

Taming Basque Nationalist Extremism? The role of Democratisation, Self- Rule, Reinsertion and Negotiation (1979-2007)

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Taming Basque Nationalist Extremism? The role of Democratisation, Self-Rule, Reinsertion and Negotiation (1979-2007)¹

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Abstract

Nationalist extremism in the Basque Country, the main manifestation of which is ETA terrorism, has been the target of a wide array of constitutional and ordinary policies. Aside from repression, these include the substantial restructuring of government and the reallocation of public resources, which are derived from a responsive approach to conflict resolution. In addition, at various periods, the Spanish government has undertaken some attempts to end terrorism by talking with ETA while it held cease-fires. Through a multivariate research design, this study evaluates the outcomes of the main policies that have been implemented. The analysis shows that the granting of Basque self-governing institutions has substantially mitigated political extremism, both with respect to attitudes and terrorism. As for the cease-fires and talks between government and insurgents, they have reduced the number of fatalities, without producing any delayed, subsequent increase in this parameter.

Introduction

This study develops a political account of the appeasement of extremism, including both the terrorism of *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (ETA, Basque Country and Freedom) and the underlying population attitudes that facilitate and support it. The account pays attention to the main responsive and repressive policies democratic governments have carried out with regard to the Basque conflict, and is tested with a multivariate research design. It focuses, in particular, on the effects of two major changes in political structures: political decentralisation and

¹ A previous version of this paper was presented at the seminar series on “Order, Conflict and Violence” at the University of Yale. I am thankful to the participants for their comments, and in particular, to its director, Stathis Kalyvas, and Juan J. Linz.

democratisation. It also pays attention to the outcomes of cease-fires and talks between the government and ETA.

The answers of conventional wisdom to how to respond to rebellion are not univocal: some advise governments to employ a good deal of repression; others suggest satisfying as much as possible those struggling violently, in so far as their cause is regarded as legitimate. Since the literature invokes rival hypotheses that involve different independent variables, the best research design to evaluate their empirical consistency is a multivariate analysis, which affords the ability to reduce the risk of spurious causal imputations.

This is carried out on variations of political extremism all through time. Since the late 1970s, the Spanish political system has produced a wide array of both repressive and responsive policies concerning this conflict. Repression has ranged from a quite indiscriminate repression towards Basque nationalism to the selective incrimination of terrorist activists. Similarly, governmental rejection of the Basque cultural, social and political differences has shifted into constitutional recognition of the Basque “nationality”, which has granted the Basques unprecedented autonomous powers.

On the basis of the available data and statistical techniques, I argue that the appeasement of Basque nationalist extremism is best explained through a combination of a substantial restructuring of government and efficacious but democratically inspired repressive policies. In particular, although democratisation has also impinged on this result, given the ethno-nationalist nature of the Basque conflict, it is the decentralisation of political power that has been the key responsive policy for the appeasement of extremism. In addition, negotiations with the terrorists during the periods in which they have held some sort of truce have not only given hope for an end of violence, but they have also reduced violence itself without increasing it in subsequent years.

Governmental Approaches to Facing Nationalist Extremism: Repression and Responsiveness

The primary concern of this research lies in the terrorism of ETA. However, unlike other terrorist groups that did not last, ETA is strongly interconnected with a network of formal and informal associations and political platforms and deeply rooted in the sectarian political subculture of a substantial segment of Basque society. Thus, rather than focusing strictly on terrorist behaviour, it seems preferable to examine it from a broader perspective: to begin with, because the repertoire of actions that destabilise the political system is far wider; and furthermore because, if one seeks to account for terrorism, the conditions in which it is sustained should be considered.

Among other reasons, in the first place, while not all violence is “terrorist”, in the sense that it intimidates a social group beyond its direct victims (Reinares 1998), other forms of political violence also posit a serious problem. Second, other varieties of contentious non-conventional, although non-violent, types of political behaviour are equally destabilising for the political and social system. Third, anti-system groups can obstruct institutional performance and destabilise the system from within. Finally, and more generally, the presence of impenetrable political subcultures, strongly structured internally and

antagonistic externally, makes co-operation and co-ordination in favour of the whole society exceedingly difficult – this being particularly true where there is an inclination to justify, promote or practice violence (for further details, see Martínez-Herrera 2007). As shown below, all these types of behaviour can be observed in the recent history of the Basque Country.

Hence I regard the case of Basque nationalist violence and terrorism within the broader category of “political extremism”. This refers to a psychological inclination to practice, advocate, or at least accept the murder of fellow citizens as a means for achieving political goals. Although the “extremists” do not necessarily carry out violent actions, they hold supportive attitudes to it. Starting from these attitudes, they are prone to different forms of behaviour that, to one extent or another, sustain political violence, from making economic contributions to casting ballots for platforms that support such violence to participating in terrorist organisations themselves.

That said, the next task is to identify governmental responses in the face of violent rebellion. This field of research has tended to be confined into two bodies of literature that hardly speak to one another. Most analyses and prescriptions still tend to focus either on repressive policies or on responsive policies *vis-à-vis* rebellious groups.² Here, they will be considered as two different yet compatible dimensions. The view that authority and force are intrinsic to the nature of government prevails in the former. By contrast, the latter corresponds to integrative views of public power in which authority is sensitive to social needs and demands. Even though a comparison of the effectiveness of each of these approaches in reducing extremist attitudes and actual behaviour could be attempted, it is plausible that a strategy combining sanctions and rewards, with a reinforcing effect, tends to be the most efficacious.

From a historical comparative perspective, the most frequent policies for confronting any sort of rebellion have been those of “repression”. An ideal-typical characteristic of these policies is that governments pursue the imposition of values upon the social environment through hierarchic and coercive methods, since they consider force their main power resource. Authority and force materialise in coercion to eradicate violent anti-system political behaviour. Conflict is framed in terms of its symptoms. The objective of these policies is to eliminate the threatening *effects* of conflict rather than to eradicate its roots.³ Although they are not the primary focus of this study, a set of repressive policies has been factored into the analysis (see Martínez Herrera 2007, 2008).

In turn, the term “responsive policies” refers to interventions aimed at coping with the underlying social and political causes of political extremism. The prevailing principle is inclusiveness, which is typical of the pluralistic democratic approach and, more generally, of regimes that are sensitive to the needs and demands of every social group. In confronting insurgency, the authorities pay attention to the structural and cultural social bases of rebellion. The rulers are ready to consider the demands of the unsatisfied groups and to communicate with them, and may also be ready to negotiate and accord compromises. Thus, amongst their instruments, there is a disposition to share

² For a conspicuous exception, see Gurr (1993).

³ Apart from that, repressive policies show broad heterogeneity (see Reinares 1998: chap. 4; Hoffman and Morrison-Taw 1999).

material resources, as well as prestige positions, and even power, at least to some extent.

Let us emphasise that responsiveness does not necessarily entail weakness, unilateral concessions or satisfying any claim. Nor does it have to be the result of certain ultimate principles or values, since it may also be developed for instrumental reasons. Moreover, responsiveness does not need to imply a zero-sum game, as it can supply all the involved actors with a general improvement. As for the policy areas, jurisdictional level, and degree of formalisation, these policies can be very heterogeneous. Depending on the roots of the conflict, they may involve many different fields (e.g., culture, religion, education and labour), and they can even include the very redistribution of public power. Finally, concerning their degree of formalisation, they can be enforced in the form of policies of constitutional engineering, or as ordinary pieces of legislation, or even as simple administrative decrees (Martínez-Herrera 2007, 2008).

Previous research has highlighted the effects of some major responsive policies to mitigate Basque nationalist extremism (Martínez-Herrera 2002b). However, it did not distinguish at the operational level between the outcomes of two major responsive factors involved, namely: political decentralisation and democratisation. This study takes up this distinction. From positive political science, the most outstanding example of a responsive approach to interethnic or nationalist conflicts is the “consociational” model of Arend Lijphart (1984, 1999). He analyses institutions that supply the possibility of expression and decision of *organised* minorities in plural societies. These institutions enable their elites to participate in power and, thus, to contribute to enhance the integration of political systems that otherwise would tend to break up and/or to underperform. The concept “responsiveness”, nevertheless, is broader than those of “consociationalism” and “accommodation” since political integration is not always based on an institutionalisation of minorities’ rights and powers. Other opportunities rest on pluralist policies (Dahl 1971) and on attempts at co-optation seeking the assimilation of minorities in exchange for economic and prestige advantages – less theorised but often put into practice (Bloom 1990; Gurr 1993).

Federalism is probably the political arrangement that is most often advised to integrate multiethnic polities. In recent years, however, some scholars have also warned that federalism might induce an escalation of ethnic conflict. Some argue that Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia broke up because their federal design fostered the framing of conflict in terms of ethno-nationality while providing the groups with state organisation resources to organise large scale rebellion (Linz 1993; Skalnik-Leff 1999). Thus, whether federalism integrates or does just the opposite remains as an open empirical question. I use the term “political decentralisation”, which comprises federalism proper as well as other forms of transference of decision-making power from the centre to the periphery.

Many other policies fall into the analytical category of responsiveness. Some directly aim at the allocation of resources across social groups – such as the distribution of wealth, access to health, opportunities for education, social positions praised in terms of status or social prestige, and resources for the preservation of certain socially-valued cultural heritages such as language

and religion. In effect, group needs and claims can be widely satisfied without granting formal guarantees to these groups. However, responsive policies usually involve guarantees of political inclusion that may give rise to structural reforms. They comprise such developments as federalist arrangements, proportional representation, and several types of power-sharing institutions, including quotas in public and private jobs (Horowitz 1985; Stepan 1998).

Another salient yet debatable responsive policy is democratisation. Dankwart A. Rustow (1970), Robert Dahl (1971), Juan J. Linz (1978) have pointed out the difficulties that a feeling of alienation vis-à-vis the political community involves for the instauration and persistence of democracies. Rustow contended that “national unity” is the “single background condition” for democracy. Among other things, this condition entails that the existing political community is not challenged by alternatives among its members.

Notwithstanding the obvious importance of conflicts about the political community in many settings around the world, the “transitologist” literature neglected them until democratisation reached Eastern Europe.⁴ Some authors suggest that democracy could be the most appropriate regime to settle conflicts within contested political communities. They posit that as long as the challenger groups obtain access to channels of representation enabling them to express their demands, they will have fewer incentives to resort to force, and thus the negotiation of compromises will be easier (Seward 1998). Nonetheless, this view has been challenged by authors who argue that democratisation of multiethnic polities tends to exacerbate ethnic conflict (e.g. Skalnick-Leff 1999). In addition, Reinares (1996) contends that the odds of strategies of provocation are larger in new, weakly institutionalised democracies. Thus, in this study, besides testing the effects of political decentralisation, I shall examine the contributions of democratisation to the appeasement of the Basque conflict.

Finally, this paper assesses the effects of the cease-fires during which different governments have held talks with the terrorists. In the Spanish case, these talks have mainly aimed at ending terrorism with a disposition to negotiate the conditions of convicted inmates and to reintegrate in society former militants of ETA. Since 1976, there have been many talks during the last three decades. However, the talks that have attracted most attention are those that have occurred during periods during when the terrorist organisation held a cease-fire. Here I shall focus on the latter. In order to increase the odds of a settlement, authorities have generally postponed many arrests during the cease-fires. One unintended effect is that the temporary reduction of detentions and the very fact of talking with the terrorists understandably generate uneasiness amongst part of the society. Yet, what produces the most concern is the intuition that terrorists use these periods for reorganising themselves and, hence, that murders might increase afterwards. Sometimes it has also been suggested that the terrorists might increase their attacks just before offering parleys in order to affect a strong negotiation position. I shall evaluate empirically both conjectures.

⁴ See, for instance, the influential collection directed by O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986), which gave birth to the “transitologist” school – a conspicuous exception is the production of Linz (especially 1978). It is ironic that, having Spain been a “flagship case” of that literature, the question of its national integration has been neglected (in this vein, see also Stepan 1998; Skalnick-Leff 1999).

Ethno-Nationalist Extremism in the Basque Country

The most prominent materialisation of political extremism in the Basque Country is the terrorism of ETA. This is one of the most long-lived terrorist organisations in the Western world, with more than forty years of existence, more than thirty years of personal attacks, and more than eight hundred murders (Domínguez-Iribarren 1999; Jaime and Reinares 1999). Still, as argued above, expressions and consequences of extremism on a polity do not confine themselves to terrorism.

ETA's persistence could not occur without being embedded in a broader social milieu. Like other organisations, its own internal dynamics explain, to a large extent, its persistence and autonomy. Yet its interaction with the social context becomes crucial. The most obvious aspect of this interaction is the success or failure of policing measures. That said, the inputs that favour ETA are no less important. ETA reproduction for decades has required, above all, the regular generational replacement of its commandos. In addition, the role of the environment in the provision of information, ammunition, infrastructure and moral support cannot be neglected (Funes 1998; Reinares 1998).

In the case of ETA, it is possible to consider a system of concentric circles, which are hierarchically related (cf. Mata 2005). At the core, there are the terrorist organisations. In a wider circle, there is a network of support organisations that, on the whole, are often called the Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV). Next, there are the voters for those parties. The external ring corresponds to those who share ideas of rejection towards Spain, separation for the Basque Country, *and* accept murdering, blackmailing, and kidnapping as means. Here I focus on political murdering and mass attitudinal rejection of the Spanish community as two dimensions of Basque nationalist extremism, which stand for the core and the external ring within this system.

Actual violence is the most obvious dimension of extremism. All the more so when murders result from the desire for public impact, and terrorist organisations exert a direct leverage over the extremist movement at large. An annual number of murders denotes, to a large extent, the operability of ETA and, especially, its ability to psychologically influence large numbers of people. I refer to all ETA's factions: ETA-m ("military"), ETA-pm ("political-military"), and the Anti-Capitalist Autonomous Commandos.⁵ For the period 1968-2004, there is a strong correlation between mortality and frequency of attacks with victims (Pearson's $r = .95$), which entails that the variation in murder techniques hardly changes lethality in the long-run.

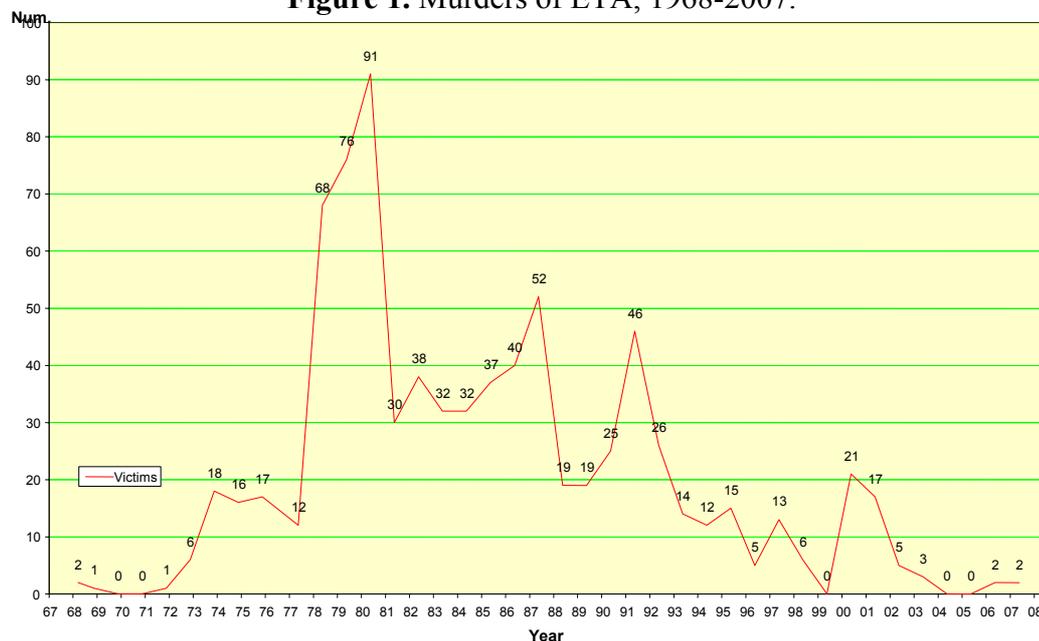
As shown in Figure 1, the largest number of ETA murders took place between 1978 and 1980, during the difficult period of the twofold transition to democracy and self-government, and the trend has been decreasing since, though with many short-term variations.⁶ The task is to account for these developments

⁵ The data on victims come from police sources.

⁶ According to former Spanish minister Prof. Ernest Lluch, the first homicide occurred in 1961, when a baby died in an explosion of a device placed at a train stop. ETA has not assumed it.

by paying attention to the impact of the main policies towards the Basque conflict while controlling for other relevant yet theoretically exogenous factors.

Figure 1. Murders of ETA, 1968-2007.



Source: Author's elaboration of police data

At the basis of the extremist behaviour under consideration lies a system of beliefs that constitutes a clear example of a political subculture. It is a structured, consistent and stable system of attitudes of rejection (even hatred) towards Spain, while adhering to Basque national identification and secessionism and sympathising with ETA. A quite reliable proxy indicator of the Basque nationalist extremist subculture lies in the exclusive self-identification with the Basque Country, as expressed on a bipolar scale of preferences.⁷ I focus on those individuals declaring to identify *only* with the Basque Country, thus *not at all* with Spain.

These attitudes are strongly associated with both separatism and favourable perceptions of ETA. Specifically, by the late 1970s, 71 per cent of citizens identifying themselves as “only Basque” perceived ETA militants as either patriots or idealists (Linz *et al.* 1986). During the 1980s, the rate of acquiescent attitudes towards ETA kept fairly stable amongst them (Llera 1994) and, at the aggregate level, the correlation is very strong, too.⁸ Additionally,

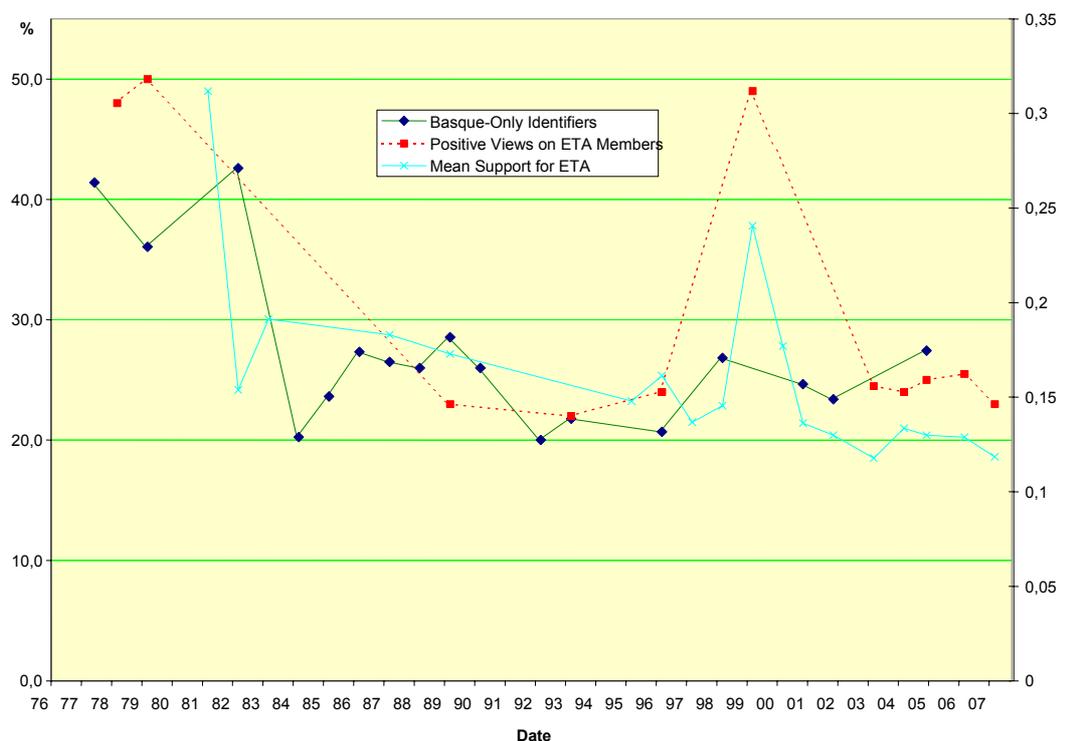
⁷ With minor differences, the question reads: “Which of the following sentences better express your feelings?: I feel Spanish only; More S. than Basque; As much S. as B.; More B. than S.; or Basque only”; DK; NA.

⁸ The Pearson's correlation between the aggregate attitudes towards ETA activists and Basque-only identification is .73. If we take attitudes of support for ETA (organisation), as weighted by Sánchez-Cuenca (2007), the correlation is .52. For comparative purposes, the correlation between attitudes towards the organisation and towards its

from a qualitative perspective, one of the most widely shared attitudes amongst ETA convicts is their hatred towards Spain (Reinares 2001).

However, the series on attitudes towards ETA and its members are very incomplete compared with our other series. Therefore, although a part of Basque-only identifiers do not sympathise with ETA, I take the percentage of Basque-only identifiers as a reliable proxy for extremist attitudes.⁹ As Figure 2 shows, between 1977 and 1982 approximately forty per cent of Basques expressed this attitude. Yet, in 1984 the rate dramatically dropped and since then its average fluctuates around twenty-five per cent. Thus, another task is to account for these variations by paying attention to the effect of the different policies.

Figure 2. Basque only identifiers and support for ETA and its members



Note: Aggregate-level Pearson's correlations (r) are: .73 between attitudes towards members and Basque-only identifiers; .52 between support for ETA (organisation) and Basque-only identifiers; .85 between attitudes towards members and support for ETA.

Sources: for Basque-only identifiers, author's elaboration of survey time-series; for attitudes towards ETA members, Euskobarometro; for attitudes towards ETA as an organisation, Sánchez-Cuenca 2007.

members is .85. For the attitudes towards ETA, see the Euskobarometro series, at www.ehu.es/cpvweb.

⁹ This exhaustively includes the series produced by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas. While trying to avoid mixing data from different sources, the series has been completed with survey data from DATA for the 1970s. To clarify the trends, if there is more than one survey per year, a monthly and quarterly weighted average has been calculated for that year. Some gap periods up to two years long have been filled by interpolation (see Martínez-Herrera 2002a).

Responsive and repressive policies in the Basque Country

Responsiveness and repression stand as the two most relevant dimensions of state policies. As far as the social background of Basque nationalist extremism is concerned, the historical dynamic of political decentralisation and re-centralisation synthesises and structures most policies. After the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), the Spanish nationalist victorious side dismantled most Basque self-governing institutions, minimising the responsive approach. By contrast, the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and the Basque Autonomy Statute of 1979 enacted an unprecedented territorial self-government. The Basque parliament and executive have jurisdiction over education, health, culture and social services, as well as the collection of most important taxes, a part of which is then passed on to the central state, after mutual agreement (Aja 1999). Moreover, they command a regional police force that has largely replaced that of the state (Jar-Couselo 1995). The Constitution also bears an important symbolic intention, as it recognises the existence of “nationalities” within the “nation” (Spain) and grants the protection and promotion of minority languages and cultures.

The restructuring of government has had many substantial consequences. For one, Basque language and folklore have been resolutely fostered by means of both staff and financial resources and regulations – the Basque language being compulsory in primary and secondary education, and enjoying affirmative action in higher education. The administration of the regional self-government has attained a great volume of administrative staff, physical assets and financial resources, thus implying a massive reallocation of resources. Furthermore, it has been often claimed that the most desirable jobs depending on the regional government are taken up by Basque nationalists, and that the allocation of regional subsidies tends to favour associations and cooperatives led by Basque nationalists (Mansvelt-Beck 2005).

To operationalise political decentralisation, I have devised a measure of the rate of regional public spending out of the total public spending related to the Basque Country. This is an optimal proxy indicator for the resources of the regional institutions, which expresses, to a large extent, their relative power as compared to the central and local levels of government. The Ministry of Public Administration has produced a measure of the share of the overall statewide public spending that has been yearly generated by the regional institutions at large (Moreno 2001; MAP 2002). Since this is not detailed per region and there are large differences between regions, however, I have weighted the rate of total regional public spending by a ratio that divides the proportion of the Basque regional budget out of the sum of all regional budgets (Martínez-Herrera 2008).

Nonetheless, the process of transference of powers from the centre to the regions was not without obstacles. In order to calm military concerns about national unity, the *Unión del Centro Democrático* (UCD) in office and the social democrats (PSOE) in the opposition agreed on a bill (the LOAPA) that aimed to harmonise decentralisation across regions and to slow down the ongoing transference of powers. As a result, from 1981 to 1983 Basque nationalists were fiercely mobilised against the bill, which could have increased further the rejection of Spanish identification amongst their reference population.¹⁰

¹⁰ The LOAPA controversy has been specified as a variable that scores .5 in 1981, 1 in 1982 and 1983, and 0 in all other years.

Responsiveness also stands out in other domains. One of the conditions that spurred nationalist extremism was dictatorship, which in the collective imaginary associated the idea of “Spain” with the idea of oligarchic domination (cf. Pérez-Díaz 1993). It could thus be possible that the achievement of a democracy contributed to attenuate the rejection towards the Spanish political community amongst the Basque population (Martínez-Herrera 2002b, 2007). I have operationalised democratisation through two indicators that are used alternatively. The first one is the Freedom House index of political freedoms, which is widely used in the literature on democratisation. The second measure is the Polity2 index of democracy, which is elaborated by the Centre for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM).¹¹

Prospects about an association between responsive policies and extremism can be expressed as a negative hypothetical causal relation. It is possible to expect that every government action satisfying a need (expressed or not as a demand) or making up for a motive of reactivity in different domains (culture, self-government, economy) of the social bases of Basque extremism will contribute to reduce both their rejection towards Spain and the derived violence. However, to disentangle the effects of these policies, it is necessary to also examine the simultaneous effects of factors stemming from the repressive side.

As far as repression is concerned, it can be expected, in general terms, that the more efficacious – for example, in the number of convictions – the repression of extremism, the larger the odds that extremist behaviour will decrease. All throughout history, rulers have usually taken this expectation as an unquestioned assumption, from which the banning of any expression, even peaceful, of extremist views has followed. Yet this proposition can be substantially amended if one considers that the efficacy of the whole policy will be greater in so far as the violence of the state is considered legitimate in the relevant contexts, such as in the social milieu where force is applied and in an international environment where human rights and political freedoms are highly valued. This involves aspects related to the public image of the policy, such as the accuracy in the application of force and the respect for human rights. Repression is expected to diminish violence, directly, by removing active violent actors and, indirectly, by increasing the perceived cost of those actions (for further details, see Martínez-Herrera 2008).

The most prominent aspect of repression is arrests.¹² The expected relation is negative and its effect should have, at least, a delay of one year, since the substitution of disarticulated commands needs some time. Nonetheless, in a hierarchical organisation, the arrest of a leader should have a greater impact than the arrest of an ordinary militant. Thus, a dummy variable representing the detention of ETA leadership in Bidart (the French Basque Country) at the beginning of 1992 has also been factored in. This operation caused ETA the loss of its most experienced leaders and important material resources, and supplied

¹¹ The Freedom House index of political freedoms ranges from 1 (high) to 7 (low). The Polity2 ranges from –10 (high autocracy) to +10 (high democracy).

¹² If not stated otherwise, the data on counter-terrorism variables are from Domínguez Iribarren (1999 with personal communication for updating) and the Unidad de Documentación y Análisis sobre Terrorismo (UDAT).

security agencies with information that would prove crucial in the following years (Reinares 1996; Sánchez-Cuenca 2001).¹³

Another device employed early on by democratic rulers was the social reintegration of fighters. By the 1980s, the government thus supplied an outlet for almost 150 of them, mostly from the ETA “political-military” splinter group, which had renounced the armed struggle in 1982 (Domínguez-Iribarren 1999; Jaime and Reinares 1999).¹⁴ In this manner important opportunity costs that induce them to persist were removed. In addition, this policy could produce various delayed effects on the terrorists’ recruitment and perception of their strategic and tactical opportunities (Martínez-Herrera 2008).

Attempts of communication with ETA to negotiate the conditions of its members in prison or the underground in exchange for a renunciation of violence make for another virtual predictor. The most important talks between government and ETA occurred in Algiers in 1989, while ETA held a truce that lasted for three months.¹⁵ Another parley took place during a truce held by ETA between 1998 and 1999 that lasted for around one year. This truce was mostly the result of the so-called Pact of Lizarra of 1998, which included the institutional collaboration between the political branch of ETA (at the time, named *Euskal Herriarrok*) and the two nationalist parties that ruled over the region (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco* and *Eusko Alkartasuna*). The governing nationalist parties sought an agreement with the organised extremist movement that could integrate its members into the political system and thus diminish their inclination to violence. Once this nationalist front did not work any longer, the cease-fire came to an end, however. The last most relevant cease-fire, also accompanied by a serious governmental effort to settle the conflict, started in 2006 and, after being interrupted by a devastating attack, was put to an end in early 2007.¹⁶ There has been some uneasiness based on the intuition that terrorists use these periods for reorganising themselves and that murders might increase afterwards. Some have also felt that the terrorists may perpetrate more attacks just before cease-fires to claim a stronger position during the parleys. A test of both conjectures is in order.

As far as the rejection of Spanish identification is concerned, I have evaluated the possibility, which has often been argued, that indiscriminate repression may de-legitimise the state. Thus, I have devised an indicator of “policing social efficiency”, which is an annual ratio between the number of arrests that produce a court order of imprisoning out of the total number of arrests. Figure 3 shows a substantial improvement of security agencies’ precision in this task since the late 1980s. The prospect of an improvement in the legitimacy of Spain amongst the Basque population follows.

¹³ The dummy Bidart scores 0 till 1991 and 1 since 1992, hence modelling an “abrupt-permanent” effect (McClearly and Hay 1980: chap. 4).

¹⁴ The data available comprise 102 reinsertions plus 10 amnesties. For an alternative view on reinsertion, cf. Sánchez-Cuenca (2001).

¹⁵ Indeed, many contacts took place in 1987 and 1988 as well, but were accompanied with both murders and arrests (Sánchez-Cuenca 2001).

¹⁶ The cease-fires have been operationalised with a variable that scores .25 in 1989, .25 in 1998, .75 in 1999, .86 in 2006, 0.22 in 2007 and 0 all other years.

Figure 3. Policing “efficiency”

Source: Author’s elaboration of data in Domínguez Iribarren (1999).

Finally, some theoretically exogenous factors have been controlled for. Two concern terrorism while another two concern the attitudinal rejection of Spain. In previous analyses, a strong drop of murders in 1981 was observed. The ex post interpretation was that this could be due to the failed coup d’état that year (Martínez-Herrera 2002b). During the transition to democracy, ETA sought polarisation, the putsch being the most unequivocal expression of its apparent success, and also an occasion for having a rest after an exhausting terrorist offensive during the previous three years. It has even been argued that ETA-m aimed at a returning of the dictatorship (Unzueta 1994; but cf. Sánchez-Cuenca 2001). At the same time, many activists, especially those of the “political-military” faction, could ask themselves whether a return to dictatorship was what they actually wanted. Another factor is the international context after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington in September 2001. These attacks prompted a substantial intensification of collaboration between national governments in the realm of counter-terrorism. For this reason, ETA could have tactically attempted to go temporarily unnoticed in the international scene.

Other two exogenous factors refer to the rejection of Spanish identification. One concerns the political family of the parties in office at the central government. In Spain, social democratic governments have tended to produce a better appraisal amongst peripheral nationalists than the center-right and conservative governments, which were perceived as having a much stronger Spanish nationalist stance. The last control variable involves the enhancing of Spanish national pride during 1992 as a by-product of the Barcelona Olympic Games and the International Exhibition in Seville.¹⁷

¹⁷ I also sought to observe the effect of the cease-fire in 1998/99. However, in 1999/2000 the CIS did not tap national identification, which prevents me from evaluating a contemporary effect in the multivariate modelling. At any rate, the data

Multivariate empirical analysis

I present multivariate analyses modelling the yearly variations of ETA murders and in the rejection of the Spanish polity amongst inhabitants of the Basque Country. Its multivariate character is aimed at rejecting spurious causal relations and unveiling hidden relations. The analysis affords the possibility of studying the change both diachronically and with a quasi-experimental multivariate approach. The methodology is deductive, seeking to falsify the theoretical hypotheses formulated beforehand. The models factor in different explanatory variables as posited by theories. Those that do not yield statistically significant effects on the dependent variables are progressively dropped from the models until a parsimonious model that only contains those variables that yield significant effects is achieved.

However, both the character of the hypotheses and the time-series approach itself entail some inductive traits as well. Social theories do not usually specify the amount of time between causes and effects. According to the very philosophy of time-series analysis, the length of the lag between cause and effect is identified by means of exploration, selecting the lag that yields a relationship with the expected direction and better magnitude. In other words, this methodology finds out a detail omitted by theory. Yet, once these parameters have been identified, the applied method is deductive again, rejecting those factors whose effects are not statistically significant or are theoretically inconsistent when controlling for the effects of the remaining variables. The process of identification of the lags followed is that of McCleary and Hay (1980: chap. 5). After making sure, to begin with, that the series are stationary (differentiating them if necessary), a Cross Correlation Function (CCF) has been estimated to identify the lags attaining a stronger and theoretically expected association in every bivariate relation. This is of crucial importance for avoiding arbitrary results. Then, the models have specified the lagged effects as previously identified.

The developments in patterns of violence

The first dimension of Basque nationalist extremism to be examined is the yearly number of ETA murders from 1979 to 2007. Because of lack of information about some essential predictors till the mid-1970s, variations prior to 1979 are disregarded. As stated above, murders have undergone a declining trend, with irregular fluctuations in the short run. The task is to assess the expected effect of the different state policies on these variations. The number of occurrences has been estimated using a negative binomial event-count model. Because, in statistical terms, this variable always takes positive integer values that tend to be rare, the distribution is discrete and skewed, resulting in errors that are not normally distributed. As this might generate inefficiency of the statistical signification tests in classical regression (OLS), in this situation, event-count models are preferred, which fit the occurrences of an event using maximum likelihood estimators. Moreover, since the data examined here are

from the Euskobarometro – which are not controlled for other variables – do not show a significant increase in 1999.

over-dispersed (variance greater than the mean), the negative binomial distribution is more appropriate than the Poisson as theoretical density function.¹⁸

Table 1 displays the effects of the explanatory factors alluded in the sections above. To begin with, the models evaluate the effects of factors stemming from a responsive approach to conflict resolution. Some models do not yield statistically significant coefficients for the impact of political *decentralisation* on ETA murders. Once the models are free of other non-significant independent variables, decentralisation attains, as expected, a significant negative effect, which is lagged three years (see Models 4 and 5). In turn, democratisation has been operationalised by means of two alternative indicators. Indeed, neither the Freedom House index, which measures the degree of *autocracy* (as the scores are reversed) (Model 1), nor the *Polity2* index of democracy (Models 2 to 4) yield significant effects. However, as will be argued below, democratisation seems to have impinged on the declining of violence through indirect mechanisms.

Table 1. Negative binomial event count regression of ETA murders

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	<i>Lag</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Coef.</i>
<i>c</i>		4,242 ***	4,610 ***	4,627 ***	4,604 ***	4,588 ***
<i>Arrested</i>	-2	-0,001 ***	-0,001 ***	-0,001 ***	-0,001 ***	-0,001 ***
<i>Bidart Operation</i>		-1,459 ***	-1,660 ***	-1,829 ***	-1,582 ***	-1,529 ***
<i>Decentralisation</i>	-3	-0,005 ns	-0,008 ns	-0,008 ns	-0,009 **	-0,007 *
<i>Autocracy (FH)</i>	-1	0,171 ns				
<i>Democracy (Polity2)</i>	-4		0,012 ns	0,015 ns	0,010 ns	
<i>Reinserted</i>	-6	-0,025 ***	-0,032 ***	-0,036 ***	-0,030 ***	-0,028 ***
<i>Coup d'État</i>		-0,724 **	-0,654 ***	-0,650 **	-0,651 ***	-0,641 ***
<i>Cease-fires</i>	1		-1,144 ***			
<i>Cease-fires</i>	-1			0,226 ns		
<i>Cease-fires</i>		-2,125 ***			-2,060 ***	-2,089 ***
<i>September 11</i>		-1,535 ***	-1,473 ***	-1,611 ***	-1,515 ***	-1,522 ***
Sample		79-07	79-07	79-07	79-07	79-07
N		29	29	29	29	29
R ²		0,946	0,935	0,934	0,947	0,943
Adj. R ²		0,920	0,902	0,902	0,921	0,921
Log likelihood		-85,960	-90,206	-94,869	-86,082	-86,198
AIC		6,618	7,158	7,232	6,626	6,565

Sign.: *** .01; ** .05; * .10; ns not significant

The models also consider the effects of a set of repressive policies. Arrests are measured as both ordinary detentions and the extraordinary arrest of ETA leadership in *Bidart* in 1992. The outcome of this operation was a drastic decrease in fatalities, apparently definitive, seemingly due to the organisational problems for ETA and the information obtained by security agencies. In turn, ordinary *arrests* show a statistically significant negative effect (with a delay of two years).

¹⁸ An OLS replication was performed. It yielded the same results in both signs and statistical significance, thus showing the robustness of the event-count models.

Concerning the social *reintegration* of fighters, which was implemented during the 1980s, besides removing opportunity costs that could cause them to persist, this could produce other delayed effects on the recruitment by ETA. The analysis lends further credence to this hypothesis, as all models yield a statistically significant negative effect, with a delay of six years. The length of the lag makes sense theoretically as the alluded mechanism of undermining recruitment and training entails a long process.

Attempts of communication by the national government with ETA during cease-fires is another concern. The first question is whether or not the expectation of forthcoming talks rises murders. Model 2 models the effect of the cease-fires with a *lead* of one year in order to test this – i.e. we consider the effect of cease-fires *backwards*. Although statistically significant, the coefficient is opposed to this intuition. This suggests that the cease-fires are held after periods in which ETA undergoes a decline.¹⁹ The second question is whether or not the period of talks, in which the government typically undertakes less detentions and the terrorists attempt to reorganise, raises murders afterwards. Consequently, Model 3 specifies the effect of the cease-fires with a *lag* of one year – i.e. we consider the effect of cease-fires *forward*. The coefficient is not statistically significant. Finally, Models 4 and 5 assess the *contemporary* effect of the cease-fires. Although, due to previous years of terrorist operative weakness, the coefficient should not necessarily be significant, the result is as suggested by commonsense – that is, cease-fires substantially decrease the number of deaths.

Finally, two theoretically exogenous factors have been factored in. Both the failed 1981 putsch and the conjuncture of international collaboration against terrorism following September 2001 account for statistically significant decreases in murders in their respective periods.

Developments on Attitudinal Rejection of Spain

To capture the attitudinal dimension of Basque nationalist extremism, the proportion of citizens rejecting any degree of identification with Spain has been devised. As argued above, this is the best proxy indicator available to measure attitudinal inclination to Basque nationalist extremism with a long-term perspective. The variations on the levels of this variable have been primarily estimated using a classical regression approach (OLS).²⁰ The task is to explain changes in this series from 1977 to 2005, when statistically representative data on identification are available. As shown above, the rate of Basque-only identifiers dropped substantially during the middle 1980s and has undergone relatively minor variations thereafter. Besides the factors invoked by the hypotheses, the proportion of population born outside the Basque Country has also been factored in. This is a necessary control since the geographical origin of

¹⁹ The fact that many murders of 1987 were caused by car bombs lends credence to the hypothesis that the decrease of murders in 1989 was produced by insurgent weakness rather than by the talks of Algiers.

²⁰ The robustness of the results has also been tested by replicating the analysis through a multivariate ARIMA approach, which takes into account the non-stationary nature of the series. Both the significance and the direction of the relationships are consistent across both types of analysis.

the family is the most important predictor of national identification at the individual level.²¹ Table 2 displays the different models evaluated.

To begin with, political *decentralisation* (with its effect lagged one year) attains a significant negative effect in the models. This finding accords with the hypothesis that decentralisation fosters the subjective integration of the Basques in the Spanish political system. In turn, the coefficient of *Autocracy* (with its effect lagged one year) is positive, as expected, but it bears the problem that it is not significant. The coefficient of democratisation (*Polity2*) is also as expected (i.e. positive) but suffering from the same problem of lack of statistical significance.²²

Table 2. OLS regression of the percentage of Basque only identifiers

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	<i>Lag</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Coef.</i>
<i>c</i>		15,097 ^{ns}	9,430 [*]	15,571 [*]
<i>Migrants</i>		0,653 ^{**}	0,282 ^{**}	0,671 ^{**}
<i>Decentralisation</i>	-1	-0,234 ^{***}	0,046 ^{***}	-0,202 ^{***}
<i>Autocracy (FH)</i>	-1	0,933 ^{ns}		
<i>Democracy (Polity2)</i>	-1		0,246 ^{ns}	
<i>Policing Efficiency</i>				-0,026 ^{ns}
<i>Center-Left Cent Gov</i>	-1	-2,793 ^{***}	0,784 ^{***}	-2,814 ^{***}
<i>Reinserted</i>	-1	-0,210 ^{***}	0,042 ^{***}	-0,218 ^{***}
<i>LOAPA</i>		12,560 ^{***}	1,542 ^{***}	12,219 ^{***}
<i>Olympics</i>		-4,191 ^{**}	1,735 ^{**}	-3,675 [*]
Sample		77-05	77-05	77-05
N		29,000	29,000	29,000
R ²		0,957	0,956	0,901
Adj. R ²		0,943	0,941	0,858

Sign.: *** .01; ** .05; * .10; ^{ns} not significant

Other factors appear as also having an effect on the Basques' subjective integration in Spain. For one, the presence of a *centre-left government* at the central government (with its effect lagged one year) yields statistically significant effects. This suggests that the policies of the social democrats have tended to produce a better appraisal of the Spanish polity amongst the Basques than those of the centre-right. Yet, the mobilisation of Basque nationalists against one law – the *LOAPA* – agreed by both the centre-right and the centre-left after the attempted *coup d'état* in 1981, might have temporarily prompted the rejection of Spain – all models show that, until important sections of the bill

²¹ The risk of ecological fallacy due to this factor is negligible. First, immigrant entries from other parts of Spain practically ceased in the late 1970s. Second, the decreasing trends of exclusive Basque identification are practically equal for all generations while controlling for origin (Martínez-Herrera 2002a). Thirdly, in the present analysis, the proportion of immigrant interviewees is controlled for.

²² It could be assumed that, in the Spanish historical context, decentralisation tends to occur in democracy, and thus that there is an indirect effect of democratisation. However, in the Catalan case, the effect of decentralisation is the opposite, leading to an increase in exclusive identification with Catalonia.

were ruled unconstitutional, there was a substantial increase in the rejection of Spanish identification.

As a great deal of conflicts in the Basque Country during the last decades have concerned terrorism and counter-terrorism, the impact of these issues has also been assessed. The first of them is the policy of social *reinsertion* of former ETA fighters. Although this was primarily an instrument of counter-terrorist policy, it might well have consequences on social legitimacy for the Spanish political community. For the policy could have also produced two outcomes indirectly affecting it: (a) the end of the activities of anti-system indoctrination by the dissolved ETA-pm; and (b) a perception among the public that repression was assuaged and that former fighters were given a chance to return to peaceful life, thus attenuating some perceived collective grievances. Actually, the regression analyses lend further credence to this hypothesis, as this factor yields a significant negative effect (with an annual lag).

Nonetheless, another counter-terrorist policy does not yield any significant effect. Model 3 test the possibility of an effect of *policing social efficiency* on the lack of identification with Spain. This is because it is often argued that repression – especially if indiscriminate – may de-legitimise the state. Yet this hypothesis does not find support from this data.

Finally, the models show that the rate of immigrants has a significant positive effect. Indeed, a negative relationship was expected, in the sense that the more Spanish immigrants, the less people should express a refusal of Spain. Though this is not the place to discuss it, the opposed finding that Basque exclusivism increases with the number of immigrants accords with theories of ethnic competition. The last factor examined involves the international big events concerning Spain in 1992. As the dummy operationalising this (*Olympics*) attains a significant negative effect in all models, one can interpret that those events improved Spanish national pride and, indirectly, Spanish identification.

To summarise, the rejection of Spanish self-identification has substantially decreased from the first half of the 1980s. The explanation seems to rest, to a large extent, on the granting of political self-government to the Basque Country. Another important reduction stems from the social reintegration of former fighters. Further, centre-left governments and international big events enhanced Spanish collective pride. Conversely, the attempt of the Spanish government to reduce the amount of decentralisation during the early 1980s temporarily increased that rejection. Finally, the effect of other factors is not significant.

Discussion and concluding remarks

Basque nationalist extremism has declined dramatically during the last 25 years. By relying on a theoretically-driven multivariate statistical approach of the available data, much of the analysis has sought to account for the decline of terrorist violence. The evidence supplied here accounts for the variations in the yearly number of ETA murders on the basis of a combination of responsiveness and repression. In effect, that appeasement has, to a large extent, been the product of political decentralisation. The establishment of a Basque

Autonomous Community, together with a resolute law-ruled repression policy, materialising in policing efficacy and the reintegration of fighters, emerge as the main causes of this mitigation.

ETA's cease-fires that have been accompanied by parleys between the government and the terrorists make for another relevant factor. This can either be considered as a consequence of political factors or – in a somewhat tautological yet plausible manner – as a consequence of those very police actions. It is worth highlighting, in the first place, that during their duration, the cease-fires held while keeping talks have reduced the number of deaths. Second, they have not increased murders in either previous nor subsequent periods, contrary to the concern that terrorists might strengthen in the meanwhile. Thus, these findings suggest that extending the periods of talks can be advisable for a government.

The failed 1981 *coup d'état* and the international atmosphere after the attacks in New York and Washington add to this account as theoretically exogenous factors. Democratisation (i.e. the regime or rules of the game, irrespective of the territorial structure of the political community) does not yield any direct effects on violence. Arguably, however, it has triggered two indirect effects: first, though decentralisation, which in Spanish contemporary history is difficult to conceive stemming from an autocratic regime; second, through the retreat of ETA-pm, one of whose basic aims was the return of democracy.

Similarly, the refusal to self-identify with Spain has substantially dropped over the last thirty years. Analysing the matter within the theoretical frame of this study, the findings suggest that, above all, the responsive policy of granting self-government to the Basque Country and the flexible repressive policy of social reintegration of former fighters renouncing violence have reduced that rejection. In addition, the rejection tended to decrease during the periods in which the incumbent party at the central government was centre-left. Conversely, the attempt of the national government to limit the scope of decentralisation during the early 1980s temporarily increased that rejection. Finally, other factors such as policing efficiency and democratisation do not yield statistically significant direct contributions on attitudinal change.

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