PROTEST, RADICALISM AND MILITANCY IN SPAIN’S BASQUE COUNTRY:
THE BASQUE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND
THE PERSISTENT STRUGGLE OF ETA

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Introduction

The twentieth century has been one of struggle and hardship for the Basque people. From losing their autonomy statute shortly after a long, difficult effort to attain it, to their defeat during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, to suffering under the repressive military dictatorship of Francisco Franco, to their present day existence under a centralized government that enacts discriminatory policies against them, the Basques have endured severe state repression but have maintained their identity, culture, pride and have not abandoned dreams of self-determination. Basque self-awareness of their unique identity began in the late nineteenth century when Basque nationalist sentiments first began to take root during a time of rapid change and industrialization in the Basque region. As Basque nationalism spread and strengthened during the early twentieth century, radical elements within the movement soon emerged, particularly among the working class, priests and bishops in the Catholic Church, and those adherents to the nationalism of Sabino de Arana. The quest began for autonomy and even independence from Spain.

The turbulent decade of the 1930s proved to be a turning point not only for the Basque Country but for all of Spain. The country was sharply divided politically with very little middle ground; tensions climbed as the polarized ideologies battled for control of the state. In the Basque Country this tension manifested itself with large increases in worker strikes and street protests, including the short-lived 1934 Revolution in nearby Asturias that was ruthlessly put down by the conservatives who were in power in Madrid at the time. By the time civil war broke out in 1936, the republican government in Madrid granted the Basque Country autonomy, but that too was short-lived. The civil
war ended in 1939, leaving the Basques on the losing side of the fight. There began a long period of repressive rule by the military dictator, Francisco Franco.

The severe repression of the Franco regime in the 1940s and 1950s ultimately fueled much anger and led to the emergence of a clandestine insurgent group which began to use armed struggle, such as assassinations, car bombs, and other forms of terrorist tactics, against the Spanish state as a method of achieving Basque independence. *Euzkadi ta Askatasuna* (Basque Homeland and Freedom, or ETA) emerged in the 1950s and began its campaign of violent attacks and armed struggle against the forces of the Spanish government. ETA grew in size and strength and increased its attacks against its repressors. When Franco died in 1975, Spain began its transition to representative democracy. In 1977 the people of Spain approved a new constitution, which included a new framework under which Spain’s historical regions (Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country) were offered regional autonomy. In 1980, Basque voters approved the Basque autonomy statute, and thus began the formation and development of the Basque regional government. Despite the regime change and the gain of new regional autonomy for the Basques, ETA’s struggle continued and even intensified during Spain’s transitional phase. What factors account for the continuation of ETA’s militancy?

The persistence of ETA more than two decades after the granting of regional autonomy to the Basques can be attributed to several important factors. These include continued discriminatory policies by the Spanish government against the Basques, the limited nature of Basque autonomy, continued support for ETA and the absence of a peaceful exit mechanism from Spain. According to many Basques, Spanish government policies over-tax and over-police the Basque Country compared to the rest of Spain,
fueling much anger at such perceived discriminatory policies. The ever present Civil Guard, with its tarnished legacy of repressive police activities during the Franco era, causes serious resentment to many Basques who want this hated force removed from the Basque Country. During the 1980s extralegal paramilitary death squads with strong ties to the Spanish government infiltrated the Basque Country and assassinated suspected ETA members and ETA supporters, which increased the level of distrust the Basques had for the central government in Madrid. Widespread use of torture against jailed Basque activists suspected of having ties to ETA added to the level of animosity against the Spanish government. Throughout this time ETA continued to enjoy considerable support among the Basques. Although Spain’s constitution guarantees regional autonomy, it prohibits any type of peaceful secession of the Basque Country from Spain, a clause which the Basques had wanted to safeguard their rights. Continued dissatisfaction with the activities of the central government and the lack of basic protection of their fundamental liberties has resulted in support for ETA’s militancy and other manifestations of radical Basque nationalism. As a result, ETA remains willing and capable of continuing the armed struggle, despite the fact that Spain transformed itself into a liberal democracy and gave considerable regional autonomy to the Basque Country.

Examining the costs and benefits of keeping the status quo engagement strategies for both sides enables an understanding as to why ETA and the Spanish government are not likely to deviate from their current strategies of dealing with each other. For ETA, the costs of maintaining the status quo include alienating the moderate base among its supporters in the Basque County and enduring constant pursuit by Spanish authorities. The benefits of continuing the struggle for ETA include maintaining pressure on the
Spanish government to grant to the Basques what they want, strengthening the Basque social movement in general to gain additional autonomy and freedom, and sustaining international awareness of the Basque struggle through its much publicized actions. For the Spanish government, the costs of keeping the status quo include having to deal with continued terrorist attacks by ETA, potential harm to Spain’s tourist industry, reduced ability to attract foreign investment, and continued instability in the Basque Country, which constitutes an important industrial base for the Spanish economy. The benefits of keeping the status quo include continuing to benefit from Basque tax revenue and the Basque industrial base, keeping in check potential secessionist movements in Catalonia and Galicia, which could lead to the breakup of Spain and cause its economic deterioration, and placating Spain’s military and right-wing factions within the government, which still maintain significant influence more than a quarter century after the end of the Franco dictatorship. My own assessment suggests that the benefits outweigh the costs for both ETA and the Spanish government to continue the status quo, and as a result the ETA militancy will continue in the future. Will negotiations between ETA and the Spanish government resume since they were last abandoned in late 1999? Is there a way out?

Most indicators appear to suggest that the answer is negative, at least for the time being. The government of Prime Minister José María Aznar is increasingly taking a hard-line approach to ETA, and since the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11th the Spanish government has received ample support from Washington in intelligence-gathering technologies not only to root out Al Qaeda cells but also those of ETA. ETA, it seems, will persist as long as the Spanish government continues its current
policy of discrimination against the Basques. Spain's central government may even need an enemy, such as ETA, in order to keep other regions together and to prevent fragmentation.\(^1\) As long as such a need exists, a change in policy remains doubtful. In the absence of policy change, ETA seems poised to carry on the military struggle, and the prospects of peace via negotiated political settlement do not appear promising.

In this project, I will first examine several important theories that will enable me to understand the roots, growth, and perpetuation of radical Basque nationalism. I will then proceed to examine a brief historical overview of the Basques before beginning our analysis of modern Basque nationalism, which emerges in the late 19\(^{th}\) century. I will look at the effects of rapid industrialization and modernization on the Basque region, as well as the turbulent decade of the 1930s which saw the outbreak of civil war in Spain. Next I will focus on the Franco regime and how the repressive policies of the dictatorship fueled the emergence of the ETA movement. The fight for independence of the Basque Country gained prominence and the Basque nationalist movement grew in strength toward the end of the Franco regime. This paper will then examine the transition to democracy and the granting of regional autonomy to the Basque Country, including the benefits of autonomy and the shortcomings of Basque autonomy. In conclusion, I will try to answer three questions: why support continues for ETA's militancy and other manifestations of radical Basque nationalism, whether political settlement (and peace) is likely in the short-run, and what effects the events of September 11 will have on the ETA movement in a world suddenly catapulted into a campaign to root out all forms of terrorism.

Theories of Nationalism and Ethnopolitical Conflict

As I attempt to analyze and understand the ideological roots of ETA and radical Basque nationalism, I begin with a review of the theories of nationalism and ethnopolitical conflict. Theories of ethnopolitical conflict and nationalism are intimately tied to each other and help to explain the rise and maintenance of culturally and ethnically-based social movements. Strong nationalist feelings usually lie at the foundation of such movements, while the addition of a host of variables, such as relative deprivation, discrimination, group resentment or new opportunities, may propel already strong nationalist sentiments into organized collective action against a government that is viewed as repressive. Once ethnopolitical movements get underway, they have a tendency to gain strength and momentum, and eventually there arises the phenomenon of protest cycles. These theories provide an opportunity for the understanding of the birth and growth of Basque nationalist aspirations, the reasons why support for radical elements within the nationalist movement (particularly the ETA movement) continue despite regime change in Spain and the granting of regional autonomy for the Basque Country, and will enable an analysis into the future of radical Basque nationalism and the prospects of a solution to Spain’s Basque question.

Anthony Smith, a leading scholar on nationalism, defines a nation as a “named population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.”² In addition, once the members of a nation think of themselves as such, they

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seek the wherewithal to politically direct their future path.\textsuperscript{3} According to Miroslav Hroch, there are three phases of nationalism which, when fully implemented, represents a nationalist movement. These phases begin when the minority ethnic group gains consciousness of their unique ethnicity and potential nationhood, discovers barriers and solutions to potential nationhood, and then tries to build support among members of their ethnic group to achieve their goals.\textsuperscript{4} Nationalist leaders play an important role in developing nationalist feelings among the group members and for issuing demands on behalf of the ethnic group. Leaders appeal to national feelings, common national historical experiences, a common future, and a common right to self-determination.\textsuperscript{5} Key elements in nationalism, therefore, include (1) the process of developing a “nation”, (2) becoming aware of belonging to a particular nation and building an emotional attachment to it, (3) communicating national symbols and a language to reinforce solidarity, (4) developing a national ideology, and (5) the rise of a social and political movement to obtain the aspirations of the nation.\textsuperscript{6} When the process of nationalism is able to create a strong ethnic identity, discontent with the old or existing political order grows, particularly during a social or political crisis. Then the situation is able to become ripe for political action in the form of an ethnonationalist social movement.

One of the preeminent scholars on ethnopoltical conflict is Ted Robert Gurr, who defines ethnopoliical groups as “identity groups whose ethnicity has political

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid, 53.


\textsuperscript{5} Norman, Theorizing Nationalism, 61.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid, 55-6.
consequences, resulting in either differential treatment of group members or in political action on behalf of group interests.”

Ethnopolitical conflict often emerges among groups where nationalistic feelings and identities run high. Such an ethnic identification often has “collective consequences” for the group as it competes with other groups in a state. Ethnopolitical groups share a common language, religion, ethnic origin, culture, territory, history, and a “belief that the traits that set them apart from others justifies their separate treatment and status.”

When ethnonationalist groups turn to collective action to declare their nationalist demands, they most often do so through general protests, rebellions, demonstrations and finally, acts of violence. These forms of collective action are the foundation of ethnopolitical conflict made against the state or other political actors.

Gurr identifies four variables that are precursors to ethnopolitical conflict: salience of ethnocultural identity, collective incentives for political action, capacities for collective action, and opportunities that improve odds of obtaining collective goals through political action. When the salience of ethnocultural identity among members of a group is greater, so is the likelihood of collective action. Identity is more salient among a particular group the more dissimilar they are to other groups, when their identity adds to a feeling of comparative advantage or disadvantage, and when the group is in conflict with the state. The Basques share a common language and cultural traditions that form the

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9 Ibid, 8.
10 Ibid, 65.
core of their national identity. The more frequently incentives exist among group members, the greater likelihood of collective action. Examples of shared incentives include resentment over past abuses (such as repressive domination over the group), fear of future mistreatment, relative deprivation, and hope for relative gain (such as regaining political autonomy). The Basques have suffered collective repression under the Franco regime, share common complaints of abuses by the Spanish security apparatus and common wishes to increase their regional autonomy. The group will have a strong capacity for ethnopolitical conflict and for achieving its demands if it has a cohesive and mobilized ethnocultural identity that can maintain political action for long periods of time. Factors that influence a group’s capacity include geographic concentration, prior organization, ability to build coalitions, and the legitimacy of its leaders.

“Ethnoterritorial dominance,” high levels of group interaction, established political institutions, strong inclusive coalitions, and authentic leaders dramatically increase the ethnopolitical group’s capacity for collective action. Opportunities for collective action depend on the relative strength and weakness of the state and the commitment of state leaders to deal with the demands from the ethnopolitical group. The Basques’ concentration in the small Basque Country, historic nationalist mobilization and organization, and steady stream of nationalist leaders contribute to their ability to create and sustain ethnopolitical conflict.

Gurr theorizes that collective disadvantages are at the heart of ethnopolitical conflict. These disadvantages come in the form of political, economic, and cultural discrimination. In particular, if the disadvantages a group faces are not applied to other groups in the state, then this further increases the incentives for ethnopolitical conflict.

11 Ibid, 65-83.
Political discrimination refers to the systematic denial of political rights compared with other groups. Economic discrimination is the denial of economic freedom or economic exploitation, and cultural discrimination is the denial of cultural expression and unique cultural behaviors. Cultural expression includes participating in religious ceremonies, cultural traditions, holidays, wearing traditional clothing, and engaging in unique aspects of family life and speaking a certain language. Cultural expression, according to Gurr, sustains the viability of the social or national identity. Ethnopolitical groups tend to demand equal rights and to utilize protest and rebellion, which leads to repressive government responses. Gurr points out that repression is likely to strengthen the ethnopolitical protest and add to its duration.  

Gurr also theorizes how ethnopolitical conflict evolves in a democratic state. Gurr states that “failure to find a middle ground increases the chances that ethnopolitical conflict will be fought out over nonnegotiable issues, such as independence in a national people’s own state.” More often than not, Gurr asserts, ethnopolitical groups in democratic societies tend to utilize strategies of protest rather than rebellion. In nation-states going through a transition to democracy, there are often significant upsurges in ethnopolitical conflict. Democratic governments are best able to mitigate ethnopolitical conflicts by protecting the group from discrimination and by making opportunities that make up for acts of past discrimination. Gurr concludes that the best tactics for

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democratic governments in finding a peaceful solution is to enable ethnopolitical groups to protect and promote their cultural practices.\textsuperscript{14}

While Gurr analyzes the emergence and continuation of ethnopolitical movements, Sidney Tarrow examines the radicalization of collective action that often occurs within such movements. In so doing, Tarrow studies how social movements respond to governmental repression and explores the reasons for the emergence of protest cycles within social movements. Using Charles Tilly’s definition of repression (‘any action by another group which raises the contender’s cost of collective action’), Tarrow proposes that repression radicalizes the protesting group and further unites those people who are opposed to the state.\textsuperscript{15} The theory postulates that collective action (collective challenges that are disruptive and aimed against elites, opponents and authorities, and put forward by people united in solidarity through a shared nationalistic identity) comes in three basic forms. Forms of collective action, such as violence, public demonstrations, and disruptive direct action, gain its power and effectiveness as a consequence of three characteristics: challenge, uncertainty and solidarity. Violence by the insurgent group tends to bring repression, driving away nonviolent sympathizers and dividing the society and resulting in a small group of militants whose politics revolves around violence and who get trapped in a military conflict with state authorities. Conventional collective action, such as strikes and demonstrations, may institutionalize the movement and benefit from strategies of negotiation, but at the same time institutionalization of the movement

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 151-65.

may lessen the movement’s capacity to attract support and to retain cooperation with the elites. For example, anti-globalization protesters are able to attract a widespread following by not institutionalizing their movement, but rather allowing it to grow free from an overarching organized framework. The challenge for movement leaders is to draw ties among the group’s many grievances, create meanings that will resonate with them, and continually strengthen the power of the movement.16

Tarrow identifies three fundamental features of movement organization: its formal organization (identification and implementation of goals), its organization of collective action (the creation of formal militia cells, either managed by or independent of the formal movement organization), and its mobilizing structures (organizing and coordinating of movement leaders with general movement participants so as to allow the movement to continue in the long-term). While the social movement is still relatively young, it typically attempts to expose the weaknesses of the state and to challenge the authorities. Over time, the increase in demands and the continuation of the social movement leads to the creation of protest cycles.17

Tarrow identifies the characteristics of protest cycles such as raised tension and an accelerated conflict, the emergence of new social movements in addition to the original movement or a radical strengthening of the original movement, and finally a widespread diffusion of the movement across societal groups and a geographical area. When a protest cycle reaches its peak, the movement is often joined by nonviolent groups, increased competition for support, and increased radicalization of tactics. Tarrow notes

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16 Ibid, 92-122.

17 Ibid, 135-55.
that urban industrial regions are often the starting place for protest cycles before spreading to more rural areas. Protest cycles are also more likely to emerge among members of the same ethnic group. The split over increasing the radicalization of tactics or moving toward more conventional forms of protest tends to be the main reason for the decline in protest cycles. This split seems to be currently occurring in the Basque Country, as ETA expands its range of targets for assassination and a growing anti-violence peace movement takes root in Basque society. Protest cycles have long-term effects on the political socialization of participants, on traditional political institutions, and on the political culture. In the end, it is the varying opportunities that arise during the course of the protest cycle that decides their final outcome.18

Protest cycles often evolve and grow in response to police behavior and the ability of underground groups to attract new members. The social movement theorist Donatella della Porta examines the role of police behavior in dealing with radical activists as well as recruitment procedures within violent underground political groups. According to della Porta, the policing of protest activities is “one of the best and most visible indicators of institutional attitudes to protest” and can be a cause of increased tension between the protestors and their opponents.19 The more repressive the police behavior, the more likely it is that radical elements will grow within the movement. In terms of recruitment into underground political groups, della Porta stresses the importance of social networks, participation in other political organizations, and a feeling of solidarity with members in

18 Ibid, 155-77.

19 Donatella della Porta, Social Movements and the State: Thoughts on the Policing of Protest. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 64.
the group as reasons why individuals choose to join the underground group in the first place.\textsuperscript{20} These two factors play an important role in the dynamics of social movements and in the long-term survival of the most radical and underground elements within the movements.

Another approach which explains the occurrence and maintenance of ethnopolitical conflict are the twin phenomena, primordialism and instrumentalism. Primordialism refers to strong ethnic and religious identities with deep roots, which may become threatened by modernization and lead a threatened group to protect their culture and way of life. Paul R. Brass’ theory of instrumentalism refers to collective goals of increasing material and political gains and using a cultural identity in order to obtain those group goals. Both primordialism and instrumentalism pertain to the Basques, who have a long ethnic history and way of life threatened by modern times as well as shared goals of obtaining greater autonomy and the right of national self-determination from Spain. Modernization leads to economic inequities between groups, especially between dominant and subordinate groups, and as a result the subordinate group utilizes complaints of ‘Internal colonialism” to wage their ethnic conflict against the repressive, dominant group. When the conditions of both primordialism and instrumentalism occur, ethnic conflict is most likely to occur.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20} Donatella della Porta, Recruitment Processes in Clandestine Political Organizations. 


Key indicators of discrimination, support and group strength enable an analysis into the continuation of ethnopolitical conflict. *Economic discrimination* is one yardstick of analysis. Indicators include restricted access to top-level jobs and education, low incomes, poor quality of life and high infant mortality rates. *Political discrimination* is another gauge of potential ethnopolitical conflict. Indicators consist of limited participation in government or civil service and limited access to political positions. *Government violence* is yet another index; its indicators comprise such factors as number of arrests, extension of due process to the detained, use of torture and executions, forcible removal of the group and acts of politically-motivated mass murder. Another yardstick is the *strength of group identity*. Its indicators include common language, culture, beliefs and shared history. *Group cohesion*, however, is a different index. Indicators consist of degree of established order, presence of legitimate leaders, number of factions, amount of conflict within the group, and control over mass media outlets. *External support* is an additional benchmark; indicators entail financial and verbal support, provision of safe havens and amount of material support. The final yardstick to measure the potential of ethnopolitical conflict is the *degree of international economic status*. Its indicators include per capita income, GDP, GNP and status of main trading partners. These indicators enable a more comprehensive analysis into the likelihood of continued ethnopolitical conflict.22

While the theorists discussed so far have examined the role and importance of nationalism, ethnopolitical conflict and social movements, Albert Hirschman offers an analysis based on three options: exit, voice and loyalty. Exit and voice are two crucial

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options that may explain why many Basques struggle for separation from Spain.

Hirschman defines exit as exercising the option of leaving an organization which is no longer satisfactory, which happens due to deterioration in the quality of service in that organization. Voice is defined ‘as any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of action and protests, including those that are meant to mobilize public opinion.’ Loyalty acts by pointing people toward using the voice rather than the exit option. The interplay of these three options, exit, voice and loyalty, help to shape the social movement and to support radical elements that may employ violence and other means of struggle in order to forward the objectives of the social movement.

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The Basques: Origins and History

The Basques are an ancient people who have lived in the same small region in the northern Iberian Peninsula for millennia. Their origins, as well as their language, remain a mystery. Archaeological evidence confirms that people have inhabited the Basque homeland since at least 20,000 B.C.E., but verification on whether the Basques are direct descendants of these ancient cave dwellers is inconclusive. Most experts agree that the Basque have inhabited the area since at least 5,000 to 3,000 B.C.E. 

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The region where the Basques have historically lived comprises four Spanish provinces (Alava, Guipúzcoa, Navarra and Vizcaya) and three French provinces (Labourd, Basse Navarre and Soule). This land area, which totals approximately 20,600 square kilometers (roughly the size of New Jersey), lies along the Bay of Biscay on the northern coast of Spain and southwestern France. The land is rugged with steep valleys; the predominant geographic feature is the Pyrenees Mountains along the Spanish-French border. About 90 percent of the Basque population lives on the Spanish side of the border.\textsuperscript{25}

Language and blood are the two primary distinguishing characteristics that define ethnic Basques. The ancient language, Euskera, predates the rise of Indo-European languages in Europe. Euskera has very few similarities with any other language ever spoken on Earth. Today’s Basques still speak Euskera, and the modern variant is strikingly similar to ancient Euskera.\textsuperscript{26} An unusual feature shared by the Basques is their blood; the Basques have the highest concentration of type ‘O’ blood (50 percent of the Basque population) and of Rh negative blood (27 percent of the Basque population) in the world, which makes them quite distinct. Today, however, symbolism of their blood type is not as important a distinguishing characteristic as it was during the formative stages of modern Basque nationalism in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Rather, the Basque language, cultural traditions, and way of life have superceded the issue of blood type as the most salient characteristics of what it means to be Basque, which in essence allows immigrants to the Basque Country to become Basque.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, 5.

\textsuperscript{26} Kuriansky, \textit{The Basque History}, 21.
The Romans, who conquered the Basques near the end of the first century B.C.E., began the long history of foreign intervention in Basque territory. A common theme among the list of Basque occupiers is that no force ever completely controlled them. Starting in the early fifth century and lasting until the early eighth century, both the Visigoths and the Franks posed a constant threat for the Basques. A constant state of war served to unify the Basques with the goal of expelling a common enemy. Visigoth rule came to an abrupt end with the arrival of the Moors (Muslim invaders from North Africa) to the Peninsula in 711. Over the next 800 years the Christian Reconquest of the Peninsula dominated the political landscape, ending in 1492 with the expulsion of the Moors by the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella. The Reconquest of Spain had its origins in two northern regions of the Peninsula: the Kingdom of Asturias (to the west of the Basque region) and in the emerging Kingdom of Navarra.27

The emergence of the Kingdom of Navarra in 905 is ‘the first organized state in Basque history’ and ‘must rank as one of the most important developments in pre-modern Basque political history.’28 For the first time the Basques had a native regime under which to live, and they soon developed the biltzar, or local representative assemblies. Navarra, however, grew apart from the other three Basque provinces of Alava, Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya during the 1200s and 1300s as those provinces were brought under the control of the neighboring Kingdom of Castilla.29

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28 Ibid., 15.

29 Ibid., 15-6.
Navarra remained an important regional power during the middle Ages and played a crucial part in the Christian Reconquest of the Peninsula. Its dynasties lasted until 1512.

As Spain began the transition from a medieval to a modern nation-state during the Middle Ages, a major conflict arose between Spain’s attempts to unify the Peninsula and the regional opposition to unification. Linguistic, cultural, political, psychological, economic and geographic factors contributed to the feelings of regional separatism across the Peninsula.\(^{30}\) In addition to the Basque region, the regions of Galicia and Catalonia too experienced deep feelings of regional distinctiveness. At the same time, it was the ancient *fueros*, meaning “codified local customs,” which helped to hold together the expanding Spanish state. For the Basques, their traditional laws are part of their identity.\(^{31}\) Using the *fueros* enabled the Basques to exercise significant local power, to veto Spanish laws, to have their own legislative, executive and judicial institutions, and to be immune from Spanish customs duties and exempt from military service outside their own province.\(^{32}\) A significant yet symbolic event was the gathering of the Basque assembly, consisting of representatives from the local assemblies, who met each year beneath the sacred oak tree at Guernica to legislate on Foral Law. It was these *fueros*, by giving the Basques regional autonomy in the new Spanish state, which placated them into remaining a part of Spain.

From the 1500s through the 1800s several important events occurred in Spain and in Europe that had direct ramifications for the Basques. The first development was

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\(^{30}\) Ibid, 18.

\(^{31}\) Kurlansky, *The Basque History*, 65.

Spain’s growing overseas empire in the Americas. The Basques, who have had historically strong ties to the seas, prospered as a result. Basque shipbuilders, sailors and explorers who participated in the exploration of the New World formed a new bourgeoisie that was to become ‘the first class in Basque society that had an explicit interest in ties with Spain.” Another major event was the French Revolution. The new ideas radiating from France deeply divided liberals and conservatives and created violent conflicts in Spain that pitted ‘Basques against Spaniards but also Basques against Basques.” The most visible manifestations of this divide are the Carlist Wars (1833-40 and 1873-76), which were civil wars fought over whether Spain should remain a monarchy and keep the fueros or whether it should liberalize and abolish the fueros in favor of a strong centralized government. The start of the First Carlist War in 1833 split the Basque community. The rural Basques supported the conservative, pro-Church Carlist leader Don Carlos and the urban Basques supported the liberal, anti-Church and anti-fueros Queen Regent María Cristina. With the end of the Second Carlist War in 1876 the Basques lost the autonomous administration and tax system that they had enjoyed up until then. The traditionalists lost to the new Spanish national identity and as a result the Basques transformed those aspirations into an emerging nationalist

33 Clark, *The Basques*, 22.


35 Kurkansky, *The Basque History*, 134.

movement. Basque nationalists of the twentieth century would use the existence of the *fueros* as evidence of former Basque sovereignty. The widening gulf between liberals and conservatives in Spain would continue well into the 20th century. Following the Second Carlist War, the Basque region began to experience rapid industrialization, creating new tensions in the area and fostering the growth of nationalistic feelings among the Basques.

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38 Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 3.
Industrialization and Rise of Modern Basque Nationalism (1876-1931)

Industrialization commenced in the Basque region during the latter half of the 19th century. The region benefited from large supplies of iron and timber, deep ports in the Bay of Biscay and fast-flowing rivers. The Basque cities of Bilbao and San Sebastián underwent rapid industrialization. As a result the population dramatically increased, with many of the new inhabitants of Basque cities coming from the impoverished areas of rural Spain. During this transition to an industrialized society, four main social and economic groupings emerged in Basque politics. They included: traditionalists (small farmers and peasants resistant to change, pro-monarchy and pro-church, opposed to nationalism); liberals (upper-class urban bourgeoisie, close links to Madrid, promoted economic prosperity); lesser bourgeoisie (resented Spanish political control and foreign (primarily British) capital, provided services); and the working classes (organized unions, utilized strikes, became major political force). As a result of the rapid industrialization of the region, “The main concern of Basque nationalism was with the new social and economic relationships inside the modernizing Basque Country.”

The Basque labor movement has its origins during this time of rapid industrialization of the Basque region. The first general strike on the Iberian Peninsula occurred in 1890 in the Basque area. Nearly 20,000 miners took part in the strike, who successfully received the improved worker rights they were seeking. Over the next

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41 Clark, The Basques, 36-9.

42 Heiberg, The Making, 46.
twenty years there were 17 major strikes among industrial workers and 4 general strikes in the city of Bilbao. As a result, the Basque ‘class consciousness, organizational infrastructure, and political militancy were evolving among the Bilbao working class.’

Some of these workers joined the Communist Party of Spain, which had formed in 1917 and which called for the secession of Euskadi as well as for social revolution. The majority of Basque workers (many of whom were immigrants), however, joined not the Communist Party but the Spanish Socialist Party and its affiliated union, the General Workers Union, the UGT. These workers wanted rights for trade unions and representation of workers’ interests in the government. The Spanish Socialist Party stressed the importance of the working class above ethnicity and nationalism and as a result came into conflict with those who stressed Basque nationalism above any other issue.

The rise of modern Basque nationalism is tied to the life of Sabino de Arana y Goiri. Sabino de Arana was born in a Bilbao suburb in January 1865. Studying as a youth in Barcelona during the rise of Catalan nationalism, Sabino de Arana witnessed the strong Catalan feelings of cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and the desire for political separation from Spain. He returned to Bilbao as a young adult determined to promote Basque nationalism at a time when Basque ethnic feelings (culturally, linguistically, and politically) were dormant. Sabino de Arana organized a campaign of raising Basque consciousness by reviving the use of the Basque language, Euskera, by

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44 Ibid, 55-8.
inventing a new term (Euzkadi) to symbolize the new Basque ethnic nation, by designing a Basque flag, and by establishing cultural propaganda offices throughout the Basque Provinces. 45 In this way, Sabino de Arana contributed to the formation of what Benedict Anderson calls the ‘imagined community,” which was “imagined” because most individuals within the Basque nation did not know each other and a “community” because the Basque nation itself was “conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.” 46 More concretely, Sabino de Arana led the Basques through what nationalism theorist Miroslav Hroch identifies as the first structural phase of a nationalist movement. In this primary stage, activists like Arana engaged in scholarly research into the culture and history of their ethnic group. Later on, Hroch theorizes, other activists work to create the nation, while in the third and final stage the national consciousness is formed among the majority of the ethnic population and a mass movement comes to fruition. 47 As part of his activist work, Arana created the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV, or Partido Nacionalista Vasco) in 1895.

Leaders of national minorities such as the Basques often appeal to the ethnic identity of that minority, to a shared cultural and historical memory, and to the claim for the right to national self-determination. Part of the role of the minority leader is to develop an ideology, “including a cultural doctrine of nations and prescriptions for the realization of national aspirations and national will.” 48 The original ideology of Basque nationalism stems from Sabino de Arana’s pivotal 1893 work, Bizcaya por su

45 Clark, The Basques, 42-3.
46 Özkirimli, Theories of Nationalism, 144.
48 Norman, Theorizing Nationalism, 55-6, 61-3.
independencia (Independence for Vizcaya). Basque nationalism itself arose from Vizcayan nationalism (from the Basque province of Vizcaya). Sabino de Arana pulled together a Basque identity drawing on the ideas and beliefs that all seven Basque Provinces should be united, that the Basques were a unique race and that each race should rule itself, that the linguistic distinctiveness make them a different race, that they should engage in a nonviolent, parliamentary struggle for political separation and independence, and that there would be an internal political re-organization following independence, most likely through parliamentary democracy.  

John Sullivan writes that Sabino de Arana ‘transformed the Carlist desire for the restoration of the Fueros into something quite new – the demand for complete separation of the Basque Country from Spain.’  

Five years after its publication, following Spain’s embarrassing 1898 defeat to the United States in the Spanish-American War, in which Spain lost its last remaining overseas colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines), Basque nationalism evolved into a significant political movement. Basque nationalist leaders took advantage of a situation in which the central government in Madrid was relatively weak to advance their movement.  

In the early years of the 20th century, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) grew and developed an important link with the politically and economically marginalized ethnic Basque working class. This group was torn between class and ethnicity as the two salient mobilizing forces. The PNV developed two ideological tendencies, which

49 Clark, The Basques, 44-7.  
50 Sullivan, ETA and Basque Nationalism, 5.  
included ‘(1) a theocratic and anticapitalist tradition that tended to be highly critical of large-scale production and of capitalists’ exploitation of employees, and (2) a more typically “Western” or “modernist” tradition that favored rapid industrialization and private entrepreneurship as a way to organize society.’

The relatively weak Spanish unions operating in the Basque region and the tense relationship between Spanish and Basque workers hindered the Basque working class movement, so that in the end approximately half joined the Spanish labor movement and the other half joined the PNV, who represented them as Basques. The PNV benefited from expanding its base of support among the working class, and soon it became the most powerful party in the Basque region.

The PNV, which was strongest in Basque cities, promoted frequent celebrations of Basque culture and other nationalistic sentiments to mobilize the Basque population, while working to do away with the law that impeded the use of the fueros. Arana eventually called only for Basque autonomy rather than independence, primarily because he realized the Spanish state was too powerful to resist. As a result, ‘the ambiguity on whether the PNV was committed to complete separation from Spain was to persist throughout the party's existence, and served to preserve its unity by allowing different interpretations of Arana’s doctrine.’ As Gurr has emphasized, ethnic mobilization, such as the growing support behind the PNV, is often aided by discrimination (‘the extent of socially derived inequalities in group members’ material well-being or political access in comparison with other social groups’) and by ethnic

52 Zirakzadeh, A Rebellious People, 111.

53 Clark, Euskadi, 88-9.

54 Sullivan, ETA and Basque Nationalism, 7-9.
group identity. The greater the discrimination among members of the minority group, the more likely it is for ethnic mobilization to take place.²⁵

During the early years of Basque nationalism there emerged two principal tendencies: the moderates and the radicals. The moderates flourished during the first twenty years of the 20th century, espousing parliamentary democracy, protecting law and order, and promoting themselves as a regionalist, rather than a separatist, party. The radicals emerged during the 1923-30 dictatorship of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, during a time when the PNV was forced underground. Their main agenda was the ‘renationalization of Euzkadi’; in other words, bringing the Basque culture and language back to the Basque Country.²⁶ At the start of the dictatorship Primo de Rivera outlawed political nationalism, which would undermine the unity of the Spanish state.²⁷ The radicals promoted Basque culture through organizations and mass mobilization as a centerpiece of Basque nationalism.²⁸ They created a sense of solidarity (using nationalism and ethnicity) among the Basques, creating the opportunity to advance the nationalist movement within the Basque Country and for future collective action. Tarrow acknowledges that ‘leaders can only create a social movement when they tap more deep-rooted feelings of solidarity and identity.’²⁹ The PNV resurfaced with Primo de Rivera’s departure from Spain in 1930 and prepared itself for the forthcoming 1931

²⁷ Clark, *The Basques*, 49.
²⁹ Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 5.
elections. Spain soon began its second experiment with republicanism in less than sixty years, and the Basques realized this would be their chance for gaining political autonomy.

The most important issue in Basque politics during the time of the Second Republic (1931-36) was the fight for the Basque autonomy statute. In the other regions of Spain, tensions were mounting between the liberals (who wanted a republican Spain) and the conservatives (who wanted a return to the monarchy and traditional institutions of society). The Basque region was struck by uprisings and open rebellion by striking workers in October 1934, who were angry with the anti-autonomy policies of the conservatives, who had come to power through elections earlier that year.\textsuperscript{60} The Solidarity of Basque Workers (SOV), a group of urban workers in the Cantabrian Mountains, participated in the Asturias Revolution of 1934.\textsuperscript{61} The Spanish military, however, suppressed the Basque uprisings. The tide of Spanish politics abruptly changed once again as a result of the 1936 elections, which brought the Popular Front, a coalition of liberals, socialists, Communists and anarchists, to power. Later that year, on October 1, 1936, the Spanish parliament approved the Basque autonomy statute despite resistance from the Navarrese, who voted against the statute.\textsuperscript{62} By that point in time, however, the Basque autonomy statute was immaterial. General Franco’s conservative forces, which had initiated a military uprising in July, had plunged Spain into the depths of civil war.

The Spanish Civil War divided the Basques between the traditionalists and the liberals. The cities of Pamplona (Navarra) and Vitoria (Alava) sided with Franco’s rebels

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\item \textsuperscript{60} Heiberg, \textit{The Making}, 84.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Zirakzadeh, \textit{A Rebellious People}, 60.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Sullivan, \textit{ETA and Basque Nationalism}, 14.
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while the urban centers of Bilbao (Vizcaya) and San Sebastián (Guipúzcoa) sided with
the republicans. In Navarra and Alava, supporters of the Republic or of Basque
nationalism were imprisoned and executed; the same occurred to supporters of the rebels
in Bilbao and San Sebastián until the PNV took control over the situation. The issue of
autonomy would be critical for determining which side the PNV would support. The
Spanish Republic guaranteed Basque autonomy while the rebels fought for centralized
power in Madrid with no autonomy measures.\textsuperscript{63} The PNV made its decision over which
side to support the second day of the military rebellion, when it declared that its
‘principles carry it without doubt to come down on the side of the people and the
Republic, in consonance with the democratic and republican regime that was peculiar to
our People in its centuries of liberty.’\textsuperscript{64} The civil war and its aftermath would prove
disastrous for the Basques.

The rebel forces successfully isolated the Basque region from the rest of Spain.
France and England, while for the most part sympathetic with the Republicans, refused to
provide military assistance to them because they signed a Non-Intervention Agreement.
In the spring of 1937 the rebels launched a major military offensive into the Basque
region. On March 31 Hitler’s German Condor Legion, who actively supported Franco’s
rebels, systematically bombed the Basque village of Durango, which “was the first time
in the history of warfare that a civilian population had been attacked from the air for other
than military reasons.”\textsuperscript{65} Less than one month later, on April 26, 1937, the Condor

\textsuperscript{63} Clark, \textit{The Basques}, 59-61.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid, 59.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid, 70.
Legion struck the Basque region again, when it carried out its campaign of saturation bombing of Guernica, a city held sacred by the Basques. The three hour attack destroyed the city and killed 1,654 civilians. On June 19, 1937, Bilbao fell to the rebels and the Basques were defeated; the Spanish Republic itself succumbed to Franco’s forces in 1939. Thus ended the Basques’ short experiment in autonomy and self-government, and began for many Basques their new life in exile. Besides military defeat and loss of autonomy, the outcome of the civil war ushered in a long period of severe repression for the Basques under the military dictatorship of Francisco Franco.

Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937)

Image from www.barewalls.com
The Early Franco Era and the Basque Resistance Movement (1939-59)

Gurr and Harff theorize that the ‘more strongly a person identifies with an ethnic group that is subject to discrimination, the more likely he or she is motivated to action.” 66

The Franco era was a time of violent repression for the Basques. Franco’s answer to dealing with Basque nationalists was to completely destroy them. As the civil war ended, Franco’s death squads executed 21,780 Basques. 67 The killing spree was horrendous and widespread. Those who were not murdered outright were brought before Spanish war tribunals administered by the Falange (Spanish Fascist Party), which utilized torture to extract confessions; large numbers of these prisoners were also killed. Franco’s military apparatus took between 4,000 and 7,000 Basque political prisoners during this time shortly after the end of the war. The Basques suffered an intense form of group discrimination, which Gurr defines as ‘political, economic and cultural restrictions that are invidiously imposed on members of ethnic, religious and other communal minorities as a matter of public policy or social practice.” 68 The Basques were singled out and systematically targeted for repression compared to other groups in Spain. This was so because the movement for Basque autonomy directly threatened the central power and authority of the Spanish state like no other group in Spain. The Spanish military, then in power, was absolutely against the break-up of Spain. The central government needed the Basque region, which was one of the two most prosperous regions in the country, for Spain’s economic development and to provide jobs for Spaniards. General Gil Yuste, the

66 Gurr and Harff, Ethnic Conflict, 84.
68 Gurr, Peoples Versus States, 106.
Spanish military governor of Alava, declared, “These abominable separatists do not deserve to have a homeland. Basque nationalism must be ruined, trampled underfoot, ripped out by its roots.”

Charles Tilly defines repression as ‘any action by another group which raises the contender’s cost of collection action.’ With Basque military defeat following the 1937 fall of Bilbao, most PNV leaders were either imprisoned or living in exile; at this time there did not exist any type of Basque resistance or clandestine organizational framework. During World War II the PNV supported the allies and the still functioning Spanish government-in-exile, under the belief that the Franco regime would end with an allied victory and that a republican Spain would reestablish the Basque autonomy statute. Basque expectations, however, were not realized, and the Basque resistance soon started with jailed PNV leaders organizing among them. Throughout the 1940s greater organization took place (women played a key role in keeping the resistance movement alive), and these emerging clandestine leaders formed a Resistance Committee. This took place in an environment of government repression, mass detentions, and suppression of Basque cultural expression, including the outlawing of the Basque language, Euskera. To make matters worse, workers’ real wages declined during the 1940s, unemployment increased, and a 1947 general strike resulted in the arrest of 6000 Basques and the laying off of 15,000 workers. The 1947 strike ‘posed the sharpest threat to the dictatorship

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69 Clark, The Basques, 80-3.

70 Tarrow, Power in Movement, 92.

71 Sullivan, ETA and Basque Nationalism, 21.

72 Clark, The Basques, 79-86.

73 Zirakzadeh, A Rebellious People, 63-4.
since the end of the Civil War.”

By 1950, however, the Basques had established the Euzkadi government-in-exile in Paris, who benefited from a sympathetic French government that was not on the best of terms with Franco’s Spain. The area of the Basque region which is located on the French side of the border became a safe haven for those Basques escaping the wrath of Franco’s security services. Gurr posits that the “most intense and complex spillover effects in ethnopoli
tical conflict happen among groups that straddle international boundaries because they draw in a multiplicity of ethnic and state actors.” Some 150,000 other Basques who had fled their homeland following the defeat moved to South America and Mexico, and these exiled Basques began to provide financial support to the government-in-exile.

Tarrow has argued that repression is often the source of a radicalization of tactics and causes a surge in collective action to counteract the repression. The PNV, however, took a rather passive role during these years, choosing to focus their efforts on strengthening Basque culture, such as through language, music, art and folklore. The Basque language remained the predominant language in rural areas, and Basque culture in general remained solid in private life. The PNV maintained close ties with the Basque government-in-exile and established new ones with anti-Franco coalitions in Spain. Its long-term goal was to achieve independence for the Basque Country but to do so through democratic channels; it therefore had to wait for democracy’s return to Spain.

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74 Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 22.

75 Gurr, *Peoples Versus States*, 91.

76 Clark, *The Basques*, 84.


78 Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 22.
This strategy contrasted with the more radical factions that emerged in Basque society who argued that Basques should not cooperate with Spanish political parties but rather should act alone in order to achieve the long-term aims of the Basque people.\(^79\) A relaxation of repression in the 1950s coincided with the formation of a new Basque nationalist group called Ekin, which means ‘to begin” in Euskera. The original Ekin members came from strongly nationalistic families who placed a strong value on the protection of Basque language and culture. When Ekin joined with the youth organization of the PNV, Ekin gained the ability to ‘expand through personal contact with trusted people from ethnically or culturally Basque backgrounds.”\(^80\) Among a group of radical-leaning and strongly nationalist perspectives, the Ekin group became increasingly critical of the moderate PNV and began to advocate national liberation for Euskadi by using armed tactics.\(^81\) It would be from among these radical groups in Basque society that the Basque insurgent group Euzkadi ta Askatasuna (ETA), meaning Basque Nation and Freedom, would give rise in 1959.

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\(^80\) Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 29.

\(^81\) Ibid, 28-31.
Rise of the ETA movement and Growth of Radical Basque Nationalism (1959-75)

Sidney Tarrow has suggested that movements create opportunities by ‘diffusing collective action through social networks,’” by creating political space for related movements to emerge, and by attempting to elicit reactions from the authorities.\(^{82}\) This understanding is very apt for the emergence of ETA. ETA was founded in 1952 by a group of seven militant students at the Jesuit University of Deusto, Bilbao, with the goal of raising Basque consciousness, revitalizing the Basque culture and transforming the Basque social movement against the Spanish government, doing so through the use of violence. Also of importance to ETA’s subsequent use of violence are its origins ‘in a culture which hated all things Spanish.’\(^{83}\) Originally part of the PNV, ETA broke ranks with the moderate Basque Nationalist Party on July 31, 1959 because it was upset by the PNV’s lack of commitment to armed struggle against Franco. July 31 also happens to be the saint’s day of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the patron saint of the Basque Country.

ETA was made up of young middle-class intellectuals (who would become the future leaders) and young urban industrial activists (workers who would become the future militant base of the organization). Many militants were also recruited from seminaries and convents of the Catholic Church.\(^{84}\) The Church itself was a safe haven for Basque language and culture (Basque priests said Mass in Euskera, even during the Franco regime when the Basque language was suppressed), and ETA gained valuable support from Church-related groups. Basque nationalists have historically been fiercely

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\(^{82}\) Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 82.

\(^{83}\) Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 38.

loyal to the Church, and the Church in turn has been highly committed to the Basque nationalist cause. In May 1960, 339 Basque priests signed a petition sent to their bishops ‘asking for support for the rights of the Basque people.’\footnote{Sullivan, \textit{ETA and Basque Nationalism}, 34-5.} The role of the Church for the Basque nationalist cause has always been an important support base for ETA’s activities. For most militants, ‘ETA came to represent the means by which to revolt both against Francoism and against a stagnant Basque society.’\footnote{Heiberg, \textit{The Making}, 106.} ETA’s first mission during its formative years was to develop an overarching framework and purpose for itself.

Over the next nine years the members of ETA debated its mission and ideology. ETA had the same incentives that Gurr identifies as essential ingredients leading to political action, such as resentment about past losses among the Basques, fear of future losses and hopes for relative gains.\footnote{Gurr, \textit{Peoples Versus States}, 69.} They disputed whether the organization ought to emphasize ethnicity or class, nationalism or socialism, ethnic-Basque or integration of non-Basque immigrants into the struggle, and acts of violence and sabotage or nonviolent protests.\footnote{Clark, \textit{The Basque Insurgents}, 32.} After 1960, a rapidly expanding Basque economy resulted in a flood of immigrants from other parts of Spain searching for work. Workers in the Basque region gained power during this decade and could conduct strikes and walkouts with greater ease.

ETA came about at a time when rebelliousness was rapidly developing among the Basque industrial workers. While some ETA members disliked the flood of immigrants, by 1963 ETA had altered its position on immigrants and actually sought their
involvement and support. More specifically, “immigrant workers could choose to become Basque by integrating into Basque life, participating in the class struggle, and thereby become full members of the PTV (Basque Workers organization), irrespective of their ethnic origin.” Basque communists, wanting to take advantage of the mobilizing and increasingly rebellious industrial workers, “decided to gain working-class visibility, gratitude, and support through participation in all available public institutions, such as factory juries and the neighbors’ associations,” while “Catholic labor groups combined recent Catholic social doctrines with Maoist and Leninist ideas.” The socialists and communists, however, placed proletarian unity above Basque nationalism, preferring to unite the Basque working class with workers throughout all of Spain. While ETA put forth a socialist agenda, the Basque nation was the preeminent value within the insurgency movement, forcing it to compete for working class support against the socialists and communists.

Three ideological tendencies emerged within ETA during the 1960s: a proletarian tendency, a guerrilla-National Front tendency, and a “nonviolent, ethnically-orientated, and culturalist” tendency. This diversity of ideology within the ETA movement would compete for predominance throughout the course of the next decade, while reaching out to nearly all sectors of Basque society. In September 1964 ETA declared that “all Basques had a legal and moral duty to support the resistance to the oppressor” and

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89 Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 38.
90 Ibid, 67.
91 Zirakzadeh, *A Rebellious People*, 64-6, 79.
92 Ibid, 183.
therefore ‘ETA would forcibly ensure that people carried out this duty.’ Therefore, according to ETA, everyone who worked in the Basque region would be potential instruments of support and rebellion for the Basque nationalist cause. ETA’s essential purpose became to radically alter the Spanish state, either by toppling the Franco government or compelling it to capitulate to the rebels. ETA, however, had already come under attack from the Spanish government and was forced underground, where it began its campaign using violent tactics.

Violence is cited by authorities as an excuse to reinforce repressive tactics in retaliation against minority groups. Tarrow has hypothesized that violence ‘legitimates repression, polarizes the public, and ultimately depends on a small core of militants for whom violence has become their main form of politics. Organizers are trapped in a military confrontation with authorities that is virtually impossible for them to win.’ This insight fits well with the case of ETA. ETA began its armed struggle by using its homegrown action-repression-spiral theory in hopes of provoking a mass uprising of Basques against the Spanish government. The theory was borrowed from Franz Fanon’s insurrectionist model used to analyze the Algerian revolution, which was carefully watched in France where many Basques-in-exile were living at the time. The action-repression-spiral theory assumed a particular chain of events: debilitating labor strikes and violent attacks on the part of ETA would incite the Franco regime to carry out policies of extreme repression against the Basques. The Basque populace, in turn, angry at the severe repression, would rise up in an army of national liberation and fight a civil

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93 Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 45.

94 Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 104-5.
war for Basque independence. After the military victory, the Basques would lead their
new territory into a socialist state. John Sullivan, however, has argued that the purpose of
this ETA theory was ‘to destroy the legitimacy of the oppressor rather than to physically
drive the enemy troops out of Euskadi.’ As the 1960s wore on, however, ETA began to
realize that the action-repressive spiral theory would not succeed. The strength of the
conservative Franco forces was far greater than that of ETA, and the Basques failed to
rise up and fight a war for independence.

Other elements within Basque society, however, utilized protest and increased the
strength of the Basque nationalist movement as a result. Basque workers became more
active and militant throughout the 1960s, effectively using strikes to gain concessions in
the workplace while increasingly demanding for more far-reaching political reforms such
as the right to create independent trade unions and labor political parties. Strikes in the
Basque region tripled during the decade, and 37 percent of all strikes in Spain took place
in the Basque region from 1967 to 1974; in 1969, 50 percent of all strikes in Spain
occurred there. More than 75 percent of the Basque working class supported the
widespread use of strikes. A small victory for the rebellious workers came when the
Spanish government legalized what it termed ‘economic strikes,” or those strikes aimed
only at specific issues or concerns at a particular industrial plant. Industrialization and
modernization of the Basque Country were partly to blame for suppressing the Basques’
willingness to rise and up and fight a war of independence, but it did lead to greater

95 Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 44.
mobilization of protest in general, and the militant Basque workers would become important supporters of ETA. Despite the early failure to start a war of national liberation, ETA conducted several important acts of violence against the Franco regime.

Tarrow has posited that “disruptive collective action evolves into more radical and violent forms to create uncertainty and fear.” Repression, naturally, follows suit. Gurr writes that severe repression will lead to intensification and a more drawn out conflict. ETA’s first act of sabotage was the July 18, 1961 partial derailment of a train full of Franco supporters and civil war veterans. Although this attack was a failure for ETA, it forced the organization to improve its clandestine ways and brought it greater social attention. In 1968, ETA militant Txabi Etxebarrieta was killed by the Guardia Civil. The killing prompted ETA to retaliate by assassinating its first victim, the Chief of Police of San Sebastian, Melitón Manzanas. This in turn provoked the Franco regime to impose a state of siege of the Basque Country and to arrest scores of ETA members and supporters. This event culminated in the famous 1970 Burgos Trials, military tribunals set up by Franco to punish Basque separatists. ETA was almost wiped out as a result of the severe repression in the aftermath of the Manzanas slaying and before the Burgos Trials began.

The Burgos Trials brought widespread support for ETA throughout the Basque region and served to radically mobilize the Basque population. The Burgos Trials were secret proceedings and the evidence against the accused was questionable at best. Among Basques, support ran high for the jailed ETA militants, who likened them to acts

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98 Tarrow, Power in Movement, 112.

99 Gurr, Peoples Versus States, 132.
of historical repression against the Basques: ‘For a majority of the Basque people, the sixteen prisoners were legitimate successors to those who had fought for Euskadi in the Civil War.’ During the course of the trial, the PNV and the nationalist trade union ELA mobilized support, held large public demonstrations and called a general strike to protest the repression and torture carried out by the Franco regime. More importantly for ETA, the Burgos Trials elevated ETA to ‘a symbol of popular resistance to the Franco regime for nationalists and non-nationalists alike…ETA was above public consensus.’

The support for ETA, not only in the Basque region but in much of the rest of the world (due to positive foreign press accounts of ETA during the much publicized trials) strengthened ETA and brought it to the forefront of the Basque resistant movement.

During the Franco years, ETA not only carried through with high-profile assassinations and attacks as discussed above, but also advanced its campaign of attacks against the Civil Guard while enduring severe repression from the Spanish government. Tarrow identifies challenge, uncertainty and solidarity as the source of power of collective action. Prior to 1968, ETA’s highly selective attacks had been symbolic in nature, but this reality changed after the Spanish Civil Guard’s strike on ETA that year. The Civil Guard, whose presence and actions were a heavy grievance of the Basques, thereafter became a focal point of ETA attacks. ETA also tried to engage in a psychological war with their oppressors so that they would live in constant fear for their lives. During the Franco era the Spanish government imposed six states of exception on

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100 Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 93-103.


the Basque Country, resulting in the arrest, imprisonment, torture and exile of some 8,500 Basque political prisoners. The 1960 Decree Law denied due process to accused ETA members and prosecuted them in military rather than civilian courts. Convicted of crimes such as rebellion, sabotage, terrorism and banditry, they were punished with either execution or life imprisonment. As the years following Franco’s death would demonstrate, these years of repression radicalized ETA.

Neighborhood associations were an important component of Basque society that utilized nonviolent forms of protest while supporting the strategies of the ETA movement. When the Spanish government legalized neighborhood associations in the mid-1960s, they quickly became quite popular in poorer quarters of Basque cities among the immigrants, factory workers and the unemployed, where members acted together to hold demonstrations and to protest the lack of social services such as schools, hospitals, affordable housing and adequate sewer systems. ETA members encouraged the formation and participation in the neighborhood associations because they believed the groups helped to bring about ‘political decentralization, participatory democracy, and proletarian unity’ and could become ‘instruments of Basque popular revolutionary counter-power’ against the Franco regime. The neighborhood associations contributed to the Basque social movement by adding to the mobilization of Basque society and by supporting the ETA movement in its actions and in its goals.

The surge in popularity for ETA that resulted from the Burgos Trials allowed the ETA movement to recover the strength to plot what would be its most audacious attack to date. ETA’s most important attack during the Franco era was the December 1973 assassination of Spanish Premier Luis Carrero Blanco. Blanco was widely acknowledged

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104 Zirakzadeh, *A Rebellious People*, 82-96.
as the ailing Franco’s would-be successor. Clearly, this successful attack was ETA’s greatest victory during this period. ETA was proving that it was an increasingly powerful force to reckon with and that it meant to use lethal force against targeted members and institutions of the governing regime in order to obtain its goals.

Two ETAs emerged during the 1970s, and the organization decided on a two-pronged strategy of mass organization (ETA politico-militar) and armed struggle (ETA militar). The split occurred in 1974, the year before Franco’s death. ETA militar became the dominant faction as the decade wore on. By the early 1980s ETA politico-militar disbanded, but continued in existence via the political party it created (EE, or Euzkadiko Ezkerra) after Spain’s transition to democracy. This left ETA militar’s violent tactics as the chosen path by which ETA would continue its struggle to obtain its objectives.

The Spanish government issued frequent ‘states of exception” in response to militant worker and political strikes during this time period, continuing a policy that began a few years earlier in 1967. During such episodes of severely curtailed civil liberties the right to assembly, free press, and habeas corpus were suspended and workers’ commissions were made illegal. In addition, any workers who had held an elective post in the factory juries were arrested, imprisoned and tortured.105

105 Ibid, 69.
The ETA Movement: Members, Activities and Ideology

Gurr has theorized that ‘for groups with a language distinct from the cultural majority, the preservation of the minority language is key to maintaining the collectivity’s viability as a social entity.” 106 ETA’s cultural and linguistic emphasis directly shapes its outlook and its actions. While the Basque nationalism of Sabino de Arana in the late nineteenth century focused on racial purity, the issue of race is a relatively minor concern for ETA, so as to broaden its support among the large immigrant community in the Basque region. In 1962, ETA’s First Assembly decided that it supported the protection of human rights, trade unions, rights and freedom for ethnic and linguistic minorities, and a decentralized political authority that gave most governing authority to municipalities. 107 ETA’s position on the borders of the Basque nation includes all land areas where the Basque language has been spoken. This land area encompasses the four Spanish Basque provinces (including Navarre) and the three French Basque provinces.

ETA places high value on Basque language and culture as symbols of unity and self-determination. The Basque culture and particularly the Basque language are the cornerstones of Basque identity and by this point in time had come to represent Basque nationalism. In fact, ‘ETA viewed the degeneration of the Basque nation in terms of the linguistic genocide conducted by the forces of French and Spanish imperialism.’ 108 The Franco regime had outlawed the use of Euskera and as a result of this policy the number

106 Gurr, Peoples Versus States, 125.
107 Zarakzadeh, A Rebellious People, 151.
of Basques who were speaking the language at the end of the Franco era was vastly diminished. There was a pervasive fear that the Basque identity would become extinct, and ETA felt that the PNV and other moderate mainstream nationalists were not doing enough to protect the Basque nation from Franco’s repression. Promoting the defense of Basque language and culture would mobilize support for ETA. ETA also stresses the importance of Basque egalitarianism as a cornerstone of the future Basque independent state. Not only is ETA’s struggle one of national liberation against the forces of imperialism, however, but also a struggle for socialist ideals against the exploitative nature of capitalism. In the waning years of the Franco regime, Basque cities were polluted, ugly and lacked many basic social services. Since many of those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder in the Basque region were immigrants, ETA was attempting to draw in support from this group of people, who might attach themselves to ETA’s socialist vision.

The theory of internal colonialism puts forward that a peripheral region within a country is exploited politically and economically. A cultural division of labor emerges whereby the advantaged group obtains the best positions while a majority of the ethnic group is left with second tier jobs. Group solidarity occurs under such an arrangement when there are “substantial economic inequalities between individuals such that these individuals may come to see this inequality as part of a pattern of collective oppression” and also when good communication is present among members of the oppressed group. ETA believes the Spanish state exploits the natural resources and the people of

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the Basque Country and that the Basque Country suffers under a form of internal colonialism at the hands of the centralized Spanish government in Madrid. ETA uses the internal colonialism argument to justify its militant techniques and to work toward the adoption of independence, militancy, and social goals as a collective attainment.\textsuperscript{111} Generally-speaking, however, native Basques have better jobs than non-Basque immigrants. ETA may also be using the exploitation argument to draw support from working-class immigrants who would otherwise be more prone to support the Spanish Socialist Party. ETA has adopted a modern Basque nationalist ideology which states that the ‘Basques have and have always had an inalienable right to self-determination. Its economic corollary is that the Basque Country is entitled to exclusive control over and benefit from its own economic resources…It concerns the right to determine the manner in which political and economic resources are distributed between the Basque Country and Madrid.’\textsuperscript{112} ETA wants Basques to have total control over the political, economic and social resources native to the Basque Country without outside interference and exploitation. ETA’s concerns were for the most part valid ones during the Franco era, as Basques lacked any type of political control over their region and watched helplessly as Basque resources were diminished by the central government to fund the development of the rest of Spain.

ETA attacks are symbolic in nature and carefully chosen. The primary goal of ETA attacks, besides to damage or destroy people and property, is to create an impact on

\textsuperscript{111} Heiberg, \textit{The Making}, 112.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, 114.
the political environment and to enter into negotiations with the central government.\textsuperscript{113}

Attacks are well-selected, discussed and planned, and ETA members try to minimize injury to innocent bystanders. ETA targets (from the Franco era to the mid-1990s) were mostly aimed against Spanish military and police units; civilians and industry leaders are secondary targets (during the late 1990s ETA significantly widened its list of targets to include jurists, professors, journalists, business managers and political party leaders).

ETA behavior correlates with Tarrow’s proposition that the ‘centralization of power in repressive states offers dissidents a unified field and a centralized target to attack.’\textsuperscript{114}

ETA violence reached a high in 1980 (88 were killed), ‘precisely during the time when Basques were gaining a number of their objectives of regional autonomy.’\textsuperscript{115} Violence peaked at this time because much fear and uncertainty existed, and ETA saw an opportunity to influence the Spanish government into giving the Basques as much autonomy as possible. ETA exercises considerable control over its use of violence in order to influence the political process and to respond to changes in the Spanish political environment.

The profile of ETA members (etarras) enables an understanding of who joins ETA, how and for what reasons. ETA leaders tend to be either experienced leaders who have spent time in Spanish prisons and who often live in political exile across the border in France, or younger, less experienced leaders who have not served prison time and who still live in the Basque region living and operating undetected as ETA leaders.\textsuperscript{116} Etarras,

\textsuperscript{113} Clark, Robert P. \textit{The Basque Insurgents} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 123.

\textsuperscript{114} Tarrow, \textit{Power in Movement}, 93.

\textsuperscript{115} Clark, \textit{The Basque Insurgents}, 133-4.

\textsuperscript{116} Zirakzadeh, \textit{A Rebellious People}, 149-50.
unlike members in many clandestine insurgent groups who may be alienated and isolated, tend to enjoy normal relationships with family and friends. In fact, ETA has been able to survive because of ‘the ability of etarras to seek refuge and solace, as well as material support, from among those whom they love and cherish.’\(^{117}\) The social movement theorist Donatella della Porta contends that those people who choose to join an underground political organization already have a friend in the group, and that small cliques often decide to join together, such as co-workers, neighbors, family and friends. In addition, members tend to be politically active in legal organizations before deciding to join the ranks of the underground.\(^{118}\)

Etarras are overwhelmingly male, join ETA in their mid to late 20s, were raised on a farm or in a small village, have no formal education beyond secondary or technical school, and come from an ethnically Basque family.\(^{119}\) Etarras’ families tend to come from the lower middle or working classes. For most etarras, the decision to join is influenced by the environment in which they were raised. For example, ‘the commando of ETA fits so readily into the youth culture of small Basque towns, for young Basques have already spent as much as a decade of their lives with a small group of intimate friends bound in tight cohesion against strangers from the outside.’\(^{120}\) Basque youth

\(^{117}\) Clark, *The Basque Insurgents*, 141.

\(^{118}\) della Porta, Recruitment Processes, 158.


\(^{120}\) Clark, *The Basque Insurgents*, 162.
cultural groups from which ETA recruits includes hiking and mountain climbing clubs, cultural groups, and seminaries of the Catholic Church, all of which have a strong presence in Basque society. Basque socialization thus plays an important role in influencing potential ETA recruits to join the clandestine organization.

Etarra’s carry out three primary activities during their tenure as members of ETA. These activities include raising Basque consciousness through the formation of discussion groups and other community seminars, supporting armed attackers through intelligence gathering and logistical support, and carrying out armed attacks, such as assassinations, kidnappings, and robberies. ETA members typically work part-time in the organization for three years and hold a steady job at the same time, making it difficult for them to be discovered by the Spanish authorities. Tarrow has argued that ‘collective action increases when people gain the resources to escape their habitual passivity and find the opportunities to use them.” These experiences radicalize etarras and they spend a considerable amount of energy in bringing new members into the fold: ‘In the long run, ETA’s major contribution to Basque and Spanish politics may turn out to be its service as a crucial link bringing young Basques through their adolescence, radicalizing and training them, and then sending them back to attack the sources of their grievances through the institutions of conventional politics.” I agree with this statement, for it appears that former ETA members retain their radical Basque nationalist ideology while working pragmatically with the PNV or HB (EH). They secretly support ETA while

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121 Waldmann, Ethnic and Sociorevolutionary Terrorism, 241.
122 Clark, The Basque Insurgents, 158-9.
123 Tarrow, Power in Movement, 81.
124 Clark, The Basque Insurgents, 165.
working through legal avenues of political change. The PNV needs ETA to add action and strength to its voice. ETA, in turn, operates most effectively as a small, loosely-knit group, influencing the youth of today to be its activists tomorrow and continuing the ETA movement.

The political culture of the Basque Country is characterized by militant etarras who are in a constant struggle against the Spanish state and identify others as either friends or enemies. Donatella della Porta observes that members in clandestine groups often have previous experience and convictions for the use of political violence. As a result, they tend to ignore the use of political negotiation in favor of physical violence. For many Basques, violence is an acceptable part of the political culture: “The impossibility of giving expression to the Basque symbolic universe, together with the physical repression to which Basques were subjected, contributed to the construction of a dense network of social relations in which violence, both physical and symbolic, permeated ever more deeply into Basque life.” The constant renewal of ETA’s link with younger generations allows ETA to sustain itself (the average etarra remains in the organization for three years), maintain constant levels of support, and preserve the quest of Basque independence among the Basque people.

Gurr has proposed that “the greater the cohesion and mobilization of an ethnocultural identity group, the more frequent and sustained its participation in political action, and the more likely it is to gain concessions and greater access to power.”

125 Waldmann, Ethnic and Sociorevolutionary Terrorism, 246.
126 della Porta, Recruitment Processes, 163-4.
127 Safran and Máiz, Editors, Identity and Territorial Autonomy, 102.
128 Gurr, Peoples Versus States, 74.
Popular support for ETA among the Basque population varies depending on the dimension of support and the current state of Spanish government policy toward the Basques. An important feature of ethnic protest movements is “cross-generational solidarity” as a crucial support element.\(^{129}\) During the 1970s and 1980s a core group of approximately 12 percent of Basques consistently remains loyal to ETA’s militant mission. As a result, there are “about 200,000 persons who are intransigent in their advocacy of independence for the Basque nation and who see ETA as a perfectly valid mechanism for attaining that goal.”\(^{130}\) In 1980, unconditional support for ETA was at 20 percent of the Basque population.\(^{131}\) During the late 1970s, while many Basques (12 percent) disagreed with ETA’s violent techniques, they at the same time held a positive image of ETA.

Etarras receive reliable support from family and close friends, which they hold as highly important. In the late 1970s, three to six percent consistently supported armed struggle as a way to gain independence. Some 50 percent of the adult Basque population at the time believed that the Spanish government ought to come to terms with the reality of ETA, try to understand ETA, and either accept or at the very least negotiate with ETA. ETA supporters tend to view themselves as either ethnic Basque or as more Basque than Spanish and tend to speak the Basque language. ETA supporters also come from all social classes. While the core group of roughly 12 percent always supports ETA, higher levels of support oscillate depending on the conduct of the Spanish government.

\(^{129}\) Waldmann, Ethnic and Sociorevolutionary Terrorism, 243.

\(^{130}\) Clark, *The Basque Insurgents*, 176.

\(^{131}\) Waldmann, Ethnic and Sociorevolutionary Terrorism, 241.
Interestingly, “popular support among Basques for ETA is sensitive to changes in Spanish policy regarding regional autonomy. When policy decisions in Madrid constrain or block the development of an autonomous Basque regime, support for ETA climbs; when the Spanish government encourages autonomy, support for ETA declines.”¹³² This is most likely an accurate assessment of the time, for regional autonomy was the focus of debate and it was for this that Basque nationalists had been fighting. Just as Gurr argued, “state strategies of subordination and assimilation increase collective grievances,” the Spanish government’s forced subordination results in greater support for ETA.¹³³ When it was perceived that the Spanish government was moving away from granting autonomy to the Basques, this increased support for radical tactics in order to achieve the Basques’ goals.

Concentration of a group in a geographic area (‘ethnoterritorial dominance’) directly influences its capacity for political action while making violent conflict much more likely.¹³⁴ ETA members and ETA attacks are themselves fairly concentrated within the Basque Country itself. Approximately 85 percent of ETA attacks take place in the Basque Country. About 50 percent of ETA assassinations and 25 percent of ETA kidnappings took place in Guipúzcoa province, while one-third of ETA’s total victims have come from Vizcaya province. ETA members originate from the same areas where ETA attacks occur, which is mostly Guipúzcoa and the eastern third of Vizcaya. This geographic zone makes up only 19 percent of the Basque territories, contains 35 percent

¹³² Clark, The Basque Insurgents, 170-80.
¹³³ Gurr, Peoples Versus States, 81.
¹³⁴ Ibid, 75.
of the population, and is where 75 percent of etarras have originated. The small area of southern Guipúzcoa province known as the Golierrri is the most concentrated and important source of ETA members and for ETA attacks. Popular support for Herri Batasuna (HB) runs especially high in this mountainous area where traditional Basque culture remains strong, immigrants are few in number, and where industrialization occurred rapidly. This is the geographic stronghold of ETA. Where Basques are few in number, Basques occupy the low-tier factory jobs (instead of immigrants), resulting in a high rate of radicalization among this specific population of traditional Basque society, where pride and respect for the Basque nation runs very high. Rapid industrialization also threatened in a more acute way the rural way of life in these rather isolated mountain valleys compared to the effect new factories and the like would have in the large cities. ETA itself is “a product of a highly unusual socioeconomic environment, a blend of industrial production and premodern Basque ethnicity and language.”\(^{135}\) By 1984, support for ETA was highest and most concentrated in this area, and radiated out from the Golierrri to the rest of the Basque Country. While a majority of ETA attacks have continued to occur in the Basque provinces of Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya provinces, ETA attacks also frequently occur throughout Spain, particularly in the cities of Madrid, Barcelona and Zaragoza, among others.

\(^{135}\) Clark, *The Basque Insurgents*, 186-203.
Democratic Transition and the Basque Autonomy Statute (1975-1982)

During the three years following the death of Franco (1975-1978), Spain, under the leadership of King Juan Carlos, transitioned from military dictatorship to a parliamentary democracy. Franco died in November 1975, and during the early months of the following year Juan Carlos made formerly outlawed political parties legal once again for the first time since the civil war. This law included the PNV and other Basque political parties. In addition, Juan Carlos permitted the free expression of Basque language and culture. This represented a significant loosening of political discrimination against the Basques that had been a hallmark of the Franco regime. In July 1976 Juan Carlos chose Alfonso Suárez as the interim President of Spain who would lead the new government through the initial transition and democratic consolidation of the country’s political system. The 1977 parliamentary elections gave a victory to the new Suárez coalition, called the Union of the Democratic Center, while also giving an important boost to the second-largest political group in the Spanish Cortes, Felipe González’s Socialist Party (PSOE). By adopting a new democratic system and not returning to military authoritarian rule, Spain had successfully broken with its Francoist past in just two short years. The first major challenge for the new Spanish government would be to pass the referendum on the new Constitution.

In the months leading up to the 1977 constitutional referendum, debate flourished in the Basque region over the merits of the proposed constitution and whether or not it should be approved. The PNV purposefully remained ambiguous over the question of the future of Euskadi, and as a result negotiations between representatives of the PNV and
the Spanish government did not make significant advances.\textsuperscript{136} There were no Basques on the constitutional committee that wrote the constitution, and as a result the Basques had no representative to advocate their demands for autonomy. The sticking point for most Basques concerning the constitutional referendum was that it made secession from Spain unconstitutional (at the same, enhancing the powers of the Spanish military). This uncompromising position of the Spanish government led PNV leader Carlos Garaicoetxea to declare:

We demand that the new state respect two principles: the principle that peoples with sovereign power are the only basis for the constitution of the state, to which they belong for as long as the state upholds and respects this principle, and the principle that the state and its territorial representatives will always try to reach a consensus when delimiting their respective degrees of power and their spheres of action….As Basque Nationalists we cannot accept a conception of the state according to which the state is the basis and the end of our existence.\textsuperscript{137}

The PNV, therefore, called upon the Basque electorate to abstain from voting on the constitutional referendum. It denoted a strategic withholding of what Harvard economist Albert Hirschman has coined the voice option (or in this case the lack thereof, choosing not to vote) to drive home the point that the proposed constitution was not legitimate. In the end, the Basque electorate obeyed the PNV: 50 percent abstained, 11 percent rejected and only 35 percent approved the constitutional referendum.\textsuperscript{138} In the Basque Country, clearly a majority of voters (61 percent) did not give their outright approval to the constitutional referendum. The high rate of abstention indicated that a majority were not ready to accept the arrangements of the “new” Spain. In addition, many who abstained


\textsuperscript{137} Ibid, 146.

\textsuperscript{138} Heiberg, \textit{The Making}, 125.
from and most likely those who rejected the new constitution probably favored militant struggle in addition to or instead of political struggle.\textsuperscript{139} Overall, the referendum passed, and the new Spanish Constitution became the law of the land. Following the constitutional question, the regional autonomy question dominated the Basque political landscape from 1978 through 1981.

While the Alfonso Suárez government created a pre-autonomy government for the Basque Country in 1977, it was not until the Basque Autonomy Statute was voted upon two years later that any significant power was granted to the region. The pre-autonomy Basque government in place from 1977 to 1979 was an important symbol to the commitment of the new Spanish government to the question of regional autonomy. Spain’s new constitution made the country’s political system into a consociational democracy where power is devolved into various regions, allowing ‘various constituent parts of a highly fragmented society to peacefully and respectfully share the same state and political institutions.’\textsuperscript{140} Despite the effectiveness of consociational democracy in yielding peaceful politics in Spain, it has not been an overwhelming success. Strong ethnonationalist identities, not only on the part of Basques but of Catalans and Galicians as well, hinder the creation of an overarching, unified political community. The constitution (in acknowledgement of the lack of an inclusive political community) also created the Autonomous Communities, which are political subdivisions of the country

\textsuperscript{139} Cynthia L. Irvin, \textit{Militant Nationalism: Between Movement and Party in Ireland and the Basque Country} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 118.

located half-way between the provincial and national levels. Nineteen such political subdivisions were created under the new constitution.

The Basques received their own autonomous community, consisting of the three provinces of Alava, Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya, which are officially called The Basque Country. It did not, however, include the province of Navarre, much to the anger of many Basque nationalists. Most Navarrese, who consider themselves to be Navarrese rather than Basque or Spanish, had lobbied for their own separate autonomous community. Those Navarrese who consider themselves to be Basque live in the part of the province north of the provincial capital, Pamplona. Navarre, unlike the Basque Country is a primarily an agricultural province, could one day be included in the Basque Autonomous Community should the Navarrese people choose to do so via a referendum.

The PNV was willing to work with the Spanish political parties on the question of the autonomy statute, in contrast to the parties of the Basque Left, HB and EE, who advocated for the inclusion of Navarre, separation of the Basque Country from Spain and total removal of the Guardia Civil from the Basque Country. HB and EE wanted the inclusion of Navarre because this largest of Basque provinces has historically had strong ties to the Basque nation. EE stands for Euzkadiko Ezkerra, meaning Basque Left, was formed in 1977 as a coalition of Basque nationalist parties with Marxist tendencies and was originally linked to ETA-pm, which dissolved in 1982. Both HB and EE called on Basques to reject the autonomy statute. HB chose not to support the autonomy statute because “a statute derived from a Spanish constitution that had not been approved by Basques could not serve as the basis for an independent Euskadi.”

The dominant PNV, on the other hand, decided that on the issue of the Basque Autonomy Statute the Basque

\[1^{41}\] Irvin, *Militant Nationalism*, 123.
electorate should support it on the grounds that it represented the best opportunity available to them. Sidney Tarrow has argued that changing political opportunities in the protest cycle establishes ‘when struggle will lead to reform.’” As was the case on the issue of the constitutional referendum, the Basque voters responded to the wishes of the PNV. A large majority of Basque voters (94.6 percent) ratified the autonomy statute in a regional referendum, paving the way for the election of the autonomous Basque government in 1980.

The Basque government has considerable power over the internal affairs of the Basque Country. The regional government, based in the capital Vitoria (in Alava province) has the power to legislate on laws for the autonomous community, decide on a budget and to select a president for the autonomous community. The president also has the power to form a cabinet and to choose other ministers to form the executive branch of the government. The Basque parliament consists of 75 seats, with 25 seats being selected from each of the three provinces. Vitoria has exclusive jurisdiction over matters of social security, health, welfare, labor relations, education, culture, media communications and the environment. The Basque government also has control over the Basque police force. However, the new constitution enables the Spanish national police force and the Guardia Civil to operate throughout the Basque Country. The heavy-handed state-security apparatus in Euskadi (heavy presence of Guardia Civil and Spanish military troops in Basque cities compared to other parts of Spain), with its historical legacy as a violent and repressive institution and the continuing perception of it as a surveillance mechanism that stands accused of human rights violations (torture in prisons, mass detentions of Basque

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142 Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 177.
political prisoners, Guardia Civil violence), demonstrated the lack of trust and lingering suspicion of the Spanish government toward the Basques.

The degree of regional autonomy, however, is always subject to change. The Spanish government retains the authority to re-establish absolute control over the Basque Country in order to protect the interests of Spain, should the central Spanish government feel the need to do so. The probability that the Basque Autonomy Statute would be revoked is very slim, however. The Spanish government, while it carefully tries to hinder further expansion of Basque autonomy, has never threatened to actually withdraw the statute. The expansion of democracy and its implications for regional autonomy plays a key role in such matters because the ‘more democratic the political environment, the more likely ethnopoltical groups will be to voice opposition nonviolently.’143 As a result, partial expansion of regional autonomy and the consequently limited powers of Basque democracy play a contributing role to the perpetuation of ETA violence in the region. Many Basque nationalists openly acknowledge that the autonomy statute does not go far enough for their own good, primarily because the autonomy statute is constricted by the Spanish constitution, which forbids advancing the Basque cause of national self-determination and the holding of a referendum on Basque independence.

Following the 1977 general election, the Basque Country witnessed the emergence of the Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity) political party. Herri Batasuna, or HB, came into existence as a coalition of current and former ETA members and their sympathizers. Viewed by many political analysts as the political wing of ETA, HB chose

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not to participate in parliamentary procedures, and therefore left their seats vacant in both the Basque and Spanish parliaments as a sign of their protest. HB announced in 1979:

Fundamentally, Herri Batasuna will not participate in the Spanish parliament because it is the legislative body of a nondemocratic State and because this state will not accept our political demands. We will not participate in plenary sessions or in committees. In our decision not to participate we do not wish to oppose the Spanish people, only the state, which is undemocratic. Spain is something that is not Catalonia, not Euskadi, not Galicia, nor the Canaries.\footnote{Irvin, \textit{Militant Nationalism}, 120-1.}

HB chose not to use their “voice option” because they believe Spanish democratic institutions are not legitimate, or as Hirschman hypothesized, the exercise of the exit option depends ‘on the ability and willingness of the customers to take up the voice option.’\footnote{Hirschman, \textit{Exit, Voice, and Loyalty}, 37.} Advocating the exit option from Spain, Herri Batasuna had determined that the participating in Spanish democratic institutions would not be effective. HB claims that the Suárez government failed to give enough genuine regional power to the Basque autonomous government and characterized the new Spanish political system as one that cannot be labeled as a true democracy but rather a “fascist democracy’ and ‘reformist Francoism.’”\footnote{Zirakzadeh, \textit{A Rebellious People}, 197.}

Herri Batasuna’s viewpoint on the steadfastness of the new Spanish democracy stemmed in part from the continuation of Franco-like suppression methods by the Suárez government. For example, the host of strict new anti-terror legislation that severely curtailed civil liberties, mass detentions by the Spanish security forces of suspected sympathizers with ETA, and the heavy presence of Guardia Civil troops patrolling the streets of Basque cities all contributed to this feeling of the return of Spanish repression.
At the end of Franco’s rule, thousands of political prisoners sat in Spanish prisons, victims of the harsh and uncompromising intolerance for political dissent. Many of these political prisoners were Basque. King Juan Carlos issued three amnesty decrees from November 1975 to March 1976, virtually purging itself of all political prisoners that had been kept in Spanish jails. As ETA violence began to increase following Franco’s death, however, a combination of renewed states of exception, right-wing counterterrorist groups and new anti-terror laws quickly emerged that brought about a continuation of policies of Franco’s despised police state. From 1975 to 1977 an extralegal paramilitary death squad called the Spanish-Basque Battalion (BVE) engaged in a campaign of assassination and counter-terror against suspected ETA members in the Basque region of France. During its existence the BVE killed five, injured 34 and kidnapped two ETA members and supporters. With each death of an ETA member, supporters held large protests and Basque workers used general strikes to demonstrate solidarity with the insurgent group. In this instance, Basques used the voice mechanism to alert the Spanish government of the shortcomings in the way it dealt with the Basque people.

Meanwhile, in Madrid, the new Spanish government created several new anti-terror laws in 1978 that gave broad powers to the police to arrest and detain suspected terrorists and their supporters. These laws suspended the constitutional rights of suspected terrorists, and as a result the number of Basques in Spanish prisons increased dramatically by 1980. In fact, all 23 leaders of Herri Batasuna were arrested by the Guardia Civil and sentenced to 7 years in prison in 1978. In March 1981 the Spanish government signed the ‘Law for the Defense of the Constitution,’” which defined terrorism ‘as any attack on the integrity of the Spanish nation or any effort to secure
independence of any part of the territory, even if nonviolent.”147 The legislative and physical coercion represented an increase in the use of government violence against the Basques, and confirmed the impression among many that ‘nothing had changed” despite the regime liberalization that had taken place in Spain. Amnesty International, in its report for 1980/81, criticized Spain’s new anti-terrorist laws and the mistreatment of prisoners in Spanish prisons. During the transition years when the outcome of Basque autonomy was still uncertain, ETA increased its use of violent methods in order to strengthen the position of the Basque nationalists during the ongoing negotiations.

Commenting on the sharp rise in ETA attacks during the transition period, social movement theorist Stanley Payne has argued that ‘acute fear of linguistic-cultural extinction pushed some Basque nationalists into unusually violent action,” while Ibarra Güell and Robert Clark theorized that the ‘fear of losing ground to government reforms and a unique chance to remain of central importance led to an increase in violence.”148 Both interpretations attempt to explain the increased ETA violence. Radical Basque nationalist leaders saw in the transition from the Franco dictatorship to liberal democracy a political opportunity of sorts to let their motives and ambitions be recognized by the Spanish government and to advance the nationalist movement and ultimately, their quest for self-determination. It was true that the Basque language was in serious jeopardy. The percentage of the Basque population that spoke Euskera had fallen from 54 percent in 1868 to only 21.7 percent in 1975. The percentage of Euskera-speakers varied widely from province to province, from 7.9 percent in Alava to 45 percent in Guipúzcoa. ETA

147 Clark, Negotiating with ETA, 39-47.
was also fearful of losing prominence to the newly legalized PNV and of becoming marginalized in the autonomy debate. As a result, ETA made a tactical decision to continue the armed struggle, publishing a pamphlet titled ‘ETA against Juan Carlismo’ in which ETA proclaimed:

We cannot postpone the struggle because liberal democracy is nothing more for us than a tactical objective….Pacifist organizations are worthless to us; instead we have to create struggle organizations capable of winning over the power of the oligarchy, just as much if this power is exercised under dictatorial forms as if it is done under liberal forms…

Remaining true to its word, ETA proved itself committed to violence by making the period 1978 to 1980 its most violent one; annual assassinations by ETA ranged from 67 to 88 during those three years. This stands in sharp contrast with earlier periods in ETA’s history. Donald Horowitz suggested that acute anxiety (in this case, concerning linguistic and cultural extinction) ‘clouds perceptions and results in extreme reactions to regular threats,’” such as drastic increases in ETA violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Range of ETA Killings</th>
<th>Autonomy-related Events151</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959-1967</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Franco regime—severe repression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-1973</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>Last years of Franco—ETA assassination of Prime Minister Carrero Blanco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-1977</td>
<td>9-17</td>
<td>First Suárez government, Transition approved in referendum, Cortes elected, Constitution drafted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-1980</td>
<td>67-88</td>
<td>Constitution approved, Autonomous Communities given legal status, Second Cortes elected, Municipal governments elected, Basque referendum approved Autonomy Statute, Basque parliament elected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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149 Clark, *Negotiating with ETA*, 74.


As the transition in Spain proceeded and the future of the Spanish state was being decided, ETA violence increased, both because of the uncertainty and the availability of new political opportunities to influence the decision-making process with their agenda. In the end, ETA judged that authentic transition had not occurred in the realms of the Spanish government since Franco’s death, and therefore armed struggle was necessary to provoke the necessary changes that it desired. While this assessment is skewed to a certain degree (Spain was no longer a military dictatorship and had transitioned to a parliamentary democracy), very similar repressive tactics were employed against ETA by the new democratic government as had been done by the fascist regime, so in the eyes of ETA it was experiencing no change in treatment from the authorities in Madrid.

Starting in 1978, ETA has articulated five demands that it argues are essential in order for it to end its campaign of violence aimed against the Spanish state. ETA formulated these demands as part of the Patriotic Socialist Coordinating Council (KAS), a group of leftist Basque nationalist organizations (including HB) whose mission is to create unity among Basque nationalists, resolve disagreements and coordinate policies and activities. The five demands of KAS (known as the KAS Alternative) are:

1) Amnesty for all political prisoners,

2) Legalization of all political parties,

3) Removal of all Spanish law enforcement authorities (Guardia Civil, Policía Armada, and General Police Corps) from the Basque Country,

4) Better working and living conditions for Basque workers, and

5) An autonomy statute recognizing:

   a. The national sovereignty of the Basque Country,
b. Euskera as the primary official language,

c. Basque government control of all law enforcement and military agencies within
the Basque Country, and

d. Basque power to adopt any political, economic, and social structures necessary
for its own progress and welfare.  

Since the Spanish government refused to accept the demands outlined in the KAS
Alternative, particularly the demand for self-determination, Herri Batasuna promoted a
‘no’ vote on the constitutional referendum and an abstention on the autonomy statute.
HB leader Francisco Letemendía declared that HB ‘does not rule out any form of
struggle which could bring about an advance for the people.’ Social psychologists
Donald Rothchild and Alexander Groth, in a more unsympathetic treatment of HB, argue
that HB presented a ‘negative ethos of confrontational militancy’ that essentially
blames the Spanish government for the past sufferings and current threats aimed against
the Basque people. Their willingness to resort to violence demonstrates a strong feeling
on the part of radical Basque nationalists that the Spanish government is neglectful of the
Basques and practices discriminatory policies against them. While I agree with
Rothchild and Groth in the sense that HB’s actions resulted from strong feelings of
discrimination, its willingness to resort to militant tactics considering the repression of
the time should not be characterized in ‘negative’ terms, for such a characterization
unfairly frames the conflict holding HB as the instigator, whereas in reality HB was

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152 Clark, Negotiating with ETA, 82.


154 Rothchild and Groth, Pathological Dimensions, 70.
simply responding in an equally militant fashion as they had been treated by the Spanish government.

While Spain pursued the transition to democracy, the Basque region slipped into the depths of a major recession. As the Basque region became more economically unstable, electoral support increased for nationalist parties. Through the early 1970s unemployment in the Basque region had remained below 1 percent, but started to rise quickly after the end of the Franco regime. In 1977 Basque unemployment reached 5 percent, and increased quickly thereafter, peaking at 18.9 percent in 1983. Support for nationalists in the Basque Country rose with the unemployment rate, as can be seen by percentage of ballots cast for nationalist parties in the Basque Country for the general elections of 1977, 1979 and 1982.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate in the Basque Country</th>
<th>Nationalist Vote as % of Ballots Cast in Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unemployment was not the only indicator of economic duress. Bankruptcies were on the rise as well, from 229 in 1975 to 3,922 in 1979. Basque GDP declined for three consecutive years in the late 1970s. The provinces of Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa, which experienced the highest rates of unemployment, also had the highest electoral support for nationalist parties. In these two provinces, a 1 percent increase in unemployment resulted in a 1 percent rise in electoral support for the nationalists. In addition to having the

highest unemployment, Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa have the highest proportions of residents that speak Euskera and pay more taxes to the central government than what they receive in return, perpetuating feelings of language-discrimination.\textsuperscript{156} Therefore the rising economic uncertainty for many Basque residents also played a contributing role in the increasing strength of Basque nationalism as seen in electoral contests during Spain’s transition period as well as for an increase in the exercise of radical nationalism as seen in rising ETA violence and in the emergence and growth of Herri Batasuna. Karl Deutsch, another scholar, has theorized that new competitive tensions ‘may tend to strain or destroy the unity of states whose population is already divided into several groups with different languages or cultures of basic ways of life.’\textsuperscript{157}

Following the tumultuous year of 1980, the year in which ETA assassinations peaked, the violence started to decline moderately as the situation in the Basque Country began to be less uncertain and the Basque government began to exercise their new autonomous rights and powers. Spain itself would take an important step in its democratic consolidation as a result of the 1982 general election. The Spanish people voted the Socialists into power, under the leadership of Felipe Gonzalez, as the replacement administration of the Suarez government. PSOE rule would also bring changes to the government’s relationship with the Basque Country and with ETA.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid, 322-30.

\textsuperscript{157} Rothchild and Groth, Pathological Dimensions, 73.

The 1982 election of Felipe Gonzalez and the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) to government leadership in Madrid represented a significant break from the Franco regime and began their dominance in Spanish politics for the next 14 years. The Socialists would renounce Marxism and move toward the Right to win the 1986 and 1989 parliamentary elections. Eager to shed campaign accusations that it was “soft on terror,” the Socialists continued the harsh crackdown on the ETA “terrorists” to whom they strongly opposed giving concessions. The Spanish government continued to pass new anti-terror laws, some of which suspended habeas corpus and gave powers to the state security services to commit crime against citizens.\[158\] Legislative and physical repression directed solely against the Basques represented the continuation of discriminatory policies practiced by the Spanish government. The Basque Country became increasingly militarized as reinforcements of Guardia Civil troops were sent to Euskadi to combat the ETA insurgency.

These new measures came on the heels of the 1981 attempted coup that was perpetrated by right-wing militants who wanted a return to the Francoist police state. Without doubt, elements within the Spanish military retained considerable power and influence over the policies of succeeding administrations in Madrid; the military would not allow the breakup of Spain under any circumstance and pressured the government for a strong role within the state apparatus. Historian Mark Kurlansky has queried, “How could Spain justify its huge armed forces, Guardia Civil and police if it no longer had

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\[158\] Kurlansky, *The Basque History*, 286.
enemies?” such as ETA. The PSOE, therefore, likely had to appease the wishes of the military in order to ensure that they remained in the barracks and to avoid a return to military authoritarian rule. It was under these circumstances that the Dirty War between government-connected right-wing death squads and suspected ETA members and sympathizers broke out in 1983.

Like the Spanish-Basque Battalion death squad that operated from 1975 to 1977, the Antiterrorist Liberation Groups (GAL) also utilized methods of assassination and counter-terror in the Basque region of southern France. The clandestine, right-wing GAL had close connections to Spanish security agencies and the Guardia Civil. During the Dirty War years (1983-1987) the GAL assassinated 28 Basque nationalists in France suspected of having ties to ETA, while injuring and kidnapping dozens of others. While GAL was the main death squad, there were other Right-wing violent groups committed to purging Spain of ETA, including the Guerrilleros de Cristo-Rey, the Antiterrorismo ETA (ATE), the Grupos Armados Españoles (GAE) and the Apostolic Anticommunist Alliance (AAA). In addition to the death squad activity, the Basque Country resembled a police state as Basque nationalists were rounded up on mere suspicions and thrown into Spanish jails. In 1985 alone the Spanish police arrested 940 Basques for political reasons, which increased to 990 Basque arrests for politically-motivated reasons the following year. The number of Basques in Spanish jails increased from 97 in December 1978 to 484 in March 1988. Torture was a common practice in the Spanish prisons during the

159 Ibid, 303.
160 Clark, Negotiating with ETA, 59.
161 Ibid, 46, 65
1980s, sowing seeds of distrust between radical Basque nationalists and the ‘liberal’ regime in Madrid. According to Donatella della Porta’s classification of police behavior, Spanish police tactics could be characterized as ‘repressive’ (type of behavior), ‘diffuse’ (groups subject to repression), ‘preventive and reactive’ (timing of police intervention), ‘hard’ (degree of force involved) and ‘dirty’ (degree of respect for legal and democratic procedures). Former fascist regimes, della Porta continues, ‘result in the lack of fully developed democratic cultures,’” and therefore ‘protest is perceived by institutions as a threat to democracy, and state reactions are perceived by the movement activists as a sign of fascism.”¹⁶² This perception inhibits understanding and communication and leads to a hardening of tactics used by both sides of the conflict.

The purpose of the GAL was to attack ETA’s safe haven in France (where most ETA members flee in order to avoid the Spanish police) since the French government was not helping the Spanish government to crack down on ETA. At the time, France was not interested in participating in operations that could lead to the creation of its very own ‘Basque problem.’ However, France did begin to respond to Spanish pressure and the presence of the death squads operating in its territory by deporting 23 ETA members from France and extraditing three others directly to Spain in 1984.¹⁶³ When Jacques Chirac became Prime Minister of France in 1986, French-Spanish cooperation deepened and France began making it a regular habit to deport ETA members to Spain. In this respect the GAL violence proved successful, for the cross-border cooperation has

¹⁶² Donatella della Porta, Social Movements and the State: Thoughts on the Policing of Protest. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66, 83.

¹⁶³ Clark, Negotiating With ETA, 63.
increased the pressure on ETA and increased its costs of waging armed struggle against Spain when its historic safe haven in France is not as safe as it once was. In the evolving nature of the Basque protest cycle, the French government emerged as a new threat (although not nearly as great as Spain), but nonetheless France’s engagement in Basque affairs signifies a new opportunity for mobilization on the part of French Basques, including the potential spread of the Basque conflict.

The Spanish security agencies were able to weaken the ETA movement during the course of the 1980s, and it was from this position of relative weakness that ETA entered into negotiations with the Spanish government. The Spanish government made the talks, which were being held in Algeria, known to the public in August 1987. The Basque government was sidelined from these talks; many Basque government leaders complained that the Spanish government was impeding constructive dialogue between ETA and Vitoria. In announcing its decision to engage in talks with the Spanish government, ETA declared:

Negotiations are situated clearly in the context of the strategy of a prolonged war of attrition that the Basque revolutionary process has always defended…we understand that a military victory over the states that oppress and divide us is not viable in the present conditions, and we are adopting a tactic of irreversible conquests by means of the creation of favorable correlations of forces that emerge through negotiations.164

By articulating its grievances and squaring the blame on the Spanish government, ETA is able to “construct larger frames of meaning that will resonate with a population’s cultural predispositions”165 and build support for itself. ETA wanted to negotiate with Spanish political representatives, not police representatives, over the issues of Spanish law

164 Ibid, 188.

165 Tarrow, Power in Movement, 122.
enforcement agencies operating in the Basque Country, the status of Navarre and the Basque right to self-determination (this would show ETA’s relative strength in relation to the Spanish government). The Spanish government, however, would only negotiate so-called ‘technical’ issues directly with ETA, such as public order and security, but would leave ‘political’ issues, such as status of Navarre and right to self-determination for talks with the Basque government.

*Negotiating Positions (As relevant today as in 1980s).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Spanish Position</th>
<th>ETA’s Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truce / Negotiations</td>
<td>Last cease-fire ended Dec. 1999</td>
<td>Truce before Talks</td>
<td>Truce and Talks together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amnesty</td>
<td>Selective Amnesty</td>
<td>Selective Amnesty</td>
<td>Immediate, unconditional amnesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legalization of all political parties</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Not an Issue</td>
<td>Not an Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal of all Spanish police and Guardia Civil</td>
<td>Basque police, but no withdrawal of Spanish forces</td>
<td>Phased Reduction after cease-fire</td>
<td>Phased total withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better conditions for Basque workers</td>
<td>Possible under Basque autonomy statute</td>
<td>Not an Issue</td>
<td>Not an Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy Statute</td>
<td>Done, but not complete</td>
<td>Existing Institutions available</td>
<td>Statute not legitimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not possible</td>
<td>Essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navarre integrated</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Navarrese decide</td>
<td>Process negotiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euskera official language</td>
<td>Co-official</td>
<td>Basque Issue</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control over police and army</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>Phased total withdrawal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another source of disagreement between ETA and the Spanish government was the issue of ending violence before entering into negotiations. ETA naturally refused to halt its violence before entering into negotiations, since halting the armed struggle was the only

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166 Ibid, 234.
real bargaining chip it could bring to the negotiations in the first place.\textsuperscript{167} The Spanish government, unwilling to make concessions, made the tactical decision in 1989 that ‘the costs of the conflict [with ETA] are far less than the costs of the potential secession of the Basque provinces.’\textsuperscript{168} The Basque Country is an important source of oil and nuclear energy for Spain and is rich in steel, shipyards, banking assets and weapons facilities. The Basque Country is also Spain’s primary region for receiving foreign investment and tax revenue. ETA views the situation in terms of internal colonialism, that the Basque Country (the periphery) is exploited by the central government in Madrid (the core). As a result, the talks broke down and ETA resumed its killing spree.

The ETA movement strengthened in the late 1980s in the wake of the Dirty War and the breakdown in negotiations with the Spanish government. Both events served to mobilize support for ETA and HB. The PNV meanwhile suffered a small split in 1986 when a breakaway party called Eusko Alkartasuna (Basque Solidarity, or EA) formed. EA holds similar positions to the PNV but is even more committed to the issue of Basque self-determination. In 1987 Herri Batasuna surprised Spain and the rest of Europe when it gained enough votes (many of which came from outside the Basque Country) for a seat in Spain’s part of the European Parliament. Support for ETA slipped, though, when an ETA bomb detonated in a Barcelona market killed 21 shoppers. Ted Robert Gurr acknowledges the potential for loss of movement support due to use of violence and terrorism; he goes on to hypothesize that in advanced industrial democracies pressure will

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid, 229-39.

mount on the ethnopolitical group to use protest rather than rebellion. In January 1988 the PNV and PSOE signed the “Agreement for the Normalization and Pacification of Euskadi,” which condemned all violence and the existence of ETA. Indeed, as the conflict entered the 1990s, a growing peace movement was taking root in the Basque Country by those who had had enough of the violence and bloodshed.

The peace movements have grown from the grassroots level of Basque society by citizens who believe “that Basque society has some kind of responsibility for the existence and persistence of the violence” and therefore the Basque people need to resolve it. The peace movement largely represents those people who had never before voiced their opposition to ETA out of fear of reprisals. Now this segment of society is not only trying to diminish the support that ETA receives but also actively condemns rights violations by the Spanish law enforcement agencies and politicians. More confident in themselves and less afraid to voice their dissent, peace demonstrators stage increasingly large street mobilizations to protest the seemingly ceaseless violence. Most people and political parties in the Basque Country agree that violence is not necessary to solve political problems.

**Question: Do you agree that violence is not necessary to solve political problems?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Reply</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


172 Ibid, 497.
Question: Does your party support the social mobilization against violence? (% agrees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PNV</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gesto por la Paz (Gesture toward Peace) and Elkarri (Among all of us) are two peace groups that emerged in the early 1990s. Gesto por la Paz mobilizes in the street and has 1,500 active supporters, 20,000 regular supporters and up to 40,000 occasional supporters. Urban supporters tend to be young while rural supporters tend to be older. The group is supportive of Spanish democracy and promotes an end to violence. Elkarri, meanwhile, is more of an intellectual group that analyzes the political context, announces its line of reasoning and works on promoting dialogue among different perspectives on the violence. Unlike Gesto, Elkarri is critical of Spanish democracy and believes that the political steps taken by the Spanish government have been ineffective. With the growing strength of the peace movements in the Basque Country, the Basque people are decidedly choosing to use their voice option to pressure the Spanish government, the Basque government and ETA to work harder at finding a political settlement that will usher in a durable peace to the region.

The peace movements seem to have had little effect on ETA violence to date. In 1995, ETA set a car bomb in the vehicle of Popular Party opposition leader and future Prime Minister José María Aznar, who survived the attack. Later that year an ETA plot to assassinate King Juan Carlos at his vacation residence in Majorca was thwarted by the Spanish police. In the spring of 1996 ETA detonated a bomb at a bus stop in the southern

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174 Ibid, 501-6
city of Cordoba, killing a sergeant in the Spanish military. ETA’s activities would set the stage for the next Spanish administration, that of Aznar’s Popular Party (PP), who won the 1996 general election. The PSOE finally lost its hold on power after succumbing to several high-profile political scandals and the effects of a deep economic recession. ETA would face an increasingly hostile Spanish government with the arrival of the conservative PP to power in Madrid.

With the 1996 election of Popular Party (PP) leader José María Aznar to the office of Prime Minister of Spain (he was re-elected in 2000), the new Spanish government decided on a no-holds barred approach in dealing with ETA. The PP has never enjoyed strong support from the Basque Country (nor from Catalonia) due to the party’s conservative stance on regional autonomy and its historical ties to Francoism. Aznar vowed to defeat the ETA movement during the campaign. ETA reacted to the harsh words of Aznar by focusing their attacks on municipal councilors of the ruling PP. One such attack provoked widespread outrage against ETA. It was the kidnapping and murder of the young PP town councilman Miguel Angel Blanco in July 1997 (after the Spanish government refused to give in to ETA’s demands of transferring ETA prisoners to jails in the Basque Country) that provoked large protests and street demonstrations throughout Spain. Blanco was a young, well-liked politician and his much-publicized kidnapping drew widespread support for his life; when his dead body was found people throughout Spain were outraged. At a time when street mobilizations against ETA violence were becoming increasingly frequent, over 6 million Spaniards protested throughout the country, including a 1 million-plus crowd that demonstrated against the slaying in central Madrid.

One of the groups that organizes such anti-ETA demonstrations is the anti-terrorist group Basta Ya! (Enough is Enough) which mobilizes against ETA because it says ETA tries to de-legitimize the Spanish democratic political system. Several weeks after the anti-ETA protests associated with the Blanco slaying, however, sizable street mobilizations in Basque cities (including a nearly 20,000-strong march in San Sebastian)
came out into the streets to demonstrate support and solidarity for ETA and for Basque independence. Many of these groups that showed their support for ETA are part of the Basque Patriot Movement, which considers the Basque Country to be an occupied state and jailed ETA members to be political prisoners. The increase in hostilities in 1997 on both sides of the conflict marked a growing polarization between the Basque Country and the rest of Spain and even within the Basque Country itself.

The following year, 1998, saw a shift in the political winds which brought both sides closer to negotiation. First, the former interior minister during the Gonzalez administration, Jose Barrionuevo, and the leaders of the right-wing counter-terrorist groups of the mid 1980s were convicted of a GAL kidnapping. Two years later a general in the Guardia Civil and a high-ranking PSOE official would be convicted of the Dirty War murder of two young ETA members. These developments were a signal that justice was being served for past discrimination (which according to Gurr is a good strategy for minimizing ethnopolitical conflict175) and were a signal that Basque rights could be respected. In this new context, ETA and the Spanish government engaged in secret talks, resulting in a cease-fire in the days leading up to the fall 1998 Basque elections.

ETA’s so-called political wing HB, now called Euskar Herritarrok (We, the Basque People), or EH, had been experiencing electoral declines in the past several elections. The whole HB party leadership of 23 had been arrested in 1997 (for the second time in its history) on charges of supporting terrorism (the convictions were later overturned by the Spanish Supreme Court). The PNV convinced the troubled HB to enter into peace talks, and on September 12 they signed the Lizarra declaration, calling

175 Gurr, Peoples Versus States, 164.
for multi-party peace talks and the right to national self-determination (Catalan and
Galician nationalists were also party to the Lizarra declaration). As a result, ETA soon
after accepted the cease-fire. Turnout was high (above 70 percent) in the regional
elections, and ETA’s gamble with a cease-fire brought them their reward.

1998 election results in the Basque regional parliament.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>PNV</th>
<th>EH</th>
<th>EA</th>
<th>PSOE</th>
<th>PP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent (%)</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seats (#)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Support for the pro-separatist EH increased due to the cease-fire (EH won over 18
percent of the vote and increased its number of seats in the Basque parliament by 3), as
did support for the conservative PP. The PNV finished first in the election, and formed a
coalition with the Basque Socialists.

During the year-long ETA cease-fire, for the first time in ten years, the Spanish
government engaged ETA in negotiations. In the one meeting that took place,
representatives of the Aznar administration refused to discuss changing Spain’s
constitution to allow for the separation of the Basque Country; as Gurr has theorized,
territorial integrity is usually the number one priority for governing elites.176 Instead, the
Spanish government announced that it would only discuss the issue of transferring ETA
prisoners to jails in the Basque Country and the process of breaking up the insurgent
group. Basque government leaders inevitably tell the Spanish government the same
things as ETA: the Guardia Civil must remove itself from the Basque Country and the
constitution needs to be amended to allow for Basque self-determination.177 After the

176 Gurr, Peoples Versus States, 195.
177 Kurlansky, The Basque History, 301.
first meeting took place, the Spanish government chose to engage neither ETA nor the representatives of the PNV in further negotiations. Noting the unresponsiveness of the Spanish government, ETA declared in December 1999 that it would soon terminate the cease-fire and return to open hostilities. In a protracted separatist conflict like this one, Gurr has theorized that some factions (like ETA) will likely sustain the armed conflict and reject any agreements that are made (although in this case there has been no agreement whatsoever). Part of ETA’s violence, however, is not used only to attack the Spanish government but also to pressure the Basque nationalist parties to commit themselves fully to obtaining Basque independence.

During pro-peace demonstrations in the Basque Country after ETA’s announcement, EH members stated that peace will only come when the Basques have the right to self-determination. The PNV concurred. Party President Xabier Arzalluz stated, “The problem is that there are people in Madrid who only want a victory. If autodetermination was negotiated, if Spain let the Basques go their way – not independence but freedom to go their way – ETA would disappear.” Soon after ETA returned to violence, and has noticeably widened its range of targets. ETA targets now routinely include business persons, professors, journalists, judges and tourist sites in addition to its more regular targeting of Guardia Civil officers, military personnel and politicians. As the death toll mounted in 2000 and 2001, anti-ETA protests reemerged in force, with particularly large protests in Madrid. The decision to “not negotiate with terrorists” seems to have provoked ETA into becoming more desperate and radical in its tactics. As Aznar’s police offensive against ETA deepens, the insurgent group is likely to gather support from Basque nationalists, as has happened in the past when the Spanish

178 Ibid, 300.
government chose to wage open battle with ETA. At the same time, however, the presence of pro-peace rallies could signal to ETA that it has to compete for support with Euskadi, which could lead ETA to radicalize even more. This might be a signal that the protest cycle will soon reach its peak and begin to wind down, and perhaps as Sidney Tarrow has theorized, the focus of Basque protest will shift away from armed struggle to political parties. Aznar, who believes that additional autonomy cannot be granted to the Basques, is angry over the PNV’s willingness to pursue dialogue with ETA and wanted to force out the PNV from their position as leaders of the Basque government in the 2001 elections. The PNV, however, gained in strength as a result of the election.

Since ETA terminated its cease-fire in late 1999, an emerging facet of the ETA movement has been the daily “street struggle” known as kal e borroka. Basque teenagers have been participating in this nightly ritual of violence and political vandalism, which features stone-throwing, destroying shop windows and telephone booths, inciting riots and hurling fire bombs at buses in Basque cities. Coined the “youth intifadeh,” the street violence can be seen as the work of ETA inculcating the next generation of youth fighters to carry out the work of the insurgency in the hopes of securing independence for Euskadi in the future. Indeed, most of these rebellious Basque teenagers belong to Haika, the ETA-directed youth organization, and come from the lower and middle classes and believe in the effectiveness of violence and urban guerrilla warfare. Most of these youths come from the ranks of the unemployed, which is high among young Basques. Their dissatisfaction is driving them to seek extreme avenues of expressing their frustration and channels them toward radical nationalist politics. The Spanish government is hoping to stifle this growing radical youth movement with tough new anti-terrorism measures that

179 Tarrow, Power in Movement, 168.
will punish these teenagers with up to 10 years in prison for such crimes. Referred to as “urban terrorism,” incidence of the youth street struggle has climbed 30 percent in 2001. Says one Basque youth about tactics being employed by the Spanish government, “It’ll only make the step to armed struggle easier..if they give you 10 years for a broken telephone booth, you might as well just kill someone.”

Donatella della Porta argues that overly zealous police and security tactics are apt to encourage the “more radical fringe” while discouraging more peaceful protestors. Such measures are likely only to alienate these already frustrated youths and deepen their commitment to the ETA movement and independence from Spain.

In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, Washington and Madrid have strengthened considerably their relationship, with the United States government pledging plentiful support and intelligence aid so as to fight the new “war on terror” in a more comprehensive way possible. The boost in Spain’s terror-fighting capabilities will enhance its ability to dismantle ETA cells operating throughout the country. (The notorious Madrid-cell of ETA was successfully captured following a major car bombing in the Spanish capital in late 2001, thanks not to enhanced intelligence-gathering capabilities but rather to the vigilance and courage of a Madrid citizen who followed the car-bombers and called in the police.) The European Union and the United States Department of State have both placed ETA on their lists of terrorist organizations and in the case of the EU it has extradited ETA members from several

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181 della Porta, Social Movements and the State, 90.
other EU countries to Madrid upon request of the Spanish government. At the same time, the EU, more tolerant of separatist and insurgent groups than the United States, has not taken the step of freezing assets of ETA despite strong pressure from the Spanish government to do so. ETA, therefore, continues to operate without significant additional threats beyond the Spanish government despite the increasingly hostile environment for so-called terrorist groups after the attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001.

The new global crackdown on terrorist organizations will surely make its effects felt on ETA, which now has the designation of Western Europe's last remaining significant guerrilla group following the unilateral disarming of the Irish Republican Army in the fall of 2001. Unlike the Irish peace negotiations, the Spanish government refuses to even contemplate the possibility of a peace process, preferring to deal with the conflict through means of the state security forces. In addition, there is a lack of external pressure and support for a Spanish-Basque peace process, and therefore the Spanish government likely does not feel the same type of urgency that was present in the Irish conflict. Finally, the overall level of violence is lower in the Spanish-Basque conflict than in the Anglo-Irish conflict, diminishing the necessity of entering into direct and sustained political negotiations. Doubtless, the Spanish government feels it has not reached its threshold of violence whereby the costs of continuing the conflict would outweigh its perpetuation of the status quo. In order for the deadlock between the Spanish government and ETA to break, the Spanish government will need to decide for itself that it wants to enter into political negotiations and work for a peaceful and lasting solution. The Spanish government controls its own fate. While the costs are rising somewhat of continuing the armed struggle, ETA is not likely to give up the fight
anytime soon. If anything else, support for ETA in the Basque Country is likely to rise as a new police state is forced upon the Basque people.

José María Aznar,  
Prime Minister of Spain
The Basques have elected seven of their own governments since Spain’s transition to democracy. They elected their first Autonomous Community government in 1980 (shortly after their autonomy statute was ratified), and have proceeded to do so in 1984, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2001. The primary political parties to seriously contend in Basque regional elections include the Basque nationalist parties (PNV, HB, EE and EA) and the Spanish parties (PSOE and PP). Here are the results.

**Basque regional elections, 1980-2001, in percentages by party and number of seats won.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>1980 % (seats)</th>
<th>1984 % (seats)</th>
<th>1986 % (seats)</th>
<th>1990 % (seats)</th>
<th>1994 % (seats)</th>
<th>1998 % (seats)</th>
<th>2001 % (seats)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PNV</td>
<td>38.0% 25</td>
<td>42.0% 32</td>
<td>23.7% 17</td>
<td>28.5% 22</td>
<td>29.8% 22</td>
<td>27.6% 21</td>
<td>42.7% 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB/EH</td>
<td>16.6% 11</td>
<td>14.6% 11</td>
<td>17.5% 13</td>
<td>18.4% 13</td>
<td>16.3% 11</td>
<td>17.7% 14</td>
<td>10.1% 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>9.8% 6</td>
<td>8.0% 6</td>
<td>10.9% 9</td>
<td>7.8% 6</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>15.8% 13</td>
<td>11.4% 9</td>
<td>10.3% 8</td>
<td>8.6% 6</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSOE</td>
<td>14.2% 9</td>
<td>23.0% 19</td>
<td>22.0% 19</td>
<td>19.9% 16</td>
<td>17.1% 12</td>
<td>17.4% 14</td>
<td>17.8% 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>4.8% 2</td>
<td>9.3% 7</td>
<td>4.8% 2</td>
<td>8.2% 6</td>
<td>14.4% 11</td>
<td>19.9% 16</td>
<td>23.0% 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter Turnout</td>
<td>59.8% 68.5% 69.6% 61.0% 59.7% 70.0% 80.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist Vote</td>
<td>64.4% 64.6% 67.9% 66.1% 56.4% 53.9% 52.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Vote</td>
<td>35.6% 35.4% 32.1% 33.9% 43.6% 46.1% 47.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

First, an explanation of the Basque nationalist political parties is in order. The PNV, or Basque Nationalist Party, is the moderate nationalist Christian-Democratic party which

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has dominated Basque politics throughout the post-Franco period. The PNV is pro-autonomy and since the mid-1990s is also pro-independence. While the PNV supports ETA’s goals, it does not (for the most part) support ETA’s means. The EH (We, the Basque People) which was formally known as HB (Popular Unity), is radical nationalist, pro-independence and is widely considered to be the political wing of ETA. The EE (Basque Left) was a nationalist, pro-autonomy and pro-socialist reform party that operated from 1977 (with close ties to ETA-pm) until it disbanded in the early 1990s. The EA (Basque Solidarity) was a nationalist, pro-autonomy and pro-moderate social democratic reform party. It came into existence in 1986 after splitting off from the PNV and operated throughout the 1990s. The PSOE is the Spanish Socialist Party and the PP is the conservative Spanish Popular Party. Both the PSOE and the PP are against further autonomy for the Basque Country and against negotiating with ETA.

The PNV dominated during the 1980 and 1984 elections, winning around 40 percent of the vote in both elections. In the 1986 elections, however, PNV support slipped 18.3 percent from 1984. This sudden drop in PNV support can be attributed to the fracture that took place within the party leading up to the election and the formation of EA. EA had become disillusioned with the perceived inability of the PNV to negotiate more power and autonomy for the Basque Country. During the next four elections while EA remained a viable political party closely resembling the PNV, PNV support remained relatively low, ranging from 23.7 percent to 29.8 percent. EA started off by receiving 15.8 percent of the vote in the 1986 election, but its electoral support declined in each successive election, so that in the 1998 election it received only 8.6 percent. Once EA had withered away by the 2001 election, sending most EA supporters either to EH or
back to the PNV, the PNV remained as the sole moderate Basque nationalist party, and PNV support rose quickly to pre-EA levels, winning 42.7 percent of the vote. Although it lacks a majority and has to rule in a coalition government, the PNV, with its 33 seats, is currently the dominant political party in the Basque parliament, as it has for the last 22 years.

The radical and pro-separatist EH maintained steady levels of electoral support during the post-Franco period, but lost a significant amount of support in the 2001 elections. From 1980 to 1998, EH support fluctuated in a comfortable range from 14.6 percent to 18.4 percent of the Basque electorate. EH won its greatest number of seats in the Basque parliament in 1998; the increased support for EH was most likely due to a popular ETA-ceasefire. The 1998 elections were also the first elections without violence. As ETA returned to armed struggle, however, electoral support for EH dropped significantly. EH won only seven seats in the 2001 election, which is only half the number of seats they won in 1998. It is likely that those voters who pulled their electoral support away from EH switched to the PNV. The 7 percentage point drop in support for EH plus the 8 percent of voters that had supported EA in 1998 most likely combined to make up the 15 percentage points that were added to PNV support in 2001.

Tracking support for ETA is difficult because support for the insurgency group transcends the support for EH. While nearly all voters who support EH most likely support ETA, a large percentage of PNV supporters also agree with ETA’s long-term goals. This is not the case for all PNV supporters of course, and many PNV supporters may disagree with ETA’s tactics. The ETA insurgency, however, lends credence and power to the PNV by supplementing their parliamentary debate with tangible struggle
against the Spanish government. PNV leaders, as a result, tell Spanish government authorities and the leaders of the two main Spanish political parties that they can either work and compromise with the PNV or deal with ETA.\(^\text{183}\) The decision of the ruling PP is to simply deal with ETA; the Spanish conservatives are in bitter disagreement with the PNV over the PNV’s willingness to sign a peace pact with EH, and as a result is trying to marginalize the PNV. The strategy has not worked and electoral support for the PNV in the Basque Country has increased by a significant margin since 1998. The PP is choosing to treat ETA as a security matter and its main policy toward ETA is to “crush” the insurgency through police, intelligence and state security mechanisms.

As far as support for the Spanish political parties among the Basque electorate goes, the PSOE has maintained steady levels of support throughout the post-Franco period. The Socialists have historically had a strong presence in the Basque region dating back to the late 19th century when the Basque region was undergoing rapid industrialization. PSOE support in the Basque Country was at its highest from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s (electoral support ran from 20 percent to 23 percent), during the same period in which the Socialists were in power in Madrid. From the mid-1990s to the present, however, Basque electoral support for the Socialists has fallen slightly, although remained constant, at around 17 percent to 18 percent. The conservative Popular Party has made steady electoral progress in the Basque Country since 1980. Most notably the PP received almost 20 percent of the vote in 1998 and 23 percent in 2001, currently making the party the second most powerful in the Basque Country. This increase in

support for the PP has coincided with its rise to power in Madrid. As a result, the two
most popular political parties operating in the Basque Country today, the PNV and the PP,
are the two parties that are the most diametrically opposed to each other; their
relationship has seriously eroded and there is much animosity and hatred between them.

Who are EH activists and what experiences have driven them to participate in this
intransigent party and formed their attitudes and perceptions on armed struggle? A
majority of Herri Batasuna (now EH) supporters are male, younger than 35, have suffered
personally the effects of state repression and have spent time as social activists in the
Basque nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{184} Prior activism that contributed to joining EH included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathway to joining EH</th>
<th>Percentage of EH Activists\textsuperscript{185}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental protests (anti-nuclear)</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herri Batasuna Precursor groups</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basque language and cultural groups</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-amnesty protests</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basque nationalist family</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in trade union activities</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETA</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth organizations</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in feminist organizations</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous experience in protest activities (whether environmental, trade union or ETA
related) and a strong nationalist identity (whether from family or language and cultural
groups) are the most frequent and the most important common denominator for those
who choose to join EH. Considering that EH is widely seen as the political wing of ETA,
it is somewhat surprising that prior experience in ETA is represented in only 20 percent
of EH activists. EH activists tend to believe that armed struggle is more effective when
the levels of state repression are greater. Thus in the provinces of Guipuzcoa and

\textsuperscript{184} Irvin, \textit{Militant Nationalism}, 134-45.

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid, 145.
Vizcaya, where the vast amount of Spanish government repression is directed (and where Euskera is spoken the most), there is also the strongest sentiments in support of armed struggle, and also the highest incidence of ETA violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province and level of state repression</th>
<th>Percent of EH activists that believe armed struggle is very effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alava and Navarre (Low levels of state repression)</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guipuzcoa and Bizcaya (High levels of state repression)</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language ability level in Euskera among EH activists</th>
<th>Percent of EH activists that believe armed struggle is very effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fluent or Semi-fluent</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited or None</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The more EH activists are able to communicate in Euskera, the more they perceive militancy against the Spanish state as a plausible strategy to advance Basque culture and the Basque nation. Both of these tables indicate that personal experience with either state repression or the Basque language (the preeminent symbol of the Basque culture and nation) plays a significant role in forming an activists’ perception of the effectiveness of armed struggle.

How do residents living in the Basque Country identify themselves? Responses to this question lay along a continuum, from those who consider themselves to be only Basque, more Basque than Spanish, Basque and Spanish, more Spanish than Basque, or only Basque. This subjective self-identification has been slowly changing throughout the post-Franco period, both for those who are native to the Basque Country and for those who make up part of the sizable immigrant population. Both groups, natives and

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186 Ibid, 201.

187 Ibid, 203.
immigrants, have significantly different self-identities, but over time the way they identify themselves has been coming closer together rather than farther apart.

*Self-identification among natives and immigrants in the Basque Country over time.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish more than Basque</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-50</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basque more than Spanish</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basque</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Basque Country natives are less likely to identify themselves as only Spanish today than twenty years ago (1.9 percent in 1998, down from 9.7 percent in 1979), and they are also less likely to identify themselves as only Basque today (36 percent in 1998, down from 50.6 percent in 1979). At the same time Basque Country natives are much more likely to identify themselves as more Basque than Spanish (nearly 28 percent in 1998 compared to only 15 percent in 1979), while identifying themselves as both Basque and Spanish remains as popular today as in 1979 (around 25 percent). Immigrants too are much less likely today to identify themselves as either Spanish only or Basque only. The percentage of immigrants who identify themselves as Spanish only has fallen from 53.4 percent in 1979 to only 15.1 percent in 1998. Meanwhile the percentage of Basque immigrants who think of themselves as Basque only has fallen from 12.4 percent in 1979 to 4.5 percent in 1998. While the percentage of those immigrants who identify

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188 Medrano, *Divided Nations*, 175. (For 1979 and 1988 data.)

189 Safran and Máiz, Editors, *Identity and Territorial Autonomy*, 103. (For 1998 data.)
themselves as more Spanish than Basque has increased from 6.6 percent in 1979 to 13.3 percent in 1998, more significant is the percentage of immigrants in the Basque Country who consider themselves both Spanish and Basque (up from 24 percent in 1979 to 45 percent in 1998) and the percentage who think of themselves as more Basque than Spanish (up from 3.7 percent in 1979 to 14 percent in 1998). It seems that Basque autonomy within the framework of Spain is creating a situation where people are increasingly likely to identify themselves as both Basque and Spanish, but tending toward more Basque than Spanish. This statistical trend seems to indicate that the Basque nationalist movement continues to grow, particularly among the immigrant population, which is more likely to identify with Basque nationalism over time. Since the percentage of people who identify themselves as only Basque is decreasing, however, I contend that support for independence is weaker today among the general population than twenty years ago.

Since Basque nationalists tend to think of themselves as at least equally Basque as Spanish, if not more Basque than Spanish or only Basque, a greater percentage of the Basque Country population fits into the self-identification categories of nationalists in 1998 than in 1979 (due mostly to changing perceptions of immigrants). Radical nationalists will overwhelmingly identify themselves as Basque only. From the data available, it appears that a smaller percentage of the Basque Country population fits into this category. This corresponds well with the election data showing a decrease in support for the radical EH in the most recent Basque elections. Moderate nationalists, on the other hand, are more likely to identify themselves as at least equally Basque as Spanish or more Basque than Spanish. The percentage of the Basque Country population that
consider themselves to fall into either one of these two categories has increased
significantly over the 19-year period from 1979 to 1998. This too corresponds with the
election data that shows a considerable increase in support for the moderate nationalist
PNV in the most recent Basque elections. Self-identity, therefore, seems to have a close
correlation with the decision to join either moderate or radical nationalist political parties.

How has satisfaction with the autonomy statute changed over time for the
Basques? Satisfaction or the lack thereof for the autonomy statute sheds light on how
many people may be willing to go to radical lengths to fight for greater levels of
autonomy or for independence of the Basque Country from Spain.

*Satisfaction with the autonomy statute among Basques over time.\textsuperscript{190}*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1987</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fully Satisfied</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly Satisfied</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest change in terms of satisfaction with the Statute of Autonomy comes among
those respondents that are fully satisfied with it, which has risen from just 28 percent in
1987 to 43 percent in 1998. This demographic is probably most supportive of Spanish
political parties like the PP or PSOE, both of which argue that enough autonomy has been
granted to the Basque Country and that no more is needed for the Basques. Enough time
has passed, it seems, for most respondents to pass judgment on the autonomy statute.
The percentage of those who did not pass judgment on it has fallen from 15 percent in
1987 to only 2 percent in 1998. The percentage of respondents who are either only partly
satisfied or dissatisfied with the autonomy statute has stayed remarkably static over time.
The percentage of those who are only partly satisfied with the autonomy statute fell

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid, 106.
slightly, from 31 percent in 1987 to 30 percent in 1998. The percentage of those who are dissatisfied with the autonomy statute also fell slightly, from 26 percent in 1987 to 25 percent in 1998. My conclusion is that those respondents who are only partly satisfied with the autonomy statute are likely to support the moderate nationalist PNV while those who are completely dissatisfied with the autonomy statute are likely to support either the PNV or the more radical EH. The continuation of either partial or complete dissatisfaction with the level of regional autonomy in the Basque Country is an important reason why support continues for nationalist parties in general and for the most radical elements, parties and the insurgent group ETA, in particular. As long as dissatisfaction with the autonomy statute continues, those who are dissatisfied are unlikely to pull their support for radical groups like EH or ETA. The most dissatisfied with the autonomy statute will point to the lack of the right to self-determination as the major missing component of the autonomy statute. Without this right, this group of people will view Basque autonomy as essentially meaningless.

This leads to an examination into the attitudes toward ETA itself among the Basque population and how those attitudes have changed over time. Since the late 1970s perceptions of ETA have grown more critical of the insurgency group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETA activists are</th>
<th>1978 %</th>
<th>1979 %</th>
<th>1989 %</th>
<th>1993 %</th>
<th>1996 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriots</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealists</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanatic</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorists</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

191 Ibid, 111.
Positive attitudes toward ETA such as they are ‘patriots’ or ‘idealists’ have decreased in the minds of Basque respondents during the 1980s and 1990s (from 13 percent to 8 percent for the ‘patriot’ classification and from 35 percent to 16 percent for the ‘idealist’ classification). Meanwhile negative attitudes toward ETA such as they are ‘terrorists’ or ‘killers’ have increased significantly (from 11 percent to 32 percent for the ‘terrorist’ classification and from 7 percent to 21 percent for the ‘killer’ classification). Attitudes toward ETA in the late 1990s, according to this data, span the range of both positive and negative associations, suggesting that Basque society is fairly polarized when it comes to their attitudes toward ETA. This fairly even split of positive and negative attitudes toward ETA projects itself into the electoral competition between the nationalist and the Spanish parties by the fairly even support for the two camps in the last two elections. The longer ETA continues its armed struggle, the more likely that the segment of the population that is least committed to the nationalist movement will grow tired and weary of persistent violence in the Basque Country, raising the percentage of those who tend to view ETA in a negative way. At the same time, many who view ETA as ‘terrorists’ could be the result of a growing international discourse on terrorism following a serious of high-profile terrorist attacks in the United States (1993 World Trade Center attack and 1995 Oklahoma City bombing) and the 1995 poison gas attack in the Tokyo subway. Finally, ETA may be viewed less as ‘idealists’ today than in the late 1970s due to the lack of ideological debate and intellectual propaganda put forth by the insurgent group over the last twenty years.
Concluding Remarks on Spain’s Basque Question

The Basque nationalist movement has sustained itself now for over 100 years. Initiated by Sabino de Arana and carried on by other nationalist leaders during a time of rapid social change, the nationalist movement took form in the Basque region and has continued to grow throughout the twentieth century. As Spain experimented with democracy in the 1930s and struggled with issues that would determine the future of the Spanish state, civil war broke out, culminating in the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. The Franco dictatorship and its quest to uproot all forms of Basque nationalism resulted in the radicalization of the Basque nationalist movement that has persisted to the present. The most visible manifestation of the radical nature of the Basque nationalist movement is the insurgent group ETA. ETA has waged its guerrilla insurgency first against the forces of the Franco dictatorship and then, against agents of democratically-elected Spanish administrations that have continued a war of repression against ETA to the present. The continuation of Spanish government repression, inequality between Basque culture and the dominant Castilian culture, and an acute fear of cultural annihilation are the principal causes for the persistence of radical Basque nationalism. What is the future of the Basque nationalist movement?

My assessment is that support for the Basque nationalist movement will continue and is likely to strengthen over the long term. Since the granting of regional autonomy to the Basque Country in 1979, there has been a steady strengthening of Basque identity among residents of the Basque Country compared to those having a Spanish identity. Basque identity has intensified because of the creation of the Basque Autonomous Community distinct from the rest of Spain, the increased use of the Basque language in
the Basque government and in the educational system (primary through the university level), the upsurge in recognition and participation in Basque culture (Basque literature published in Euskera, for instance, is experiencing something of a renaissance, as is scholarly interest in the Basque region), and the forces of globalization are pressuring Basques to protect and sustain their language and culture against assimilation. The growth of the Basque language is also likely to enhance the Basque identity. While the use of Euskera is increasing in the Spanish Basque Country, it is decreasing in the French Basque Country, where the language does not have the same protected status as it does under the autonomous Basque government in Spain. Politically, the PNV will most likely continue its dominance in the Basque regional government as sentiments of Basque nationalism continue to guide the Basque political landscape. The PNV is and will continue to be the legitimate political liaison between the Basque people and representatives of the Spanish government. Whether the Spanish government chooses to cooperate with the nationalists will largely determine the extent of future radicalization within the Basque nationalist movement.

Under current conditions, radical elements within the movement are also likely to grow in the near future. Today, hundreds if not thousands of radical Basque youth stand waiting to enter the arena of the nationalist movement; many will directly join the ranks of ETA, while most will at the very least provide crucial support to the insurgency group. Since many ETA supporters are below the voting age, electoral gains for the intransigent political wing of ETA, EH, will likely increase in the next Basque elections as these street fighters come of age. Support for ETA, of course, is much wider than what is seen in electoral support for EH. A clear majority of moderate Basque nationalists understand
the critical role that ETA plays in giving strength and prominence to the movement. As long as the Spanish government continues to treat the ETA insurgency as simply a security issue to be dealt with by state police and military forces, the radical elements of the movement will continue and strengthen. With each new act of repression perpetrated by the Spanish government, waves of new and even more radical ETA activists emerge to continue the struggle. Given the hard-line stance of Prime Minister Aznar, the conditions are ripe for further radicalization within the movement.

Besides the all too likely of an event that the Basque nationalist movement undergoes additional radicalization, under the current political climate the probability is rather slim that the Basques will receive increased levels of regional autonomy let alone the opportunity to hold a referendum on secession from Spain. The publicly-stated position of the Aznar government is that no additional autonomy for the Basque Country will be permitted; obviously, as long as the central government maintains this position and rejects the very thought of negotiation and compromise, no additional autonomy will be transferred to the Basque government. The controversial issue of granting national self-determination to the Basque Country remains barred due to specific clauses contained within the 1977 constitution. Even in the extremely unlikely event that the Spanish government granted the privilege of holding a referendum for national self-determination to the Basques, opinion polls consistently suggest that a majority of Basques would still choose to remain a part of the Spanish state. In the end, unless the current Spanish government decides to make an abrupt change in its Basque policy or if the succeeding Spanish government changes course, calls for greater amounts of autonomy for the Basques will continue to be ignored. The benefits for the Spanish
government of changing its Basque policy would include the diminishment of radical Basque nationalism, decreased support for ETA, and the political opportunity for beginning a peace process with the Basques and ending the violent conflict that has plagued the country for nearly 35 years.

Why do successive Spanish governments ignore Basque demands for greater autonomy, particularly when doing so may diminish the ETA movement and other manifestations of radical Basque nationalism? ETA itself issued a communiqué in October 2001 stating that ‘Peace is possible, of course it is, and ETA’s hand will always be held out. The conflict that Spain and France maintain with the Basque country can be resolved without missiles, in a democratic manner, simply by allowing the people to decide. ETA demands no more than this.”

Aznar rejected ETA’s gesture toward finding a peaceful solution to the conflict, choosing instead to compare ETA to Osama bin Laden’s Al Quaeda organization. The comparison of ETA to Al Quaeda cannot realistically be made; by making this statement Aznar was attempting to take advantage of the global condemnation of Al Quaeda’s unprecedented attacks in New York and Washington and mobilizing international support for the Spanish government’s quest to crush the ETA insurgency. The head of Aznar’s Popular Party in the Basque Country stated, ‘I want these killers to know that we are not going to give in to their macabre blackmail, that there is nothing to negotiate. The future of these criminals is behind bars.”

The treatment of ETA as a police and security matter will continue; this occurs

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despite widespread acknowledgement among both Basques (70 percent) and Spaniards (65 percent) that police tactics will not bring the conflict with ETA to an end.\footnote{William Douglass, Carmelo Urza, Linda White and Joseba Zulaika, Editors, \textit{Basque Politics and Nationalism on the Eve of the Millennium} (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1999), 33.}

Why does Spain not grant more meaningful autonomy but withhold the right to national self-determination? Obviously Spain has a tremendous amount to lose should the Basques win the right to independence and then achieve it. Such a maneuver could very well set off a chain reaction whereby Catalonia and even Galicia obtain their independence as well. Catalan and Galician nationalism continue to exist in the post-Franco democratic period; in fact, regional identities in both autonomous communities have strengthened just as it has in the Basque Country. If the Basque Country were to be granted the right to self-determination, it is most probable that Catalonia and Galicia would lobby for that right as well. A successful independence bid in the Basque Country, although not very likely, could embolden Catalonia, the wealthiest and most dynamic economy in Spain, to follow suit. Galicia, poorer and not as economically developed, is more likely than Catalonia and the Basque Country to choose to remain a part of Spain. Succeeding Spanish governments have had to contend with this very real and potentially destabilizing fear: that the Basque quest for self-determination will result in the break-up and disintegration of the Spanish state. The Spanish government deems the threat of the break-up of Spain to be sufficiently high that it refuses to even discuss the possibility of granting the right to national self-determination for the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia. The Spanish state, after all, is itself an artificially created territory—no single Spanish nation ever existed before the creation of the state. The idea of Spanish
nationalism has, as a result, never gained a great degree of salience compared to the country’s peripheral nations. The Spanish state, therefore, remains a fragile construct susceptible to the forces of the historical nation-regions. Could, however, the Spanish government both maintain the unity of the state while placating the radical and violent components of the Basque nationalist movement?

My contention is that such a scenario is possible should the Spanish government carefully proceed with negotiations with representatives of the Basque government while systematically decreasing its military and police presence in the Basque Country and taking steps to prove that it is truly serious about protecting and promoting Basque culture. First, the Spanish government will need to realize that the only way to bring the conflict with ETA to an end is through political negotiation and not through state-security force. The Spanish government should end its disregard for standard EU human rights conventions by immediately halting the practice of torture of political prisoners within its jails and the use of indiscriminate repression or mass detention of random Basques simply suspected of participation in radical politics. For example, Spain should no longer arrest the entire political hierarchy of EH, which it has done twice before. Also, Aznar should make it clear that he is willing to talk with representatives of all political parties that have won seats in the Basque parliament. In so doing he will need to eliminate attempts on his part to marginalize the PNV or to make illegal EH. Basque nationalism is not a temporary phenomenon that will simply fade away; it is the defining nature of Basque society and politics. By taking these steps, Aznar can set the stage for negotiations.
It would obviously prove problematic if the Spanish government entered into
direct negotiations with ETA, which Spain regards as a terrorist group. If the government
were to proceed with talks with Basque political parties, including EH, this would
provide ETA with de facto legitimacy and a sufficient voice in order to make itself heard.
The Spanish government could negotiate a temporary ETA cease-fire by allowing it an
avenue of political articulation of its grievances. The Spanish government might make a
goodwill gesture by placing Basque political prisoners in jail facilities in or near the
Basque Country. Spain is capable of reducing the sources of ETA support in the Basque
Country by moving ahead with its amnesty program for former ETA members and by
systematically withdrawing its high military and national police presence from Basque
cities. By taking these steps, the Spanish government will remove the most visible and
symbolic instruments of perceived Spanish aggression and military occupation of the
Basque Country. It is these visible and symbolic manifestations of Spanish might and
superiority over Basque society and culture that feed to the greatest extent support for
radicalization of the Basque population and support for the ETA movement.

The other major step the Spanish government should consider in order to diminish
social support for ETA is to prove to the Basques that it is serious about protecting and
promoting Basque language and culture. Fear of linguistic and cultural annihilation are
the other significant reasons why support for ETA and radical Basque nationalism exists.
The Basque regional government provides financial support for Basque schools and the
training of teachers to learn and teach in Euskera, in addition to public schools where
Castilian is the language of instruction. Aznar should make the Basque language truly
coequal with Castilian by making it co-official not only in the Basque Country but in the
rest of the country as well. The Spanish government would be wise to extend this policy to the Catalans and Galicians as well, making Catalan and Gallego equal with Castilian as well. Taking this step should diminish Basque feelings that their language is second-class to Castilian, and in doing so will result in feelings that there is less of a need for the Basque Country to secede from the rest of Spain. The Spanish government can also provide direct monetary support for Basque cultural institutions and the promotion of Basque culture throughout all of Spain. This will reduce fears of potential cultural annihilation. It is also a very symbolic (in addition to a rather practical measure) that will do much to bring about a change in Basque sentiments toward Spain. Finally, Spain should amend the Basque Autonomy Statute so that the central government can no longer unilaterally revoke the statute; rather the statute should be changed so that it can only be dismantled by a Basque referendum or by the consensus of both the regional government in Vitoria and the central government in Madrid.

The Spanish government could require the maintenance of an ETA cease-fire while it provides these benefits to the Basques. Taking these strategic measures will slowly erode support for continued ETA violence. The Spanish government will have to realize, however, that ETA violence is not something that will stop at once. More likely than not, ETA will undergo internal splits and lose coherence as support decreases for its radical tactics. Should the Spanish government take these recommended steps, ETA violence will probably fade slowly while social support for it erodes and ETA’s very existence gradually loses legitimacy. Spain could learn some lessons from the Canadian government. Canada was able to successfully diminish support for the radical separatist Québec Liberation Front by passing constitutional reforms, granting Québec greater
autonomy, making French the co-official language alongside English throughout the entire federation, and granting Québec the right to national self-determination. While the separatist Parti Québécois brought Québec to the verge of independence from Canada in a 1995 provincial referendum, the political situation has stabilized since then and the country has remained free from political violence. Due to the protracted nature of the Spanish-Basque conflict, the Spanish government cannot expect to resolve its dispute with ETA overnight. One thing is certain, however: should Spain continue to repress and use force to crush Basque radicals, ETA violence directed against the state will at the very least continue at the current level if not considerably strengthen in the near future.
Bibliography


