

# STANCE

State-Making and the Origins of Global Order  
in the Long Nineteenth Century and Beyond

Military spending as a coup-proofing strategy:  
opening the 'black box' for Spain (1850-1915)

Oriol Sabaté, Sergio Espuelas  
and Alfonso Herranz-Loncán

Working Paper Series, 2017:6  
STANCE, Lund University



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

STANCE is a six-year research program at the Department of Political Science at Lund University, Sweden. The program, consisting of several separate but connected research projects, aims to answer the question of how state-making and the international system co-evolved in the long 19<sup>th</sup> century (1789-1914) and beyond. The program is constructed around three research themes: (1) How did the different dimensions of state-making evolve? What actors and organized interests supported or put up resistance to these processes?; (2) How were these dimensions of state-making affected by geopolitical competition, warfare and the diffusion of novel political technologies?; and (3) What were the consequences for the international system, both with respect to the type of state that emerged and what entities were granted membership in the state system? The program aims to bridge the gaps between comparative politics and IR, as well as those between the study of political thought and positive empirical political science. The research has been made possible by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond). Visit the research program's website at [www.stanceatlund.org](http://www.stanceatlund.org)

Please address comments and/or queries for information to:

*Email address:* info@stanceatlund.org

*Mailing address:* STANCE  
Department of Political Science  
Lund University  
Box 52, SE-221 00 Lund, Sweden

In Series 2016:

1. "STATE CAPACITY AS POWER: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK", Johannes Lindvall and Jan Teorell
2. "THE LAY OF THE LAND: INFORMATION CAPACITY AND THE MODERN STATE", Thomas Brambor, Agustín Goenaga, Johannes Lindvall, and Jan Teorell
3. "STEPPE STATE MAKING", Martin Hall
4. "WAR, PERFORMANCE AND THE SURVIVAL OF FOREIGN MINISTERS", Hanna Bäck, Jan Teorell, and Alexander von Hagen-Jamar
5. "THE NATION-STATE AS FAILURE: NATIONALISM AND MOBILITY, IN INDIA AND ELSEWHERE", Erik Ringmar
6. "CABINETS, PRIME MINISTERS, AND CORRUPTION. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENTS", Hanna Bäck, Staffan Lindberg, and Jan Teorell
7. "SOCIAL POLICY AND MIGRATION POLICY IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY", Sara Kalm and Johannes Lindvall
8. "FROM AN INCLUSIVE TO AN EXCLUSIVE INTERNATIONAL ORDER: MEMBERSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS FROM THE 19<sup>TH</sup> TO THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY", Ellen Ravndal
9. "A FEDERATION OF EQUALS? BRINGING THE PRINCELY STATES INTO UNIFIED INDIA", Ted Svensson

10. “REPUBLICA SRPSKA – THE BECOMING OF A STATE”, Annika Björkdahl
11. “MILITARY RIVALRIES, ALLIANCES AND TAXATION: THE INTERNATIONAL ORIGINS OF MODERN FISCAL CONTRACTS”, Agustín Goenaga and Alexander von Hagen-Jamar

In Series 2017

1. “THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF STATE CAPACITY: ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND LATE DEVELOPMENT”, Agustín Goenaga Orrego
2. “TECHNOLOGY AND POLITICS: A RESEARCH AGENDA”, Johannes Lindvall
3. “RULES OF RECOGNITION: EXPLAINING DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY”, Jan Teorell
4. “MIMESIS AND ASSEMBLAGE: THE IMPERIAL DURBARS AT DELHI”, Ted Svensson
5. “INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS, AUTHORITY AND THE FIRST PERMANENT SECRETARIATS IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY”, Ellen Ravndal
6. “MILITARY SPENDING AS A COUP-PROOFING STRATEGY: OPENING THE ‘BLACK BOX’ FOR SPAIN (1850-1915)”, Oriol Sabaté, Sergio Espuelas and Alfonso Herranz-Loncán

STANCE working papers are available in electronic format at  
[www.stanceatlund.org](http://www.stanceatlund.org)

COPYRIGHT © 2017 by authors. All rights reserved.

# Military spending as a coup-proofing strategy: opening the ‘black box’ for Spain (1850-1915)\*

---

Oriol Sabaté  
Post Doc in Political Science  
Lund University

Sergio Espuelas  
Lecturer in Economic History  
University of Barcelona

Alfonso Herranz-Loncán  
Associate Professor in Economic History  
University of Barcelona

---

\* We thank financial support from the Catalan International Institute for Peace and the Catalan Department of Economy and Knowledge, as well as the Research Project ECO2015-65049-C2-2-P (MINECO/FEDER, UE).

## Abstract

Armies have recurrently intervened in politics by leading (or giving support to) *coups d'état*. Several authors suggest that civilian governments have used military spending to overcome armies' grievances and avoid their insubordination. However, recent quantitative analyses do not reach conclusive results when exploring the impact of total military expenditure on the frequency and the success of *coups d'état*. We argue that total military spending might not be a good indicator of governments' effort to gain the loyalty of the army, as it may conceal relevant changes in the composition of the military budget. This paper aims to open the military spending 'black box'. While total military spending does not seem to have any relationship with the frequency of coups, payments to officers (along with other coup-proofing strategies) appears to be associated to a lower frequency of coups in 1850-1915 Spain.

# I Introduction

Armies have frequently intervened in politics. Ranging from the prominent political role played by several European and Latin American armies in the 19th century to the most recent military coups that have taken place throughout the developing world, armed forces have affected the fate of many governments and political regimes worldwide. The available information on coups d'état in developing countries clearly shows the political importance of the army. According to Decalo (1989), only 12 African states (20 per cent of the countries in the region) kept a civilian government in power without being disrupted by a military takeover for more than 25 years after independence. Nordlinger (1977) considered that Costa Rica and Mexico were the only Latin American countries free from 'praetorian' soldiers from 1945 to the late 1970s, while half of the 18 Asian states suffered successful coups in the same period. Powell and Thyne (2011) register 457 coup attempts in 94 states from 1950 to 2010 (227 of them successful), while Bove and Nisticò (2014) report 14 additional coup attempts (5 of them successful) from 2010 to 2014.<sup>1</sup>

Several scholars have tried to identify the determinants of *coups d'état*, as well as the impact of coup-proofing strategies on the frequency and the outcome of coups. Among them, several authors have suggested that military spending is used by governments to overcome military disaffection. Given that army officers tend to value military expenditures more than the rest of society, governments try to show their commitment with armed forces by rising resources allocated to the army. In exchange, officers might feel more committed to the protection of governments and institutional stability (Powell, 2012; León, 2014). However, despite the soundness of the argument, recent quantitative analyses have not found a systematic relationship between increasing military expenditures and lower military insubordination (Collier and Hoeffler 2007; Tusalem 2010; Powell 2012; León 2014; Piplani and Talmadge 2016). We suggest that this result might be driven by data restrictions in panel datasets. To our knowledge, previous research on the topic has been based on total military spending figures, which may conceal variations in expenditure composition that can be relevant to understand the frequency and the success of *coups d'état*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Powell and Thyne's (2011) and Bove and Nisticò's (2014) figures include *coups d'état* led by either military or civilians.

This paper aims at opening this military spending ‘black box’ by analysing wage payments to Spanish military officers from 1850 to 1915, under the assumption that these were one of the main ways to gain the acquiescence of the military hierarchy. Spain is an interesting case study to explore the relationship between military spending and *coups d’état*. During Isabel II’s reign (1833-1868) and the subsequent Revolutionary period (1868-1874), Spanish governments suffered on average more than one coup (the so-called *pronunciamientos*) every four years. By contrast, the establishment of the Restoration regime (1874-1923) went along with the eradication of successful coups. Even if most historians have related this change with the new political framework designed by Cánovas del Castillo, the main political leader of the Restoration, other authors have also suggested that the improvement in officers’ wellbeing (along with other coup-proofing strategies) also contributed to the acquiescence of the army. However, so far a rigorous test of this hypothesis has been prevented by insufficient data on military wages.

In this paper we provide new data on wage payments to the Spanish officer corps for five-year benchmarks between 1850 and 1915. These include all wage complements, therefore improving previously available figures of officers’ base salaries. Our data suggest that, despite the stagnation in total military expenditure, payments to officers improved steadily throughout the Restoration, which would be consistent with a government’s strategy to get the army involved with the new political institutions. Even if the concentration of public resources in officers’ remunerations was probably detrimental to the Spanish army’s military capacity abroad, it contributed to prevent new successful *pronunciamientos* for almost half a century. This highlights the importance of taking the composition of military spending into account when analysing the impact of public resources on the frequency and the success of *coups d’état*.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 surveys the literature on the motives and the determinants of *coups d’état*, as well as previous studies on coup-proofing strategies. Section 3 describes the history of Spanish coups, while section 4 explores new data on payments to military officers and related coup-proofing strategies. Section 5 provides some historical qualitative information and section 6 concludes

## II The military intervention in politics

There is a long literature from Political Science and Sociology on the factors explaining the number and success of military coups. These can be classified in several broad categories: the military's motives to intervene, the available opportunities for successful coups and the presence or absence of coup-proofing strategies. Among the former, the military may intervene in politics in order to defend a particular conception of the "national interest", when this is threatened by civil authorities, as in those cases in which civilian governments encourage political disorder and subversive groups or fail to fulfil constitutional principles (Finer, 1961). Such accusations to the authorities, however, may often be just ways to attract some civilian approval to coups aimed at defending the army's corporate interests. These may range from the safeguard of its autonomy and corporate status to the redistribution of public resources in its favour (Finer 1961; Nordlinger 1977; Acemoglu et al. 2010; Powell 2012). More resources generally imply higher capacity to accomplish the armed forces' warfare missions, which may increase their chances to defend the alleged national interests and to gain domestic and international respect. Officers, however, may also be just willing to improve their own well-being. Thus, in those cases in which the army does not have any real war mission to perform, assaults to power mean new opportunities of promotion and rent-seeking (Finer 1961).

The military may also intervene in politics on behalf of specific political, social, ethnic or religious groups. Acemoglu and Robinson (2001, 2009) suggest that the army may act as an agent of the economic and social elites in order to prevent democratization and wealth redistribution. By contrast, Finer (1961), Nordlinger (1977), McLaughlin (2010) or Harkness (2016) argue that the army may support those social, ethnic or religious groups to which the military belong, without necessarily favouring the economic elites. Finally, military interventions may be also carried on behalf of foreign interests, as happened with US-backed military coups in developing countries during the 20th century, which were mainly aimed at defending American investors' property rights (Maurer, 2013).

Beyond the army's motivation, the domestic and international context determines the opportunity to wage successful coups. Above all, the social legitimacy of the regime appears to be one of the fundamental determinants of the frequency and success of coups (Finer 1961;

Nordlinger 1977; Belkin and Schofer 2003; Powell 2012). When governments' legitimacy is high, the military may inhibit to intervene due to its aversion to rise up against a significant part of the population and its reluctance to deal with the subsequent political disorder, as well as its fear of fracturing military cohesiveness. By contrast, previous experience of reiterated coups may hinder the capability of governments to avoid further military interventions, even creating the risk of some countries being stuck in a so-called "coup-trap" (Finer 1961; Londregan and Poole 1990; Piplani and Talmadge 2016).

The degree of democratization may also reduce the opportunity for successful coups in a non-linear way. While fully democratic regimes are protected against coups by their political legitimacy, and autocratic governments are protected by repression, semi-democratic regimes are particularly vulnerable to domestic military threats due to their combination of low legitimacy and low coercive capacity (Piplani and Talmadge 2016). However, repression does not insulate autocratic leaders from coups; Svobik (2009: 766) reports that over two-thirds of authoritarian regimes finish due to coups. According to this author, when dictatorship relies on military forces for domestic repression, the army may feel in a better position to demand better material conditions and status. If these demands are not attended, the military may extract those concessions by force. On the other hand, semi-democracies in which legal methods of securing government changes are too rigid (such as Spain before the 1874 Bourbon Restoration) may lead opposition groups to rely on the military to reach power (Luttwak 1979: 8).

Opportunities for successful coups may be higher in poor countries, where most people are politically passive due to illiteracy, poverty, and enforced silence (Londregan and Poole 1990). As long as the mass does not scrutinize the day-to-day activities of the government, it will also uncritically accept an illegal change in government (Luttwak 1979). And, finally, economic openness may reduce opportunities for coups, since the costs of domestic political disturbances are raised for both the affected state and its partners (Powell and Chacha 2016).

The aforementioned motives and opportunities to intervene provide a broad outline to understand coup risk. Nevertheless, not all countries with, say, low legitimacy and poor economic performance, suffer *coups d'état* with the same frequency. Previous literature has emphasized that governments may implement coup-proofing strategies in order to diminish coup risk. These strategies are directed either to harm the army's capacity to organize coups or to overcome the motives for military

intervention (or both). For instance, the establishment of security forces under direct civilian control may be used as a way to counterbalance a military plot. If these forces have conflicting interests with the regular army (via different rewards or personnel selection) they might stand up for the government (Nordlinger 1977; Decalo 1989; Powell 2012; De Bruin 2015). Diversionary interstate conflict may also help to prevent *coups d'état*, particularly when counterbalancing strategies are not in place (Powell 2014). According to Piplani and Talmadge (2016), international wars do not reduce the military's disposition to engage in coups, but hamper the army's ability to organize them successfully. Plotters may face severe constraints to put their plans in practice when part of the army is fighting abroad, while rotation of units and the injury or death of key officers might also frustrate their initiatives.<sup>2</sup> Another strategy consists of reducing the size of the army, which would make coups prohibitively expensive (Besley and Robinson 2010: 659). Instead of meeting the military demands and create a powerful (but also dangerous) army, it can create a "tin pot" army, which "is docile because it is so weak", although this comes at the expense of the country's military capacity in case of international conflict. Lastly, in case of ethnic, religious or culturally heterogeneous countries, the recruitment of officers among the groups that support the established regime helps to subject the military to the government's authority (Decalo 1989; McLauchlin 2010).

Beyond these counterbalancing strategies, governments can also try to remove the motives that favour military intervention. More specifically, increasing military spending has been identified as an efficient strategy to demonstrate the government's commitment with the army, since military officers care about military spending more than the rest of society (Leon 2014: 367). Thus, increasing military expenditures may diminish the probability of a coup even if the political and economic context provides opportunities for it. This is why Huntington (1991: 252) famously encouraged governments to "give toys" to the army in order to appease its willingness to intervene in politics.

Nevertheless, recent quantitative analyses have reached mixed results when exploring the effects of increasing military expenditures on the frequency and success of coups. For instance, Leon (2014) finds a positive

---

<sup>2</sup> However, international warfare might also increase civilian dependency on the military and provide the latter with higher opportunities to condition public policies (Finer 1961).

correlation between high military expenditure and low probability of a coup in a dataset for 153 countries from 1963 to 1999. However, Powell (2012) obtains less conclusive results in a dataset for 143 countries from 1961 to 2000. While he observes a negative impact of military expenditures per capita on coup attempts, he does not obtain any significant result when using total military spending. Similarly, Collier and Hoeffler (2007) only observe a positive impact in the case of Africa, but not for their whole world sample. Finally, Piplani and Talmadge (2016) and Tusalem (2010) do not find any significant correlation between both variables in datasets for 158 countries from 1950 to 2010 and 88 developing nations from 1970 to 1990 respectively.

Actually, it is not clear whether increasing military expenditure is a successful coup-proofing strategy or not. Collier and Hoeffler (2007) point that those African governments facing higher levels of coup risk increased military spending above the rest. However, Bove and Nisticò (2014) find that new regimes established after successful coups tend to increase military spending. They suggest that this redistribution of resources in favour of the army could be either the reflection of the government's willingness to gain the loyalty of the army or the result of the higher negotiation power acquired by the army after a successful coup. In the latter case, spending increases would confirm the importance of the military's corporate interests in coups, but would say nothing about coup-proofing strategies. Finally, even if governments try to prevent military coups by increasing military spending, this strategy is vulnerable to a cascade of defection (and therefore may be unsuccessful). The military will support the regime only if they believe it will survive but, if not, they will defect, making increases in military spending ineffective (McLauchlin 2010).

One of the main limitations of these analyses is the lack of disaggregated data on military spending. Total military expenditures provide information on the overall distribution of public resources, but do not disentangle their specific purposes. Were additional expenditures devoted to salaries or to other kind of budgetary items? And were they used to pay officers or soldiers' wages? Is it possible that total military expenditure does not have any effect on the frequency of coups, but wage payments to officers do? In this literature, military expenditure appears as a 'black box' that needs to be opened in order to understand the interplay between military intervention and coup-proofing. Powell (2012) recognizes this limitation when he argues that personnel and equipment expenditures could have different effects on future coup

attempts. Similarly, Bove and Nisticò (2014, 325) remind us that using total military spending “hinges crucially on how the resources provided to the military actually are distributed within the armed forces”.

In order to open this ‘black box’, the next sections focus on the Spanish case, trying to explore the opportunities and the motives for *coups d’état* in Spain from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, as well as the coup-proofing strategies applied by the governments in order to gain the acquiescence of the army. In particular we focus on officer’s remunerations and its relationship with the evolution of *coups d’état* throughout the period of study.

### III Spanish coup-d’états from 1833 to 1920

After King Ferdinand VII’s death in 1833, Spain became a constitutional monarchy. Isabel II’s reign (1833-1868) was the first long-lasting parliamentary regime in the country, after the short liberal attempts undertaken during the Independence War against Napoleon (1808-1814) and the so-called Liberal Triennium (1820-1823). The 1834 Royal Statute (*Estatuto Real*) established that sovereignty would be shared by the parliament (Las Cortes) and the king, while the 1837 Constitution included the first systematic bill of rights in Spanish history. The lower chamber of the parliament (*Congreso de los Diputados*) acquired the legal authority to pass laws, even though the king kept important prerogatives, such as the right to veto, the right to dissolve the parliament and the right to designate and remove the Ministers. In line with other European constitutions of the moment, political participation was severely restricted to owners and the wealthy.

The Spanish liberal regime was troubled since the beginning by recurrent political and social instability. Its first seven years were violently distressed by a civil war against the Carlists, absolutist supporters of the self-proclaimed Charles V, Ferdinand VII’s brother. Even though the war ended in 1839-40 with the defeat of Carlism and an agreement between both contenders (*Convenio de Vergara*), Carlists rose up again in 1847-1849 and in 1872-1876. In this context of internal instability, the Spanish army was mainly devoted to contain domestic turmoil during the first decades of the liberal regime. Despite of the creation of two paramilitary corps devoted to guard the coasts (*Carabineros*) and to protect rural roads and properties (*Guardia Civil*), the

army kept wide prerogatives on public order.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, as early as in 1835, the parliament established the first state of siege's regulation (later extended to the state of war), according to which the military would become the legal authority in times of harsh domestic turmoil.

This contrasts with the low international activity of the Spanish army. Despite joining the so-called Quadruple Alliance in 1834 with Great Britain, France and Portugal, Spain remained neutral in most international conflicts (such as the Belgian and Greek's independence wars, the Crimean War, the Italian and German unification wars, etc). It was not until the late 1850s when the Spanish army engaged in several military interventions, such as those in Conchinchina (1858-1862), Mexico (1861-1862), Morocco (1859-1860), Santo Domingo (1863-65) and the so-called Naval War (1865-1866). However, only in Morocco the army obtained a significant territorial gain, even though it hardly paid for its 10,000 casualties and 3,000 million *reales* cost (Vilar 2009). Later on, interventions abroad were aimed at fighting colonial revolts in Latin America and Northern Africa, such as the Ten Years War in Cuba (1868-78), the Small War in Cuba (1879-1880), the Melilla Insurrection (1893) and the Cuban independence War (1895-1898). The only war fought against another western country was the Spanish-American War against the United States in 1898, which ended in a few months with a resounding defeat (Puell de la Villa 2006; Vilar 2009; Torre del Río 2009).

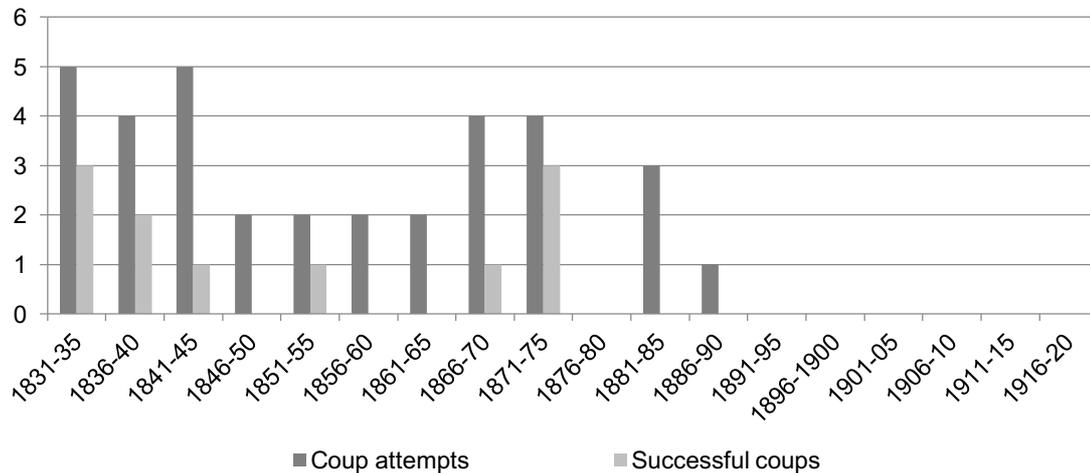
The combination of weak democracy, low social legitimacy and an army focused on domestic objectives (together with the absence of successful international military operations), created a propitious context for military interventions in politics. Figure 1 shows the attempted and successful *coups d'état* in Spain from 1831 to 1920 in five-year periods. Coup attempts account for those military actions of insubordination explicitly devoted to overthrow the government in favour of a new executive or designed to threaten the government in order to force a policy change. Successful coups are those that succeeded in expelling the government or in forcing the desired policy change. As could be expected, Spain was severely hit by military interventions during most of this period. The 1830s and the first half of the 1840s saw almost one coup attempt per year, with a ratio of success above 40 per cent. In the next

---

<sup>3</sup> This helps to explain why, despite being a Peninsula, Spain had most of its troops spread over its inland territory, instead of its coasts and frontiers, and devoted many more resources to its land forces than to its navy; see Headrick (1981), and Sabaté (2016).

four quinquennia the regime reduced its exposure to military intervention to 0.4 coups per year, while in the second half of the 1860s and the first half of the 1870s the military returned to former levels of intervention.

Figure 1. Coup d'états in Spain (1831-1920)



Source: Linz, Montero and Ruiz (2005).

By contrast, military coups almost disappeared since the mid-1870s. From 1874 to 1922 there were only four failed coup attempts, all of them in the 1880s, and it was not until 1923 when the military intervened again with General Miguel Primo de Rivera's *coup d'état*, which was the starting point of a military dictatorship of seven years (1923-1930).

According to most scholars, this evolution can be explained by changes in the institutional design of the Spanish political system (Headrick 1981; Busquets 1982; Seco Serrano 1984; Fernández Bastarache 2006). As has been said, during Isabel II's reign (1833-1868) elections were based on a very restricted census suffrage. Except for the 1836 election, in which the queen was forced to accept an extension of suffrage, all subsequent elections until 1868 were characterized by very limited voting rights and corruption. The liberal left-wing opposition (initially organized under the Progressive Party, and since 1849 under the more leftist Democratic Party) could not reach power under the established political rules, because electoral fraud blocked any possible change in the parliamentary majority. To overcome this blockade, the opposition relied on military officers to raise them to power: the progressive governments established in 1836, 1840 and 1854 began with

*coups d'état* led by military officers (the latest two of them by General Baldomero Espartero, who became regent from 1840 to 1843).

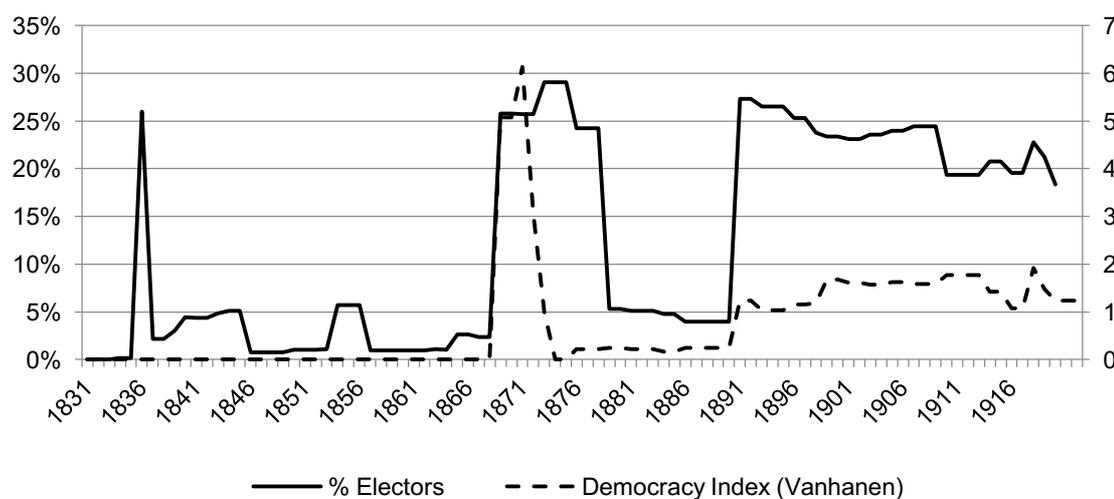
Similarly, the right-wing liberals (organized around the Moderate Party) put an end to these progressive episodes (that generally involved expanding voting rights to middle classes) by resorting to the army. The long periods of moderate government initiated in 1843 and 1856 started with military interventions, this time under the leadership of Generals Ramón María Narváez and Leopoldo O'Donnell respectively.<sup>4</sup> All these coups have been called *pronunciamientos*, in which a group of generals (and in some occasions other lower-grade military officers) organized a plot to overthrow the government on behalf of an opponent political faction. In none of these cases the plotters aimed to implement a military dictatorship; they behaved as “spokespeople and military branches of political groups, and invariably after being required by them” (Seco Serrano 1984: 81). According to Puell de la Villa (2006), the plotters expected to accomplish their objectives without fighting; they aimed to obtain the tacit or explicit support from the rest of the army during the following hours after the beginning of the coup. In case that several military units (particularly those settled in the capital, Madrid) openly confronted the coup, the plotters generally gave up their plans and tried to go into exile.

The 1868 Glorious Revolution started a period of extended democracy but high social and political instability. The mobilization of the progressive liberal opposition, once again led by a group of generals (among them, General Juan Prim y Prats, later president of the government) ended Isabel II's reign and established a new short-lasting liberal monarchy under the head of Amadeo I of Savoy. After two years of political turmoil, Amadeo resigned and a short-lasting Republican regime was established (1873-74). Suffrage was extended to all adult men (see figure 2), and civil rights were significantly expanded. Nevertheless, monarchical and conservative factions pressured to overthrow the new political regime: as can be seen in figure 1, coup attempts increased dramatically during this period. The *pronunciamientos* of Generals Manuel Pavía and Carlos Martínez Campos in 1874 ended the First Republic and restored the Bourbon monarchy.

---

<sup>4</sup> Between 1856 and 1863 the Moderate Party shared power with the Liberal Union, led by O'Donnell and created as a centrist alternative to both the Progressive and the Moderate parties.

Figure 2. Political participation in Spain (1831-1920)



*Notes and sources:* Number of electors as a share of total population (left axis, continuous line) and Vanhanen’s index of democracy (right axis, dotted line). The percentages of electors are estimates based on Linz, Montero and Ruiz (2005). The Vanhanen’s democracy index, which is based on a combination of political participation and competition, can be found in <https://www.prio.org/Data/> According to Vanhanen, an indicative threshold value for democracy would be 5 (even though it also requires minimum values of each of its components).

According to most authors, the new Restoration regime (1874-1923), designed by the conservative politician Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, removed the former political conditions that had favoured *pronunciamientos* (Headrick 1981; Busquets 1982; Seco Serrano 1984; Fernández Bastarache 2006). The conservative and the liberal parties agreed to share power in what has been called the pacific turn (*turno pacífico*). Fraudulent elections were organized in order to ensure such turn in government, which excluded the leftist movements (such as the republicans) and the more traditionalist factions (such as the carlists). As a consequence of the turn, the bulk of the former political opposition lost the incentives to “drag the military into politics” (Belkin and Schofer 2003: 607). Although political participation was extended to all adult men in 1890, the voting system continued to be altered through bribery and fraud (see figure 2).

Nevertheless, the former narrative explains only half of the picture. Even if the political system offered opportunities (or incentives) for the military to intervene in politics before 1874, the military themselves had to be willing to do so. The historical narrative clarifies why politicians wanted the military in politics, but not the military’s willingness to act. Actually, during the Restoration period there were also minority parties

(such as the republicans) that were systematically excluded from the ‘pacific turn’ and also depended on the military to achieve power. However, after 1874 most generals did not respond to these parties’ petitions, and the republicans could only promote four failed coup attempts during the 1880s.

Historians have often suggested that Spanish revolted officers intervened in politics due to their ideology. Since the Independence War against Napoleon in 1808-1814, the Spanish army became a heterogeneous social institution. The officer corps was no longer compounded exclusively by the sons of the aristocratic families, but also by promoted soldiers and guerrilla that had fought during the war (Busquets 1982; Seco Serrano 1984; Cepeda Gómez 1999). Despite Ferdinand VII’s efforts to isolate these new officers and to return to an Old Regime’s army, non-aristocratic officers became increasingly abundant in the military forces.<sup>5</sup> These new military actors, generally belonging to families of small landowners and professionals, gave their support to the liberal factions during absolutism, and later on divided their support between the Moderate and Progressive parties during Isabel II’s reign.

In this regard, the experience under the governments of the revolutionary period (1868-1873), which also received initially the support of well-known officers, would have gradually changed the military’s inclination to engage in political disputes. According to some authors, promises to abolish military conscription during the First Republic (1873-1874) ended up in revolts and mutinies, at a time when military discipline was relaxed and the troops (mainly composed by recruits) could not be easily commanded. Several laws and legislative projects, such as the creation of the so-called Volunteers for Liberty (*Voluntarios de la Libertad*) – a popular militia –, or the (failed) announcement of dissolution of the army made by the Barcelona provincial government (*Diputación de Barcelona*), frightened the officers. Once the monarchy was restored in 1874, most rejected the prospect of another democratic republic, and the army’s hierarchy started to appreciate the stability of the Restoration system (Headrick 1981; Seco Serrano 1984; Puell de la Villa 1998). Nevertheless, beyond ideological reasons, some scholars have also pointed out the importance of the army’s corporative interests to

---

<sup>5</sup> In 1836 the new constitutional order abolished the requirement of nobility to join the military academies. Since 1865 Jew and Arab descendants were also eligible (Puell de la Villa 2000).

understand the dynamics of the *pronunciamentos*. The next section aims at analysing the available literature and evidence on those potential corporatist motivations

## IV Military spending as a coup-proofing strategy in Restoration Spain

As has been indicated in section 2, corporatist motivations might be related to general grievances felt by the military as an institution or to individual officers' self-interest. Most historians have stressed the importance of the plotters' self-interest over the army's general institutional claims. Actually, the army as such had a relatively modest role in Spanish coups; these were usually organized and executed by a small group of generals or officers on their own initiative (Puell de la Villa 2006). Moreover, even if there were many problems affecting the whole Spanish army, each military branch and stratum had its own interests, often contradictory with others'. For instance, recruits were generally willing to see themselves discharged from the burden of military service, while officers wanted more soldiers to accomplish their missions. Similarly, the faculty corps (artillery and engineers) defended their own promotion systems, based on rigorous antiquity, against attempts to expand the infantry's system (which was based, in theory, on merits and, in practice, on political criteria) to the whole army.

Regarding the officers' self-interests, claims related to opportunities of promotion were especially relevant. By 1814, after the War against Napoleon, the Spanish army had an overcrowded officer corps. As has been pointed out, a new generation of wartime officers disproportionately inflated the hierarchy compared with the remaining number of troops. The First Carlist War (1833-1840) worsened the situation, as the number of officers increased dramatically due to the government's commitment to hire those who had fought in the carlist faction and wanted to remain part of the official army. As a result, Headrick (1981) estimates the ratio of soldiers to officers in 19th century Spain to be 6 to 10 in peacetime, while at the end of the 1880s it was 24 in Germany, 20 in France and 18 in Italy. As a consequence, promotions in peacetime periods became very unusual, and those members of the armed forces that wanted to develop their professional career were severely frustrated (Headrick 1981; Puell de la Villa 2006).

This excess of officers not only discouraged the staff's professional ambitions but also kept individual remunerations low, even if the total military budget was relatively high (Puell de la Villa 2000; Sabaté 2016). According to Headrick (1981), officers received a very low salary, that forced them to search for complementary sources of income, including begging in some extreme cases. Puell de la Villa (2006) also points out that most officers received lower salaries than civil servants of equivalent level. In this context, *pronunciamientos* became a way to improve the wellbeing of the plotters. Given that successful coups systematically ended up with promotions and awards for those officers that took active roles in the uprisings, *coups d'état* were seen as the mechanism to escalate in the chain of command in peacetime (Headrick 1981).

In this context, some authors have suggested that the lack of successful military coups after the 1874 Restoration was directly related to a coup-proofing strategy based on higher wages and promotions. Headrick (1981), for instance, indicates that the Restoration governments, aware of the importance of ending the long-lasting tradition of military intervention in politics, decided to improve the material conditions of officers to gain their acquiesce. Thus, Alfonso XII's proclamation in 1875 was followed by general promotions, while officers' wages were increased during the 1870s and the 1880s.<sup>6</sup>

By contrast, other authors, like Fernández Bastarreche (2006), suggest instead that the Restoration's containment policy in military spending had a negative impact on the wages and social consideration of the military during the last quarter of the 19th century. According to him, this helps to explain an increasing hostility between the military and the civilian governments, which ended up with the 1923 Primo de Rivera's military coup and the subsequent military dictatorship. Even though the author recognizes some nominal wage increases at the beginning of the Restoration regime, these were not enough to avoid a relative decline of military salaries, compared with civilian wages. Actually, in his analysis of the Spanish army during the first decades of the 20th century, Cachinero (1988) argues that low salaries and scarce opportunities of promotion (together with other claims related with the fighting capacity of army) were the main grievances of the military institution.

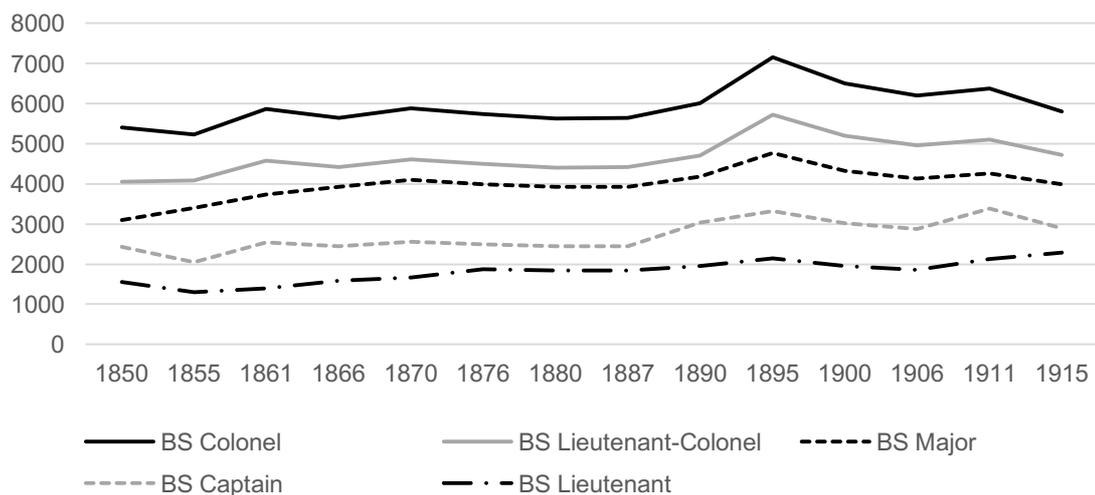
To disentangle this debate, here we provide new officer's remunerations data. To start with, figure 3 shows the evolution of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Seco Serrano (1984) relies on Headrick to reach similar conclusions.

real yearly base wages of a set of military categories (colonel, lieutenant-colonel, major, captain and lieutenant) from 1850 to 1915 in several benchmark years, expressed in pesetas of 1850.<sup>7</sup> All wages in figure 3 were assigned to infantry officers that commanded troops in a line regiment.<sup>8</sup> The figure shows two periods of increasing real wages: the 1860s and the 1890s, both of them due to increases in nominal wages (particularly the early 1860s and the early 1890s) and to relatively low inflation (the 1860s) or deflation (the first half of the 1890s). The latter, however, was followed by a quick decrease in the last years of the century, due to the reversion of inflation trends. By contrast, during the early years of the Restoration regime there were no significant changes, apart from a modest increase in the lieutenant category.

Figure 3. Real yearly base salary for several categories of officers (1850-1915)



Notes: Yearly base salary for infantry officers with command of troops in constant *pesetas* of 1850.

Sources: Salaries from Spanish public budget (*Presupuestos Generales del Estado*) and GDP deflator from Prados de la Escosura (2003).

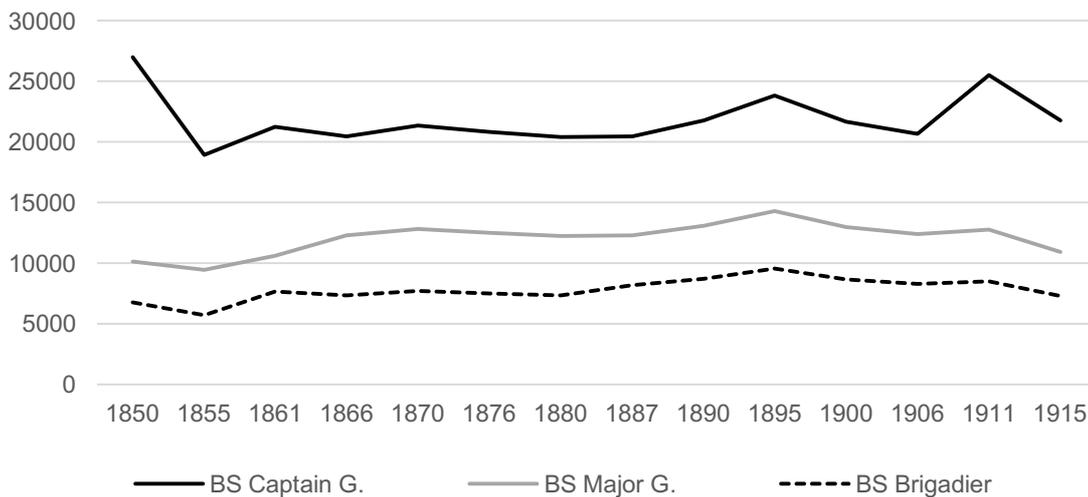
An analogous picture is found when taking into account the highest grades. Figure 4 shows the evolution of the yearly base salary for captain-generals, major-generals and brigadiers. Once again, there were significant salary increases in the three categories in the early 1860s and early 1890s, and a reversion of the trend in the late 1890s. Additionally,

<sup>7</sup> The data shown in Figures 3, 4 and 7 are presented in nominal terms in the Appendix.

<sup>8</sup> Similar data can also be found in Fernández Bastarreche (1978), expressed in current *reales* per month.

the captain-generals' salaries experienced a very sharp increase in 1911 due to the growth of their nominal wages from 25.000 to 30.000 *pesetas* per year.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 4. Real yearly base salary for several categories of generals (1850-1915)

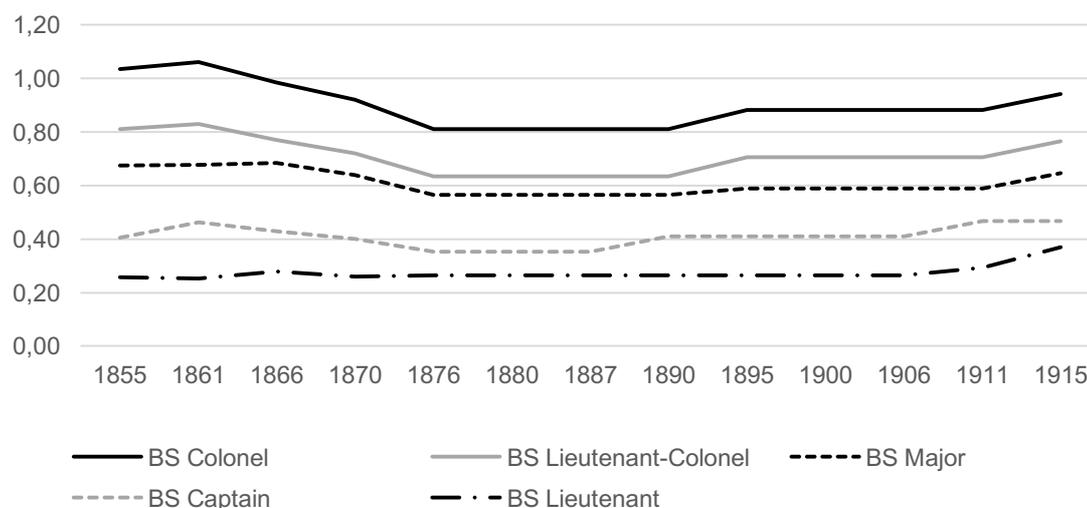


Notes and Sources: see figure 3.

Figures 5 and 6 compare these figures with the salary of other civil servants, by presenting military base salaries as a share of the salaries of the Madrid courts judges. Both figures show a substantial reduction in the military relative base salaries in the late 1860s and early 1870s, which was interrupted, but not reversed, by the Restoration. Thereafter, the relative wages of several officer grades (particularly captains, lieutenant-colonels and colonels) grew in the 1890s and 1900s, but rarely enough to compensate the losses of the 1860s and 1870s. As a result, the relative situation of some officer categories appears to have been worse in 1915 than in 1855.

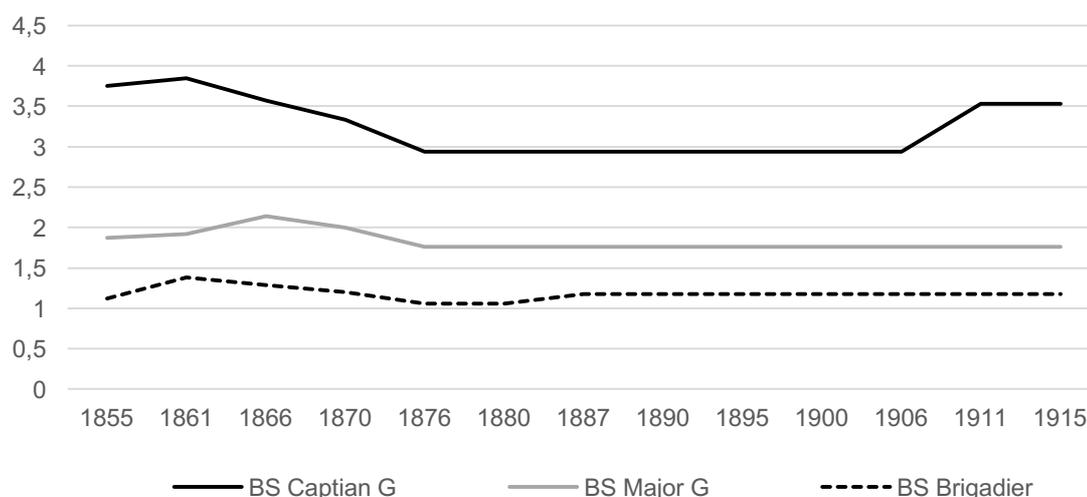
<sup>9</sup> The sharp reduction in captain generals' wages from 1850 to 1855 is probably due to some accounting differences, such as the potential inclusion of some complementary gratifications within the base salary in 1850 but not in 1855. The decrease from 1911 to 1915 in all categories was due to inflation during World War One.

Figure 5. Yearly base salary for several categories of officers as a share of Madrid judges' salary (1850-1915)



Notes and Sources: see figure 3. The salaries of judges come from the Spanish public budget (*Presupuestos Generales del Estado*).

Figure 6. Yearly base salary for several categories of generals as a share of Madrid judge's salary (1850-1915)



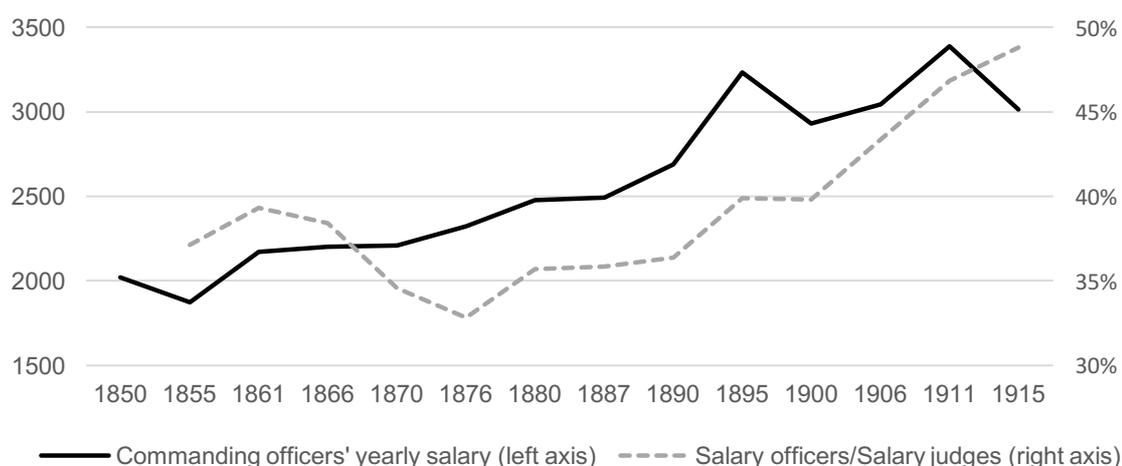
Notes and Sources: see figures 3 and 5.

Nevertheless, these figures do not reflect the whole remuneration received by officers. As was already pointed out by Fernández Bastarache (1978), the base salaries received by the army were complemented by additional remunerations that varied according to professional categories and other specific conditions. The *Report on the Organization and State of the Army on January 1, 1860* provides detailed information on the huge variety of these military gratifications. For instance, a colonel serving in an infantry regiment with two battalions

earned 333,33 reales per month (almost 15 per cent of its monthly base salary) as a gratification for commanding troops, while the same colonel in an infantry regiment with three battalions earned 500 reales (21 per cent). By contrast, in the case of the cavalry, a colonel's gratification for command was about 400 reales (17 per cent). There was even more diversity in the so called 'pluses', which were gratifications given in wartimes or in extraordinary circumstances.

Given that these complementary earnings were increasingly important during the late-19th and early-20th centuries, the base salary does not represent the actual officers' earnings. However, the diversity of these gratifications makes very difficult to provide a long-term homogeneous series for every category. As an alternative, the Spanish Government's Public Budgets provide the overall military spending devoted to officer and general corps' remunerations. This may be divided by the total number of officers reported in the national statistics in order to estimate their average individual earnings. Even if this measure only provides an average for all officer grades, it allows exploring to what extent the Restoration governments improved the officers' wellbeing. Figure 7 shows the average officers' remunerations from 1850 to 1915 in constant pesetas of 1850 (solid line) and as a share of the Madrid judges' salary (dotted line) in several benchmarks years. We just take into account the remuneration of officers with effective command of troops, and exclude those officials that were in the reserve and received only part of the salary.

Figure 7. Average total remuneration of commanding officers (1850-1915)



Sources: see figures 3 and 5.

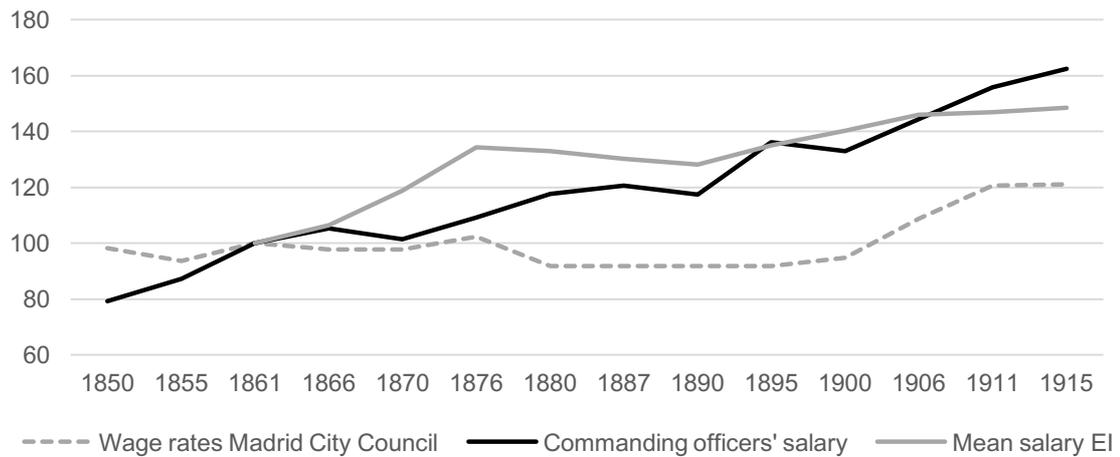
In contrast with the stagnation of the base salaries (figures 3 and 4), the complete payments to officers increased gradually from 1850 to 1915, and particularly from 1870 onwards.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the ratio of officers' payments to judges' salaries decreased from the early 1860s to the 1876 benchmark, to increase afterwards. Even if this data does not specify whether this growth was driven by higher remunerations or by an increasing share of better paid officers in relation to lower hierarchical grades, the figures suggest an effective effort to improve the wellbeing of the military officer corps. Thus, in line with Headrick (1981), the Restoration governments not only implemented a political system that discouraged military intervention, but also devoted financial efforts to overcome the grievances that could drive officers to organize coups. It is also interesting to observe that the improvement in the officers' income did not take place through increases in base salaries but by a combination of discretionary rises in wage complements and professional promotions. These measures tend to be much more visible in the long term than increases in base salaries, and are consistent with a clientelistic use of the public budget to increase political allegiance to the regime.

Similar comparisons can be drawn with other labour categories. Figure 8 compares several wages indices: the officers' (complete) average remunerations, a wage index of the City Council of Madrid and the weighted mean salary of the industrial company *La España Industrial S.A.*, all in nominal terms. The latter grew clearly faster than military payments from 1861 to 1876 but, after this year, the *España Industrial* wage stagnated, while military salaries growth accelerated. The contrast is even starker with the City Council of Madrid wages, which were rather stable until 1900, except for a significant drop in 1880. All in all, these figures would reflect again an effort to improve the wage payments to officers above those of other civilian sectors.

---

<sup>10</sup> The sharp increase from 1890 to 1895 can be explained by the combination of increasing nominal salaries and the decrease in the number of captains and lieutenants in infantry line regiments (which are low graded and low paid officers within the chain of command), as well as by the intense deflation of the early 1890s. By contrast, the drop from 1895 to 1900 is mainly explained by the inflationary trend initiated in 1895. Similarly, the decrease of 1915 is fully explained by the inflation rates of the Great War.

Figure 8. Evolution of wage indices and commanding officers' remunerations, 1850-1915 (1861=100)



Sources: Nominal wages of the City Council of Madrid and La España Industrial S.A. come from Maluquer de Motes and Llonch (2005). For officers' remuneration data see figure 3.

Similarly, Figure 9 compares, from 1870 onwards, the evolution of officers' income with other government high-level occupations: civil engineers and the 8 highest-paid occupations in the Postal Service. As the figure shows, the remunerations of officers increased more rapidly than other high wage government jobs, suggesting therefore that the improvement in military officers' remunerations did not reflect a general increase in the skill premium due to the growing demand for high-skilled workers in the economy. A similar conclusion may be drawn from information on the highest-paid jobs of the railway sector which, according to exhaustive research by Juez Gonzalo (1991: 188-189) remained virtually stagnant during the second half of the 19th century.

Figure 9. Commanding officers and other high wage jobs' remunerations, 1876-1911 (1861=100)

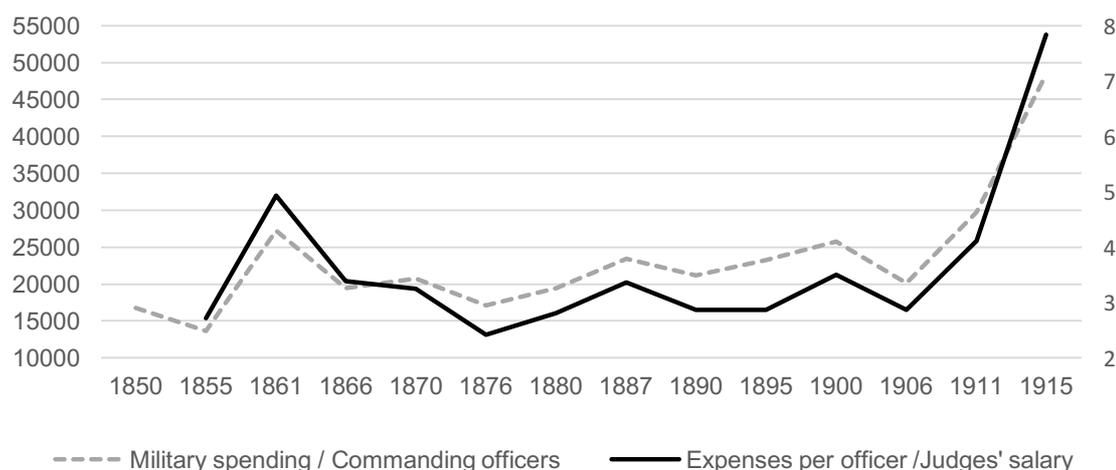


Sources: Villacorta Baños (1989); for officers see figure 3.

The positive evolution of military salaries contrasts with the trend of total military spending, which has often been used in analyses on coup-proofing strategies. Figure 10 presents the same ratios as figure 7 but using overall expenditure (in constant *pesetas* of 1850). Both series are rather flat until the early 20th century, which could wrongly induce to discredit the existence of a coup-proofing strategy based on public spending.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The main peaks are associated to wartimes: the military interventions in Africa and Asia (1859-1863), the war in Cuba and Philippines (1895-1898) and the Moroccan War (1909-1927) respectively

Figure 10. Total military spending per commanding officer (1850-1915)

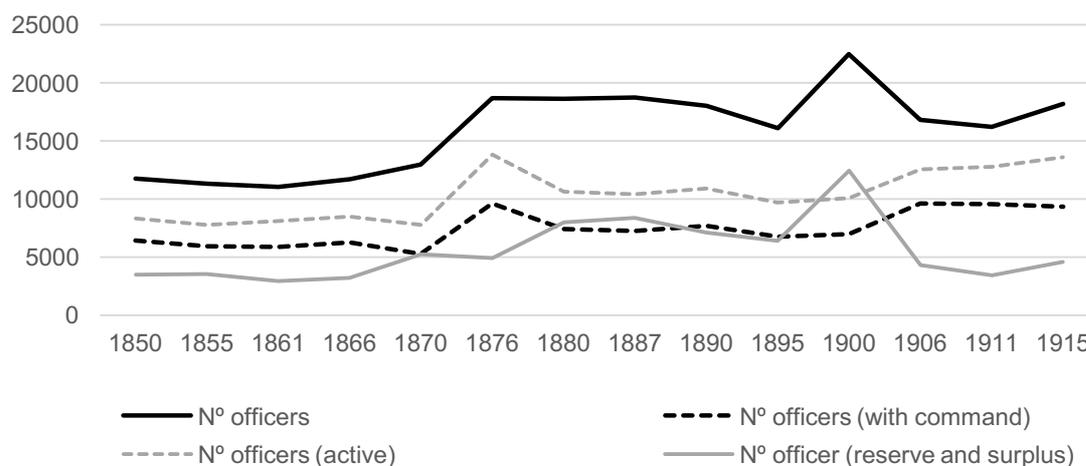


Sources: Public expenditures from Spanish national accounts (Presupuestos Generales del Estado) and GDP deflator from Prados de la Escosura (2003). For judges' wages see Figure 5.

A complementary way to improve the wellbeing of the officer corps was to increase the amount of promotions. Figure 11 shows the evolution of the number of officers in the Spanish army.<sup>12</sup> The total number of officers increased substantially in 1870-1876, and remained high until the end of the period under study. Increases in the number of active officers and the number of commanding officers in the first half of the 1870s are similar, which suggests that the army incorporated into its active chain of command some of the new officers that fought in the Third Carlist War (1872-76). However, the number of active officers decreased substantially in the second half of the 1870s, at the benefit of the number of officer in the reserve. Thus, even if the early Restoration governments preferred to consolidate war-related promotions rather than cutting the number of officers to return to previous levels, part of these new positions were transferred to the reserve.

<sup>12</sup> National budgets do not provide actual figures on the number of officers, but just estimates that could change during the fiscal year. Nevertheless, differences from the actual amounts provided by the *Spanish Military Yearbooks* for 1900, 1906 and 1915 are only 1.5 to 7.8 per cent, and budget figures allow disaggregating the total number of officers in several categories (see figure 11).

Figure 11. Number of officers in the Spanish army (1850-1915)



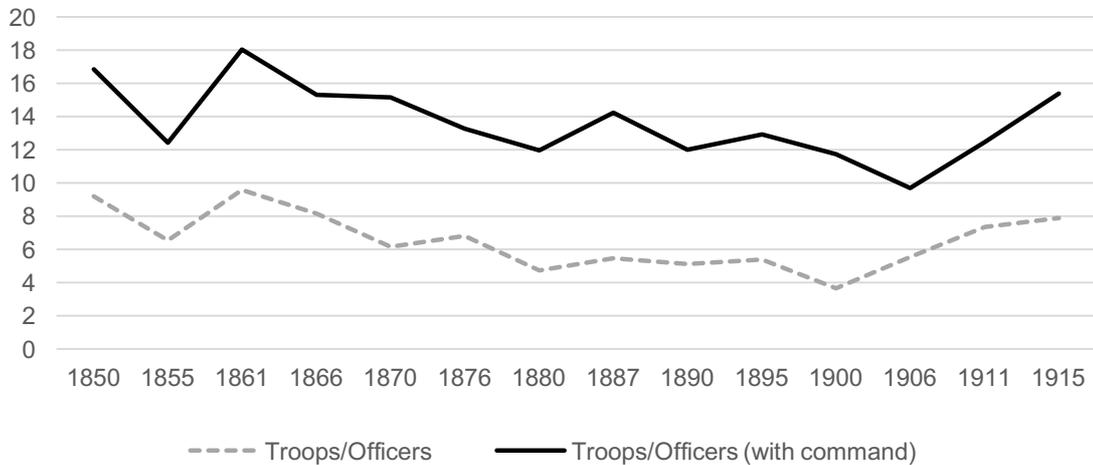
*Notes:* the number of commanding officers accounts for those officers that were commanding troops in any branch of the land forces; the total number of officers includes the former ones plus those officers in the reserve and surplus officers (without effective command of troops and half or part of the usual salary) and those officers or civil servants working for the Ministry of War with equivalent grade in charge of non-fighting services (military health, military justice, administration, etc.); the active officers accounts for the total number of officers minus the officers in the reserve.

*Sources:* Spanish public budget (Presupuestos Generales del Estado).

The number of officers in the reserve also increased significantly in the late 1860s and late 1890s, reflecting the end of the 1860s colonial campaigns and the Cuban and Philippines independence. These increases suggest again that governments preferred to keep the officers in the corps even if there were no specific tasks for them. Still, the late 1890s increase was mainly led by the so-called ‘surplus officers’ and ‘officers to be replaced’ that came from the colonies, which were to be rejected from the corps in the following years (as can be seen by the subsequent sharp decrease in the reserve and surplus officers). This downside, however, was partially compensated by an increase of the number of active officers and the number of officers with command of troops after 1900. Once again, this seems to reflect the governments’ willingness to avoid conflicts with the officers even if this implied an inflated officer corps that contributed to harm fiscal sustainability. Accordingly, as can be seen in figure 12, the number of troops per officer during the Restoration remained significantly lower than in former periods (even though the decrease had started already in the 1860s). The ratio only rose again in the 20th century, due to the Moroccan War initiated in 1909: the number of troops increased then more than the

number of officers thanks to the stock of officers in the reserve that could be deployed in wartime.

Figure 12. Troops per officer (1850-1915)



Notes and sources: see text and figure 11.

These changes may be considered part of a comprehensive plan to end the secular tradition of military coups. In this regard, some authors talk about a tacit ‘pact’ between the government and the military: the latter would remain out of politics as long as the former did not contravene the army’s priorities in military affairs (Seco Serrano 1984; Cardona 1983; Puell de la Villa 2000; Fernández Bastarreche 2006). Thus, military budgets were generally passed without much debate, and those reforms that displeased the army were generally dismissed (Headrick 1981). At the same time, the 1878 Constitutive Law of the Army clearly specified that soldiers could not participate in political meetings (except for military ministries, deputies, senators and officers in the reserve).<sup>13</sup> This ‘pact’ ensured that officers could manage military affairs on their own and would have no reasons to confront the government. The aforementioned flexibility in military remunerations, as well as the acceptance of an inflated officer corps (that aggravated the excess of officers inherited from previous periods), might be understood as part of this effort to content the army.

This would be complemented by other coup-proofing strategies. For instance, some authors suggest that Cánovas del Castillo favoured the

<sup>13</sup> *Ley Constitutiva del Ejército*, Art. 28, *Gaceta de Madrid* nº 354, November 30<sup>th</sup> 1878, Vol. IV, pg. 602

figure of the ‘king-soldier’, according to which kings Alfonso XII (1874-1885) and Alfonso XIII (1886-1931) were appointed as the supreme command of the army. This aimed at ensuring that no official would intervene in politics against the king’s will.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Restoration’s governments blockaded the career of those generals that intervened in politics in the wake of the 1868 revolution, while promoting those involved in the 1874 coups (Headrick 1981; Fernández Bastarache 2006).

By contrast, the Restoration governments did not apply other coup-proofing strategies mentioned in section 2. For instance, the regime did not develop any clear attempts to counterbalance the power of the army. This could be related with the failed and counter-productive previous experiences, such as the creation of a large National Militia during the so called progressive biennium (1854-1856) under the leadership of General Espartero, which did not help to defeat the 1856 *pronunciamiento* but partially supported it.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, the establishment of a rural paramilitary corps (*Guardia Civil*) in 1844, during the Moderate Party’s government, which could have also been used as a counterweight against progressive military uprisings, did not perform that role due to its organic dependency upon the Ministry of War (its chief command was even a military officer).

Similarly, the Restoration governments did not use diversionary international warfare as a way to keep the army occupied and hinder the organization of coups, at least before the 20th century. According to most historians, Cánovas del Castillo, the architect of the Restoration regime, was well aware of the Spanish military weakness, which prevented the country from playing any significant role in the international arena. Thus, the army’s main international missions were aimed at maintaining the colonial *statu quo* and protect the Spanish national integrity (Elizalde 1998). Moreover, the carlist movement, urban republicanism and the labour movement were seen as the main threats to the regime; thus, the Restoration governments prioritised the army’s domestic orientation (Puell de la Villa 1998).

In this regard, Figure 13 shows the percentage of days per year that the country was under war state or siege state (locally or nationally declared) from 1875 to 1922. As has been indicated, war states were

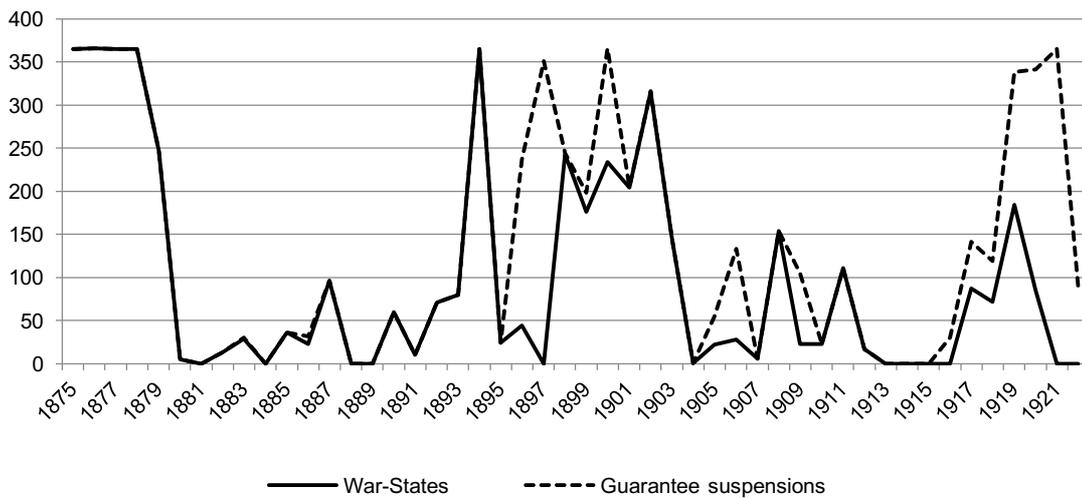
---

<sup>14</sup> In the 1878 Constitutive Law of the Army and the 1889 additional law the king was named the “supreme command” of the army. See Headrick (1981), Lleixà (1986), Puell de la Villa (2000).

<sup>15</sup> A similar process took place during the Liberal Triennium in 1820-1823. See, for instance, Headrick (1981).

declared in times of domestic turmoil, in order to transfer the public order responsibility directly to the army, while siege states allowed the government to suspend constitutional guarantees. The figure suggests that the army took the command of public order particularly during wartime, but states of war were also frequent during the early years of the Restoration, which reflects the confidence that the governments placed on the army to protect the new institutional order.

Figure 13. States of war and states of siege in Spain (1874-1923)



Notes: own elaboration based on González Calleja (1998).

From a theoretical perspective, this military withdrawal may reflect the difficult coexistence between domestic-oriented coup-proofing strategies and successful military campaigns against foreign countries. Besley and Robinson (2010) argue that governments must choose one among two main competing options to avoid coups: accept all military grievances by creating a powerful army (which could be dangerous in case of a conflict with the civilian authorities) or disdain their claims and create a tin pot army (which is not powerful enough to threaten the government, but is not very useful in case of international warfare). Restoration Spain might represent another variation of this dilemma: governments agreed to favour officers (who had been the main threat to the previous governments), but without creating a powerful army. This was consistent with Spain's unambitious foreign policy; and (as the qualitative evidence of the following section seems to confirm) contributed to keep military's loyalty.

## V Public debates on coup-proofing strategies and military grievances

This section aims at analysing to what extent the coup-proofing strategies that have been described in the previous section were explicitly presented as policies designed to avoid coups, and also to what extent the army recognized the Restoration government's efforts. To start with, political leaders were certainly aware of the need to find preventive solutions to military coups. In this regard, the speech pronounced in parliament by Cánovas del Castillo on the 2nd of July of 1877 provides some evidence about the need to implement preventive coup-proofing strategies. In his answer to the deputy (and General) Salamanca y Negrete about disciplinary measures taken against several generals, Cánovas asked rhetorically to the audience in the parliament:

*“Is there any experienced man, any conscientious man that believes that it is possible to constantly maintain the discipline in the army without using preventive measures? Is there anyone who believes that it is possible to keep the discipline without knowing the spirit and the condition of the armed forces, using only criminal and judicial measures to prevent seditions? No; (...) the industry of conspiracies has advanced too much in Spain to believe that it is possible to know and to impede seditions by only using judicial procedures.”<sup>16</sup>*

In the same speech, Cánovas emphasized that the military prerogatives given to the king in the 1876 Constitution were the result of a thorough decision, while reaffirmed the conviction that the parliament should remain away from those issues that were the army's competence:

*“(...) the present Constitution gives more military authority to the King than former Constitutions. This is not an accidental outcome; it has been thoroughly considered by the constitutional commission; it has been the result of the commission's conviction (...); in the same way that no country discusses the negotiations about diplomatic measures if the Government does not declare that these measures can be discussed, the decisions regarding the command, the government and the discipline of the army cannot be constantly discussed by the legislature without a great threat for the discipline and without nullifying the constitutional article that gives the prerogative of the supreme command to the King.”<sup>17</sup>*

---

<sup>16</sup> *Prerrogativas del Rey respecto del mando del Ejército, DSC de 2 de julio de 1877*, in Cánovas del Castillo (1999 [1828-1897]).

<sup>17</sup> *Prerrogativas del Rey respecto del mando del Ejército, DSC de 2 de julio de 1877*, in Cánovas del Castillo (1999 [1828-1897]).

Although references to the risk of *pronunciamientos* were consciously avoided in parliamentary discussions, politicians were fully aware of the danger that a state of discontent among the military meant for the Restoration regime. As stated in 1887 by General López Domínguez, former War Minister and participant in several coups before 1874:

*“(...) is not each individual free to think, given the examples registered in this country’s sad history, that bringing discontent, day after day, to the classes of the army, may lead them to justify those sad memories (...)”*<sup>18</sup>

The military press allows approaching the army’s state of mind and reactions to the government’s strategies. *El Correo Militar* (The Military Post), a military newspaper created in 1869 by a republican military writer and turned into a conservative newspaper during the Restoration, reviewed with surprising frankness the aforementioned coup-proofing strategies and the end of the *pronunciamientos* in its article “The Army and politics” published on the 8th of April of 1893:

*“In the most recent times there had been attempts to isolate the army from politics (...). It was, then, a clever policy to avoid having discontented generals in the army, trying that all of them, or at least a vast majority, served in destinies that were in accordance with their category; the consequent combination of moral and material satisfaction made difficult for them to think about asking politicians what the military organization was already giving to them.”*

Similarly, *La Correspondencia Militar* (The Military Correspondence) praised in its edition of 27th of July of 1898 the military promotions (even if this recognition was used to criticise the situation of the *Carabineros*, the coast guard corps):

*“The chains of command of the general military corps, due to several orders, have improved notably; those of the auxiliary Corps have done it extremely well and, at last, those of the Guardia Civil, so far neglected, have experienced an important advance; only those of the Carabineros suffer all the pain that falls upon their personnel, killing their spirit and inner satisfaction, and keeping constantly among them these elements of displeasure and complaint and anxiety.”*

---

<sup>18</sup> DSC de 7 de marzo de 1887, p. 928.

The *Correspondencia* also related fairly explicitly military loyalty and military staff's wellbeing in its issue of the 23rd of June of 1900, after the military repression of social turmoil in Madrid:

*“We will repeat one and a thousand times, we will say it forever; to rule is to repress; this is why today one has repressed and the triumph of our Fatherland cheers many death hearts up (...) But it is possible to repress in such a definitive and conclusive way only when the Armies stay side by side with the Governments, because the Governments take care of the Armies; when the bayonets, like nowadays, are side by side with those who order the compliance of the laws (...)”*

Nevertheless, these quotes might suggest a placidness in civilian-military relations that was far from reality. The military's claims for better conditions and more self-management of their own affairs were bitterly present throughout the period. In this regard, the *Correspondencia* voiced the military's corporative grievances during the Restoration regime and reflects the conservative turn that the army experienced throughout the period: established in 1877 by a republican major (that even participated in one of the 1880s republican coup attempts), the newspaper got progressively closer to the conservative party and ended up giving support to the 1923 military coup. In its edition of 24th of November of 1898 it claimed for higher wages for the lowest grades of the officer corps, such as captains and lieutenants. Entitled “Act of Justice”, the article said:

*“We have been repeating for many years that the salary assigned to military officers in Spain is miserable and prevents them from covering their necessities with comfort; but no Government has worried about it, not even to study it (...) No more delays and postponements, kill the harmful laziness and undertake the required measures to solve this issue that affects the dignity of the armed corps (...)”*

Similarly, the *Correo* published on 10th of May of 1886 a threatening article that related the alleged low salaries of officers in the 1880s (and also low total military spending) with the past tradition of military coups:

*“With our miserable army, with an officer corps to whom every privilege has been denied, that lives in misery, to whom every mean of welfare and decorum has been*

*skimped, we can only expect ruin, disturbance, pronunciamiento, internal disputes, the standstill of trade and industry (...)*<sup>19</sup>

Similar claims can also be found when talking about the desired autonomy of the army. The *Correspondencia* reflects the military frustration for the alleged civilian interference on military issues when reviewing the parliamentary discussion of the 1900 Ministry of War's budget:

*"All civilians that have intervened in the [parliamentary] debate have been stuck in a vicious circle that is harmful for the Fatherland and for the Army; this is: We needed to economize, to economize a lot, to economize like crazy (...). There were so much nonsense in their speeches, and so many absurdities were proposed due to the absolute ignorance of civilians regarding military issues, to the lack of study of the military problems and to the incomprehensible antipathy against the army!"*<sup>20</sup>

These criticisms suggest that the aforementioned increases in officers' remunerations and other coup-proofing strategies were probably a reaction to harsh military claims. Even if the press probably exaggerated the tough economic conditions of the military, it reflected the state of mind that prevailed in the military conservative circles. The military press welcomed the efforts done by the government to improve officers' wellbeing, but it also kept a belligerent attitude against the government throughout the period, as if the army were in a permanent bargaining process with the regime.

## VI Concluding remarks: military spending and institutional stability

Dealing with the determinants of coup d'états and the impact of coup-proofing strategies on the frequency and outcome of coups, several authors have argued that military spending may be used by governments to gain the loyalty of the army. However, recent quantitative analyses have not found a systematic relationship between these two variables. In

---

<sup>19</sup> The *Correo* actually reprints an article appeared in the newspaper *El Resumen* (The Summary). Later on, this newspaper published a discourse pronounced in June 1886 by General López Domínguez that also linked the social problems of the army and the threat of the *pronunciamientos* (Boned Colera, 1992).

<sup>20</sup> *La Correspondencia Militar*, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1900.

this paper, we argue that specific categories of expenditure closely related to the military's welfare might be more relevant to understand the frequency and success of coup d'états than overall military spending. To do so, we study the historical evolution of military officers' salaries in Spain from 1850 to 1915 and relate it with the frequency of coups.

The Spanish liberal regime initiated with Isabel II's reign (1833-1868) was troubled since the start by the army's recurrent interventions in politics. During the 1830s and early 1840s there was almost one coup attempt per year, with a ratio of success above 40 per cent. While yearly coup attempts decreased to 0.4 between 1845 and 1865, they increased again to 0.8 from the mid-1860s to the mid-1870s. By contrast, during the Bourbon Restoration (1874-1923) the country remained almost free from *pronunciamientos* for almost half a century.

This political stability was achieved thanks to the new political design implemented by Cánovas del Castillo, as well as to several coup-proofing strategies devised to make the preparation of coups difficult and to overcome the military's grievances. Military spending, in particular, was used to improve officers' wellbeing and to overcome some of the grievances that brought the military into politics in previous decades. Spanish Restoration governments did not increase *total* military expenditure, but improved the remuneration of the officers in absolute and in relative terms. This helped to keep military's loyalty and reduced coups' frequency. Instead of creating a powerful army (devoting a large amount of resources to military spending) or creating a tin pot army, the Restoration governments opted for a third way, which was consistent with the unambitious foreign policy of Spain and the domestic orientation of the Spanish army. All this highlights the importance of using disaggregated data of military spending when analysing the impact of government expenditure on cups. Even if *total* military expenditure does not increase, governments may be applying coup-proofing strategies based on military remunerations.

The Restoration governments combined their policy of increasing military remunerations with other strategies, such as a promotion policy which incorporated in the officer corps those commands that had fought in the Third Carlist War (1872-1876) and the Cuba and Philippines independence wars (1895-1898). So, even if the military kept a privileged access to legislative power and continued to pressure the governments for better conditions (as well as for more aggressive external policies and more autonomy from politics), these pressures remained under control

during several decades. Given the previous prolific history of *pronunciamientos*, this was a very remarkable historical shift.

However, the Restoration regime finally perished in 1923, due to General Primo de Rivera's *coup d'état*, despite the systematic increase in officers' remunerations. Even if higher remunerations could contribute to gain the acquiescence of the army, other factors weakened the regime's social legitimacy. For instance, the defeat in the Spanish-American War in 1898 and the consequent loss of Cuba and the Philippines contributed (among other factors) to put pressure on the military-civilian relations and to weaken the stability of the system (Seco Serrano 1984; Cardona 1983; Fernández Bastarache 2006). Similarly, the pacific turn established at the beginning of the Restoration regime started to break down when minority parties increased their parliamentary representation particularly since the approval of male suffrage in 1890 (Curto et al. 2014). In this regard, Puell de la Villa (1998) suggests that the military policies undertaken by Cánovas del Castillo (that is, the binomial king-army and the 'tacit pact' between the government and the army) gradually gave place to an emerging militarist ideology. To sum up, the policy of increasing military remunerations seems to have been successful at reducing the frequency of military coups. However, once the institutional credibility of the Restoration regime eroded and the expectations of regime continuity diminished, promises of higher wages for the military seem to have lacked sufficient appeal to prevent a successful coup (as McLaughlin 2010 suggests).

## References

### a.) Primary sources

*Anuario Militar de España*, several volumes.

*Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados (DSC)*, several years.

*El Correo Militar*, several volumes.

*Gaceta de Madrid*, several volumes.

*La Correspondencia Militar*, several volumes.

*Presupuestos Generales del Estado*, several volumes.

Sección de Historia del Depósito de la Guerra (1860): *Memoria sobre la organización y estado del ejército en 1º de enero de 1860*. Madrid: Depósito de la Guerra.

### b.) Secondary sources

Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J.A. (2001): "A Theory of Political Transitions". *The American Economic Review* 91 (4), pp. 938-963.

Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J.A. (2009): *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Acemoglu, D.; Ticchi, D. and Vindigni, A. (2010): "A Theory of Military Dictatorships". *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, 2 (1), pp. 1-42.

Agüero, Felipe (1995): *Militares, Civiles y democracia. La España postfranquista en perspectiva comparada*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial

Belkin, A. and Schofer, E. (2003): "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk". *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47 (5): pp. 594-620.

Besley, T. and Robinson, J.A. (2010): "Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes? Civilian Control over the Military". *Journal of the European Economic Association* 8 (2-3), pp. 655-663.

Boned Colera, A. (1992): *Prensa y ejército: la cuestión militar en El Resumen (1885-1888)*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, PhD thesis.

Bove, V. and Nisticò, R. (2015): "Coups d'état and defense spending: a counterfactual analysis". *Public Choice* 161 (3-4), pp. 321-344.

Busquets, J. (1982): *Pronunciamientos y golpes de Estado en España*. Barcelona: Planeta.

Cachinero, J. (1988): "Intervencionismo y reformas militares en España a comienzos del siglo XX". *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 10.

Cánovas del Castillo (1999 [1854-1888]): *Discursos Parlamentarios*. Alicante: Biblioteca Universal Miguel de Cervantes.

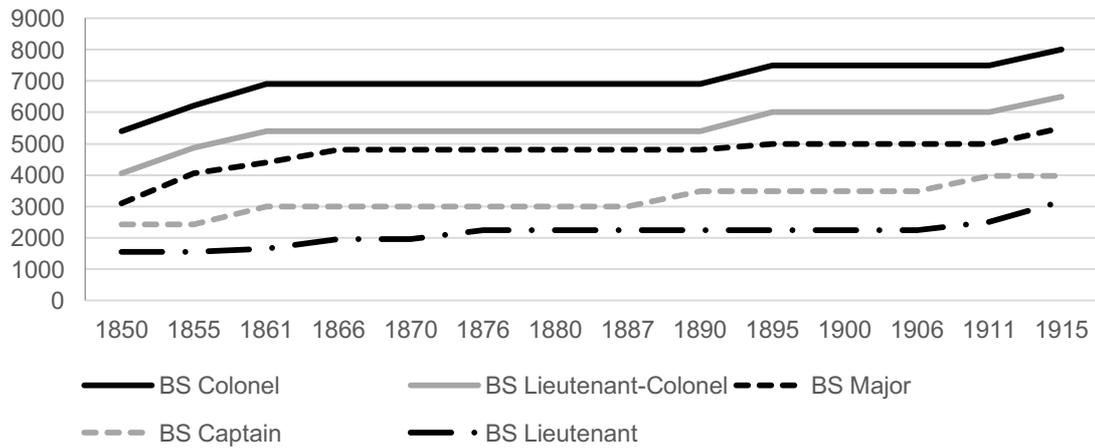
- Cardona, G. (1983): *El poder militar en la España Contemporánea hasta la Guerra Civil*. Madrid, Siglo XXI.
- Cepeda Gómez, J. (1999): *Los Pronunciamientos en la España del siglo XIX*. Madrid: Arco/Libros, cop.
- Collier and Hoeffler (2007): “Military Spending and the Risks of Coups d’Etat”. Unpublished manuscript.
- De Bruin, E. (2015): “Does counterbalancing Work? Evidence From Developing States”. Paper prepared for the International Studies Association Annual Convention.
- Decalo, S. (1989): “Modalities of Civil-Military Stability in Africa”. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 27 (4), pp. 547-578.
- Elizalde, M.D. (1998): “Política exterior y política colonial de Antonio Cánovas. Dos aspectos de una misma cuestión”, in J. Tusell and F. Portero (eds.), *Antonio Cánovas y el sistema político de la Restauración*. Madrid: Editorial Biblioteca Nueva, pp. 211-288.
- Curto-Grau, M.; Herranz-Loncán, A.; Solé-Ollé, A. (2012): “Pork-Barrel Politics in Semi-Democracies: The Spanish “Parliamentary Roads,” 1880-1914”. *The Journal of Economic History* 72 (3): pp. 771-796.
- Fernández Bastarreche, F. (1978): *El Ejército español en el siglo XIX*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.
- Fernández Bastarreche, F. (2006): “El ejército en la Restauración”, in Ministerio de Defensa (ed.), *Aproximación a la historia militar de España (Volume II)*. Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, pp. 511-536.
- Finer, S.E. (1961): *The man on horseback: the role of the military in politics*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publisher.
- González Calleja, E. (1998): *La razón de la fuerza: orden público, subversión y violencia política en la España de la Restauración: 1875-1917*. Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.
- Harkness, K. A. (2016): “The Ethnic Army and the State: Explaining Coup Traps and the Difficulties of Democratization in Africa”. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60 (4), pp. 587-616.
- Headrick, D.R. (1981): *Ejército y política en España: 1866-1898*. Madrid: Tecnos, cop.
- Huntington (1991): *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Juez Gonzalo, E.-P. (1991): *El mundo social de los ferrocarriles españoles de 1857 a 1917*. Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, PhD Thesis.
- Leon, G. (2014): “Loyalty for Sale? Military Spending and Coups d’Etat”. *Public Choice* 159 (3-4), pp. 363-383.

- Linz, J.J.; Montero, J.R. and Ruiz, A.M. (2005): “Elecciones y política”, in A. Carreras and X. Tafunell (coords.), *Estadísticas históricas de España. Siglos XIX y XX*. Bilbao: Fundación BBVA, pg. 1027-1154.
- Lleixá, J. (1986): *Cien años de militarismo en España*. Barcelona: Anagrama.
- Londregan, J.B. and Poole, K.T. (1990): “Poverty, The Coup Trap, and the Seizure of Executive Power”. *World Politics* 42 (2), pp. 151-83.
- Luttwak, E. (1979): *Coup D’État: A Practical Handbook*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Maluquer de Motes, J. and Llonch, M. (2005): “Trabajo y relaciones laborales”, in A. Carreras and X. Tafunell (coords.): *Estadísticas históricas de España. Siglos XIX y XX*. Bilbao: Fundación BBVA, pp. 1155-1246.
- Maurer, N. (2013): *The Empire Trap: the rise and fall of US intervention to protect American property overseas, 1892-2013*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- McLauchlin, T. (2010): “Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion”. *Comparative Politics* 42 (3): pp. 333-350.
- Nordlinger, E.A. (1977): *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Piplani, V. and Talmadge, C. (2016): “When War Helps Civil-military Relations: Prolonged Interstate Conflict and the Reduced Risk of Coups”. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 60 (8), pp. 1368-1394.
- Powell, J. (2012): “Determinants of Attempting and Outcome of Coups d’état”. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56 (6), pp. 1017-1040.
- Powell, J. (2014): “Regime vulnerability and the Diversionary Threat of Force”. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58 (1), pp. 169-196.
- Powell, J. and Chacha, M. (2016): “Investing in stability: Economic interdependence, coups d’état, and the capitalist peace”. *Journal of Peace Research* 53 (4), pp. 525-538.
- Powell, J. M. and Thyne, C. L. (2011): “Global instances of coups from 1950 to 2010 a new dataset”. *Journal of Peace Research* 48 (2): pp. 249-259.
- Prados de la Escosura, L. (2003): *El progreso económico de España (1850-2000)*. Bilbao: Fundación BBVA.
- Puell de la Villa, F. (1998): “El premilitarismo canovista”, in J. Tusell and F. Portero (eds.), *Antonio Cánovas y el sistema político de la Restauración*. Madrid: Editorial Biblioteca Nueva, pp. 289-312.
- Puell de la Villa, F. (2000): *Historia del Ejército en España*. Madrid, Alianza Editorial.

- Puell de la Villa, F. (2006): “El ejército y la España de Isabel II”, in Ministerio de Defensa (ed.), *Aproximación a la historia militar de España* (Volume 2), pp. 433-452.
- Sabaté, O. (2015): “Do democracies spend less on the military? Spain as a long-term case study (1876-2009)”. *Revista de Historia Económica – Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History*, 34 (3), pp. 385-415.
- Sabaté, O. (2016): “New quantitative estimates on long-term military spending in Spain (1850-2009)” in Christopher Hanes and Susan Wolcott (ed.) *Research in Economic History (Research in Economic History, Volume 32)* Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.225–276
- Seco Serrano, C. (1984): *Militarismo y civilismo en la España contemporánea*. Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Económicos
- Serra, N. (2008): *La transición militar. Reflexiones en torno a la reforma democrática de las fuerzas armadas*. Barcelona: Debate.
- Svolik, M.W. (2009): “Power Sharing and Leadership Dynamics in Authoritarian Regimes” *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (2), pp. 477–94.
- Torre del Río, R. (2003): “Recogimiento, crisis del 98 y nueva orientación internacional (1975-1914)”, in Pereira, J.C. (coord.), *La política exterior de España (1800 – 2003)*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Tusalem, R.F. (2010): “Determinants of Coup d’État Events 1970–90: The Role of Property Rights Protection”. *International Political Science Review* 31 (3), pp. 346-65.
- Vilar, J.B. (2009): “España en la Europa de los nacionalismos: entre pequeña nación y potencia media (1834-1874)”, in J.C. Pereira (coord.): *La política exterior de España (1800 – 2003)*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Villacorta Baños, F. (1989): *Profesionales y burócratas. Estado y poder corporativo en la España del siglo XX*. Madrid: Siglo XXI

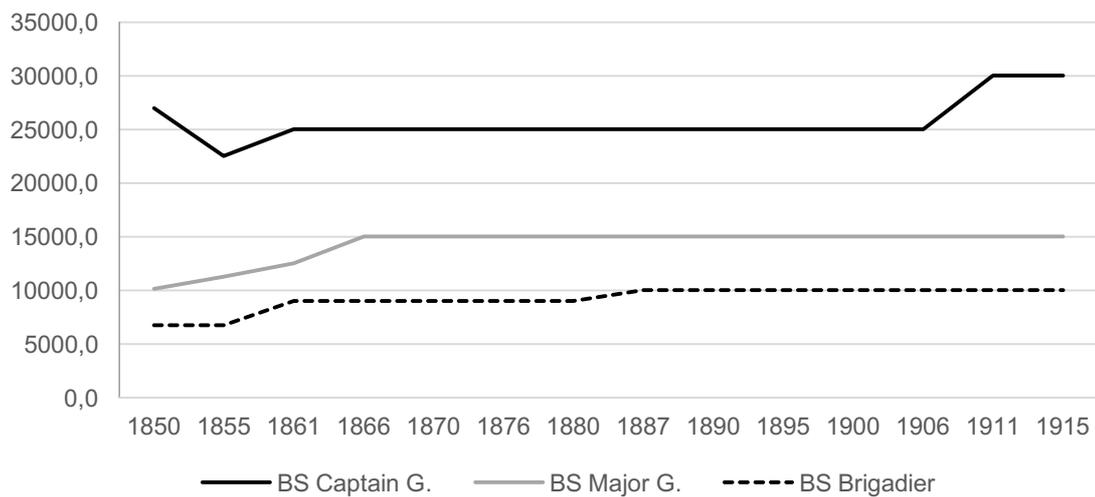
## Appendix: wage data in nominal terms

Figure A.1. Nominal yearly base salary for several categories of officers (1850- 1915)



Source: See Figure 3 Figure

A.2. Nominal yearly base salary for several categories of generals (1850- 1915)



Source: See Figure 4

Figure A.3. Nominal average total remuneration of commanding officers (1850-1915)



Source: See Figure 7