



Oscar Calvo-Gonzalez, “Neither a Carrot nor a Stick: American Foreign Aid and Economic Policymaking in Spain During the 1950s,” *Diplomatic History* 30:3 (June 2006): 409-438.

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Oscar Calvo-Gonzalez makes an important contribution to an understudied topic with his article “Neither a Carrot nor a Stick: American Foreign Aid and Economic Policymaking in Spain during the 1950s.” He adeptly illustrates how and why U.S. policy toward Spain during the 50s was driven primarily by a desire for stability in Spain. While the U.S. government was certainly interested in promoting economic openness in a country that had pursued autarkic economic policies throughout the early years of the Franco regime, it was far more interested in ensuring that the American military bases in Spain could operate in a country that was free from social and economic upheaval. This key stance was not always compatible with the U.S. government’s broader objective of limiting direct aid and promoting economic openness wherever possible.

Calvo-Gonzalez speaks directly to a point of contention in the Spanish language literature on U.S.-Spanish relations in the 1950s. Was the 1953 agreement that led to the establishment of American bases on Spanish soil a key factor that helped lead to significant changes in Spanish economic policymaking? Or did the new relationship with the United States have little to no impact on Spain’s decision to move toward a more open economic model in the late 1950s? On the surface, American behaviour was confusing and even contradictory. As Calvo-Gonzalez points out, American officials seemingly missed important opportunities to advance the cause of economic openness in Spain throughout the 1950s. But as his article illustrates, these officials learned that attempts to use either the “carrot” or the “stick” to blatantly manipulate Spanish officials into adopting the open economic policies that they wanted to see in place were doomed to failure. They could even be counterproductive, by undermining the positions of Spanish officials who were in favour of economic reform. The Franco government relied heavily on nationalist rhetoric to justify its continued existence, and even the appearance of caving in to direct U.S. pressure would be an acute and dangerous embarrassment.

As Calvo-Gonzalez argues, the United States found that it was far more effective to simply sit back and allow Spain to pursue more open economic policies through membership in international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.). In short, indirect influence was more effective than direct approaches with either “carrots” or “sticks.”

The basic argument of the article is sound, and Calvo-Gonzalez does a fine job of situating his work within the literature and of hammering out a useful, new niche for himself. However, the article is hampered slightly by two unavoidable limitations. First, the English language literature on U.S.-Spanish relations has grown only very slowly over the years, and has seen little new work over the past thirty years. More importantly, the primary source base on the Spanish side is somewhat limited by the continuing inaccessibility of Franco’s personal papers. Although we can get a fairly good idea of what was happening from the available state documents, a certain element of the top-down perspective remains in shadow.

This limitation is frustrating, because our understanding of the inner workings of the Spanish government during the 1950s is important to the story that Calvo-Gonzalez is telling. As it is, his characterization of how decisions were made in Madrid is not completely satisfying. There is no particular reason to refute the author's assertion that nationalist rhetoric was a critical factor in shunning direct U.S. economic influence, but we also do not get a particularly clear picture of how and why that was the case. We know that some hard-core Falangists were opposed to economic reform, and we know that figures such as Spanish Minister of Commerce Manuel Arburúa were in favour of more economic independence. But how was the game of waxing and waning political influence played between them? Why did the faction in favour of reform ultimately win out? These do not seem like unimportant questions as we consider the issue of U.S. economic influence.

One of the most interesting issues related to Calvo-Gonzalez's article has to do with deciding on the most appropriate framework in which to fit this sort of historical research. The author places his work squarely within the literature on the United States' "Cold War economic diplomacy," which he describes as having focused more on multilateral institutions than on more specific studies of aid programs to particular smaller powers, such as Franco's Spain.

Although Calvo-Gonzalez has certainly chosen a useful framework for an investigation of this kind, it might be worthwhile for the author to at least attempt linkages to some of the other major frameworks. For example, David F. Schmitz studied 1950s U.S.-Spanish relations within the context of U.S. relations with right-wing dictators in his book *Thank God They're on Our Side: The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1921-1965* (1999). Was it significant that Spain laboured under Franco's particular yoke, or was the specific flavour of authoritarianism not relevant when it came to U.S. economic influence? It would be useful to have at least some consideration of this issue. At the very least, there is ample room for future studies to develop in that general direction.

Calvo-Gonzalez's article would also be enriched by a more developed analysis of just how important or unimportant it was for the United States to have access to bases in Spain. If the American capacity to operate its strategic air and naval assets in the region was even moderately dependant on continued access to Spanish bases, would this situation not have made Spain into a special case, different from other aid scenarios with smaller powers? After all, the article gives the distinct impression that the U.S. would have been far less likely to disburse any kind of aid to Franco's Spain had it not been for the desire to control military assets there.

Still, "Neither a Carrot nor a Stick" is a strong contribution to a new round of investigation into the history of U.S.-Spanish relations. Although the relationship between Franco and the United States has not yet been the subject of a great many works in the English language, there is good reason to believe that further study in this area will add some additional texture and nuance to our understanding of U.S. policy toward Western Europe over the first couple of decades after the Second World War.

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