

# Spanish foreign policy monitor: April-June 2015

Elisa Lledó

>> The current wave of instability and conflict affecting Europe's neighbours (to the South and East) has been a key issue on the Spanish and European agendas during the second quarter of 2015. In particular, the tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea that unfolded in April has returned the controversial issue of migration to the forefront of the debate, both at European and national levels.

As a member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and a few months before it assumes the monthly presidency of the organism (in October), Spain has actively contributed to the discussions regarding issues such as the fight against terrorism, the review of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and preventive diplomacy.

Economic diplomacy also remains a central plank of Spanish foreign policy. Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel García-Margallo and King Philip VI have continued to make new contacts and consolidate existing ones in terms of investments, trade and cooperation. In this sense, Spain hosted official visits by Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Mohamad Javad, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, Chinese Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Chao, Brazilian Vice-President Michel Temer and the head of the Moroccan government, Abdelilah Benkirane. Along the same lines, Spain's diplomacy chief, the prime minister and the king made several state visits to different countries, including Lebanon, Indonesia, India, Mali, Senegal, France, Haiti, Brazil and Mexico.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Spain has actively contributed to UNSC discussions regarding issues such as the fight against terrorism, the review of resolution 1325 and preventive diplomacy.
- The Barcelona ministerial meeting between the EU and its Mediterranean partners provided an opportunity to discuss shared challenges and prospects for economic development.
- The migration problem topped the European political agenda between the months of April and June.

»»»»» **AN ACTIVE PRESENCE IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL**

In its second trimester as a UNSC member, Spain actively participated in the discussions regarding peacekeeping and international security. Among Spain's main interventions in the past few months, it is worth highlighting its proposal, on the occasion of the debate on 'Youth and Radicalisation' (April 23<sup>rd</sup>), to designate a Special Representative of the Secretary General with a mandate to fight against violent extremism. Also worth noting is the speech by Spanish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Ignacio Ybáñez in the open high-level debate about journalists in conflict situations (May 27<sup>th</sup>); the renewal of the mandate of MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, April 28<sup>th</sup>); and the debates (organised by Spain) in 'Arria formula' – official meetings that allow for UNSC members to exchange impressions within a flexible framework – on women, peace and security with a view to amending resolution 1325 (May 21<sup>st</sup>) and on climate change (June 30<sup>th</sup>).

All these activities are in line with Spain's guiding principles as a UNSC member. These include the fight against terrorism; preventive diplomacy; non-proliferation and disarmament (through its presidency of three committees: 1737-Iran, 1718-Democratic Popular Republic of Korea and 1540-Weapons of Mass Destruction); the revision of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; improving the efficiency of peacekeeping operations and special political missions; the humanitarian files of Afghanistan and Syria (Spain is penholder); and raising awareness about the new global threats to international peace and security (cyber-security and climate change).

The fight against extremist terrorism continues to be an international priority. The recent attacks in France (Lyon), Tunisia (Susa), Kuwait and Lego (Somalia) have increased the terrorist threat in European countries, their Middle Eastern partners and other states of the region. Spain is at the forefront of the fight against international terrorism. In consonance with its thematic lines of

action within the UNSC, it was recently confirmed that Madrid will host on 27-28 July an informative session of the UNSC Committee against Terrorism. Also within this framework, Spain envisages taking terrorism victims to the UNSC (possibly in the month of October) to participate in a session organised under the 'Arria formula'.

Regarding preventive diplomacy as a conflict resolution instrument, Spain wishes to become a model to be followed. In addition to initiatives such as the Alliance of Civilisations or its collaboration with the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), in 2012 Spain launched, together with Morocco, the Mediation in the Mediterranean (Med-Med) initiative, in order to promote a culture of peace and consensus in the region. Within the Med-Med framework, in March 2015 Spain organised a seminar in Madrid on the role of regional and sub-regional organisations in mediation actions in the Mediterranean. More recently, on 23-24 June Madrid hosted the fifth meeting of the Network of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Focal Points, under the title '10 Years of the Responsibility to Protect: responding to new challenges and threats to vulnerable communities'. The event was co-organised by Spain and Chile (whose conclusions were presented to the UNSC), in collaboration with the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect and the Stanley Foundation.

In October, Spain will hold the UNSC presidency. Envisaged activities include a debate on resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security on the occasion of its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the celebration of Spain's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a member of the United Nations.

**RENEWING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY TO EUROPE'S SOUTH AND EAST**

Increased instability caused by, on the one hand, growing tensions in Syria, Libya and Iraq due to the advances of Daesh (also known as the Islamic State) and, on the other hand, the Russia-Ukraine

crisis, begs a revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) towards Europe's Southern and Eastern neighbours. As such, on March 4<sup>th</sup> the European Commission published a joint consultation paper from the Commission and the Vice-President / High Representative entitled 'Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy', with the objective of promoting a political debate on the future of the ENP. Two meetings were held in Barcelona and Riga, albeit of different nature, which can be considered as part of the process of renewal of the EU's policy towards its neighbours to the South and the East.

The Southern Mediterranean is a source of concern. As mentioned in the previous FRIDE monitor (Spanish foreign policy monitor: January-March 2015), in April Spain hosted in Barcelona an 'Informal Ministerial Meeting with the southern partners on the future of the European Neighbourhood Policy' to debate on future EU-Mediterranean relations, common challenges

(illegal migration, jihadism, the crisis in Libya and energy security), and the level of economic development that is needed to bring stability and development to the region. Even though the meeting did not translate into concrete changes to the

ENP towards the South, it did provide an opportunity to consolidate Spain's firm commitment within the EU to its Southern neighbours.

The Fourth Eastern Partnership Summit held on 21-22 May in Riga (Latvia) between the EU and its six partners in Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – indented to take stock of the state of relations between Europe and its Eastern neighbours amidst a tense geopolitical context and to identify ways to improve the relationship.

The summit brought to the fore the existing differences between two groups of states: those that wish for closer integration with the EU and have thus signed Association Agreements – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – and those that are more sceptical. Regarding the latter, in October 2014 Armenia joined the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Azerbaijan's energy wealth has so far allowed it to adopt a neutral position and align itself neither with Moscow nor with Brussels. Lastly, Belarus is subject to EU sanctions and, like Armenia, is a member of the EEU.

The ENP's main challenge to the East is twofold. First, to effect the required reforms in those countries that wish to move closer towards the EU. And second, review the future of EU relations with Russia at a time when Moscow is attempting to counter Brussels' influence in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus.

### AT EUROPE'S DOOR

Europe is still a very attractive place for many people fleeing from unsustainable situations such as ethnical or religious persecution, poverty or war. The tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea that unfolded in April off the Libyan coast (628 people died at sea when a fishing boat carrying 700 African capsize) is a clear example of the huge migration problem facing Europe. It is a challenge in terms of both capacity and political will, reflected in the lack of understanding, coordination and decision making among EU member states. At the same time, the tragedy has highlighted the existing level of distrust among the 28 member states regarding migration management, as well as the need to establish a common approach towards migration.

The problem of migration topped the agenda of several high-level EU meetings held between the months of April and June. These include four Foreign Affairs Council meetings (April 20<sup>th</sup>, May 18<sup>th</sup>, May 26<sup>th</sup> and June 22<sup>nd</sup>), an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government (April 23<sup>rd</sup>) and a European Council meeting (25-26 June).

## Spain wishes to become a model to be followed in terms of preventive diplomacy

## 4

»»»»» The April 20<sup>th</sup> Foreign Affairs Council meeting presented a ten-point action plan to be urgently adopted to respond to the refugee and displaced people crisis. Its main priorities included strengthening joint operations in the Mediterranean – Triton y Poseidon – by increasing financial resources and considering options for an emergency distribution mechanism or a pilot project on resettlement at European and voluntary level. The biggest challenge is now to translate these commitments into concrete measures in the short term.

The April 23<sup>rd</sup> Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government agreed to frame the EU's response in four main areas. First, strengthening EU presence at sea, by tripling the budget for the Frontex joint sea rescue operations Triton and Poseidon for 2015 and 2016. Second, targeting criminal smuggling networks in accordance with international law to systematically identify capture and destroy vessels before they are used by smugglers. Third, preventing illegal migration flows with the support of Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Mali and Niger and improving cooperation with Turkey in light of the situations in Syria and Iraq. And fourth, reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility by embedding the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) into member states legislative systems, increasing emergency aid to Southern European member states and establishing an EU-wide pilot project on resettlement, to offer places for people eligible for protection.

The May 18<sup>th</sup> and June 22<sup>nd</sup> Foreign Affairs Council meetings decide to establish a European Union Naval Force in the Mediterranean – EUNAVFOR MED – with headquarters in Rome to target the business model of migrant smugglers and traffickers in the Mediterranean. The force became operational on June 22<sup>nd</sup> with contributions from fourteen member states (Belgium, France, Finland, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and the UK, among others). Spain, which on July 10<sup>th</sup> requested Congressional authorisation for dispatching its Armed Forces to participate in the military

operation, will send a maritime surveillance aircraft (with 50 men) and up to twelve men to the force's headquarters. Spain's contribution could be increased as need be to include up to 250 men plus additional maritime resources.

In May, the European Commission presented its long-awaited European Agenda on Migration. Two proposals in particular were received with scepticism by some European partners (France and Spain, among others). First, an EU-wide resettlement scheme to offer 20,000 places during a two-year period for people identified as refugees according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) criteria. And second, to relocate across the continent Syrian and Eritrean citizens in need of international protection who have arrived in Italy (24,000 people) and Greece (16,000 people) in response to what it considers an emergency situation in both countries. Distribution criteria would include GDP and size of population (weighing 40 per cent each), as well as unemployment rate and past numbers of asylum seekers and of resettled refugees, taking into consideration the efforts already made on a voluntary basis by member states during the period 2010-2014 (weighing 10 per cent each). As such, Spain would have had to relocate 4,288 people from Italy and Greece and resettle 1,549.

However, Spain has indicated that it cannot abide to these decisions. On the May 18<sup>th</sup> Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Minister García-Margallo voiced the country's reservations regarding the relocation of refugees among different member states by mentioning the 'low weight of unemployment rates and previous efforts' in the decisions, which, in his opinion, should have been decisive factors when allocating quotas. Spain claims earlier efforts in controlling illegal migration (including the 'Cayuco crisis', when massive boats from Mauritania and other African countries arrived at the coast of the Canary Islands in 2006). The documents on the fight against illegal migration published by the Spanish Ministry of Interior provide a comprehensive picture of Spain's efforts to combat illegal migration.

---

Lastly, at the 25-26 June European Council meeting held in Brussels, the Spanish diplomacy chief insisted that the adoption of quotas could create a 'calling effect' among illegal immigrants. The summit's conclusions confirmed the obligation to help 60,000 people (40,000 to be temporarily relocated and 20,000 resettled), adding that this should be done taking into account the specific situation of each member state, with the aim of putting an end to the debate around quotas and criteria. In other words, it was agreed that the re-distribution of refugees would be carried out on a voluntary basis.

## CONCLUSION

The migration crisis has become one of the biggest challenges of the twenty-first century and one of the main priorities of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. It is well known that Europe is suffering from demographic decline and that migration could solve part of this problem. However, the question is what kind of migration does the EU want. In the coming months, Europe will have to make important decisions in this area.

More broadly, the tensions surrounding the migration crisis and the intense debate over the new Greek bailout plan have brought to the fore the different perceptions and priorities among EU member states. This raises more questions regarding the future of the European integration process, coinciding with Spain's 30<sup>th</sup> EU membership anniversary (12 June 2015). The upcoming months will be decisive not only for the future of the Eurozone, but also in terms of member states' commitment to European integration, particularly in light of the growing internal and external challenges they face.

*Elisa Lledó is junior researcher at FRIDE.*

**e-mail: [fride@fride.org](mailto:fride@fride.org)**  
**[www.fride.org](http://www.fride.org)**