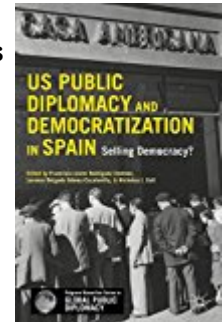


Francisco Javier Rodriguez Jimenez, Lorenzo Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, Nicholas J. Cull, eds.. *US Public Diplomacy and Democratization in Spain: Selling Democracy?.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. xi + 237 pp. \$109.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-137-46144-5.



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The English-language historiography of the Cold War has struggled to account for Spain.[1] Neither a partner in the Cold War's run-of-the-mill economic programs nor an ally in the Cold War's defining military alliances, Spain—one of Western Europe's last dictatorships—cannot quite find a place within the success story of European integration and democratization or the expansion of a Western postwar defense system under the umbrella of NATO. Including Spain in the historiography requires an additional explanatory note; studying Spain also requires that one speak Spanish, which limits the number of English-speaking scholars who can focus on it.

Spain's slippery status within the historiography of the Cold War extends beyond military and economic history to the fields of public and cultural diplomacy. We know much more about influence of US soft power in France, Germany, and Italy, for example, than we do about the impact of American soft power in Spain. Perhaps surprisingly, we also know much more about the significance of US soft power in smaller countries in

Eastern Europe or Scandinavia, where language barriers have either been ignored or admirably mastered, than we do about the role of American soft power in Spain.[2]

Despite notable gaps in the international scholarship, within the Spanish-language historiography of the Cold War—most notably in the field of cultural relations—there has been a veritable explosion of activity in the form of publications, workshops, and conferences over the last few years.[3] Little of this domestic scholarly activity has reached the translation desks of US publishers specializing in series dedicated to the Cold War and the postwar world, yet this particular edited volume testifies to the fact that renewed consideration might be in order.

US Public Diplomacy and Democratization in Spain: Selling Democracy? documents the outcome of domestic research projects with a focus on US-Spanish cultural relations and connects this work with the work of foreign scholars of US public diplomacy. The volume explores the impact of

American soft power initiatives in Spain, highlighting the US role in fostering hostile relations as well as the US interest in promoting democracy. Editors Francisco Javier Rodríguez Jiménez, Lorenzo Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, and Nicholas J. Cull also take time to consider the ways in which Spain's postwar democratization process may have been affected by US initiatives.

At the core of this book is a very simple question: in the face of authoritarianism, how did US cultural diplomats in Washington—and those dispatched to Spain—manage to walk the tightrope between US security concerns in Europe on the one hand, and a European policy dedicated to freedom and democracy on the other? Put another way: did US public diplomacy in Spain serve the cause of democratization, or did US public diplomacy initiatives simply mask an American military strategy?

Due to the political nature of the Francisco Franco regime, the relationship between the United States and Spain differed from relationships the former maintained with other Western European powers. With the onset of the Cold War, Spain and the United States became dependent on one another—the Iberian Peninsula served as a central strategic location of US military interests, and the United States in turn opened the door for Franco's return to the international tableau. The essays presented within this volume attempt to resolve the apparent contradiction between the fact that the United States purported to promote democracy while collaborating with the authoritarian Franco regime. The editors suggest that US public diplomacy programs were meant to resolve the apparent contradiction by selling democracy without any real attempts to provoke political change.

The book is divided into three parts and opens with a general introduction by the editors followed by a conceptual chapter by Giles Scott-Smith, one of the (British) deans of the study of US-European cultural relations. Scott-Smith pro-

vides a survey of US public diplomacy and the leitmotif of democratization after World War II exemplified by the themes anticommunism, race, and youth. Scott-Smith's essay broadens the volume's focus on Spain by taking into account other target countries of US public diplomacy. Scott-Smith also identifies for readers a number of conceptual red flags in the historical analysis of public diplomacy, including the fact that the message sent may not always align with the message received, and the idea that what looked to US public diplomats like an investment in future democratization was (and is) often perceived as nothing more than a cynical game of words.

The next five chapters constitute the core of the book, with each chapter exploring a specific angle in the drama of US-Spanish cultural relations. Rosa Pardo Sanz's essay focuses on the differences and the similarities between US foreign policy in Portugal and Spain in the years leading up to 1969. Unlike the Franco regime, António de Oliveira Salazar's *Estado Novo* collaborated with the Allies during World War II by providing military access to the Azores, which led to Portugal's favorable international standing in the postwar era and facilitated the country's integration into Western Europe. Although cooperation with the United States appeared to be little more than a marriage of convenience in the first years after the war, by the 1950s the US had become Salazar's "preferred ally" (p. 44), before relations cooled between the two powers towards the end of the decade. American cooperation with Franco started later, but the financial support Spain received exceeded by tenfold the amount provided to Portugal. Pardo Sanz asserts that Portugal and Spain both profited from relationships with the United States. Salazar accrued benefits in the realm of defense while Franco amassed economic advantages. Liberalization was the goal of US public diplomacy initiatives in both countries; however, Spanish oppositional circles in particular developed a rather anti-American attitude.

Lorenzo Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla ties in with this last point. His chapter analyzes the United States' "vague and imprecise" public diplomacy initiatives in Spain (p. 65). Delgado indicates that modernizing and democratizing the Franco regime was not a part of the initial US policy agenda. Initiatives designed to foster goodwill among the Spanish population included several programs in the educational, technical, and military sectors, as well as the Fulbright program. These programs targeted pro-Francoists as well as public leaders outside the pro-Franco elite who were likely to play a tangible political role in the future. Spanish critics of US foreign policy interpreted this strategy—devised in Washington as an effort to avoid immediate political entanglements while maintaining the influence necessary to step in whenever Franco fell—as a volatile attempt to have one's cake and eat it too, and clear evidence of the fact that US military interests were more important to American decision makers than the promotion of democracy.

Still, US public diplomacy programs left no doubt about the democratic inclinations of the sender country, as Pablo León-Aguinaga's chapter makes clear. The author analyzes publications produced by the US Information Service, broadcasts of Voice of America, and cooperation with the Spanish National Radio. According to León-Aguinaga, the Americans sought to develop an understanding of democratic values as a role model rather than a didactic instructor by creating a space for constructive dialogue. Moreover, US messages aimed at emphasizing connections between the two countries demonstrated American leadership and acquainted Spanish citizens with *el modelo americano*. In this way, officials were able to emphasize the key theme of US public diplomacy without offending the dictator. The American strategy outlined by León-Aguinaga irritated Spanish critics across the political spectrum, appearing too meek to some and too direct to others.

American studies and anti-American attitudes among the Spanish people are at the core of Francisco Javier Rodríguez Jiménez' analysis. The author describes the mixed feelings the United States aroused amongst Spaniards (and others), and points to the ongoing prevalence of anti-Americanism in Spain—the starkest in Europe, he claims (and these reviewers wonder why)—and its triggering influence on US public diplomacy. Rodríguez Jiménez finds that the promotion of American studies in Spain was limited as a result of a lack of both consistency and resources and the inflexibility of the Spanish educational system.

Neal M. Rosendorf's essay, borrowed from his recent book *Franco Sells Spain to America* (2014), analyzes Spain's outreach to the United States, including, for example, the Spanish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair and the liberalization of oppressive policies towards religious minorities. Rosendorf argues that the oft-proclaimed success story of Spain's remaking after its transition to democracy started long before the mid-1970s, when Franco's regime sought to make its way out of postwar isolation by encouraging tourism and attracting business, by courting the US film industry, and by adopting novel public relations strategies.

The last two chapters provide something of a *melée*. Mark L. Asquino enters the fray as a practitioner. Asquino reflects upon his experiences as a Fulbright lecturer at the time of Franco's passing, and again in 1982 when he worked as a US public diplomat in Spain. At the US Cultural Center, he organized cultural programs such as concerts, film series, exhibitions, music events, and the International Visitor Leadership program. Asquino points to verbal and nonverbal programs that had, he claims, quite an impact on both messengers and audience in Spain, creating precisely the kind of dialogue that public diplomacy seeks to promote. Based upon his personal experiences at the time of the *transición*, the author draws the

conclusion that public diplomacy before and after 1975 facilitated the path to democracy. Finally, Lorenzo Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla prudently pulls together the divergent perspectives presented throughout the volume and attempts to resolve the question of whether you can collaborate with dictatorships and sell democracy at the same time. Without offering a definitive answer, Gómez-Escalonilla points to the ambiguity of US diplomacy in the region and concedes that the question remains an open one.

Despite—or perhaps because of—this vague ending, this is a great book. Instead of simplifying the topic or getting lost in details, *US Public Diplomacy and Democratization in Spain: Selling Democracy?* provides a logical structure and a strong argument nuanced by local peculiarities, multiple viewpoints, and divergent perspectives. The volume highlights the impact of public diplomacy as a tool of soft power along with its challenge to geostrategic concerns. This volume should be of great interest to scholars of public or cultural diplomacy, American foreign policy, Spanish history, and the relations between democratic and nondemocratic regimes. The editors have successfully curated a broad array of essays focused on a specific theme, which leads to a dense, informative, and well-balanced volume. Most of the contributions are based on elaborate archival research and comprise substantial primary-source research along with consistent references to Spanish actors.

Most of all, the discreet collective argument makes this a strong book: taken together, the essays consistently point to what most authors see as an inherent contradiction between the United States' need for security and desire to promote democracy in the context of the Cold War. Nearly all of the authors represented here agree that the contradiction in US policy impeded the efficiency of pro-democracy programs.

Of course, readers do not have to agree with this implicit argument, which will certainly fuel

future debates. We, for one, do not concur, and here is why: first, terms such as “strategy” and “Washington” often obfuscate the fact that all diplomatic efforts, including public diplomacy, are subject to the nuances of internal domestic disputes. The story of Spain clearly resembles the story of US public diplomacy in the Arab world that has been so aptly portrayed by James Vaughn and others (many of whom are mentioned by Scott-Smith).[4] Historians looking at the Arab world have highlighted US cultural diplomats' utter frustration when carefully crafted programs developed over months and years crumbled in the wake of US military and political action in the region.

Second, the real question, it seems, is not whether whatever the United States did in Spain contributed to the country's democratization. Cultural programs have a way of evading impact measurement, as those who have labored in this particular realm as diplomats or as students of diplomacy know all too well. The real question, it seems to us, is much more traditional: did what appears like a contradiction to contemporary observers constitute good policy that furthered US interests and, perhaps, even met Spanish needs? After all, despite apparent contradictions, US policymakers were able to steer a middle course, incurring criticism from both sides while encouraging a level of interaction that proved feasible, both before and after Franco's death. The alternative would have been either a more outspoken stand in favor of democracy (which would have jeopardized ongoing cooperation with Franco) or greater solidarity with the Spanish leadership (which would have necessitated a turn away from the Wilsonian vision). Neither alternative would have furthered short-term US interests and neither would have served long-term Spanish needs.

Third, the questions asked in the book could be expanded to other case studies. One may squabble over the fact that public diplomacy is only one of many factors at play in an internation-

al relationship. A broader exploration of the cultural framework of US perceptions of Spain might have shed light on the fact that even security concerns are not solely motivated by political and military considerations. Some authors mention in passing that US leaders often justified their attitude by pointing out that Spain was prone to violent upheaval and “not ripe” for democracy. Surely, the legacy of the Spanish-American War in 1898 (the turning point in Spanish-American relations), visions of the “black legend,” and gender stereotypes similar to those expressed in the Latin America nexus all played a role in justifying the prioritization of security concerns. Exploring the tension between Franco’s stated antimodernism and his eagerness to solicit US technologies would certainly have been an interesting addition to this volume, as would additional case studies comparing dictatorships and their charm offensives (for example, Greece). Finally, key terms such as “anti-Americanism,” and “nation branding” deserve more methodological attention than is provided in their respective chapters. That said, these final critiques are more meant to explore and encourage the potential of cultural history for further study.

On a technical note, two essays within this volume begin with several quotations, and while the authors provide information on the quoted individuals and the dates of the quotations in footnotes, this information would have been more helpful in the running text. Furthermore, the reviewers wondered why one quotation (p. 201) presents 1947 as the year of Spain’s condemnation by the United Nations, when resolutions of the Security Council and then the General Assembly that condemned the regime and recommended the withdrawal of ambassadors took place in 1946.

Edited volumes are facing tough times these days. At English-language journals, review editors typically reason that few readers will be interested in a collection of essays that for one reason or

another did not make it into a leading journal in the field. That view ignores the promise of this particular academic genre. In the best-case scenario, an edited volume will expand the reader’s knowledge regarding a particular field overnight. The present volume is such a book. The editors have succeeded in attracting a regional group of experts highlighting an underinvestigated yet highly relevant historical relationship ready to be recognized and included in the ongoing debate over US connections in the world. Let’s go Spain!

Notes

[1]. Many thanks to Hannah Nelson-Teutsch for editing this essay.

[2]. Alexander Stephan, ed., *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).

[3]. Antonio Niño and Jose A. Montero, eds., *Guerra Fría y Propaganda: Estados Unidos y su cruzada cultural en Europa y América Latina* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2012); Antonia Niño, ed., *La ofensiva cultural norteamericana durante la Guerra Fría*, dossier of *Ayer* no. 75 (2009).

[4]. James Vaughan, “The United States and the Limits of Cultural Diplomacy in the Arab Middle East, 1945-1957,” in *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, ed. Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Mark Donfried (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 162-187.

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