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FRANCO'S SPAIN AND THE JAPANESE EMPIRE (1937-45)

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Relations between Spain and Japan were anomalous over the course of the seven years during which the Sino-Japanese war lasted, because they attained an unprecedented importance that would also not be witnessed for a long time to come after this period. Despite the Spanish colonisation of the Philippines, from the time of their expulsion from Japan in the 17th century, relations between the two nations had never been significant, not even after the comprehensive opening up of Japan to the outside world in 1868. After being defeated by the United States and the end of the Spanish colonization in Asia in 1898, not only did Spain's scarce commercial interest in Japan dissipate but this Iberian nation also witnessed a conscious reduction in interest in this space the ties becoming minimal, both with regard to the Philippines and, especially, with the rest of East Asia. As a consequence, contacts between Spain and Japan during the first three decades of the 20th century were negligible. The most well known episode was (Spain represented Japanese interests with the main powers during World War I) and the rest of events did not go beyond the scope of the diplomatic milieu.

Mutual perceptions, however, had a greater impact than these strictly diplomatic relations: both countries had a well defined image of each other. In a certain way, they were parallel, because both countries were labelled exotic by the other nation and their contributions did not go beyond the realm of mere curiosity. For Spain, Japan was situated in the Far East, with the connotations that this implied and that the name itself suggested: distant and not Western. It had some other notable characteristics, such as having made the transition from being a territory susceptible to colonisation in the mid-19th century to the category of a great imperial power, as was verified in 1905, an episode that earned Japan widespread admiration amongst several sectors of Spanish society. The socialist Julián Besteiro, for example, sympathised with the slogan "Let us Japanise Spain" that was repeated during the I World War, to highlight the need to follow the example of a country that paid great attention to education and solidarity, and whose monarchy was perceived as austere. This fascination with Japan predominated, over time, amongst the more conservative classes in Spanish society, such as military men.

Spain's image in Japan also had two facets. While on the one hand, Spain was a European country that belonged to Western civilisation, its weak colonisation of the Philippines and the precarious stability of Spanish domestic policies ensured that the Japanese viewed the Spanish with a certain amount of disdain, in much the same manner as occurred with northern European nations with regard to the countries of southern Europe. Assimilating ideas that were then in vogue about racial miscegenation during the Arab occupation, the prejudicial effects of hot climates on the characters of people and other such notions, the overall panorama of ideas associated with Spain was a melange of an occidental and orientalist vision: European, and with a glorious history, but nonetheless static, full of contrasts, despotic, feminine and tending towards violence and cruelty, as represented in Bizet's opera *Carmen*. Both nations represented the other as semi-Oriental, via contradictory lenses that enabled each of them to feel, within this civilisational scale that was so prevalent during this time, superior to the other.

In 1937, when the wars in Spain and in China happened to coincide, the Spanish (both Republicans as well as Nationalists) felt, for the first time in a long while, that they were affected by events that took place in the territory of the other nation. This reciprocal interest continued until 1945, although it underwent a dramatic change in nature because while the early period was characterised by amicable relations, the final phases of World War II were marked by Spanish hatred for the Japanese. This study will analyse this period of renewed attention, focusing upon the Franco supporters on the Spanish side and the Japanese militarists. Starting with a description of the events that took place, this article tries an interpretation based on perceptions of why such a dramatic change took place, from the initial friendship to the hatred of later years.

1. The anti-communist alliance

The Sino-Japanese wars (1937-45) and the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) were the two main conflicts that took place before World War II; in addition, they occurred simultaneously at the two geographical extremes of the Eurasian continent, as was noted at the time. The quest for allies in similar situations resulted in the fact that both the Spanish nationalists as well as the Japanese militarists deemed the conflicts to be similar and felt themselves to be in a parallel situation, proclaiming that they were engaged in a common struggle against international communism. When viewed through these lenses, the Spaniards felt the Japanese triumphs to be their own and the conquests of Chinese cities were utilised for purposes of domestic propa-

ganda. The Japanese militarists shared this vision, however, they preferred to use the friendship with Spaniards instead to educate themselves on their soil about the advances in Soviet armaments, especially with regard to the new M-80 tank.

Japan's importance in Spain was revealed when, in late 1938, Japan, Italy and Germany decided to reinforce the Anti-Comintern Pact. Spain was an obvious candidate to join but General Franco and his foreign minister, Jordana, resisted such a move, on account of which these three nations decided to apply pressure individually. As a consequence, the Japanese representative, with two other colleagues, pressurised Franco separately to sign in the Pact ***slightly modified***, in a demonstration of Japan's new status. It was only in May 1939, when the Civil War was already over, that Spain, along with Hungary and Manchukuo, a Japanese puppet state, joined the Anti-Comintern Pact. In this manner, Japan and Spain became allies, although in a very short span of time the political orientation of the anti-Communist countries did an abrupt volte-face: a mere three months after, the signing of the Non-Aggression Treaty between the Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany rendered obsolete the Spanish adherence to the Anti-Comintern.

2. The struggle against democracies

In spite of the changing significance of signing the Anti-Comintern, common Hispano-Japanese interests expanded after they coincided in the new Axis drive against democracies. After the Nazi-Soviet agreement and the outbreak of World War II, both Tokyo as well as Madrid were disoriented, and while Japan revamped its government and tried to draw closer to democracies, Spain and Italy allied themselves vehemently with Finland in its struggle against the Soviet invasion, going in the face of the German attitude. Nevertheless, with the German military triumphs, both Madrid as well as Tokyo once again reinforced their ties with the Third Reich, following Rome, who in June 1940, after the fall of France, entered World War II.

From the summer of 1940 onwards, this sentiment of participating in a joint struggle against the same enemies reverberated amongst these erstwhile signatories to the Anti-Comintern Pact, the result being a new agreement, the so-called Tripartite Pact, formed again by Japan, Italy and Germany. This time they joined efforts against democracies, especially aimed at avoiding the growing involvement of the United States and Spain joined a month later, after a meeting between Franco and Hitler in Hendaya, albeit secretly. This Hispano-Japanese political alliance, although an indirect one, entailed efforts to obtain Navycerts (permits issued by the Royal British Navy to foreign boats allowing them to transport goods) and an exchange

of products via a – quite ineffective – Commercial Treaty. Too, when Japan sought to substitute raw materials that had been banned by the United States, a so-called *Spanish Economic Mission* was invited along with other delegations from Latin America, apparently in order to buy mercury, but this Mission never rendered results. On the political sphere, Spain bet heavily on China for a final triumph of the pro-Japanese government headed by Wang Jingwei and in June 1940 the Spanish Economic Mission was the first delegation to officially visit him. Besides the joy of Wang, however, Madrid's policy only produced bafflement among observers, not only for going further than Germans or Italians, who were their diplomatic sponsors in Asia since the Spanish War, but also than those who had backed the government of Wang, the Japanese military. The army was still undecided whether to confer diplomatic recognition and rely exclusively on Wang or keep on trying to attract the Nationalist Party of Jiang Jie-shi. Efforts were also made to co-operate in terms of propaganda, both in Latin America as well as in those areas of Asia that had been occupied by Japan, however, yet again, the results were negligible.

Once again, undoubtedly, the results of Hispano-Japanese relations during the early phases of World War II occurred within the realm of perceptions. Both nations assumed a parallel posture: they were not directly involved in the European conflict, however the Japanese and Spaniards alike enthusiastically desired the triumph of the Axis powers. Furthermore, they were the two most important trump cards of the Axis powers in their struggle against the enemy, since Tokyo and Madrid held the key to the conquest of two crucial posts for the definitive defeat of the British Empire: Gibraltar and Singapore. It was relatively common, then, to refer to Spain and Japan together during the most victorious moments of the Axis powers, both in Allied documentation as well as in that of the Axis powers. This association between Spain and Japan was last reflected by the Italian foreign minister, Galeazzo Ciano, who noted in his diary an account of the phone call from his German counterpart, Joachim Von Ribbentrop, to invite Italy to join the War against the United States. Ciano ended the paragraph with an unanswered question: "And Spain?"¹

3. The Pacific War: the assignments

Pearl Harbour put an end to the parallelism perception between Spain and Japan: Tokyo ended up by being involved in the worldwide conflict while Madrid did not. Spain continued his policy of Non-Belligerence, which could

1 Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario, 1939-1943*. Milan-Rome, Rizzoli, 1946, Vol. I, p. 481.

be understood as the step that preceded its entry into the war, as was the case of Italy, but its final outcome was different. The Spanish involvement was at a different level, which is the reason why the Pacific War once again raised the level of relations, since mutual friendship now began to have definite objectives that were far more concrete and, furthermore, could have been crucial for the result of the conflict. Tokyo relied upon Spain to provide it with raw materials, to achieve a greater acceptance in the Philippines, to obtain intelligence and to represent its interests in more difficult countries. By means of the crucial mediation of the Spanish foreign minister, Ramón Serrano Suñer, Japan and Spain became involved in operations that Germany or Italy could not carry out and, in this manner, Madrid became the western nation that most assisted the Japanese war efforts.

The impact of this cooperation was uneven. The exchange of raw materials and Spanish political co-operation to achieve a wider domination over the population of the Philippines during the Japanese occupation had varying results. In the case of the exchange of products, it is possible that some purchases of Spanish goods took place, transported to Japan in ships or in the so-called "Blockade Runner" submarines, which travelled from one theatre of the conflict to another. However, there is evidence of a fair number of unsuccessful attempts and, in any case, the volume of any such transactions would have been rather small, because the quantities of products to be transported would have been minimal. As for the occupation of the Philippines, the Spanish consul in Manila handed over a list of Spanish leftists so that they could be detained, while the Japanese strove to propagate messages by Spaniards extolling their achievements. The Falangists managed to obtain a domination over the Spanish colony, substituting the pro-Franco oligarchic families that suspected Fascism but, apart from this, few benefits were had. The Japanese military police (Kempeitai), for instance, did not even prolong detention for all those who had been denounced by the consul in Manila, and Spain never managed to obtain any important measure that signified a noteworthy favour for the community. The media in the Philippines, on its part, circulated some messages of support from the Spanish administration, and the Japanese religious policy managed some praise from the Spanish Catholic missionaries that could help to achieve the acquiescence of the Filipino people for the military occupation, but its importance was relative.

Intelligence and the representation of Japanese interests witnessed the most significant results of this Spanish co-operation. In the case of the former, Spain helped significantly in the compilation of secret information thanks to Serrano Suñer, the foreign minister. The Japanese networks of espionage within the United States had been ruined after the forced intern-

ment of people of Japanese ethnic descent in *War Relocation Camps* outside their habitual living areas on the West Coast and the Japanese minister in Madrid, Yakichirō Suma, requested Spanish assistance in order to obtain intelligence from his main enemy. Serrano Suñer began by handing over some despatches from his ambassadors and later offered to engage in a joint co-operation in which Spain would share expenses, with the Japanese paying the cost of the apparatus and other additional sums, in a scheme that failed within the space of a few months. To head this espionage on the part of Spain, the Spanish minister introduced Ángel Alcázar de Velasco, a fellow Falangist greatly trusted who had done already some intelligence work, including an espionage network when being in London as Cultural Attaché in 1940, after having deceived the British ambassador in Madrid, Samuel Hoare. However, he had already been unmasked and had returned to Spain.

Throughout 1942, and despite the setback of having to dismiss some collaborators who were preparing for their respective assignments on account of being unable to obtain normal visas, Alcázar de Velasco organised a small spy network. It was based on various resident Spaniards and yet others who could pass through border checks, such as diplomats and sailors, which focused on the gathering of intelligence in the United States and was subsequently dubbed "Tō". It had at least one agent on US soil and worked thanks to the diplomatic bag, but it lacked many resources to work properly, such as a method of receiving instructions from Spain on a regular basis. Nevertheless, Alcázar de Velasco managed to hand over some interesting information, such as the despatch of numerous supply vessels to the South Pacific in Autumn 1942, anticipating somewhat the Guadalcanal offensive. The *Tō* network also had some other more modest successes and, according to the index of the *Magic Summaries* - the daily bulletin prepared by the United States' counter-espionage service with the most significant decoded messages - became the most important source of information for Japanese diplomacy in quantitative terms. All in all, Japanese intelligence acquired through Spain was meagre and not entirely trustworthy; however, due to the lack of alternatives, the Japanese continued receiving it until the year 1944.

The representation of interests in countries at war or without relations with Japan was an undertaking of great magnitude. Spain assumed this responsibility in the most significant nations, both on account of their political importance, such as the United States (with the exception of Hawai'i, which was entrusted to Sweden) or for their large expatriate communities, such as Peru and Brazil. Representing almost all of the Western hemisphere, except for Guatemala and Mexico, the task entrusted to Spanish diplomacy was more important than the one accepted by Sweden and Switzerland, therefore an important possibility to enhance Spanish diplomacy. The reasons for this

solicitude, however, were directly related to intelligence efforts and therefore Madrid was unable to fulfil the task appropriately. The forced transfer of Japanese citizens in the United States to *Relocation camps* induced Japan to seek out confidential interaction with her subjects in enemy territory and the pressing need for intelligence seems to have been the reason that Spain was duly elected to represent Japanese interests. The first telegram from Minister Serrano Suñer to his embassy in Washington with regard to this representation points to it since the text informs the Ambassador of the decision, and follows requesting him to provide information about Spaniards who were not known as fifth columnists, so that they could be appointed as representatives throughout the country.² Madrid and Tokyo saw eye to eye on the issue of relegating the well-being of the Japanese in the United States in favour of a better espionage network.

Hispano-Japanese cooperation soon encountered a fair number of obstacles. The most pressing one was the occupation of the Philippines, the former colony where Spain still retained important economic interests (the largest company in that country had its central headquarters in Barcelona while many wealthy Spanish citizens owned tobacco and sugar plantations) that had made their fortunes thanks to exports to the United States. During the first month of the war, news of Japanese aerial attacks and destroyed buildings in Manila, combined with the growing pressure exerted by the North Americans against pro-Axis Spanish temptations, unleashed a political offensive within Franco's regime to undermine the political position of Falange party and the Foreign Minister, Serrano Suñer. He openly acknowledged this to the Japanese Minister Suma and, in May 1942, formally presented a complaint to Tokyo on account of the criticism in press against Spanish colonisation in the Philippines, along with an official inquiry about the fate of some missionaries in the Philippines' Pampanga region.³

On its part, the Japanese government felt frustrated due to the expectations it had nurtured with regard to the Spaniards, especially about the representation of Japanese expatriates. Tokyo never received the expected news via Spanish channels about the mistreatment of Japanese subjects abroad, which was so essential for the Japanese propaganda efforts that showcased racial discrimination against its subjects as one of its favourite themes. Spanish diplomats and other personnel entrusted with this representation of interests were reluctant to transmit intelligence messages, or those that were

2 Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (renovated section), AMAE-R-1913-5. Serrano Suñer to Cárdenas, Madrid, 12 December 1941.

3 AMAE-R-2910-9. José del Castaño to Méndez de Vigo for Serrano Suñer, Madrid, 5 May 1942. Also, Magic Summaries (MS) dated 20 and 26 May 1942.

liable to be used for propaganda and, further, they also collaborated with the Americans to minimise the information about difficulties, including deaths. Then, when the first vessel of exchange arrived in Japan, jointly organised by Spain and Switzerland, as leading representatives of Allied interests in Asia and of Japanese interests in America, Japanese propaganda was finally able to offer the news on mistreatment that so greatly needed and, with it, criticisms surfaced about the lack of dedication on the part of the Spanish. Moreover, in September 1942, an important mainstay of the friendly relationship with Japan disappeared in Madrid, when the Spanish minister Serrano Suñer was dismissed due to the most serious episode in this confrontation between Falangists and conservatives opposed to their power, and to Spain entering the war – the terrorist attack against the military conservative Spanish Defence Minister, which caused one death. By then, the military situation had changed the balance between both countries: Japan's options had narrowed, while Madrid increasingly felt the need to distance itself from Tokyo.

The Japanese government was the first to be affected on the Spanish drift towards Neutrality. In Spring 1943, six months after assuming the office of Foreign Minister, the Count of Jordana pompously announced at a conference in Barcelona, to which he invited all accredited ambassadors, that Spain was veering towards Neutrality. At this time, the switch to neutrality was still a difficult step to take, on account of the power that the Axis supporters still wielded, specially the Germans or the Italians, and thus Tokyo became the scapegoat in the Spanish volte-face. The tangible demonstration of this Spanish neutrality began via Japan and for this purpose, in late April 1943, Madrid surprised Tokyo with some measures that abruptly put an end to the climate of friendship and co-operation that had prevailed up until then. For example, the Ministry of External Affairs cancelled the project to raise the level of mutual Legations to Embassies, despite the fact that this measure had already been agreed upon initially. Likewise, it allowed the press to divulge the news of the execution by Japan of American aviators who had been captured in China, in contravention of international laws.

The espionage network continued to function through the official channels of the Ministry of External Affairs, but lost much credibility. Increasingly clandestine and based on the personal benefits obtained by some individuals who had been bribed by Alcázar de Velasco, his information was used by former minister Serrano Suñer for his personal purposes, given that he had lost his offices. In the Spring 1943, *Tō* started to distribute information pointing to the existence of separate Peace talks between Germany, Italy and the United States (with Spanish presence), which meant the threat of a separate agreement between Germany and the Allies, leaving Japanese alone. The

plot aimed ultimately at causing a Japanese attack against the Soviet Union but it failed once the Japanese discarded the veracity of the messages and its only consequence was diminishing the Japanese confidence in *Tō* intelligence. Furthermore, the difficulty in sending new members to the Western Hemisphere, the defection of one of the supposed war correspondents sent to the United States and the detention of the sole diplomat engaged in working for the network entailed additional problems, despite the fact that money was available.

While Jordana's ideas of Neutrality were difficult to implement, attacks on Japan allowed Spain to balance the complacency to Nazi Germany and in Summer 1943, General Franco was by far the most explicit. In the course of a private conversation with the US ambassador, Carlton Hayes, general Franco assured that there were simultaneously three different conflicts in the world: the Axis powers against the Soviet Union, the Allies against the Axis and the United States against Japan. Spain maintained different opinions with regard to each dispute because – following Franco – it supported the Axis powers in the first conflict, while in the second it considered itself to be neutral and in the third, instead, it favoured the United States against Japan. According to Franco, Japan had to be defeated because it was basically a nation of barbarians. This argument had been adapted to suit his interlocutor, because a few days later, while meeting with the British ambassador, Franco only mentioned two wars. Nevertheless, the message was clear and Washington, on the basis of this conversation, now became aware of this friction between the theoretical allies, and could surmise how it could be utilised for military objectives.

In September 1943, the so-called *Laurel Incident* provided one such opportunity. Just like other territories within its proclaimed *Sphere of Co-Prosperity of Greater East Asia*, Japan had decided to formally grant the Philippines its independence. After this proclamation, Minister Suma insistently requested that Foreign Minister Jordana send a telegram of felicitation to José P. Laurel, the President of this pro-Japanese government in Manila. The Spanish minister tarried in sending this message, however his deputy, the Director-General of Foreign Policy, José María Doussinague, without the prior knowledge of the minister and apparently in order to defend Spanish interests in the Philippines, sent the requested telegram. It was not an explicit recognition of the pro-Japanese government, as it used vague expressions about the traditional amicable relations between Spain and the Philippines, however it was addressed to "The President of the Philippine Government". Later, Foreign Minister officials asked the Japanese that the telegram not be used for propaganda purposes, but his demand went unheeded and the channels of Axis propaganda divulged its contents, manipulating it

as though it were a formal recognition of the Laurel government. At this point, Washington deliberately exaggerated its reaction and caused the most serious moments of tension between Spain and the United States during the war. For a start, it issued orders prohibiting its senior officials from maintaining any sort of conversation with their Spanish counterparts, thus not allowing the latter to explain the official version proffered by Madrid. Later, it surreptitiously threatened the Spanish perplexed government that, in the light of official silence, was soon compounded by news in the press pointing out a qualitative change in the US position, to the extent of believing that an invasion in order to launch an attack against the Axis powers from Spanish territory was being considered. At the same time, periodicals such as the *New York Times* included editorials highlighting how illogical it was such a pro-Axis move at this stage in the War, while rumours circulated about plans for an invasion of Spain. In this manner, Washington managed to keep the Spanish government up against the ropes.

The *Laurel Incident* was provoked by Washington in order to benefit from poor Spanish relations with Japan, and thanks to counterintelligence. Knowing Franco's opposition to Japan and after having decoded secret Japanese messages indicating internal differences within Franco's government about the sending of the Laurel telegram, Washington viewed the situation as an opportunity to ensure that Spanish enmity towards Japan was transposed upon the European scenario. By making Madrid nervous, the United States sought to obtain tangible results, specially to curb the export to the Third Reich of wolfram, a mineral that was essential to harden armaments, which Hitler was only able to obtain then in Spain and Portugal. Washington used its far more advanced technological knowledge (the interception of diplomatic messages from a total of 32 countries, which included enemy as well as neutral nations and allies) in order to realise its political objectives, as is suggested by the different versions of the decoding of the Japanese message referring to Spanish nervousness in the light of a possible propagation by the Axis powers of this congratulatory message. The Department of State found an unexpected hindrance when the Spanish Foreign Minister, Jordana, assumed authority without revealing chinks in his armour. The practical results of the *Laurel Incident*, finally, were meagre, and the pressure to cease sales of wolfram continuing for some more months, until Madrid formally renounced sales of this mineral and accepted other Allies' demands, in the Spring of 1944.

Madrid immediately sharpened its anti-Japanese stance after Jordana saved the day behind the scenes of the *Laurel Incident*. In December 1943, when Spain was seeking a solution to the boatloads of Italian refugees that arrived in Spanish ports after the fall of Mussolini, while both the pro-Allied

Badoglio Government in Rome as well the Social Republic in Saló demanded that they be handed over, Spain unsuccessfully proposed, as an intermediary plan, that these boats be used against the Japanese.

In February 1944, the next step took place when these discrepancies opened to the public, by means of a news item that *The Times* classified as “eye-opening news”.⁴ On the basis of some information – prepared in Madrid but dated ostensibly in Buenos Aires – about Argentine citizens who were concerned about the disappearance of the Spanish language in the Philippines and about the mistreatment of the Spanish bishop on the island of Guam, the Falangist daily *iArriba!* published a curious commentary on the front page. It openly recognised its past errors for having defended the military adventures of the Japanese empire. It is very rare to discern a sense of *mea culpa* in a dictatorship, even more so manifested in the most totalitarian periodical, for which reason this article in *iArriba!* shows the complete volte-face of Madrid’s political stance on Japan – and its perception. From being one of the most ardent defenders of a Japanese victory, the Falangist newspaper started the open critics to Japan, being the first to complete the reversal.

4. Intending to declare war in order to survive in the post-war scenario

Apparently, from Summer 1944 onwards, Franco resigned himself to the idea that the Allies would win the World War II, although still without counting upon the fact that Germany would suffer an unconditional defeat. In the meanwhile, German troops abandoned the Spanish frontier in France and, for the first time, American bombers saw the possibility of attacking Japan easily, after the capture of Saipan and Guam, in Micronesia. This certainty of the definitive decline of the Axis powers coincided with the appointment of a new Foreign Minister, José Félix de Lequerica. He inherited the strain with Japan, but proceeded in a completely opposite manner, because while Jordana was mortified by this volte-face with Japan and sought ultimately to improve relations, the new Foreign Minister was radically different, seeking to use the problems with Japan to preen before the Allies. Lequerica, therefore, gave Japan maximum importance, meeting immediately with the Japanese minister Suma and showing his new policy through the media. The National Press Delegation sent three notes shortly thereafter to the periodicals ordering them to attack the Japanese empire, titles as: “[...]Criterion Openly Favourable to the United States in its War against Japan” or “Against the Anti-Christian and Anti-Western Japanese Policy”. These early anti-Japa-

4 16 February 1944.

nese instructions show that Lequerica intended to utilise Japan as a trump card for his post-war period.

Madrid was inclined to go beyond the articles and take tense relations with Tokyo to the limit. It was not the only nation to do so; during Autumn 1944 and Winter 1945, other countries – such as Argentina or Turkey – that had formerly been pro-Axis definitively aligned themselves with the Allies and snapped relations with Japan. Madrid did not know how to disentangle itself from the increasingly intense doubts about how to utilise the Japan card in the best possible manner until March 1945. Then, after the widespread destruction of the Manila and the death of at least two hundreds Spaniards, there was no other option than to take it into consideration and act urgently, but Madrid maintained doubts about how far it should go.

Madrid first tested external reactions. The first news of death in Manila arrived by means of a brief report by the Spanish news agency EFE commenting upon an article in *Newsweek* about the massacres in Manila and the suffering of the Spanish community there. At the end of the despatch, the report stressed that the atrocities in Manila could well be a reason for Spain to declare War upon Japan and that it would thus automatically become an ally of the United States and the United Kingdom. Later, the Spanish press was authorised to comment upon this despatch, as were the press correspondents resident in Spain, while a massive press campaign circulated the worst comments about the Japanese, portraying them as Asian barbarians.

Some days after, on 17 March 1945, the Spanish government decided to withdraw its protection of Japanese interests. This decision was intended merely as a first step in a chain of events that would vary in accordance with their impact. This done, Minister Lequerica had an informal dinner with the British military attaché, Windam W. Torr, in which “somewhat light-hearted remarks” were made about future measures against Japan. Lequerica said: “It looks as if we are going to declare war on Japan” and, when questioned about the timing of such a move, responded, “Pretty soon I expect. We must get it before Portugal”.⁵ Likewise, questioned about the *casus belli*, Lequerica “shrugged his shoulders” and said: “Oh, well, Franco has always hated the Japanese”. Torr then asked: “What about the atrocities in the Spanish Consulate?”, to which Lequerica replied: “Oh, yes, we might well use them”.⁶

The impact of this new resolution against Japan was less favourable than expected, although only for weeks. On 1 March, the United States

5 Public Record Office, Foreign Office (henceforth PRO-FO), Series 371. Telegram 198 from [Reginald J.] Bowker to FO (Frederick R. Hoyer Millar), Madrid, 19 March 1945.

6 *Ibid.* Tel 198 and note 20 March, Madrid, Bowker to FO. The order of the sentences in the conversation is not clear, since the references were sent on two different days and not explained.

finished preparing a policy based on the suggestions made by Franco and Lequerica in this regard to the US ambassador Hayes in his farewell meeting, in Autumn 1944. The brief concluded that the possible benefits for Allies of Madrid breaking off relations with Japan were negligible and, therefore, Washington discarded any interest on it. Upon hearing of Spanish intentions, then, the American government declared that Spanish decisions against Japan were solely the responsibility of Madrid and would not affect them in any way.⁷ The United Kingdom also clearly rebuffed the possibility of this entrance into the war on the part of Madrid, assuring that, in any case, there was still time to declare war on Germany.⁸ At a popular level, the reactions were even harsher and, for example, *El Popular* in Mexico City published a sarcastic comment relating the move with the intention to become a founding member of the new League of Nations: "Franco would declare War on Japan... Japan on Germany... Germany on Spain, and everyone would go to San Francisco!"

Amongst the regimes that had friendly relations with Madrid, the reaction was milder, however, even so, it was with a view to calm Spanish exasperation, partly on account of their own interests. Buenos Aires was the only regime that clearly identified itself with Spanish desires of declaring war, since it was in a similar situation of doing a volte-face and needed also to ingratiate itself with the victors. After having spearheaded the opposition to US pressures during the conflict, Argentina declared War on Japan on 27 March, and was followed shortly thereafter by its main ally in this resistance to US influence, Chile. The Vatican requested the journalist Manuel Aznar to use his influence over Minister Lequerica in order to reduce tension with Japan and to ensure that the situation did not worsen. The Catholic Church was clearly concerned about the possible consequences for the Spanish missionaries working in territories controlled by Japanese authorities, including the Japanese archipelago itself, China, Micronesia and Indo-China. Portugal's case was slightly different. Lisbon had been on the verge of declaring War on Japan in 1943, using the occupation of East Timor as a *casus belli* but encouraged by American promises of compensation. The United States managed to obtain authorisation for air bases in the Azores and later ignored the Japanese garrison during its northward advance, therefore in March 1945 the possibility of a military alliance with the United

7 Department of State Decimal File relating to World War II, 1939-45, Reel 247. Memorandum by John Wickerson, Washington, 1 March 1945.

8 "Preliminary reaction of Spanish Dept. is that if Spain should declare war against Japan, Franco regime should not (repeat not) be allowed any credit for the act, they hope to be able to give us their considered views early this week".

States was a forgotten issue. During the Battle for Manila, some Portuguese were also killed and Madrid sought their fellow Iberians would also act jointly. Lisbon, however, was no longer interested in declaring war on Japan, noting also that the population of Macao could suffer greatly as a result of any declaration of this kind. Moreover, Portugal could not accept following Spanish foreign policy, even less so in East Asia, where the Portuguese were the ones who should have been taking the initiative.

Japan's reaction was irrelevant to Madrid. Since Spain sought to draw closer to the Allies, Japan had a minimal margin for manoeuvre, as Madrid was yet another of many cases of progressive enmity. Tokyo's aim was simply to extend as much as possible the time during which the Iberian Peninsula could be utilised for its war efforts, such as the work of whatever espionage remained to be done. The same thing had happened in Tangiers a year earlier, when Spain ordered that all foreigners were to leave: the Japanese diplomats overstayed every date limit that had been set, until the threat of the use of force obliged them to leave the African outpost. The Japanese Legation, then, sought to avoid Spanish retaliations by offering a bribe: it proposed paying indemnities for the victims in the Philippines in such a way that the money could be routed to members of the government.

The unfavourable impact of his bellicose proclamations made Franco ponder once again upon these measures and to consider the convenience of checking this irritation. Thus, the only measure that went through at the end of the representation of Japanese interests was the snapping of relations with Japan on 12 April 1945, a logical consequence of the step taken three weeks earlier, which once again gave rise to some anti-Japanese articles. But nothing else. And in May, the first articles in the Spanish press about Franco's "military inhibitions" during the conflict appeared, which would be repeated throughout his regime.

This was doubly false, because General Franco had tried to intervene directly in the conflict on two occasions, in 1940 with the Axis powers – which has already been researched years ago – and in 1945 with the Allies. And the reason why Spain did not enter the conflict appears to have been similar on both occasions: neither Hitler, nor Roosevelt, nor Churchill wanted Franco on the winning side once they achieved victory.

5. Reasons for the volte-face

There are always good reasons for declaring a war, at least for those who favour it. But the *casus belli* offered by Minister Lequerica to the British attaché, that is, Franco hating the Japanese, is extremely interesting, since

it reflects a different reasoning. While the possibility of declaring war on the Soviet Union was reasoned utilising principled beliefs, against Japan the argument was different, since the *casus belli* of hate enters the realm of informal ideology, or what Keohane and Goldstein consider to be “world views”, forming part of the symbolism of culture, in a category that is also different from the so-called “causal beliefs”.⁹

These proposals for war also sound strange when one observes relations from the perspective of the conflict and the excellent perception of Japan in Spain merely two years ago. During the period 1940-42, the Japanese mindset had been widely utilised by the Spanish regime. Given that armies needed the blindest possible obedience to orders issued by superiors and that soldiers should risk their lives in battle, the representation of the samurai had been a recurrent theme. The *bushido*, an obvious example of inventing tradition, was adapted to circumstances and in continuous use; the book, for instance, was reprinted in 1940 under the auspices of the Japanese Legation and with a prologue by the founder of the Spanish Legion, General Millán Astray. The representations of Japan as a friendly nation that was anti-Communist and anti-Allied were two powerful reasons to create an exaggerated perception of Japan in order to seek out the parallels between both nations, to the point of generating an ideal image of Japan resembling that of the image of the Soviet Union. A fair number of leftists (not only Communists) formed their perception of the Soviet Union based almost exclusively on wishful-thinking, and vague references, without even knowing Russian or references that curtailed their flights of fancy. Something similar resulted in the ideal perception of Japan during the Spanish War and the post-war period. However, the ideal representation of Japan stayed short, since the decision not to follow the German blitzkrieg upon the Soviet Union in 1941, stopped that idealization of Japan.

When Japan began its chain of defeats in the Pacific War, the positive images of Japan fell by the wayside one by one. If earlier the Japanese had been considered to be a technologically advanced nation, it was now thought that this was because they had been taught to imitate. If earlier Japan had been viewed as a developed country and a bridge between the “Asian barbarians” and the civilised world, the image of Asia placed on top of that of the Japanese, who now became part of the *Yellow Peril*. Their erstwhile image as anti-Communists was minimised by their act of not declaring War on the Soviet Union, a decision later considered to be an example of “Asian intelli-

9 J. Goldstein and R. O. Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy. Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 8-10.

gence", presumably a tendency towards deceitfulness that was innate in each Asiatic – in this case, Russians and Japanese. Finally, the traditional images of the delicate geisha and the patriotic samurai changed their meaning and were now seen through the prism of the "Asian hordes", characterised by treachery and cruelty.

This drastic process of change took place as part of the changes in times of War. However, it did not take place in the case of Italy or Germany, despite the fact that the military fates of the European Axis countries took a turn for the worse even before that of Japan. Great Britain, as already noted, suggested that if Spain was going to declare war, it would be more useful if it declared war on Germany, which at that time was still fighting. The Spanish change of policy was clearly linked with racial questions, because Madrid underwent a radical process of a change in the perception of Japan that can be understood only through the racial overtones, resembling to that of the United States against Japan which has been described by John W. Dower in his seminal work *War Without Mercy*. If the Fascists and Nazis were the enemy, American soldiers could assume that their opponents on the other side of the front were Germans or Italians who had been forced to fight, since it was clear that there were also anti-Nazi Germans or anti-Fascist Italians. However, if the enemy was identified as Japanese, the possibility of conceiving of a Japanese who did not agree with the proclamations of their government was more remote and, therefore, the possibility of demonstrating magnificence or compassion was comparatively less. Just like that comment made by Franco to Ambassador Hayes, or that of Lequerica to Torr, the reasoning was basically cultural and located into the civilisation realm. When quarrelling this kind of dispute allowed instant changes and can explain how the volte-face was accepted among the Spanish population, but it can apply also to improving relations. In fact, one of the main surprises of the immediate post-war period was the instant collaboration between Americans and Japanese; the exceedingly rapid manner in which both contenders buried the hatchet of war.

US soldiers reflected an ideology that was essentially an Orientalist one with regard to Japan, tending to see it as a static, feminine, despotic, savage country and, consequently, one that was full of contrasts. The Spanish government shared these ideas and pondered upon the convenience of utilising them, as it did in fact do, albeit with lesser intensity. In fact, these Orientalist ideas were the sole connecting thread that continued in relations between the initial period of friendship and the latter one of hate. At times, they highlighted alternatively the positive and the negative representations about Japan. The period of friendship could have made one think that the images of barbarism and those related with the *Yellow Peril* had disappeared

when, in reality, they were simply latent. Contrary to the perception of the Germans or Italians, whose nationality was merely another bit of information about them, the Japanese were viewed first and foremost as Japanese, and then viewed as allies, at the beginning of the war, or as enemies, at the end of it.

The prevailing mindset dominated the general context of relations between Spain and Japan. However, this seems excessive. Supposedly, one of the reasons was the lack of mutual contact, however, it is necessary to likewise highlight one difference that could also explain why the changes with regard to the perception of Japan on the part of the Spanish government were so brusque: a lack of experts. While Japan had two universities that imparted courses in Spanish with Spanish professors, right from the late 19th century, decision makers in Madrid could only avail of some missionaries and of the opinions of one diplomat or another who had resided for a considerable time in Japan (however without any prior preparation) while taking political decisions. After receiving new inputs, the decision making process was different than the Japanese. Tokyo could count upon experts from whom it received advice and, in general, this would moderate any intentions of doing an overly abrupt volte-face in political decisions. Madrid, however, only relied upon well-informed people, i.e. knowledgeable parties.

Beyond additional advice (the missionaries lived outside Madrid in general), these knowledgeable parties seem to have been the leading figures in moulding the opinions about Japan that prevailed in Spain. Admiral Carrero Blanco, who wrote many articles in the press about Japan, seems to have been one of them, especially during the period of friendship, while Lequerica and Franco seem to have been so in 1945. Irrespective of whether there is any truth in this or not, Foreign Minister Lequerica was famous amongst the Allies in Spain for his pro-Axis attitudes, with an anecdote widely known of a turkey that he slaughtered while ambassador in Paris to celebrate the attack on Pearl Harbour. His need to establish his credibility as a reliable foreign minister in his drive toward managing a better treatment of Spain after the war ends could have disposed him to assume a more confrontational posture, specially against Japan.

This was also the case with Franco, as the conversation with Torr suggests. Franco revealed himself to be a passionate Orientalist with regard to Japan, as is evident from his commentaries about Japan during and after the war. During the triumphal period of the Japanese empire, the *Genera-lísimo* declared that the basic reason for these triumphs was the limitless power of endurance of the Japanese soldier, who was capable of eating only a bowl of rice daily and was still able to complete long marches. In 1959, Franco revealed himself to believe the possibility of Christianising the Japa-

nese nation, after being convinced by the Jesuit Superior, father Jose Arrupe. Undoubtedly, Franco perceived Japan through the lens of his Moroccan experience, and probably interpreted its waning military destiny as a confirmation of a rule that, until that time, Japan had been the only nation to challenge: "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet". At the end of the World War II, General Franco (and deceased English writer Rudyard Kipling) were not the only ones to think in this manner.

Abstract

Relations between Spain and Japan were especially important between 1937 and 1945, on account of the needs of propaganda in this age of war: the Spanish Civil War, the Sino-Japanese War, World War II and the Pacific War all took place during this period. The anti-communist alliance resulted in interesting political configurations during the early years. Later, Spain became the neutral country that rendered the greatest assistance to the Japanese war effort against the United States, by assuming the representation of Japanese subjects in the majority of American nations, and by allowing the formation of a network of espionage that focused upon the United States, amongst other aspects of this collaboration, once the war in the Pacific broke out. When the conflict ended, in March 1945, the government of General Francisco Franco pondered about declaring war on Japan, without actually doing so due to the Allied rejection. The last part of this study is dedicated to analysing the brusque change in Spain and Japan's image of each other, utilising concepts about perceptions in International Relations as well as theories about Orientalism.

Resumo

As relações entre a Espanha e o Japão tiveram uma importância especial entre os anos de 1937 e 1945, pela necessidade propagandista dos tempos bélicos: a Guerra Civil Espanhola, a Guerra Sino-Japonesa, a II Guerra Mundial e a Guerra do Pacífico ocorreram neste período. A convergência anti-comunista provocou interessantes aproximações políticas nos primeiros anos. Depois, a Espanha tornou-se no país neutral que mais ajudou ao esforço de guerra japonês contra os Estados Unidos, ao assumir a representação dos súbditos japoneses na maioria dos países americanos, e ao permitir a formação de uma rede de espionagem dedicada aos Estados Unidos, entre outros aspectos da colaboração, uma vez iniciada a Guerra do Pacífico. Ao terminar o conflito, em Março de 1945, o governo do general Francisco Franco ponderou declarar a guerra ao Japão, sem chegar a fazê-lo devido à rejeição Aliada. A última parte deste estudo analisa a repentina alteração de imagem que ambos os países tinham um do outro, utilizando-se tanto conceitos sobre as percepções nas Relações Internacionais, como as teorias sobre o Orientalismo.

要約

スペインと日本との関係はプロパガンダの必要性に伴って1937年から1945年までの戦争の時代に特に重要であった。スペイン内乱、日中戦争、第二次世界大戦と太平洋戦争がこの時期に起こった。初めの頃、反共同盟が興味深い政治形態を示した。その後太平洋戦争が始まった途端スペインは日本国民のために南米諸国の大半で領事業務を担い、また米国を狙ったスパイネットワークを暗黙のうちに認めて日本の反米戦争動力に最も協力した中立国になった。戦争が終わった1945年3月にフランシスコ・フランコ将軍政権が日本に宣戦を布告することを熟考したが、連合国からの反対があったためそれを止めた。この研究の最後の部分ではスペインと日本双方のイメージの急速な変化を国際関係における知覚の概念とオリエンタリズムに関する理論を使用して分析を行う。