



Stefanie Schüler-Springorum

"Shut up or piss off!"

Neighborhoods in the Basque Provinces

English summary

The Basque conflict exemplifies the case of an ethnic conflict turned into a purely political one where an artificially created "ethnic" divide serves specific political interests. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum explores the historical development and characteristics of Basque ethnic nationalism and analyses the mechanisms of the social construction of ethnic identity in a modern industrialized region and the role that terrorist violence plays in that process: Today, Basque "ethnicity" is being defined as supporting the nationalist political agenda which subsequently leads to the denunciation of those who do not support this project as "anti-Basque" or even "non-Basque", regardless of their family background. Thus, the Basque conflict presents itself as a neighbor conflict in a double sense: First of all, the kind of terrorist violence that ETA uses relies on an intimate knowledge of one's neighbors political ideas and – when it comes to killing daily routines. Harassment, deterrence and the "law of silence" work even more effectively in small communities and neighborhoods. This mafia-like mechanism has in some cases already endangered the democratic system on the local level. Secondly, in what could cynically be called a "post modern" process of nation-building, the terrorist violence divides an otherwise heterogeneous group of "neighbors", i.e. the inhabitants of the Basque provinces, into two opposite groups.

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