Introduction

This is a study of Spanish society during and after the Spanish Civil War. More specifically, it focuses on ideology and forms of repression in the period 1936–45, the first decade of what became the Franco dictatorship. In doing so it addresses two fundamental themes: first, the meaning of the concept of ‘the Nation’ in the wake of a catastrophic and bloody civil war, and, second, the significance and purpose of political economy where a whole section of society is defeated and its culture prostrated by a military authority.

These are very broad areas of discussion and, indeed, some parameters need to be established at the outset. What this book does not aim to do is to provide a typology of political violence in Spain. Neither is it a study of Catholicism and the Civil War, though religion enters substantially into the analysis throughout. Nor is it a fully elaborated account of agricultural crisis and industrial policy in the first Franco years. It is also beyond the remit of the study to analyse systematically the language of dictatorship and repression, and still less is it a social history of women in the 1940s. Each of these vital areas of historiographical interest would require a distinct treatment in its own right, a considerable task which has hardly begun in the case of Spain in this period. What it does attempt is an examination of the reconstruction of the nation by looking at how violence, religion, gender, language, psychiatry, economics and the state came together in the idea of self-sufficiency. It sets out, then, both a thesis about the nature of Francoist nationalism and power, and a suggested research agenda for the future.

Its conclusion is that nationalism and economics were both a major part of the repressive confirmation of the defeat of the democratic Second Republic. The idea of purification and a reality of closed space pervaded the regime's highly moral construction of the reordered nation and informed triumphalist economic relations. These two ideas signified a repressive silencing both of alternative concepts of the nation and of a humane vision of political economy.
2  Introduction

Popularity, both in Spain itself and abroad, Franco has become known for three things: first, victory in the Spanish Civil War; second, bringing about a so-called ‘economic miracle’ during the 1960s; and, thereby, thirdly, preparing the way for the transition to democracy in the 1970s. The substantial mythical elements of this image are now being systematically undermined by historians.1 However, a great deal remains unexplained. The apparent void in the course of Spain’s contemporary history between the Civil War and the tourist boom of the 1960s remains frustratingly present. Collective memory in Spain has been formed through an attempt by the dictatorship to extirpate the sense of history once possessed by those who became ‘the defeated’.

The Franco dictatorship was established by the victory of a coalition of right-wing social, political and military forces, united as what Franco called ‘the national soul’, in the Spanish Civil War of 1936–9.2 The dictator’s regime lasted for nearly four decades. During this period Spain became a modern industrialised society.3 The study of Francoism has tended to concentrate upon comprehensive ‘definitions’ of the regime in the light of this development.

The purpose here is to analyse the interaction of the ideological, social and economic aspects of Francoism’s establishment in power during and immediately after the Civil War as a way of grounding these theoretical contributions historically. Hence, in large part, it is a study of the brutalities of everyday life as lived by substantial sections of the population in the course of the Civil War and in its aftermath, and an attempt to suggest some ways in which they may be explained.

This study of the genesis and early years of the Franco regime began as a search for the concrete links between economic elites, war and the politics of the dictatorship. In this investigation the notion of autarky, or self-sufficiency, ostensibly the economic strategy of the regime, is developed during the conflict, was absolutely central.4 How could autarky be explained when its postulates seemed irrational in economic terms? Gradually it became evident that self-sufficiency was much more than an economic precept. Economic autarky was only part of a broader desire to seal off society, to enclose Spain. The conflict was deemed to have revealed a national ‘collective psychology’ to be protected, nurtured and encouraged by an essentialist ideology related to everyday life and violence. An imposed quarantine or silencing signified the continuation of war as a work of cultural destruction in the broadest sense.5 The orthodox view of economic self-sufficiency as ‘irrational’ therefore becomes a problem as self-sufficiency is more broadly understood as a whole culture of repression.6
Introduction

Economic autarky under Franco, a concept which affected millions of Spaniards’ everyday lives in this period, has always been explained, in some measure, by reference to the Second World War although the roots of self-sufficiency are actually to be found in Spain’s own Civil War. The traumatic crisis and war of the 1930s determined the nature of economy and authority in the post-war period. The existing political organisation of society had been threatened at the same time that a multitude of cleavages opened up, centred on class, nation, religion, beliefs and mores, generations and gender. The leading Falangist intellectual Ernesto Giménez Caballero reflected pathologically on the Republic and its deification of his vision of the nation:

They had destroyed the very substance of our being. The very soul of us as Spaniards and as men [sic] . . . The Catholic in Spain had lost his God. The monarchist his king. The aristocrat, his nobility. The soldier, his sword. The employer, his capacity for initiative. The labourer his opportunity to work. Woman, her home. The child, respect for his father. And even the Spanish language – compañera of the empire – as Nebrija described it . . . – was a spittoon for all kinds of regionalist filth . . .’

Any Civil War is a struggle between competing visions of the nation, and the Spanish Civil War was no different in this respect. The Francoist side, however, had a more coherent and durable nationalist vision than the Republicans. That Francoist nationalism clashed with alternative ideas is plain in the extent of the violence which was employed in justifying and imposing this vision. In looking at this violence, at ideas, and at economics it is possible to get closer to Francoism as a nationalist regime and as a form of totalitarianism.9

‘Degeneration’ had for decades been associated with the threat posed by ‘the City’, harbinger of ‘foreign contagions’ like liberalism leading to moral decay. Calls for ‘surgical’ treatment in order to regenerate Spain – both morally and ‘physically’ – by returning to economic, political and cultural ‘essences’ were frequent.9 Rightist regenerationists had previously conjured up the equation of degeneration and violence in terms of national immortality:

When dealing with the spiritual ruin of Spain, we must turn our hearts to stone and be willing to sacrifice even a million Spaniards to the wolves if we wish to avoid having ourselves thrown to the pigs.10

The regenerationist symbolism of essential Spanishness coincided with the ascetic regimen that Francoism imposed.11 Communism was “the gravedigger of history”.12 A whole way of life, culture, tradition itself, was at stake. By the time of the Civil War these essences had almost been lost – ‘the people no longer knew itself’13 – and were only to be
4 Introduction

recovered at the expense of an enormous sacrifice. One of the founding principles of the Falange, the Spanish fascist party, was a ‘revaluation of violence’. War was seen as an ‘element of progress’ and violence as ascetic, as ‘creative and purifying’.

Francoism instrumentalised Spain’s disaster: it was from this that its understanding of ‘progress’ and ‘the nation’ sprung. It was in this institutionalisation of victory (and defeat) that silence was imposed. A cultural and economic barrier was erected around Spain and around Spaniards. The monopolisation of public memory and the public voice by the victors occupied the space enclosed within these barriers. Not for nothing were the internalised mental strategies of survival and redress, privately articulated by ‘the defeated’ and the exiled, shaped by a desire to see those who spewed forth the official line ad nauseam consigned to a place where they too had no language, a place where communication, or culture, was denied: to reverse the imposed reality by sending the dictator to a strange land, to silence him.

This book, then, is an analysis of what the government itself called moral and economic reconstruction during and after the Civil War. The opening chapter explains, first, the historiographical vacuum of the 1940s itself in terms of nationalism, violence and suppression and second, relates the reconstruction of nation and state to the ubiquitous idea of self-sufficiency: the ‘reimagining’ of ‘purified’ subjects within ‘purified’ political space. The rest of the first half of the book provides the all-important context of social and economic relations in the years of autarky by looking at the ‘moral reconstitution’ of Spain, according to ‘the victors’ – a merging of public and private spheres in the ‘purification’ of an isolated society through the expunging of ‘Anti-Spain’, understood as individuals, ideas and cultures.

The second half of the book looks at how this environment of closed space and reordered morality affected economic relations, broadly understood. Particular ideas of purity and nationality were the backdrop of sacrifice and social control, the basis of a kind of internal colonisation which was the essential condition for Spain’s ‘resurgence’ during Francoism.
Part I

The context of self-sufficiency
1 Civil war and self-sufficiency: the Francoist reconstruction of nation and state

When the Spaniard finds himself totally united with his essence, adhering to it through an intrinsic way of understanding, his life will return to its pristine essential glory.¹

Recuperating the history of the 1940s

For nearly four decades, during the Franco dictatorship, history was manipulated by the regime as it cultivated a particular memory.² A closure of the past, and, in a sense, of time itself, was imposed from above.³ The decree of April 1940 announcing the foundation of Franco’s gigantic monument to the Nationalist victory, the Valle de los Caídos, stressed that ‘the stones . . . rise up . . . (to) challenge time and forgetfulness’.⁴ This closure through the repetition of myth was multi- fying for much of society but deeply reassuring in the maintenance of traditions, of the possession of history, for particular groups.⁵ Time was reordered according to the understanding of policemen, soldiers, state functionaries and priests in writing the history of the 1930s.⁶

Issues of class and regional identity were played down as diagnoses of the ‘sickness’ of the national character and were cast in religious, psychological or medical terms. According to this state version of the past, ‘the defeated’ had no history apart from their ‘violation of the Motherland’. The country was to be remade in the image of the myths of the Spanish essence, encapsulated in the ‘Crusade of Franco’ to save Christian civilisation as represented by reconquering Catholic Spain.⁷ In defence of this essentialist conceptualisation of the Patria, the idealised division of the people into ‘Spain’ and ‘Anti-Spain’, ‘good’ and ‘evil’, was exacerbated by the regime.⁸ The sin of association with the ideas and organisations of the Republic was not only to be confessed but recanted, suppressed and negated at a personal level. An associated dualism between the spiritual self and the ‘evil body’ to be punished was also imposed as a daily psychological torture, ‘with the deliberate purpose of transforming the Spanish masses into a herd of mutilated beings’.⁹
The context of self-sufficiency

Figure 1  *Fresco de la Destrucción*, showing a ‘broken’ Spain and the ‘Red terror’. Exposición de la Reconstrucción de España, Madrid 1940. (Biblioteca de Catalunya.)
Civil war and self-sufficiency

According to Franco, the Spanish war was ‘no artificial thing’: it was ‘the coronation of an historic process, the struggle of the Patria against the anti-Patria, of unity against secession, of morality against crime, of spirit against materialism, and there (was) no other solution than the triumph of the pure and eternal over bastard, anti-Spanish principles’. The war had signified the triumph of light over darkness, of truth over error, health over sickness.

Spain was seen as having experienced distinct historic periods: from the middle of the seventeenth century she had ‘isolated herself, closed within herself, and struggled at all cost to save herself from the threatening contagion’ that none the less ‘infected’ her during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This isolation was seen as essential to the recovery of Spain’s ‘life’, ‘being’, ‘personality’ and her permanency ‘in time and in space’.

The symbols used by Francoism were borrowed from the fifteenth-century era of Ferdinand and Isabella, when Spain had before ‘triumphed over malignant foreign powers’, when Islam was defeated and the Jews expelled. The verification of a common past was seen as essential in achieving a shared sense of national immutability after the Republic’s attempt to ‘annihilate the . . . soul of immortal Spain’. The Civil War ‘condensed the history of twelve centuries’. This vision was to be pursued by the elaboration of a set of ideas based on the notion of Spain’s historic destiny as a people, as a ‘living entity’, chosen by Providence as a source of good. Each day that passed ‘signal(led) the realisation of a prophecy’. The conquistadors of the fifteenth century were portrayed as the ideal of Spanishness against which various ‘Others’—indigenous peoples, Republicans, the Spanish working class—were to be measured. ‘Isabel [was] the national spirit against foreign annexation’ and the idea and experience of expulsion was again to be important, in several ways, during the Franco era. Francoism enforced both the physical expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Republicans and a kind of expulsion of thought through the proscription of ‘foreign ideas’. Symbolic renewal meant ‘purification’ and destruction. Falangists were charged with ‘the obligation of persecuting and destroying Judaism, freemasonry, Marxism and separatism . . . Destroy and burn their newspapers, their books, their magazines, their propaganda’.

Writing the history of Francoism with any claim at all to objectivity was hardly initiated until the 1980s. Forgetting the recent past in post-war Spain was both enforced by authority and employed as personal and collective strategies of survival. A kind of tacit agreement to forget was entered into. This ‘pact of oblivion’; as it was known in political circles, became an important condition of the process of the peaceful transition
The context of self-sufficiency to democracy in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the internalisation or evasion of the relatively recent past has been one of the factors which has led to a belief, both in Spain and elsewhere, that Francoism quickly legitimised itself through the more or less painless creation of a modern consumer society. One of the symptoms of the control of memory has been a collective partial blindness. Moreover, as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán has written, ‘very little of this hidden memory has been recovered in the new democratic Spain’. The press in Spain, throughout the Franco years, was firmly controlled by the state. The regime’s Press Law, promulgated in April 1938, supposedly as a provisional wartime measure, remained in force for more than a quarter of a century. Thousands of executions were carried out behind this barrier of secrecy. Until the late 1960s journalism as such did not exist: ‘journalists’ were, in effect, state functionaries charged with maintaining the regime’s monopoly of ideas. Moreover, the sheer longevity of the Franco regime has affected the state of archival collections which hold material on the Civil War and dictatorship. The dictatorial authorities were able to ‘clean up’ the evidence of the regime’s crimes in a way which was not possible in the same systematic manner in Germany and Italy where the brutal regimes of Hitler and Mussolini fell as chaos reigned around them. Rigidly restricted access to records favoured particular historians, sympathetic to the state, employing a methodology which eschewed explanation.

Darkness and modernity

Thus, the 1940s, ‘los años oscuros’, remain shrouded in darkness. Images are blurred by layers of obscurity and obstacles in the way of illumination have been difficult to overcome. The post-war decade has been portrayed by historians as an aberration or a deviation from the road to modernity. But the meaning of modernity itself was at stake. Daily life was shaped by the culturally constructed forms of repression effected during the war itself. The period 1936–45 witnessed a brutal repression simultaneous with a rapid reclamation of power by social elites. These elites both supported violence and had a vision of the future, albeit one which re-cycled a great deal of the past. The regime ultimately oversaw profound economic change and development, but was established through violence and suffering. The Civil War and the early post-conflict years were deeply marked by an inexorable self-pruning of extermination and expulsion: an ‘impossible exorcism’ in the pursuit of purity. The Spanish malady was ‘treated’ through a violent political economy
Civil war and self-sufficiency

which, in reality, reproduced sickness and suffering. As many as 200,000 men and women were executed by the regime in the wake of the war. A further 200,000 died of hunger as a result of the outcome of the conflict and of the policies pursued by the victorious dictatorship. The number of suicides in the immediate post-war rose considerably. Under conditions of the most barbarous torture, suicide was often both a release and perhaps a final protest against the regime. The violence amounted to a brutal closing down of choices and alternatives: the extermination of memory, of history.

The price paid in the name of order, through physical and economic repression, was enormous, but the fact that the regime was very violent did not mean that time stood still. ‘Modernity’ could be countenanced by the country’s elites if existing cultural hierarchies were reinforced in the process. Society’s dominant groups used the voice which they alone possessed in shaping this future.

The violence of the 1940s accompanied a very significant deepening of capital accumulation in the hands of those who would dominate political and social circles in Spain throughout the long Franco era and beyond. In many ways, it was in this period that the foundations of a modern industrialised state were laid. During the war and in the 1940s, the parameters within which social change might take place were established. From the outset Francoism aimed to impose a unity between society and the political system, to reunite people and state ‘intimately’, so that all Spaniards might ‘contribute morally and materially to the resurgence of the Nation’. This process depended on a complex and often contradictory interchange between violence and consent. The meaning of modernisation under Franco was decoupled from the ideas of progress derived from the Enlightenment and associated with the reforms of the Spanish Second Republic of the 1930s. ‘Progress’ was reduced to a violent purging and ‘rehchristianisation’ of society accompanied by economic development. The taking of this road to development was the principal consequence of the Spanish Civil War.

Defining Francoism

Rationality becomes difficult to describe when the stated objective is the fulfilling of a nebulous idea like ‘national destiny’. Franco’s Crusade was portrayed as a victory of spirit, of prophecy, and as ‘miraculous’. There is a case for applying the Weberian conception of ‘charismatic authority’ to a dictator who claimed to rule ‘by the grace of God’ in a quasi-monarchical, sacred state. Certainly, the power of the regime