

# The key issues in international terrorism



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ETA was founded in 1959 by a student discussion group from the University of Bilbao. The group had formed in 1952 and originally called itself EGIN (Basque language verb meaning "to act"). By 1959 this group had split due to disagreements in what direction the group was going and tactics. The group demanded total independence from Spain for the people of Basque country.

The initial target of the group was the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, who banned regional accents like Basque in his efforts to make Spain a single national identity. ETA assassinated Francos successor in 1973 hastening the end of dictatorship.

ETA has been linked to other nationalist groups and organizations that have similar aims and beliefs. The following terrorist organizations have all been associated, Provincial Irish Republican Army, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Red Flag (Venezuela) and Gazteriak.

ETA members and supporters have been victims of state sponsored terrorist group GAL (Anti-Terrorism Liberation Group). Between 1983 and 1987 twenty eight ETA members killed. The state would argue that the people of Spain would be happy to see such killings of known terrorists. The problem was that too many people unrelated to ETA became victims of GAL and the government was forced to take responsibility for innocent people being murdered.

## **2. Aims and Ideology**

ETA's main strategic aim is dedicated to a separate nation-state for the Basque people. These people inhabit areas of northern Spain and south western France.

Other strategic objectives included, National Liberation (Including separate nation-state as discussed above), Social Liberation and a federalist Europe

Main Beliefs of the group include, subscribe to Marxist-Leninist Ideology (“Marxism-Leninism” to describe the ideology that they claimed to be upholding) and Protect the Basque culture and language against perceived “colonization” by the French and Spanish states.

## **3. Leadership and Structure**

### **Leadership**

The following three ETA members have been key leaders of the group during different time periods since the beginning of operations.

Jose Urrutikoetxea otherwise known as “Jose Ternere” was born in Biscay on the twenty-fourth of December 1950. His roles within the organization were leader of political wing and also up until failed peace deal in 2006 the overall head of ETA.

Some ETA members recognized Ternera as one of the primary leaders of the Basque Separatist group. Ternera was involved in terrorist attacks, theft and assassinations.

In May 1971 Ternera fled to Brazil and joined the military front of the group.

In December 1973 he had some involvement in the explosives that killed

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Luis Carrero Blanco who served as Spanish Prime Minister under the Franco Government.

Gorka Palacios Alday was born in Barakaldo on the 17th October 1974. His role within the organization was Military Commander.

Gorka is currently imprisoned in Spain after being identified in France by the authorities as a key ETA military commander and extradited to Spain. Gorka started off as ETA commando in the military wing. He quickly rose through the ranks due to involvements in many high profile attacks. Gorka had major involvement in the wave of Costa del Sol tourist bombings in 1997.

Gorka last made the headlines with a failed escape attempt from prison in 2004.

Francisco Murguía Garmendia known as “ Pakito” was born in Ordizia on the 19th November 1953 and was a former leader of ETA.

Garmendia is currently imprisoned in Spain for 743 years for his involvement in the 1977 bombing of a bus full of Spanish military. In 1992 French police arrested him for that attack and extradited him to Spain in 2000.

## **Structure**

ETA began operations using a very hierarchical structure, maintaining a leading figure at the top. This leader would delegate to three substructures, Logistical, Military and Political.

As the years went by and the security services became more aware of modus operandi of the group ETA became more security aware. On several

occasions ETA changed its internal structure and during recent years the three substructures have been divided into a total of eleven. The intention was to combat recent captures and infiltrations. By dispersing members it would combat and reduce the impact of detentions.

### **The eleven substructures are:**

Logistics, politics, internal relations, military operations, reserves, prisoner support, expropriation, information, recruitment, neoprtian, treasury.

Members of the group are distinguished by which ones have a police record and ones that do not. The ones that have police records actively participate in ETA operations while the clean members are rallied for support when required during protests and rallies.

### **Strategy and typical tactics and targets**

The group's strategy consists of some of the following elements the first being to target the Spanish Government and business. ETA achieves this by both physical means and creating a symbol of hatred against the government. ETA tries to encourage resentment amongst members and supporters which can manifest into hatred and trigger the violent struggle against Spanish authorities. The end state to this element of the strategy is increased nationalism and ethnic conflict.

Hitting the Spanish economy as hard as it can is another element of the group's strategy. Using violent means against areas of mass tourism creates a sense of fear amongst the tourists and drive away economic gain.

Recently a new element of the strategy was formed by trying to join the democratic process and achieve independence by political and non violent means. The Spanish Government will not respond to this show of democracy and willingness to join the political process until ETA renounces violence and disarms.

## **Typical tactics**

Robbery- Weapons, explosives, vehicles and various types of machinery have all been sourced in the past through acts of theft.

Guerrilla warfare - Small groups of combatants made up of civilians whom use military tactics such as armed raids, sabotage, ambushes, assassinations and the element of surprise by using mobility as a key weapon against the Spanish Government.

Shooting and Bombings - targeting individuals for assignation by shootings and bombings. The preferred method being rigging cars with speed initiated bombs. Group use charities to announce bomb threats and warn areas of civilian population.

Anonymous threats- Delivered by placards or graffiti forcing people to worry about their safety and go into exile.

Extortion/Blackmail- ETA used this tactic to demand businesses in Basque country and areas of Spain to handover moneys they called taxes in aid of the revolution. Threats to employers and their families have been the sole cause of the extortion of up to a estimated one million Euros a year.

## **Typical Targets**

Spanish Military police and prison officers – Typical attacks on barracks housing members of the Guardia civil resulted in deaths of police, families including children.

Parliamentarians, city councilors and politicians – Politicians belonging to the Peoples Party and Spanish Socialist Workers Party have been hit particularly hard with assassinations and kidnappings.

Economic targets – Tourist sites, Railroads, Industries and malls all valuable assets to Spains economy have been attacked.

High standing figures in society – Judges, Businessmen and Journalists all have been subjected to threats, assassinations and kidnappings.

## **Main attacks carried out by ETA**

1968- During the Franco years ETA kills its first victim. Meliton Manzanaz of the secret police is murdered.

1980 – During ETA's bloodiest year to date 118 people are killed

1987 – In June 21 shoppers are killed in an attack on a Barcelona shop.

1997 – Councilor Miguel Blanco is kidnapped and killed by ETA. Six million outraged Spaniards take to the streets in protest.

1998 – In June Councilor Manuel Zamarreno dies when his car is blown up by rigged explosives.

2000 - In both the months of January and February Car bombs explode in Madrid and Baque capital Vitoria.

2003 - In May two policemen are killed by a bomb.

2003 - In July Spanish resorts of Alicante and Benidorm are hit by bombs injuring at least 13 people.

2006 - In December a bomb brings down a car park at Madrids Barajas airport. Two people confirmed missing and presumed dead.

2008 - In July five car bombs explode, four of the bombs at seaside resorts. No one is hurt.

2008 - In September a car bomb at a military academy explodes and kills one army officer. This attack comes hours after two bomb attacks injure over 10 people in the Basque region.

2009 - In June a senior police officer is killed by a car bomb in Bilbao

2010 - Jean-Serge Nerin a French Policeman is killed by ETA. He is the first French policeman to be murdered by the group.

## **The Group's Impact**

I believe that it's important to look at where ETA has arguable been successful in their campaign against the so called Spanish oppressors and measure the impact from this against the overall aim of independence from Spain. ETA along with other nationalist groups like the Irish Republican Army and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia have all fought military style violent campaigns against governments and politicians. It's clear that these

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violent acts have made minimal impact in what these groups set out to achieve especially in the case of ETA. Murdering politicians and violence against the ruling governments has only caused extra resistance from the police and military and caused public support to wane. In terms of a political impact ETA have failed with this armed struggle and have only sourced condemnation from within the International community, Spain and even the Basque territory.

Were success can be measured is the impact on the economic state of Basque country and some areas of Spain. Attacks such as the July 30 2009 Mallorca bomb lead to airports and ports on the island being shut down. The impact of this is massive loss in revenue due to the location of the incident and closure of the second busiest airport in Spain. ETA's shock tactics of hitting large areas of tourism has impacted on the economy and attracted attention but the group has to accept that this impact also loses them support due to the recklessness of the attacks and potential killing of innocent Spaniards.

According to the department of Foreign Affairs and Trade the ETA has cost economy close to eight billion Euros over the last decade. Cost to the Basque Country has been 10% of its GDP in the last ten years. The most effective impact has however been in shutting out investment in the country from private organizations due to threats and kidnappings.

In conclusion to the facts and the measurable impact it's clear that ETA have failed in achieving the aims and ideologies they believe in by using violence as the primary means of the struggle. ETA have however had some impact

on derailing the Spanish economy and although violence has not achieved the overall aim it has shocked the Spanish people and impacted on many families that have lost loved ones in the struggle. It's hard to argue that 850 taken lives over a 42 year period can result in no impact but clear that the group's aim of independence for the Basque region has not even come close to being achieved.

### **Future of the group**

Like other nationalist groups it's hard to determine what the future holds for ETA. The Spanish government will always remain skeptical of an ETA ceasefire as previous such promises and acts have been a cover for rearmament and recruitment, due to successful attempts by security forces and the Group GAL to disrupt the inner structure of ETA.

For ETA to be taken seriously for the beliefs and political objectives the only route forward is democracy and the disarmament of weapons the violent struggle.