

Instituto Juan March

Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales (CEACS)

Juan March Institute

Center for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences (CEACS)

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Date 2003

Type Working Paper

Series Estudios = Working papers / Instituto Juan March de Estudios e Investigaciones,
Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales 2002/191

City: Madrid

Publisher: Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales

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**HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS BE ACCOUNTABLE
IF VOTERS VOTE IDEOLOGICALLY?**

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Estudio / Working Paper 2003/191
May, 2003

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1. Introduction*

There are two very different logics of voting, the logic of ideology and the logic of incumbent's performance. A citizen may vote out of ideological closeness to parties or candidates. But the citizen may also vote trying to discipline and control the government. In the first case, only ideological closeness matters. In the second case, ideology does not play a role and the voter only takes into account the government's performance. The underlying rule in each case is clear. For ideological voting, the voter follows a decision rule based on ideological closeness: vote for the party that minimizes ideological distance¹. For performance voting, the voter follows a decision rule about reelection: vote for the incumbent if the utility produced by the government's policies is higher than a certain pre-established value, otherwise punish the incumbent.

Of course, these two logics correspond roughly to the distinction between prospective and retrospective voting (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes 1999). As Fearon (1999) has put it, under prospective voting elections are a matter of selecting good types, whereas under retrospective voting elections are a matter of sanctioning poor performance. This basic distinction can also be expressed in terms of the problem that each logic of voting produces: prospective voting is associated with adverse selection, retrospective voting with moral hazard (Ferejohn 1995).

Each logic of voting has been investigated by apparently self-contained literatures. Ideological voting is studied by spatial models, whereas performance voting is studied by accountability models. In pure spatial models, the incumbent's performance is just an irrelevant variable. And in "impure" models, non-spatial factors (also called nonpolicy issues) are usually reduced to candidates' traits (Enelow and Hinich 1984: Ch.5). In pure accountability models, ideology is simply absent. Thus, according to Ferejohn's classical model (1986), ideology only matters insofar as it reduces the dimensionality of the policy

* I am grateful to Paloma Aguilar, Sonia Alonso, Belén Barreiro, Marta Fraile, María Fernandez, José María Maravall, Alberto Penadés, Adam Przeworski and Michael Wallerstein for their comments. I also thank Braulio Gómez for his help as a research assistant.

¹ If there are more than two parties, the decision rule is to minimize *expected* ideological distance.

space: accountability is possible when there is a single dimension in terms of which the government's performance can be assessed.

The somehow schizoid nature of the voting literature can hardly be extended to voters themselves. It seems odd to suppose that electorates are populated by such different creatures as the pure ideological and the pure performance voters. More likely, voters vote out of ideological considerations, while being sensitive to the government's performance. How the combination of both factors works is the issue I analyze in this paper. I try to show that accountability and ideological voting are not necessarily incompatible.

In a comprehensive study of Spanish voters for the period 1980-1995, Maravall and Przeworski (2001) find that ideology tends to neutralize the effect of the economic performance of the incumbent. Even if voters respond to economic conditions, they are able to find an interpretation of those conditions that allows them to vote according to their ideological preferences. Opinions about the incumbent's performance are often an ex-post rationalization of some pre-existing ideological preferences.

I propose here a different view about the relationship between ideology and incumbent's performance. My baseline is the spatial theory of voting. I assume that citizens vote according to the Downsian proximity model in a single-dimensional ideological space. Ideological preferences are determined by the distances between the voter's ideological position and the positions the voter attributes to the parties that compete in the elections. Yet the spatial theory is incomplete: it has nothing to say about how ideology is translated into policies, or about how policies are related to observable outcomes. The first problem is that of ideological consistency, namely whether policies are consistent with the ideological stance of the party. The second problem is the capacity of the party to produce the desired outcomes with the right policies. Different factors like internal divisions, a weak leadership, shirking and corruption may affect the party's capacity. In the spatial theory it is assumed that these two problems are somehow solved.

The hypothesis that is explored here is simple: the voter's decision rule is purely based on ideological distance when there are no doubts about the parties' ideological

consistency and capacity. However, when the spatial assumptions are not true, the decision rule becomes more complex, and a voter may end up voting for distant parties or abstaining. This implies that parties' performance is not irrelevant for ideological calculations. In other words: ideological voters may be sensitive to the incumbent's performance. Note that ideological consistency and capacity are features of parties. Thus patterns of ideological voting may be party relative, that is, people who are closer to a party with a strong image of consistency and capacity will vote for this party according to the spatial model, whereas people closer to another party whose consistency or capacity is questionable will not follow the proximity logic.

An in-depth analysis of the Spanish case, where we find dramatic variation in ideological voting as compared to other countries, contributes to the testing of this hypothesis. I show how ideological voting for the Socialist party, PSOE, the incumbent from 1982 to 1996, was progressively eroded first by charges of ideological inconsistency and later on by charges of corrupt practices and quarreling within the party. An important group of voters who perceived such a loss of consistency and capacity and who were closer to the PSOE than to any other party did not vote following their ideological preferences. The proportion of those voting for the PSOE among those who were ideologically closer to the PSOE diminished election after election as a consequence of doubts about its capacity. Curiously, ideological voting for the right wing party, the Popular Party (PP), is strong and stable for the whole period.

Section 2 contains an analytical discussion about the ideological spatial model and its relationship with the concepts of consistency and capacity. Section 3 is an empirical description of patterns of ideological voting in several European countries, with a special emphasis on Germany and Spain. Section 4 is devoted to a detailed analysis of the Spanish experience in which ideological voting and accountability are combined in a single model.

2. Ideology, consistency and capacity

In the spatial theory of voting, voters have ideal policy points for each of the issues that are part of the policy space and voters know the positions of the parties (or candidates) on all these issues. The utility that a voter obtains from different parties being in power is a declining function of the distance between the voter and the party. Two complications arise at this point: first, how to define distance; second, how to deal with the number of dimensions of the policy space.

There is a variety of proposals about the measurement of distance: we have proximity, directional, and mixed models. Here, I will limit myself to the Downsian proximity model, in which distance is defined in Euclidean terms. It is not only the simplest and more intuitive model; moreover, it works remarkably well in empirical terms². If it is assumed, for the sake of simplicity, that all issues have the same weight in the voter's utility function, then we can simply express the quadratic utility function with regard to party π as

$$U(\pi) = -\|\pi - \mathbf{x}\|^2 = -\left(\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (\pi_i - x_i)^2}\right)^2$$

where π is a vector $\pi = (\pi_1, \pi_2, \dots, \pi_n)$ containing the positions of party π in the n-dimensions and $\mathbf{x}$ is likewise a vector $\mathbf{x} = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)$ with voter's ideal points in the n-dimensions. The symbol $\|\mathbf{z}\|$ stands for the Euclidean distance of vector $\mathbf{z}$, as explained in the above formula. The function reaches its maximum (zero value) when the voter's ideal points coincide with those of the party³. The greater the distance between the two vectors, the more negative the function becomes and the less utility the voter obtains.

² I have also tried directional models, but they work worse than proximity ones in every single case. For a systematic discussion of the different models, see Merrill and Grofman (1999).

³ This function is specified as a quadratic one and therefore entails that voters are risk-averse. It is also common to use a linear function in which the voter is risk-neutral.

With regard to the second complication, the dimensionality of the policy space, it is usually considered that voters do not make choices in this space, but rather in an ideological one of lower dimensionality (Hinich and Munger 1996). It is often assumed that the ideological space is one-dimensional, but it is far from clear why it should be so (Ferejohn 1995).

An ideology is a summary of what policies parties would make if in government for the whole set of issues. According to Downs (1957), ideologies exist because voters are unsure about parties. Voters may be uncertain of what parties will do once in office due to the costly nature of political information. It may be prohibitive to get informed about the positions of parties on all the issues in which the voter is interested in. In this sense, ideologies are a cost-saving device. As people cannot collect information about policies, they rely on ideologies.

Yet, Downs does not justify why ideologies save so much information-gathering costs as to reduce the space to just a single dimension. And there is something strange in the characterization of ideology in terms of a cost-saving device, if only because ideology makes political information interesting. A person without ideological convictions will find little reason to invest time and effort in getting informed about politics: political information will be boring for him. Ideology provides the incentives to gather information about politics. This helps to explain the point already noted by Fiorina (1990: 337) that gathering political information must be understood not as an investment act, but rather as a consumption one. Just as someone needs some passion for sports in order to enjoy the consumption of information about sports, in the political realm some kind of ideological passion is required to become knowledgeable about politics⁴.

If Downs' hypothesis about ideologies as cost-saving devices is not so convincing, it should not be chosen as the starting point for deriving an explanation about the single dimensionality of the ideological space. In a completely different line of reasoning, Ferejohn (1995) argues that there is a strategic basis for the existence of a single dimension: it is a

⁴ Palfrey and Poole (1987) found that voters who occupy the extremes of the ideological space tend to be more informed about politics than those who occupy the center positions, who tend to be more indifferent.

necessary condition for governments to be accountable. But this seems to be a functionalist rather than a strategic explanation: he says that “there is simply no purpose to using ideology at all unless it is essentially a single dimensional concept” (122). Here, ideologies are developed because they serve the function of inducing accountability by reducing the dimensionality of the political space to a single one. Yet, even if ideology is useful for inducing accountability, it is doubtful that it creates a single dimension for this very reason.

A simpler case for the connection between ideology and single dimensionality can be made. Ideology, after all, has some encompassing aspiration: it provides a set of principles and values that help to make all kind of political choices. Downs defines an ideology as “a verbal image of the good society and of the chief means of constructing such a society” (1957: 96). For Budge, ideology “provides politicians with a broad conceptual map of politics into which political events, current problems, electors’ preferences and other parties’ policies can all be fitted” (1994: 446). According to Hinich and Munger, ideology is “an internally consistent set of propositions that makes both proscriptive and prescriptive demands on human behavior.” (1996: 11). Bawn says that “ideology is an enduring system of beliefs, prescribing what action to take in a variety of political circumstances” (1999: 305). What unifies these definitions is precisely the emphasis on the systematic, complete nature of ideology: it contains a potential answer to any conceivable political problem. Ideology tends to produce a single dimensional space due to this capacity to create a view or image about how society should be organized. Once an ideology is formulated, it serves to infer ideal points in the whole array of policy issues. The political space is reduced to a single dimension because of the “organizing” power of ideology.

Thanks to this universal aspiration, ideologies are useful not only to create a single dimension, but also to solve the problem of incomplete contracts in democratic representation. Electoral platforms are clearly incomplete contracts. When a party is in office, it may face fully unexpected problems which were not contemplated in the original platform. The platform may not say a word about what the party should do under such circumstances and yet the party in government has to act. An unexpected problem can even change the whole political agenda, as attested for instance in the 2001 September 11th attack: Bush’s

electoral platform did not contain much about how he would react to such a large-scale terrorist attack.

This problem is compounded by the hierarchical relationship of democratic representation: when a conflict arises between the principal (the people) and the agent (the government) that cannot be solved according to the terms contained in the representation contract (the electoral platform), the last word corresponds to the agent. The government is entitled to make policy as long as it remains in power.

Citizens are willing to delegate so much decision power to politicians because despite the incomplete nature of electoral platforms, politicians are predictable when unexpected problems arise thanks to the ideological principles they adhere to. Ideology provides a focal point in this hierarchical setting, in the sense that Kreps (1990) says that corporate culture creates focal points for unforeseen contingencies in the market. Hinch and Munger have applied Kreps' argument to political competition, concluding that ideology "implies a complete worldview that allows predictions about future actions" (1996: 101).

Now, the predictive power of ideologies suggests already that ideological voting cannot be completely detached from parties' performance in office. If a party in office does not act according to the ideological principles that determine its position in the ideological space, or if the party is unable to make effective policies, voters will not be attracted to this party even if it is the closer party as defined by the proximity model. If we take seriously a spatial model of ideological behavior, we must conclude that ideological distances between voters and parties cannot be the only determinant of the vote. Ideological consistency, for instance, must be taken into account.

Generally speaking, standard spatial models are rather limited in the range of explanations that they usually produce to account for variations in the vote share of parties in elections. Vote will change if either parties move in the ideological space or the distribution of voter's ideological ideal points changes (the latter can happen either because voters change their preferences or because the electorate changes with the entry of new voters and the exit

of old ones). In this picture, government performance is just absent. Voters simply calculate ideological distances and vote for the party that minimizes expected distance⁵.

The hypothesis that voters vote for the party that minimizes expected ideological distance contains a crucial hidden assumption, namely that all parties that compete in elections are equal except for their spatial location. Ideological positions are all we need to explain voters' choices. But at least two other variables should also be considered. The first one, which I call ideological consistency, is the degree of fit between ideology and policies: how well policies reflect the ideological stance of the party. When policies do not correspond to the party's ideological line, we have ideological inconsistency. The second one, which I simply call capacity, measures the effectiveness of policies, that is, the extent to which policies produced some desired outcomes⁶. A party is more capable if it is internally united⁷, if it is able to reach agreements with other political and social forces, if its cadres and militants are honest and motivated people, and if it is not captured by interest groups. The consistency and capacity of parties is conjectured by voters observing what parties say and do. This is particularly true for the incumbent: a government's performance provides plenty of evidence about its consistency and capacity.

Let us say that a party is reliable if it is both consistent and capable. There is no reason to suppose that all parties are equally reliable. If reliability is unevenly distributed, we should assume that when voters evaluate a party, they are making both an assessment of its ideological position and an assessment of its reliability. Voters who are closer to a party and who think that the party is reliable, are going to vote for that party. Ideological distance will fully explain their behavior. But as doubts about its reliability emerge, ideological distance

⁵ In fact, spatial models sometimes make room for other variables. It is not uncommon to include a non-policy variable that refers to features of the candidates. The utility function becomes

$$U(\pi) = c_\pi - \|\pi - \mathbf{x}\|^2$$

where c_π stands for the characteristics of party's π candidate.

⁶ There have been some partial attempts to introduce capacity in spatial models. See Enelow, Endersby and Munger (1995), and Hinich and Munger (1997: 122-6).

⁷ On the consequences of lack of internal unity, see Maravall (2003).

will become less important. Thus, a voter who is closer to party π than to any other party may refrain from voting for π if π is perceived to be unreliable.

It follows therefore that patterns of ideological voting may be party-relative. People can make decisions with regard to some party based only on ideological distance to the party, whereas with regard to some other parties ideological distance may be a less relevant variable due to some perception of inconsistency or bad performance. Hence, variations in the vote share of parties are to be explained not only by changes either in the parties' ideological positions or in the distribution of voters' ideal points, but also by consistency and capacity. That is, given an ideological distribution of parties and voters, electoral results may vary considerably because of variations in reliability.

The general hypothesis can be put in the following terms: voting out of ideological proximity will wane as questions about the reliability of parties become more and more pressing. Issues of reliability do not have to affect all parties likewise: hence, we should observe patterns of ideological voting that are party-relative when some parties are seen as more reliable than others.

3. Patterns of ideological voting

In order to construct the kind of phenomenon about ideological voting that is to be explained, it is assumed that each voter votes for the party that produces higher utility as defined in a pure proximity model. Thus, we can calculate to what extent the data fit this assumption. Instead of using thermometer scores as proxies for utility, as is usually done in the spatial literature, I have constructed a categorical variable that establishes for each individual which party produces higher spatial utility. This variable simply determines which party the individual is closer to⁸. One of the attractive properties of this procedure is that it

⁸ A similar approach was used by Pierce (1995: 88-95) in his analysis of presidential elections in France and the United States.

does not discard the possibility of a person having no ideological distance to parties, either because the individual is unable to establish an ideological bliss point, or because he or she is unable to place parties in the ideological space. Thus, we can calculate the percentage of the sample to which ideological voting just does not apply, and how these people behave. Once we have such a variable, it can be cross-tabulated with vote intention or past vote: the kinds of association found among these variables will reflect the varying patterns of ideological voting.

The more technical details about the construction of the closeness variable are relegated to the Appendix. Basically, the building blocks of the variable are the self-placement of the respondent in the left-right scale and the positions the respondent attributes to the different parties in that scale⁹. Closeness to parties is then established through logical rules. As the ideological scale is a discrete one, there can be voters who are equidistant between two parties. If there are n parties, at least $n - 1$ different categories of being equidistant are possible¹⁰.

The variable cannot be applied to any party system. If there are too many parties, the number of categories of the closeness variable becomes unmanageable. Moreover, under such circumstances it is difficult to make sense of the very idea of a voter being closer to some party, since the voter may be rather close to several parties simultaneously. The variable is really useful for those countries with no more than, say, four relevant parties¹¹.

A good indicator of the power of ideological voting is what I call parties' *retentive power*. The retentive power of a party can be defined as the percentage of individuals who, being ideologically closer to that party, vote for it. This indicator, therefore, shows the percentage of those voters who according to the Downsian proximity model should vote for

⁹ In the literature, it is common to infer the parties' positions from party manifestos or experts' opinions (see Gabel and Huber 2000 for a review and a discussion). I think it is more consistent with the spatial theory to use purely subjective data.

¹⁰ There are just $n - 1$ categories if voters are able to order correctly the parties: for instance, if socialdemocrats are always placed to the left of liberals or conservatives in the ideological scale.

¹¹ I consider that any party that obtains a vote share greater than 5% is a relevant one.

the party and actually do so. Were the retentive power 100%, the proximity model would fully account for vote choices. All voters would vote for the party closer to their ideological ideal points, that is, parties would be able to retain all voters closer to them¹².

Actually, the results of table 1 show that small parties have lower retentive power than bigger parties. Table 1 reproduces the retentive power of relevant parties in four European countries in 1994 with roughly similar number of parties, Great Britain, Germany, Spain, and Portugal. That year, exceptionally, *Eurobarometer* included questions about the left-right placement of national parties in every member state, allowing a comparison of the functioning of the closeness variable. Small parties like the Liberal Democrats in Great Britain, the Liberals and the Greens in Germany, and the right wing coalition CDS in Portugal tend to have a quite low retentive power¹³. For instance, among those who are closer to the Liberals than to Conservatives or Labour in Great Britain, only 28% vote for the Liberals: 41% are willing to vote for Labour and 15% for Tories. The German FDP has the lowest retentive power in this comparison, a mere 12%; 33% of those who are closer to the FDP want to vote for the CDU and 26% for the SPD.

I am interested here in the retentive power of big parties and therefore the issue of strategic voting is not relevant. In Great Britain, 72% of those who are closer to the Conservatives and 84% of those who are closer to Labour are willing to vote for these parties. In Portugal, the percentage is the same for the two main parties, the right wing PSD and the left wing PS, 68.5%. Yet, there is an astonishing figure for the Spanish socialists, PSOE: this party is able to retain only 38% of those who are closer to it. Although this is, as I show below, an underestimation of PSOE's retentive power, it points to a deviant case. 1994 was anyway a bad year for the Socialist incumbent in Spain: economic conditions were bad and

¹² I am assuming here that there is not strategic voting. A voter may vote for a more distant party for strategic reasons.

¹³ The retentive capacity of the leftist coalition IU in Spain is clearly biased. As can be seen in a more detailed way in table 4, elaborated with bigger and more representative samples, the actual retentive capacity of IU is much lower. The *Eurobarometer* sample for each state member is really small (1,000) and it provides very distorting pictures of national politics. Thus, with regard to Spain, vote intention for PSOE and IU is the same in 1994, 16.5%, but PSOE usually gets three or four times more votes than IU.

corruption scandals were flourishing at that time. But this just makes the possibility of dwelling on the Spanish case more interesting.

Table 1. *Parties' retentive power in four European countries according to the closeness variable*

Great Britain	Retentive power	Germany	Retentive power	Spain	Retentive power	Portugal	Retentive power
Conservative party	72.1%	CDU/CSU	74.3%	PP	87.4%	<i>CDS</i>	38.5%
<i>The Liberal Democrats</i>	28.2%	<i>FDP</i>	11.8%	PSOE	37.8%	PSD	68.5%
Labour Party	84.5%	SPD	65.9%	<i>IU</i>	64.2%	PS	68.5%
		<i>Greens</i>	27.6%			<i>CDU/PCP</i>	64.9%

Notes:

Data for Great Britain do not include Northern Ireland.

Retentive power has been computed by crosstabulating vote intention and ideological closeness.

Parties in italics are small parties.

Source: Eurobarometer 44.1 (June-July 1994).

The Spanish socialists won elections in 1982. PSOE had a majority in Parliament for the period 1982-1993. From 1993 to 1996 it had a plurality and governed with the support of Catalan nationalist MPs. In 1996 the conservative party, PP, won elections and governed again with the support of nationalist parties. In 2000 the PP obtained a majority in Parliament. PSOE and PP are the two main parties. IU, a leftist coalition dominated by the Communist Party, is a much smaller party, with a vote share below 10%¹⁴. In 1986 and 1989 there was a fourth party, CDS, a centrist party very much dependent on its leader, Adolfo Suarez, the former Primer Minister in the period 1977-1981. The party collapsed in 1993, obtaining no representation at all in the Parliament. These four parties together account for over 80% of the vote. The rest corresponds to tiny and nationalist and regionalist parties¹⁵.

¹⁴ In 1986, IU got only a 3.8% of the vote, not qualifying therefore as a relevant party. However, I have included IU in 1986 for the sake of completeness.

¹⁵ For the mean ideological positions of the main parties, see tables 2 and 3 in Torcal and Medina (2002).

Electoral results for the period 1982-2000 are reproduced in table 2. In the case of PSOE, we observe a period of decline from 1982 to 1989, a period of stability from 1989 to 1996, and a new period of decline from 1996 to 2000, when it was already out of office. For PP, we observe stagnation from 1982 to 1989, a great increase from 1989 to 1993, stability from 1993 to 1996, and again a great increase from 1996 to 2000. For IU, there is a period of growth from 1982 to 1996 and then a dramatic loss in 2000.

Table 2. *Electoral results in Spain, 1982-2000*

	1982	1986	1989	1993	1996	2000
PP	26.4%	26.0%	25.8%	34.8%	38.8%	44.5%
CDS	2.9%	9.2%	7.9%	1.8%	--	--
PSOE	48.4%	43.4%	39.6%	38.8%	37.6%	34.2%
PCE / IU	3.9%	4.6%	9.0%	9.5%	10.5%	5.4%

Source: Anuario El Pais, several years.

It is difficult to reconstruct this evolution by looking at the distribution of ideological closeness in the electorate, if only because survey results deviate considerably from real electoral results. Table 3 shows this distribution for the period 1986-2000 according to five post-election surveys, starting after the first term of the Socialist government¹⁶. In the case of PP the evolution does run parallel to its electoral record: stagnation in 1986, 1989 and 1996, punctuated by two episodes of outstanding growth, 1993 and 2000. But in the case of PSOE the parallelism breaks down: the increase of people closer to the party in the period 1989-1996 is not reflected in the vote share. The greater percentage of people closer to PSOE is observed in 1996, precisely the year in which the party loses elections. The evolution of IU is also strange, for there is a huge increase in the amount of people who are closer to IU in 2000 as compared to 1996 while the coalition loses almost half of its vote in this period. The discrepancy between the distribution of ideological closeness and electoral results is particularly salient in 2000: the percentage of people closer to PP and PSOE is not very

¹⁶ Surveys before 1986 did not include the placement of parties in the ideological scale and therefore the variable of ideological closeness could not be constructed.

different (23% and 20% respectively), yet PP obtained in the elections eleven points of advantage over PSOE¹⁷.

Table 3. *The evolution of ideological closeness in Spain, 1986-2000*

	PP	PP=CDS	CDS (86-89) PP=PSOE (1993-2000)	CDS=PSOE	PSOE	PSOE=IU	IU	Without ideological distance
1986	8.6%	1.6%	11.9%	5.1%	23.9%	5.3%	8.1%	35.5%
1989	8.7%	2.0%	8.6%	3.2%	19.1%	5.6%	12.2%	40.7%
1993	16.7%		3.3%		22.3%	6.6%	13.7%	37.4%
1996	17.8%		3.9%		25.3%	7.8%	15.5%	29.7%
2000	22.7%		5.6%		20.0%	5.8%	10.5%	35.5%

Source: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, post-electoral surveys.

Part of the answer has to do for sure with the fact that a great amount of respondents are not closer to any party given the procedures for constructing the closeness variable: respondents who do not provide an answer about their ideological placement or about the positions of any of the relevant parties, are classified as people without ideological distances, that is, people that do not vote out of ideological closeness. Every year there is over 30% of people for whom ideological distances cannot be computed. In 1989 it reached its peak, 41%. The proximity model can only aspire to explain the choices made by those who do have a measure of ideological closeness.

Yet the problem goes beyond the existence of a group of people that cannot be covered by the proximity model. If we focus just on those for whom ideological distances can be computed, the puzzle remains. It is enough to cross-tabulate the variable of vote in the last elections with the closeness variable, as is shown in table 4. This table contains, among other things, the retentive power of Spanish parties for the five elections of the period 1986-2000. It provides much more detailed information than table 1 about the retentive power of parties in different countries, since we can reconstruct the choices of all those who do not vote according to the proximity model. Retentive power is signaled by percentages in bold. With regard to PP, it is difficult to discern any trend in its retentive power. Except in 1989, it is

¹⁷ In the sample, the difference in past vote for 2000 between PP and PSOE is much greater, 20 percentage points.

every year over 80%. Ideological voting under the proximity model works well for this party. By contrast, in the case of PSOE there is a progressive eroding of its retentive power. While in 1986 retentive power was a reasonable 78%, in 2000 it declined to a mere 52%, meaning that only half of those who are closer to the Socialist party voted for it¹⁸. This decline cannot be due exclusively to the onus of being in government and having to make difficult choices, since it continued once the party left office. Something similar is detected for IU: being a small party, the retentive power is lower, but it follows the same declining pattern as PSOE from 1989 onwards. As expected by the previous discussion, patterns of ideological voting are party relative. Ideological voting in Spain works for the right-wing party, but not so much for the left-wing parties. The puzzle is how to explain this asymmetry.

Table 4 offers many other insights about the features of ideological voting in Spain. The signals of weakness of the left for mobilizing voters is evident everywhere in the table. Among those equidistant between PP and PSOE, there is a huge increase since 1993 of the vote for PP, and a sharp fall of the vote for PSOE. Furthermore, there is an impressive increase of those who are closer to PSOE but vote for PP (from 0.5% in 1986 to 19% in 2000). Nothing similar can be found in the other direction: among those who are closer to PP, the percentage of the vote for PSOE is insignificant and shows no trend. Secondly, in the group of people without ideological distance there is a dramatic fall of the vote for PSOE starting in 1993 (from 28.9% in 1993 to 14.9% in 2000), mirrored by an increase of support for PP (from 9.5% to 28.5% in the same period). Finally, the table also shows that people closer to PSOE have always abstained more than people closer to PP¹⁹. In 2000 this difference reached a peak of 5.3 points. Abstention is even higher among those closer to IU. In 2000, one out of four abstained, helping to understand the process by which this party lost almost half of its votes between 1996 and 2000.

¹⁸ Note that the retentive capacity is in any case higher than that calculated from the 1994 *Eurobarometer* (see table 1).

¹⁹ Barreiro (2002) analyzes the relationship between ideology and abstention in Spain.

Table 4. *Ideological closeness and past vote in Spain, 1986-2000. Vertical percentages*

Vote	Election	Ideological closeness							Without ideological distance
		PP	PP=CDS	CDS (86-89) PP=PSOE (93-00)	CDS=PSOE	PSOE	PSOE=IU	IU	
PP	1986	81.9%	61.5%	12.8%	6.2%	0.5%	0.3%	0%	9.5%
	1989	76.9%	50.0%	20.0%	7.0%	1.9%	0%	0.4%	10.7%
	1993	80.1%		57.0%		11.4%	3.5%	3.4%	16.9%
	1996	81.6%		67.1%		17.8%	5.8%	4.7%	21.2%
	2000	83.3%		66.7%		18.9%	10.0%	5.9%	28.5%
CDS	1986	3.0%	9.4%	38.7%	11.6%	2.0%	1.3%	1.0%	5.4%
	1989	1.6%	9.5%	31.9%	8.5%	0.7%	0.8%	0.4%	1.6%
PSOE	1986	2.7%	5.1%	18.7%	55.1%	78.4%	72.4%	40.0%	30.6%
	1989	2.2%	9.5%	16.2%	43.7%	72.8%	62.0%	20.6%	29.8%
	1993	3.6%		13.4%		66.1%	64.2%	32.3%	28.9%
	1996	3.7%		8.8%		56.8%	59.4%	26.6%	24.9%
	2000	1.2%		5.8%		52.3%	59.9%	26.0%	14.9%
IU	1986	0.2%	0%	0.6%	1.6%	1.9%	7.4%	32.5%	1.7%
	1989	0%	0%	2.2%	4.2%	1.9%	12.4%	53.4%	2.5%
	1993	1.5%		1.4%		3.1%	9.5%	42.5%	3.1%
	1996	0.8%		2.4%		3.5%	13.2%	43.5%	2.8%
	2000	0.4%		0%		2.4%	7.1%	33.0%	1.2%
Abstention	1986	6.0%	14.5%	14.4%	10.5%	9.8%	13.0%	18.2%	25.0%
	1989	10.8%	11.9%	15.7%	16.9%	12.1%	15.7%	17.6%	25.8%
	1993	7.4%		12.0%		9.9%	13.0%	15.4%	24.2%
	1996	5.9%		8.8%		10.6%	11.7%	16.9%	19.2%
	2000	8.8%		13.2%		14.1%	16.4%	25.4%	24.8%
DA	1986	6.3%	9.4%	14.9%	15.1%	7.4%	5.6%	8.3%	27.8%
	1989	8.6%	19.0%	14.1%	19.7%	10.4%	9.1%	7.6%	29.5%
	1993	7.3%		16.2%		9.5%	9.8%	6.4%	26.9%
	1996	8.0%		12.9%		11.4%	9.9%	8.4%	31.9%
	2000	6.3%		14.3%		12.4%	6.7%	9.6%	30.5%

Source: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, post-electoral surveys.

Note: Bold percentages correspond to the retentive power of parties.

The trends found for PSOE and IU are by no means universal. Moreover, it is not a matter of being the incumbent or being left-wing. Using the same procedures as before, I have made a similar analysis for the German case. The contrast is interesting for various reasons. On the one hand, there is a similar number of parties. I have started in 1976 and ended in 1994, covering two consecutive elections won by the SPD and four consecutive ones by the CDU/CSU²⁰. In this period, there were three relevant parties in 1976 and 1980 (CDU/CSU, FDP, and SPD) and four parties from 1983 onwards with the appearance of the

²⁰ For 1994, the German Election Study did not include questions about the placement of parties in the left-right scale. Hence, I have used data from *Eurobarometer* 44.1. I have not had access yet to the 1998 German Election Study.

Greens. On the other hand, like Spain, the incumbency periods are indeed long: from 1969 to 1981 a SPD-FDP coalition was in office and from 1981 to 1998 a CDU/CSU-FDP one. Thus, we can check whether the erosion of retentive power is intrinsically associated to being in government.

Table 5. Ideological closeness and vote intention in Germany, 1976-1994. Vertical percentages

Vote	Election	Ideological closeness							
		CDU/CSU	CDU/CSU =FDP	FDP	FDP=SPD	SPD	SPD =GREENS	GREENS	Without distance
CDU/CSU	1976	79.7%	63.1%	28.9%	12.3%	5.9%			29.4%
	1980	76.6%	58.3%	20.8%	5.6%	5.3%			19.9%
	1983	81.5%	72.7%	44.1%	15.7%	6.4%	1.1%	7.3%	29.4%
	1987	78.7%	72.6%	36.7%	14.6%	5.8%	1.9%	3.1%	30.6%
	1990	75.4%	66.7%	37.6%	19.5%	3.7%	1.7%	4.8%	35.3%
	1994	74.3%	62.5%	33.3%	22.6%	9.3%	5.3%	10.3%	20.9%
FDP	1976	2.9%	8.2%	16.4%	9.7%	4.7%			7.2%
	1980	2.5%	5.4%	14.8%	7.8%	5.1%			2.1%
	1983	0%	1.4%	6.8%	1.4%	1.8%	1.1%	1.8%	2.4%
	1987	4.5%	8.0%	18.0%	1.2%	0.8%	0%	2.3%	5.6%
	1990	3.8%	9.1%	12.0%	8.0%	2.4%	0.9%	2.7%	4.4%
	1994	3.2%	7.1%	11.8%	3.2%	2.3%	0.8%	2.5%	1.0%
SPD	1976	4.9%	10.7%	37.7%	61.0%	75.9%			34.4%
	1980	9.9%	15.7%	44.9%	70.6%	78.8%			19.9%
	1983	5.3%	7.7%	25.0%	51.4%	69.3%	64.4%	45.5%	20.0%
	1987	4.5%	5.9%	21.1%	57.3%	68.3%	56.3%	24.8%	13.9%
	1990	6.1%	5.4%	26.4%	48.3%	75.3%	69.8%	40.1%	23.5%
	1994	5.9%	8.0%	25.8%	45.2%	65.9%	48.1%	35.5%	19.1%
GREENS	1983	0.9%	0%	1.8%	5.7%	2.3%	15.6%	23.0%	8.2%
	1987	1.7%	1.3%	1.0%	1.2%	8.6%	19.4%	51.9%	1.4%
	1990	0%	1.6%	3.0%	4.6%	7.6%	12.1%	29.9%	1.5%
	1994	0.4%	0%	2.7%	4.8%	7.4%	26.3%	27.6%	4.1%
ABSTENTION	1976	0.8%	1.6%	3.4%	2.6%	1.9%			10.0%
	1980	2.5%	4.4%	5.3%	2.7%	2.9%			16.2%
	1983	5.6%	6.3%	5.5%	7.1%	5.9%	4.4%	7.9%	10.6%
	1987	2.6%	3.8%	8.3%	7.3%	5.6%	11.7%	6.2%	11.1%
	1990	5.2%	5.4%	7.4%	5.7%	3.9%	6.9%	8.8%	13.2%
	1994	4.7%	2.7%	2.7%	1.6%	1.6%	4.5%	5.4%	11.0%
DK/DA	1976	11.7%	16.4%	13.6%	14.4%	11.8%			28.9%
	1980	8.5%	16.2%	14.2%	14.4%	7.9%			41.9%
	1983	6.6%	11.9%	16.8%	18.6%	14.2%	13.3%	14.5%	29.4%
	1987	8.0%	8.4%	15.0%	18.3%	10.9%	10.7%	11.6%	37.5%
	1990	9.5%	11.8%	13.6%	13.8%	7.1%	8.6%	13.6%	22.1%
	1994	11.5%	19.6%	23.7%	22.6%	13.6%	15.0%	18.7%	44.0%

Sources:

1976-1990 German Election Studies.

1994: Eurobarometer 44.1

Note: Bold percentages correspond to the retentive power of parties.

The retentive power has been calculated with vote intention (in Spain with past vote): vote intention tends to depress retentive power, since some people have not yet made a decision. Nonetheless, table 5 shows that the retentive power of the two big parties, CDU/CSU and SPD, is pretty high every single year. It could be argued that the CDU/CSU's retentive power has been going down since it started to govern in 1981, thus revealing that incumbency produces a weakening of ideological voting, but the decrease falls short of the one observed for PSOE in Spain. Moreover, unlike Spain, we do not observe differential patterns of abstention, and it does not seem to be the case that people closer to the two big parties vote for distant parties.

The comparison of tables 4 and 5 shows that what has to be explained is precisely the mystery about PSOE's retentive power, its growing inability to mobilize the vote of those individuals that are closer to this party than to the rest of parties.

4. Models of ideological voting in Spain

One of the more obvious lessons that can be drawn from tables 4-5 in the previous section is that not everyone who is closer to a party votes for that party. According to the hypothesis of this paper, the probability of voting for a party is a function both of the ideological distances between the voter and the parties and of some other independent variables related to consistency and capacity.

Next, I analyze various conditional logit models with vote intention (or past vote) as the dependent variable, and ideological distances and indicators of consistency, capacity and performance as independent ones. Conditional logit is a technique particularly well suited for the spatial analysis of voting in multiparty systems (Alvarez and Nagler 1998; Thurner 2000). In conditional logit, we can introduce alternative-specific variables, that is, variables with different values for each value of the dependent variable. This is precisely what we need for the spatial model, where each individual has a different distance with regard to each of the parties that form part of the dependent variable. Thus, we get a single coefficient for the

ideological distance variable that represents the overall influence of ideological voting. We can also add individual-specific variables (for instance, the opinion on government's performance), creating what is usually called a mixed conditional logit model²¹. The use of this technique is not without problems. We have to exclude both people without ideological distance and people who abstain. Abstention cannot be an outcome in the dependent variable simply because it is not possible to define a distance between the voter's ideal point and abstention.

From a methodological point of view, it is convenient to assume, as conditional logit does, that there is a single coefficient for ideological distance, so that the influence of ideological distance on voting is the same for all parties. Hence, party differences in the pattern of ideological voting must be due to some other variables, those that have to do with consistency and capacity. The party-relative patterns of ideological voting that were identified in the previous section are going to be explained by a common coefficient of ideological distance and differences in reliability.

In table 6 the pure proximity model of ideological voting is tested for Spain and Germany. In Spain the dependent variable is past vote, in Germany it is vote intention. The

²¹ In the pure conditional logit model, the probability that individual i makes the m th-choice is (Powers and Xie 2000: 239-243; Long and Freese 2001: 213-221)

$$\Pr(y_i = m \mid \mathbf{z}_i) = \frac{\exp(\mathbf{z}_{im}\boldsymbol{\gamma})}{\sum_{j=1}^J \exp(\mathbf{z}_{ij}\boldsymbol{\gamma})}$$

where $\mathbf{z}_{ij}$ is a vector containing the values of independent variables with regard to outcome j of the dependent variable and $\boldsymbol{\gamma}$ is the vector of coefficients of the independent variables. Thus, there are J values for a single variable, but a single coefficient for each variable.

In the mixed model, we add a vector $\mathbf{x}_i$ with the values of the individual-specific variables and another vector $\boldsymbol{\beta}_m$ with their coefficients, assuming that $\boldsymbol{\beta}_1=0$:

$$\Pr(y_i = m \mid \mathbf{z}_i, \mathbf{x}_i) = \frac{\exp(\mathbf{z}_{im}\boldsymbol{\gamma} + \mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta}_m)}{\sum_{j=1}^J \exp(\mathbf{z}_{ij}\boldsymbol{\gamma} + \mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta}_j)}$$

If only individual-specific variables are included, conditional logit coincides with multinomial logit.

only independent variable is ideological distance²². In the case of Spain, we can observe in table 6.1 how the coefficient of ideological distance decreases dramatically from 1986 to 1993, is stable between 1993 and 1996, and starts to increase in 2000. The variations in the coefficient are enormous and statistically significant. The 1993 coefficient is half of the 1986 one²³. By contrast, in Germany the coefficient of ideological distance is fairly constant²⁴. In fact, coefficients are not statistically different among themselves for the period under analysis, except in 1980.

Table 6. *The pure proximity model in Spain and Germany. Conditional logit*

<i>Table 6.1. Spain</i>					
	1986	1989	1993	1996	2000
Ideological distance	-0.2950 (0.0085)	-0.2469 (0.0120)	-0.1412 (0.0059)	-0.1563 (0.0059)	-0.2031 (0.0079)
Pseudo R ²	0.42	0.41	0.34	0.36	0.38
N	3,940	1,309	2,273	2,760	2,419
Parties included	PP, CDS, PSOE, IU	PP, CDS, PSOE, IU	PP, PSOE, IU	PP, PSOE, IU	PP, PSOE, IU

Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, post-electoral surveys.

<i>Table 6.2. Germany</i>					
	1976	1980	1983	1987	1990
Ideological distance	-0.1089 (0.0067)	-0.0909 (0.0041)	-0.1247 (0.0067)	-0.1229 (0.0060)	-0.1393 (0.0069)
Pseudo R ²	0.18	0.20	0.28	0.29	0.25
N	1,598	2,401	1,227	1,525	1,580
Parties included	CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD	CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD	CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD, Greens	CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD, Greens	CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD, Greens

Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: German Election Studies.

²² Ideological distance is measured as the quadratic difference between the voter's ideal point and the voter's placement of parties in the ideological scale. The models do not contain constant terms, since the aim is just to find out variations in the coefficient of the variable. Constant terms for parties would reflect factors that go beyond a pure proximity model, like the bias against small parties.

²³ I have also tried a directional model for each election. It is worth noting that the proximity model clearly outperforms the directional one in empirical fit. Moreover, the directional coefficient does not show any trend.

²⁴ The coefficients in Germany are lower than in Spain. Part of this difference is explained by the fact that whereas the ideological scale in Spain has ten points (and therefore it does not contain a center or median position), in Germany it has eleven points.

Variations in the coefficient of the model for Spain probably conceal the influence of other factors that cannot be reduced to ideological distance. Variables related to capacity and performance enter here. Unfortunately, the lack of proper questions in Spanish surveys makes a systematic comparison along time impossible. For different election years we have different questions. But we can handle the problem if two periods are distinguished. During its long time in office, PSOE went through several episodes in which its reliability was openly discussed. Simplifying somewhat a quite complex story, it could be said that from 1982 to 1989 the party was often criticized for its conservative policy, improper for a Socialist government. There was a charge of ideological inconsistency among important segments of the electorate. From 1989 to 2000, the party became increasingly divided and corruption scandals affecting the government and the party started to emerge, damaging the perception of its capacity. I deal with each of these problems separately.

Ideological consistency

A party is ideologically inconsistent when it makes policy that is not congruent with its ideological stance. It could be argued that ideological inconsistency is just impossible: the inconsistency lies in voters' perceptions of the party. When voters observe policies made by the incumbent, they update their prior beliefs about the party's real ideological position. Therefore, there cannot be inconsistency, since ideological positions are inferred from policy. Although this is to some extent correct, it tends to forget that ideological labels are not fully dependent on current actions: they represent also the history of the party, the position of the party as revealed in party manifestos and in public statements, the kind of people recruited by the party, etcetera. Moreover, voters may think that the party really holds the original ideological position, but that the government is a bad agent of the party, perhaps because the government has been captured by interest groups or by experts. Here I employ a purely subjective conception of policy inconsistency. It is just a perception shared by some voters, fair or not, grounded or not. I do not claim that the incumbent was really inconsistent.

The PSOE, particularly in its two first mandates (1982-1986, 1986-1989), suffered repeatedly the accusation of having made an economic policy too much to the right²⁵. This culminated when the brother union, UGT, broke long lasting links with the party and organized, together with other unions, the 14th December 1988 general strike. The general strike was a big success and damaged enormously the image of the party²⁶.

Both in 1986 and in 1989, some pre-election surveys included a question about ideological consistency. The respondent was asked to choose one of these statements regarding the incumbent's policy:

- (1) It has been too conservative, not proper for a Socialist government.
- (2) Before all, it has been realist, according to the circumstances.
- (3) It has been the proper policy of a Socialist Government.

I have conflated answers (2) and (3). There is inconsistency only if the respondent chooses (1). If the respondent chooses (2), there is a justification of possible policy deviations and therefore the respondent will not regard these deviations as a signal of inconsistency: if the party has not acted as expected it is because it had good reasons to do so. In 1986, 23% of the whole sample said that PSOE was making a too conservative policy, 33% said that PSOE's policy was realist, and only 18% said it was truly socialist; 26% did not know or did not answer²⁷. Three years later, in 1989, after the general strike, the percentage of those who thought that policy was inconsistent had risen to 32%, whereas 24% said that policy was realist and 14% that it was truly socialist, 30% not knowing or not answering²⁸. The

²⁵ Carabaña (2001: 43-44) argues that one of the main causes of the electoral loss of PSOE in the 80s was a set of policies inconsistent with the ideology of its voters.

²⁶ In a survey about the relationship between PSOE and UGT made in November 1987, people were asked whether the government should change its policy in order to make possible the reestablishment of good relations with UGT: 55% of the sample answered yes and only 13% said no (CIS 1711, n=2,454). In the aftermath of the general strike, 23.5% said that their opinion about the government had worsened after the strike (only 6.5% said it had improved), whereas only 12% said their opinion about the UGT had worsened (and 26% said it had improved) (CIS 1780, December 1988, n=2,498).

²⁷ CIS 1526, April-May 1986, n=25,667.

²⁸ CIS 1789, January-February 1989, n=27,287.

difference between 1986 and 1989 is interesting. In its first term, the government had to face a deep economic crisis that provoked a dramatic rise in the unemployment rate (from 16.2% in 1982 to 21.5% in 1986, an increase of 5.3 points). By contrast, in the second term, the economy was booming and the creation of employment was indeed impressive (the unemployment rate went down from 21.5% in 1986 to 17.3% in 1989, a decrease of 4.2 points). Under good economic conditions, there were fewer reasons to exonerate ideological inconsistency by appealing to the circumstances, and thus the percentage of those who said that the incumbent's policy was realistic decreased nine points between 1986 and 1989. Despite the difference in economic conditions, the party lost more or less the same amount of vote share (four percentage points) in the first two terms (see table 2), neglecting the relevance of the economic cycle²⁹.

Although the perception of ideological inconsistency was prevalent to the left of PSOE (72% of those closer to IU thought so in 1989), it was also common within the right (43% of those closer to PP in 1989). For right-wing people, this opinion might be a sincere impression of what PSOE was doing, but it could just be another means to express their rejection of the government. The variable could present then some measurement problems³⁰. However, if the variable measures to some extent ideological inconsistency, the prediction is that the effect of inconsistency on a left incumbent should be more noticeable for left-wing voters than for right-wing ones. As shown below, this prediction is born out by the statistical analysis.

If we focus on those who were closer to PSOE according to the ideological closeness variable, we find that 18% in 1986 and 29% in 1989 considered anyway that policy was inconsistent. This means that in 1989 more than one out of four among those closer to PSOE than to any other party thought that the Socialist government was too conservative. That year, vote intention for PSOE and the intention to abstain among those who thought that PSOE's

²⁹ If percentages are calculated from the whole electorate, the party lost seven points during the first term and three during the second (see Carabaña 2001). Participation fell nine points in 1986 as compared to 1982. Thus, PSOE lost seven points, but PP, being the opposition party, lost almost three points.

³⁰ Yet, it is worth noting that, as table 4 reveals, people closer to PSOE started to vote for PP to a significant extent in 1993, not before. Thus, in 1989 only 2% of those closer to PSOE voted for PP, while in 1993 this percentage increased to 11.4%.

policy was realist or socialist were 73% and 4% respectively. Among those who thought that PSOE's policy was too conservative, the corresponding percentages were 34% and 16%. Vote intention was reduced by more than half and abstention increased four times as a consequence of ideological inconsistency. This kind of effect is clearly crucial in order to understand the decline of PSOE's retentive power in the eighties.

I have estimated a conditional logit model for 1986 and 1989 in which the spatial variable of proximity is combined with a variable of capacity or performance, ideological inconsistency, adding some demographic controls³¹. The underlying hypothesis is that the perception of some party's inconsistency should decrease the probability of voting for that party keeping constant ideological proximity. Table 7 shows the results. The coefficient of ideological inconsistency for PSOE is, as expected, negative. On the other hand, it is confirmed that the influence of the consistency variable is much stronger among those to the left of PSOE than among those to the right. It is true that inconsistency increases the probability of voting for CDS or PP, but the increase is much higher for the probability of voting for IU. The fact that the impact is greater on the left than on the right shows that ideological inconsistency is something more than generic criticism of the incumbent³².

³¹ The proximity variable measures the quadratic distance between the respondent and the parties (from 0 to 81). Ideological consistency is a dummy variable (0 'Consistent', 1 'Inconsistent'). The demographic control variables are education (1 'No education', 2 'Primary school', 3 'High school', 4 'University studies'), sex (1 'Male', 2 'Female') and age.

³² I have tried other specifications. The more important change is produced when the evaluation of parties' leaders is included as an alternative-specific variable. The coefficient of ideological consistency is weakened, though it is still highly significant. But this has to do with the fact that the evaluation of leaders is related to their performance. Thus, those who think badly of the Prime Minister tend also to think that his government has made a too conservative policy. The effects of leadership are enormous in the models, but I have not included them in order to let pure performance variables enter into the analysis.

Table 7. Conditional logit models for 1986 and 1989

	1986			1989		
Ideological proximity		-0.1686** (0.0039)			-0.1918** (0.0041)	
	CDS/PP	PSOE/PP	IU/PP	CDS/PP	PSOE/PP	IU/PP
Intercept	-1.0314** (0.3407)	2.7856** (0.2751)	0.2398 (0.3779)	-0.0404 (0.2828)	2.1507** (0.2775)	-0.2149 (0.3709)
Ideological inconsistency	0.4296** (0.1222)	-0.7779** (0.1046)	1.4454** (0.1384)	0.5192** (0.0959)	-0.9011** (0.0949)	1.3031** (0.1325)
Education	-0.3589** (0.0686)	-0.5201** (0.0549)	-0.4879** (0.0775)	-0.2596** (0.0652)	-0.5341** (0.0637)	-0.1549 (0.0840)
Age	-0.0107** (0.0048)	-0.0235** (0.0031)	-0.0305** (0.0045)	-0.0173** (0.0031)	-0.0137** (0.0030)	-0.0378** (0.0044)
Sex	0.2850* (0.1174)	0.0175 (0.0959)	-0.1333 (0.1332)	0.0621 (0.0959)	0.0309 (0.0938)	-0.2519 (0.1305)
Pseudo R ²		0.61			0.54	
N		8,368			8,302	

Standard errors in parentheses.

** indicates significant at 1%; * significant at 5%.

Dependent variable: vote intention (base category: PP).

Source:

1986: CIS 1526

1989: CIS 1789

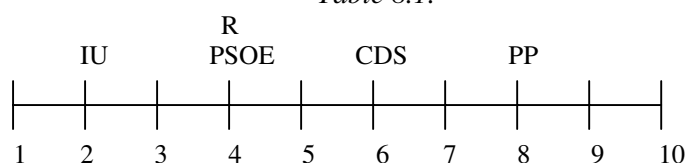
As the interpretation of conditional logit coefficients is not easy, I have included in table 8 the effect of ideological inconsistency on the probability of voting for each party for three spatial scenarios in 1989³³. In the first one (table 8.1), the respondent's ideal point coincides with PSOE's point, he is equidistant between IU and CDS (two points away from each) and is four points to the left of PP. The probability of voting for PSOE decreases 28 points due to inconsistency. The probability of voting for IU increases 13 points and that of CDS 14 points. In the second scenario (table 8.2), the respondent is more centrist: he is equidistant between PSOE and CDS (one point away from each), and equidistant between IU and PP (three points away from each). Now the probability of voting for PSOE is lower, both for consistency (75%) and for inconsistency (45%), a reduction of 30 points. The probability of voting for IU does not change much, but it changes for PP and particularly for CDS. Finally, in the third scenario (table 8.3), we have a more leftist respondent, equidistant between IU and PSOE (one point away from each), three points away from CDS, and five from PP. If that respondent thinks that the incumbent has been consistent, the probability of

³³ The age and education variables are kept constant at their means. Sex has value 1 ('male' category).

voting for it is indeed high, 91%, but it goes down to 59% if he thinks policy has been inconsistent. Now we observe a huge increase in the probability of voting for IU.

Table 8. Probabilities of voting according to different spatial locations and ideological consistency (1989)

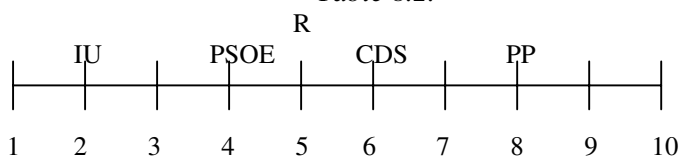
Table 8.1.



Note: R stands for the respondent's ideal position. 1 is the more leftist position, 10 is the more rightist one.

	Pr(Vote for IU)	Pr(Vote for PSOE)	Pr(Vote for CDS)	Pr(Vote for PP)
Ideologically consistent	0.02	0.88	0.07	0.03
Ideologically inconsistent	0.15	0.60	0.21	0.05

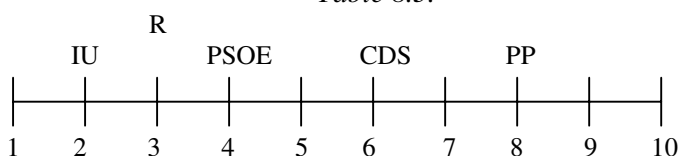
Table 8.2.



Note: R stands for the respondent's ideal position. 1 is the more leftist position, 10 is the more rightist one.

	Pr(Vote for IU)	Pr(Vote for PSOE)	Pr(Vote for CDS)	Pr(Vote for PP)
Ideologically consistent	0.01	0.75	0.13	0.11
Ideologically inconsistent	0.05	0.45	0.34	0.16

Table 8.3.



Note: R stands for the respondent's ideal position. 1 is the more leftist position, 10 is the more rightist one.

	Pr(Vote for IU)	Pr(Vote for PSOE)	Pr(Vote for CDS)	Pr(Vote for PP)
Ideologically consistent	0.05	0.91	0.03	0.01
Ideologically inconsistent	0.31	0.59	0.09	0.01

Table 8 reveals that there is significant punishment for ideological inconsistency even among those who have an ideological position that coincides with that of PSOE. Ideological convictions are not powerful enough to neutralize completely the effects of a negative perception of government's performance. The consequence of the reduction in the probability of voting for the incumbent in the spatial configurations I have examined is an increase in the probability of voting for the small parties in the vicinity of PSOE, not affecting much the main opposition party, PP.

Party unity and corruption

In the nineties new problems emerged for the incumbent. First, all kinds of corruption scandals, some related to the party, some related to members of the government. The scandals varied in substance: abuse of power, illegal financing of the party, and personal enrichment. To this, the dirty war issue must be added, a dark episode in the fight against ETA from the period 1983-1986 that resurfaced judicially in 1994. Second, the party was divided into two opposed factions and became increasingly isolated from other social forces. Problems of leadership worsened after the 1996 defeat. The surprising resignation of Felipe Gonzalez in 1997, the General Secretary since 1974 and Prime Minister for the whole 1982-1996 period, started a phase of internal turmoil and introspection in which the party was unable to solve its own organizational problems. This period lasted until July 2000. That month, after the great loss of vote share in the general elections, a new team of young people replaced the old leadership³⁴.

Both the scandals and the internal divisions had some impact on the capacity of the party, that is, the capacity to make and to implement policies leading to the desired outcomes. The idea is that a divided party may lead to paralysis or deadlock, and that corruption may signal that policies are inefficient, or more simply that politicians do not have the proper

³⁴ For the reaction of PSOE to corruption scandals, see Maravall (1999: 172-176). On how public opinion reacted to these scandals, see Sánchez-Cuenca and Barreiro (2000: Ch.4), Caínzos and Jiménez (2000). On the internal problems of PSOE, see Almunia (2001: Ch.XV-XIX) and Maravall (2003).

motivations to make the right policy. The problem lies in how to measure capacity. I have used two different measures for 1993 and 1996. It was impossible to construct a capacity index for 2000. In 1993, respondents were asked about six different dimensions of the three main parties, PP, PSOE and IU. The dimensions were: responsiveness, trustworthiness, able leaders, internal unity, the honesty of the militants, and respect for the law in the finances of the party³⁵. Not all of them have to do with capacity. More concretely, the first two, responsiveness and trustworthiness, are in a sense preconditions for capacity. A voter will not value the capacity of a party if the party is considered unresponsive or untrustworthy. I have not tried to separate these dimensions, since a principal component analysis showed that there is a single underlying component.

The mean values are reported in table 9. Some interesting comparisons can be made. The three parties obtain similar means in responsiveness, trustworthiness and leadership. Yet, there are big differences in terms of unity and clean hands. PP is seen as a much more united party than PSOE or IU. Although the more honest party is IU, both with regard to militants and to the party's financing, there are still important differences between PP and PSOE in favor of PP. The socialists obtain rather low scores in these two dimensions.

Table 9. Party means in six dimensions of capacity (1993)

	PP	PSOE	IU
Responsiveness	-0.49	-0.53	-0.49
Trustworthiness	-0.67	-0.68	-0.74
Able leaders	-0.17	-0.20	-0.33
Internal unity	+0.25	-0.09	-0.05
Honesty	-0.10	-0.26	-0.01
Legal financing	-0.30	-0.57	-0.22

Note: the mean can vary between -2 (most negative view) and +2 (most positive view).

Source: CIS 2048.

³⁵ The variables have five values, from the most negative opinion (-2) to the most positive one (+2). Although originally there was not a median value, the DK/DA answers have been imputed a 0 value, being therefore the median value. I have calculated the mean value for each party for each individual, creating later on an alternative-specific variable for conditional logit.

The index for 1996 is less fine grained. Respondents were asked to name the party that best fit each of five statements: the party that better represents the ideas of the respondent, the more trustworthy party, the party with better leaders, the more capable party to govern, and the party that can better solve the problems of Spain³⁶. Again, the first two statements are the ones that have less to do with capacity.

Apart from these indexes, I have also included a generic variable of government's performance for the three elections, and another variable about the job of the main opposition party in 1993 and 2000³⁷. As for corruption, there were not adequate questions in the surveys employed³⁸. In fact, a good deal of information about corruption is incorporated in the capacity index for 1993. An indirect indicator on corruption has nonetheless been used for that year: it is a 0-10 scale about how worried the respondent is about political corruption.

Conditional logit estimates appear in table 10. Unlike the models of table 7, those of table 10 are not so easily comparable, since for each election there are different independent variables. First of all, the capacity variable is extremely powerful both in 1993 and in 1996, though more so in 1993, probably due to the fact that the variable is more accurately measured in that year. Secondly, the opinion on government's performance is much more important than the opinion on the job made by the opposition, both in 1993 and in 2000. The opposition is probably judged prospectively rather than retrospectively. Thirdly, in the only year in which we have a separate question on corruption, 1993, the variable is not so important and it only matters for the comparison PSOE/PP, but not for IU/PP. The more worried a person is about corruption, the more likely to vote for PP.

³⁶ Again, this enters as an alternative-specific variable in the statistical analysis. Each individual has a score from 0 to 5 for each party, representing the number of times that the party has been chosen as the answer to any of the five questions.

³⁷ The question about the opposition's performance was not included in 1996. Both variables are measured from 1 to 5, 1 being the most positive opinion and 5 the most negative one. As there is a median value, I have eliminated from the sample the DK/DA answers.

³⁸ The good questions are included in more specialized surveys about corruption in which ideological distances cannot be calculated. See Sánchez-Cuenca and Barreiro (2000: Ch.4).

Table 10. *Conditional logit models for 1993, 1996 and 2000*

	1993		1996		2000	
Ideological proximity	-0.1062** (0.0121)		-0.0716** (0.0074)		-0.1124** (0.0031)	
Capacity	2.0998** (0.1875)		0.9197** (0.0431)		---	
	PSOE/PP	IU/PP	PSOE/PP	IU/PP	PSOE/PP	IU/PP
Intercept	5.8465** (1.4631)	1.8264 (1.6541)	4.0894** (1.0883)	1.9663* (0.9986)	-2.8328** (0.3129)	-5.8658** (0.4079)
Government's performance	-1.3367** (0.2586)	-0.4943* (0.2525)	-1.5915** (0.2382)	-0.6101** (0.1903)	2.5293** (0.0714)	2.0984** (0.0820)
Opposition performance	0.4488 (0.2428)	0.6414* (0.2617)	---	---	-1.3540** (0.0593)	-0.3091** (0.0713)
Corruption	-0.1376* (0.0704)	-0.1184 (0.0769)	---	---	---	---
Education	-0.6081* (0.2450)	-0.2796 (0.2798)	-0.5045** (0.1788)	-0.0842 (0.1687)	-0.1306** (0.0501)	0.1393* (0.0630)
Age	-0.0076 (0.0113)	-0.0450** (0.0146)	-0.0068 (0.0093)	-0.0270** (0.0098)	0.0013 (0.0025)	-0.0134** (0.0035)
Sex	0.0875 (0.3394)	-0.0215 (0.3826)	0.6545* (0.2795)	0.2018 (0.2705)	-0.1357 (0.0792)	-0.3066** (0.1046)
Pseudo R ²	0.77		0.82		0.63	
N	954		2,951		9,510	

Standard errors in parentheses.

** indicates significant at 1%; * significant at 5%.

Dependent variable: vote intention (base category: PP).

Source:

1993: CIS 2048

1996: CIS 2207

2000: CIS 2382

In order to understand the crucial effect of capacity, and how capacity accounts for the party-relative patterns of ideological voting, I have calculated probabilities of voting for the three parties according to different configurations of values in capacity and distance in the 1993 model.

Let us suppose first a spatial configuration like the one described in table 8.1 (someone who coincides with PSOE and is four points away from PP and two from IU). All the independent variables are held constant at their means, except capacity. Capacity is an alternative-specific variable: hence, each individual has a different value for each party. The values of capacity for PP and IU are again held constant at their means. Now, if the individual attributes a capacity of +0.5 to PSOE, the probability of voting for this party is 0.93; if capacity is -0.5, the probability goes down to 0.63, a reduction of 0.30 points (the

variable ranges from -2 to $+2$). Variations in capacity provoke huge changes in the probability of voting for parties keeping constant the ideological positions and all other independent variables.

If we want to explain the asymmetry between PP and PSOE in terms of ideological voting, as reflected in table 4, we have then to find differences in the distribution of opinions about capacity according to party. In other words, if ideological distance is powerful to predict the vote for PP and less so for PSOE, it must be because people closer to PP attribute high capacity to this party, while people closer to PSOE have a worse opinion of PSOE's capacity. This is precisely what the data show. Using the ideological closeness variable of section 3, it turns out that among those closer to PP, the mean values of capacity are $+0.50$ for PP, -0.98 for PSOE and -0.40 for IU; among those closer to PSOE, the mean values are -0.07 for PSOE (note it is a negative value), -0.38 for PP and -0.33 for IU. Thus, people closer to PP have more positive views about their preferred party than people closer to PSOE about PSOE; moreover, people closer to PP have more negative views about PSOE than people closer to PSOE about PP.

It seems likely that the progressive loss of retentive power by PSOE was a consequence of a growing perception, even among people very close to the party, that its capacity was low. The fact that the party kept losing retentive power in 2000, after four years of being in opposition, shows that the incumbent's performance was not the only variable that could affect ideological voting. The internal disarray in the party, which actually was aggravated in the period 1996-2000, was equally important to account for the weakening of the ideological vote for this party.

The explanation of temporal variation in the vote share of parties has to do with two factors: first, the spatial distribution of voters and parties; second, the retentive power of parties that derive from their capacity and performance. The electoral progress of PP in the period 1989-2000 seems to be based on an increase in the percentage of people closer to this party (see table 3). By contrast, the electoral decadence of PSOE in the same period is rather

a consequence of its loss of capacity³⁹. In other words, this implies that a pure spatial model is not always sufficient to reconstruct the evolution of electoral results. When a party suffers internal problems, or when a party is in office making policy, it is necessary to add opinions about parties' capacity and the incumbent's performance.

5. Conclusions

How can governments be accountable if voters vote ideologically? In the pure ideological spatial model, governments are not accountable: voters just vote for the closer party. Closeness to parties is all that matters. Thus, parties are equal except for their ideological positions. But there is little reason to suppose that voters follow such a mechanical decision rule. Ideological considerations cannot be fully independent of considerations about how ideology is transformed into policies (party's ideological consistency), and how policies produce certain outcomes (party's capacity).

I have argued that ideological voting might be compatible with accountability when these two problems, ideological consistency and capacity, are taken into account. Unlike the standard spatial model, where these two problems are solved by assumption, I have shown that if a government makes decisions that lead voters to conclude that the government is ideologically inconsistent, or that the government has low capacity, the decision rule of voting for the closer party can be violated, at least for the incumbent. People closer to the incumbent party than to any other party will not necessarily vote for it.

Ideological voting is not universal. It is rather a party-relative behavior. Voters who consider that the party in government is making an inconsistent policy, or that the party is not capable due to its internal divisions, will tend to punish the incumbent, even if they are closer to it than to any other party. The retentive power of parties, defined as the percentage of people who, being ideologically closer to the party, vote for it, depends on consistency and capacity.

³⁹ For a different explanation of the role of ideology in the evolution of Spanish parties' vote share, see Torcal and Medina (2002).

The analysis of the Spanish case reveals that in order to understand the electoral trend in the eighties and nineties, it is not enough to know the evolution of the ideological distribution of voters. We also need to incorporate the effects of consistency and capacity on ideological voting.

Appendix. The ideological closeness variable

The aim of constructing a closeness variable is to classify individuals in terms of ideological distances. In order to calculate distances, I have used the respondent's self-placement in the ideological scale (usually a 0-10 or 1-10 scale) and the ideological positions that the respondent attributes to the parties. There is some consensus in the spatial literature that using respondents' subjective positions of parties is more reasonable and more consistent with the underlying theory than using parties' mean position; moreover, it seems that mean placements create a favourable bias for the directional model (see Merrill and Grofman 1999: Appendix 4.3)⁴⁰.

Not every party is introduced in the analysis. Irrelevant parties (that is, parties with a vote share under 5%) are discarded. First, we know that tiny parties do not attract voters regardless of their closeness. Second, many small parties defend a single issue or compete in dimensions which are not the left-right dimension I am studying here. In the case of Spain, for instance, all regionalist or nationalist parties are not considered. This means two things: distances to irrelevant parties are not calculated, and all the voters that vote for irrelevant parties are eliminated from the sample.

Let us represent the ideological distance to party P for individual i (the difference between i 's ideal point and the placement of P by i) as d_i^P . Now, let $C_i(P_j)$ stand for the fact that individual i is closer to party j than to any other party, and $C_i(P_j = P_k)$ that individual i is equidistant between parties j and k and closer to j and k than to any other party. If we have four parties, P_1, P_2, P_3 , and P_4 , such that their order in the ideological scale is $P_1 < P_2 < P_3 < P_4$, then ideological closeness is calculated according to the following logical rules⁴¹:

⁴⁰ I have replicated the calculus of the retentive power of Spanish parties in 1996 (post-election survey) using mean party placements. Some significant distortions emerge. For instance, the retentive power of PSOE goes down to 37.2% (as compared to 55.6% in table 4). Another consequence of using mean party placements is that it is no longer possible to be equidistant, since mean positions are not integers.

⁴¹ Note that I only calculate equidistant values consistent with the initial ordering $P_1 < P_2 < P_3 < P_4$. Thus, I disregard the possibility of someone being equidistant between, say, PP and IU, since this implies that PSOE is not placed between PP and IU.

$$\begin{aligned}C_i(P_1) &\leftrightarrow (d_i^{P_1} < d_i^{P_2}) \& (d_i^{P_1} < d_i^{P_3}) \& (d_i^{P_1} < d_i^{P_4}) \\C_i(P_1 = P_2) &\leftrightarrow (d_i^{P_1} = d_i^{P_2}) \& (d_i^{P_1} < d_i^{P_3}) \& (d_i^{P_1} < d_i^{P_4}) \\C_i(P_2) &\leftrightarrow (d_i^{P_2} < d_i^{P_1}) \& (d_i^{P_2} < d_i^{P_3}) \& (d_i^{P_2} < d_i^{P_4}) \\C_i(P_2 = P_3) &\leftrightarrow (d_i^{P_2} = d_i^{P_3}) \& (d_i^{P_2} < d_i^{P_3}) \& (d_i^{P_2} < d_i^{P_4}) \\C_i(P_3) &\leftrightarrow (d_i^{P_3} < d_i^{P_1}) \& (d_i^{P_3} < d_i^{P_2}) \& (d_i^{P_3} < d_i^{P_4}) \\C_i(P_3 = P_4) &\leftrightarrow (d_i^{P_3} = d_i^{P_4}) \& (d_i^{P_3} < d_i^{P_1}) \& (d_i^{P_3} < d_i^{P_2}) \\C_i(P_4) &\leftrightarrow (d_i^{P_4} < d_i^{P_1}) \& (d_i^{P_4} < d_i^{P_2}) \& (d_i^{P_4} < d_i^{P_3})\end{aligned}$$

Note that if an individual does not answer either about his or her own ideological placement, or about any party's placement, the individual is excluded from the sample. This person is not acting according to the decision rule of the spatial model given that not all the relevant ideological distances can be calculated. The closeness variable includes a value for all those who do not have ideological distances to the relevant parties.

It is important to stress that ideological distances cannot be identified with party identification. It is one thing “feeling” close to some party, and quite another being close to it. The Spanish post-election survey of 2000 contained a question about feeling close to parties. 57% do not feel close to any party, but more than half of these people have values in the ideological closeness variable. On the other hand, for the 37% of the sample for whom ideological distance cannot be determined, 21.5% of these feel close to some party. The feeling of closeness has a much stronger relationship with past vote than ideological closeness. Hence, ideological closeness does not measure party identification: it is something else.

Due to the subjective nature of the ideological closeness variable, it could contain what in the literature is called a “projection effect”, namely that people tend to place preferred parties closer to their ideal points. Empirical studies show that nonetheless the projection effect is small. I have recalculated the ideological closeness variable for the Spanish 1996 post-election survey making an adjustment for the projection effect (see the

procedure described in Merrill and Grofman 1999: Appendix 5.1), but differences between the new and the original variables were almost negligible.

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