



A confused Spain in a disorientated Europe

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Introduction

Spain begins its European presidency at a time of maximum confusion. This confusion has three different poles: the G-20, the European paralysis, and the economic downturn.

The first thing to note is that Spain’s participation in the G-20 and events surrounding it has raised the same anxieties about the country’s position in the world which have dominated Spanish foreign policy for the last thirty years, since the transition to democracy. For the last three decades, Spanish democracy has been too busy organising its full incorporation into global institutions, achieving the recognition of its aspirations, and obtaining a level of visibility in line with its position.

The second point is that the evolution of the European political project which has led to the 27 member EU has cast doubt on Ortega y Gasset’s virtuous circle (“Spain is the problem, Europe the solution”) which up until now had dominated our foreign policy. If “more Europe” does not necessarily mean “more Spain”, the Europeanism which has guided our European policy for the last twenty five years is no longer the automatic answer to each new challenge. Indeed, rather the opposite would seem to be the case; in the new context, it is completely legitimate to ask how much Europe Spain needs to achieve its ends, on a case by case basis. Successive enlargements of the EU have unleashed a re-nationalising spirit; much to Spain’s perplexity, Berlin, London, Paris and Rome have put Europe in

second place, asserting the national will without any kind of complex. Spain, however reluctantly, is obliged to follow suit.

Finally, the depth and gravity of the economic crisis has eroded Spain's external image by calling into question the economic success narrative which it had built, unavoidably limiting its capacity for international leadership.¹ To what degree the recession impinges on our capacity for foreign action has still to be estimated, however. If the economic downturn is merely cyclical, as occurred in the past (1990-1993), the growth rate will bounce back along with that of the core European economies, perhaps even bettering the latter figure, and no far-reaching decisions need be taken. But if the crisis is structural and Spain ends up confronting a new "lost decade", as occurred in the period 1974-1984, the options narrow considerably and a thorough revision of the analytical framework becomes a necessity.

The Spanish EU Presidency, located at the intersection of these three problems, gets underway at a time of confusion, then; between means and ends, because the usual slogans apart, there has been no overall strategic reflection on what is to be achieved in Europe and how to go about achieving it. There is confusion too between logic and setting, to the extent that the European presidency mixes in a fashion none too clear national political priorities like a change in the productive model, innovation and fairness, with European priorities of a different dimension and scope (such as improving the instruments of economic governance, regulating financial markets, safeguarding the internal market, preserving the stability and growth pact, completing the extension of the Euro zone).

In circumstances such as these, the Spanish presidency will inevitably have to settle for administering Europe's affairs rather than stamping the presidency with the 'transformational nature' the Spanish president has personally pledged. This is no big deal, nor should it be any cause for alarm; first of all, Spain has more than enough political and administrative experience to carry out the coordination tasks associated with the presidency efficiently; secondly, the political timing - international, European and national - is sufficiently bad to advise against weighty decisions being taken. Europe is clearly in a period of consolidation, not one of transformation.

Weathering the economic storm, achieving minimum internal consensus and fulfilling the obligations imposed by the functioning of the EU in a satisfactory manner are sufficient goals, and realistic ones too. If there is

¹ See, for example, *The Economist* (26th of November, 2009), which describes Spain as "the new sick man of Europe".

any administrative energy left over, and some political capital to spare, two other things are worth considering. Firstly, preparing the ground and establishing the processes which can enable important decisions in the future (for example, in economic government, or security and defence policy); secondly, keeping something in reserve, just in case an unforeseen crisis capable of seriously affecting the EU's interests crops up (in the economic and financial arena, but also in terms of foreign policy).

1. Weight and influence: the G-20 debate

Foreign policy is not just another public policy; besides seeking to maximise, like other policies, an objective (economic, or security related), it is intimately linked to questions of identity. Though rarely made explicit, the questions *Who are we? What do we want? and Who are we prepared to achieve it with?* always underlie foreign policy. Seen from this perspective, foreign policy is an external activity in so much and so far as it projects the values and interests of a political community onto a given milieu, but this process in turn has a constitutive effect on that same political community. Historically, modern States have been forged through war and trade with other States. Similarly, debates about identity which run through any contemporary society are incomprehensible without keeping an eye on the international context in which they take place.

As foreign policy lends itself well to this kind of reading, it is no surprise that each government seeks its historical moment. The governments of Felipe González (1982-1996) made accession to what was then the European Community not only the axis of Socialist foreign policy, but also one vital for the Socialist project itself. Likewise, the Aznar governments (1996-2004) approached access to the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) as an existential priority compared with which all other objectives were secondary. Both González and Aznar conceived of these events as historic milestones. For González, 1986 anchored the successful transition to democracy in an international context, putting an end to decades of Spanish exceptionalism, and laying the groundwork for economic convergence with Europe. For Aznar, Spain's access to the Euro ended one hundred years of economic backwardness and a long spiral of decadence beginning with the Cuban war (1898-1998). Only by going back to Carlos IV (according to the Fundación FAES) does one come across such a critical moment of Spanish history.²

² For a reading of Aznar's foreign policy in this regard, see "Las debilidades de la política exterior española", by José María de Areilza, in Anuario 2009, Foro de la Sociedad Civil. Also Alejandro Muñoz-Alonso, "España en primer plano: ocho años de política exterior (1996-2004)", FAES 2007.

Nevertheless, despite similarities, a certain evolution between one government and the other can be seen. For the Socialists, the international factor in general, and the European variable in particular, held one of the keys to unlock the so-called “problem of Spain” (economic backwardness, international isolation, institutional weakness, a lack of social cohesion, territorial fragmentation and political polarisation). In a way very similar to that which took place in the Federal Germany ushered in with Bonn’s Basic Law, and in opposition to Francoism which forged Spanish nationalism on the basis of its differences with liberal Europe, the governments of Felipe González were able to give birth to a new Spanish nationalism based on pride in belonging to Europe. The resulting model, which has frequently been described in terms of ‘Europeanization’, looked to make Spain fully homogenous with the main current of continental Europeanism (based on the Europe of the Six, the core founders). The level of commitment which Spain showed towards Europe was such that only a decade after accession, Spain looked less like a recent arrival by 1996 than a founding member.

However, the “Spain in its rightful place” which Fernando Morán proclaimed had its references in the past more than the future. In other words, it was content to put paid to the past, and though it arrived in time to enjoy that success, there wasn’t enough to speculate with the future. In the case of Aznar, on the contrary, the situation was very different, because with the historic objective of EU accession accomplished, the coincidence of a time of economic growth and rapid internationalisation of the Spanish economy unexpectedly opened up a series of options which had not been within reach until then.

If the only option for the González governments was to get as close to the French-German axis as possible, Aznar, with a different ideological predisposition, could consider acting as a counterweight to that axis and, besides, do so from two possible variants: the European, by building an alternative coalition (liberal and on the periphery, but pro-European at the end of the day); and another more global (though also more nationalist), based on Spain’s own weight and that of its economy in the world in strategic coalition with the United States and the United Kingdom. The first option, which we could describe as ‘alternative Europeanism’, was adopted between 1996 and 2001; the second, aiming to found anew Spanish foreign policy entirely (with even the idea of a place for Spain in the G-7 to play around with) was the one chosen after 9/11.

The conceptual framework which allowed Aznar to stop thinking of foreign policy ‘in Europe’ and begin to conceive of alternative parameters came about due to a combination of factors: Spanish economic success at the

beginning of the last decade, a certain Euroscepticism in the People's Party of Thatcherite origin, Aznar's dire relationship with Chirac and Schröder, Blair's magnetism, and September the 11th, 2001. The success achieved by monetary union, the positive economic growth figures, the grave Italian crisis (which fed into the theory of the *sorpasso* of Italy), French and German economic difficulties in containing their public deficit, and the disembarking of Spanish multinationals in Latin America presented the Aznar government with an alternative vision of Spanish foreign policy to that carried out by González. The crisis with Morocco over Perejil Island (which amounted to a rude awakening for many in terms of Europe's limitations in foreign policy matters) was the catalyst which brought together a series of elements which, as has been noted above, were already present.

In the case of the current Zapatero government, the reconception of foreign policy has been more complex, and the search for specific objectives of historic magnitude somewhat more difficult, frustrating and incomplete, for several reasons. Initially, the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and the referendum on the European Constitution clearly defined a desire to return to the foreign policy of the Socialist governments. Interpreting Aznar's change of course (better said, his two changes of course) as a detour (read mistake) from an essentially sound model, the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero set as its objective "a return to the heart of Europe", and aimed to focus once more Spanish foreign policy on the European nucleus, federalist orthodoxy and the Franco-German axis. But as Spring 2005 and the negative referendum results in France and the Netherlands made all too clear, the Europe to which the new Socialist government sought to return was simply no longer there; a reality confirmed later by the departure of Chirac and Schröder.

Thus, in the face of European stasis, the international visibility of Spanish foreign policy, consciously or not, came to rest on two new policies in accordance with our tradition: the Alliance of Civilizations and development cooperation policy. Both of these received a steady injection of political, presidential capital during Zapatero's first term of office (2004-2008), to the point of radically changing the image of Spain beyond our borders. During Aznar's time in office, Spain posited itself as a global economic power sympathetic to the hard core of western liberal democracies, in short, a classic power asserting itself in terms of hard power: But the narrative provided by the Alliance of Civilizations and development aid, meant that the first Zapatero government turned towards a foreign policy based on soft power, on attractiveness, and the capacity to persuade based on values of dialogue and the idea of Spain as a cultural

and norm-based power. There is no better way of illustrating this difference than Spain's relative position in the development cooperation league table (the seventh biggest global donor) and military spend (in fifteenth place in terms of total military spend).³

But if 9/11 spelled the end of the goals which the first Aznar government initially pursued (to position Spain as a counterweight to the Franco-German axis), the global financial crisis has put paid to the construction of Spain as a cultural, norm-based power which the first Zapatero government sought. As became evident soon enough, one thing was to refuse to fight for a seat on the G-7, which clearly represented everything that Zapatero's foreign policy wanted to break with initially (an excluding liberal, western order based on economic power); but quite another was to be sidelined from the G-20, which was clearly shaping up to be a key institution in the constitution of the new world order which, in some way, the financial crisis and the arrival of Obama to the White House had contributed to establishing.

The problem lay (and lies in fact, because the question has not been resolved definitively) in that although the multilateral values on which the G-20 aspires to build its legitimacy coincide fully with those defended by Spain, our country doesn't form part of that institution due to a complex set of reasons (amongst them, the ambition of the Aznar governments to form part of the G-7). Paradoxically in a country obsessed with not missing the boat of historical opportunity, the G-20 had been ignored. And so the Spanish President was forced to slam on the brakes of his foreign policy, go back on the change of course imprinted on his first term in office, and flood the multilateral market with arguments about Spain's economic weight, and the success of its banking regulations, as a way of ensuring Spain's right to form part of the G-20.⁴

Thus, all of a sudden, Spain's presence at the G-20 seemed to become regarded as its latest big foreign policy achievement; this despite the G-20 containing three problems with no easy solution. First of all, though the access criteria were objective and fair, the legitimacy of this group of countries will continue to be dubious.⁵ Secondly, in the face of scant legitimacy in terms of origins, its credibility depends on its efficiency, something far from guaranteed. In other words, with its current institutional

³ For a conceptualisation in this regard, see "Los objetivos de España en su acción exterior", Working Paper 21/2008 of Fundación Alternativas, pp. 9-11

⁴ For a conceptualisation of this role, see "España ante el G-20: una propuesta estratégica sobre su inserción en la nueva gobernanza global", Real Instituto Elcano 31/3/2008.

⁵ See the provocative article by Anders Aaslund, "The Group of 20 must be stopped", Financial Times, the 26th of November 2009.

design and modus operandi, the G-20's efficiency is entirely subject to the will of the states which make it up, but in no way will it outlive it. In third place, it is hard to see how Spain's participation in the G-20 can be formalised easily; instead, it will consist of successive invitations, leaving Spain's presence compromised in two ways. Firstly, Spain has to indebt itself politically with every successive presidency in order to secure an invitation; and secondly, its status as a guest forces it to keep a low profile in meetings, unlike fully-fledged members who it cannot irritate by adopting initiatives which they don't like or openly taking sides in conflicts which arise.

Yet in spite of all the problems it raises, in keeping with tradition, the current Spanish government has not been slow to look for historical references and parallelisms, however contrived they might be. To go no further, in edition number 129 of this magazine, Miguel Ángel Moratinos stated that Spain's participation in the four May 2009 summits (G-20 in London, NATO in Kehl, EU-United States in Prague, and the Alliance of Civilizations in Istanbul) amounted to "a historic moment for Spain's role in international relations, without precedent in contemporary history, which has put Spain in its rightful place at last" (*Spain in its rightful place at last* page. 19), suggesting the 1906 Algeciras Conference as the most recent precedent of "the participation by Spain with the main international actors in the design of an international agreement". Significantly the Minister brushed aside the fact that his predecessor, Fernando Morán (1982-1985), had already claimed the same merit for himself in his memoirs (*Spain in its rightful place*, 1990). And, in a strange way, he was claiming a historic milestone the justification of which seemed more chronological (the hundred years that have passed) than historical or ideological (given that the division of Morocco in a typical colonial conference like Algeciras certainly doesn't seem like a politically correct date in the calendar).

It is not surprising that Spain, which has missed the boat on several key issues in its recent history, has understood its foreign policy in terms of presence, status and recognition. After all, positioning is a pre-requisite for action. However, quite another matter is that, as seems to be the case in Spain, every government feels the need to declare that it has ended the cycle, however inconclusive and problematic a statement it may be. How many times must Spain proclaim its return? Is it not an anomaly that every government feels obliged to read from the same script? Is it not time to ask ourselves what lies behind this desire, what its justification is, especially when, as is evident, we lack a structured debate on these questions?

2. The European paralysis.

As argued at the beginning of this article, Spain begins the European presidency in the midst of a reconception of its foreign action objectives. In addition to an international situation clearly in transition in terms of the institutions and instruments of government, confusion dominates the European political scene, something with important repercussions for Spain.

There are several reasons for this confusion. First of all, the process of institutional reform associated with EU enlargement, stretching over a decade and more, has taken a severe political toll on the European Union. The Treaty of Lisbon certainly does not satisfy the ambitions of a good number of member states who wanted a more ambitious text. However, in light of the difficulties experienced surrounding the ratification of the European Constitution, the truth is that the EU finds itself in what has been euphemistically termed “a consolidation phase”, but what in practice reflects the reality of an integration process which has reached its ceiling.

In second place, the EU has still not digested the successive phases of enlargement which have raised the number of members from 15 to 27 in practically a decade. Even worse, it faces a series of accession demands in the Western Balkans, but also from Turkey and Iceland, which it seems very difficult to fulfil quickly and satisfactorily. Clearly, the responsibility for this “enlargement fatigue” must not be looked for in the new members, nor attributed to them exclusively. It is worth remembering that the constitutional process came off the rails precisely in two founding member states (France and the Netherlands). Furthermore, as all reliable studies on the subject have laid bare, the fatigue in question has nothing to do with the economic costs of enlargement (enlargement has been good business, above all for the older members); nor with intra-European migratory flows (which have been even lower than expected); nor, for that matter, with the slowing down of the decision making process (there has been no institutional stalemate on account of increased EU members - not in the Council, the Commission, or the Parliament). In short, the EU is subject to “integration fatigue”, the consequences of which cut across a wide range of policy areas, one of which is enlargement.

Thirdly, the economic and financial crisis has highlighted the strengths of the integration process, since it served to parry its first blows. But the crisis has also exposed a number of limitations, both institutional and of political will. As the whole affair surrounding Spain’s participation in the G-20 has shown, for all its tremendous economic weight, Europe lacks a strategy which would guarantee it a corresponding presence and influence in the international economic and financial arena. Despite being the biggest

economy in the world, accounting for practically a fifth of all global trade, and having a currency of its own, there has been no sign of a united Europe in action at the G-7, the G-20 or the International Monetary Fund, but instead, sporadic coordination (not without contradictions and some disagreements) between European partners once again. The G-20, as has been noted, has “many Europeans, but not much Europe”.

In addition, from an internal perspective, the downturn is exerting a high price in terms of its practical effect on existing agreements, in so far as some key elements, like the internal market, the stability and growth pact or the Lisbon agenda, have been jeopardised by it. In particular in this regard, differences between London, Paris and Berlin in relation to the regulation of financial services stand out, but also with respect to the fiscal policy strategies required to exit recession, which have differed and differ excessively between Germany and France, the former focussed on containing the deficit, the latter in stimulating consumer spending via debt.

In the final instance, these passing disagreements point to structural differences which will have a big impact in the long term. Germany of late has followed a much more pragmatic foreign policy route, far removed from the emotive Europeanism which characterised its foreign policy up until German unification. This “normalisation” of German foreign policy has coincided with an important change of course in Paris, with Sarkozy also less focussed on cooperation with Berlin. The undoubted effect of both these phenomena is a cooling off within the European nucleus which the Paris-Berlin axis constituted. If in the past, Germany “thought in Europe” instinctively when taking decisions or resolving problems, in recent years it seems obvious that Germany is deciding on a case by case basis. And in the case of relations with Russia, the answer is all too clear; Moscow is too important for Berlin to leave in the hands of Brussels.

In fourth place, the EU is victim of its own indecisiveness in terms of European foreign policy and the position of Europe in the world. On the one hand, common foreign policy has advanced enough for national foreign policies to make little or no sense individually. The upsurge of China, India, Brazil and the resurgence of Russia expose the limited scale of Europe’s big powers even more starkly than before, and the need to redesign the European dimension with a view to the multipolar world upon us. In a world where globalisation pervades everything, EU member states have renounced an instrument as basic to foreign policy as trade, whilst there is no independent military power, and none sufficient on an individual basis. As has been highlighted in the United Kingdom recently in the debate on the modernisation of the strategic deterrent, not even a

country with a solid defence tradition is in a position to finance the wide ranging needs which stretch from the nuclear deterrent to state building (read Afghanistan).

At the same time, European cooperation in defence and security matters is still at an early phase. The ESDP, despite its good intentions, is just getting off the ground and the capacity of the EU to meet European Security Strategy (2003) objectives is pretty much hypothetical. Here too, the fragmentation of European power is all too obvious; despite the presence of more than 30,000 European soldiers in Afghanistan, Europe lacks a strategy and political discourse of its own, finding itself recently with no choice but wait with arms crossed (albeit sending more troops as it did so) for the Obama Administration to conclude the strategy review process. Likewise, despite spending four times more on defence than Russia, EU States frequently feel intimidated by Moscow.

The upshot of this is that the EU's foreign policy finds itself in no-man's land. With weak central institutions, strong States (though very asymmetrical in their wishes and capacities), the incentives system is doubly perverse; for external actors such as China, Russia or even the US, relations with the EU consist of how to obtain maximum advantage from the divisions between member States. For European States, meanwhile, the game consists of lumbering Brussels with the costs of policies while, at the same time, retaining as much benefit at home as possible. It is no surprise that in these circumstances we are witnessing an upsurge in bilateralism: member states are use bilateral relations in foreign relations to obtain what they are incapable of securing collectively, even if the position of the whole is weakened as a result.

3. Rethinking Spain's priorities

What are the consequences of this for Spain and its presidency? For reasons to do with its recent past, Spain is a fervently and instinctively pro-European country. For the last thirty years, Spanish foreign policy has had a single (though double-barrelled) objective: first, integration *in* Europe; secondly, the integration *of* Europe. In the land of Ortega y Gasset, Spain has always been the problem, and Europe the solution. Until recently, these two objectives (integration *in* Europe and *of* Europe) not only complemented each other, they also relegated all other foreign policy considerations to the background, or else influenced their conception in a secondary way. In the same way that a large number of national policies have been devised in a way subsidiary to Europe, our foreign policy has used the European perspective to conceptualise, carry out and secure the national interest.

In consequence, the Europeanization of Spanish foreign policy has been twofold; on the one hand, Spain has adopted European policies as its own in areas where it had no national or inherited interests from the past (think, for example, of Central Europe and the post-Soviet space); on the other hand, Spain has tried to Europeanise its most important bilateral relations, especially in relation to the Mediterranean and Latin America. Thanks to Europe, Spanish foreign policy has achieved a strategic depth which it would otherwise have lacked; harnessing the commercial and political power available to its European partners, Spain has become an important actor, at least in those two regional settings.

The problem is that this process, which has produced enormous benefits without any question, has been showing symptoms of exhaustion for a number of years now. The reasons, in this case again, are twofold. Firstly, as has been noted above, the European integration process has reached its ceiling, preventing the perpetuation of the virtuous dynamic in which enlargement of European foreign policy capacities reinforced national capacities, and vice-versa. Whether the Lisbon Treaty is able to restore the damage suffered during these years of institutional introspection still needs to be clarified, but if the political dynamic in France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy is anything to go by, it seems doubtful that European foreign policy will take anything other than very small steps during the next decade.⁶

For a country like Spain, which is neither big nor small, the European standstill amounts to an important frustration. Unlike those medium or small countries in the EU whose foreign policy overlaps almost perfectly with European policy (think of Belgium, Sweden or Holland), Spain is of sufficient magnitude to have a foreign policy which does not flow exclusively through the channels of Brussels. At the same time, unlike the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy, it is not present in other forums, like the Security Council, G-7 and the G-20, in which other EU partners of similar importance feature. As the debate surrounding the G-20 has highlighted, the exclusion of Spain from this forum has no objective justification in terms of Spain's economic significance, but is the result of a chain of political and historical factors peculiar to the country which can be amended only with difficulty.⁷

⁶ Nevertheless, as the joint document of the CIDOB and the Círculo de Economía criticises, Spain hasn't paid enough attention to new members, placing it again in a "peripheral state" ("Un proyecto para Europa", 2009, pp.1).

⁷ According to figures from the World Bank, Spain's GDP in 2008 was the tenth biggest in the world, just a little bit smaller than Russia's and bigger than Canada or India.

Significant internal reasons need to be added to these exogenous reasons (the European stasis). Leaving aside the consequences of the economic and financial crisis, it is evident that the spectacular economic growth registered in Spain over the last twenty years has given it an international dimension and importance unknown in recent history. As was always going to be the case, the emergence of new interests in Spain's international agenda has opened the door to a necessary reflection on Spain's role in the world.

The Socialist governments (1982-1996) tended to think of Spain as a regional power. The classical priorities of Socialist foreign policy reflect this well enough: Europe, the Mediterranean and Latin America. In these three spheres, Spanish foreign policy had an important added value and could be decisive when it came to shaping results if the right conditions were in place. As Maastricht demonstrated, Spanish Europeanism could prove crucial when nudging European negotiations towards positions favouring integration. Further, simultaneous to the *Drang Nach Osten* which the EU went through as a result of the fall of the Berlin wall, Spanish diplomacy was able to succeed in making the whole of the EU - not just France or Italy individually - really engage with the Mediterranean. Finally, thanks to incessant diplomatic effort, Spain managed to accompany its presence in Latin America with the political and trade backing of the EU. The success of these ventures, (partial in my opinion) is another question: what is important is the concept underlying them.

What do we find if we jump forward a decade and take a look at the current priorities of Spanish foreign policy? Europe, the Mediterranean and Latin America are all still there, but we can see that Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have been added to the list which every government official trots out like a mantra.⁸ Clearly, if everything is a priority, then nothing is, especially when a number of global issues can be added to geographic priorities, such as the eradication of poverty, terrorism, non-proliferation and climate change. *Priority*, then, must be understood in Spanish diplomatic language to mean "important for Spain" or "place or process in which Spain must have a presence in some way or other". Rather than polemicise about whether Asia is a priority of Spanish foreign policy or not (it certainly isn't in terms of the diplomatic resources assigned to it, despite what the Foreign Minister may claim), it would be more productive to look at the question from a different perspective, to stop talking about *priorities* and simply state that, as a consequence of its recent development, Spain has acquired global interests (and not for nothing either; in 2008, more of the turnover of

⁸ See Miguel Ángel Moratinos, "Diagnosis y Política Exterior", *Política Exterior*, number 131, pp. 92-93

the big Spanish companies quoted on the IBEX-35 came from outside rather than inside Spain).

This opens a debate not only infinitely more interesting from an analytical perspective, but also one impossible to avoid any longer. Should Spain aspire to build a global presence of its own (independently of the fact that this presence can be placed at the service of Europe, depending on circumstances), or should it continue to play the part of a medium sized power, one whose added value lies in its qualities of complementarity between regional interests in three main spheres (Europe, the Mediterranean and Latin America) and a strong Europeanization of its identity and policies?

It is an interesting question, the answer to which requires us first of all to see just to what extent the traditional model is spent, or whether it can be revitalised. In this regard, it would seem evident that, although the alternative model (global) is far from being fleshed out, the existing model (regional) certainly has evident problems. Besides the European paralysis already mentioned, the EU's Mediterranean policy has achieved scant results, and in addition, Spain's influence in Latin America is gradually waning.

In the case of the Mediterranean, Spain has almost certainly done everything it had to; if the Barcelona Process has run out of steam, it is not because it was badly managed, but because the governments of the southern shore of the Mediterranean have deliberately squandered the immense incentives and opportunities offered by Europe. The revitalisation which Sarkozy intended with the *la Union* for the Mediterranean suffers from the same problems; unlike the elites and public opinion in Central and Eastern Europe which opted for Europeanization, the European spark (understood as political and economic liberalisation and social modernisation) has failed to catch alight on the southern Mediterranean shore. The result is, inevitably, that Spain and its European partners have had to lower the threshold of expectations, renounce transformation and put a policy of contention and risk control into place in which positive outcomes and the definition of success are based on what has *not* taken place: the rise of Islamists to power, an overwhelming wave of immigration, territorial conflict, etc, more than what should happen (political liberalisation and economic opening). In keeping with economic logic and a situation of decreasing marginal yields, Spanish foreign policy must weigh up the costs of the current policy and the opportunity it offers. In other words, does it make sense to invest more resources in a place

where the returns are decreasing or are there other policies susceptible of obtaining greater returns?

Something similar can be said for Latin America, where the signs of the exhaustion of Spain's foreign policy are also all too evident. Once again, it would be unfair to lay the responsibility exclusively at Spain's door. In the nineteen nineties, Spain and Latin America found each other after emerging from a gloomy past full of misunderstandings and international marginalisation. For Spain, Latin America represented the opportunity to obtain international visibility which it lacked owing to its recent past, as well as providing a source of economic opportunities. For Latin America, Spain provided, via Europe, a link to an alternative world to the traditional and problematic United States, as well as the opportunity to solve traditional bilateral problems by thinking bi-regionally. Almost two decades later and, as a product of its success, Latin America no longer needs Spain to take its place at the global table, although strangely enough Spain needs Latin America to be global. The fact is that Latin America has ceased to be a continent that can be dealt with in a unified manner, much less from a bi-regional perspective. That diversity is not open to question, it is simply a feature of reality, but for Spain it means playing two roles. On the one hand, it has to keep alive the idea of a Latin American community in spite of the evident problems of political and economic content which makes it a forum more symbolic than regional (compare it with the interest of Latin America in the recent APEC summit); on the other, it has to maintain a delicate balance in its bilateral relations with each of the members of the community, something which forces it to conceal its political affinities.

In consequence, symptoms of exhaustion are apparent in the three priority areas in which Spanish foreign policy has traditionally operated, limiting the political context in which the presidency will act and its chances of success, naturally. Another important element can be added to this; in the past, transatlantic relations were also a priority focus during the Spanish EU presidency (1995), while today they are defined in a framework which is substantially different (as Jeremy Shapiro and Nick Witney highlight in this very edition).

Conclusions

Spain's Europeanism, although sincere, lacks realisable and significant objectives on which to work given that Europe is in a period of transition and uncertainty. Despite the Spanish president calling for a "transformational presidency", Spain will be obliged to carry out a

presidency dedicated to administering EU affairs, ensuring the continuity of European policies and getting the Lisbon Treaty up and running, rather than obtaining grand strategic objectives.

European exhaustion leads us to a debate which it is impossible to escape on how our global interests are best defended. By strengthening Europe, even if it means losing autonomy and national control? Or by creating, in the national arena, global capacities which might be put at the service of Europe? In the past, Spain would clearly have chosen to search for an answer in the European context. A Europe which had managed to resolve satisfactorily and collectively its global presence would have saved Spain the trouble of asking itself the question. But, as we know, Europe still does not have a single voice, economic or political, in the IMF, or the Security Council. Besides, in the jump from the G-7 to the G-20, Europe has missed out again on another chance to shape itself as an actor with its own voice in the new structures of global governance which have emerged with the financial crisis and the emergence of new poles of power. Paradoxically, at a time which the world is opening up and becoming increasingly multipolar, member States have hesitated, preferring in the final instance to take refuge in bilateralism.

With the celebration last year of the bicentenary of independence in Latin America, and simultaneous to the controversy surrounding Spain's presence in the G-20, one commentator noted that "Spain has not enjoyed so much weight in the world since the eve of Rocroi in 1643", going on to lament that "Spanish democracy has not been able to create a vision of itself coherent with its recent history", concluding by pointing with concern to "silence as myth" and stressing the "imperious need to decide what it wants to be in the future".⁹ Apparently, that is a debate which is going to remain open for some time yet.

⁹ Miguel Ángel Bastenier, "Bicentenarios y autocrítica", *El PAIS*, 20th of May, 2009, p.8.