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The political use of victimhood: Spanish collective memory of ETA through the war on terror paradigm

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Abstract

Victims have become a topic of scholarly debate in conflict studies, especially regarding the impact of their activism on the evolution and termination of violence. Victims of terrorism are now enlisted within counter-terrorism, given their moral authority as spokespeople for counter-narratives and de-escalation. Our research explores how Spanish terrorism victims' associations have evolved across eras of political violence and how they mediate the translation of international War on Terror discourses into Spanish counter-terrorism. We offer a topography of how the War on Terror has opened a 'social front' in Spanish counter-terrorism, with Spanish political elites prominently employing the victims' associations to this end. Contemporary terrorism discourses are read back onto the memory of ETA, with victims' associations assisting the equation of ETA with al-Qaeda and ISIS. Collective memory of the defeat of ETA has also contributed the veneer of 'lessons learned' to contemporary counter-terrorism measures. Our research explores the fluidity of terrorism-memory and the importation of global terrorism discourses into Spanish politics, relying upon interviews with key stakeholders in victims' associations, local politics, and the research director of the new Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre in Vitoria.

Keywords: Counter-terrorism; Victims; Counter-narratives; Depoliticisation; Collective Memory; Spain

Introduction

In the last few decades, victims of terrorism are increasingly recognised by policymakers as possessing increased moral authority with regards to questions of security policy.[1] Across Europe, victims' organisations proliferate and many memorials, plaques, and monuments are dedicated to those who perished in *specific* attacks – often constructed on, or nearby, the site of their deaths.[2] But there is one museum to terrorism in Europe that does not address a single event or rely on a physical connection to tragedy. The *Fundación Centro para la Memoria de las Víctimas del Terrorismo* (Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre) in Vitoria, Spain, tells a *general* story about terrorism and its victims – incorporating exhibits about jihadism, radical Basque nationalism, and state-sponsored right-wing paramilitaries under one roof, flattening and erasing any differences between the groups, and between their victims.

By presenting an equivalence between radically divergent militant groups and between their victims, the museum demonstrates the contemporary salience of victimhood in European security

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[1]Orla Lynch and Javier Argomániz (eds), *Victims of Terrorism: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Study* (London: Routledge, 2017); Diego Muro, 'Healing through action?: The political mobilization of victims of Al Qaeda-inspired violence in Spain and the United Kingdom', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* 38:6 (2015), pp. 478–93.
[2]Charlotte Heath-Kelly, 'Survivor trees and memorial groves: Vegetal commemoration of victims of terrorism in Europe and the United States', *Political Geography*, 64 (May 2018), pp. 63–72.

politics. It is only victimhood that connects the dead of the Atocha train station bombing in 2004 by jihadists, with the nearly 800 assassinations carried out by ETA between 1967 and 2011. ETA was a domestic, armed organisation that used violence to advance a broader separatist movement, whereas jihadism is often framed as 'international' in origin and lacks any connection to Spanish social movements. Furthermore, ETA perpetrated the longest running insurgency in modern Europe – outlasting Irish republican and Italian leftist campaigns by many decades – whereas jihadist attacks in Spain are recent, and sporadic.

No other European nation has created a non-specific museum to the victims of terrorism. We argue that the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre is the culmination of domestic and international shifts in the governance of terrorism, made particularly visible in the case of Spain by ETA's longevity.

The longevity of the ETA insurgency allows us to track the development of political, social, and cultural discourses of terrorism victimhood through Spain's approach to ETA. ETA's armed struggle has been repeatedly rescripted under the influence of new understandings of terrorism, both domestic and international. It is no coincidence that Europe's only non-specific museum to terrorism is built in the Basque country. *The longevity of ETA's campaign has affected the way they are remembered*. The historical overlap between ETA's radical separatist campaign of car bombs and assassinations, and Spain's experience of jihadism, has meant that War on Terror frames are read back onto the legacy of ETA – allowing the differences between nationalist and jihadist organisations to be erased from collective memory, and 'flattening' the representation of terrorism as apolitical, fanatical, violent crime.

Importantly, this process was not accidental. In this article we trace how the emergence of peace activism in the 1980s gradually developed into a constellation of conservative victims' associations – fostered by the Spanish state – and used to delegitimate Basque nationalism by labelling political movements as apologists for terrorism. Spanish security actors have profited from the transposition of contemporary understandings of terrorism as fanatical crime (rather than political struggle) to ETA, because it allows them to appropriate victims' activism to delegitimate a wide range of Basque separatist activism as extremism. The zenith of this narrative transposition occurs in the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre where Europe's longest running separatist militant struggle is equated with the international terrorism of al-Qaeda.

In this article we provide a topography of developments in Spanish counter-terrorism, the co-option of many victims' associations by the state, and the collective memory of ETA. ETA's longevity allows us to demonstrate wider cultural shifts in public understanding of political violence through the Spanish case study. Our research adds to an extremely interesting, yet nascent, literature on victims and their political representation by situating victims' associations in both Spanish security politics and the international context of the War on Terror. While existing research has explored how the different constituencies of victimhood compete for narrative dominance and social authority,[3] our article will help to make sense of how victims' mobilisation and narratives are shaped by the global context.

The structure of our article moves through a literature review of victims' activism in politics, to a chronological exploration of how victims' associations were incorporated into the Spanish counter-terrorism regime, ending with an in-depth analysis of fraught memorialisation through the case of the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre. This case study is particularly important because it shows how the Spanish state deposited this museum in the heart of the Basque country to bolster its own version of collective memory – specifically, that ETA, al-Qaeda, and ISIS are comparable, totalitarian organisations. Here, memorialisation becomes a component within a counter-narrative campaign, which instrumentalises victims to prevent extremism through public

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[3]Cristina Flesher Fominaya and Rosemary Barberet, 'The right to commemoration and "ideal victims": The puzzle of victim dissatisfaction with State-led commemoration after 9/11 and 3/11', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 11:2 (2018), pp. 219–412.

delegitimation – transposing contemporary understandings of terrorism as apolitical fanaticism onto the past.

Our research asks the following questions: What role do terrorism victims play in Spanish security politics? How are present-day discursive frames read back onto the past and, concurrently, how are Spanish experiences of ETA used by political actors to claim counter-terrorism expertise and to justify new legal instruments? And finally, how does the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre demonstrate these political and narrative processes, by curating ETA's struggle alongside exhibits on al-Qaeda?

Researching ETA and Spanish security politics

The Basque Country straddles Northern Spain and France. Basque people are ethnically and culturally distinct from their neighbours and speak their own Euskara language. Approximately 91 per cent of the three million Basque people live on the Spanish side of the Basque Country (Hegoaldea). In 1959, a group of young Basque activists founded the ETA organisation – an acronym for 'Euskadi ta Askatasuna': 'Basque Homeland and Liberty'.[4] The armed organisation was founded in the context of Franco's dictatorship after the Spanish Civil War. General Franco staged his *coup d'état* against the Spanish government in 1936, and Basque regions were divided in their response to the rebel government. Franco's forces began to advance upon the Basque regions in 1937, and in April the Nazi regime's support for Franco's advance was confirmed by their intervention in the Spanish Civil War – which manifested in the destruction of Guernica by the Luftwaffe.[5] Twenty-five thousand Basques would perish in the Civil War, between 1936 and 1939. While these losses were comparable with other regions of Spain, the Basque Country experienced the Civil War as a nationalist war – one where they were conquered by Franco.[6] In the aftermath of the war, Franco banned the use of Euskara in public, destroyed the only university in the Basque country, and purged all those who had been loyal to the Basque nationalist cause.

In its early years, ETA took inspiration from anti-colonial movements stretching from Algeria to Cyprus and developed particularly strong organisational ties with the Irish Republican Army and Latin American rebel organisations. In 1968, ETA claimed its first victim – shooting a Spanish military police officer in Guipúzcoa when he detained two members at a roadblock. Next, they assassinated police commissioner Melitón Manzanas – prompting a furious reaction from the Franco regime. A spiral of action-repression-action then developed between the organisation and the regime, including the spectacular assassination of the Spanish Prime Minister Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco in 1973.

However, ETA did not disappear upon the death of Franco in 1975, nor with the Spanish transition to democracy. Their armed mobilisation for Basque independence continued through Spain's democratic transition, well into the twenty-first century, utilising car bombs and firearms assassinations to pursue their political goals and their organisational survival. Many of their eight hundred victims were civilians, and deaths attributed to ETA peaked in the late 1970s and early 1980s – with 82 murders in 1980. After several failed peace processes in the first decade of the twenty-first century, ETA finally disbanded – without much fanfare – in 2011.

To trace the representation of ETA (and their victims) in Spanish collective memory, we employ several methodological tools. Firstly, we have used documentary analysis to trace changes in Spanish terrorism laws. Secondly, we have used interviews and documentary analysis to trace the emergence of victims' associations in Spain, and their gradual incorporation into Spanish

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[4]Wayne Anderson, *The ETA: Spain's Basque Terrorists* (New York: Rosen, 2003), pp. 5–6.

[5]Theresa Whitfield, *Endgame for ETA: Elusive Peace in the Basque Country* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 38–9.

[6]Ibid.

security politics. Thirdly, we conducted a site-visit to the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre to interview the Museum's research director as well as to confirm that the site remains under construction.

Our qualitative fieldwork (particularly the interviews) was carried out in different stages. Some interviews were conducted as part of a 2004 project funded by the European Union's FP7 programme; others were conducted in 2009/10 within the PhD research of one of the authors. We also incorporate media sources from 2006 where prominent political figures discuss their preferred approaches to combatting terrorism. Finally, an interview was conducted at the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre in 2018. This sequencing of interviews helped us to recognise and track the shifts in Spanish collective memory of ETA, and the impact of the victims' associations on mediating the import of War on Terror frames. In our original interviews from 2004, there is little evidence of the 'international' frames we find in the later transcripts. This transference of War on Terror ontologies occurred slowly, beginning to appear in 2006 and becoming far more prominent in our 2010 sample. By 2018, the centrality of victimhood to the collective memory of ETA, and to the new social front in the War on Terror, is extremely evident.

In the 2004 research, political and civil society elites involved in the politics of the Basque conflict (including national and regional politicians, trade unions, peace movements, constitutional movements, victims, and journalists) were presented with an extensive survey – designed to collect their recollections, information, and attitudes. Most of the 43 participants were also interviewed by the researchers, to increase the depth of the data collection exercise. In 2009/10, a total of 27 in-depth interviews were carried out in with Spanish/Basque political elites and civil society organisations. We draw on part of this material for our genealogy and combine it with document analysis, interviews and online discourse of the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre in the autumn of 2018.

These methods allow us to track how terrorism, and its victims, are framed differently across recent Spanish history. Importantly, we trace changes in Spanish counter-terrorism to identify the importation of, and cross-pollination with, international frames. Crucially, our data collection finished in 2018 with the site visit to the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre. In an article of this length, we are unable to extend our analysis to the important new twists and turns emerging in Spanish politics around, and after, the exhumation of Franco – particularly discussion surrounding the criminalisation of 'apologies for Francoism'. While crucial, we must conclude our discourse analysis in 2018. This still allows us to tell the story of the victims' associations and the translation of War on Terror frames into Spanish counter-terrorism, and how this has impacted the collective memory of the ETA struggle.

The War on Terror paradigm we speak of is comprised of new ontologies of terrorism that emerged towards the end of the twentieth century, and the appropriation of 'the social' as a front in the fight against terrorism. Before the War on Terror (and its antecedent discourses found in 1990s terror discourse),[7] terrorism was prominently understood as armed conspiracy motivated by political and social goals. Armed groups were recognised as the militant wings of broader social movements, and it was not uncommon for analysts to track how violence ebbed and waned in accordance with losses and gains in the social movement's campaign.[8] Political rhetoric still demonised militants as 'monsters', but they were pursued as egregious criminals in accordance with a law and order mandate.[9]

The 'War on Terror' has produced a significant break with that ontology. In its early years, North American and Western European counter-terrorism strategy and discourse was reorganised

[7] Chin-Kuei Tsui, *Clinton, New Terrorism and the Origins of the War on Terror* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

[8] Martha Crenshaw (ed.), *Terrorism in Context* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Reuben Miller, 'The literature of terrorism', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 11:1 (2008), pp. 63–87; Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Bombing* (New York: Random House, 2006).

[9] Clive Walker, *The Prevention of Terrorism in British Law* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

around the 'New Terrorism' frame of apocalyptic, non-strategic, non-instrumental violence.[10] Lisa Stampnitsky has charted the development of terrorism discourse across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, paying particular attention to the roles of government agencies and think tanks in producing the era's understandings of fanatic fundamentalists, and how the terrorism industry slowly turned towards notions of radicalisation and extremism.[11] All pathologise the militant as deficient in rationality or social capital, deficiencies which drive them towards egregious violence.

The split from the 'law and order' ontology of armed, strategic organisations has engendered an important practical shift in the counter-terrorism landscape: the police are no longer the sole counter-terrorism actors. Instead there is growing recognition that terrorism should be fought on the terrain of the social – incorporating a variety of different actors and professional fields, including social media companies, multi-agency partnerships, and victims themselves. All can be responsibilised with reporting and prevention of radicalisation or enlisted in counter-narrative campaigns to build resilience to extremist narratives.

The increased salience and role of terrorism victims is our particular focus here. In the EU, the practice of enlisting/recruiting victims within Countering Violent Extremism projects (CVE) is becoming commonplace. The European Commission's Radicalisation Awareness Network dedicates an entire working group to the integration of victims in counter-terrorism (RAN RVT – Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism). Their testimonies and experiences are framed as resources for the fight against radicalisation in Europe, through increasing empathy for those who have suffered. Yet in Spain, victims have been at the forefront of counter-terrorism since the early 2000s – before CVE policy programmes started to globalise.[12] Victims hold a special place in the history of Spanish counter-terrorism, and their activism (and memorialisation) allow us to tell the story of how international security discourses have cross-pollinated with the domestic.

Academic research on the activism of terrorism victims is still limited in size, but is situated within a broader turn towards victims and victimhood across the social sciences.[13] Recent research has approached the role of victims in the evolution and termination of political violence. Although comparative approaches are still scarce, some interesting cross-country comparisons have been produced.[14] There is also comparative research explaining sociocultural similarities and differences in victims' collective actions demanding recognition.[15] Due to Spain's long-term experience fighting ETA in the context of the Basque nationalist conflict, and the prominence of terrorism's victims in Spanish politics, their role as political actors has been a matter of a detailed analysis.[16]

Rogelio Alonso[17] highlights the relevance of Spanish victims as an interest group, exerting pressure on social and political debates. In a more political analysis, Fernández de Mosteyrín explores the process of violence delegitimation in Spain across the 2000s through the mobilisation of victims and civic movements in coalition with major political parties.[18] In this process, civil

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[10]Martha Crenshaw, 'The debate over "new" vs. "old" terrorism', *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 10:1 (2003), pp. 48–54; Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[11]Lisa Stampnitsky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented 'Terrorism'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[12]Arun Kundnani and Ben Hayes, *The Globalisation of Countering Violent Extremism Policies* (New York: TNI, 2018).

[13]Anette Wieviorka, *The Era of Witness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[14]Lynch and Argomániz (eds), *Victims of Terrorism*.

[15]Muro, 'Healing through action?'.

[16]Gabriel Gatti, David Casado-Neira, Ignacio Irazuzta, Maria Martinez, Sandrine Revet, Jaume Peris Blanes, and Josebe Martinez, *Un mundo de víctimas* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2017); Ágata Serrano, 'La lucha social contra el terrorismo: testimonios de algunas víctimas de ETA', *Eguzkilore cuaderno del Instituto Vasco de Criminología*, 26 (2012), pp. 253–79.

[17]Rogelio Alonso, 'Victims of ETA's terrorism as an interest group: Evolution, influence, and impact on the political agenda of Spain', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 29:6 (2017), pp. 985–1005.

[18]Laura Fernández de Mosteyrín, 'La guerra contra el terror y la transformación de los umbrales de violencia tolerada: un estudio de la violencia en el País Vasco (1998–2010)' (PhD dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2013), ISBN: 9788461752034.

society organisations created and mobilised new narratives on terrorism and counter-terrorism. More recently, Javier Argomániz has focused on the ideological dimension of victims' mobilisation by explaining their role as conveyers of a counterterrorist narrative.[19] Continuing this line of research, Ioannis Tellidis has explored the different narratives of political actors, successfully pointing at the discourse of negation of conflict as an obstacle to peace.[20] It is to this promising line of inquiry that our contribution adds.

As we detail in the next section, victims have been incorporated as central protagonists within states' counter-narrative agendas against subversive movements.

Victimhood and counter-terrorism: From peace activism to counter-narrative campaigns

The shift in victims' activism, and the uses to which it is put, is a striking feature of Spanish security policy across the decades. Popular mobilisation against conflict began in the mid-1980s, beginning with small-scale pacifist demonstrations in the Basque Country and the formation of peace organisations (Association for Peace and Reconciliation in Euskal Herria, and Gesture for Peace in Euskal Herria).[21] The protests organised by Gesture for Peace often took the form of silent vigils against ETA's violent domination of Basque society.

These demonstrations reached their peak in 1997, and with millions of people joining the protests, victims' activism became burgeoning social movement. 1997 was just one year after the premiership of José Maria Aznar (of the People's Party, PP) began. Aznar was the first openly conservative prime minister since the rule of Franco. His political campaign had leant heavily on promises to defeat ETA and eradicate its networks, and he was seen as a natural champion of the victims.[22]

In the mid-1990s, ETA increased its targeting of civil society representatives. The Civil Guard managed to free ETA's high-profile hostage, prison officer José Ortega Lara, in 1997 – only for ETA to immediately retaliate by kidnapping the conservative politician, M. A. Blanco (of Aznar's People's Party) in Ermua (Euskadi). ETA demanded that its prisoners be regrouped in Basque jails, in exchange for Blanco's release. Aznar's government refused, and ETA assassinated their hostage. This became a turning point in the Basque and Spanish civil societies as a whole.[23] A large coalition emerged against terrorism. Massive demonstrations took place across the country mobilising many different new organisations that would eventually cohere as a constitutional movement. Importantly, these demonstrations began as organic, spontaneous demands for peace. The ideological atmosphere of the 'constitutional movement' made up by civil society organisations around victims of terrorism was called 'The Spirit of Ermua'.

In the next decade (1997–2008), multiple new victims' associations were set up, including: *Asociación de Víctimas del Terrorismo* (AVT); and *Colectivo de Víctimas del Terrorismo* (COVITE). These groups allied with civic organisations (*Movimiento Manos Blancas*, *Iniciativa Ciudadana Basta Ya*, *Fundación Foro de Ermua*), to campaign for victims' recognition and increased security. Except for the anti (Iraqi) war movement in 2003, the largest public demonstrations for two decades were against ETA or demanding tougher response to terrorism

[19]Javier Argómaniz, 'A battle of narratives: Spanish victims organisations international action to delegitimise terrorism and political violence', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 41:7 (2017), pp. 573–88.

[20]Ioannis Tellidis, 'Peacebuilding beyond terrorism? Revisiting the narratives of the Basque conflict', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2018), available at: {https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1452794}.

[21]Agata Serranò, 'The Evolution and Protection of the Rights of Victims of Terrorism in Spain', paper presented to the European Consortium of Political Research, Bordeaux, 2013, available at: {https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/0d9a078b-e975-4a20-8d98-61c6e10c4c88.pdf} last accessed 3 March 2020.

[22]Adrián Tarín Sanz and José Manuel Rivas Otero, 'Leadership styles and war and peace policies in the Spanish-Basque conflict: A discourse analysis of José María Aznar and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero', *Social Sciences*, 7:68 (2018).

[23]María Jesús Funes, 'Social responses to political violence in the Basque Country: Peace movements and their audiences', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42:4 (1998), pp. 493–510.

by the state. According to the Spanish Interior Ministry, four thousand demonstrations took place against terrorism between 1998 and 2006.

Although collective action against violence was not new, the second wave of anti-terrorism demonstrations (from the mid-2000s) showed a rather different face compared to the previous. These were not peace movements of the like examined by María Jesús Funes[24] and Ioannis Tellidis.[25] Their frame, their demands, and their repertoires of collective action[26] were not pacifist, but an effort to connect terrorism to nationalism and marginalise ETA's social support by defending the established constitutional system against nationalist demands. Victims' activism was politicised through claims about the necessity of tougher measures against ETA and its political support structure. A new narrative about the problem of terrorism was disseminated through a wide repertoire of actions including mass demonstrations, judicial processes, and public engagement activities like lectures, seminars, workshops, periodical publications.[27] The 'politics of delegitimation' was the process by which this movement, in coalition with political parties and governments, mobilised narratives on terrorism that shaped Spanish regulations. This discourse identified radical nationalism as the wellspring of terrorism and its social support and attempted to marginalise it – mirroring the counter-narrative approaches to terrorism, now commonplace in Europe.

In clear opposition to Basque peace movements during the 1980s and 1990s, a new diagnosis of the problem of ETA had emerged. The emerging political narrative on the problem of terrorism had the following schema/plot: (1) there was no political conflict between the Basque country and Spain, and pacifist movements were wrong to pursue dialogue as a strategy towards peace; (2) terrorism is irrational, criminal, and non-political violence; (3), the 'full force of law' is the solution, which entails an expansion of coercive regulations without invoking special powers, but including proscription of political parties; and (4), victims are central to the delegitimation of terrorism.[28]

Plot points 2 and 4 are particularly indicative of the transposed War on Terror ontology and its accompanying counterterrorist strategy – a point we will return to later. First, we shall demonstrate the presence of these features in Spanish laws. Each of the four points were inscribed in the Agreement for Liberties and against Terrorism (an anti-terrorist Agreement between the two major political parties in 2000, the PSOE and PP). This policy framework toughened criminal codes, increased police sophistication and intelligence methods, and expanded international cooperation – using an image of Basque terrorism as a rallying point. As a result, 'Apology for Terrorism' was codified as a crime and new regulations expanded throughout the decade. This law criminalised forms of commemoration and speech understood to demonstrate sympathy for ETA prisoners. Victims' associations now monitor commemorative gatherings in homage to ETA members in the Basque country as forms of extremism, denouncing these demonstrations to the police and in an attempt to secure prosecution.[29]

Even more controversial was the Political Parties Act (2002), which proscribed radical nationalist parties, extending the reach of moves to criminalise the 'refusal to condemn terrorism'.[30]

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[24]Ibid.

[25]Tellidis, 'Peacebuilding beyond terrorism'.

[26]Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[27]Fernández de Mosteyrín, 'La guerra contra el terror y la transformación de los umbrales de violencia tolerada'.

[28]Laura Fernández de Mosteyrín, 'Communication as legitimation in Spanish CVE: Bringing lessons from the past', in A. Martini, K. Ford, and R. Jackson (eds), *Encountering Extremism: A Critical Examination of Theoretical Issues and Local Challenges* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming).

[29]According to COVITE's Observatory of Radicalization there were 399 acts of terrorist legitimation between 2016 and 2020 in the form of homages, paintings, or demonstrations in favour of prisoners amnesty. See: {https://covite.org/observatorio/}.

[30]Emmanuel Pierre-Guittet, 'Is consensus a genuine democratic value? The case of Spain's political pacts against terrorism', *Alternatives*, 33:3 (2008), pp. 267–91.

This initiated the decline of ETA's community of support.[31] This constitutional movement and the programme of legal measures found wide societal support among public opinion with alternative and more nuanced visions among Basque community.[32]

The international context of depoliticising ETA: Using the War on Terror paradigm

The late 1990s and early 2000s saw the international spread of policy discourses that categorised terrorism as irrational and non-political in nature.[33] As examined earlier, the discourse of 'New Terrorism'[34] narrated an epochal shift in the causes of terrorism as political violence increasingly appropriated religious ideology. This narrative of 'apocalyptic' terrorism influenced policymakers in the Global North to abandon negotiation and prosecution as conflict resolution methods, and paved the way for policies familiar to the early years of the War on Terror – such as counter-radicalisation policies, and counter-narrative campaigns that deploy victims and their stories to build social empathy with the victims of terrorism and delegitimate armed struggle.[35] We have referred to this as the opening of a 'social front' in counter-terrorism.

Our fieldwork with Spanish and Basque elites has shown that strong efforts were made in this period to open a social front in the war against terrorism, but in 2004 this narrative was limited to rejecting the causal significance of external, political, and structural factors for separatist violence. All the non-nationalist actors we spoke to agreed that the radical Basque nationalists had been very successful in presenting their cause to international audiences in the 1980s and 1990s, and they responded by denying and undermining the political roots of the struggle. The President of the Foro de Ermua (a Basque civil society organisation working to represent the victims of ETA) stated to researchers in 2004 that:

> Confusion. It is an attempt of conflict … the first instrument of Basque nationalism was the creation of an invented situation … a situation that provoked a perception of victimisation that is not real.[36]

The president strongly refused any connections between Basque social movements, political history, and ETA's armed struggle – denouncing such narratives as 'attempts at confusion'. This relegation of armed actors as fanatics continued, but after the effects of the 11 March 2004 bombings, politicians began to explicitly draw on War on Terror in their condemnations of ETA and their drive for political consensus around condemnation;[37] for example Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero has made clear use of the 'apolitical fanatic' ontology of terrorism in his speeches:

> Anyway, in the terrorism issue consensus are much more meaningful and numerous than differences. The unity of all democrats against terrorism has been the core challenge of Spanish political parties. It has also been a fruitful element insofar as it allows us to set a

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[31]Teresa Whitefield, *Endgame for ETA: Elusive Peace in the Basque Country* (London: Hurst, 2014).

[32]Euskobarómetro, 'Informe del Centro Memorial de las Víctimas del Terrorismo. La Sociedad Vasca ande la Memoria del las Víctimas y el Final del Terrorismo' (2 July 2017), available at: {https://www.ehu.eus/documents/1457190/1547454/informe+centro+memorial+y+euskobarometro.pdf/8c93924f-20f7-44c4-a4fb-25153f816202} accessed 28 October 2019.

[33]Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terror: Language, Politics and Counterterrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

[34]Isabelle Duyvesteyn, 'How new is the new terrorism?', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 27:5 (2004), pp. 439–54; Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[35]Javier Argomániz and Orla Lynch, 'Introduction to the Special Issue: The complexity of terrorism – victims, perpetrators and radicalization', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 41:7 (2018), pp. 491–506.

[36]Author's fieldwork interview with President of the Foro de Ermua. Madrid, November 2004.

[37]Pierre-Guittet, 'Is consensus a genuine democratic value?'.

lined that differentiated not the left and the right, the nationalist and statalist, but the democrats and the violents.[38]

However, using the War on Terror narrative of 'new terrorism' (apocalyptic, apolitical and ungrounded in social struggles) to frame ETA was not without its challenges and discursive ruptures in this early period. The Atocha station bombing of 11 March 2004 led to a profound rupture in efforts to homogenise the eras of terrorism within one Spanish narrative.

Research has shown that the prime minister's misattribution of the 11 March bombings to ETA provoked the politicisation of left-allied victims' associations. Their outrage at the careless blaming of ETA for their loved one's deaths led them to publicly advocate a very different narrative about the causes of terrorism (that is, Spanish belligerence in the war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan). This temporarily displaced the monolithic conservative narrative of victims of ETA. A divide opened between associations representing victims of ETA, and those representing the dead of Atocha.[39] The contention among victims' organisations intensified when the socialist government attempted dialogue with ETA in 2006 – generating a strong new wave of demonstrations in which the transposition of War on Terror ontology onto ETA was specially visible under the slogan 'not [negotiation]in my name'. Negotiation would mean giving political meaning to terrorism and, as it was established since the Anti-terrorist Agreement, there was no politics in terrorism.

While a powerful rupture, this contestation of the dominant conservative narrative was temporary. At the end of the decade, when ETA was coming to an end, the depoliticised War on Terror ontology applied to ETA was normalised. Indeed, international politics was considered by victims' associations activists and politicians as paramount to aiding the domestic delegitimation of ETA:

If, in the international sphere, [terrorism] stops being understood as a revolutionary instrument for justice, then it helps us … this is why we have to care for what them to have a good knowledge of what is going on here.[40]

Democracies from all over the world, especially the European ones, have their responsibility [in the endurance of violence]. The ignorance on the real situation in the Basque Country and Spain, the distance with which they were observing what was going on, the skepticism, the indifference … favoured for many years, in many media forums, that intellectuals, scholars and politicians around the world would see ETA's activity either with sympathy or with certain understanding. Together with the international activism of pro-etarras [ETA supporters] … generated an international equidistant attitude. … This indifference, with which Europeans have observed the Basque terrorism, vanished on 9/11. The feeling of vulnerability, the insecurity pushed (and how strongly it did!) some European reluctant to implement two European initiatives.[41]

ETA finally renounced armed struggle in 2011 in the context of indifference from the Spanish government and its main political parties. It was the termination of almost fifty years of violence whose end came about with no apparent political impact. How was the termination of ETA's struggle such a non-event? The answer lies in co-option of victims' associations and the opening of a social front in the Spanish War on Terror during the period 2004–11. By flattening the

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[38]José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, former president of Spanish government, quoted in Baltasar Garzòn, *La Lucha contra el Terrorismo y sus Límites* (Madrid: Adahara Editorial, 2006), p. 24.

[39]Cristina Flesher Fominaya, 'The Madrid bombings and popular protest: Misinformation, counter-information, mobilisation and elections after "11-M"', *Contemporary Social Science*, 6:3 (2011), pp. 289–307.

[40]Author's interview with activist of Foro de Ermua, Madrid, December 2009.

[41]Rosa Díez, UPYD elected politician, quoted in Garzón, *La Lucha contra el Terrorismo*, pp. 103–04.

historical and contextual differences between militant organisations of historical and contemporary nature, ETA became 'just one of many' terrorist organisations operating in the domestic and international sphere.

The constitutional and victims' movements emerged from the very local dynamics of the Basque conflict and yet, across the decade, the importation of war on terror discourses altered both. The absorption of terrorism's victims and Spanish security into the War on Terror frame radically disconnected both from their original relationship with ETA. ETA became 'just another' instance of a global insecurity phenomenon (terrorism), against which state and society continued to struggle.

As illustrated before, the assassination of M. A. Blanco in 1997 sparked the 'enough is enough' spirit known as the 'Spirit of Ermua', and allowed new civil society actors with wide societal support to reformulate understandings of political violence. Above all, the Anti-terrorist Agreement gave a voice and support for victims, opening the space for multiple initiatives that recognised the status and suffering of victims of terrorism. As a consequence, in 2001 the *Fundación Víctimas del Terrorismo* (FVT) was a state-led initiative to coordinate and channel support for the many victims' associations across the country and to better fulfil historical demands of recognition, dignity, and justice.

The existing Law of Solidarity with Victims of Terrorism (CD32/1999) was reformed in 2003 for purpose of civic recognition, as well as to include victims of terrorist attacks abroad. However, the Agreement did more than merely recognise and dignify victims. It opened the space for their political instrumentalisation, as Alonso argues.[42] It is not our point to argue for or against the autonomy of victims, but to suggest that it was in the context of this agreement that their voices opened, and sustained, the 'social front' in Spain's War on Terror. Victims became central, and coopeted actors, within the Spanish state's transposition of War on Terror ontologies of terrorism (fanatical, apolitical extremism) and efforts to delegitimate and silence radical actors.

This co-option of victims' activism by the state is particularly evident with regards to collective memory of terrorism. In 2011 a new Law For Victims of Terrorism (*Ley 29/2011 de 22 September de Protección Integral de Víctimas del Terrorismo*) included, among many other things, the recognition of victims of terrorism as comparable in states to military personnel killed in peacekeeping operations. This law also presented initial plans for the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre – not intended just for the remembrance of the past, but as a mechanism for counter-narrative campaigns in the Basque region. The 'battle of narratives' eloquently illustrated by Argomániz[43] had become ever more prominent after the end of ETA. In formalising a particular account of Spanish history, the politicians used the museum – and victims' associations – to deny, and even criminalise, the political claims of Basque nationalists, through their counter-narrative campaign. As we showed earlier, counter-narrative campaigns are central to contemporary European counter-terrorism – relying upon, and perpetuating, ontology and strategies that are central to the War on Terror era.

But contemporary counter-terrorism ontologies are not just read back onto the past; Spain's experience of fighting ETA is also used to legitimate the introduction of *new* policies. This blurring of the era's, as we show here, further points to the equivalence drawn between the ETA campaign and contemporary jihadism. In 2012, while addressing the Spanish victims' organisations, a Spanish general promoted the potential of counter-narrative work and societal resistance as a strategy against jihadism – given that it had worked against ETA:

What can be done? What you people do … Resist. We should resist. We should strengthen our society … even if there are attacks … we need to fight … the first and foremost strategy is negation. It is to convey the message that you will never gain political ends. It is

[42]Alonso, 'Victims of ETA's terrorism as an interest group'.
[43]Argomániz, 'A battle of narratives'.

impossible! … This is why we need to stimulate resilience as the capacity of all society around its victims.[44]

The past was identified as a very useful resource, with which to refresh Spanish CT discourse by constantly relying to the *lessons learned*. For example, as a former director of the National Policing Agency has stated:

Spain has extensive experience in CT. Throughout many decades, we have combated the terrorist gang ETA that caused intense suffering to Spanish society, yet was defeated. So, Spain is among the countries in the international community that shows that it is possible to defeat terrorism with determination, courage and the rule of law.[45]

The framing of ETA as 'a gang' also carried over into security service discussions of how to refer to ISIS:

DAESH and not Islamic State … among my colleagues and security agencies personnel we refuse to speak of Islamic State because to some extent it is legitimising. It is DAESH, an international terrorist organisation. And this is something we should start making publicly aware and remark on, we need to say each thing in its own terms.[46]

Similarly, stakeholders drew from their 'learning' about incorporating ETA's victims into a social front of counter-terrorism. Victims have become useful as exemplars of collective resilience; they represent 'determination and courage', so making them bearers of the counter-narrative campaign makes stronger societies. According to the Spanish National Security Strategy,[47] victims are the social group with moral superiority in representing society's efforts and this is where the transposition of a narrative against ETA is most prominent.

Terrorist's victims should be at the forefront of counter-terrorism, not only for adequate recognition, but as an instrument for countering radicalization and violent extremism. The dissemination of counterterrorist culture, through pedagogic exercises over past events and hate dissolution are paramount.[48]

In sum, and according to the 2011 Victims Law,

Political signification of victims requires their social recognition and becomes an essential tool to the ethical, social and political delegitimation of terrorism. Remembrance is an act of justice and a civilising instrument, at the same time … *a tool for the complete social delegitimation of the use of violence to assert political ideas.*[49]

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[44]Asociación Víctimas Terrorismo, 'Desafíos del terrorismo actual' (conferencia dirigida a la AVT por el General M. A Ballesteros, director del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, 2012), available at: {https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_GwQ1RVqqQ} accessed 1 September 2019.

[45]Instituto de Seguridad y Cultura, Interview with former director of the Spanish National Police Agency, CNP (12 June 2017), available at: {https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ou0l1eDvGto}.

[46]Spanish Counterterrorist and Organized Crime Intelligence Agency (CITCO) personnel, broadcasted seminar (Real Instituto Elcano, 2017), 40 mins.

[47]Departamento de Seguridad Nacional, Gobierno de España, 'Informe Anual de Seguridad Nacional' (2017), available at: {https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/actualidad/sala-prensa/aprobacion-del-informe-anual-seguridad-nacional} accessed 1 September 2019.

[48]Ibid., p. 26.

[49]Boletín Oficial del Estado, Gobierno de España, 'Ley 29/2011 de 22 de Septiembre, de Reconocimiento y Protección Integral a las Víctimas del Terrorismo' (*BOE* núm. 229, de 23 de septiembre de 2011), p. 0100566, emphasis added by author. Available at: {https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2011/09/22/29}.

This incorporation of remembrance and victims' testimonies into the War on Terror's 'social front' reached its culmination in 2015. In that year, Spain's first policies on Countering Violent Extremism were enacted. In response to the departure of thousands of Europeans for Syria as foreign fighters, Spanish authorities brought forward a new Counter-Jihadist Agreement in 2015, which expanded counter-terrorism capacities. With very little public debate around it, this programme reproduces global p/CVE policy paradigms.[50] Although CVE programmes are new in Spain, 'extremism' has been successfully prosecuted since the early 2000s, when counterterrorist legislation was expanded to cover acts of 'glorification' in the Basque case. The criminalisation of 'glorification', in particular, enabled Spanish officials to insert anti-jihadist measures into an established narrative about defeating ETA's support base. The importance of the domestic/international intersection of terrorism discourses in Spain is that these new *powers were legitimated through appeals to prior experience with ETA*. There is fluidity to the cross-pollination of domestic and international discourses of terrorism, with evidence that transfer occurs in both directions.

The denial of political roots to the Basque conflict, and the mobilisation of victimhood and memory within Spanish counter-terrorism, is demonstrated to the highest degree at the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre, planned for Vitoria in the Basque Country – to which we now turn our attention.

Memory and denial of conflict in the Spanish Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre

The dynamics explored above, in relation to the role victims' associations have played in Spanish memory politics, have most recently crystallised around a disused building in Vitoria-Gasteiz. It is here that the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre is planned. Museological curation will be used to solidify, and bring into material existence, the denial of political roots to separatist violence. The Memorial Centre represents, we argue, the pinnacle of longstanding efforts to operationalise victimhood in the service of counter-terrorism – while reading War on Terror ontology back onto past militancy. As we will demonstrate here, the contemporary discourse of 'counter-narratives' from the arsenal of Countering Violent Extremism measures is marshalled to explain the purpose of the Memorial Centre.

One of the provisions of the 2011 Act on the Victims of Terrorism was the creation of a Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre in the Basque Country. The Centre has been delayed in opening, but has obtained premises in Vitoria-Gasteiz (the Basque administrative capital), has a full website,[51] and maintains a staff of researchers who plan the exhibits and the 'documentation centre' (an archive of materials, potentially of use to researchers of Basque political violence). In our conversations with the Memorial Centre's research director, it became very clear that a wide range of violent struggles would be juxtaposed in the museum – from al-Qaeda, to ETA, to right-wing paramilitaries employed by the Spanish state to repress the Basque radical nationalist movement (GAL). ETA, the stories of its victims, and the civil movement to delegitimise the organisation will take centre stage – but the research director was adamant that ETA can be presented alongside jihadist organisations, given that all are 'criminal organisations'.[52] The discursive manoeuvres by which ETA and al-Qaeda are equated in the museum's plans are discussed below, to demonstrate how Spanish collective memory of Basque separatism is mediated through a War on Terror lens.

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[50]Laura Fernández de Mosteyrín and Pedro Limón, 'Paradigmas y Políticas de Seguridad: una aproximación al Plan Estratégico Nacional de Lucha contra la Radicalización Violenta PEN-LCRV 2015', *Política y Sociedad*, 54:3 (2017), pp. 805–27.

[51]See: {http://www.memorialvt.com/en/} accessed 10 September 2019.

[52]Interview by the author with the research director at the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2018.

A committee of experts was founded to scope out plans for the centre and, in 2015 they released their report on the recommended content and mission of the centre.[53] The report of the expert committee, and the museum itself, explicitly equate ETA's violence with that of al-Qaeda, and strongly condemn arguments that ETA's broad base of support – and opposition to Francoist repression – make it a participant in a conflict with Spain. This political context is explicitly taken off the table and banned from the Centre:

> After the defeat of ETA, the world that supported it is willingly working to distort what happened. They argue that a political conflict between Euskadi and Spain exists, and that there were two confronting violences – both of which produced victims – for which we need to apologise. Or they invoke Francoism as a legitimising element of ETA. Responding to these aspirations, the Memorial should become a meeting point of those who wish to build a faithful memory of what happened, based on the suffering of victims and the existence of ETA's terrorism as a baseline, as the principal cause of the horror of the last forty years, of all that happened: without additions, but without forgetting. We want to value the polyphony of different narratives, but with the red line of refusing to accept the justification of terrorism or any other human rights violations. Neither would we accept the dictatorship or reactive terrorism as the base of ETA's free and voluntary decision of killing its fellow citizens.[54]

More surprising, perhaps, is that this depoliticisation of ETA's separatist struggle does not just rely on the War on Terror's narrative of terrorism as apolitical fanaticism, but also strongly invokes the Holocaust as the appropriate context for memorialising victims. The report of the expert committee situates the mission of the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre in the legacy of the Holocaust – opening with a quote from Primo Levi's 'If this is a man' on the need for society to openly and fully assess the causes of the Holocaust in order to prevent recurrences. This is not simply a passing rhetorical device. Later, the Committee of Experts uses the letter of Elie Wiesel (the Head of the US President's commission on the Holocaust) to President Carter to situate and guide their own project's mission. Using no less than 14 quotes from Wiesel's document on the importance of Shoah victims' testimony and its capacity to redeem the world, the Committee draw a direct link between the Nazi genocide and militant struggle of ETA:

> 'The murderers needed to create a division to fulfill their criminal objectives', explains Wiesel. It is obvious that this was the case in the Basque Country, as it is obvious that this division is trying to continue today – so that we are not able to pay tribute to the victims … Wiesel also speaks of the need to 'fight against silence and ignorance'. He reminds us that the Americans repeated, 'We did not know, we did not understand the magnitude of the problem.' He himself, in his personal testimony of the tragedy that he experienced as a child, recalls that he repeated, 'this cannot be happening'. *What has happened with the terrorism of ETA should embarrass us, but we must also be aware that it has been a constant in all cases in which there have been affronts of this nature to human dignity.* The criminals have always counted on the passivity of society, with the mixture of cowardice and ignorance, or both at the same time, of 'not wanting to know'. In the case of ETA, it also counted on the problematic situation of a transition from a dictatorship to democracy.[55]

The positioning of the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre in the legacy of the Holocaust is, at first, a perplexing discursive move. There has been no genocidal violence undertaken by ETA,

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[53]Ministerio del Interior, Gobierno de España, 'Informe de la Comisión de Expertos para la definición del Centro para la Memoria de las Víctimas del Terrorismo' (Madrid: Ministerio del Interior, 2015).

[54]Ibid., p. 9.

[55]Ibid., emphasis added.

al-Qaeda, nor any of the other protagonists discussed in the museum's exhibits. An enormous difference in the scale of violence, as well as the state/non-state identity of the perpetrator, besets the situation of terrorism memory in the legacy of the Holocaust.

The application of the Holocaust frame to victims of non-state terrorism is motivated by the transfer of cultural and normative significance, rather than any direct comparisons between historical events. As Alejandro Baer and Natan Sznaider show, the Holocaust can be understood as a historical event – but it is also a transnational pedagogical device and moral lesson that transcends the groups involved as victims, bystanders, and perpetrators.[56] It is the universalised injunction of 'never again!' – used here to compel the condemnation of ETA. Perplexingly, the application of the Holocaust legacy to Spain is more commonly associated with the war crimes committed by fascist troops during the Civil War, and not the ETA campaign.[57] The context of the Holocaust was also entirely absent from our earlier interviews and documentary analyses. So, its deployment here is unusual and compelling.

The application of the Holocaust narrative to terrorism frames it as apolitical violence, driven by evil, motivated to destroy the liberties and rights of democratic society. In this way, the War on Terror discourse of 'new terrorism' is consolidated through an additional cultural resource – further forbidding the exploration of political root causes. By associating ETA's violence with the Nazi genocide, all statements about Spanish repression of Basque independence claims, and the emergence of the ETA in resistance to Franco's regime become 'apologies for totalitarianism'. The mental gymnastics of evoking (Nazi) state terror as a comparison for ETA, while forbidding the discussion of ETA's roots as an opponent of Francoist state terror, evokes a schizophrenic tone in the Committee's report. Here ETA – a non-state actor – is rendered as the equivalent of Nazi totalitarianism, but their original adversary – Franco's regime – cannot be included in the same comparison.

In a recent historiography of political violence in Spain, Pablo Sanchez León has outlined the topography of memory that makes this transposition possible. In 'Past Jihads', Sanchez-León speaks of the 'regime of memory' implemented within the Spanish transition to democracy.[58] The memory regime of the democratic period is built upon the post-civil war equation of both sides in the civil war. This is otherwise known as the reconciliation paradigm in which both sides were responsible and there were no winners and losers, but only shared guilt. When it comes to the collective memory of terrorism, however, this paradigm is shaken. Spanish laws to recognise the rights of victims of terrorism run contrary to the reconciliation paradigm – which has otherwise stressed the oblivion of past misdeeds, to ensure the successful transition to democracy.[59] The pressures upon the 'reconciliation paradigm' from contemporary contexts of human rights and transitional justice causes fissures in Spanish efforts to memorialise terrorism – provoking the turn to unexpected sources which could lend stability, such as traditions of transnational Holocaust memory.

Still, these fissures are visible to the careful observer. In Spanish memory politics, ETA and jihadism are framed as totalitarian projects – but Franco's regime is often not (or is silenced as an ambiguity), and any contextualisation of ETA's struggle in opposition to Franco's authoritarian rule is vehemently rejected as an apology for terrorism.[60] This discourse can be found across contemporary counter-terrorism discourse and victims' associations rhetoric. For

[56]Alejandro Baer and Natan Sznaider, 'Ghosts of the Holocaust in Franco's mass graves: Cosmopolitan memories and the politics of "never again"', *Memory Studies*, 8:3 (2015), pp. 328–44; see also Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'Culture trauma, morality and solidarity: The social construction of "Holocaust" and other mass murders', *Thesis Eleven*, 132:1 (2016), pp. 3–16.

[57]M. Armengou and R. Belis, *Las fosas delsilencio ¿Hay un Holocausto español?* (Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2005); Paul Preston, *El Holocausto español: Odio y exterminio en la Guerra Civil y después* (Barcelona: Debate, 2011).

[58]Pablo Sánchez-León, 'Past jihads, citizenship and regimes of memory in modern Spain', *European Review*, 24:4 (2017), pp. 535–57.

[59]Ibid.

[60]After the conclusion of our data collection in 2018, very interesting developments have taken place in Spain. Franco has been exhumed from his resting place in the 'Valley of the Fallen' and political discussions are beginning about the

example, the Spanish terrorism victims' associations COVITE has levelled stringent criticism at the Basque government for maintaining that ETA's emergence was contextualised by a prior conflict between Basque nationalism and Franco's authoritarian repression of the region.[61] Similarly, in 2018, Sonia Ramos, of the Ministry of the Interior, spoke to media about the introduction of anti-radicalisation teaching materials in Spanish schools. Specifically those materials address the violence of ETA, as well as right-wing paramilitaries and jihadists. Ramos stated that: 'We saw that they [students] studied execrable violence, such as the Holocaust, but there was no reference to a scourge that Spain has suffered for decades. It is very important that it be known, among others *for its prevention effect*.'[62] At this point in Ramos's argument, the temporality of transposition shifts – and the present is read back onto the past. Testimonies are operationalised as counter-terrorism resources, which work to build empathy between societies and victims. In the discourse of counter-radicalisation, this is understood as a counter-narrative activity that reduces the vulnerability of communities (particularly Basque ones, in this context) to radicalisation.

But does the Spanish administration intend to reduce the vulnerability of Basques to radical organisations, or to suppress contrasting narratives of history? Both discourses are apparent. In our interview with the Centre's research director, he stringently emphasised that the Basque region was never in conflict with Spain and that the vote of the Madrid parliament to erect the Museum in Vitoria demonstrated social consensus on the issue. The opposition of the Basque nationalist party, Bildu,[63] was not deemed to indicate valid political opposition by the director, perhaps because they are often delegitimised as extremists in conservative discourse:

> They [Northern Ireland and the Basque country] are completely different contexts. There are some things in common, like for example, the ideology of terrorist organisations [represented] in power of separate states in Ireland or the Basque country, but for the rest, it's completely different. Here, we didn't suffer a conflict between two different parts, so, it's not like a civil war. It's a terrorist campaign in which 95% of the murders were committed by one side, by ETA and the rest are right-wing organisations and so forth … here, there was this political consensus in the Spanish parliament to promote a memorial centre like this. So, there is this law of 2011, which created us as an institution, and most told political parties voted in favour of it, which one exception, the political wing of ETA … But the rest voted in favour and I think that's very important … we have to create a debate also and not only between, also with Basque Nationalists and everything.[64]

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criminalisation of 'apologies for Francoism'. Such recent developments are unfortunately beyond our scope: our article only tells the story of Spanish counter-terrorism, victims and memory up to 2018.

[61]COVITE, 'COVITE Requires the Basque Government to Withdraw its Teaching Units For Not Complying with the Basque Law on Victims of Terrorism' (15 November 2018), available at: {https://covite.org/destacada/covite-exige-al-gobierno-vasco-que-retire-sus-unidades-didacticas-por-no-ajustarse-a-la-ley-vasca-de-victimas-del-terrorismo/} accessed 1 September 2019. For further debate on the emergence of organized violence in opposition to Francoist regime during the seventies, see Joseba Zulaika, *Basque Violence: Metaphor and Sacrament* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1988); Sophie Baby, Oliver Compagnon, and Eduardo González Calleja, *Violencia y transiciones políticas a finales del siglo XX: Europa del Sur y América Latina* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2009); Sanchez-Cuenca, Ignacio, 'The dynamics of nationalist terrorism: ETA and the IRA', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 19:3 (2007), pp. 289–306; Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, *Historical Roots of Political Violence: Revolutionary Terrorism in Affluent Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[62]Ramos quoted in Laura Caro, 'Today we have to learn what terrorism is', *ABC Spain* (26 November 2018), available at: {https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-toca-aprender-terrorismo-201811250328_noticia.html#disqus_thread} accessed 11 July 2019), emphasis added.

[63]Bildu is a radical Basque nationalist coalition of parties, part of whose societal basis is the *izquierda abertzale* (nationalist/Independent left). It currently holds four seats at the Spanish Parliament (2019). Some of its members are however, considered the heir of a family of political formations that were banned by the Spanish Political Parties Act (2002).

[64]Author's interview with Research Director at the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2018.

Interestingly, the director's denial that ETA participated in a conflict with political underpinnings broke down, later in the interview. We will address this at length, as it demonstrates the effect of War on Terror strategies and ontology (specifically, Countering Violent Extremism and counter-narrative campaigns) upon the depoliticisation of ETA as a totalitarian criminal movement. When we discussed the location of the Centre in Vitoria-Gasteiz, he stated:

> We wanted to do this, not necessarily in Vitoria, but in the Basque Country; because the battle against justification, the legitimisation of terrorism *is here*. In Madrid, in Leon, in Catalonia whatever, they didn't have this problem like concrete terrorist organisation with social support behind. Of course, in Madrid, they suffered a lot of kind of attacks, but there was this area where terrorism formed a lot of social support and that social support didn't disappear after the ceasefire of ETA.[65]

How does the director hold such contrasting opinions? Simultaneously, he argues that there was no conflict in the Basque region, but also that ETA enjoyed a wide-ranging social support, which still remains significant.

The apparent tension between the two positions can be explained by their situation in the counter-narrative discourse of the contemporary War on Terror era. For the director, and the expert committee of the Centre, the museum must be placed in the Basque country to counteract the residual pockets of extremism in Basque society that practice rhetorical 'justification'. *This is not interpreted an indication of political support for the radical nationalist project*, but as improper, ill-informed 'legitimation' which must be counterbalanced by the pedagogical curation of victims' experiences in the museum.

Here we see the mediation of collective memory through distinct War on Terror ontology and strategy – that of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and counter-narratives in use against pathologised, apolitical 'terrorists'. These contemporary discourses depoliticise political violence by individualising protagonists (silencing their situation within political campaigns or their anger at state policies) and treating political ideology as a grooming technique used by radicalisers.[66] Political ideology is pathologised, rather than treated, as a collective force. By reframing political grievances in this way, it becomes possible for the director to both deny the political roots of the ETA campaign and to problematise the continued prevalence of radical nationalist collective memory in the Basque Country.

The reaction of Basque society to the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre, and this pedagogical incursion by the Spanish state, has been mixed. Critical voices that oppose the imposition of the Centre upon Vitoria by the Spanish state are audible – but struggle to gain momentum in the climate of the criminalisation of 'apologies' for ETA. Vitoria is a particularly insensitive choice of location for the Spanish memory project, as it is the location where armed Spanish police killed five peaceful demonstrators in 1976. The organisation 3 de Marzo, based in Vitoria, continues to represent the victims' families – asserting their rights to recognition. The leftist party Podemos joined members of 3 de Marzo at the inauguration of the Centre to protest the myopic memory project of the Spanish state, and its continued subjection of other perspectives. Demonstrating against the discriminatory memory project of the Spanish state, they organised protests against the visit of Prime Minister Rajoy to the site.[67] Mr Rajoy was greeted by shouts of 'thief' and 'chorizo', with the crowd of thirty continuing to chant slogans such as:

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[65]Ibid.

[66]Christopher Baker-Beall, Charlotte Heath-Kelly, and Lee Jarvis (eds), *Counter-Radicalisation: Critical Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014); Home Office, 'Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting Vulnerable People from Being Drawn into Terrorism: Statutory Guidance for Channel Panel Members and Partners of Local Panels' (London: HM Government, 2015).

[67]Publico, 'Víctimas de la dictadura piden a Rajoy "memoria" para todos los afectados por terrorismo', *Publico* (23 May 2015), available at: {https://www.publico.es/politica/victimas-dictadura-piden-rajoy-memoria.html} accessed 12 July 2019.

'HerriakEz Du Barkatuko' ['The people will not forgive', in Basque]; '3 de Marzo, nosotros no olvidamos' ['March third, we do not forget', in Spanish], 'Aldehemendik, utzipakean' ['Get out, leave us alone', in Basque], and 'zuekfaxistakzareteterroristak' ['You fascists are the terrorists', in Basque].[68]

Another organisation representing the victims of Franco's crimes, the Plataforma Vasca contra los Crímenes Del Franquismo, has also expressed visceral criticism of the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre, calling it:

An excluding project that the Spanish government is trying to impose in Gasteiz, ignoring decades of state violence which remain unpunished.[69]

These sporadic expressions of discontent disrupt otherwise totalising efforts to depoliticise ETA, to equate the organisation with al-Qaeda, and to transvalue the moral authority of Holocaust victims so that it can be applied to Spanish experiences of terrorism. These dissenting voices echo the victims' associations dedicated to the Atocha bombing of 2004 (11-M)[70] who objected vocally to being used in the Spanish state's drive for incorporation within the Anglosphere-driven War on Terror project. In both contexts, this dissent makes visible the complicated topography of memory and the importation of War on Terror frames in Spanish politics.

Conclusion

In this article, we have offered a topography of counter-terrorism policies and laws in Spain – emphasising how international War on Terror ontology and strategies have been transposed, allowing Spanish political actors to equate ETA with contemporary jihadist groups. The international discourses of the War on Terror (particularly that of 'New Terrorism', and counter-narrative strategies on the terrain of 'the social') were used as a frame through which Spanish politicians extended their delegitimation of ETA as an apolitical, criminal gang reliant on pathological loyalty from sections of Basque society. To this end, victims' associations were centrally employed to condemn and reject any explanations for violence that referred to politics or historical grievances. Victims' associations have been forceful protagonists in the campaign to prosecute radical nationalists for commemorating the deaths of militants (under the 'glorification' law), monitoring any and all sources of speech and action that might stray into the criminalised territory of the legitimation of violence, while giving voice to their own narrative that political violence is anything but political in frequent media appearances.

However, this historical revisionism is not unidirectional. Once the delegitimation of ETA in hegemonic Spanish discourse was achieved, the context of the struggle against ETA was itself invoked to smooth over the implementation of the new counter-radicalisation and counterterrorist laws of 2015 onwards. By emphasising the continuity of the new policies with Spanish experiences of fighting ETA, policymakers and police were able to 'emplot' counter-extremism and foreign-fighter laws within an existing culture of counter-terrorism. Victims' associations were, once again, central actors in the propagation of this narrative.

This borrowing between the eras comes to dramatic fruition in the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre, where militant organisations from drastically different campaigns are equated – to deliver a lesson about the importance of combatting social and political 'extremism'. As we

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[68]Natxo Gaton, 'Rajoy descubre entre gritos la placa del Memorial de las Víctimas', *Gastiez Hoy* (24 March 2015), available at: {https://www.gasteizhoy.com/el-ministro-de-interior-inaugura-en-villa-suso-la-primera-exposicion-del-memorial-de-las-victimas/} accessed 12 July 2019.

[69]Hala Bedi Irratia, 'Querella alavesa y centro de memoria, las medidas que proponen las víctimas del franquismo a las instituciones', *Hala Bedi* (22 March 2018), available at: {https://halabedi.eus/eu/querella-memoria/} accessed 21 July 2019.

[70]Flesher Fominaya, 'The Madrid bombings and popular protest'.

have discussed here, the Museum is emblematic of Spanish memory politics where the historical silence surrounding the Franco era has had complicated ramifications; ETA cannot be remembered as anti-Francoist in this hegemonic discourse, nor the Basque country framed as having had conflictual relations with Spain, so the legacy of the Holocaust is imported alongside counter-extremism discourse to stabilise the complicated and contested history of political violence in Spain. Of course, given the exhumation of Franco since the conclusion of our data collection, the story of Spanish counter-terrorism and collective memory will continue to evolve.

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