The Popular Party and European Integration. Re-elaborating the European Program of Spanish Conservatism.

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Introduction.

After the 1978 Constitution, the Spanish political right underwent a process of extended and on occasions quite rapid political, ideological and organizational changes. These changes were triggered first by the results of the 1982 general elections, which led simultaneously to the victory of the Socialist Party, the collapse of the centre-right Union of the Democratic Centre (UCD) and the transformation of the conservative Popular Alliance (AP) in the main representative of the right in Spanish politics. From 1982 to 1996, first under Manuel Fraga and then, after some periods of internal dispute and instability, under José María Aznar, the Popular Alliance (AP), relabelled Popular Party (PP) in 1989, transformed its program and organizational structures in order to become a credible competitor to the Socialist Party (PSOE). This process of renewal affected also, even if initially in a less evident manner, the field of foreign policy and international relations. Under the Socialist governments headed by Felipe González, Spain assured its internally contested permanence in the NATO and entered the European Community. The Socialist governments took part in the deepening of the European integration process and the development of ambitious cohesion policies that had direct repercussions for Spain. Socialist governments also witnessed the total restructuring of the European political map after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989.

Certainly, after Spanish membership in the NATO was confirmed in the 1986 referendum, foreign and European policies did not become an important issue in the
political conflicts and electoral competition between the Socialist and the Popular parties. Integration into Europe was overwhelmingly approved by Spanish citizens, and the Socialist governments managed to portray themselves as the main artifices of that process. The strong impulse given to cohesion funds after the 1992 Maastricht Treaty worked also to the advantage of the Socialist governments in general and Felipe González in particular, who appeared before the eyes of the public as a successful representative of Spanish interests in Europe. Also in the international arena, the incorporation into NATO that the Socialist governments defined finally became widely accepted, even more after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the end of the Cold War.

It is not surprising that in the eyes of Spanish citizens, and right before the PP victory in the 1996 general elections, Felipe González continued to enjoy a strong advantage over José María Aznar in the field of international relations. Before 1996 the main PP criticisms relating Spanish integration into the European Union (EU) focused on the alleged failure of the government’s domestic policies to bring the Spanish economy to the core of the European project. The best example of this was the PP criticism that the Socialist economic mismanagement would make it nearly impossible for Spain to meet the Maastricht criteria and join the Euro. All in all, due to the proximity of the Socialist party to the foreign and international policies preferred by Spanish citizens, and also to the nature of the dilemmas faced by Spain in the international arena in the early 1990s, European integration had not become an issue of conflict or contestation between the two main national parties before the 1996 PP electoral victory.

This low saliency of international and European issues in party competition during the 1990s should not obscure the fact though that, as a part of the general reshuffling of its political and ideological project, the leadership of the AP, PP after 1989, was undergoing a process of redefinition of its international and European
policies. This process became clearer and more consistent after José María Aznar became the leader of the PP. Aznar and his political team not only made a strong effort to make the PP appear as a centrist party and remove the perceptions many citizens held of this party as staunchly conservative and connected to Francoism. They also started to recast the ideological profiles and strategic goals of the PP. This process affected also, even if less evidently, the international and European policies of the PP.

The redefinition of the conservative foreign policies had to respond innovatively to the new Spanish international context after access to NATO and the EU. This process of readjustment was also constrained by both the Spanish conservative tradition and the need to modify it under adverse electoral conditions. Finally, the programmatic renewal of the PP was also critically conditioned by the internal politics of the party, by the role José María Aznar played in it, and by the importance this new leader assigned to developing a new foreign policy for Spain. In part as a reaction to the turbulent internal politics of AP during the 1980s, the PP became an increasingly vertical and hierarchical party after José María Aznar became its undisputed leader. The 1996 electoral victory strengthened the leadership of Aznar in the PP. The 2000 absolute majority in parliament increased further the autonomy of his government with regard to both to the Spanish Parliament and the PP.

This contribution examines this process of recasting the European policies of Spanish conservative party. It considers first the changes in the Spanish conservative agenda for Europe within the broader context of political and programmatic changes experienced by the PP from the late 1980’s onwards. This examination is based on the analysis of several pieces of empirical evidence (party manifestos data, experts assessments of party positions regarding Europe, and responses of regional and local leaders to a survey on the European integration process) and the writings and texts of
José María Aznar, President of both the Popular Party and the Spanish government from 1996 till 2004. The importance of the analysis of Aznar’s views regarding the European integration process is reinforced by the highly centralized and hierarchical character of the PP since the early 1990s till 2004, and also by the direct control that José María Aznar exercised on the Spanish European and foreign policies of his governments. In the second place, this contribution examines the policies advanced and advocated by the Spanish Conservative governments in several critical fields and moments in the European integration process. This section pays special attention to the positions of the Spanish PP governments regarding the economic and political-institutional model for Europe, in particularly, its espousal of a neoliberal and intergovernmental model of European integration. It also examines the strategic choices the Aznar governments made in the field of European and transatlantic relations. Finally, the last section of this article links the redefinition of the Spanish conservative choices in Europe to the long-term characteristics of the Spanish right and to its current political and organizational articulation.

1. The redefinition of the Spanish Conservative agenda in Europe.

The definition of the European policies of the Spanish right took place in a broader context of ideological and political redefinition. This process involved both important changes and strong continuities in the traditional orientations of the Spanish right. As we will see, the European policies of the PP governments were closely connected to the broader ideological views that the Spanish right embraced and sustained during the 1990s.
The importance of the political transformations experienced by the Spanish right from the late 1980’s onwards can be grasped by examining changes along the programmatic, ideological and electoral dimensions. As shown by the party manifestos data on the right-left policy orientation of Spanish parties, the PP moved forcefully to the center in the 1989 and 1993 general elections (see Graph 1). These changes were paralleled by a series of electoral realignments that led to the predominance of the PP among centrist voters (Torcal and Medina, 2002). Thus, the percentage of ideological centrists voting for the PP moved from 20.8% in 1986, to 32.6% in 1989, 45.9% in 1993, 62.7% in 1996 and 79.8% in 2000 (Torcal and Medina, 2002: 69). These electoral changes were also linked to changes in the perceived ideological positions of the PP: whereas in 1986 all voters placed the PP in the 8.47 position in a 1 to 10 left-right scale, in 2000 all voters placed this party in the 7.43 position (Torcal and Medina 2002: 68). The perceived left-right position of the PP changed similarly in the views of PP voters: from 7.23 in 1986 to 6.27 in the year 2000 (Torcal and Medina 2002: 68). As shown by Torcal and Medina (2002: 69), these changes were closely connected to the PP electoral increases in the 1990’s, and, in particular to this party’s victories in the 1996 and 2000 general elections.

---Graph 1 around here---

The PP made also significant changes in the field of European integration. Positive orientations towards Europe increased at least from the 1980’s onwards. These changes can be grasped by examining the evolution of both party programs and the perceptions of experts regarding the PP orientations towards Europe. Thus, as Graph 2
shows, positive references to the EU by the PP rose constantly from the late 1970’s till 1993, reaching levels similar, though slightly higher, to those of the Socialist Party.

--Graph 2 around here--

Evaluations by experts of the PP positions towards Europe also indicate an increase in the Europeanism of this party during the 1990’s. Graphs 3 and 4 show changes in the overall party positions towards European integration of the three main Spanish nation-wide parties and of several European right and centre-right forces. In a 1 to 7 scale in which 1 indicates strong opposition to and 7 strong support for European integration, the PP positions towards Europe moved towards the highest end of the scale. In Spain, the PP reached levels similar to those of the Spanish Socialist Party, whereas in the field of the European right and centre-right, the PP positions are similar to those of the Portuguese PPD-PSD, and more pro-European than those of the French RPR, the German CDU and, much more clearly, the British Conservatives. It must be taken into account that, according to the University of North Carolina Expert Survey, the relative importance of European integration in the overall public stance of the PP continuously increased from 1988 till 1999.

--Graphs 3 and 4 around here—

Finally, in order to have a more encompassing picture of the PP orientations towards Europe, it can be useful to map the preferences of party intermediate leaders regarding the process of European integration. For this analysis we can use the responses by regional and local party politicians to a survey on European issues conducted by a Salamanca research group. Even if this survey does not provide us with a representative sample of the positions and views of the PP leaders all over Spain,
it may constitute a revealing piece of evidence regarding the differences between the regional and local leaders of the PP and other Spanish parties on the issues related to the European integration process.

The following tables present the views of the respondents of the main Spanish parties concerning the European integration process. Table 1 shows the mean degree of satisfaction of political parties with the integration process. Consistently with the data previously discussed, and according the PP politicians, this party displayed very positive views of the integration process (the highest among Spanish parties).

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These positive orientations of the Spanish right towards Europe reflected the quite positive views that the Spanish public held of the integration process, and the need to adjust to the European preferences of Spanish voters. From 1986 onwards Spanish public support for Spanish membership in the EU remained very high. According to the Eurobarometer, respondents with positive views of Spanish membership in the EU always outnumbered those with negative views of that process. Furthermore, in the 1985-2004 period, Spanish respondents with negative views of EU membership remained for most of the time below the 10% threshold. Only in 1995 did negative views of EU membership reach the 20% level, dropping below 10% again in 1996. More recently, in 2004, 72% of the Spaniards saw membership of the EU as a good thing, for only 7% who considered Spanish membership as something negative. More encompassing and systematic indexes of public support for European integration reveal also the strongly pro-European character of Spanish public attitudes. Brinegar, Jolly, and Kitschelt's (2004) propose two measures of public support for the European integration process (overall European integration view and current evaluation of
European integration): under both of them, the Spanish public ranks as one of "high enthusiasm for European integration" (Brinegar, Jolly, and Kitschelt, 2004: 75).

Now, in order to grasp the precise nature of the PP political positions towards Europe it is necessary to move beyond broad programs and declarations of support, and focus on the precise ways in which the PP European agenda has been articulated and linked to other aspects of the party political program. Due to the highly centralized and hierarchical character of the PP during the 1990’s, and to the complete and direct control that José María Aznar exercised on Spanish foreign policy from 1996 to 2004, this analysis entails paying special attention to the ways in which José María Aznar linked the PP European agenda to the broader political program of this party.

In the first place, there are clear links between the economic agenda that the PP embraced during the 1990’s and the economic policies that this party endorsed for Europe. Under the Aznar leadership, the PP came to endorse neoliberal economic proposals. In doing so, the PP departed from two important traditions within the Spanish right and centre-right political space. First and foremost, the right left behind the ambiguous attitudes towards markets and capitalism that historically characterized Spanish conservatism. These attitudes were apparent in the Francoist regime, in which Manuel Fraga, the founder of AP, and many other party leaders, had played prominent roles. The PP put also aside the socially reformist views of its Christian-democratic sectors, a minor but significant stream within the PP, mostly stemming from the extinct centrist party UCD. Aznar’s governments projected this endorsement of a neoliberal economic model into the European integration process, espousing an agenda based on deregulation, open markets, economic competitiveness, and reforms of the European welfare state. Aznar himself presented this program as a rejection of the social-democratic model for Europe. Naturally, the fact that the fact that Spain largely
benefited from the European cohesion and structural funds set clear limits to the PP endorsement for a fully neoliberal agenda for Europe. In this field, Aznar’s governments resisted as much as possible attempts to reduce the Spanish share in the cohesion funds, presenting themselves as the best defenders of Spanish national interests.

The second critical component affecting the PP positions towards Europe consisted in the re-enactment, under new, democratic and constitutional forms, of Spanish nationalism. During most of the 20th century, Spanish nationalism was more directed inwards than outwards, more against peripheral nationalist groups and demands than against neighbour countries. After 1986 Spanish nationalism did not lead to hostility towards the European integration process. However, the conservative emphasis on the persistence, integrity, and unity of the Spanish nation and state became more consistent with an intergovernmental view of the EU, one centred on existing states and in which national executives should play a key and leading role. This view of Europe is critical to understand the proposals and policies that the PP governments promoted and advocated in the EU from 1996 to 2004. From a conservative perspective, this intergovernmental model for Europe would, if anything, increase the leverage of the Spanish government vis-à-vis peripheral nationalist actors. A sentence by José María Aznar on the future design of the EU shows well the underlying connection between Spanish nationalism, hostility towards peripheral nationalisms, and an intergovernmental model for Europe:

*The design is that of a Europe formed by strong and stable national states.*

*Many people, particularly nationalists, favoured a European model in which national states would dissolve. By contrast, the Europe that has arisen is not a*
post-national Europe, but a EU constituted by consolidated national states


We can find traces this state-centred view of the EU also in the orientations of the PP local and regional leaders. Table 2 reports the preferred political-institutional outcome of the European integration process by political party. It shows that PP politicians do not hold uniform views of European unification, but distribute their preferences mainly into three types of future scenarios. Among all Spanish parties, the PP shows the less favourable responses to a federal model for Europe. Moreover, the two models for Europe preferred by PP politicians leave a decisive, ultimately critical role for member states. In Spain, the PP politicians are the closer ones to an intergovernmental model for the EU. This interpretation is confirmed by the mean agreement with the idea that member states must keep the last word in important decisions (see Table 3). The mean value of the PP responses (3.7) indicates that the PP politicians are the only ones who are more in agreement than in disagreement with this sentence (the intermediate position equalling 3). Consequently, among the PP politicians interviewed in this survey, the intergovernmental model of European integration is more widespread than the federalist one. In turn, federalist views find less endorsement in the PP than in any other Spanish party.

---Tables 2 and 3 around here---

Finally, the European proposals and policies advocated by the PP governments must be linked to broader international strategic choices, in particular, to the crucial role that Aznar’s governments assigned to strengthening the ties between the EU in general,
and Spain in particular, and the US. This strongly transatlantic view of the European integration process led the PP to reject any model for Europe based on its emergence as an autonomous geopolitical actor counterbalancing the US international hegemony (Aznar 2004: 199).

By proposing to change the European capitalist economies in a neoliberal direction, and by defending the key role of national-states within the EU, the PP adopted a consistent and renewed conservative program for Europe. This program reflected the economically neoliberal and politically nationalist ideas prevailing in the PP. The PP model for Europe fits well the expectations of those theoretical approaches that expect direct links between the positions of parties in the main domestic dimensions of party competition and their proposed institutional and economic models for Europe. It shows also that a previous widespread consensus on European integration has been replaced by substantive differences among Spanish parties on the preferred economic and institutional model for the EU.

2. The European policies of the Aznar governments.

The relevance of the ideological and strategic considerations mentioned above can be grasped by examining the positions adopted by the PP governments in the European arena from 1996 to 2000. This examination must take into account the PP government preferred policies in the fields of economic policy-making and institution-building. It must also identify patterns of cooperation and conflict with other European and non-European governments in the international arena. The examination of these issues must also take into consideration the critical role played by President Aznar himself in the definition of the Spanish foreign policy. It is revealing that President
Aznar appointed as Ministers of Foreign Affairs persons who did not play important roles in the PP, and who lacked an autonomous base of support within this party. These were particularly the cases of Ministers Josep Piqué and Ana Palacio.

In the economic area, Aznar’s governments worked for economic policies and reforms along the lines of the general economic model advocated by the party. This is evident in the positions of Aznar’s governments in favour of policies of fiscal austerity in general and of the Stability and Growth Pact in particular. Aznar’s governments made first a strong fiscal effort balancing the Spanish budget in order to meet the requirements of that pact, rejecting any possibility to postpone Spain’s access to the Euro (Aznar 2004: 107). In 2003, when the Council of Ministers suspended the enforcement mechanisms of the Stability and Growth Pact, Aznar himself severely criticized this measure14.

In the second place, Aznar’s governments worked for policies aiming at market liberalization, deregulation, and a reduced participation of the public sector in the economy. Thus, in cooperation with the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, José María Aznar proposed in the year 2000 a substantial advance in the liberalization of important markets (telecommunications, gas, electricity, transportation, etc.) and a reduction of public intervention in industry. Aznar’s and Blair’s proposals were reflected in the Lisbon strategy approved by the European Council in March 2000. The limited implementation of these proposals gave rise to a joint statement by Blair and Aznar in February 2003, in which they urged new economic reforms in Europe, this time focusing on changes in the labour markets in order to reduce unemployment and increase competitiveness.

Now, as previously mentioned, the generally neoliberal profile of the policies advocated by Aznar’s governments blurred when European cohesion funding was at
In this area, Aznar’s governments obstructed any attempt to reduce the financial inflows the Spanish economy received as a result from European cohesion policies. This was particularly clear in the 1999 Berlin summit of European Council that addressed the financial agenda of the EU in the following seven years. In this summit, Aznar firmly resisted attempts on the part of net contributors to reduce cohesion funds, presenting the final agreement as a great success for Spanish economic interests (Aznar 2004: 182-83).

Another critical field for the development of the EU concerns the process of institution-building. In this area, Aznar’s governments aimed at maintaining or strengthening Spanish weight in European institutions. Already in the 1997 European Council, in Amsterdam, the Spanish government pressed successfully for a declaration indicating that the particular Spanish situation should be taken into account when addressing in the future the role and voting power of member-states. Aznar’s government fully endorsed the agreements reached in Nice 2000 regarding the voting power of states in the European Council, and staunchly opposed the voting changes proposed in 2003 by the Convention on the Future of Europe, due to the diminution of Spanish voting power entailed by the 2003 constitutional draft 15. The strong opposition put by the Spanish government was no doubt motivated by its perception that Spanish national interests were at stake in the definition of the voting procedures. This strong opposition was reinforced by the Spanish government view of European integration as a strictly intergovernmental process that should not lead towards a federal political framework16. Since national governments would keep being the decisive actors in the European game, and since their interventions would be driven by national interests, it was crucial to struggle for a as strong as possible voting weight in the European Council.
There is however one area of legal and institutional change in which the PP governments favoured as high as possible levels of European cooperation. This is the field of anti-terrorist judicial and police cooperation. From the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam onwards, Aznar’s governments fully endorsed moves to develop the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, advocating the elimination of political asylum for EU citizens in the EU. Aznar’s governments pressed also to assign Europol a role in the persecution of terrorism, to create in 1999 an anti-terrorist unit within that organization, to produce a common European definition of terrorism, and to issue lists of terrorist organizations. Both the Europol cabinet and the Europol anti-terrorist unit became directed by Spanish policemen. Also in 1999, in the Tampere European Council, Aznar demanded a strengthening of European cooperation against terrorism and organized crime. In 2002, Aznar made the struggle against terrorism the first priority of the Spanish presidency of the EU, pressing for the development of joint anti-terrorist investigation teams, the strengthening the Europol role in the struggle against terrorism, and the development of a framework for the European arrest warrant and surrender procedures (Euro-warrant)\textsuperscript{17}.

Finally, the examination of the PP policies in Europe would not be complete without considering the Spanish foreign policy in its broader context, and without addressing the international alliances the Spanish government chose from 1996 to 2004. The attitude of the Spanish government in the face of the US invasion of Iraq, and the Spanish role in the intra-European divisions triggered by this international crisis both reveals and culminates the direction adopted by the Spanish government in international and European affairs. As it was advanced above, the decisions adopted by Aznar’s governments were consistent with the ideological arguments driving the PP European and international policies\textsuperscript{18}.
José María Aznar, had often underlined the importance of the transatlantic commitment of Spain. Several reasons accounted for the value of this commitment. Among them were the attraction that the US model of capitalism exercised now on the Spanish right and the PP ideological closeness to the viewpoints of the Republican administration. This closeness concerned also other international issues, such as the hostility towards the Castro regime. The value of the transatlantic commitment was reinforced by Aznar’s cooperation with the Blair’s government in the process of European integration. This cooperation concerned the basically intergovernmental view of the unification process and some common goals in the definition of the European economic model, as the Lisbon agenda and other joint actions of the British and Spanish governments showed. By contrast, Aznar’s view of the role of the French and German governments in the process of European unification was mostly negative. Aznar disapproved of the timidly pro-market policy reforms undertook by both governments, and did not share either their presumed interest in transforming the EU in an autonomous and counterbalancing to the US actor in the international arena. The Iraq crisis provided Aznar with the opportunity to strengthen its transatlantic commitment and also take part in a European coalition alternative to that led by France and Germany, notwithstanding the unpopular character of that strategic choice among Spanish citizens.

It is far from accidental that the Socialist victory in the March 2004 general elections led to strong changes in the Spanish European policies. In 2003 the Aznar government had refused the system of qualified double majority established by the European constitutional draft, and formed an alliance with Poland in order to block its approval. By contrast, in March 2004, right after winning the general elections the Socialist leader José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero announced a strong shift in the Spanish
bargaining position regarding the European constitution. After taking office, the Socialist government abandoned Aznar’s obstructionist position and agreed to the qualified double majority voting system, the new version of which established thresholds for the approval of proposals at 55% of the member states and 65% of citizens. It is for this reason that the new leader of the PP, Mariano Rajoy, considered the new treaty unsatisfactory, and argued that Spain had lost political influence in the EU as a result of the weak bargaining position of the Socialist government. After the 2004 electoral Socialist victory, changes in the Spanish international choices were also evident in the field of transatlantic relations. The Socialist government radically departed from the Aznar policies towards the US by promptly withdrawing the Spanish troops from Iraq, a move that led to a strong deterioration in the US-Spanish relationships. President Rodríguez Zapatero’s clearly connected the new position of the Spanish government regarding Iraq to a new orientation in the relationships to other European countries, most notably to France and Germany, and to a renewed support for the deepening of the European integration process (*Le Monde*, July 28th, 2004).

3. Historical legacies and organizational possibilities in the redefinition of the Spanish conservative program for Europe.

We can understand the European choices made by the PP national leadership as the results of a specific combination historical legacies and organizational possibilities in the changing Spanish and European context. One of the main historical conditionants of the conservative orientations towards Europe lies in the types of socio-political coalitions that marked the history of the Spanish right. As Stein Rokkan’s comparative analyses on the formation of European party systems indicated (1999), in Spain
conservative views and interests tended to be represented by right-wing political blocks. These blocks articulated heterogeneous coalitions of social and political forces (including large landowners, family peasants, the top bureaucracy, and the urban bourgeoisie) and maintained close relations to key national institutions (such as the crown, the army, and the Catholic church). By contrast, although significantly present, Christian-democratic (and also fascist) political forces found timid support in the Spanish party system. The weakness of Christian-Democratic forces in the Spanish party system was never more apparent than in their crude electoral failure after the return to democratic elections in 1977. Only in the Basque country and, to a lesser extent, in Catalonia, did Christian-Democratic, socially reformist political actors achieve significant electoral successes.

However, the preponderance of political conservatism should not obscure the ideological heterogeneity of the right-wing political field. If we move back to the last democratic experience before the 1978 Constitution, the Second Republic (1931-1936), we find a highly divided political right, mainly represented by the right-wing coalition Spanish Confederacy of Autonomous Rights (CEDA) and the far-right monarchist party Spanish Renovation (RE). As Linz’s analysis of Spanish authoritarianism showed (1970), this pluralism persisted during the Francoist regime (Linz, 1970). After the return to democracy, the right was organized first by two main organizations, the centre-right UCD and the right-wing AP. The 1982 UCD collapse left the quite conservative AP, later transformed into the PP, as the only representative of the right and centre-right political space in Spain. The process of consolidation of AP and then PP was marked by the ideological and political heterogeneity of this political force, which integrated ideologically conservative, liberal, and Christian-democratic streams. This ideological and political heterogeneity contributed to the internal instability and organizational and
leadership problems that characterized AP before Aznar became its leader. In fact, the strong centralizing and hierarchical features that prevailed in PP during the Aznar years should be read as a response and a solution to the endemic organizational problems that characterized AP from 1977 onwards. This process took place under the leadership of sectors stemming from the conservative AP rather than the centre-right UCD.

Under Aznar’s leadership, the PP adapted forcefully, as other conservative forces in Europe, to a neoliberal economic agenda. This entailed leaving aside both the statist inclinations of significant sectors of the authoritarian right and the socially reformist and pro-Welfare state ideas of Christian-Democracy. But in addition to moving towards a neoliberal view, the PP maintained the strongly nationalist components of the Spanish right, although now in a democratic and constitutional form. Both the neoliberal and nationalist agendas were coherently translated into the PP European arena. The combination of these ideas (neoliberalism, nationalism, and as a connecting idea, intergovernmentalism) accounts for the roles that the PP governments have played in the EU. As Marks and Wilson have shown (2000: 11-14), this combination of ideas is typical of conservative parties across Europe. Notwithstanding the singular traits that are present in the Spanish right, the PP and its governments behaved in ways consistent with those of other European conservative parties.

This type of response reveals the prevalence of conservative streams in the PP. It has also been made possible by the type of leadership that arose in late 1980s in the Spanish right. As a consequence of the strong factionalist past of the Spanish right, partly due to its ideological heterogeneity, and of a series of severe electoral defeats after 1982, the PP moved towards a highly vertical and centralized organizational model, a model that reduced internal disputes and increased the strategic room for manoeuvre of the party leadership. The electoral gains this party made from 1989
onwards, and in particular its 1996 and 2000 electoral victories, increased the political autonomy of the national leadership and of José María Aznar. This autonomy allowed President José María Aznar adopt very strong and unambiguous positions in the European and international arena, even if some of his actions were not widely shared by the PP nor its voters (as it was clearly the case in the war on Iraq, and to a lesser degree, of the adoption of a purely intergovernmental and nationalist policy in the European institution-building process).24.

In the European scenario, as in the Spanish domestic arena, Spanish traditional conservatism moved towards a renewed combination of economically neoliberal and politically nationalist positions. This evolution was induced by ideological, economic and political transformations. It was also enabled by the organizational solutions devised by the PP from the late 1980s onwards in its process of adjustment to an adverse electoral scenario. Over all, the trajectory followed by the PP shows how the political legacies of the right, in combination with its current organizational articulation, constrained and enabled the development of new responses to the current economic and political contexts.

Conclusion.

This piece has examined the political positions adopted by the PP over the last fifteen years regarding the European integration process. Under the leadership of José María Aznar, the PP has moved to embrace a political agenda that combines economic neoliberalism, Spanish nationalism, and an intergovernmental and transatlantic view of European integration. The adoption of this program for Europe must be understood in the broader context of the ideological and programmatic redefinition of Spanish
conservatism. In turn, this redefinition must be read as a response and an adjustment to both the domestic environment of party competition and the current European political and economic scenario. This renovation process has assigned a critical weight to the defence of the Spanish economic and political interests in Europe as perceived and defined by the Spanish conservative elite.

As shown by different types of evidence (party manifestos, experts assessments, and surveys to party subnational leaders), the PP has both adopted and projected a clearly positive view of the European integration process. At the same time, under the leadership of José María Aznar, the PP governments have struggled to advance a specific agenda for the Europe, one based both on the broader ideological and programmatic choices made by the PP leadership and on a concrete reading of the Spanish interests in Europe and the world. In the economic field, the defence of the Stability and Growth Pact and the proposal of the Lisbon agenda for deregulation, liberalization, and competitiveness reflect the neoliberal ideas driving the conservative program. In the institution-building process, the strong attachment of the Spanish government to the Nice treaty and its rejection of the 2003 constitutional draft reveal the key importance the Aznar government assigned to an intergovernmental model of Europe in which the Spanish governments should retain as much institutional power as possible. Finally, the European and international alliances chosen by the Aznar governments reveal the strongly transatlantic preferences of Spanish conservatives and their opposition to the project of an autonomous EU acting as a counterbalancing power in the international arena. These policies and programs have been selected in a situation marked by the strong political autonomy enjoyed by José María Aznar during his years in government, particularly in the field of foreign policy and international relations.
By selecting this particular combination of policies, the PP leadership and governments have both remained coherent with core elements of the Spanish conservative tradition and moved to adopt a new political and economic agenda for Europe. In so doing, during the Aznar years the PP leadership and governments may have also played an important role in the clarification and crystallization of differences among Spanish political parties over the keys issues of European integration.
References


On these issues, see Hooghe and Marks (1999) and Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2002). Intergovernmental Europe could be strongly conditioned by non-directly economic ideological concerns. Some plausible elective affinities between neoliberalism and intergovernmentalism, preferences for an envision the development of a both federalist and neoliberal framework for Europe. Even if there are with an intergovernmental model for Europe (see Hooghe and Marks, 1999). Still, it is also possible to superannuated institutions and active economic regulatory role makes the neoliberal view quite compatible

Regional institutions. The concept of the EU as a residual public sector, and a small welfare state. See particularly Aznar’s ideological reading of the economic policies of his governments (Aznar 2004: 107-112). The fact that the PP governments did not undertake a drastic reduction of the Spanish welfare state does not disprove the strength of the neoliberal orientations of the PP governments. Direct attacks to the welfare state would have been very risky due to the persistence of the Socialist Party as a dangerous electoral competitor and the role that this party had played in the development of social policies in Spain. For an analysis of political factors other than party ideology conditioning policies of welfare state retrenchment, see Kitschelt (2001).

In its effort to move towards the centre of the political space, the PP joined the Christian-Democratic International in 1993. This did not change the fact that the main leaders of the PP stemmed from the conservative AP, not from the centre-right UCD. Aznar himself has pointed out that he never was a Christian-democrat (2004: 72).


Following the tradition of strong Spanish nationalism typical of conservative forces, the PP made an effort to re-emphasize the importance and value of the Spanish nation, her history, and culture. This effort was apparent for instance in the educational reforms of the Popular Party, which increased the mandatory teaching load of Spanish history and Castilian Spanish language all over Spain. This trend was certainly strengthened by the dynamics of Basque politics, including the 1998 Lizarra agreements between all nationalist forces (including Batasuna, the political group closer to ETA, now listed in the EU as a terrorist organization), and the plan for deep institutional reform proposed by Juan José Ibarretxe, the president of the autonomous community of the Basque country. This plain aims at a creating status of free association between the Basque country and Spain. The critical role that the national question plays in Spanish politics, and the very strong stand the PP has taken against peripheral nationalist demands, help explain the electoral weakness of radical right forces in the Spain. In this critical field, the PP has continued presenting a sufficiently attractive political program for most potential voters of far-right parties.

José María Aznar has consistently rejected federalist models for Europe and advocated for a EU in which nation-states and their executives will play the key role (1994: 162-167; 2004: 187). In 1994 Aznar viewed the role European Commission as merely one of implementing the decisions adopted by the European Council.

The fact that the neoliberal economic model emphasizes negative integration and rejects assigning supranational institutions and active economic regulatory role makes the neoliberal view quite compatible with an intergovernmental model for Europe (see Hooghe and Marks, 1999). Still, it is also possible to envision the development of a both federalist and neoliberal framework for Europe. Even if there are some plausible elective affinities between neoliberalism and intergovernmentalism, preferences for an intergovernmental Europe could be strongly conditioned by non-directly economic ideological concerns. On these issues, see Hooghe and Marks (1999) and Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2002).
It must be taken into account that in the Spanish conventional vocabulary the term nationalists refers to peripheral nationalists. Interestingly, in other statements Aznar contrasted his intergovernmental and nationalist view of Europe to that of the Socialists. According to Aznar, whereas the Socialists would see in European integration the possibility to both erode centre-periphery national conflicts and build safety-net in the case of escalating peripheral nationalist demands, Aznar favoured linking the strengthening of the Spanish national consciousness to a growing Spanish action in the EU and the international arena. See Aznar (2004: 242-43).

Also in accordance with its conservative and traditionalist orientations in the cultural field is the fact that the PP favoured that the European Constitution makes explicit mention to the Christian heritage of Europe. For a defence of the constitutional reference to the Christian roots of Europe, now linked to the preservation of traditional values and norms, see Aznar (2004: 189-92).

On the relationship between the party orientations towards the EU and the domestic dimensions of party competition see Marks and Steenbergen (2002) and Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2002).

For other analysis of the evolution of the views of Spanish political parties regarding the EU, see Álvarez-Miranda (1994), Quintanilla Navarro (2000).

Aznar did not miss the opportunity to link the suspension of the stability pact to the debates on the European Constitution. In his view, the suspension of the pact reinforced the need to struggle to maintain the agreements reached in Nice. See El País, December 25th, 2003.

Under the Nice Treaty rules, Spain and Poland were assigned a voting power in the European Council close to that of the much more populated Germany, United Kingdom, France, and Italy (27 votes for the former group of countries and 29 for the latter). The 2003 constitutional draft established instead a double majority rule (50% of the states and 60% of the EU population), which clearly decreased the leverage of the Spanish executive in the European Council.

See on this point Yataganas’s (2001: 32) presentation of the Spanish position in the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Nice.

It is revealing that, according to Aznar (2004: 184), the Finnish prime minister labelled European anti-terrorist and police cooperation as “José María’s topic.”

The consistency of the foreign and European policies of President Aznar is underlined by Andrés Ortega in his article ‘La coherencia del giro de Aznar’ (El País, February 15th, 2004). See also Powell (2004).

Another argument reinforcing this reading of the international situation related to the future role of the cohesion funds for the Spanish economy. In the future, the EU enlargement and the continuous growth of the Spanish economy would make Spain less dependent on the cohesion funds and on support by the most affluent countries in the EU (Aznar, 2004: 201).

Opposition to the German and French governments was made possible another consideration. It was easy to assume that the expanded EU would reduce the importance of these two governments in the European integration process. Furthermore, new member states would probably espouse strong pro-US positions, making the idea of the EU as an autonomous and counterbalancing actor in the international arena far more unlikely. The letter published by Aznar and seven more European leaders (those of the UK, Italy, Portugal, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic) in the Wall Street Journal on the 30th of January 2003 showed that this calculation was not entirely mistaken.

According to a public survey conducted by the Real Instituto Elcano, a think-tank on international studies dependent on the Spanish government, in November 2003 85% of Spanish citizens thought that the Iraqi war had not been worthwhile. In March 2004, among the eleven leaders mentioned in a survey conducted by the Real Instituto Elcano, President Bush was the one to get more negative evaluations. See http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org.

See El Mundo, June 20th, 2004. Aznar himself acidly criticized the new constitutional agreements and characterized the Socialist position in the bargaining process as regrettably (See El País, July 6th, 2004). He also declared that Spaniards should reflect thoroughly on how to vote in the Spanish referendum on the EU Constitution. By contrast, Mariano Rajoy forcefully insisted that, in spite of the limitations and drawbacks of the new constitutional treaty, the PP would favour a positive vote in that referendum (See ABC, July 14th, 2004). The position chosen by Mariano Rajoy reflected the need to both stress the nationalist criticisms of the Socialist bargaining position and avoid a extreme and hardly popular frontal opposition to the new constitutional treaty.

Except for relatively brief periods, neither the Catholic Church nor the social groups close to it had to confront secularising and/or anti-Catholic state policies. Instead, close and conservative alliances between the church and other key state institutions took place. This is one of the key factors accounting for both the weakness of Christian-Democratic forces and the prevalence of conservative, right-wing blocks. On the weakness of both Christian-Democracy and fascist forces in Spain, see Linz 1967.
The strong autonomy of the PP leadership had also clear drawbacks. For instance, it was more difficult for the party activists and intermediate leaders to persuade its national leadership of the electoral risks entailed by some the policies the government adopted.