

## Haynes and Boone Senior Advisor Eduardo Aguirre, Jr. in Ambassadors REVIEW: Observations about the Spanish Economy

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PRACTICES International

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"Our relationship with Spain needs to improve...fix it!" That was the main theme of my Oval Office meeting with President George W. Bush before I left for my post in Madrid in 2005. The president had reviewed a draft of my list of priorities in Spain and agreed with its substance. He also underscored the issues that were more important to him, injecting personal observations, and a few choice colorful words, that as a fellow Texan, I had no problems understanding.

The president stated that Spain was important to the United States, but he had not forgotten the sudden withdrawal of Spanish troops during the Iraq war, ordered by President Zapatero just days after being elected. President Bush understood that President Zapatero had campaigned on such an action and that political campaign promises had to be honored. However, he thought the sudden execution of this withdrawal was inexcusable, effectively opening an ill-timed breach that could potentially result in unnecessary military risks, thus further placing Coalition forces in harm's way.

That day, I walked out of the Oval Office with the clear purpose to find ways to reduce tension, find common ground with the Spanish government, and normalize our relationship. My main strategy was to focus our attention on matters of common strategic importance—security and economic cooperation. Since that day, it seems to me that the key bilateral and multilateral issues remain about the same. Then and now, our two countries continue to share common goals and perspectives on a multitude of fundamental issues of bilateral importance, including:

- National Security (including combating terrorism, narcotics-trafficking, organized crime, human trafficking, transportation safety, sea container security, illegal immigration, money laundering, cyber crime, and criminal extraditions)
- Intelligence development and cooperation
- Mediterranean security, naval and air base activities
- Defense cooperation including military sales, technology transfers, and licensing
- Commercial, trade, and economic interests; customizing support for US and Spanish companies with their cross-border expansions

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