TERRORISM, CONTEXT AND ELECTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY

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Abstract:
A correct electoral accountability is essential to control government’s performance in modern democracies, but there are some factors that can affect this accountability. For instance: information requirements, institutional elements, or the nature of vote as the only and simultaneous way to judge, etc. Other factors, related to the context, can also be decisive: terrorism is an example. It is commonly admitted that terrorism is an issue that usually goes in favour of conservative parties so, to some extent, it could be expected that a high terrorist threat could make some voters to give their ballot to whom they consider the most capable to deal with it instead of evaluating the government’s performance. There is another way in which terrorism can affect electoral accountability: Political parties can use certain strategies to manipulate public opinion, if context does not play in their favour, and thus escape a possible negative retrospective judgment. One possible strategy could be to introduce a winning dimension in the electoral debate, this could be terrorism.
Introduction:

Any minimally complex organization, including political ones, has to face the contradiction between two equally rational desires: making collectively binding decisions in an effective way, and having enough controls over decision makers to protect ourselves from any harmful decision. It is the problem that summarizes the old formula: ¿Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? (O'Donnell, 1998:13-14). A problem that also contemporary democracies have to face.

Current democracies are mostly representative ones (Martinez, 2004:662). The thesis that relates democracy with representation argues that in democracy governments are representative because they are elected. If the competition in elections is free, if participation is high and if citizens enjoy political freedom, then governments will act in the interest of the citizens (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 2002:19). In this respect we can distinguish two ways of understanding representation and elections. On the one hand, we have authors who argue that elections work as a mechanism for selecting candidates in a prospective way (Fearon, 1999). On the other hand, others authors argue that elections are a retrospective mechanism to assess the government performance (Key, 1966; Fiorina, 1981). On this basis we can talk, respectively, as mandated representation or representation as Accountability.

In modern democracies there are no possible mechanisms to control governments through the mandate (Przeworski 1997:7), but this does not mean there are no other ways of control. For instance, if citizens can induce them to anticipate that they will be held accountable for their past actions, some kind of control can be made (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes 2002:32). Friedrich (1968: 199-215) argues that citizens' interests are taken into account by the rulers because they fulfill the law of anticipated reactions. Since they assume their post, politicians are thinking about the next election, their claim is to be re-elected, and they know that citizens would evaluate their management. In this sense, the election would be a mechanism of control. If governments want to be re-elected, they will anticipate the wishes of the voters and implement policies that meet their desires (Fiorina, 1981: 194, Ferejohn 1986: 7, Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 1999: 30-32). But for this it is necessary that the reasons of electoral rewards and punishments are due to the actions of rulers (Maravall, 2003: 22 and 72), and this is not always true.
There are some factors that can hinder this mechanism: information problems (Manin 1998; Manin, Przeworski and Stokes 2002; Maravall 1999 and 2003; Montero and Lake, 2006; Stokes, 1996), ideology as a factor that attenuates the retrospective implications of the vote (Maravall and Przeworski, 1999: 37), certain institutional factors\(^1\), the nature of vote as the only and simultaneous way to judge. Apart from these, there are other factors related to the context that can also be decisive: terrorism is an example. It is commonly admitted that terrorism is an issue that usually goes in favour of conservative parties so, to some extent, it could be expected that a high terrorist threat could make some voters to give their ballot to whom they consider the most capable to deal with it instead of evaluating the government’s performance. But there is another way in which terrorism can affect electoral accountability: Political parties can use certain strategies to manipulate public opinion (Maravall 1999:178), for example if context does not play in their favour, and thus escape a possible negative retrospective judgment. One possible strategy could be to introduce a winning dimension in the electoral debate, this could be terrorism.

If the electoral effects of international terrorism have been already studied in depth, especially in the United States, and up to a point in Spain\(^2\), these attacks were to some extent isolated, so they were the effects. The question is what happens when these events lose their isolated character? This can be the Spanish case which has suffered from terrorism form the very beginning of his democracy. This paper is part from a bigger study that attempts to evaluate to what extent not only the international terrorism, but also an endemic terrorism as it could be ETA, plays a role as a distortion factor of the electoral accountability in Spain, either by its direct consequences or by the instrumental use that parties do of it.

Although the study will cover the whole democratic period, for this preliminary study we have chosen the VIII legislature. As we could see in the next pages, during this period of time, even though ETA has remained more or less in silence, terrorism has gained a predominant position in the electoral agenda. Moreover it has been the party in the opposition, in this case the PP, the one who has introduced it in the political debate.

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\(^1\) Possible institutional factors are: those that prevent the concentration of power (Powell, 2000; Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 1999), proportional electoral systems (1998:222 Manin, Manin, Przeworski and Stokes 1999:47; Sartori 2005:301), coalition governments (Bosh, Diaz and Riba, 1999; Font, 1999; Powell, 2000:51 and 60; Urquizu, 2003), mandate constraints (Pitkin, 1985: 60-64), the vote as a simultaneous single trial (Aguilar and Sanchez Cuenc, 2008:105), etc.

\(^2\) See Porras Nadales, 2004; Santamaría, 2004; Torcal, 2004; Duran Muñoz, 2005; Michavila, 2005; Olmeda, 2005; Sanz y Sierra, 2005; Montero y Lago, 2006, among others. Most of them mention the possible effects of the declarations in the days after the terrorist attack.
Most of the studies that have been done on public opinion manipulation with electoral purposes have focused on the strategies developed by the politicians in power (Maravall, 2003), without considering the possibility that the opposition could also be interested in preventing the citizens from using retrospective criteria. Schattschneider (1960 in Subirats and Gomà, 1998: 26) states that the one who determines what is the main concern of politics is the one who governs the country. If this is true we may think that the opposition party may also have interest in manipulating public opinion.

For example, what happens when the assessment of government performance is positive? Or when the prime minister clearly surpasses the leader of the opposition? When the political and economic context and assessments of the President and Executive are favorable to the party in government, the opposition can introduce cross-cutting issues such as terrorism within the electoral debate, as a winning dimension, preventing citizens from deciding their vote on the basis of merely retrospective criteria.

To check this hypothesis we are going to analyze the VIII legislature in Spain. As we have already mentioned this is a period in which terrorism has gained a central position in the political debate, it is also a period of time in which the evaluations of political and economic situation of the country are quite good, as well as are those of the government performance. And it is also a period of time in which ETA´s terrorism shouldn´t have been in the center of the debate by itself.

The paper has four sections, in the first one there is a brief introduction about the ETA terrorism and the changes in its intensity; then we focus in the studied effects that this kind of terrorism has had in the electoral behavior in Spain; then we analyze how was the VIII legislature and the elections that took place in this term; finally we make some analysis of the possible effects in public opinion and electoral behavior in this particular case; we end with the conclusions of the study.

**Terrorism in Spain**

In 1959, a new organization was founded with the clear aim of achieving secession of the Basque Country, its name was ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna; Basque Country and freedom). At the beginning most of its actions, like the ones of its predecessor, EKIN, had cultural nature,

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but this changed in the late 1960’s, when ETA perpetrated its first terrorist attack. Since then and until its recent declaration -in October 2011- to permanently abandon violence, Spain has suffered four decades of terrorism, in which ETA has killed over eight hundred of people converting terrorism into a constant feature of Spanish Politics⁵.

Although ETA has been present during these four decades, its actions have not been constant. In fact there have been some ceasefire declarations in which ETA has stopped its killings, even thought this does not mean that during these periods there has been a total absence of violent actions. Graph 1 shows the number of fatalities caused by ETA from 1985 to 2011. Following De la Calle and Sánchez Cuenca (2011:51) we have chosen the number of fatalities as an indicator, and not other terrorist actions, such as kidnapping, hostage-taking, extortion and other non-lethal attacks in general, because there is more information available about lethal attacks than non-lethal ones, and these are the ones systematically recorded in most countries. Secondly, fatalities are a homogenous category, which makes comparison easier, and finally, because killings are the actions which have the greatest impact.

As we have mentioned before not only terrorist attacks can be a distortion factor, also the use that political parties do of them should be considered. Graph 2 reflects the relevance that the terrorism has in the public opinion during the same period of time. As both graphs show there is not a clear relationship between these two indicators. This could be due to the kind of terrorist attacks, because not all of them have the same repercussion. For example in 2000 ETA includes politicians as one of its preferred target, and this has a great impact on the public opinion. Another fact that has to be taken into account is the so called Kalle Borroka (street violence) acts.

Since 1992 there is a drop in the ETA´s lethal capacity, this is when street violence becomes a relevant factor. This kind of acts helped ETA to maintain the public visibility of violence, and at the same time to “label” people who do not accommodate the radical ideology (De la Calle, 2007:432). In fact Graph 3 shows how the decline in ETA fatalities matches with an increase in the street violence acts⁶.

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⁵ One of the main characteristics of ETA terrorism was its duration (Sánchez Cuenca, 2001:26-27, Barros y Gil-Alana, 2006:95), and have been listed as one of the most violent terrorist groups in Europe, exceeded only by the IRA (Douglass y Zulaika, 1990:238; Shabad y Llera, 1995: 411).
⁶ The graph only covers the period between 1990 and 2000, because we have not found more available data.
Graph 1: Number of fatalities caused by ETA

Data reflect the percentage of people that considers that terrorism is the main problem in Spain. Red lines reflect the time of the different elections.

Source: The Victims of ETA Dataset (De la Calle and Sánchez Cuenca, 2011)

Source: CIS (Center of Sociological Research)
Stating that terrorism interferes in the democratic process may be obvious, what does not seem so clear is how. Fiorina (1981:5-6) defending the model of representation as accountability, claims that voters reward or punish the rulers in terms of changes in their own welfare, but in the case of terrorism, the mechanism behind the rewards and punishments of voters is not exactly the same. The electorate does not usually consider the fight against terrorism conducted by the government, but the number of attacks (Gassebner, Jong-A-Pin and Mierau, 2008:126). While this is common in most cases, the Spanish case is quite different. Belén Barreiro, in an article published in *El País* on March 16, 2004, stated that in Spain the vote to the parties in government has never depended on the number of victims of ETA. According to this author, voters do not punish the attacks but the management that these governments do of them. Moreover, Montero and Lago (2006:5-6) show how, even though ETA has been involved in several election campaigns, both national and regional, voters have not changed their behaviour at the polls for it. It is important to mention that in the Spanish case ETA terrorist attacks have affected all governments, regardless of their colour.

On the other hand, Sánchez Cuenca and Barreiro (2000:11) explain that not all policies are assigned the same responsibility. They claim that that some are outside government control, being terrorism one of the clearest examples of these policies. But if what we have just said is true, if the terrorist attacks do not have direct effects on the decision to vote of the electors, if the war against terrorism is a clear example of policy that escapes government control, why do we say that terrorism is a distortion factor of the mechanisms of vertical accountability?
If we assume that the vote only can function as an accountability mechanism to make the rulers accountable for their actions, if citizens make a retrospective judgment when they go to vote (Maravall 1999:157), any element or action which searches that the electors vote according to other criteria will become an obstacle for a correct accountability mechanism. This could be the case when some political parties include some issue as a distortion factor in the electoral debate, trying to tip the balance in their own benefit. Politicians can use different strategies to manipulate public opinion with the aim of avoiding a possible retrospective judgment (Maravall 1999:178). This is common when the ruling party had applied unpopular policies, or when it has broken the promises made during the election campaign. As a matter of fact, they can blame exogenous agents beyond the control of the government. For instance, they can present a bad economic situation as a consequence of an international crisis, or as a result of the situation inherited from the previous government.

Another strategy employed by those who occupy the government is to prevent the critical dimensions of certain policies becoming public, making them opaque to public opinion (Maravall, 1999:172). Examples of such policies include those of security and defence, often protected under the label of "reason of state". Another example of "state policy" could be counter-terrorism policy. So the question that should be raised is why one of these policies that have stayed away from the election debates becomes the centre of them. Are they introduced by any of the contenders as a possible winner dimension? What happens when these policies come to light? Lang and Lang (1983, in Maravall 1999:175) argue that when this happens, that policy becomes the subject of a battle for public opinion. Moreover, this dimension can become a winning one for the ones who have introduced it.

**VIII Legislature**

The legislature VIII begins with the PSOE victory in the elections held on March 14, 2004, in a context of shock after the 11 M attacks and the climate of political tension generated around the authorship of the attacks. The fact that the attacks were the work of Islamic terrorists was an unprecedented element to Spanish politics with possible electoral implications. ETA's authorship could have benefit the ruling party for the achievements in the fight against terrorism, but if the attack was the work of Islamist groups, it would have fallen on the PP for the support given to the United States in the Iraq war, with the clear opposition of Spanish

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7 At the beginning all the media and political parties attributed to ETA the authorship of the attacks, but as the hours passed international media began to point to Al Qaeda as a possible author of the attacks, yet the government continued publicly maintaining the hypothesis that ETA was responsible.
public opinion (Michavila, 2005:5, Montero and Lago, 2006:8). After the elections of March 2004, the climate of tension became higher. The works carried out by the Commission of Inquiry set up in the Congress to clarify the responsibility for the attacks, and in particularly the declarations from certain media, intensified the climate of confrontation between the two main national political parties, PSOE and PP. Since then ETA and terrorism occupied a prominent position in the political debate.

Santamaría and Criado (2008) mention how the 2004-2008 term has been frequently characterized as the legislature of the tension. Tension that the PP promoted from the beginning, focusing the debate in the Statute of Catalonia and in the fight against terrorism. The PP accused the new government of a possible "break" of Spain, of the collapse of the basic consensus, of the betrayal of the terrorism victims, and of selling Navarra to ETA (Santamaria and Criado, 2008:47). In the debate on the State of the Union held on May 11, 2005 M. Rajoy accused the government of "betraying the dead"; on January 15, 2007 at the Congress of Deputies, after the bombings of the T-4 Barajas, came on to say: "if you (Rodríguez Zapatero) do not comply with them, terrorists will put bombs, and if there are no bombs, is that you have given".

These authors distinguish three phases in this term, depending on what were the issues that marked the political agenda. The first would cover the months between spring 2004 and fall 2005. During this time the public agenda was marked by the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and government initiatives in social policy and civil rights, widely supported by public opinion. For its part, the PP strategy focused on discussing the legitimacy of the electoral victory of the PSOE and developed a hard opposition and frontal rejection of the government actions. In the second stage, from the fall of 2005 to spring of 2007, the public agenda, imposed by the PP, was focused on two issues: first, the adoption of the Statute of Catalonia, and, secondly, the peace process in the Basque Country after the declaration by ETA of an indefinite ceasefire in March 2006. In the third stage, which corresponds to the last year of the legislature, the consensuate adoption of several statutes, including the Andalusia’s one, reduced the intensity of the debate about the Catalanian statute. In addition, the turn of the Government in its anti-terrorism policy reduced its prevalence on the agenda in which, however, this two issues, terrorism and territorial debate, remained as important ones.
Political and economic situation in the VIII Legislature

There are two ways in which we can measure the economic situation: by objective or subjective variables. Within the first group the two macroeconomic variables that have a more consistent effect on popularity are the unemployment rate and inflation (Nannestad and Paldam, 1994; Bosh, Diaz and Riba, 1999:181). Graph 4 shows their evolution, including also the GDP.

Graph 4: Unemployment rate, inflation and GDP between April, 2004 and January, 2008.

![Graph showing unemployment rate, inflation, and GDP between April 2004 and January 2008](image)

Source: Spanish National Institute of Statistics

Although these variables are considered as good indicators, the subjective ones seem to be the more important in terms popularity of government (Bosh, Diaz and Riba, 1999:183, 193).
Graph 5: Evaluation of the economic and political situation.

The data reflect the percentage of people that considers that the economic or the political situation is either very good or good.

Source: CIS

These data reflect an assessment of the political and economic situation: while not overly good, not as bad as it could be expected by the time we are analyzing. If some echoes of the economic crisis are already heard in Spain, the crisis does not enter in the political agenda until after the elections of 2008. On the other hand, the behavior of GDP in this period of time is quite good. It is a period in which Spain led the OECD economic growth, with annual growth rates of 3.3% in 2004, 3.6% in 2005, 3.9% in 2006 and 3.8% in 2007 (Report on democracy in Spain, 2008).

But what happens with the evaluation of the government and the opposition performance? Graphs 6 and 7 reflect that, not only in 2007 before the municipal and regional elections, but also in 2008, the valuations of the government are better that opposition ones. If we made the same comparison with the evaluation of ladders (Graph 8 and 9) we check that J.L.R. Zapatero is the one who obtains better punctuations before these two elections.
Graph 6: Evaluation of the government and the opposition performance in 2007

Data expressed as percentages of the total sample.

Source: DA7708.

Graph 7: Evaluation of the government and the opposition performance in 2008

Data expressed as percentages of the total sample.

Source: DA7708.
These data show that, despite the negative assessment made by citizens of the economic and political situation, the context could be favorable to the ruling party. It could be said that at these stage people do not seem to see the government as responsible for the economic and political situation. In addition to the assessment made of the performance of the opposition main party and its leader, the data also indicate that in both cases the ruling party, here the PSOE, was the clear favorite.
**Elections in the VIII legislature.**

We have seen how counter terrorism policies, an issue that usually have been outside of party competition (Santamaría and Criado, 2008:47), has become a central element of political debate during the VIII Legislature. This has also become one of the main issues in the campaign of the municipal elections of 2007, and in 2008, in the legislative ones. This shows by itself a high level of political confrontation between parties, but the question should be if it has had any repercussion in the public opinion. Some authors (Report on Democracy in Spain, 2008; Santamaria and Criado, 2008) have pointed out the possibility that the PP introduced in the political debate crosscutting issues such as terrorist policy to win support within voters in the ideological centre.

The first elections that took place where the 2007 municipal ones. And these elections where a clear example of what has been already mentioned. Although the counter terrorism policy belongs to the national jurisdiction, so it seems that it has no sense to centre the debate on it in a municipal election campaign, terrorism and ETA occupied a central position in the electoral debate. An example of this was the polemic around the case of Iñaki de Juana Chaos, and the confrontation that followed it. Zapatero threatened to uncover the prison policy conducted by the PP, citing the reunification of 43 ETA prisoners to prevent the killing of Ortega Lara. Other events such as Arnaldo Otegui trial held in late March for glorifying terrorism; his appearance in April, with the Lendakari Juan Jose Ibarretxe at the Palace of Justice in Bilbao, and his holding of a meeting banned by the Court Supreme; the attack received by Antonio Aguirre, leader of Ermua Forum during the campaign; the performance of attorneys in relation with the terrorist group ETA; the list that the outlawed Batasuna attempt to submit in the Basque Country municipal elections, etc., also became central themes of the campaign. Of these issues the list of the outlawed Batasuna became the main point of debate throughout the campaign, but not only at the level of The Basque Country. Although they only presented their lists in the Basque region, its media coverage had effects all over the Spanish territory.

The 2007 electoral campaign is an example of how a party, in this case the PP, introduces terrorism into the political debate, and how this becomes the main issue, and sometimes the only one, that focus all the electoral campaign. As Lang and Lang (1983) predicted, when a policy

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8 Spanish civic association which formation was brought about by the murder of Miguel Ángel Blanco, a PP politician in Ermua (Biscay) by ETA.

9 Batasuna tried to present its members under two new brands, ASB and from mid-April, ANV. The PP accused the government of having opened the door of institutions to ETA, and of having "manipulated" the resolution of the Constitutional Court, stating that Batasuna was running for election because Zapatero had wanted it.
that normally remains opaque to public opinion comes to light, it ends up becoming the object of a battle for public opinion. The fact that these where regional and local elections becomes also important for two reasons: firstly, the distortion that may cause the inclusion in the political debate of a policy that had previously been somewhat hidden. And on the other hand, taking into account that war against terrorism belongs to the national jurisdiction, it has had a drag effect in relation to the issues on the electoral campaign. Following Remmer and Gélineau (2003), this represents an added problem in understanding the representation as a control mechanism, since the democratic control of regional governments is difficult when the vote is decided by what happens at the central level.

The second elections that took place, the legislative ones, were held in March 2008. Few days before, the Secretary of Communications of the PP, Gabriel Elorriaga, made the following statement to the Financial Times, the British newspaper: “Our whole strategy is centered on wavering Socialist voters. We know they will never vote for us. But if we can show enough doubts about the economy, about immigration and nationalist issues, then perhaps they will stay at home” (Financial Times, February 29, 2008). These statements summarize the strategy of the PP in this campaign, and what are the issues on which it has focused. Since the beginning of the electoral campaign PP and PSOE chose different issues: The PSOE focused on social rights, in creating jobs and eliminating the tax on capital. Meanwhile the PP, despite giving importance to the need to include Spain in the top five economies in the world, placed counterterrorism and the final defeat of ETA at the center of debate.

Attending to the report of the University of Navarra about this electoral campaign, terrorism, followed in importance by the issues associated with the economy and employment, were the main campaign issues. Another data that reflects the confrontation level generated about territorial politics and the war against terrorism, are the number of parliamentary questions on these issues made in the Congress (for more detail see the reports on democracy in Spain 2007 and 2008. Alternatives Foundation, Madrid)

But this campaign has had also another new element: the televised debates between the leaders of the two main political parties. In these debates terrorism also become a central issue. In the first one, held on February 25, 2008, Mariano Rajoy accused José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero of lying to the citizens, and of collaborating with the terrorist organization ETA. Meanwhile J.L.R. Zapatero responded to these allegations with reference to the management carried out by the PP government after the attacks of 11M. In the second debate, the great emphasis was put on the

10 This is part of the project led by Professor Francesc Pujol, Political and Media Value Analysis at the University of Navarra.
war against terrorism and on the immigration policy. J.L.R. Zapatero promised he would support any government in relation to the war against terrorism, meanwhile M. Rajoy expressed its willingness to cooperate provided that no dialogue with terrorists took place. The prominence of the fight against terrorism and territorial politics could be seen in the message with which M. Rajoy said goodbye in this second debate: he promised to govern with unity and overcoming the problems of Spain, giving priority to the fight against ETA, foreign policy and the Autonomous State. Meanwhile J.L.R. Zapatero promised to govern with "firmness, conviction and sensitivity" to correct errors and ensure economic growth and sustainable development, reducing inequalities and strengthening the presence of Spain in Europe.

On March 7, the murder of Isaías Carrasco, a former adviser and socialist militant of Mondragón (Guipúzcoa), at the hands of the terrorist group ETA, took the campaign to its end with a day in advance.

**Effects on public opinion and electoral behaviour**

First we have to check to what extent the strategy of the PP has had any influence in the public opinion. Going back to Graph 2, we can see that after the attacks of 11 M almost 60 percent of respondents believed that ETA was one of the main problems of Spain. This percentage went lower during the next months. In late 2006 it was just 19 percent who considered ETA as one of the main problems. But after the 2007 elections it reaches figures around 45 percentage points. On the other hand, Graph 1 shows this is a period in which ETA is almost silent, although there are three fatalities, the two civil guards killed in France on December, 2012, and Isaías Carrasco, killed during the electoral campaign. So are the changes in public opinion due to the prominence that terrorism has gained in the electoral debate?

The Graph 4 shows that the debate about terrorism and counter terrorism policies are one of the ones that respondents consider most important. But it could be interesting to know if there are any differences between voters. Table 1 and 2 show the differences between different kinds of voters.
In this case, to determine whether there are differences between voters of different parties we have took into account not only what the respondent claims to have voted in the 2008 elections (Table 1), but we have also considered the differences between their vote in 2008 and the reported vote in the Elections 2004 (Table 2). For the second analysis the vote variable is a nominal variable with six categories. Three refer to what might be called loyal voters (those that recognize that in both elections they have voted the same). The other three gather those who in 2004 voted for the PP, the PSOE or IU and in 2008 changed their vote for another party or for abstention. As for the variable measuring the importance granted to each of the debates, after checking that it has no implications for our analysis, it has been treated as a continuous variable. This allows us to check whether there are significant differences through an ANOVA.

Source: DA7708.
Table 1: Importance of the debates about counterterrorism according to vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>98% CI</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSOE</td>
<td>3.45 (0.61)</td>
<td>[3.43, 3.48]</td>
<td>2,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>3.55 (0.57)</td>
<td>[3.52, 3.58]</td>
<td>1,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>3.49 (0.62)</td>
<td>[3.41, 3.57]</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPyD</td>
<td>3.66 (0.48)</td>
<td>[3.55, 3.76]</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CiU</td>
<td>3.27 (0.58)</td>
<td>[3.16, 3.38]</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERC</td>
<td>3.24 (0.58)</td>
<td>[3.07, 3.41]</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNV</td>
<td>3.57 (0.57)</td>
<td>[3.42, 3.73]</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.41 (0.60)</td>
<td>[3.32, 3.50]</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M (SD): Mean (Standard Deviation); CI = confidence interval
Source: DA7708.

Table 2: Importance of the debates about counterterrorism according to changes in vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>98% CI</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSOE (loyals)</td>
<td>3.45 (0.61)</td>
<td>[3.42, 3.48]</td>
<td>1,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSOE-Others</td>
<td>3.52 (0.57)</td>
<td>[3.45, 3.59]</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP (loyals)</td>
<td>3.56 (0.57)</td>
<td>[3.53, 3.59]</td>
<td>1,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP-Others</td>
<td>3.53 (0.58)</td>
<td>[3.41, 3.65]</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU (loyals)</td>
<td>3.45 (0.66)</td>
<td>[3.35, 3.56]</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU-Others</td>
<td>3.52 (0.57)</td>
<td>[3.37, 3.66]</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M (SD): Mean (Standard Deviation); CI = confidence interval
Source: DA7708.

According to the results reflected in Table 1, we can affirm that the PP voters, as well as the UPyD ones, are the ones who give more relevance to the debate on terrorism. On the other hand, Table 2 shows how the differences are, above all, between the voters of the PSOE loyal voters and the PP loyal ones. The PSOE voters give a significantly lower importance to the debate on the war against terrorism. Instead voters who in 2004 voted for the PSOE and in 2008 changed their vote, reflect very similar values with PP loyal ones.
According to these data, PP voters are those who are more concerned about issues related to terrorism and counterterrorism. But this does not mean that the people who voted for the PP in the 2008 elections did this because they preferred they PP approach to this item, although it could be hidden some some relationship between the importance given to terrorism and the possible disapproval of the policy pursued by the Government in this matter. A correlation analysis between the variables measuring the importance that has been given to this item and the preferred way to end with ETA shows that between these two variables there is an inverse linear correlation (Pearson coefficient: -0.036, sig.: 0.007). So that those respondents who give more importance to the debate on terrorism are those who believe that the way to end with ETA is to defeat it by policial prosecution, not by diologue, position defended by the rows of PP.

Do these results imply that there has been a distorsion effect in the mechanism of accountability? If we repeat these same analysis, but in this case controlling by a variable that mesuares accountability, we can have some idea of wether it has happened or not. For this we have created a new variable that measures if the voter is coherent with his opinion about the government perfromance. The premise is that if the interviewee thinks that the government management has been good the logical response should have been to vote for the party in the incumbent. So according to this, we have created a nominal variable with six categories: correct positive (voters that are happy with government performance and vote for the PSOE); incorrect positive (voters that not being happy with government performance vote for the PSOE); doubt positive and doubt negative (voters that think government performance was so-so and respectively vote for the PSOE or not); incorrect negative (voters that are happy with the government performance but do not vote for the PSOE); and correct negative (voters unhappy with government performance that do not vote for the PSOE).

Table 3: Importance of the debate about counterterrorism according to accountability patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>98% CI</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct positive</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>[3.51, 3.61]</td>
<td>1,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect positive</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>[3.42, 3.84]</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive doubt</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>[3.47, 3.58]</td>
<td>902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative doubt</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>[3.51, 3.63]</td>
<td>903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect negative</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>[3.42, 3.68]</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct negative</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>[3.58, 3.69]</td>
<td>989</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M (SD): Mean (Standard Deviation); CI = confidence interval

Source: DA7708.
Table 3 shows that there are not significative differences in relation to the importance given to the debate on terrorism according to accountability patterns.

**Conclusions**

We have seen that even though the assessment of economic and political situation of the country was not too good, overall the context prior to the two elections that have taken place during this term was favorable to the ruling party. In these circumstances the opposition party decided to place into the political agenda an issue that until now had remained more or less aloof, ETA terrorism and counter-terrorism policy of the government, also managing to turn it into the issue that centered the political debate. This confirms some of the statements that have been mentioned: when a dimension that has remained hidden enters into the debate, it finally monopolizes the electoral agenda.

What do not seem to have happened is that this becomes the winning dimension, at least in sight of the electoral results. Moreover, it is true that according to the analysis that took into account the importance that the different types of voters have given to terrorism, the PP voters have been those who have given it greater prominence. But it is also true that when it is checked whether this involved some distortion in accountability mechanisms we found that this was not the case.

In any case, given that this study was only a preliminary one, it would be risky to draw general conclusions about it. This will require extending the study period to the rest of the elections held under the presence of ETA, as well as into more detail analysis about the possible effects—direct and indirect— that this may have caused.
References


