

A Period of Turbulent Change: Spanish-US Relations Since 2002

by Manuel Iglesias-Cavicchioli

The purpose of this essay is to show the dramatic shifts that the Spanish-US relationship has undergone from 2002 to date, by trying to explain their causes, implications, and consequences. The following text offers a critical vision of Spanish foreign policy in the last four years and suggests some possibilities to redefine the current relationship with the US Government in a more constructive way.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO SPANISH FOREIGN POLICY

The international landscape between 2002 and 2006 has been particularly intense and convulsive. According to this unstable and unpredictable scenario, Spanish foreign policy, and particularly the relationship of Spain with the US, has undergone a series of dramatic changes.

From 2002 until 2004, the relationship between Spain and the United States was at its strongest in history; the Atlantic Summit, held in the Portuguese Azores Islands on March 16, 2003, in the framework of the Iraqi crisis, demonstrated this fact.¹ The dynamics of the relationship began to change drastically when the Socialist Party (PSOE) won the last general elections on March 14, 2004, from which time no meetings have taken place between the current Spanish prime minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, and the US president. This trend seems likely to continue for the next two years, a contrast to Prime Minister José María Aznar's last two years in office, during which several meetings took place with President Bush; as such, Rodríguez Zapatero might be the first Spanish prime minister who has not had any summit with an American president in the last thirty years. Obviously, such a radical shift between two consecutive administrations demands an analysis that attempts to explain the wide range of factors that have caused this swing.

Before discussing the changes that occurred within the last four years, it is useful to highlight the most recent history of Spanish foreign policy, namely focusing on the Spanish-American relationship in the last twenty-five years.²

Until the beginning of 2002, it is possible to assert that there was a basic agreement between the main political parties of Spain, the Popular Party, and the

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Socialist Party, concerning the main tenets of Spanish foreign policy. The September 11 terrorist attacks brought together the Spanish government and the opposition to discuss the necessity of the war in Afghanistan, under the protection of the right to self-defence, as proclaimed in the UN Charter. With several relevant nuances, Aznar's foreign policy generally remained constant until 2002, and the main grounds of his predecessor, Felipe González, sustained his foreign policy from 1982 to 1996.

Since 1986, the foreign policy of Spain has been based on four pillars: the European, the Latin American, the South-Mediterranean, and the Atlantic.³ In fact, in 1986, the standard that foreign policy would be based on political consensus was crystallized; Spain became a member of the European Community, and the Spanish population decided to remain in NATO by means of a national referendum.

1976 to 1986 are considered the formative years in democratic Spanish foreign policy, as a process of defining the national interests within the international framework was underway.⁴

The most controversial point of contention between the Spanish political parties was Spain's membership in NATO, which was strongly opposed by the Socialist and the Communist Parties.⁵ In fact, Spain joined NATO in 1981 against the opinion of the left-wing parties, although it did not become a member of the Atlantic Alliance military structure.⁶ The main reason for this social and political division was the anti-American sentiment generated by the continuous American support of the Dictatorship of General Francisco Franco for almost 20 years.⁷

Aznar probably thought of the Iraqi crisis as a unique opportunity to improve Spain's relationship with the US to the highest possible level, and thus, achieve an international status of great power.

During the electoral campaign of 1982, the Socialist Party called for a referendum to decide Spain's future in NATO. Once elected, the Socialist prime minister, Felipe González, began to shift his original position on NATO, and in a risky political maneuver that carried out its electoral compromise, the Spanish government asked for the favorable vote in order to keep Spain in NATO; the government won its daring wager. González understood that withdrawing from the Atlantic Alliance would have hindered the international insertion process of Spain.⁸ The leader of the Socialist Party realized that leaving NATO would have damaged Spain's credibility within the international community, including the potential for joining the European Community.

The most resounding example of this political reversal, is Javier Solana, current High Representative for the Common Foreign Security Policy of the European Union, an ardent opponent of NATO at the beginning of the 1980's, who became NATO Secretary General ten years later. The statesmanship of Gonzalez's government, which envisioned foreign policy as a *politique d'Etat*, made possible the birth of a national consensus with the main opposition party. Since then, Spanish

foreign policy has been based upon the Atlantic pillar, and the values shared by the main political parties of the country. The 1988 military-defensive agreements between Spain and the US confirmed a new period of understanding in the bilateral relationship, leaving behind the American relationship with Franco's regime.⁹

Political consensus was forged slowly and arduously between the two main political parties of Spain, but it was achieved and upheld for sixteen years, creating stability and cohesion for Spanish foreign policy.

THE LAST TWO YEARS OF JOSÉ MARÍA AZNAR'S SECOND TERM (2002–2004): A BREAK-UP IN SPANISH FOREIGN POLICY

Bush and Aznar continue to have an excellent personal relationship, but more importantly, they also share a deep ideological agreement; Aznar shares Bush's unipolar vision of the world, asserting the necessity and the intrinsic goodness of a hegemonic US foreign policy.¹⁰ Therefore, based on this iron belief of unipolarity, Aznar decided to give an absolute priority to the bilateral relationship with the US over any another political consideration.

According to Aznar, the new international scenario required an unshakeable adherence to Washington's positions. In this respect, the most controversial issue enhancing Atlanticism was Spain's support of the war in Iraq. It is necessary to take into account that Spanish public opinion was overwhelmingly against the war in Iraq.¹¹ Although most Spaniards believed that Saddam Hussein's regime had ties with terrorist networks and that it possessed WMD, almost the 90 percent—according to several polls—was strongly opposed to a US attack even if the military intervention was supported by the UN Security Council.¹² The cause of this mass popular opinion against the Iraq war lies on the fact that the Spanish society is deeply pacifist,¹³ an issue that Aznar did not appreciate enough in making his decision.¹⁴

During the management of the Iraqi crisis at the UN Security Council, Aznar and Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister Ana Palacio—currently Senior Vice President and World Bank Group General Counsel—played an active role in supporting and promoting the US position. The Spanish prime minister travelled from the US to Mexico and Chile in order to persuade Mexican President Vicente Fox and Chilean President Ricardo Lagos to support a new UN Security Council resolution which would have authorized the express use of force in Iraq; nonetheless, these attempts were unsuccessful. Due to these trips to Mexico City and Santiago, Aznar lost the relative autonomy that had characterized the Spanish–Latin American relationship in the last twenty-five years.¹⁵

Aznar and Palacio tirelessly maintained that a new resolution was not necessary from a juridical point of view, and that it was only politically desirable.¹⁶ The Spanish government, like the governments of the US and Great Britain, obstinately defended that Security Council resolution 1441, passed in October, 2002, was enough to justify the use of force against Iraq in accordance to the UN Charter. Yet, this opinion contradicted the reports of the head of the international legal department of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, who warned the Government on the necessity of achieving an express Security Council authorization to legally use force against Saddam's regime.¹⁷ Moreover, the Spanish Association of Professors of International Law and International Relations (AEPDIRI) showed an unusual cohesion by publicizing a manifest against the use of force in Iraq on the basis of resolution 1441.¹⁸ Indeed, the Spanish internationalists almost unanimously denounced the illegal military action against Iraq as a violation of the UN Charter Article 2 (4). The debate concerning the legality of the war in Iraq seemed to close, once and for all, with the declaration of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who a year after the invasion, recognized that the war was not under the protection of international law.¹⁹

There were strong arguments in Spain for the reasons why the Spanish government supported the war.²⁰ From a realist point of view, the national interests of Spain were not at all in danger. Several authors point out that support of the invasion was the clear culmination of the Atlantistic vision that Aznar began to develop in 1996,²¹ though this opinion is subject to argument. It is true that Aznar's foreign policy focused more on Atlanticism than the former cabinet had, but Aznar always worked within the framework of the bipartisan consensus with the Socialist Party. For example, the integration of Spain into the military structure of NATO in 1998 was supported by the Socialist Party.²² Therefore, the support of the Iraqi war cannot be considered a culmination of a process, but a radical change of the general principles that have inspired Spanish foreign policy since 1986.

Spain was a temporary member of the United Nations Security Council from 2003 until 2005, which could explain the high political role the Spanish government played during the Iraqi crisis. Yet, this objective fact is not enough to explain the protagonist profile that Aznar decided to assume in supporting the attack and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime.²³ In fact, it is difficult to understand why Aznar wanted to be in the political forefront while other European leaders, such as Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, remained in a more discreet and less risky position.²⁴ As we are going to see, only strong personal convictions based on ideological reasons can explain this decision.²⁵

Aznar probably thought of the Iraqi crisis as a unique opportunity to improve Spain's relationship with the US to the highest possible level, and thus, achieve an international status of great power.²⁶ Nonetheless, it is quite possible that Aznar supported the Iraq war, not only because of pragmatic reasons, such as sharing great power status with the US, but primarily because of ideological principles. In this sense, the neoconservative thinking was the ideological basis of his policy decisions. As in the US, the Spanish prime minister assumed the viewpoints of his neoconservative advisers, especially those of Rafael L. Bardají—current Director of International Politics at FAES, a Popular Party think tank—and his personal friend, William Kristol.²⁷ Bardají is regarded as the most influential neoconservative ideologist in Spain.²⁸ During the Iraqi crisis he played an important role supporting

the military action as Deputy Director of the *Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Internacionales y Estratégicos*, a Spanish think tank of international affairs financed by public and private funds.²⁹ Bardají had been an advisor of the Minister of Defence for four years until he began to work for the *Real Instituto Elcano* in 2002. In March 2004, he decided to resign after the electoral victory of the Socialist Party.

Likewise, one has to highlight that Aznar supported the war using exactly the same arguments provided by the US and Great Britain, without having his own sources of intelligence. Through an uncritical alignment, he continuously asserted that Saddam Hussein's regime posed an imminent danger for international security because of its alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction and its ties with al Qaeda.³⁰

Moreover, supporting the war on Iraq was a personal decision made by Prime Minister Aznar because he decided to carry out this radical change in Spanish foreign policy without consulting the Parliament, government, or even his own party. As Aznar recognized in his memoirs, he made the final decision that was assumed later by the government and his own party,³¹ that is to say, a reverse decision-making process according to the exceptional seriousness of the situation.³²

The radical shift initiated by Aznar consisted of giving preference to the privileged relationship with the US, over the inherent European orientation of Spain. Aznar's preference broke the balance between the European and Atlantic pillars of Spanish foreign policy. In this respect, in October, 2003, Aznar impelled the Spanish version of the September, 2002 National Security Strategy of the US. In an official speech before the Spanish Military Academy (ESFAS), he spoke of the necessity of preventive actions in order to defeat current national and international security threats, namely the connection of terrorism with weapons of mass destruction.³³ Likewise, Aznar asserted his predisposition to collaborate with the coalitions-of-the-willing, led by the US.³⁴ Only a few months before legislative elections, Aznar wanted to proclaim a strategic thinking very close to the unilateral style of the American NSS, with a notable neoconservative influence.³⁵

The strategy stated by Aznar did not take into account the European Security Strategy.³⁶ The so-called "Solana Document" allows us to distinguish the different perceptions of international threats and their response between Europe and the US. As a remarkable example of these divergences, the European prescription for conflict prevention can be highlighted in contrast to the American prescription for pre-emptive, more precisely preventive, actions.³⁷ Between the EU Strategic Document and the American NSS, Aznar chose the latter. In his speech, Aznar made it clear that the US was the most important ally of Spain, above the EU itself, insinuating also that the US unilateral use of force was above the authority of the UN Security Council.³⁸

Following his own personalistic style that characterized his last two years in office, Aznar made this important change of strategic doctrine, without even informing the Parliament. The Aznar Doctrine was completely rejected by all the political parties of the Spanish opposition who denounced his lack of dialogue and

debate with the government concerning vital affairs of the state, such as foreign and defence policies.

After leaving the government, Aznar's public speeches and contributions to the *Wall Street Journal* offer a better insight into his foreign policy decisions than his time as prime minister.³⁹ Therefore, his conferences at Georgetown University, as an honorary professor,⁴⁰ at the American Enterprise Institute,⁴¹ and at the Hudson Institute,⁴² reveal a strong neoconservative influence in his political thinking, which is now even easier to perceive than during the 2002–2004 period. In these speeches, he has constantly supported the policies of the Bush administration, especially the war on terrorism. Regardless of the false pretexts against Saddam's regime, and the disastrous situation in Iraq, he has always asserted that the American strategy is on the right path. Like his friend President Bush, Aznar strongly believes that Iraq, the region, and the world are now safer without Saddam Hussein.⁴³ He also believes that the main obstacle against the effectiveness of the war on terror is the lack of cohesion among western countries, accusing several European leaders of not believing in the West.⁴⁴ In this sense, Aznar thinks that western values are the best in the world, and, therefore, they must be energetically defended and exported, though he acknowledges that, unfortunately, this is not a common viewpoint in Europe.⁴⁵ Likewise, Aznar believes that western civilization is in danger from Islamic radicalism, as it was in danger in earlier decades from the Soviet Empire during the Cold War.⁴⁶

As mentioned earlier, the Iraqi crisis culminated in the Atlantic Summit of the Azores Islands, where Bush, Blair, and Aznar issued an unprecedented ultimatum to the UN Security Council members, demanding them to assume their responsibility to pass a new resolution in accordance to the Spanish-Anglo-American proposal. This summit was a clear challenge to the international legitimacy of the Security Council and a demonstration of the unilateral will of the US and its allies.

Taking stock of this time, it is true that Aznar's foreign policy improved the Spanish-American relationship to an unprecedented extent, but it is also necessary to remember that he did it by supporting an illegal war with Iraq, a decision based on spurious suppositions and exaggerations.

The alignment of Spanish foreign policy with US positions was, not only in relation to the war in Iraq, but also the Spanish perspective of Latin America and the Middle East conflict. At the end of his term, Aznar gave up Spanish neutrality in this conflict. In fact, Aznar accused Palestinian terrorism of being the main cause of the conflict and accused the terrorists of being the most detrimental obstacle to reaching a peace agreement. In addition, Aznar supported the political ostracism of Yassir Arafat, impelled by the neoconservative ideas.⁴⁷

Regarding Latin America, Aznar substantially agreed with US policies toward Cuba and Venezuela.⁴⁸ Yet, Aznar's position was misguided because it did not take into account the particular ties and interests of Spain in these countries, giving rise to a loss of political independence and moral authority across the region. The role played by the Spanish government after the frustrated coup d'état in Venezuela of April, 2001 has been especially controversial. It must be clear that Spain had in no way organized nor supported the coup, though the Spanish Ambassador, together with the American Ambassador in Caracas, were the only foreign representatives who implicitly recognized Pedro Carmona as the new President.⁴⁹ In this case, the Spanish alignment with US positions reached an excessive point that put the independence of Spanish foreign policy at risk.

One of the most serious consequences of Aznar's Atlanticist foreign policy, which entailed backing an illegal action under international law, was the damage to the international image of Spain as a peace-loving state that respects international law. Prior to Aznar's actions, Spain was strongly committed to the collective security system that is legitimately represented by the UN Security Council.⁵⁰

Spain had no significant military resources to contribute to the Anglo-American coalition; therefore, Spain's influence during the Iraq crisis was minimal. In fact, the only country that was able to influence US decision making was Great Britain, because of their so-called "special relationship." Coincidentally, Tony Blair and Colin Powell had the same perspectives about the role of the UN Security Council in the management of the conflict. As a middle power, Spain could not contribute troops to the military action against Iraq, but instead sent two ships filled with medical equipment. In this respect, the strong political support given to the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq contrasted sharply with the meager military contribution made by the Spanish government. This was a clear demonstration that the political will of Spain was not proportional with its economic means and military capabilities. The proportionality between means and goals must be the basis of a serious and well-balanced foreign policy. On the contrary, carrying out a disproportional foreign policy generates false expectations and harms the country's international credibility. In this respect, the above-mentioned Atlantic Summit held in the Azores was a paradigm of lack of proportionality between political goals and military means. With a conspicuous lack of realism, Aznar tried to demonstrate that Madrid was deciding the course of international politics together with Washington and London. According to Aznar's viewpoint, the Atlantic Summit was a qualitative jump for Spain, a turning point in achieving a new international status; yet, a critical analysis allows for the recognition that this was more of a mirage than a reality, as the political will for greatness is not enough to create a great power *per se*.

In the most unilateral moments of President Bush's first term, the US treated its friends—maybe with the sole exception of the United Kingdom—more like vassals than genuine allies. Bush simply informed his friends about US decisions, expecting unconditional adhesion. In a strong relationship between allies, the highest level in the decision-making process is joint decision making. Taking into account the

military *décalage* between the US and its allies, joint decision making is arguably unrealistic and exaggerated, but given the critical international circumstances, the US administration should have at least consulted its allies before pursuing important policy prescriptions.

Taking stock of this time, it is true that Aznar's foreign policy improved the Spanish-American relationship to an unprecedented extent, but it is also necessary to remember that he did it by supporting an illegal war with Iraq; a decision based on spurious suppositions and exaggerations. Since its return to democracy in 1978, Spanish foreign policy has been characterized by the respect of international law and international cooperation through multilateral institutions. This feature has been empowered by the Spanish membership in the European Communities, culminating with being one of the most definitive values of Spanish foreign policy.

According to the unilateralist nature of the foreign policy carried out by Aznar in his last two years in office, it was condemned to be ephemeral. Aznar gave up the aspirations of constructing a foreign policy based on consensus, consequently making the formulation of a long-lasting foreign policy almost impossible. Even if his successor in the Popular Party and Prime Minister candidate, Mariano Rajoy, had won the 2004 elections, he probably would have had to alter the foreign policy of Spain by looking for a more balanced perspective. As we are going to see in the next section, the victory of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero will hurry the changes in Spanish foreign policy, but without giving stability to it.

THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF JOSÉ LUIS RODRÍGUEZ ZAPATERO (2004–2006): A DOUBTFUL FOREIGN POLICY

In order to understand the current distancing between Spain and the US, it is necessary to take into account the following factors, namely: it began from an anomalous situation in which Aznar broke the existing consensus through his drastic foreign policies, and the new Spanish government's lack of international experience, as well as its vague conception of foreign affairs.

Effectively, the relationship between Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero and President Bush began at a very complicated point. The new prime minister of Spain had promised his constituency the withdrawal of troops from Iraqi soil in conformity with his total opposition to the invasion of Iraq. The Aznar foreign policy was simply untenable for the new government, and the relationship with the US was destined to deteriorate, to a certain extent. However, the strain in the relationship between both states has not been well managed by the Spanish government, consequently increasing the damages with a series of unfortunate acts.

Moreover, the Bush Administration, and specifically its neoconservative advisers, has shown little tolerance for criticism from its allies. During these years, it has proven very difficult to deal with an administration that has implemented a foreign policy based on an assertive, unilateral will, a state of affairs especially exacerbated during Bush's first term. According to neoconservatives' moral

absolutism, the political disagreement is comparable to treason, and critical allies are seen as treacherous.⁵¹

This delicate situation was aggravated by the inappropriate management of the Spanish government. In fact, Rodríguez Zapatero's first mistake was made before he became prime minister of Spain. On the National Day of Spain, October 12, 2003, he remained seated as the American flag passed by during the parade, which was considered an offensive act by the US government. The following year, when Rodríguez Zapatero was already the prime minister, George Argyros—former US Ambassador in Madrid—refused to participate in the celebration.⁵² It is possible that Rodríguez Zapatero did not seek to offend the American symbol, because his act was a protest against the position held by Aznar's government and, in this respect, was primarily a domestic affair. Regardless, his actions were not suitable of a candidate for prime minister, who must always respect the fundamental rules of diplomatic courtesy.

The withdrawal of troops, a sovereign right of any state, could have been carried out in better conjunction with the American Command in Iraq. Yet, the withdrawal was carried out quickly; two months before the foreseen date,⁵³ because the Spanish government decided not to wait until the new UN Security Council resolution in order to avoid the pressures from Washington.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, it is clear that more prudent decision making and execution of the withdrawal would have irritated the Pentagon less and it would have reduced the political cost of this decision.⁵⁵

A few months after the withdrawal of Spanish troops, on September 10, 2004, Rodríguez Zapatero travelled to Tunisia and stated that every country should follow the example of Spain.⁵⁶ Obviously, Spain had the right to withdraw its troops, but this declaration seemed like a public invitation to desertion. Unquestionably, this was an erroneous declaration that fed the accusations of betrayal, showing the lack of international experience of the new prime minister. During the US presidential campaign in October, 2004, Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero made another clamorous strategic mistake by publicly expressing his preference for John Kerry over George W. Bush.⁵⁷ This was unwise and un-diplomatic as it set to strain the relationship with the White House for the next four years, especially as President Bush was re-elected.

Together, with the previously mentioned mistakes, the appointment of Miguel Ángel Moratinos—an experienced diplomat who served as EU special envoy for the Middle East peace process for seven years—as minister of foreign affairs of Spain has not been beneficial for reconstructing the relationship with the US. From the perspective of the neoconservatives, Moratinos was a pro-Palestinian politician, an unfair accusation as he has always maintained a neutral approach in the Middle East conflict.⁵⁸ From the neoconservative defensive position, anyone that holds a neutral point of view toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is immediately accused of being pro-Palestinian.⁵⁹

Moreover, the new relationship between Spain and Venezuela, as well as Spain's new policy toward Cuba, have further irritated the Bush administration. Concerning

Hugo Chávez, the current Spanish government has shown a lack of political ability and international inexperience by giving him an excessive personal prominence in several high level summits. The Spanish neoconservatives have taken advantage of this fact, asserting that Castro and Chávez are the main allies of Spain in the region in an attempt to accuse the government as radical and anti-American.⁶⁰

Furthermore, the sale of armaments to Venezuela has caused tensions between Madrid and Washington, because the aircrafts that Spain planned to sell to Venezuela had American technological equipment. The current American ambassador in Madrid, Eduardo Aguirre, warned the Spanish government that the US would not agree with the sale.⁶¹ Eventually, the US vetoed the sale of twelve aircraft with Americans components.⁶² According to American and Spanish neoconservatives, Chavez's regime is practically the same as Castro's.⁶³ To equate both regimes' nature is simply wrong, as it does not take into account the different political, juridical, and historical circumstances of each country. And it is cynical as well, because the US keeps its commercial relations with Caracas, despite Chavez's anti-American discourse.⁶⁴

In spite of his anti-Americanism, as well as his absolute lack of diplomatic courtesy, Chávez has been elected several times by the means of free and democratic elections, as the OAS, the EU electoral observers, and the Carter Foundation have confirmed.⁶⁵ As such, he is the legitimate representative of Venezuela, and it is necessary to continue dialogue with him, instead of seeking his removal. In any case, the Spanish government, and the European Union, must be more assertive with Caracas on such issues as rule of law and civil rights. Both Spain and the EU are committed to democracy and good governance in Latin America and, therefore, must watch attentively the political course of the region.

One must take into account that Spain has strong cultural and historical ties with Venezuela and Cuba, as well as important economic interests in both countries. Consequently, having a foreign policy in these countries that follows US guidelines is far from optimal. The hard-line policy of isolating Cuba, held by the US throughout the last fifty years, not only failed to weaken Castro's regime, but has only increased the suffering of the Cuban people. Paradoxically, as the past decades have shown, a more flexible policy of dialogue with Havana would not open the regime towards the democratic path, but at the very least, contact with the outside world would serve to mitigate the hardship of the Cuban people.⁶⁶ Differences between Cuba and Venezuela must be taken into account, in order to demand proper democratic advances from each regime.

Rodríguez Zapatero has formulated a new foreign policy, which has rejected the main lines of the model proposed by Aznar in his last two years as primer minister. Likewise, Rodríguez Zapatero's model has generated tensions with the US administration in several fields, without placating the domestic disputes concerning Spanish foreign policy. Therefore, it would be advisable to carry out some rectifications in the close future without waiting until the elections of March, 2008.

CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD A NEW CONSENSUS IN FOREIGN POLICY

It is obvious that Zapatero will never be able to reach the level of understanding that Aznar had with Bush, but he should make all necessary efforts to achieve a well-balanced relationship. This does not mean that the Spanish government must give up its ideals, but it has to at least avoid hostile gestures toward the US administration.

The international vision of Rodríguez Zapatero is different from Bush's vision, but it is clearly not anti-American. That US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has given her support to the "Alliance of Civilizations,"⁶⁷ proposed by the Spanish and Turkish governments and endorsed by the United Nations, serves as a good example. It is very likely that the Bush administration and the Spanish government have different interpretations of this Alliance. While the US Department of State is interested in the aspects concerning Middle East democracy promotion, the Spanish government is focused on cultural dialogue and poverty, in order to fight against terrorism.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, this initiative represents an opportunity for dialogue between both countries, which should be seized in order to leave aside the differences over Iraq.

In effect, the current government in Spain does not believe the change-of-regime doctrine is a valid way of spreading democracy in the Middle East and across the Muslim world.⁶⁹ This approach is not proactive, and it has incited neoconservative criticism, asserting that it endorses the option of appeasement, comparing it with the Munich Conference of 1938, an *idée fixe* of the neoconservative ideology.⁷⁰ This charge must be rejected because the Spanish government is firmly committed to fighting global terrorism, but it does not share the militarist approach of the Bush administration on this matter. The Spanish anti-terrorist perspective is based on the multilateral approach of the conference held in Madrid in March, 2005, under the sponsorship of the UN.⁷¹ Bush's war on terrorism, conceived as a new World War, has the serious shortcoming of being an interstate war that does not take into account the transnational and asymmetrical nature of global terrorism.⁷² The scarce success,⁷³ if not failure, of the Bush doctrine in terms of terrorism is due in part to this misconception. Yet, at the same time, it is a consequence of the substantial incompatibility between the fight against terrorism and the implementation of the neoconservative hegemonic agenda.⁷⁴

Thus, one must recognize that Spain and the US do not currently share the same vision of the world. The easiest solution for the Spanish government would be to wait until Bush's retirement, hoping for a more receptive US president and administration to Spanish foreign policy. At the same, the Spanish government has to take into account the changes in the US cabinet and the probable revision of policies that would take place in Washington, which may allow for an opportunity to reconcile the relationship. The present situation in Iraq, and the consequent crisis of credibility of the current policy towards the region, have weakened the hawkish positions of the Bush administration, which gives an opportunity to a new approach.⁷⁵ Because of the disastrous post-war period in Iraq, the neoconservatives

have lost much of their political influence on decision making, which they had during the first term. Therefore, US foreign policy has decreased its high degree of unilateralism.⁷⁶

A meeting between Zapatero and Bush would be necessary for normalizing the Spanish-American relationship after three years of distancing, which has created a relative, mutual distrust. Yet, this must not be specifically a goal in itself, but a result of preceding rapprochement.⁷⁷ As the Spanish participation in peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and Lebanon has demonstrated, there are several issues within international relations that generate understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect between the two countries.⁷⁸ Spain will always support the American initiatives that are developed within the framework of NATO, and under the protection of the UN. In the bilateral field, the Spanish-American Military Agreements are in force, and the Spanish government will fully respect its commitments. Regardless of the political discrepancies, the basis of the Spanish-American friendship has never been questioned. With the remarkable exception of divergent policies in both countries toward the unilateral and preventive use of force in Iraq, the US government has Spain as a reliable ally. It is time to put aside the differences over the war in Iraq and look to the future.

In general terms, the main failure of the Zapatero foreign policy has been its inability to reconstruct the bipartisan consensus; arguably, the Spanish-American relationship is the main cause of this matter. Therefore, the key point, necessary to normalize the Spanish-US relationship, lies in domestic policy. In order to normalize the relationship with the US once again, Spanish political parties must first improve the political consensus among them. The Spanish prime minister should work to create a new common and shared foreign policy, redefining the Spanish-American relationship, in such terms that both central Spanish political parties can accept. The Socialist Party and the Popular Party will have to overcome the confrontation concerning the Iraqi war, and look for new ways Spain can contribute to tackle the present international challenges.

It is not possible to return to the old consensus because the international environment is not the same as the beginning of the decade. For that reason, there is need to create a new consensus, which takes into account the strategic priorities and necessities of the post-9/11 world. In order to achieve this new consensus, which is balanced with the European orientation of Spain, it is essential to achieve an agreement, concerning the US, in Spanish foreign policy. Neither the neoconservative, staunch Atlanticism, nor leftist anti-American inclinations, will be able to create a new consensus; therefore, it will be essential to find a common space of understanding and agreement in the relationship with the US somewhere between both extremes. This new approach could be based on less ideological and more pragmatic tenets. The US is an essential ally with which it is necessary to have a friendly relationship; but it is also important to bear in mind that loyalty must not be confused with obedience. Furthermore, criticism must be constructive and based on specific aspects, and not in mere ideological prejudices.

The momentous swings of Spanish foreign policy have harmed the credibility of Spain as a reliable actor in the international community. To repair this damage, Spanish foreign policy must be based upon an agreement between the main political parties. Political unity is a desirable basis in the formation of prescriptions for the creation of an effective foreign policy that defends Spain's nationalist interests. A foreign policy conceived from a true engagement of society and government is imperative to providing policies with the necessary continuity and long term perspective to prove beneficial to Spain and its people.

Notes

- ¹ "The Statement of the Atlantic Summit: A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People," *US Department of State*, March 16, 2003. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2003/18761.htm> (accessed May 27, 2007)
- ² Juan Carlos Pereira, *La Política Exterior de España (1800-2003)*, (Barcelona: Ariel, 2003).
- ³ Isaías Barreñada et al., "España en la Guerra de Irak (2002-2004): Rupturas en la política exterior," *Universidad Carlos III de Madrid*, April 2004. Available at: [http://www.eco.uc3m.es/immartin/EspañaenIrak\(ES\)%20final.doc](http://www.eco.uc3m.es/immartin/EspañaenIrak(ES)%20final.doc) (accessed May 27, 2007).
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ William Chislett, "Spain and the United States: So Close Yet So Far," (working paper, Real Instituto Elcano) Available at: <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documentos/259.asp> (accessed May 27, 2007).
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ José María Aznar, *Ocho Años de Gobierno: Una Visión Personal de España*. (Barcelona: Planeta, 2004), 164.
- ¹¹ Chislett, "Spain and the United States."
- ¹² Victoria Prego, "Sube al 84.7 % el Rechazo a la Guerra Contra Irak aun con el Respaldo de la ONU," *El Mundo*, February 22, 2003. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/papel/2003/02/22/espana/1342438.html> (accessed May 27, 2007).
- ¹³ "Public Opinion Barometer of the Elcano Royal Institute," *Real Instituto Elcano*, May, 2003. Available at: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/200305brie_eng.asp (accessed May 27, 2007).
- ¹⁴ Al Goodman, "Polls: 90 per cent of Spaniards against war" *CNN.com/World*, March 29 2003. Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/03/29/sprj.irq.spain/> (accessed May 27, 2007).
- ¹⁵ Celestino del Arenal, "La Retirada de las Tropas de Irak y la Necesidad de una Nueva Política Exterior," *Real Instituto Elcano*, April 29, 2004. Available at: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/Elcano_es/Zonas_es/Mediterraneo+y+Mundo+Arabe/ARI+82-2004 (accessed May 27, 2007).
- ¹⁶ The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs defended this position in several parliamentary appearances. See: Cortes Generales. Congreso de los Diputados. Comisión de Asuntos Exteriores. *Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados*, Enero 2003. VII Legislatura, Núm. 678. Available at: <http://www.senado.es/legis7/publicaciones/html/textos/CO0678.html> (accessed May 30, 2007).
- ¹⁷ Ernesto Ekaizer, "El último informe que pidió Exteriores antes de la guerra de Irak consideró ilegal la intervención," *El País*, December 13, 2005.
- ¹⁸ "Manifiesto de Profesores de Derecho Internacional y Relaciones Internacionales de Universidades españolas," *Real Instituto Elcano*, February 21, 2003. Available at: <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/publicaciones/66.asp> (accessed May 27, 2007)
- ¹⁹ "Iraq War Illegal, says Annan," *BBC News*, September 16, 2004. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3661134.stm (accessed May 30, 2007).
- ²⁰ Spanish government had merely repeated the pretexts provided by the US and the UK consequently not convincing the Spanish public that Spain's national security was in danger.

²¹ Juan Carlos Jiménez Redondo, "Continuidad y Cambio en la Política Exterior Española" *Revista Estrategia Global* 11 (September-October 2005): 4-8.

²² Chislett, "Spain and the United States."

²³ William Chislett stated "other factors behind Aznar's greater Atlantic commitment included: a closer relationship with the United States and its closest European allies (the UK and Portugal) as a way to counterbalance the EU's expansion to the east (as of 2004) and to offset Spain being on the periphery of Europe; security along the southern flank of the Mediterranean, the weak point in Spain's defensive alliances; very significant Spanish investments in Latin America; the increasingly large Hispanic presence in the United States; and the potential for greater trade and investment in the United States." Cited from: Chislett, "Spain and the United States."

²⁴ Berlusconi politically supported the invasion and sent troops to Iraq during the beginning of the post-war period, but he did not participate in the Atlantic Summit held in Azores. Berlusconi described his position as a "diplomatic masterpiece." Cited from: Massimo Giannini, "Il cortocircuitodel Cavaliere," *la Repubblica.it*, March 20, 2003. Available at:

<http://www.repubblica.it/online/politica/italiairaquindici/giannini/giannini.html>. (accessed May 27, 2007); Adele Oliveri, "The Two Fronts of Italy's War," *ZNET Daily Commentaries*, March 25, 2003. Available at: [zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2003-03/25oliveri.cfm), <http://www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2003-03/25oliveri.cfm> (accessed May 27, 2007).

²⁵ Barreñada et al., "España en la Guerra de Irak," 3.

²⁶ In this sense, it is possible to find the will of power of the former Spanish Prime Minister in a famous statement in which he proclaimed that it was time "to take Spain out of the History's corner." Cited From: Isaías Barreñada et al., "España en la Guerra de Irak," 1.

²⁷ Rafael L. Bardají, "Ser Wolfowitz en España," *La Vanguardia*, November 26, 2003. Available at: <http://www.gees.org/articulo/244/> (accessed May 27, 2007).

²⁸ The neoconservative thinking in Spain is represented by a small number of specialists that gather in two right-wing think-tanks, namely the Grupo de Estudios Estratégicos (GEES) and Fundación para el Análisis y los Estudios Sociales (FAES).

²⁹ The role played by this think-tank has been controversial, being accused of lack of political neutrality during the conflict.

³⁰ "Declaración institucional del Presidente del Gobierno sobre Irak," *El País*, March 20, 2003.

³¹ Aznar, *Ocho Años de Gobierno*, 150.

³² The facts indicate that Aznar made his decision at the beginning of the crisis without taking into account the subsequent parliamentary debate.

³³ José María Aznar, "La Política Española de Defensa en Nuestro Mundo" (conferenced, *Escuela Superior de las Fuerzas Armadas (ESFAS)*, October 20, 2003). Available at: <http://www.belt.es/articulos/articulo.asp?id=1204> (accessed May 27, 2007).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Barreñada et al., "España en la Guerra de Irak," 4.

³⁶ European Union, *A secure Europe in a better World: European Security Strategy*, (Brussels, December 12, 2003). Available at: <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> (accessed May 27, 2007).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Aznar, "La Política Española."

³⁹ As a pragmatic conservative, Prime Minister Aznar did not talk frequently about ideological affairs. Once out of office, Aznar has given up his ideological inscrutability and is playing an active role as President of FAES, a Popular Party think-tank.

⁴⁰ José María Aznar, "Seven Theses on Today's Terrorism" (address, Georgetown University, Washington DC, September 21, 2004). Available at: <http://www3.georgetown.edu/president/aznar/inauguraladdress.html> (accessed May 27, 2007).

⁴¹ José María Aznar, "Elogio a Vargas Llosa," (address, Washington DC, February, 2005). Available at: <http://www.gees.org/documentos/Documen-348.pdf> (accessed May 30, 2007).

⁴² José María Aznar, *Global Threats*, Atlantic Structures Conference Hudson Institute. Available at: http://www.hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=hudson_upcoming_events&id=301 (accessed May 30, 2007).

⁴³ "11- M Masacre en Madrid," *elmundo.es*. Available at:

<http://www.elmundo.es/documentos/2004/03/espana/atentados11m/comision/comparecencias/aznar/index.html> (accessed May 27, 2007).

44 "Ex Presidente Aznar: ¿Por qué Occidente Siempre Tiene que Pedir Perdón y el Islam Nunca?" *Aciprensa*, September 23, 2006. Available at: <http://www.aciprensa.com/noticia.php?n=14181> (accessed May 27, 2007).

45 Ibid.

46 Pablo Pardo, "Aznar se Pregunta por qué los Musulmanes no se Disculpan 'por haber ocupado España ocho siglos'," *elmundo.es Internacional*, September 22, 2006. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2006/09/22/internacional/1158945858.html> (accessed May 27, 2007).

47 José María Aznar, "A New Term for Freedom," *Wall Street Journal*, January 20, 2005.

48 In general, the Latin American policy of Spain during this period was in line with the US positions. See: Celestino del Arenal, "La retirada de las tropas de Irak y la necesidad de una nueva política exterior," *Real Instituto Elcano*, April 29, 2004. Available at: <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/494.asp> (accessed May 27, 2007)

49 "Declaración conjunta de EEUU y el Reino de España," Washington DC, April 12, 2006. Available at: <http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/venezuela/doc/usaesp.html> (accessed May 28, 2007).

50 As an EU member, Spain has a long tradition concerning the observation of international law. It is true that Spain supported NATO's intervention in Serbia in spring 1999 without the authorization of the UN Security Council, but at least this intervention obtained the political agreement of both Popular and Socialist Parties in Spain, was strongly backed by Spanish public opinion, and had a wide international support.

51 In this respect, it is interesting to analyze the neoconservative criticism against the French attitude during the Iraqi crisis. In an attempt to de-legitimize the France's opposition to war in Iraq, it was accused of forming an antidemocratic axis together with Moscow and Beijing. See: David Frum and Richard Perle, *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 230-231.

52 "El Embajador de EEUU dice que faltó al desfile de las FFAA por el desplante de Zapatero a su bandera," *elmundo.es*, October 15, 2004. Available at:

<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/10/14/espana/1097771230.html> (accessed May 28, 2007).

53 "Zapatero anuncia la retirada inmediata de las tropas de Irak," *elmundo.es*, April 19, 2004. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/04/18/espana/1082303152.html> (accessed May 29, 2007).

54 The resolution 1546 (2004) was finally passed by the UN Security Council on June 8, twenty two days before the deadline given by the Spanish Government. This resolution did not agree to the Spanish conditions to remain in Iraq, namely to grant the UN military and political control of the foreign troops.

55 A withdrawal of troops must be carried out without giving the feeling of escape. Regardless of domestic and foreign pressures, Spain should have waited until the UN resolution to make this significant decision. Likewise, the decision should have been communicated to American authorities before the public communiqué of Rodríguez Zapatero.

56 "Rodríguez Zapatero Anima a Todos los Países a Retirar sus Tropas para Mejorar la Situación en Irak," *elmundo.es*, September 10, 2004. Available at:

<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/09/09/espana/1094738854.html> (accessed May 29, 2007).

57 "Polémica por el Apoyo de Zapatero al Candidato Demócrata John Kerry en los EEUU," March 19, 2004. Available at:

<http://www2.noticiasdot.com/publicaciones/2004/0304/1903/eleccion190304/eleccion190304-6.htm> (accessed May 29, 2007).

58 As EU special envoy for the Middle East, Moratinos always defended the role of Yassir Arafat as an essential component to reach a peace agreement. In the years following the second intifada, Sharon decided to ostracize Arafat, an initiative largely supported by Bush and the neoconservatives ideologues.

59 According to neoconservatives, neutrality is not possible because it would suppose to recognize the Palestine terrorism as a legitimate way of fight against Israel. See: Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana*. (New York, London: Routledge, 2004), 207-214.

60 Grupo de Estudios Estratégicos, "Los amigos de los amigos de Zapatero," *Libertad Digital*, December 6, 2006. Available at: <http://www.gees.org/pdf/3331/> (accessed May 29, 2007).

61 In fact, the US banned in a general manner the weapons sale to Venezuela. See: Steven Dudley and Pablo Bachelet, "US bans weapons sales to Venezuela," *GlobalSecurity.org*, May 15, 2006. Available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/org/news/2006/060515-venezuela-weapons.htm> (accessed May 29, 2007).

⁶² “Estados Unidos niega el permiso para vender los 12 aviones militares españoles a Venezuela,” *elmundo.es*, January 13, 2006. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2006/01/12/espana/1137106238.html> (accessed May 29, 2007).

⁶³ Mark Falcoff, “Cuba after Fidel Castro: Prospects and possibilities,” *American Enterprise Institute*, August 31, 2006. Available at: http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.24852/pub_detail.asp (accessed May 29, 2007); Grupo de Estudios Estratégicos (GEES), “La libertad y la izquierda,” *Libertad Digital*, May 20, 2007. Available at: http://www.libertaddigital.com/php3/opi_desa.php3?cpn=22700 (accessed May 29, 2007).

⁶⁴ Venezuela is “the US’s third largest trade partner in Latin America after Mexico and Brazil.” Cited from: Jonah Gindin, “US-Venezuela Business Roundtable Inaugurated in Caracas,” *Venezuelaanalysis.com*, June 30, 2005. Available at: <http://www.venezuelaanalysis.com/news.php?newsno=1682> (accessed May 29, 2007).

⁶⁵ About the 2004 referendum see: “Observers endorse Venezuela vote,” *BBC News*, August 17, 2004. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/americas/3571350.stm> (accessed May 29, 2007); About the 2006 presidential elections see the report of the EU Electoral Mission: http://www.eucomevenezuela.org/pdf/EUEOM_Venezuela_Presidential_Election_2006_Preliminary_Statement.pdf

⁶⁶ The policies of isolation have shown to be counterproductive because they generate a nationalistic reaction within the isolated country that the autocratic regimes take advantage to strengthen their repressive structures.

⁶⁷ Ana Pastor, “EEUU apoya la Alianza de Civilizaciones de Zapatero,” *cadener.com*, February 16, 2002. Available at:

http://www.cadenaser.com/articulo/espana/EEUU/apoya/Alianza/Civilizaciones/Zapatero/csrsrpor/20060216csrsrnac_4/Tes/ (accessed May 29, 2007).

⁶⁸ In this sense, Rice said that this initiative “promises to facilitate greater understanding and promote democratic reform, peace, and stability in the Middle East. We hope to be able to support projects for concrete alliance that are compatible with our own objectives in the Middle East.” Cited from: Roland Flamini, “Alliance could calm cartoon unrest,” *United Press International*, February 17, 2006. Available at: <http://www.upi.com/InternationalIntelligence/view.php?StoryID=20060217-054414-1024r> (accessed May 29, 2007)/

⁶⁹ For a critical viewpoint see: Florentino Portero, “Alianza de Civilizaciones: la democracia como amenaza,” *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Político* (Madrid) 8 (Octubre-Diciembre 2005).

⁷⁰ Rafael L. Bardají, “El momento neoconservador en los EE.UU.,” *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Político*, (Madrid) 5 (Enero / Marzo 2005): 122.

⁷¹ Koffi Annan, “A global strategy for fighting terrorism,” (keynote address, Closing Plenary of the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, Madrid, March 10, 2005). Available at: <http://summit.clubmadrid.org/keynotes/a-global-strategy-for-fighting-terrorism.html> (accessed May 30, 2007).

⁷² Bush has followed the World War IV strategy proposed by Elliot Cohen, James R. Woolsey and Norman Podhoretz. This state-centric perspective has been criticized by Benjamin R. Barber in his book *Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy in an Age of Interdependence* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003).

⁷³ Iraq can be considered as the example par excellence of this scarce success. See: Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: the American Occupation and the Blunged Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2005).

⁷⁴ The deliberate confusion between anti-terrorist struggle and global hegemony seems to have a multiplier effect of terrorism.

⁷⁵ Increasing problems in Iraq have forced Bush administration to pay more attention to diplomacy and international cooperation face with Iran nuclear crisis and North Korea conflict.

⁷⁶ The victory of the Democratic Party in the legislative elections, the consequent resigns of Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, and US Ambassador to UN, John Bolton, and the Iraqi Group Report, seem to be signals of the neoconservative influence decline in the US foreign policy.

⁷⁷ Rice is going to visit Madrid on June 1, 2007. According to the neoconservative Spanish think-tank GEES, Spanish Embassy in Washington has tried in vain to achieve that Bush received Rodríguez Zapatero at the White House. See: “Rice-Moratinos: diálogo de besugos,” *En Libertad Digital*, May 15, 2007. Available at: <http://www.gees.org/articulo/4014/> (accessed May 30, 2007).

⁷⁸ In fact, it is not an absurd idea to think that the Spanish Government has been trying to compensate the troop's withdrawal of Iraq by sending more troops to Afghanistan.

