

A coalition in jeopardy?

Results of recent election in Spain will do little to deter the terrorist threat there



NICHOLAS DAVIS

Somewhere out there, in the many caves and holes throughout the Arab world, celebrations are underway. And based on the recent occurrences in Spain, Islamic extremists are surely having quite a party, because the strength of the U.S. coalition is now questionable.

Three days after the devastating Madrid bombings, which claimed some 200 innocent lives and wounded 1,500 more, elections in Spain transpired as scheduled but produced a shocking result: The Socialist Party replaced the highly-favored Popular Party, marking a tremendous victory for the terrorists.

For eight years, the Popular Party controlled the Spanish government, enjoying success in the form of steady economic growth, reduced unemployment, improvement of Spain's esteem throughout the international community and pre-election polls even predicted a substantial victory.

However, two elements posed a problem.

First, former Prime Minister Aznar steadfastly supported the United States and devoted Spanish troops to aid in the Iraq war even though the majority of Spain's citizens opposed intervention.

Secondly, Spain suffered a terrorist attack during the Popular Party's political watch.

Surprisingly, though, many Spanish citizens regarded the terrorist attack not as an assault on the lifestyle or freedom of their country, but instead as a direct consequence of allying itself too closely with the Bush administration's war on terror.

Such an outlook is difficult for many Americans to understand or even sympathize with. Think about it: Nearly 3,000 U.S. citizens lost their lives in the Sept. 11 attacks, and the response by most patriotic, rational individuals

was to seek out the perpetrators and rid their despotism from the world.

The Spaniards, however, have chosen a different method of addressing terrorism: appeasement. It resembles an isolationist defense synonymous with sticking one's head in the ground, hoping and praying that whatever danger arises passes them by. If the threat of danger remains, the apparent line of thinking goes, pay it off with concessions or "tribute."

Consider this statement by a Spanish citizen reported by Fox News: "I wasn't planning to vote, but I am here today because the Popular Party is responsible for the murders here and in Iraq." Another citizen, quoted by The New York Times, stated,



Muslims is beyond all rational comprehension.

Moreover, the truly disturbing matter is that millions of other delusional people subscribe to this same view.

So what has Spain's tribute purchased?

The country has been allotted time from the terrorists to uphold the new Socialist Party's pledge of withdrawing troops from Iraq, and can now enjoy a life of perpetual fear complemented nicely by a feeling of powerlessness as it awaits other terrorist demands.

Sounds good, right?

But wait, there's more. Spain also has the leadership of a misguided and equally frightened prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, to guide the country through the turbulent years ahead.

Rather than defeat

terrorism, U.S. military actions risk fueling it," the prime minister said. He also claimed that neither bombs nor shock and awe tactics could defeat terrorism, saying instead, "Terrorism is fought by the state of laws."

To believe that the presence of laws alone can rid the world of international terrorism is naive, and to refuse to confront terrorists using any means necessary, is a sign of a cowardice. Prime Minister Zapatero is guilty of both.

Here is the crux of the matter. Losing 1,300 Spanish troops is no big material loss. The United States will do what it always does and carry the rest of the load. The real problem, though, is symbolic in nature. No longer does the coalition appear united. No longer does the free world share the same intensity and resolve in combating terrorism.

To the contrary, it now appears terrorists can win by frightening countries into submission.

Where will they venture to next? How about Britain? After all, a substantial portion of the population disagreed with the Iraq war. No one knows if such an attack could motivate parliament to oust British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Nevertheless, to the terrorists it is probably worth a shot. It worked in Spain.

Perhaps terrorists will spare appealing countries the pain of future attacks, but there is a catch. These countries will always be indebted to the terrorists for each day of tranquility they enjoy. Such security comes at too high of a price.

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Bush's prescription drug plan invasive, expensive

Government can't protect people from selves

When the government takes away your rights, you should be outraged. When it takes away your rights because it is treating you as if you were a child,



MIKE WALTERS

it's just plain insulting. On March 1, President Bush announced a new strategy to crack down on the illegal use of prescription drugs, at a price tag of \$10 million from taxpayers. Not only does Bush want to take away money that you have earned by working, he wants to spend it on making sure you aren't taking Tylenol with codeine instead of Advil for that headache.

It's time to let a little secret out — adults know what they're doing when they light up a cigarette, drink a beer or smoke marijuana. Who honestly thinks that what they're doing is completely safe when they can see black smoke billowing out of their nose and mouth?

This plan to widen the scope of the already-doomed war on drugs to include not only illegal drugs, but also prescription medications is flawed in its very premise of advocating a paternalistic state at the cost of American rights and in the idea that it can solve the problems it claims to be able to.

So the big question is: Where does the government think it gets the power to tell us how to live our lives? To keep the peace, it has the business of keeping men safe from other men, but not safe from themselves. To be free to pursue happiness, people must also be free to make good and bad choices. If people are to accept the idea that the government is charged with making sure they always do the right thing for themselves, the situation is an extended version of bad parenting. Should the government then implement a legal bedtime for everyone?

"I'd like someone to show me Congress' constitutional authority for the government protecting me from making unwise choices," wrote Dr. Walter Williams, an opinion writer for Capitalism Magazine. The simple fact is that no one could. Although taking drugs may involve certain risks, the principle of individual rights demands that government stay out of one's pursuit of his own happiness, which includes any choice that does not infringe upon others' rights. America was founded on the principle of individual rights and has no authority to act in opposition to this.

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Furthermore, Bush's plan will not even solve the problems he thinks it will. He's claiming his plan of cracking down on prescription drugs will solve the problem of teenagers buying drugs such as Xanax and Vicodin off the Internet with their parents' credit cards. But if you have a child who's willing and able to steal your credit card to buy something off the Internet, hurting their chances of buying Valium is really the least of your worries, and it certainly won't fix what's wrong with him.

Not only would this be a failed attempt to take care of other people's children, but the crackdown would have repercussions on medical workers and everyone under their care. The Associated Press reported that another \$138 million would be dedicated toward physician training and education programs as well as fighting illegal Internet sales. This means that doctors, who are already under the stress of dodging malpractice suits and paying for the related insurance, will have to spend even more stressful hours to attend seminars and training, while worrying that Big Brother is breathing down their necks with every painkiller they prescribe.

"The principal impact of this campaign when you step up the law enforcement response is that doctors will err on the side of under-treating pain," warns Ethan Nadelmann, executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance. And do you really want doctors under-treating your pain when you are hurting, all on account of rebellious teenagers and parents who are incompetent at raising children?

It's time for Americans to wake up and smell reality. The government wasn't created to baby-sit the punk children of irresponsible parents, and it has no authority to regulate bad decisions that harm only the person making them. The idea of being free starts with being free to make one's own choices when they affect only oneself — where to go to college, what to buy at the grocery store, whether to risk cancer by smoking and even the risk of taking more dangerous substances. People own their lives — it's time to stop letting the government say that it does.

Mike Walters is a senior psychology major.

MAIL CALL

Yell Leader positions for Corps of Cadets only

In response to a March 24 news article:

I am a junior mechanical engineering major and am also a non-reg. I disagree with some of the comments made in the article regarding the topic of non-reg yell leaders. First of all, if yell leaders are supposed to represent and reflect the entire student body, wouldn't it follow that we would need to elect women to that position? That is a ridiculous concept because the yell leaders are a reflection of our traditions, not a reflection of the student body. The student body is represented by the SBP, class officers and student government. Second of all, I feel that Justin Woods' comments in the article were chosen very selectively. The Corps members are not more qualified simply because of their work ethics. They are more qualified because of their dedication to Texas A&M and its traditions. They are more qualified than any non-reg to lead this school in some of our most important traditions. It is an honor to do that, and I feel that members of the Corps of Cadets are the most deserving of that honor. They have chosen to give up the normal college life to dedicate four years to the traditions of our school, and quite a few have also dedicated time after college to serve our country.

If Jacob Scher has such a love for the Aggie Spirit, why isn't he in the Corps? To me, that is the epitome of representing Texas A&M.

Personally, I will never vote for a non-reg yell leader. Call me prejudiced, but I don't feel that that position is one that should go to just any student at Texas A&M. The Corps of Cadets is the glue that holds this school and its traditions together. They are the "Keepers of the Spirit." Let's give them the respect they deserve and allow them to do that job.

Amy Gray
Class of 2005

SBP candidates' campaign should not focus on race

Spring is in the air, or at least discarded flyers are. Campaigning via association is a very popular idea with student elections coming up. Five Corps guys have the votes of the Corps for yell leader. Two other guys are out to represent the other 43,000 students for yell leader. SBP candidates are out to prove who has the most friends, and most students are already tired of getting flyers and it's only day four. But one campaigner for "NDC for SBP" really reached a low point with a campaigning slogan, or more so slur. "She's black — You gotta vote for her!" the young lady exclaimed in the middle of Academic Plaza Wednesday mid-morning. It's shameful enough that the administration only sees diversity as being a race issue, but when students are going out on the same weak branch, we're all doomed to fall.

Granted, the elections are mainly popularity contests and most voters don't care about the empty promises of the candidates, but I would hope the candidates would associate themselves with their accomplishments and involvement in campus organizations, not race, sex or religion. I'm sure the candidate probably doesn't agree with the words of her campaigner, but she must know who is representing her and the ideas that are being let out in her name. To all the candidates, best of luck in campaigning and represent something worth the students' time and votes.

Terri Wilson
Class of 2007

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