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Five years without
armed violence in
the Basque
Country

ICIP

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INTRODUCTION

Peace in the Basque Country: an unstoppable process

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The coming 20 October will mark five years since ETA announced a definitive cessation to its armed activity, an occurrence that has naturally affected multiple aspects of the Basque Country's everyday life, political activity and future outlook. For this reason, in issue number 28 of the Peace in Progress magazine we are devoting the main articles to finding out what has been happening in the Basque Country during these five years without ETA violence.

The first two articles provide diagnoses of the peace process as it now stands. Rafael Sainz de Rozas' article examines the condition of the peace process in the Basque Country at the present moment, while Paul Ríos' article highlights the sticking points in this process as well as the progress made. Both stress the political violence's end as being significant in terms of the expectations it has generated. They also remark upon it not having led to a process of negotiation and transitional justice, since the decision was taken unilaterally by ETA, without involvement from the PP government through talks or any other measures. According to Sainz de Rozas, consensus is yet to be reached either on the acceptance of responsibilities for the use of violence or on recognising and repairing the damage caused to all of the victims. Paul Ríos notes that measures relating to the surrender of weapons, the demobilization of current militants and the reintegration of prisoners from ETA all remain blocked. The author is of the opinion that these blocks are unsustainable, given the speed with which Basque society is settling in its new coexistence and expressing its will to move forward in the peace process.

We also wanted to investigate changes arising from the end to political violence in relation to local cohabitation and institutional politics. Aitziber Blanco describes some initiatives being implemented by the civil society and in particular by town councils, initiatives aimed at tackling conflictive and painful issues and at reconstructing the social fabric and coexistence from bottom to top. All are based on one shared desire: to improve social understanding, to allow free expression of antagonistic points of view, and to allow voices to be respectfully heard without aggression. Pedro Ibarra in his article remarks on how the disappearance of ETA violence has led to the polarization between political parties being neutralized. On one side the contaminating anti-nationalist arguments disappears, and on the other, nationalist independence reclamations are tempered. The only clear remainder of the polarization relates to the consequences of the violence. Ibarra alleges that, in general, the situation can be said to have gone from one of outright confrontation to one of normally conflictive relations.

From a feminist viewpoint, Irantzu Mendia highlights the importance of drawing upon the experience and contributions of women in order to construct lasting and sustainable peace in the Basque Country. She recalls a pioneering and cross-cutting initiative to work towards peace led by the women of Ahotsak in 2006. She also introduces us to Emagune, a new proposal seeking to contribute to a better diagnosis of conflict in the Basque Country, including the continuum of violence against women. It is launched in the firm belief that consolidating peace and coexistence requires deeper levels of democracy, and of female involvement in decisions relating to the conflict, its consequences, and the building of a society free from violence.

Lastly, the interview with Antoni Batista provides us with the views of a Catalan journalist whose experience of following the Basque conflict dates a long way back. Batista is convinced that the cessation of the violence is irreversible and that peace in the Basque Country is being consolidated, despite the Spanish government not doing anything to aid this process.

This collection of texts provides us with a panorama of everything ETA's cessation of armed violence has opened up and positively affected on the road towards peace, while also showing the limitations and stumbling blocks. They all look towards the future with a certain amount of optimism, considering this peace process to be one that will

stay its course, and that there remain opportunities open to build lasting and integrating peace in the Basque Country.

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Current state of the peace process

Rafa Sainz de Rozas

Coordinator of Justice of the Ombudsman's Office of the Basque Country (Ararteko)

Peace, a process under construction

Those of us who come from the pacifist tradition are used to referring to the dynamic character of the concept of Peace, linking it to the building of justice, as opposed to static views that limit it to the absence of conflict. So it seems appropriate to refer to peacebuilding in the Basque Country in terms of a process, in that the end of ETA terrorism certainly represented a before and after.

In any case, it is important to bear in mind that its frame of reference cannot be the transitional justice that the notion of "peace process" applied to a context of armed conflict traditionally abides by. And that is because its cessation in the Basque Country did not take place in a context of the replacement of a dictatorial regime with a democratic one, nor was it part of a military escalation, in the framework of mutual concessions between contenders. The truth is that, when ETA unilaterally made this decision, its own existence lacked popular legitimacy: not because the system of freedoms that exists in the Basque Country proved to be fully satisfactory for the Basque population, but because its shortcomings, whether in national, social or democratic terms, in no case justified resorting to violence for a vast majority.

By then it was clear that the violence of ETA did not exist as an inevitable consequence of the causes for which it purportedly fought. Nor did it exist because other political or social actors had asked ETA to exercise it on their behalf. It existed because the organization itself understood that its use was an appropriate way to change the country's political framework. ETA's decision in favor of violence had, therefore, a political motivation; but it was its political motivation – its political belief, its political desire – which led to violence, as a result of an ideological vision of the role of armed

vanguards in processes of change.

Rights and the quality of democracy

That delegitimization of violence meant that the abandonment of arms by ETA raised generalized expectations throughout Basque society of a better coexistence in terms of quality of democracy. Five years later, the hopeful anticipation thus generated appears to have given way to a certain skepticism, at least among those who associate this improvement with a regeneration of the social fabric that would, among other things, achieve a basic consensus on two elements: the need to take responsibility for the use of violence on the basis of a shared legal and moral order; and the recognition and reparation of the harm done to all the victims of all the violations of human rights.

“ The abandonment of arms raised generalized expectations in Basque society of a better coexistence; five years later the hopeful anticipation appears to have given way to a certain skepticism ”

That consensus should be favored, in my opinion, through changes that are still pending in three areas of our criminal policy:

- The criminalization of behavior that is characteristic of the so-called “realm of terrorism,” which in many cases should be understood as protected by the right to ideological freedom and political participation.
- Unusually high sentences imposed on people convicted of any kind of link to terrorism, whose effective enforcement is extended further by an exceptionally harsh penitentiary system. Legislative changes are needed to reduce disproportionate sentences and to retroactively apply mitigating circumstances for reduced levels of danger.

- The relativization or abolition of guarantees, the best examples of which are perhaps the closing down of newspapers as well as incommunicado detention and the lack of effective investigation into allegations of mistreatment or torture. Two initiatives promoted this year by the Basque Government have undoubtedly had a positive impact in this regard: on the one hand, an initiative aimed at the recognition and reparation of illegal repression between 1960 and 1999; on the other, the investigation launched by its Department of Peace and Coexistence and directed by renowned forensic surgeons, which documents more than 4,000 victims of torture practiced between 1960 and 2013, of which the justice system has compensated only 32.

We are talking, therefore, about fundamental rights; about their defense against infringements for the sake of counter-terrorism policies, and about their potentiality so that the defeat of terrorism can become the victory of democratic values as guiding principles of coexistence.

Memory for coexistence

However, no matter how well substantiated it may be, it doesn't seem likely that purely legal criticism will bring about, by itself, the changes that are being advocated. In view of the experience of these years of deadlock, I believe that, if not all, at least part of the problem has to do with the lack of a minimum agreement on memory: a narrative about the past which, defined in a forward-looking manner, would generate the political will to make progress in this area.

Without prejudice to the right of victims to truth, justice and reparation, the aim is also to encourage the interaction of the account of the victim with the confession of the perpetrator in order to help shape memory as a right of society, with truth emerging as a political act for the reconstruction of the community. In any case, one of the difficulties that its development entails is that it could not be limited to a list of events that were shared to a greater or lesser degree inasmuch as these are not morally or legally neutral: they tell us of suffering caused by some people to others through a violation of fundamental legal rights and the way this has conditioned coexistence in freedom.

In short, it is about overcoming the obvious (that harm has been done) to enter into the evaluative: the acknowledgement of the "illegitimate" nature of the suffering caused.

Until this issue is addressed, and explanations like “those were different times”, “the circumstances required it then”, “sometimes you have to take tough measure”... persist, recognition of harm will be of little use since the victims will rightfully denounce a discourse that sympathizes with their pain while justifying the perpetrator.

Prisons and the regeneration of social fabric

Perhaps the highest expression of the triumph of democracy is precisely the incorporation into the democratic consensus of those who resorted to violence to achieve political goals, after accepting their responsibility. And to the extent that the criteria hitherto applied to individualize it has led, as we have been maintaining, to a deterioration of the system of rights and freedoms in the interest of efficiency in the fight against terrorism, its correction would undoubtedly contribute to the strengthening of the consensus on the legitimacy of the system in terms of quality of democracy.

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In this regard, based on the principle of reintegration, there is a wide margin for action, in the fields of both correctional and judicial administration, to apply the general and universal criteria on the serving of sentences for people convicted of terrorism. There are four fundamental demands that can be made in this respect:

- That they serve their sentences in prisons close to their hometowns, which, apart from minimizing the negative impact of incarceration on family, social and labor relationships that shape their socialization, can also encourage debate and dialogue to facilitate the peace and normalization process both inside and outside prisons.

- That the jurisdiction of prison supervision be returned to the Basque judiciary. Its centralization in the *Audiencia Nacional* (Spanish High Court) was, in the past, an expression of exceptionality, whose reversal today is both timely and feasible.
- That the Prison Administration facilitate the application of legal regulations which provide for release from prison, with all the precautions necessary, of inmates who suffer from serious and incurable diseases.
- That their prison classification be governed by the individual prognosis of their ability to lead a life in freedom without reoffending, so that they can lead the lifestyle that is most suitable, in each case, in order to facilitate their itineraries of social, labor and family integration.

Rights, political calculation and the disappearance of ETA

In its communiqués, ETA insisted on bilateral negotiations with states, claiming that the Declaration of Aiete spoke of the need to discuss the consequences of the conflict with them. That expectation proved to be false, however, in view of what has happened in the time since then: the State has chosen not to move, hoping that the problem will take care of itself taking into account that the conditions for a cessation of violence, as we have seen, were not peace for prisoners, but peace for the political legalization of Abertzale leftwing nationalism.

“ It is a question of radically condemning violence and promoting a model of coexistence with human rights as its backbone ”

This creates a situation in which, paradoxically, the positions of both the government and ETA would seem to respond to a rational choice. The government understands that, since there is no conflict, it doesn't have to enable any measure to resolve it: the terrorist organization has simply been defeated, and its members must bear the full brunt of the law, which will continue to be based on an antiterrorist crime policy until

the organization disbands. Given this situation, ETA wonders if their disbandment can lead to a certain degree of flexibility in measures of prison policy or if, on the contrary, the government will feel even stronger and increase these exceptional repressive measures regarding its prisoners, the vast majority of whom see in the government's attitude confirmation of this latter position.

This being the situation, it is necessary to take up the fundamental idea: rather than a calculation of costs and benefits, it is a question of demanding rights. The same ones that are violated by the use of violence to achieve political objectives, and whose defense consists in radically condemning that violence while at the same time encouraging a model of coexistence with human rights, and the ethical values that sustain them, as its backbone.

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A Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration agenda

Paul Ríos

Peace activist and consultant in coexistence processes

On October 20, 2011, ETA announced a “definitive cessation of armed activity,” thus responding to the call by world leaders such as former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued three days before the Conference of San Sebastian. The so-called Declaration of Aiete called upon ETA to end violence and called upon the governments of Spain and France to begin talks to address the “consequences of the conflict.”

These talks have not occurred. The Government of Spain, after the Popular Party came into power, repeatedly expressed its refusal. In this situation, the conditions to promote a classic peace process, that is, one based on negotiations or dialog between a State and an armed group, have not been met. In light of this situation, other stakeholders have come to the fore: the Basque Government, political parties, civil society organizations and international facilitators. A broader process of peacebuilding and coexistence is thus underway. This model is more difficult to develop, since it lacks the participation of a leading actor, but it has the virtue of being more sustainable because it includes a broad and diverse base of stakeholders, who come to the fore, making the process more democratic and participatory.

The call of the Declaration of Aiete to address the consequences of the conflict refers to the design of a shared agenda on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). The UN considers that these three elements are essential for the maintenance of peace. Members of armed groups must have a clear perspective that there are better options than a return to violence while the civilian population must be able to live with the guarantee that weapons will not be used again.

On February 21, 2014, the International Verification Committee for the Ceasefire, formed by experts in peace processes and DDR agendas, announced that ETA had asked it “to include in its mandate the verification of a unilateral process of sealing its arms and putting them beyond operational use.” The Commission also reported that it had verified that ETA had sealed and put beyond operational use “a certain amount of weapons.”

The announcement was received very differently by the various institutions and political parties and the reactions were influenced by the fact that an announcement of complete disarmament by ETA had been expected. While the Government of Spain and the Popular Party considered this announcement to be fraudulent, the parties in the Bildu coalition viewed it favorably. The Basque Government and the PNV valued the announcement, but they also demanded a quick and complete disarmament, a general idea shared by the PSE.

Two days after the announcement, the Audiencia Nacional (Spanish High Court) summoned the members of the Verification Commission to testify about their contacts with ETA and the location of the sealed weapons. Since then there have been no new reports by the Commission and only unofficial information has been published highlighting the difficulties the group is encountering to work due to the risk they run of being persecuted by the security forces.

“ Now that terrorism is over and that Basque society is facing the challenge of building coexistence, it seems logical that criminal and penitentiary policy must be adapted so that it becomes a tool for the consolidation of peace ”

Meanwhile, in 2014, ETA announced that “it has carried out the dismantling of logistical and operational structures arising from the practice of armed struggle.” Furthermore it has opted for a negotiated and orderly disarmament, a commitment made explicit

again in various communiqués and interviews, in both 2015 and 2016. However, there are many doubts about what the situation is regarding ETA's sealing and disarmament process. In light of this situation, in December 2014 the Basque Government presented a proposal for fast, viable and effective disarmament. This proposal consisted in creating a committee composed of representatives of the Basque Government, the Social Forum to promote the peace process, and international facilitators.

In the same vein, the aforementioned Social Forum – an initiative of civil society that tries to provide proposals to unblock the peace process – has suggested the creation of a Monitoring Commission or a Disarmament Verification Commission to be established based on the International Verification Commission, with the support of Basque institutions, civil society, and the international community. Both proposals share the same goal: to develop a disarmament process led by Basque society. Today it is unknown whether they will prosper, but no alternative is seen as long as the Spanish Government refuses to get involved. Based on the assumption that Basque society is the final recipient of the results of the peace process, that their coexistence is what is at stake, these initiatives should not be ignored and, in fact, they can provide a means to unblocking the impasse.

“ It is still too soon to determine what might be the future of current ETA militants inasmuch as the organization has not disbanded ”

This is only part of a DDR agenda, but two important issues remain to be defined, such as dismantlement and reintegration, involving two different groups. One group consists of current ETA militants and it is still too soon to determine what might be its future inasmuch as the organization has not disbanded. There are too many unanswered questions and little willingness to address this reality to come up with any answers.

Regarding the people in prison, there are two groups. On the one hand, there is the group known as “Nanclares,” consisting of approximately thirty inmates who began a

process of dissociation from ETA and who have declared their rejection of violence and expressed varying degrees of remorse or apology to the victims. They are imprisoned in a jail in the Basque Country and have had access to prison benefits. On the other hand, there is the EPPK group of prisoners. According to recent data, this group consists of 385 inmates, compared to over 700 in 2009, and, for the most part, they are being held in prisons that are located more than 400 kilometers from the Basque Country.

Regarding the situation of this last group, a clear distinction should be made between issues related to the respect of their fundamental rights and those related to their reintegration. The former must be guaranteed unconditionally.

Holding prisoners in distant prisons is rejected by more than 73% of Basque citizens¹, and contravenes European Prison Rules, which state that “inmates must be sent to prisons that are as close as possible to their place of residence or their social rehabilitation center.” It also contravenes the General Penitentiary Organic Law, which determines that the distribution of prisoners must be carried out in such a way that the enforcement of the sentence does not originate family and social uprooting caused by an excessive distance between the prison and the inmate’s natural socialization environment.

“ These obstructions in the DDR should not lead to despair; coexistence in Basque society is happening very quickly ”

Another matter is how to promote their reintegration. The Spanish Constitution itself states that “custodial sentences and security measures will be aimed at reeducation and social reintegration.” Current criminal and penitentiary policy has its origins in the fight against ETA terrorism. Now that it is over and that Basque society is facing the challenge of building coexistence, it seems logical that the strategy must be adapted so that it becomes a tool for peace. As the Ombudsman of the Basque Autonomous Community (Ararteko) noted, “a change in the guidelines that regulate and apply the enforcement of sentences of ETA prisoners is necessary; they should be similar to the

general criteria governing other inmates.”

The reform of the Penal Code in 2003 increased the penalties for terrorist offenses and the conditions required to qualify for prison benefits. As a result, people convicted of subsequent offenses face serving their complete prison term of 40 years, which will be reduced to 32 if tough requirements are met. The result is that, barring any changes, a person convicted in 2009, in the best-case scenario, would have to remain in prison until 2041. The question to be asked is whether coexistence in the Basque Country can prosper under these circumstances.

The solutions seem complicated, but they exist. It would be possible to agree on a reintegration plan that has the consensus of institutions and political parties. The basis for this plan should be 1) that prisoners be treated in the same way as any other prisoner, 2) to take into account the current situation in which Basque society is moving toward peace and coexistence, 3) that the right of victims to memory and recognition be respected, and 4) that it be accompanied by an unequivocal commitment on the part of imprisoned people to a coexistence that is both peaceful and respectful of differences and pluralism, as well as an assumption of responsibility for what happened.

These obstructions in the DDR should not lead to despair. Coexistence in Basque society is happening very quickly and can be the catalyst to generate the conditions for the key stakeholders to begin listening to the will of the people and act accordingly. There is no alternative.

1. Sociómetro vasco 54. Paz y convivencia. Marzo de 2014.

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IN DEPTH

Towards a shared future

Aitziber Blanco

Facilitator of transformative dialogue processes

ETA's declaration of a definitive cessation of armed activity on 20 October 2011, three days after the conclusion of the International Conference of Aiete in San Sebastian, opened the door to a peace process which this time seemed irreversible. It generated a sense of relief, not only among those who had lived under their threat, but also among society in general, for whom decades of violence had become unbearable. At the same time, the subsequent legalization of Sortu ensured the representation of all political projects, providing the necessary elements to deal with a peace process scenario. Minimum conditions were in place to open dialogues aimed at addressing issues such as the disarmament of ETA, the situation of prisoners, reconciliation and a political framework of coexistence.

However, the desire to move in that direction has been hampered by dynamics of the past that continue to weigh on the present: the rejection of dialogue to address the process of an orderly disarmament of ETA, which has forced them to seek other avenues such as international support to verify the irreversibility of their decision; the rejection of dialogue to review and adapt prison policy to the current scenario of a definitive cessation of violence; the lack of significant process in achieving political consensus regarding the framework of coexistence; and the arrests and political trials of a sector of society are some examples of these dynamics that persist.

Moreover, for a part of our society all of this is very alien, either because it was not experienced firsthand, or because these issues are considered to belong to a past that is not theirs since, after the cessation of violence by ETA, they understand that we have achieved peace, or because it is considered to be something that is beyond their scope

of influence. And one must not forget that the deep economic crisis is a local reality that has changed the order of social priorities.

“ While it is important to find solutions to the problems of coexistence, it is just as important to be careful about how we go about doing so: giving up dynamics of imposition and exclusion, and opting for inclusion and collaboration ”

But, despite this context of old dynamics and new social realities, of resistance and difficulties, there have been advances in the areas of memory of the victims and of coexistence, or what has been called reconciliation. These steps have been made possible through the generosity of many people who have suffered violence directly, through the commitment of ordinary citizens, and through the sense of responsibility of Basque institutions. The creation, in early 2013, of the Secretariat for Peace and Coexistence of the Basque Government – with the aim of defining and implementing public policies of memory, Human Rights, coexistence and peace education – along with the Program for the Promotion of Peaceful Coexistence, launched in the same year by the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, are examples of institutional commitment in this area. But they are not the only ones. Because, while it is true that for many years social movements have led initiatives to build peace – which have contributed to the fact that respect for Human Rights and the use of dialogue as a means of conflict resolution are socially and politically accepted – in this new scenario it is the local governments that, to a large extent, are taking on this leadership, building coexistence from the bottom up, working locally while thinking globally.

Several experiences have been launched in recent years, each quite different from the others, but all extremely interesting. We are talking about processes that are still in progress, in which each municipality has adapted to local needs and realities, and whose final outcome is unpredictable. But they are processes in which the path taken,

that of listening and of dialogue, also becomes the objective. Because, while it is important to find solutions to the problems of coexistence we experience, it is just as important to be careful about how we go about doing so. And that means giving up dynamics of imposition and exclusion, and opting for inclusion and collaboration. It means giving up short-term gimmicky results and opting instead for results with a much deeper and lasting impact.

It is important to remember that, even though Basque society has lived in a context of ideological polarization, which required taking a stance with either “our side” or “the other side,” at the same time, there have been shared spaces: emotional, recreational, cultural, sports-related, etc. There was a need to participate in common spaces where one could breathe, relax and enjoy oneself. There was an unstated agreement to talk only about what united us, for fear of fracture, although it was not always possible to protect those spaces and sometimes polarization penetrated and atomized even those common spaces.

“ For many years social movements have led peacebuilding initiatives but now it is the local governments that are taking on this leadership, building coexistence from the bottom up ”

Hence the importance of local dialogue processes. Because these initiatives that are being developed at both a grassroots and political level aim not only to rebuild common spaces, but also to create spaces where we can explicitly address everything that weighs upon us, that hurts and confronts us. And, in order to do this, we take as a starting point that which unites us: the desire to improve coexistence, to freely express diverse and even antagonistic points of view, to be listened to with respect and without being attacked. That is why, in these initiatives, caring for the space and for the dialogue process itself becomes vitally important.

In this regard, the presentation of the Glencree initiative¹, in June 2012, was a source of hope and inspiration. After five years of discreet and confidential work, victims of different forms of violence made known their particular dialogue process. They described how, from a mutual understanding, they were able to recognize and empathize with the suffering of others, in spite of legitimate ideological differences.

The various dialogue processes that are being carried out at a grassroots level are forging their own path, each at its own pace. They represent a real and existential exercise of coexistence with those we still perceive of as “the others.” And although they do not represent the entire plurality of society (in processes at a political level, all the city council’s political representatives do participate) these initiatives are representative of society. Among the profiles of participants in these local face-to-face dialogues, there are people who have suffered violence directly, others who have been “active agents of the conflict,” people who have suffered, or still suffer, persecution and threats of various kinds, politicians, trade unionists, institutional authorities, business leaders, church officials, as well as citizens who have felt that their lives and relationships have been affected by everything that has happened. In short, they are people who, from their own experience, have decided to make a social commitment to contribute to coexistence in their municipality. And they have done so in a paradoxically difficult context, in which social disaffection is perceived regarding this issue.

**“ The processes of local dialogue are building
common spaces and generating movement from
the grassroots in the framework of coexistence ”**

At first discretion was essential, especially in a scenario without political consensus, where the fear of being manipulated or used by the other was great, where the weight of our own history and our immediate surroundings have long prevented empathizing with the suffering of those who were furthest away from our political ideas, where approaching the other has been seen as a betrayal of our reference group and their suffering, or as a renunciation of one’s own ideological position. That is why, in these

processes, discretion has been essential in order to care for the space, to create the necessary conditions of security and confidence that have allowed participants to speak honestly and freely; to question certainties that had always been unwavering based largely on mutual unawareness and stereotypes; to listen closely in order to understand despite disagreement; to explicitly state one's own limits and recognize those of others; to look for solutions that are different from one's own but that have something from everyone. This confidence has ultimately allowed for a renunciation of expected results in exchange for supporting the process and collaboration.

Some of these experiences are beginning to see the light, such as in Errenteria, an icon of the past that now symbolizes the future in the words of the dialogue group that has been working in this town in recent years: "We have been able to share our deepest experiences, we have felt respectfully listened to, we have felt believed, we have felt recognized, and we have been able to travel on the path of empathy and make the pain of others our own." The social impact of these local initiatives is hard to measure but, continuing with the example of Errenteria, their protagonists have stated that some of the political consensus reached on coexistence within the town council would not have been possible without this space of citizen dialogue.

Almost five years after ETA's declaration of a definitive cessation to armed activity, and in the face of a lack of progress in other major issues, the processes of local dialogue are building common spaces and generating movement from the grassroots in the framework of coexistence. Hopefully, these experiences will multiply and help lay the foundation for a shared future.

1. About the Glencree initiative, it has been published *Ondas en el agua*, by Carlos Martin Beristain, Galo Bilbao and Julián Ibáñez (ICIP and Angle Editorial), available in pdf and ePub (in Spanish)

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From total confrontation to “normally conflictual” relationships

Pedro Ibarra

Professor of Political Science at the UPV/EHU

Political violence in the Basque Country, during the long years of ETA violence, caused political and social polarization. Given the complexity of the analysis that social confrontation demands – one that is much more nuanced and much more detailed – it is unwise to state that a process of polarized confrontation occurred between two communities. However, political polarization was much more evident and that is what we are going to refer to exclusively in the lines that follow.

The end of violence in the Basque Country has defused the existing political polarization and today it has declined significantly in regard to the confrontation between political parties. But let us first look at how things worked in the times of violence.

Both in discourse and in parliamentary debate the extent of, and reasons for, radicalization were not the same for every political party in the political arena. Political groups that were linked to, or were part of, the Ezker Abertzalea (Basque nationalist left; henceforth EA) generally used an exclusive, discriminatory and simplistic discourse. Additionally, in particular, and to the extent that EA tolerated, legitimized, supported (choose the most appropriate verb or verbs) the violence of ETA, it was *forced* to articulate a discourse *analogous* to the exercise of that violence. In other words, it found itself compelled to develop a discourse of denigration of “the other,” of the other parties – as well as the State – which was sufficiently all-inclusive to *compensate* its justification (or tolerance) of violence. The argument worked something like this: violence could be negative but should be understood and even tolerated since it was no worse than the evil of the other parties that condemned it. The assignment of that

absolute evil with its *compensatory function* was articulated through two fronts.

“ Interparty confrontation during the years of violence was absolute; the rejection and thorough criticism of all contents and proposals from Ezker Abertzalea were based on the *contamination strategy* ”

The first front had a more essentialist character. The other parties, by definition, – including the other Basque nationalist parties – always implement negative policies in all areas: social, cultural, economic, etc. Therefore, their congenital evil delegitimized their criticism, including criticism of ETA’s violence. The second discursive strategy was more instrumental. Those parties – again, including the Basque parties – support, tolerate and legitimize the oppressive and criminal antiterrorist policies of the Spanish government. Therefore, these parties also lack legitimacy to criticize ETA’s violence since they participate in those other violent repressive policies: at the same time, the repression of ETA’s violence justifies it or at least makes it understandable.

Interparty confrontation during the years of violence was absolute. On the part of the Abertzale Left vis-à-vis the other parties. But if the degree of denigration of EA in order to achieve the compensatory delegitimization of the other parties was very strong, the response of those parties to EA was similarly forceful and denigrating. The rejection and thorough criticism of all contents and proposals from EA were based on the *contamination strategy*. Everything that the Abertzale Left proposes and demands – without exception – is and must be negative and reprehensible as it comes from an organization that justifies violence.

But also, because of the violence, confrontation was radicalized within the other parties. The constitutionalist parties – the Socialist Party and the Popular Party – systematically and consistently denigrated the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) for not being forceful enough in condemning the violence of ETA and supporting political and police

measures to eliminate it. Although perhaps more moderately, the same contamination strategy that was applied to EA was used regarding ETA's violence.

Violence also provided an argument for total ideological confrontation. Basque nationalism in general was demonized, and was declared reprehensible and contemptible, inasmuch as violence was the inevitable expression thereof. Similarly, the PNV, without distinction or exception, denigrated the constitutionalist parties using the argument of violence; in this case, the radical nature and excesses in the repression on the part of the constitutionalist governments.

**“ With de definitive cessation of violence,
confrontation and debate among the parties is
carried out without prior absolute denigration ”**

This polarization enters a phase of decline with the definitive cessation of violence by ETA - definitive cessation, not disbandment, which requires a brief reflexive digression. At this point the continuity of ETA is very difficult to understand. It seems that the only reason for this continuity is that ETA still believes that it can negotiate its self-disbandment in exchange for a release of its prisoners, which for many years has proven to be absolutely unfeasible and which, once again, suggests that ETA lost all sense of the surrounding reality many, many years ago.

Undoubtedly, this polarization crisis is due to the fact that not even the Abertzale Left needs its analogous and compensatory discourse, nor do the other parties need the aforementioned political strategy of contamination. Consequently, confrontation and debate among the parties is carried out without prior absolute denigration. It is relevant to note that the very use of nationalist discourse has entered a deactivation phase. We have indicated that the accusation against Basque nationalism incorporated the accusation of being in favor of, tolerant with, or a facilitator of violence. Contamination was absolute. Now that is no longer the case. However, what is interesting to note is that not only is the contaminating anti-nationalist argument disappearing, but also that a

remarkable moderation and decline of the nationalist call for independence is being generated. It is as if the disappearance of violence not only defuses the virulence of nationalist demands but also reduces these demands.

Today the debate among parties is articulated around the particular social and cultural proposals that each party formulates. So the chances of agreement (in some cases stable) among the different parties increase significantly and, as a result, we enter a stage of normalized political confrontation.

Where there is still a certain degree of polarization is in the consequences of the violence. We are referring to ETA prisoners; the disbandment of ETA; reparations for the harm caused, and the need for reconciliation processes between groups particularly affected by the violence. Let us make another digression to clarify that we are not referring to a process of confrontation derived from an inconclusive or unsatisfactorily concluded peace process. It is important to bear in mind that, regardless of the rhetoric, the end of ETA's violence is not a result of any peace process or agreement – or anything like that. It is the result of a unilateral decision without any compensation.

“ The end of ETA's violence resulted in a significant decrease in the process of interparty polarization; it has gone from the existence of a scenario of total confrontation to one of *normally conflictual relations* ”

This means that in the current political debate clashes sometimes arise which, in a certain way, increase polarization only on how to resolve the issue of these consequences. The position of the Abertzale Left is weak because it cannot argue in favor of certain compensatory measures for the cessation of violence – prisoners, for example. And this weakness is used by the other parties in their confrontation with EA. At the same time, demonizing continues as does the use in part of the contamination strategy of the previous scenario since it is considered that the absolute recognition of

the error and harm caused by EA with its support of ETA is the only way it can participate in the political debate on equal terms. So there is still a tendency to denigrate any proposal or demand coming from the radical nationalists, since their political organizations continue to legitimize that historical violence, indirectly, by default.

From the other side, from the discourse of EA, the possibilities of denigration using the issue of the consequences are less useful. Now it is unhelpful for its strategy to refer to a congenital evil of political parties – of the other parties – for not dealing with these consequences of violence because today it is clear that, except for the Popular Party and its government, the other parties are trying to implement the processes of settlement of the consequences.

In short, we can say that the end of ETA's violence resulted in a significant decrease in the process of interparty polarization that was occurring in the Basque Country. It has gone from the existence of a scenario of total confrontation to one of *normally conflictual* relationships. Only some debates on the consequences of the violence have resulted in the persistence of certain focal points of polarization.

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IN DEPTH

A feminist look at the peacebuilding process

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In these years of renewed efforts to progress towards peace and political normalisation in Euskal Herria, Basque women from different sectors are becoming aware that denouncing human rights violations with respect to violence in the past and present can help defining new bases for coexistence, where we can speak of a peace which is just and gender-equitable. Nevertheless, this claim is still rarely collectively boosted, with little visibility and comprehension of its relevance, and, in some cases, even finds rejection. This incomprehension and rejection is the result of a certain interpretation of reality where, as a general rule, no connection is perceived between the so-called “Basque conflict” and gender relations in our society.

The inability to see this connection is not only present here, but is a particular characteristic in a vast majority of the socio-political analyses, conducted on violent conflicts in any part of the world. Since decades, feminism has criticised the exclusion of gender as one of the key variables in conflict analysis. From the perspective of International Relations, Cynthia Enloe, for instance, highlights the fact that the debates, to which priority is given by the academic and political community, are part of the dominant accounts which ignore the alternative answers, offered by the gender issue in the characterisation and explanation of conflicts¹.

Opposite to this, in order to see reality from a feminist point-of-view, we need to take into account the gender relations as relevant dynamics in the conflicts, as well as in their transformation. Along these lines, one of the main achievements of feminism is the fact of having generated an international consensus – in the shape of United

Nations Resolution 1325 – on something which should be obvious: that men and women are affected in a different manner by collective violence, that conflicts have gender-specific consequences, and that it is necessary that women participate in all peace processes.

“ In order to see reality from a feminist point-of-view, we need to take into account the gender relations as relevant dynamics in the conflicts and in their transformation ”

In Euskal Herria, there is still much left to be done with regard to the reflection on the socio-political participation of women in the recent history of our country. In the occasions where women were given visibility in the conflict, they were mainly portrayed as relatives (mothers, wives or girlfriends, sisters, daughters...) of direct victims of violence². In some cases, notoriety was given to female members of ETA, and some studies made on their choice and participation in violent acts in the past and at present. Likewise, only few female members of different political parties have made their way to the political-institutional scene, which is dominated by men and masculinised in its forms, tongue, dynamics and symbolic aspects. Even smaller is the social and institutional recognition of Basque women as direct victims of politically motivated violence (murdered, wounded, kidnapped, tortured, sexually abused, persecuted, arrested, imprisoned...), as well as of their status as political subjects in their struggle for peace and for a negotiated way out of the conflict.

On one hand, in order to know the truth about human rights violations on women in Euskal Herria, as either direct or indirect victims, quantitative data are required, disaggregated by gender in order to grasp the real dimension of their experiences, as well as qualitative data for an in-depth analysis of the levels and areas, affected by violence, whose impact, besides physical, is also psychological, family-related, emotional, social and economic. We are dealing here with an issue which is relevant to the extent that, as I mentioned, the way women experience violence is different from

men, due to the fact that society's patriarchal organisation creates different – and unequal – materialistic and symbolic life conditions for both genders.

On the other hand, as political subjects in favour of peace in Euskal Herria, in the past and at present, numerous women have been present in associations, platforms and grassroots movements, working towards the end of violence. Overall, these are mixed spaces, where the gender dimension of the conflict has never been a key element of analysis and which don't coincide with collectives of the feminist movement.

“ Where politically motivated violence has been dispatched, there has been no cease of violent and discriminatory expressions against women ”

As women's initiative, the Ahotsak Platform (2006), consisting of women of all the main political parties at that time (except the Partido Popular), later joined by others from different sectors such as trade unions, universities and the feminist movement, was an experience which received special repercussion in the media and considerable social support. The result of Ahotsak was a consensus concerning several central premises: a) peace as collective demand and political priority; b) the legitimacy of all political projects, without exceptions; c) the commitment to respect the decision of the Basque society in terms of the transformation, change or status quo of the current juridical-political framework and, as a specific proposal from the feminist movement, d) to affirm women's rights of participation in all areas of decision, related with the resolution of the conflict³.

This last agreement is a principle of central action that has supported subsequent initiatives such as Emagune⁴, which emerged in 2014 as a meeting point for women of the University of the Basque Country/EHU and of other sectors of the Basque society, participating as individuals, with the objective of opening a space for reflection around contributions we can make in the new conjuncture, after ETA declared the definitive cease of their armed activity in 2011.

In Emagune, feminism is valued as a fundamental instrument of analysis and social transformation, due to the fact that it helps us to question imposed references, reaffirm ourselves, identify oppressions, raise solidarity among women, and give meaning to what we think and experience. This is why we consider it as a necessary perspective in the interpretation of the conflict and of what it implies to live in a democratic and peaceful society.

Emagune is a new effort by Basque women to move towards a broader and polyhedral diagnostic of the “Basque conflict”. For decades, this issue has caught practically all the political and social attention, relegating other conflictive situations, which also generate violence, to a secondary role, which is the reason they have not been addressed in the same manner nor have they been considered equally relevant.

“ Feminism helps us to question imposed references, reaffirm ourselves, identify oppressions, raise solidarity among women, and give meaning to what we think ”

On the road to a broader and more complex diagnostic, a prominent aspect of the joint reflection is the fact that gender inequalities remain a constant in our society. Where politically motivated violence has been dispatched over the last years, there has been no cease of violent and discriminatory expressions against women. As such, machismo is a factor which has not only shaped the Basque women’s experience of the conflict, regardless of their degree of participation in it, but even today, it remains present as an obstacle and fundamental threat to peace and coexistence.

This takes us to the need to find links and continuities between violence against women, associated with the political conflict, and violence which is generally related to gender inequality and machismo. It is a way of thinking that carries with it the conviction that consolidating peace and coexistence must go together with a democratic expansion of all relational areas (interpersonal, communitarian, work

related, politico-institutional...), and that an actual participation of the Basque women is directly related to the redistribution of power in our society.

From where I stand, in order to achieve this democratic expansion and redistribution of power, every peace initiative by the Basque women will have some impact and strategic interest, related to the degree in which it contributes to strengthening the feminist movement as a political subject in the decision making process regarding the conflict, its consequences and the creation of a society without violence in its broadest sense.

1. Enloe, Cynthia (2005): "What if Patriarchy is 'the Big Picture'? An Afterword", in Mazurana, Dyan, Angela Raven-Roberts and Jane Partart (editors): *Gender, Conflict and Peacekeeping*, Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, Lanhan, 280-283.

2. Whether victims of ETA, the State Security Forces or vigilante and far-right groups. See the detail on the different actors, responsible of acts of violence in the *Informe-base de vulneraciones de derechos humanos en el caso vasco (1960-2013)*, commissioned by the General Secretariat for Peace and Coexistence of the Basque Government. This is a preliminary report, collecting quantitative data and containing references to the need for more research.

3. The ceasefire break in 2006 tensed the relationships among the political parties and sharpened the pressure for the return to ultra-conservative attitudes in relation to the conflict. In spite of its significance, the experience and the agreements of Ahotsak progressively lost political and media protagonism.

4. Emagune means place or space of women

Photography : Raphael Tsavkko Garcia

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RECOMANEM

Materials and resources recommended by the ICIP

Website

Gernika Peace Museum

The Civil War was a bloody episode, which is still not fully healed. One of the places where the war's outrage was most striking is Gernika, a town in the Basque Country which was heavily bombed by the German and Italian air forces in April 1937. The Gernika Museum was inaugurated in 1998 so that neither this terrible event nor the period in which it happened would fall into oblivion. It shows the history of the town, the bombing and the context in which it took place.

In 2003, after the completion of a new museology project, the museum was converted into the Gernika Peace Museum Foundation. Its mission, besides the tasks it was already carrying out, is to focus on spreading the culture of peace. The museum has widened its objectives, which now include the preservation, exhibition, spreading, investigation and education of its visitors and the basic ideas of the peace culture, without forgetting to show the town's historical facet.

In order to fulfil this task, the museum offers the public a permanent exhibition, addressing three key questions: what is peace?, what did happen in Gernika in a moment when there was no peace?, and what does happen with world peace nowadays? Besides this exhibition, the museum's activities include, among others, temporary and itinerant exhibitions, own publications, conferences and educational workshops.

The museum also counts with a Documentation Centre on the Bombing of Gernika, a specialised public service, launched by the town authorities, with the objective to

gather and inventory all written, graphic and audio-visual material on the 26th April 1937 bombing which can be found worldwide. The centre is open to all researchers and persons, interested in the documentation depository to get a deeper knowledge of the real facts that occurred during the bombing, but also during the war and exile.

The centre's website explains in detail the bombardments that were launched on the town, their material and personal consequences for its inhabitants, the subsequent occupation by Francoist troops, and gives a brief summary of the first steps towards reconciliation. Also on the website, you can find the activities, scheduled both by the museum as by the research centre, as well as the latest research work in which the centre's team is participating. Moreover, the option exists to pay a virtual visit to the different areas of the museum.

Website

Uharan

In March 2015, the social movement Lokarri for peace and harmony in the Basque Country was dissolved after a trajectory which lasted nine years. Once ETA had ended its violent operations and a peace process which can be considered irreversible was established, the organisation had fulfilled its objectives. At the same time the end of Lokarri was made public, its members also announced that they would continue to work for further reconciliation and coexistence in a new organ, which would absorb the previously succeeded legacy.

This is how, around the end of 2015, Uharan saw the light: a new organisation, aiming at promoting the role of the Basque society in the road to peace and coexistence. The name of the organisation, Basque for "to the star", is a manifest of the wish to carry on the Lokarri philosophy, but from a perspective which is different from the one usually taken by social movements. Uharan wants to create a space where society can participate, taking profit of the social network, woven by its predecessor, and maintain contacts with local, national and international experts and organisations, working in the field of coexistence and human rights.

Despite its young age, Uharan counts with the help of around seventy volunteers, of which most already have experience as members of the previous organisation. On the

website, you can consult the activities they organise, as well as news items and events, related to peace and the resolution of the Basque conflict, such as film festivals, report publications or workshops, among others. The portal also offer you the possibility to register, so you can receive the monthly newsletter and get to know the different options to participate in activities, related to the peace process.

Besides the monthly newsletter, the organisation also issues quarterly informative compilations, where the network of national and international organisations and experts, which already had connections with Lokarri, analyse the situation of the peace process in the Basque Country. They also hold a yearly seminar or conference to debate on key issues in the field of reconciliation and coexistence. The aim of these meetings is that they are plural, promote citizen's participation and provide useful conclusions for the peace process.

Book

***Ondas en el agua*, by C. Martin Beristain, G. Bilbao and J. Ibáñez**

Ondas en el agua (Waves on the water) relates the experience of Glencree, a town in Northern Ireland where a group of about thirty victims of ETA, GAL and the Basque Spanish Battalion together with members of the National Security Forces, met between 2007 and 2012 with a clear objective: dialogue and peace. Written by key authors in the peace process, such as Carlos Martin Beristain, Galo Bilbao and Julian Ibáñez de Opacua, who were part of the dynamic Glencree team, *Waves in the water* transports the reader to the process of mutual recognition with a constructive and positive message.

The work consists of two prefaces, one signed by Professor Rafael Grasa, the other by Txema Urkijo, consultant for the Basque government regarding policies on terrorism and its victims between 2002 and 2004. The book contains four chapters and three annexes, with practical documentation on the process.

The first chapter explains how the Glencree initiative was set up, who was going to participate, how it was designed and how problems related to context and uncertainty were overcome. The second one, shorter, focuses on the initiative's methodological process and the importance of obtaining positive results. The third chapter contains an analysis of the achievements of the project, the weight of lived experiences, the "victim"

identity, the empathic work and the will to give visibility to the experience. Finally, the fourth chapter constitutes the conclusion of the book and is based on a small synthesis of the initiative and summary of the lessons learned, so that they would be a source of inspiration for the processes of reconciliation.

Ondas en el agua is part of the digital collection “Tools for peace, security and justice”, published by the ICIP and Líniazero. The work has been published in pdf and ePub format.

Documentary

Victims, truth and reconciliation

The documentary *Victims, truth and reconciliation*, shown on the program “Latituds” of the Catalan public television (Televisió de Catalunya), tells the story of the Glenree experience through the testimony of two of the participants of the secret meetings, organised in Northern Ireland between 2007 and 2012.

The experiences of Carmen Hernández and Axun Lasa are a reflection of how people who would have never crossed eyes in the street, end up crying together and recognising their mutual suffering in this Irish town. The two main characters, Carmen and Axun, had suffered the Basque conflict from two completely opposite perspectives. Carmen is the widow of Jesús Mari Pedrosa, PP councillor in Durango, who was murdered by ETA, while Axun lost her brother, accused of terrorism, and killed at the hands of the GAL movement.

They both explain how, thanks to the Glenree experience, they have been able to put themselves in each other's shoes and understand that pain does not choose sides. They ask for recognition for all those who have suffered equally, in order to improve the coexistence of future generations and to construct a society, based on empathy and self-identification through others.

In the ICIP-produced documentary, we can also see an intervention by Carlos Martín Berinstain, coordinator of the Glenree initiative, and Jordi Palau-Loverdos, who participated in many peace and reconciliation projects in the Rwanda peace process. Both recognise that, for peace and reconstruction processes, it is possible to have

common guidelines, as long as they start by creating Truth Commissions and commit to bringing people together.

Documentary

Negar franko egingo zuen aitak!

Based on the stories of people who lived in Villabona, a small town in Gipuzkoa (Basque country), during the Spanish postwar period, the documentary *Negar franko egingo zuen aitak!* (*How my father would have cried*, 2014), directed by Bertha Gaztelumendi, explains what life was like then and how coexistence was rebuilt between the sides of the winners and losers of the Civil War.

The purpose of the work, which lasts 41 minutes, is to transmit the memories of the facts and learn from what happened. The director starts with the hypothesis that coexistence can be rebuilt, since the war did not create a disruption between the town's inhabitants. Based on this assumption, the documentary captures how the neighbours were able to reconstruct the social network without any outside help.

The film makers also wanted to involve young people in the production process, who were in many cases ignorant of what had happened during the Civil War and of Francoism. For this reason, they were given the role of interviewers, so that the main characters could share their experiences and those of their families with them face-to-face.

Besides recovering the historical memory and transmit it to future generations, the documentary is also meant to be a model for similar processes in other Basque villages. The Zaharrak Berri program of the Gipuzkoa Province Council, aiming at promoting the recovery of this historical memory, has prepared a manual in order to provide guidance to groups, wishing to start a project, similar to the one described in the documentary.

Bertha Gaztelumendi, a Basque journalist with over 25 years of media experience, is specialised in studies regarding peace and conflict resolution. *Negar franko egingo zuen aitak* is her second documentary, after her first experience as a director with *Mariposas en el Hierro* (*Butterflies on the Sword*), where she shows the impact of violence on women and their potential as peacebuilders.

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TRIBUNA

Buenaventura, victims of development

Javier Sulé

Journalist

The land has experienced war first-hand, as well as the consequences of drug trafficking. Today, it is neo-paramilitary violence that continues to terrorize this Colombian Pacific city. Many of its Afro-descendant communities associate this violence with the presence of the large mega-port projects the region needs to expand and one of the companies involved has its headquarters in Catalonia.

As a result of its strategic location on the shores of the Pacific only 115 kilometres from Cali, Buenaventura has become a key point in Colombia's economic development which policymakers rush to consolidate as one of the biggest ports in Latin America. In accordance with the Free Trade Agreements already signed which establish the Pacific Alliance, the country has long been making every possible effort to put the trade connection between the Colombian interior and major ports in Asia and the United States on the map. It is said that currently, around 60% of all goods entering and leaving Colombia do so through Buenaventura.

Buenaventura exists as a port, but not as a city. This is evidenced by the deplorable living conditions of its inhabitants, which are in stark contrast with the many mega-projects currently being developed in the city and all of which are connected with the port's expansion. And while the Buenaventurian port expands to improve the country's competitiveness, life in the city itself is mired in shocking poverty where inhabitants are forced to live with alarming levels of violence. The city's inhabitants have never been a priority here. In addition, unlike other ports in the world, Buenaventura port activity has no ties to the local economy. The goods arrive in Buenaventura to be exported or imported merely cross the city. The unemployment rate is around 40%.

“ As the port is expanded, life in the city itself is mired in shocking poverty and residents are forced to live with alarming levels of violence ”

People have been condemning the social situation in Buenaventura, raising awareness and sounding alarm bells for some time now, but, far from improving, the city's plight continues to worsen day by day. There has been no investment in education or health, the public hospital was even closed down and 80% of its residents live in poverty.

The violence

In addition to the situation of poverty, the region and the city have been engulfed in an ongoing war for the past 15 years. Drug trafficking and armed conflict first gained a foothold with the arrival of the FARC and later on came the paramilitary groups, which subsequently re-formed into criminal gangs, such as *Los Urabeños* and *La Empresa*. The armed conflict has left more than 2,000 dead in the city over the past five years, not to mention the thousands of displaced, fleeing the violence, and the hundreds of disappeared.

Although there has been a slight decrease in violence, the so called neo-paramilitary groups continue to impose their authority in many districts by establishing tight social controls, collecting taxes and through extortion. Until very recently, the pinnacle of their violent strategy were the so-called *casas de pique*, houses scattered throughout the city where their victims were taken to be dismembered.

But the war was not the only source of violence. Many wonder about the reasons behind the level of violence and whether there might be a connection with the expansion of the city's port. Senator Alexander López, a member of the progressive Polo Democrático party, is convinced there is. “They are creating an environment of terror so that the locals are forced to abandon the area. Of the 340,000 people living in the city, more than 140,000 have been displaced in the last twenty years. The majority of these lived in neighbourhoods in the low tide districts, where the port infrastructure is being built”,

he says. Many of the city's social organizations are also convinced that the violence responds to powerful business interests and that the paramilitaries only do the dirty work.

A sea of mega-projects

The Sociedad Portuaria de Buenaventura, successor to the privatized Ports de Colombia, still controls 70 percent of the goods that pass through the city. However, in recent years, the world's major port operators have started arriving in Buenaventura. One of these is the Spanish company, Terminal de Contenedor de Buenaventura (TCBUEN), a subsidiary of the Grup Marítim Terminal de Contenedors de Barcelona (Grup TCB), whose headquarters are in the Catalan capital.

Why is a Catalan company doing business in the midst of so much cruelty? This was the question that sparked the Catalan Table for Peace and Human Rights in Colombia to prepare a report¹ on this company's dealings in the Colombian city. The report calls into question the company's performance and considers that its investment in Buenaventura has developed within the context of serious human rights violations. The report found that TCBUEN activities have made life unbearable for residents in the Inmaculada and Santa Fe neighbourhoods, which are adjacent to the project. The Table recalls, moreover, that the company failed to engage in any kind of prior consultation process with the communities.

“ Many critics argue that building a port for inflammable materials in the middle of a city is a nothing short of outrageous ”

Local community leader Rocio del Pilar Segura, a resident of the Inmaculada neighbourhood, lives just twenty meters from TCBUEN, separated by a wall. According to Segura, the noise generated from loading and unloading goods makes sleeping impossible and is unbearable. Segura also says that the vibrations from this work are causing cracks to appear in homes, and the company has failed to make good on its

promise to provide employment for people in the community. The affected residents also complain about the loss of local recreational spaces and the danger to residents from the road which carries hundreds of trucks entering and leaving the port each day. Furthermore, there is widespread condemnation of the adverse impact on the mangrove ecosystem and traditional fishing activities.

Last April, the case study was presented to the Catalan Parliament in an effort to reopen the debate on the need to exert control mechanisms on transnational companies that operate abroad and to set up an Observatory to oversee their activities. The company was invited to the session to present their side of the story, but refused the invitation to appear. However, they did agree to meet with the Catalan delegation during its visit to the headquarters of TCBUEN in Buenaventura last April. The Valencian Manager, Miguel Ruiz, denied all the accusations, reiterated that the company was not compelled to engage in any consultation and rejected the claim that the company's establishment in the area generated massive displacement. "Our operations only affected 33 families, which were relocated, and an area of 142 hectares of mangrove, which we repopulated elsewhere. Upcoming plans for expansion will have no impact on the neighbourhoods. We pay 23,000,000 pesos annually to the government in taxes and we cannot be held accountable if this money is not reinvested in the city," he said.

“ “They are creating an environment of terror so that the locals are forced to abandon the area” ”

Several months ago, TCB sold its majority share in the Danish group Maersk APM Terminals and is currently pending the outcome of the scandal for an alleged case of bribery in which the company was implicated in Guatemala sparking Interpol to issue a warrant for the location and arrest of company president, Ángel Pérez Maura.

The man responsible for TCBUEN's arrival in Buenaventura is controversial local businessman, Oscar Isaza. Isaza, who wields huge influence in the city, is currently masterminding an ambitious new port complex that would occupy 150 hectares of

Buenaventura's bay area. The project, known as Puerto Solo, is set to build terminals for different energy uses, from where it will be possible to transport oil, propane or butane, as well as other raw materials. With all this in mind, there is a growing number of critics who argue that building a port for inflammable materials in the middle of a city is a nothing short of outrageous.

Another recent arrival in Buenaventura is Philippine multi-millionaire Enrique Rickie, one of the world's wealthiest port tycoons who is set to put the Aguadulce terminal into operation. This new port will occupy around 225 hectares and will affect the area known locally as Bajo Calima. There are also other projects, involving port activities, which are already having, or are set to have a significant impact on the area, such as the open coal storage docks as well as the planned construction of another port in the outer bay.

“ Any plan must take into account the Afro-Columbian population, their culture and singularities ”

“Somos Pacífico”

In the midst of this complex context of violence and economic interests lives the mostly Afro-Columbian population. Despite everything, these black Pacific communities strive to continue to build their own lifestyles and conserve their identity. For them, this region is of immense importance which they see as being under threat from this development model which they claim, violates their constitutionally recognized ancestral rights.

Indeed, the development plan for Buenaventura, known as the Master Plan, was drawn up by Spanish consultants Esteyco and includes proposals regarding major guidelines the city should follow for the upcoming 40 years. The Barcelona brand is very present in the document that was drafted by a team of planners and technicians with close ties to the Catalan Socialist mayor of Barcelona, Jordi Hereu and former urban Planning councillor Manuel García Bragado, among others. Implementing the Master Plan,

currently on standby, would involve a radical transformation of Buenaventura. One of the planning proposals endorsed by consultants Esteyco involves the construction of a tourist dam and hotel complex. The project would affect about 3,400 families who would be forced to leave their stilt house homes currently located in the low tidal area neighbourhoods.

As Enrique Simonja from Justice and Peace pointed out, any plan must take into account the Afro-Columbian population. African communities cannot be considered a hindrance to development; their culture and individuality must be recognised because without their culture, a people become worthless.

1. Communities under siege. The impacts of a Catalan company, TCB Group, in Buenaventura, Colombia. Report by Tomàs Gisbert, Maria Jesús Pinto and Xavier Sulé (in Spanish).

Photography : Xavier Sulé

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TRIBUNA

The role of municipalities in peacebuilding

Carme Barbany

Can Jonch. Centre de Cultura per la Pau

All actors are necessary for peacebuilding with each one playing their own part. From cities, people are engaged in programs to promote peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution, cooperation and support programs for other cities suffering from war and violence. This experience means that cities and their networks are becoming increasingly recognized as important players when seeking contrasted, realistic and sustainable response which contribute to peacebuilding.

In a global world, everything that happens, even thousands of kilometres from home, has an impact on our lives. The major challenges facing humanity today, such as global warming and climate change, migration, forced displacement due to war and armed conflicts, have repercussions locally. These consequences are manifest in our cities and which local governments must face up to.

At this very moment we find ourselves at a crucial point in which renewal processes are taking place framed within the context of global agenda of the major issues of concern to humanity, such as peace and security, environmental sustainability, migration and development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) approved by the United Nations in September 2015, the Paris agreement signed in December last year to combat climate change and the new urban development agenda that must surely be the outcome of the Habitat III Conference to be held in Quito, Ecuador this coming October, must pave the way to facilitate progress towards a future that improves the living conditions of the people and the planet.

This future must also be built at a local level, from our towns and cities. Local issues become global issues because cities are where the majority of the population is concentrated. Cities are where the impact from global problems is most acutely felt and where the projects are designed to address these issues. In this sense, making progress in solving the major challenges affecting humanity without the knowledge and the experience cities acquire through their day-to-day management and administration is not possible. Active participation of cities in the places where decisions are made and solutions implemented is crucial.

**“ Solving the huge challenges without
acknowledging the know-how and experience
cities acquire through their day-to-day
management and administration is not possible
”**

“This is something that local governments and their networks have understood and they are working intensely on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, actively defining the lines of work to enable delivery of the 17 goals. The United Cities and Local Governments network in their report *The Sustainable Development Goals. What local governments need to know*¹ states: “All SDG contain targets that are directly or indirectly related to the day-to-day work of local and regional governments. Local governments should not be viewed simply as those who must implement the Agenda. Local governments are politically responsible, catalysts for change and the best positioned level of government to link the global goals with local communities”.

We have also witnessed the charitable initiatives from cities in the face of the refugee crisis and their willingness to provide a solution to this humanitarian tragedy unfolding in our time. Cities offer realistic solutions based on the capabilities and willingness of each municipality. The proposed solutions they offer have been designed cooperatively between local authorities and civil society through a process of networking and in

cooperation with other cities and regions. The programs to receive refugees in many cases exceed the initiatives undertaken at other levels of government and all is made possible thanks to the most valuable asset of any city; its citizens.

Why a commitment to building peace from the local level?

For the same reason that local governments are concerned and engaged with delivering the SDG, involved in the fight against climate change and in receiving the influx of refugees, they must also commit to building peace. The reasoning behind this is that municipalities provide the solutions to address the impact that global conflicts have on the lives and welfare of citizens, given their understanding that the duty of local government, first and foremost, is to work towards improving the living conditions of its citizens.

In this sense, municipalities play a key role in building peace and understanding between different cultures. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the UN, acknowledged this fact during his address to Mayors for Peace on 4 May 2010 at UN headquarters in New York: “Building a more peaceful world does not start in meeting rooms in New York or Geneva. It starts from the ground up, in neighbourhoods, in communities. It starts with enlightened leaders in cities and towns around the world. It starts with you” ².

“ To implement and deliver a peace policy, it’s important to create the appropriate structures and make sure that the values promoted by a city are shared with its citizens ”

Indeed, cities are working daily towards peacebuilding, which in a city means ensuring social cohesion, respect for human rights and the promotion of coexistence. It means promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts and respect for differences and understanding between cultures. A city involved in peacebuilding also shares know-how and experiences with other cities, networking to identify the strategies required to

achieve a fairer world for all.

There are, in our opinion, at least two crucial elements that, if lacking, make it impossible to implement peacebuilding policy: political leadership and the commitment and involvement of society and its members. If one intends to implement and deliver peace policy, one must create the appropriate structures, with political responsibility and budgetary provisions. Furthermore, we must have the technical means available and ready to implement policy. It is also essential that projects and values promoted by a city are shared with the public.

The Granollers project: a city open to peace

The commitment to peacebuilding and reconstructing historical memory in Granollers (Catalonia) is grounded in the tragic bombing of the city on May 31, 1938, during the Spanish Civil War, causing the death of more than 200 people in just one minute. Using the basic premise that a city which has suffered bombing must be the driving force to lead the peacebuilding movement, Granollers defined its own strategy for peacebuilding, which is based on memory for building the future.

The *Centre de Cultura per la Pau* (Centre for a Culture of Peace) is responsible for promoting public policy in the field of peace. The centre is host to activities regarding the retrieval and dissemination of the historical memory from the Civil War and bombings, the development of cooperation and solidarity, the promotion of public-spiritedness and coexistence, civic mediation service, education for peace, defending human rights, networking with other cities and municipal diplomacy.

“ Mayors for Peace struggle to ensure cities and citizens never again become military targets, victims of violence or war ”

The municipal action programme 2015-2019 lists the promotion of a culture for peace as one of its strategic priorities. This means that we must integrate the values of peace in

all projects: in public spaces, highlighting memory heritage; in educational projects in schools and in the squares and communities, from the perspective of acting as an educational city; promoting knowledge of the origins of neighbourhoods and their inhabitants and fostering a sense of belonging; promoting public-spiritedness and coexistence at all levels; working with organizations in the city to create joint programs, such as volunteering projects and programs of solidarity with other regions and even plans to receive refugees.

In the same way as organisations work in promoting the culture of peace within the city, Granollers encourages participation in international networks linked to the defence of human rights, peace and disarmament. These networks operate to establish cooperation programs with other municipalities and cities and to show solidarity with urban areas suffering violent conflict. Networks such as Mayors for Peace, which struggle to ensure cities and citizens never again become military targets, victims of violence or war.

From Granollers, in conjunction with many other municipalities working in their own unique way to implement policies and programs promoting peace, we intend to continue promoting municipal action to help create a world that rejects violence and inequality, a fairer, more caring and more peaceful world.

1. *The Sustainable Development Goals. What local governments need to know*, UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments)

2. You can consult the [complete text](#) from UN Secretary General's speech.

Photography: Carme Barbany

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INTERVIEW

Interview with Antoni Batista, journalist and writer

Eugènia Riera

International Catalan Institute for Peace

Antoni Batista, journalist and writer

Antoni Batista is one of the most knowledgeable Catalans in regards to the Basque conflict. He was a correspondent for the Basque Country for twenty-five years and, as a result of the knowledge acquired, has written nine books about the Basque political and social reality. In this interview, he talks about how the Basque society is experiencing the peace and reconciliation process after five years without any violence from ETA - a process still full of challenges for the future.

This summer you were in the Basque Country, working on a documentary precisely on the Basque conflict. What feelings did you have? Does the enthusiasm generated five years ago with the announcement of an end to the violence from ETA still remain?

The first and most important issue is that the cessation of violence is irreversible. There will be no more deaths, no more extortion, nor people threatened who will have to look underneath their cars when leaving home ... Peace is consolidated. And consolidates - this is the second important issue - despite the fact that the Spanish government does nothing to ensure this. And the third issue is that Basque society, like any society that has lived a nightmarish period, turns over a new leaf quickly. It has been five years since ETA has done anything, but it seems like fifty, in the sense that the Basque society is completely normalized.

The process of reconciliation, therefore, is on the right track?

Yes, it is going on a very good track. The cartography of the Basque society itself facilitates this: there are not so many people, nor do they have a very wide territory, in other words, there are few of them and they are very close together. In the same family there may be a minister of the Basque Nationalist Party (BNP), the father of a BNP businessman who suffered from extortion from ETA, and a daughter imprisoned and tortured for being a member of ETA. Another example is the notorious O'Shea Botín family. Iñaki O'Shea, founder of Herri Batasuna, is the son of a right-wing fascist and Emilio Botín's, Chairman of Banco Santander, brother-in-law. The circumstances of the Basque society allow the reconciliation to continue, not an easy step.

Don't you see a social fracture then?

I've never seen a social fracture and I lived there many years. Those who speak of social fracture are always the same people, the Spanish right wing. Social fracture, no; the society has not been torn apart. Political fracture, totally.

“ Peace is consolidated and the Basque society quickly turns over a new leaf; the reconciliation is going on a very good track ”

The cessation of violence is a firm step towards peace but the conflict still remains because it has not had the classic steps of a peace process, such as the opening a political negotiation. Can we expect any change in this respect?

It is clear that the PP government will not aid the institutional consolidation of peace, namely, the delivery of weapons by ETA, the sealing of the arsenals and a proportionated and scaled solution for prisoners and exiles. If there is another Government that is not from the PP, that continues on the left wing and in which Podemos is involved, I think that things could change. But as it is right now, that is political fiction.

The announcement of disarmament by ETA would not have an impact either?

This disarmament can facilitate other steps; recent history demonstrates that this also is to be seen. The nationalist left has been taking steps and the Spanish government has not done anything. If the Spanish government has not done anything when faced with the fundamental and highly important steps of stopping the killing, the extortion and the interfering with human rights, do we think that they will do something because ETA makes a symbolic delivery of weapons?

Another pending question is the review of the prison policy that affects ETA prisoners. How do you think it should be done?

The prison policy has reached surreal extremes. To make a prison policy as it should be, one only has to apply the current legislation. What do the law and the Constitution say? That those prisoners who have served three quarters of their sentences must be let out of jail, that those who are sick must receive special treatment, that they must be close to their families ... relating to law-abiding prisoners. Only with that, they would be in a détente process. But of course, make the law, make the catch or trick. And tricks, they have made many.

“ There has not been any social fracture in the Basque Country; those who speak are always the same people, the Spanish right wing ”

The report entitled “Investigation Project of Torture in the Basque Country (1960-2013)” registers more than 4,000 cases of allegations of torture at the hands of security forces. Should there be an institutional conviction regarding this?

Of course there should be! But if the Spanish Government is incapable of condemning the Franco regime, which is something obvious, how is it going to condemn the torture in the Basque Country?

A peace process should include the creation of a shared narrative of the past, an agreement on the report that helps to close the wounds and to address the future. The Basque Government has created the Institute of the Report, Coexistence and Human Rights. How do you evaluate the political reports that are being promoted?

I have had enough of that, instead of creating a common narrative, it would be nice to tell all the pieces of history from both sides and have everyone respect the other's point. Everyone has the right to their truth from the veracity of their conscience. I've tried to put myself in the shoes of an ETA member and of a Franco Commissioner to try to understand them. It is difficult to match up the stories but the important thing is that you respect each one. In any case, political reports are always necessary and the people who oversee them have to have the perspective to anticipate a variety of stories.

Next Sept 25th there will be regional elections in the Basque Country. Arnaldo Otegi has finally been disqualified to be candidate, however, he has decided to continue being present and leading the campaign. What do you think may be the power of the Otegi factor? Will it be a catalyst for the abertzale left wing?

Otegi will unilaterally lead the campaign and say whatever he has to no matter what the Spanish government does. Otegi is a brand-new man after coming out of jail, full of confidence and charisma, and the abertzale left wing is ready to face and knows well how to overcome any difficulties. They are not afraid and are indeed full of expectations on this new social and political era. This is already a great wakeup call!

To what extent does Otegi's disqualification *mandelizes* his figure?

I would say that he has been constantly *mandelized*, starting with him being excessively and unfairly sentenced to jail. PP is a great factory of supporters of the independence movement, as it has been stated; however, as they are also great manufacturers of Spanish nationalists, they continue winning elections. With this Spanish nationalist feeling they cover up the corruption scandals in which they are immersed.

Is it predicable that the nationalist left will overtake the BNP?

The overtake was predictable four years ago, after the great results of the local and regional elections. Now, PNB is closing its mandate with a pretty-good mark, Podemos is in crisis, and Otegi – the most well-prepared politician there is in all senses, peacebuilder, with great communicative capacity and empathy and with a vision of modern state- can not be elected. There are too many handicaps nowadays, but there is also good will for the future.

**“ Otegi is the most well-prepared politician:
peacebuilder, with great communicative capacity
and empathy and with a vision of modern state ”**

To what extent does the absence of violence increase the independence movement?

It is possible that violence contaminates the pro-independence sentiment, especially for the politics of the PP whereas “everything is ETA,” that the ends and the means coincide and, therefore, if you are pro-independence you are a terrorist. Now this will no longer occur and the absence of this violence can add to the number of separatists. But it is also possible that there will be a rest because with the disappearance of the epic – the prisoner, the tortured – the unifying force also disappears.

But how much sympathy for the separatists do you perceive in the Basque Country?

Sympathy for the independence movement in the Basque Country? The amount that you want. Now, before this fact of “tomorrow we will go towards independence with everything that that entails,” we divide the sympathies in half and we are generous. What I mean is that the utopian independence supporters have more sympathizers than militants may have real independence supporters.

Catalonia has always looked upon the Basque Country with a lot of interest. Now, with the Catalan process underway have the roles been switched? Have we gone from a Catalan Basquetis to a Basque Catalanitis?

They look at us but I would say not with catalanitis, but rather with a lot of caution. I talk in one of my books -“*Catalunya i Euskadi. Nació còncava i convexa*”- of the “resistance” factor as a symbolic and definite element of the Basque nation and Catalonia’s “pact” factor. At this time, Basque politicians look at us with sympathy but with a lot of caution. The Basques have an almost federal regional situation, more advanced than ours: they have their own internal revenue service, and the local rights reserve to the Statute and the Constitution. That’s why the BNP sees the Catalan process as a factor of destabilization from that which they have. The nationalist left looks on with more sympathy but, at the same time, they have already had the experience of negotiating with the right at the national level and it went badly. And what will happen with the Catalan right wing at the national? In a process such as this there will come a time when we will need to consider a confrontation; not military, fortunately, but peaceful resistance: enough is enough.

Photography : Antoni Batista

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SOBRE L'ICIP

News, activities and publications about the ICIP

ICIP

International Catalan Institute for Peace

Xavier Masllorens, new President of ICIP

The ICIP Board of Governors elected Xavier Masllorens as the new President of the Institution, in substitution of former president Rafael Grasa. The replacement is due to the renovation of part of the Board members appointed by the Parliament of Catalonia, which also meant the end of mandate of Grasa.

Xavier Masllorens, graduate in psychology and activist of social movements, has been former president of FundiPau, and General Director of the NGO Education without Borders and of the Organization for Intellectual Disability of Catalonia (Dincat). He has also worked as communication director for Sindic de Greuges and Intermon Oxfam.

The ICIP Board of Governors, as established by article 6 of the Law 14/2007 for the creation of ICIP, is composed by ten members: seven appointed by the Catalan Parliament (Cécile Barbeito, Carme Colomina, Vicent Martínez Guzmán, Xavier Masllorens, Óscar Mateos, Magda Oranich and Antoni Pigrau) and three other appointed by the Government (Carme Garcia, David Minoves and Manel Vila).

ICIP announces First Hip-Hop for Peace Contest

ICIP has announced the first edition of the ICIP Hip-Hop for Peace Contest with the aim of encouraging creativity and giving visibility to the commitment of young people in the field of peace.

The competition has two categories. The first one is open to students in secondary school, vocational training school and senior high school in Catalonia; the second category is open to young people between the ages of 12 and 25 who participate in youth, cultural, civic or social-educational action centers or organizations in Catalonia. In both cases, participating groups must have at least three members.

To participate, groups must compose a hip-hop piece with original rhymes and make a video recording of its performance lasting no more than four minutes. The lyrics of the songs must be related to the celebration of diversity; coexistence in urban areas or schools; criticism of violence; the denunciation of human rights violations; solidarity with people who are trapped by, or fleeing, armed conflict; or the role of youth in peacebuilding.

The deadline for submitting videos is Monday, November 28, 2016.

The First ICIP Hip-Hop for Peace Contest is being organized in conjunction with the Department of Education and the Directorate-General for Youth of the Generalitat of Catalonia.

A map of the Peace Capsules

The project Peace Capsules, which compiles reflections on what Peace is to different people from all over the world on a website, has been updated with a map which classifies these different visions of Peace by countries.

The project, created in 2014, aims at offering a view of the diversity of visions and expectations projected on the word Peace. People from different backgrounds and countries speak out their answer to the question: *What is peace to you?* according to their own experience living in a country under a conflict situation or to their commitment against war and in favor of peace.

Latest publications

Educació per la pau: com arribem a estimar i a odiar la guerra, by Nel Noddings. Published by ICIP and Pagès editors (in Catalan).

The role of children in Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration, ICIP Working Paper by
Angela Marcela Olarte.

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