Espadones: The Origin of Military Interventionism in Spain and Israel

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Abstract
This research analyses military interventionism in two countries and two different historical moments: Spain in the 19th century and Israel in the 20th century. The thesis we develop is that both dynamics were a consequence of the absence of a consensus among the civilian elite on the political system that should rule in both countries.

Keywords: Israel Defence Forces (IDF), Spanish Army, Espadón, Military interventionism, Pronunciamiento

Resumen
En esta investigación se analiza el intervencionismo militar en dos países y dos momentos históricos diferentes: España en el siglo XIX e Israel en el siglo XX. La tesis que desarrollamos es que ambas dinámicas son consecuencia de la ausencia de un consenso en la élite civil sobre el sistema político que debe regir en ambos países.

Palabras clave: Fuerzas de Defensa de Israel (IDF), Ejército español, Espadón, Intervencionismo militar, Pronunciamiento

INTRODUCTION

This article addresses a topic of great importance in current historiography: the interventionism of the military in the political decision-making process. The pioneers in this field of study were the German Alfred Vagts (1958), the British Samuel E. Finer (1969) and the Americans Gwyn Harries-Jenkins and Charles Moskos (1984), Morris Janowitz (1967) and Samuel P. Huntington (1957). This research studies this dynamic in two countries: Spain in the nineteenth century, where there was a proliferation of military pronunciamientos or «rebellions of professional commanders, advocated by
The study of the interventionism of the Spanish military in the political decision-making process has been a constant in historiography not only in Spain but also abroad, but its origin is linked to two political thinkers. On 18 March 1846, the conservative Jaime Balmes published an article in the newspaper *El Pensamiento de la Nación* entitled «La preponderancia military» («The Military preponderance») in which he did not hesitate to state: «Military power is strong because civilian power is weak; we should not so much think of overthrowing the former as of strengthening the latter; the strength of civilian power will be the ruin of military power, which will cease to be power and will become a class like the others in the State». Nine years later Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explained that the cause of military interventionism lay in the Peninsular War (1808-1814): «The first thing that gave these armies a praetorian character was the long war against Napoleon, in which the various units and their leaders gained effective political influence» (Marx and Engels, 1978: 128). In the following century, a large group of academic historians addressed this dynamic in greater depth. Among the most prominent are Jesús Pabón (1971: 239-262), José María Jover Zamora (1976: 281-303), Manuel Espadas Burgos (1990: 266), Stanley G. Payne (1968), Fernando Fernández Bastarreche (1978: 14-15), Fernando Puell (2005: 84-85), Julio Busquets (1984), Gabriel Cardona (1983), José Cepeda Gómez (1990); Eric Christiansen (1974) and Carlos Seco Serrano (1984).

Nevertheless, and beyond the differences that exist in the works of these authors, the underlying thesis of all of them is partly linked to those put forward by Marx and Engels, and Balmes in the 19th century: the weakness of civilian power, the prestige of the military derived from the Peninsular War and the First Carlist War (1833-1939/40), and the role of the army as the mainstay of the liberal regime. These ideas may be considered correct, but they cannot fully explain the causes of military interventionism in nineteenth-century Spain, as they do not answer the question of why this dynamic arose. For us, the answer lies in the lack of elite consensus on the political groups convinced that the gesture of the officers, with the support of public opinion, will lead, without harm or risk, to social peace and political reform» (Alonso Baquer, 1983: 31), led by the Espadones or military leaders of each party, and Israel in the twentieth century. Although these are different historical moments, our hypothesis is that military interventionism in both countries has its origins in the lack of consensus among civilian elites on the political system that should govern the country. However, there is also a fundamental difference between the two countries. In Spain, military interventionism disappeared when the elites managed to reach a consensus on a political regime after 1978, although this consensus has been questioned in recent years by some sectors of the left. In contrast, Israel has witnessed a gradual institutional deterioration in recent years as a result of the country’s political instability.

In order to develop this hypothesis, we have used a methodology based on the analysis of works belonging to different historiographical schools that have investigated this phenomenon in both countries.

Finally, the structure of our article is divided into three main points: The first analyses military interventionism in Spain. The second explains this phenomenon in Israel. And the third is the conclusion, followed by the bibliography.

2. MILITARY INTERVENTIONISM IN SPAIN: POLITICAL DISSENT AT THE BEGINNING, POLITICAL CONSENSUS AT THE END.
political system that should govern Spain. As a consequence of this absence, the
regimes that followed from 1814 onwards can be defined – following Guglielmo
Ferrero – as pre-legitimate because «a part of the population does not admit, does not
render obedience and loyal compliance to the new principle and is, at least, in a state
of potential disobedience» (Ferrero, 1991: 142). At this juncture, civilians and military
personnel defending a specific political project were forced to use force to gain access
to power, since there was no legal channel for doing so by peaceful means. The sector
of the elite that wielded power at a given moment was unwilling to cede it to another
group to create a political system contrary to its interests. The result was that «the
generals of Isabel II’s time were simply politicians who used the army in which they
exercised command» (Sánchez Agesta, 1974: 181). «It should be noted that the army
never pronounced itself as such, nor did it decide the internal life of the country. A
military-politician is opposed by another military-politician, without the slightest hint
of esprit de corps» (Comellas, Martínez Gallego, Ortúzar, Poveda and Rueda, 2016,
99).

The origin of this dynamic can be traced back to 1810, in the Teatro Cómico de la
Real Isla de León. It was there that the deputies gathered in the traditional form of
three estates (Nobility, Clergy and Third Estate) divided ideologically into three
groups: Seres Viles (absolutists), Conservatives (against revolution as a political
instrument and advocates of a political model similar to the British one: bicameral and
with a king endowed with royal power) and Liberals (Muñoz Bolaños, 2012: 79-82).
The result of this division was that the normative work of these courts was not going
to be accepted by all the political elite present in the Andalusian city. Perhaps for this
reason, the liberals wanted to control the Armed Forces from the articles of the 1812
Constitution in order to prevent them from becoming an instrument to re-establish
the Ancien Régime (Muñoz Bolaños, 2012: 80-81).

But the liberals’ wishes were not to be fulfilled. On 13 March 1814 Ferdinand VII
entered Spain through Figueras (Gerona). On 12 April 1814, sixty-nine deputies signed
the «Manifesto of the Persians» in which they asked the king to suppress all the
legislative work of the Cortes of Cadiz. Shortly afterwards, the monarch, with the
support of Lieutenant General Francisco Javier de Elio, Captain General of Valencia,
spoke out in the city of Turia and signed the Royal Decree of 4 May 1814 abolishing
the Constitution of 1812 and the legislative work of the Cortes. This event was the
first manifestation of the fact that the political dissent of the elites was translated into
military intervention with the aim of imposing a particular political project, in this case
that of the absolutist monarchy, and inaugurated a period that would last until the
death of the monarch in 1833. During this period, the conflict developed between the
defenders of absolutism and liberalism, both civilian and military. Both groups used
force to impose their ideas through the tactic of the pronunciamiento (Comellas, 1958)
and even foreign support, such as the Hundred Thousand Sons of Saint Louis who, under
the command of the nephew of the French King Louis XVIII Louis-Antoine de
Bourbon, Duke of Angoulême, put an end to the Liberal Triennium (1820-1923).
However, there were two other significant episodes in this period: the division of the
liberals during the Trienio between the «Doceanístas» or future «Moderados» and the
«Veinteañistas», «Exaltados» or future «Progresistas», each with their own political
model (Comellas, 2017: 88-90) and the division of the supporters of the Ancien
Régime between the «Pure Realist» or future «Carlists», grouped around the figure of
the monarch's brother Carlos María Isidro, and the «Tempered Absolutists» of Ferdinand VII, supporters of timid reforms that would allow the maintenance of the Ancien Régime in Spain (Rivera, 2022: 86-97). This division gave rise to the emergence of four antagonistic political projects that would clash after the death of the monarch in 1833.

Between 1833 and 1840, the second stage took place, which constituted the turning point in this dynamic because it made it irreversible. At the time of Ferdinand VII's death, the civilian and military elite were divided into four groups. The first, a minority, supported the absolutist-Carlist model headed by the brother of the deceased monarch. This political option would be definitively defeated with the military triumph of the Liberals in the First Carlist War. The second group, made up of the high clergy, the aristocracy and very moderate liberals, supported the conservative model, led by the Queen Regent María Cristina of Naples. Its aim was to seek a synthesis between absolutism and liberalism, embodied in the Royal Statute of 1834. This project failed because although it had the support of some members of the military elite, such as the captains general of Catalonia and the lieutenant generals of Madrid Manuel Llauder and Vicente Genaro de Quesada, it did not have the support of the majority of the army, as demonstrated in the 1836 La Granja Sergeants' Mutiny (Fuentes, 2007: 109-113). The third, made up of a sector of the bourgeoisie, liberal professionals and with some support from the popular classes, defended progressive liberalism linked to the classical principles of this ideology. Its visible leaders were Agustín Argüelles, Fermín Caballero and Joaquín María López (Vilches, 2001: 27-39). The fourth group, defended by a large part of the bourgeoisie and the conservative middle classes or Gentes de Orden, was in favour of moderate liberalism, based on «Doctrinarism». This ideology defended shared sovereignty between the King and the Cortes. Their leaders were Antonio Alcalá-Galiano and Javier Izturiz (Comellas, Martínez Gallego, Ortúzar, Poveda and Rueda, 2016: 86-92). The failure of the first two projects opened a window of opportunity for the peaceful establishment of liberalism in Spain. The cornerstone of this system could have been the consensual and doctrinaire constitution of 1837 and the alternation in power between progressives and moderates that developed between 1837 and 1840 (Rivera, 2022: 148-149; Vilches, 2001: 28-29). If this system had worked, Spain would have become a parliamentary monarchy similar to the United Kingdom where two parties succeeded each other peacefully in power. However, that possibility collapsed in 1840 with the progressive movement that expelled María Cristina de Nápoles from the regency, and she was replaced by the Espadón of this party, Lieutenant General Baldomero Espartero (Vilches, 2001: 32-35). This event broke the possibility of collaboration between the two liberal groups because it put an end to the neutrality that was supposed to characterise the Head of State and gave the progressives a hegemonic position in political life. The moderates then opted to resort to force to regain power (Fuentes, 2007: 139-150). The result was a new stage in Spanish history, known by Pabón as the «Regime of the Generals» (1840-1868), which was the period of maximum military interventionism in the 19th century.

During these 28 years, two antagonistic models of the state clashed: the progressive model, embodied in the nom nata constitution of 1856, and the moderate model, whose principles were enshrined in the constitution of 1845. The existence of two constitutional texts was a manifestation of the impossibility of consensus among the liberal elite and the need to resort to the military to achieve power. The main
protagonists of this period were two. On the one hand, the Espadones: Espartero, the moderate Lieutenant General Ramón María Narváez and Lieutenant General Leopoldo O’Donnell, head of the Unión Liberal (a Centre party) and the only general who sought consensus between the different liberal factions (Comellas, Martínez Gallego, Ortúzar, Poveda and Rueda, 2016: 239-257). On the other hand, Queen Isabella II (1943-1868) herself, the main supporter of the moderates and also of the Unión Liberal. Both parties were sustained in power by ideological affinity and not, as Juan Pro stated, by «the Court's idea that the appointment of ministers was a prerogative of the Crown, which was not obliged to alternate, but could grant its confidence to the party or ruler it preferred» (Pro, 2019: 231). But this system collapsed from 1864 onwards when the three parties began to crumble as a result of the attrition suffered, leaving the monarchy of Isabel II mortally wounded, especially after the death of O’Donnell (1866) and Narváez (1868) (Comellas, 2017: 267-269; Puell, 2005: 105-106).

At the same time, Espartero's successor as progressive Espadón, Lieutenant General Juan Prim, realised that the possibility of creating a stable political system in Spain depended on integrating the forces of the left. In 1866, in the Belgian city of Ostend (16 August), he signed the pact of the same name with the Democratic Party, which would be joined two years later by the Unión Liberal, led by Lieutenant General Francisco Serrano. The aim of this agreement, which brought together the centre and the liberal-democratic left, was (Vilches, 2001: 71):

1. Destroy what exists in the upper echelons of power.
2. Appointment of a constituent assembly, under the direction of a provisional Government, which shall decide the fate of the country, whose sovereignty was the law it represented, being elected by direct universal suffrage.

On 19 September 1868, the «Glorious Revolution» began. Isabel II was dethroned and a new stage in Spanish history known as the Revolutionary Sexenio (1868-1874) began. The causes of this revolution have been the subject of intense historiographical debate, and the current consensus links its development to the economic crisis that began in 1864 and, above all, to the conviction of most of the economic and political elite that the Bourbon monarchical system was exhausted. It was therefore incapable of pulling the country out of the situation of economic recession and political crisis in which it found itself (Fuentes, 2007: 228). However, the political systems that followed from 1868 onwards were not going to achieve this objective either. Although the revolutionaries were able to convene courts by universal suffrage and approve a liberal-democratic constitution in 1869, neither the monarchy of Amadeo I (1871-1873) nor the First Republic (1874) brought stability to the country. The assassination of Prim on 30 December 1870 was a key event in preventing the consolidation of the monarchy in the person of the Savoyard king, but there was no doubt that the political and military elite that had supported the 1868 revolution had already been divided over the victory of the monarchical form of state over the republican one and over the election of Amadeo –both Serrano and Admiral Juan Bautista Topete were supporters of Antonio de Orleáns, Duke of Montpensier, brother-in-law of Isabel II–. This meant that both the monarchical system and the republican system that followed after the abdication of the king on 11 February 1873 were pre-legitimate regimes. The First
Republic was also beset by three armed conflicts: the Third Carlist War (1872-1876), the Ten Years' War in Cuba (1858-1878) and the cantonal revolution, which endangered the very existence of the state. Faced with this situation, the army decided to intervene (Vilches, 2001: 399). On 3 January 1874, the Captain General of Castilla La Nueva, Lieutenant General Manuel Pavía y Rodríguez de Alburquerque, staged a coup d'état. Power then passed to Serrano, the last president of the Executive Power of the First Republic, who governed until 28 December of the same year when Brigadier General Arsenio Martinez Campos declared himself in Sagunto (Valencia) in favour of Isabel II's son, the future Alfonso XII, causing Serrano to go into exile and the return of the monarchy (Vilches, 4001: 401-411).

This military intervention opened a new stage in Spanish history known as the Restoration (1874-1902). The liberal and conservative elites assumed that neither could impose themselves on the other. It was therefore necessary to reach a consensus on a regime that would avoid new revolutionary experiences such as those of the Sexenio. The cornerstone of the new system was the Constitution of 1876, which allowed two parties to govern, the Liberal-Conservative party of Antonio Canovas del Castillo and the Liberal-Fusionist party of Práxedes Mateo Sagasta. Both organisations alternated in power, within a political game where the fundamental bases of the system could not be questioned and where the normative work of the adversary was respected. It was this consensus, sustained by a corrupt electoral system articulated by oligarchs and caciques, rather than the creation of the «Soldier-King» in the figure of Alfonso XII (Puell, 2005: 110-114) that put an end to military interventionism, as the political elites no longer needed to use the military to achieve power. The use of force was then limited to the political sectors that were not integrated into the new system: Carlists until 1876 and Republicans in 1886, under Brigadier General Manuel Villacampa. Their actions failed completely.

Therefore, military interventionism could be neutralised in 19th century Spain not by strengthening civilian power as Balmes advocated, but by agreeing on a political system that guaranteed free access to power between two parties and social order.

3. MILITARY INTERVENTIONISM IN ISRAEL: FROM A PARTY ARMY TO AN ARMY PARTY

Professor Yoram Peri, the author of the most important research on the role of the military in Israeli politics, did not hesitate to write:

The protracted Arab-Israeli war and the centrality of security in Israel have given the military's senior commanders a large role in the country's politics and public life. Since the achievement of independence in 1948, control over the armed forces has been weaker than is commonly perceived. Instead of state control, there is a ubiquitous pattern of civil-military relations. This relationship reflects the internal rivalries of Israeli political parties. Clashes and compromises between various coalitions of politicians and the military occur throughout the changes of government from Ben-Gurion to Begin. The role of the military in policy formulation was and is considerable (Peri, 1983: VII-VIII).

Peri's 1983 book, together with Horowitz and Luttwak (1983) published in 1975 and Horowitz's article (1977) were the starting point of a historiographical current
critical of the romantic view of Israel's birth and the role of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in the political decision-making process, encouraged by the opening of the official archives from 1982 onwards (Morris, 2004: 3). Among the most prominent are:

— Horowitz (1982) developed the thesis that since the differences between soldiers and citizens are very porous, he defined the IDF as «a civilianized military in a partially militarized society».

— Carmi and Rosembeld (1989: 5-49), from a Marxist perspective, argued that military interventionism in Israel and the policy of force employed against the Arab states was a consequence of its link to the US-led Capitalist Bloc by contrast, if it had joined the Soviet-led Communist Bloc, its policy would have been peaceful and collaborative with the Arabs.

— Ben-Eliezer (1995: 264-285) defends the concept of the «Nation in Arms» to explain the importance of the IDF by stating that the people and the military and civilian elites have opted for a policy of force to solve political problems, making the military the central element of society

— Levy (2003) systematised the theory that military interventionism in the political decision-making process and the use of force against their Arab opponents was the instrument that the Ashkenazim Zionists, Jews from Central and Eastern Europe, had used to maintain their hegemony over the Mizrahim or Middle Eastern Jews.

— Morris (2004) who in 1988 conducted an excellent study on the expulsion of most of the Arabs living in the lands dominated by the State of Israel after the War of Independence (1947-1949) and the role played by the military in this process

— Cohen (2007) defends the theory of the «militarization» of Israeli political life, embodied in the high proportion of generals who, after retirement, have been elected to the Israeli parliament (the Knesset), as have 13 of the 21 chiefs of staff (JEM) who served between 1948 and 2019 (Cohen and Cohen, 2022: 167).

This set of works changed the perception of two key dynamics: the birth of Israel and the role of the military in that state, and the theses they develop are correct. Nevertheless, and similar to the case of Spain in the 19th century, there are two phenomena that act as a starting point for military interventionism in the political sphere: the War of Independence and the lack of consensus among the civilian elite on what the model of state should be. However, the characteristics of the two processes were very different in the two countries. Israel's conflict with the Palestinians and most Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries continues to this day. Similarly, the Israeli political elite has been unable to create a minimum political consensus since 1948 to the extent that the country has no constitution. This problem is rooted in the various trends within modern Zionism, a political movement that began with the prophetic-programmatic writings of Judah Alkalai, Theodor Herzl, Moses Hess, Zvi Hirsch Kalischer and Leon Pinsker, and the immigration from Russia to Ottoman Palestine in the 1880s, sponsored by Pinsker, of Jews dedicated to rebuilding a national home for the Jewish people in their ancient land, the Land of Israel, named Zion after a hill in Jerusalem. This movement, which constituted the First Aliyah (emigration) (1881-1903), was fuelled by the oppression and anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe and the wave of pogroms that followed the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in March
1881 (Morris, 2004: 9). However, Zionism as a movement soon split, a situation that was evident when Israel was created on 14 May 1948, with three groups with their own military organisations.

The largest wing of Zionism was Labour, which controlled the Jewish Agency, the real provisional government under the British Mandate (1922-1948), and the Haganah (Defence), the main paramilitary group of the Yishuv (Jewish community of Palestine). Its leader was David Ben-Gurion, an Ashkenazi admirer of Lenin and former communist, who had evolved towards moderate social democratic positions (Peri, 1983: 29-30). The political organisation he led was Mapei (an acronym for Mifleget Poalei Eretz Yisrael, the Workers' Party of the Land of Israel), a party similar to British Labour. The aim of this group was to momentarily accept the partition treaty of 29 November 1947, approved by the United Nations (UN), and the establishment of a Western democracy linked to the Capitalist Bloc (Luttwak and Horowitz, 1983: 3-17; Morris, 2004: 15, 595).

The second group was the Marxist-Leninist Zionists of Ahdut Ha-Avodah Poale Zion (Labour-Labour Unity-Workers of Zion). They were Russians who had come to Palestine in the Second Aliyah (1904-1914), Third Aliyah (1919-1923) and after World War II and were characterised by a fusion of Zionism and Marxism. They had the support of Stalin who dreamed of creating a socialist state in the Near East, capable of rivalling the traditionalist Arab monarchies and ending British hegemony in this strategic area. Among the Jews who had arrived after 1945, there was a notable presence of former soldiers from the partisan brigades of Belarus, Ukraine, Yugoslavia and France, whose departure had been permitted by the Soviet leader as an investment in the beginning of socialism in Israel. In fact, the Soviet Union was the first state to recognise Israel and helped it by providing arms (Peri, 1982: 28; Primakov, 2009: 253-254). The Marxist-Zionists controlled the Haganah elite, the Palmach (acronym for Plugot Maḥatz, Attack Companies) and formed a group of very prestigious and popular military men such as Yigael Allon, Shimon Avidan, Moshe Carmel, David Elazar, Yisrael Galili, Yitzhak Rabin and Yitzhak Sadeh, (Ben-Eliezer, 1998: 43-64). They also had their own party, the Mapam (acronym for Mifleget HaPoalim HaMeuhedet, United Workers' Party). The aim of this group was to create an Arab-Jewish state linked to the Soviet Union that would maintain good relations with the other political structures in the region. Moreover, they advocated the return of Palestinians expelled during the War of Independence (Morris, 1995: 322) because this mass would give them a majority in future elections. However, they never achieved this goal.

The third group represented Revisionist Zionism, the doctrine developed from 1923 onwards by another Russian Ashkenazi, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who in 1923 published a hugely influential article «The Iron Wall. We and the Arabs», in which he asserted the need to build a wall that would make any Arab hope of expelling Jews from Palestine impossible (Jabotinsky, 2021; Horowitz, 2020: 314-359). However, the Zionist leader went further and constructed the idea of creating «Greater Israel» that encompassed not only Palestine, but also Transjordan, like biblical Israel. Jabotinsky died in 1940 of a heart attack, ridding Ben-Gurion of a dangerous rival, but his followers continued his ideas (Halkin, 2014: 220-221). Most important were two future prime ministers, also Ashkenazi origin: Menachem Begin, a Russian-Polish Jew and «a man in whom the bitterness generated by the Holocaust had been embodied» (Jonhson, 1988: 522),
leader of the organisation created in 1931 by Jabotinsky, *Irgun Zvai Leumi* (IZL) (National Military Organisation) and Yitzhak Shamir, of the same origin as Begin and whose family was also exterminated in the Holocaust, leader of the Lehi (acronym for *Lohamei Herut Israel*, Israel Freedom Fighters, also known as the Stern Group, after its head Avraham Stern). Both organisations unleashed a terrorist offensive against the British from 1943, as they relied only on force to establish the State of Israel (Begin, 1978; Golan, 2011; Luttwak and Horowitz, 1983: 18-19). Their political organisation was the *Herut* (Freedom).

To these three groups must be added the representatives of central or liberal Zionism –to which Israel's first president Chaim Weizzman (1948-1952) belonged–, the religious sectors –including non-Zionist ultra-Orthodox Jews– and the Sephardim –descendants of the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492–. The result of this hodgepodge –the result of an alluvial population united by the ethno-religious element, but with profound cultural and political differences– was the impossibility of establishing a consensus on the political system that was to govern the new country. This manifested itself in the lack of a constitution and, consequently, in the weakness of Israel's political power structures. The result was a great complexity in the political decision-making process due to the large number of political organisations that emerged from the very moment of independence (Peri, 2005: 324-344).

The *Ashkenazi* elite that controlled the *Mapei* took advantage of this division to establish a hegemonic position in the new state. This dynamic was only possible if they controlled the military institution. Therefore, on the very day that Israel declared independence, 14 May 1948, Ben-Gurion ordered the merger of all paramilitary groups into the new IDF. This decision had three objectives. The first was to dissolve the armed units linked to the different political movements in order to prevent a civil war from breaking out. However, shortly afterwards, in June, members of the IZL and the IDF clashed on the beaches of Tel Aviv over control of the *Altalena*, a ship loaded with weapons that had been chartered by the revisionists. The incident ended with 19 dead, 200 IZL militants imprisoned and the extremist group weakened (Ben-Eliezer, 1995: 162-165). Despite this event, the prime minister's decision was a wise one because it deprived the different political groups of acting like their Spanish counterparts in the 19th century. The second was to put an end to the power of the *Palmach* leaders, not only because they could become political rivals in the short term, but also because of their Marxist ideology, which could affect Israel's relationship with the United States and its position in the Capitalist Bloc in the midst of the Cold War. To achieve this goal, Ben-Gurion combined the defence portfolio with that of prime minister, a tradition that was to continue until 1967, dismissed Galili as IDF Chief of Staff and wanted to place men he trusted at the head of the main military commands. The latter decision was not readily accepted by the generals of this elite unit or by Yigael Yadin, a prestigious apolitical military officer. The result was the so-called «Generals' Revolt» of 1948, in which Yadin joined his fellow Marxists to prevent Ben-Gurion's control of the IDF. However, the military was defeated and most members of the *Palmach* ended up leaving the army or were ostracised within the IDF like Rabin or Elazar (Peri, 1983: 54-59). The third objective, linked to the previous one, was *Mapei's* control of the IDF. Peri claimed that this decision was a consequence of the prime minister's communist background and admiration for Lenin, the Soviet politician considered the armed forces a political instrument (Peri, 1982: 30), while for Ben-
Eliazer it was the result of the militarisation that Israel had undergone since the 1930s and which ended up making the IDF the bastion on which the state was built (Ben-Eliezer, 1995: 193-203). If anything, the result of Ben-Gurion's policy was, following Samuel P. Huntington's typology, a «subjective civilian control» of the IDF. This paradigm of civil-military relations is characterised by the subordination of the military to a civilian group or faction with particular political interests. This situation arises either because there is a community of values between the military institution and that sector or out of mere mutual convenience. The result is always detrimental to civilian control of the armed forces in the long run. For, by leaning towards one political sector to the detriment of another, the military is depprofessionalised and ends up becoming a determining actor in the political decision-making process, with the potential to alter the distribution of power in the public sphere (Huntington, 1995: 81-82). This dynamic was accelerated by Ben-Gurion because he endowed the IDF with the power to participate in shaping Israel's security policy (Horowitz, 1982: 91; Peri 1985: 31-56).

Why did this policy succeed, unlike what happened in 19th century Spain with the different regimes that succeeded each other? Because Ben-Gurion was democratically legitimised, since the section of the elite he represented was in the majority in Israeli society, as the legislative elections of 25 January 1949 showed. The Mapai won 42 seats in the Knesset out of 120, while the Mapam won only 19 and the Herut 14. This situation of Ashkenazi Labour dominance was to last until 1977.

However, the fact that the Mapai's power was not contested electorally did not mean that everyone in this party thought the same way as Ben-Gurion. During the 1950s, there was a rupture within this organisation that accelerated the military's interventionism. The cause was the Arab revolutions that overthrew the monarchical systems in Egypt and Iraq, giving rise to revolutionary pan-Arabist republics. According to Primakov, the new regimes, especially the Egyptian one, were not opposed to the existence of the Jewish state, as their priority was internal affairs. This new dynamic led Israel's second minister, Moshe Sharett (1954-55), to propose a policy of peace with the Palestinians and the Arab states. He had the support of Abba Eban, foreign minister (1966-1974), and, on occasion, of Levi Eshkol, prime minister (1963-69). In contrast, Ben-Gurion, supported by Pinhas Lavon, Defence Minister (1954-55), Lieutenant General Moshe Dayan, IDF Chief of Staff (1953-58), and Shimon Peres, Director General of the Ministry of Defence, defended an aggressive foreign and security policy vision. This division manifested itself in all Israel's policy issues in this decade: the situation of Israeli Palestinians, the Palestinian refugee issue, water issues, international diplomacy and military spending. But nowhere was the confrontation between Sharett and Ben-Gurion sharper than in the Israeli campaign of retaliation against both violent and non-violent Arab incursions into Hebrew territory (Isacoff, 2002: 46-47). But why did Ben-Gurion opt for this policy of force? The possible answer to this question can be found in a conversation he had with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Nutting, who had just met Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser in Cairo. The diplomat told the Israeli leader: «I have good news for you. Nasser is so concerned about the standard of living of the Egyptians that it is more important to him than plotting war against Israel». Ben-Gurion replied: «You call that good news?» According to Primakov, the Israeli leader feared that the US would move closer to the Arab leader and that this would weaken Israel's position in the Middle East and the Capitalist Bloc (Primakov, 2009: 31). This is clearly an accurate thesis from a
veteran diplomat. However, it is also evident that peace with Egypt and the rest of the Arab countries could make all of Israel's internal contradictions visible, as time has shown, and weaken the hegemony of the Mapei. The result would then be the substitution of an external problem for an internal one. In any case, Ben-Gurion prevailed in this struggle, becoming prime minister again between 1955 and 1963. A year after coming to power, he joined the UK and France in a punitive operation against Egypt over the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. According to Jonathan Isacoff, this decision had two consequences: the triumph of the hard line in foreign policy, which signified Israel's definitive inclination towards a force option, and:

The crucial consolidation of power for the Ashkenazi elite, which benefited enormously from the rewards of successfully pursuing aggressive military policies vis-à-vis the Arabs [...] As a result of these two victories, one military and one political, a militaristic doctrine was institutionalised in the Israeli state and society with profound implications for the future trajectory of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Isacoff, 2002: 51).

This victory also had another consequence: the military began to become aware of its power and the IDF began to transform itself from a party army to an army party. The key event in this dynamic came with the Six-Day War (1967). In this conflict Israel conquered the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula and opened the way for the military to become proconsuls of the occupied territories, taking over their management. Moreover, in the run-up to this conflict, the generals had intervened for the first time in history in the formation of the cabinet itself, forcing the inclusion of one of them, Dayan, as Minister of Defence (1967-1974). This move put an end to the tradition of this portfolio also being held by the prime minister (Luttwak and Horowitz, 1983: 205). However, the most important consequences of this development were twofold. First, the IDF elite made Defence and State Security their exclusive sphere of decision-making (Finer, 1969: 38-40). Second, the generals placed one of their members to oversee the work of the executive branch. This situation has continued, with a few exceptions, to the present day.

The Six-Day War was the high point of the power of the centre-left Ashkenazi elite. In the 1969 elections, the Alignment, comprising the Labour Party (heir to Mapei) and the now social-democratic Mapam, under the leadership of Golda Meir, born in tsarist Russia, won 46.2% of the vote and 56 seats.

However, three events in the 1970s would put an end to this hegemony and the system of power it had created:

— The disastrous Yon Kippur War (1973) which demonstrated the limits of the policy of force developed by Mapei/Labour Party since the 1950s.
— Corruption cases involving the Alignment, including Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (1974-1977)
— The electoral defeat of the Alignment in the 1977 elections In those elections, Jabotinsky’s heirs led by Begin at the head of a new party, the Likud (Consolidation) came to power thanks to the support of the Mizrahis and religious sectors (Kaplan, 2018: 68-75). This victory marked the end of the hegemony of the elite that had dominated Israel since 1948 (Smooha, 1978).
A new phase in Israel's history began in 1977, marked by the following aspects: the gradual end of the external threat to the state - but not of terrorism; the transformation of Likud into the cornerstone of political life; the growing importance of religious parties and the ultra-Orthodox minority; the theocratisation of the IDF (Levy, 2013: 269-294) and the problem of the occupied territories, especially the West Bank (Ben-Eliezer, 2012). These dynamics have not only made political consensus impossible, but have shattered the IDF's traditional image in Israeli society (Cohen, 2007: 17-18) and created a polarisation among its citizens that is weakening democratic institutions. This instability has led to increased interventionism in the IDF's political sphere, outside the exclusive realm of state defence and security. This process reached its point of no return in 2019, when a group of senior officers who had just retired from the IDF formed a new party, led by three former chiefs of staff, and called for the replacement of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government. It was a genuine army party for the first time in Israel's history (Peri, 2020: 1).

CONCLUSION

In this research we have demonstrated the starting hypothesis: a military conflict, the Spanish-Israeli war of independence, and a political weakness, the absence of consensus among political elites, paved the way for military intervention in the public sphere. However, there was a notable difference in the two countries. In the case of Spain, no political sector was able to impose itself on the others, generating a succession of pre-legitimate regimes that culminated in a revolutionary wave that broke out during the First Republic. The fear that this situation might be repeated and triumph forced the liberal and conservative elites to reach a consensus on a political system that would bring stability to the country and allow free access to power without the need to resort to the military. However, this system failed in the 20th century, leading to a period of instability and pre-legitimate regimes that culminated in the Civil War (1936-1939) and the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco Bahamonde (1939-1975). However, after the dictator's death, the reformist elites of Francoism joined with the democratic elites to build a new democratic political system based on the 1978 Constitution. Since then, Spain has been a full and stable democracy recognised by international bodies. In contrast, in Israel, an elite, the Ashkenazi Mafei, used their majority position to build a democratic state where the IDF became a Party Army and its main pillar. To achieve this goal, they did not hesitate to give the military a central role in shaping defence and security policy and opted for a policy of force on the external front. As a result, the military acquired an increasingly hegemonic position in these fields, especially after the Six-Day War. This interventionism spread to the rest of the public sphere as social polarisation and political instability affected Israel's democratic life. The culmination of this dynamic came in 2019 when a full-fledged Army Party was created.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


