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*Coming out of Violence Project*

General Editors: John Darby, INCORE (Initiative on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity) University of Ulster, and Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame, and Roger Mac Ginty, University of Lancaster

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John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty (editors)  
THE MANAGEMENT OF PEACE PROCESSES

ARL  
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# The Management of Peace Processes

Edited by

John Darby

INCORE, University of Ulster and  
Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame

and

Roger Mac Ginty

University of Lancaster

*Peace processes for communities  
identifying*

*the above*





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## Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	vi
<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	ix
<i>Notes on the Contributors</i>	xii
 Introduction: Comparing Peace Processes <i>John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty</i>	 1
1 South Africa: In Search of Post-Settlement Peace <i>Pierre du Toit</i>	16
2 Northern Ireland: Long, Cold Peace <i>John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty</i>	61
3 A Path Strewn with Thorns: Along the Difficult Road of Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking <i>Tamar Hermann and David Newman</i>	107
4 The Basque Peace Process, Nationalism and Political Violence <i>Ludger Mees</i>	154
5 Sri Lanka – the Intractability of Ethnic Conflict <i>Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu</i>	195
 Conclusion: the Management of Peace <i>John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty</i>	 228
 <i>Bibliography</i>	 262
 <i>Index</i>	 270

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## 4

# The Basque Peace Process, Nationalism and Political Violence

Ludger Mees

### Introduction: Subjects and concepts

The Basque Country risked entering the new millennium as the last European Union region which was host to a violent nationalist conflict.<sup>1</sup> Nor was the prospect of stopping the violence and reaching a peaceful settlement on the agenda of policy-makers. Since ETA (Euskadi 'ta Askatasuna/Basque Country and Freedom) began its violent campaign in the 1960s, fatalities – including those killed by extreme right-wing death squads – totalled nearly 900. ETA's September 1998 ceasefire, its first unilateral and indefinite truce in nearly 30 years, has the possibility to transform the political arena. For the first time since 1960, the year ETA killed its first victim, the situation looks 'ripe' for the start of a peace process and a negotiated way out of the conflict. What reasons lie behind this shift? In short, what factors kick-started the Basque peace process? The following analysis focuses on these questions.

Before embarking on this analysis, several prior observations and conceptual clarifications seem necessary. First, it should be stressed that the Basque conflict did not come about through the emergence of ETA. Describing it exclusively as a conflict between 'terrorists' and 'democrats' would reduce it to an unhistorical simplification. The history of Basque political nationalism is not the history of ETA. Despite frequent appearances in the mass media, the violent expression of radical Basque nationalism cannot even be considered as the predominant feature of more than a century of Basque nationalism. As a consequence of the profound gap between the processes of (successful) early *state-building* and (unsuccessful) *nation-building* in nineteenth-century Spain, Sabino Arana founded the first cell of the Basque Nationalist Party, the Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV) in 1895. The PNV – together with the Spanish

socialist Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) – is the oldest active party in Spain. The rise of Basque nationalism marked the beginning of a new phase in the evolution of the clash between conflicting cultural identities in the Basque region and centre-versus-periphery power struggles.<sup>2</sup> Since violence 'is an action, a state or a situation always generated within a conflict and exclusively qualified by that conflict', we can assume that the violent dimension is only one of a number of, mainly peaceful, dimensions in this conflict.<sup>3</sup> This remained the case even though 'political violence' created an autonomous dynamic of its own during the later years of the conflict. 'Political violence' is used in a broad sense, as 'acts of disruption, destruction, injury whose purpose, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation, and/or effects have political significance, that is, tend to modify the behaviour of others in a bargaining situation that has consequences for the social system'.<sup>4</sup> Historically, political violence has adopted different forms of expression (food riots, Luddism, land occupations, violent demonstrations, revolutions, etc.), with terrorism being one of those expressions.<sup>5</sup> If we understand the 'process of civilisation' as 'the systematic effort of the human being and of society to submit the resolution of any kind of conflict to accepted patterns', we could define the history of (political) violence as the 'history of its progressive diminution'.<sup>6</sup> Terrorism, that is, 'the systematic use of murder, injury and destruction or the threat of such acts for political ends', has proved to be a type of political violence quite resistant to the effects of the already mentioned 'process of civilisation'.<sup>7</sup>

This perpetuation of terrorism can be expected to create contradictions within the framework of an 'open' and democratic society. This point constitutes a central argument of this study. The growing dissociation between the violent and political dimension of the conflicts, between ETA and Basque mainstream nationalism, between nationalist militarism and society, will be highlighted as one of the key factors in shaping a new social and political context in the late 1980s. It was in this context that the possibility of a peace process emerged. Thus, the analysis will focus on the evolution of nationalism in the Spanish part of the Basque Country during the 1990s. Spatial constraints mean that the historical background of the conflict must be compressed, starting with the Spanish process of *transition* towards democracy.

### Transition, democracy and the perpetuation of violence

General Franco's death in November 1975 brought immense political change to Spain.<sup>8</sup> According to the literature, Spain entered 'the ideal

type of a negotiated transition, as well as a successful and relatively unproblematic consolidation of democracy'.<sup>9</sup> While this description may apply to the wider Spanish state, it does not apply to the Basque Country. The authors quoted above consider that democratic politics and institutions were not yet consolidated in Euskadi in the early 1980s.<sup>10</sup> The *national question* and its violent expressions help explain the gap between the experiences of the Basque Country and the rest of Spain. The hostile and indiscriminate activity of the police forces in the Basque provinces, the persistence of torture in police stations, the emergence of right-wing paramilitary groups and the increase in ETA violence, all made efforts to resolve the Basque conflict during the *transition* even more difficult than it had been before. Violence was affecting more people. ETA accompanied each of the major steps on the democratic transition with an expansion of violence. Since its first fatal attack in 1960 until 1977 ETA did not kill more than 19 people per year. In the next three years, ETA killed 247 people.<sup>11</sup> The figure then dropped to an average of from 30 to 40 victims per year.<sup>12</sup> The *transition* in the Basque Country was also hampered by the rejection of the new Constitution by all sectors of Basque nationalism. The partial devolution of self-government to the Basques, through the 1979 Basque Autonomy Statute, facilitated a *de facto* integration of moderate nationalism into the constitutional consensus. The radical nationalist left, represented by the ETA-allied coalition Herri Batasuna (HB) since 1978, was the only political force campaigning against autonomy. It argued that the Autonomy Statute was based on a constitution which had been rejected in the Basque provinces. The Autonomy Statute itself, however, was backed by a broad majority of the Basque voters in a 1979 referendum. Under the Statute, the three Basque provinces of Gipuzkoa, Alava and Bizkaia, which constituted the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country – Euskadi (BAC), were awarded remarkable levels of self-government within the Spanish state. This included Basque institutions (parliament, government, court of justice), police (Ertzantza), tax autonomy and broad powers in education, culture, media, industrial policy and justice. On the symbolic level, important goals were achieved by moderate nationalism. For example, the flag and the anthem invented by Sabino Arana, the founder of the PNV, became the official symbols of the autonomous Euskadi.<sup>13</sup>

For ETA and the radical nationalist left, autonomy was a poisoned apple offered by Spanish centralism to moderate Basque nationalism in order to ensure the future Spanish domination of the Basques. According to this view, autonomy also perpetuated the territorial division of

Table 4.1 Nationalist vote-sharing in the elections to the Spanish (EG) and the Basque (EA) Parliaments

Year	EG 77	EG 79	EA 80	EG 82	EA 84	EG 86	EA 86	EG 89	EA 90	EG 93	EA 94	EG 96	EA 98
PNV	28.8	27.6	38.0	32.0	42.0	28.0	23.7	22.7	28.5	23.9	29.9	25.4	27.9
HB	4.3	15.0	16.5	14.8	14.6	17.8	17.5	16.8	18.3	14.5	16.3	12.5	17.9
EE	6.3	8.0	9.8	7.7	8.0	9.1	10.9	8.8	7.8				
EA							15.8	11.1	11.4	9.8	10.3	8.3	8.7
Oth.			0.9		1.0								
Total	39.4	50.6	65.2	54.5	65.6	54.9	67.9	59.4	66.0	48.2	56.5	46.2	54.5

Sources: Llera (1994: 158–9); *El Diario Vasco* (24 October 1995 and 26 October 1998).



the Basque regions and impeded Basques from exercising their right of self-determination.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the implementation of the Basque Statute of Autonomy did not bridge the gap between the minority wing of nationalism and the rest of the Basque society. In fact, since the split in nationalism, initiated in the 1960s and consolidated during the *Transition*, the major coordinates of the Basque political system have remained largely unchanged.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the Autonomy Statute strengthened *both* wings of Basque nationalism.

As Table 4.1 shows despite the establishment and the consolidation of powerful autonomous institutions, a significant minority of Basque society continued to support an openly anti-system party like HB. Various attempts by the Spanish government to establish dialogue with ETA failed. ETA-militar were unwilling to follow the example of ETA político-militar (dissolved in 1982) and lay down their arms.<sup>16</sup>

Right-wing violence also contributed to the conflict. From 1978 to 1991 this 'counter-violence' resulted in 90 casualties. From 1983 to 1987, Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación (GAL) killed 25 Basques, mostly in the French-Basque territories. GAL's objective was to force the French government to adopt a tougher attitude towards ETA refugees and to co-operate more directly with the Spanish police forces.<sup>17</sup> In the late 1990s, Spanish judges charged the former socialist Minister of the Interior Barrionuevo (1982–8) and a number of his subordinates with organising and promoting GAL. In July 1998, former minister Barrionuevo and his State Secretary Vera were sentenced to ten years in prison for their role in GAL activities. Revelations of state terrorism, together with a series of corruption scandals linked with the socialist government, especially during the last five years of President González's long mandate (1982–96), plunged the Spanish political system into a crisis of legitimacy. This, in turn, provided ETA and radical Basque nationalism with a fresh boost.

In fact, the crisis in the Spanish political system helped slow down the process of separation between ETA and Basque society. Several factors contributed to this process. First, Spain was no longer a dictatorship. It was now a parliamentary democracy with formal channels for the expression of grievances and opposition. Second, Basque society and Basque nationalism had changed. Nationalism had achieved unprecedented levels of power. Third, ETA had failed to accommodate its strategy to the new situation. It pursued a campaign of indiscriminate violence. Conceivably, Basques and Spanish, except those linked to the Basque National Liberation Movement (BNLM) were potential

Table 4.2 Votes obtained by HB in the Basque Autonomous Community

<i>Elections</i>	<i>Votes</i>
European Parliament 1987	210 430
Spanish Parliament 1989	186 646
Basque Parliament 1990	186 242
Spanish Parliament 1993	174 655
Basque Parliament 1994	166 147
Spanish Parliament 1996	154 853

Sources: José Manuel Mata, *El nacionalismo vasco radical: Discurso, organización y expresiones* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 1993), p. 33; *El País* (20 July 1997)

victims.<sup>18</sup> The bombing of a supermarket in Barcelona in June 1987 which killed 21 people provided a bloody example of the indiscriminate nature of the violence. Fourth, the pursuit of a violent strategy, without an apparent political rationale, provoked a reaction on behalf of those for whom ETA presumed to act: the Basque people. A significant outcome was the emergence of the Basque Peace Movement in the 1980s. This increasing sensitisation of society against violence was noticeable among Basque youth, and was reflected in the ballot boxes. An analysis of HB's recent electoral performances shows that the party has steadily lost votes since the 1987 European election (see Table 4.2). These figures contrast with the upward trend in the HB vote from 1979 to 1987. If the results of Navarra are included, then HB lost about 70 000, or a quarter of its 1987 total vote, in the 1987–96 period.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, despite the electoral haemorrhaging and the calls of the Peace Movement, ETA and HB opted for a contrary strategy: the reaffirmation of political violence. This militarisation of radical nationalist politics played a crucial role in the origins of the Basque peace process.

### The counterattack

The conservative victory in the March 1996 general election was based on a hard-line attitude towards terrorism. Contact with ETA was ruled out, with policing promoted as the most effective strategy against terrorism. Improvement in co-operation between the Spanish and French police forces increased pressure on ETA. In 1997, the police captured 88 ETA members, more than half in France. Among the latter were several leading activists of the organisation: Isuntza, Urrusolo and Nervios.<sup>20</sup>

Despite police successes, ETA maintained a remarkable capacity of recovery and reaction. ETA strategy became increasingly indiscriminate. This was evidenced by the selection of six low-level town councillors of the conservative government party Partido Popular (PP) as easy targets. There was a resurgence in ETA activities following the election of Aznar as conservative Prime Minister of Spain. The offensive had two aims. First, to force the Government to transfer the more than 500 ETA prisoners to prisons in the Basque Country.<sup>21</sup> The second aim was to push the Government to the negotiating table. In the pursuit of these aims, all means were valid. In July 1997, days after ETA released a young businessman, Cosme Delclaux, after 232 days as a hostage, the Spanish police freed a kidnapped prison worker, Ortega Lara. He had been held for 532 days in deplorable conditions. His kidnappers had decided to let him die by starvation if the Government continued to refuse to transfer prisoners. Television images of an emaciated Ortega Lara were reminiscent of the victims freed from Auschwitz and Birkenau. They produced a more profound effect against ETA, even among its followers, than years of anti-terrorism communiqués.<sup>22</sup>

One week later, however, ETA kidnapped a 29-year-old PP Town Councillor in the Basque town of Ermua. Miguel Angel Blanco, son of a Galician working-class family, was better known as the bass-player of a local pop group than as a politician. ETA announced Blanco would be 'executed' within 48 hours unless there was an immediate transfer of all ETA prisoners to the Basque Country. Even if willing, the Government would have found this task impossible given the time constraints. As a result, the kidnapping took on the character of a televised death penalty. Despite the mobilisation of millions of Basques and Spaniards, and pleas from international mediators, and even some HB politicians and ETA prisoners, Blanco was killed a few minutes after the expiration of the ultimatum.<sup>23</sup>

The subordination of political reasoning to the dynamics of military activism also affected Herri Batasuna.<sup>24</sup> After a long process of internal discussion and after the rejection of two alternative documents, rank-and-file members of HB endorsed the Oldartzen Report in 1996. Drafted by the coalition's collective leadership, it was to be the party's political and strategic programme. The document criticised the Spanish and French states for their pursuit of 'the disappearance' (Article 81) of the Basques as a nation, and criticised all parties, organisations and institutions which collaborated in this aim. Although the authors recognised HB's 'false dependence on the activity of ETA', no attempt was made to break this dependence or articulate a more critical attitude towards

violence. On the contrary, there was no doubt about the legitimacy of the ETA violence:

As long as the Spanish and French states, besides violating the collective rights of *Euskal Herria* and the personal rights of its inhabitants, deny the possibility of a solution of the so called 'Basque problem' by democratic means, it will be legitimate for *Euskal Herria* to defend its sovereignty using all forms of struggle: the institutional one as well as the struggle in the street and the struggle of a political character developed by ETA and IK [*Iparretarrak*: armed organisation acting in the French Basque territory], that is, the armed struggle.

Furthermore, the enormously destructive street violence committed by gangs of young radicals received acknowledgement in the Oldartzen Report, which referred to it as 'expressions of the political struggle of our people'. Far from establishing a possible link between the uncritical support of violence on the one side and the increasing loss of political representativeness in the Basque society on the other, Oldartzen pointed to the opposite conclusion: it was necessary to abandon the strategy of resistance and move to a new offensive phase, 'theorizing and practising whatever allows us to accelerate the political process right now'.<sup>25</sup>

If political statements were ambiguous, the statistics for street violence were not. During the 1990s, the incidence of street violence increased sharply. It can be regarded as a reaction to the loss of influence by ETA/HB, and the successful mobilisation of the Peace Movement. The street violence took the form of well organised gangs, mostly made up of teenagers, which burned and destroyed hundreds of telephone boxes, banks, public buses and trains, private cars of politicians and offices and bars of the political parties. During 1996, the material damage caused by these acts of sabotage was calculated at more than 3500 million Pesetas (US\$24.31 million). This was an increase of 125 per cent over the year before. The increase was largely due to the growing trend towards arson attacks. While general street violence increased by 20.4 per cent in the 1995 to 1996 period, arson attacks increased by 60 per cent.<sup>26</sup> Between 1992, when this type of violence began, and 1997, more than 500 youths were arrested by the police, and 100 sent to prison.<sup>27</sup>

According to media reports, the street violence was orchestrated by Txelis, an imprisoned ETA leader who played a key role in the development of this strategy following the capture of the organisation's Central Committee in 1992.<sup>28</sup> Ever since, ETA, KAS and HB supported the street violence.<sup>29</sup> Yet, the political aim of the street violence, if

any existed, was lost on the Basque population. A May 1997 public opinion poll found that 83 per cent of the population in the Basque Autonomous Community thought that the street violence would not help to achieve the political aims of those responsible. Only 9 per cent thought that it would. Even among HB voters, 47 per cent gave a negative answer to the question.<sup>30</sup> If the street violence has had any effect, it has probably been the increasing ghettoisation of the Basque National Liberation Movement and the growing identification of radical nationalism with the burning of buses, banks, cars and even town halls. This growing identification of violent nationalism with criminality generated a boomerang effect against all those calling for a dialogued solution for the conflict.

The HB leadership repeatedly demonstrated its subordination to ETA and its absolute lack of political autonomy. This made it more vulnerable to juridical action. The results came soon: in December 1997, the Supreme Court sentenced 23 members of the HB Directing Council to seven years in prison for 'collaboration with an armed gang'; and in July of the following year, *Egin*, the daily paper close to HB, its radio station and a number of HB-allied enterprises were closed down after a magistrate linked these organisations to ETA's financial network.

The imprisonment of HB's Governing Council forced the coalition to elect a new Council in February 1998 and replace its imprisoned Members of Parliament. The new directing Mahai Nazionala (National Table) seemed to be more willing to draw conclusions from the political decay of the BNLM and to recover some of the lost political space through more flexible political discourse and strategies. The new tendency was also a reaction against the emergence of the Basque peace movement which, during the 1990s, proved to have a surprising capacity for mobilisation in Basque society. The business sector, which was keen to stop the damaging effects of violence and to ensure a peace dividend, also played a role in the emergence of the peace process. The relationship between violence, the economy and peace in the Basque Country, however, is much more complex than one might expect.

### Violence and the economy

Until the 1970s, the Basque provinces occupied leading positions in most Spanish socio-economic indices. Certainly this was reflected in indices on growth rates, per-capita income and earnings or rates of professional occupation. Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and parts of Catalonia were the first territories to industrialise at the end of the nineteenth century.

The second 'industrial revolution' of the 1960s and first half of the 1970s pushed Alava and Navarra, the Basque 'later-comers', into a similar position to their neighbours on the seaside, converting the Basque region into one of the most modern and dynamic centres of the Spanish economy.

Since the 1990s, economic prospects have become more optimistic. This privileged situation has changed dramatically since the end of the 1970s. The growing liberalisation of the Spanish economy, strong international competition, the technological backwardness of Basque factories and the oil crisis pushed the Basque economy into recession. Many traditional iron, steel and shipbuilding plants were closed down or restructured. About 180 000 jobs were lost in the three provinces of the Basque Autonomous Community. Unemployment reached a peak of 23 per cent of the working population. Indicators of wealth and income in the Basque Country declined in comparison with Spain. Terrorist violence was both a by-product and an active promoter of this acute crisis.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, it is impossible to measure precisely the impact of violence on socio-economic decline in the Basque Country. On the one hand, the kidnapping and killing of businessmen and 'revolutionary taxes' levied on employers had an obvious negative impact on the economy. On the other, these factors are relative. In recent years, violence persisted and even increased alongside a vigorous renaissance of the Basque economy. Between 1985 and 1995, per-capita income in the three provinces of Alava, Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia grew by 39 per cent, about 5 per cent above the Spanish average (see Table 4.3).<sup>32</sup>

Euskadi even recovered its attraction for foreign investment. During the 1990s, the Basque provinces, which – not counting Navarre – make up 1.43 per cent of total Spanish territory, increased their share of

Table 4.3 Per capita income: Basque Autonomous Community, 1955–93 (Spanish average: 100)

Year	PCI
1955	170.89
1985	107.54
1987	107.06
1989	107.13
1991	110.1
1993	109.09

Source: *Cambio*, 16 (27 October 1997), p. 12.



Table 4.4 Rates of unemployment in the Basque Autonomous Community (end of 1997)

Province	Unemployment
Alava	15.5
Gipuzkoa	17.0
Bizkaia	23.4
BAC Average	20.2

Source: *El País* (17 January 1998).

inward investment to Spain from 1.01 per cent in 1991 to 7.12 per cent in first semester of 1997. Moreover, according to Basque University research, an increasing proportion of this inward investment is in the high-tech sector.<sup>33</sup>

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rates confirm the Basque economic resurgence. In 1996, Basque GDP increased by 2.0 per cent. A year later, it doubled to 3.8 per cent, against the Spanish rate of 3.3 per cent and the European average of 2.5 per cent.<sup>34</sup>

As in the Spanish and most other European economies, economic growth in the Basque Country only slightly reduced unemployment. This peaked in 1994 at more than 25.0 per cent of the working population. At the end of 1997, the figure was 20.2 per cent, although there were remarkable inter-provincial differences (see Table 4.4). The regional peak was 27.0 per cent in the traditional industrial areas on the left bank of the river Nervión.<sup>35</sup>

Youth unemployment was particularly high. According to the nationalist Eusko Langileen Alkartasuna (ELA) trade union, 43.4 per cent of the Basque working population aged less than 25 years was unemployed. The European average rate was 12.5 per cent.<sup>36</sup>

There is no reliable sociological data on the relationship between youth unemployment and violence, especially street violence. A cause-effect relationship is unlikely, since most of the youngsters engaged in the radical nationalist street gangs had not yet entered the labour market. Nor is there any evidence of a correlation between unemployment rates and the incidence of sabotage in the different Basque areas. Street violence reached its peak in Gipuzkoa, the most nationalist province, rather than Bizkaia which recorded the highest population and unemployment rate (see Table 4.5).<sup>37</sup>

An end to street violence and politically motivated violence in general is likely to produce an immediate peace dividend. Basque society has

Table 4.5 Local distribution of street violence, 1992-4 (percentages)

	Population	1992	1993	1994
Gipuzkoa	25.8	43	55	54
Bizkaia	44.5	36	23	27
Alava	9.9	11	8	6
Navarra	19.8	10	14	13
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Gobierno Vasco (ed.), 'Plan de Actuación del Gobierno para el desarrollo de los valores democráticos y fomento de actitudes de solidaridad, tolerancia y responsabilidad en los adolescentes y jóvenes vascos', ms., Vitoria (1997), p. 16.

had to finance massive repair bills following gang violence as well as increased security measures. Tourism suffers from the Basque Country's violent image. In 1997 the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office advised tourists against visiting the Basque Country for security reasons. After protests by the Basque Government the advice was later withdrawn.<sup>38</sup> A report on foreign investment blamed terrorism as the 'principal culprit' for the reluctance of foreign businesses to invest in a region with a good infrastructure and a skilled workforce.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, spokespersons for the Basque community, a sector most affected by violence, maintain a realistic attitude. The president and the general secretary of the Employer's Association of Gipuzkoa addressed the relationship between violence and industrial investment in the Basque Country:

Talking about investment in the Basque Country and elsewhere in Europe – and I am thinking especially about foreign investment and in general about enterprises of a certain dimension – before deciding about the placement of their capital, they check all the conditions like infrastructure, the skilfulness of the people, the industrial culture, the market and its foreseeable perspectives of growth, public subsidies, tax system... I don't think that a great amount of investment is being diverted only because of terrorism. What is happening is that when all the other factors are weak, logically terrorism will be more important. On the other hand, if those factors are strong and favourable, at the end investment will come despite terrorism, and there are some examples to prove that.<sup>40</sup>

The facts seem to corroborate this impression. Basque fiscal autonomy is influential in producing a remarkable pull-effect towards Spanish



and foreign capital autonomy. This capacity of financial self-management, legitimised for historical reasons and granted by the 1978 Constitution, is an absolute exception in the Spanish fiscal system and provides the Basque administration with an important instrument for the public regulation of the regional economy. According to *El País* in September 1996, at least seven multinational companies expressed an interest in investing in the Basque Autonomous Community.<sup>41</sup> Lower taxes in the Basque Country and public subsidies attract capital from surrounding regions, provoking protests from neighbouring regional governments. Between July and August 1996, 23 cases of capital-transfer to one of the Basque provinces were counted.<sup>42</sup>

To summarise, an end to violence would bring important dividends to Basque society, especially its economy. Nevertheless, Basques have learned to live with violence and to recover little by little their traditional economic strength despite continuing violence. This seems to imply a paradoxical conclusion with regards to the peace process: the peace dividend is important, but not important enough to generate stronger pressure from the Basque business community towards policy-makers to accelerate the peace process. This passivity was criticised by the Basque peace movement *Elkarri* who, based on a report on 'Peace and the Economy in Northern Ireland', urged Basque businesses to take a more active part in the promotion of a dialogued solution to the Basque conflict.<sup>43</sup> In the preliminary stages of the Basque peace process, this active part was not played by the business community, but by the peace movement itself.

### Mobilisation for peace

The growing contradiction between the consolidation of parliamentary democracy, with a remarkable level of self-government, on the one hand, and increasing political violence, on the other, provoked public protests against ETA violence in the first half of the 1980s. These protests, by Basque pacifists, were isolated and marginal. Although the new political system did not fulfil the expectations of many moderate nationalists, it did provide some instruments for the articulation of discontent and the formulation of new claims. As already indicated above, autonomy marked the watershed in the separation between radical and moderate nationalism. It crystallised the separation between those nationalists who backed violence and those who did not. An early symbol of this shift in relations was the first mass demonstration

against violence organised by the PNV in 1978. About 35 000 Basques demonstrated in Bilbao for a 'Basque Country in Peace and Freedom'.

This demonstration, however, was only a first timid step. In reality, over the following years, the attitude of PNV leaders towards ETA violence was not as clear as the demonstration implied. After many years of critical solidarity, it was not easy to break totally with ETA. There were two main reasons. First, many nationalists were still convinced that ETA had the same political objectives as the PNV. Secondly, terrorism was helpful as an additional pressure in negotiations with the central government. It is unrealistic to blame the PNV for the persistence of ETA violence, but the fact remained that the political parties were either unwilling or unable to find a solution to the problem. This was the context for the genesis of the Basque peace movement during the 1980s.

The first attempt to co-ordinate the different groups and initiatives came in 1989 with the foundation of the *Coordinadora Gesto por la Paz de Euskal Herria* (Co-ordination for a Gesture for Peace in the Basque Country). *Gesto* is now one of the most dynamic and representative organisations in the peace movement. It has been very successful among Basque youth. It has 160 local groups integrated in the *Coordinadora*, of which 40 are linked to schools or universities.<sup>44</sup> The name of the group refers to its decision to hold silent protest demonstrations after every fatal act of political violence. From May 1988 to February 1998, *Gesto* has organised 15 760 silent protest meetings at 150 points across the Basque Country.<sup>45</sup> A key aim is to carry the rejection of violence from the street to every-day life. The increasing success of the popular mobilisations promoted by *Gesto* provoked the reaction of the Liberation Movement which, afraid of losing control of the streets, started to organise simultaneous counter-demonstrations. Tensions led to the intervention of the Basque police, which would form a *cordon sanitaire* between opposing protesters.<sup>46</sup>

The core of *Gesto por la Paz's* ideology is the total rejection of violence for political aims. It is a discourse based on ethics, in which any kind of violence is condemned. Thus, the task of *Gesto* is of consciousness-raising to undermine the (ethical) basis of political violence in Basque society. This does not mean that the political implications of violence are denied, but, according to one *Gesto* veteran, 'our task does not consist of presenting concrete political solutions to the problem'.<sup>47</sup> In general terms, *Gesto* backs dialogue with ETA, and considers some kind of secret contacts necessary before the proclamation of a ceasefire.

Gesto por la Paz draws support from voters of nearly all the Basque political parties, except HB and PP. It has suffered from splits in recent years. They include Bakea Orain (Peace Now) and Denon Artean (Among All of Us), but none has matched Gesto's capacity for mobilisation.<sup>48</sup>

The origins of the other mass-mobilising peace group, Elkarri (One to the Other/Mutually), can be found in the Basque National Liberation Movement. Elkarri was founded in 1992, the same year that the leadership structure of ETA was dismantled. A single-issue ecologist organisation was transformed into a peace group with the principal aim of contributing to the establishment of a new political climate favourable to a negotiated solution to the conflict. At first, the group was regarded as the result of a new strategy by ETA and HB, aimed at breaking the cohesion of the democratic parties in their attitude towards ETA. This initial scepticism was fuelled by the fact that Jonan Fernández, one of the most popular Elkarri leaders, had been a HB town councillor in Tolosa (Gipuzkoa).

In recent years, however, this image of the group has changed. First, Elkarri's criticisms of ETA violence have made it a target of severe ETA and HB disapproval. Second, the Elkarri leadership has endeavoured to make linkages with all sectors of Basque society. As a result, most political observers see Elkarri in a positive light. This capacity for bridge-building between the extremes is unusual in a highly polarised society such as the Basque Country.

In comparison to Gesto, Elkarri, with a full-time staff of 13 and about 2500 members, considers politics, not ethics, the principal arena for its activity: 'Its main purpose is to promote a process of democratic dialogue in *Euskal Herria* for the transformation of conflict through social mediation'.<sup>49</sup> It is impossible to separate ethics from politics in the analysis of the Basque conflict.

In recent years, Elkarri has carried out a broad range of activities, including the collection of signatures, workshops with policy-makers, publications and the creation of educational materials for schools and public demonstrations. The culmination of the group's work so far has been the peace proposal, *Izan (To Be)*, presented in November 1997. It anticipated some of the basic ideas of President Ardanza's March 1998 peace proposal.

The openly political character of Elkarri carries a double risk. First, much of its work depends on the support of the political parties. Second, and linked to the first point, this makes the group vulnerable to criticism from those reluctant to accept the intervention of organisations without an electoral mandate.

Besides Gesto, Bakea Orain, Denon Artean and Elkarri, the spectrum of the Basque peace and human rights movement is completed by other minor groups, some of which form part of the Liberation Movement, such as Senideak (relatives of the ETA prisoners and refugees) or Gestoras Pro Amnistia (organisation demanding a total amnesty for all ETA prisoners). Elkarri promoted a round-table debate between all these groups which in the Maroño Agreement (January 1994) called to 'substitute all expressions of violence for mechanisms of dialogue as the best route to peace'.<sup>50</sup> Subsequent attempts to introduce a more political dimension into the agreement by discussing the roots of the conflict and possible solutions (self-determination) broke the fragile union of the peace groups.<sup>51</sup>

The Basque peace movement raised consciousness on issues of violence. There is a new sensitivity towards violence. The level of legitimacy for the armed struggle has decreased, even among Basques close to the Liberation Movement. According to a 1997 public opinion survey, 84.1 per cent of youth in the most nationalist Basque province, Gipuzkoa, considers itself 'opposed to the violence of armed groups'.<sup>52</sup> Youth, traditionally more given to radical nationalism, seems to have most attachment to the new sensibility. According to sociologist J. Elzo, 'the young people have been ETA's source of supply, in the future they are going to be the organisation's gravediggers'.<sup>53</sup>

This new critical sensibility concerning ETA violence has also been present in the streets. The massive demonstrations during summer 1997 in response to the kidnapping of Ortega Lara and the assassination of councillor Blanco mobilised approximately six million Basques and Spaniards. In November of that year, nearly 5 out of every 10 Basques (47 per cent) said that they had participated in one or more of the demonstrations organised to protest against ETA. The so-called 'spirit of Ermua' has been interpreted as a grass-roots call to stop violence and endorse unity against terrorism. Nevertheless, the increasing rejection of violence does not close the door on a way out of the conflict based on dialogue. The total of those backing contacts with ETA, with or without a ceasefire, numbered 65 per cent in autumn 1997 (43 per cent with a ceasefire; 22 per cent without). Only 22 per cent of the Basque population reject any contact with ETA.

The pre-ceasefire situation in the Basque Country was characterised by a new dualism of a tougher rejection of ETA and all forms of violence on one side, and an increased support for dialogue as a way out of the conflict on the other. Like all social movements, the peace movement in the Basque Country has been (and still is) both a product

of this process of (ideological and mental) transformation of society, as well as an actor intervening in and promoting it. The work of Elkarri, Gesto and the other groups contributed to a new context in which, unlike a few years ago, proposals endorsing dialogues as solutions to the conflict could no longer be considered wishful thinking by pacifist Utopians. The effect of the social mobilisation for peace was not limited to the streets. It also affected the political parties.

### The political parties: Old polemics, new alignments

One explanation of the continuity of ETA violence and its social support after the establishment of Basque autonomy in 1979 may be the lack of a common strategy by the democratic parties, nationalist and non-nationalist, in their opposition to ETA. The major clash was between those who emphasised the political nature of the problem and those who interpreted the conflict in exclusively terrorist and criminal terms. For parties like the leading PNV, Euskadiko Ezkerra (EE) or later EA, one of the major obstacles on the way to peace was the central government's policy of blocking the full implementation of the Statute of Gernika. This argument was converted by the statewide socialist and conservative parties into a crude, polemical attack against the nationalists, who were blamed for the persistence of terrorism. The nationalists were said to have no interest in an end to violence since there would be few political benefits for them.

It took some years for the parties to realise that the only beneficiary from party political polemics was ETA. Policy-makers became aware of the growing gap between society, which was mobilising for peace, and a political system immersed in never-ending polemics. Hence, it was society and the brutality of terrorism which pushed politicians towards an agreement. Following a particularly bloody period of ETA violence, in which 32 people were killed in two bombings in the last trimester of 1987, all of the political parties in the Basque parliament, except HB, reached an agreement. The Basque president Ardanza initiated the 'Agreement for the Pacification and Normalization of Euskadi' or 'Pact of Ajuria Enea' on the 12 January 1988.

The Agreement contained three fundamental statements. First was the common rejection of all attempts to reach political aims by violent means. Second was a reaffirmation of the nexus between the full development of autonomy and the subsequent 'progressive resolution of the conflicts of the Basque society' as a contribution to the 'reinforcement

of democracy and peaceful coexistence'. Third was an offer of a solution to the conflict based on dialogue 'if the proper conditions for a negotiated solution of violence are given, consisting of a clear will to put an end to violence'.<sup>54</sup>

In the ten years of its existence, President Ardanza chaired 32 formal meetings of the Pact's members. The Agreement's main achievement was its contribution in strengthening anti-violence sensitivity in Basque society. It created a new cleavage separating those who backed the use of violence for political purposes from those who rejected the idea. This rift cut across the historical divide between Basque and Spanish identities. Despite the party-political polemics, there was no longer any base for criticising any of the parties of the *Ajuria Enea* block for an ambiguous attitude towards violence. This was also a consequence of the fact that, during the 1990s, all of the parties, including the nationalists, became ETA targets.

The Agreement had one major deficit: it was used as a defensive instrument in the struggle against terrorism, but it failed to facilitate advances towards peace. ETA and radical nationalism have always rejected the Agreement as a badly disguised instrument 'in the strategy against the independence movement'.<sup>55</sup> According to this view, instead of being a real agreement for 'the pacification and normalization' of Euskadi as the title suggests, the pact has functioned as a mere anti-terrorism pact. Yet, in contrast, ETA's increasingly indiscriminate military activity and the increasing 'militarisation' of HB's political discourse could not be interpreted as an invitation to open dialogue.

It was the recognition of this deficit that pushed President Ardanza towards a more active position in the policy of pacification. In March 1998, after both secret and public contacts with the parties represented in the Basque and Spanish parliaments, and with President Aznar's conservative central government, Ardanza's peace proposal was leaked to the press.<sup>56</sup> The document was significant as the first serious and concrete peace proposal presented by mainstream nationalism since the beginning of the violence in the Basque Country.

The central objective of the proposal was to ask two questions. First, what can be done to ensure that ETA stops using violence and HB starts 'integrating itself definitively into the political activity characteristic of the democratic system'? Second, how can a broader political consensus in Basque society be created? A basic premise of the proposal was a recognition that the double aim would not be possible exclusively through police action. Therefore, some kind of 'political incentive' together with a complete and unlimited ceasefire was



Table 4.6 President Ardanza's peace proposal

Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- unlimited ceasefire</li> <li>- dialogue as consequence of the ceasefire, and not vice versa</li> </ul>
Interlocutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no direct participation of ETA</li> <li>- ETA must delegate to HB as legitimate representative of a sector of the Basque people</li> <li>- rest of the Basque parties</li> <li>- Spanish state (via Basque parties with state-wide representation)</li> <li>- competent agencies of the state: disposition to accept and to implement the agreements reached by the parties</li> </ul>
Contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- issue: 'national question'</li> <li>- fixed timetable</li> <li>- no previous (political) conditions and limitations</li> <li>- after a period of testing: referendum</li> </ul>
Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'talks before talks' between the Basque democratic parties, central government, opposition parties in the Spanish parliament, ETA (secret contacts) and HB</li> <li>- information on public opinion</li> <li>- continuous advice concerning the possibilities of consensus embedded in the Constitution and the Statute of Autonomy</li> </ul>

Source: 'Para un acuerdo entre los Partidos de la Mesa sobre el "final dialogado"; Documento de trabajo', ms., Vitoria-Gasteiz (17 March 1998).

necessary. Table 4.6 summarises the main features of the peace proposal.<sup>57</sup>

Although the Northern Ireland peace process was not referred to directly, Ardanza's 16 pages of text reflect parallels between both cases. In fact, the PNV followed the Northern Ireland peace process very closely and Ardanza admitted that he and his advisers have had contacts with practically all the important actors involved in that process.<sup>58</sup> He incorporated several of its core ideas into his own proposals, although they were adapted to suit the Basque case: the exclusion of a direct participation of armed groups in the negotiations; the prior establishment of a peaceful atmosphere (ceasefire) as an indispensable precondition for the participation of parties linked to armed groups; the commitment of all participants in the negotiations to abide by any agreement reached; the fixed time-frame; and the referendum. The idea of exploring the juridical possibilities of political reform granted by the Constitution itself, especially by its 'First Additional Disposition' and its recognition of the 'historic rights' of the Basque provinces, was

not new either: a few months before Ardanza's proposal was published, Elkarri presented its Izan/To Be document.

Political reactions to the President's proposal were mixed. The socialists and governing conservatives rejected the proposal as a political concession to ETA terrorism. These parties received the support of 300 hard-line anti-nationalist Basque intellectuals and artists, who in February 1998 constituted the 'Forum of Ermua'. This was a pressure group, well represented in the media, and opposed to any political incentives given to a 'fascist movement... directed by ETA, HB and other organizations from their environment'.<sup>59</sup> The democratic nationalists backed Ardanza's plan, however, while HB criticised its own exclusion from the drafting of the document rather than the contents. In a political climate characterised by a growing confrontation between the parties just a few months before regional elections to the Basque parliament, there was no opportunity for a real debate of this first serious peace proposal: elections are bad times for good politics.

For moderate nationalists, the rejection of Ardanza's peace proposal by the non-nationalist parties had a deeper political significance. It revealed the unwillingness of the socialists and the conservatives to explore what Ardanza called the 'second phase' of the Ajuria Enea Agreement: to examine the possibilities for a 'negotiated solution' to the conflict. In other words: for the PNV and EA, the attitude of Partido Socialista de Euskadi (PSE) and PP had fatally injured the 'Pact of the Democrats'. The prospects of a peace process were slim without the support of the two main Spanish parties and almost half of Basque voters. For a qualitative change in the Basque conflict, a shift in the political and strategic outlook of the Liberation Movement was necessary. The idea of the 'third space' helped to bring this shift about.

### Constructing the 'third space'

The contemporary history of Basque nationalism is a history of a polarisation between nationalist and non-nationalist identities. Contrary to the experience of other ethnic movements on the Spanish periphery (for example, Catalan), in the Basque Country none of the political projects created to mediate between the opposite poles (Nationalist Republicanism 1910-13; Acción Nacionalista Vasca during the Second Republic; Euskadiko Ezkerra during Post-Francoism) was successful. After the events of the summer of 1997 (the release of ETA hostage Ortega Lara; the kidnapping and killing of councillor Blanco; the massive and spontaneous anti-ETA rallies) the wall that separated both



political blocks was higher than ever. The only possibility of breaking the stalemate was in making the frontier between the two blocks less insurmountable and in promoting an exchange of ideas that might contribute to the de-escalation of the conflict.

This was the basic reasoning behind the idea of the 'third space' (also called the 'third way'). Attempts to define the concept are rare. It is probably more than mere coincidence that references to the 'third way' surfaced in Basque political discussion at more or less the same time as Tony Blair, Anthony Giddens and others began their search for a way out of the crisis of international social democracy. In the Basque Country, the idea of the 'third space' was neither a product of the social democratic crisis, nor was it conceived as an instrument to bridge the gap between the nationalist and the non-nationalist communities. It was imagined as a political and social area of encounter between all those in favour of Basque self-determination by peaceful and democratic means. It was a meeting point for Basques dissatisfied with the bipolarisation of society into two blocks.

Behind these basic ideas there was no concrete and tangible programme attached to the concept of the 'third space'. It was this (calculated?) ambiguity which made it so attractive to many Basques inside or close to the Liberation Movement. A second factor increased the attraction: the promoters of the 'third space' were nearly all linked to civil society and social movements, and not to the political system. This reinforces the argument that the dynamic of the Basque peace process started from the bottom of society and later impacted on the top. The principal agencies engaged in the 'third space' project were the majority Basque, moderate nationalist and leftist trade union ELA, the HB-allied union Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak (LAB), the Basque farmers union, Euskal Herriko Nekazarien Elkartea (EHNE), the peace movement Elkarri and a number of politicians and intellectuals, some related to the extreme leftist group Zutik which was close to the aims of the Liberation Movement, but critical of its military bias.

The origin of the 'third space' project was an *entente* between the Basque nationalist unions ELA and LAB.<sup>60</sup> Previously, there had been a growing disagreement between ELA and its traditional partners, the socialist Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) and the leftist Comisiones Obreras (CCOO), due to what ELA considered an extreme subordination of these unions to the directives of their mother-organisations in Madrid. Since neither UGT nor CCOO were willing to defend what ELA-leader José Elorrieta called a 'Basque framework of industrial relations', for the moderate unionists the only way of working in favour

of this aim was breaking the traditional alliance with those 'Spanish' unions and constructing a new one together with the only nationalist union remaining, even if that organisation – LAB – was a part of the Liberation Movement commanded by ETA. This process of emphasising the more political, that is nationalist, dimension of the union's discourse led in 1993 to the breaking of the ELA-UGT-CCOO alliance and ELA's *rapprochement* with LAB, which became public in the first common manifestos issued by both organisations on the 'Day of the Basque Fatherland' (Aberri Eguna, Easter Sunday) and then on 1 May 1995.

This new alliance was a risky gamble for José Elorrieta, ELA's General Secretary. For many of the union's 80 000 members the reasons for this strategic change were incomprehensible. Why should a democratic and moderate union like ELA form an alliance with a worker's organisation which had been blamed for being a strong supporter of ETA? This unrest became open rebellion when ETA started its campaign against the Ertzantza, the Basque police. This campaign caused fatalities among ELA members (Gómez Elósegui, Olaciregui, Doral, Goikoetxea, Zabalza, Agirre). Since LAB was unwilling to change its traditional non-criticism of ETA, even the killing of members of its new nationalist partner, Elorrieta was under strong internal (and external) pressure to put to end the alliance with LAB.<sup>61</sup> After the killing of another ELA-member, prison psychologist Gómez Elósegui, in March 1997, the General Secretary admitted that 'the relationship between ELA and LAB has been seriously affected'.<sup>62</sup>

The 'spirit of Ermua' and the growing popular rebellion against ETA violence froze, but didn't bury, the idea of the 'third space'. In October, the conflict between the Basque and Spanish governments on the implementation of the social part of the Statute of Autonomy, especially the transfer of the national employment agency, sparked a revival of the project. While the Basque conservatives and socialists were preparing to celebrate the eighteenth anniversary of the Statute of Autonomy, Elorrieta announced a public meeting in Gernika, the historic symbol of Basque freedom, as ELA's contribution to the festivities. In previous media statements, he declared the 'death' of the Basque Statute of Autonomy and the necessity of exploring 'a new framework of self-government'.<sup>63</sup>

On the 18 October, 3000 nationalists turned up at the meeting organised by ELA which was supported by LAB, the farmer's union EHNE, the social democrat nationalist party EA, the philonationalist wing of the leftist Izquierda Unida (IU) (Ekaitza), HB, and Elkarri. Several PNV

leaders were also present. This meeting was the public baptism of the 'third space' and Elorrieta's speech its *Magna Carta*. It was, in the words of a leftist commentator, the 'presentation ceremony of Basque sovereignty, its first public act'.<sup>64</sup> The ELA leader's message was threefold. First was his already mentioned diagnosis of the death of Basque autonomy, 'killed by the centralists'. Second was a message about the means of the struggle for Basque sovereignty. Days before the Gernika meeting, ETA had killed another Basque policeman who was also a member of ELA:

ELA is completely conscious that the way towards a new self-government won't lead us anywhere unless it is democratic; unless it is peaceful, we shall never ever get the majorities and the social support we need. In consequence, ETA has to know that there is no place for it, that we don't need it, that it is an obstacle on this way to the future. The power of our reason, the support for our project, the dreams of our people, – all these are sufficient weapons to help us win. Other weapons are not necessary, they only obstruct.

After explaining the *why* (death of autonomy) and *how* (democratic and pacific means), Elorrieta defined the *who* or the social agency of his project. It was the 'majority' of all Basque citizens 'who accept that the sovereignty, the right to decide our future as a people, concerns the Basque citizens'.<sup>65</sup> Elorrieta's proposal to create a new nationalist, democratic and pacifist majority in favour of Basque sovereignty had an important impact on the media and the political parties. The presence of high-ranking PNV and EA members seemed to symbolise the notion of a new political and social majority beyond the traditional lines of conflict. As a consequence, the reaction of the Basque conservatives and socialists was more directed against the democratic nationalist parties and their collaboration with HB than against Elorrieta's proposals. This was understandable for two reasons. First, despite the events of the summer and speculation on possible changes within HB and the Liberation Movement, ETA had not changed its violent strategy. Second, the political instinct of conservative and socialist leaders made them aware of the possibility of a future realignment in the Basque political system. This would be motivated by discontent within moderate nationalism over traditional policies towards terrorism, and the growing desire for peace within the Basque Country.

The 'third space' was also becoming a political idea with remarkable attraction for various important sectors of Basque society. Much of this

attraction lay in the ambiguity of the idea. The 'third space' was not a political programme which aimed towards the construction of a new, alternative society. It was an idea based on a number of fundamental principles (solution of the conflict through dialogue, self-determination and no violence) with three immediate political objectives: first, the creation of 'spaces of de-escalating tension'<sup>66</sup> – in order to contribute to the de-escalation of violent confrontation; second, the breaking of the stalemate between the 'democrats' and the 'people of violence'; and third, the design of a hypothetical new majority for the promotion of Basque sovereignty as a realistic alternative to the armed struggle. Only a sufficiently fuzzy and ambiguous concept like the 'third space' was capable of generating this majority. It was a formula for the internal use of Basque nationalism and not Basque society. Even critical commentators recognised the potential of the idea: 'It has to be fairly admitted that Elorrieta's third space is becoming configured as the only political factor that can really move ETA'.<sup>67</sup>

ETA paramilitaries understood the message behind the 'third space' and its potential consequences. The answer came in December 1997, when the Spanish Supreme Court sentenced 23 members of the Directing Council of HB to seven years in prison. In response to what HB considered a 'political sentence dictated by the government and signed by the judges', the party called for a general strike on the 15 December.<sup>68</sup> It was foreseeable that in a political climate characterised by a growing rebellion against ETA terror a general strike could not be expected to obtain remarkable levels of solidarity outside the Liberation Movement. In the philosophy of the 'third space', the general strike was considered as a step backwards, since it would consolidate the existing frontiers. Guided by this conviction, the leaders of the two nationalist unions made an alternative call for a 'national demonstration' under the slogan *Konponbidea, demokrazia osoa* (The solution is full democracy). They invited HB to cancel the general strike and to support the initiative of the unions, *Elkarri*, EHNE and others. This call was heeded by HB. The same day, ETA shot and injured a PP councillor's bodyguard in San Sebastián. The new initiative of the 'third space', however, survived the tense situation. *Egin* called the unitary act of protest an 'historical milestone' that had become possible thanks to the 'political astuteness demonstrated by HB'.<sup>69</sup> The demonstration marked a major step towards receiving the same broad political and social backing obtained by ELA in Gernika, even if the PNV expressed its decision not to 'share banner and street with...those who practise aggression, insult and imposition'.<sup>70</sup>

Three days before the demonstration, ETA killed another PP councillor (J. J. Caso Cortines) in Renteria. Since neither HB nor LAB was willing to criticise ETA, it was impossible for ELA to maintain the call for the unitary demonstration. The situation was even more complicated for LAB. On the one hand, its leader, Rafa Díez, was reluctant to abandon the still new idea of a 'third space' and its vital axis LAB-ELA. On the other hand, LAB was still a part of the Liberation Movement and as such was obliged to respect the Movement's inner hierarchy with ETA at its top. The confused reaction of the radical nationalists reflected the nervousness of an organisation struggling for greater autonomy from the military direction of the Liberation Movement without upsetting the 'armed vanguard'. Following the shooting of Caso, LAB, but not HB, signed a communiqué calling for the demonstration to be cancelled. It did, however, fail to directly criticise ETA. On the same day these communiqués were published, LAB issued another one backing the call of the HB leadership to maintain – even without the other organisations – the demonstration, which later was banned by the Department of the Interior of the Basque Government.<sup>71</sup>

ETA was alert to the almost invisible shifts within the radical nationalist universe. The paramilitaries were aware that, for the first time, ETA's function was being questioned within the Liberation Movement. An ETA communiqué one week after the killing of Caso seemed to re-affirm the organisation's self-appointed position as supreme judge in the national liberation struggle. Apart from the habitual railing against PP politicians and their 'war for the destruction of Euskal Herria as a nation', the text criticised those organisations associated with the 'third space', including LAB. LAB's decision to cancel the demonstration was blamed on a 'wrong and partial humanitarian ethic'. They were said to have committed a 'political error' which was a result of their 'lack of maturity'.<sup>72</sup>

This was a serious blow for LAB. ETA had never delivered such an open and direct warning to an organisation which considered itself part of the Liberation Movement. Ordinarily, this would have spelt the end of the 'third space' notion and the attempt to re-align pro-nationalist politics. But when HB finally held its demonstration the party's new spokesman, Arnaldo Otegi, declared that 'here in the Basque Country there are no third ways'. 'Here, there are only two projects: the Spanish one and that of Euskal Herria'. Joseba Permach, another new HB spokesman, was more explicit. He stated that 'there is no third way, but there is a third space'. But what was this 'third space' for HB and LAB? For LAB-leader Rafa Díez, it was a space of 'social, trade-unionist and cultural sectors that are betting on a Basque national project and

moving away from autonomous statism which has become an important pillar of the "shared project" defended by Mayor Oreja [the Spanish Minister of the Interior]'.<sup>73</sup>

Behind the etymological exercise of contrasting two ambiguous concepts lay the equally confusing reality confronting the Liberation Movement. While the idea of exploring new ways into the future had growing support, links with the past were strong enough to prevent an open challenge to ETA's leadership role. ELA commentators interpreted Caso's shooting as an attempt to 'short-circuit the increasing protagonism of the third space, because ETA does not control a socio-political movement that, in the end, ... can politically harm violence a lot more than the antiterrorist discourse of the PP does'.<sup>74</sup> In order to recover complete control, it was necessary to establish the antagonism of the two ways.

Two conclusions might be drawn out of the confusing reaction of the Liberation Movement to the 'third space' idea. First, ETA seemed to have difficulty supporting initiatives towards a Basque peace process, if pushed by organisations not under paramilitary control. Second, the contradiction between armed struggle and mass movement had become so evident that it could no longer be silenced inside the Liberation Movement. Despite the ambiguity, partial failures and scarce political dividend, the idea of the 'third space' had become a rolling stone which ETA was unable to stop before it affected the Basque National Liberation Movement.

### From Gernika to Lizarra, via Stormont: the final countdown

The three place names Gernika, Lizarra and Stormont represent milestones in an almost year-long journey which led to the ETA ceasefire on 16 September 1998. The period between Elorrieta's 'third space' Gernika demonstration in October 1997 and the announcement of ETA's first indefinite and unilateral ceasefire can be considered as a preparatory phase in the Basque peace process. It was a 'talks before talks' phase, in which a number of crucial decisions was taken in order to ensure the silence of the paramilitary weapons. Gernika symbolised the increasing influence of the idea that there might be other, political and (maybe) more effective ways towards Basque self-determination than armed struggle. It also symbolised that the armed struggle had become a serious obstacle to self-determination. Lizarra represented the importance of nationalist realignment as a first step towards de-escalating tension and peace; it was the Basque version of the Hume-Adams



*entente*, which kick-started the Northern Ireland peace process and led to the Stormont Agreement. In fact, Stormont became a very powerful example for Basque nationalism, especially for the Liberation Movement. It is difficult to imagine the Basque peace process without the domino effect of the Northern Irish model.<sup>75</sup> In an *Irish Times* interview, HB's new leader, Arnaldo Otegi, confessed that

Ireland was a mirror for us, and so was the republican movement. Negotiation was always regarded here in the Basque Country as something suspect. But Sinn Féin [SF] and the republican movement showed us that negotiation did not have to lead to political treachery. If it could happen in Ireland, why not in the Basque Country?<sup>76</sup>

This Irish connection of Basque nationalism provides an example of the growing interrelationship between social movements in a globalised world.<sup>77</sup>

Gernika, Lizarra and Stormont shaped a new situation in the Basque Country, in which for the first time since the genesis of violent nationalism in the early 1960s there was a tangible perspective for peace. The main reason for this was a major shift in the 'contextual structure' of Basque society in the 1990s.<sup>78</sup> As a consequence, traditional forms of politics became increasingly questioned and a new political scenario became possible. Factors contributing to the shift included: the emergence of a mass peace movement which extended to the fringes of radical nationalism; the divergence between the growing militarisation of the Basque National Liberation Movement and the eagerness for peace in broader society; the increasing pressure by police and judges on terrorism and its political 'accomplices'; the contradiction between the military strategy and the political possibilities offered within the framework of political, cultural and economic autonomy; the negative consequences of terrorism for the regional economy; the impossibility of designing a common initiative of peace shared by all (nationalist and non-nationalist) parties of the Ajuria Enea Pact ten years after its constitution; the radical and unconditional rejection of Ardanza's peace proposal by socialists and conservatives; and finally, the tempting attraction of the 'third space' project.

ETA and the Liberation Movement were unable to protect themselves against the new contextual structure. The Ermua mobilisations of the summer of 1997 were a catalyst for a timid process of internal debate on the relationship between armed struggle and politics. Evidence of this came in the form of criticism of ETA by José Luis Alvarez Santa Cristina

(better known as Txelis), the former head of the political branch of ETA and one of the principal 'inventors' of the street-guerrilla. French police captured him, with the rest of the ETA leadership, in 1992. Influenced by the Ermua mobilisations, and a growing debate on future radical nationalists strategies, in the columns of *Egin*, Txelis circulated his 'Abertzaleon estrategiaz' (About our strategy as patriots) manuscript from his French prison cell in August 1997. It was signed by two other well-known ETA prisoners (Kepa Pikabea and Roxario Pikabea). The significance of the document was owing to the formerly hard-line attitude of the author. He had been regarded as ETA's principal ideologist. His analysis was guided by a will to overcome the problems of the Basque struggle by defining new ways of achieving the Liberation Movement's aims.<sup>79</sup>

Txelis did not question the philosophical base of ETA's activity, defending 'the right of any people to defend itself with arms against the State that is attacking it with arms'. But his analysis of the functionality of the armed struggle concluded that within the particular context of the Basque Country, Spain and Europe at the end of the twentieth century, the armed struggle – once a valid means of defending the interests of a nation – had become an obstacle on the way towards national sovereignty. In his words, violence was producing a 'boomerang effect' for the defenders of the Basque nation. The State's ability to survive the challenge of the armed struggle, and to transform its effects into the opposite of what its promoters intended, led the imprisoned ETA-leader to call for an 'unlimited, broad and lasting moment of de-escalating tension' and for the unity of all Basque patriots.

A new ETA killing in December 1997 led to greater internal and public criticism. HB could no longer silence increasing unrest within the Liberation Movement. Pressure for a strategic reorientation had become too strong and the party was urged to respond to the cumulative effects of popular discredit, police successes and judicial vigour. The first step towards a gradual abandonment of the Oldartzen strategy and a re-evaluation of the efficacy of militarism was announced by Rufi Etxeberria, a leading member of HB's Directing Council, on the Basque public radio station Euskadi Irratia in October 1997. Etxeberria declared the 'beginning of a new phase', in which HB would push forward politics of 'national construction'. After the imprisonment of Etxeberria and the rest of the HB-leadership, a new and more heterogeneous and moderate Mahai Nazionala was elected. Arnaldo Otegi, a former ETA prisoner, and since December 1997 spokesman of the new Directing Council, became the public face of the new wind blowing through HB and the Basque National Liberation Movement.



This shift in the political wing of radical nationalism would not have been possible without the consent of the paramilitaries. Although inside information on the situation within ETA in late 1997 is scarce, there seemed to be a nervousness about increasingly successful police action against the organisation. The ETA leadership was no longer safe in France and was forced to establish a 'new centre of operations' in Belgium.<sup>80</sup> Changes occurred within HB and its new Directing Council after an internal electoral process in February 1998. Political observers referred to a more flexible 'political waist' in the new HB leadership. Words and deeds evidenced this 'political waist'. In public appearances, Otegi and Permach again distinguished between the political project represented by HB and ETA's armed struggle. In contradiction to the traditional concept of ETA as the vanguard of the struggle, Otegi admitted 'the majority of the Basques do not share the armed struggle of ETA'. Both Otegi and Permach stated that HB did not give 'political coverage' to the 'street struggle' of the urban guerrilla.<sup>81</sup>

Alongside HB's efforts to stress its autonomy from ETA's militarism, HB leaders also re-assessed their attitudes towards the other nationalist parties. Perceptions of these parties changed from lackeys of the Spanish oppressors to potential allies in a new project leading towards Basque sovereignty. The Northern Irish peace process provided radical Basque nationalism with an idea, which facilitated the start of the peace process, the idea of a pan-nationalist agreement as first step towards the achievement of a solution through dialogue to the conflict. In other words, since the beginning of 1998, HB endeavoured to create the conditions in which a Basque John Hume and Gerry Adams could emerge. If this was the case, somebody would necessarily have to play the part of a Spanish Tony Blair.

The Irish mirror has been present in the history of Basque nationalism since its very beginnings.<sup>82</sup> With radical Basque nationalism in crisis, mass mobilisations against ETA, police successes against the paramilitary organisation, and the alternative of the 'third space' penetrating the Liberation Movement, it was not surprising that ETA and HB looked to the Irish example. With Tony Blair's election in May 1997, the Northern Ireland peace process developed rapidly. There is no precise information about ETA-IRA or HB-SF contacts, but formal and informal meetings have taken place. Certainly, the example of a nationalist movement reaching by peaceful means aims not reached by violent struggle had an immense influence on Basque radical nationalism.

In 1997 and early 1998, however, the lack of synchronism between events in Northern Ireland and Euskadi seemed total. On 20 July, one

week after PP councillor Blanco was assassinated by ETA, the IRA restored its ceasefire in response to changes brought about by the Blair administration. One week after the beginning of multi-party negotiations in Northern Ireland which included Sinn Féin (7 October 1997), ETA killed a Basque policeman in front of the new Guggenheim Museum, thus aborting the planned 'third space' demonstration. Two days after Gerry Adams's first visit to Downing Street (10 December 1997), ETA shot another PP councillor dead. As Adams was being received by the first British Prime Minister since the creation of Northern Ireland, his 23 political allies in the HB leadership had just started their seven-year sentence for collaboration with terrorism. In the three months following the Good Friday Agreement (10 April 1998), ETA killed another three people.

Even during violent periods, the message from Ireland reached the Basque Country. From late 1997, it affected general political debate as well as radical nationalism. In April 1998, parallels between the Irish and the Basque cases were again evident. Two days after the Stormont Agreement was reached, Basque nationalists of all colours celebrated their supreme national festivity, *Aberri Eguna*, with the Northern Ireland peace process centre stage.<sup>83</sup> The non-nationalist parties rejected any parallelism between the Basque and Northern Irish cases. Carlos Iturgaiz, the leader of the Basque PP, put it this way:

The situation is not comparable. In the counties of Ulster an agreement has been produced between two communities confronted one with the other, whereas here there is a fanatic minority, ETA and HB, that tries to impose by force and coercion its authority on a democratic and peaceful majority. HB and ETA have always tried to Ulsterize the Basque Country and to show a conflict between two parts which simply does not exist here.<sup>84</sup>

The socialists agreed with this argument and pointed to the high level of self-government already reached by Basques in contrast with the lack of autonomy in Northern Ireland. Their reaction, however, was not as categorical as that of the conservatives. This political debate was accompanied by a debate in the media. Few opinion-makers in the Spanish and Basque daily papers could resist the temptation of discussing the hypothetical lessons from the Northern Irish case.<sup>85</sup>

An 'Ulsterisation' of the main conflicting discourses in the preliminary phase of the Basque peace process is identifiable. The influence, however, was not only symbolic and theoretical. It also translated into concrete political practice by those who were keen to draw conclusions

from abroad: the radical nationalists of HB and ETA. Their basic instinct of political survival also played a part. The bitter experience of the winter of 1997, when the Spanish Supreme Court jailed 23 HB leaders for seven years without a major reaction from those sectors of Basque society not directly involved in the Liberation Movement, accelerated the strategic reconversion of HB from intransigent militarism to compromise-oriented policy-making. Thus, in the Basque case, the initiative on the construction of a cross-nationalist axis was not taken by moderate majority nationalism, but by the radical minority wing. The Basque SDLP, that is – *mutatis mutandis* – the governing PNV, was not able to play the initial and active part in this initiative, since the party was still the most important part of the 'Democratic Bloc' built around the Ajuria Enea Agreement that, as a consequence of the Ermua mobilisations, excluded the possibility of any common initiative with those who supported violence. Furthermore, the recrudescence of terrorism in December 1997 and early 1998, as well as the absence of visible signs of a more critical attitude by HB leaders towards ETA violence, would have been poor politics by any party willing to initiate talks with HB. It was then the Basque Sinn Féin, Herri Batasuna, which made the first step. This had two parts. In February 1998, immediately after HB's new Directing Council was elected, the party's spokesmen re-issued an idea proposed in September 1997 by the previous Mahai Nazionala which invited all political parties, labour unions and other social movements to participate in a so-called 'Ireland Forum'. The purpose was to discuss the Northern Irish peace process and its application to the Basque conflict.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, Otegi and the new HB leaders asked the PNV for secret political talks to identify possible points of consensus with a view to establishing a broad national agreement that might serve as a framework for a future ETA ceasefire. The PNV, mindful of changes within ETA and increasingly distant from the non-nationalist parties of the Democratic Bloc, was more positive to the idea of talks with HB than in 1997. This tendency towards new approaches was encouraged by the rejection of President Ardanza's peace proposal in March 1998. But even before this point a first secret meeting between HB and PNV had been held on 26 February.<sup>87</sup>

PNV and HB met 12 times in the next seven months. Both parties decided to 'armour' the talks against external, violent interference. The PNV became the target of tremendous political and media pressure when news of these talks reached the media.

In fact, for the PNV the political cost of the talks increased daily and Joseba Egibar, the party's spokesman, admitted that his defence of the

talks was jeopardising his political future.<sup>88</sup> But the PNV persevered, especially after its negotiators learned that those supporting a ceasefire and a revaluation of politics within ETA were becoming a majority.<sup>89</sup> Fruit of this was a parliamentary *entente* between the PNV, HB, EA and IU which was more symbolic than practical.<sup>90</sup> The new *entente* with a party backing terrorism prompted the Basque socialists to quit the regional government.

While HB, PNV, EA and IU were trying to build the Basque version of the Hume-Adams axis, the Good Friday Agreement was reached in Northern Ireland. Basque nationalists drew two conclusions from an analysis of the Good Friday Agreement. First, the strategy of inter-nationalist co-operation was the correct one on the way to peace. Second, after the consolidation of the HB-PNV axis it was necessary to reach a broadening of the consensus if a Basque Stormont was to be reached. The reaction of both ETA and HB was immediate: according to the Argentine daily paper *La Nación*, representatives of ETA had met IRA leaders in Montevideo to get direct information on the Stormont Agreement.<sup>91</sup> The IRA emphasis on politics increased pressure on ETA, since, as the *Irish Times* put it, 'the IRA ceasefire deprived it of a sense of having brothers in arms elsewhere in Europe'.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, HB, after attending the Sinn Féin Conference, recovered an idea already presented months ago, announcing the constitution of the 'Ireland Forum'.<sup>93</sup> The first meeting of the Forum took place on 20 June, with the participation of all nationalist parties, IU, the two nationalist unions, the farmers' union, the peace movement Elkarri and a number of smaller organisations close to nationalist thinking. The idea of the 'third space' and of the 'new majority' had reappeared, pushed by the Irish example. As on previous occasions, ETA was unwilling to leave this new initiative in the hands of the political, social and cultural organisations assembled in the Forum. Only a few days after the Forum's constitution, a bomb killed a PP councillor in Renteria who, a few months earlier, had substituted for a colleague shot dead by ETA.

However, this new incident, which had generated internal protests within HB, was an accident. The internal debate of the paramilitaries was about to conclude and the decision to declare a ceasefire seemed to be immediate. This conclusion had yet to be transmitted to the commandos in the underground.<sup>94</sup> This process of transmission took place in July and the absence of a violent reaction to the closure of *Egin*, on the orders of the Spanish Supreme Court, indicated significant changes within ETA.

An ETA ceasefire was being operationalised and HB's more flexible approach received the backing of the paramilitaries.<sup>95</sup> A means had to

be found through which the ceasefire could be interpreted as a fundamental contribution to a future political victory rather than a surrender. The 'Ireland Forum' performed this function. The 23 members of the Forum reached the 'Lizarrá Agreement' four days before ETA's ceasefire announcement. The Forum's sole objective was to reach a consensus on a draft which reflected the previous work of the Forum. In reality, there was little chance of making major changes to the draft presented by the representatives of HB and PNV Iruin and Egibar. The reason was that ETA did not know the literal text of the draft but its general outline, on which it had agreed. Since no peace process and no resolution of the Basque conflict was supposed to work without the co-operation and consent of the paramilitaries, it seemed politically inconvenient to risk this consensus by accepting major changes to the text.<sup>96</sup> The final document, with a first part completely dedicated to the Northern Irish peace process, was new evidence of the deep influence of Northern Ireland on Basque, and especially nationalist, politics.<sup>97</sup>

The declaration based on the Irish experience picks up some of the principles of Ardanza's peace proposal, such as the definition of the conflict as a political conflict, the open and unconditional agenda of the negotiations, the consideration of the Basque people as the sovereign decision-taking subject or the demand to the implicated states to accept the outcome of the negotiation process. There were, however, three remarkable differences. The first was semantic but had an acute political meaning. For Ardanza, an ETA ceasefire prior to political dialogue was an 'absolute necessity'. In the Lizarrá document, ETA was not mentioned, but it was envisaged that negotiations would be carried out in the 'permanent absence of all expressions of violence'. While this was a euphemism for an ETA ceasefire, it could also be applied to 'state [that is, police] violence'. The second difference was the explicit exclusion of negotiations with ETA in the Ardanza document, against negotiations 'without excluding any of the implicated parties', in the Lizarrá Agreement. This would include ETA. The participation of the paramilitaries was, however, conditional because, according to the Lizarrá document, the final word rested with the 'citizens of Euskal Herria'. Finally, the third difference lay in the Lizarrá document's specification of the core issues of the future negotiation process: the 'territoriality', meaning the separation of the seven (French and Spanish) Basque territories by political and administrative borders; the recognition of the Basque people as the subject of decision-making; and, finally, the acknowledgement of the Basque people's right to 'political sovereignty'. The last was another euphemism not necessarily meaning

independence, since a 'sovereign' decision could also be that of a Basque republic within an Iberian federation or even that of maintaining the current *status quo*. The differences resulted from the different objectives of the two texts. Ardanza's proposal was that of a (nationalist) president trying to establish the highest possible level of consensus among nationalists and non-nationalists. The Lizarrá Agreement, on the contrary, was a document written predominantly, but not exclusively, by and for nationalists (including ETA) with the implicit aim of smoothing the way to a ceasefire. It was a political manifesto in the mould of a Basque Hume-Adams document directed towards public opinion. In reality it was addressed to the local paramilitaries. It was not an institutional declaration which had to take Basque Trimble, Paisley or their Spanish allies into account.

Political reactions to the Lizarrá Declaration were predictable. On the one hand, the polarisation of Basque politics into nationalist and non-nationalist blocs was again evident. Little seemed to have changed since the debate on Ardanza's peace proposal. The Spanish government and Basque conservatives blamed the PNV, EA and IU for 'breaking the consensus of the democrats' by burying the Ajuria Enea Agreement. They also criticised the 'indulgence' of ETA and radical nationalism. The socialists, anxious about the possibility of losing their non-nationalist voters to the conservatives in the imminent regional elections, used the same arguments as the PP leaders and President Aznar. In this view, the agreement was a capitulation to ETA. One Irish commentator regarded the reactions as a consequence of the impression that in the Basque Country 'democratic nationalists are being seduced by ETA, whereas...the SDLP won over Sinn Féin to democracy in Ireland'.<sup>98</sup> Of the rejectionists, only the socialists of the most nationalist Basque province, Gipuzkoa, were moderate in their criticism. They asked their Madrid-based leadership and their Basque general secretary Redondo not 'to close all the doors' to the process initiated in Lizarrá.<sup>99</sup>

On the other hand, the signatories to Lizarrá championed agreement as a first step on the way to peace. The initiative also received the official support from the Basque government, which, after the withdrawal of the socialists, only consisted of the nationalist PNV and EA. The government also issued a call to ETA to lay down its arms and take notice of what the majority of the Basque people was demanding.<sup>100</sup>

When Mari Carmen Garmendia, spokeswoman of the Basque government, issued this statement, she probably knew that the call to ETA was superfluous, since the paramilitaries had already made their decision. On 17 September *Euskadi Información*, successor to the closed



daily paper *Egin*, and *Egunkaria*, the daily paper written exclusively in Basque, published the text of a communiqué in which ETA announced its first ever complete and indefinite ceasefire.<sup>101</sup> The communiqué, issued four days after the Lizarra Agreement, did not actually mention the Agreement, yet Lizarra is implicit throughout the text. The first sentence reads: 'After two long decades, now there is once again an open possibility for *Euskal Herria* to take a decisive step on the way towards independence.' ETA's answer to the new scenario was a ceasefire. The character of the truce, however, would depend on 'events and the steps'.

In Gernika, the union leader José Elorrieta spoke on the idea of the 'third space' and a 'new – peaceful – majority' backing Basque sovereignty. HB and ETA were 'ripe' to enter mainstream politics, but they wanted an 'honourable way' to do so. The PNV 'threw [them] a lifeline',<sup>102</sup> accepting the idea of a pan-nationalist *entente* as the instrument that would kick-start the peace process and as a first key to the resolution of the conflict. The inter-nationalist party talks, the Ireland Forum and finally the Lizarra Declaration specified the proposal of a cross-party nationalist agreement. Stormont was the proof that this strategy was possible. ETA's communiqué fitted perfectly into this inter-nationalist operation, since its message was addressed especially to the nationalist community and not, as usual on previous occasions, to the Spanish government or the 'centralist' parties. On 16 September, the Basque Humes and Adams, seizing the opportunities created by a new political and social framework in which the pressure in favour of an end of violence had become stronger than ever before, reached their first success: for the first time since the beginning of the violent ethnic conflict in the Basque Country, the conditions for a negotiated solution of the problem were present. Will Lizarra lead to a Basque Good Friday Agreement? The future will provide the answer to this question. For the moment, the Basque–Irish parallels continue: in the regional elections to the Basque Parliament on 25 October, the voters rewarded radical nationalism for its new strategic image and its contribution to the achievement of the ceasefire. Herri Batasuna, rebaptised as *Euskal Herritarrok*, received a substantial peace dividend with 17.94 per cent of votes. It became the third-largest party in the Basque Autonomous Community behind the PNV (27.97 per cent) and the PP (20.14 per cent), followed by the PSE-EE (17.57 per cent). The party won 57 000 new voters in comparison with the regional elections of 1994 and the total of 223 264 votes was the best result ever obtained by HB.<sup>103</sup>

## Notes

- 1 A certain exception might be the case of Corsica, where, however, neither the nationalist movement nor the impact of the violent conflict have reached a similar extent to that of the Basque Country.
- 2 For the origins of Basque nationalism, its evolution and historical context, see: Javier Corcuera, *Orígenes, ideología y organización del nacionalismo vasco (1876–1904)* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1979); Ludger Mees, *Nacionalismo vasco, movimiento obrero y cuestión social* (Bilbao: Fundación Sabino Arana, 1992); Ludger Mees, *Entre nación y clase: El nacionalismo vasco y su base social en perspectiva comparada* (Bilbao: Fundación Sabino Arana, 1991); José Luis de la Granja, *Nacionalismo y II República en el País Vasco* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1986); Juan Linz, 'Early State-Building and Late Peripheral Nationalisms against the State: the Case of Spain', in S. N. Eisenstadt and S. Rokkan (eds), *Building States and Nations: Analysis by Region* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1973), vol. 2, pp. 32–116; Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, *A Rebellious People: Basques, Protests and Politics* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991); Daniele Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain* (London: Hurst, 1997); Marianne Heiberg, *The Making of the Basque Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- 3 'Y es que la violencia es una acción, o estado o situación, que se genera siempre, y se cualifica de manera exclusiva, en el seno de un conflicto.' See Julio Aróstegui, 'Violencia, sociedad y política: la definición de la violencia', *Ayer*, 13 (1994), pp. 17–55 (29).
- 4 H. L. Nieburg, *Political Violence: the Behavioral Process* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969).
- 5 See Charles Tilly's classic *From Mobilization to Revolution* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1978), specially Chapter 6: 'Collective Violence', pp. 172–88.
- 6 Aróstegui, 'Violencia', p. 32.
- 7 Ekkart Zimmermann, *Political Violence, Crises, and Revolutions: Theories and Research* (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1983), p. 346. A good overview on the complex theoretical debate about the concept of 'terrorism' is provided in Alex P. Schmid, *Political Terrorism: a Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature* (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1983). See the author's complex definition of terrorism on p. 111.
- 8 Two months before his death, Franco persevered with the execution of five political prisoners (including two ETA activists) despite widespread international protests.
- 9 Richard Gunther, Hans-Jürgen Puhle and P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, 'Introduction', in: Gunther, Puhle and Diamandouros (eds), *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 1–32 (4). For the Spanish transition see also Richard Gunther, Giacomo Sani, and Goldie Shabad, *Spain after Franco: the Making of a Competitive Party System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Donald Share, *The Making of Spanish Democracy* (New York: Praeger, 1986).
- 10 'Thus, within this one region ... democratic politics and institutions were not consolidated at that time' (Gunther, Puhle and Diamandouros, 'Introduction', p. 11).



- 11 Politically, these were crucial years: 1978: Referendum on the Constitution; 1979: Referendum on the Basque Autonomy Statute and second elections to the Spanish Parliament; and 1980: first elections to the regional Basque Parliament.
- 12 Statistics in Florencio Domínguez Iribarren, *ETA: Estrategia, organización y actuaciones 1978-1992* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 1998), pp. 220-3. The first fatality among ETA victims, frequently forgotten in the figures, was a young girl injured by a bomb placed in the train station of San Sebastián in June 1960. Normally it is the *Guardia Civil* José Pardines, shot dead in 1969, who is considered the first 'official' fatality.
- 13 On the construction of the Basque regional autonomy, see the basic analysis of Javier Corcuera, *Política y derecho: La construcción de la autonomía vasca* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1991).
- 14 The three Basque regions within the French state (Lapurdi, Behenafarroa and Xuberoa) were not linked to the Basque Autonomous Community. Navarra, the fourth Basque province within the Spanish state, has constituted its own single-province Autonomous Community. The process of separation between Navarra and the other three provinces began during the Second Republic, when a small majority of the Navarrese town councils voted against the integration into the Basque autonomy, which after a long delay was finally established in October 1936, some months after the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. The position of ETA and radical nationalism towards regional autonomy is described with empathy by Francisco Letamendia (Pseud. 'Ortiz'), *Historia del nacionalismo vasco y de ETA*, 3 vols, especially vol. 2, pp. 221-493 (*ETA en la Transición*) (San Sebastián: R & B, 1994).
- 15 On the history of ETA, see: Jáurtegui Gurutz, *Ideología y estrategia de ETA 1959-1968* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1981); José María Garmendia, *Historia de ETA* (San Sebastián: Haranburu, 5th edn, 1995) (1st edn, 1979/80); Robert B. Clark, *The Basque Insurgents: ETA 1952-80* (Madison/London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); John Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism: The Fight for Euskadi 1890-1986* (London: Routledge, 1988); Pedro Ibarra, *La evolución estratégica de ETA: De la guerra revolucionaria (1963) a la negociación (1987)* (San Sebastián: Kriselu, 1989); Peter Waldmann, *Militanter Nationalismus im Baskenland* (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1990); Peter Waldmann, *Ethnischer Radikalismus: Ursachen und Folgen gewaltsamer Minderheitenkonflikte am Beispiel des Baskenlandes, Nordirlands und Quebecs* (Opladen: West deutscher Verlag, 1989).
- 16 For the dissolution of ETA-p.m. see Giovanni Giacomucci, *ETA-p.m.: el otro camino* (Tafalla: Txalaparta, 1997), and the memoirs of one of the politicians who personally participated in the negotiations, R. Castro, *Juan Maria Bandrés: Memorias para la paz* (Majadahonda: HMR, 1998).
- 17 Melchor Miralles and Ricardo Arques, *Amedo: el Estado contra ETA* (Barcelona: Plaza & James, 1989); Alvaro Baeza, *GAL, crimen de Estado* (Madrid: ABL, 1996); Sagrario Morán Blanco, *ETA entre España y Francia* (Madrid: Editorial Complutense, 1997).
- 18 The best study of the complex network of organisations and initiatives constituting the Liberation Movement with ETA at its core is José Manuel Mata, *El nacionalismo vasco radical: Discurso, organización y expresiones* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 1993).

- 19 This political decay has already attracted the attention of sociologists who have tried to explain it with data proceeding from biographical case-to-case studies. See Mikel Arriaga, *Y nosotros que éramos de HB: Sociología de una heterodoxia abertzale* (San Sebastián: Haranburu, 1997).
- 20 *El País* (27 December 1997).
- 21 The prisoners had been dispersed throughout Spain - often great distances from the Basque Country.
- 22 Belén Delgado Soto and Antonio José Mencía Gullón, *Diario de un secuestro: Ortega Lara, 532 días en un zulo* (Madrid: Alianza, 1998).
- 23 María Antonia Iglesias (ed.), *Ermua, 4 días de julio: 40 voces tras la muerte de Miguel Angel Blanco* (Madrid: El País-Aguilar, 1997).
- 24 Kepa Aulestia, *HB: Crónica de un delirio* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1998).
- 25 'Oldartzen. Oinarritzko Txostena. Egoeraren azterketa eta ildo politikoa', manuscript (December 1994), pp. 197, 241, 212, 287, 283.
- 26 *El País* (9 December 1997).
- 27 *Egin* (30 December 1997).
- 28 *El País* (13 January 1997).
- 29 As an example, see the communiqués of ETA and KAS in *El País* (3 April 1997). The acronym KAS stands for *Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista* (Patriotic Socialist Coordinating Council), which is a semi-legal organization created to coordinate the strategy of the political and the armed wings of the Movement. ETA-m is a full member of KAS, a fact that provides real decision-making authority to this Council.
- 30 Gobierno Vasco (Presidencia, Gabinete de Prospección) (ed.), 'Actitudes hacia la violencia en el País Vasco', ms. (Mayo 1997), p. 12.
- 31 As a briefing update of the most important dimensions of the crisis and a source for statistical data, see the article 'A pesar de ETA', *Cambio*, 16 (27 October 1997), and the chapter 'Repercusión social y económica del terrorismo', in Domínguez Iribarren, *ETA*, pp. 261-71.
- 32 *Cambio*, 16 (27 October 1997), p. 12.
- 33 Ibid. and *El País* (28 January 1998).
- 34 Information facilitated by the Basque Government's Minister of Economy, Francisco Egea, based on the data available for the first semester of 1997. See *El Diario Vasco* (17 December 1997).
- 35 *El País* (17 January 1998). The situation in the province of Navarre with an unemployment rate of 9.72 per cent was better. See *El País* (6 January 1998).
- 36 *Landeia*, 59 (enero 1998), p. 22.
- 37 Gobierno Vasco (ed.), 'Plan de Actuación del Gobierno para el desarrollo de los valores democráticos y fomento de actitudes de solidaridad, tolerancia y responsabilidad en los adolescentes y jóvenes vascos', ms., Vitoria (1997), p. 16.
- 38 *El Diario Vasco* (10 April 1997).
- 39 *El País* (28 January 1998).
- 40 Interview with J. M. Korta and J. M. Ruiz Urchegui (14 November 1997), tape document.
- 41 *El País-Negocios* (29 September 1996).
- 42 *El País* (23 September 1996).
- 43 The presentation of the report and the press-conference in *El Diario Vasco* (13 May 1997).

- 44 *El País* (20 July 1997).
- 45 *El País* (20 January 1998).
- 46 During the last few years there have been registered several cases of violent aggression against supporters of Gesto.
- 47 Interview with Xabier Azkazibar, Bilbao (9 June 1997), tape document.
- 48 More information about the organisational structure and the discourse of these peace groups can be found in Benjamín Tejerina, José Manuel Fernández Sobrado and Xabier Aierdi, *Sociedad civil, protesta y movimientos sociales en el País Vasco: Los límites de la teoría de la movilización de recursos*, ed. Gobierno Vasco (Vitoria: Gobierno Vasco, 1995), especially pp. 39–44, 83–9, 131–2.
- 49 'The Basque Conflict', ms. (report prepared by Elkarri, 1995) p. 26.
- 50 'Basque Conflict', p. 26. See also Bakea Orain, *De Arantzazu a Maroño, encuentros por la paz* (San Sebastián: Tercera Prensa, 1994).
- 51 See the statement of Bakea Orain in *El Diario Vasco* (19 July 1997). In September, a member of the same group talked about the 'recent dissolution of the Maroño groups'. See *El País* (29 September 1997).
- 52 *El Diario Vasco* (10 June 1997).
- 53 The data and Elzo's statement in *El País* (24 November 1997).
- 54 The text of the Agreement is reproduced in *El País* (13 January 1998).
- 55 See the editorial ('Diez años') in *Egin* (11 January 1998).
- 56 There have been rumours that the origin of this leak was the conservative Spanish Minister of the Interior or the Secret Services interested in aborting the initiative without giving it time to mature.
- 57 'Para un acuerdo entre los Partidos de la Mesa sobre el "final dialogado" Documento de trabajo', ms., Vitoria-Gasteiz (17 March 1998).
- 58 Information given in the context of a meeting with the members of the research project 'Coming out of Violence' (12 March 1998).
- 59 See the 'Manifiesto for the Democracy in Euskadi' issued by the 'Forum of Ermua' the day of its foundation in February 1998, *El País* (14 February 1998).
- 60 For the history of the nationalist labour movement in the Basque Country, see Ludger Mees, 'Social Solidarity and National Identity in the Basque Country: the Case of the Nationalist Trade Union ELA-STV', in P. Pasture and J. Verberckmoes (eds), *Working-Class Internationalism and the Appeal of National Identity* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1998), pp. 43–81.
- 61 There are no official figures, but it is known and admitted by Elorrieta himself that the unrest, especially of many Basque policemen members of the union, pushed quite an important number of *ertzainak* to quit the union.
- 62 See *El Diario Vasco* (18 March 1997).
- 63 *El Diario Vasco* (2 October 1997).
- 64 Javier Villanueva, 'Puesta de largo del soberanismo vasco', *HIKA*, 1997ko azaroa, p. 28.
- 65 The text of the conference in *HIKA*, 1997ko azaroa, pp. 22–3.
- 66 See, for instance, the interview with Elorrieta quoted above and the public conference given by Fernández in Tolosa, *El Diario Vasco* (18 December 1997).
- 67 See Alberto Surio's comment ('La foto borrosa') in *El Diario Vasco* (19 October 1997).
- 68 See the article 'España nos ha enseñado los dientes' with information about the press conference given by the HB leaders in *Egin* (2 December 1997).
- 69 'Hito histórico', *Egin* (6 December 1997).
- 70 See the communiqué of the PNV in *Egin* (11 December 1997).
- 71 All these communiqués can be found in *Egin* (13 December 1997).
- 72 The text of the communiqué, completely written in Basque, was published by *Egin* (19 December 1997).
- 73 'HB y LAB salvan al "tercer espacio" de sus críticas a la "tercera vía"' (Quotation in *El Diario Vasco* [30 December 1997]).
- 74 This opinion is quoted in *El Diario Vasco* (13 December 1997).
- 75 Daniele Conversi, 'Domino Effect or International Developments? The Influences of International Events and Political Ideologies on Catalan and Basque Nationalism', *West European Politics*, 16, 3 (July 1993), pp. 245–70.
- 76 'Basque leader sees peace process as way forward', *Irish Times* (31 October 1998).
- 77 Sydney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 191.
- 78 For the concept of the 'contextual structure of society' which is a re-elaboration and modification of the more common concept of the 'political opportunity structure', see Dieter Rucht, *Modernisierung und neue soziale Bewegungen: Deutschland, Frankreich und USA im Vergleich* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1994), pp. 303–23.
- 79 José Luis Alvarez Santa Cristina, Kepa Pikabea Ugalde and Roxario Pikabea Ugalde, 'Abertzaleon estrategiaz', ms., 1997ko abuztua, pp. 2, 5.
- 80 *El País* (2 November 1998).
- 81 See the interviews in *El Diario Vasco* (2 February 1998) and *El País* (9 February 1998).
- 82 Alexander Ugalde Zubiri, *La acción exterior del nacionalismo vasco (1890–1939): Historia, pensamiento y relaciones internacionales* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 1996); Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, 'El mito del nacionalismo irlandés y su influencia en los nacionalismos gallego, vasco y catalán (1880–1936)', *Spagna Contemporanea*, 2 (1992), pp. 25–58; Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, 'El espejo irlandés y los reflejos ibéricos', *Cuadernos de Alzate*, 18 (1998), pp. 169–90.
- 83 Garaikoetxea, leader of EA, criticised the 'lack of courage' that in Euskadi was impeding the negotiation; Arzallus praised Tony Blair, contrasting his example with the Spanish politicians who defended the 'military way' as the only means of fighting against ETA; HB's new leader Arnaldo Otegi confirmed that 'Euskadi is going to live the same process as Northern Ireland does'. See *El País*, *Egin* and *El Diario Vasco* (13 April 1998).
- 84 This statement of Iturgaiz and those of other leaders can be found in 'Los partidos vascos discrepan sobre la aplicación en Euskadi de la vía irlandesa', *El Diario Vasco* (12 April 1998).
- 85 Here are only four examples from the enormous bulk of press articles dedicated to this question: Imanol Zubero, 'Irlanda y País Vasco, odiosas comparaciones', *El País* (14 April 1998); Antonio Elorza, 'De Stormont a Euskadi', *El País* (17 April 1998); Miguel Herrero de Miñón, 'Método de Stormont' *El País* (18 April 1998); Manuel Castells, 'El Estado red', *El País* (20 April 1998).

- 86 *El Diario Vasco* (17 February 1998).
- 87 This, at least, is the date published later by *El País* (2 November 1998).
- 88 *El País* (20 September 1998).
- 89 *El País* (2 November 1998). The newspaper does not specify the names of the interlocutors, nor the exact date, nor the source of the information, which later was not denied by the PNV. By the end of April, ETA issued a communiqué requesting the PNV to break with its 'Spanish' allies, announcing 'profound changes' for the future of the Basque Country.
- 90 IU and EA had also held a number of previous separate meetings with HB.
- 91 Information published by *El Diario Vasco* (27 April 1998).
- 92 See the comments of Paddy Woodworth in 'Basques expect a new impetus to peace process', *Irish Times* (30 October 1998).
- 93 'HB propone un foro para extraer consecuencias del proceso irlandés', *El Diario Vasco* (23 April 1998).
- 94 Information published by *El País* (20 September and 2 November 1998).
- 95 At the beginning of September 1998, HB decided to participate in the regional elections to the Basque Parliament to be held in October under the name of *Euskal Herritarrok* (Basques Citizens). This new denomination was registered both to prevent a possible banning of HB and to open the new electoral coalition to sectors purged in previous phases or simply discontented with the extreme military bias of the HB politics.
- 96 Information according to 'Egibar e Iruin lo hicieron pasar a la ratificación del resto de los firmantes con la advertencia de que era innegociable e inmodificable', *El País* (5 October 1998).
- 97 Text in *El País* (13 September 1998).
- 98 See Paddy Woodworth, 'Spanish divided on Irish model as way forward', *Irish Times* (17 September 1998).
- 99 See the different declarations picked up by *El País* and *El Diario Vasco* (14/15 September 1998).
- 100 'El Gobierno vasco avala la declaración de Lizarra y reclama a ETA que deje de matar', *El País* (16 September 1998).
- 101 Text in *Euskadi Información* (17 September 1998).
- 102 Quotations from P. Woodworth, 'Basques expect a new impetus to peace process', *Irish Times* (30 October 1998).
- 103 Results in *El Diario Vasco* (26 October 1998).

## 5

# Sri Lanka – the Intractability of Ethnic Conflict

*Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu*

## Introduction

The protracted search for effective and durable groundrules for relations between the majority Sinhala ethnic community in Sri Lanka and the principal minority ethnic community the Tamils includes 15 years (at the date of writing) of armed hostilities between the predominantly Sinhala state and the main Tamil militant group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) or Tigers. The conflict has spilled over to affect also the position of another minority community, the Muslims.

Over the 15 years of armed hostilities there has been a series of grave human rights violations by both sides of the ethnic divide, the resort to terrorism and attrition as well as short-lived and arguably short-sighted attempts at negotiations. The search for a durable solution has invariably focused on constitutional reform for conflict resolution and, in this respect, the search for peace constitutes the definitive phase in Sri Lanka's tortuous nation- and state-building process, fifty years after formal decolonisation and the granting of independence.

Whilst the analysis of the evolution of the conflict in the last four years can be divided into subject headings, it is important to understand at the outset that there are certain factors that are common to all these issue areas. Together they make up the overarching set of factors that have militated against conflict resolution. In effect, they are the distinguishing features of the old paradigm that is wedded to the *status quo ante bellum*. Proponents of this paradigm will insist that nothing that has transpired in the last 15 years has demonstrated a case to the contrary. Rather it has confirmed their position. Critics will argue that the persistence of open armed hostilities and ethnic conflict is testimony enough to the need for a paradigm shift and new thinking on conflict resolution.