

International Intelligence

Zapatero: Spain Is Back In 'Heart' of Europe

A tripartite summit in Madrid, Sept. 13, with Spanish President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, French President Jacques Chirac, and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, was played by the European press as the end of the “coalition of the willing” in the Iraq War. Madrid’s *El Mundo* contrasted two photos: one from the meeting of former Spanish President Aznar, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and U.S. President Bush last year in the Azores, and above it, a photograph of Zapatero, Chirac, and Schröder sealing their new alliance with a handshake.

In an op-ed written for the German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and in the press conference after the meeting, Zapatero said that he was happy to say that Spain is back in the “heart” of Europe. A key emphasis for pacifying the Mideast, he wrote, would be a stronger “Euro-Mediterranean” orientation, working for reconstruction and peace against the “absurd clash of civilization thesis spread by [Samuel] Huntington.”

Two days before, Zapatero had urged all those nations that still had troops in Iraq, to do everything possible to withdraw them. At the meeting, Chirac added his concern about Iraq, saying that the situation there is “very grave and will not improve.” “We opened a Pandora’s box and are unable to close it,” he said.

The three European leaders agreed to reinforce their military as well as security cooperation, and strengthen the role of Europe in the Mideast.

Sudan Ambassador Denies Allegations of Genocide

Sudanese Ambassador Khidir Haroun Ahmed, speaking at the 13th Annual Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference on Sept. 13 in Washington, denied allegations—including

ing those of Secretary of State Colin Powell—that Sudan was committing genocide in the Darfur region. Such accusations, he said, were raised by those desirous of a Balkanization of Sudan.

He gave a brief overview of the internal conflict in Sudan, going back to the period from 1881 when the British colonialists controlled the country. During that period, Ambassador Ahmed said, the British, through their “closed-areas ordinance,” always strove to prevent the spread of Arabic to the south of the country, and since then, they have kept a hand in, stirring the pot in order to keep alive a civil conflict.

The Sudanese government has signed six protocols in an effort to resolve the conflict with the U.S./British-backed rebels of John Garang in the south of Sudan, he said. In the context of the agreements, which have restricted Sudanese military operations in parts of the country, a security vacuum was created in Darfur, which has since been filled by the merciless Janjiweed militias.

A high-level State Department official with experience in Sudan also voiced his skepticism that the Sudanese government might be involved in the atrocities. The official noted that Colin Powell, in his testimony the previous week, said that genocide had occurred, but had stopped short of directly accusing the Sudanese government.

A statement issued by Sudan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sept. 13, rebutted Powell’s charge of genocide. The statement noted that “the African heads of state and government unanimously agreed at their recent summit that concepts of genocide and ethnic cleansing are not applicable in Darfur. Also, teams of the United Nations, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, European Union, Organization of Islamic Conference, and of various NGOs [including the International Committee of the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders] have not found genocide in Darfur. Neither did the report of Kofi Annan’s Special Representative to Sudan, Jan Pronk.”

The declaration pointed out that Sudan has opened its doors to thousands of human rights activists and investigators, but the United States has yet to do so at Abu Ghraib

Prison in Iraq. It concluded angrily that “Powell’s claim has the same merit as the earlier claim of WMD in Iraq.”

Kofi Annan Says Iraq War Was An 'Illegal' Act

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan told BBC World Service Sept. 16, that the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was an “illegal” act that contravened the UN charter. The decision to take action in Iraq should have been made by the Security Council, not unilaterally, he said. When asked in the BBC interview whether he viewed the invasion of Iraq as illegal, Annan said: “Yes, if you wish. I have indicated it was not in conformity with the UN Charter from our point of view; from the Charter point of view, it was illegal.”

“Painful lessons” had been learned since the war in Iraq, Annan said. “Lessons for the U.S., the UN, and other member states. I think in the end everybody’s concluded it’s best to work together with our allies and through the UN. I hope we do not see another Iraq-type operation for a long time—without UN approval and much broader support from the international community.”

Annan said he believed there should have been a second UN resolution following Iraq’s failure to comply over weapons inspections, and that it should have been up to the Security Council to approve or determine the consequences.

The governments in the “coalition of the willing” responded swiftly to Annan’s statements. The British government stated that its Attorney-General made the “legal basis [for the war] . . . clear at the time.” Britain argued that three earlier UN resolutions provided the legal basis for toppling the government of Saddam Hussein. Australia’s Prime Minister John Howard insisted that the invasion was legal and valid. Randy Scheune-mann, a former advisor to U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, branded Annan’s comments as “outrageous,” and accused him of trying to influence the outcome of the U.S. Presidential election.