



Spanish Diplomacy in Ruins

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Florentino Portero

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Spanish society is caught between feeling aghast, ashamed and shocked by the role of our diplomacy in the world. It is beginning to be normal that in his official visits abroad, the King of Spain must, unfortunately, hear things which he was not used to hearing in the past. What happened at the Ibero-American Summit is the straw that broke the camel's back, the expression in images of the pathetic situation at which we have arrived.

Those who we support without any justification – leaving aside our commitment to the defense of democracy – are now the same ones accusing us of being non-democratic, “fascists,” they say. Our companies invest in their countries, endangering our savings tied to their national fate. And all this directly to the King...the person that represents Spain's

historical continuity, unity and values. That is the prize Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero is picking up because he linked Spanish democracy with radical movements, for yielding when pressure was exerted on our companies, for giving away Spanish taxpayers' money in form of aid to regimes yearning to do away with the institutions of representative democracy.

The Spanish Royal House has been exposed to a situation as violent as unnecessary. Seeing what happened during the first day of the Summit, the Zapatero Administration should have suggested to the king his nonattendance, as a sign of disgust and as a measure of caution to avoid what ultimately happened. Such an important and delicate institution as the Spanish Crown should not be associated with such pathetic spectacles as the

ones that took place in Santiago, Chile. It is the President of the government who has to deal with those situations using energy and wit.

The Summit allowed Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez to organize one of his circus numbers at the expense of Spain – in his opinion, the perfect embodiment of the evils devastating the continent. He pursued the confrontation and he succeeded, dragging the king himself into a scenario at odds with his status. What happened has allowed Chávez to keep on being in the headlines and exploiting the incident. Zapatero's Latin-American policy has come tumbling down. Nobody can have any doubt left that playing the Revolution game with the Bolivarians and their ilk was not only frivolous but it was mainly an attack against our own national interests.

With this legislative term almost over, the results of Zapatero's diplomacy are evident. We have disappeared from the decision-making forums to end in the hands of tyrants and corrupt characters of that ilk. Our national interests have been left behind in favor of initiatives as wrongly substantiated as dangerous. Our authority has melted away in Latin America as well as in Europe. Better not to even mention Washington. In the Arab world, we have fallen into the arms of the most dangerous regimes, shocking our traditional friends in the region.

The inflicted damage is so great that it will take us many years to regain a considerable part of what we have lost. It is not realistic to think that we can recover the influence we had before the arrival of Zapatero, because we have shown the world to what extent we are divided,

and therefore, how inconsistent we are as allies.

The regeneration of Spain's foreign policy can only be accomplished by the Popular Party. An election victory by Mariano Rajoy, leader of the Popular Party, is the *conditio sine qua non* to put an end to this disastrous period of our national history, as Esperanza Aguirre recently suggested, characterized by the attempt to set Spaniards at odds with each other, to re-open deep wounds in the country's collective memory. A defeat of the Socialist Party would lead to the sudden removal of its current party leadership and to a change of strategy. Only then, would a return to sanity be possible.

Over the years, Spanish foreign policy has lacked public argumentation, a discourse understood and accepted by the population. This is the moment. Rajoy has the opportunity to offer all Spaniards a foreign policy program that helps us understand what is the role we want to play in the international arena, and to recuperate part of the lost prominence. A task that would only be fully understood within the framework of a much bigger task, one of greater significance: The reconstruction of the Spanish identity. A challenge that Rajoy has assumed, something that millions of Spaniards thank him for. Only knowing who we are, we will be able to define our values, interests and the international role we want to play. Spain is one unit. It is not enough just trying to restore its territorial organization or to fight the terrorism of the separatists with resolve and the law, it is necessary to face the national reconstruction from all its flanks.

The foreign policy of a democratic nation cannot be based only on its history and values. We are not a recently constituted state, but one of the oldest in Europe. The experience and what we have gone through for centuries should be present, but sifted through the values and feelings of today's Spaniards. A synthesis found collected in the text of our Constitution. Spain is a democratic nation that believes in individual rights, that feels solidarity with the ones in need, and that is an inherent part of the West. Spain's international dimension must be imbued with these principles. We cannot encourage nor stand on the sidelines in the face of any kind of dictatorial regimes. It is unacceptable and incomprehensible for our allies to see Spain acting as ambassador of Cuba's Castro, of Chávez's Bolivarian movement, of the Syrian regime or, even worse, that our government embarks on foolish and irresponsible initiatives following Iran's trail and holding its hand. Spain must go alongside democratic nations and cooperate in a manner of solidarity promoting freedom, social justice, and open markets, because there is no better guarantee for peace than an international society formed by responsible governments under the rule of law.

Spain must be once more a relevant actor in the building of Europe. We have things to say and experiences to share. In Europe, we were a model partner; we knew how to make the most of the aid we received and how to be thankful for it; we were leaders against the do-nothing policy where we had stumbled, nowadays a leadership position run by

others. It is unacceptable, even worse, it is humiliating to see Spain out of the important discussions and it has become a quiet and obedient partner. Europe faces serious challenges and it is not clear that it can surmount them. We must go back to lead those who bank on economic liberalization; on better education, and higher quality research; on the defense of Western values; on a firm position to confront Jihadist terrorism and the Islamist influence on our Muslim fellow citizens; in favor of an international presence committed to the defense of democracy and open markets.

In Afghanistan, we are fighting for freedom as opposed to Islamist fundamentalism. The outcome of that conflict, as the one in Iraq, will be decisive in the unfolding of another conflict, a much greater one because it includes the two already mentioned: It is the one confronting radical Islam with the Muslim world and the West. To be consistent, we should make a more generous and committed contribution.

Although foreign policy and defense are usually not a matter of fundamental interest in electoral campaigns, the circumstances demand taking a firm stance, a doctrinal effort to excite Spaniards about an aspect of our national policy that is bankrupt and in tatters. If Mariano Rajoy does not take advantage of this opportunity, liberal-conservative Spain will have lost a golden opportunity. It is not enough to restore common sense. It is necessary to win the battle of the ideas.