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# Soft Power, Modernization, and Security: US Educational Foreign Policy Toward Authoritarian Spain in the Cold War

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## Abstract

Cold War strategic priorities led the United States to establish an enduring military alliance with General Francisco Franco's dictatorship in Spain between 1953 and 1975. This article examines the educational diplomacy carried out by the US government during the 1960s and early 1970s to foster Spain's stable modernization through the training of national development elites and the dissemination of US educational ideas. The work surveys US educational, informational, and cultural programs aimed at shaping an educational framework conducive to the expansion and legitimization of a US-oriented socioeconomic liberalization in Spain. On the one hand, this US soft power strategy sought to attract those groups who could play an important role in the capitalist modernization of the educational and economic structures of the Iberian country. On the other hand, it sought to reduce the identification of the United States with Franco's dictatorship and to link the image of the American superpower to the hopes for progress of the Spanish people. All of this was pursued in order to preserve US defensive interests in Spain. The piece also discusses US assistance to the crucial 1970 Spanish General Education Law, which allows us to explore how the US ideology of development and education was received by Spanish educational audiences. Thus, by delving deeper into the intersection between cultural diplomacy, international development, and the history of education, we aim to contribute to the integration of education into the histories of modernization and to deepen our understanding of US educational foreign policy in the Cold War.

**Keywords:** Cold War; US educational foreign policy; education in Spain; education and development

In October 1964 the counselor of the US Department of State and chairman of the Policy Planning Council, Walt W. Rostow, made a famous official visit to Spain. The Iberian country, at that time under General Franco's authoritarian rule, was an ally of the United States in the Cold War. In addition to being a significant player in the corridors of Foggy Bottom, in the early 1960s Rostow was also a renowned social scientist and intellectual champion of the influential theories of modernization and development. During that trip he participated in several receptions, roundtables,

lectures, and other public and private functions. The premier event of the tour was the lecture he gave at the Spanish Institute of Political Studies in Madrid entitled “Some Lessons of Economic Development since World War II,” in which he remarked that a nation’s educational institutions were one of the “fundamental elements that determine the course of its development.”<sup>1</sup> This idea also permeated US foreign policy toward the countries of the Global South, whose educational structures Washington sought to modernize as a factor of socioeconomic progress along non-communist lines. This article unpacks the range of educational, communicative, and cultural activities deployed by the US government during the 1960s and early ’70s, with the aim of adjusting Spanish education to the needs of modern, industrial, and Western development.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, the utopia of international development captured the minds and hearts of entire societies. In the quarter-century following World War II, the world’s imagination was seduced by the project of development and its linkage to the ideals of progress, modernity, economic growth, and well-being. Throughout those decades, the conjunction of decolonization and the Cold War made development the central axis of East-West competition and North-South relations.<sup>2</sup> This centrality has been addressed by a vibrant strand of international history that unravels development as a fundamental factor of postwar world politics.<sup>3</sup> However, “education is largely absent in recent work on the history of development and modernization.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, in the post-1945 era, the late imperial European administrations, the experts of the new international organizations, social scientists, and the emerging postcolonial elites established a close relation between development and education. As some authors have pointed out, the mission of development was not only to transform the physical environment but also to shape “the right kind of people for the modern society.”<sup>5</sup>

Profound postwar global social change fueled a veritable revolution in educational expectations in the nations of the world’s (semi)periphery, where education became identified with hopes for economic development, social progress, and political sovereignty. As US diplomatic sources pointed out in the early 1960s, since the previous decade the “passion for education” had become an unstoppable “rising tide in the newly developing countries.”<sup>6</sup> However, the explosion of educational aspirations in

<sup>1</sup>“Visit to Madrid by the Counselor of the Department Walt W. Rostow,” Oct. 21, 1964, box 204, National Security File, Country File, Spain, Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum, Austin, TX (LBJL).

<sup>2</sup>Sara Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 3.

<sup>3</sup>Corinna Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018); Stephen Macekura, “Development and Economic Growth: An Intellectual History,” in *History of the Future of Economic Growth: Historical Roots of Current Debates on Sustainable Degrowth*, ed. Iris Borowy and Matthias Schmelzer (Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2017), 110-28.

<sup>4</sup>Valeska Huber, “Planning Education and Manpower in the Middle East, 1950s-60s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 1 (Jan. 2017), 97.

<sup>5</sup>Regula Bürgi, “Engineering the Free World: The Emergence of the OECD as an Actor in Education Policy, 1957-1972,” in *The OECD and the International Political Economy since 1948*, ed. Matthieu Leimgruber and Matthias Schmelzer (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 295.

<sup>6</sup>“The Role of the Department of State in Educational and Cultural Affairs,” Oct. 18, 1961, box 1, Research Files, 1956-1982, Thomas Bowman Personal Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston, MA (JFKL).

these societies often caused tensions and conflicts, especially among the new generations emerging, in the words of an official US report, “amid the rapid social change and political unrest that accompanies the process of modernization.” From the late 1950s, this youth sector, desperate for change and education, became an important political actor in their countries and an object of attention of the superpowers.<sup>7</sup>

Against this backdrop, the launch of Sputnik in 1957 brought education into the focus of the Cold War. Since the late 1950s, the United States and the Soviet Union had used education as an instrument in their rivalry to steer the takeoff toward modernization of the newly independent nations.<sup>8</sup> In the context of bipolar competition, education was one of the “power vehicles” mobilized by the superpowers to win the minds of the elites and dominant groups in peripheral societies.<sup>9</sup> In the United States, the arrival of President John F. Kennedy to the White House in 1961 marked a “new pronounced emphasis” on education, which became a major instrument in American efforts to promote economic and social welfare as an antidote to the appeal of the Soviet development model in the Global South. Washington provided educational assistance and training to developing countries to win support and allegiance in Third World nations and encourage their progress in a Western direction.<sup>10</sup>

A body of research within the historiography of international development has focused on US modernization discourses and practices toward newly independent nations.<sup>11</sup> However, few studies deal with Spain, a semi-peripheral country that

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<sup>7</sup>“Report on the Work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Youth Affairs,” 1963, box 121, Record Group 306 (RG306), Records of the US Information Agency (USIA), Subject Folders, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (NARA); “Emphasis on Youth: Reaching and Influencing Rising Young Leaders,” 1965, box 1, Record Group 353 (RG353), Records of the Inter-Agency Youth Committee (IAYC), 1959-1973, General Records, NARA. See also Samantha Christiansen and Zachary Scarlett, ed. *The Third World in the Global 1960s* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Chen Jian et al., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building* (London: Routledge, 2018); Mischa Honeck and Gabriel Rosenberg, “Transnational Generations: Organizing Youth in the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 2 (April 2014), 234-37.

<sup>8</sup>Óscar J. Martín García and Lorenzo Delgado, eds., *Teaching Modernization: Spanish and Latin American Educational Reform in the Cold War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019); Héctor Lindo Fuentes and Erik Ching, *Modernizing Minds in El Salvador: Education Reform and the Cold War, 1960-1980* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012); On Eastern bloc education programs for the Third World, see Constantin Katsakioris, “Soviet Lessons for Arab Modernization: Soviet Educational Aid to Arab Countries after 1956,” *Journal of Modern European History* 8, no. 1 (2010), 85-106; Constantin Katsakioris, “The Lumumba University in Moscow: Higher Education for a Soviet-Third World Alliance, 1960-91,” *Journal of Global History* 14, no. 2 (2019), 281-300; and Ingrid Miethe et al., *Globalisation of an Educational Idea: Workers’ Faculties in Eastern Germany, Vietnam, Cuba and Mozambique* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

<sup>9</sup>Natalia Tsvetkova, “International Education during the Cold War: Soviet Social Transformation and American Social Reproduction,” *Comparative Education Review* 52, no. 2 (May 2008), 199.

<sup>10</sup>“International Educational and Cultural Policies and Programs for the 1960s,” Sept. 9, 1961, box WH-16, Series 10.2, Subject File 1961-64, Papers of Arthur M. Schlesinger, JFKL; “Basic Philosophy, Objectives and Proposed Role of CU Concerning US Policies and Programs in the Educational and Cultural Fields during the 1960s,” March 26, 1961, box 4, Group I, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (BECA), Historical Collection (HC), University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, AR (UAL).

<sup>11</sup>See, among others, Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

does not fit the postcolonial analytical mold. In contrast to the emerging states, Spain was located in Western Europe, had not suffered colonial domination, was not a member of the non-aligned movement, and included predominantly white inhabitants. Indeed, in the 1960s Spain was neither a part of the geographical space nor the political project of the Third World.<sup>12</sup> However, US State Department aides felt that Spain also could not be considered “a typical Western European country” since it had for long “lagged behind neighboring countries in modernizing itself.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, although it was not a Third World nation, Spain was nevertheless perceived by US diplomacy as an (intermediate) developing country in need of US education ideas and methods to “take off” successfully in a secure manner.

This article examines the educational diplomacy carried out by the US government during the 1960s and early 1970s to foster the “right kind” of modernization in Spain that meant “becoming more like America.”<sup>14</sup> The work surveys US educational, informational, and cultural programs aimed at shaping a national educational framework conducive to the expansion and legitimization of a US-oriented socioeconomic development model in Spain. To achieve this goal, US public diplomacy focused on three areas of action that comprise our main lines of inquiry: (1) the dissemination of US educational ideas and visions that linked education with orderly capitalist growth; (2) the training of Spanish national elites in charge of leading the modernization of the country across US lines; and (3) the presentation of the US system of higher education as an example for Spain to follow in order to catch up with the First World, led by the American superpower.

In this way, the US machinery of persuasion sought to forge a favorable climate of opinion for educational reform in Spain that would stimulate capitalist development and political stability, depoliticize student demands, and prepare Spanish society for a peaceful, moderate, and pro-US succession of the aging Spanish dictator.<sup>15</sup> Such reform was implemented through the General Education Law (GEL) approved by the Spanish regime in August 1970. This law was strongly supported by the United States as part of its strategy to channel the country’s profound social change in a direction consistent with US strategic objectives.

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University Press, 2003); and Nick Cullather, “Development? It’s History,” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (2000), 641–53.

<sup>12</sup>For a conceptual definition of the Third World, see Robert McMahon, ed., introduction to *The Cold War in the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–10.

<sup>13</sup>“Justification for the Present Educational and Cultural Exchange Program in Spain,” Oct. 23, 1965, box 2, Record Group 59 (RG59), Records of the Department of State (DS), Bureau of European Affairs (BEA), Country Director for Spain and Portugal, 1956–1966, NARA; “Spain: A Preoccupation Profile,” Nov. 11, 1959, box 3, RG306, USIA, Office of Research (OR), Classified Research Reports, NARA.

<sup>14</sup>Michael Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and US Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11.

<sup>15</sup>Beginning in the late 1950s, when General Franco was approaching seventy years of age, US diplomacy took an interest in and to made plans for the succession of the Spanish autocrat. See Lorenzo Delgado, “After Franco, What? La diplomacia pública de Estados Unidos y la preparación del post-franquismo,” in *Claves internacionales en la transición española*, ed. Óscar J. Martín García and Manuel Ortiz Heras (Madrid: Los Libros de La Catarata, 2010), 104–6.

The article also discusses US assistance to the GEL, which allows us to explore how the US ideology of development and education was received by Spanish educational audiences. The paper connects with approaches to international history that are interested in new actors in the development narrative, especially for those at the receiving end of the spectrum. Such approaches challenge the view of development as a product of Western thinking imposed on passive local communities, which they conceive not only as recipients of Cold War development discourses, but also as actors with their own interests and agendas.<sup>16</sup>

US educational diplomacy in Spain included a series of activities (publications, lectures, seminars, academic exchanges, technical training) deployed by various official bodies (the US Information Agency, International Cooperation Administration, Fulbright Commission, and Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs) and private entities such as the Ford Foundation. These institutions sought to, on the one hand, attract those groups and individuals who could play an important role in the capitalist modernization of the educational and economic structures of the Iberian country. On the other hand, they attempted to reduce the identification of the United States with General Franco's dictatorship and to link the image of the American superpower to the Spanish people's hopes for progress. In short, the educational activities of these agencies sought to preserve US military and security interests in Spain, a valuable defensive stronghold in southern Europe.

Finally, the work is part of a line of research that in recent years has made important advances in the study of the external dimensions of educational transformations in Spain between the 1960s and the 1980s.<sup>17</sup> The article draws on this literature and on the fields of cultural diplomacy, international development, and the history of education. By investigating a wide variety of US documentary sources, I aim to contribute to the integration of education into the histories of development and modernization and to deepen our understanding of US educational foreign policy in the Cold War.

### The Context of US Educational Diplomacy in Spain

The onset of the Cold War lessened US political misgivings about General Francisco Franco's dictatorship in Spain. Although political reluctance toward authoritarian Spain never completely vanished in the US foreign policy establishment, the increasing international tensions led the American government to sign a military pact with Franco's anti-communist regime in 1953. The agreement included the establishment on Spanish soil of a complex of military bases that contributed significantly to strengthening the "U.S. deterrent and operational capabilities" in Western Europe, the Mediterranean, and North Africa, making Spain an important piece in the

<sup>16</sup>Joseph Hodge, "Writing the History of Development (Part 2: Longer, Deeper, Wider)," *Humanity* 7, no. 1 (March 2016), 137-38.

<sup>17</sup>In addition to the other works referred to throughout this paper, see Lorenzo Delgado, "International Organizations and Educational Change in Spain in the 1960s," *Encounters in Theory and History of Education* 21 (2020), 70-91; Cecilia Milito and Tamar Groves, "¿Modernización o democratización? La construcción de un nuevo sistema educativo entre el tardofranquismo y la democracia," *Bordón* 65, no. 4 (2013), 135-46; and Gabriela Ossenbach and Alberto Martínez, "Itineraries of the Discourses on Development and Education in Spain and Latin America (circa 1950-1970)," *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 5 (2011), 679-700.

Pentagon's "worldwide defensive strategy."<sup>18</sup> Thereafter, US policy toward Spain was based on maintaining good relations with the authoritarian Franco government and preserving the country's stability in order to safeguard US military installations. However, this stability began to crumble in the second half of the 1950s, primarily because of the combined effects of the deep economic crisis, social unrest, and political turmoil that hit Spain during 1956 and 1957. To avoid a further deterioration of the situation that could affect its military interests, the US government believed it was necessary to promote Spain's development on the basis of multilateralization and economic liberalization. American officials employed a two-pronged strategy based on a couple of assumptions about modernization: that Spain's economic growth and internationalization would foster "internal political stability" necessary for the proper functioning of the US defense program, and that it would help create favorable conditions for an "orderly transition after Franco toward a stable more representative form of government still friendly to the US."<sup>19</sup>

To achieve these goals, the US government in 1958 encouraged Spain to join the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD. The following year Washington supported implementation of the National Economic Stabilization Plan, an ambitious package of structural economic reforms that included a wide range of liberalization and foreign investment promotion measures. This program boosted Spain's integration in the world economy and laid the foundations for its "takeoff" in the coming decade.<sup>20</sup> From the early 1960s until the mid-1970s, Spain enjoyed a remarkable economic boom. Throughout this period, the country underwent rapid industrialization and urbanization, the expansion of its middle class, and the emergence of an incipient consumer society.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup>"Comments on 'Authoritarian Regimes' Receiving U.S. Assistance (Military or Economic)," May 2, 1960, box 5, RG59, DS, BEA, Country Director for Spain and Portugal, 1956-66, NARA. There is an extensive bibliography on the military and political relations between the US and Franco's dictatorship during the 1940s and 1950s. See among others, Wayne Bowen, *Truman, Franco's Spain, and the Cold War* (Columbus: University of Missouri Press, 2017); Xabier Hualde Amunarriz, *El cerco aliado. Estados Unidos, Gran Bretaña y Francia frente a la dictadura franquista (1945-1953)* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 2016); Fernando Termis, *Renunciando a todo: El régimen franquista y los Estados Unidos desde 1945 hasta 1963* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2005); Ángel Viñas, *En las garras del águila: Los pactos con Estados Unidos, de Francisco Franco a Felipe González (1945-1995)* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 2003); and Boris Liedtke, *Embracing a Dictatorship: U.S. Relations with Spain, 1945-1953* (London: St. Martin's Press/Macmillan, 1996).

<sup>19</sup>"Telegram from the Embassy in Spain to the Department of State," Sept. 28, 1960, quoted in Glenn LaFantasie, ed. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Western Europe* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 778-88; "Addendum to the CU Contribution for a Country Guidelines Paper on Spain," 1963, box 31, RG59, DS, BECA, Policy Review and Coordination Staff, Country Files, 1955-66, NARA.

<sup>20</sup>This process is studied in Elena Cavalieri, *España y el FMI: La integración de la economía española en el sistema monetario internacional, 1943-1959* (Madrid: Banco de España, 2014); Lorenzo Delgado, "El ingreso de España en la Organización Europea de Cooperación Económica," *Arbor* 170, no. 669 (2001), 147-79; and Joaquín Muns and Montserrat Millet, *España y el Banco Mundial. Relaciones 1958-1994* (Madrid: Mundi, 1994).

<sup>21</sup>The rapid economic, social, and cultural changes in Spain during the 1960s and 1970s are addressed in Nigel Townson, ed., *Spain Transformed: The Late Franco Dictatorship, 1959-1975* (Basingstoke, UK:



The accelerated economic and industrial changes of the 1960s exposed the great deficiencies of Spain's obsolete, underfunded, unequal, and elitist educational system. A good example of the dramatic changes beginning at the start of the decade that exposed the country's educational problems can be found in higher education, which the emerging middle classes and the urban working class saw as a springboard for social mobility. As a result, the enrollment rate at this level grew by 142 percent between 1962 and 1972. Within a few years, Spanish universities, traditionally dedicated to the training of elites, became mass universities. Such a transformation imposed strong pressure on a classist higher education system. There was great overcrowding in the university classrooms, which, together with the lack of infrastructure, deficient teacher training, and the rigidity of the academic authorities, led to an outbreak of student protest.<sup>22</sup> This unrest concerned US diplomacy for two reasons. First, as the 1960s progressed, student protest took on an intensely anti-American orientation because of Washington's support for Franco. Second, the unrest at the universities could affect the internal stability of the country and, consequently, American strategic interests and Franco's future succession. In fact, US analysts saw students as one of the main groups among which "significant difficulties could arise to prevent a peaceful transition into the post-Franco era."<sup>23</sup>

US officials and observers believed that the closed nature of the Spanish university system, which tended "to perpetuate educational, social and economic inequalities," not only fueled student disaffection, but also hindered the country's development and clashed with ongoing processes of social and cultural modernization.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, from this point of view, an educational change that would help expand public education and broaden educational opportunities was necessary to foster economic progress and contain communism. For US experts, such an opening of the higher education system to sectors usually excluded would increase the number of potential engineers, scientists, and technicians required by capitalist development and would neutralize social upheaval by responding to the demands of broad groups who saw education as an instrument of social advancement.

All these reasons led US foreign policymakers to seek to encourage public interest and commitment to educational development in Spain, a country whose educational structures were, according to US diplomatic sources, "not effectively organized for modern requirements" and were not able to cope with the new demands arising from the changing social structure.<sup>25</sup> This task was carried out by several US official bodies and private actors. The flagship of American educational diplomacy in Spain was the US Information Agency (USIA), the organization created in 1953 to wage

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Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and Glicerio Sánchez, ed., *Eppure si muove: La percepción de los cambios en España (1959-1976)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2008).

<sup>22</sup>Elena Hernández-Sandoica, Miguel Ruiz-Carnicer, and Marc Baldó, *Estudiantes contra Franco (1939-1975): Oposición política y movilización juvenil* (Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2007), 85-96.

<sup>23</sup>"Inspection Report USIS Spain," May 29, 1966, box 8, RG306, USIA, Inspection Reports and Related Records, 1954-1962, NARA.

<sup>24</sup>"Appraisal of an education Project in Spain," May 22, 1970, Education Projects Department, World Bank Archives (WBA).

<sup>25</sup>"USIS Country Plan for Spain, FY 1962," March 7, 1962, box 4, RG306, USIA, OR, Foreign Service Dispatches, 1954-1965, NARA.

ideological warfare with the Soviet Union by showing foreign audiences the virtues of the US political, social, economic, and educational model. This agency sought to attract and persuade public opinion in other countries to create a psychological atmosphere supportive of US interests abroad.<sup>26</sup> The USIA field mission in the Iberian country—known as the US Information Service (USIS)—used magazines (*Noticias de Actualidad*, *Atlántico*, *Facetas*), pamphlets, lectures, cultural centers, and specially themed ‘American weeks’ to promote and shape educational change in Spain. This persuasion work was complemented by the transfer of knowledge through training, academic, and professional exchange programs operated by the International Cooperation Administration, the US–Spain Fulbright Commission, and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. US activity in the educational field was also supported by non-state entities, such as the Ford Foundation, which promoted activities to familiarize Spanish intellectual elites with US notions of social, economic, and educational development. These organizations and programs formed the backbone of US efforts to stimulate—at times with the collaboration of international organizations—the educational reform and modernization of Spain.<sup>27</sup>

### The Educational Vision Disseminated by the United States

During the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, the United States strove to stimulate and frame the educational debate in Spain by disseminating a Cold War educational vision that established a strong link between education and economic growth. In the postwar decades, the discourse of the “economics of education,” which considered education as a key factor in economic development, became an international educational paradigm. The geopolitical context and the social and intellectual climate of the Cold War prompted the emergence and global circulation of this approach. Both the US government and international organizations, especially UNESCO and the OECD, played a fundamental role in the dissemination and institutionalization of the “education for development” doctrine throughout the world.<sup>28</sup> This economic approach to education was based on the ideas of the human capital theory developed by a series of American economists such as Theodore Schultz, Frederick H. Harbison, Mark Blaug, and Gary Becker. These authors believed that the material progress of a country was

<sup>26</sup>On the USIA, see Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006); and Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004).

<sup>27</sup>This international educational cooperation came mainly from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the World Bank.

<sup>28</sup>On multilateral institutions and the “economics of education,” see Julia Resnik, “International Organizations, the ‘Education-Economic Growth’ Black Box, and the Development of World Education Culture,” *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 2 (May 2006), 173-95; Mattia Granata, “The OECD and Technical Education in Post-war Mediterranean Europe,” *Labor History* 63, no. 1 (2022), 1-15; Maren Elfert, “The OECD, American Power and the Rise of the ‘Economics of Education’ in the 1960s,” in *The OECD's Historical Rise in Education: The Formation of a Global Governing Complex*, ed. Christian Ydesen (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 39-63; and Bürgi, “Engineering the Free World,” 285-311.



related to the training of its inhabitants. They argued that investment in education would lead to increased productivity, innovation, and economic development. In their view, the high correlation between a country's human resources and its economic growth explained the differences between industrialized and developing nations. Therefore, the formation of qualified labor force would lead to the sort of economic growth that would promote capitalist structures and reduce communist influence.<sup>29</sup>

Ultimately, the human capital approach provided a rationale for the expansion of education in the global periphery as part of the development and modernization theories that during the 1960s dominated US social science thinking and exerted a significant influence on the American foreign policy concerning developing nations. In the hands of US experts and diplomats, these theories served as an instrument of scientific knowledge and political control to understand and neutralize the revolutionary threat in the Third World.<sup>30</sup> In general, they prescribed how traditional societies should evolve toward a modernity epitomized by America's experience as opposed to the radical promises of the communist model. The path toward progress proposed by American modernizers and ideologues put productivity and technology before ideology and class struggle as driving forces in development. Drawing on the tenets of liberal internationalism, US modernization theories established that capitalist development based on stability, technocratic reform, investments in education, technical capacity building, and expert knowledge was the best vehicle for developing countries to catch up with First World nations without falling prey to socialism.<sup>31</sup>

The ideas of human capital and modernization ideology permeated the educational message of the USIA. The informational, educational, and cultural work of USIS-Spain placed special emphasis on the "role of education in promoting economic progress and social mobility."<sup>32</sup> In Spain, various USIS pamphlets, journals, and publications were devoted to disseminating the educational concepts underlying human capital theory. *Noticias de Actualidad (NdA)* was the most important magazine locally produced by USIS in Spain, it had a circulation of around fifty thousand and was aimed at the country's political, economic, and social leaders. In December 1961, it published an article with the telling title "Education and Economy". To create a modern economic system, it said, it was indispensable for a country's labor force to acquire the "necessary knowledge and training." After

<sup>29</sup>Charles Dorn and Kristen Ghodsee, "The Cold War Politicization of Literacy: Communism, UNESCO, and the World Bank," *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 2 (April 2012), 373-98. Some of the pioneering works of this educational vision included Theodore Schultz, "Investment in Human Capital," *American Economic Review* 51, no. 5 (Dec. 1961), 1-17; and Gary Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

<sup>30</sup>Carol Lancaster, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 65-66; Mark Berger, "Decolonisation, Modernisation and Nation-Building: Political Development Theory and the Appeal of Communism in Southeast Asia, 1945-1975," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, no. 3 (Oct. 2003), 422.

<sup>31</sup>On the ideas of modernization doctrine, see Janeen Klinger, "A Sympathetic Appraisal of Cold War Modernization Theory," *International History Review* 39, no. 4 (2017), 691-712.

<sup>32</sup>"USIA and National Development," June 7, 1967, box 25, Papers of Leonard Marks, JFKL; "The United States Information Agency during the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-1969," 1968, box 1, Administrative Histories, USIA, 1963-1969, LBJL.

quoting Professor Schultz and his ideas on human capital, the article concluded that “it is simply not possible to enjoy . . . the abundance of contemporary industry without investing heavily in human beings.”<sup>33</sup>

Around the same time, *NdA* also informed its Spanish readers of a US initiative based on the framework of human capital assumptions. This was a US aid program to build ninety-one technical institutes to provide vocational training to young Spaniards, through which the US government intended to help establish educational institutions to alleviate the shortage of skilled workforce in a country that was beginning to “industrialize at an accelerated pace.”<sup>34</sup> Subsequently, in October 1963, the intellectual Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. analyzed the weight of education in American development in an article appearing in the pages of *Atlántico* (1956-1964). Another of the magazines produced and disseminated by the USIS in Spain, *Atlántico* had a circulation of seven thousand and was focused on the high-culture and intelligentsia sectors. According to this historian and special assistant to President Kennedy, one of the factors that had facilitated rapid economic growth in the United States was the “deep faith in education” and investment in human resources.<sup>35</sup>

In 1964, this same magazine published an interview with Walt W. Rostow, whose influential theory on the stages of development predicted that backward countries would climb the ladder of modernization by promoting social mobility through education. In this interview, the renowned economist and adviser to the State Department pointed out that the “first precondition for economic development” was to be found in “the education sector.”<sup>36</sup> In October of that year, in the lecture in Madrid mentioned at the beginning of this article, Rostow stressed the importance of education in defining a country’s development. The text of the lecture was distributed in booklet form by USIS-Spain.<sup>37</sup>

These and other examples are indicative of US media efforts to define the contours of the intense conversation about the educational situation that was taking place in Spain in those years. The US persuasion machine tried to shape the focus and discourse of educational change in Spain by disseminating a technocratic vision of education that was closely associated with increased productivity, capitalist development, political stability, and US geostrategic interests in the Cold War.

## US Development Training Programs

US educational diplomacy in Spain devoted attention and resources to the training of technical, scientific, and intellectual leaders who could play an important role in the socioeconomic modernization of the country. In the postwar era the “economics of education” discourse was also closely connected with those branches of

<sup>33</sup>Guy Fitch, “Educación y Economía,” *Noticias de Actualidad*, no. 20 (Dec. 1961), 20.

<sup>34</sup>“Dos histos de amistad,” *Noticias de Actualidad*, no. 13 (Sept. 1960), 6-7; “Institutos laborales,” *Noticias de Actualidad*, no. 19 (Dec. 1961), 8-9.

<sup>35</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, “El uno contra los muchos,” *Atlántico*, no. 23 (Oct. 1963), 5-9.

<sup>36</sup>Walt Rostow: desarrollo del Tercer Mundo,” *Atlántico*, no. 27 (Feb. 1964), 13-14.

<sup>37</sup>“Visit to Madrid by the Counselor of the Department Walt W. Rostow,” Oct. 21, 1964, box 204, National Security File, Country File, Spain, LBJL.

modernization theories that addressed the backwardness of Southern Hemisphere countries from a psycho-cultural perspective. This approach considered the traditional ways of thinking of poor societies as a serious obstacle to their economic development. Several authors have seen in this type of approach a clear parallelism with imperial ideologies. However, in contrast to racial doctrines, modernization scholars contended that Third World nations were not genetically inferior but mentally backward. They argued that the stagnation of peripheral states was due not to biological reasons but to mental and cultural factors.<sup>38</sup>

These ideas contributed to reinforcing deep-seated American perceptions of Spain as an atavistic people. Thus, although in the early 1960s Spaniards seemed increasingly attracted to the “new forces at work in modern societies,” US observers still viewed Spain as a “traditional closed society.” According to USIS reports, the country had remained for decades in “psychological and ideological self-sufficiency” and had for “long lived a national life somewhat apart from main currents of Europe and the modern world.” As a result, its institutions, society, economy, and educational system had “lagged behind general Western evolution.”<sup>39</sup>

US modernization thought held that the mental immaturity of traditional societies such as Spain’s was not a permanent condition but a transitory state of mind. To overcome it, US pundits believed a change to traditional values and better technical training was crucial, especially among those professionals (technicians, experts, scientists, engineers, economists) who were being called on to play leading roles in the national development crusade. In this perspective, it was imperative that influential players in backward nations should adopt a modern mindset and acquire the know-how necessary for development based on contact with American notions.<sup>40</sup> Since the early 1960s, the US government adopted this vision and used its public diplomacy apparatus to transmit “the attitudes, mental habits, knowledge and skills required for national development.”<sup>41</sup>

In line with this reasoning, US officials attempted to expunge Spain’s “ancient ways and values” by exposing its leaders in a variety of fields to “new ideas, new concepts, and new techniques from the West, especially from the U.S.”<sup>42</sup> American diplomats regarded educational exchanges as a subtle tool to allow the “wide opening of the doors of Spain” to approaches coming “from without, especially from the United States.”<sup>43</sup> The main US

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<sup>38</sup>Hemant Shah, *The Production of Modernization: Daniel Lerner, Mass Media, and the Passing of Traditional Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 7-11; Andrew Warne, “Psychoanalyzing Iran: Kennedy’s Iran Task Force and the Modernization of Orientalism, 1961-3,” *International History Review* 35, no. 2 (April 2013), 414.

<sup>39</sup>Addendum to the CU Contribution for a Country Guidelines Paper on Spain,” 1963, box 31, RG59, DS, Policy Review and Coordination Staff, NARA; “USIS Country Plan for Spain, FY 1962,” March 7, 1962, box 4, RG306, USIA, OR, Foreign Service Dispatches, 1954-1965, NARA.

<sup>40</sup>Corinna Unger, “The United States, Decolonization, and the Education of Third World Elites,” in *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jost Dülffer and Marc Frey (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 241-45.

<sup>41</sup>“USIA and National Development,” June 8, 1967, box 25, Papers of Leonard Marks, JFKL.

<sup>42</sup>“USIS Country Plan for Spain, FY 1962,” March 7, 1962, box 4, RG306, USIA, OR, Foreign Service Dispatches, 1954-1965, NARA.

<sup>43</sup>“Lecture and Related Program Activities of USIS Madrid,” June 30, 1961, box 68, RG306, USIA, ICS, Cultural Operations Divisions, Country Files, 1949-1945, NARA; “Annual Report on Educational Exchange

scheme designed to help Spaniards achieve a modern mindset and expertise was the Technical Exchange Program (TEP). TEP was implemented in Spain by the US International Cooperation Administration between 1954 and 1963, and allowed more than 2,200 Spanish experts, specialists, and engineers to receive training in US universities and research centers. As a USIS pamphlet published in the early 1960s noted, “Numerous expeditions of Spanish technicians in a multitude of specialties [such as economic planning, business management, civil aviation, engineering, nuclear energy, social sciences] visited the United States to perfect their knowledge in accordance with the modern systems practiced there and in order to adapt them appropriately to the improvement of Spanish production and industry.” However, the movement of people promoted by this program was not unidirectional from Spain to the United States; it also involved dozens of US specialists crossing the Atlantic under the auspices of TEP to run courses, take part in training activities, and provide technical advice in Spain.<sup>44</sup>

The US government discontinued TEP in Spain in 1963. It considered that the satisfactory level of economic development achieved by the Iberian country made the assistance provided by this program unnecessary. However, complaints from the Spanish authorities about the program’s termination led Washington to expand the Fulbright Exchange Program (FEP) to meet Spanish training demands. Between 1959 and 1975 the FEP awarded some eleven hundred scholarships to Spanish post-graduates, professors, and researchers, which allowed them to travel to and train in the US, and awarded almost a thousand grants to US candidates interested in teaching and researching in Spain.<sup>45</sup> This program was administered by a US-Spain Commission formed to ensure its bilateral reciprocity and academic integrity. The Spanish side attached great importance to sending Spanish scientific and technical grantees to the United States because it understood that the training of human capital in these fields was a fundamental element for the country’s development. Thus, between 1960 and 1975, some 450 Spanish graduate students, researchers, and scholars traveled to the United States with the FEP to improve their skills in areas related to engineering, biochemistry, geology, medicine, and mathematics. One of these scholars was Antonio López-Román, a twenty-five-year-old PhD in analytical chemistry, who in October 1967 applied for a Fulbright grant because he believed that the United States was the “most suitable country” to learn about new methods in pesticides that he hoped to apply in Spain.<sup>46</sup> Francisco Javier Águeda-Martín, a civil engineer, also traveled to the United States with an FEP grant. For him, one of the main benefits of the

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for FY 1961,” July 6, 1961, box 30, RG306, USIA, Policy Review and Coordination Staff, Country Files, 1955-66, NARA.

<sup>44</sup>Lorenzo Delgado, “¿El ‘amigo americano’? España y Estados Unidos durante el franquismo,” *Studia Histórica* 21, no. 1 (2003), 264-65; Adoración Álvaro, “Guerra Fría y formación del capital humano durante el franquismo. Un balance sobre el programa estadounidense de ayuda técnica,” *Historia del Presente* 17, no. 1 (2011), 13-20; *Pueblo amigos* (Madrid: USIS-Spain, n.d.).

<sup>45</sup>On the Fulbright Program in Spain, see, among others, Lorenzo Delgado, *Westerly Wind: The Fulbright Program in Spain* (Madrid: Comisión Fulbright España, 2009); and Francisco J. Rodríguez Jiménez, “Haciendo amigos: intercambios educativos hispano-estadounidenses en clave política, 1959-1968,” *Studia Histórica, Historia Contemporánea* 25, no. 1 (2007), 339-62.

<sup>46</sup>“Solicitud preliminar de beca de estudios para los Estados Unidos,” Oct. 9, 1967, Expedientes de becarios y no becarios de la comisión Fulbright, AGA 51/10582, Records of the Fulbright Spain Commission (RFSC).

FEP scholarship he enjoyed in 1968 at the University of Detroit was “having developed new techniques in Spain that I would not have known otherwise.”<sup>47</sup>

In addition to the scientific branches, the Fulbright program in Spain also paid attention to other areas, especially to the extension and consolidation of the teaching of English in Spain and to the expansion of its use in the country. The FEP aim of propagating the English language was in line with the emerging vision in US development circles of English as “the password of modernization” for traditional societies. In the late 1950s, US modernizers and foreign service officers began to embrace the English language acquisition as a priority, seeing it as key to accessing the knowledge essential for Third World advancement. From that time on, the dissemination of English as a transnational lingua franca carrying modern approaches and skills became part of the US cultural arsenal for boosting the progress of developing states.<sup>48</sup>

Fulbright scholars in Spain collaborated with binational cultural institutes associated with USIS, which offered English courses for young people, university students, and professionals. Official sources report that during the first half of 1962, about 3,700 individuals attended English courses at such centers in Spain. Between 1966 and 1969 the FEP sent more than thirty US professors and educators to Spain to teach English in universities and to advise on its implementation in curricula.<sup>49</sup> Throughout the 1960s about twenty Spanish visiting scholars and teachers went to the United States to improve their English teaching skills. Upon their return to Spain, these teachers were expected to apply and disseminate American methods and values. For example, secondary school teacher José Luis Eslava-Oroz applied for, and was awarded, a Fulbright grant in October 1967 for the purpose of acquiring the necessary training to “teach English language and literature when he returns to Spain.” Another teacher, Antonio Masó Mezquita, felt that working in language laboratories and participating in conferences and other cultural and educational activities during his Fulbright grant in 1970-71 at Wake Forest University had been “highly beneficial” in improving his English teaching techniques.<sup>50</sup> These programs contributed to the expansion of English in Spain in the 1960s and 1970s, paving the way to

<sup>47</sup>“Encuesta entre antiguos becarios españoles de 1973,” AGA 51/10574, RFSC.

<sup>48</sup>“English Language Teaching as an Important Tool of Foreign Policy,” Sept. 23, 1965, box 121, RG306, USIA, Subject Folders, 1955-1971, NARA. The relationship between English language teaching and Cold War modernization has been little studied. Some exceptions are Diana Lemberg, “‘The Universal Language of the Future’: Decolonization, Development, and the American Embrace of Global English, 1945-1965,” *Modern Intellectual History* 15, no. 2 (Aug. 2018), 561-65; and Chee Lee, “The Way to Modernization: Language Ideologies and the Peace Corps English Education in Korea,” *Education and Society* 35, no. 1 (2017), 63-80.

<sup>49</sup>“English Language Teaching, Spain,” 1966, box 2, RG306, USIA, Office of the Assistant director for Europe, Policy Files, 1963-1968, NARA. See also Óscar J. Martín García and Francisco J. Rodríguez Jiménez, “The Engaging Power of English-Language Promotion in Franco’s Spain,” *Contemporary European History* 24, no. 3 (Aug. 2015), 427.

<sup>50</sup>“Solicitud preliminar de beca de estudios para los Estados Unidos, José Luis Eslava-Oroz,” Oct. 10, 1967, Expedientes de becarios y no becarios de la comisión Fulbright, AGA 51/10580, RFSC; “Encuesta de la Comisión de Intercambio Cultural entre España y los Estados Unidos de América a Antonio Masó Mezquita,” Encuesta entre antiguos becarios españoles de marzo de 1972, AGA 54/10565, RFSC.

overtake French as the most demanded modern foreign language in the country in the 1980s.

US promotion of English in Spain also involved non-official actors, such as the Ford Foundation, which in 1965 launched a project to train Spanish teachers of English; the initiative included specialized seminars, the provision of books, and establishment of language laboratories in several universities.<sup>51</sup> With respect to the modernization of Spanish minds, the philanthropic organization's activities were not limited only to promotion of the English language. It also focused on providing education and training to encourage the development of Spain in a direction favorable to the United States.<sup>52</sup> Between 1962 and 1969, the Ford Foundation hosted fifteen research seminars for economists, sociologists, political scientists, and urban planners who the foundation believed could play significant roles "in the economic and social modernization of Spain along democratic lines." These seminars held discussions on industry policy, the tax system, public administration, development planning, and other issues related to the modernization of Spain, and the results were disseminated via courses, conferences, and books.<sup>53</sup>

Through all these activities, US educational diplomacy sought, first, to transfer to Spanish development elites the knowledge and techniques needed to promote the country's takeoff in a manner consistent with American strategic interests. Second, it aimed to bring Spanish leaders in various fields into contact with the American "informal empire."<sup>54</sup> In this regard, the initiatives discussed above were also part of US efforts to create a Spanish transnational and technical elite oriented toward US educational, economic, and scientific methods and concepts. Finally, the US government also used educational programs to dilute its identification with the Franco regime and link the American image to Spain's progress.

### Education as Propaganda: The Presentation of the US System of Higher Education

Starting in the early 1960s, USIS launched a range of activities showcasing how the US had attained "orderly political, social, and economic progress . . . as an indication of what Spain can achieve."<sup>55</sup> This campaign aimed to portray the "development towards the maturity of the United States" as a "tried and tested experiment" to be imitated by the Spanish society in its efforts to modernize.<sup>56</sup> A central element of

<sup>51</sup>"USG English Language Teaching Program," Jan. 2, 1963, box 80, RG306, USIA, ICS, Cultural Operations Divisions, Country Files, 1949-1945, NARA; "Monthly Highlights - USIS Spain," May 31, 1965, box 95, RG306, USIA, ICS, Cultural Operations Divisions, Country Files, 1949-1945, NARA.

<sup>52</sup>"Recommendations Regarding the CU Program in Spain," Jan. 14, 1965, box 402, Central Foreign Policy, 1964-1966, Culture and Information, NARA.

<sup>53</sup>For more details on these seminars, see Fabiola de Santisteban-Fernández, "El desembarco de la Fundación Ford en España," *Ayer* 75, no. 3 (2009), 159-91.

<sup>54</sup>This concept is coined in Giles Scott-Smith, *Networks of Empire: The U.S. State Department's Foreign Leader Program in the Netherlands, France, and Britain, 1950-70* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008), 21-28. See also Charles Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>55</sup>"USIS Country Plan for Spain - FY 1961," June 25, 1960, box 4, RG306, USIA, OR, 1954-65, NARA.

<sup>56</sup>"Barcelona BNC Report for April 1966," n.d., box 5, RG306, USIA, Office of the Assistant Director for Europe, Policy Files, 1963-68, NARA; "Barcelona Binational Center Activities Report," Sept. 18, 1964,



this strategy was the presentation of the US university system as an inspiring example for Spain to emulate. US public diplomacy worked to communicate the achievements and strengths of US higher education to influential sectors of Spanish society, including the student and intellectual leaders of a university where Marxist and anti-Franco groups were gaining credibility.<sup>57</sup> While such outreach efforts encompassed diverse target groups (journalists, educational experts, senior public officials, the Church and military hierarchies, technocrats), it devoted significant attention to attracting progressive intellectual elites “respected, unquestionably honest, and full of ideas in many fields such as education, social development, etc.” It also strove to identify US interests with “the constructive aspirations of the important youth sector” and to convince students that the United States stood for positive social change.<sup>58</sup>

To this end, the USIS magazines in Spain (*Noticias de Actualidad*, *Atlántico*, and *Facetas*) included numerous articles aimed at informing their Spanish readers about educational reforms, advances in research, university funding, tuition fees, and technical and professional education in the United States. These publications also included texts and news items on the history, organization, administration, and educational projects of institutions such as the University of Michigan, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Princeton, and the University of California, Berkeley.

US higher education was also one of the regular topics in the conference programs promoted by the USIS “for audiences which, themselves, had large potential impact on Spanish society.”<sup>59</sup> The American Cultural Week, held by the USIS in the city of Zaragoza at the end of 1962, included a talk by the head of cultural affairs of the US Embassy, Richard Phillips, on “The Role of the American University.” Among other examples, in 1965 the American information services held a series of colloquiums on this topic at the University of Bilbao and at several student residences in that city.<sup>60</sup> The Institute of North American Studies of Barcelona, a binational cultural center linked to the USIS, carried out several activities in 1969 focused on the American university, such as a talk given in April by Morton Rosenbaum, director of the California State College program in Spain. It also organized an American Week whose inaugural lecture was entitled “The North American University Today: Issues and Trends” and, shortly afterward, hosted a colloquium in which three Spanish students who had

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box 95, RG306, USIA, ICS, Cultural Operations Divisions, European Libraries and Centers Branch, Country Files, 1949-1945, NARA.

<sup>57</sup>A US official report observed in 1960 that “as Spain moves out of its isolation, it is essential that its youth and leaders of the next five to ten years look to the United States as the source of guidance.” See “Annual Report on Educational Exchange Activities in Spain for FY 1960,” July 29, 1960, box 30, RG59, Policy Review and Coordination Staff, Country Files, 1955-66, NARA.

<sup>58</sup>“Some General Observations on United States Policy towards Spain,” June 25, 1965, box 2, RG59, BEA, Country Director for Spain and Portugal, 1956-1966, NARA.

<sup>59</sup>“Lecture and Related Program Activities of USIS Madrid,” June 30, 1961, box 68, RG306, USIA, ICS, Cultural Operations Divisions, European Libraries and Centers Branch, Country Files, 1949-1945, NARA.

<sup>60</sup>“America Week in Zaragoza,” Dec. 27, 1962, box 80, RG306, USIA, ICS, Cultural Operations Divisions, Country Files, 1949-1945, NARA; “Monthly Report to USIS,” Feb. 24, 1966, box 8, RG59, DS, BEA, Country Director for Spain and Portugal, 1956-1966, NARA; “Appraisal of Program Accomplishments: Grantee Evidence of Effectiveness Report,” n.d., file 38, box 240, Group IX, BECA, HC, UAL.

visited the United States through the US Educational Travel Program recounted their American university experience.<sup>61</sup>

US diplomacy tried to create a favorable environment for its educational ideas with initiatives such as the Foreign Leader Program (FLP). This program was administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs with the purpose, among other things, of providing direct knowledge and contact with the American higher education system to political, social, educational, and intellectual elites from other countries. Spain joined this program in 1952, and by 1970 nearly two hundred Spaniards had participated. Among them were some of Spain's top educational leaders and experts—such as Ministers of Education Manuel Lora Tamayo (1962-1968) and José Luis Villar Palasí (1968-1973)—who, according to US sources, “studied or visited the United States under the auspices of the US government or other private entities.”<sup>62</sup> Another FLP participant was Joaquín Tena Artigas, an influential educational expert and policymaker who traveled to the United States in the early 1960s. There he visited universities and educational research centers, attended seminars, and met with deans, professors, and university administrators “to observe American educational practices.” Also visiting the United States as a program participant in 1968 was the renowned military officer and professor Julio Busquets, who was interested in learning firsthand about issues related to curriculum and academic structure in the United States.<sup>63</sup> In short, the FLP in Spain sought to reproduce the sociopolitical hegemony of the dominant groups and strengthen their ideological alignment with the United States through direct exposure to American educational models and frameworks.<sup>64</sup>

Between 1958 and 1975, the Fulbright program financed the visits of some 115 Spanish teachers, lecturers, and graduate students to US universities and educational institutions to, among other things, learn about the organization and educational methods in that country.<sup>65</sup> A grantee of this program was María del Carmen Fernández-Leal, a secondary school teacher, who reported that, thanks to her stay in the United States in 1971, she had acquired a greater “knowledge of the educational system in the USA.”<sup>66</sup> With respect to the movement of people in the opposite direction, about thirty American lecturers came to Spain to give courses and lectures on different aspects of education in their country, such as the one given in 1966 by Professor Robert Lado in Santiago de Compostela, entitled “The University in the United States.”<sup>67</sup>

<sup>61</sup>“Country Program Plans for FY 1966 and '67,” May 24, 1965, box 31, RG59, DS, Policy Review and Coordination Staff, Country Files, 1955-66, NARA.

<sup>62</sup>“The Educational and Cultural Exchange Program with Spain,” Oct. 27, 1969, box 240, Group IX, BECA, HC, UAL; “Educational and Cultural Exchange: Annual Report for Spain for the Fiscal Year, July 1, 1969-June 30, 1970,” Sept. 23, 1970, box 32, Group XVI, BECA, HC, UAL.

<sup>63</sup>“Annual Report on Educational Exchange for FY 1961,” July 6, 1961, box 30, RG306, USIA, Policy Review and Coordination Staff, Country Files, 1955-66, NARA.

<sup>64</sup>See Tsvetkova, “International Education during the Cold War,” 206-8.

<sup>65</sup>“Addendum to the CU Contribution for a Country Guidelines Paper on Spain,” 1963, box 31, RG306, USIA, Policy Review and Coordination Staff, Country Files, 1955-66, NARA

<sup>66</sup>“Encuesta Comisión de Intercambio Cultural entre España y los Estados Unidos de América, Encuesta entre antiguos becarios españoles de marzo de 1972,” AGA 54/10565, RFSC.

<sup>67</sup>“Monthly Report to USIS,” Feb. 24, 1966, box 8, RG59, DS, BEA, Country Director for Spain and Portugal, 1956-1966, NARA.

In a 1963 meeting with US representatives, the liberal philosopher Julián Marías, one of the main US contacts in Spanish intellectual circles, pointed out that much of the opposition against the dictatorship tended to equate American capitalism with the Franco state—an understanding that, in his opinion, might “cause serious future difficulties between the US and what must be more liberal future Spanish regimes.” So, he suggested that “an effort to make American free capitalism [. . .] understood would be well worthwhile” in Spain.<sup>68</sup> Thus, in addition to showing the vigor of university education in the United States, one of the main objectives of these activities was to identify education as a substantial element of US economic democracy. According to the message conveyed by the USIS in Spain, the education system was one of the cornerstones of American “capitalism with a conscience.” It was a pillar—together with social insurance, strong unions, the progressive tax model, and government economic regulation—of US “welfare state capitalism” as a constructive and nonviolent alternative to the Marxist doctrine of social justice. In the American discourse, US education constituted an element of social cohesion based on the “notion of educational equality without distinction as to race, religion, color, nationality, sex or economic resources.”<sup>69</sup> An article written in *NdA* in early 1963 by Harvard University professor Francis M. Rogers stated that education was a right enjoyed by every young American with the ability and willingness to study, regardless of his or her wealth.<sup>70</sup> This was an argument that was corroborated by a couple of brochures distributed by USIS-Spain at the end of the decade, which remarked that 20 percent of US college students came from families with incomes below the national average and that more and more poor people’s children were accessing higher education thanks to grants, donations, and cheap loans.<sup>71</sup>

Such eagerness to make education a common heritage of the whole society had led the US government, according to an article that appeared in *Atlántico* in 1963, to apply technological breakthroughs to the educational sphere.<sup>72</sup> This had given rise to developments such as educational television, understood by US officials and social scientists as an innovation capable of democratizing access to education for disadvantaged groups in the United States, but also as an innovation to modernize traditional societies, promote their economic growth, and combat communism.<sup>73</sup> In this respect, *NdA* saw in educational television an “invaluable resource” to raise the popular masses’ intellectual level, improve technical education, banish traditional attitudes,

<sup>68</sup>*Conversations between Dr. Julián Marías, Spanish Liberal Intellectual and Ambassador Stevenson, American Embassy, Madrid, Dec. 20, 1963, box 4046, RG59, Central Foreign Policy, 1963, NARA.*

<sup>69</sup>*Enseñanza en los Estados Unidos* (Madrid: Servicio de Información de los Estados Unidos, 1968), 2.

<sup>70</sup>Francis Rogers, “Educación superior en los Estados Unidos,” *Noticias de Actualidad* 15, no. 1 (Jan. 1963), 12-16.

<sup>71</sup>*La vida universitaria en Estados Unidos* (Madrid: Servicio de Información de los Estados Unidos, 1967), 4.

<sup>72</sup>“Alas pedagógicas,” *Atlántico*, Nov. 1963, 24, 22-23.

<sup>73</sup>Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, “Educational Television in El Salvador and Modernization Theory,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 41, no. 4 (2009), 757-92; Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, “How a Cold War Education Project Backfired: Modernization Theory, the Alliance for Progress and the 1968 Education Reform in El Salvador,” in *Teaching Modernization*, 172-93. On educational television in Spain, see also Mariano González, “Estar a la altura de nuestro tiempo: la televisión educativa, la UNESCO y la modernización de la enseñanza en el franquismo,” *Hispania* 80, no. 265 (2020), 597-627.

inculcate a modern mentality, and counteract Soviet propaganda in the Third World. The magazine gave a good account of the numerous educational television projects launched in the United States in the early 1960s with the purpose of serving as an example “to be followed, expanded and imitated” by modernizing nations such as Spain.<sup>74</sup>

As the above examples demonstrate, USIS-Spain used magazines, pamphlets, talks, cultural centers, and exchange initiatives to familiarize its target groups (education officials, rectors, deans, professors, intellectuals, journalists, student leaders) with the main facets and achievements of the US higher education system. This outreach campaign attempted to convey the American experience “as the source of guidance” for those influential Spaniards committed to the modernization of their country.<sup>75</sup> US propaganda endeavors in this field also sought to project an image of the United States as an altruistic and benevolent leader, willing to share its educational accomplishments and innovations with the Spanish people.

However, the US educational message suffered considerable backlash from emerging sectors of Spanish society that demanded social change, especially among intellectuals, professors, and students linked to the anti-Franco opposition. From the late 1950s and early 1960s, US diplomatic personnel detected an incipient anti-American sentiment among these groups, which grew steadily throughout the rest of that decade. In December 1966, former Spanish minister of education and Christian Democrat intellectual Joaquín Ruiz-Giménez stated in a meeting with US Ambassador at Large William Averell Harriman, that “anti-American sentiment was growing in the university, including faculty as well as student body, mainly because of Vietnam, and was spreading beyond the university into liberal Catholic circles.”<sup>76</sup>

This unfriendly stance toward the US was further exacerbated by the radicalization witnessed in Spanish universities in the heat of Global '68 and the spread of New Left, Third Worldist, and anti-colonialist ideas on campuses.<sup>77</sup> In the spring of 1968, a report from the US Embassy on the student situation in Spain expressed concern over the “rising chorus of opposition to the United States foreign policy.” In the latter part of the decade, anti-Franco student protests often featured exuberant displays of banners, chants against “Yankee imperialism,” the burning of the US flag, and attacks on US educational institutions, such as the binational cultural centers of Madrid, Valencia, and Barcelona.<sup>78</sup> In short, although the US diplomacy was in tune with these groups’ yearnings for educational expansion and modernization, its support

<sup>74</sup>“Estudios de madrugada,” *Noticias de Actualidad*, no. 3 (Feb. 1960), 17.

<sup>75</sup>“USIS Country Plan for Spain - FY 1961,” June 25, 1960, box 4, RG306, USIA, Office of Research, 1954-65, NARA.

<sup>76</sup>Notes on Harriman Conversation with Spanish Liberals,” Dec. 21, 1966, box 9, RG59, DS, BEA, Country Director for Spain and Portugal, 1956-1966, NARA.

<sup>77</sup>Kostis Kornetis, “Cuban Europe? Greek and Iberian *tiersmondisme* in the ‘Long 1960s,’” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 3 (July 2015), 486-515.

<sup>78</sup>“US Policy Assessment,” May 9, 1968, box 2493, RG59, DS, Central Policy Files (CPF), Political and Defense, 1967-1969, NARA; “Damages to Institute of North American Studies,” June 7, 1967, and “North American Study Center Bombed in Valencia,” Feb. 18, 1969, box 2491, RG59, DS, CPF, Political and Defense, 1967-1969, NARA.

for Franco made communication with them extremely difficult. Paradoxically, while the US government supported educational reform in Spain, university and intellectual leaders identified it not as a force for progress, but as a mainstay of the dictatorship.

### The United States and the General Education Law of 1970

As we have seen in the previous sections, throughout the 1960s US public diplomacy deployed a set of programs to forge among the influential sectors of Spanish society a state of mind conducive to the reform of the country's educational structures. From the US point of view, this reform was designed to expand and overhaul the Spanish educational system, turning it into the linchpin of a smooth economic, political, and social modernization that would contribute to the anchoring of the Iberian country in the Western community led by the US.

In the early 1970s, these US efforts to encourage a profound reform of Spanish education seemed to come to fruition. In 1970 the Spanish government passed a comprehensive General Education Law (GEL), considered by some authors to be "the most important reform in the history of Spanish education in the twentieth century."<sup>79</sup> Driven by student pressure, Franco's authorities launched a comprehensive reform from above, which sought to transform the "hermetic" Spanish educational system into a "means of economic, social and cultural mobility and ascension."<sup>80</sup> In this way, the Spanish dictatorship sought to synchronize education with the economic and social needs of the country, as well as to neutralize student protests and legitimize the political order.<sup>81</sup> In other words, the GEL was part of an official technocratic project aimed at fostering economic prosperity and youth de-ideologization as conditions for the perpetuation of the Franco regime as a modern illiberal state. The goal of the Spanish government was to promote a profound reform of the national education structures as an instrument to broaden the dwindling social bases of Franco's dictatorship.<sup>82</sup> To achieve this goal, the Spanish authoritarian technocrats followed a direction convergent with Western ideas on economic, social, and educational development.

In fact, the drafting and implementation of the GEL received significant support from several international actors, especially from the United States.<sup>83</sup> The US foreign

<sup>79</sup>Mariano González-Delgado and Tamar Groves, "Educational Transfer and Local Actors: International Intervention in Spain during the Late Franco Period," in *Teaching Modernization*, 119; see also Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Pamela O'Malley, eds., *Education Reform in Democratic Spain: International Developments in School Reform* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>80</sup>Juan M. Fernández-Soria and Diego Sevilla, "La Ley General de Educación de 1970, ¿una ley para la modernización de España?," *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* 14 (2021), 33-35.

<sup>81</sup>Lorenzo Delgado, "Modernizadores y tecnócratas. Estados Unidos ante la política educativa y científica de la España del desarrollo," *Historia y Política* 34 (2015), 136.

<sup>82</sup>Óscar J. Martín García, "Awkward Alliances: Modernisation Theory and United States Foreign Policy towards Franco's Spain in the 1960s," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 32, no. 4 (2021), 731; Sara Morgenstern de Finkel, "The Scenario of the Spanish Educational Reform," in *Understanding Educational Reform in Global Context: Economy, Ideology, and the State*, ed. Mark Ginsburg (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), 158-59.

<sup>83</sup>Lorenzo Delgado and Óscar J. Martín García, "El apoyo internacional a la reforma educativa en España," *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* 14 (June 2021), 177-208; Mariano González and Tamar Groves, "La UNESCO y la Ley General de Educación: La influencia de los organismos internacionales

policymakers supported the GEL in Spain, believing that it offered a good opportunity “to influence coming generations of Spaniards and indeed the whole structure of Spanish society in a constructive way helpful to our long-term interests.” They considered that the GEL could have a liberalizing effect on Spain’s political structures, help promote economic development, eliminate socioeconomic barriers in access to education, enhance social cohesion, and foster the Iberian country’s rapprochement with its European neighbors. US analysts also deemed that such a reform would help address the underlying causes that had fueled the unrest at universities during the previous years and, consequently, leave the Communists without a wedge to stir up subversion. Moreover, the fact that, according to US sources, such a reform was “largely based on American models” would help to improve the public image of the United States, which had been badly damaged in Spain in the second half of the 1960s because of the Vietnam War.<sup>84</sup>

Among the activities deployed by the United States to support the GEL, the program for training university administrators, which was entrusted to the Educational Technology Center of the Sterling Institute of Washington, DC, was particularly noteworthy. The US government also launched, together with Georgetown University, a program to teach English to Spanish teachers in education departments, which was complemented by sending US teachers specialized in the subject to Spain. In addition, American assistance included the granting of 264 study scholarships for Spanish university professors and researchers to strengthen the “academic, cultural and administrative structures of higher education, especially within Spain.”<sup>85</sup>

The Fulbright program also provided important support to the GEL in areas such as teacher training, pedagogical research, reorganization of university departments, and curriculum reform. The US government influence also contributed to the Ford Foundation and the World Bank joining their efforts to “help the [Spanish] government achieve the objectives of educational reform” and to turn the educational system “into a modern, flexible, and efficient vehicle for economic and social progress.”<sup>86</sup> It can therefore be concluded that the United States became one of the main international supporters of the GEL, providing funding, training, experts, and materials for its implementation.

However, the strong anti-Americanism that had existed in Spanish universities since the end of the 1960s fueled social protest against the GEL. Beginning in the summer of 1970, the law met with strong resistance from students and young university professors influenced by Marxist intellectual currents and by the global protests of ’68. Both saw in the GEL an act of submission to the interests of “Yankee imperialism.” For the anti-Francoist university opposition, the educational reform was an instrument of ideological control at the service of the Spanish dictatorship allied with American expansionist capitalism. The opposition also denounced the

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en torno a la modernización educativa en el franquismo,” *Historia y Memoria de la Educación*, 14 (June 2021), 209-52.

<sup>84</sup>Lorenzo Delgado and Patricia de la Hoz, “US Assistance to Educational Reform in Spain: Soft Power in Exchange for Military Bases,” in *Teaching Modernization*, 49.

<sup>85</sup>Informe del Programa de Cooperación Cultural entre España y los Estados Unidos de América,” Nov. 4, 1976, and “Becas para españoles del Programa NMA,” box 92/7, RFSC.

<sup>86</sup>“Appraisal of an Education Project in Spain,” May 22, 1970, Education Projects Department, WBA.



hierarchical character of a reform that had been imposed without paying attention to the demands for educational democratization from below.<sup>87</sup> As a result, between 1971 and Franco's death in 1975, this law became the focus of the ire of broad sectors of the university community. According to a diplomatic report, the main cause of the intense unrest during the 1971-72 academic year was "the near-universal student (and faculty) opposition to the New Education Reform Law and the manner in which it is being implemented."<sup>88</sup>

US sources themselves acknowledged that during the early 1970s the rejection of the GEL became "almost an article of faith with Spanish university students and professors."<sup>89</sup> However, resistance to the educational reform came not only from progressive university sectors. There were misgivings among the conservative ranks of the Catholic Church, which considered that the new law jeopardized the financing of non-state educational centers (mostly belonging to the Church) and reduced the Church's high historical presence and influence in the educational sector. The most hard-line hierarchies of the dictatorship also opposed a reform that they believed destroyed traditional values and went too far in its objectives regarding the modernization and democratization of education.<sup>90</sup> Thus, although the GEL represented a notable overhaul of Spanish educational institutions, all these obstacles and resistance caused a slow, inconsistent, and distorted application of the law that led to its final failure.

## Conclusions

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the United States deployed a variety of educational, cultural, and informational programs in Spain with the purpose of (1) disseminating American educational notions and methods necessary to foster capitalist growth and political stability; (2) training the elites in charge of national development; and (3) presenting the American model of higher education as an inspirational example for the modernization of Spain and a demonstration of the reliability of the United States as a world leader. American educational diplomacy also sought to reduce the identification of the United States with the Franco dictatorship and to promote a positive image of the superpower among the Spanish public. All of this was pursued with the ultimate goal of preserving the American military bases and paving the way for a future post-Franco transition to a successor government willing to maintain the US defensive stronghold in Spain.

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<sup>87</sup>Tamar Groves, "Everyday Struggles against Franco's Authoritarian Legacy: Pedagogical Social Movements and Democracy in Spain," *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 2 (Winter 2012), 305-34; Marta Jiménez-Jaén, *La Ley General de Educación y el movimiento de enseñantes (1970-1976)* (La Laguna, Spain: Universidad de La Laguna, 2000).

<sup>88</sup>"Spanish Student Unrest and University Situation," April 19, 1972, box 397, RG59, DS, Subject Numerical Files (SNF), 1970-73, Culture and Information, NARA.

<sup>89</sup>"Spain: A Troubled Academic Year Ahead?," Oct. 27, 1972, box 397, RG59, DS, SNF, 1970-73, Culture and Information, NARA.

<sup>90</sup>Isabel Grana Gil, "The General Education Act and the Church: Agreements and Disagreements," *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* 14 (2021), 143-75; Manuel de Puelles Benítez, *Educación e ideología en la España Contemporánea* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2010).

Nevertheless, the results of US efforts in the educational field were mixed. Certainly, US educational programs helped to encourage new ways of thinking and perspectives favorable to educational, economic, and social change toward Western norms. It also reduced Spain's educational isolation and facilitated the access of influential sectors to knowledge that contributed to the US-oriented modernization of the country. However, while US educational assistance attempted to prepare Spanish society to meet the challenges of the country's sweeping liberalization, such modernization caused significant educational conflicts and misalignments. The General Education Law of 1970 attempted to alleviate the structural causes of these tensions through a profound reform guided by educational models from the United States. However, the law reaped a strong social rejection that intensified the anti-American sentiment existing since the early 1960s among the field of Spanish public opinion, which—in the words of a USIS report—denounced “US cooperation with the Franco regime as an egregious mistake on the part of the nation that was also the leader of the Free World.”<sup>91</sup>

In terms of prestige, US attempts to overhaul Spanish higher education clashed with Washington's security policy in this country. This was reflected in the attacks, boycotts, and sabotage of US cultural and educational activities by anti-Franco groups that decried the US outreach initiatives as propaganda tools of “Yankee” manipulation. For instance, in May 1965, the US consul in Valencia reported pieces of anti-US graffiti in that city's binational cultural institute (the Centre for North American Studies, CNAS). By the end of that decade, animosity against US cultural institutions had become increasingly disruptive. Incidents included the hurling of metal objects at the Institute of North American Studies of Barcelona building in March 1967 and even two bomb attacks, one on Madrid's American House in 1968 and the other on the CNAS in Valencia in 1969.<sup>92</sup>

In short, at the time of Franco's death in 1975, many Spaniards did not identify the “American friend” with education, progress, and prosperity, but with the authoritarian order that was now coming to an end. By the mid-1970s, there was a widespread mistrust of the United States among broad sectors of Spanish society, which showed that US educational diplomacy's schemes to seduce had failed to counteract the loss of image induced by the US's friendship with the Spanish dictatorship. This increasingly hostile public opinion led the US State Department to adopt a low political profile during the thorny post-Franco transition, leaving its Western European allies to play the leading roles in the regime change that culminated in Spain's full integration into the Western bloc.

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<sup>91</sup>“USIS Country Assessment Report for Spain 1960,” Feb. 15, 1961, box 4, RG306, USIA, OR, Foreign Services Dispatches, 1954-65, NARA. See also Óscar J. Martín García, “The Most Developed of the Underdeveloped Nations: US Foreign Policy and Student Unrest in 1960s Spain,” *International History Review* 41, no. 3 (2019), 539-58.

<sup>92</sup>“From US Consulate in Valencia to US Ambassador Angier Biddle Duke,” May 27, 1965, box 2, RG59, DS, BEA, Country Director for Spain and Portugal, 1956-1966, NARA; “Damages to Institute of North American Studies,” June 7, 1967, and “North American Study Center Bombed in Valencia,” Feb. 18, 1969, box 2491, RG59, DS, CFP, Political and Defense, 1967-1969, NARA.

educational, and scientific diplomacy towards Franco's Spain between the 1950s and 1970s. This article was supported by the research project "Modernization, Development and Democratization. The Role of Western European Powers and International Organizations in Political and Social Change in Spain" (PGC2018-097159-B-I00), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities.