Basque language policy: successful accommodation in the middle of a violent conflict

Dr. Josu Mezo
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha (Toledo)
Instituto Juan March (Madrid)
Josu.Mezo@uclm.es

Paper to be presented at the
ECPR Joint Sessions
Turin, 22 to 27 March 2002
Workshop 5
Political Accommodation in Ethnonationally Diverse Societies:
Normative and Comparative Perspectives
The object of this paper is to analyse how, often obscured by the news about violence, the autonomous community of the Basque Country\(^1\), since its establishment in 1980, was able to deal quite successfully with the potential conflict of language. This was done by adopting a flexible policy, which has allowed, at the same time, to expand the presence of the Basque language in schools and the administration, while showing respect for the interests and rights of parents and civil workers. This way, the policy defused what could have been, and in other contexts is, a strong political conflict.

The paper is divided in three parts. The first part will explain the political situation of the Basque Country in the last 20 years, including some very brief historical information. I will show that, despite the presence of a violent nationalist minority, most political parties, nationalist and non-nationalist alike, were able to cooperate and even share government, up to 1998.

The second part will describe the language policy followed in the Basque Country in the 1980s and 1990s. In the area of education, it was based on the right to choose the language of education, combined with generous aids for Basque-speaking schools. In the area of the administration, it was based on the adaptation of the policy, according to the linguistic characteristics of the area, and the establishment of generous aid for civil workers to improve their knowledge of the language, and thus be able to comply with the new requirements of their positions.

The third part will discuss why such a flexible and gradual policy was established. As I have already mentioned, this policy coincided in time with a period of basic agreements between nationalists and non-nationalists. Was the agreed policy just a derivative of a general framework of agreements? Or was it an autonomous policy area, perhaps contributing to create that more general framework of agreement? My argument will support the latter view. I will show that Basque nationalists recognized that an important part of the population would not be willing to accept a forceful and quick introduction of the Basque language in the educational system and the administration, but would accept a policy based on either individual choice (for education) or adaptation to local situation (for the administration). So, Basque nationalists adopted flexible and gradual policies, even before they formed coalition governments with non-nationalists, and have kept them basically untouched even after those

\(^1\) Euskadi is the Basque name for the Basque Country, and for nationalists it comprises the provinces of Araba (Álava in Spanish), Bizkaia (Biscay, or Vizcaya in Spanish), Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa) and Nafarroa (Navarre, or Navarra) in Spain, and those of Lapurdi (Labourd in French), Nafarroa Behera (Basse Navarre) and Zuberoa (Soule), in France. The autonomous community created in Spain in 1980 covers only the first three. Navarre got its own autonomous regime a few years later. The French Basque “provinces” belong, together with other territories, to the Département des Basses-Pyrénées. For simplicity, and following the dominant convention in Spanish, in this paper I will use the term Basque (as in Basque Government or Basque Parliament) with the meaning of “belonging to the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country” and the expression Basque Country to refer to the Autonomous Community.
general agreements were broken. This leads to a short discussion of the conditions facilitating accommodation of ethnonational conflicts. Is language easier to accommodate than other ethnic markers like, for example, religion? What particular features of the Basque situation facilitated that language became a negotiable issue?

1. The background: history and political context

Before getting into the description of the policies, a few data about the political situation of the Basque Country will be helpful. The Basque Country is a small territory in the North of Spain where, from time immemorial, a native non-Indo-European language, Basque, was spoken. Located at first in peripheral zones, Spanish spread territorially and through social strata for several centuries, with an acceleration of the process in the 18th and specially in the 19th century. Around the mid-19th century most Basques were still probably Basque monolinguals, even if Spanish had already made some important inroads into towns. However, from that moment, economic, cultural, demographic and political forces combined to favour the quick expansion of Spanish, with two particularly important factors contributing to this process. One resulted from the waves of Spanish immigrants that arrived to the Basque Country to work in the mines, shipyards and steel factories that in a few decades transformed the Basque Country from a rural, poor and backward part of Spain into one of its most prosperous, industrialized and urbanized areas (Ruiz Olabuenaga and Blanco 1994; Garmendia et al 1982). The other factor was the universalization of at least some basic formal education, since this was made in Spanish, and therefore acted as an important force for its diffusion.

As a reaction to this wave of Spanish influences (demographic, linguistic, economic, political) around the end of the 19th century the Basque Country witnessed the birth and development of a nationalist political movement that proclaimed the right of the Basques to independence or at least some kind of self-government. The dominant party in this movement was the Basque Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista Vasco, PNV), founded as a conservative, Catholic party, which all along its history suffered from a tension between a “radical” pro-independence wing and a “pragmatist” wing that accepted autonomy within Spain as a satisfactory arrangement. Although the latter usually had the upper hand, the political line of the party was often ambiguous, hesitant, or oscillating. By the 1930s, the PNV had become one of the main parties of the Basque Country, but it was far from

---

2 See, among others, Micheleña et al (1978) and Tejerina (1992) for information about the historical evolution of Basque and Spanish.


4 Hence the title of the most complete history of the party: *The Patriotic Pendulum* (De Pablo et al. 1999 and 2001).
dominant. In the (reasonably free) elections that took place during the 2nd Republic, the voters of the Basque Country split in three segments of a more or less similar size among nationalists, left-wing Spanish parties (especially the Socialists) and right-wing Spanish parties (Fusi 1984).

Basque nationalism was suppressed during Franco’s regime but an important development in those years. A few young leftist nationalist radicals created an armed organization, ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna, or Basque Country and Freedom), which used violence to fight against the Francoist regime, and in favour of an independent and socialist Basque Country. This was at the beginning a very tiny movement, but the few violent acts that they committed were enough to provoke harsh repression from the Spanish government, including hundreds of arrests, maltreatment of prisoners, and periods of suspension of rights for the whole population, thus starting a cycle of action-repression-action that would transform ETA members in popular heroes among many nationalists, and would increase the rejection to the Francoist government among the general population.

When Franco died and Spain adopted a democratic regime, the process in the Basque Country was very much affected by the presence of ETA, which increased its violent actions through the transition period, mostly against the police and armed forces, but also, some times, against non-nationalist politicians, or against businessmen who rejected to pay the “revolutionary tax” (that is, the extortion fee) demanded by ETA. The first free elections for Spanish Congress, in 1977, showed a fragmentation that resembled that of the Second Republic, although it was more skewed towards Nationalism. Nationalist parties obtained 42 per cent of the vote (9 deputies), non-nationalist leftist parties received 36 per cent (7 deputies), and non-nationalist centre and right parties 22 per cent (5 deputies).

The Parliament elected in 1977 voted a new Spanish Constitution, with a wide consensus among centrists, Socialists, Communists, some right-wing deputies and Catalan nationalists. Basque nationalists, however, did not participate in that consensus, and they asked their voters either to abstain or to vote against the Constitution in the referendum of December 1978, when a wide majority of Spaniards supported the Constitution, while in the Basque Country, due to the low turn-out, only 30 per cent of registered voters did so. Shortly afterwards, new elections to the Spanish Congress took place. The nationalists increased their share of the vote to 53 per cent (11 seats), while the non-nationalist left fell to 25 per cent (5 seats), and the non-nationalist right was stable at 22 per cent (5 seats).

The main party of the nationalist bloc was the PNV (28 per cent), followed by Herri Batasuna

---

5 Among the many books and articles published on ETA the most accessible in English are Clark (1984b) and Sullivan (1988).
6 Results of all elections and referenda in the Basque Country can be checked at the web page of the Basque Government: http://www.euskadi.net.
(Popular Union, HB, 15 per cent), a pro-independence coalition linked to the hard-line fraction of ETA, whose deputies rejected to take their seats in the Spanish Congress, and Euskadiko Ezkerra (Basque Left, EE, 8 per cent), connected to another fraction of ETA, but more willing to participate in the regular democratic process. Among the non-nationalists, the main party was the Socialist Party (PSE-PSOE, 19 per cent), in the left, and the governmental Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD, 17 per cent) in the center-right.

The elected representatives of the Basques (minus HB) negotiated with the Spanish government during 1979 an Statute of Autonomy for the Basque Country. The agreed text, supported by the PNV, EE, the PSOE and UCD was put to a referendum in October 1979. Despite the call for abstention of HB, 59 per cent of eligible voters cast their votes, and 90 per cent of those were affirmative. Thus, the Statute of Autonomy was approved by 53 per cent of registered voters. This did not move either ETA or HB to change their minds about the new system of autonomy that was about to be established, and about their fight against the Spanish government. In fact, despite the clear transformation of the Spanish regime into a democracy, and despite two amnesty laws passed in 1976 and 1977 that released almost all ETA prisoners, from 1978 ETA increased dramatically its violent activity (from less than 20 persons killed in 1977 to around 70 in 1978 and more than 80 in 1979). Paradoxically, the year 1980, when the Statute of Autonomy came into force, the Basques elected their first Parliament, and the first democratically elected Basque Government took office, was also the bloodiest year in ETA’s history, with almost a hundred people dead.

The first elections to the Basque Parliament produced a very clear nationalist majority (66 per cent of the votes, and 42 out of 60 seats), although it was divided over the central questions of the use of violence, and the acceptance of the autonomous regime. The PNV (38 per cent, and 25 seats) was the biggest party, followed by HB (16.5 per cent, 11 seats), the Socialists (14 per cent, 9 seats), EE (10 per cent, 6 seats), which by then was clearly committed to peaceful politics, and would soon contribute to the dissolution of the wing of ETA attached to it, UCD (8.5 per cent, 6 seats), the non-nationalist right-wing Alianza Popular (AP, 5 per cent, 2 seats) and the non-nationalist Communist Party (4 per cent, 1 seat). HB refused to participate in Parliament (for not including all Basque territories), which reduced the Parliament in practice to only 49 seats, of which the PNV had exactly the majority.

With less than 40 per cent of the votes, then, the PNV could form a single-party government, headed by Carlos Garaikoetxea, which more often than not passed its projects in Parliament against the opposition of all other parties, even on questions that one would expect to be treated in a more consensual manner (like, for example, the anthem for the autonomous

7 The Association of Victims of Terrorism keeps a record of victims of ETA attacks in their web page http://www.avt.org
community). After a similar victory in 1984, the PNV remained alone in government until 1986, when Carlos Garaikoetxea, who had resigned as president in 1985 following a quarrel with the leaders of the PNV, created his own party, Eusko Alkartasuna (Basque Solidarity, EA), and forced a new election. That election produced a virtual tie between the PNV (24 per cent, 17 seats) and the PSE-PSOE (22 per cent, but 19 seats, thanks to the overrepresentation in the Basque Parliament of the least nationalist, and least populated province of Álava). HB (17.5 per cent and 13 seats) and the new EA (16 per cent, 13 seats) also got good results, while EE improved a little (11 per cent, 6 seats) and the several parties of the non-nationalist centre and right divided their vote and saw their presence very much reduced (8 per cent, 4 seats).

Following that fragmented result, the Basque Country started a period of coalition governments between nationalist and non-nationalist parties, headed by the PNV’s José Antonio Ardanza. Actually, with a brief interruption of nine months in 1991, all Basque governments formed between 1986 and 1998 included the major party of the nationalist and non-nationalist groups, that is the PNV and the PSE-PSOE. At first (1986-1990) the two parties were the only participants in the coalition, that was later expanded to include EE (from 1991 until 1993, when EE dissolved and fused with the PSOE) and EA (1994-1998).

This situation of apparent quasi-consociational agreement between nationalists and non-nationalists must be put in the context of violence action by the radical nationalists. Throughout the whole period ETA and HB continued their opposition to the autonomous regime, that they considered to be fundamentally flawed. ETA killed approximately 480 people (in the Basque Country and other parts of Spain) from 1981 to 1998 and kidnapped 40 persons (usually businessmen, to extort their families, but sometimes other people, for various “political” reasons). HB refused to participate in the Basque Parliament until the early 90s when it started to attend sessions sporadically and then more frequently, although it maintained a confrontational attitude. Out of Parliament, however, HB and other social organisations maintained a frantic schedule, with almost weekly mass activities (demonstrations, festivals, meetings, strikes, riots, and gatherings of all types) in favour of their political campaigns, that were very often connected to the ups and downs of ETA members: a boycott to French products, in the 1980s, when France started to cooperate with Spain to prosecute ETA members who sought refuge in France; support to the families of ETA’s prisoners; demands for “negotiation” between ETA and the Spanish government; demands for the regrouping of ETA prisoners in the jails of the Basque Country, after the Spanish government dispersed them around Spain.8

These activities of HB and ETA were always on the background of the political life of the

---

8 The best reference about HB is Mata (1993).
Basque Parliament and the Basque government, but they did not have a direct impact on it. All the other parties condemned the use of violence and other violations of human rights by ETA and its allies, but they had difficulties agreeing on the best course to bring them to an end. Although the level of agreement has moved up and down over time, one could very briefly summarize the situation as follows. Generally, nationalists are more inclined to believe that, since the origin of violence is political, the solution will also be political, that is, some type of concession or agreement will be necessary to convince ETA to stop. Non-nationalists tend to reject political concessions as a matter of principle (they would imply a reward to violence) and to believe that the best formula to defeat ETA would be a combination of police pressure with a monolithic front that transmitted to ETA the clear message that no concessions will be made to violence.

This latent disagreement was always present in Basque politics in the 1980s and 1990s, although for some time, especially in the late 80s and early 90s, all Basque and Spanish parties seemed to agree on a front to refuse all political dealings with ETA or even HB, support police and judicial fight against them, and promise that, if ETA renounced definitely to violence, the Spanish government might be “generous” (meaning that its prisoners might be treated with benevolence and leave prison early, through paroles or other measures). This fragile unity broke off around the mid 90s. The first disputes turned around the issue of the dispersion of ETA prisoners. The PNV and EA thought the measure was counterproductive, while the PSOE and particularly the Partido Popular (PP, the centre-right heir to the old AP, that had become the main opposition party in Spain, expected to defeat the Socialists soon, and was also on the rise in the Basque Country) supported it. The fracture grew as ETA started to kill members of the PP, while the PNV and EA came closer to HB on the issue and ended up voting together with HB in the Basque Parliament to condemn the policies of the Spanish government (headed since 1996 by the PP), and to promote international action against it, for supposedly violating international human rights agreements.9

This and other agreements of the PNV and EA with HB in the Basque Parliament led to the break, in 1998, of the long period of collaboration between the Socialist party and the PNV. I consider this to be the end of what we could call the “formative period” of the Basque autonomous regime, characterized by a peculiar combination of collaborative politics between nationalists and non-nationalists in Parliament and Government, accompanied by a residual, isolated, but still harmful radical and violent nationalist movement. The language policy that I will analyse in this paper was formulated and implemented during that period. It was started by single-party governments of the PNV, but then it had to be agreed with the PSOE. It forms part, then, of the collaborative side of the Basque situation, but it took place,

9 Chapter 3 of Domínguez Iribarren (1998) contains a useful summary of the story of the behaviour of the Spanish government and the non-violent parties towards ETA.
as I have shown, with the background of serious politically motivated violence.

Since 1998, that spirit of collaboration has broken, and the country has moved, instead, to a very confrontational situation. Shortly after the Socialists left the Basque government, the PNV, EA, HB, the leftist Izquierda Unida (IU, a group of non-nationalist parties, originally promoted by the Communist Party) and several social groups announced the signature of the Lizarra agreement, to promote a solution to the Basque conflict that was inspired in the Irish peace process. Just four days after the agreement was signed ETA announced an indefinite truce (secretly agreed with the PNV and EA beforehand). The PP and the PSOE refused to engage in negotiations based on the pact of Lizarra, since this document demanded that all parts in the conflict should accept the final decision that the Basques would take at the end of the process (thus recognizing their sovereignty or self-determination) and included the Navarre and the Basque-French territories as part of the Basque Country. They also denounced that the truce was not real, since “low-key” violence (like attacks against property, threats and intimidation) continued against the members of both parties.

The elections of 1998 took place in an atmosphere of confrontation between the defendants and opponents of Lizarra. The PP and the PSOE (and UA, Unidad Alavesa, a small populist non-nationalist party that claims to defend the interests of the province of Álava) increased their share of the votes (from 32 to 39 per cent) and their seats (from 28 to 32), but the signers of Lizarra kept a comfortable majority of votes (60 per cent) and seats (43). The new government, headed by Juan José Ibarretxe, was formed only by the PNV and EA, with support in Parliament from EH (Euskal Herritarrok, the new name of HB) and IU. But at the end of 1999 ETA broke the truce and started attacking members of the PP and the PSOE again. The PNV and EA took some time to break its agreements with EH, which led to the final blow to its already very deteriorated relations with the PP and the PSOE. For about a year, the government continued in office, but was unable to pass any measure in Parliament, since the 32 seats of PP-PSOE-UA together outnumbered the 29 seats of PNV-EA-IU.

In 2001 Ibarretxe finally called for elections, in the middle of an extraordinarily tense and bitter political mood. The PP and the PSOE expected to further improve their results of 1998, as they thought that the end of the truce vindicated their claims against Lizarra, and that the PNV’s reluctance to break with EH would be punished by the voters. But the PNV and EA argued successfully that the Lizarra agreement had been an honest attempt to bring peace, and that its failure had been in fact caused by the boycott of the non-nationalists who had rejected a wonderful possibility for dialogue, in peaceful conditions, because they were afraid of the results of that dialogue and preferred the status quo. Turn-out was the biggest ever for Basque elections (79%). PP-UA (they joined lists) and the PSOE increased slightly their share of the vote (to 41%), but kept the same number of seats (32), while the PNV and EA, with joint lists, greatly improved their results, in both votes (43%) and seats (33), thanks in
part to the plummeting results of EH (from 18 to 10%, from 14 to 7 seats). With the additional support of IU, the PNV and EA formed a new government which is currently in office.

ETA continues its attacks, mostly against members of the PP and the PSOE but also against the Basque police, judges, businessmen. The relations between the democratic parties (that is, excluding EH) remain tremendously tense, as they implicitly or explicitly blame each other for not doing enough to end violence, or even contributing to fuel it.

2. Language policy in the Basque Country: a flexible approach

By the time the Basque autonomy started to operate, in 1980, virtually all 2.1 million Basques spoke Spanish, while less than half a million spoke Basque. Basque had been in recession for several centuries, and especially since the mid 19th century Spanish had become socially dominant, and almost the only language in use in all "public" domains, like education, administration, economic activity, entertainment or the media. Speakers of Basque were older than average, lived disproportionately in rural areas or small towns and were relatively scattered. A further difficulty to its use in formal areas was that Basque had traditionally lacked a single written standard, although one had been proposed in the 1960s and was gradually been adopted by most writers and publishers, although with some controversy.

The task ahead for nationalists, when they promised to use their new powers to favour the revival of the language, was formidable, then. The situation of the language was perceived as dramatic, so many Basque nationalists demanded drastic measures of support for the language. The policy that was adopted, however, was a flexible one, based more on incentives (carrot) than on compulsion or punishments (sticks). The next sections will present a typology of possible language policies, based in different combinations of compulsion and incentives, and then I will show how in two important areas (education and public administration), the policies adopted in the Basque Country were rather flexible, based only on limited compulsion and profuse use of incentives. I will also show how, at least in the area of education, the policies can be considered quite successful (in terms of the introduction of Basque in the educational system).

10 The exact figure in the first census that asked that question was 448,156 people, or 21.5 per cent of the population (Gobierno Vasco 1984: 18).


12 Some of the arguments presented in sections 2 and 3 of the paper are summarized from the research made for Mezo (1996), soon to be published as Mezo (forthcoming).
2.1. A typology of policies

For a better description and characterization of the possible strategies I propose a classification of the policies based on two criteria. Taking into account the process of selection of the participants in the specific policy, one can distinguish among policies that are voluntary (if one can choose to participate), selective (if participation is compulsory only for some people or institutions) and universal (if it is compulsory for all). If one looks to the availability of public assistance or help to the participants in the policy in question, one could differentiate among assisted and unassisted policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aid to comply</th>
<th>How participants are selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted</td>
<td>(2) Intensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unassisted</td>
<td>(1) Permissive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. A typology of language policies

Combining these two criteria one can produce a double-entry table (see table 1), where there are six combinations, although I have fused two of them in one. This produces five types of policies, that I will briefly describe taking as an example a policy to favour the teaching of the native language as a subject in the schools. The first type of policy is just a permissive one, that would allow the teaching of the language to any school that wants to do it, without any public help or aid attached to this matter. This is hardly a policy of promotion of the language, but it can be considered as such if its teaching has been forbidden in the past. A more positive approach would be one that not only allows the teaching of the language but also favours it with some type of public help (that is, a policy that is voluntary and assisted). The next step would be a policy that makes the teaching of the language compulsory for some schools (or some students), but accompanies this compulsion with public aid to the schools selected (a selective and assisted policy). I have combined these two possibilities into one type, labelled as intensive policies, as the two concentrate in one part of the population (although specified in a different way) and give it aid or compensations to help achieve the desired goal. The third category (in an ascending order from less to more intervention of the authority on people’s behaviour) would be the one that I have called differential, one that would make the teaching of the language compulsory for some schools, without any aid or compensation attached to it. A fourth type of policy, that I have called compensatory, would be one that makes the teaching of the language compulsory for all schools, but accompanies this measure with some public assistance (like help to recycle teachers, additional staff, new subsidies...). Finally, the harshest intervention on individuals’ liberty would be a policy that establishes that all schools should teach the language, without any help or assistance from the
public authorities. I call these *extensive* policies.

If one excludes the merely permissive policies, which, as I said, can hardly be considered as real policies to promote an activity, intensive and extensive policies would be the basic ideal-types policies, differing in the two criteria used to classify the policies, and situated at the two ends of the scale of governmental intervention. I will argue that most Basque policies have fitted into the intensive category, even if given the multiplicity of programmes and policies adopted, there were exceptions that fitted in almost any of the boxes of the table.

### 2.2. Policies in the area of education

In the first years of autonomous rule on education, there was only one issue where the Basque government adopted a universal policy: Basque had to be taught as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary education. But this obligation was accompanied with assistance, in the form of additional staff, for public centres, or in the form of additional subsidies to hire new teachers, for private centres. This makes the policy compensatory, according to my classification.

But this universal policy was the exception, not the rule. There is one policy in particular that is central to the definition of the global character of educational policies in relation to language: the policy concerning the use of a language as a medium of instruction. And it is central for two reasons: first, because there is quite a wide consensus among educational experts and linguists in that the learning of a language is dramatically improved when it is used as a vehicle of instruction for other subjects; second, because the policy adopted in this question profoundly affects other decisions to be made about language in the educational system, concerning, for example, the training of new teachers, the retraining of the existing ones, or the requirements to be hired as a teacher.

In this critical policy, the Basque Country followed an intensive strategy. Already in 1979, in the period of pre-autonomy, the forerunner of the Basque Department of Education designed a system of language “models”, by which some groups of students would be taught solely in Spanish (with Basque just a subject), some would be taught in both languages, and some would receive all their instruction in Basque (with Spanish taught as a subject) (Ministerio de Educación 1979). After some confusion about it, in 1982-1983 the Basque language law and a decree of the Department of Education clarified that parents and students would be free to choose the language model. Private schools were also free to offer the model that they saw

---

13 Basque was established as a compulsory subject by the Basque Government for all educational levels prior to University in a series of decrees approved between 1981 and 1983 (see the Official Bulletin of the Basque Country, BOPV, 25 June 1981; 1 July 1982, 10 September 1982, 19 July 1983). The full contents of the BOPV are available at http://www.euskadi.net/cgi-bin_k54/bopv_00?/!

fit, while for public schools the introduction of either the bilingual or the Basque-only model would require the explicit petition of the parents. Therefore, for parents and private centres the policy adopted a voluntary character, for public centres a selective one, guided by the will of parents.

As for the assisted-unassisted character, a distinction has to be made among the Basque language schools (ikastolas), other private centres and the public schools. The ikastolas were private centres specialized in the teaching in Basque, founded clandestinely under Francoism, and then tolerated and legalized. They were considered by the Basque government and even before by Basque authorities in the pre-autonomous regime as centres that should receive a specially benign treatment, as a compensation for the hardships they had suffered during their clandestine or semi-legal period, and as a recognition of their very special role in the conservation and diffusion of Basque.\(^\text{15}\) For this reason, already in 1979, the Spanish government followed the requirements of Basque pre-autonomous authorities and approved special financial aid for the ikastolas. This and other subsequent norms approved by the Basque parliament and government allowed the latter to provide the ikastolas with extra funds, under several legal formulas (and sometimes with dubious legal coverage). My calculation is that from 1982 to 1998 the ikastolas received approximately 73,200 million pesetas beyond the 158,500 million they would have received as ordinary private schools (that means an extra subsidy of around 46 per cent).\(^\text{16}\)

Private centres that introduced bilingual or Basque-only models in their classrooms also received some extra funds, again under changing legal formulas. For the period 1986 to 1998 (before that date the aids were very small) I have calculated the additional funds to be around 4,000 million pesetas (about 5.5 per cent over the subsidy of 72,200 million that they would have received if they maintained the Spanish-only model). But this amount is a little bit misleading, for it disguises enormous differences. In the first place, the extra funds were concentrated on the non-compulsory courses. In particular, for infant courses, the extra funds brought an increase of 36 per cent of subsidies. In the second place, the additional funds were enormous at the beginning and were progressively “reduced”, not because funds to these schools diminished, but because the Basque government extended “full” subsidies to non-compulsory levels of private education in all schools. In any case, for ikastolas and private centres, that together comprised about half of the students of primary and secondary education, then, the assisted character of the policy is well established.

\(^\text{15}\) A very clear and illustrative example was the speech of President Garaikoetxea in the debate over the budget of 1982, when he said that any effort to support the ikastolas would be insignificant in comparison to the historical importance of these schools (Session of 25 March 1982, available at http://parlamento.euskadi.net).

\(^\text{16}\) This is my calculation from the review of the yearly budgets and decrees that published the subsidies for each school in those years. Amounts in constant pesetas of 1998.
For public centres, however, assistance did not take such an obvious form. These schools were free for students and their expenses were paid mostly in a centralized manner by the Department. This means that if the government wanted to reward centres that used Basque as a medium of instruction with extra funds, these could not be passed directly to the students as reduced fees, but only indirectly in the form of better equipment, services, or for example, in the form of a reduced students per teacher ratio. There are some disperse indications that in fact this ratio was lower in schools that used Basque as a medium of instruction, but there is no evidence that this was a policy that was pursued in a deliberate and stable manner and there is certainly no general provision of extra services or funds for public schools that taught totally or partially in Basque. However, even if there are no identifiable funds to assist these public schools, the Department of Education not only recognised the right of parents to choose the linguistic model of education in public schools, but also committed itself to guarantee that right, which meant, mainly, to provide the necessary human resources, either through retraining of the existing teachers, for which it allocated a considerable amount of funds, or as a last resource, through the reallocation of teachers according to the linguistic needs of the centres. In different ways, therefore, we can characterize these policies as intensive: voluntary and assisted from the point of view and students, and also private centres and ikastolas; selective and assisted from the point of view of public centres.

The same intensive character appears in most of the policies relative to the teaching profession: the training of new teachers, the requirements to be hired to work as such, and the retraining of those hired previously. There is a logic in this: since the policies oriented to introduce Basque in the schools were mostly intensive, the expectation was that for a long time, if not indefinitely, both languages would be used as a medium of instruction, and therefore, it was sensible to keep a flexible approach to requirements to graduate as a teacher, or to be hired as one.

Actually, the treatment of Basque in training colleges was similar to that of primary and secondary schools. It was a compulsory subject, but it had no special status, and studying in Basque was voluntary. For a few years the schools received special subsidies to help them use Basque as a medium of instruction, although this was soon discontinued.

As for the hiring of new teachers, only those who were going to teach Basque or in Basque were required to proof their capacity with a certificate. In 1993, however, following an agreement between the PNV and the PSOE, new regulation was approved that established that all teaching positions would have a “linguistic profile”, that is, a level of knowledge of Basque considered adequate for the job. Profile 1, enough to use Basque as the “language of

---

17 Determining exactly what jobs would require what qualification was done by the government, without a clear regulation, except for an order in 1986 (BOPV 9 of July) that established the minimum number of teachers with qualifications in Basque for schools that used the partly-Basque model.
relationship” with the students, was the minimum level, and Profile 2 was the level required to teach Basque or in Basque. From then, candidates taking exams to occupy positions for the first time in public schools would need to present their certificate of the corresponding profile (but not new teachers hired by private schools). These policies could then be classified as differential, at first, and then extensive.

In relation to teachers hired previously, the policy was at first also selective, for knowledge of the language was only demanded from teachers who had to teach Basque or in Basque. This started to change after the regulations of 1993, but the change was not drastic. All jobs would have a profile, but not all profiles would be compulsory immediately. For teachers already in the system a complex set of different deadlines was established, with the shortest deadlines for positions requiring profile 2, and the longest for those requiring profile 1. Actually, no deadline was established for jobs requiring profile 1 in schools that taught in Spanish, and teachers over 45 were exempted from complying with deadlines. Deadlines were even more flexible for private education. The policy would be revised in ten years time, but it is still flexible enough to be qualified as selective.

In all cases, before and after the regulations of 1993, the requirements to retrain were accompanied by an ambitious programme of Basque courses that included free summer courses and evening classes during the school year, and full-time courses for periods of up to two years, that teachers could attend by taking a full-pay leave. All in all, then, the policies towards teachers can be included in the intensive box (voluntary or selective, and assisted).

Table 2, that summarizes the policies adopted in the Basque Country in the period of study, shows a variety of policy types. Nevertheless, one can say that the dominant character is the intensive one, for this appears in the most relevant of policies, the one dealing with the introduction of Basque as the vehicle of instruction in both primary and secondary education, and in a few other policies like the language used as a medium of instruction in training colleges (at least during some time) and the policy for the retraining of teachers.

The language policies in the area of education have been a clear success, as the presence of Basque has increased dramatically in the whole educational system. The combination of

---

18 The contents of this agreement was transposed into a Law of Teaching Corps (Law 2/1993, BOPV 25 February 1993) and the Decree 47/1993 (BOPV, 2 April 1993).

19 It could be argued, however, that in practice they were first intensive, and then compensatory, as candidates to be hired as teachers were among the main beneficiaries of an ample system of subsidies for schools of Basque for adults. But as this scheme was open to everyone, it cannot be formally considered as a policy directed towards these candidates.

20 As explained before, the policy towards the hiring of new teachers could be also labelled as intensive, if the aids to take courses of Basque, available to all the population, are considered. There were other minor policies, not discussed in this text, that also fit clearly in the intensive box, especially those referred to the teaching in Basque in the University, and the production of schools books, software and audiovisuals in Basque.
freedom for the parents to choose the language of instruction for their children, and aid for those who chose bilingual or Basque-only models served to raise the percentage of primary school students in bilingual or Basque-only schools from 25 to 71 per cent from 1982-83 to 1997-98. In secondary education (excluding vocational training) the results are more modest, but still remarkable: from 1982-83 to 1997-98 the percentage rose from 9 to 40 percent.\textsuperscript{21}

The use of the language as a medium of instruction is not an end by itself, but an instrument for the transmission of the language, that is widely considered much more effective than the mere teaching of the language as a subject. So in normal conditions, the assumption may be made that more instruction through a language equals more learning of that language. It is important to note that the policies adopted, by using all resources (especially manpower) according to the demand of the parents, could guarantee that where that demand was high, all education might be in Basque, while where the education was low or inexistent the traditional system of education in Spanish was maintained (with Basque taught as a subject). The result was not only that more children studied in Basque, but also that they were geographically concentrated in the areas where Basque was still more widely spoken, increasing the probability that the speakers “produced” by the educational system use the language outside of it and become, in their adult life, frequent speakers.

### 2.3. Policies in the area of administration

I have not made as much detailed research in the area of administration as the one I did in the

---

\textsuperscript{21} Statistics are published yearly by the Eustat (Basque Institute of Statistics). To maintain a meaningful comparison, I use data from courses taken at age 2 to 13, for primary education and 14 to 17, for secondary education, regardless of changes in the denomination or official labelling of the courses that took place during the period.
area of education. However, a brief survey of the main decisions taken is enough to see that
the policies in this area can also be labelled as intensive or carrot policies, since they combine
limited compulsion (they are *selective*) with generous aids (they are *assisted*), especially to
civil servants to achieve the knowledge of Basque required by the regulations.

The *Law of Basque*, approved with the support of the PNV, EE and the PSOE, established
that the administration should become fully bilingual, meaning, among other things, that all
citizens had the right to choose between Spanish and Basque in their relations with all public
administrations (including the system of Justice); that these administrations could never
require citizens to provide translations of the documents presented in any of the official
languages; that citizens had the right to be answered in the language they chose; and that all
regulations and decisions of government at all levels should be published in both languages.²²

All these were responsibilities of the administration as a whole but the law did not clarify
what knowledge of Basque could be asked to civil servants who already worked for the
administration or to candidates who wished to fill posts in the future. This was clarified a few
years later, when a new law (supported by then government partners the PNV and the PSOE)
and a decree of the government,²³ established that all jobs in public administration should
have a “linguistic profile”, or level of knowledge of Basque that the job required (a concept
later used in relation to education, as I showed above), from level 1 (basic knowledge,
enough for a simple conversation) to level 4 (ability to deal in Basque with highly specialized
and technical matters, like legal documents). Each administration (Basque government,
provincial *diputaciones*, local councils) would approve a list of all the positions in the
administration, together with their profiles, that would be established bearing in mind, among
other things, the degree of contact with the public, the network of relationships with other
posts and administrations, and the kind of written tasks that the post required. But not all
profiles would be immediately mandatory.

Only a certain percentage of the posts would have to be filled by persons with the
appropriate linguistic profile, however. That percentage would be different for each
administration, would be revised every five years, and would be related to the percentage of
Basque speakers in its territory, obtained from the census. For the first five years the goal was
that the percentage of civil servants that complied with the linguistic profile should equal the
percentage of Basque speakers in the territory plus half of the percentage of quasi-Basque
speakers (people who declared to have some language of Basque, but not enough to be real
speakers). So, for example, for the Basque government as a whole this set the objective at

---

1989).
roughly 29 per cent (21.5 per cent of Basque speakers plus half of the 14.5 per cent of quasi-speakers), for the Diputación de Álava the goal was less than 9 per cent (3.9 per cent of speakers, 9.5 per cent of quasi-speakers), but for the Diputación of Guipúzcoa it was more than 48 per cent (as 39.5 per cent were speakers, and 18.1 per cent quasi speakers).

Each administration would be free to determine which of the posts in their list should fill the quota during each period, making the profile compulsory for those jobs. Exams to join the public service would include an examination of Basque. If the post had a compulsory profile, the candidates should pass the exam of the corresponding profile in order to be hired. For all other posts, Basque would be considered a merit, whose weight in the exam could vary from 5 to 20 percent of total points.

Public employees who were already working for the administration and saw their post included in the list of those with compulsory profile, had several years to prepare for the exams and proof their proficiency. Most important, the law and the following regulations established that public administrations should help the workers in that situation to achieve the expected profile, by paying for their classes of Basque, allowing them to take classes during working hours or even giving them paid leave for months to study Basque. If after all they were not able to comply with the profile, they could be shifted to other position, but not dismissed. Workers who were more than 45 years old when each five year period started, and new jobs were added to the lists, were exempted from complying with the profiles.

This is clearly an intensive policy: proficiency in Basque was required from only a part of public workers (on average, less than a third) and the requirement was accompanied with considerable aids. As in the area of education, the policy was flexible, adapted to the different realities of the country, and not very conflictive.

3. Explaining language conflict accommodation

Why did the Basque government adopt intensive language policies? How was it possible to follow what is basically an accommodating path in a context such as that of the Basque Country, characterized by the presence of a violent nationalist group that very often attacked the non-nationalists? This section of the paper will try to answer these questions, discarding some plausible answers and offering instead an argument that shows that several factors combined to favour the flexible and accommodating course.

The first argument that can easily be discarded is one that assumes that Basque nationalists were somehow forced to accommodate with non-nationalists on an acceptable language policy simply because they were not completely free to follow the policy they wanted, as the Basque country is only an autonomous region of Spain, and therefore the Spanish government could somehow be seen as the protector of the rights of non-Basque speakers, in case a Basque government attempted a more radical policy. This argument can be dismissed
for several reasons. First, in the years 1980 to 1985, when the PNV governed alone, it showed very often that it was willing to challenge the Spanish government on several matters which it considered vital, like the establishment of a Basque TV (Mezo 1990) or the new autonomous police. Thus, if the Basque government really would have liked to follow a substantially different policy, one can reasonably assume that the opposition from central government alone would have not deterred it from at least trying. Secondly, the position of the Spanish government cannot be assumed necessarily as opposed to an extensive policy. In fact, the policies followed in other Spanish regions, like Catalonia, follow broadly an extensive model, and they have not been challenged seriously by Spanish governments. Both arguments lead me to argue that one must look for internal factors to explain the policy adopted.

It could then be argued that these flexible language policies were just a reflection of a general pattern of consensual politics that were the norm in the Basque Country during the formative period of the autonomous regime. In that case, the causes of the language policies would be those that explain the broader picture of consensus (from 1985 to 1998). As shown above, the period of general consensus between nationalists and non-nationalists can be explained by the political weakness of nationalists. During the formative period of the Basque autonomy, Basque nationalists were a majority, but did not completely dominate the Basque political scene. They were divided, besides, particularly on the use of violence, so a sizeable part of them, who supported the terrorist group ETA were, for practical purposes, excluded from the normal political process. The rest, i.e. the democratic nationalists, were further divided among two or three parties (in different periods). As a result of all this, non-nationalist parties had an important voice in the political process, and when EA split from the PNV, they started to take part in the governmental coalition.

But flexibility and gradualism in language policies preceded the period of quasi-consociational agreements. During Garaikoetxea’s presidency (1980-1985) the PNV was not shy of using its power in Parliament (increased by the absence of HB) to support all kinds of projects, even against the opposition of all other parties. But there was one big exception to this: the Law of Normalization of the Use of Basque, was passed in 1982 with the support of EE and the PSOE, a support that was actively sought by the PNV. Following the approval of the law the government’s decrees and decisions in both the educational and administrative fields clearly established an intensive pattern, well before the PNV split and needed the support of non-nationalist parties to stay in power.

Thus the intensive and flexible pattern of language policy cannot be explained by the broader pattern of political agreements between nationalists and non-nationalists, for the simple reason that this came later. Certainly, during that period of agreements between the PNV and the PSOE, the intensive style of policy was maintained and reinforced, as some of its practices were fixed into laws. But again, after the Lizarra pact of 1998, when the PNV and
EA formed a government with the support of the nationalist radicals, apart from some rhetorical declarations, there was no change to the language policy. The new government, formed in 2001, with the PNV, EA and IU, has not yet had the time to make its full impact felt, but up to now it has not promoted any change in language policies.

A third argument that can be disregarded is the one that considers that Basque nationalists were not really that much interested in the revival of the language as, say, the Catalans are. It is certainly true that language was not perceived as the main differentiating element of the Basques at the foundational moment of the nationalist movement. For Sabino Arana, the founder of the PNV, language maintenance was a part of his political programme, but it was not the core of it, which was focused in the defence of the fueros (local laws), religion and racial purity of the Basques. But Basque nationalism went through several transformations during the 20th century, and some of these were related to what aspects of Basque society were used as symbols or markers of national identity. In particular, the modest role of the language as a sign of identity was progressively reinforced, so that among the competing visions of the nation, the definition that emphasised linguistic and cultural aspects gained ground.

This shift towards a more cultural nationalism had a dramatic origin: the victory in the Spanish Civil War of the Francoist side brought about a non-democratic and nationalist political regime that did not allow any type of manifestation of political opposition, including, of course, any claim about the existence inside Spain of differentiated nations, or the defense for them of any kind of self-government, much less of independence. Basque nationalist leaders fled to exile and all political activity was completely suppressed. Initially even purely cultural and linguistic manifestations were also severely restricted, so that almost all public uses of the language were forbidden, including its use in the schools, publication of books, or its use by the media. Nevertheless, some of these cultural activities went on in a clandestine manner, and later, in the 1960s, they came more and more to the open: journals in Basque were published, a few radio stations started to use the language, Basque-speaking

---

24 To be fair, it is difficult to judge the activity of that government, for after one year in power it lost the majority in Parliament and was unable to advance any important project.

25 This is a more controversial point, since language was secondary to race or religion in Sabino Arana's political discourse; but it was also central to its political and cultural activism. See on this Corcuera (1979), Elorza 1978 (127-138) and Solozabal (1979: 333).

26 I am using here the idea from Brass (1991) that the markers of ethnicity that Nationalist movements use may change over time, for different reasons.


28 Although the exact extent of this repression has been recently put under discussion, and we still lack a thorough and rigorous study of this question, there is little doubt that Francoism actively tried to suppress all but the most folkloric aspects of Basque identity.
singers published their records, and, above all, a vigorous movement of language schools for adults and of solely Basque-speaking infant and primary schools (ikastolas) flourished (Basurto 1989). Meanwhile, all openly political activity remained completely forbidden and was seriously repressed. Thus, for about fifteen years, cultural activity had prominence over the political one, so that cultural nationalism became a kind of substitute or entry way to political nationalism for many Basques. Political nationalism was transformed, and when it was legal again in 1977, it had incorporated the question of the revival of the language to a much more prominent place in its manifestos.  

So, the political leaders that came to power when the new political institutions were created, belonged to the generation that had put language in the most prominent place ever as a component of national identity. The nationalist movement had not transformed, however, into a purely linguistic nationalism, for this would mean to identify native speaker with member of the nation, and would as a consequence exclude the majority of Basques from the nation. But Basque nationalism had fully incorportated the revival of the native language to its project for the future of the country, and so, when Garaikoetxea formed the first Basque government, in 1980, his programme included ambitious projects for the revival of Basque (Gobierno Vasco 1980).

Additionally, one must bear in mind that the moderate nationalists of the PNV were often accused of treason to the true national objective of independence by the more radical HB and ETA (because the autonomous region was obviously still a part of Spain, and also because Navarre and the French territories were not included). In this situation, the revival of the national language appeared as an ideal policy to show to their radical competitors both that they were true nationalists and that they hade made the right choice by accepting the new institutions, even if they fell short of the goal of independence for the whole nation.

So it was neither pressure from Madrid, nor the pacts with the socialists nor lack of interest that moved the Basque government to adopt an intensive policy. What then? I would argue that the (relative) political weakness of nationalists played some part. Certainly one can imagine that if nationalists had been united and commanded a very clear majority in Parliament, they might have opted for a different type of policy. But parliamentary arithmetic apart, there were more important factors that influenced the position of the nationalists. They were derived from the presence of social groups that would oppose too energetic policies in favour of the Basque language (the “distrustful” minority) and also of some other groups that would adhere with enthusiasm to a voluntary policy accompanied by aid (the “mobilized” minority).

Almost a third of the Basques were immigrants from other parts of Spain, and another 20 per

cent of Basques had at least one immigrant parent. As one could expect, immigrants and first-generation Basques were less nationalist than natives, and in particular they were less enthusiastic about the revival of Basque (that barely any of them could speak), and this showed in the electoral behaviour (immigrants voted to nationalist parties much less than natives) or in their scant participation in the movement of ikastolas, among many other signs, that were confirmed by surveys.\(^{30}\) Besides, immigrants had an important political voice, for they constituted around 70 per cent of the voters of the PSOE (if those born in the Basque Country of two immigrant parents are added, the figure is 80 per cent). The participation of immigrants among the voters of right-wing non-nationalist parties, although not so overwhelming, was also high, so these parties also spoke for this social group. In fact, non-nationalist parties, and especially the PSOE, had in crucial moments a decisive role in representing and incorporating to the policy process the worries of a section of the population about the potential “excesses” of the language revival policy.

This “distrustful” minority, then, would reject “extreme” policies establishing universal obligations (one of the characteristics of extensive policies), but it was not against gradual and flexible policies of support for Basque. They shared the general good will of society towards Basque, knew that the language had been suppressed unfairly for decades and understood that Basque speakers or those willing to learn Basque should receive education in Basque and should get attention in Basque in public offices. They were thus willing to agree on intensive policies, and even to participate in them, for example sending their children to classes that were taught partly in Basque.\(^{31}\)

Intensive policies were also possible because there was what I call a “mobilized minority”, with the Basque-speakers themselves at its core. These were a minority (slightly above 20 per cent of the population), but they were gathered in certain areas of the country (most of them lived in areas where Basque-speakers were more than 40 per cent of the population), and their educational and economic characteristics were similar to the average (including the presence of a big middle class). Basque speakers were clearly more nationalist than the average, were very concerned about the language and its survival, and were consequently willing to support


\(^{31}\) Given the situation of violence and intimidation towards non nationalist politicians, some people would argue that this willingness to accommodate of the non nationalists (both politicians and the general population) was not a sincere feeling but the result of fear. However, both surveys (Gobierno Vasco 1983) and anthropological studies (Urla 1987, Heiberg 1989) show that even before the majority of non-nationalists might feel threatened by the violence of ETA, most immigrants had good will towards the language and wanted their children to learn it. The argument of social pressure as an explanation for that good will is also weakened by the fact that the rate of growth of enrolment in schools in Basque has been similar in the three Basque provinces (although starting and ending at different levels), whereas the social and political presence of nationalists, and particularly radical and violent nationalists, is very different.
very strict measures to help it. As voters, then, they could be counted as supporters of extensive policies. But as citizens, Basque speakers were a mobilized minority, that could potentially become the core of the users or clients of an intensive policy. In fact, already during the Francoist period the movement of ikastolas had demonstrated the vitality and the organizational capacity of some segments of this social group. Without any help, and at first with many obstacles, social initiatives had started a system of schools in Basque, first clandestinely, then tolerated and finally legalized, that in the last school year before Franco’s death had 25,000 students. This was a clear indication that there was a social demand for education in Basque that, with the appropriate help, might grow much bigger, serve as a model for private and public schools, and attract new segments of the population to education in Basque.

The presence of both the “distrustful” and the “mobilized” minorities was patent to any observer of Basque society since the very beginning of the autonomous regime, and certainly also to nationalist politicians. Thus, suspicion from the non-nationalists sectors and the population and an active support from Basque speakers and other language supporters led nationalists to drop their “natural” instinct towards extensive policies and design intensive policies that, so to speak, brought as much Basque as was wanted or needed to those that wanted Basque or the areas where Basque was widely spoken, and left alone those who did not want to learn, or the areas where Basque was very scarcely known.

One could add two additional factors that, besides this constellation of social and political forces, contributed to the possibility of an accommodation on language policies. One was the fact that the linguistic, “ethnic” and political cleavages were not completely reinforcing. That is, the division between nationalists and non-nationalists is not coincident with the division between natives and immigrants (although most immigrants vote to non nationalist parties), and even less with the division between Basque speakers and not speakers, as many native Basques, and many nationalists, were not able to speak the language. This reduced the possibility that nationalists would adopt a hard line in favour of Basque, as a good number of their own voters might resent that line. It also reduced the possibility that the policies adopted to favour Basque would be perceived by non speakers and non nationalists as a subterfuge to promote “jobs for the boys”.

Finally, the Basque case can be considered as an illustration of a point that is very often forgotten. As David Laitin (1999) has argued, and despite conventional descriptions of language problems that put them on a par with other ethnic divisions (like race or religion), there are some good reasons to predict that accommodation will be more likely and violent

conflict less so around questions of language. A few of these are quite adequate for the Basque case. First, because a language policy is a complex collection of regulations, programmes and processes, that will take a long time to implement, a change in language policy is also a slow process. This means that a commitment to a language policy is a credible commitment, for it cannot be reversed easily. Credible commitments increase the likelihood of agreements. Secondly, language conflicts are less likely to produce head on confrontations because language is not a fixed and unmovable character of individuals. You cannot change your race or adopt an additional race. It is hard to change religion, especially in a context of conflict, as religions have hierarchies and institutions whose mission is to maintain the congregation. And most religions exclude completely the possibility of a person professing more than one religion. But language groups do not have such institutions. And it is perfectly possible to become bilingual or multilingual. Although this may be frowned upon by monolingual members of the community, it will very rarely receive the kind of collective reaction that can follow religious conversion.

Just as people can become bilingual, policies can be bilingual too, as they were in the Basque Country. Language policies need not be a zero-sum game. Quite the contrary, it is a domain where it is possible for two national or ethnic groups to “split the difference”. 33 Where there are enough resources to “afford” a bilingual policy, wide systems of education allow people to learn other languages, and public jobs are not an exceedingly dominant way to obtain social promotion, 34 flexible policies that recognize several languages are likely to be adopted and produce a peaceful resolution to the potential language conflict.

**Conclusion**

This paper has shown how the Basque Country adopted a flexible, intensive strategy for the revival of the Basque language, out of a recognition that an extensive, uncompromising policy would not be accepted by important sectors of the population, and that on the other hand there were enough language enthusiasts to start a process of recovery based on their involvement and support. These policies were started by nationalist governments, and continued later by coalition governments of nationalists and non-nationalists. I have argued that the compromise policies were the result of neither pressure from central government nor bullying of non-nationalists to comply with nationalists’ wishes. They expressed a genuine middle road between the most ambitious desires of nationalists and Basque speakers and the most comfortable path for non nationalists and Basque speakers.

33 In fact Patten (2001) argues that from a political theory point of view official multilingualism should be the preferred option by default.

34 These three conditions were pointed by Inglehart and Woodward (1967) as facilitating a reduction of conflict on languages.
However, these policies were adopted and implanted against a background of violent conflict in which a part of the nationalists support the actions of a terrorist group that has very often attacked the non-nationalists. This is a clear illustration that the presence or absence of an ethno-national conflict in a particular society, and even its intensity, is not a simple “fact”. Different groups and subgroups may be acting differently and different levels of conflict or agreement may be present in different areas.

For the reasons explained above, agreements and compromises were possible in the area of language policy and other areas, while groups who did not participate in those agreements maintained a campaign of violence against Spain and against Basque members of non nationalist parties. One may be tempted to think that non nationalists, by agreeing to compromises with moderate nationalists and being attacked by radical non-nationalist were getting a very poor deal. But I have argued that putting those two things together is a misrepresentation of the situation, and that the agreements about language policy can be analysed separately from the violent conflict. In those circumstances agreements and violence between nationalists and non nationalists can coexist, at least for some time.

References


