

Observation no: 118

Country-year: 1956

1. Did the current regime come to power in a military coup?

Yes.

Francisco Franco led a military coup in 1936 that led to the Spanish Civil War. After winning the Civil War, Franco took power in Spain.

2. Has the country ever experienced a military coup?

Yes.

General Franco led a military coup in 1936 that ultimately led to the Spanish Civil War, but there were a series of coups from 1814 up to (and after) the Franco regime took power.¹

3. Is the country's top leader a former military officer?

Yes.

Francisco spent his early military career in Spain and was subsequently promoted to the director of the Zaragoza Military Academy. Officers whom he oversaw while at the Military Academy would later become a large source of support during the Spanish Civil War. Prior to the coup in 1936, Franco was serving as the Chief of the General Staff.

4. Is the military officer corps largely closed to those who do not share the leader's ethnic or sectarian background?

No.

I could find no evidence of ethnic or sectarian barriers to officership within the Franco Army.

5. Are there strict ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps?

No.

¹ Paul Preston, *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the Military in 20th Century Spain* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pg. 131.

I could find no evidence of ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps. Even loyalty to the Franco regime varied significantly across the time period and within different groups of officers.

6. Is party membership required for entry into the senior officer corps?

No.

In fact, there were a series of different power circles in the Franco military based on various party loyalties. However, there was, immediately after the Civil War, a glut of Falangist or Carlist party officers who served as “acting lieutenants.” These individuals (alfereces provisionales) were given special consideration for promotion.²

7. Does military training involve extensive political education or ideological indoctrination?

No.

I could find no evidence of political education and/or ideological indoctrination within the military during the period after the Civil War and leading into 1957.

8. Has the military been used to repress internal dissent in the last five years?

Yes.

The military was often called upon to put down communist guerilla forces.³ They were also called upon in other types of dissent, but did not always participate as ordered. In 1951, Franco ordered the military to repress a labor movement and the military refused to fulfill the order.

9. Has the military been used to govern the country in the last five years?

No.

However, as recently as 1949, when Castro left the country he left it under the charge of the minister of the Army and not the then Prime Minister who was a civilian.⁴ Also, former military officers dominated positions within the civilian

² Preston, *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the military in 20th Century Spain*, pg. 139.

³ Preston, *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the military in 20th Century Spain*, pg. 140.

⁴ Stanley G. Payne, *The Franco Regime: 1936-1975* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987) pg. 423.

government. Franco's cabinet included 26 former and current military officers. Military officers also held almost 50% of the posts in the Ministry of the Interior. From 1945 to 1960 22% of the civil governors were military officers.⁵

10. Is there a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military, used to provide regime or leader security?

Yes.

Two organizations, the Civil Guard and the Armed Police, provided regime security and were specially tasked with enforcing law and order in support of the Franco regime.⁶

11. Is there an internal intelligence apparatus dedicated to watching the regular military?

No.

I could find no evidence of an internal intelligence apparatus designed to watch the regular military.

12. Has a purge of the officer corps occurred in the last five years?

No.

Castro was unwilling politically to take any significant cuts of the officer corps, to include cutting down a force that was bloated with an excessive amount of officers.⁷

13. Is there an institutionalized forum through which civilian leaders and military officers regularly exchange information?

Yes.

The National Defense Junta reported directly to Franco and was comprised of the service chiefs who ran the separate Army, Navy, and Air Force Ministries.⁸

⁵ Preston, *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the military in 20th Century Spain*, pg. 137.

⁶ Jose Antonio Olmeda Gomez, "The Armed Forces in the Francoist Political System," in *Armed Forces and Society in Spain Past and Present*, eds. Rafael Bannon Martinez and Thomas M. Barker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pg. 255.

⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *The Franco Regime: 1936-1975*, pg. 425.

⁸ Preston, *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the military in 20th Century Spain*, pg. 135.

