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Introduction

This analysis will focus on Basque nationalism and its actors in order to come to a better understanding of the processes that started, transformed and modernised such ideology.

The dissertation will start by introducing in the first Chapter the three core tenets to Basque nationalism: its peculiar geography, which represents a nation being divided in two parts at the grey Atlantic periphery of two modern states; its language, so complex and unintelligible to any non-Basque because of its unique status of language isolate; its history, witness of turbulent aspirations and discrimination.

Later on, Chapter two will analyse the most infamous non-electoral political actor of Basque nationalism: ETA. By focusing on its history and its actions, it will be possible to realise their impact in modern Basque and Spanish politics.

Finally, the last Chapter will be devoted to the study of two electoral actors of Basque nationalism: the Basque Nationalist Party and the Patriotic Left. The analysis of these two actors will provide the opportunity to recognise their evolution and their success among modern voting societies.

Thanks to the information that will be found in the three chapters, this dissertation will answer to three main research questions:

1. What is the current state of Basque nationalism? How can we measure its support in modern society?
2. Has the ETA activity proved to be successful over time? Which of its objectives did this actor reach?
3. How has Basque nationalism evolved over time? Do its modern and contemporary actors share similarities with its original creators?

Chapter One: Three tenets of Basque nationalism

As one of Europe's most renowned national independence efforts, Basque nationalism has deep-planted roots in its extraordinary and peculiar history: its unique and indistinguishable culture and language, its peculiar geography spanning over two present-day nation states, and the socio-political origins and development of the Basque region are only some of the staples on which modern Basque nationalist actors base their philosophy and actions. It is therefore of vital importance to explore the aforementioned tenets before jumping into the analysis of Basque nationalist actors. Firstly, this dissertation will take into consideration Basque geography and subdivisions, then it will introduce the unique reality of the Basque language, and lastly it will provide a short historical overview of Basque nationalism and patriotism origins, spanning from the Carlist wars to the Francoist regime developments.

1.1 Geography of the Basque Country

The Basque Country, also referred to as *Euskal Herria* in the local Basque language, is located in Western Europe between the Western Pyrenees and the Bay of Biscay. The region is nowadays divided between the two modern-day European states of Spain and France, as three of its historic provinces, commonly called *Iparralde*, the “Northern Basque Country” are part of the South-Western French region of *Nouvelle-Aquitaine*. On the other hand, modern-day Spain rules over the region of *Hegoalde*, the Southern Basque Country.

As abovementioned and shown in Figure 1 here below, the historic region of *Euskal Herria* is divided into two regions and further split into seven provinces. *Hegoalde* comprises the provinces of *Araba* (Álava in Spanish), *Gipuzkoa* (Guipúzcoa), *Bizkaia* (Biscaya) and *Nafarroa* (Navarra). *Iparralde* is divided into three more provinces: *Nafarroa Beherea* (Lower Navarre), *Lapurdi* (Labourd) and *Zuberoa* (Soule). The provinces of *Hegoalde* are not all part of the same Autonomous Community in Spain, as *Araba*, *Gipuzkoa* and *Bizkaia* form the so-called Basque Country (País Vasco), while *Nafarroa* is an Autonomous Community by itself (and is in fact the largest in size of the seven historic provinces of the Basque Country). It is crucial to understand that the Spanish name “País Vasco” only refers to the namesake Autonomous Community, and therefore is not an appropriate term to use when referring to the Basque Country as the region (or better, nation) the Basque nationalists idealise, because the Spanish term lacks the acknowledgement of the Basque Country not only as a mere administrative province, but as a nation that shares a common history,

language and culture. For this very reason, when referring to the Basque Country as a whole, in this dissertation I will utilise the Basque term *Euskal Herria*.

The geography of the Basque country is to be considered an important variable to be taken into consideration because it can help to outline how much nationalist policies permeate the electorate. Later on, while analysing Basque nationalist electoral actors, geography and territory will acquire colossal relevance as they will not only enable a general comprehension of voting patterns and popular support towards nationalism and its advocates, but will also support more in depth a comparative approach to electoral and voting study. Finally, geography holds tremendous significance as it is common regard that territory is one of the four constitutive elements of the post-Westphalian nation state. Despite *Euskal Herria* not being a formally recognised and sovereign nation state, it holds nevertheless the state of nation in the eyes of the proponents of the Basque cause.



Figure 1: Comprehensive Map of *Euskal Herria* and its seven historical regions¹

¹ *Euskal Herria* by Maider. <https://www.thinglink.com/scene/784316154238730242>

1.2 The Basque Language

The Basque language, *Euskara* (or *Euskera*), is possibly one of the most interesting cases of native language isolates worldwide, due to its history and current state. Basque does not have Indo-European roots, and it has been spoken in the Basque region from time immemorial (Mezo 2002). This very first set of information is by itself already a rather charming scenario, as it legitimises *Euskera* as an undoubtably extraordinary case study of resilience and language preservation over centuries of historical developments. Moreover, it is already clear to notice how Basque may be considered such an important and essential part of the overall Basque identity and of Basque nationalism. Finally, there is no other case of a living language isolate in Europe², thus rendering the extraordinariness and peculiarity of *Euskera* even more apparent. It is clear to see that Basque history and resilience alone can be considered one of the most apparent and relevant aspects of Basque pride and, consecutively, Basque nationalist (and perhaps even separatist) feelings.

According to the 2016 Sixth Sociolinguistic Inquiry, conducted by the Spanish authorities of both the Basque and Navarrese governments and by the French Public Office of the Basque language, around 28,4% of the inhabitants living in the modern-day subdivisions of *Euskal Herria* speaks Basque^{3 4}. This percentage can be estimated at around 750.000 speakers, to which it may be deemed necessary to add all those who, according to the Inquiry, are the so-called “passive” speakers: the total number of Basque speakers stands at around 44,8% of all inhabitants, or around 1.185.000 speakers. Such figures demarcate an obvious yet pivotal reality and, by consequence, pose several important questions. If *Euskera* is spoken and understood by a number of people even inferior to the population of small countries such as Estonia or East-Timor, how has it managed to survive as a language until present day? What threats has Basque faced along its history, especially since the birth of Basque nationalism? Has Basque ever been close to extinction? What language preservation policies has Spain implemented in its modern history? Some of these questions will be dealt with and asked again later on in the short historiographical introduction of this dissertation (see Chapter 1.3), whereas the first and last points will be addressed hereby after as a conclusion to this short yet relevant paragraph.

Euskera is not only alive as a language, but it also has the status of a co-official language in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (here again it is possible to appreciate the difference between the Spanish concept and institution of the País Vasco and *Euskal Herria*) as it is

² Ethnologue. <https://www.ethnologue.com/subgroups/language-isolate>

³ VI Encuesta Sociolingüística. 2016

⁴ VIème Enquête Sociolinguistique Pays basque, 2016

dictated in Article 6 of the Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country⁵. Moreover, Basque is recognised as a co-official language also by the Autonomous Community of Navarre⁶. Earlier on in this paragraph, the question regarding the reason for Basque survival over the centuries was raised: the most straightforward answer to this question can be found also with the help of *Euskera*'s history.

Accelerating in the 18th and 19th centuries, the process of Spanish language incursion into Basque territory resulted into a relatively bilingual region, both thanks to a subsequent heavy migration flux from Spain in the years to come and, in addition, to the universalisation of education in Spanish (Mezo 2002). By this time, therefore, *Euskera* had lost its status of language hegemony in the region. Ever since then, it is possible to speculate that *Euskera* and other symbols of Basque culture and identity have in fact witnessed not only Spanish become the most spoken language, but also Spanish culture and identity become prominent in the region. It is only natural to find the roots of modern Basque nationalism in this context, identifying the enemy of Basque culture and people in Spanish linguistic, cultural and demographic expansion. This topic, however, will be dealt with more in depth in Chapter 1.3. The 20th century, at least until the dissolution of the Francoist state in the late 1970s, is to be considered another age of hardships for *Euskera*, especially taking into consideration language policy under Franco. In fact, the Spanish *Caudillo* regime decided to target Basques and Basque identity by outlawing *Euskera*, reaching the point of prohibiting the public use of the language. Moreover, anti-*Euskera* measures included even the cancellation and subsequent replacement of all Basque names that appeared on official documents (Clark 1979).

This brief historiographical portrait of *Euskera* in the past two centuries provides relevant insights that demonstrate the state of a “fading” Basque identity, specifically in terms of linguistic prevalence. It is undoubtable that *Euskera* faced a frightening risk of extinction, and that strong action had to be taken in order to prevent an integral and characterising part of the Basque culture. Thus, the ending part of this paragraph will take a look at Basque Language policy and its goals.

Public Basque Language policy effectively started in the 1980s, together with the autonomous state of the Spanish Basque region, following the dissolution of the Spanish authoritarian regime that Francisco Franco had built after the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939. At this time, only 21.5% of the Basque population, around four hundred-and-fifty thousand citizens spoke *Euskera* (Mezo 2002). This dramatic figure shows how effective the results of both Spanish migration and Francoist policies were in the “recession” of *Euskera*. As it is pointed out by Andrew Block in the Michigan Journal of Political Science, Basque Language policy and its goals can be found in the 1998 *Plan General de*

⁵ The Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country Preliminary Title

⁶ Lenguas oficiales de Navarra

Promoción del Uso del Euskera, a Basque nationalist legislative effort that details past and future policies that the Basque Government should take into consideration. Block distinguishes seven principal strategies highlighted in the *Plan General*:

1. Normalisation of the use of *Euskera*.

Euskera is to be taken out of its informal context, which reduces it to a form of communication that is used solely among family or friends. Bringing *Euskera* into the workplace and formal settings will make it more appealing and desirable to local residents. Moreover, this strategy works against the stigma of *Euskera*, which has historically been associated with poorer and less-educated classes, while Castilian Spanish was the principal language spoken in urban areas and by the upper class.

2. Definition of the use of *Euskera* as a right.

The acknowledgement of “linguistic rights”, as defined in the *Plan General*, depicts *Euskera* as an actively repressed language. This strategy aims at establishing a legal framework under which public language policy can work, thus legitimising *Euskera* also on an administrative level.

3. Promotion of the integrative value of *Euskera*.

Language acquisition is depicted as a tool of assimilation and integration, not merely a mean to communicate. This strategy is deeply connected to training children in schools in *Euskera*: by doing so *Euskera* becomes a language that can unite all citizens, of both Basque or non-Basque origins, creating a sense of belonging to the same community.

4. Increasing the instrumental value of *Euskera*.

This strategy aims at rendering *Euskera* and the knowledge of it as a necessity, thus pushing for the marginalisation of those who do not speak the language. Moreover, it reinforces *Euskera* and its value on the labour market, thus attracting interest and fostering the desire to acquire the language to all workers.

5. Invoking the rhetoric of bilingualism.

This strategy, pursued by the PNV (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, Basque Nationalist Party), aims at reinforcing the use of *Euskera* in a Basque-Castilian bilingual system, shielding the party from critics of extremism that might come from non-nationalist parties.

6. Creating demand for goods and services in *Euskera*.

This strategy aims at a spill-over effect of governmental language policies. Strengthening *Euskera* from a public point of view could result in the interest of the private sector, which would in turn respond by providing such goods and services in *Euskera*.

7. Focus on infants and youth.

The seventh and final strategy aims at a rapid development of Basque Language policies towards the youngest citizens, in order to normalise bilingualism. Here the *Plan General* acknowledges the hard struggle of promotion of bilingualism to the adult population, much of which does not speak Basque (or did not at the time of the bill), thus shifting the main focus on future generations.

These seven strategies outline the interests and attentions of the Basque nationalist governmental agenda, which pushes for a stronger cultural identity and the use of *Euskera*. Basque Language policy seems to be directed at the goal of reinforcing and reintroducing what seemed to be a doomed language. In conclusion, it is clear to witness how Basque nationalist forces and their governmental actions deem *Euskera* to be an essential, if not the defining, aspect of Basque culture and identity.

1.3 A historiographical overview

The third and final part of this introductory chapter will introduce Basque nationalist actors over their history, spanning from their origins to their modern and present-day developments.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the birth of Basque nationalism stems from the socio-political and economic conflict that originated in the Basque Country during the process of Spanish and Castilian “incursion” in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Historian Cameron Watson examined José Luis de la Granja Sainz’s theory of the three historical factors in the origins of Basque nationalism. The list proceeds as follows:

1. Remote precursors

“Between the 15th and 19th centuries, several writers constructed historical myths claiming a distinct or unique quality to Basque culture. The elements of this myth-making varied from a mysticism associated with the Basque language to ruralism and egalitarianism as essential

aspects of Basque culture, and an original Basque independence.” (Watson 2003). According to Watson, this phenomenon is not a peculiarity of Basque nationalism per se, but rather an example of European “national traditions” narratives.

2. Nineteenth-Century Antecedents

According to de la Granja Sainz and Watson, there are three general ideas that motivated Basque nationalism: Romanticism, foralism and Carlism. Before moving on any further, it is of pivotal importance to define the two concepts of foralism and Carlism. In short, the *foruak* were “a series of laws guaranteeing a measure of historical self-rule to the Basque Country” (Ibid.). According to Robert P. Clark the *foruak* were created as a compromise between the centralist Spanish crown in Madrid and the peoples living under the rule of the monarchy. On the other hand, Carlism was born as a conflict in the Bourbon Royal Crown when a succession crisis took place after the death of King Ferdinand VII in 1833. The faction loyal to Don Carlos de Borbón, younger brother of Ferdinand VII, saw a large support in the regions of the Basque Country and Catalonia, as the pretender to the Spanish crown rallied on the notions of the defence of Catholicism and national identities.

“Building on an already established invented tradition, Romantic writers of the nineteenth century centred notions of Basque difference on the possession of the *foruak*. A foralist ideology (i.e., one favouring the preservation of foral rights) thus emerged at about the same time as Spanish liberalism’s first attempts to create modern Spain. We might conclude that foralism appeared as a kind of original response to proto–state-building in Spain, just as Basque nationalism later emerged during the initial stages of the modern liberal Spanish state. The clash of Carlism and liberalism was physically played out in the two Carlist wars of the nineteenth century. Without doubt, Basque nationalism drank heavily from the mythical well of Carlism” (Ibid.)

3. The Industrial Revolution

The third and final factor taken into account is an initial Basque “reactionary clamour” (Ibid.) to a modern, industrial and plural society. By the end of the 19th century the southern province of *Hegoalde* (in particular Bilbao) had become a lively, modern and both socially and culturally heterogenous territory that was home not only to the Basques, but also to a plethora of Spanish citizens.

It is under these premises that Basque Nationalism found its pioneer: Sabino de Arana y Goiri.

Born in a middle-class Carlist family, Arana devoted his life to the foundation of what we now define as Basque nationalism. Together with his brother, Luis Arana, he forged the essence of Basque nationalism, which was first defined as “*Jaungoikua eta lege zarrak*”, “God and the old laws”: a clear nod to the *foruak* and Basque traditions.

This definition of nationalism does not specifically abide to a the more widely accepted notion of nationalism, such as that given by Benedict Anderson in his book “Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism”. According to Anderson, the nation is “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson 2016).

1. The nation is defined as imagined because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”.
2. It is limited because “even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind”.
3. Finally, it is sovereign because “the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm [...] nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state”.

This definition by Andersen, first formulated in 1983 is widely revered. On the other hand, Arana’s Basque nationalism had its base on four main pillars (Watson 2003):

1. Race

Arana envisaged an essentialist, xenophobic view of Basque nationalism which was explicitly against the non-Basque immigrants that had flooded Viscaya. Basque nationalism did not create a racial ranking structure, but it rather celebrated Basque virtues. In order to define his Basque motherland Arana created the now famous word *Euskadi*, “land of the Basques”.

2. Ruralism

Arana rejected his native urban origins in Bilbao, as he associated the city “as the location of all modern society’s evils: capitalism, industrial development, and Spanish immigration”. On the other hand, Arana celebrated the countryside and ruralism as the essence of Basque identity.

3. Religion

Arana identified religious affiliation as a principal factor for Basque independence. His opposition was to liberalism, which rejected any subordination to a national Church. It may be appropriate to say that Basque nationalism envisaged the salvation of the Basque peoples and race from a liberal Spanish state.

4. Original Independence

As introduced earlier in the chapter, Basque historical myths of original independence fostered nationalism. Arana used these historiographical reconstructions to serve his own political aspirations: the *foruak* safeguarded the Basque nation until the defeat in the first Carlist War of 1833-1839, which marked the “occupation” of *Euskadi*. Moreover, this rhetoric drove Arana to be close to the first anti-colonial movements of the late 19th century.

Arana would go on to found the PNV, Partido Nacionalista Vasco (Basque Nationalist Party), known as *Euskera* as the *EAJ - Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea* in 1895. The PNV will be the subject of a more in-depth analysis later in Chapter 3.1.

Following the fall of the Monarchy in 1931 due to the abdication of King Alfonso XII. This opened a new season for Basque nationalist politics: the newly found republic signified an exceptional chance for the PNV to gain independence without having to through a non-violent struggle, but never managed to gather enough support in the Spanish congress (Bothen 2014).

After the acute political crisis between the liberal, radical and left-wing republican alliance and the conservative, Catholic right-wing opposition, which had governed Spain from 1933 to 1936, a bitter civil war broke out. The Basque Regions of Viscaya and Guipúzcoa decided to side with the republican effort, as they thought that such position would allow them an easier path to independence (Ibid.). Unfortunately for the Basque cause, the triumvirate of generals Franco, Mola and Sanjurjo managed to overtake Spain, and Francisco Franco, the only one of the three leaders who was still alive after the end of the Spanish Civil War, established an authoritarian regime. Among the most dramatic moments of the Spanish Civil War was the ruthless bombing of *Gernika* (Guernica), a town

“of historical, political and cultural significance to the Basques” (Ibid.). The bombing was carried out by Franco’s allies of the German Nazi Luftwaffe on April 26 1937, which was a market day. This recurrence brought many visitors to the small town, while at the same time many refugees had fled there to find shelter. The ruthless three-hour bombing killed more than fifteen-hundred people and injured more than nine-hundred. All victims were civilians.

The end of the Spanish Civil War and its victory by the Francoist forces would signify abrupt changes and tensions in the Basque regions of Spain. The struggle between clandestine Basque nationalist forces and the authoritarian Spanish regime would carry on and evolve over the years, witnessing a significant turn of events with the creation of terrorist groups that would reprise Sabino de Arana’s nationalist ideology into the second half of the 20th century.

This third and final section to Chapter 1 ends here, with the establishment of the Francoist regime. The next section, Chapter 2, will analyse non-electoral Basque nationalist bodies.

Chapter Two: Non-electoral Basque nationalist actors

2.1 Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) until 1975

The first non-electoral actor that is going to be taken in consideration is *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (Basque Country and freedom), also known as ETA, a terrorist organisation that fought the Spanish state, starting with the Francoist regime, in order to fulfil its separatist aspirations. Perhaps the most known Basque nationalist actor, ETA was born following a rift in the PNV that had taken place in the previous years: several Basque nationalist students had grown weary of the conservative politics and ideology of the PNV, and thus decided to unite under a new group, called *Ekin*. *Ekin* sustained a rapid growth in their members, and so it attracted the interest of the PNV (Watson 2003). After joining the ranks of the PNV's youth section, *Eusko Gatzedi*, the two organisations were merged into the newly-found EGI. It was only a matter of time though for political differences and rivalries to take the spotlight once again: two crises in the organisation, occurring in 1957 and 1958 made it so that the former *Ekin* members and its supporters decided to part ways yet again. On July 31st 1959, ETA was born. ETA's objectives could be best described as "*Euskadi*, a free Basque Country, through a Basque state like other states in the world, and *Askatasuna* (freedom), free people in the Basque Country" (Garmendia 1980).

According to Clark, at the time of writing of his book "The Basques, the Franco Years and Beyond", ETA members reflected and shared working-class origins, and ETA could be best defined as "a product of industrial society" (Clark 1979). Among its members tried in the 1970 Burgos trial were priests, a mechanic, students, a bank employee and so on.

ETA started its days of action with a clandestine Basque nationalist agenda, yet it did not turn into violent struggle since the very first day. Instead, it opted for sabotage as a mean to gather political support and denounce the illegitimate control of the Basque Country by the Francoist regime. Its first action took place in 1961 and was an unsuccessful derailing attempt in order to stop Francoist sympathisers from reaching the city of *Donostia* (San Sebastián) to celebrate the anniversary of the military insurrection of July 18 1936. The regime did not hesitate to respond, as more than a hundred Basques were arrested, tortured and then sentenced to prison (Watson 2003). This first failure prompted a change and shift of paradigm inside ETA's ranks, as the following year, during ETA's first organisational assembly, ETA was formally defined as an organization that "would develop along the lines of an armed national liberation movement", while Marxist followers started to shape ETA's objectives and policies, advocating for a revolutionary war (Ibid.)

ETA took a final, violent swerve around 1967, as the armed conflict between the terrorist organisation and the police corps of the Civil Guard became a frightening reality in Spain. In 1968, following a gruesome shoot-out between ETA and the police, which resulted in the death of a Civil Guard, José Pardines, and an ETA member, Txabi Etxebarrieta, ETA decided to strike back and retaliate by killing Melitón Manzanás, a police inspector. These actions led to the aforementioned infamous Burgos trial of 1970, which saw six of the tried ETA members being requested the death penalty. Nevertheless, both Spanish and foreign public opinion made it so that Francoist authorities had to back down and the sentences were commuted to life in prison (Ibid.)

According to Watson, the Burgos trial prompted ETA's support and led to many new members to join the organisation. From this point onwards, the fight between ETA and the Spanish state carried on more as an urban guerrilla, and in the years to follow ETA started to engage security forces through new, more advanced actions.

ETA's possibly most infamous action of the era was the murder of then Prime Minister Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco on December 20 1973. Carrero Blanco was one of the closest allies and collaborators of the *Caudillo* Francisco Franco, and was also in charge of the regime's secret intelligence service. As Aiartza and Zabalo point out, Carrero Blanco was also "responsible for implementing the frequent states of emergency, the lack of guarantees to trial, systematic use of torture, shoot-to-kill policies and death squads deployed against the patriotic movement" (Aiartza, Zabalo 2010). It is clear to see why ETA considered him a relevant target. Clark narrates the events of the morning as such: "The weather in Madrid was cold and wet as the Premier of Spain, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, emerged from the morning Mass at the Church of San Francisco de Borja [...] A staunch Catholic who attended Mass each day before going to work, Carrero Blanco was accompanied by a small entourage of aides and bodyguards. As his automobile convoy pulled away from the Church, and turned onto Claudio Coello Street, an explosion was detonated in a tunnel beneath the street. The bomb was timed precisely to destroy the car in which the Admiral was riding. The force of the explosion lifted the car five stories into the air, over the roof of the church, and deposited it onto a high patio wall. Carrero Blanco was killed, along with his driver and a police guard" (Clark 1979). From this account it is rather clear to recognise the higher "sophistication" of ETA's violent actions that was mentioned above. The assassination of Carrero Blanco was pivotal in the process of decline of the Spanish regime, which would topple two years later with the death of Franco, giving space to the so-called "Spanish transition" from an authoritarian regime to a democratic state under the crown of Juan Carlos I de Borbón.

The last evolution in ETA's history before the fall of the Francoist regime is the season of splits and divisions among the organisation in 1974. Firstly, the labour front of ETA split to form LAIA, the Patriotic Revolutionary Workers' Party. Then, ETA was further split in two factions: ETA(m), a military faction committed to the violent conflict as the mean to obtain independence, and ETA(pm), the politico-military faction, which adopted a Marxist working-class struggle outlook (Watson 2003).

2.1 Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) after 1975

The transition to democracy, led in the first place by King Juan Carlos I, saw ETA as one of the most involved actors of the process. One of the very first policies enacted by the monarch was the amnesty of nearly all political prisoners, and a reduction of the sentence to those who would still remain incarcerated. Nevertheless, several prisoners convicted on terrorism charges were not affected by the amnesty, as only those who were indicted on lesser charges, such as propaganda, were subject to the pardon (Clark 1979). Out of the ca. three hundred terrorists that would remain in prison, the majority was Basque.

ETA's murderous and terrorist activities did not stop during this period, as the murder of Antonio Echeverría, mayor of the Guipúzcoan town of Oyarzún, can exemplify. The responsibility for Echeverría's murder would be claimed by ETA, on the accusation that the mayor had been a police informant. The murder took place on November 24 1975, only two days after Juan Carlos' coronation ceremony, and four days after the death of Franco. It was expected at the time that Echeverría's death would affect Juan Carlos and his position over amnesty, yet, as Clark points out, "[the King] would not let himself be thrown off course by this provocative attack" (Ibid.).

As mentioned here above, ETA carried on its activities over the transition to democracy, the establishment of the Autonomous Communities (such as the Basque Country introduced in Chapter 1.1), and the following establishment of the first leftist government in 1982, led by the non-nationalist PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party). Clark's analysis, which was published in 1979, predicted a spike in ETA's murderous activities, by a simple analysis of the then available data. As Clark puts it, "Whereas only 74 people had lost their lives to ETA attacks during the entire period between 1968 and 1977, nearly that many were killed by ETA violence in only one year. The 50 to 60 deaths registered during the first six months of 1979 indicate a still higher rate of ETA violence if the level of killing is projected forward throughout the year". Clark ultimately proved to be right, but his prediction is not limited to 1979 or 1980, as the number of killings showed a steadfast increase over

the years. As Jan Mansvelt Beck showed in his 2005 book “Territory and Terror: Conflicting Nationalisms in the Basque Country”, between 1960 and 2001 ETA was responsible for 848 killings in Spain, the majority of which took place in the Basque Country.

Regarding the participation in active political (and electoral) life, ETA never presented a list of its own at any election (be it national, regional, mayoral and so on). It would be foolish nevertheless to state that there never was any party or organisation that was at least partly in favour with ETA’s objectives and ideology. The KAS (Socialist Nationalist Coordinating Council), which had been created in 1975 as a result to Francoist persecution of nationalists and leftists. As the government imposed measures of martial law in *Hegoalde*, this paved the way for the imprisonment and torture of thousands of Basques, and even the execution of two Basque youths together with three members of a Spanish armed resistance group. For these reasons, the KAS was formed as a lobbying platform for the amnesty of all political prisoners and exiles.

In 1977, ETA(m) and ETA(pm) caused a split inside the KAS. The ETA(pm) were willing to participate in general elections, while the ETA(m) opposed the move. This tension led to a split, and ETA(pm) members formed a new political party, *Euskadiko Eskerra* (Basque Left), which then participated in the electoral process. On the other hand, the groups that had remained in the KAS refused to get involved. The following year, the KAS published a list of five points (Watson 2003):

1. Amnesty for all Basque political prisoners
2. Legalization of pro-Basque independence parties
3. Withdrawal of the Spanish police force from Hegoalde
4. Acceptance by Madrid of the right of self-determination, together with the inclusion of Navarre within the new autonomy statute
5. Improvement of basic living conditions for the working classes.

ETA was in favour of the five KAS points, and it offered to cease the violent struggle if the Spanish government accepted to negotiate the five policies. Needless to say, the central government never accepted such deal, and it remained hostile towards ETA. Moreover, according to Aiartza and Zabalo, “[...] there was some contact between the government and ETA, but ETA did not consider this as real and serious negotiation proposals. Besides, those negotiations were not part of its plan: the KAS alternative was seen as a minimum condition that the state had to approve [...] ETA considered that it was not a time for negotiation, but for total armed action and mass action” (Aiartza, Zabalo 2010).

Another formation that carried on ETA's ideology and was associated with ETA violence is the leftist party *Herri Batasuna*, formed in 1978. *Herri Batasuna* later renamed itself as *Euskal Herritarok* in 1998 and later again as simply *Batasuna* in 2001. *Batasuna* would later be outlawed from Spanish politics in 2003 (Lecours 2007). This political cartel will be dealt with more in depth in Chapter 3.2.

Starting in the 1980s, ETA began a phase of dissent, after its possibly most infamous actions of the post-Franco era, losing support and witnessing popular discontent against their actions, replacing Spanish police, prisons and judges as the object of this disagreement (Mansvelt Beck 2005). In 1987 in fact, ETA bombed the underground car parking of the Hipercor shopping mall in Barcelona, killing 21 people and injuring some other 45. The event shook the public to a great extent, and ETA declared that they had contacted the police to warn about the imminent bombing, but the police had refused to evacuate the area. As a response, the police stated that they were informed by ETA only minutes prior the attack (Whaley Eager 2008). Another heinous action by ETA came about in 1997, when Miguel Angel Blanco Garrido, a 27-year-old politician from the non-nationalist centre-right Popular Party in Viscaya, was kidnapped by ETA. The organisation blackmailed the Spanish government, threatening to kill him unless all ETA prisoners would be transferred to prisons in the Basque Country within 48 hours. As the ultimatum expired, he was shot in the back of the head. As Paige Whaley Eager notes, "His kidnapping and brutal murder caused a huge outpouring of grief in Spain and beyond, after his body was found with his hands tied behind his back and two bullets in his head" (Whaley Eager 2008). With these two infamous actions, ETA's decline in popularity and general popular condemnation started to come about as the mainstream position of many Spanish and Basque citizens and institutions.

Over its history, ETA conceded several ceasefires, in 1988, 1989, 1996, 1998 (shortly after the Forum of Ireland), 2006, 2010, the latter being defined by ETA in January 2011 as "permanent" (Tremlett 2011). Following the 2011 San Sebastián International Peace Conference, ETA declared the end of armed activities⁷. In the following years ETA decided firstly to depose all arms, and then, finally in May 2018, to end its political activity and cease its existence⁸.

⁷ Basque group Eta says armed campaign is over. (2011, October 20). BBC News.

⁸ La carta en la que ETA anuncia su disolución (2018, May 2). El Diario.

Chapter Three: Electoral Basque nationalist actors

The following Chapter will analyse the two largest electoral actors in the Basque Nationalist tradition: the Basque Nationalist Party and the so-called “*Abertzale* Left”. After a brief historiographical and political explanation of both parties, the last election results for both forces will be analysed at the national, regional and European level in order to verify and assert their current status.

3.1 The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV)

The Basque Nationalist Party is the principal and oldest Basque nationalist political force. Its full name is *Euskera* is *EAJ - Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea*. As mentioned in Chapter 1.3, the PNV was founded by Sabino de Arana y Goiri in 1985 (but only formally in 1897). Its date of foundation makes it the second oldest party in Spain, only after the PSOE, which was founded in 1879.

The first years of the PNV experience were highly influenced by the development of Basque nationalist theory by Sabino Arana. Arana’s nationalism is defined by three stages (Watson 2003):

1. 1893 – 1898

This period was characterised by Arana’s radical separatist sentiment. This first era might be considered as the laying of the foundations for the constitution and start of the PNV. At first Arana spread his nationalist ideas through newspapers (Arana founded the weekly *Bizkaitarra* in 1893) and a private society (the *Euskaldun Batzokia*, founded in 1894). In 1895 it was time to create the embryo of the PNV, the *Bitzkai Buru Batzar*. The civil governor of Viscaya decided to close down both the *Bitzkai Buru Batzar* and the *Euskaldun Batzokia*, as they were perceived as a threat to the Spanish nation. The members would later regroup in 1897 to found the PNV. The end of this era also marked the expansion of Sabino de Arana’s interests from strictly “Viscayan” to effectively Basque, comprising all regions of *Euskadi*.

2. 1898-1902

This period was characterised by the evolution and enlargement of the PNV. Following internal tensions in the bourgeoisie of Bilbao, a group of Basque nationalists, dubbed as the *Euskalerriacos* and led by Ramón de la Sota y Llano, joined the ranks of the PNV, under “the provision that they would have some say in the ideological evolution [...]” (Ibid.). This enlargement of the PNV started the dual identity of Basque nationalism: “the mystical but engaging rhetoric of Arana with the pragmatism of Sota” (Ibid.). The results of this political

move sorted their effect in the Municipal elections in Bilbao in 1899, in which the PNV won five out of eighteen seats. From here onwards the PNV managed to do what most parties could not and would not do in future, in attracting voters of all social classes. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan define the dichotomy between owner and worker interests as one of the political cleavages of Western Europe (Lipset, Rokkan 1967). This dichotomy was easily surpassed by the PNV, which united the nationalist interest over the capitalist and socialist division that had taken place in Basque society. This vote is therefore definable not only as cross-social but also as cleavage-cutting. Although it had its origins in the middle-class, the PNV managed to attract members of the working-class and upper-society. Arana decided to pursue this strategy by embracing a more modern political ideology that embraced capitalism, even though many of the early followers of Basque nationalism opposed it.

3. 1902-1903

The third and final period of Arana's PNV is characterised by its founder's incarceration and premature death in 1903. Arana observed the great lengths that his ideology had gone through, from its first extremist days to a modern, capitalist state. He made a final ideological step, defined as the "Hispanicist" evolution, which focused on substantial regional autonomy rather than independence altogether. Arana also planned to replace the PNV with a new political party, the Hispanicist Basques League, but died before he could bring about the change he desired.

After Arana's death, the PNV witnessed two decades of internal political struggle between the two main factions, the moderates (descendants of the *euskalerriacos*) and the radicals (descendants of the *Euskaldun Batzokia*). In addition to this internal conflict, the PNV saw its appeal grow outside or urban Viscaya into rural areas and Guipúzcoa. This rapid growth in support resulted also in the change of the party's name to CNV, the Basque Nationalist Community. After a series of successful electoral results and ideological evolutions, the radical wing of the party decided to part ways and in 1922 it founded a new Aranist party that bore once again the name of Partido Nacionalista Vasco.

After a strict turn against Basque nationalism under Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, which nevertheless guaranteed cultural freedom to the PNV and its supporters, came the Second Spanish Republic of 1931. The Basque nationalist estranged factions had come to an understanding and decided in 1930 to sign an agreement and reform the original PNV. Moreover, the cultural activities and efforts of the 1920s had signified an increased support for the party. Nevertheless, the characterising internal divisions between radicals and moderates stayed in place. Deciding not to side

with either the left or the right in all 1931, 1933 and 1936 elections, the PNV tended ideologically closer to the conservative Catholic right, but their best opportunity at autonomy came from the left (Watson 2003).

The victory of the leftist Popular Front in the 1936 elections sparked a military offensive by reactionary rightist generals Franco, Mola and Sanjurjo. The Spanish Civil War and the subsequent rise of the Francoist regime brought about negative changes for the Basque Nationalists, which were ostracised, persecuted and excluded from social and political life. For the PNV to come back into politics and to participate in elections it would take more than forty years, when in 1977 Spain held its first national elections following the democratic transition of Juan Carlos I and Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez, which had promoted a referendum in 1976 to plan the election of a new parliament that could draft the Spanish Constitution. In the 1977 elections, the PNV scored a victory on its first electoral test in democratic Spain, registering around 30% of the votes against the 27% of the nearest rival, the non-nationalist centre-left PSOE (Lecours 2007). The newly elected parliament voted on a new Constitution proposal that was written by centrist, socialist, communist, right-wing and Catalan nationalist parties. The approval in the Cortes meant that a new Constitutional referendum would be called for December 1978. The PNV was not sympathetic with the referendum, as the Constitution draft did not include the right to self-determination for the Basque people. For this reason, the PNV called for the abstention in the vote, while nationalist leftists such as *Euskadiko Eskerra* and *Herri Batasuna* called for a “no” vote (Ibid.). The “yes” vote won in the referendum, as the votes were clearly counted equally across the Spanish state, but the Basque Country saw a much higher abstention rate than any other region, and in the nationalist strongholds of Viscaya and Guipúzcoa it reached 56.5% (Ibid.).

In the 1979 general election it was possible once again to witness one of the new electoral paradigms after the democratic transition, the split of the Basque nationalist votes among moderate (PNV) parties and radical ones (*Herri Batasuna* and *Euskadiko Eskerra*). In the 1979 elections the PNV gathered 27.6% of the votes, while *Herri Batasuna* won 15% and *Euskadiko Eskerra* won 8%. Among non-nationalist parties, the PSOE won 19% of the votes, the communist PCE won 4.6% and the centrist UCD won 16.9% of the ballots. Confirming the first place garnered in the 1977 elections, the PNV would come second in just a handful of general elections (only considering the results in the Basque Country): in 1993 when the PSOE and *Euskadiko Eskerra* joined forces and won by a 0.5% margin, in 2008 when it was once again bested by the PSOE, and in 2015 and 2016 when Podemos came first. The same would apply to any regional elections, where the PNV managed to lose control

of government only in 2009 and, by so they have almost always express the *Lehendakari*, the Basque Prime Minister.

Moving on to more recent history, the PNV has published a new statute in 2016. According to this document the party describes itself as a “Basque, democratic, participatory, plural, nondenominational, humanist party that is open to progress and to all the movements for the progress of the civilisation and that strive for the benefit of the human being”⁹. The PNV has given a vote of support to the first centre-left PSOE Sánchez government in 2018 and it has supported the latest leftist coalition government between the PSOE and the left-wing populist list Unidas Podemos since 2020. On a regional level, the PNV is currently the senior partner in a coalition government with the Basque section of the PSOE. On the European level, the PNV is part of the centrist European Democratic Party and has been sitting in the European Parliament with the liberal group Renew Europe since the 2019 European Elections.

3.2 The Abertzale Left

The second electoral actor that will be analysed in this Chapter is the *Abertzale* Left. *Ezker Abertzalea* is the *Euskera* definition of what can be described as the patriotic left, nationalist left or independentist left. It started off as a movement of resurrection and resistance during the 1950s (Aiertza, Zabalo 2010).

According to Aiertza and Zabalo, the first *Abertzale* movement could be found in the aforementioned *Ekin*, a splinter group of students that decided to leave the PNV (even though they would join its youth section in the years to come before leaving it again to found what would become ETA) because of its conservative ideology and politics. *Ekin*’s aim was “to gather information and knowledge about Basque history, language, culture, nationalism and to give an action-orientated response to the current situation and the danger of disappearing as a nation”, while its founders “found themselves very close to some sections of Basque nationalism [...] which [were] opposed to the EAJ-PNV’s confessionalism and supported a socialist economic programme” (Ibid.). *Ekin*’s history was short-lived yet it is of fundamental importance, as it built the basis for the most important non-electoral Basque nationalist actor, ETA, to exist.

The next *Abertzale* left actor that will be taken in consideration is *Herri Batasuna*. This actor too played a fundamental role in the development of a leftist counterpart to the PNV, one that could

⁹ Estatutos Nacionales 2016. (2016).

conjugate both the call for an independent Basque state (as advocated by the moderate faction of the PNV) and the need for a socialist run economy. *Herri Batasuna* was born as a coalition between leftist nationalist parties (such as the aforementioned LAIA) and independent citizens. Its objectives were first of all to obtain the long-dreamed independence all the nationalists had dreamt of and to implement the KAS alternative and its five-point plan. As defined by Aiertza and Zabalo, “The *Abertzale* left had thus created a consistent political body that united independence and socialism as a political project, with the new KAS alternative as a tactical claim and the fight against reform as a line of intervention” (Ibid.).

Herri Batasuna would once again come to the spotlight in the late 1990s, during the process that led to the Forum of Ireland. In fact, the *Abertzale* coalition believed that the Basque question could learn from foreign peace processes, such as the ones in El Salvador or in South Africa after the *Apartheid* regime (Ibid.). The peace process that attracted *Herri Batasuna* the most interest though was the Irish one, which had led to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The *Abertzale* left and the Irish Republican movement had always held a strong bond and shared similar views. For this reason, *Herri Batasuna* suggested the set-up of a debate forum to analyse the Irish peace process, and it suggested that all nationalist and democratic forces should be involved. The Forum of Ireland effectively took place in the summer of 1998 and among the participants were the PNV, *Herri Batasuna* and *Eusko Alkartasuna*, a left-wing splinter of the PNV.

The experience of *Herri Batasuna*, at the time rebranded as *Batasuna*, came to an end in 2002, when it was outlawed from Spanish politics for three years on the accusation that it formed part of the ETA network. *Batasuna* was the first party to be banned in Spain ever since Francisco Franco’s death in 1975. One year later, in 2003, the right-wing government of Aznar managed to enforce a permanent ban on *Batasuna* thanks to the vote of the Spanish Cortes.

As mentioned above, the PNV suffered a left-leaning split during which a new party led by former *Lehendakari* Carlos Garaikoetxea, *Eusko Alkartasuna*, was formed. Garaikoetxea resigned his post and, only two years after the previous election day, the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country held regional elections in 1986. *Eusko Alkartasuna* would go on to become a powerful actor in the 1986 elections, as it gained around 16% of the popular vote, while the PNV suffered a loss of almost 19% of the votes (Ibid.). The newly-founded party soon became the powerhouse of the nationalist centre-left. In the present day, *Eusko Alkartasuna* is part of the *Abertzale* left coalition *Euskal Herria Bildu* at the regional and national level, while at the European level it adheres to the regionalist party of the European Free Alliance, which sits in the European Parliament together with the MEPs elected for the European Green Party.

Euskal Herria Bildu (Basque Country Unite), often seen as *EH Bildu* or only *Bildu*, is the final *Abertzale* left actor that will be taken into consideration for this analysis. *Bildu* defines itself as “the force of the Basque left towards sovereignty” (EH Bildu), states its objective as “accomplishing a Basque Country based on independent social justice”, and are “open to the participation of all parties or political parties and people that are in line with our objectives”. *Bildu* was born as a political alliance in the early 2012, and one of its founder parties is *Sortu*, the legal successor to *Batasuna*. *Sortu* is the first *Abertzale* party to officially reject any sort of political violence, and it states that it fights “for peace in *Euskal Herria*, to find a solution to the long conflict that we [the Basques] face with the Spanish and French states” (Sortu). *Bildu* does not support the current Spanish coalition government and it does not support the PNV-led Basque government.

Some academics theorised that *EH Bildu* could have to face a powerful enemy in the relatively recent populist cartel of Podemos. Among these is Stephanie Kerr, which concluded that the relations between the *Abertzale* left and a populist left-wing party that sympathised with Basque nationalist aspirations could turn into a partnership that, nevertheless, could become harmful for *EH Bildu* on the long run (Kerr 2019). Kerr concludes that Podemos is unlikely to cause a schism in the patriotic left, and that it would be of academic value and interest to analyse how Podemos manages its ties with Basque nationalist leftist parties, and to compare these relationships with those with similar oriented parties in other highly nationalist communities, such as Catalonia, as Podemos aims at becoming the kingmaker of regional elections and nationalist actors aim at maintaining and building support in their strongholds (Ibid.). As a brief yet relevant response to this interrogatory, Podemos has underperformed on an electoral basis lately, as it has lost much support in both the Basque Country (drop of 6.8% of the votes and 5 seats lost in the regional assembly) and another highly nationalist autonomous community, Galicia (15% drop in votes and all 14 councillors unseated).

3.3 Recent electoral history of Basque nationalist parties

This third and final paragraph of Chapter 3 will deal with recent electoral history of Basque Nationalist parties. In order to present a brief yet accurate argument, the analysis will focus on the two contemporary Basque nationalist electoral actors: the PNV and *EH Bildu*. The results of both actors will be analysed altogether, therefore analysing the same electoral appointment. As per title of this paragraph, only recent elections will be taken into consideration, therefore the two most recent elections (three in the case of Spanish national elections as 2019 saw two separate general election take place) per level of representation (namely national, regional and European) will be taken into consideration. Finally, for what concerns national and European elections, the percentage of votes

received by each party will be featured twice – once on the totality of Spanish votes and once in relation to the votes cast in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.

3.3.1 2016 Spanish General Election¹⁰

The June 2016 elections saw the overall triumph of the right-wing Partido Popular.

For what concerns the overall national results obtained by Basque nationalist parties for the lower house of the Spanish Cortes, the Congress, the PNV affirmed itself as the largest Basque nationalist representative in parliament, totalising 287.014 votes, which amounted to 1.19% of the total Spanish vote, electing 5 deputies out of the 18 Basque seats in the 350 seats Congress. *EH Bildu* on the other hand received 184.713 votes, for a total 0.77% of the votes and 2 deputies. Transposing the same results on a regional level, the PNV came only second behind the Podemos coalition, totalising 24.86% of the votes, while *EH Bildu* scored fourth with 13.28% of the votes. It is important to note that *EH Bildu* also ran for the Cortes in the region of Navarra, thus the total votes received in the Basque Country were only 153.339 out of 184.713.

Moving on to the Spanish Senate, which has a territorial dimension as it is a chamber of the Autonomous communities and provinces, only the PNV managed to seat any of its candidates, electing 5 senators, all hailing from the Basque provinces of Viscaya and Guipúzcoa.

3.3.2 April 2019 Spanish General Election¹¹

The April 2019 elections saw the victory of the centre-left PSOE led by Prime Minister incumbent Pedro Sánchez, after eleven years from their last electoral victory.

Once again, the PNV demonstrated to be the principal nationalist force, receiving 395.884 votes, valid for 1.51% of the total votes and 6 deputies. *EH Bildu* on the contrary only received 259.647 votes, totalising 0.99% of the total national vote and electing 4 deputies. It is clear to see how both parties saw a large increase in votes both in terms of absolute and percentual results. On the regional level, the PNV regained the first place it had not gotten since 2011,

¹⁰ Consulta de resultados electorales. Ministerio del Interior.

Through the website research engine it is possible to search, select and customise by variables all electoral results for General elections, Referendums, European Elections, etc.

¹¹ (Ibid.)

scoring 31.01% of the total votes, while *EH Bildu* came fourth once again by receiving 212.882 votes, 16.68% of the suffrage.

For what concerns the Spanish Senate, the PNV elected a whopping 9 senators across the provinces of Álava, Viscaya and Guipúzcoa. *EH Bildu* managed too to elect one senator in Guipúzcoa.

3.3.3 November 2019 Spanish General Election¹²

The November 2019 elections were called after a deadlock in parliament though which no majority could be formed. The PSOE won the contest once again.

The PNV reasserted itself once more as the leading Basque nationalist party, receiving 379.002 votes, a small decline from the previous election, which was nevertheless valid for 1.56% of votes, due to higher abstinance levels, and it elected once again 6 deputies. *EH Bildu* on the other hand managed to receive 277.621 votes, which were valid for 1.14% of the total votes, a sustained increase for a party that has such a restricted vote possibility. *Bildu* elected a total of 5 deputies, one more than it did in the previous election. On a regional level, the PNV consolidated its results scoring 32.01% of the votes, while *EH Bildu* managed a third place with 221.073 votes, 18,67% of regional suffrage and four deputies. It is noteworthy to say that *Bildu*'s remaining 56.548 votes in Navarra managed to elect one deputy there too out of the 5 Navarrese seats.

Finally, looking at the Spanish Senate, the results were the same as in the previous election, with the PNV electing 9 senators and *EH Bildu* electing one from the same provinces.

3.3.4 2016 Basque Regional Election¹³

In the 2016 Basque Regional election the two nationalist forces of the PNV and *EH Bildu* managed to receive respectively the most and second most votes. While the PNV received 398.168 votes, 37,6% of total suffrage and 28 seats out of 75, *EH Bildu* totalled 225.172 preferences, valid for 21.26% of the votes and 18 seats. Both parties scored high, as the sum

¹² (Ibid.)

¹³ Procesos electorales - Departamento de Seguridad - Gobierno Vasco.

Through the website research engine it is possible to search, select and customise by variables all electoral results for General elections, Regional elections, Referendums, European Elections, etc.

of their results surpasses by a wide margin 50% of the total votes (58.86%), indicating a regional tendency to direct one's vote to the nationalist cause. During the general election that took place on the same year, the combined votes of the two lists did not even reach 40% of the regional votes.

3.3.5 2020 Basque Regional Election¹⁴

The most recent of all elections analysed in this chapter, the 2020 Basque Regional election took place in July 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The PNV emerged once more as the principal party in the region, even though its absolute votes fell down, receiving 349.960 votes, valid for 39,07% of the suffrages and 31 seats. On the other hand, *EH Bildu* registered 249.580 preferences, a slight increase in absolute votes, 27.86% of the votes and 21 seats. This election was characterised by a lower affluence, possibly because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet again, the sum of the votes of the two nationalist actors reached very high percentages (66.93% of the votes, an 8.07% increase from the past regional election).

3.3.6 2014 European Election¹⁵

In the 2014 European Election the PNV decided to run in the moderate regionalist CEU (Coalición Por Europa). The overall national result of CEU was 5.42% of the votes, electing 3 MEPs, one of which belonged to the PNV. CEU's result in the Basque Country amounted to 27,48% of the votes.

EH Bildu instead ran in the nationalist coalition Los Pueblos Deciden, which regrouped leftist independentist parties. The coalition gathered 2.08% of the votes, and its head of list Josu Juaristi, a member of *EH Bildu*, got elected as a MEP. Los Pueblos Deciden's votes in the Basque Country resulted in 23.36% of the suffrages.

¹⁴ (Ibid.)

¹⁵ Consulta de resultados electorales. Ministerio del Interior.

Through the website research engine it is possible to search, select and customise by variables all electoral results for General elections, Referendums, European Elections, etc.

3.3.7 2019 European Election¹⁶

In the 2019 European Election the PNV ran in the CEUS (Coalición Por un Europa Solidaria), which received 2.82% of the votes, electing one MEP from the PNV. CEUS' result in the Basque Country gathered 33.92% of the votes.

EH Bildu ran on yet another leftist nationalist cartel, *Ahora Repúblicas*. The list received 5.58% of the votes and elected 3 MEPs, among which was one from *Bildu*. *Ahora Repúblicas*' result in the Basque Country amounted to 22.01%.

¹⁶ (Ibid.)

Conclusion

With these last pages, this brief overview and analysis of Basque nationalism and its actors comes to a conclusion.

Answering the first research question that was posed at the beginning of this dissertation, Basque nationalism appears not only to be alive, but also to gather continuous and active support in the Basque Country. Even though some actors of Basque nationalism might have evolved, ceased their existence or have had turbulent support over the years – specifically the *Abertzale* left – the Basque Country and, more precisely, its voters have responded positively to nationalist policies and to the efforts of Basque nationalist electoral actors. Electoral results are a rather useful tool to understand how popular support shifts around time and following specific events, particularly in liberal democratic states where elections represent one of the quintessential components of public life. The everlasting attraction of the PNV, which started its electoral journey in 1899, has proven to provide the right answers to the requests of Basque nationalist moderates, which have in turn delivered positive support towards the party, especially in the past years where the share of votes in the Basque Country has rewarded the PNV as the principal force advocating for Basque nationalist ideals and policies.

Moving on to the second question, it appears that the violent non-electoral route of certain actors has proven to be the least successful strategy, surely on what one could debate is the moral dimension of the struggle, but also on the more straightforward notion of the rewards that have come as a response of their actions. ETA, following its radicalisation and the adoption of a violent Marxist doctrine, has seen a constant decline in popular support. The overall condemnation of ETA's violent activities, and their recent disbandment after a harsh fight against the Spanish state, which utilised its judiciary and law enforcing tools not only to stop ETA physically, but to silence its political and electoral aspirations through the ban of the *Batasuna*, has proved to be a successful response. While the Spanish state can reassure itself of having fulfilled its obligations and having won the struggle, the same cannot be said about ETA: their main goal, independence has not been reached, but neither has a socialist understanding and organisation of society come to light; the armed conflict resulted in the gruesome and tragic loss of many lives, yet none of these lives were instrumental in the accomplishment of the militant nationalist agenda.

Lastly, the third research question shall be addressed. There is little of Arana's ideological legacy in modern Basque nationalist parties. Starting with Arana's party, the PNV is currently in its 125th year of activity. It is only natural that after such a long period of time political ideologies change. Arana's mystical rhetoric is nowhere to be seen in present-day PNV. Moreover, Arana's views

regarding race and immigration are not represented by the party, as the religious component of original Basque nationalist ideology is not. The PNV does in fact refer to itself as a nondenominational actor, which would have not sat well with Arana's Catholic views. What the PNV has inherited from Arana is his late moderate approach towards independence and autonomy, which unites both actors. For what concerns the *Abertzale* left, possibly the only remaining point of contact with Aranist ideology is the rejection of capitalist ideology, which comprised part of the original Basque nationalist thought, but was later abandoned by Arana. His steadfast Catholic outlook, his acceptance of capitalism and lastly his rejection of staunch separatism are all reasons for what can be defined as the detachment of *Abertzale* left from original Aranist philosophy.

Finally, this dissertation managed to navigate and study Basque nationalism both as an ideology and as a social phenomenon: it provided the solid and relevant background needed in order to be able to appreciate and research the topic of Basque nationalism; it investigated Basque nationalist history, its milestones, yardsticks and protagonists; it presented a historiographical and analytical view of modern developments and policies taken by Basque nationalist actors in order to accomplish their goals.

Basque nationalism has been a popular field of study in European politics, and its study remarkably encompasses an extremely peculiar culture, fostered and sustained by its language and its rich history. It is certain that the deep scars left by ETA and its actions will confirm Basque nationalism as a case study of a one of the few antagonist political movements that have lived to experience and express several phases: resistance, legitimation, offense, compromise and finally modernisation.

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Riassunto in lingua italiana

Il nazionalismo basco è considerato una delle forme più celebri di movimento di indipendenza nazionale. Le ragioni principali per questa considerazione si possono ritrovare nella peculiarità della questione basca, che unisce una storia e un'evoluzione culturale condizionate particolarmente dalla lingua basca, vero protagonista dell'identità locale. Questa tesi si prefigge il compito di studiare ed analizzare il nazionalismo basco attraverso tre principali riflessioni: la prima si concentra sui cardini del nazionalismo basco e su come questi influenzino le decisioni e ideologie moderne del movimento patriottico basco; la seconda ha come interesse lo studio di un attore politico, l'ETA, di carattere non elettorale, ovvero che non prende parte agli appuntamenti elettorali che decidono la composizione delle diverse assemblee nazionali, regionali ed europee; la terza e ultima riflessione tratta invece di due attori politici elettorali del nazionalismo basco, il Partito Nazionalista Basco (PNV) e la sinistra patriottica e independentista, anche nota come sinistra *Abertzale*. L'analisi di queste riflessioni permetterà di individuare la risposta a tre domande di ricerca a cui la tesi si propone di rispondere. Qual è lo stato attuale del nazionalismo basco e come possiamo misurare il suo supporto nella popolazione? È l'ETA riuscita a rivelarsi vincente negli anni, e quali dei suoi obiettivi è riuscita a raggiungere? Come si è evoluto il nazionalismo basco attraverso gli anni e quali somiglianze accomunano i suoi attori moderni con quelli delle sue origini?

Il primo capitolo di questa tesi si concentra, come anticipato, sui cardini, o pilastri, su cui si basa il nazionalismo basco. Il primo di questi cardini è la geografia basca, di rilevante importanza per la sua delicata e peculiare condizione di esistenza. I nazionalisti baschi riconoscono la loro nazione con il nome di *Euskal Herria*. Questo termine non è paragonabile allo spagnolo "*País Vasco*", in quanto quest'ultimo si riferisce all'attuale regione amministrativa spagnola della Comunità Autonoma dei Paesi Baschi. L'*Euskal Herria* d'altro canto è più di una semplice provincia secondo i nazionalisti baschi, in quanto si basa sulla regione storica abitata dai Baschi, che si estende anche all'attuale Navarra e al sud dell'Aquitania francese. L'*Euskal Herria* è infatti divisa storicamente in due aree che delineano rispettivamente il nord e il sud della regione, l'*Iparralde* e l'*Hegoalde*, e queste sono divise a loro volta in sette province, tre localizzate in nella Francia moderna e quattro (compresa la Navarra) in Spagna. La geografia basca è considerata di vitale importanza dai nazionalisti baschi anche da un punto di vista prettamente strategico e culturale: molti dei movimenti per l'indipendenza basca, per quanto questi si siano concentrati soprattutto nello stato spagnolo, auspicano una "liberazione" totale, che comprenda anche le province "francesi" dell'*Iparralde*.

Il secondo cardine del nazionalismo basco, e forse il più importante dei tre, è la lingua basca, conosciuta come *Euskera*. Il basco è una lingua di una peculiarità inestimabile, in quanto si tratta

dell'unica lingua europea che non ha né radici né legami con qualsiasi altra lingua del continente, pertanto è considerata una cosiddetta “lingua isolata”. La lingua basca detiene un ruolo fondamentale nella cultura locale, ma, secondo una recente inchiesta sociolinguistica del governo basco, solo il 28.4% degli abitanti delle province basche parlano *Euskera*. A questi va però aggiunti un altro 16.4% dei cittadini residenti, che vengono definiti parlanti “passivi”. Il numero totale assoluto dei bascofoni si aggira intorno ai 750.000 abitanti, meno degli abitanti di piccoli (nel senso della popolazione) stati come l'Estonia o Timor-Est. Questi numeri, già risaltanti all'occhio di un osservatore esterno, debbono essere considerati positivamente se si prendono in considerazione due fattori di vitale importanza nel declino dell'*Euskera*: il cambio demografico del 19esimo secolo, che vide i Paesi Baschi come un luogo di immigrazione dal resto della Spagna, e la repressione subita durante il regime Franchista del 1939-1975. Una delle ragioni principali per la sopravvivenza, ma soprattutto per il recente exploit della lingua basca si può identificare con la politica linguistica, che ha riconosciuto una situazione drammatica dello stato della lingua basca e che ha portato alla costituzione di politiche pubbliche mirate all'educazione bilingue di tutti i giovani e giovanissimi cittadini all'interno delle scuole, ma anche attraverso la sponsorizzazione del basco come lingua di interesse economico e commerciale, creando un sistema di domanda e offerta della lingua attraverso il quale portare avanti l'insegnamento e la diffusione dell'*Euskera*.

L'ultimo cardine del nazionalismo basco è la sua evoluzione storiografica. Alcuni accademici e studiosi della storia basca come Cameron Watson o José Luis de la Granja Sainz identificano tre principali fattori per lo sviluppo del nazionalismo basco. Questi fattori sono: i precursori “remoti”, ovvero i racconti simil-mitologici dal 15esimo al 19esimo secolo, che attribuivano caratteristiche uniche e di valore alla cultura basca; i precursori del 19esimo secolo, ovvero i movimenti romantici, i movimenti foralisti, ovvero coloro che si basavano sulla tradizione basca di autogoverno per mezzo dei *foruak*, un sistema di leggi di compromesso che permettevano una marcata autonomia rispetto alla corona centralista di Madrid, e i movimenti Carlismi, contraddistinti da una forte vena religiosa ed antiliberale; infine, il terzo fattore per la nascita del nazionalismo basco fu la rivoluzione industriale, che trasformò i Paesi Baschi del sud, in particolare la provincia della Biscaglia, in una società eterogenea e plurale, in cui i Baschi diventarono una minoranza linguistica in seguito a un fortissimo flusso migratorio ispanofono, provocando quello che Watson definisce un “clamore reazionario” basco.

È infatti in seguito a questi profondi cambiamenti sociali che nascono le prime esperienze nazionaliste basche, il cui padre e primo ideologo fu Sabino de Arana y Goiri. Il nazionalismo basco ha una distinta ideologia originaria, che si basa su quattro punti fondamentali: la razza, intesa come

un rifiuto delle comunità non-basche all'interno della terra dei baschi, cui Arana diede il nome di *Euskadi*; il ruralismo, inteso come rifiuto della dimensione urbana, vista come la culla di mali moderni quali il capitalismo, l'immigrazione e lo sviluppo industriale; la religione, in quanto lo stato spagnolo iniziava ad assumere caratteristiche liberali che osteggiavano la fede cattolica, uno dei capisaldi dell'ideologia Araniana; infine, la cosiddetta "indipendenza originale", ovvero la ricostruzione storico-mitologica di una società basca libera dall'occupazione spagnola (questa posizione di Arana lo portò ad essere vicino ai movimenti anti-coloniali che iniziavano a nascere durante quel periodo). Arana fondò il più longevo (secondo solo al PSOE, il Partito Socialista Operaio Spagnolo) e popolare attore nazionalista basco, il PNV, nel 1895.

Il secondo capitolo di questa tesi invece, come anticipato, si concentra sulla figura dell'ETA, un gruppo militante armato e terroristico, attivo per più di cinquanta anni nei Paesi Baschi. L'ETA nasce da uno scisma interno al PNV, quando un gruppo di studenti, alcuni dei quali avevano già provato a portare avanti una politica dissimile da quella moderata e ispirata al cattolicesimo del partito, si separarono dalla sezione giovanile del PNV, l'EGI, e fondarono *Euskadi ta Askatasuna*, Paesi Baschi e libertà. L'ETA iniziò le sue attività come un movimento antagonista, ma non abbracciò una matrice violenta durante i suoi primi anni di attività. La sua base era composta principalmente da membri del proletariato urbano e della classe media, quali operai, studenti, impiegati e addirittura preti. Il principale obiettivo dell'ETA era la creazione di una nazione basca indipendente dalla Spagna e dalla Francia. Come anticipato, l'ETA non si dedicò fin da subito alla lotta armata contro lo stato spagnolo, ma si limitò ad azioni di sabotaggio. Nel 1961 il fallimento di un tentativo di sabotaggio culminò nell'arresto, l'incarcerazione e la tortura di più di cento Baschi. A partire dall'anno successivo l'ETA si configurò come un movimento di liberazione attraverso la lotta armata, e l'ala Marxista dell'organizzazione assunse il potere "ideologico". A partire da questo momento l'ETA iniziò un violentissimo processo di lotta e guerriglia, che culminò in diverse offensive che vengono ricordate come le più scioccanti e riprovevoli da parte dell'organizzazione, sia durante la dittatura Franchista che durante la transizione democratica e la seguente vita democratica dello stato spagnolo dopo la morte del *Caudillo*. Tra le azioni più efferate vengono ricordati l'omicidio del Primo Ministro Franchista Luis Carrero Blanco nel dicembre del 1973, l'attentato al supermercato Hipercor di Barcellona nel 1987, che uccise 21 persone tra cui famiglie intere e ne ferì 45, e l'omicidio del giovane politico anti-nazionalista e conservatore Miguel Angel Blanco Garrido, rapito per richiedere come riscatto il trasferimento di tutti i prigionieri ex-ETA nei Paesi Baschi: scadute le 48 ore di tempo Blanco Garrido fu ucciso con due colpi di pistola alla nuca. Questi eventi sono ricordati come alcuni dei più gravi crimini commessi dall'ETA, e verso la fine del 20esimo secolo il supporto popolare dell'ETA era ai minimi storici, persino tra i nazionalisti baschi di sinistra. L'ETA vide negli anni

seguenti un declino nella sua attività, che terminò ufficialmente con il sesto e ultimo “cessate il fuoco” nel 2010, in seguito al quale l’ETA iniziò una fase di scioglimento, che arrivò ufficialmente nel 2018.

Il terzo capitolo di questa tesi tratta degli attori elettorali del nazionalismo basco, il cui principale fautore è stato il PNV. Come anticipato, il PNV ha una lunga storia alle spalle, e si trova al momento di stesura di questa ricerca nel suo 125esimo anno di attività. Il PNV fondato da Arana vide una rapida serie di evoluzioni ideologiche e interne al partito durante i suoi primi anni di vita. Arana innanzitutto fondò un partito marcatamente indipendentista, che nacque dalle ceneri di diverse associazioni e società nazionaliste fondate negli anni precedenti. Il PNV di questa prima fase era strettamente legato alla produzione ideologica di Arana e alle sue tesi incontrate pocanzi. Nel 1898 però una profonda crisi della società borghese di Bilbao portò all’ingresso di un gruppo di nazionalisti baschi conosciuti con il nome di *euskalerriacos*, che portarono con loro una riforma della piattaforma del PNV. Un tempo un partito fortemente anticapitalista e reazionario, il PNV si trasformò in un cartello politico capace di superare la classica dicotomia di destra e sinistra, ma che riusciva invece ad attrarre i voti sia della sua fedele classe media (quella a cui apparteneva Arana), che delle classi proletarie e borghesi, spinte da una retorica nazionalista. Questo cambiamento interno al PNV lo portò al suo primo successo elettorale nelle elezioni municipali del 1899. Infine, nei suoi ultimi anni di vira Arana abbracciò completamente una visione capitalista, e decise di “allentare” la ricerca dell’indipendenza in favore di un autonomismo moderato. Questa visione divenne quella prevalente e ufficiale nel PNV a partire dalla morte di Arana nel 1903, ma la coesione ideologica all’interno del partito venne a mancare a più riprese, con una lotta intestina tra “moderati” e “radicali”, rappresentati alla nascita di questa fazione dal fratello maggiore di Arana, Luis. Il PNV non riuscì mai a raggiungere il suo obiettivo indipendentista (o autonomista), nemmeno durante la seconda repubblica spagnola, e, in seguito alla vittoria delle forze Franchiste nella Guerra Civile Spagnola, si vide obbligato a vivere in clandestinità. La fine della dittatura e il ritorno alla democrazia coincisero con la rinascita, soprattutto elettorale, del PNV, che si affermò come principale forza nazionalista basca. Al giorno d’oggi, il PNV ha perso una sola elezione regionale (peraltro arrivando comunque primo alla tornata elettorale), eleggendo quattro dei cinque *Lehendakari* (il Primo Ministro Basco), con un’unica breve interruzione di controllo del governo tra il 2009 e il 2012.

Il secondo e ultimo attore elettorale del nazionalismo basco è la sinistra patriottica, o sinistra *Abertzale*. Le prime espressioni della sinistra basca vennero formate durante la dittatura Franchista, negli anni ’50: si tratta del gruppo di studenti che dopo un breve ritorno nei ranghi del PNV decise di formare quella che sarebbe diventata l’ETA. Con il ritorno della democrazia e delle libere elezioni nel 1977 la sinistra patriottica iniziò ad organizzarsi in cartelli elettorali, tra i quali vengono ricordati

soprattutto le esperienze di *Euskadiko Eskerra* e di *Herri Batasuna*. Quest'ultima viene particolarmente associata con l'ETA, e secondo un sostanzioso numero di accademici (ma non solo) esprimeva le intenzioni del gruppo terroristico. *Herri Batasuna* subì due trasformazioni a cavallo del 21esimo secolo e, oramai già sotto il nome di *Batasuna* venne dichiarata illegale nel 2002. Il processo contro *Batasuna* fu il primo della Spagna democratica a bandire un partito politico. L'espressione più recente della sinistra *Abertzale* è *EH Bildu*, una coalizione nata da diversi partiti dell'area socialista, comunista, Marxista, indipendentista e della società civile. Tra i fondatori più riconosciuti di *EH Bildu* si trova *Sortu*, il successore legale della *Batasuna*, nonché il primo partito della sinistra patriottica a condannare la violenza come metodo di raggiungimento dei propri obiettivi.

In conclusione della tesi, le tre domande poste nella sua introduzione trovano adesso una risposta. Per quanto riguarda la prima, lo stato del nazionalismo basco odierno è particolarmente vivo e apprezzato, e, particolarmente dopo lo scioglimento dell'ETA, la sinistra patriottica ha visto una crescita nei suoi risultati elettorali. Alle ultime elezioni regionali di luglio 2020 la somma dei voti dati ai partiti nazionalisti baschi ha raggiunto la cifra del 66.93% dei voti validi, provando l'ottimo stato di salute di cui godono sia il PNV che *EH Bildu*. Per quanto riguarda la seconda domanda, è sicuramente il caso di dire che l'ETA ha fallito su più fronti. In prima istanza, i suoi obiettivi non sono stati ancora raggiunti, mentre le istanze moderate e di collaborazione del PNV hanno ricevuto un responso ottimo sia da un punto di vista dell'opinione pubblica che a livello di collaborazione istituzionale. Non solo gli obiettivi dell'ETA sono falliti a un livello concretamente politico, ma lo stigma delle azioni violente commesse dall'organizzazione relegano i suoi simpatizzanti a una condivisa sconfitta anche morale. Infine, il terzo interrogativo. I partiti nazionalisti odierni non recano particolari somiglianze al PNV originale di Arana. Il PNV da reazionario, indipendentista, conservatore e cattolico è diventato un partito centrista che si definisce "umanista e aconfessionale", senza dogmi ideologici concernenti concetti come la razza o xenofobia nei confronti degli immigrati ispanofoni, ma comunque promuove una proposta moderata e autonomista, seguendo la linea di partito che Arana aveva adottato nei suoi ultimi anni di vita. La sinistra patriottica invece si distacca da questo tardo-moderatismo e dalla visione conservatrice e cattolica che Arana aveva della società, abbracciando invece le originali istanze anticapitaliste e separatiste portate avanti negli anni da Luis Arana e dai "radicali" interni al PNV.