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Arguing Americanism: Franco Lobbyists, Roosevelt's Foreign Policy, and the Spanish Civil War

Michael E. Chapman

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★ Arguing
Americanism

Franco Lobbyists, Roosevelt's Foreign Policy,
and the Spanish Civil War ★ ★

Michael E. Chapman

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MICHAEL E. CHAPMAN

Arguing Americanism

*Franco Lobbyists, Roosevelt's Foreign Policy,
and the Spanish Civil War*

✻ ✻ ✻

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Introduction

After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936, the leaders of Britain and France organized a twenty-seven-nation Non-Intervention Committee, which included Italy, Germany, and the USSR, in the hope that they could contain the fighting. Across the Atlantic, where isolationist sentiment was at a historic peak after the one-two shocks of the Great War and the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt followed Britain's lead, agreeing to his State Department's "moral embargo" to Spain, which then became law on 1 May 1937 when Congress passed an amended Neutrality Act. These attempts at containment notwithstanding, Soviet Russia pocketed Madrid's extensive gold reserves in return for shipping matériel of supposedly equal value to the Loyalists, while Italy and Germany armed Gen. Francisco Franco's Nationalists. Spain's civil war quickly became an international cause. Some 35,000 idealistic foreign volunteers flocked to the Loyalist zone claiming that they were defending democracy against fascism. In several countries, an argument developed between partisans, dividing along ideological lines, with Loyalist supporters slurring their detractors as anti-Semitic fascists and Nationalist supporters damning pro-Loyalists as godless Reds. This "Great Debate"—to borrow from F. Jay Taylor's influential *The United States and the Spanish Civil War*—became particularly intense in the United States, where it reappeared in a different guise following Roosevelt's interventionist support of Britain in 1939–40, was hushed after Pearl Harbor, and did not reach an accommodation until the cold war liberal consensus.¹

Rigid policies that barred arms shipments to Spain effectively disadvantaged the Loyalists of Madrid's Second Republican government. Whereas the Nationalists' high-quality supplies originated from ports such as Hamburg or Genoa, Loyalists either bought shoddy equipment at high cost on what had become a black market or were dependent on periodic Soviet shipments from Murmansk, above the Arctic Circle. Loyalists lost control of the skies in part because of their inability to buy U.S. aircraft and especially Curtiss-Wright engines for their existing Douglas transports and the roughly 1,400 fighters and bombers that began arriving from the USSR.² Non-Interventionists, moreover, isolated Loyalists diplomatically and debilitated their morale. Historian Helen Graham insists that "what destroyed the Republic was the long-term impact" of the "absolutely devastating"

Non-Intervention Committee's embargo. Graham's charge has a wider implication than the fate of Spain. Official U.S. support of the Loyalist cause in 1938 would have waved a threat card at Adolf Hitler's expansionism, prompting English and French parliaments to show greater resolve and encouraging hesitant Nazi military leaders to question the timing if not the inevitability of their Führer's next step. Why did Roosevelt—a president with unprecedented potential to influence foreign policy, if not always to make it—sidestep such a crucial issue?³

Historians have blamed America's Catholic hierarchy and congregants. Allen Guttman is typical of those who cite the diary of Interior secretary Harold L. Ickes, which recorded that Roosevelt held back because lifting the embargo "would mean the loss of every Catholic vote" in the November elections. Leo V. Kanawada Jr. is one of many who note that in May 1938 alone, "the White House, the State Department, and members of Congress received thousands of messages" from Catholics "denouncing any attempt to lift the embargo." Yet evidence presented here shows that while Roosevelt did read a few messages from pro-Loyalist Catholics asking him to lift the embargo, he saw none from denunciatory pro-Franco Catholics, and ranking State Department officials read only four. Indeed, through Popular Front organizations and fellow-traveling journalists, Soviet communists exerted far greater pressure on Roosevelt and his State Department to lift the embargo than Roman Catholics ever did to retain it. While it may be convenient to blame Catholics for U.S. appeasement of Hitler, it is time to seek new explanations.⁴

Despite talking in terms of a Great Debate, it is odd that historians have dwelled on only half of the argument, that made by America's pro-Loyalists, while showing distaste for the other side, the pro-Nationalists, whom they snub as either the "Catholic hierarchy" or "fascist crackpots." There was on the one hand a heroic throng of fascist-fighting interventionists and on the other a tiny "lunatic fringe" of isolationist appeasers. Revisionist studies are suggesting fresh approaches by recasting the Spanish generals' insurgency as a valid military response to incipient communist revolution. Yet the received wisdom of honest-to-goodness folks battling fascist evil in Spain, reinforced by popular culture and public history (most obviously in film, from *Casablanca* [1942] to *Pan's Labyrinth* [2006] and the Museum of the City of New York's *Facing Fascism* exhibition and book [2007]), still limits discussion.⁵ Many pro-Loyalist activists were of course socialists, pacifists, liberal intellectuals, and even anticommunists. A majority—at least two-thirds—of Americans who fought in Spain were nevertheless American Communist Party (CPUSA) members, albeit ones who temporarily shrouded their radical ideology with Joseph Stalin's Popular Front, maintaining that they were saving democracy by fighting fascism. Acknowledging, therefore, that communists sought the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state and the imposition by force of a workers' dictatorship will make it easier to understand the rationale of the actors discussed here. Accepting, too, that Franco lobbyists might have been just as

thoughtful and diverse as their pro-Loyalist counterparts, with the same human complement of biases and inconsistencies, allows for a more objective historiographical interpretation of late-1930s sociopolitical ideologies.⁶

This study employs new archival sources to document a small yet effective network of lobbyists—including engineer-turned-writer John Eoghan Kelly, progressive humanist Ellery Sedgwick, homemaker Clare Singer Dawes, art deco muralist Hildreth Meière, philanthropist Anne Tracy Morgan, and libertarian pundit Merwin K. Hart—who successfully capitalized on the inertia of a weak, distracted, and divided administration to promote Nationalist Spain. Franco lobbyists provide an interesting cultural study, for they revered the exceptionalism of America's founding principles while advocating modern, progressive solutions to pressing socioeconomic problems. They are politically important too, for they influenced not only public opinion but U.S. foreign policy as well.

What drove these Americans to work so hard and to sacrifice so much to back an unpalatable dictator in distant Spain during a time of economic and social crisis at home? Sources indicate that they found unity of purpose in their loathing of international Marxism. Given America's subsequent role as global cold war hegemon, this observation might not seem surprising, but it is necessary to stress that the pro-Franco anticommunism of 1937–43 differed from its bookends, the 1920s Red Scare and 1950s McCarthyism. Far from being a confident harbinger of capitalist boom, Franco lobbyists saw their anticommunism as confronting socialist euphoria over the Great Depression's apparent vindication of Karl Marx. For them, it was not the product of an exaggerated threat but, rather, a balanced riposte to a serious Comintern (the Soviet Union's Third Communist International) thrust. Most importantly, their anticommunism was not a state initiative but a minority sentiment that acted in opposition to the New Deal state, which they judged to be soft on communism while favoring Franco's Soviet-backed Loyalist enemies. Consequently, their critique of the Roosevelt presidency attracted Justice Department ire and a conviction for principal activist Kelly in 1943 under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. At a time of ideological disjuncture, pro-Franco anticommunists were patriots to themselves but un-American to their state.

Exposing and thus halting communist influence in the United States was the Franco lobbyists' primary motivation. This study nonetheless hypothesizes that a greater project lay behind their activism, even if they never acknowledged it as such. During a period of national crisis unmatched since their own civil war in 1861, American Franco lobbyists seized the example of Spain's civil war to bolster what they believed was their country's unique historic legacy of Enlightenment liberalism and republican governance. Their argument during the Great Debate was not really over Spain. Pro-Nationalists were arguing with their pro-Loyalist counterparts about who should define America's national ideology and what that definition ought to be. At home, they believed that hundreds of Comintern

agents strove to sweep away the nation-state in favor of an international republic of workers, and they feared that the double-dip recession of 1937–38, which was once again pushing unemployment over 20 percent, was creating the kind of conditions for social unrest that radicals eagerly exploited. For evidence that their fears were rational, they pointed abroad to mayhem wrought by Spain's revolutionaries, which they contrasted with Franco *The Christian Soldier*, as Kelly entitled one pamphlet, and, by extension, the civilizing order of American principles. Arguing, through the Great Debate over U.S. neutrality toward Spain, that communism was un-American had unintended consequences both for American ideology and prospects for global peace. Despite falling foul of their own government, American Franco lobbyists ultimately won the argument, yet, to their surprise, the resultant cold war liberal consensus was not what they envisaged.⁷

Because these anticommunists supported Franco, their argument from the outset proved as contentious as it was anachronistic. Evidence presented here emphasizes how most Americans in 1938, along with their president and his White House staff, had succumbed to sophisticated Popular Front propaganda about fascist aggression in Spain and sided, at least emotionally, with Madrid's Loyalists. This was, after all, the CPUSA's zenith, a time when, in the celebratory words of cultural historian Michael Denning, "'politics' captured the arts, when writers went left, Hollywood turned Red, and painters, musicians, and photographers were 'social-minded.'" Pilloried by such a broad coalition of social-minded intellectuals—from movie producers to journalists—anticommunism seemed vulgar, reactionary, the vain pursuit of mavericks like Representative Martin Dies Jr. (D-TX) and the hired guns of Chicago's Memorial Day Massacre.⁸

Franco lobbyists—at a subliminal if not an outwardly manifest level—read their unpopular stand as a declaration of their Americanism, as an opportunity for the Catholic American editor Francis X. Talbot, the Jewish-American brewer Philip Liebmann, or the Irish-German-American Kelly to cast aside hyphenated identities and claim the high ground of an all-American citizenship. Neither were old stocks immune from concerns over their identity as genuine Americans. Sedgwick and Meière, who loudly traced ancestry back to the *Arbella* or *Mayflower* on one side of their families, kept awkwardly silent about a hyphenated cousin or grandparent on the other. Determined to convince skeptics that the Comintern really did intend to build a workers' dictatorship on the ruins of U.S. capitalism, lobbyists toured Spain's Nationalist zone, publishing travelogs such as *America: Look at Spain!* In part because their activism caused compatriots to look and then argue with them over what they saw, Americans after 1945 committed to a massive forty-year ideological mission to make Americanism impregnable by battling communism worldwide. Just as Franco became a cold war bulwark, it is ironic that the un-American Kelly found rehabilitation in 1949 as a patriotically American cold warrior, lobbying Congress for the strategic utilization of domestic mineral resources.⁹

When pro-Franco lobbyists took issue with their pro-Loyalist counterparts over the extent of communist or fascist influence in Spain, or which side committed the worst atrocities, or whether to embargo U.S. arms, the heated argument they created drew thousands of otherwise unconcerned Americans into the debate. Lobbyists accordingly thought it best to present their cases in black-and-white terms, yet that very simplification of the situation in Spain focused attention on complex moral issues and political philosophies at home. At the core of this larger argument over Americanism in 1938—the year around which this study pivots—lay the definition of *democracy*. For the pro-Loyalists of the Popular Front, the term meant the pure democracy of the ballot box, for they believed that in an increasingly industrialized economy, especially at a time of global recession and high unemployment, the working class enjoyed a majority and could therefore impose a socialist state. For pro-Franco lobbyists, the term meant the checks and balances of indirect democracy, for they believed that the success of America's republican experiment depended on the kind of meritocracy envisaged by Founding Fathers Thomas Jefferson and James Madison to counter the dictatorial tendencies of factions, or foreign *isms* in contemporary parlance. When these actors decided to defend Americanism against communism by pointing to what was happening in Spain, the argument they intensified became the critical precursor of a fundamental change in that Americanism: the Founders' meritocratic form of democracy survived, perhaps even becoming further removed from popular sentiment, but only at the expense of other founding principles, as evidenced by the illiberal repression of McCarthyism, the arbitrary government of the national-security state, and the entangling political alliances of the cold war.¹⁰

Two Spains

Spain has always occupied a special place in the American psyche, just as it has served a special purpose. On subjects from Christopher Columbus (an Italian) to the Inquisition (which executed less than six heretics a year on average), legend has invariably trumped reality, which is why Spain has proved so useful. Until the 1960s, when it became a popular tourist destination, few Americans visited Spain. Before Dwight D. Eisenhower's meeting with Franco in 1959, only five Americans who would become or had been presidents ever ventured south of the Pyrenees: John Adams and his son, John Quincy, traveled through Galicia and the Basque Country in 1780 en route to Paris; Ulysses S. Grant and Franklin Pierce took post-presidential European tours in 1858 and 1878, respectively; and Herbert Hoover went to Spain in 1917 because U-boats made a crossing to Britain risky. For Adams, the poverty of Catholic Spain's peasantry, the backwardness of its industry, and the self-indulgence of its nobles and clergy served to demonstrate the enlightened

progress and civilization of Protestant America. “I see nothing,” Adams wrote, “but Signs of Poverty and Misery.” Spain, he observed, was a fertile enough country, yet it was only half cultivated. Spaniards were “ragged and dirty, and the Houses universally nothing but Mire, Smoke, Fleas and Lice.” There was nothing “rich but the Churches, nobody fat, but the Clergy.” “This Country,” Adams complained, “is an hundred Years behind the Massachusetts Bay.” Still, even in so bleak an account, there were inconsistencies. While he could find “no Symptoms of Commerce, or even of internal Traffic, no Appearance of Manufactures or Industry,” two weeks later he came across “great Numbers of Mules loaded with Merchandizes from Bilbao,” including mass-produced horseshoes “to sell in various Parts of the Kingdom.” On reaching Bilbao, a prosperous port with three hundred registered merchant ships, Adams had to admit there were “several Stores and Shops [for books, glass, china, trinkets, toys, cutlery] pretty large and pretty full.” Not that Massachusetts in 1780 had much in the way of industry, cities, or roads, especially in comparison with the efficient factories, teeming metropolises, and advanced infrastructure of rival Britain, but that was precisely why a primitive yet decadent Spain was so useful to Adams as a counterpoint to the virtues of American republicanism.¹¹

Yankee doyen Whig senator Daniel Webster (MA) visited neither Spain nor Latin America, yet in his two most famous public orations, delivered at the commencement (1825) and completion (1843) of the Bunker Hill Monument, he conjured up vivid stereotypes of Spaniards. When patriots fought the Battle of Bunker Hill in June 1775, South America was hardly visible to the civilized world, weighed down as it was by Spanish “colonial subjugation, monopoly, and bigotry.” When English colonists arrived in the New World, they were already prosperous, free, and “trained for the great work of introducing English civilization, English law, and what is more than all, Anglo-Saxon blood, into the wilderness of North America.” These “industrious individuals” made their own way in the wilderness, “defending themselves against the savages, recognizing their right to the soil, and with a general honest purpose of introducing knowledge as well as Christianity among them.” Spanish colonists, by contrast, emulating their behavior at home and greedy for gold, subjugated native peoples with “every possible degree of enormity, cruelty, and crime.” They acquired territories by fire and sword, destroyed cities by fire and sword, and “even conversion to Christianity was attempted by fire and sword.” Whereas “England transplanted liberty to America,” Webster made clear, “Spain transplanted power.” Generations of young Americans absorbed Webster’s Spain when studying his orations for the College Entrance Examination, at least until 1911.¹²

In 1898, when many of the policy makers and lobbyists discussed in this book were impressionable teenagers, newspapers drooled over the sinking of USS *Maine* in Havana’s harbor and the ensuing Spanish-American War. Cartoonists portrayed Spaniards as sword-wielding conquistadores ravishing Cuban maid-

ens, while commentators relished the opportunity to contrast American goodness with Spanish evil. “The record of the Spanish Nation,” noted William E. Mason (R-IL) in a widely reported Senate debate, was one “of continuous treachery.” Mason regretted his inability to join a negotiating committee, for he “would not sit at a table with a Spaniard who might have a stiletto under his clothes.” When Cardinal James Gibbons conducted a requiem mass for *Maine* victims, Gibbons gave thanks that America was “too just to engage in an unrighteous war” and praised the “calmness and tranquility, the self-control, and the self-possession” of Washington’s leaders. “Let us remember,” he cautioned, “that the eyes of the world are upon us.” While Gibbons hoped that the *Maine*’s destruction was an accident, he hinted nonetheless that a “fiendish Cuban” or “fanatical Spaniard” had “perpetrated this atrocious crime.” Spain in 1898 served not only to deflect attention from the corruption and crime endemic to cities like New York and Chicago but also to justify colonization of the Philippines on humanitarian grounds.¹³

When Spaniards chose violence in 1936 to resolve their differences over class, religion, ethnic separatism, and political philosophy, Americans found a mythical Spain especially useful, for they too were struggling with ideological confusion and economic recession. Those who had joined Popular Front organizations because they thought socialism would cure the Great Depression used the presence of German and Italian units in Spain to argue that an international fascist conspiracy was trampling liberal democracy and workers’ rights. Those who still trusted capitalism but worried that continued unemployment would lead to societal breakdown used the murder of clergy by Spanish militia to argue that an international communist conspiracy was subverting progressive democracy and middle-class values. Once they had committed to being pro-Loyalists or pro-Nationalists, honor demanded they stick to their guns, which required bringing as much ammunition to the argument as credibility allowed. For every point they wished to make, debaters could find evidence in Spain. Look at the poverty of Spanish peasants, pro-Loyalists said, to see how aristocrats siphoned profits that should be fueling industrialization. Look at the rapid collapse of once-profitable Spanish factories, pro-Nationalists countered, to see how selfishness, not social uplift, was behind spiraling demands by trade unionists. Because their understanding rested on legends, debaters found that a little substance could support a large myth. At the same time, those legends exposed inconsistencies in debaters’ arguments, which, when sufficiently blatant, left denial as the only recourse. Pro-Nationalists, for instance, needed to argue that the descent into anarchy following the February 1936 election of a Popular Front government forced Franco to restore order by military means, so they cited the murders of civilians by leftists as evidence. But when Nationalists bombed civilians in Guernica, they risked losing credibility as the defenders of order, especially when pro-Loyalists seized on the raid to demonstrate fascist aggression. With the legend of Spanish brutality suggesting that an atrocity must have occurred, they did not

attempt to justify the bombing on strategic grounds, so they accepted Franco's lie that retreating Basques had torched their own town.

Just as each side in the Great Debate claimed to speak for the true Spain, so the compelling mix of fact and fancy propagandized by the opposing side forced debaters to acknowledge the existence of another, false Spain. Pro-Nationalists confronted the fascist Spain created by pro-Loyalists, characterized by medieval Catholicism, vast estates owned by absentee aristocrats, the execution of leftists and dissidents, the indiscriminate bombing of civilian centers, contingents from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and military rule. Pro-Loyalists confronted the Red Spain created by pro-Nationalists, characterized by the redistribution of land and property, atrocities against respectable civilians and clergy, spiraling inflation, immorality and lawlessness, and an influx of Soviet officials and international communists. Debaters on both sides sought to show contented workers sharing in the profits of busy factories; yet in their propaganda, they tended to ignore industry to present instead a romanticized portrait of traditional farming. From *Blockade* and *The Spanish Earth* (Loyalist) to *Spain in Arms* (Nationalist), films featured ox-drawn carts, primitive irrigation ditches, peasants scything wheat, and quaint shepherds tending flocks of goats. Legends of a backward, feudal Spain helped to support a paradox that was in both sides' interest to perpetuate. For pro-Loyalists, bucolic Spain highlighted the iniquitous sharecropping that socialist land reforms would eradicate, while for pro-Nationalists, old-style farming identified the traditional values of Franco's true Spain with the yeoman farmers of New England and the Midwest.¹⁴

Historians, too, have struggled to objectify modern Spain. One scholar notes how during 1917–29, iron and steel production doubled, “strong labor organizations kept up wages in a period of falling world prices,” and there was “a remarkable expansion in the field of light industry.” Another stresses that “Spain entered the 1930s a backward state, still largely agricultural with levels of poverty equaled only by . . . Greece or Sicily.” Pessimism is understandable in the context of the Spanish Civil War, for liberals hope to show how, in Paul Preston's words, “reactionary elements” always resort to “political and military power to hold back social progress.” This study does not presume to add to the shelves of works that debate what happened in Spain. Rather, it is concerned with how U.S. lobbyists for Franco's Nationalists understood Spain and communicated their understanding to other Americans. When it does reference Spain in an objective sense, it is broadly optimistic. As David Ringrose contends in his explanation for the dual “Spanish miracles” of rapid industrialization and democratization in the post-Franco years, those miracles built on “generations of cultural, institutional, and economic experience,” on modernizing and progressive trends in place long before 1900.¹⁵

Historical analysis of foreign policy making invariably ignores long-run structural factors to concentrate instead on the immediate, nip-and-tuck world of real-politik, an approach that minimizes the role of individual agency with its attendant

psychosocial and cultural determinants, which is my interest here. A useful influence is Michael Seidman's *Republic of Egos*, which downplays grand strategy, power politics, and even ideological motivation to argue instead that events in Spain were as much to do with efforts by individuals to survive and feed themselves. "Acts of acquisitive, entrepreneurial, and subversive individualism," Seidman writes, often upset the collectivist plans of anarchist or communist ideologues to establish a wartime economy or mobilize against the better organized, motivated, and disciplined Nationalists. Political ideology, as well as the ideology of national identity, may well have been of less interest to Spaniards than historians have assumed, but it was fundamental to the thousands of Americans who volunteered to fight in Spain and the millions more who argued about the Spanish Civil War at home.¹⁶

Concepts

Many of this study's actors traveled abroad, but their trips were not so much for relaxation or even enlightenment as they were for legitimation. When Franco lobbyists who had visited Nationalist Spain talked about the destruction of churches by Loyalists or the building of affordable housing by Nationalists, they could do so with the authority of direct experience. Traveling qualified their arguments. Inevitably, the Spain of their writings and lectures was a different Spain from the one that existed for Spaniards, or even from the one that the travelers encountered. Alan K. Henrikson's concept of cognitive geography, or "mental mapping," offers an apt interpretive schema. In the context of Americans' mental map of Spain in 1938, I employ Henrikson's term to intend a conception more imagined than a *National Geographic* but less ethereal than a *Weltanschauung*.¹⁷

Our identity—who we are—is a crucial component of our psyche. Sociologist Johan Galtung values it alongside freedom, welfare, and survival as one of the four basic human needs. At least since the Peace of Westphalia laid the foundations of international law, the nation-state paradigm has offered a seductive enhancement to the organic identities of tribe, clan, family, and self. If earthy patriotism identifies us with farmstead or village, supporting us with the resources of family or community, then modern nationalism identifies us with metropolis or nation, empowering us with the resources of an entire militarized state. As a kind of turbocharged patriotism, nationalism is a powerful and compelling ideology.¹⁸

A current survey indicates that Americans are among the most nationalistic people on Earth, a distinction explicable in part by the observations that they are a settler community, of recent origin, convinced of their own rectitude and grown powerful beyond compare. Yet this does not mean that Americans are necessarily comfortable within themselves. Indeed, their very exceptionalism has been a constant source of anxiety and guilt. According to political scientist David Campbell,

Americans have an exceptionally fragile sense of national identity, which explains why they attempt to secure the boundaries of their state by exaggerating danger through foreign policy. Nor should it imply that Americans have felt uniformly nationalistic over time. Nineteen thirty-eight was a particular nadir, when Americans troubled as much by social discord as a broken economy looked abroad for inspiration, whether to international communism, transnational Catholicism, or authoritarian fascism.¹⁹

Americanism—the ideal tenets of American nationalism—was a term used throughout the 1920s and 1930s, as when Kelly wrote to a friend in January 1938 that he was coming to the “defense of Americanism.” It represented a consensus across old-stock elites and immigrants aspiring to citizenship, which both groups articulated through the Americanization programs of the 1910–20s. By virtue of their Puritan inheritance, Americans could expect a life of goodness and greatness, providing they adhered to a bundle of traditional core values, including but not limited to Protestant ethics, Lockean liberalism, Jeffersonian producerism, and the sanctity of the Constitution at home and the Monroe Doctrine abroad. Historian Samuel P. Huntington terms this package *Anglo-Protestantism*, an alluring and pervasive identity-building ideology adopted, often unconsciously, by immigrants, regardless of their ethnicity or religion. Huntington’s *Anglo-Protestantism* makes for an informative if static analytical model. This study considers Americanism more broadly and dynamically as a disputed ideology of empowerment. For Spanish Civil War partisans, it could be a derogatory term as well as a badge of honor, but it was always a national soul to argue over, possess, and then appropriate.²⁰

After researching Chinese society in the first decades of the twentieth century, Michael H. Hunt concludes that climactic moments in the gradual and contested process of national identity formation can arise when intellectuals and elites—often those with a heightened appreciation of and a yearning for robust nationalism—respond to a foreign affairs crisis, yet their historically rooted patriotism may limit the scope and appropriateness of their responses. There is resonance here with this study’s concerned, argumentative Americans, for whom pro-Franco anticommunism became a path for the affirmation of their deep-rooted core values, which a sense of insecurity had rendered fragile. Historian Prasenjit Duara believes that citizens construct their national psyche on a foundation of fluid relationships, so their composite national identity “both resembles and is interchangeable with other political identities.” During the Great Debate of 1937–38, a fierce argument over political ideology between pro-Loyalists and pro-Nationalists forced participants to think what being an American meant and to “take sides,” as debaters said. By focusing so much attention on Americanism, and then fighting over its ownership, Great Debaters not only elevated the importance of national identity for all U.S. citizens, but they also altered its core values. Franco lobbyists, though small in number, were the necessary other half of the debate; it was against the arguments

of lobbyists such as Kelly that thousands of Popular Fronters in meeting rooms, during street parades, and through the mass media directed their anger.²¹

U.S. policy makers talk in terms of “traditional values” but less often list them, just as they proudly refer to an American “way of life” yet rarely say what that entails. Pressed for specifics, they might first insist that the meaning of these phrases is as obvious as apple pie or the Fourth of July, and then perhaps mention self-reliance, rugged individualism, level playing fields, free-market capitalism, republican democracy, freedom of speech, and a shared belief in the Supreme Being. To whatever extent the tenets of Americanism are obvious, the shift from an abhorrence of tyrannical government, standing armies, and high taxes in 1775 to the enthusiasm of the cold war onward for an ever more powerful military and mushrooming federal budget begs a paradox. Since *Arbella* dropped anchor in Massachusetts Bay in 1630 with John Winthrop’s band of Puritans, an overarching characteristic seems to have infused the American psyche, which may solve the riddle. It stems from an organic, perhaps spiritual certainty in right thoughts and right actions. It extends to a well-meaning urge to impart that rectitude to others and set them straight. And it manifests itself daily in earnest debate and anxious activity, as well as intense introspection when utopian dreams turn to nightmares. It is evident in Winthrop’s embittered decision to emigrate and in his 1683 expulsion of Anne Hutchinson, an upstart minister he judged to be a latter-day Jezebel. “You have suffered yourselves to be so divided for so small matters,” one church council lamented in 1772 after settling an acrimonious conflict over preachers’ salaries in Concord, Massachusetts. Indeed, Concord’s yeoman farmers bickered so much over trivial issues that their frustration drove them to bear arms against Redcoat police at Lexington in April 1775. Moralistic preoccupation with social reform (prisons, poor houses, prohibition) and religious purity (anti-Masonry, anti-Irish nativism) came to a head in 1861 in a civil war over the ethics of work and citizenship. More recently, it has popped up in dramatic quests for a New Deal, a New Frontier, or a New World Order and in wars on poverty, drugs, or terror.²²

This restless American angst was the predominant characteristic of and driving force behind the arguments that suffused the Great Debate. Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard developed the “concept of anxiety” to explain the “dizziness of freedom,” the chronic insecurity commensurate with a growing sense of liberty, especially among Protestants, who consequently lived in fear that they would fail in their moral duty to God. If democracy is about the freedom to have an argument, then Americanism describes a collective will that is about being on the same page. There has always been an inherent tension—an angst—in American society between healthy debate and stifling conformity. Because liberty-loving Americans believe their brand of republican democracy to be exceptional, they are watchful of experiments to replicate it abroad and fearful of threats to its existence at home. In Germany, Italy, and Japan of the 1930s, where confidence in parliamentary

democracy was still consolidating, citizens turned to authoritarian regimes and militarization to rejuvenate their economies, sanction their nationalism, and end the dizziness. Central planning and a workers' dictatorship had apparently created an economic miracle in the Soviet Union. Significantly, in Spain—from which Columbus sailed to discover the New World and where inquisitorial churchmen, ruthless conquistadores, and corrupt aristocrats ever since served to demonstrate to Americans the merits of their own Anglo-Protestant civilization—the short-lived Second Republic of 1931 flirted with socialist revolution before collapsing into civil war.²³

Scope and Sources

Because this study's purpose is to document and explain the activism of American lobbyists for Franco's Spain, it ignores pro-Loyalists, who have already received extensive historiographical treatment. Ignored, too, are many important and no doubt interesting Franco lobbyists, such as Edward J. Heffron, secretary of the National Council of Catholic Men, or William H. McCarthy, postmaster of San Francisco and promoter of Pacific Coast baseball. In the interests of a compact, coherent narrative, executive membership in the American Union of Nationalist Spain (AUNS), the most influential and previously unstudied pro-Nationalist lobbying organization, provides my primary selection criterion, while Kelly, both in his capacity as AUNS secretary and as an independent activist, is a focal point for the story.

Sources should drive historiographical analysis, and I hope this study is no exception. Kelly's collected correspondence, writings, speeches, and memorabilia, comprising some 12,000 document pages, plus an uncensored Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) dossier of 1,800 pages, allow for a breadth and richness of interpretation that is unusual for a grassroots actor from the 1930s. At the same time, Kelly was an opinionated individual, which is why I have tried to balance his views against those of other lobbyists from a range of political-cultural backgrounds. Because my intention is to portray these actors as they saw themselves, this account is necessarily as sympathetic of pro-Franco Americans as it will be disturbing for those who hold to the prevailing interpretation about Spain's 1936 Popular Front government and the CPUSA members who organized volunteers in its defense. While faith in the meaning—as opposed to the politics—of objectivity suggests to me that historiographical treatment of the Spanish Civil War and the U.S. foreign policy pertaining to it has been a tad myopic, it does not follow that my actors' opinions are my own.