

# Background

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## After Madrid: Preserving the Alliance Against Terrorism

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The Socialist Party's victory in the recent Spanish general election has sent shockwaves throughout Europe and the United States. The Socialists' rise to power has caused concern in Washington, with officials in the Bush Administration fearing the end of the highly successful Spanish–American alliance. The election results are not only transforming the political landscape in Madrid, but have also shifted the balance of power within the European Union (EU) back toward “Old Europe,” led by Paris and Berlin.

- In light of the developments in Madrid, regarding Spain's threat to withdraw its forces from Iraq, the Bush Administration must make a concerted effort to shore up the “coalition of the willing” in Europe.
- Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice should engage in a diplomatic offensive to consolidate support in Europe for the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and for the war on terrorism.
- The White House should host a summit of European allies to discuss the future of Iraq.
- Washington and London must increase their political and strategic ties with “New Europe,” effectively maintaining the balance of power on the continent.
- The Madrid bombings highlight the need for more effective bilateral intelligence-sharing between Washington and European capitals, as well as closer coordination between the U.S. and the EU.

### Talking Points

- The Bush Administration should shore up the “coalition of the willing” in the war on terrorism. This will require skillful shuttle diplomacy across Europe.
- The Administration should invite key European allies to the White House for a summit on the future of Iraq.
- The U.S. should call for NATO to take command of coalition forces in Iraq after the June 30 handover. NATO involvement will reduce the burden on U.S. forces and will likely draw more allies into the Iraq coalition.
- The United States and the United Kingdom should work to reinforce their alliance with the nations of “New Europe.”
- Despite their differences over Iraq, it is imperative that Washington and Madrid continue to work closely together in the war on terrorism. Spanish and American intelligence agencies, investigators, and special forces should coordinate their efforts to destroy the terrorist network behind the Madrid bombings.

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- Despite differences of opinion about Iraq, the Bush Administration must make every effort to ensure that Spain does not drop out of the U.S.-led war on terrorism. American and Spanish intelligence agencies and special forces should combine their efforts to destroy the terrorist network responsible for the Madrid attacks.
- Washington should call for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to take command of coalition forces in Iraq after the handover of power on June 30. This should reduce the burden on U.S. forces and result in greater levels of European participation in the coalition.

### The Impact of the Spanish Elections

The March 11 bombings in Madrid—which claimed the lives of 190 people—decisively influenced the democratic process in one of Europe’s largest nations. For the first time in modern European history, terrorists have influenced the result of a major election. The ruling Popular Party was widely expected to be returned to power, but the Madrid bombings shattered their electoral hopes. When al-Qaeda emerged as the primary suspect, Spanish voters flocked to the opposition Socialists. Blaming Madrid’s links with the United States, many Spaniards rejected the Popular Party and instead swept to power a political movement that heavily criticized the Bush White House.

Until recently, Spain was at the forefront of the war on terrorism, both in Europe and around the globe. Along with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, outgoing Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar had been a highly visible supporter of the U.S.-led war on terrorism—including American efforts in Iraq—and was a partner in the historic Azores summit on the eve of war against Saddam Hussein. It is no accident that Australia and Spain, two of America’s most stalwart allies in the post-September 11 era, have since suffered massive terrorist attacks. The increasingly successful anti-terrorism coalition was targeted in both cases.

The Spanish election results have dramatically altered the relationship between Washington and Madrid. While Spain will continue to be an important partner of the United States, it may no longer be viewed as a close ally. Nevertheless, the Bush Administration must do everything in its power to help ensure that Spain does not drop out of the U.S.-led war on terrorism. If it does, the terrorists will have won at the polls.

### The Madrid Bombings: A Dangerous Precedent for Europe

Almost certainly, the Madrid bombings were the work of al-Qaeda or one of its affiliates.<sup>1</sup> The 10 nearly simultaneous bombings in Madrid are reminiscent of al-Qaeda bombings in Africa, the United States, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Al-Qaeda cells have been active in Spain for several years and Spanish authorities have made dozens of arrests since September 11, 2001.

While no firm conclusions can be drawn at this stage, the possibility of collaboration between a radical faction of ETA<sup>2</sup>—a Basque separatist group—and al-Qaeda cannot be excluded. The bombings bore the hallmarks of both traditional European terrorist attacks (ETA has frequently used Titadine, a dynamite-like explosive) and the more spectacular mass-casualty atrocities carried out by al-Qaeda. This link—if confirmed—is an extremely dangerous development. An alliance of European terrorists and Islamic militants would necessitate fundamentally rethinking the strategy of the war on terrorism.

The Madrid bombings could signify a shift in al-Qaeda strategy toward dividing the U.S. from Europe. Regrettably, the lackluster response of the newly elected Spanish government will only embolden the terrorists and encourage more attacks. Al-Qaeda will likely attempt further bomb attacks in Europe during the coming months. Key targets could include London, Rome, and Warsaw, as well as the capitals of smaller U.S. allies, such as Denmark, Portugal, and the Netherlands. Police chiefs

1. For further background on al-Qaeda involvement, see James A. Phillips, “Spain’s Retreat After the Madrid Bombings Rewards Terrorism,” Heritage Foundation *Web Memo* No. 448, March 16, 2004, at [www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/wm448.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/wm448.cfm).
2. TA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* or “fatherland and liberty”) has been responsible for the deaths of 850 people in Spain since 1968. Batasuna—ETA’s political wing—was banned by the Spanish government in March 2003. ETA was placed on the U.S. State Department’s list of terrorist organizations in 1997. Its leadership has stringently denied any involvement in the Madrid attacks.

in London are already warning that a terrorist attack on Europe's largest city is "inevitable."

Voters across Europe go to the polls in June to elect Members of the European Parliament. The British, Hungarian, Polish, and Danish elections in 2005 could also be major flashpoints, as could the Portuguese and Italian elections in 2006.

### Zapatero's Disappointing Start

Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, Spain's outspoken prime minister-elect, has wasted no time in firing salvos at President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. In an inflammatory interview with a Spanish radio station, Zapatero described the war in Iraq—and the subsequent occupation—as "a disaster." Spain's new leader urged the U.S. and British leaders to engage in "self-criticism" over their decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power. He also accused President Bush and Prime Minister Blair of lying to the world in order to justify attacking Iraq.<sup>3</sup> Zapatero's comments were echoed by European Commission President Romano Prodi, who condemned the U.S. strategy in Iraq as a failure that had led to international terrorism becoming "infinitely more powerful."<sup>4</sup>

These extremely tactless remarks do not bode well for Spain's future relations with the United States and Great Britain. Prime Minister-elect Zapatero will need to hone his diplomatic skills and reduce his anti-American rhetoric if he is to avoid alienating the U.S. and the U.K. At a stroke, the prime minister-elect managed to undo eight years of skillfully woven diplomacy which had transformed Spain from a minor European player into a major presence on the world stage.

Zapatero's outbursts are disturbingly similar to the anti-American statements made by members of German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's government

during the 2002 German election campaign. The hardline stance regarding Iraq that was taken by the German socialist government helped to poison relations between Washington and Berlin. Mr. Zapatero should avoid taking Spain down this same path.

### An Addition to the Franco-German Axis

Prime Minister-elect Zapatero has already indicated that he will shift Spanish foreign policy away from Washington and London, and move Spain closer to an alliance with France and Germany. He scorns the Atlanticist approach of his predecessor. He has called for a reversal of Madrid's opposition to the European Constitution and has expressed a desire to mend relations with France, which had been strained under outgoing Prime Minister Aznar. He regards France as "a very important ally" and stresses that "we want to make sure that the Franco-German axis works again."<sup>5</sup> Zapatero's stated foreign policy priority is "to restore magnificent relations with France, Germany and all the countries of the European Union."<sup>6</sup>

Strategically, Spain's defection to the Franco-German axis is a significant blow to the United States. However, when possible, Washington should continue to work with Madrid on issues of common interest. Afghanistan is a prime example. Prime Minister-elect Zapatero has already agreed to double the number of Spanish troops participating in the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul.<sup>7</sup> Hopefully, Zapatero—despite his political inexperience and fiery rhetoric—will follow the example of Schroeder's government by seeking reconciliation with Washington, while eschewing the dogmatic, confrontational approach of his counterpart, French President Jacques Chirac. Indeed, Berlin has privately urged the incoming Spanish government to tone down its anti-U.S. language.

3. Zapatero is quoted as saying, "Mr. Blair and Mr. Bush must do some reflection and self-criticism. You can't bomb a people, you can't organize a war with lies." March 15, 2004, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3512894.stm> (April 3, 2004).

4. BC News Online, "Spain to Re-Join Old Europe," March 15, 2004, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3513898.stm> (April 3, 2004).

5. Quoted in Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, "New Spain Will Swell the Ranks of Old Europe," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 16, 2004, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/03/16/wspain116.xml> (April 3, 2004).

6. Incoming Spanish Government Is Planning Shift in Allegiances," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 16, 2004.

7. The Spanish contingent will rise to 250 soldiers by the summer of 2004. Associated Press, "Spain to Double Afghanistan Troops," *CNN.com*, March 29, 2004, at <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/03/29/spain.troops.ap/index.html> (April 3, 2004).

## The American Alliance with “New Europe”

At the same time, the Bush Administration should redouble its efforts to shore up its close alliance with the countries of “New Europe.” These 10 central and eastern European nations will enter the European Union in May: Poland, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, and Malta. Nearly all of these nations supported the United States’ action in Iraq, and many have contributed soldiers to the coalition. French President Chirac condemned these countries as “infantile” for their support for President Bush, resulting in a furious backlash against France.<sup>8</sup>

Together with Great Britain, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland, and the other nations of New Europe, the United States must work to strengthen the U.S.-led coalition. Washington should call for a flexible, dynamic Europe that maintains the principle of national sovereignty at its core.

## The Impact of the Spanish Withdrawal

The Spanish prime minister-elect has pledged to withdraw Spain’s contingent of 1,300 troops from Iraq unless the United Nations (U.N.) is given control over security forces in that country.<sup>9</sup> His demands are unlikely to be met, and the withdrawal of Spanish troops will probably take place by the June 30 handover of power in Iraq. He has so far rebuffed entreaties from Secretary of State Colin Powell and Prime Minister Blair to reconsider his decision.

Spanish forces represent just 1 percent of the 130,000 coalition troops in Iraq, and their departure would not affect the coalition’s ability to conduct operations. In addition to Spain, 12 other European countries have military or police personnel on the ground.<sup>10</sup> Spain was due to take over the command of the 9,000-strong multinational force in the central-south area of Iraq. Fortunately, Poland, which has 2,500 troops in the country, has already indicated that it will maintain its command of the region if Spain withdraws. In the next few months, the

addition of 4,500 troops from Japan and South Korea will bolster the U.S.-led coalition.

However, a unilateral move by Spain to pull out its forces will be a symbolic blow to the coalition and may prompt other European nations such as Italy and Denmark, which have small contingents in Iraq, to consider doing the same. It could also deter wavering allies from committing new troops on the ground. In the coming months, the Bush Administration will need to make strenuous efforts to shore up the “coalition of the willing” in Iraq—which will require skillful shuttle diplomacy across Europe. High-level Washington officials must listen to the political concerns of U.S. allies in Rome, London, Warsaw, and other friendly European capitals.

## A NATO Command for Iraq

Washington should make every effort to convince Madrid that a troop withdrawal from Iraq would be counterproductive. The U.S. should also push for a new U.N. Security Council resolution endorsing American and British plans for the handover of power in Iraq. However, in doing so, the Bush Administration should not make major concessions to Spain, France, or Germany. Rather, U.S. strategy regarding coalition-building in Iraq should be both pragmatic and visionary.

Washington should call for NATO to take over command of coalition troops after the June 30 handover. This should result in a greater willingness among European nations to contribute to the long-term security and stability of Iraq. Washington should lay down the gauntlet to Paris and Berlin, calling on them to join the multinational effort to build a democratic and safe Iraq. Thus far, the critics—led by President Chirac—have carped disdainfully from the sidelines without lifting a finger to help the people of Iraq. NATO involvement would allow continental Europe’s two biggest powers, France and Germany, to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. It may also give the new Spanish prime minister a face-saving opportunity to keep Spanish forces in the country.

8. Chirac Lashes Out at New Europe,” *CNN.com*, February 18, 2003, at <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/02/18/sprj.irq.chirac> (April 3, 2004).

9. Miguel Angel Moratinos, Spain’s foreign minister-designate, subsequently confirmed this pledge in “Spain’s New Course,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2004, p. A18.

10. These countries are the United Kingdom, Poland, Italy, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

The Spanish demand—shared by France and Germany—that the U.N. take over control of coalition forces in Iraq, is both unreasonable and unrealistic. The U.N. does have an important advisory role to play, including the training of election officials and the monitoring of elections. However, it should not have a military or a dominant political role.<sup>11</sup> Handing over political and military power to the U.N. would be a strategic disaster.

A NATO command in Iraq is a far better alternative to giving the U.N. a bigger say in Iraq's future. Unlike the U.N., NATO is a multinational organization that is run effectively and can project military power. NATO's track record—from deterring the Soviet Union to expanding the zone of democracy in Europe—has been excellent, and bodes well for any future stabilization in Iraq. A NATO presence in Iraq, combined with its operations in Afghanistan, will carve out a new role for the alliance.

### A Wake-Up Call for Europe

The Madrid bombings should shatter the illusions of many Europeans who mistakenly believed that the war on terrorism could be won through U.N. resolutions, international courts, and appeasement. Although the war on terrorism consists of more than military action, intelligence coordination among major states such as Spain and the U.S. remains a prerequisite for dealing with al-Qaeda, ETA, and other terrorist groups.

Much of Europe still believes that this is America's war and America's problem—not Europe's. The Madrid bombings should be a wake-up call for high-level EU officials who think the war on terrorism can be won simply by applying the gentle nostrums of economic aid. Islamic terrorists are at war not only with the United States, but also with Western ideas, ideals, and societies.<sup>12</sup>

The tragedy in Madrid once again illustrates that outgoing Prime Minister Aznar has been right all along: Any effort to win the war on terrorism must

have a military and intelligence-sharing component if it is to succeed. As Prime Minister Aznar recently stated in *The Wall Street Journal*, terrorism is the world's problem and must be crushed:

If we want to stop the terrorists from murdering us and from dictating how we lead our lives, we must confront them. Some think the solution is to sue for peace, to negotiate with terrorists so that they might go and kill elsewhere. But that way is unacceptable to me and to millions of Spaniards. Terrorism deserves only to be defeated. This is the debt we owe to the victims of the attacks, and to the society that mourns them.... Ours is a battle between freedom, democracy and civilization, on the one hand, and terror on the other. If on September 11 we were all American, on March 11 the whole world was Spanish. We cannot just abandon this battle; it is everyone's fight.<sup>13</sup>

In the wake of the Madrid attacks, some positive signs are emerging from the EU—along with growing evidence of a new determination to combat terrorism in Europe. A recent summit of European leaders in Brussels led to an agreement on over 50 Europe-wide anti-terrorism measures. These include increased airport security, the sharing of passport databases, and a continent-wide register of individuals convicted of terrorist offenses. European heads of state also pledged in an 18-page declaration to “mobilize all the instruments at their disposal, including military resources” to prevent another major attack on European soil.<sup>14</sup>

However, European anti-terrorism initiatives will only succeed if they involve cooperation with the United States and are integrated into the broader war on terrorism. The terrorist atrocities in Madrid should strengthen the resolve of Europe's leaders to work more closely with Washington on intelligence-gathering, criminal prosecutions, and military action to combat international terrorism. The United States and Europe have a common interest in defeating the scourge of global terrorism. Hope-

11. See Nile Gardiner and James Phillips, “A Limited Role for the United Nations in Post-War Iraq,” Heritage Foundation *Web Memo* No. 402, January 22, 2004, at [www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/wm402.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/wm402.cfm) (April 3, 2004).

12. This point is made in Phillips, “Spain's Retreat After the Madrid Bombings Rewards Terrorism.”

13. Jose Maria Aznar, “The Truth About 3/11,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 24, 2004. p. A20

14. See “Leaders Agree Plan to Combat Terrorism,” *The Times*, March 26, 2004, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,12589-1052055,00.html> (April 3, 2004).

fully, these tragic bombings will draw the U.S. and Europe closer together, instead of dividing them further. Continued cooperation among allies is essential to defeating international terrorism.

### What the Coalition Should Do

The U.S. and its allies should take the following steps to minimize the effects of the Spanish withdrawal and to prosecute the war on terrorism:

- **A diplomatic offensive.** The Bush Administration needs to make strenuous efforts to shore up the “coalition of the willing” in Iraq. This will require skillful shuttle diplomacy across Europe. Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice should personally take charge of overseeing this diplomatic offensive.
- **A White House summit on Iraq.** High-level Washington officials need to listen to the concerns of allies in Rome, Warsaw, and other friendly European capitals regarding Iraq policy. The Administration should invite key European allies to a summit meeting at the White House. The Administration should also actively promote the idea of a NATO command in Iraq.
- **Strengthening the alliance with New Europe.** Because Spain is joining the Franco–German axis, the United States and Great Britain must reinvigorate their efforts to reinforce the alliance with the nations of New Europe. The expansion of NATO to 26 members—including several nations in Central and Eastern Europe—should serve as an opportunity to increase the military and political ties between Washington, London, and former Eastern Bloc countries.
- **Intelligence-sharing.** The U.S. and Europe should greatly increase their intelligence cooperation and carefully coordinate the new European anti-terrorism initiatives with the U.S.-led war

on terrorism. While most intelligence-sharing will continue at the bilateral level, the appointment of a new “anti-terrorism czar” should facilitate closer direct cooperation between the United States and the European Union in areas of joint concern.

- **Combating al-Qaeda in Spain.** It is imperative that the United States and Spain continue to work closely together in the war on terrorism. Spanish and U.S. intelligence agencies, investigators, and special forces should coordinate their efforts to destroy the terrorist network behind the Madrid bombings.
- **NATO leadership for Iraq.** NATO should be brought into Iraq in an effort to give European partners a bigger stake on the ground. NATO involvement would likely draw more allies into the Iraq coalition and reduce the likelihood that European countries would withdraw their forces.

### Conclusion

The election of Prime Minister Zapatero will undoubtedly weaken the close ties between Washington and Madrid. The strong partnership between outgoing Prime Minister Aznar and President Bush is unlikely to be emulated by Spain’s new prime minister.

However, despite differences over Iraq, it is imperative that the United States and Spain continue to work closely together in the war on terrorism. If Spain withdraws from the U.S.-led coalition, the terrorists will have achieved their goal of shattering the Spanish–American alliance.

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