



¡Bienvenidos al Bulletin de verano de 2024!

With the summer holidays almost upon us, there is a vivid sense of place in this edition.

We join local people on the streets of Málaga, Madrid and Mallorca as they grapple with the competing pressures of an over-active [tourist trade](#) and the need for affordable housing.



Walking the waterfront of Miami, we discover its hidden identity as a [city of expatriates and artists](#), where the world is mapped out in the wing of a *cucaracha* [in Spanish].

Returning to the early 1900s, we see Buenos Aires' sweet spot, the Plaza San Martín, through the eyes of the [marvellous Miss Kavanagh](#), whose literally towering ambition lifts her above her socialite critics.

And in the second part of our series on [visual analysis](#), we see what happens when our subject takes to the mean streets of Mexico City openly carrying a gun.

Urban violence is high on the agenda in several Latin American states, with '[punitive populism](#)' seen by some as the solution. We compare violent crime in El Salvador and Ecuador, and ask whether the former's 'Bukele model' of mass arrests can quell the sudden upsurge of violence in the Andean state.



Colombia's decade of *la violencia* (1948 – 1958) did at least provide inspiration for the writing career of its most illustrious author, Gabriel García Márquez. We look at the extent to which his early novella [El coronel no tiene quien le escriba](#) (*No one writes to the colonel*) is his response to the injustices of the then dictatorship in his native land [in Spanish].

Spain and Portugal were also under dictatorships at that time. Fifty years on from [Portugal's Carnation Revolution](#), we compare and contrast the developments that led up to and followed on from the two neighbours' mid-1970s transitions.



Spain's current political situation has brought to the fore contrasting figures, in the persons of the suave Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and the quirky Catalan nationalist Carles Puigdemont. We examine how these [two leaders](#) have maintained their influence and support base through challenging times [in

Spanish].

Summer allows us to lift our gaze for a while from worldly events and to indulge in a little escapism. Nothing better than a good book to help us along, and there can be no better book for thought-provoking fun than *La tía Julia y el escribidor* / *Aunt Julia and the scriptwriter* by Mario Vargas Llosa. Our correspondent looks at the 'corrupt and compelling' [artist-muse relationship](#) at the heart of the novel.



Summer holidays are also a great opportunity for Sixth Form hispanists to turn their minds to the Bulletin of Advanced Spanish / University of Glasgow Essay Competition, whose closing date this year is 23 September. The winning entry will be published in our next edition. Download Competition rules [here](#).

Since 2017 the Bulletin of Advanced Spanish has been a free resource, read on every continent, written by and for enthusiasts at all stages of their exploration of the language and culture of the Spanish-speaking world. Please see the Guidelines tab if you would like to write for us. The deadline for the next edition is the end of September.

Feliz verano a todos,

The BAS editorial team

Essay Competition 2024

We attach a downloadable invitation to Sixth Formers to take part in this years competition.

Good Luck!

<https://bulletinofadvancedspanish.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/bas-2024-essay-competition-poster-1.pdf>



The Marvellous Miss Kavanagh: Revenge and Skyscrapers in Buenos Aires

BAS editor Helen Laurenson

Every morning during her last winter, the old woman walked around the rectangular terrace of her apartment. She moved slowly, pausing at intervals to take in the view. From this high vantage point, or her eyrie as she called it, the city lay spread and luminous in the early summer light. To the east, beyond the Hotel de Inmigrantes and the docks, the river traced its wide brown path towards the sea. She remembered summers at the balneario, young men and women swimming, full of vigour and life, with not a thought for what would come. As night fell, the terrace of the Cervecería Munich would fill up and French lanterns illuminate the smiles of the people as they walked through the glorieta to reach the pier. Now nothing remained of Costanera Sur, it had long since been transformed into an industrial waste ground where no-one ventured. However, it was to the western side of the terrace where the woman's gaze lingered. To the Plaza del Retiro where the gods had lived. With an imperceptible smile, she turned her back on the view and moved towards the stone apex of the terrace, just as she had designed it, the bow of her ship. The gaucho's daughter and her Edificio Kavanagh had outlived them all.



Buenos Aires' architecture earned the city the sobriquet of the 'Paris of Latin America', and during the gilded age it seemed that many buildings were endowed with a sense of the monumental. The modernist *Edificio Kavanagh* is one of many such buildings, whose architects collectively embraced a hybridity of styles and both European and North American influences.

From grandiose yet utilitarian water pumping stations such as the 'Palacio de Aguas Corrientes' of 1894, to the 'Catedral de Electricidad', a power station opened in 1928 and nicknamed *Nuestra Señora de la Electricidad* by *porteños*, there was a clear sense of architectural innovation and experimentation.

Indeed, this *fiebre de París*, bolstered by the new-found prosperity generated by agriculture and livestock, fuelled a building boom summed up in Gaudí's words *No Hi Ha Somnis Impossibles* (*There Are No Impossible Dreams*) emblazoned on a building by Spanish architect Rodríguez Ortega on Avenida Rivadavia. Both foreign and Argentine architectural firms took full advantage of the capital flooding into the country, and of the appetite of wealthy clients to design ever more ostentatious buildings, particularly in the Art Deco and Modernist traditions.



The first quarter of the 20th century also saw the arrival of pivotal Italian architects keen to develop their portfolios outside the restrictive Italian school, in particular Francesco Gianotti (1881-1967) and Mario Palanti (1885-1978), who between them designed some of Buenos Aires' most emblematic buildings: the Palacio Barolo, the Hotel Castelar ^[1], El Palacio Chrysler ^[2], Galería Güemes and the Confitería El Molino. The emergence of eclectic modernism, in parallel with Art Nouveau, Art Deco and Rationalism, explains the construction in the 1930s of such disparate buildings as the American Art Deco style *Edificio Kavanagh* and the gigantic and exaggerated French style *Edificio Estrugamou* ^[3]. The architectural historian Eduardo Lazzari affirms this, stating, 'una característica de los arquitectos argentinos es la de siempre generar una broma arquitectónica, es decir un detalle que no se corresponde con lo canónico y que le da un toque significativo'.

This fascination with the architectural language of Paris – specifically Beaux-Arts – has its roots in the *fin-de-siècle* when more mansions per family were built in Buenos Aires than anywhere else in the world ^[4]. Indeed, the Argentine Centennial of 1910 continued in this vein, with the construction of public buildings and monuments donated by the countries of immigrant communities settled in Argentina.^[5] The first two decades of the 20th century saw established patrician families – the Blaquier, Alvear and Anchorena families amongst others – jockeying for position in an increasingly uncertain world, where industrialist nouveau riche interlopers and immigrant Marxist sympathisers from Russia threatened the social and political *status quo*.



It was into this climate of socio-cultural apartheid that Corina Kavanagh Lynch was born on 20 February 1890, the daughter of Irish immigrants from Ballygarrett, Co. Wexford and County Westmeath. At the age of 22, Corina was married to Guillermo Ham Kenny, the wealthy son of a fellow Irish landowner, Peter Ham of La Choza, Luján, whose obituary states, 'Mr Ham, through his persevering industry and uprightness, amassed an immense fortune since his arrival in the Plate'.^[6] Four years older than Corina's father, Guillermo lived the typical life of the Argentine elite – *con la vaca atada* ^[7]– owning *estancias* in the Pampa and studs in Chantilly, whilst developing a taste for European high life.

The couple lived outside Argentina for sixteen years, with Corina amassing French antiques, *haute couture* and jewellery, and clearly fine-tuning her interest in architecture. When he died, Corina became even more wealthy: even so, societal expectations in such a patriarchal society were that she would still require a husband despite her independent wealth. She duly went on to marry Carlos Mainini, her husband's doctor and a TB specialist whom she met in Paris and married in August 1929 – a marriage annulled by the Vatican six years later. So far, not so good. In 1938 – *y para más INRI* – she married the patrician bisexual Héctor Gustavo Casares Lynch, whose father was a founding member of the ultra-elite Buenos Aires Jockey Club ^[8]. None of the marriages were particularly happy, despite her fabulous wealth and lifestyle, and she remained childless, living out her days in apartment 14 of the *Edificio Kavanagh* until her death in 1984 aged 93.

The urban myth of Corina Kavanagh centres on the construction of the 31-storey, 120-metre-high residential skyscraper in 1936, at the time the tallest building in Latin America and the highest reinforced concrete structure in the world. The building occupies a triangular shaped site in front of the *Basilica Santo Sacramento* and adjacent to the Plaza Hotel, facing the Plaza San Martín in the Retiro *barrio* of Buenos Aires.

The building, commissioned by Kavanagh, was designed by the Argentine architects Gregorio Sánchez, Ernesto Lagos and Luis María de la Torre. It is said that Corina Kavanagh had to sell several *estancias* in Venado Tuerto ^[9] in the province of Santa Fe to fund the cutting-edge project, which had 105 luxury apartments for rental, with hitherto unseen levels of sophistication as

regards fittings, finish and design^[10]. Its Impact was immediate: in 1939 the American Institute of Architects ranked it as a technical achievement alongside the Eiffel Tower, Aswan Dam and Panama Canal. In 1999 it was declared a national monument and part of UNESCO's World Heritage of Modern Architecture.

Theory and speculation swirl around Corina's motivation for the project. Already in possession of the French-style Palacio Kavanagh in the northern suburb of Olivos, Corina did not hesitate in purchasing the future *Edificio's* plot of land when it became available on the Plaza del Retiro. Ownership of this plot allowed her to exact architectural revenge on the self-styled 'Condesa Pontificia' Mercedes Castellanos de Anchorena (pictured), who had spurned Corina as *nouveau riche*. The ultra-pious Condesa had founded the adjacent Basílica del Santísimo Sacramento in 1914: Corina's carefully designed skyscraper achieved near total occlusion of the view of Basilica Santo Sacramento from the Palacio Anchorena, the Condesa's family mansion on the other side of the Square. The snub was lost on the Condesa, who died in 1920, 16 years before the Edificio was built, but presumably brought satisfaction to Corina.



With Corina's second marriage dissolved in Paris, she returned to Argentina. Rumours suggesting an amorous liaison between Corina and the Condesa's son Aarón de Anchorena, *soltero de oro argentino*, entertained Argentine socialites of the mid-1930s, but remain unproven. On 17 March 1938 Corina married her third husband, Héctor Gustavo Casares Lynch.

Perhaps the most edifying aspect of the Corina legend is not the alleged vendetta with the Condesa, but rather the revolutionary nature of both the building and its creator. In the midst of the Depression, and in a society where men dominated commerce and real estate, Corina Kavanagh broke boundaries aesthetically and socially. Allegedly inspired by New York's Rockefeller Building^[11], the *Edificio Kavanagh* was conceived, designed and built in 20 months, a testament to Corina's tenacity and a very different rate of progress from that of the Rockefeller, which took eleven years of design controversy. Corina's bold envisioning of this corner of Plaza del Retiro made a clear

modernist statement with its perpendicular, avant-garde façade so in contrast with the existing low-level skyline of domes, mansard roofs and *belle-époque* embellishments. The impact of the building was not merely aesthetic: as the ambitious *crie de coeur* of a woman excluded yet triumphant, it constituted a subtle destabilisation of the social *status quo*.



Despite all her wealth, Corina's story was that of immigrant Argentina, and her building really was 'La Pampa puesta de pie' ^[12]. From featuring on the cover of the society magazine *Caras y Caretas*' Christmas edition of 1935 to being voted most iconic building in Buenos Aires by the city's inhabitants in 2017, there is no doubt that *la hija del gaucho se hizo la América*.

^[1] The hotel on Avenida de Mayo where García Lorca stayed from October 1933 to March 1934 during the premiere of *Bodas de Sangre* in the Teatro Avenida. The hotel opened in 1929 and was designed by Mario Palanti, who also designed the *Palacio Barolo*.

^[2] Now called Palacio Alcorta, the building comprised a one-mile rooftop automobile test-track and was built in 1928.

^[3] This building is an architectural anomaly which imitates Parisian *belle époque* on an exaggerated, proto-brutalist scale.

^[4] See for example, Palacio Paz (1902-1914), now the Círculo Militar; Palacio San Martín (1905-1909) home of the Anchorena family, now the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Palacio Pereda (1919), now the Brazilian Embassy, el Palacio Ortiz Basualdo (1912), now the French Embassy.

^[5] Monuments were exported from France, Italy and Spain, with the British gift of the *Torre de los Ingleses* placed strategically in front of the Retiro railway station which opened in 1915, whose steel construction was shipped from Liverpool and apocryphally intended for Australia.

^[6] <https://www.genealogiafamiliar.net/getperson.php?personID=I23467&tree=BVCZ>

^[7] This curious expression – *tener la vaca atada* – connoting extreme wealth, finds its origin in the transportation by ocean liner of family, servants, domestic animals and even cows to provide fresh Argentine milk when in Europe.

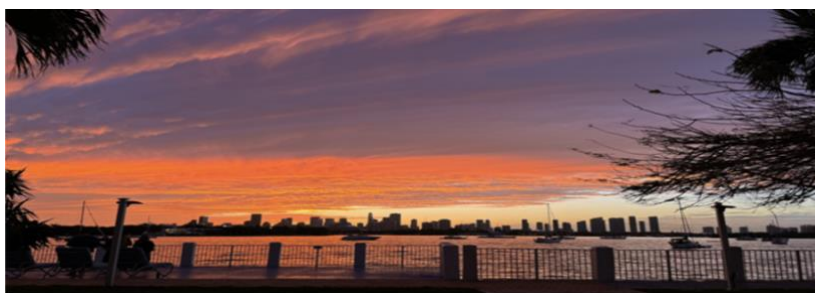
^[8] <https://www.diariodecultura.com.ar/costumbres-y-tendencias/la-fascinante-vida-de-cora-kavanagh-la-mujer-que-invento-el-edificio-mas-iconico-de-buenos-aires/>

^[9] Founded by the Irishman Eduardo Casey and known as 'La Esmeralda de Sur' due to the fertile landscape.

^[10] Originally conceived as luxury rental apartments, fittings included imported American kitchen appliances, a cold fur store, reception, garden terraces and 12 lifts.

^[11] The Rockefeller Building is twice the height.

^[12] Prologue, Marcelo Nogué, *Kavanagh*



Miami, tierra de expatriados, destino artístico y cultural

BAS editor Clara Riveros

Han transcurrido dos años de mi vida en Florida -luego de recorrer un poco Europa, vivir en algunas ciudades de América Latina y del Norte de África-, llevo casi un año instalada en Miami Beach. He dejado de huir. Mi experiencia vital advierte que puedo haber encontrado mi hogar, mi lugar en el mundo. Miami es individualidad, diversidad, interculturalidad, libertad, vida. Y muchos desafíos cotidianos.

Cuando hace pocos meses murió la filántropa y coleccionista de arte Rosa de la Cruz pensé que valdría la pena contar a nuestros lectores del *BAS* un poco de la vida artística y cultural de Miami -vista desde mi orilla en Miami Beach-, y hacerlo a través de su gente, de quienes hacen y llenan de brillo nuestra hermosa ciudad.

Rosa de la Cruz nació en La Habana, vivió en ciudades de Europa y de Estados Unidos y se radicó en Miami donde residió 50 años, muriendo a los 80 años. La referencia a su vida y a su legado tienen razón de ser en este texto porque su legado a la vida cultural de la ciudad y a la internacionalización de Miami como destino artístico es relevante.

“Además de su museo y de su maravillosa colección, a Rosa se le debe la internacionalización de Ana Mendieta y de Félix González-Torres. Este último ha sido el artista cubanoamericano más importante de los últimos 40 o 50 años. Rosa lo apoyó incondicionalmente no solo en vida. Continuó promoviendo su obra después de que este falleciera en 1996”, recuerda Elvis Fuentes, director ejecutivo del



Museo de Coral Gables. Wilfredo Cancio Isla, amigo de la familia, ha dicho sobre la célebre gestora cultural que se le debe la prestigiosa feria mundial Art Basel, siendo esa la primera y más notable referencia a la vida artística y cultural de Miami.

Esta es tierra de expatriados y esa característica definitoria la posiciona en un lugar especial y privilegiado. Todos aquí somos ciudadanos del mundo. La escritora y novelista francesa americana [Jeanne Ferron](#) ha dicho que “son las personas las que aportan sus deseos y es la gente, que viene, la que hace una ciudad”. Veamos cómo y porqué.



Ferron eligió Miami y Miami la eligió a ella. Lo afirma sin matices. Y no es para menos. Vino aquí en noviembre de 2019, justo antes de la pandemia. Poco antes de partir descubrió “un pedazo de historia dentro de la Historia” y estando allí pidió un deseo. Dos años después, Ferron aterrizaba de nuevo en América y esta vez para quedarse por una larga temporada. “Gané la lotería que organiza Estados Unidos para obtener la Green Card. La vida proporciona historias a los escritores. Y los escritores las transforman. Son el deseo y el

conocimiento los que dan vida al Arte y Miami está llena de historias, rostros y personajes. Nada menos”.

Ferron ha publicado cuatro novelas en francés y dos libros colectivos y busca posicionarse como la escritora franco-americana radicada en Miami con todas sus implicaciones: “escribir en francés, por el estilo y la semántica, y escribir en inglés para adoptar la poderosa forma americana de contar historias”. Ella celebra la vida cotidiana, la cultura y el arte en Miami, pero también la forma en que se ha pensado este país. Nota que ese camino transitado probablemente le ha legado a Miami su particularidad y unicidad.

He tenido ocasión de conversar con artistas y escritores que traen sus miradas sobre la vida artística y cultural de la ciudad y también de Miami como un destino elegido para establecerse.

Fabián Peña, un artista único y brillante cuya obra me resulta impactante, posee una admirable habilidad creativa para hacer algo bello con elementos que a otros nos resultan aterradores y repugnantes, como las cucarachas y moscas. Recuerda que, a un año de llegar a este país, en 2005, residía en Houston y colaboraba con el artista Adrián Soca como parte del proyecto colectivo Elsoca & Fabián. En septiembre de ese año fueron invitados por la curadora Liz Cerejido para realizar un performance como parte de un programa para artistas cubanos organizado por el Cuban Research Institute de Florida International University. “Este viaje a Miami resultó sumamente estimulante y decisivo para nosotros. Al llegar aquí recibimos un gran apoyo por parte de colegas y amigos. Conocimos personalmente a artistas cubanos emigrados a quienes admirábamos desde nuestra época de estudiantes en Cuba, así como a nuestra primera galerista en los Estados Unidos, Bernice Steinbaum, quien también nos brindó un extraordinario apoyo en esta primera etapa”.



Peña descubre aquí un espacio familiar, encuentra viable y factible retomar y desarrollar su carrera, se reencuentra con viejos amigos y familiares a quienes no veía desde hacía muchos años. Todo ello ha sido un proceso muy orgánico. “Todos estos motivos fueron suficientes para decidir quedarme a vivir aquí, además del clima privilegiado y el mar que tenemos en esta ciudad. Miami posee un potencial cultural extraordinario. Lo

más fascinante de esta ciudad es su condición cosmopolita, un punto de encuentro para personas de todas las nacionalidades que enriquecen su tejido cultural con sus diversas experiencias y tradiciones. Aún persisten ciertos estigmas asociados a Miami, pero afortunadamente estos prejuicios están pasando a un segundo plano. Miami es hoy por hoy la casa de destacados artistas de diversas procedencias que están viviendo y trabajando en la ciudad, enriqueciéndola artística y culturalmente”.

Abunda en la existencia física de museos, como el de [Coral Gables](#) al que está vinculado y que tuve el privilegio de conocer y de recorrer en su compañía, también el [Instituto de Arte de Miami](#), así como [colecciones privadas](#) de renombre que enriquecen la vida cultural de la ciudad y los espacios culturales alternativos



como [“Dimensions Variable”](#) que se ha consolidado como un punto de referencia en la escena artística local. Y, desde luego, el evento donde muchos desean estar: “La llegada de la feria [Art Basel](#) en 2002 marcó un hito crucial en la historia cultural de la ciudad, no solo impulsando su desarrollo económico, sino también consolidándola como un destacado destino artístico a nivel mundial”. En el Art Basel de 2007, a los cinco minutos de abierta la feria, la obra de Peña fue vendida. El comprador, Lance Armstrong, habría pagado 21 mil USD. No parece un mal comienzo en suelo americano. Desde luego, el artista no presumió de ello, lo descubrí en la prensa local. “La verdadera riqueza de Miami radica en su diversidad poblacional”. Para Peña este elemento la hace fascinante, además de estar en plena ebullición y evidenciar su gran potencial.



[Robert Mack](#), escritor estadounidense especializado en cuestiones de [felicidad, plenitud y temas análogos](#), también hizo de Miami su hogar. Mack ha sido actor y modelo, presentador de televisión, productor, conferencista y es, en primera instancia, una de las personas más genuinas e inspiradoras que he conocido en Miami. Su brillo, dulzura, luz, energía, disciplina, perseverancia y optimismo son admirables. No

sorprende que el autor de [“Happiness from the Inside Out”](#) y [“Love from the Inside Out”](#), apoye, acompañe, motive y coadyuve al proceso de sanación, transformación interior de muchas personas, al [redescubrimiento de su felicidad y a su consecuente salud mental y espiritual](#).

Mack ha vivido en algunas de las más intensas, vibrantes e interesantes ciudades del país -Filadelfia, Pittsburg, Nueva York, Los Angeles-, para finalmente establecerse casi de tiempo completo en Miami “por la vibrante diversidad de la ciudad”. Exalta la energía y el dinamismo de Miami, sus hermosas playas, inmejorable clima tropical, incomparable [accesibilidad y transitabilidad para peatones](#) y el ambiente cada vez más metropolitano. “Miami es un crisol de culturas que enriquece mi vida diaria”, dice.



El experto en Psicología Positiva ha descubierto que Miami alimenta sus ideas, su salud mental y aporta elementos a su proceso de crecimiento de formas diversas. Todo ello redunda en su balance, equilibrio y bienestar físico, mental, espiritual e individual, además de establecer conexiones con personas que tienen intereses comunes a los suyos. “El optimismo y el entusiasmo por la vida que impregnan la ciudad se alinean perfectamente con mi enfoque en la positividad; y el clima, las playas y el entretenimiento respaldan mi deseo de lograr armonía y equilibrio entre la vida profesional y personal”, añade.

Mack confirma la inquietud o percepción de que Miami está subestimada en términos culturales y artísticos: “Si bien muchas personas reconocen su vida nocturna y sus playas, a menudo pasan por alto su próspera escena artística. Miami es sede de exposiciones artísticas de renombre internacional como Art Basel o el vibrante arte callejero que ofrecen los [murales de Wynwood](#), así como una gran cantidad de museos e instituciones culturales que enriquecen la vida de la ciudad con una gama muy amplia de expresiones artísticas”. Los eventos y lugares más destacados para Mack son el [Miami City Ballet](#), la [Florida Grand Opera](#), pero también el [Pérez Art Museum](#) y el [Festival anual de Cine](#) de Miami. “Miami exhibe una escena artística ecléctica y sofisticada que satisface una multiplicidad de gustos. La combinación de influencias latinoamericanas con las tradiciones norteamericanas crea un paisaje cultural único”.

El autor estima que para mejorar el potencial de Miami como destino cultural “es clave una inversión continua en artistas y en organizaciones culturales locales. Apoyar los movimientos de base y las galerías más pequeñas junto con las principales instituciones puede fomentar un entorno cultural más inclusivo y dinámico”. Agrega que no está de más la promoción de los bienes culturales de Miami a través de asociaciones internacionales y programas de intercambio cultural, el desarrollo de infraestructuras, así como una mayor presencia en medios de comunicación. “Me gustaría ver una infraestructura física y organizacional mejorada para apoyar las actividades de creación artística, así como mejoras para el acceso al transporte a los centros culturales e inversión en espacios que permitan a los artistas vivir y trabajar, así como fomentar las plataformas digitales que puedan mostrar la escena cultural de Miami a una audiencia global”. Todo ello puede incidir en la reputación de Miami como centro artístico internacional.

Un aspecto no menos relevante es la importancia de la [vivienda asequible](#), siendo este el “componente crítico de una economía creativa próspera”, en palabras de Mack. Y es que el [aumento](#) de los [alquileres](#) y del [coste de vida](#) pueden asfixiar a las fuerzas creativas, expulsando a los artistas, innovadores y otros productores culturales hacia zonas más asequibles, cosa

que ya está sucediendo y, por lo mismo, enfatiza la necesidad de políticas que garanticen que los artistas y actores creativos tengan acceso a viviendas asequibles para mantener el carácter de Miami como polo vibrante y dinámico de la vida cultural y artística. Mack reflexiona vivamente sobre este tema al enumerar diferentes iniciativas y subraya que estas no solo apoyarían a la comunidad cultural existente sino que también atraerían a nuevos talentos, concluyendo que todas estas redundarían en la vitalidad cultural, pero también en la economía de la ciudad.



Camino a diario cerca de cinco millas bordeando el mar, me siento afortunada de sentir la brisa, el olor a sal y de ser besada por este sol ardiente y abrasador de Miami. Recorro las calles de mi ciudad, disfruto la algarabía y el espíritu festivo, veo decenas de rostros felices y sonrientes abarrotados en restaurantes y cafés. Me encanta la calle y conversar con desconocidos que se han rendido al encanto paradisiaco del lugar, al buen clima, al magnífico tiempo todo el año, incluido el invierno que no sucede o no del modo inclemente en que se

manifiesta en otros lugares del mundo.

En Miami hay una gran fiesta de lenguas, todas bailan, ninguna está aburrida y sentada sola en un rincón. La cadencia de acentos que se cruzan, entrecruzan y mezclan, otorga brillo y sensualidad a esa puesta en escena que constituyen el diálogo y el intercambio por el simple placer de hacerlo. Celebro, brindo y festejo esta ciudad, pensada para peatones y para gente opuesta a la vida sedentaria, decidida por estilos de vida saludables que privilegian los buenos hábitos, el autocuidado y el ejercicio, la ética, la estética, la naturalidad y la autenticidad como formas de una vida genuina, el placer y la belleza en todas sus manifestaciones y expresiones. ¡Salud!



Fabián Peña, Fossil, 2008. Fragmentos de ala de cucaracha sobre piedra traslúcida. Una sola ala de cucaracha cortada en minúsculos fragmentos para componer o representar el mapa del mundo.



Is punitive populism the solution to violent crime in Latin America?

Dr Celia Szusterman examines why El Salvador's approach is not the solution for the spike in violent crime in Ecuador.

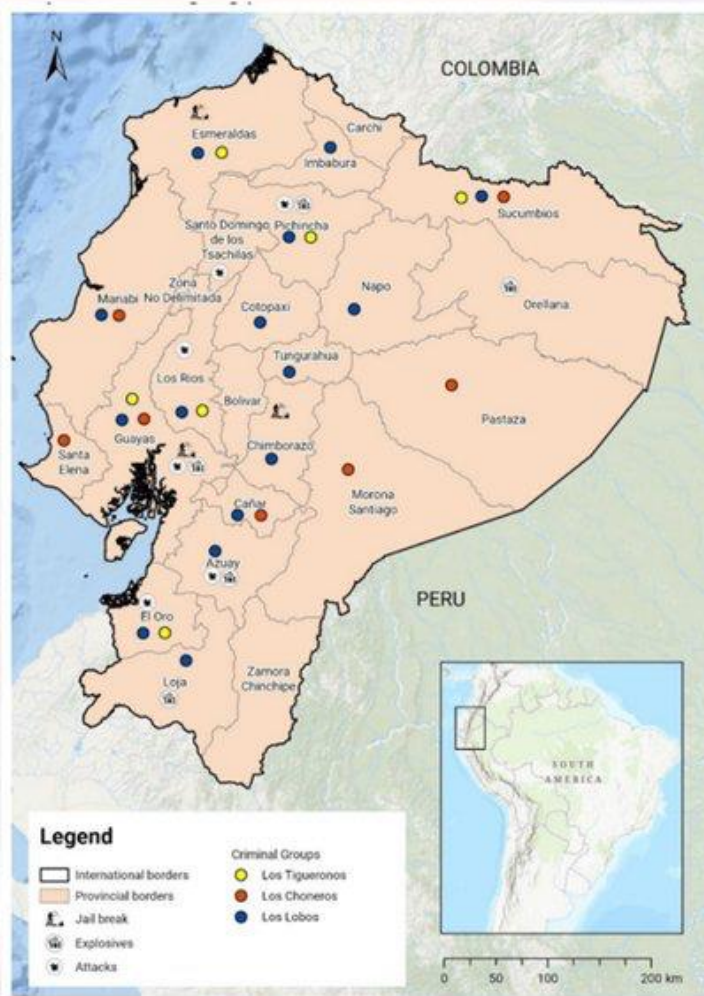
Crime and violence have long been a top concern for families across Latin America. The region accounts for nearly half of the world's intentional homicide victims, although it has eight percent of the global population. If governments in the region were able to prioritize more effective crime-fighting strategies, these would not only enhance public safety but also improve the region's economic potential.



In a recent report the IMF estimated the average macroeconomic impact and cost of crime in the region at between 1.5 to 2.0 percentage points of GDP. Taking into account the high rates of poverty, and the fact that Latin American societies are the

most unequal in the globe, it is clear that beyond the horrific costs of loss of life, violence imposes an economic cost that countries cannot afford.

While the northern triangle countries of Central America (El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala) have consistently shown the worst violence-related statistics in the region, in the last couple of years Ecuador has climbed up the crime-related tables. Yet as recently as 2018 Ecuador was considered to be one of the most peaceful countries in Latin America, an oasis enclosed in the south by the political instability and Shining-Path violence in Peru, and in the north by the decades-old Colombian armed conflict between government and mostly FARC guerrillas.



© Source: InSight Crime (19/01/2024)

Disclaimer: The layouts 'jail break', 'explosives', and 'attacks' do not match the number of events and are meant to illustrate that at least one event took place in the province by January 2024. The 'criminal groups' category does not show all gangs in Ecuador, only the three most active.

The increase in violence in Ecuador coincided with the arrival of drugs, which in turn was closely correlated to the implementation of Plan Colombia, an anti-drugs and anti-FARC strategy first conceived in 1999. The heavy security operations financed by the US forced the Colombian narco-guerrillas to seek alternative routes to store and ship cocaine to the US and Europe.

In 2016 Plan Colombia was replaced by the Peace Accords signed between the government, paramilitary groups and most of the FARC. Although not all guerrillas-turned-narcotraffickers joined the peace negotiations, a pivotal incentive for the FARC to abandon the armed struggle was the possibility of becoming a political party and joining civil life in Colombia. This is key to understanding why negotiations were possible in Colombia but cannot happen in Ecuador, where the serious criminal organisations are money-driven foreign cartels interested solely in financial gain, and not in becoming a political force in Ecuadorean society.



Violent prison riots in 2019 brought to light for the first time the Balkan mafia's control of Ecuadorean prisons. They also revealed the presence of transnational cartels in the country, specifically the Mexican Sinaloa and Jalisco Nueva Generación. After President Guillermo Lasso's failure to control prisons, and his early departure from the office, Daniel Noboa was elected to complete his term until 2025.

In December 2023 the Attorney General launched Plan Metastasis, an anti-corruption plan aimed at revealing and dismantling in the judiciary the extensive network of corrupt government officials, judges, police officers and prison personnel. The ensuing prison riots of 8th January 2024 were a direct result of Metastasis, which included transferring the imprisoned leaders of drug cartels to maximum security establishments. The depth and extent of corruption was revealed when 'alias Fico', head of the powerful Choneros gang, disappeared from his cell. This was the spark for a series of violent events focused mainly on the city of Guayaquil. As a result, President Noboa issued Decree 111 declaring a state of internal war, sending the military onto the streets and into the prisons to restore order, imposing a curfew and classifying twenty-two different gangs as 'terrorists'.



Notwithstanding these measures, peace has not been restored to the streets of Guayaquil. The government published photographs of rows of half-naked, crouching detainees, reminiscent of those posted by the Salvadoran government to

symbolise its 'Plan Bukele'. The latter, named after El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele, relies on the suspension of civil rights and mass incarceration – a 'state of exception' that has now become normal.

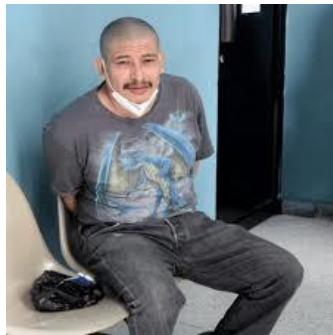
These images were hailed internationally as proof of Bukele's determination to end gang violence. Politicians across Latin America began to cite what is known as 'punitive' or 'penal' populism as a model to be copied, disregarding the particular Salvadoran context and the consequences of the dual policies of mass incarceration and militarisation of security. However, can criminality in El Salvador and Ecuador be compared meaningfully? Is the so called 'Bukele Model' one to be emulated by other countries in the region, as so many politicians (and the public) favour? Do the policies implemented by Bukele reflect an enlightened security model that will deliver peace and security in the long term?

In 2015 El Salvador had one of the highest murder rates in the world, outside war-zones. Nowadays, the situation has reversed: Ecuador has seen its homicide rate climb steeply, while El Salvador's trend in homicides continued its downward trajectory. The 2023 UNODC report on global homicide rates put El Salvador at 7.8 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, while in Ecuador the rate was 27 per 100,000. Mexico and Colombia scored 26 and 25 respectively. A rate of more than 10 per 100,000 is considered a violence "epidemic" by UN agencies.

The claim by President Bukele that the dramatic fall in homicide rates is evidence of the success of his Territorial Control Plan has to be put in context. Homicides had been on a downward trajectory in El Salvador since 2015, and continued to fall in 2019 when Bukele became president. Then,



during one weekend at the end of March 2022, there were 86 homicides. On the Monday Bukele declared a state of exception, initially for three months but which has been in place continuously since then.



There is ample evidence that Bukele's representatives had been meeting with imprisoned gang leaders in spite of the President repeatedly announcing that he would not "negotiate with terrorists". One such leader, "el Crook", at the time serving a life sentence, mysteriously turned up in Mexico, from where he was deported to the US to await trial.

Bukele's stated aim, on launching his Plan, was that 75,000 gang members and their associates would be rounded up and imprisoned. His administration would build the largest prison in the Americas, suspend all procedural guarantees, reduce food rations, and prohibit all visits, including of lawyers. As a result of these draconian measures, El Salvador now has the highest imprisonment rates in the world. Just to give one example, with a population of six million El Salvador is estimated to have almost 100,000 people incarcerated, while England and Wales, with ten times the population of the country has a prison population of 86,000.

More than eighty per cent of those arrested in El Salvador are still awaiting trial. With little regard for the rule of law, let alone human rights, Bukele has declared they will never be let out. Moreover, most victims of police and army raids were poor young men. This not only destroys their lives, it has a catastrophic impact on their families and communities and erodes the foundations of democracy. As someone once asked, will 'iron fist' policies result in a society worth living in?



In Madrid recently, President Noboa distanced himself from the Bukele security policies: “we want to emphasise jobs, education and development, not just grenades and machine guns. We want to offer opportunities to people who had nothing and ended up in those narco-terrorist groups” (*El País*, 17th May 2024). Many studies have concluded that there is no correlation between incarceration rates and crime rates globally. People who mock those who defend the rights of prisoners as human beings tend to say: “what about the human rights of victims?” Clearly victims have been deprived of the first human right, their right to life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its articles 3 and 5 states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security, but it also reminds us that no one shall be subjected to torture or cruel or degrading treatment or punishment, and that everyone has the right to justice and a fair trial.

The demand for citizen security at times challenges the future of democracy. Politicians eager for quick solutions resort to militarisation in order to provide citizens with a secure context in which to live their lives. When the State fails to deliver security, opinion polls throughout Latin America have revealed people’s willingness to cast off the rule of law and values of democracy. As Mexico has shown, militarisation of internal security does not offer an exit strategy: on the contrary, it undermines the institutions of law enforcement.

In El Salvador, Ecuador, Mexico, Colombia, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba, people aspire for more peaceful and equitable lives. The struggle continues for just and decent societies in which state institutions do not humiliate their citizens.





One photograph – Francis Alÿs's 'Re-enactments'

The second in a series of three articles on 'the visual' by BAS Editor Nathaniel Gardner.

While most (if not all) visual scholars agree that, when studying photographs, it is key to focus on collections or series of images, it is not uncommon for different publications on visual studies to publish short pieces that allow a deep read into one specific photograph. This type of exercise can be useful because it allows you to focus on just one image profoundly. If you ever tackle a challenge like that, most of my advice regarding the reading of photographs from my previous article also applies. Perhaps most important when offering the read of a single photograph is to be sure that you have sufficient grounding in context, so that the reading can have the maximum level of relevance possible.

I will now offer a deep read of a documentary photo from a video/performance art project called "Re-enactments" by the Belgian artist Francis Alÿs – a long-term resident of Mexico. After being stationed in that country during his Belgian military service, and after graduating as an architect in his native country, Alÿs returned to Mexico where he began to establish himself as an international artist whose work has been exhibited across the globe. While he is based in Mexico, his work does not only take place there. He has worked in other countries such as Peru, Belgium, Iraq, Afghanistan, among others. His art often has broad themes such as play, conflict, or work.



This image (which, for ease of reference, we reproduce twice again as you read through this article) belongs to one of his Mexican projects from the late 1990s and early 2000s in which the artist focused on individuals who walk across the city. This walking as art can take many forms, but the one thing this series of photographs has in common is that those who walk (himself or others with whom he collaborates) move across the historical district (*centro histórico*) in Mexico City. For example, he has taken a magnet on wheels for a walk across the city to see what type of detritus it will pick up. He hired someone to push a large block of ice along the streets of a city until there was nothing left of it. In another series of photographs, we observe visual evidence of many of the street sellers, *ambulantes*, who make their living via many forms of informal employment. One reading of this work can be as a criticism of the sub-employment that exists in the neo-liberal Mexico of that period (and still persists today).

The photograph featured here is from perhaps his most daring venture in the *ambulantes* series (which might explain why it is him who is pictured in the photograph). This specific example comes from a video of Francis Alÿs walking into a gun shop on Calle de La Palma (near the Zócalo) in Mexico City, buying a 9mm Beretta and then proceeding to walk with the loaded gun through the same area until he was stopped by the police. In a way that might only be possible in Mexico City, Alÿs then explained to the police that he was an artist and that the stroll with a loaded weapon was only part of an artistic

performance. He was allowed to go free. Then, in an even odder twist of circumstances, the police agreed to take part in a “re-enactment” in which Alÿs undertook the same stroll with a replica pistol and the police pretended to arrest him, as they did in his original walk.

There are many ways of reading this photograph. You can see it as a criticism of the normalization of violence in Latin America. It can be a discussion on danger (as both the act and the “re-act” subjected the artist to an elevated level of risk during his performance). Given the police interaction, the theme of law and order can be read into the image.

However, as we look at the single photograph, we may want to ask ourselves, why has the artist chosen this photograph to represent this artistic performance? Without an explanation from the artist, it is difficult to know fully, but a discussion of the details of the image helps us to identify meaning.



As we focus on the information within the photograph, this evidences a meditation on violence as well as on Mexico and Latin America themselves. The photograph was taken in the *centro histórico*, not far from the Tepito neighbourhood, which is notorious for its levels of crime and violence (amplifying the level of danger as well for Alÿs, who is

undertaking this risky act in the name of art). He is casually dressed – looking different from his “professional tourist” photograph (below) that he took just adjacent to the Zócalo (main square) where other professionals (such as plumbers and carpenters) wait for work in another artistic performance that he staged around that same time.

This difference between tourist and artist is important as it shows him making an effort to integrate into Mexican life and to engage with its social problems: Mexico is now his home, so its problems are also his. The fact that Alÿs carries the gun in broad daylight down a busy street in central Mexico City is a clear comment on the presence of violence even in the heart of the Mexican capital.



Go back to our main 're-enactment' photograph and scan the detail from left to right. You will notice that it goes from the non-specific in Latin America to the specific. On the bottom left-hand corner (at relatively the same level of the gun) is a poster of Che Guevara. Associated with youth, rebellion and violence, this is a clear reminder of Latin America, its revolutionaries, and its history of radical politics.



The image then moves to the more specific. The photograph makes overt and subtle reference to Mexico. The tell-tale architecture of the Capilla de San Lorenzo is made from the same colonial material cannibalized from Aztec structures to create both colonial and *mestizo* buildings (just as the Conquest gave rise to modern Mexico's predominantly mixed race population). Another less subtle reference to the Mexico City location is the taxi cab. Though still recognizable in monochrome representations, the colour images help the viewer to recognize the scene as one from the capital because the green Volkswagen Beetle was at that time the most common taxi cab in the city.

Finally, just above the car is a public telephone on which you can see the TelMex slogan *Todo México* colourfully listed on the phone book. A standard style of the phone booths from that period, the image helps to identify the location as Mexican. If there were any doubt regarding the location of the image, this detail clarifies it.

So, a simple visual reading (because there are others) could be to show how the image offers a line of visual information that starts with Che Guevara, moves to the chapel, then the gun, to the taxi and finally to the phone book with its *Todo México* message on the other side of the image. It is a linear progression. It offers a spectrum with a broad symbol of Latin America at one

end and of Mexico at the other, with the instrument of violence (a man and his gun) in the middle. The photograph suggests violence, and comments that Mexico is high on the spectrum of violence in Latin America.

As you can see, a more profound reading of an image is useful as it helps you to think deeply about what it might mean. To do so successfully, you need to take time with the image, consider its contents and composition, and to contemplate its context and creator(s).

Try it, and see what you discover.

Links to photograph:

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/130829>

<https://www.davidzwirner.com/artworks/francis-allys-re-enactments-c6003>



The artist-muse relationship in 'La tía Julia y el escribidor'

Catherine Wray

In *La tía Julia y el escribidor* (1977) Vargas Llosa vividly depicts the transformative power of the artist-muse relationship, highlighting its usefulness in shaping an artist's creative expression whilst warning of the potential of unchecked desires or emotions to catalyse an artist's demise.

At the heart of the novel is the relationship between the titular Julia, the aunt-by-marriage of aspiring writer Varguitas, widely considered a younger, fictional model of Vargas Llosa himself. A romance between the unlikely pair begins to blossom, with Julia appreciating Varguitas' artistic sensibilities and Varguitas being drawn to his aunt's maturity, independence and worldly charms. Her status as a divorcee in the conservative society of 1950s Peru sets her apart from the rest of the family, and she quickly becomes Varguitas' muse, stimulating his creative imagination and encouraging him to explore his artistic potential.



However, as their relationship develops, the artist-muse dynamic between Aunt Julia and Varguitas becomes increasingly intricate and conflicted. The age difference and familial ties complicate their connection, which defies societal expectations and undermines the expected boundaries of their relationship.

The blurred lines between fiction and reality further contribute to the complexity of their bond. Varguitas begins to fictionalise his experiences with Aunt Julia in his writing, rendering the distinction between his personal life and his creative work increasingly ambiguous. This intertwining of reality and imagination – though characteristic of Vargas Llosa's work – raises doubts regarding the authenticity of their relationship and the ethical implications of using personal experience as material for artistic expression.



The moral ambiguity of their relationship is also interesting. Given his youth and naivety, a modern reading of *La tía Julia* may conclude that the power imbalance is tipped in Julia's favour, raising doubts as to whether her decision to engage in a romantic relationship with her nephew is an impulsive yet ultimately ethical choice or a somewhat exploitative one, with her taking advantage of Varguitas' infatuation where she could and should have

exercised restraint.

However, this perspective is challenged and ultimately undermined by the fact that the real-life Julia, upon whom Varguitas' enigmatic muse is based, would later make a powerful counter-argument with her own memoir, published in 1983, *Lo que Varguitas no dijo*. In this riposte she asserts her own artistic voice and expression, rendering her role in the relationship uncertain. Whilst *La tía Julia* portrays her as a confident woman in command of her own desires, in her own account she expresses her disenchantment that she was used as artistic fodder in a way that did not do justice to nor to her experience of the relationship. In this way, the ethics of the semi-autobiographical format of the novel are challenged and – in her view, at least – condemned.



The reference to an *escribidor* in the novel's title is usually taken to be a reference to Pedro Camacho, the stunningly successful scriptwriter of *radioteatros*. His descent into obsession and insanity is marked by the increasingly nonsensical and illogical stories which feature in every other chapter of the book, with his artistic talents being squandered as a result of his deteriorating mental state. His relationship with his audience, though parasocial rather than romantic like that of Julia and Varguitas, can be said to go some way in bringing about his downfall.



Like Aunt Julia, Camacho is quickly identified by Vargas Llosa as differing greatly from the other characters around him. When he is first introduced to Varguitas, the owner of the radio Station described him as more machine than man, such is his productivity and skill. His melodramatic plotlines and ability to engage his audience account for his devoted following. This success initially distracts him from his inner demons and elevates his status in a way that provokes a degree of envy on the part of Varguitas.

Ultimately, however, the support of his audience is fickle and unsteady. He appeared to embody the rise of mass culture taking place at the time the novel was set. However, when his mental state deteriorates, his stories become increasingly incoherent, prompting a degree of bewilderment tinged with fascination from the audience who once listened enraptured to his tales. This duly catalyses his downfall. That Varguitas ends the novel as the successful writer, while Camacho's career has collapsed, highlights the insouciance of the creative industry which both pedestalled and destroyed Camacho. The symbiotic nature of the writer-audience dynamic prompts the reader to question who is really in control, whose desires are really being immortalised in his work: the artist who is left jobless, meaningless and hopeless, or the audience, whose imaginations and perspectives are dominated by the images and narratives the artist chooses to convey.

In the same way, the muse and the artist become uncomfortably enmeshed, with their respective roles at times unclear. Julia, the muse of Varguitas, will later step out of the novel to reclaim her agency and tell her story on her terms in a way that is less than flattering to Vargas Llosa, whilst Camacho – though clearly a gifted writer of melodramatic *radioteatros* – is also the muse and inspiration of Varguitas, and at the mercy of his audience and superiors.

In this manner, the duplicitous nature of the artist-muse relationship is shown to be just as corrupting as it is compelling.





‘El coronel no tiene quien le escriba’ entre líneas

BAS editor Francisco Compán

Mucho más allá de ser la historia de un veterano de guerra y su dicotomía sobre el destino del gallo de pelea que ha heredado de su hijo Agustín, *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* es una obra cargada de contenido político. Ambientada en Colombia a finales de 1956 durante la dictadura militar de Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, y escrita en el exilio en París entre 1956 y 1957, la novela está inspirada por la mala situación económica de García Márquez en su exilio francés, y por la experiencia de su propio abuelo y veterano de guerra que esperó en vano durante años por el reconocimiento a los servicios prestados al bando Liberal durante la Guerra de los Mil Días.

Breve y concisa hasta el extremo, la novela está cargada de simbología y de un uso denso de adjetivos que requiere que el lector lea entre líneas. Esto es en sí una referencia a la censura impuesta en Colombia durante *La violencia* en los años cincuenta, y a la que García Márquez se refiere sin tapujos en la propia novela cuando al médico le resulta “difícil leer entre líneas lo que permite publicar la censura”. Los pocos personajes que buscan estar informados sobre lo que sucede en Colombia se enfrentan al riesgo de recibir información clandestina desafiando a la censura.



Mientras que el vínculo entre el gallo y la memoria del difunto Agustín tiene una dimensión casi exclusivamente política, la conexión entre el gallo y la carta toma además una dimensión social. La larga espera por la carta está impregnada de especulación e incertidumbre, y denota la incompetencia burocrática de un sistema social roto que contribuye a crear una atmósfera de inactividad y frustración. Para el coronel, la carta es una línea de vida que le da esperanza. La carta y su precaria situación económica son inseparables, y la desesperación del coronel por la falta de noticias sobre su pensión se

deteriora cuando Don Sabas le dice que el gallo vale 900 pesos. La relevancia de la carta como causa de la frágil salud del coronel se debilita a medida que progresa la novela y la atención del coronel se enfoca en el gallo, pero su papel como símbolo del fracaso burocrático y social se consolida al no llegar la carta.

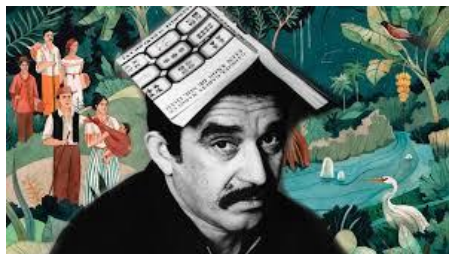


El gallo es sin duda el símbolo más significativo de la novela, aunque parece tener connotaciones diferentes para los distintos personajes. Para el coronel, el gallo representa la esperanza y la posibilidad de salir de la miseria en la que vive, lo que justifica sus desmesuradas atenciones hacia el animal pese al resentimiento de la mujer al replicar que “cuando se

acabe el maíz tendremos que alimentarlo con nuestros hígados”. Al mismo tiempo, el gallo simboliza la memoria de su hijo Agustín, cuando, según la mujer del coronel, “produjo un sonido gutural... como una sorda conversación humana”. La decisión de malvender el gallo al corrupto Don Sabas implica para el coronel traicionar la memoria de Agustín y eliminar la posibilidad de solucionar su situación desesperada, pero la alternativa de deshacerse del “pájaro de mal agüero” es tentadora ya que garantiza su supervivencia y la de su mujer, por lo menos a corto plazo.

Para los muchachos de la gallera (los compañeros de Agustín) y para el pueblo oprimido, el gallo simboliza la resistencia política en un país sin posibilidad de elecciones. Del mismo modo, la gallera es el entorno donde se distribuye información clandestina y es así un foco de resistencia política. La simbología del gallo alcanza una nueva dimensión cuando los muchachos se llevan el animal de la casa del coronel a la gallera para entrenarlo, diciéndole a su mujer que “el gallo era de todo el pueblo”. El coronel reacciona con un rotundo “hicieron bien,” marcando así un punto de inflexión a partir del que se politiza la imagen del gallo. Este sentimiento colectivo respecto al gallo renace cuando Germán muestra el gallo a la “multitud exaltada” en la gallera, y hace resurgir el espíritu de lucha del coronel que “nunca había tenido una cosa tan viva entre las manos”. La decisión del coronel de no vender el gallo se debe a que “esa tarde... la gente había despertado”, al mismo tiempo preservando la memoria de Agustín y su propia dignidad.

La ilusoria esperanza del coronel de recibir la carta con su pensión parece ser reemplazada por la expectativa del despertar político de un pueblo que hasta las últimas páginas de la novela parece estar hundido en el sopor y resignado, como el coronel, a vivir en permanente estado de sitio bajo un régimen represor. Dado el perfil político de García Márquez, no parece sorprendente que el gallo no se venda, y que el coronel decida apostar por mantener su conciencia tranquila alentado por el compromiso político de Germán, la “gente nueva del pueblo”, y la imagen de “un gallo que no puede perder”.



Publicada diez años antes de la aclamada *Cien años de soledad*, que marcaría un antes y un después en el mundo literario, la sucinta *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* contiene elementos literarios reminiscentes del realismo mágico que floreció en la obra maestra posterior. A diferencia de ésta, *El coronel...* se aleja del tratamiento mítico de los personajes para enfocarse en una realidad histórica tangible que permitiría a García Márquez cumplir con su compromiso social.



“En la década del 2015 a 2025, los dos grandes personajes serían Sánchez y Puigdemont”.

BAS editor Alfredo Benito conversa con Ignacio Molina, investigador principal del Real Instituto Elcano.

No es una tarea fácil que una persona tan prolífica y ocupada como Ignacio Molina tenga un hueco en su agenda, y menos para una publicación tan humilde como este boletín. Este investigador principal del Real Instituto Elcano, probablemente el think tank más prestigioso de España, es además profesor en el Departamento de Ciencia Política y Relaciones Internacionales de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, así que la tarea tenía visos casi de imposibilidad. Pero nada es imposible cuando se trata de hablar de política, sin duda, el terreno en el que Molina es una de las voces más reconocidas a nivel internacional. Investigador visitante en distintas universidades como la Trinity College de Dublín, Harvard y Oxford, ha participado en decenas de proyectos de investigación, impartido seminarios en otros tantos centros académicos e incluso es colaborador habitual de instituciones como el Parlamento Europeo, la Comisión Europea, el Consejo de Estado, el Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y Cooperación o la Fundación Bertelsmann. Toda una carta de presentación.

Cuando charlas con Ignacio Molina, enseguida percibes su vocación docente. Se demora lo necesario en dejar claro su punto de vista, sin escatimar en explicaciones que puedan dar lugar a confusión. En este mundo acelerado en el que vivimos se agradece más que nunca la pausa, el análisis profundo y la claridad expositiva. Ponemos sobre la mesa de este investigador dos nombres últimamente en boca de todo el mundo, incluso fuera de las fronteras domésticas: Pedro Sánchez y Carles Puigdemont.



BAS.- ¿Se podría trazar algún paralelismo en la carrera política de dos de los grandes personajes de actualidad a día de hoy en España como Pedro Sánchez y Carles Puigdemont?

Ignacio Molina.- Desde el punto de vista de la trayectoria de un político siempre hay paralelismos en la medida en que los políticos tienen como fin llegar al poder y mantenerse. Desde la Ciencia Política les consideramos como actores racionales, y su racionalidad consiste en alcanzar las posiciones de poder. En particular, aquellos políticos que se orientan a la mayoría, es decir, que pretenden liderar un proyecto de país. En el caso de Puigdemont, es Cataluña, con este sentimiento nacionalista, en su caso, expresamente para crear un nuevo Estado. En el caso de Sánchez, obviamente, es España.



A partir de ahí, otro paralelismo de estos dos personajes es que más o menos hace diez años es cuando salen a la esfera pública. Pedro Sánchez con las elecciones primarias dentro del PSOE en 2014, y en cuanto a Puigdemont, que era alcalde de Girona, pero no lo conocía el gran público, a partir de su elección en 2015 como presidente de la Generalitat de una manera un poco indirecta.

En el mundo contemporáneo donde las ideologías se han hecho un poco líquidas, porque la conciencia de clase esta más diluida, pues tienen que apelar a elementos de movilización muy difusos, muy genéricos. En el caso de Sánchez, la idea de progresismo, la izquierda, pero intentando crear más una marca personal que trasciende a la organización política. Y en el caso de Puigdemont, la nación catalana, pero también trascendiendo lo que era el antiguo partido de centro derecha catalanista -CiU-. Y son personajes que relativamente han tenido éxito, más Sánchez que Puigdemont, al que le marca un fracaso, que le hace mirar constantemente al pasado. Mientras que Sánchez por ahora sigue siendo presente y esa es una importante diferencia.

BAS.- Entonces, ¿crees que hay más elementos que les separan en su trayectoria política que aspectos comunes?

Ignacio Molina.- Bueno, a ver, la cúspide de Puigdemont se sitúa en 2017. Luego lo que ha hecho Puigdemont ha sido sobrevivir fuera del poder y un poco casi en las catacumbas: una huida, una detención, un proceso judicial... Tampoco su desempeño electoral ha sido muy brillante si lo



comparamos con otros líderes del centro derecha catalán. Por ejemplo, Jordi Pujol ganó todas las elecciones a las que se presentó, incluso, que nadie lo olvide, Artur Mas también. Y, sin embargo, Puigdemont a las tres que se ha presentado, las tres las ha perdido, una a través de líder interpuesto. Por su parte, Pedro Sánchez llega al poder en 2018. Lleva ya seis años en el Gobierno de España, haciendo muchos juegos malabares, con bastante habilidad política. Y previamente fue derrotado dentro del partido, pero se recompuso y con habilidad volvió a ganar. Ha ganado dos veces elecciones internas del partido y eso le ha convertido en un referente de la izquierda española. Tensionando mucho algunas de las convenciones que había sobre reglas, sobre procedimientos. Pero siendo cierto que hay paralelismos, más allá de eso, el desempeño de cada uno ha sido muy distinto.

BAS.- Has hablado de sobrevivir, y quería fijarme en ese asunto. ¿Crees que merece algún tipo de elogio que, en la política actual, tan fugaz en muchos casos, estos dos líderes hayan sido capaces de sobrevivir a momentos muy convulsos? ¿Eso les confiere en tu opinión un carácter especial?

Ignacio Molina.- Depende de cuál es el elemento para juzgar a un político. Por ejemplo, le vamos a juzgar por las políticas que ha llevado a cabo, el resultado.

Pues, qué tipo de política económica ha impulsado, si ha habido crecimiento, cómo ha ido el paro, la inflación, la deuda, el déficit. O, por ejemplo, en términos de igualdad, de cohesión social, el estado del bienestar. Lo podemos juzgar por temas de política exterior...Luego hay otro juicio más de la competición política: ha sido capaz de ganar elecciones, ha sido capaz de hacer coaliciones que le han permitido sobreponerse a sus problemas dentro de su contexto y ha sobrevivido a distintos líderes de la oposición. Por decirlo en inglés, lo primero serían las policies y esto segundo politics. Y luego un tercer juicio, algo así como más histórico: hasta qué punto estos personajes cuando veamos su legado se convierten en referentes de hombres de estado, etc...



Entonces, dependiendo mucho de cuál de esos tres juicios cojamos, el juicio es distinto. Si empezamos por Sánchez, que es mucho más fácil juzgarle, porque es el primer ministro de un país de la Unión Europea, pues a pesar de todo el ruido de la política española, se puede decir, por ejemplo, que desde el punto de vista económico y a

pesar de la pandemia pues no le ha ido del todo mal. Si hablamos de políticas de igualdad, pues ha sido un Gobierno que ha hecho mucho gasto social y desde el punto de vista de la política exterior, pues, por ejemplo, su ayuda a Ucrania. Es decir, se puede hacer un juicio que no debería ser muy malo para Pedro Sánchez. Porque los datos sobre crecimiento económico, renta, desigualdad, influencia de España no son objetivamente malos.

Si haces un juicio sobre su capacidad de ganar el poder dentro de un partido con muchísimos enemigos...Luego, ganar la hegemonía en la izquierda donde tenía a Pablo Iglesias. Y además ser capaz de, incluso cuando no gana las elecciones, mantenerse en el poder. Es espectacular lo de Pedro Sánchez. Pero creo que su grandísimo problema es el elemento de la unidad, de la cohesión, de ser un hombre de Estado, de respetar las reglas. En mi opinión, ha tensionado demasiado las costuras, la buena relación con la oposición, que dicho sea de paso no ha sido muy exquisita, y tiene mucha culpa de la polarización que vive en España. Pero es verdad que han jugado todos a la crispación.

BAS.- ¿Y en el caso de Puigdemont? ¿Cómo crees que sería su juicio político?

Ignacio Molina.- Si nos vamos a Puigdemont, gobernar, gobernar, lo hizo solo un año y medio, y no hizo absolutamente nada. Su única obsesión era el referéndum y el próces. Además, hay un juicio unánime que Cataluña durante su mandato no fue bien económicamente. A él no le preocuparon ni las infraestructuras hídricas, ni la educación, ni las empresas, que huyeron de Cataluña, etc...Así que el juicio a sus políticas, regular.

Desde el punto de vista de la política en general, es verdad que consigue pasar de ser el oscuro alcalde de Girona a todo un presidente de la Generalitat, pero lo cierto es que le sale todo un poco mal. Sí, organiza el referéndum, ahí sí es un gran éxito, porque toda su vida estará pensando en el gol que le mete al



Estado español, organizándolo en contra de los jueces, la policía, los servicios de inteligencia. El 1 de octubre es su gran día, pero es verdad que luego no ha mantenido el poder, incluso el PSOE le ha ganado, que eso no ocurría normalmente. Pero luego hay una gran diferencia con Pedro Sánchez, que tiene muchos enemigos, la mitad de los españoles dirán algunos, pero, lo que es la izquierda tiene un criterio muy positivo de Sánchez. Sin embargo, Puigdemont dentro de los nacionalistas tampoco es una figura indiscutida.

Sinceramente, aunque el juicio de Pedro Sánchez pueda tener muchos elementos negativos, pero desde el punto de vista de, este hombre ganó, gobernó, se mantuvo en el poder e hizo cosas, eso no es comparable a Puigdemont que yo creo que habrá muchos aspectos negativos, porque fue mucho más terrible que Sánchez en relación con el Estado de derecho, porque incumplió las sentencias, siguió todo igual...Pero creo que desde el punto de vista de lo que hizo y de mantener el poder, el balance no es tan positivo. Es verdad que la política contemporánea es muy interesante porque introduce todos estos elementos de habilidad, picardía, de ser capaz de jugar con la conexión directa con el ciudadano y en esto sí es verdad que Puigdemont a Sánchez han trascendido a sus partidos. Y no siendo especialmente carismáticos tienen detrás muchos seguidores.

BAS.- Has mencionado la política contemporánea, con todo el ruido mediático, las redes sociales y su cascada infinita de opiniones – e insultos-. En tu opinión, ¿crees que cuando un político intenta ir más allá, y como dices, trasciende a su formación política y toma riesgos y decisiones extremas, se expone a una demonización como la que han

vivido estos dos personajes? No sé si compartes la visión de que son dos de los personajes más odiados de los últimos tiempos en la política española.

Ignacio Molina.-Sí, eso se puede medir empíricamente, porque cuando le preguntas a la gente su opinión sobre los líderes hay un porcentaje muy alto que les ponen un cero. Bueno, a ver, hay algunos líderes más odiados, por ejemplo, hay más personas que le



ponen un cero a Abascal [líder de VOX]. También cuando te pones fríamente a pensar en Pedro Sánchez, uno tiene que juzgar que si le pone un cero es porque ha hecho abstracción de cualquier otro mérito que pueda tener Sánchez. A lo mejor estoy de acuerdo con él en lo que está haciendo en Ucrania, tampoco va tan mal la economía. Pero ese cero es por todo lo que genera de falta de identificación con el personaje. Y eso sí es una cosa muy contemporánea de la política. Como creo que el ciudadano ha llegado a la conclusión, en parte con razón, de que gobierne quien gobierne las cosas no van a cambiar mucho, es decir, va a seguir habiendo inseguridad, paro, tipos de interés alto, va a seguir siendo difícil comprar una vivienda. Pues entonces la política es más la idea de sentirte más satisfecho con el hecho de que gobierne alguien que está más cerca de ti. No es que este Gobierno haya conseguido esto, no es tan pragmático. Es más blanco y negro: como no es el mío...Lo que buscan en la política es satisfacción, no tanto el elemento de una gestión de lo público. En el pasado eso se manifestaba a través de identidad de clase, o los que eran católicos, pero no era tan personal como ahora. Y eso genera más la idea de filias y fobias sobre una persona cuando en realidad, si rascas quizás no merezca esa filias y fobias. Hay personas que quieren ser muy divisivas, el caso de Trump es muy claro. Pero hay otras que no quieren serlo tanto y sin embargo, en un mundo tan polarizado, eso acaba ocurriendo en España con Sánchez.

BAS.- Entonces, volviendo al punto de partida, ¿crees que es difícil hacer un análisis paralelo de estos dos personajes de los que estamos hablando?

Ignacio Molina.-Cuando me planteabas esto pensaba que era difícil meterlos en un mismo análisis, pero te doy la razón después de haberlo pensado un poco que cuando uno diga la década del 2015 a 2025, si uno tuviera que identificar los dos grandes personajes serían ellos dos. Y son los que van a ser más perdurables incluso en el pensamiento de alguien que no sea español. Incluso Abascal es en el fondo una reacción al independentismo catalán, con lo cual es más importante Puigdemont.

BAS.-¿Qué futuro les auguras a estos dos líderes políticos?

Ignacio Molina.-Yo creo que Puigdemont no tiene mucho futuro, porque su resultado electoral no le acompaña y entonces bueno, digamos que con la amnistía, que aunque se ha aprobado queda por ver cómo se implementa por los jueces, puede decir, vuelvo, no estoy fugado pero creo que políticamente no tiene mucho futuro. Cuando un líder como él que, en mi opinión, no es especialmente brillante, y que simplemente cabalgó esa ola del referéndum con más o menos habilidad, pues básicamente tratará de vender el relato de su trayectoria política con el 1 de octubre, derrota simbólica al Estado y que fue capaz de no tener que acabar ante el Tribunal Supremo porque consiguió cerrar eso con la amnistía. Pero yo creo que no tiene mucho más capital político que ese: acabar siendo esa especie de abuelo cebolleta que recuerda sus grandes éxitos.



Y en el caso de Sánchez, pues ya veremos, porque es un personaje que se mueve en el filo de la navaja, muy en el filo para ser el primer ministro de un país de una economía avanzada. Porque esos órdenes suyos son muy raros en un país puntero. Pero ese estar constantemente en el filo de la navaja igual hace que en seis meses se le ha ido la mayoría y pasa a ser un expresidente, simplemente eso. O que acabe la legislatura, que incluso sea capaz de repetir, o como es joven todavía, tenga una carrera más internacional. Pero en definitiva con Sánchez es que no hay bola de cristal y es más difícil saber lo que puede pasar.



Over-tourism: is Spain a victim of its own success?

BAS editor William Chislett

As the tourism season heats up, angry Spaniards in Málaga, priced out of the housing market, have taken to daubing streets and doors with slogans and stickers ranging from the mild *Antes esta era mi casa* ('This used to be my home') to the more brutal *A tu puta casa* ('F*ck off home'). In Tenerife, the most visited of the Canary Islands, thousands of protestors holding placards reading 'We don't want to see our island die' called for a freeze on tourists and a more sustainable tourism model. In Barcelona, residents of the La Salut neighbourhood were so fed up with not being able to get home on the number 116 bus, as it was always crammed with tourists visiting Gaudi's Park Güell, that they successfully lobbied the city council to have the route removed from Google and Apple maps.

More and more flats are being turned into holiday accommodation, enabling landlords to earn more but depriving those who want to get on the property ladder or leading to tenants losing their accommodation.

There is a growing trend of converting small shops and bars into tiny flats for tourists. The cake shop and bakery Feni, founded in 1945, very near my home in Barrio Salamanca, Madrid, closed in April. My post on X (formerly known as Twitter) went viral and led a two-page [article](#) in *El Mundo* on such closures (a total of 8,320 as of February in Madrid alone).

On average, 100 people apply for each home available to rent in Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, Bilbao and Santa Cruz de Tenerife, according to Alquiler Seguro, a property company. While in the Balearic Islands, an average of 142 people apply for every rental property.

In 2023 a record 85.3 million international tourists came to Spain (17.3 million of them British), making it the second most visited country after France – although, as Didier Arino, president of the French tourism industry specialists Protourisme points out, “between 15 and 20 million of the visitors who come to France are just



passing through on their way to Italy or Spain.”. The first quarter of this year saw 16.1 million tourists, 17.7% more than in the same period of 2023. The forecast for the whole year is up to 100 million, more than five times the number in 2020 when tourism was decimated by COVID. Back in 1954 when Spain began promoting package holidays, a mere one million tourists came.

In order to cope with these swelling numbers, by the end of 2025 260 more hotels of varying sizes will have been opened, half of them in Madrid, Málaga, Valencia and the Canary Islands, according to the real estate consultancy CBRE.

Spain’s tourism sector generated close to 13% of GDP last year. It was the main driver of the 2.5% growth in the economy and helped lower the jobless rate to under 12%. One in every four new jobs created in 2023 was in labour-intensive tourism. A bad tourism season spells trouble for growth and employment (the 11.2% decline in economic output in 2020, the EU’s biggest fall, was largely due to the massive drop in tourists).

The number of tourists last year was 1.75 times more than Spain’s population (1.47 in France, see Figure 1), but this was nothing compared with the Canary Islands (population 2.2 million and 14 million visitors, 5.7 million of them British). Tourism produces a whopping 35% of the islands’ GDP. In stark contrast, very few tourists holiday in the vast swathes of countryside known as *la España vaciada* (‘Emptied Spain’) where the population density is among the lowest in Europe.

Figure 1. International tourists as a percentage of Spain's population, 2016-23

	Number of international tourists (mn)		Population (mn)		Tourists as a % of population	
	Spain	France	Spain	France	Spain	France
2016	75.3	82.7	46.4	66.7	162.3	123.9
2017	81.9	86.9	46.6	66.9	175.8	129.9
2018	82.8	89.4	46.8	67.0	176.9	133.4
2019	83.7	90.9	47.1	67.3	177.7	135.1
2020	18.9	41.7	47.4	67.4	39.9	61.8
2021	31.2	48.4	47.4	67.6	65.8	71.6
2022	71.6	79.4	48.0	67.8	149.2	117.1
2023	85.3	100.0	48.6	68.0	175.5	147.0

France's figures for 2023 are provisional.

Source: World Tourism Organisation and Statista.

Spain is not alone in having this problem. Venice and Amsterdam, for example, are controlling tourism numbers with various measures and charges. Seeking the right balance in Spain between protecting heritage, the environment and local residents' wishes, on the one hand, and commerce and the hotel and restaurant trade, on the other, has no easy fix.



2023 and just one was sanctioned, according to a report.

The Canary Islands plan to toughen the laws on short lets, and in the case of new-build properties bar them from the short-let market. Madrid has similar laws in place, but enforcement leaves a lot to be desired. Of 17,000 short-term rental apartments in Madrid, only 600 were inspected between January and November

In the Balearic Islands, whose Premier, Marga Prohens, said this month that the tourist limit had been reached, large cruise ship visits might be cut back, limits imposed on motorhomes, curbs placed on street drinking and a ceiling put on the number of tourist places.

As for the affordable housing problem, it has been ignored for too long by the two main parties, the conservative Popular Party (PP) and the Socialists (PSOE). Again, this is not just a Spanish problem, but it is particularly acute here.

Spain's stock of social rental dwellings (a paltry 1% of the total housing stock) is almost the lowest among the 38 OECD countries. In the Netherlands it is 35%. The number of this type of home built dropped from around 90,000 in 1997 to 10,000 in 2021. Between 2010 and 2020, a total of 932,000 new homes were built, compared with 5.4 million in the previous 10 years. Stung by the bursting of a massive real estate bubble in 2008, property developers cut back.

The Bank of Spain estimates 600,000 more new homes are needed by 2025 for young adults in order to narrow the gulf between the supply of all types of homes on the market each year (90,000) and the demand (270,000). Spain is very much a property-owning society (75%) and often of more than one home, either for holiday use or to rent out, but while 70% of those under 35 owned their home in 2011 only around one-third do today.

Lastly, as if Spain did not already have enough grievances aggravated by tourism, the government of the drought-stricken region of Catalonia plans to install in October a floating desalination plant in Barcelona (host to more than 12 million international tourists in 2023), unless there is substantially more rain, to help the city guarantee its drinking water supply.



Adapted from the version originally published by the Elcano Royal Institute.

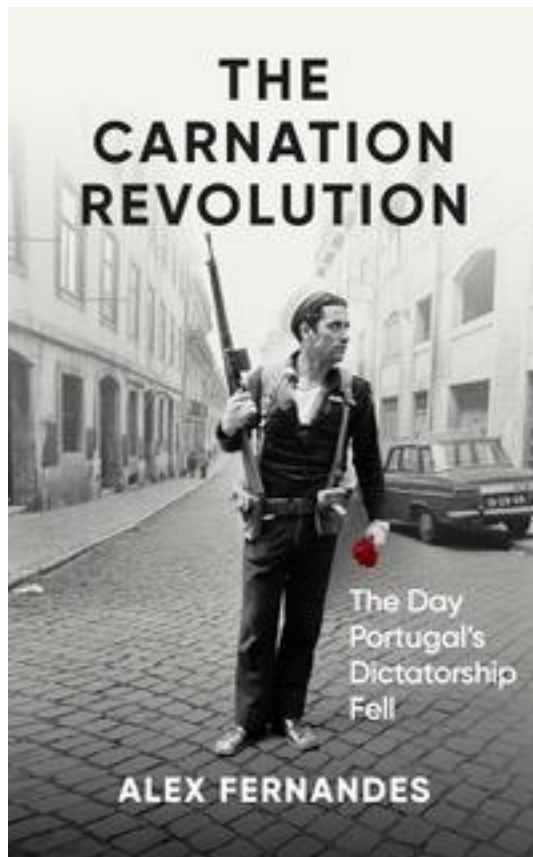


Portugal and Spain: 50 years of variations on a theme.

BAS Editor William Chislett

Little did they know it, but the military captains who overthrew Portugal's decades-long dictatorship on 25 April 1974 ushered in a wave of democratisation around the world, including Spain after the death of General Franco in 1975, but in very different circumstances.

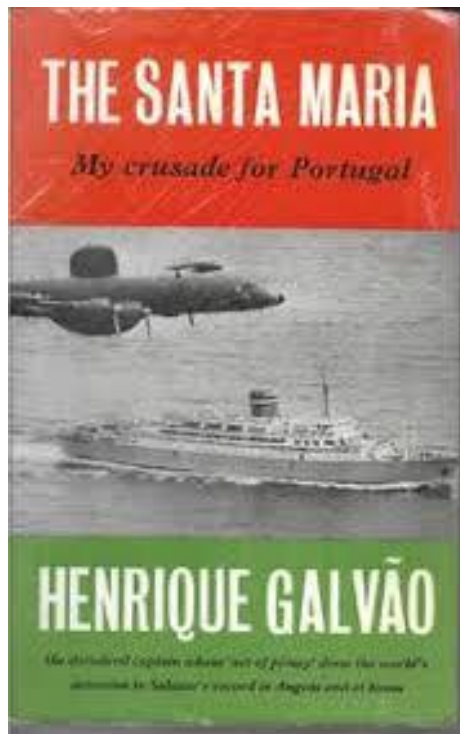
Portugal's dictatorship was the oldest in Europe, totalling 48 years since the 1926 military coup against the chaotic First Republic and 41 years since the authoritarian *Estado Novo* established in 1933 under António de Oliveira Salazar.



What led to the coup against Salazar's successor, Marcelo Caetano, how it unfolded and its turbulent aftermath, when Portugal might have gone down the road of communism, is brilliantly and evocatively told in Alex Fernandes' gripping book *Carnation Revolution* (Oneworld Publications). The main driver of the rebellion was widespread discontent in the armed forces caused by the unwinnable 13-year conflict in the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, which drained lives, morale and resources. The secret signal for the uprising to begin came when a radio station broadcast the popular song *Grândola, Vila Morena*. Citizens greeted the coup by giving carnations to soldiers, which they placed in the barrels of their guns.

While in Spain no serious attempt was made to challenge Franco from within his regime and there were no elections for head of state, Portugal's (fraudulent) 1958 presidential election saw General Humberto Delgado run against the candidate supported by Salazar. Delgado subsequently went into exile. In 1965 he was killed just over the border in neighbouring Spain after being lured there by agents of the Portuguese secret service PIDE whom he believed were opponents of the regime.





Nevertheless, unrest had taken root among the military command. In 1961, when the colonial conflict with nationalist movements began, a group of commandos, led by Captain Henrique Galvão, seized the luxury Portuguese cruise liner Santa María in the Atlantic in an effective propaganda coup against the dictatorship. More and more officers from the upper classes and their children moved into civilian jobs in the colonies in the late 1960s, thereby reducing their chances of premature death, leaving vacancies in the more junior ranks to be filled by young men from working class families from the mainland. Most of them had never left Portugal and were confronted with what Fernandes calls 'the multifaceted reality of Portuguese colonialism, marked by racism, sexism, cruelty and institutional corruption'.

The gulf between the regime's propaganda machine spouting that the war was going well and the brutal reality was huge.

Back on the mainland expressions of dissent were becoming more daring. One of the most memorable was the release of two pigs dressed in admiral's uniforms in central Lisbon to protest at the re-election of Admiral Américo Tomás as President for the third time in sham elections. The pigs were so oiled that the police could not grab hold of them and had to shoot them.

Conscription laws brought more and more young adults to the battlefield from the mainland, as well as anti-regime students from the colonies. 'In the 1950s, Portugal exported revolutionaries, radicalised under its nose, back to their homes in the colonies. Over two decades later, the colonies paid back the favour: now the Homeland's soldiers return dreaming of a revolution'. Spain, too, experienced student unrest.

Some officers stationed in multinational bases abroad, as a result of Portugal's membership of NATO since its creation in 1949, came into contact with democracy. As well as NATO, Portugal also benefited from the Marshall Plan. Spain, more of a pariah, was barred from both (it did not join NATO until 1982). During World War Two neutral Portugal had closer ties with the US than Spain (in 1943 the US was granted use of the Azores as a strategic stop for its aircraft and ships). Spain was also non-belligerent, but exported wolfram, a key element for the manufacturing of armaments, to Nazi Germany, and sent the Blue Division, a voluntary unit of 45,000 personnel, to the Eastern Front to fight against Soviet Russia. Franco also met with Hitler.



During the Cold War, both staunchly anti-communist countries were important for the US, which established military bases in the Azores and in Spain. Ironically, it was communist parties that spearheaded the civilian opposition to the dictatorships in both countries.

In Portugal, the military's discontent gave rise in September 1973 to the Movement of Captains (subsequently called the Armed Forces Movement, MFA), whose first meeting of 136 junior officers was held secretly near Évora (exactly a year later, a small group of Spanish officers formed the Democratic Military Union, UMD). There was anger not just at the waste of the war, but at new ordinances (subsequently repealed) which allowed a militia officer to take a rapid two-semester course and acquire the same status and rights as a permanent officer who had undergone the full four-year course. This erosion of staff officers' prestige was paradoxically a catalyst for finding common ground among the disparate elements in the MFA.



The final blow for the regime was the publication in February 1974 of a book by General António de Spínola, Vice Chief of the Armed Forces, arguing for a political and not a military solution to the colonial wars, which would only be possible in a democratic Portugal. Spínola, never seen without his cane, lambskin gloves and monocle, was sacked.



The April 1974 coup was virtually bloodless, apart from the four people shot dead when a crowd gathered in front of the PIDE's headquarters, and one PIDE agent. The first two years after the revolution were turbulent, with six provisional governments, endless strikes, takeovers of large estates and factional fighting in the armed forces between leftists and conservatives. The conservative Spínola, known as the 'Old One' (he was in his 60s), collided head-on with the much younger radicals in the MFA, especially over how to achieve decolonisation. In March 1975 he attempted a coup, but it failed and he was exiled to Brazil. This was followed on 25 November, five days after Franco's

death, by a left-wing coup, quickly put down in a counter-coup.

By this point Portugal was at last ready to move from a revolutionary to a constitutional process and a pluralist democracy. Its revolution was closely watched in Spain by opponents and supporters of the regime alike. According to urban legend, General Manuel Díez-Alegría, the relatively liberal chief of the Spanish army staff, was sent a monocle after the revolution, a symbolic way of asking him to assume the role played by Spínola.

Spain's transition to democracy was very different. Franco died with 'his boots on'. He was not overthrown. There was political violence against the regime, and it did not end with the dictator's death. The Basque terrorist group ETA killed 20 people before and more than 800 after Franco died, only ending its armed struggle for an independent Basque country in 2011.

The Spanish transition was engineered in a pact between the reformist right and the non-violent left using Francoist 'legality' to dismantle the 36-year dictatorship, installed after Franco won the civil war in 1939. It was both a top-down process, animated by King Juan Carlos under a parliamentary monarchy, and bottom-up from the streets with social mobilisations.



Democratic elections were held in June 1977 and a new constitution was approved by parliament in October 1978.

Both countries joined the then EEC in 1986 and have undergone profound socio-economic transformations. While the population of the much larger Spain has increased by more than 14 million since 1975, largely fuelled by immigrants, Portugal's only rose by just over one million (see Figure 1). The per capita income of Portugal, even poorer than Spain 50 years ago, has grown proportionately more than its neighbour, while life expectancy in both countries is among the highest in the world. Their economic structures have followed a similar path: the agricultural and service sectors' share of GDP today is almost the same. Portugal's unemployment rate is just over half that of Spain's and the country has also been much more successful in reducing the early school-leaving rate from very high levels. Spain has become more feminist than Portugal, judging by the large proportion of female MPs (44% of the total).

Figure 1. Socio-economic data, Portugal and Spain, 1975 and 2023

	Portugal		Spain	
	1975	2023¹	1975	2023¹
Population (mn)	9.0	10.2	35.8	48.0
Under 15 (%)	27.0	13.0	27.0	14.0
Over 65 (%)	11.0	23.0	10.0	20.0
Life expectancy at birth (years)	68.0	81.1	73.0	83.2
Per capita GDP (current US\$)	2,127	26,880	3,209	33,090
Structure of GDP (%)				
Agriculture	12.0	2.5	9.6	2.6
Industry (including construction)	39.6	22.7	39.1	22.8
Services	48.4	74.8	51.3	74.6
Unemployment (%)	4.0	6.6	4.8	11.7
Gross public debt (% of GDP)	19.2	103.4	11.9	107.7
Tax burden (% of GDP)	19.7	36.4	18.4	38.0
Inward FDI stock (US\$ bn)	9.6 ²	177.3	65.9 ²	787.3
Outward FDI stock (US\$ bn)	0.81 ²	62.9	15.6 ²	550.7
International tourists (million)	N/A	18.3	30.0	85.1
15-29 year-olds not in employment, education or training	N/A	3.9	N/A	12.7
Early school-leaving rate (% of population aged 18-24)	N/A	6.0	N/A	13.9
Cars per 1,000 population	N/A	639	N/A	627
Share of women in parliament (%)	N/A	33.0	N/A	44.0

(1) Or latest available figures.

(2) UNCTAD's figures for foreign direct investment began in 1990.

Sources: World Bank, Eurostat, OECD, IMF, World Tourism Organisation, Bank of Portugal.

If the number of governments over a certain period of time can be taken as a yardstick of political stability, then Spain with 17 governments since 1976 compared with Portugal's 24 has been more stable. Both countries had essentially two-party systems. Spain's ended in 2015 with the arrival in parliament of the would-be centrist Ciudadanos and the hard-left Podemos, followed in 2019 by the hard-right VOX, while Portugal's ended this year when the hard-right Chega won 50 seats, up from 12 in 2022, making it, like VOX after Spain's 2023 election, the third-largest party.

Political life in Portugal is less antagonistic than in Spain, where parliamentary debates and discourse demonise opponents. Spain's two main parties, the conservative Popular Party (PP) and the Socialists, are in a permanent state of confrontation and ideological polarisation, to some extent the legacy of the Civil War.



Portugal's recent election, like Spain's in 2023, produced no party able to govern on its own. The centre-right Democratic Alliance (DA) won, ousting the Socialists after eight years, but fell 36 seats short of the 116 required to form a governing majority, while Spain's Socialists remained in office but were 55 short of a majority. Both countries therefore have minority

governments that rely on support from other parties (a total of six in the current Portuguese parliament and 11 in Spain which, unlike Portugal, has regional parties – a marked difference).

By vowing not to make any deals with Chega, Portugal's DA leader and Prime Minister Luís Montenegro will have to seek support from the Socialists. In Spain the DA's counterpart, the PP, has made deals with VOX at the regional and local levels in order to govern. Whether the PP would do this at the national level if the seats won by it and VOX gave them a majority at the next general election, not due until 2027, remains to be seen.



Spain's two main parties could do with taking a leaf out of Portugal's book and learn to cooperate. The political situation in Portugal will be closely watched in Spain.

Adapted from the version originally published by the Elcano Royal Institute in Madrid.

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