

Civil War, Genocide and Beyond: How to Re-found the Narrative Framework on the Destruction of the Spanish Democratic Republic after 1936

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This article contends that the category of civil war is not suitable for studying the massacres of civilians during the Spanish 1936–1939 war and its aftermath. In trying to build an alternative narrative for the understanding of the destruction of the democratic republic of 1931 founded on the human rights paradigm, an analytical framework is devised based on the deficit in deliberation processes allowing for the re-classification of social constituencies as ontological enemies. By showing that the repression by Franco's followers supplemented institutional logics and rationalities from colonial warfare and religious wars, the article also provides insights for a qualitative differentiation in repression between the two contending sides.

For over half a century now, starting from Thomas (1961), there has been a universal historiographical consensus for defining as a civil war the dramatic conflict that, between 1936 and 1939, opposed defenders of the democratic republic proclaimed in Spain in 1931 against those military and civilians mobilized to suppress it. In current Spanish democracy, however, the role played by the discourse on civil war has not been limited to the domain of historiography: reaching well beyond analytical purposes, the category has been gifted with profound meta-narrative attributes for staging reconciliation and the oblivion of past deeds as preconditions for democracy after the long regime of General Franco (Aguilar 1997, 2001).

Since the beginnings of scholarly accounts of it, the Spanish Civil War was set in a wider interpretation on the limitations of the Second Republic to provide a stable institutional setting for political competition between ideological adversaries and being capable of securing peace under civil life. From the viewpoint of post-Francoist narratives, the resort to war was a collective failure, and both sides share responsibility (Sánchez León 2012). This link between democratic deficit and civil

war can be now questioned, bringing the whole narrative framework, inherited from the transition to democracy, to an epistemological crisis.

The mentioned framework is founded on an ideological conception of reconciliation that invokes the threat of another civil war against legitimate claims for radical reform and justice in the post-Francoist democracy; it was also established at an important intellectual and cultural cost. The unchallenged consensus in Spanish historiography from the transition period was that the death toll and the brutality concerned had been comparable on each contending side. Only recently has this assumption been refuted by facts;¹ for decades, however, it contributed to even out the moral profile of contenders irrespective of the principles upheld in each camp; on its part, instituted oblivion discouraged further research on the violence exerted by civilians during and after the war.

Over the last decade, a series of cultural, social and political trends has challenged these conventions. On one side, exhumations of civilians massacred during the war and its aftermath have decisively contributed to break the balanced distribution of killings between the two confronting forces: what now stands out are the pervasiveness and intensity of the repression exercised by the Francoist side, exerted far from the battle lines and involving a wide variety of practices, from selective acquittals without trials, arbitrary courts martials and forced labour and imprisonment, to the stealing of newborn babies, withholding of benefits and services, or re-education in institutions, all within a wider framework of *damnatio memoria* of the defeated, etc. (Fernández de la Mata 2017). Exhumations are, in turn, the core activities of a whole movement for memory recovery, engaging citizens in organized protests in favour of public recollection, justice and reparation for the misdeeds of the Franco regime; although limited in its impact on state policies, the memory movement has decisively contributed to inserting the Spanish media and public opinion into the global discourse on human rights (Ferrándiz 2008, 2014). This overall trend has, on the other side, fostered interpretations of the war from the perspective of the victims, a growing literature that, by actualizing patterns of collective memory of the defeated, has contributed to taking a critical distance from assumptions of mutual guilt (see, for example, Silva and Macías 2003; and an overview in Gómez López-Quñones 2006).

By contrast, the academic response to these trends has not been very welcoming: instead of actively contributing to establishing a dialogue with the rising social demand, leading historians have on the contrary argued once and again for maintaining a neat dividing line between History and memory (Juliá 2006, 2011); in the meantime there appeared a series of ‘revisionist’ argumentations that pinned

1. The consensus only started to be questioned by the early twenty-first century, partly due to the publication of the studies gathered in Juliá (1999), which offered more accurate numbers of civilians killed by the Francoist followers that superseded previous accounts. The survey was territorially incomplete, however. It was only after 2008 that the consensus collapsed, following the lawsuit opened by judge Baltasar Garzón on crimes against humanity during Franco's regime, and which included a list of over 110,000 extra-official killings in the Francoist side not registered in documents ('Truth on Trial in Spain' 2012).

on the defenders of the Second Republic the undermining of 1930s' democracy (an example can be found in Álvarez Tardío and Rey Reguillo 2011; an overview of public polemics in Faber *et al.* 2011, and a critical approach in Sánchez León 2017, 95–212). Fortunately, there is a new generation of scholars specialized in the study of violence upon civilians in the 1930s who are devoting their work to the different repressive practices of the contending sides (Ledesma 2008; Rodrigo 2012; and works gathered in Casanova 2004 and Espinosa Maestre 2010). Yet they suffer from the lack of a narrative framework drawing from the principles of human rights and adequate for the scholarly challenges that ensue.

A most telling expression of the limitations of the inherited frame is the labelling of the Francoist massacres of civilians as genocide, an option increasingly chosen by both senior and junior researchers (Preston 2013; Miguez Macho 2013) and international experts on the topic (Feierstein 2016, 123–148). Genocide is a very loaded category, the usage of which requires profound underpinning, not only at the juridical but also theoretical, methodological and narrative levels; it is also a much-abused term, often employed in a metaphorical or purely rhetorical manner. In the case of Spain, the claim for genocide is, in principle, unjustified, since the definition by the United Nations only encompasses massacres against minorities for ethnic or confessional reasons and excludes aggressions against ideological-political identities (Lemkin 1946; Shaw 2008, 17–36).

This, however, does not necessarily mean that defining the Spanish 1936–1939 war as genocide is inadequate or misleading. On one side, the choice transcends the limitations in the current definition by embracing what appear to have been brutal and massive killings of civilians, recorded in collective memory and still awaiting justice. On the other, resorting to the term seems to have a justification regarded from within the internal dynamics of scholarly research: it signals the obsolescence of the inherited terminology for addressing the fate of the Spanish democratic republic of the 1930s from the perspective of the repression of civilians. In the wider picture, the usage of genocide highlights the indefinite status of the Spanish conflict in the ranking of crimes against humanity: acknowledged as one of the major civil conflicts of the twentieth century worldwide, it remains however excluded from the shortlist of massive and systematic massacres of modernity (Mann 2005). This sort of limbo situation suggests an increasing divorce between the academic delivery of and the social demand for accounts of the Spanish Civil War, fuelling a feeling of misrecognition and injustice among the victims and their descendants.

What is at stake, then, is the building of an alternative narrative framework, capable of overcoming the drawbacks in the inherited one for dealing with the repression of civilians, marking the origin of the long period of lack of liberties under Franco. Only through such a paradigmatic shift may the debate on whether or not the Spanish Civil War should be accounted a genocide be properly addressed and settled. Moreover, with a new narrative framework many legacies of trauma and misrecognition of the victims targeted by the memory movement could be overcome at the moral, the symbolic, and even the judicial level.

My contention is that the first step towards this goal is to redefine the Spanish 1936–1939 events as being beyond a civil war.

Beyond Civil War

Syria, Afghanistan, Burundi, Chechen, Darfur, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Mali . . . the twenty-first century seems to be rife with civil wars, with their corresponding death tolls, refugees, humanitarian crises, and indiscriminate violence on ordinary citizens. Experts in geopolitics have found a rise in the outbreak of civil wars since the end of the Cold War; yet they also remind us of the recurrence of internecine warfare in the last 200 years worldwide, hand-in-hand with the rise of national states (Kalyvas 2007). From this longer-term perspective, what we are witnessing is, to a large extent, a revival of the term Civil War for labelling conflicts that used to be defined differently: with the decline of utopian ideologies, civil war has actually come to occupy the status assigned during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to another category: revolution (Koselleck 2004, 43–57).

For historical studies, this re-location of civil war entails an epistemological and methodological challenge analogous to that which occurred 100 years ago, when the accommodation of the language of social revolutions gave rise to academic sociology and social history (Iggers 1997, 51–96). Regarded from the Western tradition of political thought, civil war refers to situations emerging when those rejecting the liberties, participation or collective deliberation procedures instituted in republics tried to put an end to the experience of civic government altogether, while others sought to defend the *civitas* from its inner enemies (Armitage 2017, 3–28). In this view, civil war appears as a recurrent experience in any polity founded on self-government by citizens; thus regarded, it is a natural condition of modernity, the eradication or prevention of which calls upon the recourse to states of exception which have marked contemporary history (Agamben 2015, 1–24).

This re-arrangement of the status of civil war brings about a thorough renovation in scholarly research and leads to reflection from an interdisciplinary perspective. For historians it entails a distinctive challenge, however, as those rather few events traditionally defined as civil wars now lose their uniqueness in the historical record. The re-conceptualization of the category fosters a thorough reassignment and redefinition in the status and content of specific historical processes.

One of the most acknowledged modern civil wars is surely the Spanish Civil War, between 1936 and 1939. In the available narrative framework the uniqueness of the event is pinned to the failure of democracy: for over half century the dominant consensus among scholars was that the Second Republic accommodated a deficient, incomplete or failed democracy, the ultimate expression of which was open conflagration among its citizens. Regarded from a critical history of citizenship, instead, the relation between the establishment of democracy and the outbreak of civil conflicts does not appear as an anomaly but rather an expected threat: accordingly, the Spanish democratic republic can be classified as a ‘normal’ democracy precisely

because it nurtured a struggle between attackers and defenders of a constitutional framework recognizing citizenship rights and duties.

This does not mean that the Second Republic was a model of democratic institutional and civil life: the argument is only that the outbreak of the war does not question the nature or condition of its citizenship culture and institutions; quite the opposite, the Spanish Civil War embodies a typical crossroads in the history of a modern citizenship polity. Be this as it may, this interpretive shift bears enormous consequences for historiography. Since the transition to democracy, efforts have been made to detach the 1936–1939 war from the overall dynamics of the early 1930s: historians critical of the consensus on the war as a collective failure have argued that the Second Republic, in spite of the embedded social conflicts inherited from the short- or long-term past, was a proper democracy according to the standards of the surrounding Western nation-states, and that the violence unleashed against its foundations had independent sources (Casanova 2010, 9–37; Preston 1994). The perspective stemming from the new approach on the conceptual history of civil war argues instead that, as the traditional interpretation assumed, the Spanish Civil War should keep being read in close relation to the citizenship experience from the 1930s, but not for the sake of diminishing the credentials of the republican democracy. In this view, the Second Republic regains complete integrity as a historical phenomenon; it is the Spanish Civil War that loses its aura of exceptionality as a historical event: while the category of civil war does not stand out anymore in the overall record of modern history worldwide, the Spanish war does not provide the democracy of the 1930s with its fundamental significance

The status of the category is also downplayed when the case is approached from conceptual history. According to a credible study, in the language of modern Spanish politics, ‘civil war’ was already a widely-used term before the establishment of the Second Republic. In the early 1930s, the concept did not alter its semantics nor did it gain greater currency in social usage: it was primarily employed to designate, not major constitutional crises, but mainly situations unleashing fears of degradation in the quality of representative institutions or civic life. This usage fell short when the 1936 crisis unexpectedly broke out. As contenders tried to give meaning to the nature of the confrontation under way, they both rejected that the conflict could be defined as ‘civil’ in any significant dimension: either they denied this condition to their enemies – as did the pro-Republican official propaganda – or altogether rejected applying the label to themselves, as in the case of the pro-Franco forces. From both sides, instead, the struggle was regarded as a confrontation that allowed no mutual recognition, to the degree that ‘the massacring was possible once [the contenders] did not allow the confrontation to keep any resemblance with what they defined as a civil war’ (Cruz 2013, 214).

Summarizing, the category of civil war does not properly address the way the historical protagonists defined their own collective experience. All this should be enough justification for questioning the usefulness of the category. Yet there is still another, decisive, reason for redefining the 1936–1939 attack and defence of the

Spanish democratic republic as other than a civil war. It has to do with the increasing trend among specialists to draw upon the terminology of crimes against humanity when searching for appropriate categories. My contention is that this signals that the quantity and quality of the Francoist massacres so transcend the heuristic capacity of the category of civil war that its usage makes it difficult to properly address the issues raised by the repression practised during and after the war.

This does not mean that the 1936–1939 conflict was not a civil war; what it means, nevertheless, is that the massive killings of civilians during the conflict and in its aftermath cannot be properly accounted for by reserving the category for an exclusive status in the definition of the overall historical event. Regarded from the perspective of a critical history of citizenship, the Spanish Civil War was not a civil war, or at least not primarily a civil war. An alternative naming is required.

Re-founding the Narrative Framework (I): Civil, Colonial and Religious Repression in the Context of Total War

The issue at stake is not merely one of renaming, though. In trying to find an alternative label for the 1936–1939 crisis suitable for the study of repressive practices, what is demanded is not just a new category or even a renewed theoretical approach, but a wider epistemological thrust bringing about a brand-new narrative language.

To begin with, the challenge requires an intensive focus on perpetrators only recently upheld in the case of Spain (Aguilar and Payne 2016; Sánchez León 2018; Ferrer and Sánchez Biosca 2019). The traditional narrative framework on the Spanish Civil War adopted a rather indiscriminating perspective in which all those involved in killings could be approached as either or both victimizers and victims; this pattern has been questioned in recent years, although the rise of the literature on memory has entailed giving growing attention especially to victims and mainly from the Republican side. This, together with the fact that the Republic ‘has left a richer documentary legacy than its opponents’, partly due to the plausible destruction of archival information during the dictatorship, helps explain that the defeated have been subject to much more intensive and varied research than the supporters of the July 1936 military coup, thus leaving ‘the Nationalist zone in relative neglect’ (Seidman 2011, 9).

In spite of this unbalanced point of departure and partly in reaction to it, there is a need to enrich the perspective on victims with one on perpetrators. This can now be achieved profiting from an emerging ‘turn’ in perspective in genocide studies in the last few years. The new focus on victimizers has to do partly with a global understanding of the present as post-totalitarian – a context which favours historical distance from highly-repressive regimes and the psychological profile of mass criminals – and also partly with the internal dynamics of genocide studies, which suffer from a saturation of the victim/witness approach that may be compensated by a focus on the perpetrator. As one of its proponents argues, the emerging agenda aims at offering ‘a full account of the horrors and cruelties’ of crimes against humanity

(Lewy 2017, ix) as a prerequisite for addressing other relevant issues, especially regarding the motivations for individual and collective participation in massacres; from the side of cultural history there is also a bid for moving beyond the reconstruction of the ‘logistics’ of exterminist machineries and examining the ‘logic of the criminals, with their particular mental universe’ who designed, planned and executed genocides (Chapoutot 2016, 19, my translation, emphasis in original).

This epistemological turn can only be successfully undertaken in parallel with a thorough reconfiguration of the conceptual field of civil war. Traditionally, the definition and study of civil war was hegemonized by the semantics of social revolutions, and so tended to be viewed essentially as a clash between social forces endowed with enough capacity for discourse and collective self-organization. In this approach, both revolutions and civil wars shared a common etiology of violence upon civilians, in the form of repression of antagonistic political-ideological and class identities. However, although the outcome of a civil war depends on the relation of forces among contenders, its rationale is not just that of taking power and expelling a ruling class but actually getting rid of a declared enemy, to the extreme of annihilation. From the perspective of repression, it is more akin to the wide variety of social phenomena encompassing aggression towards minorities that form the core of the agenda of the human rights paradigm.

In effect, minority aggression usually sets into motion discourses and policies of exclusion founded on discursively elaborated classifications. In principle, there are two major differences between civil war and minority cleansing, besides the latter affecting mostly ethnic or religious rather than class or ideological-political groups: in a civil war, the confronting sides comprise the majority of the population and both contending sides are endowed with enough resources to act in retaliation. However, both phenomena tend to share a common scenario for repression: warfare. In modern history, there have actually been two distinctive military phenomena of relevance touching upon the repression of minorities: colonial conquests and religious wars, the former usually targeting ethnic groups and the latter confessional identities.

In general, these three types of repressive warfare – civil, colonial, and religious – take place separately: civil wars by definition break out within a single polity, whereas colonial invasions in principle concern aggressions against external communities (holy wars may be either internal or external). Exceptionally, however, the three types may appear aggregated, amounting to the kind and level of repression of a total war. In a total war all available resources are mobilized by contending armies and launched indiscriminately against both military and civilians, thus transgressing the boundaries between the normal and the exceptional with unpredictable repressive side-effects and usually fostering experimentation in the management of those social constituencies classified as enemies (Fritz 2011, 303–358; Traverso 2016, 101–132). The violence unleashed under a total war stands out in its spatial and temporal scope: it does not affect minorities but overall populations at large, its repressive experiments being fostered by the duration of the state of exception accompanying the military effort (Kalyvas 2008; Kalyvas and Balcells 2014). Compared with a revolution, a situation of total war alters not just the relative

positions of groupings but also the cultural patterns of social classifications that allow for the institutional management of life and death.

Viewed from this analytical standpoint, there are sufficient grounds for arguing that Spain's late 1930s conflict was staged in a context of total war. As a colonial conquest, the initial coup d'état and subsequent military campaign launched by the Francoist side against the Second Republic was led by so-called 'Africanist' military cadres with a trajectory of imperialist aggression in Morocco (Balfour 2002). Archaeological findings have confirmed that the aggressive and repressive techniques practised by the rebellious army drew upon previous experiences in colonial Africa (González-Ruibal 2012, 2016). As to the case for a religious war, the mobilization in favour of the coup was explicitly labelled a Crusade by religious authorities (Reig Tapia 2006). The religious rationale of the anti-democratic mobilization during the Second Republic and the war has been widely acknowledged by specialists (Blinkhorn 1975, 1986; Cruz 2006, 50–62, 190–205).

Accordingly, a proper understanding of the violence exercised upon citizens in the Spanish 1936–1939 war needs to supplement the study of repression typical of civil wars and revolutions – justified as launched against political-ideological and class identities – with the description and analysis of the logics and rationalities of exclusion unleashed in contexts of the state of exception or total war. A focus on repression under colonial and holy wars should thus help clarify the distinctiveness of the exterminating machinery of Franco's army and his followers.

Re-founding the Narrative Framework (II): Deliberation Deficits and the Logics of Misrecognition

In order to develop such a perspective, further theoretical reflection is needed, though. In particular, what is required is an inclusive understanding of 'the political' as a self-reflective, potentially absolute logic constitutive of both individual and collective individuals and capable of instituting social classifications (Pizzorno 1987, 1993). This conceptualization should in turn be placed in dialectical relation with 'the un-political': the realm of the un-reflected but which is potentially capable of placing and displacing subjects by ranking, excluding, or neglecting them, and even of disposing of individuals or whole groups (Cacciari 2009). In any modern polity or constituency – where the political occupies the centre of social life and is legitimized as the collective exercise of deliberation for the achievement of common ends – there are issues which are sheltered from polemic or conflict, taken for granted as given or commonsensical (Esposito 2011); these conventions institute norms that are followed unquestionably and, when dealing with social constituencies, they set the stage for treating beings as objects of administration (Agamben 2000), eventually establishing the conditions for declaring an enemy without resorting to deliberation.

This does not mean that in the absence of deliberation there is no politics; yet the dominance of un-political considerations reduces deliberation to the means – the allocation of resources, procedures and assignment of tasks relating to the social

classification of individuals – without opening to question the ends of classification, that is, the inclusion or exclusion of individuals within existing social classifications and the meaning and significance of the latter.² Deliberation involves ‘weighing the reasons relevant to a decision with a view to making a decision on the basis of that weighing’ (Cohen 2007, 219); it ‘encourages reflection upon preferences without coercion’, so that those involved in deliberation ‘are amenable to changing their minds and their preferences as a result of the reflection induced by deliberation’ (Dryzek 2000, 8, 31 respectively). Accordingly, deficits in deliberation over ends entail misrecognition of the moral foundations of individuals as members of collective identities, allowing for their exclusion, harassment and eventually extermination through necro-politics. Exclusion and inclusion can thus follow without touching upon value judgements or moral issues. As certain groups are loaded with permanent social stigma, once a group category appears pre-defined as a species of beings or class of objects, the classification of an individual member in the category does not engender debate: decision-making is confined to the most adequate means available for the institutional management of the individual within an unquestioned group category. In other words, deliberation over ends presupposes the recognition of otherness and impedes objectification; in its absence, individuals tend to be classified in categories irrespective of their self-identification, especially through asymmetrical counter-concepts (Koselleck 2004, 155–191).

Un-political imagination imposes its own referents on collective identities (a perspective inspired by O’Flynn 2006; Talisse 2005; Della Porta 2013; Yound 2002). Historically, it takes the form of infra-political conventions or customs, such as cultural phobias and xenophobias, repudiations, subordinations and stigmatization of groups; or takes the form of meta-political obligations – such as dogmas, commandments and other precepts – elaborated by reference to otherworldly beliefs or more sophisticated theologies. Infra-political phobias and meta-political anathemas usually derive from before modernity; however, they usually also have been renewed in modern discourse, and often reformulated by inserting them into ideologies (Freeden 2006, 33–40). Ideological justifications in turn allow for the display of bio-politics – the management of social categories, in the form of acculturation and education, access to specific services, integration, segregation, social control, eugenics, etc. (Agamben 1998; Esposito 2008, 45–77) – but eventually also for necro-politics, that is, the instituted management of death, unleashed whenever the members of a category are deprived of the condition or subjected to the extreme such that the category appears as disposable (Mbembe 2003).

This overall framework is suitable for studying states of exception or major crises in the constitution of the social order where there are two contending sides with an autonomous capacity for discourse and organization for targeting specific social or cultural groups. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, the contenders were

2. The distinction between deliberation over the definition of ends (value-oriented or thick deliberation) and deliberation over the allocation of means (instrumental or thin deliberation) draws up the line that separates political agonism from un-political antagonism, defining politics as the realm for the recognition of the adversary as legitimate enemy (Mouffe 1999).

massively mobilized by overarching, opposing ideologies ranging along the whole political spectrum from extreme Left to extreme Right – Anarchism, Socialism, Communism, Republicanism, Traditionalism, Fascism, and so on. Accordingly, in principle, members from both sides were equally exposed to un-political conventions. Moreover, ideological cleavages and class stereotypes were among the most socially extended and intensively acknowledged identity referents. Actually, during the war, class imagery stood out in the necro-politics of both the left-wing revolutionary organizations defending the Second Republic and the reactionary and traditionalist, anti-democratic rebels, proving that they had both escalated into classifications for exclusion and even extermination (Preston 2013).

Ideological or class identities tend to be constructed by means of a friend/enemy dichotomy. However, there remains the possibility of re-classification of individual members of ideologies or classes. In the case of the latter, this is because, in modern societies granting equality under the law, classes cannot be given formal juridical recognition and are as much exposed to objective mobility as to identity self-denial. This can be argued of instituted classifications such as the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, the peasantry or the middle classes, and their different subcategories, the borders between which are not always easily drawn. On their part, ideologies are even more malleable: they may be experienced as unlimited and invariable but are also exposed to dropout through conviction, persuasion or under oppression. Accordingly, classifications based on these kinds of identity referents are more prone to take into consideration self-identification by individual members. This does not mean that repression justified through ideological or class antagonism becomes less aggressive or arbitrary; however, given their lack of juridical dimension and their fluidity as categories, class and ideological stereotypes tend to leave open the issue of whether to include or not particular individuals, which is ultimately settled through decisions taken depending on the context.

Accordingly, a comprehensive analysis of the logics of repression in the Spanish 1936–1939 war should take into consideration the presence and degree of deliberation standards relating to ideology or class deployed by the contending sides, and their dynamics over time in their respective exclusionary practices. Just to give a comparative example relevant for the case, whereas on the Republican side a set of rather uncoordinated and informal repressive repertoires – i.e. the ‘paseos’ or illegal detentions and killings without trial of individual citizens – soon gave way to more routinized and legalized methods, such as popular tribunals, on the Francoist side organized massacres lacking juridical guarantees extended throughout the war and beyond, only eventually to be replaced by generalized court-martials. Ultimately, the rule-following of court-martials and the decision-making processes of popular tribunals can be differentiated through the distinction between deliberation over means and deliberation over ends (Smith and Wales 2000). Failure to take this into account allows for double standards in the treatment of the repressive practices by Franco's followers after the 1939 military victory, which end up being interpreted in a much more lenient manner compared with the ones deployed by the Republican defenders in the besieged capital (Ruiz 2005, 2014). A more refined and

balanced study on the social and moral rationality of Republican popular tribunals has already been done (Ledesma 2005, works gathered in Oviedo Silva and Pérez-Olivares, 2016); however, much research and reflection on this issue still lie ahead in order to offer a fully-fledged account of the repressive logics and rationalities between the two contending sides in the Spanish 1936–1939 war from the presence or absence of deliberation over ends. The available narrative framework cannot take this whole issue into proper consideration, constrained as it is by the category of civil war, which evens out the content of all kinds of repression and, by reducing it to ideological-political motivations, neglects the possibility of other rationalities that entail qualitative differences among decision-making processes in terms of the misrecognition of otherness.

Re-founding the Narrative Framework (III): De-humanization of Otherness, Absolute Enmity, and the Limits of Ideological–Political Extermination

As we have seen, there are enough grounds for arguing that, on the Francoist side, the repression of civilians during and after the war mimicked that of colonial and religious warfare. However, the paradox is that, notwithstanding the rise of regional cultural–political identities since the end of the nineteenth century, the Spanish 1936–1939 war took place in a society that, in ethnical and cultural terms, was rather coherent and unified; moreover, a long tradition of religious intolerance had also made for a virtually absolute monopoly of Catholicism, which restricted the supply of alternative confessions.

The way to solve this conundrum is to further elaborate on the logic and rationality of repression in colonial conquests and holy wars. Both of these are founded on the elaboration of un-political stereotypes of ethnic and religious identities which, once institutionalized in discourse, foster exclusion and ultimately annihilation without appealing to deliberation over ends. Compared with class and ideological–political identities, ethnic and religious identities are more fixed and tend to be visible through physical features or customs, which allows for the establishment of semantic dichotomies and asymmetries for discrimination and exclusion that do not take into account the self-identification by victims (Koselleck 2004, 155–191). Ethnic classifications are distinctive in that inherited stereotypes relating to race and civilization tend to be reshaped and refined through scientific rhetoric, and this has historically allowed for more effective bio-political and eventually necro-political management, since ‘[e]xclusive deliberation by unaccountable experts will generally fail to produce a mutually justifiable policy’ (Gutmann and Thompson 1999, 245).

Science, in the form of elaborated taxonomies, has been always behind modern policies of misrecognition of cultural identities, fostering the de-humanization of otherness and ultimately extermination. The perspective suggested here is not normative but etiological, seeking to describe the emergence of blatant, explicit and exceptional forms of classification of social and cultural groups in a context

of total war. Accordingly, conventional dichotomies typical of civil wars and revolutions – national/foreign, ruling/ruled, bourgeois/proletarian-peasant, elite/popular – need to be supplemented with the study of metaphors and other tropes discursively organized in dichotomy pairs suggesting de-humanization, such as normal/uncanny, natural/artificial, organic/mechanic, human/animal, masculine/emasculated... (La Porte 2004; Smith 2011; Tileaga 2007; Haslam 2013; Douglas 2002). These criteria make for a vocabulary on types of destitution: de-humanization, infra-humanization, naturalization, objectification, ontologization, etc. And this on its part allows for distinguishing among degrees of exclusion: discrimination, exclusion, oppression, segregation, repression, brutalization, annihilation, and ultimately extermination.

Now, in the case of Spain, both contending sides coined their enemies by aggregating different combinations of ideology, class and inherited cultural stereotypes into an exclusive nationalist viewpoint as ‘non-Spanish’ (Núñez-Seixas 2005). However, only the conceptual frame of repression developed by Franco's followers was specific in that it included a racial ingredient, identifying ‘Reds’ with Asian nomadic hordes embodying Communist ideological allegiance (Núñez-Seixas 2010). Such discourse was instrumental in fixing the identification of enemies and settling their inclusion as individual members in the category of disposable, without resorting to deliberation.

The rebels’ scientific discourse was not as elaborated as that deployed by the Nazis (Preston 2013, 73–85). Yet, next to their quasi-ethnic approach to the ideological enemy, Franco and his followers profited from the availability of an extremely orthodox and exclusive classification of religious identity that may be classified as fundamentalist.³ In fact, the presence of such Catholic fundamentalism allowed for an extreme rationality of exclusion, founded on the conception of otherness not simply as an enemy that needs be excluded but as an utter menace – not just physical and individual but rather moral and collective, radical – to such an extreme that its mere existence impedes the sense of moral integrity on the part of the perpetrators’ group (Schmitt 1963). Such definition of the enemy as absolute completely occludes deliberation processes and imposes recourse to intensive and indiscriminate violence.

The perspective comes full circle. According to a growing scholarly consensus, in the Spanish 1930s, religious fundamentalism functioned as the common substratum to a whole variety of political identities on the extreme Right, from monarchical and traditional nationalists to emerging Fascists and all kinds of radical religious propagandists (Gallego 2002), favouring a discourse that blended the religious with the ideological and the ethnic through pervasive anti-Jewish tropes (Álvarez Chillida 2014). Its hybridization of semantics – epitomized in the definition of an ontological ‘anti-Spanishness’ – allowed the Francoist side to jump from aggressive discourse to

3. Religious fundamentalism ‘rests on the claim that some source of ideas, usually a text, is inerrant and complete’ (Bruce 2000, 13), and it both appeals and tries to impose absolute truths (Garaudy 1990). It asserts ‘a single religious order of values which applies to all aspects of human life, including morals and politics’ (Macedo 1995, 479).

the devising of extermination measures in a thoroughly un-political way; that is, skipping deliberation over the ends and reducing decision-making to deliberation over the means available for repressing and eventually annihilating an enemy naturalized as non-human. This common language and rhetoric, together with the resort to more fluid, non-party organizations, accounted for a unique type of political identity among Catholic propagandists: a sort of ‘victimized perpetrator’ prone to aggressive fanaticism against ideological opponents.⁴

As much as in the case of repressive institutions (i.e. courts martial versus citizens’ juries), there remains to be accomplished a comparative study of the contending sides in the Spanish 1936 war in their distinctive deployment of language genres and jargons (i.e. scientific versus religious, aesthetic, etc.) in order to fully specify the specific, contextual conditions for the shift from adversarial agonism to antagonism and to absolute enmity. It seems, however, that the extreme development of a logic of extermination was absent in the Republican repertoires and rationalities of repression, all of which involved a degree of deliberation over the ends when classifying the enemy either collectively or individually. In effect, in stark contrast with the Francoist side, the discourse and practice of necro-politics on the Republican side remained within the contours of nationalist, class and ideological–political definition of otherness; added to this were strains of traditional popular justice standards and an emerging loyal/disloyal cleavage epitomized in the obsession with a ‘Fifth column’ that justified the bulk of repression in territories under Republican rule.⁵

This does not mean that, once the war had started, the Republican repressive standards were milder than those of their enemies; yet, from a human rights perspective, they were qualitatively different in that they entailed deliberation over ends, and so allowed for the re-classification of individual members; moreover, the repressive repertoires developed on the Republican side could not easily supplement each other and escalate into the logic and rationality of absolute enmity. Their actual deployment still awaits detailed study from the perspective of the alternative framework outlined here. My contention here is that the qualitative differences in repressive logics and rationalities between the two contending sides in the Spanish 1936–1939 war had to do with the presence or absence of colonial perspectives on otherness and the identification of adversaries as absolute enemies following a Catholic fundamentalist *Weltanschauung*. The relevance of this hypothesis underlies the whole

4. A focus on fundamentalist Catholic discourse also has important underpinnings for historiography, allowing us to confront ‘revisionist’ arguments that lately have tried to exonerate extremist confessional identities, organized around an anti-democratic alliance of extreme right-wing followers – the CEDA (Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas) – from exerting violence during the war and even from instigating it before its outbreak (Álvarez Tardío 2011).

5. This explains why the only circumstance in which repression in the Republican side escalated into extermination was during the defence of Madrid between September and December 1936, when the sense of collective paranoia fuelled by the imminence of a military conquest of the capital by the enemy fostered an extraordinary degree of cooperation among the usually rather contending repressive agencies in the hands of competing ideological organizations. An alternative view, which considers those killings as an experiment for future massive killings by Russian Communist during the Second World War, can be found in Ruiz (2015).

re-founding effort of the current article: it allowed for the transformation of what were ideological–political cleavages into ethnic-racial and confessional imageries and rationalities that called forth the radical exclusion and eventually extermination of full social categories as much as all their individual members.

This perspective situates the Spanish 1936–1939 war straight within the realm of genocide. The Spanish Civil War seems to be a unique example of genocide, however, in which ideological–political antagonisms were reshaped as confessional and ethnic. Eventually, though, supplementing ideological with ethnic and confessional rationalities imposed limits upon the logic of extermination. In effect, in contrast to ethnic cleansing, religious conflicts stop short of escalating towards extermination: once the victorious side takes control of the territory, the defeated community is exposed to forced conversion and other means of acculturation. In the case of Spain, as opposed to Nazi Germany during the Second World War, necro-politics did not escalate into the full extermination of social categories and their individual members, but would eventually be redirected into bio-politics founded on religious-fundamentalist nationalist values, an outcome that in any case can be neither anticipated nor accounted for by using the category of civil war.

Conclusion: Genocide and Beyond

My contention in this article has been that, for the proper study of the massacres of civilians in the Spanish 1936–1939 war, the category of civil war is not only increasingly inadequate but, due to the meta-narrative underpinnings of the concept, it has actually become an obstacle for solving the problems posed by the study of the perpetrators of these massacres. What is at stake, then, is not just an academic issue: for the emergence of the memory movement, and for the whole ideology of reconciliation on which post-Francoist democracy has rested for decades, historical narratives are a collective good in a citizenship culture and they play a pivotal role in the whole political economy of public memory and human rights. In this sense, the longer-run misrecognition of the defenders of the 1930s' democratic republic repressed by those rebelling against it should not be continued by the misrecognition of their younger generation of heirs, a situation that entails unnecessary suffering and fuels antagonisms in the public sphere.

I have argued that, in order to overcome the pitfalls of the current narrative framework, what is needed is a different set of categories amounting to an alternative language. In building a new understanding of the repression of civilians, my proposal takes critical distance from exhausted historiography debates on which of the two conflicting sides started the war or was more murderous in quantity, offering instead an approach founded on the qualitative differences in their respective etiologies of repression. This allows us to address from firmer ground the debate about genocide, and to critically incorporate the narrative on the Spanish war into the human rights paradigm. Beyond this, the alternative proposed here safeguards the specificity of the

event by stressing its uniqueness as a colonial war and a belated religious war in twentieth-century Europe.

I will not try to downplay the enormous difficulties ahead, though, which go beyond the theoretical. To begin with, how to fit the perspective on perpetrators within a narrative framework suitable for the human rights and the memory movement remains an issue that requires attention and will surely be polemical, for it touches upon the relations between the epistemological and the ethical in narrating extreme violence (Ricoeur 1984; La Capra 2000). It also brings new intellectual challenges. For, as a colonial war, the Spanish 1936–1939 war was launched not towards a people subjected to an imperial power but against the very metropolitan population; and as a religious war, the massive killings of unarmed citizens by confessional fanatics took place in what was a rather cohesive and unified ethnic and cultural community. Thus regarded, Spain challenges the assumption that violations of human rights tend to be exerted against social minorities, as much as it defies the UN convention that claims that ideologically motivated conflicts do not foster or witness massive killings of civilians.

All this allows for a very disturbing conclusion: the Spanish 1936–1939 war finally seems to have been launched not against a cultural minority of any kind but against the bulk of the country's citizenship. If proved so, it certainly does not fit the category of genocide either, because it transcends the analytical capacity of this concept.

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