

Elena C. DÍAZ GALÁN

*Professor of Public International Law. Doctor of Law. Rey Juan Carlos University
(Madrid)*

Email: elenacdiaz1@gmail.com

*Geopolitical position and defending Spain's
national interests: rethinking the Perejil is-
let issue twenty years later¹*

Abstract

The definition of Spain's geopolitical position on the international order is one of the fields that still needs to be explored. The situation of dependence of our country in matters of security and defense by its membership in international organizations, such as NATO and the European Union, is not an obstacle to Spain in order to have singular postulates in its foreign policy. The determination and defence of Spain's national and vital interests would be at the base of the place that Spain should occupy in world geopolitics. It is possible to clarify this issue by analysing the decisions taken 20 years ago in the Perejil islet. This case embodies some of the components that must shape substantial aspects of the foreign policy of any State. This paper aims to clear of the main postulates that outline the defence of the most fundamental interests by Spain, reflecting on territorial sovereignty and the use of force in international relations.

¹ This article was written in 2021 within the framework of the High Performance Research Group on Freedom, Security and Citizenship in the International Order of the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (INTERCIVITAS). It is also the result of a research stay at the Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas of the University of Lisbon in 2021, with a grant from the Asociación Universitaria Iberoamericana de Postgrado (AUIP).

Keywords

Geopolitical position, national interest, vital interest, territorial sovereignty, use of force, Perejil.

Cite this article:

Díaz Galán, E.C. (2022). Geopolitical position and defending Spain's national interests: rethinking the Perejil islet issue twenty years later. In *Journal of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies*. N.º 19, pp. 387-409.

Introduction

Clarifying Spain's role in the global or regional geopolitical scene would require clarifying the current state of the world order. In any case, it has been a long time since Spain has played a leading role on the international stage despite its historical past. Even before the "colonial disaster" in 1898, our country lived in a prolonged period of decadence and lack of capacity to act in international relations. At the very least, "in more than two centuries Spain has not been exactly what you would call a player in the international arena"². For this reason, we should go back to 1978, with the triumph of the democratic transition, and note Spain's insertion in the international order at that time, and note some interest on the part of Spanish foreign policy in achieving an essential place in international relations. But any decision that is or has been taken in this direction could never ignore the features giving shape to today's international society and, particularly, the geostrategic interests that inhabit such a complex and deeply variegated international reality.

The 2017 National Security Strategy indicates Spain's interests as a basic component of our country's external action, including in the field of security and defence. The notion of "interest" that is used acquires various connotations, meanings and interpretations in this document, coming with many different adjectives added to it. Thus, the aforementioned Strategy refers and remits simultaneously to: "global interest"; "general interests"; "immediate interest"; "shared interests"; "direct interest"; "values, interests and principles"; "geopolitical interests"; "strategic, political and economic interests" or simply refers to genuine "Spanish interests". The most common expression will be in particular: "national interests"³, perhaps because it best encapsulates all of the above. Something that also happens, albeit to a lesser extent, in the 2021 Strategy.

However, in many cases, it is not easy to define with certainty the content of national interests, since this concept "is complex and is made up of a series of interests of different types (...)"⁴. However, it could be said that within the concept of national interest, everything that refers to the defence of sovereignty and, in particular, that which affects territorial sovereignty, would always occupy a privileged place. Moreover, territorial sovereignty interests could be qualified as "vital interests" of states. In our case, they would be those interests "that affect the survival of Spain as a nation", i.e., they would be interests that our country would be able and willing to "protect and, if necessary, (a) defend against any risk or threat affecting its survival as a nation"⁵.

2 Fojón Lagoa, E. (2019). El problema geopolítico de España: el caso de la defensa y Fuerzas Armadas [The case of Defence and Armed Forces]. Instituto de Política Internacional. Análisis 1/2019. Madrid, UFV. P. 1.

3 Presidencia del Gobierno. (2017). Estrategia de Seguridad Nacional 2017. Un proyecto compartido de todos y para todos. Boletín Oficial del Estado. December. Madrid.

4 Marsal Muntala, J. (2010). Introducción. Evolución del concepto de interés Nacional. CESEDEN monographs. 115. Madrid. P. 12.

5 Escrigas Rodríguez, J. (2010). Análisis comparativo del concepto del interés nacional [Comparative Analysis of the concept of National interest]. Evolución del concepto de interés Nacional. CESEDEN

Along these lines, there are two reasons that would explain the importance of territorial sovereignty in defining national interests: On the one hand, territory is one of the constituent elements of any state and, in other words, “territory is part of the national identity that deserves to be respected”⁶. On the other hand, the defence of territory and, above all, the state’s capacity to do so defines its geopolitical position in the international order. In this sense, it could be accepted that Spain lacks a unique political position in the international space, although it would perhaps be necessary to exclude from this statement “the action on Perejil Island in 2002 in defence of national sovereignty”⁷. In this case, Spain’s unique geopolitical and geostrategic position would have been formed. But the clarification of vital interests is also a function of the means the state is prepared to use to defend them. Thus, “traditionally, those interests in whose protection a state would be prepared to resort to the use of force, either by taking some form of military action or by threatening it, have been regarded as vital”⁸.

This is precisely what happened in 2002 when a group of Moroccan gendarmes occupied the Perejil Islet⁹ and Spain carried out the first and only military operation in defence of national sovereignty that has taken place since the adoption of the 1978 Constitution¹⁰. Moreover, this came about as a unilateral reaction on the part of Spain without the military or operational support of some of our country’s partners in the field of security and defence. The Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and the European Union (EU) did not participate operationally on this occasion, limiting themselves at best to diplomatic efforts with the aim of participating in the resolution of the dispute¹¹.

The examination of the notions of national interest and territorial sovereignty in the context of the Perejil affair has the sole purpose of uncovering the most essential aspects that define Spain’s geopolitical position in the new international order. From there, it is indeed possible to deny that Spain’s geopolitical position could be described

monographs. 115, p. 42.

6 Mangas Martín, A. (2015). Territorio, integridad territorial y fronteras del Estado en la Unión Europea. *Revista Jurídica de la Universidad de León*. 2, p. 222.

7 Fojón Lagoa, E. El problema geopolítico. *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

8 Sanz Alisedo, G. (2010). Intereses que afectan a la soberanía nacional. Evolución del concepto de interés nacional. CESEDEN monographs. 115. Madrid. P. 77.

9 In general: Planet, A. and Hernando De Larramendi, M. (2005). Una piedra en el camino de las relaciones hispano-marroquíes: la crisis de Perejil. *Relaciones hispano-marroquíes: una vecindad en construcción*. Madrid, Ediciones de Oriente y del Mediterráneo. Pp. 102-135.

10 Pacheco Barrio, M. A. (2012). El contencioso del islote perejil en la prensa escrita. La presencia española en África: del “Fecho de allende” a la crisis de Perejil. Madrid. P.215.

11 This, at least, is what the Spanish Foreign Minister declared: “[...] the Spanish government has enjoyed the understanding and spontaneous solidarity of the international community [...] both the institutions of the European Union, [...] [and] the Secretary General of NATO have spoken out unequivocally”. Cortes Generales. (2002). *Journal of sessions of the Congress of Deputies, Committees*. VII Legislature, 543, Joint Foreign Affairs and Defence, Sessions 32 and 28, respectively, held on Wednesday, 17 July 2002, 17349.

as “absent” in Spain’s political and social narrative; and as “dependent” on the decisions approved by the international organisations in which our country is a member. Although the Perejil affair is usually attributed little geostrategic importance, everything indicates that it acquires a special value in the definition of Spanish foreign policy because it shows how an affair of this kind, often described as anecdotal, makes the expressions containing the guidelines of Spain’s national defence a reality in practice.

In short, the main questions to be addressed in this work will essentially be the following: How are Spain’s national interests defined? What are their basic components? And, consequently, whether what happened in Perejil twenty years ago would help to resolve these questions? In order to do so, one needs to look at the practice of the Spanish state and, from there, determine and specify the geopolitical position that our country occupies on the international scene.

The complex and uncertain international reality in which Spain must operate and the context of relations with Morocco

It is difficult to describe the features that shape the current international political reality, nor is it easy to determine and clarify the place of those who are considered to be the main actors in international relations¹². In reality, we live in a space where the geopolitical situation is confusing, or at least permeated by a multitude of uncertainties¹³. The end of the Cold War opened a path for hope and was aimed at ensuring security, world order, and establishing permanent rules governing international relations, which was advised in particularly noticeable in Europe¹⁴. Of course, the nineties of the last century clearly pointed in this direction, but many of the hypotheses that were established in this period is now being questioned. Thus, one cannot speak of a secure planet in terms of the maintenance of international peace and security, nor should one proclaim the full enshrinement of democracy as the essential basis of the states that make up the international community¹⁵.

Nor is it possible to be sure that free trade and the liberal economic order have taken root as the primary foundations of economic and trade relations between actors in

12 Barbé, E. (2020). El invierno que no llegó: el orden internacional en tiempos de pandemia, *Revista Española de Derecho Internacional [Spanish Journal of International Law]*. 72, 2. Pp. 15-31.

13 Jordán, J. (2014). Gestión de la incertidumbre en las relaciones internacionales. *Análisis Grupo de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional GESI*. 9/2014. Granada. Pp. 1-17.

14 Fojón Lagoa, E. (2015). La evolución del orden internacional y la configuración del poder en Europa. Entre institucionalismo y geopolítica. PhD thesis. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. 97 ff.

15 Cf. López-Aranda, R. (2018). El orden mundial en el siglo XXI: una perspectiva de policy planning. *Real Instituto Elcano*. Documento de trabajo 9/2018. 25 April, p. 9.

an international context, which would have an enormous influence on international politics. Even more so, as has rightly been said,

“For nearly three decades, a plethora of academic books and articles, conferences and media panels have heralded a future in which institutions will finally triumph over old cultural constraints. (...) Past ideas such as nations situated within defensible borders were supposed to give way to states that would voluntarily cede part of their sovereignty to transnational and supranational organisations”¹⁶.

However, none of this has happened yet, or at least not completely.

On the contrary, the international environment today is even more complicated and uncertain than in the past. In essence, albeit in a latent form, there is a tension in the international order that is not only expressed in economic terms, as in the case of the so-called “trade war”, but that is also being felt, with some intensity, in the context of security, which is even more worrying. In other words, a contemporary view would lead to the conclusion that everything is conditioned “by the intensification of geopolitical and geoeconomic competition between the great powers, especially the US vis-à-vis China and, to a lesser extent, Russia”¹⁷.

Therefore, the most urgent thing to do would be to accurately assess the current situation in the international order and thus calibrate Spain’s geopolitical role accordingly. It should therefore be clear that “the international scenario (...) on a global scale (...) is in many cases worrying about our security” and that Spain must therefore be prepared to face a “high-risk scenario”¹⁸. In reality, a succession of events has been taking place in the international order, beyond the impact of the recent Covid-19 pandemic¹⁹, and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022, which foresee the emergence of other new realities and which, likewise, foretell transcendental changes in the rules of power in international relations. In this context, a country of average capacity such as Spain should be very attentive in defining its geopolitical position and its strategic interests. The primary aim would be to appreciate that which is unique to Spain, because “it has its own specific geopolitical problems”²⁰.

16 Michta, A. A. (2018). The Revenge of Hard Power Politics. *The American Interest*. October. Available at: <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/10/16/the-revenge-of-hard-power-politics/>

17 Molina, I. (coord.). (2019). *España en el mundo 2019: perspectivas y desafíos*. Real Instituto Elcano, Elcano Policy Paper. February. Madrid. P. 19.

18 Molina, I. (coord.). (2017). *España en el mundo 2017: perspectivas y desafíos*. Real Instituto Elcano, Elcano Policy Paper. February. Madrid. P. 5.

19 See; Bosoer F. and Turzi, M. (2020). La pandemia del 2020 en el debate teórico de las relaciones internacionales. *Geopolitics(s): Revista de Estudios sobre espacio y poder*. 11, 0, pp. 153-163.

20 Fojón Lagoa, E. El problema geopolítico. *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

In any case, the situation of unease and uncertainty in which the current international situation finds itself is the result of multiple factors, and it is therefore important to point out at least the following: First and foremost, it is becoming clear that the usually latent but sometimes quite explicit power struggle that can be seen in today's international society, depending on the actors involved, has been reflected in the positions held by the United States, especially during the period of the Trump Administration; but, above all, it is also interesting to note the positions and decisions of China, which is gradually advancing in the imposition of its rules in the international order; and, likewise, the role that Russia wants to play in the new international context²¹.

All of these paints an insecure geopolitical picture that is fundamentally characterised by a wide and profound unpredictability that, in particular, was expressed most clearly at the time through the “strategic behaviour” of the former US president²². The expressions and embodiments of power witnessed in the behaviour of these three actors have specific repercussions in the field of security and defence. This makes it possible to conclude that

“The shift in the distribution of power around the world and the challenge to the United States’ position of dominance by the growing economic and military power of China and the geostrategic assertiveness of Russia as it attempts to regain its great power status are returning the world to the fundamentals of great power”²³.

Words that certainly sum up the state of the current international community.

Spain should define its geopolitical position according to this new and unstable reality that has been described and in being aware that it is living through a historical period that has been described as “the great global upheaval that is now looming on the horizon”²⁴. This implies that Spain's geopolitical and geostrategic position should be defined according to the new actors with more power in the international order and that our country should not hesitate to configure new and renewed alliances in the economic field as well as in the security sector, in some of its dimensions. Thus, it should not be ruled out that our country will strengthen its relations with China and other actors such as Turkey. It cannot be otherwise since indeed “in recent years we have been facing the advent of a new world order and a hegemonic transition”²⁵. Therefore, it will be the situation at the universal level that will determine Spain's geopolitical position, as long as our country has its sights set on the changes that may take place.

21 On Russia: Sánchez Herráez, P. (2015). Marco geopolítico de Rusia: constantes históricas, dinámica y visión en el siglo XXI. Cuadernos de Estrategia. 178, pp. 15-78.

22 Molina, I. (coord.). España en el mundo en 2017. Op. cit., p. 19.

23 Michta, A. A. The Revenge of Hard Power Politics. Op. cit.

24 Ibid.

25 Sánchez Mugica, A. (2018). El orden mundial y la reconfiguración hegemónica en el siglo XXI. Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, Nueva Época. LXIII, 233, pp. 373.

It is in this general context that bilateral relations with Morocco should be analysed, and where the Perejil conflict specifically arose. Of course, this controversy must be placed in the more general framework of the long-standing relationship between the two states, which expresses both cooperative ties and areas of conflict. In the latter case, Spain's position in the disputes between Morocco and Algeria, the profound migration crises that have repercussions on Spain's stability, the traditional territorial confrontations, including maritime spaces, between the two countries, and, of course, the question of the Sahara, among others, should be included. These and other issues define the geopolitical struggle between Morocco and Spain. Thus, the Perejil conflict is yet another manifestation of the multiple situations with potential for collision that exist in the spaces that the two countries must share.

The series of disagreements in Spanish and Moroccan foreign policy culminated in the Perejil incident precisely when, for various reasons, but also because of Spain's position regarding the Sahara, given that the Spanish government "supported the elaboration of a census of Sahrawis carried out by MINURSO" and the conflicts over fishing, bad relations existed between the two states. The components that defined the conflict on both sides are detailed below. But, in any case, the consequences of the solution to this dispute include the consolidation of Spain's geopolitical position in relation to Morocco, and Morocco's awareness of its capacity to call into question Spain's essential interests.

Indications on the Perejil affair and Spain's geopolitical position

In all this context, the Perejil affair certainly represented a minor case in the international order and, in reality, lacked the necessary relevance to deduce essential lines from it that could outline the foreign policy of any state²⁶. There are many reasons that could lead to this conclusion and with which we could argue that the Moroccan occupation of this small territory could not be interpreted as an attack or defence of a vital interest of the states that are interested in the matter, in our case, Spain and Morocco. The small size of the islet; its scarce or almost non-existent strategic value; the uncertainties regarding the states' titles to sovereignty; the absence of economic interests; and the limited means used in the occupation and also in the subsequent eviction by the Moroccan forces and the Spanish Armed Forces respectively, suggest that in no case are vital interests that would constitute the core of the national interests of the states involved.

However, this was not the case in the past. In this way, it has been possible to say that

"During the 19th century, the islet had an important strategic importance mainly for Great Britain and Spain", so that "the possession of Perejil

²⁶ García Flórez, D. (2002). Aspectos históricos del conflicto de la isla del Perejil. Real Instituto Elcano, ARI. 18, 14 July 2002.

was important not only for the positive benefits it could bring them, but also as a means to prevent another power from occupying it”²⁷.

But the situation and circumstances have certainly changed and what happened in 2002 was measured more in terms of information, communication and image than in terms of purely strategic and geopolitical criteria. So, it is true that this affair produced “a relevant media phenomenon for the media on both shores of the Mediterranean, even for the international press”²⁸, although it did not evoke analysis of the deep-seated components it might contain.

But the factual, political and legal context in which the affair took place could disprove the claim that the islet of Perejil is of no importance and, above all, any position that the behaviour of Morocco and Spain on the occasion of the conflict would be of little relevance. At times there have been attempts to portray it this way, and, with some insistence, to belittle Spain's behaviour in this matter. In this line, for example, J. Saura states from the beginning of his work that it is a “recent and tragicomic episode, with international mediation included, of occupation by Morocco (11 July) and *reconquest* by Spain (17 July) of the islet of Perejil or Leila”²⁹.

Spain's national interest and geopolitical position

Examination of the Perejil affair makes quite explicit the relationship that actually exists between the defence of national interests and the shaping of states' geopolitical positions. At least in the case of Spain, the fact of having assumed an active role meant defining and specifying part of what our country understands as its national interest and, above all, the Spanish government gave meaning to the need to define its position on the geopolitical chessboard in the region. In essence, a single issue could serve as a guideline for discovering what exactly states are hiding when it comes to identifying the content of their strictly national interests. Because, in the end, “national interest is the key concept of political realism”³⁰. From there, some considerations could be made:

First, it is not easy to specify precisely all the elements that make up the notion of national interest. The 2017 Homeland Security Strategy does not go on to define what is meant by national interests. Nor does it provide sufficient evidence to determine the areas in which such interests are most directly affected and, from there, to be able

27 Gil Pérez, J. and Garrido Guijarro, O. (2014). La isla Perejil, la perla decimonónica del Mediterráneo. HAO, Historia Actual Online. 34, p. 36.

28 La Parra Casado, D., Penalva Verdú, C. and Mateo Pérez, M. Á. (2007). La imagen de España y Marruecos en la prensa marroquí y española durante el incidente del islote de Perejil (Leyla). La política árabe y mediterránea de España. Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals. 79-80, p. 153.

29 Saura Estapà, J. (2002). A propósito de la soberanía sobre el islote de Perejil. Revista Electrónica de Estudios Internacionales (REEI). 5, p. 1.

30 Bilbao Arrese, J. M. (2003). El interés nacional de España. ABC de Sevilla, 6 February 2003.

to shape their content. The most that can be deduced from this document is that national interests could be simultaneously recognised and detailed based on the state's particularities, of course, taking into account the main features that outline its foreign policy. Prior to the adoption of the 2017 Strategy, in line with the previous documents produced by the Spanish Government, it seemed appropriate to highlight that

“The definition of the Spanish State's national interests, according to the objectives of National Defence, gives priority to the protection of Spanish society, the defence of the Constitution and of Spanish values and institutions, as well as contributing to international peace and security”.³¹

To which should certainly be added the defence of territorial integrity, an expression that would also cover those lands and maritime areas that are the subject of disputes with other states.

For this reason, the 2017 Strategy clearly states that “protecting Spain's interests abroad is key to Homeland Security”, which is why it would be appropriate to carry out a profound and astute strategic reflection on Spain's positioning in each of the international organisations of which it is a participating member. And, from there, determine

“A commitment and proactive involvement to guarantee the best defence of national interests and security and prosperity of the Spanish state and society, as well as to promote greater international cooperation”³².

In any case, the defence of territory or the reaction to cases in which a state decides unilaterally to resolve territorial sovereignty conflicts would form part of the notion of national interest, regardless of the greater or lesser geopolitical or geostrategic importance that one wishes to give to the territory in question. It is clear that establishing and numbering the cases in which national interests would be affected would be quite helpful in discovering the content of these interests. However, it must be agreed that “the definition of national interests is [...] a real challenge for the State, because it reflects its will to preserve tangible and intangible national resources”³³. Precisely in the Perejil islet affair, the tangible and intangible aspects of Spain's national interest were combined quite well, and this would be another argument in favour of considering it relevant as a model in the examination of Spain's national interests.

It could even be said that we would be in the presence of true “vital interests”, a notion that incorporates intangible components such as the case of the “imperative of identity, which brings together the intangible resources of the State that unite the population around funda-

³¹ Algora Weber, M. D. (2011). *Intereses nacionales de España en su entorno geopolítico. Los intereses geopolíticos de España: panorama de riesgos y amenazas*. Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa. P. 15.

³² Estrategia de Seguridad Nacional 2017. *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

³³ Sanz Alisedo, G. *Intereses que afectan a la soberanía nacional*. *Op. cit.*, p. 105.

mental and shared values and conceptions”³⁴. The Perejil affair was not only about protecting territorial integrity, or at least preventing Morocco's unilateral decision from determining the spaces in which neighbouring states exercise control and jurisdiction, but also affected fundamental values and principles that give cohesion to Spanish society. The Spanishness of certain territories in North Africa was called into question by the Moroccan military operation on the islet of Perejil. In this way, this behaviour was an advance on Moroccan policy aimed at measuring the Spanish state's capacity to deal with possible threats and proclaiming the effectiveness of “*faits accomplis*”³⁵. Consequently, the occupation of the islet represented a direct attack on Spanish national interests since, on the one hand, it deprived Spain of its power of control over a certain territory and, on the other hand, it laid the groundwork for the eventual loss of further territories over which Spain exercises full sovereignty.

Moreover, one could welcome and accept the interpretation that the main “objective of the invasion was to trigger a conflict that would hide the internal crisis” but also “to gain pressure to improve positions in its external conflicts”³⁶. Therefore, the defence of Perejil against an alleged unilateral use of force by Morocco falls squarely within the notion of Spain's national interest. What this affair did reveal, however, was the urgent need for each state, in this case Spain, to define more precisely what its national interests should be and also what instruments and tools it should have at its disposal to defend them. Thus, for states, “it is an essential matter to define what their national interests are, who is responsible for defending and achieving them, and the resources and means to do so”³⁷.

The Perejil islet affair placed the defence of a territory, even if one did not wish to exercise full sovereignty over it, within the framework of the most essential national interests in the Spanish state. Hence, it is possible to accept the interpretation that “the protection of territory is not limited to safeguarding the inviolability of its borders, but must be viewed from a broader point of view and with greater spatial depth”³⁸, which is precisely what happened in the case of the Perejil crisis, which in no way put the survival of the Spanish state at stake. Indeed, what happened on the islet activated military logic, but all especially because of the defence of the intangible interests that lie behind the rejection of the Moroccan occupation of the territory.

Secondly, what happened on the islet of Perejil is hardly comical and fortunately did not have tragic consequences either. But it did represent a special assumption

34 *Ibid*, p. 82.

35 More recently, there was the massive attack of Moroccan civilians on the city of Ceuta in May 2021. In this case, it was said that “Spain, therefore, cannot cede in its territorial integrity and in the Spanish and European nature of Ceuta and Melilla”. Pique, J. (2021). Morocco-Spain: ¿condenados a entendernos? *Política Exterior*. May 28.

36 Ruiz Miguel, C. (2002). Las nuevas relaciones internacionales después de la crisis de Perejil. *Boletín de Información*. 276, p. 23.

37 In the case of Spain, progress has been gradual in this area. Algora Weber, M.^a D. *Intereses nacionales de España*. *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

38 Sanz Alisedo, G. *Intereses que afectan a la soberanía nacional*. *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

that is important in terms of defining Spain's geopolitical position on the international scene and, above all, has the capacity to explain the presence of vital interests in the geopolitical context. Spain's forceful and proportionate response to a military occupation, however minor, revealed two other elements that make up the vital interests of states: "the territorial imperative, or the protection of the spaces over which the state exercises its sovereignty or jurisdiction", but also "the functional imperative, which entails the capacity of the state to exercise its government action autonomously and effectively"³⁹. All of these highlights the fundamental aspects that crystallise the link with a state's foreign policy in defence matters, and also the will to preserve those interests that are essential, in our case for Spain. What made the Perejil islet affair unique lay precisely in the fact that, for the first time in a long time, with a pragmatic sense, Spain projected a concrete and unique geopolitical position on the international scene.

The Perejil affair in no way meant that Spain assumed a leading position on the international stage, but it did at least express that it was a state with the capacity to defend national interests from its own geopolitical position, which was not determined by its links with other states or with international organisations in which it participates. The lack of intervention by other actors, beyond occasional instances of mediation, in the crisis between Spain and Morocco over the Perejil affair clearly demonstrates its relevance in defining a particular foreign policy that is not entirely dependent on other actors and factors. Although there was a desire to highlight role of the United States in this dispute, or at least it was pointed out that "Secretary of State Colin Powell played an important role in the resolution of the conflict"⁴⁰.

For this reason, the Perejil crisis reveals, once again but in reverse, that Spain's true geopolitical position on the new world stage and, in particular, in the regional spaces in which our country intervenes, is determined by what has been defining Spanish foreign policy for a long time, including in the field of security and defence. In reality, the absence of a unique position for Spain that comes from a process of internalisation and leads to its own independent stance on the international stage. For this reason, it is accepted that Spain's position in current international geopolitics is largely determined by the alliances in which it participates, which deprives it of an approach with a unique focus, making it a policy that can be described as "dependent". In the case of Perejil, the opposite was found to be true. In other words, it was stated that the defence of the territory is a task that corresponds to the State and that; therefore, it is the State "that has the duty and the right to defend it and make it respected, internally and externally", in such a way that "territory and territorial integrity are two assets that fall within the exclusive competence of the State"⁴¹.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

40 Sapag, P. (2003). Cuando España llama a rebato. Militares y periodistas en Perejil. *Historia y Comunicación Social*. 8, p. 236.

41 Mangas Martín, A. Territorio, integridad territorial. *Op. cit.*, pp. 234-235.

In short, it must be accepted that the Perejil affair was a media war for both countries with the aim, among others, of gaining international support, and “a fundamental symbolic action in their bilateral relations”⁴². However, this symbolic operation is endowed with certain components that make up the foreign policy of both states and, in particular, specifically in relation to Spain, it is found to outline, stimulate and determine the content of their national interests⁴³. In this sense, defending territorial sovereignty acquired real meaning, especially in relations with those states with which there are territorial claims. Therefore, in the event that a so-called “minor incident” is not resolved in favour of the state that considers its most essential and vital interests to be at risk, it could cause that state to lose positions and advantages not only in bilateral relations, but also on the international stage.

It should be stressed, therefore, that the loss of the islet of Perejil would not put Spain's survival as a state at stake, but it would affect, beyond tangible resources, intangible interests that form part of national sovereignty. This islet, with its characteristics and in the context of the political and legal situation in which it permanently finds itself in Spanish-Moroccan relations, should be understood in geopolitical terms as a part of Spanish territorial integrity or, at least, it should be conceived within “the main risks against Spanish territorial integrity” that “derive from the Moroccan claim over the Spanish territories of North Africa” and also what happens in the maritime areas⁴⁴. In this perspective, Perejil is part of a whole that must be defended jointly.

A conflict which has clear symbolic connotations and has the virtue of indicating the basic outlines of Spanish foreign policy and, also, of Moroccan foreign action. From this perspective, the Perejil affair delimits the content of national interests because the defence of territory determines the state's capacity to preserve its territorial integrity, but also its geopolitical position. Indeed, it should not be forgotten that

“In the new global context and due to its geographical situation (...) as an important determining factor of our Strategy, (...) Spain has a *geopolitical problem*, in which elements such as: being a border, having island territories and in North Africa (...)”⁴⁵.

The Perejil affair, even if only in part and only partially, contributed to solving Spain's geopolitical problem or, at the very least, demonstrated that Spain could enjoy a certain ability to sustain a unique and autonomous position in certain matters.

42 García de Frutos, M. (2011). Perejil: un conflicto simbólico por la información. *Revista Aequitas; Estudios sobre historia, derecho e instituciones*. 1, p. 84. Regarding aspects of the discourse addressed to Moroccan public opinion. Vid. La Parra Casado, D., Penalva Verdú, C. and Mateo Pérez, M. Á. *La imagen de España y Marruecos en la prensa marroquí y española*. Op. cit.

43 Ibid.

44 Sanz Alisedo, G. *Intereses que afectan a la soberanía nacional*. Op. cit., p. 96.

45 Fojón Lagoa, E. *El problema geopolítico*. Op. cit. p. 9.

National interest and territorial sovereignty

The national interest is closely linked to the concept of territorial sovereignty. Moreover, when spaces that a state considers to be part of its territory are affected, even the concept of vital interests is activated, so that all the means at the state's disposal can be used to preserve and protect them. Consequently, the Perejil affair raised an issue that must first be resolved in order to address the definition of a state's national interests. At the very least, it should be clarified in particular whether this notion also encompasses those spaces in which there are disagreements over who holds sovereignty and to whom its control and jurisdiction should be attributed. Situations tend to be quite diverse and varied and, in the case of Spain, it is undeniable that in relations with Morocco both Ceuta and Melilla would form part of Spain's territorial integrity⁴⁶.

Any decision or behaviour that would take place in relation to these territories would be an integral part of Spain's national interests and would even affect those interests that should be qualified as "vital". So much so that, as was pointed out some time ago in relation to the Gibraltar area,

"The nation in which the international community places its trust" in having control over the Strait will "greatly increase its specific weight in the international sphere by placing itself in a privileged position when it comes to asserting its national interests in different forums"⁴⁷.

For this reason, national interests must be previously and precisely defined, and this is the ultimate reason why Spain should clearly state that the islet of Perejil falls into the category of its territorial sovereignty, even if it is understood and practised in a broad sense. In this vein, many of the media outlets that covered the issue in 2002 described it as "a state affair, where national interests were at stake"⁴⁸.

However, an analysis of the situation in Perejil in 2002, and twenty years later, leaves a bittersweet taste regarding this issue. Spain at no time questioned that it had legitimate rights over the islet, but chose to take an excessively moderate position on territorial sovereignty. At most, as indicated by the Spanish Foreign Minister, "the Spanish presence on the island has never been the object of official protests by Morocco and in no case can it be affirmed that there has been a regular Moroccan presence on Perejil Island (...)"⁴⁹. Spain's postulates would be to maintain the *status quo* on the islet without altering the balances that have been maintained in recent years in bilateral Spanish-Moroccan relations over the territory. It has therefore never been clear

46 Loureiro Souto, J. L. (2015). *Los conflictos por Ceuta y Melilla: 600 años de controversias* [doctoral thesis]. UNED. Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia.

47 Villalba Fernández, A. (1994). *Zona del estrecho de Gibraltar*. Cuadernos de Estrategia. 72, p. 261.

48 Pacheco Barrio, M. A. *El contencioso del islote perejil*. Op. cit., p. 215.

49 Cortes Generales, year 2002. Op. cit., 17348.

whether the islet of Perejil falls within the expression that “all necessary measures must be taken to ensure both the success of the operation and the safety of our forces and our compatriots in the cities of Ceuta and Melilla and on the islands and rocks under our sovereignty”⁵⁰.

The question is of great importance insofar as the territory under sovereignty would be included in the notion of national interest and also in the concept of Spain's vital interest. It remains to be seen whether this fully applies in the case of territories that do not, strictly speaking, form part of Spanish territorial sovereignty. In other words, the question of whether maintaining the *status quo* at Perejil was truly in Spain's national interest would be pertinent. An examination of practice leads to the conclusion that this could be deduced, for example, from the intervention of the then Deputy José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, who pointed out that the Moroccan military intervention had caused “the alteration of a *status quo and* (that) logically the government had the responsibility to work so that this *status quo* would go back to normal”⁵¹.

Without going into a legal assessment and weighing up of the legal titles that correspond to Spain and Morocco in relation to sovereignty over the islet of Perejil, it should be clear that on the occasion of the 2002 event he only wished to stress the need to maintain the *status quo* on the islet and therefore not to give any validity to *faits accomplis*. Thus, it is worth recalling, for example, when the debate on the state of the nation was held in 2002, how the President of the Spanish Government emphasised that in the Perejil affair he “will not accept *faits accomplis*”⁵². However, Spain's decision not to underscore territorial sovereignty over Perejil should not be interpreted to mean that this issue is not in Spain's national interests. On the contrary.

Spain's behaviour throughout the crisis with Morocco revealed that the Alawite kingdom's action in occupying the islet and claiming its territorial sovereignty should be considered as an event that directly affected Spain's interests and, in particular, those that it must defend by resorting to the use of force if necessary. In other words, the islet of Perejil acquired a special value from the moment that acts intended to alter the *status quo* were carried out and, with it, national and even strategic interests reappeared. Because, at the end of the day, as has been said,

“Perejil Island has a strategic value at the moment, but it lies neither in its 1,600 square metres of surface area nor in its location, close to Ceuta and right next to the Moroccan coast. Its importance lies, above all, in the mind of the one who has threatened *its status quo*: Morocco”⁵³.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 17351.

⁵¹ Ibid., 17358.

⁵² Pacheco Barrio, M. A. El contencioso del islote Perejil. Op. cit., p. 222.

⁵³ Bardají, R. (2002). El valor estratégico de la isla del Perejil. Real Instituto Elcano, ARI. 17.

The most accurate conclusion would be that the Perejil affair has an impact on the essential components that define Spain's national interests and, at the same time, raises an issue of constitutional importance insofar as it affects the national territory, even if this is not precisely defined in Spanish law and even if there are doubts as to whether Perejil is an integral part of Spanish national territory. The expressions contained in the Spanish Constitution, in this respect, should cover all cases, above all incorporating those areas in which they produce active or passive territorial claims.

As recalled,

“The Constitution refers on several occasions to ‘Spanish territory’ (art. 138.1; 139.2; 158.1 and 161.1), on one occasion to the ‘territory of Spain’ (art. 68.5), on another to the ‘national territory’ (art. 19) and to the ‘territory of the State’ (art. 139.1)”⁵⁴.

For the Spanish state, all these allusions certainly cover both the territory that is fully established and recognised by third parties and also that which is the object of disputes of a territorial nature and with issues of sovereignty. In essence, territory and territorial sovereignty would be substantially within the notion of national interests and would be integrated into vital interests. Therefore, it must be admitted that for Spain “Spanish-Moroccan relations occupy a central place in the defence and achievement of its national interests, both vital and strategic”⁵⁵.

In short, there is a close link between national interest and territorial sovereignty. In the case at hand, the idea that the national interest “is incompatible with current economic and political dynamics that are oriented towards overcoming the concept of the frontier”⁵⁶ was fully accepted. The deeper controversy surrounding the Perejil affair concerns the defence of what is specifically understood as national territory on the basis of the existence of borders between states. Or, at least, this case has become a practical example that illustrates and argues how Spain opposes Morocco's decision to enforce a territorial claim by armed force, which extends far beyond the case of Perejil⁵⁷. The relationship and reference to the national interest is proven by accepting that “territorial sovereignty is the set of competences that a state exercises over the activities that take place in its territory and has an exclusive character”⁵⁸, which is precisely what was sought in the Perejil affair.

⁵⁴ Mangas Martín, A. *Territorio, integridad territorial*. Op. cit., p. 227.

⁵⁵ Algora Weber, M.^a D. *Intereses nacionales de España*. Op. cit., pp. 23-24.

⁵⁶ Herrero De Castro, R. (2011). *Política exterior de España e intereses nacionales*. UNISCI Discussion Papers. 27, p. 94. From the same author: (2010). *El concepto de interés nacional. Evolución del concepto de interés nacional*, CESEDEN monographs. 115, pp. 17-38.

⁵⁷ Of course, the cases of Ceuta and Melilla, in particular, are behind all Moroccan territorial claims.

⁵⁸ Rodrigo Hernández, A. J. (2004). *Soberanía y administración de territorios*. *Anuario Español de Derecho Internacional*. 20, p. 297.

National interest and use of force

From a complementary perspective, the issue of the islet of Perejil brings to the fore one of the components that always accompanies the defence of the state's vital interests of which, as can be clearly deduced, are an integral part of national interests. In such cases, it should be assumed that

“The defence of Spanish territory against aggression (...) or its protection against an attempt at hostile infiltration (...) is undoubtedly a vital interest in which the State must be prepared to bring all its resources to bear”⁵⁹.

Thus, Spain's use of force to “recover” the Perejil islet was of greater significance than might initially have been expected and, in this context, represented a “lesser use of force” in international relations. This can be seen in two ways.

First, with a general scope, insofar as the Perejil case actually embodies one of the most typical and recent cases that allow for recognizing the possibility of states resorting to force in cases of countermeasures⁶⁰. This implies that the defence of a state's vital interests may be carried out through the use of armed force, but there is not always an obligation to resort to the notion of self-defence. In other words, the protection of a state's vital interests may involve the use of force, but not necessarily that it takes the form of a state of self-defence. In the case of Perejil, it was precisely a minor use of force, as some authors of Spanish doctrine maintain⁶¹, and it was a suitable means for the defence of Spain's national interests. In any case, the case demonstrated that the use of force is a tool that can be used in cases where the state's territorial integrity is affected. It is clear that “Spain's most immediate strategic interests are oriented towards the territorial sphere”, in such a way that certain spatial areas, such as the territories in dispute with Morocco, will be “areas of special importance when defining Spanish interests” and, therefore, “constitute elements of special sensitivity and consideration in the defence of vital interests (...)”⁶².

Second, this case reveals an aspect that reinforces and strengthens the idea that this was a defence of national interests, using force as a deterrent. As stated above, “in the absence of certainty about Moroccan intentions, military deployment was intended to reinforce deterrence”⁶³. The importance of the issue lies not so much in the defence of

59 Sanz Alisedo, G. *Intereses que afectan a la soberanía nacional*. Op. cit., p. 83.

60 See: Leben C. (1982). *Les contre-mesures inter-étatiques et les réactions à l'illicite dans la société internationale*. *Annuaire Français de Droit International*. 128, pp. 9-77.

61 Díaz Barrado, C. M. (2017). *El conflicto en Colombia: derechos humanos, beligerancia y uso de la fuerza*. *Anuario de los Cursos de Derechos Humanos de Donostia-San Sebastián*. XVII, pp. 117-140

62 Algora Weber, M.^a D. *Intereses nacionales de España*. Op. cit., p. 17.

63 Jordán, J. (2018). *Una reinterpretación de la crisis del islote Perejil desde la perspectiva de la amenaza híbrida*. *Revista General de Marina*. 274, p. 943.

a tiny islet but rather in Morocco's attempt to impose a permanent unilateral solution to territorial claims and to establish a platform for future Moroccan territorial claims. In other words: "the material and strategic importance of the islet was negligible. What was indeed relevant (...) was the unilateral nature of the Moroccan action"⁶⁴. It is clear from all this that the Rabat government's intentions in occupying the islet went beyond the specific possession of this small territorial portion and that, ultimately, a much deeper issue was at stake. The Moroccan action could be a testing operation aimed at checking the military and psychological capacity of the Spanish state and Spanish society in the territorial conflicts between the two States. What is important, however, is that the preservation of territory can be achieved through the lawful use of force.

Combined with the effect of surprise, however, what the Moroccan authorities really intended was to bring a broader political dispute between Spain and Morocco to the forefront of the discussion. As they say,

"Beyond the islet, the object of the Moroccan action was the *status quo* on the delimitation, legality and legitimacy of the territorial borders between Spain and Morocco in North Africa, and specifically in the Strait of Gibraltar"⁶⁵.

This leads to questions that go deeper than the mere temporary occupation of the islet of Perejil, i.e. the aim was to spread a territorial conflict in all its dimensions. In terms of international law, the Spanish military action was a lawful response, in accordance with the basic rules of international law, to a prior act of unlawful use of force, albeit minor, by Morocco. This was recognised, for example, by the European Union in the Presidency Declaration of July 2002. It is desirable that international disputes be settled peacefully, but when the vital interests of states are attacked by unlawful means and through the use of armed force, the possibility of responding with countermeasures through the lawful use of force is sometimes triggered⁶⁶.

Conclusions

The value to be attached to the notion of national interest and its link to territorial sovereignty of states and the use of force in the case of Spain can be shown in the context of the event that took place in July 2002 in Spanish-Moroccan relations over the islet of Perejil. In any case, it is not easy for a state to define, decipher and delimit

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Jordán, J. Una reinterpretación de la crisis del islote Perejil. Op. cit., p. 945.

⁶⁶ The Moroccan government did not agree with this position. See Rodríguez Carrión, A. J. and Torres Cazorla, M.^a I. (2002). Una readaptación de los medios de arreglo pacífico de controversias: el caso de isla Perejil y los medios utilizados para la solución de este conflicto. *Revista Española de Derecho Internacional*. 54, 2, pp. 724 ff.

the content of what is national interest, since it is an evolving concept with all kinds of different components. In the case of Spain, and from a geopolitical perspective, the national interest must be conceived on the basis of our country's unique interests that would draw its own contours as a nation and state, and also taking into account that Spain participates in certain international organisations, especially the European Union and NATO.

The defence of Spain's territorial integrity is part of Spain's national interests and should even be qualified as an item of vital interest. Hence, there is an indelible link between national interest and territorial sovereignty. But the content of national interests also allows us to deduce the geopolitical position of a state and the substantial components of its foreign policy. Spain's response to Morocco's occupation of the islet of Perejil should be interpreted as a significant expression of the defence of national interests, thereby projecting Spain's unique geopolitical position on the international stage.

This conflict took place at a time when Spanish-Moroccan relations had deteriorated considerably, especially because of the disputes in the fishing sector and Spain's position on the Sahara issue, and in spite of the fact that they have kept silent on the matter, it has marked in part the decisions that the two states have made in their mutual relations. Since then, Spain has been acutely aware of the risks to its geopolitical position in the area, and Morocco has gauged the means and limits of the pressure it could exert on the Spanish authorities in relation to its traditional territorial claims.

But the protection of land and maritime areas, which are part of a state's territory, is a fundamental part of vital interests. This covers all those well-defined and established spaces that make up the territory of the state, as well as other spaces where there may be some kind of territorial dispute or where the sovereignty of the states in question is at stake. Any uncertainty as to whether it is incumbent upon a state to exercise full control and jurisdiction over a particular territory does not preclude it from falling within the notion of national interest. The Perejil affair demonstrated that the protection of the territory of the islet had to be conceived as an essential aspect of the defence of Spain's vital interests. This gives expression to the tangible dimension of these interests and, at the same time, reveals the focus on intangible resources. For this reason, the Perejil affair had and still has a symbolic nature that is linked to the cohesion of Spanish society and the protection of the values and principles on which it is based. In short, the notion of territory, which is linked to the defence of national interests, must be interpreted in a broad sense, in such a way that it also encompasses spaces subject to sovereignty claims. Spain's behaviour in this case was therefore an assertion of a national interest.

Finally, the defence of the vital interests of states allows the use of all means at the disposal of the state in question to protect and preserve them, within the framework of the basic rules of the international legal order. The use of armed force could be a useful and appropriate tool to respond to attacks on such interests. The only limits that the state must respect are those imposed by international law and, in particular, by peremptory norms. In the case of the islet of Perejil, Spain's response through the use of force can be understood as an appropriate expression of the protection of its

vital interests and would be, on the basis of opportunity and proportion, an appropriate mechanism to restore Spain's position in bilateral relations with Morocco. This is despite the fact that this mechanism is not the only one that can be used in these relations, especially in the context of the complex relations between the two states.

This is because the Spanish military action was a "lesser use of lesser force" in application of a countermeasure to a previous unlawful use of force by Morocco. Moreover, Perejil has become a relevant precedent in this area for a sector of doctrine. In conclusion, the state can defend its most basic national interests by this means and within the limits outlined above. But even without the survival of the state being in question, the military response, which was limited in time and space and aimed solely at restoring the *status quo* on the island, represented an interesting practical scenario for appreciating the contours of the concept of national interest. Of course, the limited geostrategic and, of course, economic importance of the Perejil islet was offset by its political significance and, in particular, by the contribution it has made to Spain's geopolitical position on the international scene.

Therefore, the main issues arising from the Perejil affair would be, for these purposes: Firstly, that Spain asserted a unique foreign policy position and that Morocco made clear its willingness to pursue its territorial claims. And secondly, that the variegated relations between Spain and Morocco have multiple aspects and components, but that they can also be channelled through the defence of national interests and that this could give rise, albeit in extreme situations, to the use of force between the two states.

Bibliographic references

- Algora Weber, M.^a D. (2011). Intereses nacionales de España en su entorno geopolítico. Los intereses geopolíticos de España: panorama de riesgos y amenazas. Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional, September. Ministry of Defence.
- Bardají, R. (2002). El valor estratégico de la isla del Perejil. Real Instituto Elcano, ARI. 17.
- Barbé, E. (2020). El invierno que no llegó: el orden internacional en tiempos de pandemia. *Revista Española de Derecho Internacional [Spanish Journal of International Law]*. 72, 2, pp. 15-31.
- Belhaj, A. (2009). *La dimension islamique dans la politique étrangère du Maroc: déterminants, acteurs, orientations*. Louvain-la-Neuve. Presses Universitaires de Louvain.
- Bosoer, F. y Turzi, M. (2020). La pandemia del 2020 en el debate teórico de las relaciones internacionales. *Geopolítica(s): Revista de Estudios sobre espacio y poder*. 11, 0, pp. 153-163.
- Chikhi, D. (2002). Dispute territoriale autour de l'îlot "Persil-Leïla? Retour sur les enjeux politiques d'une crise anecdotique. *Le Quotidien d'Oran*.

- Díaz Barrado, C. M. (2017). El conflicto en Colombia: derechos humanos, beligerancia y uso de la fuerza. Anuario de los Cursos de Derechos Humanos de Donostia-San Sebastián. XVII, pp. 117-140.
- Escrigas Rodríguez, J. (2010). Análisis comparativo del concepto del interés nacional. Evolución del concepto de interés nacional. CESEDEN Monographs. 115.
- Estrategia de Seguridad Nacional 2017. Un proyecto compartido de todos y para todos. (2017). Boletín Oficial del Estado. Madrid, Presidencia del Gobierno. December.
- Fojón Lagoa, E. (2015). La evolución del orden internacional y la configuración del poder en Europa. Entre institucionalismo y geopolítica [PhD thesis]. Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
- (2019). El problema geopolítico de España: el caso de la defensa y Fuerzas Armadas. Instituto de Política Internacional. Análisis 1/2019. Madrid, UFV.
- García Flórez, D. (2002). Aspectos históricos del conflicto de la isla del Perejil. Real Instituto Elcano, ARI.18, July 14.
- García de Frutos, M. (2011). Perejil: un conflicto simbólico por la información. Revista Aequitas; Estudios sobre historia, derecho e instituciones. 1.
- Gil Pérez, J. and Garrido Guijarro, O. (2014). La isla Perejil, la perla decimonónica del mediterráneo. HAO, Historia Actual Online. 34, p. 36.
- Herrero De Castro, R. (2011). Política exterior de España e intereses nacionales. UNISCI Discussion Papers. 27.
- Herrero De Castro, R. (2010). El concepto de interés nacional. Evolución del concepto de interés nacional. CESEDEN Monographs. 115, pp. 17-38.
- Jordán, J. (2014). Gestión de la incertidumbre en las relaciones internacionales. Análisis Grupo de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional GESI, 9/2014. Granada. Pp.1-17.
- (2018). Una reinterpretación de la crisis del islote Perejil desde la perspectiva de la amenaza híbrida. Revista General de Marina. 274, p. 943.
- La Parra Casado, D. et al. (2007). La imagen de España y Marruecos en la prensa marroquí y española durante el incidente del islote de Perejil (Leyla). La política árabe y mediterránea de España. Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals. 79-80, p. 153.
- Leben, C. (1982). Les contre-mesures inter-étatiques et les réactions à l'illicite dans la société internationale. Annuaire Français de Droit International. 28, pp. 9-77.
- López-Aranda, R. (2018). El orden mundial en el siglo XXI: una perspectiva de policy planning. Real Instituto Elcano. Documento de trabajo 9/2018. 25 April.
- Loureiro Souto, J. L. (2015). Los conflictos por Ceuta y Melilla: 600 años de controversias [doctoral thesis]. UNED. Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia.

- Mangas Martín, A. (2015). Territorio, integridad territorial y fronteras del Estado en la Unión Europea. *Legal Journal from the University of León*. 2.
- Marsal Muntala, J. (2010). Introducción. Evolución del concepto de interés nacional. *Monographs from the CESEDEN*. 115. Madrid.
- Michta, A. A. (2018). The Revenge of Hard Power Politics. *The American Interest*. October. Available at: <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/10/16/the-revenge-of-hard-power-politics/>
- Molina, Ignacio (coord.). (2017). España en el mundo en 2017: perspectivas y desafíos. Real Instituto Elcano. Elcano Policy Paper. Madrid. February.
- (2019). España en el mundo en 2019: perspectivas y desafíos. Real Instituto Elcano. Elcano Policy Paper. Madrid. February.
- Pacheco Barrio, M. A. (2012). El contencioso del islote Perejil en la prensa escrita. Leandro Martínez Peñas, Manuela Fernández Rodríguez, and David Bravo Díaz, (coords.). *La presencia española en África: del “Fecho de allende” a la crisis de Perejil*. Madrid.
- Pique, J. (2021). Marruecos-España: ¿condenados a entendernos? *Política Exterior*. May 28.
- Planet, A. and Hernando de Larramendi, M. (2005). Una piedra en el camino de las relaciones hispano-marroquíes: la crisis de Perejil. Planet, A. and Ramos, F. (coords.). *Relaciones hispano-marroquíes: una vecindad en construcción*. Madrid, Ediciones de Oriente y del Mediterráneo. Pp. 102-135.
- Rodrigo Hernández, A. J. (2004). Soberanía y administración de territorios. *Anuario Español de Derecho Internacional*. 20 .
- Rodríguez Carrión, A. J., and Torres Cazorla, M.^a I. (2002). Una readaptación de los medios de arreglo pacífico de controversias: el caso de isla Perejil y los medios utilizados para la solución de este conflicto. *Revista Española de Derecho Internacional*. 54, p. 2.
- Rózsa, E. N., & Belhaj, A. (2008). Ceuta and Melilla: Risques et gestion des risques. *Euromesco Paper*. 75, pp. 1-31.
- Ruiz Miguel, C. (2002). Las nuevas relaciones internacionales después de la crisis de Perejil. *Boletín de Información*. 276.
- Sapag, P. 2003, Cuando España llama a rebato. Militares y periodistas en Perejil. *Historia y Comunicación Social*. 8.
- Sánchez Múgica, A. (2018). El orden mundial y la reconfiguración hegemónica en el siglo XXI. *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, Nueva Época*. LXIII, p. 233.

- Sánchez Herráez, P. (2015). Marco geopolítico de Rusia: constantes históricas, dinámica y visión en el siglo XXI. Cuadernos de Estrategia. 178, pp. 15-78.
- Sanz Alisedo. G. (2010). Intereses que afectan a la soberanía nacional. Evolución del concepto de interés nacional. CESEDEN monographs. 115. Madrid,
- Saura Estapà. (2002). A propósito de la soberanía sobre el islote de Perejil. Revista Electrónica de Estudios Internacionales (REEI). 5.
- Villalba Fernández, A. (1994). Zona del estrecho de Gibraltar. Cuadernos de Estrategia. 72.

Article received: November 1, 2021.

Article accepted: January 20, 2022.
