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## Spanish Elites Parallel General Public on Views Toward NATO

*Recent Office of Research polling in Spain shows that while the elite and general public support NATO membership, only about half of both segments of the public think it is still relevant. Since the elite cannot be relied upon to foster positive sentiment toward NATO among the general public, efforts to improve the Alliance's image should focus on both.*

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Spanish elite attitudes on security fall more closely in line with French elite views than with those of their German counterparts.
- Elites favor a broad mission for NATO, including peacekeeping, defending human rights and combating international terrorism.

### In Post-Cold War Period, Elites Feel Safer But Acknowledge Security Concerns

Two-thirds (64%) of elites (and 57% of the public in Fall 1998) feel the world is much safer since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Yet elites also say a number of security issues should be high priorities for Spain, including combating international terrorism (85%) and drug trafficking (83%) and preventing the

spread of weapons of mass destruction (72%).

### Elites and Public Back NATO Membership But Are Divided on NATO Essentiality

Spaniards tend to believe that NATO is important, though perhaps not "essential" to maintaining their country's security.

Majorities of the Spanish elite (76%) and the general public (68%) support their country's membership in the Alliance (Table 1). Elites are slightly more strongly in favor than the public.

**Table 1: Attitudes toward NATO Membership**

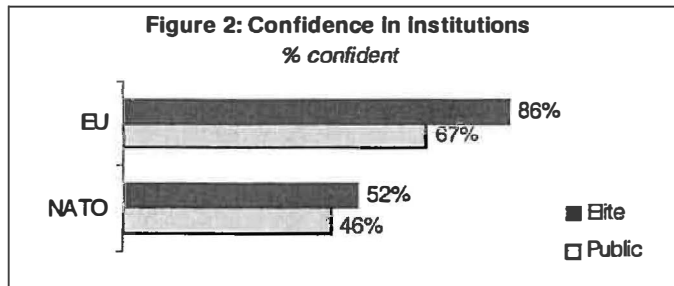
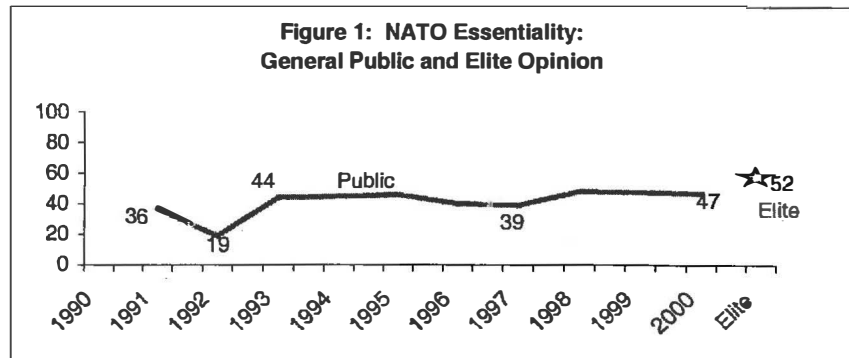
	Elites	Public (Spring 2000)
Strongly favor	38%	27%
Somewhat favor	38	41
Somewhat oppose	11	12
Strongly oppose	11	10
Don't know/no answer	1	10

However, both the elite and general public are divided on whether NATO is essential to their country's security. About half (52% elites, 47% general public in Spring 2000) say NATO is still essential, while as many elites (47%) and four in ten among the general public (40%) consider the Alliance no longer essential.

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*This report is based on data from telephone interviews with a sample of 502 elite adults age 18 and older in Spain conducted January 8-February 9, 2001. Elite respondents were drawn from groups of politicians, business leaders, educators, the media and cultural elites. Demoscopia in Madrid conducted the interviews for the Office of Research.*

Public views have been relatively stable after recovering from a dip in 1992 (Figure 1). Views are similarly divided when assessing confidence in NATO (Figure 2, below).



Among elites, politicians and business leaders are more likely than media, cultural and religious elites to support NATO membership, have confidence in the Alliance and think NATO is essential.

**NATO Inspires Less Confidence than EU**

Both elites and the public are much more confident of the European Union than of NATO. In fact, nine in ten elites and seven in ten average Spaniards believe the EU should make the most important security decisions about the future of Europe’s security. Only one in ten in each group thinks NATO should have this role (Table 2).

	Elites	Public
EU	86%	72%
NATO	8	9
NATO and EU jointly*	2	1
A new organization*	1	1
Other organization*	1	2
Don't know/no answer*	3	16
*volunteered responses		

**Elites Favor Reduced Role for U.S. in NATO, Stronger Role for Europe**

Given the priority they place on the EU, it is not surprising that a majority of elites (66%) and half the public (50%) want a stronger role for Europe in NATO and a reduced role for the U.S. Three in ten in both groups (elites 29%, public 34%) say “the U.S. and Europe should keep the same security relationship in NATO that they have now.” Among those who feel the role of Europe should be strengthened, a majority of elites (68%; 45% overall) and half the public (51%; 26% overall) would favor this even if it “meant that European NATO members, including Spain, would have to spend more money on defense.” Even under these circumstances, relatively small minorities (elites 24%, 16% overall; public 39%, 19% overall) would prefer to maintain the current security relationship.

Majorities of elites (90%, vs. 8% opposed) and the general public (67% vs. 13%) also favor “the development of a common European defense force,” but there is no consensus on how the force should relate to NATO. Half (elites 49%, public 51%) envision a force operating in conjunction with NATO; the remainder are split between those who envision it operating separately from NATO (elites 19%, public 15%) and those see it replacing the Alliance (elites 27%, public 21%). Spanish elites (49%) are less inclined than French (65%) and German (83%) elites to say a common European defense force should operate in conjunction with NATO.

Many elites are reluctant to pay for a European defense force whether it is developed within or independently of NATO (Table 3). In both cases, a slim majority oppose an increase in spending, while four in ten support it.<sup>1</sup> The prevailing view (51%) among elites is that Spain is currently spending the appropriate amount on defense. A quarter (25%) favor cutting defense spending, while a fifth (20%) favor increasing it.

	Support	Oppose	Don't know/NA
Within NATO	38%	58%	5%
Independently of NATO	41	53	6

### Elites Support Wide Range of NATO Activities

Results suggest Spaniards' divided views on how NATO should relate to a European defense force does not preclude positive sentiment toward the usefulness of the Alliance. The Spanish elite favors a broad approach to the use of NATO forces (Table 4). Wide majorities support using NATO troops for peacekeeping in

	Support	Oppose
<i>To provide peacekeeping in countries bordering NATO members, such as Bosnia</i>	89%	10%
<i>To defend human rights in non-NATO countries</i>	84	14
<i>To combat international terrorism</i>	84	15
<i>To combat international drug trafficking</i>	80	18
<i>To strengthen security in a particular region, such as in the Mediterranean</i>	80	18
<i>To stop the development of weapons of mass destruction capabilities in other countries</i>	73	25
<i>To defend Western interests in Europe</i>	72	20
<i>To defend Western interests outside Europe, such as in the Persian Gulf</i>	66	31

countries bordering NATO members, defending human rights in non-NATO countries and combating international terrorism. Spanish elites are slightly less supportive of using NATO forces to defend Western interests either within or outside Europe.

### Political Affiliation Plays Role in Security-related Attitudes

Elite views on security issues vary markedly by political affiliation (Table 5, next page). Supporters of the ruling conservative Popular Party (PP) tend to be more favorable toward NATO than supporters of the opposition social democratic Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and supporters of the United Left (IU) coalition.

Both Popular Party and PSOE supporters back Spain's membership in NATO, but Popular Party supporters tend to consider NATO essential and to have confidence in it, while PSOE supporters are divided. IU supporters tend to oppose NATO membership, say that the Alliance is not essential, and lack confidence in it.

<sup>1</sup> Asked only about a spending increase for an independent force, the general public is evenly divided: 47 percent oppose an increase, and 41 percent support it.

		PP (n=155)	PSOE (n=133)	IU (n=17)
NATO membership	Support	<b>93%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>24%</b>
	Oppose	6	20	<b>77</b>
NATO essentiality	Essential	<b>73</b>	48	18
	Not essential	27	50	<b>82</b>
Confidence in NATO	Have	<b>79</b>	45	6
	Lack	21	54	<b>94</b>
U.S.-Europe relationship	Reduce U.S. role	46	<b>80</b>	<b>77</b>
	Keep same	50	17	6
Lead decision-maker	NATO	14	6	--
	EU	<b>79</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>94</b>

Popular Party supporters are closely divided on whether the U.S.-Europe relationship in NATO should change, while PSOE and IU supporters favor reducing the role of the U.S. Majorities of supporters of all three groups say the EU, and not NATO, should make Europe’s most important security decisions.

**Spanish Elite Views Closer to French than German Counterparts**

The pro-European attitudes of the Spanish elites are generally similar to those of the French (Table 6). In contrast, German elites tend to express more pro-NATO views.<sup>2</sup>

		Spanish	French	German
NATO membership	Support	<b>76%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>91%</b>
	Oppose	22	32	7
NATO essential	Essential	<b>52</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>77</b>
	No longer essential	47	45	22
Confidence in NATO	Confident	<b>52</b>	38	<b>73</b>
	Not confident	47	<b>60</b>	25
U.S.-Europe relationship	Reduce U.S. role	<b>66</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>58</b>
	Keep the same	29	28	40
Lead decision-maker	NATO	8	5	25
	EU	<b>86</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>64</b>
European defense force	Support	<b>90</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>84</b>
	Oppose	8	8	15

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<sup>2</sup> Please refer to “German Elites Emphasize NATO’s Importance,” M-22-01, and “French Elites Back NATO Membership, But Want Lead in Security Matters,” M-83-01.

## Methodology

This report is based on preliminary data from telephone interviews conducted January 8-February 9, 2001 with a sample of 502 elite adults age 18 and older in Spain. The research firm Demoscopia in Madrid conducted the interviews for the Office of Research. Survey questions were prepared by the Office of Research. The questionnaire was translated by the contractor and reviewed by Office of Research staff.

While any definition of “elite” is somewhat arbitrary, the construction of the sample used in this survey is designed to ensure representation across a broad spectrum of decision makers and opinion leaders in Spain as well as comparability across a set of European surveys conducted simultaneously. The sample composition included: **political elites** (deputies, senators, ministers, party leaders, and regional leaders); **business leaders** (leaders of companies with more than 100 employees); **educators** (university directors, professors, and researchers); **media elite** (owners, publishers, editors, and reporters), **cultural elites** (doctors, lawyers, architects, museum and theater directors, NGO directors, artists, and writers), and **religious leaders** (directors of charitable organizations). The gender composition of the sample is 83 percent men, 17 percent women.

The sample was compiled by selecting individuals from a variety of sources, using random selection procedures. Political elites were identified from Internet sites and the directory *Fichero de Altos*. Business leaders were selected from Duns 2000 (Dun and Bradstreet). Educators were sampled from Internet sites. Media representatives were selected from *Guia de Medios*. Cultural elites were sampled from a variety of directories, including *Cineguia*, *Recursos de la Musica y la Danza en Espana*, and the *Who is Who* publication. Religious leaders were sampled from the yellow pages and *Fichero Altos Cargos*.

As a rule of thumb, 19 times out of 20, results from samples of this size will differ by no more than about plus or minus 6 percentage points if the same type of survey were to be conducted repeatedly. The practical difficulties of conducting a survey of public opinion may introduce other sources of error into the results.

For further information, please contact the analysts.