

Spain Is Not Different. Institutional Development and the Army in the Second Spanish Republic and Civil War

España no es diferente. Desarrollo institucional y ejército en la Segunda República y la Guerra Civil

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Resumen: This paper studies the role of the army in the Spanish institutional development. Contrary to the idea of the army as a monolithic block or other elites' agent, I develop a new theoretical framework that relies on three insights. First, the army was an independent political agent with great influence over Spanish institutional dynamics. Second, besides the officers' ideology, the economic and professional interests of the military influenced the stability of Spanish political regimes. Third, the army was divided into factions with opposed economic and professional interests. I finally summarize the implications of the theoretical framework for the Second Spanish Republic and the influence that the economic interests had on military factions and the side chosen by officers in 1936.

Palabras clave: *Institutional development, factions, elites, army, Spain.*

Abstract: Este artículo estudia el papel del ejército en el desarrollo institucional español. Frente a la idea del ejército como un bloque monolítico o como un agente al servicio de otras élites, planteo tres ideas. Primero, el ejército era un agente político independiente con gran relevancia en la dinámica institucional española. Segundo, los intereses económicos y profesionales del ejército influían en la estabilidad de los regímenes políticos españoles. Tercero, el ejército estaba dividido en facciones con intereses contrapuestos. Finalmente resumo las implicaciones de este marco para la II República y la influencia de los intereses económicos de las facciones militares en el bando elegido por los oficiales en 1936.

Keywords: *Desarrollo institucional, facciones, élites, ejército, España.*

Introduction

This paper presents a new theoretical framework to study the army in the process of institutional change. The framework relies on three ideas about the role of the army in the social orders that characterize the majority of developing countries. First, the ar-

my must be taken as a relevant political player in its own right. With few exceptions, developing countries through history have not been characterized by a Weberian state that monopolizes the use of legitimate violence. One of the consequences of the absence of a Weberian state is that the army has not been under political control.¹ Because the army is a relevant and autonomous political player, its interests and actions are important when determining the stability or instability of political regimes. Second, in addition to the ideological reasons traditionally used to explain the loyalty of military factions to ruling coalitions, economic motivations have played an important role in ensuring officers' loyalty to rulers. Throughout history, specialists in violence have benefitted from economic incentives contingent upon protecting the status quo and resisting revolution. This pattern can still be found nowadays in some developing countries where the army controls important sectors of the economy. Finally, the theoretical framework highlights the heterogeneity of interests within the army. The distribution of economic rents² among military groups might attract the loyalty of some (the ones that benefit) but also alienate others. This tradeoff results from the conflict of interests within the military: when distributing economic rents or implementing military policies, rulers and their coalitions often need to make choices about the factions that will benefit. This is one reason why developing societies usually live in the shadow of violence, that is, a situation in which «the possibility that the military will assume an active role in governance does not lie far below the surface.»³ The Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939) will be used as a case study for the theoretical framework.⁴

The previous three ideas about the army are at odds with some widespread assumptions of the literature that have focused on the military and its role in developing countries. Take the case of the army as a relevant political player in its own right. Many scholars model the military as the elites' agent (that is, they consider the army to be the armed component of the elite as well as in charge of applying the policies and defending the interests of other elites).

¹ The USSR and its control of the army probably represent the most important exception to what is otherwise a (rather) general rule for developing countries: the army is not under political control and appears as a major political player in its own right.

² Throughout the paper, the term "rent" (or "economic rent") is used in its narrow sense widely accepted in economics, namely «a return to an economic asset that exceeds the return the asset can receive in its best alternative use» (Douglass C. NORTH, John J. WALLIS and Barry R. WEINGAST: *Violence and social orders. A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 19). For a useful, non-technical survey of economic rents in economic theory, see Robert D. TOLLISON: "Rent Seeking: A Survey," *Kyklos*, 35/4 (1982), pp. 575-602.

³ Douglass C. NORTH, John J. WALLIS and Barry R. WEINGAST: op. cit., p. 170.

⁴ Developing societies living in the shadow of violence can also be found today. Reporting on contemporary Africa, Somini SENGUPTA: "Chaos in West Africa: Unending Wars," *New York Times*, May 5, 2003, p. A7, pointed out that «The level of violence in [African] countries varies in intensity as local warlords gain temporary control and introduce order. The order can be maintained for years and even decades, especially there is little worth stealing, but it is always fragile. Lethal violence can erupt suddenly and escalate into chaos.»

In other cases, the army is taken as elites' coercive agent to prevent democratization.⁵ Modeling the army as an organization subordinated to other elite groups obscures the role that purely military interests have in officers' actions and willingness to support ruling coalitions. Developing societies usually lack a Weberian state: violence is dispersed among different groups, and the state is unable to form a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. These societies try to preserve order by creating elite coalitions that reflect what North, Wallis, and Weingast call a *double balance*⁶ between economic and political power, but threats from other elites that are not part of the coalition persist. As a result, developing societies are more unstable and more likely to suffer coups and civil wars than developed countries.⁷

Focusing on intra-elite conflict immediately suggests that elites do not share a unique goal and are divided into different factions that hold different and conflicting interests.⁸ This directly relates to the second and third legs of my theoretical framework: the importance of economic rents to form coalitions with military factions and the heterogeneity of interests within the army. Marxist sociology or neoclassical theories of the state tend to depict elites as monolithic organizations.⁹ In this view, elites or social classes are modeled as single agents whose

⁵ See, for example, Daron ACEMOĞLU, Davide TICCHI and Andrea VINDIGNI: "A Theory of Military Dictatorships," *American Journal of Macroeconomics*, 2/1 (2010), pp. 1-42.

⁶ Douglass C. NORTH, John J. WALLIS and Barry R. WEINGAST: op. cit., p. 20 define the double balance as «a correspondence between the distribution and organization of violence potential and political power on the one hand, and the distribution and organization of economic power on the other hand.»

⁷ Evidence of the decline in violence after the Neolithic Revolution (together with a model of society's organization to explain it) is provided by Richard H. STECKEL and John J. WALLIS: "Stones, Bones, and States: A New Approach to the Neolithic Revolution", NBER manuscript, February 2007. The greater likelihood of civil wars for poorer countries has been documented for the second half of the twentieth century. See, for example, Paul COLLIER and Anke HOEFFLER: "On Economic Causes of Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers*, 50/4 (1998), 563-573; and James FEARON and David LAITIN: "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, 97/1 (2003), 75-90. The most ambitious and general study showing the decline of violence through time is Steven PINKER: *The Better Angels of Our Nature. Why Violence Has Declined*, New York, Penguin Books, 2011.

⁸ Przeworski makes a similar point, in his discussion of the Marxian claim that «The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the entire bourgeoisie» (Karl MARX and Friedrich ENGELS: *The Communist Manifesto*, London, Pluto Press, 2008), when he notes that «the survival of capitalism may be possible only at the cost of particular capitalists and may not be in their individual interest» (Adam PZREWORSKI: *The State and the Economy Under Capitalism*, Chur, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1990, p. 91). Not even capitalists can be represented as a monolithic, homogenous group.

⁹ Charles TILLY: *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992; Douglass C. NORTH: *Structure and Change in Economic History*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1981; Daron ACEMOĞLU and James A. ROBINSON: *Economic Origins...*; Daron ACEMOĞLU and James A. ROBINSON: *Why Nations Fail. The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, New York, Crown Publishers, 2012; Robert H. BATES: *When Things Fell Apart. State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Marx's adherence to the monolithic view of elites should not be exaggerated. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels state that «the separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a battle against another class; otherwise, they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors» (quoted in Margaret LEVI: "The Predatory Theory of Rule," *Politics & Society*, 10/4 (1981), pp. 431-65, p. 433). That is, when dealing with institutional dynamics, the Marxian view points out that class struggle is both the motor of institutional change and the reason for social conflict. Thus, it

goals are given by a unique objective function that they try to maximize to the best of their means and given some constraints.

Single agent theories are useful theoretical artifacts, but elite organizations differ from this paradigm in crucial ways. Indeed, the Spanish Army contained many factions with conflicting interests. This was not a particularity of the Spanish military because, as Gonzalo Rivero points out, «internal dissensions within the armed forces are the rule rather than the exception.»¹⁰ The plurality of interests within the military meant that, when deciding a specific military policy, Spanish governments attracted some military factions but alienated others. The single agent theory of the state puts the cart before the horse by assuming that the result of political and economic development (i.e., the concentration of coercion in the state) already exists. Weberian states or sufficiently centralized states characterize developed societies and not developing ones. In a framework with dispersed violence, the army is more than a simple agent of political and economic elites: it is *one of* the elites that dominates politics and economics in developing societies; the army, in turn, is composed of factions, and we must understand both the disputes from which those factions arise and the links between military factions and the ruling coalition.¹¹

The idea of the army as a relevant Spanish political player or the focus on elite coalitions to understand Spanish institutional dynamics is not new. Many scholars have shown the importance of the army in the Spanish political system in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹² The study of elite coalitions and their effect on Spanish institutional arrangements has been applied to the regimes predating the Spanish Republic¹³ and the transition to democracy after Franco's death.¹⁴ However, the literature has often neglected both the economic links

seems accurate to portray Marx as a proponent of the monolithic view of elites, at least when referring to institutional change.

¹⁰ Gonzalo RIVERO: "Oligopoly of Violence," New York University, unpublished manuscript, 2013.

¹¹ This paper points to the inadequacy of treating developing countries as "Weberian States" due to their lack of a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Lant PRITCHETT and Michael WOOLCOCK: "Solutions When the Solution is the Problem: Arraying the Disarray in Development," *World Development*, 32/2 (2004), pp. 191-212, provide a different critique for the application of "Weberian concepts" to developing countries that does not rely on the control of violence but on the characteristics of the bureaucracy in developing countries. The authors show the inadequacy of assuming that developing countries count with a "Weberian bureaucracy" (that is, something close to «effective, rules-based, meritocratic, and politically accountable public agencies» that operate within a large political jurisdiction, see p. 192), which can be in charge of implementing development practices, programs, and policies.

¹² See, for example, Stanley G. PAYNE: *Politics and the Military in Modern Spain*, Stanford University Press, 1967; Carolyn P. BOYD: *Praetorian Politics in Liberal Spain*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1979; Gabriel CARDONA: *El poder militar en la España contemporánea hasta la guerra civil*, Madrid, Siglo Veintiuno, 1983; Joaquín LLEIXÀ: *Cien años de militarismo en España*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 1986; Fernando PUELL DE LA VILLA: *Historia del Ejército en España*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2009.

¹³ Manuel TUÑÓN DE LARA: *Historia y realidad del poder (El poder y las élites en el primer tercio de la España del siglo XX)*, Madrid, Cuadernos para el diálogo, 1967.

¹⁴ Thomas D. LANCASTER and Gary PREVOST (eds.), *Politics and Change in Spain*, New York, Praeger Publishers, 1985.

between military factions and the ruling coalition and how changes in military policy and the resulting redistribution of economic rents affect officers' behaviors and loyalties toward the dominant coalition. In this paper, I focus on the Second Spanish Republic, but some obvious extensions in the application of this framework could study the transition to democracy in the 1970s and 1980s or even nineteenth-century Spain.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The first section delves into the two main insights of the theoretical framework. First, the army was a relevant, autonomous political player in the elite coalitions that rule developing countries today and throughout history. Second, multiple factions with diverse (and often opposed) interests coexist within the army, and both ideology and economic rents are key to attract their support. The second section shows that Spain was not different: the theoretical framework applies to the Spanish case. Indeed, this section establishes the political relevance of the army and the interests defended by the different factions that coexisted within the military in the Second Republic. It also analyzes how those interests were affected by Azaña's military reforms between 1931 and 1933. The third section concludes and explores some empirical applications of the theoretical framework to the study of the army in Spain.

The Army: A Relevant, Autonomous, and Non-Monolithic Elite

a) The Army: A Relevant Political Player

The ability to effectively attack one's enemy and defend one's self has been an important determinant of survival and development of human groups throughout history. The importance of attack and defense explains why the army has almost always been a relevant organization in social orders. Many scholars have pointed out the link between violence and development. In *Prosperity and Violence*, Robert Bates states that «the study of the political economy of development is the study of prosperity and violence.»¹⁵ Thus, the organization and control of violence appear as a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for economic growth.

Where does the impetus for attack and domination (that is, the seeds of violence) come from? Some scholars have used an almost axiomatic approach to bring the importance of violence and military action to the forefront. David Landes enunciates a «law of social political relationships» whereby marked disparity of power, private access to instruments of power, and equality of groups or nations cannot coexist. Landes derives the inevitable conclusion: «where one group is strong enough to push another around and stands to gain by it, it will do so.»¹⁶

¹⁵ Robert H. BATES: *Prosperity & Violence. The Political Economy of Development*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2001, p. 101.

¹⁶ David S. LANDES: *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations. Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1998, p. 63. For a more rigorous analysis in the rational choice tradition of the conditions under which a state decides whether to attack another or remain peaceful, see Dagoberth L. BRITO and Michael D. INTRILIGATOR: "Conflict, War, and Redistribution," *The American Political*

Charles Tilly adopts a similar perspective when pointing out that «men who controlled concentrated means of coercion [...] ordinarily tried to use them to extend the range of population and resources over which they wielded power.»¹⁷ Educating rulers in war as a way to achieve glory, honor, and distinction has also been mentioned as another push for widespread warfare in early modern Europe.¹⁸

These “axiomatic approaches” to the human propensity for violence do not have to rely on *ad-hoc* foundations like human impulses, rulers’ irrationality, or the assumption that rulers desire power for its own sake.¹⁹ Indeed, well-known links exist between military superiority and material improvements.²⁰ As Bates remarks, attack and encroachment upon others’ property often appear as an attractive option, as generating prosperity through appropriation saves the efforts that one must incur to generate such wealth through work or innovation.²¹ Boix develops a simple model for stateless, non-hierarchical groups (similar to simple foraging societies) and finds that variables like inequality, size of the group, or looting technology can make preying more rewarding than engaging in productive activities. Boix explains that the emergence of hierarchical structures and the state is the result of asymmetric technological shocks that lead to both higher inequality between groups and greater incentives to invest in military technology (either to loot or to protect the more unequal distribution of output).²²

Historical examples of positive reinforcements between military power and prosperity abound. Europe arguably offers the most relevant case from the economic historian’s point of view. Phillip Hoffman recently used a tournament model that shows the links between warfare, technological improvement (notably the use of gunpowder), and the European political and

Science Review, 79/4), 1985, pp. 943-957; and Robert POWELL: “Guns, Butter, and Anarchy,” *The American Political Science Review*, 87/1 (1993), pp. 115-132.

¹⁷ Charles TILLY: op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁸ Phillip T. HOFFMAN: *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 24-5.

¹⁹ As Adam PZREWORSKI: op. cit., p. 26, notes, «the autonomous importance of power in politicians’ utility function is perhaps the grand unresolved issue of political science.» From a non-academic perspective, Kapuscinski suggests that human desire for attack, defense, and expansion might be the result of a pervasive force of nature that goes beyond the case of humans: «This sensitivity to the border issue, this untiring enthusiasm for constantly marking them out, widening them, or defending them, are characteristic not only of man, but of all animate nature, of everything that moves on land, in water and air,» in Ryszard KAPUSCINSKI: *Imperium*, New York, Vintage International, 1995.

²⁰ Here I discuss a simple factor underlying the existence of war given the positive feedback between military capacity and pecuniary rewards and prosperity. For a discussion of rational explanations of war (rather than an alternative based on a peaceful bargain that avoids violent conflict), see James D. FEARON: “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization*, 49 (3), 1995, pp. 379-414.

²¹ Robert H. BATES: op. cit., pp. 43, 51, and 56. Cultures have always tried to limit the incentives to such encroachment over others’ property by creating norms that condemn such behavior. The Christian commandment “Thou shalt not steal” is a good example. It seems clear that such attempts to stop violent behavior within the community have not been successful at completely eliminating attacks against property. Furthermore, the option of encroachment upon outsiders’ property remained (thus, the Crusades).

²² Carles BOIX: *Political Order and Inequality. Their Foundations and Their Consequences for Human Welfare*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 22-59.

economic hegemony after the sixteenth century.²³ The Spanish, Portuguese, English, and Dutch control of America and Southeast Asia and the substantial economic rents extracted testify to the European connections between power and plenty in the early modern period.²⁴ English merchants provide another example of positive feedback between economic activity and military capacity. English traders in the sixteenth century were the main suppliers of ships to repeal the Spanish Armada.²⁵ N.A.M. Rodger concludes that «it is always a mistake to look at medieval naval warfare with the modern distinction between warships and merchantmen much in mind.»²⁶ Business and the military jointly coevolved and determined the chances of expansion and success of nations and empires.

All those links between military capacity and prosperity are helpful to explain the impulse for attack and defense and why the military systematically appears as an important elite in institutional arrangements. Still, despite being broadly used, the precise meaning of “elite” remains problematic. As Hirschman points out, «as happens frequently with concepts that are suddenly thrust to the center of the stage [like “elite”], [it] appeared so self-evident a notion that nobody bothered to define it precisely.»²⁷ We lack a comprehensive theory of elites and their role in the process of institutional change, but, for our current purposes, it will suffice to define elites as «the persons who, by virtue of their strategic locations in large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movements, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially.»²⁸ The power and influence of elite members are inseparable from the organizations they belong to. In Wallis and North’s words, «elites are always connected to organizations in some way.»²⁹ Given military officers’ decisive influence over military capacity and the decision to fight or contest current ruling arrangements, members of the army are key figures in the social orders established for developing societies. One of the main legs of our theoretical framework immediately follows: in the context of political and economic development, the army must be studied as an independent organization whose goals and interests are not subordinated or determined by other elite groups.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ David S. LANDES: *op. cit.*, p. 143-144; Ronald FINDLAY and Kevin H. O’ROURKE: *Power and Plenty. Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007.

²⁵ William H. MCNEILL: *The Pursuit of Power. Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1982. The *Armada Invencible* also relied on private ships: forty of its sixty eight warships were merchantmen.

²⁶ Nicholas A.M. RODGER: *The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain, 660-1649*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1998, Vol 1, p. 115.

²⁷ Albert O. HIRSCHMANN: *The Passions and the Interests. Political Arguments For Capitalism Before Its Triumph*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 43.

²⁸ John HIGLEY: “Elite Theory and Elites”, in K.T. LEICHT and J.C. JENKINS (eds.), *Handbook of Politics: State and Society in Global Perspective*, Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research, Springer Science+Business Media, 2010, p. 163.

²⁹ John J. WALLIS and Douglass C. NORTH: “Leviathan Denied: Governments, Rules, and Social Dynamics,” working paper presented at the Economic History Workshop at Yale University, April 2014.

b) *The Army as a Non-Monolithic Organization: Coalitions and Military Factions*

As the organization in charge of violence, the military is both a crucial and a dangerous member of the dominant coalition in any given social order. As long as it is loyal, its services enhance the ability of the group to protect its members. However, if officers turn against the ruler (either to take direct control of power or to support a competing claimant for ruling society), instability, violence, and the fall of the government might follow. Discussing the importance of Mancur Olson's logic of collective action in the emergence and consolidation of states, Jerry Hough and Robin Grier nicely summarize the importance of the threat that the military represents for rulers: «the main danger to major property owners should not be class revolution (a collective action in which it is irrational for rank-and-file people to participate), but military coups and armed militias both from inside and outside. History confirms this.»³⁰ In order to counter that threat, ensuring the support of powerful officers and military factions has been one of the priorities of rulers throughout history.

The danger that military factions represent for the stability of dominant coalitions in a given institutional arrangement is often obscured by Max Weber's widely accepted definition of the state as «the human community that, within a defined territory [...] (successfully) claims the monopoly of legitimate force for itself.»³¹ Weber's definition of the state seems adequate for modern, developed countries. In developing societies, however, the Weberian state has been the exception rather than the rule because «access to the means of violence is dispersed throughout the elite» and the army has not been under political control.³² The idea of the army being a relevant political player in its own right rather than the agent of other elites is reinforced by Charles Tilly's work.³³ Tilly distinguishes four stages in warfare and state organization that he terms patrimonialism (until the fifteenth century in much of Europe), brokerage (roughly between 1400 and 1700 in many parts of Europe), nationalization (mostly between 1700 and 1850), and specialization (starting approximately in the mid-nineteenth century and lasting until recently). Only in the last stage (specialization) does the military become a specialized branch of the national government in which there is a clear separation between the milita-

³⁰ Jerry F. HOUGH and Robin GRIER: *The Long Process of Development: Building Markets and States in Pre-industrial England, Spain, and Their Colonies*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 61.

³¹ Max WEBER: "Politics as a Vocation", in John DREIJMANIS (ed.), *Max Weber's Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations*, New York, Algora Publishing, 2008, pp. 155-208, p. 156.

³² Douglass C. NORTH, John J. WALLIS and Barry R. WEINGAST: *op. cit.*, p. 153, Margaret LEVI: *op. cit.*, p. 438. The Soviet Union is probably the most relevant exception in the lack of consolidated control of the military among developing countries. During its decadence, however, the USSR fell in the more traditional pattern of decentralized (non-Weberian) organization of violence. Writing about soviet republics in the early 1990s, Ryszard KAPUSCINSKI: *op. cit.*, p. 127, noted that «[...] weapons of all sorts have appeared on the black market, including armored trucks and tanks, owing to the disintegration of the old superpower and the loosening of discipline in the army. And so everybody and anybody is arming himself and sharpening his sword. It is easier in this country to get a pistol and a grenade than a shirt or a cap.»

³³ Charles TILLY: *op. cit.*

ry's role (decided by military experts) and the fiscal requirements to fund military expenses, which is controlled by representative institutions independent of the army.³⁴

If the consolidated control of the army by representative institutions did not emerge until recently, how did rulers ensure the loyalty of relevant factions of the military for most of our history? The first answer points to the ideology shared by rulers and members of the military.³⁵ In this sense, religion was an important tool to align officers' beliefs with the preservation of social order: the assimilation of the ruler to a divinity in Imperial China or Ancient Egypt shows how religious beliefs could result in greater loyalty to the ruler. Similar examples abound: in Japan, the emperor's family members are nowadays still considered to be direct descendants of the sun goddess, the Russian czar was considered a god until the nineteenth century, and the Catholic Church has always been an important element in legitimizing the ruler in many European countries. In Spain, the Catholic Church controlled enormous estates and performed administrative duties for the king. Religious values constitute one of the elements that can contribute to widespread beliefs in favor of the ruler. Similarly, values like "order" or "tradition" that might be widely shared across ranks in the army can contribute to officers' attachment to the status quo.

Besides ideology and values, rulers also understood that loyalty was better secured when reinforced by the persuasion of wealth and pecuniary interests. Consequently, material rewards have also been used to reinforce the loyalty of specialists in violence. In the agrarian societies of medieval England and Spain, the ownership of land was an important determinant of political and economic power. The coalition that William the Conqueror formed after conquering the British Isles in 1066 in England was built around the distribution of land among his main officers. Military feudalism resulted. A similar strategy of conquest and reward by the distribution of the land among officers was followed by Christian princes in the Iberian Peninsula between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries after capturing the territory from Mus-

³⁴ Douglass C. NORTH, John J. WALLIS and Barry R. WEINGAST: op. cit., mention the consolidated control of the military as one of the «doorstep conditions» that societies must attain before transitioning to what they call «open access orders» (institutional arrangements characterized by competitive and impersonal political and economic markets). They also date the moment when some societies established and consolidated modern political and economic institutions back to the nineteenth century. William H. MCNEILL: op. cit., p. 77, dates the political control of the military back to fifteenth-century Italian city-states (Venice, Milan...). Despite the fact that it might be true that «coups d'état ceased to be a serious threat» for those cities, it seems less clear that they also achieved a separation between the fiscal and military activities of the army. In the case of England, Jerry F. HOUGH and Robin GRIER: op. cit., p. 116, do not find indication of any consolidated control of the military until the first decades of the 1700s.

³⁵ I use "ideology" as defined by Douglass C. NORTH: *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 23: «the subjective perceptions (models, theories) all people possess to explain the world around them. [...] [T]he theories individuals construct are colored by normative views of how the world should be organized» (his emphasis). North ended up using the concept "belief system" instead of "ideology" to avoid the usual assimilation of the latter to the Marxist notion of false or incorrect beliefs (Jerry F. HOUGH and Robin GRIER, op. cit., p. 44). In our case, the concept is applied to some theory (probably widely shared among officers and members of the military) regarding how society must be organized.

lims. The creation of religious-military orders (Alcántara, Calatrava, and Santiago) is a good example: the founders of the orders were given important amounts of land in the expectation that the military forces that they created would protect the northern Castilian city-states. Examples of other forms of economic incentives to attract the support of military units and factions also exist beyond European frontiers: Chinese rulers during the Sung dynasty (960-1279) paid tribesmen to defend the borders against would-be raiders.³⁶ Even nowadays, the Egyptian army controls important resources of the economy that range from manufacturing to service-providing companies.

Far from being an organization subordinated to the political power, the military in developing countries is an autonomous agent that is integrated into the ruling coalition via ideology and the creation and appropriation of economic rents to ensure its support and loyalty. As Hough and Grier point out, «when rulers are strong enough to punish and reward, they usually can keep the self-interest of officials enough under control to keep government functioning, at least ineffectively.»³⁷ The problem, as we will see for the case of Spain during the Republic, is that the interests of military factions often conflict and policies must choose the group that will benefit at the expense of another. Understanding the composition of and changes in the economic rents accruing to members of the military is an important element in understanding the sources of the (in)stability of institutional arrangements and the incentives that military factions have to support or oppose the government.

The Army in Spain

The application of the theoretical framework to the case of Spain and the Second Republic requires two steps. First, I will show that the army was a relevant political player that was not under political control. Second, I will show that the literature has traditionally emphasized the ideological links between the army and the elites that ruled Spain and that there existed conflicts around the distribution of economic rents between military groups. I will explore the organization of the army in factions and their economic interests and show how the reforms implemented by Manuel Azaña, the minister of war between 1931 and 1933, affected the economic and professional prospects of military groups in Spain.

a) The Spanish Army: A Relevant Political Player

Violence and military interventions were common in Spanish political history well before the Second Republic. During Isabel II's reign (1843-1868), Spain had one civil war, two military *pronunciamientos* (military coups) that succeeded and led to changes of government,

³⁶ William H. MCNEILL: op. cit., p. 16.

³⁷ Jerry F. HOUGH, Jerry F. and Robin GRIER: op. cit., p. 29.

13 *pronunciamientos* that failed, and a final military coup that overthrew Isabel II.³⁸ The brief reign of Amadeo I (1870-1873) and the chaotic First Republic (1873-1874) were also dominated by military unrest that ultimately led to the fall of the first republican experiment in Spain.

During the *Restauración* (1874-1923), the army was still a key player in the Spanish dominant coalition. As Puell de la Villa points out, «the army was considered an autonomous class with its own structures of power that ran parallel to the ones of the civil administration [...] and that directly depended on the monarch.»³⁹ Military officers sat in the senate and parliament, and the minister of war between 1874 and 1917 was always an army officer. The political relevance of the Spanish military was embodied in laws that increased its political power. In March of 1906, for example, the Law of Jurisdictions gave the military courts control over all the «crimes against the Fatherland and the army.» The Law of Jurisdictions was a step in the process whereby «the officer corps came to consider itself the ultimate arbiter in politics.»⁴⁰ Another significant law reflecting the political power of the army was the Royal Order of January 15 1914, which allowed direct communication between the king and army officers. This order was particularly significant for two reasons. First, it confirmed that, despite being a parliamentary monarchy *de jure*, during the *Restauración* the army enjoyed a *de facto* political power not subject to parliamentary control. Second, the law was symptomatic of the king's need to attract support from sectors of the army. Some scholars see the 1914 Royal Order as another step in the consolidation of the king-soldier (single ruler) that commanded general obedience from the army.⁴¹ Rather than confirming the existence of a single agent with total control of the army, the law was indicative of the king's need to attract and ensure the support of powerful officers and sectors of the army in order to forge a coalition that stabilized the regime. In Lleixà's words, the king acted as «the principal hinge that united the civil and military branches of the state» in a social order in which the army had to be «*coordinated* but not subordinated to the remaining public powers.»⁴²

The end of *Restauración*'s parliamentary monarchy was also marked by military intervention. In 1923, Primo de Rivera, an infantry officer, took power after a military coup and established a dictatorship that lasted seven years (1923-1930). Between 1923 and 1925, Primo formed a “Military Directory” (*Directorio Militar*) in which the army took control of the majority of the Spanish political system. According to González Calleja, «the Directory freed the administration from political parties and turned it to hundreds of pressure groups, mainly the army, which rapidly occupied the main administrative posts.»⁴³ After 1925, the regime became

³⁸ Albert CARRERAS and Xavier TAFUNELL (coord.): *Estadísticas históricas de España: siglos XIX - XX*, Bilbao, Fundación BBVA, 2005, pp. 1085-1086.

³⁹ Fernando PUELL DE LA VILLA: op. cit., p. 114.

⁴⁰ Paul PRESTON: *The Spanish Civil War. Reaction, Revolution, and Revenge*, New York, Norton & Company, 2007, p. 28.

⁴¹ Gabriel CARDONA: op. cit., p. 78; Fernando PUELL DE LA VILLA: op. cit., p. 110.

⁴² Joaquín LLEIXÀ: op. cit., p. 66.

⁴³ Eduardo GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA: *La España de Primo de Rivera. La modernización autoritaria 1923-1930*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2005, p. 69: «El Directorio libró a la Administración del influjo de los

a “Civil Directory,” but Primo stayed as the head of the government, only below the king in the chain of command. After Primo stepped down in 1930, two shorter dictatorships led by Berenguer and Aznar (both army officers) followed until April 1931 when the Second Republic was declared.

Regimes before the Republic varied in character, but in all of them, the army was a relevant political player in its own right. North, Wallis, and Weingast’s words restate the inevitable conclusion: «If active support of the military forces is necessary to hold or obtain control of the civilian government institutions, then a society does not have political control of the military. If military officers serve as officers [...] in the civilian government, for example as legislators or executives, then a society does not have political control of the military.»⁴⁴ The Republic inherited and operated in an institutional arrangement where the army was a relevant player that was not under political control.⁴⁵

b) *The Army and the Spanish Dominant Coalition*

When explaining officers’ behavior and willingness to support (or oppose) governments during periods of political instability, the ideology of the army has been privileged. Take the case of nineteenth-century *pronunciamientos*.⁴⁶ Officers’ involvement in *pronunciamientos* has traditionally been explained by the antagonism between the liberal and conservative sectors in both the army and Spanish political system. Lancaster and Prevost summarize this ideological approach to officers’ interventionism in Spanish politics:

partidos políticos para entregarla indefensa al de ciertos grupos burocráticos de presión, especialmente el Ejército, que se lanzó con avidez a ocupar los principales puestos gubernativos.»

⁴⁴ Douglass C. NORTH, John J. WALLIS and Barry R. WEINGAST: op. cit., p. 170.

⁴⁵ The two last changes in government before the declaration of the Second Republic provide additional anecdotal evidence of the army being an important element of Spanish governments. After the king decided to replace Primo de Rivera as head of the Spanish government, Primo contacted the captain generals in the army (officers with the highest rank in the military) to verify if he had their support. Realizing that captain generals were not willing to intervene in his favor, Primo de Rivera left Spain (Gabriel CARDONA: op. cit., p. 101). King Alfonso XIII followed a similar path in April 1931: after the electoral victory of republican parties in major cities, the king met with the most important officers in the army. Officers’ unwillingness to support the monarch also ended with the king’s exile and the peaceful declaration of the Republic. Meeting with the army before accepting a political decision (either taken by the king or derived from elections) shows the extent to which the army was expected to influence the Spanish political path.

⁴⁶ Vilar provides one useful brief description of *pronunciamientos* and their stages in nineteenth-century Spain: «Periodically a well-known process took place. Exiles, secret societies, often foreign intrigue, obscurely encouraged by partisan opinion, and aware that legal channels had been closed by official pressure, elected a general, frequently a leader in exile, or at least in disgrace. [...] A manifesto was read to the troops, who abandoned their barracks. Arrests were carried out, commands changed, while express messengers and telegrams called on other garrisons, previously approached, to make a pronouncement in the same terms. Madrid usually declared the situation under control (this was often true since out of scores of failures only half a dozen *pronunciamientos* were successful).» Pierre VILAR, *Spain. A Brief History*, New York, Pergamon Press, 1977, p. 65.

The political participation of the Spanish armed forces [in governmental decision-making outcomes] comes from the same mold as that of many Latin American nations. Politically and culturally conservative, the Spanish armed forces see themselves as the ultimate defenders of the Spanish nation. They are the protectors of God and country, always ready to come to the defense of the “Spanish way of life.” Defense of the church, the family, the monarchy and other centralized authority, and most traditional Spanish institutions are of utmost concern to them. The Spanish military is principally inward looking, seeing the potential danger from within Spain itself, not from foreign invasion. The military has always seen the political Left as the greatest threat to these institutions and thus to the military’s own central role in politics and in the nation’s governmental decision making.⁴⁷

Studies of the Republic and the Spanish Civil War typically agree with this view: the support of many officers to the rebels that started the 1936 military coup and the civil war is mostly explained by the conservatism that allegedly pervaded the Spanish Army.⁴⁸ There is no doubt that the traditional preeminence of ideology and military culture to explain officers’ behavior during the Second Republic and civil war has strong foundations and deserves serious consideration. Puell, for example, convincingly shows that the “interventionist” mentality developed by the Army during the years of “praetorian politics”⁴⁹ (1874-1931), officers’ view of themselves as being victimized by republican policies, and their animosity to regionalist movements in Catalonia or communism were important elements in pushing officers to join the conspiracies against the republican government.⁵⁰ Far from denying the importance of those (non-pecuniary) elements, I would like to *add* new (pecuniary) factors of analysis and falsifiable hypothesis that might enhance our understanding of officers’ motives to join the coup against the Republic in July 1936.

Besides the officers’ ideology, the theoretical framework developed in this paper also points to the role of economic rents in strengthening the loyalty of military factions. The study of the changes in economic links between the army and ruling coalitions is an underdeveloped aspect of the field of military studies for twentieth-century Spain in general and the republican period in particular.

Even if there is no doubt that ideology and officers’ beliefs played a role in their attitude vis-à-vis the Spanish governments and their involvement in the 1936 military coup, one should avoid an excessive (or unique) focus on officers’ beliefs for at least three reasons. First, the arri-

⁴⁷ Thomas D. LANCASTER and Gary PREVOST: op. cit., p. 4.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Carlos NAVAJAS ZUBELDIA: *Leales y rebeldes. La tragedia de los militares republicanos*, Madrid, Síntesis, 2011.

⁴⁹ Carolyn P. BOYD: *Praetorian Politics in Liberal Spain*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

⁵⁰ Fernando PUELL DE LA VILLA: “La trama militar de la conspiración”, en Ángel VIÑAS, Eduardo GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA, Fernando HERNÁNDEZ SÁNCHEZ, José Luis LEDESMA, Julio ARÓSTEGUI SÁNCHEZ, Hilari RAGUER SUÑER, Francisco SÁNCHEZ PÉREZ, Fernando PUELL DE LA VILLA y XOSÉ M. NÚÑEZ SEIXAS (coords.), *Los mitos del 18 de julio*, Barcelona, Crítica editorial, 2013, pp. 55-78.

val of the Republic implied a redistribution of economic rents among military groups. Therefore, the reformist governments in power during the first years of the Republic (1931-1933) manipulated one of the most important links between the ruling coalition and military factions. It is important to understand to what extent those changes influenced officers' behaviors and incentives to support the Republic. Second, there is scant evidence for individual officers' ideology or beliefs. Only a fistful of officers were clearly identified with one political party.⁵¹ Military organizations with marked political characters existed—the far rightist *Unión Militar Española* (UME) and the leftist *Unión Militar Republicana Antifascista* (UMRA)—but the written membership records disappeared or were destroyed during the civil war. In the case of the UME, scholars in general agree that 12% or less of Spanish officers belonged to the conservative organization.⁵² Third, even if ideology seems to be correlated with officers' behavior, it could be the case that, as Przeworski notes, rather than officers acting guided by an ideal, «causality runs the other way: [...] protagonists [that is, officers] want to do some things for other reasons and use philosophers [or ideas] to justify their positions.»⁵³ Hough and Grier also emphasize the difficulty in dissociating self-interest from ideology and the risk of endogeneity: «[religion, politics, and legitimating ideologies] are extremely complex. [...] Those with different self-interests naturally gravitate to those features of ideologies and religions that further their interests.»⁵⁴ Proponents of ideology as the main factor dividing the army in Spain must be aware of the ubiquitous problem of reverse causality in social sciences: was ideology driving officers' actions or were officers' actions caused by other motives (for example, their pecuniary self-interest) that, in turn, determined their observable ideology?⁵⁵

We must then turn to economic links between the military and Spanish political systems. Contrary to other developing countries, the Spanish Army did not have significant or

⁵¹ There is not a comprehensive study of officers' involvement in politics at the regional and urban levels. Not surprisingly, an examination of deputies in the Spanish Parliament during the Second Republic reveals a scant military presence. Out of the 1,484 members of the parliament elected during the Second Republic, only 22 appear to be "Army officers" [*militar*] and two had already retired (information obtained from the Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados*, available at <http://www.congreso.es/portal/page/portal/Congreso/Congreso/SDocum/ArchCon/SDHistoDipu/SDBuscHisDip>). The 20 (active) officers that sat in the parliament represented only 0.13% of the 15,344 active officers registered in the 1936 Military Yearbook published by the Spanish Ministry of War.

⁵² Julio BUSQUETS and Juan Carlos LOSADA: *Ruido de sables. Las conspiraciones militares en la España del siglo XX*, Crítica, Barcelona, 2003, p. 191, ft. 13; and Fernando PUELL DE LA VILLA and Justo A. HUERTA BARAJAS: *Atlas de la Guerra Civil Española. Antecedentes, Operaciones y Secuelas Militares (1931-1945)*, Madrid, Síntesis, 2007, p. 44.

⁵³ Adam PZREWORSKI: *Democracy and the Limits of Self-Government*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 9.

⁵⁴ Jerry F. HOUGH and Robin GRIER: op. cit., p. 214.

⁵⁵ Gabriel CARDONA: op. cit., p. 98, suggests an alternative channel for explaining officers' involvement in politics based on friendship and family links («La oposición militar [a Primo de Rivera] se extendía gracias a relaciones de compañerismo, como fue el caso de los artilleros y los aviadores, y también a través de las vinculaciones familiares y amistosas»). This possibility, even if equally subject to problems of unobservability, has a greater chance of being tested (falsified) through a study of military networks in the Spanish Army. This might constitute a promising new field of research on Spanish military history.

direct control over economic resources or firms.⁵⁶ By 1931, the military in Spain had achieved an important degree of specialization in its military tasks. That specialization led to conflicts over distribution of economic rents that revolved around purely military issues like promotions between ranks and other policies affecting officers' professional careers. Those conflicts around officers' professional and economic prospects crystallized in divisions along geographical and corporatist lines.

c) Corporatist Divisions in the Army

The professional and economic interests of the Spanish military corps were important determinants of their involvement in politics. Artillerymen, engineers, infantrymen, cavalrymen, and aviators participated in the most important conspiracies and coups that affected Spanish political regimes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their identity and interests as members of the corps were important in understanding their position. The Second Republic was not alien to the conflict of interests between corps. After Azaña implemented his military reforms between 1931 and 1933, the center-left republican government altered the distribution of economic rents and professional prospects between corps.

Aviation was probably one of the clearest examples of officers' particular interests along corporatist lines. The Spanish Aviation Corps was the newest in the Spanish Army (it appeared in 1910), but it was soon involved in political controversies. The participation of some aviators in the wars against native African tribes between 1910 and 1927 favored some fast promotions for aviators, but Primo de Rivera (Spanish ruler between 1925 and 1930) never consolidated Spanish Aviation as a fully independent corps. Furthermore, Primo de Rivera never provided adequate funding for the corps, and his personal animosity toward Ramón Franco (a popular aviator) contributed to the widespread involvement of members of the corps in conspiracies against Primo's regime. Aviators' standing in the army drastically changed after 1931. With the arrival of the Republic, Spanish Aviation benefitted from many reforms that improved its professional and economic standing within the army and consolidated its independence vis-à-vis other corps in the army. In a law published in the *Diario Oficial del Ministerio de la Guerra* on May 19, 1931, Azaña gave aviators economic bonuses for their services. Furthermore, the minister cancelled all the decrees against aviation officers approved by Primo de Rivera and created the *Cuerpo General de Aviación*, which established the independence of the corps vis-à-vis the remaining structure of the army once and for all.⁵⁷

Corps in the army also had rivalries based on military education and methods of promotion. The most important corporatist conflict was between the artillery and engineers and infantry and cavalry. Artillery and engineers were the most elite branches and received longer

⁵⁶ Artillery was an exception, but the industries it controlled were exclusively devoted to the production of military equipment, so its control over the Spanish productive system does not seem to go beyond the purely military field.

⁵⁷ Gabriel CARDONA: op. cit., p. 157.

and more technical educations. These corps defended the existence of separate academies with respect to the infantry or cavalry. Primo created the General Military Academy where all the corps shared the first two years of studies, thus increasing the animosity of engineers and artillerymen toward his regime. During the first years of the Republic, Azaña aligned with the interests of the technical corps by closing Primo de Rivera's military academy in Zaragoza and reestablishing three military academies: one for the Infantry, Cavalry, and Quartermaster Corps in Toledo; another for the Artillery and Engineers Corps in Segovia; and a third for the Military Health Corps in Madrid. Officers pursued their *entire* careers within these academies. In other words, Azaña's reforms aligned with the interests of the most technical military groups.

Artillerymen and engineers were also strong supporters of promotions determined by seniority rather than promotions based on combat merit. Methods of promotions are studied in the next section because they were a key aspect that generated divisions in the army between troops in Africa and the Iberian Peninsula.

Economic and professional motivations do not offer a clear prediction for the behavior of *all* the military corps. The Civil Guard is a good example. When differentiating between ideological and materialistic reasons for joining the coup, the former seem more relevant than the latter in the case of the *Benemérita*. The conservative character of the Civil Guard (manifested in its defense of "order" and its opposition to any leftist movement) and its links with rural oligarchies is well documented.⁵⁸ There are no significant economic or professional disputes that divided the corps or affected its relationship with other corps within the army. Perhaps it can be argued that the manipulation of professional interests was favorable to the *Benemérita* when conservative coalitions were in power. Between 1933 and 1935, right-wing governments increased the independence of the corps vis-à-vis the civil power, and there were several attempts to increase the number of members who were part of the corps.⁵⁹ In July 1936, 71% of the officers in the Civil Guard joined the coup, whereas only 29% remained loyal to the republican government.⁶⁰ The case of the Civil Guard is a useful reminder of the scope and limits of our theoretical framework: economic, professional, and other materialistic goals might be a useful *addition* to traditional non-pecuniary (mostly ideological) explanations of officers' behavior during the civil war. However, there might be many cases, like the Civil Guard, for which nonpecunia-

⁵⁸ Eduardo GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA: "Las fuerzas de orden público y la República", in Jorge MARTÍNEZ REVERTE, *Los militares españoles en la Segunda República*, Madrid, Editorial Pablo Iglesias, 2012, pp. 99-134 and Gerald BLANEY: "Between order and loyalty: the Civil Guard and the Spanish Second Republic, 1931-1936" in David Oran (ed.), *Conflict and Legality: Policing Mid-Twentieth Century Europe*, Francis Boutle, London, UK, pp. 42-63.

⁵⁹ Eduardo GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA: op. cit., pp. 107-108.

⁶⁰ Francisco ALÍA MIRANDA: *Julio de 1936. Conspiración y alzamiento contra la Segunda República*, Barcelona, Crítica, 2011, p. 165. Gerald BLANEY: op. cit., pp. 56-7, points out that, in many cases, the units of the Civil Guard waited to know the outcome of the coup before taking sides, so its position was a consequence—rather than a cause—of the outcome of the coup.

ry factors played a major role and deserve most of our attention when studying officers' behavior.

c) Promotions and Geographic Divisions in the Army

The second division in the Spanish Army was along geographical lines and revolved around the methods of promotion preferred by the geographical factions that coexisted within the army. Officers in the military were divided into three rank categories. First, the ranks of lieutenant general (*teniente general*), major general (*general de división*), and brigadier general (*general de brigada*) were part of the general officers, the highest category in the army. The second category was formed by the senior commissioned officers (*jefes*), which comprised the ranks of colonel (*coronel*), lieutenant colonel (*teniente coronel*), and major (*comandante*). Finally, the group of junior commissioned officers (*oficiales*) included captains (*capitanes*), lieutenants (*tenientes*), and *alféreces*.

Officers within each rank were classified on a scale according to their seniority holding the rank. Promotions from one rank to another could be determined following different criteria. The first possibility was having promotions by combat merit, in which officers were promoted on behalf of remarkable actions in the battlefield. A second possibility was promotion by election whereby the ruler simply appointed those officers that would be promoted to the next rank. Finally, promotions could be determined purely by seniority: those officers, having spent longer time holding the rank, were the ones who could be chosen for promotion. Those three methods of promotion (combat merit, election, and seniority) were not always (or simultaneously) in place. Their importance changed with military reforms and the pressures that different military groups exercised to favor one method or another. It is easy to understand why military factions attached great importance to the policies regulating promotions in the army and spent a lot of time and effort lobbying for (or against) their preferred (or least preferred) methods of promotion: officers' promotions improved the economic and social standing in the army by resulting in higher wages and more prestige. In an oversized army with a chronic problem of excess officers in its ranks, ranks were quickly congested, and the progression toward the higher ranks became difficult. Each faction fought for implementing the method of promotions that maximized the chances of its members benefitting from promotions to avoid stagnation in a given rank.

Conflicts around methods of promotion exacerbated the clash between troops posted in the Iberian Peninsula (*Peninsulares*) and those posted in the Spanish North-African colonies (*Africanistas*). The former preferred promotions were strictly determined by seniority, whereas the latter were strong proponents of allowing promotions determined by combat merit. *Peninsulares'* criticism of combat merit often pointed to problems of arbitrariness and favoritism. In this sense, the military journal *La Correspondencia Militar* published an article in 1912 stating that:

There are 2,300 senior officers of Infantry and Cavalry who do not want to be politicians, and who reject any government policy that tries, by means of favoritism, to introduce hated rivalries into the Army. They regard any reward for service that is opposed to their vehement desire to ascend by seniority as a menace to their only safeguard, the scale of seniority.⁶¹

Despite its ecumenical and apolitical pretensions, the article itself is indicative of the political activism of the army in its attempts to influence the methods of promotion and the tensions that existed around that issue. Favoritism and arbitrariness aside, the reasons for that type of activism were linked to officers' self-interest and the impact that methods of promotion had on the careers and economic rewards they expected. On the one hand, *Africanista* officers were regularly involved in combat against native tribes in North Africa between 1910 and 1927 and therefore defended promotion by combat merit as a way to obtain faster progress through the scale. On the other hand, *Peninsulares* opposed promotion by combat merit because, lacking opportunities for combat, they could not benefit from that type of promotion. Allowing promotions determined by combat merit harmed their future prospects in favor of the *Africanista* faction. Nazario Cebreiros, an officer of the Spanish Army in the first half of the twentieth century, showed how self-interest loomed behind officers' defense of one method of promotion over the other. This is how Cebreiros described officers who benefited from promotions by combat merit during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship:

When the Juntas [*peninsulares*' lobbies⁶²] had an unyielding force, they were *junteros* [i.e. *peninsulares*] and fierce defendants of promotions by seniority when they were at the [Iberian] Peninsula; but if, following their desires or by chance, they crossed the strait [of Gibraltar], then they became rapidly convinced that promotion by seniority was not in the interest of the State.⁶³

Thus, rather than acting as the agents of liberal or conservative elites in Spain, officers «would be more concerned with promoting their own interests as military men above or outside of party conflicts.»⁶⁴ The government's decision over the methods of promotion would attract the support of the *Peninsulares* (if emphasis was put on seniority) or the *Africanistas* (if promotions by combat merit were allowed). Decisions over methods of promotion were impor-

⁶¹ Quoted in Stanley G. PAYNE: op. cit., p. 124.

⁶² More precisely, the Military Defense Juntas were peninsular organizations of military men who «were opposed to *Africanistas*, the *méritos* system, the palace clique, and the generals.» Stanley G. PAYNE: op. cit., p. 127.

⁶³ Nazario CEBREIROS: *Las Reformas Militares. Estudio crítico*, Santander, Talleres Tipográficos J. Martínez, 1931, p. 14.

⁶⁴ Stanley G. PAYNE: op. cit., p. 37.

tant determinants of the support that geographic military factions gave to Spanish governments.⁶⁵

In a series of laws passed between 1924 and 1926, Primo de Rivera allowed promotions by combat merit⁶⁶ and by election.⁶⁷ The Republic inherited a military structure where combat merit and election had determined several officers' ranks. In another controversial law, Primo also eliminated the closed scale⁶⁸ for the Artillery Corps and Engineers Corps—an event without precedent in the history of these corps, which had always relied on seniority to determine the promotions in their ranks.

Between 1931 and 1933, Azaña reversed Primo's policies and implemented a series of military reforms that altered the promotion system. Two decrees passed in 1931 cancelled Primo's promotions by elections⁶⁹ and revised those promotions that the dictator passed on combat merit grounds.⁷⁰ Promotions were cancelled except if, at the moment of revision, they could be justified using the seniority criteria. Many officers who had been promoted by Primo lost position in the scale as a result of Azaña's revisions of promotions by combat merit. Azaña's reforms of the methods of promotion were completed with the passage of a law on May 2, 1932 that established the promotion criteria followed during the Republic. The law was partly inspired by a law of 1918, which had been approved under the pressure of *Peninsulares* and other proponents of the seniority criteria for promotions. It was established that promotions would be mostly determined by seniority. In the case of promotions from captain to major and from colonel to brigadier general, it was also required that the officer pass a course and final exam.

The reform of promotion methods in 1932, as well as the reversion of many of Primo's promotions, could have affected officers' and military factions' attitudes vis-à-vis the Republic through three different channels. First, by strengthening the role of seniority and study in determining promotions, the 1932 law favored *Peninsulares*' interests and might have alienated the *Africanista* faction. Second, emphasis on seniority was also in line with the interests of those corps historically attached to the closed scale, namely engineers and artillerymen. Third, those officers who lost positions or were demoted after Azaña revised Primo de Rivera's promotions could have been more likely to raise against the republican government in 1936. There is abun-

⁶⁵ To a certain extent, those decisions also reflected the relative force of each faction. In 1917, when the government approved a law that restored promotions by combat merit, the *Peninsulares* created the Defense Juntas and forced the fall of the government. One of the first measures of the new government was restoring the preeminence of promotions determined by seniority as demanded by the peninsular faction (Michael ALPERT: *La Reforma Militar de Azaña (1931-1933)*, Granada, Comares, 2008, p. 126; Gabriel CARDONA: op. cit., p. 145).

⁶⁶ Law of May 11, 1924.

⁶⁷ Law of July 26, 1926.

⁶⁸ The "closed scale" was another term to designate systems in which promotions were only determined by seniority.

⁶⁹ Order of May 18, 1931. Only the promotions by election that could be justified on seniority grounds were maintained.

⁷⁰ Order of June 3, 1931.

dant anecdotal evidence of how seriously officers took these reforms of promotions within the army. On April 19, 1932, Azaña wrote in his diary that General Goded, who was executed four years later after his failed attempt to lead the military coup in Catalonia, was «very angry because the reforms cut off his career.»⁷¹ In another entry, Azaña echoes the rumors that Melquíades Álvarez, an important political figure of the Republic, «has agreed to combat in the Parliament the cancellation of promotion by combat merit.»⁷² The interests of the army were important issues during the Republic, and military factions had enough political relevance to make their voices heard at the Spanish Parliament. The impact of revisions of promotions was widespread and did not only affect top-rank officers like Goded. Alpert points out that 17 infantry colonels, 34 infantry lieutenant colonels, and 34 cavalry lieutenant colonels were negatively affected by the Decree of May 18, 1931. Furthermore, seven lieutenant colonels were demoted to majors and eight majors to captain.⁷³ Likewise, an analysis of the *Diario Oficial del Ministerio de la Guerra* (DOMG) of March 31, 1933, in which promotions by combat merit during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship were revised, reveals that one lieutenant general, one major general, nine brigadier generals, 17 colonels (four from the General Staff and 13 from Infantry Corps), 32 lieutenant colonels (five from General Staff, 23 infantrymen, three cavalrymen, and one from the Quartermaster Corps), 97 majors (eight from General Staff, 80 from the Infantry Corps, eight from the Cavalry Corps, and two from the Quartermaster Corps), 132 captains (112 infantrymen, 16 cavalrymen, and four from the Quartermaster Corps), and 74 lieutenants (69 from the Infantry Corps and five from the Cavalry Corps) were negatively affected. The impact of revisions was widely felt across ranks and corps.⁷⁴

Among the officers mentioned in the DOMG of March 31 1933, I could identify 323 that were still active in July 1936. Using the data collected by Engel Masoliver,⁷⁵ 276 (85.45%) of those officers joined the coup against the republican government. The remaining 47 (14.55%) remained loyal to the Republic.⁷⁶

⁷¹ «[E]stá muy dolido de que las reformas le hayan cortado la carrera.» Manuel AZAÑA: *Memorias políticas y de guerra, I*, Barcelona, Crítica, 1981, p. 459.

⁷² «Otros afirman que Melquíades se ha comprometido a combatir en las Cortes la anulación de los ascensos por méritos de guerra.» Manuel AZAÑA: op. cit., p. 20.

⁷³ Michael ALPERT: op. cit., p. 134.

⁷⁴ Alpert points out that the DOMG of March 31, 1933 cancelled 365 promotions by combat merit (op. cit., p. 139). My own counting of the cancellations registered in the decree resulted in the 363 officers mentioned in the text. It must be pointed out that some officers appear twice (e.g., Amado Balmes Alonso is mentioned in the document as both brigadier general and infantry colonel because he benefitted from two promotions by combat merit during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship), so, in reality, less than 363 officers were negatively affected by the revision.

⁷⁵ Carlos ENGEL MASOLIVER: *El Cuerpo de Oficiales en la Guerra de España*, Valladolid, Alcañiz Fresno's Editores, 2008.

⁷⁶ The classical disclaimer "correlation does not imply causation" applies. Despite the fact that the percentage of officers negatively affected by the revision of promotions that joined the coup (85.45%) is higher than the average percentage of officers that rebelled according to Engel Masoliver (80.89%), this correlation does not take into account two important elements. First, it does not consider the impact of other variables that could have also influenced officers' decision (e.g., rank, corps, ideology, or hierarchical effects). Second, the correlation is not free from the reverse causality problem mentioned above:

Concluding Remarks: New Horizons for the Study of the Army in Spain

Developing societies have generally been characterized by a lack of political control over the military. This lack of political control, together with the importance of the potential for attack to ensure the survival and expansion of a particular human group, explains the relevance of the army as a political player that influences the dynamics of society and the process of institutional change.

Besides the ideological links that help to ensure the support of relevant factions of the military to the ruling coalitions, societies have used the creation and distribution of economic rents among officers and military factions. Studying the changes in the creation and distribution of those rents might be an important strategy in improving our understanding of the behavior of military groups throughout history in relevant aspects like their interests in supporting the ruling coalition, their likelihood to rebel against the status quo, and the link between military policies and the (in)stability of some regimes.

One should be careful to avoid an overstatement of the novelty in a self-proclaimed “new theoretical framework” for the Spanish Army. This paper emphasizes the (relatively neglected) economic and professional factors that could have shaped officers’ behavior in July 1936. However, the tension between pecuniary (economic) and nonpecuniary (culture or ideology) factors has shaped the debate to explain structural dynamics and social change for several decades.⁷⁷ It seems fair to state that the insights of our theoretical framework open new research options on the role of the military in institutional arrangements throughout Spanish history. There is little doubt that the Spanish military was an autonomous and relevant elite group in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish social orders. When studying the Second Republic and Spanish Civil War, it has almost been taken for granted that the failure to consolidate democracy in Spain was due to ideological conflicts and the extremism of leftist and rightist political forces or, in slightly different terms, clashes between conservative elites and masses seeking to redistribute political and economic power. The army is a part of this traditional conceptual framework and usually appears as an agent of the elites during the republican period (that is, as the armed component in charge of protecting the privileges and power of old conservative elites). The fact that the majority of officers rebel against the republican regime in July

did revision of promotions result in less loyalty to the republican government or did (suspected) less loyalty to the Republic cause revision of promotions in 1933? See Alvaro LA PARRA-PEREZ: “For a Fistful of Pesetas? The Political Economy of Military Factions in a Failed Democracy: the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939,” Weber State University, submitted manuscript, 2015, for evidence of a causal relationship between promotions and the likelihood to join the coup. It must also be pointed out that Fernando PUELL DE LA VILLA: “Julio de 1936: ¿Un ejército dividido?”, in Jorge MARTÍNEZ REVERTE, *Los militares españoles en la Segunda República*, Madrid, Editorial Pablo Iglesias, 2012, pp. 77-98, p. 82, reduces the percentage of officers that joined the coup to 67% of commanding officers (“*oficiales con mando de armas*”). More research is needed to refine our knowledge of the officers’ side during the civil war.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Theda SKOCPOL: “A Critical Review of Barrington Moore’s Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy,” *Politics and Society*, 1/4 (1973), pp. 1-34.

1936 is often explained by the conservative ideology that permeated the army, whereas those officers that remained loyal were the few that were sympathetic to leftist ideas.

There is no doubt that ideology and beliefs played important roles during the Republic and especially during the civil war, but this view is too simplistic in at least two ways. First, by highlighting the “conservative ideology of the army,” it offers an excessively monolithic view of the military. In reality, the army was divided into many groups and factions that held different interests on both ideological and economic issues. Second, it neglects one important tool that ruling coalitions used to attract the support of military groups, namely the creation and distribution of economic rents between military factions. In Spain, those economic and professional military interests mostly revolved around the design of military education or the method of promotion (seniority, selection, or combat merit). Conflicts and different interests in those questions led to frictions between factions (technical against non-technical corps, *Peninsulares* against *Africanistas*...). We know little about how those changes in economic and professional military interests between 1931 and 1936 affected officers’ attitudes vis-à-vis the republican regime. This could constitute a useful addition to the purely ideological explanations that have traditionally dominated the literature.

Using data from Engel, I find that aviators and officers whose economic and professional prospects were worsened after Azaña’s reforms (either because they were negatively affected by the revision and cancellation of Primo de Rivera’s promotions or because their professional prospects worsened after the elimination of the rank of lieutenant general) were more likely to join the military coup of July 1936 against the republican government.⁷⁸ This is just a first indication that the study of military factions and their economic interests might *add to* the current knowledge regarding the behavior of military groups during the Republic and civil war. Our theoretical framework suggests some additional options to delve into the study of the Second Spanish Republic: is it possible to enhance our measurement (or available evidence) regarding the ideological divides within the military (either at the individual or at the factional level)? What is the relative importance of ideological motivations with respect to economic self-interest in explaining officers’ behaviors during the Second Republic and civil war? Were there other economic rents distributed between military groups? To what extent did republican military policies impact officers exclusively via the redistribution of economic rents? Did ideology play any role in the design and implementation of Azaña’s military policies?

Besides reinforcing interdisciplinarity by connecting the study of the military to the economic and political reality of the Republic, the theoretical framework has broader implications for the study of social dynamics in Spain. First, our framework suggests that intra-elite conflict might be an important driver of the process of institutional change and the challenges that societies face in consolidating transitions to democracy. This view is at odds with the traditional “elites vs. masses” approach that dominates the study of political and institutional

⁷⁸ Álvaro LA PARRA-PEREZ: op. cit.

change.⁷⁹ Second, the application of the framework does not need to be restricted to the case of the military. Further empirical applications will require the study of elite groups that formed the ruling coalitions in Spain (or that fought for being part of that coalition) and the mechanisms that ensured their cooperation, particularly the creation and distribution of economic rents.

Insofar as the military was one of the most important political agents in Spain, applying the insights of the theoretical framework to the Spanish military might constitute a useful point of departure to further improve our understanding of Spain's difficult path to development and a more consolidated democracy.

⁷⁹ Scholars outside the Marxist school have also adopted and popularized the “masses versus elites” framework in economics and political science (see, for example, Daron ACEMOĞLU and James A. ROBINSON: *Economic Origins...*).