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Introduction

Spain joined the European Community in 1986 and since then it has held the European Presidency on three different occasions. The first took place in the first half of 1989, only three years after it had become an EC member. The second one was held during the second half of 1995, after the accession to EC membership of Austria, Finland and Sweden. The third began in January 2002, in the aftermath of the terrorist attack against the United States.

A comparative analysis of the Spanish Presidencies reveals continuity in some basic priorities as well as significant changes of strategies and goals. The latter are essentially due to three interacting factors: the evolution of the process of European integration, the progressive Europeanization of Spanish politics and policies and, since 1996, the shift from a proactive approach, combining commitment to European integration with an increasingly clear-cut definition of national interests, to reactive attitudes based on self-interests together with emphasis on single issues such as market liberalization or terrorism.

This chapter is divided into two main parts. In the first, the domestic foundations for changes in Spanish policies and attitudes towards the EU are laid down. We first review the evolving domestic context of Spain membership, paying particular attention to the preferences and attitudes of Spanish political elites, to regional concerns and to public opinion attitudes. We then identify elements of shift and continuity in Spain’s European strategies and interests. This provides an assessment on the extent to which Aznar’s government has represented a departure compared to the González term. In the second part, the three Spanish Presidency periods are described and analysed. We briefly outline the main characteristics and outcomes of the 1989 and 1995 Spanish Presidencies and then give an in-depth account of the 2002 Presidency, stressing the different types of strategies deployed to cope with the issues on the agenda.

The domestic foundations of Spanish EU policy
The domestic context

A disappearing consensus on the EU

Until the Maastricht treaty, Spanish European politics was based on a nationwide consensus rather than on partisan preferences (Closa, 2001: 10). Spain’s entrance into the EC was supported almost unanimously by political parties, including Catalan and Basque nationalists, interest groups, the media and public opinion. For Spain, European integration meant above all economic, social and political modernization (Morata, 1997). It was also supposed to allow the country to recover its lost place in Europe. In addition, EC membership was perceived by many political actors as a way to face traditional problems of identity in a pluri-national state. Belonging to Europe would provide the opportunity to share a “common” identity based on non-nationalist values. The EC was also immediately equated to a source of benefits in terms of political stability, economic growth, regional development and foreign investments. As an economic and social laggard country, since 1986 Spain has largely been relying on EU subsidies to develop its regions and to modernize the infrastructures. Its GDP per capita has increased from 69 per cent to 85 per cent of the Community average.1 Its hard bargaining strategy in the European Council of Berlin (March 1999) allowed it to be the main beneficiary of Community funds until 2006. However, it will be difficult for Spain to keep its position after the next enlargement. Furthermore, the Spanish administration, at all levels, has adapted quite satisfactorily to EC requirements and is, in general, among the good implementers of EC policies.

The initial consensus among political elites, and especially between the two main parties (PSOE and PP), began to break down in the early 1990s when Aznar took over the PP leadership. Already in 1992, the conservative leader criticized governmental efforts to obtain additional financing at the Edinburgh summit, stigmatising Felipe González as a “beggar”. However, European issues dealing with institutional architecture, social policies and the free market have only recently become matters of political contention in day-to-day politics, especially between the ruling conservative PP and the socialist party. The latter has been trying to exploit political scandals associated with European policies, such as the linseed oil affaire2 or the huge “compensations”

1 By 2000, the Spanish economy was the eleventh largest in the world.
2 An important fraud in the use of Community subsidies to flax crops was discovered in 1999.
granted to electric power companies to cushion the costs of market liberalization. As we will see below, the debate on the Future of Europe and the 2002 Spanish Presidency have ultimately deepened these differences.

*Regional exclusion from EU decision-making*

Regional participation in the EU has been a matter of permanent concern for the regions and a source of intergovernmental tensions since 1986. Since Spain is a decentralized member state, the EU relies largely on the regions (Autonomous Communities) for the implementation of policies and the management of funds. At the same time, however, the expansion of the integration process has resulted in a loss of regional decision-making powers to the national government. The ‘political agreement for governance’ signed by the conservative Popular Party and the Catalan nationalists of CiU in 1996, as the basis for the CiU’s parliamentary support to the national government, provided for enhanced regional participation in Community decisions. The agreement was aimed at improving regional participation in internal procedures for preparing national positions on EU matters. More importantly, it provided for future participation by regional ministers in those Council meetings dealing with issues that fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the regions.

However, the agreement has never been fully implemented. The Autonomous Communities have continually express their frustration with regard to their involvement in EU decision-making both at the internal and European level. In 1998, Aznar ignored a parliamentary resolution urging the government to strengthen the regional presence in the EU Councils on the basis that ‘representation of national interests in the EU is an exclusive competence of the central government’ (El País, 18 October 1998). The Spanish Prime Minister began Spain’s 2002 Presidency reaffirming his firm opposition to regional involvement in EU decisions. As we will see below, Aznar’s attitude regarding the regions is consistent with his role as a zealous gatekeeper for national sovereignty at the EU level.

*Public opinion attitudes*
Since 1986, Eurobarometers have consistently reflected two main characteristics of Spanish perceptions concerning European integration. On the one hand, European integration has more supporters in Spain than the Community average. Citizens are generally favourable towards the idea of a strong European Union, with the purpose of bringing together Europe’s nations and states (European Commission, 2001). Most of them do not consider it to be a real threat to Spain in terms of language, national identities or culture. Significantly, according to opinion polls, most Spaniards feel comfortable with a multi-level identity (Szmolka, 1999) and the subsidiarity principle has more supporters in Spain than in most member states. In general, trust in European institutions is much higher in Spain than the European average, sometimes even higher than trust in domestic institutions (June 1996), and a large majority supports continued participation in the EU.

On the other hand, however, the perception of material benefits provided by EU membership is below the European average. Since this is the case in most of member states, such an apparent contradiction between material and immaterial values, might reflect a lack of awareness among Spanish citizens about the complex and sometimes incomprehensible implications of EU membership (Barreiro and Sánchez-Cuenca, 2001: 34). Consequently, the decreasing support for European integration from 1991 to 1995 may not only be the expression of widespread feeling of Europessimism in a context of economic crisis, but also a concrete reaction to growing conflicts related to highly sensitive domestic interests (agriculture, fisheries, regional funds and public aids) (Morata, 1999: 420). In other words, since accession Spaniards have tended to frame Community membership more in terms of rights-benefits than in terms of obligations-costs.

**González and Aznar: continuity despite deep changes**

In institutional and political terms, since its entry into the EC, Spain has tended to see itself as one of the large member states (Powell, 2002). At present, it enjoys eight votes in the Council of Ministers (twenty-seven when the Nice treaty enters into force) and two members of the Commission. In 1999, Javier Solana was appointed Secretary General of the Council and High Representative for the CFSP. In order to play a major role in the EU, Spain has been seeking also to take advantage of its historical relations.
with Latin America and the Arab countries. However, some of the problems faced by Spain as an EU partner might be better explained by ‘its very peculiar position that does not fit into any of the categories into which all others may be grouped: the very prosperous and large; the very prosperous and small; the less prosperous and small’ (Powell, 2002; see also Areilza, 1999).

Notwithstanding similarities in a number of fundamental issues (i.e. preserving Spain’s institutional weight; rejecting a ‘two-speed’ Europe to avoid being peripheralized; demanding more cohesion; strengthening EU relations with Latin America; supporting South Mediterranean partnership), Gonzalez’ and Aznar’s strategies towards European integration have been rather different, with regard to both form and content.

González’ European activism

The socialist premier attached high priority to building a strong alliance with Mitterrand and Kohl that allowed Spain to participate in the Community’s hardcore while promoting initiatives such as subsidiarity, European citizenship and closer economic relations with Latin America. A personal good understanding with Jacques Delors led also to important outcomes related to cohesion policy and the integration of Spanish agriculture and fisheries into the common policies sooner than expected. By framing European priorities in terms compatible with national aspirations and vice-versa, the latecomer Spain was able to gain a reputation as a quasi founder member state.

Felipe González displayed a twofold entrepreneurial and bargaining strategy which combined a commitment to far-reaching European integration and the claim for Community funds to enable the country to close the gap with the big member states. In 1989, Spain vetoed the EC budget in order to force agreement on doubling the Structural Funds as a compensation for accepting the Single European Market. Again, in 1991 Spain threatened to block the agreement on Political Union if the new Cohesion Fund was not included in the Maastricht Treaty. While the Spanish negotiators did not succeeded in imposing their views on the need to create a federal compensatory fund to reduce economic differences among the member states, they were able to built a
winning coalition including three small member states - Portugal, Greece and Ireland - to get additional resources to improve transport and environmental infrastructures. In exchange, the Spanish government was ready to accept majority vote in a number of policies, and especially for environmental decisions, a very sensitive issue for the government and domestic economic interests.

However, at the Maastricht Summit, Spain also played the federal card for all it was worth. Its original proposal for European citizenship was included in the treaty. Furthermore, Spain was one of the main supporters of the principle of subsidiarity to be applied as a guide to decide how best to achieve Community objectives instead of a limit to Community competencies. At the Ioannina summit of 1994 the Spanish government, together with the UK, opposed increasing from twenty-three to twenty-six the votes needed to form a blocking minority in the Council decisions following the entry of Austria, Finland and Sweden into the EU. Spain clearly feared that the centre of gravity would shift northward, so that the country would find it difficult to grab the lion’s share of the EU regional funds. Finally, as already mentioned, the Spanish government took the opportunity to bring about the integration of domestic fisheries four years earlier than had been stipulated in the accession treaty. In short, the new context of European integration resulting from German reunification, Maastricht and the Northern enlargement led to ‘a more careful consideration of exactly what degree and kind of co-operation were required to maximize perceived national interest’ (Gillespie and Youngs, 2000: 5).

Aznar: a stubborn nation state’s gatekeeper

Aznar’s European policy since 1996 has been characterized by a combination of change and continuity (Powell, 2002; Barbé, 1999). The latter is evident in the efforts of the government to ensure that Spain would join the EMU, to promote relations with Latin America and the Southern Mediterranean countries (excepting Morocco) and to defend cohesion policies.\(^3\) Changes have related mainly to the stronger emphasis on market policies and the increasing alignment with the Blair and Berlusconi governments

\(^3\) During the 1999 Berlin Council, Spain was able to keep its share of the Cohesion funds as a condition for not blocking Eastern enlargement; furthermore, in the Nice summit (December 2000) Spain succeeded in retaining unanimity on structural policies until the next 2006 reform.
in contrast to Spain’s traditional commitment to the Franco-German axis. In many respects, Aznar’s European strategy has been more influenced by domestic considerations than by a clear commitment to the European project. This has resulted in a mix of nationalist attitudes, reactive pragmatism and a lack of flexibility.

When he came to power in 1996, Aznar was almost the only conservative prime minister in an EU Club dominated by socialist and social-democrat members. However, the series of electoral defeats of right wing (UK, Italy and France) and Christian Democrat (Germany) parties in the large member states gave him the opportunity to gain influence in the European People’s Party (PPE). It is worth remembering that Aznar’s strategy included the entry of Berlusconi’s Forza Italia into the party and the exclusion of the Basque Christian Democrats (PNB). A further step was his election as the new president of the Christian Democrat International (CDI) in November 2001.

A main departure from the former period has been Aznar’s fascination with Blair’s neoliberal policy, irrespective of substantial economic and labour market differences between Spain and the UK. Both leaders were main promoters of the Lisbon process to strengthen European competitiveness. They also took common initiatives against terrorism and illegal immigration. At the domestic level, Aznar has also profited somewhat from the new entente with the British government as it allowed for the opening of bilateral negotiations on a new statute for Gibraltar during the Spanish Presidency. Together with Blair and Berlusconi, Aznar has been one of the most fervent European supporters of US global strategy after the 11 of September.

With regard to institutional issues, the PP government adopted a rather obstructionist attitude during the negotiations of the Amsterdam Treaty. Initially it threatened to block the agreement on the overall reform if the other partners would not accept its claims regarding the reweighting of votes in the Council. This demand led to the inclusion in the treaty of a Declaration stating that ‘there is a Spanish problem which ought to be solved before the first enlargement”. In other words, Spain would only accept the loss of one of ‘its’ two commissioners in exchange for a substantial increase of its votes in the Council. With respect to the other issues at stake, Spain’s main objective was to prevent any decision that would harm Spanish financial advantages or bring about any increase in
domestic expenditures. Thus Spanish negotiators fiercely opposed the extension of qualified majority voting to Structural and Cohesion Funds as well as, together with Britain and Denmark, to social security decisions. On other issues, Spain moderated its positions in order to achieve its main domestic priorities: a special fiscal status, as an ‘ultra-peripheral region’, for the Canary Islands, and the limitation of asylum rights for EU nationals suspected of terrorism. Unlike the 1991 IGC, Spain did not pay special attention to the CFSP since it was satisfied with the existing arrangements (Barbé, 1999). Regarding the Stability Pact, Aznar sided with Helmut Kohl against the French proposal on EU co-financing of national employment policies to counteract eventual disruptive effects on the labour market.

Frequent disputes with Germany, the main net contributor to EU budget, on financial issues has been another characteristic of Spanish European policy since 1998. During the negotiations on the Financial Perspective 2000-2006, with the amount that was to be allocated to cohesion policies at stake, Aznar succeeded in keeping for Spain almost the same share of Structural and Cohesion Funds as it had enjoyed during the previous period. However, the strategy followed was rather confusing. Instead of taking a clear position throughout the process, Aznar combined forcing positions with unexpected concessions, especially to Germany, which upset the other partners and embarrassed Spanish negotiators. Moreover, his last minute bargaining on the Cohesion Fund did not enable him to avoid a small cut-back on the Structural Funds, what was precisely supposed to be the first Spanish priority.

Tensions with Germany reappeared during the 2000 IGC (Closa, 2001). Notwithstanding its final agreement on enhanced co-operation, Spain was very reluctant to accept the German proposal on the simplification of the procedure, fearing the negative externalities of any eventual exclusion in terms of decision-making influence (Gstöhl, 2000: 56). However, Madrid’s top priorities were concentrated on keeping its privileged position among the largest member states and its veto powers on the Structural and Cohesion funds. The two self-interest-oriented roles of being a European great power and a bargainer for national interests are clearly visible in the Nice process. Spain exerted great pressure to defend its position as a medium to large country having two commissioners. In the negotiations leading to Nice, the Spanish government also argued that it would only
accept having fewer votes than France, Italy and the UK if the Germans were to have more (Best, 2001). This bargaining strategy was successful. As expected, Spain did not succeed in obtaining the same influence in blocking decisions as the four larger member states. However, it managed to win the largest proportional increase in votes - from eight to twenty-seven – and ended up having only two votes fewer than the larger members. As regards the extension of qualified majority voting, Spain retained its veto power on the Structural and the Cohesion funds until 2007. Even then it will relinquish this veto only on condition that the Financial Perspective for the period after 2007 will already have been adopted.

Three Spanish Presidencies: changes in strategies and roles

The first two Spanish Presidencies

January to June 1989: ‘The challenge of the ‘débutant’

Spain’s accession to EC membership was the final result of hard and long negotiations. The apprehension of some member-states vis-à-vis the entrance in the Community of the young Spanish democracy prolonged the phase of preparatory negotiations for more than ten years. Yet this European scepticism contrasted sharply with both the enthusiasm and the pro-Europeanist consensus of Spanish elites and society. Being part of an integrated Europe was synonymous of economic modernization and political rehabilitation. It is important to highlight such a fact since it allows a better understanding of the Spanish strategy once its turn in the Presidency of the Council arrived in January 1989.

The first Spanish Presidency was dominated by one overarching goal: to show its reliability and efficiency as a Community partner and to counteract the sceptical expectations of some member states about Spain’s ability to carry out its responsibilities. To achieve such a goal the Spanish executive invested heavily in preparing for and to organizing it. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs characterised these preparatory activities as the ‘largest task ever undertaken by the Spanish Government and its administration’ (Ministry of Foreign Office, 1989:1). On this occasion, as well
as on subsequent ones, the Spanish government took particular pride in its organizing capacity and made a big point out of it.

The programme of the Spanish Presidency was an important means for demonstrating that Spain was a reliable European partner with a clear pro-Europeanist stance. With such goals in mind, the Presidency developed two parallel strategies. On the one hand, working in close contact with the European Commission, it focused on pending issues dealing with economic integration. On the other one, it tried to carry out initiatives in the sphere of European political co-operation.

In a context marked by the renewal of the European Commission in January and by European elections in June, the first priority of the Spanish Presidency was to comply with the Single Market program to be achieved by the end of 1992. To do this it had to clear the way to the construction of the internal market by providing solutions to pending issues, in particular fiscal harmonization and freedom of circulation. The Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the social dimension of the internal market were issues that received preferential attention. In fact, they monopolized the negotiations that took place during the European Council of Madrid in June. On these issues the results of the Council were uneven. The Council freed the way to move forward regarding the EMU, by approving the Delors Plan and by setting July 1 as the beginning of a new phase. Yet British opposition to the draft of the European Social Charter overshadowed the progress made regarding the EMU (González Sánchez, 1989: 720).

Thus, the first Spanish Presidency adopted a strategy which, while tending to minimise risk, also aimed at dealing resolutely with pending Community issues. Finally, the Spanish Presidency carefully avoided making a major issue of the British rejection of the European Social Charter. However, such a ‘low’ profile was not to be found regarding matters that were managed on an intergovernmental basis. Since its first Presidency, Spain has paid particular attention to European political co-operation and resorted to the intergovernmental mechanism as a way to Europeanize its priorities on

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4 See the interview with Felipe González: “L’avenir de l’Espagne dépend de son intégration à l’Europe”, _Le Figaro_, 8 June 1989.
matters of foreign policy and to try to achieve a new international stature after decades of ostracism.

The Southern Mediterranean as well as Latin America traditional priorities of the Spanish diplomacy received preferential attention during the first Spanish term. Regarding Latin America two initiatives stand out: the creation of a guarantee fund to resolve the problem of foreign debt and the increasing involvement of the European Community in the peace process in Central America.

To summarize, Spain used its first Presidency to achieve three major goals: to convey to the other member-States its seriousness and efficiency as European partner, to reaffirm its pro-Europeanist stance and its commitment to serve the Community interest, and to strengthen European political co-operation as a framework to achieve a new international projection. Its thus emphasized the role of the ‘good European’, trying to act as a well-meaning broker with the ambition of moving the Union forward. In doing so, it relied primarily on accommodating and problem-solving strategies (see the Introduction to this volume).

_July to December 1995: ‘Less naïve with regard to Europe’_

Spain regained the European Presidency in the second half of 1995 in the midst of a complex context. The Spanish Presidency was, for various reasons, viewed with scepticism by its European partners. The Presidency took place in the aftermath of a difficult negotiation that settled a major distributional conflict between the least developed member states (Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy) and the rest regarding the EMU. Spain, which acted as the leader of the coalition of the least developed, had demanded a doubling of Structural Funds for the period 1993 to 1999 as well as the creation of a new Cohesion Fund in exchange for the financial efforts that were necessary to meet the demands of the EMU. As negotiations leading to the treaty on the European Union made clear, through time Spanish society and elites had become more critical regarding the cost-benefit ratio generated in the process of European integration.
Even the traditionally pro-integrationist Spanish government moderated its public stance (Closa, 2001: 39).5

Furthermore, the Spanish Presidency came after a difficult political time in Spain, dominated by multiple political and financial scandals that badly affected the socialist government. In such a context, the Presidency was seen as an opportunity to try to polish the tarnished image of the government in the eyes of the public.

The context in which the second Spanish Presidency unfolded predisposed the government towards a programme of action more focused on pursuing national interests.6 Unlike 1989, the main goal of the second Presidency was not so much to show its reliability as a European partner as to demonstrate how ‘central’ Spain was for Europe (Moreno Juste, 2001). In other words, Spain abandoned the role of the ‘good European’ and instead started to promote a stance that emphasized Spain’s position as an important European power.

Spain reaffirmed its commitment to the process of economic integration and set as a priority the attempt to devise solutions for pending matters such as the definition of the criteria that qualified candidates to enter the third stage of EMU as well as the definition of a European employment policy. The 1995 Presidency was also a new opportunity to strengthen EU relationships with a set of regional countries, especially the Mediterranean and the Latin American ones, in which Spain had a particular interest. The Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Barcelona, the Inter-regional Framework Agreement with Mercosur, the signature of a new Trans-Atlantic Agenda and a Plan for Concerted Action during the European Council of Madrid were some of the major achievements of the Presidency. Furthermore, the new Presidential term was a favourable occasion to promote another traditional priority of the Spanish government, namely the strengthening of European co-operation in matters of justice and home affairs, in particular the prevention of and fight against terrorist activities. The Spanish initiative led to the European Statement of La Gomera (Westendorp, 1995: 22).

5 See also the interview with Felipe González: “Il n’y a pas que l’Allemagne qui compte”, Le Nouvel Observateur, 12-18 June 1992.
6At least at a symbolic level, as became apparent in the choice of the logo (a ‘ñ’ with the colours of the Spanish flag, a reference to the conflict with the European Commission that rejected the Spanish decision to ban the selling of keyboards that did not have that letter. Cf. Closa, C., 2001: 40.
In summary, the second Spanish Presidency made clear that a turning point had been passed in Spain’s attitude towards European integration since the negotiations of the Maastricht Treaty. Once the reliability of Spain as a Community partner had been established and its international prestige consolidated, the priority of Spanish European policy was to keep the country in the centre of European politics. It did so through two different means: on the one hand, by qualifying as a candidate to enter the third phase of EMU, hence becoming part of the European hardcore; on the other hand, by shifting the priorities of its domestic agenda to the European sphere to Europeanize traditional goals of Spanish foreign policy as a way to offset the progressive shift of Europe’s centre of gravity eastward. In terms of Presidency roles, Spain became more of a bargainer for national, regional as well as socio-economic interests. This included the role as defender of the interests of the ‘southern periphery’. Accommodating strategies were now accompanied by strategies that served Spanish self-interests.

The 2002 Presidency: great ambitions, modest outcomes

The 2002 Presidency entailed the organization of two European Councils, one summit with Latin American countries, the fifth Mediterranean Conference, forty-one Council meetings, forty-one informal Councils and 151 working groups meetings. This gives a broad idea about the logistic complexity and the amount of organizational resources needed to fulfil such a responsibility.

The Spanish agenda consisted largely of European and international issues such as global terrorism, the worsening Middle East conflict, the setting up of the European Convention on institutional reforms, the negotiations on the next enlargement and the Lisbon process. Mr. Aznar devoted great efforts, not only to fostering economic issues related with competitiveness in the global market, but also to building a coalition, especially with Italy and the UK and some other small member states on very sensitive issues such as terrorism and immigration.

The terrorist challenge
For obvious domestic reasons, terrorism was the first priority on the Spanish agenda, a concern that was not initially shared by most of European governments. However, after 11 September 2001 global security issues were at stake and the Spanish authorities took the opportunity to Europeanize as much as possible the struggle against ETA. Indeed, we have here a good example of agenda shaping, in which Spain succeeded in structuring and framing the agenda to its own advantage (cf. Tallberg in Chapter 2 of this volume). Spain concentrated on strengthening legislative and judicial means towards a European Space of Freedom, Security and Justice. The most relevant achievement was the agreement on the effective enforcement of an Euro-arrest order. Spain did not succeed in reaching an agreement either on the final location of Eurojust or on the European School of Police, for which Madrid was one of the candidate cities. In addition, the Spanish government put pressure on its reluctant EU partners to start negotiations on judicial co-operation with the USA, which would have made the extradition of terrorists easier. The proposal was heavily opposed by some member states and by the European Parliament, which pointed to the persistence of the death penalty in the US judicial system and the serious legal doubts aroused by the Patriot Act adopted in the aftermath of 11 September.

The Lisbon process

Economic liberalization (the Lisbon process) was also at the top of the Spanish agenda during the European Council of Barcelona of March 2002. It is worth noting that, a few weeks before the meeting, the Spanish Prime Minister criticized the European left as being ‘an obstacle to the progress of the market’ (Ortega, 2002: 32). The EU summit was contested by the most important demonstration against globalisation ever held in Europe, involving 300,000 people.

Due to the strong resistance of France and Germany, the Spanish government, supported again by the UK and Italy, did not succeed in its attempt to complete fully the liberalization of the energy market. The compromise agreement will affect industries and, only partially, consumers by 2004. However, Spain overcame the strong opposition of the Netherlands and Germany (and indirectly the US) against the Galileo project, which will compete with the American GPS.
The Lisbon process does not only deals with increasing European competitiveness; it includes social cohesion concerns as well and, as agreed in the Göteborg summit, a strong commitment to environmental issues as part of the European strategy towards sustainable development.\(^7\) However, despite the proximity of the World Summit of Johannesburg, sustainable development was not a priority on the Spanish agenda, any more than it is at the domestic level. The European Council of Barcelona ‘took note’ of some Commission proposals on the issue and decided to postpone the definition of the Union’s position on Johannesburg until the Seville European Council. At Seville, the European leaders simply stressed the Union’s desire to adopt ‘clear and concrete commitments with a precise time frame, relying for their achievement on effective partnership’.\(^8\) In fact, the preparatory work to Johannesburg was carried out mainly by the Commission.

**Enlargement**

Regarding the Eastern Europe candidate countries, officially Spain gives resolute and unreserved backing to the enlargement process. For Spain, the entry of the candidate countries into the EU will probably stimulate a real development of economic, trading and cultural relations, which for historical reasons have always been very narrow. However, it is worth noting that in 1999 Spain blocked the reform of the cohesion funds until the next reform in 2006. In 2001 it claimed further financial compensation for its less developed regions to counteract the ‘statistical effects’ of the enlargement on the European GDP per capita average. In this context, Spain fully took on the role of a bargainer for national interests, and did not refrain from forcing strategies (cf. the Introduction to this volume).

Officially, Spain has given full backing to the objective proposed by the Commission in its ‘road map’ for improving the progress of the accession negotiations. Spain supported the ‘regatta’ approach, the principle of differentiation and the possibility for each candidate to “catch up” in terms of its actual state of readiness. Regarding the proposal for a schedule of items to be dealt with during the Presidency,

\(^7\) COM (2001) 264 final
\(^8\) From the 42 pages of the Presidency Conclusions only one deals with the EU strategy towards Johannesburg.
Spain declared its willingness to achieve common positions on the assigned chapters in accordance with the road map, ‘but always respecting the present framework and the current financial perspective’.

The aim was to conclude the negotiations with the best-prepared candidates during 2002. However, little room for an agreement on the financial costs of accession was left before the Seville Council, and Aznar did not manage to reach a common agreement on that issue during the meeting. For electoral (Germany and Sweden) and other domestic (the Netherlands and UK) reasons some member States were blocking the negotiations, claiming that the final decision should be taken only after the reform of the CAP during the Danish Presidency. Thus, the real outcome on the enlargement negotiations, officially one of the main issues on the Spanish agenda, was a non-decision.

**Immigration**

While the Spanish Presidency agenda did not include a single word on immigration, the issue became the ‘most relevant European priority’ immediately prior to the Seville Summit. With some quick tactical moves, Mr. Aznar manoeuvred to achieve two main objectives. On the one hand, he imposed his agenda on the rest of the European leaders, some of whom had been blocking the Commission proposals on immigration for years. This is a prominent example of Presidential agenda setting (see Tallberg in this volume). On the other hand, backed by the new European conservative governments and the UK, he reacted to the increasing xenophobia and racist attitudes in some member States, which were paving the way for the rise of extreme-right and populist parties in France and in the Netherlands. The Seville European Council was expected to set up a common framework to cope with illegal immigration and criminality. The Presidency proposal, which was firmly rejected by France and Sweden, included financial sanctions against less developed countries unable to control migration flows. Instead, the Council conclusions stressed that ‘closer economic co-operation, trade expansion, development assistance and conflict prevention are all means of promoting economic prosperity in the countries concerned and thereby

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9 However, some European leaders such as the president Chirac and the Swedish primer, Mr. Goran Persson, warned of the danger to link immigration and criminality.
reducing the underlying causes of migration flaws’ (Seville Council, 2002). Moreover, any future co-operation or association agreement concluded with third countries should foresee the joint management of migration flows and the readmission of eventual illegal immigrants.

Relations with Mediterranean and Latin American partners

Once again, the strengthening of Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-Latin America relations were two important priorities of the Spanish Presidency, demonstrating the strong regional priorities of Spain. Spain continued its efforts to play the role of a bridge-builder between the EU and regions of Spanish interest. While seeking formulas to define operational measures for promoting political partnerships and security, Spain also made an effort to open the door to a new phase of the Barcelona process, emphasizing the need to stimulate the business integration of Mediterranean partners with a view to the future establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area.

The fifth Euro-Mediterranean Conference was supposed to provide new impetus to Euro-Mediterranean partnership. However, the results were very disappointing. Spain was unable to reach agreement with its partners on the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank while some Arab leaders decided to boycott the Conference as a protest against Israel.

The Spanish Presidency intended to renew and strengthen the strategic association between the EU and Latin America, which to a large extent crystallized in Rio de Janeiro in 1999. In the margins of the Madrid Summit, specific meetings were held at the highest level with Mercosur, the Andean Community and the countries of Central America. Following the former Association and Free Trade Agreement concluded with Mexico, a new agreement based on the same goals was concluded with Chile. At the same time, efforts were pursued to advance the European Union’s negotiations with Mercosur. In addition to raising the profile of political relations, these agreements were intended to bring an increase in economic and commercial exchanges with the Latin American region. However, the Argentina crisis, which seriously affected Spanish economic interests, and Brazil’s economic difficulties made it impossible to conclude any specific agreement with those countries.
The final point deals with the Spanish attitude towards institutional reforms, and especially the European Convention. It is no secret that, in spite of the Presidency slogan (“More Europe”), Aznar is not only against a federal Europe, but he is also reluctant to make any attempt to strengthen supranational institutions. As he has stated in several occasions, ‘all those debates [on institutional reforms] are only nominal issues; what is really relevant is policy effectiveness and the preservation of national sovereignties’. Aznar has been profiting from his strong domestic position and from his close relationships with Blair, Berlusconi and, more recently, Chirac, to create a coalition aiming to foster the intergovernmental pillar. Following the guidelines adopted by the Helsinki Summit (December 1999), the European Council of Seville endorsed the report on simplifying the structure and functioning of the Council, which was prepared by the Secretary General Javier Solana. Notwithstanding the European Convention, the European leaders examined a Blair-Chirac-Aznar proposal for the reform of the European Presidency, which foresees the appointment of a ‘former President or Prime Minister’ as a permanent ‘President of the European Council’ for the next legislative period. A rotating Presidential team consisting of five or six countries would in turn assist the President. Nevertheless, the small member States did not back the project, which would give more influence to the larger ones.

CONCLUSIONS

Recalling Spain’s “peripheral syndrome” (Barbé, 1999), periodic claims for financial compensation and a continuous determination to attain a ‘big power status’ (Powell, 2002), the recent literature has stressed continuities between Gonzalez’s and Aznar’s European Presidencies. Continuities are based on historically shaped specificities of the country, on past Presidencies and on rooted expectations among the other partners (see Introduction to this volume), while changes are related to evolving ideological values and preferences regarding national interests within the context of European integration. As Tallberg points out (Chapter 2 of this volume), ‘whereas all member states engage in forms of agenda shaping, they vary in the issues they introduce, emphasize, de-emphasize, or neglect as a result of exogenously defined
variation in national preferences’. The same rationale may be applied to Presidencies conducted at different times by the same member state. From this point of view, the Spanish case shows substantial variations both in socio-economic or constitutional priorities and, to a certain extent, also in regional priorities.

The former Prime Minister, Felipe González, was seeking to create an interdependent link between Spanish modernization and European integration which brought about credibility as a reliable partner, active involvement in European institutional building and leadership capacity as a quasi-large member state. In 1989, the latecomer and somewhat still naive Spain put at work its organizational capacities to overcome the Community’s sceptical expectations. In the second half of 1995, in the midst of domestic political difficulties and continuing Euro-scepticism, the Spanish Presidency reached the main targets that had been set, most of which were of a wider European interest. In terms of Presidency roles, the role of ‘good European’ was at the forefront. Spain tried hard to be an effective broker and bureaucrat in order to gain credentials as a reliable European partner.

Apart from supporting free market policies, a strong euro and closer cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs, Aznar has lacked a vision for a European project, as the debate on the future of Europe has made evident. This also implies that Spain has not been able to play any significant leadership role under his premiership. His approach to European integration is twofold. On the one hand, it largely relies on traditional Spanish nationalism rooted on firm convictions about the need to preserve sovereignty above all. On the other hand, the EU is viewed as a provider of additional financial and legal means to expand free market policies and to close the gap with the large member states. At the same time it can offer also additional resources to face domestic problems such as terrorism. To be effective such a strategy should be consistent with the priorities of other partners, and especially UK and Italy, in order to build a blocking coalition.

The 2002 Spanish Presidency case fits with the rational model ‘which conceives the Presidency as a strategic actor, seeking to satisfy national preferences within the confines of its formally designated institutional role’ (Introduction to this volume). Madrid structured the EU agenda according to its main priorities: economic,
institutional and regional. Preferences were clear from the beginning: European solidarity against the terrorist challenge - including closer cooperation with the US - market liberalization, and improving trade relations with Latin America and South Mediterranean countries. Enlargement was expected to be the star issue at the European meeting of Seville. Indeed, Spain was willing to reach an agreement on the entry date of the candidates. However, it failed to mediate among member states’ positions on the post-enlargement share of CAP subsidies, an issue in which Spanish interests were at stake. Repeated Spanish efforts to protect its interests in undiminished regional and agricultural support have made any Spanish attempt to act as an honest broker difficult, especially in these and related issue-areas.

Immigration overtook the enlargement. The issue jumped to the top of the Spanish agenda in reaction to the electoral gains of xenophobic parties in some member States. However, the Presidency framed the problem in terms of fighting illegal immigration and sanctioning countries of origin, which was unacceptable for the other member states.

As regards the regional priorities of Spain, little room for a satisfactory agreement was left to enhance the Euro-Mediterranean partnership due to the Middle-East conflict, the Spanish dispute with Morocco, and the German reluctance about any additional expenditure. At the same time, a trade agreement with Chile was the most significant outcome of the EU-Latin America summit.

Finally, apart from rejecting the federalist project, the Spanish Presidency did not make any explicit contribution to the institutional debate on the future of Europe. However, it took advantage of the term to back a proposal aiming at strengthening the Presidency powers.

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