The persistence of nationalist terrorism: the case of ETA

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March 2008

Chapter prepared for
Kledja Mulaj (ed) *Violent Non-State Actors in Contemporary World Politics*

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Introduction

ETA (*Euskadi ta Askatasuna*, Basque Homeland and Freedom) is one of the oldest terrorist organizations in the world. It was born in 1959, it claimed its first victim in 1968 and it is still active today, after having killed 777 people (until the end of 2007) and wounded thousands of others. It is a nationalist group that fights for the independence of the Basque Country. It has survived regime change, a process of devolution, several internal splits, changes of strategy, negotiations with almost every democratic Spanish government, several ceasefires, and numerous blows by security forces that have made it much weaker than in the past.

ETA is the only remaining terrorist organization in Western Europe among those that emerged in the wave of political violence of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many countries in the developed world witnessed the emergence of terrorist groups of very different ideologies: revolutionary groups such as the Red Brigades (Italy), the Red Army Faction (Germany), and the GRAPO (Antifascist First of October Revolutionary Group, Spain); fascist groups such as the NAR (Revolutionary Armed Groups, Italy) and the Spanish Basque Battalion (Spain); vigilante groups such as the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association (both in Northern Ireland); and nationalist groups such as ETA itself and the PIRA (Provisional Irish Republican Army, Northern Ireland). In comparative terms, only the PIRA has a bloodier record than ETA. The PIRA killed around 1,650 people, more than twice the number of fatalities by ETA in a similar time span.

Despite its resilience and bloody trajectory, there is still very little written in English about ETA and Basque nationalist violence.[1] Indeed, the English literature on ETA is not comparable in quantity to the enormous body of literature on terrorism in Northern Ireland and in Italy. Moreover, this literature has tended to focus on the nationalist conflict and the social movements rather than on ETA itself.[2]

In this Chapter I provide an overview of ETA regarding the following aspects: (i) origins and history, (ii) organization, recruits, and social base, (iii) strategic evolution, and (iv) target selection.

1. History and background

The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) is made up of three provinces in the North of Spain (Álava, Guipúzcoa, and Vizcaya). It is a relatively small territory with a population of around 2.1 million people (as of 2006). Vizcaya is by far the most populated province (around 1,100,000 inhabitants) and also the most industrialized one.

[1] See Jan Mansvelt Beck, *Territory and Terror. Conflicting Nationalisms in the Basque Country*. London, Routledge, 2005; Luis de la Calle, 'Fighting for Local Control: Street Violence in the Basque Country', *International Studies Quarterly*, 51, 2007, pp. 431-55; Robert P. Clark, *The Basque Insurgents. ETA, 1952-1980*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984 and *Negotiating with ETA. Obstacles to Peace in the Basque Country, 1975-1988*, Reno, University of Nevada Press, 1990; Marianne Heiberg, 'ETA: Euskadi 'ta Askatasuna', in Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O'Leary and John Tirman (eds) *Terror, Insurgency, and the State. Ending Protracted Conflicts*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 18-49; Cynthia L. Irvin, *Militant Nationalism. Between Movement and Party in Ireland and the Basque Country*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999; David Laitin, 'National Revivals and Violence', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 36, 1995, pp. 3-43; Enric Martínez-Herrera, 'Nationalist Extremism and Outcomes of State Policies in the Basque Country, 1979-2001', *International Journal of Multicultural Societies*, 4, 2002, pp. 16-40; Ludger Mees, 'Between votes and bullets. Conflicting ethnic identities in the Basque Country', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24, 2001, pp. 798-827; Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, 'The Dynamics of Nationalist Terrorism: ETA and the IRA', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 19, 2007, pp. 289-306; Goldie Shabad and Francisco Llera, 'Political violence in a democratic state: Basque terrorism in Spain', in Martha Crenshaw (ed) *Terrorism in Context*, University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, pp. 410-69; John Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism. The Fight for Euskadi, 1890-1986*, London, Routledge, 1988; Benjamín Tejerina, 'Protest cycle, political violence and social movements in the Basque Country', *Nations and Nationalism*, 7, 2001, pp. 39-57; Paddy Woodworth, *Dirty War, Clean Hands: ETA, the GAL and Spanish Democracy*, Cork, Cork University Press, 2001.

[2] For a review of the Spanish literature on ETA, see Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, Ignacio, 'Violencia política, orden y seguridad', in Manuel Pérez Yruela (ed) *La sociología en España*, Madrid, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2007, pp. 289-303.

After the death of Franco in 1975, the BAC was constituted. It is regulated by the so-called Gernika Statute, approved in 1979, which specifies the powers of the Basque institutions. The BAC is a wealthy region, with a GDP per capita well above the Spanish average.

There is a Basque Parliament and a Basque government. The BAC has its own fiscal regime (it does not participate in the flows of redistribution between the other Spanish regions). It has extensive legislative powers, its own police force (the *Ertzaintza*), its own education system, mostly run in Basque, its own health system, and a public TV channel (see articles 10-24 of the Gernika Statute for a full list of powers). The only limits to autonomy are social security, defence and foreign policy.

Whereas the BAC is the administrative reality, Basque nationalists usually employ the term "Basque Country" (*Euskal Herria*) to refer to a much larger territory. They claim that the Basque Country is made up of the BAC, Navarre, and the three Basque provinces of the South of France (the French Basque Country, or *Iparralde*). Among radical nationalists, one of the central claims is precisely what they call "territoriality", that is, the unification of the seven provinces in a single Basque state.

As a matter of fact, nationalism is very unevenly distributed in these territories. In Iparralde, it is clearly marginal. France has been successful in the national assimilation of its Basque population: the vote for Basque nationalist parties or the use of the Basque language is almost negligible in this territory. In the South of Navarre and in Álava, the Southern province of the BAC, Basque nationalism is also rather weak. During the transition to democracy, the possibility of incorporating Navarre in the BAC was discussed, but eventually rejected. Nonetheless, the Autonomy Statute of Navarre contemplates unification with the BAC if a majority of people in Navarre is in favour. Today, Navarre is definitely more pro-Spain than pro-Basque Country. Nationalism is

stronger in Vizcaya, Guipuzcoa and the north of Navarre. These are also the areas where violence has been more intense (see Section 4 below).

Basque nationalism emerged as a reaction to two dramatic changes. On the one hand, the early wave of industrialization in the late XIXth century, which provoked a massive flow of immigration to the Basque provinces from other regions of Spain. On the other, the defeat of the Basque traditionalists (also called the *Carlistas*, because of a dynastic dispute about the monarchy) in the third *Carlista* civil war (1872-6), which brought about the abolition of the Basque *fueros*. The *fueros* were the local civic and economic rights that had survived from medieval times in the Basque provinces and Navarre. They represented a sort of exceptionalism within Spain. Their elimination was part of the process of Spanish nation building.[3]

Basque nationalism was anti-liberal from the beginning, based on an idealization of rural life and ancestral traditions, with a strong influence of the Church. Unlike Catalan nationalism, which was more civic-oriented, Basque nationalism was ethnic-oriented. This difference is still visible.[4] There was a clear racist element towards Spaniards in the writings of the founder of the Basque Nationalist Party (BNP), Sabino Arana (1865-1903).

The BNP has been the hegemonic political force in the Basque Country at least since 1917, when it became a mass party. It has always been internally divided into two factions, the moderates, who seek autonomy within Spain, and the radicals, who seek full independence.[5]

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[3] The *fueros* of other regions, Aragon, Catalonia, Mallorca and Valencia, had already been abolished by Felipe V at the beginning of XVIII century.

[4] See Paloma Aguilar and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, 'Performance or Representation? The Determinants of Voting in Complex Political Contexts', in José María Maravall and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca (eds) *Controlling Governments. Voters, Institutions and Accountability*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 105-30; and Araceli Serrano, 'Manifestaciones étnicas y cívico-territoriales de los nacionalismos', *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 82, 1998, pp. 97-125.

[5] See the two volumes of de Pablo, Santiago, Ludger Mees and José Antonio Rodríguez, *El péndulo patriótico. Historia del Partido Nacionalista Vasco,* Barcelona, Crítica, 1999 and 2001.

The first Basque Government was created during the civil war (1936-39). The Autonomy Statute was approved on 1 October 1936. A grand coalition between the BNP and the socialists was created, under the leadership of José Antonio Aguirre (from the BNP). This experience, however, was short-lived. Whereas Navarre and Álava supported Franco, Vizcaya and Guipuzcoa were against him. These two provinces were particularly repressed after the victory of Franco, who immediately suppressed Basque autonomy.

ETA emerged in the context of the long dictatorship period under Franco, coinciding with a second wave of industrialization and a second massive flow of immigrants from other parts of Spain. A group of youngsters, mainly students, acting under the name of Ekin ("doing" in Basque), were dissatisfied with the passive stance of the BNP towards the authoritarian regime. In the 1950s, Ekin merged with the youth organization of the BNP, EGI. The critical attitude of this group led to expulsions and eventually to the first split in the ranks of the BNP in 25 years.

The splinter group chose the name *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (ETA) and wrote its founding charter in July 1959.[6] It is a brief document in which the organization defines itself as a patriotic, non-religious, non-political group with the goal of "saving the Basque soul" and "the self-determination of our homeland's destiny." At that time it was hard, if not inconceivable, to expect that ETA would end up as an organization engaged in full terrorist violence.

ETA's first actions were rather naïve. Graffiti, the hoisting of Basque flags (which were forbidden), and the destruction of Francoist symbols. The first serious attack was the explosion of a bomb on 18 July 1961 to derail a train full of Franco's volunteers going to a remembrance service (the fascist rebellion against the Republic

[6] Reproduced in de Pablo, Mees and Rodríguez, Vol. II, p. 236 (see fn. 5).

had started on 18 July 1936).[7] The regime overreacted to these acts; many activists were arrested and many others had to move to the French Basque Country.

ETA organized several assemblies to design a strategy for fighting against the dictatorship. There were basically two alternatives. On the one hand, if the fight was aimed against the regime, it could be understood in terms of class struggle, as part of a wider revolutionary movement in the whole of Spain against the dictator. On the other hand, if the fight was against Spain rather than against Franco, then it could be framed in terms of a national liberation campaign.

During the 1960s ETA was badly divided between those who stressed class struggle and those who stressed national liberation.[8] There were various attempts to reach a compromise: ETA's ideology was defined in the socialist or Marxist jargon of the time as a national liberation movement inspired by anti-colonial experiences (Algeria, Cyprus and the Irgun were for ETA important models to emulate.) If no equilibrium was reached it was, among other reasons, because the Basque Country did not fit either a national liberation story (the Basque Country has never been, by any means, a Spanish colony) or a revolutionary situation (the working class was not prepared for a revolution.)

There were numerous splits in those years. The winners were always the nationalists. In the V Assembly, held in 1966-67, the orthodox Communists were expelled (they formed the short-lived ETA *berri*, or new ETA). This internal dynamic of ideological clarification was precipitated by an unexpected event. In fortuitous circumstances, Javier Echebarrieta, one of the leaders of ETA, was stopped by the Civil

[7] On 28 June 1960, a bomb exploded in a train station in San Sebastián (Guipuzcoa). A baby girl (Begoña Urroz) died as a consequence of the wounds. The attack was never claimed. Although some people think that this act was the work of some anarchist group, there is some consensus in imputing the killing to ETA (though there is no hard evidence on that).

[8] For a history of ETA in the 1960s, see José M. Garmendia, *Historia de ETA*, San Sebastián, Aramburu, 1996, and Gurutz Jáuregui, *Ideología y estrategia política de ETA. Análisis de su evolución entre 1959 y 1968*, Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1981.

Guard (military police) on 7 June 1968. He killed Civil Guard José Pardines and escaped. But some hours later he was found and shot by security forces. Echebarrieta became the first killer and the first martyr of ETA. That episode sparked the spiral of violence that has lasted for almost forty years. ETA decided to take revenge by killing Melitón Manzanas on 2 August 1968, a police commissar with a notorious reputation of being a torturer of political prisoners. The reaction of the regime was indeed tough. There were massive arrests and the declaration of a state of emergency in the Basque provinces and later on in the whole of Spain.

Regime repression created a cleavage between those who remained in the Basque Country and those who left for France. The veterans, who were in France, considered that the new leadership was not sufficiently nationalist. They were extremely worried about a new Marxist deviation. During the VI Assembly there was a new split. The organization was by then decimated by arrests and internal divisions. But the nationalists recovered full control of the organization.

ETA survived thanks to the mistake made by Franco, who organized a spectacular trial against several activists accused of the killing of the torturer Manzanas. The so-called Burgos trial (the name of the city in which it took place) was used by ETA activists to make publicity, to reach audiences beyond Spain and to trigger an international solidarity campaign. ETA gained wide popularity due to the repressive excesses of the regime.[9]

Their popularity augmented still more with the assassination of the Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco in Madrid on 20 December 1973, the President of the Government and second to Franco. It sent the signal both to the state and to the opposition forces that ETA was indeed a powerful organization.

[9] On the Burgos trial, see the first hand report in the memoirs of Mario Onaindía, *El precio de la libertad. Memorias (1948-1977)*, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 2001.

Franco became rather ill in 1974. The expectations about his death set in motion another internal rift within ETA about the strategy to be followed after the end of the dictatorship. The majority opted for some combination of armed struggle and political participation. The minority, on the other hand, considered that armed struggle should be the only activity for ETA. This disagreement led to the most important split in the history of the organization. The split was precipitated by another attack in Madrid on 13 September 1974. The terrorists exploded a bomb in a restaurant attached to the central police headquarters, assuming that most customers would be police officers. Thirteen people died as a consequence of the explosion and only one was a policeman.

There was a bitter argument within ETA on whether the attack should be claimed or not. The majority imposed its position: it decided to deny any involvement in the attack, alleging that recognition would undermine popular support. At the end of 1974, ETA split into two different organizations, the majority, political-military ETA (ETApm), and the minority, military ETA (ETAm). The military branch considered that political participation in the process of transition would imply a diversion of resources and that the organization would ultimately succumb to electoral politics.

In a sense, ETAm was right. ETApm, despite being more numerous, was unable to sustain armed struggle for long. Within ETApm, those more involved in politics concluded that armed struggle was a deadweight loss for the movement. In 1977, the military commandos of ETApm, increasingly dissatisfied with the political evolution of the organization, left for ETAm. The flow of activists and weapons into ETAm made it much more powerful. One year later, its violence skyrocketed and it became the dominant group in terms of armed struggle.

ETApm abandoned armed struggle in 1982. Its violence was subordinated to the strategies of the political party associated with ETApm, the Basque Revolutionary Party

(*Euskal Iraultzarako Alderdia*). In fact, the aim of its attacks was mainly to gain support and followers. In that sense, the kind of violence that ETApm carried out was more similar to the typical revolutionary type (as exemplified by the Red Brigades or the GRAPO) than to the typical nationalist type (as exemplified by ETAm or the PIRA). The same can be said of the CAA (Autonomous Anticapitalist Commandos), an armed group formed by those military activists who left ETApm in 1977 but who refused to enter ETAm. Heavily influenced by the anarchist experiences of the *Autonomia* movement in Italy, Germany and France, they conceived violence as an instrument for the development of class consciousness and the advancement of anti-system social movements. The CAA were active between 1978 and 1984.

After 1984, ETAm was the only acting terrorist group in the Basque Country. Given the continuity between the pre-1974 ETA and ETAm, I will refer indistinctly to either of the two organizations as ETA. Only when the context makes it necessary, shall I distinguish between ETAm and ETApm.

2. Organization, recruits and popular support

Terrorist organizations tend to be rather small compared with guerrilla insurgencies. To estimate the size of ETA, it is necessary to make a distinction between the hard core of the organization, made up of the leadership and the people who take up arms in the commandos, and a more eccentric circle made up of those who are somehow related to the organization and help it in different tasks such as intelligence, housing, and border-crossing. In the case of ETA, all estimations coincide on figures of below 500 people for the hard core. According to some estimates, there were 300/350 activists in the hard core in 1978, the year in which ETA launched its offensive against the state and the

number of killings skyrocketed.[10] In the early eighties the number of activists gradually started to decline, meaning that the organization was unable to find new recruits to replace all the activists who were being arrested. The reduction in ETA's activity, particularly after the arrest of the entire leadership in Bidart (South of France) on 29 March 1992, was probably caused by the shrinking of the organization. In recent years the size of the hard core has most likely been less than one hundred people.

Its capacity to attract recruits to the hard core explains the resilience of ETA's violence. ETA has seen itself as the vanguard of a much wider movement which is subordinated to the needs of armed struggle. The dense network of organizations, associations and firms was called KAS (*Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista*, Patriotic Socialist Coordination) during the period 1975/98, and *Ekin* afterwards. Sometimes it is also referred to in a more generic way as the Basque National Liberation Movement. The network includes newspapers and other publications, a political party (adopting various names over time, *Herri Batasuna* being the most enduring one), a union, a women's organization, a youth organization, associations in support of ETA's prisoners, organizations aimed at spreading the Basque language, and even firms (travel agencies, fish imports, etcetera.) The core of the movement is underground, the external belt is legal.

For many years, the courts were unable to establish the link between ETA and the rest of the movement. Thanks to various initiatives launched by the judge Baltasar Garzón since 1998, this link has been proved and many of the organizations and associations of the movement have been illegalized and their members sent to prison.[11] The effect of these court initiatives has been an increasing isolation of ETA and greater

[10] Florencio Domínguez, *ETA: Estrategia organizativa y actuaciones. 1978-1992*, Bilbao, Universidad del País Vasco, 1998, p. 39.
[11] See Baltasar Garzón, *Un mundo sin miedo*, Barcelona, Plaza Janés, 2005, Chapter 4.

difficulties in finding recruits and money. Moreover, the right-wing Popular Party passed a law in 2002, with the support of the socialists in the opposition, that makes parties connected to a terrorist organization illegal. This means that the political branch of ETA has not been able to run in the elections held since that year.

Nationalist terrorist organizations try to penetrate society in various ways. It is well-known, for instance, that Hamas, apart from terrorist violence, spends part of its resources on welfare provision (schooling, health, and other services.)[12] The PIRA, in Northern Ireland, was involved in public order in the Catholic strongholds, punishing, through beatings and kneecapping, petty criminals and joy riders.[13] In both cases, the terrorists tried to fill a hole left by a defective state. In the Basque Country there has not been a problem either of welfare (which is generously provided by the Basque and Spanish governments) or of public order (unlike Northern Ireland, there is no sectarian conflict in the BAC.) In order to be present in society and gain popularity, ETA's strategy has been to penetrate and manipulate new social movements (environmentalist and, ironically enough, antimilitarist and pacifist ones.)

The most important way of attracting new people into the organization is through personal networks.[14] The average militant is someone who has been socialized in the movement and has a relative or a friend in the organization (or in jail). If the person has experienced, personally or through someone close enough, an episode of state repression (arbitrary arrest, torture), it is much more likely that the person will take the step of entering into the organization. Since the early nineties, the most important

[12] Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas. Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2000.
[13] Rachel Monaghan, ''An Imperfect Peace': Paramilitary 'Punishments' in Northern Ireland', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16, 2004, pp. 439-61.
[14] Domínguez (fn. 10), pp. 22-6; Fernando Reinares, *Patriotas de la muerte. Quiénes han militado en ETA y por qué*, Madrid, Taurus, 2001.

recruit mechanism has been street violence.[15] Youngsters are trained in acts of street violence. Some of them, to avoid arrest, go underground and end up in the ranks of ETA.

The internal structure of ETA is strongly hierarchical. At the top there is an Executive Committee that makes all the important decisions and establishes the goals and the strategic line to be followed. Members of the Executive Committee are selected through cooptation.[16] Formally, there is no leader of ETA, although de facto someone can play that role (for instance, Domingo Iturbe, aka *Txomin*, in the early eighties). The Executive Committee is responsible for the different branches of the organization. These are the military, political, logistic, finance and border-crossing ones. The Executive Committee is not an accountable body within ETA. Due to the constraints of being underground, there is very little interaction between the leadership and the militancy. The assemblies that were held in the 1960s have not been repeated, although there have been some general meetings to discuss transcendental decisions (such as a ceasefire).

Members of the executive committee are all in France. France has been for many years the sanctuary of ETA. Things started to change due to the "dirty war" against ETA in the period 1983-87. A state-sponsored organization, the GAL (*Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación*, Antiterrorist Liberation Groups), acted mainly in the South of France against ETA's members and sympathizers. The GAL killed 27 people in this period, though many of them had no relationship whatsoever with ETA.[17] In any case, France toughened its policy against ETA; extradition of terrorists, for instance,

[15] On street violence in the Basque Country, see de la Calle (fn. 1).
[16] Domínguez (fn. 10), p. 84.
[17] About the GAL, see Woodworth (fn. 1).

became a reality. Since then, there has been an ever increasing degree of cooperation between France and Spain.[18]

Regarding finance, ETA has obtained money through bank robberies, kidnappings and extortion. Bank robberies occurred only in the early days. It is a risky operation for the terrorists and it often produces collateral victims. It is interesting to note that the PIRA did not resort to this tactic either.

Kidnappings, by contrast, have been much more frequent in the history of ETA. Although some of them were carried out for political reasons, most of them had economic motivations. Almost eighty people have been kidnapped by all Basque terrorist groups.[19] Yet, kidnappings are not a stable source of money. The outcome of a kidnapping is always uncertain: the family may refuse to pay ransom, the police may foil the payment or find the place where the person is held prisoner. Moreover, kidnappings are highly visible in the media and may be unpopular among supporters because of the "mafia" image. For all these reasons, ETA abandoned kidnapping in 1996.

Extortion is by far the most important source of finance. The terrorists regularly ask entrepreneurs and shopkeepers to pay the so-called "revolutionary tax". To make the threat of extortion credible, eight people have been killed for financial reasons.[20]

The extortion system requires a dense network of people in charge of collecting the money. Only powerful organizations, with some degree of territorial control over the population, can put this method into practice. On a larger scale, guerrillas extract rents from peasants in the territories they liberate from the state. Powerful terrorist organizations such as ETA or the PIRA emulate this behaviour. Systematic extortion is

[18] See Sagrario Morán, *ETA entre España y Francia*, Madrid, Universidad Complutense, 1997.
[19] See the appendix in José María Calleja, La diáspora vasca. Historia de los condenados a irse de Euskadi por culpa del terrorismo de ETA, Madrid, El Pais-Aguilar, 1999.
[20] José María Calleja e Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, *La derrota de ETA. De la primera víctima a la última*, *Madrid*, Adhara, 2006, p. 97.

not found in groups without a definite territorial base and with less popular support. Organizations such as the Red Brigades, the GRAPO or the Red Army Faction have to finance themselves mainly through bank robberies.

It is difficult, nonetheless, to specify objectively the amount of popular support terrorist organizations have. Basically, we do not have reliable indicators of direct support, although it is possible to extract some information from surveys and electoral results. If we assume that voting for *Herri Batasuna* (HB) can be taken as an indicator of support for ETA, Table 1 shows that on average 10 per cent of the Basque adult population support ETA. This amounts to around 172,000 people. In terms of votes, HB has a vote share of 15 per cent. If we calculate this as a percentage of the total nationalist vote, then HB represents 26 per cent (one in four nationalist voters vote for ETA's political branch.) These figures are calculated on the basis of the eight Basque legislative elections run between 1980 and 2005.

TABLE 1 HERE

Table 1 also shows that support is rather stable. Even when HB was not allowed to compete in the 2005 elections, a surrogate party, the PCTV (Communist Party of the Basqueland), obtained 150,000 votes. The most deviant elections are those of 1998 and 2001. In 1998, the elections took place one month after ETA declaring a ceasefire. That year, HB obtained its best result ever, with 224,001 votes, showing that some people are willing to vote for an independentist party when ETA ends the violence. The breakdown of the ceasefire gave rise to a particularly cruel campaign of ETA against local non-nationalist politicians. As a consequence, in the following elections, in 2001, HB suffered a dramatic fall in its electoral support.

Survey information provides a similar picture. Although there are no systematic longitudinal data for the whole period, it is possible to calculate a mean of support on a scale 0-1 (where 1 is full support and 0 no support at all) for fifteen years based on the *Euskobarometro* survey.[21] The mean is 0.18, which is consistent with the figures corresponding to electoral results.

Support for ETA is clearly minoritarian in the Basque Country, but it is large enough to sustain a terrorist organization. Around 10 per cent of the population are sympathetic to the goals and means of the terrorists. Thanks to this significant support, ETA has survived for so long and has been able to create an important physical and human infrastructure that makes possible the extortion network, the infiltration in social movements, or the creation of a parallel world in which youngsters are socialized in the values of armed struggle.

3. Strategy[22]

Nationalist terrorism is about territory, whereas revolutionary terrorism is about mobilization. Nationalist terrorism aspires ultimately to the creation of a new state in the territory under dispute. Revolutionary terrorism, by contrast, seeks to ignite a mass uprising against the system. While the demands of the nationalists are negotiable (there is a continuum of possible agreements between no territorial concession and independence), revolutionaries cannot negotiate with the state, since they want its demise.

[21] At www.ehu.es/cpvweb. See Sánchez-Cuenca (fn. 1), pp. 300-2, for a full description of the rules followed to calculate mean support.
[22] This section draws heavily on Florencio Domínguez, *De la negociación a la tregua. ¿El final de ETA?*, Madrid, Taurus, 1998, and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, *ETA contra el Estado. Las estrategias del terrorismo*, Barcelona, Tusquets, 2001.

Mobilization is also important in the case of nationalist organizations, but it is purely instrumental with regard to the territorial goals. The terrorists are aware that the more people mobilize claiming for greater autonomy or independence, the more bargaining power the terrorist organization has to negotiate with the state. Mobilization is then needed as a form of increasing the bargaining power of the terrorists vis-à-vis the state.

In order to force the state to make concessions, nationalist terrorists use violence. Violence imposes a cost on the state. The terrorists' expectation is that if the cost is sufficiently large, the state will opt for abandoning the territory. Obviously, the terrorists do not know the resistance threshold of the state. They simply try to impose a cost as large as possible, with the purpose of breaking the resistance will of the state.

This structure of interaction between a nationalist terrorist organization and the state fits the general model of war of attrition. In the military war of attrition, there is a protracted conflict and each further period of fighting reduces the military power of the parties. It is a matter of exhausting the capacity of the enemy. In the case of terrorism, the parameters of the problem are somewhat different. The exhaustion produced by terrorist violence is not physical, but economic, political and ultimately psychological. For instance, in economic terms, it has been estimated that the cost of ETA's violence has been around 10 per cent of the BAC's GDP.[23] Terrorism also puts serious political strain on the system. And, in the last instance, people are repulsed by terrorist killings. For all these reasons, protracted terrorist violence imposes a cost on the state. The state decides in each period whether this cost is worth paying or not. In the case where it concludes it is not, it yields to the terrorists.

[23] Alberto Abadie and Jon Gardeazabal, 'The Economic Costs of Conflict: A Case Study of the Basque Country', *American Economic Review*, 93, 2003, pp. 113-31.

Both ETA and the PIRA are paradigmatic examples of nationalist terrorist organizations involved in a war of attrition against the state. However, in the case of ETA, it was not obvious in the early period that war of attrition was the strategy to be followed. In fact, although the bulk of ETA activity corresponds to war of attrition, it is necessary to distinguish three strategic periods since the first fatality in 1968.

Under Franco, ETA saw itself as the armed vanguard that would create the dynamics of a mass uprising of the Basques. Violence was supposed to send a signal to the masses about the existence of a hard-core of activists willing to fight against the system. Inspired by episodes of anti-colonial struggle in other countries, the idea was that violence would escalate thanks to the overreaction of the state. Ruthless and indiscriminate state repression would move many to join the rebels, which would in turn lead to an increase in violence. This spiral of violence and repression would eventually bring about the collapse of the state.

The revolutionary hopes of early ETA failed to materialize. When the end of the Franco regime was close, ETA had to rethink its strategy. If the masses had not made the revolution under dictatorship, it was clear that they were not going to make it under democracy either. Around 1975 we observe the first internal documents about the strategic shift towards war of attrition. But it is in 1978 when ETAm clearly adopts the new strategy:

> The function of the armed struggle is not to destroy the enemy, for that is utopian, but it is indeed to force him, through a prolonged war of psychological and physical attrition, to abandon our territory due to exhaustion and isolation.[24]

[24] Quoted in Francisco Letamendía, *Historia del nacionalismo vasco y de ETA* (3 volumes), San Sebastián, R & B Ediciones, 1994, Vol.II, p. 114.

It is also in that year, 1978, when ETAm announces a set of five conditions that if met by the State would lead to the cessation of violence. Basically, these conditions (the so-called KAS Alternative) refer to the right of self-determination, amnesty for terrorists in prison, the constitution of an autonomous region comprising the three Spanish Basque provinces plus Navarre, and the withdrawal of Spanish security forces from the Basque Country. For the next twenty years, ETA killed in order to force the State to accept these demands. A statement made by an ETA spokesperson in 1988 shows that the strategy had not changed: ETA "has opted for a prolonged war of attrition, the aim of which is to outlast the enemy. We know that ETA cannot destroy the Spanish state, and this is not our aim. (…) But the Spanish state cannot destroy us either."[25]

Once the new strategy was clear, ETAm launched an extremely violent campaign to break the resistance of the state. As can be seen in Figure 1, which represents the quarterly number of fatalities for the period 1968-2006, terrorism escalated dramatically in 1978. The bloodiest quarter in terms of fatalities in the whole history of ETAm was the fourth one in 1978. In December of that year the referendum on the new democratic constitution of Spain was held. It is plausible to consider that the terrorists wanted to prevent participation as much as possible.

FIGURE 1 HERE

ETA was able to sustain a high level of violence until the end of 1980. In 1981 a spectacular fall in the number of killings is observed (see Figure 1). A possible explanation is this: the escalation of violence produced an increase in the number of

[25] Quoted in Patxo Unzueta, *Los nietos de la ira. Nacionalismo y violencia en el País Vasco*, Madrid, El País-Aguilar, 1988, p. 251.

arrests, to the point that in 1980 so many activists had been arrested that ETA was not able to replace all of them with new recruits. Violence was then reduced.

From 1981-82 onwards, there was a sort of stalemate between the terrorists and the state. Terrorism and counterterrorism reached some sort of equilibrium, so that the level of violence was contained. This period was characterized by intense dialogue and negotiation between the Socialist incumbent and ETA.[26] Although there had been contacts already in November 1975 and in December 1976-January 1977 (two meetings were held in Geneva), contacts did not become frequent until 1983. Any approach by the government was interpreted by the terrorists as a sign of state weakness. Thus, ETA became convinced that further pressure in the form of more lethal attacks would end up with the state sitting at the negotiating table and accepting secession. Some of the worst attacks in the history of ETA are related to the process of dialogue and negotiation. For instance, the car bomb that exploded in a building of the Guardia Civil that killed eleven people (5 children among them) on 11 December 1987 was planned by ETA's leadership as a bargaining tool for the negotiations. The state, however, thought that contacts were useful to weaken the terrorist organization. Contacts, the state assumed, might provoke tensions and eventually a rift in the organization. Internal division between "moderates", willing to reach some agreement, and "radicals", rigid supporters of continuation of armed struggle, could end up in a split.

After many preliminary contacts, ETA and the government agreed to hold formal negotiations in Algiers. On 8 January 1989 ETA announced a 15-day ceasefire that allowed the process to begin. The ceasefire was extended until 4 April. During this period, six meetings were held, but no agreement was possible. The government did not want to engage seriously in political negotiations and the terrorists did not accept less

[26] For a fuller analysis of the contacts between ETA and the government, see Sánchez-Cuenca (fn. 22), Ch. 4. The Socialist Party won a majority in 1982 and remained in power until 1996. From 1996 to 2004, the Popular Party (conservative) was in government. In 2004, the Socialists gained power again.

than full satisfaction of the KAS Alternative (basically, self-determination.) Despite this failure, there were numerous other contacts between 1990 and 1996. Yet, these contacts did not give rise to a new round of negotiations. When the Popular Party won elections in 1996, it made public its commitment not to negotiate with the terrorists.

The most important event in the war of attrition was the fall of the entire ETA leadership in a police operation in Bidart on 29 March 1992. The blow to ETA was terrible. It led to a process of internal reflection among the terrorists that in turn led to the abandonment of their strategy. They understood that their violence would never surpass the resistance threshold of the state.

In 1995, ETA issued a new set of demands that replaced the old KAS Alternative. The new document, known as "Democratic Alternative", was rather opaque. In a first reading, it was not obvious whether there was any significant change with regard to the war of attrition model. However, a new emphasis was added on the necessity of achieving independence not in direct negotiations with the state, but rather through an agreement with all nationalist forces in the BAC. The idea was that the state would not be able to prevent secession if there was a broad consensus among parties, unions, social movements, and ETA about the necessity of exercising the right of self-determination. The Democratic Alternative was publicized after a failed attack against the leader of the conservative Popular Party, José María Aznar, on 19 April.

The third strategic period, that of the nationalist front, was made visible through a radical change in the pattern of target selection (see next section). For the first time in its long history, ETA started to kill non-nationalist, elected politicians, particularly at the local level. The calculation of ETA was the following: by killing non-nationalists, the BAC would be split into two non-reconcilable halves, nationalists and non-nationalists, and the moderate nationalists would have no other option but to reach a

consensus with the radical ones. Thus, a nationalist front would be constituted, according to the plan expressed in the Democratic Alternative.

The politics of the nationalist front crystallized in the so-called Lizarra Pact (Lizarra is a town in Navarre) on 12 September 1998. It was pretty much inspired in the political front created by the PIRA with John Hume's socialdemocratic party, the Dublin Government, and the Irish lobby in the United States. The contents of the Pact were based on a secret agreement between ETA and the BNP signed in August of that year. The moderate nationalists agreed to fight for independence and to politically isolate the non-nationalist parties in exchange for an indefinite truce by ETA. The truce was declared on 19 September.

The pact of the BNP with the terrorists created high political tension in Spain. Many thought at the time, nonetheless, that ETA would not resume violence. The conservative government of Aznar held a meeting with the terrorists in Switzerland, but ETA was not interested in this case in negotiating with the state. Its focus was on other Basque political forces.

When ETA found out that the moderate nationalists were not ready to provoke a constitutional crisis by issuing a unilateral declaration of independence, it broke the truce. The announcement was made on 28 November 1999. The truce had lasted almost fourteen months. The terrorist campaign after the truce (see Figure 1) was brutal; not so much in terms of the number of killings, but rather in terms of the impact that the killing of politicians had. The government, with the support of the socialists in the opposition, passed a law banning the political branch of ETA. There was wide consensus that a party linked to a terrorist organization that kills politicians is not acceptable in a democratic system.

The new cycle of violence was quite short. In 2000 ETA killed 23 people. In 2003 the death toll was lowered to three fatalities. After the 2000-03 cycle of violence, ETA found itself without strategy. Once the strategies of insurrection, war of attrition and the nationalist front had failed, ETA could not provide a political justification for armed struggle. The terrorists entered into a new phase of decadence and agony. In fact, they did not kill anyone for three and a half years.

During this period, ETA asked for meetings with the government. The new socialist President, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, agreed to begin a peace process. On 22 March 2006, ETA announced "a permanent ceasefire." There were some contacts between the government, the terrorists and international mediators, but the harsh opposition of the Popular Party to a negotiated settlement prevented any progress in the peace process. The government was very cautious and did not make any concessions. ETA exploded a car bomb in the car park of the new terminal of the Madrid Airport on 30 December 2006, killing two immigrants from Ecuador. That was the end of this short-lived peace process.

4. Patterns of target selection

An important difference between guerrilla insurgencies and terrorist conflicts is that in the latter the number of fatalities is much lower, so that counting and codifying all victims is time-consuming but ultimately feasible. Whereas in the case of civil wars target selection can only be analyzed through sampling (sampling on time, or on geographical space), in the case of terrorism we can have access to the whole universe of fatalities. I have collected a large dataset with all fatalities killed by ETA.[27] Thanks

[27] The dataset is publicly available at www.march.es/dtv. For a more detailed analysis of ETA's target selection, see Luis de la Calle and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, 'La selección de víctimas en ETA', *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 10, 2004, pp. 53-79, and Calleja and Sánchez-Cuenca (fn. 20).

to this dataset, it is possible to provide some basic information about the main features of ETA's violence.

As Table 2 shows, ETA and all other Basque nationalist terrorist organizations killed 834 people between 1960 and 2006. This count does not include more diffuse political violence (such as street violence) in which it is impossible to attribute the crime to a particular organization. Almost 93 per cent of the killings belong to ETAm. ETApm and CAA represent only the remaining 7 per cent. Compared with Republican terrorism in Northern Ireland, fragmentation is much lower in the Basque Country.

TABLE 2 HERE

As for the geographical distribution of the killings, 67 per cent of them took place in the BAC (561 fatalities). Within the BAC, Guipúzcoa, the most nationalist province, concentrates the highest number of fatalities (309, or 55 per cent of all fatalities in the BAC.) By contrast, Álava, the least nationalist province, represents only 7.7 per cent. Outside of the BAC, Madrid is the region with the highest death toll (121 fatalities, 14.5 per cent of the total), followed by Catalonia (54 fatalities, 6.5 per cent of the total).

The geographical pattern is revealing about ETA's strategy. For instance, ETA has carried out indiscriminate attacks with car bombs not in the BAC, but in the rest of Spain. Of all fatalities killed by car bombs, only 16 per cent occurred in the BAC. It is obvious that the terrorists tried to prevent the killing of Basque civilians in order to preserve its support base.

Generally speaking, Basque terrorist organizations have been rather selective in their violence. There have been 596 lethal attacks, producing 834 fatalities. The average

number of fatalities per lethal attack is 1.4.[28] Such a low average is due, as I have pointed out above, to support constraints. Supporters have more moderate preferences about violence than activists. They do not approve of indiscriminate killings or killings of civilians. These data are consistent with the fact that 64 per cent of the victims were killed by shootings. Shootings are normally more selective than bombings.

If we look at the status of the victims in Table 3, we can see that security forces, including the army, represent 58 per cent of all fatalities. Most of them were police officers. It is important to bear in mind that in Spain counterterrorism corresponds to the police forces, not to the military. This explains why the military represents only 11 per cent of all fatalities.

TABLE 3 HERE

Civilians are in total 42 per cent of all victims. It is indeed a considerable figure, but it contradicts the commonplace notion that terrorism is to be defined as violence against non-combatants or civilians. In fact, terrorist organizations usually kill fewer civilians than guerrilla insurgencies. Civilians, for instance, are around 80 per cent of all killings in the case of the Peruvian Shining Path.

ETA claims that it does not approve of the killing of civilians, except if the person has done something contrary to ETA's interests. Informers, drug-dealers, entrepreneurs who do not succumb to the financial extortion, people with extreme right-wing ideology, or people involved in the "dirty war" against ETA are exceptions to this general rule. These are normally selective killings and have more to do with issues of

[28] The equivalent figure for the PIRA is even lower, 1.3 fatalities per lethal attack. See Sánchez-Cuenca (fn. 1), p. 300.

security for the organization than with issues of influence.[29] In other words, selective killings are rarely part of the campaign against the state. In ETA, 21.5 per cent of the killings were selective in the sense specified here.

Yet, there is an important gap between this 21.5 per cent of selective killings of civilians and the overall 42 per cent of civilians killed. This difference is largely explained by indiscriminate and collateral killings. For instance, on 19 June 1987, ETA exploded a car bomb in the car park of a mega store in Barcelona, killing 21 civilians. ETA made a call warning about the existence of a car bomb (with no further details about the exact location), but the police did not take the threat seriously and people were not evacuated. This is typically an indiscriminate attack. Indiscriminate and collateral victims are around 16 per cent of all fatalities.

Finally, politicians and public officials merit some attention. During the war of attrition period, ETAm did not target politicians, though it killed some non-elected mayors of the Franco period. By contrast, ETApm attacked elected politicians in the early years of democracy (there was a campaign against Basque, right-wing, non-nationalist politicians who belonged to the incumbent party). If we limit ourselves to the case of ETAm, we observe that in the period 1968-1992, which covers both the insurrection and the war of attrition strategies, politicians and public officials are only 2.7 per cent of the fatalities. Yet, in the period of the nationalist front, from 1993 onwards, the percentage goes up to 22 per cent.

The killing of politicians starting in 1995 has had a profound impact on Spanish society. Even if the number of fatalities per year had a clear declining trend in the nineties (see Figure 1), the Spanish people became much more concerned with ETA's

[29] On the distinction between influence and security, see Gordon H. McCormick, 'Terrorist Decision Making', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6, 2003, pp. 473-507. Security is related to the survival of the organization (avoidance of denunciations, financing, internal feuds, competition with other organizations); influence has to do with the capacity of the organization to achieve its goals.

violence in this period than in the war of attrition phase. In the last 15 years, each killing has been in the headlines of the newspapers and terrorism has become a central issue in the political debate. ETA has been more present in public life despite the substantial reduction in fatalities.

As some authors have pointed out, the impact of violence is a complex function of both the quantity and the quality of violence.[30] By changing target selection, ETA has been able to keep its presence in Spanish politics even with a lower number of fatalities. This change of targets, however, has been highly costly to ETA in terms of popular support. Its image has worsened considerably in the eyes of both radical and moderate Basque nationalists.

Conclusions

ETA belongs to the wave of terrorist organizations that emerged in many developed countries at the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s. What is particularly puzzling is not its origin, but rather its extraordinary duration. ETA was born under an authoritarian regime, but its lethal activity escalated during the early years of the transition to democracy. Despite the introduction of democracy, and despite a process of devolution of fiscal, social, security, education, and health powers to the BAC, ETA has not renounced armed struggle.

ETA has been able to survive for such a long time due to the existence of a small, but extremely cohesive base of supporters (around 10 per cent of the BAC's population). Moderate nationalists do not support ETA, but nonetheless have an indulgent attitude to violence. In order to keep this basis of support, the terrorist

[30] Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, 'The Quality of Terror', *American Journal of Political Science*, 49, 2005, pp. 515-30, and Gordon H. McCormick and Guillermo Owen, 'Revolutionary Origins and Conditional Mobilization', *European Journal of Political Economy*, 12, 1996, pp. 377-402.

organization has created a vast and complex network of legal, semi-legal and illegal organizations around the hard-core armed group. ETA has a newspaper, a party, a union, associations and firms. Moreover, it has tried to capitalize on new social movements.

The lethal activity of ETA is low compared to that of guerrilla insurgencies, but high compared to other terrorist organizations in the Western world. Today, ETA has the highest death toll after the PIRA in Northern Ireland. ETA and its various splinters killed 834 people in the period 1960-2006. Basque nationalist terrorism is rather selective: 1.4 fatalities per lethal attack on average. Most of the victims are members of police forces and the military. Civilians represent 42 per cent of all fatalities.

ETA has gone through three strategic periods: the insurrectionary one (until 1977), the war of attrition (1978-92), and the nationalist front (1993-2003). After the failure of the nationalist front, no strategy is discernable. There are solid empirical grounds to argue that after 2003 ETA entered into its final phase of extinction. It did not kill anyone from June 2003 to December 2006. After a short, failed peace process, ETA has resumed violence, but it is much weaker than in the past, both in terms of public support and offensive power.

Table 1. Electoral support for the political branch of ETA in Basque legislative elections, 1980-2005.

	Votes	Percentage of the census	Percentage of total vote	Percentage of nationalist vote
1980	151,636	9.75	16.55	25.67
1984	157,389	9.93	14.65	22.67
1986	199,900	12.04	17.47	25.74
1990	186,410	11.04	18.33	27.78
1994	166,147	9.50	16.29	28.86
1998[a]	224,001	12.30	17.91	32.80
2001[a]	143,139	7.89	10.12	19.15
2005[b]	150,644	8.37	12.44	23.28
Average	*172,408*	*10.10*	*15.47*	*25.74*

[a]: Herri Batasuna ran under the name of EH (*Euskal Herritarrok*)
[b]: Herri Batasuna was banned, but Batasuna's voters voted for a marginal party, the PCTV (Communist Party of the Basqueland).
Source: Basque Government.

Table 2.

Year	ETA/ETAm	ETApm	CAA	Others	Annual total
1960	1				1
1968	2				2
1969	1				1
1972	1				1
1973	6				6
1974	19				19
1975	11	4			16
1976	16	2			18
1977	8	2			10
1978	60	1	4		65
1979	65	10	5		79
1980	82	5	9		94
1981	30		2		30
1982	36		3		39
1983	31		8	1	40
1984	31		1	1	33
1985	37				37
1986	40			1	41
1987	50				50
1988	19				20
1989	18				18
1990	25				25
1991	45				46
1992	26				26
1993	14				14
1994	13				13
1995	16				16
1996	5				5
1997	13				13
1998	6				6
1999	0				0
2000	23				23
2001	15				15
2002	5				5
2003	3				3
2004	0				0
2005	0				0
2006	2				2
Total	775 (92.9%)	24 (2.9%)	32 (3.8%)	3 (0.4%)	834 (100%)

Source: The ETA dataset (at www.march.es/dtv)

Table 3.

Victim status	Fatalities	Percentage
Military	96	11.5
Spanish Police (National police and Civil Guard)	350	42
Basque police (*Ertzaintza*)	13	1.6
Local police	25	3
Politicians and public officials	49	5.9
Members and former members of ETA	7	0.8
Other civilians	294	35.2
Total	834	100

Source: The ETA dataset (at www.march.es/dtv)

Figure 1.