

IDENTITY CRI

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FROM PROFESSOR EDUARDO RUIZ'S OFFICE in the University of Deusto in Bilbao, Spain, you have a bird's eye view of this elegant and eclectic city's center. Below, the Nervion River frames Frank Gehry's mammoth wavy titanium masterwork, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. Joggers and bikers amble and glide along

separate running and bike paths. Well-fed business executives in suits tuck in for long and decadent lunches with friends. Indeed, on a sunny day in May, the city recalls the hedonistic good feel of Los Angeles. This Basque city is a plainly cosmopolitan and wealthy, as is much of the Basque region of Spain.

Viewing this sunny postcard, it is sometimes difficult for the casual visitor to imagine that a violent and vexing nationalist conflict, that between many Basques and the rest of Spain, persists. But it does.

Around Bilbao, the green and wild Basque hills that are the dominant feature of the region's topology encroach. Those hills hold a tiger in the tall grass. In June, ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, Basque for "Basque Homeland and Freedom"), the militant Basque nationalist movement, announced that it was formally ending its ceasefire that, with some exceptions, had helped staunch additions to ETA's more than 800 killings in 40 years. Violence haunts the Spanish side, too, with 700 ETA affiliated individuals in Spanish jails, deaths in Spanish prisons under questionable circumstances, and allegations of Spanish torture by human rights groups like Amnesty International.



SIS

In the Basque Country academics and universities are working to deal with an age-old conflict over regional autonomy, language, and national identity.

Text and photography by David Tobenkin

GORA ETA

Politics intrudes on paradise: “Gora ETA”—“Hurray for ETA,” the militant Basque separatist group, reads graffiti on a statue on a bridge spanning the River Urumea in the toney Basque beach resort town of San Sebastian. Inset, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao



Professor Eduardo Ruiz is director of the Bilbao-based University of Deusto's Pedro Arrupe Institute of Human Rights. He is optimistic that separatist violence will continue to wane, but less so that a political solution can be reached.

But the physical violence in the conflict is only the tip of a vastly greater iceberg of pain, anger, and distrust that marks the relationship between Basques and Spain as a whole, and between Basques of different political persuasions. Basques feel the pain of a Spanish central government that refuses to discuss the right of Basques to determine their own political future, that bans political parties and candidates seen as tied to violent and separatist groups, and that continues to incarcerate nationalists. Spaniards, for their part, are angered by what they view as Basque refusal to recognize the significant concessions already made to Basque autonomy, by the continued violence of ETA, and by fear that further Basque autonomy could rip apart their country, which is an uneasy patchwork of many regions and ethnic groups that have long pressed to go their own separate ways.

Ivory Towers in Spain and the Basque Region

And what of Spain's universities? As custodians of knowledge, reason, and tolerance, they have waged a long battle to reverse the repression of the long-running dictatorship of Francisco Franco, staunch the violence and hatred tied to the conflict, and find a rational solution to the larger political problem. The trouble with the last, all sides concede, is that unlike environmental or medical threats that can be resolved with a scientific breakthrough, matters at the core of Basque-Spanish conflict are matters of the heart as well as the mind.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *There are three ways that Basque Country can be identified: Basque Country, Basque Autonomous Region, and Basque region. They are used interchangeably throughout the article and in quotes, are used in the manner in which the speaker identifies the region.*

Ruiz, director of Deusto's Pedro Arrupe Institute of Human Rights, represents the voice of many in stating that, while the worst of the violence is probably over, when it comes to finding a solution to the underlying nationalist conflict...well, that is another matter.

"I am optimistic about an end to violence, but about finding a political solution I am more pessimistic," says Ruiz, an easy-going and friendly man. "There is a very deep feeling against any recognition of national plurality in the state in the majority of Spanish society. That has always been there, but during the 1980s there was a good mood. It was a historical moment when, after the Constitution and maybe for the first 15 years after, maybe something particular could have been achieved. Now as time goes on, it is more and more difficult. The system is more and more consolidated, and the possibility of adopting a solution granting some form of asymmetrical relationship unique to the Basque Country becomes less and less feasible. The hard positions have reappeared again, and there's now no shame in recognizing self with hard political stance."

Still, despite the continuing political challenge, Basque and Spanish academics have been, and continue to be, at the forefront of efforts to resolve the conflict, albeit sometimes in indirect forms. They have been integral to areas of progress achieved to date, notably the reduction of violence and a resuscitation of Basque culture. An examination of the Spanish universities' role in addressing the Basque-Spanish conflict throws into focus the possibilities and limits of university educational systems in addressing the most fundamental of conflicts.

Basque Higher Education and Basque Survival

To a large degree, university efforts to address the violence and conflict have played out among Basque scholars of different views, rather than among Basques and Spaniards, and no where more so than in the various universities of Basque Country.

The University of Basque Country (UPV/EHU) is the largest Basque higher education institution in the country, with campuses in each of the three provinces that make up the Basque Autono-



The School of Law Building at the University of the Basque Country's San Sebastian campus



Buildings of the University of Deusto in Bilbao, in the Basque region of Spain, rise above the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao's spider and water spray sculptures.

mous Community and nearly 4,000 professors and administrators serving 48,000 students. As of 2005, 78 different degrees are offered, with students able to choose from more than 1,300 subjects of study. That is a remarkable turnaround from the Spain of Franco, who originally barred public universities from the Basque Country and then only permitted a few isolated institutions altogether.

Its private sibling, the Jesuit-affiliated University of Deusto also has facilities in all three provinces, a faculty of more than 600, and 16,000 students. In 1997 a new private university was approved by the Basque parliament, the University of Mondragon, set up under the auspices of the worker-cooperative industrial group of the same name. At present, the university has around 4,000 students and offers a total of 22 degree courses.

All these schools follow the pedagogical organization of other Spanish universities, with the notable difference of offering varying numbers of courses in the Basque native tongue, Euskara, says Patxi Juaristi, director of universities for the Basque Autonomous Government.

Euskara, unrelated and predating in Europe the Indo-European tongues spoken by almost all the rest of Europe, is critical to Basque self-identity—so key, in fact, that the only word in Euskara for a Basque

person translates as “Basque language speaker.” Academics have had a primary role in ensuring its survival by codifying a standard and written version of Euskara, which entered the twentieth century as an almost exclusively oral language, largely because of a variety of Euskara dialects, frustrated efforts to find common tongue, and because other tongues like French and Spanish were used for more formal thought.

As significant as the teaching of the language has been the academics' role in making it a living one of intellectual use. At UPV/EHU, 43 percent of classes are taught in Euskara. The language, forbidden to be taught or spoken during the 35-year Franco dictatorship and seemingly headed toward extinction, is now used by 24 percent of the country, with the percentage of speakers higher among younger generations.

“It's a miracle Basque Country has revived that language,” says Robert Clark, a professor of government emeritus at George Mason University who has written three books on Basque nationalism. “It's not an easy language and it's not wide-spoken. To save it required considerable effort, including the translation of books and films. They didn't have much time to do it before it would have been too late—maybe a generation.”

THE BASQUE CONFLICT

TO UNDERSTAND the Basque conflict, one must understand the Basques, an ancient and enterprising people who live around the northern border of Spain and in what is now the southern border of France. Three Basque provinces and an additional region with some Basque areas, Navarra, lie in Spain. Across the border in southwest France, lie three other, smaller Basque provinces, where nationalist tendencies are not as pronounced. This is a tiny region: one can drive across Basque Country, end to end, in any direction in several hours, and the Basque population in Spain is only 2 million in a nation of some 40 million Spaniards.

Often at war with bigger powers throughout their history, the Basques' relationship with the modern state of Spain is complicated. When Columbus patrons Ferdinand and Isabella unified Spain in the fifteenth century, they allowed their amalgamated provinces like the Basque Country considerable autonomy. Basques played a large part in Spain's golden age as whalers and

sea captains whose nautical exploits helped facilitate the seagoing prowess that launched Spain's colonial age. Later, Basques fought on opposite sides in Spain's various nineteenth century internecine wars, as the country sank into decline.

After Franco's Nationalists won the Spanish Civil War in 1939 against the Republicans, Franco vigorously repressed the Basques, who had largely sided with the Republicans. Autonomy was eliminated and Basques were forbidden to use or teach the Basque language. The radical ETA was founded in 1959 and began attacking Spanish targets in 1961.

Franco's anachronistic dictatorship ended in 1975 with his death. In 1978 the country approved a Spanish Constitution in a nationwide referendum, including provisions for the protection of nationalities and regions within its borders and their historical rights. These included the Basque people's right to autonomy in the territories known today as the Basque Autonomous Community and Navarra.

Negotiations with Madrid and moderate Basque parties led to a subsequent Statute of Autonomy granting the Basque government fiscal autonomy, the ability to collect taxes, creation of an autonomous Basque police force, Basque radio and television stations, and autonomous education and health systems. In practice, the status allowed for the highest level of self governance of any subnational entity in Europe, says Gorka Espiau, a senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), an adviser for the Basque presidency with respect to the peace process, and a senior associate to the International Conflict Resolution Center at Columbia University.

The debate over the Basque-Spanish political relationship continues, notably, whether the Basques can declare independence. But to the credit of the Spanish state as well as the Basques, it will at least be conducted between a dominant culture and a subculture that has not been wholly suppressed, unlike nationalist conflicts in many parts of the world.



Stopping the Violence

If ensuring cultural survival has been a major Basque academic achievement, a second significant one has been on the moral front: playing a key role assisting in the transformation of the Basque political struggle into a predominantly nonviolent one.

ETA's terrorist activities have been generally selective. By targeting figures associated with Franco, the Spanish military, and the sometimes repressive legal system and, with notable exceptions, generally sparing bystanders, the movement acquired a Robin Hood air to some in decades past. On the other hand, the violence always extended to standard bearers of hostile or Madrid-friendly ideas, especially if those standard bearers were Basque. Basque intellectuals considered too soft on nationalism matters, including university professors and journalists, have been a not-uncommon target for violence or threats.

The level of violence in the last five years, however, has greatly decreased. Professors say that in part reflects ETA's recognition of a general Basque consensus, even among most who favor independence from Spain, that violence must be rejected as a means to an end. Professors have had a direct role in bringing that change about through participation in, and leadership of, a variety of groups that opposed violence.

Educational Groups Oppose Violence, Champion Human Rights

One group is Gesto Por la Paz. "Our group was formed to express ideas against violence and in favor of human rights," says Pedro Luis Arias, a professor at the School of Engineering at UPV/EHU who served as one of 12 members of the Gesto Por la Paz coordinating board from 2000–2006. "Gesto Por la Paz performed the same type of activities to try to establish opposition to ETA killing people, as well as to police, Guardia Civil, or whoever was committing torture. Our first step was trying to show through demonstrations and media expressions the real ideas of most of people living in Basque Country, who are against terrorism and in favor of human life."

After that initial step, in 1991, members of the group who were educators, including many university professors, designed primary and secondary school teaching materials to promote peace and human rights and collaborated with education administrators in the development of peace-oriented programs.

Other groups of educators, or that prominently feature educators, were also formed in response to the conflict and have condemned the violence. Unlike Gesto, Arias notes, most such groups have leanings for or against independence or, at least, greater Basque autonomy.

Elkarbide is an association of 454 professors of UPV formed in the year 2000 that calls for Basque self-determination of their political status and has encouraged political groups and institutions to speak to each other to facilitate a solution.

More conservative and Madrid-leaning groups of Basques have also formed, some clearly expressing antipathy to independence drives, including Basta Ya! and Foro de Ermua. The latter, led by Universidad Complutense de Madrid economics professor Mikel Buesa, lays out a strict line against negotiations with ETA, calls for its dissolution, and also rules out unilateral self-determination by Basque Country. Buesa, whose brother was killed by ETA,

says such plans "are pernicious for Basques, as they seek to establish a totalitarian system in which political liberty would disappear. Likewise, they would have very negative economic repercussions."

The Political Challenge

If preservation of the Basque language is a common goal among Basques, and eliminating the violence has become a goal of most, seeking full independence is another matter. The Basques themselves have been ferociously divided on just how much autonomy and independence they want.

According to a 2007 poll by Sociometro Vasco, 35 percent of the population does not want an independent state, 30 percent wants independence, and 20 percent would or would not be in favor depending on the circumstances (15 percent were undecided). However, even if they do not want independence, a far more universal Basque sentiment is that they should have the right of self-determination: a 2005 opinion poll showed that a majority of the population in the Basque Autonomous Community believes that

the Basque have the right to determine the type of relations they maintain with the Spanish state, while a significant minority believe that Spanish society as a whole should decide on any possible modification to the political status quo.

In 2004 the Basque Parliament passed a proposal for a new statute based on free association or shared sovereignty with Spain, which would allow the Basque Parliament and presidency the right to define any potential changes in the current relationship between Spain and the Basque Autonomous Community. In practice, the Pact for Free Association with the Spanish state would have transferred such powers to the regional government as issuance of identity cards and regulation of borders, according to accounts of the talks. The Spanish Parliament, the Cortes, overwhelmingly rejected the proposal, which would have exceeded the autonomy granted to Spain's other



Pedro Luis Arias, a professor at the School of Engineering at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), was on peace group Gesto Por la Paz's coordinating board from 2000–2006. He says that the vast majority of Basques, including Basque professors, have rejected violence as a means to finding a solution to the conflict.



Xabier Ezeizabarrena in the Town Hall of San Sebastian/Donostia, a beach resort playground of the rich that doubles as a hotbed of Basque separatist militancy. He is a University of Basque Country professor of law, novelist, legal advisor to the Town of San Sebastian, and spokesman for the San Sebastian branch of the moderate Basque Nationalist Party. He says, "I lived in Madrid for 20 years and I was born there and in Madrid they don't believe there is a conflict."

16 regions. However, the willingness of Socialist Spanish Prime Minister Jose Zapatero to continue discussing reform to the existing Statute of Autonomy, even after a December 2006 ETA bombing killed two, offers hope to some of further mainstream political developments.

Adding Structural Solutions

While academic research on the Basque issue has been extensive, and ad hoc university groups have tried to address the conflict's violence, Espiau says those efforts have been hobbled by a notable lack of peace and conflict intervention programs in Spain that focus on the Basque Conflict.

"Many countries in the North, like Sweden and Norway, have long traditions of research and studies,"

Espiau says. "In Spain and Southern Europe, by contrast, they are not that well developed. Therefore the Basque conflict has always been a big problem for academics who want to enter the field."

Peace research in Spain is supported by a network of different university departments and conflict transformation centers that are part of AIPAZ (Asociación Española de Investigación para la Paz [Spanish Association for the Investigation of Peace]). However, the Basque conflict tends to be analyzed as only one conflict among many and the focus tends to be on research, rather than intervention, Espiau said.

"Our Institute doesn't deal with the [Basque] conflict directly, although on occasion we have had some related activity, such as seminars featuring a specialized investigator or social agent of Basque country who explains his points of view to us, or some publication dedicated to that theme, in which some members of our institute have participated," says Beatriz Molina, director of the Institute of Peace and Conflict at the University of Granada, an AIPAZ member.

New centers, however, are on the way, including two in and around Madrid: La Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), a think tank established in Madrid that aims to provide innovative thinking on Europe's role in the international arena; and the Toledo International Centre for Peace, which focuses on mediation and negotiation processes, second-track diplomacy, and peace building in conflict situations. The government of another restive Spanish province, Catalunya, has passed a law to support a new institute to conduct research on peace and conflict issues. Espiau says that he is exploring the possibility of presenting a similar proposal for a new Basque conflict studies institute that will be publicly discussed in 2008.

A Proliferation of Models

Professors like models, and for resolution of the Basque Conflict, there are many. Among the most prominent at the moment are variants of the Northern Ireland Belfast Agreement peace accord. Signed by the major political parties in 1998 and ratified by voters across the island of Ireland, the Belfast (a.k.a. Good Friday) Agreement calls for determination of sovereignty through consent: that Northern Ireland is to remain part of the United Kingdom unless and until the citizens of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland both vote for a united Ireland. The agreement also calls for Protestants to share political power with the minority Catholics and for the creation of an elected Northern Ireland Assembly. However, unlike Madrid, the British governments' major political parties both supported the approach and appeared willing to accept the possibility of reunification of the six counties of Ulster with the Republic of Ireland as a result.

Some say, however, that a closer fit to the Basque Country's challenges is Puerto Rico's complicated relationship with the United States. They say that the situation may similarly stay unresolved because residents in Basque Country are divided in a way similar to the tripartite division of Puerto Rican popular opinion on the best future political status for that island: independence, statehood, or a continuation of a muddled, ill-defined current status as a U.S. commonwealth.

"The problem here is not a problem of Basque Country and Spain and France but a problem in Basque society," Arias says. "The Czech Republic and Slovakia separated with no problem. In both countries, the consensus was high in favor of that solution. That's not the situation in Basque Country. It's a very plural society. Many are in favor of independence. Many are in favor of greater autonomy.

Others are in favor of the present situation. There is not a significant majority supporting one position or another.”

Espiau notes in a recent USIP position paper that creative solutions may be possible to help realize the goals of Basque nationalists. One, he says, would be to recognize political, economic, social, and cultural relations between the Spanish Basque provinces, Navarra, and the French Basque provinces through creation of a Euroregion, an entity defined by the Council of Europe as a form of transnational cooperative structure between two or more territories located in different European countries.

Lack of Discourse

While many discussions of such possible solutions have been held, open discourse, unfortunately, does not necessarily lead to open minds. In Basque Country, a wide gamut of political parties have adopted fixed political positions on the subject, from ETA-affiliated and other Basque independence parties on one side to local members of the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party and conservative Popular Party, the last vigorously opposing separatism, on the other.

Academics say that scholars tend to follow these cleavages with little scholarly detachment. “Universities should be able to explore and generalize this conflict with less violent perspectives than occurs in the political world’s discussions,” Espiau says. “We haven’t had that.

Many professors are just repeating what the political parties said. We haven’t had research comparing our situation with other situations in the world. Spanish academia has said we are unique and not related to others. That’s not an acceptable academic point of view.”

As noted above, some groups aimed at ending the violence also have taken to discussing and promoting political solutions to the conflict, many with academics in prominent roles.

Elkarbide, the association of university professors, has fostered discussions among political groups and institutions. Its platform includes nonviolence as the only acceptable political approach, Basque self-determination, humanization of the conflict, legalization of prohibited parties affiliated with ETA, and agreement that all parties have an equal opportunity to promote their views.

Until recently, Elkarri was another key social movement for peaceful resolution of the Basque conflict in Basque Country. It was founded in 1992 to defend and mobilize the model of a peaceful solution through dialogue to the Basque conflict and was the first organization in the area to promote discussions at the local level to transform the roots of the conflict, as well as dialogue between different political parties, says Espiau, the group’s former spokesman. In 2006 Elkarri was dissolved and replaced by a successor group, Lokarri, a new organization focused on promoting direct consultation to and from the Basque society about a new political agreement.

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Still, despite such efforts, leading a full and fair discussion on the Basque conflict in a Spanish or Basque University classroom or faculty conference requires courage and fortitude.

“The Basque conflict is a taboo topic—I’m in investigation groups and I don’t ask other participants about it,” says UPV’s Juaristi, himself a member of the pro-dialogue *Elkarbide*. “When you start to talk about it, you start to argue, and you realize you have entirely different positions.”

Not surprisingly, an enormously charged issue for students in both Basque Country and Madrid is how history is taught. Some students complain that unlike secondary schools, university professors are free to choose their own texts, which, they say, often translates into their own biases.

There are clearly professors who do their best to teach both sides. UPV/EHU Basque History Professor Santiago de Pablo says that he endeavors to be evenhanded in political discussions. “I try to give, and I think historians have a responsibility to give, the most objective possible version of history, without national mythologies. I try to break the myths of both sides, though I don’t always succeed.”

If communications between Basques of different political perspectives are difficult, then meaningful communications between independence-minded Basques and non-Basque Spaniards, including academics, can be even more problematic.

I meet Xabier Ezeizabarrena in the Town Hall of San Sebastian/Donostia, a toney beach resort playground of the rich that doubles as a hotbed of Basque separatist militancy. He is a boyish, tousle-haired Renaissance man: a UPV/EHU professor of law, novelist, and legal counsel to the town, and spokesperson of the moderate Basque Nationalist Party. His unsuccessful candidacy for mayor in the May 2007 elections focused on a bourgeoisie platform closer to fixing city streets than revolution. Still, he too, rails against the deaf ear of Madrid.

“My last book was entitled *Ciaboga Infinita*,” Ezeizabarrena says. “That’s the point when the boat shifts route, so they come back to port—I’m saying the shift to port, the tack, is everlasting in the Basque Country. It’s an everlasting tack because we’ve been discussing this for the last 200 years. Nobody [with the countries’s mainstream political parties] really realizes that it is a conflict and a political conflict—only the Basque national parties. I lived in Madrid for 20 years and I was born there, and in Madrid they don’t believe there is a conflict.”



The Town Hall of San Sebastian/Donostia

The Road to Madrid

It’s been 20 years since I spent a year as an exchange student at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, the public institution located on the city’s outskirts. The muy liberal political science department is even further out, a half hour bus ride from the main campus at the Somosaguas campus, deliberately located away from the city’s center by Franco authorities to keep potentially rebellious students at bay.

Spaniards, and many Basques opposed to separatism, tend to quickly divert discussions about the Basque-Spanish political conflict toward discussions about Basque violence. Steer them back toward the ultimate issue of further autonomy or independence, and positions quickly harden.

On a bus on the way to Somosaguas, I turn to small and fresh-faced Susana Gonzalez. A 19-year-old first-year UCM student in business administration and management, she could pass for a high-schooler. But when I ask her about the Basque desire for self-determination, her opinions are strong and immediate: “I think everybody in Madrid thinks they should be part of Madrid,” she says. “They should be more consciousness of the fact that they are a part of Spain. If one province becomes independent, others will want it

and then there’s no Spain. We’ve done a lot for them already. I don’t think they should have the right of self-determination.”

That’s not an uncommon sentiment, says Guillermo Moreno, a 23-year-old political science major I query in the battered and neglected Somosaguas Political Science Building. “Generally here, everything is very ‘Spain, Spain.’ The Political Science Department is a little more open because it is more liberal than the other departments. I think



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we need to follow the Northern Ireland negotiated solution. If not the solution, then at least the method. Here, we don't negotiate with someone if they are a member of [ETA-affiliated Basque political party] Batasuna. I think it would be better to negotiate with everyone."

A professor confirms Moreno's critique: "The [UCM] Faculty of Law is very conservative, speaking generally, while political science is more progressive," says Jaime Ferri Dura, a professor of political science and administration at UCM.

Think Local

Given such resistance in Madrid, a political solution to the Basque conflict will likely begin with the Basques. The latest peace initiative is an effort of the Basque Autonomous Community Lehendakari ("President"), Juan José Ibarretxe, to solicit the views of local organizations, communities, and individual Basques for their ideas on how to solve the conflict. Many university intellectuals, grass roots organizations, and local municipalities are participating in this project, named Konpondu, Euskara for "to transform," says Espiau, who is helping to administer the program.

"This is an on-line and off-line initiative," Espiau said. "We are implementing a program for civil society to send their opinions about peace building directly to the Basque Parliament," he says.

Espiau says that participants submit their opinion on how to bring peace by filling in a questionnaire, sending a message to the political parties, phoning, commenting on a blog, and by joining local forums. The opinions are posted on the blog, while surveys and other response mechanisms are relayed directly to the International Centre for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Columbia University in New York for the drafting of a conclusions report, which is due at the end of the summer.

He says that more than 20,000 opinions and proposals have already been collected, with seven peace forums formed at UPV/EHU alone. "Teachers and students are participating and a report will be sent with their conclusions to the Basque Parliament," he says.

If such efforts inspire hope, they must be salted by past experience. I reflect on an excellently researched and written 2006 report sponsored by Lokarri...with an unfortunate title, "Report on the Basque Conflict: Keys to Understanding the ETA's Permanent Cease-fire." With ETA's June announcement that it was ending its ceasefire, the region again tensely awaits a further spasm of violence.

Much could depend on next year's Spanish general elections. Should the conservative Partido Popular (Popular Party) build upon a strong showing in this year's elections and gain control of the Cortes, Basque-Spanish relations could suffer.

Death in the Afternoon

I end my journey to Spain by taking in a bullfight at the Plaza de Toros in Madrid. As I look around the remarkably compact stadium, the yellow and red Spanish flag is everywhere. Three matadors dis-

patch six bulls in two hours, their bloody corpses dragged through the sand and out of the ring by mule trains. Blood sports may have been largely eradicated in the rest of a generally progressive European Union, most recently through the 2004 ban of fox hunting in Britain. Not bullfighting. It's a full house here and there's nary an animal rights protestor in sight.

Whatever bullfighting is or isn't, its nature is profoundly visceral, as are its merits and detractors. So, too, the matter of who should control the northeast corner of Spain tends to be resistant to logic, even to the mind-workers of the Spanish, Basque, and foreign academia. Despite years invested in the Basque conflict topic, George Mason's Clark says he eventually decided to leave the subject behind.

"If I thought academic pursuits would help resolve this conflict, I'd still be doing that," Clark says. "But what I found out is that the parties don't need additional information about how to proceed. The struggle doesn't persist because of ignorance. It's a question of will. Everyone wants peace, but only on their terms. The exceptions are the families of prisoners, who just want sons and husbands brought back." **IE**

DAVID TOBENKIN is a freelance writer in Chevy Chase, Maryland. His last article in *IE* was "No Cookie-Cutter Solutions" in the January/February 2007 issue, which focused on dealing with foreign students and scholars and immigration policies on U.S. campuses.

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