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## The bilateral relations between Spain and the US Abstract

I began my presentation highlighting a key element: our shared history, since Spain was present in what is now the territory of the US for 308 years after our first settler landed there and our geographical imprint is also remarkable: more than half the current territory of the US bear traces of such a presence.

The next landmarks are our help during the War of Independence, with figures such as Bernardo de Gálvez, then Governor of Louisiana and our war for the independence of Cuba. Since Spain did not participate in any of the two World Wars, we did not participate in the Marshall Plan and the acceptance of the Franco dictatorship within “the West” only came with the visit of President Eisenhower in 1959.

The speech King Juan Carlos delivered before a joint session of Congress in June 1976 was a landmark event, since he described there our path to become a fully-fledged Democracy. Since then the relations have been making progress but have not been exempted from ups and downs: under Prime Minister Aznar and President George W Bush they were really closed but the Iraq war put a huge strain on them when the government of PM Rodriguez Zapatero decided to withdraw our forces there. Under President Obama relations rebounded remarkably quickly and the US support was key for Spain to become ‘permanent guest’ at the G-20 group of countries.

The second and most substantial part of the presentation is an overview of the different dimensions of the relationship, beginning with our diplomatic presence in the US and the regular exchange of visits. The military dimension is key for the US: ever more often Spanish troops, planes and ships are part and parcel of major US operations. For the US our bases of Rota and Moron are, as the Pentagon puts it: “a key element in their ability to project force in the Eurasian, African and Mediterranean theaters”. Equally, both countries cherish their extremely close relationship across all the law enforcement aspects, from anti-terrorism to fight against transnational criminality.

The economic and commercial dimension is key for Spain: on the one hand, the modernization of the Spanish economy cannot be conceived without the presence of US companies. Conversely, Spanish companies now enjoy an ever more solid presence in the US in very many sectors: retail, food, energy, infrastructures, etc. The figures confirm that the evolution is particularly positive in the last decade, outstripping the already remarkable rise of our economic presence abroad. Such a vital a promising relationship has also a very positive impact in third countries, particularly in Latin America.

# Global Security Challenges

The final dimension is the cultural, educational and civil society one: the US is the second largest country for Spanish speakers, trailing only Mexico and surpassing Spain. Additionally, hundreds of Spanish teachers work every year in the US and the Fulbright scholarship program has attracted over 60 years the best and brightest people in both countries. Lastly, key Spanish personalities are now extremely popular in the US: the chef José Andrés, the heart surgeon Fuster or the basketball star Pau Gasol.

The third and final part of the presentation takes a look at the geopolitical context the bilateral relationship operates within: an increasingly competitive global arena, with China and Russia manifestly challenging the “international liberal order” and with ‘insurgent’ countries like Syria, Iran or North Korea.

The US as a country is increasingly popular in Spain and the Spanish public is more knowledgeable about our historical legacy in the US, thus requiring our Ministry to actively promote it. Finally, Spain is fully aware that being a responsible and active partner in the world can only be built through a strong transatlantic commitment in the political and military dimensions both within the EU, NATO and the UN.