



The purpose of Spain's PD: a golden circle of public diplomacy analysis

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Abstract

Since the introduction of the term public diplomacy (PD), PD literature has evolved and expanded in different directions, multiplying the research conducted on PD actors, programs, publics, networks, tools, and purposes. Focusing our discussion on the purpose of public diplomacy, the potential mission-driven public diplomacy model called “The Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy” by Cabrera Cuadrado (J Public Diplomacy 2:2, 2022) is used to analyze the WHY of Spain's public diplomacy, analyzing the grand strategy purpose of the European country since the Franco dictatorship until the present day. This analysis comprises the evolution of Spain's purpose throughout the following phases: the Franco dictatorship, the arrival of democracy (or Transition), and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Interviews to key PD practitioners were conducted to complement the research. An outlook into the future of Spain's public diplomacy grand strategy is also included.

Keywords Public diplomacy · Purpose · Sense of mission · Spain · Moral values

Popular public diplomacy (PD) definitions include the objectives of understanding, informing, influencing, and engaging foreign publics. Cowan and Arsenault (2008) argue the existence of three clear stages that correspond to monologue, dialogue, and collaboration, which can be equated, respectively, to the PD objectives of informing, understanding, and engaging. The focus on relationship-building and collaboration encouraged some authors to differentiate this ‘new’ public diplomacy from the traditional (one-way communication) public diplomacy (Melissen 2005). Other authors characterize the monologue and dialogue phases as a time of combat and competition (Anholt 2020), recognizing a shift in public diplomacy activities across countries moving from competition to collaboration (Fitzpatrick 2006; Hocking 2008; Kelley 2009). In the current age of collaboration, Anholt (2020, p. 145) suggests that countries need to follow a pattern of cooperation with their counterparts, not classifying them as “enemies to be liquidated, or customers to be marketed to,” but as partners working against common international challenges, such as global warming or racial discrimination.

Although several authors have manifested the countries' will to “manage the international environment” through their

public diplomacy practices (Cull 2009; Sevin 2016), Anholt (2020, p. 118) defends the use of a moral purpose when conducting public diplomacy as is reflected in his theory “The Good Country Equation”:

The most likely reason why somebody would admire a country is that they believe it contributes something of value to the world we live in, that it is motivated by positive values and principles.

In other words, *people admire good countries*.

Similarly, other authors support the need of acting with a moral purpose. Vuving (2009) described the foundation for soft power as a combination of benignity, inspirations, admiration, and gratitude. Zaharna (2021) has conducted extensive research on the “humanity-centered” approach of public diplomacy, citing vast literature including Anholt and Vuving. Crilley and Manor (2020) defend that “[nations] that are seen as promoting positive values, such as multiculturalism or human rights, are less likely to encounter resistance to their policies.” Zhang and Swartz (2009) also agree with the damage caused to countries' international reputations when they disregard global public goods (GPG), what is also known as international opprobrium. Fitzpatrick (2017) also asks the question “What is public diplomacy's purpose?” in her work, suggesting the resurgence of the “idea of a more socially conscious public diplomacy with a public mission” (p. 85).

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Furthermore, researchers from other areas agree with this moral view, like economists John M. Keynes and Mariana Mazzucato, who believe that governments should have “a sense of mission” and create “public value” (Keynes 1926; Mazzucato 2018). From the business field, we also find Simon Sinek’s (2009) leadership theory “The Golden Circle,” which argues that organizations—including countries—should be driven by a moral purpose to improve the image they want to portray. Sinek’s (2009) theory provides a strong framework of how a moral purpose—also termed WHY—can change the publics’ perception and how the lack of it can have the same impact, but negatively. As Sinek (2009, p. 28) states, “[t]here are only two ways to influence human behavior: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it.”

Cabrera Cuadrado (2022) merges Sinek’s and Anholt’s theories to provide a potential mission-driven public diplomacy model called “The Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy.” As Cabrera Cuadrado (2022) states:

When the reason WHY countries conduct PD relies on moral topics like democratizing the world, fighting climate change, achieving gender equality, eradicating racial discrimination, or ending global poverty, these countries become much more attractive to the eyes of foreign publics.

The purpose of this research is to apply the theoretical framework of “The Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy” to a real case study to prove its applicability. This paper’s scope will focus on the core layer of the model, WHY, the purpose that is present across all layers of the model, and the concept that differentiates “The Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy” from other PD models. Therefore, the research question is “What is and has been the WHY of Spain’s public diplomacy throughout the years? And has the WHY of Spain influenced the success of its public diplomacy strategies?”.

Very little research has been done on Spain’s public diplomacy purpose, as public diplomacy is also a very new term in Spain’s vocabulary. The first time that the term “public diplomacy” appeared in the Official State Gazette of Spain was in 2007, and it was only mentioned as the name of one of the subjects studied at the Diplomatic School (BOE 2007). The next two appearances in the Gazette in 2009 and 2010 were also titles of subjects studied at specific master’s programs (BOE 2009, 2010). It wasn’t until 2012 that a ministerial position included the term “public diplomacy” and it wasn’t until 2021 that a Spanish Foreign Policy Strategy had a section on PD (BOE 2014; Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación 2021b). Therefore, when analyzing Spain’s public diplomacy strategies, the analysis comprises the actions and programs that fall within the PD definition given in the introduction and not necessarily the actions and programs that Spain has explicitly designated as public diplomacy strategy.

One of the questions included in this research is whether the WHY of Spain determines the success or failure of its public diplomacy strategies or not. There is no clear evidence about a direct relationship between the two in every single stage of this study, but we can observe an evolution in Spain’s WHY that leads to appealing a wider international audience and an improvement in Spain’s image abroad, especially since Spain’s democratization and Europeanization, a transformation of Spain’s WHY toward a more honest and inspirational moral purpose.

Theoretical framework and methodology

The purpose of the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy is to provide countries with a tool to achieve a competitive image abroad through a collaborative approach by having a moral purpose that guides its practices and actions in international relations. Although this paper focuses on the main layer of the model, WHY, it is important to understand that the WHY is a transversal layer that should be present in all other layers of the model to show consistency, coherence, and unification.

The Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy is composed of six concentric layers:

- *WHY* represents the moral cause or purpose of the country.
- *HOW* represents the soft power of that country, its cultural and political values, as well as policies.
- *WHAT* represents all PD programs and communication in the fields of information, education, and culture, meaning international broadcasting, exchange diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy.
- *WHERE* represents the national cultures that affect PD processes. The author claims a lack of a cultural feasibility assessment to compare the cultures of actors and audiences to produce culturally sensitive PD. Every country needs to bear in mind WHERE PD is going to be conducted to adapt it to different profiles.
- *WHO* represents both the actors and the audience. New intersectional dimensions are suggested to be added to the cultural feasibility assessment as certain cultural traits might be shared across countries. These dimensions are generation, language, religion, race and ethnicity, and regional typology.
- *WHEN* represents the time, how often and for how long PD is conducted.

The first step for a complete Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy analysis is to determine the country’s WHY and its reflection across layers (Fig. 1).



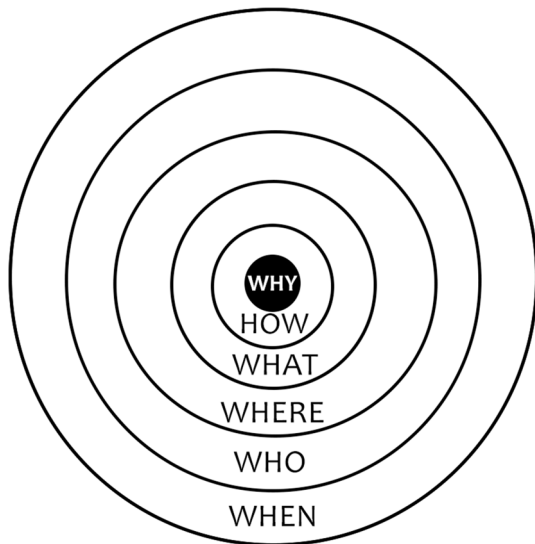


Fig. 1 The Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy. *Source* Cabrera Cuadrado (2022). Used with permission from the author

To analyze the changes in Spain's purpose regarding public diplomacy, I analyzed the evolution of the institutional structures overseeing public diplomacy efforts—whether they were categorized as public diplomacy or not—and the purpose reflected by each of these institutions through their promotional materials, programs, and actions. In order to do so, I have collected existing research on Spain's international relations, nation branding, and public diplomacy and I have analyzed them through the lens of the new theoretical framework “The Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy.” Furthermore, research on primary sources from the Spanish government has also been included in the analysis.

To complement the scarce research on Spain's public diplomacy, six interviews were conducted between September 27th and October 25th of 2022, both in person and online. The interviewees were key PD practitioners who have an active role in Spain's PD and professionals whose work is connected to public diplomacy through media and international business. Their perspectives serve to augment the analysis in this paper. The interviewees include:

- Miguel Albero, Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of Spain in the United States.
- Ricardo Añino, Political Counselor at the Embassy of Spain in the United States.
- Manuel Lejarreta, Ambassador of Spain to Angola and former Secretary General of *Fundación Consejo España-EEUU*.
- Cristina Manzano, journalist and Director of Esglobal.
- Manuel Muñiz, Provost of the IE University and former State Secretary of *España Global*.

- José Alberto Sanchís, President of Casa de Valencia in Washington D.C. and businessman.

There are no previous studies about the purpose of Spanish public diplomacy. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to contribute to the field by analyzing the WHY of Spain's public diplomacy as explained in the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy, analyzing the grand strategy purpose of Spain from the Franco dictatorship to the present day.

Spain is different

During the Franco dictatorship, Spanish public diplomacy was limited and extremely controlled by the government. In 1936, the *Ministerio de Propaganda* was created to regulate the information disseminated abroad about Spain. Due to the concentration of propagandistic and political communication in the tourism industry, PD activities were also regulated through the *Dirección General de Turismo* until 1951, and through the *Ministerio de Información y Turismo* since its creation that same year (Correyero Ruiz 2004; Pack 2006). Despite some engaging and collaborative programs during this period, taking as an example the Fulbright exchanges between Spanish and American scholars (Rodríguez-Escobar and Rodríguez-Jiménez 2019), the majority of PD efforts were unidirectional from Spain to the rest of the world, as it happened with the tourism industry, the film industry, or Spanish-language teaching (León Aguinaga 2006; Rosendorf 2014; Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla 2014). Spanish public diplomacy during the Franco dictatorship was open to other countries, but most of these efforts were strategically focused on the U.S. audiences (Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla 1994, p. 268). And, whereas the authoritarian regime established in Spain was despised by European countries, the United States welcomed Spanish public diplomacy efforts because it found an ally in Franco's Spain based on their shared anti-communist positions (Manzano 2016).

As previously mentioned, Anholt (2020) argues the need of a moral purpose to be attractive to foreign publics, and Franco had a similar perception reflected in his behavior in external relations. He disconnected himself from his fascist allies, Hitler and Mussolini, after they were defeated, leaving Spain as the only European dictatorship still standing (Rodríguez Gómez 2014). Therefore, Franco decided to focus on non-political aspects to promote Spain internationally under the slogan “Spain is different”—first created by Luis Bolín in 1948 and later mass promoted by Manuel Fraga in 1960 (Salcedo 2015). According to Manuel Lejarreta, Ambassador of Spain to Angola and Former Secretary General of *Fundación Consejo España-EEUU*, during the first years of the Franco dictatorship the image of Spain was that of a backward country, traumatized, closed and poor; however, there was a shift in this



image thanks to a closer alliance with the United States and the whole public diplomacy strategy behind “Spain is different” (M. Lejarreta, personal communication, October 17, 2022). This slogan highlighted the unique way of life and being of Spanish society, known as the Spain of the *pandereta*—a folk tambourine commonly featured during Spanish celebrations and traditionally associated with a rural country of *toros*, *fiesta y siesta* (bulls, party and nap) (Pack 2006). Some clear depictions of the Spain of the *pandereta*—a Spain of Andalusian folklore, bullfighting, gypsies, good wine, and *españoladas*—are Ernest Hemingway’s novel *The Sun Also Rises* of 1926 and Luis Berlanga’s movie *Bienvenido Mr. Marshall* of 1953 (Pritchett 1954; Pack 2006). This perception of Spain was also reflected in the Fulbright Program, the exoticism of Spain was used to promote studies related to history and social sciences, whereas it represented a barrier inhibiting the attraction of American scientists and researchers (Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla 2009). Furthermore, Franco portrayed Spain as a Catholic referent and defender. According to Nick Cull, Franco’s Spain “emphasized its Catholicism as part of its internal and external display of morality” (Cull and Anholt 2022). “[A] role that would be ratified by the 1952 Vatican-Spain Concordat,” prioritizing Spain’s moral values connected to religion toward the eyes of the public (Rosendorf 2014, p. 86).

Therefore, the purpose or grand strategy, the WHY, that Franco was establishing for Spain’s image abroad, especially in the United States—with milestones such as the Spanish Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair in 1964 (“The website of the 1964/1965 New York World’s Fair,” 2022)—was the Spain of the *pandereta* and its Catholic values. However, the boosting of the image of Spain during the dictatorship had its limits. According to Sinek’s (2009) leadership theory, when the WHY promoted by a country does not match its actions, it causes the phenomenon called “split of WHY.” When the actions of a country differ from the moral WHY, these efforts can be seen as propaganda, as dishonest or manipulative attempts to sell the image of a country. Franco was promoting Spain as a defender of the moral values of the Catholic Church. Yet these values were not always reflected in the actions of the government. At the time, there was still strong censorship, political violence, and a large amount of exiled Spanish intellectuals refuting the ideal Spain Franco was trying to sell (Rodríguez-Jiménez 2016). Therefore, there was a split between the promoted moral purpose and the actual behavior of the country, a split of Spain’s WHY and WHAT. This incoherence affected the perception of foreign publics, taking as an example the “anti-Franco displays” in Italy to “boycott travel to Spain” and the anti-Spanish campaigns “Don’t travel to Spain” in Scandinavia during the 1960s (Pack 2006, p. 112).

The arrival of democracy—the Transition

With the Transition from dictatorship to democracy after the death of Franco in 1975, Spain opened up to the world of developed countries and started a process of democratization and modernization. Most of those interviewed for this study agree that there was a radical change in the image of Spain. The two critical aspects that Manuel Muñiz, Former Secretary of State of España Global, highlights are (1) the arrival of democracy and integration into international organizations such as the European Union and NATO; and (2) the internationalization of the Spanish economy (M. Muñiz, personal communication, October 10, 2022).

During the establishment of the democracy in the late 1970s, international relations remained at a standstill to avoid conflict and the breaking of long-time agreements established during the dictatorship (Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla 2009). The magnitude of internal changes in the political system also didn’t leave many resources to deal with foreign policy. The press and researchers were also too focused on the democratization process to actually integrate the international context in their communications. However, such positive internal political changes had an effect on the country’s international image without pursuing further foreign policy strategies (Pereira Castañares 2001).

Despite the fact that Spain was experiencing internal changes and almost neglecting international relations, maintaining Spain’s relationship with the United States was still a priority, which was proven by King Juan Carlos I’s first visit abroad to the North American country as early as in 1976 during the celebration of the bicentennial of U.S. independence (Tenorio Macià 2019). During this visit, Juan Carlos I announced his wishes to democratize Spain, strengthen Spain–U.S. relations, and boost the image of Spain in the American country (Powell 1995). Most of the interviewees point to King Juan Carlos I as a key figure in the Spanish transition to democracy. Ricardo Añino, Political Counselor at the Embassy of Spain in the United States, states that Juan Carlos I symbolized the change and represented the seriousness and commitment of Spain’s transformation into a democracy, reflected in the aforementioned trip to the United States (R. Añino, personal communication, October 5, 2022).

After a period of internal development and renovation, including the establishment of a democratic Parliament and the adoption of the Spanish Constitution in 1978, Spain started directing its efforts toward the outside world. In the 1980s and 1990s, Spain established public institutions more focused on the goals of public and cultural diplomacy, such as the *Ministerio de Cultura*, the *Agencia*



Española de Cooperación Internacional and the *Instituto Cervantes* (Fernández 2015). National promotion focused on repositioning the country while building on its existing characteristics, as Joan Miró's sun (a depiction of well-known Spain's tourism of *sol y playa*) became a symbol of Spanish modernization (Gilmore 2002; Moilanen and Rainisto 2009, p. 72).

In 1982, the FIFA World Cup took place in Spain, which proved to be a “unique opportunity for Spain to demonstrate its successful democratization and modernization,” and was followed by the first general elections won by a leftist party “symboliz[ing] the beginning of a new era” (Simón and García-Martí, 2019). With this, Spain started to provide a much more modern image, also reflected in all the international events that came after during the 1990s, such as the Olympic Games in Barcelona and the World Expo in Sevilla, both in 1992 (Noya 2012). These high-profile events demonstrated to visitors that Spain was a developed country. After joining the European Union in 1986, Spain also started to promote a new internal purpose: becoming a European democracy. Spain's image as a European democracy still coexisted with the representation of the old slogan “Spain is different,” which showcased the country as a great destination for travel and fun, making tourism a key industry in the Spanish economy. According to Manuel Muñoz, the tourism industry is also one of the key aspects of the Transition, an industry that expanded during the Franco dictatorship and was consolidated during the transition to democracy. As of today, in Manuel Muñoz's words, “more than 500 million people have been in Spain” and that means that 500 million people have a direct relationship with the country (M. Muñoz, personal communication, October 10, 2022).

Hence, the purpose or grand strategy (WHY) of Spain during the Transition represented becoming a developed country and a European democracy, without forgetting the well-established image of Spain as a country of *sol y playa* (sun and beach).

The beginning of the twenty-first century

After the democratization process, Spain's PD efforts were still not centralized nor coordinated and never went further than promoting Spain as the passionate and sexy “erotic dancer” or the funny and original “minstrel” depicted in the Spain of *pandereta* (DIRCOM et al. 2003). Spanish researchers affirm that Spain never defined a clear cultural diplomacy strategy (Noya 2012, p. 449), but during the first decade of the twenty-first century, there was a resurgence of cultural institutions in Spain (Marco and Otero 2010).

After Anholt's proposal of the concept of “nation branding” (1998), Spain decided to incorporate this idea on its own branding project—*Proyecto Marca España*—published

in 2003. In the original document, this strategy is implicitly categorized as a nation branding effort, and explicitly states that it contributes to the public diplomacy of the country, making recommendations on how to better interact with public diplomacy resources to build a strong and coherent nation brand (DIRCOM et al. 2003). The aim of this project was to provide a more attractive image of Spain to boost the internationalization of Spanish brands and their exports in the world (DIRCOM et al. 2003). *Marca España* tried to create an image of Spain as a reliable business partner, within a crisis context, where “made in Spain” represented innovative products and services of quality (Ibid). Cultural actions were also considered later in this initiative with the *Plan Estratégico General de la Secretaría de Estado de Cultura 2012–2015*, although its business approach prevailed, and certain authors demanded greater investment in cultural diplomacy programs and networks (Fernández 2015).

One decade after the creation of *Marca España*, the first Directorate General with the term “public diplomacy” was created: Directorate General for Media and Public Diplomacy (BOE 2012). A couple of years later, still several authors agreed that “Spain's image abroad still [did] not clearly reflect the reality of the modernization process that both its economy and Spanish society [had] experienced since the 1970s” (Ulldemolins 2015). Most of the interviewees agree that *Proyecto Marca España* was an underfunded project without a clear impact in Spain's image. José Alberto Sanchís, a Spanish businessman based in the United States, declares that *Proyecto Marca España* “didn't represent anything” for the regular businessman and didn't improve the nation brand of Spain. According to José Alberto, *Marca España* didn't consider the needs and ambitions of Spanish small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with activity abroad (J. A. Sanchís, personal communication, September 27, 2022). The journalist and Director of Esglobal, Cristina Manzano, also states that although *Marca España* was launched by the government, it became mainly a volunteer project without structure nor budget led by a Spanish businessman who was not necessarily expert in nation branding, leading to unprofessional results such as a badly translated website (C. Manzano, personal communication, October 10, 2022).

Although *Marca España* was created to alter the old WHY of Spain's Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy, it essentially remained the same in the eyes of the foreign publics. According to the periodical evaluations of the Real Instituto Elcano (2021) through their *Barómetro de la Imagen de España*—which analyzes the perception of Spain in 5–6 different foreign countries every year—there has been a positive evolution of the general image of Spain from 2012 until 2018, during the active years of *Marca España*. However, the aspects of Spain's image that have improved have more to do with tourism than business; therefore, this



improvement is not necessarily directly related to the nation branding strategy of *Marca España*, but to the work of the State Secretary for Tourism and *Turespaña*, such as the communication campaign “Spain in 10 seconds” (Turespaña 2018).

As Anholt (2020, p. 38) argues:

There’s usually only one reason why a country thinks it has, or actually has, an image problem, and that’s because it has a reality problem: It hasn’t found its wider role or task or purpose in the world. It doesn’t really know *why* it exists for people outside its own population, and that’s why nobody else knows.

After years acknowledging that Spain’s image abroad didn’t reflect the reality of the Spanish government, companies, and society, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs created the *Secretaría de Estado de la España Global* in 2018 (hereinafter *España Global*) (BOE 2018). This State Secretary was created to give a more accurate and comprehensive image of Spain in the world. *Marca España* focused too much on commerce and Spanish brands and neglected the image of the country as a whole (DIRCOM et al. 2003). *España Global* was established with the purpose of “planning, coordinating and monitoring Spain’s external action, public and private, in the economic, cultural, social, scientific, and technological fields” by highlighting Spain as a pioneer and leader in social justice, healthcare, quality of life, technology, etc. (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación 2021a). The main idea was to modify the old WHY of Spain of *toros, fiesta y siesta*, and shift to a more appealing purpose, which would also cover work-related and development areas. This effectively shifted the WHY of Spain under the slogan “This is Spain” to a broader understanding of “a good life” encompassing happiness, health, social justice, success, and self-realization. This was made possible by unifying all Spain’s PD efforts under a new structured and properly funded Secretary of State. *España Global* integrated three Directorate Generals (DG), (1) DG for Strategy, Prospective and Coherence where a comprehensive action plan was written as general guidelines for PD efforts; (2) DG for Economic Diplomacy where a shared narrative was created for companies and embassies in terms of foreign affairs; and (3) DG for Communication in charge of press, social media, and other communications with the public (M. Muñoz, personal communication, October 10, 2022).

The next survey by *Real Instituto Elcano* after the 2018 issue was conducted already in 2021 and this time the result shows a negative evolution of the image of Spain since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. This decline is mainly due to the economic impact the pandemic had on Spain, as well as on other countries, as all of the countries included in the study show a negative trend in the

evaluation of their image (Real Instituto Elcano 2021). Nevertheless, if we take a closer look at the different aspects included in the evaluation of the image of Spain, we can find some improvements within certain areas. From 2015 to 2021, the ratings of the Spanish economy, the level of technology, its infrastructure, and Spain’s image as a democracy have improved, areas whose promotion has been emphasized by *España Global* since 2018 (Real Instituto Elcano 2015, 2021). In the latest evaluation from 2021, the key aspects of Spain’s image that the United States highlights are the Spanish gastronomy, its citizens, and Spain as a tourist destination, still strong aspects of Spain’s tourism promotion during the Franco dictatorship (Real Instituto Elcano 2021). According to journalist Cristina Manzano, the image of Spain is still strongly connected to the tourism advertised during the dictatorship; nevertheless, Spain managed to upgrade that image to a country of quality tourism (C. Manzano, personal communication, October 10, 2022). Miguel Albero, Cultural Counselor at the Embassy of Spain in the United States, declares that campaigns conducted by *Marca España* and *España Global* had more of an internal impact—also necessary as Spanish people used to have a worse image of Spain than its actual international image—but weren’t especially successful toward external stakeholders because of their lack of research on foreign countries’ cultural interests (M. Albero, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

In general, more research needs to be conducted to analyze whether there are specific areas of improvement directly related to *España Global*’s strategic plan and actions. The diversification of resources and actors used in Spain’s PD since *España Global*, reaching more audiences in different fields, is clearly visible. Nonetheless, there is not an extensive evaluation plan for these actions, leaving still room for improvement.

Despite the short life and slight positive impact of *España Global*, the agency was dissolved by the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs in July 2021—only three years after its establishment—due to the change in leadership, as *España Global* was a project started by former Minister Arancha González Laya and her successor and current minister José Manuel Albares did not want to continue those efforts and decided to restructure the whole Ministry of Foreign Affairs focusing on geographic regions (BOE 2021; Molina and Tamames 2022). Projects that were being implemented and prepared have functionally been put in a state of limbo without any clear indication of their future status. Almost 20 years later, we are circling back to the problem that *Proyecto Marca España* highlighted: “the lack of an institution that, with the necessary rank, could design and coordinate these tasks of image promotion” (DIRCOM et al. 2003). Public



Table 1 Evolution of Spain's image abroad and the underlining WHY. *Source* Author

	Image projected	WHY	Actual image
Franco dictatorship	Spain is different: Spain of <i>pandereta</i> , Andalusian folklore, bullfighting, gypsies, good wine, and <i>españoladas</i>	Fun and friendliness, Catholic values	Exotic tourism destination <i>sol y playa</i>
Transition to democracy	Spain becomes a developed European democracy	Fun and friendliness, democratic values	Exotic tourism destination, European democracy
<i>Proyecto Marca España</i>	Spain as a great business partner	Fun and friendliness, business leadership and performance	Exotic tourism destination, European democracy
<i>España Global</i>	This is Spain: Spain as a leader in science, technology, culture, gastronomy, and many other areas	Fun and friendliness, excellence, and achievements in diverse scopes	Quality tourism destination, European democracy

reporting in the media on this topic is also alarming as many Spanish media outlets announced the resignation of *España Global*'s State Secretary, Manuel Muñiz, without mentioning a single time the dissolution of the agency (Cinco Días 2021; La Información 2021; El Español 2021).

Since the dissolution of *España Global*, the *Índice de Presencia Global* by the *Real Instituto Elcano* has shown a steep decline in Spain's global presence, especially in soft power. According to the study, "Spain is the country that loses the bigger volume of global presence between the 150 countries" with an 11% decline in a year, mostly in its economic and soft power dimensions, the latter including tourism (− 57%) and culture (− 17%) (Olivie and Gracia 2022, p. 18). Whether this decline is directly related to the dissolution of *España Global*, we do not know, but we can assess that there is a need for increasing public diplomacy efforts to improve Spain's image abroad. Furthermore, Political Counselor Ricardo Añino reminds us that the constant changes to the name, structure, and perception of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are counterproductive to our own nation branding (R. Añino, personal communication, October 5, 2022). Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has had three different names *Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores* (1939–2004), *Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y Cooperación* (2004–2018), and *Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación* (2018–present), and it has restructured its State Secretaries and Departments on several occasions during the last 20 years (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación 2023; La Moncloa 2023). Moreover, Cultural Counselor Miguel Albero emphasizes the need for a centralized strategy and objectives accompanied with good governance and stronger coordination among PD institutions (M. Albero, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

The evolution of a purpose

Taking a look at the evolution of Spain's WHY in public diplomacy over the last decades, there is a clear improvement in setting a direction to Spain's efforts and its results. As we can see in Table 1, during the dictatorship the values reflected in WHY under the slogan "Spain is different" were limited to tourism attractiveness and Catholic values because of the authoritarian nature of the regime. The image projected during Franco's Spain has had such a strong impact on foreign audiences and Spanish PD practices that its heritage is reflected in the WHYs of Spain decades later, even though a different regime, different institutions, and different grand strategies have been established.

The Transition to democracy elevated the image of Spain to that of a developed and modern country. Although the country was still portrayed as an exotic tourism destination, Spain's efforts in becoming a European democracy and modern society in the eyes of the foreign public were proven to be successful after key international events conducted in the 90s (Cull and Anholt 2021). The target audiences of Spain also expanded during this period. Initially, Franco's Spain was very much focused on U.S. audiences, but Spain's modernization, democratization, and integration into the European Union broadened the country's perspective, expanding their target audiences to three main regions: Europe, Latin America, and the United States (DIRCOM et al. 2003, p. 14).

When consciousness about nation branding and public diplomacy appeared in the Spanish government thanks to *Proyecto Marca España*, Spain's attempts to improve its international projection focused on business leadership and performance, causing a clear shift in Spain's WHY to more professional values. While this was the aim of the government, the public didn't really acknowledge Spain as a leader in business because of the poor efforts and lack of resources.

Another shift took place with the arrival of *España Global* and its ambitious goals of portraying Spain as a



leader in science, technology, innovation, and all the hard sciences that didn't have a reputation in the eye of foreign publics, but also in social justice and inclusion, complementing the fun side of Spain's tourism image with more sophisticated purposes. As previously mentioned, the *Barómetro de la Imagen de España* has showcased the positive evolution in certain aspects of the international image of Spain, highlighting its constant good ratings in gastronomy, tourism, sports, and friendliness of Spanish citizens (Molina and Tamames 2022). Nonetheless, other areas of focus are lacking prominence in the rankings, therefore, leaving room for improvement.

Going into the future

Since the dissolution of *España Global*, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has increased its total budget 4,13% (Molina and Tamames 2022), including the budget allocated to public diplomacy under the section on cultural cooperation, promotion, and diffusion abroad (Ministerio de Hacienda y Función Pública 2020, 2022). For the moment, it seems that the current Ministry is following the lines of action of *España Global*, although we have seen in the *Índice de Presencia Global* that Spain's image during that period hasn't necessarily improved (Molina and Tamames 2022; Olivie and Gracia 2022). Nevertheless, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hasn't centralized the PD efforts in a leading institution to form an overseeing body with Spain's grand PD strategy. Without a clear institution, body, or agency that acts as a leader for Spain's PD, it is very hard, and almost impossible, to coordinate all of Spain's PD actors under the same strategy, action plan, and continuous evaluation efforts. According to Political Counselor Ricardo Añino, there is internal communication on PD guidelines being sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Embassies, in this case, to the Embassy of Spain in the United States (R. Añino, personal communication, October 5, 2022). However, according to Ambassador Manuel Lejarreta, this is not the case for the Embassy of Spain in Angola (M. Lejarreta, personal communication, October 17, 2022). This situation shows clear priorities, but also the lack of resources to align all PD efforts of Spain in the world.

Bearing in mind the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not explicitly shared the main purpose or grand strategy of Spain's PD efforts. According to journalist Cristina Manzano, to have a field of specialization in public diplomacy—such as a WHY—can be very effective, especially when it reflects the real image of the country (C. Manzano, personal communication, October 10, 2022). Indeed, Gilmore (2002, p. 284) defends that public diplomacy should not be used for “whitewashing the canvas, painting the desired picture of it and expecting that

picture to sell,” but that a “country's brand should be rooted in reality and in fundamental truths about the destination.”

What is the WHY that Spain could currently represent? The reality of the country is that Spain is the second most visited country in the world, which aligns with the current image of great tourism destination (World Tourism Organization 2020). But Spain is also ranked 1st in welcoming refugees (Connor 2018), 1st in the Healthiest Country Index (Bloomberg 2019), 2nd in organ donation after 28 years of leading the ranking (International Registry in Organ Donation and Transplantation 2021), 4th in the Women's Workplace Equality Index (Council on Foreign Relations 2018), and 8th in the LGBT Equality Index (Equaldex 2023). These are all realities that Spain could use for its public diplomacy strategy.

As most of the interviewees agreed, Spain is an avant-garde country in gender equality and women empowerment, a WHY that Spain could easily exemplify and represent in its PD grand strategy and efforts by amplifying the communications on what is being done nationally and internationally. In fact, in 2021, the Directorate General for Communication, Public Diplomacy, and Media published their first Feminist Foreign Policy to integrate gender equality in Spanish foreign policy objectives, including a short section on how PD can contribute to this goal (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación 2021c). Spain is a feminist country and could become a world leader in this field.

In terms of social justice, Spain could also use its image as a pioneer in LGBT rights as a WHY. In 2005, Spain became the second country “to eliminate all legal distinctions between same-sex and heterosexual unions” (McLean 2005). Nowadays, Spain is still in the avantgarde of LGBT rights, having passed a “Trans Law” in February 2023 protecting legal gender recognition, sexuality education, parenting recognition for unmarried same-sex couples and more (González Cabrera 2023).

Another popular suggestion for the WHY of Spain is solidarity and generosity. Spain is a country that welcomes refugees and asylum-seekers on a daily basis, it contributes to peace missions, and it has become a reliable country on global crises (M. Lejarreta, personal communication, October 17, 2022).

Conclusion

The image and purpose of Spain has shown a clear evolution from the Franco dictatorship until the present day. The democratization and modernization of the country have improved its image abroad and it has shifted the purpose of Spain's international relations and public diplomacy. Several efforts have been made to advance foreign perceptions of Spain through public diplomacy projects (*Marca España*)



and institutions (*España Global*), yet none of those were extremely successful nor are still active. As mentioned, the term public diplomacy didn't appear in Spain's government documents until the beginning of the twenty-first century, and it was not given a Directorate General until 2012. Still, public diplomacy does not have a dedicated budget from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Apart from the lack of attention and resources, Spain needs a more coordinated and centralized strategy of public diplomacy to reflect the realities of the country with a more sophisticated WHY represented in Spain's public diplomacy purpose, be that feminism, solidarity, technological leadership, or the fight against climate change.

The applicability of the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy is not limited to the case of Spain. This model could also be applied to analyze the WHY or purpose of other countries' public diplomacy strategies with different perspectives or even regimes. On another note, the learnings from the case of Spain could be applied to other European cases of radical transformation and recent democratization, such as Croatia.

Future research on the impact of Spain's public diplomacy would be an interesting follow-up study. On one hand, an analysis on Spain's foreign perception since the dissolution of *España Global* and the MFA budget increase would help determine if a centralized PD institution is the solution to a better PD strategy, or if an increase in resources is good enough to enhance performance. On the other hand, it would be important to analyze the effectiveness of focusing on certain moral purposes, as suggested in the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy, by analyzing the impact of the Feminist Foreign Policy launched by Spain in 2021.

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