



## A Spontaneous GAL

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One of the most serious risks to the Zapatero's supposed peace process is the possibility his surrendering the Rule of Law could lead to the spontaneous creation of a new GAL: in other words, the emergence of an armed response to ETA. This might seem remote, but no one should discard it when analyzing the long term situation.

There are a number of factors to consider. First off, the fact that ETA's bloodiest killers will soon be out of prison as a result of an extremely generous penal system and the administration's total inaction. These terrorists, far from showing any remorse for their past actions, will be celebrated by their followers and will boast of their murderous status. Northern Ireland's experience has shown having victims and assassins live together generates conflict, the victims feel an unbearable humiliation.

Second, the victims feel the rule of law is abandoning them. The victims of terrorism in Spain have been an exemplary association, always displaying faith in democracy and confidence in the judicial system. Analysts of other terrorist situations are surprised by the

resignation Spanish society has shown toward the more than 1,000 deaths ETA has caused –all without a single case of personal vengeance. But if, as a consequence of the government's surrender to ETA and the possible massive release of ETA members from prison, the victims could lose all trust in the democratic system and justice. The possibilities for some number of victims to decide to take justice into their own hands will grow exponentially.

Surrendering to ETA could also fuel indignation among the hundreds of men and women in the nation's security forces who have made the anti-terrorist fight the center of their professional, and sometimes personal, lives. After risking their own lives, after years of sacrifice and unlimited devotion to defeating terror, it would be especially hard to accept the government, for political and partisan reasons, surrendering to an enemy they had managed to corner and bring to the verge of defeat.

The emergence of a spontaneous GAL would be the worst case scenario one could imagine for the Basque Country. It could turn into a Basque civil war

with unpredictable consequences. It might be a remote risk, improbable, but the Prime Minister should meditate about where he is going to ensure he doesn't create any collateral damage with his policy of surrendering to the

terrorists –damage that would be lethal to our democracy, our society and for bringing an end to ETA.

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