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THE END OF EMPIRE AND THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN NATION, 1808 TO 1868

Jesús Cruz

On the night of March 17, 1808, a mob took over the esplanade of the Aranjuez Palace near Madrid to stop the possible escape of the Spanish Royal family to the American colonies. Rumors spread that the first minister Manuel Godoy was behind this escape plan, fearing that the advance of the Napoleonic troops into Spanish territory could endanger the monarchs. While these rumors were the spark that ignited the riot known as the Revolt of Aranjuez, the causes of these discontents were deep and long-standing, the most immediate being the defeat and decimation of the Spanish navy in 1805 in the disastrous battle of Trafalgar, consequence of Manuel Godoy's unfortunate international policies. The defeat not only eroded the morale of the Spanish military and political elites, but also worsened the state of the national finances, spreading economic hardship to all levels of Spanish society. The prestige of King Charles IV was also jeopardized because of his political inhibition, weak spirits, and lack of charisma. He delegated all his political responsibilities to Manuel Godoy, a member of the royal bodyguards who was always perceived as an outsider by the aristocratic King's entourage and by the selective clique of the monarchy's high administration. Because of this exchange of responsibility, Godoy amassed too much power. This accumulation of power evolved in proportion to his political isolation and lack of support from all entities of Spanish society, from the upper classes to the common people. But beyond his eventual political mistakes and unfortunate international alliances, the causes of discontent were cumulative: they were the expression of a profound crisis of the Spanish political, social, and economic system – the Spanish *Ancien Regime* – that demanded radical transformations.

The events on the night of March 17, 1808, at the Royal Site of Aranjuez mark the end of the Ancien Regime in Spain and the beginning of the liberal era. Its most immediate impact was the abdication of Charles IV in favor of his son Ferdinand VII, and the resignation of Manuel Godoy, thus creating the worst crisis in the Spanish monarchy since the late seventeenth century. It may be true that the mob assembled in Aranjuez was carefully manipulated by the angry foes of Godoy, the members of what was known as the Fernandine party. This party was composed of a group of courtier notables that Godoy describes in his memoirs as the "faction." Despite the intervention of this network, whose main connection was their hatred of the first minister, the movement was much more than a palace coup. The event known as the Revolt of Aranjuez actually consisted of several riots that started in that city and extended to the capital. In Madrid, the rebellion was carried out by spontaneous popular groups who looted

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the residences of Godoy and his acolytes. The fact that palaces were pillaged and set on fire by an angry mob with no intervention to stop the plunder demonstrates the state of malaise that exceeded the limits of the high politics of the court. The riots reflected not only the rejection of the traditional dominant groups towards Godoy's attempted reforms, but also the commitment of politically advanced groups, who claimed the need for a profound intervention to cure the long-term illnesses of the Spanish imperial system. These groups, known as the *Ilustrados*, were composed of educated elites who began embracing the ideas of the Enlightenment in the mid-eighteenth century. The *Ilustrados*, well represented in the circles of the administration of the monarchy, backed reformist policies to remedy the deficiencies of the Spanish Imperial system. The French Revolution, and the failure of Godoy's despotic reformist policies, radicalized a segment of the *Ilustrado* elite that later adopted the banner of liberalism and proposed radical revolutionary solutions to modernize Spain. The Revolt of Aranjuez, and the uprising against the occupation of Madrid by the troops of Napoleon which occurred on May 2 of that same year, were popular actions in part inspired by the ideas of liberalism. Both occurrences anticipated a style of Spanish rebellion that would repeat itself throughout the nineteenth century, marking the beginning of the period known in Spanish history as the Liberal Revolution.

The Spanish Liberal Revolution (1808–1843)

Between 1808 and 1843 Spain underwent a profound transformation, from an absolutist imperial monarchy to a modern liberal nation-state. It was a period of change in a broad sense sparked by the two transnational impulses that affected the history of the West in the last third of the eighteenth century: the ideas of the Enlightenment, and the technological, scientific, and economic developments taking place in parts of the Western world. In Spain, as in other parts of Europe, both impulses ignited the process of political and social transformation that is known as the Liberal Revolution. However, as Juan Pablo Fusi has pointed out, that revolution was an intermittent, uneven, undefined, long process, and in a number of aspects incomplete (Fusi Aizpurúa 1997, 16). It did not occur during a time of substantial transformation of the Spanish economy and did not produce enough economic prosperity to soften endemic social inequality. It was above all a period of political and institutional change that in part occurred under the exceptional historical circumstances of the Napoleonic Wars. By means of constitutional forms of government, the traditional social structure of estates was replaced by a society integrated by citizens equal before the law. Nevertheless, this new society remained oligarchic in nature, with a small middle class, dominated by a combination of old established elites and new ascendant groups that exercised dominance by means of a social system based on patronage, loyalty, and personal dependence. The privileges of the nobility were abolished, especially those of taxation, criminal justice, inheritance, and old established seigniorial rights. Nonetheless, the aristocracy remained strong within circles of royal and local power and maintained an atavistic social and cultural ascendance. The power of the Church was substantially diminished. The tithe was suppressed, the assets from the *manos muertas* (a form of tenure in which property donated to the church was forever unalienable) were forbidden, the menacing Spanish Inquisition finally abolished. Still, the four different constitutions drafted during this period recognized Catholicism as the religion of the Spanish nation.

Revolutionary politics caused the disintegration of the Spanish empire. The management of the empire became more and more complex during the second half of the eighteenth century because of the lack of financial resources, international competition, and the rise of autochthonous colonial elites that felt alienated by the imposition of rules and rulers from far away. The monarchy tried hard to remedy the crisis by implementing a series of new policies known as

the Bourbon Reforms, aimed at improving colonial administration. Reforms came too late and proved insufficient in stopping the rise of revolutionary movements for national emancipation that brought about the independence of the major colonies of the Spanish empire.

Liberalism was the political ideology behind the revolution. Liberal ideals were pro-democracy as they favored political representation, but were not fully democratic because the right to vote was limited by a variety of restrictive prerequisites. In Spain, as in the rest of the Western world, liberalism was not the patrimony of a single class or social group, though the ideology was more attractive to the educated middle and lower segments of society. Some historians and social thinkers have questioned the strength of Spanish liberalism as a political force and denied the existence of a Spanish contribution in what became the main political credo of the West during the nineteenth century. For these scholars, the Spanish liberal movement only captivated a social minority that borrowed the ideas of the French and English Enlightenment and its successive philosophical ramifications. The paradox of this approach is that the term "liberal" entered the English and French political vocabulary in reference to the Spaniards who were drafting the first Spanish Constitution in the city of Cádiz around 1812. The essence of the liberal program embraced by Spanish liberals was a set of ideals stemming from the Enlightenment with one central theme: the search for freedom and the rejection of despotism. But recent scholarship has shown that the embodiment of these principles in the early Spanish Constitution of 1812 established an original contribution that transcended the frontiers of Spain. From a political point of view, Spanish liberalism was not an ideology of minorities, or poorly organized, or a failure when compared with the liberal experiences of other European cases considered models of nineteenth-century liberal success. As María Cruz Romeo points out, considering the long periods of authoritarian government in France, and the institutional fragmentation of Germany and Italy, Spain can be credited with having the longest years of parliamentary government among the large continental European countries, beginning in the 1830s and ending in the early twentieth century (Romeo 2010, 106).

The first stage of the Liberal Revolution took place under the exceptional circumstances of the Napoleonic occupation of Spain between 1808 and 1814. The control of the Iberian Peninsula was an essential strategic component of Napoleon's imperial project. With the cooperation of the Spanish monarchy, the emperor signed a series of treatises of friendship with Spain between 1801 and 1807. The most transcendental, the Treaty of Fontainebleau (1807), allowed the entrance of French troops into Spanish territory to facilitate Napoleon's invasion of Portugal. Most Spaniards disliked the military incursions of the French that in Catalonia and the Basque Country began as early as 1794. The riots of 1808, and especially the uprising of May 2 in Madrid, demonstrated the depth of anti-French sentiment among Spaniards and brought Napoleon's tactic of cooperation to an end. The emperor then decided to substitute his previously friendly imposition for a de facto invasion that forced the abdication of Charles IV and his son, the future Ferdinand VII, in favor of his own brother Joseph. While a significant segment of the Ilustrado elite welcomed the French emperor as a beneficial modernizer and cooperated with the invaders, thus becoming committed "afrancesados," the majority of the Spanish people declared war on the French and the imposed king Joseph I. The War of Independence, the name given to the Peninsular War in Spain, was, according to Stanley Payne, the broadest and most intense popular and national reaction to Napoleonic domination in Europe (Payne 2011, 140). The fight comprised a combination of actions carried out by the regular army in conjunction with a popular guerrilla movement. The intervention of British troops was decisive in defeating the French army on the battlefield. At the same time, the continuous and unpredictable activity of the guerrillas in different parts of the territory eroded the morale of Napoleonic troops by creating a feeling that victory could never be fully accomplished.

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The war transformed the abstract idea of the Spanish nation, used before by the Ilustrado reformers, into a material reality in which "el pueblo" (the people), now fighting against an invader, became the main protagonist. The large majority of Spanish people understood the fight against Napoleon as a patriotic act to defend a territory, a culture, and a monarchy. However, Spanish sentiment was split concerning the political, social, and cultural form the new national community should adopt (Álvarez Junco 2011, 99). One side favored maintaining the traditional order of the absolutist monarchy and the society of estates, and the other supported the transformation of Spain into a constitutional monarchy and a society of citizens equal before the law. The proponents of change were still a social minority, but had clear goals and were better prepared and organized for the political battles to come.

Opponents to Joseph I established Juntas Provinciales (Provincial Councils) and a Junta Central. These were alternative institutions that rejected the legitimacy of what they called the intruder king and assumed the sovereignty of the Spanish nation. The Junta Central took shelter in Cádiz, a city the French never managed to subdue, and called for the meeting of the Cortes Extraordinarias – a special meeting of the traditional Spanish parliament. Parliamentary sessions started in September 1810, after a wartime election that gave the liberals many seats. The social archetype of these liberals was a young, highly educated member of the middle and lower ranks of the provincial elites, with a background in public administration, higher education, or commerce. Good examples of this archetype were the three most celebrated deputies of this parliament: the lawyers Agustín de Argüelles and Evaristo Pérez de Castro, and the cleric and university professor Diego Muñoz-Torrero, all in their thirties and all belonging to families of the middle ranks of the provincial gentry. The influence of the liberal majority was noticed when the Cortes approved a bill to legalize freedom of speech despite the opposition of the conservatives, now known as the serviles. Additional legislation abolished seigneurial privileges, the corporate structures of artisan guilds, and the Inquisition. A commission was charged to draft the first Spanish liberal constitution.

The Cádiz Constitution was approved in March 1812 and was the most celebrated liberal charter across Europe and South America until the 1830s. It inspired liberals in Italy, Germany, Russia, and, against the intention of its drafters, the forces that brought about the dismantling of the Spanish empire. The ideas embodied in the text stemmed from the philosophical traditions of the French and Anglo-Scottish Enlightenment, and included elements inspired by the doctrines of natural law of the Spanish-Catholic-Scholastic school. The Constitution introduced the principles of equality before the law, national sovereignty, and the division of powers meant to limit the authority of the absolutist monarch. According to the Constitution, the nation was to be represented in the Cortes by elected deputies following a complicated electoral process of indirect male suffrage. The powers of the king were reduced substantially: his orders had to be validated by the first minister, he did not have the power to suspend the legislature, and his ministerial appointments had to be approved by the parliament. Some individual rights were recognized, including free speech, education, and property, but the Constitution did not include a bill of rights and did not acknowledge the right to choose a religion other than Catholicism.

The Constitution of 1812 attempted to create a centralized state that emphasized the sovereignty of the national community over that of the individual subject; it was assumed that the nation was the source of all individual rights. It did not mention what the future held for long-established fiscal and institutional arrangements in some parts of Spain, including the Basque Country and Navarre. The 1812 liberals intended to eliminate feudal privilege by creating a national community of universal taxpayers in an open socio-economic order that valued merit

over inheritance. With an absolute and no doubt naive confidence, they called for a peaceful transition towards the new state and social order.

The defeat of Napoleon brought about the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in Spain. The new king, Ferdinand VII, returned to Spain in March 1814 in an atmosphere of patriotic excitement and popular support. It was now the responsibility of the new monarch to accept, reject, or negotiate with the Cortes the Constitution of Cádiz. Soon the conservative opposition, the *serviles*, took action by drafting a manifesto (*Manifiesto de los Persas*) encouraging the king to restore absolutism. On May 4, Ferdinand VII, a ferocious anti-liberal, approved a decree that dictated the suspension of the Cortes, the abolition of the 1812 Constitution, and the restoration of the old political and social order.

In Spain, as in the rest of Europe, the "Restoration" of 1814 promised to be a transitory moment in the long conflict initiated by the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century between the forces of change and the defenders of tradition. The 1812 liberals lost their first battle because they were an advanced radical minority in a country still dominated by traditional Catholicism and old established social loyalties. But those who held liberal ideologies were on the right side of history, and little by little its social base became wider, more persistent, and better organized. The "spirit of 1812" survived in the minds of many members of the upper ranks of the army whose ascent had taking place during, and because of, the war. These liberal military men became a fundamental force in the ascent of liberalism in nineteenth-century Spain. After 1814 the most frequent iteration of the Spanish liberal uprising was a sort of coup known as a *pronunciamiento* that involved the combined action of the military and civilians. It was usually an urban rebellion comprised of two fundamental steps: a period of secret conspiracy to design intricate plans to take over the government, and a military coup backed by revolutionary civilians who barricaded the streets. The success or failure of these revolutionary upheavals mainly depended on the role played by the military. The first of many *pronunciamientos* took place in 1820 and was led by Rafael de Riego, a young military general with a social profile similar to the liberal deputies of the Cortes of Cádiz: he was of the provincial gentry, well educated, and a romantic patriot.

Riego restored the Constitution of 1812 and forced Ferdinand VII to pledge allegiance to it. Riego's imposing attitude toward a king that had sent explicit signs of displeasure caused the first split among the Cádiz liberals. A more moderate wing was in favor of amending the charter to give the monarch more power and to establish a bicameral legislature with one chamber for the upper classes of society. Regardless, the spirit of radical liberalism prevailed, the possibility of an amendment was rejected, and the liberal divide intensified. This fissure created an unstable political environment. Those in favor of a traditional political system took advantage of this instability and launched a geographically localized but substantially armed uprising in which all opponents to liberalism were united in a dynamic of violent action. The liberal government reacted to this uprising by speeding up its increasingly anti-clerical revolutionary policies, which now focused on dismantling the power of the Catholic Church.

It is in this tumultuous political climate that the Spanish American colonies achieved independence. The liberals of 1812 and 1820 failed to provide mechanisms of political representation to the colonial elites. The *criollo* deputies in the Cortes of Cádiz were coopted by the imperial administration, not elected by a democratic constituency. The Spanish liberals were not willing to cede any political autonomy to Spanish American elites. After 1820, independence became the only feasible option for the *criollo* groups. Under the leadership of Simón Bolivar and José de San Martín, by 1824 the bulk of the Spanish American empire was transformed into a series of independent republics.

By 1823 Riego's government was on the edge of collapse, plagued by anti-liberal forces, the division among liberals, and the uncontrolled activity of radicalized groups. In April of

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that same year the anti-liberal European coalition of the Austrian and Russian empires sent a French battalion to Spain that overthrew General Riego. Ferdinand VII's absolutism was restored and the general was jailed and publicly executed a few months later. The Spanish Liberal Revolution now had its first popular hero, but after three years of liberal rule the liberals were divided. The ten years leading up to the death of Ferdinand VII in 1833 were years of political persecution, though the liberal movement remained fairly active, in a constant state of conspiracy, and by all means unstoppable.

At the time of Ferdinand VII's death, his daughter and the inheritor of the Spanish crown, Queen Isabella II, was only three years old. Her mother, María Cristina of Naples, became the temporary Regent of Spain. María Cristina had two options from which to choose when forming her new government: continue with the absolutist style of her husband or negotiate with the liberals. While she did not sympathize with the liberal credo, she understood that liberalism could no longer be kept at bay. During the 1820s, the most influential sectors of the dominant social groups embraced liberalism, and its ideals captured a popular following also. Having said this, María Cristina could not stomach the spirit of the Cádiz Constitution and decided instead to govern using the support of the most moderate wing of the liberal spectrum. She gave the position of first minister to Francisco Martínez de la Rosa, a prestigious intellectual and former deputy of the Cortes of Cádiz who belonged to the moderate group. Martínez de la Rosa drafted an alternative charter (the Royal Statute of 1834) to replace the Constitution of 1812. However, his experiment did not generate enough support among the liberals and was drastically rejected by the absolutists. The division between temperate and radical liberals widened to the point of splitting into two separate political parties: the Moderate Party and the Progressive Party. Each party held differing views over how quickly Spain should be transformed into a modern liberal democracy, a division that characterized Spanish politics during the central years of the building of the modern nation. On the other side of the political spectrum, the absolutists declared war on the Regent María Cristina and her liberal government. They questioned the legitimacy of Isabella to inherit the Spanish crown, proclaiming instead that the ultra-conservative Carlos María Isidro, brother of Ferdinand VII, was the legitimate heir. This war, known as the Carlist War (1833–1839), was the first in a series of three violent civil confrontations between liberals and absolutists (Carlists) in the nineteenth century.

Martínez de la Rosa's reticent liberalism failed in its attempts to unify the liberals and fight the reactionary forces represented by Carlism; in short, his political vision could not definitively bring freedom to the Spanish nation. He left the government in 1835, creating a period of ascent for the progressives that lasted until 1844. The Spanish liberal revolution reached its peak in a context of exacerbated political confrontation between moderates and progressives, while both groups still fought a war against the forces of the *Ancien Regime*. The main difference between the moderate and progressive parties lay in the degree of political and social change brought on by revolution, as well as the means used to implement these transformations. Both parties were in favor of constitutional monarchy, but disagreed on the amount of power the monarch should keep. Both were in favor of a restricted form of suffrage, but they differed in the level of restriction. These differences were irreconcilable when drafting electoral law or when spreading democracy to municipal life. The progressives were in favor of making the municipal councils and the mayors elected officials, a measure the moderates drastically rejected. The moderates prioritized order and authority, where the progressives emphasized democratic participation. Both were in favor of the protection of private property and realized the need to disentail the properties of the Church, but the progressives wanted to create more measures than the moderates to constrain the economic power of the Catholic Church. Both relied on military *pronunciamientos* to seize power instead of elections. The

difference lay in the amount of popular involvement each party relied on to make the coup successful. Progressive *pronunciamientos* were generally carried out by military garrisons in coordination with rioters in the streets building barricades, while the moderates preferred palace coups without the participation of the masses. The progressives created a body of National Militias (*Milicia Nacional*) integrated by civilians whose mission was to defend and promote revolution. The moderates opposed these militias drastically and called for their dissolution.

Until 1842 the two main figures in the Progressive Party were Juan Álvarez Mendizábal and General Baldomero Espartero. In 1835 Mendizábal, a financier with experience in international trade who was well connected in British economic circles, was offered a ministry in the cabinet. Progressive party leaders felt he would be able to fix the persistent Spanish deficit now aggravated by the war. Mendizábal's main contribution to the revolution was the implementation of the program of disentailment of the Church's property. Mendizábal's policies were drastically contested by the moderate opposition, and backed in the streets by radical liberals who desired the restoration of the Constitution of Cádiz. A *pronunciamiento* in August 1836 known as the coup of the "Sergeants of La Granja" reinforced the position of the progressives, who were now ready to restore constitutionalism. They now had two options: either reinstate the Constitution of 1812, so hated by the moderates, or draft a new constitution. They decided to follow the second track, because it was the only feasible alternative that could guarantee a long period of political stability. A new constitution was drafted and approved in 1837. The Constitution of 1837 struggled to find a balance between moderate and progressive liberal agendas. It established a bicameral system with a Senate whose members were proposed by the Cortes but elected by the monarch. All laws had to be approved by both chambers. Cabinet ministers were also nominated by the monarch but needed to be endorsed by the Cortes. Catholicism was again declared the official religion of Spain, but the practice of other religions was permitted. The state agreed to economically support the clergy, to repair the harm caused by the disentailment of Church property.

For María Cristina and a substantial portion of the Moderate Party, the Constitution of 1837 was still too radical. It generated political stability, but only for a short period that coincided with the defeat of the Carlists on the battlefield and the end of the First Carlist War. The leader of the moment was the progressive General Baldomero Espartero, who was victorious in 1839. Espartero was a product of the Spanish Liberal Revolution: the son of a craftsman from a small village in central Spain promoted to the rank of general thanks to the wars and the opportunities offered by the new liberal system. In 1840 the charismatic general, now highly popular, was endorsed by the progressives to become the new Regent of Spain, taking the place of María Cristina, who was sent into exile. The progressives hoped that his popularity and political commitments would guarantee the continuation of the Liberal Revolution. However, Espartero behaved more like Napoleon and less like the civilian politician most progressives had desired. By 1843 the consensus of support for the general's regime had been eroded, mainly because of the disillusionment of the politicians. An ad hoc alliance of moderates and progressives engineered a series of conspiracy plots that culminated in *pronunciamientos* and forced Espartero from his position.

At this point a significant segment of the dominant groups, including the monarchy, the moderate military, and the Catholic Church felt that the revolution had gone too far. The defeat of the Carlists served to reinforce the prestige of the monarchy, thus creating an atmosphere of stability that would foster the political rearrangement of the dominant Spanish groups. Under these new conditions the momentum of radical politics waned. As in France in 1795, so in Spain in 1843, the moment for the taming of the revolution had arrived. What happened during these years was certainly not unique to Spain. It was a process that occurred in all

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nineteenth-century European revolutions. After a period of radical enthusiasm marked by dramatic political alterations, the revolutions were either completely halted or else re-channeled by the insurgent forces of order. This same phenomenon occurred in the Spanish revolution after 1843, when the Moderate Party took control of the political process and Queen Isabella II, on her thirteenth birthday, was declared of age and became the new Queen.

Unlike the brief period of Progressive control, the Moderate period of hegemony, beginning in 1843, lasted for most of the rest of the century. In the long term the transformation of Spain into a liberal state was mainly the achievement of the moderate stream of liberalism (Esdaile 2000, 85–88). The progressives held power only during short intervals that were normally linked to revolutionary episodes. These were decisive moments in the process of the transformation of Spanish political and social structures, to be sure, but the long periods during which the liberal system matured were controlled by moderates. Thus, the years between 1843 and 1868 mark the beginning of this moderate hegemony that lasted until 1923. These were the years in which the Moderate Party forged the political and administrative foundations of the Spanish liberal state.

Taming the liberal revolution: the conservative turn (1843–1868)

The formal task of taming the revolution was undertaken by the three internal forces that balanced Isabella II's constitutional monarchy: the crown, the army, and the bulk of the dynastic parties. The crown was unequivocally conservative, if not anti-liberal. Publicly, both María Cristina during her regency, and the Queen herself during her rule, were committed to liberal reforms, but they feared the liberal revolution because it represented a threat that would limit the power of the throne (Burdiel 2010, 20–22). The monarch still had the right to designate and dismiss ministers and to grant a decree to end the legislature and call for new elections. Isabella II took advantage of this option whenever she felt threatened by liberal radicalism, a tendency that consistently favored the Moderate Party. Thus, the Progressives felt that they were being deliberately neglected by a partisan monarch who was constantly challenging the liberal revolution, and little by little started to endorse the idea of finding a possible successor who would be willing to accept the rules of constitutional parliamentarianism. In the beginning the idea appealed only to the radical wing of the Progressive Party and to the new left wing, which had situated itself in a separate group known as the Democratic Party. However, with the passage of time – especially after 1863 – the idea of replacing the monarch found support among all members of the Progressive Party and even among significant representatives of the Moderate center.

The military formed the second internal force that worked for the control of liberal radicalism. The propensity of the military to actively intervene in politics in nineteenth-century Spain is a phenomenon that cannot be explained in simple terms. Likewise, it is also a simplification to consider this interventionist propensity, which continued into the twentieth century in Spain as well as the greater Hispanic world, as the most evident manifestation of the existence of a "distinctive" Spanish authoritarian tradition. Militarism, understood as the active intervention of the military in the process of political decision making, was a common phenomenon in all of continental Europe in the nineteenth century. In a general sense, modern militarism has resulted mainly from the weaknesses of civil society in countries in which political democratization is guided by political elites, but it also has to do with the different role assigned to the military in the context of the new liberal state.

After 1843 the military's political intervention increasingly abetted the conservative shift in liberal politics (Vincent 2007, 32). The fall of the charismatic General Baldomero Espartero

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marked the beginning of a period of military realignment with the Moderate program. It is true that the generals adopted independent styles of governing not always in tune with the civilian programs they were supposed to represent. Nonetheless, what generally prevailed were arrangements along the lines of the two major civilian political forces active on the Spanish political scene: the Moderates and the Progressives. Espartero, despite his Napoleonic propensity, was considered the candidate of the rogressives. Ramón María Narváez, despite his exaggerated authoritarianism, along with the more conciliatory Leopoldo O'Donnell, the military leaders of the period between 1843 and 1868, became the sentinels of Moderate liberalism. In the last instance, the military hierarchy was more attracted by the moderate message of an ordered and controlled transition than by the progressive program of democratic insurgence.

Along with the crown and the military, the last and most important force in the process of political readjustment initiated after 1843 was the Moderate Party. In the 1840s the moderates believed the most critical steps for the implantation of a liberal order had already been taken in the previous decade. They argued that the years of progressive radical politics had been a threat to the political, social, and economic stability that Spain needed to prosper. It was their task, they believed, to return Spanish politics to the path that would lead to the completion of the still unfinished task of constructing an authentic liberal order.

After 1843 the moderates and the crown worked together to exclude the progressives from government, but that exclusion was also the result of the progressives' misguided political strategies. They had decided to adopt a position of *retraimiento* (systematic electoral abstention) to protest the impudent favoritism that the crown showed towards the moderates. The strategy was a complete failure because it served to entrench the power of the moderates. The progressives were divided between a radical and a more pragmatic wing. The problem they continually faced was finding a way to control the revolution and keep it from extreme radicalization. This tension was always a handicap for the rogressives and the reason for their tactical hesitancy. The Progressives' reluctant policies resulted in the split of the party. In 1849 an excision from the progressives formed the Democratic Party, determined to bring an authentic democracy to Spain. The political positions of the democrats were diverse. The leadership of the group still believed in the constitutional monarchy, but many were republicans, some of them federalists who called for a kind of multinational state. There was also a socialist component represented by followers of Fourier. The Democrats were active in all of the revolutionary attempts that challenged the moderate hegemony. They provided the popular element that sparked the upheaval of 1868, and in 1873 they were the main promoters of the first republican experiment in Spain.

The main instrument the moderates used to tame the revolution was the "reform" of the constitution that the progressives had adapted in 1837. In fact, the so-called reform ended in the formation of a new Constitution of 1845. Despite the repetition of many articles, this new body of laws differed substantially in spirit from the progressive constitution, to the point that it transformed the nature of the entire political system. Under the Progressive constitution, national sovereignty had rested with the parliament, but the Moderates established a new form of sovereignty in which part of the crown's traditional powers were restored. This restoration was made by limiting the responsibilities of parliament and, subsequently, reinforcing the power of the monarch, the cabinet, and the senate in the decision-making process. There was a new senate whose members, undetermined in number, would be exclusively appointed by royal designation from among the notables of the kingdom. Also, the constitution opened the door to limiting freedom of expression. Along with this, it suppressed the national militia that had been a key instrument used by the Progressives to implement their revolutionary program. Once the constitution had established the framework for the new order, the Moderates

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embarked upon a feverish legislative program to consolidate their rule. The main outcome of this process was the elaboration of new electoral laws and new norms for the regulation of freedom of speech. Both legal instruments were, of course, restrictive and designed to continue the consolidation of their power.

But the Moderates were not only cunning political manipulators, they were also good administrators. The moderate years bequeathed a set of institutions, laws, and practices that survived the turbulence of daily politics and helped to consolidate the Spanish liberal state. The Moderates reformed the old Spanish National Bank, converting it into the modern financial institution it is today. They also introduced the postal stamp to Spain and the use of the peseta as the national monetary unit, and took the first measures to create a state-supported education system. Regarding the administering of justice and public order the moderates succeeded in formulating a new criminal code in tune with the spirit of rationalization that characterized liberal law. They advanced the process of building a modern court system, and created in 1844 the controversial and historic Spanish Civil Guard, a government-controlled local police force in charge of maintaining public order. One of the moderates' more lasting projects was the reform of the national treasury that made the collection of taxes more balanced and efficient. They also initiated a series of reforms of the state's administration to make it more professional. Among the most important steps of this reformist task before 1848 was the creation of the new departments of Commerce, Education, and Public Works, the completion of the administrative division of Spanish territory in the provinces, and the approval of a bill to regulate municipal and regional powers that implied a tighter control of central government over provincial life.

The first serious revolutionary challenge to moderate rule occurred during the spring of 1848. The progressives tried to replicate in Spain the revolutionary movements that were taking place in other parts of Europe. However, conditions were not favorable and the effort was a complete failure. Narváez acted rapidly and resolutely to repress the revolution. The Progressives were unable to mobilize the masses to man the barricades for the revolution. They were divided regarding the goals of the revolution; there was a good deal of hesitation among those who feared that popular mobilization would end in a social revolution. The result was a split in the Progressive forces that gave birth in 1849 to the Democratic Party. So, despite the failure, 1848 demonstrated that the seeds of revolution were nestled in Spanish soil and could germinate under more advantageous conditions.

This moment arrived in 1854. The political situation had so deteriorated that it was finally possible to create a broad consensus favoring change. As usual, the military was the key to revolutionary success, by means of repeated armed pronunciamientos that ended in the neutralization of the government. The movement attained its goals in July 1854 when General Espartero was called to take the presidency of a new cabinet. Between 1854 and 1856, Espartero, with the Progressives' and O'Donnell's consent, tried to go back to the situation as it had been before 1843. The Progressive program included the promulgation of a new constitution that would make it possible to extend freedom of speech, decentralize the state, reform the tax system, expand suffrage, continue with disentailment, and restore the national militia. The program only partially succeeded in its economic goals. A new constitution was written and approved by parliament in 1856, but it was never promulgated and consequently had no lasting impact. Progressive rule did not substantially alter the functioning of the liberal state as it had been established by the Moderates. The 1854 revolution brought about more a change of government personnel than a change of vision and policy; consequently, it was contested from the very beginning by those who dreamed of the coming of a new order. Now the voice of revolution was represented by the new Democratic Party, whose rhetoric and program were

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even more radical. In fact, the more rebellious the Democrats seemed the more hesitant and ambivalent appeared the progressives. It was this combination of factors that brought to an end the progressive biennium. In 1856 Espartero, unable to stop the revolutionary pressure of the democrats and the criticisms of the moderates, decided to resign. General Leopoldo O'Donnell became the new prime minister.

The fourteen years that separate the 1854 revolutionary episode from the Gloriosa revolution of 1868 were marked by the attempt to build a liberal center with a new political experiment guided by Leopoldo O'Donnell, known as the Liberal Union. A coalition more than a party, the Liberal Union worked better as an experiment for the future than as a solution for the problems of the moment. The idea was promising, but in reality the experiment was sponsored by an alliance of notables with few popular links and strongly convinced that in politics order should prevail over liberty. The Liberal Union brought about the longest period of stable government since 1833, but it finally failed in what was supposed to be its main goal: the unification of the entire liberal family in a common endeavor. Like the moderates before 1854, the unionist government ended up practicing a policy of exclusion of the political opponent. The fear of a popular revolution was again the excuse to neglect and repress those who supported greater democracy and social reform. In this, politicians were backed by the crown, which was more and more identified as the main obstacle to democracy.

The coming of the 1868 upheaval shows the inability of Spanish liberals to achieve a stable political system for Spain. As we have seen, the years of the moderate hegemony were decisive for the consolidation of a liberal state, but overall liberalism failed to provide the liberty and prosperity that many Spaniards would have expected from the early liberal project. This political failure was in the last instance the consequence of the poor performance of the Spanish economy and the persistence of traditional social structures. Indeed, in a society marked by the existence of deep social divisions, traditional Spanish elites had little margin to both warrant political stability and at the same time maintain their domination. This explains the hesitations of the Progressives and the refusal of the Moderates and Liberal Unionists to open the political system to a higher degree of democratic participation. Under these circumstances, Spanish political life would continue to be marked by the menace of revolution, but now the social characteristics of that revolutionary potential threatened more than ever the traditional liberal elites. In the future the maintenance of a stable political system would depend on the capacity of the elites to remain united, a condition that proved to be impossible in Spain's turbulent political life.

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