

39
SEPTEMBER
2011

THE LONG ROAD TO THE SPANISH SECURITY STRATEGY

Laia Mestre Researcher, CIDOB

“Security today is everyone’s responsibility”. On 24 June 2011 the Spanish Government approved the first National Security Strategy with this motto as the pillar on which Spain has to build for the next decade its international strategic role in a new, multi-polar, and ever changing world.

The goal of any security strategy is to provide a long-term and comprehensive approach to security, identifying both potential threats and challenges, and the available instruments to meet them. Following the pattern of the European Union with the European Security Strategy of 2003 (and its review of 2008) and other European countries such as France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero announced in the inaugural speech of his second term the commitment to develop a comprehensive national security strategy which had to be broad enough to include other instruments apart from the purely military ones. To this end, the Spanish government appointed Javier Solana to lead the process of elaboration of the Spanish Security Strategy (SSS), only one month after finishing his duties as High Representative for the CFSP in November 2009.

However, the road to the Spanish Security Strategy has been long. During the

forty years of the Franco dictatorship, Spain was an internationally isolated country. But over the past thirty years of democracy, the role of Spain in the world has significantly changed. It has gone all the way from a reluctant partner within NATO but a “good pupil” within the EC/EU during the eighties, to a committed European partner in multilateral peace operations from the nineties on. In this sense, the long road to the Spanish Security Strategy has had two different routes. On the one hand, Spain has mapped a domestic route, from a dictatorship security culture to a democratic one, in which the once-despised Armed Forces have become one of the most positively-valued institutions in Spain. On the other hand, Spain has also pursued the European route. By becoming an EU Member State, Spain

started to participate regularly in the debates about the development of a common security and defence policy, it contributed to deepening the EU external geographic priorities, paying special attention to Latin America and the Mediterranean Region, and it showed interest in taking part in almost all civilian and military missions abroad. Nowadays, as the Spanish Security Strategy states, Spain perceives itself as “a medium-sized power with its own particular profile and great potential for external action”.

The Spanish Government has approved its first National Security Strategy, subtitled “Everyone’s Responsibility”, following the pattern of the European Union with the European Security Strategy and other European countries such as France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

However, the evolution of Spain’s security culture has been the result of three overlapping and long-lasting processes: the democratisation of the armed forces, a gradual participation in the main regional organisations as well as in international peace operations, and the politicisation of security and defence policies.

Membership in the European Union has strengthened Spain’s status in the international arena through the adoption of the principles and values of European security culture. Moreover, both Spanish and European narratives share a commitment to the Human Security Concept.

The adoption of a Security Strategy has been a crucial step for Spain to adapt its security and defence policies to a wider approach to security, which includes diplomatic, military, political and foreign aid means.

First Stop: Democratizing the Armed Forces

“As an open country and a member of the EU, Spain plays its part in the international order while seeking to promote and defend national, regional and global interests. We are an influential and respected voice”. If Spain can be considered today, as the SSS attests, an influential and respected voice in the international arena, it is because in the internal process of consolidating democracy, it also started a process of consolidating a new external role. This goes a long way towards explaining the construction of Spain’s democratic security culture, which is a result of three different but overlapping and long-lasting processes: democratisation, multilateralisation and the politicisation of security.

The process of democratising the armed forces was understood in Spain as a way of limiting the military’s power and modernising its structures and perspectives. Under Franco, the military had the exclusive mission of preserving the regime; that is, ensuring internal defence. It is for this reason that military headquarters were placed in the centre of the country’s principal cities.

Zapatero announced in the inaugural speech of his second term the commitment to develop a comprehensive national security strategy which had to be broad enough to include other instruments apart from the purely military ones

During the democratic transition, in order to avert any hitch in the overall democratisation process, the reform and control of the armed forces became a top priority for Spanish leaders. The first military reform in 1977 consisted of the creation of a single Ministry of Defence, which integrated the army, the navy and the air force into a single common structure. The purpose of this reform was to achieve a “separation of powers” by setting apart the military organisation from the government. The Socialist Party victory in 1982 accelerated ensuing reforms, such as the approval in 1984 of the Law for National Defence and Military Organisation which strengthened the Prime Minister’s authority and clarified the relationship between the government and the armed forces by creating the post of the Chief of the Defence Staff (JEMAD).

Other important reforms included the suspension of compulsory military service, the reduction in size of the armed forces, the admission of women, and the reorientation of the army towards new functions, particularly peace support operations. The 2003 Strategic Defence Review defined a more flexible approach to the role of the armed forces according to which military resources can be used for three types of missions: traditional defensive missions, missions related to international cooperation, and missions to support the civil administration in ensuring the security and well-being of Spanish citizens.

The multilateralisation process can be observed in Spain’s gradual participation in the main regional organisations, as well as in international peace operations. Despite Spain’s transatlantic ties, formalised in bilateral military agreements

reached with the United States in 1953, Spain suffered a period of isolation *vis-à-vis* various Western European economic and political institutions. Another reason for its isolation was that during the Franco regime, Spain’s security and defence policy was mainly directed toward the South, primarily Morocco, and therefore it had little in common with the security concerns of its European neighbours (such as those related to the former Soviet Union).

This multilateralisation process took place in three different spheres. The first is the European sphere, consisting of Spain’s accession to the European Union (EC/EU) in 1986 and to the Western European Union (WEU) in 1988. All Spanish political parties, as well as public opinion, regarded membership in the EC as a step forward on the road to the consolidation of democracy and as an opportunity for economic development. As far as the WEU was concerned, the Socialist government perceived this institution as the most appropriate European defence organisation and, hence, one in which Spain had to become a member.

The second sphere of multilateralisation is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Spain joined the Atlantic Alliance in June 1982, six months after the Spanish Parliament approved Spain’s membership by a narrow margin. In fact, membership in NATO remained a controversial issue during the subsequent electoral campaign in October 1982, when the Socialist Party (PSOE) under the leadership of Felipe González pledged to call a referendum on Spain’s continued membership in NATO. However, once in office, the Socialists perceived NATO membership as a vehicle for the country’s integration into Western Europe and became aware of the problems involved in a hypothetical abandonment of the organisation. Hence, the referendum, held in March 1986, was really more of a plebiscite on the popularity of Felipe González than a vote on the issue of NATO membership. The Yes vote (52.5 per cent in favour, 39.8 per cent against, with an abstention of 40.6 per cent) preserved Spain’s membership in NATO, although on the condition that it would not form part of the military command structure. The post-1989 international scenario favoured the development of a new Spanish role within the Atlantic Alliance, which led in 1997 to its full military integration into the reformed Alliance.

The third sphere within which Spain has multilateralised its security policies is in its participation in multinational peace-keeping missions, especially since the end of the Cold War. In 1989, its participation in operations under UN mandate started with the contribution of troops to missions in Africa (Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and Rwanda) and in Central America, where Spain headed some of them (El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti). Apart from these contributions, it has to be mentioned that Spain also participated - though in a limited manner - in the multinational military operation during the 1991 Gulf War. Spain allowed US forces en route to the Gulf limited use of military facilities on its territory, and

sent naval units to the region under the WEU flag to enforce the embargo imposed by the UN Security Council.

The evolution of Spain's security culture also comprised a process of politicisation. Despite the broad general consensus on Spain's increasing participation in European multilateral security and defence cooperation, two significant disagreements between the two major parties (PSOE and PP) illustrate a remarkable shift towards a more politicised security policy. The first disagreement occurred over NATO membership in the 1980s. In fact, this was the first foreign policy matter that broke the consensus that had been reached by political forces in the transition from the Franco dictatorship to democracy. Although Spain remained a member of NATO after the referendum of 1986, this split did not disappear until the end of the Cold War.

The second disagreement took place during the crisis over Iraq in 2003. The conservative Spanish government supported the US approach to the conflict and voted with the US in the UN Security Council (Spain was an elected member of the Security Council for the 2003-2004 term). In addition, José María Aznar, Prime Minister of the Conservative Government, appeared as one of the promoters behind a letter (The Letter of the Eight) supporting transatlantic relations and US policy toward Iraq, which was published in several European newspapers on 30 January 2003 and signed by the leaders of eight European countries (Spain, Portugal, Italy, the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Denmark).

The Iraq war marked the definitive end of the consensus between the major Spanish political parties on the priorities of Spanish foreign and security policy, and it led to a clash between the government and the public over the government's actions (91 percent of the Spanish population opposed military intervention in Iraq).¹ And for the first time, Spain's foreign and security policy became an electoral issue - a controversial one - in the campaign leading to the general elections in March 2004. The incumbent PP government was studying the possibility of assuming command in June 2004 of the Multinational Division Central-South in Iraq, until then under Polish command. But the Socialists adopted a very different stance, proposing to withdraw Spanish troops by the end of June 2004 unless the UN took political and military control over Iraq before then and Iraqi institutions were quickly restored.

Following his electoral victory, Socialist Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's first decision was to accelerate the pull-out from Iraq. He gave the order to withdraw all Spanish troops in April, well before the date announced during the electoral campaign. In this sense, the 2000-2004 period, during which the Aznar government had a foreign affairs agenda shaped by a securitisation approach (support for the US war on terror doctrine, a sanctions based approach to im-

migration), appears to be an anomaly in the thirty years of Spanish democracy.

Finally, it must be pointed out that the Socialist Party, in government since 2004, has made some changes to Spanish foreign and security policy that may continue into the future. As a reaction to Spain's participation in the Iraq war without public support, the government imposed two conditions on sending Spanish troops abroad: internal legitimacy, requiring parliamentary approval, and external legitimacy, provided by the adoption of a UN resolution. Following the words of Rodríguez Zapatero, foreign policy must "be committed to the values professed by the majority of the Spanish people" and "strengthen multilateral institutions and the tools we use to guarantee human rights, promote gender equality and spread the values of justice and solidarity that are inherent to the rule of law".²

Finally, the growing process of politicisation of the security and defence policies developed by each government has demonstrated that these specific areas have definitely abandoned the consensual nature they had had during the eighties and nineties, which had been an integral part of the transition to democ-

The process of democratising the armed forces was understood in Spain as a way of limiting the military's power and modernising its structures and perspectives

racy. Spanish security policy has turned into politics as usual where ideological confrontation takes place.

Mid-way Stop: Europeanizing Spain's Security Culture

"Our capacity for action is enhanced through our membership of a European Union (EU) that shares our interests, and our recognised standing as a country committed to effective multilateralism". The SSS confirms that Spain has based its strategy on enhancing its status in the international arena by aligning with the EU and collaborating to strengthen the international 'actorness' of the Union. This section will focus on three general aspects that link Spain's national security culture and that of the EU: (i) the convergence of Spanish and European security discourse; (ii) challenges to European security that directly affect Spanish citizens; and (iii) Spain's commitment to NATO and ESDP notwithstanding certain practical limitations.

When it comes to discourse, Spain's security culture follows the principles and values of the European security culture. To begin with, peace forms part of the narrative of Spanish foreign and security policy, as it does for the European Union. This is especially noteworthy given the fact that, in contrast with the EU founding members, Spain's membership in the EU was a way for it to consolidate democracy, and it did not come about as a way of guaranteeing a lasting peace. Nevertheless, this has

1. Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), *Barómetro de febrero de 2003*, nº 2481.

2. Rodríguez Zapatero, José Luis (2008), "In Spain's interest: A Committed Foreign Policy", Address given by the Spanish Prime Minister, Museo del Prado, 16 June 2008.

not adversely affected its commitment to delegitimising power politics and to the development of supranational forms of cooperation. In addition, the protection of civilians, the defence of human rights and respect for international law are other values shared by the Spanish and the European security cultures.

Since Javier Solana was the driving force behind the European Security Strategy, it is easy to see how the key issues of current Spanish foreign policy and the strategic objectives of the ESS converged. The 2008 National Defence Directive (NDD) stated that “national security is intrinsically and inextricably linked to the security of Europe”. Spain’s socialist government easily introduced the concepts and principles of the ESS into its own security and defence policies, sometimes in a rather explicit way. On the one hand, the list of security challenges – and even the way they are presented in the 2008 – DDN had much in common with the global challenges and key threats enumerated in the ESS. On the other hand, both Spanish and European narratives share their commitment to the Human Security concept.

The Iraq war marked the definitive end of the consensus between the major Spanish political parties on the priorities of Spanish foreign and security policy

In the already mentioned solemn speech at the *Museo del Prado* in June 2008 José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero spelt out his world view as follows:

“We need new tools to deal with new conflicts and their causes. The new rules of governance that we need in order to promote peace efficiently require a global view of human security, and they need strong democracies, states that are committed to human rights and an international community that is watchful and active with regard to weak states that can barely control their territories”.

Similarly, the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy, approved by the European Council in December 2008, stated that:

“We need to continue mainstreaming human rights issues in all activities in this field, including ESDP missions, through a people-based approach coherent with the concept of human security”.

For Spaniards, the major challenges or threats related to Spanish and European security in its narrow sense are terrorism, immigration flows to the Spanish coast and, more recently, acts of piracy against Spanish and European fishing vessels. The Spanish Government has played an active role in developing a common European response to such threats.

Asked regularly by the Real Instituto Elcano about international threats to Spain’s vital interests, the general perception is that terrorism is the most important, together with the world economic and financial crisis and global warming. This is primarily the result of two factors. On the one hand, since the final years of the Franco era, the fight against Basque terrorist movement ETA has been one of the top issues on the domestic home

affairs agenda, as well as a growing issue in French-Spanish bilateral relations. On the other hand, the Spanish Government, led either by the Socialist Party or the Conservative one, has fought for the inclusion of terrorism in the EU agenda. In other words, the establishment of a European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice is seen by Spain as a very important element in the fight against ETA terrorism. This is why as soon as terrorism appeared on the European and international agenda after September 11, Spain strongly promoted various coordination measures such as the development of an extradition policy and the adoption of a European arrest warrant (Euro-order). Finally, the terrorist attack on Madrid’s commuter trains on 11 March 2004 sped up the European measures introduced as a result of September 11. On this issue, the only political difference between the PSOE and the PP is that while the socialist government (from 2004) has decided to fight against terrorism through greater police cooperation, the conservative government (1996-2004) did so by asking for the inclusion of terrorism as a specific goal of ESDP missions.

An influx of migrants to the Spanish coasts in the summers of 2005 and 2006, crossing over the fences at Ceuta and Melilla, or arriving at the Canary Islands in fishing boats known as *cayucos*, forced the

Spanish government to reframe some aspects of its policy on migration. Although this is not strictly a security issue, Spain promoted the necessity for a European-scale response because these migration flows affect European security along the southern borders of the European Union and not just that of Spain. European immigration policy has been built upon two basic instruments: (i) coordination mechanisms for regularisation processes and the fight against the irregular labour market in Europe; (ii) the execution of coordinated action in border control (FRONTEX actions) and cooperation with countries of origin and transit. Hence, Spain does not consider migration as primarily a security issue but rather as an economic and social problem to be solved in a coordinated manner within the European Union.

In 2008, as a result of an escalation in acts of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia against Spanish vessels, Spain and France promoted the launch of an EU military naval operation, the so-called EU-NAVFOR Somalia (*‘Atalanta’*). The Spanish government argued before parliament that this mission was in support of Spain’s national security, piracy having geostrategic and economic repercussions for Spain, and that it was also a global security issue due to the grave consequences flowing from the existence of a failed state in the region. Moreover, the Spanish public supported this ESDP mission more than others because it believed (57 percent give strong support) that the problem of piracy in Somalia directly affected Spanish security and interests³. This became evident when in November 2009 a Spanish vessel named *‘Alakrana’* was hijacked for six weeks by a group of Somali pirates.

3. Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Internacionales y Estratégicos (2009), *Barómetro del Real Instituto Elcano*, nº 20, Madrid, March-April 2009.

Finally, Spain's commitment to peacekeeping operations and especially those carried out by NATO or the EU through ESDP has been firm, even though in the last years the effects of the economic crisis have caused a budget cut for Spanish military expenditures. From Spain's point of view, NATO and ESDP are not only compatible but also mutually reinforcing in their pursuit of security for European citizens. While NATO has to continue as the basis for the collective defence of its members, ESDP is perceived by Spain as an essential element of EU foreign policy if the EU is to become an international actor in the emerging multipolar world. Spain has been very proactive in the conceptual development and implementation of the ESDP, but its limitations in terms of its military capabilities prevent any convergence with the perceived "hard core" group of countries that lead this European policy. Despite its participation in three battlegroups, its contribution of troops to many ESDP operations, and its interest in the launching of the European Gendarmerie Force in 2004, Spain faces two significant factors which limit its role. The first factor is its traditional reluctance to improve its civilian capacities. The socialist government has maintained a low level of political interest in developing civilian capacities, as did the previous conservative government, and has put the emphasis of its discourse on 'Spain's military ambitions'.

The second factor that places a limit on Spanish contributions to the Western security system is the funding of the expeditionary expenditures of any ESDP or NATO missions. Although the Spanish defence expenditure is the fifth largest national defence expenditure among the 27 EU Member States (but only represents 1.16 percent of GDP)⁴, a major problem for Spain is the cost of unforeseen missions such as NATO's Pakistan earthquake relief operation or the deployment of a battlegroup even when there is the political will to use this ESDP instrument. The way these missions are paid for follows the principle of "costs lie where they fall". That is, Spain has to pay for the airlift and deployment of its troops, which is more of a problem for Spain than it is for the more economically powerful EU Member States which have larger defence budgets. Although the ATHENA mechanism is a first step toward commonly funding military operations, Spain would like the EU to go further in this direction. Or, it would prefer to reduce the system of battlegroups and to transform it into a more operative and less cumbersome instrument. Despite all these limitations, Spain would be very interested in participating in any permanent structured cooperation if there were no military and financial constraints.

4. The annual budget for the Spanish Ministry of Defence for 2009 amounted to 12.196 million Euros. This was a decrease of 4 percent from the previous budget. See: "Defence Data of EDA participating Member States in 2009", information available at the website of the European Defence Agency, <http://www.eda.europa.eu>

Last Stop: The Spanish Security Strategy

The SSS has come to confirm that Security policies are no longer a *domaine réservé* for the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs. In the first place, a number of ministries and governmental organizations of the security community served on a working committee to define the contents of the SSS. In addition, through an open, consultative process, representatives of political parties, members of the civil society and the private sector and national and international experts also participated in its drafting. Finally, the SSS recommends the creation of a Spanish Security Council, a collegial body with executive capacities to carry out the decision-making, advisory, monitoring and controlling functions necessary to coordinate the security tasks.

One of the weaknesses of Spain's international security role has been the low development of civilian capacities. To address this shortfall, the SSS foresees the creation of an Inte-

Since Javier Solana was the driving force behind the European Security Strategy, it is easy to see how the key issues of current Spanish foreign policy and the strategic objectives of the ESS converged

grated External Response Unit for the deployment of civilian experts in national and multinational missions abroad, following the example of the British Government's Stabilisation Unit. This Unit not only represents an increase of the political interest in developing civilian capacities but it will also assure a better coordination between the military and the civilian actors deployed in an international mission.

"Spain must have the capability to react against any aggression to its interests, those of its allies within the framework of signed agreements or in support of the international peace and security. It must do so with a comprehensive approach, with the appropriate combination of military and civilian means". The approval of the SSS has been good news for Spain's contribution to conflict prevention and international peacekeeping operations, but also for better civilian-military coordination. One could criticize the lack of opportunity to present this strategy after a ten month delay and in a turbulent economic context that have made security a low-priority issue, both for the public and for the government. Others have lamented the lack of consensus among the major political parties. To be sure, with the deep economic and social crisis now affecting Spain, the SSS could well become just another dead letter. However, the adoption of a Security Strategy was necessary for Spain to adapt its security and defence policies to a wider approach to security, including diplomatic, military, political and foreign aid means.