

Mass-Mediated Social Terror in Spain

Nicholas Manganas

*University of Technology, Sydney*

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**Nicholas Manganas,**

**"Mass-Mediated Social Terror in Spain"**

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**Thematic Issue *Representing Humanity in an Age of Terror***

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**Abstract:** In his paper, "Mass-Mediated Social Terror in Spain," Nicholas Manganas explores mass-mediated narratives associated with social terror. Manganas posits that one approach to understanding social terror is to conceptualize it as a process of narrativization. Manganas takes a global view while at the same time applying that approach to the contemporary Spanish political and cultural context following the 11 March 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid. He views the current social and political panorama of Spain as an example of social terror in dialogue with both current and historical national discourses. Manganas details the events surrounding the March 11 attack in Madrid in 2004 and posits that mass-mediated narratives of social terror can be both a struggle to negotiate current political battles of (national) identity, and also a struggle to renegotiate historical pacts that emerged from regimes of social terror such as the Franco dictatorship (1936-1975). The tensions between the image of the nation during Franco and after the attacks are understood in relation to the role of the mass media in reflecting, shaping, and fostering a state of social terror.

## Nicholas MANGANAS

### Mass-Mediated Social Terror in Spain

On 11 March 2004, ten bombs exploded in and around Madrid's Atocha station, killing 191 people and wounding another 1,500. The 11 March attacks were executed by thirteen Islamic "terrorists" 911 days after the 9/11 attacks whose *modus operandi* was imitated (four trains paralleled four planes) (see Calvo 9). The attack occurred three days before the 14 March national election when it was generally believed that the then Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar would lead the conservative Partido Popular (PP: Popular Party) into its third term in office. In a narrative of events that will go down in popular Spanish history the PP promptly blamed the attack on the Basque Separatist group *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (ETA). Although within hours the evidence indicated that an Islamic group had most likely perpetrated the attack in the context of the wider global war on terror, the government continued to tell the story that ETA was responsible, as the following statement by Aznar attests: "March 11, 2004 has taken its place in the history of infamy ... There are no negotiations possible or desirable with these assassins that have so often sown death through all of Spain. We will defeat them. We will succeed in finishing off the terrorist band, with the strength of the rule of law and with the unity of all Spaniards" (qtd. in Tremlett 1). Three days later, in a climate of civil division and suspicion, the people unexpectedly ejected the government from power and elected the Socialists (PSOE: *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) under the leadership of José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero. The PSOE, in turn, withdrew immediately Spanish troops from Iraq and in the process was perceived by conservative political commentators around the world to have sabotaged its relations with the world's sole superpower -- the United States of America.

In this study, I locate the narratives that Spanish citizens use to commonly "know" themselves (as historical subjects) during periods of social terror with particular focus on the narratives related to the 3/11 attacks. Spain's constitutive cultural and political narratives are many and complex, and they vary significantly according to time and place. However, some official "narratives" that emanate from the Spanish government are crucial in understanding recent developments in Spanish political culture particularly as they relate to discourses of terror, even if these narratives are not always coherent and can be arbitrary and contested. The 3/11 attacks present an opportunity to study how these narratives circulated publicly in a moment of terror and how the Spanish government attempted to turn a moment of fear into one of political gain by using a particular narrative that actually backfired. The essay seeks to demonstrate that the 3/11 attacks in Madrid led to a clash of narrative efforts to make sense of the event. I also posit two related points: 1) that societies and individuals need narratives to make sense of themselves, that the media plays a role in these narratives, and that regimes of social terror and political parties benefit from these narratives and 2) that mass-mediated narratives of social terror that emerged in the aftermath of the 11 March 2004 attacks in Madrid can be understood as a site of struggle both to negotiate current political battles of national identity as well as to renegotiate previous narratives of national identity, especially in this case the narratives that emerged from the Franco dictatorship (1936-1975) that constructed national identity similarly out of a context of social terror.

The Spanish state has a long and persistent history of conflict that could fit into a broad definition of "terrorism." Forms of "terrorism" and "social terror" were utilized during the Spanish Civil War and under the Franco dictatorship as well (notably by the Basque separatist group ETA). That history can also be traced to the Catholic Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from Islamic control, a struggle that ended in 1492. But, although it is acknowledged from the outset that such a long historical trajectory exists, the focus here is on the events surrounding the 11 March attacks in Madrid, particularly the three days between the attack and the national election on 14 March. Those three days constituted a unique form of social terror unleashed upon the Spanish people. Aside from the fact that a series of bombings threatened the stability of the country, the ambiguous nature of the attack and the politicization of the event by the government created a precarious environment that challenged the historical narratives of the unified Spanish state and the regional identities or nations (i.e., Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia) subsumed into it. Here, I work from

the presumption that certain crucial collective narratives of Spanish identity and nation-forming have been disturbed or undermined in recent decades, even though these narratives persist in public consciousness. I argue that the fracturing of these narratives culminated with the "terrorist" attacks in Madrid on 11 March and the subsequent change in government. Although these constitutive narratives have neither been abandoned nor superseded by other narratives, their troubled condition has significant political implications for the future of many facets of the Spanish state and the nations contained by that state. In addition, the following analysis questions whether these narratives are "really true," what function of power these purported truths serve, and hence, what each fiction disguises, displaces, enforces, and mobilizes (Brown 3). To do this we must understand the different narratives that were operating in Spain during the days surrounding the 11 March attacks and the different ways that these political constitutive narratives circulated within political discourse, particularly how they intersected with historical narratives that emerged in the context of social terror (e.g., the Spanish Civil War, the Franco regime, Basque separatism) -- narratives that have left a trace in the politics of the present and that since 3/11 have regained potency within state-mediated discourses.

The concept of a teleological and progressive history, the conviction that history has reason, purpose, and direction, was fundamental to the concept of modernity (see Brown 5). This progressive master narrative has not been entirely superseded but it has been seriously undermined, especially by the number of regimes that have unleashed one kind of social terror or another upon innocent populations. Nazi Germany is of course the most notorious example, but other examples can be found almost anywhere in the world: Latin American dictatorships, McCarthyism in the United States, ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and Africa, anti-immigrant scare-mongering in Western Europe, Australia, and the U.S.A., and so on. Indeed, modernity's obsession with progress (from human rights to economic development) appears now, in the post 9/11 era, to be rather optimistic. Post 9/11, few if any terms, are as loaded with ideological and symbolic meaning, and yet difficult to pin down, as "terrorism." The concept of "social terror" is similarly elusive. Social terror cannot (and should not) be reduced to a "terrorist attack," even one of the magnitude of the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States. Instead, uses of social terror as a concept should be more fluid and radical in their presumptions. Social terror, by implication, refers to a type of terror inflicted upon a collective, the mass, or as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri would put it, the "multitude." It is not overtly concerned with the suffering of the individual (assuming that to be terrorized is to suffer). Although all pain and suffering can only be felt individually (we can only empathize with the pain of others), social terror works on the level of society; it is about terrorizing society *en masse*. Social terror must have an agenda. It must be implemented for a purpose, if not to control society, then to regulate it, influence it, or shape it into something altogether different. In short, social terror is about power. But it is not the type of power that Michel Foucault called "disciplinary power" (242), the techniques of power that were centered essentially on the individual body. Disciplinary power relied on a whole system of surveillance and hierarchies – all the technology that, according to Foucault, could be described as the disciplinary technology of labor (242). Rather, the technique of power that social terror utilizes is a technology of power that emerged in the eighteenth century. Although this new technique of power does not replace disciplinary power, it exists at a different level, on a different scale. This new technique of power was in Foucault's words, not a disciplinary power but a "biopower" that is not individualizing, but, rather, massifying (242-43). Biopower does not exactly deal with society (the social body), and nor does it deal with the individual-as-body. It is "a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted" (Foucault 245). Biopolitics conceives and deals with the population as political problem. The aim of this new technology of power is not to discipline the body but to take control of life and the biological processes of humanity in order to ensure that they are not disciplined, but regularized (Foucault 247). The inevitable consequence of biopower is that it spurs the installation of myriad security mechanisms around the random element inherent in a population. That is, all the processes characteristic of birth, death, production, and illness. In sum, biopower is integrated across all sections of society

with the ultimate intention to regularize, harmonize, and normalize the population as political problem.

Social terror, therefore, works in two ways. First, social terror is used by the state to enforce the regularization process that spurs on biopolitics (that is, through authoritarian regimes such as Fascism or through a neo-liberal conception of globalization or empire that attempts to regularize both the political economy and the society that sustains it). Second, non-state actors use social terror in order to disrupt the regularization process and thus achieve some kind of political realignment (e.g., separatist and revolutionary groups, "terrorist" organizations, and even non-governmental organizations that aim to disrupt biopolitical regimes). Social terror, therefore, is something that is experienced by individuals even though its target is the mass. Social terror must, in some sense, disrupt what is "normal," destabilize the way things should be and the way things were. Social terror is intrinsically linked to biopolitics because all forms of terror in essence aim not only to control the population as a political problem but to regularize all levels of society, an unending process leading towards homogeneity. Biopower, however, does not only exist within states. The European Union and the World Trade Organization are two supranational examples that demonstrate the bureaucratic zeal for uniformity, especially in terms of economic integration. Foucault, therefore, was quite prescient in his series of lectures in 1975-1976 at the Collège de France by singling out "regulation" as a more ominous form (or technique) of power that also challenged history as emancipatory and progressive. It is no wonder, then, that Hardt and Negri also adopted Foucault's concept of biopower in their analysis of the regularizing power of globalization detailed in their two manifestos *Empire* and *Multitude*.

The question thus arises, how can the discipline of cultural studies represent social terror without negating individual suffering and while simultaneously acknowledging the global framework that sustains it? One approach might be to consider social terror as constituted through, and guided by narrativity, in that all social processes and interactions are narratively mediated (Somers 364). It would seem impossible to explore the complexities of representing humanity during moments of social terror except through a narrative. When confronted by the "terrorist" attacks in Madrid critical theorists need to ask how they might understand this historical event if not through, on the one hand, a narrative (ten bombs exploded, killing 191 people, leading to the government being voted from office three days later), or, on the other hand, as memory (memory in this case being the raw material of history, that is, as the essential element that constructs individual and collective identity) (see Le Goff 98)? Through narratives (our life stories) we come to know and make sense of the social world. Our social identities are inscribed within these narratives, as is our memory of them. Social terror might be directed from the state, or from non-state actors, but the result is the same: we need narratives to make sense of the world around us, as does the state itself. All states narratively mediate the biopolitical field. Otherwise, the so-called masses -- the multiple body with so many heads -- would be unable to make sense of the regularization process. Narratives can circulate in society in different ways, can be contested, and are not always exclusionary. The following section demonstrates that, despite the complexity of historical narratives in the Spanish state, it is possible to delineate their evolution over time and to ascertain their function in representing humanity during moments of terror.

Throughout the twentieth century, the concept of *las dos Españas* (liberal and conservative Spains) attained almost mythological significance in the area of contemporary Spanish cultural thought and related scholarship. It is not difficult to understand why. The Spanish state has a long and violent history that can be traced back to the Spanish Reconquest and beyond. It is therefore easy for theorists to narrativize this "violent" trajectory as a struggle between two anthropomorphized equals with corresponding and unambiguous values. On the one side, "liberal" Spain is accorded the values of the French Revolution and is described as being anti-monarchical and pro-European. On the other side, "conservative" Spain is branded as traditionalist, centralist, pro-monarchical and anti-regionalist. Liberal Spain's moment of glory was the Second Republic (1931-1939), which established full political and intellectual liberty, separated Church from State, successfully initiated Catalan autonomy as a first step in recognizing the culturally and nationally diverse nature of Spain as a state, as well as initiating land reform despite the opposition of the tra-

ditional ruling classes. In popular history, the stark difference in ideologies of *las dos Españas* clashed, leading to three years of civil war (1936-1939) and culminating in almost forty years of dictatorship under the Franco regime (1939-1975). This regime has been cast as the epitome of "conservative" Spain: the logical conclusion of traditionalist values that are at once illegitimate, oppressive, and undemocratic. The problem with this narrative is that it is overly deterministic and it assumes that every Spanish citizen can be neatly situated on one side or the other, with undivided loyalty to the corresponding values of conservative or liberal Spains. Nonetheless, this is a potent narrative and for the families that lost loved ones on both sides of the Civil War this division is very much real. Yet, despite the Franco dictatorship's efforts to erase the legacy of "liberal" Spain from what Franco termed the *patria* (not only a spiritual, social, and historic unity, but also one that posited Catholicism and the state as the central organizing power) the concept of *las dos Españas* remained in the consciousness of the regime (see Balfour 115). After all, the regime needed the liberals to symbolize the "other" or the "anti-nation." The Franco regime's social narrative claimed that it was restoring "order" to Spain after the chaos that ensued with the liberal Second Republic. Liberal Spain was thus accorded the values of "disorder" -- a narrative that has remained dominant to this day in much of the Spanish mass media. The narrative of *las dos Españas* was kept alive during the Franco regime through the ritualized process of "purifying" the nation from any influence from the enemy. As Helen Graham notes, the military actively recruited thousands of civilian vigilantes to carry out a dirty war against the defeated Republicans (315). For Graham, "this was the beginning of the 'fellowship of blood,' of the complicity of whole sectors of Spanish society, 'ordinary Spaniards' who became enmeshed in the murder of their compatriots" (Graham 315). The violence brought down against those associated with the Republicans usually derived from a need to humiliate or break the enemy, publicly or otherwise, such as through mass public executions followed by the exhibition of corpses on the street. Graham argues that all these forms of violence "were functioning as rituals through which social and political control could be reenacted" (318). When the Francoists murdered the "enemy," they were murdering the threat of change. The assumption was that a "new" Spain could only be reborn through a blood sacrifice -- a process of purification (318). The sum of this "politics of retribution" was that the Republican dead could not be publicly mourned. As Graham states: "the defeated cast no reflection. No public space was theirs" (321). The result was a devastating schism between public and private memory in post-civil war Spain (321). As the Franco dictatorship progressed, the inhuman "Other" slowly became Basque "terrorists" and any dissident who challenged the centralist government.

With Franco's death in 1975, Spain ended 36 years of military dictatorship that had been, for the most part, a stable if brutal regime. With the transition to democracy, many exiles and victims of Franco's social terror hoped that the ghosts of the past would be unleashed and that a process of reconciliation would somehow be addressed. Instead, the repression of these memories intensified and an unofficial policy of forgetting, a "pact of silence" was "agreed by the Francoist elites in return for a *de facto* political amnesty" meaning that no Francoist would be called to judicial account (Graham 322). But what in effect is the process of "pacting" and what can it tell us about the recuperation of public memory in the contemporary Spanish state? In Stephanie R. Golob's study of "pacted democracy" and the legal case involving the ex-Chilean dictator Pinochet, she argues that "pacting ... involves both the construction of a new future-oriented post-authoritarian 'constitutive story' and what might be called a non-story, a 'pact of silence'" ("Forced to be Free" 32). Thus, the process of pacting can be described as a form of narrativization. In the Spanish case, the pacting elites purposefully chose the narrative of peace, stability, and prosperity instead of truth and justice. According to Golob, these choices were made in order to re-imagine the Spanish state in a way that appeared more inclusive (Forced, 32). Instead, the elite narrative was exclusionary in its denial of the past "as it symbolically narrowed the contours of national identity to include only those 'safe' feelings sanctioned by the official post-authoritarian narrative" ("Forced to be Free" 32). But as Golob points out, "pacts are not forever" and that "even 'successful' transition pacts sometimes have to be renegotiated or amended" ("The Pinochet Case" 47). In the Spanish case, the "pact of silence" and the "pact of forgetting" were negotiated by the Spanish elites, ex-

cluding civil society. With the strengthening of Spanish civil society throughout the 1980s and 1990s these pacts were once again up for renegotiation.

Since Spain's transition to democracy began in the late 1970s within the existing cold war framework in the international order, the importance of universal human rights was still not entrenched in the international political apparatus (see Blakeley 45). However, with the third wave of democratization in the 1980s and 1990s that emerged with the end of the cold war, a well-developed body of international human rights law, as well as a well-established network of non-governmental organizations promoted a "cosmopolitan liberal consensus on transnational justice" (Blakeley 45). This process culminated with the arrest of General Pinochet in London on 16 October 1998, which was spearheaded by Spain's celebrity judge Baltasar Garzón's "innovative legal argument that forced disappearance can be interpreted as an ongoing crime not only against those who were actually disappeared but also against those who continue to be obstructed in their search for the disappeared" (Blakeley 45-46). Spain's prominent role in the Pinochet case was well publicized even if it contradicted Spain's own "pact of silence" about its authoritarian past. Nevertheless, a process of recovering historical memory escalated in Spain simultaneous to the moment when widespread debates on transnational justice dominated the international legal and human rights agenda. Domestic factors were also crucial. The timing of this process coincided with a string of public anniversaries: 2000, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Franco; 2001, the twentieth anniversary of the failed military coup of 23 February 1981; January 2002, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Atocha massacres (where seven lawyers belonging to *Comisiones Obreras* [the syndicate of the Communist Party] were killed by extreme right-wingers); April 2002, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the legalization of the Spanish Communist Party; June 2002, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first democratic elections since 1936; and October 2002, the twentieth anniversary of the first Socialist government in post-Franco Spain. The official commemorations continued in 2003 with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the constitution (see Blakeley 46). All of these commemorations received extensive coverage in the Spanish print and broadcast media.

The Spanish media had played the important role in erasing the memory of Franco and recreating a Franco regime without its supporters. The representation of these commemorations was therefore somewhat skewed in television and print coverage. León Solís's criticism of the Spanish coverage of the anniversary of Franco's death in the Spanish daily *El País* highlights that the official narratives of the media attempted to establish a clear break between Spain's "murky" past and its glorious democratic future by creating a "sense of closure" about anything related to the Spanish state's authoritarian past (50-54). Nonetheless, as Georgina Blakeley posits, the fear of the return to violence that characterized the transition to democracy, a fear that was given credence by the high level of violence during that period (especially from ETA and an attempted military coup), began to dissipate with the consolidation of democracy, and I would add with Spain's firm position in the European Union. Although, the fear of a return to extreme ideology and violence still exists, according to Blakeley, it is "no longer such an obstacle to action" (47). In order to summarize this complex history it is important to highlight a few key points: the dominant narrative of the Franco regime emphasized a unified and homogenous "nation," where the violence of the Civil War was more or less erased from public memory. With the transition to democracy, the unofficial "pacts" as described by Golob sought to leave aside this violent history in the hope of consolidating a smooth democratic transition that would allow for Spain's successful integration into the European Union and NATO. During this time, the narrativization of ETA in Spanish society also changed dramatically. From a somewhat legitimate "resistance" movement against a Fascist dictator (whose murder of Franco's successor General Carrero Blanco in 1973 was credited by many Spaniards as the single act that promoted democracy in Spain), ETA's continual and unremitting attacks against a democratically elected government lost all legitimacy throughout Spain except in some quarters of the Basque Country, although even there support for ETA's violent tactics remained low (estimated to be around ten percent). In Spain, being branded a "nationalist" became an insult, a term usually reserved for regional nationalists who had not yet "matured" into sensible democrats. ETA had become an anachronism, an echo of the Franco era that continually

disrupted the unofficial pacts of forgetting and silence. To the "new" Spaniards, Franco and ETA were two sides of the same coin.

Thus, although the concept of *las dos Españas* has been relatively sidelined in recent decades it nevertheless has survived in many of the dominant narratives operating in Spanish political and mass-mediated discourse. The Spanish media is one of the world's most partisan, with Spanish newspapers and radio stations flagrantly voicing their support or opposition to one of the major parties with little pretense of objectivity. The Socialist government that was in power from 1982 to 1996, and which won government again after the 11 March attacks, has been narrativized by more or less all sides of the mass media as the continuation and representation of "liberal" Spain, whereas the opposition Popular Party is accorded the "traditional" Catholic values that represent the historical "conservative" Spain. Even though these narratives persisted in the media, the politics of compromise that until recently dominated the post-Franco era through the "pacts of silence" as described by Golob ensured that the concept of *las dos Españas* was more or less neutralized. The main reason that Spain's transition to democracy was so successful was the general antipathy of Spanish citizens towards any extreme ideologies of whatever political persuasion. In the post-Franco era, therefore, the Spanish state has re-branded itself through mass-mediated narratives as a peaceful and democratic state with a rightful place of belonging in "civilized" Western Europe. Since it joined in 1986, Spain has traditionally been the European Union's most enthusiastic supporter. The "murky" Francoist past is thus recast as a mere historical glitch, an anomaly in the trajectory of Spain's progressive and emancipatory history. Most Spanish people view any events that challenge this narrative with suspicion. This is why popular opinion turned against ETA in the 1980s, even though up until Franco's death, many Spaniards considered ETA as engaged in a legitimate fight against a fascist regime. Even public revelations in the 1980s that the Spanish state was using "terrorist" tactics to fight Basque separatists failed to send the anticipated shock waves across Spanish society that many political elites expected. This is also why, in my view, Spain had the highest number of people of any congruent country opposed to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (up to 91% according to some polls). Perhaps no other state except Japan in the post-war era has erased so successfully violence from its popular state narratives. This process of political compromise on issues ranging from counter-terrorism to immigration continued all the way into the 1990s and only began to break down with the PP's second term in office (2000-2004). Thus, although the concept of *las dos Españas* has always been present, it has also been negated by the realities of the political climate in Spain. This all changed in the post 9/11 era in Spain with the 11 March attacks and as we will see with the recent announcement of a "permanent" ceasefire by ETA.

The Spanish electorate's deep distrust of any party whose roots were traceable to the Franco dictatorship was particularly evident in the 1989 elections where the Socialist party under the leadership of González managed to win exactly half the seats in parliament, despite a series of corruption scandals that had more or less discredited the Socialist government. In the early 1990s the PP eventually emerged as a strong political party when Spain rapidly consolidated into a two-party system of government. In 1996 the conservatives won government democratically for the first time since the end of the Franco dictatorship. For many scholars, the fact that a right-of-centre conservative political party was democratically elected in Spain was the final step in the consolidation of Spain's transition to democracy. Many had feared that Spain would become a one-party state after the Socialists had won five successive elections. When the PP came to power with the elections of March 1996 Aznar was well aware of the deep fears that a right-wing government would arouse, and he is said to have told his inner circle that "the first PP administration would tread softly, and only implement rightist policies the second time around" (Woodworth 11). The PP gained the support of both the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) and the dominant nationalist grouping in Catalonia (CiU). However, the PNV quickly withdrew its support. After the assassination of a young PP councilor, Miguel Ángel Blanco, in July 1996 by ETA, resulting in mass demonstrations throughout Spain and the Basque Country in an unprecedented display of democratic unity, the PNV "quickly began to suspect that the PP was beginning to use the struggle against ETA as a battering ram against Basque nationalism in general" (Woodworth 11). The PP quickly discovered that a tough antiterrorist policy would be a magnet for votes. It was also evident, according to Wood-



worth, that "many Spaniards, both intellectuals and ordinary people, felt that Basque nationalism, perhaps the Basque language itself, constituted a social sea in which the terrorists could swim with ease" (Woodworth 11). To complicate things further, a young Madrid audience at a concert in commemoration of Blanco booed when a performer sang in Catalan. According to Woodworth, "overt Spanish nationalism which had dared not speak its name for years because of its association with Francoism was set for a revival" (Woodworth 11). But Aznar and his advisers saw that while a "bash the Basques" strategy might fail in the Basque region itself, it was enormously popular in most of the rest of Spain (Woodworth 12). Woodworth claims in *Spain Changes Course* that a reliable, but private, source revealed that one of Aznar's senior ideologues secretly admitted that ETA's attacks actually served the PP's interests because "if the violence ended, the party could no longer refuse to negotiate a new deal with the PNV. Such negotiations ... would undermine the unity of Spain. [Aznar] ... would prefer to endure a degree of terrorist activity ... rather than cede any more ground to Basque nationalism" (Woodworth 12).

As a victim of an ETA attack himself, Aznar defined the PP's antiterrorist policy with the phrase, "within the law, but with all of the law" (Woodworth 12). And when all of the law was not enough, he changed the law, banning ETA's popular political front, Batasuna, and a number of satellite groups on the grounds that they did not condemn ETA's attacks (Woodworth 12). In that political climate anyone who opposed the law was likely to be branded as an ETA sympathizer. Meanwhile, Aznar discovered "Constitutional Patriotism" during the PP's second term in office, bringing him into conflict with much of the Spanish left, Catalan, Galician, and Basque nationalists and even regionalists from his own party. According to Woodworth, "It would seem self-evident that a constitution that was drawn up under the shadow of dictatorship, with the army rattling sabers from the wings, might be in need of reform a quarter of a century later, when democracy had put down much deeper roots" (14). Yet the PP insisted that any move to seriously overhaul the constitution would endanger both the unity of the state, and the democratic system itself (Woodworth 14). Aznar's opponents not only faced the prospect of a revived Spanish nationalism under the banner of the sacredness of the constitution and a shift in foreign policy but also the innovation of a monthly ceremony of homage to the Spanish flag, attended by the chiefs of staff and minister of defense. For many on the left, the PP's second term came to symbolize a deepening authoritarian atmosphere (14). As Spain's only significant conservative party, the PP is also the only main link to Spain's Francoist past. Such a link, however, is tenuous in a country in which Franco is defended publicly by few people. Nevertheless, Paul Preston explains that there are some figures in the PP who either do not condemn Franco very clearly, or condemn him "in a way so relative, so timid, so respectful, that their condemnation seems to spring more from necessity, hypocrisy or fear, than from conviction" (2). Although I do not wish to suggest that the PP in Spain is merely the democratic equivalent of the Franco regime, a clear continuation of Francoist narratives of the Spanish nation is evident in PP rhetoric and policies. Like Franco, the PP perceives devolution of central power to the Spanish regions as unacceptable. Similarly, the PP regards its political opponents as "traitors" of Spain (for among other things negotiating with "terrorists"), while all political dissenters are "enemies" of the state. The PP is also more outward looking in its foreign policy by aligning itself strongly with the USA (instead of the EU like the previous and successive Socialist governments) and wants Spain to regain her status in the international system (a status that many conservative elites lament was destroyed when Spain lost its last remaining colonies in the Spanish-American War of 1898). The PP thus operates politically with contradictory narratives. On the one hand, it continually expresses ambiguous views on the Franco dictatorship (this has most recently been demonstrated in 2006 with many PP politicians and supporters claiming that Franco's uprising was "justified" due to the excesses of the Second Republic); strongly criticizes the delegation of more power to Basque and Catalan regionalists, yet campaigned for more powers for Valencia and the Balearic Islands, two regions where the PP is in power. On the other hand, the PP claims to defend democracy against "ideologues" (i.e., radical leftists or Basque and Catalan nationalists who want to "Balkanize" Spain). The PP thus represents a logical and moderate continuation of the Franco regime without that regime's outlandish excesses. The PP promotes "order" to the electorate by pointing out the potential "disorder" and havoc that its Socialist opponents

could inflict. Thus, within eight years of PP rule, the great Spanish divide between right and left, between the traditionalist "deep Spain" and liberal democrats of all stripes was once again clearly evident (Woodworth 18).

According to Jan Oskar Engene, three groups of actors are involved in a "terrorist" attack: first, the terrorists, those who employ violence; second, the victims, those who are inflicted by violence; and third, the targets, those not directly hit by the violence but influenced by observing or learning about it (15). Thus, the first group is denoted as the transmitter, the second group becomes the medium communicating a message by being direct recipients of violence, while the third group is the recipient of that "violent" message. According to Engene, conceiving terrorism in this way implies that "there is a triangular relationship between the terrorists, the victims they inflict violence upon and the audience(s) they want to communicate a message to" (Engene 15). If we try to translate the train bombing in Madrid into Engene's model we can determine that the medium communicating the message consisted of the Spanish citizens who were killed and injured in the attacks. When we ask who the transmitters and the intended recipient(s) were, though, we encounter inevitable problems. Most so-called terrorist attacks (especially since 9/11) are characterized by their ambiguous nature. In the immediate aftermath of an attack it is difficult to determine either what the motives were or who the perpetrators were. In order to gain some sense of perspective, people understandably turn to the mass media for, as Engene argues, the media "will have to report what has happened and connect the violence to those responsible for it" (16). Engene also points out, however, that terrorists do not have mediating control over the political message that is generated by their actions. The message is further complicated by state and government law enforcement officers who also have the opportunity of influencing the message (Engene 17). In order for a terrorist message to be transmitted successfully it must, at the very least, challenge the narratives of the state. In *The Spirit of Terrorism* Jean Baudrillard argues that the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center in New York represented "the absolute event, the 'mother' of all events, the pure event uniting within itself all the events that have never taken place" (4): the terrorists were successful in communicating their message because the two towers of the World Trade Center were ideal embodiments of the "definitive" order. The collapse of the two towers thus represented the destruction of that order (whether it was Western Civilization or US-dominated globalization) (Baudrillard 6). For Baudrillard, then, terrorism can only succeed when it has symbolic currency and resonates on a global narrative level. Or rather, terrorism can only communicate its message when it disrupts a mythological narrative. This explains why the ramifications of 11 September have been so significant that even scholars such as Francis Fukuyama who once hailed the end of history now concede that history has once again started. The point is that we can only speculate on what the message is, a message that is constantly being filtered and rearticulated by the media and re-narrativized on a daily, if not hourly, basis on BBC, FOX, CNN, and other mass-mediators of the news. Indeed, the message is constantly being rearticulated differently and in unique ways throughout the world.

Patricia Mellencamp's analysis of how television news operates in times of shock and trauma is apt for any analysis of mass-mediated social terror. According to Mellencamp, coverage of traumatic incidents breaks into the normal schedules of television time by disrupting regular, repetitive time (684). In this break, the possibility of a revolutionary moment occurs in the very disruption of regularity. To avoid that possibility, television acts to normalize and regularize the catastrophe (684). This is done by endlessly replaying coverage of the catastrophe. The September 11 attacks are emblematic of this process, given that the constant televisual replaying of footage of the planes crashing in to the twin towers synthesized the event into a kind of "normality." Mellencamp argues that television news explains such catastrophes in order to reduce audience anxiety: "television promises shock and trauma containment over time via narration of the real" (254). The process of mass media TV coverage is in effect a construction of a narrative. The events of 11 September and 11 March are pertinent examples: at first reports were uncertain as to what was happening, but they gradually shaped into a coherent "story" about what was occurring. The narratives that emanate from the media (and not just television) during times of catastrophe and crisis are not neutral. Such narratives have a cumulative and regularizing effect on audiences. Such a

process is not meant to imply that viewers are passive, as is often asserted in traditional media theory, but rather that these narratives help to reinforce and normalize certain specific narratives of identity (both individual and group). As the coherent story emerges and evolves in the news media it tends to fit into the parameters of state-sanctioned discourses. These discourses are by no means absolute, but they serve as a kind of framework in which political and cultural narratives operate. The mass-mediated narrative therefore constitutes a form of biopower in the sense that it is projected upon the population -- the multiple body with so many heads. The aim is to regulate and regularize threats to and from the population by attempting to explain away the random element inherent in society, in this case the "terrorist" attack. This narrative containment is especially the case with television news, since it represents discontinuity in an otherwise continuous system. According to Mary Ann Doane, television "has been conceptualized as the annihilation of memory, and consequently of history, in its continual stress upon the 'nowness' of its own discourse" (227). In a modern state such as Spain that has so effectively erased the story of violence out of its (official) narratives, the 11 March attacks were an overwhelming discontinuity that threatened the stability of the post-Franco pacts of compromise in Spanish political culture and society.

In the preceding months before the Spanish national election, the apparent success of the war on Iraq had put the issue on the back burner of Spanish politics. As the March elections approached, opinion polls consistently indicated that the PP would coast back to power, though it would probably not repeat its overall majority (Woodworth 20). But on 11 March, three days before the election, ten bombs exploded in and around Madrid's Atocha station, killing 191 people and wounding another 1,500. In *Politics out of History*, Wendy Brown argues that when constitutive cultural and political narratives are disturbed and undermined, insecurity, anxiety and hopelessness washes across the political landscape (5). This is the precise scenario that the conservative Partido Popular government found itself in the three days between the March 11 attack and the 14 March national election in 2004. Any political party (especially when in campaign mode) communicates to the electorate a narrative that it hopes will convince the people to elect it into office. The effectiveness of this narrative is naturally challenged during times of national crisis. Yet it is conventional wisdom that people usually give their governments certain leeway during times of crisis or social terror. The 11 March attacks need not have spelled political disaster for Aznar and the PP and it could be argued that the attacks might have presented the incumbent government with an opportunity to solidify its electoral position. So why did the PP's narrative blaming ETA backfire? A brief chronology of the three days in question follows to shed light on how the attacks intersected with contested historical narratives.

At 13.30 p.m. on 11 March, just hours after the attacks, the Interior Minister Ángel Acebes claimed that there was no doubt that ETA was responsible. It is not surprising that the PP initially accused ETA for the 11 March attacks and continued to do so until the day of the election. ETA certainly had both the motive and a history of attacks in Madrid (including railways), and was, for the most part, the only significant "terrorist" group active in Spain (other groups like GRAPO, the military wing of one of Spain's Communist parties) were by comparison minor players and did not provoke the same levels of outrage as "nationalist" ETA did). But the according of blame to ETA did ignore the fact that ETA had never launched an attack on such a scale since its inception in 1959, favoring instead target assassinations. Moreover, ETA had been severely weakened in recent years after successful joint operations between Spanish and French police departments.

The former Director of News for *Cadena Ser* and the editors of *El Mundo* and *El País* claim that Aznar called them on the day of the attacks with his personal assurance that ETA was indeed responsible. The foreign minister also instructed the entire diplomatic corps that the bombers were domestic terrorists. Even the United Nations statement condemned ETA, the first time such a document had attributed blame to a specific group. The result of this government maneuvering was more or less successful and most Spanish media, including the left of centre *El País*, mentioned ETA in their initial headlines. At the next press conference at 8:00 p.m. Interior Minister Ángel Acebes did not mention that a van with Koranic verses and detonators had been found with the explosives and that these were different to the type used by ETA. At 9.30 p.m. an Islamic newspaper in London received allegedly a letter from al-Qaeda taking credit for the attack. By the evening

of the eleventh, so much material evidence pointed to an al-Qaeda link (and none at all to ETA) that Acebes was forced to concede that all hypotheses were under consideration, even though he would continue to point the finger at ETA. On 12 March, the day after the attacks, the international media was more or less equivocal on attributing responsibility to the attacks. In the UK the *Daily Express* declared "Britains Warned -- We May be Next," whilst US President George W. Bush stated that "we can't rule anybody out." At 6.45 p.m. on the same day, ETA confirmed that it was not responsible. The government rejected ETA's statement. The President of the Basque Nationalist Party pointed out that although ETA kills, it never lies since ETA usually wants the public to know it is responsible for the attacks it perpetrates. If ETA was the guilty party, why would it deny it when it always took responsibility for past attacks? The blame narrative also failed to take into consideration the post 9/11 context, repeated warnings from Islamic extremists against the USA's allies, and Spain's high-profile participation in the invasion of and subsequent war in Iraq. Coupled with increasing numbers of disaffected immigrants from North Africa who reside on the margins of Spanish society and are exploited as cheap labor, the idea that Islamic fundamentalists would execute an attack in Spain was not that far-fetched. Given that Spain once had an Islamic history spanning some 800 years, a source of pride for many Islamic and Spanish scholars, Spain was therefore at the nexus of world events in the post 9-11 era (in terms of both historical imaginary connections and political-military design).

With the internet and cable television, Spanish citizens had access to the international media which more or less remained skeptical about the according of blame to ETA. As a result of the misinformation or ambiguity emanating from the Spanish mass media, the people turned to a technology that the government and the big media companies could not control -- their mobile phones. The mass mobilization of people that occurred throughout Spain during those three days was orchestrated by hundreds of thousands of instant text messages. One of the first text messages that circulated among the public was: "Poisonous Information. It was Al-Qaeda. The government denies it. Pass it on!" (all subsequent translations from the Spanish are mine) ("Intoxicación Informativa. Ha sido Al-Qaeda. El gobierno lo niega. Pásalo!"). Other messages called for demonstrations outside the PP headquarters. At 8.00 p.m. on 12 March the police arrested five men (three Moroccans and two Hindus) which led to another SMS: "2 Hindus and a Moroccan arrested. Did you know?" ("Detenidos 2 Hindús y un Marroquí. Lo Sabes?"). Although for the most part television stations were following the government line, radio talk shows on 12 March had begun discussing the theory that the attacks were linked to the war in Iraq. News about the spontaneous demonstrations in Madrid led to protests throughout Spain. The PP government blamed the radio station SER for the mobilization and the PSOE for initiating the text messages (although the Socialists deny they were behind the text messages). By Friday night the latest text message read: "Against the PP's coup d'état. Everyone at Sol at 12 in the Puerta del Sol. Pass it on!" ("Contra el golpe de estado del PP. Todos en Sol a las 12 en Puerta del Sol. Pásalo!"). Mariano Rajoy, Aznar's chosen successor, called the protests illegal, illegitimate and antidemocratic. In response, placards at the demonstration read: "The voice of the people is not illegal" ("La voz del pueblo no es ilegal"). The PP government understood by the Friday night that people were not demonstrating against ETA, but were chanting "Who was it?" and then, "Your war, our blood!" Finally at 1.15 a.m. in a press conference Interior Minister Acebes stated that TeleMadrid had received a video spoken by an Islamic fundamentalist with a Moroccan accent taking responsibility for the attacks. Yet at lunchtime that day, the foreign minister was still telling the BBC that the trail to ETA remained hot.

Yet, what is important here is not to determine whether the PP manipulated the media or not, but, rather, to understand why the PP narrative failed to convince the majority of Spanish people of its "realness"? Or perhaps, more simply, why did the PP government insist on such an elaborate "narrative"? This question is particularly interesting considering that most of the Spanish media was reporting the government line with little questioning. Three days before the election, the PP government understandably did not want to admit that the Madrid attack had anything to do with the wider war on terrorism. Spain's participation in the war in Iraq was controversial enough, but the government was loath to admit the possibility that somehow Spain was being punished for it. After all, the message that the PP promoted to the Spanish people was that the government was

reclaiming Spain's past "glory." The accepted narratives in the aftermath of the 11 March attacks is that the PP government was voted out of government because it "manipulated" the flow of information by insisting that ETA was responsible. This has now become the official narrative of the new Spanish socialist government, and most of the Spanish and international media. Although much of the international community (and indeed some of the Spanish media as well) perceived the March 2004 elections as an act of cowardice in the face of the global war on terrorism, there was a general feeling in Spain that the election demonstrated the "maturity" of the Spanish people that rejected the "manipulation" of the event by the government. Paddy Woodworth, for example, also argues that the Spanish electorate responded quickly to a fast-changing and complex crisis. Spanish voters did not vote out of fear because Spanish democracy has been intimidated for more than thirty years by bombings and shootings. Moreover, the maturity of Spanish democracy was demonstrated by the Spanish police and intelligence services which refused to be misled by the government and quickly and professionally tracked down the most likely culprits (Woodworth 22). Interestingly, however, it is the Spanish conservatives who offer more insight into those three days and how the attacks intersected with historically contested narratives.

In *Terrorismo y democracia tras el 11-M*, Ederne Uriarte, a conservative columnist for the right-wing Spanish daily *ABC* exemplifies the Spanish right's perception of the 11 March attacks and the subsequent PP defeat. Uriarte argues that an emotional discourse about solidarity and the values and unity of the Spanish people against terrorism permeates the official narratives of terror in Spain and the strength of these popular narratives is such that neither politicians, the media, nor intellectuals dare to question them. According to Uriarte, the 12 March demonstrations throughout Spanish cities that were meant to condemn the attack instead became a condemnation of the government which was considered responsible for the attacks. Although the protesters claim that the people only denounced the manipulation of information by the government in the hours following the attack, Uriarte does not understand why the people wanted to know the identity of the killers and not more information about the act itself (17). For the first time in the Spanish history of terrorism, Uriarte claims, the central point was not the crime itself or its perpetrators but the role of the government naming the identity of the perpetrators immediately after the attack (29). Thus, according to Uriarte, the context of panic in the people caused this "obsession" with the "truth" -- as if knowing the identity of the perpetrators would alleviate momentarily the reality of the massacre (29). For Uriarte, when fear wins, the guilty party is no longer the aggressor but those who were meant to protect us -- the government (17). After the attacks, the people wanted to return to a life of tranquility and security. Thus, they believed that the only way to achieve this would be to eliminate the factors that had provoked Al Qaeda -- the presence of Spanish troops in Iraq. She argues that this reaction is a consequence of the role of the phantom of dictatorship that still dominates Spanish politics. Uriarte perceives the phantom of dictatorship as Spain's main weakness, leading Spaniards to want to stay on the margins of the fight against terrorism. According to Uriarte, the Spanish left abused this "weakness" during the 2004 general elections by accusing the PP of being the "inheritors" of Francoism. It was, therefore, not the manipulation of information in itself that caused the downfall of the PP government, but the phantom presence of social terror that still permeates Spanish political discourse. The PP government had obviously underestimated the extent to which its re-orientation of government policy did not coincide with the modern post-Franco narratives of the Spanish state. The transition to democracy in the late 1970s was successful because of the various pacts of compromise, on the one hand, and the unofficial policy of "forgetting" the "ghosts" of the past, on the other. The PP failed to adhere to one of the key rules in political campaigning: to convince the electorate. The PP did not recognize the profundity of the narratives of compromise that still operate in Spanish political society. Nor did the PP recognize that violence had been erased as a noble trait of Spanish identity. The PP continued to promote the historical narratives of Francoism in a "nation" caught between forgetting the past and recuperating the memory of the victims of the past. In an international context of transnational justice that the Spanish judicial system had helped spearhead, the narrative that the PP wove was a political miscalculation.

Terror as a concept is elusive and the best way to understand events and the representation of humanity is through narratives. Analyzing narrativization highlights continuities with the past and also reveals where discontinuities or disruptions in and to history exist. Studying the social function of narrativization further exposes how, unlike the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the suicide bombings in London on 7 July 2005 which galvanized society and political forces, the 11 March attacks in Madrid led to a sharp political and social fracture in Spain. Although the head of the Catalan government, Pasqual Maragall, claimed initially that "We are all *Madrileños* today," the political fallout of the 2004 national election has left deep scars. Therefore, the 11 March attacks offer us considerable insight into the representation of humanity in an age of terror by demonstrating that after the initial moments of unity, togetherness, and empathy with the victims, the function of terror in post 3/11 Spain destabilized long-standing national narratives. History does not always have reason, purpose, and direction. As Brown argues in *Politics out of History*, in the post-cold war world the past becomes "less easily reduced to a single set of meanings and effects, as the present is forced to orient itself amid so *much* history and so *many* histories, history emerges as both weightier and less deterministic than ever before" (5; emphasis in the original). Yet state institutions, as well as individuals, often operate politically as if the historical constitutive narratives of a state are infallible and perpetual. By attempting to construct narratives based on the presumption that there is only one "true" and valid history, the PP made a political blunder that cost it dearly. The disavowal of the PP and its narratives by the Spanish people was evidence that the former narratives of the Spanish state were (at least for the moment) exhausted in a state already negotiating multiple histories. The Spanish example is therefore telling in a number of ways. It demonstrates that memories of social terror (Francoism) leave a trace in the politics of the present. In times of national crisis these memories regain potency and are politicized within state-mediated discourses. In the Spanish case, the pacts of compromise that were characteristic of the Spanish transition to democracy, although still in operation, have been undermined in recent years. As a result, the PP's rhetoric in the days between the 11 March attacks and the 14 March election did not coincide with popular narratives of the Spanish state that had erased Francoist rhetoric and that now imagined Spain as a cosmopolitan and democratic member of the European Union.

Relations between the members of the new Socialist government and the new PP opposition began on agreeable terms in 2004 with the latter's formal recognition of the Socialist victory, and the promise of a healthy approach in opposition. These cordial relations quickly became strained. The official PP narratives radically altered in the aftermath of the Madrid bombing and the 14 March elections. The PP narratives now focus on sowing doubts as to who was the so-called "mastermind" of the 11 March attack, all the while insisting that without the attack the PP would still be the government of Spain. The PP narratives also suggest that there is a connection between the electoral defeat and a conspiracy involving ETA, which proponents of these narratives argue, had everything to gain from a Socialist victory. More conspicuously, the PP intimates that the Socialists themselves have something, even a lot, to hide about what happened in those days in March. The conspiracy theory reads something like this: that the March 11 attacks were mounted by remote control by some Spanish political groups with Moroccan and French agents and executed by Basque terrorists and al-Qaeda working side by side with the blessing of the Spanish left and some news media. According to Santos Juliá writing in *El País*, the purpose of these narratives is to erode and undermine the legitimacy of the Socialist victory in the election. Tellingly, the repetition and the insidious nature of these narratives have elided neatly with the traditional conservative narratives of Spanish national identity. By repeating the line that Zapatero refuses to lift the veil on the whole truth (what this truth could be remains unspoken), the insinuation is that "something is being plotted - some shameful concession to terrorism, or some treacherous surrender to the enemy, or some betrayal of the unity of Spain" (Juliá, *A Year of Opposition*). For the PP, the Socialists are traitors "who are removing obstacles from the path of the enemies of Spain," as exemplified by the Socialist government's dealings with the regional nationalists, in their conciliatory approach to regional government, and their refusal to take legal action against the Communist Party of the Basque Country for allegedly being a political front of ETA. The PP's insistent repeating

of simple messages as opposed to offering policy ideas may be shallow politically but remains effective. The repetition of these narratives in radio shows and newspapers fixes them as central questions of current political debate in Spain. This in turn forces the Socialists to respond to these allegations, even if the allegations point to the preposterous idea that the Socialists "masterminded" the Madrid bomb attack in order to win government.

Even after the PP's disastrous narrative construction in the days between the 11 March attack and the 14 March election, the potency of these long-standing historical narratives in Spain is still apparent. The emotional attachment that many Spaniards have to these narratives indicates that the memory of regimes of social terror remains entrenched in the cracks of the political apparatus and in the minds of the public. Historical narratives are never superseded; rather, the present is forced to orient itself amid so much history, and so many histories....

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Author's profile: Nicholas Manganas teaches in the Spanish major of the In-Country Study Program at the Institute for International Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney. In his work, Manganas explores media and cultural studies, Spanish and European studies, and international studies, where he focuses on mass-mediated narratives of terrorism in Spain and looks at how these narratives are negotiated publicly through the process of recuperating public memory. In particular, he is interested in the concepts of "perpetual war" and "perpetual peace" in the context of the narrativization of terror in the post 9/11 era within the "European" cultural and geo-political space. E-mail: <[nicholas.manganas@uts.edu.au](mailto:nicholas.manganas@uts.edu.au)>