

CHAPTER 6

PUBLIC OPINION AND TERRORISM: THE SPANISH EXPERIENCE



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50 ALF-CENTURY HAS PASSED since ETA¹ terrorists killed Begoña Urroz Ibarrola², a 22-month-old girl, on June 27 1960, when they set off a firebomb at Amara train station in San Sebastian, a vile act for which they have never been held accountable and whose perpetrators have never been identified. From that date onwards, ETA has effectively been the main —though not the only— force behind terrorism in Spain (Muñoz Alonso 1982). It is significant that ETA began its sinister trail of terror with attacks on railroad facilities, trains and stations, given that Jihadist terrorism³, with which it vies for prominence, did likewise with brutal attacks on four commuter trains in Madrid on March 11, 2004⁴. But we shall focus our analysis on ETA, as theirs is the only brand of terrorism that has managed to tap into and significantly affect public opinion, generating a broad spectrum of popular support within Basque society⁵.

About 15 of these 50 years coincided with the dictatorship of General Franco, while for the last 35, Spain has had a fully democratic government. Around 6% of ETA's assassinations took place in the first period of its existence, including that of the prime minister Government, Admiral Carrero Blanco, in 1973, but it was during the transition to democracy (Piñuel 1986), the years of its institutional establishment (along with that of Basque self-government), and the consolidation of pluralism that the group's terrorist activity was most intense prolific. ETA is now the oldest active terrorist organization in Europe after the IRA (see Clark 1984, Elorza 2000, Alonso 2000 and 2001), and Spain (along with the United Kingdom) is the country that has suffered and fought the longest against long-term, sustained terrorism.

It is no coincidence that the Marxist, leftist guise adopted by both ETA and the IRA over the years with the aim of widening their internal support base and establishing strategic or logistical international alliances⁶ is underlain by identitarian and communitarian ideologies (Jaúregui 1981, Alonso 2003). Using the nationalist principles (Azurmeni 1998, Elorza 2005) shared by the other political forces with which they compete for ideological hegemony in the construction of their ethnic community (Douglass 1985, Della Porta and Mattina 1986),

¹ Acronym of the organization *Euskadi eta Asuntasuna*, which in the Basque language means "Basque homeland and freedom".

² ETA is been responsible for 857 deaths either in Spain or of Spanish citizens, in addition to the killing of a gendarme in France in 2010. The names of each of these victims and the circumstances in which they were killed can be found in the excellent book by Alonso, Domínguez and García, *Vidas rotas: Historia de los hombres, mujeres y niños víctimas de ETA* (2010). See also "¿La primera víctima de ETA?" by Santiago de Pablo in *El Correo Español* newspaper (06/19/2010).

³ For the characteristics and significance of this brand of terrorism, which left 200 dead and almost 2,000 injured on March 11, 2004 in Madrid, bringing an important social and political backlash in its wake, see the recent article by Reinares "The Madrid bombings and global Jihadism" (2010).

⁴ It should be noted, however, that the first Islamic attack took place in Madrid in 1986 when a bomb blast killed 18 people in El Descanso restaurant.

⁵ This study is part of the findings of research project SEJ2006-15076-C03-01, made possible thanks to funding received by the joint research team from the Basque Government (IT-323-07).

⁶ In addition to its historical connections with the IRA, Palestinian and Arab terrorism, and left-wing European terrorism, ETA's more recent collaboration with Latin American terrorists, which serves as a both a source of support and a rearguard, is also noteworthy (Domínguez 2010).

⁷ The Euskobarómetro studies carried out by a team of researchers in the political science department of the University of the Basque Country, which can be consulted at www.ehu.es/euskobarometro

their strategy is based on confrontation between communities, on ethno-ideological cleansing, and on the fight against the “oppressive” state (Sánchez-Cuenca 2001) with whom they contest the monopoly of the use of legitimate violence. In order to achieve this goal, they need to provide their communities with a valid alternative to the state, one which portrays them in the collective consciousness as frontline heroes, avengers and saviors of the people, and as victims of the “illegitimate” violence perpetrated by the state.

There are many approaches, all of them necessary, to addressing the origins of terrorism, the way in which it is sustained or subdued, and such issues as its organizational structure (Domínguez 1992 and 2002), its sociology, its strategies and ideology, the motivations and makeup of its activists and the manner in which they are recruited (Reinares 2001), its social support, its impact on social institutions, and the nature and results of anti-terrorist policies (Reinares 1998). However, in this chapter we shall going to focus on how terrorism has shaped public opinion and on whether community sentiment has in turn fostered evolution and propagation of terror or, conversely, has helped bring it to an end. In order to do so, we shall examine how terrorism is perceived in the Basque Country, basing our analysis primarily on a series of surveys that we have conducted over the last 30 years⁷. These have enabled us to assess and quantify the impact on society penetration of the terrorists' arguments, the efficacy of their intimidation, and the extent to which terrorism has been accepted or rejected by public opinion. We shall also compare our results with those obtained in other countries and contexts (Hewitt, 1989).

Terrorism and public opinion

In democratic societies, public opinion is the great mediator between institutions, public actors, civil society, and collective rituals (Kertzer 1988), of which terrorism is one. In fact, we might even say that public opinion itself is another of these rituals. At the same time, the struggle to control and shape public opinion makes it a battleground for the main actors, institutions, and rituals alike. Complex psychological, cultural, economic and political realities are simplified into opinions, attitudes, judgments and motives for individual actions, which are in turn condensed into what we call public opinion. Public opinion today is based not on grand speeches and explanations but rather on simplifications in the shape of new flashes, headlines, fleeting images, value judgments and clichés. However, though the technical workings of the media machine may be broadly similar from society to society, even where vastly different levels of development or modernization prevail, the same cannot be said of the social operation of public opinion, which is far more dependent on the culture and the political structure of the society in question. In this respect, whether or not a society is fully

democratic, and whether it is governed by a fully-institutionalized, long-standing political regime or one that is yet to be consolidated, can be key factors. During the fifty years that concern us here, Spain itself has experienced periods of centralist authoritarianism, uncertain transition, institutional decentralization, and democratic consolidation. At the same time, a well-structured, firmly-rooted political culture with values, idea systems, a collective consciousness, symbols, identities and leaderships that foster stable and consistent opinions is vastly different from one which is fragmented and changing, which may lead readily to disillusionment, apathy, and emotional or cyclical explosions. This is particularly significant in those societies that might be described as weak, with poorly-articulated, rapidly-changing social groups, where mass culture boils down to little more than a succession of states of opinion, and especially when they are subjected to the emotional impact of terrorist attacks and the arguments and rhetoric of terrorist groups.

Consequently, terrorists have a vested interest in orchestrating spectacular attacks with devastating results that cause both uncertainty and confusion, especially where chance and surprise also come into play. When the climate is favorable, as it been for ETA at different periods, the perception of a terrorist act as an almost mundane occurrence leads to increased brutality as the perpetrators seek greater notoriety, in keeping with the terrorist maxim of spreading maximum fear among the population and/or the authorities (Hewitt 1993). Such effects can only be achieved with the generally involuntary assistance of the media, which disseminated images and shapes opinion. The absence of an effective communication strategy on the part of the public institutions concerned is also an important factor in this regard (Canel 2007).

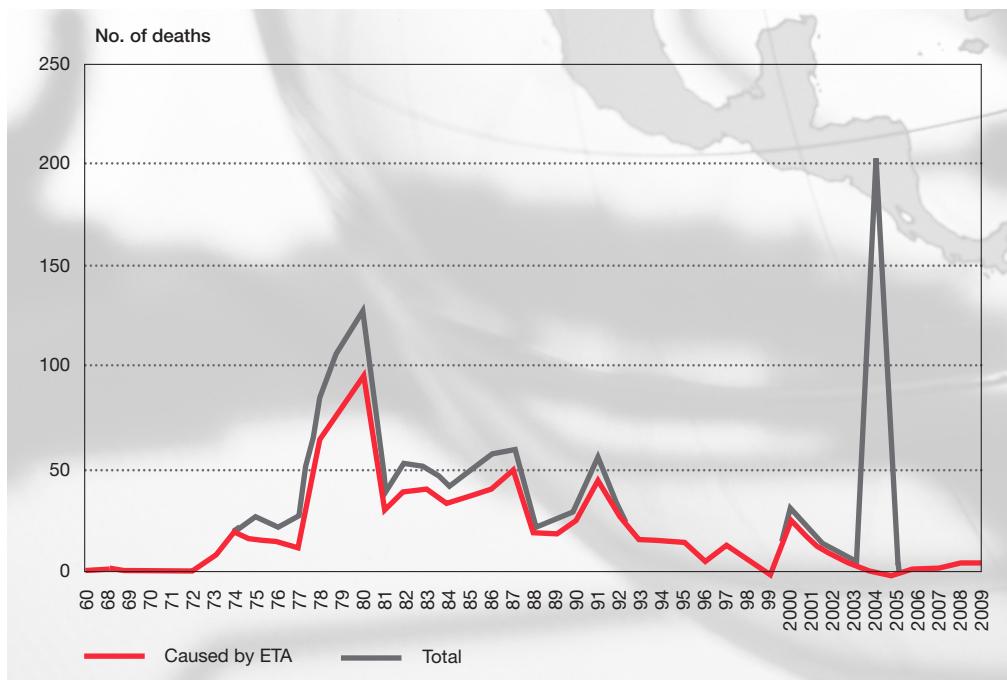
There is a general consensus among social analysts of contemporary terrorism (Schmid and De Graf 1982) that the principal objective of any terrorist organization is to burst onto the political scene as a leading player, in order to impose itself on the political system or its decisions to ensure the organization's interests and strategies are taken into account. For this reason, direct action aimed at molding public opinion is highly beneficial. In order for its action strategy, direct or indirect, to affect popular feeling, terrorism needs to be front-page news as often as possible, and the terrorists themselves must be perceived as spearheading a broad spectrum of social demands, in order to garner popular support. Seizing on every conceivable pretext for social grievance, they aim to mobilize as many sympathizers as possible, creating a vanguard capable of opening a breach between public opinion and social institutions, and a window of opportunity for the emergence and consolidation of an entire social movement. Rather than exposing the failure of social institutions to satisfy the demands made by society, the terrorists are primarily interested in showing these institutions to be incapable of defeating them, and

attempt to spark an “action-repression-action” dynamic in which they emerge as the driving force behind mobilization. Their objective is to weaken enemy morale, and to do so, they must act both through and on popular opinion, generating withdrawal, division and, above all, demoralization in order to bend the will of the public and the authorities alike. In the final analysis, success for the terrorists consists of making themselves indispensable figures in the elimination of the very violence and destabilization that they themselves have created, seeking a truce and negotiations in which they play an active rather than a passive role.

Data on terrorism in Spain

I shall start with some revealing statistics regarding these fifty years under the cloud of ETA violence (Shabad and Llera 1993), including the last 32 under a pluralist democracy. During this time, ETA has been the main perpetrator of terrorism in Spain, as shown by Figure 1 below, which charts deaths caused by violent or terrorist acts in Spain since 1960. As we can see, in addition to being the only terrorist organization still in existence today, ETA was responsible for three out of every four of the approximately 1,200 deaths from political violence that can be classified as terrorism.

FIGURE 1. Deaths from terrorism in Spain (1960-2009)



Source: Elaborated by author from data from the Ministry of the Interior

The figures show a trail of blood and destruction: 857 people killed by ETA⁸; thousands of broken families (3,000 orphans, widows, parents, siblings, spouses, and friends who have suffered the loss of a loved one); over 20,000 direct victims of attacks left mentally or physically scarred, and not only in the Basque Country but in the whole of Spain; 60 kidnappings, and extortion from thousands of business people, many of whom have now fled from the Basque Country; 40,000 people threatened and harassed, according to figures provided by the group *Gesto por la Paz* (though 3,000 of these use bodyguards, the vast majority remain unprotected); more than 11,000 separate acts of violence: It is estimated that about half the Basque Country popular has experienced genuine fear at one time or another, and the climate of fear has far-reaching effects on daily life.

The figure also bears witness to the strategic changes in the terrorists' approach. It is clear that ETA did not murder more people or commit more acts of terrorism under the Franco dictatorship; most of its victims were killed during the democratic era, notably at key stages in the establishment of Spain's new democratic system⁹. During these years, ETA activists, terrorists from the left-wing GRAPO¹⁰, and their counterparts in extreme right-wing groups¹¹ were together responsible for an average of nearly 100 murders every per year. However, ETA would also step up its deadly campaign at other significant moments: prior to negotiations with Felipe González's government in Algiers in 1989, on the occasion of the Barcelona Olympics and the Seville Expo in 1992; following the breakdown of negotiations with Aznar's government in 1999; and, with considerably less vigor, after the failure of negotiations with the Rodríguez Zapatero government in 2006.

As well as opening the door to political pluralism and democratic liberty, Spain's first free elections in 1977 led to a broad amnesty that emptied the country's jails of political prisoners, even those incarcerated for acts of terrorism. But this did not satisfy most terrorist groups, who chose to persevere with their violent, anti-system strategies. As shown by Table 1, which details acts of violence and victims of terrorism in Spain since 1978, the persistence and diversification of ETA's actions stand in sharp contrast with the only sporadic activity and exhaustion of other violent groups.

⁸ A third of these victims were killed during the transition to democratic rule for Spain and to self-rule for the Basque Country (1976-1980). Two thirds were killed in the Basque Country itself, though only one fifth of the victims were natives of this region. Almost six out of every ten were members of the security or armed forces, and an addition 11% were civilian bystanders to those attacks. Some 8% were civilians belonging to non-nationalist political parties (AP, PP, PSOE, UCD, UPN and others).

⁹ 1977: first democratic elections; 1978: approval of the Constitution; 1979: approval of the Basque Country's Statute of Autonomy; 1980: first regional elections in the Basque Country.

¹⁰ The "First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Group" (GRAPO), began committing acts of terrorism in 1975 as the armed wing of the PCE(r), of which it was a Maoist-inspired splinter group. Its last attack took place in 2006 and it the group is believed to have dissolved in 2007. In addition to the violent actions of anarchist groups, the reputation acquired by the Revolutionary Anti-Fascist Patriotic Front (Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota, FRAP) is also worthy of mention here. Created in 1973 and linked to the PCE (m-l), from which it split in 1964 over to the latter's policy of national reconciliation, the group's short but bloody existence came to an end when it was disbanded in 1978.

TABLE 1. Violent actions and victims of terrorism in Spain 1978-2009

¹¹ The profusion of right-wing groups with mutual ties and constantly-changing names and formats included *Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista* ("Triple A"), *Antiterrorismo ETA* (ATE), *Grupos Armados Españoles* (GAE), *Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey* (GCR), *Batallón Vasco Español* (BVE), *Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación* (GAL), and the *Comandos Antimarxistas*. Their first attack came in 1975 with the assassination of the industrialist Iñaki Etxabe in Biscay, and their last in 1989, when the HB parliamentarian Josu Muguruza was slain in Madrid. In between, they combined acts of terrorism with brutal intimidation. Focusing their attacks on violent or radical Basque activism, these groups sought to destabilize the Spanish constitutional system (Muñoz Alonso 1986).

Year	Violent actions (*)	Kidnapping	Killed by ETA	Killed by the extreme right	Killed by GAL	Killed by others	Strikes called
1978	178	4	65	8	—	13	1
1979	234	13	78	22	—	11	2
1980	192	10	96	29	—	2	—
1981	147	6	30	4	—	4	2
1982	103	6	40	1	—	12	—
1983	119	6	40	—	2	8	—
1984	325	—	33	—	9	—	4
1985	307	3	37	—	11	1	2
1986	315	2	40	—	2	18**	—
1987	133	1	50	—	1	8	—
1988	290	1	19	—	—	—	1
1989	437	1	19	1	—	5	—
1990	294	—	25	—	—	5	—
1991	307	—	45	—	—	10	1
1992	612	—	27 (1)	—	—	—	1
1993	486	1	16 (2)	—	—	—	—
1994	336	—	15 (3)	—	—	—	—
1995	981	1	15	—	—	—	—
1996	1.190	2 -1-	5	—	—	—	—
1997	1.038	— 2-	13 (2)	—	—	—	1
1998	519	—	7 (1)	—	—	—	—
1999	344	—	—	—	—	—	—
2000	751	—	27 (4)	—	—	2	—
2001	612	—	16 (1)	—	—	—	—
2002	487	—	7 (2)	—	—	—	2
2003	135	— [10]	3 (1)	—	—	—	—
2004	159	—	—	—	—	200 (7)**	—
2005	243	—	—	—	—	—	—
2006	315	—	2	—	—	—	—
2007	449***	—	2	—	—	—	—
2008	255***	—	4	—	—	—	—
2009	145***	—	3	—	—	—	1
TOTAL	11.978	57 [10]	779 [17]	65	25	297	18

(*): bombs, sabotage, robberies, actions of support groups and other violent acts, whether of ETA or the MLNV (Basque National Liberation Movement).

Source: Elaborated by author from data taken from Miguel Castells (1982: 38ss), Andrés Casinello (1984: 265-308), Gestoras Pro-Amnistía, José L. Pinuel (1986), Yearbooks of EGIN (1977-1990), Ministry of the Interior and Vasco Press.

[x] Estimate of the number of "express kidnappings" of businessmen for the year 2003.

(x) Terrorists killed in terrorist or police actions.

** Deaths in the Islamist attacks in the Restaurant Descanso, the 11th of March and in Leganés.

*** 2007: ETA=19, Groups around ETA= 430; 2008: ETA=38, Groups around ETA= 217; 2009: ETA=15, Groups around ETA=130

An examination of how ETA terrorism has evolved shows us the different stages of violence and the changing methods the group employed to pursue its objectives. We shall focus here on the victims, for it is they who provide the key to understanding the message that underlies ETA's actions. What types of victims did ETA target at different stages of its history? Between 1960 and 1975, the group appears to have been fighting against Franco's dictatorship, since its attacks during this period were almost exclusively aimed at state security operatives, the armed forces, and businessmen and politicians with ties to the regime. Appearances, however, can be deceptive. The fact is that ETA's members were seeking to acquire dual recognition, both as the only true Basque nationalists (following what they saw as the ideological and strategic betrayal by the PNV¹²), and as freedom fighters allied with supporters of democracy. The key moments of this period were the assassination of Carrero Blanco and the mobilization surrounding what became known as the Burgos Trials¹³. Between 1975 and 1980, ETA's struggle was aimed against the reform and institutionalization of the new democratic system and the new regime of self-rule for the regions, now called "Autonomous Communities"; it used every available means to obstruct the new regime's consolidation and legitimization, and began targeting democratic politicians and institutions, along with members of what it called the Basque oligarchy. In addition to the confirmation of ETA's internal division and disavowal of armed struggle on the part by of its so-called political/military wing¹⁴, the period from 1980 to 1987 also marked the beginning of the group's direct attacks on the Basque regional government, including the tactic of killing members of the new Basque police force (the Ertzaintza). In addition to politicians from the national democratic parties, the people with ties to the PNV were also targeted, as the terrorists now waged a campaign of large-scale, indiscriminate car bomb attacks. Between 1987 and 1995, in the face of the united front presented by all of the democratic parties following the first anti-terrorist pacts¹⁵ in 1988 and the failure of the Algiers talks with in 1989 (Clark 1990), ETA launched a direct offensive against democracy, as the group explicitly stated in its call for a "democratic alternative", widening the scope of its attacks in the process¹⁶. From 1995 onwards, as part of its strategy of "socializing the suffering" and encouraging widespread street violence or *kale borroka*¹⁷, ETA targeted Basque society itself, whose pluralism the group disliked as it refused to yield to the terrorists' dictates, and it now targeted politicians, especially members of the national center-left PSOE and center-right PP parties¹⁸, who were now at odds over violations of the anti-terrorist agreements. This, however, did not prevent ETA from again seeking to open talks, first with the PNV¹⁹, and later with the PP government, after the groups declared a unilateral "ceasefire" in 1998 (Domínguez 1998), and finally with the newly-elected PSOE

¹² The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) is the largest party in the Basque Country, enjoying the support of around a quarter of eligible voters and receiving between 24% and 40% of the vote. Of Christian Democratic ideology, it was founded by Sabino Arana in 1895 (Corcuera 1979, De Pablo and Mees 2005).

¹³ This was the first major summary trial by court-martial of ETA leaders, six of whom were condemned to death, though none were executed, as an amnesty was subsequently granted (Arteaga 1971).

¹⁴ Starting in 1975, with the demise of the dictatorship in sight, a major internal debate took place between what were known as the 5th and 6th assemblies (i.e. ETA's political/military and military wings) which would end in confrontation (Amigo 1978). While the 5th assembly sought to create a party or sociopolitical movement that would use political means to achieve its ends, the 6th strongly advocated continued violence, a position that made it appear as subservient to the armed group. The 5th assembly gave rise to the new Euskadiko Ezkerra ("Basque Left") party, which would end in the dissolution of ETAm after the agreement with the national UCD party over the release of its prisoners in 1981. The 6th assembly, meanwhile, created the Herri Batasuna ("People's Union") party to and as the political and institutional core of a broad sociopolitical movement led by ETAm.

¹⁵ The agreements had been signed in Vitoria (specifically at the Ajuria Enea palace, the residence of the President of the Basque Government), Pamplona and Madrid, following large-scale, indiscriminate attacks in Saragossa and on the Hipercor hypermarket in Barcelona in 1987.

¹⁶ Another significant development at this time was the fundamental and unifying transformation undergone by ETA in curbing the proliferation of the splinter groups which had competed amongst themselves in orchestrating terrorist acts in the 1970s and early 1980s (in addition to ETApm and ETAm, there were Mendeku Iraultza, CAA, Kibaletan and ETApmVIII).

¹⁷ Literally “street fighting” in Basque.

¹⁸ Of particular importance were the killings of the PP council members from San Sebastián (Gregorio Ordóñez) and Ermua (Miguel Ángel Blanco), and the attempted assassination of the party’s leader, and future Spanish premier, José María Aznar, as well as the PSOE leader in Alava province, Fernando Buesa.

¹⁹ With the signing of the Lizarra/Estella Pact, via which a strategic alliance was formed based on the exclusion of non-nationalist parties from Basque institutions and on the advancement of the idea of independence for the Basque Country, as well as the declaration of a truce by ETA in 1998.

government after a declaring a unilateral “truce” in 2004 (Eguiguren and Rodríguez 2010). In short, ETA employed a strategic mix of revolutionary struggle against the system, competition for hegemony within the “ethnic community” (Barth 1969) and ethno-ideological cleansing of Basque society.

It was during the latter period that *kale borroka* or ETA-inspired street violence by youth erupted as a strategic response by an organization much weakened by the capture of its leaders in Bidart, France, on March 29, 1992, the success of policies based on collective social mobilization through anti-terrorist agreements²⁰, and effective police work on both sides of the Spanish-French border. In 1995, with both its operational capacity and the credibility of its threats seriously diminished, the cornered group instituted *kale borroka* sought an alternative brand of terrorism that would attract new recruits and at the same intimidate society. It dubbed the new concept as the “socialization of suffering”, a euphemism for “spreading fear”, for without fear and intimidation, a terrorist organization loses authority and chance to impose its will on society. The “socialization of suffering” took the form of the violent harassment of a broad spectrum of social groups which had either publicly rebelled against ETA’s tyranny or had resisted the imposition of the exclusive nationalist identity defined by the terrorists and their supporters. In addition to persecuting militants, PP and PSE-EE office holders, civil servants and entrepreneurs, ETA now targeted all of those sectors of society that had publicly defied it, including journalists, intellectuals, teachers, judges, trade unionists, pacifists, etc., in a clear campaign of ethno-ideological cleansing through unmistakably asymmetric violence.

Violence and politics in the Basque Country

In order to explain the persistence of ETA’s terrorism and the way in which the group’s strategy has evolved, we must take into account the ideology on which it is founded, namely a brand of nationalism that is based on exclusivity, ethno-ideological cleansing, and a broad socio-political movement that provides support, attracts new recruits, and binds its imagined ethnic community together (Anderson 1983). ETA’s violence is therefore an ideological legacy inherited from the most extreme interpretation of the beliefs of Sabino Arana, founder of Basque nationalism, and despite its evocation of the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship as justification, its main struggle has been waged against the establishment of a pluralist, democratic regime (Zulaika 1988). Naturally, ETA cites the Franco regime, police brutality, and judicial repression to gain sympathy and support, and portrays those of its member jailed for terrorist crimes as “hostages”.

ETA collaborates with a host of other organizations from a wide range of socio-political backgrounds²¹, in a genuine division of labor that is strategically managed by the terrorist organization in the manner of a secret army, with ETA itself as the true leader of the movement. The group's priorities, therefore, are constant activity, propaganda and the manipulation of public opinion, goals that it pursues by availing itself of the very liberties that it seeks to destroy. Its ultimate aim is to destabilize social institutions and prevent the constitution of democracy in the Basque Country by creating conflict within the community, and opening a breach between institutions and public opinion, thus facilitating its own hegemony within the community and ensuring that the violence cannot be curtailed without its cooperation²².

Half a century of almost daily violence perpetrated in small territory that is home to scarcely two million people has thus created a violent subculture that is crucial to the perpetuation of ETA's social control, its continued support and its strategic success. Whatever its ideological or political makeup, terrorism unfailingly generates violent subgroups which provide both motivation and discourse, enabling those who orchestrate it not only to establish social networks that ensure cooptation and support, but also to use the fear thus generated to impact upon the moral fabric of the community, the political and social elite, the media and other societal institutions. ETA's main goal is to impose its political will, obliging the whole of society and its institutions to internalize the group's "war" as a means of resolving the conflict, if not by directly defeating the terrorists then through an armistice and the capitulation of public opinion. Nationalist terrorism of the type that concerns us here relies on the creation of community through confrontation and segregation (Llera 2000). The community in question is built on a continual, penetrating dialectic of conflict between us and them, friends and enemies, patriots and foreigners, and good and bad, which is emphasized daily through violent acts, the victims targeted and the casualties produced. It is this same rationale of internal strife which both requires and generates the violent communitarian subculture (Maaluf 1999) that doubly plagues the direct victims of terrorism, adding political and ideological stigma to physical injury, and, in the long term, extends this victimization to the whole society, which is effectively held to ransom by terrorism.

Our surveys²³ have identified the communicative isolation of a sector of Basque society as an indicator of this widespread victimization. Figure 2 charts the evolution of the sense of freedom to speak about political matters in the Basque Country²⁴. On average, around 20% of the Basque population aged 18 years and over do not feel free to talk about politics, between 40% and 50% feel able only to do so selectively with certain individuals, and between 30% and 40% have no qualms at all about discussing political matters. The range of opinions expressed has much to do with the greater or lesser presence of the threat of

²⁰ It should be noted that the pacts of 1988-1994 were followed by a new anti-terrorist pact signed by the PP and the PSOE between 2000 and 2004.

²¹ The organization known as the Basque National Liberation Movement (Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Vasco or MLNV).

²² ETA's ploys have included halting the building of a nuclear power station in Lemoniz, opposing the construction of the Leizaran motorway between San Sebastian and Pamplona, necessitating its rerouting, and, currently, rejecting the extension of the high-speed train service to the Basque Country.

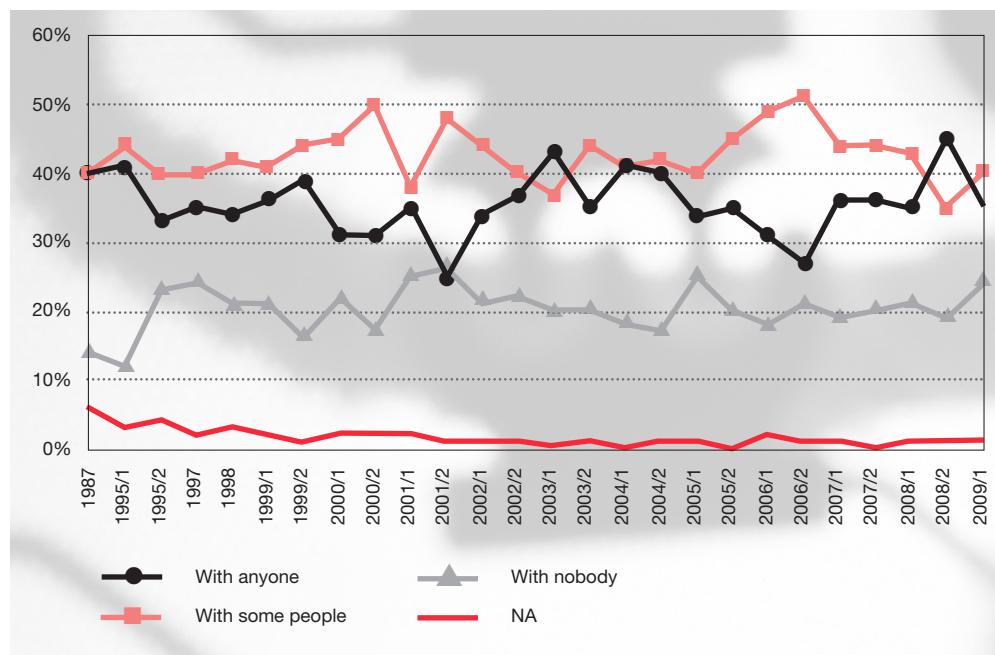
²³ See www.ehu.es/euskobarometro

²⁴ We introduced this indicator into our surveys in 1987, and since 1995 we have applied it in all rounds of our semiannual barometer.

²⁵ In this particular round, the distribution of the three groups was 25%, 39% and 35% respectively.

violence in its different manifestations. If we take the group comprising those who feel unable to talk about politics and examine their political profile as reflected by the latest round of our opinion poll undertaken in November 2009²⁵, we see that this “spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neumann 1980, Muñoz Alonso 1988) particularly affects those who do not consider themselves Basque nationalists (30%) and those who vote for the PP (40%) or the PSE-EE (30%). In contrast, those who define themselves as Basque nationalists (40%) and support parties that subscribe to this ideology (40% of those who vote for satellite terrorist organizations, 42% of PNV voters, 46% of EA voters and 49% of ARALAR voters) stand out within the group that feels completely free to speak about politics.

FIGURE 2. Sense of freedom to discuss politics among Basques, 1987-2009

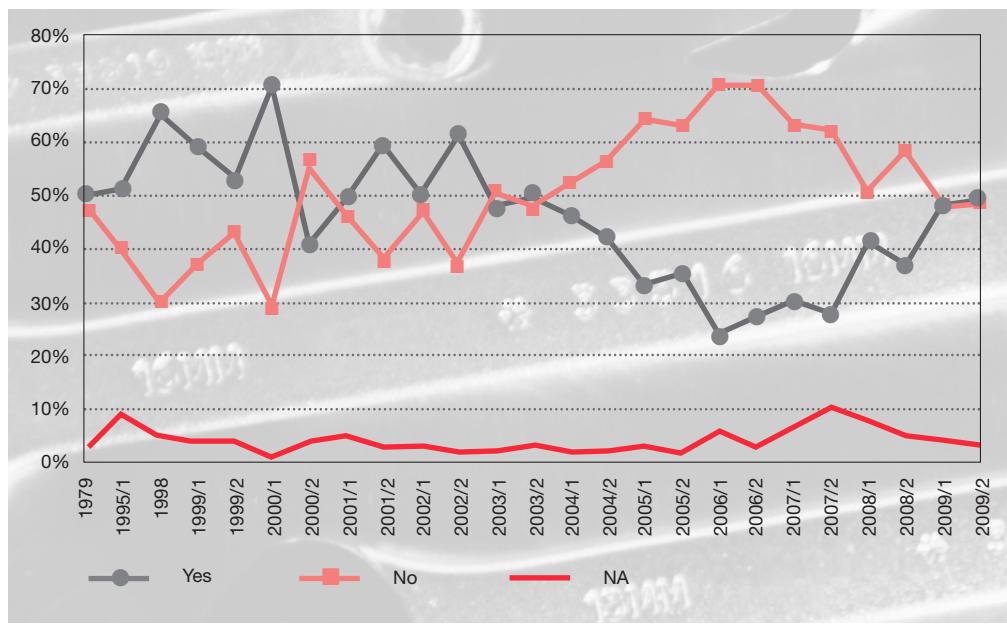


Source: Euskobarómetro. November 2009

²⁶ This indicator was first used in 1979 by Juan J. Linz and his research team (1986).

Another indicator that we have systematically applied to our barometer since 1995²⁶ is the public's perception of fear of involvement in politics. Figure 3 details the evolution of said factor since 1979, and results range from a minimum of 25% during the most recent ETA ceasefire in 2006 to a maximum of 70% following the collapse of the 1998 truce; the figure currently stands at 50%, just as it did 30 years ago. Once again, the results of the latest survey reveal that PP (79%) and PSE-EE (61%) voters perceive this fear most acutely, in contrast to the nationalist electorate.

FIGURE 3. Fear of actively participation in politics among Basques, 1979-2009



Source: Euskobarómetro. November 2009

One consequence of the fear generated by the economic extortion of businesses and professionals and the threats made to non-nationalist political sectors has been the mass exodus of individuals and families from the Basque Country²⁷ in search of tranquility in the form of guaranteed physical safety, or to flee from the daily strain of living there²⁸. This is a clear case of ethno-ideological cleansing.

These effects are understandable, given the daily presence of violent intimidation, whether from the terrorists themselves or through the social control exercised by their support networks in the broader context of the popular movement that they have created (Llera, Mata and Irvin 1993), particularly in those areas of the Basque Country where their presence, even within institutions, and level of mobilization are greater²⁹. Consequently, another of the political effects of this daily violence is the reduced scope for electoral competition by the non-nationalist political parties (the PP and PSE-EE) in wide areas of the region, where they are attacked, threatened and persecuted, and must struggle to keep their headquarters open, to communicate with their supporters and voters, and to field candidates in local elections. Lastly, the institutional presence of political organizations which support terrorism (in the Basque parliament, the three provincial or *foral* governments,³⁰ and local councils) has

²⁷ An exact calculation of this internal exile has yet to be made. However, net migration in the Basque Country between 1980 and 2005 was negative, a population loss of around 10% thus following more than a century of growth brought about by major industrialization and economic development. Though this decrease cannot be attributed solely to the direct effects of terrorism, we estimate the number of those whose decision to leave the region was influenced by the specter of violence to be in the thousands.

²⁸ In our surveys, we have examined certain other complementary indicators when studying this phenomenon. One of these is predisposition to leave the Basque Country, which ranges between 10 and 20% and is found primarily in non-nationalist sectors. Another is the interference of political tension and debate in daily life, which ranges between 50 and 70% and is overwhelmingly attributed to the political divisions between nationalists and non-nationalists.

²⁹ The different electoral guises under which the pro-terrorist movement has competed in elections have won the support of between 10% and 12% of the total electorate, earning between 12 and 18% of the actual votes in legislative elections (and as many as 7 seats in the national parliament), and between 10% and 19% in regional elections (14 seats in the regional parliament), enjoying a significant local presence in certain areas of the Basque Country, and a major capacity for blackmail in the forming of institutional majorities.

³⁰ The internal organization of Basque self-government follows a federal model, the structure of which is based on the *foral* governments and the councils of its three provinces, which control public finance through the system of *Concierto Económico* (Economic Agreement) (Novo 2010).

enabled them not only to achieve notoriety and public funding but also to take clearly anti-system strategies (Sartori 1976) and exert powerful blackmail in the forming of parliamentary majorities, making regional institutions difficult to govern as well as significantly polarizing Basque political life (Llera 1989, 1993, 1994 and 2009).

The response of institutions and society

What has been the social and institutional response to the sustained onslaught of nationalist terrorism in particular and the challenges that it has posed? Here, too, we find several stages: the first, which encompasses two decades of anti-Franco terrorism and mobilization prior to the 1977 amnesty, saw the emergence of a terrorist vanguard and its acceptance as a weapon against the regime by democratic sectors that opposed the dictatorship, especially within Basque society. It was during this period that the terrorists put launched their strategy of *action-repression-action* that yielded such positive results over a long period. The key moments in this regard were the Burgos trials in 1970 and the assassination of the Spanish premier, Carrero Blanco, in 1973. Many democrats applauded the latter, not realizing that they were digging their own graves for years to come by portraying ETA as the vanguard in the struggle for democracy, when the terrorists, as would subsequently become apparent, had no interest in either democracy or freedom. But ETA itself a huge boost from this misapprehension on the part of democratic groups, which it a force to be reckoned with for many years, earning its members the support and approval of a significant part of the population, Basque and non-Basque alike, and a romanticized international reputation as freedom fighters.

The second stage, between 1977 and the election of the socialist government in 1982, was marked by the beginning of the transition towards democracy, the introduction of Basque self-government with the PNV at the helm, the negotiated dissolution of ETAp (Onaindia 2000), and the military coup attempt of February 23, 1981. This was an eminently passive stage during which the political classes focused on designing and establishing the new democratic system while society in general sought to emerge from the major economic crisis in which Spain had been immersed since the early 1970s. Though this was the most prolific period in terms of the organization's terrorist activity, ETA's social and political impact was minimal³¹. The country as a whole, including most political groups, viewed ETA either as a legacy of Franco's dictatorship that would surely face away with the arrival of democracy, or were reluctant to express disapproval of an organization that had stood up against the repressive Franco regime, and to which society owed a debt. The sense that ETA's actions were somehow justified because of the Civil War and the dictatorship would

³¹ In 1981, the Association of Victims of Terrorism (AVT) was born, led by Ana María Vidal-Abarca, the widow of the Chief of the Basque Police Force in Alava, who was murdered by ETA. The organization currently has over 3,000 members.

lead, following the conversion of ETApM from an armed organization into the *Euskadiko Ezkerra* political party, to a lenient policy whereby repentant terrorists could be welcomed back into civil society.

The third stage, from 1982 to 1987, featured the arrival of the socialist government, the consolidation of democracy, economic recovery, Spain's admission into the EEC, and the overall modernization of the country, and also the establishment of self-government in the Basque Country under the hegemony of the PNV. The same period also saw the dirty war against ETA fought by the organization known as GAL³². During these years, the PNV was seen as an insurance policy by the Basque electorate, and the socialist government considered it (PNV) a key player in the task of bringing terrorism to an end, but with no viable alternative in sight, the inertia that had afflicted the preceding UCD administrations persisted. At the same time, the absence of violent nationalists in the Basque parliament enabled the institutional nationalists (PNV) to take advantage of their central position to plot and implement their own predominance in what could be termed a shadow coalition comprising a division of labor within the nationalist community. A key component in this new strategy was the creation and establishment of the new autonomous Basque Police Force, which was intended to replace the state security forces in the region in the years to come.

The fourth stage, between 1987 and 1996, witnessed coalition governments between the PNV and the PSE-EE in the Basque Country (Llera 1987), and ended with the victory election of the center-right PP in national elections. This period also saw the first attempt at negotiating with ETAm in Algiers in 1989, the failure of which marked the beginning of a new era in antiterrorist policy, with which the French authorities now cooperated. The most important developments in this period were the agreements reached on anti-terrorism policies by Spain two largest parties, and the forming of anti-terrorist movements that were supported by large segments of society (Funes 1998), facilitated by the signing of the Ajuria Enea, Madrid and Pamplona agreements. This was arguably the most successful period in the fight against terrorism and its grip on society, a time during which the newly-brokered cooperation with France brought an end to the sanctuary previously enjoyed there by ETA terrorists.

The fifth stage lasted from 1997 to 2004, when Spain was governed by José María Aznar (Cosidó and Elía 2010). When the Ajuria Enea pact and the other unifying agreements had become dead letters, the PSOE and the PP signed a new anti-terrorist pact (the Agreement for Freedom and Against Terrorism) that proved highly effective in confronting terrorism and mobilizing civil society. In the Basque Country, meanwhile, the PNV and ETA signed the

³² GAL was an organization whose members included state security force operatives, mercenaries, and right-wing extremists. It was active between 1983 and 1987, especially in France, and killed 25 people, chiefly ETA members or supporters. A decade later, an investigation of its activities led to criminal proceedings that and prison sentences for a former minister of the interior, two senior security official, and several policemen (Garzón 2006).

Lizarra/Estella Pact, as did other nationalist parties and the IU (United Left) opening up a front-based political conflict between nationalists and autonomists (so called constitutionalists) parties (Unzueta and Barbería 2003). This same period also saw the ETA truce of 1999 and a second series of failed negotiations between ETA and the government, the first with the PP at the helm, which took place in Switzerland. This led to the introduction of a policy of zero tolerance against ETA's social and political milieu through the new *Ley de Partidos* [Party Law] passed in 2002, the consequent outlawing of certain political parties and groups, and the international strangulation of ETA via the signing of agreements and ETA's inclusion on the lists of terrorist organizations compiled after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. The PP government also radically changed its perception of the PNV's role in the fight against terrorism, now viewing it more of an obstacle than an ally and ultimately raising the possibility of a coalition of the PP, the PSE-EE (the Basque branch of the PSOE), that could defeat the nationalists on their own ground. More importantly, the victims of terrorism at last stood up and demanded to be heard. By now there were thousands, and until then they had remained in the shadows, and sometimes even persecuted (this was a period during which guilty consciences were assuaged by the assumption that "they must have done something"). It is symptomatic of this state of affairs that until 1997 hardly anything was written about the victims of terrorism in Spain (Calleja 2006), a dramatic—not to mention immoral—omission. The suffering that this sector of the population was forced to endure and the human and moral insensitivity shown by the rest of society are difficult to comprehend. During talks between ETAp and the UCD government regarding the dissolution of the former in 1981, negotiators spoke about the release of imprisoned terrorists, yet their victims were conspicuously absent from the discussions. No one asked for forgiveness, and no unresolved cases were cleared up. The kidnap and murder of the young PP local councilor Miguel Angel Blanco in Ermua in 1997 was a watershed in bringing the victims to the fore and in mobilizing civil society against the violence, isolating ETA's nationalist apologists³³. There had been precedents, such as *Gesto por la Paz*³⁴ and COVITE³⁵, the latter led by Cristina Cuesta, and the widespread demonstrations that followed the assassination of the PP parliamentarian Gregorio Ordóñez in 1995.

³³ Between 1996 and 2005, some 60 groups (associations, foundations, forums) of victims of terrorism throughout Spain appeared and flourished. The most significant of these were: the *Foro de Ermua* (1998), which emerged as a result of the murder of Miguel Angel Blanco in the Basque village of Ermua; the social movement, *Basta Ya* (1999) led by the philosopher Fernando Savater in San Sebastian; and the *Fundación de Víctimas del Terrorismo* (2002), which arose under the leadership of former premier Adolfo Suárez in the wake of the Agreement for Freedom and Against Terrorism.

³⁴ The association *Gesto por la Paz* was founded in the Basque Country and Navarre in 1986 and currently boasts over one hundred local branches.

³⁵ In 1992, *Denon Artean*, a pacifist organization led by Cristina Cuesta, the daughter of a Telefónica executive killed by ETA, was formed in San Sebastian. In 1998, it became the *Colectivo de Víctimas del Terrorismo* (COVITE).

The latest stage began in 2004, when all consensus between the two major national parties broke down in the wake of the dramatic ending to the PP government's term of office, the Jihadist attack in Madrid coming just three days before the elections, which brought victory to the PSOE. With the new ETA ceasefire in place and the negotiation process between the organization and Zapatero's government (Benegas 2007, Eguiguren and Rodríguez 2010) now supported by all parties except the PP, Spain entered a new era

marked by the division and demobilization of civil society. Nevertheless, the victims of terrorism retained their moral prominence and their mobilizing role, though they did lose their autonomy when the parties exploited them in their own confrontations. From this civic frustration and demobilization, a new political party led by former PSOE parliamentarian Rosa Díez and Fernando Savater (UPyD)³⁶ would emerge as the heir to the Basta Ya movement. However, a further breakdown in negotiations forced a change in the anti-terrorist policies pursued by the socialist government. The PSOE's second term of office, which began in 2008, saw a return to democratic unity and the electoral and institutional exclusion of the terrorists' political representatives, leading to significant police successes³⁷. Another unexpected turn of events in the Basque Country was the election of a PSE-EE regional government in 2009 that has the support of the PP, essentially an inverted reworking of the failed coalition of 2001.

The evolution of public opinion

What has been the attitude of Basque society towards ETA over the years? We began to ask this question and to include it in our surveys from 1981 onwards³⁸. The results are shown in Figure 4. The majority did not reject ETA until the 1990s, when the effects of democratic unity in the fight against terrorism, the failure of the negotiation process in Algiers, and the onset of social mobilization all took their toll. Prior to this, the predominant attitudes were either varying degrees of justification or simple reluctance to speak, if rarely explicit support. The decline of rejection and consequent increase in support and justification during periods of truce or negotiation are also noteworthy (Algiers-González, Lizarra-Aznar and Zapatero), and was especially apparent during the ceasefire and talks that followed the Lizarra/Estella Pact. However, the collapse of this accord, the signing of the Agreement for Freedom and Against Terrorism, the launch of new anti-terrorist policies, and the mobilization of civil society in support of the victims of terrorism appear to have elicited a definitive reaction among the Basque population, with a sustained majority rejecting ETA and explicit support for the group falling to its lowest levels ever. Even during the most recent truce in 2004, a period of negotiation between the government and ETA, the reaction of Basque society was totally different from what it had been in the past, and the terrorists were now clearly losing the propaganda war even among their own supporters. This was borne out in all the elections held over the past decade, in which the group's political positions have steadily lost support³⁹, and its electoral fell to 50% of what it had been at the beginning of the Lizarra process in 1998.

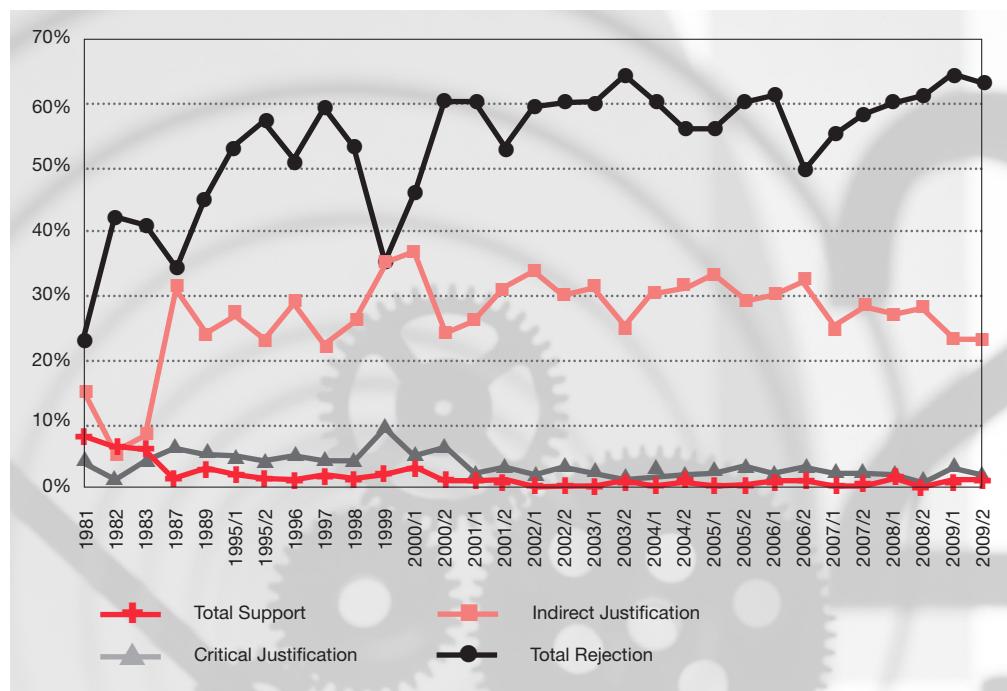
³⁶ Unity, Progress, and Democracy.

³⁷ Without being excessively optimistic, one may now regard ETA as in the final stages of its existence, with almost 700 of its activists jailed Spanish (500) and France (200), including its leadership –police in Spain and France have "decapitated" a total of six time in the past two years by arresting its senior cadres, and frustrated a bid to establish a new base in Portugal. Furthermore, a major internal debate is currently in progress regarding the continuation of violence, and 73% of respondents to our May, 2010 survey of Basque opinion perceived "weakness" in ETA. Still, 41% were pessimistic and 19% over the prospects for its disappearance, mainly because most (71%) saw no willingness or desire on the organization's part to bring an end to the violence.

³⁸ In this year, for the purposes of an initial study commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior, which was then preparing to enter negotiations with ETApn, we posed the need to ascertain what Basque public opinion thought of ETA, which we addressed by means of an open question. Since then, we have been posing the same question but in closed format, asking those surveyed to choose one of the following options: (1) complete rejection; (2) fear; (3) indifference; (4) acceptance during the dictatorship but not under democracy; (5) acceptance of the ends but rejection of the means; (6) support but with acknowledgement of the organization's mistakes; (7) unconditional support; (8) don't know; and (9) no answer.

FIGURE 4. Attitudes towards ETA in the Basque Country, 1981-2009

³⁹ Of particular significance here is the gradual and parallel success enjoyed by ARALAR, the latest ETA splinter group, which arose as a consequence of the rejection of the armed struggle and the demand for its abandonment.

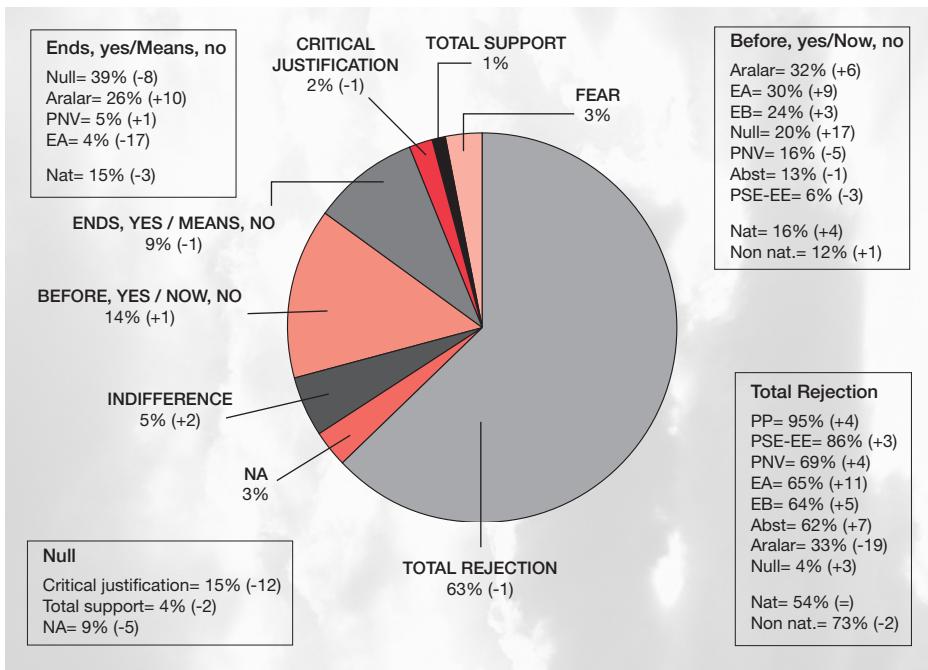


Source: Euskobarómetro, November 2009

⁴⁰ The bars in the figure reflect the opinions of different constituencies based on the results of the vote in the last Basque regional elections in 2009. Though these were the first in which the pro-terrorist movement had no involvement, its voters nevertheless made themselves heard by responding to the call by ETA and its satellite organizations to enter a blank vote. It should also be noted that the distinction between "nationalists" and "non-nationalists" is a subjective one made by the respondents themselves to a question in the survey.

The current level of electoral support is shown Figure 5 below⁴⁰. The pie chart shows clearly how the circle of support has rotated over the last three decades. The majority rejection of ETA indicated in our November 2009 survey includes three out of every four non-nationalists (95% of PP voters, 86% of socialists and 64% of IU-EB voters and abstainers). The organization received a similar rebuff, albeit with a smaller majority, from nationalist supporters (69% of PNV voters, 65% of EA voters, 33% of ARALAR voters and even 4% of EHAK voters). The indirect approval of those that previously saw ETA as justifiable but no longer do so (14%) or those that agree with the group's ends but not its means (9%) is still in evidence, notably among the less moderate nationalists (31%), but also among lingering sectors of the left. Only a minority of voters (19%) still exhibits explicit or qualified support. All in all, the electorate that has traditionally supported ETA through various parties (HB, EH, EHAK, ANV) has begun to decline in recent years, particularly after the failure of the latest negotiations and the banning of specific parties and groups.

FIGURE 5. Basque attitudes toward ETA by party electoral support

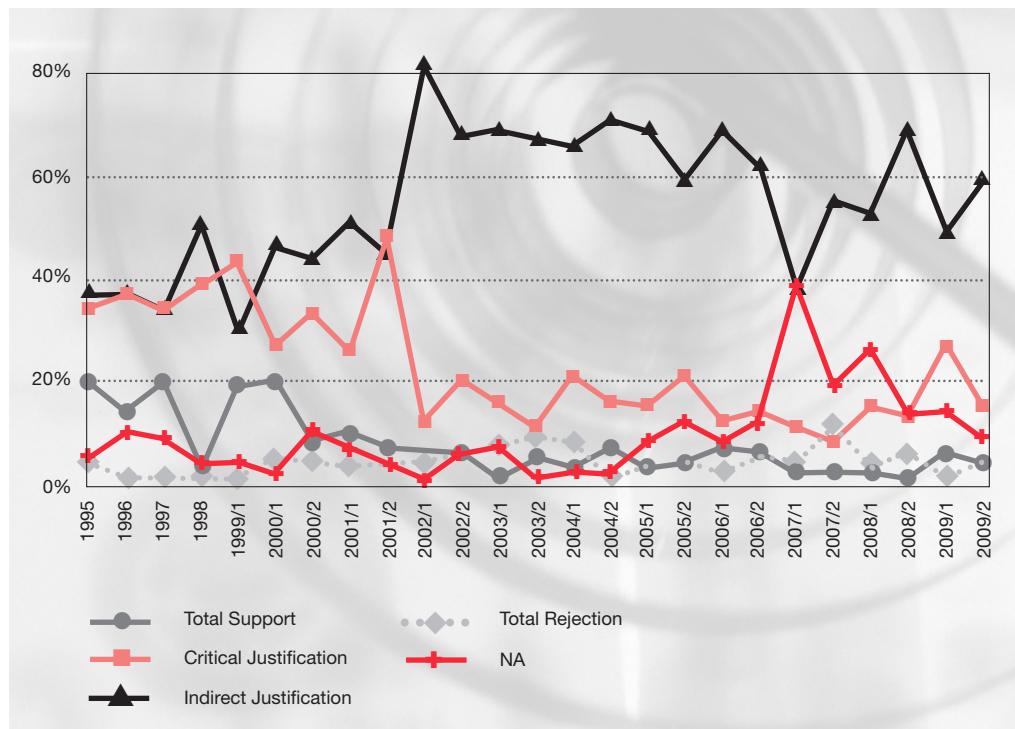


Source: Euskobarómetro. November 2009

The non-nationalist voters have displayed an almost continual level of rejection of approximately 70% (with PP voters averaging 90% and those of the PSE-EE 80%), while indirect justification has consistently stood at around 20%. Among nationalists, meanwhile, rejection and indirect justification maintained similar levels, generally around 40%, until the 54% rejection obtained in the past year. This can be attributed not only to the clear rejection shown by PNV voters (which had stood at around 60%), but also, and more importantly, to the changes and internal fragmentation of the electoral support for groups linked with ETA, as seen in Figure 6.

This Figure 6 shows how the unconditional (20%) and qualified support (40%) for ETA in the second half of the 1990s has fallen to minimal levels a decade later, following the same path taken first by left-wing voters and subsequently by their nationalist counterparts towards

FIGURE 6. Basque attitudes toward ETA, 1995-2009 (HB/EH/EHAK/Null)



Source: Euskobarómetro. November 2009

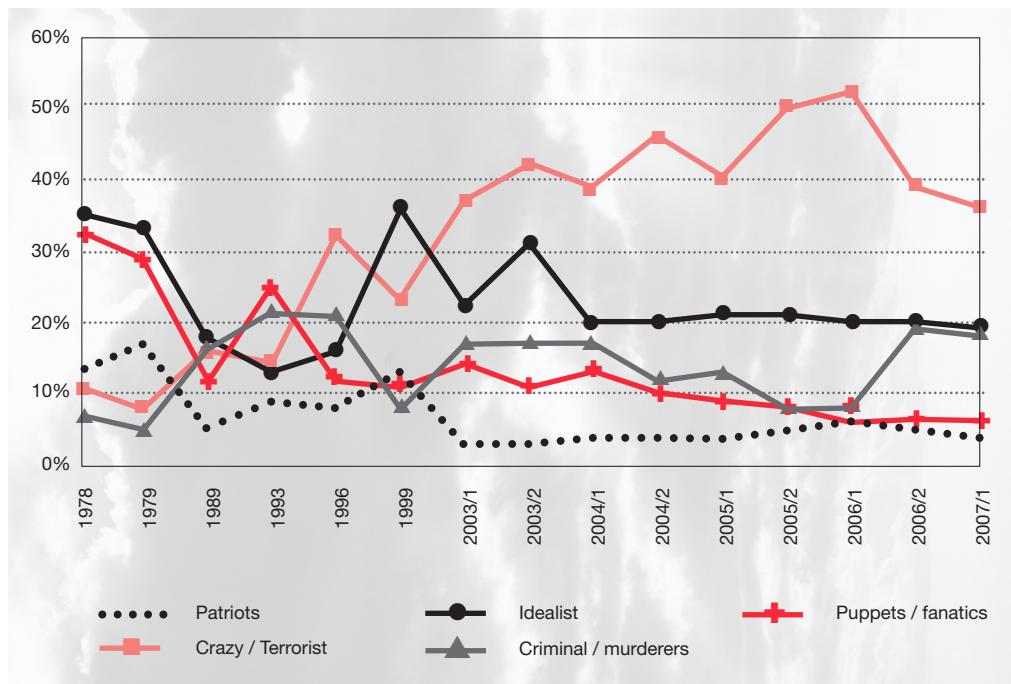
stances of indirect justification in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. The recriminations expressed by supporters of terrorism over the failure of the last two negotiation processes in 2000 and, more particularly, in 2006 is also apparent.

Another indicator that we have used and adapted from the initial research undertaken by Juan J. Linz (1986) concerns the image of ETA activists⁴¹. If we examine the evolution of the labels applied to ETA by popular opinion since the beginning of the democratic era, a similar pattern emerges, as seen in Figure 7.

Again, up until the end of the 1980s and the failure of the Algiers talks, exculpatory or accommodating labels predominated (patriots, idealists, puppets/fanatics), and it was not until the breakdown of negotiations in 1999 that the reaction of Basque society became patently negative (terrorists and murderers). This shift from acceptance to rejection was spearheaded by the social democratic left, followed by the more moderate nationalists, and then by leftist and more radical nationalists, until even ETA's hard core of urban supporters began to show signs of disaffection.

⁴¹ The categories that Juan J. Linz used in his 1978 and 1979 surveys were: patriots, idealists, puppets, madmen and criminals. As of 1989, we replaced puppets with fanatics, madmen with terrorists and criminals with murderers.

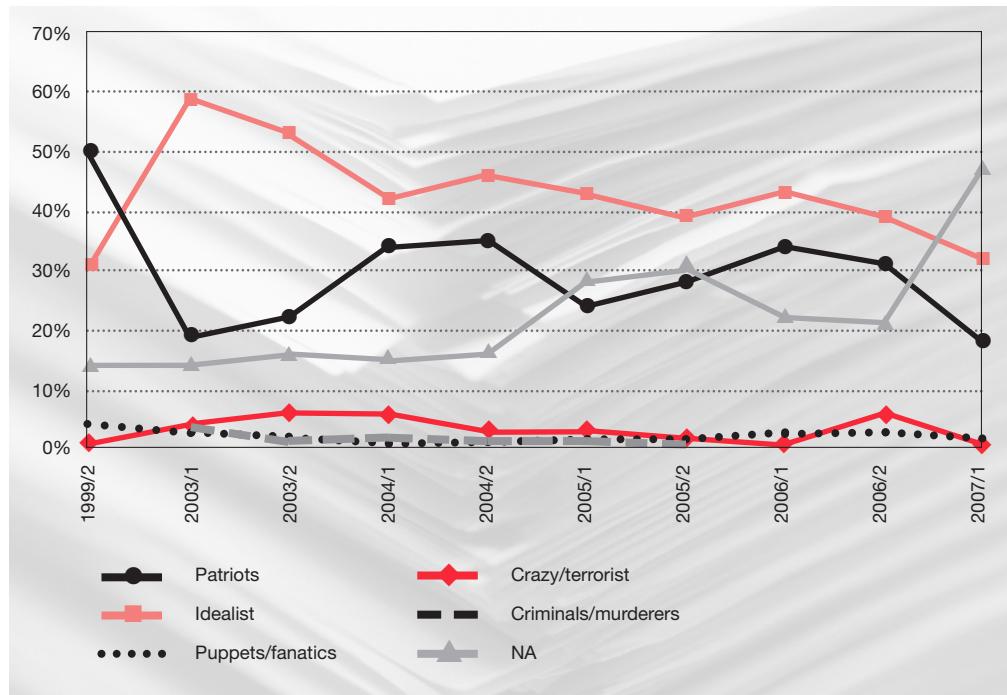
FIGURE 7. Public image of ETA activist in Basque Country, 1978-2007



Source: Euskobarómetro. May 2007

A third indicator that we have used since 1989, and whose findings contrast with those detailed above, focuses on the extent to which respondents subscribe to the view that any ideology can now be defended in the Basque Country without resorting to violence. Over the years, an overwhelming majority (around 80%) has consistently agreed with this assertion, while only a small minority (some 15%) has disagreed. This would suggest that the responses given to the previous indicators were conditioned by a tendency to excuse or justify ETA on the part of the social, ideological and opinion-making sectors concerned. While responses to this third indicator may be viewed as politically correct, those elicited by its earlier counterparts have more to do with the impact of terrorism, its identitarian aspects, and the socializing effects and social control exerted by the prevalent violent subculture. In short, the most significant discovery here, as witnessed by Figure 8, is the instability of the attitudes of voters who support terrorism, which have been severely affected by the failure of the last two negotiation processes.

FIGURE 8. Public image of ETA activist in Basque Country, 1996-2007
(HB / EH / EHAK)

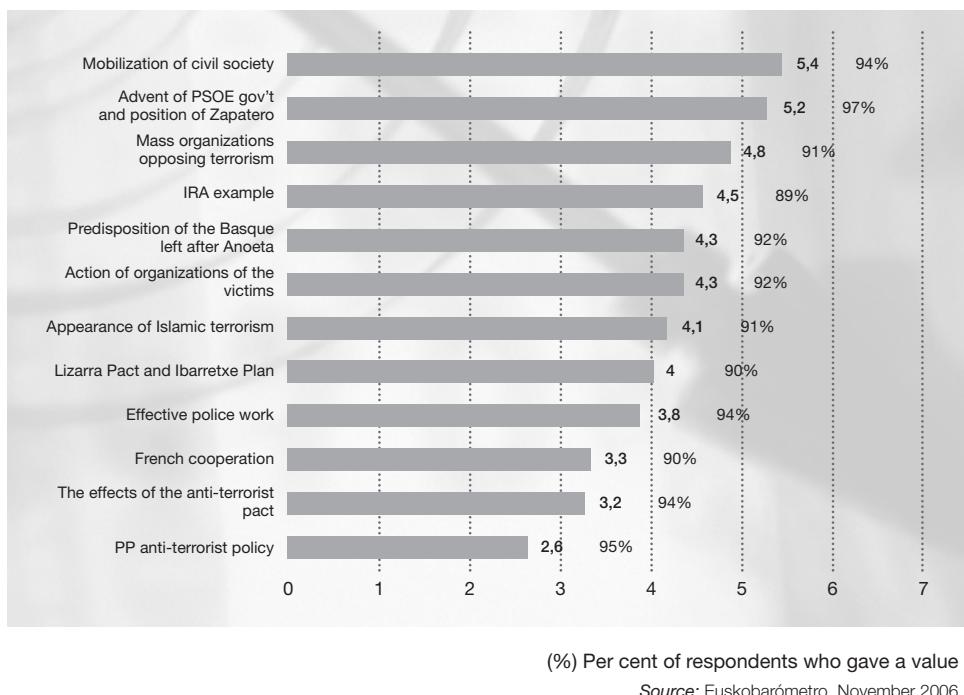


Source: Euskobarómetro. May 2007

⁴² On a scale of 0 (no contribution) to 10 (a major contribution).

In 2006, amidst relative optimism in the news media and with an end to terrorism a real possibility, we asked Basque citizens to evaluate⁴² the contribution made by different actors to the achievement of this goal, and obtaining the ranking shown in Figure 9. In a context of gaping differences of opinion between nationalists and non-nationalists, the first thing that stands out is the relative importance attributed by Basque society to the role of social mobilization to defeat terrorism (5.4), followed by the change of government and its anti-terrorist strategy based on dialogue (5.2), and the key role attributed to social movements against violence, which have been especially active since the late 1990s. Beyond these figures, a different set of results begins to emerge which reflects both the nationalist viewpoint (the example set by the IRA, the predisposition of the pro-ETA movement itself, and the impact of the Lizarra/Estella Pact and the Ibarretxe Plan) and the non-nationalist stance (the activities of victims' organizations, the appearance of Islamic terrorism, the effectiveness of police action, French cooperation, the anti-terrorist pact, and the PP government's anti-terrorist policy).

FIGURE 9. Appraisal of factors contributing to end of Basque terrorism in Basque Country



The contrast between nationalist and non-nationalist public opinion in the Basque Country appears even more significant, if that were possible, when we compare the appraisals detailed in Figure 9 with those given in the rest of Spain for an extremely similar indicator⁴³ in that same year, which appear in Figure 10. Characterized by a narrower range of opinion and higher positive scores, Spanish public opinion placed police effectiveness (6.9) and French collaboration (6.8) at the top, followed by the mobilization of civil society (6.6), social movements against violence (6.5), victims' organizations (6.2), the example of Northern Ireland (5.7), the impact of the anti-terrorist pact (5.5), the anti-terrorist policies pursued by successive governments (5.4), and the appearance of Islamic terrorism (4.6).

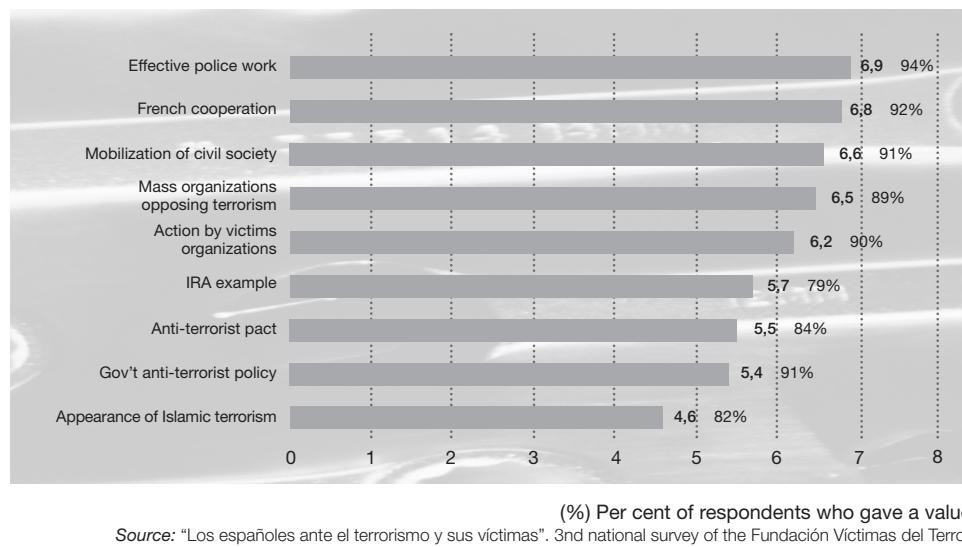
In a similar vein, a year later⁴⁴, following ETA's unilateral decision to suspend its dialogue with Zapatero's government, which had generated so much division in Spanish society, we asked those who participated in our survey to define the extent to which they felt that the climate was right for talks between the government and ETA. As the results listed in Figure 11 show, the division between those who agreed (43%) and those

⁴³ In our third national survey of "Los españoles ante el terrorismo y sus víctimas" (The Spanish in the face of terrorism and its victims), December 2006 (www.ehu.es/euskobarometro).

⁴⁴ In our fourth national survey of "Los españoles ante el terrorismo y sus víctimas", September 2007 (www.ehu.es/euskobarometro).

who did not (49%) was significant; predominant among those in agreement were 74% of IU voters, 67% of PSOE voters, and 67% of nationalists, while those in disagreement included 84% of PP voters. However, some parties displayed a certain misalignment with their respective voters, particularly in the case of those who felt that the climate was right, notably the socialists (26% of socialist voters in disagreement in contrast to 12% of PP voters in agreement).

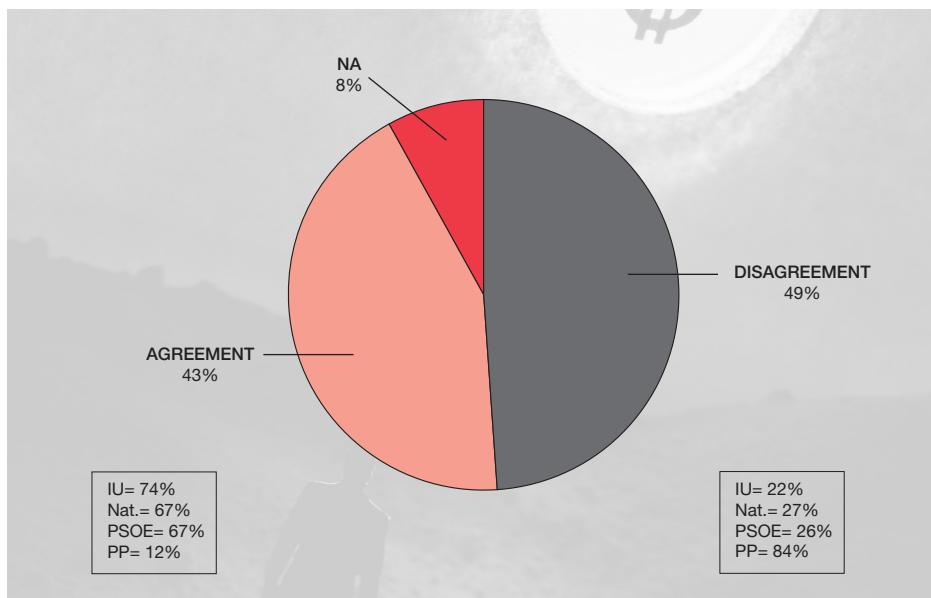
FIGURE 10. Appraisal of factors contributing to end of Basque terrorism in Spain



⁴⁵ The data in question was collected by our 5th national survey of "Los españoles ante el terrorismo y sus víctimas", November 2008 (www.ehu.es/euskobarometro).

Areas in which there was near unanimity of Spanish public opinion⁴⁵ were the necessity of an agreement between the PSOE and the PP with regard to anti-terrorist policy (89%), and the need to revitalize the existing anti-terrorist pact (88%) by reinforcing police and judicial effectiveness, pursuing terrorists, and observing a policy of zero tolerance for those who support and justify terrorism in the Basque Country.

FIGURE 11. Agreement / disagreement that government - ETA dialogue was appropriate



Source: "Los españoles ante el terrorismo y sus víctimas". 3rd national survey of the Fundación Víctimas del Terrorismo-Euskobarómetro. December 2006

Conclusions

After fifty years of suffering and exposure to continuous acts of aggression, violent intimidation, and the sowing of confrontation within identities, including thirty years of democratic struggle against terrorism based on the rule of law, the defense of pluralism and the mobilization of civil society, a society fighting for its very existence in the midst of such a conflict can hardly remain indifferent.

Historical wounds, the ideological and political complexities of our social fabric, the efficiency of the violent subculture in articulating and gains support for its ambitions, the conflict of identities, the uncertain transition towards democracy and self-government, and the checkered results of the error-ridden anti-terrorism policies may all have helped prolong the life of the terrorist hydra, but none of these factors will ultimately prevent us from seeing the light at the end of this long and tortuous tunnel.

All of this is reflected in the struggle for control of Basque public opinion on the one hand, and in the ambiguities of such public opinion and its gradual shift towards rejection

of the terrorists' actions and arguments on the other. It is the indignant reaction of civil society that is now drawing the Basque Country out of the conspiracy of silence in which it has been living, even though this is occurring in a context of apparent confrontation created by the symmetrical relationship between identity and community. Public opinion has played and continues to play a key role, both in the strategic and political defeat of terrorism, and in the eradication of the subculture of violence that it creates. Proving itself to be equally necessary, however, has been the consistent institutional action and proper social mobilization that enable a clear discourse to be heard, one that is both credible and acceptable to a public that rejects division and confrontation.

Nevertheless, the strategy of confrontation based on identity, if not community, continues to separate the nationalist and non-nationalist respondent groups. The opinions of the nationalists are well structured and coherent in its discourses and attitudes, while that of the non-nationalists is more diffuse and permeable. The role played in this asymmetrical state of affairs by the control exerted by the nationalists over institutions during the last thirty years—in particular its influence on public media, culture, and the education system—cannot be underestimated. However, in addition to being one of the terrorists' strategic goals, this division of opinion also serves as a weapon in the quest to impose their discursive hegemony within the nationalist community and to foster the ethno-ideological cleansing of non-nationalists.

In conclusion, the incipient institutional change based on the alliance of what we might term the “losing” side is no chance occurrence, nor is it irrelevant to the development of an inclusive, plural Basque society. We refer here to the current PSE-EE minority government, supported by the PP, whose strategy is precisely to eradicate the existing violent subculture, defend pluralism and political moderation, and stifle debate and conflict over identity once and for all. ■

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