

## Spain's contribution to Euro-Atlantic security

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### Theme

This paper takes stock of Spain's contribution to Euro-Atlantic security.

### Summary

In order to get a sense of Spain's contribution to Euro-Atlantic security, this analysis examines Madrid's performance in relation to four relevant indicators: (1) its political commitment to strengthening NATO and the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy, and its leadership in conceiving key policy initiatives in these two frameworks; (2) its actual material contribution to collective (ie, EU/NATO) initiatives and operations; (3) its overall defence spending; and (4) those national efforts that may have a possible impact on Euro-Atlantic security. The conclusion is that Spain's contribution to Euro-Atlantic security is more relevant than one might think.

### Analysis

#### Introduction

Both NATO and the EU have recently called attention to the worsening security situation in and around Europe. In their 2016 summit at Warsaw, the Heads of State and Government of the Alliance alluded to an 'arc of insecurity and instability along NATO's periphery and beyond', pointing to Russia's aggressive actions in Eastern Europe, the deterioration of the security situation in the Middle East and the threat of terrorism on European soil.<sup>1</sup> In order to mitigate, or even redress, the spectre of ever greater instability, allied leaders called for a more determined collective effort to strengthen defence and deterrence in the East and project stability in the South. In a similar vein, the 2016 EU Global Strategy for Foreign Policy and Security alluded to the violation of the security order in Eastern Europe and the plague of terrorism and violence in North Africa and the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> According to the global strategy these times call for a stronger Europe and, more particularly, a greater EU effort in the area of security and defence.

The sense of urgency about the evolving security situation in and around Europe —and about the need for European countries to do something about it— has not been lost on

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<sup>1</sup> 'Warsaw Summit Communiqué issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016', para 5.

<sup>2</sup> 'A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, Share Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe', June 2016, p. 7.

(cont.)

Europe's citizens. Recent public opinion surveys consistently show that security has become one of the biggest concerns for the citizens of EU and NATO countries, and that there is broad public support to the idea that Europeans should play a greater security role.<sup>3</sup> The ball is now in the member states' court. It is ultimately up to them to provide the resources and energy needed to produce a greater security effort on the part of NATO and the EU—one that can help strengthen security and bring stability to Europe and its environs—.

One important way to measure a nation's commitment to collective security in the Euro-Atlantic area is to look at their input, by assessing how much they spend on defence. Hence there is a new commitment by NATO Heads of State and Government to increase their national defence budgets to 2% of GDP by 2024. However, it is important not to lose sight of output and to take into account how much states actually contribute to collective defence and security initiatives.

How is Spain doing? Madrid is often portrayed as a laggard on the security and defence fronts. Admittedly, it has one of the lowest defence budgets in the Euro-Atlantic area. Yet Spain halted its defence spending cuts and actually increased spending on defence by about 32% from 2016 to 2017.<sup>4</sup> The government remains politically committed to more spending in coming years. Perhaps more importantly, Spain fares much better if we look at output. In this regard, Spain has not only demonstrated an unwavering political support for NATO and the furthering of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), it has also shown a strong commitment to NATO initiatives. It stands out as the leading contributor to CSDP military operations, as it is the only EU country that has participated in all the operations launched to date. Last but not least, Spain's own efforts to curb illegal immigration from Africa and its support for French military operations in that continent bear witness to its status as a 'border country' and its important contribution to Euro-Atlantic security.

### Spain's vision for Euro-Atlantic security: projecting stability and enhancing resilience

Spain understands peace and security in a Euro-Atlantic context and is committed to a balanced development of NATO and the EU. Like many other countries in the Euro-Atlantic space, Spain belongs to both organisations and is firmly convinced of the need for European security for both. Thus, Spain advocates a stronger EU role in security and defence while insisting that this should reinforce and complement NATO.

The year 2016 was important for Euro-Atlantic security. Besides the presentation of the EU Global Strategy, at their July 2016 summit in Warsaw, NATO countries adopted a so-called 360-degree approach to European security and defence. The Warsaw Summit allowed the organisation's focus to shift to two key issues for the improvement of security in the Euro-Atlantic area, which became the focus of the Special Meeting of Heads of

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission COM (2017) 315 of 7 June 2017, "Reflection paper on the Future of European Defence", p. 8, Eurobarometer.

<sup>4</sup> This is mainly due to the transfer of new defence equipment programmes (formerly paid for by credits from the Ministry of Industry) to the core Ministry of Defence budget. We should therefore perhaps compare the 2017 budget with that of 2015 (when the equipment programmes were also included). Back in 2015 the defence budget was 0.92% of GDP, although the GDP was then lower than in 2017.

State and Government on May 2017. The two key issues are: compliance with the Wales Summit's commitment to investment in defence, the so-called 'Defence Investment Pledge', and the importance of the fight against terrorism. Moreover, on the margins of the Warsaw Summit, NATO and EU leaders signed a joint statement confirming that relations between the two organisations are reaching historic levels of cooperation.

As a border country, bringing stability to North Africa and the Middle East remains a strategic priority for Spain. Thus, Madrid welcomed the launch of a new NATO initiative at Warsaw under the name 'Projecting Stability', aimed at reinforcing the capacities of NATO partners, among others, in the Middle East and North Africa. It also supports similar initiatives in the EU context. In particular, in its Global Strategy Implementation Plan on Security and Defence the EU has called for reinforcing the capacities of its partners as one of the three priorities of the new Level of Ambition (the other two priorities being responding to crisis and external conflicts and the protection of Europe and its citizens).

Underlining this concept of 'projecting stability' or 'reinforcing the capacities of our partners', Spain supports the strategic concept of 'advanced frontier'. It sees forward engagement in North Africa and the Sahel as essential to Spanish and Euro-Atlantic security. It has therefore devoted significant efforts to improving the situation of its southern neighbours, not least through bilateral programmes to combat illegal migration with countries like Mauritania, Mali, Senegal and Cabo Verde. Due to this, Spain has been one of the pioneers in implementing, even without expressly mentioning it, the concept of 'resilience' —reinforcing early prevention in societies that might be threatened—.

### Spain and NATO: committed to the East, leading in the South

In the framework of NATO, Spain is one of the leading advocates of prioritising the challenges from the South. Hence its strong support for the Mediterranean Dialogue and its firm commitment to the Framework for NATO Adaptation to the Threats coming from the South, also launched at the Wales Summit.

At their May 2017 Brussels meeting, NATO member states agreed to present concrete national plans outlining a vision of how to comply with the Defence Investment Pledge agreed upon at the 2014 Wales Summit. These plans revolve around three components: (1) the 'aim to move towards' spending 2% of GDP on defence, allocating 20% of this 2% to equipment acquisition and R&D; (2) the capability procurement goal that each ally establishes within NATO; and (3) the contribution of each ally to missions and operations, ie, to participation in NATO military operations but not only in the Alliance, also in the EU, the United Nations and the Coalition against Daesh.

Insofar as it devotes only 0.9% of its GDP to defence, Spain is still in the low band of the percentage of spending in relation to GDP in NATO, but it fares much better in terms of its spending on equipment and R&D, which account for 19.31% of its overall defence spending. The commitment made in Wales to 'aim to move towards' 2% GDP defence spending in 2024 must not be forgotten. However, it is this broader, three-component

approach to measuring a country's contribution to Euro-Atlantic security that underscores Spain's position.

Spain is one of the most committed Allies in its contributions to NATO operations and initiatives. All of its joint commands (Land, Maritime, Air and Special Operations) take part in the rotations of the NATO Response Force; it has taken the lead of the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG 2) in the first half of 2017; it contributes to the operation Active Fence in Turkey with a Patriot battery since 1 January 2015, its presence having been extended until the end of this year; and it takes part in all the measures aimed at reassuring NATO allies in the East. In 2016, Spain was the first framework nation of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), the main component of the Readiness Action Plan adopted at the Wales Summit in 2014, in reaction to the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia. Madrid is also taking part in the Baltic Air Police, with two rotations in 2015 and 2016, having deployed again this year fighters in Estonia. Lastly, Spain is contributing to the Enhanced Forward Presence in 2017, with more than 300 troops integrated in the battalion led by Canada, which has just been deployed in Latvia and also involves Albania, Italy, Poland and Slovenia.

Spain contributes 4.9% of NATO's common budget, placing it in seventh place among the allies, only behind the US, Germany, the UK, France, Italy and Canada. Its armed forces have the eighth-largest number of NATO troops.

Finally, it is important to take into account Spain's commitment to NATO's Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) programme, which was agreed upon at the Lisbon Summit in 2010 in response to the growing threat of the proliferation of ballistic missiles, and whose initial operational capacity was declared fulfilled last July. Spain provides tactical and logistical support and protection capabilities to this strictly defensive system. This is an area in which Spain cooperates specifically with the US in the context of its deployment of four AEGIS destroyers in Rota.

#### The EU's CSDP: Spain as a leader?

Beyond NATO, Spain is a leading advocate of the EU's CSDP, both in word and deed. At the political level, Spain was very strongly involved from the outset in the making of the EU Global Strategy for Foreign Policy and Security, presented by the High Representative in June 2016. It has also expressed its strong support for the further development of the Global Strategy, specifically through the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence.

Alongside key partners like France, Germany and Italy, Spain is pushing for a deepening of CSDP. This revolves around several key initiatives, including, chiefly: (1) the adoption of a new Level of Ambition for CSDP operations, agreed in the Implementation Plan, through improved intelligence and better coordination on capabilities; (2) the establishment of a military permanent planning and conduct capability (MPCC), agreed for the moment only for non-executive missions; and (3) a greater involvement of the European Council in security and defence issues in general.

At this stage, Spain supports further progress on CSDP, which currently involves three main areas: (1) the establishment of the MPCC within the EU Military Staff; (2) a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) among Member States in order to better ensure their defence commitments; and (3) the possible launching of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), foreseen in the Treaty of Lisbon, but which has so far not been launched.

Besides its unwavering political support for CSDP, Spain is the leading contributor to the military missions currently under way in the EU, as far as the number of troops is concerned (767 in total as of July 2017). As a maritime nation, Spain plays a key role in the two CSDP military missions at sea: EUNAVFOR Atalanta and EUNAVFORMED Sophia. EUNAVFOR Atalanta aims to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia and thus protect a vital European sea lane —this being arguably the most strategically relevant CSDP mission—. Spain has been the main contributor to Atalanta and the only EU member state that has participated permanently since the operation was launched in 2009. EUNAVFORMED Sophia is part of the EU's comprehensive response to the migration challenge in the Mediterranean. The UN Security Council has just extended the mandate of EUNAVFORMED Sophia, as in 2016 two additional tasks were added: training the Libyan coastguard and monitoring the arms embargo in international waters off the coast of Libya. These two additional tasks complement the initial one, which was the fight human trafficking networks. The first training package delivered by EUNAVFORMED Sophia concluded in February 2017, and Training Package 2 was launched thereafter. In this context, 36 of the trainees from the Libyan Coast Guard and Port Security (LCGPS) will be trained in Spain

In addition to its two naval missions, the EU has four other military operations in progress: EUTM Mali, EUTM RCA, EUTM Somalia and EUFOR Althea. Spain is engaged in all of them. Moreover, the EU is presently engaged in nine civilian operations: EUPOL COPPS, EUAM Ukraine, EUBAM Libya, EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUCAP Sahel Mali, in which Spain participates; and EUCAP Somalia, EULEX Kosovo, EUMM Georgia and EUBAM Rafah.

### Beyond NATO and CSDP

Spain's contribution to Euro-Atlantic security is not confined to the NATO and EU frameworks. It also participates in the Eurocorps and in the European Gendarmerie Force (EUROGENDFOR) —two independent structures that can nonetheless help reinforce the EU's CSDP and even NATO—.

Spain sees the Eurocorps as a structure that can serve both the EU and NATO. Since 1994 it has participated in the Eurocorps alongside Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg, with a Mechanised Division. Its final integration was completed on 31 December 1998 with the incorporation of the Extremadura XI Mechanised Infantry Brigade and the remaining units of the Nuclear Troop Division (NTD) of the Brunete Mechanised Division. The Treaty on the Eurocorps and the Statute of its Headquarters (Strasbourg Treaty) entered into force in 2009. Today the Eurocorps is one of NATO's seven High Readiness Land Headquarters, having been certified as such in 2003, and it is included in the rotation system of the NATO Response Force (NRF).

EUROGENDFOR is integrated by member states' paramilitary police forces ('gendarmeries'), including Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania; it has the objective of carrying out police missions in the framework of crisis-management operations. Spain participates with its *Guardia Civil*. Due to its dual military and police nature, EUROGENDFOR can carry out all types of missions during crisis management operations, participating in the military phase of a crisis, acting in the transition between a military and a civilian operation and participating in missions of prevention. EUROGENDFOR services mainly the EU but can also be placed at the service of other international organisations, such as NATO, the UN or the OSCE. It has a rapid reaction capacity of around 800 individuals within 30 days. In 2017 Spain holds the presidency of the EUROGENDFOR Interministerial High Level Committee (CIMIN).

Beyond its contribution to multilateral structures, Spain has taken a number of steps aimed at strengthening security in the southern neighbourhood. We have already alluded to Spain's ongoing engagement with a number of countries in North and West Africa, whose object is to strengthen their resilience and curb illegal immigration into Europe. In addition, and with a view to improving security in Africa, Spain engages in bilateral military and intelligence cooperation with a number of European countries, most notably France. Spain's strong support of France following the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris bears witness to the close ties between the two countries. Spain has been assisting French operations in Africa, mainly in Mali and the Central African Republic, with Air Force deployments of 61 and 45 troops in Dakar and Libreville respectively.

Spain also contributes to the Global Coalition against Daesh, participating in the five working groups of the Coalition (poli-military stabilisation, foreign terrorist fighters, financial control and strategic communication). Specifically, Spain leads the base in Besmayah (Iraq) and has recently expanded its presence in Iraq to 450 troops. Spain has cooperated with experts from the Hoyo de Manzanares NATO Centre of Excellence on Demining (C-IED), in the framework of the NATO Defence Capacity Building (DCB) programme in Iraq (first for Iraqi officers in Jordan, later moving to Iraq) and is contributing to the police training programme led by Italy, with 25 *Guardias Civiles*.

## Conclusions

Spain's understanding of security is rooted in its conception of the Euro-Atlantic as a space of shared interests, norms and values. This paper has provided an overview of Spain's contribution to Euro-Atlantic security by identifying four relevant areas. One often discussed benchmark relates to input, and more particularly defence spending: this is an area where Spain can do more, with a view to meeting the commitment to move towards 2% of its GDP in defence, adopted at the 2014 NATO Wales Summit. A second area has to do with a country's political support for the development of NATO and the EU's CSDP. This is an area in which Spain scores high. Besides supporting a stronger NATO and a stronger CSDP, it wants to ensure that their development is complementary and mutually reinforcing. Notably, Madrid has played an important role in the conception of relevant initiatives, such as NATO's 'projecting stability' and southern neighbourhood agendas, and of key CSDP initiatives such as Permanent Structured Cooperation.



A third important area relates to Spain's actual material contribution to NATO and CSDP initiatives and operations. This is another area where Spain's contribution stands out. It has played an active role in recent NATO initiatives on the eastern flank, having acted as the framework nation of the VJTF and Standing NATO Maritime Group 2, being a regular contributor to the Baltic Air Policing Mission, sending 300 troops to Latvia and maintaining a Patriot battery in Turkey. It also plays a central role in NATO's Ballistic Missile Defence architecture. As far as the EU is concerned, Spain is today the largest contributor to CSDP military operations and is also present in five out of nine ongoing civilian operations. The last indicator has to do with Spain's own initiatives beyond NATO and the EU. As a 'border state', Spain's actions in Europe's southern neighbourhood — whether bilaterally or as part of a smaller cluster of countries— also make an important contribution to European security. In this regard, we should perhaps note Spain's efforts not only in curbing illegal migration into Europe by reaching out to key countries in North and West Africa and improving their resilience, but also Madrid's contribution to French-led military efforts in Africa.