



Zapatero's Solitude

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Zapatero begins this new Legislative term in a state of clamorous solitude. In the picture from the NATO summit, he appears isolated from the rest of the Western leaders. This is the best graphic representation of the way he conducted Spain's foreign policy in his last term. On the other hand, the image also represents Zapatero being rejected by the other leaders, which is merely a reflection of the parliamentary solitude in which PSOE currently finds itself within Spain.

The problem with our foreign policy extends beyond Zapatero's inability to communicate with his European and North American counterparts. The underlying problem is that Spain has disappeared from all relevant decision-making forums. The initial purpose of renouncing a new transatlantic dimension was to exclusively center ourselves within Europe. This has transformed Spain, overtime, into an increasingly irrelevant actor in the heart of the Union and the distance between it and the United States continues to

grow. The government has no idea how to resolve this distance.

There is however, another, worse aspect of Spain's irrelevant role. Zapatero seems to feel a growing discomfort when he meets with democratic leaders of the most prominent global powers. They however, seem to be extremely comfortable meeting with authoritarian leaders of irrelevant countries, such as Zapatero. The Socialist foreign policy doesn't know how to effectively defend our national interests in Europe, let alone in the world. It also has failed to uphold with clarity, the principles of a democratic society in his foreign policy. The partnership with the totalitarian regime in Cuba, and friendship with Chávez in Venezuela are examples of errors which must be immediately rectified.

The political isolation with which Zapatero begins this new legislative term within Spain is no less significant. PSOE already seems incapable of gaining a new and onerous base of conces-

sions from its potential partners. The end of positions in Congress and the Senate has not served the nationalist parties on this occasion. They anticipated that their candidate, José Bono would come to preside over Congress. Instead, he was elected president of the Supreme Court in the first vote, making him the first president of the Chamber of Deputies in our newly democratic history. He has not been elected by an absolute majority.

Even more gruesome, is that the same day PSOE gave up a secretary in Congress to the PNV and agreed to give them six senators to construct a Parliamentary Group in Upper House, the Basque nationalists voted against the censorship motion of the socialists to get rid of the mayor of Mondragón, who refuses to condemn the recent assassination of an ex-socialist councilman.

Zapatero is not only failing to gain new support, but is struggling to keep the support he has had in the past. The new legislative term is already plagued with the bitter controversy regarding the Catalan tax exemption which the Government of the Generalitat has tried to instate from the head of the Segre River to Barcelona. The fact that

this same party who has opposed any change in its electoral flags, can now be found immersed in a debate of these characteristics, has drawn much attention. The underlying problem, however, is that the PSC, which considers itself the great architect of Zapatero's victory, is also ready to use force, even though at the moment it is within the Socialist group. Therefore, it is not unlikely that Zapatero will soon have greater difficulties maintaining cohesion among his own group in this current legislature.

With these circumstances, it is prudent to advise that Zapatero does let the offering of Mariano Rajoy to have been in vain. He must agree that aspects of the state such as the territorial model, anti-terrorist fight, foreign policy, and justice should be consensual among the great Spanish political forces. The risk is that Zapatero will interpret his insufficient electoral victory as an endorsement from Spanish society to carry out his exclusive project. This would be the worst possible way to interpret the results of March 9th.

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