

## What Price Franco?

The United States may be on the verge of compounding its previous blunders on the Iberian peninsula with a five-year renewal—at a cost to this country of \$750-million—of an “agreement on friendship and cooperation” with Spain. Here is another example of Secretary of State Kissinger’s penchant for insensitive policies, supposedly rooted in *realpolitik*, that are offensive to the NATO allies and damaging to long-run American interests.

Indeed, even the purported strategic value of the Spanish agreement—the use of three air bases and a nuclear submarine refueling station—is open to some question. Generalissimo Franco’s Government would be unlikely to permit the use of the bases for any military operation undertaken on behalf of NATO, from which Spain is excluded. Spain did refuse to allow use of the airfields to supply Israel during the 1973 war.

But even many who concede the strategic conveniences of the facilities in Spain believe the political cost is far too steep. To bestow such a blessing on a disintegrating and increasingly repressive Franco regime will be to outrage the democratic forces in Spain as well as to offend NATO and the European Economic Community, both of which have made it clear they will never accept Spain while the Generalissimo remains in power.

Franco is 82, ailing and only episodically in charge of affairs. By demonstrating support for him at this time, the United States may mortgage its relations with Franco’s successors—and future use of the very bases with which Mr. Kissinger is so preoccupied. Moreover, this dubious pact is being negotiated strictly as an executive agreement without recourse to Congress. As an expression of responsible partnership in foreign policy, a commitment of this magnitude should be negotiated as a treaty, requiring the scrutiny and consent of the Senate for its ratification.