

# Ten tasks for Spain's new foreign minister

## FRIDE

>> Spain has a new foreign minister. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, minister since the Socialist government assumed power in March 2004, has been replaced by Trinidad Jiménez. Spain's partners will be asking themselves what this change implies for Spanish foreign policy.

It is widely acknowledged that Spain's international weight has weakened since 2004 and that foreign policy has received little priority from the current government. Spain's presidency of the European Union in early 2010 was frenetic but was overshadowed by the economic crisis and the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. Its key foreign policy aims were frustrated.

Trinidad Jiménez does not have much time or political room for manoeuvre in the lead up to Spain's next elections. To make a mark, and lead an overdue improvement in Spain's foreign policies, here are ten tasks the new minister should focus on:

**1) Broaden horizons.** In her investiture, the new minister indicated the Asia-Pacific region as one of her priorities. It is high time that Spain take its relationship with this booming part of the world seriously. From the perspective of image, the success of the Spanish pavilion at the Shanghai Expo – it was among the five most visited – has contributed to presenting Spain to Chinese public opinion. But Spain, which historically has not had a close relationship with the Asia-Pacific region, is far behind other European countries in terms of commercial and cultural exchange and business presence. Proof of this lies in the fact that it only has 15 embassies in the region, as compared to the 33 of the United Kingdom, France's 30, or Germany's 28.

To be coherent, relations with China, India, Korea or Japan would have to be framed within the ambit of the EU. The reality, however, is that

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Trinidad Jiménez does not have much time or political room for manoeuvre in the lead up to Spain's next elections.
- Spain could foment the inclusion of development in the agenda of the G20
- Due to the economic crisis, Spain must address an ever-growing and ever more ambitious international agenda with far fewer resources than in previous years.
- The new minister must improve policy coherence and coordination, and begin the reform of the foreign service.

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»»»»» each state fights to defend its own interests with respect, above all, to the great Asian giant. Without forgetting the defence of human rights, the Spanish government must find a way to strengthen its relations with Asia, and to support Spanish businesses that want to embark on Asian ventures. The Spanish language, tourism and alternative energies are the three sectors in which Spain offers added value to the region.

**2) Contribute to global reform.** The demand for global governance or collective management presented by global challenges is burgeoning. The diplomacy of summits and cooperation through informal clubs, along with the ever greater contribution made by non-state actors and transnationals, now form a regular part of the formulation of the international agenda. An economic and political medium power such as Spain should try to multiply and enlarge its contribution to global reform, as a reflection of both its interests and its national values.

Spain is a permanent guest, though not a full member, of the G20 and it has an interest in enlarging the cohesion and coherence of the European position both in this institution and in the G8. In so far as coordination improves at the European level, so the position of Spain will grow stronger. It is important, however, that it contributes to reinforcing the legitimacy of these fora in the face of accusations that Europe is overrepresented.

Furthermore, given that Spain has made development cooperation one of the flags of its international policy, it could foment the inclusion of development in the agenda of the G20, while also establishing greater dialogue with some of the new principal donors such as Brazil, India and China.

**3) Move closer to Brazil.** Some may fear the *Latin Americanisation* of Spanish foreign policy, given the previous experience of the new minister in the region. Spain has a privileged relationship, however, which it should not let go to waste.

The real challenge consists of building a bilateral relationship with Brazil which, thus far, has been perceived as a rival rather than an ally of Spain. The

Spanish government has recognised positive gestures from Brazil, such as firm support for the presence of Spain in the G20 and the increased teaching of Spanish in Brazilian schools. Moreover, economic exchange has grown considerably and Spain is now the fourth largest investor in Brazil.

Use of the EU-Brazil Association Agreement for regular dialogue will facilitate international harmonisation, along with EU-Mercosur agreement and greater regional stability. A closer relationship with Brazil, in its role as regional leader, may also help coordination and to rationalise Ibero-American and European-Latin American summits, thus seeking a logic and common dates for these events.

**4) Improve coherence in Africa.** Africa should not disappear from the Spanish agenda. To lose sight of the continent, at this crucial moment, would be a serious mistake. At the same time, greater realism is needed, along with words being backed by action. For example, in the 2009-2012 Africa Plan the prime objective was the 'support of processes of consolidation of democracy and peace building and security in Africa': Spain has not only failed to launch new strategies, but has also been absent from international initiatives in this regard. Some specific suggestions would be to make more and better use of personnel in the new embassies in Africa, to try to enlarge Spain's profile in the European Foreign Service of Catherine Ashton (with respect to personnel and policies), and to re-evaluate the use of Casa África (Africa House) and other forms of 'diplomacy'.

Leaving to one side the necessary reform of cooperation, for Africa to hold the attention of Spain does not require numerous additional resources, but instead political will; the will to improve the coherence of Spanish policies and to ensure that they maintain their relevance in the European context. The next Africa-EU summit, at which Spain should champion better coordination with the African continent as a whole, will offer an opportune moment.

The principal reason is that the greatest challenge in strategic and security terms for Europe in Africa – the presence of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic

Maghreb (AQIM) and of numerous criminal networks in the Sahel region – is a phenomenon that transcends the supposed division between Sub-Saharan Africa and the North of Africa. Moreover, in the areas around this geographic belt there are numerous other potential sources of instability, from the westernmost region – the elections in Guinea, Ivory Coast and Nigeria – to the Indian Ocean, where the conflict in Somalia is ongoing, passing through the referendum in Sudan. It seems a good moment to begin to act in coherence with the declared support for democracy, and to change the so-often condemned, but nonetheless no less serious, attitude towards the Obiang regime in Equatorial Guinea.

**5) Do better, with less.** The Zapatero governments have made development cooperation one of the fundamental pillars of foreign policy. However, the economic crisis has created a situation in which Spain must address an ever-growing and ever more ambitious international agenda with far fewer resources than in previous years. If it wishes to maintain its influence as a medium-sized power, it must seek broad strategic coherence.

This requires a focus that goes further than the current Spanish leaning towards modernising the tools of cooperation and promoting effectiveness measures. Coherence must take on a dimension that is as much political as geographic and address, for example, the differentiated treatment given to Sub-Saharan states and their counterparts in the Maghreb, while also tackling challenges such as trans-Saharan migration flows, drug trafficking and terrorist threats in non-governed spaces. These issues underline the growing spatial and thematic interconnections in the region. Such a focus could also contribute to joint and multinational development initiatives which consider entire regions, while Spain makes itself more visible and influential, and positions itself at the fore of the redesign of European relations with Africa in general.

**6) Take action on more than agricultural imports and immigrant boats.** Spain's great pending task in its Mediterranean policy is to fully embrace the new era of EU international

relations, recognising that Europe's wellbeing will, in the end, be Spain's too. It is to be hoped that Jiménez has the courage to develop a new Spanish foreign policy that is more mature, more modern and more visionary than that of her predecessor in this regard. On one hand, in its Mediterranean policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC) must accept a truth that is already common sense in the rest of the EU: under the current circumstances, it doesn't serve much purpose to emphasise the multilateral framework, including in technical projects such as those foreseen by the new Union for the Mediterranean (UM). The idea of making Euro-Mediterranean cooperation more agile through a much narrower, depoliticised approach has failed.

With good reason, the UM is considered an empty shell in almost all of the rest of the Union. As an object of Spanish prestige, it is not only very expensive but also comprehensively ineffective. On the other hand, Spain could be a key actor in the development of genuine regional leadership, something that is much needed in an area ravaged by historical conflicts, economic weakness and political oppression. To achieve this, Spain, given its privileged relationship with Morocco, should support the country's progress towards assuming the role of genuine regional leader with regard to systemic reform, within the framework of the country's Advanced Status. The latter should be further developed and defined in all areas, so as to demonstrate to the other countries of the southern Mediterranean littoral the clear advantages offered by a path of genuine reform. This implies not only seeking more (an 'advanced' level of reform in both the political and economic spheres), but also being willing to offer more (for example, in terms of liberalisation of both trade and visa policies).

Furthermore, it would be very disappointing if the present opportunity for Spain to adopt a long-awaited more visionary approach in its policy on the Mediterranean were to go to waste due to the country's preoccupation with tomatoes and immigrant boats which, until now, have dominated its decisions regarding the region.

»»»»» 7) **Build bridges.** The new Minister for Foreign Affairs, together with the Prime Minister, will have to dedicate considerable time to security ahead of the NATO summit to be staged in Lisbon on 19 and 20 September, and the OECD summit to be held in Astana (Kazakhstan) on 1 and 2 December. There is an opportunity for Spain's foreign policy to stand out and to act as a bridge between different parties. To achieve this, Trinidad Jiménez will have to exercise diplomacy and present a vision for a new or reformed architecture for European, Atlantic and Eurasian security. The moderate position of Spain in Europe, and its good and close relations with the United States and Russia, along with the other members of the OSCE, could help conciliate divergent positions.

The NATO summit will approve a new strategic understanding for the next ten years. The text has already been negotiated, but the summit, which will be attended by both Barack Obama and Dimitri Medvedev, will also broach the thorny issue of missile defence, along with Russian proposals for a new pan-European security treaty. Spain will need to have a clear idea of how it sees the relationship between the European Common Defence and Security Policy, NATO and the OSCE, along with possible links between regional Eurasian security organisations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

The OSCE summit two weeks later is something of a novelty, as no such summit has been organised since 1999 and the majority of ministerial meetings since then have ended in failure. The Spanish presidency of the OSCE in 2007 was recognised for having succeeded in uniting different points of view and Spain forcefully defended the passing of the presidency to Kazakhstan in 2010. This has created a link between Madrid and Astana, but has also implied assuming some responsibility in terms of helping the Kazakhs ensure their presidency is a success. It will not be easy, as the OSCE is divided over what its objectives and purpose should be. Moreover, the summit takes place too close to the NATO meeting, and as a result it is probable that few high-level representatives will attend.

The agenda is still open, but it is likely that the Corfu Process, which has come to dominate the question of security architecture, will be debated. Spain could contribute to an attempt to revive the OSCE as the main forum for pan-European security, given that it is viewed positively by all its members: by the United States and Europe, due to its neutrality, and by the former Soviet states, thanks to its backing for human rights without entering into external models of democracy.

Finally, Spain can also play a positive and creative role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Eastern Europe (for example the secessionist republic of Trans-Dniester in Moldova), and the Southern Caucasus (Abkhazia and South Ossetia, breakaway territories of Georgia, and Ngorno-Karabakh in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan). Equally, Spain is considered a neutral actor for not having recognised Kosovo. Jiménez is likely to have to make moves on this issue, however.

8) **Recover values.** Spain gives assurances that the defence of human rights guides its actions in foreign policy. For example, Zapatero has emphasised the fight against the death penalty and has fostered the formation of an International Commission of experts in an effort to attain a universal moratorium in 2015, seeing this as a first step towards abolishing this form of punishment in the greatest possible number of countries. Last summer, he also gave support to the creation of a UN agency for women.

In another area, he has promoted, together with Turkey, the Alliance of Civilisations, which is now run by the United Nations. This is an example of the mobilisation of vast resources for dialogue and the participation of non-state actors in the global agenda. Beyond the merits of the initiative – which is regarded as controversial by many – the eruption of non-state actors and public-private alliances represents an interesting dimension of global governance.

Despite the rhetoric, it is not always easy to find a balance and coherence between uncompromising defence of human rights and the country's own interests. The case of China is the most obvious but, as previously mentioned, the case of Obiang, for exam-

ple, is flagrant. Furthermore, there is an ongoing lack of more active democracy promotion policies. In a country whose political transition and incorporation into European institutions are frequently used as a point of reference, this absence is significant.

Moratinos had to dedicate a great deal of time and effort to redirecting the policies of the Popular Party and to restoring relations with the US which had been damaged by Zapatero. Jiménez should now take a step further and plot her own course.

**9) Clean house.** In her investiture, Trinidad Jiménez also mentioned reform of the foreign service as one of her priorities. It is a task that remains pending for all the tenants of Palacio de Santa Cruz, but also one that is becoming ever more necessary if Spanish

diplomacy is to adapt to current times. This is so now more than ever, with the dawn of competition with the European External Action Service, which will include professionals from all countries, not to mention training its own corps. This is a key

moment, with the major players making moves (or better said, changing posts and assignments) and establishing priorities. Spain must also design a national policy – rather than a party policy – to ensure its presence in the diverse international institutions, starting with the European organisations.

In the specific case of cooperation, the new minister should make progress with the long-awaited reform, which was left abandoned during the mandate of Moratinos, who never wanted to confront civil servants to sort out the main institution, the Spanish Agency for Cooperation and Development (AECID). This is urgent if Spain wishes to be not only a ‘middle’, but a serious donor. There is a great deal of pressure on European donors in terms of the effectiveness of aid; pressure which is growing in the run-up to the next High Level Forum in Seoul (November/December 2011) and which, further-

more, has moved forcefully up the G20 development agenda. Spain must attack her structural problems, especially with regard to professionalisation, the use of new modalities and the construction of second generation alliances through, for example, triangular cooperation.

**10) Coordinate, coordinate, coordinate.** The other major pending task is to improve coordination among all the public entities that intervene in Spanish foreign policy. The apparent lack of communication between the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Culture and Industry has led, on many occasions, to compromising situations – the announcement of the withdrawal of troops from Kosovo, for example – thus leading to a loss of effectiveness and, above all, the diminished image and reliability of Spain in the outside world.

Even within the Ministry itself, it is fundamental to improve coordination between the areas of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation. Being familiar with both, the minister could seek reconciliation between them, despite the abundance of quarrels and competition that currently exists. In this regard, it will be important to effectively manage the relationship between the minister, the Secretary of State for International Cooperation and the AECID.

These are not minor tasks for the long year that remains before the next elections. But they may represent an opportunity for Spain to fix its attention on the outside world again and begin to recover lost time and a weakened reputation.

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## **If Spain wishes to maintain its influence as a medium-sized power, it must seek broad strategic coherence**