The accession of the three-year old Carlos II (1661, r. 1665-1700) to the Spanish throne inaugurated a new stage of dynastic rivalry between the Habsburgs and the Bourbons, changing the traditional dynamics of competition from one in which Habsburg territories and allies encircled and threatened to one in which they buffered and protected from France. Although clearly no longer the hegemonic power of Europe, first under Queen Mariana of Austria (1634-1696), regent of the monarchy from 1665 to 1676, and subsequently during the rest of Carlos II’s reign, Spain effectively adapted to its new position in the continent and implemented a number of important shifts in foreign policy that provoked a visible geopolitical reconfiguration. For the first time in its history, according to Spanish theologians, Habsburg Spain forged offensive military alliances with “heretics”—namely England and the United Provinces—against another Catholic prince (Louis XIV), decisively altering the traditional military and diplomatic blocs in Europe. A reconsideration of Spain’s role in the European stage allows scholars to cast a fresh light on the nature of international politics during a period of change and uncertainty, largely caused as well by the unresolved question of the Spanish succession. Such an approach effectively breaks the paradigm of late-Habsburg Spain’s irreversible decline, which has obscured, for close to three centuries, the dynamism and significance of the period.