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“North African Troops Entering Gijón (1934)” Anonymous (Public Domain)

‘Morocco, Asturias .... Only the Landscape Changes’
Civil Guard Major Lisardo Doval Bravo, Special Delegate of the Ministry of War for Public Order in the Provinces of Asturias and León, November 1934.[1]

Introduction: Imperial Circuits of Sovereignty, Violence and Identity

The image is arresting: African soldiers in October 1934 marching in a victory parade through a major avenue of the northern Spanish city of Gijón. The men formed part of an estimated 2,000 Spanish Legionnaires and Moroccan indigenous forces (‘Regulares’) who had landed on Asturian shores a few weeks earlier under the overall command of one Francisco Franco, charged with crushing a revolutionary insurrection by militant miners in the region (Shubert 1987; Álvarez 2011). Almost eighteen months later, another uprising, this time led by reactionary elements of Spain’s Army Command and their fascist supporters was launched from North Africa. On 18 July 1936 the same General Franco mobilised the Army of Africa against the Spanish Republic from Tetuán, capital of the Spanish zone of the Franco-Hispanic Moroccan protectorate. His troops soon crossed the Strait of Gibraltar joining mainland co-conspirators in what during the next three years unfolded as the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. It is estimated that around 80,000 Moroccan combatants fought on Franco’s ‘National’ side during those years, often playing a similar vanguard role in the elimination of democratic Spain to that first rehearsed in Asturias during the autumn of 1934 (de Madariaga 2002; El Merroun 2003; González Alcanturd 2003; Sánchez

[1] The quote is cited in Taibo II 2013, 530. See also Preston 2012, 87-88 for a succinct account of Doval’s career.

Ruano, 2003). Like all slogans, the anti-fascist '¡No Pasarán!' has experienced various incarnations, but during the Spanish Civil War these words were often recited as part of a resistance song that proclaimed "The Moors Franco Brought/Want to Enter Madrid/ While there's Militias Left/They Shall Not Pass". What were Moroccans doing repressing workers in northern Spain and then fighting for fascists in a foreign civil war? What were their motivations and aspirations? How did 'Spanish' Morocco become the breeding-ground for right-wing military commanders? And what might all this tell us about empire and colonialism in the making of contemporary international relations?

Imperial circuits of power, I argue, are at the core of responses to these sorts of questions. The Regulares were executing on Spanish soil the same kind of counter-insurgency operations they had been recruited and trained to undertake in northern Morocco under Spanish command – as this article's epigraph suggests, for the actors involved, only the landscape changes. Together with the other colonial shock-troops, the Spanish Foreign Legion (*La Legión Española* or *El Tercio de Extranjeros*), Moroccan battalions were the mixed outcome of compulsion, poverty, *esprit de corps*, aggressive masculinity, in-group identity and militarist ideology present across both Mediterranean shores, among conscript and superior alike. The Legion and Regulares were also both explicitly trained as military agents of Spanish colonialism in North Africa. They were led by a coterie of commanders who - infused by a Spanish imperial ideology harking back to the Christian *Reconquista* of Iberia, yet galvanised by the more recent 1898 "loss" of the remaining colonial possessions in Cuba and Philippines – sought to revive Hispanic grandeur and redress the country's imperial decline through the occupation and pacification of northern Morocco (Macías Fernández 2019). Key members of the military far-right such as (among many others) Francisco Franco, José Millán Astray, José Sanjurjo, Emilio Mola, Dámaso Berenguer or Francisco Kindelán (all of them bar Franco, born and/or with fighting experience in colonial Cuba or the Philippines) actively sought service in Morocco, where they honed techniques of military repression and established a distinctive officer group known as the *Africanistas* (Balfour 2002; Nerín 2005). Effectively seeking "exile" in the colonial periphery, there they tested violent imperial fantasies of a "Single, Great and Free Spain" (*España: Una, Grande y Libre*) on the native "savages" before unleashing the same crusading mission on metropolitan democrats and revolutionaries. As Aimé Césaire had pointedly concluded in his 1950 *Discourse on Colonialism*: "colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him … to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism" (Césaire 2000 [1950], 35. Italics in original).

In the rest of this article, I invoke Edward Said's notion of "contrapuntal reading" to present a transnational sociological account of the Spanish Civil War, and the "buried instincts" of brutality and "decivilization" it unearthed during this period of Spanish-Moroccan relations. The conflict was (together with the second Italo-Abyssinian war, and Japan's Manchurian invasion) of course emblematic of the Twenty Years' Crisis so central to IR's disciplinary foundations. But the Spanish civil war also raises important questions of sovereignty, violence, and identity which – filtered through a political sociological lens – offer novel perspectives on the power of empire and colonialism in relation to these key IR categories. Specifically, I argue that the Spanish colonial frontier in Morocco served as a laboratory for distinctive expressions of transnational state-building, violence and identity-formation which were reproduced in

both the metropolitan heartlands of the Iberian Peninsula and in the Protectorate itself during the interwar years. The complex interaction between core and periphery in this period had momentous implications for both Spanish and Moroccan history, many of which continue to play out in contemporary politics across the Gibraltar Strait. For example, the existence of the Rif Republic from 1921-27 was a short-lived but signal episode in the first wave of twentieth century anti-colonial struggles which at the time reverberated politically beyond North Africa (the Rif leader Albdelkrim even made the front cover of Time Magazine in August 1925) and more recently, within Morocco itself (Daoud 1999; Maddy-Weitzman 2012; Pennell 2017). Similarly, Spain's catastrophic defeat at the hands of Rifian rebels in June 1921, where the occupying army lost 8,000 men in the battle of Annual (a village situated in a remote valley some 130km away from the colonial stronghold of Melilla), contributed significantly to the interwar clash between dictatorship and democracy in the Spanish mainland. There are therefore resonances from this experience for recent IR debates on international hierarchy, empire, decolonial/postcolonial politics as well as more specific considerations around transnational combatants; place, debt and memory across states; and indeed, the international politics of race, racism and racialisation (Arielli 2018; Sabaratnam and Laffey 2023; Acharya 2022). The next section elaborates further on what may be at stake politically and theoretically in conducting a contrapuntal reading of the Spanish Civil War, emphasising the productive tensions between the imperial structures which underpinned the conflagration and the historical agencies that generated more fluid, contingent conceptions and practices of race, place, memory and belonging. The latter are explored in greater detail under successive section headings which illustrate the importance of approaching international politics sociologically, as a terrain of power relations that is forged through multifaceted and asymmetrical interactions between state institutions like armies, governments and colonial administrations on the one hand, and social forces such as political movements, transnational ideologies and kinship networks on the other.

Counterpoint and the Colonial Mirror

Borrowed from the practice in classical western music of simultaneously playing two separate but interlaced melodies which together harmonise, the cultural theorist Edward Said used counterpoint as a method of critical textual analysis. Though Said employed this technique while analysing literary works, similar principles can usefully be applied in the interpretation of international relations since, as Said himself pronounced, the "inherent mode" of counterpoint was not temporal but spatial: it rejects a purely chronological, mechanical causality and the positivist, juridical mapping of metropole and colony, instead proposing the "threading through" of culture and imperialism across, as he would have it "overlapping territories, intertwined histories" (Said 1994). Geeta Chowdhry neatly summarises what adopting this for IR might entail: "The goal of a contrapuntal reading is … to not privilege any particular narrative but reveal the 'wholeness' of the text, the intermeshed, overlapping, and mutually embedded histories of metropolitan and colonised societies and of the elite and subaltern" (2007, 105). Pinar Bilgin, goes further by inviting IR theorists to adopt counterpoint as an ethos and metaphor, in addition to a method for studying world politics that "focuses on our 'intertwined and overlapping histories', moving us away from studying origins and originalities" (2016, 141).

Imperial frameworks are especially amenable to contrapuntal analysis because they tend to defy fixed boundaries, primordial identities and timeless histories. Instead, empires have generally fostered heteronomous and incommensurate territorialities, hybrid (if rigidly stratified) cultures, and fluctuating patterns of spatio-temporal expansion and contraction which readily lend themselves to the intermeshed, intertwined, overlapping, and mutually embedded histories associated to counterpoint. Moreover, contrapuntal readings allow for more dialectical interpretations of historical events like the Spanish Civil War by encouraging relational "both/and" rather than binary "either/or" accounts of what might otherwise appear as seemingly irreconcilable social forces like fascist generals and Muslim soldiers, as well as linking individual parts of a story to a larger narrative whole. Counterpoint thus shares with other critical theories an emphasis upon the shifting nature of social relations across time and place. It invites thinking about multiple determinations in the unfolding of historical processes, including the "non-simultaneity of the simultaneous" (Bloch, 1991 [1962]) as it appears say, in the "Reconquest" tropes during the Spanish Civil War.

A crucial element in all this for what follows is the recognition of hierarchy and unevenness accompanying the intersecting histories of metropole and colony; between the dominant and subaltern. As we shall shortly see, a contrapuntal reading of the Spanish Civil War through the lens of international political sociology cannot give equal causal weight to all social forces at all times: a large part of the task at hand is to identify the structural power – exercised most notably by the colonial administration and a militarized ruling class – responsible for the form and content of the overlapping territories and intertwined histories of Spain and Morocco during this period. I will therefore be using the term "imperial circuits" generically when referring to the production of spaces, modes of violence, and mobilisations of identity which *both* stretched across existing territorial boundaries in often contingent ways *and* were nonetheless subject to powerful patterns of structural domination. Here, tracing imperial circuits and their attendant processes of state-formation from the colonial frontier becomes a useful means of illustrating the contrapuntal dynamics at play. In a similar vein to Alexander D. Barder – albeit shorn of his endorsement of Latourian "actants" – I develop further the premise that international hierarchy "has historically resulted in the experimentation and innovation of various norms and practices that (re)shape the domestic space of various imperial or hegemonic powers" (Barder 2015, 2). While for Said contrapuntal reading "must take account of both processes, that of imperialism, and that of resistance to it" (Said 1994, 79), I add "collaboration" to the mix, as an essential ingredient to the imperial experimentation and innovation just mentioned.

Finally, the metaphor of the "colonial mirror" emerges as a complement to a contrapuntal method and the practices of imperial circulation respectively, directing attention to the mutually reinforcing feedback loops between metropole and colony in the progress toward the Spanish Civil War. Michael Taussig adopted the term "colonial mirror" when interpreting British Foreign office consul Roger Casement's 1913 report on violence in the Peruvian-Colombian border region of the Putumayo river basin, from which Taussig concludes that "This reciprocating yet distorted mimesis [between savagery ad civilization] has been and continues to be of great importance in the construction of colonial culture – the colonial mirror which reflects back onto the colonists the barbarity of their own social relations, but as imputed to the savage or evil figures they wish to colonize." (Taussig 1984, 494. Italics in the original).

I take from Taussig the important qualifier of the *distorted* mimesis since the colonial mirror projects less a direct likeness and acts more as a looking glass through which particular imperial practices of violence and domination are refracted. To be sure, Spain like the rest of Europe in the interwar period experienced the “imperial boomerang” identified by W.E.B Du Bois, Hannah Arendt, and many others: from concentration camps to genocidal violence, the forms of domination visited upon colonial peoples in previous centuries rebounded onto European lands in the twentieth century (Hyslop 2011). But this was an asymmetrical reflection since it was mediated through diverse transnational forces and institutions which literally displaced the singularities of imperial violence. To borrow from Barbara Fuchs, it is a conception of mimesis as “the fun-house mirror, the reflection that dazzles, the impersonator, the sneaky copy, the double agent – mimesis, that is, as a deliberate performance of sameness that necessarily threatens, or at least modifies, the original.” (Fuchs 2001, 5). For example, historical memory – and its associated notions of compensation, loyalty and sacrifice - played an important role in both the origins of the Spanish Civil War and its subsequent legacies in Hispano-Moroccan relations, including the status and memorialisation of Army of Africa veterans. Yet, whereas the historical memory driving Franco’s uprising was one of imperial nostalgia and reactionary revanchism, that which informs contemporary accounts of the North African participation in the Spanish Civil War is imbued with notions of unacknowledged service and reparation (Deiback 2006; for comparison with France see Mann 2006). “Exhumatory work as centerpiece of forensic archaeological work in Spain” Carla Tiefenbacher reminds us “so far does not include Moroccan soldiers who died in the Civil War, and memory activism does not involve histories of Falangist and Republican persecution of Spanish or Rifan/Moroccan/Sahraoui Protectorate and colonial residents” (Tiefenbacher 2023, 9). Similarly, while two competing conceptions of the Spanish nation were physically fought out during the civil war, an almost parallel experiment in state-building was underway in northern Morocco in the shape of Abdelkrim’s 1921-27 Rif Republic. These two experiences of sovereignty were plainly different in all manner of ways, but they were interconnected, both reshaped through the warped colonial mirror.

My intention, then, in deploying a family concepts like counterpoint, imperial circuits and the colonial mirror is to reconcile the structural framing of the unequal relationship between Spaniards and Moroccans in the civil war with the recognition that such transnational relations – both within and across states - created unique and often contingent manifestations of violence, solidarity, identity and territoriality. Politically, it means accounting for imperial legacies in contemporary international relations without succumbing to a static or essentialist formulation of North-South relations which underestimates the powerful and changing collective agencies within and across these geographical spaces.

Imperial Detachments

Unlike the rest of the Maghreb, Morocco remained largely free of Ottoman and European colonialism under the ruling Alaouite dynasty (in power since 1631) until the start of the twentieth century. Successive “Moroccan crises” in 1905 and 1911 saw that part of the continent embroiled in the latter stages of the “Scramble for Africa”, specifically in Franco-German imperial rivalry over the Moroccan sultanate, which

resulted in the country becoming a protectorate in 1912 divided into French and Spanish zones (the first containing the better part of fertile, "useful" Morocco, the second, the mountainous Rif region of the north, a small band of territory in the south called Cape Juby, and a tiny enclave at Ifni in the country's southwest). Madrid adopted from other imperial powers forms of "native" or "indirect" rule which sought to administer its part of the protectorate through a hierarchical system of delegates organised around Spanish *interventores* (roughly, "controllers" or "supervisors") responsible for overseeing their nominal counterparts among indigenous notables (*qaids*, *amirs,* and *qadis*)) (Mateo Dieste 2003; de Madariaga 2002). This infrastructure of colonial government closely resembled the "decentralised despotism" activated by Europeans in other parts of Africa, which as Mahmood Mamdani notes, involved the creation of "a dependent but autonomous system of rule, one that combined accountability to superiors with a flexible response to the subject population, a capacity to implement central directives with one to absorb local shocks" (Mamdani 1996, 60).

During the first decade of occupation, Spanish military and administrative weakness combined with intermittent anti-colonial resistance to produce a situation of protracted insurgency across the northern zone of the protectorate which went well beyond the "local shocks" alluded to by Mamdani. A familiar divide and rule pattern of conflict and collaboration between the colonisers and local potentates had delivered an unsteady order, albeit with significant parts of the Rif still well beyond Spanish control. These arrangements reflect perfectly the attributes of a "frontier governmentality" defined by Benjamin D. Hopkins as a "system of personal administration, justified and stiffened by the objective independence of the law [where] Local tribesmen provided the first line of colonial muscle to enforce the precepts of the regime's legal code and personal administration within frontier societies. As tribal police and militia, they became the coercive arm of the state complicit in their own suppression." (Hopkins 2020, 5).

In the summer of 1921, however, an entirely new (and, in retrospect most powerful) challenge came in the shape of a six-year rebellion led by Muhammad bin Abdel-Karim Al-Khattabi (aka Abdelkrim), during which time he proclaimed an independent Rif Republic (*al-jumhuriyya al-riffiya*). The full details of this complex and influential early instance of national liberation need not detain us here, but they unequivocally point to a parallel process of state-formation *through* anti-colonial resistance (Ayache 1981; Daoud 1999; Montgomery Hart 1976; Pennell 1986; Tahtah 1999; Woolman 1969). Abdelkrim, scion of the prominent Rifian Aït Ouriaghel clan who had sporadically been on the payroll of Spanish colonial authorities, unified previously fractious tribal groups in the region under a single banner of Rif sovereignty from 1921-27, inflicting damaging defeats on the Spanish through disciplined guerrilla warfare and by establishing a territorial administration with its own standing army, national currency, central bank, and diplomatic representation (Daoud 1999; de Madariaga 2009; Pennell 1986; Tahtah 1999; Woolman 1969). Abdelkrim's inspiration in wider modernist movement of pan-Islamic reform captured in the writings of Mohammed Abduh and others, as well as his insistence the new Republic was a unique experiment in local, federated self-rule, all signalled the construction of a novel political subjectivity largely shaped through imperial circuits and the colonial mirror: in his Spanish education and employment, as well as the later sublation of this experience, Abdelkrim was both product and scourge of Spanish colonialism; his war-time Republic as much part of a transnational wave of anti-colonial campaigns and republican state-building like that witnessed in Turkey, as a very unique reaction to the

deeply factionalised political ecology of the Rif (Daoud 1999; Tahtah 1999). Most importantly, the Army of Africa emerging from this period of Madrid's colonial war efforts was to prove critical in triggering and then shaping the course of the Spanish Civil War, thereby complicating any straightforward notions of exclusive territorial sovereignty mapping onto legitimate monopoly over the means of violence. It is here that the contrapuntal sensibility when making sense of these different but convergent dynamics adds analytical value.

The clearest expression of the "overlapping territories, intertwined histories" at play lie in the colonial roots of the two main military forces involved in Franco's civil war frontline and the 1934 Asturian miners' repression that preceded it - the Moroccan Regulares and the Spanish Foreign Legion. The first of these emerged around 1911, after a few years of largely ineffectual experimentation with lightly-armed native police forces. Moroccan nationals were recruited under Spanish leadership into various infantry and cavalry battalions (*tabores*) tasked with assisting the colonial pacification of the northern zone, and given the title of Regular Indigenous Forces (*Fuerzas Regulares Indígenas*) in contrast to the Moroccan Sultan's personal army or *Mahalla*, as well as the smaller auxiliary and constabulary forces. The creation of such indigenous regiments was driven by dynamics of "decentralised despotism" just mentioned. But it was also a response to the unpopularity of the colonial war among the metropolitan working class (expressed most violently during the 1909 "Tragic Week" of rioting in Barcelona against reservist call-ups) aswell as the accompanying assumption by the Army High Command that Moroccan lives were worth less than Spanish ones. The second of these assault forces, the Spanish Legion formed in 1920, was directly inspired by the French Foreign Legion yet claimed in the nomenclature of *El Tercio* a lineage dating back to the early-modern Habsburg imperial troops, the *Tercios de Flandes* (Ballenilla y García de Gamarra 2023). Like its Gallic counterpart, the Legion recruited both nationals and foreigners with a chequered personal past (although the latter never made up more than 20 per cent of the force); individuals who, in the title of a famous legionary anthem, were willing to enlist as 'Bridegrooms of Death' (*Novios de la Muerte*) in the pursuit of Spanish imperial glory (Álvarez 2001; Rodríguez Jiménez 2005). The Legion's explicit mission was to eradicate Moroccan anti-colonial resistance through recourse to brutalised – and often illegal – warfare. Its founding father and subsequent leader José Millán Astray used unambiguously fascist and imperialist imagery celebrating death, combat, discipline and ultra-nationalism when conjuring through this new elite corps "an effective fighting force" that could "quickly compensat[e] for the losses suffered among our indigenous force of Africa" (quoted in Álvarez 2001, 14).

Their operational mobility and autonomy, coupled with a relative detachment from the rest of the Armed Forces in terms of personnel, doctrine and physical location also rendered the Legion and Regulares as expeditionary forces. The Regulares in particular were comparable to, and in many ways inspired by auxiliary troops common to many other campaigns of colonial occupation and policing, or indeed the theatres of both World Wars (Echenberg 1991). They were paid a daily rate of 5.25 pesetas which, according to Balfour represented "50 per cent more than the militiamen of the Nationalist army" (Balfour 2002, 272). This was an extremely secure salary for many men whose alternative source of income in North Africa – agricultural labour, whether at home or in neighbouring Algeria – was at best seasonal, and at worst, jeopardised by war and drought. Despite being foreigners who were paid to wage war in a different

country, the Regulares were not mere mercenaries – they were colonial conscripts integrated into a legal-military patronage system that went beyond a simple cash transaction (Ettinger 2014). Neither fully part of a colonial levy system like the Senegalese *tiralleurs*, nor an imperial "fire brigade" like the Indian Army, the Regulares contained elements of both, but were principally designed for counter-insurgency operations in Morocco (Clayton 1988; Jensen 2019). Their eventual dispatch to the Iberian Peninsula became a matter of operational expediency and domestic propaganda for Spanish commanders, and among those enlisted, a function of economic opportunity, political coercion and a degree of ideological commitment to Franco's religious crusade against infidel "Reds". A sense of adventure, the romance of travel abroad and the drive to assert a masculine identity built around honour and independence are also cited as reasons for volunteering in the few available testimonies from Moroccan veterans themselves (Al Tuma 2018; Balfour 2002; de Madariaga 2015; Sánchez Ruano 2004).

Underpinning this collective agency were the strong clientelist bonds which endured from the Rifian campaign of the 1920s into the call to arms for the Spanish Civil War. Plainly, it was not necessarily the personnel that survived across the two decades, but the patronage structures themselves (many of Franco's Moroccan civil war fighters would in the 1930s have been young men with little prior combat experience). A pyramidal system of Military Controllers (*Servicio de Intervenciones Militares*) established during the decade after the rout at Annual had, in parallel to the body of civilian *interventores* secured the steady supply of Moroccan recruits for the Spanish Army of Africa. In essence, enlistment of indigenous troops took two basic forms: Rifian men (by 1936 Moroccans from either zone of the Protectorate) would respond independently to Spanish recruitment drives, prompted chiefly by the need to supplement meagre incomes and sign up to the Regulares for a salary; or they might join the so-called *harka* forces conscripted and led by local notables or *qaids* who, in exchange for payment in cash and in kind, supplied troops from *kabilas* (villages or settlements) under their command. Recruitment was also overdetermined by the politics of pacification during the Rif war within and among the various local tribes or kinship groups. As the Spanish adapted to Abdelkrim's guerrilla, the Regulares were replenished with men from defeated populations who were effectively press-ganged into the indigenous forces as part of the spoils of war. Thus, the Spanish gradually built a pliable network of "Friendly Moors" (*Moros amigos*), generally located close to the colonial *presidios* (garrisons) such as Ceuta, Melilla and Alhucemas, who supplied recruits as well acting as informants and auxiliaries in the pacification process. It was these very networks, which during the counter-insurgency campaigns had "formed a community of soldiers in which fraternity and solidarity were more powerful than ideology or politics" (Balfour 2002, 275) that were revitalised and redeployed in the build-up to the Spanish Civil War.

We have, then, in the example of the Regulares and the *harka* columns, eminently contrapuntal instances of a multi-layered colonial subjectivity articulated by both a deeply hierarchical process of frontier governmentality aided by the mobilisation of a local system of tribal clientelism just outlined, with a much more "horizontal" phenomenon of international military detachments made up of native soldiers who could be deployed anywhere under Spanish authority. This roving, transferable quality was of course even more pronounced among the Spanish Foreign Legion, whose very composition and mission assumed mobility and circulation across different terrains as

a distinctively colonial combat unit. Both organisations were premised initially on their exclusive use outside the Iberian Peninsula. Yet a signally imperial circulation of force – be it through soldiers, commanders, doctrine, expertise, matériel or intelligence – gave these military divisions a unique power which by the early 1930s began to be capitalised by Africanist officers conspiring against the newly-proclaimed Republic on the Spanish mainland. The significance of such imperial detachment is particularly visible in the exceptional forms of violence that accompanied Spain's colonial wars in Morocco, and which were later replicated in the metropole.

A History of Extreme Violence

To understand the full impact of the "imperial boomerang" of colonial violence upon the Spanish mainland, it is worth quoting at some length the memoirs of the then Minister of War, Diego Hidalgo, as he candidly recalled the main rationale for landing African soldiers on the Cantabrian coast to repress the 1934 Asturian miner's uprising:

> I was terrified by the idea of our [Spanish] soldiers dropping like flies, victims of their own inexperience and lack of battle-readiness, having to fight in a harsh climate, in a hostile terrain, possibly enduring guerrilla warfare where dynamite would act as the preferred weapon of war and that, while many soldiers fell, there were in Africa 12,000 battle-hardened men, prepared, well versed in defense and ambush, tough and accustomed to life on the field, subject to iron-fisted discipline. (Rodríguez Jiménez 2005, 125; translation my own)

Tough, disciplined, experienced, trained in irregular warfare and above all, more expendable than Spanish conscripts, the Regulares and Legionnaires on this account embodied the imperial, muscular militarism that was to save Spain from the degenerate, godless proletarian subversives who, for much of the army command and their supporters, constituted an "anti-Spain". These reactionary values had a long pedigree in Spanish history, but they were reinvigorated through the colonial enterprise in Morocco (Macías Fernández 2019; Jensen 2002). The pacification campaigns of the two decades preceding the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War witnessed the experimentation in unique and sometimes novel forms of warfare that had brutalisation, racialisation, and extermination at their core – all features of Césaire's decivilizing of the coloniser, and Taussig's colonial mirror.

Such modalities of violence were familiar to both sides of the Mediterranean, merging, so to speak, the worst of both worlds in a clear example of contrapuntal territorial overlap over an intertwined historical period. The Spanish humiliation at Annual lead to a change in doctrine and tactics marked by a defensive retreat and the turn to irregular *harka* battalions against Abdelkrim's insurgent Republic. But such recalibrations were also accompanied by an Africanista revanchism which normalised scorched-earth policies associated to both colonial war and the local *razzia*. The latter is a latinisation of the Arabic term *gāziya* referring to punitive raiding practices central to the reproduction of North African tributary societies which had a counterpart in the history of Iberian frontier-raiding explicitly replicated by the Legion. It has a convoluted genealogy connected to the pre-Islamic notions of "shock incursions" on rival land, property and populations which, as Jensen has painstakingly demonstrated, was actively reinvented by French Marshal Bugeaud in the colonial conquest and

pacification of Algeria from 1830, only to be recycled almost a century later by Spanish commanders and administrators in Morrocco (Jensen 2017). Somewhat ironically, Bugeaud had served in the Peninsular War of 1807-14, and it is entirely plausible the French Marshal's application of the *razzia* was inspired by his experience of guerrilla warfare in Iberia, Although, as Thomas Rid (2009) has rightly insisted, the *razzia* was only one side of a counter-insurgency strategy that also included native collaboration – in the French case, through the so-called *bureaux arabes*, a direct template for the Spanish *Servicio de Intervenciones Militares* explored earlier.

For all the Spanish claims they were bringing legal-bureaucratic rule and socio-economic development to Morocco, a posting or tour of duty in the Protectorate was deemed by officers and soldiers alike as an opportunity for quick enrichment through sinecure, military promotion, corruption, contraband, pillage, or a combination of all of the above, as vividly reflected in some of the novels and memoirs of the time (Balfour 2002; Barea 2018 [1943]; Sender 1976 [1930]). The Legion in particular became infamous for its lawless conduct during and outside combat, indulging in everything from posing for trophy photographs with beheaded enemy soldiers to the encouragement of rape and looting in counter-insurgency operations under the cover of the customary *razzia*. The colony thus turned into an exceptional space *par excellence*; a corrupt, peripheral frontier zone of extreme violence, conspiracy and perpetual war where only the martial and "racial" virtues of hierarchy, resilience and moral fortitude could guarantee survival.

It is however the use of chemical weapons by the Spanish against Rifian populations that best exemplifies the brutalisation of Madrid's colonial mission in northern Africa, and the consequent reinforcement of the Moroccan protectorate as an exterminationist testing-ground. Sebastian Balfour's (2002, chapter 5) penetrating account has demonstrated how Spain's interest in acquiring chemical weapons for use in Morocco was "reawakened" by the Annual Disaster. Led by King Alfonso XIII's keen enthusiasm for poison gases, sectors of the Spanish High Command were seduced by the possibility of a technological fix to Abdelkrim's increasingly powerful revolt. Following secret negotiations in preceding months, contracts were signed with German companies in the summer of 1922 for the construction of a chemicals arms factory in Aranjuez, south of Madrid, as well as the supply of mustard-gas bombs, gas masks and several hydroplanes to deliver the toxic payload. With French materials and expertise, the Spanish began at the same time producing toxic weapons (phosgene, tear gas and chloropricine) in their North African enclave of Melilla. In the course of the following five years, Spanish fighter-planes and artillery illegally (and therefore secretly) unleashed chemical warfare across the Rif mountains, dropping thousands of bombs on refractory populations and shelling rebellious strongholds. Balfour's scrupulous research is inconclusive about the exact scale of the chemical onslaught, and is guarded about any definitive assessment of the poisonous campaign's effectiveness. Yet he is clear about its immediate and long-term effects - ranging from blindness, burns, cancer or plain death, to the contamination of land and livestock - and is unequivocal about the genocidal racism that informed the adoption of chemical warfare against Moroccan rebels. Quoting a report from the French military attaché's interview with King Alfonso XIII, Balfour unearths the conspiratorial supremacism that underpinned the Spanish ruler's worldview at the time: "'The important thing' the attaché reported the king saying, 'is the extermination, like that of malicious beasts, of the Benu Urriaguels [sic] and the tribes who are closest to Abdel Krim' […] The Riffians' offensive, the king

continued, “was but the sketch (*amorce*) of a general uprising of all the Muslim world at the instigation of Moscow and international Jewry…’’ (Balfour 2002, 135).

It was precisely this political vision that was sought out by the country’s right-wing government in October 1934 when faced with a revolutionary strike in Asturias (and indeed, briefly, in Barcelona and Madrid). One cabinet member is said to have remarked about the insurgent miners: “For those who committed so many acts of savagery, there weren’t enough Moors, because they deserve Moors and something more.” (cited in Sánchez Ruano 2004, 46). It is telling that, despite President Alcalá Zamora’s reluctance in entrusting Africanistas with the suppression of the miners’ strike, General Franco managed to position himself as the de facto commander of the operation from Madrid among other things, by placing his friend and Army of Africa veteran Lieutenant Colonel Juan Yagüe (later known as the “hyena of Asturias”) at the helm of the Regulares in Asturias. As Paul Preston has suggested, Franco “[r]egarded left-wing workers with the same racist contempt which had underlain his use of locally recruited mercenary troops, the Regulares Indígenas, against the Rif tribesmen.” (Preston 2012, 83). This was, for all intents and purposes another frontier war of pacification - this time against the communist, anti-clerical, working-class hordes who were polluting the Spanish fatherland. Short of chemical warfare, the Legion and the Regulares employed the same tactics and techniques of violence in Asturias as they had done in the Rif – from pillage and torture, through to aerial bombardment and shelling of civilian settlements. There is no need here to detail the various testimonies and records of the wanton brutality meted out by these forces. It might suffice to note with Paul Preston (2012) that the vastly disproportionate number of civilian casualties resulting from the events in Asturias: nearly 2,000 civilians perished during the ten-day insurgency and subsequent repression, as opposed to eighty-eight soldiers, eighty-six Civil Guards and fifty-eight Assault guards killed. Careful estimates by Paco Ignacio Taibo II (2013) suggest that some 15,000 people (mostly workers) were arrested in the aftermath of the rebellion, with about one fifth of these still imprisoned one year after the October events.

Months later, when Franco and his supporters embarked on their military rebellion from Morocco in July 1936, North Africa had in a sense already experienced the atrocities of the subsequent civil war, acting as a laboratory for the exterminatory violence now about to visit the peninsula. The formulations and practices of colonial violence reappeared on both sides of the conflict, although the scale and purpose of such violence differed significantly in the Republican and National sectors (Espinosa Maestre 2010). In the Republican zone, a distinctive – arguably more democratic – relationship to violence sought to root popular justice in the principle of somehow disciplining but thereafter co-existing with, rather than exterminating those who had sided with Franco. Similarly, though rape, looting, torture, summary executions and murder were all features of repression and score-settling in the Republican side, their causes and consequences were markedly different to those of the insurgent zone. Vengeance was generally a more intimate and opportunistic affair in the former – targeted at persons and institutions that had been, or were perceived to have been responsible for injustices in a named place and particular socio-political contexts. Moreover, there is ample evidence to suggest that Republican authorities and leaders – including the often-maligned Anarchists – sought to impose the rule of law and due process, thereby preventing the kinds of outrages committed by some revolutionary militias, especially during the immediate aftermath of Franco’s coup (Espinosa Maestre 2010).

On the National side, however, the physical annihilation of the opposition was a strategic objective from the beginning. "The repression carried out by the military rebels" Preston succinctly puts it, "was a carefully planned operation to eliminate, in the words of the director of the coup, Emilio Mola, 'without scruple or hesitation those who do not think as we do.'" (Preston 2012, xiii). Importantly for our purposes, the colonial detachments of the African Army played a crucial part in this endeavour acting – in the same way they had done in Asturias in October 1934 - as the exterminating frontline (though often conducting brutalities during rear-guard "mop-up" operations) in the initial "purging of the South" during the summer of 1936, and then via the infamous "Column of Death" that marched from Andalusia and Extremadura onto Madrid in the autumn of that same year. A complete disassociation from local socio-political dynamics and a utopian - placeless and therefore timeless; ground and year zero – conception of a pristine and virginal Spain facilitated this reactionary notion of liberation through extermination. For Franco and his rebel army, terrorising opponents and liquidating the enemy was the solution in cleansing Spain of its Bolshevik-Judeo-Masonic infection.

The Legion was the quintessential expression of this martial culture, but many of these same values were replicated among the Regulares, as some Moroccan troops internalised their own stereotyped savagery, fearlessness, sacrifice and loyalty to charismatic leadership. The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war has in particular become a source of historiographical debate and controversy (Alcalde 2021). Oral testimonies (involving both soldiers and civilians) together with official records offer unambiguous evidence of rape being used to terrorise Republican sympathisers or mere civilian bystanders in the first months of the war (Balfour 2002; de Madariaga 2002; Preston 2012; Sánchez Ruano 2004). The infamous case of the Moroccan Regular Officer El Mizzian sadistically ordering the gang rape of two female workers in the knowledge the women "would be dead in four hours", and National commander Queipo de Llano's radio broadcasts encouraging sexual violence against Republicans, are both commonly-cited examples of such practices. But as Ali Al Tuma's careful survey of this painful subject indicates, Moroccan troops were not specifically or even disproportionally responsible for such sexual violence (Al Tuma 2018). The bogeyman figure of the Moor as a monstrous predator was the construct of both National and Republican propaganda, which typically essentialised the allegedly congenital attributes of the Moorish "martial race". This is not to belittle the numerous and real (both documented and supressed) crimes of sexual violence perpetrated by Legionnaires, Regulares and other National forces as part of their repressive campaign in Asturias, or the "cleansing" operations during the civil war (Muñoz Encinar 2019; Varona 2021). It is instead to insist that it was the military culture of dehumanised, distanced, exterminatory violence promoted by Franco's Army of Africa and its Falangist allies, and not the specific ethnic identity of groups or individuals that account for such heinous practices.

The use of Moroccan troops in both Asturias and thereafter during the course of the Spanish Civil War was an instance of colonial mirror reflecting back onto the metropole. In contrapuntal style,roles were inverted and the backdrop changed – Asturias and Andalusia became the Rif, miners and peasants replaced the Moors; colonial subjects invaded the metropole, and class struggle stood-in for anti-colonial resistance as the focus of repression. But the modes of violence, the discourses and

policies of extermination, and the mobile detachments used to execute them were familiar to both experiences across the Gibraltar Strait. This symmetry has led some to assert that the Spanish civil war "came from Africa" (Nerín 2005); that it was imported intact from the colonial frontier into the metropolitan centre. As we have thus far seen, however, it is more accurate and useful to think of the distorted mirroring in these forms of violence through imperial circuits which do not respect tidy national delimitations or neat causal chains. Whilst clearly allowing for the uneven and hierarchical ways in which this circulation operated (the whole point of colonialism is, after all, domination) reifying the colony and metropole as an "outside" and "inside" also risks externalising both the causes and the dynamics of violence and emancipation like those experienced in Asturias in 1934 and the Spanish Civil War, or indeed under the Rif Republic from 1921-27.

Brothers in Arms

With the end of the civil war in April 1939, the Army of Africa was disbanded and the majority of its surviving members repatriated to Morocco as pensioned ex-combatants. Having declared himself Generalísimo of Spain, Francisco Franco retained a cavalry squadron of former Regulares as his personal "Moorish Guard" (*Guardia Mora*) who in future decades escorted the dictator in standardised indigenous ceremonial attire at public parades and state occasions. This proximity of an "Othered" Moor was both personal and political: as Franco himself was to confess, "Without Africa, I can scarcely explain myself to myself" (cited in Balfour, 2002: 202). For an otherwise largely unreflective individual, this extraordinary self-awareness raises all manner of questions about the identity-formation generated and operationalised across both shores of the Gibraltar Strait during the Spanish Civil War and the decades either side of the crisis. The individual and collective contradictions embodied in Franco's own trajectory appear irreconcilable to any outside observer. How to justify a National-Catholic crusade against the (Moscow-directed) infidel led by a Muslim vanguard? Were African regiments responsible for salvaging Spain's national unity, having first practiced the civil war's exterminatory violence in the alleged Asturian birthplace of the medieval Christian Reconquest? And how to reconcile racist stereotypes of Rifian treachery, cowardice and insubordination with a 'National' frontline made up of the very same Moors? The contortions Franco's propagandists went through in order to square these contradictions were often farcical: the Regulares it was said, were allied with Nationals in their desire to rid Spain (and indeed the rest of the world) of Bolshevik-Judeo-Masonic revolutionaries. The African troops it was claimed, had thanks to the colonial civilizing mission absorbed the best of Spanish virtues – nobility, piety, discipline and integrity – which they were now extending to the peninsula. Sebastian Balfour appropriately recounts an anecdote of the Bishop of Pamplona who, after his home village in Andalusia was taken by Franco's troops, ordered the replacement of the effigy of the Moor with that of Lenin in the village church's traditional altarpiece image of *Santiago Matamoros* (St James Moor-slayer, the country's patron Saint).

The most promising framework with which to understand these extraordinary ideological manoeuvres in National-Catholic discourse and practice involves combining the ideas of paternalism (Wright, 2020) and brotherhood (Mateo Dieste, 2003) in the construction of a sort of fraternal tutelage which presented Spanish colonial rule in the northern Morocco as a "sentimental, not a political protectorate" (Velasco

de Castro 2014: 215). As several Hispanist historians and cultural theorists have shown, the figure of the Moor - which had for centuries been represented in both high and popular culture in conflicting ways as bloodthirsty fanatic, enlightened despot, valiant warrior, duplicitous servant, or simply a noble savage - came to be glorified by the rebel side as a faithful, courageous, resilient and often eroticised fighter (Archilés 2013; Bolorinos Allard 2016; Jensen 2016; Martín Corrales 2002; Martin-Márquez 2004; Torres Delgado 2023). There was for Nationals no question of the Moroccan subordination in this relationship, but their commitment and audacity in battle indicated the Regulares shared a warrior genealogy with the best of the Iberian native sons. As Tomás García Figueras, fellow Africanist and later Franco's chief negotiator with Hitler floridly wrote in his memoirs:

> On the other side of the Strait … was a Muslim brother who, through his own independence and with an acute sense of his nationality and religion, felt integrated into our own fatherland through ties of love […] the native would join it [the Fatherland] with all the devotion and affection of a brother, asking for himself the honour of sharing with Spaniards the fight to death against the enemies of civilization and Godless men who threaten to undermine Western culture of which both Hispanity and Arabism [sic] have been the chief architects (Cited in Bolorinos Allard, 2016: 975; my own translation).

The fraternal tutelage which had accompanied the colonial administration through the system of "friendly Moors" was replicated in the hierarchical brotherhood that characterised the civil war. From the outset, Spanish-born soldiers were intermingled among the indigenous battalions along an average ratio of 1 to 5 as calculated by Ali Al Tuma (2018, 42). This was ostensibly to maintain unit coherence and combine the perceived "warlike aptitude" of Moroccans with a presumed Spanish level-headedness. Moorish troops were granted culturally-specific facilities and resources relating to religious rites, food and drink, health and recreation, whilst always remaining recognisable through their distinctive native uniform. Although some African soldiers did serve in Spanish-majority units, including the Legion and even Falangist militias, the bulk of Moroccan conscripts fought with comrades from the same tribal group or geographical region. Only a very small number (including the murderous El Mizzian encountered earlier) rose to senior officer rank. Legionnaires on the other hand considered themselves to be fiercely distinct from the Regulares, reaffirming the de facto racial segregation within the Army of Africa, despite the Legion formally allowing Moroccan enlistment. In the end, the disproportionate combat casualty rate among Regulares (11,500 killed, or about one in eight versus one in ten for European divisions) points to the fact that Moroccan soldiers were indeed used as cannon-fodder - or sacrificial siblings - for the National side. The limited oral testimonies from Moroccan ex-combatants suggest they took pride in their exceptional soldiery, recognising their critical importance to Franco's victory, but also the heavy price paid in the form of life-changing combat injuries and a perceived post-war abandonment (Deiback 2006).

The focus on Moroccan fighters in the Army of Africa should not, however, blind us to the presence, albeit numerically much smaller, of close to 1000 Arab volunteers from across the Middle East on the Republican side (Ben Salem 2003). The brutal suppression of the 1934 Asturian insurgency reinforced the Spanish left's antipathy

toward “Franco’s Moors” and this was viciously recorded not just in crassly racist caricatures among some of the left-wing press, broadcast and agitational outlets (Alcolea Escribano 2012; Martín Corrales 2002), but also in allegations of summary executions of Moroccan combatants captured by Republicans (Al Tuma 2018). Geopolitically, the principled anti-colonialism of the Spanish left was not matched by any meaningful support for Moroccan or indeed Rifian independence (Fleming 1998). This was partly due to the objective factor of an underdeveloped working class, and the corresponding absence of mass left-wing counterparts in the northern sector of the Protectorate, as well as the more subjective dimensions of Eurocentric superiority and outright bigotry among Spanish leftists toward “the Moor”. Matters were not improved by the continuity of Madrid’s colonial policies toward Morocco under the Republic, and their aerial bombardment of North African populations at the start of the civil war. Mutual distrust between the Spanish left and many Moroccans of the Spanish zone was exacerbated (and encouraged by the Spanish right) through the Regulares’ instrumental role in Franco’s initial success in the autumn of 1936, and the political support for the rebels offered by the Spanish protectorate’s most prominent nationalist leader Abdel-Khalek Torres, as well as the Moroccan sultan himself.

Efforts at creating a single Arab unit within the pro-Republican International Brigades were unsuccessful, although a Hispano-Moroccan antifascist battalion with around 300 volunteers, enlisted resident workers, and deserters from the National side was briefly cobbled together in late 1936, almost disappearing overnight due to heavy casualties. Jewish brigadistas from Arabs lands, North African leftists organised by Algerian militant Rabah Oussid’houm under the Commune de Paris Battalion, or Palestinian communist Najeti Sidiqi, instructed by the Comintern to conduct psychological and propaganda operations in Arabic targeted at Regulares, all represent the more diverse and capacious “Moorish” identities present in the Spanish Civil War (Bensalem, 1988; Bofarull 2004). To this we might add Al Tuma’s important recognition of the many ordinary, everyday and generally uneventful war-time interactions between Moroccans and Spaniards that took place in the National side in particular and which, while clearly discouraged by authorities that wished to segregate the two peoples (especially African men and local women), were in fact “tactfully” tolerated. In sum, although the procrustean figure of the Moor as either a younger sibling needing brotherly oversight, or a servile and cruel mercenary doing the dirty work for fascists were dominant tropes on both sides of the Spanish Civil War, these identities were subject to change and subversion as the war developed, highlighting the paradox so eloquently portrayed in Langston Hughes’ civil war poem:

> We captured a wounded Moor today/He was just as dark as me/I said, Boy, what you been doin' here/Fightin' against the free? […] Cause they got slaves in Africa —And they don't want 'em to be free/ Listen, Moorish prisoner, hell!/ Here, shake hands with me!/ I knelt down there beside him/And I took his hand —/But the wounded Moor was dyin'/ And he didn't understand. (Hughes, 1995 [1937])

For all the focus on brotherhood within the Army of Africa, the most salient example of racialised military solidarity during the period under scrutiny were the Africanista officers themselves. In an almost flawless example of how powerful national identities were constructed through imperial circuits, Franco and his officer cohort demonstrate the centrality of the colonial frontier in the making of Spanish National-Catholicism.

The Africanistas projected themselves as redeemers of a tarnished military-national-religious honour, which peninsular officers and politicians had betrayed through their effete, urbanised, metropolitan liberalism. With the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931, Morocco became the locus of a revanchist counter-revolution as it concentrated the true essence of "authentic" Spain, which Franco's clique claimed was being diluted by mainland democracy. It was in the colonial war-theatre of the Rif where these vernaculars of a primoradial Spanish national identity were refined, only then to be transposed onto the peninsular metropole in a contrapuntal movement traversing territory, yet unfolding during a single historical moment. Imperial circulation was doubly present in this context: as a geopolitical infrastructure facilitating the exercise of violent authority across jurisdictions led by a dedicated military faction, and as an ideological framework of frontier governmentality shared both with other imperial powers (most notably neighbouring France) and among Spain's own officer class. The sense of brotherhood here was one among equals; its materialisation, an ultranationalist vision of Spain liberated from secular democratic forces.

Conclusions: International Political Sociology through the Colonial Mirror

Toward the end of Driss Deiback's 2006 documentary on Regulares veterans *Los Perdedores* (The Defeated), two contemporary Spanish Muslims in Granada decry the national and local authorities' neglect over one of the few Muslim burial grounds where Army of Africa soldiers were officially laid to rest during the civil war. This brief episode in the 80-minute film distills many of the themes addressed in the present article around the international politics of sovereignty, violence and identity as they emerged contrapuntally during the interwar crisis and beyond, across Spanish and Moroccan territories. Regardless of their faith, motivation or allegiance, so the volunteer caretakers of Granada's Muslim cemetery suggest, the Moroccan soldiers interred there merit the same respect and attention as any other deceased soul. Implicit in such unimpeachable universal humanitarian logic, however, is the idea that those foreign soldiers who in the past fought for Franco today belong in Spain, actually buried in Spanish soil as a testament to their ultimate sacrifice for the National-Catholic cause in that country. Read through such a contrapuntal filter where place and time are interlaced, the memorialisation of Franco's Moroccan conscripts becomes politically fraught by raising questions of historical responsibility, national belonging, and ideological legacies with very strong contemporary reverberations (Martín Corrales 2002; Stenner 2019)

In Deiback's film, motifs of betrayal, deception and obligation figure prominently among the Moroccan ex-combatants interviewed. Former Regulares charge Franco's commanders with forcing or duping them into joining the Spanish Civil War, and denounce the paltry compensation received for their loyalty. As discussed above, there is much truth to these claims. Yet, equally, such narratives of treachery and victimhood tend also to elide the multidimensional agency that propelled tens of thousands of Moroccan men to the Spanish frontlines. Neither purely mercenary, nor solely coercive, the Army of Africa must be understood as a conjunctural outcome of specifically colonial structures of patronage and frontier governmentality, underpinned by distinctive imperial circuits of domination, resistance and collaboration. These dynamics point to an expression of international relations where formal hierarchies between peoples and nations are constantly subverted and reproduced by named groups

and social forces across states, which in turn challenge static conceptions of the dominant and subaltern, or core and periphery in world politics. It encourages IR theorists to focus on the continuing power of imperial encounters and the specific place of frontiers in the social, ecological and political reproduction of the international system. Thus, the figure of "The Moor" in the context of the interwar crisis cannot be seen as either a merely racialised figment of the Spanish imperialist imagination, nor the hapless casualty of colonial conscription. African soldiers were enmeshed in intricate socio-economic and political relations of poverty, clientelism, necessity and kinship within and across imperial centre and periphery, which created a unique martial identity during, and either side of the civil war. Similarly, the Africanista officers emerged out of a peculiar intersection between colonial counter-insurgency and metropolitan class conflict which was neither exclusively "African" nor "Spanish", but resolutely imperial. In both cases, essentialist conceptions of national or ethnic identity vanish in the face of the colonial mirror. To quote Barbara Fuchs once more: "Imitation compromises the narratives of national distinction by emphasizing inconvenient similarities and shared heritages" (Fuchs 2001, 4).

The distortions of the colonial mirror, however, do not erase the very real reconstructions of territorial sovereignty effected by the imperial circulations outlined above. One of the benefits of counterpoint is identifying instances such as post-war Spain and Morocco, where divergent state-building trajectories can readily be traced back to the mutual (if tense and unequal) prior interaction between those two societies. Most obviously, the immediate consequence of the Spanish Civil War was a forty-year military dictatorship marked by a deep internal social involution in that part of southern Europe. Spain'state and society were reconfigured through the civil war in ways that still resonate in today's democratic setting, including ongoing political disputes over the memorialisation of the conflict (Rubin 2014). In Morocco too, the distant legacies of the Rif Republic occasionally present themselves in, for example, the 2017 People's Movement (*Hirak al-Sha'bi*) cycle of protests which, after the grisly death in a garbage truck of street-seller Mohsine Fikri following police harassment in the northern Moroccan city of Al Hoceima, acquired a distinctive regional orientation and a prolonged intensity in the Rif (Aidi 2017; Wolf 2019). Plainly, these are mobilisations in response to very contemporary socio-economic inequalities and state repression in today's Morocco, but they do express both a material and symbolic continuity with previous Rif rebellions against external encroachment and political marginalisation, including Abdelkrim's Republic (Aouragh 2016; Pennell 2017). The colonial rule that structured relations between Morocco and Spain during the interwar years has now formally dissolved, and the two social formations interact as nominal equals in the family of nations. The status of Spaniards of Moroccan descent, or those still crossing the Strait as migrant workers today falls squarely within the framework of citizenship and rights, both fought out at the jurisdictional scale of territorial sovereignty. Yet as this article has argued, an account of contemporary Spanish-Moroccan relations that is attentive to the contrapuntal international political-sociological interactions beyond the state and across societies ("overlapping territories, intertwined histories") is much the richer and, ultimately, more accurate than a simple legal-diplomatic interpretation of international relations. It is a narrative which, in Eric Calderwood's powerful reinterpretation of shared histories across the Gibraltar Strait, emphasises the long-standing mutual constitution peoples on both shores:

> [Interwar Spanish colonial apologists] claimed a cultural and even biological affinity with their neighbors to the south … by making the legacy of al-Andalus the main justification for Spain's expansion into North Africa and the Muslim world. The colonial myth of al- Andalus was, in turn, taken up by Moroccans and used to craft a national identity, one that emphasized Morocco's place at the crossroads of Europe and the Muslim world. Thus, the idea of al-Andalus has served to approximate Spaniards to Africa while distancing Moroccans from it (Calderwood 2018: 22).

Finally, because this latter claim regarding the importance of inserting transnational relations into IR is today hardly controversial, it is worth reiterating by way of a closing reflection the distinctiveness of specifically imperial circuits in shaping relations between and across states. The contrapuntal reading above of the Spanish Civil War sheds light on unique problematics of international political sociology such as the role of transnational soldiers in world politics, or the place of race and racism in reproducing the international system. Put bluntly, even the most nationalist of national armies are the outcome of encounters with and incorporations of "foreign" forces, while the codification of race and racism tends to be the product of contested, if unequal social struggles which can resolvein partial and temporary collaboration -, not always the comprehensive, one-sided imposition of the will of the most powerful. My central contention, then, has been that as empires dominate they also generate - specific expressions of sovereignty, violence and identity. In the case-study selected here, the fairly exceptional instance of colonial troops being deployed for purposes of metropolitan repression stands in contrast to other comparable experiences where "Guardians of Empire" (Killingray and Omissi 1999) either fought on one side of an inter-imperial rivalry or repressed and policed other colonial peoples – rarely was the colonial subaltern used to suppress the metropolitan subaltern in the twentieth century. Rather than accepting a rigid separation between "inside" and "outside" or metropole and colony, I have suggested these two stylised spaces in fact constantly invaded each other. Specifically, it was uniquely mobile and culturally distinct units – the Legion and Regulares – who executed much of Franco's exterminationist plans, mainly because they were designed and drilled as imperial detachments, disassociated and distanced from both local politics and that of their own homelands. This argument echoes similar claims about social distance and systematic Othering as pre-requites for any form of genocide (Bauman 1989). But it also indicates that such dissociation required spatial distancing – a form of violence and repression reliant on the far-flung geographical displacement of mobile units allowing for both the physical removal, or "cleansing" of enemy populations as well as the disproportionately high casualty rate among colonial conscripts. In the process, such expressions of imperial circulation refashioned distinctive forms of collective identity which, despite the efforts of colonial authorities and self-perception of many of the actors involved, were rendered much more adaptable and elastic than allowed for by the straightforward distinction between "metropolitan" and "subaltern".

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