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Negotiations leading to Spain's entry into the Common Market are now underway and Spain's application to join NATO would likely be favorably received. Questions regarding her membership in the military alliance are examined in this paper prepared by a student in the Naval Staff College of the Naval War College.

SHOULD SPAIN JOIN NATO?

by

Lieutenant Commander Antonio Zea, Spanish Navy

Introduction. In recent years Spain has been isolated from forums where economic, political and military decisions affecting her as a European country were made. The opposition of some NATO states to a more important security linkage between Spain and NATO was not because of a single factor, but a complex of reasons, historical, ideological and some psychological.

The U.S.-Spanish defense arrangements signed in 1953 gave the United States the use of strategic bases in Europe and made Spain, *de facto*, a part of the Western Alliance. This pact was welcomed by responsible defense officials of the NATO states but it was a welcome largely private and guarded.

Now a democratic Spain provides new political, economic and security opportunities for Spain's full integration into Western Europe and for her choosing to participate in a common defense effort on equal terms.

Membership in the European Common Market is an acknowledged Spanish aspiration, made necessary by the

importance of Spain's trade with The Nine. Now Spain is deeply engaged in negotiations to join the Common Market and the integration is imminent. Spain would probably be welcomed into NATO if it applied but NATO is a divisive issue in Spain's newly open politics and there are serious questions about the wisdom or necessity of joining the NATO military alliance.

At this point it is reasonable to ask some fundamental questions related to security on the West and Spain. They might include:

—What is Spain's political system and how can it affect the alliance?

—What is the Spanish economic potential now and in a longer term?

—What makes Spain strategically important to NATO and the Warsaw Pact?

—What contributions could Spain make to NATO?

—What can Spain gain from a more official linkage with NATO?

—Can Spain escape her strategic importance to Western Europe and choose another option?

Spain's Political System and NATO. The charter of the North Atlantic Treaty proclaims: "The parties to the treaty reaffirm their faith in the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments." The states are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, operating on principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area.

Article 10 of the treaty provides that "the parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European state in a position to further principles of this treaty . . ." to join the Alliance. It has been clear, however, that until now some NATO states would not accept, at least in peacetime, the integration of Spain in NATO without some democratization of her political system.

The referendum on the new Spanish Constitution took place on 6 December 1978. This new constitution defines Spain as a multiparty democratic parliamentary monarchy. The people "in whom sovereignty resides" will elect a two-chamber court at least once every 4 years. The Crown will appoint a Prime Minister, that person to whom a majority in the court is prepared to entrust government. The constitution guarantees and recognizes the rights of the individual. It takes into account what Western societies have gained and assimilated over many years.

As NATO was founded on the principles of democracy and individual liberty, once Spain carried out the constitutional and institutional changes that transformed the courts into a legislature fully representative of all Spaniards of voting age and responsive to the will of the majority of the people, the political reason to be out of the Alliance is no longer valid.

The Spanish Economy. Spain is an increasingly industrialized nation whose economy has been characterized by slow growth, a familiar feature for many NATO countries but which, in the case of Spain, stands in sharp contrast with the very rapid growth and industrialization of the sixties and early seventies. These unfavorable developments reflected the effects of the world recession. But domestic policies also did not come to grips with necessary disequilibria in the economy during a period when priority was accorded to fundamental political reforms. It was only after the parliamentary elections of June 1977 that the new government elaborated a more coherent economic program that produced remarkable improvement. Some of the objectives in 1978 were surpassed. The government had in mind a growth rate of 1 percent, and it reached 3 percent.¹

The GNP is still below the average of NATO countries but above Turkey, Portugal and Greece and close to Italy and Britain. (See Figure 1.)

The manufacture of capital goods is perhaps the best indication of a nation's capacity to produce complex, technologically advanced goods for peace or war. In those areas, Spain ranks well among NATO countries. In electricity, in 1972, Spain was seventh in the world. In steel, in 1975, Spain ranked twelfth among all producers. Automobiles, in 1973, were ninth, and in shipbuilding, by 1978, Spain ranked fifth in the world.

Spain manufactures motor vehicles of every kind for the armed forces and also manufactures telecommunications equipment and some weapons. The French AMX-30 tank is produced in Spain. Overhaul of some U.S. Air Force aircraft is performed in Spain and Spain already supports an important commercial air fleet.

In the Navy, five DEG-type frigates have been built in Spain in collaboration with the U.S. Navy, and now eight

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GNP at Market Prices ²	Defense Expenditures, Percent of GNP ³		
	1976	1976	1977
NATO	1976		
Belgium	6710	3.0	3.4
Britain	3910	5.2	5.0
Canada	8410	1.8	1.8
Denmark	7590	2.5	2.5
France	6550	3.7	3.6
Germany	7250	3.5	3.4
Greece	2400	5.0	5.0
Italy	3040	2.5	2.4
Luxembourg	6280	1.0	1.1
Netherlands	6500	3.3	3.6
Norway	7700	3.2	3.1
Portugal	1630	4.0	3.3
Turkey	1000	5.5	5.7
United States	7910	5.4	6.0
Spain	2890	1.7	1.7

Figure 1

corvettes of Spanish design with SAM and SSM are under construction. Spain has also built modern conventionally-powered submarines of the French *Daphne* and *Agosta* class and the fast patrol craft of the Spanish Navy are produced in Spain.

Although rather well endowed with most industrial raw materials, Spain's prospects for continuing rapid growth must be moderated because of the high cost of imported oil on which Spain is almost entirely dependent. Even so, Spain clearly has significant natural resources. The national infrastructure, and the planning, managerial, and technical skill is of a medium power. In a worldwide ranking of industrial states she placed ninth in 1975.⁴

On 6 February 1979 a solemn ceremony marking the opening of negotiations between Spain and the EEC ended with an important speech by the EEC Minister Calvo: "... We hope that Spain will be an active and energetic member of this renewed community and strengthened by the addition of the three Mediterranean countries and by the forthcoming direct elections to the European Parliament." It was a historic day, not only for Spain but also for the EEC. It marked the irreversible in-

corporation of Spain into the destinies of Europe. "Spain," added the Minister, "is no longer a third country but a candidate country We are prepared to be hard, cold, ruthless and merchant-like as all European nations, without forgetting the political ideals of the community We are dealing with something concrete: Europe needs us and we need Europe."

To conclude this discussion of the economy, it is useful to quote from an article in the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*: "In short, Spain is no longer a somnabulant land of sunny beaches, snorting bulls, sherry Bodegas, and Valencia orange groves. It is an economic power whose strategic position and military potential could significantly affect the military balance in Europe."⁵

The Strategic Context. The strategic value of Spain is her geographic position, derived from her access to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic and from the natural barriers to any invasion by land or by sea, and her location at the end of Europe distant from the threat of the Warsaw Pact armies.

Her privileged position on the main maritime routes between the Atlantic

and Mediterranean, controlling the Strait of Gibraltar and both its eastern and western approaches and also the Canary Islands and the transit lanes of the large tankers bound for the North Atlantic, is of great strategic value. The Balearic Islands and the south coast from Alicante to Gibraltar provide ideal locations for controlling air and sea lines of communication in the western Mediterranean. One author agrees:

In this maritime area—the Western Mediterranean—in which the French-Iberian backbone represents the only possible framework, the remarkable infrastructure already existing—if placed at the disposal of an organized maritime defense system without exclusions—represents, with a considerable lower cost, the effective value of a good number of task forces and aircraft carriers.⁶

Another Spanish writer has gone further: "In the future the Mediterranean will not be a distinct theater of operations, but an appendage of the Atlantic."⁷

Penetration of Spanish airspace from Eastern Europe would require aircraft to cross through Western Europe missile and aircraft defenses. This makes Spain useful as a platform for naval and military operations. In case of a disaster Spain can be the place where the rest of NATO forces could be rebuilt and recouped.

It should be borne in mind that in a conflict, Spain's strategic position would be disputed by the contenders, her bases valuable targets. Because of this, it will be problematic for Spain to remain isolated from a general conflict, as she did in the past.

This strategic importance is not likely to be overlooked by Warsaw Pact who must plan the forces they need to achieve strategic objectives. They must calculate the additional forces they would need to reach the Spanish

redoubt, having already crossed Europe. It is probable that the need to plan on overcoming Spain would itself contribute in some amount to deterring any Soviet attack against NATO countries.

The Soviet Union is well aware of the importance of Spain and is spending large sums of money on this issue. The Soviet presence in Spain is amazing. Russian merchant ships are always present in Spanish ports. Thus far the Spanish Government has refused the generous offers of Soviet aid and trade arrangements, preferring to remain on the Western side. The Soviet Union has embarked on an intense campaign to keep Spain out of NATO. Spanish Communists along with French and Italians, have spread the notion that Spanish entry into NATO would somehow pose a threat to post-Tito Yugoslavia. The idea is, evidently, that the addition of Spain to NATO would entitle the Russians to take Yugoslavia.⁸ "Moscow has already offered Spain the opportunity to host the third stage of Helsinki Act in Madrid, in return for a commitment to remain neutral."⁹ As Gromyko has said: "If you were to ask what in our opinion would best benefit Spain's interest as a state, we would answer: a course of action fomenting peace, an 'independent' and peaceful policy in international affairs."¹⁰

The diplomatic/psychological war is in full swing. A number of approaches have been made by Soviet state commerce and industry to private Spanish banks and trading organizations, offering remarkably attractive credit terms and lucrative markets in an attempt to promote Spanish economic dependency on unilateral trade relations with the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe. If the West fails to recognize the connection in Spanish minds between the EEC and NATO, Moscow certainly does not.¹¹ And if the West forgets the effect of Spanish entry into NATO on deterrence, Moscow has not. Soviet diplomats are busy striking up new friendship

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with their Spanish counterparts. In London and Paris and every time a Spanish leader goes abroad, there is a flurry of activity between Spanish and Soviet embassies. The battle for hearts and minds is well underway.¹²

Taking part in this psychological battle is the *New Times* (Moscow) magazine. In the last of a series of articles written from Madrid, "Drawing Spain into NATO," Anatoly Medvedenko wrote:

Those who associate Spain's future and prestige not with NATO and its increasingly adventurous policies in which the intervention in Zaire is a recent example, but with the promotion of all European cooperation in the spirit of Helsinki, are urging prudence and circumspection.¹³

It must be said that some political masters of Western Europe are receptive to the idea that the entry of Spain into NATO would be a provocation to the Warsaw Pact, would help undermine the "status quo" in Eastern Europe, and would prejudice further progress of the SALT and policy of détente.

Without discussing the matter it may be noted that the recent turmoil in Iran has enhanced Spain's strategic importance.

Possible Spanish Contribution to NATO. Some contributions have been reviewed in the strategic context. One of special interest is the consolidation of the southern flank of the Alliance now weakened by the continuing Greco-Turkish friction and the political situation in Italy and Malta. Some media accounts have suggested that NATO troops might have to be stationed in Spain if they were forced to pull out from Italy.

One naval role in which Spain would make a valuable contribution is in support of NATO naval projection. Political developments in Italy could handicap the use of its facilities by the 6th Fleet.

In this case the naval base in Rota would play a crucial role in the western Mediterranean. Even if this does not happen, other considerations may cause the United States to withdraw one of its two carriers from the Mediterranean. Then Spain could position itself as a base for projection of airpower over this part of the Mediterranean while considerations of mobility would dictate where to locate the remaining carrier in the eastern part.

The Balearic Islands and the south coast of Spain provide good locations for bases to challenge the potential dominance of sealanes in the western Mediterranean by an enemy air and naval force based in Algeria.¹⁴ The political and military alignment of Algeria—even if not now closely allied with the Soviet Union—in the event of a confrontation with the Warsaw Pact is not easily predictable. Presently, its military forces are equipped with Soviet aircraft, and missile boats and Soviet technicians and military advisors are present in the country. This potential threat to NATO cannot be ignored.

NATO aircraft could be dispersed to bases in Spain to reduce vulnerability while in the event of conflict Spain could function as a transit center and supply depot for reinforcement from the United States. The defense of the NATO southern region requires this air reinforcement in order to balance, in the earliest stages of a conflict, the superiority that Warsaw Pact now enjoys in that area. Spain can play a good role in this logistic task.

An Atlantic role might also be contemplated in the South Atlantic approaches where it will be necessary to reinforce the ASW defense of sea lines of communications.

East-West transatlantic approaches can be protected from the northwest of Spain, promoting a means for filling a gap in the maritime and air defenses in that sea. The traffic coming from the Cape of Good Hope can be protected⁵

from the Canary Islands naval and air bases. The strategic position of this island astride the oil routes off the western coast of Africa is a valuable asset. The most important facility in the future is likely to be the naval base in Las Palmas. It is being moved to a new site on the Island of Gran Canaria and will be thoroughly modernized.

The Spanish air defense on the ground recently has been modernized with U.S. technical assistance and is compatible with NATO, a valuable asset.

The Spanish Army can be considered a strategic reserve.

Advantages and Disadvantages to Spain from NATO. In discussing the possibility of Spain's entry into NATO it is necessary to analyze in some detail the pros and cons.

Among the advantages the country would gain are: strong political and economic reasons for strengthening relations with the West; access to all kinds of information, not only military, but also technical and economic; a share in forming military strategy on a West European scale; and improvement of combat training and capabilities of the armed forces.

It is also important to take into account that the political and social dimension of NATO is becoming more important. NATO's Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society is already working on studies concerning sea and air pollution, automobile and road safety, and disaster assistance. Even the NATO military committees have come to devote much of their time and effort to practical matters of common concern which may or may not have military connection.¹⁵

Another argument in favor is the possibility of solving the Gibraltar problem. The fact that the United Kingdom and Spain belonged to the same alliance might obviate the need for a British military presence in Gibraltar and might

create the conditions necessary to having the base under Spanish administration. The safeguarding of the rights of the people of Gibraltar could be guaranteed by the autonomies established under a new constitution.

Not measurable, but not to be discounted either, is the purely prestige factor in being recognized as a member of the military "club."

On the other hand there are negative sides to the question of NATO membership. Membership involves certain restrictions of national independence; Spain might sometimes have to place the interests of all NATO states above her own and allow the presence of foreign military bases on her territory. On this point, a Spanish magazine article said,

It should be remembered that any ties of Spain with NATO are above all a threat to its national sovereignty, and the very fact of joining that organization should be considered not so much from the military as from political standpoint, because Spain's NATO membership with her dependent on Western Europe and the U.S. will curtail our independence.¹⁶

There may also be a negative reaction from countries of the Mediterranean, above all Arab countries, which could worsen relations. And Spain's membership in NATO may indeed upset the present balance of forces in Europe.

One of the most frequent complaints in connection with NATO is the expense. The increased military spending, according to some preliminary estimates, will treble the present figure according to defenders of this argument, but this seems exaggerated. Defense expenditure in terms of GNP was 1.7 percent for Spain in 1977, and the average for NATO countries was 3.5 percent,¹⁷ which is not triple but double. What would be more "expensive" would be a change of emphasis

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over the years to come from men to equipment and professional training.

But regardless of the exact amount, if Spain's military were to be brought up to NATO standards, it will affect important economic priorities, such as the country's need to concentrate on economic and social development rather than in less productive military power.

The Spanish Decision. Spain's strategic position makes difficult any longing for neutrality, however attractive, at least emotionally, to many citizens. Such a neutrality is seen by the present Spanish Government and other Western countries as impractical. Still, the emotional attraction is important inside Spain and bears directly on foreign policy and must be decided one way or another in the near future.

Assuming that Spain is allowed to choose, will she join NATO? The Suarez government has shown some cautious interest in joining NATO, but has indicated that this is a question for the Cortes (Parliament).

Foreign Minister Oreja has argued that "this is one of the issues in which the Spanish people's vote must be heard, a wide national debate is necessary before a firm decision is made." He noted: "In these circumstances I am little worried about whether NATO would now audit us or not, because our doctrine in this regard is yet to be defined."¹⁸

The EEC and NATO may not appear related (strictly speaking they are not) but they are linked in the minds of Spaniards. "Why should we commit ourselves to someone else's defense when that someone won't give us an equal opportunity to sell our products?" The EEC issue must be decided before the NATO question.¹⁹ But the EEC entry is now in good way and the words of the present government becomes more clear. Foreign Minister Oreja has said that he fully shares his party's position favoring Spain's inte-

gration into NATO; that he considers it essential to have a broad consensus of the various political grouping on this subject but that the question is not urgent. In the same context, Prime Minister Suarez, answering questions by parliamentarians after his speech in the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, said that Spain is in favor of entry to NATO but that it is not an urgent matter and ought to be in the format of close cooperation with all the country's political forces.²⁰

There now seems consensus on the European Economic Community but there is not yet on NATO. Membership in NATO would certainly not satisfy the Socialists who wish to see Spain aligned with the neutral countries. So the PSOE—Spain's Socialist Party—opposes NATO membership. This party appears to have played its card on the subject already. At the beginning of 1978, a PSOE delegation met CPSU ideologue Mikhail Suslov in Moscow and signed a pact that commits the Socialists to a policy of neutrality. The agreement consisted of a statement committing the signatories to avoid any action that raises tension between the two power blocs.²¹ Felipe Gonzalez, PSOE General Secretary, declared recently that the Socialist Labor Party is convinced that accession to NATO would run counter to Spain's national interests and that the PSOE would therefore oppose any attempts to get Spain into the organization. A similar stand has been taken by Tierno Galvan, PSOE Honorary Chairman who has said that he is convinced that any connection with NATO would tie Spain to the United States and make it impossible for her to pursue an independent foreign policy. He thinks Spain would gain by following a policy of nonalignment.

For the Communist Party there is no question of Spanish membership. Its position is obvious—it wants NATO dissolved completely. This position was formulated at its Ninth Congress and was

apparent in the recent elections campaign in which it urged unconditional opposition to participation in NATO.

Public sentiment must also be taken into account. The newspaper *El País*, which speaks for intellectuals and the middle class, wrote in May 1978, "We have repeatedly stressed that the question of Spain's entry into NATO has a vital bearing on the future of our country and the government therefore must not make any hasty decisions."^{2 2} The paper holds that Spain had important and urgent foreign policy problems, such as development of relations with Eastern Europe and North African countries and formulation of her policy in the Mediterranean. *El País* exposes the arguments of the Atlanticists that now, after Franco, Spain has "matured" enough to join the "democratic community." NATO support, the newspaper recalls, maintained Franco in power and reminds its readers that NATO generals helped the "Colonels" impose a military dictatorship on Greece.

The final decision on Spain's accession to NATO lies with the *Cortes*. What is the alignment of forces, after the 1 March 1979 parliamentary elections, in the *Cortes*? The government's pro-Atlantic policy has the support of its own Union of the Democratic Center—167 seats—and the rightist Democratic Coalition—10 seats—in the lower chamber. The Socialists and Communists—who oppose entry—account for a total of 143 seats.

Like parties, public opinion and media, the armed forces are also far from adopting a firm position on NATO membership. The attitude of the armed forces towards NATO is important. The position of the navy has a theoretical quasi-link with NATO and is generally in favor of membership. The air force represents an intermediate position and although on a lesser scale, is involved—like the navy—in combined exercises. The other extreme position is that of the army which neither in its tactics,

logistics, nor organizational structures and functions follows NATO doctrine in a joint and systematic way. Its lack of modern equipment is not so important as the apparent absence of psychological preparation for modern warfare. The traditional role of defense of the territorial integrity of Spain appears passive.^{2 3}

In examining the security options of Spain it is necessary to take into account the role of the treaty between Spain and the United States, which makes the option of neutrality an academic proposition. The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the two countries specifies the following objectives: "to harmonize their defense relationship with existing security arrangements in the North Atlantic area"; the "development of appropriate coordination with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization"; and "to prepare and coordinate plans, which are in harmony with existing arrangements in the North Atlantic area."^{2 4} This made Spain, *de facto*, a part of the Western Alliance.

Real neutrality, Swiss-style, is meaningless and the only plausible alternative would be continued military links with the United States instead of the advantages of a multilateral alliance and moving closer to the status of a privileged ally. The logistic links to supply the Spanish Armed Forces are almost definitive. This has its danger because the United States does not offer a firm defense commitment under the treaty and the political forces are reluctant to grant military facilities that might make Spain vulnerable to superpower attack.

Conclusions. Spain is an integral part of Western Europe and her defensive and strategic interests coincide with those of NATO, but there is a strong tendency toward a neutral posture.

The option of neutrality is utopian and dangerous and there seems no alternative but to join NATO. NATO

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would offer entry into a multilateral security scheme and abundant possibilities in the political and military fields to participate in and benefit from the different negotiation forums. Spain's plans to join the EEC are now almost a fact, and NATO is seen the military arm of the community.

The Spanish integration into Europe is not only for commercial and economic objectives, but also has political goals. These can be achieved by joining NATO, since Spain would reap diplomatic advantages from belonging to a political organization that includes the nations of her own geographic, economic and cultural orientation, and this might lead to a peaceful solution to the problem of Gibraltar.

All parties in the *Cortes* accept the need for EEC membership but military membership is a question that divides the government and the opposition and it is essential to have a broad consensus of the various political parties on this subject. It is not an urgent matter but must be the consequence of close cooperation with all the country's political

forces. The last thing that the socialist opposition wants is for Spain's political problems to be exacerbated by a question that it thinks of secondary importance. And that is the last thing that NATO countries should want as well.

So the steps are clear: political integration, economic integration and only then, as a logical consequence without being an urgent matter, should Spain join NATO.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Lieutenant Commander Zea was commissioned in 1961 after graduating from the Spanish Naval Academy. He attended the Mine Warfare School at Ostend, Belgium and has commanded a Spanish

Navy patrol boat and a minesweeper. He graduated from the Spanish Naval War College in 1976, from the Naval Staff College of the U.S. Naval War College in 1979, and is now on the staff of the Spanish War College.

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