this point, defeatism had taken hold among some sectors. A group of army officers in Madrid under Segismundo Casado believed it was possible to negotiate an honorable peace with Franco and sought to overthrow the Negrín government. In an ugly ending to a tragic war, Republicans turned on Republicans. The attempted coup was defeated, but it only hastened the war's end.

Looking back from the Nationalist victory in 1939, it is easy to view it as inevitable from the outset. They benefited from a steady stream of high-quality arms and supplies and had the substantial support of the disciplined and well-equipped German and Italian units, in addition to the professional Army of Africa. The clear chain of command and well-organized supply chains kept the Nationalist army more focused. The Republican forces lacked all of these advantages, and the political divisions and internal

power struggles within the Republican government clearly undermined their military capacity. The result was a resounding military defeat for the Republic, but the vindictive and unconditional victory imposed by the Nationalists brought neither peace nor a true end to hostilities.

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Question

1 The lecture ended by summarizing the negative feedback loop on the Republican side between military defeats, shortage of supplies, demoralization, and exacerbation of existing divisions, which makes it difficult to isolate the weight and primacy of each factor. After hearing about the military evolution of the war, what was your biggest takeaway in terms of this feedback loop?

18

Guernica to Madrid: The Urban Battlefield

In the larger history of 20th-century warfare, the urban target epitomized the growing civilianization of warfare. War was undergoing a transition between the largely trench warfare of the First World War and the incendiary carpet-bombing of World War II. That transition produced more civilian than military victims for the first time in a major European war. Although the scale of urban destruction in Spain was smaller than in the Second World War, it was unprecedented at the time. This lecture looks at several urban areas that became military targets, mostly on the part of Nationalist army and air force.

The Bombings of Guernica and Málaga

Even though it was not a major city, the Basque town of Guernica came to symbolize the transition in warfare from soldiers killing each other to turning their firepower on defenseless civilians. In some ways, there was nothing special about the Guernica bombing. It was the combination of British journalist George Steer's gripping on-the-ground reporting, printed in many major newspapers, followed by Picasso's immortalization of the event in his painting which crystallized its emblematic role in 20th-century anti-war discourse.

The event took place on April 26, 1937, during a three-hour period when Condor airplanes carried out wave after wave of attacks—part of a new strategy being developed by the Nazi air force. The bombing occurred on a market day, so it was full of people from the surrounding villages as well as refugees from the eastern regions of the Basque Country. The total number of those killed or wounded is still disputed—anywhere from a few hundred to more than a thousand—but the majority of the town was destroyed. The town had no antiaircraft defenses, which allowed the planes to dive down to rooftop level. They dropped bombs on the narrow roads leading out of the city, which were clogged by panicked civilians.

In contrast to the worldwide attention to Guernica, the bloodbath that followed the Nationalist victory in Málaga a few months earlier had received little attention. The Nationalist commander Gonzalo Queipo de Llano had promised revenge for the violence perpetrated against Nationalist sympathizers by the revolutionaries in the first summer of the war. His revenge was the bombing and shelling of the refugees on the coastal road, who were heading for Republican territory in Almería. Several thousand refugees died trying to escape, while thousands more were summarily executed over the following weeks. An estimated 40,000 civilians fled Málaga in the days after its defeat.

The Canadian doctor and International Brigadier Norman Bethune saw the aftermath firsthand. He went to Spain in late 1936 and developed a mobile blood transfusion unit that could treat soldiers at the front. After the bombing of Málaga, Bethune brought his team from Valencia to the

Málaga-Almería road to help the refugees. He published an on-the-ground account in his 1937 book, in which he described what he called the largest, most horrible evacuation of a city that he'd ever seen.

Despite Bethune's published account of the Málaga massacre, it was largely unknown until the early 21st century, when local officials began to organize commemorations. The contrast between Guernica and Málaga demonstrates the sometimes arbitrary nature of the international spotlight—an issue that continues to shape our understanding or ignorance of the many current conflicts around the world today.

The populations and government were at first completely unprepared for aerial bombardment, with no infrastructure of civil defense or air raid shelters. In the aftermath of the war, the ruined urban landscapes of cities served as brutal symbols of the unconditional victory of the Nationalists over Republican Spain.

The Siege of Madrid

Madrid received as much international attention as Guernica. Madrid was never captured, and the successful effort to defeat the Nationalist offensive was one of the major early turning points of the war. Although Nationalist troops were kept outside the city, fierce fighting on the outskirts and the bombing and blockade of the population brought civilians into the heat of battle.

The unlikely defense of the city began in the chaos of the Republican government's decision to flee the city on November 6, as the Nationalist army confidently prepared their attack. The government left José Miaja, the newly appointed commander of the Madrid forces, in charge of the city. With no warning, no headquarters, and no government in place, Miaja's orders were to defend the city at all costs and organize a defense committee.

He quickly formed a committee that represented all the political forces in the city. He appointed as his chief of staff Lieutenant Colonel Vicente Rojo. By all accounts, Rojo was one of the best officers on the Republican side. During the first weeks, he coordinated a defensive line along the two main points of Nationalist attack: in the Casa de Campo green space on the western border and the Manzanares River, which was a natural barrier to the south.

Although the siege of Madrid lasted for two years, the most intense fighting occurred in the first month along the banks of the river in the peripheral neighborhoods on the southwest and on the campus of Madrid's University, near the Casa de Campo. Having failed to break through the Republican lines in the first couple of weeks, Nationalist aircraft began to bomb the city. These air raids killed an estimated 2,000 civilians. As the Nationalists moved their focus from Madrid to other fronts, and as the Republican air force was organized to protect the city, bombing raids declined.

Still, the civilian population continued to suffer. The Nationalist army did what it could to prevent supplies from entering Madrid, leaving the population short of food and warm clothes as winter set in. In addition, local officials were overwhelmed by the problems of clearing out rubble, uncovering corpses, and helping residents repair bombed-out buildings.

The Republican government in Valencia created a committee in April 1937 whose job was to manage all these challenges and protect Madrid's cultural and artistic heritage from destruction.

Republican officials in Madrid also inflicted violence and terror against purported enemy citizens. Many presumed Nationalist supporters had been trapped in the city, up to 20,000 of whom took refuge in the city's foreign embassies. The Nationalist general Emilio Mola famously boasted to an English journalist that he would take the city with his four columns of Moroccan and Spanish Legion troops, along with assistance from what he called the fifth column of secret supporters inside the city. The term *fifth column* has now become a ubiquitous phrase referring to internal subversion.

Republicans arrested and killed many suspected Nationalists, including more than 1,000 prisoners from the Cárcel Modelo who were taken out on November 11 as Republicans were trying to prevent a Nationalist surge into Madrid. Over the course of the next month, the prisoners were executed in what have become known as the Paracuellos massacres.

Beyond this notable atrocity, more than 60 centers detained and tried civilians with perfunctory public trials, most of them linked to one of the popular front parties or organizations. An estimated 6,000 to 8,000 suspected Nationalist sympathizers were killed in this process of extrajudicial terror in the capital city.

Attacks on Barcelona

Held in Republican territory for most of the war, Barcelona was identified both with revolutionary anarchism and Catalan nationalism. And as elsewhere, initially it saw a wave of wild violence against civilians linked to conservative parties and organizations. Scholars estimate that 8,000 individuals were executed by Republican forces in Barcelona, either by ad hoc committees or later by the popular tribunals set up to administer summary justice. A quarter of these were ecclesiastics, and many of the rest belonged to right-wing political parties.

To escape punishment, many of the wealthy inhabitants fled or donned working-class clothing to disguise their status. Similar to Madrid, a violent feedback loop emerged between rooting out internal fifth-column enemies and Nationalist aerial bombings. The civilian toll—both physical and psychological—soared within a city that was far from the front lines until the end of the war.

The Nationalists turned their full attention to the city after completing the conquest of the North and beginning the drive through Aragon that would separate Catalonia from the rest of the Republic. From the beginning of 1938, regular aerial bombing campaigns were inflicted on the city, most of them by Italian planes stationed nearby on the island of Majorca.

The worst concentrated aerial bombardment took place over three days in mid-March, when raids left almost 1,000 dead and 1,500 wounded. Italian planes dropped 44 tons of bombs, including delayed-fuse bombs that were designed to pass through roofs before exploding inside buildings.

The Nationalists justified these bombings by claiming that supplies were stored in the basements of apartment buildings. However, it seems clear that the aim of demoralizing and punishing the civilian population must have played a role in the ongoing attacks on a city that was never on the front line of battle. More than 2,500 civilians were killed in Barcelona—almost half of the 5,500 deaths caused by aerial bombing in all of Catalonia.

As in Madrid, the Catalan government created defense committees to better protect the population and the architecture, but in Barcelona they mounted a particularly effective civilian defense infrastructure. They organized the construction of 1,400 air raid shelters around the city, the majority of which used existing subterranean spaces or basements. Each shelter was guarded by residents in the neighborhood, whose job was to help people enter once the sirens announced an upcoming attack.

Over the course of the war, Barcelona was bombed 194 times, beginning in February 1937 from a warship in the harbor, which caused 18 deaths. As a port city that received, stored, and distributed supplies arriving by sea, its warehouses, factories, and train depots were strategic targets.

By early 1939, when the remnants of the exhausted Republican army had fallen back to defend Catalonia, everything began to fall apart. Instead of a bitter fight to the end, demoralized Republican forces showed little interest in serious resistance. The Catalan government fled Barcelona on January 23, and the Nationalists triumphantly entered the city three days later.

Almost half a million Catalans fled across the French border in the wake of the defeat. The victors were eager to assert dominance over a city that epitomized not only working-class revolution but Catalan nationalism. An estimated 4,000 were executed and thousands more imprisoned. In addition, the new government criminalized all public expressions of Catalan language, culture, and identity.

The overall number of Spaniards killed in aerial bombardments is estimated at 10,000, a fraction of the losses in the Second World War. But it's important to acknowledge this transitional moment in 20th-century warfare. The specter of Guernica is no less horrifying because it pales next to Dresden or Hiroshima. In its own context, it marked a rupture that paved the way for these future tragedies.

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Question

1 The bombing of Guernica has become a symbol of the horrors of modern warfare. How is your own understanding of this symbol and event changed by situating it in its specific and original historical context?

19

The War as Soldiers Experienced It

In this lecture, we turn from battles to the soldiers who fought them. Both armies began with significant untrained-but-enthusiastic voluntary units, but there was no upwelling of mass enlistment on either side. As a result, both armies increasingly relied on involuntary conscription as the war dragged on. And both suffered from the morale issues arising from a brutal and endless war.

Early Republican Forces

In the first stage of the war, the hastily organized Republican militia units were a heterogeneous mix of loyal soldiers from regular army units and members of different political parties and trade unions. In the chaos after the uprising, most army units on the Republican side were disbanded, so some soldiers joined the new units as volunteers.

But the majority of militias were comprised of working-class trade unionists. Many formed their own individual brigades, taking advantage of the government's desperate decision to distribute arms to these organizations. Among the trade union volunteers, the majority were either unskilled laborers, agricultural workers, or unemployed, and most were young and unmarried. As members of anarchist, socialist, or communist trade unions, these were ideologically committed individuals, inspired by the call to fight against fascism.

The anarchists of the central zone created 19 battalions with 32,000 men, while the Communists recruited 25,000 into their Fifth Regiment division. Nevertheless, this was a relatively small group. Estimates put the total at about 120,000 men and a few hundred women who joined the militia units in the summer of 1936.

From the beginning, these units faced huge challenges, including lack of military experience, bad-quality weapons, and the absence of uniforms. The hodgepodge pattern of direct recruitment left commanders unsure of how many men they had under their command.

Even more serious was the profound distrust between professional officers and militiamen. Military men often viewed the militias as left-wing revolutionary rabble-rousers, while militiamen suspected the professional soldiers' loyalties. Many anarchists and socialists were already anti-militarist. The military's hierarchical structure and culture of obedience seemed to imitate the same unjust social system they wanted to overturn.

As a result, militia volunteers generally rejected these military norms. Commanders reported that soldiers would leave their unit at will to return home or would disobey a direct order if they weren't convinced of its usefulness. Or they would refuse to fight alongside militia units of different political identities.

All of these problems quickly convinced the Republican government of the need to create a regular army. But it is important to give the militias their due. They prevented what could have been a complete rout in July of 1936, giving the Republic space to reorganize both the government and the army. Their contribution was essential in the first weeks when the government didn't know who to trust in the regular army. Even the mythologized vision of heroic workers served the Republic as a propaganda tool, held up as an inspiration for others to follow.

Early Nationalist Forces

The Nationalists had their own version of heroic warriors: the volunteer Carlist and Falangist militias whose iconic images appeared on their posters. And like the distinct Republican militia units, Carlists and Falangists were uneasy allies with very distinct worldviews and goals, united by a common enemy. Also similar to the Republican militias, the members were already mobilized in political organizations. The Falange established 116 battalions with more than 200,000 men, while the Carlist Requetés formed 35 units with 60,000 fighters.

Unlike the Republican militias, Falangists and Carlists were well outfitted with recognizable, distinct uniforms—blue shirts for the Falange and red berets for the Carlists. The Nationalists immediately integrated these units into the military command structure of what was already a professional army. As a result, the squabbles between them were kept more or less under control.

But tensions and incidents continued, especially after the forced unification into a single party, the Movimiento, which was dominated by the larger Falange. Some Carlists refused to wear the Falange uniforms or perform the fascist salute, and they resisted swearing the oath of the Movimiento, which they thought placed the country above God. Carlists supported the restoration of a Catholic monarch who would impose religious unity. In the end, they were never fully absorbed into the single party.

Conscription on Both Sides

The political and symbolic struggles that shaped militia life faded as the early volunteers were replaced or absorbed into the regular armies through mass conscription of ordinary Spaniards. The Republican decision to conscript came at the end of the summer of 1936 in the face of imminent defeat. For the Nationalists, the failure to take Madrid in the fall convinced them they would have to increase the military force for a long war. By the end, fewer than 1 in 10 soldiers who fought were volunteers, as conscripts became the main fighting force.

Recruitment was organized at the municipal level, through records kept by town halls of eligible men. All those on the list received instructions to present themselves at the town hall for medical examination, where they would be classified as fit, exempt, or unfit for service. Of the 5 million men theoretically eligible, about 2.5 million were called up by one side or the other. The rest were classified as unfit, sought exemptions, or found other ways to avoid service.

The Republic's order included all those between the ages of 16 and 45, while the Nationalists limited the call to those aged 18 to 33. Nevertheless, both sides mobilized about the same number of men: 1.3 million for the

Republicans and 1.26 million for the Nationalists. Each government set up processing stations that registered, outfitted, and assigned the new recruits to their units before sending them off to the front with minimal training.

In general, the Nationalist soldiers expressed confidence in the ability of their leaders to supply their needs. In contrast, the Republican soldiers felt increasingly neglected and underserved.

Conditions Affecting Morale

A key difference between the two armies was the growing contrast in the matériel conditions for their soldiers, both for morale and in maintaining an effective fighting force. The Republicans' economic problems, including the inflation, made it more difficult for them to buy the necessary supplies for their soldiers. Epidemics of scurvy reflected their poor diet. Shortages of blankets and boots generated various collection drives to provide what the government could not. For the same reasons, soldiers were either paid late or could buy little because of inflated prices. These problems led to looting and scavenging as well as desertions.

Meanwhile, the Nationalists experienced nothing like the extreme scarcity among Republican troops. Beyond more regular delivery of necessities, the Nationalist resources allowed them to provide small luxuries like alcohol or sweets, or Christmas bonuses and care packages.

Another common demand from soldiers was access to sex, supplied by prostitutes whose ranks were increased by privation among poor women. Both sides tolerated the practice, but the Nationalists tried to regulate it with official brothels and health screening certificates. On the Republican side, prostitution was unregulated, with apparently higher levels of venereal disease.

At first, both armies tried to protect their poorly trained conscripts from the most dangerous operations, reserving them for defensive positions. The Nationalists could continue this practice because they had a larger corps of elite troops in the Moroccan Regulares and the Spanish Foreign Legion, in addition to the Italian divisions. Without this buffer, the Republicans leaned more heavily on the conscripts, who were marched long distances on foot to advanced positions. Placing poorly trained soldiers in the vanguard in turn probably weakened the next attack and started a downward spiral.

In addition to matériel and military conditions, troop morale depended on their understanding and interpretation of why their sacrifice mattered. The majority of recruits on both sides were peasants. Some were illiterate, and many had no political affiliations, unlike the early volunteers. So, both sides invested a significant propaganda effort in motivating them to withstand the hardships of war.

In a civil war, each side has to paint a picture of "us versus them" that is more complex than in a war against another nation. Whether this bifurcated vision resonated with the average recruit is an open question. Many peasants may have identified more with their small villages, so a battle for the soul of Spain may have seemed remote from their everyday experiences.

On the Nationalist side, the task of educating recruits was mostly left to the chaplains. They linked their cause with the religious crusade and painted a dire picture of Catholic Spain under siege from atheistic communists. Soldiers were told that this threat required strict discipline and obedience to win the battle.

The Republicans employed political commissars, influenced by the Soviet model. At the same time, their message was as infused with Spanish nationalism as the other side. Their version of the nation was linked with progress, enlightenment, and free thinking.

Whereas Nationalists didn't require explicit ideological commitments from their soldiers, Republicans were more interested in convincing recruits of the righteousness of their cause.

Penalties for Evasion

Morale was a serious issue for both armies, given the length and brutality of the fratricidal war. However, it became one of the most serious issues for the Republican army during the final year. Low morale led to desertion, shirking, and self-mutilation, all time-honored strategies to avoid putting oneself in harm's way.

These individual strategies for survival reveal the tepid enthusiasm of many ordinary men to join the struggle. From the beginning, the thousands of men who simply ignored mobilization calls became the first official deserters. Some fled to the mountains, crossed the border, or boarded a ship for the Americas. Both sides forbade travel abroad for all adult men, and in February 1937 they revoked all exemptions for military service to expose shirkers. Self-mutilators were either shot on the spot, placed in advanced positions, or left to die of gangrene on the field. In June of 1937, both sides again increased the penalties for failure to obey the call up. They also instituted mandatory reevaluations of those who had been deemed earlier unfit for service.

In August 1938 during the Battle of the Ebro, President Negrín tried a different strategy by proclaiming an amnesty for thousands of fugitives, in the hopes that some would take the opportunity to reenter society and join the dwindling Republican forces. But as a rule, both sides moved toward harsher measures, including the death penalty for defection to the other side. However, in general the Nationalists began with stricter traditional military justice, while the Republicans reluctantly accepted more draconian measures as indispensable in the face of disintegrating morale.

The shift from committed volunteers to conscripts seems to reflect a general pattern in which the ideological battle lines faded into struggles for everyday survival. While this point could apply equally to each side, this trend increasingly favored the Nationalists, especially from the end of 1937. After that point, the combination of victory in battle and consistent supplies contrasted with Republican defeats and dwindling resources. As matériel fortunes shifted, the war was won or lost by the fighters who lived them every day.

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Question

1 How did this lecture about the soldiers' perspectives and experiences of the war from their position on the ground alter or enhance your understanding of the more classic top-down military history of the battles and stages of the war?

20

How the Nationalists Organized for Victory

In this lecture, we examine how the Nationalists built a successful wartime operation beyond the battlefield. After the failed Madrid offensive, the Nationalist leadership prepared for a longer war. In addition to shifting their military strategy, they also pursued three major organizational goals: consolidating their authoritarian institutional structure, stabilizing their financial resources, and organizing the logistics to supply their soldiers and civilians with basic necessities.

Consolidating the Authoritarian Structure

The emerging Nationalist political structure consolidated over the last year and a half of the war, after the foundation of the so-called New State in January of 1938. Since October 1936, when Franco maneuvered his appointment as head of state, the Nationalist side had effectively operated as a military dictatorship, but it had no official administrative structure beyond the advisory leadership council. Franco's astute advisor and brother-in-law, Ramón Serrano Súñer, convinced him that it was time to form a proper government.

Franco wanted to retain his unquestioned personal power, but he was also savvy enough to realize that any structure had to make room for all of the interest groups in the Nationalist camp. The forcible unification of the Falange and the Carlists in April 1937 into the single party, the Movimiento, was the first step. But the key turning point was the establishment of a state apparatus and civilian government.

The decision paralleled a turning point in the military operations, following the conquest of the northern industrial corridor and in the midst of the Battle of Teruel and as the Nationalists began their next decisive offensive. It was clear that the expanding territory under their control needed a more regular governing structure. More symbolically, the establishment of a state was also a political and diplomatic signal of the growing confidence in a Nationalist victory.

In this context, Franco formed the first government of the New State, regulated by the Law of Central Administration. The core principle that remained unchanged was Franco's absolute power in his dual role as head of state and president of the government. The administration was divided into 11 ministries, presided over by the president of the government, who appointed the ministers. The head of state occupied the presidency, while the combination of president and the council of ministers constituted the government. Finally, the ministers had to swear an oath of fealty to the head of state and the Nationalist regime.

The First Government of the New State

The ministry of education was entrusted to the traditionalist Catholics, public order and defense was given to military leaders, and industrial and agrarian organization to the Falange. Ramón Serrano Súñer took the position of minister of the interior, while Franco's brother Nicolás was sidelined, appointed ambassador to Portugal. Most scholars consider Serrano Súñer as the main architect of the New State and the man with the greatest ideological influence on Franco during these years. He advocated for greater fascistization, and he pushed for even closer relations with the Nazi and Italian governments.

Establishing New Laws

Among the first important laws passed were the reinstatement of the death penalty and the abolition of the Catalan autonomy statute. This was followed by the prohibition of the use of Catalan in public documents. The government also passed a draconian press censorship law that included government appointment of the chief editors of newspapers.

For Catholic traditionalists, the government created a new education framework that gave absolute power to the church to design curricula for secondary schools and disavowed the secularization measures of the

Republic. For the Falange, Franco approved the Fuero de Trabajo, or "Labor Charter," that the Movimiento leadership drew up in March of 1938 at the behest of Serrano Súñer. It declared that the economy would be organized according to the principles and structures of vertical syndicalism, modeled after the Italian fascist labor charter. The Fuero became the first of seven fundamental laws that would constitute a kind of constitution for the dictatorship.

In December of 1938, the council of ministers took the more radical step of staking their claim to the past. With an increasingly clear path to victory after the Battle of the Ebro, the council believed it was time to assert the legitimacy of the Nationalist regime from the moment of the coup. Conversely, the Republic was declared illegitimate from the same moment.

The resulting Law of Political Responsibilities was issued in February of 1939, on the cusp of the conquest of Catalonia. It effectively outlawed all Republican parties and associations and backdated treasonable offenses to anyone who had supported the legal Republic since July 1936. It laid the institutional framework for a broad scope of postwar repression and retribution. In the same spirit, Franco repeatedly rejected all calls for mediation in what he continued to frame as a clear-cut battle between Spain and its enemies.

Stabilizing Financial Resources

Another, more diffuse interest group that the Nationalist government courted was the economic elite, both foreign and domestic. Despite the Republic's efforts to downplay revolutionary expropriations and collectivizations, most wealthy property owners and businessmen distrusted the Republic. Many had already moved their capital to overseas accounts and investments in 1931.

Franco and his advisors worked to convince these businessmen to reinvest in the reconstruction of Spanish industry and commerce in the Nationalist zone. Using some of the foreign loans secured from Italy and Germany, the Burgos council offered loans and easy credit to restart businesses that had been collectivized or expropriated in the Republican zone. Bankers and

aristocratic families also directly donated to the Nationalist cause or offered their wealth and reputations as collateral for more foreign loans. Individual companies also agreed to sell goods to the Nationalists, often on credit. This was the case with the US petroleum companies, which supplied 75% of the Nationalist petroleum products.

Key to the Nationalists' growing financial stability was the ability of the government to convince foreign lenders and markets of the solvency of its currency and its commitment to protect private property. Because they lacked access to the state gold reserve, credit was indispensable for the Nationalists, and credit is built on trust. To build that trust, the Nationalist government put its financial policy in the hands of those who defended capitalist orthodoxy, which was the language of international finance.

The finance minister was a conservative monarchist named Andrés Amado. To stabilize its currency, he advised prohibiting banks from trading foreign currency and fixed the peseta at its prewar level. Nationalist authorities also paid attention to the amount of money in circulation, placing official stamps on circulating banknotes. In the spring of 1937, the use of Republican currency in the Nationalist zone was outlawed, and old bills were withdrawn as new ones were issued.

Andrés Amado's continuity as financial architect of the Nationalist state is an underappreciated element of its coherence and stability. At the end of the war, he received the grand cross of the Orden de Isabela la Católica, a prestigious award to honor those who rendered extraordinary service to the nation.

Currency stabilization gave Spaniards greater confidence to redeposit their money into bank accounts, even though interest rates were low. The increase in deposits returned large profits for the bankers and made funds available for financing the government. In May of 1938, the government began paying out interest payments for holders of state bonds, which again reinforced the stability and solvency of the financial system.

The Nationalists also increased the state's income through effective taxation. The state created several new taxes, all of which financed an estimated 30% of its expenses. The incorporation of the northern industrial corridor in late 1937, with its extensive mining and metallurgy businesses, significantly expanded the tax base.

Even if business owners had been expropriated during the Republican period, they were required to pay back taxes or face stiff fines. In return, they received a guarantee of property rights and the promise of an obedient and servile labor force after the disbanding of the left-wing trade unions. Successful taxation also helped to curb inflation.

Increasing Agricultural and Industrial Production

Rural Spain was the core base of the Nationalists, and in general their policies favored agricultural producers over urban consumers—the reverse of the Republicans. Thus, the government established a good working relationship with the peasant farmers. They returned land that had been confiscated under the Republic. They ensured that farmers had incentives to grow and sell their produce. Instead of imposing price controls as did the Republicans, they set price guarantees and sold seeds at reduced prices.

In addition, they paid farmers well for requisitioned goods, a practice that limited hoarding and black-market dealing. Wages for farm labor actually rose, as farmers faced labor shortages due to conscription and repression. The result was an unprecedented full-employment agricultural economy that improved everyday life for some of the poorest landless laborers—only, of course, if they were not labeled political enemies.

During the last years of the war, the industrial sector also expanded in the Nationalist zone. The major turning point was the conquest of the North, especially the mining basin of Asturias and the steel and iron industries of Vizcaya, which allowed the Nationalists to produce some of their own armaments. Under the Nationalists' strict controls and quotas, steel and

iron production and coal extraction doubled. While wages remained low, workers were paid regularly and could buy more food with those wages, and the number of jobs increased.

Contrasting Experiences

Favorable economic metrics like a stabilized currency and increased production don't tell the whole story of life in the Nationalist zone. The major divide that defined who ate and who went hungry was political affiliation.

Beyond the thousands who were killed or suffered in concentration camps with starvation rations, the wives and children left behind without a breadwinner were often left destitute. In an economy and society that frowned on female employment, women were refused jobs and reduced to begging or the meager rations at soup kitchens, and some mothers gave up their children to state care as the only hope for their survival. Others turned to prostitution, feeding the higher demand from conscripted soldiers.

In contrast, widows of Nationalist soldiers who died in service were awarded pensions. Given the alternatives, it is easy to understand why this policy was one of the powerful incentives offered to former Republican soldiers if they joined the Nationalist army. Thus, the Nationalist state tried to draw a line between those it considered the unsalvageable enemy and the rest of the neutral or misled population. The enemy was usually identified by membership in a popular front political party or trade union, or the holding of a government post. Anyone who did not fall in these categories might be won over with stable employment, full bellies, and purchasing power for their pesetas.

With this view of the Nationalist organization of the war effort, we now have the complete picture of elements that favored a Nationalist victory. If Spaniards in the Nationalist zone generally lived better during the war, the postwar period inaugurated one of the most difficult decades for many Spaniards. The so-called years of hunger were marked by extreme repression and devastating poverty and starvation, all happening while the world's eyes were turned elsewhere.

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Question

1 In terms of explaining the more successful Nationalist administrative and financial organization of the war effort, what did you think was most helpful: the discipline of authoritarian centralization or market economic policies like currency stabilization?

21

How the Republic Organized for the Long War

While the Nationalists continued to consolidate and expand, the Republican side struggled with both internal divisions and an increasingly dire military situation. Addressing both of these challenges was the goal of the new government that was established in May 1937 under a new prime minister: the moderate socialist Juan Negrín. In this lecture, we look at Negrín's strategy to achieve a more unified Republican state and convince international democratic powers to drop their nonintervention stance.

Centralizing the New Government

Prime Minister Negrín's strategy to address domestic infighting was to focus on discipline, unity, and further centralization. As part of this latter effort, Negrín's government tried to rein in the revolutionary forces. After being assigned a diminished role in the new government, the revolutionary elements of both the CNT and UGT unions left the coalition. Meanwhile, the remaining Republican and Communist Parties enjoyed a stronger position in Negrín's new government.

Republicans, communists, and moderate socialists agreed that centralization and military discipline were needed to win the war. The violence in May 1937 had defeated anarchist autonomy in Barcelona, and by the summer, Negrín's government had dissolved the agrarian collectives in Aragon and dismantled the anarchist-dominated regional councils in Aragon and Catalonia. By the end of the year, factional infighting had mostly been reined in. However, there was growing defeatism among soldiers in the Republican camp.

Juan Negrín

Within the government, the first crack came in March 1938, when the minister of national defense, Indalecio Prieto, announced to the cabinet that the war could not be won and that it should be ended as soon as possible. President Azaña did not disagree, but he reluctantly concluded that there was no other option than continued resistance, given the Nationalists' refusal to negotiate a conditional surrender.

Following Prieto's resignation, Negrín formed a new but broader cabinet. It included both the UGT and the CNT, all of whom were united around the policy of resistance. However, in the face of increasing defeatism and declining morale, this so-called war government also pursued more draconian civilian and military discipline.

Swaying the International Community

Negrín proclaimed his Thirteen Points in April 1938. The points were meant to persuade the international community that the Republic was a true democracy, not a revolutionary regime. He called for the independence of Spain from "foreign forces," for the establishment of a democratic republic (to be approved in a referendum), and for the defense of private property.

In addition, he called for an "ample amnesty" for all those who aspired to the "reconstruction and greater glory of Spain," regardless of which side they had fought on. The only nonnegotiable issue was the demand for amnesty. Negrín feared that a Nationalist victory would, in his own words, unleash "a reign of terror and bloody reprisals" against anyone associated with the Republican cause.

But the Thirteen Points drew no response from the British or the French. And the lack of response from the Nationalists further hardened Negrín's conviction that he had no choice but to fight on and hope for a change in the international situation. He made a vain last attempt to win over international opinion in February 1939 by reducing the Thirteen Points to just three: an independent Spain, a referendum to decide the future regime, and "a patriotic labor of reconciliation."

The Casado Coup

By the fall of 1938, following the failure of the Ebro offensive, the only party that still defended a policy of resistance was the Communists. The rest of the population and soldiers were war-weary and had come to associate the Communist Party with the internal policing forces. These sentiments created the context for a fierce anti-communist backlash.

After the fall of Catalonia in February 1939, Britain and France formally recognized the Nationalist government, and President Azaña resigned. These events were the trigger for the coup against the Negrín government by Colonel Segismundo Casado, commander of the Center Army, who formed a National Council of Defense in Madrid on March 5, 1939. His council included all the parties and trade unions in the capital except the communists. Casado claimed that he would be in a better position to negotiate with Franco than Negrín. From this logic, Casado's new council proclaimed that it was the legitimate representative of the Republic.

The declaration led to armed confrontation in Madrid between council defenders and the communists. Casado's forces defeated the communists, at the cost of 243 lives and nearly 600 injured. Worse still, the coup prevented the possibility of a relatively orderly retreat of Republican civilians and soldiers to the ports of the Mediterranean. Casado himself escaped into exile, where he admitted that he had been wrong about the possibility of any negotiated peace with Franco. On March 28, 1939, Nationalist troops paraded through Madrid without encountering any resistance.

Spain's Communist Party

The actual role of the Communist Party in the Republic's tragic trajectory is still unresolved. Hanging over the debate is the question of how much the PCE, Spain's Communist Party, was responsible for its own actions or a pawn in Soviet schemes. There are two retrospective versions of the communist story in Spain.

One version of the story paints the PCE as a duplicitous, conniving force whose ultimate goal was to take over the government. In this view, the PCE's support for the popular front was only a calculated political expedient. It was simply the best face they could present to the democratic countries in the hopes of gaining their assistance in the war. Once the war was over, the story goes, their true face would have been revealed with the installation of a totalitarian communist dictatorship.

The other narrative takes the PCE's commitment to the popular front at face value. In this story, the PCE was genuinely dedicated to "popular democracy," as articulated in Negrín's 13-point program. Further, in this interpretation, the Socialist and Republican Parties worked together as part of a pluralist democratic state, even if the conditions of wartime forced compromise and sacrifice.

In practice, both of these stories oversimplify the case. The Republican side was so fragmented that even political groups who shared the same name did not always prioritize the same goals or values. At the same time, all of the competing visions held among the several parties and factions of the Republic shared one conviction in common: the revolutionary sense that they were constructing a new society.

The Republican camp was not divided between revolution and democracy. Instead, it incorporated an array of different revolutionary visions for Spain, some more recognizably democratic than others. For most, the liberal democracy of Britain or the United States wasn't on the table. Nor was the orderly social democracy that emerged in Western Europe after World War II.

For the left, a victorious Republic may have really been able to bring together democracy and socialism in a new experimental form. For the right, the only endgame was totalitarian communist dictatorship. It's hard to say whether Spain's peculiar political world even fits inside the Cold War binaries of communism versus democracy that we tend to retrospectively apply.

Inadequate Provisioning and Fiscal Shortcomings

For most civilians, the ideological debates probably had little relevance. Many of them were likely more concerned with providing for their families and protecting their homes than with grand political visions. And on this basic level, the Republican government was not able to deliver as well as its Nationalist counterpart.

Both the Republic's civilian population and its army suffered the consequences of inadequate provisioning. Hunger and privation began during the siege of Madrid in the winter of 1936 and spread to the rest of the Republican zone over the following months. The dramatic decline in Soviet shipments from early 1938 exacerbated their problems but did not create them. More fundamental were the complicating factors on the ground, from decentralization to local revolutionary projects. These realities made it all but impossible to organize a coherent provisioning strategy.

Even after the reconstruction of the state, logistics remained in disarray. Meanwhile, inflation undercut Republican currency both at home and abroad as uncontrolled printing flooded the economy with new notes.

Inflexible agrarian price controls were designed to placate urban consumers. But they encouraged hoarding of produce as the value of the Republican peseta dropped. Plummeting confidence in Republican currency and inadequate provisioning for its population highlighted the shortcomings of the Republic's political economy. The situation wasn't helped by the government's failure to collect taxes. Without enforcement, many in the Republican zone simply refused to pay, which further restricted the government's resources.

Fiscal shortcomings meant that soldiers were often paid late. The budgetary shortfall prompted the printing of ever more money, which in turn pushed up prices. By the later stages of the war, inflation had skyrocketed to 1,500%.

Declining Productivity

The Republic was already at a disadvantage in agriculture, since the majority of farmland fell into Nationalist hands almost from the outset. The remaining heartland in Aragon had been collectivized under anarchist control, subject to both local committees and the Regional Defense Council of Aragon. Similarly, the agricultural collectives in Valencia acted in a completely autonomous fashion, disregarding both trade union and state directives.

As food scarcity worsened, draft animals were slaughtered for meat, but the short-term relief only worsened the overall prospects. Without draft animals on farm and road, it became increasingly difficult not only to produce and transport food but also to supply the front line. By the end of the war, the Republic was on the verge of famine. Particularly hard-hit were the urban populations.

Bread line in Barcelona, January 29, 1939

In Barcelona, political leaders complained that many workers were calling in sick but refusing to submit the proper documentation. Instead of going to work, they spent their days searching for food, which often involved either barter or the black market. Villages fared better because families relied on local garden plots, although hungry soldiers passing through took what they could find, despite severe punishments for looting.

On the industrial front, the Republic began with a huge advantage, with the industrial areas of Asturias, Catalonia, and the Basque Country under its control. At first, factories were able to operate with existing inventories, but supply chains soon began to break down. In 1937, industrial production stood at 60% of the prewar level, but plummeted the following year. The lack of raw materials and parts and the growing problem of absenteeism on the part of a hungry and resentful workforce all contributed to a steep fall in productivity.

In the big picture, it's difficult to imagine which set of alternate circumstances might have paved the way for a Republican victory. But the mix of adverse factors that contributed to its defeat make it hard to argue that if only one factor had been different, they would have won, as in the classic pro-Republican claim that nonintervention was the single fatal ingredient. What is indisputable is that the defeat marked a pivotal moment in Spanish history whose aftermath is still playing out today.

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Question

1 The Republicans had so many interlocking factors working toward their defeat. How would you define the precise factors that would have had to be in place to imagine a Republican victory, and what do you think would have happened to the Republic after 1939?

22

Repression on the Two Sides

When we think of concentration camps, we often think of the infamous Nazi and Soviet camp systems. While those camps operated on an unparalleled scale, they were not without precedent. In fact, they were part of a larger 20th-century trend of using concentration camps for civilians. In the Spanish Civil War, both sides opened concentration and prisoner-of-war camps, which shared the common aim of eventual redemption through work. In this lecture, we examine the transition from the early explosion of wild killings in the summer of 1936 toward judicial process and incarceration.

Transition from Executions to Incarceration

After the first few months of the war, executions continued, but there was a clear shift on both sides from killing to incarceration. That trend would last through the rest of the war and continue in the early postwar dictatorship. The symbol and instrument of political incarceration was the concentration camp.

There is a distinction between standard prisoner-of-war camps where captured soldiers are held under the international rules of warfare and concentration camps where inmates are sent due to beliefs, political affiliation, or racial identity. The latter were also distinct from the Nazi death camps, which were constructed explicitly to exterminate the racial "others," particularly Jews, who could never be rehabilitated. Concentration camps, on the other hand, were meant to be temporary, designed for reeducation and reentry into society.

The new system of popular justice prosecuted beliefs or identities as well as specific crimes. Much as the Nationalists would assign collective enemy identity to the working classes, most Republicans identified entire social and economic groups as political enemies subject to prosecution. These included feudal landowners, military officers, bankers, clergy, and in general the wealthy classes, all of whom were often labeled "politico-fascists."

Republican Prisons and Camps

The Republic began to regularize its judicial process in October 1936 with the establishment of a new "emergency jury" system. Sentences of up to three years were meted out to people who demonstrated that they were opponents of the Republic. Individuals could be convicted for fascist beliefs or their lack of support for the Republican cause. Confirming this political dimension, the juries included one professional magistrate but two members of popular front political parties.

Within this framework, the Republic expanded existing prisons and built new ones to accommodate the influx. Religious institutions were converted into prisons, while in coastal regions authorities opened prison ships.

Beyond standard prisons, the Republican state created the beginnings of a "redemptive" labor camp system. The camp project took shape under the leadership of anarchist justice minister Juan García Oliver (November 1936 to May 1937). It probably had both a pragmatic and principled origin, both as a solution to prison overcrowding and as a political program of rehabilitation through work.

Prisoners were charged with building at least half a dozen camps themselves, the first in April 1937. These camps never employed a laboring prisoner population larger than a few thousand, and they were assigned to public works construction. The biggest camp, in Alicante, held around 1,000 prisoners by early 1938 and was dedicated to draining salt marshes to create new farmland. While the official policy was redemption, treatment often looked more like punishment. Abuses and maltreatment were routine, with no formal protections or mechanisms of appeal. Illness, food shortages, and exhaustion were also common complaints, although there were few deaths.

Albatera concentration camp in Alicante

A different type of military labor camp expanded in 1938 along the front lines. The Military Information Service, or SIM, created these camps to directly support the war effort and enforce discipline. Prisoners engaged in military auxiliary operations like building trenches and fortifications. Most of these prisoners were identified as draft dodgers, deserters, and fifth-column saboteurs, so this labor was viewed as both punishment and redemption.

The largest network was a series of six Catalan camps, which imprisoned between 7,000 and 8,000 inmates, in conditions that ranged from harsh discipline to exemplary terror. These camps included International Brigadiers who had been caught trying to leave Spain, as well as anarchists or dissident Marxists in the small, Catalan-based POUM party, who were targeted as disruptive revolutionaries even though they belonged to the Republican coalition.

These groups were targeted because the SIM was controlled by the Communist Party. It was created in August of 1937 to root out Nationalist spies, saboteurs, and collaborators, but also targeted internal enemies, particularly the POUM, which was reviled as a rival communist party.

This evidence of internal political terror is among the most-debated issues in the Republican repression. Some critics equate it with Soviet-style chekas—the secret police who terrorized Soviet citizens. Defenders argue for the understandable if regrettable need for harsh discipline in a deteriorating military situation.

Nationalist Prisons and Camps

On the Nationalist side, repression evolved along similar lines, but the scale was much greater. With the establishment of a centralized Junta in October 1936, the rebels began to set up formal military tribunals and a more bureaucratized system of justice.

Prisoners convicted for "blood crimes" were still executed, but others were more likely to be sentenced to prison or labor camps. As trials increasingly led to incarceration rather than execution, the camps began to grow, and territorial conquest only accelerated the expansion.

By all accounts, conditions in the camps were abysmal, with meager rations and vengeful guards. Those held captive were not recognized as prisoners of war, a status that would have imposed minimal protections from the Geneva Convention. Discipline, morality, and work were the key tools to purify and "disinfect" a population viewed as damaged by communism and atheism.

In contrast to the Republican side, the Nationalists leased prisoners to private companies, which benefited enormously from the cheap labor. By the time the last camp closed, tens of thousands of prisoners labored either for the military, the state, or private companies. They built roads, railroad tracks, water canals, port facilities, and, most famously, the Francoist war monument, the Valley of the Fallen (Valle de los Caídos).

While forced labor in the camps served a practical purpose, the camps also aimed at reeducation, which was synonymous with re-Christianization. Attendance at mass was mandatory, and camp chaplains delivered sermons urging prisoners to abandon their immoral secular ideas and return to the Catholic fold.

Up to this point, Nationalist camps mostly held prisoners of war. The Law of Political Responsibilities in February 1939 expanded their scope. As a result of this huge net, the 190 Nationalist concentration camps expanded to accommodate as many as 280,000 Republicans at their peak capacity in 1940.

After the Law of Political Responsibilities in February 1939, anyone who had supported the Republican government from 1936 could be charged (ironically) with "military rebellion." Under this definition of "reverse justice," many people were incarcerated simply for doing their jobs.

The regime quickly realized that prosecuting half the population would overwhelm the judicial system. As a pragmatic reset, in January of 1940 a new sentencing order encouraged reconsideration and reduction of previous sentences, as well as the expedited processing of the tens of thousands of pending cases. As a result, the era of mass incarceration began to wind down after 1942, when all but one camp had been shut down. By 1945, all civil war offenses other than "blood crimes" were pardoned.

There was almost certainly a complex calculus behind the decline of death sentences and then incarceration, but the true rationale is still debated. It may have been a strategic attempt to win over skeptical Western democratic countries, or a practical solution to an overpopulated prison system, or some mixture of both. What is certain, however, is that the regime's attitude toward the defeated had not changed. At no point did Franco make any effort or gesture at reconciliation.

Altogether, the Nationalists incarcerated more than 500,000 people in up to 200 camps. Meanwhile, the Republican camps only housed a few thousand prisoners, which reflects the smaller scale of their repression and their shrinking territorial control.

Repression beyond the War

"Repression" in the Spanish case does not only refer to incarceration and execution. After the war, ordinary Spaniards suffered poverty, hunger, and often inhumane working conditions. In the immediate postwar era, it is estimated that 200,000 people starved to death or succumbed to related diseases.

Scholars have uncovered evidence that government policy intentionally directed the most severe consequences of the subsistence crisis onto the working classes, who were assumed to be "reds." This was made possible by the economic policy of autarky, or self-sufficiency. Closed off from international markets in the postwar period, the regime distributed scarce resources unevenly among the population. Thus, the policy imposed a kind of collective class punishment on the poor.

Meanwhile, the vertical syndicates enforced rigorous social discipline on workers, and workers in turn had no path to demand better wages or conditions. Legislation left them with little power or agency. In rural

areas, Republican agrarian reforms were reversed. In their absence, landless laborers were left exposed to landowners who saw an opportunity to enact revenge against those they perceived as revolutionary-class enemies.

While public scenes of religious and nationalist fervor were plentiful, the defeated found themselves silenced and marginalized as their place in the national story was erased. Alternative national identities were also perceived as a threat to the regime, identified as anti-Spanish by the victory coalition. Cultural or linguistic expressions of Catalan or Basque identity were restricted and prohibited when possible. Repression became a means of monopolizing Spanish identity, history, and memory.

In the big picture, how do we situate the mass killing in the civil war among the atrocities of the era, from the gulag in the USSR to the Holocaust against the Jews? And what is the best terminology to define the Spanish case?

Some historians who emphasize the qualitative and quantitative magnitude of Nationalist violence have called it a war of extermination, genocide, or holocaust. By using those terms, they argue that Nationalist repression amounted to an explicit plan of mass murder.

However, the majority of scholars reject the word *genocide* as either imprecise or exaggerated. Some have proposed terms like *terror*, *crimes against humanity*, *war of occupation*, or *politicide*. While these terms are more measured, their proponents argue they don't minimize the level of Nationalist repression; rather, they capture it with greater precision.

The level of Nationalist repression can only be understood in the context of a civil war: a binary framework in which there is only room for victors and vanquished. Reintegrating the defeated—if they were to be reintegrated—could only be accomplished by transforming them altogether, through punishment and reeducation.

More broadly, the expansion of mechanisms to exterminate, punish, and marginalize populations beyond the battlefield confirms the progressive civilianization of warfare and the disintegrating line between combatants and noncombatants that has become a standard feature of contemporary wars and their aftermath.

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Question

1 What did you think about the debate over the terminology of repression that was discussed here and in the first lecture? How significant do you think the words are in shaping our ability to understand what happened?

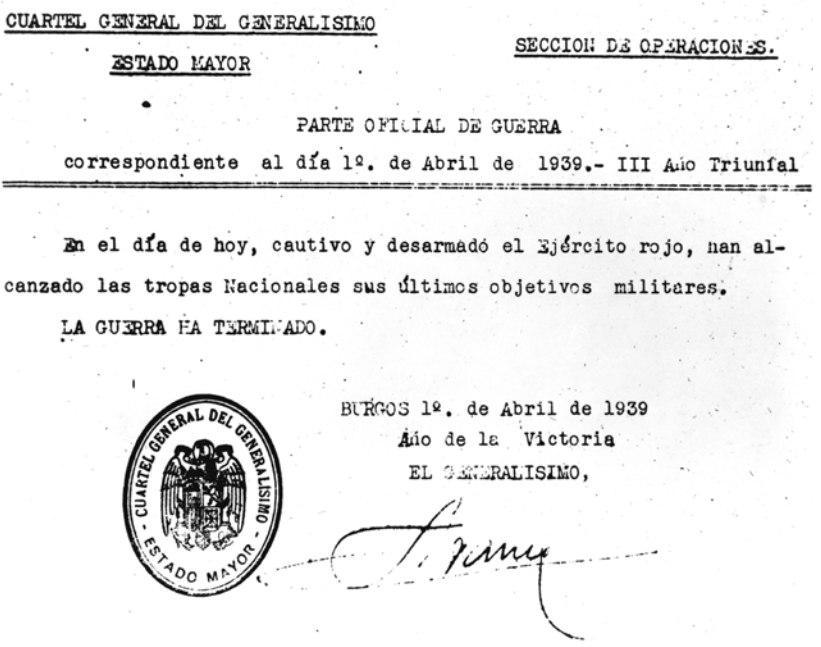
23

The New Regime and the Aftermath of the War

The Republican government had tried until the end to secure a negotiated peace, but Franco refused anything other than an unconditional surrender. His declaration of victory on April 1, 1939, was issued into the void of collapsing Republican defenses. However, while this date marked a turning point, it was not the shift from war to peace. This lecture looks at the war's aftermath—the blurred boundary between war and postwar—which would extend up to 1948, defined as a period of intense strife, warfare, privation, and the overarching struggle to impose a new hegemonic order.

Franco Supports the Axis Powers

After three years of devastating violence, the formal conflict ended with a whimper on April 1, 1939, when Franco issued a brief message claiming victory: "Today, with the capture and disarming of the Red Army, the Nationalist troops have achieved their ultimate military objective. The war is over."



CUARTEL GENERAL DEL GENERALISIMO
ESTADO MAYOR

SECCION DE OPERACIONES.

PARTE OFICIAL DE GUERRA

correspondiente al día 1º. de Abril de 1939.- III Año Triunfal

En el día de hoy, cautivo y desarmado el Ejército rojo, han alcanzado las tropas Nacionales sus últimos objetivos militares.

LA GUERRA HA TERMINADO.

BURGOS 1º. de Abril de 1939
Año de la Victoria
EL GENERALISIMO,

CUARTEL GENERAL DEL GENERALISIMO - ESTADO MAYOR -

In addition to the executions, arrests, exodus, and guerrilla warfare that followed, the aftermath of the civil war also remained linked to the broader European conflict that broke out in September 1939, only months after the Nationalist victory. On October 23, 1940, Franco and Hitler had their first and only meeting. They discussed the conditions under which Spain would formally join the Axis coalition. Hitler wanted Spain's help in expelling the British from Gibraltar, but in the end he rejected what he viewed

as Franco's extortionate demands. These included the transfer to Spain of British Gibraltar and various French colonial territories in Morocco, Algeria, and Cameroon.

While Spain never formally joined the Axis alliance, Franco found the opportunity to symbolically repay his debt to the Nazis by authorizing recruitment of volunteers to "fight communism" in the Soviet Union when the Germans invaded in June of 1941. The idea of punishing the Bolshevik state was very popular among the Falange activists, who blamed the Soviet Union as the instigator and supporter of the criminal Red Army in Spain's civil war.

The so-called Blue Division finished its recruitment in early July. The soldiers were incorporated into the Wehrmacht as the 250th Infantry Division, outfitted in German uniforms, and made to swear an oath of loyalty to Adolf Hitler. They arrived on the Russian front in October 1941, just as winter was setting in and the German advance began to bog down. Until their recall three years later, 47,000 soldiers and 146 female nurses volunteered and participated in the Russian offensive, including in the Battle of Leningrad. The division suffered 5,000 deaths, 10,000 wounded, and 400 captured by the Soviets.

Franco Reinvents the Regime's Image

In general, as the war began to turn against the Axis powers, Franco began a broader process of de-fascistization. He renovated his cabinet and shifted his rhetoric. Thus, he appointed more traditional Catholic monarchists and demoted the role of the Falange. He also foregrounded what would be the regime's dominant ideological framework, so-called National Catholicism, which stressed the traditional moral authority of the church as the predominant unifying feature of the Spanish nation.

As the regime's ideology changed, so too did its prominent symbols. Franco's use of the Falange uniform and the fascist salute gradually disappeared as he reinvented his external image. They never disappeared entirely, but they were gradually pushed off center stage, especially in the

international arena. This broader realignment was also accompanied by the gradual winding down of mass trials and incarceration after 1941, including waves of pardons.

All of these strategic moves began a lengthy rehabilitation of Spain's international reputation. It would culminate in the early 1950s with Spain's reincorporation into the anti-communist West. This alliance was symbolized by the military pact with the US signed on September 23, 1953, which exchanged American aid for military bases in Spain.

Before then, the international community, symbolized by the newly created United Nations, sought to isolate the Franco regime as an undesired relic of the fascist era. The December 1946 resolution was a strongly worded rejection of Spain's inclusion in the international body, approved by both the US and the USSR. Based on the report of a UN commission, it concluded that the dictatorship was a fascist regime imposed with the help of the Axis powers. It further insisted that the Franco regime shared in the responsibility for the Second World War, including by sending the Blue Division to fight for the Nazis.

Over the next several years, however, the Western powers eventually accepted the pragmatic usefulness of the Spanish dictatorship in the Cold War (as they accepted other right-wing dictatorships in Latin America and elsewhere). This realignment was facilitated by Franco's successful promotion of his image as an anti-communist cold warrior.

Guerrilla Fighters Resist

The aftermath of the civil war was very different for the Republicans. Tens of thousands were killed and hundreds of thousands were arrested, while half a million fled Spain as refugees—half of them permanently. A small percentage, however, stayed on as guerrilla fighters.

The guerrilla resistance officially began after the declaration of Nationalist victory, when Republican fighters were no longer defending a legitimate government. The first guerrilla units comprised Republican soldiers who either feared capture or believed in continuing the struggle. There were

pockets of resistance across the country, but most were located in pro-Republican communities along the coasts and around Madrid, in addition to rural and mountainous terrain where it was easier to hide out.

There was virtually no coordination among these units, which relied on local communities for food and logistical support. They carried out small sabotage, subversive propaganda, and assassinations and raids, which occasionally resulted in the brief "liberation" of an isolated pueblo. Women played an important role in the support networks, as evidenced by the 800 women convicted by the Franco regime for their pro-guerrilla activity in the North.

A new phase of guerrilla resistance opened at the end of the Second World War. This included the return of Spanish refugees who had fought as Maquis, or French resistance fighters, in France.

Spanish fighters adopted the word *Maquis* to describe themselves, in an effort to maintain the links and sympathy with the larger anti-fascist struggle.

This second phase was inaugurated with Operation Reconquest of Spain, a dramatic invasion over the Pyrenees to the Val d'Aran in Catalonia by several thousand Spanish Maquis in October 1944. The goal was to spark an internal uprising against the Franco regime and force the Allies to extend their liberation of Europe to Spain. However, the Franco regime quickly gathered an overwhelming force of Civil Guards and Moroccan troops to beat back the attackers. In less than 10 days, the Maquis had retreated back over the French border.

Nevertheless, the failed invasion sparked a new, more coordinated phase of guerrilla activity. The Communist Party, whose groups had been the major political force in the anti-fascist resistance across Europe, took the lead in organizing and directing the units. The goal was to destabilize and disrupt the regime and to demonstrate the strength of anti-fascist resistance to the European powers.

Hopes for intervention were highest from 1945 to 1947, when the United Nations and the Western powers had issued strong condemnations of the Franco regime. However, it soon became clear that condemnation was not going to be supported by military action as the Cold War divide deepened in Europe. Eventually, the Spanish Communist Party admitted defeat and renounced its armed struggle against the regime in 1948.

At the same time, the Franco regime turned its focus from punishing civil war criminals to crushing the guerrilla forces, reprising some of the terror tactics used in the early months of the civil war. Suspected guerrillas were shot on the spot, several thousand were arrested and given long prison sentences, and supporting villagers were threatened. Those who could escaped to France or went into hiding.

Pockets of guerrilla resistance lasted until the late 1940s. When it became clear that the Allies had no plans to oust Franco, the movement fizzled out.

Refugees Flee the Franco Regime

The Spanish refugees were the first wave of what would become a torrent of European refugees in and after World War II. The majority escaped over land through the Pyrenees to France. Beginning in January of 1939 with the imminent fall of Catalonia, women, children, and old people began fleeing north, over the mountains, in bitter winter weather. The next refugees were soldiers after the collapse of the Catalan front. By the end of the war, an estimated 500,000 had crossed the border.

A clearly hostile, conservative French government was completely unprepared for the influx. The French began to establish temporary housing and processing centers in 1938, in schools, old factories, warehouses, and granaries. From there, the first five concentration camps were set up close to the border but lacked basic infrastructure. People slept on the ground and lacked toilet facilities, clean water, or adequate rations, which resulted in dysentery, malnutrition, and cholera.

The French authorities did everything they could to convince the "undesirable" internees to return, viewing them as a burden in France's economic crisis as the country was still struggling to recover from the Great Depression. By the end of 1939, about half of the initial refugees had returned to Spain.

When the Second World War began, the French government declared that stateless foreign men under age 48 were required to work for the war effort, either for a private employer, in a work brigade building fortifications, or as a soldier in the French Foreign Legion. Some 10,000 eventually joined the French Resistance as Maquis. Some of these ended up arrested and imprisoned in Nazi camps. About 7,000 Spanish refugees were interned in Mauthausen, more than half of whom died of disease and starvation. Still, some 150,000 Spanish refugees survived to become permanent French exiles, with large communities in southern cities like Toulouse.

Other than the Soviet Union, which mostly welcomed Communist Party members, the country which first opened its doors was Mexico. Its government had been sympathetic toward the Republic and had provided foreign aid during the war. Despite Mexico's generosity, it also instituted a selection process that weighed politics and class as factors in accepting refugees.

The Mexican government tried to minimize the anarchist immigrants and favored those who had belonged to Republican and Socialist Parties. Preference was also given to those with education and professions, which resulted in an extraordinary influx of intellectuals into Mexico's cultural and academic circles.

The trauma of the civil war's aftermath was exacerbated by the international isolation and the onset of the world war, which turned attention away from Spain. As a result, the new regime had carte blanche to carry out its repressive measures with little international public outcry.

Beyond this initial period of impunity, the fact that the Franco regime never formally embraced reconciliation has led some scholars to make the argument that the civil war only ended in 1975 with Franco's death.

Whatever date we choose for the end of the civil war, it's clear that the trauma left by the conflict continues to haunt and divide Spanish society today.

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Question

1 Did you find the concept of "aftermath" instead of "postwar" helpful in understanding the period after April 1, 1939? What do you think of the argument that the war didn't really end until Franco's death?

24

The Spanish Memory Wars

The Spanish Civil War remains a deeply divisive topic, with no national consensus as to how it fits into the trajectory of Spanish history. In fact, one could argue that it is more divisive today than it was 20 years ago, with the reigniting of the so-called memory wars and the competing narratives of Spain's historical trajectory. In this final lecture, we explore the evolution of how the civil war has been memorialized and framed since 1939 and what is happening with the memory today.

A One-Sided Commemoration

During the four decades of the Franco regime, a single civil war memory and narrative was forcibly imposed. The regime continued to publicly recognize and mourn the Nationalist victims of the war with commemorative plaques, monuments, street names, and, most dramatically, the Valley of the Fallen.

The Republican cause was dismissed, excoriated, vilified, and silenced. Republican military veterans were denied pensions and disability, while wives and orphans couldn't collect benefits. Republican families could not even investigate the fate of loved ones who had been killed or disappeared. Some knew exactly where bodies were buried in mass graves but would have risked punishment if they had tried to excavate.

This enforced silence helps explain why the "recovery of memory" would become such an important theme in the future. At the same time, the fact that many Spaniards had collaborated in the victory coalition meant that a recovery of memory would never be a consensual or simple process.

The longevity and evolution of the Franco regime also complicated the memory of the war. During its final two decades, the country benefited from a wave of economic development and increased standard of living. In 1964, the regime celebrated the end of the civil war by proclaiming "25 years of peace," highlighting these improvements and taking credit for them. The so-called economic miracle increased passive support for the Franco regime, which some argued had softened over time.

An Agreement to "Forget"

The end of the dictatorship in 1978 marked a turning point when the relentless one-sided commemoration of the civil war finally ended. A few families began the process of recovering the bodies of their loved ones in local mass graves and requesting formal death certificates. But at the national level, the leaders of the political transition made a decision to "forget" the divisions of the past in order to create a broad consensus around the new democratic regime.

Thus, they passed an amnesty law in 1977 that exonerated Republican political prisoners of the dictatorship but also protected Francoist officials from being charged with war crimes. Even with a political transition, there were no purges of Francoist officials, no military tribunals, and no truth and reconciliation commission.

However, the agreement to "forget" the civil war also meant that the memories and experiences of the vanquished remained buried in public discourse. The war simply disappeared from national public culture altogether. School history textbooks stopped before the Second Republic to avoid having to decide on a single narrative. Obviously, the past was not really forgotten, and the ghosts remained visible in the Francoist memorial landscape, but "burying the hatchet" was the public motto.

Instead, the national government tried to address grievances of individual Republicans and their families. Thus, the first Socialist governments in the early 1980s passed a series of laws to restore pensions for civilians, soldiers, and widows on the Republican side. Some municipal governments embarked on a recovery of Republican memory, such as changing street names or erecting plaques. Finally, there was a huge outpouring of academic scholarship to recover the voices of the Republican side in the civil war. However, none of these efforts amounted to a public national collective reckoning.

Attempts to Seek Justice

The next turning point came in 1998, when a Spanish judge, Baltasar Garzón, decided to charge the Chilean dictator, Augusto Pinochet, for the deaths of Spanish citizens who were killed in the 1973 coup, through an unprecedented use of universal jurisdiction. Garzón petitioned unsuccessfully for Pinochet's extradition to Spain to stand trial for crimes against humanity. Pinochet had been a strong supporter of Franco. People in both Spain and Chile were galvanized by Garzón's act, but some Chileans criticized Spain for not having brought its own dictator to justice.

In 2008, Judge Garzón launched a prosecution of those responsible for Nationalist and Francoist crimes committed during the war and postwar. The indictment demanded a coordinated government-sponsored campaign to locate the bodies of the 130,000 people still unaccounted for and punish those responsible. This posthumous indictment of Franco and 34 of his associates officially broke with the 1977 amnesty law that had pardoned all past crimes.

An ultraconservative group sued Garzón, alleging that he had committed an abuse of power for investigating crimes that had already been pardoned. He was cleared of this charge but was disbarred for 11 years. At the same time, Garzón continues to be viewed as a hero by those pushing for a more uncompromising condemnation of the victory coalition and the regime it created.

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, a nonprofit human rights foundation, awarded its first annual human rights award to Judge Garzón in 2011.

Beyond the individual case of Garzón, Spain's two main political parties each defended opposing positions, thus politicizing what began to take shape as a memory war. The center-right Popular Party argued that the country should not open old wounds and risk unleashing dormant hatreds. The center-left Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) shifted to the position that it was necessary to publicly acknowledge the atrocities and condemn the dictatorship. The Socialist Party proposed a bill in 1999 to formally condemn the dictatorship for the first time, but the Popular Party refused to support it, agreeing in 2002 only to a generic condemnation of "totalitarian regimes."

At the grassroots level, citizen groups pressured the Spanish government to undertake a series of judicial, cultural, and political measures to finally acknowledge the full crimes of Franco's dictatorship. But they also decided to take matters into their own hands, given the inaction of the government, particularly in the exhumation of the mass graves.

The Association for the Recuperation of Historical Memory, or ARMH, was founded in 2000. The nonprofit organization employs scientists, archaeologists, and historians to locate and exhume the remains of Republican victims killed during and after the war. Over the following two decades, 5,000 volunteers have participated in the excavation of 150 grave sites and recovered the bodies of more than 1,400 victims, which were returned to their families.

The Law of Historical Memory

The Socialist Party finally responded to the grassroots pressure with the Law of Historical Memory, passed in 2007. For the first time, the democratic government officially condemned the Franco regime as illegitimate and committed the state to rehabilitate its victims.

It authorized the government to finance the "exhumation and reburial" of people in mass graves, but only through subsidies to volunteer organizations like the ARMH. It also specified that excavations had to be initiated at the behest of individual families, for the purpose of private mourning, not collective justice or reparations. The law also charged the Ministry of Justice with collecting evidence about wartime atrocities but decided not to pursue criminal charges. Finally, it also left in place the Francoist-era judicial convictions.

On a more symbolic level, the law ordered that all memorial statues and plaques "that exalt one of the warring bands" should be eliminated. The most problematic of the Francoist civil war monuments was the Valley of the Fallen. Since Franco's death, it had continued to be a pilgrimage site for supporters who visited his grave.

The law called for the "depoliticization" of the monument by forbidding any political events that exalted the Nationalist victory in the civil war or celebrated Francoism. The site was also a functioning monastery, and the law ordered that it should be restricted to religious usage. At the same time, it mandated that it should also serve as a place to mourn all civil war victims. Debates continue as to how to transform this structure into a truly inclusive civil war memorial or museum.

Shifting Memory Politics

At the same time that more voices have clamored for greater recognition and memorialization of the Republican side in the civil war, there has also been a backlash. There was always a contingent that was reluctant to open old wounds. But a new ultraconservative narrative has revived what was essentially the Francoist version of the civil war, justifying the uprising as a necessary defense against the left-wing chaos of the Republic that was heading toward communist totalitarianism. The new ultraconservative political party, Vox, claims that the memory laws passed by the socialist governments are undemocratic in their effort to impose a single pro-Republican memory regime.

Another player in this memory battle has been the church. Without directly entering into the larger debates, the church has focused on recognizing the victims of anticlerical violence through its own religious process of beatification. Over the past two decades, several thousand religious martyrs have been beatified for having died "defending religion" or due to the "hatred of the faith" during the civil war.

One of the most dramatic acts was to petition for the exhumation of Franco's body from the Valley of the Fallen, which was finally approved by the Supreme Court and carried out in October 2019. Despite objections, his body was moved to a private cemetery in a Madrid suburb where his wife was buried.

On the state level, the official memory politics around the civil war continue to shift each time a new government comes into power, confirming its polarized politicization. After the 2007 Law of Historical Memory passed by the center-left Socialist government, the center right Popular Party government that followed, between 2011 and 2018, defunded the law and refused to implement some of its elements. So it was only when another socialist-led government took power in June 2018 that some of its features were implemented and augmented.

In July 2022, the center-left PSOE-led government passed the Law of Democratic Memory, which declared the memory of victims as a "right of citizenship." For the first time, it asserted the leadership of the government in locating the disappeared and excavating mass graves. All the conservative parties again rejected the law as "divisive," although the official position of the PSOE government is to mourn "all victims" rather than to replace veneration of one side with the other.

Many of the citizen groups want the government to go further and celebrate the Republic as Spain's democratic heritage. As a result, the recognition of Republican victims hasn't solved the problem of deciding what version of the civil war will be represented in textbooks and museums. It seems likely that Spaniards will debate these competing memories of the civil war for the foreseeable future. As a result, the civil war will continue to play a central and contested role in Spaniards' understanding of who they are as a nation and where they are headed in the future.

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Question

1 In Spain and elsewhere, debates continue about the proper way for countries to remember and come to terms with their "dirty pasts." What are your thoughts about the advantages and disadvantages of various strategies, based on what you've learned about memory politics in Spain?

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