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8

Government communication in Spain: Leaving behind the legacies of the past

María José Canel

Introduction'

On 20 October 2010, Spain's Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez-Zapatero reshuffled his cabinet in order to, as he said in a press conference, 'seize the moment of the definitive recovery of the economy and employment'. With this idea, communication was centralized, and he trusted in people 'with a great capacity for communication to explain clearly to Spanish society what we are doing' (Rodríguez-Zapatero, 2010). He was attempting to change the structure of communication in order to send clearer and more effective messages.

But these changes did not take place. Only months later, on 28 July 2011, Rodríguez-Zapatero was obliged to call early elections, four months before his term of office was meant to end. It was the culmination of Spain's ninth democratic constitutional legislature, nine periods of government which, together with the constituent period (1975–9), add up to 36 years of development and consolidation of democracy, following the 36 years of dictatorship under the Franco regime.

The blueprint for communication set out in January 2012 by the new government of the Popular Party led by Mariano Rajoy is another addition to the different approaches and formulas with which Spanish governments have

communicated in democracy. This chapter offers an analysis of this evolution in an attempt to account for the context of government communication in Spain at the time of writing.

A brief look at history: From militarization to democracy

The system of government communication today in Spain has been developed under the 1978 Constitution. This was the result of a complex and delicate constitutional negotiation process which led to the consensus to establish a democratic system after more than 150 tumultuous years.

The forms of government adopted during this turbulent time and immediately prior to the period analysed in this chapter are as follows (see Table 8.1): in 1923 after a coup d'état, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera was established, lasting for more than six years; on 14 April 1931, after Republican-Socialists won local elections, the Second Republic was proclaimed and King Alfonso XIII went into exile; between 1934 and 1936, uprisings against the government of the Republic followed one after the other on 18 July 1936 military troops revolted under the command of General Franco, unleashing a civil war between Nationalists and Republicans until Franco's victory on 1 April 1939. Finally, on 20 November 1975, Franco died, bringing to an end a dictatorship that had lasted almost forty years.

Within this historical context, the practice of government communication began its institutionalization in 1923 with the establishment of the Office of Information and Press Censorship during the military dictatorship, which functioned as the government office of spokesperson and was placed under the Ministry of the Presidency (Campos, 1999; 2010, p. 443). This regime imported the pyramidal and centralized Napoleonic structure² for the dissemination of government information: the system of 'compulsory insertion' (i.e. publication of the information issued by the regime was mandatory for all media) granted the State a predominant position for ensuring an information structure based on coercion and censorship (Campos, 1999, p. 105).

This way of organizing government communication was to be taken up again during the Franco regime (1939–75): based on the small press offices that worked as the censorship offices of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, their propagandistic nature was maintained together with the right of the State to disseminate information. This right was reinforced in 1951 with the creation of the Ministry of Information and Tourism, which consecrated the idea that disseminating information was one of the different activities of a State that regulated everything involving the press, propaganda, information, radio broadcasting, cinema, television, theatre and tourism.

TABLE 8.1 Milestones in Spain's recent history

1923–9	Coup d'état and the establishment of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship
1931	Second Republic
1936–9	Civil War
1939–75	Franco dictatorship
1978	Constitution approved by referendum
1979	First constitutional general elections. UCD (Union of the Democratic Centre) Party
1979–82	UCD governments (Democratic Centre Union)
1982–96	Socialist governments (PSOE). Three legislatures. Felipe González
1996–2004	Popular Party governments (PP). Two legislatures. José María Aznar
2004–11	Socialist governments (PSOE). Two legislatures. José Luis Rodríguez-Zapatero
2011–	Popular Party (PP). Mariano Rajoy

Finally, the Franco regime confiscated media whose editorial lines had been opposed to the *Movimiento Nacional* (National Movement), in other words, to the single party called the Falange (*FET y de las JONS*) which, together with those called 'vertical' trade unions (those not proscribed by Franco), state agencies and public posts, civil servants and numerous social organizations, comprised the majority group in Spanish society under Franco; these media were handed over to this 'National Movement' (hence it was known as 'the Movement Press'). When the Franco regime ended and the 'Movement Press' was closed down, the only place to accommodate its workers was within the new public administration. As will be seen, they have formed an important part of the staff of government communication offices during 32 years of democratic governments, from 1975 until 2011.

With the death of Franco on 20 November 1975, a process began that came to be called the 'Democratic Transition' (García Morillo, 1996; see also Field & Hamann, 2008). The first democratic elections were held in 1977, the new constitution was passed in 1978 and a period of democratic alternation in power began in 1979, with governments of the Democratic Centre Union-UCD (1979–82), Socialists-PSOE (1982–96), Conservative Popular Party-PP (1996–2004), Socialists-PSOE (2004–11) and Popular Party-PP (2011–).

The political landscape: The result of laborious consensus-making

The 1978 Constitution establishes Spain as a constitutional monarchy, with a parliamentary system, both chambers being elected by the people; it also establishes a decentralized territorial organization with 17 autonomous communities. Several features of this system deserve more discussion to provide a better understanding of how government communication operates in Spain.

First, the prime minister, elected by parliament, is not 'one among equals' (*primus inter pares*) but is given great powers by the Constitution (established with the aim of consolidating governments after years of instability), and is not actually called 'prime minister' but rather *Presidente* (president) (and the second in command is called *Vice-Presidente*, vice-president). The prime minister and his/her government have considerable power to control parliament's agenda, schedule and outcomes; the whole structure and organizational chart of the government depends upon the prime minister's will (López Guerra, 1992). The prime minister also has a strong influence over the electoral list and the crucial rank order on that list. This has important implications for communication. First of all, it makes the prime minister the most important factor for the media (see Álvarez & Pascual, 2002, pp. 267–8). Second, communication structure and resources are highly dependent upon the prime minister's sensitivity to communication matters: it is s/he who decides priority of ranks and resources, and the personal relationship between official communicators and the prime minister is crucial for decision making in communication matters.

Secondly, Spain is a state with a system of regional autonomies (*Estado Autonómico*); it is a national state in which autonomy for historical nationalities and regions is recognized (it is not, as is the case for federal systems, the federation of actually existing states). Every autonomous community has its own legislature, executive and judiciary infrastructure. To this must be added the singular nature of the multiparty system in Spain: the D'Hondt method of proportionality for allocating seats in parliament makes it difficult for third national parties to get seats, but it facilitates the presence of nationalist/pro-independence parties, that, though smaller, have strong backing in certain autonomous regions. The result is a parliament with two major parties and an average of eight nationalist/pro-independence parties. As a consequence, it is difficult to obtain the required absolute majority, and in fact, five of the nine legislatures since the transition have had governments with only a simple majority. But there is no tradition of coalition government in Spain. This has important implications for government communication: the central

government has to tailor its messages to the different languages and cultural specificities of different regions; communication of central government public policies (especially of those with shared powers) has to compete with communication from the regional–autonomous governments; finally, central government ministers often have to travel to the autonomous regions to reach out to the people and thus extend the central government’s message.

The media landscape

Spain’s media landscape is characterized by the private press on the one hand and a dual broadcasting system of public and commercial broadcasting on the other. Several features deserve mention for the present analysis.

First, media concentration and a partisan press are the norm. Table 8.2 shows the most important media groups. Prisa is the largest, doubling the audience figures of the second largest, Planeta (Artero, 2010).

Many studies have shown the partisan character of the Spanish press (Semetko & Canel, 1997; Gunther, Montero & Wert, 2000; Artero, 2010; Canel & Sanders, 2006, 2010; Canel, 2012, just to quote some). In general, Prisa, Zeta and Mediapro occupy the centre-left of the ideological spectrum, whereas Planeta, Vocento, Unedisa and Godó are on the centre-right.

Second, Spaniards are mainly television viewers (3.8 hours a day, Uteca, 2011). Whereas newspaper readership has always been low, with a lower circulation rate than the European Union’s average (85 issues per 1,000 inhabitants, as compared to 166) (AEDE, 2011, figures are for 2009), television and radio have always commanded massive audiences. While 88.4 per cent

TABLE 8.2. Media groups in Spain

Prisa	Planeta	Vocento	Unedisa	Mediapro ^a
<i>El País</i> newspaper	<i>La Razón</i> newspaper	<i>ABC</i> newspaper	<i>El Mundo</i> newspaper	<i>Público</i> newspaper
SER radio network		12 regional newspapers	<i>Marca</i> (sports newspaper)	<i>La Sexta</i> television network
Pay television digital platform	<i>Onda Cero</i> radio network	<i>Qué</i> (free newspaper)		
Digital+				
<i>Cuatro</i> televisión network	<i>Antena 3</i> television			
	<i>Adn</i> (free newspaper)			

^a At the time this manuscript goes to press, important changes are taking place in the Mediapro group: the paper edition of the *Público* daily newspaper has been closed down (February 2012) and the television station *La Sexta* has been bought by Planeta.

watch television daily, only 37.6 per cent read the press and 57.7 per cent listen to the radio; 41.5 per cent accessed the internet the day before (EGM, 2011a, figures are for 2011). Daily newspapers reach an overall circulation of 3,775,230, of which 2,949,129 pertain to the general information press, 722,504 to the sports press and 103,597 to the economic press (AEDE, 2011). Regional press circulation is 2,202,880, more than half of total figures.

Third, the landscape of the Spanish television system has radically changed during the last twenty-three years. First of all, its structure has been liberalized: it was only in the late 1980s (1988) when Spanish television moved from being a public monopoly (with only two state channels) to a competitive multichannel system, with all the networks increasingly concerned about ratings. In 2010 there were three main private national operators managing several channels (Telecinco, the leader with 25.5% of the audience share, Antena 3 – 15.8% – and La Sexta with 6.8%), one national public operator (CRTVE, with two channels and 24.1% of the audience share) and thirteen regional public operators (owned by the regional governments). Audience share is concentrated in the first five operators (83.5%). Nowadays 71 per cent of homes have DTT, 9 per cent cable, 15 per cent satellite and 5 per cent IPTV (internet Protocol Television) (Uteca, 2011).

There have been interesting modifications in the public broadcasting service. Legislation in 2006 brought important changes with the idea of guaranteeing the channels' independence, its public nature and confirming it as a public service. The chief post is no longer a *Director General* (General Director) appointed by the government (whose mandate expired with the election of a new government); the channel is governed by an executive body (the *Consejo de Administración*, Board of Administration) elected by parliament, which also chooses the chairperson of the corporation and its board from among these 12 members, needing a qualified majority of two-thirds. The first chairperson designated in this way resigned in July 2011. On 20 April 2012, alleging the parliament's incapacity to reach an agreement, the government established the possibility of absolute majority if on the first round of voting the qualified majority of two-thirds could not be reached (Decree-Act 15/2012). Appointment of present chairperson passed parliament in June 2012. Act 8/2009 also changed RTVE's financing system: with the suppression of income through advertising, its main income now comes from the general state budget (42%). It is still too soon to assess whether these modifications are producing a more independent and less pro-government coverage.

Fourth and finally, whereas newspaper readership and television audiences are decreasing, internet use is increasing: in 2005, 19.7 per cent mentioned they had accessed the internet the day before; this figure more than doubled (43%) in 2011 (EGM, 2011b). Moreover, 83 per cent of internet users also use social networks (Fundación Orange, 2011), which have become a tool

for the development of social movements. These in turn have become the mouthpiece for social protests and complaints expressed to public and economic authorities; mobilizations through social media crystallized with the campaign for regional and local elections in 2011 in what has been called the *15-M movement* (for the 15 May 2011) by the 'Outraged' who have generated the Occupy movement.

Some data regarding the journalistic culture will help to complete our picture of the media landscape in Spain and permit a better analysis of government communication. Survey research suggests that Spanish journalists are moving from a partisan–ideological paradigm towards a more adversarial–apolitical one. A new generation of journalists has been shown to be more impartial, factual and critical than their colleagues who, trained during the Franco era, see the media's role as contributing to the consolidation of the democratic system and its institutions; this previous generation tends to be more interpretative in their style, oriented towards advocacy and supportive rather than critical of institutions (Canel & Piqué, 1998, pp. 317–18; Barrera & Zugasti, 2006).

The development of government communication: Giving central place to communication

When General Franco died in 1975, the King named Adolfo Suárez as prime minister. Suárez was well aware that 'the country had to change radically' in order to avoid 'a new confrontation between Spaniards' (interview in Prego, 2000, pp. 19–20). Urged on by the need to generate confidence in the idea that 'it was possible to live together in democracy' (interview in Prego, 2000, p. 54), and basing himself on the German experience (Campos, 1999, p. 143), in 1977, Suárez created the 'Office of Information Services' which was meant to disseminate to the media information from cabinet meetings and visits from international governments (Decree 2761/77). In 1978, aware of the need to centralize in one person broad powers to provide information about the activity of the presidency (the prime minister's office) (Campos, 1999, p. 138), and to achieve better relations with the media, something regarded as 'of capital importance in a pluralist society', he placed the role of communications higher up in the organizational chart through the creation of the office of state secretary (subminister) (Decree 2157/78).

Table 8.3 illustrates the evolution of the rank of the government's spokespeople since 1982.

When the Spanish Socialist Party came to power in 1982, its leader, Felipe González, transferred to the government what he had learned during

TABLE 8.3 Evolution of the government's spokesperson since 1982

Dates	Formula	Governments
1982–5	Government spokesperson = State secretary (subminister) for communication	PSOE 1982–6 1986–9
1985–8	Government spokesperson = Minister (who is also the Minister of Culture)	1989–93 1993–6
1988–93	A specific Ministry of Government Spokesperson is created	
1993–6	Ministry of Spokesperson	
1996–8	Government spokesperson = State secretary (subminister)	PP 1996–2000 2000–4
1998–2000	Government spokesperson functions are attributed to the Minister of Industry	
2000–2	A specific Ministry of Government Spokesperson is created	
2002–4	Government spokesperson = Deputy prime minister	
2004–10	Government spokesperson = Deputy prime minister	PSOE 2004–8 2008–11
2010–11	Government spokesperson = Deputy prime minister	
2011–	Government spokesperson = Deputy prime minister	PP 2011–

the election campaign: the importance of communication in bringing about change (Feo, 1993). Among other things, he understood that the vital need to strengthen Spanish democracy went hand in hand with the need to reinforce the figure of the prime minister, a challenge that would have the following implications for communication: he would be the one to appear most frequently at press conferences, and the prime minister's office would centralize relations with the media (Campos, 1999, p. 150). Different analyses have shown González's great ability to communicate (Álvarez & Pascual, 2002, p. 274). He has been characterized as a 'natural and unrivalled communicator' who was a crucial element that made up for a still weak and not fully systematized communication office (Canel & Sanders, 2006, p. 90).

Two months after these elections, González created the post of government spokesperson (filled by a state secretary) in order to adjust the pace of the bureaucracy to that of the media and thus achieve a more direct and accurate exchange of information; in the words of his first spokesperson, he was aiming to replace the 'state control' model he had inherited with a more professional communication approach (Sotillos, 1984, p. 380). In 1985, the job of government spokesperson was raised to the rank of minister (Decree 1087/85) (filled by the Minister of Culture), and in 1988 González took the most important step in this process with the creation of an entire ministry devoted to the government spokesperson with all the infrastructure that involved (Decree 727/1988). The structure acquired by the spokesperson in 1988 and its development would turn out to be determinant in the evolution that government communication has undergone in Spain until now.

When the conservative Popular Party came to power in 1996 it initially lowered the rank of government spokesperson back to a state secretary, with the resulting downsizing of the supporting structure. As revealed in interviews with those who worked as his spokespeople, at the beginning of his term, Aznar did not have a very clear idea of what he wanted to do with the organizational chart of government communication (interviews, 2009), which subsequently underwent changes during his two terms as prime minister: in 1998 the Minister of Industry was also given the role of government spokesperson; in 2000 Aznar created a specific Ministry of Government Spokesperson; and in 2002 a deputy prime minister was named as spokesperson for the first time ever.

In 2004 the Socialist Party returned to power and its leader, José Luis Rodríguez-Zapatero, consolidated the trend to unite the roles of government spokesperson and deputy prime minister in one person; he furthermore added a third *Dirección General* (General Direction, a State Office) whose function was to strengthen coordination of the message. In order to expand his message, in 2010 he attributed spokesperson functions to both the deputy prime minister –formally the government spokesperson – and to what is called the *Ministro de la Presidencia*,³ but as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there was hardly time to find out whether this formula was effective.

To summarize, the organizational chart for government communication in Spain has undergone different formulations. Formulas vary from the case in which the spokesperson is a state secretary to where the spokesperson has the next highest rank after the prime minister in the position of the deputy prime minister. In-between, there is the case in which the government spokesperson combines other ministerial responsibilities with that of being the government spokesperson; the case where s/he is a minister without portfolio (with very limited resources); and where s/he is a minister with

portfolio (and therefore with their own structure, office and staff). As Table 8.3 illustrates, the trend has been to put communication at the centre: for the last three governments the government spokesperson has held the highest rank after the prime minister.

The organizational structure for government communication today

Figure 8.1 shows the organizational chart for government communication in 2011.

The communication structure is, generally speaking, as follows: under the *Ministerio de la Presidencia* there is a State Secretary for Communication to which state offices (*direcciones generales*) belong (each headed by a General Director, the next rank below a state secretary). Traditionally, there have been two state offices involved in communication (one for domestic information and another for foreign information). In 2004, a third state office was created for coordinating communication from the prime minister's office with the press offices of ministerial departments.

The latest restructuring of the organizational chart, carried out by the Popular Party government in January 2012, has the following features. The official government spokesperson is also the deputy prime minister and the State Secretary for Communication depends on that office. For budgetary reasons the previous three state offices (*Direcciones Generales*) dealing with communication functions have been reduced to one. Four subunits depend

FIGURE 8.1 *The organizational chart for government communication in Spain, 2011*

Source: By author with information from the Ministerio de la Presidencia, 2011.

on the state office for communication: one for relations with domestic media, one for relations with foreign media, one to carry out research and one for electronic communication and new communication technologies (Decree 199/2012).

In the ministries, the person responsible for communication does not have the rank of a General Director but is only an advisor to the minister (this post is no longer called 'chief of the press office' but 'chief of the communication office' in order to include other activities that go beyond mere relations with the media).

The prime minister does not have a specific communications office or spokesperson. Since 1983 this office has had a team of advisers but its range of action is not so relevant (Ortega, 1992, p. 195). Both the development of this office and its latest restructuring of 2011 (Decree 1094/2011) indicate that there are a lack of adequate procedures in the prime minister's office for the conduct of more systematized and planned communication on the part of the prime minister. First, the only unit in this office that could be related to communication (the Department of Analysis and Studies, responsible for monitoring the government's image in the media and in public opinion, and the drawing up of strategic proposals) has not been given much relevance during the past three decades (interviews, 2009 and 2011). Secondly, what refers to the prime minister's participation in events is scattered in the organizational chart: on the one hand, the Department of Protocol is independent of the prime minister's advisers cabinet, and its work is more technical than strategic (interviews, 2011); moreover, the prime minister's agenda is drawn up by his personal secretary without any systematic procedure for long-term strategic planning, with the exception of very specific issues (Ortega, 1992; this way of working was corroborated in interviews in 2011). Finally, the structure of the office for crisis management does not include a communication dimension. All of these features are shown again in the latest restructuring of the government carried out in 2012 by the Popular Party (Decree 83/2012). Thus communication of the prime minister has to operate within these structural deficiencies.

Human and financial resources

Presence (and absence) of the public administration

An analysis of the human resources devoted to government communication in Spain brings to light certain specificities as regards the presence of the public administration (civil service). First, the staff is made up of a combination of personal/political appointments and civil servants from the general state

administration. More specifically, in 2011 approximately 200 people were working in the central body –the State Secretary for Communications (forty of them in communication and the rest in administrative or technical tasks: ushers, administrative secretaries, etc.). Eight of them were personal/political appointments; the rest were civil servants who had reached their posts through competitive exam (career civil servants) or were hired (temporary civil servants). As already mentioned, this is also where the workers from the *Movement Press* were accommodated after the demise of the Franco regime, not all of them were retired until 2011, and were determinant as part of the staff of the office of the State Secretary for Communication (interviews, 2011).

At the ministerial level the average size of the communication staff is as follows: at the head is the Director of communications (with rank of advisor to the minister and not of General Director) – who in some cases has a deputy – three writers, one person to monitor audiovisual media, two people for monitoring wires, three administrative secretaries and two ushers. Of all these, only the Director is a personal/political appointment, as is this person's deputy, if there is one. Workers formerly from the *Movement Press* can also be found among the civil servants working in the ministries.

This staff structure has practical implications that go beyond the usual complexity involved in the coexistence of political appointees with civil servants. On the one hand, having inherited the workers from the *Movement Press* meant that for a long time recruitment, replacement and training processes to adjust staff to changing communication demands were put on hold. This led to an inflation of technical functions (performed by civil servants, such as accreditation of journalists or monitoring media content) to the detriment of managerial ones (such as strategy design or content production).

In 2011, a total of 400 persons were working in government communication (including administrative staff).⁴ It is difficult to compare this figure with others over time because the official publications do not differentiate communication staff from other civil servants. But if we look just at the central communication unit (the state secretariat for communication), the data indicate, first, that the number of staff increases, the higher the rank of the unit;⁵ and second, that the current number of 200 people has remained stable over the past few years.

Secondly, unlike in other countries, in Spain there is no specific corps of civil servants to work in the communication area of public administration. There are no civil servants in senior posts. There are no mechanisms for recruitment or specific training and promotion procedures with criteria related to professional communication. That is why, again unlike other countries, there is barely any explicit formulation of what values should prevail in government communication. Once again, we must look back to the Franco era to find the only formulation made in this respect: a decree from 1967, which, reflecting the ethos of the Francoist confessional State, established the 'norms of behaviour for civil

servants in the Ministry of Information and Tourism'. Although no longer in force, they deserve mention in that they show the regime's concept of state ownership of information: the information that the government provides is simply one more social institution like the 'institutions that were brought to light or recreated by the National Movement'. Therefore, civil servants, in their work of providing information from the State, shall fight the 'enemy', which is 'the great force of international communism'; an enemy against which 'any neutral attitude is inadmissible' (quoted in Campos, 1999, pp. 133ff.).

As there is at present no specific branch of the civil service devoted to communication, the values of the General State Administration for all civil servants also apply to those working in communication. It was not until 2007 that the Civil Service Bylaw established a comprehensive formulation of the concept, functions, rules and ethical principles guiding the civil service. Although it establishes objectivity, integrity, neutrality, impartiality, transparency, effectiveness and honesty (BOE, Act 7/2007, article 52) among its basic principles, in the section on ethical principles and norms of behaviour deriving from these general norms no reference is made to public communicators or the job of communication. In short, in Spain there is no guidance on the values that should guide the work of civil servants working on government communication to replace that issued by the Franco regime.

Skills and education

As shown in Table 8.3, there have been 13 government spokespeople (only 3 of them women) during the past 29 years. Whereas the government's spokespeople have a more political profile (none of the 13 were communication professionals), the State Secretary for Communication and the heads of ministerial departments' communication offices are always journalists (mostly with journalism degrees) who have worked in the media and have a personal relationship with the minister who hires them. The development of courses and degrees in organizational communication and public relations as well as of the professional field of corporate communication has led to a trend to hire people with this sort of background. The National Training Institute for Civil Servants established specific short courses on communication for civil servants in 2008.

Financial resources

It is not easy to access accurate and thorough information as to the cost of government communication. The official data available are published in a report regarding expenditure on advertising campaigns issued yearly since 2006.

In 2010, a total amount of €80,832,130 was spent in advertising and institutional communication. Compared with prior years, this expenditure amounted to a 50 per cent reduction with respect to 2006 (this reduction is due to the economic crisis). The only expense on the rise is internet communication. Finally, the government spends mainly on advertising campaigns and direct marketing; only 5.8 per cent is allocated to public relations campaigns (Ministerio de la Presidencia, 2010a).

The process: Tasks performed by the government communication office

An analysis of how different decrees have formulated the tasks attributed to government communication offices in Spain from 1977 to today (the last was in 1999) reveals a slight trend towards a broader conception closely linked to management: moving from communication focused entirely on the government's relations with the media (dissemination of information from cabinet meetings, trips of senior officials, etc.) to a formulation that, albeit vaguely, refers to the idea of strategic management and planning (including the *devising* of an communication *policy* and its coordination). Nevertheless, these formulations are far from being a broader and more complete conceptualization of communication: for example, there is nothing referring to public relations activities and there is a lack of integration of the different communication tasks such as protocol, internet communication, the staging of events or crisis communication.

In practice, the main tasks carried out by government communicators are related to media relations management. The government spokesperson meets the press every Friday, after the cabinet meeting. There are no daily briefings by the government spokesperson or the ministerial departments; additional press conferences are called unsystematically. The weight of media exposure is very much on the leaders (the prime minister and the ministers) since they do not have a spokesperson. In fact, the directors of communication for ministerial departments do not brief the press; what they do is to arrange the ministers' media encounters.

Coordination is referred to as one of the most important challenges (interviews, 2008 and 2011); although directors of communication from ministerial departments functionally depend on the central unit for communication in practice they report to their ministers.

As interviews show, public officials do not undertake much strategic work; feedback research is not conducted; there is little planning for crisis communication, as shown in research case studies looking at government

communication relating to terrorist attacks and media scandals (see Canel & Sanders, 2006, 2010). Interviews also show that there is, however, an awareness of the need to transfer the knowledge and strategic skills common in election campaigns to government communication. In 2007 a new corporate identity (to include the word 'España') for all information and public relations activities of the government and the ministries was introduced. There is also an internet editorial office and an online information platform, last renewed in 2011.

Conclusions: Challenges for government communication in Spain

This chapter shows that the design, organization and legislation relating to government communication in Spain have their roots in a conception of the State as the prime conveyor and manager of information.

This analysis corroborates what has been shown in previous studies (Canel, 2007; Dircom, 2007; Sanders, Canel & Holtz-Bacha, 2011): there have been a number of changes (new degrees in organizational and corporate communication, modifications to the organizational chart to give more importance to the rank of those in charge of communication, new courses for civil servants, new definitions of tasks, etc.) that allow us to say that government communication in Spain may be moving towards a more systematized structure. But at the same time innovation in communication is hindered by the legacy of the past, and today's challenge is to overcome the conception of the State as the prime manager and owner of information.

Challenges include, first, establishing useful mechanisms for safeguarding government communication from partisanship and self-promotion. The Law for Advertising and Institutional Communication was approved in 2005 both to improve distribution of governmental messages and to disassociate accurate and neutral information on public policies from political opinion and partisan messages. Prohibited content includes material that undermines public policies, is sexist, encourages violence, or promotes government achievements. Although this law has meant a step forward towards transparency in communication expenditure (every year the government has to send to parliament a report on the aims, costs, tools used and companies contracted for all its campaigns) it does not address the broad variety of tasks that communication in today's world demands: the legislation refers only to advertising campaigns; it does not consider the outsourcing of professional public relations services (in fact, the sporadic calls for bids have been controversial). Finally, the mechanisms for control are defective:

the Complaints Committee (established just three years ago) depends on the government's state secretariat for communication. It has so far received several complaints but none has been upheld (written information provided by the secretary of the Committee at a personal query).

Other challenges include establishing mechanisms that foster transparency in government communication;⁶ renewing staff to rebalance technical tasks with those of management and planning; creating organizational charts that integrate in a more professional and thorough way the different communicative tasks that a government carries out; updating the profiles of those who manage communication departments; establishing recruitment, training and promotion processes typical of the public administration that will guarantee the values of neutrality and public service, also at senior level; the use of the internet for closer interaction with citizens; and finally, research, since although studies have been carried out on election campaigns, very little has been published on government communication. All of these challenges must be approached in the context of an increasingly fragmented media sector and an ever less compliant public television station, which is in the midst of a deep economic crisis. Future research should concentrate on finding out whether the structural changes taking place are contributing to government communication that is moving away from the Francoist 'state control' model of its remote origins.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is mainly based on a revision of the evolution of organizational charts, published analyses and existing legal texts. However, given the paucity of material published, this research draws on information taken from an ongoing research project based upon in-depth interviews with Spanish government spokespeople. Information from six interviews has been used here: three were with the highest rank of government spokespeople and three with Secretaries of State for Communication. People interviewed cover all governments since 1993. Interviews were conducted between 2008 and 2011.
- 2 The present Spanish Civil Service has its roots in that established in the nineteenth century following the French Napoleonic system. More specifically, Napoleon's establishment of the Bureau d'Esprit in 1792 has been identified as pioneer in the organization of administrative structures for the dissemination of governmental information (see Campos, 1999, p. 105).
- 3 The *Ministerio de la Presidencia* is a ministry without portfolio: it supports the prime minister and has a political function. It also coordinates matters of constitutional relevance: relations between the government and parliament, governmental committees, coordination of the cabinet meetings, and so on.

- 4 These figures include only the staff of the Secretary of State for Communication and the communication offices of the different ministries; they do not include the communication staff from state bodies or agencies such as museums, the state train company or state security forces. To give an idea of the total figure for civil servants, the information available, which includes regional ministries and agencies, puts the number at 131,954 (Ministerio de la Presidencia, 2010b).
- 5 Thus, it increased from 30 persons in 1979, when it was a State Secretariat for Information to 300 in 1988, with the creation of a Ministry of Spokesperson (data taken from Campos, 1999, p. 176).
- 6 On 23 March 2012, the government presented a *Draft Bill on Transparency, Access to Public Information and Good Governance* that at present is still in the discussion phase in Parliament.

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