



Pablo Aguiar

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Lecturer in International Relations at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and PhD Candidate in International Relations at the same University.

The analysis of Spain's contribution to European Union's co-operation for development policy (from now onwards CDP) during the government of Jose Maria Aznar necessarily requires an inquiry about Spanish bilateral development policy. The low profile that has been one of the main characteristics of Spain's co-operation for development policy has negatively conditioned its participation in the CDP of the EU. During last two legislatures, and independently of the different Foreign Affairs Ministers, we can distinguish three periods:

Popular's Party electoral victory raised hopes of improvement of Spanish CDP. While candidate, Jose María Aznar had compromised, during 1994 massive demonstrations in favour of 0,7% ODA/GNP, to reach that amount and modernise Spanish co-operation for development system.<sup>1</sup> Greatest success of this phase is the approval of the International Co-operation Law in 1998, including an article explaining Spain's contribution to the European Union's co-operation policy.<sup>2</sup> The approval of the law ended the process of standardisation of Spanish development policy that had begun on 1991 with membership to DAC. During this period government focused on better management of Spanish co-operation for development system and logically its contributions to Community's policy were not significant.

Initial momentum after new government lead to languish and a second phase: amounts did not grow nor substantial reforms were put forward. Respectfully to Spain's contribution to Union's CDP there was never an initial momentum, except for the Cuban case,<sup>3</sup> so Spanish participation is nothing more than testimonial. Clear symptoms of Aznar's government indifference towards this policy are the facts that Foreign Affairs Minister never assisted to Development Council meetings, humbly Spanish State Secretary for International Co-operation also considered several occasions that such institution could carry on its activities without his participation.

The absolute majority reached by Aznar in 2000 meant, as on many other policies, a substantial change of development co-operation policy. From a formal point of view complaints on government focused on the aversion to dialogue with other political or social forces, that is what Vera points out *"Probably the most grave of past period of office which is about to end has been its (in)disposition. From a dialogue spirit of past legislatures, we have changed to interference, threat, black lists and finally the disdain for the opinion of social organisations and academics*

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, while Prime Minister, Aznar was not able to translate his promises in facts, with the only exception of 2001 Spain's percentage of aid has been well below previous governments or community average (1996-0,22; 1997-0,24; 1998-0,24; 1999- 0,23; 2000-0,22; 2001-0,30 y 2002- 0,26).

<sup>2</sup> Article 6.2 *"Spain will impulse the coherence of community policies, the progressive building of the co-operation for development policy of the European Union and will contribute to its efficient application and execution"*.

<sup>3</sup> Most significant change in Popular's Party foreign policy was the attitude towards Cuba, including the proposal and final approval of a European Common Position compelling Cuba for a change on their democracy and Human Rights record if it wanted to continue receiving European aid. Such initiative allowed Aznar to pronounce on of his famous sentences *"It's Fidel's turn"*.

*linked to co-operation*" (2003:73). Civil society response came on February 2002 by a manifesto titled "For the dialogue and participation" signed by more than a hundred DNGO's.

Following Alonso contents of DCP have also been changed "*the reforming effort is abandoned and a new conception of co-operation is defended directly linked with Spain's interests – commercial or cultural- on Foreign Policy*" (2003:254). Despite of reserves expressed by State Secretary for International Co-operation to community's aid,<sup>4</sup> it is this context of exploitation of development policy where we should place the Aznar government will to participate in the DCP of the Union. Synthetically we can resume Spanish contribution in three concise initiatives:

- **Prioritising aid to Middle Income countries:** During last decade Union's DCP has established, following most donors, poverty reduction as the primal objective. The Spanish Government has maintained that such fight against poverty should not leave aside co-operation with middle-income countries, as these countries include approximately half of planet's poor. Despite this fact, according to a recent study that does not seem to be the case of the Spanish poverty reduction strategy "*In the case of Spain it is clear a prevalence of an aid more linked to the interests of the donor (economic and cultural presence in the country) rather than authentic motivations of fighting against poverty*" Alonso et al (2003:102). There are other reasons that explain this prioritisation. Firstly most of these countries are included on Spanish foreign policy geographical priorities: Latin America and North of Africa. Secondly this policy justifies Spanish continuous non-fulfilment of the international agreement, assumed by Spain, of destining 0.15% ODA/GNP to Least Developed Countries.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, as the Minister clearly pointed out, it tries to reach a change on geographical orientation of EU's aid.
- **Reaching a European compromise for the UN conference on Financing for Development:** Barcelona compromise was reached during Spanish presidency, comprising each member state would dedicate 0,36% ODA/GNP, this would allow to bring the community average effort up to 0.39% ODA/GNP. Aznar's government insisted in many occasions that it had the intention of reaching an agreement and once it was concluded it congratulate for it. Despite this fact contrary to post agreement enthusiasm British press on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2002 or French Le Monde 11<sup>th</sup> of March signalled Spain as one of the countries forming part of the group that wanted a lower profile agreement.<sup>6</sup>
- **Migration Conditionality:** During European Council held in Seville, and with United Kingdom backing, Aznar proposed a reduction of Union's aid to those countries incapable of controlling satisfactorily the migration fluxes. Fortunately the rest of member's opposition allowed softening this initiative. There are at list two basic problems with such policy: firstly the ethic dilemma of equalising the other kinds of conditionality (democracy, good governance, Human Rights or reduction of military expenditure) which evidently search universal objectives with the will of some European leaders of building a fortress Europe. Secondly the efficiency of the initiative is rather doubtful. Most of the countries that generate migration fluxes are Least Developed Countries, whose boundary control capacity is low, and for whom co-operation aid represents a necessary but insufficient element of their development policies. Despite this fact, far from abjuring his proposal, Aznar has shown once again his obduracy that his inconditionals signal as one of his virtues "*If we want Union's aid for fighting illegal immigration to be efficient and trustful, we should be capable of evaluating and revising*

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<sup>4</sup> "*It is sarcastic asking for more money for the European Union's Commission when it's execution levels are the lowest of the world; firstly it should spend its assets and do it well*". M.A. Cortés, State Secretary for International Co-operation, Spanish Congress, Commission of International Development Co-operation, 12 march 2002.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, Brussels, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> One symptom of government's lack of enthusiasm is the fact that, contrary to other member states, Spain has not approved any higher compromise other than Barcelona's. France 0,5% in 2007; Netherlands 1% in 2005; Ireland 0,7% in 2007; United Kingdom 0,4% in 2006; Sweden 1% in 2006 or Luxembourg 1% in 2005.

*it, depending on the results obtained, so that we can react in front of evident lack of co-operation in trying to stop illegal immigration".<sup>7</sup>*

To conclude we should probably thank Aznar government for not intervening more decisively in European Union's co-operation for development policy, specially according to the forceful appreciation of Spain's DCP made by Rodriguez and Sotillo "*It is more than evident the lack of coherence between the principles and compromises assumed and the reality of our co-operation policy. This situation far from getting better has been worsening in the last few years*" (2003:169).

### Basic Bibliography

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<sup>7</sup> Aznar during his farewell speech at the European Popular's Party meeting, Brussels, 12th February 2004.