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Federico Aznar Fernández-Montesinos

THE ROLE OF ARMED FORCES IN THE STATE-BUILDING PROCESS

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THE ROLE OF ARMED FORCES IN THE STATE-BUILDING PROCESS

Abstract:

Armed forces play a key role in the consolidation of a state. Military and state powers used to be intertwined, thus causing a blurring of political and military authority. With the advent of the civil society and its development, armed forces have become the military wing of the state. The study of history sheds light on the functioning of the different institutions, but a deeper analysis would also require a historical perspective, taking into account existing values and conceptions at the time.

Keywords:

State, Armed Forces, History, violence, legitimacy.

Palabras clave:

Estado, Fuerzas Armadas, Historia, violencia, legitimidad.

Just as Truth is the daughter of time, so are institutions the product of their time; '*civitas filia temporis*', Norberto Bobbio rephrases thus the well-known Latin proverb. This is true of the armed forces, which along with Spanish society and other institutions, have undergone comparatively rapid changes. This factor would account for its being an institution that currently enjoys an excellent reputation.

In order to better understand the reality of a 19th century institution, an insight into its creation and development is enlightening, but not quite enough; history allows for a better understanding of the present time, but when working with facts alone, history can prove a biased tool of judgement and distort reality. One must needs look back to understand what may come. What used to be is no more, and will not ever be, for as Heraclitus said 'you cannot step in the same river twice'.

Institutions are then to be analysed against the backdrop of their current situation in society –with its culture and set of values. In an academic environment, any attempt at explaining the Spanish Inquisition from a 21st-century perspective would be considered pedestrian and verging on the populist. The same applies to the study of 21st-century armies from a romantic standpoint, or even from a 20th-century perspective. However, conclusions may well appear in the opening lines; when faced with the uncertainty of the unknown, some feel tempted to resort to expressing prejudices as scientific proof, as in the case of the rough handling of historical facts.

Power is of paramount importance for a state; it is a decision tool. In fact, state and military power were one and the same for many centuries; hence the erstwhile position of prominence of the armed services within the state machinery.

This document, therefore, seeks to analyse the role of the armed forces in the state-building process, chiefly focusing on the 19th and 20th centuries, so as to compare and contrast existing civil-military relations and draw some conclusions.

THE ROLE OF ARMED FORCES IN THE STATE-BUILDING PROCESS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The notion of State is somewhat akin to the concept of Army, for the origins of the latter are thought to lie in political power¹. Thus, amongst primitive tribes, war was but a rare occupation, with no armies or specially trained individuals involved. Once the harvest was reaped, a seasonal fight ensued, where hunting tools were used as weapons and after which the various tribes resumed their agricultural activities.

With the emergence of surplus produce, societies could now develop the finances needed to raise and maintain professional standing armies. This led to the gradual loss of its seasonal character and to an extended influence on power dynamics.

Nevertheless, there is no reference to the term 'war'² in the anthropological studies covering the Paleolithic Age. Societal structure was very rudimentary –according to Clausewitz, war was just a social custom—and attachments to a particular territory were fairly feeble; those who emerged triumphant would not take possession of the land, rather, they banished their enemies. Wars were fought in a most helter-skelter fashion.

The Mesolithic³ brought about a technological revolution in weaponry responsible for the appearance of the bow or the sling, but it wasn't until the Neolithic Period⁴ that combats were conducted in an orderly fashion and that whole societies fought over specific. Furthermore, the first proto-urban settlements were the consequence of both developments in the fields of

¹ Carro Martínez, Antonio. El Estado y las Fuerzas Armadas. Colección Informe.

<http://www.mpr.gob.es/servicios2/publicaciones/vol01/>

² Harris, Marvin. Introducción a la antropología general. Editorial Alianza, Arganda del Rey 1999, pp. 464-465.

³ Ibid. p. 237.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 464-465. Giddens shares that view (Giddens, Anthony. Sociología. Alianza Universidad, 1994). Furthermore, he believes wars between smaller societies were different in that there was no specific social class to fight in them due to a lack of storage capacity. Neolithic societies, on the other hand, did generate a surplus, which allowed for the creation of a specialised group to make war. (VV. AA. Apuntes de Polemología Escuela Superior del Ejército, Escuela de Estado Mayor, Documento de Trabajo del Departamento de Estado Mayor 1999. Capítulo I.)

agriculture and of war. Walter Bagehot said, and I quote, ‘the beginning of civilisation is a military advantage’⁵. In this regard, Robert Ardrey went as far as to say that:

*“Weapons preceded man[...] mankind [Homo sapiens] triumphed over Australopithecus africanus.”*⁶

In fact, more often than not societies would derive their names from their weapons of choice, as Alonso Baquer notes. Thus, the Angles, the Romans, the Germani and the Cantabri owe their names to terms such as arrow (*angl*), spear (*robar* or *gari*) or axe (*cant*); incidentally, the term ‘arms’ (weapons) derives from the word for that part of the body.⁷

The emergence of hydraulic civilisations in Egypt and Mesopotamia can be traced back to the first attempt to control water resources and supply, as pointed out by Quincy Wright. The genius of ancient Greek and Roman civilisations devised a comprehensive philosophical and legal framework to ensure the clear separation of political and military powers⁸. Armies like those led by the Romans are, to a certain extent, dependent on economies of scale, the times and the citizens. For the Romans, it was not so much a question of beating their opponents through tactics or by the use of weapons, as of appealing to a strong sense of discipline.

The barbarian tribes integrated with the communities they had defeated, settling down permanently, ploughing the land, and partly abandoning their warfare practices. All this resulted in an organisation of the territory based on the sense of honour of the warrior nobility which served in the king’s host at his command. Troops consisted of several retinues, that is to say disparate, irregular medieval formations⁹. Feudal concepts of government and military power were closely related and the distinction between them was blurred.

⁵ Bagehot, Walter. *Physics and Politics*. Beacon Press, Boston 1956, p 32

⁶ Ibid. p 51.

⁷ Alonso Baquer, Miguel. *¿A qué denominamos Guerra?* Ministerio de Defensa 2001, p 16.

⁸ Carro Martínez, Antonio. *El Estado y las Fuerzas Armadas*. Colección Informe.

<http://www.mpr.gob.es/servicios/publicaciones/vol01/>

⁹ VV.AA. *Aspectos de las guerras*. X Curso de Estado Mayor de las Fuerzas Armadas, Documento de trabajo del Departamento de Estrategia de la ESFAS, September 2008.

The Hundred Years War put an end to this feudal structure. Consequently, monarchs had to redouble their efforts and raise mixed armies which comprised battalions of king's subjects and mercenary forces¹⁰. Because of their origins, a belligerent attitude is often cited as a genetic trait of the aristocracy.

During the Renaissance period, the state machinery underwent further changes and professional standing armies subordinate to the Crown were recruited. Medieval retinues and servitude belonged to the past and the political and military wings were clearly differentiated and destined to remain so.

While it took a long time to formulate, the notion of state sovereignty is inherently linked to the Renaissance movement and its enunciation may be attributed to Machiavelli, though it was Bodino who clearly defined this concept in his works towards the end of the 16th century.

The term '*stato*' reflects the new social ethos that provided fertile ground for its creation. A link may be established between the root '*st*' and the Greek verb '*histemi*', with its derivative in the Latin term '*istere*', as well as with the terms '*sto*' and '*stare*', Greek and Latin for to curb or to assuage a situation. Station, statue and institution also derive from this term and also convey a sense of stillness and quietude.¹¹

On the one hand, only the crown had the appropriate means to cast artillery cannons¹². On the other hand, due to the spread of firearms among the population and a less demanding military training, the army gained in popularity and reinforced the ever increasing role of the king to the detriment of the aristocracy¹³.

¹⁰ VV.AA. Aspectos de los conflictos. Op. cit.

¹¹ Arlotti, Raul. "La formación del Estado moderno."

www.derecho.uba.ar/revistagioja/.../R0001A001_0010_misclanea.pdf

¹² Pizarro Pizarro, José A. La guerra de Indochina punto de inflexión de la historia militar contemporánea. Tesis doctoral Universidad Complutense, Facultad de Geografía e Historia 2007, p. 17.

¹³ Engels, Federico. Temas militares. Equipo Editorial S.A, San Sebastián 1968, p. 19.

As Tilly explains:

"After all, taxation was the chief means by which the builders of states in the sixteenth century and later supported their expanding armies, which were in turn their principal instrument in establishing control of their frontiers, pushing them out, defending them against external incursions, and assuring their own priority in the use of force within those frontiers. Conversely, military needs were in those first centuries the main incentive for the imposition of new taxes and the regularization of old ones."¹⁴

Because of the historical tradition up to that point, different private forces would contend for the control of a certain territory. That is why the right of private war remained a privilege of every member of nobility in Europe for a long time. From the 17th century onwards, however, governing forces imposed their authority on everyone without exception and proscribed private armies, discrediting criminal and useless recourse to weapons among the population, which came to accept the confrontation between state forces and civilians whenever there was a disruption as something normal¹⁵. The armies' mission at the time was to ensure the preservation of internal order, as well as being entrusted with the defence of the country.

The process which led to this state of affairs was a gradual and slow one. The piecemeal changes were introduced and so the weapons of those who rose in rebellion were confiscated, the settling of scores and the duels were banned and there was a control on the production, distribution of weapons and the granting of licences. The Tudor dynasty and Louis XIII of France demolished more fortresses within their domains than those that were built to secure the frontiers whilst they carried out the reorganisation of the army.

The expansion of the military forces was accompanied by the recognition of a distinction between their activity 'within the borders of the nation' and 'abroad', something which strengthened the bond that linked warfare and the state activity and represented the first step towards specialisation.

Power was wielded in an increasingly complex environment. This led to the appearance of military administration services which inspired and preceded by many centuries those in the civil

¹⁴ Tilly Charles. (comp) The formation of national states in Western Europe. Princeton University Press, 1975, p.23.

¹⁵ Tilly, Charles. Coerción, capital y los Estados europeos 990-1990. Alianza Editorial, Madrid 1992, pp. 112 y 113.

service¹⁶. Elliot sees in the succession of a warrior king like Charles V by Philip II, who led a sedentary existence, an apt symbol of the transformation of the Spanish Empire¹⁷, from the era of the conquerors to that of the civil servants. Titian immortalized Charles V in the Battle Mühlberg, a feat Philip II could never emulate for all his military interventions.

The aristocrats monopolised the officer posts and their values permeated the high ranks of the army.

In Spain, this stagnant model became obsolete after several centuries. The Union of Arms was the Count-Duke of Olivares's attempt at reforming the army. He intended to create a reserve unit shared by all monarchy territories, but his plans failed dismally because of the revolts against Castilian rule. Later attempts at raising an army in each territory were also to no avail. In France, monarchs still had the possibility of levying taxes without encountering any opposition on the part of the Estates General and could amass a vast fortune and recruit a standing army. France thus became a major power in Europe¹⁸.

The Spanish army remained on the sidelines of the military revolution taking place in Europe after the successes of both the French and the Swiss, with the representative example of the Prussian Army. The better ballistic performance¹⁹ was largely dependent on discipline²⁰. In Spain, the introduction of those changes was delayed.

Army and State remained juxtaposed concepts up until the end of the 18th century. Number-wise, the army was more important than any other state organ. Back in 1631-32, Gustavo Adolfo and Wallenstein each commanded an army of no more than 100,000 men.

¹⁶ Carro Martínez, Antonio. El Estado y las Fuerzas Armadas. Colección Informe.

<http://www.mpr.gob.es/servicios/publicaciones/vol01/>

¹⁷ Tilly, Charles. Coerción, capital y los Estados europeos 990-1990. Op. cit. p. 120.

¹⁸ Álvarez Añaños, María Ángeles "Poder y Estado Moderno".

www.moderna1.ih.csic.es/cordoba/Poder_y_Estado_moderno.pdf

¹⁹ Cardona, Gabriel. El problema Militar en España. Historia 16, Madrid 2005, p. 13.

²⁰ Charles III Ordinances read: "first corporal and corporal second class will carry a bendable, baton no thicker than a thumb and with no carvings[...]". Section 2: Corporals, subsection 1, paragraph 9.

The Battle of Rocroi resulted in the victory of a 22,000-man army –at the time of Louis XIV, the number of soldiers would rarely drop below 150, 0000, and children and servants carrying their belongings tagged along with them²¹. The power of Philip V could only summon 32,000 men, while Louis XIV gathered an army of 300,000²². It is worth noting that while in 1808 the number of people serving in the army was of 62,000 at a time when the population of Spain was of around eight to ten million people, that figure reaches the 120,000 mark today, with a population of 44 million.

During the Age of Enlightenment, armies, inspired by this model, took on a new role as a defence tool, bolstering the prominence of the state and its sovereignty, and deterring other nations from fulfilling their aspirations. A colossal amount of money, which took up half –and sometimes even two thirds—of the national budget, was destined to finance these troops²³.

As Frederick the Great bluntly declared, a nation's power is measured by the strength of its military forces, '*ultima ratio regum*'. Absolute monarchs, with the military force provided by the cannons at their disposal and an arrogated legitimacy, exerted their physical and moral authority, hence the convergence of state power and military force²⁴.

The French regimental structure and organisation were gradually adopted and the army underwent several changes following the example set by the Prussian troops. Thanks to this military structure, the personnel –notably non-commissioned officers and soldiers—could work as administrative assistants. The ever present interaction between the land forces and civil society was then compromised²⁵.

Very much in line with the Enlightenment ideals was the decision of the House of Bourbon to rearrange the configuration of the army, in an attempt to modernise it.

²¹ Van Creveld, Martin. Los abastecimientos en la guerra. Ediciones Ejército, Madrid 1985, p. 42.

²² Puell de Villa, Fernando. Historia del Ejército en España. Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2000, pp. 18 & ss.

²³ VV.AA. Aspectos de los conflictos. Op. cit.

²⁴ Carro Martínez, Antonio. El Estado y las Fuerzas Armadas. Colección Informe.

<http://www.mpr.gob.es/servicios/publicaciones/vol01/>

²⁵ VV.AA. Causas de los Conflictos. X Curso de Estado Mayor de las Fuerzas Armadas, Departamento de Estrategia, September 2008.

The Royal Ordinances issued in 1701 with French undertones were replaced by those decreed in 1768 by Charles III of Spain, which remained in force until the advent of democracy. By 1710, there were already 4 artillery schools operating in the country, and halfway through the 18th century, new schools were founded in which officers were drilled in military techniques²⁶.

Ministerial leaders such as Ensenada or Patiño introduced far-reaching reforms which included the Hispanisation of the military forces, the creation of a network of ordnance depots and munitions stores, still in use today, and the enactment of the Ordinances in effect till 1799. Bourbon kings were aware of the strategic value of the sea and instead of operating Ferdinand VI's 50,000-ton fleet, Charles III mobilised a fleet that displaced 175,000 aggregate tons, in addition to a defence system deployed in America which up until 1797 helped protect the military posts from potential attacks carried out by England, the then preeminent naval power²⁷.

During the 18th century, there was a strong emphasis on the hierarchical structure of the army. Officers and soldiers had both a distinctive dress uniform so as to differentiate between the two ranks. Whilst in Europe officers came from the lowest echelons of aristocracy and were trained as army cadets, in Spain commoners did not have access to the regiment of artillery or the corps of engineers²⁸.

Only the king and the members of the aristocracy occupied positions of authority, and there was no such thing as a military lobby exerting its influence over them, as the distinction between nobility and military was blurred. Nevertheless, after the Esquilache riots of 1766 the Count of Aranda seized power together with higher ranks of the military forces. The mutiny of Aranjuez is another remarkable example; led by the Prince of Asturias in 1808 it was a ground-breaking intrusion into political affairs²⁹.

²⁶Cardona, Gabriel. El problema Militar en España. Op. cit. p. 14.

²⁷Puell de Villa, Fernando. Historia del Ejército en España. Op. cit. p. 32.

²⁸Cardona, Gabriel. El problema Militar en España. Op. cit. p. 15.

²⁹Ibid. pp. 16 & ss.

Everything revolved around the army, whose competences were not limited to those of defence and security nationwide, but which extended to social and economic affairs. The ruling elite was the same and there was movement between different social strata. Since there was no time to lose and the military human capital could not remain idle, the state embarked on a public works scheme. Thus, the state authorities exerted their influence through the armed forces—Sabatini was a field marshal and other figures in the scientific community had a military background, like Jorge Juan or Lavoisier.

Under the Old Regime the ‘offices’ or state positions in France became hereditary charges and were passed on within families –as in the case of the Sanson family, a dynasty of executioners in Paris. The ‘commissaires’ were appointed and dismissed at the whim of the king.

The French Revolution caused sweeping changes, but it was Napoleon who laid the foundations of the modern French civil service, as well as of those in the rest of Europe. *‘It is my wish, said Napoleon³⁰, ‘to create in France a civil order in society. Heretofore, there have existed in the world only two orders –the Military and the Ecclesiastical³¹.*

A new ‘civil order’ was established and various permanent bodies were created, each under particular statutes, thus shaping a civil-service hierarchical structure consisting of different bodies and an underwriting system³². The French civil service and some cognate institutions in our country, such as the Council of State, incorporate military working models³³. Historically, it can therefore be asserted that it was the civil service which adopted the military model, albeit including their own features and under no disciplinary regime.

³⁰ TN: Pelet de la Lozere, Privat Joseph Claramond Napoleon in Council: Or The Opinions Delivered by Bonaparte in the Council of State pp. 200-201.

³¹ Parada Vázquez, Ramón. Derecho del empleo público anexo ley 7/2007, de 12 de abril, del estatuto básico del empleado público. <http://www.marcialpons.es/static/pdf/100799310.pdf>

³² Universidad de Alicante. “El personal al servicio de la Administración Pública” <http://www.ua.es/personal/jant/GAP/2/DA2/08.pdf>

³³ Parada Vázquez, Ramón. Derecho administrativo Parte II. Marcial Pons, Madrid 1995.

The ‘quinta’ –call-up or military conscription—meant that citizens could be inducted into the army and during the Age of Enlightenment –when there was not a sense of collective responsibility regarding national defence—it was a way of diverting the population from crime and idleness, as well as a recruitment mechanism. During the time of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, the terms citizen and soldier were virtually equivalent. The French Revolution and the Carnot’s Convention restored this attitude, paving the way to the modern age:

“The young men shall fight; the married men shall forge arms and transport provisions; the women shall make tents and clothes and shall serve in the hospitals; the children shall turn linen into lint; the old men shall betake themselves to the public squares in order to arouse the courage of the warriors and preach hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic.”³⁴

The *Levée en masse* or mass mobilization resulted in the mass recruitment of ill-prepared staff conspicuously lacking in fighting spirit. Yet, with the advent of Romanticism and the chivalric spirit attached to it, patriotism became the backbone of the military forces and this new system eclipsed that of the Royal Armies.

All of the above notwithstanding, the introduction of conscription attests to the fact that war was now seen as a means to achieve national aspirations, something which, according to Anthony Giddens, was a decisive step towards the adoption of universal suffrage, as it actively engaged society as a whole in national defence matters.

At the beginning of the 19th century, army officers were largely drawn from the nobility, but as the army acquired a greater level of technical competence and military academies were created, the burgeoning upper and lower middle classes became the new advocators of the aristocratic values. Hence the officers’ zeal to disassociate themselves from the rest of society in order to retain an aristocratic mindset whilst lacking the financial support.

The French Revolution led to the military estrangement from the state, which no longer was the outdated governmental system of a political regime the army was associated with.

³⁴ TN: Hazen, C.D. The French Revolution Vol II, pp. 666.

Armies gradually took on a political role, staging military uprisings as well as actively participating in the operations set up to quell the various insurrections taking place during this century of change. At the same time, the ‘Soldier king’ was promoted as a figure of military power; previous monarchs had held a leading position in the control of armies, but never before had royals donned military dress³⁵.

As the state attained a considerable level of technical and structural complexity, the civil-military distinction was accentuated; the state took over new responsibilities, including but not limited to those of defence and security, while society became structurally sound.

The creation of modern police state by Joseph Fouché was a milestone in that armed forces were freed from the burden of ‘internal’ security and order.

The creation of specialised law enforcement forces lifted heavy burdens from the military. What with the new regulating legal constraints placed upon state sovereignty, the aforementioned specialisation and the ever-growing civil-military distinction, jurists were bequeathed with the military elite’s erstwhile duties and responsibilities.

The state machinery grew in complexity and size, favouring civil service departments. Consequently, there was a technical differentiation and thus the institutions and the power structure of the state were moulded by society. Armed forces ceased to be the only available instrument at the disposal of the state.

The concept of State Sovereignty was substituted by a more elaborate and developed idea, that of a Social and Democratic State under the Rule of Law. Hence Max Weber’s definition³⁶ of the conception of a state: *“a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.”*³⁷

³⁵ Puell de Villa, Fernando. *Historia del Ejército en España*. Op. cit. p. 94.

³⁶ From Max Weber: *Essays in Sociology*. Oxford University Press. 1946. p. 78.

³⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 112-113.

The coalescence of clashing ideologies and opposing values during a period characterised by change accentuated already existing and glaring internal discrepancies.

The problem of Spain at the time did not stem from the army –a mere reflection of the society whence it was drawn—but from its inability to adapt and evolve and a lack of social cohesion. In 1931, Azaña remarked:

“Neither the army, nor the military duties, nor even the military personnel themselves –for we are all cast in the same mould—are to blame for the increased emphasis you all know Spain has placed on the Army. In the midst of a disintegrating society with anachronistic and incongruous institutions, no visible authority and no respect to maintain discipline, the military authorities were the only disciplinarian force, the only means effete parliamentary regimes of the last century had at their disposal to exact obedience, and even to seize power.”³⁸

ARMED FORCES AND POWER TODAY

In Western countries, the role of the armed forces has gradually shifted from backbone to military wing of the state. This transition has been neither smooth nor rapid and it would not have been possible without the development of a strong civil society. Its narrative is not linear either, because of its dialectical nature and its social dynamics, full of contradictions and a great deal of toing and froing. Progress in a linear fashion is at best a myth and at worst a lie.

Democracy is far more than just the Rule of Law, the holding of elections or a balance system. It is, first and foremost, a code of ethics, a culture, a way of doing things, as well as an opportunity for citizens and heads of state to engage in a dialogue in order to reach a joint decision. As the Count de Saint Exupéry once said, ‘what is essential is invisible to the eye’. Only a thick[sic] society is open to real democracy. It is an invaluable cultural creation.

Once developed and ‘fully formed’, the inclusion of the armed forces within the state machinery relies on the ability to impartially undertake their technical improvement, the devolution of

³⁸ Doctrina política de Manuel Azaña. Editorial Fenicia, Madrid 1978, p. 37.

internal security duties, as well as the abstention from using any form of coercion to political ends. In a nutshell, all stakeholders must show an unwavering resolution in the performance of their mission and accept the necessity of a civilian, democratic control over these tasks.

Notwithstanding the Weberian concept of the state as one with the legitimacy of the monopoly of violence, in a truly democratic situation recourse to these extreme measures should be minimal, lest we may be held accountable before common criminals or terrorists. The possibility is more telling than the actual exertion of power, and the less it is used, the better, for it is easily eroded. Rather, it should be regarded as some sort of symbol; the ultimate deterrent.

The use of force, be it military or not, in a democratic state—scarcely worthy of the epithet—is undesirable. The problem arises when the regime legitimises its authority using violence, which would also destroy society. Democracy represents the triumph and full development of civil society.

In order to secure their victory, terrorists first weaken the society they act against; the more unstable the society, the better the chance of success. Force alone does not secure victories, but the precarious state of a given society largely contributes to its eventual downfall. Similarly, society precedes the state, a mere instrument designed to cater for its needs and to adapt to changes.

Democracy requires that governing authorities and those under their rule engage in dialogue, in ways that enable the pragmatic and effective management of power. Representative democracy—the most widespread variant of democracy—embodies a fundamental contradiction in that the will of the people is not necessarily that of the elected officials. This would not happen under an imperative mandate, though this system suffers from other shortcomings.

In practice, this intrinsic mediation in the representation of a society that hardly ever acknowledges its responsibility for or the decisions adopted on its behalf, and is therefore uncommitted, engenders a legitimacy deficit, in that society no longer takes part in the

democratic process of voting and engaging in dialogue with the governing authorities –hence the importance of opinion polls. There is always room for improvement.

To this legitimacy deficit, we must add the fact that society as a whole is not actively engaged in defence operations, as these are consigned to the technical, specialised military division. Some voices point out that the existence of professional armed services further undermines this sense of popular responsibility; a population and makes them all the more liable to criticism by an uncommitted and misrepresented population. Bada³⁹, for instance, argues that:

*“It is easier to have the courage of a soldier that is willing to die in defence of a fair cause, although he or she has to kill, than the bravery of a saint willing to die for all without killing anyone... It is easier to have an army of good soldiers than a town with good citizens... Some people are even convinced that, in short term, we will be able to count on an army of robots programmed to defend us without patriotism and to kill without hatred to the enemy”. This, by the way, will not make patriots and citizens more peaceful, but it will make them less responsible and far less supportive. In fact, this process of evolution of professional armies has already started, with mercenary soldiers and ranged attacks with increasingly sophisticated weapons. It is a process in which citizens, civil society, are distanced from the wall, removed from defence and take war as entertainment. Were it not for terrorism, which appeals to us and brings conflict at a street level, there are people in Western democracies that think that we could live in peace”.*⁴⁰

In the Third World, armed forces are an altogether different matter, as they still have a leading role, generally over a specific sector within a given society –be it for ethnic or religious and cultural reasons—and not over the state and society as a whole⁴¹; armies in these countries are coercive and repressive forces that are sometimes involved in armed conflict. Salvador Giner observes that the development of a country determines whether a particular state is more or less prone to coups d'état and considers that 60 % of putsch attempts between 1958 and 1967 occurred in countries with a relatively low GDP level.

³⁹ Bada Panillo, José. “Más allá de una cultura del miedo y del odio, de la guerra preventiva y del terrorismo.” Mira Editores. Zaragoza 2000, p. 361.

⁴⁰TN: translated excerpt taken from the analysis document: Fernández Montesinos, Federico Aznar. “Conflict and Public Opinion.” p.3. http://www.ieeee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA35-2013_Conflicto_OpinionPublica_FAFM_ENGLISH.pdf

⁴¹ VV.AA. “La era de la globalización: Estados bajo presión.” Informe de conferencia 03. Fundación FRIDE 2008, p. 7.

Lenin rightly warned that for a revolution to succeed, it is imperative that the army stops pledging allegiance to the ruling class.⁴²

Tilly explains how up until 1966, the Nigerian army did not meddle in divisive regional and ethnic affairs. Yet, after the coup that very same year, a coalition of officers ousted Ibos from power and expelled them from the Nigerian Armed Forces. As a consequence, in May 1967 conflict erupted in the Eastern region of the country and the Biafran war began⁴³.

The violence unleashed resulted in the creation of groups leading a parasitic existence and whose funding depended on the perpetuation of violence⁴⁴. Once the abortive attempts at establishing a state system were abandoned, the armed forces, together with private security forces and mercenary armies became the ruling authority, favouring war leaders and further destabilizing the system.

It is worth noting that because of the dissolution of military forces⁴⁵ in developing countries such as Ethiopia, or Albania (former Soviet Union state), the control over a large portion of materiel is lost and this contributes to social unrest. Consequently, security sector reform should be among the post-conflict priority measures.

The events that took place in Eastern Europe are a salient example; NATO greatly contributed to the reform of the military forces in these countries and thus eased transition towards peace and democracy ensuring peace⁴⁶.

The ruling elite in these countries belonged to three different social groups: political leaders, senior civil service officials, large companies –both national and nationalised—and the higher ranks of the armed forces. The political formula used in Eastern countries up until 1989 is

⁴² VV.AA. Apuntes de Polemología. Op. cit. chapter 9.

⁴³ Tilly, Charles. Coerción, capital y los Estados europeos 990-1990. Op. cit. pp. 291-292.

⁴⁴ Alonso Berro, Miguel. “Los Estados fallidos.” en VV.AA. Cuaderno de Estrategia núm. 120/2002, p. 215.

⁴⁵ Molinero Huget, Jorge et al. Guerra global permanente. Editorial Catarata, Madrid 2005, p. 127.

⁴⁶ Boonstra, Jos. “El papel de la OTAN en la reforma democrática.” Documento de Trabajo de FRIDE núm 38, Madrid 2007.

comparable to the classical power triangle⁴⁷ in Eastern Europe socialist nations, and whose vertices represent the Party, the Armed Forces, with the Government in the apex of the triangle.

The Armed Forces were involved in the management of the Party, which provided the ideological drive they needed to function. Both provided the State Administration and Government with high officials. The army was a territorial and social force running parallel to the State. As the Party lost grip of reality, distancing itself from society, showing an increasing inability to respond to external stimuli and straying into nepotism and patronage, the State gradually crumbled away.

That is why the political regime did not survive the gradual reform which upset the balance and brought about the collapse of the entire system. In the 90's, this flawed system unable to respond to the requirements of society was eventually abandoned. In spite of all these changes, the old elite remained in power within the revamped institutions and bodies⁴⁸.

The power structure was no longer that of a triangle, as armed forces and government were now at the same level. The intervention of the NATO and the dialogue between armed forces in Eastern and Western nations was of paramount importance in the democratisation process in these countries and smoothed the transition.

CONCLUSIONS

Tilly describes the evolution of civil-military relations in four stages or panels. In the first panel, the king wears armour and carries a sword, recruiting and commanding his own army and navy. In the second, the king bears glorified military garb, but contracts with a condottiere. In the third panel, the king, fitted out in a grand costume consults with his ministers. In the last scene we see a king sporting a business suit and negotiating with the representatives of major civilian interests. The four panels bear the following subtitles: Patrimonialism, Brokerage, Nationalization, and Specialization⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Federal Reserch Division, Library of the Congress [Algeria, a country study](#). Helen Chapin Metz, Washington, 1994.

⁴⁸ Nair, Sami. [Las heridas abiertas](#). Editorial El País S.A. Madrid, 1998

⁴⁹ Tilly, Charles. [Coerción, capital y los Estados europeos 990-1990](#). Op. cit. p. 300.

Each era, each society has its own unique government configuration which ultimately depends on the prevailing values. In the Western world, democracy embodies the triumph of civil society, but there is always room for improvement. The workings of the machinery of the state and of the armed forces are the result of a Daedalian specialisation process stretching over centuries.

Azaña used to say that ‘we are all cast in the same mould’, and military forces are a fair reflection of the idiosyncrasies of their time and of the members of the society, whose values they share. And that is how it should be; being an accurate reflection of all social strata and of their ideologies confers them legitimacy.

In a given society, every member –including those serving in the military forces—share the same values and moral ideals; not so attitudes, which may vary from one person to another. Serving in the armed forces requires an arguably higher level of commitment. This may account for a different attitude, but it does not mean they occupy a higher position within society or that they are endowed with exceptional qualities or breadth of vision.

In a democratic society, the political choices of citizens must be duly represented. Otherwise, citizens would feel disenchanting with the performance of the armed forces. There is no shortage of examples –from the Vietnam War to the war in Irak—all of which show that, in military matters, there is a tendency to draw hasty conclusions.

There is a tendency –be it overt or covert—to oversimplify the fundamental issue regarding the armed forces. The fact that they act in unquestioning obedience of those democratically elected to represent the citizens is woefully –and even wittingly—overlooked. Citizens should give this matter careful thought, for they too are responsible for the military actions being carried out. Democracy means freedom, but with freedom comes responsibility; therein lies its significance.

*Federico Aznar Fernández-Montesinos
Analyst of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE)*