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**COSTS AND BENEFITS OF SPANISH NATO MEMBERSHIP:
 A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE.**

BY MAURIZIO CREMASCO.

The Johns Hopkins University
 School of Advanced International Studies
 Bologna Center

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Any analysis of the value of Spanish membership in NATO must be put in the context of the strategic significance of the Iberian peninsula. Only in this framework it is possible to evaluate and understand the related elements of cost and benefit.

Since the end of WWII, the United States has viewed the military importance of the Iberian peninsula within the context of the various scenarios of an American-Soviet confrontation in Europe. Those scenarios, and the specific role assigned to Spanish and Portuguese territory, changed through the years, along with the changes in the international situation and the balance of power between East and West (1).

In 1947, the U.S. Department of Defense study "DRUMBEAT" indicated the main American strategic interest to be the maintenance of the control of the Gibraltar strait.

The subsequent studies and plans, like "FROLIC", "CHARIOTEER", "HALFMOON", "FLEETWOOD" and "TROYAN", all viewed the military significance of Spain not so much as a potential theatre of ground operations, but as an essential asset for the control of Gibraltar and the defense of the sea lines of communications (SLOC) in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic.

Paradoxically, as my good friend Antonio Marquina has pointed out, Gibraltar, one of the elements which, in American eyes, gave Spain its main strategic importance was not, and it is not today, under Spanish sovereignty.

A gradual change in this perception of Spain's strategic relevance, still so reminiscent of WWII thinking, came in the early 1950s, along with the "new look" of the American military doctrine, the emphasis on the employment of strategic airpower and the subsequent need for airbases around the world.

The land and naval significance of Spanish territory -- the barrier of the Pyrenees to a Soviet invasion attempt, the great "strength in depth", the control and defense of the SLOCs -- was increased by the capabilities Spanish air facilities could provide to the U.S. Air Force. This was considered particularly true in light of the increased vulnerability of airbases in the Middle East. The importance of Spanish airports became even more evident in 1963 when the American Strategic Air Command (SAC) was forced to abandon the airbases it was utilizing in Morocco (2).

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In fact, the value of naval and air facilities for the U.S. Navy and Air Force was the main reason for the re-evaluation and change of Truman Administration policy toward Spain. Let's not forget that the U.S. Navy had been in stiff competition with the British for predominance in the Mediterranean and the nearby Atlantic. The Americans wanted bases independent of the British and strategically located with respect to both bodies of water. And let's also not forget that in 1949 the U.S. Navy was building up the Sixth Fleet to operate in the Mediterranean.

Even though American warships began paying port calls to Spain in 1949, it was Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Sherman's visit to Madrid July 16, 1951 which signaled a change in policy. On July 18, Secretary of State Acheson, commenting the Adm. Sherman's interview with General Franco, stated: "Military authorities are in general agreement that Spain is of strategic importance to the general defense of Western Europe. As a natural corollary to this generally accepted conclusion, tentative and exploratory conversation have been undertaken with the Spanish Government with the sole purpose of ascertaining what Spain might be willing and able to do which could contribute to the strengthening of the common defense against possible aggression. We have been talking with the British and French Governments for many months about the possible role of Spain in relation to the general defense of Western Europe. We have not been able to find a common position on this subject with these governments for reasons of which we are aware and understand. However, for strategic reasons outlined above, the United States has initiated these exploratory conversations. Any understanding which may ultimately be reached will supplement our basic policy of building the defensive strength of the West." (3).

Following Acheson's statement, President Truman acknowledged that the Administration had officially changed its policy toward Spain. The President further stated that the policy had been shifted as a "result of advice by the Department of Defense." (4).

After two years of discussions and negotiations, the bilateral American-Spanish relationship was formalized with the signing of three agreements: the first concerned the construction and use of military facilities by American forces in Spain; the second covered economic assistance; and the third dealt with military assistance (5).

Under these agreements, the United States obtained the permission to construct and utilize: a naval base and air station at Rota; naval ammunition and fuel storage centers at El Ferrol and Cartagena; three Strategic Air Command bases in the vicinity of Zaragoza, Madrid (Torrejon), and Seville (Moron); and a petroleum-oil-lubricants (POL) pipeline connecting these bases with the one at Rota.

B-47 bombers started to operate from Spanish bases in 1957. In 1965 they were replaced by the B-58s, which were withdrawn in 1968. And, in early 1964, Rota joined Holy Loch in Scotland as one of the two ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) bases on non-U.S. territory, allowing a more efficient use of SSBNs operating in the Mediterranean and North Atlantic area.

The discussion by American military authorities of the strategic importance of Spain, referred to in the July 1951 Acheson's statement, resurfaced again one year later.

Just before the outbreak of the Korean war, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the State Department seek a direct or indirect inclusion of Spain in the Atlantic Alliance. The JCS argued that Spain was equally, if not more, important than Italy. This due to Gibraltar, Spain's easier defendibility, the fundamental importance of Spanish territory as a logistic base and as a ground for further projection of CONUS forces in a protracted war, and the capability it would give to air and naval forces operating both in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

Since the 1950's there have been radical changes in the international situation, and in the geostrategic and geopolitical picture of the Mediterranean basin in particular. NATO's defense strategy and the East-West military balance had undergone a significant transformation. Major improvements have occurred on the performances of all weapons systems, thanks to impressive technological developments. Also there have been profound changes in the Spanish domestic situation and in the relations between Spain and the European Community. Spain is now a democracy, it is the sixteenth member of the Atlantic Alliance, even though its integration in NATO military structure is still pending, and by January 1, 1986 it will become the eleventh member of the EC.

However, its strategic relevance in the framework of Western Europe's security picture has remained basically the same. Spain's strategic advantages, those which prompted the United States to seek and establish a special bilateral relationship culminating in the ratification of the 1976 treaty of friendship and cooperation, are still present today. In fact, neither geography, nor the strategic factors deriving from it, can be drastically altered. Furthermore, there are new elements in the international scene which tend to enhance Spain's strategic importance, such as the new emphasis on scenarios of conventional versus nuclear conflict in Europe; the stability of the East-West situation in Europe vis-à-vis the instability in many regions at the periphery of NATO's area of responsibility; the possibility of an American-Soviet confrontation through a Third World crisis; the new role of "crisis stabilization", and "peace keeping" which the European countries seem ready and willing to play. And finally the continuing fundamental importance of oil and strategic minerals flow which requires the capability of maintaining the SLOCs open to maritime traffic. Due to these new factors, today's Spanish geopolitical assets are just as significant as the geostrategic ones.

Within this general framework it is now possible to examine the costs and benefits of full Spanish membership in NATO. But, first I would like to make some specific observations. It would be very difficult to make a sharp division between political and military costs and benefits. The two are closely interrelated, especially for Spain, which is not a front line country and will not be confronted with the possibility of a Soviet ground attack in case of a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict. It could even be argued that this will tend to give to the political elements of the overall costs and benefits assessment a heavier weight.

I would analyze the situation from a European, instead of a strictly NATO perspective, even though I realize that the differences between the two is minor. But I think that only a European perspective would justify taking the political aspects of the issue into consideration.

Even though I would try to remain within the limits of a European perspective, also so as to repeat what has been already said by my good friend Antonio Sanchez-Gijon, each element of cost and benefit should be interpreted in the broader context of the interaction between Spanish and European interests.

Finally, the military implications of full accession, and thus the related, exact degree of cost and benefit, will be dependent upon the terms of Madrid's participation in the integrated military structure of the Alliance.

I would like to start from the benefits, first because it is always good to begin with the positive aspects, and second because I think the benefits are more numerous than the costs.

In general terms, Spanish membership in NATO will have an important symbolic value. For NATO it will represent a concrete plus at the time the Alliance seems troubled by many minuses. It will constitute a vital confirmation it is not badly affected -- and it is not seen by a newcomer as being affected -- by what many have called a politico-military malaise. It will be a sign of strength and self-confidence at the time it is confronted with a further wave of Soviet diplomatic efforts, cleverly conducted by the new Soviet leadership, aimed at dividing the United States from its European allies; and at the time it is faced by the continuous increase in Soviet military capabilities. It would increase the European share of the Atlantic burden, thus contributing to the defusing of the issue of who is going more for the defense of Europe, which periodically mars the relations between Americans and Europeans.

In military terms, the Spanish full participation in NATO would provide several benefits. Let me list those which are most evident, but not in a priority order.

1. Spain would be for NATO a highly valuable territory, substantially "sanctuarized", that is quasi immune from Soviet conventional attack.

The longest-legged Soviet fighter-bomber, the Su-24 "Fencer", has a combat radius of action at low level of about 1,000 Km. Even when deployed on the forward airbases of East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the "Fencers" cannot reach Spanish targets. To do that they would have to choose a HI-LO-HI profile, thus becoming more vulnerable. Even the Soviet Tu-22M "Backfire" bombers would have to fly part of their route at high level and pass through the German and French air defense systems. Soviet attacks on Spanish targets employing sea-based conventionally-armed cruise missiles do not appear cost-effective, and considering the Soviet operational priority of the sea battle in the Atlantic it is unlikely to be performed.

The low degree of conventional vulnerability of Spanish territory, to which a modernized Spanish air defense system would greatly contribute, makes it a

safe rear area where pre-positioning could take place, where CONUS reinforcements could safely land or disembark, and where supply depots could be organized, support material concentrated, and maintenance and repair centers established.

Even though the "depot" functions should not be overestimated, considering the high attrition rate of today's conventional wars and the need to have the replacements close at hand, the pre-positioning and the storage of ammunition, weapons systems (such as anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile) and spare parts would constitute a significant increase of NATO ability to respond to and sustain Soviet conventional aggression. And this would represent a further element of deterrence, complicating the potential adversary's military planning.

2. The availability of Spanish air and naval facilities would undoubtedly contribute to the flexibility of operations in both the Mediterranean and Atlantic war theatres. For example, the major servicing and supply functions provided by Rota, which already in the 1960s was able to handle, at any one time, eleven capital ships, including two "Forrestal" class carriers, (6) would save ships two weeks of Atlantic transit time and would permit the preservation of a certain degree of Sixth Fleet operational flexibility even in case of unavailability of Italian and Greek naval facilities.

Spain is one of the few European countries whose airbases have the runway length, width and weight requirements to support operations of fully loaded B-52 aircraft. In a conventional conflict, B-52s taking off from Spanish bases could perform a significant anti-shipping sea-control mission in the Mediterranean and in the Southern Atlantic. Even naval facilities in the Central Africa's Atlantic coast, if utilized by the Soviet submarines for interdicting Western shipping in Southern Atlantic routes, could be attacked by Spanish-based B-52s.

3. The contribution of Spanish armed forces to the defense of Western Europe would be a concrete boost for NATO conventional capabilities. This contribution would most likely come more from the Spanish Navy and Air Force than from the Spanish Army, especially in a short war scenario.

The Spanish Navy could operate in the North Atlantic, together with other allied naval forces, to protect the sea routes used by CONUS reinforcements on their way to Europe. Or it could cover IBERLANT Command's area of responsibility, and the Central Atlantic, where the utilization of the Canary Islands might make it possible to push anti-submarine warfare further south and permit a more permanent presence of aircraft in the area (7). Another zone of operations could be GIBMED Command's area of responsibility and the Western and Central Mediterranean, where it could integrate its units with the French and Italian naval forces.

It should be remembered that about 65% of oil imports and about 57% of all major commodities imports by the European countries pass through areas under IBERLANT command's responsibility, with a daily average of more than 400 oceangoing ships. Maritime traffic within the Mediterranean is even heavier.

The presence of Spanish Navy in the Mediterranean as a NATO force could give further motives to transform the present Naval on-call Force for the Mediterranean (NAVOCFORMED) into a Standing Naval Force (STANAVFORMED), a move

which could provide several advantages. It would give to U.S. Sixth Fleet a greater flexibility of operations outside the Mediterranean, reducing the scope of its NATO mission. It would enlarge the responsibility of the Southern European countries for security in the Mediterranean, removing the problem from the context of a simple geo-strategic rivalry between the two superpowers. It could lay the foundation for a force which, in the long term through appropriate functional and structural changes, would permit French participation. It could become in the longer term the Mediterranean naval force of an integrated Europe.

The Spanish Air Force, apart from its air defense mission, could operate in a sea-control role in the Mediterranean using, if necessary, the staging facilities provided by the Italian airbases in Sardinia to expand the radius of action of its combat aircraft (8).

Except for a very limited contribution, it is difficult to envision the participation of the Spanish Army in war operations in the Central European front. However, units of the elite Spanish Foreign Legion or the air-portable brigade could be earmarked for operations in the Southern front. Furthermore, army units, together with an air force ground support attack element, could participate in ACE Mobile Force.

4. Spain's participation in NATO could open to other European military forces the training grounds and ranges in Spanish territory. In 1981, the USAF conducted over 50% of its gunnery training at the Bardenas Reales firing range near Zaragoza (9). This and other training areas could be utilized by other NATO forces. However, this is a very delicate issue which must be addressed taking into consideration Spanish public opinion to avoid unfavorable "rejection" symptoms.

In political terms, the benefits of Spanish participation in NATO are less evident. They are more in the realm of the Spanish contribution to the shaping and formulation of a coordinated or common European policy. Thus, they are elements more of the role Spain will be willing to perform in the EPC decision-making process than of the part Spain will play on the elaboration of the Atlantic Alliance's political response to international events detrimental to Western interests.

Keeping this in mind, and relating it to what I already said on the difficulty of dividing military and political factors, the political benefits can be summarized as follows:

1. Spain's participation in Western efforts to defuse and stabilize crisis situations in the Mediterranean area.

2. The role Spain could play in the Euro-Arab dialogue, considering its special ties with the Arab world. This, in turn, could help Western interests and reduce NATO concerns if it eventually resulted in stemming Soviet politico-military penetration in North Africa and the Middle East.

3. The contribution Spain could offer in shaping the European position in the Euro-American relations.

4. The fresh approach Spain could take in revitalizing the IEPG and in pushing toward a better rationalization of the European armaments industry and toward a real two-way street in the transatlantic cooperation on weapons systems research and development.

We can now address the problem of the costs. Again, I will not try to give them a specific qualitative or quantitative value. And, again, I will not list them in a priority order.

In general, the costs are more political than military, especially assuming a European perspective.

1. Spanish willingness to participate to a Western "crises stabilization" policy, and to support, albeit indirectly, "out-of-area" initiatives -- which I included in the benefits list -- could become a cost if it jeopardizes the Spanish position in the Arab world. In fact, this could reduce Spain's capability of playing a positive and effective role in the Euro-Arab dialogue.

2. Spanish participation in NATO's military structure could result in a cost in terms of East-West relations. The Soviet Union has expressed strong opposition to Spanish membership in NATO. In a memorandum delivered to the Spanish Government in September 1981, the Soviet Union concluded: "In this situation, the Soviet Union and its allies concerned over their vital interests including their security interests, would be forced to draw appropriate conclusions and weigh up the possibilities for taking appropriate steps." (10).

It is difficult to say if the Soviet opposition constitutes a ritualistic response, or if it is a serious concern capable of generating some form of counter measure. On the one hand, it is difficult to foresee precisely what counter action the Soviet Union could take. On the other hand, the Soviet Union has always been pragmatic enough not to threaten East-West relations in developments which, though detrimental to its interests, cannot be avoided.

3. Another cost could be related to Spain's relationship with the Arab world and its position on the PLO issue. Spain's attitude could further add to the differences in the approach to the Middle East problem between the United States and the European countries, weakening Western cohesion.

4. Problems could arise in the necessary reshaping of NATO's military command structure in the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean areas (SACLANT, IBERLANT, AFSOUTH, GIBMED).

5. Another cost could result from political and military developments arising from two still pending issues: the first between Spain and Great Britain concerning Gibraltar and the second between Spain and Morocco concerning Ceuta and Melilla.

The first issue cannot be equated with the Greek-Turkish controversy on the Aegean. Very likely it could be solved without causing the same trouble, embarrassment and concern in NATO provoked by the 1964 and 1974 Cyprus crises.

The second is more complex and difficult, due to its military implications and the emotions which it stirs in the Moroccan and Spanish people. Morocco is

not a member of the Atlantic Alliance, but a long-standing pro-Western nation with strong ties with the United States. Ceuta and Melilla are outside NATO's area of responsibility. A confrontation between Madrid and Rabat involving a Moroccan annexation attempt of the two Spanish enclaves would pose very serious problems to the Alliance. The Alliance would be forced to take position, the mechanisms of article 5 would be set in motion, insofar as the case would be considered an aggression to a NATO member. The decisions to be taken will not be easy, and this would be the source of eventual costs.

Finally, there is another issue that could be a benefit or a cost, I am not sure which: Spanish contribution to NATO's budgets. Considering its total amount (civilian budget, military budget, infrastructure fund) Spanish contribution will certainly increase the financial resources of the Alliance. Perhaps, considering only the infrastructure programs, Spanish membership will represent a cost. Everything is dependent upon the accession agreements, the specific projects to be developed and the facilities Spain will provide. A final answer to this question can be given only when the financial agreements will be concluded and ratified by Spain.

I certainly have not covered all the ground I could. For example, I did not address the problems of the strategic importance of the Iberian peninsula in terms of American and Soviet deterrent systems, or in terms of Eurostrategic deterrence purposes. But there are time limits to a conference presentation which should be respected.

On balance, from a European perspective the benefits of full Spanish membership in NATO are far greater than the presumable costs. Furthermore, while the benefits can be, in general, objectively appreciated, the costs are more in the realm of repercussions from events which could, but also could not, happen.

Joining the Atlantic Alliance would enable Spain to cooperate with and participate in the European security system while still taking its own national and international interests into account and without giving up its independence in decision-making.

What is of greatest importance it that Spain will continue to see herself as a Western nation able to play a positive role in Europe and in the Mediterranean both politically and militarily.

The overriding necessity is for Spain to feel herself more and more a part of Europe's evolution and development, more and more a participant in Europe's future.

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INTERNAZIONALI - ROMA

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