

Public Diplomacy en Español: An Analysis of Spanish-language Public Diplomacy Scholarship⁺

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Received: February 05, 2024 | Accepted: May 17, 2024

Abstract

Public diplomacy scholarship typically centers on English-language works, yet significant research on public diplomacy and related topics, like soft power, is emerging in other languages. This study uses computational text analysis to examine Spanish-language peer-reviewed articles on public diplomacy from 2001 to 2023. The findings reveal interesting patterns in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship, including theoretical focuses, geographic areas of study, and gendered citation patterns. Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship is largely dominated by scholars from Spain. Mexico, however, stands out as the most frequently studied geographic area, followed by Spain, the United States, and, to a lesser extent, Colombia and Argentina. The results underscore a strong focus on concepts like image, communication, and public opinion, reflecting crucial concerns in the foreign policy of Spanish-speaking countries. Finally, the findings reveal a gender imbalance, with men comprising the majority of authors, and a statistical analysis indicates that works by women receive fewer citations than those by men. This essay is a first step in understanding key trends and gendered patterns in public diplomacy, aligning with a broader movement striving to decolonize academic literature and prioritize under-represented people and geographic areas within the field.

Keywords: public diplomacy, international relations, communication studies, gender, Latin America, Spain

⁺ Acknowledgments: We thank Stefany Antonelly Ayo Ramirez, Carla Cabrera Cuadrado, Francisco Rodriguez Jimenez, Eduardo Luciano Tadeo Hernández, and Juan Luis Manfredi Sánchez for their support.

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Introduction

Public diplomacy is a fast-growing area of study with little agreement on its boundaries. A traditional statement would define public diplomacy as “direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking and, ultimately, that of their governments” (Malone, 1988, p. 199). Similarly, Nye (2008, p. 95) states that public diplomacy is a communication instrument used to “mobilize resources to attract foreign audiences.” More recently, public diplomacy has been defined as a term to describe the efforts by nations to win support and a favorable image among the general public of other countries, usually by way of news management and carefully planned initiatives designed to foster positive impressions (McQuail, 2010).

The growing interest in public diplomacy is evident in the increased number of academic organizations and journals focusing on the subject. The International Communication Association (ICA) established the Public Diplomacy Interest Group in 2015. The ICA Annual Meeting also has pre-conferences and a dedicated section for public diplomacy. Similarly, the International Studies Association (ISA) has hosted public diplomacy pre-conferences in the past, and papers sponsored by ISA sections, such as foreign policy analysis and international communication, often incorporate public diplomacy themes. Furthermore, several journals specifically dedicated to public diplomacy exist. For example, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* and the *Journal of Public Diplomacy* are both devoted to public diplomacy scholarship and practice.

While most academic research primarily comprises English-language works, there is a rising interest in the study and practice of public diplomacy worldwide. This trend is particularly pronounced in Latin America, Spain, and other parts of the Spanish-speaking world. An increased number of academic initiatives, conferences, and journals are focusing on the subject. For instance, the ISA Latin America and the Caribbean Annual Conference frequently includes Spanish papers incorporating public diplomacy themes. Likewise, the Mexican International Studies Association (*Asociación Mexicana de Estudios Internacionales*) Annual Conference regularly features panels and papers that include topics related to public diplomacy. In recent years, the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative (NACDI), a multidisciplinary research network of academics, policymakers, and practitioners in the field of public diplomacy, opened a chapter in Mexico. NACDI has active Mexican scholars in leadership positions and publishes reports in Spanish on public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, soft power, and other related topics.

In addition, many academic Spanish-language journals regularly include works related to public diplomacy. These are mostly publications in the fields of communication and international studies. In Latin America, some examples are the *Revista de Estudios Sociales* from the University of the Andes in Colombia and the *Revista Chilena de Relaciones Internacionales* from the Playa Ancha University in Chile. Similarly, Spanish journals like the

Comillas Journal of International Relations from the Comillas Pontifical University, *Relaciones Internacionales* from the Autonomous University of Madrid, and *Communication & Society* from the University of Navarra also feature articles incorporating public diplomacy themes. In Spain, the oldest think tank in the country, the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, also explores public diplomacy topics.

There is also an increased number of government-sponsored organizations and journals focusing on the subject. In Argentina, for instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) operates an office called *Dirección de Organizaciones Intermedias y Diplomacia Pública*. This office provides advisory services to the National Congress of Argentina and its members regarding foreign policy issues, including public diplomacy. In Spain, publications by the *Real Instituto Elcano*, a think tank established by the Spanish MFA, frequently feature works related to Spanish public diplomacy efforts and challenges.

In Mexico, the interest in public diplomacy is demonstrated through the creation of two executive directorates within the Mexican MFA in 2018. One of these is dedicated to cultural and tourist diplomacy (*Dirección Ejecutiva de Diplomacia Cultural y Turística*), and the other focuses on strategy and public diplomacy (*Dirección Ejecutiva de Estrategia y Diplomacia Pública*). Additionally, the *Instituto Matías Romero*, Mexico's diplomatic academy, has a quarterly publication that often showcases works related to public diplomacy in Mexico, the United States, and other countries. The *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior* (RMPE) serves as a platform that brings together public diplomacy scholars and practitioners to collaborate on the subject.

Considering this activity, we have conducted a meta-analysis of the literature, providing an overview of the trends characterizing Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship since 2001. Our results not only affirm some conventional wisdom about familiar topics and approaches but also provide some unexpected insights.

The Need for This Study

This study traces the evolution of Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship from 2001 to the present through a content analysis of peer-reviewed articles written in Spanish. We also include works relevant to public diplomacy in two Spanish-language editor-reviewed publications. First, articles in the *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior*, a quarterly publication associated with the Mexican MFA. Second, articles by the *Real Instituto Elcano*, a think tank formed by the Spanish MFA.

We include these two publications because they play a crucial role in the academic development of international relations, public diplomacy, nation branding, and related concepts within the Spanish-speaking world. The RMPE accounts for around 20 percent of the articles in our dataset, while articles by the *Real Instituto Elcano* make up around 10 percent. We did

not find other government-affiliated publications that play as significant a role in public diplomacy scholarship as these two. Furthermore, prominent scholars who publish in peer-reviewed journals also publish in or cite these two publications in Mexico and Spain. For example, Juan Luis Manfredi Sánchez, Rebecka Villanueva Ulfgard, and César Villanueva Rivas, among others, have published in the RMPE. Additionally, works by Nicholas J. Cull and Corneliu Bjola have been translated into Spanish and published in the RMPE.

To be sure, there are certain caveats to only choosing peer-reviewed articles and these two editor-reviewed publications. First, this approach overlooks several platforms where valuable work on public diplomacy is found, such as books, doctoral dissertations, and academic blogs. Second, the two publications are based in Mexico and Spain, which introduces inherent biases related to the geographical location and institutional affiliations of authors. These biases also extend to the stylistic, formal, and linguistic expectations of submitted manuscripts.

However, our primary concern lies in the scope of Spanish-language scholarly attention directed towards public diplomacy. For characterizing the body of literature as it has evolved over the decades, a meta-analysis of this subset of work remains appropriate. We start with a broad research question:

RQ 1: What are the key trends in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship?

Trends in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship reflect the theoretical and disciplinary approaches employed, as well as the subjects and regions under examination. To address this primary research question, we analyze three relevant and interrelated aspects of the literature: the volume of publications, the authors, and the research topics.

RQ 2: What is the volume of scholarly work produced?

We analyze the metadata associated with each article to assess the development of public diplomacy as an academic field in the Spanish-speaking world. Using biographical information, we also identify the most prolific authors in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship, along with their academic positions and affiliations.

RQ 3: Who are the most prolific authors in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship?

We then shift our focus to the topics within the articles. Public diplomacy is associated with various concepts, actors, and practices, including soft power, nation branding, foreign policy, strategic communication campaigns, and public opinion (Gilboa, 2008). Therefore, we identify the most common topics in the dataset of articles.

RQ 4: What topics are most common in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship?

Considering the noted rise in academic interest in public diplomacy during the period under examination, we investigate whether this heightened focus has led to the concentration

on specific concepts. We search for patterns in the co-occurrence of topics within the articles included in this study. This exploration encompasses, but is not restricted to, the identification of theoretical concepts (e.g., soft power), public diplomacy tools, and countries featured in the research. Finally, we also assess whether scholars' perspectives on public diplomacy differ across countries within the Spanish-speaking world.

RQ 5: What topics co-occur most often in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship?

RQ 6: How do topics vary in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship across countries?

We then shift our focus to gender publication patterns in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship. Gender is a crucial element in any society. In Latin America, gender and related concepts are fundamental dimensions in nearly every aspect of contemporary social, economic, and political life (Chant & Craske, 2003). For example, *marianismo* describes an ideal of true femininity, encompassing traits such as passivity, purity, and self-sacrifice, deeply intertwined with Roman Catholicism. The region has a historical struggle with gender inequality and discrimination, particularly against women. Meanwhile, during the military dictatorship, Spain exhibited relatively low levels of gender equality compared to other Western European countries (Hernandez Bark et al., 2014). However, the country's transition to democracy in the late 1970s marked a turning point in the advancement of women's rights and gender equality. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, Spain currently outperforms the European Union average on gender equality and progress.

In the realm of foreign policy, some countries in the region have adopted a feminist foreign policy approach. While there is no universally agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a feminist foreign policy, Mexico embraced this approach in 2020, followed by Spain in 2021 and Chile in 2022 (UN Women, 2022). This shift is accompanied by efforts to transform the practice of foreign policy for the greater benefit of women and girls worldwide. For example, in 2020, Mexico committed to achieving full employment parity and equal pay, and applying a gender lens to every foreign policy decision by 2024. Spain appointed a Special Envoy on feminist foreign policy to report to the Spanish Parliament. It also allocated one-fourth of its official development assistance to programs that prioritize gender equality as a primary objective (UN Women, 2022). In 2023, the Chilean MFA published a handbook outlining the goals and methods of feminist foreign policy and established advisory bodies to guide the government in its implementation (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, 2023).

Yet, these countries share a recent development where gender has become central to political disputes. While conflicts related to women's rights are not new, only recently have they emerged as a dividing line in the public identities of political parties, politicians, and candidates (Biroli & Caminotti, 2020). Moreover, there is a conservative backlash against gender in both Latin America and Spain today. Various political parties and figures have

incorporated anti-feminist narratives into their platforms, as seen with Vox in Spain or José Antonio Kast in Chile. In Mexico, this conservative backlash is led by the National Action Party (PAN) and other political parties with close ties to evangelical groups.

Despite the significant progress women have made over the past several decades, they continue to encounter substantial obstacles in academia. These challenges go beyond the well-known and long-standing difficulties they face in balancing career and family responsibilities. Research spanning various disciplines has revealed biases against women in academia. For instance, Maliniak et al. (2013) identified a notable gender citation gap within the field of international relations. Other scholars have exposed biases against women in areas such as teaching evaluations (MacNeill et al., 2015), peer review (Wennerås & Wold, 1997; Villegas Cruz, 2022), and group interactions and deliberations (Karpowitz & Mendelberg, 2014), among numerous other instances.

The next set of questions contributes to these broader efforts. We delve into gender and authorship patterns in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship, specifically focusing on whether a significant gender citation gap exists in the literature. We consider individual citations to be significant for two key reasons. Firstly, academia typically regards citations as a vital metric for assessing the quality of scholarly contributions. They are also employed to evaluate the quality of faculty and departments across various universities. Secondly, the significance of citation counts is expected to grow as they become increasingly accessible and easier to compile using platforms such as Google Scholar, Scopus, or other search engines. If a persistent gender gap in citations exists, it is crucial for departments and universities to be aware of this disparity.

RQ 7: What are the gender and authorship patterns in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship?

RQ 8: Is there a significant gender citation gap in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship?

Data and Methods

This study traces the evolution of Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship from 2001 to 2023 through a content analysis of academic articles written in Spanish. While valuable work has emerged in various outlets, we confined our analysis to peer-reviewed publications and editor-reviewed articles from the *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior* and the *Real Instituto Elcano*. Although this approach excludes work from other sources, it allows for a systematic content search. In doing so, we have applied a level of methodological rigor to the identification of content for inclusion in this analysis that would not have been achievable otherwise.

We chose the year 2001 as the starting point because the field of public diplomacy has significantly expanded since then. Previous studies suggest that 9/11 marked a turning point in public diplomacy practice and studies, leading to a wave of interest in the subject (Zaharna, 2010). We considered articles that incorporated the term “diplomacia pública” (public diplomacy in Spanish) in the title, abstract, or keywords. Our focus was solely on articles and did not encompass books, book chapters, or theses. Regarding quality criteria, each coder was responsible for determining and justifying the inclusion or exclusion of specific journal articles.

We conducted our search using Google Scholar, a freely accessible web search engine that indexes metadata from scholarly literature across various publishing formats and disciplines. We chose Google Scholar because it is the most widely recognized academic search engine. We attempted to use other academic search engines such as Semantic Scholar, Scopus, and RefSeek. However, these engines yielded limited results when using the Spanish language. Additionally, we explored other academic search engines that focus on scholarship published in Spanish, such as Redalyc. Redalyc is supported by the *Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México*. Nevertheless, the results of other engines were either more limited or overlapped with the results obtained from Google Scholar.

We collected metadata for all Spanish-language articles through manual coding. The title and author(s) names were directly extracted from the articles. Subsequently, we coded the academic institution, academic rank (e.g., assistant professor or associate professor), discipline, and gender of the authors at the time of publication. We also collected information about the number of citations for each article. The number of citations for each article reflects citations from all articles cataloged in Google Scholar, not just those journals from which we draw our sample.

Using titles, keywords, and abstracts, we also categorized each article based on all the geographic areas it studied. Many articles about public diplomacy focus on a single nation-state, like Mexico or Colombia. However, some articles study multiple states, covering transnational issues, conducting comparative studies, or examining international relations, among other topics. Each article was coded based on all the geographic areas it addressed. For instance, the historical analysis of Japanese public diplomacy in Chile during World War II by Iacobelli and Camino (2018) was coded as relevant to both Japan and Chile. An automated validation of this process was performed by verifying the most commonly mentioned nation-states in each article.

The extent of information provided in the journals varied, but we were able to identify most of these variables, except for gender. Author gender was obtained from departmental websites, personal profiles, news reports, and other sources. In practice, we are “imputing” gender because it is implausible to determine each author’s actual gender identity. This strategy has been used by other scholars when examining gender publication patterns in academia (e.g., Teele & Thelen, 2017; Villegas Cruz, 2022). An accurate assessment of an

author's gender is of utmost importance for the validity of the analysis. Sociological studies on gender take care to differentiate between sex (a biological identity) and gender (a socially constructed category shaped by cultural expectations of male- and female-appropriate behavior). Gender involves an ongoing performance aimed at producing a set of behaviors perceived by others as normative (MacNell et al., 2015). Even though gender is a social construct, the historical dichotomy of men and women has been significant and remains valuable for quantitative analysis.

Results

The dataset, collected through mid-2023, includes articles that use the term “*diplomacia pública*” (public diplomacy in Spanish) in the title, abstract, or keywords. In total, our dataset comprises 143 Spanish-language articles about public diplomacy. The average number of citations in our articles is 10.2. No single journal or academic discipline seems to dominate the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature. Our dataset includes articles from 85 unique academic journals around the world. The most common academic disciplines in Spanish-language public diplomacy are international relations and communication studies. However, our data shows a multi-disciplinary field with theoretical, conceptual, and methodological links to several academic disciplines, including history, international law, political science, geography, and media studies, among others. As we will explore further below, these articles are authored by scholars from various countries, including Spain, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Argentina, and more.

Volume and authors

We begin by examining the volume of scholarly work produced each year. Figure 1 shows the number of articles per year from 2001 to 2023. Surprisingly, we did not find any articles for 2001 and 2002. It is generally understood that the events of 9/11 in 2001 led to a wave of interest in public diplomacy (Zaharna, 2010), but this is not the case here. One possibility is that there was not much interest in the topic due to the limited involvement of Spanish-speaking nations in the war on terror. For instance, very few Spanish-speaking nations participated in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq during that period.

However, the volume of Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship has slowly increased over the years. We have peak years in 2009, 2014, 2021, and 2022. The highest peak in 2009 is linked to an RMPE special issue on public diplomacy organized by Mexican scholar César Villanueva. In the first five years of our data (from 2001 to 2005), we found only 9 articles. However, from 2018 to 2022, we have a total of 24 academic articles. There is approximately a 2.67-fold increase in the number of articles about public diplomacy published in Latin America and Spain from the first five years to the last five years of the data. This

trend looks promising for the future of Hispanophone public diplomacy scholarship.

Table 1 shows the most prolific authors in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature from 2001 to 2023. These prominent authors are all located in Spain, Mexico, or the United States. Juan L. Manfredi, a full professor at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, is the most prolific author in the dataset. He is also the Prince of Asturias Distinguished Visiting Professor at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

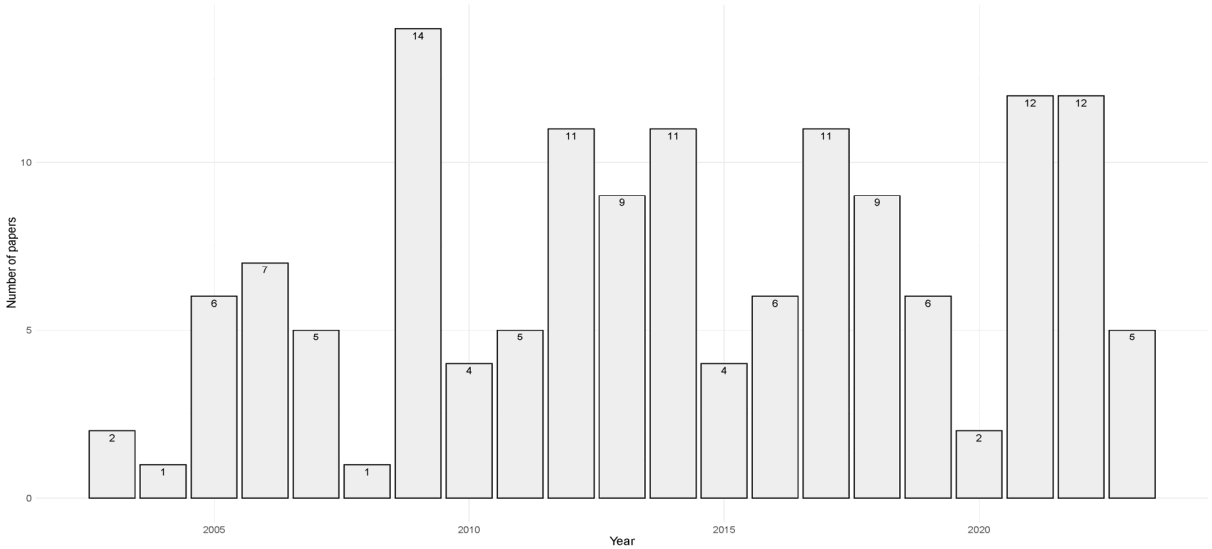


Figure 1. Number of Spanish-language public diplomacy articles per year, 2001-2023

Half of the most active authors are affiliated with institutions located in Spain. This is intriguing, especially when you consider that Spain ranks fourth in terms of native Spanish speakers. In contrast, Mexico, which has the world’s largest Spanish-speaking population, only has two authors in the top ten. The most prolific authors in Mexico are Rebecka Villanueva Ulfgard and César Villanueva Rivas, faculty members at the Mora Institute and Ibero-American University in Mexico City, respectively.

Table 1. Most prolific authors in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature, 2001-2023

Author	No. articles	University	Country
1. Juan Luis Manfredi Sánchez	7	Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha	Spain
2. Francisco Javier Noya Miranda	5	Universidad Complutense de Madrid	Spain
3. Nicholas J. Cull	4	University of Southern California	USA
4. María Teresa La Porte	3	Universidad de Navarra	Spain
5. Rebecka Villanueva Ulfgard	3	Instituto Mora	Mexico
6. César Villanueva Rivas	3	Universidad Iberoamericana	Mexico

Author	No. articles	University	Country
7. Daniel Aguirre Azócar	3	Arizona State University	USA
8. José Saavedra Torres	2	Northern Kentucky University	USA
9. Soledad Ruano López	2	Universidad de Extremadura	Spain
10. Jordi de San Eugenio	2	Universidad de Vic - Cataluña	Spain

Interestingly, some of the most prolific authors in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature are affiliated with universities in the U.S., a country where Spanish is not the de facto national language. Some of these scholars publish directly in Spanish, such as Saavedra Torres, a scholar originally from Venezuela who works at Northern Kentucky University in Kentucky (e.g., Saavedra Torres, 2012). Others have their works translated into Spanish from other languages. For instance, some of the works by Nicholas J. Cull, a pioneering scholar in the field of public diplomacy, have been translated from English to Spanish (e.g., Cull, 2022).

Institutional affiliations

One of the key trends in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship is the significant presence of prolific scholars from Spain. A question we can ponder is whether the majority of authors in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship originate from this European country. In other words, which country dominates the knowledge production in Spanish-language public diplomacy?

Table 2 presents the authors in Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship, organized by country. It is important to note that the table includes only the most prevalent locations. Meanwhile, Figure 2 conveys the complete information in the form of a map. The map uses a grayscale, with darker shades indicating a higher number of authors in a particular country.

Table 2. Authors in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature by country, 2001-2023

Country	No. authors	% total authors
1. Spain	76	44.7
2. Mexico	42	24.7
3. United States	10	5.8
4. Chile	9	5.3
5. Colombia	7	4.1
6. Argentina	6	3.5
7. United Kingdom	5	2.9
8. Venezuela	3	1.8
9. Peru	2	1.2
10. El Salvador	1	0.6

As Table 2 illustrates, the vast majority of authors are associated with institutions such as universities or think tanks situated in Spain. Out of all the authors, 76 (constituting 44.7% of the total authors) have affiliations with institutions in this European country. According to our data, some of the most frequently encountered Spanish universities in the field of public diplomacy are the Complutense University of Madrid, the University of Castilla-La Mancha, and the University of Extremadura.

Mexico is the second most common location of authors' institutions in our dataset. According to our data, some of the most frequently encountered Mexican institutions in the field of public diplomacy are the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the Ibero-American University, and the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education. Additionally, a significant number of authors from Mexico are diplomats employed by the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As shown in Figure 2, authors are affiliated with institutions from various regions including North America, South America, Europe, and even Asia. The United States represents the third most common location of authors' institutions, followed by Chile, Colombia, and Argentina. While the majority of authors are affiliated with institutions in the Spanish-speaking world, it is worth noting that a substantial number of authors originate from countries where Spanish is not the primary language, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium.

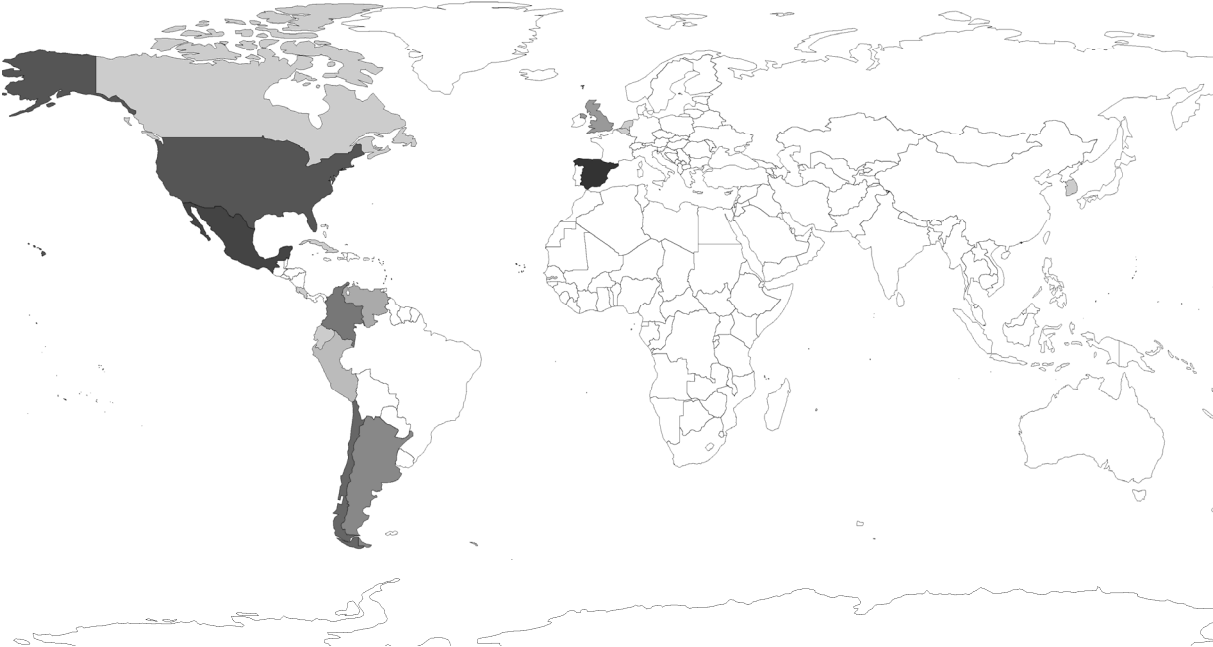


Figure 2. Authors of articles in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature by country, 2001-2023

Topics

Next, we turn our attention to the topics covered within the articles. Public diplomacy is interconnected with various concepts, actors, and practices, such as soft power, nation branding, public opinion, nation-states, and international institutions. To identify the most prevalent topics in public diplomacy research, we conducted a term frequency analysis on the article abstracts and performed a network analysis of the keywords.

Table 3 presents the results of the term frequency analysis in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature from 2001 to 2023. “*Diplomacia pública*” (public diplomacy) is the most frequently occurring term in the article abstracts. This observation is not surprising, as it is the search term we used to identify articles for inclusion in this study. The results highlight a strong emphasis on concepts such as image, communication, and public opinion, which reflect important concerns in the foreign policy of Spanish-speaking countries. The table also highlights the prominence of terms like “communication” and “international relations.” This could indicate the significance of communication studies and international relations as essential fields of study within the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature. Regarding the countries mentioned in the literature, only Spain, Mexico, and the U.S. stand out among the most frequently referenced terms. Just like the analyses of author and institutional affiliations, it appears that the literature is predominantly focused on these three countries.

Table 3. Term frequency analysis (abstracts) in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature, 2001-2023

Term	Frequency	Term	Frequency
diplomacia_pública	138	sociedad	30
internacional	80	poder	30
cultural	54	política	29
artículo	53	culturales	28
exterior	52	relaciones	27
países	45	estudio	25
comunicación	44	opinión	24
país	39	relaciones_internacionales (RI)	24
análisis	38	desarrollo	23
imagen	38	estrategias	23
españa	35	acción	23
méxico	33	caso	23
política_exterior	32	estados_unidos	21
mundo	32	acciones	20
actores	31	servicio	20
medios	30	cooperación	20
trabajo	30	internacionales	19

As Figure 5 shows, the countries with the highest number of articles dedicated to them are Mexico (21%), Spain (16%), and the United States (10%). Nevertheless, the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature encompasses nearly every region across the globe. Naturally, a substantial portion of the studies focuses on public diplomacy involving or originating from countries in the Americas. This region is home to the world’s largest Spanish-speaking population. For instance, we observe articles related to Mexico in North America, as well as those pertaining to Peru and Chile in South America. The Spanish-language public diplomacy literature also explores countries in other regions. For instance, it explores topics concerning France and Portugal in Western Europe, South Korea and China in East Asia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, and Morocco and Algeria in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

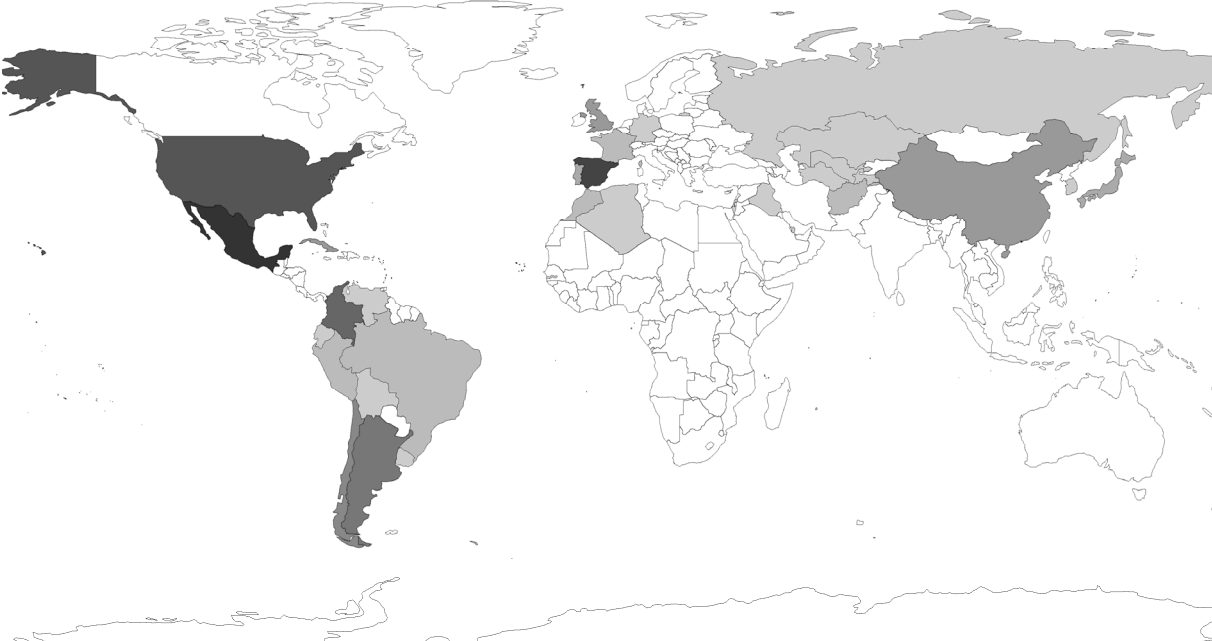


Figure 5. Geographic areas of study in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature, 2001-2023

The last component of the content analysis aims to explore differences in topics across countries within the dataset. RQ 6 seeks to understand how topics vary within Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship across different countries. Table 4 displays the top 10 keywords by country in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature from 2001 to 2023. Note that Table 4 encompasses only the top five countries in our dataset, namely Spain, Mexico, the U.S., Chile, and Colombia (See Table 2).

Table 4. Top 10 keywords by country in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature, 2001-2023

Spain	Mexico	United States	Chile	Colombia
diplomacia_pública	diplomacia	diplomacia_pública	diplomacia_pública	diplomacia_pública
diplomacia	diplomacia_pública	diplomacia	digital	colombia
comunicación	cultural	culturales	prensa	unión_europea
cultural	méxico	política_exterior	mundial	pilares
RI	cooperación	poder_suave	chile	percepción
españa	comunicación	estados_unidos	bolivia	relacionamiento
cultura	política_exterior	historia	medios	guerra_fría
exterior	consular	RI	américa_latina	RI
relaciones	política	intercambios	comunicaciones	estados_unidos
estados_unidos	estados_unidos	educación	modernización	perspectiva

As mentioned earlier, authors in Spain, Mexico, and the U.S. compose the majority of scholars in the Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship. Articles authored by scholars affiliated with institutions like government agencies, universities, or think tanks in Spain predominantly focus on concepts like cultural diplomacy and communication. These articles also look at Spanish public diplomacy efforts and their connections with the United States. In particular, they include historical analyses of Spain-U.S. relations during the Cold War and Spain's position in the growing U.S.-China competition. Similarly, articles authored by scholars in Mexico tend to concentrate on concepts such as cultural diplomacy and communication. They also explore Mexican foreign policy, with a particular emphasis on the relationship with its northern neighbor. In contrast to those in Spain, these authors often address concepts like cooperation and consular diplomacy.

Authors affiliated with American institutions predominantly focus on American foreign policy, emphasizing aspects like soft power, cultural diplomacy, and educational exchanges. Interestingly, the results suggest that the U.S. is examined not only in relation to Latin America and Spain but also as an independent subject, for instance, in studies concerning American foreign policy in the Middle East. In the case of Chile and Colombia, articles focus on different topics compared to those from Spain and Mexico. In Chile, authors concentrate on the relationship between digital technologies and public diplomacy, as indicated by terms like “*medios*,” “*prensa*,” “*digital*,” and “*modernización*.” Additionally, they examine the complex relations with Bolivia, which have been historically strained due to territorial disputes. On the other hand, authors in Colombia delve into their country's foreign policy, with a particular emphasis on its relationship with the United States. There are interesting studies about the U.S.'s role in the Colombian civil conflicts during the Cold War. Additionally, they frequently explore Colombian relations with the European Union.

Authors and gender

In this section, we explore whether there are differences in citations between men and women in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature. To begin, let us first look at the proportions of men and women among all authors. There is a total of 175 authors in the dataset. The analysis uncovers a gender imbalance in publication rates between men and women in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature. Figure 6 illustrates that men represent the majority of authors published in the journals. The number of male authors is 116 (66%), while the number of female authors is 59 (34%).

Our results also indicate that, in general, works by women receive lower citations compared to those by men. We categorized all articles in the database according to the gender of the authors, placing them into three groups: those with more female authors than male authors (including articles with one female author), those with more male authors than female authors (including articles with one male author), and those with a gender balance among the authors. We classified the latter two categories as “Men majority” articles and those with more female authors than male authors as “Women majority” articles.



Figure 6. Authors of articles in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature by gender, 2001-2023

Table 5 displays the average number of citations a given article received based on the gender of the author. It also presents the results of a t-test, which is an inferential statistic used to determine if there is a significant difference between the citation means of two groups: “Men majority” articles and “Women majority” articles. On average, articles primarily authored by women receive approximately four citations, whereas articles authored by men receive an average of around ten citations. As shown in the table, there is a significant

difference ($p < 0.05$) in the citation means of the two groups. Articles with female authors are less likely to be cited in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature.

Table 5. Gendered citation patterns in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature (t-test)

Gender	Total Citations	Mean Citation (per article)	Standard Deviation
Men majority	977	9.58	18.8
Women majority	77	3.49	6.42

Welch Two Sample t-test
 T-statistic = 2.88 DF = 138.67 p-value = 0.005

To be clear, the results do not imply any causal mechanisms. They do not mean that works by female authors receive fewer citations solely because they are women. There could be several potential explanations for the existence of this gap. The results simply indicate that, in general, works by women receive lower citations compared to those by men.

Discussion

Authors from Spain, Mexico and the U.S.

In general, Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship is significantly influenced by scholars from Spain, Mexico, and the United States. The prominence of these countries in the study of public diplomacy is closely related to their influence on the global usage of the Spanish language. According to the most recent yearbook of the Instituto Cervantes (2022), more than 496 million people consider Spanish their mother tongue, which accounts for approximately 6.3% of the world’s population. These statistics establish Spanish as the second most widely spoken mother tongue, trailing only Mandarin Chinese. Mexico boasts the highest number of native Spanish speakers, with 127 million people, constituting 25.6% of the total Spanish-speaking population. Additionally, around 11 million more Mexicans reside in the United States. According to the yearbook, by 2060, the United States will host the largest population of Spanish speakers after Mexico, and an estimated 27.5% of its residents will be of Hispanic origin. Given this scenario, Lamo de Espinosa and Badillo Matos (2017) argue that Mexico is a strategic partner for Spain, as they believe that the future of the Spanish language is closely tied to the United States.

Despite Mexico’s large population, the vast majority of authors in this field are affiliated with institutions located in Spain. Our findings indicate that five of the top ten most prolific authors are associated with Spanish institutions. Furthermore, roughly 44% of all authors in Spanish-language public diplomacy literature have affiliations with institutions in Spain. This is quite intriguing, particularly when you consider that Spain is ranked fourth in terms of native Spanish speakers.

In contrast, Mexico, which has the world's largest Spanish-speaking population, only has around 20% of the authors. This could be attributed to higher levels of economic development in Spain compared to Mexico. For instance, in 2022, Spain's GDP per capita was \$29,674, while Mexico's GDP per capita was \$11,496. These economic advantages may translate to more investments in education and research in general. The gap could also be attributed to the fact that Spain has more active public diplomacy efforts than Mexico. Since the 1950s, Spain has established cultural centers in Alexandria, Beirut, Cairo, London, Naples, Rome, Paris, and Munich to promote its culture and enhance its global image (Lamo de Espinosa & Badillo Matos, 2017). Moreover, Madrid founded the Cervantes Institute in 1991 to promote the Spanish language and the *Real Instituto Elcano* in 2001 to enhance its country's international brand. Both entities have enjoyed continuity and global visibility. In contrast, it was not until the 1970s that Mexico began opening centers and institutes in Europe and the United States to promote its national and contemporary culture and make the activities of its diaspora known (Rodríguez Barba, 2008).

Naturally, the majority of authors in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature are affiliated with institutions in the Spanish-speaking world. However, it is worth noting that a significant number of authors originate from countries where Spanish is not the primary language. For example, the U.S. represents the third most common location of authors' institutions in our dataset (6%). It is important to note that Spanish is the second most spoken language in the United States. Additionally, we have authors from countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, and South Korea. This wide geographic diversity underscores the importance of Spanish as a language in international politics and communication. Spanish is one of the six official languages of the United Nations and serves as an official language in the European Union, the Organization of American States, the African Union, and many other international organizations.

One significant gap in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature is the limited presence of authors from smaller Spanish-speaking countries in Central America and the Caribbean. Our results show only two authors from this region, one from Cuba and one from El Salvador. We also did not find any articles by scholars from Equatorial Guinea, the only African country where Spanish is an official language. Given their lack of coercive power and exposure to potential hostile takeovers, small states rely more than average on peaceful diplomacy and strategic communications. These states offer a unique perspective on public diplomacy as smaller powers. Given that half the member states of the U.N. are considered "small", editors and scholars can actively prioritize publishing articles by authors from under-represented nation-states outside of Spain and Mexico.

Main concepts: Soft power and cultural diplomacy

The quantitative text analysis of the articles highlights a strong emphasis on concepts such as image, communication, and public opinion, which reflect important concerns in the foreign policy of Spanish-speaking countries. Scholars often delve into the concept of soft power (“*poder suave*” or “*poder blando*” in Spanish), especially those affiliated with American institutions. This focus might be attributed to a long-standing tradition in which scholars and practitioners frequently equate the two concepts. They consider public diplomacy an important part of soft power, which is used as an umbrella concept for cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and media outreach (Gilboa, 2008).

Moreover, the network analysis highlights the prominence of cultural diplomacy terms like “cultural” and “*cultur-ales*.” The term “*cultural*” serves as a central node in the plot, indicating it has a higher degree of connectivity to other nodes in the network. The significance of cultural diplomacy is particularly true for Spain’s public diplomacy efforts, where a focus on cultural institutions has been instrumental in promoting its image abroad.

Culture is a cornerstone of Spain’s public diplomacy strategy. In the 1980s and 1990s, Spain established institutions with a more explicit focus on the goals of cultural diplomacy, including the Ministry of Culture, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, and the Cervantes Institute (Cabrera Cuadrado, 2023). With its cultural heritage and global influence, Spain identifies language as a powerful tool in shaping its image, promoting its values, and fostering international relations. The Cervantes Institute, in particular, plays a crucial role in promoting the Spanish language and culture worldwide. Language is intricately linked to culture, and Spain’s public diplomacy leverages this connection to showcase the richness of traditions and values in the country by promoting its culture globally. This linguistic reach gives Spain a unique advantage in diplomatic efforts, allowing the country to connect directly with diverse populations across continents, especially in Latin America.

Cultural diplomacy also plays a significant role in articles about Mexican public diplomacy. There are various reflections on public diplomacy in the internet age, its connection to mass media, and Mexico’s relations with other countries through public diplomacy efforts. Within the context of the Mexico-United States relationship, consular diplomacy is addressed as a means of facilitating communication between Mexico and its diaspora in the United States. Interestingly, the network analysis also reveals that the U.S. is studied not only for its relations with Latin America and Spain but also independently. Most studies are about American foreign policy toward Latin America or Spain. For instance, there are studies about Washington-sponsored educational exchange programs in Colombia and Spain. However, there are also studies about American foreign policy in the Middle East. For example, Van Ham (2003) examines the American military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks. Our findings highlight the significance of American public diplomacy for Spanish-speaking countries.

Geographic areas of study

The results show that Mexico has been the most frequently studied geographic area with 21% of the articles, followed by Spain, the United States, and, to a lesser extent, Colombia, Argentina, and Chile. Naturally, a significant portion of the studies focuses on public diplomacy involving or originating from countries in the Americas. This region is home to the world's largest Spanish-speaking population. However, there are very few articles about public diplomacy efforts in the Central America and Caribbean region. There are only a handful of articles about Cuba, and nothing about other Spanish-speaking countries like Panama, Guatemala, or the Dominican Republic. Additionally, we did not find any articles about public diplomacy in Equatorial Guinea, the only African country where Spanish is an official language. There are also very few articles about intra-regional relations within the Spanish-speaking world. For instance, there are multiple articles about public diplomacy regarding Mexico-U.S. relations, Mexico-E.U. relations, and even Mexico-China relations. However, there are very few articles addressing Mexican relations with other Spanish-speaking countries. There is a scarcity of public diplomacy studies about Mexico and Spain, even though the European country is one of Mexico's main export destinations. Similarly, there are few public diplomacy studies about Mexico and Colombia, even though they are geographically close and represent the two largest populations in Hispanic America. This "intra-regional gap" in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature is an area that scholars should aim to address in the near future.

The Spanish-language public diplomacy literature also explores countries beyond the Americas. Notably, there is an increasing number of articles examining Chinese public diplomacy efforts toward Latin America. For instance, Cerda Dueñas (2019) has an article about the practice of sending giant pandas from China to other countries as a tool of diplomacy in Mexico. This practice is known as "panda diplomacy." We anticipate that public diplomacy scholarship involving China and other Asian nations will become increasingly important in the future.

However, it is worth noting that there is a noticeable absence of studies examining public diplomacy in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. This gap in scholarship overlooks public diplomacy by strategic states, including great and middle powers such as Nigeria, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Africa, and others. To advance the literature, the academic community should actively prioritize the publication of articles about underrepresented nation-states beyond those mentioned above.

Gender and citation patterns

Our findings also show that men represent the majority of authors published in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature. The gender imbalance in Spanish-language public diplomacy is similar to other fields and area studies. For instance, from 2000 to 2015,

women represented only 18% of all authors in the top-tier journals in political science (Teele & Thelen, 2017). Similarly, between 2000 and 2020, the percentage of male authors in top-tier Asian studies journals was approximately 60%, while female authors made up 40% of the total (Villegas Cruz, 2022).

A statistical analysis also indicates that works by women receive fewer citations compared to those by men. Unfortunately, the gender citation gap is very common in academic disciplines. For example, Maliniak et al. (2013) find that male authors in international relations journals are less likely to cite work by female scholars in comparison with female authors. There are several possible explanations for why this gap exists. Maliniak et al. (2013) argue this is mainly because (1) women tend to cite themselves less than men, and (2) men, who make up a disproportionate share of international relations scholars, tend to cite men more than women.

The gap could also be because men and women work at different types of institutions. In the field of international relations, men are more likely than women to be employed by Ph.D. granting institutions, while women are more likely to work at liberal arts schools (Maliniak et al., 2013). However, this pattern does not seem to apply to the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature. Both male and female authors mostly work in similar institutions.

The status of women in academia has long been a topic of discussion and concern at colleges and universities across the world. As mentioned earlier, we do not suggest that works by female authors receive fewer citations solely because they are women. There could be several potential explanations for the existence of this gap. More research is clearly needed to explain the gendered patterns documented here. In the meantime, a gender imbalance and citation bias in the public diplomacy literature is a problem for women in the profession because of the indisputable importance attached to publications at all stages, from hiring, to tenure, to promotion decisions. More and more women are seeking degrees and careers in the field, making equal access to the field's top journals extremely important; indeed, urgent.

Conclusion

Public diplomacy scholarship predominantly centers on English-language works. However, significant research on public diplomacy and related concepts, such as soft power, is emerging in other languages. In this study, we align with a broader movement striving to decolonize academic literature, fostering education and research that are more just, inclusive, and reflective of the richness of human experiences across diverse cultures and histories. To achieve this goal, we employ computational text analysis to conduct a content analysis of Spanish-language peer-reviewed articles on public diplomacy from 2001 to 2023.

Our findings confirm conventional wisdom on familiar topics and approaches while offering unexpected insights. Spanish-language public diplomacy scholarship is notably

shaped by scholars from Spain, Mexico, and the United States, reflecting these countries' influence on global Spanish language usage. Despite Mexico having the highest number of native Spanish speakers, most authors are affiliated with institutions in Spain. Notably, 44% of authors in this field have ties to institutions in Spain. Mexico, however, is the most frequently studied geographic area, constituting 21% of the articles, followed by Spain, the United States, and, to a lesser extent, Colombia, Argentina, and Chile. The results underscore a strong focus on concepts like image, communication, and public opinion, reflecting key concerns in the foreign policy of Spanish-speaking countries. Additionally, our findings reveal a gender imbalance, with men comprising the majority of authors (66%), and a statistical analysis indicates that works by women receive fewer citations than those by men (1:3).

This essay marks an initial effort to comprehend key trends and gendered patterns in public diplomacy. It can aid scholars in prioritizing research and the publication of articles that focus on underrepresented topics, authors, and geographic areas within the field. While acknowledging that achieving perfect representation is challenging in any literature, it does not imply abandoning efforts to strive for more comprehensive and equitable coverage at every level.

In closing, we note a number of future directions for research. First, one significant gap in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature is the limited presence of authors from Hispanophone Central America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Given their lack of military power, these small states rely more than other countries on peaceful diplomacy and strategic communications. Therefore, they may offer a unique perspective on public diplomacy as smaller powers. Editors and scholars have the opportunity to actively prioritize the publication of articles by authors from these underrepresented nation-states. In addition, there are few articles about intra-regional relations within the Spanish-speaking world. For instance, there is a scarcity of public diplomacy studies about Mexico and Spain, even though the European country is one of Mexico's main export destinations. This "intra-regional gap" in the Spanish-language public diplomacy literature is an area that scholars should aim to address in the near future.

Finally, future research can delve deeper into gendered patterns in public diplomacy and practice, with a central theme being the intersection of gender and public diplomatic strategies. In Spain, for instance, female scholars are currently investigating how Madrid integrates gender perspectives into its public diplomacy initiatives, emphasizing areas such as promoting gender equality and women's rights abroad (Solanas, 2021). They also explore gender dynamics in public diplomacy beyond the Spanish-speaking world. For instance, Pérez Mateo and Planet Contreras (2021) investigate the role of female civil servants in the Ministries of Religious Affairs in Morocco and Algeria. They find women contribute to efforts to export Islamic religious education abroad, particularly in Europe. The realm of feminist foreign policy encompasses other topics worth exploring. These include the roles of

female diplomats, the portrayal of gender in cultural representations, and a country's contributions to global gender-related initiatives, among others.

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