The 2004 Election in Spain:
Terrorism, Accountability, and Voting

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On Thursday March 11, 2004 (M-11), not long before eight in the morning, thirteen Islamist terrorists from a local Al Qaeda branch exploded ten bombs on packed commuter trains that were going to the Atocha station in Madrid. One hundred and ninety-one people died and more than two thousand were injured. There was great commotion, and the parliamentary electoral campaign for the renovation of the Congress of Deputies and the Senate on March 14, 2004 (M-14), was suspended. On Friday March 12, massive demonstrations were held in all the cities in the country. According to official estimates, about 2,300,000 people participated in the demonstration in Madrid. One of the slogans repeated most insistently by demonstrators was, "We want to know who it was, ETA or Al Qaeda" ("*¡Queremos saber quién ha sido, ETA o Al Qaeda!*").

The conservative Popular Party (*Partido Popular*, PP) government presided by José María Aznar hastened to point the finger at the ETA terrorist group almost immediately, ignoring any evidence that might point to Al Qaeda. According to the conclusion of a subsequent parliamentary commission, between M-11 and M-14 the government manipulated information so at to hold ETA responsible, as it believed that this would benefit the PP in electoral terms. The government also covered up any indications that Al Qaeda might be involved, fearing that it would have to pay an electoral price for its involvement in the war in Iraq. On the morning of Saturday March 13, at a time when all electoral activities were prohibited, PP candidate Mariano Rajoy told a national paper that he was "morally convinced" that ETA was the responsible. Hours later, demonstrations were held in front of PP headquarters in various cities to protest against the government's management of the information in the wake of the attacks. On Sunday March 14, Election Day passed without incident. The results differed from those of the March 2000 general election in two notable ways: the level of participation was much higher and the PP was defeated by the main opposition group, the Socialist party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, PSOE), led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero.

This article explores the impact of M-11 on the electoral results. To what extent did the terrorist attacks change the voting preferences of Spaniards? And if they did, to what extent are they a necessary and sufficient factor when explaining the defeat of the party in government? These questions will be answered first by discussing the predominant interpretations of the impact of terrorism on electoral choices; second, by examining the causal mechanisms behind the impact of terrorism on the electoral results and their empirical relevance; third, by assessing the robustness of these causal mechanisms through different data and arguments; and fourth, by looking not only at the question of *what* but also to the issue of *how much*: through a counterfactual statistical analysis we will quantify the impact of the attacks on the election results. The final section presents the conclusions and examines the implications of the research.

Interpretations and Electoral Calculations

The 2004 election results appear to confirm that the attacks did have an impact on the electoral fortunes of the political parties. As shown in Table 1, participation levels rose to 75.7 percent, an increase of almost three million voters. And the PP, which had governed for the preceding four years with a comfortable absolute majority, lost the election, its vote declining from 44.5 in 2000 to 37.6 percent in 2004, and from 183 seats (52 percent of the seats in the Congress of Deputies) to 148 (35.7). The PSOE won the elections with 42.6 percent of the vote (compared with 35.7 percent in 2000) and received 164 seats (47 percent, compared with 36 percent, or 125 seats, in 2000). The PSOE beat the PP by more than one million votes and by almost five percentage points, and became the party winning the highest number of votes ever attained in the short history of Spanish general elections (there have been nine thus far)[1].

Table 1
Seats and Votes in the 2004 General Election

Party	In thousands	%	N	%	In thousands	%	N	%
	2004				Differences 2004-2000			
	Votes		Seats		Votes		Seats	
IU	1,284	5.0	5	1	-98	-101.0	-3	-2
PSOE	11,026	42.6	164	47	3,107	8.4	39	11
PP	9,763	37.7	148	42	-558	-6.88	-35	-10
CiU	835	3.2	10	3	-135	-1.0	-5	-1
PNV	421	1.6	7	2	67	0.1	=	=
Other regional parties	1,332	5.2	16	5	201	0.3	5	2
Extra-parliamentary parties	822	4.7	-	-	85	1.4	-	-
Total[a]	25,483	100	350	100	2,669			
Census	34,571				602			
Voters	26,155	75.7			2,816	+7		
Abstentions	8,416	24.3			-2,214			

[a] This refers to votes for the candidacies
Source: Ministerio del Interior
(www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/index.htm)

Given their magnitude and proximity to the elections, the attacks inevitably affected the behavior of Spanish voters. But the intensity of that impact, the number of people involved, and the mechanisms through that impact occurred need further detailed empirical analysis. The task is particularly difficult given the lack of precedents. Terrorism has been a factor in electoral campaigns in other Western countries. In the United States, the hostage crisis at the U.S. Embassy in Iran in the weeks prior to the election in November 1980 contributed significantly to the defeat of president Jimmy Carter and the victory of Ronald Reagan[2]. In the Netherlands, the assassination of Pim Fortuyn, the mayor of Rotterdam, nine days before the May 2002 election, the first political assassination in Holland in four centuries, led to the suspension of the campaign and a surprising 17 percent vote for his party, which came second in Parliament[3]. By contrast, in Spain the terrorist group ETA has "intervened" in various national and regional electoral campaigns, assassinating candidates, political leaders, lawyers, judges, and journalists. But voters did not

apparently change their behavior at the polls because of this, nor did the electoral expectations of parties change significantly.

In theory, the impact of the M-11 attacks, the second most serious terrorist attacks in recent European history[4], should have been greater. But although it is clear that they did have an impact, was this impact the consequence of a widespread or of a selective mobilization of specific sectors (such as new voters)? Was this impact the consequence of the reinforcement of a previous voting choice –which was simply intensified– or of a massive change of voting preferences? And if the latter is true, how did voters justify their abandonment of the party they had voted for in 2000 and their support for another?

Most interpretations of the electoral consequences of the terrorist attacks have described their impact as a "drastic turn" (*vuelco*): their evidence is based on the defeat of the PP in spite of its leading the polls in surveys over the preceding two years[5]. As shown in Table 2, which presents a selection of the many polls carried out from January 2004 until ten days before the election, the PP was in the lead. But electoral predictions (in Spain and elsewhere) have to be taken with a pinch of salt. In previous elections predictions have turned out to be wrong without existing terrorist attacks or other exceptional or unexpected events[6]. Moreover, some of the surveys shown in Table 2 registered a gradually narrowing gap between the PP and the PSOE during the electoral campaign, and some surveys undertaken on 10-12 March put the PP one percentage point ahead of the PSOE, or even put the PSOE 2.6 percentage points ahead of the PP[7]. In short, there was a *technical tie* before M-11: in some cases, differences between PP and PSOE vote estimates in Table 2 were narrower or included in the margin of error of the surveys. In short, any result was possible. The PP could have won (with more votes and, given the conservative bias in the electoral system, more seats)[8], but it was equally feasible to expect a PSOE victory.

Table 2
Vote Estimates in Some Pre-Electoral Polls, January-March 2004 [a]

	2000 Election Results	Noxa	Noxa	CIS	Sigma Dos	Celeste Tel	Opina	Noxa	Citigate Sanchís	Vox Publica	Sigma Dos	2004 Election Results
PP	44.5	42.6	42.6	42.2	42.8	42.9	42.0	41.4	42.8	42.5	42.1	37.7
PSOE	34.2	36.5	38.6	35.5	36.6	37.2	38.0	39.2	37.3	37.3	37.6	42.6
IU	5.4	7.2	5.8	6.6	5.7	5.9	6.3	6.3	5.7	7.1	5.3	5.0
CiU	4.2	3.0	2.8	3.7	3.3	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.4	3.2
PNV	1.5	2.1	2.2	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.6
CC	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.4	--	1.0	0.9
ERC	0.8	1.4	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.5	1.9	2.1	2.2	1.9	2.0	2.5
Others [b]	8.3	6.2	5.1	7.3	6.9	6.4	6.2	5.4	6.0	6.5	7.8	6.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sample		1,000	1,800	24,140	12,500	2,404	4,000	2,200	1,007	2,071	1,000	
Interview [c]		T	T	P	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	
Time Period		1/7-9	2/6-12	1/24-2/15	2/24-3/2	2/17-3/5	2/27-3/1	2/27-3/3	3/1-3	3/1-3	3/5-6	
PP-PSOE Difference	10.3	6.1	4.0	6.7	6.2	5.7	4.0	2.2	5.5	5.2	4.5	-4.9

[a] Noxa surveys were Publisher in *La Vanguardia*; Sigma Dos, in *El Mundo*; Celeste Tel, in *La Razón*; Opina, in *El País*; Citigate Sanchís, in *Gaceta Fin de Semana*; and Vox Publica, in *El Periódico de Catalunya*. The CIS survey was undertaken by the Centre of Sociological Studies (*Centro de Estudios Sociológicos*).
[b] Figures in "Others" have been adjusted so that the total is 100.
[c] *T*, telephone interview; *P*, personal interview.
Source: Julián Santamaría, "El azar y el contexto", p. 32.

But if there was no a "drastic turn", to what extent did the attacks erode electoral support for the PP government? This begs another more general question about the links between terrorism and assessments of government performance, on the one hand, and terrorism and voting, on the other. Most analyses of these issues are based on the reaction of U.S. citizens to the September 11, 2001 attacks: the approval ratings for George W. Bush increased spectacularly immediately after the attacks, and electoral support for Bush and the Republican Party increased considerably in the medium-term as well[9]. This reflects the view that domestic terrorism usually leads to a "praise for the leader", while international terrorism makes people "rally round the flag". Ceteris paribus, Spaniards might also have rallied round their government after the attacks and voted for it. But the link between terrorism and support to the incumbent worked differently in this case. Spaniards have become used so to speak to the terrorism of ETA over the last forty years and have exonerated governments for its

continued violent activities because they perceive that governments are helpless and ultimately not responsible for them. As we will see, the issue of terrorism played a marginal and even irrelevant role in evaluations of PSOE government performance and on the intention to vote for the PSOE in the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s[10]. Moreover, the issue of ETA terrorism was systematically kept apart from party competition. Over the last few years, however, the PP government introduced the issue of anti-terrorist policies in electoral competition, taking advantage of the overwhelming support of Spaniards for the anti-terrorist laws of the Aznar government[11].

After M-11, the PP made a seemingly simple electoral calculation: if the Al Qaeda attacks were attributable to ETA, the government could perhaps benefit from the praising our leader effect and in any case be exonerated from any responsibility, given that this has been the pattern until then and that its anti-terrorist policies were positively assessed by Spaniards. But if the attacks were attributable to Al Qaeda, citizens would immediately associate them with the government's support for the intervention in Iraq, a support given on the basis of fallacious arguments at best, spurred on by the US against the will of every political force and the overwhelming majority of Spanish citizens. The failure of the government to sideline Al Qaeda before the election and the fact that Al Qaeda responsibility was ascertained before the election meant that the issue ceased to be whether terrorism (of either source) has an impact on voting behavior to become a question of both understanding how Islamist terrorism relates with government accountability and anticipating the ability of citizens to punish the government at the ballot box.

As is shown below, a significant part of PSOE electoral gains and PP losses was a result of citizens blaming the government for the M-11 attacks because its active support for the intervention in Iraq; of perceiving manipulation in the information released by the government about the authorship of the attacks; and of assessing negatively governmental performance in the preceding four years. The vote therefore became a key mechanism for citizens to control and, in this case, punish, the government.

After all, this is what can happen when governments implement policies that the majority of citizens view negatively, and when they repeatedly ignore their preferences on relevant issues, and systematically evade responsibility. Thus, the electoral defeat of the PP government was ultimately an instance of democratic accountability. In the words of Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, "governments are 'accountable' if voters can discern whether governments are acting in their interest and sanction them appropriately, so that those incumbents who act in the best interests of citizens win reelection and those who do not lose them"[12]. Retrospective assessments of government performance by citizens are often confusing because it is difficult to make a connection between their situation and the incumbent policies[13]. But the M-11 events helped Spaniards to assess the PP government, and they did so by resorting to normal democratic procedures. As Key has put it, "the only really effective weapon of popular control in a democratic regime is the ability of the electorate to expel a party from power"[14].

The Impact of M-11: A Quantitative Analysis

In the empirical analysis that follows, we have used a post-electoral 2004 survey undertaken by *Demoscopia* to assess the impact of M-11 on the results of the general election of March 14[15]. Table 3 shows the relationship between the impact of M-11 as declared by respondents and their voting behavior[16]. It shows that 6 percent of voters (124 respondents) decided their choice after the attacks; most of them (more than 65 percent) ended up voting for the PSOE[17]. When the data are disaggregated, two complementary processes become apparent. On the one hand, 5 percent of respondents was mobilized as a direct consequence of the attacks (they would have abstained from voting otherwise); of these, another 65 percent ended up voting for the PSOE[18]. On the other hand, 5 percent changed their vote, and of these, 45 percent also joined the socialist electorate. The PP and the United Left (*Izquierda Unida*, IU) only got 11 and 3 of the mobilized respondents' votes, and 6 and 3 percent of the transferred votes, respectively[19]. Notably, 19 and 16 percent of respondents said that Iraq

and government information about the attacks, respectively, were the issues that had the greatest influence on their vote[20]. The PSOE benefited most of all, particularly when the "no answer" respondents are not taken into account: in both cases, about 60 percent voted for the socialists, and only between 5 and 9 percent voted for the PP or the IU.

Table 3
The Impact of M-11 on the Election[a]

| | M-14 party vote | | | |
Impact	PSOE	PP	IU	Total
Opted to vote for a party after the attacks	82 (4%)	17 (1%)	7 (0.3)	124 (6%)
Was not going to vote, but did so after the attacks	93 (2%)	16 (0.5)	5 (0.2)	151 (5%)
Changed party vote after the attacks	55 (2%)	7 (0.3)	4 (0.2)	122 (5%)
PP government policy was responsible for the attacks	316(11%)	29 (1%)	28 (1%)	545(19%)
Information about the attacks was the most decisive in my vote	259 (9%)	40 (1%)	23 (1%)	465(16%)

[a] The number of respondents is followed, in brackets, by the percentage (when that was more than 0.5 percent) of the total sample. The total in each row is not the same.
Source: Demoscopia Survey, 2004.

These bi-variable relationships, however, can only show who *wins* votes, but not who *loses* them. Thus, Table 4 sheds light on electoral volatility or vote changes that occurred after the attacks, showing vote transfers after M-11. Only the 5 percent (122 respondents) that changed its party vote after the attacks (see Table 3) are taken into account. Again, the PSOE was the great beneficiary, losing 9 but gaining 55 votes. In other words, it gained 4 percent of its votes after the attacks as a result of electoral volatility. By contrast, the other parties lost votes after M-11. The PP and IU lost more than 5 and 3 percent respectively, and the National Galician Bloc (*Bloque Nacionalista Galego*, BNG) lost more than 70 percent[21].

Table 4
Individual Electoral Volatility Before and After M-11 (by number of individuals)[a]

M-14 Vote	Vote Before M-11				
Parties	PP	PSOE	IU	BNG	Total
PP	—	4	—	—	7
PSOE	23	—	8	8	55
IU	—	2	—	—	4
BNG	1	—	—	—	1
NC	9	1	—	21	45
Other/Blank/Did not vote	10	3	—	1	15
Total	38	9	8	30	122

[a] To calculate the percentages, it should be noted that the final results according to the survey were as follows: PP 589; PSOE 1.139; IU 121; BNG 12, and no answer 365.
Source: Demoscopia Survey, 2004.

These data are relevant but still insufficient. Electoral behavior cannot be explained in a deterministic way. It cannot be said that "given *x*, then *y*". Probabilistic criteria must come into play ("given *x*, *y*, and *a*, *y* is probable") because many issues influence voters, with each having a variable impact on voting behavior. To integrate all factors that may have shaped voting behavior on March 14, it is necessary to shift from a bi-variable to a multi-variable analysis. Table 6 is based on a voter decision model that account for the most relevant factors of electoral behavior in Spain. The variables we have selected are the usual ones: socio-demographic (age, gender, civil status, level of education, employment situation, and religiosity); the basic political issues of the preceding legislature (the decision to support the invasion of Iraq and the overall view of government performance over the preceding four years); and views of party leaders and self-placement on the left-right ideological spectrum. As perceptions of the economic situation are known to have a significant impact on voting behavior, the fourth variable is voter assessment of the economy. Fifth, views of M-11 are also included. Finally, two classic political variables, political interest and level of satisfaction with the way democracy is working, are included to explain non-voting[22].

Descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 5. According to the data we have examined, two hypotheses are tested. The aim is to understand whether those respondents who believed that government information about who was responsible for the attacks was self-interested and whether those respondents who blamed government foreign policy for the attacks were more likely than others to vote for the PSOE (and less likely to choose the PP, the IU, or to abstain).

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Observations	Media	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
PSOE vs. PP	1,729	0.66	0.47	0	1
POSE vs. IU	1,260	0.90	0.29	0	1
PSOE vs. abstention	1,551	0.73	0.44	0	1
Civil status	2,929	0.16	0.37	0	1
Employment situation	2,896	1.79	1.78	0	5
Education levels	2,919	1.57	0.80	0	3
Church attendance	2,854	0.98	0.86	0	3
Gender	2,929	0.49	0.50	0	1
Age	2,907	46.09	18.09	18	91
Iraq intervention	2,823	0.28	0.60	0	2
Incumbent performance	2,846	0.93	0.84	0	2
Zapatero evaluation	2,755	5.92	2.41	0	10
Rajoy evaluation	2,733	4.25	2.72	0	10
Llamazares evaluation	2,348	3.66	2.42	0	10
Ideological self-placement	2,338	4.65	1.94	1	10
Assessment of economy	2,874	1.18	0.75	0	2
M-11 and Iraq policy	2,929	0.19	0.39	0	1
Information on attacks	2,929	0.16	0.37	0	1

Source: Demoscopia Survey, 2004.

In Table 6, the dependent variable in the statistical analysis is voting for the PSOE, the PP, the IU, and non-voting. Each of the three models attempts to explain the decision to vote for the PSOE (1) rather than for the PP (0); for the PSOE rather than for the IU (0); and finally, for the PSOE rather than abstaining (0). Given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, a logistical estimation model has been used[23].

Table 6
Results of Estimates of three Logistical Binomial Models, 2004 Elections[a]

Independent variables	Models		
	PSOE (1) vs. PP (0) '90'(0)((0)(0)	PSOE (1) vs. IU (0) (0) IU (0)	PSOE (1) vs. Abs. (0) (0)
Socio-demographic			
Gender[b]	-0.54 (0.54)	0.17 (0,33)	-0.20 (0.25)
Age (in years)	0.07***(0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.05***(0.01)
Civil Status[c]			
Married/cohabiting	-1.21** (0.54)	0.17 (0.33)	-0.44* (0.25)
Employment situation[d]			
Self-employed	-1.56* (0.82)	-0.32 (0.52)	-0.03 (0.42)
Unemployed	0.87 (0.93)	-0,08 (0.52)	-0.59 (0.36)
Retired	-2.62***(0.88)	-0.65 (0.69)	-0.83* (0.49)
Housewife	-0.15 (0.78)	-0.44 (0.60)	0.29 (0.38)
Student	1.16 (1.14)	0.20 (0.64)	0.17 (0.50)
Education level[e]			
Primary	-1.61 (4.12)	1.16 (1.31)	-0.86 (1.24)
Secondary	-1.37 (4.15)	1.84 (1.36)	0.02 (1.27)
Graduate	-1.80 (4.16)	0.70 (1.35)	-0.66 (1.28)
Church attendance[f]			
Only religious holidays or less	-0.38 (0.64)	0.84** (0.33)	0.69***(0.24)
At least once a month/week	-0.96 (0.72)	1.32***(0.68)	0.91** (0.37)
More than once a week	-1.83* (1.02)	-1.56** (0.78)	-0.59 (0.63)
Assessment of basic political issues			
Government decision on Iraq[g]			
Average	-0.40 (0.55)		-0.47 (0.37)
Good/Very good	-3.48** (1.52)		-1.23 (0.84)
Governmental performance[g]			
Average	-1.95** (0.84)	1.09** (0.44)	-0.31 (0.25)
Good/Very good	-5.11** (0.95)	-0.41 (0.65)	-1.31***(0.35)
Evaluation of leaders and self-placement[h]			
José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (PSOE)	1.22***(0.17)	0.91***(0.10)	0.51***(0.06)
Mariano Rajoy (PP)	-0.50***(0.13)		
Gaspar Llamazares (IU)		-0.77***(0.10)	
Voters' self-placement	-1.05***(0.17)	0.46***(0.13)	-0.47***(0.08)
Assessment of economic situation[g]			
Average	0.30 (0.94)	-0.02 (0.37)	0.50* (0.28)
Good/Very good	-0.88 (0.92)	0.45 (0.49)	-0.13 (0.30)
Influence of M-11 attacks[i]			
Consequence of PP government foreign policy	2.73***(0.76)	0.96** (0.40)	1.18***(0.28)
PP government information on authors of attacks	1.71***(0.59)	0.07 (0.37)	1.44***(0.31)
Other political variables			
Interest in politics[j]			

Little			0.71***(0.27)
Some/A lot			1.34***(0.31)
Satisfaction with how democracy is working[k]			
Low			1.10** (0.45)
Some/A lot			2.00***(0.45)
Constant	4.87 (4.47)	-4.13** (1.66)	-3.77** (1.49)
Number of observations	1,381	917	1,132
% of correctly predicted cases	97.8	91.7	87.1
Pseudo R^2	0.90	0.46	0.43

[a] Robust standard deviations (in brackets). Levels of significance are ***p <0.01; **p <0.05; *p <0.1.
[b] The reference category (RC) (that to which the coefficients of the various models is compared) is being a woman.
[c] The RC is being single, divorced, and widowed.
[d] The RC is dependent worker.
[e] The RC is being illiterate and lacking education.
[f] The RC is never going to church.
[g] The RC is a bad or very bad assessment. The variable of assessment of the incumbent decision on Iraq could not be included in the regression that explains the decision to vote for the PSOE instead of the IU because there was no variability among IU voters.
[h] Evaluations of political leaders are graded from 0 (very unfavorable) to 10 (very favorable). Voters' self-placement in an ideological scale is graded from 1 (left) to 10 (right).
[i] The RC is no influence. In both cases, they have been operationalized as two dichotomous variables which have the value of 1 when the respondent agrees with the statements included in the table, and 0 when they do not.
[j] The RC is no interest.
[k] The RC is no satisfaction with the way democracy is working.
Source: Demoscopia Survey, 2004.

The effect of socio-demographic factors, opinions on parties, and assessments of the economy play a similar role to that already known by previous analyses of electoral behavior[24]; although interesting, they are not addressed further here. All we wish to note here is that most of the variables are signed in the theoretically-expected direction, that many are statistically significant, and that the models correctly classify almost all respondents in each sample. Religiosity, age, civil status, and employment situation had a relevant impact on the propensity to vote for the PSOE instead of the PP, as well as on the decision to non-voting. Evaluations of political leaders and ideological self-placements are highlighted in the three models. As expected, government evaluations had a high and negative

impact on the decision to vote for the PSOE rather than the PP, and less of an impact on the decision to abstain. By contrast, the economic situation ceased to have the importance it had in previous elections.

The important coefficients to focus for our purposes are those on the M-11 variables. As can be seen, both coefficients are positive and statistically significant in all the regressions; the only exception is the view of government information about those responsible for the attacks on the decision to vote for the PSOE instead of the IU. Thus, the probability of voting for the PSOE instead of the PP and instead abstaining was higher for respondents who think that the Madrid attacks were the result of the policy on Iraq, and/or for those who have a negative view of government information about the authorship of the attacks. But the probability of voting for the PSOE rather than the IU was only higher in the former case.

Causal Mechanisms and Electoral Consequences

The above data clearly shows that M-11 had an impact on electoral behavior in two ways. First, because the government was blamed for the attacks as a result of its support for the war in Iraq; second, because of the view that government information about those responsible for the attacks was at best self-interested and at worst manipulative. Each view reinforced the other. If a significant proportion of Spaniards held the government responsible for the massacre only three days before the election because of the government's policy on Iraq, the government's attempts to blame ETA even as evidence mounted up suggesting the opposite, finally triggered the increasing dissatisfaction that many Spaniards had felt over the preceding four years.

Both reasons need to be examined more closely. Why was the government held responsible for M-11 when previous governments had not been blamed for ETA attacks? Contrary to what the government said, not all types of terrorism are the same: at least in the mind of voters, there are relevant differences between ETA and Al Qaeda terrorism. First, there is no causal link between government decisions and ETA terrorism: *all* democratic governments in Spain have had to face that threat. By contrast,

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many Spaniards assumed there was a link between the foreign policy of the PP government and the Al Qaeda attacks. Second, government anti-terrorist policies had never been questioned by either political leaders or citizens, at least until the PP came to power in 1996, and the issue was not included by any party in any electoral campaigns. By contrast, a huge majority of Spaniards and all the parties except the PP disagreed with the government's reasons for supporting the intervention in Iraq (the non-existent weapons of mass destruction, the alleged terrorist links of the Iraqi dictatorship, or the also alleged United Nations authorization). Thus, while anti-ETA policies can be characterized as a *valence* issue (over which there is a shared view), intervention in Iraq was a *position* issue (a conflictive one, shaped by each individual's ideological position)[25]. In this regard, Table 7 shows opinions on and assessments of government and ETA terrorism. It confirms that, unlike Al Qaeda terrorism, this clearly is a valence issue[26]. While there was mass rejection of the government's decision to support the war in Iraq, only 26 percent of Spaniards disapproved of anti-ETA government policy in 1988; and only 16 percent had a negative view of the PSOE government in 1988 (compared with 34 percent for the PP in 2000). It is clear that ETA terrorism is a valence issue given the random distribution among various parties of those citizens dissatisfied with PSOE government anti-terrorist policies in 1988: 17 percent voted for the PP, 11 percent voted for PSOE, and 5 percent votes for the IU. Similarly, only 35 percent of respondents in 2000 thought that the socialist government would have changed anti-terrorist policies for the better or for the worse, compared with the PP government.

Table 7
Opinions and Assessments Regarding ETA Terrorism, 1988 and 2000 (in percentages)

Opinions and Assessments on whether Respondents…	
Approve of PSOE government anti-terrorist policies (1988)	
Yes	54
No	26
No answer	19
Evaluate PSOE government combating violence (1988)	
Good/Very good	38

Average	31
Bad/Very bad	16
No answer	15
Evaluate PP government anti-terrorist policies (2000)	
Good/Very good	28
Average	28
Bad/Very bad	34
No answer	9
How the PSOE would have dealt with anti-terrorism if it had been in power (2000)	
Better	12
Same	45
Worse	23
No answer	20

Sources: See footnote 27.

The situation changes dramatically when one takes Iraq into account. As Table 8 shows, almost 8 in every 10 Spaniards had a negative view of government policy on this issue. Assessments of government policy on Iraq were clearly divided between the parties of the left and the PP. Further, it was felt that the government ignored the preferences of the majority of Spaniards: no less than 87 percent thought this in 2004. What is more, the government was not considered representative: a government is representative when its policies and decisions best serve the interests of citizens, even when they contradict the preferences of some or most citizens in the short-term[27]. Government policy on Iraq was, at best, based on an information asymmetry: as long as people did not know whether there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, PP leaders believed it was possible to argue that the invasion was the best way to safeguard the interests of Spanish citizens. But after the Saddam regime was toppled and no such weapons were found, citizens rejected the government's policy: only 5 percent of Spaniards believed that the war was worth it, and an overwhelming 86 percent felt otherwise. In other words, the government was not representative. And because it failed to act representatively, it may be punished in the ballot box: after the M-14 elections, 21 percent of respondents said that the invasion of Iraq had had a strong influence on their vote, and 16 percent said it had influenced their vote somewhat[28].

Table 8
Opinions on and Assessments of the War in Iraq, by Party Vote in 2004 (in percentages)[a]

Opinions and assessments	Party vote			
	IU	PSOE	PP	Total
Government decision to back Iraq invasion				
Positive	-	1	28	7
Neutral	13	4	33	12
Negative	87	94	34	76
Government action in Iraq war responded to majority of public opinion				
Yes	-	2	12	4
No	100	95	72	87
The war in Iraq was worth it				
Yes	-	1	19	5
No	97	97	63	86
Government performance over Iraq influenced vote				
A lot	12	10	2	7
Somewhat	11	24	6	14
A little	17	21	19	16
Not at all	60	43	70	56
(*N*)	(119)	(1,053)	(469)	(2,929)

[a] Percentages do not add up to one hundred because non answers have not been included. Positive views include "very good" and "good" responses; neutral views include "not good or bad"; and negative views include "bad" and "very bad".
Source: Demoscopia Survey, 2004.

In sum, additionally to the massive rejection of the incumbent policy on Iraq, the government was also blamed for the terrorist attacks that were for many connected to that policy. Further, efforts to manipulate information about who was responsible for the attacks aggravated the problem and were even radically rejected by many voters. In reality, the latter reinforced pre-existing negative views of governmental performance as a whole. As Barreiro notes, the "style" of the PP government was characterized by its tendency to ignore public opinion, lack of transparency, and a systematic scorn for opponents[29]. Assessments of specific government policies were similarly negative. As shown in Table 9, dissatisfaction was generalized in every policy area, except those of economy and employment, and with particular intensity in some cases[30]. If the perceptions that the government was responsible for M-11 (or that its information about its authorship were manipulated) were a necessary condition for the electoral punishment of

the PP, the negative view of practically all areas of policy areas was a sufficient condition for the PSOE to win former IU or PP voters, mobilize former non-voters, and attract young voters[31]. Thus, the attacks and the subsequent government manipulation triggered electoral changes that evolved during the electoral campaign. But those changes were made possible by the negative views of government policies as a whole over the preceding four years[32].

Table 9
Assessments of Government Policy Performance by Party Vote in 2004 (in percentages)[a]

	Party vote			
Assessments	IU	PSOE	PP	Total
Economy and work				
Positive	30	41	96	56
Negative	58	55	3	39
Education				
Positive	16	19	79	35
Negative	81	72	14	45
Social policies				
Positive	16	21	73	39
Negative	82	73	15	54
Housing				
Positive	3	7	54	20
Negative	93	89	42	73
Terrorism				
Positive	15	18	78	33
Negative	85	77	20	61
Emigration				
Positive	9	12	61	26
Negative	86	80	33	65
Taxes				
Positive	23	23	75	37
Negative	69	72	20	54
Foreign policy				
Positive	7	13	76	31
Negative	84	78	18	57
(*N*)	(119)	(1,053)	(469)	(2,929)

[a] Percentages do not add up to one hundred because non answers have not been included. Positive opinions include the "very good" and "good" responses; negative opinions include the "bad" and "very bad" responses.
Source: Demoscopia Survey, 2004.

From *What* to *How Much*: Three Counter-factual Simulations

Having shown the link between voting behavior and M-11 through these two causal mechanisms, it is now necessary to determine the extent to which they had an impact on the election results. Counter-factual simulations can be used to ascertain what might have happened if the attacks had *not* taken place. As is well known, counterfactual analyses allow one to revise a causal hypothesis when research design is not experimental, or, in other words, the situation under study cannot be reproduced: counterfactual simulations draw inferences about events that did not actually happen[33]. Our results are summarized in Table 10. It shows what would have occurred under different scenarios, with simulations based on the regression estimates of Table 6. The percentages for the PSOE-PP, PSOE-IU and PSOE-non-voting comparisons have been calculated so that they add up to 100 percent for each pair. The survey results are reproduced in the first column[34]. The second column shows the electoral results arrived at on the basis of the three regression models (using the statistically significant coefficients in Table 6, and including the M-11 variables), with a separate calculation for the probability that each voter will vote for the PSOE rather than the PP; for the PSOE rather than the IU; and for the PSOE rather than abstain. In each case, the most probable electoral behavior is attributed to each person, with a 50 percent threshold. Thus, if a respondent is likely to vote for the PSOE by 46 percent and for the PP by 54 percent, they will appear as likely to vote for the PP. As it turns out, the PSOE has 64.9 percent and the PP has 35.1 percent of the vote; the PSOE has 76.4 and the IU 23.6 percent of the vote; and the PSOE gets 92.5 and non-voting gets 7.5 percent.

Table 10
Three Simulations of Electoral Results according to Different Scenarios (in percentages)

Parties	Survey data	Predictions based on regression models	Simulation 1 (no impact of information management on attacks)	Simulation 2 (no influence of government policy in Iraq)	Simulation 3 (simulations 1 and 2 aggregated)
PSOE	65.9	64.9	63.5	63.6	62.2
PP	34.1	35.1	36.5	36.4	37.8
PSOE	73.4	92.5	90.9	91.6	90.6
Abstention	26.6	7.5	9.1	8.4	9.9
PSOE	90.4	76.4	76.4	72.9	72.9
IU	9.6	23.6	23.6	27.1	27.1

Source: Demoscopia Survey, 2004.

Three simulations were undertaken to estimate what would have happened to each pair of comparisons if nobody had thought that the attacks were the consequence of the conservative government's policy in Iraq; if nobody had been influenced by the manipulation by the government when disseminating information about the authorship of the attacks; and if the two above scenarios were simultaneously true. To obtain these results, coefficients in Table 6 were used to calculate the probability of each type of electoral behavior, although first setting to 0 the variable on "consequence of PP government foreign policy". The same thing was then done with the variable on "PP government information on authors"; and finally, the same was done with both variables. As shown in Table 10, in the first simulation the vote for the PSOE fell by 1.4 percentage points, and the vote for the PP rose by the same amount; the vote for the PSOE diminished by 1.6 percentage points, and abstention increased by 1.6 percentage points; and the vote for the PSOE and the IU did not change. In the second simulation, the vote for the PSOE fell by 1.3 points and that rose by the same amount for the PP; the vote for the PSOE declined by 0.9 percentage points, and abstention increased by 0.9 percentage points; and the vote for the IU increased by 3.5 points, and decreased for the PSOE by 3.5 points. Finally,

in the third simulation, the vote for the PSOE fell by 2.7 points, and rose by the same amount for the PP; the vote for the PSOE fell by 1.9 points, and abstention increased by 1.9 points; and the vote for the IU rose by 3.5 points and fell for the PSOE by 3.5 percentage points.

The results of these simulations show clearly that the attacks had a small but significant impact on voting behavior, and that its effects were particularly important in terms of mobilizing abstainers and of transferring votes from the IU to the PSOE. For IU supporters, the assessment of PP government foreign policy was more relevant than how the government managed information after the attacks. PP voters and abstainers in particular also responded more to this latter issue.

These conclusions must be interpreted with caution. As Heraclitus of Ephesus warned, one cannot swim twice in the waters of the same river: the assumption "all things being equal" is never completely satisfied in a simulation. And polls are only approximations to reality. The reconstruction of electoral behavior on March 14 is imperfect. Therefore, the conclusions of this empirical analysis must be seen more as an attempt to highlight the causal mechanisms through M-11 influenced the general election than as a precise quantification of that influence.

Conclusions: Political Responsibility and Democratic Accountability

According to so-called catastrophe theory, small, hidden changes can produce important changes when they are able to become apparent[35]. The impact of M-11 on electoral behavior on March 14 does not confirm these assumptions. If anything, the opposite seems to be true: the unexpected and traumatic M-11 attacks have not changed the electoral preferences of Spaniards. This article has aimed to determine the causal effect of the attacks on their voting behavior on March 14, and to analyze how that effect worked. After the statistical analyses undertaken on the basis of the post-electoral survey by *Demoscopia*, we have estimated that the attacks would have given a slightly higher percentage of votes to the PSOE. Even with the caution necessary in such analyses, this is a much more modest

proportion than that (needless to say, absolutely imprecise) which is usually referred to in political debates. Whatever the case, it must be remembered that if the attacks had *not* taken place, either the PP or the PSOE could have won the election: only days before M-11, the polls pointed to a "technical tie". The reaction to the attacks changed that because of the negative assessments of both government foreign policy to support the invasion of Iraq and the manipulation by the government when informing the public about the authorship between the March 11 and March 14. While the former factor was particularly important in mobilizing abstainers and in turning IU voters –and PP voters to a lesser extent– into PSOE voters, the latter factor additionally explains why former abstainers voted for the PSOE, but were not relevant for IU voters.

These reactions did not happen in a vacuum. They were conditioned by the also negative evaluations of the incumbent performance over the preceding four years. The results are conclusive. Every policy, barring economic and employment policy, was viewed negatively. This retrospective judgment became a sufficient condition for the PSOE to win former IU and PP votes, for former abstainers to participate, and for young voters to mobilize in the wake of the terrible commotion caused by attacks, and for which government was blamed.

In the first chapter of his famous posthumous book, Key emphasized that his "perverse and unorthodox argument" could be summarized by the statement that "voters are not fool"[36]: although some certainly may act strangely, the majority behaves rationally and responsibly in light of the alternatives and information at their disposal. It must be added that voters are not blind either, although they are sometimes short-sighted; and nor are they amnesiac, although they are sometimes absent-minded. Faced with events like M-11, voters' retrospective judgments do not have to be blind, in the sense posited by Achen and Bartels[37], when it comes to holding a government to account. Moreover, the institutional conditions made accountability possible[38]: the high level of clarity about responsibility for the development of policies was maximized by the absolute majority support enjoyed by a single governing and cohesive party without internal divisions

or alternative leadership. Thus, the PP defeat was not just caused by the terrible attacks *per se*, but also by the working of the basic mechanisms that ensure democratic accountability. In a democracy, governments are representative because they are elected. Elections serve to hold governments accountable for their past actions. As they anticipate the judgment of voters, governments have a strong incentive to implement policies that are likely to be assessed positively. At the end of each legislature, governments are held accountable to the electorate for their management of public affairs. Voters assess their performance and vote accordingly. Because the majority of Spaniards felt that the government did not respond to their demands and was further unable to convince them that its policies were the best ones possible, they had a textbook response: punishment at the ballot box. When expressing their electoral choice, Spaniards collectively punished the PP and paved the way for a PSOE government. Ultimately, the vote became the decisive instrument used by citizens to control and, in this case, punish the government.

Notes

1. Analyses of the PP government's performance in 2000-2004 and of the 2004 electoral campaign, as well as the election results and their impact on the party system, can be found in Belén Barreiro, "14-M: elecciones a la sombra del terrorismo", *Claves de Razón Práctica* 141 (2004): 14-22; Josep M. Colomer, "The General Election in Spain, March 2004", *Electoral Studies* 24 (2005): 149-156; Julián Santamaría, "El azar y el contexto: las elecciones generales de 2004", *Claves de Razón Práctica* 146 (2004): 28-40; Mariano Torcal and Guillermo Rico, "The Spanish General Election: In the Shadow of Al-Qaeda?", *South European Society and Politics*, 9 (3) 2004: 107-121; Robert M. Fishman, "On the Continuing Relevance of the Weberian Methodological

Perspective (With Applications to the Spanish Case of Elections in the Aftermath of Terrorism)", Notre Dame: Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame, Working Paper 317, 2005; Narciso Michavila, "Guerra, terrorismo y elecciones: incidencia electoral de los atentados islamistas en Madrid", Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, Working Paper 13, 2004; Pablo Oñate and Francisco A. Ocaña, "Las elecciones generales de marzo de 2004 y los sistemas de partidos en España: ¿tanto cambio electoral?", *Revista Española de Ciencia Política* 13 (2005): 159-182; Francesc Pallarès, Alex Bosso and Jordi Muñoz, "Las elecciones generales de 2004 en España", in Instituto de Derecho Público, *Informe Comunidades Autónomas 2004*. Barcelona: Instituto de Derecho Público, 2004; Alberto Sanz and Ana Sánchez-Sierra, "Las elecciones generales de 2004 en España: estilo de gobierno, política exterior y movilización", Madrid: Departamento de Ciencia Política y Relaciones Internacionales, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Working Paper 48, 2005. *Fundación Alternativas* (FA) also published a debate among experts on these issues; see FA, "Guerra de Irak y elecciones del 14 M: un año después. Debate de expertos", Madrid: Fundación Alternativas, Seminarios y Jornadas 12, 2005.

2. Paul Allen Beck, "Incomplete Realignment: The Reagan Legacy for Parties and Elections", in Charles O. Jones (ed.), *The Reagan Legacy: Promise and Performance*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1988, pp. 153-154.

3. Paul Pennings and Hans Keman, "The Dutch Parliamentary Elections in 2002 and 2003: The Rise and Decline of the Fortuyn Movement", *Acta Politica* 38 (2003): 51-68.

4. The terrorist attack with the highest number of victims took place in December 1988 in Lockerbie, Scotland, when Libyan agents crashed a Pan Am flight on its London-New York route: 259 passengers and crew were killed, and another 11 people died hit by falling debris.

5. See, for instance, Edurne Uriarte, *Terrorismo y democracia tras el 11-M*. Madrid: Espasa, 2004, p. 30.

6. José Ignacio Wert, "Sondagens de opinão pública em Espanha e em Portugal", *Análise Social* 167 (2003): 573-598.

7. The first assumption is made in Carlos Malo de Molina, "La matriz de transferencia de voto", Presentation at the XIII Seminar on Political and Sociological Research, AEDEMO, Madrid, 2004; the second appears in the presentation by Julián Santamaría in the FA, "Guerra de Irak", pp. 33-34.

8. Ignacio Lago and José Ramón Montero, "'Todavía no sé quiénes, pero ganaremos': manipulación política del sistema electoral español", *Zona Abierta* 110-111 (2005): 277-348.

9. See, for instance, the trends included in www.pollingreport.com.

10. Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca and Belén Barreiro, *Los efectos de la acción de gobierno en el voto durante la etapa socialista (1982-1996)*. Madrid: CIS, Opiniones y Actitudes 29, 2000.

11. Sanz and Sánchez-Sierra, "Las elecciones generales de 2004 en España", p. 17.

12. Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, "Elections and Representation", in A. Przeworski, S.C. Stokes, and B. Manin (eds.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 40.

13. Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels, "Blind Retrospection: Electoral Responses to Drought, Flu, and Shark Attacks", Madrid: Instituto Juan March, Working Paper 199, 2004.

14. V. O. Key Jr., *The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting 1936-1960.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966, p. 76.

15. This survey was directed by Richard Gunther and J. R. Montero, and conducted in April-May 2004, covering a representative sample of 2.929 adult Spaniards. The survey was financed by a consortium of researchers from Ohio State University, the Autonomous University of Madrid, the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Pompeu Fabra University, the University of Santiago de Compostela, and the Institute of Social Studies of Andalusia.

16. It should be noted that the *Demoscopia* survey, like most undertaken after the M-14 elections, notably under-represents PP voters. Our results are therefore more reliable for showing how M-11 influenced the election than for showing the extent to which it did so. Nonetheless, given that the political debate focused on the first issue and given that the intensity of that influence is well known, the *Demoscopia* survey is perfectly adequate to respond to the questions posed here.

17. Voters were asked, "When did you decide to vote for your party?".

18. Respondents were asked, "What influence did the attack of March 11 in Madrid have on your voting decision?".

19. All respondents were asked, "How did the attack in Madrid influence your vote?".

20. All respondents were asked, "What most influenced your decision?".

21. The BNG rather than other regional parties was chosen because vote transfers before and after the attacks were only significant for the Galician nationalists.

22. The use of such a well-specified model of voter choice does mean that we have some attrition of survey respondents due to the fact that some respondents did not answer a number of questions necessary to operationalize all of these variables. However, our samples appear very similar to the larger sample from which our data was drawn, thus providing us confidence in the representativeness of our samples of Spanish voters.

23. Given the high number of parameters and specifications estimated, logistical regression facilitates the presentation and interpretation of the results more

than a multinomial model. Further, both are equivalent. See Michael R. Álvarez and Jonathan Nagler, "When Politics and Models Collide: Estimating Models of Multiparty Elections", *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (1998): 55-96. According to the results of the Hausman test, not presented here, the assumption of the so-called *independence of irrelevant alternatives* (IIA) can be accepted for all three models.

24. See, for instance, Ignacio Lago, *El voto estratégico en las elecciones generales en España (1977-2000). Efectos y mecanismos causales en la explicación del comportamiento electoral.* Madrid: CIS/Siglo XXI, 2005, as well as the articles included in the *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, (6, 2002), coordinated by Julián Santamaría and J. R. Montero, which is dedicated to the March 2000 election.

25. According to Stokes' classical definitions, position issues refer to those involving a defense of government actions from among a set of alternatives that define the distribution of voter preferences. Valence issues simply link the choice of political party with general conditions that most voters view positively or negatively; cf. Donald E. Stokes, "Spatial Models of Party Competition", *American Political Science Review* 57 (1966), p. 372.

26. The data on ETA terrorism are surprisingly scant. Information from the CIS databank is used here, and refers to survey 1.729 (February 1988) and survey 2.382 (February 2000). See also Sánchez-Cuenca and Barreiro, *Los efectos de la acción del gobierno*, pp. 48 ff.

27. See Przeworski, Manin and Stokes, "Elections and Representation", pp. 29-30.

28. For a comparison of these data with those for other countries, which confirm the intensity of Spanish assessments, see, for instance, Philip Everts and Pierangelo Isernia, "The Polls-Trends: The War in Iraq", *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69 (2) 2005: 264-323.

29. In FA, "Guerra de Irak y elecciones del 14 M", p. 8.

30. Despite this exception, it should be remembered that in Table 6 the economic policy is only relevant to explain the vote for the PSOE rather than abstention, and only to a limited degree.

31. It should also be remembered that, according to Table 6, assessments of governmental performance over the last four years was a fundamental variable to explain the PSOE vote vis-à-vis the PP, the IU, and even abstention.

32. See Torcal and Rico, "The Spanish General Election", p. 108.

33. See James D. Fearon, "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science", *World Politics* 43 (1991): 169-195. For an empirical application of counterfactual analyses in the study of electoral behavior, see Michael R. Álvarez and Jonathan Nagler, "Economics, Entitlements, and Social Issues: Voter Choice in the 1996 Presidential Election", *American Journal of Political*

Science 42 (1998): 1349-1363; and by the same authors, "A New Approach for Modeling Strategic Voting in Multiparty Elections", *British Journal of Political Science* 30 (2000): 57-75.

34. It should be noted that under-representation of PP voters is considerable in the Demoscopia survey: the relationship between PSOE and PP voters is practically 2:1, which is far from reality. However, the relationship between PSOE and IU voters (9:1) and PSOE voters and non-voters (7:3) are quite similar to the results of the actual elections. This means that the simulations data are more reliable in these latter two cases than in the first.

35. Courtney Brown, *Chaos and Catastrophe Theories.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995.

36. Key, *The Responsible Electorate*, p. 7.

37. Achen and Bartels, "Blind Retrospection", p. 28.

38. G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, chap. 3.