Understanding Spanish Jihadist Terrorism

The Ideology Behind the Metaphors

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Main Findings

In this book, I have adopted CTS-informed commitments concerning ontology (critical realism), epistemology (scepticism), politics (revisionism of statist ideology), and normativity (emancipation) to draw upon a productive and performative understanding of Spanish 'jihadist (counter)terrorism' discourse as a new category of governmentality (Foucault 1991, 158; Mavelli 2016, 237–47). Equipped with this framework, I have demonstrated that Spanish 'democracy' has functioned since the 'Spanish Transition to Democracy' (STD) not only *despite* but also *through* 'terrorism' (Mythen and Walklate 2006, 394). Critically, this dynamic includes the propagandistic exploitation of actual terrorist attacks, which I have illustrated through my Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) of the Madrid (2004) and Barcelona (2017) attacks.

To that effect, in Part I, I have contextualised and deconstructed the STD and 'War on Terror' (WOT) narratives as the main statist ideologies shaping the Spanish (and Catalan) mainstream institutional and media framing of both events. Then in Part II, I have illustrated my discussion of Part I by engaging in a CMA of the coverage of the Madrid and Barcelona attacks by the Spanish (and Catalan) newspapers of record, with a focus on the cognitive, semantic, and pragmatic use of metaphors for propagandistic purposes.

Part I

A significant gap in both traditional (Cercas 2009; Tusell 2011; Muñoz Molina 2013; Juliá 2017; Fernández Soldevilla and Jiménez Ramos 2020) and revisionist narratives (Morán 1991; Monedero 2011; Labrador 2015, 2017; Preston 2018) of the STD lies in the axiomatic idea that Spanish democracy emerged and has consolidated itself *despite* terrorism. Marta Rovira has summarised this idea eloquently: "in the set of narratives – of democratisation – terrorism is only part of the story as a constant threat to the smooth development of the Transition, and not as a conditioning factor of political changes" (cited in Casals 2016, 13). This mainstream Terrorist Studies (TS) view fails to account for how Spain's post-transitional regime has operated not only *despite* 'terrorism' but also *through* it (Mythen and Walklate 2006, 394).

Thus, as part of my contextualisation of 'terrorism' in Spain since the STD (1975–82), I have demonstrated that a gradual semantic shift occurred during this period. This phased semantic development significantly influenced the subsequent usage of the terms 'terrorism,' 'democracy,' and 'Constitution' in mass public discourse, as well as related terms like 'victim(s),' 'elections,' 'authorities,' and 'citizens.'

On the one hand, the meaning of these signifiers had been vigorously debated as part of the transitional process (particularly apropos key episodes, such as the 1977 Political Reform Act, the 1977 Moncloa Pacts, the 1978 'Constitution' approval, the 23-F coup attempt, and the 1982 'elections'). On the other hand, a crucial semantic displacement took place in this period as a result of which by 1982, 'democracy' had come to be understood as a dead metaphor (i.e., a concept) of the opposite of Francoist dictatorship rather than a break with it, 'terrorism' was almost exclusively equated with sub-State political violence (as opposed to State political violence) against 'victims,' and the so-called 'Constitution' had assumed the status of a sacrosanct foundation of the current 'democratic' order, periodically renewed via 'elections.' Drawing upon Friedrich Nietzsche's idea that "concepts are metaphors whose origins we have forgotten" (Yebra López 2024, 131), I have shown that this critical semantic shift would be (conveniently) forgotten over time, courtesy of the consistent and persistent ideological erasure of this displacement in Spanish mainstream historiography and mass press.

However, I have demonstrated that it is precisely the semantic tension between the meaning of these terms before and after the STD which lies at the heart of the subsequent consolidation of the STD and WOT narratives. As part of these statist ideologies, this tension has also reinforced the hegemonic, conventionalised understanding of 'democracy,' 'terrorism,' and 'Constitution' in contemporary Spain as self-evident realities, rather than as ontologically unstable and socially constructed entities. I have further contended that it is in light of this dynamic that we can best make sense of the metaphoric uses of the above terms as part of the mainstream institutional and media coverage of post-1982 'terrorist' attacks, including the 2004 Madrid bombings and the 2017 Barcelona hit and run.

Additionally, revealing this functioning also helps us account for the otherwise paradoxical fact that since the STD, sub-State 'terrorism' has been actively sought after by the Spanish State to reinforce the governance of the country as 'democratic' by opposition. Hence why the cessation of political violence by Spain's principal internal 'terrorist' group (ETA in the 2000s) did not diminish 'counterterrorist' hysteria in Spain. Instead, it merely led to its rebranding, resulting in increasingly stringent penal codes targeting a newly designated 'terrorist' threat: 'jihadist terrorism.'

Expressions like 'jihadist terrorism' and 'Islamic terrorism' are problematic, as they conflate terrorism and violence with Islam and Muslims. Islam is complex and multi-faceted, so reducing it to monolithic interpretations, such as viewing it solely as a religion of violence, is prejudiced, reductionist, and highly inaccurate (Ahmed 2015). Similarly, 'jihad' signifies a struggle in the path of God (*fi sabil Allah*) and encompasses a range of actions from violent means ('lesser jihad,' *al-jihad*

al-asghar) to moral and spiritual improvement ('greater jihad,' *al-jihad al-akbar*) (Firestone 2002; Cook 2005; Bonner 2008; Albarrán 2018). Therefore, violence is neither the sole nor defining aspect of jihad as an Islamic concept (Ahmed 2015, 444).

By contrast, drawing upon the STD and WOT narratives, in the 21st century, Spanish '(jihadist) counterterrorism' has framed 'jihadism' as a security issue to be monitored and neutralised within the context of the 'Global War on Terror' (De Arístegui 2006; Torres Soriano 2009, 2014; Reinares 2014, 2017; López Bargados 2016; Reinares and García-Calvo 2018, 2021; Gómez 2022; León Siminiani and Carretero 2022). This approach has further served to advance Spanish nationalism and depoliticise 'jihadist attacks' on Spanish soil while instituting a new form of Orientalism (Said 1978; López Bargados 2016) that has allowed those in control of the State to position themselves in the legitimising extreme of the essentialised anthropological, theological, and political binary, 'we/good/democratic/innocent/ Spanish/Catalan/Judeo-Christian/citizens/siding with the Constitution vs. them/ evil/terrorist/Muslim/dehumanised/Others' (see Jackson 2005).

Overall, I have shown that since 1982, the common discursive goal of the dominant Spanish (post)transitional political class and the mainstream press has been to construct the political subjectivity of the Spanish nation through the misrecognition of itself as 'democratic.' This self-perception has been shaped in contrast with the Terrorist Other, whether it be the older (ETA) or new, like Al-Qaeda, IS, and, since 2015, the 'radicalisation' suspect, particularly Basques, Muslims, and/or Catalans (Aretxaga 2000; Sagardoy-Leuza 2020).

Tracing this innovative *longue durée* connecting the Madrid (2004) and Barcelona (2017) attacks to the STD (1975–) and the WOT (2001–) narratives has allowed me to speculate, in anticipation of my CMA in Part II, that in 21st-century Spain, the mainstream press coverage construction of 'democracy,' 'terrorism,' and 'victims' apropos the attacks of the jihadist terrorist resistance[1] remains markedly State-centric. In particular, and as discussed by Jack Holland regarding similar events, apropos the Madrid and Barcelona attacks in Spain (and to a lesser extent, in Catalonia), "the media and popular culture contributed to a process of co-production, looping, and communicating official language in a manner that maximized its dissemination, reach, and resonance" (2016, 208).

At the same time, I have nuanced my point in this volume about the hegemony of the STD and WOT narratives by showing that the above-referred semantic displacement between 1975 and 1982 (on which their current hegemony is partially predicated) coexisted with (and entailed the temporary defeat and partial oblivion of) alternative symbolisations articulated by a number of peripheral political actors. These included, first, the far right, which featured pro-military ultraconservatives and neofascist violent groups, both of which continued to see 'democracy' as profane rather than sacred (Preston 2018). Second, the far left, e.g., the FRAP, GRAPO, and MIL, all of which understood the fabrication of the terrorism problem by the State as a projection of its own terrorism, and interpreted political violence against the State as a means to further 'democracy.' Third, the so-called 'Basque exception,' which denounced State violence as 'terrorist,' often viewing

ETA's political violence as 'patriotic.' Fourth, what we could call the 'Catalan exception,' which, though less impactful, also denounced the fabrication of the terrorism problem by the State as a projection of its own terrorism, desacralising the 'Constitution' as anti-democratic, and advocating for self-determination, occasionally framing *Terra Lliure* and *Tsunami Democratic*'s violence as 'patriotic.' Lastly, Antonio García-Trevijano's strand of constitutionalism, for which 'democracy,' as enshrined in the 1978 'Constitution,' was the profane of sacred democracy as a legal and institutional break with Francoism (2009).

In this sense, a crucial takeaway from the present volume is that, eventually, these alternative narratives about 'democracy,' 'terrorism,' and the 1978 'Constitution,' to which one must now also add local jihadist terrorist resistance (Al-Qaeda, IS), have all come back to haunt the Spanish State in post-transitional times. This process has become particularly intense since the post-2008 ideological opening experienced as a result of the 2008 'economic crisis,' the mass critical adoption of social media in the 2010s, the 2011 *Indignados* [Outraged] movement, and the 2017 Catalan unilateral declaration of independence, all of which have significantly eroded national consensus apropos the STD narrative while problematising 'counterterrorist' military solutions congruent with the WOT ideology (e.g., José María Aznar's support of the US-led invasion of Iraq; the use of force by the Spanish National Police and the Civil Guard during the 2017 Catalan bid for independence).

Part II

In the second part of this volume, I have adopted CMA as a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model to metaphor (Charteris-Black 2004, 2011) premised on the understanding of the latter as "a word or phrase that is used with a sense that differs from another more common or more basic sense that this word or phrase has" (Charteris-Black 2011, 31).

Focusing on the analysis of metaphors from a discourse model standpoint has allowed me to identify and discuss the intentions and ideologies that underlied language use (Charteris-Black 2004, 34; 2011, 45) apropos the Spanish and Catalan mainstream press coverage of the Madrid and Barcelona attacks. In particular, it has allowed me to examine the metaphorical and propagandistic (rather than literal and objective) exploitation of these events in alignment with the STD and WOT framing of the following keywords: 'democracy,' 'terrorism,' 'jihad,' 'victims,' 'Constitution,' 'authorities,' 'elections,' 'citizens,' and 'unity.' Additionally, it has helped me examine the relationship between these keywords and many other linguistic metaphors (and further figures of speech), which I have grouped based on the target domains that were more relevant to my discussion of 'jihadist terrorism' regarding the Madrid and Barcelona strikes, namely, the nature of the 'jihadist terrorist' attacks, the perpetrators, the 'victims,' media reactions, condemning and mourning the events, and the Spanish post-transitional regime (plus Catalan independence in the case of the Barcelona attacks).

In this sense, and as I have pointed out repeatedly in this book, by using single inverted commas around the above-mentioned keywords, I have not intended to

deny the status of the attacks as terrorism, the perpetrators as terrorists, or those killed in Madrid and/or Barcelona as victims. Instead, I have used single inverted commas to stress that the fact that there were genuine terrorist attacks, terrorists, and victims of the attacks could and did coexist with the propagandistic exploitation of the labels 'terrorism,' 'terrorists,' and 'victims' to exacerbate a false binary between 'us/innocent/victims vs. them/evil/terrorists' that served to reinforce the STD and WOT narratives as the main statist ideologies underpinning the Spanish State's governance of the country *through* terrorism in addition to *despite* it.

Editorial Positions on STD and WOT as Statist Ideologies

In this volume, I have proved that, congruent with my discussion in Part I, the overall editorial position of all four newspapers of record (*El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Vanguardia*, and *El Punt Avui*)[2] apropos the attacks was highly dependent on their respective engagement with the STD and WOT ideologies. These ideologies served as the predominant frameworks for producing knowledge about the attacks, which were understood as acts of 'jihadist terrorism/Islamic terrorism,' targeted by 'counterterrorism' in 21st-century Spain.

On the one hand, *El País*, *El Mundo*, and *La Vanguardia* embraced and reproduced both narratives uncritically: all sought to use the '(jihadist) terrorist' attacks of Madrid and Barcelona to reinforce Spanish 'democracy' by opposition as established around the Spanish parliamentary monarchy and State of Autonomies enshrined in the 1978 'Constitution.' In contrast, while *El Punt Avui* disseminated the WOT framing rather uncritically, it actively problematised the STD narrative from the viewpoint of pro-Catalan independence. However, it has been my contention in this volume that, to the extent to which the WOT is mutually reinforcing of the STD one, by reproducing the former, *El Punt Avui* ended up helping the latter's cause as well.

Contra its uncritical reproduction by the Spanish (and Catalan) mainstream press apropos the Madrid and Barcelona attacks, the WOT narrative has been consistently problematised in this volume. This has been done not just diachronically (i.e., through a critical genealogy of this narrative since 2001; Part I), but also synchronically, i.e., by contrasting it with the caution exercised by the international press, including 'Western' allies, when it came to labelling the attacks as acts of 'terrorism.' Predictably, this prudence (which, in the case of the Barcelona attacks, was further compounded by criticism in social and decentralised media) provoked a negative and anxious reaction from the Spanish and Catalan mainstream press.

Apropos the Madrid attacks, I have shown that *El Mundo* was vehement in its criticism of "media from all over the world, from *Libération* to The New York Times" (3) for referring to ETA as a 'separatist' rather than 'terrorist' group. Conversely, it thanked those rare media that did describe members of ETA as "terrorists" by, inter alia, referring to them as media that spoke openly ["*hablaban sin tapujos*"] (3), and implying (without owning it) that any label other than 'terrorists' (e.g., 'separatists,' let alone 'freedom fighters' or 'resisters') was a cover-up of an

otherwise self-evident reality [“*realidad sin tapujos*”], i.e., that ETA members are “simply terrorists.”

Additionally, and concerning the Barcelona attacks, I have observed that two German newspapers of record, namely, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Der Spiegel*, featured the collocation ‘supposed terrorists’ in the main headline of their front pages.

The Propagandistic Use of Metaphors to Manufacture Consent apropos the STD and the WOT

My CMA has shown that, although metaphors could have been used for the edifying purpose of rendering jihadist terrorist resistance as illustrated by the Madrid and Barcelona attacks intelligible to the Spanish nation, overall, none of the four Spanish and/or Catalan mainstream newspapers did so consistently. Rather, for the most part, they all instrumentalised metaphors as catchy, memorable, highly replicable, persuasive, and non-legally binding rhetorical figures that allow for embedded ideological content to be accepted while being left undiscussed (Stanley 2015, 155). In particular, they did so to disseminate all the more effectively their propagandistic exploitation of these ‘terrorist’ events. In turn, this dynamic obstructed (rather than facilitated) fair public deliberation on the attacks, which is itself a *conditio sine qua non* of a proper understanding and consideration of these events within a democratic regime.

More specifically, I have shown that, in alignment with my discussion in Part I, metaphors were used across all four newspapers mostly to oversimplify democracy and terrorism (in the form of military attacks by members of the jihadist resistance) as mutually constitutive realities. Ultimately, the main goal of this campaign was to ‘manufacture the consent’ (Herman and Chomsky 1988) and support of the Spanish nation for the STD and WOT statist ideologies en route to successfully framing ‘jihadist terrorism’ in Spain as a security issue to be monitored and neutralised within the context of the ‘Global War on Terror’ to consolidate Spanish ‘democracy’ by opposition. In practice, this rhetorical manoeuvre helped solidify Spanish ‘(jihadist) counterterrorism’ as a pivotal element of Spain’s national branding.[3] It also helped catalyse the eventual implementation of a securitisation strategy designed to advance the attributions and perceived legitimacy of the Spanish and Catalan governments, conflating them with the Spanish and Catalan nations, respectively, and allowing both to misrecognise themselves as ‘we/good/democratic/Spanish/Catalan/Judeo-Christian/citizens/siding with the Constitution’ by opposition to ‘them/evil/terrorist/Muslim/dehumanised/Others’ (see Jackson 2005).

In other words, I have shown that metaphors were highly instrumental in (re)producing Spain’s institutional and journalistic terror knowledge about the attacks, which was effectively “counterinsurgency masquerading as political science” (Schmid and Jongman, 1988, 182; cited in Jackson 2007, 245 and from there in Shareef 2024).

Sensationalism and an Existential Binary

I have shown that the effective use of metaphors for propaganda was primarily achieved by employing them to create a sensationalised portrayal of the attacks,

including gruesome language and the treatment of the term 'terrorism' as a supposed self-evident reference to sub-State terrorism. In turn, this served to induce fear, frame the attacks within the WOT narrative, and boost sales.

In the case of the Madrid attacks, *El País*' headline the day after the bombings described them as a "terrorist inferno," and in *El Mundo*'s issue of that day, the attacks were metaphorised as "the hell that turned red and burnt the whole of Madrid" (3). For both newspapers, the sensational framing of the Atocha bombings à la WOT was partially dependent on the analogy with '9/11.' Thus, just as *El País* featured the claim "the Madrid explosions should be the European 9/11," *El Mundo* entitled its editorial of March 13th "Our 9/11" (3), adding that "Yesterday Madrid was that Manhattan." Concerning the Barcelona attacks, *El Mundo*'s online front page and editorial the day after the Barcelona attacks spoke of "IS' 'Fire in Al Andalus.'"[4]

This was followed by the dissemination of the essentialised anthropological, theological, political, WOT- and STD-informed binary 'we/good/innocent/democratic/Spanish/Catalan/Judeo-Christian/citizens/siding with the Constitution vs. them/evil/terrorist/Muslim/dehumanised/Others' (see Jackson 2005). This dichotomy was reinforced by appeals to enforce 'unity' at 'home' against the 'terrorist' Other. Hence the systematic and self-righteous metaphorisation of the targeted cities (Madrid, Barcelona) as "the capital of dignity/the world" by *El País* and *El Mundo*, as well as the Hobbesian body politic (1651) claim that "we are all Madrid/Barcelona." The latter served to reinforce the idea that the body of the sovereign/State Barcelona, Madrid, and by extension, Catalonia and Spain consisted of the sum of each individual subject, exceeding the stature and force of each of them individually so as to better protect them collectively, whereupon he derives the legitimacy of his 'authority.'

The dissemination of such doctrine was further assisted by metaphorisation via the recurring use of prosopopeiae apropos both cities. Thus, Madrid was conceptualised in *El Mundo* as the "heart" of Spain (March 12th, 72), and in turn, the train station where the attacks took place was said to be the "heart" of Madrid (March 12th, 3). Additionally, Madrid was metaphorised in *El País* as possessing a "soul" (March 12th, 5). Similarly, apropos the Barcelona attacks, the avenue where the hit and run took place, the iconic La Rambla, was conceptualised in *La Vanguardia* as an (urban) "artery" (2), the editorial of that day further metaphorising La Rambla as "the bowels and heart" of a (European) human body targeted by the perpetrators (24), who incurred a "terrorist mauling" that "bled Barcelona's heart" (idem).

In the case of the Madrid attacks, the above-mentioned existential binary was further reinforced via the systematic metaphorisation in *El País* and *El Mundo* of 'votes' as the only 'weapons' 'we,' the Spanish 'citizens,' have against the 'barbarism' and 'fanaticism' of 'evil' 'terrorists' posing an existential threat to 'our way of life' (both newspapers). Concerning the Barcelona attacks, this binary was validated through the metaphorisation of the hit and run in terms of "lost/hijacked innocence" (*El País*) and "La Rambla's Torn Postcard" (*La Vanguardia*, 2).

Metaphors were also highly instrumental in the oversimplistic victimisation of those affected by the attacks. Concerning the Madrid attacks, *El País* spoke of the

assassinated as the "martyrs of 3/11" (*El País* March 13th), and both *El País* and *El Mundo* featured the proclamation of March 11th by the then-president of the European Parliament, Pat Cox, as the "European Day for the Victims of Terrorism" (*El Mundo* March 12th, 2). Furthermore, the 'victims' were also compared in *El País*' issue of March 14th to 'fish swimming together to protect themselves from their predators' (hence downplaying their individuality and emphasising their vulnerability, in line with a 'counterterrorist' narrative revolving around the securitisation approach) and "ants" (connoting them as law-abiding members of the working class).

Regarding the Barcelona attacks, this rhetorical manoeuvre was assisted by infantilising metaphors, such as conceptualising those who suffered the hit and run as 'Joan Miró's children' (*El País*, further implying that the attacks were surreal). Additionally, *La Vanguardia* made the editorial choice to include a 'flaccid stuffed animal from *Finding Nemo*' carried by a local tourist guide to lead the crowd. This object was then used as a metaphor to positively frame those predominantly affected by the attacks and Barcelona (mostly tourists) as 'innocent,' further depoliticising their predicament (13). The same newspaper resorted to the 'Olympic Games of 1992' (which were held in Barcelona) to metaphorise the assistance of these anonymous citizens as being animated by the "Olympic spirit" (14), thus framing Barcelona as a city of universal tolerance and understanding. This point was echoed by a metaphorisation in *El Punt Avui* whereby a 'red suitcase abandoned in the middle of the road' was likened to a witness of tourists fleeing the scene of the attacks (13).

Lastly, and as part of the existential binary in question, the dehumanisation and Othering of the perpetrators were abundant and often overwhelming, particularly around the use of animal-related and devil-based metaphors.

Concerning the Madrid attacks, in *El Mundo* these were metaphorised as "the clawing of infamy" (March 12th, 2), perpetrated by "the Devil himself" (March 12th, 3), "gangsters" (March 14th, 15), and "inquisitor slaughterers of the new millennium" (March 14th, 15). Additionally, in *El País*, the perpetrators were described as a group of "savages" (March 12th) and Al-Qaeda as a "terrorist hydra" (March 14th).

Regarding the Barcelona attacks, these were metaphorised in *El Mundo* as the 'charging/ramming of a bull' driving "at a diabolical pace," the bumper of the van with which one of the perpetrators committed the hit and run becoming "the jaws of the vehicle." Similarly, in *El País*, the perpetrators were metaphorised as a "thousand-headed army," its members belonging to a "cell" whose "tentacles" reached into multiple Spanish provinces. Lastly, both newspapers referred to the events through the borrowed metaphor "lone-wolf attacks" (also used in *El Punt Avui*, 20) and to the explosives the perpetrators intended to use for the Barcelona attacks via the additional borrowed metaphor "the mother of Satan."

The Impossibility of Negotiating with Terrorists, Reducing Jihad to Terrorism

The discursive consolidation of the above existential binary via metaphors paved the way for the shaming metaphorisation of negotiating with the perpetrators

(Madrid attacks), as well as for the Islamophobic reduction of the principle of jihad to the commission of terrorist strikes (Madrid and Barcelona attacks). As a result, it seemingly dispensed with the evident need to make the case for why negotiating with the perpetrators is wrong and why 'jihad' ought to be reduced to the commission of 'terrorist' attacks, respectively.

Concerning the supposed impossibility of negotiating with the perpetrators of the Madrid bombings, one should consider the metaphoric assertions that negotiating with the assassins meant insulting the memory of the 'victims' (*El Mundo* March 12th, 3), that entering into dialogue with the "terrorists" meant accepting a form of "blackmail" (*El Mundo* March 12th, 3), as well as putting a "price tag" on "freedom" and "democracy" (*El Mundo* March 12th, 3), and that any attempts to dialogue with the perpetrators were akin to "singing to fire" (*El País* March 14th). By virtue of these metaphors, both newspapers sought to shame the Spanish nation into accepting the WOT perspective, a key tenet of which is that 'terrorists' are to be targeted and removed, their sociopolitical grievances and/or demands coming at a distant second. Additionally, these figures of speech served to exonerate the Spanish political establishment from justifying this problematic ideological position.

Finally, with regard to the Islamophobic reduction of the principle of jihad to the commission of 'terrorist' attacks, all four newspapers participated in this discourse, thus vilifying Islam and jihad while implicitly validating Al-Qaeda's (concerning Madrid) and IS' (concerning Barcelona) discourse on 'jihad' and 'jihadism.'

This reductionism could already be discerned in the late (rather than immediate) 2004 coverage of the Madrid attacks in both *El País* and *El Mundo*. Thus, the first mention in the coverage of the strikes by any Spanish newspapers of record (*El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*) was in *El Mundo*'s issue of March 15th, where the term "*Yihad*" ["Jihad"] (in caps) appeared in the following collocation: "Jihad – holy war" (1). This framing was then used as a precedent for these newspapers' subsequent treatment of 'jihadist terrorism' apropos the 2017 Barcelona attacks, as reflected in my CMA of their mainstream press coverage the day after (August 18th).

Such Islamophobic oversimplification was compounded by the ironic metaphorisation of the 13-year interlude between the Madrid and Barcelona attacks as a "*Baraka*" [in Islam, a blessing power emanating from God to what is worthy of it; *El País*], and the conceptualisation of the Barcelona attacks in terms of an "urban jihad" (*El País*), plus the claim that "the jihadist scourge (…) raises first-order challenges for European governments trying to deal with this threat to their security" (*El País*). This reductionist framing was particularly pernicious in the metaphorical scenario concocted by Pilar Rahola in her *La Vanguardia* article "In the Crosshairs of Jihad" (7), where she claimed that the Barcelona attacks represented a form of "new jihad" (idem) and spoke of "the devilish force of the new jihad" (idem).

The attacks were further depoliticised across the board by framing them as non-sensical (rather than, e.g., political retaliation against Western colonialism). For instance, in *El País*, the assassinations were metaphorised as "gratuitous killings… using supposed ideas as an excuse" [literally using them as a "shield," "*escudo*"].

In *La Vanguardia*, the perpetrators were metaphorised as "*personas descarriadas*" [literally, "people" without a '*carro*' – 'carriage,' i.e., devoid of a vehicle or animal employed to move something from one location to another; by extension, disoriented, misguided] and leading lives that were "*desnortadas*" [literally, without '*norte*' – 'North' or by extension, a point of reference] (18).

Even more worrisome (and particularly symptomatic of the cultural hegemony achieved by the WOT narrative) was the fact that, despite its explicit anti-Islamophobic stance,[5] *El Punt Avui* also reproduced the above oversimplification on multiple occasions and in prominent places. For example, the day after the attacks, its editorial read "Global Terror in Barcelona" (1, 23), whereupon the subheading of many pages devoted to the attacks featured a clearly Islamophobic phrase: "Islamist blow to Barcelona" (6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25). Still, probably no other metaphor about the attacks was as eloquent, unique, and recurring as "putting Barcelona on the map of terrorism" (3, 7), which effectively included Barcelona in the 'global jihad' narrative, implying a security-and-defence approach by drawing upon maps as instruments of surveillance technology.

A further twist could be found in *El País*, *El Mundo*, and *La Vanguardia*'s additional oversimplification and dismissal of Catalan independence, including its unwarranted association with 'jihadist terrorism,' with *El Punt Avui* vocally opposing both points. In either camp, metaphors were colourful and highly instrumental in framing the debate to each newspaper's advantage (i.e., as a legitimising/delegitimising device – Charteris-Black 2011, 37), particularly for the purpose of deflating ontologically that which they opposed ideologically.

This discursive construal could be observed, e.g., in the metaphorisation of the attacks in *El País* as a "loud knock" ["*aldabonazo*," a term of Hispanic Arabic origin] meant to serve as a wake-up call for supporters of Catalonia's independence to renounce their "secessionist chimaera," "democratic nonsense," and "games of deception." Conversely, both newspapers framed collaboration between Catalonia and the Spanish State (within the framework of the current 'constitutional' arrangement) in positive terms, resorting to metaphorisations like "holding out a hand," "working as a team," and "pulling together" (*El Mundo*), as well as "rowing together" (*El País*)

By contrast, in *El Punt Avui*, the unionist assumption that Spain is a 'democracy' enshrined in a 'Constitution' was challenged in no uncertain terms by metaphorising Article 2 of this document (which consecrates the State of Autonomies and the "indivisibility" of the Spanish nation) as a "Francoist hindrance" ["*rèmora franquista*"] (43). This problematisation was compounded by the accusation in the pages of the same newspaper that the Spanish government was blackmailing the pro-independence camp. This idea was compellingly conveyed by metaphorising the Spanish government's threats to disqualify the Catalan one in terms of 'keeping a card on the table': "[the Spanish government] keep[s] on the table the card of disqualifying the [Catalan] councillors because of political ideas" (idem). Lastly, in the same issue, *El Punt Avui* published an article connoting Spain as authoritarian yet vulnerable (thus keeping alive the hopes of pro-independence

supporters) by metaphorising the Spanish empire as having "an iron hand and feet of clay" (38).

Overall, the end result of the metaphorisations disseminated by *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Vanguardia*, and *El Punt Avui* was the consolidation of the WOT narrative on Spanish soil (and if you will, as it intersects with the STD one). This, as I have shown, effectively mirrors (and reinforces) Al-Qaeda and IS' discourse apropos a supposed existential war between 'we/righteous' and 'them/evil.'

This shared understanding between 'counterterrorists' and 'terrorists' (as well as their respective media pundits) was perhaps most discernible in *El Mundo*'s reproduction of a quote from a pro-IS Twitter account that the kind of "new jihad" instantiated by the Barcelona attacks aimed "to reconquer al-Andalus." I have further illustrated this point by engaging in a CMA of IS' claim of responsibility for the Barcelona strikes in a statement published in their affiliated media outlet *Al Naba*. In that communiqué, the victims of the Barcelona hit and run were conceptualised as "Jews and Crusaders," contrasting with the Spanish and Catalan mainstream press, which would typically speak of 'innocent citizens.' This collocation is customary in IS' statements when referring to non-Muslim targets of attacks of its authorship, and speaks to a simplified understanding of jihad as *al-jihad al-asghar* ['الجهاد الأصغر'], i.e., the lesser jihad, in the military sense. In turn, this form of jihad unfolds as part of a global geopolitical scenario strictly codified along the lines of '*us vs. them*,' that is, the 'House/Territory of Islam' ['*Dar al-Islam*,' 'دار الإسلام'] vs. the 'House/Territory of War' ['Dar al-Harb,' 'دار الحرب'], the latter being, in this case, Barcelona/Spain as populated and ruled by 'Jews and Crusaders' (See Streusand 1997; Albrecht 2018).

Why Sensationalist and Binary Metaphors Obfuscated Public Deliberation on Both Attacks

I have observed above that the Spanish version of WOT, as mediated by the oversimplifying binary between 'innocent' Spaniards and 'foreign,' 'evil' 'jihadist terrorists,' was crafted and disseminated to allow for the political subjectivity of *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Vanguardia*'s (and, to a lesser extent, *El Punt Avui*'s) audience to be constituted through the misrecognition of itself as 'democratic' in the mirrored image of the Terrorist Other (Al-Qaeda, IS). However, this propagandistic endeavour was only partially successful. Its shortcomings have been exposed multiple times in alternative online media and publications whose reach has grown exponentially since the 2010s.

Indeed, I have shown in this volume that, as noted by Charles Townshend (2002, 7) and Richard Jackson (2005, 83), 'innocent' and 'evil' are unstable categories, since to a lesser or greater extent, everyone is involved in global structures of power and domination. Additionally, I have demonstrated that neither 'democracy' nor 'terrorism' are coherent or homogeneous subjects, but "loosely-connected and contradictory ensembles of institutional bodies, apparatuses, fantasies, political groups" (Aretxaga 2000, 53). This point is corroborated inter alia by the existence and persistence of complex interactional dynamics between the Spanish State

security forces and 'terrorist' groups, which had a decisive influence on the Madrid and Barcelona attacks, respectively.

Apropos the Madrid bombings, and as per the Spanish National Court ruling, authored by Judge Salvador Francisco Javier Gómez Bermúdez, published on October 31st, 2007, and ratified by the Spanish Supreme Court on July 17th, 2008, Al-Qaeda was neither directly nor exclusively responsible for the attacks. Instead, they were the product of a convergence of interests between members of the jihadist terrorist resistance loosely associated with Al-Qaeda (some of whom had a Spanish passport),[6] a number of individuals from the Spanish *hampa* or criminal underworld (who facilitated explosives in exchange for drugs),[7] and the negligence of the Spanish security forces and national intelligence. Indeed, a significant number of the perpetrators and facilitators were on their files and/or worked for them as informers prior to the attacks (Ordaz 2007). Hence Giles Tremlett's conclusion in *Ghosts of Spain*: "turns out that all of this was done by a handful of petty crooks who where also police informants, but that police did not have the faintest idea of what was going on" (2008, 251). Still, both this collaboration and the fact that a significant number of the perpetrators and facilitators worked for the Spanish security forces and national intelligence as informers prior to the attacks, are frequently and conveniently elided to this day in public discourse. Additionally, a large number of the 'victims' were not Spaniards, but working-class immigrants. Notwithstanding this fact (or precisely because it did not align with the STD- and WOT-informed binaries), on March 13th (i.e., two days after the attacks), the Spanish government granted Spanish passports to all foreign 'victims,' thus retrospectively equating victimhood with Spanishness.

Regarding the Barcelona attacks, the majority of those killed were not Spaniards, but tourists. However, attesting to the (increasing) instability of the label 'victim,' the National Court ruling 15/2021 raised the number of 'victims' from 170 (including those injured) to over 300. For the first time, the Spanish judiciary included under this label people who had suffered psychological disorders as a result of the attacks (notably post-traumatic stress) and extended it to the direct relatives of the survivors (even if they were not present at the crime scene) and to members of the Spanish security forces (León Siminiani and Carretero 2022).

Concerning the perpetrators of these attacks, it has been proven that the Spanish National Intelligence Centre (CNI) lied about the mastermind behind the strikes (Abdelbaki Es Satty), hid information on him from the Catalan autonomous police (*Mossos d'Esquadra*), hired Es Satty as an informant in exchange for preventing him from being deported, and secured for him a position as the imam of Ripoll. Moreover, after failing to contain him, which resulted in the members of his cell committing the 2017 Barcelona attacks, the CNI sent his controllers to positions in far-removed places abroad (Bayo 2019a, b) (see also Yebra López 2022, 798–9).

I have also noted that the investigating judge of the trial for the Barcelona attacks (2020–1), Fernando Andreu, sought to downplay this interaction (thus justifying why it was not extensively discussed as part of the National Court ruling) and remained cautious about it:

> I do not know exactly whether Es Satty was an informant or whom he spoke with from the National Intelligence Centre (…) I believe that there are still things we do not know (…) I think there are still some loose ends to tie up in this investigation.
>
> (León Siminiani and Carretero 2022)

Ultimately, the intelligence failures leading to the Madrid and Barcelona strikes, respectively, seem to lend support to Joseba Zulaika's thesis regarding the systemic complicity between 'terrorism' and 'counterterrorism' (2003, 2009). According to this line of thought, self-declared 'counterterrorism' is fundamentally at odds with its sole admitted purpose (to stop 'terrorism'). Instead, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that fosters more 'terrorism,' of which the 2004 bombings and the 2017 hit and run are just two salient examples. After all, and contrary to Spanish mainstream consensus, ETA was not brought to an end by the Spanish State's 'counterterrorism,' understood as an indefatigable campaign of police repression and judicial intervention against this group as a 'terrorist' organisation, but rather by the latter's own political base (Zulaika and Murua 2017).

Controlled Dissent in Spanish and Catalan Newspapers of Record

Notwithstanding the above observations, it could be objected that ultimately, both *El País* and *El Mundo* did scrutinise, criticise, and hold the Spanish government and parties accountable, at least at times and to some extent. For instance, it is hard to deny that *El País* consistently mobilised various metaphors to denounce the Popular Party (PP)'s political instrumentalisation of the Madrid attacks. Notably, this newspaper published an article arguing that Aznar had used the 1978 'Constitution' as a 'hiding place' ["*zulo*," its Basque etymology suggesting Aznar's instrumentalisation of ETA] (March 13th). Additionally, it used against Ángel Acebes the derogatory metaphor deployed by the latter in the early hours after the explosions in order to discredit alternative accounts of ETA being responsible for the attacks as a form of "intoxication" (March 15th). Lastly, it famously accused PP politicians of having incurred an "informational horse-trading" (thus implying intentional deceit without needing to prove the allegation in question) (March 15th).

For its part, it is obvious that *El Mundo* aggressively contested the Socialist Party (PSOE)'s victory at the national 'elections' of March 14th, 2004, calling into question their 'democratic' legitimacy. This point was conspicuously implied in the following metaphor deployed by Gabriel Albiac in his column of March 15th: "Al-Qaeda won" (2). From this and in subsequent issues, *El Mundo* went on to describe the attacks as a 'Socialist coup' that had used 'jihadist terrorism' as a 'smokescreen.' Its editorial line became highly sceptical of the so-called 'official truth' as presented by the judicial power (Spain's National Court, Spain's Supreme Court), the Spanish political class, and *El País* alike. In conjunction with further conservative media, such as the radio station *Cope*, the printed newspaper *La Razón*, and the online-only newspaper *Libertad Digital*, *El Mundo* would go so far as to claim that, although the facts remained unclear, the Madrid attacks were probably carried out

by a consortium of the Spanish State security forces (possibly with the intervention of some paramilitary group linked to Spanish State terrorism, such as the GAL), ETA, the Moroccan secret services, and the PSOE.

However, I would argue that in none of the above cases were *El País* or *El Mundo* criticising structural aspects of the Spanish State and/or the post-transitional regime, let alone doing this with a view to edifying their audience to facilitate fair collective deliberation on the Madrid attacks in particular, or democracy, terrorism, and/or jihadist terrorist resistance at large. Rather, these newspapers were merely taking issue with the contingent circumstance that either the PP or the PSOE, respectively, were leading the Spanish government at that particular point. The rationale for their criticism was to act in line with their respective party interests, with *El País* favouring the PSOE over the PP, and *El Mundo* adopting the opposite position. This conclusion is also congruent with the fact that *El Mundo*'s prior coverage of State terrorism in Spain was limited to the pioneering publication of a series of interviews in the 1990s with members of the GAL (associated with the PSOE) who admitted in its pages to having assassinated Basques from both ETA and *Herri Batasuna*. Since the STD, *El Mundo* and *El País* have only ever addressed specific instances of State terrorism (rather than State terrorism *per se* or at large) as a means to delegitimise the political party they oppose, rather than to discuss State terrorism or inform their audience about the paradoxical and highly problematic relationship between democracy and terrorism in contemporary Spain.

In this sense, even the use of the metaphor "the sewers/cesspits of the State" ["*las cloacas del Estado*"] in *El Mundo* since March 14th, 2004 (e.g., on page 72 of that issue; see also López Brú 2013), can be understood from this perspective. It was, by and large, used within the context of articles that aimed to criticise the PSOE's instrumentalisation of the Madrid attacks, as well as that party's supposed collaboration with the Spanish security forces, rather than to engage in a critique *in toto* of the Spanish security forces or the Spanish State, let alone (in connection with) 'democracy' and 'terrorism' since the STD. By contrast, consider Ricardo Romero de Tejada's (2022) unambiguous reference to the "*cloacas*" in *Público* (alternative media) as being intrinsic to the "*Estado*" ["State"] since Francoism, thus deeming the post-1978 regime "neo-Francoist": "It's not about the *Cloacas del Estado*, it's the *Estado-Cloaca*. And it goes back a long way" (2022).

Moreover, by criticising the PP (but not the PSOE) and vice versa, *El País* and *El Mundo* were taking issue with specific political parties while ultimately (distracting their audience's attention from the fact that they were) validating partidocracy at large as the post-transitional "quasi-total domination of parties in politics" (Gorun 2012). This aspect became particularly apparent when, on the eve of the 'elections,' *El País* utilised a vivid metaphor suggesting that, in the aftermath of the Atocha bombings, 'voting was a heroic form of anti-fascism': "More than Ever: To the Ballot Box, Citizens." Conversely, according to the newspaper, abstention would have been akin to fulfilling the 'terrorists' goals in attacking Madrid, which in turn served to justify the newspaper's editorial encouragement to vote en masse for just about any party (including the PP): "Against the discouragement and

demoralisation intended by the terrorists… the moment advises that a vote be cast for any of the democratic parties that stand – for election."

Moreover, the fundamental complicity of *El País* and *El Mundo* with the core ideologemes of the Spanish State concerning 'democracy,' 'terrorism,' and 'jihad,' including partidocracy, can further be surmised from the fact that as soon as the need to campaign for a specific political party in light of the upcoming 'elections' was removed from the equation, these newspapers' respective framings of the 'terrorist' attacks in question became virtually indistinguishable. Thus, concerning the Barcelona attacks and in conjunction with *La Vanguardia*, both media positioned themselves against IS and Catalan independence, and in favour of both silencing alternative narratives (or else, dismissing them as 'conspiracy theories') and the increased securitisation of Spain and Catalonia.

Notwithstanding these explanations, one could still object that, by contrast to *El País*, *El Mundo*, and *La Vanguardia*, *El Punt Avui* did criticise structural aspects of the Spanish post-transitional regime that were shared by the respective editorial lines of the other three newspapers, such as the endorsement of the triumphalist narrative on the STD and rampant Islamophobia. Nevertheless, as I have observed in my CMA, *El Punt Avui*'s editorial tension between criticising the shortcomings of the STD from a pro-Catalan independence standpoint, on the one hand, and endorsing the WOT narrative (notwithstanding its explicit anti-Islamophobic stance), on the other, was eventually resolved in favour of the latter, i.e., endorsing a security-and-defence approach à la WOT. Ultimately, this meant that, paradoxically enough, *El Punt Avui*, much like *El País*, *El Mundo*, and *La Vanguardia*, ended up favouring unionism, as reflected in the quote from its editorial the day after the attack: "coordination between all policies must be maximum and cannot be clouded by political misgivings. Terrorism has become a global phenomenon that affects everyone. In this fight against blind and sectarian terror, all the authorities must be involved" (3). While encouraging coordination between the Spanish State and Catalan security forces, respectively, was not *per se* unionist (at the end of the day, the *Mossos* operate independently and autonomously), advocating for the involvement of all the "*authorities*" (including the Spanish State and political class) definitely was, as it implies both reinforcing the standing 'constitutional' arrangement (including Article 2, which explicitly contradicts Catalan independence) and validating those "authorities" as possessing moral authority [*autorictas*] (in addition to their *de facto* ability to exert their power – *potestas*).

Diachronic Evolution and The Digital Era: Ideological Openings, Emancipatory Horizons

My comparative analysis between the 2004 and 2017 attacks has further allowed me to examine how the passage of time affected the coverage of 'terrorist' strikes of a similar kind. This diachronic evolution influenced the Spanish State's approach to 'jihadist (counter)terrorism,' the conventionalisation of (discourse on) attacks of this sort, the transition from the broadcast era to the digital period, and the increasingly vociferous claims in favour of Catalan independence between 2017 and 2020.

I have noted that as regards *El País* and *El Mundo*'s press coverage of the 2017 Barcelona hit and run relative to that of the 2004 Madrid bombings, overall, in the case of Barcelona, non-metaphorical language predominated over metaphorical usage, particularly in the early framing of the attacks. This contrast can be explained by the fact that, by the time of the Barcelona massacre, there had been plenty of similar attacks on European soil, which made the use of metaphors less necessary to frame an issue that was no longer unheard of. Conversely, the highly conventionalised nature of these events also helps account for the frequent appearance of the term 'jihad,' in the coverage of the Barcelona hit and run and the recurring use throughout this corpus of jargon related to jihadist terrorist resistance, including terms such as 'Salafism,' 'returning jihadists,' '(self)radicalisation,' 'sleeping cells,' and 'DAESH' (all of which were virtually absent in the wake of the Madrid bombings).

In parallel to this, between 2004 and 2017 there was also a decisive transition from the broadcast era to the digital period, which has had a lasting impact on the way media power and control operate. Information circulation moved from a one-to-many paradigm to a combination of that with many-to-many (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, Twitter – currently X – and their comments sections), which made information increasingly interactive and participatory. Related to this, there was a vast decentralisation of the capacity to produce and disseminate information, which meant that individuals were no longer passive consumers, but active creators of news and further media content. Lastly, this dynamic downplayed the relevance of top-down, one-to-many strategies of gatekeeping, expertise, and framing, with hegemonic narratives and frames being consistently reproduced but also questioned and/or challenged in the comments section of many newspapers and on further social media platforms. As a result, mainstream newspapers such as *El País* and *El Mundo* (and to a lesser extent, *La Vanguardia*) lost their quasi-monopoly on the early national framing of major news events, including 'terrorist' attacks, and the Spanish press at large experienced a significant process of ideological opening.

By 2017, there were open-access, pro-democracy (as a break with Francoism) platforms (e.g., MCRC) and mass alternative online newspapers, including several that are left-wing (e.g., *Público* – see above – and *eldiario.es*) or pro-Catalan independence (*Avui*, *El Món*). There was even a Spanish Observatory of Islamophobia in the Media, assisted by a glossary on Islam elaborated by Luz Gómez (Autonomous University of Madrid) that featured definitions of terms and distinctions necessary for the general public to judge the extent to which the text they were consuming contained Islamophobic propaganda. Much in the spirit of CTS, all of the above, in conjunction with people's activity on social media and further sociopolitical events of that period (the 2008 'economic crisis,' the 2011 *Indignados* movement, and the 2017 Catalan unilateral declaration of independence), were now holding the Spanish (and Catalan) mainstream media accountable for their ideological discourse, including the framing of major events (e.g., the 2017 Barcelona attacks). They were also tracing the roots of that discourse back to many of the political arrangements and much of the statism validated by the STD (Martínez 2012) and WOT (Jackson 2005) narratives.

Guillem Martínez's analysis for *Público* (2017) in the aftermath of the Barcelona attacks offered a conspicuous summary of this dynamic, including the unreliability of the State as a source of information, the subservience of the Spanish and Catalan mainstream media to their respective governments (whence their proverbial calls for "unity"), and the lack of political independence of the Spanish State security forces:

> The classic article explaining Spanish culture in the process of suffering an attack (…) does not provide information about the attack but calls for unity and social cohesion around a government and its political values. It is the famous unity against terrorism (…) as shown on March 11th, 2004, the State in this part of the world is neither a reliable nor a prestigious source of information.

Furthermore, I have shown in this volume that mainstream legacy newspapers such as *El País*, *El Mundo*, and *La Vanguardia* reacted to the emergence of digital broadcasting by trying to co-opt social media, shaming media outlets associated with the perpetrators (as in Rahola's metaphorisation of them as "pamphlets" in *La Vanguardia*, 7), and above all, seeking to gatekeep by enforcing a binary between public/unfiltered/amateur journalism, on the one hand, and professional/fair/nuanced journalism, on the other. Metaphors were highly instrumental in this effort, as illustrated by *La Vanguardia*'s metaphorisation of public speculation about the number of deaths in the Barcelona attacks as "flea market haggling" (26), popular support on social media for those directly affected by the attacks as "armchair solidarity" (25) and "posturing" (25), and public journalism on social media as "the incontinent underworld of communication" (25), a "frenzied traffic" which, according to *El País*, "only [professional, legacy] journalism can direct."

In light of the above, I have argued that this dichotomy reflects not so much the media's inherent strength but rather their perceived need to overcompensate for their dwindling power. To that end, they adopted a moralistic stance and highlighted their supposed ability to provide objective coverage, thereby reaffirming their status at a time when their relevance is at its lowest.

Likewise, since 2017, the framing of political dissidence by the Spanish State, its security forces, and some members of the Spanish political class in terms of 'terrorism' has worsened, including the political imprisonment of rappers like *La Insurgencia*, Valtonyc, or Pablo Hasel on charges of 'terrorism' (Travieso 2018), Juan Ignacio Zoido (PP politician)'s claim in 2018 that booing the Spanish anthem is "violence" (Europa Press 2018a), and Xavier García Albiol (PP politician in Catalonia)'s conceptualisation of the Catalan pro-independence movement the same year as a "holy war" against the Spanish State (thus equating separatism to 'jihadism') (Europa Press 2018b). In 2019, and following Catalonia's unilateral declaration of independence two months after the 2017 Barcelona attacks, the Spanish State Supreme Court issued a public ruling condemning several separatist leaders to prison (Minder 2019a, b). As of 2025, a public and juridical debate persists concerning the issue of whether the Barcelona riots and protests that followed the 2019 Spanish court ruling count as 'terrorism.'

Once again, these reactions are best understood less as 'solutions' to the 'problem' of 'terrorism' than as symptoms of the fact that self-proclaimed 'counter-terrorism' as a form of governmentality necessitates some form of 'terrorism' (real, fabricated, and/or propagandistically exploited) by opposition to which to strengthen its identity and justify and/or expand its attributions.

Eternal Vigilance

By way of objection, one could still make the point that, surely as much as the Internet has relativised the importance and ideological reach of traditional mass media and boosted public participation, it has also given rise to the spreading of 'fake news' (i.e., misleading information disseminated under the guise of news reporting) and the creation of ideological echo chambers on social media platforms. Moreover, alternative media (including those I have mentioned above) also have their own ideological biases, perhaps even in line with further party interests (e.g., *Público* and *eldiario.es* tend to favour left-wing parties like *Podemos* and *Sumar* over any other, while *El Món* is biased towards the pro-Catalan independence party CUP – the Catalan acronym for 'Popular Unity Candidacy'). Surely, this implies deploying a whole new set of (potentially) misleading metaphors, which also ought to be scrutinised for the sake of enhancing the overall quality of press transparency and fair public deliberation in today's Spain?

Admittedly, this is indeed the case. For instance, in 2019, and shortly after *Público* had published its scoop on the ties between the CNI and the mastermind behind the Barcelona attacks (Es Satty), the Spanish newspapers of record, including *El Mundo*, *El País*, and *ABC*, decided to ignore this report, which was nevertheless echoed in liberal media such as *The Huffington Post* and *Diario 16*. By contrast, *El Confidencial* and *eldiario.es* disputed it. *El Confidencial* ridiculed *Público*'s position by labelling it with an eloquent metaphor: "the zombie theory of the La Rambla attacks" (García Jaén 2019), arguing that, contrary to *Público*'s suggestion (Bayo 2019a, b), Es Satty was neither a double agent nor the protected witness B5 from the 2005 *Chacal* Operation, carried out to dismantle a 'terrorist' cell that was sending combatants to Iraq. For its part, the director of *eldiario.es*, Ignacio Escolar, released a press note stating that they refused to share *Público*'s scoop because they were unable to verify the authenticity of its sources independently (2019).

Similarly, my discussion of the contradictions underlying *El Punt Avui*'s coverage of the Barcelona attacks, and particularly of the enduring influence of the WOT narrative on its editorial line (which ultimately overwrote its explicit support for anti-Islamophobia and Catalan independence), should make us cautious about the limits of the ideological opening achieved by journalism in the social media era, particularly in the case of media outlets that are funded by political institutions (in this case, the Catalan government). Therefore, as a corollary and despite the seemingly emancipatory turn experienced by the Spanish mass media, I must conclude *Understanding Spanish Jihadist Terrorism: The Ideology Behind the Metaphors* by urging the reader to default to George Orwell's indictment to never trust a metaphor that we are used to seeing in print (1946).

New Avenues for Research

There are several new research frontiers heralded by the present volume, stemming both from its innovations (e.g., CTS' internationalisation and the use of Voyant Tools as part of a CTS-informed CMA) and its limitations (e.g., the shortcomings of real-time information analysis, lack of critical chronological distance, and ongoing developments).

Regarding this book's innovations, my geographical (Spain, particularly Madrid and Barcelona) and linguistic focus (Spanish, and, to a lesser extent, Catalan, and Arabic) has allowed me to transcend CTS' original and recurring Anglo-Saxon focus. In particular, my continuous discussion of the diverging ideological implications of the respective metaphorical uses in the original text in Spanish, Catalan, and Arabic, on the one hand, and my rendition into English, on the other, has demonstrated a number of aspects. Paramount amongst these is the fact that the Spanish original texts, as couched in, inter alia, colourful metaphors, were more emotionally driven than their English translation, which might have likely played a role in the persuasiveness of the metaphors in question (i.e., higher than one could expect by reading the English translation alone). On the other hand, while expanding the regional dynamics of CTS, this book has not offered a specific, long-term, or comprehensive account of the interaction between the global and local (Spanish/Catalan) levels. Additionally, there is ample margin to include more alternative Spanish-speaking newspapers (e.g., *El Confidencial*, *Público*, *Eldiario.es*), Catalan-speaking ones (*El Periódico de Catalunya*, *Ara*, *El Món*), and particularly, Arabic-speaking press (*Al Jazeera*, *Al Arabiya*, *Asharq Al-Awsat*), as well as media coverage of the attacks in further regions (United States, Morocco, France) and languages (French, Tamazight).

Second, my adoption of CMA as a CDA model to analyse metaphors (Charteris-Black 2004, 2011) has allowed me to deconstruct hegemonic metaphor scenarios used in the service of the 'jihadist counterterrorist' cause in the Spanish and Catalan newspapers of record (see above), increasing our awareness of the metaphorical picture and images we were subject to *qua* mass press consumers of the 'truth' of the Madrid and Barcelona attacks (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944; Horkheimer 1947; Adorno 1966; Herman and Chomsky 1988). This result vindicates Michel Foucault's adoption of Nietzsche's critique of truth as power, as summarised in the following quote (Foucault 1984):

> What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage, seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions; worn out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses.
>
> (1999, 180)

In this sense, my CMA has demonstrated that the 'truth' about the Madrid and Barcelona attacks as portrayed in the Spanish and Catalan mass press was a

discursively mediated construction in which various regimes of metaphors were mobilised in the service of 'jihadist counterterrorism' as underpinned by the statist ideologies of the STD and the WOT. Such a propagandistic campaign was premised on the metaphoric exploitation of a small subset of keywords ('democracy,' 'terrorism,' 'jihad,' 'victims,' 'Constitution,' 'authorities,' 'elections,' 'citizens,' and 'unity') and related linguistic (and visual) metaphors. Ultimately, this realisation validates Amina Shareef's insight that "much of the knowledge production of terrorism (…) is tied (…) to make counterterrorism possible" (2024).

On the other hand, I have overwhelmingly restricted my scope to the above keywords and many assisting linguistic metaphors (occasionally accompanied by information on the type and positioning of columns, articles, and editorials within the page/website in question, as well as specifications on whether a particular linguistic metaphor occurred as part of a sub-headline), with only a limited sample of visual metaphors apropos the Barcelona attacks. As a result, my CMA has left undiscussed a host of further elements that worked together to create a complex, multi-layered exercise of consent manufacturing (Herman and Chomsky 1988) extending beyond mere words to convey deeper meanings and narratives (including metaphorical ones). While not discussed in this volume, these additional aspects also played a significant role in the Spanish and Catalan mainstream newspapers' effort to frame the public perception of the Madrid and Barcelona attacks in alignment with the WOT narrative (and, except for *El Punt Avui*, also with the STD one). These include images (e.g., cartoons and illustrations, which often used exaggerated imagery to convey a metaphorical point about the attacks, plus photographs and infographics), element arrangement (the layout of articles and images often implying relationships or hierarchies), font size and style (emphasising or downplaying the importance of certain pieces of information), and colour use (conveying emotions or themes). This book would greatly benefit from such complementary angles, which would make it more comprehensive and multidimensional.

Third, for the purpose of my digital corpus analysis, I have relied exclusively on the web-based reading and analysis environment for digital texts Voyant Tools, deploying only a few of its functionalities. On the one hand, this specific software and its tools have proved useful for the purpose of my inquiry. From a quantitative perspective, I have extensively deployed its scalability (i.e., its ability to handle both small and large corpora) to analyse individual corpora (e.g., *El Mundo*'s coverage of the Barcelona attacks) in isolation, as well as in conjunction with further mainstream media press (in this case, including *El País*, *La Vanguardia*, and *El Punt Avui*) within the overall coverage of these events. Additionally, I have employed Voyant Tools' total word counts and frequency counts (for whose optimisation I have compiled my own list of stop words).

From a qualitative perspective, I have deployed visualisation tools such as clouds, trends, and scatter plots to understand metaphor use patterns and trends more effectively, as well as 'keyword in context' (KWIC) to enhance my discussion of the terms 'democracy,' 'terrorism,' 'jihad,' 'victims,' 'Constitution,' 'authorities,' 'elections,' 'citizens,' and 'unity.' Moreover, I have relied on Voyant Tools' multi-language support to work with corpora in English, Spanish, Catalan, and

Arabic. Lastly, I have used interactivity (i.e., clicking on a word in a word cloud to reveal its context in the corpus), as well as the collocates tool to see words that frequently occur near a specified term. These functionalities have helped me better understand the pragmatic dimension of my analysis.

For example, by validating the hypothesis that within my corpus, 'democracy' (which features a positive evaluative orientation) would appear frequently near 'terrorism' (negative evaluative orientation), and that such proximity would have served to reinforce the former's connotations by opposition to the latter's. Additionally, the word 'attack(s),' ranked amongst the most frequent words in both the Madrid and Barcelona corpora. While its equivalent in the dictionary is '*ataque*(*s*)' in Spanish and '*atac*(*s*)' in Catalan, it was actually a translation from '*atentado*(s)' in the Spanish corpus and '*atemptat*(s)' in the Catalan one. In both languages these terms collocate very frequently with that of 'terrorist' (i.e., significantly more so than '*ataque*'/'*atac*' and their plurals), thus reinforcing the framing of the attacks as a supposed self-evident act of 'terrorism.'

On the other hand, further software tools can offer additional and specialised features that may better suit complementary research needs, particularly as pertains to longer and more multilingual corpora. Examples include AntConc (which features more sophisticated KWIC and concordance functionalities, plus offline use) and Sketch Engine (which provides access to a vast array of preloaded corpora in multiple languages while also being able to handle very large corpora with complex queries efficiently), as well as NLTK (Natural Language Toolkit) and SpaCy, both of which feature comprehensive Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Machine Learning (ML) integration (helpful for sentiment, thematic, cross-document, and diachronic analyses, plus Named Entity Recognition – NER).

Lastly, an important limitation of my discussion in this book has been the challenges of analysing real-time information as it relates to the lack of critical chronological distance and the continuous nature of political developments. At least in its first edition, this book reaches only until July 31st, 2024, which means that there is room left to engage in the critical analysis of linguistic metaphors apropos Spanish 'jihadism' that have emerged and/or experienced significant growth afterwards.

Consequently, it is my sincere hope that this volume will inspire further scholars in the field of CTS to continue what I have started here. Ultimately, as noted by cyberneticists Norbert Wiener and Arturo Rosenblueth, "the price of a metaphor is no other than eternal vigilance" (cited in Reynolds 2018, 10).

Notes

1 In this book, I have used the phrase 'jihadist terrorist resistance' to highlight differing perspectives on so-called 'jihadist attacks,' which can be seen as either 'terrorism' or 'resistance' based on political views. In doing so, my aim has not been to remain equidistant between both interpretations or to embrace relativism. Rather, my goal has been to challenge the simplistic framing of these strikes as solely 'terrorism' against 'democracy' or just 'righteous' anti-colonial 'resistance.'

2 Concerning my CMA of the Madrid attacks, I have used the digitised paper editions of both *El País* and *El Mundo*. However, the former does not preserve the page numbers

of the original on paper, which is why I have not included them at the end of my quotes from this source. By contrast, in *El Mundo*, the page numbers of the original on paper are preserved in the digitised version, which is why I have been able to include them in my quotes of this source, except for the issue of March 13th, which has not been digitally preserved (consequently, I have used instead the digital version published in the morning of that day, which does not feature page numbers). As for my CMA of the Barcelona attacks, I have only deployed *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Vanguardia*, and *El Punt Avui*'s issues of August 18th, which is why I have deemed redundant the inclusion of this date after each quote of these issues. Additionally, I have used the digital version of *El País* and *El Mundo* (which is why I have not specified the page number), but the digitised version of *La Vanguardia* and *El Punt Avui*'s respective paper editions (hence the page number specification at the end of my quotes).

3 Hence *El País* and *El Mundo*'s praise of the supposed political independence of the Spanish State security forces in the face of 'terrorist' attacks carried out by members of the jihadist terrorist resistance, as in *El Mundo*'s validation of Rajoy's statement that "they do not take sides" ["*no se casan con nadie*"] (March 13th) and *El País*' adjectivisation of their supposed efficiency as nothing less than a "miracle" (August 18th).

4 All subsequent quotes apropos the Spanish and Catalan mainstream press coverage of the Barcelona attacks refer to their respective issues published on August 18th, 2017.

5 "[The perpetrators] are not Muslims, but petty criminals who use some Quran verses to try to give respectability to their criminal acts. It is an important finding in the face of the temptation to attribute Barcelona's success to the absence of an iron fist against immigration" (3).

6 In the words of Tremlett, "the profile of the Madrid bombers was depressingly low life. They were freelance radicals, only loosely linked to Al-Qaida" (2008, 250).

7 As observed by Tremlett, "Spain, despite Aznar's obsession with ETA terrorism, turned out to have a lively black market in Goma 2 and other explosives used in the mining industry of the northern Asturias region" (2008, 251).

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