

# Ethno-Politics, Mobilization and Violence in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country

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## Ethno-Politics, Mobilization and Violence in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country

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### **A Comparative Analysis of Sinn Fein / Herri Batasuna and Evaluation of the Respective State Responses to Militant Ethno-Nationalism**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The conflicts in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country have attracted a great deal of research on the macro-political, economic, social and conflict management parameters but there has been little research on the evolution and changing nature of ethno politics in regards to the radical ethno nationalist parties; namely Sinn Fein and Herri Batasuna. Much less attention has been paid on the state responses, in particular those of the Spanish state. Based on the conviction that the two parties form their strategies based on a rational calculus, I proceed on my analysis of their previous tactical adjustments in relation to state responses. The most important decisions made by these parties have been affected by the decreasing course and appeal of violence and the opportunities provided by the political environment. Sinn Fein has permanently adjusted its policies to fit the constitutional arena and Britain has adopted a flexible policy of inclusive communication. Herri Batasuna continues to exercise the classic model of mobilization and 'protest politics' and the Spanish state continues to suppress the Basque radical movement. My conclusion is that Britain's responsive and gradually less dogmatic strategy proved to be far more effective than Spain's policy of suppression. The bottom line is that 'law and order' policies alone are less effective without the implementation of a political program.

#### **Chapter 1**

##### *1.1. The characteristics of Ethnic mobilisation in the Basque Country and Northern Ireland*

In Ireland, traditional irredentist claims were systematically endorsed by the Irish Republican movement. In the Basque country, the creation of an ethnically and territorially inclusive state is a central component of the Left Basque Abertzale[1]. The struggle for the achievement of their ethnic aspirations has never been pursued in a consistent and uni-axial manner and heated debates over the dilemma of violence and non-violence have become particularly grueling in both conflicts. Notably, both ethnic groups under investigation have openly raised demands of self-determination. However, the right to self -determination is a highly controversial issue within the academic and political circles. Self-determination is defined as "the legal arrangement that gives a group of people independent statehood or expanded powers within a federal state and it is based on the democratic principle of autonomy and self-government." [2] Yet, the issue of national 'self -determination' still remains relatively unclear as to whether these ethnic groups have the right to direct their 'ethnic destiny' themselves by simply restructuring the current accommodating patterns which have been established many years ago.

The profound conservatism of the centralized 'nation- state' as well as the absence of a peaceful exit mechanism has constituted a drawback in the peaceful and effective management of such claims. The reactionary responses by Spain and Britain to the increasingly disintegrating tendencies of their respective minorities clearly illustrate the full adherence to the status quo 'protocol' set up by the constitution. However, the right to self - determination constitutes

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only one of the macro-political and practically teleological objectives in the politics of these ethnic groups by reflecting “the particularistic politics encompassing aspirations short of the creation of a nation state and the congruence of culture with polity”[3] Interestingly, the Basque and Irish nationalist appeals have presented a remarkable intensity and popularity within and outside their respective communities. Nonetheless, even within these phenomenally strong nationalist movements, the intensity, degree and persistence of the nationalist sentiments may vary from one region to the other and this is evident from the fluctuating nationalist support within the Basque territories (Euskal Herria) and the Northern Irish counties. [4] Firstly, the formation of a ‘politicized ethnicity’ will be regarded as the key element for the promotion of collective interests through some form of mobilization. An ethnic group may express its grievances and demands in multifarious ways. Notably, bringing ethnicity into the political and social arena the ethnic community is able to communicate and contest its views in a systematic and organized fashion and simultaneously challenge the state authorities. The politicization of ethnicity is the outcome of an ethnicity – based dynamic that moves people to collective action on grounds of historical experiences, struggles against outsiders for possession of a homeland or cultural markers.[5] More precisely, a politicized ethnic movement represents the conversion of an ethnic community into a political competitor that seeks to combat ethnic antagonists or to impress ethnically defined interests on the agenda of the state.[6]

In Ted Gurr’s theory of ethno political action, the politicization process is a result of a dynamic formula based on the interaction between ‘relative deprivation’ and group mobilization. [7] His theory holds that for a group to become politically active there should be some ongoing frustrating experience of socio-economic or other deprivation along ethnic lines. The degree of deprivation will be taken as the variable which determines the scale and nature of the mobilization. These perceived inequalities and threats often translate into active public mobilization and therefore lead to competition. There is a commonly held belief that the Irish Catholic minority has been deprived of its basic civic and political rights, an allegedly intolerable reality, which finally resulted in a number of ethnically-led public campaigns. Admittedly, British assimilation policy in Northern Ireland remained largely unfinished replaced by a strictly vertical pattern of hegemony where “subordinate identities may regard themselves to be subjected to an enforced marginality in which they serve as a non –functional, surplus population that is condemned to economically peripheral and often ritually unclean labor.”[8] This is how many Irish Catholics viewed themselves in the past years of Protestant domination. The Irish Catholic community after having achieved fundamental changes on its ‘status’ did not cease the nationalist campaigning. On the contrary, mobilization was intensified while being gradually displaced from the original ‘deprivationist’ argument to the ethno-political romanticist and irredentist spectrum. Therefore, the relative deprivation argument is certainly a contributive stimulant to the emergence of grass root mobilization but it does not imply that mere satisfaction of the basic civic rights will guarantee long-term inter-ethnic social peace.

The Basques have frequently expressed grievances with regards to their cultural needs and political visions. Notably, the Basques seemed to be mobilizing en masse during the most economically vibrant years of the industrialization period and after the end of the Francoist era in order to deter threats of cultural alienation and preserve – or advance – their political status. Interestingly, in the Basque case, cultural preservation and resistance to the alien Hispanic cultural patterns have intensified ethnic awareness granting a reactionary outlook to the Basque nationalist movement. As Joseph Rothschild observed: “...ethnic mobilization is not an ephemeral phenomenon; it is a reaction to the technocratic rationality, a brake to the continuous materialization of our lives, and systemization of our society.”[9] After a systematic effort by Franco to integrate the Basques into the wider acculturated and de-ethnicized proletarian folk – by attacking their culture –, the Basques resulted in viewing themselves as being unwanted for what they actually were. The Basques had widely experienced a politico-cultural threat during the Franco years whereas the Irish had been socially, economically and politically marginalized throughout an extended period of Anglo-Protestant authoritarianism. Therefore, it is rather obvious that different types of deprivation may cause similar reactions.

Although socio-economic deprivation may encourage or even stimulate the expression of grievances, the importance of identity expression through politics cannot be downgraded because of the post-modern convictions that ethnic mobilization is a mere socio-economic anomaly relying exclusively on materialistic discrepancies. Sometimes, mere cultural deprivation may well lead in ethnic mobilization and consequent confrontation with the state since ethnic individuals realize that assimilation, however earnestly sought, cannot be a solution to an increasingly intolerable status of deprivation. In reaction, an alternative is sought in minority group organization and political action.[10]My

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belief is that the rectification of the socio-economic injustices does not usually de-politicize an ethnic group because the remaining feeling of bitterness and the need for ethno-national fulfilment become well embedded in the consciousness of the individual and therefore may become incompatible with the wider aspirations of the nation. The secessionist-nationalist tendencies that numerous distinct ethnic groups present could also be psychologically translated in terms: “of the emotional impact ethnic appeals may have which inevitably strike straight into the heart of our shared socialization experience, associated with the early childhood comfort of security.”[11] This is evident in the continuation of the republican politics after the reformation of the Northern Irish system and the narrowing of the inter-communal economic divide.

Participation in the political arena is a major option in a group's mobilization strategy. Institutional and extra-institutional party politics are part of the broader ethno political spectrum together with the exercise of political violence and other forms of relevant social action. The Irish republican nationalists provide a vivid example of mobilization through institutional – electoral politics (Sinn Fein) and extra – constitutional forms of action including civil disobedience and protest. In the Basque country, there is an active combination of a semi-constitutional participation (Euskal Herritarok/Herri Batasuna) in regional politics and other forms of action including the use of violence. The Basques and the Irish nationalists are perfect illustrations of an apolitical ethnic solidarity that has been appropriately transfigured into an orchestrated socio-political pressure tool in order to influence the strictly realpolitik environment of the modern state. In both cases though, after long periods of authoritarian subjugation, the political system has become open for the participation of these two ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the sources and incentives for mobilizing widely differ in the two respective communities. It is believed that the Irish mobilization was principally connected to the societal anomalies and imperfections of hegemonic control whereas Basque nationalism emerged out of an ethno-culturally defensive movement. In both cases ethnic mobilization has led to party formation. The ethno political party is an organization that “purports to represent a particular ethnic group and seeks political power to impinge on the relative power or position of ethnic groups.” [12] This is principally based on the assumption that ‘one of the most effective means to influence the power relations among ethnic groups is to hold office’.[13] Yet, ethnic politics may sometimes result in unprecedented political dichotomies.

A major feature of the ethno-parties in the Basque country and Northern Ireland is the significance of class inequalities. Orthodox nationalists advocate that class cleavages become less important under the existence of a common threat while inter-class solidarity is usually strengthened along ethnic lines. The assumption that: “emotional anchorage and symbolism of communal mobilization leads far more easily to successful appeals of solidarity than calls for the unity of crosscutting class interests” only partially applies to the Basque/Irish comparison.[14] Republican and Abertzale voters present a phenomenal similarity in regard to their socio-economic backgrounds. Despite the fact that these groups tend to attract supporters from several backgrounds, their supporters are more likely to define themselves as ‘working class’ people. Paradoxically, there is a high concentration of unskilled workers in the moderate nationalist parties, namely the PNV and the SDLP. Cynthia Irvin has observed that there is a high percentage of working- class voters in Sinn Fein and Herri Batasuna as there is also a particularly high working class support for the moderate nationalist parties. More precisely, the C2DE[15] working class category is the dominant proportion in both the extreme and moderate nationalist parties. The better off segments of the society tend to identify with the moderate nationalist parties in each country despite the interestingly higher proportion of ABC1[16] Basques voting for Herri Batasuna compared to the relatively low number of ABC1 voting for Sinn Fein.[17] Therefore, since strong working class proportions can be found in both the moderate and the extreme nationalists it should not be assumed that the level of economic status necessarily leads in extreme nationalist identification or visa versa. The multi-class participation of the left wing Basque Abertzale (EH/HB) contrasts with the heavily working-class background found today in the republican block. Thus, it could be assumed that ethnicity penetrates deeper layers of socialization, experience, and emotion than other ideological solidarities.

Admittedly though, socio-economic deprivation is viewed as a ‘community matter’ and regardless of the existing realities of the broader class dichotomies ethnic groups tend to organize in ethnic lines rather than allying themselves with the broader ‘deprived’ class within the state. People perceive that there is hatred against what they are, against their identities and they do not feel part of a wider economically disadvantaged group. Moreover, ethnic mobilization has re-emerged as a bridle against standardization and achromatic uniformity. [18] Ethnic mobilization delineates the process by which mere particularistic interests become a common cause and intra – group conflict is portrayed as

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minor. [19] The mobilization process depends on a basic exogenous structural factor; that is the political system and the state response. Ethnicity is likely to become politicised when perceived structured interethnic inequalities exist in multiple forms of targeted socio-economic and politico- cultural deprivation compelling the individual to utilize its collective identity in order to advance perceived interests and deter possible threats. The Irish and Basque mobilization processes have been strongly characterized by a conflictive anti-authoritarian sentiment and the politicisation of ethnicity has been principally translated into forms of conscious political action replacing the previous lethargic passivity.

## 1.2. Militant Ethno- politics

The desire of an ethnic group to realize its ethno-nationalist objectives has usually led factions of the community in confrontation with the reactionary though dominant ruling political and military powers. Generally, there is a strong belief that ethnic politics appear to be naturally more conflict prone than civic politics because they challenge the actual integrity of the state unlike conventional ideological politics, which principally compete over particular forms of macro-political administration. Interestingly, it has been also observed that: "some factions choose violence, armed resistance or revolt as the only way out of the impasse, other factions continue with legal activities combined with non-violent protest." [20] Moreover, Merkl lucidly described the phenomenon of political violence. In his words, he firstly described political violence as:

a considerable or destroying use of force against persons or things, a use of force prohibited by law, directed to a change in the policies, system, territory of jurisdiction or personnel of a government or governments and hence also directed to changes in the lives of individuals within societies.[21]

Paul Wilkinson argued that political violence may serve several aims including 'ethnic conflict, hatred discrimination and oppression, which are some of the most frequent contributory causes of internal political violence, combined with socio-economic deprivation.' [22] The systematic exercise of organized or spontaneous political violence aiming at the achievement of a radical constitutional – political change that will bring independent statehood is what we know as ethno-political violence. The Basques and the Irish Catholics had long ago initiated a dual strategy in ethno politics shared between the electoral and the armed struggle. In Ireland, the Republican movement of the early 80's – politically represented by Sinn Fein- initiated a dualist ethno-political mode combining elements of abstentionist electoral competition while conceding to the IRA's violence. Similarly, the MLNV [23] movement in the Basque Country, politically represented by Herri Batasuna has strongly advocated the 'gun in politics'. Finally, the generic factors leading to violence can be found in multiple sources. Danielle Conversi argued that lack of ethnic cohesion in the Basque Country and disagreement over the national objectives may lead in violence whereas in Ireland the incorporation of discriminatory policies have instigated a 'culture of violence' and division which eventually served as means towards a new political reality. [24] Therefore, it could be claimed that there is an effective relation among ethnic politics, deprivation, and violence. The ethno political strategy (violence – non- violence) and the state response are the two major independent variables to determine the course and fate of the mobilization process. Hence, I do not regard ethno-nationalism as generically militant but I see violence as the product resulting mainly out of the environmental factors and opportunities affecting the ethno political strategy. In the next chapter, the phenomenon of militant nationalism and the practice of violence will be treated as a rational political choice, a pressure tool, for promoting partisan interests.

## Chapter 2

### 2.1 Sinn Fein and Herri Batasuna: Same objective different pathways

The mixture of revolutionary and constitutional politics is clearly demonstrated on the strategy of the two radical political parties in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. Herri Batasuna – at the time speaking- constitutes an illegal extra-constitutional organization closely connected with ETA. On top of this, it has never been a fully legitimate party due to its abstentionist policy and the condemnation it has received by the state authorities. Respectively, Sinn Fein has presented an increasingly pro-electoral strategy leaving behind the uncompromising commitment to the armed struggle. Thus, the basic empirical hypothesis is that Herri Batasuna lacks constitutional legitimacy on a

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regional and state level whereas Sinn Fein, after conceding to the Peace Process has been gradually detaching itself from violent politics. Of course, this hypothesis does not reflect the totality of perceptions within Sinn Fein, but it certainly mirrors its post-agreement commitment to reconciliation. Nevertheless, both parties have been going through the same abstentionist policy in the past national elections, both of them have at times advocated violence as means to resolve conflict and both followed the same pattern of 'movement politics'. Yet, many changes in their outlook and strategies have recently occurred due to the pressing realities, leading the parties into two rather separate political destinations.

A decade ago, Sinn Fein was advocating that the only sure way to freedom is through the 'armalite and the ballot box' but today the ballot box has eclipsed the armalite. In my first comparative point I will evaluate the recent political strategy followed by Sinn Fein and Herri Batasuna by illustrating the different perceptions existing in these two parties and how these two parties finally reached the decision to re-adjust their policies. The basic assumption in this section is that Sinn Fein and Herri Batasuna design their policies, actions and discourse based upon an increasingly rationalistic calculus in consideration to their cause.[25] Herri Batasuna's preferred policy to 'expose the repressive Spanish regime' requires the implementation of reactionary policies through political organization and grass root mobilization. By contrast, Sinn Fein has largely overcome the old 'repressionist syndrome' focusing more into the active and meaningful involvement whereas public mobilization seems to be reducing. However, by examining their vital strategic choices and their dramatic development from marginal pro-violent factions to partners, it could be safely claimed that there has been a substantial consideration of the environmental dynamics and the changing socio-political realities in each case.

## *2.2. 1986- 1995: Sinn Fein's changing face*

The transformation of the republican politico-military block in the early 90's has been a gradually developing and extremely cautious procedure for the search of a delicate balance to keep the republican vision alive. In a previous Ard Fheis (Sinn Fein Conference), Martin MacGuinness has stated in an effort to illustrate the determination and commitment of republican people that:

Years of struggle have not diminished the determination of the republican people...no one can argue that a democratic resolution would be a simple matter. All involved in the conflict, would have to be prepared for dramatic and imaginative initiatives. Republicans are willing to engage in the search for a democratic solution with courage and flexibility.[26]

However, this is not to claim that the overall 'war' for unification has been properly denounced as an anathema. By contrast, it would be more accurate to claim that the long war vis-à-vis the exercise of organized physical force has reached its outmost limits for the overwhelming majority of the extremists. The British governments' attitude towards a more realistic and politically inclusive line and the dead ends the armed struggle had brought about offered the opportunity for the republican movement to rethink its strategy. The transition from enforcement to persuasion has been a remarkable change in the republican history. The new strategy required the full politicization of the 'movement', developing Sinn Fein as a political party of substance and expanding the 'struggle' into the political system in the Irish Republic.

Sinn Fein's original triptych of demands; unification –withdrawal – amnesty which had been set by the Declaration of Independence had been largely remained intact till the recent reformulation of Sinn Fein's vision.[27] Sinn Fein's original framework of demands included:

1. The establishment of a Constituent Assembly for the 32-Counties elected by the people of All-Ireland to draft a constitution within a six-month period. The agreed constitution would then be submitted to the people of Ireland in a referendum.
2. Prior to the setting up of the Assembly the British government would have to give a declaration of intent to withdraw all its forces within twelve months of the adoption of a new constitution by the people of Ireland.
3. Finally, an amnesty for all political prisoners and all those on the wanted list. All political prisoners must be released one month prior to the election of the Constituent Assembly.

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Nevertheless, the republican movement faced three major difficulties by the late 80s, which proved to be critical for the development of the movement. Firstly, the abandonment in 1986 of the pro-abstention politics and the full commitment in the electoral process constituted the first tactical step Sinn Fein has taken towards the formation of a new reality. However, the decision to participate in the politics of the 'colonial' Northern Irish sub-state' did not come up with a parallel condemnation of violence. The Unionist opposition viewed this as a further advancement of Sinn Fein's 'political front' for legitimatising political violence more efficiently within the actual institutions of the state. The moderate nationalists received this with suspicion and fear of Sinn Fein's objective to antagonize the moderates in a full out political campaign. Sinn Fein's active participation in institutional politics was not welcomed as a move towards peace or as a permanent rejection of the violent past. By contrast, it was received as an attempt to enhance republican influence in policy making while squeezing the 'moderate' ground.

A statement by the PIRA Army Council made clear that it is imperative to break SDLP's monopoly on the leadership of the nationalist community."<sup>[28]</sup> In first place, the commitment to the ballot box did not place any explicit restraints on the armed struggle but it symbolized the dawn of a new mixed strategy, from the pro-violent abstentionist line to the 'armalite and the ballot box' strategy.<sup>[29]</sup> Republicans had long ago realized the importance of developing a working relationship with the people ever since the phenomenal nationalist mobilization of the H-Block crisis in 1981.<sup>[30]</sup> The electoral approach was not a mere tactical manoeuvre but it constituted a well-defined political thinking based upon a two-fold long-term realization; namely the politicization and legitimization of the republican struggle. The basic assumption had been clearly stated by Owen Carron in 1981 and referred to the necessity of a "political program parallel to the armed struggle."<sup>[31]</sup> Gerry Adam's had publicly admitted the need to resist the criminalization of the republican struggle. In his very words:

In resisting this move (criminalization) republicans were asserting the political nature of their struggle and contradicting the British attempt to suggest to the world that the political crisis in the six counties was not a political crisis at all but was merely a problem with a criminal element.<sup>[32]</sup>

Proper electoral intervention constituted a strategic imperative for the complete politicization of the republican struggle preventing a possible marginalization of the republican movement into the apolitical spectrum and offering republicans a formal political ontology. Owen Carron has made this crystal clear: "What is being fought here is a political war, and therefore we must have a political organization, and we must engage in political battles."<sup>[33]</sup>

Additionally, the electoral mixed strategy offered the chance to those republicans who were being inactive to engage in meaningful politics. The activist factions saw this as "a new way to involve people in the movement who had previously been merely passive...in electoral campaigns everybody can do something from canvassing to billposting."<sup>[34]</sup> Many republicans expected a furious reaction by the British government as a response to Sinn Fein's decision to contest elections in a participatory fashion and occupy seats in the national assembly. Undoubtedly, the British authorities perceived Sinn Fein's successful electoral participation as a particularly subversive act aiming at the infiltration of the existing political reality in Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein was no longer a sterile advocate of violence but it became an active participant in the political debate over the future of the Irish North. As Adrian Guelke noted: "...Sinn Fein's electoral success clearly undermined the British government's public stereotyping of Sinn Fein and IRA supporters as a tiny, evil extremist minority"<sup>[35]</sup>

Together with the politicization of the armed struggle, the electoral path was also needed to legitimize the republican cause in the eyes of the British and international public opinion. Adams firmly believed that the republican movement had to become firstly politicized in order to show clearly the degree of support for Sinn Fein.<sup>[36]</sup> With the public back up of some thousands of republican voters the armed struggle could eventually acquire a 'popular' mandate deriving out of the mass support basis for its continuation. In an effort to mitigate dissident voices within the republican movement Sinn Fein was determined to show that the institutionalization of the republican viewpoint within the 'illegal' Northern Irish political framework could represent and legitimize the armed struggle as a popularly backed strategy. Thus, the tactical aim of the above approach was to avoid isolation by politicizing the movement, expose the British regime, legitimize the cause, and utilize all possible human and economic resources on the national and international level. Admittedly, Sinn Fein's move towards electoral participation highlighted a new era of republican politics marked by a changing approach, which nurtured a new political thinking leading gradually away from the

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militant approach.

Secondly, despite the radical shift towards electoral politics, the traditional ideological basis of Sinn Féin; namely nationalism and socialism remained largely intact till the end of the cold war. For Sinn Féin strategists and supporters these two concepts traditionally constituted part and parcel of the overall ethno-socialist vision for Ireland. The belief that national liberation should only come through a process of dynamic social transformation and the restructuring of the existing paternalistic realities, – remnants of a post- hegemonic regime – dominated republican dogma for years. Remarkably, as part of the wider reshaping strategy of the republican outlook the dogmatic ethno-socialist conviction seems to have softened, thus giving birth to a more flexible and realistic political make up. As Jon Tonge concluded, the basic aim of the establishment of a united thirty-two county socialist republic has been abandoned or downgraded. The collapse of 'existing socialism' in late 80s and 90s clearly indicated the flaws of economic interventionism and patternisation. The EU membership of Ireland and the UK followed by the intense capitalization and liberalization of the whole Irish market and the narrowing of the inter-communal gap between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland made it necessary for the republican leadership to update the socialist discourse. Adrian Guelke has interestingly observed that: “ ...by the 1990s, the model which had once been central to Republican thinking of a socialist, economically self-sufficient, united Ireland seemed a pipe – dream, even to Republicans. [37]

Today, Sinn Féin's economic programme reflects the building of a feasible social economy targeting the inter-community social needs through a set of realistic objectives to be achieved through partnership and gradual democratization of the economic sphere. Sinn Féin's redefined economic programme has been named 'Putting People First' and it represents a refined egalitarian economic proposal based on local initiatives and unity.[38] The An Phoblacht columnist Sean McBradaigh warned republicans to “...avoid ultra-leftism. Make alliances with other progressive forces and build Sinn Féin as the credible political alternative to conservatism.”[39]

Thirdly, Sinn Féin's participation in local elections and the smoothing of its Marxist profile have had a huge impact on the overall shape and destiny of the whole republican movement offering the party an alternative choice from that of militant dogmatism; that is the valuable alternative for negotiation and political compromise.[40]

The An Phoblacht columnist Sean McBradaigh observed that:

Any time republicans attempted to follow dogma without regard to objective conditions resulted in isolation, stagnation and defeat. Obsession with ideological purity and the following of dogmas that don't suit objective conditions is a recipe for disaster Successful revolutionaries combine pragmatism with determination and vision. Sinn Féin must always use the language that makes sense to people in their day-to-day lives, not that which makes some activists feel right on.[41]

## *2.3 New Republicanism*

In the first place, the decision to contest elections was not made to change the militaristic calculus of the movement but the medium-term impact created opportunities proven to be crucial in softening the sterile militant philosophy of the pro-violent faction. As it has been clear so far, Sinn Féin has had to face the republicans with the 'challenge of change'. Interestingly, young republicans have publicly stated that: “coming out of the most intensive period of the armed conflict...republicans have over the past decade been pioneering a new phase of struggle.”[42] For them the central role of Sinn Féin in the peace process is a key factor in Sinn Féin's growing support. Sinn Féin had to be part of a pan-nationalist front that was emerging; otherwise they would have faced fears of possible isolation and public condemnation. Most importantly however, Sinn Féin analysts realized the indispensability of reproaching the Protestant unionist community and the acquisition of its consent for any moves towards a lasting peace and solution in Ireland. The categorical denial of the republican leadership to empower interaction with their communal counterparts had brought about a stalemate that was particularly hurting for the republican aim.

Firstly, it gave the SDLP a leading role within the nationalist community and secondly the continuing political stagnancy hindered the overall republican vision whose realization required some stable progress. Jon Tonge has

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clearly pointed out the etiological framework responsible for this policy shift in the republican analysis. He argued that in the 80's, SDLP's electoral support stabilized as the mainstream nationalist political party, its moderate and realistic nationalist philosophy had proven to be more attractive considering the persisting pressure of the security forces and the impossibility of an immediate British withdrawal in the short-medium term.[43] By contrast, Sinn Fein's anti-colonial militaristic rhetoric seemed to be washing-out especially after the Anglo-Irish agreement in spite of Sinn Fein reservations in regards to the alleged British neutrality over Northern Ireland. [44] Sinn Fein viewed this declared 'neutrality' as being contradicted by Brooke's further statement that the Conservative party is committed to keeping the Six Counties as part of the UK. John Hume drew the conclusion that Britain was neutral and by doing so placed the responsibility on the shoulders of nationalists to get Britain to join the persuaders of unionists to look to national reunification. Brooke rejected Hume's conclusion.[45] For Sinn Fein, Britain's defacto and dejure sovereignty over Northern Ireland fails to recognize the Irish national right for ending partition and without an explicitly meaningful restating of the British policy objectives to promote unification the British government could not be regarded as impartial. Sinn Fein expected the British government to endorse a policy of persuasion in order to influence the Unionists for changing their perceptions on the possibility of Irish unification and withdraw the Loyalist veto which is currently in effect. Gerry Adams, in his reply to Hume's claims on British neutrality during the early Hume-Adams in 1988 he referred to the recognition and acceptance by the SDLP of the Loyalist veto which is recognized and sustained by the British government against the wish of the Irish people as a whole.[46] The Hume - Adams talks and the evolution of the so-called 'pan nationalist front' signified a move away from the armed struggle. The 'pan nationalist front' would be the vehicle for political reform. Pan-nationalism was constructed upon the belief that a diplomatic strategy, developed around the configuration of forces sympathetic to the broadly nationalist position could pressure Britain to sponsor significant reforms which might undermine the union. 'New Republicanism' was being constructed based on the politics of identity, electoral mandates and equality agendas replacing the revolutionary demands for national liberation." [47] The gradual British disengagement from Northern Ireland-at least on a strategic and economic level encouraged republicans to overcome their post-colonial syndrome and gradually break the hurting stalemates that violence had brought about. The anti-imperialist sentiment had been particularly smoothed rendering futile the active pursue of a stereotypical revolutionary anti-imperialist line. In 1993, after a range of violent events, which threatened to undermine any effort for peace, Sinn Fein received a promising statement by the British government included in the Downing declaration. The British government declared that:

...it is of the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise the right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is what they wish for.[48]

On top of these, the opening up of new opportunities and the possibilities of inaugurating an ambitious Trans- Atlantic alliance with America consolidated Sinn Fein's belief that the old passionate militaristic convictions could not be further sustained. Sinn Fein's reformed political line has set up a number of priorities which clearly identify the need for engaging with unionism on the nature and form of a new united Ireland while conducting a broad campaign alongside other political parties, campaign groups, trade unions and other interested sections of our society in creating an Alliance for Irish Unity.[49]

It is an undisputed fact that the republican leadership decided to move gradually from the absolutist non-negotiable practice to inclusive dialogue with unionist consent. That was principally based on the realization that unionists will be part of a united Ireland in any case and the only feasible way to neutralize the British presence could come through the reformulation of the unionist objectives and the internalization of the conflict. Sinn Fein, while accepting that Britain had no longer any selfish economic and strategic interest in Ireland had been rather unsure about Britain's political interest believing that it remained politically committed to the Union.[50] In Section Nine (A Strategy For Change) of the Sinn Fein's Lasting Peace document republicans clearly state its traditional position that: "Britain has a responsibility to recognize the right of the Irish people to self-determination; change its current policy to one of ending partition and giving sovereignty to an all-Ireland government; influence unionist attitudes to this end; consult with Dublin to agreement on ending partition." [51]

Interestingly, republicans added that:

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If Britain refuses to do this then Dublin should; win international support for Irish national rights; mobilize support for this among Irish people and their descendants living abroad; use every international forum at its disposal; mobilize in Britain on Irish national self-determination; initiate debate with Northern unionists regarding national reunification; mobilize support in every aspect of Irish life to secure national independence; review every treaty with Britain re. such issues as extradition; organize nationally and internationally in defense of democratic social and economic rights; and establish democratic structures through which the above can be implemented.[52]

Therefore, Sinn Fein's 'retaliation' strategy for peace would eventually be constitutional, publicly backed, democratic and internationalist, driving away from the drawbacks of elite violence while engaging in mass-based political activity. The Downing Declaration however, explicitly pointed out that the British government's role is to 'encourage, facilitate, and enable' the peace process – rather than specifically encourage any single outcome.[53] In turn, the increased interaction among the nationalists and Britain's willingness to include Sinn Fein in the party talks followed by an IRA ceasefire offered the possibility for republicans to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the British government parallel to some phased arms decommissioning by the IRA which has been suggested by the Mitchell report in 1994.[54] Eight years after, Gerry Adams, in a recent speech at Conway Mill West Belfast, has stated that:

Our strategy is determined by objective realities...it commits and compels us to be part of the effort to establish a fair and just society for all the people in this island. Our effort is to replace conflict and strife with genuine partnership and equality [55]

Thus, three major pillars of traditional republicanism; that of militarism-socialism and anti-imperialism have been reformulated and modernized. For republicans, peace making will eventually harmonize the interests of the two communities by illegitimizing the British presence in favor of a united Ireland. Republicans increasingly see themselves acting as the dynamic persuaders for Irish unity with Protestants and unionists.[56] Interestingly, Sinn Fein's phenomenal commitment to the peace process has generated serious concerns to the unionist community; the unionists realized that the republicans pursue a dynamic policy of participation through institutional means backed by some strong external support as well as a strong local political mandate to further the implementation of the agreement.[57] Firstly, Sinn Fein's strategic perspective aims to the full implementation of the peace process, which is exactly what London wants to see.. Parallel to this, a full implementation of the GFA is actively pursued for gaining confidence and credibility by exposing the anti-agreement factions as reactionary and anachronistic. Paul Dixon has argued that with the Unionists resisting to implement the peace agreement because of their demand for IRA decommissioning, Sinn Fein manages to increase its honourable commitment to the peace process.[58] Hence, Sinn Fein's short-medium term objective is to keep the Agreement in place by increasing trust and support and finally acquire the majority of the nationalist vote and become in the long term the dominant party in the whole North of Ireland.

## Chapter 3

### 3.1 *Herri Batasuna*

Along the coast of Biscay, the Basque radical nationalists have been implementing an exceptionally confrontational and dynamic policy towards the representatives of the Spanish state; namely the Guardia Civil, the political regime and the media. The contemporary Left Abertzalespan style="font-size: 12pt; font-family: "Times New Roman";">[59] coalition of Euskal Herritarok entered in the 90's – under the more familiar name of Herri Batasuna (People's Unity)- a period of continuous bloodshed, repression and uncommunicativeness. However, the inauguration of the Irish talks and Sinn Fein's evident political shift encouraged the Left Abertzales to pursue change in Basque politics. Herri Batasuna is a broad Left coalition occasionally swinging between legality and illegality normally depending on the mass support of the MLNV and the course of ETA's activity. Herri Batasuna consolidated as a new political force in 1978 by Telesforo Monzon who initiated a radical pan-nationalist forum for the independence of the Basque country but it was not legalized until 1986, the same year that Sinn Fein dropped its non-abstentionist policy. In the same line with the Irish republicans, the Left Abertzale while contesting elections persistently followed a rejectionist policy which reflected their deep distrust of formal constitutional politics. Interestingly, the HB leadership, which is comprised by 23 National Board members, rejects parliamentary democracy for representative democracy based on

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peoples' assemblies as a form of genuine direct democracy.[60] In 1993, the former Basque nationalist coalition Euskadiko Ezkerra (Basque Left), which constituted ETA's political wing, merged with the Spanish socialist PSOE.[61] Consequently, the drastic weakening of ETA's politico-military wing and EE's subsequent commitment to parliamentary constitutional politics rendered Herri Batasuna the only radical nationalist and anti-system coalition in the country.

## 3.2 The failure of the KAS strategy: 1976-1996

Herri Batasuna's official political programme developed a set of political demands and objectives known as the KAS and later renamed KAS Alternative Manifesto (1978).[62] The function of KAS was to coordinate and direct different components of the MLNV, to define the axis of the liberation process in its tactical and strategic aspects, and to organize the political struggle, bringing together all of the sectors in the popular movement.[63] Herri Batasuna and ETA (m-pm) are integral components of the KAS project directing the overall strategy of the Left Abertzale for almost a decade and a half.[64] The KAS alternative constitutes a political framework set by the broader Left patriotic front in the Basque country in order to provide the basis for an orchestrated struggle with a set of intermediary goals for the achievement of an independent Basque Country. The KAS framework accommodated a diversity of interests under the common objective of self-determination granting the Basque Liberation Movement (MLNV) a politicized character. Initially, the KAS project maintained that the armed struggle coordinated with the mass institutional struggle represented the key to advance the revolutionary goal and made it seem that ETA could achieve self-determination without a ceasefire[65] However, a heated debate emerged between ETA (pm) and ETA (m) over the subjugation of the electoral politics to the armed struggle, which finally resulted in a split between ETA pm/ EIA, and ETA (m). In addition, weak public support for the radical pro-independence KAS required its immediate reformulation in order to set the basis for negotiating an ETA ceasefire under certain conditions. On February 1, 1978 ETA (m) published a communiqué announcing for the first time its wish to discuss a ceasefire under five basic preconditions.[66] These five major points are known as the KAS alternative, which constituted the backbone of HB's policy, and they explicitly referred to:

- The grant of full amnesty for the political prisoners and refugees
- The establishment of democratic and civil liberties (legalization of all political parties- Institutionalization of the Basque Language)
- The withdrawal of security forces, especially the Guardia Civil and the other Spanish police forces
- Improvement of workers' living conditions
- A national statute of autonomy for the four southern Basque- including Navarre- provinces that recognizes the right to self-determination and independence

Herri Batasuna's vision of an independent, socialist and monolingual Basque Country has been largely based upon the advancement of KAS through the mobilization of an active protest movement by HB and ETA's parallel strategy for effectively provoking state repression. Following the classic revolutionary plan of action/repression/reaction/ ETA drew up a strategy of constant attack on, and persecution of the oppressor, in order that the latter would lose control of the situation and act indiscriminately against the Basque people[67] Yet, the KAS alternative provided ETA (m) a basis for negotiating a ceasefire. By contrast, the PSOE government demanded a permanent truce, disband, and decommissioning followed by a complete cessation of violence before talks so that negotiations would not come about as a product of what it was thought to be a 'terrorist blackmail'. The short term overall success of the KAS and the KAS alternative had to do with the early granting of partial amnesty to the political prisoners by the transitional Suarez government and the subsequent legalization of all political parties by PSOE in the Basque country. Additionally, ETA's spiral of action-repression during the KAS years provoked the implementation of illegitimate and militaristic strategies by the Spanish state (ZEN plan-GAL- the Algiers Arrests etc), which certainly produced a process of de-legitimization of the new democratic institutions. Moreover, ETA and HB thought that the KAS could be a feasible alternative for negotiation but this perception soon proved to be unrealistic and certainly based on

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miscalculations in regards to the state's agility. The intensions of the State and the moderate nationalist block became very clear especially after the tragic failure of the Algiers and the signing of the Ajuria Enea pact (Pact for the normalization and pacification of the Basque Country) in 1988, which categorically condemned ETA's violence. Thus by 1995 the KAS strategy had been completely abandoned.

### 3.3.1995- 2000: The "Batasuna Process"

In 1995, seven years after the failed informal negotiations in the Algiers between ETA and the Spanish government, a new framework was set up by the rank and file of the militant group which meant to constitute HB's principled thesis. This has been known as the 'Democratic alternative' [68]. By sustaining a circle of violence without actually forwarding the objective goals of the movement, the MLNV was running a risk of disintegration and public condemnation. The action-reaction model proved unfruitful because of the government's persistence to eradicate violence, the failure of HB to legitimize its demands outside the nationalist community and the increasing disappointment within the nationalist movement itself with regards to violence. In a survey conducted by Euskobarometer in 1997, 88% of the 2855 Basques questioned were opposing violence as a means to forward political goals.[69] For the first time ETA presented a concrete proposal under the title "Democratic Proposal" for political negotiation to be agreed among the Basque citizens and the Spanish government and for the first time ETA recognized the importance of the constitutional political parties taking part into the negotiations. The proposal stressed the recognition of the democratic 'right to self determination' as a necessity for breaking the deadlock.[70] Florenz Aoiz has clearly noted that:

...independence was now viewed as a more reasonable option because of political reasons and authentic democracy." [71] He also added that: "We think that the most important task is to get change from the Popular Party...and give a chance for peace through negotiations. We also think that the situation of violence can be changed in a few weeks if the Spanish government changes the situation of the political prisoners, who are in a very bad way. The most important thing is that we are just asking for recognition of the right to self-determination. For us this is not a political question; it is a democratic question.[72]

ETA referred to the creation of a platform for inclusive dialogue in order to terminate the conflict and bring about a solution based on the free will of the Basque citizenry.[73] As it has been stated by ETA:

To achieve the recognition of the Basque Country, essential for this process to be really democratic, is the aim of the political negotiation between ETA and the Spanish State...as new conditions and democratic means are given, ETA will adjust its activity to the new situation of the conflict without giving up its final political aims.[74]

The importance of the 'democratic alternative' does not principally lay on the restructuring of ETA/HB political agenda. The importance is found on the belief that Spain has to prove how successful its democratic transition was by supporting dialogue and communication for the resolution of a political problem. For this reason, ETA would be ready to step back from the negotiation process and leave it all in the hands of HB to make nationalist politics.[75] However, without the clear and preconditioned denunciation of violence progress was very unlikely to be made. On 21 February 1996, the response of the Gonzalez government, in one of its last actions, was to have the proposal video declared illegal, and to arrest Herri Batasuna leader Jon Idigoras for distributing the video, under the charge of 'collaborating with an armed band.' In 1997, the imprisonment of the whole Herri Batasuna National Board followed charged with 'collaboration with the armed group (ETA) and based upon the conviction that HB never denounced ETA' and made propaganda for them by showing the videotape.[76] From then on HB's political line had been shaped by a new emerging reality in the Basque country. The dogmatic austerity of the KAS alternative philosophy as well as the unilateral democratic manoeuvre by ETA proved both to be incapable of providing a reliable and realistic basis for improvement and eventually instigates some negotiations between the parties. Unlike the Irish republicans, the Basque radical Left nationalists systematically try to adjust their proposals in order to pressurize the state to negotiate. In the Irish case, the British government took a leading role in changing the political climate and the Irish republicans seized the opportunity for change. However, the signing of the Lizarra-Garazi Treaty opened a new horizon for breaking the deadlock of the conflict and for remanufacturing HB's political stance. The election of the PP Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar in 1996 did not present much of a change on the policies towards the Basque

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country. Yet, the Basques needed to start a fresh project with the hope of breaking the deadlock they reached during the Gonzalez years. The Basque nationalist left, Herri Batasuna, reoriented its strategy of contacts with different political parties, trade unions, social organizations and popular groups, to deal with two fundamental issues: on the one hand, how to resolve the political conflict between the Basque Country and the Spanish State in a democratic way, and on the other, how to make an accurate analysis of the situation in the Basque Country and the political framework arising from the Spanish Constitution and the Statutes of Autonomy, which according to most Basque organizations were drained.[77] According to this strategy, the Basque nationalist left created the so-called "Forum of Ireland" to evaluate the aspects that favored negotiation in Ireland and the peace agreements in Stormont, as well as to find the best way towards peace in the Basque Country.[78] Only the PP, PSOE, the CCOO and UGT (trade unions) refused to take part in this forum. The other Basque political parties (HB, PNV, EA, IU and Batzarre), unions (ELA, LAB, EHNE, ESK-CUIS, STEE-EILAS), and various social groups -up to 23- started a process of talks.[79] The nationalist block putting for some time the non-nationalists of the Popular Party and the Spanish Socialists in political isolation inevitably created an increasingly polarized climate.

Prior to the Lizarra Treaty in 1998, a crisis between Spain's ruling Popular Party and its junior partner the PNV, over the transfer of jurisdiction in 37 areas of the Basque Country risked the PNV support to the then minority government of the Popular Party in the Spanish congress. The crisis intensified over the issue of which police force; the regional police (Ertzaintza) or the Spanish national police should be protecting the Popular Party politicians who are targeted by ETA. From the beginning of 1998 the PNV initiated secret talks with HB and ETA in order to find a peaceful way together. The PNV eventually withdrew its parliamentary support to the Popular Party and on September 13 1998 signed the Lizarra Accord.[80] On the one hand, PNV and EA agreed to break off relations with Spanish political forces against Euskal Herria; and Euskadi Te Askatasuna would announce an indefinite interruption of its actions. This was a secret accord that set a trial period of four months and it had been regarded as a crucial radicalization of the PNV. After the break with the PNV and the signing of the Lizarra Accord the Popular Party launched a campaign to discredit its former ally. It accused the PNV of giving cover to ETA's violence by defending things like self-determination. However, PNV's objective aim was to create a 'new coalition government of all nationalist parties (PNV EA HB/EH) which could lead to the end of ETA's terrorism, the pacification process and the integration of HB/EH into the democratic game.'[81]

Herri Batasuna worked out the "Lizarra Agreement" containing all the fundamental claims to start talks and reach agreements with other political and social organizations: right to self-determination and land unity, new institutional structures -including all the Basque provinces-based on sovereignty. Other issues regarding the Basque people such as culture, education and a socio-economic model to favor the national and social construction of the Basque Country were incorporated. Finally, the way to resolve the violent conflict through negotiation which will bring about peace and democracy to the Basque Country had to be set.[82] On September 12th, an agreement was reached - the so-called "Lizarra Agreement"- signed in the Navarrese village Lizarra-Estella. This Agreement has two parts: the first one analyzes the aspects that favored the peace process in Ireland, and the second sets out the following points:

- The main issues to resolve are: land unity, right to self-determination.
- The conflict in the Basque Country is a political conflict between the Spanish and French States, and thus, its resolution must be political.
- Talks should start immediately, without exclusions, including all the Basque people.
- The process must have two strands. In the preliminary stage, there should be multi-party talks with no preconditions. In the resolute stage, the core of the conflict should be tackled and a solution found, with no expression of violence throughout.
- The resolute negotiation, apart from implying no specific imposition, should respect diversity of Basque people and parity of esteem for all political options by furthering democracy. The key of the problem is to provide the Basques with a say and to make the States respect their decision.

The Lizarra declaration mirrored to some certain extent the need for real unity among the Basque nationalists so that a political framework for negotiations could be created. Additionally, ETA's desire to end its campaign of violence as it had previously proclaimed on the 'Democratic Alternative' document could only be realized through the unification of the Basque nationalist forces. ETA clearly articulated in its Democratic Alternative 'video show' that:

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The democratic process towards Basque self-determination must have the participation of labour unions, associations, social movements, political parties, institutions, that is, all society, to define options, discussion, frameworks, and suitable agreements.[83]

In turn, ETA's ceasefire communiqué in September 18 1998 declared that:

if all the political and social forces sharing this goal (independence) come together, in order to achieve the institutional structure we want, ETA publicly commits itself to welcome, protect and promote every initiative to overcome current institutional and statute partition. Taking into account the situation of the Basque Country, as well as present opportunity and longing for freedom, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna announces an indefinite complete cessation of military operations.[84]

ETA's withdrawal into the political background offered the opportunity for an undisturbed session of proximity talks but it did not offer the permanent cessation of violence that Madriddemanded. Public opinion received ETA's ceasefire with mixed emotions, the 'Lizarrá nationalists' welcomed it as a good opportunity for negotiations whereas the non-nationalists of PP and PSOE received it with suspicion and reserved optimism. Interior Minister Jaime Major Orega stated that "only time will be the judge of the sincerity and authenticity of rebel's offer and regarded the ceasefire as a 'trick truce' to draw more votes for its allied Herri Batasuna in the regional elections." [85] Indeed, HB had an unprecedented electoral boost in the 1998 regional elections acquiring 17.7% (14 seats).

At the same time, the Spanish government accused ETA of calling the truce merely to gain time. The Spanish police said that ETA was taking advantage of the truce to rearm and reorganize in case they opted for a return to the armed struggle. Moderate Basque nationalists had blamed the government's intransigence for blocking peace moves and warned that ETA could return to violence unless concessions were made. The government repeatedly called on ETA to turn its indefinite cease-fire into a permanent truce, and insisted that the group disband so that negotiations could be forwarded. The government stated that: "...it would not discuss any change in existing national boundaries, and has insisted that any negotiations be limited to the logistics of the group's demobilization and the fate of its prisoners." [86]

By August 1999 relations between the PNV and ETA started to grow tense. Street-violence (kale borroka) threatened to throw the Basque Country in chaos. ETA accused a sector within the PNV of "poisoning" the "political process" and proposed the creation of a national Basque parliament, which, of course, was rejected by the PNV, and other signatories of the Lizarrá Accord. The aims of both groups involved were diametrically opposed: the moderate Basque nationalists did not want to change the status quo of indirect occupation and concessions from Madrid, which has been used to reward the Basque economic elites, and ETA and the radical Basques seem not ready to settle for less than Basque independence.[87]

Full integration of HB into the current political status quo would be the price HB was called to pay in order to achieve intra-nationalist unification and wipe out ETA's violence. ETA, in its end of unilateral ceasefire communiqué in November 1999 claimed that the Spanish PP government and PNV tried to turn a process of nation-building into a peace process without content, and to drown the abertzale left in the political 'normality.' After the end of the truce, the Basque public opinion according to June 2000 Euskobarometer [88] perceived massively that the tension developed in the relations between the political parties the last two years is increasingly provoking social strain. Nearly 8 of every 10 agree with it. The main reasons for this are, according to them, the lack of agreement between the Basque nationalist forces and the state parties (45%) and the Spanish Government's resistance to change (35%). As for the peace process, if in May '99 the main sensations were hope and worry, in that order, at present worry is stronger and so is disappointment." [89] Herri Batasuna generally admitted the fact that a possible solution could only be achieved through an open democratic process of dialogue and negotiation provided that the Spanish government recognized the political dimension of the conflict and the need to negotiate with the nationalists without a total disband of ETA. Admittedly, an indefinite cessation of violence would be critical for any future initiation of any contact as the one provided by ETA in 1998.[90]

Additionally, the idea of an emerging 'third space' composed by people in despair from the Basque patriotic left and

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other left wing voters with no faith in the military solution reinforced a policy shift in HB for the acquisition of larger electoral support.[91] This unstructured third space has eventually become a critical regulatory factor in Basque politics determining the future of Batasuna's political development.[92] Hence, Batasuna's post- 1998 political position has been stressing the political importance of the conflict while focusing on the legitimate 'democratic right' of self-determination on a territorial basis, freedom of speech, and the regrouping of the political prisoners. Parallel to this, HB continued pressing for the advance of formal and inclusive negotiations between Madrid and Gasteiz and the promotion of a phased demilitarization of the Basque country with the withdrawal of the Guardia Civil.

## Chapter 4

### 4.1 State responses

Occasional violent incidents continue to influence the ethno national campaign in Ireland and the Basque Country consequently disrupting the centre-periphery relations. The degree of political violence in the two regions has been remarkably high since the 70s. Sporadic violent incidents in the Basque country during Franco's regime escalated into a full out Basque-led anti-dictatorial campaign. In the Irish north, right after the civil rights campaign, a number of horrifying violent events exposed the deep divisions in the society that could no longer be sustained. For both Britain and Spain, the suppression of terrorist violence has always been a principal issue. The prevention and suppression of terrorist incidents is a central component for the normalization of the two conflicts. However, the two states have adopted different philosophies on conflict management since there is an evident divergence in principles and aims on the Anglo-Spanish policies towards their conflicts.

### 4.2 Evaluation of State policies towards ETA/HB: 1983-1996

During the 80s ETA aimed to create an impact on the political environment in order to enter negotiations with the central government through the action repression spiral. Today however, ETA perpetuates its campaign in order to expose Spain's political problem, pressuring for negotiations between the nationalist political forces of the Basque country and the central authorities. In the first two 'KAS alternative' years 1978-80, when the Autonomy statute given by Spain was being negotiated, ETA presented the highest level of violent activity (88 victims) which resulted to the introduction of a number of repressive policies including severe anti-terrorist legislation.[93] From the 80's and on, ETA perceived violence as an effective way to communicate its position of power, using violence in order to force the Spanish government to negotiate. A substantial number of supporters and sympathizers, together with the core of the groups' activists effectively managed to pursue a systematic campaign against the Guardia Civil, Spanish non-nationalist politicians as well as businessmen and even other nationalist Basque politicians. The violent campaign has failed so far to derive concessions from the state but it 'succeeded' on preserving the campaign alive although much more weakened.

The Government's firm stance to suppress all violent acts is the most actively pursued policy in regards to the Basque conflict. Since the eruption of the first violent incidents, Madrid had been steadfast on its conviction that violence must be suppressed by all means so that a permanent end to the conflict can be achieved. However, the principal problematic is the generalized view Madrid takes in regards to the whole conflict in the Basque Country, which consequently endorses the conduct of repressionist policies. Interestingly, no Spanish government has ever recognized a political conflict in the Basque Country, thus prohibiting by law the implementation and promotion of purely political initiatives. The 1978 Spanish constitution although it provides extensive regional autonomy of a consociational nature between the regional and central government at the same time it prohibits any type of peaceful secession.[94] For Spain, every political concession that would enhance the already existing regional autonomy is regarded as a weakening of Spanish territorial and constitutional integrity. The costs of keeping the status quo include having to deal with continued terrorist attacks by ETA, potential harm to Spain's tourist industry, reduced ability to attract economic investment and continued instability in the Basque country. However, the benefits of maintaining the status quo far outweigh the costs. Firstly, the Basque Country constitutes an important economic asset for the Spanish economy with its highly developed service and financial sector as well as the industrial installations and tourism. The common borders and commercial interaction between Spain and the Basque Country prevent Spanish policy makers to detach themselves politically and economically from the Basque region. Thirdly, by

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preserving the Basque Country Madrid adds to the tranquillization of the right-wing factions in the military and government which still maintain significant influence more than a quarter of a century after the end of the Franco dictatorship.[95] Finally, the existing threat of a spill over effect starting with the French Basque provinces and the province of Navarre and the existence of the other nationalist movements in Catalonia and Galician could inevitably lead to the dissolution of Spain. Consequently, in contradiction with British policy on Northern Ireland, Spain tactically declared in 1989 that: “the cost of the conflict is far less than the cost of the political secession of the Basque provinces”[96]

Enric-Martinez Herrera suggested that a combination of efficacious, but flexible law ruled public order policies, together with very substantial doses of responsiveness assists the mitigation of militant nationalist extremism.[97] The grant of autonomy to the Basque Country was seen by Madrid as a concession part and parcel of the democratic transition rather than as the legitimate restoration of a political tradition, since then no other political development followed till the 98' ETA ceasefire. Throughout the course of the conflict, Madrid has been confined to the drastic implementation of anti-terrorist frameworks, special security programmes, and security measures in order to mitigate the violent parameters of the conflict. The rationale of the public order approach presumes that the combating of violent phenomena and their effects is more crucial than the deep causes of the conflict that generates them.

## *4.3 Lessons from the 'Socialist years'*

The Socialist government of PSOE drastically responded to the increasing separatist violence through a series of ultra-repressive methods which finally did not produce the expected result vis a vis to eliminate ETA. The focus of the Gonzalez government was to eradicate the military capability of ETA rather than inflict political damage on Herri Batasuna. The ZEN plan, the GAL squads and the pact of Ajuria Enea are three important events throughout the 80s characteristic of the law and order approach adopted by the Spanish government. The ZEN (Zona Especial Norte) Plan, introduced by the Gonzalez government in 1983 was a military anti-terrorist plan for the Basque Country in order to pursue the “physical destruction of suspected ETA activists in Northern Basque Country.”[98] The ZEN Plan required the cooperation of the, local police with the Guardia Civil for the suppression of separatist crime. For this to occur, it was necessary to acquire the support of the non-nationalist Basque population (1/3 of the total population). In other words, by dividing the Basque population over policing and security issues Madrid attempted to internalise the conflict therefore throwing the Country into a civil war among the Basque nationalists and the non-nationalists. The Basque Parliament ultimately rejected the Plan. Yet the failure of the ZEN plan provided some fertile ground for extra-constitutional paramilitary action. The GAL squads, funded by the Interior Ministry, operated from 1983 to 1987 across the Franco-Spanish border chasing and assassinating ETA suspects. After having assassinated 28 people, most of them innocent, Judge Baltazar Garzon launched a criminal investigation, which resulted in the imprisonment of several people including the minister of Interior.[99] The campaign GAL implemented indicated the high degree of anxiety and lack of concrete policy in the fight against ETA. The Gal scandal presented an adverse effect in the fight against ETA by legitimatising the arguments of the extremist nationalist supporters. Several attacks against the group's main operational mechanism followed the detainment and imprisonment of several members but they did not result into a permanent halt of violence since hundreds of recruits waited to be employed by ETA. In addition, the detention- reinsertion policy also proved inefficient since the group was assassinating many of the reintegrated ETA members right after their release. In a nutshell, “the security agencies acted if pursued by ETA during the dictatorship till the mid 80s”. [100] The Francoist philosophy had been very well embedded within the attitudes and perceptions of the security forces consequently leading them towards a clumsy post-totalitarian policy planning.

As a consequence,

...the strict anti-terror legislation that severely curtailed civil liberties, mass detentions by the Spanish security forces of suspected sympathizers with ETA, and the heavy presence of Guardia Civil troops patrolling the streets of Basque cities all contributed to this feeling of the return of Spanish repression .[101]

The connection of the state authorities to the GAL squads remained unveiled till 1994, when judge Baltazar Garzon investigated some media reports providing evidence for collusion. In 1988, a broad anti-terrorist front was established based on the Ajuria Enea Pact signed by all the political agents of the Basque Country excluding Herri

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Batasuna. Again, in the same repressionist – militarist logic, the Agreement aimed at increasing collaboration between the regional and Spanish police in an effort to illegitimize violence in the Basque Country. Indicative of the militaristic spirit which dominated within the Spanish security circles was officer's Andres Cassinelo statement in 1985 that:

...the nucleus of ETA and its supporters cannot be reduced to mere words; it has to be localized, neutralized and destroyed with appropriate police action and he concluded by saying that: I prefer terrorism to the KAS alternative and war to the independence of Euskadi.[102]

The same man, five months after the Pact of Ajuria Enea became General of the Spanish Army in the Basque Country. Nevertheless, the effect of these public order policies can be evaluated in the variation of the number of victims per year. Herrera's work presents that the number of ETA victims has dramatically decreased since the beginning of 80s following a decreasing tendency with occasional outbursts of violence. The strict law and order policies implemented in the 80s only managed to stabilize the course of terrorist activity without having any serious effect on the perceptions of those in favor of violence.[103]

One of the few orchestrated political actions taken by the Socialist government throughout a period of 14 years (1982-1996) was the initiation of the 'Algiers Talks' between police officers and ETA members, which have been expelled by France to Algiers. The conversations failed to deliver with each side accusing the other for attempting to manipulate the process.[104] The chronic Spanish demand for ETA's immediate disarmament and disband in return for the imprisoned etarras monopolized the governmental agenda in contradiction with the inclusive political requests made by the Basque extremists. ETA wanted to negotiate with Spanish political representatives, not police representatives, over the issues of Spanish law enforcement, Navarre and self determination, the Spanish government though only would only negotiate so-called 'technical' issues such as public order and security [105] The last action taken by the Gonzalez government against the extreme nationalists was the so called 'crime of the videotape', which involved the distribution of a video tape by Herri Batasuna that contained members of ETA explaining the conditions for ending the conflict in their 'democratic alternative' proposal. The arrests resulted in the imprisonment of the HB Executive Board. [106]

Entering the 90s, support for violence dramatically decreased showing a remarkably low overall sympathy for ETA's violence. The image of ETA itself presented also a phenomenal deterioration in the eyes of the ordinary Basque citizens. From the information provided by Euskobarometre, in 1996, 32% of the 1.800 Basques questioned believed that ETA activists are crazy/killers and another 21% regarded them as criminal/killers.[107] Only, 16% of the total viewed them as idealists and an 8% treated them as patriots.[108] A wide contrast to the beliefs people held almost two decades ago emerged at this point, in 1978-9 people were presenting ETA activists principally as idealists and patriots or at worse as manipulated fanatics. Given that the support for violence in the Basque country is merely restricted within the HB coalition, it is evident that violence does not enjoy much of support and endorsement in the wider populace. During the truce of 1997-98, the overall support for violence in order to achieve political goals was remarkably low in the Basque country with the only exception of the Herri Batasuna voters. In 1997, a year before the ETA ceasefire and the initiation of the Peace Talks among the Basque nationalist forces, an anti violence dementia erupted in the Basque country with an 88% of the population being very much or somewhat against violence for political goals.[109] It was only among the HB supporters where pro-violence sentiments could be found, a substantial 60% of them presented themselves in favor of violence whereas another 36% of them was much more skeptical about violence. [110] Finally, Robert Clark has observed that: "when policy decisions in Madrid constrain or block the development of the autonomous Basque regime, support for ETA climbs; when the Spanish government encourages autonomy, support for ETA declines." [111] Therefore the PNV having a leading role in the negotiations for the expansion of autonomy frequently needs ETA to add some action and strength to its voice.[112]

Whenever Tony Blair runs into difficulties in Northern Ireland quick to tell that there is 'no alternative' to the peace process.[113] By contrast, Aznar's PP, after winning the elections with the support of the PNV publicly declared that there is an alternative. Since then, PP's 'alternative policy' towards the Basques has been characterized from an absolute law and order austerity and suspicion to the Basque movement. As I have previously analyzed, the Spanish government lost the opportunity for peace provided by the Lizarra agreement and the ceasefire in 1998. From then

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on, the Spanish government has launched a dynamic offensive policy against the core structure of the Basque movement by cracking down its media and press agencies as well as illegalising Herri Batasuna. PP's philosophy holds that the decomposition and dislodgment of the radical Basque social movement will eventually annihilate the support for ETA's violence. The goal of the government is to criminalize the legal organizations linked to the pro Basque movement and to prevent HB from running the elections.

In August 1998, Baltazar Garzon became the first judge since Franco dictatorship to close down a legal newspaper Egin and its sister radio Egin Irratia.[114] Aznar's policy is heavily influenced by Bush's 'war on terrorism', a dogma that presupposes those who are not against the ones defined as terrorists by the state, they are consequently with them. In addition, the Spanish government is determined to fend off plans by the Basque regional government to hold a referendum for self-determination on shared sovereignty.[115] This plan has been devised by leading PNV party and the Spanish efforts to deter its implementation have caused serious frustration to the moderate nationalists. The closure of Euskaldunon Egunkaria, a Basque language newspaper, and the following arrest of 10 directors and managers added to the perception of many Basque nationalists that Aznar is becoming an increasingly abusing leader. In February 2003 a caustic statement by the moderate and collaborationist PNV described Spain as a 'totalitarian state', consequently enraging the Spanish authorities, which nevertheless continued the crackdown policy.[116] Consequently, terrorist attacks and police operations follow each other. The former will never triumph as a result of the overwhelming inequality of forces and the lack of majority support from the people. The latter are insufficient in them to prevent further violent actions and are incapable of achieving a lasting peace.

## *4.4 Evaluation of British Policy towards the Republican movement*

Two strikingly contrasting interpretations of British policy traditionally dominated in Northern Ireland. Unionists have tended to argue that the British Government has been attempting to rid itself of Northern Ireland.[117] Republicans have portrayed the determination of British imperialism to hang on to its first and last colony. However, in recent years both nationalists and republicans realized that British policy towards Northern Ireland has dramatically shifted since the late eighties.[118] There are a number of contrasting theories regarding the nature and aim of the state policies conducted by Britain in Northern Ireland. Brendan O'Leary has claimed that British policies under the Conservative government have been characterized by a 'remarkably painful and slow ethno national policy learning'.[119] O'Leary's argument is based on the alleged lack of 'consistency' that British policies presented from 1979 to 1997 by illustrating a number of inconsistencies which galvanized British policy for years, consequently preventing the formation of a concrete and continual policy for many years. I will focus on three inconsistencies described by O'Leary:

the fact that London 'declared support for Northern Ireland's place in the Union but also declared the absence of 'selfish strategic or economic interest', the public opposition to talking with terrorists while conducting private 'contacts', and a willingness to end the Union, and the British opposition to the erosion of UK sovereignty by the EU but support for giving the Republic an enhanced role in Northern Ireland.[120]

These three questions will be related to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the IRA-British pre-Agreement 'contacts' and the road to the Good Friday Agreement. Interestingly, 'O'Leary's 'inconsistencies' have been critically countered by Paul Dixon who argued that British policy in Northern Ireland is marked by 'continuity' and 'consistency' in regard to the constraints British governments had to face in attempting to pursue their interests.[121] Paul Dixon recognizes the existence of some 'tactical adjustments' in British policy but he does not regard them as markers of political incoherence.

Britain has implemented a number of security policies for countering terrorist acts and violence albeit the security forces in Ireland proved to be counter productive in the past years failing to adopt a Catholic-friendly image. However, parallel to some responsive political efforts, a number of tough police and military measures have been employed in order to regulate the high levels of violence. Northern Ireland is a heavily militarized province with at least three different military units (RUC, British Army/RIR, PSNI) sustained by Britain. The Northern Ireland army garrison comprises of the regular army regiments, the RUC and the RIR, which principally recruited people from the Loyalist community. By 1994, there were 30,543 armed personnel supported by an extensive network of intelligence and

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surveillance. [122]

Similarly to the Spanish GAL squads, Britain has also had to present a record of ambiguous security policies for 'resolving' or at least mitigating the erupting nationalist tensions. There have been strong accusations of 'collusion' between British security forces and Loyalist paramilitary groups for the assassination of 'selected targets'. A number of slow-moving but exceptionally revealing inquiries ordered by the British government indicated a number of assassinations carried out with the complicity of high-ranking British security forces and under the patronage and covering of the British security personnel. The summary report from the Stevens commission, released in the 18 April 2003:

...documents widespread collusion between local pro-British "Loyalist" paramilitary gangs and the pro-British Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), in particular its Special Branch, and the Force Research Unit (FRU), a branch of British Army intelligence.[123]

The secret unit, called the Force Research Unit (FRU) had been tasked with handling undercover agents in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic who allegedly conducted most of the 'operations' 'relying on FRU's intelligence resources. The FRU was set up in the early 1980s to take over previously uncoordinated agent running activities, placing them all under a single professional command structure. A member of FRU came forward to talk about what the unit had done. Agreeing that there had been a policy of "shoot to kill by proxy", the former FRU member said that his unit had acted as "judge, jury and executioner ... [it was] immoral and probably unlawful." [124] A high-ranking member of the British security forces responsible for setting up this 'network of assassins and torturers' told BBC TV's Panorama that their goal was to get the Loyalists to be "more professional" in their targeting of Republicans.[125] The British intelligence and security forces had to deal with the indiscriminate nature of the Loyalist paramilitary shootings. Loyalist gunmen tended to choose 'easy targets', "often ordinary Catholic civilians, to spread blind terror among the Catholic community at large." [126] Some factions within the British security forces wanted a more sophisticated Loyalist targeting policy, "one shaped to better serve overall British policy." [127]

These alleged 'shoot to kill' policies have stigmatized Britain's policy record in Northern Ireland exposing the security system's vulnerability to the influence of these anachronistic and militant elements, which infiltrated the security forces. The implementation of these undercover policies epitomized the failure of illegitimate force by escalating the tensions between the state and the nationalist community and encouraging the promotion of violence. A series of bombings in Northern Ireland as well as the initiation of the second 'IRA Bombing campaign' in the British mainland verified the falsity of such extra-constitutional policies.

Another major macro-political concern had to do with the economic burden Northern Ireland posed to Britain due to its vast security and structural needs. This has ultimately created much re-consideration on the continuation of the 'no negotiation' strategy. The Times commented that the three men primarily responsible for the Anglo Irish Agreement – Armstrong, Howe and Hurd – saw Northern Ireland as an encumbrance, 'a drain on the economy and an obstacle in foreign relations'. [128] Brendan O'Leary argues that the political effect of the AIA was very ambiguous. The primary objective of the Agreement was not to foster peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

At the time of the AIA, Margaret Thatcher believed that the agreements' fundamental aims were basically targeting the "demobilization of radical nationalism, the restoration of SDLP's credibility and the creation of the conditions for a military and political counter offensive against the IRA." [129] Nevertheless, the Anglo-Irish Agreement empowered SDLP's consociational strategy, which temporarily halted the growth of Sinn Fein's share of the vote. Indisputably though, the Agreement ultimately exposed the Unionists as the unwanted part of the Kingdom by opening the way for the Irish Republic to cooperate over an issue of common concern.

The most crucial policy shifts in British policy occurred at the starting of the 90s with the dawn of the 'pan-nationalist front'. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Peter Brooke paved the way for influencing the political thinking of the central government. His important realization that it is difficult to envisage IRAs complete military defeat through security measures led him to encourage the London Conservative government to be 'flexible' and 'imaginative' if the IRA stopped its violence. [130] The slow realization by the British government of the principle for 'republican inclusion'

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in the talks had been favoured not only by the election of Gerry Adams as Sinn Fein leader and the later American intervention but also because of the deteriorating importance of Northern Ireland in Britain. The sterile Thatcherite policy of 'no talks with terrorists', which is today's Spain's political principle, proved to be unfruitful by adding only to the preservation and perpetuation of the tensions. Paul Dixon observed that:

...the obstructionism of British policy is explained as being due to the Conservative government's precarious majority at Westminster and its dependency on the Ulster Unionist MPs at Westminster; the ideological affinity between conservatives and unionists and the influence of the security establishment.[131]

Thatcher was determined not to compromise the Union and was interested primarily in finding ways of improving the security situation by introducing cross border cooperation on anti-terrorist action.[132] Prime Minister Thatcher finally approved secret talks with Sinn Fein out of necessity in October 1990, thus marking some continuity in Britain's history of 'contact' and back channel negotiation with the republican insurgents.[133] The British government became increasingly interested in the drastic republican developments in order to achieve an IRA ceasefire. However, the fact that Adams seemed to be willing to 'move on' threatened the traditional Conservative - Unionist block which primarily viewed republicans as criminal terrorists. Nevertheless, the British government under PM John Major, while reassuring the Unionists that 'there can be no secret agreements or understandings between the governments and organizations that support violence' carefully sustained a link with Sinn Fein.[134] The 'Brooke initiative' may have failed to bring parties together because of the Unionist objection on the North-south negotiations, but it did contribute to the halt of violence (IRA ceasefire 1994) and the participation of Sinn Fein in the negotiations.

The first phase of the contacts between the government and Sinn Fein ended with the signing of the Downing Street Declaration in 15 December 1993 as an effort to attract Sinn Fein into the peace process. Ironically for the Unionists, the British government acted unilaterally by secretly negotiating with SF and retreating from its insistence on the permanence of the IRA's ceasefire while publicly denying all contacts. In fact, the issues of permanent ceasefire and decommissioning constituted the safe card for the British government and for the Unionists for pressuring the IRA/SF to halt operations. A very important factor for the reshaping of the British political mentality on Northern Ireland was the formation of the 'pan nationalist' front which included Sinn Fein and SDLP, backed by strong American support which gave rise to an orchestrated pressure for the advancement of a peace process. In January 1994 President Clinton's decision to grant Gerry Adams a US entry visa despite a continuing IRA campaign was a further reminder of the rewards on offer should Sinn Féin pursue the path of constitutional politics. British policies have certainly been influenced by the determination of the Irish nationalists to persuade firstly the IRA for ending violence and secondly to communicate their concerns to the Unionists. This protognorous nationalist opening could not have been left unexploited by the British government.

On August 31, 1994, the IRA gave a quantum boost to the peace process with their announcement of a "complete" ceasefire. The systematic interaction between the British government and Sinn Fein, facilitated by the IRA ceasefire continued to progress despite Unionist reservations on the issue of decommissioning. In May 1997 Tony Blair's Labor Party took office with a clear parliamentary majority. By mid-June, the demand for decommissioning prior to Sinn Fein's entry into talks was dropped by the government re-enabling the process to continue.

In late March the negotiations intensified, although many issues were still outstanding. The UUP and SDLP held opposing views of how power would be shared between the two communities in Northern Ireland. Sinn Féin was deeply uneasy at the prospect of any new Northern Ireland assembly and contributed little to negotiations on this matter. The UUP was concerned the remit of cross-border bodies and their relationship with the Northern Ireland Assembly and Irish Parliament, and anxious to tie the Irish government down on the proposed changes to its constitutional claim on Northern Ireland's territory.[135]

Another pressing factor for the acceleration of the peace process by the British government was the dramatically reduced sympathy for violence from the people of Northern Ireland. By forwarding a peace framework for reconciliation and normalization, the British government could eventually illegitimise paramilitary violence and promote Britain's image as a broker and facilitator. A public survey conducted in 1998 has showed that 72% of the Catholic population had no sympathy for the use of republican violence with another 69% of Protestants detesting loyalist violence. [136] For the first time after the failed power-sharing attempt of Sunningdale, Britain showed the

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political determination to treat Northern Ireland as a unique entity – though inextricably associated to the United Kingdom- , detaching London from the politics of Ulster despite the severe Unionist objections.

After the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, several technical obstacles appeared to be blocking the implementation of the historical agreement. Although great progress has been made, a number of successive incidents in the last year 2002-2003 resulted in a prolonged crisis. On the one hand, Britain's 'securocratic' approach towards Northern Ireland has radically been reduced and peace through flexible negotiations has been forwarded as the sole prospect for change. Labour's philosophy has evidently presented signs of retreat from the traditionalist views on the non-negotiable preservation of the Union and suppression of insurgent nationalist opposition. On the other hand, a number of subsequent 'unresolved' political issues such as the Unionist demand for IRA decommissioning, the suspension of the Assembly and the cancellation of the recent elections hamper the implementation of the Agreement. The Unionists have exercised significant pressure on the reluctant British government to placate their fears despite London's willingness to get on the process. Admittedly, the IRA is seen as a common enemy for both the British government and the Irish Unionists and suspicious allegations regarding IRA's activities usually attract London's attention. Moreover, Britain's interest to sustain moderate Trimble in power, so that the Loyalist extremists will not increase their vote and influence in the polls, has rendered London exceptionally acquiescent to some unfounded Unionist fears. Britain's commitment to discourage polarization and preserve the GFA has burdened the government with the task to placate the Unionists.

The following passage illustrates Britain's passive response to the Unionist fears:

Firstly, the Unionist leader (UUP) David Trimble began to escalate his demands on the IRA to disarm, "at the time the IRA was successfully cooperating with the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning and had begun to put 'weapons beyond use' in order to keep the peace process going and to encourage implementation of the GFA by the British government."<sup>[137]</sup> By September '02, the Ulster Unionist Council [UUC] regarded the IRA disarmament as not enough and they were now calling for the IRA to disband. In addition, the UUC called for rollbacks in the already weak policing legislation — insisting that the proposed 50/50 Protestant to Catholic recruiting ratio aimed at equalizing the 90% plus Protestant PSNI over time be scrapped. Trimble also announced they would immediately and illegally block SF from attending the GFA's North/South cross-border bodies, and walk out of the devolved assembly on 18 January '03 unless all their demands were met.<sup>[138]</sup> Because the British government's sole strategy seems preserving a weak Trimble in power — in fact, David Trimble has made an art of weakness — and because they see a coalition of the Ulster Unionist Party [UUP] and the nationalist Social Democratic Labor Party [SDLP] as indispensable, they (the British government) continue to allow political stagnation.<sup>[139]</sup>

Unionists continued to clutch at straws, holding on every possible pretence or petty-incident to justify their fears and calling Britain for protective action. Contrary to what the moderate Unionists agreed in the GFA, they now wished to see the Assembly working but only if Sinn Fein was excluded from the power-sharing executive. The British Labour government and SDLP regarded this demand unacceptable but the UUP's tight links with the British security establishment and the withdrawal of DUP's two ministers from the Assembly had put the British government on the screw after emerging 'evidence' that Sinn Fein/IRA policy still wavered between violence and democratic politics.<sup>[140]</sup> The British government subsequently reacted by suspending the functions of the Assembly as a whole consequently leaving Unionists, Republicans, and moderate Nationalists discontent. Ironically, the only winning side from the prolonged crisis is that of the anti-Agreement Loyalists confirming their fears and reservations for the Agreement as such.

## Chapter 5

*Conclusion: A comparative scheme of concluding remarks*

After all the parallels of the Irish and Basque nationalist movements are striking. Both Herri Batasuna and Sinn Fein followed an extra constitutional mixed strategy combining the armed struggle and elections, usually attracting some 15% of the regional vote. In both cases the mainstream nationalist parties (PNV-SDLP) saw it as their role to bring the radicals into the constitutional fold by facilitating ceasefires. The PNV however failed to bring PP and PSOE into

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the Lizarra framework. Both SF and HB realized the need for some rational tactical adjustments for the preservation of the republican and Left abertzale nationalist movements. Sinn Fein's decision to participate fully in the elections and the initiation of the Hume – Adams talks consequently lead the movement gradually away from violence and towards a policy of consent and non-violent persuasion. Herri Batasuna, heavily influenced by Sinn Fein's entry into the peace talks, encouraged the formation of the 'Irish Forum', which has been a product of the pan-nationalist Lizarra Agreement. The fate of the Agreement however did not enjoy the success of that in Northern Ireland. Spain's hesitance to enter negotiations, the PNV's vested interests and ETA's ceasefire withdrawal clearly indicated the lack of political willingness to resolve this long-standing conflict. While the British government has been prepared to keep the radicals happy, the Spanish government continues to deny the existence of a political conflict and excludes the possibility of negotiating with the 'violent'. In Northern Ireland, all parties involved accepted that it was a political conflict requiring a political solution. Resolving the problem of identification will certainly be the essential step for initiating any meaningful negotiation in the Basque Country. There is also wide divergence on the methods applied by Madrid and London. The Spanish government is hoping to suppress the extremist movement by force, while the British have devised means of drawing it into the political mainstream. As we have seen, both states conducted a number of illegitimate policies to counter the terrorist threat without enjoying much support and success. The British government and the IRA realized that they will never win militarily and thus, they accepted that the conflict would remain unresolved unless appropriate political action was taken whereas the Spanish government and security forces continue the offensive repression of the radical Basque movement. The principle of 'inclusion' has also been critical to progress in Northern Ireland. The participants realized the importance of recognizing the different traditions on the island and the right to self-determination based on the people's will to retain links with Britain. The British government, viewing the unprecedented chance for peace, relaxed its preconditions and compromised with the republicans relying on the assumption that inclusion is necessary for the instigation of meaningful talks. By contrast, Spain's exclusionary 'no negotiation' strategy has hampered progress by imposing unrealistic and inflexible preconditions to HB/ETA without being willing to discuss political issues other than negotiating on the strictly militarist agreement regarding the 'arms for prisoners' issue. Madrid has no intentions whatsoever to discuss over issues of territory, political sovereignty and increased self-ruling since Prime Minister Aznar does not seem willing to offer anything from the political side. There have been attempts and strategies to end this situation. Basically, they all come under one of three models: "the police solution", "political force" and "non-violence- dialogue". The first two, a police solution and force, have been the dominant models. The result, in terms of factors that have contributed to maintaining the conflict within its current parameters, is clearly negative. The third, non-violence and dialogue have hardly had a chance, and the opportunities that have arisen have always been partial and incomplete. According to this analysis, the future development of the two ethno-political movements holds that Sinn Fein will continue to consolidate its constitutional position by strengthening its electoral campaign and by strategically supporting the implementation of the Agreement. Despite the current crisis, Sinn Fein will not abandon the efforts to normalize the political proceedings and expand the scope of the Agreement. By contrast, Herri Batasuna, being an illegal organization, will continue to pressurize the Spanish government and the local pro-dependence parties through the MLNV organizations till they decide to start up inclusive talks. Most probably, ETA will also continue its campaign against Spanish interests and it is certain that the Spanish government will be responding in the same military-judicial fashion in order to weaken support for the movement, eradicate ETA and make the Basque Country's position in Spain absolutely firm.

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## **Sinn Fein**

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[5] Esman Milton, 1999, pg 14

[6] Esman Milton, 1999, pg 27

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[8] J.Ross and A. Beker/ R.St Cyr & s.Rawkins, 1980, pg 10

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[15] C2DE= retired workers, unskilled workers, blue-collar, service employs, casual labourers.

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[17] Cynthia L. Irvin, 1999, pg 125: see: Table 4.4. Social Background of Irish and Basque Nationalist Supporters.

[18] J.Rothchild, 1981, pg 5

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