



NATIONAL

## JOINT VENTURES WITH TERROR

**ETA has organised its truces in the form of three joint ventures – with the PNV, with ERC and with Zapatero – to forge ahead with secession**

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*In times ahead the Spanish people are going to have to face up to a major political problem; the problem of dismantling the Spanish constitutional system in a situation where two parallel and converging fronts come to meet – negotiations with a terrorist organisation which seeks to break Spain up, and a nationalist onslaught whose ultimate aim is to put an end to Spain's cohesion, unity and strength as a nation.\**



PHOTOS: EFE

Below: ETA declares a truce with Catalonia using a Catalan flag of independence (February 2004).  
Right: Zapatero and Carod Rovira at the Moncloa Palace (October 2004).

Engaging in political talks with a terrorist organisation can, and does, entail dire consequences for a democracy. Negotiation invariably strengthens the hand of the organisation and always debilitates democracy. But if, besides this, such political negotiation is conducted within the context of a nationalist offensive and a

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scheme to change the institutional system, then this is purely and simply suicide for a nation. There is nothing more foolhardy than presenting a terrorist organisation with the opportunity to set forth its claims in the midst of an agenda for a second transition.

The best thing we Spaniards have done in the last two centuries, which was to see through the political Transition, now lies in a state of bankruptcy, thus putting at serious risk Spain's historical, political and cultural continuity and posing the threat of social rift among Spaniards.

I know that my view does not tie in with the prevailing trend and I know that people prefer us not to give them bad news; that the welfare society induces a certain tendency to look the other way and to play down what happens and underrate it. To the extent that evil is not immediate, or it is not immediately and directly tangible, it tends to fade away from the daily concerns and priorities affecting citizens. This is only normal.

However the duty of those of us who are engaged in political life, if we do this through a sense of vocation and with passion, is to anticipate what goes on beneath the surface or might come to pass; to inform people on the groundswell and highlight matters that tend to remain concealed.

This does not mean causing alarm, but instead telling the Spanish people the truth. One has to be bold enough to tell the truth and to remind those people who have now swapped the word "peace" for "demands" about "unity" and that the most pressing need is to bring back the truth.

Peace and unity are only possible if we dare reinstate truth. It is all very well and fashionable to talk about peace and the need to restore unity in the face of ETA, but neither peace nor unity can be recouped by turning our back on the truth.

Today Spain is witnessing an unprecedented nationalist onslaught after ten years ago in Ermua, when the nationalist movements were in a state of panic for the first time in their history about losing power, losing the initiative and becoming just another episode within the history of Spain.

This is now the tenth anniversary of a nationalist offensive in which ETA has placed itself at the forefront thanks to three bogus truces; thanks to three rounds of political negotiations where first the PNV, then ERC (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya) and finally José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero have made agreements and held talks with ETA, that is, after they have paid a political price for a temporary cessation of terrorist acts.

Three truces in one decade. Truces that are not or ever have come without a price for Spanish democracy, because under the guise of a peace process such truces always represent, to use a term from business, joint ventures. That is the

political price right from the start: ETA's designs converging with those of another political agent and it forming a joint venture with them. Each might have their own particular goals but they agree to join forces to achieve certain specific ends.

Let nobody have any illusions about it: besides meaning a temporary cessation of terrorist acts by ETA, truces involving negotiations mean political agreements; they mean joint ventures. They mean paying the initial political price, which is concurring with ETA on a specific strategy.

At the first talks, in the first joint venture, which were partly held in Estella in 1998, the most notable feature was that the PNV, through its governing bodies, formally and solemnly assumed the right to self-determination as an objective and political design that it made its own, finally doing so after years of debate and hesitancy, and it maintains this undisturbed today. The ETA-PNV joint venture agreed upon in Estella consisted of these two agents coinciding with the aim of self-determination.

**“Three truces which have never come without a price for Spanish democracy, because under the guise of a peace process such truces always represent joint ventures. That is the political price”**

In the second truce, the joint venture was entered into between ETA and ERC, this taking place in Perpignan in 2003, and ETA set a case apart in its track record by for the first time jumping to an area outside the Basque Country and achieving a commitment on completely wrecking the constitution and self-determination for Catalonia with the other side of the bargain, as ever with ETA in such joint ventures, being a temporary cessation of killings in Catalonia, which, by the way, is the only one which it has not formally broken. The ERC-ETA joint venture consisted of the two concurring on completely tearing up the constitution.

Lastly comes the third joint venture negotiated; none other than that involving a meeting of the designs of ETA and those of Rodríguez Zapatero's government.

I know this is frightening, appalling and hard to believe, yet it is absolutely true. It is a fact of life which we Spaniards should know how to speak up about.

Zapatero seeks a kind of society without values, do-gooding-centre-left, a society characterised by the idea of “everyone against the PP”, a weak society that ensures his survival in government for many years hence, because only by changing society and only by enfeebling it can he be sure that the PSOE can stay in power for several years. And to change society he has to change the system we agreed upon in the Transition and replace the agent that is, and stands for, the PP with a

different political agent, a nationalist left-wing, and to do this he has to alter and change the Spanish political and territorial map. He has to create an unrecognisable Spain.

We are dealing here with a joint venture whereby Zapatero's design of a do-gooding centre – left Spain, bereft of values and characterised by the idea of “everyone against the PP”, an unrecognisable Spain, needs to be complemented and culminated by using a legalised version of ETA which is partly legitimised under the new Spanish political scenario.

Deep down this means setting up a new political playing field for Spain where there is no more room for the PP as an alternative and ETA can take part, even at the expense of pulling down the structure of the constitution and the unity of Spain. This is why the designs of ETA and those of Zapatero intersect. The Zapatero-ETA joint venture consists of changing the political playing field by debarring the PP and bringing in ETA.

In fact the misnomer of the “peace process” advanced by Zapatero and ETA has arrived along with three classic ETA demands:

- The legalisation of ETA in Basque and Navarran city councils.
- A territorial one in the shape of plans to annex Navarre with the nationalist cause.
- And a commitment to work towards an agreement on framing self-determination, which for ETA constitutes the scenario for obtaining power.

Everything else is mere prologue, prelude, preamble or circumstance. Everything else is accessories, propaganda or a smoke-screen. The key point is that.

For that reason neither I nor anybody else who cares to dare find out the truth need read the newspaper *Gara* to find out what this perverse joint venture involving convergence between ETA and Zapatero consists of.

Once again, this is ETA's ploy, as it always was. And for this reason in this joint venture the terrorist organisation is the one who holds the initiative, sets the pace and the only one who can break off arrangements.

It would be a ridiculous accusation to say that this lends credibility to a mouth-piece for ETA. It is not by reading *Gara* closely that the situation becomes clear, but by merely applying logic, common sense, experience and a knowledge of ETA as well as intellectual integrity in approaching the problem.

The difference is that while the first two joint ventures involving political agreements with the PNV and ERC were very straightforward, in this the third one, despite Rodríguez Zapatero's willingness, everything is that much trickier.

A temporary, limited joint venture between the PNV and ETA is not complicated. Those of us with some experience of politics in the Basque Country know only too well that “some shake the tree and others gather the nuts”.

And I imagine that a joint venture with ERC is also very straightforward. At the end of the day they are both organisations which came into being to break up Spain.

Nonetheless, a joint venture between the Spanish Government and a terrorist group is a completely different kettle of fish and is destined to failure. While all such joint ventures are hare-brained, this is much more so, as it is anti-natural because it is deeply immoral, because a government is only there to stamp out fear and terror, not to ally with it, not even temporarily. And because you cannot use a terrorist organisation to change the political playing field with the sole purpose of steamrolling the opposition and staying forever in power. This simply will not turn out right for Zapatero because Spain is a great nation. Another issue is the damage, the cost and the burden to Spain from this strategy of Zapatero’s.

**“ETA wants the possibility of this misnomer of a peace process becoming corrupted to the point where talks with the Government continue even if it kills and assassinates”**

Because of all this and without having to read *Gara*, many of us realise that the terrorist attack on Terminal 4 at Barajas airport provided confirmation that this joint venture was plunging into crisis and that “self-determination right now” as the starting point and guarantee for the process was giving way to “self-determination in stages”.

No sooner had the local elections ended, had ETA regained some power and funding through the Partido Comunista de las Tierras Vascas (Communist Party of the Basque Lands) and from ANV (Acción Nacionalista Vasca, *Basque Nationalist Action*) and no sooner had it confirmed that it would not return empty-handed, it “temporarily” brought an end to the joint venture. ETA holds the initiative, sets the pace and conditions action taken by the Zapatero government. And now it has instituted a hiatus.

ETA’s credentials do not need to be checked, neither yesterday, today or tomorrow, because ETA has not changed. It does not and will not ever change. It is what it is.

ETA seeks, and most particularly will go on to seek, the possibility for this misnomer of a peace process, which appeared to be aimed at ending terrorism, to become corrupted to the point where talks as part of this between ETA and the Government continue even if it kills and assassinates. For this reason the Gov-

ernment's return to the negotiating table in the wake of the Terminal 4 terrorist attack once again strengthens ETA's hand, gives it the initiative and ensures its uninterrupted progress. By doing this the Government continues to follow the route map marked out by ETA to the letter.

The only aspect that should be carefully monitored is Rodríguez Zapatero's attitude, now and in the future, when this hiatus, this deathly interlude, takes hold in Spanish society.

## **Results and consequences of the joint ventures**

To ascertain where we stand today and, above all, to find out what we must face up to in the future, from the standpoint of the alternative party in government, it is necessary to run the slide-rule over the decade and add up the consequences of these three disastrous joint ventures in the shape of the three truces: find out how democracy has fared on balance from these three mistakes.

The result does not just cover counter-terrorist policy in strict terms. The result must take in the nationalist offensive overall, include the point where the Spanish nation has been hit and explain the backward step taken in valuing freedom to understand the seriousness of matters in assessing the damage done. This outcome can be outlined briefly in ten basic points.

1.- The PNV has assumed self-determination as one of its own aims since Estella.

2.- We have a patently unconstitutional Statute of Catalonia and ERC has announced the "breakaway" of Catalonia if the Constitutional Court rules against its standpoints.

3.- ERC's radical Catalanian nationalism has replaced CIU in the joint government of Catalanian institutions from Perpignan.

4.- The vanguard of this nationalist offensive, i.e. ETA in Basque society and in Basque institutions, has been politically and socially legalised through the Communist Party of the Basque Lands and ANV.

5.- Many of the organisations springing from Spanish constitutionalism and which emerged following the Spirit of Ermua have been brought to a virtual standstill.

6.- A feeling of defencelessness and at times of persecution has come to the fore among victims of terrorism.

7.- For the first time since the Transition to democracy there are very real prospects of Basque nationalism getting into the Navarre Government and com-

ing to rule Álava again. For the first time self-determination for the Balearic Islands has appeared in the constitutions of certain of the Islands' institutions.

8.- The joint venture between ETA has to all intents and purposes put paid to the Parties Act and the Agreement on Liberties and against Terrorism.

9.- There is a new political legal doctrine which the Justice Minister has openly expressed and which the Attorney-General has put into practice. This doctrine espouses that the Spanish Nation's Rule of Law is based on laws having to be applied according to the circumstances.

10.- And the most serious consequence has occurred in the ambit of morality: lies, the end justifies the means, the Spanish are like minors... These are the mainstays of the policy that the present government presides over.

The diagnosis is clear. The question which remains is what should be done? How should one go about the rectification of matters that ought to be done?

I always considered myself to be in the centre and as a result I have been actively involved with the UCD (Union de Centro Democrático) and the PDP (Partido Demócrata Popular) prior to the re-founding in the form of the Partido Popular. My viewpoint today is that in searching for the centre you can and should never lose your bearings. When you lose your bearings you not only lose the centre, you lose your *raison d'être* and lose sight of why you are in politics, you veer close to the ridiculous and you end up getting shipwrecked.

Our reference point in Spanish politics, the reference point for everybody, for the left, for the right and for the centre is Spain. It is our nation. It is our constitution. And it is our Transition. Because Spain and freedom are two sides of the same coin.

**“One of the biggest blunders which have been made since the transition got underway stems from the fact that it was not politically correct to speak about Spain and the Spanish nation”**

The problem is that reality is a long way away from such a reference point. Spain is immersed in an unprecedented nationalist offensive which took an extraordinary turn for the worse when, instead of making a stand against it, Rodríguez Zapatero tried to run it and joined in with it and began a second Transition to replace the first one. All of this was with the sole objective of marginalising and crushing the Spanish centre-right, making “everyone against the PP” his single strategy for hanging onto power.

Spain is a great nation but it needs people in power who are convinced about this. And nowadays conviction is lacking. Let us not be mistaken; it is not just anti-terrorist policy, nor policy which directly relates to the Basque Country and Cat-

alonia. It is foreign policy, it is defence policy, it is the way in which soldiers killed in the Lebanon are received, it is policy on water which increasingly involves the course of rivers, it is policy on languages used in European institutions...

One of the greatest blunders that have been made since the transition got underway stems from the fact that it was not politically correct to speak about Spain and the Spanish nation, about the moral values which the history of a nation always involves, about its symbolism.

Reasons have always been found not to do this. Initially, due to the suddenness after the previous regime, the mere mention of the Spanish nation or the use of its symbolism was considered a provocation which earned you expulsion from the “political centre”. Later on it was an insurmountable hurdle when it came to reaching agreements with nationalists, who were almost always the key to coming to power. Afterwards it became a matter of avoiding being called “Spanish nationalists”.

A mistake. A huge mistake. We have suicidally dispensed with our most powerful political tool available for making a stand against terrorism, against the Basque national liberation movement, against nationalist offensives. Our most powerful tool is Spain, Spain as a nation, as a project, as a historical reality. Spain is much more than our respective acronyms stand for, much more than our tactics and strategies as politicians.

This is why today more than ever the alternative to the party in government must be based on and express itself through the conviction that Spain is a great nation. All our party’s alternative areas of policy and all its strategies must be built on this central theme and on this overarching idea.

Spain does not only mean a great history, does not just mean the articulation of a feeling, and is not only the expression of a universal culture. Spain’s strength is the only way for us to exist and influence an increasingly globalised world through the European Union.

But this will only become a reality if a majority of Spaniards understand this and share this view in their innermost convictions. This is why we must dare speak the truth. We have a political and moral duty not to conceal everything that is at stake from Spaniards. We must dare to make this reference point the centre of our political activity.