

# Terrorism in the Basque press (1990, 2000, 2008-2009). Analysis of newspaper editorials about ETA's fatal attacks

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**Abstract:** This article presents an analysis of the editorials published by the Basque press in 1990, 2000, 2008 and 2009, when ETA carried out fatal attacks. The objective is to examine the treatment given by the different Basque newspapers to terrorism in their most important opinion texts, which reflect their ideology. The initial hypothesis is that the editorial line used by the Basque press to address ETA's attacks has changed remarkably during the analysed years, going from the virtual absence of editorials to the use of editorials as active instruments in the fight against violence. By 2009, the Basque press had finally defined its strategy to combat ETA's terrorism, and this was perfectly reflected in their editorials.

**Keywords:** editorials; terrorism; ETA; fatal attacks; Basque Country; press.

**Contents:** 1. Introduction. 2. Political and journalistic context. 3. Method. 4. Analysis of editorials. 5. Results. 6. References.

Translation by **Cruz-Alberto Martínez-Arcos, Ph.D.**

## 1. Introduction

This article analyses the evolution of the editorial treatment given by the Basque press to the fatal attacks carried out by ETA. The analysis starts in 1990 as most of the Basque media did not publish editorials before that year. ETA committed 16 murders

in 1990 and 19 in 2000. Fortunately, this figure decreased dramatically in 2008-2009 to just 6.

The research is based on the analysis of the editorials of *El Correo Español*, *Deia*, *Egin-Gara* and *El País*. The first three newspapers are edited in the Basque Country. Meanwhile, *El País* is the most-sold newspaper in Spain and has a different edition for the Basque Country, edited in its Bilbao office.

The selection of newspapers aimed to take into account media representing all the political positions and ideologies in the Basque Country: from the centre-right ideology of *El Correo* to the centre-left ideology of *El País*, passing by the moderate nationalism of *Deia* and the left nationalism of *Egin*.

On the other hand, the selected newspapers are those that maintained the strongest sales during the analysed dates, as shown the following table:

<b>Table 1: dissemination of the analysed media</b>			
<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2009</b>
<i>El Correo</i>	130,032	132,113	110,826
<i>Deia</i>	48,313	No data*	19,087
<i>Egin/Gara</i>	44,264	52,311*	No data*
<i>El País</i>	375,875	436,302	391,815

Source: OJD (*Oficina de Justificación de la Difusión* - Spanish Newspaper Circulation Data Office)  
 \*In 2000 *Deia* was not included in the studies of the OJD.  
 \*\**Egin* was shut down in 1998, so this figure corresponds to the data provided by OJD for 1997. *Gara* does not appear in the studies of the OJD.

<b>Table 2: Readers (in thousands)</b>			
<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2009</b>
<i>El Correo</i>	505	591	503
<i>Deia</i>	118	109	87
<i>Egin/Gara</i>	126	142	92*
<i>El País</i>	1,452	1,447	2081

Source: EGM  
 \*Data corresponding to 2008. *Gara* does not appear in the 2009 studies.

We have analysed all the editorials published by the selected newspapers on the dates when ETA carried out fatal attacks, according to a scientific methodology that is explained later.

## 2. Political and journalistic context

It is difficult to understand the editorial policy of the press towards the violence of ETA without connecting it to the political context of each of the years under analysis.

The publication of news stories on terrorist acts have been marked by permanent doubts that arise from the fact that some attacks have a propagandistic side and also seek their dissemination. Rodrigo Alsina (1991: 32) recognises that terrorism has a very important, but not decisive, communicative dimension: “Terrorist acts are events that enter into a communication system whose production logic will turn them into news”.

From a journalistic perspective, terrorist acts cause a dysfunction in the relationship between news-worthy events and news. As Luis Veres (2006: 131) rightly explains, “news exist because certain unintended events occur, but with terrorism the terms are reversed and certain events are planned to force the production of news”.

As Enrique Gil-Calvo (2003: 246) points out, this relationship between violence and media visibility can make some people “to resort to violence to guarantee the visibility of a social conflict”.

Sánchez-Ferlosio (1982: 79) emphasises the exceptional nature of terrorist acts since the fact that their perpetrators always claim responsibility is part of their essence and this opens the doors of the media for them. “The deaths caused by terrorists are ‘signed deaths’ because the terrorist has demanded from the beginning, by acknowledging responsibility, that these deaths carry their name”.

There is no doubt that the media and terrorist acts maintain a relation of symbiosis, of mutual need. This is because, in the words of María Gil-Casares (2008: 6), “terrorists find in the media the desired platform to disseminate their names and their message, but also provide, in turn, the show that journalists need”.

Despite the fact that terrorists seek the media dissemination of the attacks, journalists defend the public’s right to be informed, even of the darkest side of its society. Arcadi Espada (2002) strongly defends this stance: “terrorism has to be presented in the media. (...) I do not agree with any of these arguments about the violence of many journalists, university professors or not, who are tempted to turn newspapers into a sort of theme parks in which evil is not exhibited”.

In the 1980s the need for the media to establish a common editorial policy towards terrorism begun to be considered. The Spanish Socialist Party took the first steps to

establish this consensus and in 1983, under the Presidency of Felipe González, the *Plan ZEN (Zona Especial Norte - Special Northern Zone)* was created [1]. This plan included, among other aspects, the possibility of driving a media and political attack against terrorism.

One year later, the Minister of the Interior of the Socialist Government, José Barrionuevo (1984, 10), pointed out in a book edited by the General Technical Secretariat of the Ministry of the Interior that “it should be essential for the media to maintain a hostile attitude towards terrorism and to commit themselves to use their own resources to participate in the active fight against terrorism and the constant defence of democratic values and civic security”.

So for the first time the media were given a comprehensive plan with specific recommendations to inform about ETA attacks, at a time when the political consensus to combat ETA terrorism becomes consolidated. In January, 1988, the Basque parties, with the exception of the *Ezker Abertzalea* (Basque for “Left-wing Basque Nationalism”, also known in English as “Abertzale Left”), signed the Agreement for the Normalisation and Pacification of Euskadi, known as the Ajuria-Enea Pact [2]. This pact was promoted by the lehendakari (the President of the Basque Government) José Antonio Ardanza and signed by the National Basque Party (PNV), the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), the Popular Alliance (AP), the Eusko Alkartasuna (EA), the Euskadiko Ezkerra (EE) and the Democratic and Social Centre (CDS). Among many other aspects, this pact highlighted the protagonist role that the media must play in the peace process due to their influence on social behaviour.

The Ajuria-Enea Pact was officially ended in September, 1998, when the Basque political parties, with the exception of the Basque Socialist Party (PSE) and the Popular Party (PP), signed with the Abertzale Left the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement [3]. This new agreement was signed at a time of high political turmoil caused by the sharp turn ETA gave to its terrorist strategy in 1995. In this new strategy, the media, journalists and politicians, mainly from the PP and PSE, became ETA’s new main target.

In 1999 and 2000 the attacks of ETA were especially virulent and frequent against the media. On 7 May, 2000, ETA killed journalist José Luis López de Lacalle and on 24 May, 2001, in Donostia, it killed Santiago Oleaga Elejabarrieta, the Chief Financial Officer of *El Diario Vasco* newspaper.

ETA’s attacks on politicians were not any less virulent. In 1995, with the murder of Gregorio Ordóñez, a councillor of the PP, ETA began a terrorist strategy that had its

peak from 1996 to 1998 and particularly in 2000, when the number of deaths surpassed the death toll accumulated from 1996 to 1998.

The pressure put on the Abertzale Left by the Spanish State, that is the central government, was also intense. In December, 1997, the Supreme Court sentenced to 7 years in prison the members of the National Council of Herri Batasuna, and on 14 July, 1998, Judge Baltasar Garzón ordered the cautionary closure of the *Egin* newspaper and the *Egin Irratia* radio station. Eleven years later the Supreme Court declared this closure as illicit.

In December, 2000, the PP and the PSOE signed the Agreement for Freedom, also known as the anti-terrorism pact, which conditioned the inclusion of the PNV and EA to the ending of the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement. This agreement made possible the reform of the Political Parties Law, which outlawed the Abertzale Left.

In 2001 the Abertzale Left began to adopt new names in order to avoid the legal action enforced by the new Political Parties Law. Herri Batasuna disappeared from the political scene and became Batasuna; but in 2002 judge Baltasar Garzón charged the leaders of the new organisation with the crime of belonging to an armed group and issued a detention warrant against 18 of them.

The siege against the Abertzale Left was so intense that in February, 2003, Judge Juan del Olmo ordered the temporary closure of the Basque Country's *Egunkaria* news paper because, according to him, it supported ETA's armed activity. *Egunkaria's* directives were detained by police, which was later accused of torture. Seven years later, in April 2010, the first section of the Criminal Division of the Spanish National Court declared the closure of *Egunkaria* as unconstitutional.

ETA's threats and attacks against politicians and journalists acted as catalysts and started a journalistic transformation that culminated on 13 July, 1997, when ETA killed Miguel Angel Blanco, the Councillor of the PP in the community of Ermua. Arcadi Espada (2002) explains the new information policy adopted after this assassination: "Up until the death of Miguel Ángel Blanco... terrorism and its victims had been minimised, and the murderers had been mythic zed actively and passively. And I am not lying at all. This is the result of an analysis of the newspapers published at that time".

The media vindicate the unity of the democratic forces and function as an instrument in the fight against terrorism. The consensus the press lacked for many years in the reporting of ETA attacks finally became materialised.

Authors like Idoyaga and Ramírez-de-la-Piscina (2000, 273) speak of the active role of the media against terrorism from 1998 (a year included in our research) to 2000: “Cayetano González Hermosilla, head of communications of the Ministry of the Interior has recently highlighted the «maturity» demonstrated by the media across the country to deal with the so-called ‘problem of terrorism’ and has simultaneously stressed the need to banish the idea of journalistic neutrality when dealing with these issues”.

Margarita Robles, Member of the General Council of the Judiciary, stresses the importance of the media in this new stage: “And it is due to the media’s importance that all political powers in all countries and at all times have had a special interest in controlling the media or establishing wonderful relationships with them” (Several Authors, 2000, 27).

At the end of the 1990s the media acknowledge that they can and should play an essential role in the fight against terrorism and that the reporting of their actions does not have to be neutral and that it can become an effective instrument to fight terrorism.

### **3. Method**

The study of newspaper editorials is crucial to reveal the media’s information policy. Editorials are unsigned texts, written by qualified experts or by groups of editorialists, who express the point of view of each medium and not of a particular journalist. The guidelines that we find in these texts are therefore extremely valuable, much more than those in any other type of text, to detect the thematic strategy of the media towards certain subjects.

This research focuses on analysing the editorials published by the Basque press in 1990, 2000 and 2008-2009, when ETA carried out fatal attacks. This study aims to identify the information policy of the different newspapers and to establish coincidences and differences. The final objective is to draw conclusions that can contribute to revealing, what Sanchez-Duarte and Sampedro (2011: 189) call, “the political-media guidelines of each epoch”.

The method used to carry out this research was content analysis. For this analysis we ventured into the field of discourse theory, analysed all the editorials published after ETA carried out fatal attacks on the selected years, and classified the various themes that were addressed by the press and that ultimately defined the guidelines for the study of these texts.

We deconstructed the discourse of the editorials in order to detect the position of each newspaper towards ETA's violence. Through this procedure we established the following thematic framings as objects of study:

1. Depiction of ETA
2. The political conflict
3. Parties involved in the conflict:
  - a. Central government
  - b. Basque Government-Lehendakari
  - c. Abertzale Left
4. Democratic nationalism
  - a. Nationalism and non-nationalism
5. Lizarra-Garazi Agreement
6. PP-PSOE Agreement
7. Solutions
  - a. Use of dialogue
  - b. Unity of democrats
  - c. Police and judicial methods
  - d. To defeat ETA

For the transcription of the editorials we used the method implemented by José-Manuel Jarque in his research entitled “Inmigració i premsa: editorials i informació”, which was directed by Xabier Giró. These two researchers are members of the Conflict Communication Observatory of the Autonomous University of Barcelona. This method has also been implemented by Iker Merodio-Urbaneja, in his international doctoral thesis entitled: *Análisis de editoriales e informaciones sobre el Plan Ibarretxe en la prensa generalista española de 2001 a 2006* (Analysis of editorials and news about the Ibarretxe Plan in the Spanish mainstream press from 2001 to 2006).

The study of the Basque conflict published by Petxo Idoiaga and Txema Ramirez-de-la-Piscina in 2002 –*Al filo de la (in)comunicación* (“On the edge of (the lack of) communication”)– has also been very useful for this research due to its thematic proximity. Another key instrument in this research is Teun Van-Dijk's scientific explanation of discourse analysis as research method (1996).

For the scientific study and analysis of the editorials as texts closely linked with the configuration of the public opinion we must necessarily return to the work of Maxwell McCombs and Shaw (1972), which was later developed by McCombs in *Setting the agenda. The mass media and public opinion* (2004). This last work established the first connections between the agenda setting, which is perfectly summarised in the

following phrase: “The mass media tell us not only what to think about, but also how to think about it” (McCombs, 2004). This book also introduced the theory of framing, regarded as an effect derived from the agenda setting, where the discursive forms through which the media present their agendas configure what we call framings.

According to these theories, the media choose the themes they will present to their audiences and thus determine what issues people will think about and the way people will think about those issues; i.e., the media set the agenda. However, in order for those issues to convincingly reach the public the media selects certain expressive forms, i.e. framings that exponentially multiply their effectiveness.

We will not review here the numerous authors that have made contributions to the theory of framing from different disciplines and points of view. However, we want to address two aspects that complement this theory and that have been important for the method used in our research.

The first aspect is the study of the relation of framings to their socio-political context, which Iker Merodio (2010: 57) calls the “framing effect”. This author quotes Casetti and Di-Chio (1999: 294), who affirm that “the text contributes, in turn, to the definition of the historical, geographical, social and cultural context that surrounds it. Everything that the text says and the way it says it restructure the surrounding reality, at least for the common perception”.

The second aspect, also mentioned by Iker Merodio (2010: 58), is priming, which was developed by Hwang, Gottlieb, Nah and McLeod. Priming is defined as the existence of a number of personal factors that condition people’s perception of the importance of the issues (interpersonal discussion, reflection, previous political knowledge, etc.).

The theoretical relevance of framing in the development of this research is evident. The media, through the publication or otherwise of editorials about the attacks of ETA during 1990, 2000 and 2008-2009 configure an important part of their agenda to influence, in this case, what the public should think about this important issue.

The analysis also identified the presence of “suitcase words”, which according to Michel Collon (2002: 90) are words to which “people give whatever meaning they want (...) and the media do not refute”. According to Iker Merodio, these words are as suitcases that “are loaded with content during a process and at the end of this process these words are transformed into fortresses that must be knocked down or defended (2010: 62)”.

The presence of these words offers the possibility of stripping them off of their original contents and giving them underlying negative connotations to create misinformation. In this way, as Fraguas-de-Pablo (1985: 88) explains, “the word, with its broad content, is the enemy (...), the fortress-word will fall and will become a caricature against which feelings can be easily directed”.

#### 4. Analysis of editorials

The main objective of this research is to analyse the content of the editorials, the themes or framings they used to transmit their points of view to the public about ETA killings. To achieve this objective we analysed the most recurrent themes, which were identified in the deconstruction of the editorials ‘discourses.

##### 4.1. Depiction of ETA:

In 1990 *El Correo* does not have a uniform information policy to describe ETA activists. Thus, to describe ETA this newspaper alternates negative adjectives– “dirigentes de la banda terrorista” (“leaders of the terrorist group”) (09-12-1990)- with ironic not disapproving descriptions – “los particulares demócratas que prefieren el amonal y la metralleta... matando a dos jóvenes” (“Democrats who prefer the ammonal and machine gun... kill two young boys”) (03-09-1990).

*El País* always presents negative connotations. It describes ETA as a “banda” (“gang”) and refers to its attacks as “terrorismo etarra” (“ETA terrorism”).

*Egin* always puts ETA in a positive light and does not even hesitate to praise it: “Euskadi Ta Askatasuna... su humildad y capacidad autocrítica para reconocer sus errores y su rechazo al recurso de la mentira como arma” (“Euskadi Ta Askatasuna... its humility and self-criticalability to recognise its mistakes and its refusal to use lies as a weapon”) (19-03-1990).

From 2000 onwards both *El País* and *El Correo* do not hesitate to use all kinds of derogatory adjectives to describe ETA’s attacks and militants. *El Correo* uses expressions like: “cobarde crueldad” (“coward cruelty”) (05-06-2000); “los matarifes de ETA” (“ETA’s assassins”) (11-23-2000); “la inquina etarra” (“ETA’s hate”) (4-12-2008). *El País* also uses negative adjectives and refers to ETA as: “la organización del fascismo vasco” (“the organisation of the Basque fascism”) (07-16-2000); “el frenesí criminal en el que está embarcado la banda terrorista” (“the criminal frenzy embarked by the terrorist group”) (30-07-2000); and “crimen terrorista” (“terrorist crime”) (08-03-2008).

In contrast, *Egin* avoids using derogatory adjectives and weird euphemisms linked to politics: “la irrupción de nuevo del accionar armado de ETA en el escenario político” (“the new invasion of ETA’s armed actions in the political arena”) (22-01-2000). However, this paper does not hesitate to refer to the government’s violence with blunt terms: “Determinadas acciones de terrorismo de Estado” (“certain terrorist acts by the state”) (22-01-2000).

*Deia*’s position is halfway between that of *El Correo* and *El País*, on the one hand, and that of *Egin*, on the other. *Deia*, thus, alternates harsh and soft adjectives to refer to ETA: “la escalada de terror iniciada por ETA” (“the escalation of terror initiated by ETA”) (10-08-2000) and “El problema estriba en el empeño de la organización en arrogarse” (“The problem lies in the commitment of the organisation in claiming rights that do not belong to them”) (31-10-2000).

#### 4.2. Political conflict

In 1990 the possibility that a political conflict could be motivating ETA’s armed activity is not part of the editorial agenda of the press. In contrast, in the year 2000 this issue is constantly included in the agenda of *El Correo* and *El País*, and more intensely in the agenda of *Egin*. In its arguments against ETA’s armed activities, *Deia* never mentions the existence of a political dispute.

*El Correo* and *El País* refer to this existence of this conflict exceptionally in 2000. *El Correo* only points out that to suggest that a political conflict is motivating ETA’s attacks is insulting: “Resulta insultante proseguir la discusión sobre el origen y las causas de la violencia” (“It is insulting to continue the discussion on the origins and causes of violence”) (31-10-2000). Meanwhile, *El País* refers to this existence of this political conflict to point out that it does not justify the use of arms: “Conflictos políticos los hay en todas partes; la cuestión es si el existente en Euskadi es de tal naturaleza que justifique el recurso a la violencia” (“There are political conflicts everywhere; the question is whether the nature of the one in the Basque Country justifies the use of violence”) (30-08-2000).

*Egin* is the most interested in linking ETA attacks to the existence of an unresolved political conflict between the Spanish State and Euskal Herria. In 2000, *Egin* says that this political conflict is the cause and driving force of the armed struggle. In 2009 *Egin* reiterates that argument and criticises the Basque Government, which was led by the PSE since May 2009: “... Pero no pueden negar la realidad... El atentado, igual que el resto de expresiones violentas, evidencia la necesidad de buscar una resolución del conflicto político en parámetros de diálogo, acuerdo, respeto, democracia, justicia y paz” (“... But they cannot deny the reality... The attack, like the

rest of the violent expressions, demonstrates the need to seek a solution to the political conflict through dialogue, agreement, respect, democracy, justice and peace”) (19-06-2009).

### **4.3. Parties involved in the conflict**

#### **4.3.1. Central government**

In its editorials, *El Correo* never refers to the governments of Felipe González, Aznar or Rodríguez Zapatero. *El País* seems a little more critical, but only when the central government is in the hands of the PP and only when the government aims, in its own words, to use the fight against ETA for political purposes: “...Aznar no puede pretender que la oposición respalde, junto a la actuación antiterrorista del Gobierno, la política vasca del PP; sobre todo cuando la ha convertido en el eje de su política electoral en toda España, e incluso de su política internacional” (“... Aznar cannot expect that the opposition will support, together with the anti-terrorist actions of the government, the Basque policy of the PP; especially when he has turned this policy into the central idea of his election policy across Spain, and even of his international policy”) (23-11-2000).

*Deia*, once again, examines both sides and addresses the inability of the central government as well as the responsibility of ETA: “... ETA es la única responsable del múltiple asesinato y Aznar no puede repartir culpas donde no las hay para disimular su incapacidad de abordar un serio problema de Estado” (“... Only ETA is responsible for the multiple murders and Aznar should not blame innocents in an attempt to disguise his inability to deal with a serious governmental problem”) (31-10-2000).

*Egin* is the most critical newspapers towards the central government and accuses it of engaging in a revengeful policy (10-10-2000), which fails to offer peace agreements to ETA: “... la estrategia del PP... se ha demostrado absolutamente inútil, salvo para provocar más sufrimiento. Su única oferta se limita a esperar una nueva acción judicial o policial que sirva de cortina de humo a su estrepitoso fracaso, ante una opinión pública cada vez más domesticada” (... the strategy of the PP... has proven to be absolutely useless, except to cause more suffering. Its only strategy is to expect a new judicial or police action that serves as smokescreen to its resounding failure, to the eyes of an increasingly domesticated public opinion”) (23-10-2000).

### 4.3.2. Basque Government-Lehendakari

Nor the Basque Government or its Lehendakari are part of the editorial agenda of the newspapers analysed in 1990. Here it is important to note that the Ajuria-Enea Pact was in force since January 1988 and throughout 1990.

In 2000 *El País* and *El Correo* change their editorial policy. Here it is important to note that since 1999 the executive power of the Basque Government is formed by a coalition between the PNV and EA, with external support from Euskal Herritarrok (EH, “Basque Citizens”), and that the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement is already in force since September, 1998, when it was signed.

For *El Correo*, the policy of the Basque Government and the Lehendakari Juan José Ibarretxe has led the Basque Country to a political and leadership crisis (21-12-2000); and demands the interruption of the parliamentary agreements with Euskal Herritarrok because “without the prior condemnation of violence, this coalition is not qualified to sit around a peace table with other political parties” (22-01-2000). Thus, this newspaper proposes that early elections are the solution: “El lehendakari Ibarretxe no puede seguir haciendo caso omiso a cuantos le demandan o recomiendan que, sin demora, convoque a la ciudadanía a las urnas” (“Lehendakari Ibarretxe cannot continue ignoring the people who is demanding or recommending him to call citizens to vote as soon as possible”) (22-09-2000).

*El País* continues to make constant references to the need to end the parliamentary agreements with the Euskal Herritarrok (05-06-2000); claims that early elections are the solution (23-11-2000); and demands a new government: “... Ayer mismo decía el lehendakari que no había alternativa al actual Gobierno PNV-EA. Hay varias, desde un Gobierno de concentración de todas las fuerzas democráticas –a la manera del Consejo General de fines de los setenta- hasta uno de diferente signo salido de unas elecciones anticipadas” (“Just yesterday the lehendakari said that there was no alternative to the current PNV-EA Government. There are several alternatives, from a Government that concentrates all the democratic forces –similar to the General Council of the late 1970s- to a government led by a different party designated in early elections” (05-06-2000).

*Deia* and *Eginn* ever use the policy of Ibarretxe’s government as part of their editorial arguments, in order to achieve the opposite effect: to prevent the weakening of the lehendakari as head of the government.

In 2008 *El Correo*, *El País* and *Egin* directly criticise the Basque government, still led by Ibarretxe. However, when Patxi López takes the presidential office (the Basque

Presidency) the references to the Basque government disappear. *Deia* never mentions the Basque government in its editorials, nor before or after Lopez.

### 4.3.3. Abertzale Left

Unlike the rest of the analysed newspapers, in its editorials, *Egin* never refers directly to the Abertzale Left and its possible links with ETA.

*El Correo* mentions the Abertzale Left once in 1990 to affirm that ETA's attacks must act as a catalyst to join efforts against those that support those attacks with their silence (03-09-1990).

*El País* criticises the Abertzale Left in 1990 and 2000 and rejects its alleged words of peace because ETA keeps carrying out attacks: "... el mismo día que algunos dirigentes de Herri Batasuna volvían a ahuecar la voz para alardear de su deseo sincero de paz... manos anónimas realizaban el gesto banal de depositar en un buzón... sobres destinados a asesinar o mutilar a seres humanos" (... the same day that some leaders of Herri Batasuna deepened their voice once again to brag about their sincere desires for peace... anonymous hands performed the banal gesture of depositing into a mailbox... envelopes intended to kill or mutilate human beings" (01-03-1990).

Of the analysed newspapers, *Deia* showed the highest degree of interest in talking about the Abertzale Left. It does so to point out that the militants of the Abertzale Left are distancing themselves from the organisation after ETA's attacks (22-01-2000), and also to demand the Abertzale Left a clear and convincing statement against ETA (31-10-2000), and finally, to ask the Abertzale Left to dissociate itself from ETA and to start a political strategy that is autonomous and independent from "guns and bombs" (14-05-2008).

### 4.4. Democratic nationalism

*El Correo* and *El País* use the term "democratic nationalism" to refer directly to the Basque Nationalist Party. In doing so, these newspapers turn the term "democratic nationalism" into a suitcase word that is filled with negative connotations that make non-nationalists look good. Nationalists become intolerant, sectarian and extremists; while non-nationalists are associated with such virtues as democracy, pluralism and the defence of freedom.

All the references to the democratic nationalism appear in the editorials from 2000 and once again this circumstance is related to the presence of a Basque executive power maintained with the support of the Abertzale Left and the existence of the Lizarraga Agreement.

*El Correo* does not hesitate to give the term “nationalism” all the possible negative connotations. While non-nationalists are depicted as tolerant, respectful of plurality and protective of freedom, nationalists are described as intolerant (22-01-2000), and their relations with the “abertzale extremism” are blamed for the absence of peace. This is intended to force the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) to distance itself from the extremists and to form an alliance with the non-nationalists (02-23-2000). The rupture of relations with the Abertzale Left is essential to mend the road to peace (10-23-2000).

*El País* also criticises the “democratic nationalism” for posing political vindications that, according to this newspaper, are nothing more than concessions to ETA (22-01-2000). This newspaper accuses the democratic nationalism of balancing the fight against ETA and the agreements with the Abertzale Left, which is impossible to advance towards peace (16-7-2000); calls for the interruption of any pact or agreement with the “non-democratic nationalism” (22-01-2000) and for the return to the “unification of positions with democrats” (30-07-2000).

Curiously, in 2008 and 2009 there are no references to the democratic nationalism in *El Correo* or *El País*. In their editorials, *Egin* and *Deia* never refer to the term “democratic nationalism”.

#### **4.4.1. Nationalism and non-nationalism**

Neither *Deia* nor *Egin* ever referred in their editorials to the social division between nationalists and non-nationalists, which was an important theme in *El Correo* and *El País*.

*El Correo* attributed the division of the Basque society into nationalists and non-nationalists to the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement (21-08-2000); blamed the PNV of the separation between “nationalists and non-nationalists”, and calls for the rebellion of democrats against fanaticism (15-12-2000).

For *El País* the reason why nationalists maintain their pact with the Abertzale Left, despite the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement was ended and ETA went back to carrying out attacks, is that they do not feel threatened directly, because the attacks are suffered by the non-nationalists (23-02-2000). *El País* also claims that this is a perverse attitude because nationalists are to blame for the rupture of the agreements with ETA, but the consequences will be paid by non-nationalists (23-11-2000).

#### **4.5. Lizarra-Garazi Agreement**

All the analysed newspapers mentioned the Lizarra-Garazi Agreements, signed on 12 September, 1998, but from very different perspectives. Here it is important to note that on 3 December, 1999, ETA announced that it was ending the truce that it had maintained for 14 months, since the agreement was signed, and that on 21 January, 2000, ETA committed the first post Lizarra-Garazi-Agreement attack: the killing of soldier Pedro Antonio Blanco Garcia in Madrid.

*Deia* criticised this new attack and argues that it “serves as ammunition to the centralists who have opposed the signing of the agreement from the beginning”(22-01-2000).

*Egin* describes the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement as a positive experience and argues that keeping this line of action is effective to achieve peace in the Basque Country: “El acuerdo de Lizarra-Garazi es, hoy por hoy, la piedra angular en la que puede acuñarse el futuro de paz de Euskal Herria. Vale más trabajar por conseguirlo que esperar a que se produzca el siguiente atentado” (“The Lizarra-Garazi Agreement, today, the cornerstone on which the peaceful future of Euskal Herria can be written. It is better to try to achieve it than to wait for the next attack to occur”) (08-05-2000).

In its editorials, *El Correo* also makes references to the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement but only to show that there are no reasons to justify the agreements between democratic parties and the organisations that exculpate ETA (17-07-2000). The editorials of this newspaper also propose that an alternative to achieve peace is the withdrawal of the PNV from earlier agreements and the search for transversal pacts (18-08-2000).

*El País* points out that with the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement and the consequent truce from ETA the democratic nationalism bowed to the demands of the violent nationalism (23-02-2000). *El País* also considers that agreements such as the Lizarra-Garazi legitimise ETA and that the division between democrats contributes to the survival of violence (23-11-2000).

#### **4.6. PP-PSOE Agreement**

On 12 December, 2000, the PP (Popular Party) and the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) signed the “Agreement for Freedom and against Terrorism” (known as the Pact against Terrorism). The PNV argues that hidden under this agreement is a frontal attack against the demands of its party to find a definitive solution to ETA's armed struggle.

*Deia*'s editorials doubt about the effectiveness of the two-party agreement to find solutions to the armed struggle (15-12-2000); vindicates agreements between all political forces without exceptions, including the Abertzale Left as an effective way to

find solutions (15-12-2000); and considers that the two main political forces in Spain condition peace to the defence of the one-state idea (21-12-2000).

*Egin* does not make direct references to the Agreement for Freedom, but considers that it seeks to put pressure on the PNV to join the agreement and to isolate an important sector of the Basque society in doing so (05-06-2000).

*El Correo* defends the PP-PSOE Agreement but also accuses the ruling nationalism of acting as a firewall between the 'democratic society' and the society subjected to terror (15-12-2000).

*El País* also defends the PP-PSOE agreement and denies that this agreement requires the PNV to renounce to its vindications, but considers its pretensions are impositions (22-09-2000).

## 4.7. Solutions

### 4.7.1. Use of dialogue

Dialogue is another suitcase word used by the press to refer to the violence of ETA in the editorial pages. Everyone talks about dialogue, but everybody interprets it in different ways, each person with previous conditions. Dialogue, thus, becomes a term that can be used for everything and seems to unmask those who do not support it.

In 1990 *Egin*, *El Correo* and *El País*, with their clear divergences, do not close the doors to dialogue as an instrument for achieving peace. *El Correo* calls for determination and rejects the use of dialogue before ETA takes definitive steps to abandon violence (09-12-1990), but recognises that it is the responsibility of the government to explore all the paths that could lead to the end of ETA, without rejecting negotiation (09-12-1990).

*El País*, for its part, considers that it is not acceptable to call for negotiations and at the same time to fill mailboxes with explosive cards (01-03-1990), but also openly acknowledges that peace or reconciliation in the Basque Country are not possible without negotiations with ETA (01-03-1990).

*Egin*'s dialogue strategy is much more accurate and detailed than that of the other newspapers. *Egin* equates the violence of ETA with the violence of the State and associates dialogue with political conversations (19-03-1990); argues that a negotiation must be based on the acceptance of the eight points agreed upon in Algiers in letter and in spirit (19-03-1990); considers that the initiation of any dialogue must open the doors to a legal and political change (05-03-1990), and demands the

recognition of the territoriality (solution to the problem of Nafarroa) and the right to self-determination (05-03-1990).

In 2000 all newspapers change their editorial line to support dialogue as an instrument to achieve peace in the Basque Country. *Deia* begins to use this argument in its editorial agenda and argues that any solution to the conflict requires negotiation and dialogue without exclusion, provided the right to life is guaranteed and political discrepancy is heard and respected (08-05-2000).

*Egin* lowers and dilutes the demands it made ten years earlier for the search of dialogue and calls for a negotiation that takes everybody into account, with no absences, and also seeks political solutions (23-11-2000), although it does not specify what kind of solutions.

Both *El Correo* and *El País* consider that any solution of dialogue between the different Basque political parties requires as a precondition the disappearance of ETA, the transversal agreements and the forceful application of the civil law against ETA.

#### **4.7.2. Unity of democrats**

In 1990 the analysed newspapers do not vindicate the importance of the unity of democrats to face the terrorism of ETA. This a recurring theme from 2000 onwards, mainly for *El Correo* and *El País* which end up turning it in to another suitcase word.

The agreements between the PP and PSOE are identified as the “unity of democrats”, so that everyone who does not support their agreements is antidemocrat.

*El Correo* calls for the unity of democrats, but complains that the PNV is placing unity before any vindication (05-06-2000); and blames the “democratic nationalists” for the lack of consensus and transversal political unions (31-10-2000).

*El País* also calls for the unity of democrats as necessary to combat terrorism and yearns for the Ajuria-Enea Pact (21-08-2000); but, like *El Correo*, blames the Basque Government and the lehendakari, and by extension, the PNV for the absence of strategies of democratic unity (30-08-2000).

In all the analysed editorials, *Egin* and *Deia* address the unity of democrats only once after 2008. *Deia* does so to highlight its importance to delegitimize terrorism (31-07-2009); while *Egin* does so to produce the opposite effect and to ratify that the discourses of unity against ETA have completely failed in the past (15-05-2008).

### 4.7.3. Police methods

In 1990 *Egin* is the newspaper that refers the most to police measures in its editorials; it considers that those who simply expect ETA to surrender are irresponsible (09-04-1990) and criticises the police for its practice of torture and vigilantism (02-07-1990).

*El País* never uses this argument, while *El Correo* only does so in one occasion to call for the provision of more and better resources to the security forces.

However, in 2000 all the analysed newspapers make references to the use of police forces to solve the Basque conflict. *Deia* highlights the ineffectiveness of the purely police methods and calls for smart policies (30-07-2000); while *Egin* is always firm to reject the use of police force as a form solution (30-07-2000).

For its part, *El País* and *El Correo* highlight the importance of the police and judicial intervention in the fight against terrorism. This argument is also included in their editorials from 2008-2009. *El Correo* emphasises that the security forces, by themselves, are a crucial instrument in the process of peace (30-07-2000). Ten years later *El Correo* goes further and defends the adoption of seamless unity to face terrorism as well as asks for support, without political trade-offs, to the police activity as an instrument for the defeat of ETA (19-06-2009).

*El País* argues that the *Ertzantza* (the autonomous police of the Basque Country) has not complied with its responsibility to prosecute ETA (23-10-2000); and demands political organisations to fully support the judicial and police activity (23-09-2008).

### 4.7.4. To defeat ETA

In none of the years analysed the Basque press made reference to the full defeat of ETA. In 2008 and 2009, *El Correo* argues that if society wants to defeat ETA definitely, it is necessary to undertake a journey that requires the application of the weight of the law, the rejection of political trade-offs, and the participation of the Basque society (15-05-2008).

For the first time this newspaper speaks of the definitive defeat of ETA and affirms that if ETA militants still continue carrying out attacks it is because they have not yet understood that the only thing society expects from them is their unconditional surrender (19-06-2009).

## 5. Results

### a. *Deia*

This newspaper does not normally publish editorials in 1990. It published only one editorial after the bombings of ETA, but it was dedicated to Jaruzelsky. In the years 2000 and 2008-2009 the situation changes radically and the ETA attacks are always present in its editorials.

This newspaper alternates derogatory and neutral adjectives to describe ETA's armed activity.

Although this paper acknowledges that a political conflict underlies the armed struggle of ETA, this argument is never used in its editorials.

This paper considers that the armed struggle is the sole responsibility of ETA, but, once again, examines both sides and recognises that the central government is partly responsible for the conflict. In its editorial arguments, this newspaper never mentions the Basque Government or its lehendakari, to avoid his political wearing-down.

This newspaper shows the highest degree of interest in talking about the Abertzale Left and never uses the term “democratic nationalism” nor refers to the possible social division between nationalists and non-nationalists.

For this newspaper, the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement was an “inspiring path taken by the Abertzale forces to achieve a new political and legal framework exclusively through peaceful and democratic methods”.

*Deia* doubts the effectiveness of the Agreement for Freedom; vindicates the agreements between all political forces without exclusions, including the Abertzale Left; and considers that the two major Spanish political forces condition peace to the defence of the one-state idea.

According to this paper, any solution to the conflict involves negotiation and dialogue without exclusion; provided the right to life is guaranteed and political disagreement is heard and respected.

*Deia* mentions the importance of the unity of democrats only once in 2009, and considers that this unity is essential to delegitimize terrorism.

This paper highlights that the history of the Basque conflict has demonstrated the ineffectiveness of just using police methods and calls for smart policies.

**b. *Egin***

In 1990 this paper does not publish editorials in a regular basis, but it does publish an opinion page on Mondays, about the current political situation, including the attacks by ETA. In 2008 and 2009 this is the only newspaper that does not publish editorials whenever fatal attacks are carried out, but it does increase the editorial references to ETA in comparison to 2000.

*Egin* always puts ETA in a positive light, never discredits it and does not hesitate to praise it. It regularly describes ETA as “la organización armada vasca” (“the Basque armed organisation”).

This paper is the most interested in contextualising the attacks by ETA with the existence of an unresolved political conflict between the Spanish State and Euskal Herria. It considers that this is the cause and driving force of the armed struggle and refers to the attacks by ETA as a “confrontation”.

*Egin* is also the most critical newspaper towards the central government. *Egin* accuses the central government of engaging in a policy of revenge against a group of people who demands democratic rights. It anticipates the failure of any strategy that fails to offer peace agreements to ETA.

Like *Deia*, *Egin* never mentions Ibarretxe’s government, the democratic nationalism, or the possible social division between nationalists and non-nationalists in its arguments.

*Egin* describes the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement as a positive experience and argues that keeping this line of action is effective to achieve peace in the Basque Country.

For this newspaper, the PP and the PSOE defend constitutionalism against any claim that expands the political legal framework, and predicts that any agreement of this type will be a failure.

In 1990 *Egin* designs a precise and detailed dialogue strategy: it equates the violence of ETA with that of the State; rejects the demand for clear unilateral actions and advocates for the acceptance of the eight points agreed upon in Algiers in letter and spirit; considers that dialogue will open the doors to a legal political change that will serve to the normalisation of Euskal Herria; and demands the recognition of the territoriality and self-government of the Basque Country. In 2000, it lowers its demands and calls for a negotiation that takes all involved parties into consideration, without absences, and also seeks for political solutions, although these solutions are not specified.

Egin mentions the unity of democrats only once in order to ratify that the discourses of unity against ETA have completely failed in the past.

This paper is always firm to reject the police measures; describes as irresponsible those who opt for waiting for the unconditional surrender of ETA; and criticises the practice of torture and vigilantism of the police.

### **c. *El Correo***

In 1990 *El Correo* maintains a discontinuous editorial line, with presences and absences that do not seem to respond to a specific strategy: It only publishes editorials against ETA' attacks in three occasions. In 2000 and 2008-2009 *El Correo* defined its editorial line and published editorials about ETA every time it carried out fatal attacks.

In 1990, the adjectives used by *El Correo* to describe ETA terrorism are mostly very negative but sometimes they are not so harsh. In 2000 and 2008-2009, the situation changes completely and *El Correo* always describes ETA and its militants with very negative adjectives.

*El Correo* never connects ETA's armed struggle with the political context. In one editorial it points out that suggesting this connection is insulting. It never publishes criticism against the central government.

*El Correo* does not criticise the anti-terrorist policy of the Basque Government until the year 2000, after which it criticises the lack of leadership of the Basque executive power and its lehendakari Juan José Ibarretxe. In 2008 *El Correo* publishes direct references to Ibarretxe's Government, but these references disappear when Patxi López takes the Basque Presidential Office (the *Lehendakaritza*).

*El Correo* only talks about the Abertzale Left on one occasion, to affirm that the attacks must act as a catalyst to combat ETA.

This newspaper does not hesitate to give the term "nationalism" all the possible negative connotations. Against the tolerance, the defence of freedom and respect for plurality of the non-nationalists, *El Correo* highlights the intolerance of the nationalists.

*El Correo* attributes the division of the Basque society into nationalists and non-nationalists to the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement; blames the PNV of this division and argues that nationalists fear they will be mistaken by non-nationalists when it comes to

rebellling against ETA. *El Correo* proposes that an alternative to achieve peace is the withdrawal of the PNV from earlier agreements and the search for transversal pacts.

*El Correo* defends the PP-PSOE agreement and criticises the allusions made by the PNV leaders about the signed agreement which call into question its effectiveness to achieve peace.

In 1990 *El Correo* does not close the doors to dialogue as an instrument for achieving peace, but in 2000 clarifies its stance and considers that the disappearance of ETA must be a precondition for dialogue. In addition, this paper supports an unyielding attitude: “El Estatuto de Autonomía es el único plan de paz posible” (“The Statute of Autonomy is the only possible peace plan”).

*El Correo* associates the PP-PSOE agreements with the unity of democrats and calls for the PNV to place unity before any vindication. This paper blames nationalists for the lack of transversal agreements.

It stresses the importance of the police and judicial intervention in the fight against terrorism. It argues that the security forces, by themselves, are a crucial instrument in the peace process and advocates support, without political trade-offs, for the police activity as an instrument for the defeat of ETA.

It speaks for first time about the unconditional defeat of ETA. It does so in 2009 and affirms that if ETA members still continue with their attacks it is because they have not understood that the only thing that is expected from them is unconditional surrender.

#### **d. *El País***

In 1990 *El País* is the only newspaper with a well-defined editorial policy. However, it addresses ETA’s fatal attacks on only two occasions. In the years 2000 and 2008-2009 the situation changes and *El País* begins to address all fatal attacks by ETA in its editorials.

In 1990 *El País* is the only newspaper that always describes ETA negatively. This strategy is maintained in subsequent years, when a wide range of derogatory adjectives are used.

Only on one occasion *El País* links ETA’s armed struggle with the political context, and it does so to point out that the political context is irrelevant because it does not justify ETA’s violence. *El País* is more critical of the policy of the central

government, but only when the presidency is in the hands of the PP and only when the PP intends to fight ETA.

*El País* constantly mentions the need to end the parliamentary agreements with Euskal Herritarrok, demands early elections and calls for a new Government that can be transversal or totally different. *El País* stops criticising the Basque Government when Patxi López is named the new Lehendakari.

*El País* criticises the Abertzale Left both in 1990 and 2000, always to reject its alleged good words of peace as long as ETA keeps carrying out attacks.

*El País* accuses the “democratic nationalism” of making political demands that “are nothing more than concessions to ETA”; prompts the democratic nationalism to end its agreements with “non-democratic nationalism” and calls for the return of the transversal unity with democrats. Moreover, this newspaper accuses nationalists of the social division, and claims that they are not worried about ETA attacks because these attacks are not directed at them.

*El País* argues that with the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement the democratic nationalism bowed to the demands of the violence and contributed to the division of democrats.

*El País* defended the PP-PSOE agreement and denies that this agreement required the PNV to renounce its claims.

In 1990 *El País* openly acknowledges that reconciliation or peace in the Basque Country is not possible without a negotiation with ETA. However, in 2000 *El País* claims that ETA must put an end to its armed struggle before dialogue can be initiated.

*El País* associates the PP-PSOE agreements with the unity of democrats; blames the Basque Government and its lehendakari for the absence of unified strategies; proclaims the unity of democrats to fight terrorism; and see the Ajuria-Enea Pact as a valid instrument in the fight against ETA.

*El País* affirms that the autonomous police of the Basque Country has not complied with its responsibility to prosecute ETA and demands political organisations to fully support the judicial and police activity.

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Country”), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation ([reference CSO2010-19855](#)). The first phase of this project addresses the media treatment of deaths caused by ETA, gender-based violence, and work-related accidents from 1990 to 2010.

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#### 7. Notes

1. On 7 October, 1983, the Basque Parliament debated the ZEN Plan. The debate can be watched in: <http://www.parlamento.euskadi.net/pdfdocs/publi/2/01/000034-2.pdf>

2. The full text of the Ajuria-Enea Pact is available at: <http://www.filosofia.org/his/h1988ae.htm>

3. The full text of the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement is available at: <http://www.filosofia.org/his/h1998liz.htm>

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