



Foreign and Security Policy for the Post-Zapatero Era

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In politics you pay for the mistakes you make. In foreign politics, you pay very dearly. Four years of government under Rodríguez Zapatero have left us with a complicated legacy. The Spanish Prime Minister has managed to work his way into non-speaking terms with the President of the United States; he has succeeded in being ignored by the leaders of the large European powers; and he has been insulted by those he considers to be his friends, ranging from Chávez and Evo Morales to the Castro brothers. In record time, Rodríguez Zapatero has managed to eliminate Spain from world affairs and ensure that the country is widely regarded as frivolous and irresponsible.

Foreign policy may not be that important to him, except around election time, when he runs to grab photo opportunities with whoever may be willing or available. But world affairs are important. The mortgage crisis in America could endanger our

prosperity and, at the opposite extreme, the events in Pakistan could have a devastating effect on our security. Just look at the Islamic terrorists who come from Pakistan with every intention of replicating the events of March 11th.

The world is much more complicated to understand and to manage today. Zapatero's Spain has not prepared itself to adequately face all of the challenges and threats that currently exist. In fact, Spain is more vulnerable than ever because the Government has eliminated the necessary tools to overcome the current issues.

Improving Spain's international status is not merely a question of whim. Our well-being and security are at stake. Just like any other country, Spain cannot face all of its international problems effectively on its own; it needs its partners and allies in order to find the necessary solutions. And for us to be able to rely on our allies, our allies must

see us as a serious nation and a coherent nation. One that is willing to demand, but also willing to contribute by playing its part. We are a long way off this goal at the present time.

Shedding the burden of the current government's foreign policy will require persistence and dedication; it will mean establishing new principles and adapting our foreign, security and defence policy instruments in order to achieve the goal of making Spain one of the leading democracies in the world, an objective that this government should never have discarded.

Thus, it is essential to normalise our relations with the United States, irrespective of who may be sitting in the White House. Being a good ally to America raises our status vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Spain can also only pull off its policy of strengthening democracy and opening the markets in Latin America with the support of the United States. Being a good ally does not mean doing everything the Americans tell us to do. It means maintaining a good dialogue at every level and wishing to cooperate on those matters of mutual interest and matters that benefit the rest of the world. The truly servile approach is that of Rodríguez Zapatero, who cheerfully accepts a bilateral relationship not unlike that which Spain had under Franco in the 1950's: military bases, selective cooperation on police matters and no political recognition.

Second, Spain must recover its standing in Europe. And it must do so by offering a series of constructive alternatives. Europe must be strong. However, it never will be strong if it goes against America or renounces its roots and values. Europe's problems go way beyond the realm of mere institutional arrangements and Brussels

must show that it is capable of responding to people's concerns. Spain should lead the agenda for economic reform in order to ensure that employment grows and opportunities multiply as a result; it must fight for a common emigration policy that will combat illegal immigration and it must push for measures that improve the integration of foreign residents; it must promote a form of European defence that is fully compatible with the Atlantic Alliance, as well as advocating a Europe that is founded on a bedrock of Western values, a respect for human dignity and the application of the law irrespective of race, gender or religion. Multiculturalism is a failed, harmful and dangerous experiment.

As I have already mentioned, in Latin America Spain should take the lead in terms of championing the freedom agenda. It must demand legal security for Spanish investors and abandon its support for totalitarian, populist and indigenist regimes throughout the Region. In Cuba it must encourage a democratic transition, instead of supporting the reactionary course of the Castro dynasty. Active support for dissidents is essential and urgent. Spain's last objective must be to help the Latin American Region integrate itself within the great movements and developments of the twenty-first century.

In the Mediterranean Region, we must make it clear to our neighbour in the South precisely what the limits to our relations are. These relations can never justify corruption and lack of transparency. Morocco must follow the path of economic and political openness, as well as respecting the UN's plans for the Sahara. At the opposite extreme, Spain's foreign policy must seek to defend Israel's right to exist and support Israel against its many enemies.

Iran must urgently be made to understand that Europeans align themselves alongside Israel. And the Palestinians must know that our help is conditional upon them wishing to progress towards a democratic state that is capable of respecting Israel's borders and security. The presence of our blue helmets in Southern Lebanon can only be contemplated to the extent that they are effective in dismantling Hezbollah's military capacity.

Spain is threatened by Islamic terrorism. The Spanish deployment in Afghanistan is coherent in terms of Spain's contribution to the war on terror. However its current form is unacceptable, with Spanish troops being constrained by political decisions that provide no support for the allies and place the success of their mission at risk. The Spanish contingent must have all the resources necessary in order to guarantee its security, while also enabling it to carry out its mission of stabilising the situation throughout the country. There must be no deceit and no lies.

The task of the new Prime Minister of the Spanish Government will be demanding and difficult. In addition to a series of clear principles on which to act, current challenges require instruments that are adapted to the corresponding objectives. In view of the growing complexity of external factors, the blurring of the distinction between national and international security and the enormous demands made by foreign affairs, it would be advisable to create a National Security Council to serve the Prime Minister. This body would provide him with the support he

requires in order to make the necessary decisions, as well as providing a tool for ensuring the coherence of an activity that is becoming increasingly inter-departmental.

Finally, it is not enough to merely develop good policies and implement good measures. These must be explained and the Spanish public must be convinced that it is doing the right thing. It would not be a bad idea for the new government to follow the example of Spain's neighbouring countries and elaborate a National Security Strategy, one that establishes the challenges that Spain faces and the options the country has when it comes to tackling them. The Dutch have a strategy of this kind, Brown will shortly have one and Sarkozy wishes to create one. It is even possible that the EU might revise its own Security Strategy dating from the year 2003. Why should we content ourselves with being the last in the queue?

Whatever the case may be, in order to play a prominent role on the international scene, we must be strong at home. A fragmented country, with a weak economy that is not especially competitive, which is contented to simply serve as a spa destination for pensioners from Europe and as a paradise for seekers of cheap tourism opportunities, can have little influence throughout the world. The essential task of the new government will, therefore, be to rescue Spain from the mediocre and sidelined position in which Rodríguez Zapatero has placed it and to ensure a better future. Nothing more and nothing less.