

Diagnosis & Foreign Policy

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“We have the objectives, strategic planning, resources and will to influence and cooperate in the challenges and demands of the twenty first century.” The Spanish Foreign Minister responds to Jose Maria Areilza and Jose Ignacio Torreblanca’s analysis of the position of Spain in the world.

The journal *Foreign Policy* (Spanish edition) published an article in its June-July edition entitled ‘Differential Diagnosis. Foreign Policy’, written by Jose Maria de Areilza and Jose Ignacio Torreblanca. Behind this epigraph, the authors conceal an open letter on foreign policy addressed to Spanish President, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. They then try to set out a *differential diagnosis* through the narrative of a clinical history, diagnosis and treatment, though what is most striking is the application of the concept of differential diagnosis to Spanish foreign policy [...]

[...] If we stick with the medical metaphor proposed by the authors of the article, any practised reader can appreciate the one-sidedness of their narrative, the lack of rigour and experience needed to establish an accurate diagnosis and, naturally, an effective treatment; all the more so when that treatment is unnecessary, the policy in question being healthy, full of vigour and creativity, and with a good future ahead of it.

From a close reading of the article, it is easy to deduce that the authors’ diagnosis is based on a *clinical history* which is lacking in nuances, is politically biased, and follows the symmetry symptomatic of the main party of the opposition. What is even more disconcerting, the treatment calls for a prescription well past its sell-by-date, and amounts to a style which borders through its phoney-scientific discourse on personal and political disparagement. This, indeed, is where the *differential* aspect of this Spanish foreign policy *diagnosis* lies. That foreign policy is open to criticism and is always predisposed to dialogue and compromise, in keeping with the demands of any mature democracy and in line other state policies; but an attempt to discredit Spanish foreign policy wholesale such as that which shines through the article in question is another matter altogether.

The principles, values, direction and political goals of President Zapatero's governments are contained in the electoral programmes with which the Socialist party has gone to the polls and won the last two general elections. That is where the narrative of the Socialist governments' foreign policy, its objectives, actions and legacy in Spanish history, and consequently that of the President of the Government, are to be found [...]

In all modesty and with some degree of satisfaction, Spain is an important actor on the international stage today thanks to the formulation of that foreign policy, its objectives and the degree to which they have been met. We are a stronger country within the international community today than we were five and a bit years ago, one which identifies with a fairer, more balanced world and fights for it, promoting peace, the defence of human rights and democratic values, the respect for international law, such as in the case of Kosovo, institution building, development cooperation and sustainable human security [...]

Without getting into the matter in too much detail, and sticking to the limitations I have set myself, I think the decision to bring home our troops from Iraq amounted to a sea-change in Spanish foreign policy, a new direction and different approach which has been endorsed by subsequent events. The Spanish people have noticed a change and a significant growth in our foreign policy, which has been faithful to the principles and values previously mentioned, and has enabled Spain to exert influence on global governance in the United Nations system, the European Union, Latin America, North America, Asia and Africa; as well as by establishing and strengthening multilateral and bilateral relations with a whole host of organisations in defence of human rights and the promotion of the internationalisation of Spanish businesses [...]

The first of our foreign policy objectives was the defence and promotion of an effective multilateralism. In the face of the failure of unilateralism, it was evident that we had to strengthen the whole UN system. That was the first thing the President did on the international stage, and his speech to UN General Assembly in September 2004 clearly reflected the base-lines of this new direction in our foreign relations. The fight against terrorism was without doubt the priority concern for our government and the international community at large, and for that reason the initiatives presented in that speech were framed squarely in the context of that objective: the new global strategy against terrorism and the Alliance of Civilizations [...]

In the area of international aid and the fight against hunger, poverty and disease, the President has received backing too, from civil society, the political groupings on the floor of the EU parliament and those of the Latin American Community of Nations, the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS), and the UN..... Over recent years, development aid has won cross-party support, something which has favoured the renewal of instruments, and has seen different forms of strategic planning map out the coherence, effectiveness and transparency of aid [...] Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's government has maintained the commitment to reach 0.7% of GDP in 2012 and it has been put to the international community at large that this figure becomes obligatory for developed countries from 2015 onwards [...]

Regarding the Europe arena and Europeanism [...] the President has played an important part in unblocking the European construction process over recent years, something the Aznar government hindered, acquiescent as it was in blocking the process of institutional deepening, as the breaks were put on the Constitutional Treaty in favour of widening, and in defence of the Treaty of Nice, though the contributions of the latter have been politically and socially surpassed by the Lisbon Treaty [...]

In the constructive negotiations of the latest Financial Perspective, the Spanish government has secured the Technology Fund endowed with two billion Euros which will speed up our country's uptake of the new information and communication technologies even further, and increase productivity [...] Spain has promoted a comprehensive immigration policy within the UE which has been thrashed out by countries of origin, transit and destination, and which lays great emphasis on integration, the fight against human trafficking and the respect for human rights and development aid [...] The Spanish presidency aims to strengthen the role of Europe as a global actor, because this will make it easier to come out of the crisis at its various different levels, and strengthen our model based on the rule of law, and economic and social progress, making it more cohesive and influential within the international community.

In Latin America, support has been given to regional and local organisations, and significant political and diplomatic efforts have been made, as well as more resources and instruments provided, to bolster the South American Community of Nations, the summit system, and our multilateral and bilateral relations there – strategic association agreements with Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Peru [...]

Does anybody think that our presence in the Mediterranean, Asia-Pacific or in Africa is unnecessary in the context of a globalised world? Can common sense tolerate the absence of Spain from the Euro-Mediterranean arena, the conflict in the Middle East, contacts with the United Kingdom and Gibraltar, or the solution to the conflict in the Sahara? Isn't it a cause for pride that the Secretariat for the Union for the Mediterranean has set up offices in Spain, in Barcelona? Does it seem unreasonable that Spain has worked decisively with others for Morocco to get its own EU Statue and so become one of our main, natural partners? How is it possible to overlook a strategic agreement with China, or the fact that its leaders consider Spain their best friend in Europe for that matter? And what about our relations with India, Japan and Australia? Aren't they worth highlighting? Can anybody seriously argue that Spain's presence in Afghanistan goes unnoticed, and should be measured by the criteria of withdrawal? These doubts and many others arise all too easily when reading the *treatment* which *Differential diagnosis* offers us.

An inexcusable omission of what constitutes a foreign policy priority can also be discerned together with these doubts – that of the new African policy [...]

Relations with the United States of America, from both a bilateral and multilateral perspective, have always been both loyal and open, and they will become stronger in defence of common policies and interests once the turbulence of the initial period of the first PSOE Government is overcome. Effective cooperation has always been present in our relations, and in terms of economic, security, defence, police and judicial matters, the level has been magnificent; these ties have been even further strengthened with the arrival of the Obama administration only a few months ago [...]

In light of the results of the President's policies and those of this *Sherpa*, it flies in the face of logic that the authors fail to value or appreciate the efforts by Spanish society, the autonomous regional governments and the entire Government in propagating democratic values and human rights in both the domestic and foreign arena, especially since we form part of the small group of countries with a national human rights plan and contribute to those being developed within the international community [...]

Nobody can doubt that Spanish foreign policy has a plan and grand ambitions, and it is obvious that we have limited resources at our disposal which much be increased at a reasonable rate in order to keep up with the

accelerated pace of the times. The Socialist governments have increased the budget of the Foreign Ministry threefold, raising it from 1, 10 billion Euros in 2005 to more than 3, 61 billion in 2009 [...] Since the arrival of Rodriguez Zapatero's Government, fourteen embassies and nine consulates have been opened, and four consular offices have been upgraded to the category of consulate general. In terms of diplomats, the commitments of the *Acuerdo de Potenciacion del Servicio Exterior* (Agreement to Strengthen Foreign Service) are being met, so that over these years 200 diplomatic posts have been announced; this commitment will be maintained despite the difficult economic juncture, which will mean going past the magical figure of a diplomatic core of more than 1000 diplomats. In the same vein, a satellite network has been launched, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence, in order to ensure the place of our communications system in the world and make it more agile.

Our foreign policy has resources and aims, and it has analysts and their findings in both the President's office and the Foreign Office, compiling and drafting well documented studies based on the international reality of the day. We have a teams of civil servants who, *sleeves rolled up*, work without respite and in a coordinated fashion 365 days of the year under a modern leadership which goes beyond old fashioned and conservative conventions; a leadership genuinely open to well founded and balanced criticism, but which cannot accept biased clinical histories or simple and unnecessary treatments applying a phoney *differential diagnosis* to a high quality foreign policy in expansion, in the very best of health, backed by a parliamentary consensus, as well as the Spanish people.