



## FOREIGN POLICY

### SHRINKING SPAIN ... SHRUNK

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When José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero came to power, his approach to foreign policy could be summarised in three sentences: no to war; a return to the heart of Europe; and the opposite of everything Aznar had done. His attitude, his lack of knowledge of the rules of the environment, his obvious contempt for reality, as well as his naïveté and frivolity, ensured that Spain's status would diminish on the international scene. It ensured a Spain that would anger its main ally, the United States; a Spain that would fail to defend the country's interests vis-à-vis its partners; a Spain that would ignore the nature and importance of the threats against her; and a Spain that would link up with any radical, anti-imperialist nation it might come across.

Three years later, Zapatero's shrinking Spain has become a reality. From its previous status as a serious nation respected by all, Socialist Spain has now become a Spain that counts for nothing, a Spain that has left the club of important nations, but has failed to find its niche anywhere else. The Socialist Government is disparaged by its new Latin American partners, by Morales and Castro –not to mention

Hugo Chávez— and is despised by its recently discovered allies, such as Morocco. Within the Paris-Berlin axis, which has been a veritable obsession for Spanish Socialists since the González era, there has not been any place for Spain.

The Zapatero era will go down in history as having thwarted the important role that our nation might have played in the international arena after it finally overcame the complexes that plagued the country from the Transition period up until well into the 1990's. This Government's mistaken approach and incompetent management have resulted in a Spain that makes no contribution to the important decisions that are taken throughout the world, a Spain that fails to be taken into account, even when this affects our own national interests. The shrinking Spain of Zapatero has now become a truly diminished Spain.

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### **Foreign Policy Negligence**

Zapatero came onto the scene by telling us that he would place the world in his pocket, but exactly the opposite seems to have occurred. His interest in the international agenda is surprisingly lacking: few official trips abroad and when he finally does make them, he tends to cut them short. His no-shows have become famous: in November 2004 he cancelled an appointment with Vladimir Putin in Moscow in order to attend a normal session in the Spanish Parliament; a month later, he did the same to Poland, citing tiredness and a need for sleep as an excuse. For a country of such strategic importance as India, he had only 24 hours to spare. Nevertheless, we know that he has used the official airplane to go shopping in London and to hear his wife sing in Berlin. This he did quite unashamedly and without taking advantage of the opportunity to meet his counterparts. Throughout the year 2006, except for the eight multi-lateral summits he was obliged to attend, he only carried out seven bilateral visits to other countries, most of which were packed into the end-of-year schedule.

### **Making Enemies of Our Allies**

Zapatero's first decision as head of the Spanish government, even before he assembled his cabinet, was to unilaterally withdraw from Iraq. Zapatero had expressed his opposition to military intervention in order to bring down Saddam Hussein, but the timing and implementation of this decision highlighted, from the very first, his frivolous, uncooperative and intransigent approach, an approach he has made the basis for his government's actions ever since. Spain had just suffered the most serious terrorist attack in its history. Meeting one of the terrorists' demands could only be interpreted as a form of surrender, and the Islamic world certainly regarded Zapatero's reaction in this light. Zapatero chose appeasement before responsibility. However, the worst aspect of all this was not that we left our allies in the lurch in Iraq—including the Latin American troops that the Spanish

forces were supporting– but that shortly afterwards, during a visit to Tunisia, Zapatero took the liberty of calling on the members of the coalition to desert the cause and leave the Americans isolated. An ideal way of winning over the White House!

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Instead of stepping up his cooperation with the United States in the battle against terrorists, whose evil atrocities Spaniards had just been made the target of, Zapatero not only gave in to the terrorists, but became the United States’ most vociferous critic, hounding the same super-power that had finally taken an interest in helping us to defeat ETA. Much of his swaggering approach in those months can be explained by the fact that Zapatero was convinced that George W. Bush would lose the Presidential elections of 2004 and that Kerry would become the next US President. He not only made his stance clear by stating that “I will work with President Kerry”, but he lectured any pro-American leader who happened to cross his path.

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For Spain, Zapatero’s approach meant, among other things, that the country was relegated from being a preferential ally of the Americans to a kind of marginalized state. Spain’s pathetic diplomatic efforts to persuade Bush to receive Zapatero at the White House caused the government to make a fool of itself. High level contacts between the two countries are few and far between and almost always linked to multi-lateral international meetings. And every time it has seemed that bilateral relations might get back to normal, Rodríguez Zapatero, with his declarations and acts –such as wearing a Palestinian headdress or “kefiya” whilst criticising Israel or his justification of Hezbollah’s activities– have raised the tension unnecessarily once again. Last year, which, according to our Minister for Foreign Affairs was meant to signify a return to normal relations with the Bush Administration, came and went without any high-ranking US official setting foot in Spain.

### **Europe: Return to Nowhere**

“Returning to Europe” was the slogan used by Rodríguez Zapatero to synthesise his foreign policy programme. In reality, what he had in mind was forcing Spain’s entry into the Paris-Berlin axis. In practice, he not only failed to lead Spain back to the heart of Europe, but effectively pulled us out of it. He did not even manage to be accepted by France and Germany as an appendage.

Spain's loss of influence in Europe is quite evident. By accepting the European Constitution Treaty without any kind of compensation, Rodríguez Zapatero voluntarily accepted that Spain no longer formed part of the club of major nations and, therefore, lost his capacity to halt initiatives that go against Spain's interests. Zapatero gratuitously threw away the decision-making power in the EU that Spain had worked so hard to acquire during the negotiations for the Treaty of Nice. The same occurred with regard to Community funds: The Government "succeeded" in losing 43,000 of the 48,000 million euros that were at stake in the Union's new Financial Perspectives. We do not know why Minister Moratinos failed to attend the General Affairs Council where the matter was initially addressed, nor why the Spanish delegation that attended the Brussels Summit where the issue was finally settled failed to secure a better deal for Spain, and that many hours before the Poles, to cite just one example, finally accepted the package. The fact is that Rodríguez Zapatero allowed Spain to lose its funds and to become the main financier for the expansion process. Neither did our Socialist Government receive any thanks from its supposed friends.

With regard to the Franco-German axis, Rodríguez Zapatero was not especially far-sighted or prudent either. First of all, he failed to recognise the fragile nature of the situation, which depended on the continuity of Gerard Schröder and Jacques Chirac in their respective posts; second, he threw himself publicly behind the re-election of Schröder, whom he helped in his electoral campaign, whilst pouring scorn on Angela Merkel, openly delighting in the prospect of her defeat. The Spanish Prime Minister did not attend the inauguration ceremony of the German Chancellor just a few weeks later and his first bilateral meeting, in June 2006, focused on the thorny question of E.ON's takeover bid for Endesa. Fortunately for Spain, the Spanish leader failed to impose his interventionist strategy with regard to this affair.

**“The immigration policy implemented by Minister Caldera, consisting of “papers for all”, has led Zapatero into some serious clashes with his dearest European partners, especially France”**

Furthermore, we should recall that the immigration policy implemented by Minister Caldera, consisting of “papers for all”, has led Zapatero into some serious clashes with his dearest European partners, especially France. With regard to the successive requests made by Deputy Prime Minister De la Vega, the EU not only failed to mobilise the resources that the Spanish Government expected it to, but even reminded us that we had created the problem ourselves through the “magnet effect” resulting from the massive regularisation process carried out by the Spanish government. Some commentators, such as the candidate for the French Presidency, Nicolas Sarkozy, even called on the EU to prohibit unilateral regularisation processes adopted by Member Countries. The tension created by this issue was such that Zapatero officially expressed his anger in the records of pro-

ceedings in the Spanish Parliament: “If certain countries are looking to lecture us on their policy in this respect, we’re not interested; and we’re not interested in what the French Minister for Home Affairs might have to say, especially after the scenes we have witnessed in the neighbourhoods of Paris”. Sarkozy was diplomatic in his reply, but Chirac raised the matter again at the European Summit in Lathi: “I have spoken in the same spirit and along the same lines as the Home Affairs Minister when he addressed Mr. Zapatero..., all of the countries that form part of Schengen suffer the consequences entailed by these regularisations”.

**“Zapatero became a champion of anti-Americanism in Latin America: he headed the push to lift the sanctions imposed by the EU on the Castro regime and he nestled up to Hugo Chávez, to whom he sought to sell aeroplanes and patrol planes”**

The only government Rodríguez Zapatero has not had major problems with is that of the United Kingdom. Although Zapatero’s press conference with Tony Blair following their meeting at the Palace of La Moncloa, had its high-points and low-points, the fact is that London had little to complain about. After the summer, three parties –instead of two as has always been the case– namely, the authorities on the Rock, Her Majesty’s Government and the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, reached an agreement that was labelled “historic” by the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs. And on this occasion he was certainly not wrong: Spain renounced its right to push for its rightful claims for the very first time. All restrictions were lifted and the Spanish Government agreed to treat Gibraltar as a different country. The Rock’s inhabitants, whose position was strengthened enormously, staged a referendum, whose result signified quite obviously what it signified, however much the Spanish Government may have sought to dismiss it: the first step towards full independence.

**The Latin American Revolution**

Slighted by the Americans and ignored by his main European partners, Rodríguez Zapatero had no other choice but to become a champion of anti-Americanism in Latin America. First, he headed the push to lift the sanctions imposed by the EU on the Castro regime, sanctions that favoured the dissidents on the island. In theory, this was instigated in order to persuade the dictator to free a few political prisoners. Fidel never did. Quite the contrary, in fact. Second, he nestled up to Hugo Chávez, to whom he sought to sell aeroplanes and patrol planes, the famous “peaceful weapons”, as he curiously called them. This weapons’ export contract would soon turn into a veritable “soap opera”: Bono set things moving behind Moratinos’ back; Colombia was offended by the fact that an already-approved sale was cancelled; the measure produced irritation in Washington, where the Administration found it difficult to understand how a NATO ally could support anti-democratic and anti-American regimes; and even Chávez himself was angered in the end, being unable to accept that the airplanes he had been promised had

failed to arrive because Spain did not have the patents required to complete the sale. And following that series of embarrassments, Zapatero was forced to bear the humiliation of an agreement being reached between Venezuela and certain members of ETA, a pact that was only cancelled after the Spanish Government was publicly placed in the dock by the media.

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During the Bolivian electoral campaign, the current Government provided covert support for the radical “indigenista”, Evo Morales. Following his victory, Morales was welcomed to Spain and, although Bolivia’s debt of 100 million euros was cancelled and the country was granted aid in the form of 60 million euros’ worth of school material, the Spanish Prime Minister preferred to cede the photo opportunity with the Bolivian leader to the King, failing to pose alongside him at the Palace of La Moncloa. In return, Morales decided to nationalise Bolivia’s hydrocarbon reserves, ignoring Repsol’s rights. In line with what Zapatero had stated while abuses were being committed by the Argentinean Government against Spanish companies –namely that it was not the Government’s mission to mediate in favour of Spanish companies– he took no action whatsoever in Bolivia, leaving the company and thousands of Spanish savers in the lurch.

**Under Islam**

In the Maghreb Region, Zapatero’s government soon broke away from the policy pursued by his predecessor, especially in relation to the question of the Sahara. In a gesture of appeasement, he abandoned Spain’s traditional position of supporting the solution proposed by the UN and decided to support Morocco’s interests. Spain gained nothing positive out of this shift in policy: the supposed good relations between the two kingdoms has not led Morocco to end its violation of the agreements on emigration, by which Rabat must accept the return of non-Moroccan citizens that depart from its territory, and Mohammed VI continues to use emigration towards Spain as an additional tool in his political manoeuvrings. A symptomatic indication of the limits of Zapatero’s diplomacy is the fact that the Spanish Government has been unable to fix a date for the Prime Minister’s much-vaunted visit to Rabat, which was scheduled to take place after last summer according to the Deputy Prime Minister, but was then unexpectedly cancelled by Rabat and has yet to be re-scheduled.

Perhaps out of indignation, perhaps out of a desire to assert himself, Zapatero decided to visit Algeria. His guest visit soon became a “frank exchange of opinions”, a meeting in which he was subjected to Buteflika’s harsh criticisms and from which he slipped away without summoning any press conference at the end. In this respect, Zapatero has made every effort to go against the policy of balance

sponsored by the governments of the Partido Popular, simply to end up at the same place, only now having been scorned by Morocco and rebuked by Algeria.

Even a country as small as Senegal, the most frequently visited by members of the Spanish government, including a trip by Rodríguez Zapatero himself, has yet to accept the terms and the implementation of a repatriation agreement that was supposed to have been settled and was due to be carried out by the two countries.

**“The Alliance of Civilisations is as humiliating as ineffective and it has been warmly received by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran and rejected by Europe and the United States”**

In the Middle East crisis, Zapatero’s government has adopted positions that are as visible as they are surprising. Contrary to the shared European stance, Zapatero supports full recognition of Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in the Lebanon, as well as acceptance of the Iranian nuclear programme. Any reservations regarding Iran’s sponsorship of terrorism, its willingness to wipe Israel off the map, its denial of the Holocaust and the negative reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency seem to be irrelevant. The Israeli-Lebanese conflict permitted Zapatero to entrench himself further in his stance, distancing Spain again from the European position. Donning a Palestinian “kefiya”, he criticised the country that had been attacked, Israel, for its response, and voiced words of understanding for Hezbollah, with the Lebanese terrorist group subsequently rushing to offer him their express thanks for his support.

This radical approach is not only foolish, it is also ineffective. Spain has lost its influence both in the region and in Brussels. A good example of this is provided by the resounding failure of Zapatero’s proposal to implement a new Peace Plan, which he presented at the recent Franco-Spanish Summit. Italy, whose government is ideologically closest to that of Spain at the present time, rejected the Plan, whilst France immediately discarded it. During the supposed celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Madrid Summit in 1991, Moratinos not only failed to attract the main participants to Spain, over and above González (the host of the event in its day), but even aroused all kinds of criticisms from a party as essential as Israel.

The Alliance of Civilisations initiative deserves to be dealt with separately. It effectively consists of ceasing to be loyal to our Allies in order to link up with leaders such as Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Hugo Chávez and the Castro brothers. Zapatero’s Alliance of Civilisations constitutes one of the most lamentable examples of the progressives’ preparedness to shirk their responsibilities in the face of Islamist blackmail and attacks perpetrated by the enemies of the West. This concession is as humiliating as it is ineffective and, as we might expect, it has been warmly received by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran and rejected by Europe and the United States. The main theoretical contribution of this initiative consists of blam-

ing the Western world for all the ills that exist in Arab and Muslim societies and rejecting the principle of reciprocity out of hand, which is to say, demanding the same treatment for Westerners under Islam that Muslims receive on our soil.

Rodríguez Zapatero's Alliance of Civilisations has been useful to him in striking up a friendship with Kofi Annan. The controversial former Secretary General of the United Nations is the figure who has visited our Prime Minister most frequently at the Palace of La Moncloa over the last year. He made the Alliance of Civilisations a cause of his own while he was Secretary General of the UN and now it remains to be seen whether he will accept Zapatero's insistent offer of becoming a high representative for the initiative.

**“Zapatero believes climate change is a more important threat than terrorism and who calls bomb attacks accidents”**

### **A Spain That Counts for Nothing**

The Spain that Zapatero inherited from his predecessor, José María Aznar, was a Spain that was firmly anchored to the West, a loyal ally to the United States and a country taken into account by its partners in the EU and respected by its neighbours. The Azores Meeting was a symbolic and defining moment for this new, ambitious and important Spain. The Spanish Prime Minister at that time was accompanied by Durao Barroso, Spain's best neighbour, Tony Blair, representing the oldest democracy in Europe, and George W. Bush, the leader of the most important country on Earth. Zapatero set to work to remove Spain from the limelight of the Azores, and he did his work so well that he ended up eliminating Spain from the scene all together.

Zapatero's Spain is a country that counts for nothing and that nobody takes into account. This Government neither seeks nor demands respect, and it is capable of exacerbating its worst policies with an even worse management. The current Prime Minister cares very little about Spain's position on the international scene because he cares little about Spain. He is a Prime Minister who believes climate change is a more important threat than terrorism and who calls bomb attacks “accidents”. He is the inventor of the idea of preventive surrender. He is satisfied with a Spain that is insubstantial. He is effectively achieving just that and this shrinking Spain, this shrunk Spain, will be his foreign policy legacy.