

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales  
Universidad del País Vasco / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea

Thesis under the joint supervision agreement between EHESS and UPV/EHU

PhD in Law, Political Sciences, and Philosophy (EHESS)  
PhD in Research Models and Areas in Social Sciences (UPV/EHU)

**BARIŞ TUĞRUL**

**A generational analysis of the social  
reproduction and legitimacy of political  
violence in the Basque and Kurdish cases**

**Co-supervised by: Hamit BOZARSLAN (EHESS)  
Benjamín TEJERINA MONTAÑA (UPV/EHU)**

**Date of defense: 27 May 2021**

**JURY MEMBERS**

1. Antimo Luigi Farro, *Sapienza Università di Roma*
2. Ayşen Uysal (Rapporteur), *SciencesPo Paris*
3. Benjamín Tejerina, *Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea*
4. Caroline Guibet Lafaye (Rapporteur), *Université de Bordeaux*
5. Hamit Bozarслан, *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*
6. Mesut Yeğen, *İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi*
7. Michel Wieviorka, *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*
8. Pedro Ibarra Güell, *Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea*

*To my father*

## Acknowledgments

Throughout the long research trajectory of this study, I have revised an innumerable number of valuable scholarly works. Due to a personal interest in life histories on which this study is also primarily based, I have carefully read many prefaces and forewords. However, only after having lived through a similar experience now I truly understand what scholars mean when acknowledging specific individuals who play a vital role in their research trajectory. Although a Ph.D. dissertation is considered an individual exercise, I believe it is always a collective work to which many people contribute. The experience I have lived through is obvious evidence of this affirmation. It would be unthinkable to finish this study without the valuable contributions of many people.

Having affirmed so, first of all, I wholeheartedly thank my Ph.D. supervisors, Hamit Bozarslan at *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* (EHESS, Paris), and Benjamín Tejerina at *Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea* (UPV/EHU, Bizkaia) for the extraordinary support they have provided from the beginning, and for dedicating their valuable time and attention in each phase of this study. I must also recognize their everlasting patience with me during this time drain activity and their bountiful comprehension. I will always remember and appreciate the trust and confidence they have transmitted and everything they have taught me throughout this long journey. Taking advantage of this opportunity, I must recognize my colleagues' support and helpfulness at the Center for Turkish, Ottoman, Balkan, and Central Asian Studies (CETOBaC) at EHESS and Collective Identity Research Center (CEIC) at UPV/EHU during my stay in Paris and Bilbao.

I cannot forget the contribution of other mentors and colleagues I have had before and during my doctoral studies. I express my gratitude to all academic staff at the University of Ankara, most of whom have been purged and lost their jobs as they prioritize scholarly ethics, liberty of expression, and living an honorable life instead of falling silent in the face of what they consider unjust. Speaking of challenges and severe consequences of becoming a scholar in Turkey, I must recognize and thank the role that İsmail Beşikçi has played. Besides his support and encouragement whenever I have needed, the route he has paved continues to enlighten many generations following his footprints.

Likewise, I appreciate the contributions of the Faculty of Political Sciences and Sociology members at the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*. The period during which I had my MA degrees has been crucial to getting to know Spanish history and politics and, therefore, become an incubation period for this study. In this sense, I must specifically thank Luis Enrique Alonso, Alfonso Pérez-Agote, and Elena Casado for their time and intellectual guidance. I must also express my sincere gratitude to the Spanish Agency of International Development and Cooperation (AECID) to make it all possible and all staff and colleagues at the *Colegio Mayor Nuestra Señora de África*.

Finally, I must name other scholars who supported my efforts through the way. First of all, I must recognize all my colleagues' support and encouragement at the Department of Communication Sciences at Hacettepe University. I specifically want to name Suavi Aydın, who has satisfied my curiosity with his profound knowledge and experience as a prominent anthropologist, and Emre Toros, who has provided valuable last-minute contributions with brilliant ideas. I also thank Francisco Letamendia and José Manuel Mata at the UPV/EHU, Michel Wieviorka at CADIS, EHESS-CNRS, Jeffrey C. Alexander at Yale University, Monserrat Guibernau at the Queen Mary University of London, Donatella della Porta at the European University Institute, and Therese Pettersson from Uppsala University for their support, kindness and helps at various stages of this study.

Besides the scholarly world, there are other people who contributed to this study during my ethnographic research in two challenging fields. During my stay in the Basque Country, I had the chance to get to know great people who made me feel at home. Among many others, I am particularly grateful to Asier Amezaga and Alicia del Alamo, who always kept an open door in Bilbao whenever I needed it. In the field phase, I must recognize the vital role that Olatz Dañobeitia, Eneko Ibarguren (Kurku), and

Joxean Fernández (Magila) played in my research practices on the ground. Without the extraordinary effort they have made and the time they have dedicated, it would be impossible to complete the Basque field of this study. Additionally, I also thank Father Juan José Agirre, who generously shared whatever I needed from the Benedictine Foundation in Lazkao village.

Similarly, during my stay in Diyarbakır and my field research in Kurdistan, I received a lot of help and support from many people. Among them, I must specifically name Hamdullah Menteşe (Apo) for his generous hospitality and friendship and Feride Laçın for her tremendous help and effort during my field research in the northern Kurdish field. In the south, Kerem Çiftçi was always ready to assist my questions and needs. Zagros Hiwa and Dalyan have dedicated significant time and effort to make it as fruitful as possible. Finally, I must specifically name my colleague and friend Neslihan Yaklav who made an enormous contribution to this study. As a brilliant researcher, she worked day and night under very challenging conditions. I thank them all very much for their invaluable contributions, without which it would be unthinkable for me to finish the Kurdish field with such valuable outcomes.

Besides the Basque and Kurdish fields, several people have also contributed to different phases of this study. I also must name them: First of all, my dear mother Şükran Tuğrul and my brother Özgür Tuğrul have always been there whenever I have needed. During my stay in France, Bénédicte Vallet and Réjane Schapira showed a great deal of hospitality and helped me with French texts. Similarly, my friends Gaizka Etxeberria and Seyhan Atak helped me with texts in Basque and Kurdish Kurmanji. My friend Mikail Darbinyan spent day and night on the exhaustive work of English proofreading. Caroline Guibet Lafaye from CNRS – Centre Émile Durkheim included me in her research team and offered invaluable assistance for my field research. My friend and colleague Asier Amezaga patiently read the final draft of the entire study and shared with me his opinion and critics. From the beginning, my friend Evin Deniz has shared with me anything related to the subject of this study and helped me anytime I needed it. I thank all of them very much for their valuable assistance and help. Also, several people personally prefer their name not to be mentioned for obvious reasons. Understanding their concerns, I also thank all those anonymous individuals very much for their help and support.

There is also one last group of anonymous individuals to whom I must extend my deepest gratitude. I must acknowledge the contribution made by all those who have voluntarily participated in in-depth interviews of this study in the Basque and Kurdish fields. Their contribution undoubtedly constitutes the central pillar of the final work. It truly saddens me that some of them will never be able to read these words, nor will they even see that I have concluded this study thanks to their voluntary collaboration. Therefore, I dedicate this study to all those who have sadly passed away shortly after participating in this study. I will always remember each of them and wholeheartedly appreciate their vital contribution, which makes it possible for me to write these words today.

Finally, while analyzing stories between life and death throughout a long research period, I have lost some beloved ones to whom I would like to pay tribute. Among them, there is Juan Sorín, a good friend with whom I spent considerable time in both fields of this study. I lost my feline friend Musti, with whom I shared friendship and love. I also lost two of my uncles, Güray and Koray, who had left unforgettable memories in my life. Finally, I lost my dear father, Türkay Tuğrul, who, despite the discrepancies and differences of opinion, taught me to be generous, honest, and in solidarity with others and showed total respect for my free will. He wanted so much that I would finish this study, and he supported me until his last days. My father died in December 2015. This study is the result of a promise that I gave him in life. I would like very much that my father could read these words.

## Abstract

This study analyzes the social reproduction and legitimacy of political violence through three consecutive generations of the long-lasting Basque and Kurdish conflicts in Spain and Turkey. By adopting an approach based on cohort analysis towards the phenomena of ethnic revivals and radicalization of ethnonational movements resulting from a generational rupture, the initial part of the study provides historical insight on period and cohort effects in the emergence and development of non-state organizations (ETA and the PKK) that resort to political violence as a new generation style. In a later stage, a longitudinal cohort analysis based on the life-history technique through qualitative data collected in the Basque Country and Kurdistan is applied to three consecutive generations selected by considering large-scale political events with significant social consequences in both Basque and Kurdish societies. This categorization, in which generations are used as a social metric, involves an extended period, beginning from the early 1970s and continuing until the 2000s. Focusing on the pre-militancy period experiences and political socialization of those individuals who served in the self-proclaimed Basque and Kurdish liberation movements through a life-course approach, this analysis reveals the role that primary and secondary socialization processes play in the militancy engagement and the reproduction of group truth that justifies the use of arms in each period. The transformations taking place during this extended time frame in key variables such as physical and symbolic violence exercised by the state, the regime tolerance towards national minorities, and the availability of political mechanisms that permit voicing ethnonational demands through non-violent repertoires also affect the social legitimacy attributed to the non-state organizations resorting to violent repertoires for political ends. Changes in the degree of popular support to ETA and the PKK as *avant-garde* actors of the Basque and Kurdish liberation movements by their respective societies observed through the sources of quantitative data, which draws a diametrically opposite picture since the early 1990s, play a decisive role in shaping the politico-military trajectory that both organizations follow in later periods.

Keywords: Cohort analysis, generations, political violence, social legitimacy, Basque conflict, Kurdish conflict

## Résumé

Cette étude porte sur la reproduction sociale et la légitimité de la violence politique à travers trois générations successives de conflits basques et kurdes de longue durée en Espagne et en Turquie. Les phénomènes de renouveau ethnique et de radicalisation de mouvements ethno-nationaux résultant d'une fracture générationnelle sont abordés à partir d'une approche fondée sur l'analyse des cohortes. L'étude offre dans une première partie un aperçu historique des effets de période et de cohorte dans l'émergence et le développement d'organisations non étatiques (ETA et PKK) qui recourent à la violence politique comme nouveau style de génération. Dans une autre partie, une analyse longitudinale basée sur la technique du récit de vie, à partir de données qualitatives collectées au Pays basque et au Kurdistan, est appliquée à trois générations successives sélectionnées sur la base d'événements politiques de grande envergure ayant des retombées sociales significatives dans les sociétés basque et kurde. Cette catégorisation, qui utilise la génération comme métrique sociale, couvre une longue période, qui démarre au début des années 1970 et se poursuit jusqu'aux années 2000. A partir des données obtenues par une approche de parcours de vie portant sur la période antérieure à l'activisme et à la socialisation politique des membres des mouvements autoproclamés de libération basque et kurde, cette analyse montre comment les processus de socialisation primaire et secondaire influent sur l'engagement militant et la reproduction d'une vérité de groupe qui justifie l'utilisation des armes à chaque période. Les transformations qu'ont connues au cours de cette longue période des variables clés telles que la violence physique et symbolique exercée par l'État, la tolérance du régime envers les minorités nationales et l'accès à des mécanismes politiques permettant d'exprimer des revendications ethno-nationales par des répertoires d'action non violente impactent aussi la légitimité sociale accordée aux organisations non étatiques qui ont recours à des répertoires d'action violente à des fins politiques. Les variations du niveau de soutien populaire à l'ETA et au PKK, en tant qu'acteurs d'avant-garde des mouvements de libération basque et kurde, par leurs sociétés respectives, sont mesurées à partir des données quantitatives qui dressent un tableau diamétralement opposé depuis le début des années 1990. Ces variations jouent un rôle décisif dans la trajectoire politico-militaire que suivent les deux organisations ultérieurement.

Mots-clés: Analyse de cohorte, générations, violence politique, légitimité sociale, conflit basque, conflit kurde

## Resumen

Este estudio analiza la reproducción social y la legitimidad de la violencia política a través de tres generaciones consecutivas de los conflictos prolongados vasco y kurdo en España y Turquía. Adoptando un enfoque basado en el análisis de cohortes hacia los fenómenos de resurgimiento étnico y radicalización de los movimientos etnonacionales resultantes de una ruptura generacional, la parte inicial del estudio proporciona una visión histórica de los efectos de período y cohorte en el surgimiento y desarrollo de organizaciones no estatales (ETA y el PKK) que recurren a la violencia política como un nuevo estilo generacional. En una etapa posterior, se aplica un análisis longitudinal de cohortes basado en la técnica de la historia de la vida mediante datos cualitativos recogidos en el País Vasco y en el Kurdistán a tres generaciones consecutivas seleccionadas teniendo en cuenta los acontecimientos políticos de gran envergadura con importantes consecuencias sociales tanto en la sociedad vasca como en la kurda. Esta categorización, en la que las generaciones se utilizan como medida social, abarca un período prolongado, que comienza a principios del decenio de 1970 y continúa hasta el decenio de 2000. Basándose en las experiencias previas a la militancia y la socialización política de las personas que militaron en los autoproclamados movimientos de liberación vascos y kurdos mediante un enfoque del curso de la vida, este análisis revela el papel que los procesos de socialización primarios y secundarios desempeñan en el compromiso de la militancia y la reproducción de la verdad grupal que justifica el uso de las armas en cada período. Las transformaciones que tienen lugar durante este largo período en variables clave como la violencia física y simbólica del Estado, la tolerancia del régimen hacia las minorías nacionales y la disponibilidad de mecanismos políticos que permiten expresar las demandas etnonacionales a través de repertorios no violentos también afectan la legitimidad social atribuida a las organizaciones no estatales que recurren a repertorios violentos con fines políticos. Los cambios en el grado de apoyo popular a ETA y al PKK como actores en la vanguardia de los movimientos de liberación vasca y kurda por parte de sus respectivas sociedades, observados a través de las fuentes de datos cuantitativos, que dibujan un cuadro diametralmente opuesto desde principios del decenio de 1990, desempeñan un papel decisivo en la configuración de la trayectoria político-militar que ambas organizaciones siguen en períodos posteriores.

Palabras clave: Análisis de cohortes, generaciones, violencia política, legitimidad social, conflicto vasco, conflicto kurdo

## Abbreviations (Basque case)

AAA ( <i>Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista, Triple A</i> )	Anti-Communist Apostolic Alliance
ANV ( <i>Acción Nacionalista Vasco</i> )	Basque Nationalist Action
AP ( <i>Alianza Popular</i> )	People's Alliance
ATE ( <i>Antiterrorismo ETA</i> )	ETA Antiterrorism
BVE ( <i>Batallón Vasco Español</i> )	Spanish Basque Battalion
CAPV ( <i>Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco</i> )	Autonomous Community of the Basque Country
CCOO ( <i>Comisiones Obreras</i> )	Workers' Commissions
GAL ( <i>Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación</i> )	Antiterrorist Liberation Groups
EA ( <i>Eusko Alkartasuna</i> )	Basque Solidarity
EE ( <i>Euskadiko Ezkerra</i> )	Basque Left
ELA ( <i>Eusko Langileen Alkartasuna</i> )	Basque Workers' Solidarity
ETA ( <i>Euskadi Ta Askatasuna</i> )	Basque Homeland and Freedom
HB ( <i>Herri Batasuna</i> )	Popular Unity
KAS ( <i>Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista</i> )	Socialist Patriotic Coordinator.
LAB ( <i>Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak</i> )	Nationalist Workers' Committee
MLNV ( <i>Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Vasco</i> )	Basque National Liberation Movement
PCE ( <i>Partido Comunista de España</i> )	Spanish Communist Party
PNV/EAJ ( <i>Partido Nacionalista Vasco/Eusko Alderdi Jeltzalea</i> )	Basque Nationalist Party
PP ( <i>Partido Popular</i> )	People's Party
PSE ( <i>Partido Socialista de Euskadi</i> )	Socialist Party of the Basque Country
PSOE ( <i>Partido Socialista Obrero Español</i> )	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
UCD ( <i>Unión de Centro Democrático</i> )	Union of the Democratic Center
ZEN ( <i>Zona Especial Norte</i> )	Special Northern Zone



## Abbreviations (Kurdish case)

AKP ( <i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> )	Justice and Development Party
ARGK ( <i>Artêşa Rizgariya Gelê Kurdistan</i> )	Kurdistan People's Liberation Army
BDP ( <i>Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi</i> )	Peace and Democracy Party
CHP ( <i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i> )	Republican People's Party
DDKO ( <i>Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları</i> )	Revolutionary Cultural Eastern Hearths
DEP ( <i>Demokrasi Partisi</i> )	Democracy Party
DEHAP ( <i>Demokratik Halk Partisi</i> )	Democratic People's Party
DTK ( <i>Demokratik Toplum Kongresi</i> )	Democratic Society Congress
DTP ( <i>Demokratik Toplum Partisi</i> )	Democratic Society Party
DYP ( <i>Doğru Yol Partisi</i> )	True Path Party
ERNK ( <i>Eniya Rizgariya Netewa Kurdistan</i> )	National Liberation Front of Kurdistan
HADEP ( <i>Halkın Demokrasi Partisi</i> )	People's Democracy Party
HDP ( <i>Halkların Demokratik Partisi</i> )	People's Democratic Party
HEP ( <i>Halkın Emek Partisi</i> )	People's Labor Party
HPG ( <i>Hêzên Parastina Gel</i> )	People's Defense Forces.
JİTEM ( <i>Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele</i> )	Gendarmerie Intelligence Counter-Terrorism
KCK ( <i>Koma Civakên Kurdistan</i> )	Kurdistan Communities Union
KUK ( <i>Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçuları</i> )	National Liberators of Kurdistan
MİT ( <i>Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı</i> )	National Intelligence Organization
PDK/KDP ( <i>Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê</i> )	Kurdistan Democratic Party
PKK ( <i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan</i> )	Kurdistan Workers' Party
RP ( <i>Refah Partisi</i> )	Welfare Party
SHP ( <i>Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti</i> )	Social Democratic Populist Party
TAK ( <i>Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan</i> )	Kurdistan Freedom Hawks
TİP ( <i>Türkiye İşçi Partisi</i> )	Workers' Party of Turkey
THKP-C ( <i>Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi</i> )	People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey
TKP/ML ( <i>Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist</i> )	Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist–Leninist
YJK ( <i>Yekîtiya Jinên Kurdistan</i> )	Patriotic Women of Kurdistan
YJWK ( <i>Yekîtiya Jinên Welatparêzên Kurdistan</i> )	Union of Kurdistan's Patriotic Women
YNK/PUK ( <i>Yekîtiya Nîştimanî ya Kurdistanê</i> )	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

## Glossary (Basque case)

<i>Aberri eguna</i>	Basque national day.
<i>Abertzale</i>	Literally ‘patriot’ in Basque. Usually associated with political, social, and military organizations within the orbit of the radical Basque left.
<i>Alzamiento</i>	General Francisco Franco’s uprising against the Spanish Second Republic.
<i>Aurresku</i>	A type of popular Basque dance, performed as a tribute or honoring someone.
<i>Baserri</i>	(Sp. <i>Caserío</i> ) Traditional Basque rural household and culture.
<i>Baserritarra</i>	A person from rural baserri culture.
<i>Batasuna</i>	Basque radical left coalition founded after the ban of HB.
<i>Batua</i>	<i>Euskera batua</i> . Standardized Basque language.
<i>Batzoki</i>	Social and cultural centers of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV).
<i>Bereziak</i>	Literally ‘special’, referring to an elite commando group within ETA-pm.
<i>Bertsolari</i>	A person who improvises rhymed verses ( <i>bertsos</i> ) signing in Basque.
<i>Carlismo</i>	Conservative and traditionalist ideology that defended Catholicism and monarchy in opposition to Spanish liberalism and modernization.
<i>Caudillo</i>	A military or political leader. Used as a synonym of General Franco in Spain.
<i>Cipayo</i>	A pejorative expression used for local security forces under the order of a colonial ruler. It is used for the Basque Autonomous Police ( <i>Ertzaintza</i> ).
<i>Ekintza</i>	Literally ‘action’ in Basque. The expression is usually employed when referring to armed actions taken by ETA commandos.
<i>Elkarri</i>	A leading Basque pro-peace group founded in 1992.
<i>Erdaldun</i>	Non-Basque speakers in the Basque Country.
<i>Erdara</i>	The term used for those who speak languages other than Basque in the Basque Country, primarily referring to Spanish and French languages.
<i>Ertzaintza</i>	Police force of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.
<i>Euskadi/Euzkadi</i>	The term used for the Basque Autonomous Community, including three administrative provinces of Araba, Bizkaia, and Gipuzkoa in Spain.
<i>Euskaldun</i>	Those who speak the Basque language.
<i>Euskal Herria</i>	Literally means ‘Basque Homeland’ in Basque. It refers to all seven historic Basque provinces, including Navarre and three French Basque provinces.
<i>Euskaltegi</i>	Public or private centers for the teaching of the Basque language, <i>Euskera</i> .
<i>Euskera/Euskara</i>	Basque language.
<i>Etarra</i>	An ETA member/militant in Basque.
<i>Estatuto de Gernika</i>	Guernica statute. Statute of Autonomy for the Basque Country since 1979.

<i>Fueros</i>	Basque foral regime or the <i>Fueros</i> refer to a particular system of relative fiscal, military, administrative, and legislative autonomy prior to Spanish centralization.
<i>Gazte asanblada</i>	Youth assembly.
<i>Gaztetxe</i>	Literally ‘youth house’ in Basque. Social and cultural centers for young people in the Basque Country.
<i>Gesto por la Paz</i>	One of the leading pacifist movements against ETA violence in the mid-1990s.
<i>Grupos Y</i>	Youth groups exercising urban violence allegedly formed by the <i>abertzale</i> left
<i>Gudari</i>	Literally means ‘soldier’ in Basque, also used for ETA members.
<i>Hegoalde</i>	Literally means ‘southern country’ in Basque, which refers to Spanish Basque Country, including Navarre.
<i>Herriko Taberna</i>	Social and cultural centers of the <i>abertzale</i> left.
<i>Ikasle abertzaleak</i>	Patriotic students. The student movement of the Basque <i>abertzale</i> left.
<i>Ikastola</i>	Schools in the Basque language.
<i>Ikurriña</i>	Official flag of the Basque Country.
<i>Insumisión</i>	Mass insubordinate and civil disobedience movement against Spanish obligatory military service in the 1980s and early 1990s.
<i>Izquierda abertzale</i>	Basque patriotic left. Commonly used to refer to radical Basque nationalists.
<i>Iparetarrak</i>	Literally ‘northern ETA members’ who have served to the French Basque organization IK.
<i>Iparralde</i>	Literally means ‘northern country’ in Basque, referring to the three Basque provinces in France.
<i>Jauntxos</i>	Basque rural seigniors.
<i>Jarrai</i>	Youth movement of the radical Basque <i>abertzale</i> left in the 1980 and 1990s.
<i>Jeltzale/Jelkide</i>	The members of the PNV/EAJ.
<i>Kale borroka</i>	Literally ‘street fight’. Small-scale acts of urban violence perpetrated by Basque youth groups within the orbit of <i>abertzale</i> left.
<i>Korrika</i>	Mass rallies for the promotion of the Basque language.
<i>Kuadrilla</i>	Close friend circles in the Basque Country.
<i>Lauburu</i>	Literally ‘four heads’, a mythological Basque cross.
<i>Lazo azul</i>	The blue ribbon. An icon used by pacifist groups against ETA kidnappings.
<i>Legal commando</i>	Uncovered ETA members who pursue an everyday life.
<i>Lehendakari</i>	Title of the President of the Basque Government.
<i>Liberado</i>	A professional full-time ETA militant in the underground.
<i>Maketo</i>	Derogatory expression referring to Spanish migrants in the Basque Country.
<i>Mendigoizales</i>	Mountaineers’ groups in the Basque Country.

<i>Milikis</i>	Colloquial expression to name the members of ETA-pm's 8 <sup>th</sup> Assembly, who later joined ETA-m.
<i>Mirentxin</i>	Collective vans and buses used in prison visits of families and friends.
<i>Muga</i>	Literally 'border' in Basque. Used to refer to the Franco-Spanish border dividing the Basque Country.
<i>Ongi etorri</i>	Literally 'welcome', referring to a 'welcoming ceremony' for Basque prisoners who abandon the prison and return to their native village/town.
<i>Pasotas</i>	Those who do not care about anything, blasé. <i>Pasotismo</i> is a typical characteristic of the post-Franco generation in Spain.
<i>Rojigualda</i>	Pre-constitutional Spanish flag that is usually associated with the Francoist dictatorship.
<i>Sortu</i>	The current political party of the <i>abertzale</i> left within EH Bildu coalition.
<i>Talde</i>	Literally 'team, group' in Basque. Usually refers to support groups under the commands of ETA.
<i>Txakurra</i>	Literally 'dog' in Basque. A pejorative expression used for Spanish police.
<i>Udalbiltza</i>	The Assembly of Basque Municipalities of the Basque Country.
<i>Zazpikis</i>	ETA-pm members who defend the resolutions of the 7 <sup>th</sup> Assembly.
<i>Zulo</i>	Literally 'hole' in Basque. Used for ETA's hidden arms magazine, cache.
<i>Zutik</i>	Official monthly of ETA since the 1960s. Followed by <i>Zuzen</i> and <i>Zubate</i> from the early 1980s onwards.

## Glossary (Kurdish case)

<i>Ashiret (Aşiret)</i>	Tribe, clan. Organizational social and political unity among Kurds.
<i>Agha (Ağa)</i>	A 'landlord' in Turkish Kurdistan.
<i>Apocular</i>	Literally the 'followers of Apo' (Abdullah Öcalan). The initial popular name for the PKK militants.
<i>Bakur</i>	Northern Kurdistan (Turkey).
<i>Başûr</i>	Southern Kurdistan (Iraq).
<i>Bedel</i>	Moral price.
<i>Beg (Bey)</i>	Honorific title used for a feudal lord, seigneur in Ottoman chieftainship.
<i>Beglik (Beylik)</i>	Small principalities in Anatolia under the jurisdiction of a Beg.
<i>Bejik</i>	Kurdish militias who participated in the Armenian massacres under Ottoman rule.
<i>Borç</i>	Moral debt.
<i>Caliph</i>	Title for the chief Muslim ruler regarded as the successor of Prophet Muhammad.
<i>Çîrok</i>	Oral story in Kurdish Kurmanji.
<i>Dengbêj</i>	Traditional Kurdish storytelling poets.
<i>Doğulular</i>	Literally 'Easterners' in Turkish. An expression used to avoid the term 'Kurds' due to repressive consequences.
<i>Doğu mitingleri</i>	Eastern rallies.
<i>Eşkiyalık</i>	'Banditry'. The traditional form of an uprising against the local authority ( <i>agha</i> ) in Kurdistan.
<i>Fedayee</i>	Those who sacrifice themselves by taking suicidal actions.
<i>Gundî</i>	Literally 'peasant' in Kurdish Kurmanji. The term contains a derogatory meaning when describing people from the countryside in Kurdistan.
<i>Halay</i>	Kurdish folk dance performed during social and cultural events.
<i>Halkevleri</i>	Literally 'People's Houses'. Community centers established in the early 1930s aiming to indoctrinate Turkish nationalism.
<i>Halkodaları</i>	Literally 'People's Rooms'. The smaller version of <i>halkevleri</i> in villages and small towns.
<i>Heval</i>	Literally 'comrade' in Kurdish Kurmanji. Mainly used among the PKK guerrillas and people in Kurdish patriotic ( <i>yurtsever</i> ) circles.
<i>İhanet/ihaneçî</i>	Betrayal and betrayer in Turkish.

<i>Kesk û sor û zer</i>	Literally ‘green and red and yellow’ in Kurdish Kurmanji, referring to the three colors on the Kurdish flag.
<i>Korucu</i>	Village guard in Turkish.
<i>Köy enstitüleri</i>	‘Village institutes’. Educational institutions established to educate the rural populace in Turkey.
<i>Kurmanji</i>	One of the dialects of the Kurdish language, primarily spoken in Turkish and Syrian Kurdistan.
<i>Kürtçülük</i>	Kurdism. Any political activity in favour of Kurdish national demands.
<i>Madrassa</i>	Religious schools in the Ottoman empire.
<i>Mehter</i>	The Ottoman military band and the music they perform on the battlefield.
<i>Mezra</i>	Small hamlets in rural Kurdistan.
<i>Milis</i>	Undercover urban armed militia who serve the PKK in towns and cities where the guerrilla has no direct access.
<i>Millet</i>	Non-Muslim communities (Greek-Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish) under Ottoman rule.
<i>Mir</i>	Aristocratic title used for the Kurdish ruling stratum in the Ottomans.
<i>Muhktar</i>	A village chief.
<i>Mullah</i>	Muslim preacher.
<i>Murid</i>	A devoted follower of an authoritative religious figure, a Sheikh, e.g.
<i>Müfreze</i>	Turkish gendarmerie units.
<i>Namus</i>	Literally ‘virtue’ in Arabic, popularly used for the sexual integrity of women as the principal aspect of family honor.
<i>Önderlik/Serok</i>	Literally ‘leadership’ in Turkish and ‘leader’ in Kurdish Kurmanji. Used among the PKK cadres and <i>yurtsevers</i> to refer to Abdullah Öcalan.
<i>Pasha (Paşa)</i>	High-ranking honorary title in the Ottoman army.
<i>Rojava</i>	Western Kurdistan (Syria).
<i>Rojhilat</i>	Eastern Kurdistan (Iran).
<i>Serhildan</i>	Massive popular uprising.
<i>Serxwebûn</i>	Official monthly of the PKK since 1982.
<i>Shalwar</i>	Traditional baggy trousers.
<i>Sheikh (Şeyh)</i>	Honorific title used for an Islamic tribal leader.
<i>Shafi’ism</i>	A school of interpretation of Sunni Islam that is widespread among Kurds.
<i>Şehit/Şehîd</i>	Martyr in Turkish and Kurdish Kurmanji.
<i>Şervan</i>	Literally ‘fighter, warrior’ in Kurdish Kurmanji.

<i>Sistem/düzen</i>	Literally ‘system’ in Turkish. The PKK cadres use the term referring to the capitalist social system, any other life than guerrilla life.
<i>Talebe</i>	Students, pupils in Turkish. Some called the PKK/ Apocular <i>talebes</i> in their early period as most cadres were young university students.
<i>TC</i>	Initials of the Republic of Turkey in Turkish. A derogatory term used by Kurdish patriots when referring to the Turkish state as an enemy.
<i>Tehcir</i>	Literally ‘deportation’ in the Ottoman Turkish, specifically used for practices exercised during the Armenian Genocide.
<i>Töre</i>	Traditional customs.
<i>Vatan</i>	Homeland in Turkish.
<i>Vilayet</i>	Literally ‘province’ in Ottoman Turkish.
<i>Yayla</i>	Uplands.
<i>Yoğunlaşma</i>	Mental concentration during the militancy period.
<i>Yurtsever</i>	Kurdish patriots, usually those who are affiliated with or sympathizers of the PKK.
<i>Zazaki (Kirmanjki, Dimli)</i>	Language spoken among some northern Kurds. Some claim that Zazaki is one of the dialects of the Kurdish language.
<i>Zindan</i>	Literally ‘dungeon’ in Turkish. From the early 1980s on, <i>zindan</i> is considered a front of resistance by the imprisoned PKK cadres.

## List of Tables

<i>Table 1</i>	Demographic growth in Bizkaia between 1779 - 1900
<i>Table 2</i>	Electoral results in the Basque Country in general elections before the Spanish Civil War
<i>Table 3</i>	Net immigration flows to the Basque Country between 1920 – 1981
<i>Table 4</i>	The 1927 and 1965 census in predominantly Kurdish cities
<i>Table 5</i>	Constitutional referendum of 6 December 1978 in the Basque Country + Navarre and five main provinces in Spain
<i>Table 6</i>	Referendum of 25 October 1979 on the autonomy statute for the Basque Country
<i>Table 7</i>	1991, 1995 and 1999 General Elections in Turkey’s Kurdistan
<i>Table 8</i>	Number of casualties in Kurdish conflict in Turkey between 1990 - 2000
<i>Table 9</i>	Evolution of the image of ETA militants between 1978 - 1989
<i>Table 10</i>	Attitudes of the Basques towards ETA in the early 2000s
<i>Table 11</i>	Internal voting among ETA militancy for the proposal of definitive dissolution (2018)
<i>Table 12</i>	Percentage of affirmative answers regarding the central political questions and administrative preference
<i>Table 13</i>	Public demonstrations and events organized by <i>abertzale</i> left groups (1978 - 1988)



## Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i
Abstract .....	iii
Résumé .....	iv
Resumen .....	v
Abbreviations (Basque case) .....	vi
Abbreviations (Kurdish case) .....	vii
Glossary (Basque case) .....	viii
Glossary (Kurdish case) .....	xi
List of Tables .....	xiv
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Research subject, scope, and outline .....	2
Basque and Kurdish nationalisms in context.....	3
Basque and Kurdish national revivals: Generational rupture and radicalization .....	5
Understanding the social reproduction of ETA and the PKK: A generational perspective .....	6
Research question(s) and hypotheses .....	11
Research methodology: Implementation and challenges .....	12
Secondary source consultation: Literature revision and data availability.....	13
Data collection process in the Basque and Kurdish fields .....	16
Methodological problems: Epistemological concerns and practical challenges .....	20
<b>1. Generations, nationalism, and political violence .....</b>	<b>22</b>
1.1. Understanding the question of generations and generational research .....	22
1.1.1. Generations: Definition, scope, and sociological significance .....	23
1.1.2. Socialization processes, political generations, and generational rupture .....	25
1.1.3. Collective traumas, violence, and generational reactions .....	27
a. Experienced trauma: Social change and generational silence .....	28
b. New cohort generation and the social reproduction of trauma narrative.....	29
1.1.4. Designing a cohort analysis: Generations as a social metric.....	31
Some remarks on the methodology of generational analysis.....	32
1.2. A generational approach towards nationalism and political violence.....	34
1.2.1. Nationalism and nation-building in the stateless nations .....	35
Ethnicity and ethno-symbolism in the stateless nations.....	37
1.2.2. Nationalism as a generational rupture: Social change and ethno-nationalist movements .....	39
The birth of ethnonational elites as a generation entelechy .....	41
1.3. Ethnic revival, generations, and collective violence.....	43
1.3.1. Generation of ethnic revivals: Revolutionarism out of silence .....	43
1.3.2. New generation entelechy: Construction of trauma, war, and enemy .....	46

1.3.3.	Political violence in ethnonational movements.....	47
a.	Group truth and justifications of violence .....	48
b.	The legitimacy of political violence: Regime, group, and community .....	50
1.4.	Cohort analysis for ethnonational political violence .....	53
1.4.1.	The whys and hows of a generational approach towards political violence .....	53
1.4.2.	Comparative cohort analysis of ethnonational political violence: A proposal .....	55
<b>2.</b>	<b>Generational Development of Basque Nationalism .....</b>	<b>59</b>
2.1.	Emergence and early periods of the traditional Basque nationalism .....	59
2.1.1.	State-building and the question of centralization in Spain and the Basque Country .....	59
a.	The centralization issue in the formation of the Spanish state .....	59
b.	Resistance, loss, and trauma in the Basque Country: Carlist wars and the abolition of the Fueros ...	60
c.	The period of post-Carlist Wars and the social grounds of the early Basque nationalism .....	61
2.1.2.	The emergence of Basque nationalism: Doctrine, characteristics and social components .....	63
a.	The founding generation of the PNV and the early period Basque nationalist doctrine .....	64
b.	Other Basque nationalist fractions before the Spanish Civil War .....	66
2.1.3.	Basque nationalism(s) during and after the Spanish Civil War .....	69
a.	The legitimacy and social realm of Basque nationalism before the Spanish Civil War .....	69
b.	The political realm of the Basque nationalism before the Spanish Civil War .....	70
2.2.	The post-Civil War generation and the re-formulation of Basque nationalism.....	71
2.2.1.	The post-Civil War period and Basque generational silence .....	71
a.	Problematic legitimacy of the Franco regime in the Basque Country .....	71
b.	The post-Civil War trauma and generational silence in the Basque Country .....	72
2.2.2.	The generational rupture within the Basque nationalist universe .....	74
a.	The birth of EKIN/ETA and the initial period of Basque neo-nationalism .....	75
b.	Theorization of the revolutionary war and the use of violence by the new generation entelechy ...	76
c.	Social conditions during the emergence period of Basque neo-nationalism .....	79
d.	Socialization mechanisms of the generational transmission of the Basque nationalism .....	81
<b>3.</b>	<b>Generational Development of Kurdish Nationalism .....</b>	<b>89</b>
3.1.	Emergence and early periods of Kurdish nationalism .....	89
3.1.1.	Turkish modernization and Kurdish national development .....	89
a.	Kurdish autonomy under the Ottoman imperial sovereignty .....	89
b.	The emergence of Kurdish nationalist entelechy and early activities .....	90
3.1.2.	Violence and trauma in Kurdish collective memory .....	93
a.	Ethnic challenges and violence in the late Ottoman period: The Armenian question .....	93
b.	Traces of the Armenian Genocide in Kurdistan and Kurdish collective memory .....	94
3.1.3.	Kurdish resistance against Turkish nation-building: From revolt to surrender .....	96
a.	The Sheikh Said revolt: The end of 'tacit contract' .....	97
	An analysis of the consequences of Sheikh Said revolt in Kurdish memory .....	99

b.	The Dersim revolt: The beginning of the generational silence.....	102
	The use of physical and symbolic coercion in and after Dersim .....	104
3.2.	The ethnonational revival of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey .....	106
3.2.1.	The generational resurgence of Kurdish nationalism .....	106
a.	The post-revolts period and reproduction of Kurdish identity in generational silence.....	106
b.	The 49ers: A political generation? .....	109
c.	The influences of Mustafa Barzani’s upheaval among Turkey’s Kurds.....	111
3.2.2.	The political socialization of the Kurdish left towards autonomy .....	112
a.	The TİP experience and Eastern Rallies .....	112
b.	The emergence of an autonomous Kurdish political activism in Turkey .....	114
c.	The 12 March 1970 memorandum and radicalization of Kurdish national movement(s).....	116
<b>4.</b>	<b>Generational Development of Violence in the ‘Basque National Liberation Movement’ .....</b>	<b>118</b>
4.1.	The late Franco era political atmosphere in the Basque Country .....	118
4.1.1.	The birth of a political cohort: The Burgos Trial and re-politicization of the public sphere .....	118
4.1.2.	Cohort effects on Basque violence: Class question and ETA in labor disputes.....	120
4.1.3.	The late Franco period violence in the Basque collective memory .....	122
4.2.	The socialization processes of the Basque political cohort during the late Franco era.....	124
4.2.1.	Acquiring Basque national identity: The role of the family in the nationalist transmission .....	124
4.2.2.	Secondary socialization mechanisms: Schooling, associative world, and religion.....	126
a.	Language, schooling, and friend circles (kuadrillas) .....	126
b.	The Basque church and nationalist clergy .....	128
c.	The question of ethnicity in Basque neo-nationalism .....	129
4.3.	From dictatorship to monarchy: The ‘Spanish Transition’ in the Basque Country .....	131
4.3.1.	A general overview of the post-Franco politics in the Basque Country.....	131
4.3.2.	The construction of the Spanish Transition in the group truth of abertzale left .....	133
4.4.	What they fought for: Motivations and justifications of political violence .....	138
4.4.1.	The armed struggle as a tool to accomplish national and social aspirations.....	138
4.4.2.	The perception and meaning of struggle: Emotional aspects of militancy.....	141
<b>5.</b>	<b>The Founding Generation of the ‘Kurdistan National Liberation Movement’ .....</b>	<b>145</b>
5.1.	The Kurdish politics in Turkey between 1970 - 1980.....	145
5.1.1.	Kurdish movements, Turkish revolutionary left, and the emergence of the PKK.....	145
5.1.2.	The generational rupture: Refusing the past, pioneering the future .....	148
5.2.	The construction of Kurdish national identity among first-generation PKK cadres .....	151
5.2.1.	The place of ethnonational symbols in the socialization of PKK militants.....	152
5.2.2.	Impacts of the southern Kurdish national struggle and its defeat among northern Kurds .....	153
5.2.3.	The social mechanisms of politicization of the Kurdish question .....	154
5.3.	The impacts of Turkish rule on Kurdish collective memory and Kurdishness .....	156
5.3.1.	Barriers in minds: Early Kurdish revolts, violence, and perception of the state .....	156

5.3.2.	Internal colonialism: The social perception of Kurdishness outside of Kurdistan .....	159
5.3.3.	Internal colonialism: The social perception of Kurdishness inside Kurdistan .....	162
5.4.	Analysis of first-generation violence: Justifications, objectives, and repertoires .....	164
5.4.1.	Motivations and justifications for the use of force in Kurdistan .....	164
a.	Denial, destruction, and death: Legitimate self-defense for Kurdish ethnic survival.....	165
b.	The role of intersectionality in the Kurdish armed struggle .....	167
5.4.2.	The initial targets, objectives, and repertoires of first-generation political violence.....	169
a.	The transformation from banditry to the political violence .....	170
b.	The 12 September 1980 coup and introduction of new repertoires.....	172
	Dungeon resistance: violence against oneself as a form of collective protest .....	173
	The Bekaa Valley period and the internationalist guerrilla warfare .....	175
<b>6.</b>	<b>MLNV during the Period of Democratic Consolidation in Spain .....</b>	<b>177</b>
6.1.	Early socialization period of MLNV actors during the Spanish Transition .....	177
6.1.1	Transformations in the social meaning of violence during the Spanish Transition .....	177
6.1.2.	The diversification of violent actors and expansion of the Spain-Basque conflict .....	181
6.1.3.	Family tradition: Questioning the transgenerational transmission of militancy .....	184
6.2.	Cohort and period effects on the Basque conflict through the 1990s .....	187
6.2.1.	State violence and institutional marginalization of ‘anti-democrats’ .....	187
6.2.2.	Secondary socialization and initial engagement of MLNV militants.....	189
6.2.3.	Violence in the era of ‘privatization of social life’: Introduction of new repertoires.....	191
6.3.	Motivations and justifications of violence among MLNV members in the 1990s .....	197
6.3.1.	Interpretation of violence among the MLNV militants.....	198
6.3.2.	Suffering, struggle and sacrifice: The emotional meaning of the cause and devotion .....	201
<b>7.</b>	<b>The Kurdish National Liberation Movement in the 1990s .....</b>	<b>203</b>
7.1.	Political socialization of second-generation PKK cadres.....	203
7.1.1.	Objectifying the reality: Military occupation and violence after the 12 September coup .....	203
7.1.2.	The post-coup structural violence against the Kurdish ethno-symbolic universe .....	206
7.1.3.	The continuing impacts of internal colonialism in and outside of Kurdistan.....	209
7.1.4.	The rise of the PKK as the sole actor of the Kurdish struggle .....	211
7.2.	Turkey, the Kurdish question, and the PKK in the 1990s.....	214
7.2.1.	The introduction of non-violent repertoires: Kurdish legal politics.....	214
7.2.2.	The involvement of new actors and the expansion of the Kurdish conflict.....	216
7.3.	Motivations, justifications, and mechanisms of the armed struggle .....	219
7.3.1.	The profile of second-generation PKK militants .....	219
7.3.2.	Justifications for the use of arms among second-generation cadres .....	220
a.	Violence as a means of annihilation versus violence for self-defense .....	220
b.	Social mechanisms and motivations for affiliation.....	223
	The <i>serhildan</i> process and mass urban mobilization .....	225

Indoctrination behind bars: Prison resistance and militancy in the 1990s .....	228
<b>8. Basque Conflict in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Spain .....</b>	<b>231</b>
8.1. Socio-political scenery and violence on the verge of the new millennium in Spain.....	231
8.1.1. A new phase: ‘Socialization of suffering’ versus ‘all against terrorism’ .....	231
8.1.2. Social mechanisms of reproduction of radical Basque nationalism .....	236
a. Family and early socialization mechanisms and processes .....	236
b. Friend circles and later stage political socialization process .....	239
8.2. The Basque conflict in the early 21 <sup>st</sup> century .....	242
8.2.1. “They’re all ETA”: Broadening the contents of terrorism .....	242
8.2.2. The effects of Stormont in the Basque Country: The Lizarra – Garazi Agreement .....	244
8.2.3. The Post-Lizarra period: Militancy under the PP – PSOE anti-terrorism pact.....	246
8.3. Motivations and justifications of politico-military involvement after Lizarra-Garazi .....	249
8.3.1. Collective memory and strategy of the armed struggle and group loyalty .....	250
8.3.2. The interpretation of violence and political progress in the Basque Country .....	252
8.3.3. Objectives and functionality/dysfunctionality of violence in the period of illegalizations .....	253
<b>9. The Kurdish National Liberation Movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century .....</b>	<b>258</b>
9.1. The political atmosphere during the early socialization of third-generation cadres.....	258
9.1.1. The perception of Kurdishness, the State, and the PKK in the 1990s.....	259
9.2. Change in paradigm: The State – PKK relations after 1999 .....	264
9.2.1. A new approach towards Turkey’s Kurdish question on the eve of the ‘New Republic’ .....	264
9.2.2. A new approach towards Kurdistan’s Turkish question in the era of the ‘New Party’ .....	266
9.3. Political socialization and engagement of third-generation PKK cadres .....	267
9.3.1. The early political activities and decision-making process .....	268
9.3.2. The transition period from part-time to full-time involvement .....	269
9.4. Motivations and justifications for the use of arms among third-generation cadres.....	272
9.4.1. From the tailed Kurd to terrorist Kurd: Continuous consequences of internal colonialism .....	273
9.4.2. Repression through detention and prison in the 2000s .....	276
9.4.3. Symbolic violence and concerns over Kurdish ethnic survival.....	278
9.4.4. The question of women and intersectionality in politico-military involvement.....	281
9.4.5. ‘ <i>Önderlik</i> participations’ .....	284
<b>10. Generational Analysis of the Social Legitimacy of the MLNV.....</b>	<b>285</b>
10.1. The social legitimacy of armed struggle in the late dictatorship .....	285
10.2. The offensive by the MLNV against the Ajuria-Enea block .....	290
10.3. The aftermath of the Lizarra-Garazi: The 11-S and a new concept of terrorism .....	295
10.4. The end of the cycle of violent repertoires in the MLNV .....	298
<b>11. Generational Analysis of the Social Legitimacy of the PKK .....</b>	<b>305</b>
11.1. The Apocular phase: Early conditions, challenges, and social support .....	305
11.2. The post-15 August 1984 guerrilla phase and the early 1990 <i>serhildans</i> .....	309

11.3.	Social support for the new PKK amid old challenges .....	316
<b>12.</b>	<b>Ideological and Symbolic Development of the MLNV .....</b>	<b>323</b>
12.1.	The changed and unchanged in the history of ETA.....	323
12.2.	The symbolic transformation of Basque nationalism and Basque national liberation .....	326
12.3.	The fundamental symbolic elements of Basque neo-nationalism .....	329
12.3.1.	Euskera: Where agony begins and reproduces itself.....	332
12.3.2.	Leadership in the MLNV: ETA as the ‘charismatic’ leader .....	336
12.3.3.	The meaning of suffering and sacrifice in the MLNV: Death, exile, and prison .....	338
12.4.	Women in ETA and the MLNV.....	344
<b>13.</b>	<b>Ideological and Symbolic Development of Kurdish National Liberation Movement .....</b>	<b>351</b>
13.1.	Being a member of the PKK: Mountains and the re-vitalization of the genuine Kurd .....	351
13.2.	Construction of the Leadership and other cult figures in group truth .....	355
13.3.	The Party of Martyrs: Immortality through ‘bedel’ and ‘borç’ .....	362
13.4.	Women’s liberation struggle within and outside of the PKK .....	366
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>379</b>
	Generational variables in the development and radicalization of Basque and Kurdish nationalisms.....	379
	Social mechanisms of mobilization and militancy .....	381
	Group truth and the perception of social reality.....	383
	Justifications of violence.....	385
	Generations, contention, and social legitimacy of violence .....	388
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>393</b>
	Online sources .....	411
Appendix 1:	Maps .....	412
Appendix 2.1.	Questionnaire for in-depth interviews in the Basque Country .....	414
Appendix 2.2.	Questionnaire for in-depth interviews in Kurdistan.....	416
Appendix 3.1.	Interview chart (Basque Country) .....	418
Appendix 3.2.	Interview chart (Kurdistan) .....	419
Appendix 4.1.	Sociodemographic data of participants (Basque field) .....	421
Appendix 4.2.	Sociodemographic data of participants (Kurdish field).....	423
Appendix 5.1.	Samples from in-depth interviews (Basque field) .....	426
Appendix 5.2.	Samples from in-depth interviews (Kurdish field).....	429

## Introduction

This study<sup>1</sup> focuses on the phenomenon of political violence exercised by non-state actors in the Basque and Kurdish cases from a generational perspective. By proposing a research model based on a comparative analysis of specific periods within the long history of two ethnonational movements, it attempts to demonstrate the role that generational variables play in the emergence and development of violent repertoires by non-state organizations. This attempt also includes justifications made by individuals involved in these organizations and the grade of legitimacy attributed to the use of violence by their respective communities through the selected periods of analysis.

Dealing with such an analysis requires from the very beginning to specify the distinctive characteristics of these movements that resort to the use of political violence for nationalist and social aspirations. The emergence of these movements has to see with socio-political conditions of a given period shaped by a multiplicity of variables at macro and micro levels. However, they distinguish themselves from other coetaneous revolutionary movements and groups that resort to using violent repertoires to achieve political goals. Unlike the latter case, the self-proclaimed 'national liberation movements' adopt a narrative based on nationalist historiography inherited from the previous generation nationalist groups and reconstruction of this narrative in which the new generation entelechy objectify their position as the leading actor of the nationalist movement. The national liberation movements, in this sense, are not limited to a pure armed manifestation for particular demands from the nation-states with which these organizations contend. Still, they also function as a social movement that seeks a successful diffusion of the group truth regarding the national identity among the community members whom they claim to represent.

A successful diffusion of the national narrative is a challenging question that involves a set of mechanisms and a complex process of social reproduction in everyday life practices. These socialization mechanisms, ranging from family and schooling to peer leisure time activities, associations, or mass media, convert into spaces on which several definitions of truth regarding the national identity compete with one another. As observed in both cases analyzed in this study, each generation of the national liberation movements benefits from available social mechanisms they consider functional in a given period or, otherwise, create alternative arrangements to impose their identity definition on targeted sectors in society.

---

<sup>1</sup> This study has been conducted as a Ph.D. research project under the co-supervision of Dr. Benjamín Tejerina (Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea) and Dr. Hamit Bozarslan (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales).

Finally, like these movements and the politico-military strategy they pursue, the social legitimacy attributed to them also has a dynamic character. The support by the members of the ethnic community on behalf of which these movements claim to exercise violent performances depends on the socio-political conditions of each period during which these strategies evolve. Understanding of material changes and transformations these conditions pass through in each period and the actor's subjective interpretation on these become an essential aspect when it comes to analyzing the evolution of social legitimacy of the use of violence among the ethnic community.

### **Research subject, scope, and outline**

This study analyzes the social reproduction of political violence from a generational perspective in two long-lasting cases of ethnic conflict in southern Basque Country (Spain) and northern Kurdistan (Turkey)<sup>2</sup> led by two avant-garde politico-military actors: *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA, Basque Homeland and Freedom) and *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (PKK, Kurdistan Workers' Party). The comparative analysis of both movements that emerged under entirely different social conditions will be carried out on the purposefully selected three consecutive periods that permit to observe the role that generational variables play in the trajectory of both armed conflicts.

Despite the adoption of almost an identical political discourse in their initial stage, based on the use of 'revolutionary violence' against Spanish and Turkish 'colonial rules' in the Basque Country and Kurdistan, both movements have experimented a simultaneous contrast in terms of their socio-political influence and social legitimacy through the following periods of their politico-military trajectory. ETA, the military apparatus of the self-proclaimed Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV – *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Vasco*) that had been the only significant resistance against the Franco dictatorship since the early 1960s, fell into decline starting from the early 1990s. This decline continued through the 2000s until its laying down of arms and definitive dissolution in 2018. The PKK, the leading actor of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement (*Kürt Ulusal Özgürlük Hareketi*) that remained as the only significant organization against the military regime of 12 September 1980 coup d'état launched its first guerrilla offensive against the Turkish state in 1984, reaching a massive mobilization capacity in Kurdistan through the 1990s and 2000s. This converse development of both movements in terms of their mobilization capacity and social legitimacy between the 1980s and 2000s constitutes chronologically overlapping two cases of the same phenomenon, political violence, that offer a suitable ground for an extensive comparative analysis.

---

<sup>2</sup> Southern Basque Country (*Hegoalde* in Basque) includes Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (*Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco*) and the Foral Community of Navarre (*Comunidad Foral de Navarra*), both possessing political autonomy status in the Kingdom of Spain. Northern Kurdistan (*Bakur* in Kurdish Kurmanji) includes Eastern and South-Eastern regions of the Republic of Turkey which have no administrative competency (see Appendix 1).



Notwithstanding, although there are certain similarities in the initial phases of their foundation, structural differences between the Basque Country and Kurdistan and the diverging routes followed in Spanish and Turkish politics broadly impact the radicalization process of the Basque and Kurdish national liberation movements. These differences offer a suitable ground to realize a comparative analysis on both cases encouraging the researcher to look beyond macro theories of nationalism with little satisfactory explanation on why and how certain national revivals in this period evolved into armed struggle, whereas others pursued a relative pacifist route. Micro-level case-specific variables whose traces can only be sought in the sociological history of both cases (Laitin 1995) come to the forefront. *Chapter 2* and *Chapter 3* are, therefore, dedicated to the emergence of Basque and Kurdish nationalism, briefly covering a long period up until the specific generations analyzed in detail through the following chapters.

#### *Basque and Kurdish nationalisms in context*

An attempt to evaluate the historical roots of Basque and Kurdish nationalism from the modernist perspective draws an entirely different picture. Violent confrontations with the central authority in the period of transition from the imperial understanding of sovereignty to the centralization of the modern state appear as one of few common characteristics. Having settled on two distinctive configurations in terms of social structure, both Basques and Kurds enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy in their dealings with the central authority, whose removal ran into a reaction by peripheral actors. Violent confrontations in the form of wars and upheavals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century ended up in the victory of modernist centralization, which later appears in the Basque and Kurdish national historiography as the beginning of loss. The culmination of these confrontations and discontinuation of both nationalist movements took place in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the end of the Spanish Civil War and suppression of Kurdish revolts. Both events are objectified as genocidal attempts in their respective historiography (Ortzi 1975; Dersimi 1987; Beşikçi 1990; Egaña 1996).

In the Basque case, the history of administrative privileges (*Fueros* or *foral* regime) from the Kingdom of Castile goes back to the period of Spanish colonial adventures in which Basque noble classes participated as the key actor in North Atlantic commercial routes, converting the Basque provinces into a hub between northern Europe and 'New World'. Attempts to remove this status as part of Spanish centralization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century provoked confrontations between those liberals, who opted for the territorial unification of Spain, and those traditionalist *Carlista* sectors in favor of maintaining the *Fueros*. The growing Basque bourgeoisie and developing steel industry, which had been almost exclusively dependent on Castile, supported further integration with Spain. In contrast, conservative Basque peasantry and rural seigniors whose economic interests were primarily reliant on the Basque foral regime opposed this idea of centralizing the state (Díez Medrano 1999: 30-79). This

confrontation is best reflected in the Basque provinces and Navarre through a series of civil wars (*Guerras Carlistas*) through the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Spain.

This division between different segments of Basque society and the social transformations in the highly-industrialized Basque provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, which hosted massive Spanish labor immigration after the abolishment of *Fueros*, constituted the conflictive roots of the first Basque nationalist doctrine. The national narrative of Sabino Arana Goiri, the founding father of Basque nationalism and its political representative PNV (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco* – Basque Nationalist Party), developed upon the loss of *Fueros*, Spanish invasion in the Basque land, and the objective of the recovery of lost past and racial purity through the independence of *Euskadi* (Basque Homeland). The triumph of this neo-traditional Carlist ideology (Laitin 1995: 10) in later periods brought the Basque autonomy back during the Spanish Civil War, whose result would sweep away anything Basque, imprisoning the Basque nationalist sectors into a two-decade social silence.

The initial stages of Kurdish nationalism, on the other hand, developed in a completely different social configuration based on rivalries among rural nomadic *ashirets* (tribes), which were extremely difficult to control by the Ottoman imperial authority in the hands of the Sultan-Caliph. The solution developed by the central authority in the Kurdish periphery was to assign the influential traditional Kurdish ruling stratum (*mirs*) and grant them economic privileges and political autonomy in the form of emirates (Mardin 1973: 170-171). This symbiotic relationship between Kurdish *mirs* and central Ottoman authority began to deteriorate with the implementation of Ottoman modernization and centralization starting from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of which Kurds began to lose their privileged status. This contention gave way to rebellions by leading Kurdish *mirs* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the form of ethnopolitical resistance against the Ottoman centralization (Yeğen 1999: 226-232), and the triumph of the latter eliminated the Kurdish peripheral foci of power.

The later generation of these traditional Kurdish noble families was among those Kurdish intellectuals who produced the early initiatives of Kurdish nationalism in a period during which the Ottoman state progressively lost its western territories as a result of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century wave of national independence. Despite the collaboration of Kurds with the Ottoman army during World War I, not only against the Allied Powers but also in the Armenian genocide of 1915, the foundation of the new republic did not bring the desired Kurdish autonomy but also abolished the Caliphate, the only remaining concrete bond between the Turks and Kurds (Bozarslan 1988). This development brought the second wave of revolts in Turkey's Kurdistan led by influential religious authorities against the government of Ankara, whose definitive defeat in 1938 interrupted the progress on Kurdish nationalism, equally dragging the Kurds into a two-decade silence.

In both Basque and Kurdish cases, the generational silence coincides with two chronologically overlapping traumatogenic interventions on the process of national development: the end of the Spanish Civil War and the establishment of the Franco dictatorship in Spain in 1939 and the end of the Dersim revolt in 1938 and consolidation of Turkish nation-building process under the one-party Kemalist governance in Turkey. During this period of social silence, the transmission of both Basque and Kurdish national memories to upcoming generations was confined to those organizations in exile in neighboring countries, the PNV in France, and Hoybûn in Syria (Bozarslan 2005a: 54; Pérez-Agote 2008: 102-103). The revival of both nationalisms also coincides chronologically as in both cases, those generations who did not suffer traumatogenic events but lived through their consequences were protagonists.

#### *Basque and Kurdish national revivals: Generational rupture and radicalization*

The Basque and Kurdish revivals in the early 1960s point to a generational rupture from the previous nationalist movements and a radicalization process shaped by certain socio-political variables at both local and global levels. Although such variables as the regime character and tolerance determining the grade of physical and symbolic coercion as well as the impacts of social movements at a global scale show similarities, the temporal differentiation of their effects shapes the form and chronology of the radicalization processes observed in both cases. Testimonies made by the early-generation individuals of the revival period regarding their socialization under the conditions of social silence, detailed in *Chapter 2* and *Chapter 3*, reveal the effects of these variables.

In the case of Basque nationalism, a generational rupture from traditional Basque nationalists and the radicalization process takes place in the late 1950s. The foundation of EKIN, a cultural organization prior to ETA, by the Basque university students and EGI members (youth organization of the PNV) in this period, came up with as a reaction to the ongoing social silence as well as to the passiveness of the older generation (Pérez-Agote 1984; Unzueta 1988). Social transformation observed in the Basque Country, especially massive Spanish labor migration to highly industrial Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa regions, gradually moved young generation nationalists away from the race-oriented and pro-Catholic traditional doctrine and accelerated the articulation of class question into the Basque neo-nationalism. The influence of revolutionary movements and anti-colonial struggles in this period and, most importantly, physical and symbolic repression by the Franco regime provoked a rapid transformation of EKIN as a cultural resistance movement into ETA as a revolutionary organization that adopted the use of responsive violence. After roughly a decade-long ideological discrepancies among groups defending a closer relationship with the Spanish left as well as Basque nationalists taking different revolutionary perspectives and subsequent splits, in the early 1970s, ETA arose as a national liberation organization with a Marxist-Leninist agenda through an armed revolution (Ibarra 1987). This

period also coincides with the *cause célèbre* Burgos Trial with which the Basque nationalism returned to occupy the public sphere through protest movements against the regime repression.

The Kurdish case of national revival in Turkey, on the other hand, pursues a somewhat different trajectory during which quite similar variables arise in different periods. The ongoing silence since the last Kurdish revolt in 1938 equally impacted young Kurdish intellectuals who had to continue their university education in the Turkish metropolises of Istanbul and Ankara. Unlike the Basque case, their activities were initially limited to sporadic cultural events for a considerable time and became only visible with the protracted *49'ers* trial. Since then the Kurdish political activism began to flourish under the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP – *Türkiye İşçi Partisi*) and only achieved an autonomous stance by the end of the 1960s (Jongerden & Akkaya 2011; Bozarslan 2012; Güneş 2012). The pacifist and merely political organization of the Kurdish movement began to radicalize with the intervention of the 12 March 1971 military memorandum and subsequent repression, as a result of which several Kurdish organizations with different ideological lines came into being. Similar intra-organizational disputes and confrontations observed within ETA took place among a variety of Kurdish organizations with different political agendas in this period. The PKK, then called Kurdistan Revolutionaries or popularly referred to as *Apocular*, was among those organizations and the only significant one remaining after the 12 September 1980 military coup in Turkey.

#### *Understanding the social reproduction of ETA and the PKK: A generational perspective*

A socio-political analysis of two long-lasting movements based on an uninterrupted use of political violence requires dealing with an extensive time frame during which political and social conditions change and transform. Similarly, the social value and forms of contribution to a cause vary along with these transformations (Fillieule 2009: 88-89) that arise as independent variables affecting the politico-military strategy pursued by these organizations as well as the mechanisms of political socialization of their militants. A generational analysis makes it possible for a systematic tracking of socio-political conditions behind the use of violence in each period, how individuals' socialization processes make them internalize the group truth legitimizing violence, and, finally, whether the broader sectors within the community in question support such practices.

The political socialization and engagement processes of individuals who take part in a politico-military organization involve particular socio-political dynamics that change and transform over time. This fact encourages the social scientist to design an analytic approach based on the concept of 'cohort generation' (Ryder 1965) that refers to human groups sharing a common location in the social and historical processes and, as a result, live through similar experiences (Mannheim 1952[1928]: 291). A

cohort analysis on a movement, therefore, goes beyond the individual's militancy period, including socio-political conditions during their primary and secondary socializations.

The three consecutive political generations analyzed within the scope of this study correspond to a period of active militancy, beginning from the mid-1970s and continuing up until the first decade of the 2000s. The socialization process of those individuals who participated in politico-military activities, however, extends to a larger time scale involving roughly a four-decade period. In this sense, what is referred to as the 1<sup>st</sup> generation does not only apply to the militancy period but the political and social environment previously experienced by individuals who later got involved in political violence. The subsequent 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations also follow the same logic; their pre-militancy socialization overlaps the militancy period of generations preceding them. Taking the significant changes and transformation that occurred in the trajectory of Basque and Kurdish conflicts into consideration, the following chart summarizes the generation cohorts analyzed in this study:

	Basque Case	Kurdish Case
<u>1<sup>st</sup> Generation</u>	<p><i>The Franco dictatorship period</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Widespread labor movements, repression on Basque symbolic universe, absence of the PNV (exile)</li> <li>- Burgos Trial (1970): return of the Basque in public sphere</li> <li>- Ogro Operation (1973): execution of Admiral Carrero Blanco by ETA and last executions of Francoist dictatorship (1975)</li> <li>- Paramilitary groups: Batallón Vasco - Español, Triple A, ATE</li> <li>- The death of Franco</li> </ul>	<p><i>12 March 1971 military memorandum period</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mass mobilizations of labor and student organizations: Dev-Genç, THKO, TKP/ML (TİKKO) activism</li> <li>- Emergence of Kurdish youth movements: T-KDP, DDKO, Özgürlük Yolu, Ala Rızgarî, Kawa, KUK, Apocular (Later PKK)</li> <li>- The fall of Mustafa Barzani movement in southern Kurdistan</li> <li>- The PKK's Hilvan and Siverek resistances against <i>aşiret</i> s</li> <li>- Deployment to Bekaa Valley</li> </ul>
<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Generation</u>	<p><i>Spanish transition to liberal democracy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1978 Constitution (Territorial organization of the state)</li> <li>- 23 February 1981 failed military coup attempt</li> <li>- Dissolution of ETA-pm (1982)</li> <li>- GAL paramilitary activities, extrajudicial killings (1983 - 1987)</li> <li>- Spain's entry into the European Community (1986)</li> <li>- Legal grounds for the PNV and other Basque political parties</li> <li>- 1988 Ajuria-Enea Pact: 'democrats versus terrorists'</li> </ul>	<p><i>12 September 1980 coup d'état and military regime</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physical and symbolic repression by military junta</li> <li>- 15 August 1984 Eruh - Şemdinli offensive: the PKK's first guerrilla campaign against Turkish military</li> <li>- Implementation of Temporary Village Guard system in Kurdistan (1985 - today)</li> <li>- Governors of state of emergency and curfew in Kurdistan</li> <li>- 1990 <i>serhildan</i> s uprisings and mass participations to the PKK</li> </ul>
<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Generation</u>	<p><i>Consolidation of liberal democracy in Spain</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Algiers conversations between ETA and State (1989)</li> <li>- Spanish - French cooperation: the fall of Bidart (1992)</li> <li>- Neoliberal boom: Seville Expo'92, Barcelona Olympic games</li> <li>- Prosecution and punishment of GAL members</li> <li>- New forms of struggle: <i>kale borroka</i> and 'socialization of suffering' - political assassinations by ETA</li> <li>- Discriminate state repression: closure of <i>Egin</i> daily, judicial processes against HB and KAS structure</li> <li>- Emergence of anti-ETA mobilizations in the Basque Country</li> </ul>	<p><i>The period of low-intensity war</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expansion of war in urban centers: militia involvement, <i>serhildan</i> s (popular uprisings) in Kurdish towns</li> <li>- Mass participations to the guerrilla (women)</li> <li>- Paramilitary JITEM extrajudicial practices: kidnaps and disappearances</li> <li>- Evacuation and destruction of villages and mass emigration</li> <li>- Bans on Kurdish political parties: HEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP</li> <li>- Emergence of Kurdish Hezbollah against the PKK in towns</li> <li>- Capture and imprisonment of Abdullah Öcalan (1999)</li> </ul>

As stressed before, the rupture of EKIN/ETA as a new cohort generation took place earlier under the extreme conditions of the Franco dictatorship and experienced a rapid radicalization in the early 1960s. In contrast, the *Apocular*/PKK was a product of the end of the relative ease of the 1960s after the military memorandum of 1971. When the first, second, and third generations are mentioned in both cases, therefore, these correspond to the categorization made for analytical purposes in this study, which has to see with the research interest in observing the social impacts of two diametrically opposite political trajectory in Spain and Turkey: while in the Basque case, the post-Franco period sees

the beginning of a gradual transition towards a western liberal democracy based on pluralism in political representation in Spain (Pérez-Agote 1987; Gurrutxaga 1996), the Kurdish case follows a constant deterioration with the same regard, beginning with the 1971 memorandum and culminating with the military regime established after the coup d'état of 1980 (Bozarslan 2009; Aydın & Taşkın 2017). This contrast constitutes a chronologically overlapping time frame that makes it possible for a comparative analysis of the qualitative changes and transformations in the use of physical and symbolic coercion by both Spanish and Turkish states in the Basque Country and Kurdistan, as well as the violent repertoires by ETA and the PKK.

In the Basque case, the first generation includes those ETA-m militants whose socialization period took place under the socio-political conditions of the Franco dictatorship. Their militancy in the armed organization corresponds to the post-Franco period, namely Spanish Transition, a term categorically rejected by these militants. The new territorial organization of the state through the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and the Basque autonomy statute of 1979 constituted the initial steps of Spain's democratic aperture towards the Basque question. It was also the period during which ETA's notorious urban military actions in and out of the Basque Country, as well as extrajudicial measures by the state-sponsored GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación – Antiterrorist Liberation Groups), reached their highest peak (Ibarra 1987; Zirakzadeh 1991). *Chapter 4* analyzes these developments and the subjective evaluation by individuals who joined ETA in this period.

Similarly, *Chapter 5* deals with the first-generation militants of the *Apocular*/PKK that chronologically coincides with the founding generation cadres who began to carry out political activities under the harsh atmosphere of the 1971 military memorandum. The practices of armed struggle in this initial period were limited to the intervention of young PKK militants in the local hegemony of influential *ashirets*, whom the group qualified as the extensions of 'colonial Turkish state' in Kurdistan, and disputes with other coetaneous movements. What changed the destiny of the PKK in this period was the 12 September 1980 coup and the subsequent military regime that swept away almost all significant Turkish and Kurdish youth movements (Jongerden & Akkaya 2011). Thanks to its deployment to Lebanon right before the coup, the survival of the PKK made it possible for them to launch a long-lasting guerrilla campaign in 1984 in rural Kurdistan.

The decade of the 1990s that embraces neoliberal economic policies both in Spain and Turkey refers to a breaking point concerning Basque and Kurdish armed insurgencies. In Spain, this period is translated as the rapid political disengagement of ordinary people from the public sphere and limiting their political affiliation to professional parties (Mata 1993; Pérez-Agote 2008). In this period, the radical Basque *abertzale* (patriotic) left movement and its legal representative coalition *Herri Batasuna*

(HB, Popular Unity) qualified as ‘anti-democrats/terrorists’ and condemned to isolation through the Ajuria-Enea pact signed among all political powers, including the PNV (Letamendia 2001) were subjected to state repression. Apart from ETA’s inclusion of deliberate civilian targets, the low-density practices of urban violence called *kale borroka* (street fighting) reached evident levels, making a significant number of Basque nationalists question the necessity of violence (Arriaga 1997). *Chapter 6* analyzes the second generation of those militants involved in politico-military activities in ETA in the early 1990s as well as the youth group of the MLNV of the time, *Jarrai*.

The 1990s in Kurdistan, on the other hand, draw quite a different picture concerning the implementation of the same economic policies that made the long-existing uneven capitalist development even further visible. As observed in *Chapter 7*, this period saw the spread of PKK activities in Kurdish towns and cities through massive *serhildan* uprisings and the extreme intensity of violent confrontations in the rural Kurdistan between Kurdish guerrilla and the Turkish army. The use of non-violent repertoires was neutralized by the state that denied any identity definition other than the official one (Yeğen 1999). Attempts of participation in legal politics via Kurdish political parties were frequently interrupted and punished by the Turkish judiciary, and the use of extrajudicial means by the state-sponsored groups against Kurdish political activism increased in both rural and urban areas. Evacuation and burning of villages to cut logistic support to the guerrilla provoked mass emigration of rural Kurds towards big Kurdish and Turkish cities (Jongerden 2007; Güneş 2015), expanding the geography and traumas of the conflict even further.

The last generation analyzed in *Chapter 8* focuses on those MLNV militants, once again both ETA as well as the youth movement of the period, *Segi*, founded after outlawing of *Jarrai*. These individuals belong to a generation whose politico-military participation corresponds to the aftermath of the Lizarra-Garazi peace accord in 1998-1999. This period also saw several anti-violence movements in the Basque Country protesting against ETA’s political assassinations. Selective coercion put into practice by the state on ETA’s social surroundings continued with the further involvement of the Spanish judiciary through a mass illegalization campaign launched against the political and social organizations of *abertzale* left, including the legal representative HB (Mees 2003). After the last unsuccessful peace attempt in Loyola negotiations in 2006, the MLNV entered in the process of demilitarization that led to the end of the use of violent repertoires and the consequent dissolution of ETA in 2018.

Finally, *Chapter 9* focuses on the last generation analyzed in the Kurdish field, which consists of those militants who joined the PKK following the capture of the organization’s founder and main ideologue Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. Following a severe intra-organizational crisis, a new paradigm for

the stateless solution of the Kurdish question within the scope of the 'democratization of Turkey' (Öcalan 1999) was embraced by the majority of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement. Although this period also sees the *de facto* cultural recognition of Kurds as an ethnic identity, most individuals who decided to join the armed struggle had experienced the direct or indirect consequences of the low-intensity war of the 1990s, which shaped their perception of reality. The PKK activism, which mainly had remained limited to Turkey's Kurdistan, began to extend to western Turkey through sporadic protest actions in this period where the PKK found grounds for the political and social organization as a result of the massive emigration of the 1990s.

The analysis of these three consecutive generations focuses on the individual's socialization processes under the socio-political conditions corresponding to each period, the mechanisms through which the political socialization leading to militancy takes place, and, finally, motivations and justifications of engagement expressed by the militants. Affirmations made by social actors with this respect correspond to their subjective perception of reality that reflects the group truth legitimizing political violence. However, whether the broader community on behalf of which the group carries on armed strategy also shares the definition of reality internalized by the group members remains unanswered. For this reason, *Chapters 10* and *11* focus on the generational analysis of the social legitimacy of these groups and the strategy they pursue in Basque and Kurdish societies. These chapters illustrate the grade of social support granted to ETA and the PKK by basing on available quantitative data as well as the actors' perception concerning the changes in social legitimacy through qualitative data obtained in the course of both field research.

Finally, a generational analysis on the social reproduction of political violence not only does it permit the social scientist to observe the conditions and reasons of engagement but also the grade of loyalty to the collective group and the cause defended through armed militancy. This latter is equally essential for an organization to survive. The habitus and mode of belief transmitted and interiorized by the majority of collective group members through written or unwritten rules are related to symbolic elements (Lefebvre & Sawicki 2006: 42-43) whose reproduction is also a generational question. As the value attributed to these elements with definite symbolic meaning within the political culture in which each group emerges and develops are constructed and reproduced through generations, *Chapter 12* and *Chapter 13*, therefore, analyze these processes through three consecutive generations.

This simultaneous analysis of those generations involved in politico-military strategy based on a specific group truth concerning social reality eventually allows making final comparative remarks under *Chapter 14*. This last chapter discusses generational variables influencing the success or failure of both movements in achieving a considerable degree of plausibility of the group truth among the



Basque and Kurdish communities under the given conditions of each period. These conclusive remarks will be based on a specific research plan, questions, and hypothesis whose details are worth mentioning in detail as the following.

### **Research question(s) and hypotheses**

After having made a brief overview of the selected cases from a generational perspective, it would be convenient to formulate the main research question as follows:

“How do generational variables affect the social reproduction and legitimacy of political violence in the Basque and Kurdish cases?”

The above-formulated question reveals the scholarly interest lying behind the field research conducted in both cases. Nevertheless, an attempt to find a satisfactory answer to this question requires formulating several sub-questions that are essential to this end. The following sub-questions to be brought about through the upcoming chapters are therefore equally necessary to answer:

- a) What are the key generational variables behind the emergence of organizations that resorted to political violence in the Basque and Kurdish cases?
- b) What are the social mechanisms of the reproduction of political violence in both cases? Do they continue or change in each generational period?
- c) How do actors involved in political violence perceive social reality? Does this perception of reality change through generations?
- d) How do social actors from different political generations justify their involvement and loyalty to violent organizations?
- e) Does the social legitimacy of violence exercised by ETA and the PKK change through generations? If so, how does this change affect the trajectory of these movements?

These sub-questions may vary, and many others may be listed down. However, both retrospective quantitative data, as well as the qualitative data collected in this study, delimit the scope of questions. Apart from provoking further interest for future research, the primary function of these questions is to formulate hypotheses tested by basing on the accumulated data obtained through literature revision and the field research specifically designed to this end. The main hypotheses that this study has attempted to test regarding the above-formulated questions are as follows:

- a) Political violence exercised by non-state actors in the Basque and Kurdish cases derives from national traumas and their reproduction by future generation nationalists.

- b) Social mechanisms that produce political violence vary depending on the socio-political conditions and variables of each sociological generation.
- c) The social reality perceived by militants is based on the idea of a continuous state of war for ethnic survival, which justifies the use of violence in any period.
- d) The decision-making on involvement in armed militancy is a long process passing through specific patterns during the primary and secondary socialization of each generation.
- e) The social legitimacy of political violence depends on socio-political conditions in a society in a given period under which new cohorts emerge.

Qualitative data collected for this study in the Basque Country and Kurdistan, respectively, as well as the evaluation of previously accumulated data, will allow conducting a systematic analysis through the following chapters to test the above-formulated hypothesis. The results obtained in both cases will be evaluated comparatively in the conclusive remarks.

#### **Research methodology: Implementation and challenges**

A scholarly work dealing with such concepts as nationalism and political violence within the context of 'stateless nations' enters into a controversial area as definitions regarding any of these concepts tend to be subject to moral judgments. These moral judgments are reproduced continuously in everyday life through a variety of mechanisms (family, schooling, media, and alike), and academia is not exempt from this process. The social scientist whose intrinsic position is to avoid value-oriented conducts upon the research object (Weber 1949: 11) may drift apart from 'what it is' and get closer to 'what it ought to be' that leads the science to become a set of practices seeking to determine the validity or falsity of a phenomenon through empirical knowledge (Douglass & Zulaika 1990: 242).

The social constructivism adopted as the general methodological perspective in the analysis of political violence focuses on the processes through which human knowledge regarding this phenomenon is developed, maintained, and transmitted through generations. In this approach, the representation becomes the object of analysis the way it exists, and such value judgments as goodness and justness attributed to the representation or its scientific veracity are deemed irrelevant (Pérez-Agote 1989: 146). Here at this point, the social scientists do not adopt a suspicious role by looking into the degree of the realness of the presented act, searching for 'real reality' (Goffman 1956: 108) or scientific curiosity on the weight of evidence and validity of arguments used by individuals in their discourse (Habermas 1975: 107-108). As basically affirmed in Thomas Theorem that constitutes the premise lying behind this approach, "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Merton 1995: 380), and no further inquiry is necessary with this regard.

From the perspective of constructivist phenomenology, whether Basques and Kurds are nations, whether the Basque Country and Kurdistan are colonies or not, or whether ETA and the PKK are national liberation movements or terrorist organizations are not questions for which the social scientist is concerned. The primary task of a researcher is to understand the process that leads the social actor to make such affirmations and, consequently, take a specific type of action. The researcher, in this case, focuses on the subjectively constructed reality objectified by the social group in question, making it possible to get back to the stage prior to interpretation to achieve “direct and primitive contact with the world” that he is investigating (McGowan 2004: 101). He is not primarily concerned with the degree of accuracy of what social actors claim or evaluating the moral justifications they make (Alexander *et al.* 2004: 9) but instead approaching the defined reality as a research object only because it is objectified and internalized as real by social actors.

Implementation of this methodological approach in a comparative analysis in two different cases of the same social phenomenon from a generational perspective requires paying close attention to the temporal and qualitative characteristics of the previously realized studies and availability of reliable data through a detailed literature revision in each case as part of the pre-field research phase. It would be convenient to affirm beforehand, the research trajectory on the selected period follows explicit parallelism with the political path of both countries concerning Basque and Kurdish questions. Likewise, the same political trajectory also constitutes the primary factor in determining unforeseeable challenges in implementing the research plan in both fields.

*Secondary source consultation: Literature revision and data availability*

A significant amount of scientific work has been realized on both the Basque and Kurdish conflicts, making a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data available for new studies to be designed. Just as the subjects themselves, however, the trajectory and evolution of scholarly interest in both cases differ significantly, following a parallel pattern to political processes observed in Spain and Turkey. Consequently, existing studies offer varying amounts and distinct types of accumulated data in each case to be studied.

The scholarly interest in Basque nationalism and the emergence of armed struggle has extensively been studied from different disciplines in both Spanish and international academia since the mid-1970s. The atmosphere of relative ease in liberties in this period encouraged scholars to deal with this ‘delicate’ question and allowed an increase in the number of works. Those scholars who introduced the first texts of the Basque neo-nationalist historiography in the late and post-Franco periods were ETA-affiliated and published these early works under their political pseudonyms (Beltza [*pseu.* Emilio López Adan] 1974, 1977; Ortzi [*pseu.* Francisco Letamendia] 1975, 1979). In the same

period, however, there were also plenty of Spanish/Basque (Caro Baroja 1971, 1974; Larronde 1972; Fernández de Pinedo 1974; Linz 1973; Apalategi 1976; Etxezarreta 1977; González Portilla 1977, 1981; Elorza 1978; Garmendia 1979; Corcuera 1980; Aranzadi 1981; Jáuregui 1981) and foreign scholars (Douglas 1971, 1975; Payne 1975; Clark 1979, 1984; Heiberg 1982) from different disciplines who focused on the history and political aspects of Basque nationalism.

What may be qualified as the golden age of studies on the Basque nationalism and ETA corresponds to the mid-1980s onwards, namely the democratic consolidation in Spain. In this period, Basque and Spanish sociologists (Pérez-Agote 1984, 1987; Gurrutxaga 1985, 1990, 1996; Gurrutxaga, Pérez-Agote & Unceta 1990; Tejerina 1992; Tejerina & Aierdi 1995; Díez Medrano 1995; Arriaga 1997), historians and political scientists (Fusi 1984, 1989; Linz *et al.* 1986; Ibarra 1987; Elorza 1992; Mata López 1993; Llera 1994), and anthropologists (Aretxaga 1988; Zulaika 1988; Douglass & Zulaika 1990; Alcedo 1996) collected a significant amount of qualitative and quantitative data. Meanwhile, the interest by foreign scholars also continued in this period with prestigious works (Sullivan 1988; Wieviorka 1988; Heiberg 1991; Zirakzadeh 1991; Laborde 1998). Apart from representing a high-quality level in scientific terms, the importance of these scholarly works also lies in their contribution to data collected in this period that also coincides with individuals categorized under the first and second generation of the MLNV in this study.

Finally, the third period of Basque studies points to a divided scientific positioning between the official truth and the group truth in which it is the value judgment of social scientists from both poles that shape the definitions and concepts. While some scholars continued producing objective analyses on the Basque politics (Tejerina 1999, 2001, 2015; Conversi 2000; Mees 2003; Lecours 2007; de la Granja & Mees 2008; Pérez-Agote 2008; Murua 2016), a biased position concerning one of two definitions of reality is noted in the Spanish and Basque academia. The complete articulation of Spanish politics to western democracies, as well as the controversial actions by ETA since the mid-1990s, seem to have deepened the polarization among Basques, including academia. Some former (Azurmendi 1998; Elorza 2005; Llera 2013) and younger generation social scientists (Reinares 1998, 2001; Casquete 2009; Fernández Soldevilla 2016; Leonisio, Molina & Muro 2017) adopted the official truth on the Basque question, which was the synonym of 'ETA terrorism'. This scenery draws a similar picture for those former generations (Lorenzo Espinosa 1997; Letamendia 2002, 2013) as well as younger generation intellectuals (Egaña 1996, 2009, 2013, 2017; Casanova 2007, 2012) who embrace a different interpretation reproduced as the group truth among *abertzale* left circles.

Among studies on Kurdish nationalism and the radicalization of the Kurdish movement in Turkey, however, the very same political trajectory conditions the academic literature in a quite

contrary manner. Foreign diplomats assigned to Kurdistan (Taylor 1868, e.g.) as well as Russian Kurdology scholars in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century produced the first systematic available sources on Kurds. The period before the 2000s witnessed the involvement of foreign scholars or those Turkish and Kurdish scholars and intellectuals who pursued their academic career out of Turkey (Bozarslan 1988, 1993, 1997; Olson 1989; Picard 1991; Van Bruinessen 1992, 1994; Barkey & Fuller 1998) with few exceptions (M.E. Bozarslan 1964, 1966, 1967; Beşikçi 1969, 1970, 1990, 1991, 1992; Bayrak 1993, 1994) as well as some notable journalistic works (Kutschera 1979, 1997; Martorell 1991). Legal challenges and difficulty in access to terrain that became especially apparent after the 1980 *coup d'état* and uninterruptedly continued until the late 1990s, a critical timeline for this study, made it hardly possible to collect reliable and systematic data during these periods.

This situation has gradually changed beginning from the early 2000s, and there has been substantial academic interest in the subject by both Turkish and Kurdish scholars from different disciplines (N.A. Özcan 1999; Yeğen 1999, 2006; Kahraman 2003; Vali 2003; Özoğlu 2004; A.K. Özcan 2006; Çağlayan 2007; Heper 2007; Bozarslan 2009; Darıcı 2009; Keser 2010; M.S. Kaya 2011; Saraçoğlu 2011; Güneş 2012; Aydınöğlu 2014; Demir 2015; Orhan 2016; Tezcür 2019) and journalistic works (Cemal 2003; 2014; Çakır 2004). Quantitative and qualitative data collected through field research carried out by some of these scholars have made a significant contribution to the field. Along with the ongoing interest by foreign scholars (Van Bruinessen 2000; White 2000; Romano 2006; Jongerden 2007; Casier & Jongerden 2011; Grojean 2017) and experts on the subject (Kutschera 2000; Martorell 2005; 2016; Marcus 2007), there has been remarkable progress in this field. After this period, and with intervals depending on the political conjuncture in Turkey by which the field research of this study in Kurdistan has been affected, the data collection process has grabbed a significant impetus.

The literature revision on both cases reveals that, however, there has not been much scholarly interest in political generations regarding the Basque and Kurdish conflicts. Except for a few available sources that concern themselves with the question of generations (Arriaga 1997 and partly Orhan 2016), the impacts of generational variables have hardly been subject to analysis. Despite a significant amount of scientific work on both Basque and Kurdish nationalisms and conflicts in general, and ETA and the PKK in particular, a systematic analysis of different generations of these movements, therefore, lacks in the literature. A comparative cohort analysis on these movements, in this sense, not only does fill this gap in each case but also helps to understand the impacts of generational variables on political violence comparatively observed in different socio-political settings.

### *Data collection process in the Basque and Kurdish fields*

The differentiation in data availability in each case primarily conditions the research design and methodology applied in this study. As in the case of literature revision over the secondary sources, data consultation through independent research centers results in partly satisfying data collection in each case. In the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, *Euskobarómetro*, conducted by the Department of Political Sciences at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), which has been collecting sociological data since the Spanish Transition period, is the primary source along with Basque Statistics Office (*Eustat – Euskal Estatistika Erakundea*) of the Basque Government, which has been providing reliable statistical data on economic, social and linguistic areas since the mid-1980s. The availability of regularly collected scientific data since the post-Franco period offers an ideal starting point to design a cohort analysis that coincides with these periods.

In Turkey, on the other hand, research initiatives over Kurds and the Kurdish conflict are quite recent, and the data collection process is mostly irregular as the trajectory of the ongoing conflict primarily conditions these practices. Prominent research centers like Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research (*DİSA* in its initials in Turkish), Truth Justice Memory Center (*Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi*), and *KONDA* Research and Consultancy have been collecting quantitative and qualitative data on Turkey's Kurdish question, including physical and symbolic violent practices exercised by both parts of the conflict. Nevertheless, due to the limitations as mentioned above, other relevant indicators such as electoral results and census are to be taken into consideration despite a series of variables (judicial intervention in electoral processes, electoral security, and the ban on Kurdish political parties, among others) which make their reliability questionable.

### *Primary source consultation*

Official publications, communiqués, and declarations issued by the organizations constitute essential primary sources as they reflect the group truth in each period. These publications make chronological tracking possible concerning strategical changes these organizations have gone through. These sources are also relevant as they reveal the reality constructed by the group at a certain point in time and make it possible to observe the retrospective reconstruction of the same reality by individuals during in-depth interviews made at the time that this study is realized. The primary sources are available and relatively easy to access through available physical and electronic archives.

In both ETA and the PKK, those archives are accessible. However, the excessive amount of information obliges the researcher to carry out a selective work: the Hordago Editorial team compiles ETA's collected publications until 1978 in an 18-volume work, available both in Foral Library of Bizkaia (*Biblioteca Foral de Bizkaia*) and the Basque Section of the UPV/EHU. Additionally, the collection

'Euskadi Eta Askatasuna' by editorials *Txalaparta* and *Aise Liburuak* offer an 11-volume chronological work based on the official documents issued by ETA. For any further consultation, the complete archive of ETA is available in the library of Lazkao Benedictine Foundation (*Lazkaoko Beneditarren Fundazioa*) led by Father Juan José Agirre in Lazkao village (Gipuzkoa).

In the case of the PKK, although there is no specific physical archive available in Turkey, the Library of İsmail Beşikçi Foundation (Istanbul) offers a modest collection. Likewise, a part of the initial source consultation of this study corresponds to the Kurdish Institute of Paris (*Fondation Institut Kurde de Paris*) as well as the Kurdish Cultural Centre of Ahmet Kaya (*Centre Culturel Kurde Ahmet Kaya*) in Paris. Additionally, the PKK offers more comfortable and faster access to the electronic archive of its official publications *Serxwebûn* from 1982 on (up to 2020 + special editions) and *Berxwedan*, published between 1983 – 1995, which can be consulted through the organization's official web page. Likewise, other relevant publications as *Şehitler Albümü* (Martyrs' Album) and important referential books of the organization and Öcalan are also available on the same web source.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, one last relevant category considered a primary source is testimonies, interviews, and autobiographic memoirs written by those individuals who have been involved in militancy in the Basque and Kurdish movements at different times. Some of the leading figures of the Basque (Beñaran Ordeñana 1978; Álvarez Enparantza 1997; Idigoras 2000; Zumalde 2004; González Katarain 2009; Otegi 2012) and Kurdish (Anter 1991, 1992; Öcalan 1995; Bayık n.d.; Kutlay 1998; Serdî 1994; Kotan 2003; Zana 2004, 2014; Büyükkaya 2008[1992]; Ekinci 2010; Yıldırım 2010; Cansız 2014; Dr. Şivan 2014 [1970]; Karayılan 2014) movements, who belong to different cohorts, provide essential information.

Notwithstanding, while the above-stated data offers a significant amount of information that serves as a starting point, a comparative cohort analysis of the social reproduction and legitimacy of political violence requires designing a systematic research implementation that focuses explicitly on generational variables in both cases. For this reason, it would be convenient to go through the primary data collection process used in this study.

#### *Field research and qualitative data collection*

Due to the previously explained reasons in relation to the political path of both countries in question, the qualitative data collected in the Basque case is more diverse and systematized and includes all three generations analyzed in this study (Pérez-Agote 1984; Zulaika 1988; Mata 1993; Alcedo 1996; Reinares 2001) whereas the data on Kurdish case is irregular, mostly based on journalistic practices

---

<sup>3</sup> Please see <https://www.pkkonline.com/> or <http://www.serxwebun.org>

(Kutschera 1997; Martorell 2005; Marcus 2007) and, therefore, difficult to systematize. This distinctive character of the available data conditions the qualitative data collection design in each field.

A systematic analysis of political violence from a generational perspective requires an additional process of specific data collection. In a study aiming to observe the socialization processes of the members of a particular group in a longitudinal form, beginning from family transmission to schooling and coeval relations, a life-history analysis based on selected samples provides more satisfactory outcomes than other available research techniques (Bertaux 2010: 84). To this end, two different longitudinal research designs based on in-depth interviews with actors from different generations have been conducted for comparative life-history analysis. Semi-structured questionnaires for in-depth interviews are designed for both cases and developed throughout field research (see Appendix 2.1 and 2.2). Due to the differentiation in available data and, most importantly, the variables specific to each case (e.g., social structure, ethnic/religious diversity, geographic extensiveness), each field research has been designed accordingly.

The Basque field (Spain and France) consists of a total number of 24 interviews with those militants who joined ETA-m as well as others who joined later outlawed Basque youth movements of *Jarrai* and *Segi*, which exercised low-density urban violence, allegedly under ETA command. By taking the previously made studies and available data since the Spanish Transition into consideration, 18 interviews have been selected for the analysis seeking an even distribution in terms of age, sex, and geographic region in three periods. Additionally, an exclusive interview from the founding generation of EKIN/ETA, codified as *B-F*, is also included as considered a valuable asset. All transcripts are anonymized as agreed with the individuals who voluntarily took part in this study and codified per cohorts (B-I, B-II, and B-III, respectively), as indicated in the Summary Chart of interviews in the Basque field (see Appendix 3.1).

The second group of in-depth interviews consists of PKK guerrillas and urban militias who are similarly divided into three consecutive generations, beginning from the founding period of the organization in the mid-1970s to the 1990s and 2000s. Thirty-four interviews have been selected for the cohort analysis (see Appendix 3.2) out of some 70 made in both northern (Turkey) and southern Kurdistan (Iraq). Each group (codified as K-I, K-II, and K-III) contains more interviews than those in the Basque case for several reasons. First of all, comparatively far less amount of studies and less regularly collected data obligates the researcher to fill this gap to make generalizable inferences. Secondly, social conditions and variables show a more diverse character in a bigger and more complex society, whose geographic limits overstep Kurdistan, reaching across western Turkish cities, which host a



considerable amount of Kurdish migrant communities. Such variables as ethnicity and religious creed in and out of Kurdistan draw a more complex social fabric than that of the Basque Country.

Limitations in terms of accessibility and controlling key independent variables based on the demographic characteristics of individuals come up with essential reasons in deciding which data collection technique to implement. Focus group discussions with two representatives from each of three generations had initially been considered adequate to create a dynamic micro-universe through which it would be possible to observe interactions among different generations (Alonso 1998: 94). Nevertheless, after initial contact with both terrains, it was realized that the implementation of this technique would be problematic for two main reasons. First of all, in the case of ETA, minimal conditions of mobility that militants faced in underground and prison/exile came up as a practical difficulty to bring two representatives from all three generations together in the same physical place. This challenge was especially apparent in the case of those third-generation militants, most of whom found themselves under one of these three conditions.

The impression noted in encounters with the PKK militants in guerrilla bases in southern Kurdistan (Iraq), on the other hand, drew a different picture with this respect, and implementation of focus groups among guerrillas from different generations did not seem as challenging. Here at this point, however, another challenging question came into sight. Unlike ETA militants, the relative hierarchy among PKK members from different age groups and rankings was more visible, something that casts doubt on the question of self-censure by younger guerrillas in the presence of higher-ranking members. Despite the frequently repeated emphasis on equality and 'comradeship' in in-group environments, field experience in southern Kurdistan occasionally demonstrated contrary examples, especially in relations between young guerrillas and those who occupy executive positions. Intergenerational interactions among militants, therefore, have remained mostly limited with notes taken during informal encounters and conversations with individuals in each field.

For these reasons, semi-structured in-depth interviews were deemed adequate to collect systematic data that would make a comparative life-history analysis possible. To this end, the researcher designed questionnaires by taking the position of the individual at the time (ex-prisoners, exiled, underground) as well as socialization/militancy period conditions into consideration in each case. A sufficient amount of data has been collected to make a comparative analysis despite certain methodological deficiencies and practical challenges encountered on the ground that would be convenient to mention briefly before making a theoretical proposition for this analysis.

*Methodological problems: Epistemological concerns and practical challenges*

After having explained the methodology regarding the primary and secondary sources and the qualitative data collection process, finally, it would be convenient to underline some of the epistemological concerns and practical challenges faced in both Basque and Kurdish fields:

In epistemological terms;

- The qualitative data collection process applied in this study aims to obtain information regarding the social actor's perception of reality at a certain point in the past. However, the definition of reality and the narrative individuals reconstruct out of their memories reflect their present interpretations. Additionally, as Goffman stresses (1961, 1974), the role of the interlocutor in open-ended interviews is to construct an image of personality out of biographical material. As precisely underlined by some scholars who previously researched the Basque field (Tejerina 1992; Alcedo 1996) and others who discuss life-history analysis in generational studies (Braungart & Braungart 1986: 224), by selectively processing information, the social scientist constructs a representation of this reconstructed reality out of memories. While the information obtained through the archives and official sources released by these organizations in the past, as well as ethnographic studies realized on the members of a specific cohort (Zulaika 1988, e.g.), provides a relative remedy for the former issue, the latter remains to be a critical epistemological deficiency that must be taken into consideration.
- The same concern is also pertinent when analyzing autobiographical texts written by the prominent figures who took part in these movements in a specific period in the past. When these texts are analyzed, it is noted that most of them were written long after these individuals had spent considerable time in the politico-military trajectory. As in the case of in-depth interviews, individuals tend to reinterpret their pre-militancy period experiences and reconstruct a narrative in these texts through the ideological optics of their later militancy.
- The researcher's identity features in terms of ethnic origin and sex, as well as language competency, inevitably affect to a certain extent the course of field experience and outcomes. In both fields, the researcher had to conduct interviews in those languages, Spanish and Turkish, considered instruments of symbolic violence imposed by the 'colonial enemy'. Although this did not suppose any significant obstacle in practical terms on the ground, they possibly have an impact to a certain extent on the obtained outcomes.
- Similarly, the researcher's own identity also appears as another question in terms of his social construction of subjective reality concerning both cases. The Basque case is an entirely new

terrain in which the researcher has hardly had experience except slightly more than a one-year field research period and, therefore, has rarely been subject to social tensions of the violent conflict personally. The Kurdish case, on the other hand, is strictly relevant to the researcher's life-course and political identity construction, which has gone through a wide range of influential mechanisms regarding the Kurdish question in Turkey.

In practical terms;

- Although the pre-field plan had been designed on the basis of equal representation of actors in terms of age, sex, and geographic origin, it was not possible to fulfill always the desired profiles due to various reasons. First of all, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, almost all first-generation female PKK militants, who were already few in numbers in the initial stages of the organization, are not alive anymore. Other available sources (e.g., Cansız 2014) represent a particular profile of early women recruits. Similarly, most accessible third-generation ETA militants are currently attending lengthy prison sentences, and the conditions in underground or exile prevent the researcher from having the authority to have more selective control over the interviewee profile as planned.
- The conditions in prison in both cases do not offer suitable grounds to conduct reliable, recorded in-depth interviews. Thus, penitentiary visits made along with families do not include any in-prison interview. Still, they should be regarded as participatory observations based on notes on the social impacts of these visits on the primary social environment of the militants as well as intergenerational interactions among them.
- Finally, as explained before, some interviews could not be included due to the physical limitations of the research project. Some individuals in the Basque field refused their voices to be recorded for security concerns. Those interviewees who authorized the researcher for voice recording are given priority in the selection process.

Considering the entire research trajectory with all foreseeable and unforeseeable challenges and necessary changes made due to these challenges through the field research, it is believed that both previously existing and collected data make sufficient contribution in testing the main hypotheses and offering a satisfying answer to the research question(s). However, the major contribution of this study is the implementation of cohort analysis in two cases of the same phenomenon that will pave the way to scholarly criticism and improvements in future studies on generational research.

## 1. Generations, nationalism, and political violence

### 1.1. Understanding the question of generations and generational research

There has been little progress on the question of generations in sociology since Mannheim's early pioneering work (1928)<sup>4</sup> despite the increasing interest in studies focusing on generation-related subjects. Mannheim's undervalued legacy among his later period colleagues (Pilcher 1994) has begun to change only recently with the introduction of theoretical approaches and debates over generations as an empirical research object (Edmunds & Turner 2005). Notwithstanding, a proposal on the analysis of *longue durée* social phenomena (e.g., nationalism and political violence) from a generational perspective remains relatively underemphasized. Controversial empirical questions on the whens and hows of a generation in a sociological sense prevent a clear concept of generations as a social metric from being developed and applied in the analysis of social phenomena.

The first group of studies, beginning with the above-referred Mannheim himself, regard the elusive term of 'generations' as a problematic question due to the boundaries demarcating when a generation ends, and another starts from a biological perspective. A simple chronology of particular age groups is too vague to categorize (Spitzer 1973: 1355). The difficulty in defining 'what is a generation' and explaining 'when and how it emerges' leads many scholars from diverse disciplines to revisiting the term by basing it on parameters other than the span of life. To this end, these concepts previously theorized by Mannheim, such as social location, generation units, and generation style (1952[1928]), have later been revised, further developed, and categorized. Although this shift from biological factors to extra-biological parameters has not resolved the fundamental empirical questions regarding the boundaries separating one generation from others, they pave the way towards a potential methodological approach in which generations are regarded as a social metric.

The approach towards generations as an analytical tool in studying a specific social phenomenon, adopted by historians (e.g., Kriegel 1978; Wohl 1979; Roseman 1995) as well as some sociologists (e.g., Elder 1974; Arriaga 1997; Brannen & Nilsen 2002), constitute a controversial question. Most of the time, scholars make arbitrary categorizations over why to include certain age groups or periods and why not others. In order to clarify this question, which makes generations an intrinsically 'problematic' issue, it would be convenient to focus on both the definition and relevance of this concept as an empirical object and parameters to use generations as a metric unit.

---

<sup>4</sup> Spanish philosopher Julián Marías indicates a long list of 19<sup>th</sup>-century western European positivists such as Comte, Mill, Dromel, Cournot and Dilthey who elucidated generations as a chronological agent and were usually concerned about the question of their temporal duration (1949: Ch.2). However, as most scholars referred in this study affirm in their dealings with the question of generations, it was Mannheim who brought about the subject as an empirical object. As recognized by Marías himself (1949: 125), it was also Mannheim who introduced new concepts to the sociological understanding of the term that distinguishes the scholar's legacy from his predecessors.

### **1.1.1. Generations: Definition, scope, and sociological significance**

Studies on the scope of generations as an object of empirical analysis focus on historical and social variables through which a particular generation comes into existence. The relevance of a specific age group in the emergence of a generation becomes only meaningful when these historical and social conditions lead individuals to have significantly different experiences from older age groups. This perspective distinguishes what is qualified as lineage generation based on biological age factor from the concept of 'cohort' that refers to those individuals who "experienced the same event within the same time interval," which cannot be confined to characteristics fixed at birth (Ryder 1965: 845-846).

Putting a sociological accent on the concept of generations, Mannheim goes beyond biological determinism and emphasizes the role of 'social location' in which individuals in certain age groups share a specific range of experiences, a particular mode of thought, and a type of historically relevant action. Individuals from similar age groups naturally coincide with one another temporally; however, this temporal overlap does not necessarily mean that they share a similar social location. The latter has to do with living through the same experiences that impinge upon individuals a "similarly stratified consciousness" (Mannheim 1952[1928]: 291-292, 297). Nevertheless, this does not constitute itself a starting point for a social location out of which a generation emerges for which there appear specific prerequisites.

First of all, the formation of social locations is a product of modern societies in which the unprecedented development of human knowledge brings rapid transformations that result in complex human interactions. Unlike traditional ones, in modern societies, the younger birth cohorts (age groups) put more emphasis on self-expression that substantially distinguishes them from the older generations (Inglehart & Welzel 2005: 96-97). Individuals learn different role positions, which until then has been limited to the family as the primary economic and social institution in which the notion of generation is limited to lineage descent (Eisenstadt 2003[1956]: 270). The emergence and development of a cohort as a modern phenomenon, therefore, are closely related to the presence of antagonistic strata, more specifically social class, upon which the intergenerational contention among different birth cohorts occurs (Elias 1996: 229).

Secondly, a cohort generation is related to extraordinary events that make profound impacts on society as a whole but whose consequences particularly shape the socialization process of a young birth cohort. Cohort-related variables involve those major-scale historical events such as wars, conflicts, or economic depressions that provoke profound social changes and transformations in a society (Chauvel 1998: 16), as in the case of interwar period turmoil during which Mannheim brought about the problem of generations. The rhythm of social transformations to which the members of a

potential cohort sharing a similar location are subject play a determining role in the formation of a 'generation entelechy' that produces a new 'generation style' to deal with these consequences:

"The quicker the tempo of social and cultural change is, then, the greater are the chances that particular generation location groups will react to changed situations by producing their own entelechy. [...] Whether a *new generation* style emerges every year, every thirty, every hundred years, or whether it emerges rhythmically at all, depends entirely on the trigger action of the social and cultural process." (Mannheim 1952 [1928]: 310, *emphasis in the original*)

The rhythm of these changes, however, does not affect all members of a specific birth cohort in the same way. Their impacts are also strictly related to such stratification variables as ethnic origin, social class, and gender of those individuals who live through the major-scale changes and transformations (Schuman & Scott 1989: 360; Bristow 2015: 186). These events with dramatic social consequences, such as wars, conflicts, economic depressions, and migrations, affect the political formation of all young members of society, but the identity and belonging in terms of ethnicity, class, and gender limit the range of possible experiences that individuals have. These variables largely determine how individuals sharing a similar social location are impacted<sup>5</sup>, how they interpret the consequent transformations, and, as a result, what trajectory they pursue to deal with them.

The emergence of particular youth groups as a result of these social processes promotes responsive ideas and attitudes, that is, the formation of a new generation entelechy that generates oppositely positioned 'generation units'. According to Mannheim, this occurs "only where a concrete bond is created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilization" (1952[1928]: 303-307). Therefore, for a cohort generation to come into existence, shared experiences of a sequence of events are not sufficient *per se*. Shared experiences lead to the emergence of a cohort so long as they provoke a 'we sense' in individuals or collectives. Treating generations as specific 'collective identities' having their own 'social time', Corsten emphasizes this feature of consciousness that the members of the same cohort have about 'their time,' distinguishing a cohort from a simple age group:

"...members of a generation do not simply share assumptions of a background of experience. They also share a *sense* that the other members of the same generation share similar background assumptions. They do not only have something in common, they have also a (common) sense for (a kind of knowledge about) the fact that they have something in common. This more intuitive reflection upon the common sense of a generation is part of the sense of sharing a collective time – the sense that converts my time to our time or to the times of my generation." (Corsten 1999: 258, *emphasis in the original*)

This affirmation points to what is defined as a 'generational identity' (Alwin & McCammon 2007: 231-232) among those who belong to the same birth cohort and pass through more or less the same

---

<sup>5</sup> The class question is placed in the center of Mannheim's understanding of social location, but it is more systematically formulated within the context of generations and intergenerational conflicts by Elias's later period analysis on the German society (1996). In a more recent period, Brannen and her colleagues (2004) successfully introduce other identity definitions as ethnic origin and gender to their intergenerational analysis on in-family cultural transmission.

experiences in the face of social and cultural changes in a given period, and, as a consequence, create a strong 'collective mentality' in a temporal sense (Esler 1984). A cohort generation distinguishing itself from the previous generation in the mode of thinking and acting, therefore, refers to the birth of a political generation as a result of a generational rupture.

### **1.1.2. Socialization processes, political generations, and generational rupture**

Why do different birth cohorts react differently in the face of the same social turbulences? How is the difference in their mode of evaluating the facts and actions they take shape so sharply that they are considered a political generation? Propositions based on life-course development theory that refers to social events and roles that individuals interiorize at different stages of their life cycle (Giele & Elder 1998: Ch.1) fall short to explain this differentiation. The politicization of a generation is about a question of discontinuity, a split from the former modes of thinking and attitudes, and the beginning of another continuity based on entirely different ones.

Life-cycle and life-course approaches coincide in drawing a continuous transgenerational flow from elder birth cohorts to the younger in transmitting the patterns of experience and ideas through the socialization of individuals. Parsons, Bales & Shils affirm that in this formulation, the flow of cultural transmission of shared values possessing a deep emotional significance takes place through specific mechanisms that are essential for the continuity of social order in any society (Rule 1988: 152). These mechanisms begin with family, qualified as the 'primary agency', and continue through schooling, coeval relationships, and later period engagements categorized as the 'secondary socialization agencies' (Berger 1967: 392). Whether the political orientations acquired in the family environment as the primary socialization agent are enduring and persistent or change at later stages of life constitute the primary debate among scholars working on life-cycle politics.

Political generations enter this debate by providing a different perspective that does not ignore the transgenerational patterns but points to intergenerational collisions in this flow. When a large-scale social change takes place, its consequences are processed and interpreted distinctly by different birth cohorts, and this difference is eventually reflected in their political attitudes (Arriaga 1997: 68). A political generation arises when a younger birth cohort rejects the political order assumed by the older age group and develop a new trajectory among the members of the same cohort. Braungart & Braungart point out that this is closely related to two principle axis in any social context: *historical circumstances* such as population growth, urbanization, industrialization, economic depression, unemployment, cultural change, and nationalism prepare social grounds for politicization when the adequate *mobilization forces* (organized networks, solidarity, charismatic leadership, intergroup competition over political goals) are present (1986: 217-218).

A 'generational rupture', that is, a break-up between elder and younger cohorts in terms of interpretation of the change and actions taken to deal with its consequences, arises under these circumstances. While the younger cohort, 'active' or 'strategic generation', makes a generative contribution to the social community and polity, the older 'passive generations' tend to accept the given culture (Turner 2002: 16-17). Due to their pioneering role and the significance of their activism in speeding up the renovation of cognitive bases of society (Attias-Donfut 1988: 148), 'disruptive' young generations are usually identified with the 'youth movements' (Juhem 2009: 193). These youth groups and movements are the carriers of the generation entelechy and the operators of 'generation style' that shape the political socialization of the following birth cohorts.

At what stage of life-course this generational rupture takes place arises as an important question in understanding this process and developing a model of analysis. Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1936) suggests that although children begin to conceptualize politics and create a sense of identification with political symbols in their family environment, their interpretation of politics until the early adolescence period remain at a rudimentary level. It is only at what the scholar labels 'formal operational stage' (13 years and over) that children can think about abstract concepts (Peterson 1983: 271-272). Although some others (Jennings & Niemi 1981: 21-22) indicate later years of adolescence as a critical period for the development of the individual's political ideology, referring to their empiric cohort analysis, Bartels and Jackman underline a broader age spectrum, from childhood to adolescence, during which sensibility towards politics increase (2013: 10). A generational rupture by the cohort that experiences the social change, therefore, arguably takes place in early adulthood, during which the interest in politics begins. However, the period that paves the way towards the rupture involves a broader period, beginning with early adolescence.

Finally, when a generational rupture takes place and the younger cohort establishes an alternative political stance, there starts a new transgenerational socialization sequence that lasts up until the following generational break-up. Characteristics of the cohort that breaks up from the older age group are transmitted to subsequent cohorts, and the ideas and attitudes once considered 'different' gradually extend over the population under a certain age (Spitzer 1973: 1385). The new generation style and entelechy develop a tendency of continuity through upcoming birth cohorts. In this case, new cultural and social norms arising along with the latest cohort generation are also expected to transfer through subsequent birth cohorts.

However, this does not mean that older generations are exempt from these changes and transformations in ideas and styles brought by the new generation entelechy. Unlike the 'fresh contact' argument of new cohorts with the social change, defended by both Mannheim (1928) and Ryder



(1965), Edmunds & Turner affirm that if older age groups find the ideas and attitudes promoted by the new cohort attractive enough, they end up in accepting them (2002: 50).<sup>6</sup> Arguably, the capacity of persuasiveness and verisimilitude of new ideas and attitudes are primary factors in turning the transgenerational transmission pattern into an intergenerational one. The salience of the event that provokes generational rupture also appears to be an essential variable in the reaction by different birth cohorts (Riggs & Turner 2000: 74-75) that should be further examined.

### **1.1.3. Collective traumas, violence, and generational reactions**

In studies on generations, major-scale events that have left their marks on the formation of macro generations in this and previous century come to the forefront. Traumatogenic events like the Great Depression, world wars, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the September 11 attacks are frequently selected when exemplifying the magnitude of socio-political changes at a macro level (Brokaw 1998; Edmunds & Turner 2005; Alwin & McCammon 2007; White 2013). Nevertheless, the larger-scale impact and popularity of these milestone events in western societies result in underestimating the relevance of smaller-scale traumatogenic events that provoke similar generational ruptures in more local settings. Civil strifes, invasions, and rebellions potentially produce a micro-level political generation among the young cohort of a specific community or identity group.

Unlike 'psychic traumas' that have direct devastating effects on individuals, larger-scale events have the capacity of provoking 'collective traumas', referring to severe consequences due to the disruption of communal networks and evanescence of 'we sense' among the members of a specific community. While those who suffer an individual trauma continue to exist despite severe damages, collective traumas constitute a threat to the existence of a collective identity (Erikson 1976: 153-154). Fundamental elements of social tissue (e.g., family and peer groups) give up functioning the way they do in the pre-trauma period. Catastrophic events with multiples loss of life and property and memories based on them provoke over-disrupted family dynamics (Figley & Kleber 1995: 83).

Those scholars who analyze the generational effects of events provoking collective traumas (Mayer 1988; Tedeschi 1999; Edmunds & Turner 2002; Alexander *et al.* 2004; Hirsch 2008) include violent human interventions such as wars, revolutions, and rebellions among them. As in the case of natural disaster, these human-made violent events also threaten the collective identity of a community by provoking a sense of loss of meanings and collapse its symbolic universe (Elias 1996: 351). Additionally, unlike natural disasters with no specific perpetrator, the reaction given by victims tends

---

<sup>6</sup> Using the data collected by Detroit Area Studies (1971), Dowd precisely affirms that there is no significant empiric evidence showing a relation between age factor and tolerance towards civil liberties (1980: 221-222). Fresh contact argument may be valid in the initial stage of an emerging cohort, whereas the mid and long-term generational impacts on older birth cohorts are related to qualitative variables of the change as well as forms and ideas represented by the new cohort.

to be different in human-originated instances in which the disaster is caused by an individual, group, or entity to whom victims collectively react in various manners. As pointed out before, such responses before traumatic episodes are observed more visibly among the young cohort who are more likely to become the entelechy of this pioneering process:

“Traumatic episodes like war and revolution may become the foci of crystallization of the mentality of a cohort. The dramatic impact may mark indelibly the ‘naïve eyes and virgin senses’ of the cohort in the vanguard and change them into an entelechy with an explicit mission, a virtual community of thought and action. [...] A new cohort provides a market for radical ideas and a source of followers, and they are more likely than their elders to criticize the existing order. [...] The direction of change may be to the left or to the right, toward democracy or toward totalitarianism, but whatever the trend, it is most manifest in youth.” (Ryder 1965: 850-851)

This affirmation, however, constitutes only the reaction by a specific birth cohort to major-scale violent events. An attempt to inquire the effects of incidents caused by major-scale violence on different birth cohorts requires a two-sided observation among the members of different age groups: *a)* those who have personally been subjected to traumatogenic event itself and; *b)* those who have not experienced the incident directly, but have to deal with its consequences. It would be convenient to dwell in both cases to understand the reaction given by both generations.

*a. Experienced trauma: Social change and generational silence*

The profound changes reflect the immediate impacts of a traumatogenic event on pre-existing patterns of beliefs, goals, identity, and interpersonal behaviors. Sztompka affirms that these social changes on axio-normative and symbolic belief systems of society happen *sudden* and *rapid* in terms of time; *wide* and *comprehensive* in terms of its scope, including a wide range of aspects of social life; and *radical*, *deep*, and *fundamental* in terms of its content (Alexander *et al.* 2004: 158-159). These impacts constitute a completely different process that is hardly correlated with the trajectory of transgenerational transmission of cultural norms and social patterns. In such cases, collective trauma itself becomes a socialization mechanism that deconstructs the pre-trauma period social reality and upon which a new collective reality is constructed.

Traumatic experiences faced by a community are interpreted under the existing moral values, and overcoming trauma consequences is not limited to individuals who have been subjected to traumatic practices (e.g., torture, rape, disappearance, death). Still, it is instead a question of ‘cultural bereavement’ (Summerfield 1995: 20-22). Smelser indicates that those societies that experience large-scale traumatic violence at some point in time develop two principal reactions: *a)* ‘we must remember’ based on collective public campaigns or; *b)* ‘let us forget’ resorting to deliberate mass omission (Alexander *et al.* 2004: 51-54). Arguably, the presence of the perpetrator and the position of the victim in the post-trauma period appear highly relevant to these reactions upon which the trauma narrative is constructed. In case the perpetrator continues to occupy an absolute power position, the generation

who lives through the trauma is more likely to embrace the unwillingness to remember the causes leading to the traumatogenic event, which creates a state of social silence.

Scholars working on collective traumas underline two reasons when explaining the causes that lead to social silence observed right after a violent incident. While some members of the society fall into silence to assuage survivor guilt (Brende & Parson 1986: 128), some others take a similar attitude in the form of posttraumatic avoidance to prevent reoccurrence of a similar catastrophe (Elliott 1997: 812). Social silence involves the preference of those birth cohorts who experienced the traumatogenic event to confine their traumas to the 'language of the family', which consists of nonverbal and non-cognitive acts practiced exclusively in the private sphere (Hirsch 2008: 112). Upcoming generations who do not live through the incident but instead face its severe social consequences may potentially take a somewhat different attitude by breaking the social silence through a public stand against the trauma perpetrator. Eyerman makes the following statement with this respect:

"If a collective memory is rooted in a potentially traumatic event, which by definition is both painful and also open to varying sorts of evaluation, *it may take a generation to move from group memory to public memory*. Sometimes it may take even longer; sometimes it may never happen at all." (Eyerman 2002: 66, *emphasis added*)

This transition from collective silence to collective emitting at the end of which the cultural trauma finds a social expression and constitutes a part of the collective memory of the community in question is also where the previously mentioned 'generational rupture' starts. In such cases, the younger generation takes a rather critical attitude towards the lack of reaction and silence adopted by their parents and begin to construct a completely different social reality based on trauma narrative.

#### *b. New cohort generation and the social reproduction of trauma narrative*

The trauma caused by violence potentially triggers a strong sense of solidarity within the community as well as a revulsion from societal arrangements that rest upon enforcement methods (Cosser 1967: 88). The forms of thinking and acting adopted by the new cohort, therefore, are based on a reaction towards the social and cultural forms imposed upon society, and the passive stance, silence, and immobility by older generations are considered betrayal (Smith 1999: 218). Within the trauma narrative constructed by the generation entelechy, the new cohort is ascribed a leading role claiming that the adopted ideas and attitudes will serve best to recover trauma consequences.

A generational rupture points to a social process through which the trauma narrative is objectified in the public realm. The trauma acquires a level of social recognition rather than remaining as a sum of personal experiences told by older generations in the private sphere (Olick 1999: 345). In other words, from the perspective of constructivist phenomenology, when a traumatogenic event takes place within a collectivity, the *sine qua non* to qualify this event as a collective trauma lies in its

construction by the political generation rather than the objective dimension of the crisis it provokes. The distinction between potentially traumatic experiences and the way they are represented as a narrative becomes apparent with this respect:

“Traumatic status is attributed to *real* or *imagined* phenomena, not because of their actual harmfulness or their objective abruptness, but because these phenomena are believed to have abruptly, and harmfully, affected collective identity. [...] Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity. Collective actors 'decide' to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go.” (Alexander *et al.* 2004: 9-10, *emphasis added*)<sup>7</sup>

Telling and re-telling those stories based on stereotyped and distorted traumatogenic events whose causes and consequences are debated through language and other symbols create a collective memory based on the trauma (Neal 1998: 202). A successfully narrated trauma acquires different spatial and temporal parameters, transcending the limitations of the original event, overflowing the individuals' minds, and spreading over objects or cultural artifacts (Eyerman 2001: 130). Spatial traces of a tragedy and multifold practices through which its 'sociodrama' is reproduced re-actualize the traumatic event through new generations, alerting them about the presence of the threat that caused the tragedy (Kellerman 2007: 35-36).

A successful narration of trauma, however, still depends on certain objective conditions under which the sociodrama is performed. The sociocultural context of a society determines whether it is more trauma prone than others. At this point, Smelser emphasizes that the memory remembered and made to remember must be culturally relevant for the society in question with substantial adverse effects, disgust, shame, or guilt (Alexander *et al.* 2004: 36-37). No historical event is automatically – and necessarily- qualified as a 'collective trauma' despite the magnitude of its tragic impact. It is strictly related to objective conditions under which the sociodrama functions. This process begins with the *claim-making* of the event and demand for the reparation of harassment that is later taken to the public via *carrier groups* consisting of elites, intellectuals, religious leaders, or marginalized classes who are the 'meaning makers' of the narrative. Finally, a broader *audience* internalizes the trauma narrative. From social actors to the scholarly world, legal bureaucracy and mass media offer a wide range of mechanisms for this process of 'traumatizing' the community (Alexander 2012: 15-24).

Revisiting the principle approaches towards generations as a product of historical and social locations, it has been attempted to emphasize the emergence and politicization of generations from a

---

<sup>7</sup> This argument constitutes exactly the opposite to the Mannheimian approach which prioritizes 'personally acquired memories' and underestimates 'appropriated memories', insisting that individuals only possess directly experienced memories (1952[1928]: 296). The constructivist approach towards collective trauma in generational terms does not attribute a primary role to the traumatic event itself, but rather to the degree of verisimilitude in its narration as a trauma, which is not about the personally acquired memories but rather the narration of traumatogenic event.

sociological perspective, with a particular accent on the role of collective traumas and the construction of the memory. In the last part of this section, it would be convenient to revise some of those studies which focus on generations and intergenerational interactions in specific cases.

#### **1.1.4. Designing a cohort analysis: Generations as a social metric**

Empirical questions on the ambiguous definition and scope of generations cast a shadow on those studies that analyze specific social phenomena from a generational perspective. If generations already constitute a challenging empirical question, designing a methodology based on this concept as a temporal unit is further compelling. A considerable number of studies reveal a strict relationship between the research question and the phenomenon and the scope of generation to be applied when designing a fruitful research methodology.

First of all, it is necessary to distinguish two types of scholarly work involved in the subject of generational research: the first group of scholars (e.g., Elder 1974; Wohl 1979; Schuman & Scott 1989; Roseman 1995; Arriaga 1997; Chauvel 1998; Brannen & Nilssen 2002; Eyerman 2002; Bristow 2015) choose a specific case study and implementing a cohort analysis they demonstrate why the approach towards the concept of generations they embrace is the most convenient for this particular case. The second group (Jansen 1974; Kertzer 1983; Braungart & Braungart 1986; Brannen 2003; Burnett 2010), on the other hand, focuses directly on the methodological use of generations as a temporal unit following empirical outcomes provided by the first group. Both groups provide essential insight in revealing specific characteristics of generational analysis and developing a proper research design for a particular social phenomenon.

A generational analysis, no matter if it focuses on a specific or various birth cohorts, is always an intergenerational analysis as the impacts of a social change on a particular generation are only observable in comparison with the ideas and attitudes of older birth groups. In many case studies, scholars choose specific periods by taking a significant event that provokes profound social changes as a reference, which also determines the concepts to include in the analytic framework. If one carries out a longitudinal analysis on the generational impacts of the Great Depression on various birth cohorts, such parameters as the level of economic deprivation, change in income, and unemployment rates are related to the capacity of adaptation and reaction among different birth cohorts (Elder 1999[1974]). Similarly, in a cross-sectional study that aims to measure the impacts of significant events on the collective memory of several birth cohorts (Schuman & Scott 1989), the empirical data obtained on a specific cohort is meaningful only if it is comparable with that of older birth cohorts.

In some other cases, intergenerational interactions are situated at the center of research interest that focuses on the transmission and reproduction of roles, norms, and forms of political

affiliation and engagement within a specific social structure such as family (Brannen, Moss & Mooney 2004; Jennings, Stoker & Bowers 2009) or religion (Williams & Davidson 1996; Pérez-Agote 2012). These studies pay closer attention to the socialization processes of each cohort and their impacts on transformations observed within these structures. They also provide clear insight concerning generational continuities in each period and the role of relevant independent variables in this process.

In the recent period, there is a noticeable increase in studies designed to analyze the conditions under which specific macro generations come into being. Following the path opened by Wohl's comprehensive multi-country study on the 'lost generation' (1979), the more recent period historians and sociologists (Carlson 2008; Monhollon 2010; Henger & Henger 2012; Bristow 2015) examine the socio-political variables that impact the ideas and forms of actions that new cohort generations develop in other cases. As previously mentioned, these studies focus on the profound economic and social changes experienced in the western world, particularly North America, following major-scale events with catastrophic results, such as world wars and economic depressions. The later period generations, namely generations X, Y, and Z, are rather associated with consumption tendency in marketing strategies and research (Meredith & Schewe 2002).

Finally, some scholars show interest in the role of generational variables in affiliation and disaffiliation to concrete groups that represent a specific generation unit. Ideological influences of a period on the socialization of a cohort whose members get involved in youth/student movements (Whalen & Flacks 1984; Braungart & Braungart 1991; Cohen 1994) and engagement/disengagement in an organization (Elias 1996: 229-299; Arriaga 1997) provide essential insight regarding the perception of external variables and in-group loyalty. This last group is especially crucial as they scrutinize the impacts of generational variables on transformations in a particular group and the relationship between objective conditions and subjective interpretations.

#### *Some remarks on the methodology of generational analysis*

After having briefly revised various case studies based on generational analysis, it would be convenient to cast an eye on some remarks concerning the implementation of generations as a social metric. Although it is difficult to draw a typology of generational analysis applicable in any case<sup>8</sup>, based on the previous empirical research in different fields, some scholars point out certain aspects that need consideration when designing a research model.

---

<sup>8</sup> A rare example to establish a typology towards the patterns of change and continuity in intergenerational family transmission has been attempted by Brannen and her colleagues (2004: Ch. 7), who limit themselves to two structural factors (occupational and geographic mobility) that they have found to shape intergenerational relations within families.

First and foremost, the difficulty in distinguishing three referential factors, that are age, period, and cohort effects as independent variables, constitute the core problem in the analytical use of generations. The tendency to separate ontogenetic change (biological maturation), period, and cohort effects (Juhem 2009: 190) has been a problematic issue, and a comprehensive explanation of a life-cycle phenomenon is related to all three factors (Dowd 1980: 214). Major-scale events that potentially create new cohort generations affect individuals' everyday life and *habitus* by developing a strong sense of own culture (Edmunds & Turner 2002: 15-16), and life-course elements form part of this process. Underlining the same question, Braungart and Braungart suggest conducting a combined qualitative model in which aging, period, and cohort effects are included, linking the life-course development of individuals to historical experiences based on societal and global cycles (1986: 225).

As previously noted, the sociological significance of a generation goes beyond the concept of aging. Although age groups still constitute a fundamental parameter used in cohort analysis, understood as a location of an individual or a social group in time, a cohort puts the emphasis on the impacts of historical events on human development (Alwin & McCammon 2007: 234). The researcher identifies boundaries demarcating a cohort as a social unit by including only specific age groups based on his or her knowledge and expertise on the historicity of the research subject (Burnett 2010: 47-48). This characteristic of cohort analysis, therefore, comes in for criticism as cohort identification is considered highly arbitrary and difficult to justify (Spitzer 1973: 1357; Kertzer 1983: 138), which makes a cohort come into prominence as long as it catches scholarly attention.

Notwithstanding, the identification of a cohort is not a random practice. Formative events and the magnitude of changes related to the research subject are taken into consideration when delimitating the age groups of a generation cohort, assuming that individuals within the selected age category have gone through similar experiences. At this stage, which methodological design to apply depends on the research question and objectives. If, for example, the research aims to measure the impact of one or more events at one point in time on different birth cohorts (e.g., Payne *et al.* 1973; Taveggia & Ross 1978; Schuman & Scott 1989), cross-sectional research design provides a sufficient amount of data to obtain fruitful results. However, if it seeks to measure a social group at various points in time, a longitudinal design best suits this end (Buss 1974: 56). Depending on the specific interests of the researcher, these designs include various research techniques (panel study, life-history analysis, e.g.) to obtain desired outcomes (Braungart & Braungart 1986: 222-224).

Finally, an analysis focusing on the relationship between significant social events and specific age groups who share similar life experiences depends on the availability and accessibility of data. Any event-based cohort analysis addresses a series of conceptual questions regarding the measurement of

a definable event. The temporal location of the formative event in question (far past, past, near present or present), and the duration of its impacts, lead the researcher to recast the relevant retrospective and prospective data (Elder & Pellerin 1998: 272-273) in designing a research strategy. A research project based on comprehensive cohort analysis, for this reason, requires a thorough literature revision on the research subject. Those studies based on an extensive survey data set systematically collected by research centers in different periods (e.g., Drouin 1995; Jennings, Stoker & Bowers 2009; Bartels & Jackman 2013) enjoy the opportunity to formulate a wide range of research questions and hypothesis that are possible to test through available data.

Having revised the main aspects of generations as well as primary questions regarding the generational methodology, now it is time to focus on two social phenomena, nationalism and political violence, for which this study suggests a comparative cohort analysis model. In the light of theoretical approaches towards generations explained so far, the emergence and ethnic revival of nationalisms and the radicalization of ethnonational movements will be discussed from a generational perspective.

## **1.2. A generational approach towards nationalism and political violence**

This section focuses on the political radicalization of ethnonational movements that lead to the use of violence seeking to achieve political objectives. As analyzed through the following chapters of this study, two specific cases corresponding to this phenomenon, self-proclaimed Basque and Kurdish national liberation movements, derive from a generation entelechy based on an almost identical political discourse at the beginning of the 1960s and follow similar forms of action in a later period.

Two fundamental questions need addressing in quest of a reasonable theoretical explanation: *a)* why do some ethnic groups resist assimilation by the nation-states, whereas others end up adopting the official definition of the nation? *b)* Why does a small portion of ethnic groups resort to violence, whereas most others pursue non-violent repertoires for similar demands? The modernist theories on nationalisms based on the relation between capitalist development and nation-state formation and nation-building processes only provide partial explanations to these questions. There are cases where capitalist development pursues similar patterns, and national revivals take somehow different forms. Some specific situations, like Catalans and Basques that experienced an ethnic revival in a repressive environment in two industrial regions of the same country but somehow developed two different trajectories regarding the use of violence, also rule out the role of authoritarian regimes as the sole independent variable of collective violence (Laitin 1995: 6). Inferences made out of structural differences in capitalist development and the divergence in the orientation of nationalist elites (Linz 1973, 1985; Medrano 1999) or the references to different components of a national identity (Guibernau 2007) need to attend in this quest for convincing answers.



To this end, the first step is to revisit some theoretical approaches towards the phenomenon of emergence, survival, and reawakening of nationalisms among stateless nations from a generational perspective. The second and more compelling phase is to examine some approaches towards the phenomenon of political violence that emerge out of ethnonational movements. Finally, the third and last part suggests an analytical design through which a comparative cohort analysis between Basque and Kurdish cases will be carried out through the upcoming chapters of this study.

### **1.2.1. Nationalism and nation-building in the stateless nations**

The term 'stateless nations' (McCrone 1992; Keating 1997) refers to those communities which have not attained statehood but possess a certain degree of national awareness and seek to accomplish specific national objectives (Guibernau 1996: 100).<sup>9</sup> The emergence of stateless nations is intrinsically due to two main factors that have to be seen both with those ethnically different communities as well as the nation-building process of those states in which ethnic communities survive. A theoretical quest for a comprehensive explanation of this phenomenon, therefore, must lean on both factors.

When Gellner raises the critical question of why some ethnic groups do not enter into national formation and opt for splitting up and forming their nation-state, he concerns himself with only one side of the coin. Leaving the motivations of refusal by ethnic groups with strong loyalties to their traditions and symbolic universe aside, the scholar focuses on the failure of the dominant nation in homogenizing the targeted population as a result of poorly organized nation-building (1994a: 60). A successful centralization over the national territory aims to accomplish a 'cultural control' based on the creation of a single linguistic, historical and artistic tradition by establishing a nation-wide educational system, imposing national languages, building museums, inventing national flags, anthems, holidays, and rituals that serve to make this 'homeland' less heterogeneous and create a unified nation out of a population (Tilly 1994: 140). A partial failure in this complex process ends up forming various nationalist projects under the same nation-state (Breuilly 1993: 367). In those states with multi-ethnic imperial heritage, the failure of nation-building results in lumps where the core components of national identity find it challenging to penetrate to the population.

The premise lying behind this argument derives from the modernist approaches towards nationalism based on the uneven character of the spread of wealth due to antagonist growth and expansionist tendencies of capitalism. The uneven growth of capitalism provokes what Kohn (1946) conceptualizes as western-style 'territorial nations' with clear-cut boundaries and robust institutions.

---

<sup>9</sup> In a later study specifically dedicated to these national groups, Guibernau uses the term 'nations without states' (1999), referring to national minorities living within the administrative borders of one or more nation-states. Although the minority position of these communities includes demographic facts in terms of population, it is primarily related to the position of the community in terms of access to power (Ritzer 1986: 292) that varies in the case of each nation without a state.

'Ethnic nations' in the under-developed periphery with new elites copy this western model based on inherited *ethos*, race, languages, with no or little need for economic and political institutions of modernity (Shulman 2002: 555-557). The latter case of nationalism is best observed in the episode of uniformed imperialism of 1880 - 1945, anti-colonial struggle, and decolonization (Nairn 2003[1975]: 328), which had significant influences on the generation of ethnic revivals and liberation movements in which nationalist elements forged with the left-libertarian doctrine of the early 1960s.

The center-periphery dichotomy of the modernist approach has its reflections in studies on smaller-scale cases in a period posterior to western ethnic revivals (Linz 1973; Wallerstein 1974; Hechter 1975; Rokkan 1975; E. Weber 1976; Nairn 1977), which demonstrated several examples of ethnic tensions between two or more poles with national aspirations and the central state.<sup>10</sup> These challenges to the unity of the nation-state system observed surprisingly in advanced western countries where the nation-state formation had already passed a long time dragged these scholars into developing explanations based on the modernist approach towards nationalism.

Over accentuating economy-political dynamics in the emergence and revitalization of ethnic nationalisms, modernist reductionism falls short in offering a generalizable explanation to this phenomenon that follows different forms of peculiarities. By arguing that the classification of England, France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Russia as 'long-run territorial entities' does not necessarily mean that they were actually 'nations' in the modern sense before the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (James 2006: 237-239). Moreover, a long list of continuing ethnic-territorial cultures with apparent structural differences in terms of capitalist development that manifest national aspirations comes up as a question on which the modernist approach provides no satisfactory explanation (Hobsbawm 1992: 168-169). The fact that some of these regions in western states where capitalist development is far advanced than the rest of the country, such as Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain (Orridge 1981: 181), draws a contradictory situation stipulated in Gellner's well-known *Megalomania – Ruritania* (1983) or Hechter's internal colonialism models (1975) which fits well in explaining other cases, e.g., Kurds (Romano 2006; Entessar 2010). As Hechter himself confesses a decade later, like any other model, his model also provides only one theoretical explanation of this complex phenomenon, which may have other factors (1985) that are worth revising.

---

<sup>10</sup> It must be emphasized that, however, these studies employ the concept of center – periphery in such a broad range that its content becomes fairly ambiguous when enquiring in what terms (economic, cultural or political domination, geographic position, military superiority, and alike) a national identity is labeled as core or peripheral. Despite some attempts in detecting the common characteristics of peripheries through distance, difference and dependence (Flora *et al.* 1999: 115), establishing an overarching approach on this matter remains problematic. Comparing Hechter's definition of center – periphery distinction in terms of the cultural division of labor (1999[1975]: 315) with Sztompka's emphasis on core and peripheral groups in accordance with proximity and openness to the impacts of traumatogenic change (2004: 166), constitutes a clear example of this conceptual ambiguity.

The relative failure of diffusion of national identity throughout the national territory cannot be explained by solely focusing on the (in)capacity and uneven functionality of state institutions. Those scholars who embrace the *ethno-symbolist* approach towards nations and nationalisms (Armstrong 1982; Smith 1981; 1986; Hutchinson 1987) emphasize fundamental pre-modern *longue-durée* loyalties and elements related to territorial attachment, religion and myths, and language that constitute the basis for varying types of modern nationalist mobilizations. The resistance by the stateless nations against the official definition by developing a rival national identity with a set of aspirations for a common destiny is also closely related to these elements.

If nationalism bases on a performative process of symbolic reality that aims to diffuse a specific definition (Greenfeld 1992: 7), its primary task is to create a collective narrative of the nation seeking its maximum diffusion throughout the claimed territory. In those regions where different genealogical myths and ancestry ties, ethnic demographic characteristics, customs, and languages are embraced, these pre-existing ties and sentiments constitute a challenge for the successful penetration of official identity definition among ethnic masses. The institutional imposition of modern nationalism based on liberal democratic and rationalist ideas on inherited customs produces a solid conservative resistance in the form of return to ethnic traditions (Hutchinson 2005: 46).<sup>11</sup> Consequently, one of three indispensable phases of nation-building by a state, that is, 'the project of creating the nation-to-be' by winning over an ethnically different group, experiences a relative failure. This prevents the official national identity from fully achieving the following phase of nation-building, which is the establishment of a mass nationalist movement in the region where the ethnic group is dominant in terms of population (Hroch 1995: 284).

Furthermore, the imposition of a symbolic universe may also result in the transformation of these pre-modern loyalties into nationalist ambitions. In such cases, the 'dual attachment' of rights, duties, and commitments that an ethnic group typically has towards both territorial-political and ethnic nations may incline in favor of the latter, giving birth to further politicization of the ethnic group (Smith 1986: 137, 166). This process indicates the beginning of a new national project and, therefore, a new collective reality constructed on the basis of the distinctive *ethno-symbolic* elements of a specific *ethnie* such as a claimed homeland, common ancestry and myths, historical memories, and distinct

---

<sup>11</sup> Hutchinson's argument affirms the fact that ethno-nationalist elites are not only defenders of the elements of their ethno-symbolic universe, but they are also fervent opponents of modernization. Unlike the prediction on the destructive effects of modernization on ethnic and cultural differences, Eisenstadt notes opposite impacts of modernization on the crystallization of ethnic consciousness by provoking conservative responses (1973: 358). Indeed, both cases analyzed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of this study show that the early nationalist leaders of Basque and Kurdish nationalisms were also strong opponents of modern secular ideas brought along with Spanish and Turkish nation-state formations.

culture (Smith 1999: 127). As in the case of territorial nations, this process also begins with the activities of a small group of national elites who actively use these ethno-symbolic sources to objectify an own national definition without possessing a proper administrative apparatus.

The fact that these ethno-nationalist elites lack the same mechanisms as those who emerge as a result of the modernization of territorial state conditions the trajectory of ethnonational development. Previously existing values, traditions, and customs that provoke a sense of collective belonging (i.e., proto-national bonds) are only considered a starting point upon which new national loyalties are established (Hobsbawm 1992: 77-78). In the end, what makes a nation integral to a nation-state is not solely the emotional stage of 'nationalism' but unified administrative state apparatus over a demarcated territory surrounded by boundaries. (Giddens 1995: 190). Therefore, ethno-nationalist elites develop alternative mechanisms that guarantee the ethnic survival of their community. Traditional *longue-durée* elements are reconstituted and utilized as the basis of 'moral innovation' for the new political activism. Elites reactivate the forgotten layers of the ethnic past in order to establish collective myths of legitimacy for this activism (Hutchinson 2005: Ch.2).

This process points to constructing a national narrative or, in Smith's words, a distinctive 'ethno-history' (1991: 126) that nationalist elites seek to diffuse among the members of their targetted ethnic group. Although this national narrative does not consist of a mere fabrication of facts, the pattern used in this process corresponds to selective memory, incorporation of invented traditions, and fictitious purities (Gellner 2006: 54).<sup>12</sup> Historical events and incidents are internalized through ethnic filters, and from this moment on, what is taken into consideration are not the facts but the knowledge of commonly held perception of these facts (Connor 2002: 39). The emphasis on a sense of uniqueness and unity, development of a positive self-image, granting the foundation for ownership of the land and resources, and justifying the claims and grievance of the group are among these common perceptions (Kelman 2001: 195). The national historiography distinguishes itself from history as a science and converts into a medium of indoctrination for devotion and sacrifice, as Smith notes:

"The 'rediscovery' or 'invention' of history is no longer a scholarly pastime; it is a matter of national honour and collective endeavour. Through the tracing of our history, 'we' discover (or 'rediscover') who we are, whence we came, when we emerged, who our ancestors were, when we were great and glorious, who our heroes are, why we declined... But the rediscovery of the 'national self' is not an academic matter; it is a pressing practical issue, vexed and contentious, which spells life or death for the nationalist project of creating the nation." (1986: 148)

This national narrative based on strong ethno-symbolic ties among community members complies with a vital task of cultural survival. Identification with a 'historic nation' that managed to survive disasters

---

<sup>12</sup> For a similar approach towards the relationship between ethnic elements and modern nations, please see Anderson, Benedict (2006[1983]) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London & NY: Verso. Hobsbawm, E., Ranger, E. (Eds.) (1992) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press.

in the past becomes a motor for collective action to overcome future contingencies (Hutchinson 2005: 37). This capacity that depends on demographic (population), economic (specific homeland, material sources, and facilities), cultural (customs, language, and other symbolic codes), and political (the will of survival, leadership, and degree of autonomy) variables is crucial for the mobilization of community members to defend and transmit ethno-symbolic elements and values through generations (Smith 1999: 128-130). The transformation of these pre-modern loyalties into modern nationalist mobilizations also has to see with a transition from traditional lineage-based intergenerational interactions to the politicization of a specific cohort.

### **1.2.2. Nationalism as a generational rupture: Social change and ethno-nationalist movements**

Transmission of *longue-durée* ethnocultural heritage through kinship ties refers to the previously explained understanding of the concept of lineage generations. Significant changes brought by modernity provoke drastic social transformations that have impacts on the pattern of kinship interaction, introducing a complex network of social relations with the outer world of ethnic boundaries. These transformations and changes result in the emergence of a cohort with new ideas and forms of action. The politicization of ethnocultural heritage leading to a nationalist mobilization by a new generation entelechy is related to this process.

Prior to the emergence of nationalism, phenotypical features, customs, and memories of a shared historical past constituted strong kinship ties among the members of a community. Weber labels this community as an ethnic group whose members develop a 'subjective belief in a common descent' based on blood relationship (1978[1922]: 389). Among these groups, traditional kinship mechanisms (e.g., family and religion) that functioned through a pattern based on transgenerational interactions guaranteed the continuity of ethnic ties. Members of the same ethnic group established a link to a belief in a 'common ancestor' that reproduced itself from one birth cohort to another within the boundaries of a closed community (Fishman 1980: 84). Horowitz underlines that this sense of collective belonging to an extended kinship based on a putative descent resembles a 'large family':

"There are fictive elements here, but the idea, if not always the fact, of a common ancestry makes it possible for ethnic group to think in terms of family resemblances—traits held in common, on a supposedly genetic basis, or cultural features acquired in early childhood—and to bring into play for a much wider circle those concepts of mutual obligation and antipathy to outsiders that are applicable to family relations." (Horowitz 1985: 57)

The social transformations brought by industrialization and the capitalist mode of production changed this genealogical pattern with the rise of an intelligentsia—a generation entelechy leading a new cohort in the Mannheimian sense—defined as the 'new priesthood of the nation' (Smith 1986: 157). The political scenery after the French Revolution created a young political generation cohort who was born

in the Imperial period and socialized in an atmosphere of Europe-wide turbulence and, consequently, came up with radical libertarian ideas.

Although the emergence of nationalism as a form of mass political mobilization has not been analyzed from a specifically generational perspective, some scholars (Eisenstadt 1956; Braungart 1984) underline the relation between the youth movements and national consciousness. However, it is Kedourie who notes the idea of nationalism as a generational rupture. In his analysis on Alfred de Musset's *Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle* (1836), based on observations on the post-Napoleonic social transformations, the scholar makes the following inferences regarding the intergenerational relations:

“But the restlessness was the work not only of the revolutionary legend; it proceeded from a breakdown in the transmission of political habits and religious beliefs from one generation to the next. In societies suddenly exposed to the new learning and the new philosophies of the Enlightenment and of Romanticism, orthodox settled ways began to seem ridiculous and useless. The attack was powerful and left the old generation bewildered and speechless; or if it attempted to speak, it merely gave voice to irritated admonition, obstinate opposition, or horror-stricken rejection, which only served to widen the rift and increase the distance between the fathers and the sons. [...] The sons rejected the fathers and their ways; but the rejection extended also to the very practices, traditions, and beliefs which had over the centuries moulded and fashioned these societies which suddenly seemed to the young so confining, so graceless, so devoid of spiritual comfort, and so unable to minister to the dignity and fulfilment of the individual.” (Kedourie 1960: 99-100)

This intergenerational discrepancy manifests itself through new ideas and forms of action introduced by a new entelechy. The invention of a national identity propagated by new elites is a process of construction based on those symbols and beliefs held by the members of regional, ethnic or linguistic categories of a population to create a new bridge of communality (Giddens 1995: 190-191), and a response to the problem of the state-society relationship arising out of the transition from traditional to modern society (Breuilly 1993: 396-397). In this process, the intelligentsia selects cultural aspects of a specific group, attach them new values and meanings, and use them as symbols to mobilize group members, encouraging them to compete with similarly constructed identities (Brass 1994: 87).

The case of ethnic communities sees a similar process of politicization of a specific cohort who develops an antagonistic stance against the ‘outsider/enemy’. Smith’s ethno-symbolic approach proposes an explanation of how this mobilization for ethnic self-determination takes place as an attempt to create a high culture, securing a recognized homeland by offering a national-homeland project of its own and, this way, turning a ‘passive *ethnie*’ into an active political community. The scholar emphasizes the ‘rediscovery/reconstruction’ of a distinctive ‘ethno-history’ that re-appropriates the myths and symbols produced through kinship interactions and its practical use for a mass mobilization to political ends –the creation of an independent state (Smith 1991: 126 ff).

Notwithstanding, while Smith explains the hows of the ethnonational mobilizations and separatism from old empires, he hardly focuses on the whys of this phenomenon. The historical process he describes makes a loose reference to the historicity of the subject who takes these steps

towards a political movement. With their definition of 'active/strategic' generations, a contrast to Smith's concept of 'passive *ethnie*', Edmunds and Turner underline the contribution that a young cohort makes with their national political consciousness and cultural leadership (2002: 72). The historical location of this generation entelechy (i.e., nationalist intelligentsia) and the socio-political process through which the new generation style they introduce are essential to explain the emergence and continuity of ethnonational movements in stateless nations.

#### *The birth of ethnonational elites as a generation entelechy*

The emergence of a political mobilization out of ethnic loyalties led by a new entelechy is the product of two main interrelated factors taken as reference in cohort analysis: period and cohort effects (Juhem 2009). While period effects refer to specific events in a historical location, cohort effects are related to the impacts of these events on the political socialization processes of the new cohort generation. Both factors play a determining role in the emergence of a new generation entelechy that gives the initial steps of ethnonational mobilization in the stateless nations.

In the case of ethnic groups, period effects correspond to the nation-building and nation-state formation processes carried out both by the imperial administrations and those nationalist groups that mobilize towards an own national entity through independence from these empires. The nationalism of 1880 – 1914, as Hobsbawm notes, proliferated the idea of self-determinism for any people who consider themselves a 'nation', and the potential nationhood was based on two main criteria: ethnicity and language (1992: 101). An increasingly growing number of ambitious ethnonational movements led by a new entelechy that complied with these criteria corresponded to this period. This period effect helped the ethno-nationalist elites observe the phases towards the statehood achieved by fully-fledged nations and formulate their goals accordingly (Hroch 1995: 284).

The cohort effect on the emergence of this new generation entelechy and style has to see with the social changes and transformations taking place in this historical location. The process of nation-building in old empires introduced a set of standardized ethno-symbolic elements imposed on those ethnic communities who were *a fortiori* familiar with the reproduction of their own ethnocultural universe until then. In this relationship, the 'rulers' who were not from the same ethnicity as the 'ruled' considered unwelcomed 'foreigners' violating the ethnic boundaries (Gellner 1994b: 35). It was only after this encounter with the 'outsider' that ethnic communities discovered their distinctive characteristics (Giddens 1987: 116-117) and defined themselves from an exclusionist optic (Armstrong 1982: 5). The unique ethnic features based on kinship relations until then began to acquire a new meaning thanks to the presence (and threat) of the others/them, as Tajfel explains:

"The characteristics of one's group as a whole (such as its status, its richness or poverty, its skin colour or its ability to reach its aims) achieve most of their significance in relation to *perceived differences* from other groups and the value connotation of these differences. [...] the definition of a group (national, racial or any other) makes no sense unless there are other groups around. A group becomes a group in the sense of being perceived as having common characteristics or a common faith mainly because other groups are present in the environment." (Tajfel 1981: 258, *emphasis added*)

In this new social composition, encounters between different definitions of each identity group cause a perception of threat in the mind of social actors provoking a national self-awareness among the circles who have not realized the difference between the imposed cultural and symbolic codes and their own (Staub 2012: 206).<sup>13</sup> The political socialization of a new cohort is related to this decisive historical process. The new entelechy socialized under these conditions breaks with the kinship cycle of the previous-generation ethnic group members coming up with such ideas as self-determination and independence, the means guaranteeing their survival and development as a nation.

The state of conflict in these identity encounters becomes a question of preserving an imaginary homeland constructed through a mythical past, shared traditions, and memories. Maintaining cultural boundaries and boundedness towards the 'others' considered foreigners threatening the security and integrity of the homeland becomes an essential element of conserving culture and identity (Morley & Robins 1995: 89-90). Nationalist elites of stateless nations put a set of mechanisms into practice to mobilize the masses in favor of the idea of the defense/preservation of the homeland as their success is strictly related to their capacity of mass mobilization for common nationhood (Connor 1990: 99). To this end, historical myths towards which the previous generations developed strong emotional ties are elaborated selectively to create an ethno-history based on the idea of 'chosen people' to be internalized through the following generations (Smith 1999: Ch.4).

Nevertheless, attempts to diffuse national identity in the absence of fundamental nation-building mechanisms, i.e., institutions controlled by a nation-state, is a challenging task, and the states seeking their national consolidation usually are not tolerant towards such aspirations considered a direct threat to their integrity (Guibernau 1996: 103). Furthermore, as Kedourie emphasizes, the established national system of the world order does not lead to peace and stability as expected, but conflicts and tensions with frequent catastrophic consequences (1960: 138) that impact those ethnonational movements negatively in their ambitions towards an own national project. The emergence of a new entelechy with new ideas and forms of action in the early 1960s constitutes another historical location worth analyzing from the same generational perspective.

---

<sup>13</sup> The instrumentalist approach attributes a further positive vibration to the conflict as an effective social mechanism of identity reproduction. Hostilities between two groups serve to prevent the boundaries separating them from disappearing (Simmel 1955: 18), and thanks to patterned enmities and reciprocal antagonisms, these boundary lines are constantly reaffirmed as long as the conflict continues (Coser 1956: 38). For this reason, once the conflictive social relation between different national identity definitions is established, it is unlikely that it comes to an end unless the co-existence is over.



### **1.3. Ethnic revival, generations, and collective violence**

The term ethnic revival employed by the leading scholars who have made critical contributions to the study of nationalisms (Connor 1970; Smith 1981; Hutchinson 1987; Hobsbawm 1990; Gellner 1994) refers to a resurgence of ethnonational movements in plurinational states with ambitions for an own national project based on the right for self-determination. Like their emerging phase in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, these movements from the 1960s onwards also arise as a result of a generational rupture followed by collective traumas and silence experienced among previous cohorts.

Resorting to violent repertoires to achieve the political project of national liberation that goes accompanied by a social plan for the future regime comes up as a specific generation style defended by a generation unit. Therefore, the previously formulated question about why some stateless nations (e.g., Basques, Corsicans, Kurds) adopted the use of violence whereas most others (e.g., Catalans, Galicians, Flanders, Quebecois) embraced non-violent repertoires must be reformulated from a generational perspective. Why, among some ethnic communities, does the use of violence as a specific generation style find social grounds and support whereas others fail to do so? Indeed, these movements such as *Exèrcit Popular Català* (Catalan People's Army), *Front d'Alliberament Català* (Catalan Liberation Front) and later *Terra Lliure* (Free Land) in Catalonia or several armed organizations that later formed *Resistència Galega* (Galician Resistance), *Front de Libération de la Bretagne* (Breton Liberation Front) or *Front de Libération du Québec* (Quebec Liberation Front) came up in the same period as other consistent examples. Still, they failed to find grounds to become strong politico-military actors convincing a part of their respective societies of the necessity of the use of coercion.

As underlined by some scholars who have realized comparative analyses on specific cases of national revivals, more concretely, Basque and Catalan nationalisms that offer a compelling example of two different routes regarding the use of arms under the same regime (Payne 1971; Laitin 1995; Conversi 1997, Medrano 1999), it is hard to propose a general explanation for this phenomenon. The inconsistency among different cases emerging under similar socio-political conditions encourages social scientists to incline towards micro-level analyses focusing more on case-specific historical, structural, and cultural factors. A generational perspective based on cohort and period effects potentially offers a helpful tool in analyzing ethnic revivals and their armed radicalization.

#### **1.3.1. Generation of ethnic revivals: Revolutionarism out of silence**

The emergence of a cohort generation that led to ethnic revivals in the early 1960s has to see with consecutive traumatogenic events that the nation-state system provoked through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Anticolonial struggles erupted during the post-World War II, and the waves of left-libertarian social movements in the 1960s shaped the ideological components of generation entelechy

of ethnic mobilizations. New ideas and forms introduced by this new entelechy refer to another generational rupture from the previous cohort of 'silent generation' (Burnett 2010) that had emerged as a result of the post-war period crises, traumas, and depressions.<sup>14</sup>

Tilly quite rightly confirms that since the initial stages of nation-state formation in Europe, dating back to the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), wars and war settlements have played a determining role in establishing the nation-state system (1975: 74-75). Nevertheless, the consolidation of the nation-state system in the western world has also produced more wars and conflicts based on the political and economic interests of these states. The 20<sup>th</sup> century undoubtedly witnessed the most extreme cases of these traumatic experiences. As Conversi underlines, the modernist framework and discourse on which nationalism depends produced two world wars, the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide of 1915, as well as other atrocities. Ethnic minorities have often been the victims of 'ethnic Westernization' tendency based on the obsession with national purity and eliminationist attitudes (2012: 15). The impacts of these collective traumas, as well as their profound social consequences, also determined the political trajectory of ethnonational movements.

The ethnic revivals observed from the 1960s onwards are based upon the previously mentioned ethnonational movements that emerged by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Smith points out that despite their distinctive forms, the resurgence of these movements is considered a continuation of earlier ethnonational political and cultural organizations as observed through a broad range of examples, including initial political and cultural mobilizations in Breton, Basque, Catalan, Corsican and Kurdish cases (1981: 21-22). Indeed, considering the presence of commonly shared fundamental ethno-symbolic elements, the affirmation leaves no room for doubts.

Notwithstanding, when the period before western national revivals are analyzed, there appears a historical location of 'discontinuity' in terms of the development of national project among these previously founded cultural and political organizations. As noted by those scholars who analyze Breton (Nicolas 1982), Flemish (Nielsen 1980), and Corsican (Dominici 2004) nationalisms, in the European context, Nazi occupation during World War II and the aftermath of the devastating effects of the war conditioned a period of silence during which ethnonational political activities diminished drastically. A similar state of generational silence is also noted in Basque (Pérez-Agote 1984) and Catalan (Guibernau 2004) cases due to post-civil war dictatorship in Spain, and in the case of Kurds (Bozarslan 2009) after the suppression of consecutive revolts between 1925 and 1938. The lack of

---

<sup>14</sup> It is surprising to note that besides Burnett, who directly refers to the Silent Generation of post-WW-II, only a few scholars cited in this study (Roseman 1995; Chauvel 1998; Brannen, Moss & Mooney 2004) ever mention generational silence in their approach towards the generational conflict. It may well be affirmed that generational studies are more interested in those birth cohorts who later get involved in activism than the previous birth cohort that adopted a position of inactivity.

political activism and mobilization beginning by the late 1930s involve a two-decade silence through which the new generation entelechy of ethnic revivals socialized.

Silence as the main component of the period effects on the socialization of the new cohort appears to be a product of directly experienced traumas to prevent similar consequences.<sup>15</sup> Older generations experiencing the 'enemy' violence tend to believe that their oppressors are infinitely powerful, and, as a result, they opt for a more passive stance (Gurr 1970: 206). This 'collective self-doubt' fed by experiences of shared trauma, suffering, and humiliation, on the other hand, reveals the extraordinary capacity of nationalism in conflictive situations through loyalty and 'self-sacrifice' (Staub 1989: 252). Historical memory based on the idea of a past golden age and a nation that had survived countless disasters, no matter constructed on facts or fiction, appears as an inspiring tool for the new entelechy to take the lead and call to action for the national cause (Hutchinson 2005: 53). This attitude is also a refusal of the passive position taken by the previous generations.

The generation style introduced by the new nationalist leadership is a result of the influence of major-scale coetaneous movements and events that have a profound impact on the emergence of the new cohort generation. Evolution and development of 'left-libertarian movement family' starting from the 1960s on (Della Porta 1995: 85), as well as archetypal national liberation movements as the leading actors of decolonization and anti-imperialist resistance in various parts of the world, come up with such ideas as liberation, equality, and justice, influencing the ideological orientation of young generation nationalists (Hobsbawm 1992: 149-150). In those cases where the ethnonational mobilization resurges under authoritarian rules with no or little tolerance, the young nationalist leaders find it relatively easier to identify their position with that of the colonized peoples and embrace the idea and forms of anticolonial liberation.

The intensified social conflict between distinctive identity definitions also serves to embody the narrative of colonization. Dislocations, strains, grievances produced by the rapid social change play a triggering role in escalating the existing social conflict among the members of different nationalist groups (Oberschall 1993: 152-153). The perception of large-scale Protestant emigration as 'England's garrison in Ireland' in the eyes of Irish Catholic nationalists (Hutchinson 2005: 100) or unwelcomed Spanish-speaking labor migration to the industrial Basque Country in the 1950s embodying the claims of 'Spanish occupation' (Linz 1985: 232-234) constitute noteworthy examples in this regard. These

---

<sup>15</sup> Elias explains the impacts of collective traumatic experiences in the attitude of what he labels as the 'transitional generation' that seized power after the defeat of National Socialism and opted for an attitude of forgetting the Nazi interlude. The scholar underlines that the emergence of the Baader-Meinhof group (RAF) is nothing but a long-term after-effect of National Socialist trauma as a result of this mass forgetting by the previous generation (1996: 431-432).

encounters make the ethno-symbolic elements of each identity group interact more closely and consolidate the hostility towards the outsider.

Finally, various 'concrete groups' considered essential for the formation of generation units (Mannheim 1952[1928]: 307) develop different responses to particular events and traumas (Edmunds & Turner 2002: 98-99) by opting for different forms of action as generation 'sub-styles'. The idea of the use of violence for the national liberation and social revolution constitutes one of these sub-styles that emerges out of ethnonational mobilizations.

### **1.3.2. New generation entelechy: Construction of trauma, war, and enemy**

The new cohort considers that generational silence as a reaction to traumatogenic events by the previous generations threatens ethnic survival. Collective trauma and its consequences are incorporated into the national narrative based on an 'anticolonial war' against the 'enemy' in which the leadership is attributed to the new entelechy. The destiny of this war depends on the grade of internalization of this national narrative by the broader public among the community.

Although nationalist ideology follows a similar pattern of diffusion of a specific social reality (Guibernau 1999: 93; Pérez-Agote 2008: 13), unlike social movements, nationalism in its essence distinguishes itself as a rather historic-political movement born out of antagonism against a defined enemy rather than a social opponent (Touraine 1985: 167). National liberation movements, in this sense, oversteps the limits of social movements as they construct a narrative based on a 'state of war' against a nation-state rather than protesting due to social indignation (Letamendia 1997: 287-288). In this narrative, the enemy constitutes a central figure often depicted in a configuration in which a colonial or imperial power symbolized with the name of its capital city, and an identity group that does not regard itself as part of the larger state are present (Barker 2007: 105). National liberation is considered possible only with the overthrow of the colonial power out of 'national homeland' by using force as in the case of archetypal anticolonial struggles in other parts of the world.

Reconstruction and reconfiguration of the national narrative by the new entelechy may significantly differ from the previously existing ones. Still, it is usually based on the replacement of the subject who undertakes the historical responsibility for ethnic survival and accomplishment of the long-desired national project. The presence of the enemy arises as a *sine qua non* against whom heroic figures had achieved glorious victories in the 'golden age' (Smith 1991: 127-128). The name of the hero who lit the fire by confronting the enemy becomes a synonym for 'rebellion' (Barker 2001: 97-98). In the historiography of the stateless nations, however, the golden age is over with the invasion of the enemy, and glorious victories are replaced by 'glorious sufferings', which are usually real or invented traumas provoked by the same enemy who iniquitously continues to occupy the claimed homeland.

Leaders and avant-garde organizations formed among the members of new entelechy identify themselves with this heroic figure and take a similarly historical role.

The success of the construction of trauma narrative based on suffering is related to the degree that the collective group identifies itself with putative trauma victims. Objectification of the story based on the victimization has to do with the persuasiveness of meanings to the community rather than its accuracy (Alexander 2012: 120). Once the community recognizes the narrative as real, it becomes part of the collective memory and functions as an essential form of myth-making (Neal 1998: 215). The ability of ethnic survival from genocidal attempts, massacres, deportations, and expulsions from 'homeland' throughout the entire history of 'nation' that goes back to thousands of years consolidates the quality of being a 'chosen people'. Appreciation of life even more after surviving from a life-threatening trauma becomes an existential issue (Tedeschi 1999: 322-324), which is still at stake because the source of the trauma, the enemy, continues to threaten the ethnic survival. The young cohort assumes the historical 'national duty' based on devotion and sacrifice that their ancestors had allegedly exercised in the past.

### **1.3.3. Political violence in ethnonational movements**

The use of violent repertoires by particular youth groups for political ends arises as one of the forms of contention that become considerably popular in the period of ethnic revivals and adopted by some ethnonational movements. Political violence as a form of action appears as one of the distinctive elements of generational rupture, a generation style introduced by a specific generation unit. Resorting to violent repertoires for national and social ambitions is backed by a considerable amount of people within some communities, whereas among some others finds no social grounds, making these groups exercising such practices remain vastly marginal.

Resorting to violence among ethnonational movements is not a widespread phenomenon. It is instead an exceptional means observed only in a few cases compared to a high number of peaceful groups with similar objectives. National identity is less salient, nationalist politics is less central, and ethnonational violence is less prevalent than it is assumed (Brubaker 1998: 273). Despite the empirical outcomes that underestimate the alleged link between national aspirations and collective violence, the overemphasis of these cases by scholars and journalists creates a contrary image (Laitin 2007: 23). Although the use of coercion for political ends becomes popular among some youth groups of the 1960s and, consequently, catches scholarly attention<sup>16</sup>, it persists among a tiny percentage of resurging ethnonational movements.

---

<sup>16</sup> It is of no coincidence that pioneering scholarly work that specifically handle the question of political violence (Feierabend *et al.* 1966, 1969; Smelser 1968; Nieburg 1969; Graham & Gurr 1969; Davies 1969, 1971; Gurr 1970; Huntington 1971; Snyder

The fact that organizations resorting to violence are few in numbers among ethnonational movements also has to do with the grade of their acceptance among the community members in question. As pointed out before, even the most pacifist cases of ethnonational mobilizations under democratic (e.g., Quebec and Bretagne) and undemocratic regimes (e.g., Catalonia, Galicia) experience the emergence of armed national liberation organizations in this period. Their lack of persistence, therefore, should be sought in their capacity to convince a considerable part of the nationalist segments of the necessity of the use of violence for national liberation. This quest requires distinguishing the justification of coercion by the group members and the legitimacy attributed to the group by the community it claims to represent.

*a. Group truth and justifications of violence*

Instrumental approaches towards collective violence based on cost-benefit calculations regarding the political objectives and the characteristics of the political regime assume that groups compete for scarce goods rationally (Kaufman 2001: 17). Stemming from the rational choice theory<sup>17</sup>, these approaches base on the opinion of the social actor about the effectiveness of the use of violence in relation to benefits and the conviction about the achievement of ultimate goals through violent practices. In the case of national liberation movements led by a particular group, the 'rational' on which the national struggle is constructed has a set of parameters objectified and reproduced as the group truth in which emotional elements weigh significantly.

In his pioneering study on the involvement in violent groups, Gurr puts a socio-psychological emphasis on individuals' moral judgment over the perceived deprivation through which violence is justified.<sup>18</sup> According to the scholar, groups resorting to violence justify their actions via a) *normative justifications*, that are the "attitudes and beliefs men hold about the intrinsic desirability of taking or threatening such action" and; b) *utilitarian justifications* that are about the "beliefs men hold about the extent to which the threat or use of violence in politics will enhance their overall value position and that of the community with which they identify" (Gurr 1970: 157). While the first category is about the core sources of frustration that determine the level of commitment to political violence, the

---

& Tilly 1972; Grundy & Weinstein 1974; Tilly 1976, 1978) correspond to a period during which the use of violent repertoires by anti-colonial and revolutionary movements in the world impacted a specific cohort in western Europe.

<sup>17</sup> Initially put forward by neoclassical economists, the rational choice theory is later extended to the field of sociology and political sciences (Homans, 1961; Coleman 1973; Friedman & Hechter 1988) by focusing on the social actor's preference hierarchy (values, utilities) instead of the social sources behind their formation (Ritzer 2011: 417).

<sup>18</sup> Deriving from 'frustration-aggression' theory (Dollard *et al.* 1939) which argues that aggressive behavior presupposes a source of frustration that produces counter aggression (Berkowitz 1989), Gurr's *relative deprivation* model explains the likelihood of violence in cases in which the politicization of discontent and deprivation based on actors' perception of discrepancy between *value expectations*, which consist of conditions that people consider they are rightfully entitled, and *value capabilities*, that is about what people are actually able to get. The intensity and scope of relative deprivation among the members of a collectivity arise as principal variables that determine the potential of collective violence (1970: 24-29).

utilitarian justifications have to see with the degree of utility people attribute to violent strategy in getting what they wish to. This latter is more related to cost/benefit calculation and, therefore, linked with the persistence of commitment (Klandermans 1997: 97).

Although Gurr underlines the role that the socialization of extra-punitive attitudes and the existence of cultural traditions play in shaping people's collective memory concerning the violent past (1970: 168-171), he does not get into further details on what influences over the social actor's value expectations and value capabilities as well as moral judgments. These are directly related to the actor's subjective perception of social reality in a given cultural and political context beyond the rational evaluation of the facts. The emotional state of individuals in a group is related to the more or less commonly shared biographic experience of each social actor who lives in self-constructed subjective worlds (Ritzer 2011: 272). Everyday life encounters and intersubjective interactions through socialization create what Collins labels as a 'ritual chain' in which individuals take part and look at the world through a common hole.<sup>19</sup> The overall level of long-term emotional energy accumulated through everyday interaction rituals plays a decisive role in individuals' subsequent functioning in their dealings with episodes of extreme anger, fear, or shame (Collins 2004: 130). Accumulated emotional energy among the members of a disadvantaged group contributes to the construction of group rationale.

In stateless nations, the perception of deprivation regarding the national identity is based on an emotional attachment with a constructed narrative of past sufferings and traumas. Historical traditions of violent conflict and the present loyalty to the national identity lead to a positive evaluation of the use of violence in the cognitive construal of the nationalist sectors (Bandura 1998: 163; Conteh-Morgan 2004: 74). Past rebellions by the ethnic group and the violent response given by the 'enemy' set a culture of violence in the group's collective memory that create a socially permissive precondition for the use of coercion by the future generations (M. Crenshaw 1981: 381-382). The emotional seal based on love for the homeland and the idea of the recovery of the lost past, idealized and narrated as the golden age, therefore occupies the center of rationale on whether the use of violence is necessary and beneficial to achieve the ultimate objective of national liberation.

The redefinition of the enemy following the new ideological parameters and concepts to the group truth arises as another feature of ethnic revivals. Young generation entelechy articulates these components of a culture of opposition against the 'colonial ruler' with such ethno-symbolic elements as local myths, legends, epic stories, folk beliefs, and historical memories of struggle that further

---

<sup>19</sup> These interactions and ritual chains correspond to the process of knowledge production through *externalization* and *objectification* of subjective meanings that are followed by the *internalization* of the objectified social reality by individuals through socialization processes (Berger & Luckmann 1991[1966]: 69-74, 149). Rituals as objectified truths are constructed as a result of intersubjective interactions and internalized by the following generations.

strengthen this culture of opposition (Foran 1997: 229-236). Apart from being an oppressive power seeking to exterminate the ethnic group, the enemy is now also qualified as a 'colonial force' backed by local collaborators/traitors that exploit the colonized national community.<sup>20</sup> Ethnic cleavage in the society is extended over other identity definitions such as class and gender that constitute the new components of 'ethnopolitical rebellion' (Gurr & Moore 1997), which expand the influence of the movement on other social groups, including them in the struggle against a common enemy.<sup>21</sup> Whether this new definition of national reality based on a narrative of a colonized nation that faces the threat of assimilation and extermination is adopted by the broader sectors of the society in question determines the future trajectory of the movement.

*b. The legitimacy of political violence: Regime, group, and community*

Studies on the theory of the state frequently refer to the concepts of legitimacy and legitimation. Whether a political entity or organization is qualified as legitimate depends on the effectiveness of legitimation, which is the process of ascribing legitimacy (Barker 2001: 22). Specific duties attributed to the modern state, ranging from tax collection to ordering governmental affairs (Dunleavy 2012: 793), result from its recognition and acceptance as a legitimate authority by people. When non-state groups imitate this authority by performing similar interventions and control with the threat of use of coercion (Letamendia 1997: 232), the state is challenged in terms of legitimacy.

The use of coercion constitutes a fundamental component of legitimate political authority. In the Weberian understanding, the state is defined as a human community that 'successfully'<sup>22</sup> claim to be the sole source having the right for 'the legitimate use of physical coercion' in a demarcated territory (Weber 1946: 78). The monopolistic character as the key qualification attributed to the state, however, is not delimited with the use of physical coercion but also includes other functions and competencies. In his referential work *Economy and Society*, the scholar also attributes to the state holding the monopoly of control over the land for the fiscal obligations (Weber 1978[1922]: 145), regulating the monetary system for monetary transactions (*Ibid.* 166-167), creation of the rules to define the limits of authority, granting the necessary means for administrative function (*Ibid.* 271-272)

---

<sup>20</sup> Della Porta argues that such definitions are due to the estrangements of armed activists in underground conditions that provoke an "unreal image of the external world" (1995: 180). This 'unreal image', however, refers to the group truth objectified as 'real' by the group and adopted by a considerable part of the community. This definition of reality is therefore independent of any scholarly judgment as its realness or falsehood does not necessarily correspond to the objective facts.

<sup>21</sup> When there is a conflict among different groups seeking the same objective (e.g. toppling a regime), objectification of the conflict plays a unifying role by creating new interaction opportunities (Cosser 1956: 117-119, 128). Simmel precisely affirms that conflict against a common enemy sticks groups together which have otherwise nothing to do with each other (1955: 99).

<sup>22</sup> Morris's interpretation over the ambiguous use of the adverb is to distinguish the state from gangs and protective agencies who use 'ordinary' violence (1998: 44). These potential challengers to the authority in the form of bandits, marauders, and pirates in traditional states with an insecure hold of the power center over the means of violence (Giddens 1987: 182) continue as the state-sponsored bandit groups (Hobsbawm 1959: 13) in modern societies as long as the state consents them.



and, finally, the monopoly of the citizenship through the transgenerational flow of the socio-economic privileges (*Ibid.* 690). The state guarantees its legitimate position as the sole actor ultimately eligible to comply with these duties and competencies. The monopoly of the use of coercion plays a primarily functional role in forcing any other potential actors to obey this order.

Nevertheless, in some cases, the state fails to establish this monopoly due to several reasons: geographic obstacles, challenging terrains, poverty (Laitin 2007) and intrastate contentions and warfare (Horowitz 1985; Hutchinson 2017) may prevent the state from eliminating non-state actors as alternative power centers with significant capacity of coercive power. When other groups claim this monopoly out of consent, it supposes a threat to the absolute control of the state over the core functions and competencies on the national territory.

Although there is no empirical evidence that ethnic fractionalizations and discriminative policies lead to violent confrontations (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 83-85), regime type and tolerance constitute two variables that condition the transfer of legitimacy between the state and rival group. Tilly suggests that the grade of tolerance towards non-state group demands is directly linked with these variables. *Repressive* and *totalitarian* regimes show limited tolerance towards group demands. In contrast, *tolerant* and *weak* regimes facilitate the emergence of solid groups showing a wide range of tolerance towards their activities (Tilly 1978: 109-110). In regimes with inclusive policies towards ethnic minorities, the state accepts ethnic distinctions through *cultural recognition* or even concede a further degree of decentralization through *political autonomy* and *federalism*. Contrariwise, in regimes defining the nation as a homogeneous unity, exclusionist policies towards ethnic minorities are based on *denial and repression* through cultural and institutional imposition (Guibernau 1999: 35-64).

Intervening in alternative nationalist claims considered deviant by regimes is part of 'internal pacification', in which the limits of tolerance depend highly upon the definition of 'deviance' in a given country (Giddens 1987: 327).<sup>23</sup> The perception of deviance determines the character of policing, which may be: *a) repressive versus tolerant; b) selective versus diffuse* in terms of the range of groups subject to repression; *c) preventive versus reactive* in terms of timing of police intervention; *d) hard versus soft* in terms of the degree of force involved and; *e) dirty versus lawful* in terms of legal and democratic procedures (Della Porta 1996: 66). Indiscriminate and disproportionate counterinsurgency tactics and violence by governments are perceived as unjustified sanctions alienating the civilian population and making the grounds more suitable for broader support to insurgent groups (Oberschall 1993: 172-173).

---

<sup>23</sup> Tilly roughly classifies types of public performances according to the degree of tolerance by the authority: *a) Prescribed* performances include typical ceremonies of allegiance and transfer of resources to state control; *b) tolerated* performances have to see with legal claims and organized responses to moral offenders and; *c) forbidden* performances include physical violence on governmental resources (Tilly 2003: 47). In this sense, the question of whether an activity/demand is considered deviant has to see with the limits of tolerated performances in any regime.

These measures against the members of the ethnic community on whom law and coercion are applied selectively provoke 'disaffection' as an initial form of disobedience to the authority. In the case of rebellious nationalism, obedience and loyalty are likely to transfer to an alternative order as the legitimacy of the state is questioned (Barker 1990: 185-187).

The social legitimacy of a non-state organization depends on the relation between the organization and its subordinate community that grants consent to the justifications that the organization proposes (Beetham 1991: 233-234). Any entity is capable of legitimizing itself to the extent that it influences the beliefs of others and relating the justification of the power it possesses (Morris 1998: 104). The social legitimacy of a particular group using political violence is related to the acceptance of group truth among the 'community of legitimation' (Letamendia 1997: 296), whose loyalty and obedience depend on the competitive capacity of the group to objectify the justifications of violence. Starting from the inversely proportional relationship between the strength of normative justifications and the legitimacy of a regime (Gurr 1970: 185), one can affirm that members of a community who question the legitimacy of a government are more likely to accept these justifications.

Policy changes of a specific regime towards a more inclusive and tolerant direction, however, do not necessarily end the use of violent repertoires. Unlike collective behaviorists, who argue that changes in the attitude of agencies of social control (Smelser 1964) and political concessions made by colonial regimes (Hodgkin 1957) push the groups to embrace non-violent repertoires, the good faith or tactical reforms by governments cannot be sufficient to relieve social strain. The magnitude of such changes sometimes may be 'too little, too late' and be interpreted as a sign of weakness, giving another impulse to violent conflict (Oberschall 1993: 155-156). Groups resorting to specific repertoires do not tend to come up with new actions and expressions but rather rework known routines in response to new circumstances (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2004: 138). In contrast, such changes have a considerable impact on the group's capacity for mobilization and its social influence.

The grade of legitimacy attributed to the group violence by the community is susceptible to significant changes in regime attitude and availability of channels for non-violent repertoires. The gap between the community and the group concerning the perception of reality affects the social support conceded to the latter. When the group's mobilization capacity weakens, or mobilization attempts provoke reverse effects, the social consequence is likely to be 'erosion of support' as a symptom of movement decline (Klandermans 1997: 100). In such cases, the community begins to demonstrate the withdrawal of consent for the policies implemented by the group, a process labeled as *delegitimation* (Beetham 1991: 206). The emergence of counter-movements backed by a significant portion of the society (Zald & Useem 1987: 254) and electoral results obtained by political parties within the orbit of

underground movements (Dunleavy & O'Leary 1987: 154) provide meaningful qualitative and quantitative indicators in terms of social legitimacy that the group enjoys.

New generations born in a more democratic and tolerant regime find it harder to internalize the group truth based on a war for ethnic survival when objective conditions and everyday life experiences do not back this sociodrama. Similarly, older generations embrace ideas and forms introduced by a new cohort, inasmuch as they find them attractive (Edmunds & Turner 2002: 50); they give up their support on the contrary. A gradually growing gap between the avant-garde group and the community that the group claims to represent concerning the social reality leads to the disaffection of a significant portion of the latter, which once granted legitimacy to the organization.<sup>24</sup>

#### **1.4. Cohort analysis for ethnonational political violence**

After having established a theoretical link between nationalism in the stateless nations as a product of a new cohort and political violence as a generation style introduced by particular groups of a specific generation unit, the last section of this chapter proposes a cohort analysis model that aims to explain the social reproduction of violence in ethnonational movements. As in the case of other social phenomena, the selected research subject determines the whys and hows of specific research design as well as the analytical framework that need to be detailed.

##### **1.4.1. The whys and hows of a generational approach towards political violence**

The phenomenon of political violence has been studied from many different perspectives by scholars concerned about the causes of violent repertoires and roles attributed to them in conflicts. Theoretical approaches that aim to explain certain aspects of the phenomenon tend to do so in a complementary manner. Having made an extensive revision of such attempts, Rule precisely concludes that any quest for an overarching theory to bring a comprehensive explanation to collective violence is simply an idle effort (1988: 264). Basing on cohort and period effects as well as the life course of those who join particular groups exercising violent practices, the generational approach proposes a systematic periodical analysis model based on micro-analytical case-specific aspects of the phenomenon.

From a generational perspective, the emergence and development of political violence as a form of contentious politics indicates a broad historical period during which various birth cohorts are born, socialize, and interact with one another. This perspective accentuates the dynamic character of contention as a continuing process through which multiple variables are involved. Structural strain and

---

<sup>24</sup> One must bear in mind that the question of affection and disaffection of the community with the group does not take place abruptly, and the question that Arriaga (1997) formulates how members of a community stop providing loyalty to a specific group involves a long and complex process. It also makes equally important the question of how members of a community continue to grant a certain degree of loyalty to the group despite clear disagreements and discrepancies with it.

mobilization, as well as social control factors influencing collective behavior (Smelser 1963) or an individual's psychological state regarding the perceived frustration (Davies 1969; Gurr 1970), are all closely related to changes and transformations in socio-political and economic variables. Similarly, purposefulness and rationality in collective action based on cost and benefit calculations by groups (Tilly 1974; McCarthy & Zald 1977; Oberschall 1978) and individuals (Olson 1965; Hardin 1982), and the relation between the organizational capacity of groups (Klandermans 1984; McAdam 1988; Friedman & McAdam 1992) and regime tolerance towards claim-making actors (Tilly 1978, 2003, 2006) are equally subject to changes and transformations by time. Functionality and dysfunctionality of violence (Giddens 1985; North 1990) exercised through formal political institutions (Galtung 1969; Kohle & Alcock 1976; Gilligan 1996) or by non-state organizations against the established political order (M. Chrenshaw 1981; Della Porta 1995) therefore cannot be evaluated without focusing on the case-specific temporal evolution of relevant variables observed in an ethnonational conflict.

A cohort analysis that combines the life-course approach with period and cohort effects include micro-level variables on social organization and everyday construction of meaning and ritual (Laitin 1995: 3) as well as case-specific historical experiences, influences, values, and principles in the formation of national identity (Guibernau 2007: 3). Ethnographic studies focusing on micro-level aspects of ethnonational violence provide highly fruitful insight, complementing the questions in which major scale theories cannot offer a satisfactory answer.<sup>25</sup> Dealing with violence as a socially and culturally constructed dynamic process reproduced in a specific *habitus* (Bourdieu 1980), ethnographic studies propose an alternative to behavioral, cognitive, and biological explanations on this matter (Nordstrom & Robben 1995: 6). How this cultural and social construction occurs and what mechanisms are involved in their social reproduction in different periods constitute essential questions to address through a cohort analysis specifically designed for each case.

When it comes to the *hows* of a cohort analysis on ethnonational movements and political violence as modern concepts, first of all, a research design must base on the 'cohort generation' perspective that focuses on a complex network of social relations beyond the traditional family interactions. Although in-family ties are part of the life-cycle of individuals involved in a politico-military organization, the 'lineage generation' perspective falls short in offering a helpful tool for the qualitative measurement of period and cohort effects. A comprehensive cohort analysis, therefore,

---

<sup>25</sup> Ethnographic analyses on different cases of ethnonational violence look into the traces of spatial and temporal construction of violence by focusing on structural continuities and material reciprocity between conflictive communities (Feldman 1991) as well as the micro-cultural context in which the life-course practices of construction of meaning in terms of national identity and violence develop (Zulaika 1988). Although these studies do not purposefully focus on the question of generations, a micro-analytical approach towards a specific period provides a fruitful insight regarding the generational variables involved.

must include life-course, period, and cohort effects (Dowd 1980) with adequate research design to obtain sufficient data to answer the research question(s).

As initially emphasized, time intervals separating one generation from another constitute the most challenging question in the generational analysis as there is no clear-cut formula with this respect. Bearing in mind that a cohort represents a social category 'in itself' (Braungart & Braungart 1986: 213), temporal boundaries of a generation vary depending on the phenomenon to be analyzed. A comprehensive analysis of a political generation, therefore, must include a broader time dimension than the detected generational rupture, revealing the entire militancy career (Fillieule 2001: 199). When the generation of the 1980s is referred to within the context of an armed organization, in this sense, cohort analysis must include the primary and secondary socialization processes during which period and cohort effects on a specific birth cohort can be observed. Qualitative data on life-course narratives reveals the impacts of formative events and subsequent changes and transformations reflected on individuals' everyday life practices and habitus (Edmunds & Turner 2002: 15-16).

Finally, as emphasized in more recent studies based on a generational analysis of social phenomena (Brannen & Nilsen 2002; Eyerman 2002; Bristow 2015), specific subsets of age groups when designing an analytical framework arise as an essential feature. Inclusion of such variables as social class, sex, ethnicity, and religion, which constitute significant social locations, is crucial for cohort analysis, as they are decisive in terms of research outcomes (Elder 1974: 16). Observations on the influences of these variables on individuals and groups in each period analyzed allow making an intergenerational comparison that converts cohort analysis into a more fruitful exercise.

#### **1.4.2. Comparative cohort analysis of ethnonational political violence: A proposal**

Bearing in mind the previous theoretical explanations, a comparative cohort analysis of political violence within the context of stateless nations requires to specify certain features in terms of research design and methodology. Suppose a cohort analysis aims to reveal the generational impacts of socio-political variables on specific organizations and the trajectory of political socialization of militants. In that case, the researcher decides the most convenient research design as well as an analytical model with a competent data collection technique to obtain necessary outcomes for a comparative study.

Which research design to choose has to see with the scope and objectives of the research and the available retrospective data, and the possibilities and limitations of prospective data collection (Elder & Pellerin 1998). Cross-sectional and time-series designs that give fruitful results when analyzing one specific event offer a useful tool in case the researcher is interested in the generational impacts of an incident at one or several points in time. When dealing with political generations that introduce violent repertoires as a particular generation style, however, the unique period effects that shape the

characteristics of these generations, as well as the life-course development of individuals of a generation unit (Braungart & Braungart 1986: 225-226), include various referential events that provoke significant political and social changes.

Due to their dynamic character, the study of processual changes in politico-military organizations requires the measurement of diachronous data on several units that fit best the longitudinal research method (Janson 1981: 20). In order to measure the same group at various points in time, longitudinal research design offers the most convenient model in terms of data accessibility in analyzing justifications of violence as well as tracking the social support granted to the armed group. Accumulated quantitative data on the legitimacy of the use of coercion among the members of a community (e.g., specific surveys and electoral results obtained by political representatives of the movement) is usually available and accessible. Likewise, previously made studies on specific cases also offer valuable data that may be complemented with prospective data collection. What data collection technique to implement has to see with the type of analysis considered best.

A micro-level analysis involves the mediation of militants' perception of reality, which affects the group's interaction with the authority and requires taking a closer look at the 'individual's political career' during which collective identities are constructed and transformed (Della Porta 1995: 136). The life-history analysis on the primary and secondary socialization processes, beginning from in-family intergenerational interactions and carrying on the process of political socialization through schooling and friend circles (Bertaux 2010), allows observing how the reality regarding the national identity is constructed as group truth. This broader perspective enables the researcher to see the role of what Mannheim labels as 'primary stratum experiences' (1952[1928]: 297) as well as the sensibility of individuals towards politics in their adolescence period (Bartels & Jackman 2013). The life-history analysis, in this sense, makes significant contributions to generational studies as well as life-course theories by providing qualitative outcomes regarding political socialization despite some epistemological issues worth mentioning.

Specific epistemological issues come into sight when working on past experiences at present. Those scholars who develop biographical narrative interview techniques (Schütze 1976; Fischer 1978; Rosenthal 1995) note that the life-course of social actors until the moment of narration condition the retrospective reconstruction of their memories. The perspective that individuals have at present determines the selection of memories, temporal and thematic connections among them, and the way they represent the remembered experiences (Rosenthal 2007: 50). The narration of memories is also subject to re-selection and re-construction processes by the researcher, making them the reconstruction of a constructed memory. In cohort analysis, which already deals with differentiation

between life-course and generational effects, these epistemological issues add a 'methodological effect,' making generational analysis further compelling.

The periodization of generational categorization of those actors who opt for armed struggle at different points in time is related to the trajectory of the conflict during which militants socialize and acquire the group truth regarding the national question. The concept of 'militancy career' refers to this long process based on individuals' predisposition of militancy and their transition to action (Fillieule 2001: 201). For this reason, an ideal distribution of generational groups to be analyzed should coincide with two factors: exclusive inclusion of specific birth cohorts and the engagement period. One must bear in mind that exclusively personal motivations of engagement in armed militancy may be highly diverse and challenging to systematize and even independent from generational variables. Limitations on age and militancy period factors, therefore, serve to rule out exclusively personal motivations in violence that correspond to the field of psychological studies.

The periodization when designing a generational study (and inclusion of specific birth cohorts) requires that the researcher involved in cohort analysis of a particular movement and group familiarize him or herself with the history of the research subject thoroughly (Burnett 2010), detecting cohort and period effects that are likely to shape the actors' political socialization process. Selected periods must base on quantitative and qualitative data that reveal the relationship between the objective situation regarding the conflict and the subjective interpretation by actors. Quantitative data based on such sources as electoral results and, when available, specific survey studies demonstrate the evaluation of the use of violent repertoires by the members of the community in each period of analysis, which can be contrasted with the in-group motivations and justifications obtained through specific qualitative data collection techniques.

An even distribution of individuals in each generational group in terms of sex, social class, and religion (Bristow 2015) also makes it possible to observe and measure the weight of these variables in their politico-military trajectory. These variables constitute significant elements in actors' socialization as they are directly related to their perception of deprivation based on the relation between their value expectations and value cost (Gurr 1970). The inclusion of these variables in generational groups in a longitudinal design allows the researcher to measure their weight qualitatively in each generational group of analysis. Such an approach reveals the response of each of these identity definitions to period and cohort effects. It demonstrates the changes and transformations that both the group and community pass through with this respect.

Finally, cohort analysis based on a comparative perspective and methodology makes a simultaneous observation of the outcomes obtained in each field possible by contrasting the cohort

and period effects on each case. Systematic integration of a time dimension in analysing a social phenomenon is believed to serve a better understanding of changes and transformations in the social reproduction and legitimacy of political violence in a multiple-case study. Eventually, such an attempt also constitutes another example of a recently growing number of analyses that encourage the use of generations as a social metric in explaining complex social phenomena, paving the way for future studies to be conducted by next-generation scholars.



## 2. Generational Development of Basque Nationalism

### 2.1. Emergence and early periods of the traditional Basque nationalism

The emergence period of the modern Basque nationalism corresponds to the industrialization process during the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century characterized with the uneven triumph of the liberal state in Spain, abolition of the Basque *foral* regime, and rapid industrial growth, as well as the subsequent drastic social transformations (Beltza 1974: 68). The idea of creating a Basque state on a defined *patria* (to be named *Euskadi* or *Euzkadi*) and the formation of its institutional driving force, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV/EAJ - *Partido Nacionalista Vasco/Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea*), are the two major historic points when it comes to the emergence of the Basque nationalist doctrine. This historical period shaped by the political context of the state-building process in Spain throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its socio-political consequences in the Basque Country and Navarre is, therefore, essential to understanding the generational development of Basque nationalism(s).

#### 2.1.1. State-building and the question of centralization in Spain and the Basque Country

##### a. *The centralization issue in the formation of the Spanish state*

The thesis of 'weak nationalism' refers to the lack of bureaucratic capacity and efficiency of social channels as fundamental tools to expand the nationalist doctrine throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Spain despite the enthusiastic launching of nation-state building through the Cádiz Constitution, which equally lacked a potent constitutive power (Villacañas 2015: 387)<sup>26</sup>. This argument claims that the state-building process in Spain launched before having accomplished the territorial integration of nation-building provoked a lack of legitimacy of the state in some regions where local powers manifested their opposition to the idea of centralization to preserve their privileges (Linz 1973: 33, 99).

The first signs of early centralization attempts in Spain focus on the formation of a stable symbolic universe: making the Castilian language the official language of the Iberian Peninsula, as well as that of remote colonies, the introduction of the national flag (*rojigualda*) in 1785 during the reign of Carlos III, the creation of the Royal March (*Marcha de Granaderos*), as well as the foundation of the *Real Academias* of language and history, are considered long-delayed steps in the centralization process of the Spanish State (Pastor 2012: 70-71). The invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by the Napoleonic Army constituted a turning point in the construction of the idea of Spanish nationalism

---

<sup>26</sup> The thesis of a 'weak state' in the Spanish context was first employed by Linz in his *Early state-building and late peripheral nationalism against the State: The case of Spain* (1973) in which the scholar explains the problematic state-building process in Spain. This approach was later reformulated by the following scholars: de Riquer, B. (1994) "La faiblesse du processus de construction nationale en Espagne au XIXe siècle" in *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, n° 41(2), April - June, pp. 353-366; Fusí, J. P. (2000) *España. La evolución de la identidad nacional*, Madrid: Temas de Hoy; and in the most comprehensive manner by Álvarez Junco, J. (2001) *Mater Dolorosa. La idea de España en el siglo XIX*, Madrid: Taurus.

(Álvarez Junco 1996: 91-93); the posterior symbolic reproduction of the resistance deemed as *Guerra de Independencia* (Independence War) is commonly recognized by Spanish historiography.

Nevertheless, the lack of efficiency in fundamental mechanisms, most importantly, an efficient educational system, resulted in only limited effects over the predominant lordship regimes at a local level. Having lacked a genuine Enlightenment revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Spain entered the period of industrialization without an efficient state apparatus in a context of archaic inequalities and hostile approaches towards the idea of modernity (Giner 1986: 440).<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the existence of clientelism in politics, the indifferent attitude of political elites towards any radical change, and the dispersion of cultural, political, and financial centers were among the main factors for the failure in achieving a substantial national project and cultural homogeneity (Lecours 2007: 20). Weak governmental and territorial articulation eventually provoked a low level of legitimacy of the state in those regions where the primitive accumulation of symbolic capital (Pérez-Agote 1984: 11) for other ethnic identities had developed a certain degree of loyalty.

Having failed in playing an integrating role with strong national cohesion and far from preparing feasible grounds for indoctrinating the popular masses with the ethno-symbolic elements of Spanish identity, Spanish nationalism largely remained at a rhetorical level reproducing the myths of glory from disastrous and exhaustive wars (Álvarez Junco 1997: 46). The consequence of this failure made it possible for the emergence of rival ethnic movements in some regions, including the Basque Country, which was incompatible with the social cohesion imposed by the state.

*b. Resistance, loss, and trauma in the Basque Country: Carlist wars and the abolition of the Fueros*

The imposition of liberal measures dictated from a political center upon remote territories was a challenging issue in Spain for two reasons. The local authorities had long been administratively disconnected from the center, and the highly religious and traditional social fabric was in no way responsive to such modern and secular steps. These were also the main reasons for the collision between liberals, who sought to establish a centralized and uniform modern Spain, and conservative and traditionalist *Carlista* sectors, who defended a monarchic and Catholic Spain (Esteban de Vega

---

<sup>27</sup> This situation is due to impossibilities rather than an awkwardness in policymaking by the Spanish elites. Following an important phase of cultural development throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century through which the national symbolic universe had made considerable progress, the devastating effects of the Napoleonic invasion; additionally, the territorial loss of the Spanish Empire in the Americas and its severe effects on the colonial economy, the incapacity and inability of governance due to the ultra-reactionary character of the regime of Fernando VII liquidated the state structures. The long-lasting financial incapacity during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from which Spanish Monarchy had been suffering, inevitably affected its capacity to provide decent public services, especially in the field of education, which had been controlled by Catholic Church hierarchies, which provoked a lack of coherence in a weak public education system with local and provincial deficiencies (Fusi 1989, 2001: 97-102).

2003: 127). Within a few decades, this collision provoked the eruption of a series of civil strife and violence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, named as Carlist Wars (*Guerras Carlistas*) between 1833 - 1876.

The Carlist ideology received the most significant support in the Basque Country and Navarre, where the Second Carlist War exclusively took place. The fiscal system created by *Fueros*<sup>28</sup> in the Basque Country suited the interests of the Basque peasantry, as well as autonomous *jauntxos* (rural seigniors) while causing devastating effects on the economic benefits of the Basque bourgeoisie and small industrial facilities (Ortzi 1975: 74-76). This social division facilitated none other than to choose one of two conflictive sides. The newly emerging Basque bourgeoisie (after losing colonial trade, more eager to resort to commercial activities inside Spain) and the urban working class in the developing metallurgy industry, as well as the upper Basque aristocracy, were in favor of modernization and, therefore, supported liberal ideas. The low-ranking Basque clergy and rural peasantry, along with small rural gentry, on the other hand, were sharing a convergence of interests due to a high level of religiosity among those social circles and opposing the centralization of the state. Liberal and secular policies such as the concession of religious freedoms, access to civil marriage, and the abolition of mandatory tithing were far beyond their conservative limits (Díez Medrano 1999: 69-79).

Under the conditions of such visible social divisions based on tensions between the urban and the rural, the liberal and the traditional, the rich and the poor, and finally, centralists and absolutists, the achievement of the modernization of the state with a robust national cohesion was a challenging attempt. The inevitable social and political consequences of this division also shaped the mentality of the first generation of Basque nationalism that emerged once the foral regime was abolished.<sup>29</sup>

*c. The period of post-Carlist Wars and the social grounds of the early Basque nationalism*

The Second Carlist War that concluded with the victory of the *modernizers* brought the definitive abolition of *Fueros*, generating different reactions in Basque society. For the general population, the foral regime meant relatively less fiscal contributions and exemptions from compulsory military service. In contrast, for upper-class sectors such as manufacturers and traders, the abolition of *Fueros* brought certain economic advantages. Traditional political institutions now were substituted with modern ones, and the proclamation of Economic Agreements (*Conciertos Económicos*) in 1882 changed their attitude towards the foral regime and increased their loyalty to Spanish political parties.

---

<sup>28</sup> The term *Fueros*, or foral regime, refers to a peculiar system of autonomy in terms of fiscal, military, administrative, and legislative means within a political organization based on a federation-like system consisting of local municipalities (de Pablo, de la Granja & Rubio 2011). For the history and structural analysis of Basque foral regime in Spain, please see Díez Medrano, J. (1999) *Naciones Divididas. Clase, Política y Nacionalismo en el País Vasco y Cataluña*, Madrid: CIS.

<sup>29</sup> The abolition of *Fueros* is a milestone as it constitutes one of the main pillars of the Basque nationalist historiography in which the Law dated 25 October 1839 recognizing the constitutional unity over *Fueros* is depicted as the loss of Basque sovereignty by the founding generation of Basque nationalists whose ultimate goal was to get back to the situation prior to this 'unfortunate date', recovering the privileges of *Fueros* (Ortzi 1975: 82-83).

The support for Spanish nationalism this way became the main characteristic of the local Basque bourgeoisie (Díez Medrano 1999: 85-87). The lower-class sectors, particularly the Basque peasantry who had lost their privileges, on the other hand, produced a great sense of resentment towards capitalism and urban centers where the new elites were living.

The rapid and uneven industrialization that accelerated after the abolition of *Fueros* provoked a significant workforce flow from other parts of the Iberian Peninsula, more specifically towards the municipality of Bilbao, the cradle of Basque industrialization (Payne: 1975: 61). With the new industrial progress and consequent urbanization, the cities in the Basque Country became areas where the population came to experience the social changes derived from the industrialization directly. New forms of life were becoming apparent in those cities, whereas the old ways began to suffer erosion (Pérez-Agote 1984: 60).

The exportation of sources from the iron-rich Bizkaia region, and the accumulation of capital as a consequence, not only allowed for the creation of an iron and steel industry but also determined a peculiar industrialization model in Bizkaia through an increasing percentage of manufacturing concentration in a specific part of the capital Bilbao. The left bank of the Nervión river became known as the industrial territory. In contrast, the right bank converted itself into a residential space and the capital city, Grand Bilbao, became an organizational and administrative center, provoking a notable physical gap between the new industrial proletariat living in socially isolated neighborhoods and the rapidly enriching bourgeoisie in Bilbao (Gurrutxaga 1996: 59-60). In a society where the population doubled between 1877 and 1900, the sense of defeat after the Carlist Wars extended to many segments of society, manifesting itself as a direct threat to the autochthonous ethnic characteristics.

Table 1: Demographic growth in Bizkaia between 1779 - 1900

Year	Bizkaia	Mining and River Nervion area	Bizkaia (agricultural areas)
1779	111,603	24,995	96,608
1810	112,92	26,138	86,782
1826	112,275	27,566	84,709
1843	143,012	31,631	111,381
1857	160,579	40,159	120,42
1877	189,954	62,437	127,517
1887	235,659	105,728	129,931
1900	311,361	167,68	143,681

Source: González Portilla 1981: 104

The sense of 'invasion' had already been visible in the eyes of Basques during the Carlist Wars. Most troops fighting in liberal armies in the Basque Country had to be recruited in other parts of Spain due to the high level of support to Carlist ideology in Basque provinces (Coverdale 2014: 238-240). The

post-war generations sensed a similar perception in everyday life among newly emerging cross-identity environments such as industrial production installations. Spanish immigrants, with their symbolic universe and language, were in constant contact with traditional Basques. The latter had already had hostile feelings towards capitalism as well as its representatives, the ever-growing commercial and industrial Basque bourgeoisie. Unsurprisingly, the first generation of Basque nationalism took a reactionary and racist shape as a response to massive migrant communities 'invading' Basque land.

Being another rapidly industrializing region, Gipuzkoa showed a distinctive character in terms of industrial development with its widely dispersed manufacturing facilities in comparison with Bizkaia, where the industrial production was heaped around the capital Bilbao. As a result, the region saw a multi-polar immigration and urbanization process as the dispersed character of industry did not permit the creation of large production centers but instead developed a diversity of production through mostly small and medium businesses (Gurrutxaga 1996: 55-56). As a consequence, different social groups were in constant interaction with one another in a reduced physical space.

As a result of this distinctive industrial growth model and expansion, the nationalist bourgeoisie in Gipuzkoa adopted a lifestyle widely determined and shared by other existing social groups, overwhelmingly consisting of working-class people. The consumption level and fashion that the Gipuzkoan bourgeoisie followed, in this sense, did not necessarily correspond to its economic potential. Consequently, unlike the Bizkaia, social interactions among different classes were not confined to isolated spaces (Pérez-Agote 1984: 65-66). This spatial differentiation in interclass interactions also appeared as one of the key factors for the different positions taken by the Basque bourgeoisie towards nationalism in different regions of southern Basque Country.

### **2.1.2. The emergence of Basque nationalism: Doctrine, characteristics and social components**

The briefly described social transformations following consecutive wars and economic developments constitute the primary grounds on which the first generation of traditional Basque nationalism emerged. Basque nationalism arose as a reaction to social transformations due to massive working-class Spanish immigration perceived as a destructive threat against Basque identity and culture and an expression of disenchanted middle-class Catholic Basques facing labor tensions and disputes (Arriaga 1997: 29). The latter is especially relevant in Bizkaia, where the Basque bourgeoisie failed to show interest and capacity when it came to penetrating the emerging Basque nationalism as a result of closer commercial ties with the Spanish national market with continuous demands in heavy-industry products (Díez Medrano 1999: 51). These two fundamental motivations are also significant for analyzing the main characteristics of the doctrine introduced by the founding father of traditional Basque nationalism Sabino Arana Goiri and his Basque Nationalist Party (PNV/EAJ).

a. *The founding generation of the PNV and the early period Basque nationalist doctrine*

Being the first political organization promoting and defending the Basque identity, the PNV has had an almost uninterrupted pioneering role in representing and reproducing Basque nationalism. Sabino Arana, who shaped the party's politics in this early period, also became the inventor of core elements of the Basque national symbolic universe. The Basque flag, *Ikurriña*, the national day, *Aberri Eguna*, as well as the PNV's party anthem were also adopted by all Basque nationalist movements and inherited until today. He also conceptualized the independence and territoriality of the Basque nation, which initially focused on Bizkaia and, over time, extended through other remaining six provinces labeled *Euzkadi* or *Euskadi* (Conversi 2000: 53-54).

As emphasized before, Arana's nationalist doctrine arose as a reaction to the Spanish immigrant community in the Basque urban areas where the social encounters between autochthonous Basques and Spanish immigrant workers were far more visible than any other parts of the Basque Country (Pérez-Agote 1984: 60). Referring to the increasing presence of Spanish immigrants pejoratively denominated as *maketos* (Arana Goiri 1980: 627-628), Sabino Arana also became the first Basque nationalist who defined the situation in his native Bizkaia as 'colonial' and suggested the separation of the Basque community from Spaniards:

"It is essential to isolate ourselves from *maketos* in all walks of life. [...] We can say that in these times of slavery, we have a large number of Spanish colonies in Bizkaia, but let's never get confused with *maketos*" (Sabino Arana quoted from De la Granja 2006: 197)

The frequent interactions with Spanish immigrants and their cultural universe, both perceived as a threat against Basque racial pureness, emphasized the defense of *genuine* Basque based on ancestral descendants as the most remarkable component of Arana's nationalist doctrine. He stressed the authenticity of surnames inherited from ancestral lines, a feature aimed at differentiating 'us' from 'them' in his nationalist code (Gurrutxaga 1985: 422). He reflected this racist component in a hostile discourse towards Spanish immigrants, invaders of an inferior race who would destroy superior Basque values and traditions of Old Law (*Vieja Ley*). Although Arana was clearly in favor of territorial unity and independence of *Euskadi*, the preservation of Basque racial purity was a priority:

"...*Ley Vieja* (Old Law), the main defining element of the nation because: Is the soil on which we walk the only thing which constitutes the Homeland? Is it important for us to have a free Bizkaia here in these mountains, like having it elsewhere? If it happens to occur to have a Bizkaia, yes, free, but constituted by the Spanish race, would it really be Bizkaia?" (Sabino Arana quoted from Corcuera 1980: 384)

Arana depicted the Basque race as a divine cause; religion, the love that one feels for God and Jesus Christ, appeared to be the primary requirement to be called a *patriot* (Larronde 1990: 94). Basque religious salvation through independence combined the above-quoted 'Old Law' with 'God' (Arana Goiri 1980: 192) as synthesized in harmony in the famous motto of *Jaungoikoa eta Lege-Zarra* (God

and the Old Law) pronounced in the foundation of the PNV. Independence of the Basque homeland (Euzkadi/Euskadi), considered functional for the divine glory, would also mean independence from maketos who had already lost their genuinely Catholic moral values (De la Granja 2006: 193). Profound feelings for Catholicism in Arana seemed even more critical than the Basque national freedom:

“Between witnessing a free Euzkadi but away from Christ and seeing it enslaved but faithful to Christ, the Basque Nationalist Party would opt for the latter.” (Sabino Arana, quoted from Corcuera 1980: 324)

This approach also becomes apparent in the affirmations by prominent figures of the following generation of Basque nationalists, like Fray Evangelista de Ibero (Ramón de Goicoechea y Oroquieta, alias *Iber*), the first ideologist of the Basque nationalism in Navarre. Describing himself as a loyal student of Arana, whom he titles as ‘the martyr of God and Euzkadi’ in his famous work *Ami Vasco*, he emphasizes the central place that religion occupies among Basques:

“The Basque people love their religion more than the land they live on, more than their freedom, more than their *fueros*, more than their language. [...] the Basque put the faith in Christ as the basis for the restoration of their homeland, and if, miraculously, there is a Basque who denies the faith in Christ, soon, thank God, he would not also be late in denying his homeland. [...] In conclusion, even though it is something more than for the sake of our race, we must fight for God. Do not forget that I am [*only*] talking to Basques.” (Fray Evangelista, quoted from Garralda 2001: 169-170)

The contradictive political positioning between the Episcopal hierarchies and the popular Basque clergy refers to a breaking point in explaining the role of religion as a driving force of Aranist nationalism. While the former opposed any form of nationalism except that of the official church doctrine, the latter positioned closer to Basque nationalism with its critical stance against ‘liberalist sins’ (Delgado 2007: 188). Increasing support by the popular church through subsequent generations, especially after the first electoral success of Basque nationalism in 1917, illustrated the growing integration of the low-ranking Basque clergy into Aranist nationalism.

Finally, the Basque language, *Euskera*, which is the most significant element of the Basque ethno-symbolic universe by a wide margin, appeared as a component serving to differentiate recently arrived Spanish migrant communities and the autochthonous Basque. It was mostly the case among those peasants who emigrated from the rural parts towards growing industrial centers, leaving their traditional *baserri* culture<sup>30</sup> behind and experiencing new identity encounters in big cities. In these new urban areas, the arrival of Spanish immigrants consolidated the long-continuing decline in the use of *Euskera* among Basques (Tejerina 1992: 87). This situation also explains the hostile attitude of first-

---

<sup>30</sup> In her comprehensive study on *baserri* (hamlet, rural house), Etxezarreta puts special emphasis on the issue of language and the difficulty that *baserritarrak* (rural Basques) have in articulating into Spanish-dominated cultural environment. The scholar confirms cases where the *euskalduns* (Euskera-speakers) do not feel comfortable in understanding and expressing themselves in Spanish and, therefore, feel a certain degree of ‘inferiority’ in Spanish-dominated urban culture (1977: 169).

generation Basque nationalists towards mostly *erdaldun* (Spanish-speaking) Basque bourgeoisie qualified as 'domestic enemy' (Corcuera 1980: 144).

The positioning of early Basque nationalists towards Euskera is best observed in the mythical construction of this language as the most ancient in the Iberian Peninsula, an approach inherited by *Fuerist* theorists, who considered Euskera 'the language of Paradise' (Letamendia 1997: 94). Arana's concern for the transmission of the Basque symbolic universe to upcoming generations (Corcuera 1980: 398) and his overrating of Euskera as an element of differentiation (Gurrutxaga 1996: 73) by characterizing it as 'the seal of the Basque race' (Arana 1980: 1713) also affirm the place conceded to the linguistic question.

Notwithstanding, Arana's positive approach towards the language never underestimates race and religion as the key components. Arana himself clearly expresses that a *maketo* speaking Euskera is far less welcome than a Spanish-speaking Bizkaian (1980: 404). The importance of Euskera in traditional nationalism constitutes a significant element despite some of Arana's statements that might be considered contradictory with this respect.<sup>31</sup> The linguistic particularity of the Aranist viewpoint is more likely to be a mechanism of integration, differentiation, and, finally, an essential reference for social cohesion (Tejerina 1999: 82) rather than a central doctrinal element.

#### *b. Other Basque nationalist fractions before the Spanish Civil War*

The PNV's entry into politics arose an alternative project to the idea of a unified Spanish nation-state, which had faced serious –and violent– resistance by Carlist sectors in the Basque Country and Navarre, the latter being a disputed territorial question even today.<sup>32</sup> This project was based on a clear expression demanding the recovery of the 'historical state of reality' before the abolition of the *Fueros* in 1876 (Arregi 2000: 106-107), which simultaneously constituted the mythical construction of Arana's Basque nationalist historiography.

Nevertheless, the political project that seeks to achieve this recovery and the continuity of this 'historical reality' within the same PNV divided the party into two lines. The traditionalist sectors led by the Arana brothers (Sabino and Luis) maintained their pro-independence, extremely Catholic, and

---

<sup>31</sup> Considering Arana's writings on the Basque language such as *Etimologías Euskéricas* (1980[1887]: 31-42), *Lecciones de Ortografía del Euskera Bizkaino* (1980[1897]: 810-982), *Pliegos euskeráfilos* (1980[1888]: 43-68) and *Pliegos euskeralógicos* (1980[1892]: 91-106), it is out of doubt that Arana put emphasis on the linguistic question. However, Arana's erratic comparative style on what he considered essential to be a 'Basque', in this sense, might be the cause of confusion with respect to his positioning towards the language. In the final analysis, it is understood that for Arana, Euskera's paramount consideration had to do with its strengthening role for the most fundamental component of his nationalism, race.

<sup>32</sup> Among Basque nationalists from both the right and left-wing, the region of Navarre is considered one of four regions of the Basque Country under Spanish rule, namely *Hegoalde* or *Hego Euskal Herria* ('Southern Country' or 'Southern Basque Country'). As a separated autonomous community, Navarre enjoys economic and fiscal privileges due to 'historic rights' in accordance with the Navarre Economic Convention of 1990: <http://www.lexnavarra.navarra.es/detalle.asp?r=88>



anti-modernization position. In contrast, the bourgeois sectors led by Ramón de la Sota followed a rather capitalist, moderately religious, and pro-autonomist line (Lecours 2007: 56). Although the ideological discrepancies between those sectors, which would provoke intra-party disputes and a consequent separation, were difficult to reconcile, the far-fetched unity strengthened the electoral capacity of Basque nationalism, which yielded remarkable results in the post-Arana period.

Table 2: Electoral results in the Basque Country in general elections before the Spanish Civil War

<i>Percentage of votes in favor of specific parties over the total distribution of votes</i>			
<b>Parties and political tendencies</b>	<b>1907</b>	<b>1931 June</b>	<b>1936 February</b>
<b>Right-wing</b>			
Conservative parties	64.07	12.40	16.23
Traditionalists	23.51	10.32	12.31
<b>Nationalists</b>			
PNV	2.15	28.48	35.06
ANV		6.27	
<b>Center and Left-wing</b>			
Republican	4.27	22.56	13.24
Socialist	6.00	16.79	14.73
Communists and POUM	3.18	8.44	
<b>Abstentions</b>	<b>37.93</b>	<b>19.19</b>	<b>22.37</b>

Source: Díez Medrano 1999: 105

After the founding generation of traditional Basque nationalism, plenty of different nationalist approaches with quite limited electoral margin also came into being thanks to the political and social conjuncture of the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In an era of increasingly growing Basque capitalism, now more connected with the Spanish economy than ever, Arana’s anti-modernity discourse did not seem sustainable for the Basque nationalist capitalists affiliated with the PNV (Totoricagüena 2004: 37). A more moderate regionalist perspective received considerable support, creating a new political organization in favor of autonomy status, Basque Nationalist Communion (CNV - *Comunión Nacionalista Vasca*). The CNV defended the integrity of an autonomous Basque region in a confederal Spain, avoiding intra-Basque separatism (de la Granja 2008: 20). Specific ideas defended by the party significantly differed from the second generation of traditional Aranist nationalists (the *Aberrri* group) concerning the linguistic issue and control mechanisms for the nationalist press in Euskadi.

An exceptional figure was the leader of the *Aberrri* group, Elias Gallastegui, who represented the second generation of Aranist tradition with a broader perspective towards issues such as social justice and class struggle. Gallastegui caught the attention of Bilbao’s proletariat sectors with his explicit support for violent acts and breaking laws against oppressive economic conditions, which led

to his expulsion from the PNV (Zirakzadeh 1991: 132-133). Highly influenced by anti-imperialist movements of his epoch, Gallastegui fiercely opposed the idea of approximating the official line of the Spanish right. His ideas in relation to Basque nationalism seeking the recovery of the past, and radicalization of the Aranist doctrine regarding an anti-foral reintegration, were passionately defended by his *Aberri* group (Díez Medrano 1999: 102; Letamendia 1997: 262).<sup>33</sup>

Despite their limited electoral success and social influence, other Basque nationalist parties and groups also began to emerge in the early 1930s. With its secular and relatively more inclusive position, as proclaimed in the San Andrés Manifest, the appearance of the Basque Nationalist Action (ANV - *Acción Nacionalista Vasca*) meant an initial estrangement, although vague, from the traditional race-based Aranist doctrine. Emphasizing the social questions in Basque society, especially the issue of immigration and intra-Basque unitarianism by refusing the rigid anti-*maketismo*, the ANV introduced a timid but entirely new perspective towards Basque nationalism (De la Granja 2008: 50-51). The ANV's emergence may well be interpreted as the early seeds of the Basque leftist (*abertzale*) political movement, which was the first –somehow insignificant, dissociation from the core race-based principle of the Aranist doctrine. The party's leading figure Luis Urrengoetxea's inclusive approach on this matter illustrates the early signs of this political shift:

“That hatred towards the *maketo* is over. [...] There are foreigners in the country who love the Basque homeland more than many Basques of race. [...] They are more Basques by the condition than Basques by blood” (Urrengoetxea quoted from De la Granja 2008: 32)

The ANV's political program, based on the idea of Basque autonomy and secular principles, also meant a refusal of the extreme religiosity of Aranist nationalism. Urrengoetxea's open criticism towards ‘the making of a confessional party out of Basque nationalism’ that he described as a ‘fatal error’ (Robles Muñoz 2013: 290-291) constituted a significant reference to ANV's separation between religion and politics; a growing tendency among young generation Basque leftists. This new Basque nationalism also significantly differed from the traditional PNV line with its approach and attitude towards social questions by adopting a comparatively much more progressive program, especially when it came to labor-related questions.<sup>34</sup> This progress, however, was interrupted by the Spanish Civil War that put an end to the national development in the Basque Country.

---

<sup>33</sup> Sensibility on class struggle that Sabino Arana had rejected was new among traditional Basque nationalists. As a result of this lack of local tradition in labor activities in the maturing mining industry, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE – *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) easily penetrated into local labor organizations in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the hinterland of Bizkaia and some parts of Gipuzkoa, (Miralles 1992: 240). The influence of Elias Gallastegui's PNV-Aberri on the future generations of traditional Basque nationalism led the way towards the formation of the *Jagi-Jagi* group that founded the union of Solidarity of the Basque Laborers (SOV - *Solidaridad de Obreros Vascos*) in 1911, which later transformed into the STV (*Solidaridad de Trabajadores Vascos* - Solidarity of the Basque Workers). Gallastegui's writings and thoughts also became popular among the first generation of EKIN/ETA members (Zirakzadeh 1991: 135; Totoricagüena 2004: 45).

<sup>34</sup> Referring to the post-war period, prominent *abertzale* left historiographer Ortzi also mentions the ANV-affiliated Basque *Maki* militants, who were fighting against the Franco regime from the other side of the *Muga* (Spanish-French border) in

### 2.1.3. Basque nationalism(s) during and after the Spanish Civil War

Destruction of the Spanish Civil War in the Basque Country was not different from any other parts of Spain. What makes it unique, however, is the way that the following generations have later constructed these tragedies as collective traumas in the Basque national historiography. This task corresponded to those historiographers whom themselves socialized under the post-war regime and experienced measures of physical and symbolic coercion implemented far more remarkably in two provinces where the strength of Basque nationalism was notable, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. The sociodrama of such incidents as the bombardment of Gernika and the treason by Franco-allied Italian brigades in Santoña, the subsequent exile of Basque nationalism, and the emergence of new Basque resistance in these narrations (Beltza 1974; Ortzí 1975) has also been reproduced by later-generation Basque historiographers (Bruni 1987; Casanova 2007; Egaña 2009; Zabalza 2015).

#### a. *The legitimacy and social realm of Basque nationalism before the Spanish Civil War*

Right before the eruption of the Spanish Civil War, Basque nationalism had created specific mechanisms to diffuse its doctrine on popular masses. The organizational expansion of the nationalist circles took place through *Euzko Gaztedia* (Basque Youth Association), *Eusko Ikasle Batza* (Student Association), *Emakume Abertzale Batza* (Organisation of Women), the *mendigoizales* (Group of Mountaineers), and many other cultural associations around *batzokis* (Basque nationalist cultural centers) (Drona 2013: 105). Thanks to the changing conjuncture in terms of social polarization with growing labor movements and political instability in the aftermath of the short-lived dictatorship imposed by Miguel Primo de Rivera (Pastor 2012: 94), the Basque nationalists found suitable grounds to negotiate a political system with the Republican administration.

The progress made on the Basque cultural and symbolic universe by new generations following the nationalist heritage of Aranist doctrine was also notable. The successors of Sabino Arana continued to reproduce myths based on Basque ethnic characteristics in their works and political discourses. Elizalde's famous book *Raza, Lengua y Nación Vasca* (Race, language, and the Basque nation) (1911) constitutes a significant example in which the racial superiority of Basques is emphasized (Gurrutxaga 1985: 111). This tendency is also observed among other Basque nationalist idealists of the period, such as Aranzadi and Evangelista de Ibero, who also fervently defended the idea of the originality of the Basque race and the right to self-government. A significant dissociation from Aranist components would only be possible with the emergence of a new political movement in the post-war period.

---

Navarre, labeling them as the 'seeds of *abertzalism*' (1975: 262). For a comprehensive work that objectifies this interpretation by *abertzale* left, see Renobales, E. (2000) *ANV, el otro nacionalismo: Historia de Acción Nacionalista Vasca, Euzko Abertzale Ekintza*, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.

b. *The political realm of the Basque nationalism before the Spanish Civil War*

On the eve of the Civil War, the issue of peripheral nationalisms, more concretely Basque and Catalan cases (Linz 1973), occupied the agenda of successive Second Republic governments in Spain, which sought conciliation between new liberal secular Spanish nationalism and the ethnonational ambitions with a considerable degree of political success and social legitimacy in peripheral territories. The debate between Republican politicians and Spanish elites, such as Manuel Azaña, Ortega y Gasset, and Unamuno, seemed to have cast a shadow on the Constitution of 1931. Implicit references to possible municipal and regional autonomy (art. 1/3) paled in comparison with the explicit accent on the 'irreducible limits' of the Spanish territory (art. 8) (Pastor 2012: 95-96).<sup>35</sup>

Basque nationalism until the Civil War was divided into a dual ontology: class and race. The political competition based on the dual ontology of class and race among Basque nationalists up until the Civil War created four types of identity definitions. 1) *traditional peasants*, whose ideological proximity to Carlism pushed them towards PNV affiliation; 2) *socialists*, who were strong mostly among Spanish immigrants in industrialized urban centers; 3) *Basque ethnonationalists (Euskaldunes)* and 4) *liberals* (Azurmendi 1998: 51-52). This division played a determining role during the Civil War, with each faction supporting one of the sides in the conflict. As some scholars stress (Lecours 2007; González Portilla 1988; Garmendia 1995), despite their hardline Catholic stance and, therefore, opposition to secular republican policies, the Basque nationalists supported the Popular Front (*Frente Popular*), prioritizing their ultimate 'national objective', the procurement of the Basque Autonomous Statute by the Republican government.

In electoral terms, as previously noted, the period corresponded to the gradual but significant increase of the PNV in Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, obtaining electoral support from traditionalist rural villagers who began to gain increasing independence from small-scale Carlist landlords by getting integrated into industrial professions in nearby urban areas (Díez Medrano 1999: 106). Unlike the rest of Spain, and despite the highly industrialized character of the two pioneering regions, the Republican socialists were in a relatively weaker position in the Basque Country, behind the Basque nationalists and Spanish conservatives. Their potential voters were concentrated only among Spanish immigrant workers in Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, whereas the panorama was even more pessimistic in Araba and Navarre (de la Granja 2008: 227-229).

---

<sup>35</sup> For such other intellectuals as E. Giménez Caballero, R. Ledesma Ramos and O. Redondo Ortega, defending rather conservative perspectives regarding the subject of Spain's national integrity, please see Payne, Stanley (1999) *Fascism in Spain, 1923 - 1977*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 51-65.

In this atmosphere, the long-awaited Basque autonomy statute was negotiated with the participation of various political and social actors (Corcuera 2009: 211-214). Among the problematic issues were the legitimacy of the referendum held in Araba, where 42% of the region's voters were absent, and the question of inclusion of Navarre (Villa García 2007: 48), which remained a sensitive topic in Basque politics up until today. The final draft, including only three regions (Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, and Araba), was approved in October 1936, three months after the Civil War had erupted; the Basque Government and its mythical first *Lehendakari* (Basque President) José Antonio Aguirre supported the Republicans against Franco's *alzamiento* (uprising). This positioning resulted in severe political and social consequences in the ruling of the Francoist regime in the Basque Country.

## **2.2. The post-Civil War generation and the re-formulation of Basque nationalism**

Since the end of the Spanish Civil War, the identity question in the Basque Country has begun to transform towards a new direction; it has been defined by the political environment to which the different generations were exposed rather than ethnic descent (Linz 1985: 229). To better understand this development from a generational perspective, Pérez-Agote gives some insight by classifying this long process. The first period begins from the end of the Civil War and continues until the late-1950s, which the scholar labels as 'society in silence'. The second period is about the continuing 'social silence and responsive violence as a language', referring to the period beginning with the emergence of EKI/ETA in the late-1950s until the early 1970s. Finally, the third period is the 'breaking-up of the silence' during which the public sphere recovered its character as a political space (1984: 110-117). The key moment of this last period begins with the Burgos Trial (*Proceso de Burgos*) in 1970 and continues until the death of General Franco in 1975 that starts the 'Spanish transition' to liberal democracy.

### **2.2.1. The post-Civil War period and Basque generational silence**

#### *a. Problematic legitimacy of the Franco regime in the Basque Country*

The uprising led by Franco and the consequent Civil War had been popularized as a crusade against those who supported the Republican regime considered a threat to the values of the Christian civilization. The legitimizing discourse based on this religious instrument against all forms of opposition, however, was problematic in the Basque Country. With the approval of the Basque Statute, the Aguirre government had promoted the Basque language and managed to prevent religious persecutions among social sectors sharing different ideologies. Franco's crusade against whatever considered communism and atheism faced a serious challenge (Fusi 1987: 46).

Spain's Francoist post-war centralism saw a 'unity of destiny' consisted of politico-religious elements elaborated through mythology, education, mass media, and, above all, the freehearted

contribution of the Catholic Church. The selection of the Church as an instrument of political legitimation, however, faced a critical problem in the Basque Country, where the lower stratum of the ecclesiastical hierarchy was on the defeated side (Pérez-Agote 1987: 148). The Basque nationalist clergy did not see the uprising as a 'crusade' and positioned in collaboration with the Republican army against Franco. In Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, where the Basque clergy had acquired a more nationalist position, gradually leaving aside its Carlist tendencies (Aizpuru & Unanue 1991: 287-304), they became the first victims of the Francoist regime (Beltza 1974: 321).

The role of religion as a legitimation mechanisms points to the previously-noted distinction between the *official church* (high-ranking ecclesiastical hierarchy), promoting and transmitting the political discourse of the new regime, and the *popular church* (low-ranking clergy), dedicated to Basque nationalism (Mata 1993: 147; Pérez-Agote 2008: 150-151). The role that the new regime assigned the official church was to establish a narrative of the glorious victory of Spanish patriots against the inner enemies of the nation. The stigmatization of the *rojo* (Red, communist), in this sense, included almost all sectors considered a potential threat to the values of national-Catholicism: socialists, anarchists, and communists, all of which were frequently related to Marxism/atheism (Arriaga 1997: 49-50). Church began to play a prominent role, especially in Spain's post-war education system, as the primary mechanism of the *crusade* against *rojo* separatism.

The *popular church*, on the other hand, opted for an opposite position, which played a determining role in the initial organizational process of the new Basque nationalist entelechy. Finding themselves in the axis of two struggles, the Basque national liberation and class conflict, both explicitly characterized as enemies of Franco's National-Catholicism, the local church offered one of few available spaces where the Basque neo-nationalism found grounds to settle.

#### *b. The post-Civil War trauma and generational silence in the Basque Country*

The generational experience of violence in the Basque Country requires a broader perspective, going beyond the Civil War. As previously explained by referring to the Carlist Wars, the phenomenon of violence had already converted into a routine of everyday life in the region since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Caro Baroja 1974: 69). Basing on the chronological order of armed confrontations among actors from distinct social backgrounds, one observes that political violence in the Basque Country follows a continuous line, involving several consecutive generations.

With its strong symbolism in the Basque historiography, the Spanish Civil War, however, represents a before and after (Zulaika 1988: 16). Narratives based on emotional accumulation such as the Gernika bombardments and shootings of Basque *gudaris* (soldiers) turn the sufferings of the defeated into an image of exclusive cruelty against the Basque people (Aguilar 2002: 203). The war is

attributed to the primary responsibility for the loss of national achievements, destruction, occupation, and repression by the 'enemy'. Arana's description of Euskadi as the 'occupied homeland of Basques' finally became apparent with the military presence of the Francoist regime in the social realm (Jáuregui 1981: 423). The perception of violence and the idea of resistance against the enemy, in that sense, were completely coherent with the narrative of the centuries-long national struggle. Mark Legasse, a historical figure from the first generation of the *abertzale* left movement, makes the following statement in a text titled 'Basque People and Armed Struggle' published in *Enbata* on 11 May 1989:

"Being firm believers and with arms in our hands, we have left the centuries behind, full of turmoil and rebellions from the Ebro to Adour and from Bayonne to Bilbao. And here we are, fifty years ago, in an uninterrupted series of armed uprisings: the First Carlist War, with Tomás Zumalakarregi; the second, with the priest Santa Cruz; then afterward, the *gudaris* of Agirre; and finally the guerrilla of ETA, which goes on and on, and does not end... Because it is this way. One out of every two Basques has not known their country different from the state of war." (quoted from Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 8: 46)

The Francoist regime had to replace religion as a mechanism of legitimation with the use of coercion. This situation created a social reality based on a clearly defined dichotomy: the *vencedores* (the victors) who imposed their symbols in the public sphere by force and the *vencidos* (the defeated) who were unable to express their symbols due to regime repression (Tejerina 1992: 113). Practices of physical and symbolic violence created an environment of fear for any form of folkloric, linguistic, or symbolic elements in those 'traitor provinces', Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, which consequently provoked a state of absolute 'social silence'<sup>36</sup> (Gurrutxaga 1996: 98-100). The official policy of the Francoist regime concerning the Basque question was therefore based on the denial of the identity, inattentiveness towards the collective needs of the population, the elimination of cultural peculiarities, and, finally, physical repression against any resistance (Jáuregui 1981: 206).

Pérez-Agote describes the monopoly of state violence until the late 1950s in the Basque Country by, 1) physical violence referring to forms of indiscriminate physical repression exercised by the state's security forces, and 2) symbolic violence related to restrictions and prohibitions imposed by the regime on language, culture, and forms of political symbolization (2008: 140). The generational impact of the Francoist regime among the Basque nationalist cohort is best depicted by José Luís Álvarez Enparantza (alias *Txillardegi*), a founding member of EKIN/ETA and one of the leading intellectuals in the field of contemporary Basque philology and literature, in the preface of his book on cultural and political developments in the Basque Country:

---

<sup>36</sup> The concept of 'social silence' in the Basque context is introduced and popularized by Pérez-Agote's early studies (1984, 1987) and repeatedly used by many other scholars (Gurrutxaga 1984, 1996; Tejerina 1992; Sánchez Erasquin 1993; Arriaga 1997; Aguilar 2002), who refer to the lack of any expression of Basque nationalist symbols (such as the language, flag, folklore or any other cultural elements or events) in the public sphere and unwillingness of those generations who had been subjected to the state repression to speak about their traumatic experiences.

“In 1936, those from my generation were seven, ten, or fifteen years old. To put it another way, we were born, and we were born in the Basque world, therefore, in the middle of a war and oppression. Because when we could begin to make sense of things, everywhere in our streets, we came across militiamen, red-hat Moors, and Nazis wearing combat boots. As the years passed by and Franco died in 1975, we were 45, 50, 60 years old. Then our entire life had flown by. Those from my generation were born and grew up in that historic environment. And this, undoubtedly, shaped and conditioned us forever.” (Álvarez Enparantza 1997: 7)

Under such conditions, regime violence itself seems to have become a social mechanism determining the grade of *Basqueness*; the more individuals were subjected to state repression, the more affiliation to the Basque identity they felt. The following example cited from one of the discussion groups (G-I, PNV affiliates) that Pérez-Agote conducted in the mid-1970s corresponds to the generation that experienced the Civil War and socialized under the Franco regime:

“The repression is very important. During Franco’s times, it reached extreme dimensions. Many people became Basque when they experienced repression. Yes, the repression has been very important. Many of us have had children, relatives, or children of friends in jail, police stations, etc. Many times, it seemed that if they repressed us, we were Basques, and if not, we were not.” (Discussion group G-I in Pérez-Agote 1987: 78)

Regime violence, in this sense, came up with the principal element of daily life, politicizing the Basque youth who began to question the ongoing repressive climate (Reinares 2001: 87-88). The silence adopted by those generations who experienced the Civil War and the new order imposed during the post-war period also played a determining role in the socialization processes of the following generation. Indiscriminate regime repression against any expression considered deviant from the official truth and severe punishment by the authorities as a consequence pushed many young Basques with no clearly defined ideological stance towards different forms of militancy (Zumalde 2004: 66-68).

In the absence of PNV, then leading the Basque Government in exile with limited political influence and a lack of mechanisms to resist the state’s monopoly of symbolic and physical violence, the new generation of Basques came up with a new form of resistance. This mobilization initially emerged in the cultural field and, within a short period, evolved into a politico-military movement which played a significant role in the following decades of Basque and Spanish politics.

### **2.2.2. The generational rupture within the Basque nationalist universe**

Under the Francoist rule, the new socio-political context provoked a reaction by the generation born and socialized under the conditions of dictatorship. This roughly two-decade period, as in the case of the emergence of traditional Basque nationalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, once again witnessed significant social changes whose character and consequences primarily affected the emergence and development of other political developments. The emergence of *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA - Basque Homeland and Freedom) in the late 1950s was not only the reappearance of Basque nationalism in the



public sphere, something exclusively confined to the private realm for two decades but also the beginning of an ideological break-up from the formerly established Basque nationalist code.<sup>37</sup>

a. *The birth of EKIN/ETA and the initial period of Basque neo-nationalism*

Having emerged out of the PNV's youth organization *Euzko Gaztedia* (EGI), EKIN was born as a cultural movement, with a specific concern on the linguistic question under the strict conditions of dictatorship. The movement symbolized an intra-nationalist secession based on a clear sense of frustration among young generation intellectuals in disagreement with their parent's silence and immobility in the face of the imposed 'official truth' (Arriaga 1997: 36-38). Discontent with the PNV's inefficient diplomacy and limited activism in exile (Unzueta 1988: 95) and disappointment with Western powers' permissive stance towards the Franco regime (Zirakzadeh 1991: 147) motivated the new generation to advance in ideological and practical terms. ETA summarizes this frustration and passive position of the older generations in the form of social silence in an official document published in 1970 for the first anniversary of the loss of one of its early ideologists, Txabi Etxebarrieta:

"For decades, there was nothing except silence. We belong to a generation born in parentheses, and only now we have begun to wake up and understand. [...] ...it all was about breaking the vicious circle: nothing is done because there are no conditions, and there are no conditions because nothing is done so that the conditions come to light and the people become aware of their revolutionary oppressed condition. It was about, in a word, waking the people up. In a situation in which everything was to be done (organization and agitation, propaganda and consciousness-raising, theory, and practice), we have chosen the action and bet on the people." (Document released by ETA on 7 June 1970 cited from *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 1993, Vol. 3: 32-33)

Reformist demands on a more active positioning of the PNV against state repression faced firm disagreement by the party members, which concluded in the expulsion of Benito del Valle, a leading figure of the EKIN group. Similar actions by older generation nationalists who controlled the party's discipline mechanism also accelerated the new impulse of young nationalists backed by the party's youth (Jáuregui 1981: 75-80). The recruits of *Euzko Gaztedia*, who gathered in restricted social environments available (folkloric groups, scouts, and intellectual circles), showed evident proximity towards the EKIN group (San Sebastián: 1984: 89). In the absence of the PNV's executive, the newly emerged generation entelechy under EKIN/ETA offered an immature but decisive alternative, becoming the only active anti-Francoist Basque nationalist group in the Basque Country:

"At that time, you did not have many things where you could integrate. There was very little. The PNV was practically unseen. That is to say, the only nationalist force with military possibilities and possibilities of doing things in those years was ETA. The PNV existed, but it did not really attract us, the younger generations [...] In

---

<sup>37</sup> Scholars in Basque and Spanish academia remain divided over whether the ethno-nationalist wave that emerged in the late 1950s can be considered a rupture from the PNV. Some claim that the new leftist *abertzale* Basque movement led by ETA is similar to the PNV's racist nationalism based on the exclusion and hatred of Spain and anything Spanish (Juaristi 1984, 1997; Azurmendi 1998; Llera 2003; Elorza 2005; Reinales 2001, Casquete 2009, Fernández Soldevilla 2016). Other *abertzale* left-affiliated scholars (Ortzi 1979; Beltza 1974, 1977; Apalategi 1979; Ibarra 1987), however, claim that the patterns, ideology and practices carried out by *abertzale* left circles indicate a clear rupture from traditional race-based components.

those years, young people needed something more. We needed somewhere where we could express our feelings and carry them out.” (Interview N° 26 quoted from Reinares 2001: 175)

Notwithstanding, the PNV had an overwhelmingly solid reputation due to its mythical role; it was the founding organization of Basque nationalism that accomplished the Basque political autonomy under the conditions of the Civil War and enjoyed an absolute ideological and emotional monopoly over the Basque nationalist movement (Alcedo 1996: 57). The Basque scholar Beltza, whose militancy in ETA coincided with this period, makes the following statement with this regard:

“In a situation of ambiguity concerning the ‘old’, *Ekin* was unified with the *Euzko Gaztedia*, the youth organization of the PNV, creating *Euzko Gaztedi* that year. On the one hand, there was an expressed desire to break with the type of action taken by the PNV or, instead, its lack of action; while on the other, those of *Ekin* did not want to break with that old nationalism that was still full of prestige from the War and the 1940s.” (Beltza 1977: 94)

Despite the shared political ambitions between the PNV and EKIN/ETA concerning the future of the Basque people, the approach adopted by new generations for the social project provided the first signs of cleavages. Resembling the ANV’s approach to the identity question of Spanish immigrants, the perspective adopted by EKIN/ETA, at least theoretically, was more inclusive and tolerant. This approach was articulated with linguistic and cultural concerns, given the multi-ethnic character of Basque society in this period (Sullivan 2015[1988]: 38). The generational rupture with the PNV was considered an obligation, as underlined by Txillardegui later on:

“The same way that Sabino Arana ceased with the Carlist Party, or Lenin with the II International, we considered that we also had to do the same with the Basque Nationalist Party, of which we could not be part.” (Txillardegui cited from *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna*, Vol.1: 19)

Ideological cleavages between the dominant actor of Basque nationalism and the new generation Basque nationalists widened over time and, in the absence of the former’s active political involvement and with the developing strategy of the latter, Basque neo-nationalism led by ETA soon became the primary challenger to both the PNV *jeltzalismo* as well as the Francoist regime.

*b. Theorization of the revolutionary war and the use of violence by the new generation entelechy*

Ambiguity concerning political violence among the first generation of ETA members was between those who opted for the Gandhian style non-violent resistance and those anti-colonialists who favored the calculated use of defensive violence against the ‘occupying enemy’ (Zirakzadeh 1991: 152).<sup>38</sup> The initial priority, in any case, was not necessarily given to high-impact military actions but rather creating a reaction to what was considered Basque cultural extermination under the Francoist rule.

---

<sup>38</sup> The debate on whether to use violent means appears in ETA’s official publication *Zutik* n° 7 and 8 dated 1962. While those who were under the Gandhian influence defended non-violent struggle by showing clear sensibility towards the common values of Christianity, others led by Madariaga were defending and justifying the use of coercive actions with the following affirmation: “Let us be clear: we are not the ones who provoke violence. While we are an anvil, we will endure; but as soon as we become the hammer, we will hit.” (ETA 1979, Vol.2: 295, 301)

Although ETA openly declared the adoption of physical resistance in its famous *Libro Blanco* (White Book) published in the organization's official monthly *Zutik* Nº 6, April 1961 (ETA 1979, Vol.1), the concept of 'political violence' in ETA's repertoire until 1964 was based on merely symbolic actions. Scholars who have studied the political strategy of ETA's initial period also affirm that even the early high-risk actions were a response to the symbolic imposition of the Spanish nationalism in the Basque Country (Jaúregui 1981: 87; Ibarra 1987: 57), as the founding members emphasize:

"Burning of a [Spanish] flag in an official building, in broad daylight in San Sebastian where the summer holiday gathered the most distinguished figures of the Regime and the fascist system was then considered a matured and calculated operation with a certain risk." (Jon Nicolás in ETA 1979)

"We were making graffiti with the motto '*Gora Euskadi Askatuta*' [Long-live free Basque Country] or '*Gora ETA*' [Long-live ETA] or simply 'ETA'. Another important action was to make an *ikurriña* and place it on walls or windows. We were making them here in *Iparalde* [Northern Basque Country, France], and after bringing them across the border, we were hanging them. [...] We were also carrying out some more risky actions. We placed a big *ikurriña* on power cables on the river Nervión." (Julen Madariaga in *Punto y Hora*, 13 July 1984)

The state's response against those mentioned above, however, was in the form of excessive physical coercion that served the reproduction of Basque neo-nationalism in two ways. First, such a reaction by the state's security forces against symbolic actions taken by ETA showed Basque society the seriousness of the national question. Secondly, the qualitative character of this coercive reaction, mostly indiscriminate against the entire population, provoked the initial steps of politicization through the use of political violence. The early-period militant José Luis Zalbide expresses his observations with this respect in his famous analysis titled '*Hacia una estrategia revolucionaria vasca*' (Towards a Basque revolutionary strategy), written under the pseudonym of K. de Zunbeltz:

"The insistence on filling walls with the acronym ETA is significant in that first period until 1964. Certainly, acronyms mean nothing when they are not associated with something that is in itself important. In those early years, few people knew that the acronym of ETA corresponded to an underground political organization. Even though people, in general, would not have noticed such type of activism, repressive forces took charge of filling those signs with their first content. When a certain sign appeared on a wall, there was a spectacular mobilization of the Civil Guard and Police forces to cover it, first, and then to find the author; there was no doubt that the sign had some significance. In case that the significance of that sign was difficult to understand, the same repression also took place to explain it to whoever wanted to understand. Leaflets and flags had the same effects as the mural signs; it was the immediate repression that confirmed the popular content of resistance in those murals, leaflets, and flags." (Zunbeltz 1975[1968]: 123-124)

ETA's first politico-military strategy, in strictly theoretical terms rather than any notable signs of physical harassment (Ibarra 1987: 63-65), began to develop with the adoption of the concept of 'revolutionary war', promoted in one of ETA's first ideologue Federico Krutwig's book titled *Vasconia* written under the pseudonym of Fernando Sarrailh de Ihartza in 1962. Apart from occupying a central place in the early history of ETA<sup>39</sup>, the book made explicit references to the national resistance and

---

<sup>39</sup> *Vasconia* is frequently labeled as the 'Bible of ETA', an argument which is both affirmed (M. Azurmendi 1998: 53) and denied by some early-generation ETA militants like José Félix Azurmendi, who wrote the preface of the edition of the book consulted in this study (see Sarrailh de Ihartza 2006[1962]: 7-11). While the question of Krutwig's influence during the initial

decolonization processes in Algeria, Tunisia, Cyprus, as well as the Cuban revolution (Ortzi 1975: 300-301, 309). In a socio-political context in which the relation between the regime and Basque people was based on violence (see Interview N<sup>o</sup> 14 in Reinares 2001: 89), the idea of armed struggle as a result of the cohort effect was embraced by the young generation Basques with relative ease. Early period ETA militant Xabier Zumalde (alias *El Cabra*) narrates his personal experience with this respect:

“Despite the systematic repression of the dictatorship, student movements and youth, in general, launched an unstoppable march towards freedom, influenced by liberal and anti-imperialist currents fighting in Algeria, Vietnam, Cuba, etc. The mythical figure of Ernesto Che Guevara was infecting the young rebels with revolutionary ardor. [...] I felt trapped by that revolutionary current. The strong disappointment suffered in the labor struggle, and Catholic movements had created in me a frustration caused by impotence. Besides, we could do nothing with non-existent or ‘castrated’ underground unions. Eventually, I decided to take up arms.” (Zumalde 2004: 69).

ETA gradually took a firmer stance towards the leftist revolutionary struggle as a result of its 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Assemblies with the introduction of key concepts from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Gramsci, forging the national question with a social one.<sup>40</sup> Introducing his new text titled ‘*Nacionalismo revolucionario*’ (Revolutionary nationalism, 1966), Krutwig distinguished between bourgeoisie nationalism and the revolutionary one defended by ETA. According to the latter, leading figures of the Basque middle-class bourgeoisie were the members of the Spanish bourgeoisie and, therefore, servants of a Spanish project regardless of their surnames or place of birth (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 2: 84).

The adoption of armed struggle as the primary strategy for the national liberation began to have reflections through early *ekintzas* (armed actions) carried out by the following generation militants who went through almost the same political socialization as the founding generation intellectuals under the conditions of dictatorship. Jokin Gorostidi, a member of ETA’s Executive Board after the 5<sup>th</sup> Assembly, affirms that the use of political violence was in a transitory phase from symbolic actions to the use of physical coercion in the late 1960s, as he details the following on the matter:

“The procedures were rudimentary, particularly when we acted against fascist monuments and plaques dedicated to the dead on Franco’s side located in all the towns of Euskadi. [...] I also remember that there were *ekintzas* against informants, some of whom are in the PNV today, like burning their cars, etc.” (Jokin Gorostidi in *Punto y Hora de Euskal Herria*, 13 July 1984)

The tendency towards a more systematic use of political violence grew stronger after the nomination of Xavier Zumalde as the head of ETA’s military branch. Zumalde opted for the establishment of a mountain guerrilla (*Las Cabras*) in the Basque Country and officially adopted the spiral of ‘Action-Repression-Action’ as the new military strategy of the organization (Ortzi 1975: 311). Zunbeltz explains the logic behind this strategy and the objective sought through its implementation:

---

phase of theoretical strategic development of ETA is debatable, Vasconia constitutes one of the earliest examples of Basque leftist *abertzale* historiography whose main pillars remain up until today.

<sup>40</sup> For more detailed information on internal debates during the initial assemblies of ETA, see Madariaga, Julen “Las cinco primeras Asambleas” in *Punto y Hora de Euskal Herria*, 18-24 August 1977.

“Repression and revolutionary activity grow together and condition each other. Under certain conditions such as those seen immediately after the war of ’36, repression produced mostly terror among the masses. As of certain new conditions, the measures of repression engender greater revolutionary actions; and as the revolutionary actions are in turn answered with even more spectacular measures of repression, a process is produced in the form of a spiral where revolutionary activity and repression are pushed to higher levels each time. In this process, action-repression-action, the main adversely affected is the oppressor state, that is, the ruling class behind it. In effect, the means available to a state to repress the masses, although big, are limited. When the state represses the action of the people employing batons and water hoses, it may well boast of keeping its battle tanks in reserve; but when the state takes the tanks to the streets, it has nothing more to oppose to the revolutionary action of the people.” (Zunbeltz 1975[1968]: 82)

While the spiral of action-repression-action did not seek large-scale physical damage by weakening the ‘invading enemy’, it brought the rise of political consciousness of ordinary Basques, a vast majority of whom had been suppressed by the social silence. As the highest-ranking military commander of ETA after the 4<sup>th</sup> Assembly, Zumalde emphasizes this crucial function of action-repression-action:

“I believed in it [*the armed struggle*], and I thought that the best thing about our youth was that they were ready to fight for that cause. Soon I realized that idealists, dreamers, and guerrillas [*like us*], we were alone. The people, our people, were lethargic, and only when we practiced the revolutionary war, through the strategy of action-repression-action, did we managed to awaken them.” (Zumalde 2004: 19)

In this generation, ETA began to obtain its first firearms contributing to the escalation of violence. Txabi Extebarrieta, who carried out the organization’s first fatal action, also became the ‘first revolutionary martyr’ of ETA (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.2: 101, 109). ETA’s first planned *ekintza*, the Sagarra Operation, in which the organization executed police inspector Melitón Manzanás in August 1968, was the vengeance of Txabi (*Gudari* Nº 48, 13 October 1968) and ETA officially announced that the execution of Manzanás was carried out in the name of the Basque People (ETA 1979, Vol. 7: 532-533). From this moment, the action-repression-action spiral extended to the entire Basque Country, provoking more detentions and trials, eventually turning social silence into a mass mobilization in the late years of the Franco regime.

### *c. Social conditions during the emergence period of Basque neo-nationalism*

Socio-economic developments observed in Franco’s Spain since the early 1950s contributed to the conflict on identity in Basque society. From this decade onwards, the Spanish economy began an integration process into the European economic system, showing a high-rate economic growth, around 7% between 1961 and 1974. This development, once again, gave way to more immigration to the industrialized regions of the country, mainly the Basque provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, in a period of increasing labor movements and strikes (Cruz 1977: 61, 130). Consequent structural transformations also played a determining role in shaping the main characteristics of Basque neo-nationalism.

The rapid socio-economic transformations and their social consequences appear as the primary causes of radicalization in the Basque Country in this period. The massive migration flow from other parts of Spain towards the local labor zones in these regions created new conflictive identity

encounters (Gurrutxaga 1985: 435; Hobsbawm 1992: 140-141). What made these encounters more visible had to do with transformations in the traditional mode of production in rural areas. The crisis in the traditional *baserri* production system fell far behind the new technologies and, as a consequence, brought rural sectors to work in the newly-developing industries, gradually eliminating the rural mode of production and its socio-cultural characteristics (Etxezarreta 1977: 173). This transformation significantly affected domestic migration by pushing the young Basque population from rural surroundings towards industrial towns and cities where the core elements of their native Basque symbolic universe came to collide with the new urban demographic reality.

Table 3: Net immigration flows to the Basque Country between 1920 - 1981

<i>Net immigration flows (expressed in thousands)</i>	
<b>Years</b>	<b>Basque Country</b>
<b>1921 - 1930</b>	31.1
<b>1931 - 1940</b>	12.2
<b>1941 - 1950</b>	25.6
<b>1951 - 1960</b>	174.0
<b>1961 - 1970</b>	159.6
<b>1971 - 1981</b>	21.0

Source: Elaborated from Díez Medrano 1999: 149

These developments made the disadvantaged position of Basque national symbols even more visible in the public sphere, provoking an immense sense of discontent, anxiety, and, finally, a reaction by the new generation who found themselves fearing their cultural extermination. Initially, this reproduced a hostile attitude towards Spaniard *maketos*, who had long been depicted as a severe threat violating the essential distinctive ethnic characteristics of Basques:

“Especially at the beginning, when we were in EGI, we were pretty racist. We were racist because they inculcated us racism in some way. Then yes, we felt uncomfortable with these people because, sure, on the one hand, these were the very same people that you saw that they were coming here and stepping on what we thought were our things, right? Our land, our language, and such, right?” (Interview N°9 quoted from Reinares 2001: 164)

In a social environment where class struggle became visible, ethnic identity encounters among working-class people made relations even more conflictive. This conflictive environment also brought about a challenge for Basque nationalists who sought to funnel their energy for the national struggle. As such, the younger generation entelexy began to consider the relationship between class and nation (Linz 1985: 232-233). Unlike the PNV’s exclusionist approach towards Spanish immigrants, the Basque neo-nationalists gradually adopted a different policy towards people of non-Basque origin. The repression and resistance during labor strikes had significant impacts on ETA developing the question of how to handle the working-class issue, which eventually embraced an inclusive approach towards

non-Basque workers (Jaúregui, 1981: 170; Garmendia 1995, Vol. 1: 185). *B-F*, a historic founding-generation EKin/ETA member, explains their initial perspectives on national and social questions:

“In those early years, we had a clear national consciousness among us; the social conscience was just waking up. And among us, there were differences in terms of the knowledge on class struggle. Some of us, they were -or we were, sure, it depends on who with respect to whom, people like Txillardegi or like Barandiaran had already had concerns on this matter before others. Benito del Valle or Albisu, Larramendi, Aguirre, and I myself, we would realize later the new dimension of society, from the perspective of social struggles.” (B-F)

This new approach, along with the further integrationist attitude of Basque capitalist elites towards the Francoist central state and the Spanish market, also points to the progressive adoption of leftist ideas reflected in the organization’s political discourse (Pérez-Agote 1984: 82). The rising domestic and foreign demand for capital goods, provoked by both the Civil War and World War II, benefited the Basque heavy industry based on metallurgy production in the hands of the Basque bourgeoisie (González Portilla & Garmendia 1988: 46). The Basque racial pureness, a utopic dream of Arana, under the existing socio-political context, was gradually abandoned in this period. ETA explains the new attitude towards the definition of Basque identity in its first interview with *Enbata*, the monthly *abertzale* publication in the French Basque Country, through the following affirmation:

“ETA does not define the condition of being Basque according to birth criteria; being Basque is to live in the Basque, that is, defending the Basque culture and Basque people. Bearing this in mind, we see Basque capitalists who speak Basque and who, in 1936, positioned themselves along with the reactionary forces which took sides against the Basque people. Those are the same people who occupy executive positions in the Spanish State and practice genocide in southern *Euskadi*.” (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 2: 148-149)

The adoption of this new perspective towards the national question resulted from a social reality in which defining the *Basque* through racial elements fell short in achieving a realistic objective of national unity. Although it would take a longer time for ETA militancy to internalize this political perspective<sup>41</sup>, it continued to evolve throughout the following generations.

#### *d. Socialization mechanisms of the generational transmission of the Basque nationalism*

The social silence during the post-war period did not necessarily mean that the ‘Basque nationalist code’ was completely dissolved or disappeared but instead confined to limited space. These limits established specific relation forms of communal life: *us*, those who shared the code of the nationalist functioning, and *others* who followed the official regime doctrine. (Gurrutxaga 1985: 130). In a social context based on constant repression to which responses to this repression began to flourish, those relations also acquired a conflictive character consolidating the limits between *us* and *others*.

---

<sup>41</sup> There is hardly any reliable information on the general profile of first-generation EKin/ETA members except a rarely available booklet titled *Euskadi ala hil* (Euskadi or death), allegedly written by Zumalde and published in the French Basque town Saint-Jean de Luz in 1976. The first part of the booklet provides limited data on early losses, according to which the general profile of early ETA members appeared to be male and ethnically Basque (except for Juan Paredes Manot [alias *Txiki*]), and in terms of social class, they were mostly students and working-class people (Euskadi ala hil 1976: 9-48).

Being the smallest social group in which primary socialization begins, the Basque nationalist family has a significant influence on the transmission of the nationalist code through generations (Mata 1993: 237; Garmendia 1995, Vol.1: 48, 298). During the period of social silence, the Basque nationalist family, on the one hand, limited its functioning to a significantly reduced environment and, on the other, took a skeptical attitude in reproducing this code transgenerationally. The emergence and radicalization that new nationalist entelechy went through was not only a reaction to the Francoist politics based on repression up until the end of the 1950s but also to their respective families due to the silence and stagnation they adopted in response to repression (Pérez-Agote 2008: 116).

From this perspective, it may well be argued that the emergence of EKIN/ETA as an initially cultural resistance movement is a question of generational rupture rather than continuity. In the absence and passiveness of the founding institution of the Basque nationalism, the PNV, and with ambiguous attitudes by Basque nationalist families, the new generation entelechy concerned about the Basque *cultural extermination* embraced a more active form of resistance which, shortly after, evolved into armed struggle under the cohort effects of anticolonial movements. B-F, one of the fervent defenders of the Basque anticolonial struggle among the founders of EKIN/ETA against the Spanish and French states, makes the following statement with this respect:

“[Under the conditions of dictatorship, did your family talk much about what they had experienced?] In our house, yes. But, in general, the immense majority of families did not dare to do so. Once the Spanish troops entered and occupied all of Gipuzkoa, all of Navarre, all that we call *Hegoaldea*, [southern Basque Country], Basque families did not dare to speak about the matter. The Spaniards had scared them that much. [...] I think we can describe the struggle and the break-up we had with the PNV as an internal struggle within the Basque world. I’m going to put it like that, right? It was a rupture that we could call ‘generational’. They belonged to the generation of War, and we were the children of a different generation, different people. They had the political and social ideas of a generation older than ours. These people of the PNV were stunned, detained in a particular phase of national liberation, which was the Statute.” (B-F)

The analysis of the in-family transmission of the Basque symbolic universe illustrates the impacts of the post-war policies implemented in the Basque Country. The new political order converted the perception of the historical decline of the Basque symbolic elements into a sense of total loss, a concern for the extermination of anything related to the Basque. EKIN/ETA’s appearance as a cultural resistance movement coincided with this primary concern of the new generation. Being one of the leading members of ETA’s Branka group (*culturalistas*), who dedicated his entire life to the Basque philology, Txillardegi narrates his childhood memories within a Basque nationalist family environment right after the end of the war in the Basque Country:

“The Basque world –Basque songs, maps of *Euskal Herria*, Zabalo, the posters of Txiki, the *lauburus*, *mendigoizale* trousers, not to mention *ikurriñas*, disappeared from us. A few years later, when our parents went to San Sebastian, my brother and I were nosing around the drawers of our mother and... We found a thick and elegant book: ‘Look, look! Look at this precious book! What cover! What sheets!’ On that leather cover, we could read *El Libro de la Patria* (The Book of the Homeland). It appeared from underneath all the clothes. When it was dinner time, a big scolding came: ‘Who gave you permission to stir those drawers?’ We did not even know that book



ever existed. And it disappeared again during the following weeks and years. That subject was prohibited, even within our house. [...] Along with that wicked sense of prohibition, and also from a very young age, I internalized the painful and deep feeling of being the son of a people in decline. In addition to having our own country prohibited to us, from the beginning, we realized that it headed towards disappearance. [...] One did not need to be very smart to realize the situation. Looking around, as I have just said, we came across the same attitudes. My parents, for example, knew Basque, although they never spoke it. I heard my mother saying a couple of words from time to time and with a single purpose, leaving aside something that should not be said: '*Federico, umiak aurrian!*' [Federico, the children are in front!] And they changed the conversation. That is the functional limitation of our language. In the mornings, it was used with the milkman; every single day, this is true. And that is all. No more signs in conversations at home." (Álvarez Enparantza 1997: 10-11)

Previous-generation family members deliberately hid the Basque national symbolic references belonging to the 'history' to prevent their children from being the victims of the same 'sin' that their parents had committed (Lorenzo Espinosa 1993: 19). Only small things such as the *Gernika* painting by Picasso, Basque nationalist songs like *eusko gudariak* (Basque soldiers), or an *ikurriña* (flag) accidentally found hidden somewhere constituted the symbolic elements that the following generation Basques remembered. The silence dominating the public sphere also affected the private life of post-war generations, as described by an early generation ETA militant:

"My father had an *ikurriña*, a flag... He had it there upstairs. There were times when some of his friends would gather up there to talk. I guess they were talking about those issues, right? Well, at that time, my father belonged to the Basque Nationalist Party. [...] And they would send us to watch out, to see if anyone was coming up, if everything was alright. In short, you saw that there was something taking place at the time there that you were unable to understand. It was during those times, sure." (Interview Nº 28 quoted from Reinares 2001: 56)<sup>42</sup>

This 'intra-family silence' (Pérez-Agote 1984: 88-89) continued through the following generations. Although ETA had already taken initial steps of resistance against the imposed silence, the passive attitude of previous generations did not change significantly up until the early 1970s, more concretely until the *cause celebre* Burgos Trial. Analyzing memoirs written by leading abertzale left figures, one notes that social silence before the Burgos Trial continued in the public sphere where the symbolic imposition of Spanish nationalism was overwhelming. Being a leading figure of the Basque *abertzale* labor movement during the Franco period, Jon Idigoras narrates the impacts of unilateral silence:

"Those post-war years were hard: hunger, fear, persecutions and reprisals, rationing, and silence, great silence... [...] The fascists of the town campaigned at ease, and they were absolute owners of lives and fortunes. They were roaming around carrying pistols in a cocky and provocative way. They made us answer the shouting of '*Viva España!*' with another '*Viva!*' With disgust and pain, we had to raise our arms, making the fascist salute under threat, in case we did not do so, we would be denounced as 'separatist reds' and suffer harsh consequences of rebellion along with the family." (Idigoras 2000: 22)

---

<sup>42</sup> Other interviews quoted by Reinares (Nº 15 and 20), however, affirm that their parents made a particular effort to speak and make their children speak in Euskera (2001: 58). Focusing on the same subject, Arriaga similarly emphasizes that the transmission of language had a wide range of modalities, mostly manifested through two opposite reactions, ranging from not teaching the language to children as a result of fear from the regime (Interview 10) to a dramatization of love for the language and absolute imposition of the language in the private sphere (Interviews 10 and 11) (1997: 40-41). In a comprehensive ethnographic study with later period ETA militants, Alcedo explains these opposite attitudes of Basque nationalist families by distinguishing two types of 'messengers'; while *active messengers* tend to maintain the tradition by transferring it to the following generations; *passive messengers* tend to possess the tradition but make no effort to diffuse it (1996: 48). The scholar confirms that those who lived through the war were more likely to behave as passive messengers.

Such practices of the imposition of silence not only targeted the mechanisms of reproduction of the Basque nationalist code but also replaced or radically transformed them with new ones for the indoctrination of Spanishness among young generations. Pro-Catholic youth groups sponsored by the regime in various social initiatives are frequently mentioned by young ETA militants, whose socialization took place during Franco years. *El Cabra*, the second military commander of ETA and the head of the organization's short-lived guerrilla phase, describes his youth experience in his native Amorebieta by underlining this systematically implemented policy:

"I was around sixteen years old back in 1954 when they invited me to join the *Frente de Juventudes* [Youth Front], which was then called *Youth Falanges* of Franco. Since I did not have the slightest idea about politics and knew absolutely nothing about Franco and his dictatorship, I joined the *Falange*. Their place was at an apartment in Amorebieta confiscated from the PNV; that is to say, it was the old *batzoki*. It was common in all the towns and cities of the Basque Country." (Zumalde 2004: 34)<sup>43</sup>

The initial stages of political consciousness concerning national identity also seem to have been a product of these mechanisms in the secondary socialization process, beginning with indoctrination through schooling. As a result of the unwillingness of parents to inculcate the symbolic and ideological components of Basque national identity, generations attending Francoist schools normally interiorized the symbolic and ideological components of Spanish national identity portrayed through the official truth. José Miguel Beñaran (alias *Argala*), the mythical leader and ideologue of ETA-m<sup>44</sup> who led the organization until the late 1970s, depicts his childhood experience with this respect and the intra-family conflict he had with his PNV-affiliated father:

"A fundamental factor for a long time in my education would be the teachings received at school. I studied with admiration the feats of Spanish conquerors and the so-called crusades, considering the loss of the Spanish empire as the terrible result of a series of historical injustices done by other nations such as England or France. I considered José Antonio Primo de Rivera - founder of the *Falange* - a national hero, and the *rojos* enemies of the Franco regime as labeled in history books; [they] were a gang of atheists, rapists, and murderers. I never positively considered the Basque national question in my childhood, although I knew it from my father and his nightly auditions from a forbidden radio station whose emissions were half-drowned in a sea of noises and beeps that made them almost unintelligible. My father was a Basque patriot, a sympathizer of the PNV, and I was a Spanish patriot and supporter of Franco for peace, which, after years of 'revolts and the burning of convents', he had given us to 'all Spaniards'. [...] Also, the family on my father's side - which constituted my environment - were almost entirely Basque nationalists. I could frequently feel that strange atmosphere of private conversations at [their] homes, in which the names of Sabino Arana, founder of PNV, and José Antonio Aguirre, at that time president of the Basque Government in exile, were cited. But all this, which was imbued in my subconscious without realizing, was unable to fight against the school's education, or even consider problems to which I was at least a little sensitive due to my young age." (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 5: 290)<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> ETA's following-generation leader José Miguel Beñaran (alias *Argala*) also affirms his involvement in the *Legión de María*, another pro-Catholic movement aiding people in poverty and other social issues, in which he began to acquire a certain level of sensibility towards social questions (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993/Vol. 5: 291). Likewise, Idigoras affirms that organizations such as the Catholic Labour Youth (JOC – *Juventud Obrera Católica*) and the Brotherhood of Workers of Catholic Action (HOAC – *Hermandad de Obreros de Acción Católica*) actually formed the backbone of future labour organisations (2000: 79-80).

<sup>44</sup> ETA-m or *ETA-militarra* is one of two main branches of ETA after the separation of ETA-pm or *ETA-politiko-militarra* in 1974.

<sup>45</sup> For *Argala's* political autobiography, see the preface in Apalategi, J. (1979) *Los vascos: de la nación al estado: PNV, ETA, ENBATA*, San Sebastián-Donostia: Elkar.

Any sign of deviation from the institutional symbolic imposition frequently resulted in physical violence, leaving a traumatic imprint in the memory of those who experienced or witnessed it:

“One day, my friend had the ‘brilliant idea’ of making a ‘nefarious’ question to that fascist [*teacher*]:

- Master, what does the word *Euskadi* mean...

- *Euskadi* does not exist, nor will it ever exist!

Then he put him against the wall, right in the corner, and kicked him. [...] He kicked him in the corner of the classroom, full of desks and with the photographs of Franco and José Antonio...” (Zumalde 2004: 28)

The linguistic question was not only a space of competition and hegemony between the regime and Basques but also among the Basques themselves for the historical linguistic process of Euskera (Tejerina 1992). The long-existing disdain attributed to this language by immigrants as well as urban Basques got further consolidated under the total imposition of Spanish. The ‘stigma of the Basque’, in this sense, was most visible in the use of Euskera, which was subjected to prohibition, punishment, discredit, and humiliation (Arriaga 1997: 46-47). Euskera’s use and teaching converted into something traumatic, which helped interiorize the radical nationalist discourse (Mata 1993: 232; Reinares 2001: 66-67). Idigoras narrates his observations on this matter in encounters between *Euskaldunes* (Basque speakers) and *Erdaldunes* (non-Basque speakers) in the official school environment:

“The children at the school of Etxano, we were *Euskaldunes*. Some, those who from village hamlets surrounding Zornotza, we spoke both in Basque and Spanish; others, the majority, came from the remotest hamlets of Etxano, and they only knew and spoke Basque, which made it extremely difficult for them to articulate some words in *Erdara* [Spanish]. [...] These children, among whom I include myself, and so many thousands of others from other schools in *Euskal Herria*, we were also condemned to have to speak a language that we did not know and renounce speaking in our language. To achieve this, they employed different systems on us at the same time, the first of which was direct punishment against those who spoke Basque: putting us on our knees facing the wall and beating us with a wooden ruler. The other method was public humiliation by calling us ‘illiterate’, ‘animal’, ‘donkey’ and other niceties for not knowing Spanish.” (Idigoras 2000: 24-25)

The change in the public image of Euskera, however, also began in this period. The new Basque nationalist intellectuals launched a process of vernacular mobilization and cultural politicization (Smith 1991: 140). The generation of the 1960s corresponded to a period during which the Basque cultural revival began to flourish in the hands of leading artists such as Aresti, Oteiza, Chillida, and Ibarrola. They frequently reflected their discontent about the cultural and linguistic regression of Basque. In a period in which *ikastolas* (Basque schools), whose history initially goes back to the Republican period (Unceta 2003: 338-341), were re-emerging in underground amid a remarkable sign of sensibility shown towards linguistic issue (Arriaga 1997: 71-72). *B-F* describes their initial attitude towards the cultural question, more specifically towards Euskera, in the initial phase of EKIN/ETA:

“In the beginning, logically, we emphasized the cultural aspect. We established three stages; the first was the cultural aspect, the second was the political aspect, and the third was the military aspect [...] The cultural was the basis of our personality, and if we asked for independence, it was because we wanted to establish our nation to recover all the essences of that nation, including the cultural ones as well. [*Was there any influence or interaction between the culturalists of the time and the leading figures of the Basque revival?*] Yes, there was a lot in the literature. Especially people like Txillardegui, who had a great inclination towards everything that had to do with literature and, as you know, he was a good writer. He knew this man [*Gabriel Aresti*] personally, and they

were in contact. So, when we began to establish the organization, in the underground, of course, one of the first things we did in the cultural field was to make those who did not know Euskera learn it or those who had known and had forgotten it, to learn it again.” (B-F)<sup>46</sup>

The Basque national revival also transformed what Tejerina defines as the symbolic valorization of Euskera based on the emotional affection attributed to the language as the principal objective element of Basque collective identity (1992: 265-266). The public ban on the language as the main symbolic component of the Basque neo-nationalism was interpreted as a direct threat to the Basque homeland and people (Martínez 1993: 181). The derogative position of the Basque themselves towards Euskera and the continuous decline of its communicative function were the main indicators of threat against Basque ethnic survival. *Argala* best exemplifies this situation through the re-interpretation of his early childhood observations in the late 1970s. He narrates the stigma of *Euskera*, to which he was also alienated, even among what he considers the Basque nationalist family environment in his native Arrigorriaga, where the Spanish language was dominant by far:

“Arrigorriaga was also mainly Spanish speaking. Until about twelve years ago, Euskara was a language in the process of disappearing; known almost exclusively by a small sector of *baserritarras*; they probably used it at home, but the young people were ashamed to speak it out of their circles. The knowledge of Euskara was a cause of a sense of inferiority complex rather than a sign of national affirmation as a differentiated people. [...] My father, a son of *Euskalduns*, was completely unaware of Euskara. Since her childhood, my mother, of *baserritarra* origin, was obliged to go to big villas to offer her services as ‘*femme de ménage*’ until her marriage. [*She was*] Basque-speaking; I do not know if it was because she was living with my father and his family - they all lived in a single house - or because of an inferiority issue that was widespread at that time among Basque speakers - probably for both reasons--she only used Spanish at home, so until recently I did not know Euskera.”<sup>47</sup>

Immediately after this affirmation, he describes changes in the value dimension of the language and an intensive process of vernacularization through the Basque cultural revival in a short time, which coincided with the early formation of his political and social consciousness:

“At that time, one could hear about a new patriotic and socialist political organization that was fighting for the independence of *Euskadi*; it was ETA. The *Ikastolas* arose, and young people who sang in *Euskera* appeared. The Basque question came to light with all of its issues. Our people, almost annihilated, were resurrecting, and this resurrection was also felt in Arrigorriaga. Evening classes in Euskera began for adults, and Basque-speakers began to overcome their complex to show that they were proud of speaking Basque.” (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 5: 290-291)<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> This initial initiative among EGIN/ETA members soon constituted the official approach towards Euskera in ETA. Valuing such cultural-linguistic activities as ‘taking a personal position on Euskera’ was clearly stated in the organization’s *Libro Blanco* (see ETA 1979, Vol. 1: 155) as well as Krutwig’s referential *Vasconia* in which he condemned the lack of eagerness by Basque families to transmit Euskera to future generations (Sarrailh de Ihartza 2006[1962]: 44-45, 53).

<sup>47</sup> For a similar testimony, please see the Interview Nº 44 in *Reinares* 2001: 160-161.

<sup>48</sup> Chronologically coinciding with *Argala*’s autobiographical text, *Etxezarreta* also makes an identical affirmation with respect to the emotional valorization (and re-valorization) of Euskera. The scholar affirms that the use of Spanish was more common among youth, whereas Euskera was functional inside the *baserri* or in the village. In this period, the *baserritarras* changed their language when communicating with someone from the *outside* (doctors, veterinarians, agricultural agents) and urban centers. Also, when *baserritarras* worked in factories, being surrounded by Spanish speakers, the sense of linguistic inferiority forced them to speak in Spanish, making Spanish among *baserritarras* an obligation for social insertion. While this sense of inferiority was present, the scholar equally concludes that a strong sense of pride for being *euskaldun* grew stronger among both rural and urban Basque youth in this period (1977: 169-172).

These underground activities, however, could only be performed in a restricted environment under the conditions of the dictatorship. Two main mechanisms were relatively exempt from regime repression: the associative world and friend groups (*kuadrillas*) encompassing student and laborer groups as well as tolerable activities of *Mendigoizales* (Mountaineers' groups), and activities within the orbit of the lower-ranking Basque clergy and the local church. These mechanisms played a paramount role in the emergence and development of Basque nationalist activism during Francoism.

Social activities in neighborhoods and villages were part of associative networks among which *kuadrillas* constituted a microcosmos in daily life. Weekend holidays and after-day leisure activities, most commonly through *poteo* and *txikiteo* (two forms of in-bar socialization), facilitated the entry of ETA in Basque neighborhoods and villages in this early stage (Pérez-Agote 1984: 108). *Mendigoizale* activities, under the protection of the local church as well as the steep mountainous geography of the Basque Country, came to the forefront among highly limited public activities:

"In those times, I also signed up with the *Mendigoizale* group of the PNV with the desire to do something wherever I could, but without any doubt, because I felt *abertzale*, and that was a way to respond to the call of Basque nationalism. [...] It was a nice activity, and it also served to keep the flame of *abertzalismo* burning. Now and then, we did some painting with the phrase '*Gora Euzkadi askatuta*' [Long-live free Euskadi], written with a brush made with a stick and a piece of sackcloth and with tar or pitch as ink." (Idigoras 2000: 79)

The church and low-ranking Basque clergy had a primary role in the organizational development of Basque neo-nationalism by providing a high-degree legitimacy within the scope of the theology of liberation, as observed among those early militants (Mata 1993: 147-148, 237).<sup>49</sup> The support of the Basque Catholic church to ETA was best reflected in the early formulation of neo-nationalism, the legitimation of the political violence through 'Christian social thought', and its efficient diffusion among youth and workers' circles. This close relation provided ETA with a significant capacity of resource mobilization under the strictly limited underground conditions (Arriaga 1997: 33).<sup>50</sup>

Under the conditions of the dictatorship, the church was also an important physical space for nationalists and their social environment. Such places as Aránzazu and San Antón church were among the main gathering points for prisoner families where propaganda papers were produced, and some priests encouraged the struggle by providing logistic support (Alcedo 1996: 271). Due to the very character of the Francoist doctrine, the church enjoyed relative immunity from the regime. Besides its strongly nationalist character (Interview Nº 18 in Reinares 2001: 64), the church also served to

---

<sup>49</sup> The lack of public university was a challenging question when it came to reproducing the intellectual components of the Basque nationalism that largely corresponded to exile (PNV) or prison (ETA) (Pérez-Agote 2008: 111-113). The founding generation *B-F* affirms that this task was handled by the Jesuit priests at the University of Deusto.

<sup>50</sup> Despite its explicit definition as a 'secular and democratic *abertzale* movement' (ETA 1979, Vol.1: 30), the *Libro Blanco* of ETA makes references to such values as liberty and justice within a Catholic context, assuming a historical 'responsibility before God and before the Fatherland' (ETA 1979, Vol. 1: 161). This early period, therefore, is a short transitory phase of ETA-PNV break-up during which Catholic rites form part of the national struggle (see Interview B-1 in Alcedo 1996: 263-264).

indoctrinate and organize the Basque youth about social questions. The Basque clergy was deeply involved in the organization of labor movements and strikes taking place in urban industrial centers. Idigoras, a prominent figure of the *abertzale* syndicalism, underlines this organizational and protective role describing his first involvement in labor activities at the time:

“My involvement in the syndical movement included numerous trips to Bilbao. We used to hold meetings in the convent of the Franciscan Fathers of Irala, who were selflessly offering to collaborate and even put at our disposal their copy machine and typewriter to prepare some pamphlets. [...] We began to meet weekly in one of the upper dressing rooms of the church of San Antón with the permission, vigilance, and protection of Don Claudio Gallastegi, the parish priest, a greatly committed *abertzale* in those hard times.” (Idigoras 2000: 80, 91)

The support of the Catholic church also continued during the initial period of the armed struggle. Apart from many young priests who joined ETA (Bastante 2004), the church continued to provide logistic support to the organization. Having been indoctrinated by an *abertzale* priest when he was attending Catholic Workers’ Youth meetings in his native Amorebieta (2004: 45), Zumalde also affirms that in a later period, the church continued to provide him and his comrades with an exclusive opportunity to organize and carry out the very first clandestine armed activities of ETA:

“With an insignificant but excited embryo, ETA already had its first operational headquarters, and it was also under the protection of the Church. We hid the weapons under the skirts of the *Virgen del Carmen*, and to this end, we used a ladder that reached the niche; that is why we used to say that one of ETA’s first *zulos* [cache] was built ‘under the panties of the Virgin’. Of course, the Civil Guard never reached that place.” (Zumalde 2004: 80)

As to be observed through the following chapters on the development of Basque neo-nationalism and the evolution of the armed struggle, this strict collaboration with the Basque church and ETA will go through significant transformations. Similarly, some of the other social mechanisms that play a considerably functional role in the emergence and early development of Basque neo-nationalism leave their place to new ones. The end of the Francoist period, in this sense, does not only refer to a transition in Spanish politics but also a transformation in terms of the social reproduction of Basque neo-nationalism and violence under new political conditions.

### 3. Generational Development of Kurdish Nationalism

#### 3.1. Emergence and early periods of Kurdish nationalism

Early period Kurdish nationalist mobilization and activities correspond to the aftermath of the turbulent atmosphere of national independence rebellions in the Ottoman empire that goes back to the first Serbian nationalist uprising followed by others in Christian European provinces through the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hanioglu 2008: 51), and remedies implemented by the Ottoman administration against the increasingly continuing territorial losses. The antagonistic reaction by traditional Kurdish elites developed against a waxing monolithic definition of a nation of Turkish state-building process and the end of the Turkish-Kurdish Muslim brotherhood with the abolishment of the Caliphate in 1924 (Bozarslan 2005a). Modernization and centralization projects implemented by Ottoman Turks and a long series of violent confrontations shaped the trajectory of Kurdish national development.

##### 3.1.1. Turkish modernization and Kurdish national development

###### a. *Kurdish autonomy under the Ottoman imperial sovereignty*

Since the beginning of its foundation as a small *beglik* (principality) in 1299, the Ottomans saw a progressive expansion through a large geographic area, reining over remote territories and peoples. As in the case of European monarchies, in this period, the legitimacy of Ottoman rule was based on religious authority, personified in the figure of the Sultan-Caliph, whose understanding of sovereignty was based on a universal claim rather than a demarcated territory (Yurdusev 2004). The administrative and economic system implemented in order to sustain the sovereignty over these remote areas and peoples, especially in those parts near the empire's eastern borders where the social organization was based on nomadic *ashirets* (tribe)<sup>51</sup>, depended on the assignation of influential rulers who established peripheral power centers (Mardin 1973: 170-171).

Before the emergence of Kurdish nationalism, traditional relations between the central authority and Kurds were primarily shaped by the peculiarities of this organizational setting. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the traditional Kurdish ruling stratum (*mirs*) controlling *ashiret* leaders in the region was legitimized and consolidated against foreign threats by granting Kurdish nobility certain privileges and political autonomy (Özoğlu 2004: 53-54). The political organization of Kurds in autonomous emirates under the Ottoman and Safavid empires made them active political actors in

---

<sup>51</sup> In most scholarly works referred in this study, the Kurdish term *aşiret* (*eşîr* in Kurdish Kurmanji) is translated as tribe or clan. Nonetheless, it is important to underline beforehand that such concepts frequently used in western literature to refer to human groups in Africa, America, and Oceania do not exactly connote the same meaning as *aşiret*; this latter typifies a sense of complex social organization based on vital agricultural and nomadic economic activities forming a *unity for common interests*, something observed in the Eurasian, North African and Middle-Eastern social context (Aydın and Emiroğlu 2003: 78). Even though the kinship is a determining factor in this organizational unity, these vital necessities make it important to understand that *aşiret* is also directly related to a political unity (Beşikçi 2014[1969]: 75-76).

power struggles and dynastic territorial disputes (Bozarslan 2009: 26). This autonomous system, however, was a well-calculated and designed project, which prevented Kurdish *mirs* from establishing a united power center, which had always been a chronic problem for Kurds. Having maintained this chronic lack of political unity that created constant conflicts, divisions, and rivalries among *ashirets* struggling for the leadership of a chieftain, as noted in the case of Bedirhan of the Botan Emirate (Van Bruinessen 1992: 178-179), this system made it quite challenging for Kurds to form a significant political and military power in the presence of stronger actors.

The relative power-sharing of the central authority with Kurdish *mirs* and the autonomous status conceded to this latter gradually diminished beginning from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the initial steps of Ottoman modernization and the centralization project of the Ottoman government. The restoration of central Ottoman rule in distant territories and suppression of corresponding notables, among whom Anatolian, as well as Arab and Balkan notables in incipient stages of their national liberation movements, were the main concern at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Hroch 2013: 175). The lack of unity among Kurdish emirates gave Ottoman authorities an advantageous position to rule out a possible tribal insurgency among Kurds. Ottoman central authority and governors who had already been cautious of the possibility that local Kurdish forces would have constituted one dominant military and political actor and had maintained a certain degree of division between leading Kurdish emirates, knew well that it was unlikely that local Kurdish forces would be able to confront strong and modernized Ottoman army (Eppel 2008: 240). Despite the three major rebellions launched by leading Kurdish *mirs* through the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Muhammad Pasha of Rawanduz, Bedirhan Beg, and Sheikh Ubeydullah) in the form of 'ethnopolitical resistance' (Yeğen 1999: 226-232), the Ottoman centralization process achieved the elimination of those peripheral foci of power in Kurdistan. These first attempts and failure of leading Kurdish tribes changed the direction of the early seeds of Kurdish national awakening towards diaspora activities in the capital of the Ottoman state.<sup>52</sup>

*b. The emergence of Kurdish nationalist entelechy and early activities*

Paradoxically, the political organization and activities of early Kurdish nationalism did not emerge in Kurdistan but in Istanbul, where the gathering of two nuclei had prepared the grounds. The young generation members of Kurdish tribes, which had unsuccessfully revolted against the Ottoman centralization and, consequently, exiled to the Ottoman capital, and intellectual members of Kurdish tribal families who had been educated in Europe and occupied high-ranking positions within the

---

<sup>52</sup> Despite their definitive military failure, these major rebellions occupy a significant place in the modern Kurdish historiography (Hassanpour 1992; Bender 1995; Jwaideh 1999[1961]) as they are deemed the first expressions of the distinctive character of Kurdish national identity. Their significance, however, is rather based on the way they are narrated within the nationalist historiography and the impacts they had, as observed on the future generations of Bedirhan Beg who played a leading role in Kurdish national organization (Özoğlu 2004: 72), on shaping the future of Kurdish movements.



Ottoman administration. Although they were far from forming a unified nationalist movement, the active involvement of this young entelechy in publishing and association activities was the first concrete step taken in the linguistic and cultural fields.

Notwithstanding, previously mentioned tribal loyalties and antagonistic stances, which had been the most crucial reason for the lack of unity and loss in the military field during the rebellions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, were also a typical character of these urban elite circles, constituting a challenge to establish a political and organizational unity. These rivalries among leading Kurdish tribal aristocrat families such as Bedirhan and Shemdinan, who were among the founders of *Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (The Society for the Mutual Aid and Progress of the Kurds), were based on separated interests and goals under the Ottoman constitution regime despite their undeniable efforts on cultural and linguistic matters as well as Kurdish history (Van Burinessen 1992: 276; Klein 2007: 135-138).

In a period of internal turmoil among Ottoman *millets*<sup>53</sup> due to the strong desire for national independence under the influence of the nationalism wave, Kurdish national elites advocated the idea of Ottomanism. Nevertheless, this period also coincided with the progressive influence of *Ittihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (Committee of Union and Progress), which had fortified their monopoly on power through the Young Turk revolution of 1908 (Kansu 1997). In this political atmosphere and tensions between these independence movements and the growing monopolistic imposition of Turkish nationalism in response had a significant impact on younger generation Kurdish intellectuals. Nuri Dersimi, a young student in Istanbul who later became one of the most prominent figures of Kurdish nationalism, defines the perspective taken among young generation Kurdish intellectuals who were subjected to this symbolic imposition of the Turkish nationalist universe under the Young Turk regime:

“[Due to Young Turk policies] there emerged an atmosphere of hatred and mistrust against the Turkish state among those *millets* which were not Turk. Pursuing such [Turkish nationalist] policies also provoked serious reactions among us, Kurdish youth [in Istanbul]. Even those young Kurds who had manifested a non-Kurdish position until then began to qualify Turks as ‘enemy’ as a result of such big excitement. Among the university students in Istanbul henceforth, there emerged a quarrel and fights on nationalism. At school, when we went to the classroom after the break, we saw that it was written on the blackboard in capital letters ‘how happy the one who says I am a Turk’ and ‘Long-live Turks’. Before this situation, we too felt obligated to enter the classroom during break time and write on the same board ‘Long-live Kurds, and Kurdistan’ and ‘how happy is the one who says I am a Kurd’ [...] We, Kurdish youth, began to gather in Diyarbekir coffeehouse in Çemberlitaş [district] in Istanbul and hold discussions on this subject. Undoubtedly, the goal of Kurdishness and Kurdism had its impact entirely among our environment day and night.” (Dersimi 1992: 38)

While admitting that Dersimi’s claims were the early seeds of future full-fledged Kurdish nationalist movements, Özoğlu points out that existing Kurdish associations, including the student society *Hevi*

---

<sup>53</sup> During the Ottoman period, the term *millet* was used on a religious basis, according to which only Rums, Armenians, and Jews are considered separate millet in the Ottoman social structure. After the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, the concept emphasized a clearly defined national identity in a modern sense, Turkishness, including Muslim Kurds and Arabs, and recognizing only non-Muslim minorities as different millets. (Ayđın 1998: 108-109).

(Hope), were far from being nationalist organizations seeking for Kurdish national independence or autonomy (2004: 80-81). However, in the presence of a growing sense of Turkish nationalism and its impositions by the Young Turk regime, those Kurds who once advocated Ottomanism began to change their minds. Having spent most of his life in exile for resistance against the oppressive national unity policies by Young Turks, Mevlânzâde Rifat, a leading Kurdish intellectual of the period who had once embraced Ottomanism, expresses his generational predictions for the fate of the 'East':

"Il-fated East! Do not be downhearted! You have got children who will work to purify you for your exaltation, who would cut off your arrogance from the beginning. Be well aware that these [*children*] swore only for your liberty and independence. They never get exhausted; they do not abstain from anything; surely, one day, they will appear on battlefields for you, for their homeland. They know very well that beyond the darkness there is rejuvenation, there is light." (Mevlânzâde Rifat 2009[1912]: 94)

This young generation entelechy, then grouped under *Hevi* student organization, pioneered the foundation of *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti* (Society for the Rise of Kurdistan) in Istanbul and parallel organizations in some towns in Kurdistan during the last moments of World War I in 1918, opening a new period in Kurdish national mobilization. Direct political interventions like demanding the concession of autonomy status to Kurds and the release of Kurdish prisoners (Van Bruinessen 1992: 278) emphasized a more determined political stance of Kurds in this period in comparison with former cultural associations. Monopolized by the same aristocrat families with the same old rivalries, Kurdish elites took a direction towards the construction of Kurdish national identity, separating it from the idea of Ottomanism as clearly seen through various numbers of Kurdish nationalist *Jîn* magazine (Bozarslan 2005b: 46). Addressing the Kurdish youth through an article in this magazine, Siverekli Hilmi reveals the dedication of the Kurdish elites of the time to making nationalist propaganda in favor of Kurdish vernacular mobilization and national project:

"The time of following others is passed [...] Work only for your own people. Do not forget that we have a language of our own, however neglected, and a rich history. Here you have a formula for independence: action and initiative." (*Jîn*, 19 November 1918, transcribed into Latin alphabet by M.E. Bozarslan 1985 Vol. 2: 401, quoted from Özgölu 2004: 82)

Political developments following the end of World War I and the official policy adopted towards the Kurdish national question by the founding cadres of the new republic in Turkey commenced a new cycle in Kurdish nationalism. This new cycle, whose traces had already been observed in the form of Turkish – Kurdish alliance during World War I, manifested itself during the war of 1919- 1923, denominated as the War of Independence in the Turkish official historiography, and shortly after evolved into a state of violent antagonism. Major traumatogenic events of this period also shaped Kurdish collective memory to be reproduced through the following generations in different forms.

### 3.1.2. Violence and trauma in Kurdish collective memory

Different forms and practices of violence have always been at the center of Kurdish society throughout the contemporary history of Kurdistan and have been objectified as national traumas in the Kurdish national historiography. In the course of these violent practices, Kurds have mostly been victims, although there are also cases in which they come to the forefront as perpetrators, as seen in the case of the Armenian Genocide. The violence exercised by the Turkish – Kurdish alliance on the Armenian community changed the demographic structure of the region later to be claimed by Kurds and, therefore, shaped Kurdish collective memory.

#### a. *Ethnic challenges and violence in the late Ottoman period: The Armenian question*

The eruption of national rebellions against the long-standing Ottoman reign at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century showed that the centralization of the state through modernization policies was not sufficient to reconfigure the center-periphery relations of the plurinational empire. In the presence of national movements among Greek, Slavic, and Armenian peoples backed by western powers (Ergil 1975: 40), Ottoman intellectuals began to look for different ideas to maintain the empire's unity. Ottoman reformists sought to keep together the old *millet*s through a liberal constitutional parliamentary system, which would open the doors to pluralist political participation for the sake of a common *vatan* (homeland). The failure of this initial approach led the increasingly Turkish nationalist cadres to implement repressive measures against these communities (Mardin 1991: 94).<sup>54</sup>

Reforms aimed at yielding western-style liberal modernization policies were bogged down due to inefficient advances. As a result, an iron rule was brought back through despotic centralization for the sustainability of the state amid ethnic-religious cleavages that had sprung up throughout the Empire (Lewis 1968: 178-179). The effects of this political turn came to shape numerous aspects of social and economic life during the three-decade rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II, labeled as *Istibdat* (Period of Autocracy). Sultan-Caliph's autocratic intervention embraced Pan-Islamism to end the empire's decline. Possessing the most significant title in the Muslim world, the Caliph had legitimate authority over a vast majority of religious communities except Shi'a and non-Muslim groups like Jews and Armenians. (Deringil 1991: 346-348). The inefficiency of Pan-Islamism on these non-Muslim groups pushed the regime to resort to repressive measures where these were dominant, as seen in the case of the Sunni Muslim Hamidian light cavalry regiments, the vast majority of whom consisted of Kurdish tribal groups, carrying out violent acts on non-Muslim communities, particularly Armenians. The relationship between Kurds and Armenians who shared the same geographic territory, Eastern Turkey,

---

<sup>54</sup> For a revised edition of Mardin's work on Turkish modernization, see Mardin, Ş. (2006) *Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey*, NY: Syracuse University Press.

under the rule of Ottoman Turks, would determine the characteristics of political violence that would take its most extreme form in the genocide of 1915 in the hands of Young Turks.<sup>55</sup>

The Hamidian massacres and especially the Armenian Genocide are particularly important for the northern Kurds and Kurdistan for two fundamental reasons: first of all, in demographic terms, after the extermination of the Armenian population in Eastern Turkey, the Kurds remained as the sole significant ethnic community whose potential nationalist demands supposed a threat to immature Turkish nationalism and its ambitions to construct a resilient national unity. As Van Bruinessen points out, the extermination of the Armenian people, in this sense, made a potential Kurdish state more feasible than ever (1992: 269, 277) as the ethnically heterogeneous demographic structure of the land was converted into the *land of Kurds*.

Secondly, while the Kurdish – Armenian demographic co-existence was over, vestiges in the form of memories caused by violence committed during massacres by Kurdish tribal *bejiks* (militias) continued until today. The role that Kurds played during the Armenian massacres would be difficult to erase from the Kurdish collective memory for generations. When early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Kurdish national revolts erupted, Kurds vividly remembered the tragic fate of non-Muslim ethnic Armenians against whom they had collaborated with Turkish nationalists about a decade ago. Due to the trauma of the Armenian Genocide in Kurdish collective memory, Kurds feared being exterminated like the Armenians (Bozarslan 2005a: 219-221). The first concrete event of exemplary character for such a possibility was the Koçgiri revolt, which helped Kurds refresh their interiorized collective memory on the Armenian question and made them seriously consider the possibility of a similar fate.<sup>56</sup>

#### *b. Traces of the Armenian Genocide in Kurdistan and Kurdish collective memory*

The earlier Armenian massacres and the genocidal practices of 1915 have created two types of references among northern Kurds. The first type consists of spatial references, which are observed where mass killings of the civilian population took place. In their comprehensive ethnographic study

---

<sup>55</sup> The question of Hamidian violence and the 1915 Genocide has always been controversial questions in both political and academic debates in Turkey. These questions manifest themselves within a dichotomic system of thoughts concerning recognition on one part and the denial on the other. While most western and Armenian authoritative voices on the subject explicitly define the crimes as genocide (See Hovannisian 1986; Dadrian 1995; Lewy 2005, Akçam 2006, 2012; Kévorkian 2011; de Waal 2015), most Turkish scholars adopt the official history of the Republic of Turkey, in which the killings are presented as a result of a massive Armenian *tehcir* (Ottoman Turkish for deportation-relocation), a defensive action during World War I (see Uras 1987; Halaçoğlu 2001; Hikmet *et al.* 2004; Süslü 2011; Çiçek 2016). Despite his firm stance against genocide claims, Kazım Karabekir Pasha, one of the top commanders of the Ottoman army during World War I, recognizes the deterioration of relations between Kurds and Armenians starting 1895 (Karabekir 1994: 136, 141).

<sup>56</sup> This vision is also manifested by Hasan Hişyar Serdî, one of the participants of the Sheikh Said revolt in 1925, as he recalls the post-Koçgiri revolt scene as - “[It] was not less disastrous than what had happened to the Armenians. Once villagers were killed and villages were burnt down, barn animals were culled too” (1994: 149). As a rare study on this subject based on comprehensive ethnographic research in the province of Mardin, Biner presents qualitative evidence that supports Bozarslan’s arguments on traces of the Armenian Genocide in Kurdish collective memory (2010: 72).

on the social memory of Diyarbakır's Kurds, Çelik and Dinç highlight the impacts of violent practices committed during the Armenian Genocide. Researchers point out that a total of 60 individuals interviewed mention 30 places where mass killings reportedly took place and share stories of violent practices as well as the spatial memory of those places whose Kurdish names reflect the genocidal experiences: *Newala Kuştiya* (Stream of the dead), *Çala Filehan* (Armenian well), *Korta Filehan* (Armenian pit), *Şikefta Xwîni* (Bloody cave), *Zanga Filehan* (Armenian cliff), *Zindana Qelecuxê* (Qelecûx dungeon) and *Newala Qetlê* (Stream of the massacre) among many others (2015: 189-190).

Apart from spatial memory, which is transmitted to younger generations, atrocities committed are also taken as temporal references. Anecdotal evidence shows that this continues to be the case for the post-genocide generation. Tarık Ziya Ekinci (Lice, 1926), one of the leading figures of Kurdish ethnic revival in Turkey in the early 1960s, points out that the Hamidian massacres against Armenians in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 1915 Genocide were commonly used as temporal references among locals in his native Lice, a remote district of the Kurdish capital of Diyarbakır (Amed):

“Those years, during which Armenians were massacred, are referred to among those from Lice as a kind of historical milestone. Two separate Armenian massacres are mentioned. When any incident from the past is recalled, they say it took place during the periods of First Armenian Massacre (*Virguna Filan a ewili*) or Second Armenian Massacre (*Virguna Filan a paşîn*).” (Ekinci 2010: 44)<sup>57</sup>

Violent practices and memories are also reconstructed as collective trauma through recently conducted in-depth interviews.<sup>58</sup> The following is an example of how the subjectively constructed narration of violence is transmitted from individuals belonging to older generations. Serhat, a 58-year-old Kurd from a village of Dicle, another district of Diyarbakır, constitutes a clear example of this transmission as he narrates a story told by his late father who had witnessed the events as a teenager:

“There are things that my father had experienced when he was around 15-years-old, things that he witnessed and told us. My father told us that Armenians were huddled together and carried to where we call Verli Talay, where they were massacred altogether. This took place in April of 1915. Having passed some two-three months, as the weather got warm and bodies of those Armenians killed in Verli Talay fell apart, their fat began to melt down. The fat pouring out of their bodies was streaming down the rocks like a flood. My father told us he witnessed that.” (Interview cited from Çelik & Dinç 2015: 201)

---

<sup>57</sup> Ekinci's personal account of his native Lice is only one example of this temporal reference. Being one of the most influential figures of the Kurdish cultural revival, Musa Anter (Nusaybin, 1920 - 1992) similarly tells of his illiterate mother, who played a crucial role in the formation of his national consciousness. When Anter asked about his real date of birth, reportedly her answer was: “*Piştî Fermanê Fileya tu hatî dinyayê*” (You were born right after the Armenian Genocide) (Anter 1991: 30). For another genocide-related memoir from Kurdish activists and intellectuals and members of Anter's generation, also see Miroğlu, Orhan (2010) *Hevsel Bahçesinde Bir Dut Ağacı. Canip Yıldırım'la Söyleşi*, İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, pp. 52-55.

<sup>58</sup> Basing on his own field research, Üngör notes the unwillingness to speak of a taboo, feeling shame and guilt along with the comfort of ignorance and denial commonly observed among potential interviewees (2014: 158), whereas contrary examples make it possible to conduct fruitful field research. Biner also exemplifies similar experiences among Muslim Kurds and Arabs, alleged perpetrators of violence against Armenians and other Christian communities cohabiting with them, in an earlier ethnographic study conducted in Mardin (2010). Evaluating such material in sociological terms, the interpenetration of myths and ideology, manipulation or exaggeration of facts, or even silence itself is of utmost significance as they provide a considerable amount of information on how and why these narratives are (or not) reproduced in such a manner and what the social consequences of these interpretations are in Kurdish society.

The narration of the degree of violence exercised during the Genocide, no matter to what extent it corresponds to the objective facts, is depicted by the eyewitness generation and orally reproduced by the upcoming. While Turkish gendarmeries are held responsible for atrocities committed, some other narrators explicitly point to local Kurdish involvement in these practices. Born in 1907 as a member of the leading Kurdish nationalist *Jirki* tribe, Hasan Hişyar Serdî, who participated in the Sheikh Said revolt (1925), acknowledges that attitudes among Kurds towards Armenians consisted of two opposite poles: those who attempted to prevent Armenians from being massacred and those who collaborated with authorities in the name of a religious compensation to be given in the after-life. Serdî further depicts Kurdish involvement he witnessed as a child in his native Nûzerg village (Diyarbakır):

“Our village was located between Lice and Hanê. Near the village, on the higher side, there was a 5000-year-old dungeon, inherited from the period of Hurîs. The dungeon had been made by carving through a natural cave. Armenians were brought together, taken to the edge of the cliff near this dungeon, and killed by being thrown down. Corpses were being carried to the dungeon and thrown there, one on the top of the other. As the dungeon was deep enough, it did not give off an odor.” (Serdî 1994: 124)<sup>59</sup>

While attitudes and reactions such as shame, guilt, fear, denial, or legitimizing discourses concerning Armenian massacres vary depending on ethnic (Arabs, Kurds, and Turks) and religious groups (Sunni Muslims, Alevis, Yazidis, and Christians) living in Kurdistan (Biner 2010: 71), the narration of violent practices committed towards a specific ethnoreligious group illustrates the burden of these massacres in Kurdistan and Kurdish collective memory. The fear and anxiety provoked by the collective memory also become one of the main motivations of Kurdish nationalist mobilization.

### **3.1.3. Kurdish resistance against Turkish nation-building: From revolt to surrender**

After the abolishment of the Caliphate by the Kemalist republic in 1924, traditional Kurdish elites, tribal chieftains, and religious sheikhs in Kurdistan, who had been underestimated by Kurdish nationalists entelechy in Istanbul, played a more prominent role in Kurdish nationalism (Bozarslan 2005a: 228). Possessing a far more substantial capacity of resource mobilization and a more autonomous position than those secular Kurdish elites in Istanbul, influential and respected religious figures led the national struggle. The subsequent closure of *madrassas* (religious schools), highly appreciated sources of education for most Kurds, as well as strict penal consequences for discussing the late caliphate and religion in the new political scene, changed the mind of those Kurds who had helped Kemalist cadres between 1919-1921 (McDowall 2004: 192), during the war of Turkish-Kurdish Muslim unity led by the

---

<sup>59</sup> Üngör exemplifies a similar sequence in an interview with Erdal, an 18-year-old male from the Garzan region, who narrates what his grandfather as an eyewitness had told him when he was a child (2014: 159), which is further support for Serdî's claim on two different attitudes of Kurds (protective or co-participant) during the Armenian Genocide. The silence of genocide survivors and resistance to speaking out in detail about experiences appear to be a commonly observed occurrence, unlike the willingness of their grandchildren to tell the story of their elders.

Caliph against 'infidels'.<sup>60</sup> The eruption of the Sheikh Said revolt in 1925, a year after the abolishment of the caliphate, and the unusual response of the new regime was a turning point and an end of the long-lasting deliberative relation between Turks and Kurds.

a. *The Sheikh Said revolt: The end of the 'tacit contract'*

The importance of the 1925 revolt led by Sheikh Said, an influential cleric from the Naqshbandi religious order, stems from its distinctive character in comparison with previous rebellions. Previously experienced Kurdish rebellions in the Ottoman periphery were a way of demanding certain rights from the state, a peculiar form of a power relation observed under Ottoman reign. Defining this relationship with the term of 'tacit contract' (*zımni sözleşme*) (Mardin 1991: 106-120) between the Kurds and the state, Bozarslan argues that despite Sheikh Said's nationalist discourse in favor of an independent Kurdish state, the majority of participants in the revolt indeed sought to renew this contract. Nevertheless, the reaction shown by the new Republic to the revolt significantly differed from the reactions shown by the Ottoman authorities. The new state's policy was not seeking a balance between the central state and the periphery (i.e., Kurds), but rather the systematic marginalization and assimilation of the latter (Bozarslan 2005a: 224-226). The unilateral termination of the long-existing 'tacit contract' by the Kemalist regime also gave a new impetus to the Turkish–Kurdish conflict.

Additionally, the Sheikh Said revolt was orchestrated by the political organization *Azadi* (Freedom in Kurdish Kurmanji)<sup>61</sup> that brought Kurdish nationalism to the hands of traditional figures of Turkey's northern Kurdistan, which until then had been confined to Kurdish elites in Istanbul. (McDowall 2004: 192). While the leadership of highly respected religious figures had positive effects in organizational terms, it also provoked debilitating impacts due to long-existing inter-religious discrepancies among Kurds. In sociological terms, it would be convenient to analyze the revolt in two

---

<sup>60</sup> A. K. Özcan points out that the purpose of both sides in this cooperation was apparently different from the beginning: While Kurds fought for the salvation of the *Ümmet* (Muslim unity), the Ottoman Turkish elites' main concern was the salvation of the state. There was a clear contrast in the attitude of Turks before and after the proclamation of the Republic in 1923: The idea of Muslim unity against infidels was fused into a single-bodied structure based on the 'Turkish nation' in a modern sense, in which there was no room for religious brotherhood (2006: 79-81). From this point of view, it would be convenient to affirm that early Kurdish resistance towards this new policy was also a confrontation between the authoritarian and 'modernizing' state, on the one hand, and a traditional society based on certain values on the other (Bozarslan 1988: 133). This characteristic of early Kurdish mobilization against the state offered a pretext to Turkish nationalists to characterize them as merely reactionary rebellions led by fanatic fundamentalists against the modern secular republic.

<sup>61</sup> During its first congress in which Sheikh Said also participated, Azadi agreed on two fundamental actions: a) the need for a well-organized and planned uprising to be launched in May 1925 and; b) the need for foreign assistance, possibly from France, Great Britain or the Soviet Union among other options (Van Bruinessen 1992: 280). Being one of the actors who participated in the revolt and having suffered from its consequences, Hasan Hışyar Serdî quotes Sheikh Said on the objections to a possible Russian alliance due to the 'atheist' nature of the latter during a meeting: "Some said France, some said England, and none gets angry. Once Russia is mentioned, the majority of you lash out to oppose, and some of you want to have a say. We are looking for a political ally and someone who backs us. What business do you have with the religion of the states?" (1994: 194) While religion was a strong determinant among Kurdish national elites for making political decisions, Sheikh Said's rationale appears to have given priority to national interests over religion.

aspects: *a*) a failure in the military and political sense due to organizational deficiencies and; *b*) success in terms of national consolidation and construction of collective memory among Kurds.

As a highly disputed matter, some scholars claim that religious elements, more precisely a re-establishment of the Caliphate, override national concerns for the Kurdish ethnic identity (McDowall *ibid.* 197-198). Religious motivation played a fundamental role both in the organization as well as the mobilization of the revolt, and, most probably, it would have had certain political weight if the revolt had been successful. The Caliphate's symbolic value was also reflected by Sheikh Said himself:

"Previously, we had a common *Caliph*, and this gave our religious people a deep sense of being in a community with the Turks. Since the *Caliphate* is abolished, all we have left is the feeling of Turkish repression" (*Bagdad Times*, 7 April 1925, quoted from Bozarslan 1988: 130)

Nonetheless, it would be erroneous to ignore the nationalist aspects of the revolt, as the Kurds were equally worried about assimilation through population exchange policies and linguistic restrictions, discrimination of Kurds in official positions and during compulsory military service, frequent and deliberate interventions in political and social issues, and eventually, the exploitation of natural resources in Kurdistan, all of which reflected the ambivalent character of Kurdish nationalism at the time (Olson 1989: 155). There was a certain degree of mistrust among Kurdish leading elites towards the new regime in Turkey, not only because of the abolishment of the Caliphate but also, as underlined before, Kurds remembered well the tragic fate of ethnic Armenians. Serdî quotes Sheikh Said's reflections shared with Kurdish militia commanders, tribal chieftains, and intellectuals in a congress held right before the revolt that illustrate his nationalist sentiments:

"...If we move such half-heartedly, it will not be Turks who will end up in disappointment, but us. You can be sure that these [*Turks*] will do the same to us as they did to Armenian children and women, who were slaughtered with the bayonets of Turkish soldiers. So, do you really want this cruelty to happen to the Kurdish nation too? [...] I am older than 70, holding a *tasbih* [rosary] in my hand. Now I have also thrown the *tasbih* away and grabbed my rifle. My wealth, properties, and children are more than yours. I am ready to sacrifice all for the rights of my nation." (Sheikh Said quoted from Serdî 1994: 197)

The religious factor in this context is essential as it directly conditioned the organization, mobilization, and, eventually, the fate of the revolt itself. Bringing in a strategically religious cause to a planned nationalistic revolt was logical as some religious Turks also opposed the secular policies of Mustafa Kemal's government. By injecting a religious character, one could attract those Kurds whose main preoccupation was Islam. Furthermore, a rebellion pioneered by a charismatic sheikh would favor success as the sheikhs had significant influence over Kurds and, thanks to their traditional reconciliation roles, they were capable of bringing together tribes in conflict (Van Bruinessen 1992:



281-282; Olson 1989: xvi).<sup>62</sup> The political authority and social prestige of sheikhdom among Kurdish tribes and society, in general, were considered a unifying factor for national aspirations.

Nevertheless, Kurdistan's multi-religious structure, most evidently observed in the historical Sunni – Alevi conflict<sup>63</sup>, was also a serious obstacle. The mistrust was not only between Kurds and Turks but also between Sunni and Alevi Kurds; the Sunni sheikhdom factor did not contribute to strengthening confidence between Sunni and Alevi Kurdish tribes. Despite a strong political organization led by influential Naqshbandi personalities who managed to mobilize their *murids* (devoted followers) (Bozarslan 1988: 130), profound religious discrepancies provoked a discordant effect on the mobilization capacity and the definitive outcome of the revolt. Having been subjected to discriminating treatment at the hands of both Sunni Turks and Kurds during the Ottoman reign, a call for mobilization to Alevi Kurds by a Sunni Naqshbandi sheikh constituted a somewhat counterproductive effect. Their preference between two options determined the attitude of prominent Alevi tribes: an independent Kurdistan to be led by Sunni sheikhs or a secular Turkey, in which, at first glance, all people would be treated as equal citizens (Van Bruinessen 1992: 294). Most Alevi Kurds opted for the second, which sounded more beneficial for their community.

#### *An analysis of the consequences of Sheikh Said revolt in Kurdish collective memory*

Despite its military failure, the importance of the Sheikh Said revolt is linked with the following policies implemented once the revolt had been quelled and the social construction of their narrative. Unlike the barbaric and reactionary depiction as a sign of Islamic fanaticism in Turkey's official historiography (Lewis 1968: 268), Kurdish historiography glorifies the revolt by creating continuity between Sheikh Said's revolt and today's ongoing resistance against the authority of the state (Kahraman 2003: 19; Tezcür 2009). Consequently, the revolt as a large-scale violent event has successfully become a cultural trauma in Kurdish collective memory.

The degree of aggression during and after the Sheikh Said revolt is brought forth the construction of Kurdish collective memory based on three forms of violence exercised by both sides. The first one corresponds to the organized physical violence led by Sheikh Said, which in the final

---

<sup>62</sup> The affirmation made by scholars is crucial as it highlights a long-established historical state of social and political organization in Kurdistan. In eastern Turkey (i.e. northern Kurdistan), the sheikhdom and *aghadom* (landlordship) are fused together in one practical title and directly related to land ownership. In this sense, those who possess most properties and land also obtain sheikh status in due course and exercise a great deal of authority (M.E. Bozarslan 1964: 125). Also, traditionally in Kurdish society, those sectors who are primary candidates to be the governing class are *begs* (Kurdish seigneurs) and tribal and religious leaders (sheikhs). Any Kurdish leader who seeks to exhibit influence over Kurdish masses unexceptionally belongs to one of these sectors (Jwaideh 1999[1961]: 502), of which Sheikh Said was not an exception.

<sup>63</sup> Discrepancies between Sunni and Alevi communities go back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century's political atmosphere in northern Kurdistan, divided between the Shi'a Shah Ismail of Persia and Sunni Ottoman reign under Selim I (*Yavuz*). Those Alevi Kurdish communities who were more sympathetic towards the Shah were harshly punished by Yavuz as well as Sunni Kurdish tribes. (Beşikçi 2014[1969]361-362; Gezik 2012: 48).

analysis may well be qualified as a nationalist rebellion with the use of religion for instrumentalist purposes to mobilize masses (White 2000: 73-74).<sup>64</sup> The organization of insurgence was based on a simple plan in harmony with the socio-political structure of the region: All tribes would participate with their chieftains taking control of their area and imprison Turkish officials and gendarmes or pushing them away and, finally, join one of the battlefronts that would be formed in order to expand the revolt and defending themselves against the government's attacks (Van Bruinessen 1992: 285).

The second and third types of violence correspond to coercive measures taken during and after the event by the Kemalist regime; while the first is based on physical measures, the latter consists of symbolic elements of violence. Violence was employed to control the rebellion and continued in the form of symbolic violence during the post-rebellion period through measures taken by the regime through bans on Kurdish symbolic customs and their forceful substitution with Turkish cultural and linguistic elements. Zîne Kezûn and her brother Ramazan from the village of Kur in Çewlig (Bingöl) narrate the dramatic experience their family went through after the revolt, highlighting that physical violence through extrajudicial mechanisms was disproportionate and indiscriminate:

"My father made me sit on his lap, kissed me, and cried. He told me, 'My Zine, take my tobacco case, fill and bring it back'. I said, 'Dad, I swear they have set our house on fire; our house is burning'. My father cried. Soldiers grabbed my arm and threw me from my father's lap. I went back to our house from there; it had been completely burnt down. Soldiers took my father and my uncle and killed them. We ended up homeless. My brother Ramazan was young at that time; women hid him under their gown and saved his life that way. [...] Soldiers set fire to everything we had along with our houses. There was nothing left. Our bovine and small cattle were destroyed too." (testimony quoted from Kurij 2015:176, 178)

Despite its reactionary, pro-Islamist description in Turkish official historiography, the revolt was a serious warning to the Kemalist government as it brought forward the question of ethnicity in the young Republic (Jongerden 2007: 318). Repressive measures employed during the revolt were extensively used under the Law on the Reinforcement of Order brought forward by the Independence Tribunals with extraordinary powers (McDowall 2004: 195). An envisaged Turkification process was accelerated through *Şark Islahat Planı* (Eastern Reform Plan) on 24 September 1925. The plan proposed a comprehensive assimilation program for Kurds as well as other ethnic groups: rebuilding Turkish villages, settling Turks and sending Turkish civil servants to Kurdish villages, building public schools, along with the dispersion and compulsory resettlement of Kurds<sup>65</sup> in areas populated by Turks

---

<sup>64</sup> M.S. Kaya emphasizes that the Sheikh Said insurrection may well be characterized as a Zaza-Kurdish rebellion as it was led by and received almost full support from the Sunni Muslim Zazas in the region, which excluded those Kurmanji-dominated Kurds in the provinces of Varto, Muş, Diyarbakır, Elazığ (Xarput), and Karakocan (2011: 64). Outside of this geographical area, the participation, support, refusal, or even the opposition were directly linked to the interests of chieftains.

<sup>65</sup> Referring to TBMM *Zabıt Ceridesi* (Minutes of the Turkish Grand National Assembly), Period 2, Vol. 33, Yeğen points out that right after the suppression of the revolt, those Kurds who had allegedly been involved in the rebellion were displaced and resettled along with their families (some 1.500 people comprising 80 families) in western areas of the country populated by Turks and 2.000 hectares of land belonging to the displaced were confiscated by the state. The resettlement policy later continued under the Settlement Law of 1934, through which 25.400 people from Kurdish provinces were resettled in western Turkey (2009: 603-604).

among other measures (Yayman 2016: 86-90). *Table 4* indicates census results held in 1927 and 1965 in cities within the 5<sup>th</sup> Region of General Inspectorship distributed under the Eastern Reform Plan:

*Table 4:* The 1927 and 1965 census in predominantly Kurdish cities.

City/Town	1927		1965		
	Turks	Kurds	Turks	Kurds	Zaza
Diyarbakır	56,151	132,209	178,644	236,113	57,943
Bitlis	20,689	67,678	56,161	92,327	2,079
Elazığ	97,657	112,493	244,016	47,446	30,939
Erzurum	231,018	36,422	555,632	69,648	2,185
Urfa	82,182	82,788	207,652	175,100	16,917

Source: Yeğen, Tol & Çalışkan 2016: 29-30<sup>66</sup>

Apart from political measures, there were also social plans to change the demographic structure of Kurdistan: encouragement of intermarriage between Turkish civil servants living in Kurdistan and Kurdish inhabitants, linguistic enforcement of Turkish over Kurdish-speaking people, and the schooling of Kurdish children (Yeğen 2009: 600-603) among other measures. The state's attitude towards the challenges on the path of nation-building (more concretely Kurdish question) was outlined by the Prime Minister of the period, İsmet İnönü, in his 1925 speech to the Turkish Grand National Assembly:

"...nationalism is our only factor of cohesion. In the face of a Turkish majority, other elements have no kind of influence. We must turkify the inhabitants of our land at any price, and we will annihilate those who oppose the Turks or *le turquisme*" (İsmet İnönü cited by Barkey & Fuller 1998: 10)

One of the most effective mechanisms used for the Turkification of Kurdish society was the establishment of *Halkevleri* (People's Houses), designed as doctrinal community centers that effectively functioned for more than two decades between 1932 and 1953.<sup>67</sup> The idea behind these institutions was to create new citizens following the principles of Kemalism in order to promote the idea of a nation as a commonly accepted entity by the masses.<sup>68</sup> The aim of these institutions can be

<sup>66</sup> Statistical data on the Kurdish question in Turkey lacks credibility due to political and social factors. Yeğen *et al.* emphasize a tendency among Kurdish citizens not to be officially registered as such and hesitation when it comes to exposing their ethnic identity (2016: 28). Apart from concerns and obstacles of political occurrences, a social definition of ethnic identity varies and hypothetically changes from one generation to another. For example, the case of Zazas is quite ambiguous as to whether they should be considered Kurds in general, Zaza Kurds or simply Zazas. In their comprehensive study carried out in 12 Kurdish cities based on 1.918 surveys, the criteria that Yeğen *et al.* take as reference is based on participants' own definition with respect to their ethnic identity. Nevertheless, a lack of previously obtained reliable data, as the authors stress (*ibid.* 60-61), negatively affect the reliability of ongoing studies carried out through such small-scale sample groups. A similar methodology based on the participants' subjective definition of ethnic identity was also adopted by Konda Research and Consultancy in a nation-wide study using a much bigger sample group with a total of 10.393 surveys (2011: 84-87), which relatively facilitate a point of departure for ongoing studies.

<sup>67</sup> The *Halkevleri* were followed by *Halkodaları* (People's Rooms), launched in 1940 and designed for villages and smaller towns. Lamprou argues that both institutions have an even longer history as their ancestral institutions in order to turkify remote villagers actually go back to social Darwinist ideologues of the 1908 Young Turk revolution (2015: 24, 70).

<sup>68</sup> The idealized Turkish nationality was based on an inheritance of a 'common culture' that consisted of a series of common attributions: historical affinity, common morality, loyalty to a common political entity, a common homeland, common roots, descendants, and a common language (Heper 2007: 83-84). People's Houses and other institutions with similar ends like *Köy Enstitüleri* (Village Institutes) were designed to achieve this challenging task.

summarized by the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) Secretary-General Recep Peker's own words about the *Ülkü* (Great Ideal), the most important journal published by the institution along with *Yeni Türk* (New Turk) and *6 Ok* (Turkish for *Six Arrows*, which refers to the six principles of Kemalism):

"We are publishing *Ülkü* in order to promote the excitement of new generations who have left behind the dark ages to turn towards a bright and honorable future, to stir the demand for reforms in community's blood, and to quicken the pace of these steps [...] *Ülkü* will exist in order to form a unity of the mind, heart, and initiative." (Recep Peker cited from İnce 2012: 65)

By aiming to create modern and civilized citizens loyal to the Turkish nation, People's Houses and People's Rooms were used as mechanisms of assimilation against other languages competing with Turkish. This latter highlights the importance of the linguistic question as the primary concern, particularly in Diyarbakır (Lamprou 2015: 71-73). Ekinci narrates his socialization experience as a secondary school pupil in the Kurdish capital of Diyarbakır in the late 1930s:

"The Diyarbakır *Halkevi* was one of the biggest and referential People's Houses in Turkey. [...] One of the ideological activities of these was to organize conferences for nationalist writers and poets invited to Diyarbakır from Ankara and Istanbul. We would participate in them regularly as the school administration insisted we follow those conferences." (Ekinci 2010: 110)

Naci Kutlay, another important figure for the Kurdish ethnonational revival in the early 1960s, confirms yet another aspect of these institutions' assimilative functions. He recalls his own childhood experience in the People's House of his native Ağrı by stressing policies of cultural assimilation of Kurdish children through these institutions:

"Though we knew very well how to perform local folk dances, we were not allowed to perform them in school ceremonies, and we were taught *harmandalı* and *efe* [*Aegean folk dances*] performances." (1998: 17)

These policies were the beginning of a series of measures consisting of symbolic and physical practices of violence to handle Turkey's Kurdish question. Along with the Dersim revolt, which took place about a decade later, the Sheikh Said revolt constituted one of the primary references in Kurdish collective memory and a key symbol for future Kurdish resistance movements.

#### *b. The Dersim revolt: The beginning of the generational silence*

While the Sheikh Said revolt constitutes one of the essential national references in Kurdish historiography and collective memory, the Dersim revolt of 1937-1938 and subsequent measures taken by the Turkish government to suppress the rebels and re-establish the order had vital consequences in terms of sociological generations. Ten years after the unsuccessful Ararat rebellion<sup>69</sup>, Dersim was the end of an era for Kurdish national history in Turkey.

---

<sup>69</sup> Ararat revolt of 1929-1930 led by veteran commander İhsan Nuri was another organized nationalist rebellion against the government in Ankara. As such, it reflects the continuous character of the Sheikh Said revolt as those guerrilla units who had

The revolt was launched in reaction to resettlement policies and the evacuation of specific areas where Kurdish nationalism was developing into a threat to the monopolistic ambitions of the Kemalist regime. The Dersim province (later renamed Tunceli by the central government) had already aroused the suspicion of the central government in the years preceding the event. As a result, the new regime decided to take measures to suppress the local population by means of disarmament, deportations, and forced settlement through the use of coercive practices similar to those that had been implemented against the Armenian population in 1915 (McDowall 2004: 208).<sup>70</sup>

The *Dersim Raporu* (Dersim Report) of 1933-1934, published in limited numbers by the General Command of the Gendarmerie, in which Dersim's geographic, demographic, ethnic, tribal, economic, and military characteristics are addressed comprehensively, illustrates attitudes shown by the inhabitants of Dersim towards the central authority since the late Ottoman period. According to the report, the Dersim community did not pay their taxes and provide militias during war times; they moved in hostility as if they held an autonomous status and, consequently, they must have been chastened (Dersim Report 2011[1933-1934]: 159-162). Nevertheless, the real concern that republican cadres had was explicitly mentioned in the upcoming pages of the report:

"If today there is an obvious fact for us, it is that the trend called Kurdishness is attempting to penetrate in the part of old Dersim (Northern part of Eastern Dersim) whose center is comprised of the Haydaranlı tribe and called Kutu River or Kalman [*Alevi*] Center. It is considered as important and necessary as that of Ağrı [*Ararat*] to put out the fire that boils in this hearth before it starts to spew out." (Dersim Report 2011 [1933-34]: 220)<sup>71</sup>

Tribal disputes and Sunni–Alevi religious segregation once again left their mark on the destiny of the Dersim revolt. Dersim was exceptionally peculiar in linguistic and religious terms, besides its geographical characteristics with steep mountains. Most tribes linguistically belonged to the Zaza-speaking communities, whereas some others spoke Kurdish Kurmanji. In terms of religious creed, the vast majority of people in Dersim were Alevis, and they were surrounded by Sunni Muslim Kurds who spoke Zaza or Kurmanji (Van Bruinessen 1994: 142). When the revolt began, tribal discrepancies and

---

not been captured or surrendered played an influential role in Ararat (Van Bruinessen 1992: 265, 291). Founded in Beirut as a Kurdish nationalist political party, *Hoybûn's* (Independence) propaganda activities among Kurdish tribes in northern Kurdistan focused on the problem of tribal disparities, as observed in the party's *Birlik Andı* (Promise for Unity) (Fuccaro 2005: 245-246), by foreseeing a non-tribal fighting force (McDowall 2004: 203).

<sup>70</sup> For the author's reference, see FO 371/14580 Matthews to Clerk, Trebizond, 15 November 1930; FO 371/16074 Tabriz Consulate Diary, 5 January and September 1932 (*ibid.* 213). It would be convenient to point out that the idea of the rehabilitation of Dersim had already occupied the agenda of the former Ottoman regime as well. Basing on his specific revision on Dersim-related subjects in the Ottoman state archives, Irmak underlines that the Ottoman administration had already implemented such rehabilitation policies since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (2011: 248).

<sup>71</sup> The chapter titled 'Fundamentals of Dersim's Rehabilitation' explicitly states that a comprehensive military operation in order to disarm the population and displace the existing leaders in Dersim is imperative. This will guarantee to avoid future recurrences of disobedience and prepare the grounds for a radical rehabilitation plan based on the substitution of civil servants, reorganizing the administration, opening schools and spreading *Turkish-centered* propaganda (2011[1933-1934]: 265-266). Beşikçi indicates that such measures were put into practice after passing and implementing the Law of Settlement № 2510 in 1934, which, according to Saraç (1934), was the beginning of a systematic settlement policy within the framework of a deliberate strategy based on economic, social, and national ambitions (Beşikçi 2013[1977]a: 100).

enmities also determined the positioning of each tribe with respect to one another within the context of armed confrontations between the government forces and rebels. This rivalry is best elucidated in threnodies anonymously written between 1937-1938 that also reflects the memory of the Armenian Genocide among the people of Dersim:

“Fight brothers and sisters fight / This is not a tribal war / [This is a] war between *Kirmançs*<sup>72</sup> and cruel Turks / Never show cowardliness / Do not let others speak ill of us. [...] This tyrant has many soldiers / He has turned the world mad on us / Dad-burned tribes / They have preferred our death to money / Do not forget / When the enemy finishes with us / Tomorrow will be your turn / You will end up exactly like Armenians / We will not die in disappointment / We have taken revenge for our ancestors / Not to mention dying in this mountain” (Gezik 2012: 161)<sup>73</sup>

It is equally important to emphasize that due to the Alevi–Sunni segregation, the Dersim massacre did not catch much attention outside of Alevi Kurdish community, even during the implementation of systematic massacres by the government forces. Canip Yıldırım, one of the leading figures of the Kurdish ethnonational revival in the late 1950s and the subsequent periods of the Kurdish political movement, reflects on the military operations in Dersim among Kurds in general:

“Kurds showed no interest in the military operation in Dersim; I mean Shafi’i<sup>74</sup> Kurds. They were explaining the matter in terms of Alevism. After all, Alevis from Dersim did not take part in Sheikh Said [*revolt*], and Sunni Kurds did not take part in Dersim [*revolt*]. An Alevi friend of mine named Sükrü Laçın recalled the following incident: ‘Sheikh Said Effendi comes to Dersim and becomes Sayyid Rıza’s guest. When they were about to prepare dinner in the evening, Sheikh Said Effendi says «Rıza Agha, please do not sacrifice the goat you would like to sacrifice, let ours do that.»’ Because you cannot get an Alevi bride, nor can you give a [Sunni] bride [to Alevis], what Alevis sacrifice cannot be eaten, their water cannot be drunk.<sup>75</sup> [...] Leaving aside those intellectuals of Kurdish origin, there was hardly anyone caring about Dersim.” (Miroğlu 2010: 70-71)

The leader of the rebellion, Alevi cleric Sayyid Rıza, who led the resistance against the implementation of Kemalist policies, shared the same destiny as his Sunni fellow Sheikh Said, but the subsequent massacres committed in Dersim would be qualified as genocidal practices in Kurdish historiography.<sup>76</sup>

#### *The use of physical and symbolic coercion in and after Dersim*

In terms of physical coercion put into practice by the regime, the Dersim revolt witnessed a massive military mobilization that practically resulted in the occupation of the entire region by a contingent of 50.000 troops, accompanied by invited European officers (Bozarslan 1988: 128). Due to its proximity

---

<sup>72</sup> The *Kirmanç* is a communal identity of Zaza-speaking Alevis in Dersim whose geographic territory is referred to as the ‘Land of Kirmancıye’ (the Alevi Land). In contrast, the community refers to Zaza-speaking Sunni Muslims as ‘Zaza’, Kurmanji-speaking Kurds as ‘Kurmanc’, and their Kurdish language dialect as ‘Kırdaski’ (F. Çelik 2017: 65).

<sup>73</sup> For a study of the dimensions of state violence in Dersim see Requiem by Sayyid Qazi in Dr. Şivan (*pseu.* Sait Kızımıztoprak) (2014[1970]) *Kürt Millet Hareketleri ve Irak’ta Kürdistan İhtilali*, İstanbul: El Yayınları, pp. 104-105.

<sup>74</sup> Shafi’ism is one of the schools of interpretation of Sunni Islam founded in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>75</sup> Whether intrinsically real or invented, this story is constantly reproduced in Dersim society when it comes to explaining the reason for the Alevi leader Sayyid Rıza’s unwillingness to support Sheikh Said in his revolt against the Kemalist state (Yardımcı & Aslan 2011: 422-423).

<sup>76</sup> By referring to Nuri Dersimi (1952) and Dr. Şivan (2014[1970]: 104, 112), Beşikçi employs the term ‘genocide’ when describing the practices of physical violence implemented by the state forces in Dersim (2013[1990]: 119-120). Adopting the term ‘ethnocide’ employed by Van Bruinessen (1994), Jongerden emphasizes that the resettlement policy was used as a type of spatial instrument to deal with the ‘Kurdish problem’ (2007: 306).

to the capital of Ankara and the significant number of airfields, the Turkish Air Force actively joined the operations with more sophisticated arms than those used a decade earlier. Perhaps symbolically, the most notable aspect of those operations was that Mustafa Kemal's adopted daughter, Turkey's first female pilot and symbol of modern Turkish women, Sabiha Gökçen, had also taken part in bombardments over Dersim (Olson 2000: 89-90). Foreign observers reportedly described the degree of physical violence in qualitative terms:

"It is understood from various sources that in clearing the area occupied by the Kurds, the military authorities have used methods similar to those used against the Armenians during the Great War: thousands of Kurds including women and children were slain; others, mostly children, were thrown into the Euphrates; while thousands of others in less hostile areas who had first been deprived of their cattle and other belongings were deported to *vilayets* [provinces] in Central Anatolia" (in McDowall 2004: 209)<sup>77</sup>

The measures of symbolic violence were put into practice within the legal framework of the same Law of Settlement. The Dersim revolt became a historical event that prepared the ground for and essentially legitimized the efficient implementation of the said law. Article 11 constitutes a clear example of the projected strategy to be pursued for the displaced and the measures of symbolic practices of violence on them:

"It is forbidden for those whose mother tongue is not Turkish to establish new villages and quarters, labor and craftsman groups as a whole, or reserve a village, a quarter, a business or a craft workshop by such individuals [*exclusively*] for their cognates." (Law of Settlement cited from Beşikçi 2013 [1977]a: 117)

Schooling and the national education program were functional mechanisms for the implementation of symbolic measures of violence aimed at effectively assimilating non-Turkish ethnic groups, more concretely Kurds. The effective use and expansion of 'boarding schools', a strictly Turkish speaking environment designed through the *Halkevleri*, was formulated for the linguistic and cultural assimilation of ethnic minorities (Lamprou 2015: 70).<sup>78</sup> The social transformation that took place in the Dersim region apart from 1938 events and the subsequent republican 'modernizing' process converted the school with the state's official education program as the only platform through which forthcoming generations would have an opportunity to ascend to more reputable social positions (Gezik 2012: 155-

---

<sup>77</sup> For the reference made by the author, see FO 371/21925 Pro-Consul to Loraine, Trebizond, 'Memorandum on Military Operations in Dersim', 27 September 1938 (McDowall, *ibid.*: 213). While most Dersimi elders in the region today do not show a willingness to speak out about what they had witnessed and the traces of the massacre of 1938 are absent in the public sphere (Göner 2017: 65), some valuable field studies have been carried out since then. Apart from Göner's ethnographic study, for testimonies by witnesses of traumatogenic events such as mass killings, assaults and deportations of people from different villages and tribes, see Yardımçı, S., Aslan, Ş. (2011) "Memleket ve Garp hikâyeleri: 1938 Dersim sürgünleri ile bir sözlü tarih çalışması" in Ş. Aslan (Ed.) *Herkesin Bidiği Sır: Dersim*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 428-431; Gezik, Erdal (2012) *Dinsel, etnik ve politik sorunlar bağlamında Alevi Kürtler*, (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, pp. 118-126.

<sup>78</sup> Boarding schools constitute one of the most notable examples of assimilation policies Kurdistan that continue until today. Basing on the data provided by the Ministry of National Education, Yeğen underlines that among 299 boarding schools in Turkey, 155 (52%) of them are located in predominantly Kurdish populated provinces, and a total number of 84,442 out of 142,788 (59%) are enrolled in a boarding school in these provinces (2009: 605).

156). The concern for social status would eventually provoke the alienation of the remaining young generations in Dersim from their own culture.<sup>79</sup>

### 3.2. The ethnonational revival of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey

Kurdish ethnonational revival in the late 1950s and the early 1960s took place after the long period of generational silence observed as a result of traumatogenic experiences that Kurds lived through during the period of consecutive national revolts and their aftermaths. In this period, there were two incidents concerning the revival of Kurdish nationalism: the 49ers incident and trial in Turkey, which was a result of the state's *Kurdism* phobia rather than an organized political movement, and the resurgence of the Kurdish national liberation movement led by Mullah Mustafa Barzani in Iraqi Kurdistan. Both the success and collapse of this latter had a significant generational impact on the later development of the Kurdish national liberation movement(s) in Turkey through the following decades.

#### 3.2.1. The generational resurgence of Kurdish nationalism

##### a. *The post-revolts period and reproduction of Kurdish identity in generational silence*

The suppression following the Dersim revolt ended the newly emerged Kurdish national movement in Turkey, imprisoning it into a two-decade generational silence, during which there was hardly any Kurdish nationalist activity. After a long period of revolts of varying dimensions and a high cost in human life, northern Kurdistan was finally pacified (Van Bruinessen 1992: 291), and Kurdish nationalism fell into silence. Apart from political and military measures taken during and right after the revolts, previously mentioned cultural and symbolic impositions appear to have extended the political silence in the social sphere. Anter depicts this aspect of Turkish Kurdistan of the 1930s (Mardin) as well as the 1950s (Diyarbakır) in his memoirs as follows:

“Outside, I mean in the city center, it was prohibited to speak in Kurdish. If they overheard you speaking the language, they would fine one lira per word. It is for this reason that Mardin was converted into a camp of mutes. As people were not able to speak in public, they were trying to understand one another by using hand gestures. [...] Turkish Kurdistan and its heart Diyarbakır were sleeping. Fascist governments had cooled them out; there was not even the slightest wiggling out there. I sensed this and headed to Diyarbakır from Istanbul right away.” (Anter 1991: 29; 1992: 34-35)<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> As a consequence of this social transformation, Gezik mentions the emergence of a new ‘upper group’ (*üst grup*) starting from the mid-1950s who favored speaking Turkish instead of their own mother tongue and remained distant from their own history as well as all those elements of the ‘traditional *seyit* culture’ whose rejection became a key for individual success (2012: 157). Apparently, past *collectivist* loyalties and their system of symbolic values have been replaced by individual aspirations within the peculiar political and social history of Dersim.

<sup>80</sup> Yıldırım portrays his childhood in Diyarbakır through complementary anecdotes that help further understand Anter’s memoirs. Referring to the “*Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!*” (Citizen, speak Turkish!) campaign sponsored by the state, he narrates that even elderly villagers were forced to learn Turkish, those refusing to do so were fined by the municipal police and decided not to venture to the city anymore (Miroğlu 2010: 45). Ekinci also narrates the same pattern of symbolic violence in the public sphere that Kurdish villagers suffered at Lice’s local market. As someone with first-hand experience on the matter, Ekinci would personally translate and assist the villagers in understanding their *new* language (2010: 79).



As a result of the collective trauma produced by the Kurdish revolts on the generation who witnessed and survived them, fear and anxiety found their manifestation in the form of silence. The state's assimilation policy on the upcoming generations was also coherent with symbolic violence systematically exercised throughout Kurdistan. Turkish national historiography was placed as the official truth and reproduced through the national education system. As a result, Kurdish identity and the core elements of its symbolic universe, above all Kurdish language and national history, failed to penetrate the public sphere. Likewise, due to the consequences of cultural traumas, the older generation showed no eagerness to reproduce these elements of the Kurdish symbolic universe in their private sphere. Ekinci's early childhood observations are highly significant with this respect:

"According to the history education we received at school and the Sun-Language Theory<sup>81</sup>, despite the fact that we spoke Kurdish, all Kurds in Lice and the surrounding villages must have been Turks too, just like everyone else in the world. Therefore, we considered ourselves Turkish. [...] Not much time had passed since the Kurdish revolt of 1925. In the memory of generations before me, the remembrances of mass slaughter, tortures, repressions, and cruelties of the post-revolt years were still fresh. Those intellectuals harboring ideas of Kurdish nationalism were killed or exiled. [...] In my family, the idea of belonging to an ethnic origin different from Turkish was not discussed. Before graduating from high school, I had not witnessed any stimulating event that would drive me towards scrutinizing or discussing the very essence of this distinctness. I was not able to perceive what I had experienced through the frame of distinctness." (Ekinci 2010: 124)

During the period of generational silence that continued until the beginning of the 1960s, Kurdish intellectuals in exile took charge of maintaining the 'memory' and transmitting it to the upcoming generations (Bozarslan 2005b: 54). After Martial Law came into force during the suppression of revolts, activities related to Kurdish nationalism were extremely dangerous in Turkey. Intellectuals who had fled to neighboring countries took up this task. Osman Sebrî, who had been jailed when he was a teenager due to his family's sympathetic stance in favor of the Sheikh Said revolt, later actively participated in the Ararat revolt of 1930. Being a member of the *Hoybûn* party, Sebrî tells of his experience fleeing to Syrian Kurdistan and his contact with other party members:

"I was going to Syria hoping that there I would see many patriots. I had heard from a nephew of mine of the existence of a political organization named Xoybun [*Hoybûn*] that was seeking the independence of Kurdistan. I had heard that Bedirxan, Cemîl Pasha, the Ibrahim Pasha families, two sons of Sahîn Beg and Hacoyê Haco were part of this organization. All of them were working toward enlightening the people and their liberation [...] When I asked Celadet [*Bedirxan*] about this [*being a member of Hoybûn*], did I know anything about parties and their objectives, their national and global policies or Kurdish revolts and the reasons that they had failed? Let me say it this way: I did not know any of these issues at that time. The only thing I wanted was to comply with the

---

<sup>81</sup> The Sun-Language Theory (or *Güneş-Dil Teorisi* as it is originally termed in Turkish) was a pseudoscientific linguistic hypothesis claiming that all civilizations and languages in the world derived from Turks and their language, Turkish. It was promoted in order to justify the existence of western-originated loanwords in the Turkish language. All the while, many words of Arabic and Persian origin were gradually abandoned in an attempt to linguistically purify the Turkish language as part of the Kemalist reforms (Lewis 1968: 434-435). Such pseudoscientific activities basing on pan-Turkist ambitions aimed at inventing a solid and secular nation out of a highly complex social structure inherited from the former imperial regime. By extending the historical boundaries of the 'Turkish nation' beyond the history of Islam, Turkish historiography, linguists, and anthropologists were commissioned to reveal and justify the existence of 'Turkish' in pre-Islamic periods (Aydın 1998: 109). For a more detailed and critical revision on the Sun-Language Theory and its implementation, see Beşikçi, İ. (2013[1977b]) *Türk Tarih Tezi, 'Güneş-Dil Teorisi' ve Kürt Sorunu*, İstanbul: İBV Yayınları, Chapters 2, 3 & 4.

rigorous desire I felt to serve my homeland. I had no other goal than this. I learned everything I should have learned from these high-ranking members of Xoybun.” (Sebrî 2012: 125, 128)<sup>82</sup>

Smuggling along the border served to open a gateway between those Kurdish intellectuals living in Syrian Kurdistan (*Rojava* or Western Kurdistan) and Kurdish intellectual youth in the north. Ekinci narrates the experience he had on this matter during his youth:

“[Smugglers] were bringing in a variety of goods from Syria, a French colony then, which could not be found in Turkey, and commercializing them in Lice and the areas surrounding it. In their commutes, they were also in touch with those Kurdish intellectuals who had settled down in Syria as well as the Kurdish organizations led by those very intellectuals. They were both receiving their support and, at the same time, were bringing information and documents on Kurdish political movements. For example, the book named *Dersim İsyanı* [The Dersim Revolt], written by veterinarian Nuri Dersimi, who had played a key role in the Dersim revolt and [later] settled in Syria, was brought by smugglers and distributed discreetly among the Kurdish intellectual youth. When I was on a summer holiday in 1944, this book of Dersimi reached me via the same source. As it was extremely dangerous to possess literature in those days, after having read the book, I did not dare to carry it to Istanbul and gave it back to the source who had brought it to be preserved.” (Ekinci 2010: 55-56)<sup>83</sup>

By defining this period as the ‘period of silence and intimidation’, Kutlay points out that there were only a few tenuous initiatives concerning *Kurdishness*. In such a restricted environment, those attempts were limited to sporadic folkloric events and cultural activities among intellectuals studying in Turkish metropolises (Kutlay 2012: 29).<sup>84</sup> Testimonies by the generation of Kurdish ethnonational revival in Turkey (Anter 1991: 55-57; Kutlay 1998: 49; Ekinci 2010: 153-156) confirm that student dormitories in big Turkish cities such as Istanbul and Ankara in which Kurdish university students from different towns and villages of northern Kurdistan were accommodated as one of few social mechanisms available through which the symbolic elements of Kurdishness were reproduced. Those also served as a melting pot where Kurdish youth from different geographic and cultural backgrounds gathered and interacted with one another, as Yıldırım narrates:

“The *Dicle student dormitory* had a nice aspect: It had brought Van, Hakkari, Urfa, Mardin, and Diyarbakır together. People who were not aware of each other came there and were acquainted with one another in this dormitory. People who were even unaware of where the city of Van was located discovered each other in this dormitory, so to speak. Family structures were already favorable. In most houses, they were speaking Kurdish or Zaza. This being the case, a nationalist movement began to emerge here.” (Yıldırım in Miroğlu 2010: 80)

---

<sup>82</sup> Pervin Cemil, a member of the leading Kurdish intellectual and nationalist Cemil Pasha family, also describes how her family members had to flee to Syria after being released from prison following the Sheikh Said revolt, and how they immediately became members of Hoybûn, continuing their *Kurdish* activities (Kurij 2015: 116-117). Despite his bad experiences and disappointment later with Hoybûn party members (2012: 143-144), the importance of Sebrî’s testimony is that it illustrates the connection between the Sheikh Said and Ararat revolts in organizational terms and national goals. Admitting this fact, Hasan Hişyar Serdî, who participated in both, defines the latter as the continuity of the former (1994: 360).

<sup>83</sup> Kutlay refers to the same book by Dersimi as well, pointing out that he probably obtained it from Syrian Kurds in 1953 (1998: 44). Economic and political activities such as contraband trade or smuggling through the Iraqi and Syrian border appear to have been one of the consequences emerging from the difference between the social reality and artificial separation of frontiers (Bozarslan, M.E. 2002[1966]: 48; Beşikçi 2014[1967]: 291-292).

<sup>84</sup> Orhan indicates that there were only a few journals in this period: *Dicle Kaynağı* (Source of Tigris, 1948) was one of the short-lived journals published bi-weekly in the 1940s. Even a decade later, the panorama was not different with the exception of other short-lived journals such as *Şark Mecmuası* (Journal of Orient), *Şarkın Sesi* (The Voice of Orient), and *Şark Postası* (The Orient Post) (2016: 47), which come to be yet further evidence of social silence on Kurdish matters in this period.

The same student dormitories, where Turkish and Kurdish students stayed together, also provided an atmosphere for identity encounters and positioning due to conflicts between different groups. Having been subjected to discriminatory attitudes from their Turkish colleagues, most students coming from Kurdistan acquired the early seeds of a Kurdish national consciousness while staying in those dormitories. Ekinci speaks of how he got familiarized with the 'Kurdish problem', of which he had not been aware before, during his visits to the Dicle Student Dormitory:

"At the Dicle student dormitory, I came across the Kurdish problem, something which I was not quite aware of; I had not been conscious of it until then. The primary reason for which I found myself in this situation emerged from tense speeches made by my Turkist-*Turançı* colleagues at the Medicine Institute's student dormitory. While having a conversation with my Turkish friend Niyazi Demirkol, with whom I was sharing the same study room, I told him that my aunts, their children, my uncle's children, and my younger brothers did not even know a word in Turkish. Thereupon, turning towards me, he responded, 'Those who do not know Turkish are not Turks, and they have no right to live in Turkey.' I was in shock. I realized that in the country where we were, our right to live was not bestowed, that we were not treated as citizens. My thoughts grew stronger in explicit or implicit conversations with my friends with whom I was in touch at the Dicle student dormitory. Now I was conscious that we were living in an environment where we were not treated as citizens; our fundamental rights were denied; speaking in our mother tongue was not respected. From that day on, I contacted my friends at the Dicle student dormitory more frequently." (Ekinci 2010: 164-165)

It was not a coincidence that the most fervent defendants of the first macro-judicial case against 'Kurdism' (*Kürtçülük*), a concept used for those who defend Kurdish national demands, emerged after the two-decade silence among those young Kurdish intellectuals whose national consciousness flaggingly awakened in this limited environment they interacted with one another in western metropolises of Turkey. These initial activities were also the early seeds of the Kurdish ethnic revival in Turkey, led by this new generation entelechy.

*b. The 49ers: A political generation?*

The *49ers* incident and the subsequent trial took place as a result of the state's concern over the growing Kurdish consciousness among the gradually flourishing Kurdish intellectuals and university students. The latter was accused of allegedly having formed an organization backed by foreign powers that aimed to bring down the national unity of the Republic of Turkey. Public and media attention on the *49ers Trial*, which lasted for several years, was considered the first Kurdish-related public incident after the Dersim massacre of 1938 (Güneş 2012: 52), through which the generational silence gradually began to loosen after two decades.

Describing the *49ers* as an organized political-nationalist movement and the defendants of the trial as a political generation would be an assertive argument to claim. Testimonies by those individuals who were prosecuted in the trial tend to refute such claims in their later published memoirs. As emphasized before, undoubtedly among those young intellectuals, there was a growing sense of *mission* for the Kurdish national identity that was sporadically manifested through cultural activities;

however, there is no qualitative evidence that such tendencies were visible among people in Kurdistan and the ideological level and willingness to form an organized movement was in no way mature enough at the time. One of the defendants of the trial and a leading Kurdish political figure in later years, Canip Yıldırım, depicts the situation among young Kurdish intellectuals then and the general atmosphere of fear among his social surroundings when it came to Kurdistan activities:

“[It was] an affection of ‘we are Kurds’. But that was all, nothing more than this. [It was] A sense of belonging to *Kurdishness*. I mean, nobody said ‘let’s get organized and so forth’. It was only on an ideal basis, the emergence of a utopia, an idea, getting to know Kurdish history, and understanding it. We were quite far away from those things. [...] For example, our first nationalist movement emerged after the 27 May [1960 *coup d’état*]. Only when 27 May happened, we began to give Kurdish names to our children. Most of those names were rejected. [...] Kurdish movements existed in thoughts, in minds, you hear and think about them. You have an idea as you are an intellectual. You go to Istanbul, to Ankara, and people there regard you as Kurd. Then you head back to your hometown, and this time your father scolds you, ‘What the hell are you doing, bub? Son, they’ll ruin us, they’ll screw us up!’ It means the people did not associate themselves with the movement; apparently, they failed to make people affiliate of it.” (in Miroğlu 2010: 65-66, 81)

Collective activities and initiatives organized by those who showed more sensitivity towards the Kurdish culture and language were irregular<sup>85</sup> due to the legal and practical impossibilities in political terms for exercising and organizing such thoughts. Such cultural activities as were the *Dicle Gecesi* (Tigris Night), organized by Musa Anter, during which Kurdish dancers in national dresses were performing folkloric events for the Kurdish audience, played a pioneering role in this realm (1991: 60). Kutlay also draws a similar enthusiastic picture among Kurds during the *Doğu Geceleri* (Eastern Nights) in Ankara in the early 1950s, during which the silence imposed on *Kurdishness* in the social sphere developed into an atmosphere of relative ease:

“The *Doğulular* [Easterners]<sup>86</sup>, essentially Kurds, in Ankara were flooding into those fun nights. Having experienced long-lasting oppression, we were gathering in a relatively democratic environment. People were fearful, but they were finding one another. [...] In those years, what made us feel excited and look more for one another were folkloric and cultural festivals in local settings in the evenings celebrated after years of silence. We were singing our folk songs and performing folk dances. Folk songs were in Turkish, but those who listened to them knew that they were ours; they were from our region. Every other element of those songs except its language (!) was Kurdish. With all of their elements, their spirit, their rhythm, they were Kurdish folk songs. [...] We did not consider ourselves as if we were from an outland city; in these types of gatherings and those of some big towns of the East and Southeast, we showed interest and participated as if they were our own ‘nights’. The *Davul* [drum] and *zurna* were taking our breath away as if they were the symbols of being a Kurd. Iraqi Kurds studying in Ankara were also participating in those *nights*.” (Kutlay 1998: 49)

---

<sup>85</sup> A limited attempt of forming a group with a specific objective took place at the Dicle student dormitory that Musa Anter names as the ‘*Kürtleri Kurtarma Cemiyeti*’ (Rescue Society for Kurds), established informally by Anter and few others in order to help those assimilated Kurdish students in the dormitory recover their Kurdish identity. Anter notes that he and his friends within this group swore on a ‘Kurdish flag and a gun’ for loyalty to the cause of this group (1991: 58-59). While it was a unique example that lacked a social reflection at the time, the initiative led by Anter and his friends illustrates concerns by some intellectuals of the period for the ethnic survival of Kurds. Ekinci also stresses that it was known that there were some demands on the recognition of democratic rights, Kurdish language and culture, but there was no concrete attempts or initiatives to address those issues explicitly. The only thing he witnessed was some numbers of the journal *Hawar* published in Syria, which made him and his friends feel excited as it was written in the Kurdish language (2010: 157-158).

<sup>86</sup> In the following pages of his memoirs, Kutlay explains the significance of the word ‘Easterners’: “We could not introduce ourselves as Kurd explicitly, we were saying ‘Easterner’, but it was obvious what it meant” (1998: 62). The expression is still commonly used today, particularly among those who prefer not to employ the word ‘Kurd’ or ‘Kurdish’.

'Kurdism' activities in the early years of Kurdish revival were limited to those sporadic cultural events that took a while to evolve into a political movement led by a new generation entelechy. Although this evolution mainly had to see with the developments of Turkish politics, there was an evident influence of developments taking place in other parts of divided Kurdistan that need to be addressed. While the Kurdish revival was experiencing its initial phases in Turkey through these loosely organized social activities by young intellectuals, political progress made in a much more organized manner in Iraqi Kurdistan also impacted those young Kurdish nationalists.

c. *The influences of Mustafa Barzani's upheaval among Turkey's Kurds*

One significant occurrence that influenced Kurdish intellectuals in Turkey in this period was the *coup d'état* in Iraq and Mullah Mustafa Barzani's return to Iraqi Kurdistan. After the short-lived Republic of Mahabad led by Qazi Muhammad in the mid-1940s, Kurdish nationalism had also fallen into silence in Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan (Bozarslan 2009: 44). Mustafa Barzani's political and military success converted Kurdish nationalism into a mass movement among southern Kurds. The admiration and loyalty towards his heroic personality, his traditionally appreciated position as a son of a sheikh, and a chieftain consequently strengthened the idea of Kurdistan as a nation that soon acquired a strong emotional attachment, independent from Barzani's idolism (Van Bruinessen 1992: 316).

After long years of silence, Barzani's stance was also perceived as a flourishing hope among Turkey's Kurdish intellectuals, who accelerated their efforts under the relative atmosphere of freedom following 27 May 1960.<sup>87</sup> As the leading figure of Kurdish national revival in Turkey, Anter describes the enthusiasm and excitement upon Barzani's advancement that made him decide to publish *İleri Yurt* (Advanced Country) in the northern Kurdish capital of Diyarbakır:

"There had been a *coup d'état* in Iraq, and Barzani had returned. Happy days were expected for Kurds there. The Iraqi state recognized the Kurdish flag; the fact that Iraqi people consisted of Arabs and Kurds was stated in the constitution. All Kurdish cultural activities were permitted. Newspapers in Kurdish were being published, and there was an education in Kurdish at schools. Naturally, this situation influenced the situation in Turkish Kurdistan as well. At this time, I decided to go to Diyarbakır again to publish a newspaper." (Anter 1991: 140)

The impacts of Mullah Mustafa Barzani's movement was not an instantaneous light, but rather a continuing fire affecting the young generation entelechy of Kurds in Turkey. Having been a member of this new generation at the time, Mehdi Zana, a future influential Kurdish politician, affirms that new

---

<sup>87</sup> Although Qazi Muhammad's Republic of Mahabad had a certain impact on Turkey's young Kurdish intellectuals, its short life also provoked disillusion. Mustafa Barzani's movement, on the other hand, was perceived as a total and continuing struggle that had concrete reverberations in the north (Aydın & Taşkın 2017: 172). Ekinci also exemplifies this influence through the foundation of T-KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party-Turkey/North), initially led by Kurdish lawyer Faik Bucak, and subsequently by Sait Elçi of the 49'ers circle (2010: 620-621). The political dimensions of Barzani's influence are also underlined and affirmed by scholars (Barkey & Fuller 1998: 49; McDowall 2004: 408; Bozarslan 2009: 51) as well as other testimonies (Kutlay 1998: 64, 126; Miroğlu 2010: 127) analyzed in this work. Advances and consequent failures of Barzani in Iraqi Kurdistan continued to have a significant impact on Kurdish movements in Turkey through the following decade.

mediums like radio transmission '*Kürdistan'ın Sesi*' (The Voice of Kurdistan) were serving the young Kurds in Turkey who were interested in following the latest developments and nationalist progress in the south (2014[1991]: 34-35), something which emotionally impacted him to such a degree that he finally came up with a symbolic action plan against anti-Barzani propaganda in Turkey. His enthusiasm was also the early signs of the desire for taking more concrete actions among youth:

"The fact that there was a Kurdish movement had caught my attention, and I adopted a tendency towards Kurdishness. I could not take my eyes off it. I was wondering what would happen. [As if] I was dying with each *peshmerga* who died and was fighting alongside each *peshmerga*. My heart accompanied them. I was thinking to myself, 'wish I were with them right now'. [...] Upon hearing these nefarious comments on our people, I thought that it was necessary to do something. I came up with the idea to prepare a banner and hang it up somewhere over the main street. I got rolling immediately. Along with my friends, we prepared a banner and hung it on the wall of the office of the Mufti located on the main street. We did this along with M. Güllü and N. Derman at around midnight. On the banner, one could read 'Long-live Barzani, damn with those who do not like him!' This was a manifestation of the reaction we had, the smoldering anger we had deep inside. I had no fear in my heart. Doing something, a desire to look after the people, overcame the sense of cowardliness. I was ready to do anything for my people." (Zana 2014[1991]: 32)

Nevertheless, developments in Iraqi Kurdistan and their echoes in Turkey equally worried the Turkish authorities and fueled their fear of the potential Kurdish awakening in Turkey, which ended up with the imprisonment of 50 Kurdish students and intellectuals. After the death of one of the detainees, Emin Batu, the trial was termed the *49ers trial*. Confinement in prison served to consolidate the ideas they had concerning their future political activities, as well as drew the line that came to separate different generation units between left-wing revolutionary and right-wing conservative Kurds.<sup>88</sup>

### **3.2.2. The political socialization of the Kurdish left towards autonomy**

#### *a. The TIP experience and Eastern Rallies*

The 49ers incident and trial marked the first step towards a revitalization process of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, which grew stronger throughout the following decades due to several period and cohort effects. In the beginning, leading figures of the Kurdish movement in this generation followed a pragmatic and ultimately pacifist political line, in which the attitude taken by Turkish political parties towards the Kurdish issue played the paramount role:

"It was not possible to go to the people merely based on the Kurdish issue. Had we said something like that, in some places, we would have even been lynched. For this reason, we calculated what legal parties in Turkey could have offered to Kurds. The idea of an independent Kurdish organization was not anything we were discussing. [...] We kept an eye on Iraq, being curious about what Barzani would do. However, nobody was thinking about an armed struggle in Turkey. We looked around, when a new political party was established, if they were sympathetic to Kurds, we went and joined this party." (Yıldırım in Miroğlu 2010: 127)

---

<sup>88</sup> This separation is described by all three activists (Anter 1991: 164-165; Kutlay 1998: 84; Yıldırım in Miroğlu 2010: 141-142) who were leading figures within the leftist nucleus and later showed their support for future Kurdish revolutionary movements. Political radicalization or tendencies towards violence was unlikely to emerge during this period except for Sait Kırmızıtoprak (*alias* Dr. Şivan), who was also among those in the leftist group of the 49ers and later joined Mulla Mustafa Barzani's armed movement in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Throughout the 1960s, significant figures among those who had been prosecuted in the 49ers trial got involved in political activities in a much active and organized way. The *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* (TİP – Workers’ Party of Turkey) was the first political initiative in which Kurds were present. Its organizational activities were first launched in Diyarbakır and extended throughout other Kurdish cities and towns over time. They had relative success in gaining the support of some Kurdish nationalist religious *mullahs* (Muslim preachers) after the local elections in 1963 (Ekinci 2010: 339-365). The party’s official program was considering the *eastern* and *south-eastern* problem as a question of chronic economic underdevelopment whose solution was underlined as a priority within the framework of Turkey’s national and territorial unity as explicitly underlined:

“Eastern development would be among the services to be implemented immediately and rigorously by the Workers’ Party of Turkey while carrying into effect the development of the country. [...] In parallel with the economic backwardness of the region, our citizens here are also in a backward position in social and cultural terms. Furthermore, those who speak Kurdish or Arabic or those who belong to the Alevism creed are subjected to discrimination for their status. As indicated under the Art. 3 of the Constitution, the Workers’ Party of Turkey expresses the indivisibility of Turkey as a whole with its people and territory and categorically refuses any kind of separatism and regionalism.” (TİP Party Program 1965: 110-111)<sup>89</sup>

The *Doğu Mitingleri* (Eastern Rallies) organized by Kurdish representatives of TİP, principally Mehdi Zana, Naci Kutlay, Kemal Burkay, and M. Ali Aslan, between 1967-1969 were the first social reflections of a political organization of those experienced intellectuals from the 49ers generation.<sup>90</sup> These developments also brought about the first introduction of Kurdish nationalism in the social sphere of northern Kurdistan after the two-decade silence following the cultural traumas of the last revolts. As a social scientist and political activist in this period who actively observed Eastern Rallies, İsmail Beşikçi makes the following analysis on the widespread participation of Kurds in those rallies:

“Consciousness and participation of wide popular masses are the most important feature and consequence of the Eastern Rallies. The fundamental point here is that the Eastern Rallies have accomplished a social goal and focused in this direction. Individuals from different social classes participated in meetings and socialized. Alongside those who have no or little land or those who have nothing at all are people who control feuds such as aghas and sheikhs. All participated and shared their thoughts.” (2014 [1969]: 197)

In his structural analysis on the Eastern Rallies, Beşikçi affirms that those rallies directed much attention to the question of underdevelopment of the ‘East’, provoked by factors such as rapid population growth and a lack of agrarian reform (strong presence of sheikhdом and aghadom), regarded as the fundamental problems of the region (2014[1969]: 81-90). While this was the general perspective of those who organized the rallies, most of whom were TİP members, the slogans on

---

<sup>89</sup> The political program of TİP can be consulted at the library of the Turkish Grand National Assembly’s Open Access Collection: <https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/xmlui/handle/11543/628>

<sup>90</sup> As pointed out earlier, whether the 49’ers were a political generation remains a debatable issue. Here the term *generation* refers to those activists and intellectuals belonging to a specific birth cohort. It is understood from their testimonies that the Eastern Rallies signaled the emergence of a new cohort in Kurdish society, consisting of several generation units made up of both left-wing and right-wing Kurds for the equal rights of Kurds in general (Kutlay 1998: 177).

banners carried throughout those rallies reflected more than chronic sociopolitical problems, urging a direct demand for citizenship rights and expressing disenchantment due to the excessive presence of the state's coercive forces in Kurdistan: "Easterners! Make an effort and struggle for your legal rights! Demanding your rights does not harm the unity", "The Easterner will surely make you recognize their humanness and citizenship", "We do not want gendarmeries, we want teachers", "We do not want police stations, we want schools", "In the West factories and roadways, in the East commandos and police stations", "We do not want butt strokes, we ask for a hand" (Beşikçi *ibid.* 25-26). Being from the younger generation of the 'Easterners' within TİP at the time, Mehdi Zana describes the atmosphere he observed during an Eastern Rally organized in his native Silvan, a remote district of Diyarbakır. Zana's observations illustrate the awakening of Kurdish youth, the background of the participants in rallies, and the growing reaction of Kurdish nationalistic youth towards Turkish leftists who reduced the 'Eastern problem' to merely structural issues and underdevelopment:

"Two days later, there were waves of people heading to the rally. People were coming from all regions. Among those who came, university students and *mullahs* constituted the majority. Some university youth of nationalist tendencies had expressed their objection to the rally. As we were organizing the rally, they were constantly repeating, 'This is a rally of Kurds; we do not want the leftists to come and leave their mark on the rally.'" (Zana 2004 [1991]: 92)<sup>91</sup>

Those were the initial signs of the future divorce between Turkish leftists and Kurdish nationalists. This tendency among the younger generation Kurdish nationalists under the TİP structure would gradually take them in a new direction, giving way to the first autonomous movement of Kurds in Turkey.

#### *b. The emergence of autonomous Kurdish political activism in Turkey*

The enthusiasm and encouragement during the Eastern Rallies among the younger generation of Kurds bolstered the idea of forming an autonomous Kurdish political movement focusing on the Kurdish national question. The disappointment and lack of trust towards TİP's Turkish socialists were followed by the formation of the *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* (DDKO - Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths). The initiative was taken by young Kurdish members within TİP's 'Eastern Group', and after having debated the idea, older generation intellectuals also offered their support (Miroğlu 2010: 192). One of the founding members of DDKO, Mümtaz Kotan, explains how the young generation decided to leave the Turkish socialists as two sub-groups within TİP tried to abuse the 'Easterners':

---

<sup>91</sup> Zana adds that he firmly refused this approach of young Kurdish nationalists at that moment. At a later time, after being transferred from the Eskişehir Prison to the Aydın Prison, Zana seems to have adopted a view of imprisonment of the Kurdish national identity by the Turkish socialist movement as understood from the following lines he wrote in a letter addressed to his wife Leyla: "All the time they [*Turks*] spoke, we applauded, we ran behind them, they talked, wrote and we memorized. Was not that for this reason, we contradicted our own Kurdish reality, and in the name of socialism, revolutionism, we unwittingly betrayed our own people with such an attitude of denial?" (Zana 1995: 56). Mehdi Zana later became one of the founders of Diyarbakır DDKO, and his wife, Leyla Zana, became one of the leading Kurdish politicians in the Turkish National Assembly in the early 1990s. Both also faced long jail terms for their political stance in later periods of their life.



“Extreme level of actions were marketed in incredibly unbelievable ways in order to gain the support of the ‘Eastern Youth’ by using such slogans as ‘We are brothers, this country is for all of us’, ‘We are an indivisible whole’. [...] We were not blind; we could read, see, and listen. We had opened the pages of history. The memories and remembrances inherited from our grandparents and parents were right in front of our eyes. Within the general framework of socialism or in the works of Lenin, presumably, it would be possible to find a remedy for our situation too! We would not work for others all the time. We decided to have meetings among us and create an organization. We would split up from the Turkish ‘Left’. It was a divorce; our separation was both legitimate and necessary. It is not necessary to discuss the gossip and accusations beyond this. In fact, after the 1967 Eastern Rallies, our duty had separated a bit from them; we had focused on the specific demands of our region and our nation and our own problems.” (Kotan 2003: 271, *emphasis in the original*)<sup>92</sup>

University dormitories and associations located in big Turkish cities, such as Istanbul and Ankara, continued being common places for political debates and meetings in this period as well. Nevertheless, referring to Kotan’s narrative, the progress made in terms of organization and structuring was also attention-worthy. DDKO aspired to bring right-wing and leftist Kurds together to accomplish further organization of Kurdish youth in northern Kurdistan, and both leftist and conservative Kurds from previous generations were contacted and actively participated in meetings. Apart from universities and dormitories, private homes where activists of older generations resided as well as the famously-known coffee houses, like the Dinçer coffeehouse in Ankara’s Cebeci district, where plenty of meetings were held, were reportedly in use (Kotan 2003: 273-275).<sup>93</sup>

The atmosphere of the early 1970s marked the birth of a political generation in northern Kurdistan: DDKO had been created, and Kurdish national activism had drawn a vivid portrait through this newly born organization. As previously mentioned, Mullah Mustafa Barzani’s armed struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan inevitably influenced young Kurdish intellectuals in the north, whose ideas and aspirations would later be developed by upcoming generations. The direct impact of this influence was best reflected with the foundation of T-KDP in the mid-1960s, the most influential Kurdish movement in Turkey during the second half of the decade (Jongerden & Akkaya 2011: 125; Güneş & Zeydanlıoğlu 2014: 265).<sup>94</sup> Notwithstanding, before the 1971 Memorandum, the implementation of violent repertoires did not seem to have been considered as a means of accomplishing the goal of national liberation. An earlier defendant and prisoner of the 49ers, and one of the leading militants of T-KDP in

---

<sup>92</sup> Mümtaz and Orhan Kotan along with Ruşen Arslan, İbrahim Güçlü, and Hatice Yaşar founded the *Rızgarî* (Liberation) organization in 1975 that defended the struggle against Turkish, Iranian, and Arab colonialisms over the four parts of a divided Kurdistan (Orhan 2016: 54-55).

<sup>93</sup> The use of such places continued during the following years among Kurdish youth in the urban areas in Kurdistan as well. Canip Yıldırım brings an example of this tendency mentioning the Abide teahouse in Diyarbakır, where future Kurdish organizations held meetings overnight (2010: 206). Generational continuity is observed in two founding meetings: the first one was held in Tark Ziya Ekinci’s house in Ankara, while the second took place at the house where M. Emin Bozarslan was temporarily residing in Istanbul (Kotan 2003: 275).

<sup>94</sup> N. A. Özcan underlines the role of the Naqshbandi religious order connections during the expansion of the Barzani movement as a result of the *Hür subaylar* (Free officers) who were in close contact with cities near Turkey’s border with Iraq: Mardin, Hakkâri, Van, and Diyarbakir. The scholar also affirms the influence of the southern Kurdish struggle in the north, most notably through KDP’s illegal branch office in Silopi in 1963 under the command of T-KDP led by Said Elçi (1999: 15-19).

this period, Sait Kirmızıtoprak (alias *Dr. Şivan*), defines the aspirations of Kurdish intellectuals and militants in early 1970, as well as the pacifist methods to be implemented to achieve them:

“Kurdish intellectuals and nationalist militants, following the profound desire and demands of the Kurdish people, are determined to carry out the ongoing *democratic struggle* with all their strength. [...] Such *democratic means as political parties, rallies, press conferences, folkloric performances, progressive associations*, and the such have become the unique focal point of this struggle. No ‘police trap!’ and ‘group of junta adventurers’ can derail and sabotage this positive, rational, realistic, and democratic struggle method of the Kurdish people.” (Dr. Şivan 2014[1970]: 116, *emphasis added*)<sup>95</sup>

Nevertheless, after the military memorandum in Turkey on 12 March 1971, the atmosphere of relative freedom of the 1960s was over, and repression against Kurdish political activities as well as Turkish revolutionary student movements increased remarkably. The deterioration in fundamental rights and mobilization would also shape the understanding of militancy among existing Kurdish movements as well as the political socialization of upcoming generations.

*c. The 12 March 1970 memorandum and radicalization of Kurdish national movement(s)*

The idea of an armed struggle for Kurdish national liberation following the revitalization of Kurdish nationalism in the late 1950s was first brought about a decade later in the early 1970s. This idea was crudely carried out in the climate of the post-1971 military memorandum by numerous illegal organizations as a result of the circumstances arisen from particular weaknesses within the new central government (Van Bruinessen 1992: 33). Kurdish mobilization through a variety of organizations now wholly independent from the Turkish left grew to represent different generation units in Kurdish society, introducing new generation styles, among which the use of violence was also present.

The 1971 memorandum swept away the atmosphere of relative freedom of the 1960s and, conversely, brought repressive measures upon those who manifested any kind of leftist aspiration.<sup>96</sup> For the political life of Turkey, this was the beginning of a spiral reaction between the state with all of its coercive apparatuses on one side and revolutionary movements that, within a time, demonstrated a rapid radicalization on the other. This sharp transition from pacifist mobilization to violent

---

<sup>95</sup> In the upcoming pages of his book, Dr. Şivan’s skepticism towards the idea of ‘taking a position of legitimate self-defense’ through his call for unity to Turkish intellectuals and politicians (*ibid.* 129-130) becomes apparent. As understood from the preface of APEC publishing company (Stockholm) that edited Dr. Şivan’s writings in book format in 1997, the author wrote these lines in Iraqi Kurdistan only a year before the 12 Mart 1971 Memorandum and the subsequent military intervention in Turkish politics (See the preface in Dr. Şivan 2014[1970]: 308). After this occurrence, Turkish revolutionary movements in general and Kurdish liberation movements, in particular, got significantly radicalized as a result of the repressive measures taken by the regime, which, according to Beetham’s typology (1991: 205-206), was considered politically illegitimate.

<sup>96</sup> The most significant changes in the 1960 Constitution were over the ‘Essence of Fundamental Rights’ article, which was modified to ‘Essence, Limitation, and Abuse of Fundamental Rights’. Article 11, which regulated fundamental rights and duties, article 22, which regulated freedom of the press; article 30, which regulated detention and arrest, article 111 regarding the National Security Council, article 120 on academic autonomy, and articles 136, 138, 139, 140 and 141, which regulated civil and military courts (including the Supreme Court and Military Supreme Court) were profoundly changed in favor of an ‘indivisible unity of the Turkish homeland and nation’ (Aydın & Taşkın 2017: 224-227). This restricted the freedom of certain political activities, designating the State Security Courts as the competent judicial-military authority for such cases.

repertoires for political aspirations was observed in the existing Kurdish movements as well. While until the year of the 1971 Memorandum, *Dr. Şivan* was assertively defending a struggle through merely democratic means; a year later, on 26 August 1972, his colleague, Necmettin Büyükkaya (alias *Neco*), a young political activist from the DDKO generation, expressed his involvement in the T-KDP, clarifying the party's position in terms of a politico-military orientation with a clear emphasis on the principles of international solidarity with other leftist-revolutionary movements:

“On 10 July 1971, I joined the ‘Parti Demokrati Kurdistan (Lî Tırkiya)’, which means ‘Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey’. This party is the sole socialist revolutionary underground military party of Kurds in Turkey. It defends the obligation of armed struggle for the rights of Kurds in Turkey. *It believes that the parliamentary option hypnotizes the peoples of Turkey and [instead] suggests popular armed war as the way of struggle.* [...] It stands up for firm solidarity with both Turkish revolutionary organizations as well as other Middle Eastern organizations, especially with Palestinian ones.” (Büyükkaya 2008 [1992]: 24, *emphasis added*)

The idea of an anti-colonial struggle against colonizing powers (Turks, Iranians, and Arabs) and Kurdish aristocracy considered their extensions in Kurdistan through an armed struggle was brought about. As a generation style, this view was also adopted by the most significant Kurdish movement of the period in Turkey, T-KDP, during the eruption of others in the mid-1970s. Previously cited T-KDP militant *Neco* also gives insights on the use of revolutionary violence as a political strategy with this respect:

“Our policy is to determine our national personality (our future) and to prepare our people for an armed uprising by gathering all of them except the feudal and traitorous co-conspirators in order to accomplish the unity and sovereignty of our country. [...] Then, later on, gradually increasing its intensity, political propaganda would turn into armed political propaganda. And advancing step-by-step towards a war of resistance would inaugurate the phase of an uprising. [...] It is necessary to establish, develop, and strengthen Popular Resistance Units (Armed Popular Liberation Powers) in order to take the initiative.” (Büyükkaya 2008[1992]: 245)<sup>97</sup>

Notwithstanding, T-KDP was not able to put this policy into practice. Throughout the 1970s, generation units of Kurdish nationalism found themselves in a highly atomized position as plenty of Kurdish political parties and organizations came into being: KUK and KİP derived from the T-KDP; there were other left-wing movements such as *Kawa*, *Rızgarî* and *Ala Rızgarî*, which were more sympathetic to TİP; TKSP/*Özgürlük Yolu* (Path to Freedom) led by Kemal Burkay preferred to stay in the legal field and; finally, there were those organizations such as *Tekoşîn* and *Stêrka Sor* whose roots were found in illegal Turkish revolutionary leftist groups and organizations (Jongerden & Akkaya 2011: 125). The PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* – Kurdistan Workers’ Party), then self-denominated as *Kürdistan Devrimcileri* (Kurdistan Revolutionaries) or as popularly known in its initial phases *Apocular*, was among this last group and showed a rapid development against the military rule in Turkey.

---

<sup>97</sup> In a letter that Büyükkaya had written to his brother, he describes repressive measures by the state in close collaboration with Kurdish feudal aghas and sheikhs against Kurdish patriots and communists by highlighting examples from his native Siverek and Diyarbakır. He provides utilitarian justifications for the use of coercion by expressing the importance of the military capacity of an organization in the eyes of peasants for being deemed legitimate (2008[1992]: 39-40).

## **4. Generational Development of Violence in the ‘Basque National Liberation Movement’**

### **4.1. The late Franco era political atmosphere in the Basque Country**

The character of regime violence during the 1970s did not bring significant changes, neither in quantitative nor qualitative terms; however, in this decade, ETA violence showed a gradual but significant increase. Following the first organized political assassination, the execution of Melitón Manzananas, ETA caught much more public attention than it had done through its previous symbolic *ekintzas* (actions). However, this action carried out against an infamous figure who, in a way, represented the repressive character of the regime in the eyes of Basque nationalists, also sent the first signal to the state to handle the issue before it spiraled out of control.<sup>98</sup>

#### **4.1.1. The birth of a political cohort: The Burgos Trial and re-politicization of the public sphere**

The Burgos Trial of December 1970, in which 16 Basque militants were taken to a military court, was the first show of force by the regime in this decade. Six capital punishment sentences and a total of 752 years in prison for the condemned provoked a reaction through protest movements not only in the Basque Country but all over Spain and in European cities as well. The reaction of the Spanish state against protests was the continuation of its three-year state of exception; this was interpreted as a sign of weakness rather than power and, therefore, further encouraged new forms of political opposition against the regime (Villacañas 2015: 560-561).

The Burgos Trial and the subsequent socio-political atmosphere provoked a radical change for political mobilizations in the Basque Country. Social silence imposed by the state right after the Spanish Civil War had already been interrupted through sporadic early actions of symbolic value carried out by EGIN/ETA, coinciding with the Basque national revival. The Burgos Trial, however, raised the level of mobilization far higher by provoking mass public protests against the regime, converting the street into a political arena (Pérez-Agote 1984: 109-117; Gurrutxaga 1985: 273) In this sense, the Burgos Trial, supposed to be a show of the state’s strength, in fact, unintentionally offered grounds for a newly-born political generation and intensive political activism daily. Arriaga points out that the socio-political atmosphere following the trial indicates the emergence of a new political generation, whose eagerness to fight corresponded to ETA, the unique organization with sufficient practical foundations able to orchestrate the desires and *vision* of this political generation:

---

<sup>98</sup> The number of detained, jailed, and exiled show a notable increase especially starting from 1968, which coincided with the execution of Manzananas, and reached its peak in 1975. Gurrutxaga underlines that a total number of 4,265 detained, 632 jailed, and 518 escaped or exiled were noted only in this year, and the number of imprisonments for 1973 and 1975 in the southern Basque Country reached around 70% of the total numbers of those who were in entire Spain (1985: 305-307). ETA’s claim of responsibility as an organization (ETA 1979, Vol. 7: 532-533) refusing any individual role in the action during the Burgos Trial (Alcedo 1996: 162) resulted in support by the Basque public opinion towards ETA.

"Politics is sacralized; it becomes a daily task, a meaningful activity. The most diverse sectors experience participatory assemblies; the labor and anti-repressive strikes which *Bazquize* the labor movement and moved the national movement to the left proliferate: the street becomes a privileged space and a forum for political actions; while the elder living through occurrences in an anxiously expectant attitude, they put the dial on Radio Paris. And ETA is there, at the center of social reality. The power of the armed struggle, despite the importance of its symbolic role, is above all factual, lies in its ability to be present." (Arriaga 1997: 69)

These protest movements became the most significant success of ETA's famous action-repression-action spiral strategy, which had not been fruitful in the organization's previous attempts among labor groups (Lecours 2007: 80). Having been the only politico-military organization confronting to Franco regime since the end of the Civil War in the Basque Country, and therefore accumulated a certain level of emotional adhesion by the Basque youth, ETA took advantage of the trial as well as the indiscriminate repressive measures taken by the regime. The expression of 'Gora Euskadi Askatuta' at the end of Mario Onaindia's declaration during the trial and his singing of *Eusko Gudariak* by his colleagues in front of the tribunal were signs of having overcome the fear which had long paralyzed Basque activism. Eugenio Etxebeste (alias *Antxon*), who first joined ETA-pm's distinctively famous *bereziak* (special) commandos and then became one of the historical leaders of ETA-m in the 1980s, explains in *abertzale* left daily *Egin* how the Burgos Trial played a decisive role in his life during a time when he was a promising natural science student:

"...there comes a time when you cannot divide yourself in two because both the one as well as the other demand a total dedication. And I end up leaning towards the political task, giving priority to the liberation of our people over that other possible contribution of mine in the field of applied sciences. This could be placed towards the seventies, around the Burgos Trial, which had a great impact on all of us, since, at that time, I was still living on my inclination towards scientific work, but I could no longer go combining with a growing dedication to the cause of our national and social liberation. So, I gradually abandoned the other..." (Interview with Eugenio Etxebeste, originally published 8 March 1989 in *Egin*, quoted from *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 1993, Vol.8: 245)<sup>99</sup>

For those who started to acquire national consciousness through political activism originating out of the Burgos Trial, the protagonist of the trial, ETA, soon converted into a myth representing the struggle and resistance among Basques (Alcedo 1996: 342). ETA lit the way for an organized movement to achieve national independence and promised social justice based on class struggle in the absence of other political alternatives under the iron hand of the Franco regime. *B-1/06*, who was one of the historical female militants in ETA who was born in a Spanish immigrant family with a clear anti-Basque stance in a small Basque nationalist town in Gipuzkoa, describes her socialization environment during the Burgos Trial, which largely shaped her perception concerning the organization at that time:

"For example, the Burgos Trial. I remember that at school, from the town next door, from middle school, we prepared a big general strike for all the students. I remember going to school, and they gave us papers. Well, I took one of those papers that they had given us the day before the general strike, I took it home, and my father told me that if I participated in the strike, I wouldn't come home! [At that time, what did you think of the organization ETA?] I didn't have a clear vision; I heard that there were detentions, I heard that they had hung

---

<sup>99</sup> For similar testimonies regarding the impacts of the Burgos Trial on the political socialization of later period ETA-m and ETA-pm militants, please see Interview N<sup>o</sup> 23 in Reinares 2001: 77; and Interviews G-5 and B-2 in Alcedo 1996: 92, 99.

*ikurriñas* around town, in my town they carried out an armed action, which didn't seem to me very... [correct] Well, I mean 'but why does it happen?', such things made you question things. Yes, I knew the organization was already there; I was already asking questions. I was also telling my father 'damn, they also defend the workers!' My father was an ordinary worker, [he was saying] 'How the hell are they going to defend the workers if the only thing they want is independence!', 'Yes, they do, but they bring two things together!' At that time, well, I was discovering that world." (B-I/06, female, 57, Gipuzkoa)<sup>100</sup>

Whether due to these protests, pressure from the international community against the final verdict of the trial, or a combination of both, the Franco regime consequently had to back down by suspending capital punishments, which was also interpreted as a sign of weakness of the regime by anti-Francoist movements. Despite its ongoing intense internal disputes and divisions, ETA continued to employ its politico-military strategy to agitate and further politicize Basque nationalist youth and workers.

#### **4.1.2. Cohort effects on Basque violence: Class question and ETA in labor disputes**

Taking the politico-military actions in this period into account, one observes that ETA<sup>101</sup> sought a pioneering role for the ongoing class struggle as well as the Basque national liberation. As the earlier experiences showed, although some workers were eager to support the mobilization, they remained far from associating themselves with ETA's Labor Front (*Frente obrero*), which was related to 'terrorism'. The Labor Front overcame this obstacle by creating the LAB (*Langile Abertzale Batzordeak*, Patriotic Workers' Committee) in Deba-Urola, Gipuzkoa (see *Kemen* N°6, August 1975, "Thesis sobre LAB"). José Miguel Beñaran (alias *Argala*), the prominent ideologue of the self-proclaimed Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV – *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Vasco*) in this period, confirms ETA's inclination towards this direction, making the national liberation and labor struggles compatible for the project of a socialist Basque Country:

"Once the decomposition process of Francoism began, ETA, far from enhancing the ranks of petty-bourgeois organizations, has given rise to the creation of workers' parties; which are also proving to be able to support the sectors that represent a revolutionary practice against the reformist politics of those who have always proclaimed themselves authentic revolutionary communists. Today, in the face of the double solution – petty Basque bourgeois or the Spanish socialist – that was presented to the Basque People in the first part of the century, a sector of the working class can offer a third way: the Basque socialist revolution. [...] The option offered today by the patriotic sector of the Basque working class is not only an option for *Euskadi* but also indirectly for Spanish and French workers that the Basque socialist revolution can only strengthen working classes in their respective countries. It is the best contribution that the Basque working class can make to workers around the world." (Argala in *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 1993, Vol. 5: 293-294)<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> The codification of *B-I* stands for those individuals who belong to the first generation of ETA-m members who joined the organization once the Franco period was over. For the sociodemographic data of the militants, please see Appendix 4.1.

<sup>101</sup> As mentioned by Garmendia, it is more convenient to use the term 'ETAs' to underline the plural character of political visions claimed by different organizations using the name ETA from the 1960s up until the early 1980s. (1995, Vol.1: 40). Nevertheless, two important objections make this suggestion questionable: Firstly, most militants who served in ETA at different times construct a unique concept of ETA despite recognizing the plural character of its armed actions in different periods (Arriaga 1997: 37). The second motivation that politically fuels this reductionism has to do with the political strategy of the Spanish state, which portrays ETA as a single 'terrorist organization' since its foundation in the late 1950s.

<sup>102</sup> Unlike the arguments on ETA's strictly Basque nationalist position, the attitude that ETA-V and later ETA-m took with regard to internationalist solidarity positions was also clearly discussed in Argala's autobiographic text, in which he criticizes

The approach that the organization adopted concerning the use of violence in labor disputes in which the Basque working class was involved in this period was clearly stated in the second number of the organization's official publication *Hautsi* in 1973:

"Our armed action has two aspects: The first is that of tactical actions aiming to respond to specific problems where our workers see their capacity for action is restrained precisely by the existence of such institutional violence and by those specific repressive units. The second would be the strategic development for the preparation of the phases prior to the popular uprising, without forgetting the possible constitution of the mentioned Basque revolutionary army if the revolutionary process required it this way." (Hautsi Nº 2 January 1973, p. 18 cited by Ibarra 1987: 91-92)

Two significant actions taken by ETA commandos express the organization's activism in favor of labor rights: the kidnapping of Lorenzo Zabala, consultant of the company Preicontrol, and Navarre businessman, Felipe Huarte Beaumont, in 1972 and 1973, respectively. Both actions constituted a clear sign in ETA's desire and eagerness to be a leading actor for the working class in the Basque Country by taking charge of the ongoing labor disputes.<sup>103</sup> In both actions, ETA took a negotiating role, implicitly declaring itself as the representative of workers. The regime's response to these actions was equally violent (Casanova 2007: 134-139), which at the moment made the action-repression-action spiral functional and fruitful. A labor activist in this period talks about the growing perception of ETA as a rival politico-military power against the state, bringing down the myth of invincibility of this latter:

"We saw ETA as a very important point of reference that brought up a series of fundamental constraints in society, especially in the face of [*the state's*] power, that power was not invincible and such. At the time, we saw it like that and as a *counterpart to the monopoly of state violence*." (Interview 04 in Arriaga 1997: 96, *emphasis in the original*)

Apart from their functional role in catching the attention and support of the working class, both actions also had a symbolic dimension through which ETA clearly showed its positioning in favor of an inclusive approach towards Spanish migrant workers. Also, the kidnapping of Zabala, who himself was an ethnic Basque, was considered a fundamental change that provoked sympathy in the eyes of Spanish migrant workers towards ETA<sup>104</sup>, which until then considered the organization solely a separatist and exclusively Basque nationalist. This action discarded the PNV's racial definition of Basqueness (Sullivan 2015[1988]: 135-136). ETA's affirmation through the *Carta de Burgos* (Burgos Letter) explicitly emphasized the organization's new direction towards a double project -national liberation and class struggle- based on the articulation of the armed struggle for national liberation with the popular labor movement as the unique way to get rid of the oligarchic hegemony:

---

the accusations of ETA-VI as well as the position that the Spanish left adopts towards the Basque national question (see Argala in Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 5: 293).

<sup>103</sup> During this period of increasing labor strikes, national struggle and class conflict were in an interactive dialectical relationship best reflected through the symbolic means of both struggles. As Arriaga emphasizes, the singing of *Eusko gudariak* (Basque soldiers) along with the Internationalist anthem and putting the *ikurriña* and red flag side by side during collective encounters best exemplify this relationship (1997: 95).

<sup>104</sup> In-depth interviews 01, 04, 05, and 15 by Arriaga (1997: 72) provide significant qualitative affirmations with this respect.

“The Basque people do not confront to Spanish people but the Spanish oligarchy; Basque people are in solidarity with Spanish people in their confrontation against the Spanish oligarchy. [...] It is about being in favor of exploitation with the oligarchy suppressing our people or being against it.” (ETA 1979, Vol. 15: 119)

After the high-profile kidnapping of the German Consul Eugen Beihl in 1970 as a way of bringing international attention to the Burgos Trial, Zabala was the first of a series of business people kidnapped for labor disputes as part of ETA’s revived politico-military strategy in this period. Having received positive feedback from working-class Basques as well as some Spanish migrant workers, ETA continued to pursue this labor favoritism which, by time, turned into the organization’s imitation of the state by enforcing its own industrial law and financial rules (Letamendia 1997: 232), best reflected through a revolutionary tax imposed on Basque industrialists and business people.

#### **4.1.3. The late Franco period violence in the Basque collective memory**

In terms of *ekintzas* against the regime forces, the most high-profile action taken in ETA’s history was the execution of Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco in Operation Ogro, who had been appointed Prime Minister by General Franco himself. The operation was carried out on 20 December 1973 by an ETA commando named *Txikia*, in honor of ETA member Eustakio Mendizabal, killed earlier that year (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 3: 134-149).<sup>105</sup> The execution of Admiral Carrero Blanco, who was considered Franco’s successor, reinforced ETA’s fame both nationally and internationally (Conversi 2000: 100-101).<sup>106</sup> Idigoras narrates how this ‘spectacular success’ received enthusiastic celebrations among Basque nationalist circles:

“We celebrated it in style, and from the popular wit, the famous song about the admiral arose, which went ‘Flew, flew, Carrero flew...’ with an ‘Eeeeeuuup!!!’ at the end that served to launch all kinds of clothes and objects on the air, trying to imitate the ‘deadly leap’ that Carrero Blanco gave on Claudio Coello Street in Madrid. The best thermometer to measure the popularity of ETA’s action was, without a doubt, the positive reaction by most popular sectors.” (Idigoras 2000: 250)

In a communiqué dated the very same day, 20 December 1973, ETA claimed responsibility for the assassination of Carrero Blanco, whom it considered the guarantor of the continuity of ‘the fascist regime supported by Opus Dei and Falange’, which had cost the lives of nine militants up until that moment. Carrero Blanco was also held responsible for the intensive repression over all members of the working class, and, finally, they also ‘gifted’ this act to the peoples of Euskadi, Catalonia, and Galicia

---

<sup>105</sup> In her book titled *Operación Ogro (Cómo y por qué ejecutamos a Carrero Blanco)*, based on interviews with four members of the Commando Txikia, Julen Agirre (*pseu.* Eva Forest) revealed details of the earlier kidnapping plan and alternative scenarios for the long-studied action and how the organization eventually had to give up the initial plan and opted for the execution of the *Ogro*, referring to Admiral Carrero Blanco (1974: 63-79).

<sup>106</sup> Besides its effects on the struggle against Franco’s government and rendering impossible the regime’s transition to Francoism without Franco (Sullivan (2015[1988]: 152), Operation Ogro achieved remarkable publicity for ETA as well as the Basque national liberation struggle worldwide although the operation did not accomplish its initially desired objective, the liberation of Basque political prisoners, which provoked a sense of lament among those who carried it out (see declarations made by Jon and Iker in Agirre 1974: 79). Right after the explosion of Blanco’s car, the entire world knew the name of ETA as it was also on the front page of the world’s leading newspapers.



as well as all the democrats, revolutionaries, and anti-fascists of Spain (see the communiqué by ETA in Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.3: 152).

The reaction by the regime for the assassination of the head of government, once again, followed the same pattern as in the case of the execution of Manzanos. Only a couple of months later, Spanish police arrested around 150 activists in labor organizations as well as militants of groups such as ETA, FRAP, and *Liga Comunista*. After the execution of his right-hand man, undoubtedly, Franco did not want to take any steps back that could have been interpreted as the regime's weakness by his adversaries (Preston 2005[1986]: 45). The government went ahead and applied the death penalty for Catalan anarchists Salvador Puig Antich and Heinz Chez. These executions gave way to public turmoil and anti-Francoist protests in the Basque Country, where ETA called for a nine-day general strike as a protest (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 4: 24).

The same attitude of the regime was also reflected in the Basque Country, where the execution of Carrero Blanco ignited the wick of another cycle of violence through the immediate state of exception and execution of two ETA militants, Juan Paredes Manot (alias *Txiki*) and Ángel Otaegi, along with three FRAP members on 27 September 1975 (Díez Medrano 1999: 178). As in the case of Puig Antich and Chez, Franco strictly rejected commuting the executions, which provoked counterproductive effects in suppressing the political insurgency in the Basque Country, where mass demonstrations and labor strikes were held immediately after (Casanova 2007: 179).

These last capital punishments carried out just before the dictator's death on 20 November 1975 remained engraved in the Basque collective memory constituting an important symbolic place right before the beginning of the transitional period towards parliamentary democracy under the leadership of the young monarch Juan Carlos I. The last executions of Francoism and subsequent mobilizations seem to have had a considerable impact on the further political mobilization and activism of the *Burgos Trial* generation in the Basque Country:

"There was a lot of political movement in the street; people were in the street. They went on strikes; the political movement in the street was strong. So, as a result of this, my political consciousness began to awaken. [...] More than anything, I began to learn a little about politics following the executions of Txiki and Otaegi, the Burgos Trial; I was around 14 years old at the time. It was probably from that period on that I began to orient myself a little and found out what was happening in my country and all that. And from there on, was when I began to acquire consciousness as a nationalist, and also as a woman." (B-I/04, female, 53, Gipuzkoa)

Mobilization of this new generation beginning from around the time of the Burgos Trial in the early 1970s and till the end of the Franco era, whose heavy-handed policies and executions against any anti-regime movement, particularly ETA, left a dark seal on Basque collective memory. Witnessing these tragic incidents later to be constructed as national traumas provoked certain pessimism on the future of the Basque Country, where the traces of a 40-year dictatorship were still overtly present.

## 4.2. The socialization processes of the Basque political cohort during the late Franco era

The late Franco era saw the regime dedicating its energy to dissimulate its decline amid a growing number of anti-Francoist movements coming into the public sphere through a variety of means, ranging from street demonstrations to armed actions. Having described the general political atmosphere and its social reflections in the late Franco period in the Basque Country, it would be convenient to analyze in detail the socialization process and mechanisms of those ETA militants, more specifically, those who continued their politico-military trajectory in ETA-m and ETA respectively.<sup>107</sup>

### 4.2.1. Acquiring Basque national identity: The role of the family in the nationalist transmission

As with previous generations, families of first-generation ETA militants in the post-Franco period also varied in their attitudes concerning politics, from maintaining the silence when it came to talking about politics to speaking out in their private sphere, which was not common during the early and mid-Franco eras. Ambiguity among older generations of the Basque nationalist families seems to have inclined more in favor of the transgenerational transmission of the nationalist symbolic code, above all the language as an essential element of it:

“In this country, if the language hasn’t disappeared, it’s because some have actively instilled it. Well, I’ll explain it to you: my father, for example, has never punished me for having bad grades or for having done a prank in the street, nor has he ever laid a hand on me. But the time I really saw him angry with me was when we spoke in a language that was not ours at the table at lunch or dinner. He said that at that table, as long as he was alive, we had to speak Basque. Then when we got up from that table, we would do what we wanted, but when we were at that table, we would speak Basque.” (B-I/01, male, 66, Gipuzkoa)

Among those individuals who came from a Basque nationalist family had elder generation members (parents, grandparents, uncles, and alike) involved in the Basque nationalist side during the Civil War. In this context, while the sensibility towards the transmission of national symbolic elements was notable, a protective attitude aiming at keeping their children away from further involvement in politics was observed. *B-I/05* and *B-I/04*, both coming from Basque nationalist families from rural Gipuzkoa, describe these attitudes by their elder family members:

“The only thing my mother taught me was *Euskera*... Then they weren’t talking to you about politics, they were talking to each other, but they were excluding you. They bought a radio, I remember, they plugged the radio at night, they listened to the radio; the radio of Paris broadcasted such things. We would go downstairs, my brothers and my sister, creeping up at the kitchen door, trying to hear what they were saying? When they would catch us, they gave us two slaps and [*send us*] right upstairs!” (B-I/05, male, 68, Gipuzkoa)

“Well, we knew that grandfather had been in the war, on the nationalist side, but in general, there was no talk about politics. [*But your family had a nationalist profile?*] Yes, in general, it was a nationalist family because both grandparents, by my mother and by my father’s sides, had fought on the side of the PNV. So, as a result, you did hear comments at home, but they were very diffused. Also, at home, they always told you ‘don’t get involved in politics; politics only brings you trouble!’ and you see! [*laughing*]” (B-I/04)

---

<sup>107</sup> Previously collected qualitative data specifically on this subject (Zulaika 1988; Alcedo 1996; Reinares 2001) includes both ETA-m and ETA-pm militants whose political socialization corresponds to the late Franco period.

The struggle had already reached a certain level of recognition achieving a considerable grade of emotional adhesion, not only by Basque nationalist sectors but also any other anti-Franco groups, who felt a close attachment with ETA's violence as a form of the public expression against the imposed social silence (Pérez-Agote 1987: 4-8). In this generation, being nationalist was equivalent to being anti-Francoist, and being anti-Francoist inevitably passed through the identification with Basque nationalism (Gurrutxaga 1996: 113) in the absence of any other significant alternative against the regime. During the decade of 1970s, ETA and being an *etarra*, acquired a positive symbolic character among Basque nationalists and anti-Francoist sectors who depicted the organization as a model-actor of resistance. Although families tended to keep their children away from politics, the popularity of ETA seems to have caught their attention in the family environment in which they grew up:

"I always remember a conversation from my parents; they would talk about ETA. I think it was the first time I heard someone talking about ETA. I was around 9 or 10 years old, and I had that feeling that they were talking about ETA with great admiration. [...] And then I remember that at 10 or 11 years old, we went to a summer camp, and I, with another kid, we took an oath in Salvatierra, in Araba that at 16 we would join ETA. At ten years old, without knowing what it was about, we already perceived that it was something that had to be done. So, I have lived the story of my militancy in ETA in a very natural way." (Interview G-1 in Alcedo 1996: 111)

Among Spanish immigrant families, the transmission of the Basque nationalist code to children was naturally out of the question. However, in exceptional cases of some Spanish families who categorically rejected ETA's actions, the children exhibited sympathy for adopting the Basque nationalist cause (B-I/02 and B-I/06). Among these families living in industrial zones, new generations who later joined ETA tended to acquire sensibility towards class-related issues which they dealt with in their immediate family environment rather than elements of Basque identity:

"We didn't talk about politics because my parents were humble people who didn't want complications with the Franco regime. Then there was fear of talking about those issues, and in my house, there were never conversations about politics. [...]...what I initially acquired in my life was a social formation, a social sensitivity towards the situation of the working class. I didn't have much of a Basque national consciousness because the area where I grew up was more like an industrial zone, where there was a mix of cultures, a mix of people from all nations. So, it wasn't, so to say, a closed Basque village that only generated itself." (B-I/02, male, 58, Araba)

"My family is from outside, not from here; they are immigrants. So, I didn't live in my house the atmosphere of Basqueness. I lived in an environment of people who came from the outside to work and who already had enough problems with surviving and taking care of us, educating us. [*And what was the political orientation of your parents?*] They had no political orientation, but rather they came from a very conservative environment. That is, if my family voted right now, they would surely vote for the PP. They came from a tiny village of farmers in Castille [...] ...my father hated everything that was Basque, especially because of the language. So he always kept us away from it." (B-I/06)

As previously-made studies show, the involvement of a close family member in the resistance against Franco also provoked sympathetic feelings towards the low-intensity counter-violence carried out by ETA at the time. Similarly, those who had a relative that was a refugee in French Basque Country, which was a common status after the Civil War, possibly developed a 'family tradition of militancy' in this period (see Interviews N°22, 33 and 34 in Reinares 2001: 60-61; and D1 in Alcedo 1996: 51). B-I/03,

who comes from Basque nationalist family tradition, describes his own experience that conditioned his life concerning his militancy:

“My father was in the Civil War against Franco; my mother also had to go into exile to the French state when the troops passed through. Afterward, well, they suffered from Franco’s era. Later my father happened to have a job as a financial advisor, achieving an important social middle-class position here in Bilbao. Perhaps in our family, the fundamental element was that they arrested my elder brother in 1969 for being an ETA militant, and that, in a certain way, conditioned and determined my life: we are two brothers, five years apart; he was 19, and I was 14. It kind of determines family life. At that moment, one would want a more express commitment with all that reality.” (B-I/03, male, 62, Bizkaia)

The ambiguity observed among Basque nationalist families seems to have been based on the transmission of the Basque ethno-symbolic elements, more concretely the language, to their children on the one hand, and showing utmost sensibility in preventing them from getting involved in political activism on the other. This latter, however, is primarily shaped through the following secondary socialization process of individuals in which a variety of more complex mechanisms are involved.

#### **4.2.2. Secondary socialization mechanisms: Schooling, associative world, and religion**

##### *a. Language, schooling, and friend circles (kuadrillas)*

Under these conditions, individuals passed through a set of complex primary and secondary socialization processes, frequently colliding with each other as both had different definitions of ‘truth’. It was mostly the case of those ethnic Basques who learned Euskera at home and later attended Francoist Catholic schools where Spanish was the compulsory language. Although Basque nationalist clergy was in defense of Basque culture, the official church hierarchy was still strictly at the service of the regime. B-I/05, who was born in a village in Gipuzkoa in an *euskaldun* family, explains how he suffered from aggression due to this state of dual-truth collision when he was a primary school student:

“When I first went to school, I didn’t know even a word in Spanish. Then you go there, you say good morning ‘*Egun on!*’, and you get smacked for that. You have to put your hand like that [*showing the position*], and they hit you with a wooden stick. Then you come back home and say ‘*buenas tardes*’ [good afternoon], and they gave you two smacks for that! You simply don’t understand. [...] ...they send you there to learn something, but what you have learned there you say it at home, and they give you two smacks, and what you learned at home isn’t worth anything at school... You go through all this and say, ‘why do you send me to school then?’” (B-I/05)<sup>108</sup>

Restrictions and prohibitions on the Basque symbolic universe in the public sphere created contradictions among those individuals who grew up with those symbols in their family. Although *ikastolas* had emerged along with the Basque cultural revival of the 1960s and extended through the 1970s under the protection of the Basque church, they offered quite limited space for the reproduction of Basque cultural symbols, especially Euskera. The same contradiction was also present for those who

---

<sup>108</sup> For similar testimonies on the absolute denial and prohibition of *Euskera* and imposition of Spanish national symbols through the use of force in Franco-era schools in this generation, see Interview N°16, 26, and 43 in Reinares (2001: 66-67).

lived near the French Basque Country (*Iparralde*), especially when crossing to the other side of the *muga* (the border), as narrated by B-I/01, who is from a small neighboring village in Gipuzkoa:

“My *ikastola* was born in the underground, where we studied courses clandestinely. Everything we studied in Basque was worthless. We were studying in Basque, but in order to pass, we had to take exams at the institute, which were public schools in Spanish. Also, the *ikurriña*, the Basque flag, in our village was forbidden. But I live here, some 14 km away from the border. Then you went there [*French Basque Country*], and there you saw the *ikurriña*, you heard songs in Basque, songs that were patriotic rather than revolutionary, and you could see that there, the Basque culture, as far as it went, was maintained even though it was in a somewhat folkloric way; but it was preserved. Here it also made an impact, and people eventually went upon it with Basque dances and with all that had to do with the Basque culture. I think it was the beginning for many, especially the first militants and different generations.” (B-I/01)

As mentioned in *Chapter 2*, youth activities, more concretely excursion to mountains, organized by *kuadrillas*, had begun to have a significant function during the period of the Basque national revival. These activities and groups continued to maintain their functional role in the late Franco period. *Kuadrillas* became a critical nucleus in the post-Franco period to transmit ideology via micro-mobilizations, which produced a certain degree of sympathy towards ETA (Reinares 2001: 72-74). Activities in which different *kuadrillas* participated, like dance groups or mountaineers’ excursions, acquired a secondary function, a political one, by bringing *kuadrillas* of similar ideological backgrounds together (B-I/02, 03, 04, 06) and, thus, creating a social mechanism of interaction among them.

“My *kuadrilla* initially was one from the neighborhood, and then, along with school, we got integrated. Finally, when we were 18-19 years old, I think more than anything, it was eventually the political environment in which we were mobilizing; we were already gathering based on ideologies. We, the people who were on the left, were getting together. I think we all were defining our positions; there was the *kuadrilla* that belonged to those who were from the PNV, the *kuadrilla* that we were from the *abertzale* left, the *kuadrilla* of the apathetic...” (B-I/04)

“...within my *kuadrilla*, there was a lot of talk about such questions, about the political situation and ideological tendencies; they were socialists, communists in general, progressive left. [...] In the Franco era, let’s say that cultural environments, dance groups were nucleus where people expressed themselves freely because they were trustworthy people and people with more or less progressive tendencies.” (B-I/02)

Apart from their role in the politicization and connecting individuals of similar ideological orientations, *kuadrillas* as strong interpersonal friendship ties were extremely relevant for recruitment. The existence of a highly dense associative world which worked through friend circles, one of the most remarkable characteristics of Basque society, was not only a social reproduction mechanism of Basque nationalism but also a channel that led individuals to recruitment for armed activities in this period. B-I/05, who had an initial militancy phase during the Franco period, also confirms that his trajectory, which led him to the mountains with the previous-generation military chief Xabier Zumalde (alias *el Cabra*), was also a result of his initial contacts with ETA through his *kuadrilla*. The interviewee describes how he progressively made his way to becoming a member of the armed organization afterward:

“I don’t know how long I was roaming around drunk, so they [ETA] could hook me! I went to bars, I didn’t drink, but I pretended to be drunk, and I shouted ‘*Gora Euskadi!*’ and such. I knew there were people, and I wanted to see if anyone [*would notice*]. And one night, one from the *kuadrilla* held me and said, ‘what do you want? You wanna go to the barracks?’ And I said, ‘No, I don’t wanna go to the barracks, but let’s see if someone says, «hey

you! come here!»’, ‘well, you’re already in!’ he told me. ‘What do you mean I’m already in?’, ‘you’re already in!’ This was the first thing to arrange that meeting held by the Franciscan priests. [...] I went to the meeting, and I knew the one who was giving the talk. Once he finished, I grabbed him and said, ‘you talk to me about monopoly and why not about this [*weapons*]!’ [*laughing*], and the bastard called A [*name*] said, ‘this is not for such things, [*laughing*] you go up there!’, and they arranged a meeting for me to go to the mountains!” (B-I/05)<sup>109</sup>

While *kuadrillas* played a crucial role in the adherence of Basque nationalism by providing suitable grounds for its symbolic reproduction and initial steps for recruiting the armed struggle, political engagement and ideological affiliation also had specific effects on this social structure. This subject will be observed more clearly among the following generation militants as the youth groups get more integrated into the politico-military strategy of the *abertzale* left.

*b. The Basque church and nationalist clergy*

Considering the socio-political conditions of the early Spanish Transition period, one notes that the major actors and mechanisms of reproduction of the Basque nationalist code did not pass through significant transformations. Neither did the attitude of state security forces towards the explicit use of Basque nationalist cultural and linguistic symbols. This affirmation was also valid in the case of Basque local church and clergy with specific ideological affiliations towards Basque nationalism that continued to play a key role due to their relative immunity from the regime repression. B-I/03 explains how he had already become familiar with concepts of social justice thanks to his interactions with Basque clergy in his youth period in his native Bilbao:

“In *Euskal Herria*, there was an element that was the Basque clergy. Not all of them, but an important part, especially after the war, given the great repression against all inmates in jail, some were helping and assisting a little. So, a part of the Basque clergy was different here; it was an element that must always be taken into account for everything because they had a prominent role in helping and had solidarity with the people, something not seen in other parts of the state. We also had ties with that kind of clergy. [...] I perfectly remember what I was hearing from some priests, from some of them within the Jesuits, who talked to me of these ideas; maybe expressed in another way; not in a Marxist way, but in another way like rich and poor, justice, the right of the poor to have their dignity, the unnatural and anti-Christian character of oppression. So, for me, all that was about social injustice wasn’t that new.” (B-I/03)<sup>110</sup>

The Basque clergy also had a highly functional role in the recruitment of the armed struggle. In a society characterized by a high level of religiosity (as confirmed by B-I/01, 02, 04, 05 & 06), key Catholic values such as mercifulness and compassion constituted a serious challenge for joining an armed organization whose actions increasingly resulted in human fatalities, an ETA militant quoted by Alcedo narrates the conversation he had with a local priest with this regard in his early militancy period:

---

<sup>109</sup> For similar testimonies, see Interview D-2 in Alcedo 1996: 109 and Interview N<sup>o</sup> 26 in Reinales (2001: 147).

<sup>110</sup> Qualitative data obtained by Pérez-Agote (1984: 104-105; see Interviews 1-4.1, 1-6) affirms the role that local church played as ‘foyer’ offering the only possibility for those who were seeking middle and high school education at the time. This facilitated Basque nationalist clergy a unique opportunity to have constant access to young generations through seminars and other activities with parochial groups, cultural and folkloric associations. In the 1970s, 71% of those who had joined the seminar were children aged between 10 and 12, and only 5% were older than 17, the majority of whom being from municipalities with a small population, according to a study (Ynfante 1970 in Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 2: 25).

“At that time, I was a believer; two months later, I no longer was. I told the priest: ‘I have this problem; ready to die, yes I am, but ready to kill... I have serious problems with it.’ Then the priest, instead of giving me a speech, told me: ‘don’t worry, I’ll give you absolution in all those cases whenever you want.’ And it was so... like so little transcendent, so gratuitous; his answer was so light that I said, well, it shouldn’t be so much of a problem to kill.” (Interview B-1 in Alcedo 1996: 146)

This period coincided with what Pérez-Agote labels the *second wave secularization process* in Spain. Although the majority of the population continued defining themselves as Catholics and attributing social values to Catholic rituals, there was a significant decline in religious practices and increasing interest in earthly questions (2012: 113-114). Whether as a result of this general tendency or due to the specific political context in the Basque Country<sup>111</sup>, one observes a visible tendency of alienation from religion among ETA members. Although all interviewees in this generation confirm that they once had strong ties with religion and the church, they also confirm this process of alienation simultaneously developing along with their political engagement in their adolescence. Among all interviewees in this generation, religion was not a significant variable affecting their militancy in ETA, except B-1/02. Despite his non-religious position when he joined ETA, the individual confirms that he had to deal with the consequences of religion in his immediate family when he was serving a lengthy prison sentence:

“With my parents, I had no relationship during my jail period because, the same way they maintained that discretion during the Franco regime, they had the same discretion concerning my militancy in ETA. My parents were practitioner Christians, and they couldn’t believe in their minds that their son could be killing people, to simplify it so. As a consequence, they did not come to visit me. It wasn’t that they were ashamed of me, but they preferred to stay out of it. [...] My mother, after 4 or 5 years or so, began to visit me periodically, like once every four months. And my father saw me only once in these 22 years. It was here, in one of the prisons in the Basque Country, in Basauri. They brought me to Basauri for an illness I had, and my father interviewed me, just like you and I right now, and he said, ‘Look, son, I don’t know what has led you to this situation, but I only know one thing: if you are giving your life for this, it must be for a very strong reason.’ That is the only thing he has told me in life, and he died while I was in jail, and that phrase has remained in my mind.” (B-1/02)

### c. *The question of ethnicity in Basque neo-nationalism*

A detail noted in this period was the generational discrepancies in ideological terms between those militants of non-Basque origin and their respective families. Although there is little data available on the origin of ETA militants, one can argue that the number of *Euskaldun berries* (New Basques), referring to the children of Spanish immigrant families, began to increase from the mid-1970s on.<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> In his study on the Basque nationalist code, Gurrutxaga argues that this abrupt form of secularization and disengagement from the church occurred as religion in Basque society was gradually replaced by politics (1985: 331). The qualitative data obtained on the issue through this study is insufficient to verify this argument in general terms, although one can confirm that at least in the case of the Basque *abertzale* left circles, this abrupt secularization is highly distinguishable.

<sup>112</sup> The relevant data regarding this period is available in two sources: The first one is the previously referred anonymous booklet titled *Euskadi ala hil*, in which only Juan Paredes Manot (alias *Txiki*, born in Zalamea de la Serena, Badajoz) appears as the non-Basque origin. The encyclopedia of *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* is the second primary source with its *Hildakoak* (The dead) section dedicated to those fallen militants in each period. Although the vast majority of those who died in the late 1970s was still ethnic Basques, the presence of non-ethnic Basque militants among those who were killed between 1977-1980 gives some idea about the increase of *Euskaldun Berris* in this period (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.5: 183-287). A similar panorama was also seen when analyzing the profile of the following period of fallen militants between 1981 – 1984, in which *Iparretarrak* (IK) militants were also included (see Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.6: 177-275).

Social confrontations between immigrant communities and autochthonous Basques and the adoption of more inclusive attitudes by ETA towards non-ethnic Basque immigrants are mentioned in the following narrative made by B-I/05:

“[How was your relationship with the immigrants at that time?] At first, bad. At that time, we were just a few fools who spoke in Euskera, not more! You were speaking, and the only thing they said was ‘habla en cristiano!’<sup>113</sup> And there happened fights in the street! [laughing] You’re in a bar, and this happens, and right outside! [So, there was a rejection from your side towards immigrants?] Yes, yes, *maketo!* The insult we used was *maketo!* Then a communiqué, a political leaflet by ETA, came out, which said ‘assimilation’, that we had to integrate them into this [movement]. [...] Their integration began when ETA released that leaflet, and we began to take a step back; we began talking to them about it and convincing them. Until then, there was a time here that was harsh training; they were on one side, and you were on the other. There were no mixed groups of people, mixed *kuadrillas*. It was like ‘this is my *kuadrilla*, and that one is their *kuadrilla*, and they’re *maketos!*’” (B-I/05)

Some scholars argue that the commitment of ethnically non-Basque militants to the Basque cause and participation in ETA was related to the need to be accepted by locals (Basques) and feeling integrated within the receptor society. This way, the new generations were recognized by the ‘original’ members of this society even though they lacked the fundamental Basque ethnic elements (surnames, language, e.g.). The highest level compromise (which is militancy in ETA), therefore, proved that they were *Basques* to the point that they were ready to sacrifice their life (Laitin 1995: 40; Reinares 1998: 113-117).<sup>114</sup> B-I/06, born in a small village in Gipuzkoa in a conservative Spanish immigrant family, narrates her own experience from the very opposite angle and the trajectory which led her to get to know *Basqueness* as an *euskaldun berri*:

“My youth *kuadrilla* was a bit of [kids around] 13, 14 or 15 years old, they were around the neighborhood where I lived, which was a mostly immigrant and little politicized one, with a Spanish conscience more than Basque. [So, nothing to see with *euskalduns*?] Not at all! No way! Pretty contrary, the *euskaldun* was a cause for confrontation. [...] Then, everything was very organized in a spatial sense; because our neighborhood was in the outskirts of a village, which was very Basque and very nationalist. So, we maintained relationships within the neighborhood. In that period of the religious crisis, I began to interact with other people in my village. At first, it was school, but then when at 15 years old, we would go to the village next door for middle school. Then you contact other people with another way of thinking, there I got involved in the *Basqueness*, so to say; how to be a Basque, and there you begin to have doubts. Moreover, there were several ETA attacks in the village. Specifically, what struck me most was that several people hang *ikurriñas* in the bell tower of the church, then seeing the Civil Guard coming to remove *ikurriñas*. Then you begin to ask yourself, ‘what’s an *ikurriña*, but why does that happen? Why do the Civil Guards come?’ [...] [And since you were from the outside, were you subjected to any discrimination by the Basques?] I think when I was young, yes, there was. In my village, some were from ‘that neighborhood’ and ‘the others’. We were ‘the others’ to them. But then gradually, as you start to get closer to things, voices, opinions... Later the discrimination disappeared; on the contrary, it was very inclusive, too much! [laughing]” (B-I/06)<sup>115</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> A colloquial expression in Spanish used when requesting that someone speak clearly, in an understandable way.

<sup>114</sup> Although this argument is worth taking into consideration in some local cases where the Basque culture is dominant, the data presented by Reinares in his later study (see Interviews Nº 41 of Andalusian and Nº 29 from Extremadura origins in 2001: 168-170) is not of an affirmative character. The militancy in ETA was not a unilateral process; as B-I/05 clearly states above, the organization had already actively involved the recruitment of non-ethnic Basques. Secondly, this argument ignores the fact that the politically advantageous dominant identity under the conditions of Francoism was not Basqueness with restricted social space, but Spanishness which enjoyed an almost absolute control and power on all mechanisms of diffusion.

<sup>115</sup> The political trajectory described by the interviewee draws a similar line with the initial stages of the acquisition of (Basque) nationalist consciousness by María Dolores González-Katarain (alias Yoyes) through almost identical social mechanisms existing in the period, as revealed in her later published diary (2009). Yoyes was born in the Gipuzkoan town of Ordizia in a



In general, this was the situation in the Basque Country from the perspective of individuals involved in their initial political activities in the late Franco era, which led them to join ETA in the early years of Transition. While specific political steps were taken in Madrid concerning the national question in Spain, more concretely political demands by Catalans and Basques, these individuals who had gone through their political socialization under the former regime refused the idea of change through 'transition' and opted for continuing armed struggle in the post-Franco era.

### **4.3. From dictatorship to monarchy: The 'Spanish Transition' in the Basque Country**

#### **4.3.1. A general overview of the post-Franco politics in the Basque Country**

Franco's physical disappearance did not bring the immediate end of Francoist ideas in Spain. Erasing the heritage of the dictatorship in the Basque collective memory was further compelling. The socio-political context of the Basque Country had seen a recently emerged and rapidly growing active political generation with sympathetic feelings towards the violence exercised by ETA. This sympathy constituted an additional challenge for Spanish politicians, almost all of whom were loyal to Franco<sup>116</sup>; convincing Basques of a democratic transition was far more complicated than other parts of Spain.

Immediately after the dictator's death, both ETAs of the period, *militar* and *político-militar*, did not wait long to make their position clear on the 'falseness' of the new regime against which they opted for continuing to struggle. In its proposal presented to the political coordination organ of the Basque movement KAS (*Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista* - Socialist Patriotic Coordinator), ETA-m pointed out that King Juan Carlos I was just a figure looking after Franco's heritage and the PSOE and PNV were mere representatives of the liberal bourgeoisie under the dominance of the Spanish bourgeoisie. Therefore, the only way of the Basque liberation was to defeat the Spanish oligarchy by organizing the working-class Basques (ETA 1979, Vol. 17: 514).<sup>117</sup>

---

Spanish nationalist family. She discovered the Basque identity through secondary socialization mechanisms such as school, underground gatherings and discussions and Catholic Church activism which peaked at the time of the Burgos Trial (Aretxaga 2005: 149-150). Despite the limited qualitative data, affirmations made by those two coetaneous women militants with a similar family background offer valuable information on the construction of nationalist identity and political trajectory that *Euskaldun berries* pursued in this generation in ETA(s).

<sup>116</sup> This constitutes one of the most frequent arguments among the Basque *abertzale* left militancy who categorically refuse the term 'Spanish transition' that they tend to qualify as a 'false democratic illusion of *Juancarlistm*' and the 'continuity of the *Caudillo*' (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.4: 79). Indeed, upon the will of the dictator who had already declared Juan Carlos as his successor, only two days after Franco's death, the Spanish parliament proclaimed Juan Carlos of Borbón as the King of Spain, who restored for the second time a monarchic regime in the Spanish history. The successive governments of Arias Navarro, who was designated the Prime Minister after the execution of Admiral Carrero Blanco by ETA, and Adolfo Suárez, allowed Franco-era figures such as Torcuato Fernández-Mirando, Manuel Fraga, and José María de Areilza to continue to occupy leading positions in post-Franco Spanish political life (Preston 2005[1986]: 91-92).

<sup>117</sup> With regard to *Juancarlistm*, ETA-pm seemed more in favor of an authentic and mass mobilization open to all parts, including possible contacts with Spanish leftist factions. Over time, the organization began to disregard the armed struggle in a 'democratic' reality, in which they considered that the armed struggle resembled fascist terrorism with destructive effects, leading to the marginalization of the group (Hautsi nº 12, pp. 14-15 in ETA 1979, Vol. 17: 124-125).

The continuity of heavy-handed policies of former Francoist cadres, such as the Prime Minister Manuel Fraga Iribarne, who ordered a police intervention against a general strike in Vitoria/Gasteiz on 3 March 1976, which ended up in the killing of 5 workers, became justifying arguments for ETA-m's negative position concerning a possible emergence of a real democracy out of the ruins of a dictatorship (Zutik Nº 67, November 1976). Also, the appearance of paramilitary mercenaries in the very same year, such as ATE (Anti-Terrorismo ETA), AAA (Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista), and *Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey*, with around 150 attacks on Basques between 1975 and 1976 (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.4: 98) constituted strong evidence for *abertzale* left sectors that the regime was far from *KAS alternatives*<sup>118</sup> over which ETA sought to negotiate with the state.

Despite these repressive policies, some significant steps are also noted: The Suárez government managed to get the autonomy status project started within the scope of the Art. 151 of the new Spanish constitution, which bestowed autonomy status to those 'historic nationalities' (Gibbons 1999: 16-18). Nevertheless, this initial attempt was not sufficient to convince all Basque nationalists, now consisting of the historical organ of the Basque nationalism PNV and the legal representative of MLNV, *Herri Batasuna* (HB, Popular Unity) and *Euskadiko Ezkerra* (EE, Basque Left). Additionally, there was the call for abstention by the PNV reflected as 44,7% of the participation in three Basque provinces, which was significant in terms of the legitimacy of the new constitution in two major provinces of the southern Basque Country (Pastor 2012: 124):

Table 5: Constitutional referendum of 6 December 1978 in the Basque Country + Navarre and five main provinces in Spain

Provinces	Total number of electorate	Total number of voters	Votes in favor	Votes against	Blank ballots	Null ballots
Vizcaya	874.936	371.456	266.019	78.036	20.327	7.074
Guipúzcoa	504.389	219.032	139.777	65.429	11.295	2.531
Álava	173.412	102.822	73.409	19.726	8.194	1.493
Navarra	361.243	240.695	182.207	40.804	15.415	2.269
Madrid	3.047.226	2.201.102	1.896.205	222.638	66.575	15.684
Barcelona	3.424.682	2.317.888	2.095.467	109.530	97.018	15.815
Valencia	1.451.169	1.094.770	968.932	77.589	39.439	8.810
Sevilla	1.002.518	695.661	644.692	33.526	13.759	3.684
Oviedo	864.796	534.343	473.348	44.874	11.395	4.726
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26.632.180</b>	<b>17.873.301</b>	<b>15.706.078</b>	<b>1.400.505</b>	<b>632.902</b>	<b>133.786</b>

Source: Self elaboration from Official State Bulletin (BOE) Nº 305, of 22 December 1978.

<sup>118</sup> KAS alternatives proposed by ETA are also listed in details in the organization's official publication *Hautsi* Nº 11, among which the establishment of democratic liberties, a general amnesty for all Basque political prisoners, adoption of measurements to improve the life of popular working masses, the expulsion of the state's coercive apparatus from the Basque Country and their replacement of local security forces to be formed by a provisional Basque Government, recognition of the national sovereignty of *Euskadi Sur*, understood as four regions including Navarre, the right for self-determination, and the official and priority status of Euskera are underlined (ETA 1979, Vol. 17: 91).

These initial political steps were followed by more specific policies on cultural and linguistic issues under the legal umbrella of the Basque Statute of Autonomy (also known as *Gernika Statute*). The new regime guaranteed the most significant elements of the symbolic universe of Basque nationalism: the language and national flag, as well as a wide range of economic autonomy derived from the historical legacy of *fueros*. Despite the partial completion of some demands listed under the KAS Alternative, HB opted for abstention, whereas the PNV and EE this time took a favorable position, which provoked a split among Basque nationalists (Lecours 2007: 90). Although the abstention was still considerably high in the referendum of 25 October 1979, votes in favor of the autonomy project appeared to have a far higher legitimacy among Basque nationalists:

Table 6: Referendum of 25 October 1979 on the autonomy statute for the Basque Country

Provinces	Total number of electorate	Total number of voters	Votes in favor	Votes against	Blank ballots	Null ballots
Álava	174.930	110.609	92.535	10.023	6.363	1.688
Guipúzcoa	507.002	302.847	278.399	12.290	9.018	3.140
Vizcaya	883.609	507.980	460.905	25.216	16.038	5.821
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.565.541</b>	<b>921.436</b>	<b>831.839</b>	<b>47.529</b>	<b>31.419</b>	<b>10.649</b>

Source: Official State Bulletin (BOE) N° 269, of 9 November 1979.

The split between Basque and Spanish nationalists and a further split among Basque nationalists themselves with regard to the political system put into practice in the Basque Country gave way to different interpretations by politicians. By the time, as the system consolidated itself, these interpretations became more acute, especially concerning the use of political violence.

#### 4.3.2. The construction of the Spanish Transition in the group truth of *abertzale* left

Although most scholars agree on the negative interpretation by MLNV about the post-Franco regime in Spain (Pérez-Agote 1987; Zirakzadeh 1991; Mata 1993; Garmendia 1995; Gurrutxaga 1996; Arriaga 1997; Conversi 2000; Lecours 2007), motivations lying behind this interpretation are less accentuated. Political motivations justifying official arguments defended by *abertzale* left groups and organizations within the orbit of MLNV, including ETA, correspond to those intellectuals who formulate the historiography of the post-Franco era. Indeed, these attempts to construct and reproduce Basque national historiography, which seeks to express the lack of legitimacy of government-initiated reforms in the Basque Country, begin right after the 1978 elections (see Ortzi 1979) and continue until recently (see Pascual Lizarraga 2015).

The political position adopted by the Basque *abertzale* left concerning the Spanish Transition, which categorically refuses to give value to any of the policies mentioned above, is best reflected in the words of those militants who joined in ETA in this period. When analyzing the discourse defended

by these militants, two fundamental factors come to the forefront in their negative qualification of 'democracy': *a)* a total lack of confidence in the 'new regime' which they consider a simple make-up of the old dictatorship, that is to say, continuity of 'Francoism without Franco' and; *b)* the interpretation of the period, especially repression and violence by the state and state-sponsored groups, which the militants would use to justify the continuity of their 'defensive' violence.

The collective memory in the initial years of the post-Franco era was reflected through references to Franco's regime, primarily focusing on its repressive character and punitive practices against the Basque symbolic universe. The transition was defined as a mere *tapadera* (cover), which generated an illusion, and it was nothing but a re-adaptation of the Franco regime to put the state in western orbit (Mata 1993: 200-201). The categorical denial of the transition in the Basque Country led to the conclusion that 'nothing had changed' (Pérez-Agote 1987: 58-59), implying the necessity of ETA violence for a desired genuine change. This interpretation was based on the continuing presence of those political figures and institutions that symbolized Francoist fascism. Counter-arguments concerning the national unity of Spain and Navarre's status were based on this *abertzale* left version of the historiography of a 'so-called' Spanish Transition in the Basque Country (Ortzi 1979: 60, 157-174). Around 30 years later, new generation Basque historiographer Casanova describes the same period by underlining the same fundamental characteristics of Spanish political reforms:

"After a three-stage process: approval of the Law of Political Reform, general elections and the constitutional referendum, the Spanish State was formally considered a democracy. No political, police, judicial, religious, military, or economic agents responsible for the dictatorship that had oppressed the Spanish State for forty years after taking power in a bloody Civil War were subjected to trial, expulsion, or sanction. The new regime had been formed from an absolute advantage by the heirs of the previous one, which had established their political parties, UCD and AP, with all possible means, including public ones, while the rest of the forces, including those that accepted the reform, started from the precariousness of long clandestinity. Besides, the Armed Forces had set limits on sensitive issues, such as the monarchy, the flag, and the territorial unity, and their commanders had not deprived themselves of showing off their capacity in the political process. On these undemocratic foundations, rules of the game were forged that would be definitive." (Casanova 2007: 241)<sup>119</sup>

An almost identical perspective is also expressed by those militants who joined ETA in this period. Questionable sides of the transition from a dictatorship to a monarchy without democratic elections with the presence of those political figures and symbols imposed by the Francoist regime seem to have been a fundamental factor in reproducing the thesis based on a 'nothing has changed' argument. The

---

<sup>119</sup> In his above-referred book, Ortzi (*pseu.* for Francisco Letamendia) also stresses this discrepancy between the traditional PNV *jeltzalismo*, which had explicitly supported the Gernika Statute conceded by the new regime in Spain and, by time, became overtly critical towards 'ETA terrorism' and the position adopted by the stronghold of leftist *abertzalismo*. By referring to the previously-mentioned KAS alternatives of 1976 and the subsequent formation of *Euskal Erakunde Herritarra* (Basque Citizen Organization), the scholar claims that the *Reforma* imposed on Basque people had no legitimacy (Ortzi 1979: 29-30). Arguments by the same scholar about the presence of those Francoist figures such as Manuel Fraga, who was in charge of what was called 'public order' through heavy-handed policies implemented with the excuse of 'political terrorism' and justifying attitudes towards those policies by some other politicians such as Martín Villa, Carrillo, and Múgica Herzog (*ibid.* 56-57) also show the initial discrepancy between two major Basque nationalist political blocks.

continuity of the symbolic universe imposed by the dictatorship through the socialization processes of all previous generation Basques appears to have been concrete and visible evidence that consolidated this interpretation about the Spanish Transition:

“For me, for many people like me, it was a huge disappointment when it turned out that Franco died, in the first interactions between the regime and the opposition, the first news, so to speak, [*was that*] the new King would be the one put by Franco, fuck! But this was gonna be a Republic, right? [*laughing*] No, no, no, it’s not a republic, it’s a monarchy and also the one to whom Franco assigned: Juan Carlos! [...] Also, damn, the regime had to pay; nobody paid anything, they went out [*of Francoism*] and stayed in the same places. They even made us face facts that were terrible even though they had symbolic elements, like the flag. We’d lived all our childhood, everything in our houses that the *rojigualda* flag, the red and yellow one, was the flag of the dictator that we called the *piper potoa* in Euskera. There were pepper cans that had a Spanish flag; that’s where we got the name from. In Basque, it means ‘pepper pot’. That, even that one... they were even going to keep that symbol, not even the flag of the Republic, the one with three colors. Ahh, [*they were*] all the same!” (B-1/03)

“I think many of us didn’t question whether it was necessary to continue. What happened was that Franco’s death didn’t bring the change that we had expected. Therefore, the democratic transition, if you like, which we believed in didn’t occur; we saw that there were no tangible things; to the contrary, there was a whole facade, but the main thing... Well, ok, it’s true that a ‘democratic system’, in quotes, had been installed, representativeness, but there was no democratic culture, above all concerning the dreams of Basque People. There was no recognition of the Basque People and their right to exist; there [*just*] was not.” (B-1/06)

The objectification of ‘nothing has changed’ by individuals based on the interpretation of these facts was also the primary motivation for those who opted to get involved or continue their militancy in ETAs.<sup>120</sup> The sense of disappointment and the lack of feasible mechanisms to achieve the future political project made those individuals positively reflect on the need for politico-military activities. B-1/05, who had already begun to serve in ETA before Franco’s death, describes his experience in prison as well as right after his release due to a general amnesty declared by Juan Carlos I in 1977:

“[*When you went out of prison, it was already the period of Transition...*] No, there was no transition! You see, in jail, you talked to people about this, and there were a few of us who already knew where we’d go! That is to say, to grab the frets [*weapons*] again! And you know, this isn’t what we’ve been fighting for; this isn’t why we’ve been in jail. So, what option is left for you? Well, this one! At that time, I remember that I was with *Argala*, and he told me, ‘No, you go to HASI [*political party*]’ Well, HASI didn’t exist yet then, there was HAS, LAB, LAIA, etc. And I said, ‘Well, you’ll see, but there are people whom either you admit them [*in ETA-m*] or will they go with the *pms!* [*ETA-pm*]’ And he said, ‘Damn, there will be no amnesties, got it?’ And I said, ‘Nobody asks you for amnesty; what I’m telling you is what’s there. I’m talking about some people to whom if you don’t give the option to join the armed struggle, they will go to other places where they’ll be given the armed struggle!’ And after his meeting, he said, ‘Ok, prepare the *zulos* [*cache*] and whatever you need, and end of story!’ I tell you, I’d already decided in prison in Puerto. We were eight guys who would form two *taldes* [*commando group*].” (B-1/05)

While the steps taken by post-Franco governments to deal with the absolute symbolic imposition by the former regime seemed promising in terms of cultural recognition of nations other than Spanish, as Tejerina points out, anti-terror practices against ETA’s armed campaign were little efficient and, at the same time, not compatible with the legislative changes underway. Insistence in illegal and illegitimate

---

<sup>120</sup> Previously made studies also reflect this perspective concerning the continuity of armed struggle (see Interview N<sup>o</sup>4 in Reinales 2001: 91). It is understood that this vision was also shared by the members of other components of MLNV. Mata demonstrates through his field study among these groups, the idea of ‘if the situation had changed, then ETA would not exist’ attributes the continuity of ETA to the unchanged political situation that legitimized the use of arms in post-Franco politics (1993: 280, also see Interviews E-18, member of *Azkapena* and E-14, member of LAB on page 281).

methods and actors in the fight against terrorism remained incoherent with the spirit of a 'democratic transition', which was supposed to be towards the rule of law; they also helped ETA's famous spiral of action-repression-action to keep operating (2001: 45-46). Eugenio Etxebeste (alias *Antxon*), one of ETA's high-ranking militants through the 1980s, underlines this fact as a justifying point to deny the 'Transition' from the Basque perspective in an interview with French daily *Libération*:

"There is one thing that they do not want to understand. Of course, the Spanish state has changed; there has been made progress... but I am not Spanish. It is as if you look at the Iberian Peninsula with a magnifying glass, and you only keep your eyes on Madrid. In *Euskadi*, people have never been tortured that much. It is Spanish socialists who put the *Plan ZEN* into practice." (Eugenio Etxebeste in *Libération*, 5 February 1985 quoted in *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 1993, Vol. 4: 94)

Physical repression exercised by the state in the Basque Country in a period during which protest movements against the regime had already achieved certain impetus, with direct or indirect connection with ETAs, was also noted in the post-Franco period. Apart from dramatic events of state violence, like the police intervention in the labor strike in Vitoria-Gasteiz, where five workers were shot dead by the forces of public order<sup>121</sup>, the general atmosphere of repression was evident in the public sphere. The excessive use of violence in public protests such as labor strikes or the movement against the construction of Lemoiz nuclear plant, as well as routine casualties and detentions, served to strengthen the thesis defended by ETA-m:

"What is the point of talking about democracy in *Euskadi* while military and paramilitary units like the Civil Guard, Armed Police and General Police Corps are present on Basque territory. Those who two years ago, under the baton of Fraga, murdered five working-class fighters in Vitoria-Gasteiz are the same ones that just a year ago machine-gunned our colleagues *Zaharra* and *Goikoetxea* in Itsaso, and are the same as today, at the orders of the democratic Suárez; they continue to suppress popular aspirations, as in the case of the Lemoiz Nuclear Power Plant" (Communiqué of ETA to the Basque People, 8 March 1978 in *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 1993, Vol. 5: 60)

Apart from those incidents with tragic human losses, most of whom being ETA militants but also a considerable number of civilians, at the hands of the state's military and paramilitary units<sup>122</sup>, the general atmosphere experienced in the streets seems to have consolidated a narrative constructed on the social reality in the Basque Country during the transition period. Political (Basque nationalism, *Euskera*), social (anti-nuclear, ecologist), and economic (labor) demands were overtly expressed in the public sphere and suppressed violently by police forces; violent confrontations became a part of daily

---

<sup>121</sup> Objectified as the 'Vitoria Massacre' (*Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 1993, Vol.4: 88-89), the evening of 3 March 1976 is considered the first significant act of state violence of the post-Franco transition period. The fact that the main person responsible for the police intervention was Manuel Fraga Iribarne, one of the most loyal ministers of Franco before his death, strengthened even further the thesis that 'nothing had changed' and Francoism continued without Franco. After the incident, ETA-pm emphasized the absolute necessity for a democratic rupture (*Hautsi* Nº11), and ETA-m reaffirmed that a true democracy would never surge out of the ruins of dictatorship. (*Zutik*, nº 67, Nov. 1976).

<sup>122</sup> Paramilitary groups were in close contact with the Spanish security forces for a prolonged period during the state's anti-terrorism campaign. The first phase of this period was characterized as 'state terrorism' in the *abertzale* discourse (CEDRI 1990) and began with the last state of exception declared in the late Franco era in April 1975 with the actions of ATE (*Anti-Terrorismo ETA*) mercenary group. It subsequently continued through the second phase between 1978-1981 with the dominant presence of BVE (*Batallón Vasco-Español*), and finally ended with a third phase led by GAL (*Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación* – Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups), which operated from 1982 until 1986 (Letamendia 1997: 347-348).

life. Two narratives, one general and another more personal reported through in-depth interviews carried out by Reinares, best reflect the characteristics of this violence:

“People went out to the street, a demonstration, maybe to ask for an increase in salary. The police appeared and gave beatings. But were they giving real beatings, huh? It’s not what you see today there, with only a few of them around! They hit you a few times, and you begin to run, and that’s it. There were real clashes, shots, dead people. I mean, every day. It was constant. There were police checkpoints, they set up roadblocks that some say were well marked, but if you didn’t pay attention, you didn’t realize that there was a control until you reached it, they shot you, they killed you and things like that. I mean, it was continuous! Day by day, it was full of beatings, beatings and beatings. And that was after Franco died.” (Interview N° 33 in Reinares 2001: 69)

“I remember that, at sixteen years old, I was studying at the institute. It was 1976, and it was the day of *Euskera*; I have it engraved in my mind because they arrested me. I went out with a girl to dance, to a party room, where they put songs in Basque. And, suddenly, the Civil Guard came in and started detaining [*people*], detention, when there was no demonstration of any kind. Ten jeeps entered the party room, and they started beating people up; they beat all of us. In fact, the son of a civil guard lost his eye; that’s to say, it was absolutely indiscriminate. I was confined to bed due to the number of whippings and beatings they gave me in the back. I had my back marked like Jesus Christ, in living flesh. [...] Little by little, you are instilling a feeling of... hatred towards that, hatred, I think it was hate towards everything that it represented.” (Interview N° 34 in Reinares 2001: 133)

In a society where around 75% of the general population attributed the responsibility of ongoing violence to the winners of the Civil War and those groups and organizations considered their heirs (Llera 1994: 110)<sup>123</sup>, ETA actions against them were simply considered just and fair by the affected sectors of society. Although this did not imply that an overwhelming majority of the Basque population supported the ideology and political project for a Basque state, the mythicizing of ETA as the only significant actor that fought against the legality imposed by the dictatorship (Jaúregui 1981: 228) helped the organization maintain its popularity throughout the Transition. This sympathy mobilized a variety of people from different backgrounds. It may well be affirmed that in this period, the dialectical relationship between the state and ETA violence unified a significant part of the society in favor of the latter. *B-I/02*, who had no clear position towards the struggle for Basque national liberation, explains how the general atmosphere of repression and violence took him towards ETA and how he gradually gained sensibility on the national question through this trajectory:

“As a result of the situation generated by Francoism and of police actions, repression, etc. it was that period when I began to acquire consciousness that this people needed their own tools to exist. And then there was ETA, and I understood that one of the ways to fight for that cause was by joining ETA. [*And how did you decide to get actively involved in the movement?*] I think it was a period around one year or so of reflecting on the personal contribution that I would give to the process of national and social liberation. And I thought that my contribution in trade unions, the labor, and social fields had already been a while, and I realized that my contribution from that moment on began to have meaning in the organization of ETA.” (B-I/02)

---

<sup>123</sup> Having carried out one of the few reliable studies in these early periods of post-Franco Spain, Linz and his colleagues provide a more detailed outcome with regard to sources of violence in the Basque public opinion. According to their research conducted at the very time of the Transition, between 1978-1979, the rough ratio of 75% considered that the extreme right-wing actors (22% of the total), central government (20%), past dictatorship (19%), and police forces (15%) were the primary sources for the ongoing violence. In contrast, the rest hold extreme leftist movements (17%), nationalists/regionalists (4%) and student/youth groups (3%) responsible for violence (Linz *et al.* 1986: 647).

For the generation who passed through their socialization in the late Franco period in the Basque Country, the negative objectification of the Spanish Transition was comprehensible and coherent with the social memory inherited from the Francoist era. Notwithstanding, almost all individuals stress that taking such a ‘personal decision to take a step forward’ almost always requires a certain period (B-I/01, 02, 04, 06), which involves a thorough reflection. Therefore, it would be convenient to analyze the motivations and justifications that individuals express about their involvement in ETA.

#### 4.4. What they fought for: Motivations and justifications of political violence

The late 1970s saw a significant increase in ETA’s violence with a growing number of human casualties. The escalation of violence was motivated by specific factors, among which the social support and symbolic value attributed to the organization occupied a significant place (Tejerina 2001: 45-46).<sup>124</sup> The previously summarized socio-political atmosphere offered favorable grounds to unite diverse sectors, principally Basque nationalists but also a substantial amount of working-class people of non-Basque origin, in a growing anti-Francoist protest cycle led by this organization. When normative and utilitarian justifications expressed by those individuals who decided to join ETA in this period are analyzed, the following motivations and aspirations come to the forefront:

Motivations Interviewees	Armed struggle as an effective medium, the unique option	Sociopolitical environment: Repression, desire for liberation	Failure in expected changes, frustration	Strategy for ethnic survival, self-defense	Revolutionary spirit, labor conflict	ETA's fame and military capacity	Affective meaning of militancy: Maximum devotion
B-I/01	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
B-I/02	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
B-I/03	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
B-I/04	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B-I/05	✓	✓		✓			
B-I/06	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓

Although it is not easy to categorize these motivations and justifications, as they tend to be present in an intermingled manner, it is convenient to analyze the above-stated by regrouping them together. Most of the time, they are expressed within the same context.

##### 4.4.1. The armed struggle as a tool to accomplish national and social aspirations

Although ETA itself stated on countless occasions that the violence it exercised was of revolutionary character (Zuzen Nº 20 1982: 5), what is almost identically expressed by all militants, both in this as well as the future generations, is that the armed struggle was not a goal, but rather a (necessary) tool to accomplish political objectives. The main political objective of ETA in this period can be evaluated

<sup>124</sup> When analyzing the statistics on the armed actions taken by ETA (see Llera 1994), despite the previously presented statistics by Linz *et al.* (1986) in relation to the sources and responsibility of violence in the late 1970s in the Basque public opinion, one can affirm that the organization became the main perpetrator of violence in this period in terms of human casualties. The fact that ETA’s armed actions left around 240 people dead in only three years, between 1977-1980, clearly demonstrates a dramatic increase in the volume of violence (Lecours 2007: 85, 97).



in two phases: The short-term desired objective of ETA was to force the central government to negotiate the KAS alternatives (Ibarra 1987: 123). As militants in this period affirm, this was the first step to move towards the second phase of the main objective, which was the independence of the southern Basque Country and the formation of a socialist and unilingual Basque state<sup>125</sup> to be unified with the northern Basque Country in the future. This attitude towards the armed struggle and vision with regard to political objectives pursued through violence is best summarized by ETA-m's leading ideologue in the early period of post-Franco transition, *Argala*:

"The armed struggle is unpleasant; none of us likes it; it is hard. As a result of that, one goes to jail, into exile, is tortured; as a result of that, one can die, one finds himself forced to kill; the armed struggle hardens the person; it hurts him. However, the armed struggle is essential to move forward. The Spanish Government, for its reform plan, is sustained by the support of the army and the repressive forces. In order to combat this force, the armed force, it is essential to have a popular army. It is necessary that the people organize themselves in the armed struggle, in the underground, within ETA. I know from my own experience that ETA militants do not like violence, but they find themselves forced to fight. The KAS alternative constitutes the indispensable basis for talking about normalization of life in Euskadi, for thinking of a less violent path for the continuation of political life towards the constitution of an *independent, socialist, reunified, and euskaldun* Euskadi. While the objectives of the KAS alternative are not achieved, the Basque people will be tied, the institutional pathways will not help them much, and the armed struggle will be a necessity." (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.5: 9, *emphasis added*)

The critical question here is to find the reasons why individuals considered that armed struggle was the unique option despite the end of the Franco period. The question has its answer as all actors of MLNV considered that Francoism did not end with the death of the dictator and the following governments were not a rupture but rather a continuity of the same regime, with almost the same political actors and institutions except the *Caudillo*. When considering the position of ETA members in this generation, the inheritance of late Francoism in the Basque collective memory was not something simply heard from the previous generations but rather something directly experienced in their everyday life. The armed struggle for 'defensive' purposes, therefore, had to continue as it was the only functional means to deal with this situation of 'war' under the given conditions:

"I thought that it was the only way we could turn everything upside down, so we could get the right for self-determination. Well, then we didn't think that it would be the right to self-determination but independence and a modification of the labor conditions of the workers. [...] I also think that ETA's struggle was defensive because, in the end, we were attacked. It wasn't an open war but a covert war. We were at war." (B-I/04)

"You don't just take up arms because you feel like it, or it's the most romantic [*form*] or the ideal thing in your life, but it awakens you, and you say 'what solutions have we left for this nation to develop the way it should in social, cultural and political terms, [*and*] how?', and you seek to find answers to that question, and you ask 'how?' [...] Nor have we ever considered in this country that through armed struggle, we would one day arrive at the liberation of this land, but instead that this land will be liberated when the majority of its people decide that it must be liberated. What you do is to maintain that pressure; you have maintained that this nation exists. This nation has rights, and as long as the people are denied those rights, we'll continue the armed struggle" (B-I/01)

---

<sup>125</sup> Mata explains the use of violence by ETA in this period by making a distinction between *strategic* and *tactical* objectives. According to scholar, the *strategic objective* refers to the independence of the Basque Country, and the *tactical objective*, based on the idea of political negotiation, defines the route that takes the MLNV to the strategic objective (1993: 284).

The affirmation made by *B-I/01* explains a fundamental instrumental function that ETA attributed to the use of violence for political purposes, which was to maintain social pressure so that the Basque question remained visible. The most crucial social significance -and efficiency- of ETA's violence, in this sense, was not to defeat the state apparatus militarily<sup>126</sup> but, instead, its symbolic capacity to prevent the state from becoming legitimate on the Basque territory (Pérez-Agote 2008: 102). Although the Basques had always lost their confrontations with the state and been subjected to repression as a consequence, which constituted the central pillar of Basque nationalist historiography, violence was considered a symbolic medium that delegitimized the sovereignty of the state. *B-I/03* explains his 'historic' role as an ETA militant as well as the role that the organization has played in his opinion in this long struggle for the Basque ethnic survival:

"I've been a militant of ETA all that time and through all these things, but there's a certain moment you say 'well, ETA is just another element of the history of a nation. But not even my ultimate goal was to be a militant. I'm just a slave more of a chain of a people from history, that it exists, in a way or another, by giving the battle for the same goal.' Then you say, 'whatever the situation is, my people have already lived it through'. I remember hearing at home the situation after losing the Civil War, the repression and all that, and I think a worse situation than that one [*does not exist*], we have already experienced that, and besides, we were those who lost... If we Basques have learned something, it is to lose; we know how to lose. What happens is that we have a great capacity for pig-headedness! [*laughing*] Well, it is ours, and the final judgment arrives, and maybe the end of the world comes, but we'll continue claiming [*our demands*]." (B-I/03)

This vision towards the armed struggle –and the necessity of its continuity, in this sense, constitutes one of the main utilitarian justifications. It is perceived as a task to carry out in order to continue considering themselves a simple 'little grain of sand' (B-I/02, 03, 04) in a long bank, figuratively representing the Basque national history. While military defeats or errors committed are assumed, all positive advances in the development of the Basque national identity during the Transition and the following period of democratic consolidation are attributed to the functionality of violent practices:

"...the fact that we have the LAB union is our success. Before there was no union or anything, there was the Labor Front, then that Labor Front transformed into what is the LAB today. There were no political parties; there was a Political Front, the Political Front converted into HAS, then into HASI, and now it's Bildu or Sortu. We've made mistakes, yes, but we've also done the right things, and they're all ours." (B-I/05)

The functionality of the use of arms is also mentioned in the political processes that take place in the Basque Country right after Franco's death. The consequences of ETA's actions are interpreted as the vital factor that has paved the way for the current conditions. Apart from occasional successes like paralyzing the Lemoiz Nuclear Plant (Mata 1993: 282), the Autonomous Statute and other concessions are considered the results yielded thanks to ETA's fight and sacrifice (see Interviews N° 31 & 45 in

---

<sup>126</sup> It would be convenient to mention that the main political objective of ETA, that is, forcing the Spanish central government to accept the KAS alternatives, was based on a practical tactic: The organization, which considered itself the revolutionary army of the Basque people (*Zuzen* N° 20 1982: 5), sought to damage the presence of Spanish security forces considered 'occupying forces', and force them to abandon the Basque national territory under constant pressure through the use of revolutionary violence, as clearly stated in ETA-m's official publications in this period (see *Zuzen* N° 22, 1982: 7).

Reinares 2001: 94). The functionality of ETA violence is also noted in the case of the first conversations between ETA and the Spanish government in Algeria in 1989 (Interview N° 40 in Reinares 2001: 95). B-I/06, one of the historical ETA executives in this period who was also present during the Algiers Conversations, confirms ETA's desired approach towards political negotiations:

*"[So, you were outside at that time. (I was in Algiers) And from there, how did you see the evolution of ETA?] At that time, what we saw was that the armed struggle had a function, that it still continued to have, that there were reasons to continue the armed struggle, but that we had to come to an agreement. That is to say, we would have to open paths, and that's why in Algiers, the negotiation paths were opened. I think, at that moment, those paths started to work. I think it was something that came from within the Organization years ago. At that time, I was in the military structure, so I already had enough job with armed actions. We all said, 'one day we'll have to reach, we'll have to reach some agreements with the Spanish Government', and we were there. It was necessary to overcome the armed conflict and to give rise to stages of a negotiated political solution. [And then after the failure in Algiers, you were expelled...] I don't know if it was a failure because we achieved several things: First, we managed to show that the Basque conflict appeared there, and negotiation with the state was needed, and the state had to take steps, and many things were put on the table which had been ruled out until then. Then we got support from the state, which meant an international acknowledgment of an armed organization that had direct talks with a government. So, I think we achieved a lot of things" (B-I/06)*

All these motivations and aspirations that individuals rationally evaluate as 'correct' justify the decision of joining the armed struggle. These motivations, however, primarily constitute utilitarian justifications prioritizing the instrumental use of political violence and are also explicitly mentioned in ETA's official records.<sup>127</sup> Their adoption by those ETA cadres who have been loyal to the 'Basque liberation cause' is, therefore, considered logical and coherent. Notwithstanding, focusing on the 'personal' side of militancy engagement reveals more abstract and complex aspects.

#### **4.4.2. The perception and meaning of struggle: Emotional aspects of militancy**

Although the Spanish transition made advances towards a liberal democracy throughout the 1980s with significant changes in both the character of state violence as well as the progress in protection and promotion of cultural rights (Pérez-Agote 2008: 170)<sup>128</sup>, an affirmation which is strictly denied by MLNV cadres, the armed struggle of ETA continued. For those individuals who opted for the continuation of the armed struggle, existing political conditions, as observed above, played an important role. However, the 'emotional aspect of militancy'<sup>129</sup> in the national liberation struggle, while not utterly irrelevant to those conditions, went beyond the political and social characteristics.

---

<sup>127</sup> Precisely, in an internal message addressed to its militants, ETA officially declared its desire to establish peace talks with the Spanish government and reiterated its eagerness to declare a unilateral ceasefire in conditions of peace talks to be based on five points of the KAS alternatives (see *Zutabe*, n° 42, October 1985).

<sup>128</sup> Llera indicates that '*re-esukaldunization*' process, referring to the normalization process of the Basque language in public life and its co-official status in Basque institutions, did not prevent its communicative function from declining within Basque society during the 1980s (1994: 89). Basing on qualitative data on three generations, Tejerina also affirms that although Euskera made significant progress during the years of Transition, including among *euskaldunberris*, the communicative function of this language in a pluri-linguistic environment began to decrease while the overestimation of cultural and political dimensions of Euskera continued increasingly (1992: 169-171, 252).

<sup>129</sup> The term 'emotional aspect of militancy' is inspired by a text titled 'The human aspect of the militant' written by a leading ETA member, Antxon López Ruiz (alias *Kubati*), upon the request of *Euskadi Information* monthly. In his short text, Kubati

Basing on the outcomes of her ethnographic research, Alcedo claims that ETA militants as human beings experience a profound transformation of life once they begin to get involved in militancy by complying with three phases of the militancy rite cycle: *a)* they come from a determined social order whose existing symbolic universe (Francoist official order or –for later generations- institutionalization by the traditional Basque nationalism) does not satisfy them; this takes them to *b)* the refusal of and separation from this order during a period of ambiguity; and finally, *c)* they become part of a new social structure, that of ETA (Alcedo 1996: 98-99). The process of this transformation is best described by one of the leading militants of ETA's '*vieja guardia*' (old guards), Antxon López Ruiz (alias *Kubati*), in a text he wrote on this subject while serving a lengthy prison sentence in the early 1990s:

“In militancy, as in life, there is an evolutionary process consubstantial to the social environment in which one is shaped. It starts with taking simple, modest, but tremendously responsible and necessary steps because these are the beginning of a development that will lead the person to acquire the capacity to have responsibilities. [...] It all starts on the day you seriously consider what you do in this world. But this approach is not spontaneous; it is preceded by endless reproaches to oneself and a reflective attitude about how society should be so we can all live a more dignified life. You also ask yourself the reason for the oppression that your people suffer. These kinds of questions arise from the depths of your being when you are alone with yourself, when it is only you.

At the moment that these types of questions become repetitive, an irresistible need arises within you to give them the right answer. You know that there are people who have been fighting for many years, people exiled, imprisoned, retaliated against, dead... and when you think about these details, you realize that you are reaching the point where reality creates contradictions for you. At the same time, you notice inside that something is moving, that something is leading you to the commitment and asking you to participate in the struggle in which many people are giving everything they have.

That ‘something’ about which I talk, you do not know what it is yet, you cannot define it precisely, but you notice it very intensely, it is like when you are in love, and your heart is agitated; when that ‘something’ manifests itself, you have got the goosebumps. Over time, after a few years, you realize that the feeling, that ‘something’ that, at first, you cannot understand, but you know that it exists, is love. Love for your people, love for humanity, love for life.” (*Euskadi Information*, Nº 74, December 1991, republished in *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 1993, Vol 8: 305)

As *Kubati* emphasizes, the period of comprehension in defining this peculiar and intense feeling that usually takes a considerable time constitutes the decision-making phase of the individual in the involvement in ETA. Indeed, almost all interviewees from all three generations affirm that their involvement in ETA typically took some time during which they pondered their thoughts. Militancy in ETA as the highest level of loyalty with highly probable consequences, listed as ‘prison, exile, or death’ (B-I/01, 04, 06), is the most challenging decision that one may ever happen to experience in life:

“In my case, a moment came in which they asked if I’d be willing to enter the organization, and well, I began with a process of... I don’t know how to say *hausnarketa* [reflection], then evaluating ‘Well, I think that for me the armed struggle is valid and if I support those who exercise the armed struggle, if I agree with that, I must take a step, and it must be myself who does that, not always bequeathing from others.’ So, from there on, I said, ‘I assume the consequences, I assume militancy’ and I integrated into a group from here on. [*But, was it difficult to make that decision?*] Man, I don’t know if it was difficult. I think that it’s something that just comes to you

---

provides important details regarding the personality of militants through his own example of personal formation and development. The qualitative outcomes obtained in the Basque field confirm that certain emotional aspects underlined in the text can be generalized for the entire ETA militancy and, as *Kubati* himself precisely affirms, his personal experience with this respect is shared by other militants (*Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 1993, Vol.8: 305).

little by little. That is to say, the time for you to leap is when you really think about it and say, 'let's see, this has three ways out: I'll end up in jail, they'll kill me, or I'll have to leave [*for exile*].' So, that moment was really hard because you say... But on the other hand, I think it's a process that comes from before. Maybe you're preparing yourself, you think so, you think that you can do those things. Then, when that moment comes, yes, when the right time comes, and you say 'well, open or close', then you say 'I open' and that's it." (B-1/04)

Being hard to comprehend and rationalize, and probably for this and other security-related reasons, this state of 'love' which grows inside the individual also determines the strictly personal aspect of this final decision-making. Most militants repeatedly emphasize that no one from their immediate social surrounding, including their family members, knew nothing about this decision-making process nor about their militancy in ETA until they became *liberated* by passing into the underground militancy (B-1/01, 05, 06) or were arrested as part of *legal* commandos (B-1/02, 03, 04).<sup>130</sup>

"When you make decisions like this in your life, you know that, in one way or another, they'll kill you, you'll go to jail, or you'll spend your life in exile. These are decisions that I don't know if you're ready for, but I believe that in most cases, we're prepared for that. [*We're*] prepared because we say, 'it was my choice.' The choice that many times you've not shared with anyone, but for one reason or another, you've said, 'I'm going to take this path. It's my decision.' You're aware that you can go through all these hardships, right? So, if you're willing to go through all these hardships, it's for something." (B-1/01)

Once individuals come to understand the meaning of this feeling, a process of transition from the 'old' world to the 'new' one begins to take place. Through this process, leaving the old loyalties behind also brings new social conducts and customs and new contents endowed to social roles (Alcedo 1996: 128-136). This process requires the refusal of old ethical/moral codes indoctrinated through the existing social mechanisms and, simultaneously, the adoption of new ones objectified by those who carry out the struggle. Labeling this process as the 'first phase of militancy', *Kubati* explains this state of mind, which is related to the individual's life-course, he and his comrades in ETA previously lived through:

"The first steps are always tough, but you count on the strength and impetus that youth gives you. It's a little impulsive, but that condition, even though it can bring us bad moments, helps us not to ask a lot of things that have no answers at that moment and that we need a certain journey in our lives to find them. When one gets mature both in age and in ideas, he needs to resolve unknowns and create new ones. This process is an indispensable part of a person's evolution. [...] We would not begin to function if all the unknowns that life can bring to us are piled up. That is to say, I cannot be a militant of an armed organization if I follow the moralistic behavior that the priest of my school taught me; neither can I if I believe in the justice defended by the State that oppresses my people if I am to set two examples. In order to overcome these two contradictions, which may be very entrenched depending on the social extract from which the militant comes, you need an evolution that must follow a natural rhythm. It is here when I mean that we may not find all the answers at the beginning of the unknowns posed by the determination to embrace a struggle like ours." (López Ruiz in *Euskadi Information*, Nº 74, December 1991, quoted from *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 1993, Vol 8: 305-306)

---

<sup>130</sup> Militancy in ETA is divided into two categories: *legal commando* consisting of those who live everyday life, having a family and a steady job, and a *liberado* ('freed' in Spanish), defined as a person who becomes a professional dedicated to the Basque revolution. Focusing on this latter category, Alcedo stresses the fact that *liberados* give up their *legal* status, leaving all other occupations (work, study, and alike), as well as their affective world (family, *kuadrilla*, village), creates 'a sensation of extreme liberty (from stress and fear of being detained) and happiness' (see interviews B-1, B-7 in 1996: 118, 122-123). The transition from a *legal* position to becoming a *liberado* (underground) and other possibilities constitute important factors with regard to the direct and indirect social consequences for both the militants and their affective worlds.

This personal transition described in detail above corresponds to the process of internalization of the group truth by the individual, beginning from the political socialization at a certain point in life-course. Once this process is completed, all concepts that are relevant to the 'cause' (and to life), such as justice, equality, and liberty, are interpreted from the optics of the new collectivity to which the individual belongs. The perspective towards these concepts leads to a contradiction and conflict with those which are defined in the official truth considered morally incompatible with the group truth.

"When leaving prison, the Head of Services told me 'good luck!', and I replied, 'Good luck to you! You're the lucky one', and he said, 'what do you mean?' 'if I were lucky, you'd be inside 24 hours like me! And that's a minimum! Until we see what is that you're charged with, what did you commit? And then we'd see! Today I go out, but in 8 months, I'll be back!' I told him. 'Damn, that's revenge!' he said. 'Oh shit! Yours is justice, and mine is revenge? What a bloody coincidence! No, it's justice! You're a fascist, you've been at the service of fascism, and then we'd have to see what roles you played in the beatings of prisoners. And your behavior in prison, we'd have to work on it too! Then, after all that, either you'll face jail, or you'll be acquitted, released without charges! And this is justice! Justice on my part, and justice on your part too!'" (B-I/05)

"I have an idea that is above almost all thoughts, an ethical idea that is: Here we're all equal, no one can impose anything on me nor us because he fucking feels like it. And if someone imposes on me, I punch him, and I'll punch whenever I can. That is to say, if I don't have the strength, I won't be able to punch him, but my moral right is to respond to him on the basis of self-defense. If I happen to lose that, what would I become?" (B-I/03)

This perspective also explains the rationale behind the continuity of the armed struggle through this and the following generations. Questioning whether it is necessary to pursue an armed struggle from a different rational perspective based on the democratic political system established in Spain, in this sense, becomes irrelevant for the members of MLNV. Whatever the military strategy put into practice is, the moral judgment of the militant justifies it as long as he or she remains loyal to the group truth.

## 5. The Founding Generation of the ‘Kurdistan National Liberation Movement’<sup>131</sup>

### 5.1. The Kurdish politics in Turkey between 1970 - 1980

#### 5.1.1. Kurdish movements, Turkish revolutionary left, and the emergence of the PKK

The emergence phase of the PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan – Kurdistan Workers’ Party*) coincided with the turmoil of Turkey’s post-memorandum political scene, during which the country experienced the evolution of yet three other major armed organizations, all influenced by leftist revolutionary ideas of universally iconic figures and movements elsewhere in the world: Mahir Çayan’s *Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi/Cephesi* (THKP/C – Popular Liberation Party/Front of Turkey), influenced by Latin American revolutionary movements; *Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu* (THKO – The Popular Liberation Army of Turkey) led by Deniz Gezmiş; and finally *Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist* (TKP/ML – Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist) under İbrahim Kaypakkaya’s control influenced by Maoist China (Aydın & Taşkın 2017: 186-191). While many Kurdish parties or organizations in Turkish-ruled Kurdistan stemmed either from the TİP or DDKO tradition, the PKK, then popularly known as the *Apocular*<sup>132</sup>, was one of few other organizations that put in place a different theoretical and practical vision for Kurds in Turkey.

For Abdullah Öcalan, the founder and leading ideologue of the PKK, internationalist iconic revolutionary movements emerged as a result of the politicization of a specific cohort at the time represented by the Turkish leftist movements, especially THKP-C, drawn a more attractive option as their arguments were better prepared for the debate over the use of revolutionary violence (N.A. Özcan 1999: 30). Çayan’s leadership and methods had long fascinated Öcalan during his earlier youth activism in western Turkey. In a DEV-GENÇ (*Devrimci Gençlik - Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey*) meeting at Istanbul Technical University, Çayan’s criticism towards Mihri Belli’s DEV-GENÇ was later expressed by Öcalan with significant admiration:

“Mahir had spoken quite courageously. It was just before he went in underground. It was the first time that I saw that the Kurdish question had been opened to debate there. Mahir’s speech on Kemalism and the Kurdish question was brave, and it expressed the utmost level of influence on us. I think he had got rid of the influence of Kemalism just recently. He expressed the same point for revisionism too. I suppose Mahir also started a debate, discussing an illegal organization that would not hesitate to consider revolutionary violence. He made two tough speeches. Even gunfire took place, as far as I remember. For me, it was an extremely brave stance; I would even call it ideal. It was the most significant moment of my life in Istanbul.” (Öcalan 1996: 63)

An explicit expression of the Kurdish issue and debate over the use of revolutionary violence overlapped in Öcalan’s ideas in comparison with other previously mentioned Kurdish nationalists. Of

---

<sup>131</sup> This designation appears in the first volume of the PKK’s official monthly journal *Serxwebûn* (independence), in which the organization is defined as an anti-colonial Marxist-Leninist *Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtulus Hareketi* (Kurdistan National Liberation Movement) against the ‘colonial-fascist military junta in Turkey’ (January 1982, №: 1-2, 9).

<sup>132</sup> Literally means the ‘followers of Apo’, referring to the diminutive version of the name Abdullah (Öcalan).

the two main goals, the first one, a socialist revolution in an independent Kurdistan, defined as a colony (Öcalan 2009[1996]: 19), began to take shape with a specific practical method, which, at a later stage, would be successfully combined with a second, the idea of a multifaceted anti-colonial struggle against the ‘occupying enemy’<sup>133</sup>, pejoratively labeled as TC, referring to the initials of the Republic of Turkey in Turkish (*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*).

It was not only Öcalan who was influenced by the leftist revolutionary movements of the period during the early 1970s but generally all founding generation cadres of the party, most of whom were young Kurdish university students studying in Turkish metropolises. Being one of the current members of the KCK (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan – Kurdistan Communities Union*) Executive Council and one of the founding figures of the PKK alongside Öcalan, *K-I/04* describes the political atmosphere and influences of this period on different generation units:

“In the early 70s, the political situation in society was particularly linked to the revolutionary struggle in Turkey, that was, first and foremost, the dimension that influenced me the most. There was influence from the [May] 68 Movement. Influence from the 68 global youth movement created echoes in Turkey up until 12 March [1971]. The process, which continued until 12 March in 1971, had created quite a serious commotion in Turkey, a revolutionary commotion. This revolutionary influence was a development that influenced many sectors of society. On the one hand, this created a breeding ground for the development of revolutionaries, while on the other hand, it created its opponent side. I mean, there was a divided atmosphere in political terms between movements from leftist, revolutionist, or counter-revolutionist positions.” (K-I/04, male, *CONF*, 60)

A close observation of this period reveals that the early recruits of the self-denominated *Kurdistan Revolutionaries* were mainly university students or drop-outs from landless large Kurdish peasant families with low levels of literacy (Marcus 2007: 37).<sup>134</sup> Alongside them, the presence of leading militants of Turkish origin, such as Haki Karer and Kemal Pir, played a pioneering role in extending forms of protest under the influence of internationalist revolutionary movements of the period. These cohort effects were more visible among intellectual circles in Turkish metropolises as well as Kurdish cities and towns, as the following early period militants explain:

“Apart from Turkey and Kurdistan, what influenced intellectual youth at that time were popular revolutions taking place around the world. The youth was searching for influences from revolutions such as the Soviets, Vietnamese, Cuban, and others. Of course, this happened among the educated youth, and, in fact, this also began in Turkey. It began among the youth at universities in Turkey and Kurdistan and gradually extended all across Kurdistan over time. It was the way [*things started*] during that period.” (K-I/08, Male, 61, *Derik*)

---

<sup>133</sup> The idea of Kurdistan as a colony was not a new definition; some scholars emphasize that Turkish communist Dr. Hikmet Kıvılcımlı had also defended the same thesis in the early 1930s (N.A. Özcan 1999: 31; Yeğen 2006: 155). In a letter addressed to his brother in 1977, Büyükkaya also stresses the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle for Kurdistan, divided into four parts, underlining the right for self-determination (2008[1992]: 86-87). However, Öcalan appears to have been the first ideologue who successfully combines colonial definition with a practical armed struggle in order to break the colonial impact on Kurds and liberate their personality in a *Fanonian* sense (2002[1961]: Chapter 1).

<sup>134</sup> Kurdish intellectual M.E. Bozarıslan, who had elaborated one of few social analyses of the period, indicates that primary school education remains a privilege except for bigger villages and towns, and the number of those who graduated from primary education institutions was significantly low in this period (2002[1966]: 68-77; *also see* Table on illiteracy rate on pp. 79-80). Sociodemographic data collected for this research verifies the data presented by Bozarıslan (*see* Appendix 4.2.).



“We can talk about the generation of 68 and its influence. There were some 6-7 teachers in our village, and they organized a school boycott in which only one teacher did not participate; all the rest participated in the boycott. I remember well, I was a child, around the year 1969, they made us shout slogans ‘American mutt, get out of Turkey!’ It’s the first slogan that I remember. [...] During that time, Mahir Çayan’s and Deniz Gezmiş’s movements emerged. Despite all defamations by the enemy [*Turkish state*] in newspapers by disseminating propaganda against them, we caught their fancy; it was a rebellion against the system, and we had human sentiments towards them because they were young. For example, after the martyrdom of İbrahim Kaypakkaya and that of Mahir Çayan and his comrades, there were banners hung in the streets with ‘Blood for blood, revenge!’, ‘Popular Liberation Army of Turkey’, ‘We will take revenge of the Denizers, we will take revenge of the Mahirs!’ Little stickers were secretly put on the walls by university students” (K-I/09, Male, 60, Kağızman)<sup>135</sup>

The 1971 memorandum in Turkey’s political history was a crucial shifting point, which caused a further radicalization and atomization of Kurdish liberation movements as well as modified the form of interactions and attitudes they shared with Turkish leftist youth. Executions of leading revolutionary leaders by the state and the attitude taken by their successors in those movements towards the Kurdish question were vital for the first generation of PKK members. In an interview with Duran and Kürkçü, the latter being the only survivor of the *Kızıldere* massacre, Öcalan recognizes this traumatogenic event as a milestone in his life:

“When you were about to head towards Kızıldere, we were just recently emerging within the revolutionary youth. With a sympathetic warmth, I had joined *Siyasal*<sup>136</sup>. I also remember that I was sympathetic towards THKP/C. Surely, they were our youth heroes; they were personalities whom we most idealized in that period. They were the symbols of invincibility. We did not think that they would reach an end so easily, especially altogether in that manner. However, when we witnessed that their corpses were broken up into pieces in red blood so tragically, our whole world changed in a sense. I still remember those days. It is true; it was an end for you; it might have been the end of life too. If you survive like this today, it is a miraculous survival. But for me, it was the first serious political test. What I will and will not do for the Kızıldere event was a departing point that determined my subsequent life. [...] We got involved in a hot political environment because of the Kızıldere event. If I were to state a starting date for me, this would be one of the most serious beginnings. Because I was jailed, something that became a significant incubation period for me.” (Öcalan 1995: 39-40)

After the tragic collapse of the prominent revolutionary movements led by the leftist-libertarian generation entelechy in Turkey, the first cadres of the Kurdish movement began favoring an *anti-colonial struggle* discourse for Kurdistan by gradually distancing themselves from other Turkish leftist groups (K-I/03, 06). K-I/07, an Alevi Kurd from the Turkish province of Maraş, affirms the impacts of the 12 March 1971 memorandum on the emergence of the PKK movement:

“...after the 1971 coup, in Kurdistan, all of those whom we can define as youth leaders of the 1970s, leaders of the revolution in Turkey, were all liquidated. This liquidation led leftism in Turkey towards significant atomization. [...] Well, what were the conditions that opened the door for the emergence of the PKK? It was the post-1970 [*developments*].” (K-I/07, Male, 61, Maraş)

Penetrating Turkey’s Kurdistan in the post-12 March memorandum period was a challenging issue. Apart from the extreme stigma of leftism and Kurdism and repression, other Kurdish groups following

---

<sup>135</sup> K-I/01 (Male, 57, Varto), as another clear example, confirms that his hometown, Varto, was highly affected by the revolutionary processes taking place in Turkish metropolises, like May Day in 1977, celebrated in Istanbul’s main Taksim Square during which dozens of people were shot dead.

<sup>136</sup> Referring to the *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi* (Faculty of Political Sciences), University of Ankara.

the paces of the revitalization of Kurdish nationalism from the late 1950s onward were also a significantly decisive factor against the future development of the PKK movement. Öcalan's vision, however, was not based on traditional Kurdish nationalism but was instead a protest against those who defended the ideas and forms exercised by previous generations.

### **5.1.2. The generational rupture: Refusing the past, pioneering the future**

Despite internal disputes and splits among them, most Kurdish nationalist and revolutionary organizations of the period followed a line of generational continuity. Kemal Burkay's *Partiya Sosyalista Kurdistan* (PSK – Socialist Party of Kurdistan, also known for its famous publication *Özgürlük Yolu/Riya Azadî* – The Path to Freedom) opted for a non-violent democratic anti-fascist struggle; the defenders of the Kurdish left among young DDKO militants established *Rızgarî* (Liberation); *Devrimci Demokratik Kültür Derneği* (DDKD – The Revolutionary Democratic Culture Association) emerged as one of the pro-Soviet organizations with branches in northern Kurdistan. Finally, the most radical movements such as Kawa and *Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçuları* (KUK - National Liberators of Kurdistan), a transformation of T-KDP after the collapse of Barzani's movement in Iraqi Kurdistan, were the most formidable rivals of the Apocular/PKK in this period (Orhan 2016: 55-56).

The formation of the pre-1978 PKK, *Apocular*, or Kurdistan Revolutionaries<sup>137</sup>, however, drew a somewhat different picture with an apparent inclination towards the leftist-revolutionary spirit of the 1970s generation, with almost no reference to the Kurdish ethnic revival process. Despite Öcalan occasionally admits his short-lived experience in DDKO ranks during his DEV-GENÇ period (2004: 309), the political discourse that he used to describe the DDKO from the beginning is remarkably critical (Öcalan 1996: 61-62, 100-101). This perspective is best reflected through the PKK's founding text *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu* (The Path of the Kurdistan Revolution), famously known as *Manifesto*:

“Due to the thought dependence and infertility of Kurdish intellectuals, the incapacity they show concerning the analysis of the history of their country and its precise conditions is, only today, gradually being overcome. The publication movement, which was not developed around revolution theory and program up until now, has not been able to reflect the reality of the country as a natural result of legality, and therefore, has prompted the youth and intellectuals to gather around social-chauvinist and reformist petit-bourgeoisie tendencies and prevented the educated youth movement from developing in a revolutionary-patriotic fashion. Adopting the principal to think and act on the basis of the Kurdistan reality, with its theory deriving from the concrete [facts] of the country and with its program based on this theory, our Movement sees it as a sacred and historic duty to pioneer our people in the ideological, organizational and political spheres.” (PKK 1993[1978]: 119)

The PKK, in this sense, represents a generational rupture, more so than a continuity of previous processes involving the above-mentioned contemporary movements. The radicalization of the PKK as

---

<sup>137</sup> The beginning of the PKK as Kurdistan Revolutionaries may seem paradoxical as the group was formed in the Turkish capital of Ankara by young intellectuals (Kutschera 1997: 249). Taking the initial activities carried out by student groups analyzed in *Chapter 3* and the lack of higher education institutes in Kurdistan in this period into consideration, on the other hand, it is of no surprise that the intelligentsia of Kurdist groups mostly gathered in Turkish metropolises.

a movement opting for armed struggle may be interpreted as a natural consequence of an increase in state violence on Kurds and newly emerging Kurdish political movements in this period; however, by accusing the former-generation Kurds of betrayal and cowardliness, the PKK reinterprets the long-lasting Kurdish struggle (Bozarslan 2012: 152-153). This interpretation is also the departing point for a 'new Kurdish reality' to be constructed and objectified throughout the following decades. In this sense, prominent figures of the Kurdish struggle in other movements and their *Kurdism* activities are considered neither sufficient nor correct, as expressed by K-I/09:

"You see 68s, you see 54s, the trial of Musa Anter and his colleagues, for example. There were innocent demands by the DDKO, like 'make roads in Kurdistan, bring electricity to Kurdistan, build schools in Kurdistan'. However, these [*demands*] were a call to plunder Kurdistan and assimilate Kurds in a way; despite this, Turkey didn't even accept similar innocent slogans that would serve to colonialism. [...] Let's say Kemal Burkays and Anter, despite their submissiveness, their betrayal, the Turkish state didn't accept them. Of course, the state wasn't idle either. There was a principle in that period: whoever forms an organization, the first condition was to be an anti-*Apocu*. Celal Bucak's wife or his sister, she once said on television, 'the Apocu movement is a poisonous movement; wherever it goes, it poisons there!' It was true; we were poison; we were antidote poison; they had already poisoned Kurdistan, but we were their antidote." (K-I/09)

Succeeding Kurdish organizations throughout the 1970s were characterized in a similarly negative way by the most PKK cadres (K-I/03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 10) due to their lack of action and reformism from the PKK's perspective. This commonly shared critical vision within the PKK towards other political organizations is also reflected in Öcalan's own words:

"There was a pile of other parties; those never took a decision on militarization. They did not even find [*enough*] time to fight. We call them reformists. There is no need to call them reformists. In fact, their presence or absence makes no difference under the wheels of colonialism; they are things that exist [*only*] in name, but not in reality. If you want to be accepted in Kurdistan, if you want to walk towards a life with some freedom, self-identity, and self-willpower, you have to be a soldier." (Öcalan 2008[1995]: 210)<sup>138</sup>

The betrayal and submissiveness ascribed to previous-generation actors were also attributed to the hereditary movements. While the *Apocular* is defined as a movement of action, that is to say, an organization that coherently employed its theoretical approach on practical grounds, actions by others are perceived as a sign of common enmity against the PKK. K-I/05 summarizes the vision of the first PKK cadres and their opinion about those movements:

"*Heval*<sup>139</sup>, they didn't have such a significant thing; they didn't take many actions. KUK, Rızgarî, Ala Rızgarî, DDKD or Özgürlük Yolu, these movements didn't take significant actions against the state. Let alone significant actions; they had no action at all. Their alliance was usually against us. For example, I remember that they created a formation called UDG in 1979 [*The National Democratic Power Union*]. What was that? Well, it was supposed to be against the enemy, but on the very contrary, it was anti-*Apocu*; that is, they developed an alliance against the *Apocular*. All the actions they took were against us." (K-I/05, male, 57, Diyarbakır)<sup>140</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup> Within the early numbers of *Serxwebûn*, one observes that other Kurdish movements are hardly mentioned and, when mentioned, they are reflected contemptuously as the symbols of reformism and obedience to the authority, whereas the resistance and determination of the PKK militants are praised in comparison (see *Serxwebûn* №27 March 1984).

<sup>139</sup> The term *heval* (literally 'comrade' in Kurdish Kurmanji) is frequently used among PKK members or sympathizers.

<sup>140</sup> K-I/06 affirms this argument in his interpretation regarding the formation of UDG.

While ideological discrepancies were the main challenge among Kurdish generation units, some specific approaches were –at least theoretically- shared by these Kurdish movements. First and foremost, the majority of them considered Kurdistan as a colony; they underlined structural problems ('feudalism',<sup>141</sup> economic deprivation, e.g.) as an obstacle on the path towards Kurdish national unity. However, as Öcalan mentions above, what made the PKK different was their insistence on taking visible actions. As being one of the closest cadres to Öcalan in the initial phase of the *Apocular*, K-I/04 underlines the PKK's difference from other Kurdish leftist organizations of the 1970s:

"The organizations you've asked about took quite a bizarre position, difficult to understand what exactly it was. There you see, through the context of international ideologies or politics, they adopt an attitude that is open to socialism and Marxism. From this aspect, even though they have certain alliances and relations with the Turkish left and other leftists around the world, they remain hesitant in integrating within them. This is their contradictory side, which is more about social chauvinism. That is to say, the incompetency of approaching the Kurdish question through the social chauvinist characteristic of real socialism provokes an anti-nationalist reaction. A strange situation emerges: they don't get fully integrated, but neither are they that disconnected. [...] The PKK movement took the criticism of all those elements as the main reference; it evaluated them even though all of them had different perspectives. It criticized real socialism. It also criticized those movements that sought links with different centers of the world. It presented itself by seriously, and particularly, criticizing Kurdish nationalism -or the mainstream which we label as primitive nationalism." (K-I/04)

From this perspective, the political history of Kurdistan was reconstructed, with the PKK being its central actor. The reality of a Great Kurdistan was depicted as an inter-state colony (*Serxwebûn*, June 1982, №6: 12-17), and the anti-colonial liberation war led by the PKK an integral part of the national history of Kurds, a history written by the PKK. Likewise, as it was the PKK that launched the military and political struggle for the first time against the colonial identity imposed on Kurdish people, the history of this colonized nation and the salvation of their *self* also began with the PKK. This narrative is reflected in *PKK Tarihi* (History of the PKK), attributed to Cemil Bayik (alias *Cuma*), one of the founding commanders of the PKK and the current co-President of the KCK Executive Council:

"From our perspective, when one says history, it is the history of the PKK that comes to mind to a certain extent. The history of our people, the way we understand it, is the history that begins with the emergence of the PKK. History prior to this [*period*] is not much like a history to embrace; it is a cursed history. It is not a history based on positive aspects; it has minimal positive aspects. For this reason, when referring to history, we partly embrace the history of our people with the emergence of the PKK. And, in fact, the real history begins with this. This is the reason we embrace it this way. The one before is the history written by others. The history written by others is the history of slavery. It cannot be our history. Our history is the one written by ourselves. This is the history that

---

<sup>141</sup> The concept of 'feudalism' is quite frequently used among the PKK cadres as well as in Öcalan's writings. Characterizing the adjective 'feudal' with the social system traditionally observed in Kurdistan, based on tribal leadership and *aghadom*, Kurdish national movements build a bridge between medieval European society and the contemporary Middle East. Establishing such an analogy between the lordship system in European feudalism and the status of Kurdish *mirs*, a comparison based on the political and social similarities of the unequal distribution of land and power in the hands of nobility (Aydin & Emiroğlu 2003: 546), defended by some western scholars, offers reasonable grounds only in understanding the power relations and struggle within the context of Kurdish *ashiret* system.

belongs to us. When one embraces history in this respect and to a certain extent, [it emphasizes that] our history starts with the emergence of the PKK." (Bayık n.d.<sup>142</sup>: 4)<sup>143</sup>

Once Apocular officially declared the foundation of the *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (PKK) in 1978 after long years of intra-group debates (Aydinoğlu 2014: 27), the group commenced preparations to launch a war against the state. However, this was not solely a war in military terms, but throughout the years, it soon evolved into a broader war; a war against family relations, traditional gender roles, and all aspects of social life imposed by what was considered colonial rule over Kurdistan (Öcalan 2008 [1995]: 214-215). This broad definition of 'struggle and war' required to deal with profound social and political 'endemics' besides military challenges, and the PKK's first steps would be taken against them.

## 5.2. The construction of Kurdish national identity among first-generation PKK cadres

Basing on limited studies carried out in this period, one can observe that the *aşiret*-style social organization was still dominant in most parts of northern Kurdistan in the 1970s (Mardin 1973: 171). Within the context of this form of socio-political organization based on tribal relations, people define their origin by the tribe they belong to rather than locations and symbols concerning their national identity. Large family and kinship relations strengthen the *we*-sense of a social community, and therefore, prioritize belonging to a tribe. (Beşikçi 2014[1969]: 176). While in traditional western societies, tribalism offers fertile grounds for the development of nationalisms, the peculiarity of Kurdish *aşiret*-style tribalism has remained mostly static for centuries, contributing to an endemic factor fueling disunity among Kurds (A. K. Özcan 2006: 139, 149).

Under such conditions, Kurdish nationalism, which had been theorized by Kurdish intellectual circles since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, came across a challenge to extend itself among the peoples of Kurdistan as leading tribal figures, as well as political and social mechanisms under their control, did not offer grounds for the national development. Although most first-generation PKK cadres note a low level of political involvement by the majority of individuals within their immediate social surroundings, the relatively higher degree of emotional attachment to the ethno-symbolic elements of Kurdishness, more specifically the Kurdish language, differs significantly depending on the geographical zone,

---

<sup>142</sup> The reference titled *PKK Tarihi* (The History of the PKK), allegedly written by commander Bayık under the pseudonym of *Cuma Arkadaş*, is a 201-page book in PDF format containing no copyright information and has recently been referred to by several scholars (e.g. Tezcür 2014: 262). Upon the request of the researcher of this study, a high-ranking KCK officer has verified whether Bayık has ever written such a book. Reportedly, commander Bayık personally denies having written the book or having granted his approval for publishing it and does not acknowledge the existence of a book titled *PKK Tarihi*. It is understood that the text is anonymously edited from the lectures titled '*Parti Tarihi*' (The Party History), given by commander Bayık in the mid-1990s in the Central Party School, as confirmed by the PKK's official monthly *Serxwebûn*'s corresponding numbers (For the above-quoted words by Bayık, please see *Serxwebûn*, November 1994, N° 155: 24).

<sup>143</sup> Another high-ranking PKK commander and KCK Executive Council member, Murat Karayılan (alias *Cemal*), stresses a similar argument claiming "with the struggle for liberation pioneered by the PKK, a revitalization of the Kurdish people took place" (2014: 249) in his book *Bir Savaşın Anatomisi: Kürdistan'da Askeri Çizgi* (Anatomy of a War: The Military Line in Kurdistan), written upon the request of Abdullah Öcalan in order to reflect the 'truth' and 'reality' (*ibid.* 225).

religious creed, and ideological tendencies. As a result, most individuals affirm that Kurdishness was an identity that they discovered in later stages of their life.<sup>144</sup>

### 5.2.1. The place of ethnonational symbols in the socialization of PKK militants

Analyzing the relation that first-generation PKK cadres have established with Kurdish ethnonational symbols, more particularly with their mother tongue, reveals a process of changes over time. Almost all first-generation participants affirm that Kurdish Kurmanji or Zazaki is the first language in their early socialization environment (e.g., extended family members and friends). However, the possession and safeguarding of Kurdish as a mother tongue only later becomes one of the principal elements that makes them aware of their ethnic differences in relation with other ethnic groups, particularly with Turks, who are not only dominant in numbers but also have a privileged power position in terms of political and social hegemony.

Although the majority of first-generation cadres confirm that they were not able to identify the source behind the practices of symbolic violence through linguistic repression at the moment they were subjected to them, these were later associated with their Kurdish national identity and regarded as the consequences of 'colonial rule', provoking a deep sense of anger. This first moment of linguistic awareness as a differentiating imprint was almost always related to experiences they lived through during their primary school period, as described by the following individuals:

"During primary school, we didn't know Turkish. It was taught to us through slaps, punches, fury, ear pulling, and so on. However, at that time, we didn't question this through such arguments as 'We are Kurds, why do they teach us Turkish?'" (K-I/02, male, 54, Hilvan)

"Talking about the question of Kurdishness, there were spies among us at primary school; teachers were organizing them. I remember that anyone who spoke Kurdish at home was beaten up the next morning. For example, my aunt's son Kemal was our primary school classmate who spoke Kurdish at home; a teacher named *W* [name] beat Kemal very badly. I was telling myself, 'I'll kill this man when I grow up!' It provoked such hatred in my heart. We grew up, we became *Apocu*, but we couldn't see him around; had we seen him, possibly we wouldn't have forgiven him, possibly we would've punished him." (K-I/09)

The conditions witnessed by *K-I/09* during primary school years in rural Kağızman were also experienced by *K-I/08*, whom himself describes how he was personally given the role of 'spy' by his native Kurmanji speaking school teacher to inform on his schoolmates speaking Kurdish at school in the district of Derik (Mardin). The experience that the interviewee went through at the time seems to have consolidated his later political position towards Turkey's Kurdish question:

"We had a Kurdish teacher in primary school; he wanted to use me as a spy by saying 'whoever speaks Kurdish, you'll give me their name, you'll tell me.' I did it once; I informed on two colleagues, we were in the second grade,

---

<sup>144</sup> Sharing the outcomes of his field research based on survey method applied among the PKK militants, A.K. Özcan, points out that 84,4% of a total number of 184 participants remember the first time they had become aware of their national identity, whereas only 26,6% of them remember the moment when they realized that they belonged to a tribe (2006: 146-147), which means that tribal belonging and loyalty is perceived as something 'natural' in comparison with national identity.

I said, 'teacher, they've spoken in Kurdish.' Well, I told him this in Kurdish; I didn't know Turkish. Then, upon entering the classroom, he called those two boys up, and as he beat them, I realized that I caused this. Then as we were leaving the classroom, I went and said, 'why did you beat them?' He said, 'Was it not you who told me that they'd spoken Kurdish?' I replied, 'well, I'm speaking with you in Kurdish too!' I was in a primary school in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade back then. 'I won't inform you anymore', I said. 'Yes, you will', he said. 'No, I won't!' I insisted. Then he slapped me in the face too. In short, we realized then that Kurdish was prohibited. Later on, for example, we realized that we were Kurds; we found out that our language had been prohibited. When we were in high school, we realized it more clearly." (K-I/08)

It is also occasionally mentioned that once the person in question dominates the Turkish language at an early age through schooling and begins interacting with Turks in an urban public sphere, a certain sense of embarrassment forces them to abandon their mother tongue. Cansız narrates this feeling of embarrassment about her Kurdishness once her family had moved to Dersim to a new urban lifestyle in lodgments, home mainly to Turkish civil servants:

"I was forcing [*my family*] at home to speak Turkish, so my mother would learn to speak it and to not be in an awkward situation when she spoke to neighbors. At times 'when you speak [*Turkish*], you speak wrong, and I feel embarrassed', I was saying. It was at that moment that she told me I should not have been ashamed of [*my*] Kurdishness. In later years, when becoming conscious of my Kurdishness, and recognizing, even minimally, being from Kurdistan, I remembered all these and was ashamed of having been ashamed. I then realized how much I had become estranged from my mother tongue." (Cansız 2014, Vol. 1: 35)

The linguistic aspect, as the most visible part of the Kurdish ethno-symbolic universe, was a crucial factor in discovering one's own identity and the construction of a reality based on the anxiety of being exterminated. The instrumental use of the language was restricted to the private sphere or the rural *mezra* (small hamlets) located in mountains and *yaylas* (uplands)<sup>145</sup>, where the state's presence was relatively weaker (M.E. Bozarslan 2002 [1966]: 109). The forceful imposition of another symbolic system, which would later be interpreted as that of a colonizing *enemy*, also appeared to be a factor strengthening the concern for the Kurdish ethnic survival. The PKK, in that sense, was considered the only actor capable of changing this unfortunate destiny through armed resistance.

### **5.2.2. Impacts of the southern Kurdish national struggle and its defeat among northern Kurds**

As emphasized in *Chapter 3*, the return of influential chieftain Mullah Mustafa Barzani in Iraqi Kurdistan had a significant impact on the Kurdish revitalization in the north. This influence was further entrenched with the foundation of the T-KDP until the definitive defeat of Barzani by the Ba'athist regime of Iraq in the mid-1970s (Ayata 1999: 53).<sup>146</sup> This influence on the identification with Kurdishness seems to have also continued in this period:

---

<sup>145</sup> *Yayla* (upland) and *mezra* (hamlet) are two of the most common types of sub-village structures in northern Kurdistan (Aydın & Emiroğlu 2003: 492). Basing on the data recorded by the former State Institute of Statistics (DİE), Beşikçi affirms that there were some 9,436 villages and 9,970 sub-village locations (2014[1969]: 78 – 80) in this period.

<sup>146</sup> This is one of the strongest motivations for the Turkish state's consideration of the Kurdish question as a serious threat even during the post-1960 coup period, which brought relative liberties in terms of political organization (Zürcher 2004: 246). Right after the coup, in June 1960, some 485 influential tribal Kurdish leaders were accused of being involved in Kurdistanism,

“In those years in Kurdistan, it was the struggle in southern Kurdistan that affected Kurdistan [*as a whole*]. The struggle of Barzani was affecting Kurdistan. There was broadcasting in Kurdish. As *Önderlik*<sup>147</sup> mentions in his plea, there was the Baghdad radio and Yerevan radio. They, too, were aiding to keep Kurdishness fresh and durable.” (K-I/07)

Mullah Mustafa Barzani’s armed struggle for autonomy in Iraqi Kurdistan experienced the last major Kurdish defeat and loss of hope in March of 1975, as Iran and the US lifted their support for Barzani, leaving him alone against Iraq’s sophisticated military (Marcus 2007: 33). The defeat was a shock for Turkey’s Kurds, and the timing coincided with the emergence of a young cohort adhering to revolutionary movements led by intellectuals and university youth in Turkey.

“There was the struggle of Mullah Mustafa Barzani; they appeared in newspapers, like the *peshmerga* along with his wife in the same military position. It was stirring a feeling of Kurdishness in our hearts; there was a Kurdish struggle, a sense of Kurdishness; they were fighting. It was due partly to Mustafa Barzani and partly to Leyla Qasim’s execution. Sure, as you know, too, there was silence in [*northern*] Kurdistan, but there was a continuing struggle in the south. [...] ...then after the 1972 student movements began to increase, in fact, up to secondary school it’d extended; Kurdish left, Turkish left. In that period, we heard the name of DDKD. In 1975 there was a demonstration of TÖB-DER teachers in the city center of Kars; the slogan of ‘*Kurdara azadi*’ [freedom to Kurds] was shouted for the first time in 1975. When they shouted that slogan, it very much caught our attention. When we were students, we were marching on the street, carrying some banners, but the majority of Kurds were just watching us from the pavement. When we shouted ‘*Kurdara azadi*’, all those who were on the side joined us. That was touching to the feelings of Kurds, and they joined the march.” (K-I/09)

While admitting the influence and reverberations of the Barzani movement in the north led by Dr. Şivan, Sait Elçi, and other Kurdish nationalist figures of the period, *K-I/04* and *K-I/06* point out that they were inevitably condemned to fade away as they were not able to show any sign of action in practice. Although Barzani and the struggle in the south stirred up some national sentiment, it was the Apocular’s actions (their implementation of ideas in the practical realm) that brought the Kurdish movement as a form of anti-colonial struggle into the consciousness.

### **5.2.3. The social mechanisms of politicization of the Kurdish question**

As seen in *Chapter 3*, the social structure of Kurdistan constitutes one of the most decisive factors of the political destiny that Kurds have faced hitherto. The socialization process of radicalization of Kurdish movements, including the early PKK cadres, was also shaped under the conditions that emerged out of this variable. Although all founding cadres of the movement at some point were associated with leftist circles in their early political careers in Turkey’s western metropolises, qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews indicates a variety of factors related to their earlier political socialization processes both in and out of Kurdistan.

---

arrested and sent to concentration camps in Sivas-Kabakyazi. As a similar practice, the general amnesty legislated on 26 October 1960 excluded the famous members of *the 49ers* (Aydın & Taşkın 2017: 111).

<sup>147</sup> The term “*Önderlik*” (literally meaning ‘Leadership’ in Turkish) is frequently used among PKK cadres and recruits when they specifically refer to the party’s leader Abdullah Öcalan. Less frequently, expressions such as *Başkan* and *Önder Apo* (‘President’ and ‘Apo the Leader’ in Turkish) or *Rêber* and *Serok* (‘Guide’ and ‘Leader’ in Kurdish Kurmanji) are also used by the members of and individuals sympathetic towards the PKK.



During this period, the decision to become an Apocu (or verging towards other coetaneous movements) passed through specific locations where political discrepancies and projects for Kurdistan were being debated among different organizations. Having been founded after the 1971 Memorandum as a revolutionary and progressive organization, the TÖB-DER associations (*Tüm Öğretmenler Birleşme ve Dayanışma Derneği* – Association for Unity and Solidarity of All Teachers) hosted numerous meetings and debates alongside other available spaces:

“Some movements had their own associations, youth associations, where [meetings] were celebrated. We didn’t have an official journal or periodical; neither did we have offices like theirs; our meetings were rather held in coffeehouses, student houses, schools, and TÖB-DERs. Discussions were taking place in three locations. In villages, you sometimes go to villages; there’re squares there, you have discussions in those village squares. Also, coffeehouses<sup>148</sup> were locations for discussion then, and thirdly it was through TÖB-DERs with which we all were familiar. In places like Varto, it developed this way. But, above all, discussion platforms were coffeehouses and also such associations, platforms like the TÖB-DER, teacher’s lodges.” (K-I/01, male, Varto, 52)<sup>149</sup>

TÖB-DERs and similar associations shared general traits regarding political engagement in this period (as confirmed by K-I/03, 05, 07, 08, 09; also mentioned in Cansız 2014, Vol.1: 161-162, 293). Also, leading members of the Apocular who would be ‘martyred’ before the guerrilla campaign was launched, such as Kemal Pir (as mentioned by I-K/04, 07), Mazlum Doğan (K-I/08), and, above all, the premature death of Haki Karer (Bayık n.d.: 39-42) who is mentioned by almost all interviewees, have been singled out for their decisive influence on recruitment processes. Notwithstanding, apart from the active engagement of educated youth in urban spaces, close friend circles in rural Kurdistan played an active role either in inviting potential militants to debates held in the associations mentioned above or directly introducing them to organizations and movements they were already affiliated with. K-I/02 describes the function of friend circles in rural Hilvan and relates it to his initial preference of involvement in the Apocular:

“[There were also different groups in that period, were not there?] Yes, they all were there, but I wasn’t in a position to say ‘that group is good, that one is bad’ For example, there was *Rızgari*, *Kawa*, *PKK*, *KUK*, and others. I didn’t possess enough intellectual capacity to be able to choose the good one among them. Only since my friends were *Apocu*, were of the *PKK*, I joined this movement by associating myself with them. I didn’t participate by knowing the rules, the program, objectives, targets, and aspirations of this movement; I learned such core values as objectives, aspirations, targets, and the program after I’d joined the movement. It was this way in the beginning because those who knew the program, target, and objective of the movement were our predecessors. [...] ...neither did I participate in a meeting, nor in a debate, nor anything like that. Only because people with whom I was in touch were *Apocu* –I say like this because in that period they were called *Apocu*– I too had contact with them, I moved alongside them and became an *Apocu*. I didn’t like or choose any organization or movement by participating beforehand; neither did I chose my party; I just chose my friends, and my friends had chosen this party.” (K-I/02)

---

<sup>148</sup> K-I/02 disaffirms such roles by stating that there were no coffeehouses in villages in his native Hilvan where people instead gathered in a meeting room in the evening in the house of leading figures of the village such as an *agha* or *mukhtar*.

<sup>149</sup> K-I/01 also narrates that they obtained the first draft of the *PKK*’s initial *Manifesto* in one of those meetings. Commander Bayık points out that it was quite challenging and, at times, dangerous for the Apocular to attend such meetings and debates at TÖB-DER meetings; examples of such difficulties are reflected in their attempts to attend TÖB-DER meetings at the Antep branch, where they were constantly refused, threatened, and almost subjected to physical violence by their rivals (n.d.:33).

As the confrontation between the PKK and the state grew more intense, with the PKK becoming the sole challenging movement against the state after the 1980 *coup d'état*, the social and political dimensions of the conflict also went through significant transformations due to various factors, which will be assessed when analyzing the upcoming generations.

### **5.3. The impacts of Turkish rule on Kurdish collective memory and Kurdishness**

#### **5.3.1. Barriers in minds: Early Kurdish revolts, violence, and perception of the state**

Despite the Apocular's early violent confrontation against tribal chieftains as well as their rivals, the trait that distinguished them from other existing illegal movements was the use of coercive force against the Turkish state, which was perceived with great skepticism by elder-generation Kurds, survivors of the Sheikh Said, Ararat and Dersim revolts (Kutschera 1997: 250). Even though Kurdish national consciousness had experienced an awakening among young intellectuals, it was not an easy task to extend it over popular masses and encourage them to join the struggle due to a collective memory of the devastating consequences of earlier uprisings against the state.

Among the first generation of PKK cadres, the collective memory of such large-scale violent experiences is described with a certain ambiguity. While some affirm that such recollections were mentioned in their immediate social surroundings, they were always accompanied by a sense of fear and anxiety. As *K-I/05* affirms, they only were able to make sense of these stories as 'national traumas' after having joined the PKK:

"My family was a bit *yurtsever* [*Kurdish patriot*]. Elders within the family were talking; they were telling us a bit about what Kurds had experienced in the past. We were children then, and these things were being told in our family in the form of stories. *Dibejin em wek çîrok* [We are like a story]. In that sense, they were influencing us, like 'our ancestors, our elders lived through such things'. But, to be honest, if I told you I had the knowledge of rebellions, it wouldn't be true. I didn't know. I mean, I can affirm that we got to know Kurdishness with the PKK to a degree. We knew [*something*], they were telling us before about the Sheikh Said period, and about other rebellions. However, we couldn't make much sense out of them. But Kurdishness, the Kurdish struggle began with the PKK; it wouldn't be exaggerated to say so." (*K-I/05*)

One can also observe that, as in the case of the obligation to speak Turkish or memorize the Turkish national anthem, other national symbolic icons and acts such as the founding father of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), and raising the Turkish flag in state institutions were perceived as elements of the state's symbolic violence and virtually reproduced traces of the collective memory that Kurdish society retained. *K-I/09* explains how these symbolic elements, as well as continuing physical violence exercised by the state, co-existed in his native Serhat region in this period:

"The Ararat revolts, the Geliye Zilan revolts, had impacted my family. We were children, sometimes we were walking along with my uncle *Y* [*name*], and when we would pass in front of the school, my uncle was saying, 'let's not pass in front of the school'. There was a statue of Atatürk there, and they were hanging a Turkish flag each Sunday. My uncle *Y* was saying, 'These are our assassins, Atatürk is our assassin! This Turkish flag is the flag of our enemy. I don't want my eyes to see them. When my eyes see them, I shed tears.' Naturally, they were telling

us about the Geliye Zilan incidents in detail, how they did such things, and so on. [...] There was *yurtseverlik* [Kurdish patriotism] in my family from my paternal uncle's side, but it was a hidden patriotism, which they couldn't dare bring into view due to fear. In 1969 my father and some other 12 from our village were taken and tortured by the state, being accused like 'allegedly you've helped Mullah Mustafa Barzani!' [...] My father spoke out about this during the 1975 elections, that's to say, from 1969 until 1975, my father and others who had been taken along with him couldn't say a word about it out of fear." (K-I/09)

In some other places, like Dersim, where the vast majority of inhabitants had experienced indiscriminate state violence and harsh post-revolt measures, it was hardly possible to witness elder-generation trauma survivors describe their memories over what had taken place. Fear and loss of hope provoked by a cultural trauma that elder-generation Kurds had been subjected to continued to be reflected in the form of a social silence to a certain degree. K-I/03 explain how this attitude of elder generations was reflected in both the private and public spheres:

"[You have talked about many tragedies. In your childhood, were there comments on issues such as the Dersim massacre or the policies towards Alevis among your family members?] No, not much, because they were intimidated, they were frightened. They kept it a secret for a long period as they didn't want us to end up like them, sharing the same destiny. Then once in school, one unavoidably faces [*the truth*], they were forcefully telling some things piece by piece, fragmented. That's to say, people didn't talk. [*That is, the first time you faced this reality was not in your family circle?*] Well, you have it in your family circle, but not in detail. You know about it; they were exiled; your father and mother were in exile. When my parents were in exile, my father was older; he remembers everything then. He was about 13 or 14-years-old at the time. They know all these, but they don't tell you about them; they insistently don't tell you." (K-I/03, male, 56, Dersim)<sup>150</sup>

The unwillingness and reluctance of Kurds towards the idea of a struggle, or even to talk about Kurdishness, and to a lesser extent, discuss *Kurdism*-related issues in this period were linked to the perception of the state inherited by previous generations. Having been subjected to, experienced, or simply heard about the continuing practices of state violence, most Kurds attributed a status of invincibility to the Turkish state. It was one of the most challenging questions that early PKK cadres had to deal with. Commander Karayılan states that due to the constant fear generated by the state's power, 'reformist submissive Kurdish movements' refused to take up arms by saying, "Sheikh Said killed two gendarmeries, and half of Kurdistan was destroyed. If you establish an army and raid the police station, the other half of Kurdistan will be destroyed too." (2014: 107)<sup>151</sup> K-I/01 expresses a similar concern and fear common to Kurdish society at that time:

"Kurdish society knew well what the Turkish state meant; they associated the state with repression, intimidation, and plunder. Now, the emergence of a firm stance against all those caught the attention of society. There emerged a situation like this: everyone was saying something; the peasants, the youth, they all listened, 'Alright, good, he speaks well, nice' but then they were saying, 'the state is too strong, you cannot contend with the state!' It was the consequence of historical self-experiences; there'd been revolts everywhere, and they'd all been suppressed everywhere. Having witnessed all those, all such practices at a barbaric level... But then they looked

---

<sup>150</sup> Cansız makes the same statement about the narration of the Dersim massacre of 1938 within her family, which consisted of fragmented memories, and how her father constantly warned her and her brothers and sister to 'behave adequately' to avoid similar catastrophes (2014, Vol.1: 25, 118).

<sup>151</sup> In one of the early numbers of *Serxwebûn*, this tendency is clearly stated: "Our submissive [*Kurds*] have said to those newly-emerged and developed organized forces 'the enemy is strong, if we oppose, it will destroy us, let us keep silent', by always reminding them the past, the period when feudal-led rebellions had been crushed" (Nov. 1982, N° 11: 13).

and saw 'Aha! These guys dare; they take a stand against the police, against the *agha*' When something concrete took place, they affirmed this stand deep inside." (K-I/01)

Almost all cadres interpret the relation between the state and Kurds within the context of violence. In general, it is mainly about the threat against the essence of Kurdish existence –language substitution, humiliation of origin, and denial of identity. At a personal level, however, it is mostly related to the experiences of physical violence. Collective traumas experienced by the previous generations create a negative image of the state. The most common example among interviewees (K-I/02, 04, 08, 09, 10) illustrates how this reproduction occurs, beginning in early childhood:

"I'd like to give you only an example rather than [*making*] a political analysis. Our village, as I've said, was a Kurdish Alevi village. The interesting thing is that even when I was a child when gendarmes came over to the village, all the men would run away. Everybody was frightened of the state. There was such a thing. Secondly, very frequently they took people from our village to the gendarmerie station and beat them for days. They cut half of their hair, half of their mustache, and, prohibiting cutting the other half, sent them back to the village. Such insulting practices were happening all the time. I've seen it throughout my life; it was never absent. I'd witnessed it since my childhood. For example, men running away; when soldiers came over, all the men were running away, there was nobody left around, only women. They didn't even know why they were running away. They were only saying, 'the gendarme is coming!' I mean, 'what's the matter, what will they do...?' [...] These are my childhood memories. Ever since, whenever I see police or soldiers, I run away. Whenever 'state' is pronounced, I get frightened lest they give me trouble. Because this is what we've lived through." (K-I/04)

Providing almost identical examples, other interviewees demonstrate that it was not a state of trauma exclusively affecting Alevi Kurds in the Dersim region. As understood from the previous studies, 'gendarmerie beating' in rural Kurdish villages in this period was a common means of state violence (M.E. Bozarslan 2002[1966]: 169). K-I/02 affirms that when his parents did not want him to do something when he was a child, they would warn him by saying, "Hush! The soldiers/gendarmes are here!" which was a fear reflected on them as a result of past experiences with the state in Hilvan. K-I/09 similarly describes his own experience with what was called the *müfreze* (Turkish gendarmerie units) in his village near Kağızman. K-I/08 from a village of Derik district (Mardin province) narrates how once he was personally subjected to gendarmerie violence as a 5-year-old child:

"One day, they told us again that soldiers were coming, 'soldiers have come!', the news came. While running towards our house, to hide in the fodder again, suddenly, they appeared in front of me! I was dumbfounded! One of them came and held my ear. I was 5-years-old then. He talked to me in Kurdish, I do remember, because then I didn't know any Turkish; I remember him telling me, 'go and bring us chicken!', - Where could I find a chicken now? [*I said*] - He said, 'we're here, go and bring us chicken!', 'Okay!' I answered. As soon as I freed myself from their hands, I went directly in the fodder to hide! I mean, the first violence of soldiers I was subjected to was they were holding and pulling of my ears like that." (K-I/08)

These measures were taken in the absence of any counter-violence, except sporadic individual acts or short-lived attempts by bandits or contraband traders. The emergence of the PKK, in this sense, made it possible for a generational discrepancy to be based on the creation of a 'new Kurd', as observed in other cases in the Middle East in this period (Bozarslan 2012: 153). Describing an almost an identical occurrence, K-I/10 (54, male, Dersim) explains that fear and humiliation experienced by older

generations from such violent practices incited his generation to find a solution to avoid ending up in the same situation as their parents, and this coincided with the post-12 September 1980 period, after which the PKK remained as the sole organization:

“I didn’t know much about the PKK in an ideological sense. The only reason that I joined the PKK was due to the repression by the state, especially in the region where I was. When we were in our early ages, soldiers would come over to villages; we had a hundred-house village. If there was a deserter in the village or contention among villagers, they could bring all villagers together and carry out a public beating. We were little children; we were hiding behind our mothers. [...] This provoked fear inside of us but also obliged us to think about what measures to take not to be in our fathers’ position. This led us to logic like ‘we’ll not be like our fathers!’ that Turkish soldiers or police wouldn’t be able to come and insult, beat and torture us; we’d have to defend ourselves. [...] When the 12 September arrived, many organizations were set aside, got caught, or went to Europe as refugees; there was only one organization that was active in the region; it was the PKK. We chose the PKK this way; there remained only one organization with which we would be able to take our revenge and defend our rights.” (K-I/10)

Similar experiences among first-generation cadres were a visible factor upon which the state was symbolically constructed as an actor which exercises *indiscriminate violence* against the Kurd, an undesired identity whose existence was paradoxically denied. The same simultaneous political and social denial and discrimination were not only widespread phenomena for the Kurds living in Kurdistan but also throughout Turkey in general. Such phenomena consolidated the image of the state as a ‘colonial enemy’ in the minds of young generations.

### **5.3.2. Internal colonialism: The social perception of Kurdishness outside of Kurdistan**

Uneven structural transformations between western and eastern Turkey as a result of a lopsided capitalist development make the encounter possible between different identity definitions. Such developments, alongside complex class relations based on the particular inequalities linked with exploitation patterns, become a determining factor for Kurdish identity awareness and appreciation. Contradictions in the liberal economic growth model adopted roughly from the 1950s onwards created specific areas in western Turkey. In contrast, central and eastern Turkey stayed marginally underdeveloped, making regional differences more visible (Keyder 2013a: 489). The social consequences of these contradictions became apparent in the eyes of those who experimented with more frequent encounters with economically advantaged classes in and out of Kurdistan.

Dominant tribal figures in Kurdish society sustained this politico-economic system, qualified as ‘colonial rule’ by early generation entelechy of the Kurdish movement, in Turkey’s Kurdistan: *aghas*, large landowners, *sheikhs*, influential parochial figures, and *begs*, tribal chieftains, were mainly settled in big towns or cities and played mediating roles between the illiterate peasant and the outside world (McDowall 2004: 399). Especially in rural Kurdistan, such figures were integrated into the Turkish political and economic system (Boratav 2003: 126). Among Kurdish political activists of the period, including the Apocular-PKK, this economic approach was considered a deliberate policy employed by

Turkish colonial rule in order to convert Kurds into low-cost human capital, ready to serve the growth of the Turkish bourgeoisie as well as the interest of their local extensions in Kurdistan (PKK 1978: 28).

Analyzing the underdevelopment of the Kurdish region and the differentiating elements of Kurds as an ethnic group, Beşikçi claims that the fundamental problem in this period was linked to feudal property and production relations (substructure) under the *ashiret*-style socio-political organization, and its legitimacy through religious interpretations (superstructure), which directly led to a class struggle between landowners and peasants (2014[1969]: 47 - 50). In a broader context, the non-industrialized bourgeoisie in Kurdish towns and cities, consisting mainly of tribal chieftains controlling large territories and the local peasantry, penetrated Turkey's national economy in the absence of a national home market conditions. Hence, influential Kurdish townsmen did become not only an indispensable bridge between the peasant and the Kurdish town but also an extremely privileged mediator between the same peasant and Turkish industrial bourgeoisie.

These integrated structural conditions coincide with Hechter's 'internal colonialism model' which argues the persistence of a separate peripheral identity in two ways: The initial penetration of the national economy into the peripheral region provokes a 'cultural division of labor', in which those individuals who adhere to their peripheral identity find themselves in the lower stratum of society. Secondly, due to the dependence on the national economy, the economic development in the periphery remains relatively slow, which, in the long-term, favors the interests of the national bourgeoisie by providing low-cost labor as well as arbitrary flexibility of labor conditions (1999[1975]: 302; 1978: 299-301).<sup>152</sup>

The phenomenon of low-cost labor migration from underdeveloped Kurdistan towards the increasingly growing western Turkey is one of the social consequences of this economic structure. A lack of industrial manufacturing and aghadom-related problems in the agricultural system push Kurds from the countryside towards big Kurdish cities. Due to the lack of sufficient capacity in those towns and cities and, considering the dominance of *bourgeoisified* tribal chieftains, they eventually migrate to big Turkish metropolises where they work as *hammal* (porters) or low-cost labor in the vast construction sector (M.E. Bozarslan 2002[1966]: 44; Kutschera 1997: 251-252).

The labor environment, job site, and ethnically mixed lower-class living quarters play a crucial role in identity interactions, through which group solidarity is established and reinforced among the

---

<sup>152</sup> While not having employed the term internal colonialism at the time, Beşikçi expresses Kurdistan's peculiar form of internal colonialism by underlining that one of the characteristics of feudal exploitation in eastern Turkey is the penetration of eastern dominant classes into Turkey's western capitalist classes. The scholar emphasizes that as a result of this, the surplus production accumulated in a given agha's hands tends to flow toward dominant western classes and is converted into surplus value in the west. This coalition between eastern feudalism and western capitalism is the key reason for the east's underdevelopment and west's increasing growth with all its social and political consequences (2014[1969]: 184).

members of the same ethnic group that Hechter and Levi define as a 'segmental dimension of the cultural division of labor' (1979: 186). Due to the conflictive identity encounters and pejorative myths concerning the 'Kurdish race', ethno-symbolic elements of Kurdish identity were frequently subjected to a racist treat. *K-I/02*, who had not been aware of his Kurdish identity in his native Hilvan, narrates how he *found out* his Kurdishness as a child worker in western Turkey:

"About this issue of Kurdishness, there were some elements, but 'If we're Kurds, why do they teach us Turkish?' This consciousness wasn't that clear yet. I didn't question it the way I was questioning, for example, religion. How did I question it? I went to Tekirdağ in 1975. I was around 13 or 14 years old. There I was on my way, walking down the street towards the apartment we'd rented. Some people around my age, maybe a couple of years older, blocked my path. I knew that they'd do something, but I didn't know their purpose or intention. The street was narrow, and I had to pass through. They encircled me, and while I was quarreling with one saying, 'what's the problem?' I felt that another one was putting his hand between my legs from behind. I had a *shalwar* [baggy trousers] on, one that we wear in Urfa and Siverek. Anyway, I grappled with them this-and-that, and I managed to slip away from them, to a distance of 20-30 meters. I knew that they wouldn't catch up even if they ran after me or threw stones. Then one of them shouted, 'Hey man, where's his tail?' Then I realized it was about the tail. They were searching for a tail between my legs: [*in their mind*] the Kurds have a tail, that's the reason why we wear *shalwar*, and they thought I was wearing a *shalwar* to cover up my tail. Probably, their parents had told them so. They said, 'Kurdo, *kiro!* [bumpkin] where's your tail?' [*silence*]. That made me remember my Kurdishness; that provoked a wound inside of me. It was damage to my honor, my pride, my dignity, my personality. There I became a Kurd; I realized that I was Kurd. [...] Turks made me remember that I was Kurdish. Otherwise, it was not my parents or the revolutionary stuff so far and so forth. That Kurdishness of mine in that period was the first motivation that drove me until today. It was how I got to know myself. It was the attempt to search for my Kurdishness between my legs. I didn't realize it in Kurdistan because of Kurds; I realized [*what*] Kurdistan [*was*] thanks to Turks." (K-I/02)

Initial positioning of individuals tended to manifest itself as the rejection and alienation from the disadvantaged identity and its ethno-symbolic elements, as previously observed in the affection for the mother tongue. Among those interviewees from Alevi background whose social environment voted for the Turkish center-left CHP, reportedly because of the strictly secular position of this party along with a fear of being slaughtered by Sunni Muslims due to past cultural traumas among Alevis (Cansız 2014 Vol.1: 62; *K-I/03, 07*), one also observes that intersectionality among a set of identities further consolidated this feeling of inferiority.

"We were both Kurds and Alevis, and at the same time, belonged to lower strata. That's to say; we were complying with all the requirements of being revolutionaries. Because Alevis were already being looked down upon, and Kurdishness was considered a damned status. Poverty had the same status too. Now in this context, the tendency in our family was sympathetic towards the revolutionary line. In that period, there was already a general sympathy towards leftists in Turkey. Naturally, this sympathy was based on the revolution-socialism axis then existing in Turkey; we didn't have anything about the Kurdish issue yet. I mean, Kurdishness was something which had gradually been forgotten, which had been declared undesirable. We found ourselves in a paradoxical situation, such as getting rid of the effects of Kurdishness as immediately as possible, getting rid of Kurdishness itself to be free from social pressures." (K-I/04)

As a teenager, while attending an amusement event organized in Berlin by the Kurdish diaspora, late Sakine Cansız (alias *Sara*) narrates the (re)discovery of her Kurdishness during a fun night in Berlin; the same Kurdishness of which she had once felt 'ashamed' in her childhood period in Dersim:

“Indeed, what was the shame I felt at that moment? Why did it suddenly become so important? In fact, I had experienced shaming on Kurdishness before. Not having had a good command of Turkish, [and] the fact that my mother wasn’t able to speak Turkish like Turks used to affect me; and now Kurdish dresses, not wearing colorful dresses expressing Kurdishness, experiencing an *otherness* among all those people made me feel ashamed. Maybe it was quite simple; however, what that shame reflected was the quest for Kurdishness, a sense of ownership for Kurdishness” (Cansız 2014, Vol.1: 74-75)<sup>153</sup>

Nevertheless, such contradictions and questioning of identity were not exclusive to where hegemonic and unequal identities encounter one another in or outside of Turkey, but also in Turkey’s Kurdistan as well. This latter also created frequent tensions among Kurds regarding different positionings towards Kurdish (and Turkish) identities.

### **5.3.3. Internal colonialism: The social perception of Kurdishness inside Kurdistan**

The sense of shame from Kurdishness constructed and indoctrinated as an undesired identity through the state institutions was not limited to those geographic spaces where Turks and Kurds encountered one another but also among the Kurds in Kurdistan. Economic relations established between the Kurdish peasantry and the Turkish bourgeoisie were long considered a driving factor for the sense of inferiority among Kurdish peasants, socially reproduced by intermediary actors such as sheikhs, aghas, urban civil servants as well as tradesmen (M.E. Bozarslan 2002[1966]: 101). This relationship created a subtle but severe cleavage based on an *urban-versus-peasant* dichotomy. While the former drew an aspired stereotype of the modern and literate Kurd with a good command of the Turkish language, the latter was considered primitive and undesired, an obstacle for being a ‘civilized’ citizen. This contradiction between urban Kurds and *gundîs* (peasants), however, was later reconstructed through a historical narrative in which the latter represented the authenticity of Kurdish people as well as resistance for ethnic survival against the enemy, as *K-I/08* explains:

“Among Kurds in Kurdistan, there has always existed a contradiction between the rural and the urban. This began especially with rebellions in the period of surrender or resistance. Those who stayed in mountainous areas, in the countryside, especially near the mountains, didn’t give in; they resisted. They left all earthly wealth aside and went up to mountains with quite limited possibilities and sustained themselves under very tough conditions, not to surrender in the name of Kurdishness. In other words, they resisted not giving up their Kurdishness, their values; this is the way it’s been told. Well, the contradiction begins there; between those who surrender and those who resist, rural and urban, town dwellers.” (K-I/08)

The interviewee continues exemplifying this urban-versus-peasant social conflict by narrating his experience in primary school. When the following narrative is analyzed in details, the analogy established by the interviewee between the fight given by peasant students against the townies and the fight given by the PKK against the state is noteworthy:

“In that period, this contradiction between the urban and the rural existed during childhood, even at primary school. For this reason, we had a group formed by obligation, a group consisting of children who didn’t know one another. Due to the attitude of those townie children who looked down upon us, who made fun with us, who

---

<sup>153</sup> On the question of Kurdishness, Düzgün makes an identical statement by highlighting that Kurdishness among the inhabitants of the region is a relatively new phenomenon, mostly adopted by the youth (2010: 90).



were unfair to us, we, the children of peasant origin, were coming together. When one was insulting a peasant boy, and then another one [*saw it*], they both looked at each other and saw that they both were peasants. When both were subjected to the same insult, they naturally came together, as they were saying, 'we both face the same situation'. It happened to us too. We would carry wooden sticks in our bags all the time in order to fight, to defend ourselves in a fight. The townie children were especially attacking us the most, as peasants were in a minority position, we didn't have enough power to attack; it was just defense. However, when there was an attack, we resisted with all our might; I mean, we didn't let them get away with it; we tried to take our revenge. Well, we also formed our group that way; it began in the first or second grade [*of primary school*] and lasted until we got to know the PKK." (K-I/08)

This common perception is observed among all other individuals in this period: While Kurdishness with its symbolic universe and traditional way of life was characterized as a sign of primitiveness, the other, which was not clearly defined, but understood as another identity based on the official definition imposed by the state, was institutionally promoted and socially praised by tribal leaders.<sup>154</sup> Öcalan intervened in this pattern claiming to save the 'Kurd' from what they have been converted into by the 'colonizer'; the PKK created the 'new Kurd' and strictly refused the 'old Kurd':

" 'The Kurd is wild, the Kurd is stupid, the Kurd this-and-that', colonialism has made a clump of false definitions. We are nothing in the language of colonialism. [...] Why would you play the poor, the dumb? We have not opened the path to life little; we have opened it extremely wide. If you say 'we will live like old Kurds', no. There is no way back to the old Kurd. In case you do, I will stand in your way; I will shoot you all to hell! We say 'no' to life as the Kurd that the enemy wants us to be." (Öcalan 2009[1996]: 231-232)<sup>155</sup>

Having confirmed how this colonial identity ruled over family through institutional structures existing in Kurdistan, which continuously reproduced a devaluation of Kurdishness as a source of embarrassment, *K-I/06* expresses how he began to question this sense of inferiority for the first time, instilled by Turkish schools and continuing throughout his life. The interviewee affirms that he finally chose to refuse his parents' submissive position and took a different direction:

"The most obvious contradiction in my family was that, like other families in Kurdistan, other individuals, other nuclei in Kurdish society, while they were quite well-respected and wealthy in their own social values; in urban culture, in colonial institutions, however, they were in a poor, vassal position. We experienced this contradiction since we were born. The contradiction between denying yourself and becoming yourself, between being a Turk or Kurd, was a source of shame for us. Where did we first realize this? We realized this while attending Turkish schools. We didn't know Turkish until we went to school. At school, we were taught that even speaking in our mother tongue was a source of shame. Some of us continued this way for years; there are still those who continue this way. There are big minds who consider Kurdishness a source of shame, as a stain rubbed on their identity, like a disgrace. For example, when I was at the beginning of secondary school, its reflection on me was the anger I felt for my own father: I'd seen my father as someone with willpower in the village, I'd seen my mother with willpower, but within those social contradictions when I saw him as someone whose existence was ignored, who was insulted, who kowtowed, standing ready to receive orders, I felt angry." (K-I/06, male, 50, Kars)

---

<sup>154</sup> One of the most significant indications of tribal willingness to establish closer relations with the state entities is reflected through Beşikçi's survey-based study among Alikan tribe members. The scholar emphasizes that the promotion of the Turkish language among tribe members opened a path for being accepted to the school and encouraged them to do military service; something that they had once escaped from. When they were asked about the reasons that motivated them for Turkish military service, 'Learning how to write and read Turkish' (45,9%) and 'Being able to socialize in towns, markets etc. without being embarrassed' (21,6%), and 'gaining knowledge' (10,8%) were the most important motivations, while other options such as 'service to the motherland (16,2%) and 'obligation' (5,4%) remained quite low by a wide margin (Beşikçi 2014[1969]: 240).

<sup>155</sup> Similarly, by basing on the attempts of engraining a high level of theoretical and cultural capacity, commander Karayılan characterizes the guerrilla recruitment process as a "school of re-creating and educating the human being" (2014: 433).

Although Kurdishness and political activities related to *Kurdism* had already begun among Kurdish intellectuals in this period of 1970s, apparently on the social level, the perception of *Kurdism* as a political activity was not that widespread yet and still had a considerably negative connotation. Cansız portrays the distance that people from Dersim had towards Kurdish identity and *Kurdism*:

“At that time, we were still distant from the notion of Kurdishness. We were saying ‘we are Alevi’. The Kurd did not exist in passports, national identification, or books at work or official institutions of the state. Whether you come from Tunceli, Kayseri, or Thracia, all citizens of TC were known as Turks. It was not that important either. Nobody cared about national origin. This discrimination did not exist in the leftism and revolutionary circles of the period! But Ali Gültekin and Kemal Burkay were known as ‘Kurdist’ in Dersim. It was used as profanity: Kurdist! They had many books. They had İsmail Cem’s ‘Eastern Question’ book too. We were Easterners; that is why it caught [*people’s*] attention. Nobody else talked about Kurdishness then.” (2014, Vol.1: 76)

Finally, this identification between Kurdishness and being uncivilized became a social reality, eliminating any signs or symbols from public life that had once belonged to the previously existing social reality. Despite contradictory situations and interactions with one’s own identity that this reality provoked, it was widely accepted or, at least, adhered to among Kurds. *K-I/01* describes one of these contradictory situations referring to the use of one of the most fundamental and symbolic elements of Kurdishness in circumstances that impacted him and his family:

“I’ve told this story many times, let me tell you too. When I was about to go to primary school, my mother took me to register at school. We knew the teacher; she was almost from our circle, a family friend, she would come to visit us. When my mother took me to register, she spoke in the Zaza language with the teacher. I mean, the teacher normally knew Zazaki, she was local and spoke it at home, but she didn’t respond to it there, because it was a school, as if it’d broken the formality; as if my mother had betrayed that formality. But that attitude of her left a severe psychological mark on my family, on my mother, and it affected me too.” (*K-I/01*)

This contradiction sustained and promoted by the dominant classes in Kurdistan, who continuously exploited the overwhelmingly peasant Kurdish lower class, also determined where the armed campaign for propaganda and agitation would begin. An initial focus was put on the influential tribal chieftains, considered feudal collaborators and extensions of the state (N.A. Özcan 1999: 45, 75). The first targets in the armed struggle, therefore, were those individuals considered *traitors* and *collaborators* of the colonial enemy, equally threatening Kurdish ethnic survival.

#### **5.4. Analysis of first-generation violence: Justifications, objectives, and repertoires**

##### **5.4.1. Motivations and justifications for the use of force in Kurdistan**

Although some early cadres express that the idea of armed struggle had not been foreseen in the initial phase of the PKK (*K-I/06, 08, 09*), in the founding *Manifesto* of the party, there are explicit references to the use of revolutionary violence. This comes as a result of theoretically associating the use of destructive force with modern concepts such as the state, imperialism, and exploitation through colonialism (PKK 1993[1978]: 122-123). Having analyzed ‘the role of force in history’ and two fundamental types of force employed, *a) internal force*, which may be revolutionary or reactionary,

and b) *external force*, mostly of reactionary character; the PKK stresses the obligation to use revolutionary force which the Kurdish people must embrace:

“If the external force is organized intensively and its impact is felt on our people every day, every minute and every second, then the revolutionary force which is also in favor of our people must beat the counter-revolutionary force every day, every minute and every second. Against predatory, destructive, and unjust forces in command of a counter-revolution, we shall create a just and revolutionary force, creator of a new society, which is in command of our people! [...] there is a general rule learned thanks to the liberation struggle given by all colonized peoples: no matter how numerous they are, if a people are determined to fight, it must get ready for a long-term popular war. Through various stages, this war will lead those people to independence. This rule is also applicable in our case. If the people of Kurdistan dare to fight, it must, unconditionally, get ready for a long-term popular war that will pass through various stages.” (PKK 1993[1978]: 124)

The emphasis on the use of revolutionary force explained in this founding text is crucial to understand the relationship between value expectations and value capabilities through the justifications of first-generation individuals and their involvement in the armed struggle leading up to the early guerrilla period. Frequently repeated patterns of justifications are schematized below:

Motivations / Interviewees	No alternatives available / Expressing through violence	Destiny of former non-violent movements / individuals	Survival against denial, destruction and death	Self-defense/obligation	Gains accomplished through use of arms	Liberty, liberation, independence
K-I/01	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
K-I/02			✓		✓	✓
K-I/03		✓	✓		✓	
K-I/04	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
K-I/05	✓	✓	✓			
K-I/06	✓		✓	✓		✓
K-I/07	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
K-I/08		✓	✓		✓	
K-I/09	✓	✓	✓	✓		
K-I/10	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

a. *Denial, destruction, and death: Legitimate self-defense for Kurdish ethnic survival*

When the qualitative data analyzed, the state policy towards Kurds in Turkey, based on denial, destruction, and death, as characterized by the militants themselves, appears as the most notable justification of the use of violence. This justification, however, is mostly interconnected with others, like the frequently repeating idea of ‘legitimate self-defense’ that is very possibly stemming from the *denial, destruction, and death* factor. In individuals’ minds, such a hostile approach labeled as a ‘policy of extermination’ towards anything associated with Kurdishness is perceived as a threat of being annihilated. Considering itself as the defensive force of Kurds, the PKK objectifies and reproduces this state of war for Kurdish ethnic survival through a revolutionary defensive reflex:

“The PKK carries on *the tradition of survival that Kurdish society has been implementing for five thousand years*, but it does so by transforming this into consciousness and practice. Not only does it preserve that, but it also attempts to make that come true. That’s why asking the PKK ‘why do you exercise violence?’ is not a valid question; it must be the other way around: ‘Why do you exercise violence over the PKK?’ or let’s ask it in a more sociological sense: ‘Why do you exercise violence over Kurdistan’s society?’ [...] We were in the mountains for an ideal. We were trying to liberate our society; we were trying to liberate the environment we were living in. We were bearing the discourse of this [*liberation*]; *we were bearing the reality; we were the bearers of reality*. However, bearing the reality resulted in extreme cruelty in Kurdistan. It meant death; it was a death warrant.

That was the violence I experienced, and I realized that without defending yourself, without organizing yourself, without being powerful, you wouldn't be able to protect either." (K-I/06, *emphasis added*)

Alternative channels (legal organizations, political parties, civil society, and media) being unavailable, and any pacifist attempt at making them available was harshly punished, violent repertoires remained the only possible way to express and objectify the reality portrayed by the PKK. In this context, the interpretation of value expectations and value costs is based on this relationship between the two different realities competing with each other. The official reality of the state concerning Kurds has the same value cost that an individual is likely to face by getting involved in an armed struggle, which is death. The value expectation, the liberation and freedom of Kurdistan (K-I/01, 02, 04, 06, 10), is considered worth this cost. K-I/09 explains this relation in an unequivocal manner:

"One of the reasons that push you towards war is that you're offered no right to live as Kurd. They offer you a right to live as slaves, and living as a slave is worse than death; that's to say, submission is worse than death. Like what Comrade Mazlum Doğan says, 'submission takes you to betrayal and resistance to victory!' From this point, what would you do? You're a people, but you have no right to speak, to express yourself. [...] So what would you do? You take up arms. If he [*the enemy*] comes over to you violently, you also have to respond violently. You have to speak the language he understands. If you don't, then you die; you're destroyed. In this case, you have to put up with all these for the sake of a popular war; you have to become an *Apocu*." (K-I/09)

Regarding the generational impact, the coetaneous organizations are qualified as misguided in their choice of strategies, and, therefore, they inevitably faded away over time. Former movements are also labeled as 'reformist' (K-I/05), while prominent figures like Musa Anter (K-I/09) and the destiny they faced are considered significant factors for the *obliged* self-defense actions. The party's early '*martyrs*' are highlighted in order to justify the use of arms within this context. This interpretation is used as a supportive reason for armed struggle as a successful strategic choice:

"Why did PKK advance? Because this way, the armed struggle, was correct. There was the *Özgürlük Yolu*, led by Kemal Burkay. They were publishing a journal and getting organized around this journal. They were involved in literature, doing this and that. Has anything remained from Kemal Burkay and his movement? Nothing left at all. What did he do? He couldn't even manage to organize two guerrillas. They moved to Europe and organized their own life. Has anyone remained from the *DDKO*? No! Has anyone remained from the others? No! For those who remained standing in Kurdistan, there was no other way but armed struggle for defending themselves as well as raising the awareness of society, organizing and waking them up to take action. [...] You want to get organized in Kurdistan to transmit your ideas to the masses, and they kill you, as it happened in the case of comrade Haki [*Karer*]. Before, comrade Aydın Gül had already been martyred in Dersim. For this reason, you have to take up arms to transmit your ideas to people." (K-I/07)

Furthermore, this generation also describes that any sort of demand or claim concerning such questions as leftism and Kurdishness was not only unwelcomed but also persecuted with severe consequences. The stigma of *leftism* and *Kurdism*, and repressive measures taken against legal organizations based on anything related to them pushed Kurds towards illegal ways:

"The obligation of arms arose from this: it has to do with the state structure of Turkey in that period, with the political condition. Well, it's, in fact, the same today. At that time, there was quite a serious anti-communism [*policy*]; the state had an extremely anti-communist, anti-socialist structure. There wasn't even the slightest possibility to express yourself with this regard; there were just a few little gaps. But concerning the Kurdish

question, nothing at all! Even saying 'I'm Kurdish' was prohibited. You couldn't say 'I'm Kurdish' or 'Kurdistan'. These were prohibited. The cost to pronounce these corresponded to Article 125 of the Turkish Penal Code, which is capital punishment. That's to say, claiming 'I'm Kurd', 'Kurdistan exists' required that one be put on trial under Art. 125, with capital punishment. [...] You decide on this: 'There is only one thing I can do, and it's an organization, an illegal organization.' However, the question is how such an organization survives, how does it defend itself? Once you're involved in such an organization, as you've already considered committing a crime according to the fundamental laws of the nation-state system, and the corresponding cost of committing this crime is death, once you begin to do this, you continuously face death. As you face a death attack, you're obliged to defend yourself, and this unavoidably pushes you to armed position." (K-I/04)

Some individuals (K-I/02, 03, 07) express that any gain concerning the diffusion and consolidation of the Kurdish identity is strictly related to the armed struggle launched by the PKK. The most concrete accomplishments attributed to armed struggle are listed as justifications of this strategy:

"Look now, what did we accomplish by employing this method? We've got our televisions, no? We've got television channels via Turksat, in Kurdish. Was it possible for us in 1978 to have a television channel? Only for an oath, they launched a fight in parliament. You greet them, and they start a fight. All those weren't possible. Was it possible for us to publish a newspaper? A newspaper like *Azadiya Welat*, in Kurdish? No, it wasn't. Was it at all possible that we could form a political party like HDP [*Halkların Demokratik Partisi* –Democratic Party of Peoples]? No, it wasn't. Could we address [*people*], could we get organized? Well, what we call now democratic autonomy, *xweseri demokratik*, we were saying. All those were impossible. (K-I/07)

Although Kurds were the primary distinct identity group by a wide margin, struggling to survive to preserve one's own identity was not exclusive to Kurds. Other groups also found themselves in a minority position in terms of possession and exercising political power, which brings about the role of *intersectional* identities within the context of the Kurdish struggle in Turkey.

#### *b. The role of intersectionality in the Kurdish armed struggle*

The intersectional approach towards collective identities (Crenshaw 1991) in Turkey's case is directly linked to the political hegemony of a dominant identity model, structured as a desired 'acceptable citizen' since the 12 September 1980 coup, who is masculine, ethnically Turk, religiously Sunni Muslim (Üstel 2004: 295). Northern Kurdistan represents a territory where contradictions to this definition of a *model citizen*, above all Alevism and Kurdishness, challenge the monolithic understanding of society (Sarigil 2010: 533). Those cadres possessing intersectional identities in terms of ethnic, sexual, and religious identities manifest the impacts of intersectionality in their involvement in the armed struggle. *K-I/03* argues that the state policies following the 1970 and 1980 repressive regimes pushed many young Alevi Kurds to join the PKK:

"On 12 September, they did in a more extensive way what they'd done in 1938. Under such circumstances, Alevi youth, Alevi Kurds, turned their steps towards the PKK. Look, even now, if you ask older comrades about that period, the number of Alevis then was more within the PKK organization. Whenever rallies from Botan, Amed, and other regions started following the 15 August 1984, let's say the 1990s, until the beginning of mass rallies,

Alevis were more in numbers both among fighters, and some 80 percent of executive cadres were Alevis. It was this way for the women too. Well, this had a certain impact there.” (K-I/03)<sup>156</sup>

The value expectation gained once fully dedicated to the struggle is arguably far more potent in those cadres possessing intersectional identities as the feeling of liberating oneself from the sense of deprivation, repression, and desperation is greater than those of possessing only a single *undesired* identity. *K-I/04* explains this in detail when asked whether involvement in an uprising against the Turkish state provoked any hesitation or fear:

“We come from an extremely oppressed situation in all senses; we experience the repression of the system, in which we live in constant fear, and also constant social repression. One should never ignore this. For example, we’re Alevi: We’re under pressure from all other sects of Islam, we cannot express any of our beliefs freely, we cannot practice any of our own beliefs. We have a cultural structure, and this is propagated as if it were extremely immoral. Any part of our belief is considered an extreme perversion. [...] Secondly, Kurdishness is in the same situation too. Things associated with Kurdishness aren’t equal even to those things associated with animals; they treat you as if you were a more backward creature than animals. You’re subject to both the excessive repression of the state’s laws as well as a constant lynching by the traditions of society. [...] In this situation, you already experience the biggest humiliation, fear, as well as the biggest betrayal. Then, finding yourself in such a situation, when you see a tiny light through which you can express yourself, would you feel any fear? On the very contrary! You’ve already experienced the fear, the other way around, till the bitter end. There you kind of get rid of your betrayal, your denial, your refusal of yourself, and you make the power of rebellion rise against those who have made you into all such things. This takes away all the fear one may feel. You feel free, and from that point on, you become ready to pay any price not to lose that.” (K-I/04)

Finally, this was the case for Kurdish women despite their limited participation in this period. Having been a leading woman militant in the founding phase of the PKK, late Sakine Cansız explains how the impact of Leyla Qasim, a legendary female Peshmerga fighter executed by the Iraqi Ba’ath regime, as an ideal Kurdish woman figure played a crucial role in her further militancy within the PKK:

“Leyla Qasim was a legend; she was a heroic girl for me. With a gun and *raxt* [ammunition bandolier], that stance of her had always impressed me. Women and guns. Women and war. Women and a fight for the sake of national liberation. Women and death. These were not ordinary things. They meant a lot. Kurdish women would overcome their slavery by taking part in the fight. Leyla Qasim’s fight was also an uprising against collaborationism, and it was impossible not to be affected. The further I got involved in the fight, the more important Leyla Qasim became for me. Her search for freedom, her seeing her freedom in the freedom of her people, her positioning in the forefront in the fight against all reactionary and feudal structures, their approach to women, and her falling martyr for this cause was a moral, a reference, an example for all Kurdish women. Kurdistan Revolutionaries had included women in the struggle from the very beginning. Was this not adopting a *Leyla*? Women would have to take part in national liberation. Only by taking part actively in this struggle women would be able to achieve their freedom. This was the real path to liberation. *Leylas* must increase in numbers; they must live and be kept alive.” (Cansız 2014, Vol.1: 266)

Kurdish women’s participation in the Kurdish national liberation struggle, in which they carry on their struggle for gender equality, see remarkable progress through the following generations. Starting from

---

<sup>156</sup> Although there is no data verifying this claim, the Serxwebûn Album of Martyrs archive provides some quantitative information about the place of birth of those cadres who died as a result of military confrontations in this early period, during which Alevi cadres from the Dersim and Pazarçık regions were notable in numbers. One can also observe in the same album that during the pre-guerrilla phase, the vast majority of casualties took place in between Hilvan – Siverek, as well as Batman, Derik, and Kızıltepe regions, arguably due to the intense war against powerful and well-armed tribal chieftains as well as other rival organizations in this period. For further information with regard to the general profile of first-generation Apocular/PKK casualties, see PKK (n.d.) 1976 – 1984 *PKK Direniş Şehitleri Albümü*, (n.p.), available on [www.serxwebun.org](http://www.serxwebun.org)

the example of Leyla Qasim in the south, as Cansız emphasizes, the intersectional identity of Kurdish women goes beyond the question of national liberation against the Turks, Arabs, or Persians and includes an equally challenging struggle against Kurdish patriarchy of which their fellow male *comrades* are also affected by.

#### **5.4.2. The initial targets, objectives, and repertoires of first-generation political violence**

In their emergence phase, the Apocular did not intend, nor did they consider it convenient, to attack the state's security forces in Turkey due to extreme limitations in their capacity to mobilize material and human resources (K-I/02, 07, 08). The first actions of the group centered on robberies, targeting newspapers spreading anti-propaganda of the group (like *Aydınlık* paper), bombings, and killings of whom they considered fascist targets (N.A. Özcan 1999: 44).<sup>157</sup> Defined as 'the period of individual violence' (Öcalan 1995: 188), these actions are justified in terms of self-defense.

The intervention of the Apocular in what they described as feudal-related social affairs and their confrontation against the rule of tribal chieftains was the most attractive propaganda element of the group. The Apocular's difference was most notable in public eyes for their upholding, in practical terms, of what they theoretically defended.<sup>158</sup> For most initial cadres, this was the most significant motivation for deciding on which existing militant group to join:

"Other movements were much more influential than us in some places, but they weren't able to advance. Why? Because Kurdistan's society has specific a tendency as well; when you say [*something*] and don't act, it doesn't catch that much attention. They say, 'we trust you once we see you in action'. In fact, this was one of the reasons why people adopted and flocked to the PKK after the 1984 breakthrough. The PKK was saying and then doing [*it*]. It was just the opposite of what other movements did." (K-I/05)

In remote places, such as Dersim, where Turkish leftist movements were dominant against local nationalistic demands, anti-propaganda was quite strong, and it took a comparatively longer time for the PKK to penetrate society than other places (K-I/03). However, as Cansız describes, this characteristic of the PKK helped the group gain respect and construct a sense of group identity:

"[*The group*] neither had a name, nor a journal or periodical, nor an association! However, all had the same awareness, the same unity in their attitudes. Wherever there was an injustice, wherever it was necessary to fight, wherever it was necessary to embrace and protect, their presence was a completely different state of mind. In the beginning, they were saying 'just a few Kurds' to ridicule us. Then they began to call us 'Kurdistan Revolutionaries', and ultimately the 'Apocular'. We were gradually growing in numbers. Consciousness along the lines of Kurdishness and nationalism were developing." (Cansız 2014, Vol.1: 129)

---

<sup>157</sup> K-I/09 confirms his direct participation in two robberies carried out due to the financial necessities of the organization as well as actions against Doğu Perinçek's *Aydınlık* newspaper in Kars because the newspaper had exposed photographs and personal information about Abdullah Öcalan and Rıza Altun. He also affirms his participation in the execution of police officers affiliated with the extreme-right *Pol-Bir* association and several bombing incidents (so do K-I/05 and K-I/07).

<sup>158</sup> Tezcür finds exactly the same evidence through his personal contact in Diyarbakır who expresses the Apocular's modesty and action-oriented character (2015: 257); something valorized by the Kurdish peasantry (Büyükkaya 2008[1992]: 40).

Some individuals adhered to the PKK seeking to satisfy emotional needs (K-I/02, 08, 10), while others were motivated by the movement's 'disciplined and humble character' (K-I/07). Furthermore, the adventurous nature of leftist youth at the time sought out the PKK due to its action-based attitude against 'fascist targets' (K-I/09), which made the movement superior in qualitative terms despite its inferiority in members and resources (K-I/06) compared to other coetaneous movements. Carrying out militant practices and the war against Kurdistan's traditional dominant classes was be the first step in establishing PKK's role as a challenging competitor.

*a. The transformation from banditry to the political violence*

The exploitation of peasant by *aghas* in Kurdistan has a long history that goes back to the Ottoman period. Apart from owning the property of an entire village, these traditional chieftains were also local authorities taking charge of security, legal, and social issues.<sup>159</sup> While the state provided services such as assigning civil servants and establishing gendarmerie stations (Bozarslan M.E. 2002[1966]: 108), tribal leaders became partners of the state, implementing certain practices, including the use of coercion based on the Weberian approach of consent given by the former (1946: 78), which made it difficult for the exploited peasant to raise any objection against aghadom.

This policy backed by the state also shaped specific ways of reaction by non-state actors. *Eşkiyalık* (banditry) came to the forefront as one of these in Kurdistan society. As the peasant was well aware that the state authority took the side of aghas in conflicts, they considered banditry the most secure way of counter-repression (Beşikçi 2014[1969]: 165). While such sporadic insurrections were common in a social system based on aghadom, *heroic* bandit personalities usually did not cause severe physical or reputational damage to aghas (Van Bruinessen 1992: 125-126).

By confronting tribal chieftains in a quite unusual and organized manner, the Apocular changed this ever-repeating pattern, challenging not only the tribal authority but converting it into an opportunity to reveal the role that the state plays in exploiting the peasant and, thus, propagate the ideas of the PKK.<sup>160</sup> K-I/02, who was directly involved in the intense armed struggle in and around

---

<sup>159</sup> Beşikçi claims that this was especially common among settled tribes due to the destructive influences of the Islamic faith interpreted by privileged dominant classes, whereas among nomadic tribes, those influences did not convert religion into a mechanism that regulated the social and economic aspects of life (2014[1969]: 250-251).

<sup>160</sup> As unusual as it may sound for a sociologist, Beşikçi makes an interesting prediction for a possible organizational transformation of *eşkiyalık* by acquiring a rather political character. Almost a decade before the PKK's foundation and deployment to Kurdistan, the scholar claimed that the more social contradictions on the masses increased due to pressure, the more consciousness and objective conditions it would be able to provoke, which, in turn, would also transform banditry into a systematic struggle against the entire established system (2014[1969]: 166). The prediction of Beşikçi came into being with the emergence and development of the PKK throughout the 1970s and 1980s as an organized politico-military movement. Unlike the heroic images of resistance attributed to the traditional bandit figures reproduced in epic stories, the PKK distinguished itself from these *agit* (valiant, brave) figures, reaffirming the importance of unity among Kurds and organization in order to create a good commandship that would lead to an absolute victory (Karayılan 2014: 451-452).



Hilvan in the late 1970s, underlines how crucial it was to make the rural Kurdish peasant understand and appreciate the practical benefits of such a struggle in their favor rather than attempts for ideological indoctrination:

“The degree of discussions that I had was way different from that of my comrades. Our comrades held debates on imperialism, socialism, real socialism, or revisionist socialism. [...] ...mine wasn't this way; it was more like 'there are aghas in Hilvan, there is repression by aghas, there is even cruelty of aghas, and those aghas are associated with the state. They've got one foot in village and another one in the city, they're feudal agents, and they're the extension of the state in Kurdistan. For that reason, those aghas are equal to the state, and we need to fight against them.' Because, for gaining someone's attention, you first have to fight against feudalism there, you have to put forward the arguments on feudalism; without doing so, by only putting forward arguments against the state, you cannot do a good job. Also, it doesn't make any sense to tell someone like me, 'Mao says this, Lenin says that, Marx says this, Engels says that, Ho Chi Minh says this' because he doesn't comprehend it. It doesn't make any sense to say 'whether Kurdistan is a colony or not' either! 'They've ruined Kurdistan; they've banned our language. We don't have our country, they've divided it into four, and for these reasons, we need to struggle!' This argument was enough! Because this is the ideal argument for the peasant. [...] For this reason, the first phase of organizational form was based on the armed propaganda.” (K-I/02)

As observed among local chieftains, competing amongst themselves in periodic violent tribal confrontations or blood feuds<sup>161</sup>, the political power in Kurdistan had traditionally been atomized unevenly. As a result, it was common to establish alliances among smaller tribes against stronger chieftains as a tactic of debilitating the capacity and influence of rival tribes. This tactic was also pursued in the 1970s by smaller tribes, which saw Kurdish nationalist and socialist youth groups as potential allies in order to debilitate their all-time rival tribes (Van Bruinessen 1992: 316). K-I/02, having been involved in a battle against the highly influential *Süleymanlar* tribe in Hilvan, explains how the Apocular took advantage of existing intertribal rivalries:

“Some tribes supported us in an underhand manner as they had disagreements with the Süleymanlar. How did they do so? They opened their doors to us, 'come in, stay in our house!', then 'take this gun, it's yours' or 'take these bullets, you kill the Süleymanlar!', their rival. As we already knew of this rivalry, we tried to take advantage of it; they were trying to use us, and we were exploiting the material support that we obtained from them against the Süleymanlar. They were saying, 'you fight well against the Süleymanlar, so I'll be stronger.' Well, our objective was to topple the Süleymanlar, and if they acted [*like the Süleymanlar did*] afterward, we'd make them face the same situation. Sure, it was our secret [*agenda*]. From their short-term tactical peasant perspective, it was like 'they shoot my enemy, so I support those who shoot my enemy. Instead of us, they shoot our enemy, so let's give them a few bullets!'” (K-I/02)

Some claim that the PKK's involvement in intertribal disputes converted them into an ordinary tribal actor among existing ones (Van Bruinessen 1988: 42), which was the case in Siverek resistance against the *Bucaklar*, the strongest tribe in the same region, which eventually turned into a classical villager style positional (*mevzi/kozik*) war instead of the one based on hit-and-run guerrilla practice (Karayılan 2014: 113-115). However, Hilvan fight showed that having comprehensive knowledge of local cultural

---

<sup>161</sup> In his study on the phenomenon of blood feuds in Turkey, Ünsal notes that although *aghadom* has gradually lost its absolute authority in Eastern Turkey where semi-feudal structure with traditional authorities as political and social rulers still maintain themselves to a degree, influential tribal leaders tend to bypass state institutions and, instead, use their own *de facto* institutions for disputes (1990). Whether the PKK's intervention in such potentially fatal social disputes supposes any challenging role to those authorities will be observed through the testimonies by upcoming generations in this study.

codes and successfully employing hit-and-run tactic, the PKK emerged as a distinctively new challenging authority in Kurdistan:

“In the region, whoever is strong, people back him, that is common sense. Why people back the strong? [*Because*] some become economically dependent on him, some politically, some socially, some in terms of family ties, and some try to secure their place as everyone else depends on him. [...] ...if you’re a leader for a long time, as long as you’re strong, everyone is satisfied with you; however, when a challenger is emerging against you and everyone witnesses you losing, everyone reopens old wounds that you’d caused them. [...] Another thing was that the Süleymanlar knew who their enemy was. Tribes normally say, ‘we’ll fight against this tribe’, and everyone knows each other, everyone knows where to shoot each other. But now, the Süleymanlar didn’t know their enemy! They said at the beginning ‘just a few *talebes* (pupils) in Hilvan’, but then they saw that we weren’t a few students. They went to Diyarbakır, and we shot them there; we shot them in Antep, in Urfa. They went to Ankara, and we shot them even there too! The shooters were unknown [*to them*], someone gets closer from behind and shoots ‘bang bang bang’ to their head! An unidentified enemy! An unidentified enemy toppled them, not only them but other tribes in the region too. Sure, others thought, ‘they’re the strongest tribe in the region, and they couldn’t stand up to them, how can I do so?’, and then they backed us. Consequently, the Süleymanlar couldn’t be around Hilvan, Urfa, or Adıyaman. [...] Finally, they said, ‘we want to turn ourselves in.’ ‘Well, if you surrender, these are our conditions: you’ll give me that amount of weapons, you’ll resign from the town hall, and you’ll withdraw the statement you’ve made about our comrades’, and they said ‘ok’, they accepted them all and surrendered. This way, the Süleymanlar issue came to an end. After that, for the first time, elections were organized in Hilvan under the control and initiative of the movement, and we won the mayor’s office.” (K-I/02)

Despite the unsuccessful attempt in what is named as Siverek resistance against the Bucaklar tribe, the fight against the tribal rule as well as resistance towards other Kurdish and Turkish rival revolutionary organizations increased the PKK’s popularity within a short time (Bayık n.d.: 51-52; Tezcür 2015: 255-256).<sup>162</sup> As a result of the lack of experience in guerrilla-style tactics, something they experienced in Siverek’s resistance, the resulting failure, and the impending *coup d’état*, Öcalan ordered all cadres to go first to Syria, then to Lebanon, where PKK militants would experience their first confrontation against a state, Israel, in solidarity with Palestinian fighters.

*b. The 12 September 1980 coup and introduction of new repertoires*

The 12 September 1980 military intervention constituted a milestone rupture in civil politics in Turkey as it marked the beginning of a new regime that sought to achieve what the 1971 memorandum could not in terms of limiting democratic and human rights (Schick & Tonak 2013: 598-599). Repressive measures implemented right after the toppling of the elected government gave way to perhaps the most immense bloodshed nationwide experienced until then.<sup>163</sup>

Concerning state violence and repression, northern Kurdistan experienced the worst practices since the 1938 Dersim massacre. Indiscriminate state violence in all forms did target not only political

---

<sup>162</sup> A similar perspective is described by Ramazan Ülek, also from a little village nearby Hilvan, who expresses how both the state gendarmerie and feudal aghas were implementing numerous forms of violence towards villagers, and concludes that as a result, “After years of being repressed, suddenly there was something and everyone ran to the PKK” (Marcus 2007: 45).

<sup>163</sup> By referring to the Human Rights Association (abbreviated İHD in Turkish), Aydın and Taşkın point out that out of 400 deaths under suspicious circumstances during the period of martial law, 171 were due to torture. According to official records, some 210,000 legal actions were carried out by martial law military courts, of which around 85,000 were due to thought crimes. Until 25 October 1985, 50 people were executed, and some 1,683,000 people were blacklisted (2017: 331).

movements and activists but also ordinary Kurds with no political affiliation. Systematic torture practices carried out on detainees converted prisons into another front for the struggle through actions such as collective hunger strikes and self-immolations (Tezcür 2015: 258-259). These acts, to be termed as the '*zindan direnişi*' (dungeon resistance), produced the most significant myths within the symbolic universe of the Kurdish national liberation struggle.

*Dungeon resistance: Violence against oneself as a form of collective protest*<sup>164</sup>

Among the most significant actions by PKK militants during this period were those taken in prisons, specifically by those militants who were detained in the notorious Diyarbakır prison (popularly known as '*Nº 5*' among Kurds). While some of the leading cadres of the PKK had fled to Syria, among whom Öcalan as the secretary-general of the party as well as some of today's leading KCK council members, others such as Mazlum Doğan, Kemal Pir, Hayri Durmuş, Ali Çiçek, and Akif Yılmaz were detained on numerous occasions and subjected to torture practices in Diyarbakır prison.

Among Kurds, it is widely believed that Mazlum Doğan himself sparked the *Newroz* fire on the night of 12 March 1982 by immolating himself in his cell.<sup>165</sup> He was followed by other PKK militants who were famously referred to as *The Four* in Kurdish patriotic circles. Finally, protests continued with a fatal hunger strike, commonly referred to as the *death fast*, during which four other leading cadres lost their lives (Marcus 2007: 67). It is understood that Mazlum Doğan himself was aware of the impact of a propagandistic reproduction of these actions. In his letter to fellow inmates in *Prison Nº 5*, he emphasized the importance of a narrative based on a prison struggle:

"The situation in prison is important too. The pressure and cruelty on us have to be revealed in the most extensive way possible, both inside and outside of the country, and public attention has to be brought upon our trials. Actions we take against the Junta, the resistance we show, and our voices echoed in courtrooms have to reach out to the masses and be used as a propaganda source in favor of our party." (Doğan 1994[1982]: 133)

---

<sup>164</sup> By defining the 'violence against oneself' as "voluntary actions of physical degradation or even the destruction of one's own body in order to protest or defend a claim", Grojean points out that such fatal actions are considered 'non-violent' as they do not target another party in a conflict and only affect the individual who perpetrates them (2009: 565-566). Nevertheless, as Gouin emphasizes, protest forms such as self-immolation "may be seen as an extreme form of protest by which the person concerned seeks to communicate not their despair or loss of hope but a clear message expressing the intensity of their commitment to their cause" (2014: 180). Indeed, by creating an important symbolic base for the construction of a contemporary myth of resistance reactivating the myth of *Newroz* (Güneş 2013: 256), those first casualties in the Diyarbakır prison, honored as 'revolutionary martyrs', carry an immense symbolic value through generations.

<sup>165</sup> There is a certain ambiguity about how exactly Mazlum Doğan actually ended his own life and the motivations behind it. While some sources claim he had hung himself (Marcus 2007: 67; Cansız 2014, Vol.2: 195-198), some claim he set his cell on fire first and then hung himself (Kutschera 1997: 254) and, finally some others depict it as a protest action through self-immolation (A.K. Özcan 2006: 195). This last one also coincides with commander Karayılan's exalted version (2014: 124), whereas the PKK's 1976 – 1984 Album of Martyrs indicates that he was strangled under torture in his cell where he had lit up a candle and made a *Newroz* speech on 21 March 1982 (PKK n.d.: 271). Whatever the fact is, in the national history formulated by the PKK, it is depicted as an extremely devote heroic action that took '*comrade* Mazlum' to the grade of a revolutionary martyr and opened a new and long-lasting *zindan* front in the struggle.

Doğan's actions, along with others, converted prisons in another field of resistance, creating a robust symbolic influence on both first-generation cadres (K-I/07, 08, 09) and the upcoming generations following the same trajectory. K-I/03, who attended a lengthy jail term in this period, explains the role of '*zindan direnişi*' (dungeon/prison resistance) in the struggle since then:

"The most visible and stunning example of the dungeon resistance and how the dungeon becomes a resistance field were the practices exercised in the 1980s in the Amed [*Diyarbakır*] dungeon, and the resistance showed by PKK militants there. The 14 July resistance is a big milestone in bringing the revolution in Kurdistan to these days; Hayri Durmuş marked the start, Kemal Pir came second, and four comrades fell martyr there; however, after that breakthrough, those hellhounds, those who were playing the role of hellhound in the dungeon were shaken, they kneeled in the face of that resistance and removed all such practices. It was a tradition launched by comrade Mazlum Doğan, and it ended in a victory through the 14 July Great Death Fast Resistance. [...] For a PKK militant, it doesn't matter much whether you're inside or outside [*of the prison*]. In either case, the perception is the following: 'Even though you're in a *zindan*, it's a resistance field, and if you're outside, you're already in resistance'. Well, sure, the conditions aren't the same; you're restricted, you're imprisoned, and you're under the control of the representatives of the state holding a stick in their hands, against which you're fighting. However, ignoring this [*fact*], a Kurdish militant, a PKK fighter considers a prison a resistance field, this is how it has been for 40 years, and it hasn't changed." (K-I/03)

The resistance was made public in courtrooms through what militants branded '*political defenses*'; these were later turned into an opportunity to explain the PKK's political objectives, which further enhanced public interest in the movement (Güneş 2012: 98). K-I/09, who was detained right after the 1980 coup and was subjected to abuses and torture, explains the dialog he had with the judge:

"For example, in the courtroom, the Court Board, that's to say the Chief Judge asked me, 'Son, if you hadn't been got caught, what would you do?', and I replied 'if I hadn't been got caught, I'd drive your army into the Aegean Sea... -as you always repeat «I drowned the Greek in the Aegean Sea», so I'd drown your army in the Aegean Sea!' He said, 'Wow! Did you have such power?' And I replied, 'We would establish that power, we would do it as the PKK!' We along with 21 comrades had prepared a political defense at that time." (K-I/09)

Actions taken by this and later-generation imprisoned cadres were mythicized as heroic and brave acts against the 'colonial enemy' through social reproduction processes. According to the doctrine, this colonial enemy was to be eventually defeated, after which these sacrifices and collective determination would bring freedom to Kurds. In this sense, beyond the PKK itself, the dungeon resistance and its fallen 'heroes' were also converted into national symbols objectified by Kurdish *yurtsever* circles, as sought out by another current KCK Executive Committee member Mustafa Karasu (alias *Avareş*) in the early 1990s:

"All values created in the Diyarbakır [*prison*] and martyrs do not only belong to the PKK but all Kurdish people and patriots. They are values that have to be preserved, exalted, and merited properly by any individual who feels love inside for the *patria* and the people. These are exemplary shining values for the Kurdish people and of Kurdish popular history that engrain hope, determination, and consistency. These will lead the way for future generations with their positive attributes that form part of our people's history." (Karasu in Ayata 1999: 39)

Similarly, K-I/10, who began his militancy in the PKK in the late 1970s and became a part of the dungeon resistance for eight years, explains how these values and heritage obliged him for many years to stay inside the PKK despite his dissatisfaction with the functioning of the organization:

"I got to know the organization around 1977, while many friends ended up in prison along with me, also many friends whom I got to know while in prison fell martyr. My relatives fell martyr, for example. So, what can I feel for this organization? In fact, you're the son of this organization; many of those who had sympathetic feelings for this organization, who worked for this organization fell martyr, and you have to look after their values and heritage. What they left behind for you is a value, and you're obliged to stake a claim on it." (K-I/10)

Such actions made the PKK even further known inside and outside Kurdistan and became another crucial reference point as Öcalan himself later defined dungeon resistance as the beginning of the PKK's 'defensive war' by stating, "From the vestibules of Diyarbakır dungeons up to the peak of Mount Ararat, this resistance has been exposed and extended throughout our country" (1992: 154). Nevertheless, this guerrilla-style 'defensive war' against the state would have to be postponed as it required a preparation phase outside Turkey.

#### *The Bekaa Valley period and the internationalist guerrilla warfare*

Öcalan's move to the Helwe Camp near the Beqaa Valley sought a period of preparation for a guerrilla campaign to be launched in Turkey's Kurdistan. The internationalist spirit of the epoch as cohort effect got the PKK closer to other factions under the umbrella of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (Marcus 2007: 55-57). Although the Eruh-Şemdinli Offensive of 15 August 1984 was marked as the first guerrilla-style operation of the group, the first PKK guerrilla cadres had their first armed guerrilla experience against the Israeli state, which also resulted in the first casualties for the organization outside Turkey (Bozarslan 2009: 69). The internationalist revolutionary ideals adopted by the PKK was noticeable in this generation<sup>166</sup>, as *K-I/05* explains:

"What was our only aspiration when we joined [*the PKK*]? Become a good guerrilla, become a good guerrilla for our country. Before the guerrilla struggle was launched in our country, in the beginning, the struggle taking place outside had affected us quite much. For example, in 1978-79, our only aspiration was to go to Palestine and be a good guerrilla. It wasn't possible for me because I was sent to prison in that period at a young age. The comrades who were with me then went there. There were also some of my comrades who went there and fell martyr in the struggle. As I couldn't do it, I said, 'well, I couldn't go to Palestine, so at least let me go and become a guerrilla in my own country.' That's to say; I can affirm that by carrying out guerrilla warfare in Kurdistan, I made that dream come true." (K-I/05)

The PKK's deployment and settling in Lebanese camps also served as further political education for those who began to acquire a leftist-internationalist political stance once joining the party, as well as practical military skills (Öcalan 1995: 188-189). Through its Helwe military camp, a *micro-Kurdistan*, where Öcalan arose as the genuine political figure (Bozarslan 2009: 69), the party functioned as a politicization mechanism through which some early cadres obtained ideological capacity. *K-I/02*, who

---

<sup>166</sup> Although the struggle was named the 'Kurdistan National Liberation Struggle' in which the Great Kurdistan was defined as an inter-state colony divided and exploited by global and regional powers (See Serxwebûn, June–September 1982, N° 6, 7, 8, 9), it seems that the internationalist spirit of the revolutionary left was maintained within the PKK in this early period as observed in the formation of the short-lived *Faşizme Karşı Birleşik Direniş Cephesi* (United Resistance Front Against Fascism) consisting of several Turkish revolutionary groups (Serxwebûn June 1982, N° 6). Other echoes of this revolutionary leftist spirit were the references to Vietnam, Mozambique, Cuba, and other Latin American national liberation struggles, as well as overwhelmingly explicit Leninist approaches to revolutionary mobilization and proletariat internationalism frequently cited in the PKK publications in this period (Serxwebûn, January 1982, N° 1; Nov. 1982 N° 11).

had no formal education nor ideological background knowledge before joining the PKK, describes the literature of the epoch, vastly based on Öcalan's early writings as well as other pioneering figures of the world's leading revolutions, as the early referential sources:

"We went to the Helve Camp, later to be called the Mahsum Korkmaz Academy. In that camp, we were training ourselves. At that time, *Başkan* had written *Kürdistan'da Zorun Rolü*; he'd already written *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu*, what we called *The Manifesto*. He'd written *Örgütlenme Üzerine, Faşizme Karşı Birleşik Direniş Cephesi*; he had a book titled *Kürdistan'da Çözüm Yolu*, he'd also written something on behalf of the *Ulusal Kurtuluş Cephesi*.<sup>167</sup> Additionally, we had one, two, three volumes by Mao in China, in which he explains how they struggled through the Chinese Revolution. We had that of [Võ Nguyễn] Giáp and Ho Chi Minh from Vietnam; books of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro in Cuba; how they'd fought. We received education through such books. Then, we had the First Conference in 1981. Later, with Israel's attack on Lebanon in 1982, some 11 comrades fell martyrs while others were captured. Along with some comrades from that period, we were all in that camp, the Mahsum Korkmaz Academy –then it wasn't called the Mahsum Korkmaz Academy, because Mahsum Korkmaz himself was there with us too, we called it Helve Camp." (K-I/02)

Although it does not occupy a significant place in the PKK's historiography, those militants who died in the first confrontations against Israel are also mentioned. *K-I/08*, who went to the Beqaa Valley and fought against the Israeli army, narrates his experience as follows:

"Well, surely at the time, we took part in many armed confrontations, both during the guerrilla period as well as before, in Lebanon, in Palestine too. [*Did you exercise guerrilla warfare in Lebanon too?*] Yes, we went there as guerrillas; as PKK members, we were guerrillas there; we were living alongside Palestinian guerrillas. We fought against Israel, and there were also some reactionary organizations; we also fought against them. For example, during the Israeli offensive to Lebanon in 1982, we had 11 martyrs. I mean, there were armed confrontations taking place then, confrontations in which I took part in too, in Lebanon." (K-I/08)

During this period, the PKK continued its agitation and armed propaganda activities, especially in the mountainous areas of the rural Botan region (K-I/02). The group attempted to penetrate geographically remote provinces, like Dersim, where Turkish leftist movements such as the TIKKO, PDA, HK, TKP (Cansız 2014, Vol.1: 117-118, 124) still had a considerable presence despite the strict post-coup Martial Law measures which were further hindering the expansion of the PKK (K-I/03). A new period that was going to change the trajectory of the struggle into a stricter form of armed confrontation would be inaugurated with the Eruh-Şemdinli offensive, launched on 15 August 1984. This new period would be marked by the PKK's newly acquired guerrilla warfare capabilities, as well as its new role as the primary challenger to the state in Kurdistan.

---

<sup>167</sup> In order as it is mentioned, the English titles correspond to: The Role of Force in Kurdistan, The Path of the Kurdistan Revolution (Manifesto), On Organization, The United Struggle Front Against Fascism, The Solution in Kurdistan and The National Liberation Front.

## 6. MLNV during the Period of Democratic Consolidation in Spain

### 6.1. Early socialization period of MLNV actors during the Spanish Transition<sup>168</sup>

The primary and secondary socialization periods that the second generation of the MLNV militants analyzed in this study correspond to the Transition and Democratic Consolidation periods in Spain. Apart from the generational heritage of political discourse based on a ‘false transition/democracy’, anti-terrorism policy implemented by PSOE governments in this period also seem to have consolidated this vision of discontent with the characteristics of the new political system.

#### 6.1.1. Transformations in the social meaning of violence during the Spanish Transition

Despite the negative interpretation by *abertzale* left circles regarding the characteristics of regime violence, most political scientists (Ibarra 1987; Clark 1990; Zirakzadeh 1991; Mata 1993; Lecours 2007; Hamilton 2013)<sup>169</sup> agree that it passed through significant changes. The heavy-handed policies implemented by the successive governments following the Franco regime were mostly abandoned or, at least, discriminatively practiced on the MLNV environment and *abertzale* left sympathizers. This transformation in anti-terrorism policy notably changed the perception over the state violence among other groups and sectors in Basque society in the period of democratic consolidation in Spain.

A clear divergence was noted within the Basque nationalist universe regarding the steps taken in the Basque symbolic universe in Spain. The co-officialization and institutionalization of *Euskera*<sup>170</sup>, as well as other key national symbols (Ikurriña flag and the Basque national day Aberri Eguna), were mostly evaluated positively (though not sufficiently) by conservative Basque nationalists of the PNV (Pérez-Agote 1987: 19-23). Along with the significant institutional changes such as the structure of the Basque Government and the Basque Autonomy Statute, which equally received positive criticism by the traditional nationalists, these transformations made some sectors of Basque society question the need for ETA violence, which was still evaluated positively to a certain degree by a considerable percentage of Basque nationalists, overwhelmingly by leftist sectors.

---

<sup>168</sup> Along with ETA militants, youth organizations of MLNV, *Jarra*, *Haika* and *Segi*, labeled as ‘terrorist organizations’ by Spanish authorities due to their allegedly organized involvement in street violence and riots under ETA’s command, are also included in this and following generations.

<sup>169</sup> The quality of this transformation, however, remains a controversial question that reflects the power struggle between the state and ETA among the members of Spanish and Basque academia. Those scholars who have an ideological positioning based on anti-*abertzalismo* (Juaristi 1997; Azurmendi 1998; Reinares 1998, 2001; Elorza 2000, 2005; Casquete 2009; Fernández Soldevilla 2012, 2016) explicitly qualify ETA as a terrorist organization and the only source of violence in democratic Spain. Those who have a pro-*abertzale* position (Apalategi 1985, 1992, 1993; Letamendia 1994, 1997), on the other hand, object to this vision by accentuating violence and extrajudicial practices implemented by the ‘Spanish state’.

<sup>170</sup> For the Fundamental Law for the Normalization of the Use of Euskera (10/1982 and dated 24 November 1982), which declared Euskera as the language of the Basque Country (Art. 2), recognizing its co-official status along with Spanish (Art. 3), see <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2012-5539&p=19860704&tn=1>.

While Spain's new anti-terror policy was based on enhancing ethnic identity-related fundamental rights for national minorities, it also sought to employ any form of repressive policies, including legal and illegal ones, on those sectors that refused the new institutionalization. The *abertzale* left sector, which was almost exclusively subjected to these repressive policies, was also the largest political group embracing Basque symbolic elements, above all, Euskera. Legal measures taken in favor of this language did not prevent the linguistic conflict based on the hegemonic position of Spanish on Euskera (Tejerina 1992: 206). This social conflict was most visible in identity encounters that kept on reproducing a sense of injustice, inferiority, and deprivation among *abertzale* left sectors. B-II/04, native from a highly Basque nationalist Bizkaian coastal village of Lekeitio, describes her own childhood experience, which exemplifies these identity encounters:

"Damn, I believe that we've grown up with the feeling that we were despised, that there was an injustice for us. For example, in Lekeitio in summer, many people come from Bilbao and from outside. Sure, we spoke Euskera, and those people from Bilbao or Madrid despised us for speaking Euskera; they said, '*háblame en cristiano!*'<sup>171</sup> I remember that cultural shock when I was 13-14 years old, the time you just begin to like people. And the impact of that was...[*shocking*] They made us feel like villagers, ignorant, and things like that. Oh, I also remember when I was in the eighth year of the EGB [*primary school*], they killed the doctor of the town, he had an office in Bilbao, but he was from Lekeitio<sup>172</sup>. There were other deaths too. So, you breathed that atmosphere also at home, from the injustice that you experienced." (B-II/04, female, 38, Bizkaia)

The PNV's favorable position towards new institutionalization was harshly criticized by the *abertzale* left, which held *jeltzales* responsible for the current political situation that they believed was harming the Basque people.<sup>173</sup> These opposing positions taken by the main poles among Basque nationalists towards the new political system created a dichotomist glance concerning the use of violence: 'If someone refused one type of violence (ETA's), they directly or indirectly defended the other violence (that of the State)' (Mata 1993: 285). The dialectical relationship established between two sources of violence, which once unified Basque nationalist sectors as well as anti-Francoist voices in Basque Society, began to acquire a divisive role among nationalist sectors.

Apart from the transformations taking place in the physical, symbolic, and structural violence exercised by the state, another factor contributing to the change in opinions concerning the use of violence for political ends among Basques had to see with invariability in violent repertoires employed by ETA in this period. Although the state apparatus did not reduce police operations, repression by Spanish police acquired a more selective and discriminative character, primarily targeting '*etarras*';

---

<sup>171</sup> As explained in a similar context in *Chapter 4*, the colloquial expression 'hablar en cristiano' in Spanish is used when requesting someone to speak clearly and plainly, in an understandable way. It is highly significant to observe that the interviewee confirms having been subjected to exactly the same sort of societal violence in a symbolic sense and humiliation as the late Franco period during the period of liberal democracy.

<sup>172</sup> The interviewee refers to Santiago Brouard, who was one of the leading figures of *Herri Batasuna* and assassinated in 1984 by the state-sponsored GAL paramilitary unit.

<sup>173</sup> For supporting qualitative data, see interviews I-11 (PNV member), I-13 and I-14 (HB members as well as I-7 and I-8 (ETA-m and ETA-pm members) in Pérez-Agote (1987: 55-60).



among whom were included not only ETA militants but militants or sympathizers of the *abertzale* left, and occasionally other dissidents. As a result of this policy, the MLNV members continued to reproduce their 'nothing has changed' perspective in terms of repression while other Basque nationalist sectors saw little reason for armed struggle (Ibarra 1987: 149-155; Zirakzadeh 1991: 196). The lack –or at least the minimized level of- indiscriminate violence on Basques in general eventually deprived ETA of using its famous action-repression-action strategy.

ETA's actions, on the other hand, were increasingly questioned as civilian casualties grew during the 1980s. The kidnapping and subsequent execution of Lemoiz engineer José María Ryan Estrada were the first of such actions, which affected a considerable part of the Basque society. Despite ETA-m's official statement reaffirming its promise to defend the interests of Basque land and people (*Zuzen* Nº 11, August 1981), the assassination of a working-class civilian saw protests by Spanish (CCOO, UGT) and Basque nationalist (ELA) labor unions as well as Spanish left-wing (PSOE, PCE) and Basque (PNV, EE) political parties. The assassination of Ryan was considered the first damage to ETA's reputation in this period (Bruni & Giacomuzzi 1992, Vol.2: 153) that continued throughout the decade of the 1980s, during which armed actions carried out by ETA commandos in and outside of the Basque Country left numerous casualties.

In the Basque Country, highly risky urban *ekintzas* (military actions) against banks and private companies, where civilians were frequently present, caused irreparable damage to victims as well as ETA's popularity. On 5 February 1983, a bomb explosion in a branch of the bank Banco de Vizcaya in Bilbao was one of the most prominent examples of this kind of actions, as it cost the lives of three civilians, one being a delegate of a Basque labor union (ELA) and the other a loyal HB (*Herri Batasuna*) voter (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.6: 65). Following the assassination of Ryan, such actions continued to provoke social disturbances expressed through strikes by the affected sectors.

Actions taken by ETA commandos outside of the Basque Country were even in greater magnitude in terms of civilian losses. Three consecutive attacks carried out in the post-transition period illustrated three possible consequences of ETA *ekintzas* in this period: in the first incident, an ETA car bomb killed 12 Civil Guards in República Dominicana Square (Madrid, 1986) with no civilian casualties; the second attack at Civil Guard barracks in Zaragoza (1987) killed 11 people, including six children. ETA's justification was to offload the blame on Spanish authorities as they had not evacuated civilians from those places declared 'military targets' (*Zuzen*, 17 December 1987). Finally, the third and deadliest attack in the history of ETA killed 21 people and left 45 wounded after the explosion of a car bomb in the parking of Hipercor supermarket in Barcelona (1987), for which the organization again blamed the Spanish police for not having evacuated the supermarket despite phone warnings. ETA

announced an official pardon to the people of Catalonia for the ‘serious error committed’ in the development phase of the operation (see *Comunicado de ETA al Pueblo Vasco*, 21 May 1987 in Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.7: 90-91).

Images showing the aftermath of these attacks covered the front pages of many newspapers when writing on ETA and ETA-related questions, reconstructing the trauma each time. The Basque public opinion, including nationalist sectors, and even some within the *abertzale* left, found them difficult to comprehend. Arriaga points out that these ‘non-digestible violent actions’, specifically accentuating the execution of ex-ETA executive María Dolores González Katarain (alias *Yoyes*) by an ETA commando in her native Ordizia<sup>174</sup>, made it further difficult to defend the group, signaling the first critical voices and questionings against ETA violence (see Interviews 07 & 05 in Arriaga 1997: 138-139). Being a founding cadre of EKIN/ETA, *B-F* confirms that it was that period that he also began to question, not the idea of an armed struggle and *raison d’être* of ETA, but its incomprehensible military *ekintzas* and began to drift apart from the organization:

“The head of the commando of Hipercor was with me in jail in Paris, and I remember that he reproached me. Oh, it sounds like a lie, but he told me, ‘X [*name*] someone like you don’t agree with Hipercor?’ and I said, ‘Y [*name*], but how the hell can I agree with the Hipercor if it was barbarism?’ [...] I told him what I had to say, ‘Y, I’m sorry but what you guys asked forgiveness for, what you apologized for is about the story of the car, that it had broken down, etc. No, what was missing there was that the order should’ve been given before: a car like this, loaded with explosives can never be put in such a place, neither inside nor outside, this cannot be discussed, that’s it!’ If it explodes and there’s no civilian victim, you’re lucky. There it exploded, and 21 dead, bloody hell! Then I told him, ‘Then you complain that I don’t agree with it? No way!’ Well, at that time, there occurred many similar things, and I began to manifest my [*negative*] opinion.” (B-F)

The disturbance provoked by such actions had substantial impacts and echoes on institutional politics in the Basque Country, which finally led to the *Ajuria-Enea* pact signed in 1988 among all Spanish and Basque political parties against ETA and its political representative HB. From this date on, the conflict was no longer defined between the Spanish central government and MLNV, but rather between democrats, those who defended institutionalization and the Gernika Statute, and anti-democrats, those who refused them opting for violence (Llera 1994: 101, 115; Murua 2017: 40). The impacts of this unity, which may well be interpreted as the formalization of an isolation policy towards all components of MLNV, explicitly backed by those Basque nationalist political formations in favor of the Gernika Statute<sup>175</sup>, would leave their mark on Basque politics and conflict through the 1990s.

---

<sup>174</sup> Aretxaga emphasizes that the case of *Yoyes*, who was labeled as a ‘traitor’ by ETA, became an exception in the construction of the figure of martyr-hero observed during the funerals held for ETA militants, constituting a counter-image of ‘terrorists’ promoted by Spanish authorities (2005: 157-158). On the government’s side, however, *Yoyes*’s case was drawn as an ‘exemplary/good terrorist’ who found the ‘correct way’, acted accordingly and paid the price with her life. Even decades after her assassination, *Yoyes* still occupies a significant place in Basque mass media as part of an anti-ETA campaign. For a featured example, please see <https://www.diariovasco.com/politica/201609/08/anos-desde-matara-yoyes-20160908003814-v.html>

<sup>175</sup> Letamendia points out that the pact consisted of a two-layer structure: The signatories of the pact, formal political parties, constitute the main layer. These also play a key role in the formation of the second layer that the scholar labels as the ‘external circle’ of the pact, consisting of associations, trade unions, mass media, and citizens in general (2001: 143).

### 6.1.2. The diversification of violent actors and expansion of the Spain-Basque conflict

Apart from transformations observed in the physical violence of the state, the period through which the second-generation militants of the MLNV socialized also saw the involvement of new actors and violent performances. The geography of the violent confrontation went beyond the frontiers of the Spanish Basque Country, increasingly towards Spanish capitals where ETA commandos carried out highly fatal *ekintzas* as well as the French Basque Country, where state-sponsored paramilitary and mercenary units pursued Basque refugees, ETA members, and their social surroundings.

After the definitive dissolution of ETA-pm (7<sup>th</sup> Assembly) in 1982 and the transfer of a considerable number of its militants, particularly those termed *bereziak* (Special units) and the 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly pro-KAS (*milikis*), in favor of the continuity of armed struggle to ETA-m<sup>176</sup> (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.6: 76-77), the latter remained as the only armed group. While the monopoly of the use of coercion corresponded to ETA as the avant-garde actor of the national liberation struggle, a variety of civil groups within the MLNV simultaneously took charge of the social and political struggle, dealing with state repression exclusively concentrated on *abertzale* left sectors in the orbit of or sympathetic to ETA (Ibarra 1987: 156).

In Spanish politics, the PSOE's coming to power in 1982 with the leadership of young Felipe González was interpreted as the 'real transition' through the liquidation of Francoism, political normalization, and modernization of state structures, as well as the beginning of a consolidation of Spanish democracy (Marín 2000: 191-192). Nevertheless, González's new government also faced the darkest period of post-Franco Spain: Despite the changes and transformations attributed to González's governments, an anti-terror campaign titled *Plan ZEN* (Zona Especial Norte – Special Northern Zone) was launched in February 1983 in almost the same manner as previous governments, given that the Interior Ministry was still made up of personnel who had served under the previous governments.

---

<sup>176</sup> The question of the use of political violence was also one of the reasons for the definitive separation between ETA (to be named 'ETA-militarra') and ETA-pm. Dissatisfaction with certain violent actions taken by the organization's Military Front brought about the definitive rupture of ETA-pm and got *pms* closer to Spanish Communist Movement (MCE - *Movimiento Comunista de España*), a Maoist group consisting of former members of the first intra-ETA secession *ETA-berri* (Zirahzadeh 1991: 191). This convergence between Spanish and Basque leftists further continued with the foundation of *Euskadiko Ezkerra* (Basque Left) in 1976, in which an important number of ex-ETA-pm militants joined, accepting the conditions of the Basque regional autonomy (Conversi 2000: 149). The idea of definitive abandonment of arms among *pms*, however, seems to have created further divisions among the remaining militants, especially between a minority group called *zazpikis* (literally 'the seventh', referring to the organization's 7<sup>th</sup> Assembly), who were eager to dismantle ETA-pm installations and dissolve the organization, and those who organized the 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly, most members of which continued their politico-military trajectory in ETA-m (Letamendia 1990, Vol. 7: 272). Wieviorka points out that the position adopted by ETA-pm's *zazpikis*, in fact, had largely to do with their incapability of producing a high-level action model and an inevitable adaption of their aspirations to regionalism and economic modernism (1988: 327). Indeed, when the resolution of ETA-pm's last assembly celebrated in February 1982 is analyzed (see Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 6: 293-296), almost identical concerns as those of ETA-m with regard to the characteristics of the new regime and, therefore, a clear tendency in favor of the continuity of armed struggle are noted. This explains the eagerness of a considerable number of *pm* militants to join ETA-m.

Anti-terrorism measures taken within the framework of Plan ZEN worked in favor of ETA, who used it to justify its argument of 'occupied Basque Country' (Woodworth 2001: 68).<sup>177</sup> The plan also involved the Basque provinces of south-western France where paramilitary GAL (*Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación* – Antiterrorist Liberation Groups) units, founded and organized under the orders of high-ranking Spanish authorities<sup>178</sup>, pursued and assassinated Basque militants and refugees. Illegal kidnappings and killings authorized by the Spanish Ministry of Interior were translated as a strategy to pressure the President of the Republic of France, François Mitterrand, to chase up ETA and Basque refugees to deny them the ability to operate in French territory (Woodworth *ibid.* 82).

Felipe González's coming to power in Spain also became a turning point for the diplomatic relations and cooperation between France and Spain, which opened the doors for the expulsion of political refugees settled on the other side of the *muga* to third countries by French authorities (Cassan 1997). Spanish premier González brought about this subject by taking advantage of a NATO meeting in which the PSOE government asked for further cooperation among NATO members in extraditing political refugees (see *El País*, 13 March 1983), clearly implying Basque refugees in France.

The GAL actions were considered a useful tool by Spanish authorities where diplomacy failed despite its highly negative social consequences regarding the anti-terror struggle. In her ethnographic study specifically conducted on funeral ceremonies of radical Basque nationalists in this period, Aretxaga stresses that funerals held for those who were assassinated by GAL units became symbolic exaltations of deaths through heroic figures who sacrificed their life for the sake of Basque homeland, as in the case of Santi Brouard exemplified by the scholar (1988: 68).<sup>179</sup> Despite the progressive steps towards further democratization, the GAL arose as the last controversial anti-terror conduct in the eyes of young generations who were born in the post-Franco period. Such cases as the assassination of HB deputy Santi Brouard in 1984 (B-II/04) created massive mobilizations of solidarity among Basque

---

<sup>177</sup> Indeed, having witnessed such anti-terror measures, it did not take long for ETA-m to confirm that the new legislation led by González was no different from any kind of *bourgeoisie-backed* government, as the armed organization had predicted (see *Zuzen*, nº 27, Dec. 1982) and it publicly denied the democratic character of the Spanish state after Franco's death underlining that despite the existence of a government lead by socialists, they were obliged to carry on a conservative state tradition (see *Le Monde*, 7 January 1983).

<sup>178</sup> Despite the public protest movements against extrajudicial killings by the GAL, the fact that those actions had actually been orchestrated by the state was revealed in 1994, when two convicted policemen organizing GAL, José Amedo and Michel Dominguez, revealed the secrets regarding the involvement of high-ranking state officials (Aretxaga 2000: 49). The scandal grew so significant that it even involved the Interior Minister José Barrionuevo as well as three high-ranking Spanish officers who had planned the formation of GAL, adopting the tradition of a previous mercenary group *Batallón Vasco-Español*: Rafael Vera (Director of State Security), Francisco Alvarez Sánchez (Chief of Bilbao Commissary) and Andrés Cassinello. This fact was also later confirmed by Juan Antonio González-Pacheco (alias *Billy el niño*), a Francoist police inspector who admitted his direct involvement only in some small activities within GAL (Woodworth 2001: 193-194).

<sup>179</sup> The scholar also establishes a connection with the previously mentioned Basque poet Gabriel Aresti's famous 'Nire aitaren etxea defendituko dut' (I will defend my father's house) by reconsidering the most orthodox interpretation of metaphorical elements such as 'father's house' (fatherland), and one's sacrificing his life defending it within the context of funerals. Examples of such exaltation of death during funerals tend to convert them into an anti-GAL demonstration justifying the violence exercised by ETA (see Interview Nº 39 in Reinares 2001: 79).

groups with a certain sensibility towards repression (Ibarra 1987: 151)<sup>180</sup> B-II/02, who had to live in *Iparralde* due to the position of his father, a leading member of ETA then, narrates the atmosphere he experienced along with other children of refugee families, most of whom, as the interviewee confirms, remain imprisoned today for their later involvement in ETA:

“[It was the period that GAL was still active in Iparralde, was not it?] Hyperactive, come on, sure! They tried to kill my father four times. [And as a child, how did you perceive it, all those GAL activities?] Very tough, but I believe that it was experienced more here [Spanish Basque Country] than there. It seemed to me something also logical, tough, but at the same time logical. It’s like as if we are in a war, and this is what happens in wars, isn’t it? It pisses you off that it happens, and it scares you, of course. People with whom you’ve been having dinner, two hours later, they’re killed. Well, it’s hard, isn’t it? But it was like something that was there; I don’t know how to explain it, a thing that we’d almost assumed quite well already. [Was it part of your day-to-day?] Yes, yes, of course, it became part of you, hard as it may seem. Yes, as for my *aita* [father], for many people who were in the spotlight. It was the situation of how they lived it. But of course, my perspective was that of a kid who was distant from that organization or from that topic, right?” (B-II/02, male, 40, Araba)

After the official visit of King Juan Carlos I to France (see *Le Monde*, 11 July 1985), mass deportations of Basque political refugees to countries such as Venezuela, Cuba, Togo, Cabo Verde, Dominican Republic, and Ecuador began. Once Spain’s NATO membership was reaffirmed in the 1986’s referendum, as well as its entry into the European Union the same year, the Franco-Spanish anti-terror cooperation became more vigorous, which had immediate effects on GAL’s activity in the French Basque Country; Basque militants simultaneously began to lose their sanctuaries in southern France. Illegal GAL activities were replaced by French police, which took over the task of pursuing ETA members and handing them to Spanish authorities.

On the side of MLNV, in this period, the notion of resistance was extended through those organizations forming part of MLNV against the anti-terror policies based on total isolation of *abertzale* left sectors by the state. The new political state in which MLNV found itself urged the adoption of a multi-front resistance under the motto of ‘resisting is moving forward’ (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 7: 48) by re-distributing the tasks of each actor within the collectivity. In a message to the members of MLNV, ETA affirmed this expansion of resistance, in which the organization continued to play an avant-garde role by leading the armed struggle against the state’s isolation policy:

“Let us be aware of the magnitude of our people, of the struggle and the responsibility that correspond to the MLNV when it comes to determining tasks, outlining the political line and applying it, each one in its field, with the necessary correction.” (*Zubate* N° 45, November 1987)

The frequency of police violence against MLNV groups, as well as their sympathizers, highlights the fact that public demonstrations for political and social demands were still common throughout the

---

<sup>180</sup> The kidnapping, torture, and execution of José Antonio Lasa and José Ignacio Zabala in October 1983 constitute the most dramatic example of GAL activities still reproduced among *abertzale* left circles. Revelations in the mid-1990s show that both militants were kidnapped by the Spanish Guardia Civil in the French Basque capital of Baiona (Bayonne) and taken to a palace belonging to the Ministry of Interior in San Sebastian (Donostia), where they were tortured and finally executed in Alicante. [https://elpais.com/diario/1995/07/30/espana/807055216\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/1995/07/30/espana/807055216_850215.html)

1980s. Besides legalized significant dates such as *Aberri Eguna* (B-II/01) or public demonstrations in favor of political prisoners and against torture (B-II/02, 04, 05, 06), in the form of repetitive gatherings supported by non-MLNV groups, specific political and social issues continued to provoke mobilizations. ETA and civilian components of the MLNV actively took part in those demonstrations, making them a target for Spanish security forces. As Tejerina stresses, ETA embraced new forms of social struggles emerging in Basque society, as observed in the case of Lemoiz and its moves to control the Anti-Nuclear Committees that constituted the most overt examples of this political strategy by the organization (2001: 51). Social demands raised in Basque society offered the MLNV reasonable grounds to penetrate with nationalist and social sectors whom it claimed to represent and fight for.

### **6.1.3. Family tradition: Questioning the transgenerational transmission of militancy**

Despite a general belief on the impacts of the family environment of ETA and MLNV members on transgenerational transmission, qualitative data obtained in this and previous studies show that such arguments do not have a clear empirical basis.<sup>181</sup> The ‘family tradition’, based on the affective connection with ETA’s counter-violence, do have significant roles in some instances (Reinares 2001: 60-61), and most members of the radical youth maintain immediate kinship relations with the previous generation militants (Aretxaga 2005: 140). However, affiliation to a particular political group or involvement in any form of militancy has to see with a more complex socialization trajectory that includes the family environment but goes far beyond the genealogical limits.

As in the case of previous-generation militants, MLNV members in the 1990s do not necessarily come from Basque nationalist family background; neither do they solely base their militancy on Basque nationalist aspirations. In terms of national identity, the family backgrounds of militants in this generation range from that of a strict Francoist tradition among elder members (B-II/04) to Basque nationalism, including conservative PNV nationalism (B-II/01), as well as an apparent inclination towards *abertzale* left currents (B-II/02, 06). Others (B-II/03, 05) give more priority to social class, emphasizing their leftist working-class position when defining the ideological characteristics of their respective families. One observes that this heterogeneity is due to an intricate pattern of politicization process among the immediate family members belonging to different generations that, as B-II/04 narrates, goes beyond the limits of the so-called ‘family tradition’:

“Look, my mother is from a family; my grandfather was a Francoist. We don’t know about my grandmother because, you know, if you have a Francoist husband, a woman cannot say what her political tendency is. But anyway, in her adolescence, my mother started to hang out with pro-independence people. It was the time before Franco’s death when there was a huge increase in rejection and repulsion movements, and during that

---

<sup>181</sup> The previously mentioned studies focusing on the militancy in ETA, including during the post-Franco period, confute these myths, affirming that although in some cases immediate social surroundings play a considerable role in shaping one’s ideological orientation, in most others, this is not the case (see B-6 in Alcedo 1996: 110; Reinares 2001: 172).

[time], she met my father. [You say that your grandfather was a Francoist. Was there collusion within the family?] Oh, when my mother began to date my father, my grandfather told her, 'your boyfriend is an *etarra*, and I forbid you to see him!' and all that, but my mother told him it was her life. Well, my father is from a PNV family, from Lezama, a town where the PNV has a strong foothold. The whole family, in general, was from the PNV. Because of his environment of friends or whatever, he happened to be a little more left-wing or more related to the leftist pro-independence movement. Both were militants in their youth; they were in *Gestoras Pro-Amnistia*, which was an organization fighting for prisoners. So, I believe that awareness about the Basque political conflict very clearly came to me from home." (B-II/04)

In some cases (B-II/01, 03, 05), symbolic elements of the Basque identity were absent in the family environment where individuals were born, and only through the mechanisms of secondary socialization did they get to know the Basque nationalist code. *Ikastolas*, which had been legally registered schools since the early 1980s, and *euskaltegis* (Basque academies) with Basque language courses subsidized by the Basque Government, were among the latter. In these families, politics appeared present through social class matters rather than the national identity:

"[What was the political orientation of your parents?] They're of a rather leftist orientation with little nationalist sense in the beginning. My maternal grandfather was a member of the Communist Party of Spain. On my maternal family's side, all have been Republicans. [...] In my house, my parents didn't speak Euskera. Then my brothers and I all learned Euskera and became literate in it. Later we took courses, we went to academies, and each one had a better or worse level [of Euskera]. [...] My father worked in the shipyards of *Euskalduna*, they're famous shipyards because at the time there was a struggle by workers when they tried to privatize the company. The conflict that my father was part of in *Euskalduna*, we lived it day by day, something traumatic for us. My father also had problems, depression, and those things after that. Because he always felt that he was on the losing end of the fight. *Euskalduna* ended up closing, and he felt that he was the loser of that fight. In this sense, politics have always been present in my family." (B-II/05, male, 38, Bizkaia)

Nevertheless, a process of 'intergenerational transmission' is noted among those family members whose political orientation does not directly correspond to the *abertzale* left current; and, as in the above-quoted case, not even directly to Basque nationalism. The militancy of their children in the MLNV, and especially the traumatic consequences of this engagement like the prison, exile, or death, provoke a transformation in their previous political positions, resulting in the process of 're-socialization' (Berger & Luckmann (1991[1966]: 176). In such cases, the transmission of 'tradition' potentially takes place in an exactly contrary sense, acquiring an intergenerational character rather than a transgenerational flow. All having served considerably long prison sentences (B-II/01, 04, 05) or exiled (B-II/02, 03), this intergenerational transmission becomes apparent among individuals and their respective family members who have experienced the consequences of the militancy:

"[What was the political orientation of your family?] Not very defined at a partisan level, but there were some signs that they felt Basque and they belonged to the working class, that's true, but not very defined. It was during the years of repression that I suffered they became more politicized. Nowadays, they participate in public acts in favor of prisoners and political mobilizations, and also my mother participate in a movement that is for the defense of the reprimanded youth, and today they vote for the *abertzale* left." (B-II/03, male, 40, Navarre)

"[And your parents, what did they do?] My father worked in a factory, had a job in a factory. My mother was a housewife. They were from the PNV, without major...[dedication] They've never had...[militancy] Very Christians! [laughing] Very Christians and deeply PNV sympathizers! [So, they had a rather nationalist political orientation?]

Well, then after they'd caught me and so on, it's true that my parents changed a lot because they began to see things from another perspective. And they've suffered a lot with all this." (B-II/01, female, 43, Bilbao)

Additionally, as observed among the family members of the former generation militants, the possibility of being subjected to severe consequences of one's militancy causes a strong reaction of refusal and protectionism even among those families sympathetic to the *abertzale* left current.

"I had a lot of family problems because I started to participate in *Jarra*. In fact, my parents and I almost stopped talking. Because they knew it as they'd lived it, they knew what could happen to me, and they didn't want it. So, there was a lot of confrontation with the family. [*Although you have told me that they were a family with quite an abertzale position...*] Yes, for this very reason. They knew [*what would happen to*] someone who starts to move and get into politics. You see, my parents had experienced Francoism very closely, and they knew what we had; they'd seen that the system hadn't changed. So, they knew that if I got involved in politics, sooner or later... Here someone who gets into politics sooner or later ends up in prison or... [...] The first time they accepted [*my militancy*] was when I was imprisoned. And it was crucial for me that they said that they were proud of me and my political activity and that they loved me, and that they'd be there with me." (B-II/04)

Finally, as for religious creed, the generation whose militancy began in the 1990s coincides with the third wave of secularization observed among individuals who conduct a social life separated from religion and doctrines of the Catholic church (Pérez-Agote 2012: 134). In this period, the church's position concerning violence saw a significant change: while through the early 1980s, the church rejected any violence no matter which actor carried it out (state or ETA), by the end of the same decade, condemnation of violence targeted only ETA, labeling the organization as an 'enemy of humanity and the democracy' (Unzueta 1987: 236). Both developments created a gap between the Catholic church and the *abertzale* left in an increasingly secularized society.<sup>182</sup> Disengagement from the church, as observed among the previous generation, is also noted among the MLNV militants as well as their families in this period despite their initial affiliation to this institution:

"[*Regarding religion, was your family a practicing one?*] My father in his youth, yes. He had a childhood that was closely linked to the church. Because the side of my father's family was very devout, you can see it in my father's values. Also, I believe that a part of his social aspect is closely linked to the values he received, Catholic values, like the question of poverty or the moral issue. I believe that *aita*, yes, he was influenced. But as for his ideology today, he's not a believer. Besides, he's very critical of many things related to the church. I think he's matured and become disenchanted with the church. For example, he considers that had there been a God, none of what's happening today would've happened." (B-II/06, male, 40, Bilbao)

While the official church position towards the Basque conflict and more so towards violence exercised by ETA continued throughout the 1990s, a progressive disengagement from the official church doctrine also grew, especially among those who were from leftist circles. Although there were cases where individuals initially questioned the morals of militancy in a politico-military organization like ETA (B-

---

<sup>182</sup> Pérez-Agote especially underlines the change in the Basque Country as, along with Navarre, this region had always been rabidly religious and repeated the question of how an 'over politicization' of Basque society due to the conflict served as a substitution of religion with politics (2012: 136). Nevertheless, certain Catholic clergy members have continued playing a role in the forthcoming peace attempts and initiatives, as seen in the late 1990s and the following decades.



II/01), something inevitably implicated the possibility of involvement in actions with fatal results, preventive effects of religious moral diminished in comparison with previous generations.

## **6.2. Cohort and period effects on the Basque conflict through the 1990s**

The period during which the armed organization sought to establish official contacts with Spanish authorities witnessed significant changes: Spain's definitive articulation to the European and NATO systems and increasingly closer anti-terror cooperation with France, as seen in the Sokoia Operation in 1986, had put an end to the sanctuary status of northern Basque Country for militants. Moreover, the Spanish government had managed to gather all constitutionalist actors around its ongoing anti-terrorism approach. While these international and national developments significantly limited MLNV's maneuvering capacity, violent actions carried out by ETA in Spanish capitals also damaged the popular support that the organization had once enjoyed. All these occurrences gradually tightened the circle within which ETA and the rest of the MLNV found themselves.

### **6.2.1. State violence and institutional marginalization of 'anti-democrats'**

The post-Transition anti-terror policy followed the same strategy, based on selective repressive measures on the legal and illegal components of the MLNV, aiming to achieve the maximum isolation of ETA and its social bases. The inclusion of major Basque nationalist political players such as PNV, EA, and EE in the Ajuria-Enea pact, and the support that the pact received from leading social organizations such as labor movements and, most importantly, the Catholic church, which had once encouraged the liberation struggle (Mata 1993: 150-151) served to this marginalization plan. Putting political pressure on ETA as well as the political voice of the MLNV, *Herri Batasuna*, encouraged the state to tighten repressive measures further by including judicial mechanisms along with a new penitentiary regime put into practice from 1989 onward.

The plot behind GAL's activities, which had been deactivated immediately after France's full anti-terror cooperation, was revealed in this decade, and some critical figures with political responsibilities faced legal proceedings. Although the sentences were mostly symbolic, it was a unique opportunity for the Spanish government, led by very same Felipe González, to convince both the national (including Basques) and international public that Spain abided by the rule of law. In other words, rather than opening a debate questioning the legality of the Spanish state, the political consequences of GAL served to consolidate the image of this legality by taking to justice and sentencing the primary individuals responsible for the internal security of the state, Minister José Barrionuevo and Secretary of State for Security Rafael Vera.

The gradual involvement in citizen security and public order issues of the Basque autonomous police *Ertzaintza*, replacing the Spanish national police and the historically infamous Civil Guard units, also received a positive reaction among Basques. An exception to this, however, was the *abertzale* left sectors who pejoratively labeled these autonomous police forces *cipayos*, referring to Indian colonial mercenaries at the service of France, Portugal, and Great Britain (Joxean Agirre 2007: 94). These new tasks attributed to the Ertzaintza received a special significance once these units began to confront ETA militants, detaining dozens and killing some, and equally became ETA's military target starting 1991 (*Zuzen*, nº 52, September 1991).<sup>183</sup> Despite allegations of torture and ill-treatment during long detention periods, it may well be affirmed that the use of coercion by the state generally remained within the limits of tolerance in the eyes of most ordinary Basques.

Regarding the steps taken towards advancements in the Basque symbolic universe, the Law for the Normalization of the Use of *Euskera* approved in 1982 had achieved a functional role among Basque institutions and *ikastolas*, which expanded considerably within the education system (Tejerina 1992: 281).<sup>184</sup> It was only after the early 1990s that the pro-Euskera movement was enforced in the southern Basque Country among some mayors in Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia, and Navarre who declared Basque as 'the single official language' in their municipalities by regrouping Basque-speaking municipalities under EUMA Association, backed by PNV, EA, and HB, in 1994 (Apalategi 1998: 167-168). The positive attitude of all three Basque nationalist political groups in this period (PNV, HB, and EA) saw Euskera as the unique ethno-linguistic element for modern Basque nationalism, playing a significant role in unifying the Basque national identity (Arriaga 1997: 123).

Continuous progress made at a symbolic level, inclusive parliamentary system, and discriminate patterns of violence towards the 'enemies of democracy' generally consolidated the idea of institutionalization throughout the 1990s in Spain. However, the attitude of ETA and violent repertoires developed as a response to these policies and their impacts in a period of remarkable social transformations equally affected this consolidation, further accelerating the criminalization and marginalization of the MLNV as a whole. Notwithstanding, despite these conditions, which increasingly

---

<sup>183</sup> Joxean Agirre points out that this was the result of the first involvement of *Ertzaintza* against ETA in Etxeberria Parque in Bilbao in 1991, leaving an ETA militant dead and another badly injured, something that justified the terming of *Cipayo* which served for Spanish colonial rule in the Basque Country from the *abertzale* left perspective (2007: 94-95) and, therefore, justification of violence to be used against them, as in the case of Spanish police who were pejoratively called *txakurra* (dog) for the same purpose of legitimizing the use of violence (Aretxaga 2005: 211). The Basque Autonomous Police unit, which once played an intermediary role in establishing contacts with ETA executive Francisco Mujika Garmendia (alias *Pakito*) along with PNV executives (Clark 1990: 169), became another enemy force only after five years of its foundation.

<sup>184</sup> Popular activities like *korrikas* (mass rallies promoting Euskera) began in the early 1980s and continued throughout the following decades. Due to the historical role based on indifference and despicement adopted by the Basque bourgeoisie and, unlike their Catalan counterparts with the Catalan language, their embracement of Spanish as the main communication medium (see discussion groups G-8 and G-18 in Tejerina 1992: 201) required additional efforts for popular Basque nationalist classes, mainly *abertzale* left circles, to put the promotion of Euskera into practice.

limited the possibilities of political maneuver for the *abertzale* left, specific social mechanisms played a functional role in the political socialization of MLNV members who got involved in their initial militant activities during the early 1990s.

### **6.2.2. Secondary socialization and initial engagement of MLNV militants**

As observed in the case of previous generations, broader and more complex secondary socialization mechanisms shape an individual's involvement in political militancy by facilitating the transmission of generation style promoted by a specific generation unit. In order to comprehend this process, which most of the time develops into further involvement in political engagement, at times including politico-military activities to different degrees, it would be convenient to go through the mechanisms and events that individuals pass through during their political socialization period.

While a growing number of movements protesting against ETA violence emerged starting the early 1990s (B-II/04), the majority of individuals emphasize the presence of MLNV in the public sphere in this period despite its significant decline throughout this and the following decades. Individual's initial observations over the occurrences in everyday life regarding the national question and affiliation to cultural products of protest, like political music as specified by some actors (B-II/03, 04, 05), came to the forefront in the early process of construction of meanings:

"Since childhood, I was aware that something was happening. I always saw the police on the street or saw the students of the institute that was next to my school, that the police were going for them. Then with the music in *radios libres* [free radios], starting at 10 or 11 years old, I began to listen to political music. Then you gradually open up little by little, and you understand what is happening around you, and little by little, you are shaping those feelings, then you give those things more of a political shape and political reasoning to all that." (B-II/03)

The construction of meaning is exclusively related to violence exercised by the state against the social presence of *abertzale* left sectors. Torture and execution of ETA militants in custody as well as the recently launched dispersion policy towards ETA prisoners (B-II/04, 05, 06), repressive measures against youth and student organizations and people from the *abertzale* left environment (B-II/01, 03, 04, 05) are frequently mentioned by individuals when explaining the reality from their perspective. Almost all individuals note that the first steps were sporadic participation in public gatherings and demonstrations organized in order to protest these repressive measures. This sporadic participation later develops into more organized political involvement, which in almost all cases correspond to collective gatherings of youth (*gazte asanblada*), the formation of youth social and cultural centers (*gaztetxes*), and the student organization of *abertzale* left, *Ikasle Abertzaleak* (patriotic students).

"I believe that the first way you gain access is through mobilizations and open public calls that there will be a demonstration. I've already mentioned that I remember that of Barcelona 92, I remember that of the Gulf War, the one that took place here when they closed the *gaztetxe* in Bilbao as well. That was the first one that I individually... [*participated in*] because maybe before there were acts [*of participation*] by my family, or I'd gone to an act with my family, but these were the first times that I went alone by myself and with other friends. So, I think the first thing you do is to attend calls that are made. And then the next one is in high school. A time comes

that you say, 'well, what can we organize at school? What can be organized here?' Then you begin to search. There was a group dedicated to *Ikasle Abertzaleak* that was student stuff. In my time, I remember that there were antimilitarist groups. More than antimilitarists, it was against military service. The first thing I did was to declare myself an objector, that's to say, I refused to do Spanish military service." (B-II/05)

The trajectory summarized above is shared by almost all other militants in this generation, who define it as a 'natural emotional process' rather than a sudden decision, except *B-II/01*, whose militancy in ETA is due to an instantaneous circumstance. Throughout this trajectory, certain significant international and national events left their mark on public protests. Anti-militarism and protests against Spain's role in NATO, rejections of military service in Spain (*insumisión*), the anti-drug campaign, occupy movements and protest music were already on the agenda of Basque radical organizations since the 1980s (Muro 2008: 132). Among these subjects, the mass disobedience against compulsory military service, which began in the late 1980s, and the first Gulf War in early 1991 are noted explicitly by some individuals (B-II/03, 04, 05) as prominent period effects:

"At 14 years old, I began to participate in mobilizations; I remember that it was the Gulf War. So, when I began to get politically active, it was when I had started high school at 14 years old. It was also the time of the *insumisión* that was an essential struggle in our country in the 1990s, with [*the participation of*] hundreds of young people who went to jail for having refused to do military service in Spain. Those were my reasons for getting active at 13-14 years old. Since age 10, I was already listening to political music, radical Basque rock, and that was also essential for me. [...] It was a very natural way, I believe. You began listening to music, to the free radio of your city, and little by little, you realize what's going on around you. [*Did anyone, a specific person influence you?*] No, no, no. Well, within my *kuadrilla* of friends we spoke, 'we wanna do something, we have to do something with the *insumisión* movement or student movement', and we asked people in our high school like 'we can join, right?', 'Yes, if you wanna join...', and that's it, in a natural manner." (B-II/03)

"Let's see; I started when I was in high school, there we created the student organization *Ikasle Abertzaleak*, we created it there in Lekeitio as there was nothing like that there. [...] From there on, we created a *Gazte Asanblada*, a collective of young people. It was more about working on the subject of leisure and free time, our music, our concerns. We created that too, and I don't know how many years I was there; two or three years. And then from there, when I was in Lekeitio at that time, there was no *Jarrai* or anything. There was nothing at a youth level. The first one that was created was the collective of *Gazte Asanblada*. And then yes, in 92 or so, *Jarrai* was created, and at a party one night, I remember someone who had studied with me, we grew up together, she was from another *kuadrilla* and today is my best friend; she proposed to me if I wanted to participate, [*mentioning*] that they'd began to create *Jarrai* and all that." (B-II/04)

Within the 'undefined hierarchy of commitments' among all MLNV organizations, youth organizations occupy an important place due to their presence and active role in the public sphere. Notwithstanding, the militancy period in a youth organization is limited to a shorter time as a natural consequence of the life cycle, which begins in adolescence and lasts a couple of years. This relatively short militancy period only corresponds to a specific phase within broader militancy, which usually continues. Besides bringing public attention to the conflict, these youth organizations also carry out recruitment tasks for other components of the MLNV, as explicitly stated in a text titled *Anexo a la Ponencia KAS* (Annex to KAS Presentation) approved in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of HASI on December 1987:

"*Jarrai* faces the great task of organizing the Basque youth movement and configuring itself as a priority framework for debate and decision on issues related to it, addressing their problem from the perspective of KAS. The responsibility of linking the Basque youth movement with the Popular Unity - *Herri Batasuna* corresponds to

the youth organization. Besides, from a strategic point of view, *Jarraí* has to contribute cadres and militants to HASI, LAB, ASK, and in general, to the MLNV.” (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.7: 288)

The above-quoted text explicitly suggests that *Jarraí* militants or Basque youth activists, in general, tend to continue their militancy within the orbit of the MLNV<sup>185</sup>, which may or may not be in the form of politico-military activities in ETA despite the general social perception about youth militants as future ETA recruits (Aretxaga 2005: 140). Among the interviewees in this generation, both cases are described: *B-II/05* affirms the limited period of militancy in the youth organization *Jarraí* and his ‘obligatory’ militancy within the following youth organizations (*Haika* and *Segi* respectively) due to ‘extraordinary conditions’ that the *abertzale* left found itself in the late 1990s:

“In that period, I realized that my militancy in *Haika* had been exceeded because, at that time, I was looking for another type of militancy, in a political party or whatever else. [...] Because a group of political cadres was sent to prison, I had to re-engage [*in the youth organization*]. I’d recently been in the formation process of *Haika*, but I didn’t understand that I had to be a person taking *Haika* forward. I had to look for militancy in other areas; I was already at a certain age then. Since there was a lack of cadres, I re-engaged again. I was a militant in *Jarraí* and *Segi* without having passed through *Haika*! [*laughing*]” (B-II/05)

*B-II/02*, who followed the same ‘three-phase’ militancy trajectory through (1) the student and (2) youth organizations, on the other hand, is the only example whose militancy ended in joining (3) ETA, a trajectory that does not sound uncommon as implicitly affirmed by the interviewee:

“What we can call ‘militancy’, it was at 15 years old. [*Do you mean in the youth movement?*] Yes, when I went to high school, after the *ikastola*, once I finished the eighth grade, I attended the high school, and there I began in the student movement, in *Ikasle Abertzaleak*, and along with that I joined *Jarraí*. And from there, following the rule of ‘three-phase’... As *Jarraí* belonged to KAS, and since I was already in KAS... etc. etc.” (B-II/02)<sup>186</sup>

Eventually, the pressure was also put on the youth organizations, especially with the Spanish judiciary accusing *Jarraí* and *Haika* of organizing low-intensity urban violence under ETA’s command. As a result, most youth activists faced long prison terms with terrorism charges. The police and judicial repression over these organizations to dissuade Basque youth from getting involved downgraded the presence of *abertzale* left organizations’ in the public sphere.

### 6.2.3. Violence in the era of ‘privatization of social life’: Introduction of new repertoires

The 1990s in Spain, in general, witnessed significant changes in terms of capitalist development and modernization. Manifestations of this could be seen in the increasing purchasing power of citizens and, consequently, mass consumption. Some featured developments and advances in 1992 came to symbolize the state of ‘happiness’ that citizens of Spain began to enjoy. The Declaration of Madrid as the European Capital of Culture, the Universal Exposition of 1992 in Seville (popularly known as Seville

---

<sup>185</sup> Among the interviewees in this generation, the role of *Jarraí* was seen with the exception of *B-II/01*, who directly entered in ETA due to extraordinary circumstances. *B-II/03* was a fugitive outside Spain when he participated in the study. *B-II/02* was the only participant who was in *Jarraí* right before joining ETA. *B-II/04* was in a foundation defending popular movements, *B-II/05* was in the syndicate movement LAB, and *B-II/06* was a member of the *abertzale* left political party of the time (*Sortu*).

<sup>186</sup> For supporting empirical data with this respect, please see Interview N° 32 and 39 in Reinares 2001: 81-82.

Expo '92), Barcelona's hosting of the Olympic games, the first Spanish satellite Hispasat 1A and the inauguration of Spain's first high-speed rail line between Madrid and Sevilla were considered the most manifest signs of neo-liberalization and opening of the Spanish economy to the outside world (Ross, Richardson & Sangrador-Vegas 2016: 127).

This state of prosperity experienced after Spain's spectacular integration into the western liberal economic system and the new institutionalization of politics brought along a new positioning of people in terms of political participation. The impacts were especially notable in the Basque Country, where the street had increasingly converted into a primary sphere of politics since the early 1970s. Basing on studies on the impacts of capitalism on political engagement (Habermas 1975, Bell 1976, 1988, Bennet 1986, Held 1989, Giddens 1991), Pérez-Agote argues that such a transformation in the economic and social spheres in the Basque case also brought a rapid political disengagement of ordinary people from public sphere and re-establishment of more simple links with politics in their private life. Consequently, politics faded away from the daily lives of individuals by promoting the role that political parties began to play (2008: 217 - 220).<sup>187</sup> This tendency also decreased political mobilization significantly; in other words, the presence of those who took to the streets for political and social demands seen throughout the 1980s slowly died down (B-II/01, 02).

Such a drastic and rapid economic transformation also had a staggering impact on shaping a new cohort with non-political aspirations based on a professional career, leisure time activities, or mass consumption (Arriaga 1997: 157). What Pérez-Agote defines as '*pasotismo*' (indifference), in this sense, refers to the social categorization of this new cohort (*pasotas*) who show passion and interests in politics to a far less extent (2012: 281). For *pasotas*, the interest in politics and political participation through the public sphere is replaced by the blessings of the society of mass consumption, which constitutes the most challenging obstacle for Basque working classes as foreseen by *Argala*, who had expressed his concerns with this respect during the Spanish Transition:

"Today, perhaps the greatest obstacle is the high level of consumption in the peninsular Basque Country [*Spain*] - the engine of the Basque revolutionary process - which can make us forget that the aim of Basque workers is not to consume what is necessary and the superfluous up to a ridiculous level - and at the same time dramatic - but to transform our social relations of production, making them fraternal and supportive, and our relations with the means of production by appropriating them and placing them at our service; deciding what we want to produce and how we want to distribute it; being able to think and be in contact with one another in our language and creating our own culture; in short, being free people in a free country." (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 5: 294)

---

<sup>187</sup> In his earlier study, Pérez-Agote refers to the same question about the 'privatization of social life', but somehow underlines that political rationalization processes had a slower rhythm in the Basque Country than the rest of Spain after Franco due to the ongoing national problem that had distorted social life as well as inter-subjective social relations (1984: 127-128). In a later study on the post-Franco period, however, the scholar demonstrates the privatization of life through empirical data obtained from PNV, HB, ETA-m, and ETA-pm members (see interviews I-7, 8, 11, 13, 14 in 1987: 55-59).

Despite the diminishing level of political engagement in everyday life, specific public protests and demands did continue in this period. Nevertheless, these were not similar by nature to those of the previous decades. Platforms and communities such as *Afectados por la violencia*, *Gesto por la Paz*, *Pakea Orain*, *AVT*, *Denon Artean*, or *Paz y Reconciliación* began to mobilize against ETA actions in the early 1990s and developed into mass rallies by the end of the decade. Whenever ETA carried out armed actions, social actors backed by the Ajuria-Enea pact began to call for public demonstrations, provoking further polarization among Basques based on ‘democrats’ versus ‘anti-democrats/violence’ (Casanova 2007: 372-373). The social significance of such protests aiming to delegitimize ETA’s violence meant that the public sphere was no longer dominated exclusively by the MLNV (Murua 2017: 161-162).<sup>188</sup> B-II/04 narrates the atmosphere in Bilbao during the period of a well-known symbol of the anti-ETA campaign called *lazo azul* (blue ribbon) and the emotional state she found herself in:

“They painted people from the *abertzale* left as if they were demons; people without a soul, without a heart, that we loved violence. Through media, of course. Then partly, society has influence, partly the educational system. Not in Lekeitio, but of course, when I went to study in Bilbao, in that period, ETA also carried out two long-lasting kidnappings. Well, it was the time for the so-called pacifist movement. [...] They launched the blue ribbon things. Then I remember that when I came to study in Bilbao, there were teachers who came with the blue ribbon. Because of the aesthetics, because you proposed a strike or because of your way of speaking, it was already seen more or less from what environment you were from, and of course, the institution was harsh towards us. So, in general, it is a feeling of ‘all these things happen to me, but they [*only*] talk about one type of violence!’ Of course, until today, here they only talk about one type of violence, which is never denied; at least I’ve never denied it. It was evident that there’s been a use of political violence by the *abertzale* left, but about other types of violence [*from others*] no, nobody spoke out.” (B-II/04)

Becoming aware of the construction of a new cycle of politics by Ajuria-Enea pact organizations, in 1991, ETA underlined the necessity to implement ‘substantial changes in its dynamic of political intervention’ as well as adaptation and renovation within the structure and organization of the KAS block under the new political and social conditions. Nevertheless, the armed struggle continued to be the ‘decisive factor and determining element’ for this change aimed at achieving objectives for *Euskal Herria* (*Barne Buletina*, Nº 57 and Nº 58, June-July 1991 and *Barne Zirkularra*, December 1991 in *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 1993, Vol.8: 90, 93, 95).

The inclusion of assassinations of civilian targets to this end opened a new phase in ETA’s armed strategy. Drug dealers claimed to have been deployed allegedly by the state itself to deactivate Basque youth, prison agents as well as prosecutors (Carmen Tagle), Basque business owners who refused to pay the ‘revolutionary tax’ (José Manuel Olarte, Isidro Usabiaga) were among these new

---

<sup>188</sup> The use of similar tactics was part of a broader counter-insurgency strategy based on the ‘low-intensity warfare’ experimented in Vietnam and Algeria (Klare & Kornbluh 1988). In a similar context to that of the Basque Country, they had already been used to the very same end in Northern Ireland in order to socially isolate IRA, where it got strong support from Irish nationalists (Faligot 1980: 275). Considering the counter-terrorism strategy put into practice in Spain since the implementation of Plan ZEN, one notes that all components of ‘low-intensity war’ (Spanish-French cooperation, GAL violence, Ajuria-Enea unity and one-sided anti-violence movements) were successfully implemented by the Spanish state.

targets. This ‘expansion’ of military targets gained momentum with local politicians, primarily municipal council members, starting the mid-1990s. ETA’s communiqué on 29 January 1995, right after the organization’s first political assassination, Gregorio Ordóñez, revealed that it was motivated by the increasing repression on the *abertzale* left community and deemed these individuals as targets responsible for the uninterrupted state of oppression against the Basque people since Franco:

“...after many years of oppression, *Euskal Herria* is still condemned to a simmering death while being denied its development, identity, culture, and language. [...] The *abertzale* left continues to pay a high price to keep alive the political project of an independent *Euskal Herria*. [...] In the action against Carrero [*Blanco*] yesterday and the one carried out against Ordóñez today, ETA not only fights against Franco and its successors but against the State that oppresses *Euskal Herria*, whatever regime it adopts. [...] and especially Gregorio Ordóñez, he was against a political solution, and if he were in the Government, the paths of dialogue would not be more open than now.” (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 2005, Vol.9: 212-213)

Although ETA’s official communiqué mentioned elements and motivations similar to those of Franco’s dictatorship, it equally revealed the rational objective behind these actions: reaching an agreement with the *adversary* through political negotiations. *B-II/02*, who joined ETA in the early 1990s, confirms the change in military targets and the main objective behind it:

“[*And how did you see the military strategy of that time? In the 90s?*] Very difficult, very difficult because you have to give way to it; a fundamental change took place. And it was the change from hanging on to attacking. The targets changed; we went for the de facto powers, specifically to the head, something always mentioned: to the tentacles and the head. An analysis was made on that; it was enough to hang in that much, and we had to beat to the head. But sure, that means that you’re going to have a greater conflict with the citizens because the policeman who hits you is bad, but nobody knows the council member who tells police to hit! So, there you enter a much harder game to try to make the conflict socially known, right? [*And what was the objective you wanted to achieve through that strategy?*] I think it was the same as always in the end, right? See that the enemy is forced to sit down and negotiate, or talk at least, start a dialogue about what happens to us, what’s our future and begin [*a process*], above all that, right? Apart from counteracting that brutal repression that has always been against our culture, our language.” (B-II/02)

Apart from political assassinations by ETA, other actors of the MLNV also started to get involved in physical resistance and confrontations against Spanish security forces in order to respond to the ongoing isolation policy. Increasingly intensified policing policies, creating a virtual and real confrontational space in a period through which the public sphere got increasingly depoliticized, led to the emergence of *kale borroka* (street struggle)<sup>189</sup> practices, a new form of political violence that came into play from the early 1990s on (Ferret 2012). These practices of low-intensity urban violence, which usually pretended to cause economic and material damage rather than fatal consequences, also helped form a symbolic community of suffering on which the *abertzale* left constructed its political discourse against state repression (Letamendia 1997: 353).

---

<sup>189</sup> Van den Broek emphasizes that although the term *kale borroka* literally means ‘street struggle’, as pejoratively promoted by the Spanish media along with definitions such as *violencia callejera* (street violence) or *violencia juvenil* (youth violence), some MLNV sectors opposed this terming of acts of physical violence, underlining that it also included political gatherings as part of *herri borroka* (popular struggle), as affirmed by a *Jarrai* spokesperson (2004: 719-720). This usage is maintained by the researcher as the term *kale borroka* is used by interviewees of this study when referring to such violent acts.



In a period in which ETA's violence saw considerably strong social criticism and condemnation and, on the contrary, the state violence became less visible and less questionable by the general Basque public, such low-intensity practices of violence made the Basque conflict more visible in highly populated urban centers. The degree that police violence was designated towards a specific sector, the radical politicization of Basque youth tended to go more towards the further socialization of the violence, within the scope of what was popularly referred to as the 'socialization of suffering' strategy (Van den Broek 2004: 721). Yet ETA continued to be the only organization challenging the monopoly of violence exercised by the state's coercive forces in Spain, the use of such violent repertoires in the form of the 'popular response' (B-II/03, 04, 05, 06) to state violence by the MLNV also extended through some of its civilian –and visible- components:

"There was a series of impositions, and it was a response; it took that character because it was a way that would move [people] or cause harm to the state in this regard. Moreover, there came a time in the 1990s –though I become more aware of this as time passes, that the logic of reaction was moved towards more popular formulas. That form of reaction that we previously observed was by certain people who showed determination, a reaction through armed activity. Then, [the idea] came up that this reaction could be moved to a more popular level in the street as well, with an illegal mobilization, with a barricade, even later with what's called *kale borroka*. People who carried out actions without being members of the military organization, in the organization of ETA, carried out violent actions or actions of response in that regard. That, above all, occurred in the 1990s." (B-II/05)

This popular response was typically considered within the scope of 'legitimate self-defense' by those cadres who carried it out, which pointed out an interesting distinction between the violence exercised by ETA and that exercised by the youth movement: According to B-II/02, while ETA opted for attacking strategies, practices like *kale borroka* were designed for defensive purposes from the continuing repression against the *abertzale* left (B-II/04). Describing the environment of violence occupying everyday life, B-II/06, who actively participated in the acts of *kale borroka* in this period, explains the whys and hows of this 'self-defense':

"Demonstration marches were prohibited, the National Police always detained people, and I believe that the first self-defense was usually to put up barricades to defend yourself so that the police vans couldn't pass through. The youth organization at that time was *Jarrai*. They called for demonstrations that were prohibited. [...] I participated in the demonstrations and even in *kale borroka*. What I used to say, my argument was 'if the State itself doesn't respect its own rules, its laws, why do we respect laws of the State? The state doesn't comply with the norms concerning the prisoners, right? I think, starting from there, it begins little by little. By 'little by little', I mean, the first actions: the first thing was to participate in what was called *saltos*, which were groups of people who demonstrated peacefully, but when the police dissolved the demonstration, they would be stick together in groups of 30-40, and they would stay on roads until the police arrived. When the police arrived, you had to run away. From there, you went on to make barricades and then clashes with the police." (B-II/06)

One of the most controversial debates on this matter is whether the practices of *kale borroka* are designed and orchestrated by ETA. Although some scholars mention that these youth groups formed part of a 'subculture of violence' (Llera 1994: 99) by adopting a violent role for ETA's social penetration (Mata 1993: 141; Elorza 2005: 226), others are skeptical about this view. Ferret underlines that the practices of urban violence cannot be reduced to a series of violent methods invented and naturalized

by ETA or the *abertzale* left in general. While admitting that *kale borroka* was included on ETA's politico-military agenda<sup>190</sup>, the scholar stresses the role of a series of internal and external factors in relation to political and social tensions as well as a long trajectory of political socialization through mechanisms such as mountain excursions or the *ikastola* environment and *kuadrillas*, without which an explanation of this phenomenon remains superficial (2012). Although it is categorically denied by some *Jarra* and *Haika* members (B-II/03, 04) that these organizations received or gave the order of *kale borroka*, some others, including B-II/02 who had been in *Jarra* before joining ETA, implicitly recognizes the organized character of these urban confrontations:

"These acts have never been organized, nor in the last 20 years. It's a logical reaction that normally occurs in situations of brutal repression. In fact, it isn't what we say; they've never been able to prove that we organized or gave orders. They accuse us collectively. They don't say X [name] had a meeting with those young people to organize an attack. They say between 1992 and 2001, there are, according to them, 6,500 acts of sabotage and *kale borroka*. And they say that those acts had been organized by *Jarra*. If you are a member of *Jarra*, you're responsible for those acts." (B-II/03)

"There has never been a debate within the *abertzale* left or social organizations; there has never been a debate like 'well, we have to do this!', that never exists and never existed. But I think it was a popular reflection developed by saying 'no, we must respond to this!' and the need to respond is in all fields. So, it's something that just comes out in a way -we won't say spontaneously, because in the end, when you carry out or meet with someone to carry out an action, I imagine that it's not spontaneous, right? [laughing] But yes, it's a natural reaction of all of us trying to react the way we can. You were in a demonstration, no matter how illegal it was, and if the police hit, you would run, but some people thought that they had to confront the police as a reaction when they started detaining [people]. So, I think it's more of logic, logical development of the need for a response to actions by which such [violent] expressions arise." (B-II/05)

Although such affirmations draw an ambiguous picture of to what degree the acts of *kale borroka* were organized and, most crucially, by whom or which group(s)<sup>191</sup>, one observes that components of the MLNV recognize them as fruitful acts of a popular struggle and, therefore, qualify them as legitimate and valid with this respect (Van den Broek 2004: 724-725; Ferret 2012). In terms of the use of political violence, it may well be interpreted that participation in these acts is attributed to a certain degree of valorization within *abertzale* left universe, arguably more than mere political participation, but less than the armed struggle, as understood through the affirmation of B-II/06:

"*Kale borroka* is a very diffuse term, and multiple forms, degrees, and intensity levels are present inside *kale borroka*. [...] These are years of very strong political and military impulses between ETA and the state, and well,

---

<sup>190</sup> This affirmation by Ferret is based on evidence obtained through a police investigation after the fall of Bidart in 1992. The scholar mentions that the new military strategy of ETA, as revealed through private internal documents of the organization's Executive Board, was based on three levels of terrorist action coded XYZ, corresponding to institutional/political space, public sphere/streets (*kale borroka*) and the use of 'terrorist violence' (Ferret 2014: 1018). Van den Broek who has studied the strict relation between the acts of urban violence and the MLNV through key documents such as *Oldartzen* and *Karramarro I & II*, confirms that the acts of *kale borroka* are included on the MLNV agenda and that of its sub-organizations, ETA among them, despite the denial by *Jarra* and HB members in 'organizing and orchestrating' such acts (2004).

<sup>191</sup> Whether the Basque youth organizations systematically got involved in low-intensity urban violence under the orders of ETA is a sensitive question impossible to answer through in-depth interviews due to the ongoing judicial processes against some of the youth organization members who also participated in this study. For this reason, while researching this and the subsequent generation, the researcher observed that it was far easier to talk to ETA militants about ETA violence, which had been an obvious tool, than talking to youth organization members about *kale borroka* or ETA violence. All participants, on the other hand, unexceptionally qualified these violent performances as legitimate.

the state puts pressure on all fronts: It puts pressure by executing militants, but it also puts pressure through political prisoners. On the components of the political front and [the question of] illegalization, it does nothing, it respects them, but it employs the most physical or most direct part of state violence. The phenomenon of *kale borroka* is a phenomenon of popular response, of masses, of masses that bring up a confrontation with the state. In short, symbolically, what is being done is to fight against the state, and *kale borroka* implies a superior level of symbolization to other levels, without reaching the armed one, of course.” (B-II/06)<sup>192</sup>

Despite the illegalization of Jarrai and Haika in the early 2000s, their successor Segi continued for a limited time until it faced the same fate. The use of *kale borroka* continued through this and the following decade, becoming the most substantial allegation by the Spanish judiciary for the criminalization of these organizations by placing them within the ETA orbit along with other civil components of the KAS structure.

**6.3. Motivations and justifications of violence among MLNV members in the 1990s**

Unlike the last two decades, the mortal military actions carried out by ETA significantly diminished quantitatively throughout the 1990s, whereas the number of actions based on low-intensity urban violence reached its highest levels (Llera 2013). On the other hand, the decrease in actions with fatal consequences in quantitative terms also drew a contrary picture when it came to their qualitative impacts and the reaction they provoked in Basque public opinion. Normative and utilitarian justifications mentioned by members of organizations that carried out violent practices throughout the 1990s remained within the boundaries of group truth reproduced by the *abertzale* left community. As seen below, most of these justifications, except that of concerns over the Basque ethnic survival, coincide with those expressed by the previous-generation ETA members:

Motivations Interviewees	Reaction/defense to State violence and repression	Violence as an effective medium for political objectives (Negotiations)	Francoist heritage: Lack of democracy, liberties and alternatives	Injustice, demand for self-determination	Ideological orientation, socialism	The image of ETA and legitimacy of armed struggle	Emotional aspect of militancy: Maximum devotion to the cause
B-II/01	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
B-II/02	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B-II/03	✓		✓				✓
B-II/04	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
B-II/05	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
B-II/06	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

As in the case of previous-generation militants, these repetitively expressed normative and utilitarian justifications are challenging to evaluate separately. They are the components of a solid strategy based on the same group truth. As underlined by some of those individuals (B-II/03, 04, 05), these components are not the root cause, but rather a reflection of a long-lasting conflict, a war between the Basques and what they describe as ‘Spanish colonial state’.<sup>193</sup> What appears to legitimize the

<sup>192</sup> This definition corresponds to the levels of involvement in radical Basque nationalism schematized by Muro as 1) killings, 2) street violence, 3) political activity, 4) support task, and 5) wider radical nationalist family (2008: 126).

<sup>193</sup> Basing on the fact that the bourgeoisie in the Basque Country is ethnic Basques, some scholars argue that the objective conditions of colonialism, as suggested in Hechter’s theory of internal colonialism (1975, 1985) or Nairn’s approach to the

devotion and emotional attachment to the cause, and, therefore, to the militancy, is a combination of these justifications. When simplified in the light of the qualitative data, the general justifying argument for the struggle can be interpreted as the following: As the current unjust political system, which is the heritage of the Francoism, offers no democratic alternative for the self-determination of Basque people and their aspirations for developing their nation, violent methods, including the armed struggle of ETA, against state violence and lack of democracy are legitimate, and they offer an effective mechanism to achieve this political goal by forcing the state to negotiate.

### 6.3.1. Interpretation of violence among the MLNV militants

Selective violence, put into practice as part of the anti-terror policy against ETA and gradually extended towards all components of MLNV, was consolidated in the 1990s with the full incorporation of new legal means as well as a wide range of mechanisms of social legitimation, ranging from social movements to mass media and academia. Targeting a well-defined group also meant the intensification of coercive repression on the components of this group, attempting to paralyze their social activities that served to social diffusion of the group truth. This tactical use of physical violence by the state seems to have achieved notable success on this goal as almost all individuals mention that there was excessive use of repressive means by the state apparatus in this period; something that the rest of the society did not perceive as to be observed in *Chapter 10*.

Analyzing narratives regarding state violence, one observes that violent practices exercised through the state mechanisms corresponded to those who were actively involved in organizations within the MLNV, with ETA at the forefront by a wide margin. Alleged torture and execution claims against ETA militants in custody (B-II/04, 06), the dispersion of Basque political prisoners under the new penitentiary policy (B-II/04, 05, 06), political activities such as public gatherings and demonstrations as well as youth occupy movements intervened by the security forces were the events strictly related to claims by *abertzale* left universe:

"I remember [*something*] that had been decisive in my political militancy. Well, I came to Bilbao to live, and I remember that when I was living in Bilbao, but I was a militant in Lekeitio, they killed two people in a week. One was Gurutze Iantzi, who was killed being tortured at the police station, and within a week, they kidnapped and drugged an ETA militant. Well, they used him as a guinea pig, and then they threw him out of a window of the police station onto the street, here, at Indautxu Police Station. They said he'd committed suicide and all that. I remember that those two things had a strong impact. I was studying here in Bilbao, and we attended demonstrations; there were general strikes in high schools. [*Having witnessed these incidents, how did you feel?*] I felt outraged, that is, the feeling was like 'it can't happen! Here, they're killing people!'" (B-II/04)

---

same phenomenon by referring to 'cultural colonialism' (1979: 187-188), have never existed in the center – periphery relations in Spain (Linz 1985: 234). The intersubjective construction of group truth by *abertzale* left rather corresponds to the perception of reality by the group members, which, as some others argue (Letamendia 1997; Díez Medrano 1999), is closely related to the structural motivations behind the attitude adopted by this ethnically Basque bourgeoisie towards the ethno-symbolic elements of Basque nationalism and the development, and the promotion of this latter.

Such use of coercion, mostly absent in other political and public events, provoked a sense of injustice, lack of democracy, and liberties, which were the fundamental conditions for self-determination, something that continued to be impossible within the constitutional framework of Spain.<sup>194</sup> It was probably for this reason that although these coercive practices specifically and exclusively targeted the MLNV components, those who were subjected to state violence perceived them as violence targeting the entire Basque people whom they claimed to represent:

“Man, I’ve always been very clear that what we demand is fair. That is, the right to decide is the most fundamental, and if it’s admitted at the individual level, why not at the collective level and not at the level of *people*, right? If they say that it’s the basis of democracy, *why don’t they stop imprisoning a nation?* So, I’ve always been sure that there was no freedom. Well, in fact, the guarantor of the unity of Spain is the armed forces. I think that the basics haven’t varied much from then up until today.” (B-II/01, *emphasis added*)

“Once you’re within a collective, you also realize that this is a much wider war. That’s to say, you have a much broader conflict, the repression isn’t only on you because you were in charge of that activity at that time, *but it’s against the whole nation*, and that you’re just one more face of all that conflict.” (B-II/05, *emphasis added*)

Being subjected to intensive state repression and convinced that the political system offered no room for the development of an independent Basque political project, MLNV militants continued to reproduce the same discourse regarding the post-Franco period in Spain. Pointing out the problematic elements of the Spanish Transition, members of the MLNV objectified the same group truth based on the affirmation of ‘nothing (in fact) has changed’ after Franco by rigidly rejecting the use of concepts such as transition, democracy, and liberty:

“[*But at that time, unlike the Franco years, there already was parliamentary democracy in the 1990s, right?*] Yes, but does it really work, or who really founded all that democracy here? It was Franco, that is to say, only the collars of the dogs have changed, but they continue to be the same dogs. They’ve changed the ways of suppressing the population, they’ve changed the strategy of how to remain in power, but they’re the same powers that prevent you, especially us, from being a nation, right?” (B-II/02)

A notable difference in comparison with the previous generation(s) is more emphasis on the right to self-determination. Concerns about Basque ethnic survival, one of the root causes of the creation of ETA during the Francoist regime, are not accentuated as they used to be, the most significant and visible difference from the previous generations. Arguably, the progress and advances made in political and cultural<sup>195</sup> realms since the Spanish Transition have smoothed down the concerns for Basque ethnic annihilation, and the new focus has become the national development in a sovereign entity.

---

<sup>194</sup> Article 2 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 states the “indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation, the common and indivisible country of all Spaniards”, although it recognizes the “right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions of which it is composed”. Please see <https://www.boe.es/legislacion/documentos/ConstitucionINGLES.pdf>

<sup>195</sup> Obviously, the most concrete subject is the linguistic conflict among different models defended by different political groups in relation to the place that Euskera has at an institutional level as well as the communicative function of this language in comparison with Spanish. Sociolinguistic studies and surveys carried out by the Basque Government since 1991 in all seven regions of *Euskal Herria* show the progressive development of the use of Euskera among youth in the Autonomous Community of Basque Country (CAPV) and, to a lesser extent, in the Navarre Foral Community, with a decrease in the French Basque Country. Nevertheless, the same sociolinguistic surveys also reveal that despite the progress in terms of teaching and alphabetization of Euskera, the Spanish language continues to have an overwhelming dominance in the southern Basque

Apart from the national freedom of Basques, which continued to be one of the essential references among MLNV militants, the question of social revolution and socialism as the future political project was emphasized quite often among this generation. Despite the major macro-political changes taking place from the 1990s onwards, especially within the Soviet-led socialist block, the anti-capitalist stance of the MLNV continued as expressed in ETA's famous motto '*jo ta ke independentzia eta sozialismoa lortu arte*' (Onward towards independence and socialism):

"It shouldn't be forgotten that having a social fabric like the one we have today, *I believe the monster which has become our enemy is capital, capitalism*, we should also change our ways of acting —not forgetting, of course, where we are. But for me, they've become of secondary importance, that is, before, maybe I cared a little more about having a Basque identity. Today as the enemy has changed so much, honestly, I don't give it a shit! *Why do I want to be Basque if I'm going to live in the same capitalist society? I'll have the same work problems*, the problem that youth has, but not only youth, the issue of housing... I don't care! At a social level, with all the problems that this fucking society brings, in the end, I'll be the same. What does it matter to me if we take into account that our project hasn't changed? In fact, it wouldn't matter to us because it's one more step towards our freedom, to be a nation. Of course, yes, because we are [*a nation*], and we want to be recognized, but then we also have to take into account what kind of people we want to be." (B-II/02, *emphasis added*)

Due to the above-expressed reasons, all militants in this generation considered that the use of violence was an effective means for two main reasons: 1) It was a necessary practice to confront violent interventions of Spanish and Basque security forces (mainly Spanish National Police but also the *Ertzaintza*)<sup>196</sup> during public events organized by the MLNV. 2) It was also necessary to use higher-scale political violence by ETA to force the government to sit at the negotiation table. The pessimistic vision of the MLNV concerning other viable alternatives made the armed struggle remain the only available functional option. *B-II/01* underlines this fact when recalling the moment she joined ETA:

"I've always believed that this won't be an armed struggle thing. But it's true that in those times, it was thought that through armed struggle, it was possible to put pressure on the government to make it negotiate on independence or self-determination. [*So, at that time, you considered that armed struggle as a method was legitimate?*] Of course. Sure, it was hard for me because I was educated in a Christian way, and so forth... So, the idea of... [*killing*] But a time comes, and you say, 'there is no other way left!' What options do we have?' Because they don't give you democratic options. It is true that at that time, we thought we could put pressure." (B-II/01)

Legitimizing and justifying the use of both low and high-scale violence against the 'enemy' thus became normal and just within the group truth. Consequences of violence exercised through the state apparatus, mainly by security forces but also through the penitentiary and judicial mechanisms, continued to reproduce this group truth of suffering, which also served to consolidate the emotional attachment of individuals to the cause and the fight.

---

Country (*Hegoalde*); a point that provokes concerns among the *abertzale* left sectors who show a far higher level of sensibility for the linguistic question than other Basque nationalists. For the relevant studies and questionnaires, please see <https://www.euskadi.eus/informacion/estudios-sociolingüísticos/web01-a2lingu/es/>

<sup>196</sup> ETA, and in general, the MLNV, claimed that the violence they exercise was a response to the *oppressive* state. However, attacking Basque security forces under the control of the *Basque Government* made this argument questionable. Despite delegitimizing *Ertzaintza*'s presence and involvement by labeling it a colonial '*cipayo*', a generally accepted argument within MLNV, actions against these units reinforced the official state discourse of 'ETA against all', including the very same Basques.

### 6.3.2. Suffering, struggle, and sacrifice: The emotional meaning of the cause and devotion

As previously seen, almost all MLNV militants define their initial involvement and continuity in political militancy as a natural process that requires a certain period of reflection. In terms of politico-military engagement, this process corresponds to a series of experiences that establish a coherent connection between the group reality and pursuing a strategy to overcome the challenges that shape this reality. As long as the armed struggle is deemed a viable strategy to confront these challenges and believed that it potentially opens the door for the ultimate objective of the cause, the national independence and socialist Basque state, it is regarded as an effective means.

Nevertheless, as observed in the text of Antxon López Ruiz (*Kubati*) referred in *Chapter 4*, emotional attachment, emerging from the beginning and increasing through future cycles of militancy, plays an equally important role in the involvement and continuity in the militancy. The initially indefinable feeling which begins to move inside individuals (B-II/03, 04, 05) drives them towards militancy, despite being fully aware of the possible consequences (prison, exile, or death). Although almost all individuals confirm that militancy in such organizations requires assuming all these possibilities, B-II/04 confirms that it is a strenuous emotional and mental exercise for individuals:

“I believe that you don’t think about fighting for something rational; it’s rather a feeling, it starts from a feeling, from an emotion, an emotion of injustice, so you want to do something to change that. A little from rage too and illusion, from both things. [...] Since childhood, you’ve seen what happens to people who fight; you know that they either get killed or tortured or taken to prison. Well, more or less since I started in *Jarrai*, I knew that among the prospects of future, what I would possibly have was one of those: prison or torture.” (B-II/04)

This emotional state and sentimental attachment to the cause, defined as ‘love’ by *Kubati*, becomes an essential value in the militant’s life. For militants, especially if taking someone’s life at stake, this feeling helps overcome their moral questioning. As Alcedo emphasizes, the voluntary stance for a glorious aspect gives violence a vital sacrificial aspect (1996: 110-111, 194-204). The sentimental attachment to the cause implies overcoming any concerns on one’s own life as well as that of their beloved ones and ready to sacrifice them all:

“I think the militancy is something that coincides with my character, with my life. I don’t conceive my life without it. I don’t know how to explain it. It’s the process that has priority before people; this is how I consider it. It’s above them; for that reason, there are occasions in which other lives are taken. So, my personal life is secondary to me; the first is the first. [*And it is the cause?*] The cause, yes. The other thing is how you’re going to carry it out. Today too, I believe in the work of ant [*collective work*]. For different reasons that I’m not going to evaluate, today I’m not involved in anywhere as a militant, but I have never given up militancy.” (B-II/02)

“ [*For*] people who have organized or taken part in a structure like ETA, the decision you make is so vital, in the sense that you’re so fucked up... You assume a series of responsibilities, things that can happen to you, or that a series of repercussions you can experience. It does not have to do only with you, but also with those around you. The actions that you’re going to perform, an armed action, a specific action, or whatever, they’re such vital decisions that I understand that it’s like as if inside you’ve got a kind of screwdriver. You have to be very strong; you have to say ‘it’s like this, I’ve made this decision’, and you have to prepare your brain to be able to assimilate it, to be able to consider it. So, I believe that it’s such an intense exercise that you do for a cause” (B-II/05)

Being the avant-garde actor of the MLNV and, therefore, the expression of utmost dedication and contribution to the cause, ETA comes to the forefront in terms of the level of sacrifice and devotion. Despite the increasing number of questionable military actions against civilian targets and a notable decline in its military power, especially after the 1992 Franco-Spanish operation in Bidart, ETA continues playing a referential role for other MLNV militants who consider the use of violence legitimate within the given socio-political context from their perspectives:

“I believe that the armed organization was a reference. For those of us who were fighting like that at that time, I think they were examples. Their communiqués had a lot of influence on us. For me, it was a kind of guide: I’ve always seen ETA and its militancy as those sectors that have been the most committed, those who were dying at that time, the militants were being executed, they were like ones who were devoted the most, they devoted everything in the process of liberation. [...] ...and that thanks to them, *Euskal Herria* was alive, and thanks to them, there was also pressure on the state. [*They constituted*] some parameters that gave the conflict itself a great weight. Also, in general terms, you’re already immersed in conflict; on your street, you see it, you live in conflict. So, within that conflict that you live in, you see which sectors are where and the place of ETA... ETA was a kind of popular army and a political organization. It wasn’t military in the strict sense, but yes, it was like that part of your side that is the furthest ahead, that exposes the most, that risks the most, that devotes the most, and therefore, it was the most legitimate concerning the political movement.” (B-II/06)

[*How did you see ETA and the idea of armed violence at that time?*]. [*laughing*] [*silence*] Sure, to begin with, as I said before, in the beginning, at least my militancy was quite emotional; it came from feelings. Well, frankly speaking, I didn’t rationally analyze the armed struggle much in that period; it was something that I identified myself with. I identified myself with it in the sense that I saw that in this country it wasn’t possible to defend yourself through words, that’s to say there was no democracy, that there hadn’t been a genuine transition, the Spanish State is no democracy, just like today it still isn’t. So, I would say that when all the means of a nation to defend itself are removed, it seemed to me that the use of violence was legitimate.” (B-II/04)

Through the following periods, the dialectical relationship between violent repertoires exercised by the state and those of ETA entered a new cycle of expansion in qualitative terms: announcing its new strategy called the ‘democratic alternative’, the MLNV softened the KAS Alternative and offered new conditions for political negotiations which, in theory, left the final word to the people of Basque Country. However, this new strategy was still based on political violence as the primary mechanism, and it resorted to more civilian objectives within the range of its military targets. Soon after its implementation, this new strategy brought the desired initial objective, negotiations. However, it equally accelerated the political and social isolation of the *abertzale* left movement.



## **7. The Kurdish National Liberation Movement in the 1990s**

### **7.1. Political socialization of second-generation PKK cadres**

The pre-militancy socialization period of those who join urban or guerrilla activities at the beginning of the decade of the 1990s corresponds to a period that begins before and continues after the *coup d'état* that took place in Turkey on 12 September 1980. The period following the coup sees not only an immense political crackdown on all types of social movements and political organizations but also brings with it the emergence of a variety of new political actors that have a significant impact on the construction of the social reality, both in and out of Turkey's Kurdistan.

The analysis on in-depth interviews with individuals from this generation reveals key findings on the perception of the Kurdish identity; there are specific elements which individuals interconnect when speaking about how they acquired this identity: Indiscriminate physical violence exercised by the state during the post-coup state of emergency period, from which individuals themselves or their immediate social surroundings (mainly extended family members) are affected (K-II/01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 11), violence and armed propaganda activities launched by the PKK, especially from 1984 onwards (K-II/03, 04, 05), the influence of family members on Kurdishness (K-II/02, 03, 04, 05, 07, 09, 11, 12), the continuity in degrading and banning the Kurdish language and the imposition of Turkish national symbolic universe (K-II/01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 09, 11, 12), recollection of past memories and revolts (K-II/06, 07, 09), and Kurdish–Turkish identity encounters as a consequence of internal colonialism (K-II/07, 08, 09, 12) are fundamental elements that second-generation militants mention.

#### **7.1.1. Objectifying the reality: Military occupation and violence after the 12 September coup**

After the 12 September 1980 *coup d'état*, most Kurdish organizations faded away or had to carry on their political activism outside Kurdistan and Turkey (McDowall 2004: 420). The case of the PKK constituted an exception as the party instead settled in military camps in Lebanon in order to prepare the launching of a long-lasting 'popular war' against 'occupying colonial rule'. Despite its short-lived military presence in the Eruh and Şemdinli districts as well as the lack of organizational capacity to channel popular masses into guerrilla lines, the 15 August offensive was the PKK's first and the most significant manifestation that would be the main constitutive symbolic element in the history of the PKK as well as the Kurdish collective memory.

Apart from the coercive measures put into practice during the martial law following the coup, practices exercised in this period by the military junta in Kurdistan made the PKK's arguments more visible than ever. The more salient the presence of the Turkish military and police became part of everyday life for most Kurds, the more it objectified the occupation by the 'colonial enemy' as a social

reality in Kurdistan, consolidating the argument of the PKK as the only actor fighting this occupation (Marcus 2007: 132). Arbitrary and indiscriminate practices of state violence on the Kurdish civilian population became widespread in the presence of violent guerrilla offensives. Whether urban or rural, including those remote mountainous areas like the Botan province, all interviewees confirm the excessive presence of Turkish security forces following the September coup. *K-II/02*, a native of the Lice district of Diyarbakır (Amed), depicts the reflections from the daily life of Kurds in this period:

“...people were already seriously harmed due to the occurrences of the 1980s. In this region, our people, including myself, we’d not seen a normal, ordinary period. That’s to say we’re all children of extraordinary conditions; it’s the type of country we’re living in. Maybe we wouldn’t even be able to adapt ourselves to normal conditions even if they existed one day. Because we’re used to seeing the military, the police around, we’re used to hearing helicopters, warplanes, we’re used to seeing the tanks and artillery. Possibly when these come out of our lives, we’ll feel the absence inside because you’ve grown up with them; you’ve got accustomed to them. Let’s say we’re surprised when we go to metropolises, we wonder why we can’t see any policemen around, like ‘where is the police, why aren’t there any soldiers around?’ I mean, it’s an abnormal situation! You get surprised when you don’t see them! Well, here they’ve become a part of everyday life; they’ve become a part of you. They’re a piece of everyday life. When they’re absent, the picture remains incomplete.” (K-II/02, male, Lice, 42)

Those individuals who became PKK militants later on in the early 1990s perceived this constant presence of state security forces from the 1980s onwards as an explicit act of invasion that provoked a great sense of discontent and anger towards the Turkish state and its core national symbols. *K-II/03* describes his childhood experience in the city center of Batman, where he grew up and joined the guerrilla in 1990:

“...there was state oppression all the time, you feel that constantly in all parts of life; you see policemen and soldiers on every corner. [...] Each morning and each evening, nearly a thousand soldiers, half-stripped to the waist, wearing only a pair of trousers and combat boots, were marching from *Komando* [Avenue] up to the city center and coming back, shouting slogans. They were carrying out morning exercises in the city center, and this was provoking enormous anger. [How did you find it at that time?] They were an invader; they had an invasive mentality, something like that. Because in their eyes, you were no different from a fly, they look at you as if they looked at a fly, and you feel it. Anything related to Turkishness instills you this: the guy marches holding a flag, you detest the flag; he marches singing the *Mehter*<sup>197</sup> anthem; you hate that too. In fact, when we were subjected to torture, they did it in the presence of the flag, along with the Mehter anthem. As they torture you in the presence of whatever value exists in the name of Turkishness, you come to hate these values of Turkishness.” (K-II/03, male, Batman, 38)

The state of fear and violence were also present during the years following the 1980 coup. As the PKK intensified its armed propaganda activities in rural Kurdistan, above all, those villages and *mezras* where the state had once been unable to maintain a thorough control, the civilian population became more and more subjected to repression. Almost all interviewees confirmed that arbitrary and indiscriminate violence on Kurdish peasants became politically motivated. *K-II/05*, who was born in a pastoral nomadic tribe moving around the Botan region where the guerrilla offensive was launched, recalls practices she witnessed in her early childhood:

---

<sup>197</sup> *Mehter* was a type of music performed by marching bands of the Ottoman army. Mehter music has long been adopted by Turkish nationalist groups and parties.

“The 12 September *coup d'état* took place. I do remember that. Sure, I didn't know what the coup meant; we didn't know it. Every morning we woke up in the middle of winter with soldiers everywhere. In all mountains, there were soldiers. People were trembling from fear. For example, I witnessed many scenes like this; they were putting people together, rounding them next to the mosque or the school, and made them all wait in the mud under rain and snow. They were torturing people in public.” (K-II/05, female, Botan<sup>198</sup>, 42)

During the 1980s, religion was a leading factor along with a growing sense of nationalism in determining people's political and social orientation (K-II/02, 03, 05, 06, 07, 09, 10), as well as creating conflictive encounters (K-II/04, 08, 11) among Kurdish communities. As observed in Kurdish history, in rural villages where the community was mainly organized through religious authorities, those individuals were also highly respected by the rest of the community. Describing a similar story in connection with violence by state security forces, K-II/07, who grew up in an extremely conservative small village in the Garzan region, details how such a well-respected individual in his village was subjected to violence and the reaction of the community:

“...we were children then, and our village was raided. The *imam* [Muslim preacher] of the village was taken. When the imam came back, all of his nails had been pulled out under torture. This became a polemic subject in the village. Actually, he was later assassinated, around 1993 or 1994. His daughter also joined [*the guerrilla*] later; there are many who joined from his extended family. He was religious, but he was a *yurtsever*. Also, his influence among people was way different. He wasn't like other imams. Such things sparked conversations in the village. [...] Like ‘It's unfair, why do they treat us like that? What was the imam guilty of? Why did they take our imam?’ This person was performing his imamate for us in the village, like Friday prayer and the such. In fact, when there were some problems in villages at that time, it was the imam who resolved them, or there was a board of elders. Such things did happen, but there was also an environment of fear from the state. For example, when two gendarmes came over to the village, and one said ‘gendarmes!’ everyone was running away, especially men, abandoned the village. I witnessed this situation personally.” (K-II/07, male, Bitlis, 42)

Finally, although it was not the only reason for individuals' decisions to join the guerrilla, violent practices described by older generations as well as directly witnessed violence helped construct an emotional state of fear, anxiety, rage, and anger. An intergenerational connection was established between the past (heard) collective traumas and the present ones. K-II/11, who experienced the post-September measures in one of the Alevi villages near Varto, points out this emotional state of fear and its conversion into a reaction once the individual joined the guerrilla in the early 1990s:

“I remember the 12 September; I was a child. I was around seven years old. In fact, my elder brother got tongue-tied due to fear because when soldiers came over to our villages, they were gathering all the men and women in village squares and putting them to torture. We children witnessed this; we lived through that period in such an overt way. That provokes two things in you: First, you get seriously frightened; when you witness such violence as a child, it provokes significant traumas. Also, you feel extreme anger. [...] Society had already seen such things; they'd seen all that took place in the dungeons of the *September coup*, during raids on villages, by stories of villagers who were forced to eat human excrement or stories of unborn babies getting bayoneted in their mother's womb during rebellions. We were people who had constantly witnessed the oral transmission of this, heard it, or experienced it. You feel fear and anxiety from this, [*you say*] ‘I'll end up like this too, and I'll die in a corner’. However, when you join [*the guerrilla*], in fact, you run the risk of death, and you don't think you'd survive a long time. [...] ...you overcome all that fear as soon as the first bullet is fired, and then the second feeling

---

<sup>198</sup> As in the case of K-II/05, due to security concerns, some participants did not want to provide specific information about their place of birth or the name of their tribe during the interviews. Having been explained that this demographic data was important for a more accurate evaluation, they agreed to specify only the region where they were born.

comes up, and leaving all your fear behind, by leaping forward, you attempt to get a result as soon as possible, you seek to make that anger explode, as well as the hatred, the rebellion you've accumulated inside of you." (K-II/11, male, Varto, 43)

Taking these post-coup security practices into consideration in northern Kurdistan, it would not be wrong to argue that disproportionate and arbitrary practices of indiscriminate state violence traumatized a considerable amount of Kurdish youth in their early socialization process. As the PKK began to extend its propaganda activities to urban towns and cities in the early 1990s, these traumas resulted in the mass participation of young Kurds from different social profiles.

### **7.1.2. The post-coup structural violence against the Kurdish ethno-symbolic universe**

Following the 12 September coup, all legal grounds were prepared to ban the use of any minority language; these measures started implicitly targeting the public use and transmission of the Kurdish language by bringing into force even further restrictions since the 1971 military memorandum. The newly designed constitution of 1982 particularly specified "the language of the Turkish Republic", from which derived the most specific legislation of linguistic repression in the form of the Language Ban Act. This new law entered into force in 1983 and brought a broad spectrum of bans on other languages except Turkish in the public sphere (Watts 1999: 634).

Repressive policies towards the Kurdish ethno-symbolic universe, mainly the ban on language, provoked considerable contradictions, which were later reconstructed as a part of the state's deliberate assimilation policies. Both those who have directly suffered from the practices of symbolic violence in their early socialization period (K-II/01, 03, 05, 06, 07, 09, 10 12) and those who have had maintained a certain distance from their native Kurdish Kurmanji or Zazaki languages (K-II/04, 08, 11) agree on this interpretation and consider themselves as the victims of the state's policies. Almost in all cases, individuals underline the co-existing social realities, one being strictly restricted to their private sphere and the other they find out once they meet the official truth through state institutions. *K-II/06*, who joined the guerrilla in her early adolescence, emphasizes the role that such bans played as the first signs in her questioning of national identity as soon as she met the 'official truth':

"Within the family, you've never learned the Turkish language; you haven't spoken it; your mother tongue is Kurdish, and you speak Kurdish at home all the time. You go to school for the first time and try to learn how to read and write in a language you've never learned. [...] Apart from this, *it's even prohibited to use your language in your daily life. There is a social reality based on prohibitions.* It's a society that is forced to act under prohibitions. It's impossible; they prevent that society from protecting its own identity. In other words, they prevent society from getting to know itself." (K-II/06, female, Diyarbakir, 41, *emphasis added*)

As being one of the main socialization mechanisms outside of the family, public schools were one of the central institutions that individuals spoke about regarding the linguistic incompetency of Kurdish children and consequent physical punishments (K-II/01, 03, 04, 06, 07, 10 12). Nonetheless, practices of physical violence due to deviant behaviors from symbolic impositions were also present anywhere

in the public sphere. Among second-generation PKK cadres, *K-II/01* experienced this situation in the pre-school period when visiting her imprisoned father in the infamous Diyarbakır Prison № 5:

“...it was a military prison, during the visits, there was always a soldier standing next to us, and another one standing next to them [*inmates*]. They were blowing a whistle, and once they did, my father could turn and speak, but he didn’t speak any language other than Turkish, and as my mother didn’t know Turkish, there were tragic consequences. Sometimes I was the translator between them. At one stage, my father told my mother something like ‘send the children to school’, my mother replied ‘I have no money, I can’t send them to school, I’m having difficulties’, my father got angry and spoke in Kurdish. Once he spoke Kurdish, they began to torture him in front of us. We lived through such tragic situations as well. [...] Naturally, this takes shape in our childhood mind, like there is a soldier in front of you, he tortures, he doesn’t accept your language. Maybe then we didn’t understand why he didn’t accept the language, like ‘why is Kurdish unacceptable, why isn’t there any other language except Turkish, this language can’t be used’.” (*K-II/01*, female, Diyarbakır, 38)

During her school years later, the interviewee points out that the same attitude towards her native Kurmanji continued in a systematic manner, which made her begin to question her identity for the first time despite her lack of political consciousness. Once the individual grew up and acquired political consciousness regarding her national identity, she finally made sense of all those memories:

“At schools, they were saying ‘Kurds don’t exist, you must forget this language, it’s archaic, you shouldn’t speak this language’, and pressure like this was being exerted. I had an advantage, though, as my teacher was kind of leftist, she didn’t put much pressure [*on us*]; however, the pressure did exist at the school in general, and this was shaping you. Even when I said one day –after my father had been released from the prison-, ‘Dad, are we Kurd or Turk? Why is it that Kurds are bad?’ My father said, ‘No, we’re Kurds, and Kurds aren’t bad; why do you say so?’ I said, ‘because they always say so at the school’. [...] Well, this was the sort of tone that was given to a child, and it naturally gave way to doubts. I mean ‘in the end, we’re humans like them too, why do they ignore us? What did Kurds do? Why? Aren’t we a people?’ Well, maybe you’re not fully conscious, but this makes you doubt and settles in your subconscious. Once you grow up and see some facts, you say, ‘Aha! Sure, so it was for this reason!’ I mean, as you grow older, your questioning gets further deeper.” (*K-II/01*)

Apart from the linguistic ban and imposition, other elements symbolizing Turkish nationalism were deliberately forced upon individuals. The Turkish national anthem, oaths, and the flag were all understood to have been imposed as elements provoking a considerable degree of repudiation. One of the regularly imposed symbolic practices was *Andımız* (Turkish Student Oath)<sup>199</sup>, which was compulsory up until recent years in all public and private primary and secondary educational institutions in Turkey. The following is the latest version of the daily-repeated oath as an initial session of the school day ceremony:

*“I am a Turk, honest, and hardworking. My principle is to protect the younger and respect the elder, to love my homeland and my nation more than my essence. My goal is to rise and progress.*

*Hey Great Ataturk! On the path that you have paved, I swear to walk incessantly towards the goals that you have indicated.*

*My existence shall be a gift to the Turkish existence. How happy is the one who says ‘I am a Turk!’”*

---

<sup>199</sup> *Andımız* was first written by the Minister of National Education Reşit Galip in 1933 and was made compulsory. The oath’s text underwent minor changes and continued to be compulsory until it was officially abolished in 2013.

Some second-generation individuals (K-II/02, 03, 07) draw attention to the oath by specifically underlying the final part, which states, 'How happy is the one who says I am a Turk', an expression first used by the founding father of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal (*Atatürk*) in his speech for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Republic. Once acquiring political consciousness of their own national identity as Kurds, individuals interpret this obligation of having to claim that they are Turkish as an offensive symbolic imposition on non-Turkish ethnic identities:

"Well, what does it say? 'How happy is the one who says I am a Turk', that's to say, 'all others except Turks are animals!' As long as this expression remains, an Armenian, a Kurd, that's to say all those who remain as 'others' are considered not good. It's become such a nationalist discourse; that's what its essence is. [*When you see the Turkish flag or when you hear such expressions, how do you feel?*] I feel annoyed, sure! If you ask me now, the flag belongs to all of us, I have no allergy to the flag, but they tortured me under that flag; now, whenever I see that flag, I become like a bull that sees the color red! [...] when you write 'how happy is the one who says I am a Turk', you push me towards a feeling of hatred against all Turks because this is hate speech. You say, 'how happy is the one who says I am a Turk', so who are we? Then I'd say, 'how happy is the one who says I am a Kurd! Damn with Turks!' If you mean to say 'damn with Kurds', then I'd say the same to you." (K-II/02)

"I had a friend who was beaten up because he hadn't buttoned up his jacket when he passed in front of Atatürk's bust. That's to say, whenever you pass by, you must button up your jacket and salute! It's the barbarity put into practice, exercised through symbols by those who are in charge in the name of the state. Especially the torture you're subjected to during the political trajectory objectify the meaning of the practices even further. Consciously or unconsciously, this creates an extreme culture of resistance in the mind of every child." (K-II/03)<sup>200</sup>

In prisons, forcing inmates to sing the Turkish national anthem or the imposition of the Turkish flag and language had already been reported among the methods of symbolic torture during the post-coup imprisonments (Kutschera 1997: 254). However, starting the 1990s, such symbolic elements were further integrated into the physical practices of torture. *K-II/04* points out the evolution of this process in his native Ardahan:

"They weren't forcefully imposed in that period [*the 1980s*] in our region yet. For example, when soldiers were torturing people, they weren't doing it with the flag, or at least I didn't witness that. They didn't do it with the national anthem, so we didn't have the consciousness to consider them as symbols of the state's official apparatus. After a while, such practices were developed, from 1990 onwards, they developed even more, along with the 'special war', they didn't exist before that period." (K-II/04, male, Ardahan, 42)

The official policy adopted by the state, however, was not the only means through which the imposed symbolic system drove a significant percentage of Kurds to strengthen and adhere to their national identity. As observed among the previous-generation militants, structural characteristics and economic relations between the Kurdish periphery and the Turkish bourgeoisie also continued affecting the social conflict on identity in this period.

---

<sup>200</sup> For a comprehensive study on this matter, see Darıcı, H. (2009) *Violence and freedom: The politics of Kurdish children and youth in urban space*, PhD thesis submitted to Sabancı University, Istanbul.

### 7.1.3. The continuing impacts of internal colonialism in and outside of Kurdistan

When it comes to the awareness, reconstruction, and consolidation of the Kurdish identity both in and outside Kurdistan, Öcalan's theoretical approaches are directly linked to the devastating effects of the colonial structures and relations of what he defines as authentic Kurdish identity and lifestyle based on communal relationships. Through such texts as *Kürdistan'da zorun rolü* (The role of force in Kurdistan), *Örgütlenme Üzerine* (On organization) and *Kürdistan'da Kişilik Sorunu* (The question of personality in Kurdistan), Öcalan constitutes the PKK's primary function on three *sine qua non* for national liberation in a broader sense, which are; 1) the need for armed struggle, 2) a pioneering organization in order to unite and reorganize the highly atomized Kurdish society and, finally and most importantly, 3) creating a genuine personality considered adequate for such an organization (A.K. Özcan 2006: 105-106). This approach becomes one of the PKK's main concerns from the 1990s onwards, which has simultaneously shaped the concept of 'national liberation'.

As in the case of first-generation, among the second generation of PKK cadres as well, these impacts played a significant role when it came to identity distinction and awareness among Kurds. In this period, the PKK became active in recruiting people in big Turkish cities, particularly in Istanbul, which hosted many Kurdish citizens who had gone there pursuing better economic prospects (Marcus 2007: 133). Idealist Kurdish university students who were desperate to intervene in the Kurdish process sought the organization as an alternative to the role officially attributed to Kurds in Turkey. Instead of denying their Kurdishness in order to occupy a place within the society, adhering to and fighting for this identity became a vital source of motivation for some sectors in Kurdish society (K-II/01, 02, 03, 04, 06, 07, 09, 11, 12). K-II/09, whose family immigrated to the *Çukurova* region<sup>201</sup> when she was three years old, underlines these two commonly observed antipodal attitudes (refusing or embracing the native Kurdish identity) among those Kurdish communities living and settling outside of Kurdistan, narrating her own experience:

"The biggest contradiction is that your entire childhood passes by being discriminated against because you're Kurdish. I was around seven years old; I fell out with our neighbor's daughter. [...] Her mother came over and put her hands on her waist. She said, 'You dirty wild Kurds! Get the hell out and go to your Barzani's place!' That has always stuck to my mind, like 'why are Kurds wild?' or 'who's Barzani?' I mean, a seven-year-old child cannot know who Mullah Mustafa Barzani is. Besides, we didn't grow up in Kurdistan; we were growing up in a different place. This discourse has always remained in the corner of my mind, my heart. [...] I can say that what took me to the PKK was that exclusion, that humiliation. What that seven-year-old child heard has never been forgotten; it's always remained somewhere in my heart. As you grow up, in adolescence, you still experience that exclusion. [...] Although you have a period of desiring to assimilate [*with Turks*], later on, you once again return to your identity, such things help you regain your consciousness and tell you all the time: 'you're a wild Kurd'. You notice

---

<sup>201</sup> The *Çukurova* region is one of the most important cotton farming areas in Turkey, where a significant part of the agricultural labor force on cotton fields are Kurds. They worked as seasonal workers at one point in time, but later began to settle in the outskirts of big Turkish cities such as Adana and Mersin in *Çukurova*, changing the demographics of these cities.

this when people stare at you, when you're pushed around, everything orders you to embrace your own identity." (K-II/09, female, Çukurova, 49)

The social consequences of internal colonialism not only had impacts on those peripheral community members who lived in regions where the official truth regarding the national identity was dominant but also in the periphery where the social and cultural characteristics were based on the Kurdish ethno-symbolic universe. Compared with the former case, which affected relatively fewer community members, this latter was considered a larger-scale threat for the entire peripheral territory objectified as 'national homeland'. Considering the potentially devastating effects in terms of ethnic survival, which almost all interviewees were concerned with, this challenge supposed a crucial factor for their later political socialization and militancy periods, as narrated by K-II/12:

"The best [example] which comes to my mind is that I was sick, and my mother took me to the doctor. The doctor was talking to me, and he was a Kurd himself. He asked about my complaints. My mother was answering in Kurdish, but I answered in Turkish. He ignored my mother and began to talk only to me. My mother knew my symptoms and problems better; I wasn't able to express them as well as she could. However, as I was speaking Turkish, the doctor who himself was from my identity but had accepted and got used to being a Turk, or a fake Turk, pushed my mother aside and said, 'You shut up! You don't know how to speak!' in a humiliating way. He addressed himself to me. Yes, I spoke that day, but when we got home, I really felt so bad. [...] This particular example was the one that has stuck to me, and afterward, I've lived through the same thing in every institution I've been to. It'd been triggered off once inside of me. Everywhere I went, once we spoke Kurdish, there were lots of eyes humiliating me in my own country, my own land, my own city, lots of people keeping an ear to the ground. It isn't necessary to beat me there because there is already violence. [...] My reaction didn't come in the form of self-inflicted injuries, accepting and melting into this system as in the case of some others. It came in the form of resistance: 'If you're like this, don't think that I have no alternative. If you implement all these practices, I can implement similar and further reprisals as a response to you.' Well, obviously, I wouldn't do this within their legal order. I chose an area in which I would be able to organize myself far easily and would be able to respond to them in reprisal." (K-II/12, female, Batman, 47)

Even those who were living in remote areas where the PKK had little or no influence, the structural and economic contradictions between western Turkey and the Kurdistan region offered a clear-cut comparison. Although it cannot be considered the sole motivation, the element of poverty and inequality in access to prestigious labor opportunities arose as primary economic consequences of the cultural division of labor (Hechter 1999[1975]: 38-39). Along with other decisive factors such as oppression, security concerns, and the developing organization for national liberation, the economic deprivation also came to the forefront in the awakening of political consciousness:

"I witnessed the gaudiness, life there [western Turkey]; on the other side, I witnessed life in the villages of Ardahan when I was back, and I said, 'It's impossible that this is the same country!' [Did you think it was a consequence of colonialism at that time?] No, I didn't know those things; I had no idea at all. [...] 'Here's a place called Kurdistan, we're invaded, our language was banned...' I wasn't conscious of it, absolutely not. There was nobody who would tell us about such things, either as if someone had organized us or something, nothing like that. You know, as they tend to say 'they're taken in'; no, we found the organization on our own by questioning life." (K-II/04)

"One of the topics which affected me so much, maybe you've also noticed, you pass by a station, workers are waiting there, all of them come from Kurdistan, don't they? It hurts you terribly. One offers a job, and tens of hands are lifted. You say to yourself, 'why are these people in such a situation?' All of them are Kurds, well, maybe coming from different cities, maybe they're not your relatives, but you speak the same language, or you



witness things like this. Moreover, again and again, it's always Kurds who work in the toughest jobs like blacksmiths and construction. In such a position, one only thinks about his bread and butter; he can't have any other goal; he's not even in conditions to take proper rest. While you see such things, it hurts you. You look and see every day that a family emigrates from Kurdistan, they come and have nowhere to go, they look for accommodation or a job. Their village is burnt down. I mean, all these become a question of calculation. Sure, it depends on each individual. If you put up with it, you just go forward, and if you can't put up with it, you look for a way out." (K-II/07)

While not the only ones, the consequences of internal colonialism continued to be a factor for those individuals who stuck with their own national identity and were likely to seek a collective response. After the devastating effects of the 12 September coup in the early 1990s, there was only one alternative left through which this discontent and reaction could be canalized.

#### **7.1.4. The rise of the PKK as the sole actor of the Kurdish struggle**

Geographically, the emergence and expansion of guerrilla warfare did not take place in a homogenous manner. Mountainous areas along the border with Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan were the first places guerrilla warfare tactics were used against the state. In fact, in the early 1990s, the PKK had achieved its guerrilla activity phase only in the Botan region thanks to its geographic characteristics, a handicap for the state and substantial advantage for the PKK guerrillas (N.A. Özcan 1999: 126 - 127). In the rest of Kurdistan, especially in remote areas like Dersim (K-II/11), the organizational activities were limited to armed propaganda and agitation.

The PKK's growing and extending influence over Kurds in rural Botan was notable after the 15 August offensive, led by the legendary commander of the organization, Mahsum Korkmaz (alias *Agit*), who was killed some years later. The social structure of rural Botan, mainly consisting of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, and newly arrived technologies played a crucial role in the reproduction of the narrative based on this 'heroic' act of *Agit* and 15 August around the region, extending up to nearby cities where nomadic peasants frequented for economic reasons. *K-II/05*, who was born in a semi-nomadic tribe roaming through the Botan highlands, narrates the influence of the 15 August over her family and how the mythicization process was started right after *Agit's* death:

"Because our family was a nomadic tribe, they knew many things. We didn't know much because we were children then. For example, my family and the surroundings knew when Heval *Agit* had fallen martyr. Gabar was our mountain; people would come from and go to Van, and from Van to there. They knew the 15 August offensive; in fact, it had a significant impact [*on them*]. [...] What had provoked an enormous impact on me in terms of political views was that there were cassette players then; my maternal uncle had brought one and placed it on the wall of a house. He played a song by Heval Mizgin called '*Rakin egîdê me rakin*' (raise our [*fallen*] hero, raise)<sup>202</sup>. People, half of the village, gathered and listened to that cassette. They were listening and crying their heart out. The first thing that impacted me was that scene, that sound, '*Rakin egîdê me rakin*'. How can I describe it... Sometimes, I listen to that song, and it still brings about that excitement, that spirit inside, that deep sound... In a way, that song made a call to me, as if saying 'come'." (K-II/05)

---

<sup>202</sup> The interviewee refers to a popular song/mourning written upon the martyrdom of Mahsum Korkmaz. The lyrics were also interpreted as 'raising against the enemy' whose only possible way was to join the guerrilla.

It is also noted that this reproduction process of Kurdish symbols, whose expression was strictly prohibited in public, was expanding in the private sphere through similar mediums (illegal publications, cassette players), which seemingly helped young generation Kurds to be more familiar with these symbolic elements. In this limited early socialization environment, attacks against those who were representing the national liberation provoked a strong emotional reaction. *K-II/03*, who had personal contact with Mahsum Korkmaz in his childhood, narrates his initial familiarization with Kurdish identity and the impact of *Agit's* death in his militancy:

“My elder brother always brought political literature home, and he explained them to us. In my childhood, there were things that I was familiar with. But there was something which affected me most: At that time, cassettes and songs in Kurdish were prohibited too. My brother had got Aram Tigran’s cassettes brought from Armenia thanks to a friend of him. At home, Aram Tigran’s cassettes were playing all the time, and it was cheering us up and enriching our vocabulary. Additionally, there were also my elder brother’s stories, so we got to know Kurdishness in our childhood. But it was in 1986 that I took a personal, major decision: it was the announcement of Mahsum Korkmaz’s death on TRT-1 [*Turkish state-run television channel*], which was the only channel then. I remember well; I was nine years old then. [...] I remember Mahsum Korkmaz vaguely; I was sitting on his lap; he was playing with me. When his death was announced on the news, my brother shouted, and we all snapped and paid attention. And we saw the news; we realized what had happened. Then I made a promise to myself, a promise that I made on my own: ‘I won’t do military service for this state, and I won’t get married!’ A promise like this about my future life. It was something childish like ‘I must call them to account for this’, but it was such an intense feeling. That was the decision I took on my own, and I went to mountains to join [*the guerrilla*] in 1989, but I was too young, I was sent back.” (K-II/03)

By the early 1990s, other few political groups that remained after the devastating coup of 1980 had almost no significant role against the military junta regime. Those who joined the PKK from urban or rural environments in the early 1990s also point out the ineffective and unwilling attitude of groups such as KUK or Ala Rızgarî towards the idea of taking any concrete action against the ongoing repression by the regime. *K-II/09*, who grew up in the southern Turkish city of Adana, where KUK was dominant in her adolescence, narrates how the PKK, still popularly known as the *Apocular*, gradually became the dominant politico-military actor in this period:

“There were those from the *Apocular*, those from KUK, from Ala Rızgarî; they all were coming and going. At that time, I didn’t know the *Apocular*; I asked those from KUK, I knew people among them, ‘you’re Kurds, and they’re Kurds too; why don’t you guys come together?’ Imagine that even in that unconscious state of mind I had, I was asking, ‘If you don’t unite, if you stay fragmented, how will you manage to carry on this struggle?’ Those from KUK were replying by saying, ‘They’re in favor of violence; we’ll solve the problem on the table!’ I knew some high-ranking KUK leaders. As the *Apocular* became active there, there was no one else around; they all ran away. It was the period of post-September 1980. After the September coup, many KUK leaders fled to Europe, while the remaining sympathizers melted away once the *Apocular* became more active.” (K-II/09)

The situation was not significantly different in Kurdistan, either. Unlike previous-generation cadres, most of the early recruits in the 1990s hardly mention the presence and influence of other Kurdish movements. This scenery facilitated the decision-making for some individuals in joining the guerrilla (Marcus 2007: 133). Coming from an atomized *yurtsever* social environment in terms of organizational diversity, *K-II/12* emphasizes how the 12 September coup constituted a milestone for political organization in northern Kurdistan, making the PKK the only option:

“Especially after the 12 September took place, all organizations were wiped out, all of them stepped back. The only organization which came into prominence was the PKK. -Well, ok, this has a lot of objective and subjective reasons; surely, I cannot get into them. The PKK was an organization that attempted to carry out its political ideology, put into effect through violence, and was the one that remained after the storm of the 12 September coup. For this reason, other ideas couldn’t materialize in a political system like that in Turkey. That’s to say, only an organization that used violence to carry its objective and ideology into effect could get a result. [...] At that time, the state was using limitless and disproportionate violence against us, against the Kurds. I guess, also, from the perspective of pride, actions taken by the PKK against the Turkish state –especially towards the security forces and main institutions of the state- were catching our attention more and more.” (K-II/12)

In the early 1990s, while guerrilla warfare was in its infancy phase in other regions, relying on armed propaganda and agitation activities with no significant direct armed actions, regions like Behdinan and Botan were already considered ‘liberated zones’. (N.A. Özcan 1999: 133-143). Settling in mountainous areas, where they were relatively less prone to the state’s physical and symbolic violence, also made those rural Kurds maintain their cultural characteristics and peculiarities and, therefore, contributed to their ethnic survival. *K-II/05* explains how the nomadic life her family lived at that time familiarized them with the national liberation movement(s) in daily contacts, among which the PKK/Apocular became distinctively famous towards the 1990s:

“After 1980, there were some contradictions –at that time; I was a little girl-, after 1985-86, the *Apocular*, KDP, and KUK... I’ve seen these many times in villages. Some were from the KDP, and some were *Apocu*. The *Apocular* weren’t dominant then yet. Most of the time, they just called them the *Apocular*; who were they? What in the world were those? In that period, nobody knew much about them. This contradiction and struggle were present all the time. There was always ‘let’s do something!’; there was always a quest. But once I grew older, the political view that I lived through, that I witnessed was that of the PKK, that of the *Apocular*. At the time, people were calling them ‘*talebe*’ [pupils], then they began to call them the *Apocular*. Then I grew a little older, and the PKK had already occupied every corner. Towards the 1990s, there was nobody else but the PKK.” (K-II/05)

As mentioned before, the PKK’s expansion of influence and fame varied significantly from one region to another at that time. Especially in those places where Turks and Kurds lived together, repressive measures practiced by the state’s on deviant identities and ideologies (stigma of leftism, Kurdism, and Alevism, i.e.) continued to perpetuate a state of fear, which affected people’s attitude towards the PKK and Kurdism in a significantly different way. *K-II/04*, whose family was divided between the city of Ardahan and a nearby village, describes his early sympathy towards the PKK, which at that time was almost absent in his region, and the political and social atmosphere:

“In the city center, fear dominated us; both Alevism and Kurdishness, and also left-wing tendencies were reasons for extreme oppression, there was a powerful empire of fear built up and, for this reason, nobody dared to speak out or say what they were. We had a football team, and everyone was saying, ‘This is the communist team or the PKK team!’ I swear we’d never seen a PKK member; we hadn’t heard of them either; we hadn’t read anything on them. We would sometimes talk or do things to show that we had sympathy for them, but due to fear, everyone was staying away. There was a pre-school, and because we used that pre-school, nobody would get close to the place, as if it’d been an island of leprous! There was such a big fear. Apart from that, the left had been repressed, also generally, Alevism had already been repressed, and Kurdishness also had been crushed when it was sprouting. For this reason, it was considered sinful to talk about politics. Because of me, many people removed their children from the school; we were studying at Y [name] High School; those children didn’t study.” (K-II/04)

The above-quoted individuals who had gone through their political socialization process after the 1980 coup illustrate that while the PKK remained the sole significant armed resistance movement against the military junta, it was still expanding inside and out of Kurdistan. Increasing widespread violence exercised by both the state –including newly involved state-sponsored actors- as well as PKK militants would intensify the polarization of Kurdish society further throughout the following decade.

## **7.2. Turkey, the Kurdish question, and the PKK in the 1990s**

The early 1990s experienced the initial signs of Turkey's non-official recognition of Kurdish identity, which had been systematically denied until then: The ban on the use of Kurdish in public was finally lifted, the Prime Minister of the period, Süleyman Demirel, recognized the 'Kurdish reality' of Turkey in a speech in Diyarbakır, and alongside him, President Turgut Özal made considerable efforts to find a political solution for this long-lasting conflict. Such advances led Turkey's Kurdish question to a political solution (Yeğen 2011: 74). For the first time in the history of the Republic of Turkey, Kurdishness was addressed as an identity to be taken into consideration.<sup>203</sup>

However, hopes for a constructive political solution did not live long, giving way to a continuously extending spiral of violence with human and material losses. The state's newly introduced counter-terrorism policy, which went far beyond the PKK insurgency through the introduction of new legal and illegal actors and methods, became a precursor for further advancements in the following decade. The wider the spiral of violence between the state forces and the PKK guerrilla became, the more dramatic social consequences arose.

### **7.2.1. The introduction of non-violent repertoires: Kurdish legal politics**

The first legal movement block in Kurdish politics in Turkey emerged after the October 1991 elections with the People's Labor Party (HEP - *Halkın Emek Partisi*), founded on 7 June 1990, whose candidates were registered on the Turkish central-leftist Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP – *Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*) list.<sup>204</sup> The HEP was definitively banned by the Turkish Constitutional Court on 15 July 1993, and its members joined the newly founded Democracy Party (DEP – *Demokrasi Partisi*) that shared the same fate as its predecessor and its successor, the People's Democracy Party (HADEP – *Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*), due to the same legislation issues in Turkey's post-coup Constitution and

---

<sup>203</sup> These symbolically encouraging steps, however, remained only in an embryonic stage and in no way brought significant changes to the 'cultural recognition' of the Kurdish identity despite Öcalan's repeated calls in this period. See Öcalan, A. (1994) *Bir Muhatap Arıyorum: Ateşkes Konuşmaları*, Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.

<sup>204</sup> HEP's inclusion on the SHP electoral list was a compulsory move for Kurds to send representatives to the Turkish Parliament due to the obstacles created by the 23 May 1987 Amendment and Article 33 of the Turkish Electoral Law № 2837. According to the mentioned amendment, any political party requires a minimum of 10% votes to have representation in Parliament.

Electoral Law (Watts 1999: 640-641).<sup>205</sup> These bans created a legal barrier for Kurds seeking the use of non-violent repertoires in order to voice their political demands.

From the 1989 elections onwards, the Turkish center-left SHP party and the new representative of Turkish political Islam, the Welfare Party (RP – *Refah Partisi*), became two fundamental political forces in the region, the latter overcoming the former halfway through the decade. Having expanded their influence throughout the region from the early 1990s onwards, Kurdish political parties following the HEP tradition achieved notable electoral success in Turkey's Kurdistan. Despite the conditions of war and constant legal and illegal interruptions of free political participation of Kurds, the Kurdish *yurtsever* left began to make its presence felt from the 1995 general elections onwards, becoming one of the most decisive political actors in the late 1990s (Yayman 2016: 207).

Table 7: 1991, 1995, and 1999 General Elections in Turkey's Kurdistan

		Adıyaman (Samsür)	Ağrı (Ağır)	Bitlis (Etil)	Bingöl (Çewiğ)	Bitlis (Erdiis)	Diyarbakır (Arned)	Hakkari (Colemerg)	Kars (Qars)	Mardin (Mêrdîn)	Muş (Mîş)	Sirt (Şêrt)	Sirnak (Sîrnex)	Tunceli (Dêrsim)	Urfa (Riha)	Van (Wan)	Turkey	Kurdistan
ANAP	1991	20,3	26,6	15,9	17,8	31,2	14	43	16,9	18,5	17,2	18,2	19,6	10,7	26,6	26,3	24	21,1
	1995	14,8	18,4	15,5	14,4	23,1	13,8	12,2	12,3	22,3	16,5	14,2	13,8	9,1	17,1	16,6	19,6	16,2
	1999	10,5	9,2	10,5	9,7	20,5	11,1	9,4	16,3	16,4	11,1	12,6	16,9	8,1	14	9,8	13,2	12,4
DYP	1991	24,9	28,2	14,7	27,6	14	20	29,6	27	17,1	14,9	19	14,6	3,4	31,3	26,5	27	23,4
	1995	18,6	13,6	14,3	12,8	15,1	10,8	19	18,4	19,7	11,2	10	29,3	16,8	25	10	19,2	16,1
	1999	17	12,7	14,1	14,5	14	11,2	18,1	11,8	19,2	11,7	22,1	10,2	15,6	23,8	11,1	12	15,9
RP/FP	1991	24,9	22,2	15,3	35	29,1	12	6,3	7,1	8,7	24,3	20,6	2,6	5,6	18,4	22,5	16,9	17,4
	1995	32,5	30,7	25,8	51,6	29	18,8	6	20,5	20	29,7	28	8,3	2,7	26,2	23,8	21,4	25,1
	1999	27,5	12,8	13,9	24,4	20,8	14,6	9,9	9,8	11,8	10,9	13,4	11,1	2,4	21,4	18,9	15,4	17,0
DSP	1991	2,3	2,5	0,9	1,3	2,9	2,6	1,1	17,2	1,3	1,3	1,8	1,1	1,6	2,7	1,8	10,8	3,9
	1995	2,9	1,7	1,5	1	2,7	2,6	2	16,4	1,7	2,9	2,1	2,8	3,8	2	2	14,6	3,1
	1999	6,3	2,8	2,4	2,2	4,7	5	4,8	17	9	9,1	5,1	4,5	9,1	4,6	4,1	22,2	6,0
CHP	1991	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1995	10,9	3,7	1,7	5,2	2,5	2	2,7	9,4	4,5	4,3	8,6	8,9	23,4	2,3	2,3	10,7	4,7
	1999	12,1	4,1	4,1	5,6	2	3	5,8	8,2	2,9	4,6	6,5	5,1	18,3	6	5,1	8,7	5,7
SHP	1991	27,2	15,3	52,8	17,9	21,9	49,9	19	31,1	53,9	41,8	39,6	61,2	57,9	20,7	22,3	20,8	32,7
	1995	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
HADEP	1991	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1995	9,5	17,9	37,2	7,1	10	46,3	54,2	6,8	22	16,7	26,6	25,9	16,9	13,7	28	4,2	22,4
	1999	7,5	33,7	43,4	12,9	13,7	45,9	46,1	17,5	25,3	31,8	22,1	24,1	13,4	16,6	35,7	4,7	26,4
MHP	1991	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1995	6,7	5,5	1,5	5,4	7,6	2	2,2	12,1	5,4	5,9	6,9	4,3	5,5	3,7	7,1	8,2	5,3
	1999	10,6	7,7	2,1	11,2	11,4	2,8	2	12,8	1,9	4,4	5	5	7,2	8,5	8	18	6,9
Independent	1991	-	4,5	-	-	0,4	1	-	-	-	-	0,4	-	19,7	-	-	0,1	1,0
	1995	1,8	5,6	0,1	-	5,8	0,5	-	2,1	2,2	10,9	0,4	-	16,6	8,4	5,6	0,5	4,3
	1999	0,3	12,1	3,6	11,4	6,9	1	-	-	9,9	12,1	9,7	16,3	20,4	1,8	0,9	0,9	4,0

Source: Elaborated from Yeğen *et al.* 2016: 51-53

Frequent interruptions in legal politics appear to have been a motivating factor for those young Kurds to come closer to the idea that the only feasible way out to survive as a Kurd was through an armed struggle. Hopes beginning with the HEP's attempts to find a pacific solution to the Kurdish question,

<sup>205</sup> In March 1994, the National Grand Assembly voted in favor of removing the parliamentary immunity of seven members of parliament, Leyla Zana, Mahmut Alınak, Hatip Dicle, Orhan Doğan, Selim Sadak, Sırrı Sakık and Ahmet Türk, all arrested and taken to court with allegations against the unity of the state and sentenced accordingly. Bozarslan suggests there are certain indicators that voters of this legal opposition correspond to those who form the legitimizing bases of the PKK, as some former fighters later participated in this *legal wing* of the struggle, while some others, like Zübeyr Aydar, a former MP of the DEP, have been involved in the PKK-related political activities in the European diaspora (2009: 82).

relying on Turkey's left-wing sectors as well as the president of the period, Turgut Özal<sup>206</sup>, were later crushed by members of both parties of the conflict (Bozarslan 2009: 81-82). Although bans on political parties and activities are rarely mentioned (K-II/01), other forms of political involvement such as protests against extrajudicial killings of leading Kurdish figures like Vedat Aydın (K-II/01, 08), hunger strikes (K-II/01, 03), participation in youth and student organizations (K-II/07, 08, 09, 11) and the state's response towards them are pointed out among second-generation individuals.

The period of short-lived political parties continued through the 1990s with constant judicial and police interventions. Increasing the use of repressive force via institutional mechanisms on civil politics in this period was coherently coordinated with similar tactics in the military realm, transforming the armed conflict between the state and the guerrilla into a low-intensity war. New approaches adopted by both sides extended the war in quantitative and qualitative terms and widened the social reach of the conflict, provoking further fragmentations in Kurdish society.

### **7.2.2. The involvement of new actors and the expansion of the Kurdish conflict**

The increasing expansion and military capacity of the PKK urged the state to revise its policies on the Kurdish question. Considering this question as a result of underdevelopment of the 'south-east' allegedly used by outsiders for their interests rather than a struggle for national identity, Turkish authorities continued to employ repressive methods in the region through emergency rule applied by regional governors with extraordinary competencies (Marcus 2007: 129-130). Security-oriented measures through these governors favored the state's short-term benefits against the guerrilla in military terms; however, they also provoked unprecedented social transformations that would affect the course of the conflict in the medium and long term.

Increasing, and unexpected even for the party itself, public support for the PKK, especially in key provinces where the enlistment of recruits reached its highest peak in this period, was significant evidence that the state began gradually losing its already-problematic legitimacy against an organized group which claimed to represent Kurds. Mass support towards the guerrilla and a sense of solidarity and respect by the civilian population to those who joined the 'popular army of Kurds' constituted strong qualitative evidence to support this claim:

"I joined [*the guerrilla*] alone. I went to Cizre, the only one from the village was me. A *dolmuş* [*minibus*] from a neighboring village passed by. The driver saw me, and even though he didn't know me in person, he stared at

---

<sup>206</sup> Özal's prudent efforts to establish indirect contacts with Öcalan via two of the most prominent leaders of southern Kurdistan, Mesud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, as well as HEP parliamentarians and Kemal Burkay as representatives of Kurdish legal movements, are considered brave efforts for the period (Aydın & Taşkın 2017: 396). Nevertheless, the massacre of unarmed Turkish soldiers, allegedly ordered by high-ranking PKK commander Şemdin Sakık (alias *Parmaksız Zeki*), an action recognized by the PKK as one of the crimes of those 'liquidationist cadres' who were deliberately acting in complete discrepancy with the *Apocu* doctrine and imposed their own misguided understanding and standards (Karayılan 2014: 330-332), as well as Özal's sudden and unexpected death led the relative period of distension towards years of total war.

me, astonished, a young girl. Anyone going to the town normally carries a *turik* [saddlebag] in their hand; I was all alone, carrying nothing. He asked me where I was going, and I replied, 'I'm going to Cizre'. He asked nothing else; I got on. He asked, 'Ok, where will you get off?' I indicated to him; he stopped there to drop me off; I asked, 'how much?', and he said, 'I don't want money.' Believe me, I never forget it. Sure, he understood; of course, he did. Because it wasn't only our village, but hundreds of people joined the guerrilla from each village in Botan. [...] [They joined] as if they were doing military service. They were filling minibuses to send them to Cudi [mountain], some forty, fifty people. We departed to Cudi forty people from Cizre, forty people! I stayed five days in Cizre, some seven female comrades came over, they gathered us, and forty people from Cizre by buses, by cars, by taxis, we ran through those security points, one after the other, we went up to Cudi, forty people!" (K-II/05)

Along with the mass participation of young and idealist recruits<sup>207</sup> who were in search of 'doing something', another indicator that illustrated the increase in popular support for the PKK was the way that the rural civilian population backed the guerrillas with logistic and material means. During the early 1990s, in some rural regions, PKK guerrillas had an almost total commitment and support from villagers, whereas, in some other remote areas (like Ardahan, K-II/04), they had hardly any presence and support. The interview with a former PKK commander, the late Sait Çürükkaya (alias *Dr. Süleyman*), provides important qualitative data regarding the support for the guerrilla in the Amed region:

"We lived under a tent that covered a sort of rocky outcropping. [...] We had a small toilet outside, and there was one village not too far away with 120 houses. Every day, a different house would prepare food supplies for us." (Interview quoted from Marcus 2007: 171)

Nevertheless, these remarkable developments in rural Kurdistan also brought an additional cost for the guerrilla forces and those villagers who supported them: Physical violence by the state under the conditions of martial law included the evacuation of civilians from rural Kurdistan. It forced migrations towards Kurdish towns as well as western Turkish cities and, more dramatically, the burning of their villages cut the logistic support that the guerrilla enjoyed. These practices damaged the PKK's military and logistic capacity and its social reputation as the 'popular army of Kurds' due to a lack of military capacity to intervene against such violent performances by the 'enemy'. K-II/03, who was serving as an active guerrilla then in Lice, where the evacuation and burning of villages were carried out on a large scale, criticizes their position in the face of state violence:

"What Tansu Çiller and Doğan Güreş<sup>208</sup> did was to finish this, and they did so. They indeed did. They partially succeeded too. One of the reasons that they succeeded was us; we couldn't play our role well, and, as a result, they became successful. [Do you mean in the military sense?] Yes, in both political and military sense. For example, when they came up with the evacuation of villages, we were to come up with measures to prevent the evacuation of villages, and we failed. When they came up with burning down villages, we were to come up with an idea to prevent the villages from being burnt down, and we failed. Because all these people trusted us, all people believed in us, all people helped us, and we were to protect them at any cost. However, what was it that we did? We watched them desperately through binoculars. Alternatively, we could go and fight to the death, and we'd die there too. We couldn't develop an alternative to the system, as we couldn't do so; this process was prolonged like this." (K-II/03)

---

<sup>207</sup> As other individuals (K-II/03, 07, 10, 11, 12) indicate, mass enlistment in guerrilla was a commonly observed phenomenon in this period, both from Kurdish towns as well as western Turkey. Quantitative data presented by Marcus shows that in the rural areas of Amed province, the number of PKK guerrillas increased around five-fold within a year in 1992 and the overall number of guerrillas reached around 10,000 along with some 60,000 armed urban militias (2007: 171-180).

<sup>208</sup> Prime Minister and Chief of Staff of Turkey in this period.

Another key factor that provoked the spread of violence was the introduction of the *Korucu* (Village Guard) system. Village Guards were a paramilitary structure financed and organized by the state in close cooperation with influential regional Kurdish chieftains who possessed thousands of armed men.<sup>209</sup> Having put the village guard system into practice in mid-1985, the Turkish government showed the first signs of opting for a military solution backed by the creation of local governments during the state of emergency in 1987 and security zones in the early 1990s (Kutschera 1997: 257-258).

Nevertheless, while the state played a fundamental role in the fragmentation of Kurds, the PKK also further deepened this enmity by escalating violence through raids to those villages where the *korucus* and their families resided. Many significant incidents investigated by different researchers (N.A. Özcan 1999: 151; Marcus 2007: 114-115) noted that the hostile attitude of guerrilla forces towards those local tribes and villages contributed to the strategic fragmentation that the state aimed for and, therefore, rigidly divided Kurdish society into two main poles, materializing into intra-ethnic rivalries. While most militants refer to these incidents as ‘individual errors which do not represent the party philosophy’, those who left the organization in the 1999-2004 period provide more detailed examples of these wrongdoings:

“When there were assaults carried out against *korucu* villages in Botan, the person who witnessed the incident of a child thrown into a tandoori told me this story laughingly. I witnessed that he was comically telling this story. What kind of mood is this? How come someone does something like this? These were the things we lived through, and I’d say, ‘I cannot do this’, not for quids! [*What’s the reason behind such attitudes?*] I cannot make any sense out of this. For example, there were the İkiyaka and Üzümlü assaults; such actions were explained by holding MİT<sup>210</sup> accountable, but those were actions carried out by the PKK. -You can take these things off the record if you like- Violence in the case of village guards isn’t addressed towards an outsider; they [*guards*] are part of your people, and another group who has committed serious crimes against you assigns them. Some villagers, later on, became village guards against us in significant numbers. Some tribes, like the *Jirki* tribe, are mentioned. They’re those tribes that got radicalized within that atmosphere of mutual violence.” (K-II/11)

The rapid expansion of the *korucu* system throughout the 1990s created a challenge for the PKK to further consolidate its authority in Kurdistan.<sup>211</sup> The military strategy pursued by the state was to seek the prevention the guerrilla units from establishing political and social contact with the native population and, simultaneously, urge the latter to make a decision between joining paramilitary groups backed by the state or leave their living space (Jongerden 2010: 80). As the PKK was unable to prevent

---

<sup>209</sup> Unlike claims by the PKK in its latest political program that the tribal-feudal system is eliminated (PKK 2000: 48), A. K. Özcan points out the tribal structure continues to be a social, political, and economic reality of Kurdish society despite transformations during the past two decades (2006: 143 - 144). The scholar bases his argument on the numbers of guerrilla fighters collected during 20 years by the PKK, allegedly around 20,000, which is contrasted with the state’s ability to recruit 60,000 *official* village guards within just a couple of months in 1986. While the argument brought about by Özcan is worth considering in quantitative terms, it is difficult to evaluate as the sole empiric indicator since the recruitment opportunities available for the PKK and the state were (and are) in no way similar in terms of resource mobilization capabilities.

<sup>210</sup> Acronym for *Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı* (National Intelligence Organization), the Turkish state intelligence service.

<sup>211</sup> The Village Guard System as a long-term structure constitutes a multifaceted sociological research topic, which extends far beyond the limits of this study. For a comprehensive qualitative field study on the emergence and development of the Village Guards, carried out by DİSA (Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research), see Özar, Ş., Uçarlar, N., Aytar, O. (2013) *The Village Guard System*, (Trans. Sedef Çakmak), Diyarbakır (Amed): DİSA.



the Turkish army from evacuating and burning down the villages, the consequence was in the form of massive demographic changes due to migrations from rural to urban Kurdish towns and cities. These developments led Turkey's Kurdish conflict to further expand by polarizing the parties involved.

### **7.3. Motivations, justifications, and mechanisms of the armed struggle**

#### **7.3.1. The profile of second-generation PKK militants**

One of the attention-grabbing characteristics of the participation in the PKK in this period is the increasing number of militants from urban backgrounds with a significant level of formal education. This profile appears to have triggered an already existing urban-rural intra-party conflict in the early 1990s, which would lead to more dramatic consequences for the PKK. *K-II/08*, an Alevi Kurd and university drop-out born in the Turkish capital of Ankara, affirms the sharp difference and intra-party conflict between those who had rural and urban backgrounds in the 1990s. He explains this challenge when asked whether he has ever regretted his militancy trajectory:

“Well... [*thinking*] Let's not say 'regret', but there occurred many things which I say, 'this shouldn't have happened'. [*Could you give an example of those things you find wrong?*] There were executions that I found wrong, executions that I couldn't accept. There were many of them; these happened. There were extrajudicial executions. I couldn't accept them; I wasn't able to digest them. Or, let's say, there were autonomous lives in that period. Sometimes commanders lived differently. [*Do you mean Provincial Commanders?*] Yes. For example, today, it's not like that. Why? Because at that time, traditionalism was imperative. Everyone stuck in the Turkish [*style*] commandership that they perceived [*laughing*]! Because there was nothing else. [...] There were so many problems if you try to understand those periods because the party wasn't in control over everywhere. As I've said, the northern areas were being commanded by individuals, and they commanded as much as they understood the party. Some of them were as tough as Stalin! [*laughing*]” (*K-II/08*, male, Ankara, 44)

Most of those cadres referred to in the above-quoted interview belong to leading figures who joined the guerrilla during the 1980s and ascended to high-ranking positions. Labeling them as 'conspirator cadres' poisoned with the 'ambition for power', top PKK commander Karayılan indicates that such figures as Parmaksız Zeki (Şemdin Sakık), Ferhat (Osman Öcalan), and Terzi Cemal had committed serious wrongdoings which considerably affected the PKK's social and political reputation (2014: 218-219, 229).<sup>212</sup> As being the official perspective of the PKK, quite coherently, this interpretation is widely adopted by all cadres from all three generations.

---

<sup>212</sup> In-party executions and crimes committed by such individuals are also included in the IV Party Congress of the PKK, which are declared in different volumes of the PKK's official publication (For the cases of Kör Cemal, Şehmuz, Metin, and Hogır who are defined as part of a 'feudal-conspiratory liquidationist elements' see Serxwebûn, June 1991, N°114: 10-12; for details also see Öcalan, A. [1993] *IV. Kongre Politik Raporu*, Istanbul: Zagros, p. 170). Some sources also indicate that the ARGK's (Kurdistan People's Liberation Army) 'Compulsory Military Service Law' based on the forced recruitment of young Kurds (White 2000: 197) was also among those repressive practices strongly disapproved by Kurdish families whose relatives had been subject to the law. When asked about such practices during interviews (*K-II/02*, 03, 07), they were also characterized as deliberate acts of 'betrayal' implemented by 'misguided/spies' within the PKK in that period.

### 7.3.2. Justifications for the use of arms among second-generation cadres

As for the motivations through which individuals justify their involvement in the armed struggle within the PKK, one finds they are closely related to the value expectations and value capabilities in the given period. When explanations concerning motivations and justifications of engagement in the armed struggle are analyzed, the following patterns come to the forefront:

Motivations Interviewees	Ethnic survival, Self-defense	Effectiveness of responsive violence vs. state violence.	Liberty, liberation, independence	Social support/reputati on of the PKK	Historical references, experiences	Lack of alternatives	Inequalities, lack of opportunities	Social questions: Gender, feuds, etc.	Participation and martyrdom of social surroundings
K-II/01	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
K-II/02	✓	✓		✓		✓			
K-II/03	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
K-II/04		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
K-II/05	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
K-II/06	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
K-II/07	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
K-II/08	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
K-II/09	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
K-II/10	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	
K-II/11	✓	✓					✓	✓	
K-II/12	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

When the above-presented considered, the most notable motivation in the process of decision-making appears to be violence (both physical and symbolic) exercised by the ‘colonial apparatus’ and the absolute need for self-defense for Kurdish ethnic survival. The fact that other potential alternatives and democratic mechanisms to the armed struggle (legal actors or mechanisms, civil society initiatives, e.g.) were not available comes as another decisive motivating factor for resorting to violent repertoires. When analyzing these variables, therefore, it is more convenient to take a multi-dimensional perspective instead of attempting to separate these elements.

Historical experiences socially reproduced as cultural traumas that Kurdish people have been dealing with throughout ‘their history’ are also (K-II/01, 03, 05, 07, 09, 12) mentioned to exemplify the need for the use of force in order to assure the ethnic survival. Similarly, most individuals (K-II/01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 10, 12) also refer to the PKK’s rising legitimacy among *yurtsever* sectors, first, in rural areas through the 1980s, and subsequently expanding towards urban environments in the early 1990s, and the image that the organization means for the destiny of Kurds. As both positions are closely related to the primary concern of the need for self-defense, they arise as essential elements to be analyzed along with this fundamental question.

#### a. Violence as a means of annihilation versus violence for self-defense

In this generation, violence is still considered a valuable tool to prevent cultural extermination through physical and symbolic violent practices implemented by the ‘enemy’, considered a synonym for denial and death. A decade after the official proclamation of the PKK, the relation between value expectations

and value cost among second-generation cadres remained unchanged; these second-generation cadres were subjected to indiscriminate repressive measures following the 1980 coup in and outside of Kurdistan through their socialization processes. The lack of alternatives to resorting to political violence drove the Kurds to armed violence, considered the only feasible solution:

“...the emergence of the PKK and its search for a solution through political means have always been responded to by annihilation, and the primary objective of the September 1980 coup was to snuff out the PKK movement. In the presence of a reality that is dedicated to destroying you with all its might, ready to use any sort of violence, you have no alternative but to defend yourself by taking up arms and fighting. [...] Under those conditions, in the face of a reality of the state, which doesn't offer you the right to live, the most fundamental method of self-defense for you is to take shelter in the mountain and take up arms. There's nothing beyond this; there is no alternative.” (K-II/06)

The survival instinct of Kurds as a people, according to the reality objectified by the PKK, is to withdrawal to the mountain, which is frequently depicted as an all-time safe haven against any external threats as well as a unique place in order to establish and protect what is viewed as the *best* and *genuine* way of life for Kurds following Kurdish historiography formulated by Öcalan:

“In the vocabulary of Kurds, in their subconscious, there's always a look towards the mountain. For three thousand years, let's get back to the beginning of humanity, civilization, to Gutis, who are considered Kurds; from then up until today, Kurds have always been interested in the mountain. The peoples surrounding Kurds consider them 'Mountain People', and Kurds too always organize themselves according to the mountain. Pay attention, all old villages are located on the mountain slopes, at the steepest points of the mountain. They're always in a position to watch their backs; they always want to secure their back. The mountain is their inhabitancy; they know well that the only place where they can hide, cover themselves, or trust is the mountain. Therefore, among the stories in Kurdish *dengbej* [traditional storytellings], in any family and any house, this is highlighted; no matter discreetly or not, this is narrated. All children have questions in their childhood, and there are always stories to tell them about this.” (K-II/03)

Uninterrupted violence exercised on any form of cultural products related to the Kurdish symbolic universe consolidated the perception of individuals regarding the annihilation of Kurds. The conviction that there were no alternatives was therefore usually supported by both their own generational experience of being subjected to symbolic or physical violence as well as the transmitted experiences by previous generations. Both ongoing repressions and collective traumas experienced in the past by elder generations convinced the individuals of the need for possessing an organized movement with the military capacity to make Kurds recover the authentic identity from which they had been alienated:

“In my childhood, I remember very well songs by *dengbejs* that had no political content whatsoever. You even couldn't listen to *dengbej* songs freely; they were prohibited. So, how do you think someone prohibiting all that you have will recognize you? It's only possible through an organization. Arms are never our preference; they have never been, neither today; however, it's mandatory, the obligation pushes you towards arms because there's no other way. They don't put up with your existence. [...] They used to say '*kart-kurt*'<sup>213</sup> for Kurds, you know the story. For this reason, the Kurds are fragmented, unconscious, away from their own identity, and there is a need for an organization that could manage to make the Kurd recover itself. During that organizational

---

<sup>213</sup> A form of denial of the Kurdish identity that reverberates throughout Turkish nationalist sectors. The claim argues that as 'mountain Turks' walk on the snow, their feet make a sound that sounds like 'kart-kurt', and from that stems the term 'Kurd'.

process, when I was in the ERNK<sup>214</sup>, some elders were saying, 'Come on! You're just kids! Sheikh Said couldn't do anything; what would you be able to do?' There was such distrust. It wasn't easy to inject trust into Kurds with that much lack of trust in themselves, so dispersed and fragmented. Without bringing down the police stations that the Kurds possess in their mind, it was impossible to take the Kurds towards the right path." (K-II/09)

In this interpretation of the reality, the historical turning point in the destiny of Kurds is at the hands of a pioneering avant-garde actor with strong leadership that confronts the physical and symbolic violence implemented on the homeland that the Kurdish *yurtsevers* considered occupied. In the early 1990s, the PKK's fame as the armed forces of the Kurdish national liberation had not yet reached a significant level; however, mythical depictions spreading around, from one person or family to another, began among Kurds in this period. The stance and response by the PKK against the state's increasing repression in people's minds took a more acute form in this period, urging them to choose one of the conflictive sides:

"There was repression in Kurdistan; there was torture. When you said 'I'm a Kurd', they'd either imprisoned you or kill you. You could be part of society by refusing your Kurdishness, or you'd fight for this and, if necessary, you'd become a martyr or become a veteran, or become imprisoned, but you'd nonetheless become a part of this struggle. When the conditions of participation became apparent, it was due to the realities based on this ground. We participated on this basis too." (K-II/01)

Some second-generation cadres (K-II/02, 05) also underline the role of arms in the traditional Kurdish way of life as a medium frequently resorted to in order to deal with conflictive situations. If the mountain was logistically crucial for the ethnic survival of Kurds, arms were equally important in their rebellion and resistance to the authority, as observed in epic stories based on resistance against powerful *aghas* and tribes.<sup>215</sup> Although its ideology and political objectives had not yet been fully understood among ordinary Kurds, the PKK's ongoing struggle against both the state and what was considered the state's local extensions in Kurdistan managed to draw people's attention:

"In early times, to be honest, we didn't fully understand what the PKK was. We didn't know what the ideas of *Önderlik* were about. However, our mothers were talking about it on their way to the fountain, and I eavesdropped on them. They were saying, 'apparently, there's someone, his name's Apo, and he says, «if Kurdistan becomes free, all people will be equal». Nobody will discriminate, saying you're poor or you're rich. There won't be conflicts based on the land property anymore. Nobody will ever tell you, «this is my village; get the hell out of here»'. That's how women were talking about it. After that, comrades began to come down to villages and towns. For example, during *Newroz*, we went to Cizre together by bus and stayed there for a month. The massacre took place then. We were hiding behind walls to protect ourselves from the bullets. They killed many people. After that *Newroz*, we were out; we participated in all demonstrations along with the guerrillas. Once we went to Zap, and we encountered comrade Sozdar Avesta. She made a speech which I never forget, 'Comrades; we call all our people to join the party lines', she concluded. Actually, after a short while, we all joined the PKK." (K-II/10, female, Nusaybin, 42)

The enemy, against which the PKK had declared a long-term war, however, was far more potent than the traditional local authoritarian actors and had already shown its strong hand, striking fear and

---

<sup>214</sup> *Eniya Rizgariya Netewa Kurdistan* (The National Liberation Front of Kurdistan) was founded in March 1985 in order to mobilize the masses in northern Kurdistan as well as carry out activities in Europe.

<sup>215</sup> For a collection of traditional epic stories, see Gündoğar, S. (2015) *Kürt Masalları*, Istanbul: Evrensel.

anxiety in Kurdish collective memory. The PKK's actions against the 'occupier' starting 15 August 1984 damaged the invincibility of the state. While older generations who experienced past traumas were mostly skeptical about taking up arms against the state, practical actions taken by the PKK encouraged those young Kurds who felt intensely irritated by the repression. A belief in the myth of the state's invincibility and another one in the PKK's rebellion and determination followed an inversely proportional path:

"In that environment, among all other organizations which cowered, it was the PKK who took the initiative and shined. And despite all of its mistakes, with its first, second, third, and fourth actions, the PKK became a heroic organization. I'm someone who left the organization because of its mistakes, but, even so, it built up such a feeling inside of me as well as in all other Kurds like me: 'the state may be too powerful, but now we too have power. If we want, we can do it!' It was new rampancy for Kurds indeed. Because Kurds have always had a bleeding wound, even looking back only in the last hundred years. It's a society that experienced a massacre once every 20 or 30 years; it's such a periodical thing. Let's keep their more previous past aside." (K-II/12)

"We were saying 'if the state were to be overthrown, it's only possible through arms'. There was an idea like 'if the state has arms, you must have arms too; if you struggle against the state, if it oppresses you with its arms, police, soldiers, gendarmerie, you can [only] defend yourself with arms the same way'." (K-II/02)

These factors were mostly related to the broad political spectrum, which evolved into more violent encounters between the two principal conflicting sides, eventually becoming a low-intensity war (Özçelik 2006). Testimonies by PKK members illustrate that political, social, and economic conditions of everyday life were transformed as a result of these developments. Another consequence of these, commonly described by interviewees along with other catalyzing factors, was that they drove the individual towards the instrumental use of arms.

*b. Social mechanisms and motivations for affiliation*

The life-history analysis shows that the general state of fear and intimidation on the one hand and anxiety and anger on the other constitute two parallel emotional reactions. Although it is quite challenging to graph out the fear-intimidation and anxiety-anger axis through a line, one can argue that responsive group violence tends to emerge out of the latter, targeting the source of the former. What must be taken into consideration at this point is that there are also plenty of period effects shaping a variety of social mechanisms through which individuals produce (and reproduce) normative and utilitarian justifications for taking up arms.

Throughout the 1990s, indiscriminate violence by the state frequently took place on specific dates, such as *Newroz* celebrations (which were illegal at the time) or the commemoration of the 15 August, which came to be symbolically significant elements in the Kurdish national universe. These converted into a social mechanism of nationalist reproduction based on the idea of resistance

(Hirschler 2001: 153).<sup>216</sup> As affirmed by most second-generation PKK members (K-II/02, 03, 04, 07, 09, 10, 11, 12), they or individuals from their primary social circles had been subjected to violent practices for having attempted to celebrate these events. These experiences played a significant role in making them question their own national identity and status as unequal citizens. A relevant experience described by K-II/04 constitutes one of the most remarkable examples among others:

“There was a graffiti incident which we didn’t know anything about, but they blamed and detained us. It took place not only in the city center but in villages too. I don’t remember well whether it was something related to *Newroz*, but it was an important day like that. It was wintertime because they dragged us in the snow. We were still children, high school students, 17 individuals in total. That day was probably a turning point for me; you know, people go to Mecca for peregrination, it was like that for me. Until that moment, I didn’t know what an organization was, how it was established, how it was managed. There was only a distant name called Apo, a legend, an organization consisting of three letters, PKK, which we didn’t even know what it stood for; we were only sympathetic as it was a synonym for rebellion. That day, they beat us up while entering the gendarmerie station. [...] Like ‘So, you’ll found independent Kurdistan, in such a miserable state, with your knee-high height?’ It was the first time I heard the expression ‘independent Kurdistan’! That night I didn’t sleep all night long; I was up until the early morning; I kept thinking, ‘What’s this issue about? Why is it like this? Why do other people have a state, and we don’t? Why is this language banned?’ I tried to find the reasons and couldn’t find an answer. For me, it was the first rebellion.” (K-II/04)

Some others underline the stigma of leftism or Alevism for the same source of violent experiences instead of specifying their Kurdish identity. Possession of multiple disadvantaged identities, as observed among the previous generation cadres, constituted more possibilities for being subjected to political repression and social discrimination. The question of intersectionality, in this sense, augmented the triggering effects that motivated young idealistic individuals. K-II/11, a native Alevi from Varto who grew up in Adapazarı near Istanbul, describes how multiple identities he possessed eventually drove him to affiliate himself to the PKK at a certain point in his life-course:

“...you already live with lots of identities of the ‘other’. For example, I grew up in Adapazarı, there in Adapazarı, we were Kurds on the one hand, and we were also Alevis on the other, that’s to say, we all had lots of identities of ‘other’, and these identities caused constant pressure on us in society. You feel under constant pressure in the presence of such conditions, and you look for a way out of this [*situation*]. Also, when I joined [*the guerrilla*], I was 18 years old. Any 18-year-old person is inclined to save the entire world alone; there was also the impact of those years, so to say. However, both that social situation we experienced, repression, the bare state violence on Kurds, as well as the state of being inclined towards leftist ideas in my family, and a quest for yourself based on such ideas push you to look for various ways. That’s the reason that I joined, if I’m to summarize.” (K-II/11)

Intersectionality became more evident –as it was initially developed as a theoretical approach (Crenshaw 1991)- when related to gender within the context of the struggle of Kurdish women. Apart from the state, Öcalan’s call for the struggle was also addressed towards Kurdish patriarchal hegemony on Kurdish women. The question of gender (in)equality and the growing expansion of the PKK, along

---

<sup>216</sup> *Newroz* is a festival celebrated in the ancient Zoroastrian culture of Persia to bring man and nature together at the beginning of each spring in a universally inclusive context rather than as a national symbolic property (Shariati 1986: 236-237). Within the context of the Kurdish conflict, however, *Newroz* is constructed upon the legend of *Kawa* (Kaveh the Blacksmith), a mythical national hero who defeated an Assyrian King and, consequently, liberated Meds, considered the ancestor of Kurds. This legend, accepted among Kurds as a constituting myth (Bozarslan 2002: 843) is also adopted by the modern Kurdish movement, making *Newroz* an ethno-symbolic tool through the idea of resistance against the foreign ruler.

with the spread of Öcalan's woman liberation doctrine from the 1990s, constituted a significant factor that made the PKK's human capital increase remarkably throughout the decade:

"I went there with the goal of an independent Kurdistan. Besides, the organization which I joined for an independent Kurdistan was also promising the liberation of women. For me, both reasons were quite important. An organization that put both things together in the same front, it was my decision, and I went there with the idea that I'd prove myself in both things and, besides, I'd reveal my personality and my own identity. [...] I had a Kurdish identity, which was excluded and always subjected to violence, but, besides, I was also a woman who directly felt the position of women subject to inequality, injustice, and all sorts of violence in society, and I empathized with them. Even though I didn't have personal experience in that period, I could see and feel what all women - whom I was part of- were living through. That's to say, in my choice, it was quite decisive too. I mean, double inequality, double injustice, and double violence were the general motives that prompted me more towards such a path." (K-II/12)

In a society based on close kinship relations, the more participation in militancy affairs there was, and the more severe violence from the state got on large family members, the more it provoked a sense of resistance among other family members towards the state. This situation was most clearly observed in the previously-explained *korucu* system. K-II/10, from a village near Nusaybin, a district of Mardin bordering Syrian Kurdistan, explains how the PKK's influence spread in the region due to the state's repression and how the imposition of the Village Guard system was not fully functional among the immediate social surroundings of those who joined the guerrilla:

"Nobody knew the PKK before, but once they got to know them, all villages around us became *yurtsever*. There was a lot of participation [*in the guerrilla*]. Maybe you've heard that participation from the Mardin region was like a river. As the participation was at such a high level, the enemy increased pressure by settling in villages and towns. The state aimed to convert people into *korucu*; they wanted to convert all family members of those who joined the PKK into village guards against the PKK. Those who were *yurtsever* abandoned their villages; they resisted, but some became village guards. My father came up here to Qandil, and we talked. The state had told him that either he would become a village guard or his house would be burnt down. He said, 'I won't use arms against my own daughter. I'll leave the village!' He went to Silopi, but he didn't become a village guard." (K-II/10)

Factors mentioned above stand out concerning political socialization processes involving the new generation that aided the expansion of the PKK's political and social influence. Throughout the 1990s, this was best reflected in massive enlistments of Kurdish youth in the guerrilla from both Turkey's Kurdistan as well as the suburbs of western Turkish cities with predominantly Kurdish populations. As a result of further geographic expansion and intensification of violent confrontations, the Kurdish conflict went beyond the characteristics of rural guerrilla warfare. By that time, it also occupied a significant part of urban daily life and politics in Turkey's Kurdistan.

#### *The serhildan process and mass urban mobilization*

One of the most remarkable indicators demonstrating the PKK's involvement and organization in urbanized areas (towns and cities) where national consciousness and reaction against the state's legitimacy intertwined as well as its mobilization capability was the socio-political phenomenon of *serhildans* (massive popular uprisings). With this new phase, the PKK's war against the state made its entry into cities (Marcus 2007: 142), becoming the most rebellious, massive, and widespread

movement bearing the flag of Kurdishness since the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Kurdish revolts.<sup>217</sup> Once again, strongholds of Kurdish nationalism and resistance such as Botan (Şırnak and Cizre), Mardin (Nusaybin, İdil, Midyat, Bismil, Savur, and Kurtalan), Garzan (Sason, Kozluk, and Mutki), and the capital of Diyarbakır were home to *serhıldan* activities and popular resistance (N.A. Özcan 1999: 136-150).<sup>218</sup>

A considerable amount of the second generation of PKK cadres (K-II/02, 03, 04, 05, 07, 09, 10) refer to 'the period of *serhıldans*' as a distinguished socio-political atmosphere that affected the trajectory of the struggle in Kurdish towns and cities. Notwithstanding, these widespread protests, which provoked extreme tension and violent urban clashes with state forces, were also the result of extreme repression by the state against PKK cadres and their social environment. This reaction was best observed during funeral ceremonies held for fallen PKK guerrillas, which convert *serhıldans* into a rapidly growing vicious circle of violence. PKK commander Karayılan explains how *serhıldans* arose as a generation style and turned out to be a social mechanism which auto-reproduced the spiral of violence due to extreme repression by the state security forces:

"In this period, the firm stance of people in Nusaybin and Cizre provoked the emergence of the *serhıldan* style, a new form of struggle due to constant martyrizations. Especially in Cizre, as a result of attacks by the state against each *serhıldan* march, some people lost their lives; and the funerals of those who were martyred each time turned out to be a new *serhıldan*. This way, an uninterrupted period of struggle among people got underway." (Karayılan 2014: 204)

As observed in the case of the PKK's first-generation 'prominent martyrs', mythicizing those individuals who were killed while fighting against the state continued in this subsequent generation. *Serhıldans* organized in the name of new potentially heroic figures, whose actions mostly coincided with the reconstruction of the *Newroz* myth within the historiography of the PKK, in this sense, functioned as a mechanism for mythicization (Güneş 2015: 70-71). Unlike first-generation individuals, those cadres mainly consisted of women guerrilla fighters. The mythicization of female guerrilla martyrs as *goddesses* (Çağlayan 2007: 112-113) among PKK cadres coincided with a period during which the number of women began to increase in the guerrilla. Heroic actions attributed to such female cadres

---

<sup>217</sup> *Serhıldans* are a new form of non-tribal mass participation in a modern national sense as a result of the unprecedented growth of a secular political organization (A.K. Özcan 2006: 201-202). While some experts agree that *serhıldans* are the most significant form of protest against the state authority, indicating the rapid increase of the PKK's social legitimacy (Laizer 1996: 90; Marcus 2007: 143), there lacks a comprehensive scholarly work focusing on the social grounds which make such mobilizations possible soon after the PKK's first offensive. As will be observed here, certain social variables seem to have played a triggering role in the emergence of those movements; however, further research on this specific socio-political phenomenon is required in order to better comprehend the social roots of *serhıldans* through a systematic analysis.

<sup>218</sup> These popular protests against state repression in particular times (e.g., the *Newroz* holiday and the 15 August offensive anniversary) are first referred to as "*Kürt intifadası*" (Kurdish uprising) in PKK publications and soon called *serhıldan* (see Serxwebûn, March 1990, N° 99 & April 1990, N° 100, August 1990, N° 104). The impact and future provisions of *serhıldans* are also pronounced by Öcalan as "the pace forward towards popular national uprising" (Serxwebûn, Nov. 1990, N° 107: 4).



as Azime, Zekiye, and Berivan had two fundamental functions: First of all, the action they took had a direct effect on the decision-making process of potential cadres, both men and women:<sup>219</sup>

“I got to know the movement in 1990; it was the incident of self-immolation carried out by the comrade Zekiye on the historical walls surrounding Diyarbakır. With this action by comrade Zekiye during *Newroz* in 1990, I began to get to know the movement, finding out about it, acquainting myself with it. The year 1990 was also the year I graduated from high school. I’d did the university entrance exam. I received the results of the exam in 1991; I’d been entitled to study at *Siyasal*<sup>220</sup>, I didn’t register, I preferred to go to the mountain.” (K-II/02)

The second function involved the mythicization of those actions and individuals as the symbols of heroic stances against the enemy that served as a vital element in building up the narrative of the ongoing Kurdish struggle, attracting the attention of upcoming generations:

“Berivan had been martyred towards the 1990s. The whole agenda then was full of PKK; it was all about Berivan’s martyrdom, *serhildans* in Nusaybin, and Cizre, which later spread throughout Kurdistan. It was also about Comrade Ayten, who was martyred in Bagok in 88-89. We all grew up with these incidents. [...] The *serhildan* was launched in Koser after the martyrdom of comrade Kamuran. It was a small one. Heval Kamuran and eight other comrades were martyred; people went there and brought the corpses back for the first time. The state didn’t allow them to do it, which triggered a little *serhildan*. Then in Nusaybin, and then in Cizre, but the one in Cizre was big. How did the Cizre *serhildan* begin? Heval Berivan was martyred in January of 1989, if I’m not wrong. People wanted to visit heval Berivan’s grave in the *Newroz* of 1990, and they rallied. The state intervened against this rally, then the *serhildan* erupted. Then to Nusaybin, Amed, Serhad, and after that, the *serhildan* spread all over Kurdistan. I was around 13-14 years old then; there were *serhildans* everywhere in Kurdistan.” (K-II/05)

The PKK’s entry into towns and cities also opened new social spaces in organizational terms where it became possible to address a considerable amount of people. Limited political and civil society activities made the PKK cadres, now actively working in urban centers, seek any possible social event apart from national holidays and commemoration days such as the previously-mentioned *Newroz* or 15 August anniversary.<sup>221</sup> In Kurdistan, even the least political gatherings began to acquire a political character to encourage urban Kurds to mobilize and support the PKK, helping them to overcome the collective memory on the image of the state:

“What were the grounds for this at that time? It was weddings, for example. It was an essential program to convert weddings into a political sphere. How? They’re made by playing *saz* in the region; so, you sing a few political songs, a few individuals stand up and join the *halay*<sup>222</sup> and make the victory sign, you see that it catches everyone’s attention, and they repeat what they see. Then some people ask what it’s about, you explain it to

---

<sup>219</sup> Testimonies show that heroic actions and subsequent *martyrdom* of Kurdish female guerrillas are interpreted by Kurdish men in this period as a sign of dedication and devotion to a ‘man’s job’ in an extremely patriarchal society. The fact that ‘even’ women sacrifice themselves ‘obliges’ men to join the PKK in accordance with the codes of patriarchic hegemony. Women, on the other hand, are motivated to fight against this male-dominant mentality that constantly degrades them. The fact that their fellow female comrades take part in the armed struggle of their free will and the consideration of their martyrdom as a heroic act illustrates that women are also capable of accomplishing the same duties expected from men.

<sup>220</sup> Referring to the popular denomination for the prestigious Faculty of Political Sciences of Ankara University.

<sup>221</sup> Created as an armed unit in this period, whose members lived a normal life but were effective in towns and cities, militias (*milis*) also took charge of organizing ‘pro-martyr’ demonstrations (N.A. Özcan 1999: 208-213). Militias sent to western Turkey as civilian activists also played a paramount role in recruiting of new cadres from 1986 onwards (Marcus 2007: 131). Despite the lack of any explicit reference among individuals to the role that urban militias played in the organization and orchestration of *serhildans*, their active role of social intervention in urban spaces is emphasized by the PKK leadership. See Öcalan, A. (1993) *PKK IV. Kongresine Sunulan Politik Rapor*, Istanbul: Zagros; also see Serxwebûn, January 1991, N° 109.

<sup>222</sup> A sort of Kurdish folk dance which is frequently performed during special social and cultural events. As an important symbol of Kurdish national identity, the *halay* is also performed during political events held by *yurtsever* circles.

them. The PKK already had a positive image since the 1984 assault. You see people speaking, asking questions, and then you see there are grounds for the organization. You get organized, it continues, and [afterward] the cycle reproduces by itself. [Do you mean it emerges out of cultural factors?] Sure, it's not a case that suddenly takes place out of nothing; there's already a social reality, and there's a political formation that handles best that social reality by making a call for resistance. There are fears, and it breaks down fears. What was the strongest fear in society? Well, 'the State has tanks and artillery; Allah is in the sky, and the State is on the ground, how can one challenge the State?' or 'There've been 28 revolts, and it hasn't been achieved!' This fear was present and what the PKK did was to break it down; the more the fears were broken, people began to go to mountains freely." (K-II/03)

K-II/07, who was then in Istanbul, affirms that the intellectual cadres living in western Turkey were also involved in the organization of similar practices among Kurdish immigrant communities in the suburbs:

"We organized ourselves, and I worked with the YCK [Kurdistan Youth Union]. There was an incredible performance there among those Kurds, solidarity among immigrants from Kurdistan; they all had sympathetic feelings towards the struggle, morally and materialistically. In that district or neighborhood, no matter who came from whatever city or place, even if they were enemies, they found each other. Let's say, this coffeehouse, that association, when there was a wedding everyone was attending, and that wedding would be converted into something other than a normal wedding. It'd convert itself into a political gathering or symbol of some sort. We witnessed those things many times. Also, especially there and back, the struggle in Kurdistan directly shaped the environment. For example, when we were there, we organized student-youth excursions, which we'd not done in Kurdistan. We were going somewhere, such as the Belgrade forest [in Istanbul], and held all sorts of political debates there." (K-II/07)

Having expanded guerrilla warfare, the PKK's entrance into Kurdish towns and cities, and organizations of *serhildans* and other forms of protests by clashing with security forces often meant more pressure by the state on the developing urban network of the organization. The more Kurdish nationalist sectors put public pressure on, the more the state resorted to coercion to rebuild its authority.<sup>223</sup> As a result, an unprecedented number of operations sprang up, both in rural and urban Kurdish environments, filling the prisons with hundreds of new inmates.

#### *Indoctrination behind bars: Prison resistance and militancy in the 1990s*

The prisons in Kurdistan had already become one of the main fronts of the struggle after the widespread detentions of the 1980 coup period. Self-sacrificing actions by early leading figures such as Kemal Pir, Mazlum Doğan, and Hayri Durmuş had already given a strong impulse, converting the prison into another *battlefield* where inmates developed their political capacities. The same phenomenon continued in a far more organized manner among subsequent generation cadres.<sup>224</sup>

---

<sup>223</sup> It is of no coincidence that the period of massive popular uprisings in key Kurdish towns and cities corresponded with the reorganization of politico-military structures after the PKK's 5<sup>th</sup> Congress through which the urban militia and ARGK (*Artêşa Rizgariya Gele Kurdistan* – Kurdistan National Liberation Army) forces remained the core military units (see PKK 1995a). The main objective of this move was to create a rupture between the state and the people of Kurdistan, rendering the state a simple military entity without any popular support. In such a struggle, the main goal was not military but political, seeking to organize the people against the state (N.A. Özcan 1999: 180). In this strategy, mass protests, in other words, *serhildans*, were considered important events that would feed the Front organization and delegitimize the state in Kurdish everyday life.

<sup>224</sup> The first four interviews (K-II/01, 02, 03, and 04) selected to be analyzed in this generation are included in this study as they all had served long jail terms for organizing an urban network of militants for the PKK (see Appendix 4.2.).

As a result of indiscriminately repressive measures put into practice by the state security forces on Kurds living in urban areas, the prison population significantly increased in numbers. For most of the 1990-generation Kurdish youth who were involved in organized political activism throughout the decade, prisons were communal grounds full of cultural, social, and political activities, serving as a type of *academy* (Öz 2015: 123-124). *K-II/03* explains how rapidly inmates circulated except for those who had been convicted for being PKK members continuing their militancy while imprisoned:

“We were doing whatever we could to nourish ourselves with news from the outside; from newspapers to journals, from books to banned publications, we did everything to smuggle them into prison, and we achieved it! [*laughing*] I mean, resources which I had access to inside when I was in prison weren’t available to those who were outside—both visual and written resources. [*Were there many people who were locked up inside?*] Of course, there were! In Batman prison, we initially had a capacity for some 300-400 people; it was around 400 and rose up to 450 at times. Except for those 20-30 people who came from the guerrilla, the rest changed and circulated constantly!” (K-II/03)

This peculiar circulation of inmates offered the PKK a unique opportunity to continue indoctrination and propaganda activities inside Turkish prisons. Newcomers were carefully guided by the imprisoned PKK cadres in political and organizational terms, as well as basic skills and rules for communal life. This way, prisons were converted into recruitment mechanisms that played a crucial role in consolidating the guerrilla movement. By providing a noteworthy example, *K-II/02* explains how prisons complied with this function by offering suitable conditions for recruitment:

“There was a *serhildan* process which began on the Newroz of 1992, and continued until 94, and this had a significant impact inside. There were tens of people coming inside and being released. There was a competition inside the prison at that time: Inmates were competing to see who could send the most newcomers to the mountain! Who could make them join [*the guerrilla*]! In this sense, their imprisonment served to get them more organized. Most of them were coming, staying seven or eight days. In groups, let’s say 40 or 50 people come in all at once and then all released at once. Most of them were released through the bill of objection. The majority of arrests were aimed at threatening people, a policy based on jailing people for a short period and, this way, intimidate them. It was purposeful, like ‘let them go away, not participate in serhildans, stay away knowing that they can end up in prison’. [*We distributed*] those who were sent to prison, like five or seven individuals for each PKK-affiliated inmate. For example, I say, ‘comrade X [*name*], you’ve got these people. You’ll try to send them to the guerrilla; you’ll be in charge of their recruitment!’ You plan all your time accordingly; you take care of them, you tell them about the guerrilla life there. Once you organize them and they’re released, whoever sent the most people to the guerrilla through recruitment is named ‘the best organizer!’ There were competitions like this during that time, and hundreds of young people joined the guerrilla this way.” (K-II/02)

Finally, prison as a mechanism of social reproduction had a wider sphere of influence. The conditions and treatment that inmates had to deal with also affected their social surroundings. While most families fiercely opposed the participation of their family member in the armed struggle initially (K-II/02, 04, 05, 07, 08, 09, 10), prison played a significant role in the political transformation of older generations, making them far more sensitive towards the conflict:

“Before the state or the police, it was our surroundings who tried to take us back down. My mother was a nice person, she didn’t put pressure on me, but she objected too! How? She was saying, ‘it’s a fool’s errand! How will you defeat this state?’ She’d never seen in her life the mountains in Hakkari or Şırnak, but she was saying, ‘you’ll die of hunger there, you’ll die of hunger in those mountains!’ Have you ever seen those mountains? No! So, how do you know? But she had such a perception. Rather than the state, police, or intelligence services, our family

surroundings tried to convince us to back down. [*And what about her later reaction when visiting you in prison?*] I was released in the summer of 2003, near autumn. That mother of mine later on transformed into a mother who would say, 'Son, go! As long as Apo is imprisoned, if you stay with me, I won't give you my blessing!' [...] As I've said, before I joined [*the guerrilla*], that mother who was saying 'You'll die of hunger in the mountains, you'll fall prey!', when we were holding *death fasts*, hunger strikes, she always objected saying 'You shall survive, so that you'll fight, you shall go out and fight!' [...] Our families transformed all together, all of them changed. Was it us who changed them? I don't think so. Society itself, that period of war, that period of struggle transformed society." (K-II/04)<sup>225</sup>

Such significant ideological transformations eventually led them to provide support for political activities organized within prisons. Through the practices of 'family-based social activism' (Verberg 2006), they became a bridge between the outside world and the prison by collecting information and *intelligence* during visits (K-II/02), which were systematically used by imprisoned cadres later on. Similar functions attributed to prisons another fundamental role that served for the organization and direct or indirect involvement and contribution of broader sectors in the struggle in later generations.

---

<sup>225</sup> Similar affirmations made by other individuals (K-II/01, 02, 05, 07) were also noted during participant observations in the Diyarbakır headquarters of TUHAD-DER (*Tutuklu ve Hükümlü Aileleri ile Dayanışma Derneği* – The Association for Solidarity with Families of Prisoners and the Convicted) during the field research in Kurdistan.

## 8. Basque Conflict in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Spain

### 8.1. Socio-political scenery and violence on the verge of the new millennium in Spain

From the mid-1990s, Spain's Basque question entered a new phase that witnessed a peculiar expansion of the conflict in qualitative terms by both conflicting sides, which inevitably left political and social imprints in the Basque Country. Socio-political scenery based on these imprints in a divided society concerning the ongoing violence also primarily determined the fundamental elements of political socialization of next-generation MLNV cadres. Both actors of the conflict contributed to this atmosphere by implementing new policies and coercive performances.

Since the mid-1980s, ETA had been progressively suffering from military and logistic losses as a result of closer Franco – Spanish anti-terror cooperation, whose most spectacular example was the Bidart operation to the organization's leadership cadres in 1992. The arrest of such historical ETA members as were Francisco Mugica Garmendia (*Pakito*), José Luis Álvarez Sancristina (*Txelis*), and José Arregui Erostarbe (*Fiti*) and, above all, the seizing of internal documents helped Spanish authorities comprehend the complex organizational and financial network of ETA. These occurrences confirmed the military decline of ETA<sup>226</sup> and urged the MLNV to reconsider its politico-military strategy (Muro 2008: 152). Nevertheless, this strategic revision did not give way to the elimination of the use of coercion but, to the quite contrary, a further expansion of violent interventions and new targets.

The Spanish state, on the other hand, continued to pursue its selective violence against the components of the MLNV. Having accomplished the initial objectives of the anti-terror policy, which was the isolation of ETA as well as its political representation *Herri Batasuna (HB)*, the very same policy was extended to the criminalization and, finally, the outlawing of all organizations within the MLNV orbit. Further involvement of the Spanish judiciary in the political process put more legal pressure on mechanisms such as media, civil society, and social movements from the *abertzale* sectors. By the end of the decade and throughout the early 2000s, Spanish prosecutors became active actors of the conflict by banning Basque dailies, youth centers, and even the political coalition HB.

#### 8.1.1. A new phase: 'Socialization of suffering' versus 'all against terrorism'

The approval of the *Oldartzen* text in 1995 by HB militancy reaffirmed the legitimacy of ETA, giving the armed organization total credit on delicate issues such as when to declare a ceasefire and whether there are suitable conditions to launch a negotiation process. Despite critical voices towards ETA's

---

<sup>226</sup> MLNV emphasized that the arsenal captured labelled as 'ETA's arms factory and the biggest *zulo* (cache)' was not for operational use but for sale due to the over-production of ETA arms manufacturing activities (Euskadi eta Askatasuna 2005, Vol.9: 15-16). Nevertheless, the fall of experienced leadership and the post-operation conditions that forced other potential leaders to flee to places such as Mexico and Cuba were notable. The emphasis put on the fall of Bidart by ETA militants in this generation (B-III/02, 03, 04, 06) shows the magnitude of damage that the operation caused in logistical and military terms.

violent practices from some members of HB starting the early 1990s, as observed in the *Iratzar* (awake) proposal<sup>227</sup>, most militants backed the text presented by the leadership (*Mesa Nacional*). This official document announced significant modifications within the ongoing politico-military strategy of the MLNV, which shaped the dynamics of contention in the Basque Country.

The Oldartzen text approved the expansion of the conflict through ‘new spaces’, giving total legitimacy to highly visible practices of the low-intensity urban struggle of *kale borroka* considered an expression of the political struggle by people (Murua 2017: 38-39) as well as the introduction of a cycle of high-impact political assassinations. The concept of *socialization of suffering*, which did not appear as such in the text but somewhat popularized by adversaries of the MLNV, was based on the new forms of action introduced by ETA and Basque youth movements. Although members of those movements recognize the ‘opening of new fronts’ following the fall of Bidart in this period (B-III/01, 03, 04, 06), there is a consensus on the intentional use (and abuse) of the term ‘socialization of suffering’ by opposing Ajuria-Enea group members and their corresponding media<sup>228</sup>:

“It’s true that new fronts were opened, but why? I don’t believe it was for socializing the suffering, but it was tactical or strategic. That phrase in the Oldartzen text, which was a presentation that HB took out at that time, was to put a voice to the suffering. It’s true that at that time when it began to voice that prisoners had to be in Euskal Herria, it was the time that *kale borroka* also started to gain considerable strength because new generations were coming, and it’s true that with *kale borroka*, we began to take action against [*municipal*] councilmembers who supported the dispersion. So that was when they began to say, ‘yes, in Oldartzen’s text, you say you have to socialize the suffering!’ It wasn’t like that, but they made use of this way in the face of so many injustices and so much repression.” (B-III/03, male, 34, Gipuzkoa)

While it is true that the concept is widely reproduced by adversary mechanisms as the theoretical point of departure for newly introduced violent actions carried by ETA as well as the youth component of the MLNV, analyzing the Oldartzen text, one also observes sections that may easily be interpreted as implicit tactical instructions. The new strategy, based on the expansion of violence throughout all social sectors considered accomplices and supporters of the state repression, was developed as a response to constant selective violence concentrated against the *abertzale* left, as explicitly stated in the text:

“Those who are allied with the enemy’s strategy and have responsibilities must feel the anger of citizens on their flesh. The cost of such a repressive strategy must be extended to all those who have the responsibility for it. Each

---

<sup>227</sup> The debate over *Iratzar* in this period was important, as later explained by a leading HB figure Rufino Etxeberria (*Holandés*) from the Martutene prison. Despite the weak support from HB members, ideas defended in the text apparently became the main skeleton of the last peace process led by the leading *abertzale* left figures, among whom Etxeberria was also present. The text explicitly suggested the current political line adopted by the MLNV: “...in the opinion of the *Iratzar* direction, it was necessary to move towards detente, as there was an excessive identification between ETA and HB within Basque society, a harmful identification. The presentation of *Iratzar*, replicated from HB, advocated for a deepening of institutional and political work, distancing itself from the consequences of the armed activity of ETA” (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 2005, Vol. 9: 166).

<sup>228</sup> Apart from the mainstream Spanish and Basque media, it is convenient to point out that the concept of ‘socialization of suffering’, attributed to new military targets of ETA as well as sabotage actions through *kale borroka*, also find widespread interest in Spanish and Basque academia, especially among those who almost exclusively study the subject of *ETA terrorism* by reproducing the official truth agreed by the constituent parties of the Ajuria-Enea pact (see Reinares 2001; Elorza 2005; Fernández Soldevilla & López Romo 2011; Leonisio 2015; Llera 2016).

repressive attack against the *abertzale* left has to create among enemy lines the same panic that occurs among the *abertzale* left.” (quoted from *Ponencia de Oldartzen* in Murua 2016)

The positions taken after the Algiers conversations and backed by the signatory parties of the Ajuria-Enea pact seemingly pushed ETA and the *abertzale* left to change its defensive strategy to an offensive. The opening of new fronts meant new military targets in the form of political assassinations of low-ranking Spanish politicians serving in the Basque Country as well as assassination attempts against key political figures in Spain.<sup>229</sup> *B-III/04*, a member of several organizations within the *abertzale* left before joining ETA, explains this strategic change in response to anti-terrorism pacts in Spain:

“After Algiers, the fall of Bidart, it’s when *abertzale* left started a self-critical reflection: [from] an earlier cycle, rather than action-repression-action and response, to a new cycle of building your own model, and that’s also where I socialized. New concepts of militancy, because at that time, 1994-95, there was a total revision in the militancy forms. [...] Then there was a re-grouping in order to isolate the *abertzale* left, isolate the organization, and also to socialize the conflict in order to move from a conflict between Euskal Herria and the State to a conflict between the democrat and the violent, and to lead the conflict to Basque society. [Do you mean the Ajuria-Enea pact?] Yes, yes. So, I think that it was the response by the organization, in the beginning, defining those signatories of the pact as military targets, not the Ajuria-Enea pact, but the Madrid pact; I think it was called like that, the pact between PP and PSOE.” (*B-III/04*, female, NA, Gipuzkoa)

The first concrete examples of consequences of the new strategy were seen through the deadly attacks addressed to influential local politicians of the PP (Gregorio Ordóñez in Gipuzkoa), first, and of PSOE (Fernando Múgica) afterward. In an interview published in *Euskaldunon Egunkaria* on 16 April 1995, shortly after the assassination of Ordóñez, ETA confirmed the motivation, underlined in the above-quoted extract by *B-III/04*, which led it to take such actions against new civilian targets and implicitly reiterated its search for political negotiation with the state:

“The objective of this action was to attack the politicians considered responsible for prolonging the conflict, and professional politicians have understood it well. The State has the utmost responsibility for the prolongation of the conflict, and through the Madrid Pact, the party leaders have offered their full support to the state in order to extend and maintain the dispute. Regarding the consequences, and aside from the first statements, the political nature of the conflict and the need to provide it with a political solution have been re-emphasized. Professional politicians have understood that the consequences of the prolongation of the dispute will affect everyone and that everyone must strive to find a rational solution.” (*Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 2005, Vol.9: 213)

This hardline military strategy exclusively practiced by ETA, indeed, provoked social suffering and reaction similar to that of the Burgos Trial in 1970. However, now it appeared just the other way around: An immense part of Basque society, including Basque nationalists sectors, rose to voice their concerns even further against ETA violence. The most dramatic example of political assassinations was the kidnapping and execution of Miguel Ángel Blanco, a PP municipal council member of the small Bizkaian town of Ermua, which created a massive public mobilization in the Basque Country as it did in

---

<sup>229</sup> Although the victims of political assassinations were low-ranking PP and PSOE representatives in the Basque Country, ETA commandos unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate PP leader and later Prime Minister José María Aznar, who was defined as “one of the top enemies who guarantee the oppression of Euskal Herria” by ETA right after the failed assassination attempt in Madrid in 1995 as well as King Juan Carlos I in Mallorca, who was accused of being the successor of Franco and the top perpetrator of the ‘Basque cultural genocide’ (*Euskadi Eta Askatasuna* 2005, Vol. 9: 214, 228-229).

entire Spain. Public disturbance and reaction posterior to Blanco's execution provoked an unprecedented mobilization and condemnation of ETA as well as its political surroundings (Tejerina 2001: 53), becoming a milestone event that filled the public sphere in the Basque Country:

"[What would ETA want to achieve through that new tactic?] Putting pressure, right? Well, making life impossible for them, so they put pressure on the government also from inside their own house to take steps to mobilize them to reach a negotiation or resolve the conflict. From inside their house and tell them, 'Hey, holy crap! You have to find a solution, so move your ass!' First, there's that of Blanco, the period of Miguel Ángel Blanco, which drew a line of before and after, it did cause a lot of movement." (B-III/06, male, 35, Gipuzkoa)

"ETA killed him [*Miguel Ángel Blanco*], and the result was a massive wave of people. Well, they made a hell of a scene on television, and it was amazing because loads of people went out against ETA and hunted abertzale people, and not just abertzale, but they went against everything Basque; they attacked *euskaltegis* and things like that. Everything that resembled Basqueness was attacked and beaten. These were hard days. I remember the first day when he was killed, I went up to Santutxu for the fiesta of Santutxu, and there was no one from the abertzale left. There were only 50 or 100 of us, and they were eight thousand, a lot. Then on the second day, there were more people, and we could somewhat face off. There were clashes, there were fights with bottles, with whatever you could find." (B-III/02, male, NA, Bizkaia)

Apart from these novelties in the armed strategy, the MLNV also simultaneously launched a new political strategy titled the 'Democratic Alternative' for negotiations. Recognizing the changes taking place in recent years in the political, economic, and cultural realms, ETA underlined the need in replacing the KAS Alternative by assigning the final word about the future of the Basque nation to the Basque people through the right to self-determination (Communiqué of ETA on 20 April 1995 in Lorenzo Espinosa 2006: 328).

This new approach required determining steps to be taken daily to create social tensions and mobilizations to socialize the consequences of the struggle (Muro 2008: 155). Actions of street violence such as sabotage, damaging public goods, and clashes with the police by the youth groups remarkably increased right after the approval of this new strategy. While military actions by ETA largely remained static, low-intensity violent actions rose from around 335 in 1994 to 981 in 1995, 1.190 in 1996, and 1.038 in 1997; subsequently, there was a drastic decrease in 1998 (519) and 1999 (344), a period corresponding to the Lizarra-Garazi pact for peace. These actions rose again to 751 in 2000, after the collapse of the Basque national pact (see Table 1 in Llera 2013: 11).<sup>230</sup> The low-intensity actions served to make the Basque conflict visible in social terms, making the potential actors of the MLNV feel the existence of the ongoing conflict in their early political socialization period. *B-III/02*, a former Jarrai

---

<sup>230</sup> The quantitative data elaborated by Llera presents coherent figures when taking the political chronology of the 1990s into account and coincides with that presented by van den Broek (see Table 1 in 2010: 718). Notwithstanding, as the scholar himself stresses, these figures are based on 'violent actions and victims of terrorism in Spain' between 1978 and 2010. One notes that a large amount of these actions corresponds to low-intensity urban violence, a considerable percentage of which erupted as a response to police interventions. Similarly, the inclusion of ETA militants killed in police operations among 'ETA-related deaths' as a result of 'terrorist violence' also appears confusing.



youth militant in Bilbao before joining ETA in the late 1990s, narrates how such public demonstrations to which he attended since his childhood converted into violent confrontations and clashes:

“I remember demonstrations that began in Indautxu - when they killed someone, let’s suppose we were about 300 people or so, the demonstration began and the police came over. And once the police intervened, people began to put barricades and things like that. We were gradually barricading the Casco Viejo; then in Casco Viejo, there were beatings until 3:00, 4:00 or 5:00 o’clock in the morning.” (B-III/02)

The phenomenon of *kale borroka* constituted one of the most effective instruments embraced within the new strategy of the *abertzale* left, as explained by those individuals who participated in sabotage activities in this period. In an interview published in *Herria Eginez* titled ‘Kale borrokaz mintzo’ (Speaking about *kale borroka*), these actors affirmed that well-calculated sabotages and low-intensity urban violence of spontaneous character were actually in harmony with those actions taken by ETA:

“We are *abertzales*; we work in different movements and get together to analyze the value and usefulness of sabotage and put it into practice. [...] *Euskal Herria*, given the criminal strategy of the French and Spanish states, which want to make it disappear as a people, has the right to use any kind of struggle to be in control of their future. [...] We hit when we see that it is necessary and possible. Sometimes in response to repression, sometimes in the presence of a special occurrence, many times actions that have a purely offensive character [...] *we do not carry out sabotage only to respond [in defense] but also to attack*, although we measure a lot the actions we take, not only taking measures in relation with our security but also analyzing the consequences that sabotage can have. We take great care so that consequences that we do not wish for do not occur. [...] We say again that the dynamics of sabotage is spontaneous, [*it is*] another form of struggle that arises and develops among the People, another instrument. *Unifying this with ETA aims to make punishments greater.*” (Herria Eginez, November 1995 in *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 2005*, Vol.9: 186-187, *emphasis added*)

The emphasized ‘greater punishment’ through new fronts of the conflict in more offensive forms (B-III/03) rather than the ‘legitimate self-defense’ of previous periods, occupied a pivotal place within this new strategy, which sought to keep the sensibility and attention of Basque society up in relation with the conflict. B-III/01, a convicted militant in *Segi*, the official youth organization of the MLNV after *Jarrai*, affirms the positive attitude of the *abertzale* left towards these actions:

“...in the Basque process starting in 1995, there was *kale borroka* like whoa! It was just like this! [*exclaiming the intensity*] *Kale borroka* was all out, and there were also assassinations... [...] *kale borroka* was so heightened at that moment because the *abertzale* left had decided that there should’ve been [*kale borroka*]. I mean, it wasn’t by chance; it wasn’t like it was born out of the street, no. That was organized. [*So, it was not something emotional that suddenly comes out...*] No, nothing happens here by chance!” (B-III/01, female, 29, Bizkaia)

Further involvement of the Basque police force *Ertzaintza* in counter-terror confrontations with ETA members pit the PNV against HB and other organizations of KAS. Funeral ceremonies held for fallen militants continued to be one of the platforms where the PNV was accused of being at the service of the oppressive enemy. During the funeral of Anjel Irazabalbeitia (*Txorta*), who was killed in an armed confrontation with the *Ertzaintza* at Loiu airport in 1994, KAS spokesman declared that “the time of impunity is now over”, and in its subsequent communiqué, ETA defined the *Ertzaintza* as “members of an army which defend the interests of the PNV and Spain, members of the Spanish army who help to

oppress the People” (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 2005, Vol. 9: 154). This political confrontation also had its impact on the streets, expanding the social conflict between the Basque nationalists.

### 8.1.2. Social mechanisms of reproduction of radical Basque nationalism

In comparison with former generation individuals of the MLNV, the limited data shows a lesser degree of heterogeneity in terms of the primary social surroundings of militants. Indeed, all six interviewed MLNV militants analyzed in this generation confirm that they were born in a nationalist/*abertzale* family (either left-wing or more traditional). Almost all of them have attended *ikastolas*, where their initial political activities usually begin. The later militancy trajectory through other organizations of the MLNV, ETA, and Segi follows a similar pattern to that of the previous generation.

#### a. Family and early socialization mechanisms and processes

Although all militants define their family as Basque nationalist/*abertzale*, significant differences are noted when it comes to specifying their political ideology. Some mention that their immediate family members have always been supporters of the *abertzale* left (B-III/01) and, at times, joined ETA during the late Francoist period (B-III/04). In other cases, family members show inclinations towards PNV nationalism, ranging from absolute support to the *jelkide* line to a more ambiguous or mixed (father *abertzale* and mother *jelkide* or vice versa) positions (B-III/02, 03). Nationalist family tradition has reflections on the political inclination of upcoming generations, although the grade of commitment vary significantly, as B-III/02 exemplifies:

“Surely, my father has raised my awareness a lot, and to a good extent, my family in A [*name of the village*] were all left-wing and *abertzales*. I’ve always lived in an environment of leftists and *abertzales*. Although we’ve all lived in that environment, I became aware much more and much sooner than my other cousins and my sister. I don’t know why. Some are more aware than others or more committed. For example, a cousin of mine was a council member for HB, then another cousin of mine isn’t really [*politically*] active; he has never got involved. Another one is a singer and makes political songs and so. Then my sister was a member of *ikasle abertzaleak* for many years, and now she lives in Barcelona, but she’s a member of the CUP there.<sup>231</sup> She also has a commitment and a lot of experience. She’s already been politically active, not as young as me; she started political activities in the last years of high school or so.” (B-III/02)

In both cases, whether they support right-wing or left-wing Basque nationalism, the reaction of family members towards the political involvement of their children in the organizations of *abertzale* left is usually negative and critical. B-III/05, a convicted Segi militant released on bail at the time of the interview, is from a Gipuzkoan village where the PNV has traditionally had an evident influence. She mentions this generational discrepancy despite the Basque nationalist position of her parents:

“By political orientation, they’re nationalists, *abertzales* yes; [*they are*] *euskaldun*, in my house, the whole family has been *euskaldun*. Then maybe if we’re to identify them more concretely with the *abertzale* left, there has

---

<sup>231</sup> CUP (*Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* – Popular Unity Candidacy) is a far-left pro-Catalan independence political party in what is considered ‘Catalan Countries’ (*Països Catalans*) in the historiography of Catalan nationalism.

been no such clear identification. On top of that, I've discussed this issue a lot with my father, and we've had our collisions. Apart from being a little more conservative, and also, about the issue of violence and such, there are always discussions." (B-III/05, female, 30, Gipuzkoa)

Having an *abertzale* left background family does not seem to make much difference in the attitude of family members. The fact that those families whose members have previously suffered from the possible consequences of the militancy –prison, exile, or death- seems to have created a shared memory, particularly among the family in question, but also generally in Basque society. Despite being fully committed to ideas and objectives promoted by *abertzale* left, such memory provokes a certain degree of fear and anxiety in parents that their children might end up suffering from one of these consequences in case they are engaged in politico-military activities:

"From what I remember, from what others told me, I know that they didn't consider [*my militancy in ETA*] well. It's normal because after so much struggle, after seeing the trajectory that the struggle has had and the consequences it's brought, you see what happens to your son or daughter when he or she decides to participate or get involved in an armed organization. So, it's normal for them to react with anguish for what may happen to their children; how long will they be underground, how long will the parents be without seeing their son or daughter. Well, it's a normal reaction that parents may have. I don't like to talk about it much, but for example, in 2002, a cousin of mine was also in the organization and was already living in the underground. A bomb exploded, and he died. Also before, in the 1980s, an uncle of mine, who was in the organization too, died in a confrontation with the police. So, within the family, we've had that experience." (B-III/03)

The initial non-military political activities within the *abertzale* left collectivity, which almost always coincide with the student (*ikasle abertzaleak*) or youth (Jarrai and Segi) organizations, is also worrying for parents. As the members of youth organizations could consider joining ETA and going to the underground seeking further commitment to the cause (B-III/02, 04) or escaping from Spanish justice (B-III/03), the initial steps towards youth militancy often harbor a potential risk of subsequent involvement in the armed struggle. B-III/01 affirms the difficulty of dealing with parents from the *abertzale* left in this initial phase of her and her brothers' political involvement:

"When the parents are from the *abertzale* left, I think it is much harder to tell them that you're politically active than if they're from the PNV or... [*others*] But my friends whose parents have never been interested in politics and things like that, they told them since they were young 'I'm attending a meeting!' or 'I'm going to a demonstration', and I, and my brothers, would tell our parents on a Saturday morning when they asked 'where are you going so early?', 'I've got a meeting, but it's for a magazine in the village.' I mean, the meetings of Segi or things like that, no!! [*Do they find out right away?*] Yes, in small villages more easily, and they always say 'No no! Don't get into that, no!' And they're from the *abertzale* left, but they already know the consequences that things like that can result in." (B-III/01)

Although the Basque nationalist family environment has a certain level of influence on shaping the individual's national identity, the examples mentioned above are not likely to show that 'family tradition' plays a decisive role in militancy involvement. A considerable amount of anecdotal evidence mentioned among militants in this generation does not permit to affirm the frequency of such cases. B-III/02 narrates a tragic anecdote about a family member of his childhood friends, which impacted his militancy trajectory later on rather than his friends':

“For example, when I was a little kid, I had some friends in A [*name of the village*] whose father was an ETA militant, and then when I was around 12 years old or so, I remember that they told me ‘we don’t know where our father is, if he’s alive or dead. We know he’s in ETA, but we don’t know...[*anything else*]’ I remember that one day I learned that he was killed on the border. Well, that has left a big mark on me. These friends [*of mine*] lost their father when they were very young. [*And did they also later get involved in politics?*] The older sister, yes, she’s always been a little involved. The others, they were three brothers, two brothers not that much. I don’t know why, but they don’t have that sensibility in militancy.” (B-III/02)<sup>232</sup>

In some cases, other immediate family members who more or less belong to the same generation and whose position within the family is based on less vertical hierarchy, however, appear to have considerable influence on one another. Interaction among sisters and brothers within the same family concerning militancy-related subjects is more likely to be an encouraging and motivating factor. The following narrations exemplify the role of same-generation family members in the initial steps towards youth militancy:

“[*When did you start exercising political activities? How was your participation?*] It’s usually something natural. I started in the *ikastola*. My brother was a militant in a village, and he was also in charge outside the village. He was like, ‘X [*name*], you have to do this in the *ikastola*, you have to organize a strike’, and you start like this, in the *ikastola*, and then you go on and on. Then they tell you ‘in the youth magazine of the village’, then they tell you ‘you have to join...’ or ‘do you want to join *Jarra*?’ I started in *Jarra* like that, but almost at the end of *Jarra*, it was already disappearing. Also, you go to the *topaguenak*<sup>233</sup>, and little by little just like that.” (B-III/01)

“My sister was also a militant; I took my sister and her *kuadrilla* a bit like references or role models. And like that, you start out a little with curiosity, and you begin to ask questions. At first, there was *Jarra*. There was a *talde*; they’d be like a nucleus of five people; they also used to organize a little more open assembly to inform people and do different temporary activities that didn’t require a day-to-day commitment. So, in the beginning, it was like going there and listening; they give you things to read. You begin a little like that.” (B-III/05)

As for religious creed, although some individuals confirm the ambiguous connection that at least one of their parents has maintained with the Catholic church, testimonies reveal the progressive effects of the third-wave secularization process (Pérez-Agote 2012: 134). Disengagement from religion and Catholic practices are noted among the third generation of MLNV cadres, all of whom define themselves as non-religious or atheists. The ongoing secular progression is visible even in the most conservative villages as individuals (B-III/03, 05, 06) from a traditional Basque nationalist background with considerably strong ties with the Catholic church confirm an apparent inclination towards a more secular stance among their older generation family members. *B-III/04*, whose grandparents were of *Carlist* tradition and in favor of the Franco regime, and whose parents, on the other hand, joined ETA against the same dictatorship when they were young, confirms once again the trajectory that Basque nationalism has experimented with this respect:

---

<sup>232</sup> Similar affirmations were also noted during participatory observations as well as formal and informal interviews made among families of Basque political prisoners and exiles who actively participated in campaigns and events organized by solidarity associations like *Etzerat* and *Herrira*. Based on these observations, it was noted that those who had suffered from the direct and indirect consequences of the militancy of their parents were likely to drift apart from the *abertzale* left collectivity or—in some extreme cases— even from their own parents. This question will be brought about in details in *Chapter 12*, which will be dedicated to a more specific intergenerational analysis through three generations focused in this study.

<sup>233</sup> Literally means ‘meeting places’ in Basque. *Topaguneak*, however, also refer to a movement in favor of Euskera.

“I have a link [*with religion*] because my family has already had a lot of relationship with religion on the part of my grandparents. My grandparents were believers, practicing; my grandmother less, my *aitona* [grandfather] a lot, and my uncles too; I have an aunt and an uncle who are practicing [*Christians*] in the liberation theory. So, within the family, I’ve had a connection, and there’s also been drift, a mutation from the beliefs of my grandparents towards a more social and more progressive vocation.” (B-III/04)

Generational disengagement from religious practices has continued progressively in Basque society as well as in Spain in general. Parallel to this progress, the initial overt support shown by low-ranking sectors of the Basque clergy for the idea of national liberation seems to have diminished, and, as a result, the upcoming generations of the Basque clergy have gradually disengaged from the struggle.<sup>234</sup>

#### **b. Friend circles and later stage political socialization process**

Although individuals in this generation describe their close friend groups (*kuadrilla*) as ideologically homogeneous<sup>235</sup>, usually consisting of individuals with Basque nationalist and leftist tendencies, most individuals equally indicate that the number of those who form part of any political organization or movement is usually rare. The transformation of political participation in favor of professional political institutionalization, a phenomenon referred to as ‘privatization of social life’ since the early 1990s (Pérez-Agote 2008: 217), in this sense, has visible impacts even in villages where Basque nationalism in general, and recently the *abertzale* left movement, in particular, prevail (B-III/01, 03, 05 and 06). Despite embracing a nationalist and pro-independence stance, most *kuadrilla* members do not consider politics and political questions their primary concern in life. Ideological affinity towards certain parties among *kuadrilla* members, therefore, is not necessarily the synonym of political militancy. K-III/06, being from a nationalist village in the hinterland of Gipuzkoa province, depicts a general picture of his village referring to his *kuadrilla*:

“Here, everyone is independentist, but when it comes to militancy or taking action, my *kuadrilla* has never been... [*committed*], except for two or three people. We’re rather like athletes or students. If it’s about putting a sticker of ‘presoak Euskal Herrira’ [*prisoners to the Basque Country*] in a fiesta, they’ll stick it without any problem, but then they wouldn’t participate in those things. Here we have an independentist and *abertzale* profile, but then the degree of commitment varies. Perhaps some are just dedicated to sports or studies, while others attend meetings or participate in an association and things like that. They vote for the *abertzale* left for sure. You take into account that 25 years ago here, there were only two councilmembers from the *abertzale* left, and now there are eleven.” (K-III/06)

---

<sup>234</sup> Except for some interventions in specific ETA actions, such as Bishop José María Setién’s mediation in the kidnapping of prison officer Ortega Lara (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 2006, Vol. 10: 42-43), peace negotiations and reconciliation processes, as in the case of Basque Bishop Juan María Uriarte’s mediation role in Switzerland between the representatives of the Aznar government and ETA (Murua 2017: 46) or the last Loyola conversations where *abertzale* left representatives admitted that they were in constant but discreet dialogue with the Basque church (Otegi in Munarriz 2012: 59-60), low-ranking Basque clergy seem to have largely decreased its active role in the conflict over time.

<sup>235</sup> Although the research universe is too limited to come to a general conclusion, one observes that the geographic location appears to be a strong determining factor in ideological affinity to a specific political line among *kuadrillas*. In places (like rural Gipuzkoa, e.g.) where the communicative use of Euskera in daily life is common and Basque nationalism –with a progressive inclination towards left-wing currents among youth- is generally dominant (B-III/01, 03, 05, 06), this ideological affinity tends to be reflected in *kuadrillas*. In urban capitals where the dominance of Spanish is indisputable in everyday life, however, the political heterogeneity among *kuadrilla* members becomes more observable (B-III/02, 04).

Those friends acquired through political militancy in the early adolescence years gradually begin to occupy a broader place in the emotional space of the individual. The 'kuadrilla of militancy',<sup>236</sup> in this sense, shows a far more homogenous ideological composition and an apparent stance in terms of commitment to militancy. B-III/04 makes this comparison by describing the 'multiple' kuadrillas she has had throughout her life-course politics:

"I was living in Donostia until I was 17, then I lived in Bilbao for three years, and then I went to Pamplona with my partner and lived there for ten years. My kuadrilla was a bit mestizo; they're in Donostia and Iruñea [Pamplona] especially. [What profile do they have regarding politics?] Well, the kuadrilla in Donosti is my kuadrilla from high school, so they're *abertzales*, close to the *abertzale* left, but they aren't militants; they're my childhood friends and friends from high school. Then, both in Bilbao and Iruñea, my environment was more militant, more linked to my militancy, and my work in those days. My social life around the movement is rather militant, a more politically committed environment, and that is also where I've socialized." (B-III/04)

Commonly shared political ideas concerning national and social outlooks for the desired Basque state and devotion for the cause gain such a high emotional level that the second kuadrilla gradually comes to occupy a vital place in individuals' personal life within a short time. B-III/05, who got involved in political militancy in a later period, confirms her views regarding this phenomenon and impacts of 'privatization of social life' among this generation in general:

"I have two kuadrillas, a kuadrilla since childhood, those who have studied with me, we've grown up together. Perhaps in that kuadrilla, there are different opinions; some of them have been militants, they may share a similar [political] direction in general, and they can be sort of identified with a [specific] political project, maybe that of the *abertzale* left, but vaguely. And possibly in some ways, they may have second thoughts, but in general, they're like people dedicated to their lives; studying, working, living with a partner, spending time with friends, and so on. Some don't even read the press; they have no interest either. You go and ask them, 'do you want independence?', they'll probably say yes, but then in practice nothing. Then I have another kuadrilla, that by time eventually, we've come together a bit more for militancy, we're also of different ages, we've been getting together for reasons or feelings that have united us. In the beginning, you probably come together because you have to talk about this or that, and then over time, a kuadrilla is created, and apart from militancy, we're also friends sharing a vast personal space." (B-III/05)

Despite being qualified as one of the most typical structures of the Basque associative world through which arguably individual or collective recruitment for militancy potentially takes place (Reinares 2001: 147), findings among the recent generations put this argument into question. The new generations have access to the associative world under different conditions than in the 1980s. Political normalization and highly consolidated political institutionalization have given way to a considerable disinterest in politics, making it neither the primary concern nor the main topics discussed among ordinary Basque youth (Gurrutxaga 1996: 195-196). As observed through the above-quoted interviews, Basque youth has adopted a more individualist and pragmatic tendency towards social roles and prestige; they have overvalued better education, professional concerns, and private life and, as a consequence, the weight of political militancy, riskier than ever before, has significantly decreased.

---

<sup>236</sup> In her ethnographic study on different generation ETA members in the 1980s and 1990s, Alcedo observes the militancy-related formation of what she denominates 'kuadrilla of ETA', as affirmed by interview Y-2 (1996: 243-244).

New sociopolitical conditions generate a certain distance among *kuadrilla* members who opt for political militancy and those who are comparatively more distant to political activities and interactions on a daily basis. In some extreme cases of state repression, increasingly concentrated against the *abertzale* left youth militant cadres, tensions emerge from the possible consequences of militancy may come to reach such a high level that they threaten the solid structure of what individuals understand as the ‘original *kuadrilla*’:

“In my *kuadrilla*, we all don’t get together [*any longer*]. Maybe sometimes we get together, but on a daily basis, we are in small groups. So, those who are closest to me are mostly militants. [...] In the tensest moments, we couldn’t sleep in our own house, they told us that we had to walk away so that the police wouldn’t catch us at home. You’re with friends, and they say ‘are you coming with us or not?’, ‘No, I can’t, I have to go...’ So, that’s where the tension emerges within the *kuadrilla*. They indeed affect relationships over time. [...] There’s so much tension that the relationship deteriorates over time. When I returned from prison, I realized that people got along very badly. Those of us who once had stuck together very closely got along very badly.” (B-III/01)

As observed among the previous-generation individuals, the role of specific mechanisms of social reproduction through which political militancy is initiated continues in this generation too. These mechanisms usually begin with *ikasle abertzaleak*, frequently related, but not limited to *ikastolas*,<sup>237</sup> or in other youth collectivities such as *gazte asanblada* in the early adolescent period and canalize towards the official youth movement of the *abertzale* left of the period. Once the adolescence period is over, this trajectory, defined as a ‘natural process’, tends to head towards various options in the same *abertzale* left direction. When demographic data belonging to each individual is analyzed, despite interruptions by the Spanish police and judiciary, the future political trajectory follows other *abertzale* left organizations such as popular movements related to political prisoners and exiles, women, labor union involvement, political party, and, finally, politico-military engagement.

The grade of commitment required to participate in these organizations, however, varies depending on the type of activities that one is eager to carry out. As pointed out in *Chapter 6*, the youth organization recruits future cadres for the MLNV components (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.7: 288), among which ETA requires the highest degree of commitment. As noted from those who have continued their militancy trajectory in ETA after having a considerable period of involvement in the youth movement *Jarrai* (B-III/02, 03, 04), despite the highest level of commitment and potential sacrifices one may have had to face, this transition is no way exceptional. This itinerary towards ‘higher commitments’ is also noted in ETA’s public message, directed at those *abertzale* youth participating in acts of *kale borroka*:

---

<sup>237</sup> Euskera continues to be the most significant element mentioned by individuals as a primary sign of identity belonging. The qualitative data presented by Echeverria in this period shows the level of identity definition in relation to the schooling language, which is overwhelmingly superior in Basque-medium schools than Spanish-medium ones (2003: 359-360). While such data does not directly intend to correlate the identity definition with political radicalization, it constitutes valuable empirical evidence concerning the emotional value attributed to Euskera as a moral obligation for the Basque identity.

“The *kale borroka* must have its own meaning. Those who practice it must measure their objectives and their willingness of commitment very well, and they know that if they want to raise that level of commitment, if they want to be in favor of *Euskal Herria* in an organized way, there are numerous organizations, ETA among them. “(Egin, 6 July 1997 quoted from Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 2006, Vol. 10: 149)

Although individuals usually refuse to provide information regarding the details of how this transition from the youth movement to the armed organization in the underground took place, they confirm (B-III/03) or, at least, they insinuate (B-III/04) that they had established contacts with the armed organization before joining. This transition also continued in the period of the successor youth organization Segi (B-III/01), which allegedly led the acts of *kale borroka* in the early 2000s.

## **8.2. The Basque conflict in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Having depicted the trajectory of violent confrontations between the Spanish state and ETA from the mid-1990s, it would not be erroneous to affirm that advancements in the late 1990s, as well as the early 2000s, brought significant changes to the political and social panorama in relation to the Basque conflict in Spain. Significant developments in the conflictive relationship among major Basque nationalist political forces with evident social consequences determined the future politico-military trajectory of the Basque conflict, which came to be the last remaining one after the Northern Ireland peace process came to an end.

### **8.2.1. “They’re all ETA”: Broadening the contents of terrorism**

The late 1990s saw progressive anti-terror policies in Spain, which was coherent with discriminative and selective police violence implemented since the period of democratic consolidation. The Popular Party (PP) led by José Maria Aznar won the general elections of March 1996 by a narrow margin, which obliged him to form a coalition with Catalan, Basque and Canarian nationalists. The Basque nationalist government led by Lehendakari José Antonio Ardanza, who had already begun to question the role of the Ajuria-Enea pact criticizing its security-oriented approach (Mees 2003: 111), came to occupy an intermediary role between the new Spanish hardline government and radical Basque leftists.

In this period, another type of spiral of violence based on a similar dialectical relationship was put into practice: Whenever the state security forces carried out a significant operation against ETA, causing considerable damage to the organization’s military structure, it did not take long for ETA to carry out a responsive *ekintza*, proving its continuing military capacity (Muro 2008: 157). Nevertheless, these responses were far from being notorious in a military sense with few exceptions, and they instead provoked anger and hatred among many sectors in Basque society. Such cases as the kidnapping of José Antonio Ortega Lara, a low-grade penitentiary civil servant, for a total of 532 days and the previously mentioned kidnapping and the assassination of Miguel Ángel Blanco, PP councilmember in the town of Ermua, were among ETA’s infamous *ekintzas* in this period. Subsequent



social mobilizations, the biggest of which was the ‘spirit of Ermua’, interpreted and reproduced as a call condemning violence and the unity of Basques and Spaniards against terrorism by politicians and media (Mees 2003: 99), prepared the grounds for the direct interference of the Spanish judiciary against all *abertzale* left components now considered ETA.<sup>238</sup>

Apart from the outrage and incomprehension in Basque public opinion, the tactical change of the military strategy of ETA with new fronts and targets appear to have been difficult to digest among young generation cadres who were in the initial stages of their militancy. Indeed, for a considerable number of militants, targeting civilians (i.e., politicians or civil servants) was challenging to grasp (B-III/02, 05). B-III/01, who began to get involved in youth activities in the late 1990s, describes the impact of such actions against civilian targets despite her unconditional support for ETA:

“[And how did you see, for example, the organization and its method of armed struggle?] At that moment? I remember the case of Miguel Ángel Blanco; I was saying, ‘Ok, they’ve already scared him, so don’t let him die, [just] spare him!’ But more than anything, it was because of the effect of television and things like that, but I’ve never thought about... I mean, I was saying ‘the Basque Country is oppressed. It has to defend itself!’ [So, it means that you considered the responsive political violence fair or legitimate?] Yes, yes, that’s it! I knew it provoked suffering, and that hurt me, but it’s true that I was carrying it with pride, so... [Laughing] Look, it has always made me feel sad, but it indeed depended on who was the one who died. I mean, a Civil Guard... Since we were little, we’ve heard many things that the Civil Guards had done. For example, your father tells you a story like ‘I was tortured...’ So, if a Civil Guard was killed, well, I was sorry for his family, but not for him. But it’s true; I remember in the case of Miguel Ángel Blanco, I was saying he shouldn’t have died.” (B-III/01)

Apart from previously analyzed mobilizations against ETA, these *ekintzas* also opened a new era for judicial persecution against the entire *abertzale* left community, which manifested itself as mass police detentions, primarily against youth groups (Jarrai, Segi). The youth groups of the *abertzale* left were held responsible for *kale borroka*, intimidating and harassing low-ranking political party representatives in the Basque Country, and carrying out riots and acts of sabotage under ETA command. Regional and national media continually reproduced the image of radical Basque youth as extremists, fanatics, Fascists, and Nazis (van den Broek 2017: 124). Designated as Y Groups (*Grupos Y*)<sup>239</sup>, their actions were qualified as auxiliary terrorist actions of ETA’s new military strategy.

Nevertheless, this expanded anti-terror approach was not only limited to those groups exercising political violence but also legal-political and social organizations under the KAS structure, which was considered an umbrella organization that provided political and social space for violence. Soon after, associations involved in the rights of Basque political prisoners (*Gestoras Pro Amnistía*),

---

<sup>238</sup> Ermua spirit was adopted and used as a political instrument by the PP; first against anti-systemic *Herri Batasuna*, and also against any of peripheral nationalism, including that of the PNV, which had just recently begun to emphasize the necessity of major improvements in Gernika Statute (Ibarra & Ahedo 2004: 81). Aznar’s unwillingness to consider such demands due to his concerns over the national integrity of Spain may well be considered the PNV’s getting away from the Ajuria-Enea group and its eagerness to dialogue with long marginalized HB to overcome the armed conflict.

<sup>239</sup> ETA, whose acronym stands for Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Country and Freedom) in its lower case form *eta* means *and* in Spanish (*y*), hence the reason for labeling it the Y Group.

media outlets (first *Egin* and then *Egunkaria*) came to face the consequences of this approach. The most sensational of the judicial actions was the detention order for the National Board (*Mesa Nacional*), the leadership of HB, regarded as the political wing of ETA<sup>240</sup>, by Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzón in 1997, which eventually led to the prohibition of the party in 2003 (Muro 2008: 129). Within just a couple of years, all these KAS organizations faced a similar fate.

### **8.2.2. The effects of Stormont in the Basque Country: The Lizarra – Garazi Agreement**

The year 1998 marked a before and after in the recent political history of the Basque Country as it gave way to hopes, as well as disappointments. Parallel with the definite steps taken in Northern Ireland, Basque national politics evolved, seeking a similar path. After nearly a decade of uninterrupted military and political confrontations since the Algiers conversations between deeply divided poles, the first comprehensive peace initiative was launched. The overlapping of specific ideas and developments shaped the socio-political environment of the Basque Country and made a transition possible from rapid and unpredictable circumstances to a peace settlement.

The beginning of the year saw two important dialogue groups involved in the long-lasting conflict: The highest representatives of the Spanish government, the Prime Minister José María Aznar and the Minister of the Interior Jaime Mayor Oreja held a lengthy meeting with Lehendakari José Antonio Ardanza and the historical leader of the PNV Xabier Arzalluz in relation with the future of the Ajuria-Enea pact, assuring further dialogue on the (new) reality of the Basque Country (*El Mundo*, 17 January 1998). Although the conversations focused on the fight against terrorism as a joint project, ‘the reality of the Basque Country’ also had to see with the future of the Gernika Statute. While *Jelkide* executives, who thought that the statute was far from satisfying their needs, demanded improvements upon the political autonomy status, the right-wing Aznar government showed no willingness to such demands (Ibarra & Ahedo 2004: 81). Essentially, the support by the PNV for the PP government was conditional to the compliance of improvements upon the Gernika Statute.

Analyzing the role that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Sinn Féin played in the coetaneous process conducted in Ulster, the *abertzale* left was eager to create a common Basque national project, emphasizing the principle of self-determination (Lecours 2004: 103-104). This idea, based on the principle of ‘Democratic Alternative’, finally came to achieve its definitive form in the National Assembly of HB celebrated on 14 February 1998 in Iruñea (Pamplona), through which all progressive

---

<sup>240</sup> Analyzing recent literature on the Basque conflict, one also observes that this discourse has extensively been reproduced by Spanish and Basque academia. Some scholars overtly label HB as the political wing of ETA from this very period; a tendency that continues until the recent publications on this subject (see Llera 2003, 2016; Funes 1998; Azurmendi 1998; Sánchez-Cuenca 2001; Reinales 2003; Elorza 2005; de la Calle 2007; Casquete 2009; Fernández Soldevilla 2010, 2012; Alonso 2010; Juaristi 2014). The scholarly reproduction of the official political discourse of the Ajuria-Enea pact takes place among the above-mentioned studies with references to one another, constituting an efficient reproduction mechanism of official truth.

*abertzales* were called upon for the accumulation of nationalist forces with maximum flexibility for a democratic solution of the conflict (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 2007, Vol.11: 20-22). After the rejection of the Ardanza Plan by the Ajuria-Enea group, leading PNV figures Xabier Arzalluz and Joseba Egibar showed their positive stance towards this idea of a peaceful solution similar to the process in Northern Ireland. Initial contacts between the PNV – EA and HB developed into a general agreement formulated during the Forum of Ireland (Murua 2017: 46), which was concluded in the signing of the Pact of Lizarra (aka Pact of Estella) in September 1998.

The Pact of Lizarra, subsequently known as the Lizarra – Garazi Agreement as it was later signed again in the French Basque town of Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port), highlighted two historical developments in the realm of contemporary Basque politics in Spain: Despite the apparent differences between the premises of the Ardanza Plan proposed by PNV and those concluded by HB in Iruñea, these central poles coincided with a national construction process within the framework of a definitive solution for the armed through a similar pattern followed in Northern Ireland (Letamendía 2001: 175). Moreover, the inclusive character of the pact towards any Basque nationalist social and political movement, going beyond a mere gesture of dialogue between antagonist poles (the PNV – EA and HB), and its exclusionism of the Spanish unionists consolidated the sense of Basque national unity, creating a polarized political field between the Basque nationalists and others (Leonisio, Molina & Muro 2017: 40). This new political scenario also constituted an exceptional interruption of the ‘anti-terrorism front’ unity pursued and maintained since the Ajuria-Enea pact (Tejerina 2015: 9). ETA’s announcement of an indefinite ceasefire on 16 September 1998, a precondition by the PNV and EA to sign the Lizarra – Garazi Agreement, generated excitement among *abertzale* left cadres. B-III/04, who was in the executive board of the *abertzale* left in this period, narrates this process and describes the atmosphere of excitement after a challenging period of confrontation and political isolation:

“There were already the dynamics of common efforts in advance that helped [us] visualize that a joint project was possible. Moreover, it was the era of the absolute majority of the PP, an offensive against *Euskal Herria*, against the signs of identity, so it was also a kind of defensive strategy. I mean, an enemy unites many times more than a strategy. Also, at that time, certain concessions that were to be developed from the Statute of the Basque Country were blocked. It was an offensive against *Euskal Herria*; identity, media, that [detention] of the National Board... [...] There was a sensation among different *abertzale* sectors, like ‘damn, what’s happening to us?’. So, undoubtedly there was enthusiasm. The creation of *Udalbiltza*<sup>241</sup> was also a fascinating element, but there was a very fast process. [...] There was an objective hurry, which was that we - not only us but the PNV and also the EA in 1996-97, saw a limit and a structural crisis. The framework was worn out; the statute was expended. Then there were conditions for a new *Txiberta*, which, after all, and undoubtedly in a different manner, was what the Lizarra-Garazi became.” (B-III/04)

This atmosphere of excitement, however, turned into a state of anxiety and disappointment with ETA’s execution of Lieutenant Colonel Pedro Antonio Blanco in Madrid in 2000 after a 14-month ceasefire.

---

<sup>241</sup> The Assembly of Basque Municipalities of the Basque Country, approved by the PNV, EA, and HB.

The Lizarra-Garazi Agreement was shelved after the assassination of Fernando Buesa, PSE-EE spokesperson in the Basque Parliament. The new *abertzale* left coalition, *Euskal Herritarrok* (Basque Citizens), did not take a different position from similar assassinations prior to the agreement and, as a result, the other principal signatory of the agreement, PNV, resiled. The dissolution of the Lizarra – Garazi group resulted in the reactivation of ETA’s armed campaign from where the organization had left off but saw an even stronger and firmer involvement of the state in the anti-terror struggle.<sup>242</sup>

### 8.2.3. The Post-Lizarra period: Militancy under the PP – PSOE anti-terrorism pact

The reason for the failure of the Lizarra – Garazi process is a controversial question among the Basque nationalist sectors. The main parties of the agreement accuse each other of not having complied with obligations and duties. Scholars who have studied this period of the Basque conflict in detail (Letamendia 2001; Lecours 2004; Muro 2008; Murua 2017) mention the difference in expectations that both parties and their bases had and the objectives that executive cadres pursued. One of the first-generation of ETA members in this study, *B-I/06*, who was one of ETA representatives in meetings with the Spanish government upon her return from exile, describes weaknesses in the performance of both parts, the PNV and ETA, which consequently held up further advancements in the process:

“[How was your interpretation regarding the Lizarra-Garazi process?] Man, I think Lizarra-Garazi was an opportunity, one of the best opportunities that the Basque movement has ever had. We all let it fade away, ‘all’, that’s to say we made many mistakes. I think it was the best time the Basque people had for finding solutions, but the commitments of some, the fears of others... I don’t think we gave it enough time to...[progress] It began to rot because of the lack of willingness by some to take risks, especially the PNV because the organization was willing to move forward, but the PNV wasn’t comfortable. [...] I believe that we worked there -‘we’, especially the organization more than the political movement, in too much haste. We wanted or needed victories on the spot! We wanted achievements right then! We wanted the achievements to become visible. So, I don’t know; we lived it from time to time. I think it failed because of that [...] I think the PNV has more responsibility because they didn’t want to take risks, but we also did many things that... [were wrong] Well, above all, hurry and also [it was like] a laboratory project that had no viability.” (B-I/06)<sup>243</sup>

The failure of Lizarra – Garazi and the increase of *kale borroka* against non-nationalists in the Basque Country brought the opening of a new cycle of violence. In late 2000, two major parties in Spanish politics, the PP and PSOE, both furious with the PNV for having signed an agreement with whom they called ‘anti-democrats/violent’, concluded their anti-terror collaboration by signing the Agreement for

---

<sup>242</sup> Despite the official call by the signatories of the pact addressed to the Spanish and French governments (Mees 2003: 140) and José María Aznar’s public appearance through which the Spanish Premier confirmed that he had personally authorized ‘the contacts with the Basque liberation movement circles’ (*El Mundo*, 3 November 1998), and an unfruitful secret meeting between the Aznar government and ETA representatives in Switzerland, it is difficult to characterize the Lizarra – Garazi pact as an open peace negotiation between two antagonist sides of the conflict but rather an attempt to accomplish a unified Basque nationalist consensus eliminating the long-cultivated perception of *democrats* versus *violents* among Basques (Lecours 2004: 102; Murua 2017: 47). It is also true that although the Basque Country experienced a relative atmosphere of peace in the absence of ETA activities, the so-called ‘popular struggle’ through *kale borroka* actions by the *abertzale* youth continued at considerable levels (van den Broek 2004: 714-715; also see Table 1 and Figure 1 in de la Calle 2007: 436-437).

<sup>243</sup> For the evaluation of the Lizarra – Garazi process from the PNV’s perspective, see Anasagasti, I. (2003) *Agur Aznar. Memorias de un vasco en Madrid*, Madrid: Temas de Hoy, pp. 281-302; Arzalluz, X. (2005) *Así fue*, Madrid: Foca, pp. 477-512.

Freedoms and against Terrorism (Letamendia 2001: 181); this eventually brought about a return to further strict police and judicial measures against the MLNV.

ETA's resumption of the armed struggle by increasing its military offensive and attacks since the end of Lizarra – Garazi period followed the same political objective as before: putting pressure on the Madrid government by paralyzing the political and social life for their respective representatives in the Basque Country to force them to sit at the negotiation table. *B-III/06*, who joined ETA right after the collapse of the Lizarra – Garazi process, describes this period of the armed struggle:

“After Lizarra-Garazi, ETA decided to recruit people, and they gave me a call, and well, I went. ETA wanted to open a session of armed struggle for several years and was recruiting people; they also came to me. [...] After Lizarra, it [*violence*] went all out; it went all out again! Well, it was like, ‘now you’ll see how we’re going to...[*hit*]’ Another phase of armed struggle began to reach negotiations for peace again, to put pressure on people to sit down and talk again, so there would be no more armed conflict.” (B-III/06)

The government's response against the new offensive by ETA showed no signs of waning. With an absolute majority in the Spanish Parliament, the governing PP embraced a broader understanding of ETA, which included all radical nationalist circles loosely associated with the armed organization: The entire network of ETA's connections, including civil society organizations, mass media, and political formations as well as individuals were now simply branded as ETA members. An extensive illegalization process was launched, the Basque language newspaper *Egunkaria* was banned and closed, and *Batasuna* was outlawed in 2003. The PSOE-PSE unconditionally supported the PP's illegalization strategy within the scope of the new anti-terrorism pact (Lecours 2007: 106-107). Comprehensive police and judicial persecution was put into practice through mass detention operations and macro judicial trials against anyone connected with those organizations. The disproportionate repression, in some cases, forced young *abertzale* left militants to make vital decisions:

“I had to run away because the police came for me. There were large raids in those times. After some documents containing names were found and revealed in France, there was a raid. Apparently, in that raid, an individual gave my name during an interrogation session in a torture room, and I had to escape. The police came to get me and... That was in 2005. [*So, in your case, were you forced in a way?*] Forced... Well, I had some previous contact with the organization, but I was serving here, living a normal life. When that happened to me (it was already possible that it could happen anytime, that I could be arrested or would have to leave all this to flee from the police or repression, I was lucky to escape), then I decided to join the organization fully.” (B-III/03)

Although previously she never carried out a political activity for ETA, *B-III/01*, who was arrested in another European country due to an international arrest warrant since 2004, also confirms joining ETA as one of few possible options if she had ever been released from prison at that time:

“[*And had you been released, what would you have done?*] Look, I tell you the options, then what I'd have done... Either you stay and live there, which wasn't my option, or you go to *Iparralde*, but it wasn't possible because they'd arrested five colleagues of mine, from the summary of my case, or you go to the armed organization. [...] [*Would you have joined the armed organization then?*] [*Laughing*] The only option left was that one, but it remains unfulfilled, right? [*Laughing*] We'll never know, but anyway. [*In any case, the organization is on stand-by today, is not it?*] Yes, it was like that at that time too, but there was that option on the table.” (B-III/01)

New conditions of militancy on either side of the *muga* were harsh and risky for both legal and illegal actors in this period. As stated by B-III/03 above, militancy for those who were in a 'legal commando' was extremely stressful due to the possibility of being detained at any moment and facing torture and abuses. Becoming a *liberado*, militancy in its *professional* form, supposed to overcome this constant sense of fear and anxiety. However, the new conditions in the underground were much more challenging than those of the previous generations:

"[And underground life, how is it? Conditions and communication...] Very limited, very limited. Well, radio, you listen to the radio, but very few newspapers, very few. Information is incomplete because you get letters from time to time, but very few. [A research made on the previous generation confirms that the militants in the underground have very few opportunities to return to their home and speak with the family...] No, nobody would even think of such a thing. Because the first thing they do when someone leaves for underground is to watch the house, watch the family, see what movements they make, see if they meet him." (B-III/02)

"Our period was something different; at that time, the family didn't go to see you nor... I, at least, had nothing, no contact with anyone, neither by mail nor any other means. You could write letters from time to time, but anyway, it would be unlikely. Physical and phone contact, nothing. The telephone never, and physical, well if you spent a long time, it's possible. I didn't spend much time, so... I didn't see anyone. But, indeed, we haven't been long either. People [who had been for] five years or ten years, maybe were entitled to have a weekend with their mother, but that's probably only once in every five years." (B-III/06)

This period during which judicial persecution gradually articulated with police repression and the political isolation of the entire *abertzale* left community was commonly named the 'period of illegalization' (*ilegalizaciones*). The utmost level of division between Spanish constitutionalists and "anti-democrats/violent" sectors (all components of the KAS structure) created an enormous level of fatigue for the *abertzale* left, making it impossible for them to have any space for political and social activities. (Otegi in Munarriz 2012: 106). Under these conditions, any movement within the *abertzale* left collectivity, especially the youth movement, which usually involved in public events, had to take extreme precautions as if they were an underground organization:

"What was already clear was that the state had some control mechanisms that were very difficult to avoid, and we used to take security measures like going by car, I don't know where to take the train, then I don't know where to go... You had to go around and around a thousand times to get to a place. But in the end, they [*the police*] found out. The militancy had also been very hard because you couldn't use mobile phones, to send an email, you had to go somewhere, you're constantly taking precaution measures. But, we're a popular movement; we're not an underground movement. So, how do you organize public events taking security precautions? Of course, it's difficult, especially if you want to organize people and the youth, and that youth also responds to the activation of a popular movement. You can't do it completely from the underground. So, you have to take some security precautions knowing that at some moment you [*may*] have to face the consequences too." (B-III/05)

Finally, the period effects of the 11 September 2001 attacks reshaped the perception and meaning of 'terrorism', putting any similar armed activity in the same pot no matter who the perpetrator was. Spain was one of the western countries which experienced a similar incident on 11 March 2004 in Madrid. If cooperation between France and Spain from the late 1980s significantly weakened ETA's military and logistic structure, the approach of the global fight against terrorism after 11 September 2001 was a definitive loss in their propaganda war. It was precisely in this period that both ETA as the

avant-garde organization of the MLNV and banned political forces of the *abertzale* left seriously began to question the effectiveness of the armed strategy in the new political panorama:

“I think there was a change in 2001 and 2004, 11-S and 11-M. During the 1990s, there was, and I think that, especially in Lizarra-Garazi, the strategy was wearing out; that is to say, it was socially depleted. We went forward, the *abertzale* left responded, remained standing, kept the pulse, visualized the imposition of the states, but there was a social debilitation. Then there was also an organizational debilitation with the illegalization process. [...] I believe that in 2001 and 2004, there already was another more in-depth reflection, both in *Euskal Herria* and within ETA itself, on the effectiveness of the armed struggle. In those analyses, two elements converged: the understanding that armed struggle as a political instrument was increasingly delegitimized among certain sectors and could become an obstacle for the accumulation of forces in Euskal Herria, something that from 1995-97 with the Democratic Alternative had been considered essential. [...] In the 1990s, as you’ve said, there was a leap because new fronts were opened, and the strategy of negotiation and that of fronts by the organization was used to open, to move the scene forward, so to speak. At this time now, we’re talking about much more selective use of armed struggle, much more political. That’s on the one hand. And on the other hand, international cooperation was also undoubtedly accelerated, and the fight against terrorism was specialized and modernized, and you notice that.” (B-III/04)

Despite all these conditions, which made the participation and militancy in the armed struggle politically and socially far more challenging, the group truth reproduced among *abertzale* left militancy continued to legitimize the use of violence for political ends. The voluntary participation in ETA or the youth organization of the *abertzale* left, Segi, continued in this generation. An analysis of the motivations and justifications of involvement in militancy among this last generation MLNV cadres sheds further light on the topic.

### **8.3. Motivations and justifications of politico-military involvement after Lizarra-Garazi**

Some militants in this generation (B-III/01, 06) overtly express that the human capital that the *abertzale* left had been enjoying in previous decades diminished significantly despite the commitment of core cadres to the struggle. As in previously analyzed generations, in this generation, too, there were specific motivations for which individuals justified violence or, at least, found it functional in order to achieve their ultimate political goals. Regardless of society’s general view on political violence, these motivations and justifications were based on the group truth and the desired project to be completed once the belligerent state was overcome.<sup>244</sup> The essential change in motivations and justifications for the use of violence observed from the mid-1990s onwards was the following: Before this period, violence as a ‘defensive’ means was justified mainly due to ethnic survival concerns with the armed struggle deemed as the only option. After this period, however, the armed struggle came to be considered a functional tool, among other available mechanisms, to achieve further political and social gains, which the *abertzale* left considered essential for its future political project. The main motivations and justifications of violence expressed by actors are classified as follows:

---

<sup>244</sup> This does not necessarily mean that the MLNV and its military wing ETA did not take into consideration the assessment of different sectors within Basque society towards political violence. This subject will be discussed in detail in *Chapter 10*.

Motivations Interviewees	Symbolic and physical violence of the State	Gains and positive contributions through the use of violence	Judicial and political repression - Illegalizations	Fight for rights and self-determination (Political objectives)	The image of ETA and legitimacy of armed struggle	Others (Social justice, gender equality)
B-III/01		✓	✓	✓		✓
B-III/02			✓	✓	✓	
B-III/03	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
B-III/04		✓	✓	✓		
B-III/05	✓		✓	✓		✓
B-III/06	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Before a comprehensive analysis, it is convenient to underline two fundamental *sine qua non* that each militant seems to have interiorized, whether involved in the armed struggle or not: high sentimental devotion and readiness for self-sacrifice to the cause, and assuming the fact that the MLNV adhere to an exclusively politico-military strategy.

### 8.3.1. Collective memory and strategy of the armed struggle and group loyalty

The emotional aspects of militancy involvement once again appear as the primary condition in the decision-making process. All individuals in this generation mention that they began with sporadic participation in social mobilizations and gradually evolved into a more organized and dedicated involvement through those groups and movements, which revitalized such mobilizations. As observed among previous generations, the emotional attachment to the cause and the medium of contribution grew equally stronger, reaching the highest manifestation of dedication and sacrifice, that was joining ETA. The collective memory constructed within the *abertzale* left universe regarding ETA as the avant-garde actor of Basque national liberation (B-III/03) and the only power responding to Spanish (and French, although expressed to a far less degree) ‘colonial rule’ (B-III/02, 06) led some militants to choose the armed struggle in their further militancy trajectory:

“I saw ETA as the only organization that truly faced the savagery that the state did. Against the oppression we experienced. The only organization that faced it. So, I admired them a lot. [*And the step you took from Jarrai to ETA, how did it happen?*] Well, I can’t talk about that. [*I do not ask about technical details like how exactly it took place, but how did you make that decision?*] Ok. How did I decide? Well, as I’ve said before, for me, ETA was the only one who truly faced Spanish and French oppression. Political organizations are necessary and fulfill a role as important as that of ETA. But my militancy, I don’t know if I felt it or I thought about it more in ETA than in *Herri Batasuna* or *Jarrai*. The fact of facing the enemy attracted me much more.” (B-III/02)

Facing the enemy undoubtedly requires resorting to violence with fatal results, referred to as the utmost sign of determination and dedication to the cause in some studies (Azurmendi 1998; Reinares 2001; Elorza 2005; Leonisio, Molina & Muro 2017). Nevertheless, as leading anthropologists who have worked extensively on ETA violence underline (Zulaiaka 1988; Alcedo 1996) that the value attributed to the ETA militant is not related to their predisposition and capacity of killing, but instead it is performed through the militants’ sacrificial act, confronting death in its broadest sense by taking up



arms. The experience that *B-III/04* had before going underground best illustrates the standards of sacrifice and devotion to the cause required to join ETA in this period:

“Well, I’d become a mother before I went underground. I left my son; his father was in jail. We had our son while he was in jail. He’d been in the underground, then he got arrested and imprisoned by the Spanish state, there I got pregnant, we had our son, and then I went to the underground. So, I left my son with my parents; the father was released from prison after two and a half years, then my son went to live with him. He’s now underground again. I left prison, and soon he went underground [silence] Puff, for me... Well, you can imagine: I left a one-year-old baby, on top of that period, I wouldn’t have left my son for anything, and I left my son.” (B-III/04)<sup>245</sup>

This commitment, which requires similar acts of sacrifice due to prohibitions and immense judicial persecution, consolidates itself throughout a long militancy period. One observes that the justification process for the use of arms also consolidates itself from the beginning of this initial stage. Questions asked in the early period of militancy regarding the presence of violence as part of everyday politics (B-III/01, 02, 05) are part of the construction of meaning by one of the sides of this conflict, the *abertzale* left. Armed struggle, in this sense, is exclusively carried out by ETA, but it is assumed and accepted as a political strategy by the entire community. Once again, *B-III/04*, who served in many organizations of the *abertzale* left before joining ETA and going underground after the collapse of the Lizarra – Garazi Agreement, explains this perspective:

“[What did you think of the idea of armed action for political purposes at that time?] Well, I didn’t consider it. You find it legitimate, and you don’t think about it when you’re involved in political activity as a base militant; at least I didn’t think about it. I’d gotten acquainted; I’d grown up in that vision of politico-military strategy. So, you don’t think about the coordinates of a politico-military strategy, you simply believe in them and go forward, and you continue with them. [...] I’ve passed all my militancy in social and political movements, and it’s once I went underground or..., during that time I also did things in... [ETA] -well, I don’t know if I can talk about it- [laughing] I mean that there’ve been many years, in ETA too. [Do you mean that before going underground, you were already in a legal commando of ETA?] Eh... I’m not going to answer that! [laughing] You have to keep in mind that you can be in ETA, but the *abertzale* left is a set of organizations, and among them, ETA is present too, which functions following the coordinates of a politico-military strategy. So, you don’t have to join ETA to be aware of what the coordinates of a politico-military strategy are and to value them or not. Throughout the entire process of my militancy, especially after 1995, when I took responsibility in the *ikasle abertzaleak* and later in *Ekin* as well as other organizations, and finally in the leadership of the *abertzale* left, it was independent of whether or not I was a militant in ETA, my political coordinates were politico-military coordinates” (B-III/04)

As insistently emphasized by the interviewee, any individual who has ever been in any organization of the *abertzale* left and maintained ties with this community does not question the use of violence and the *avant-garde* organization which exclusively exercises it. Questioning this logic leads typically to questioning the group truth, which ends up in disaffection and disassociation from the group loyalty (Arriaga 1997: 175-176). Any attitude contradicting this perspective –that is to say, publicly questioning politico-military strategy, finds no room within the collectivity.<sup>246</sup> The legitimacy attributed to this

---

<sup>245</sup> Exceptional as it may sound, the interviewee mentions three similar experiences among other female ETA militants in prison in France. These cases correspond to what Alcedo calls other forms of ‘death’, which are exile, prison, and the militancy itself, as they oblige the militant to get away from places and people with whom they are emotionally attached (1996: 205).

<sup>246</sup> Except for early divisions, which were mostly due to ideological discrepancies rather than disaccord on the politico-military strategy officially adopted during ETA’s Third Assembly in 1964 (Ibarra 1987: 64), the first organized publicly critical voice

politico-military strategy by *abertzale* left cadres is objectified from the early militancy period and, therefore, military engagement in ETA is considered coherent:

“You see armed struggle justified and, in fact, we’ve never questioned the armed struggle, and it’s true that we’ve always supported it. And when the time comes, that is to say, the time of choosing the option of armed struggle comes, you back it or... [*you quit?*] Well, it seems to me that we did the most coherent [*thing*]; we did what we had to do. Also, it’s true that maybe we’ve contributed less than we wanted, but anyway. Once the time passes, you make a self-criticism” (B-III/03)

Following this logic, the continuity of armed struggle today is interpreted as a natural consequence of the perception of reality in the Basque Country as an oppressed people under Spanish and French rules. Institutional and judicial pressure insisting on the rejection and condemnation of the armed struggle by the *abertzale* left political parties constitutes an unavailing effort in this sense. B-III/01, who was a young militant in the new *abertzale* left political formation *Sortu* when she was interviewed, explains the position she, as well as her colleagues, have with this respect:

“Well, I say it calmly here, but... I’m from *Sortu*, and I don’t reject any violence. Another thing is what you have to say so as not to be banned. Within a few years and with the way being paved here, the truth of what has happened must prevail. And when that time comes, nobody will say that. We will say ‘ETA has existed because here there’s been oppression and political conflict.’, and *Sortu* will work on that discourse, but at this moment, it’s necessary to say that violence is rejected because if not, they ban you [...] Well, I’m sure that you go and talk to any spokesperson and they’ll tell you ‘I’m not going to reject any violence if it’s in defense of a nation.’ I just can’t do this. I mean, it’s not compatible with my ethics. [...] I’m sure that personally few people from *Sortu* will tell you that they reject violence. Another thing is that strategically we’ve decided not to use it. And the fact that I don’t reject it doesn’t mean that I don’t admit that it creates suffering. Conflict creates suffering.” (B-III/01)

Considering this and other affirmations made by members of the MLNV, one can affirm that the continuity of the armed struggle is directly related to its functional role in the political sphere. Indeed, both past and present practices of violence are still deemed legitimate -and being legitimized continuously- by the community, which undeniably constitutes a fundamental condition for military engagement in terms of normative justifications. Nevertheless, as noted among individuals in this generation, it is the functionality of violence for achieving a desired political project (i.e., utilitarian justifications) that largely shape the organizational position.

### **8.3.2. The interpretation of violence and political progress in the Basque Country**

Analyzing the motivations and justifications that MLNV militants in this generation express concerning violent practices for political ends, some elements which once came to the forefront by previous generations are still stressed. While such justifications as physical violence by the state and the historical role of ETA’s responsive violence are occasionally mentioned, these occupy far less space in comparison with previous generations. Political prisoners and unfair judicial sentences (B-III/03, 05,

---

among the *abertzale* left (*Herri Batasuna* and then *Euskal Herriarrok*) began to emerge in the 1990s, and a definitive split of those who publicly disagreed with the violent strategy took place with the formation of *Aralar* (Mees 2003: 131, 208) by the historic *abertzale* left leader Patxi Zabaleta after the end of ETA’s long ceasefire in 2000.

06), torture claims, and alleged execution of ETA militants during police raids or in custody (B-III/05) constitute the main arguments in justifying the violence exercised by the MLNV in this period.

Regarding the symbolic imposition and violence via state institutions, one observes a continuous transformation compared to the situation of ETA members in the 1980s, who were seemingly the last victims of linguistic persecution by the state. Indeed, almost all interviewees in this generation confirm that they attended *ikastolas*, where they studied exclusively in Euskera. The linguistic question, however, still occupies a key place in the ongoing Basque conflict as a vital part of everyday social encounters. Although its institutional normalization through education and schooling has seen an almost uninterrupted advancement –except the controversial approach during the Aznar government calling for the halting of Basque-medium schools considered a threat against Spanish national unity (Echeverria 2003: 353), the social conflict based on ethnic identity still manifests itself to a certain extent in the linguistic positioning of each identity group (B-III/05).

While advancements made in the linguistic, cultural, bureaucratic, and political spheres are widely recognized and generally evaluated positively, the *abertzale* left community found them insufficient and non-functional for the Basque national development. The development and progress made in these fields are usually attributed to the politico-military strategy without which they would have been impossible. This perspective creates an in-group consensus about the idea that progress in the development of the Basque identity is not a result of the central Spanish government's concessions but instead a result of the ongoing struggle against this colonial power.

“In our environment, at least, what I saw was that even though the situation changed a bit, it was because of the achievements of the fight, but what people here demanded was to be able to decide on their future. [...] As you've said before, older generations, those who lived Franco's era, with the struggle that they fought, we perhaps got something positive [*out of it*], like *ikastolas*, for example. We had the opportunity to learn in Euskera, which was already legal in our time. That's maybe what the Transition has brought, less to Navarre, but the three provinces; it brought a statute, some quotas of power. Some progress had already been achieved, but anyway, the thing is that with a decree issued by Madrid, things could easily go bad.” (B-III/03)

This interpretation emphasizes the functional role of violence in pursuit of political objectives, which would only culminate with the right to self-determination of the Basque people and a sovereign Basque state in the future. For this reason, such an approach also indirectly manifests the idea that future accomplishments must also be through a struggle, which constitutes one of the main motivations of violence mentioned by individuals in this generation.

### **8.3.3. Objectives and functionality/dysfunctionality of violence in the period of illegalizations**

Qualitative data on violence exercised by the last generation MLNV cadres primarily concentrates on two fundamental questions, which merits analysis in order to understand the use and rejection of arms. The viability of the armed struggle in accomplishing the ultimate aim of the MLNV (i.e., self-

determination and Basque national sovereignty) and the political cost of the armed struggle appear as two fundamental parameters in this new context. As clearly noted, any individual who has carried out political activities in the politico-military structure of the MLNV in this period mainly refers to these two parameters when justifying the continuity and discontinuity of political violence.

As already seen in this chapter, the idea of promoting the principle of self-determination through the proposition of the Democratic Alternative was launched in the mid-1990s in the Basque political context and found the first concrete grounds of debate during the Lizarra – Garazi process among Basque nationalist political actors. Although this process had raised hopes and enthusiasm within the *abertzale* left community, its collapse in 2000 and subsequent judicial persecutions equally provoked a great sense of disappointment and anger. Under those political circumstances, ETA opted for a new cycle of violent confrontations to force the government to sit at the negotiation table and bring the military confrontation into a political solution:

“At that time and until today, until this last process, I’ve understood the armed struggle as an element that allowed one to open new doors in *Euskal Herria*, to build the democracy, not to build my political model; for building my political model, I already have my social organizations, my feminist organization, and others. The armed struggle, especially starting from the Democratic Alternative, is an instrument to negotiate, to open options for debate in *Euskal Herria*, the right to self-determination, certain democratic conditions, in one way or another, to open a new democratic framework. So, as I deepen my political militancy, this becomes essential for me: I can’t build other social relationships if I don’t have political and economic sovereignty. And to have political and economic sovereignty, I not only have to get the right to self-determination and take over as a country, but I also have to have the right to carry out political activities. Because starting 2000-2003, the independence movement doesn’t have the right to carry out political activities. So, for me, this is a necessity, right? Maybe it’s not a necessity because of hunger, maybe not a necessity to be able to speak in *Euskera*, but yes, it’s a necessity to implement myself as a project. So, that progress of mine as a militant makes this [*armed struggle*] more necessary. And when in 2003-2004 I took my leap into the underground, I had this very clear” (B-III/04)

The above-quoted lines emphasize the constructive function attributed to violence, which was once deemed vital for its defensive function. The Basque ethnic survival, which once was the primary concern of the *abertzale* left community, now seems to have taken a step forward by establishing a political project (Basque nation-state). As briefly mentioned above, the progress and development achieved for Basque national autonomy under Spanish rule, primarily attributed to the politico-military strategy led by ETA, fuel the idea that the ultimate objective of the MLNV would only be achieved by following a similar pattern. Both the current constitution as well as binding laws for the autonomous administration system, giving the final decision to the Spanish central government on such issues as education, cultural and financial activities (B-III/03, 04), are considered a set of impositions on Basques. This political structure in effect and legal framework, as well as the ‘constitutional patriotism’ fiercely defended by the PP and supported by the PSOE against such initiatives as Plan Ibarretxe in the Basque Country and *Nou Estatut* (New Statute) in Catalonia (Pastor 2012: 156-158), are, therefore, conceived as obstacles on the path towards national construction of the peoples of Spain:

“...you see people moving around, and you gradually develop something like ‘Damn, if we want to achieve something, we have to move around! If not, there’s nothing here!’ You’re also gradually aware of the oppression a little bit, what’s an oppressor, and the repression. Why? Why do we want it [*independence*]? You gradually find out the rights they take away from you [*Did you feel oppressed in a certain way? Did you perceive it in society?*] Well, at the beginning maybe you don’t feel like ‘oaaahh!’ but sure, then you keep seeing things, and you say ‘sure, I can’t decide, here we can’t decide what we want or what we want to study or whatever we want or how we want to speak.’ You go into a store, and they don’t understand you, or they tell you ‘[*speak*] to me in Spanish!’ In the end, you experience such things, but when you gain some awareness of it, you say, ‘Damn, day by day they’re oppressing my rights!’ [...] Sure, in the end, they’re our rights, and we’re the ones who have to defend and fight for them; if not, the enemy isn’t going to tell us ‘oh here you are, look, take them!’ So, the people must rise and say, ‘we want this and that...’ or, if not, they’ll gradually take what we have away too.” (B-III/05)

The perception of reality of the Basque Country as a nation oppressed by Spain and France, however, corresponds to specific political and social questions almost exclusively fretted about the *abertzale* left community. When their attitude and opinion about other Basque nationalists like the PNV and EA are taken into consideration, one may argue that the *abertzale* left considers themselves unique patriots and the real protectors of the Basque nation (Mata 1993: 179-181). Under such considerations, any judicial or police repression against this community is interpreted as a direct threat against the Basque national universe and values. Any action taken against the *abertzale* left collectivity, in this logic, is related to oppression and a lack of democracy from which the Basque people suffer:

“Today, it’s becoming clearer that here there’s a conflict and that *Euskal Herria* is an oppressed nation that has neither civil nor political rights. Two weeks ago, they arrested six members of *Segi* too.” (B-III/01)

Finally, the increasing repression that the *abertzale* left sector is subjected to has had a dual effect at an individual and strategical level. Judicial persecution of civil elements of the MLNV and disproportionate prison sentences for those who exercise exclusively political activities appears to affect the decision-making process when it comes to joining the armed struggle and any other form of militancy within *abertzale* left organizations:

“...you cut yourself off because there’s repression, or it makes you stronger, and you get on the same level as them to continue with what you believe in at that moment. What I want to say is that with repression, some say, ‘uhh here! [*no way*]’ and others say ‘Go for them! We won’t let them [*do whatever they want*]!’” (B-III/03)

In strategical terms, prohibitions made a significant percentage of the *abertzale* left community further question the functionality of violence to achieve political objectives. In a period when the use of a specific type of actions, similar to those by ETA, were condemned at an international level, any legal counter-action to defeat these organizations had a certain degree of political legitimacy. This conjuncture, *zeitgeist*, favored the state, implementing other repressive mechanisms in the fight against ‘terrorism’ while on an almost daily basis restricting the MLNV’s radius of action.

“They had the *abertzale* left outlawed; that was also one of the key factors for me. If you don’t have legal, political activity -although there was the illegal one- they’re in command; they are the ones who make laws, who remove the old ones and who make new laws. And Europe... There has never been any state that intervened in Spain because they were always saying, ‘it’s a question of terrorism; you have a free hand in everything!’ So, in some aspects, there the enemy had a free hand, a green light to do what it wanted.” (B-III/03)

“The forms have changed. [Before] We were younger too [laughing]. There’ve been many reasons, and time has changed, society has changed, we all have changed; so, following the same current doesn’t give us many results. [Do you think the armed struggle had already lost its legitimacy?] The situation was at a standstill; everything was bogged down. ETA had the capacity to carry out the armed struggle for a long time, but... There were also many arrests by the police, many high-ranking people and such had fallen.” (B-III/06)

Being confined and not being able to politically and socially advance, the debates over the use of violence within the *abertzale* left community seems to have become more frequent and intense. The new leadership of the *abertzale* left sought an attempt to put an end to the politico-military strategy. Arnaldo Otegi, himself a former ETA militant and later one of the most influential figures within the political wing of the *abertzale* left before and after the Loyola peace initiative, revealed that there were two different –and antagonistic- visions within the *abertzale* left regarding the ‘exchange value’ attributed to the armed struggle: On the one hand, there were those who (Otegi himself among them) sought the end of armed activity in return for minimum democratic bases for political advancement; on the other hand, there were those who insisted discussing the end of the armed activity if only there were a concrete agreement regarding the future of the Basque Country (in Munarriz 2012: 37, 41, 56-57). Although it has not been revealed explicitly, as some individuals affirm (B-III/03, 06), there were similar debates within the armed organization. B-III/04, who went underground right before the Loyola negotiations (2005-2006), mentions that it was not only the MLNV’s political wing but also the armed organization itself which had passed through an intense period of evaluations regarding the effectiveness of politico-military strategy pursued:

“When you’re in ETA, you assess the incidence of armed struggle and each of the actions and armed fronts in a much more critical way. I’ve always thought about the armed struggle because I moved in those parameters at the time that I was in the political leadership of the *abertzale* left. But for me, it’s been paradigmatic to verify that I’ve found a much more critical and specific vision within the organization than what we did in the MLNV. [...] ...when in 2005-2006, the organization made different considerations on the effectiveness of the armed struggle, another way of understanding the negotiation process that yielded the results of Loyola, that yielded results to what’s being done today.” (B-III/04)

These circumstances gradually led the *abertzale* left community to seriously consider an alternative for accomplishing its ultimate objective, a change from politico-military strategy to a solely political one; this would mean the definitive elimination of the armed struggle and, as a consequence, definitive dissolution of ETA. Opening such a debate among the cadres of the *abertzale* left set off a confrontation between antagonistic visions concerning the use of political violence as a medium. The experience of living through the collapse of the Loyola peace process after ETA’s large-scale bombing action in Madrid Barajas Airport in 2006 and the subsequent assassinations of Inaxó Uria and Isaías Carrasco increased the tension between these two poles, almost provoking an internal rupture within the community. Otegi reflects this tense internal debate and position defended by those who were in favor of ending the armed struggle, among whom was the *abertzale* leader himself:

“...we needed to understand that through political and democratic channels it would be possible to build sufficient popular majorities to achieve our objectives, and that, therefore, the persistence or maintenance of the armed struggle, in addition to granting the State a perfect excuse to distort the political conflict and place it within an ‘anti-terrorist’ scheme, prevents the accumulation of forces from achieving our goals. [...] ...we argued that the disappearance of ETA’s armed violence was a necessary condition, although not by itself sufficient, to build what we then called a genuinely effective strategy. [...] ...there are logical tensions around the contents and the debate agenda itself because, while some of us defended the need to address a reflection without limitations (frankly speaking, also about our position regarding the armed struggle), other colleagues considered that this was not an issue that should be dealt with because it competed exclusively with ETA. We, on the contrary, even though it was clear that decisions regarding the armed struggle corresponded to the organization that practiced it, considered that the open debate affected the strategy and, therefore, it was up to us to also set our position on the political-military strategy.” (Otegi in Munarriz 2012: 98-101, 105)<sup>247</sup>

This long and intense debate, which ended with adopting a new strategy based on the use of exclusively political means, paved the way for a gradual withdrawal of ETA from the Basque national contention. After ETA’s declaration of the ceasing of its armed activity in 2011 and the subsequent definitive dissolution of the organization in 2018, the bilateral characteristics of violent conflict have merged into a political one in which the monopoly of the use of coercion has returned to the state.

---

<sup>247</sup> Basing on the firm stance demonstrated by those who have insisted on their position against the use of violence for more efficient political progress in the Basque national liberation process, it may be affirmed that the power position between the political and military cadres within the MLNV has changed in this late period. Those who have imposed their firm backing to ETA through Oldartzen text, as well as the position naturally defended by the military cadres, seem to have given up their position in favor of the continuity in politico-military strategy. Those who have defended a politico-military strategy in Mugarri text against Argitzen defended by those who have opted for a change towards a more pacifist approach and ETA’s opposition to any change in politico-military strategy in effect, as Otegi affirms, have finally had to incline towards the position introduced through Argitzen, which has largely been supported by the bases of *abertzale* left (see Munarriz 2012: 111, 144).

## 9. The Kurdish National Liberation Movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### 9.1. The political atmosphere during the early socialization of third-generation cadres

The socialization period of those PKK cadres who joined the guerrilla from 1999 onwards mostly corresponds to the late 1980s. The spiral of physical violence, which had rapidly been growing since the 1980 coup, reached its peak in this period, referred to as a state of low-intensity war (Özçelik 2006). Indeed, the dramatic increase of the intensification of Turkey's Kurdish conflict, especially between 1992 and 1998, is best observed through the following figures, which illustrate the total number of casualties during the decade of 1990s:

Table 8: Number of casualties in Kurdish conflict in Turkey between 1990 - 2000

	Number of deaths per year											
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	TOTAL
State-based violence	245	304	1518	2117	3980	3076	3464	4292	1952	1390	174	22512
One-sided violence (PKK)	61	49	216	404	205	96	17	19	23	26	0	1116

Source: The University of Uppsala, Department of Peace and Conflict Research<sup>248</sup>

The dramatic escalation of violence by both sides in this period is directly related to constant operations/actions and retaliations between two main groups: 1) The Turkish state and non-state forces, which may be divided into two sub-groups; a) Turkish security units (military and police), and b) paramilitary actors (quasi-official *korucus* and state-sponsored Kurdish *Hezbollah* and *JITEM*<sup>249</sup> members) and; 2) the PKK's rural guerrilla and urban militia. Due to the characteristics of policies implemented by both sides of the conflict, Kurdish society became polarized, and the social impacts of the conflict continued to spread towards Turkish metropolises.

The rapid escalation of the conflict and the involvement of new actors, following the strategic plans adopted by the two sides, also provoked a new series of social consequences under which upcoming generations socialized. Social conditions shaped by the evacuation of villages in rural Kurdistan and, consequently, continuous migration flow towards Kurdish cities and towns where the PKK activated its urban propaganda means through popular *serhildans* were among the decisive

<sup>248</sup> According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP - Department of Peace and Conflict Research at the University of Uppsala), the total death toll in Kurdish conflict in Turkey between 1989 - 2019 is estimated at 31,955 people, a vast majority of whom lost their lives as a result of violent confrontations between Turkish state security forces and the PKK guerrilla. To access to available database and research methodology used in data collection, see <https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/>

<sup>249</sup> *Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele* (Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism) is an organization largely involved in counter-guerrilla activities in Turkey's Kurdish conflict and committed a series of extrajudicial methods according to the report (1998, see Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 & 3.3) issued by the Human Right Foundation of Turkey, available on: <http://en.tihv.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Ra1998HumanRightsReport.pdf>



factors. These practices are underlined by third-generation cadres whose socialization period corresponds to the atmosphere of turmoil in and outside Kurdistan.

### 9.1.1. The perception of Kurdishness, the State, and the PKK in the 1990s

In this generation, Kurdishness as a national identity is frequently defined as ‘sympathizers’ having strong emotional ties while lacking an intellectual and ideological approach or knowledge towards national history (K-III/01, 02, 04, 05, 11, 12) except for a few cases in which ideological commitment is also emphasized (K-III/06, 07). This emotional state is related to the conservation and protection of ethno-symbolic elements (K-III/03, 04) and the treatment they are subjected to as a result (K-III/01, 02, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 10, 11, 12). The state of ‘consciousness’ and ‘ideological organization’ of this emotional sense of belonging is attributed to the struggle of the PKK.

The expansion of the armed struggle through the 1990s intensified the propaganda struggle by both sides of the conflict. Especially in certain regions where religious creed, overwhelmingly Sunni-Shafi'i Muslim, played a determining role in the social order, anti-PKK propaganda succeeded for a considerable period. *K-III/11*, who was born and grew up in a rural village in Garzan province, describes the negative image of guerrillas at the time among people and the change it has passed through:

“In that period, due to the impacts of conservatism -I have a dim recollection of those times- for example, we were scared of going out at night. Our elders –well, not in our family, were saying ‘don’t go out at night!’ In Kurdish, ‘*ji derve*’, which means ‘outsiders’; ‘they come and take you away!’ There’re outsiders; they come at night, don’t go out!’ Recalling this memory now, it sounds a bit tragicomic; however, it tells you about the psychology, the approach there. It illustrates to you what kind of stuff the state, the system drum into peoples’ heads. I mean, as if they [*guerrillas*] were kidnappers from whom one must be scared. Maybe they didn’t use the concept of terror in that period but succeeded in cultivating this perception of it. Of course, this underwent a change during the process; it underwent a rapid change.” (K-III/11, male, 27, Garzan<sup>250</sup>)

The PKK’s political aim in the 1990s was to leave the state as a mere military entity without any popular support by organizing Kurds against its political and social authority. Growing civilian protests against the state, the increasing number of people appealing to the PKK’s popular tribunals instead of state tribunals, or influential traditional leaders highlighted the rapid increase in social support that the PKK sought (Romano 2006: 75; Marcus 2007: 176-178).<sup>251</sup> The PKK’s main goal was to fight against ‘all colonialist institutions’ and replace them with its own ‘absolute authority’, as stated in the party’s official journal *Berxwedan* published in 1993 with the title of ‘Authority is ours’:

---

<sup>250</sup> Despite the commitment of total anonymity of any information, some interviewees in this generation refused to declare their place of birth (K-III/02, 03), while others agreed to provide this information in terms of their province (K-III/01, 04, 11).

<sup>251</sup> Pointing out the long tradition of ‘legal pluralism’ in Kurdistan, which goes back to the Ottoman period, under a public court system (*halk mahkemesi*), Taş argues that the PKK offers a more effective and traditionally recognizable mechanism for resolving disputes than the Turkish official courts (2014: 80). While the ratio of inclination among Kurds living in northern Kurdistan towards the PKK’s revolutionary justice system and Turkish state justice system is unknown, the rapid expansion of rivalry courts in the region is a sign of the increasing authority of the PKK in certain zones of northern Kurdistan.

“The resolutions adopted by the PKK, which are formed in concrete proposals such as ‘political parties will shut down [*their offices in Kurdistan*], all their administrators and members will resign, the newspapers serving the Turkish special war will not be distributed, TVs will not be watched, schools serving as colonialist assimilation institutions will be shut down, teachers will resign, gambling will not be allowed, all the officers of the TC [*Turkish Republic*] will leave Kurdistan, no one will attend the courts of the TC, no one will join the Turkish military service, taxes will not be paid to the TC, journalists will be allowed to come to Kurdistan only with permission’ are implemented in perfect order. Our people have been devoting all their efforts towards implementing these resolutions.” (*Berxwedan*, 15 November 1993, cited from A.K. Özcan 2006: 202)

The Turkish state, on the other hand, was determined to prevent the consolidation of ties between the PKK and its Kurdish population at any cost. This goal provoked an unprecedented presence of the state’s security forces in the region: In the mid-1990s, the total number of security forces deployed in Kurdistan was approximately 300 thousand, some 50 thousand of which were village guards (McDowall 2004: 439). As a consequence, the period corresponding to the socialization of third generation constituted the most intensive years of the conflict, with more than 30,000 casualties, including more than 5,000 civilians (Aydın & Taşkın 2017: 395). A recent study carried out by *KONDA Research and Consultation* illustrates the devastating dimension of the conflict among those Kurds: While 39.1% of the general population suffered economic losses, a total of 25.1% had to emigrate or leave their place of residency. The rate of those people who had at least one immediate family member killed or wounded account for 18.3%, and 5.1% of the same individuals also stated that they have ended up in a police station or court at least once (KONDA 2011: 139-140).

The evacuation of villages and curfews aimed at controlling every aspect of Kurdish rural economic and social life was the most effective form of military intervention by the state. As commander Karayılan points out, massive military deployment and the strategy of total war in Kurdistan harmed the guerrilla, whose consequences were best observed in the practices carried out in 1995, as well as the social structure of northern Kurdistan. The Turkish military’s strategy based on ‘territorial control’ made it difficult for guerrilla maneuvers and access to primary products (2014: 298 - 301). The remarkable success of the PKK in organizing rural Kurds resulted in severe damage by the retaliatory Turkish military assaults.

Nevertheless, the state’s short-term military achievements through indiscriminate acts of violence impacted the collective memory of Kurds, guaranteeing the continuity of national traumas among the following generations. According to the Democratization Report issued by the center-left CHP, a total of 3,428 villages and hamlets were evacuated, forcing approximately 70,000 families or 400,000 people to emigrate (Yayman 2016: 62). The traumatic impacts of such practices and a strong emotional attachment to the Kurdish identity in their *new lives* in large cities are best narrated by *K-III/04*, who was born in a rural village in the Botan region where guerrilla forces had easy and frequent access after the 15 August 1984:

“The fact that we emigrated to big cities didn’t mean that we broke up with the movement; I mean, we tried to preserve our own reality in a moral sense. Sure, even as a child living within the system<sup>252</sup>, it was challenging to preserve or feed your moral values. Despite all attacks by the system, neither my family nor the general environment lost consciousness of the Kurdishness they’d gained and always tried to preserve it. Along with this, there also developed a certain level of reaction against the enemy. Because the land where I was born, grew up, or the house I was born in, or so to say, the places where I lived throughout my childhood memories were all burnt down in front of my eyes; they were all destroyed. It was the end of a period for a human being; it meant the end of my childhood dreams. Then an inner questioning developed, like ‘why?’ We were children then, and we asked ourselves those questions even as children: ‘why did they take away from us the place where we passed our childhood or the land where we were playing, where we were free?’ or ‘why did they burn down our villages?’ We had similar questions in our minds while being incorporated into the system.” (K-III/04, male, 36, Botan)

In the 1990s, the PKK also extended its politico-military activities to those urban towns and cities where Kurdish patriotism enjoyed strong social bases. This atmosphere of urban unrest, best reflected through the PKK-led *serhildan* movement amid the political and social turmoil of the 1990s, also coincided with the socialization period of individuals in this generation. K-III/05, born in the Kurdish capital of Diyarbakır (Amed), explains how this conflictive atmosphere in his childhood impacted the formation process of his national identity:

“For Kurds, the 1990s particularly are an unmitigated period of *serhildans*; it was a period during which the PKK reached out to millions, that it became part of society and in many places that society rose and joined the struggle. Our period was this period; this is the moment when we got to know the struggle, the period during which we were searching for ourselves. The question you asked most was this one for sure: What’s going on? What is the meaning, the reason for all of these that we experience? [...] As a consequence, the moment that you begin to ask these questions, you come up with new questions; your Kurdish identity comes up. You begin to question the reality of the state; you question the reasons that these things take place in a certain region within a state. It takes you to your national identity, to your past; ‘What’s our history? Who are we?’, you search for an identity for yourself to which you can belong because you feel that you’re different. For example, do you live in Istanbul? You may find yourself in a state of being an ‘other’ since you’re a Kurd. [...] This led us to define ourselves first: ‘who am I?’ and you reply, ‘I’m a Kurd!’ ‘Why am I subject to these because of my Kurdish identity?’ Well, even though you don’t experience that directly, that war, those massacres and catastrophes occurring around you, it leads you to question the reality you experience. Consequently, you gradually separate yourself; you gradually realize that you’re the ‘other’.” (K-III/05, male, 38, Diyarbakır)

It is also noted that the continuity of the conflict was a functional mechanism of national reproduction. The participation of previous generation individuals in guerrilla lines and their ‘martyrdom’ in confrontations against the ‘enemy’ appears to have been a strong motivation for the emergence of national consciousness. K-III/07, who was born and grew up in a rural village near Doğubeyazıt, a district of Ağrı (Serhat Province), affirms this interpretation and claims how such occurrences provoked positive changes in the PKK’s image within a relatively short time:

“In my immediate family, there was generally a consciousness of Kurdishness because there were people who joined [*the guerrilla*] from my family; from my mother’s side, two of my aunts and my uncle had joined, and another aunt of mine had fallen martyr in 1994. I mean, within the family, there was a certain sense of *yurtseverlik* [patriotism], that is, Kurdish national consciousness. We grew up within that family environment. [...]

---

<sup>252</sup> The concept of ‘system’ (*sistem* or *düzen* in Turkish), frequently used by all individuals in the Kurdish field, refers to any sort of life other than guerrilla life, which is the closest to the genuine Kurdish lifestyle described by Öcalan. In his two-volume work, *Nasıl Yaşamalı* (How to live), Öcalan theorizes a detailed framework for an ideal life to be pursued first by the PKK guerrilla as avant-garde liberation force of the enslaved Kurdish people whose social and national relations are defined as “on thin ice, slavery-like, blind, straitlaced and whimsical” (Öcalan 2009 [1996], Vol.2: 92-93).

...in the past, especially in the 1990s, some people were subjected to considerable state violence; people whose villages were evacuated, burnt down, people who emigrated from their villages. From this point of view, people have a very different perspective towards the PKK; they see the PKK as a savior, like 'if there's a movement which would save us one day from the tyranny of this state, that's the Kurdish movement', they think. Because, indeed, the practice that the state exercised there left deep marks on people." (K-III/07, male, 32, Doğubeyazit)

People in remote rural villages had frequent encounters with guerrilla members in their daily economic activities, primarily based on animal husbandry, in the highlands of regions such as Serhat, Botan, and Amed (K-III/04, 06, 07, 09).<sup>253</sup> However, it was not as easy to portray a similar positive image among urban Kurds in towns and cities. Being from the city center of Van, K-III/08 affirms that while some sectors in society were interested in the struggle, in such a cosmopolite environment where Kurds, Turks, Persians, and Laz coexisted, a considerable amount of people saw the PKK as a terrorist organization. She points to the *Newroz* celebration in 2008 as a turning point with this respect:

"[When you were telling me about your participation in 2008, you said you joined the guerrilla after a turning point. What was that?] I mean, it wasn't a personal turning point [especially] for me; I've meant for society in general. For example, the increase in *yurtseverlik* had to do with the *Newroz* of 2008, in my opinion. Because after the 2000s, it was possible to celebrate a bit more freely in Kurdistan, the ban on *Newroz* had been lifted. I'd never been to a *Newroz* environment before 2008; my family didn't have such a thing. However, the *Newroz* celebration area was near us; people were passing by our home when they headed there; we witnessed this every year during the 2000s. But they prohibited it in 2008. The reasons didn't sound quite logical to people. It was political, and for the first time, I wanted to participate in that *Newroz*. I'd participate along with a group of friends. It'd be celebrated in the market center, but people couldn't get there. Before we went there, people had already been dispersed. They exercised such intense violence on people. After having experienced that violence, seeing the remains of it, of course, I had the chance to follow through cameras, televisions, and internet afterward, I consider that this provoked a turning point in society." (K-III/08, female, 28, Van)

The two fundamental elements on which the polarization was based in this period were the *korucu* system in rural Kurdistan and Islamism in those regions where religion conditioned and shaped social life. The Village Guard system had been designed as a temporary structure; however, by time, it turned out to be a permanent measure, becoming a unique option for preventing one's village from being evacuated. A rapid increase in the expansion of village guards, which figured a total number of 14,818 in 1988 and 62,186 only seven years after in 1995 (Özar, Uçarlar & Aytar 2013: 56), illustrates that a significant number of Kurds converted into *korucu*. Some others (K-III/04, 06, 11), on the other hand, turned down this request despite its severe consequences:

"I'm from the district, from Lice. Ever since I could remember, there had been an organization in my childhood years; the state had never been able to knock sense into people completely. I remember that during the period of converting people in village guards. They held a gun to someone's head, he was saying, 'kill me, I won't become a *korucu*!', and I don't think he was saying such a thing just for saying it; he fully believed in this. For example, they were telling his wife, 'tell your husband to take up arms. Otherwise, we'll kill him!' and a woman never accepted such a thing. In the end, family relations are quite strong ties. The woman was saying, 'Kill him if you like, but I don't let arms enter in my house!' As I've said, some were conscious. Ok, maybe it wasn't a hundred percent on the whole, but people, in general, had that political consciousness." (K-III/06, female, 38, Lice)

---

<sup>253</sup> K-III/11, who was born and grew up in rural Garzan, underlines this fact by pointing out that, unlike the Serhat, Botan, Amed and Dersim regions, his native Garzan, due to its geographic characteristics, did not offer suitable grounds for guerrilla activities, which, in his opinion, was one of the reasons that organizational activities were relatively weaker in that period.

Polarization in urban centers, on the other hand, was distinctive. Although some second and third generation of PKK militants affirm the presence of armed militia units in urban areas, violence in the form of unidentified extrajudicial killings and kidnappings was common. The Kurdish Hezbollah became one of the prominent organizations against PKK-affiliated circles or sympathizers and put Islamist pressure in regions where religion was a powerful social mechanism:<sup>254</sup>

“The environment where we were studying was Kurdish, but our fight was against each other; on one side were *Hezbollah* supporters and on the other *Apocu* supporters. [...] ...they kidnapped young girls because they weren’t covered; they raped and then killed them. All that we experienced in that period in Kurdistan, or maybe it was only in some regions, was progressively spreading.” (K-III/01, female, 34, Garzan)

“Garzan is conservative, and for this reason, it became a target of a special war policy that I mentioned. You know, it was also converted into the center of *Hezbollah* counter-guerrilla activities in the 1990s. Batman, Silvan, Siirt, Amed... These places, especially Batman, even today it’s the center of *Hüdapar*, a kind of continuation of Hezbollah supporters. We can label them as ‘moderate Hezbollah’; they’re organized that way, they’ve got a dense population there. However, this isn’t easy to organize unless there are radical religious bases” (K-III/11).

Finally, by the end of the 1990s, the image of the PKK and that of the state changed inversely. Throughout the 1990s, the PKK rapidly evolved into a political actor in the center of a set of active social movements with a growing influence in Kurdish society (Aydinoğlu 2014: 43). In an atmosphere of catastrophic confrontations and excessive violence by both legal and illegal actors, the Kurdish movement proved itself as an alternative authority against and despite the state. The PKK and its activities were eventually perceived by a considerable number of Kurds with an emotional attachment to resistance. *K-III/10*, an Alevi Kurd who mainly defined themselves as Alevies rather than Kurds, describes the image of the PKK among her community in this period:

“The PKK among the community was something like that; it was a legend, a myth indeed. It was what we saw in our childhood, too: If there are a few nice things, if some things were going well, it was thanks to the PKK, to the guerrilla, those people who sacrificed themselves in this way. That’s how parts of society were at the time; the political stance of the society was being critical with the past, but also [*asking*] ‘how will it be?’ for the present. Also, the symbols created by the PKK, personages the PKK was emboldening, created hope for us. This was the period in which I joined.” (K-III/10, female, 34, Maraş)

While the PKK was expanding its social influence through various channels, mainly militarily but also through political and social activities to support the political participation of women and youth, the image of the state as a unique and indisputable authority became gradually eroding. The widespread belief in the impossibility of fighting against the state, observed among the testimonies by previous generation cadres, began to change considerably:

“I joined in 1999. Society had achieved a certain level in terms of national consciousness. The state of hopelessness seen in the past had been overcome a bit. Both the environment I was living in [*Kurdistan*], as well as Kurdish yurtsever groups I’d met in the metropolis of Istanbul, showed themselves cognizant, hopeful for the

---

<sup>254</sup> In a recent comprehensive study, Yeğen *et al.* show that, like any other parts of Turkey, most people in Kurdistan (Kurds, Zazas, Arabs, and Turks) define themselves as ‘religious’, between 70% – 90% on average, with the exception of the Alevi community in Tunceli (Dersim) where the average rate is 37%. Among those who define themselves as ‘religious’ some 40% indicate that they are ‘religious/highly religious’. This rate reaches up to 42% among Kurds, 50% among Zazas, while it is around 26% among Turks, 43% among Arabs, and 1,1% among Alevis. (2016: 71-72, 77-78).

future and freedom. Among people in Kurdistan, a certain level of consciousness developed. That perception of 'we cannot make it through, we cannot achieve, we cannot win, we cannot challenge the state', developed before 1978 or after the suppression of previous Kurdish revolts, was broken a bit. It wouldn't be fair if we say 'completely', but that perception was broken up to a certain degree." (K-III/09, male, Siirt, 37)

By the end of the 1990s, the PKK converted into a primary oppositional reference, not only militarily but also with its increasing involvement in political and social questions in Kurdistan. The following decade, after the detention and imprisonment of Öcalan, saw serious debates and newly introduced ideological concepts to this end. The new party program and objectives made the PKK significantly different from the previous periods. These changes also determined the basis on which the organization and the state would seek a political solution to Turkey's long-lasting Kurdish conflict.

## **9.2. Change in paradigm: The State – PKK relations after 1999**

The late 1990s and early 2000s left their mark on the PKK as the party went through significant structural and ideological changes after the capture and imprisonment of its founding ideologue and historical leader Abdullah Öcalan on 15 February 1999 in Nairobi, Kenya. His capture was considered an 'international plot against the PKK leadership' among cadres (Karayılan 2014: 393)<sup>255</sup> that lit the fuse of dozens of suicidal self-immolation protests in Turkey and European capitals (Grojean 2012: 163-164). These protest actions were also a strong indication of Öcalan's leadership image within the party in the late 1990s (Aydinoğlu 2014: 96). Öcalan's arrest, at the same time, was the precursor of attempts to a political solution for Turkey's Kurdish question.

### **9.2.1. A new approach towards Turkey's Kurdish question on the eve of the 'New Republic'**

The decade of the 1990s in Turkish politics was full of short-lived coalition governments that lacked sufficient goodwill and determination to tackle the Kurdish question through political means. Apart from Kurdish legal parties such as HEP, DEP, and HADEP, Turkey's chief prosecutors were behind the figures promoting the highly popular Welfare Party (RP - *Refah Partisi*) led by Necmettin Erbakan, whose active political life was definitively interrupted on 28 February 1997 (Aydın & Taşkın 2017: 431-432). The appearance of new generation cadres of political Islam in Turkish politics in the new millennium to be led by the Mayor of Istanbul during the mid-1990s, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, would soon make him the most powerful political figure of the 'New Turkey'. Erdoğan first dealt with the established laic military guardianship, paradoxically defenders of a democratic republic with their secular stance, before claiming his consolidated power base.<sup>256</sup>

---

<sup>255</sup> Since Turkey's crisis with the Syrian government in 1998, claims of an imperialist plot were pronounced numerous times by the PKK officials (Serxwebûn N° 202, October 1998: 12-13; also see the following Serxwebûn N° 203, 204, 205).

<sup>256</sup> The rise and takeover of political Islam in Turkey, and the role of both domestic and international actors, is far beyond the content of this study; however, in political terms it is closely connected with political and social occurrences observed during the 1990s and 2000s in Turkey's Kurdistan. The presence of communal religious sects and orders in varying power and

Unlike the previous-generation political Islamists, the new generation reformists represented by the Justice and Development Party (AKP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), who initially refused to be labeled ‘Islamist’ but rather ‘conservative democrats’, preferred to follow a moderate agenda, making efforts on a consensual agreement on controversial issues in terms of individual rights and liberties, avoiding confrontation with Turkey’s traditionally secularist military (Cizre & Çınar 2003: 327). While this political strategy attracted the popularity of Turkey’s ‘conservative democrats’, particularly those once inclined to center-right parties among whom Kurds occupied a considerable place<sup>257</sup>, the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century only witnessed partial legislative reforms of the VII Section of the 1982 military junta Constitution which regulates the ‘freedom of expression and dissemination of thought’, amended by the last coalition government before the AKP’s takeover.<sup>258</sup> Further steps concerning the Kurdish question, however, corresponded to the presidency of Erdoğan’s once common-cause fellow Abdullah Gül, who declared the state’s new political perspective on this matter.

The most significant action taken by the AKP government in this first mandate was the lifting of the long-lasting state of exception (known as *OHAL - Olağanüstü Hal*), which had been implemented in 1987 and continued throughout the years of low-intensity war in the 1990s with controversial practices (Bahçeli & Noel 2011: 106), for which no official entity could be held accountable. The relative period of calm from 1999 to the mid-2000s, thanks to reforms and practical changes in security measures, which were part of Turkey’s ongoing EU membership agenda, and the unilateral ceasefire declared by the PKK were fragile due to factors such as the detention of ‘peace groups’ (Bozarslan 2009: 103-104). Kurds welcomed all such developments with a certain skepticism. Anti-democratic and repressive interruptions frequently cast their shadow upon seemingly unprecedented steps towards democratization, making them look superficial.<sup>259</sup>

---

influence and allegiances or disputes between those and the central government has largely shaped the political itinerary of the state regarding the Kurdish question. For a comprehensive analysis on the emergence, expansion and political influence of Islamist communities in Turkey, see Çakır, R. (2002) *Ayet ve Slogan: Türkiye’de İslami Oluşumlar*, İstanbul: Metis Yayıncılık.

<sup>257</sup> One of the common fallacies about Kurds in Turkey is the belief that Kurds are overwhelmingly religious, and the religious orders and leaders continue playing an absolutely dominant role in shaping Kurdish politics. Undoubtedly political Islam occupies a significant place in Kurdistan. However, political and social dynamics through which Kurds have gone in the recent decades contradict such a static vision towards Kurdish social and political life (Yeğen *et al.* 2016: 89).

<sup>258</sup> Legislative changes, especially those made on Articles 26 and 28 regulating the freedom of expression and dissemination of thought which includes freedom of the press, were particularly important as they included linguistic bans on ‘those languages banned by law’ which were contradictory to the binding clauses of the European judicial institutions and bodies (for the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey in English, see [https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution\\_en.pdf](https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf)). Nevertheless, the concession of other fundamental rights such as education in languages other than Turkish (Constitution Art. 42) as well as the articles of the Political Parties Act which ban languages used for political propaganda activities other than Turkish (Art. 43) and claims on the existence of minorities and activities seeking to preserve, promote, and disseminate languages and cultures other than the Turkish language and culture (Art. 81) remain as controversial issues.

<sup>259</sup> In this period, almost all cultural institutes, publishing companies, and other associations in Turkey’s Kurdistan remained within the PKK’s orbit. This also reinforced the PKK’s position as a unique dominant political movement in northern Kurdistan. Daily circulation of propagandistic news turned the imprisoned leader of the PKK into a national symbol, reflecting Öcalan’s imprisonment as the imprisonment of Kurds and his freedom as the priority condition for the freedom of Kurdistan (Marcus

This fragile relative state of peace did not last long. In June 2004, from İmralı prison, Öcalan finally halted the ceasefire, complaining about the lack of dialogue and serious initiatives. While the PKK launched a guerrilla campaign in northern Kurdistan, the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H - *Yurtsever Devrimci Gençlik Hareketi*) organized a massive *serhıldan* in Diyarbakir upon the death of rebels by Turkish soldiers in March 2006 (Marcus 2007: 295) and the allegedly PKK-linked Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK - *Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan*)<sup>260</sup> carried out violent attacks in western Turkey. This spiral of violence, although to a relatively less extent, continued until the end of the first decade of the 2000s.

### 9.2.2. A new approach towards Kurdistan's Turkish question in the era of the 'New Party'

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s did not bring an immediate change in terms of the PKK's socialist ideological line. The Party Program and Statue, approved in the PKK's 5<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1995, reaffirmed the positive impacts of the principles of the October revolution on class struggle, especially in the colonized parts of the world, despite the fall of the Soviet regime. The misconducts of Soviet leaders, which represented nothing but a 'primitive and wild phase of socialism through Russian chauvinism', had gradually misguided it from the path towards socialism. The disappearance of the Soviet Union opened up doors for a 'creative and scientific socialism' in the era of free-thinking. On this basis, the PKK still refused other alternatives such as the 'territorial self-rule and autonomy', labeling these concepts as submissiveness to Turkish colonialism and insisted on an 'independent and united Kurdistan' by achieving 'People's Liberation Army' (PKK 1995b: 16-21, 71-72, 79-80).<sup>261</sup>

Significant paradigmatic changes within the PKK based on a completely different solution for the Kurdish question was revealed following Öcalan's capture and consequent court and prison period. Öcalan's 'Second Manifesto' titled The Manifesto of Democratic Solution for the Kurdish Question (*Kürt Sorununa Demokratik Çözüm Manifestosu*) consisted of his three-volume defenses before the

---

2007: 292-293). The fact that this newly constructed narrative of Kurdish reality was constantly reproduced through those mediums urged the state to intervene in them, contradicting the democratic facade of the regime in the 'new Turkey'.

<sup>260</sup> Whether TAK is an offshoot organization of the PKK or an independent radical Kurdish youth organization is disputable as the PKK has repeatedly denied any connection with TAK while not condemning actions carried out by this group. Most interviewees taking part in this study stress the independent and more radical character of TAK, but, at the same, they torridly justify such actions carried out by their fellow TAK 'hevals' (comrades). On the other hand, those interviewees who left the PKK precisely in this period affirm that TAK was founded as a special unit out of HPG guerrillas upon the capture of Öcalan. These affirmations may be linked with the First HPG Conference, celebrated in June 2001, in which detailed debates were held over the restructuration of HPG's military line—which continued in 2001, 2002 and 2003 periods, and philosophy based on the 'right of retaliation' in a '*fedayee* spirit'. (Karayılan 2014: 413, 551). It may arguably be pointed out that the creation of a new organization for such a purpose might have been a diplomatic maneuver by the PKK to prevent the reputation of its name from being defamed as a result of critical urban-space actions with a potential risk of civilian casualties.

<sup>261</sup> This is almost an identical approach to the idea of 'a democratic people's dictatorship in an independent and united Kurdistan' emphasized in the PKK's Founding Declaration (*Kuruluş Bildirisi*) (PKK 1978: 37). An interesting detail mentioned in the Party Program of 1995, however, is about the future relations with neighboring peoples with whom unity is possible only if each one is independent and free. However, by explicitly giving priority to Turkish people, the same article (31) also foresees a 'Middle Eastern Federation' approach to develop further relations with neighbors (PKK 1995b: 77).



accusations by the Turkish court. The new approach, from this moment on, would be a democratic solution to the long-lasting Kurdish question within the existing official borders of the Turkish state, in accordance with the National Pact of 1920 (*Misak-ı Milli*), based on the idea of a 'free togetherness' under a 'democratic republic' in Turkey (A. K. Özcan 2006: 125-127). Instead of fighting for an independent socialist Kurdish nation-state, the PKK opted to fight for making Turkey a genuinely democratic place, in which Kurds and Turks would coexist in harmony as equal citizens under such alternatives as autonomy or federation that Öcalan had once fiercely refused.<sup>262</sup>

The process was also remarkable in proving the authoritative capacity of Öcalan over organizational hierarchy, including military cadres and legal-political actors of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement. Following Öcalan's first call and indications, the PKK direction declared that "Önderlik shall not be rejected in any condition, and his perspective shall be implemented as it is" (Karayılan 2014: 401). However, this was not the case for some cadres who had joined the PKK with the ambition of achieving an independent and socialist Kurdistan. Jongerden and Akkaya (2011) claim that some 1,500 militants, among whom some leading commanders left the organization to form the Patriotic Democratic Party (PWD - *Partiya Welatparêzên Demokrat*). Although this attempt had no significant influence over Kurdish politics of the period and the PKK recovered its losses within a relatively short period, Öcalan's absence was challenging, as Karayılan affirms:

"In the country, that interregnum period was an absolute disaster. Once I got back [from Europe], I was having difficulty in making head or tail of what had happened and the advances made. I was simply shocked by the organizational situation, chaos, and mess I came across. The trajectory would have gone much worse unless depredations were recovered in a short time. In some ways, the organization was experiencing *a state of having been left ownerless*." (Karayılan 2014: 408, *emphasis added*)

Despite certain significant losses and confusion, the PKK managed to overcome the most severe crises of its history. New militants continued joining the guerrilla and, as understood from their testimonies, adopted the new PKK ideology with relative ease. The following section, therefore, will be dedicated to the motivations and justifications of the armed struggle by these recruits under the flag of the PKK's armed branch HPG.

### 9.3. Political socialization and engagement of third-generation PKK cadres

Individuals in this generation label their involvement making the distinction between '*emotional*', usually a faster participation period after experiencing an extremely traumatogenic event, and '*conscious*' participation, which requires a more extended period of decision-making and a certain level

---

<sup>262</sup> Comparing three historically fundamental texts, which are the founding *Manifesto*, Party Program of 1995 and Program 2000, A.K. Özcan underlines that "according to the structure of the new programme, the Workers' Party of Kurdistan is literally no longer a party of Kurdistan, but of an official Turkey. The reconstructed programme resembles the programme of a legal socialist party of Turkey within the borders set out by the National Pact" (2006: 135-136). For a detailed discussion on this matter, please see Grojean, O. (2017) *La révolution kurde. Le PKK et la fabrique d'une utopie*, Paris: La Découverte, Ch. 2.

of ideological knowledge on the PKK movement. Both patterns play a role and are closely linked to the life history of the individual in question.

### 9.3.1. The early political activities and decision-making process

The third-generation recruits illustrate higher levels of political involvement in the PKK-oriented youth activities (K-III/02, 03, 05, 07, 08, 09, 11, 12) and political parties (K-III/01, 06, 08) in comparison with previously analyzed generations. Except for one particular case (K-III/04) who got directly involved in guerrilla lines in his early ages, all interviewees affirm to have experienced a legal militancy period before eventually deciding to dedicate themselves to a *full-time professional* commitment. This latter requires a considerably long decision-making process, ranging from at least six months to a couple of politically active years. The early-age eagerness in participation in guerrilla lines (or failed participation attempts and refusals by the PKK towards voluntary demands) is usually due to the need for emotional expression of revenge (K-III/01, 02, 04, 12).

The reaction developed as a result of the presence of the *enemy* and the violence exercised in the environment that individuals go through their socialization process, prepare the grounds for an emotional affiliation in guerrilla. In some cases, this reaction culminates with a shocking, triggering factor in individuals' decision-making. *K-III/04* narrates the motivations of this emotional attachment as a result of having witnessed 'the enemy reality' at the time of his participation in the guerrilla, which coincided with Öcalan's capture in 1999:

"When I joined [*the guerrilla*], I was young, more correct to say, I was a child, I was around 14-15 years old, and I had no hesitation whatsoever. Because in my childhood, I went through that violence, I had the chance to get to know the enemy closely. Especially during the period of *serhildan* between 1992 – 1993, in Cizîr [*Cizre*], in Botan, we had the chance to see the enemy more closely. We witnessed a lot of violence exercised afterward; there was violence I'd witnessed, there were enemy activities. Sure, with the capture of *Önderlik*, it was emotional participation, and, as I had the chance to get to know the enemy, it was a half-emotional and half-conscious participation. Of course, it was my youth period; I was a child; I had a sense of revenge too." (K-III/04)

The involvement of a family member or a close relative also arises as a motivation to be subjected to violent practices by the state or state-sponsored actors. In this sense, those individuals having one or more family members who have gone to or fallen *martyr* in the guerrilla (K-III/02, 06, 07, 09, 12) coincide with those who have suffered more from state violence. *K-III/02* establishes this connection:

"My own family were passive *yurtsevers*. But there were participations within the family: during the founding years of the movement, an uncle of mine had joined the [*guerrilla*] lines. After that period, the enemy put very intense pressure on my family. There were practices of violence, torture, and unidentified murder attempts. As you face intense violence by the state during your early ages, this inevitably provokes anger inside of you. This anger, I can affirm indeed, had already caused an unconscious influence on me. In later times, you could see that in many places in Kurdistan, they were torturing families. Especially in 1992-93, you see in the cities of Kurdistan, there were enemy practices at a massacre level, raping young girls, that's to say any kind of offense was exposed. When you read and investigated these a little more within the family, and the fact that the practices your family experienced were happening more intensively in other places of Kurdistan made you feel like 'This issue cannot continue like this, you have to say stop to this!'" (K-III/02, female, 34)

A dramatic loss of a close individual as a result of enemy violence also potentially leads to a sudden decision of enlistment due to the reaction based on a highly intense emotional state. Whether technical or organizational procedures permit an individual to participate, such situations seem to have provoked suitable emotional grounds:

“I’d already decided before, but they didn’t let me join as I was too young. When I was 13 years old, my uncle was martyred. I wanted to join then, but the organization didn’t allow me, saying, ‘You’re too young, we won’t let you join, you cannot join.’ After that, when I was 15 years old, I gradually began to make regular visits, introductions, and so forth.” (K-III/12, female, 32, Tatvan)<sup>263</sup>

Most other third-generation interviewees, on the other hand, have been involved in considerably long legal activities which act as a middle point between part-time and full-time engagement in militancy and, consequently, help the individual carry out a relatively more ‘conscious’ participation.

### **9.3.2. The transition period from part-time to full-time involvement**

In most cases, at least among the interviewees taking part in this study, joining the PKK guerrilla requires a process of decision-making, which takes a certain time and depends on the personal conditions of each individual. In this legal activity phase in which most militants in this generation have passed through, it is worth mentioning that some activists (K-III/02, 03, 06, 08) find themselves in a state of extreme dissatisfaction with their level of activism and seek to make a greater contribution, a full-time dedication to the cause/struggle by converting into a professional guerrilla:

“...in the initial phases, although it’s just at a sympathy level, curiosity brings you on a quest to get to know more. When a certain level of inner-loyalty gradually takes shape inside of you towards that existing thing –one cannot exactly name it, but you get involved in a quest thinking, ‘How can I get involved in this? How can I become part of this?’ In that period, I was involved in a partial search; for a while in the youth movement, I began to work in the legal-political field. However, in its existing state, then, no matter how regularly you go –I’m talking on my behalf- it didn’t become a response that much to me the way I wished. I found it insufficient. I had a desire for a stronger involvement, more devotion of myself to the cause. And the activities in which I was involved then seemed more passive. I was desiring, pursuing a more radical involvement. After a certain period, I began regular visits to the comrades in prison. Thanks to the comrades in prison, I can say that this process reached another stage, became more official, an identity. Our dialogue with the comrades and exchanging correspondence also increased my current consciousness level. It fueled my desire to join [*the guerrilla*].” (K-III/02)<sup>264</sup>

Dissatisfaction with ongoing legal activities, however, is not always a sufficient reason for the later-stage *professional* engagement as a guerrilla fighter. The period of decision-making may require a prolonged time due to a variety of personal or organizational issues. Disapproval of immediate family members or emotional ties with them (K-III/06, 07, 09, 10, 11) may be a factor that prevents the individual from breaking away from what they pejoratively denominate ‘the system’. The confusion or uncertainty on whether the full engagement would increase their contribution to the struggle (K-III/02,

---

<sup>263</sup> K-III/06, who took part in her first hunger strike when she was 14 years old in 1991, confirms that she attempted to join the guerrilla first in 1992 and was refused by the ARGK responsible in her region for the very same reason related to her age.

<sup>264</sup> Among third-generation interviewees, K-III/02 is one of a few (the other being K-III/07) who explicitly point out the role that imprisoned cadres have played in her involvement in the PKK guerrilla.

03, 06, 08, 09, 11) also prevents the individual from easily breaking these solid emotional ties. K-III/11 labels the beginning of pre-PKK activities in the legal field as an 'activation process', which took more than half a year in his case due to several emotional and ideological motivations that had to be overcome before making the final decision:

"There was an initiation process since 2009. During that time, I carried out different tasks and activities, ideologically and politically. However, the process I'm talking about is a process of a definitive break-up. Because in 2009, I was hovering between the system and revolutionism. That's to say, not being able to break away from the system on the one hand and, on the other, not being able to break up with that other life either. [...] ...in fact, rather than suddenly coming up with 'ok, I'm emotionally touched, let me go!', I lived through an intense process of thinking, an intense process of evaluation, a state of inner war. For example, many times, I've asked myself, 'Ok, there's repression here, there's cruelty here. What they do here is wrong, now it's wrong in all its parts, but will the place I go to be a [proper] response?' [...] With such questions asked during that period as well as other factors such as family and social issues which require a different process for dealing with... This [phase] took some 6-8 months, then it was followed by a decision-making process, and now here I am." (K-III/11)

Emotional obstacles constitute one of the biggest challenges in the decision-making process, which the individual defines as 'the period of becoming clear in mind'. The impossibility of living an 'honorable life' under the conditions of the 'system', however, motivates individuals (K-III/04, 05, 07, 10, 11). After further questions about the meaning of full engagement through the armed struggle, the same interviewee describes one of the most challenging situations during which he had to make a decision in his period of 'becoming [mentally] clear':

"...participation is to choose an *honorable life* and, at the same time, one can only achieve the truth through an honorable life. I think this way. During that period of becoming clear about which I'm talking, I thought of this. Let me tell you something –since I've accepted the interview, get its full version: Before I came [to the guerrilla], I had a sentimental relationship. It was quite different from simple dating because it happens differently here among us. It's not like what we see in the system, let's say, dating for one or two months and then give it up. Especially among Kurds, there is a commitment, and once you commit to someone, it's a commitment with love. I also had a similar situation. It had a lot of influence on the period of becoming clear. However, a statement by Önderlik became the strongest factor that made my mind clear: 'Those who do not have a country cannot have love.' It's really true. At that moment, I began to think about this, 'I wonder how much true, how much moral... How could you form a family in an inexistent country?' Therefore, in my current analysis, I believe I came to my real love. [You had to give up your sentimental relation?] Yes, I did. [Was it not difficult for you, sure, it was a choice...] Right, it was a choice [silence]... Of course, it was difficult. In fact, what makes it precious is this difficulty. It's the very moment that you make a real choice. Only in those very moments can you wholeheartedly go after the truth or pursue an honorable revolutionary life. Because without sacrificing something from yourself, how on earth can you say that you're pursuing revolutionism!" (K-III/11, *emphasis added*)

A large family structure with close-knit ties appears to be a determining factor in the process of decision-making. The influence of emotional ties with family members plays two opposing roles: While the first deactivates the rational side of individuals in the process of decision-making, accelerating the potential engagement, the second detains the individual from finalizing a comparatively longer process of rational decision-making, preventing or, at least, postponing the engagement.

As previously revised, humiliating attitudes and the practices of physical violence towards family members tend to be an overly emotional triggering factor that may lead to a sense of hatred

and revenge in the decision-making individual. Once such an incident occurs, it is quite likely to light the fuse of a vicious circle: For each loss of a family member, there will be at least several potential family members who will be ready to seek revenge -and who will possibly fall sooner or later.<sup>265</sup> Some individuals who have such experiences (K-III/01, 02, 04, 05, 06, 07, 11, 12) explicitly express the sense of revenge as the first instinct before such incidents.

“The first time I experienced state violence was when our village was raided by soldiers when I was around six years old. In that incident, my father underwent torture in front of our eyes; they were holding a gun to my uncle’s throat, saying, ‘we’ll kill you.’ In that period, there was nobody left that they hadn’t tortured in our family, nor the entire village. It was because only they’d given loaves of bread to a guerrilla; they tortured the entire village for this reason. [...] At that moment, they cracked my father’s head, which impacted me a lot. The fact that they’d cracked my father’s head provoked a very different feeling inside of me. Why? Because my father was a hero in my eyes, but the head of the hero in my eyes was broken. The enemy was taking him to prison with his head cracked. One of the first points which impacted me was this, as far as I remember.” (K-III/12)

As observed among previous generation interviews, immediate family members, especially parents, oppose the political involvement of their children as they realize that the further commitment potentially leads to becoming a guerrilla cadre in later stages. This approach is commonly observed among third-generation individuals whose parents have experienced the most severe years of the conflict and have already ‘paid the price’ (*bedel*). No matter how much a family *yurtsever*, they adopt a protectionist attitude concerning the political activism of their children:

“As I’d established relations with the organization and my relations developed a bit, my family was scared. They sent me abroad twice, to England, and I came back each time. For example, when I was abroad, I always felt this too, ‘If I get back to Turkey, I’ll definitely go and join!’, I was saying.” (K-III/10)

“My family put immense pressure on me because my family had paid the price in the past. They were bombarding me with ‘Enough is enough! We’ve [*already*] suffered!’ They didn’t want it, they didn’t want it at all, because they’d already witnessed that suffering, they didn’t want to experience more suffering.” (K-III/07)

Finally, despite the emotional attachment of the family to the PKK and its struggle, which is explicitly noted on certain occasions such as guerrilla *martyrdoms* and public demonstrations, this protectionist attitude continues. Despite the initial disapproval, at a later stage, families tend to accept the decision taken by their family member, converting their emotional attachment into a politically/ideologically conscious one, as seen in the case of K-III/11:

“My family had difficulties accepting this at the beginning. They knew that I was involved in activities, but they showed a completely protectionist approach towards me. Let me tell you a memory of mine: I was at school, my father gave me a call, ‘Son, where are you?’ I said, ‘I’m at the school’, and he said, ‘Look! There’s a demonstration, and I’m there, don’t come, ok? Just do your schoolwork!’ I said, ‘Ok,’ and we came across each other head-on at the demonstration! [*laughing*] Well, it’s something like that; I mean, the issue is ‘I do it, and it’s enough for all of us! Let me do it; let me go, but let my children stay away!’ In fact, there’s a saying in the north [*Kurdistan*] too,

---

<sup>265</sup> Although there is no explicit affirmation by any generation concerning the influence of blood feuds as part of the cultural ecology of Kurdistan, one can hypothetically argue that the cultural marks of blood feuds within the scope of ‘honor’ concept are reflected in the emotional reaction of individuals. The PKK as a modern guerrilla force strictly opposes the notion of ‘revenge’ for any reason, and revenge-oriented approaches, such as suicide attacks -or *fedayee* actions in the PKK literature- are refused unless they serve for tactical benefits (Karayilan 2014: 428, 448). However, this does not mean that pre-guerrilla political socialization and decision-making phases are exempt from this cultural ecology in which the honor is exalted.

'Hit guerrilla hit, found Kurdistan, [but] stay away from my child!'<sup>266</sup> There's that issue. My family is *yurtsever*; in fact, one of the things I'm most influenced by is that, since my childhood, whenever we get news about a martyr, our house becomes a mourning house. Especially, my father, he has such a strong emotional attachment. [...] What's different now? They try to achieve a level of consciousness out of this emotional attachment. It's quite important, indeed. For example, my siblings, especially my elder sisters... Well, ok, they used to raise the *kesk û sor û zer*<sup>267</sup>, the photo of Önderlik, the PKK flag, but they didn't know that much about what they all meant. However, after I joined [the PKK], there's been a change in this matter." (K-III/11)

Practices of physical violence and the potential consequences that they may have on the members of a larger group beyond individuals themselves include close relations that these individuals establish throughout their life cycle. However, this set of relations is not the only variable determining the process. Mechanisms through which repressive measures are taken by the challenged authority also play a paramount role as they directly affect the individual's commitment to expressing political demands through the use of arms.

#### 9.4. Motivations and justifications for the use of arms among third-generation cadres

The relatively calm atmosphere of the early 2000s did not help much to deescalate political tension between the PKK and the state. Uncertainty among Kurdish *yurtsever* circles, especially concerning the destiny of the struggle without Öcalan's presence and the lack of a publicly declared precise road map for an approaching peace deal, and continuing lack of alternatives for non-violent means of struggle, led many potential fighters towards the mountains. For those who choose (or 'were obligated' as they affirm) to continue the struggle more efficiently and effectively, going beyond mere political instruments and mechanisms, the PKK and its politico-military strategy were still the only available option where they could pursue their value expectations:

Motivations Interviewees	No or limited alternatives/ Violence as obligation	Historical experience Destiny of former movements	Ethnic survival vs. denial and attacks	General and personal experiences of state violence	Correct strategy and Accomplishments	Question of woman	Freedom and honorable life	Racism and exploitation of Kurds
K-III/01	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
K-III/02	✓		✓	✓	✓			
K-III/03			✓	✓		✓		
K-III/04	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
K-III/05	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
K-III/06	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
K-III/07	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
K-III/08	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
K-III/09	✓	✓	✓	✓				
K-III/10	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
K-III/11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
K-III/12	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Analyzing the motivations expressed by third-generation individuals who decided to get involved in the armed struggle reveals several factors. The concerns for 'ethnic survival' in the presence of any form of 'state violence' which all individuals have directly experienced or witnessed at some point in

<sup>266</sup> Originally rhymed version in Turkish: "Vur gerilla vur, Kürdistan'ı kur, çocuğumdan uzak dur!"

<sup>267</sup> Literally means "green and red and yellow", referring to the three colors of the Kurdish flag.

their life-course or, at least, significantly suffered from the indirect consequences of it, continue constituting the primary motivation. As other alternative mechanisms of political participation are considered too limited and risky, which make them practically inefficient, they feel morally and politically 'obliged' to take a further step in their militancy trajectory. It would be convenient to get through some of the most notable sub-categories which appear to have shaped the individual's perception of reality in relation to their choice of armed struggle in the PKK.

#### **9.4.1. From the tailed Kurd to terrorist Kurd: Continuous consequences of internal colonialism**

A common issue expressed by the third generation of PKK militants is the continuity of derogatory attitudes towards Kurds observed both in and outside of Kurdistan. These are especially experienced in those areas where identity encounters frequently take place, like mixed neighborhoods, educational institutions, and workplaces. A dramatic increase in the volume of violence, which further deteriorated the endemic economic deprivation in Kurdistan, resulted in further immigration flows, consequently expanding the sphere where these identity encounters occur.

The consequences of internal colonialism continued to play a catalyzing role in a society where economic and social inequalities among classes had become extremely visible. It was especially the case due to such economic and structural impacts as an unfair distribution of income, high unemployment rates, internal displacements, and mobilization of the labor and unplanned urbanization as a result of progressive neoliberal policies from the 1990s onwards (Boratav 2003: 171-175). Apart from the flow of low-cost labor towards relatively more industrialized western Turkish cities, the forced migration of those Kurds who had once lived in Kurdistan's rural villages to Kurdish towns as well as big Turkish cities was another reason as a result of the conflict in rural Kurdistan through the 1990s.<sup>268</sup> *K-III/04*, who emigrated to Istanbul once his village in Botan had been burnt down, explains the attitude taken by his fellow schoolmates during his primary school year experience:

---

<sup>268</sup> It is difficult, however, to come across reliable quantitative data on this matter as studies realized by official sources and those by civil society organizations offer wide discrepancies. The report titled *Research on Migration and Displaced Population in Turkey* published by the Institute of Population Studies at Hacettepe University indicates that a total number of displaced citizens in Turkey is estimated around one million. In contrast, Keser, who himself specifically carried out sociological research in Diyarbakır, points that similar studies conducted by civil society organizations such as Human Rights Watch, GÖÇ-DER, and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey mention numbers varying from 2 to 4 million people (2010: 53). When it comes to the reasons and motivations that cause migrations, one also observes significant divergence between scholars (see Aksoy 2004; Keser 2010; Sevim & Özpolat 2017; Şimşek & Özkaya 2017). The outcomes of a research carried out by the Migration Platform in major cities of western Turkey, which host a significant number of Kurdish immigrants (e.g. Istanbul, Adana, Mersin), as well as other big cities in Kurdistan which receive immigrants from rural Kurdistan (Diyarbakır, Mardin, Batman, Hakkari, Van, Bitlis, Siirt, Muş), illustrate that those 1,541 participants underline repressive measures by the state security forces under the state of exception (77,5%), repression by village guards (65,9%), security concerns (63,8%) and the evacuation of living spaces (60,8%) as major motivations of population mobility, whereas economic concerns such as financial hardship and unemployment (12,1%), lack of opportunities for education (7,5%), health concerns (5,4%), restrictions on grazing in highlands (36%), and the embargo on nutriment (26,2%) are less important (Güvenç, Teselli & Barut 2011: 33-36). For a detailed study based on field research carried out between 2006-2007 in two major Turkish cities with a significant

"I was constantly asking questions, like 'why can't we live like normal human beings? Why are we marginalized as *others*?' Well, there was a lot of labeling. Even when we were going to school during childhood, I remember those primary school years; it was like 'these are Kurds, these are *kıro* [*bumpkin*], they came from mountains, these are Kurds with a tail' Well, there were many insults. Sure, we were new in that environment; we were trying to comprehend certain things." (K-III/04)

The low-intensity war between the PKK guerrillas and the Turkish military during the 1990s had also affected Turkish public opinion, strengthening their prejudices and discriminative attitude towards the Kurdish population, labeling them potential 'terrorists'. The daily reproduction of the ongoing confrontation and dramatic pictures from funeral ceremonies held for fallen soldiers and policemen based on deep-seated slogans such as 'all for the homeland' or 'martyrs are immortal, and the homeland is indivisible' not only further raised nationalist sentiment among Turks but also whipped up racism and hatred towards Kurds. The news labeling the PKK and its leader Öcalan as 'bloody-handed terrorist organization, head of separatists, baby killer' strengthened the highly negative perception of the Turkish public opinion on Kurds (Saraçoğlu 2011: 140). Kurds were not only a strange, 'wild' human species with a tail living in the mountains, as once looked down upon, but now they were 'terrorists' trying to divide and bring down the Turkish homeland.<sup>269</sup> K-III/01, who had to immigrate to Istanbul due to both Hezbollah violence in her native Garzan as well as financial issues her family was suffering, expresses her own experience with this respect:

"There [*in Istanbul*], as you're Kurdish, it provokes such a glance like 'you're inferior!', a despising glance. Then they tell you 'speak Turkish, speak well, so you'll be well'. Those Turks who don't know you see Kurds as terrorists. There was pressure like that on us from the Turkish side; by Turkish families or Turkish people we knew. Although they had no idea, there was propaganda, like 'the region of south-eastern Anatolia is terrorist' That's to say when that region was brought about, anyone, no matter male-female or children, they were all terrorists. [...] I also witnessed this, I had a Turkish acquaintance whom I hadn't known [*well*], and she always considered it that way. After our friendship and dialogue had deepened, she saw it through with her own eyes and said, 'there's not such a thing!' Some of them were saying, 'We knew the PKK differently. We thought they were terrorists who massacred children, who killed women', so far, and so forth. This propaganda was being spread continuously on television and radio." (K-III/01)

A similar approach based on the same prejudice and discriminative attitudes was also present in work environments where Kurds and Turks coexisted. The personal experience of K-III/07 in the western Turkish coastal province of Muğla, where he had to go to work in the construction sector along with his relatives and friends, exemplifies the conflict among Turkish and Kurdish working class:

"We worked in construction there in Muğla along with the family members and some friends. There the foreman who gave us the job was a Turk from Aksaray. He was a good person. However, there were sub-contractors from Kayseri who'd undertaken the rest of the work in the construction project. Apparently, they also set their eye on the painting job. One day the foreman came and said, 'well, folks, I'm delighted with your performance. Although you're Kurds, I have no problem with you at all; however, this foreman from Kayseri, he walked into the director's office and made a complaint saying stuff like, «These are terrorists; they employ terrorists here.» I suppose I

---

number of internally displaced Kurdish population, Istanbul and Mersin, as well as the Kurdish capital of Diyarbakır, see Kaya, Ayhan (Ed.) (2009) *Türkiye'de İç Göçler Bütünleşme mi Geri Dönüş mü?*, Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

<sup>269</sup> The mainstream media on the Kurdish conflict adopts an identical language used by the state, reproducing the *official truth* on 'separatist terrorism'. This biased approach that the media takes towards the PKK has been included in some valuable works on Kurds and the Kurdish conflict in Turkey (see Çakır 2004; Grabolle-Çeliker 2009; Aktan 2012).



won't be able to work with you anymore.' The son of my elder uncle went directly to talk to that subcontractor foreman and said, 'Why did you do such a thing? Why are you taking the bread out of our mouth? We're here, just working. You're working too, like us. Let us earn our bread, don't put a snapper'. Anyway, while discussing, they attacked us. [...] then the gendarmerie came over and took us all to into custody. Both sides told their sides of the story there. After receiving some insults at the gendarmerie station, we were released as neither side made a complaint. Once freed, we said, 'let's get back to our home, there's nothing here for us!'" (K-III/07)

Although the *de facto* cultural recognition of Kurdish identity in Turkey had begun in the early 2000s, it had little impact on preventing discriminative approaches and *otherization* of the category of Kurdishness through 'exclusive recognition' (Saraçoğlu 2011) based on the social reproduction of pejorative attributions. Visible practices of a cultural division of labor, provoking discriminate approaches towards the ethnically-oriented distribution of occupations and salary policies, were also noted by individuals who affirm to have been treated as second-class citizens. K-III/06, who went to Gemlik, a district of the western industrial city of Bursa, explains this situation:

"All of us, those who had to go to metropolises –really all of us [*hear*] stuff like 'Oh! We used to have a Kurdish neighbor; she was cleaning our windows. She was very nice!' I realized many things in metropolises; they make you feel like you're second-class. Sure, I have [*Turkish*] friends, I have quite cherished friends, but in society, they make you feel that you don't belong here! For example, a mother once turned and said to me, 'If you didn't come here, our children wouldn't stay hungry here; you come and take all jobs, and our children stay hungry!' Because you're a low-cost laborer. When you have a job interview, you don't have a home or anything in that city like them; you've gone to a metropolis, most probably you've got a family [*to take care of*], there's no bread [*income*], when the children are involved, of course, the emotional side of the issue is quite different. If he [*employer*] employs a worker for 500 thousand Turkish Liras, he offers you 300 thousand. You even don't ask how much the other one works for; you accept either way. This is a reality." (K-III/06)

Finally, how these attitudes affect social actors who are in the process of becoming conscious about their different -and disadvantaged- ethnic identity or in decision-making for their future militancy comes up as a fundamental question. Whether due to economic motivations or anti-terror measures, having to leave the place of origin and settling in western Turkey does not necessarily lead the individual to hide distinctive characteristics of their identity but, quite contrarily –as clearly expressed by some (K-III/01, 04, 06, 09, 12), such experiences may provoke counter-productive effects which later constitute one of the main reasons of active involvement in the struggle. The example that K-III/06 narrates, in this sense, is meaningful when it comes to embracing one's distinctive ethnic characteristics rather than covering them up and adopting the imposed ethno-symbolic elements:

"I'd just completed one month or something working. –Indeed, as I read a lot, my Turkish had improved. They told me, 'as your Turkish is proper unless you say that you're Kurdish, nobody would figure it out!' It's curious, I hadn't lived in Amed [*Diyarbakır*], so I don't have an Amed accent. That provoked a reaction in me, and indeed, I realized this later on, I began to put some Amed accent into my Turkish. I mean, I felt embarrassed as my Turkish was proper; I did feel embarrassed. I didn't understand it much, but from that moment on, I realized that I put an Amed accent into my Turkish. Especially when I talked to Turks and those people who think that way, I included Kurdish words in my Turkish. I kind of forced myself." (K-III/06)

Humiliating practices that individuals experience and passive reactions they tend to adopt in their pre-armed militancy period play a long-term role in their active involvement in political activities to a varying degree. Restrictions in non-violent repertoires and their lack of effectiveness under given

conditions, as indicated by almost all interviewees, encourage them to take further steps towards more commitment.

#### **9.4.2. Repression through detention and prison in the 2000s**

Despite the vague rumors about a possible peace negotiation, spreading particularly after the imprisonment of Öcalan and his subsequent calls for a withdrawal of northern guerrilla forces to the southern field in Iraq and sending 'Peace Groups'<sup>270</sup> in order to show his willingness to open a dialogue in this period, the pressure put by the state on those civilian political and social groups within the PKK orbit was still considerably heavy. Harsh security measures exercised on political activists in the legal field also were one of the motivations which drove those activists to guerrilla lines. Frequent detentions, which usually ended up in short-term imprisonments as foreseen by the Anti-Terror Law, made individuals feel they had little chance to voice their demands through legal means:

"Although the discussions took place in a different dimension in the legal field, as for my own choice in that period, there weren't many things that I could do in the legal field because the field that the state turned its steps towards was the legal field. You could carry out legal activities for one or two years maximum, but they were limited. They didn't permit you to open an association; they didn't let you speak in your language. All these weren't permitted; they were considered a crime. In addition to this, when you took a stand against this and carry out legal activities, after a couple of years, you'd find yourself in jail, you'd be sentenced to an imprisonment of 10 or 12 years. I considered that it wouldn't be that effective; it wouldn't be a long-term resistance. In fact, on this basis, too, I made a choice and took my final decision." (K-III/02)

Personal experiences that almost all individuals went through reflect and justify the motivation mentioned above. Indeed, more than half of third-generation interviewees confirm that they had been taken to custody at least once (K-III/01, 03, 06, 10, 12) or several times (K-III/05, 07, 08, 09) during their early political activities, and almost all of them (K-III/05, 06, 07, 09, 10, 12) also affirm that they were subjected to physical torture and maltreatment in custody. *K-III/12* expresses that she first wanted to join the guerrilla directly upon the *martyrdom* of her uncle when she was 13 years old, a request refused by the PKK; she was detained while carrying out legal activities at the age of 15. The interviewee explains how torture practices she was subjected to while in custody consolidated her way of thinking concerning the state and encouraged her further in her decision to join the PKK:

"I began my militancy at the age of 15; I also took part in political activities in Turkey. However, due to enemy repression, one cannot do many things. For example, after having carried out activities for three years, I got detained in the middle of the street and sent to prison. This provokes something inside of you, like, if you're sent to prison without doing nothing, then if you do something, they'd execute you [...] I hadn't yet turned 18 when I was sent to prison. Then this reality emerged inside of me: When I wanted to join the PKK, they told me 'you're too young', but when I was 17 years old, I underwent torture. While TC defends freedom, human rights, children's rights, although we did nothing, we were sent to prison and underwent torture only because we were Kurds. After that process, my road map was clearer. I saw that, whatever happened, the only solution or the only way out for me would be mountains. I decided during that process, and I ended up in the guerrilla in 2005." (K-III/12)

---

<sup>270</sup> Peace Groups have been another sign of Öcalan's indisputable ruling capacity on the PKK despite his imprisonment (Marcus 2007: 287) that has made him the indispensable actor of forthcoming peace talks, as confirmed by *K-I/01*, a high-ranking senior PKK member who took part in a Peace Group sent to Turkey from Iraqi Kurdistan.

Most of the time, violent practices targeted a large group, especially family members of those who were involved in political or military activities. Some interviews noted that their family was subjected to physical and psychological violence as a family member had joined the guerrilla (K-III/02, 06, 07, 11 12). Such occurrences also strengthened the image of the 'enemy' in individuals' mindsets. *K-III/02* narrates how she began to identify the state with those authorities whose violent attitudes her family was subjected to when their house was raided due to her uncle's involvement in the guerrilla:

"I was a little kid when the enemy raided into our house. They dragged my mom by pulling her hair. She was pregnant, and they kicked and smacked her. We were very young. When we wanted to get closer to our mum, they didn't let us. That scene always remains in front of my eyes; it left a deep impact inside of me. It was the first thing that stuck to my memory concerning state violence. [*When did it happen?*] In 1987. In that period, it was the first thing I witnessed. It was repeated many times during the following years, too, until around 1995. The state applied intense violence on my family, but that one was a directly violent act that stuck to my mind for the first time. What particularly introduced me to the concept of the state here? Soldiers and policemen in uniform. In the following years, whenever I saw a soldier or a policeman, I didn't call him 'police'; I was saying 'the state has come!' It jogged itself in a child's mind like that. That's to say, it refreshed [*my memory*] by violence, by guns, by uniforms. For this reason, surely, it wouldn't get out of my mind that quickly." (K-III/02)

When individuals participated in public demonstrations or simple celebrations of politically and culturally significant days such as the commemorative activities for the 15<sup>th</sup> August offensive or *Newroz* celebrations, as 2008 *Newroz* celebrations in the city center of Van previously mentioned by *K-III/08*, such repressive measures through violent means still came to the forefront. Maltreatment and torture practices diminished only by the end of the 1990s, as affirmed by some interviewees (K-III/01, 03, 08, also K-II/01). In contrast, the mid-1990s, which corresponded to the early political participation period of the majority of third-generation cadres, witnessed an extreme level of police violence on civilians in custody. *K-III/05* narrates his first experience in custody, which led him to question the reality in which he was living as a Kurdish child:

"My first detention took place at an age that I can call childhood. It was late 1992; there was a commemorative ceremony for Mahsum Korkmaz. In that period, everything was organized illegally; such activities were all illegal. It was the first mass activity in which I took part. A few days after that, we'd been chased down; I got detained. I underwent torture at that age. The same day, they also detained my two elder brothers. They were uncovering my eyes while torturing them in front of me; then, they were covering my eyes and uncovering theirs while torturing me in front of their eyes. Undoubtedly, this causes damage to a man's psychology, especially if you're a child. [...] This drove me to question things in later years: 'What was that which made me be subjected to that torture during my childhood? Why does such a thing they do to me give them pleasure? Why does it give them pleasure? How can a human being or state torture his brothers in front of a child's eyes?'" (K-III/05)

Similar practices and possible risks of being detained during mass police operations against the PKK's urban structures were a potentially triggering factor for those who were in the process of decision-making for further engagement. Although most individuals were not subjected to long prison terms in this generation<sup>271</sup>, their testimonies show that organized prison activities continued. *K-III/07*, who,

---

<sup>271</sup> During the post-interview sociodemographic data collection of this investigation, the jail terms of interviewees range from several days (K-III/03, 10) to several months (K-III/05, 06, 08, 09, 12) or, exceptionally, several years (K-III/07) at longest.

before joining the PKK, served a two-year jail term for his legal activities, fled to southern Kurdistan (Iraq), where he joined the PKK after being issued a warrant for the third time. He confirms that the prison environment provided him educative activities and made it possible for intergenerational interactions, offering suitable grounds for his decision-making in this period:

“There were comrades who had been in prison for 15-20 years. I had the chance to meet them. We wrote notes to one another in prison and sent them discreetly by putting them inside a sock and throwing it to the other ward. I even had a story there. There was a guerrilla comrade there who had been captured wounded in 1996-1997. [Apparently] he used to visit our house, and at that time, I was a child. I was 4-5 years old, and I remember him that then I wanted to play with his equipment, with his rifle. He was taking an ammunition clip out and saying, ‘you can play’, but when I wanted to put my hands on his grenades, he was saying, ‘No, not with that one! It’s dangerous!’ [laughing] I didn’t know that comrade was in the Erzurum prison, but he’d heard of me. Because we’d introduced ourselves to those comrades, and he remembered me. He wrote me a letter. I can only share a little piece from that letter with you, a very short note: He was saying, ‘once upon, when I went your house, you were playing with my rifle, with my grenades, but it never passed through my mind then... Now you’ve come here, and you’ve become my comrade. Now we both are on the same route.’ It was such a different feeling for me. The fact that this comrade stayed that many years in prison, and I went there and began to walk on the same path with him, becoming a comrade of him was an entirely different feeling.” (K-III/07)

State violence, however, was not related and limited to only measures of physical violence, which undoubtedly formed a significant part of the socialization processes that the individual went through. Policies and attitudes towards the symbolic elements of the Kurdish national universe also left significant imprints on the very process itself, as they were perceived as serious threats towards the Kurdish national identity and ethnic survival.

#### **9.4.3. Symbolic violence and concerns over Kurdish ethnic survival**

Practices of symbolic violence have been brought about by all generations of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement, and now the Kurdish National Liberation Movement does not constitute an exception with this regard. Although institutional bans on the use of minority languages in Turkey, among which most importantly Kurdish language, are eased through a set of legislative changes<sup>272</sup>, individuals’ experiences with their daily practices show no remarkable difference; neither does their perception of the value of the Kurdish language.

Analyzing individuals’ statements over the perception of threats and violence against the Kurdish ethno-symbolic universe, whose most visible and referred element is the Kurdish language, one observes that they express and exemplify their deep concerns by two means: *a)* the importance of ethnic survival for Kurds and; *b)* concerns over the linguistic process and value dimension of the Kurdish language. Almost all interviewees, except *K-III/08* and *10*, who had no connection with the Kurdish language in their immediate family environment, tend to put explicit emphasis on these points

---

<sup>272</sup> The relative freedom of the Kurdish language in the social and institutional spheres, in any case, are attributed to the struggle of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement, as affirmed by interviewees, which constitutes one of the utilitarian justifications for the continuity in the use of violence.

as part of their motivation for joining the PKK. *K-III/03* depicts the reflections of repression and restrictions on the Kurdish language and its symbolic reproduction mechanisms in everyday life in the public sphere and, to a certain degree, even in private life due to fear. These traumas described by previous generations, as well as current traumatogenic events to which interviewees have personally been subjected, also lead them to question their national identity:

“...you’re on the road, you travel from one village to another. There are gendarmerie stations; you’re passing by gendarmerie stations. You’re listening to music in your language, but when you get closer to the station, you switch it off; you switch Kurdish off and change it to Turkish! You ask questions ‘Why?’ and they say, ‘If they know [*that we listen to Kurdish music*], they’ll arrest us! They shouldn’t know about it!’ Then, when you speak Kurdish at home, they say, ‘be quiet! Speak quietly! Don’t let anyone hear that we speak Kurdish! Otherwise, they’ll come and kill us or torture us or arrest us!’ Fearing this, you cannot do anything. That’s to say, your life is always under constant pressure. For this reason, ‘why are people like that?’, not people in fact, ‘why are Kurds like that? Why are Kurds under such pressure?’ You grow up with these questions. Because people are getting killed in front of your eyes, your language is being attacked in front of your eyes; you cannot even speak in your language, you cannot listen to music in your language. This provokes something...” (K-III/03)

As observed through previous generations, one of the first state institutions where symbolic violence was experienced during the secondary socialization process of children was primary school education centers. Still in this period, as today, in both public and private schools, the Turkish national education system was based on a monolingual model in which education in minority languages was not allowed. *K-III/11*, who had to move from his native village to the nearest district to attend state boarding school (YİBO) due to the financial problems of his family, describes the experience he and his elder brother had during their first day at school:

“We entered the classroom, our first day, we didn’t know even a word in Turkish, nor that there even was a language called Turkish. Our daily language was Kurdish. We walked in, a strange place for us! I saw that the teacher called us, saying, ‘walk in’, so we did. If I’m not mistaken, he asked our name; I couldn’t understand much, but he asked our name, and we didn’t understand. We stared at each other. As he asked a second time, his voice raised. We stared at each other once again; we couldn’t say anything. Then, this time as he asked, he began to shout, and my brother, in a panic, said, ‘*Ev çi dibêje?*’ [what does he say?] in Kurdish, and all happened at that moment! The teacher began to beat us, saying, ‘it’s forbidden to speak Kurdish here!’ That day was the first day that I tasted blood. [*Was that the first time that you were subjected to state violence?*] It was the first time. At that time, we saw signs for the first time in what kind of place we were living. The fact that those two children went to sit down in their seats in a welter of blood was something like the beginning of a movie for us. Especially for me, to be more precise. Then, that process, in fact, mapped out my present indeed.” (K-III/11)

*K-III/09*, who was subjected to a similar form of symbolic violence while attending primary school, narrates the experience he had lived through, out of which he did not make sense at the moment that he was subjected to these practices, and emphasizes how such experiences, later on, played a role in shaping his future militancy in the PKK:

“I remember in my family, some of our neighbors were coming to visit us and the day after, they were telling teachers if we’d spoken Kurdish at home. Then the teacher lined us up in front of him; he beat us with a ruler. Or he made us clean a toilet full of feces with bare hands. [...] In my opinion, these are the worst forms of violence. You shoot and kill someone; maybe this violence looks pretty easy to you; however, the dimension of violence which would leave a mark on someone his entire life is the one that I’ve just talked about. Maybe we didn’t realize it much in that period, but the fundamental reasons pushing me towards the PKK were these...” (K-III/09)

Notwithstanding, compulsory national education was not the only realm where symbolic violence practices were applied; they were observed in society in numerous ways. As some of third-generation interviewees (K-III/07, 08, 10, 12) emphasize, in later periods when they became politically active, these practices strengthened the idea of 'freedom of Kurds/Kurdistan' from the hegemony of what they began to consider a 'colonial invader':

"In all these places you go, most of the time, you're subjected to insults. It also catches your attention. For example, some elderly people don't know Turkish; they look down upon them; this makes people feel abased. You say, 'Man, it's my homeland, I live here! It's not only Turkish people who live here; they're not indigenous here!' Doctors, teachers, soldiers, and police are all Turks! You only feel a complete invasion; you can feel that there's an invasion here. So, in this sense, I was saying, 'Kurdistan must be liberated!' When I met the Kurdish movement, this idea gradually became even more evident in my mind." (K-III/07)

Practices of physical and symbolic violence and similar practices that previous generation Kurds had suffered created a strong sense of threat towards the existence of Kurds as a people. The presence of three fundamental elements in Kurdish society in Turkey convinced Kurds to take a step forward in the struggle for ethnic survival: *a)* historical evidence based on past cultural traumas (stories over revolts and massacres that Kurds had been subjected to) reproduced in *yurtsever* circles and the destiny of other Kurdish movements which once co-existed alongside the PKK; *b)* the continuation of restrictions and repression on the Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements, and finally; *c)* the continuation of indiscriminate and disproportionate physical violence all together consolidate fear and anxiety of being subjected to a constant risk of the extermination of Kurds as a community:

"I didn't take this [*showing his rifle*] up willingly, but as I've said, we had to do so because it'd become a question of existence or annihilation. I don't want to get into historical stuff that much, but bearing in mind historical processes, the system or –let's say, nation-state or capitalist modernity, dominant powers have always had a hostile policy towards the Kurd. There is always a mentality that wants to annihilate Kurds. As I've said, you constantly face a way of thinking that recreates itself, which wants to prove its own existence by killing you. Naturally, you have to defend yourself against this. You'll die, or forcefully you'll have to intervene not to die. This wasn't anything we wished for, but was it brought to such a level." (K-III/04)

The group truth, based on the threat of annihilation of a people if not adequately defended, make individuals believe that the failure of the PKK also means the end of the Kurdish people (K-III/09). The PKK sees itself as the guarantee for Kurdish ethnic survival for which the guerrilla undertakes the task of legitimate self-defense. Öcalan himself explains the notion of 'legitimate defense' in his 'pleadings' to the European Court of Human Rights after his capture:

"If the repression is at a level where it puts one's life in danger, the most fundamental human rights are not recognized, cultural rights of the people are oppressed by force and denied, and those social forces determined to enjoy these rights are repressed and imprisoned; against the unlawful state which does not respect the requirements of universal law and against its implementation of force, popular defense units and a broad legitimate defense, including in armed form, are put into practice in and out of the country following the art of war in every single detail." (Öcalan 2001, Vol.2: 138)

The PKK and its armed forces, HPG (*Hêzên Parastina Gel* – People's Defense Forces) restructured in 2001, appear to be the fundamental and indispensable *avant-garde* with this vital task. Their absence

would put the entire Kurdistan and the Kurdish people in danger. In this narrative, once again, the PKK comes to the forefront as the key actor for Kurdish ethnic survival. This vision is stated by Mustafa Karasu (alias *Avareş* or *Hüseyin Ali*), another leading KCK Executive Committee member, in one of his writings published in the PKK's official *Serxwebûn* right after Öcalan's capture:

"Whether the youth or the elder, nobody should think about their interests because if the head is eliminated, the body will also be eliminated. If the PKK is eliminated, there will not be [*Kurdish*] people anymore. [...] We know very well that if we fall silent, the whole world will fall silent; if we fall silent, Kurdishness will be over. The guerrilla will not be silent, so our people should not fall silent either." (Karasu in *Serxwebûn* № 206, Feb 1999: 9)

For this reason, the capacity of current voluntary guerrilla military power backed by the *yurtsever* society, the existence of Kurdish identity and Kurdish cultural development, the international popularity of the Kurdish question, overcoming the problem of a lack of Kurdish leadership, which had long been stuck in inter-tribal competitiveness and conflicts, thanks to the leadership of *Önder Apo*, progress in individual and social freedoms are all considered as accomplishments that the PKK movement has achieved and, therefore, have become a hope for all peoples in the Middle East as well as the entire world in a broader sense (K-III/02, 04, 05, 06, 08, 11, 12). In this group truth, the armed struggle is considered a vital tool for Kurdish liberation, guaranteeing the protection of Kurdish identity in the face of violent threats through 'legitimate defense'. Over time, this task has been broadened following the PKK's new paradigm:

"I've thought a lot about this, 'If there weren't such violence, if we hadn't been subjected to such cruelty, would we choose such a thing?' and the answer I give each time is always the same: If there weren't such an environment of cruelty, it wouldn't be easy to choose this option. Probably I wouldn't choose it indeed. For this reason, I'd like to say that one of the most fundamental reasons that enforce our struggle is the fact that it is a legitimate defense. However, today it's far beyond it. The PKK, which once was a self-defense movement, preserving its own existence, is today a movement of establishing a new system, a pioneering movement. That's to say, it was once formed as a movement to save a people, but today it's converted into a source of hope for the entire Middle East, and in fact for the entire world." (K-III/11)

Precisely, this new system designed by the PKK's indisputable leader Öcalan is based on a set of freedoms going far beyond national liberation; as observed in the previous section, this new approach adopts a broadly inclusive perspective towards actual debates such as ecologic responsibilities and the question of gender equality. This latter, which is one of the fundamental problems, not exclusively in Kurdistan but also in Turkey, also appears to have been as one of the most attractive points catching the attention of Kurdish women from the early 1990s onwards and, as observed among third-generation female cadres, maintains its importance in hitherto.

#### **9.4.4. The question of women and intersectionality in politico-military involvement**

The Kurdish National Liberation Movement had already taken significant steps in the early 1990s concerning the inclusion of women in guerrilla lines amid sharp sexist reactions among some high-ranking regional commanders who deemed women as rear-guard elements rather than active militants

on the battlefield (Karayılan 2014: 219, 254-255). While the PKK's official discourse and Öcalan's emphasis in favor of women's liberation through a Kurdish revolution had an enormous impact on Kurdish women (N.A. Özcan 1999: 162)<sup>273</sup>, it still required time to overcome intra-party challenges with male militants who had cultural difficulties accepting the party's approach with this respect.

In the early 2000s, gender problems in Kurdish society were not eased, nor were similar challenges within the PKK; however, the progress made throughout the second half of the 1990s had constituted unprecedented steps: The YAJK I Congress, the first congress for women guerrillas, was organized in 1995 with a participation of 300 women, during which a women's headquarters and organizational system were formed, and many women were sent to other provinces where the presence of female guerrilla had been quite limited (Karayılan 2014: 335-336). The progress favoring women's position within the party structures and Öcalan's further critical focus on the question of family and women in Kurdistan continued to encourage Kurdish women to join the PKK.

Indeed, from different backgrounds in terms of their geographic origin, social class, and educational level, all of the female interviewees point out at least several motivations that have to do with women-related questions among the reasons for their enlistment. Intra-family repression and social pressure on women come up as the primary factor. As Marcus states, "In a society in which most girls were not educated beyond primary school, and many were married before the age of 15 -and then to a man picked by their family- joining the PKK might be the only way to take control of their lives" (2007: 174). Along with contradictions regarding their ethnic identity, practices of male domination in every aspect of everyday life constitutes a key factor when it comes to questioning gender-related inequalities. The perception of being 'second-class' members of society, as it is noted concerning ethnic belonging, is also emphasized about gender:

"I lived through it: Why is it that there's a distinction between women and men? Why do women suffer from that much cruelty despite all the efforts they make? She gets nothing in return; quite contrarily, she's a being who is exploited, oppressed, a being who gets beatings or hears insulting words that she shouldn't hear. You think about all these at an early age. These contradictions lead you to a sort of quest. [...] Well, [*that's*] what also pushed me closer to the PKK at some point or made me curious about *Önderlik* a bit more, like 'Who's he? What's it all about? What does he want to do?', especially about the question of women." (K-III/01)

This process of questioning the issue of gender takes place along with questioning the contradictions that individuals perceive concerning their ethnic identity, which similarly leads them towards the PKK as the only existing option. In this sense, possessing both identities, that is to say, being a 'Kurdish woman', means being in a disadvantageous position and, consequently, being subjected to

---

<sup>273</sup> The theoretical progress achieved with this respect is clearly observed when the founding text of the party (*Manifesto*) and Öcalan's early writings are compared with texts published in the 1990s. The PKK's Party Program and Statute published in the mid-1990s dedicates a significant part to the exploitation and slavery of women, pointing out the revolutionary capacity of a women's liberation (1995b: 31-32, 74).



discriminative attitudes due to both ethnicity and gender, which provokes an even stronger sense of injustice and indignity in terms of freedoms and rights.

“The Kurds have long been considered as second-class, and they still are. Well, maybe after the PKK struggle, there may be changes, but socially this has shaped the mentality we have, being deemed secondary, not being a primary member... This is the first point. Secondly, as women, we’re talking about a five-thousand-year-old system, a system that has been designed in a patriarchal form for five thousand years. In fact, all these forces, violence, state, and repression have to do with this mentality. As a woman, we’ve got a serious problem with freedom. In the society we live in, if we’re to talk about things happening 40 years ago, just as the Kurds are second-class, women are twice that in terms of second-class! There’s a struggle for this. Women suffer from a problem of freedom, and one of the most important points about my participation has to do with this.” (K-III/08)

While certain features of Kurdishness are still possible to cover up by resorting to a variety of means and the advantageous qualities of being men facilitate such efforts—at least by providing a better shield when it comes to being a target of discriminative attitudes, womanhood is practically almost impossible to leave behind or mask. What is noteworthy in this sense is that the question of gender has a strong transgenerational chain that can only be broken through a radical decision, like joining the guerrilla. As emphasized by *K-III/01*, joining the PKK also means a generational rupture by refusing to follow or inherit the same destiny as her mother and potentially her daughter:

“I was at an early age, but I took this decision, and I went [*to join the PKK*]. As I was a woman, I was a Kurd, I had no willpower, no rights in this country, in this society; so, if I’d stayed, my destiny would be like that of my mother. Tomorrow, in the future, my daughter’s destiny would be like mine too. I made this decision to prevent all these from happening. That’s to say, the PKK didn’t come and find me, but I went to the PKK.” (K-III/01)

The PKK, now both theoretically and practically committed to the struggle for radical changes in both questions, appear to be the only authority that women seeking such changes resort to:

“Well, when I was on a mission to transform this society, to be beneficial to this society, the place where I considered closest to myself was in the PKK; the place where I could do so was within the PKK, especially as a woman! I mean, in society, you’re subjected to all kinds of violence, all kinds of things; this isn’t only in a physical sense, but you’re under a psychological, corporal, physical, mental attack. Among all these, as a woman, you’re also on a mission to fight against these. In fact, what pushes you towards this mission are such things indeed. That’s why wherever you consider yourself close to, you choose that.” (P-III/03)

Despite the remarkable progress and, above all, having the total support of Öcalan, the organization and struggle of women within the PKK have continued having similarly progressive, though far slower, reflections on Turkey’s Kurdistan.<sup>274</sup> Determination for the Kurdish national and social liberation, which requires a vital task to carry on fighting for a new life and political system theorized and designed by Öcalan, becomes a priority. The current position of Öcalan, therefore, comes up as a specific period effect that has played a significant role in individuals’ decision-making in this generation.

---

<sup>274</sup> For quantitative data by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) on domestic and sexual violence towards women in 2008 and 2014, see Gender Statistics 2019, Chapter 13. Available: <https://biruni.tuik.gov.tr/yayin/views/visitorPages/index.zul>

#### 9.4.5. *Önderlik* participations

Finally, one last important factor observed to have considerably influenced the decision-making process in terms of *professional* involvement as a PKK cadre is the period of the PKK leader Öcalan's capture and imprisonment. As pointed before, the PKK's official group truth is based on an alleged well-planned 'international plot'. Thanks to the organization's highly developed social networks in this period, including propaganda channels broadcasting from Europe via satellites, this narrative has spread among Kurdish people, including the potential young recruits.

Enlistments in guerrilla lines apart from February 1999 onwards were referred to as the '*Önderlik* participations' (K-III/09), which, besides constituting the beginning of a new era in the Kurdish national liberation movement, was a major triggering impulse motivating upcoming PKK recruits. Among six recruits who joined the PKK in 1999 and early 2000s (K-III/02, 04, 05, 09, 10, 12), four of them explicitly affirm that the international plot on Öcalan and his later isolation in the İmralı Island prison were one of the main motivations for their enlistment.

"I didn't want to stay in the legal field at all. The field where I thought I'd be more active, more efficient was the guerrilla field. One of the reasons for this was the captivity of *Önderlik* because, after the captivity of *Önderlik*, the mission that He assigned to guerrilla was much more at the forefront. *Önderlik* considered that the guerrilla was the guarantee of freedom. On the other hand, there were some challenges in the mountains in that period. Although we didn't feel them much despite our presence in the community, there were many attacks by external powers. For this reason, the guerrilla field seemed very attractive. Strengthening this field meant ensuring the legal field, the position of *Önderlik* too." (K-III/02)

"During the period when I joined, we could get no news from our *Önderlik*. We had no information for months about his health or if he was alive. Conscientiously, this was a situation beyond all other emotions; the priority above all else at the time was the case of *Önderlik*. Well, as a young Kurd as well as a Kurdish woman, I wanted to do something about it. While a person sacrificed his entire life for a people, especially for women, a woman, a young Kurd, too, would have to do something under these circumstances. As a response to this or after similar circumstances I experienced, I made a stride; I went to the guerrilla in 2005." (K-III/12)

The conditions under which Öcalan has found himself in different periods have continued to play a fundamental role in shaping Turkey's politics, especially the progress made concerning the Kurdish question and the PKK's future evolution. The consolidation of his figure as the 'popular leader of Kurds' among *yurtsever* circles has been the key reason behind this continuing political influence despite his long-term presence in a high-security prison. The construction of the figure of *Önderlik*, which will be analyzed from a generational perspective in *Chapter 13*, in this sense, constitutes a crucial process to understand this progress.

## 10. Generational Analysis of the Social Legitimacy of the MLNV

The previous chapters dedicated to the itinerary of political violence carried out by ETA, as well as *abertzale* left youth, have provided a generational outlook of the topic in terms of period and cohort effects on militancy engagement. By focusing on the evaluation of violent strategy among those individuals who have carried on their militancy within the corresponding organizations of the MLNV and social legitimacy attributed to the use of arms in Basque society, this chapter will analyze the evolution of group truth and the Basque public opinion regarding the place of violent repertoires used in Basque politics through three consecutive generations.

### 10.1. The social legitimacy of armed struggle in the late dictatorship

*Chapter 4* seeks to analyze the relationship between the pre-militancy socialization period of those who were born in the Franco dictatorship and later joined *ETA-militarra* during the post-Franco period and justifications through which they legitimized the use of violence. Since the beginning of the Burgos Trial in 1970, the public sphere had converted into a realm where young people manifested their political demands through assemblies, labor, and anti-repressive strikes. The physical absence of Franco and the prudent steps taken towards parliamentary democracy, however, were not sufficient in the eyes of some sectors to overcome the collective memory of the 40-year dictatorship.

Skepticism by some sectors in Spain towards what was generally seen as the ‘new regime’ brought as an obstacle for the post-Franco period Spanish administration. They needed to convince anti-Francoist sectors, the vast majority of whom consisted of Spanish hardline leftists and anarchists as well as Basque, Catalan, and Galician nationalists, that the regime headed for a genuine democracy through a transition. This task became further problematic in the Basque Country as, unlike Catalan and Galician cases, Basque society was not divided only between Spanish and Basque nationalists; there was also a division between the traditional line (PNV), which had a tremendous influence on Basque nationalist collective memory, and left-wing neo-nationalists, who had practiced the only significant resistance against the dictatorship.<sup>275</sup> This division between two central poles of Basque nationalism shaped the future of politics in the Basque Country: Those who accepted the Spanish central government’s definition of national pluralism in Spain<sup>276</sup> claimed their demands on further

---

<sup>275</sup> Although it should not be deemed as the only indicator, electoral numbers presented in *Chapter 4* upon two consecutive referendums held in the late 1970s, one on Spanish Constitution state-wide (Table 5) and the other on Basque autonomy held exclusively in southern Basque Country with the exception of Navarre (Table 6), indicate that the road map offered by the new regime was (or had to be) accepted by a considerable margin except two key regions, Gipuzkoa and to a lesser extent Bizkaia, which had been qualified as ‘traitors’ by the Francoist regime.

<sup>276</sup> Autonomy for historical nationalities in Spain (Basque, Catalan, and Galician) provoked nationwide mobilizations for similar demands, first Andalusia and then the Canary and the Balearic Islands, Valencia, and Aragón appealed for similar rights through the motto ‘*café para todos*’ (Coffee for all). These mobilizations eventually resulted in a peculiar form of greater decentralization than previously designed, leading principal nationalist minority parties to pact (or not) with major Spanish center rightist or leftist parties instead of establishing a federative structure (Colomer 1998).

reforms in favor of the Basque identity through political means, whereas a significant number of those who refused the Transition's changes found these reforms insufficient and opted for the continuity of violent repertoires (Mata 1993: 44; Pérez-Agote 2008: 171).

Despite the diminishing character of physical and symbolic violence exercised through the state apparatus during the 1980s and many Basque nationalists adopting solely political means, ETA enjoyed a certain level of social support among Basque left-wing nationalists. The increasing electoral support for political actors (*Herri Batasuna* and *Euskadiko Ezkerra*) who campaigned against the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and the ambiguous position taken by the PNV towards the concept of 'terrorism of ETA' (Gunther, Sani & Shabad 1988: 341-344) remained examples of the considerable social legitimacy that the armed group had in this decade.

The Basque Country continued to be an exceptional case within Spain, where the monopoly of violence traditionally held by the state was seriously challenged by an illegal entity with considerably strong power (Linz 1987: 161). Despite the presence of some militants who truly believed in a military victory (Arriaga 1997: 96), in this rivalry of ETA against the state, as the leading members of the period stress (B-I/06), the emphasis was put on the instrumental function of violent strategy in favor of a negotiation process with their counterparts. B-I/05, one of the leading militants of the organization's *vieja guardia* (old guard), expresses the following with this respect:

"[How did you see the military strategy at that time?] The military strategy... Even today, there will be some who think that through that way, the winter palace can be taken! Some people thought that way, but it wasn't like that! The military struggle or the military front has always been seeking a negotiation in this story. Another thing is that maybe in Kurdistan, you guys go in company [of large groups], but here we don't! Here, there's a commando, and they seek to impact the state so that the state could negotiate in a midpoint." (B-I/05)

The social legitimacy that ETA enjoyed as the only politico-military actor challenging the monopoly of violence by the state within that context maintained itself reasonably intact through the 1980s despite its gradual decline towards the end of the decade. Those occurrences of primary importance through which Spain had gone, as mentioned in *Chapter 4*, arguably played a determining role in explaining the gradual decline in support to ETA and the politico-military strategy the organization employed. Political and social events, taking place from the mid-1980s onwards, ranging from macro-politics in relation to Spain's place in the EEC and the ceasing of extrajudicial GAL activities to the increasing impacts of the rationalization of politics through which political pluralism was represented, arguably shaped the transformation of armed struggle's perception for ordinary Basques. The following table demonstrates the change of ETA's image in the eyes of Basque:

Table 9: Evolution of the image of ETA militants between 1978 - 1989

Evolution of the image of ETA militants between 1978 - 1989			
	1978	1979	1989
Patriots	13	17	5
Idealists	35	33	18
Manipulated	33	29	11
Madmen	11	8	16
Criminals	7	5	16
NK/NA	1	8	34
	(1.140)	(1.011)	(2.386)

Source: Data obtained in 1978 - 1979: J.J. Linz *et al.* 1986<sup>277</sup>; data obtained in 1989: F.J. Llera (CIS, 1795) in Llera 1994: 103.

A drastic change in the image of ETA among Basques is noted when considering the attribution of positive definitions to the members of the organization through the decade of the 1980s: While 50% of Basques thought they were either patriots or idealist in 1979, this number decreases to 23% only a decade later. Likewise, negative definitions qualifying ETA militants as ‘mad’ and ‘ordinary criminals’ also shows an apparent increase, from 13% to 32%, almost a three-fold increase within a decade. The most notable and controversial outcome of this analysis, however, is observed in the decline of the percentage of those who once believed that they were ‘manipulated by others’<sup>278</sup> and, especially, the remarkable increase among those who refrained from expressing an opinion on ETA, more than four times greater in 1989 than those in the late 1970s.

The significant increase of individuals who chose not to express their opinion on ETA members may well be explained through two factors: Ordinary citizens fall silent due to fear from the ongoing violence by ETA and pressure from social surroundings, the *abertzale* left community. Later public manifestations against ETA and a boom in the support for organizations against ETA violence are interpreted as ‘breaking the spiral of silence’ (Funes 1998; Muro 2008: 158).<sup>279</sup> Although some pay attention to this first argument by interpreting the existing data specifically collected to measure the freedom that Basque citizens felt when speaking about politics in the presence of ‘ETA terrorism’ (Leonisio, Molina & Muro 2017: 148-149), this approach contains certain controversies when analyzed

<sup>277</sup> For the original study during the transition period, please see Linz, J.J., Gómez-Reino, M., Orizo, F.A., Vila, D. (1981) *Informe sociológico sobre el cambio político en España, 1975 – 1981*, Madrid: Fundación FOESSA.

<sup>278</sup> Llera qualifies this category as both ‘negative and exculpatory’ (1994: 104), making its drastic decrease open to interpretation in both senses. From this perspective, an ETA militant may be a naïve person (an ‘idealist’, ‘patriot’) manipulated by bad people (criminals, assassins) and, consequently, they too end up becoming criminals, outlaws.

<sup>279</sup> This is exactly the opposite interpretation of a widely accepted thesis of ‘social silence’ under Francoist violence in the Basque Country and ETA’s violence as the only political language in the presence of this silence (Pérez-Agote 1984, 1987; Gurrutxaga 1985; Tejerina 1992; Arriaga 1997). As observed through *Chapter 8*, the assassination of PP councilmember Miguel Ángel Blanco in 1997 is similarly interpreted as the breaking of silence generated due to ‘ETA terrorism’.

along with other available data. A comparatively far lower percentage of individuals refraining (11% in 1989 and 0% in 1991) from expressing their opinion on other ETA-related controversial questions such as the uselessness of non-state violence for achieving political goals constitutes one of these controversies (see Table 43 in Llera 1994: 102) by bringing out a logical question: If this hypothetical absolute increase in fear from ETA violence eventually led people to fall silent in expressing their opinion on this organization, how would one explain their expression of opinion on the qualification of violence exercised by the very same organization? Precisely, a later study, conducted in a period during which ETA's violence against civilian targets was more indiscriminate than ever, points to only 4% of Basques expressing 'fear' in characterizing ETA (see Euskobarómetro November 2005).

A similar contradiction is also observed when considering the high rate of N/A among the voters of Basque nationalist parties (HB 22%, EE 30%, EA 20%, and PNV 30%) about the image of ETA militants in 1986 (see Table 45 in Llera 1994: 104). Coming to such a conclusion that the electorate, especially those who supported *abertzale* left parties whose ideological orientation and political goals were the same as those defended by ETA, feared 'ETA terrorism' then constitutes an apparent contradiction and incoherence.<sup>280</sup> Moreover, it was far more likely for those radical nationalist groups to fear state-sponsored GAL violence, which committed kidnappings and extrajudicial killings until the mid-1980s, than that of ETA. In sum, in both cases, one may well argue that there is a certain degree of unwillingness to express an opinion on political questions, and fear from the atmosphere emerged as a result of the long-lasting armed confrontation between two conflictive sides.

When considering the extraordinary changes in society and politics throughout the 1980s, the unwillingness to express an opinion on ETA may well be due to confusion and genuine unsureness on how to qualify this organization. In a period during which the imprints left by the old Francoist regime in Basque collective memory were still warm and fresh, and difficulties of the new system (failed military coup on 23 February 1981, state-sponsored armed activities with fatal consequences, first by such legionary groups as ATE, BVE, AAA and alike, and later by GAL) proving its democratic maturity, what ETA represented was still valued to a certain extent despite the clear signs of decline in

---

<sup>280</sup> Leonisio *et al.* refer to a series of quantitative surveys conducted from 1987 to 2015 by *Euskobarómetro* through which an attempt to measure the 'freedom to speak about politics among the Basques' is carried out (see Figure 8.3 in 2017: 149). The data shows a high-degree fear among Basques to speak about politics, as demonstrated by the scholars. However, a crucial subject here at this point seems to have been disregarded: In a highly fragmented society in terms of ethnic identity as well as a positioning towards the use of non-state violence, freedom to speak about politics (as the data shows) depends largely upon where (public or private sphere), when (periods of peace negotiations, escalation of violent confrontation, etc.) and with whom (among Basque or Spanish nationalists, right-wing or left-wing). While it is completely coherent that an ordinary citizen with Spanish nationalist tendencies was likely to fall silent in the public sphere where Basque nationalists were present in a period in which ETA's military campaign or humiliation campaign by *abertzale* youth were intensively practiced, it is equally understandable that any *abertzale* left supporter was unlikely to be eager to speak out their opinion in a period that any opinion on ETA directly or indirectly interpreted as positive was subjected to judicial processes and a possible prison sentence by Spanish courts. Such an interpretation, therefore, omits and ignore the bilateral character of the conflict.

comparison with the previous decade (Mees 2003: 93). The affective connection with ETA due to the symbolic value that this organization accumulated for having been the only resistance group fighting against the dictatorship was still observed among Basque nationalists in this period:<sup>281</sup>

“ETA was everything. More than anything, it was the symbolism of ETA’s struggle, resistance, not throwing in the towel, the oxygen, right? In short, it meant life, or I understood it this way.” (Interview G-5 in Alcedo 1996: 92)

“... we like it or not, in the Basque Country, in my opinion, they were unique at that time. For example, the period that corresponds me to live in ETA, it was an organization that counted on a very, very clear charm, including a very well-defined public charm of adherence to that activity.” (B-I/02)

Although ETA’s capacity for social mobilization gradually diminished, the support provided by the *abertzale* left community could not be underestimated. The sympathy and affinity of nationalist sectors who shared the same ideological orientation were reflected in the logistics and shelter provided for the movement. It was demonstrated in a series of activities ranging from public mobilizations for political and social demands to more concrete accomplices affecting the conditions of militancy, which became more apparent in the case of full-time ETA militants in the underground, namely *liberados*, more than legal commando cells. Making a brief comparison between the current situation and the period during which he served as a *liberado*, B-I/05 underlines this point:

“Today, for example, you organize a demonstration, and people don’t join; they just stare at you. In the past, no matter where you were coming from, from work, from this and that, you saw a demonstration, and you joined. There were fewer people but more awareness and more commitment. Then the commitments helped you. For example, the houses where I used to stop at; today, it’d be unthinkable that a house with five children offers you shelter. Saying ‘unthinkable’, I mean, I haven’t moved around, but witnessing what’s heard in the organization in recent times, today, it’d be unthinkable. Nevertheless, before it was normal, the houses where we stopped to stay. Those in Donosti, if not possible, those in Eibar, in Bilbao...” (B-I/05)

Starting from the second half of the 1980s, political and economic transformations cultivated during the Spanish Transition began to bring their concrete results to the social sphere. Spain’s international recognition as a country deemed ‘democratic and respectful towards the rules of the game of the civilized world’ made it further difficult for Basque nationalists who refused the same rules and opted for a sovereign national project (Apalategi 1998: 185). This period saw some of the most controversial public *ekintzas* (armed actions) carried out by ETA commandos in entire Spain, provoking the deadliest actions in the history of the organization. Although the organization tended to hold Spanish authorities responsible for ‘accidental’ civilian casualties, these claims had little impact on the general public opinion, who were subjected to constant reproductions of tragic images through mass media. Civilian

---

<sup>281</sup> As Aranzadi underlines in the early 1980s, it would be convenient to emphasize that these positive attributions to the image of ETA and *etarras*, in fact, did not constitute explicit support for the military practices exercised in that period, but it was rather an emotional support to the nationalist ideology defended by ETA in the face of ongoing oppression (1982: 482). Quantitative data presented by Llera supports this argument: Even in the case of lethal actions carried out against Spanish security forces in the early 1980s, the same period in which ETA members received a significant percentage of positive support, an immense majority of Basque (65%) showed ‘absolute refusal’ of violent actions (see Table 50 in 1994: 108).

casualties due to operational errors and miscalculations became frequent, confusing social bases of *abertzale* left and bringing about doubts as to ETA's role:

"Hipercor was a... [*silence*] I don't know how to say it. The organization had given a 'negative' to attack Hipercor by day, but only by night. Then, one within the *talde* came up with an idea saying, 'let's do it this way, get the place evacuated; it'd have much more impact than blowing it out at night!' What happens is that in the day time, you leave the operation in the hands of the police; you cannot control the operation; the police control it! The organization says, 'we must attack French and Spanish interests!' but it says, 'by night, not by day' [...] It's delicate. The armed struggle is delicate, and the way we practice it is much more delicate. You can't make many mistakes, do you understand? You plant a bomb, and a child dies. Ok, one can die, but eight cannot die! You can't make a mistake and then another, then another one, because... then people don't understand you." (B-I/05)

Although the politico-military strategy pursued in this period opened the doors for the *Algiers* conversations, as a result of which ETA was recognized as a legitimate political actor (Egaña & Giacomucci 1992: 164-165), its social impacts were counterproductive. Amid the consequences of political transformations and social changes, during which the use of coercion for political aspirations was considered less legitimate<sup>282</sup>, these large scale actions provoked serious doubts, even among some *abertzale* left cadres. This questioning became evident when evaluating the social legitimacy of non-state political violence throughout the 1990s.

## 10.2. The offensive by the MLNV against the Ajuria-Enea block

As seen in *Chapter 6*, political and economic transformations in Spain, particularly the Basque Country, had enormous impacts on the social structure and relations in the southern Basque Country. Following drastic strategic changes implemented in the anti-terror policy, which did include not only a change in the indiscriminate nature of police repression and disappearance of state-sponsored illegal means of physical violence (GAL) but also the removal of symbolic impositions on the Basque national universe, ETA actions remained as the only visible means of violence.

Resorting to violence for political goals in a period during which the consolidated political system permitted a wide-scale representation at the national and regional levels was hardly convincing for most ordinary nationalists. Two main objectives pursued by the MLNV through a politico-military strategy, Basque national independence and socialism, continued; however, neither national nor international contexts offered favorable conditions to mobilize masses for such ends: The PNV governed the Basque Country since the first elections held, and Basque nationalist parties –despite internal division within the PNV- had an overwhelming majority against Spanish nationalists.<sup>283</sup> In the face of such a political panorama, and now with the PNV's explicit rejection of 'terrorism' through the Ajuria-Enea pact, political isolation deteriorated the image of ETA and *Herri Batasuna* (HB).

---

<sup>282</sup> For quantitative data on the Basque public opinion about the necessity of violence, see Tables 42 - 43 in Llera 1994: 102.

<sup>283</sup> For the archive of elections celebrated in the CAPV, see The Basque Government, Department of Security: [https://www.euskadi.eus/web01-a2haukon/es/contenidos/informacion/w\\_em\\_calen\\_elec/es\\_def/index.shtml](https://www.euskadi.eus/web01-a2haukon/es/contenidos/informacion/w_em_calen_elec/es_def/index.shtml)



Regarding the desired political regime once the independence achieved, the early 1990s did not offer the best macro-political context: The fall of the Berlin wall and collapse of the Soviet Union, which brought the overall crisis of socialism, also affected the *abertzale* left and ETA, which soon had to replace the idea of socialist democracy with a 'Democratic Alternative' (Murua 2016: 177). Spain's full integration into the global capitalist system and the rationalization of politics through the recently-established new political order with a variety of parties made it extremely difficult for ETA to mobilize working-class Basques. Ordinary Basques now had other priorities than public involvement in everyday politics (Mata 1993: 96). Any action taken by ETA in labor disputes in this period was interpreted negatively and seen as an obstacle rather than solidarity and support to working-class people<sup>284</sup>, as explained by B-I/04:

"In the end, their discourse was 'the only thing they're doing is that *Euskal Herria* doesn't advance, *Euskal Herria* cannot be independent, *Euskal Herria* is without this and that', and [*it has to see with*] living much more comfortable, the economic conditions we've had here. There's been a decade of impressive economic solvency. I don't know how people managed to come to this point. Well, you get out of jail and say, 'something's going on here! What's this? Here's a trap!' [...] Of course, what do you expect would happen? People go from home to work, from work to home, for many hours. And then they go on holiday, all out of here, outside *Euskal Herria*. A new way of living has been created, and also, there's been a bombardment through mass media." (B-I/04)

Despite its categorical denial towards the Spanish transition to democracy and its refusal to take part in the political system established by the cadres of the former Franco regime, the consequences brought about as a result of changes made during the transition also forced the MLNV to revise its politico-military strategy.<sup>285</sup> From the mid-1990s, it was not only about defending Basque land and nation against colonial powers (Spanish and French states) but also the construction of a national project through a broader military offensive that deliberately included a rising number of civilian targets. While the state's selective physical repression over a specific group converted into an effective means, ETA's violence, on the other hand, turned more and more indiscriminate. In the mid-1990s, the victims were no longer only those who were imposed by the state (Mata 1993: 136), and civilian casualties were no longer accidental, which was already complicated to excuse, but rather deliberate,

---

<sup>284</sup> Wieviorka explains the social qualification of 'terrorism' by focusing on the relation between the armed organization and the social group on behalf of which the former claims to take armed actions. By providing the same example of labor disputes between the employer and workers, the scholar mentions the reaction given by the social group (workers) in the presence of actions taken against the target (employer) by the armed organization as the key parameter whether these actions are considered terrorism (1998: 543-544). From a generational perspective, reactions given by Basque workers towards ETA's involvement in labor disputes in different periods constitute the best example in this regard. The decline in support to such actions by working-class people is best observed when comparing the mobilization of workers in favour of ETA's kidnapping of Basque businessman Zabala in Franco's period and other such cases as the kidnapping of José María Aldaya in 1995, which mobilized the same workers protesting against ETA and demanding the immediate release of their employer.

<sup>285</sup> It may well be argued that despite its political discourse based on the denial of Spanish transition, the *abertzale* left has always reorganized its structures in harmony with post-Francoist developments. As Ibarra precisely points out, the emergence of all organizations under the umbrella of KAS and that of HB was actually possible because there did exist a transition towards democracy (1987: 141). The same organizations under the KAS structure, however, labeled the Transition and the democracy that it brought 'false' and continued to function for a 'genuinely democratic system'.

becoming even more challenging to explain and justify to the social bases supporting the *abertzale* left. *B-II/02*, who was in ETA in this period, explains this difficulty as a result of the change in military strategy:

“That’s the offensive, and when you change to the offensive, all become more difficult. Sure, it’s not the same to justify that ‘I hit you because you hit me’ as ‘I hit you because I know you’re going to hit me or that because you’ve been fucking me alive for whole my life!’ Your strategy is harder to socialize in explaining why you hit that person or why you go behind that factual power [...] [*And that change from the defensive to the offensive, what do you think it was due to?*] Due to an internal debate that was very tense, it was like, ‘It’s enough, man! We have to take the reins’. It’s also a bit like what’s being seen in practice today with the whole issue of the ceasing of arms. The reins have been taken. We’re the ones fighting here, and we’re the ones who have to get to the offensive part! If you’re defending yourself all day, you don’t build. So, the issue of national construction begins when the offensive is launched.” (B-II/02)

If high-impact military actions taken throughout the decade of the 1980s made those who were sympathetic to ETA question the role of armed actions, deliberate lethal actions towards selected civilian targets received serious criticisms and rejections, even by some of those who played a historic role within the *abertzale* left. *B-I*, who was one of the founders of EKIN-ETA and who later became a prominent figure in Basque politics before finally abandoning the *abertzale* left, explains his disengagement process that ended with his public criticism of the organization he once had created:

“We created a machine, an instrument called EKIN/ETA. It is an instrument that we put in the hands of our people so that our people could make use of it. And one of the conditions that we put ourselves was that this instrument would work democratically, both inside and outside. And from 1985, 1986 there were things that I didn’t like very much. And from a certain moment on, I realized that ETA no longer counted on anyone to implement its policy. I said, ‘Man, no way! One cannot make things and impose them on the people’. There, I began to realize it. [...] And there happened about ten or so, important stuff, huh? For example, that of Ángel Blanco was a case. That of Ángel Lara, who was imprisoned. Gregorio Ordóñez, and another PP council member from Irún or Errenteria. There were some eight or ten cases, I tell you, let’s start counting and... ‘Damn! What’re we doing here? Everything is shut down here! Who does ETA count on when it orders a commando to do such things?’ That’s it, for me, huh? That’s what I saw, and then I started talking and saying and writing.” (B-F)

This reaction from Basque nationalists became more evident with the implementation of the new military offensive through the opening of new fronts, denominated as ‘socialization of suffering’, practiced right after the approval of the Oldartzen text (Muro 2008: 153). The dissident within the MLNV reacted differently; some preferred to follow the intra-movement discipline by obeying the internal decisions, whereas others, as in the case of *B-F*, publicly manifested their disagreement and criticisms towards the new trajectory that ETA opted for. *B-I/06*, a historic ETA leader who was in exile in Santo Domingo when the new offensive was launched, explains the reaction among previous-generation cadres who continued to back ETA in this period:

“What is called the socialization of suffering, yes, that phase begins there. [*And how did you personally evaluate it?*] Well, I didn’t understand it much and said, ‘if they’re there, they’ll know what they’re doing!’ In the beginning, it was like, ‘ugh, what’s this?’ [*Because in your time...*] There were other types of military targets. Man, at first, I found it bizarre, but anyway, you say, ‘if they do so, it’ll be for something!’ I justified it to some extent, although politically, I found it difficult where to place. Apparently, there was a kind of discourse, ‘the people ask for that!’ But, we, at least in very private, very intimate conversations, found it difficult to understand. [...] ...we didn’t have a lot of information. And the truth is that with most of the people who came I questioned this many times, with

people coming from the political sphere too, I sometimes asked them, 'how do you see it?', and everyone regarded it well! And they were people who were working at the political level, not at the military level. I think that people in the organization took that leap and people at the political level accepted it; in general, they accepted it. There could be discordant voices, but in general, they accepted and assumed it." (B-I/06)

Adoption of this new strategy, partly as a result of the state's repression now directly concentrated on ETA, inevitably strengthened HB's ties with the armed organization, bringing it closer to ETA's practices. HB and other organizations of the MLNV symbolically and practically became more dependent on ETA (Mata 1993: 139), which converted them into ever more active components of the battle. In Eugenio Etxebeste's own words, this approach aimed at "widening the battlefield to survive, *ulstering* those zones of Euskadi where the implementation of radical nationalism was bigger" (Elorza 2005: 226). A rapid increase in low-density sabotage attacks by *abertzale* youth, in this sense, may also be considered a part of this offensive strategy in an attempt to penetrate society.

Although these efforts made the Basque conflict more visible than ever in densely populated urban centers, they equally accelerated the decline in numbers of those who backed the *abertzale* left. Despite the dissolution of another alternative Basque leftist party, *Euskadiko Ezkerra*, HB's votes declined to 14,83% in 1993 and 12,47% in 1996, making the *abertzale* coalition only the fourth most voted option in CAPV, even after the Spanish right-wing PP (Lecours 2007: 100). For the organization maintaining its 'natural dynamic', electoral success did not seem to have been a major concern. Legitimacy in this period was already an internal question; it was sought after among the 'chosen ones' who saw the organization as the bastion/spirit of demands. Only they understood, only their opinion was important; 'others' were important just because they legitimized the chosen's opinion. There was no need to explain to the whole population as they were unable to comprehend what was at stake (Gurrutxaga 1996: 178). ETA seemed aware of this potential loss of social legitimacy when these new fronts were opened; however, the ultimate aim of violence was not to seek approval from society, but rather a rational objective based on the group truth through its instrumental use:

"...it was the beginning of the following phase that either many people found harder or it was harder indeed, especially for what's called the 'rearguard' or those people who back you, people you have. The people who'd been behind you in the 1980s were no longer behind you that much, all the doors that had been open began to close, and the repression began to increase; the powers began to have another type of strategy, new technologies began to be used. But of course, the objectives were clear; I mean, the factual power was still the same, so it was decided to attack it directly. With all the consequences that we would face because that was analyzed, and that was known to happen. [*Do you mean it was possible to do that analysis at that time?*] The consequences that it was going to bring us? Yes, that analysis was done; it was known. But we've always said the same: 'Our goals are the same, and we prefer to go with few people towards where we want to go than with twenty thousand people without knowing where we're going to', right? So, it was a tough decision, we knew this was going to happen, but it had to be taken; there was no other option." (B-II/02)

Despite contrary claims by some individuals (B-II/03, 04) that ETA acted in the name of the Basque people, as Gurrutxaga argues, after the Spanish Transition, the armed organization was far from representing Basque society; it instead sought to impose its legitimizing frame and praxis on them. It

was a break-up with the rest of the people sharing the same territory as well as with the sectors of traditional Basque nationalism (1996: 179-180). Basing on the essence of the politico-military strategy approved in this period, that was launching an offensive until the Spanish state would give in and negotiate on genuinely democratic bases through which self-determination of the Basque people would be guaranteed (Mees 2003: 72), and considering the vision reflected by *B-II/02*, the following affirmation may well be made: In its new politico-military strategy, the MLNV did not indeed seek for or, at least, gave no priority to justify the legitimacy of the use of violence through popular votes, but rather exercised this politico-military strategy in a merely instrumental manner at an institutional level for political goals.<sup>286</sup> Having been qualified as an anti-system coalition, HB did not seem to have cared about the progressive decline in votes but about the repressive measures against civilian components of the MLNV, as these were the social and political mechanisms of the very same politico-military strategy (*B-III/04*). As the first and foremost objective was to negotiate and come to an agreement with the 'enemy', all military and civil components of the MLNV functioned within this logic. In a broader sense, it was believed that it was ETA itself who represented the national aspirations of Basques, as clearly expressed by Josu Muguruza before his assassination in 1989:

"ETA represents Basque citizens to a much greater extent than the votes of HB, because ETA - in addition to its decisive form of struggle, certainly - has a political program that in electoral periods is assumed, not only by HB, which defends it in electoral periods and out of them but by the nationalist majority of this people. When someone is voting for the PNV because the PNV advocates for Basque territoriality, he is voting for ETA. When someone is voting for EA, because Mr. Garaikoetxea is for self-determination, he is voting for ETA. And when someone is voting for Mr. Retolaza when he says that the Spanish police forces must be removed from here, he is voting for ETA. ETA has the political program of the majority of this people. A political program for whose realization there are no legal instruments." (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1994, Vol.8: 49)

Nevertheless, the enemy also saw this through and took a responsive offensive towards these non-military components: Dailies (first *Egin* and then *Egunkaria*) were shut down, KAS members were arrested, youth movements (first *Jarrai* and then *Segi*) were crushed with terrorism charges, and finally HB was outlawed. This anti-terror policy based on outlawing every single MLNV organization, which was launched by the PP government in the mid-1990s and culminated with the PP-PSOE Pact in early 2000, played a decisive role for the MLNV than the decline in electoral support:

"The PP had entered the government in 1996, and they made a change in strategy that was kind of removing the water from the fishbowl. It was then when they decided and began to cultivate the thesis that everything was ETA. That's to say, they couldn't manage to fight ETA; therefore, they said 'we must fight the political movement', which means to remove the water from the fishbowl. Consequently, they proposed a repressive strategy that has continued until today." (*B-II/04*)

---

<sup>286</sup> Until this strategic change took place within the MLNV, Mata argues that HB's role was to make the social legitimacy of ETA visible through votes and gathering crowds in public demonstrations, which clearly showed that the institutional presence of this collectivity was actually built up on ETA's existence and, consequently, the barrier separating the political party from the armed group became narrower (1993: 140). From the approval of the Oldartzen text onwards, this strict relationship between political and military components of the MLNV has become much more visible as the party has acted as the public voice of ETA on many occasions.

Increasingly repressive Spanish police and judiciary interventions in social movements, media, the youth movement, and all other non-military KAS components began to paralyze the capacity of political maneuver of the *abertzale* left. A decline in social legitimacy created a significant lack of support against the harsh implementation of illegalizations, especially in a moment when the impacts of the privatization of social life and rationalization of politics were growing stronger:

“...when the illegalizations began, they’d already shut down the newspapers, and we said ‘hey, what’s going on here?’, and people began to get scared. Well, people in general. Let’s see; the Basque people have always been afraid; they’ve always been repressed. I mean, the one who had no political involvement could be touched; they could stop him, they could torture him, but he had less and less lottery [*possibility*] than those who were militants. Once the logic of illegalizations began, I believe that there was a certain feeling of [*fear*]. Sure, many people said, ‘I have a family, I have children, I have a mortgage, I’ve gotta be careful!’ And also, ethical and moral considerations too, people [*were*] saying ‘hey! Where are we going? This is escaping from our hands; we aren’t controlling the effects that these actions create’.” (B-I/06)

Although the MLNV found concrete opportunities for negotiation on several occasions, this situation mostly remained unchanged during the following decade. Two serious negotiation attempts –despite their ultimate failure- proved that the instrumental use of violence was eventually functional in terms of objectives that the movement sought. Nevertheless, failure in obtaining definitive results diminished the support by the community even further, which consequently provoked louder internal critical voices in the face of increasing state repression on the MLNV.

### **10.3. The aftermath of the Lizarra-Garazi: The 11-S and a new concept of terrorism**

In terms of the politico-military strategy pursued by the MLNV, the post-Lizarra-Garazi period was nothing but a continuity of the same widened offensive, reaching an even broader scale by including more deliberate civilian targets. The period between two truces declared by ETA, the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement and the Loyola conversations, also witnessed another sharp decline of social support to the *abertzale* left. The increase in votes observed during the truce declared as part of the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement illustrated this decline, as clearly seen in the electoral results for CAPV: 17,7% that HB obtained in 1998 drastically went down to 10,0% in 2001 whereas the PNV and EA, which had summed 36,1% in total in 1998, triumphed with 42,4% in coalition (Ibarra & Ahedo 2004: 84). The PNV-EA coalition drew a clear picture as the legitimate representative voice of Basque nationalism.<sup>287</sup>

Although ETA’s actions remarkably diminished in quantitative terms compared with the previous decades, the continuity of violence and, especially, the expansion of victims seems to have had further deteriorating effects on the image that the armed organization had in Basque society. After

---

<sup>287</sup> Despite the landslide victory in Basque nationalist votes obtained by the PNV-EA coalition, most individuals within the MLNV continue claiming that these political parties are not the real representatives of Basques (B-II/03) by accusing the PNV of not doing enough/nothing for the Basque people (B-II/06, B-III/03, 04). Arguably, this is another indicator that the MLNV counts on other parameters (devotion/loyalty, and grade of sacrifice made) rather than electoral results in terms of legitimacy and representativeness.

the takeover of government by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero as the president of the PSOE government, who launched the final negotiation process in the history of ETA, the data presented by *Euskobarómetro* illustrated apparent changes taking place in the mind of Basques:

Table 10: Attitudes of the Basques towards ETA

Opinion	Nov. 2005, %		
Total rejection	60		
Before Yes, now No	17		
Ends Yes, means No	12		
Critical justification	3		
Indifference	2		
Fear	4		
I do not know	2		

Source: Data obtained from Euskobarómetro (November 2005) in Lecours 2007: 110.

Although the data presented above is based on differently formulated questions in comparison with those previously presented, it clearly shows that an overwhelming majority of Basques in this period evaluated the presence of ETA negatively, refusing the politico-military strategy of the organization. One of the most significant differences from previously presented data (1989) is that the participants show absolute clarity when it comes to giving opinions in this period: Only a tiny margin (2%) refrains from expressing their opinion on ETA, and those who felt fear (4%) expresses this overtly. Basque people seem far more confident about their opinion on ETA and violence. All indicates that, as Gurrutxaga claims, unconditional support observed during late Francoism and ambiguity observed during the Transition evolve towards a clear condemnation of violence (1996: 133, 159).

The above-presented data demonstrates that the relationship between the MLNV and its social bases was increasingly debilitated. Wieviorka suggests that under such circumstances where the violent actor loses the ties it once maintained with its reference population and is unable to explain the objectives pursued through the use of violence via non-military mechanisms, such actions are qualified as ‘purely terrorist’ (1998: 543).<sup>288</sup> A self-critical vision with this respect is explained by *B-II/06*, who took part in highly widespread *kale borroka* actions in this period:

“I believe that legitimacy has decreased over time for different reasons. I believe that rather than ETA, this maybe corresponds more to the *abertzale* left. On the other hand, there’s the state [*factor*]. [...] ...frankly speaking, here, the *abertzale* left has also its responsibility: It hasn’t been able to ideologically confront that element with the state. It hasn’t been able to convince the rest of the popular classes, social sectors of *Euskal Herria*, that this

<sup>288</sup> Unlike other scholars who qualify any actions of ETA taken in any period in its long history as ‘terrorism’ seeking to obtain power (Reinares 1998: 31; Casquete 2009: 67-68), the definition made by Wieviorka links the exercised violence with the reaction/support shown by politically and/or socially targeted groups who form part of the social base of the ‘community of legitimation’ (Letamendia 1997: 296) for the politico-military strategy exercised by the group.

armed struggle obeys a logic. [...] The abertzale left, in my opinion, has big deficits, and its biggest deficit is the ideological one or the inability to carry out an ideological struggle, an ideological transmission. The question of legitimation of armed struggle corresponds, on the one hand, to this incapacity and, on the other hand, because it's not only been a question of the state but a question of system, and there's been a great pact of many sectors trying to delegitimize that, and they've achieved it." (B-II/06)

This inability to maintain links with social sectors for which the use of violence was claimed dragged the MLNV into further isolation, in which, apart from other variables, illegalizations played a key role. The increasing level of police and judicial repression augmented the isolation to such margins that non-military components of the MLNV remained practically dysfunctional. This state of standstill, despite ETA's continuing violent actions and the counter-terrorism propaganda projected through all available mechanisms (media, civil society, academia), dominated Basque public opinion in that 'terrorism' exercised by ETA damaged the Basques themselves:

"[*We were*] the violent, violent, violent, and the others were democrats! It's true that in the minds of citizens, this scheme was winning: 'These are the violent ones, the ones that hurt, and as they keep hurting, the state doesn't give us what it has to give.' And then the illegalizations, they pushed us aside. It was a reality that the *abertzale* left was slowly disappearing, being buried away. [*And why do you think it happened, why did people go away?*] If they tell you, 'they're terrorists, they're terrorists!', and also you see that the armed struggle isn't taking you to another scenario but that the state, which oppresses you, is using it as an excuse to oppress you, well, people eventually say, 'hey, you guys are going too far!'" (B-III/01)

As previously mentioned, what seems to have been a crucial factor in delegitimizing the use of violence for political ends was the new meaning attributed to both 'terrorism' and the 'fight against terrorism' following the 11-S attacks. Not only did this extend the sphere of combatting terrorism to a global level, but it also brought the discourse of 'democrats versus violent' to the same level. In a world where the spectacular terrorist threat became a desirable object to be present against the 'self-fulfilling crusade' with sophisticated armies (Zulaika 2009: 204-205), political assassinations carried out by ETA were also included in the same pot. Under these circumstances, actions taken by ETA were considered more in favor of the political interests of the Spanish state than those of the MLNV:

"There it was precisely the time of the twin towers [*attacks*] in the United States, so the international context against terrorism was also favorable for the Spanish state to put all our organizations on the list of global and European terrorist organizations. That's to say; the international climate also helped that fascism." (B-II/04)

Under the new conjuncture, the 'terrorist' was not that same rational actor anymore, with whom negotiation channels could be opened, but a mysterious object against whom any measure was legitimate. Spain, a country that itself was targeted soon after the 11-S and hit by this 'new treat' in its capital city in 2004, then embodied all the support from its western allies. Both the military capabilities, as well as the rationale lying behind the politico-military strategy pursued by the MLNV, remained largely dysfunctional under this new global conjuncture:

"I believe that the global situation also changed. I mean, when we started, Ireland was also present. In Europe in those years, there were several movements; IRA was active, there was an armed struggle in Germany. In the wake of May 68, I believe there was another kind of conscience. But it's true that today it's increasingly difficult.

I don't know why, but there's indeed less legitimacy. Also, for example, the attacks of *Al-Qaeda*, that for me created a before and after. Because, sure, if a group appears and carries out an *ekintza* killing 200 people, and then you go and shoot someone, obviously what you're doing is worthless, because people say, 'what nonsense boy!' Compared to those kinds of actions, like that of trains and all that, you say, 'we're some strait-laced!' I think it's about this factor; there's this global factor that the armed struggle is losing everywhere." (B-II/01)

It is understood that the extended scope of terrorism and the fact that it became a synonym for every anti-system movement and action were also interpreted due to this new global approach established following the 11 September attacks and the consequent military operations:

"...after 9/11, the battle against global terrorism takes a step up with the invasion of Iraq, but it's also against all dissident social movements in all states. It's not only a problem between the US and Iraq, but a new re-modeled anti-terrorism policy emerges, and I think that affects all dissident political movements. And here, after 9/11, they started talking about that too. Because here PP was directly involved along with Bush in the invasion of Iraq, and it's no coincidence that after 11-M [*attacks in Madrid*], they attributed what had occurred to ETA, right? It's a bit like everything is interconnected. -Then it cost the PP the government-. That is, they took advantage of all those to set out a bit like, 'here there's a terrorism problem, but we take a step further, and we're going to call everything that puts this system into question as terrorist.' right?" (B-III/05)

The Atocha train bombings of 11 March 2004, later claimed by *al-Qaeda* due to Spain's involvement in the invasion of Iraq by US-led allies, constituted the best example of this tendency. Right after the explosion took place, leaving 193 civilians dead and around two thousand wounded, it was immediately attributed to ETA by government-backed media. Although both ETA militants and HB executives made contrary declarations, ETA was made the scapegoat until the authorship of the attack was finally revealed. *B-I/05* narrates the experience he had in prison when the attack took place:

"We went out to the patio, and we said 'this isn't ours, we don't have that material!' Around 1:00 pm, when we went in to eat, the dog, I mean the module boss, said, 'I know it's not you guys', and I said, 'no, maybe in a high-speed train we can put one, but only one, not five bombs in five different points and fire them all against the unfortunates of the world! No way! The unfortunates of the world, it may be due to an accident; you go with a suitcase, and it blows up for some reason. It may be like this, but not otherwise!' He said, 'I know, it's not you.' But it has remained like this, and this has continued hitting us!" (B-I/05)

Armed actions by ETA continued after the last peace talks denominated the Loyola conversations, to a far less extent compared to the earlier period, until 20 October 2011 when the organization declared the definitive cessation of its armed activity. This process also meant adopting a new strategy based on pursuing the same political objectives through non-violent repertoires.

#### **10.4. The end of the cycle of violent repertoires in the MLNV**

Although internal debates concerning the utility of armed struggle had long been present, already resulting in the secession of *Aralar* as an alternative but insignificant non-military voice of leftist Basque nationalists, the post-Loyola frustration further increased the volume of such debates. Despite the presence of hardliners who still defended the continuity of pursuing a politico-military strategy at any cost, this internal debate within the almost entirely outlawed *abertzale* left finally concluded that the armed struggle was inefficient for obtaining political objectives.



Having witnessed the strength of Basque national unity through a solely political strategy in the period of the Lizarra-Garazi, and after the last chance lost in Loyola, it was quite unlikely to reach another negotiation, which led to a transformation towards an exclusively political strategy was decided upon (Murua 2016: 203-204). The leading *abertzale* leader Arnaldo Otegi affirms that while discordance among the *abertzale* left militant cadres existed to a certain degree, the definitive position in favor of the elimination of armed strategy reflected a generally shared perspective:

“...that conclusion was latent within the *abertzale* left, but it did not end up afloat, so it was our turn to put it on the table with all the consequences. It was hard; it generated tensions but ended up being an exercise of revolutionary honesty that, to some extent, freed us all. [...] ...I think that when we (those who were detained in the 13 October operation) raised the need to end the armed cycle at the table, *we voiced and ‘interpreted’ an immense silent majority of our social and militant bases.*” (Otegi in Munarriz 2012: 174-175, *emphasis added*)

The decision adopted by the non-military cadres of the MLNV forced ETA to respond in favor of or against this new strategy to be followed by the political side of the movement. Arguably, this situation referred to a breaking point in which a change of cards between the political and military wing of the MLNV took place: If, after the approval of the Oldartzen text, *abertzale* left politics became submissive to ETA<sup>289</sup>, now it was the political wing who put pressure on ETA, forcing the organization to accept the new non-military strategy. Although it is improbable to come across any official statement by any of the two sides proving this negotiation, some signs insinuate the confrontation between the political and military wings of the MLNV. In another part of his interview with Munarriz, Otegi confirms the position of ETA on the proposed strategic change by the *abertzale* left and the transformation that the organization’s initial negative position experienced in the face of the majority:

“The position of ETA (at least the one that arrived us) was absolutely contrary and opposing to the beginning of any change of strategy; however, to the extent that our bases were being massively incorporated to our positions, this made the position of that organization incline towards the direction that marked the decisions taken by the *abertzale* left.” (Otegi in Munarriz 2012: 147)

This situation constituted an internal question that created long debates and high tension within and among different components of the MLNV, whose details have somehow remained mostly obscure up until today. *B-II/06*, a former youth member of the *abertzale* left who worked for its political representation *Sortu* when interviewed, a significant component of the current *abertzale* coalition EH Bildu, is the only individual among all who overtly expresses his opinion on this subject:

“I’ll be honest: I cried. Because the organization has historically set some goals, and in that statement, it decides to cease the armed activity without having achieved any of them. For me, that’s sad. I doubt that this was a decision of the armed organization as such, taken on its own. [...] The organization has been pressured -there

---

<sup>289</sup> As noted in *Chapter 8*, the undertaking of this direct ‘policymaking role’ by ETA was explicitly observed in the organization’s communiqué of 20 April 1995, in which they emphasized the need to introduce the Democratic Alternative to replace KAS Alternative. This state of ‘blind submission’ of the political leadership to the leadership of the armed wing would inevitably lead to one of two options: rethinking a new political strategy or a political suicide (Mees 2003: 185). Considering the stance taken by the political leadership, it is understood that Basque leftist nationalist sectors opted for the first scenario, which required putting an end to the armed struggle.

are also sectors within the same organization that shared this perspective, but I think that the pressure exerted from that lobby controlling the mass media like *Gara*, *Info Zazpi*, *Berria* and, above all, *Batasuna* or *Sortu* prevailed. They have a lot of power, so I'm convinced that they got to say, 'you do this, and we'll continue there, but if you keep shooting, we'll reject you.', and of course, the first thing to avoid is a split, a breakup." (B-II/06)

As *B-II/06* points out, among MLNV militants, and more concretely within ETA, there had already been similar discussions and debates on the utility of armed struggle since the collapse of the Loyola process. For most militants from different generations within the MLNV (B-I/04, 05, 06; B-II/01, 02, 03, 05; B-III/02, 03, 04, 05, 06), ETA's decision to definitively laying down of arms was not a surprise at all. Despite the overwhelming importance of the utilitarian aspects that seemed to be decisive for such a decision, the disappearance of a referential actor within Basque national history also provoked ambiguous feelings, partly due to a sense of failure in achieving the pursued objectives and partly due to the referential significance of ETA in *abertzale* left collective memory:

"[When you heard that news, how did it make you feel?] Well, it's contradictory because, on the one hand, I'd been waiting for some time to see when that news would come as the process had begun earlier. It was seen that it'd be the next step after the ALETE Declaration; the organization would have to respond in one way or another. [...] But it had to come, it did, and that's it. It's neither joy nor sadness; it's a contradictory sensation because after all, you've been using that method, now it's over, and we continue with another. In the end, we continue in the fight with other methods, and it makes you feel 'damn, I thought we'd turn it upside down, and we haven't succeeded, but we'll continue and try.'" (B-I/04)

"[You received that news in jail; how did it make you feel?] I don't know; it was a strange feeling. The thing is that I saw it [as something] necessary. Also, I was fortunate because I coincided with many politicians [in jail], then I had a lot of information and was aware that that moment would have to come. But it's a strange sensation because suddenly a referential actor says that it disappears. So, it's a weird feeling. I understand that for many colleagues it's been terrible, like 'it's been a bit fast, there's not been enough information', but it was something that had to come. Given the trajectory of recent years etc., it was evident to me that something had to come. But it's true that when it comes, you feel a bit like an orphan. [laughing]" (B-II/01)

Analyzing the opinion of militants from three generations concerning the breakthrough strategical change adopted by the political and military components of the MLNV, four interconnected motivations, almost equally expressed by the vast majority of individuals, seem to have played a determining role in this final decision. These motivations, in a way, summarize the previously assessed ones underlined by the last-generation militants when explaining the main reasons for the decline in social legitimacy of the use of violence by ETA: *a)* a change in economic, social, and political conditions observed in Basque society as well as in the world in recent decades; *b)* increasing judicial and police repression on all MLNV components; *c)* a continuous decline in popular support and unwillingness in political militancy within the *abertzale* left and, finally and as a result of all of them; *d)* the dysfunctionality of the armed struggle in achieving short and long term political objectives. The following individuals synthesize best all these motivations together:

"For me, there are different reasons: One is that society has changed, and people, in general, are becoming less critical and more comfortable, more individualized. The one who is interested in [just] carrying on with his work, with his family and such, and the fact that it costs more to make commitments in the popular movement. [...] Besides, the state has a means of control that becomes stronger each day, and they deactivate and imprison you.

Each day that passes, the fight is also more expensive. An 18-year-old young man who has just started to carry out political activities in his village by putting posters, giving a talk in favor of young people’s rights in education and such, one day suddenly sees 20 policemen coming to his house to detain him and suddenly finds himself in jail with a six-year sentence. It’s not easy to say, ‘I’m willing to go to jail for six years’.” (B-III/05)

“...just as a comrade told me one day, ‘we’ve become revolutionaries to take up arms, and we have to know when to leave them.’ Let’s see, the armed struggle by itself isn’t an objective; it’s a means. So, as a means, it wasn’t serving. Well, for a lot of things, because we haven’t been capable of getting the armed objectives right because our capacity in a way has been neutralized by repression<sup>290</sup>, and we didn’t learn to accept it. And I think that people, society was already getting distant. For many things, people were changing, society was changing, and I think we had to adapt ourselves to that. We had to realize that the armed struggle no longer yielded the results it once did. [So, do you think it was the right time?] I think it should’ve been done before. Before, long before. I think that especially when the last process was carried out, the Loyola process, there already... There I think we made a huge mistake; I think that we should’ve stopped there.” (B-I/06)

The new position adopted by the political wing of the MLNV opened the door to a process that eventually led to the definitive dissolution of ETA. This process consisted of a series of steps to abandon the armed strategy and the dismantlement of its military structure, and the definitive dissolution of the organization. On 3 May 2018, historic ETA leader José Antonio Urrutikoetxea (alias *Josu Ternera*) read out ‘the final declaration of ETA to the Basque people’ in which, he concluded, “ETA emerged from the (Basque) people and now dissolves back into it” (Gara, 03 May 2018).<sup>291</sup> An internal communication dated back to March 2018 reveals that this decision resulted from a debate among ETA militancy over different proposals. *Table 11* summarizes the results of internal voting among ETA militancy from the operative structures (i.e., active militants), prison front as well as the exiled deemed eligible to vote on the definitive dissolution of the organization:

*Table 11:* Internal voting among ETA militancy for the proposal of definitive dissolution (2018)

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Votes in favor	997	92,6
Votes against	47	4,3
Blank vote / Abstention	33	3,1
<hr/>		
Total number of voters	1335	100
Participation	1077	80,7
No participation	70	5,2
Uncounted votes	188	14,1

Source: ETA, elaborated from *Barne Komunikazio Orokorra* 1803 (March 2018)

<sup>290</sup> Although it is not a commonly expressed opinion among individuals taking part in this study, a few interviewees (B-I/05 and 06) underline the fact that the lack of capacity of carrying out greater armed actions as a response to the repressive measures by the state has equally diminished the grade of legitimacy that people attribute to the organization.

<sup>291</sup> See <https://www.naiz.eus/eu/actualidad/noticia/20180503/declaracion-final-de-eta-al-pueblo-vasco-texto-integro>

As observed above, the vast majority of ETA's members who participated in this historical voting backed this final decision. Around 93% of 1077 voters, constituting approximately some 80,7% of a total of 1335, voted in favor of the definitive dissolution of the organization. Around 4% voted against, and 3% opted for blank votes or abstention. The same document also reveals that 70 militants decided not to vote as they did not consider their participation legitimate due to their prolonged lack of contact with the organization in the prior years. Additionally, a small number of them protested the vote, considering that the decision had already been made. The organization also revealed that 188 militants remained out of these final results as their votes could not be counted due to technical impossibilities, which were not specified in the referred official internal communication.

Although information from ETA's official internal document presents a clear majority backing the final decision, a qualitative look at the entire process -the ceasefire, dismantlement, and dissolution- reveals that a significant number of MLNV members from all three generations disagreed or were dissatisfied with the way that the process had been handled, or presented doubts as to whether it was the right decision. Among interviewees who were deemed eligible to vote, there was only one who disagreed with the majority's decision and explicitly rejected the idea of ending the armed struggle. As seen in other cases (B-I/01, 02, B-II/03, 04, B-III/03), interviewee *B-II/02* expresses his affirmation due to organizational discipline within ETA despite his disagreement:<sup>292</sup>

*"[Do you think it was necessary to take that step? Do you agree with it?] I believe that if something is decided, it's decided, and that's it. We must assume the decisions that are made. [...] Look, I don't trust the people, ok? If the people decide that there have to be gunshots again and they found an organization like AKPUPUPA, I don't care; let them do so! I mean, the people have the word now, so the people will have to see what they do. [...] I personally don't think it was the right time, I say 'personally'. That's why I say that there're decisions that are assumed, and that's it. But I personally believe that it wasn't the right time yet. That's to say, there's much political immaturity on the part of the *abertzale* left, especially in terms of social implication. I'm very scared because I see that many are being transformed into mere political bureaucrats, you know? [...] I don't believe in established politics, I don't believe in an established democracy, I don't believe in them."* (B-II/02)

Another interviewee with a similarly negative opinion criticizes the 'unilateral process', which refers to taking all steps for a transition from politico-military to merely political strategy in a unilateral way, without expecting steps to be taken by the state for negotiation. He comes up with alternative ideas without ruling out the role of violent actions to a certain extent:

*"What I think is that the military strategy evidently hasn't worked in recent years. Is leaving that strategy that hasn't worked for a unilateral disarmament process? Is that the way out? I don't think so. Besides, in this economic context, I believe that there could be a scheme with less military intensity today, without killing anyone. [...] If you blow the tunnels in M40 road, the economy of Madrid depends on M40; the loss in economic terms would be in the billions! You take only a road, the M40, a tunnel... - Well, it doesn't correspond to me to*

---

<sup>292</sup> As noted in the demographic data sheet (see Appendix 3.1), these interviews were conducted between two important dates, after the declaration of ETA's definitive ceasefire in 2011 and the last communiqué of the organization in which it announced the dismantlement of its military structure and its total dissolution in 2018. For this reason, there is no data on whether those interviewees who were deemed eligible to vote (ETA militants only) voted in favor or against.

talk about this, this is a criminal offense! – but that type of action puts the state into difficulties because of the economic cost - without killing anyone, it affects the economic system of Madrid.” (B-II/06)

Except for these two discordant opinions, a vast majority of individuals back the process launched by the *abertzale* left. While agreeing with the cessation of the armed struggle and embracing political means, a significant number of militants (B-I/04; B-II/02, 03, 04, 05; B-III/01, 02, 06) consider vital the adoption of a non-military strategy to achieve the definitive objective, that is, Basque self-determination. Notwithstanding, some individuals criticize the technical aspects and contents of this process when asked their opinion on this specific issue, taking a critical attitude towards the process through which this change was designed and implemented. Some individuals (B-I/01, 05; B-II/05, 06; B-III/02, 05) express their concerns by paying particular attention to such specific subjects as the unresolved issue of dispersion of Basque prisoners and conditions for the return for those who have long been in exile, which have been the most sensible and crucial questions occupying the negotiation agenda since the early 1990s.

“*[Do you personally think that this step had to be taken?]* Yes. I think it wasn’t done in the best way, but I think so; this step had to be taken. *[And in what way do you think it would have been better?]* I don’ know... I think that if it’d been done differently, we’d have fewer problems today. For example, if we’d come to fix the issue of prisoners, we wouldn’t have the problem we have. The issue of prisoners is crucial, and the enemy also knows that it’s crucial for us. So, they use them as hostages. Besides, I don’t see real public pressure on the state to fix that issue. If we raise the issue of prisoners as the first step in advancing on other issues, it’s automatically blocked there because the Spanish and French governments have the key.” (B-III/02)

One also observes that there is strong collusion between the emotional aspects of what have been dedicated and done by resorting to the armed struggle and the rational aspects through questioning the functionality of this option. Another group of individuals (B-I/01, 04; B-II/01, 03; B-III/01, 03, 05) casts doubts on whether the politico-military strategy has indeed been worth carrying you and whether the new exclusively political strategy will be effective. In general, although they believe it is necessary to abandon the armed struggle, they are critical of the lack of sufficient information and discussions held among ETA members before taking such a crucial decision:

“...you choose the armed struggle as a method of fighting knowing that it’s the maximum you can get to offer and take up. Because the armed struggle is that hard: You give life, but you also take life. All the comrades I’ve met in that situation, I believe they’ll never and ever forget those situations that have occurred as a result of the armed struggle. [...] Not being here and not receiving information on how and why these [*steps*] are taken can create frustration, and you ask yourself questions like, ‘has it been worth 50 years of your own suffering and making others suffer too? - because you also make others suffer - Has all this been worth getting where we are?’ and all like that. [...] In this case, I believe that the organization has made a decision, and that decision could perhaps have been shared more or informed better in the case of many people who have spent many years in jail and who didn’t have enough information to evaluate this change in strategy that well.” (B-I/01)

Illegalizations and repression seem to have been the main reasons for insufficient information among the cadres in three fields: operative, prisons, and exile. Extremely restricted conditions under which this decision had to be taken prevented most militants from having comprehensive debates about the details of the process. Although some individuals (B-III/03, 06) clearly express that these options had

been continuously debated among prisoners and, as previously indicated, most individuals could foresee the direction that such debates would lead to, it is understood that extreme conditions created a different temporal perception:

“I believe that for many people, it’s still too early to see many things, to understand. There have been very rapid changes, it’s been passed almost overnight from one strategy to another, a strategy that was at least 40 years old was changed, so I understand that it’s difficult to understand. It’s also because of the situation in the organizations that have taken that decision in the underground. Well, obviously, as there is no total freedom to debate, to be able to speak calmly when there is repression, when the organizations are illegal, it’s challenging. So, I understand the situation that many people aren’t happy; I also have many doubts.” (B-III/03)

Finally, although some scholars who have worked on the subject of radical Basque nationalism represented by the *abertzale* left draw a picture of this movement with clearly established and firmly pursued orthodox lines (Azurmedi 1998; Reinares 2001; Elorza 2005), the entire sequence of this final process once again illustrates what Arriaga (1997) argues when referring to the heterodox character of the *abertzale* left universe. This heterodoxy is intense and painful in decisive moments when a crucial decision is to be made:

“What’s clear is that within the *abertzale* left, the change of strategy isn’t done without suffering. When I say ‘with suffering’, I mean it’s not like each and every one of us is clear about what it is to be done. Some people have it clearer, there are people who in the end have no alternative, other people yes, they have an alternative but with doubts, and there are other people who are totally against it, who think that this change in strategy is wrong, that won’t yield the contemplated results. So yes, there’s a dispute, yes there are people within the *abertzale* left who have different positions.” (B-II/05)

This last process, which has become extremely painful for the community for various sentimental and rational reasons<sup>293</sup>, has ended up in the definitive dissolution of the last surviving armed wing of the MLNV since the mid-1980s. Although the long-lasting armed conflict is over and the MLNV, now completely integrated into the Spanish political system in coalition with other *abertzale* formations, continues pursuing the same political objective, the consequences and pending questions of the conflict still keep some social mechanisms active. Such crucial issues as the exiled and the dispersion of Basque prisoners, which have been the main cause of intra-community suffering as well as a mechanism of transgenerational reproduction of the conflict, still remain unresolved.

---

<sup>293</sup> This intra-group suffering may hypothetically be related to the previously assessed process of ‘socialization of suffering’, which actually took place from the very same intra-group suffering and the idea of the extension of this suffering among other social groups who were considered free from it. Through in-depth interviews with the *abertzale* left militancy who lost the group loyalty during another crucial process of decision-making for a strategic change in the mid-1990s, Arriaga illustrates similar kind of sentimental and rational motivations that caused a painful state with respect to the place and future of ETA among the members of the community (see Interviews N° 01, 10, and 13 in Arriaga 1997: 177-178).

## 11. Generational Analysis of the Social Legitimacy of the PKK

Previous chapters are dedicated to the analysis of political violence in a period of three consecutive generations at the beginning of which the PKK was born as *Apocular*/Kurdistan Revolutionaries and gradually achieved an autonomous position from the previous and coetaneous Kurdish movements, first converting into the dominant actor and, finally, the unique reference, a synonym for Kurdish ~~National~~ Liberation Movement. The analyses made on three consecutive generations have specifically focused on the socio-political characteristics of each epoch, with particular emphasis on the practices and justifications of varying forms of violence exercised by the PKK, denominated as 'legitimate self-defense' by the cadres, in relation with –again varying forms of- symbolic and physical violence exercised by the state as experienced and perceived by the actor.

This chapter will specifically focus on the question of social legitimacy and support conceded to the Apocular/PKK since its initial phases by attempting to make a generational observation on the individuals' perception with this regard. Although the lack of available quantitative data directly reflecting Kurdish public opinion regarding the PKK and its armed activity, some secondary sources, as well as testimonies provided by individuals, make it possible to observe the legitimacy attributed to the group through this three-decade period.

### 11.1. The Apocular phase: Early conditions, challenges, and social support

The existence of numerous coetaneous rival organizations being the main challenge, the initial phase of *Apocular*/PKK saw limitations in terms of material, logistical and human resources. The involvement in violent clashes with rival organizations as well as inter-tribal conflicts, as mentioned in the case of the *Süleymanlar* and *Paydaşlar* in Hilvan region in *Chapter 5*, served the recognition of the group by Kurds in this region within a relatively short time (N.A. Özcan 1999: 39-41). Nevertheless, the initial involvement of PKK cadres seems to have lacked all the prerequisites at a political, social, and military level. Being one of the leading founding cadres of this period and the current co-President of KCK Executive Committee, commander Bayık indicates a list of challenges in this period after having left Ankara for Kurdistan as follows:

“We faced too many difficulties once we entered into the country [*Kurdistan*]. First of all, we lacked experience; we had not trained ourselves that much. In fact, even at a theoretical level, we were not that advanced. Today, a newcomer comrade knows many things; however, our situation was not like that. We were strangers in Kurdistan; we did not know much. Neither comrade Kemal [*Pir*] nor I knew. We knew some things intellectually, but frankly speaking, we did not know the country; we did not know the people. We did not have even a single contact, a single relationship. Additionally, we had financial issues too. When we were about to leave Ankara, the money that all our comrades had was barely enough for our bus tickets. When we arrived in Antep, neither we nor those who were in Ankara had any money left. The first thing we did was to find out where the workers' market was to look for a job in order to earn money. For instance, it took six months in Antep. We worked during the day and at night if you were able to find someone, you talked –and in such a place like Antep, whomever you

call 'Kurd', made them just laugh away-, we were craving for people, and then going and sleeping on the ground. We could not afford to rent an apartment. We were not the only ones who worked under these conditions, but all comrades who went to the country. Another point was that people did not accept themselves; they did not accept the struggle on their behalf. When we said 'Kurdistan', they were saying, 'What is that you call Kurdistan?' Another challenge was the presence of the Turkish left. They were a greater obstacle than the state for us." (Bayık n.d.: 32-33)

Such financial and human source challenges –considered essential factors in terms of resource mobilization (McCarthy & Zald 1977: 1216)- were vital for the group as they directly conditioned the capacity, intensity, and efficiency of armed actions carried out in this period. Even though there was no systematic offensive against the state forces yet, the presence of other violent actors, especially local tribes with a considerable amount of armed contingents, made it crucial to respond similarly in order to convince rural Kurds living under their realm. *K-I/07*, who was militating in the Maraş-Antep region where such confrontations were frequently occurring, describes the challenges they suffered during this period referring to the above-quoted narration of commander Bayık (alias *Cuma*):

"It has been narrated a lot in our Party History; comrade *Cuma* has narrated it: We had a *kelesh* [*Kalashnikov*], it traveled through all the cities.<sup>294</sup> [...] The pistol of comrade Haki, then we found three more guns in the field where we were present; one was an *Uzi* we bought. It was made in Israel, quite good for urban areas. There was also a German gun called *Steyr*, made during Hitler's period; we bought it too. And we also bought a 14-bullet with a yellow grip [*Browning*] in the zone we were present. [*Which zone were you in?*] In Maraş, Maraş-Antep region. Our comrades found them like this, with quite limited possibilities. They were producing explosives this way too. Some comrades worked so much: some dynamite and other stuff, they were making explosives. It was difficult to get weapons. Subsequently, when we were heading to Lebanon, the first time we crossed the border, we didn't have many weapons with us." (*K-I/07*)

Auxiliary actions, like robberies or extortion of wealthy individuals, were deemed to have been sporadically planned and carried out to meet financial needs. *K-I/05* remembers that his first armed action was the bombing of the house of an *agha* in Diyarbakır in order to extort money from him. Describing similar conditions in his native Serhat region during this period, *K-I/09* also explains how they had to get involved in auxiliary actions in order to find resources for their primary needs:

"There was poverty. For example, there was a comrade who worked for bakeries; he was both organizing workers and working in a bakery. [...] For example, we were in charge of the Meat and Fish Committee or were unloading iron from trucks, unloading cement or vegetables in the vegetable market to earn our allowance, our organizational allowance. We had no resources; while we were carrying out such activities, we also couldn't help thinking of robbing. It was about neediness; we had nothing at all. For example, when we made that money robbery, martyr comrade Şiyar and I took the money and handed it over to our comrades in the headquarter there in Pazarçık; it was 540 thousand liras. [...] These comrades gave us 40 thousand out of 540 thousand, and comrade Şiyar and I bought two *Steyr* pistols, German guns used in World War II. We also bought 200 bullets with that 40 thousand; it was so much money at that time." (*K-I/09*)<sup>295</sup>

Finally, it was not only a question of material resources but also the knowledge and practice of using them efficiently (*K-I/02, 07, 08*), which would be possible only after being deployed to Lebanon. As

---

<sup>294</sup> For the reference mentioned above, see Bayık, C. (pseu. *Cuma*) (n.d.) *PKK Tarihi*, (n.p.), p. 50.

<sup>295</sup> Those two examples quoted from the first generation of interviewees regarding the lack of possibilities and resources in this period are stressed by all early cadres. *K-I/06* confirms that this was still the case when they were organizing propaganda activities in mountainous villages, even around the late 1980s.



Bayik emphasizes above, it appears that besides professional military training, guerrilla warfare also required getting to know the terrain and people as well as the social and cultural diversity of different regions and communities in such an immense geographic area as Kurdistan. *K-I/02*, who got involved in propaganda-agitation activities in the Botan after returning from Lebanon, explains how different geographical and social conditions of this field of militancy were in comparison with his native Hilvan:

“When we first went there, most of us were students here; they’d never seen mountains and rocks. It was our first time, and our guide got lost, we stayed all alone. But we had to continue. We were saying, ‘If we manage to cross over this mountain, if this mountain is over, it’s ok!’ You cross over the mountain; a new mountain appears; you cross over that one, then a new one! It was the first thing; we’d never seen a mountain. There is a folk song, you know, ‘Around Urfa, there are foggy mountains’, what is termed the foggy mountains around Urfa, you cross in 15 minutes; but that mountain, you begin to cross in the morning and continue until late evening, and you’re not over it yet! Another thing was that it was July when we arrived, all villages were empty. We even didn’t know why those villages were empty. Why were they empty? Because the villagers had gone to uplands, and we didn’t know what an upland was! Then we asked where the villagers had gone, and they explained to us.” (K-I/02)

This lack of connection with people, culture and customs, and the land was one of the first issues that the PKK, still known as the *Apocular* in most parts of Kurdistan, had to deal with through propaganda and agitation activities under the rule of Turkey’s new military junta. Even though *Kurdism* activities had already begun and the revitalization of Kurdish nationalism had made some progress among new generation Kurdish intellectual circles before the emergence of the PKK, most ordinary Kurds who had lived through or heard of the consequences of such outbursts against the state preferred to remain distant to *Kurdism* as a political activity, and, to far less extent, to the idea of armed rebellion as a result of collective memory on historical experiences. It was even a challenging task to reach people and talk about the existence of Kurdish identity, especially after the autocratic regime established following the 1980 coup. This long and challenging process is summarized by *K-I/06*, who was directly involved in the armed propaganda phase in the 1980s:

“At that time, we realized this: Detecting an identity isn’t sufficient; you have to carry out a struggle to liberate that identity. If the discourse doesn’t acquire a practical form, it doesn’t become an identity. The struggle we carried out was the struggle of being or not an existence. In order to prove your existence, you have to protect it, so you can become an identity. That’s the reason we decided on self-defense in 1982. We made criticism of violence. The role of force in Kurdistan and damage caused by colonial forces were analyzed by the PKK, by *Önder Apo*.<sup>296</sup> On this basis, we took the decision that self-defense against this would be possible through a popular revolutionary war. What was the result? The 15 August offensive. In the 1990s, we could only manage to prove that we were an identity. We could manage to prove that we did exist. That’s all. Nevertheless, existing didn’t mean independence. You can’t be free without an identity, either. Only after that could we start the liberation struggle. That’s to say, our liberation struggle, in fact, began after the 1990s.” (K-I/06)

In the initial period of the group, Turkey in the 1970s was going through an extensive anti-propaganda campaign against communism through both legal or illegal means. The 1971 memorandum not only prohibited labor strikes and limited any sort of organizational rights, but also prepared the grounds for

---

<sup>296</sup> For the reference made by the interviewee, please see Öcalan, A. (1983) *Kürdistan’da Zorun Rolü*, (n.p.): Weşanên Serxwebûn.

the formation of a political representation of fascism in Turkey, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP - *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*), which would be the leading force promoting racism, anti-communist propaganda and violence (Keyder 2013b: 107-109). With its socialist anti-colonial discourse in favor of the liberation of Kurdistan, the *Apocular* were a potential target for growing fascism under the conditions of the stigma of both *leftism* and *Kurdism*. Both characteristics, communism, and *Kurdism* were perceived and reacted by ordinary Kurds in an extremely negative manner, with people being warier of the latter than the former:

“We went to the house of *Önderlik*, after the meal, his father said this, ‘Son, you used to be a communist, but I have heard that now you have become a Kurdist. It is quite dangerous; you’d better become a communist again!’ *Önderlik* smiled and said, ‘My father too has comprehended what is dangerous!’ It was dangerous indeed. Under those conditions, staking a claim on Kurdistan, starting activities in Kurdistan was not an easy task. The father of *Önderlik* was able to say this despite his old age. It was the expression of reality.” (Bayık n.d.: 26)

“Even our parents, grandparents, sisters and brothers who knew nothing about such things were saying ‘Boy, go and be a KUK militant, but not a PKK militant! Go and clash with someone else, but not with the state! Go and be a militant of the Turkish left, but not the Kurdish left!’ Being Kurdish, fighting for the sake of Kurdishness itself was a reason for the state to kill you. Another thing was that the state was saying, ‘these are communists’, that was to say, ‘they sleep with their father, mother, brother, and sister or with this and that!’ They were spreading such propaganda to irritate you spiritually. There were Associations for Struggle against Communism at the time backed by the state, the United States, counter groups, or the *gladio*. Well, there was something like that then; our families were saying, ‘Oh God! Everywhere is under control, don’t you even dare!’ [*Your family too?*] Sure, our family too.” (K-I/02)

The practical activities from which people in small communities benefited served to gain the confidence of villagers. While some of those activities and actions were important consolidating the party’s authority by taking over political power following the military victory, as seen in the case of the Süleymanlar tribe in Hilvan (Bayık n.d.: 52; K-I/02), some others were of local character and had to do with the order in everyday life in the community. To the degree that these everyday practical activities, whether violent or not, were welcomed by the community, more support was given to the *Apocular* as an authoritative reference.

“Issues were emerging in the village, and we took care of them; we were working for our family until around two o’clock in the afternoon, and at seven or nine o’clock in the evening, we would work on the plantation field of a poor village, finishing the field by midnight. We were setting the crop over the field and handing it in to the owner. As we helped in such ways, along with our boom in the village, the Kurds couldn’t repress the Turks [*Azeries*]. In fact, in the beginning, we’d gained a few Turkish comrades too; we converted them into *Apocu* during their student period. [...] For example, people from the neighborhood were coming and making complaints like ‘*heval*, these individuals cause a disturbance in the neighborhood; they’re vagabonds, they’re roaming behind girls!’ We had our groups, teams; we were punishing only these guys, we were beating them up, they were terrified of us. Then, for instance, people had the utmost sympathetic feelings [*towards us*]” (K-I/09)<sup>297</sup>

---

<sup>297</sup> The role that the PKK militants assumed when it came to dealing with the everyday problems of people is also mentioned by other first-generation militants who stress that the party exercised this role in a very organized manner (K-I/03, K-I/07). As similarly expressed by a villager from the Kızıltepe district of Mardin, “Poor people joined the PKK because they use a language understood by the people. When the agha oppresses people, the *Apocular* intervened. They were the only ones resisting oppression. If a girl was kidnapped, they also intervened.” (quoted in Tezcür 2015: 257) A similar generational analysis to be made through for the periods of the 1990s and 2000s will bring to light the advances or deteriorations with this respect and, most crucially, whether this has any impact on the direction of armed struggle.

In some areas of Kurdistan, where other rival Kurdish movements were dominant and the *Apocular* yet to be present, establishing contacts was further complicated due to already existing prejudices among people. It required more effort and propaganda to deal with lousy fame than entering a new area by introducing your group from scratch. The Botan region, which would be a PKK stronghold after the 15 August 1984 offensive, was one of those regions where the *Apocular* were physically absent during their initial phase, but their bad fame had already been reproduced extensively. *K-1/02* narrates his own experience during their visit to a village in this region within the scope of early propaganda-agitation activities where the *Apocular* had an entirely negative reputation as a result of anti-Apocu propaganda by other groups and organizations:

“...when they asked who we were, we said that we were KDP Peshmergas. We asked, ‘what other organizations are present around here?’ and they said, ‘KUK is here, DDKD, Özgürlük Yolu, and so forth’; then we asked, ‘what about *Apocular*?’ and they said ‘No! There is no Apocu here!’ They began to curse the *Apocular*, including our mothers and sisters! They said things like, ‘*Apocular* kidnap people, they extract money from people, kidnap and kill people!’ We said, ‘for God’s sake, these aren’t true, who has said all these?’ I don’t know if he said KUK militants, anyway. ‘Well, no! The *Apocular* don’t do such things. Ok, they kill, but they kill people from the such-and-such profile!’ [...] We tried to explain that the *Apocular* weren’t like that, but sure, they didn’t know yet that we were Apocu! Anyway, up until the late hours of the night, we managed to have a certain fluidity, a certain momentum [*in the conversation*], then we said, ‘well, we’re Apocu, we swear!’ They said, ‘no way! You’re kidding!’ ‘No, it’s not a joke, we’re Apocu!’ When we said ‘Apocu’, they all stared at us like ‘Ah jeez!’, you know, the eyes of the notable man were wide open, like ‘Oh! How come you’re Apocu!’ They’d cussed us, the Apocu, out. That means, as for his version about us, as they cussed us out, now we would have to kill him! He said, ‘but I’ve cussed you out!’, ‘yes, you’ve done, we’ve got it, we’ve heard it’, ‘well, it’s been shameful’, ‘Yeah, it’s been shameful, you’ve behaved so, anyway!’ [*laughing*] Anyway, he asked, ‘so, what can I do then?’ ‘well, you’ve cussed us out because they misrepresented us to you, they’ve taught you badly, and you’ve cussed us out; we have nothing to say. However, from now on, we can be allies, we can be friends, and you can help us.’ He said, ‘Sure, with great pleasure, whatever you like!’, ‘Well, you just help us when we come to your house; don’t inform on us, give us some supplies, give us a lift to the such-and-such village, you just do such things for now.’ He responded, ‘with great pleasure’, and he helped us.” (K-1/02)

It took a long while for the PKK, still known as the *Apocular*, or as scornfully called the *talebeler* (pupils), to come to the forefront and attract the attention of Kurds in rural and, to a lesser extent, urban Kurdistan; arguably, it might have required even more time to accomplish if the 12 September 1980 coup had not taken place and swept away all rival organizations of the period.

### **11.2. The post-15 August 1984 guerrilla phase and the early 1990 serhildans**

After September 1980, the PKK remained the sole significant actor as the military coup and post-coup repressive measures put into practice had eliminated most other Turkish and Kurdish leftist movements. As the autocratic military regime of Gen. Kenan Evren considered the *leftism* and *Kurdism* as the main potential threats to Turkishness, they soon became targets for special attention: Hundreds of militants were killed through armed confrontations, torture, extrajudicial execution or vanished, with 85,000 people sentenced to long prison terms (Bozarslan 2009: 67).

Despite the significant difficulties that the PKK faced as a result of the coup, it may well be argued that it was 12 September 1980 that accelerated the widespread recognition and fame of the group among Kurds. Öcalan's decision to withdraw the PKK militants out of Turkey avoided more severe damage to the organization, something that it would have experienced had it continued in Turkey's Kurdistan before the guerrilla war. The elimination of rival organizations, against which the PKK had given its first early losses by the Turkish military and police forces, made the PKK the only potential organization of resistance; the move to Lebanon gave them enough time to get trained and gain experience by fighting against the Israeli army. Additionally, the massive presence of Turkish military forces, which already had a negative reputation among Kurds due to historical occurrences, and violent practices they had arbitrarily implemented on civilians made the PKK's definition of 'colonial enemy' and 'occupying force' clearly visible in the eyes of many Kurds.

Öcalan's decision on returning to 'the country' (northern Kurdistan, Turkey) and launching a guerrilla campaign on 15 August 1984 became a new milestone for the Kurdish National Liberation Movement, giving way to a decades-long intensive military confrontation between the Turkish state and the PKK. K-I/05, who was in Diyarbakır Prison N°5 when the 15 August offensive was carried out, describes the sentiments that he and his fellow PKK inmates had, and the morale boost received among their social surroundings outside:

"When the 1984 offensive took place, for instance, we got extremely excited. 'What could it be?' Sometimes we were going out to the ventilation area with comrades; we all were curious because we didn't know what it was, what was going on, what were they doing? We knew nothing about that. Some of us were saying, 'this is an armed struggle, propaganda, armed propaganda' [...] Sure, the 1984 offensive created a big excitement, a big excitement indeed. It was also noticeable in the attitude of those families who were coming to visit us. They came, you got to see them, and everyone had their spirit lifted. You see, like 'your comrades have started it!', like that, it had created such excitement among people. Surely, we also did feel that excitement; it was reflected on us, the comrades in prison.' (K-I/05)<sup>298</sup>

The success of the 15 August guerrilla offensive in Eruh and Şemdinli marked the beginning of a new period for the Kurdish national liberation struggle that opted for the implementation of "revolutionary violence against imperialism, fascist Turkish colonialism, and its native servants" to be led by the PKK, as stated in the Announcement of HRK (*Hêzên Rizgarîya Kurdistan* – Kurdistan Independence Union) in the *Serxwebûn* edition published following the offensive (August 1984, N° 32, p. 2). Nevertheless, it appears that even the PKK's high-ranking cadres were unable to foresee what impacts the offensive

---

<sup>298</sup> The official history of the PKK confirms that the 15 August 1984 Eruh – Şemdinli offensive was, in a political and military sense, a major milestone. The PKK delivered its first big blow on a military regime that had crushed almost all other Turkish and Kurdish revolutionary movements, provoking a great sense of disbelief and general mistrust in revolutionism among people. Unlike previous rebellions, which, according to commander Bayık, had taken place *per se* in the history of Kurdish people, it was considered the first organized armed resistance movement (n.d.: 107). The PKK was in a preparation phase as they previously had sent a message via its official journal, advising Kurdish people to "take good care of your guns, they are all that we have got" (*Serxwebûn* May 1984 N° 29: 4). Bayık's qualification of the 15 August offensive as the first organized armed resistance appears as another indication that the generational rupture of the PKK with traditional Kurdish resistance movements (Sheikh Said revolt organized by Hoybûn, e.g.), placing the PKK in the center of the Kurdish liberation war.

would cause on Kurds living in the region. Commander Karayılan emphasizes the impact of the offensive on local people in the region and how the PKK cadres were not able to calculate the potential emerged afterward:

“The offensive ventilated people’s emotions, creating excitement, and fueling their anger towards the colonial system. From this perspective, by partially rebelling, people fell in the mood to run and join the guerrilla. In a way, they were in the mood for rebellion. The pulse for uprisings at a regional level began to increase rather than a general uprising throughout the entire Kurdistan. Sufficient conditions were enough for the guerrilla to grow, multiplying instantly within a short while. In Uludere, Beytüşşebap, and Bestler, people’s disposition for such an outburst was high. If there had been a tactical leadership who was able to evaluate the conditions of the period, who was able to analyze the developments experimented, had the fiery emotions of the people been rationalized, it would have been able to channel hundreds of people into the guerrilla possibly. The vast majority of people living in this region had no significant ties with the state. It was possible to make those people’s groups, who constituted a significant potential, join the guerrilla and increase the capacity of the guerrilla. However, the absence of a competent tactical leader who would show performance at such a level was a great misfortune. Comrade Agit [*Mahsum Korkmaz*] was the closest candidate for such a role, but it would not be possible for one individual alone to achieve this. It would require a competent organized team and a more efficient position.” (Karayılan 2014: 155)<sup>299</sup>

Despite the unexpected positive reaction by the people who witnessed the guerrilla’s raid and the subsequent show of strength, and the posterior intervention of state security forces following the failure of the PKK in organizing effervescent groups, the 15 August offensive and its prominent commander *Agit* would gain extreme value within the symbolic universe of the Kurdish national liberation struggle. This first action planned, taken, and completed was the beginning of a ‘state of war’ (*Serxwebûn* Dec. 1984, N°35: 9) that would resonate even in the remote interior parts of northern Kurdistan despite the subsequent disappointment by the people of Botan. *K-1/03*, who joined the PKK after the 15 August offensive, explains why he decided to join the PKK guerrilla:

“Before 1980, let’s say before the coup, we were aware of this movement [*PKK*], but we didn’t know much about it –talking on my behalf- and the 12 September coup took place and swept society like a steamroller, it swept over Alevis with a different steamroller. It essentially targeted the Kurdish movement and swept over Turkey’s leftist movements; Turkey’s left didn’t show any resistance against it, and you’re sympathetic towards them in that period. However, the Kurdish liberation movement led by the PKK developed resistance against this coup, this junta... So here your priorities change, your concerns change. Because it [*PKK*] defends you; the other which you set your hopes on hasn’t defended you, it has abandoned you, it’s even given in. [...] ...the movements for which you previously had sympathetic feelings have kneeled down in the face of the 12 September, so to say, given in, and you see a new glimmer of hope there, and there is a power which resists, defends you, defends you to the death.” (K-1/03)

The offensive that the PKK launched against the state opened a new era in the history of the Kurdish liberation struggle in Turkey, with the 15 August acquired significant symbolic value in the eyes of Kurdish public opinion by having demonstrated that the state was not immune to losses. Having

---

<sup>299</sup> Describing the same topic, commander Bayık also recognizes the atmosphere of the uprising backed by the people in the Botan region that did not last long as the organization was not ready for such massive participation due to the lack of practical leadership and had to refuse people’s willingness. Bayık also adds that the negative approach taken by the organization towards people’s eagerness to join the guerrilla then turned out to be disbelief (n.d.: 108). Among first-generation participants in this study, *K-1/05* also makes an identical explanation with this respect by confirming the guerrilla’s negative attitude towards people’s willingness right after the 15 August offensive.

achieved such a critical propaganda tactic, the PKK damaged to a certain degree the myth of invincibility that the Turkish state had long preserved since the catastrophic end of the Dersim revolt of 1938 and its suppression. Especially among young Kurds who joined the PKK guerrilla in the early 1990s and those who had been subjected to propaganda activities by the guerrilla in rural parts of Kurdistan, it was a source for the revitalization of a dream project, an independent Kurdistan, which had long been faded:

“‘What does the PKK want to do?’, not everyone was conscious of this. The youth knew a bit. *Serxwebûn* publications arrived, *Özgür Halk* [Free People] magazine as well; also cassettes were being distributed, there were leaflets, conversations, and meetings with some people... Everyone had that dream of an independent Kurdistan, like, ‘we’ll have an independent country too; finally, we’ll also live in peace and calm.’ [...] ...loyalty and sympathy for the PKK were quite high. Maybe some were expressing this explicitly, some others kept this inside themselves, but in any place I’d been in, this was the topic. Those who opposed also expressed their opinions, like ‘it’s possible, but it’s difficult’, but others were like ‘this is a strong movement, they can handle this.’ Then they were calling the *Apocu* or *Karkers* [workers]. Especially those who came from rural areas, they had a better grasp of this subject as they’d seen the guerrilla: ‘Look, they say such things, they make such propaganda. They live like this; they’re clean. They’re different from the others; they don’t resemble other organizations.’ Such discussions took place in that period.” (K-II/07)

Although there is no empirical study available conducted directly or indirectly on the social support provided to the PKK in this period, reports and analyses made by some high-ranking Turkish military personnel and politicians revealed in later years illustrate the growing influence of the organization among Kurds. Analyzing official documents issued by Turkish political parties, leaders, and military members, including the President of the Republic of the time, Turgut Özal, Yayman reveals the concerns that the support provided to the ‘terrorist organization’ was growing, that the organization’s influence in predominantly Kurdish cities was increasing, that the organization became an ‘alternative power to the state’ in rural Kurdistan, and that the organization sought to enhance its social bases among Kurds through propaganda activities (2011: 353-354). Indeed, the legal-political involvement attempts -despite having been frequently interrupted by the Turkish judiciary, grew increasingly, achieving some %26,4 of votes by the end of the 1990s, becoming the most voted political party in Turkey’s Kurdistan (Yeğen *et al.* 2016: 51-53).

As mentioned by second-generation cadres, in the decade of the 1990s, during which they joined guerrilla lines, the PKK and its struggle became the main discussion topic among Kurdish *yurtsever* circles, as narrated above by K-II/07. Nevertheless, this also meant the emergence of another cleavage, now not about merely being a Kurdish *yurtsever*, but instead among *yurtsever* circles themselves. This cleavage was about the involvement in the armed struggle, deemed correct, honorable, and ideal, while the counterpart was labeled cowardice and disloyalty:<sup>300</sup>

---

<sup>300</sup> As noted in *Chapter 9*, this cleavage became even sharper among third-generation individuals, some of whom explicitly define joining the PKK as a question of pursuing ‘an honorable life’ (K-III/04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11).

“Also, [about] the struggle carried out by the PKK, their words were narrated like epics, like ‘the PKK has gone to mountains, they sacrifice themselves. Wherever they go, they fight this, and that way, they stand and fight in full faith. They gain lots of respect; wherever they go, people trust them, they’ve got a position transmitting trust’. When we participated, this reality was pretty widespread in society. In some others, for example, the fear of ‘If I join, I’ll get caught’ was at the forefront whereas, for most others, it was like ‘If that’s how the situation is, we too shall take part in it; or you become integrated into the state here and try to survive thanks to the state, or you take part in an honorable fight’ In fact, it was the beginning of cleavage in society.” (K-II/01)<sup>301</sup>

While material insufficiencies for military affairs mostly remained unchanged, especially in comparison with the quantitative and qualitative capacities of the state, which constituted a serious problem at times of armed confrontation (K-II/10), they were not among the primary challenges brought about by the cadres. Although the PKK’s struggle in the mountains was considered ideal and inspirational by most Kurdish nationalist circles, for those recruits who were of the urban profile, physical conditions in rural areas and mountains were one of the most severe challenges that this generation faced (K-II/03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09), especially those who were used to the conditions of urban metropolitan atmosphere and unfamiliar with rural life:

“At the beginning, one gets a bit surprised because it’s a completely different world, a completely different life. You go there and, in the simplest sense, from the place where you have to sleep to sleeping with your shoes on, everything seems like a difficulty. Maybe for those who live in rural villages, it’s less problematic, but you find everything problematic. For example, I can’t stand washing my face without soap; it becomes a psychological obsession for me. Under such conditions, due to all these, you’re incredibly jolted. The first month, two months, then gradually you get accustomed, you make sense of it; many unknown things become known to you. [...] Those who are successful build these up by converting it into a lifestyle; those who aren’t successful run away and hand themselves over to police, or they commit suicide; they deviate another way. We were successful, or maybe we weren’t successful, but life dragged us along, I don’t know, that’s life anyway.” (K-II/04)

“Guerrilla life is way different, life in the mountains too, particularly if you come from a big city. For example, the first moments of your participation, life in the mountain, becoming familiar with the guerrilla, all those inevitably provoke some condensations in your mind. In my case, as I already had potential, [I’d lived in a] rural village environment or, at least, as I knew about the PKK a little, I didn’t have many challenges in an ideational sense. Maybe only I had some difficulties in the beginning due to physical conditions.” (K-II/07)

Most of the time, as in the case of first-generation cadres, the value costs of living a civilian life as a Kurd who embraced their Kurdish identity and joining the PKK in order to claim the liberation of this identity were considered equal in individuals’ minds. In terms of value cost, they considered the possibility of being imprisoned, tortured, or assassinated was as high as getting killed (as a ‘martyr’, considered a far more ‘honorable death’) in the ‘national liberation war’. In this sense, armed militancy was considered to have the same value cost, death, as staying and fighting through non-military activities for the same value expectation. As K-II/11 emphasizes, in this period, he and most of his

---

<sup>301</sup> Other interviewees from different geographical areas and backgrounds in this generation (K-II/03, 04, 06, 07, 08, 12), who commonly confirm the image of the PKK in their eyes, use almost identical expressions with this respect. In terms of Kurdish public opinion on the PKK, however, perspectives vary widely, depending on the political ecology and demographic characteristics of certain regions/areas, as seen in electoral results of legal representatives. Among interviews, K-II/04’s testimony describes the insignificant presence and despicable image of the PKK in Ardahan, which isolated him from the rest of the society, whereas K-II/05, who grew up in the uplands of Botan region, describes that she was in constant contact with guerrillas as people in her region voluntarily provided food and equipment to the fighters in this area.

fellow comrades never considered that they would survive longer than 2 or 3 years, which was the period for the most experienced guerrillas in the battle at that time. Once the individual's mind became 'clear' for the pursuit of this 'new life', the fear of death, which had a high probability, did not come to constitute a challenge:

"Although I'd not lived in Kurdistan, I felt no fear at all; I can say this frankly. I felt that I headed for the place where I belonged. Because for years, I was searching, and I believe that in the mountain, I found the potential response to my aspirations. For this reason, I never had dilemmas, hopelessness, even when I faced death. I lived through this: I had moments when I held my grenade in my hands, [*and said*] 'If the enemy captures me alive, I'll explode this grenade on myself', but without feeling even the slightest fear. The trust I have in the struggle is an entirely different spirit, and it's essential. The period of participation, of getting familiarized with, there may be some emotional moods, but I didn't feel those fears as I believed that we'd liberate Kurdistan through the struggle in which I trusted. Sure, I experienced some challenges. Especially not being able to walk on the mountain. I'd always lived in a big city, moved around by car or on the street. I felt that difficulty until I got accustomed, but apart from that, I had no fear at all or no other challenge. I also carried out activities for many years; I made *şervans* [fighters] join and believed in [*the struggle*]." (K-II/09)

Another frequently emphasized challenge brought about by second-generation individuals appears to be the inevitable reflections of the undesired aspects of the Kurdish cultural identity, which some individuals believe (K-II/01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 08, 11) provoked serious wrongdoings among some cadres. As previously observed through *Chapter 9* (see Table 8), the death toll due to one-sided PKK violence towards civilians (mostly towards Kurdish villages where the *korucu* system was implemented) augmented drastically from 49 in 1991 to 2016 in 1992 and 404 in 1993, according to data revealed by the Department of Peace and Conflict Research of the University of Uppsala. Such practices with mostly fatal consequences, both in the PKK itself as well as Kurdish society, were one of the main reasons that the PKK's reputation was damaged and, therefore, its social legitimacy decreased among those Kurds who suffered from these unrepairable losses:

"At that time, we were number one on terror lists. Well, maybe our war and action styles also played a role in that; I don't object to it, I mean, I'm a member of this movement. However, in those years, the command level of the organization was weak. Many things, like civilian losses, arbitrary things, took place. Claiming 'these didn't occur' means not being able to see the future. Those who aren't able to analyze their past cannot create any future either. We did such things. *Önderlik* made a historical self-criticism of these. He did so as a movement, and we apologized to all of those people. We apologize now too. Possibly many of our militants also lost their life this way. We apologized to their families, and we restored their honor of life. They lost their lives during the mess of war. I may have lost my life too. [*Do you mean you might have been executed?*] Yes, many people, when they objected to things like that, which didn't fit their mind, then the attitude [*towards them*] could change too. They could have been considered as if they couldn't come to [*learn or accept*] this life." (K-II/08)

It is widely believed and objectified within the PKK that such erroneous attitudes were due to carrying the essence of a Kurdish personality constructed under a 'colonized culture, social and political repression, feudal values, and reactionary backgrounds'. In this narrative, despite the efforts for indoctrination by *Önderlik*, it is thought that those individuals who did not comprehend the concept of a newly introduced 'humanization' and 'freed minds', which were the new interests of the PKK after



having abandoned classical Marxism (A.K. Özcan 2006: 109), were the main challenge in this period that the PKK militants came across:

“There are no clear-cut borders between the *system* and revolutionary ranks; instead, there’s transitivity; you carry that culture, that identity and bring them there. Because of that, it doesn’t change immediately; it takes so much time. Sure, by time, as that movement constructs its own culture, its own identity inside, it becomes easier for those who come to be subject to or adopt that culture. However, at that time, the period we’re talking about was just the period of construction. For example, ‘we’ll achieve the revolution tomorrow!’ there was such a state of emotion or spirit; nobody thought about the issue of women, ecology, human rights; we even didn’t think about such things. Our familiarity with these in a more realistic, more staggering way was only after 1999, after the captivity of *Önderlik*. Undoubtedly, *Önderlik* had dwelled a lot on this, wrote and spoke about this in the past, but no matter how much He talks, if you’re unable to understand. The capacity of understanding of an individual is in direct proportion to his mind, and our capacity was like this; the environment in which we grew up was an environment of repression, our personalities were problematical, and our capacity of understanding on this matter was weak. Consequently, our advancement took place in a troubled manner.” (K-II/04)

Most cadres in this or previous generations make similar affirmations about their lack of ability for self-analysis, self-transformation, and self-reaction. One can argue that such reconstructed narratives expressed by individuals had to do with the ‘production of individual’s personality’ (Öcalan 1993: 183), an issue that came to the forefront in the itinerary of the PKK after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In this sense, it is significant and coherent that those who continued serving the organization, showing the utmost loyalty to its principles and philosophy regardless of changes and transformations over time, adopted and socially reproduced this new ‘official’ version of the *self*.<sup>302</sup>

Attributing the root cause of bad management/practices and wrongdoings to ‘incapable cadres’ or a ‘gangster/conspirator approach’ (*çeteci/komplocu anlayış*) within the PKK, allegedly sponsored and backed by the Turkish state, is an officially adopted group truth (Öcalan 2001, Vol.2: 229-230; Karayılan 2014: 194-195). In this version of reality, such wrong practices by no means reflect the PKK’s firm stance and principles or the philosophy of its *Önderlik* and, therefore, cannot be attributed to them. A different interpretation in more details with this respect, however, is observed among those drop-outs who left the organization in the 1999 – 2004 period:

“During the period of Dr. Baran, as soon as you join, the PKK that you idealized before drastically changes in a couple of months. You come up against a PKK image different from what you’d been told; a PKK with an organization based on excellent relationships, whose humanistic side comes into prominence. The picture of PKK you visualized, you idealized, is broken into pieces in your eyes; it goes upside down all of a sudden. After that process, you experience some anxieties, some concerns, some regrets. A friend who joined alongside me, we joined together, it didn’t take even a month, after fifteen days, he dropped out and went away, just like many people did. It’s the threshold; those who overcome that threshold stay; those who do not leave after a short while. So, how do you overcome the threshold? They tell you something afterward: The PKK you’ve seen here is the false PKK; the correct PKK is the one represented by Öcalan, the PKK guided by him. However, you never see that PKK either.” (K-II/11)<sup>303</sup>

---

<sup>302</sup> Those who left the organization in the 1999-2004 period by disagreeing with the new paradigm of the PKK (K-I/10, K-II/11, and K-II/12 in this research), on the other hand, do not agree with this interpretation about their personalities.

<sup>303</sup> Having exemplified similar wrongdoings in the PKK by infamous high-ranking provincial commanders such as Högür and Dr. Baran, *K-I/10*, who joined the guerrilla lines in the late 1980s and left the PKK in 2004, also underlines the same fact. Refusing to call the PKK a ‘terrorist organization’ but labeling some of its past practices as ‘terror actions’, the interviewee makes a

As emphasized in *Chapter 7*, such intra-party conflicts in this generation were mostly based on the distinction between the profile of PKK cadres who had joined the organization in the 1980s, the majority of whom had rural peasant backgrounds and joined the organization as a result of the PKK's initial armed propaganda activities in rural Kurdistan, and those who joined from the 1990s on, among whom university drop-outs and urban youth occupying a significant proportion. It is understood that this urban-rural discrepancy and conflict, whose social roots have been mentioned in *Chapter 5*, which reached its highest peak within the PKK in this period, gradually diminished by time:

“At that time, the peasant – petit bourgeoisie conflict was way stronger. Today, there are social transformations. They're not only transformations taking place within the PKK, but there have been transformations in society as well. Due to these social transformations, even those who live in villages come [*to join*] already as semi-intellectuals. At least, if they happen to come, they come by knowing the organization. They tell them about what life is like, what the situation is like, what the principles are like in the organization, and that one should come if only they accept to live in this way. Do you understand? Now there aren't people who discovered the world at a shot like this anymore. Because the PKK is now a widely known organization, that's what it is. However, discrepancies exist today too. I tell you for the record; they do exist today too. But not like the peasant – urban class conflicts, like in the past, but rather in terms of the sense of life, the philosophy.” (K-II/08)

Discrepancies and internal conflicts within the PKK continued during the early 2000s as well. The radical changes made in the nation-state oriented paradigm provoked the most detrimental impacts in the history of the organization, almost giving way to its disintegration. However, once the crisis resolved with a majority of militants remaining loyal to the *Önderlik's* new paradigm (and despite the abandonment of some important high-ranking cadres), the PKK continued to lead Kurdish politics in Turkey, gradually getting more involved in other aspects of Turkish politics.

### **11.3. Social support for the new PKK amid old challenges**

As seen in *Chapter 9*, Öcalan's capture in 1999 and the subsequent period of a deep crisis within the PKK brought about the most severe and radical changes, and challenges, that the organization had faced until then. Major incidents of this period, therefore, also constituted the most challenging questions, not only for the political generation of this period but also for all other previous-generation cadres who had continued their militancy within the party. Indeed, the capture and imprisonment of the PKK's *Önderlik*, objectified as a result of an 'international conspiracy' in the group truth, and discrepancies between those who recognized Öcalan's paradigmatic change, renouncing the project of an independent Kurdish nation-state and introducing the abstract idea of 'democratic confederalism' and democratization of Turkey, and those who objected this change and protested

---

long and detailed list of wrongdoings: the compulsory military service law, assaults and destruction of guard villages with civilian women and children inside, demanding obligatory 'revolutionary taxes' from the rural peasant (a practice the interviewee himself witnessed under the command of Dr Baran), intra-organizational executions, some of which were allegedly ordered by the current high-ranking commanders. Apparently, such practices against civilians significantly damaged the PKK's reputation and social legitimacy in this period and pushed some influential and militarily powerful *yurtsever* tribes (Jerki Tribe, e.g.) to embrace the Village Guard system.

against the *Önderlik*, and therefore labeled as *ihanetçi* (betrayers) by the loyalists, left its mark during this period of early 2000s.

Whether this crucial cornerstone was a significant variable in terms of the popular support that Kurdish people offered to the PKK in the early 2000s seems to be a negative assessment. Despite its overly emotional impact among Kurdish *yurtsevers*, which is especially visible among the PKK cadres, Öcalan's capture and subsequent changes in the paradigm of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement do not seem to have been a significant turning point in Kurdish public opinion concerning the reputation and prestige of the PKK as a legitimate socio-political actor. Öcalan's indispensable role in short-lived peace negotiation attempts, first in the Norwegian capital of Oslo and then in the "democratic opening" towards Turkey's long-lasting Kurdish conflict, illustrated his indisputable status as the leader of Kurds in this period (Çakır 2010: 182).

Although no specific empirical study focuses exclusively on the PKK's social legitimacy, certain quantitative studies on Kurds reveal significant findings concerning the social legitimacy of the main actors of the Kurdish movement. According to KONDA Research and Consultancy's report dated May 2011, more than 50% of Kurds believe that the solution of Turkey's Kurdish question is possible only if the Kurdish legal-political party (then BDP), Abdullah Öcalan, or the PKK is recognized as an interlocutor by the Turkish government (KONDA 2011: 141-142). The research outcomes reveal that at least half of the Kurdish population recognize the Kurdish movement led by the PKK as the legitimate political actor on their behalf despite substantial changes that it has passed through.

Likewise, political parties founded upon the paradigmatic change in which elements of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement occupy an apparent majority along with Turkey's leftist-democratic political and social actors see a significant increase in electoral results from the early 2000s onwards.<sup>304</sup> The consistent increase in electoral results competing with the conservative AKP in the region reaches a landslide victory in June 2015 general elections, achieving to obtain some %62,4 of votes in Turkey's Kurdistan (Yeğen *et al.* 2016: 54-57). Other quantitative data presented by Yeğen and his colleagues regarding the major political questions as well as administrative preferences by the main ethnic/religious groups living in Turkey's Kurdistan also reveal quite significant findings that also indirectly illustrate the importance of Kurdish movement-related issues among Kurds:

---

<sup>304</sup> The latter development involved, first the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP – *Demokratik Halk Partisi*), which eventually merged into the Democratic Society Party (DTP – *Demokratik Toplum Partisi*) and was banned on 12 December 2009, and finally, Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP – *Halkların Demokratik Partisi*), which currently carries on its political activities. Despite the repressive policies put into practice since 2015 and with its leading members of parliament in jail, including co-Presidents Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, as well as tens of democratically elected co-mayors imprisoned and replaced by administrators assigned by the AKP government, HDP obtained 11,70% of general votes (5.867.302 votes in total), becoming the third most-voted party in the Turkish Grand National Assembly according to the 27<sup>th</sup> Term General Elections on 24 June 2018. Please see Supreme Electoral Council of Turkey: [www.ysk.gov.tr/tr/24-haziran-2018-secimleri/77536](http://www.ysk.gov.tr/tr/24-haziran-2018-secimleri/77536)

Table 12: Percentage of affirmative answers regarding the central political questions and administrative preference

<b>Political questions</b>	<b>Kurds</b>	<b>Zazas</b>	<b>Alevis</b>	<b>Arabs</b>	<b>Turks</b>
PKK prisoners should be released	70,4	62,8	83,1	20,3	9,2
PKK members should be participating in legal politics	69,0	64,2	82,0	22,8	12,2
Öcalan should be freed	67,2	46,3	62,5	18,2	6,4
Kurds should be apologized for what was done to them in the past	86,1	70,7	86,7	51,2	22,4
<b>Administrative preference</b>					
An independent Kurdish state	46,8	25,7	23,2	1,2	1,3
A federal administration	48,1	32,1	48,6	9,5	7,0
Democratic autonomy	61,6	49,7	70,9	26,7	7,8
Expanding the power of local governments	73,2	75,0	84,4	43,2	18,2
Continuity of the unitary state	37,5	43,6	20,0	71,1	59,4

Source: Elaborated from Yeğen *et al.* 2016: 131, 137

The above-stated data reveals the high percentage of absolutely affirmative answers among Kurds, Zazas, and Alevi Kurds regarding the Kurdish conflict-related main questions in comparison with those given by Arabs and Turks living in Kurdistan. Such controversial questions as the future of Öcalan's condition or that of those imprisoned and active PKK militants find significant support among Kurds. Accordingly, the administrative preference of Kurds, Alevis, and Zazas shows a clear tendency towards democratic autonomy and expansion of the power of local governments that corresponds to the new paradigm of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement and the roadmap offered by Öcalan for the political solution of Turkey's Kurdish question.

The quantitative data revealed by these recent studies regarding the social legitimacy of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement in general and the PKK, in particular, is also supported by qualitative data obtained among the third generation of PKK cadres. In the case of those who joined the guerrilla during this period, the social organization and mechanisms of reproduction of the political discourse of the PKK seem to have achieved a remarkable level, and they joined the guerrilla having a clear idea regarding the PKK's political program and aspirations, as affirmed by K-III/02:

"I joined the movement in the year 2004. From the point of view I had in 2004, it was a period in which the PKK had already become popular and socialized. It was a period during which certain dimensions of the phenomenon of the PKK, their political trajectory, the phenomenon of the state had already become uncovered. For this reason, we had no difficulty getting to know [*the PKK, struggle*] on our part. Because then the contradictions were revealed the way they existed, in all aspects. There were resources created by the Kurdish Liberation Struggle; for example, television broadcasting, mediums developed in a functional way, like press and media. These were frequently keeping our agenda up-to-date and creating an immense flow of advancements of social consciousness. We can also point out that, in fact, the [*Kurdish*] society already had a certain level of consciousness, an upheaval." (K-III/02)

As emphasized in the previous chapter, anti-PKK propaganda in Turkish media, which depicts the group as a terrorist organization in harmony with the official political discourse of the state, still played an influential role, especially in those towns and cities with demographically multi-ethnic characteristics, where polarization between Kurdish *yurtsever* circles and other groups illustrated clear-cut visibility

(K-III/08). The rural villages, overwhelmingly dominated by Kurds, who enjoyed the direct contact with the guerrilla, on the other hand, were the places where the PKK had consolidated its social hegemony:

“...in our region, people themselves handed in their children to the PKK. I remember this from my family, as well. I can say that their glance towards the PKK was way different; in a sense, they saw it like ‘these people fight, they fight in the mountains for Kurdish people’, like ‘they’ll save us.’ [...] On this matter, they have a very distinctive approach towards the PKK; they have strong sympathetic feelings towards the PKK, especially if they see the guerrilla movement. There in the Serhat region, uplands are quite widespread; animal husbandry is already a priority for people to feed themselves as a means of living. When they go to uplands, they already meet guerrillas there.” (K-III/07)

The enlistment of recruits from a village, where social ties had traditionally been based on close kinship among large families, appears to have had a considerable impact on the entire village, changing the vision of people significantly towards the PKK no matter how the organization and the guerrilla were seen previously. *K-III/11*, being the first person who joined the guerrilla from his village, describes how his decision impacted the negative vision that people of the village in Garzan province once had due to constant anti-terror propaganda in his childhood:

“Maybe they [*the people*] didn’t use the concept of terror in that period, but they [*the state*] could succeed to have cultivated this perception. Of course, this underwent a change during the process; in fact, it underwent a rapid change. The reason for this is that it [*state propaganda*] had no base there; it defames, villainizes, presents [*the guerrilla*] in a bad and savage way, but this has no grounds there. As it has no cultural and historical grounds, and the PKK emerged out of the people, this [*anti-propaganda*] didn’t succeed. For this reason, these obstacles were overcome easily. Today, as far as I know –if we happen to talk about the situation in our village- it has passed through a big transformation. Especially after I left the village and joined the PKK, this created a big impact on people. It has nothing to do with this or that individual; the fact that a guerrilla member emerges there makes them better understand that the PKK emerges out of the people.” (K-III/11)

This change in the attitude and approach of those people who once considered the PKK as a criminal terrorist organization is also narrated by *K-II/04*, who was detained in the early 1990s and served a 12-year prison sentence in Metris prison (Istanbul). After being released as someone sentenced for being a ‘PKK terrorist’, his experience in his native Ardahan, which was not a Kurdish *yurtsever* area, showed how this generational transformation took place throughout the 1990s:

“[*How did the society welcome you once you got out of prison?*] ...Thousands of people came to visit [*our house*]. I lumped in my throat, let me just tell you this, I said, ‘I abandoned this city crying. You treated me as if I had leprosy, but now witnessing this scene, I excuse you all.’ That’s all that I said. [*You mean their welcoming you was a different scene...*] It was stunning, yes. It was something that no fiction or no particular organization could ever achieve; it all happened in an entirely natural way; some were sacrificing animals, people lining up to take a photo with me, especially those lads... From Istanbul, they took me to a wedding venue; whether there was really a wedding or they’d organized it for me, I don’t know. Thousands of people had come; they were crushing one another to take a photo with me. I mean, for whom? There are 86 million people like me in this country. The young were pushing one another to take a photo. The same thing happened with those people in the village. Those people who probably go to the city once a year in their life came to the city center hurriedly in minibuses and tractors.” (K-II/04)<sup>305</sup>

---

<sup>305</sup> This observation in those peripheral zones of northern Kurdistan where the demographic characteristics in terms of ethnicity vary significantly is particularly important. In the specific case of Ardahan, electoral results obtained from the State Institute of Statistics (DİE) between 1995 to 2011 illustrate that while Turkish conservative right-wing (principally ANAP, DYP, RP, and later AKP) and central left-wing (DSP and CHP) political parties had an overwhelming majority, the increase in the

When it comes to analyzing major challenges and difficulties in this period in terms of organizational advancements, access to material resources, and facilities, one can argue that, at least in comparison with previous periods, significant progress was also made with this respect. While the gap between the PKK and the state in the use of advanced military technology widened in favor of the latter throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the PKK also achieved a considerable organizational capacity in terms of resource mobilization and logistics:

“[How do you meet your own needs in the guerrilla?] We’ve got logistic units that provide things such as food and clothing for our comrades. These units are stable. If we’re ten comrades here, whatever we need is written down. Let’s say the name of our unit is martyr Sarya, martyr Rubar, or like that. Each unit has a name or zone, or the unit takes the name of a martyr comrade. Whatever we need, if you’re in the south [Iraqi Kurdistan], it is supplied by these units. Whatever is available within the bounds of possibility is distributed equally among all units. If you’re in a war zone, you have to create these possibilities; you take them from people, you do it thanks to the help of the people, or, if you have economic solvency, you buy them. In fact, it varies depending on the zone and area, but that collective life is essential everywhere. If a pair of shoes are needed, whichever comrade has the most worn-out shoes, they get the new ones. It’s a culture within the guerrilla; there’s no individualism; there’s no ‘I want the nicer or newer one’ approach. Collective life teaches you this.” (K-III/12)

The physical challenges of continuing the guerrilla *way of life*, for any member, including that of experienced cadres, are mentioned by individuals as challenging for all; alongside that, the conditions of war and military repression by the enemy are specifically highlighted among third-generation cadres (K-III/01, 04, 06, 07, 09, 10, 11, 12). Having passed a considerable amount of time since the first guerrilla war was launched and having been active in the legal-political field of the struggle before joining the guerrilla lines, it appears that most third-generation militants had an idea about guerrilla life, whether such information corresponded to reality or not remains another issue:

“Sure, when one first arrives, what they have in mind, what they think about it, and what they see is different. These differences are present. I’d mostly learned about the PKK, the mountain, guerrilla, and struggle through books. Especially books from prison, books written by those comrades who were staying in prison. Sure, I was incapable of fully comprehending mountainous conditions and guerrilla life because, in the end, it’s just a book; its literary side is stronger. No matter how well it describes life, it can’t reflect it exactly the same way [as it really is]; you can’t put life into a book. Once I came to the mountain [to join the guerrilla], I asked myself, ‘why is it different than that of the books?’ [Later on] however, practical conditions of life give you the answer. [Do you mean you were disappointed?] Rather than a disappointment, let’s say that there is a difference between your first observation, your first understanding, and the thing you’re involved in. It’s not worlds apart; there wasn’t that much difference either. [...] Just to give an example, I’d rehearsed how to sit cross-legged for six months before I joined the guerrilla! Why sitting cross-legged? All comrades I’d seen on television were sitting cross-legged. I came to the mountain, some were sitting cross-legged, but they weren’t like that 24 hours! At least,

---

proportion of votes obtained by pro-Kurdish political parties is worth noting. HADEP, which participated in two national elections in 1995 and 1999, obtained 6,5% and 7,8%, respectively. DEHAP, after the ban on HADEP, obtained 15,9% only three years later in 2002, becoming the third most-voted party after center-right DYP, which obtained 18,0% (see <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/doc/dosyalar/1923-2011-MVSecimleri-Tuik.pdf>). Taking into consideration the political and social repression put into practice, limited campaigning possibilities, along with an electoral system significantly limiting the representation of votes in the parliament due to a 10% threshold requirement, quantitative data supports the observation of K-II/04, and one can affirm that the Kurdish (National) Liberation Movement achieved a solid nucleus even in remote areas of northern Kurdistan throughout the 1990s and 2000s, culminating in the mid-2010s. In the general elections held on 1 November 2015, HDP, the legal political coalition in which the Kurdish National Liberation Movement occupied the majority, obtained 17,096 of 57,583 valid votes, becoming the first most-voted party in Ardahan with 30,37% (Please see <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/doc/dosyalar/docs/Milletvekili/7Haziran2015/KesinSecimSonuclari/Cevre/Ardahan.pdf>).

sometimes you put your legs straight, your legs get tired. I'd thought that comrades in the guerrilla were sitting everywhere and every time cross-legged! [*laughing*] Just a small example!" (K-III/09)

Despite being represented as a challenging place where only those who show a certain level of determination and will-power could manage to survive, the mountain, which once was depicted as the ideal safe haven where Kurdish culture had been genuinely preserved, is pointed out as an ideal place to construct the 'new life'. This idealized life, however, is only possible by leaving behind all material desires, individual aspirations, and ambitions that people living in the 'system' have. That is the reason that while highlighting its challenging aspects, the mountain is considered a unique place where individual bounds are replaced by real freedom:

"If you ask in an ideological sense, it's no way a matter of hesitation.... People who have that hesitation can't stay in these mountains; they can't fight; they can't resist under the tough conditions of these mountains. By no means, those who have such hesitation like 'I wish I were in my house, I wish I were by my mom's side, I wish I had a car like that, or cakes and ale, so forth..." Those people who want to live such a life can by no means stay with us. This mountain doesn't accept them; this nature doesn't accept them; even nature kicks these people out." (K-III/04)

"...you break that chain and come to the mountain. You don't care about anything anymore; you care about neither your family nor finding a job, nor buying a house or a car. You leave them all behind. When I came to the mountain, I felt for the first time that I was free! I said, 'Ok, now I'm free!' You can feel it; you can taste freedom. That's what I felt for the first time in the mountain. I was very happy that day indeed, really very happy, and that happiness still continues. However, guerrilla life surely has its own challenges. Because you live in the mountain, there's war; the enemy is always flying above you with its reconnaissance planes, with its warplanes. On the other hand, there are challenging natural conditions." (K-III/07)

Finally, the involvement, as well as social and political domination of the Kurdish Liberation Movement in urban areas through a variety of social movements (those related to ecology, youth, and women), associations (focusing on such struggle-related subjects such as forced migration, families of prisoners and *martyrs*), local mass media, publishing, and other activities, also bring the PKK philosophy and doctrine closer to ordinary urban Kurds who have hardly any chance to establish direct contact with the rural guerrilla. K-II/01, an ex-guerrilla cadre who dedicated herself to legal-political activities under the Democratic Society Congress (DTK – *Demokratik Toplum Kongresi*) after having served a lengthy prison sentence, narrates her daily life observations concerning the politicization of Kurdish society following the PKK's philosophy in her native Kurdish capital of Diyarbakır with this respect:

"...the PKK struggle has grown that bigger; it's a reality which improves itself without being stuck in one field anymore. I mean, today, even ordinary people have become PKK members [*PKK'lileşmek*]<sup>306</sup>; in fact, this slogan isn't for nothing: 'PKK is the people, and the people is here!'<sup>307</sup> Such a slogan is based on social conditions because it [*the movement*] improves itself in every field. When you come across a mother, you see and think, 'well, she's

---

<sup>306</sup> The term '*PKK'lileşmek*' literally means becoming a PKK member; however, its significance within Kurdish *yurtsever* circles refers to adopting and accepting the socio-political philosophy promoted by Öcalan, going beyond and not necessarily staying at a level of having formal affiliation with the PKK. As will be seen in *Chapter 13*, becoming a PKK member in a broader context is a complex ethical and intellectual question, which requires profound changes in one's personality and sense of understanding and being in harmony with an ideal life, once again, depicted by the Kurdish *Önderlik*.

<sup>307</sup> *PKK halktır, halk burada.*

illiterate, she doesn't know anything!', but when you talk to her, she has a conversation with you on in-depth political topics; she knows enough to have such discussions, if she's involved." (K-II/01)

These are phases that the PKK's organizational development and social legitimacy have passed through since its foundation and the group truth objectified with this respect. Testimonies tend to illustrate that transformations beginning within the PKK have had inevitable impacts on Kurdish society, and this has occurred in an intergenerational way, as observed in some extracts from previously quoted individuals (K-I/02, 09; K-II/01, 04; K-III/02, 07, 11). However, for a better comprehension of this process, it would be convenient to analyze how the symbolic elements of the PKK's symbolic universe have been constructed and objectified through this long period from a generational perspective. This question will be brought about in the last *Chapter 13*.



## 12. Ideological and Symbolic Development of the MLNV

Taking the long history of ETA (and that of the self-proclaimed MLNV) into account, a generational perspective facilitates an analysis of the continuity of certain symbolic elements which has experienced little changes, as well as the discontinuity of some others forcing the movement to make profound revisions and changes whenever necessary. This latter becomes so apparent in specific contexts that the attitude of ETA towards the political process of the periods in question and attitudes of Basques towards this organization differs significantly from the previous periods. From a generational perspective, this differentiation encourages a scholar to analyze this organization as a plural entity, evaluating each historical phase within its own socio-political context.

### 12.1. The changed and unchanged in the history of ETA

An immense majority of scholars treat ETA as a singular entity, a six-decade continuum born in late the 1950s and disappeared in the late 2010s, except few (Garmendia 1995; Arriaga 1997) suggest a classification based on historical periods through which this organization has passed. One of the main reasons for this reductionist conceptualization of ETA is due to those individuals who have been in ETA in different periods but somehow construct a singular concept of ETA by attributing different armed actions carried out by the different ETAs to this constructed concept (Arriaga 1997: 37). Regardless of whether they are from the founding generation who have later abandoned the organization or those who joined ETA in a period when these founding cadres became critical with violence, all generations refer to a single entity as the avant-garde actor of the Basque national liberation.

Exceptionally, what Garmendia emphasizes by referring to ETA as a plural entity, however, has more to do with the diverse ideological tenets and tendencies embraced by the organization(s) in the early 1960s (1995: 40), which saw the emergence, splits and fusion of a variety of ETAs with considerably divergent ideologies and proposed methods to be implemented (Desfor Edles 1998: 127). Even such early referential founding members of EKIN/ETA as Txillardegui, Agirre, and Benito del Valle, who formed the organization's cultural front, the *Branka* group, concerned with the Basque national identity and culture and, as a result, were labeled 'reformist sell-outs and repugnant' by Maoist and Marxist-Leninist cadres, had to abandon the organization (Álvarez Eparantza 1997: 244-245). The intra-group conflicts, whose most visible example was the organization's highly controversial 6<sup>th</sup> Assembly (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol. 5: 293) and consequent split between ETA-pm and ETA-m, continued after the Franco regime.

A similar ideological change was also observed in a later period, albeit to a lesser extent, becoming especially notable since the early 1990s. The beginning of this decade witnessed the fall of

the Berlin Wall, the collapse of 'real socialism' and secessions from the USSR in the Baltic and eastern Europe, which affected the MLNV by bringing about the right to self-determination as a universal principle (*Zuzen*, Nº 49, July 1990).<sup>308</sup> The fall of Soviet communism, which affected revolutionary armed movements, especially in Latin America except for the FARC and ELN in Colombia, also cast its most significant reflection on Marxist-Leninist factions within the MLNV. The later approval of the Democratic Alternative, in this sense, meant the integration of the *abertzale* left into a liberal democratic system. Leading ETA member Antxon López Ruiz (*Kubati*) revealed this obvious consequence in his testimony by underlining, "After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was not any feasible way to reach socialism in the world. It was democracy. We had to accept this system" (in Murua 2017: 177). This ideological transformation was notable among militants whose activities in ETA went back to prior to this period and, therefore, were able to make such comparisons:

"I remember that when I joined ETA, my colleagues and I also tended to read Marxist literature; Lenin, dialectical materialism, and such questions that nowadays, at least in the Basque Country, almost nobody touches. Even in a certain period, we had internalized that the seizure of power would've even been viable; it was our dream at that time. So, what I want to tell you is that all within the movement, around ETA or the *abertzale* movement, there's an evolution as a result of the years, some reflections, and you're adapting your mechanisms to respond to repression." (B-I/02)

In terms of military strategy, there were also similar changes and transformations. The end of the Spanish Transition and drastic changes in the character of state violence forced ETA to employ different actions in order to bring the state to the negotiation table. In the face of an indisputable superiority of Spanish policing capacity in a social context in which politics became more professional and less public, the MLNV adopted an 'offensive' position to achieve this goal. Throughout this phase, the objectives and targets of the strategy implemented by the MLNV showed remarkable changes, which, as previously seen, provoked a significant level of outrage and disengagement of some sectors of society that once had a certain degree of sympathy towards ETA. Paying tribute to his close friend late Txabi Etxebarrieta, an early ideologue and the first fallen member of ETA, Jorge Oteiza stresses the distinction he makes in a letter written to the Ministry of Justice on 22 January 1993 published in the preface of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of his famous *Quousque tandem*:

"Anti-Francoist ETA is being confused with this false ETA identified with this fanatic non-brilliant HB which survives from the uselessness and division of our political parties, disorientation, and backwardness of our suffering country." (Oteiza 2007[1963]: 53)

What remained relatively unchanged, however, was the construction of the 'enemy', which was almost exclusively the synonym of the Spanish state as a colonizing occupation force in the Basque Country. From the perspective of this group truth, any actor who directly or indirectly served to maintain the

---

<sup>308</sup> The right to self-determination from which various nations within the Soviet Union enjoyed and established sovereign entities in 1991 significantly impacted the MLNV environment in this period. In an interview with *Egin* daily (13 February 1997), *Txillardegui* indicates such cases as the Armenians and Latvians in which this right was successfully exercised.

*status quo* was considered to be on the enemy's side and, consequently, a military target. This approach developed a mechanism of legitimization based on the dehumanization of military targets, in which the perpetrator ignored the human aspects of victims (Rai, Valdesolo & Graham 2017). In periods prior to the mid-1990s, the organization pursued a policy of generally discriminate/selected violence in the sense that military objectives were Spanish police and military personnel as well as those who allegedly collaborated with the former; informers, drug dealers, and some business owners. This discriminate selection of target groups involved an indiscriminate process of dehumanization in which the personal characteristics and attributions of the targets meant nothing, as the objective of attacks was focused on what they symbolically represented:

*"[When it comes to the military targets, police, civil guard and such, how do you select them?] Well, if you ask me the names of these [targets], I'm unable to tell you. An old policeman -I was like his son's age -, during interrogations asked me, 'why?', and I said, 'if I see you first, you [are the target]!', he says, 'you mean, you shoot the uniform?', 'yes, the uniform!' It's nothing personal; it's not Pepito of so and so! There are specific actions with specific targets, you understand? But when you take action against the occupation forces, it's not personal, you hit the Corps; the Police Corps, the Civil Guard Corps, no matter who this person is..." (B-1/05)*

Starting with the approval of the Oldartzen text in the mid-1990s, that is to say, with the implementation of the 'socialization of suffering' towards those social sectors which had been deemed exempt from the consequences of the conflict, this discriminate circle of potential targets gradually expanded; ranging from Spanish politicians to prison servants. Among these targets, however, some of them were still dehumanized without taking their ideological orientation, affiliations, or thoughts into consideration, as in the case of San Sebastian (Martutene) prison psychologist Francisco Javier Gómez Elosegui, who was a member of ELA, a Basque nationalist labor union. In the face of fierce criticism by ELA and PNV executives, ETA made the following statement illustrating the dehumanized state of these victims: "the action was not against Gómez Elosegui, an ELA militant, but an action against a Spanish jailer without further ado" (*Egin*, 6 July 1997).<sup>309</sup>

In some other cases in this period, armed actions were carried out directly against specific targets. In such cases, quite contrarily to the dehumanized victims, the victim's ideology and thoughts were decisive. The selection of new targets, however, was also based on a strong symbolic character, as in the case of ordinary ones (Casquete 2009: 70). These specific targets frequently consisted of low-ranking Spanish politicians, most of whom were not primarily responsible for policies implemented by

---

<sup>309</sup> While dehumanization of victims was expanded, one observes that such actions provoked a counter-productive effect and can be referred to as a 're-humanization of dehumanized victims' via mass media by portraying the victim's personality underlining positive characteristics of their human side. The assassination of Gómez Elosegui constituted a quite obvious example as even Basque media outlets covered his tragic loss. Even 20 years later, *el Correo* daily recovered Gómez Elosegui's story with the headline "The psychologist who wanted to humanize prisons" (12 March 2017) under which his position in favor of human rights for prisoners and his struggle to end the dispersion of Basque prisoners were emphasized and praised.

the state. Actions against low-ranking politicians was not a choice but rather an obligation due to the weaker military capabilities of the organization, as *B-I/05* confirms:

“You normally hit the security forces or the collaborators! And there comes a time, and you say, ‘after all, those who cover it up are the politicians’, and you start to hit the politicians! So who do you hit? The councilmembers from PSOE and PP... If you can hit the minister, then you hit the minister, but as he’s well protected, well, no. Aznar [*was attempted*] only once. If you don’t [*succeed to*] get him down, you can’t get him down anymore... Reaching a president, yes, man, It’d be possible changing to a suicidal action, but doing it the way we do, reaching someone in a high-rank position is very difficult. And if you manage to do so once, you have to finish the job. In Aznar’s case, I said, ‘we screwed it up, fuckin’ hell!’ and a comrade told me, ‘but we’ve carried out the *ekintza*’, and I said, ‘No, we haven’t carried out the *ekintza*! If you wanna hit him, you have to finish it; you can’t fail! Yes, the *ekintza* was done, but he got out alive’. In such kind of *ekintzas*, he must die; otherwise, you fail.” (B-I/05)

Until the end of armed confrontation, the MLNV pursued this double-sided armed strategy in which dehumanized and humanized targets coexisted simultaneously. Despite the violence exercised uninterruptedly by both sides, the consolidation of democracy established since the Spanish Transition created a different understanding and perception of ‘violence’ in Basque society, which affected the mechanisms and symbology of radical Basque nationalism throughout post-Franco generations.

## **12.2. The symbolic transformation of Basque nationalism and Basque national liberation**

The idea and practice of the Basque national struggle and the priority and meaning attributed to fundamental elements of Basque national symbolism have been in the process of constant transformation since the beginning of the early traditional doctrine. As assessed in *Chapter 2*, some scholars argue that what they tend to denominate ‘*abertzale* religion’ led by ETA represents an uninterrupted continuum of Basque national romanticism in the era of democratic Spain (Juaristi 1997, 1998; Azurmendi 1998; Elorza 2005; Casquete 2009, Fernández Soldevilla 2016) as certain symbolic elements are adopted and adapted to current conditions.<sup>310</sup> Although ETA and the *abertzale* left frequently reproduce fundamental elements of Basque nationalism, one must also consider the perception and interpretation of those elements by different generations.

Scholars who study Basque/ETA violence considering their own perception of reality as the objectively true one qualify the reality perceived by the *abertzale* left politico-military actors as a ‘false interpretation’. In their moral judgment, the *abertzale* left objectifies an imaginary state of war created through symbols adopted from the *aranist* doctrine and reproduced through the practices of everyday life. The confrontation of a popular army against the same enemy replace *Eusko gudariak gara* (we are Basque soldiers) of the Civil War period with the famous motto of *Gora ETA militarra* (Long-live military ETA). In semantic terms, the old war between Euskadi versus Spain is reintroduced through the new

---

<sup>310</sup> The adoption, modification, expropriation and use of these national symbolic elements as the singing of *eusko gudariak* (Basque soldiers) as part of the funeral liturgy of fallen ETA members or celebrating holidays as the Basque national day *Aberrri Eguna* and commemorating the battles of the Spanish Civil War in *Bizkargi eguna* and *Albertia eguna*, constitute supportive references to this continuum defended by these scholars.

terminology of the war between Euskal Herria versus the Spanish state (Azurmendi 1998: 56-58). From this perspective, exclusionism and racism against the 'other', inherited from aranist nationalism, is still valid in abertzale minds (Elorza 2005: 191-192). From the mid-1990s on, this war against the 'other' oversteps the limits of racist exclusion, taking the form of eliminating anything 'Spanish' through attacks against Spanish representatives in the Basque Country (Casquete 2009: 70), bringing way to a process later to be interpreted as an ethno-ideological cleansing (Llera 2013).

This interpretation of group reality attributed to radical Basque nationalism contains some visible elements and practices that, to a certain extent, correspond to the group reality objectified by the abertzale left. What is mistakenly (or at least misleadingly) presented in this interpretation, however, is the relationship established between the perception of reality and the place that violence occupies within this reality. This is partly due to the ambivalence in the qualitative aspects of ETA violence shaped by the dual identity definition (ethnic and class) that sees sharp contradictions: The weight of 'being Basque' arises as a key determining parameter as the organization avoids targeting any PNV-affiliated figures, except those *ertzainas* deemed colonial *cipayos* under the enemy's orders. When it comes to other targets like those Basque businesspeople kidnapped or assassinated by the organization, their social class status is the determining factor rather than ethnic origin. Despite the overwhelming emphasis on the national component, especially after the 1990s, two main elements of the Basque *patria* that the organization seeks to establish, freedom and socialism, seem to have remained unchanged up until the last communiqué of the organization.

Within the social reality objectified by the *abertzale* left universe, the construction of 'being *etarra*', a vital element of the 'war', is a part of the concept of 'being Basque'; the image of *etarra* is configured as the incarnation of the perfect Basque (Alcedo 1996: 56). It is about fighting, suffering, and, if necessary, be ready to die for the *patria*. This analogy makes it possible to establish a parallelism between the figure of *gudari*, constructed as a heroic national figure who fought and died for *Euskadi* in Basque historiography, and the *etarra* who takes over this generational role as the resurrection of *gudari*. Francisco Mujika Garmendia (*Pakito*), one of the leading military commanders of ETA, affirms this construction of *gudari* by expressing, "I am an ETA militant, a *gudari*, and I fight for self-determination" (Euskadi Eta Askatasuna 1993, Vol.8: 9). Alcedo points out that this generational link was stated in one of its early official publications in which the organization underlined this continuum and legitimized its fight:

"It seems to us that it is a natural task to fight, to suffer, and to die, the same as it was in 1936 as well as in 1964. [...] We, in 1964, do not hope for anything other than grabbing the torch and continuing the path. We suppose that the heroes of 1936-37 did not ask permission from the elder to fight, suffer, and die. We do not think to do less. And nobody keeps hope: The same as then; NOW it is necessary to fight, suffer, and die." (Supplementary sheet of *Zutik* nº 10 in Alcedo, 1996: 60, emphasis in capital letters in original text)

“The PNV is God and the law!<sup>311</sup> They also practiced defensive war if they like. But well, I also consider that what ETA practiced was also defensive because, in the end, we were being attacked. It wasn’t an open war, but rather a hidden war; we’re at war.” (B-I/04)

Once Francoism as a political regime ended and those in exile since the end of the Civil War re-established their hegemony over the Basque nationalist universe, offering different political project(s) than the KAS Alternative, this continuum converted into an uphill battle. The (re)institutionalization of Basque nationalism through the Gernika Statute as ‘re-functionalization of the tradition’ put an end to an ‘anti-Francoist consensus’ among Basque nationalists and provoked political confrontation among right-wing (PNV-EA) and left-wing (HB-EE) blocks (Gurrutxaga 1996: 130). Eventually, the reform process through the political autonomy was consolidated, and the ‘moderate nationalists’ led by the PNV joined the constitutional block against ‘terrorism’, provoking an internal break-up among Basque nationalists (Gurrutxaga 1990: 89). This break-up created a definitional division between ‘good Basques’ and ‘bad Basques’ reflected in the symbolism adopted by both communities coexisting on the land where they competed to be the leader of Basque nationalism.<sup>312</sup>

From the perspective embraced by the *abertzale* left community, qualifying themselves as ‘good Basques’, the PNV represents a series of negative characteristics concerning their contributions to the Basque national cause. Any progress made in terms of political autonomy and Basque symbolic universe is interpreted as ‘submissiveness’ to the enemy. Indeed, although not asked about their opinion about the PNV, many members of the MLNV express a negative opinion on the *jeltkide* position. While some (B-I/03, B-III/03) directly accuse *jeltzales* of implementing the dispersion policy against *abertzale* left militants from the 1980s onwards, some others qualify them as ‘the enemies at home’ (B-I/05) or ‘sell-outs’ (B-I/04). Most individuals appear to have a consensus when defining the PNV as an institutionalist actor who seeks to sustain its hegemonic position by allying with the *enemy*:

“...here, there are certain nationalisms because when the PNV is allied in such a radical way, getting on the bandwagon of power, they’re dedicated to speaking out to look good to others by neglecting us, even the basics. They even deny our status as politicians, even almost as *abertzales*, or that we’re simple murderers as many of them have said or that we’re Marxists and communists, that we don’t believe in anything. They’ve used tremendous and unforgivable language. [...] ...they’ve had no ethical principle, no moral, so to say, nothing. In terms of having gotten involved in the biggest barbarity, well... Then at a personal level, you’re with them, and they change. It’s a very short-term pragmatism. It’s about staying in power.” (B-I/03)

This positioning leads to a process of identification based on the previously mentioned duality of good and bad Basques: If during the Francoism, Basque identity was defined in opposition to Spanishness, after the dictatorship, the rivalry between the two poles, a non-dramatizing vision towards nationalism represented by *jeltzalismo* and a dramatizing vision adopted by *abertzalismo* (Arriaga 1997: 84)

---

<sup>311</sup> Referring to the PNV’s historical slogan ‘*Jaungoikoa eta Lege-Zarra*’ (God and the Old Law).

<sup>312</sup> The introduction of the term ‘Euskal Herria’ replacing the traditional name of the Basque land ‘Euskadi’, in this sense, went far beyond a merely semantic change referring to a continuum, as claimed by Azurmendi (1998: 58), but it was a result of conflict between two rival poles claiming the leadership of Basque nationalism.

gradually became determining factors. From the dramatizing view, the parameters coming to the forefront to be qualified as good or bad Basque have to do with the level of struggle, suffering, and sacrifice for the *patria*:

“The PNV has a problem, and it’s about when they get involved in claiming the rights of the Basque people, they tend to lose hegemony because there’s another one who does it better than them; who has fought more, who has given more -well, it’s from our perspective, they’re going to tell you that they’re the ones who have fought the most, right?-, but we’re the ones who worked their heart out more, who risked their lives more, who offered more human sacrifice. They offered it at another level, but... So, there’s the problem of hegemony.” (B-I/06)

On some occasions, arguably due to the same dramatizing vision, the alleged immobilization and passiveness of the PNV in the post-Franco period were also presented as one of the fundamental causes of dependence and slavery of the Basque people as well as the ongoing struggle and suffering:

“What has the PNV done during the last 40 years? What policy have they pursued? Although they say they’re nationalists, *abertzales*, what have they done in practice? Yes, it’s a political party that has been a reference in a country, but when Francoism ended, they agreed for a statute with the state, with which they said that we’d be free, and in practice, it hasn’t been like that, it’s rather brought more vassalage, more dependence. Even though it brought us some quotas of power here in the three territories, we practically continue with the same dependence from the Spanish state.” (B-III/03)

Except for the relatively harmonious short-lived process of Basque national unity through the Lizarra – Garazi Agreement, these conflictive visions towards Basque politics and Basque social reality continues hitherto. Throughout this confrontation process, the MLNV has redefined and revalued fundamental symbolic references of traditional Basque nationalism or, occasionally, invented other symbolic elements that have emerged from the trajectory of this dual conflict.

### **12.3. The fundamental symbolic elements of Basque neo-nationalism**

Since its emergence period, the MLNV has got involved in the process of symbolic reproduction following the political and social projects to be implemented in *Euskal Herria*, as well as a series of practices related to the consequences of the ongoing conflict. As the mentioned rupture begins from the (re)institutionalization of Basque nationalism through the political reform implemented during the Spanish Transition, the cleavage with the already-existing symbolic universe is reflected through the social reproduction of this rival symbolic universe adopted by the MLNV.

It must be emphasized, however, that this rival symbolic universe does not refer to a radical break-up rejecting the fundamentals of the symbolism of the Basque nationalism, but rather a process of modification and re-interpretation of this tradition and introduction of newly invented symbolic elements. The majority of symbolic elements such as the national flag (*ikurriña*), national day (*Aberrri Eguna*), and other folkloric elements such as *bertsolaria* (oral folk poetry), *aurreku* (ceremonial dance), and *dantzaris* (dancers), not to mention *Euskera*, are adopted by Basque neo-nationalists and

appropriated as a symbolic endowment (López Vidales 2004: 29).<sup>313</sup> Undoubtedly, the meaning ascribed to these elements is strictly related to the struggle, sacrifices, and devotion.<sup>314</sup>

Some other symbolic elements, on the other hand, have been introduced throughout the long politico-military trajectory, such as funeral ceremonies for fallen militants or *ongi etorri* (welcoming ceremony) events for those who get out of prison. Regarding funeral ceremonies, Aretxaga (1988) indicates that apart from the 1970s, traditional rituals have been substituted by new forms with a specific group affiliation and identity. As years have passed and the armed conflict in the Basque Country continued, the MLNV has created an agenda of rituals primarily consisting of these special holidays or events considered culturally significant. Besides consolidating the Basque neo-nationalist doctrine, these events have also served as pedagogic instruments in the socialization process through which the love for the patria is valued above any other consideration (Casquete 2009: 77-78), as symbolized in the organization's early period anonymous booklet titled '*Euskadi ala hil*' (Euskadi or death). Reproducing the sense of being a community ready to make sacrifices, as noted in *Chapters 6* and *8*, these elements play a crucial role in the political socialization of the following generations.<sup>315</sup>

There are two primary sources on which these rituals (demonstrations, ceremonies, commemorations) are constructed: The first is based on elements that have always been considered core elements of Basque ethnonational symbolism (*ikurriña* and *Euskera*, among others); commonly shared by all Basque nationalists and cannot be monopolized by any specific group. The second source is almost exclusively monopolized by the *abertzale* left community as it consists of these events, which are directly related to the consequences of the long-term armed confrontation between ETA and the Spanish state. Consequently, the symbolic value that these rituals have is almost exclusively limited to the *abertzale* left community and their social surroundings. In his analysis based on self-elaborated quantitative data covering a 10-year period between 1978 – 1988, corresponding to the beginning of

---

<sup>313</sup> Although Elorza claims that this is the result of a fusion between *aranist* xenophobia and ETA violence (2005: 224-225), the case of anthems constitutes a point of discrepancy: *Jeltzales* recognize and adopt the official national anthem *Eusko Abendaren Ereserkia*, literally meaning 'the anthem of the Basque race' or *Gora ta Gora* as it is popularly known, written by Sabino Arana, who rejected Iparragirre's famous *Gernikako Arbola* (Gernika Tree) due to its universalist connotations as expressed in "*eman ta zabaltzazu/munduban frutuba*" (give and expand your fruit through the world). The attitude by neo-nationalists, who disregard the racist components of the *aranist* doctrine, however, constitutes a different perspective noticeable in the early ideologue of ETA, Federico Krutwig, as well as Mikel Antza, one of the organization's high-ranking members, who show a fairly strong sense of embracement towards the work of Iparragirre (Zabaltza 2016: 229-232; also see Sarraih de Ihartza 2006[1962]: 417) adopting it along with *Eusko Gudariak* which represents the sacrifice for the patria.

<sup>314</sup> What Casquete labels '*symbolic vampirism*' has to do with this attitude of the MLNV when it comes to making use of symbols that do not exclusively belong to their symbolic universe. The scholar exemplifies this referring to the celebration of the anniversary of the birth of Kandito Sasetta, a Senior Commander of *Euzko Gudarostea* (Militias of the PNV in the Civil War) whose symbolic reproduction was first produced among PNV circles and then it was expropriated by the ANV and, subsequently by HB (2009: 167 – 176).

<sup>315</sup> Arguably, this is one of the main reasons why the Spanish authorities have taken a strict attitude towards such public events in recent years. The case of Segundo Ibarra, an alleged KAS executive, whose *ongi etorri* ceremony was held in Bilbao on 1 November 2014, in the researcher's presence as a participant observer within the scope of this study, constitutes a clear example. <https://www.elmundo.es/pais-vasco/2014/11/03/545771be268e3eaa7e8b4578.html>



a new constitutional era in the Spanish politics as well as the beginning of a rivalry between PNV-led constitutionalist Basque nationalists and ETA-led anti-system leftist Basque nationalists, Mata lists the following rituals of significant importance for the *abertzale* left community:

Table 13: Public demonstrations and events organized by abertzale left groups (1978 - 1988)

Subject	Years											Total	%
	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88		
Euskera	12	3	16	9	15	18	13	10	10	20	16	142	5
Ikurriña	0	0	1	1	1	9	2	3	0	1	1	19	1
Basque patria/sovereignty	4	4	4	4	0	3	1	1	1	0	2	24	1
Gudari	0	0	1	2	3	1	0	3	6	3	1	20	1
Commemoration/anniversaries	5	0	3	4	6	5	4	2	6	12	2	49	2
Martyr funerals	50	29	25	18	7	11	7	2	4	9	2	164	6
Ongi etorri/tributes	8	4	5	7	4	22	18	23	10	63	25	189	6
Support for prisoners	7	18	10	88	20	17	15	3	6	89	14	287	10
Liberty for the arrested	22	13	20	31	19	31	10	4	6	49	2	207	7
Extraditions/deportations	0	12	6	9	0	2	14	0	35	90	1	169	6
Refugees	2	23	1	1	1	7	16	8	9	66	7	141	5
Amnesty	22	20	25	5	20	12	18	2	1	22	6	153	5
Repression by security forces	13	11	16	7	3	3	13	1	1	3	6	77	3
Paramilitary (BVE, GAL, etc.)	3	1	24	2	0	10	14	1	2	8	0	65	2
Torture	1	0	3	1	5	1	0	0	0	9	1	21	1
Antiterror law	2	1	0	1	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	25	1
Antinuclear	47	18	22	7	8	8	1	1	1	1	1	115	4
Women/feminism/dom. violence	4	9	10	8	2	9	7	2	3	7	1	62	2
Against NATO	0	0	0	7	0	4	5	5	7	1	0	29	1
Internationalist solidarity	1	1	7	1	2	8	1	0	2	7	7	37	1
Against military service	0	2	3	3	2	4	1	5	9	5	4	38	1
Ecology	0	3	0	1	3	2	0	1	2	12	7	31	1
Unemployment	2	1	0	2	0	1	3	0	0	10	6	25	1
Student related	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	30	1	39	1
Others <sup>316</sup>	14	4	10	11	15	21	13	12	10	25	17	152	3
Unspecified	63	63	45	50	40	73	46	19	30	179	60	668	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>2948</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Re-elaborated out of data presented in *Chart N° 7* in Mata 1993: 82-83.

<sup>316</sup> Some of these events listed by Mata correspond to sporadic public demonstrations and protests in such specific events as the ban on *Egin* daily, implementation of a reintegration plan or protest during visits of important figures (Juan Carlos I, Pope), which are equally important in political terms but are not of repetitive character and, therefore, not qualified as a ritual.

The above-presented quantitative data provide essential information that serves as a useful guide for a qualitative analysis so long as the socio-political context of the given period is taken into consideration. Although there is no similarly available data on this specific subject for later periods, bearing the socio-political factors as well as the trajectory of military confrontation in mind, it is possible to make inferences on whether each of these subjects has converted into a symbolic ritual.

As observed through the presented data, demonstrations and protest movements against Spanish compulsory military service, the anti-nuclear movement against the Lemoiz nuclear plant, reactions towards Spain's position in NATO, the protest against state-sponsored paramilitary organizations as well as kidnappings and extrajudicial killings by these organizations saw a significant level of social mobilization. Once the compulsory military service was abolished or Spain gave up sponsoring the GAL, protest movements against these also disappeared or diminished considerably.

The commonly shared Basque national symbols represent 7%, among which *Euskera* carries an overwhelming weight (5%), showing the concerns for the linguistic question by radical Basque nationalists. What Mata classifies as 'support to ETA' in his analysis, which includes a long list of conflict-related rituals, constitutes 48% of public mobilizations. These rituals imply that the fight given by ETA functions as the charismatic leadership due to its symbolic contribution and capacity of representing the vast majority of radical nationalists (Mata 1993: 96-103). Although the support for ETA, especially for the politico-military strategy of this organization through the 1990s and 2000s, suffers an evident decline, most of those rituals, directly related to the armed struggle and its consequences, acquires a significant symbolic value due to their constant generational reproduction within the *abertzale* left community that is worth looking more in details.

### **12.3.1. Euskera: Where agony begins and reproduces itself**

Since the emergence of Basque neo-nationalism, *Euskera*, as the central pillar of Basque national symbolic universe, has played a vital role constituting the core element of Basque ethnic survival in the fight against the Franco regime. First-generation *abertzale* left cadres (Apalategi 1979; Álvarez Enparantza 1997; Idigoras 2000; Zumalde 2004)<sup>317</sup> coincide when they narrate their pre-militancy period that the problematic linguistic question and solutions offered to solve it became almost a synonym for national liberation. The absolute absence of *Euskera* in the public sphere, as well as the ambiguous attitude of their parents towards the generational transmission of this language, constituted the central reference point from which the national liberation struggle was launched.

---

<sup>317</sup> Also seen in interviews in Alcedo (1996) and Reinares (2001), as well as the testimony by *B-F* in this study.

Euskera appeared as the key (and most visible) symbolic element of identity encounters and was incorporated in a dual conflict as part of Basque cultural revival: the defense and promotion of Euskera against *unwelcomed* Spaniards and urban Basques who alienated from their native language (Pérez-Agote 1984: 39). The struggle, therefore, required the return and rediscovery of the genuine Basque represented in *baserri* life, which became an essential element of the revival of Basque national symbolism. With its genuine language, customs, and worldview, *baserri*, which had long been a considered a set of undesirable characteristics, now became something to be protected at any cost as best reflected through the verses of Aresti's famous, "*Nire aitaren etxea defendituko dut*" (I will defend my father's house), which revealed the symbolic significance and value invested in this long-abandoned social organization (Zulaika 1988: 130-133). A similar concern was also notable in well-known Basque contemporary sculpture Jorge Oteiza's voluminous literary essays *Quousque tandem...! Ensayo de interpretación estética de alma vasca* (1963), in which he questioned the fundamentals of being Basque as well as the worrying situation with this respect during the early 1960s:

"But now, in order to know what's that lacking in us, we must ask ourselves who we are. We are a people in defeat, in slow decline (we come), and we have rushed into the critical and deadly situation of today. [...] If our language dies, our character is being erased (our poetry dies). Who is guilty?" (Oteiza 2007[1963]: Paragraph 20).

The placement of language in the center of Basque ethnic survival was also perfectly visible through the emergence and early development of ETA, whose most significant *ekintzas* in this period were also almost exclusively of symbolic nature. Krutwig systematically theorized the linguistic question in what he called progressive Basque nationalism. Categorically rejecting the approach towards Euskera in the aranist doctrine as well as theocratic attributions (*fededunismo*) to the language from religious optics (Sarrailh de Ihartza 2006[1962]: 310, 340), he mentioned that Euskera was the compulsory element of the 'future (Basque) nationalism' with no room for any racial component:

"The future nationalism must be pro-*Euskera* since it is precisely the Basque language that is the vehicle for the transmission and conservation of community ideals that represent the cultural substructure of our people, which is the basis on which the social revolution must be carried out following the historical development of our ethnic, human, geographical and economic entity. Denying or disregarding the primary factor of our national entity is to deny one's own entity and personality and discard the historical development around which we have to make ourselves. Thus, without *Euskera* (its use and cultivation), the personality, historical, and future development of our *ethnia* is impossible. [...] The main factor that personalizes the evolution of Basque society is its language. It is the discriminating factor. The other factors unite around it and increase the Basque personality that acquires its ontic idiosyncrasy, both socially and culturally, politically, and economically." (2006[1962]: 377)

This approach adopted during the Basque cultural revival continued after the Franco period. However, the number of those who defined themselves as *euskaldun* and *quasi-euskaldun* was remarkably low, with a wide gap in Araba, Bizkaia, and Navarre, in comparison with *erdalduns*.<sup>318</sup> The normalization of

---

<sup>318</sup> Departing from the quantitative data obtained from the results of the Municipal Population Census in 1981, Tejerina shows that 86,6% of those living in the Araba region, 71,76% of those living in Bizkaia, and 42,43% of those living in Gipuzkoa defined themselves as *erdaldun*, and only an average of 21% constituted Basque-speaking population (1992: 145, 148). In a later study, based on the same source, the scholar extends this data and demonstrates the gradual expansion of the Basque-

Euskera and the implementation of a bilingual model included among the KAS Alternative (Ibarra 1987: 112) were achieved throughout the 1980s. Approval of the *Ley de Normalización del Uso del Euskera* (Law for the Normalization of the Use of Euskera) by the Basque Government in 1982 made Euskera the official language of the CAPV. Legislation of 1986 on the bilingual structure of government jobs created new conditions under which the language found a chance to develop. Increasing the expansion of *ikastolas* and the rapid implementation of the newly introduced two educational models in public schools -B model (education in Euskera and Spanish) and C model (education in Euskera only), extended the language competition among young generations (Gurrutxaga 1996: 182-184).

This generational development of language competition is also observed through other indicators: While the number of books published in 1981 in Euskera was 200, by 1987, the number almost quadrupled, reaching 774 (Tejerina 1992: 136). Likewise, the same effect is observed in the realm of the press, which made significant progress with the creation of the *Egunkaria* daily in Basque on 6 December 1990. Peio Urzelai, the editor in chief of the daily, underlined that their ‘adventure’ was a fruit of an extraordinary effort and success of a generation of young journalists whose average age was not older than 35. Along with the creation of radio channels and television in Basque, in this decade, a daily in the native tongue was considered a must (1998: 400-401).<sup>319</sup>

The progress made in this field, however, was considered in no way sufficient. In subsequent periods, among all Basque nationalist parties, HB embraced a pro-monolingual project to make Euskera the sole official language in *Euskal Herria*, differentiating its position from the PNV and EA (Tejerina 1992: 309). Although the progress in terms of the institutionalization of Euskera as the co-official language of the Basque Autonomous Community corresponded to the PNV-led government, these accomplishments are interpreted as the positive results of the MLNV’s struggle:

“...when we went to prison, few people spoke *Euskera*, during the 1980s nobody spoke, we were four or five who spoke it, and most of the time in Spanish. Yes, that’s true, some spoke Basque but few, and there were already *ikastolas* and all those things. Today, however, you go out, and you hear it! You hear Basque; you see people more *abertzale*, more Basque, so to speak. [...] We’re not only the ones responsible for our mistakes committed in the military [*part*]. We’re talking about mistakes, but there are also successes, huh? Those who know *Euskera* are ours [*our gain*], those who have this conscience or this movement are ours...” (B-I/05)

This emphasis highlights a crucial understanding, a bridge between linguistic competence and the state of being (considered) Basque. The linguistic question became practically an imperative in terms of Basque nationalism. The use and diffusion of the language, as summed up in the slogan of *Euskal*

---

speaking population to 30% in 1996 (Tejerina 1999: 97). For sociolinguistic questionnaires from 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016, visit the webpage of the Basque Institute of Statistics (*Instituto Vasco de Estadística / Euskal Estatistika Erakundea*): [https://www.eustat.eus/estadisticas/tema\\_458/opt\\_0/tipo\\_3/ti\\_Competicion\\_Linguistica/temas.html#el](https://www.eustat.eus/estadisticas/tema_458/opt_0/tipo_3/ti_Competicion_Linguistica/temas.html#el)

<sup>319</sup> An interesting observation with the same respect is possible when it comes to analyzing the official publications of ETA. The number of texts in Euskera displays a remarkable increase starting from the 1990s. This extraordinary quantitative growth is arguably also due to the revalorization of this language among the *abertzale* left community and the involvement of new generation militants whose literacy in Euskera is closely related to the availability of formal education in this language.

*Herrian euskaraz* (In the Basque Country in Basque), was embraced as the primary goal for a national construction project by the *abertzale* left, requiring every *abertzale*, whether they speak it or use it, to interiorize the fact that Euskera is their native language (Azurmendi 1998: 114-117). This value attributed to the language was noted in the extraordinary effort made by individuals among the *abertzale* left militancy who learned Euskera in a later period, especially during their militancy:

“[And you and your brothers learned Euskera later, right? And why did you decide so?] For coherence. If you have a perspective, at least from my side, I have it, and I believe that my brothers have the same, you have a feeling, an ideology, and you’re located within *Euskal Herria* as part of Euskal Herria, Euskera seems fundamental to us. It’s something that directly pushes you to know it, to discover it, to try to use it, [and eventually] to use it. In my particular case, I’ve learned the most Euskera during my militancy.” (B-II/05)<sup>320</sup>

The goal of monolingualism, as Martínez points out, constitutes an essential socio-linguistic expression of the political conflict by integrating itself into territorial delimitations of ‘Euskal Herria’ through such practices as *Nafarroa Oinez*, *Araba Euskeraz*, *Kilometroa*, *Ibilaldia*, *Herri Urrats* and, especially, *Korrika*, a race on feet throughout *Euskal Herria* organized by *abertzale* left-oriented Basque Literacy Coordination (AEK - *Alfabetatze Euskalduntze Koordinakundea*) (1993: 182).<sup>321</sup> These pro-Euskera movements and rituals for linguistic recovery reproduce emotional adhesion towards Euskera as the primary national reference, augmenting its prestige and popularity.

Nevertheless, the hegemony of Spanish-speaking dominance in the cultural, professional, and financial sectors of Basque society remains obvious (Arriaga 1997: 123). The limits of institutional progress and the given structural factors (Díez Medrano 1999) convert the goal of monolingualism into a utopia. Countless examples of conflictive practices encountered in everyday life due to the limited communicative function of Euskera provoke a sense of agony and suffering among the *abertzale* left community. As clearly narrated by some individuals (B-II/04; B-III/05), each situation of linguistic conflict faced in everyday practices reproduces this sense of agony and suffering for Euskera:

“You live through the conflict since childhood as... being Spanish or Basque, right? ‘Oh, you don’t speak Spanish?’, that is, there are two languages; there’s Spanish, and there’s Euskera. It’s like the conflict is much more basic. Then you later learn the concepts of sovereignty and independence. [Have you always studied in Euskera?] Yes, I went to an *ikastola*; I’ve studied in Euskera, at home in Euskera as well. In fact, on my mother’s and father’s side, they’re both from *baserris*. [...] So, it’s like the Spaniards and the Basques. You see that differentiation since childhood. Then, by the time you train yourself, you’re reading, you’re listening, what’s sovereignty, what’s independence, and you get to know these concepts. But at the beginning, it’s like ‘I’m Basque, I’m not Spanish and the Spanish flag nooo, the *ikurriña* yeesss!’, because in the end, they’re the symbols that you’re being educated to take one side or the other, right?” (B-III/05)

---

<sup>320</sup> The communicative function of Euskera is extremely valuable among the *abertzale* left militancy, as noted during participant observations. In one of these cases, a young Sortu member confessed to the researcher during an informal conversation in a pub that he would never be able to reach a high-rank position within the *abertzale* left party because he was unable to speak Euskera properly.

<sup>321</sup> Territoriality, another important element of Basque neo-nationalism, occupies a significant place in symbolic terms in such rituals. When emphasizing the national character of *Egunkaria*, Apalategi precisely stresses its publication in five major Basque cities (Baiona, Bilbo, Donostia, Gasteiz, and Iruñea) and its distribution to ‘every corner of Euskal Herria’ (1998: 170).

Agony, due to dissatisfaction with Euskera's minimal communicative function<sup>322</sup> and the apparent linguistic dominance of the Spanish language in almost every aspect of social life, continues. Any other social scenario except Basque monolingualism, therefore, is considered a failure in terms of Basque national development. Only a hypothetical victory in this field seems to be interpreted as the vital aspect of political victory, implying the unity of Basque national identity and linguistic sovereignty.

### **12.3.2. Leadership in the MLNV: ETA as the 'charismatic' leader**

The data presented by Mata concerning the symbolic expressions of radical Basque nationalism reveals that what the scholar classifies as 'support for ETA', which occupies an overwhelming part of the *abertzale* left social agenda. As these expressions are due to the consequences of the long-lasting conflict between ETA and the state, unlike shared symbols of Basque nationalism, they are exclusively produced by the radical Basque nationalist universe. The repetitive character of these events converts them into ritualistic performances that reproduce the affirmation of ETA's leadership within the MLNV that must be analyzed before evaluating these rituals in detail.

Beyond the self-definition made by the MLNV, which qualifies ETA as 'the military avant-garde' and 'the revolutionary army of the people' (*Zubate* 22, p. 50 quoted in Ibarra 1987: 143), its construction as the 'charismatic leader' of the MLNV corresponds to a long social process. This process of a 'charismatic bond' (Madsen & Snow 1996) has to do with the commitment and devotion through generations that attribute ETA to the highest category with its pre-eminence among all MLNV components. The accumulated symbolic capital deriving from this generational transmission, the avant-garde characterization of the armed struggle, mysterious features and the mythification of the challenging clandestine life, and its capacity (threat) of coercion (fear) play a primary role in the reproduction of this charismatic leadership among the *abertzale* left universe (Mata 1993: 112).

Unlike the emphasis on an individual personality with supernatural qualifications of the Weberian sense of charisma (1978[1922]: 215-216), the lack of personification of collective leadership comes to the forefront as one of the most remarkable characteristics of the MLNV. Indeed, although there have been several names frequently pronounced in the historiography constructed by *abertzale* left circles, most of whom being early leaders and ideologues such as Txabi Etxebarrieta, Eustakio Mendizabal (*Txikia*), José Miguel Beñaran (*Argala*), Eduardo Moreno Bergaretxe (*Pertur*, ETA-pm), their

---

<sup>322</sup> According to the latest report issued by *Eustat* (2016), while 53% of the population in the Basque Country declare having 'some knowledge of Euskera', only 13% of the general population define Euskera as their primary language, and 7% indicate both Euskera and Spanish with this respect, whereas 63% declare Spanish as their primary language. This recent data comes to affirm Tejerina's argument that the presence of ethnolinguistic movements (led by AEK and HABE) with the annually increasing participation of locals is strictly related to the construction of a Basque collective identity (1999: 76) rather than augmenting the communicative function of Euskera. For the mentioned report issued by Eustat, please see [https://www.eustat.eus/elementos/ele0014600/VI\\_Encuesta\\_Sociolingüística\\_2016/inf0014639\\_c.pdf](https://www.eustat.eus/elementos/ele0014600/VI_Encuesta_Sociolingüística_2016/inf0014639_c.pdf)

names are far from being synonyms of charismatic leaders with supernatural attributions. Despite their symbolic mythification within the abertzale left universe (Casquete 2009: 231), these personalities never occupy a place similar to that of Baader of the RAF, Prabhakaran of the Tamil Tigers, or Öcalan of the PKK (Della Porta 1995: 116; Hofmann 2015); it is the organization itself that carries out the role of the *charismatic leader* of the Basque people (Arriaga 1997: 109).<sup>323</sup> Precisely, none of the individuals participating in this study makes specific reference to these figures or any other individuals who have been in the organization's executive board as sole definitive leaders. *B-I/02* affirms that there has never been such a tendency for personifying collective leadership, including the founding fathers of EKIN/ETA, whose role was limited to the historical role they played in early periods:

"One of the characteristics of the Basque National Liberation Movement, of great relevance in terms of its implementation, was that it lacked a leader; the decisions were collective, within the executive bodies created for this purpose. There've been comrades who have played an important role in terms of their theoretical contributions, like Txabi, Argala... But it's always been known to discern that they were but one militant more within a melting-pot of people with different profiles where each one contributed to the best of their capacity, but always making it clear that no one played the role of a leader, like Che, Subcomandante Marcos or other revolutionaries from other times. The attribution of historical leaders to the founders can be understood as a historical connotation, but not within the development of the political lines to be carried out." (B-I/02)

The leadership in the executive position in ETA, therefore, is never indispensable and strictly related to certain conditions and radical changes that have direct effects on this status. Any militant who get caught and jailed or have to go to exile or simply die also faces the fact that this executive position or any other responsibilities taken through active militancy are lost and replaced by others. The tendency towards the sacralization of prominent figures, which was more likely to be present during the Franco dictatorship and the Transition, becomes gradually less common in later periods. An interview with a leading Jarrai militant of the 1990s explains this subject as follows:

"I believe that in Euskadi, one of the best things we have had, especially today, and perhaps in the past days not so much, is that there have been no leaders. [...] If we believe in collectivity and we think that it is everyone's job, the only thing that the existence of a leader leads to, on the one hand, is to mark you an end since what the disappearance of the charismatic leader normally leads you to disputes, the lack of unity, etc. etc. [...] ...obviously there have been leaders who have become fundamental because of their trajectory. We can talk about someone like Txomin Iturbe for all the historical significance that he has had and for what he has meant, but Txomin Iturbe has died, and nothing has happened here." (Interview E-5, quoted from Mata 1993: 210)

One observes that while the death, exile or prison, frequently repeated by individuals as three possible scenarios in the militancy within the MLNV, particularly in ETA, put an end to the executive leadership position of a militant, as observed in the cases of the above-mentioned historical figures, it also launches a process of symbolic construction, which is worth analyzing in detail.

---

<sup>323</sup> During a post-interview informal conversation in the *Herriko Taberna* of his native village on the question of leadership in the Basque and Kurdish cases, *B-I/05* also affirmed that, unlike other movements –like the case of PKK's Öcalan, in ETA there has never been an 'almighty' leader figure; instead the organization itself is regarded as the leader of the MLNV.

### 12.3.3. The meaning of suffering and sacrifice in the MLNV: Death, exile, and prison

Through the previous chapters of this study on the Basque case, many individuals have pointed out the possible consequences of joining ETA, which equally determine the level of sacrifice and suffering as well as the grade of commitment. Unlike political activity in other organizations of the MLNV, ETA appears to be a unique organization whose militants are likely to endure at least one of three possible consequences of their militancy, death, exile, or prison, which require the utmost level of sacrifice as well as coping with the highest level of suffering; a quality which secures the organization's indisputably top-ranking position among other organizations under the KAS structure.

Among these three possible consequences of armed militancy, death appears as the central axis of studies on Basque violence from which fundamentally two different perspectives diverge concerning positions in which *etarra* appears as the main subject: 'terrorists' who provoke death through mortal *ekintzas* or 'gudaris' who are facing to death for the liberation of the *patria*. This latter constitutes the pillar for constructing the symbolic meaning for those who have sacrificed their lives and, consequently, become heroes within the *abertzale* left narrative.

Subjective interpretations of the death of a referential figure are constructed through journalistic chronicles and monographs characterizing the image of the hero as an archetype: Their suffering, the sacrifice they make, and subsequent death establishing their excellence promote a commonly shared 'memory'. Casquete argues that the case of these heroic leaders such as Argala, Txikia, or Etxebarrieta offers a perfect example of 'domestication of death', which refers to the glory of death and unimportance of life when the *patria* is involved (2009: 231-235). The symbolic 'immortality' is achieved as their names and paintings embellish the walls in nationalist villages and towns (Reinares 2001: 115). In this social construction of 'excellence', based on the testimonies of leading figures in the Basque radical nationalism, who had close relations with the 'hero', negative interpretations or comments are deliberately omitted. In other words, the symbolic reconstruction of the hero does not necessarily correspond to the genuine characteristics of the person in question.<sup>324</sup>

As emphasized before, however, this non-verbal ritual act of 'taking life' does not glorify death as a generic concept, but the hero's act of sacrificing his own life as the ultimate chain of a moral obligation beginning with taking up arms (Zulaika 1988: 334). Death, in this context, is not an objective

---

<sup>324</sup> What seems particularly determining in the construction of the heroic image as the symbol of resistance is the position and trajectory of militancy. In the case of Txiki and Otaegi, two ordinary members executed by Franco's regime right before its fall, the construction of the *hero* is based on their suffering. In the case of Txomin Iturbe, who died in a car accident in Algeria, once again, the suffering he experienced during his years in exile is accented. Assassinations of HB deputies Santi Brouard and Josu Muguruza are similarly linked with the suffering, whereas in the case of Argala, who was assassinated by a bomb placed in his car and Txabi Etxebarrieta, who was the first ETA militant killed in an armed confrontation with the police, the construction of a heroic image is largely based on the sacrifices for the cause (Casquete 2009: 238, 249, 279-281, 291).



for immortality but rather as a consequence of this sacrificial act. It is arguably for this reason that in the vocabulary of the *etarra*, the concept of ‘martyrdom’ does not exist, neither in a religious nor a secular sense; it is the social scientist who associates this concept with the MLNV and particularly with ETA.<sup>325</sup> There is no divine cause, no doctrine that praises death, being *martyred* but the fear and concern for acculturation, disappearance of the *patria*, a perceived threat of extinction of the Basque, and a common acceptance of this reality objectified in a group in which sacrificing one’s life is a qualitative measure of being considered Basque (Alcedo 1996: 208).

“We’ve never had the concept of ‘martyrdom’ in relation to dead comrades within the revolutionary praxis, in which death takes place in clashes with the repressive forces. For any comrade who has died within the context of the struggle, I’ve felt a moderate pain of the loss of a comrade.” (B-I/02)

More than the sacralization of death, what is further valorized within the *abertzale* left community are militants who have been in exile or serving long prison sentences. If a fallen militant reproduces the suffering and sacrifice once, exile and prison offer grounds for the constant reproduction of both through various social mechanisms. Especially in the case of the latter, since the end of the 1980s, with the implementation of the penitentiary dispersion policy, this has become an unresolved question, not only for prisoners but also for their immediate family surroundings. The question of prisoners and dispersion policy come to the forefront within the context of Basque conflict due to two functional aspects that deserve to be studied from a generational perspective through qualitative data.<sup>326</sup>

In symbolic terms, what Verberg labels as ‘family-based activism’ (2006) (i.e., family members of prisoners involved in organized activities for their relatives) has come to take a more organized and public form since the dispersion policy. What once used to be under the relative protection of the Catholic church (Alcedo 1996: 271) become regular public concentrations at local and national levels. During these events, such demands as bringing ‘Basque political prisoners and the exiled’ back to the Basque Country, conceding them equal rights and conditions as other prisoners and a possible amnesty are voiced. Taking those who voluntarily participate in these demonstrations into consideration, one can claim that these rituals possess a significant level of capacity for mobilizing different social and political groups, going beyond and overcoming the potential capacity of the *abertzale* left. The support

---

<sup>325</sup> The attribution of ‘martyrdom’ to the militants of ETA not only appears in these studies (Reinares 2001; Azurmendi 1998; Elorza 2005; Casquete 2009), in which Basque neo-nationalism is treated as an ‘*abertzale* religion’ but also anthropological interpretations (Zulaika 1988; Alcedo 1996; Hamilton 2007a) that relate the sacrificial rituals with the concept of martyrdom.

<sup>326</sup> In addition to data obtained among militants from three generations, having an initial interest in this specific aspect of the conflict and spent plenty of time with individuals working for associations and organizations in defense of prisoners’ rights and support for their families (*Herrira* and *Etixerat*), the researcher actively participated in collective prison visits and carried out in-depth interviews with prisoners’ families. Although the qualitative data obtained through these interviews are not included in this study due to physical limitations, it provides significant information to affirm the outcomes.

and solidarity shown by family and friend circles become one of the key variables giving the prisoner the strength to carry on their ties with the movement under harsh conditions:<sup>327</sup>

“In my case and as in the case of almost the majority of Basque political prisoners, the family has always been around, and we’ve always been able to count on them. In my case, I’ve never complained about what my family and friends have contributed to me, making the jail much easier to put up with.” (B-I/01)

A prison is also a place where family and friends regain the relation with the militant. Mostly, despite the psychological and economic cost, the family re-establishes these ties through visits and letters (Alcedo 1996: 297). Bringing them all back home, as demanded through the motto ‘*Euskal presoak eta iheslariak extera*’ (Basque prisoners and the exiled home), means coming together with what *patria* stands for; language, people and the community for which they claim to have sacrificed their life. While this is the ultimate aim, the visits serve temporarily as a bridge between the prisoner and the patria:

“Holy shit, you’re on the other side of the world, in prison, and suddenly your people come! The faces that are your people! Then, suddenly, as soon as you see the face or hear the voice, your people, your language, your community, your family, your life come to your mind before you see them.” (B-II/04)

In rare cases that the prisoner and their immediate social surroundings lose in contact for different reasons, as previously seen in the case of *B-I/02*, other people with whom the prisoner had no previous acquaintance fill this gap through letters and visits:

“Is there any relative who says ‘I don’t want to know anything about you’? There may be some cases. There are people, for example, who have escaped, they’ve spent many years outside their town and have lost contact with the *kuadrilla* and such a lot, so there are people who have fewer visits, it’s true. But anyway, it’s also true that new people usually sign up; you get to know new people.” (B-II/01)

“In that aspect, I think we’ve been privileged. There’s been much work on the issue of prisoners and raising awareness of being a prisoner. When there are political reasons, and people identify themselves with them, it’s easier for people to go for visits. Although you don’t know that person, he’s from your town that you have some references; it’s easier. In our case, unknown people have been young people, maybe they haven’t met us in the street, but they’ve had references. They write [*letters*], and some dare and end up making visits.” (B-III/03)

Although the solidarity and support for the prisoners and their social surroundings do not mean solidarity and support for ETA nor ideological affiliation with the *abertzale* left, they generate a certain degree of sensibility among different sectors of society. As Alcedo affirms, the dispersion policy that had possibly been designed to isolate the families has backfired, and the only thing that has been achieved is to make visits more uncomfortable and costly that increase the sense of victimhood, which is already widespread among the ‘*etarra* community’ (1996: 297). The narrative of ‘suffering’ is extended over penitentiary dispersion and all consequences it brings to the social surroundings of the prisoner. Long trips, traffic accidents, and mistreatment by the ‘enemy’ form part of this narrative. The

---

<sup>327</sup> Arguably this is one of the reasons that there are few militants who feel regretful from their militancy and, consequently, have abandoned the organization. Indeed, the outcomes of this study, in this sense, affirm what Reinares mentions (2001: 16) that an immense majority of ETA militants take total responsibility for the decision they once made, and a vast number of them (B-I/04, 06; B-II/01, 02, 03, 04, 05; B-III/01, 02, 03, 04, 06) affirm that they would make things better and contribute in a more efficient way for the cause/organization if they had any chance to change anything in their past life.

prisoner, their family and friend circles, and the community consider these measures as a vengeance by the enemy's side, as expressed by all three generations:

"The dispersion policy carried that fact, it had a clear political goal, and it was about politically separating you from your comrades, from your *patria*, but it also had another function that was an added punishment to your family members and friends. [...] Today, it remains exclusively as a policy of revenge. Maintaining that policy of dispersion today towards Basque political prisons is a measure of revenge because it hasn't yielded the results that they were considering the day they began to apply it." (B-I/01)

"What hurt me is what they did with my family. Because I've chosen this, I'm a militant, and I abide by the consequences. But what hurts me is that my 70-year-old parents have to make a five-hour trip [*there*] and five hours [*back*]. It hurt me a lot that my four-year-old son had to make these trips to see me [...] ...my family found out then the injustice of the system. And, on top of that, they've suffered by experiencing it personally because to whom the dispersion affects most is them. They had to travel to Malaga, 1000 km to go, and 1000 km to return, only to see me. They've always been there, every month. You see it among social prisoners, they have no visits, and in our case, it's necessary to have a 10-hour trip, and we still have visitors." (B-II/01)<sup>328</sup>

Such organizations as *Gestoras Pro Amnistía* and, after its closure and illegalization by the Spanish judiciary, *Etzerat*, and *Herrira*, within the orbit of the *abertzale* have left played a vital role in these sensibilization and mobilization processes by establishing a network of relations among family members who are indirectly but significantly affected by the consequences of the penitentiary policy. Organizing solidarity campaigns and events as well as practical support through regular weekend *Mirentxin* vans with voluntary drivers who take tens of family members from the Basque Country to Spanish and French prisons are among prison-related activities.<sup>329</sup> Apart from visualizing the grade of solidarity bonds, these activities also serve as a place of encounter where families and friends from different ideological backgrounds and generations gather (Aretxaga 2005: 161) in an environment where the dominance of the *abertzale* left is noted.

Analyzing experiences corresponding to MLNV cadres who have served long prison sentences and their immediate social environment who have re-socialized through the mechanisms mentioned above, a complex process of intergenerational interaction is noted. In a context of radical changes resulting from extreme conditions such as prison and exile, the re-socialization of these families through mechanisms led by the *abertzale* left community get them closer to the radical Basque nationalist movement. Strong emotional attachment with the prisoner or the exile has the potential to overcome ideological or religious discrepancies, which gradually opens the path for families to get involved in a certain degree of 'family-based social activism'. This phenomenon is mostly exercised through participation in public demonstrations in favor of prisoners and exiles and electoral support

---

<sup>328</sup> The narrative of suffering is best reflected among the family members of prisoners. Even though they are Spanish immigrant worker families who initially had no ideological proximity to Basque nationalism and even to a less extent to the *abertzale* left (as in the case of B-I/06), it is noted that over time they also adopt the same definition of 'enemy' and 'vengeance' when asked their opinion on penitentiary dispersion.

<sup>329</sup> Long trips in these vans were also part of the participant observation carried out for this study. The researcher noted that apart from personal topics, interaction among family members largely concentrated on prison and prisoner-related questions from a perspective that corresponded to a 'we versus the *enemy*' narrative constructed within the *abertzale* left group truth.

for the formal *abertzale* left party, which is the only political formation tackling the question of Basque prisoners. B-I/06, whose family were Spanish immigrants from pro-Franco background living in a predominantly Spanish immigrant neighborhood in a town of Gipuzkoa, narrates how her parents have gradually passed through a certain degree of transformation beginning from the early years of their daughter's militancy in the underground, later exile and, finally, in prison:

"Your daughter is always your daughter! Although they didn't agree with me, in terms of the support, they've always been with me. Then they've slagged me off all the time, huh? My mother says I've ruined her life; she still says it. [*Has there been a change in their thinking after you got involved?*] Man, in some ways, yes. When I escaped, the people who supported them were the Basque people, not the people from the neighborhood. People of the neighborhood where we lived, they rather embittered the pain. [...] ...there were people from villages who support them when they found out. They gave them a lot of love; they spoiled them a little. So, they got closer to them. Later, my parents participated in all the activities they [*organized*], in solidarity with the prisoners, with the exiles... My family was in everything to be in solidarity with the prisoners, but more than anything because I was inside. That doesn't mean that they've stopped being conservative. At this moment, my *amatxu* [mother] votes for EH Bildu; she says, 'Hey! They've got my vote!' Yes, they've always voted, but anyway, that's because of the sense of closeness to me, as a need to support me." (B-I/06)

As B-I/06 emphasizes that although the parents disagree with the politico-military strategy of the MLNV and critical of the political activities of their children, they may eventually be driven into family-based activism to end the socially reproduced 'suffering and injustice' to which their children are subjected. In this particular form of political involvement, what is previously referred to as 'family tradition' work the other way around: It is no longer parents who play a determining role in their children's familiarity with the Basque nationalism, but their militant children who, in a way, cause them get acquainted with this universe through these re-socialization mechanisms.

"Many times we've collided, but then in the hardest moments, they've always been there. I think they also lived a reality that until then, they knew it existed, but they hadn't experienced it first-hand. Hearing and living, in the end, isn't the same, and on many occasions, they've also changed their view towards the conflict. [*Have you noticed that change of view?*] Yes, totally. Because before, until my arrest, they didn't at all attend even a single demonstration, and now they go all the time. [*If*] there's a demonstration in favor of prisoners in Bilbao, they go there, something is organized in Urnieta, they're there right away although I'm not present." (B-III/05)

"Due to the years of repression that I've suffered, they've become more politicized, and nowadays they participate in mobilizations in favor of prisoners and political mobilizations, and also my mother has participated in a movement in defense of the victims of reprisal. And today, they vote for the *abertzale* left." (B-II/03)<sup>330</sup>

When it comes to interaction with the following generation members, however, it is not as easy to affirm the emergence of 'family-based activism', as relations between the militant and their children develop ambiguously. Depending on the conditions and environment in which the socialization process of younger generation family members continues, they develop a timid acceptance or total refusal

---

<sup>330</sup> As observed in this case and others (B-I/02, 05, 06; B-II/05; B-III/01, 02, 05) among immediate family members, women, especially mothers, come to the forefront. The qualitative data from all three generations, as well as interviews made with the families of Basque prisoners, reaffirm the previously made affirmations by anthropologists who underline the role of women as they are the ones who leave their traditional role in the private sphere and enter the public sphere playing a mediational role such as speaking to prison authorities, occupying squares of their village for prisoner rights, talking to journalists and, this way, becoming essential actors of the national struggle (Alcedo 1996: 137; Aretxaga 2005: 161).

towards their parent's militancy. It is noted that in the early socialization period, militancy, exile, or prison tend to appear as the central element of identity construction for children:

"Let me tell you an anecdote: My nephew, who is now ten years old, a couple of years ago he asked why his father was in jail; the answer they gave him was that because his father loved the Basque people very much, he loved his *patria* very much. Then the question that the child made to the person who answered the previous question was 'and then why are you not in jail, is it because you don't love *Euskal Herria* that much?'" (B-I/01)

"My nephews have always known me in prison. So, for them, since they were born, I've always been living in jail. Maybe they had different ways of interpreting it, but they didn't see jail as a bad thing. [...] And I remember that when they went to visit me in Salto prison, my sister-in-law told my nephew (around nine years old at the time), they got an identity card issued for him, so of course, he told his mother 'mama, why does it say there that I'm Spanish? If I am Basque!' and she said, 'Look, that's why they are in jail!' That's it, understood!" (B-I/04)

The dialectical relation between the sacrifice and suffering is best observed in this intergenerational interaction where the sacrifice for the *patria* is objectified as the main reason for the consequential suffering. Although the explication sounds coherent with the continually reproduced group truth, and initially adopted by children, in some cases, conditions under which children carry on their secondary socialization process make them face the official truth about ETA and MLNV:

"I think that the way that reality can be explained to a child - to any child, many children here- is always [*about*] trying to explain 'defending *Euskadi*' when talking about it. It's not strange at all. Their mentality comprehends something; in a way, something about making it ours, about defending that of belonging to us. Of course, then years go by, and they get a little older; they go to school and hear that their father is a terrorist, that he's a murderer and such and such. So that turns out to be a very strong process of crisis. Besides, it's not even possible to argue in the same way; there's a thing called television where they say they tell the truth, and it says that your father is a son of a bitch. But anyway, it's the official truth, the truth of power." (B-I/03)

Similar affirmations reveal that the reaction by the upcoming generations seems to follow a parallel development to the decline in ETA's social legitimacy. B-I/02, who is also from an industrial village where most of the residents are immigrant families, points out the same fact when interpreting the distance that his daughter keeps with him despite her *pro-abertzale* left ideological stance:

"...if you live these areas where there're Spaniards, Canary Islanders, there's a hodgepodge of cultures and sensibilities, and positions that generate certain situations that you don't like. My daughter has had to live there, and during schooling my daughter had to live it, they would tell her 'you're the daughter of a terrorist' So, that has affected her in her experience -it's my interpretation-, she says 'I'm not in favor of ETA, it's because of ETA that my father is in jail, that I'm discredited in the school environment, that I had to live a tense situation.' So I believe that my daughter identifies herself with the ideological or with the political, which the *abertzale* movement or ETA represents, but she refuses the activity [*political violence*] that has brought such consequences as prison and suffering for her." (B-I/02)

The testimonies reveal that, in most cases, adolescents interpret love and devotion for the *patria* as a challenger to the love and care they expect from their parents. Underground militancy, exile, and prison, which leave no room for children, are considered consequences of the choice that the militant made for the *patria*. The initial understanding and coherence of the primary socialization period leave their place to questioning and adopting critical attitudes during the secondary socialization period of these adolescent children as several ETA prisoners affirm:

“...teenagers have it worse off. Because they have a time when they say ‘my mother or father prefers *Euskal Herria* to me and they’ve abandoned me for the struggle.’ A small kid at first adapts himself, but a teenager begins to question things and starts to throw them in the face. [*Have you seen experiences like that?*] Yes, I’ve seen the periods of questioning, then they don’t want to go to visits. Later on, they usually overcome it.” (B-II/01)

“...they can accept that there is some kind of conflict, a struggle, but what’s more difficult for the children to understand is when you say ‘you have to understand that I believe in this and I have to fight because my moral values oblige me.’ The conclusion they draw out of that is that here there are two things: they and *Euskal Herria*, and I’ve preferred *Euskal Herria* to them. How do you explain that to a child? ‘Look, we have an ass, and sometimes we have to try to cover several chairs, but there’s only one option.’ So, that’s very difficult to explain. What kind of love can there be when you’ve preferred something else before them? What they want is attention, love. Although it seems utopic, they want to have a father as other children have.” (B-I/03)

The generational gap becomes apparent, especially in the case of militants whose political socialization process corresponds to the Spanish Transition, whereas their children have socialized during a consolidated democracy. The fact that the group truth of the MLNV rejects that Basques enjoy ample autonomy in a genuinely democratic state enlarges this gap even further. In an environment in which fundamental symbolic elements of Basque national identity are thoroughly institutionalized and class struggle is not as apparent as it used to be, children find it challenging to justify the need for the use of violence for national and social aspirations. *B-III/04*, who had to abandon her one-year-old son and went to the underground in 2004, narrates her own experience with this respect:

“In our case, the militant, he or she, has to justify what the reasons for their militant commitment are, why he or she decides to take that step towards militancy. And, on top of that, it’s something that for many sectors, it is ‘inexplicable’ unless you already enter the story of the militant person, the militant idealizations, and more because we live in a quote-unquote ‘democracy’. After all, the CAPV has some degree of competence, economic and linguistic sovereignties. So, the elements used until now brings a ‘why?’ Because you fight for Euskera and ‘Mama, but I’m in an *ikastola*, and I speak Euskera, and nobody comes and makes it impossible for me to speak Euskera! What else do you want?’ You don’t live in a situation of exploitation and apparent poverty in which standing up against the economic oligarchy is something legitimate, or idyllic or ethical, right? It’s like ‘mama, I eat every day, so what are the reasons?’ and ‘why mama? I don’t see a justification!’” (B-III/04)

Although ETA put a definitive end to its armed activity in 2011, dismantled its military structure, and, finally, dissolved itself as a politico-military organization, the question of dispersed prisoners or the exiled continues as one of the unresolved problems. This also means that the prison and prisoner continue to play a central role as a mechanism of social reproduction of sacrifice and suffering among the social surroundings of the *abertzale* left community.

#### **12.4. Women in ETA and the MLNV**

The place of women in Basque society in general and within the militancy of the MLNV, in particular, remains a relatively new subject in scholarly works until the early 2000s. This situation in academia follows a reflection of limited active participation of women in institutional politics until the 1990s, which is not particular to Basque Country, but rather a common phenomenon in all of Spain considering the timeline of the development of the feminist movement in this country.

Notwithstanding, several available sources before this period offer a certain degree of understanding regarding the place of women in Basque politics as well as in the MLNV.<sup>331</sup>

Explaining the historical evolution of Basques in his famous *Vasconia*, Krutwig reaffirms the common belief in the myth of matriarchal Middle Age Basque society in which there allegedly existed genuine equality between men and women. In this society, where the transmission of real kinship was through women, matriarchal principles determined the social organization. Other concepts like monogamy or monandry, as well as patriarchal practices and traditions, were imposed by the foreign tradition (Sarrailh de Ihartza 2006[1962]: 83-84).

While Krutwig described the 'pre-colonial' gender practices based on equality between men and women in Basque social life, this did not imply that the new Vasconia to be constructed through revolutionary war against the colonial powers would equate women with men in terms of social roles. The only reference that Krutwig made with this respect was about the role of women in the *eliberris*, a system of free communities, in the future Vasconia, where maternity was considered a well-respected social duty in communal life due to its role in kinship transmission (*ibid*: 451-452). This symbolic position attributed to women as mothers and carriers of national and cultural characteristics through generations was a result of the religious legacy that ETA inherited from the traditional Aranist doctrine (Hamilton 2007b: 135) under the influence of Catholic traditions. This idealized life that allegedly existed once upon a time and sought to be re-established in the future Basque Country did not seem to correspond to the existing gender practices that Krutwig explained when referring to the devastating impacts of Spanish and French colonial rule in *Vasconia*.

The lack of references to women in the Basque national liberation struggle was also evident in Krutwig's book, which was considered the primary theoretical reference of ETA in the early period of the organization. Although the early ideologue of ETA did not directly attribute any negative or positive role to women, he mentioned that *plastikolaris*, referring to small urban cells of 'asphalt guerrillas' (*guerrilleros de asfalto*), would be composed of men, leaving no room for women's active role in the struggle (*Ibid*: 403). This (lack of) approach towards the militancy of women was also noted in the practical sense when taking the rare presence of women in the initial phases of ETA into account. The

---

<sup>331</sup> Unlike the impulse of the feminist struggle for equal basic rights and anti-discriminative intervention by the state in western Europe and North America after the 1960s, Spain constituted a rare example where the dissemination of feminist movements only became possible during the post-Francoist transition period. In Spain, women's movements were peculiarly articulated to the underground opposition against the repressive regime, as seen in other countries with similar political contexts, including Portugal, Greece, and Turkey (Kaplan 1992: 206). For the quantitative evolution of women's participation in politics in the Basque Country, please see Elizondo, A. (1999) *La presencia de las mujeres en los partidos políticos en la Comunidad Autónoma de Euskadi*, Vitoria-Gasteiz: Gobierno Vasco, Table 4.5 and 4.7, pp. 113-115.

participation of women in ETA's assemblies from 1966 to 1970 was only 9%, being only nine among 102 militants (Unzueta 1988: 182).<sup>332</sup>

The differentiation in the patterns of recruitment between early period male and female militants in ETA, which was related to the existing gender roles in Basque society, appears as the most determining factor in political participation. Hamilton points out the restricted access of women to activities outside the family, with little chance of involvement in such public activities and mechanisms as youth groups, Church seminars, student organizations that attracted mostly young middle-class Basque men (2007b: 135). This argument was especially apparent in the rural *baserri* context in which women were actively present in labor except for works requiring significant psychical strength and, on the very contrary to men, they practically had no social life other than attending the mass on Sundays. This dependence of women on domestic and agricultural work made them more prone to exploitation with no participation in urban social life, in a position of total ostracism (Etxezarreta 1977: 168). Although sexual oppression and social pressure on women do not appear as a primary cause of militancy involvement, among female militants from the first generation of this study, *B-I/04*, from a rural village of Gipuzkoa, expresses this reality through the following affirmation:

"From there on [the *Burgos trial*] is when I begin to acquire consciousness as a nationalist, but also as a woman. Because there's also the circumstance of... Well, if men are oppressed, then women are doubly oppressed, right? As women, we had fewer options to do things in the street." (B-I/04)

By the late 1970s, the presence of women in ETA began to increase. Although the number of women activists in the armed campaign showed a slow increase starting the 1970s, María Dolores González Katarain, famously known by her alias *Yoyes*, came to the forefront, reaching a high-ranking position within ETA. Constituting the most frequently reproduced example of a female ETA leader, *Yoyes* gained infamy as she abandoned the organization benefiting from the reintegration plan proposed by the Spanish government in 1982 for ETA members. Consequently, *Yoyes* was accused of treason and assassinated by ETA while attending a fair with her son in her native Ordizia in 1986. According to Aretxaga, the tragic end that *Yoyes* faced has to do with the figure that she represented as a woman fighter, which was a threat to culturally accepted gender codes:

"Hero, traitor, martyr- *Yoyes* was everything that, from the cultural premises embedded in nationalist practices, a woman could not be. Moreover, *Yoyes* was a mother. In the nationalist context, the models of hero, traitor, or martyr and the model of the mother are mutually exclusive. I believe the synthesis of these models in the person of *Yoyes* which made her 'treason' much more unbearable than that of other ex-militants." (Aretxaga 2005: 158)

Although the number of women in ETA increased starting from the early 1980s on (Hamilton 2007b: 136), their position in the organization reflected a continuation of the dominant male role. Basing on

---

<sup>332</sup> Hamilton also estimates a similarly lower but steady number of women within the organization, starting from the 1960s and continuing until the late 1970s (2007a: 189-190; 2007b: 135).



his qualitative data (interviews 12, 19, 16 & 7), Reinares mentions that many women joined the organization due to their emotional relationship with male militants in this period. Their position as 'the warrior's rest' (*Descanso del guerrero*), referring to handling exclusively auxiliary duties ordered by the male-dominant organizational structure, therefore, required an extraordinary effort to prove their capacity (2001: 21-28). Underlining the same approach towards women in ETA in the early period of the armed militancy, Alcedo affirms that women in this position were assigned collaborative tasks rather than armed *ekintzas*, then considered almost exclusively 'a man's job'. By referring to affirmations made by her interviewees (G-1 and G-6), however, the scholar also points out that this auxiliary position of women began to change significantly starting the 1980s (Alcedo 1996: 354, 361-363). B-I/06, who was one of few leading female militants in ETA in this period, makes a distinction between the 'collaborator' and 'militant' and narrates her position as a female militant within ETA:

[How was the role of women in those years? Were there many women militants?] I can't tell you if there were many. At that time, we, as several women, worked together. [And did they hold important positions? Some sources use the term 'the warrior's rest' for women, that is, in general, they did auxiliary work and not *ekintzas*...] No, there I think we have to distinguish things: On the one hand, there was a section of women who did that job, as partners; they weren't women militants who had opted for militancy by the decision but the women who helped their partner do things, it was a more sensible militancy, a form of collaboration. Then there was another group of women who did serve with complete awareness. I'm not going to tell you that it wasn't sexist; what happens is that it's sexist because we come from a society that is so. But at that time, there were already women in charge. [...] It is true it was a military organization composed mostly of men, but women had roles, and it's often said that a woman has to prove herself twice as much as a man. Well, maybe, yes. Maybe at that level, yes. You had to prove it more than a man, training, courage to take action, yes, that's true." (B-I/06)

Since the early 1980s, women became more active in armed actions as professional militants, which was a stage of 'proving themselves', and their military capabilities were accepted as such (see D-2 and G-1 in Alcedo 1996: 360-361). The representation of female ETA militants changed from 'unwitting participants', victims of their emotional partners, to 'cold-hearted killers' who showed the same or even greater potential as their male comrades (Hamilton 2007b: 140).<sup>333</sup> Although they showed a relative refusal towards traditional gender roles, it is noted that in practice, sexist and discriminative attitudes continued, as confirmed by B-I/02 through a reflection on the behavior of male militants:

"In my time, without denying that we were living in a socio-political situation where patriarchy and *machismo* marked a large part of our lives, up to a level that the revolutionary evolution itself led us to overcome schemes of that conduct, I must recognize that while in theory, we were in favor of equality between every human being, practices were sometimes affected by the education that we received. And in that sense, I must recognize that there were discriminatory aspects and attitudes. That said, the evolution within the organization and the role women played in the fight at all levels and on an equal level was significant, getting to overcome those aspects and looking at them *a posteriori*, and recognizing them, the same ability, in any structure, to be another militant. The progress is evident, and although we cannot be credited with creating the foundations of what is today called class feminism, the contribution of ETA militants, as well as in the structures of the MLNV, has influenced this ideological drift to a certain degree." (B-I/02)

---

<sup>333</sup> Arguably this indicates the end of 'couple terrorism', a term that some scholars adopt from *The Demon Lover* by Morgan (1989), who argues that all women involved in such activities are motivated by their sexual attachment to 'male terrorists', which create a real gender division of labor inside armed organizations (Reinares 2001: 28; Hamilton 2007b: 137-136).

Notwithstanding, this transition from taking the traditional gender roles for granted to rejecting them evolved through specific phases. The way women acted in order to break the patriarchal patterns of male-dominant militancy in this period was based on the imitation of these very same patterns. As Aretxaga underlines, these women who opted for being active fighters, a role culturally defined as masculine, had to sacrifice their identity as women, and they are qualified as 'exceptions' or, as popularly depicted, 'women with balls' (*mujeres con pelotas*) whose extraordinary courage was related to possessing the essence of masculinity (Aretxaga 2005: 160).

Basing on her findings out of qualitative data (female militants from the 1980s and 1990s), another Basque anthropologist, Alcedo, also confirms that in the early 1990s, there were more women involved in armed *ekintzas*, and they adopted the role of traditional male militants to achieve positions of power which were, traditionally, in the hands of men. The scholar also mentions that in their future militancy period, female militants also questioned this tendency, demanding the reconstruction of clearly defined gender roles and resolving the existing masculinity problem (1996: 355-356).

"...in the militancy also, although we were feminists, we took on male roles in order to throw our weight around, and now after years, I realize that it was [*true*] in my case... If there was a debate, I wasn't among those who fell silent, but I think in terms of manners, we'd have to change. Then, I look at the past and say, 'Ufff, we were doing things very badly!'" (B-III/01)

The adoption of masculine roles, however, brought about new problems, especially when carrying out political activities in an underground organization in which conditions of militancy became the most determining factor. In this period, during which women felt forced to embrace a male role for the sake of their militancy career had to make a clear choice. Traditional domestic gender roles attributed to women overwhelmingly preponderated as most female ETA cadres had to reject having children in order to continue their politico-military itinerary:

"If you have a child when it comes to devoting yourself more to the militancy, holy shit! It deters a lot! And normally, if both the father and mother serve, who renounces the militancy? Normally it's usually women [...] I don't know any case that has been the other way around. I don't think I know any." (G-1 in Alcedo 1996: 363)<sup>334</sup>

The place and grade of involvement of women in professional militancy seem to have grown quantitatively and qualitatively over time. Although starting from the late 1990s, the presence of women in the armed struggle was still low in numbers in comparison with male militants, it tended to grow, and women came to occupy leadership positions within the organization:

---

<sup>334</sup> Two examples in this study are noteworthy in order to illustrate the evolution of gender-related questions in ETA: B-I/05, who was in ETA throughout the 1980s along with his girlfriend, who got pregnant during her militancy. In a post-interview conversation in the *Herriko Taberna* of his native village in Gipuzkoa, he narrated going to ETA's executive board to tell them he would need paternity leave voluntarily, so his girlfriend could continue her militancy. The petition was a surprise as it was extremely rare in that period; there were no established norms and rules with that respect in the organization at the time. In the case of B-III/04, who gave birth before joining ETA in 2004, however, the militant affirms that she continued her career leaving her one-year-old son to her boyfriend, who was also an ETA militant; an act considered 'normal' in this period.

"[In the late 1990s, how was the participation of women?] Well, women participated as any man participated. What happens is that there were few; there weren't many. Time has passed, and they've grown in numbers. Today they're still a minority, but [in terms of] the grade of commitment and rights, they're paid the same attention as men. [Do male militants treat women the same way as any other male comrade?] Yes, I think in general, yes. There're many examples of female militants. There've even been *talde*s composed of women only. They detained a *talde* in Madrid; another *talde* fell in Galicia as well, women only. Then there've been women in the leadership. Since I started my militancy, since I escaped, I've known women in the leadership" (B-III/03)

This qualitative progress observed regarding the position of women in leadership roles in ETA also brought out the role that women played in the armed organization as well as such controversial issues as the motherhood of female militants. The characteristic of ETA as an underground organization distinguished it from other MLNV organizations, and the increasingly repressive conditions under which ETA militants had to exercise their militancy conditioned these debates and decisions:

"I believe that the organization has specific characteristics because living underground unifies you, so to speak; it unifies you in your responsibilities, it unifies you in other things. It's different, for example, when you're working in the organizations of *abertzale* left where you have a civil life and therefore have gender responsibilities that are attributed in civil life both as a mother or as a wife or as a worker. So, these limitations, these gender differences in civil life, are transferred and lead to other kinds of differentiation in political life. But when you're serving in an underground organization, these gender differences that condition your civil workspace; you don't have them in the military organization. [...] Yes, there were debates that I experienced in ETA about the role of women or certain problems such as maternity, and different decisions were made around that. Those were decisions that have been largely conditioned by repressive obstacles from which the organization has suffered as well. But I believe despite those repressive obstacles; there've also been attempts to provide space to the right that women have to be mothers." (B-III/04)

The new feminist process was launched by female *abertzale* left cadres to re-evaluate and revise the implementation of feminist measures within the KAS structure in which *Egizan* played the role of the avant-garde organization for *abertzale* women. B-III/04, who was one of the leading figures within the feminist movement of the MLNV in this period before joining ETA, affirms that it was precisely in this period that the *abertzale* left came to the conclusion that *Egizan* was far from complying with its primary objective, which was to assure that women participated on the basis of equality within the organizations of the *abertzale* left and these organizations adopted a feminist approach as a political reflection which was to spread over masses by time. This conclusion, especially after the Lizarra – Garazi process, led the cadres to open a process of diagnosis which was implemented in all organizations of the MLNV except ETA, which supported and encouraged this process but –to her knowledge- did not implement it within its squads:

"I participated in this process, and we conducted a quantitative survey, percentages, the number of responsibilities, participation in assemblies, type of responsibilities from a perspective. We tried to measure power management from a qualitative perspective as well, not just participation. This process is reviewed in all *abertzale* left organizations except in ETA -as far as I know, because at that time I wasn't [in ETA], I wasn't in the underground. So, I can't know, and I don't think anyone knows. On top of that, I think ETA had a diverse area; I mean, there wouldn't be a diagnosis by sex, focusing both on the underground structure and in the structures of support, help, information gathering, and others. So, I don't think anyone can objectively talk to you about that. [...] If ETA had [such a process], certain decisions would've reached us. I'm not informed that they did so. I know that they participated in that debate, and they saw that debate necessary, and in fact, there were changes both in its language and in its public appearances, trying to seek gender parity in his public appearances." (B-III/04)

Although she depicts her later experience as an ETA militant in an environment where gender equality and gender-balanced practices were seemingly present, the interviewee is cautious to confirm whether these measures approved and implemented by other *abertzale* left organizations were also adopted and interiorized by ETA's leadership in the early 2000s:

"Now, what was the gender distribution in case there was a gender distribution of power and certain responsibilities within the organization? Well, I'm unable to tell you, I haven't experienced it. I've lived a militancy with gender parity, but I don't know if it was temporary. I can't tell you from my personal experience that it's been gender-balanced in the executive bodies; I dare not interpret it like 'it was gender-balanced.' [...] I can assure you that militants of the organization and the organization itself approved the feminist process that we, women, and many men because we weren't only women, started in the *abertzale* left." (B-III/04)

Whether ETA officially accepted and implemented a gender-balanced policy before its final dissolution remains inconclusive. The growing weight of this approach, adopted by all other civilian components of the MLNV, however, is also observed among ETA executives as noted when the historical ETA militant José Antonio Urrutikoetxea (*Josu Ternera*) affirmed that "male and female ex-militants of ETA will continue the fight for a reunified, independent, socialist, Basque-speaking and non-patriarchal Basque Country in other areas" in the Final Declaration of ETA (*Gara-Naiz*, 03 May 2018). This affirmation underlines that the question of gender constitutes one of the main pillars of the Basque project for which the *abertzale* left continues to work in its post-politico-military phase.

### 13. Ideological and Symbolic Development of Kurdish National Liberation Movement

The significance of the struggle for actors considering themselves an *avant-garde* movement for the society they seek to represent is far more complex than a simple consideration of them as groups with nationalistic demands. As observed among most groups opting for armed revolution, the articulation of certain ideologies to the desired regime to be established also offers society in question radical changes. In this sense, the duty of militants claiming to represent the group's identity goes beyond their military objectives (e.g., defeating the enemy) and constitutes a symbolic function (Ibarra 1987: 28). This task is often challenging as non-state groups have limited reproduction mechanisms to diffuse and legitimize their symbolic universe. This last chapter will focus on the development of the symbolic universe created within the PKK through generations and the interaction between the group truth and the Kurdish community with this regard.

#### 13.1. Being a member of the PKK: Mountains and the re-vitalization of the genuine Kurd

Analyzing the PKK movement, the militant appears as a figure who is expected to represent the values attributed to the group, an ideal personality constructed to achieve a set of promised goals. In his lectures on the Party History, commander Bayik dedicates a considerable part to the importance of 'becoming a PKK member' (*PKK'lileşmek*) by exemplifying the philosophy of the party through the experiences of first leading cadres such as Haki, Kemal, and Cemil himself, along with the group leader Abdullah Öcalan (n.d.: 19-23). This approach implies that perfect candidates to become an ideal PKK member are the party *Önderlik* and *martyrs*, both devoting and sacrificing their lives for the liberation of Kurds.

The exaltation of being an ideal PKK member is commonly observed among the PKK militants, who define this process as a life-long path through which even the most experienced members of the party do not see themselves as totally qualified to be entitled as a fully-accomplished PKK member (K-1/06, 09). K-1/08, who has devoted his entire life to the armed struggle in different fields (in Palestine, Turkey, in 'dungeon resistance' and more recently against ISIS), confirms that even the top members of the group, including himself, recognize this fact:

"Now someone comes to join us; they change their clothes and wear a guerrilla uniform; they're not a member of the PKK yet and cannot become PKK members right away. Now you go and ask Cemil Bayik, 'Cemil, are you a member of the PKK?' He'd probably tell you, 'No, I'm still trying to be!' The same question was posed to him, you know. At the moment, I cannot say 'I'm an excellent PKK member'; it's impossible. [...] I can say this: What I'd like to live or what I'm living isn't a lifestyle far away from that of the PKK; one tries to deserve it as much as possible. I can tell you, however, have I deserved it? No, I have not! [*Why do you think so?*] Because hundreds of comrades of mine with whom I joined this struggle, we worked, we fought together have fallen martyr. I mean to say, I haven't been able to do what I'm supposed to do in my practice, in my revolutionary life. We haven't been able to carry out the necessary response, necessary activities, necessary participation, necessary level, and consequently we haven't been able to do what history, what *Önderlik* assigns us to do; I haven't done, I don't

believe I did it in way that it deserves. [*silence*] This isn't for being humble; this is a reality. Whatever PKK member you ask this question, none would tell you, 'I believe I've been fighting diligently', and in case one said so, I wouldn't believe it." (K-I/08)

Attempting to become a PKK member and living the lifestyle that the party *Önderlik* indicates requires specific conditions independent from the influence of any of those states, among which Kurdistan has long been divided. Considering itself as the pioneering force of the Kurdish people and, in its recently adopted dynamics, of all peoples of the Middle East (K-I/06), the PKK seeks a safe haven free from all detrimental influences, not only in terms of oppressive state violence, but also lifestyles imposed by unequal capitalist social and political configurations.

As natural shelters, relatively free from any of such detrimental effects, mountains are one of few options in Kurdistan in order to implement the party's 'new life' in practice by complying with their traditional role in the survival of Kurds. Under the physical conditions of Kurdistan, vast mountain ranges had offered perfect places to hide for bandits who, in a far less organized and political way, had rebelled against local authority (M.E. Bozarslan 2002[1966]: 109). In this manner, ascribing an indispensable symbolic value for ethnic survival to the mountains of Kurdistan, the PKK forms the prototype of this new life, the *real* Kurdish life<sup>335</sup> there in the mountains, and launches the struggle in order to (re)transmit it to society, as the founding cadre *K-I/04* explains:

"We needed to establish a living space autotelic to us. That means we'd need to use this space as a headquarter to organize ourselves, develop our culture, our social structure, and our struggle. That's why mountains are an indispensable place for us. A unique free place where we can express ourselves best is the mountain, and only there can we create our genuine organization, culture, and identity. And for this reason, we've created it here. In the mountain, our guerrilla, being present in every sector, expanding in almost every area, maintains a revolutionary, socialist, communal lifestyle. We've created a system in which a community consisting of individuals who solely fight for their aims without having any private ownership, and all their needs are provided collectively. This is who we are, and we survive and carry on our struggle. This is also what we project for our society." (K-I/04)

Mountains become vitally important due to their natural location, making it possible for the PKK members to construct their version of Kurdish reality, based on the history of Kurds and ancient Middle Eastern peoples that Öcalan has long analyzed. The PKK reproduces this reality in everyday communal practices of guerrilla life by adopting the role of a constructor and diffuser of the Kurdish national identity of the 'new Kurd' (Bozarslan 2003: 110). All fundamental symbolic and democratic rights from which they consider themselves deprived under the nation-state system are available despite the lack of all other components not considered of such priority:

---

<sup>335</sup> Placing itself at the center of Kurdish historiography, the PKK uses the symbolic attraction of an imagined remote past in which the ancestors of Kurds are believed and narrated to have lived this ideal life. Bearing in mind the symbolic value attributed to 'the mountain' as an indispensable component for survival, pointing to the Taurus-Zagros mountain system as the cradle of a highly-glorified Neolithic revolution, the precise period of a desired remote past –and a unique chance to re-create the genuine Kurd- the PKK leadership establishes a perfect bridge between the lost past and the future to be constructed through PKK struggle (Öcalan 2001, Vol.2: 43-50).

“...we live happily in places where we feel free, we speak our own language, we express our thoughts freely, we freely put into practice whatever we’ve got at the intellectual level. We can touch our own land and feel the spirit of our land deep inside. We’re free. Maybe there are no facilities; maybe there is no conformist life, nor the advantages that conformist life offers. It may sound like we’re deprived of all these, but we live giving ourselves free rein, we live in peace, with the happiness of getting back to our history, to our own self. We can make politics; we can sense that we’re a political power. We can sense our history. Önder Apo once said about mountains, ‘Mountains must be ideologized, and the ideology must breathe the air of freedom that mountains have’. We’re in the mountains; we’re ideologizing mountains.” (K-I/06)

The task assigned to the cadres by Öcalan is to expand the new life throughout Kurdish society gradually. Considering political conditions in Turkey’s Kurdistan, such an ambition requires a tremendous level of organization and devotion. Nevertheless, relatively free conditions in the mountains under which cadres find suitable grounds to establish and develop this new life are rather complicated in the socio-political order existing in Kurdistan. The gap between the established official reality by the state and ideal social reality to be pursued by the PKK is best described by those who have experienced both for a sufficient time by joining and, after long years, leaving the organization and resettling in the existing social order:

*“[So, when you went back to civilian life, did you continue from the point you had left off before joining the PKK?] No, there were three different phases. I think you’ve also heard this from others too; generally, we, those who left the organization, have the same state of mind: The first one, the period before being fully engaged in the organization, was a life for me. When you leave this behind and join the PKK, it is similar to the following: burning one’s bridges. You join by burning your bridges; you have to strike out your old life habits, your old friends, your ex-boyfriends, your love, your mother and father, every kind of thing you have. If not, it becomes tougher. Constantly longing for them, with flashbacks, it becomes difficult to confront all these; the wildness of the mountains, the wildness and barbarity of the enemy, and our in-party struggle –as you’re constantly carrying out an in-party class struggle and gender struggle too. For that reason, there was an expression in the PKK: ‘Did you burn the bridges?’ And yes, we did; I did burn them too. For this reason, my past was a life of mine. My second life is the period I spent within the PKK and in the mountains, in a military sense. When I [finally] returned here [civilian life], I neither could begin from the past, continue from the point I’d left off, nor could I continue by leaving behind the point I’d left the PKK.” (K-II/12)*

The difference between the new life and existing social order or, as labeled by the cadres, between ‘the mountain’ and ‘the system’ is also expressed by current PKK militants from all generations. Being in the mountain is depicted in an exalted manner as a collective living space based on communal wellbeing and a spirit of sharing, whereas what they refer to as ‘the system’ and all the values it is based on –individualism, career-oriented ambitions, greed- are considered inhumane, incompatible with humane development and unsustainable. This view is mainly observed when individuals are indirectly asked whether they have any regret concerning the decision they took when joining the PKK:

“I’ve loved this movement. I preferred not to have gone to university. I preferred to go to the mountain. If it happened to occur today, it’d be the same [...] Believing in that ‘rights and justice will be manifested sooner or later’, I’d do the same today too. As I’ve said, if I’d graduated from the university, become an engineer, a lawyer, a governor, or this and that, I’d probably not get humanized the way this movement has made me humanized.

I'd not be that satisfied in the ideological and moral sense the way this movement has satisfied me. I'd be living like an ordinary simple person, like a person eating, drinking, speaking, trying to satisfy his instincts." (K-II/02)<sup>336</sup>

"...the happiest years of my life are those which I spent in the mountains. I saw that even in prison, a place where everything is based on punishment, one can be happy. For this reason, when I was leaving prison, they asked me, 'So what now? What did you achieve?' and I said, 'I'm grateful to my comrades. I'm grateful to *Başkan Apo* because were it not for him, I wouldn't be able to live such a life!' [...] I've made sense of my life like this; I suffered, I stayed hungry, I stayed under siege for 43 days, I managed to survive only by eating cracked wheat, I held on to life by drinking confined groundwater. I ate dog meat; I had to feed myself whatever I found in nature. It wasn't me only, but you're also responsible for those who accompany you. But also, I went to Paris too. I drank a cup of coffee right next to the Eiffel Tower. I thought about the writings of Napoleon. I went to Moscow, Tehran, and so on. I've been to more than 30 countries; I mean, it's such a life. From my point of view, I consider all these activities quite valuable; I don't know how someone else judges them if they condemn them or consider them sinful; however, I consider it a form of life impossible to design through money or by any human." (K-II/04)

The same consideration concerning competing realities, the *mountain*, and the *system*, is also observed among third-generation cadres who spent more time during their pre-guerrilla phase in political activities, which is explicitly mentioned as the only regret when considering their previous life (K-III/03, 06, 07, 10,11). Parallel to the paradigmatic transformation of the PKK from 1999 onwards, the mountain is described as an exclusively special place for free life whereas the rest of the world, considered under the hegemony of the nation-state system, for which the PKK had also aspired before the change of paradigm after 1999, offers only material satisfaction:

"I've never said such a thing like, 'I'd have a better life if I'd not joined the PKK' or 'I'd have such a beautiful life with this and that!' I know very well that this wouldn't happen. Because as an individual, I'd like to exist with my own sense of belonging, with my own identity. We know very well, and we're aware that when you try to exist the way you're, freely, with your free will, the dominant global system, present state systems won't allow you." (K-III/05)

"I don't think I'd have a more comfortable life [*in the system*]. The challenges in these mountains –getting wounded, staying hungry, getting tired, long walks, the cold and hot, etc. Sure, they're all difficulties, but I think they're all bearable difficulties. Challenges [*in civilian life*] that an individual has to put up with are unbearable; they're really unbearable. I mean their struggle to earn a living, problems, a sense of constant pressure, a state of not being able to live freely... These are all difficulties, and I think these difficulties are more challenging than the PKK." (K-III/09)

The expansion of such a new organization of life and its further expansion throughout a society whose members have already been subjected to massive dispersion, not only in Kurdistan but also in big cities in Turkey too, indicate the most challenging part of such a long-term project. To this end, it appears to be equally vital to construct and diffuse the core symbolic elements of group truth, which form the symbolic universe of Kurdish reality objectified by the PKK, through targeted masses.

---

<sup>336</sup> Among all interviewees, including those who left the organization, none showed any sign of regret or repentance except some individual mistakes and in-party wrongdoings attributed to those who were unable to comprehend the PKK philosophy. Quite contrarily, when interviewees were asked questions directly or indirectly whether they regret the decision they made, they frequently -and quite similar to those in the Basque case- point out that they only regret *a)* for not having been able to make more efficient efforts for the sake of the struggle or *b)* for not having joined the PKK earlier than they did.



### 13.2. Construction of the Leadership and other cult figures in group truth

The existence of strong leadership that Kurds respect and obey has been emphasized as one of the main characteristics of Kurdish social life (Zeki 1977: 167). These figures of leadership require the capacity of being able to resolve disputes and conflicts and are typically represented by well-respected individuals such as Sheikhs or village elders, who are directly related to power struggle and rivalry among themselves (Jwaideh 1999[1961]: 66; Van Bruinessen 1992: 78). As seen in *Chapter 3*, this has been an essential factor for the traditional attempts of rebellions against authority throughout contemporary Kurdish history.

The question of leadership in the initial phase of the PKK, at first glance, seems to follow a similar pattern to that of traditional Kurdish movements despite the clear emphasis on an anti-colonial struggle, a clear reflection of the *zeitgeist* during which the party was formed. However, one must bear in mind that Öcalan's profile differs from that of previous leaders in the contemporary history of Kurds. Unlike noble characteristics attributed to previous Kurdish leaders based on arguments alleging that these come from prophet Mohammad's lineage or occupy a respectable place in an influential religious order (Jwaideh *ibid.* 98-101), Öcalan's charisma comes to the forefront through extraordinary skills and talents attributed to him by his followers. The group's former popular name before the establishment of the PKK, *Apocular*, literally meaning 'the followers of Apo', perfectly reflects this leadership approach that helps develop an 'almighty' savior figure among Kurds:

"It's necessary to think of the characteristics of this leadership: How did he accomplish this? Well, if one remembers the way İsmail Beşikçi defines the situation in which the Kurds found themselves until the emergence of the PKK, 'Kurds were transformed into a cadaver and Öcalan created a new human out of that cadaver; he gave life to that cadaver', he says. What does a cadaver mean? He refers to a divided, atomized body. It's a miraculous thing to give it life again. That's why it's necessary to deliberate well on the capacities of *Önderlik*." (K-1/03)

Öcalan's figure as an indisputable leader of the PKK and, to a broader extent, of the Kurdish people reflects both sides of the same coin: While the former is about his significance among party cadres, the latter has to do with the PKK's social legitimacy among Turkey's Kurds. Although there were a few occasions in which Öcalan happened to have received criticism by his fellow comrades like Mazlum Doğan (Cansız 2014, Vol.1: 367), and the preference of the first PKK cadres was to be called the 'Kurdistan Revolutionaries' instead of the *Apocular*, Öcalan's role as the main ideologue and the most favorable person for the leadership position within the movement is noted through his early publications. Being one of Öcalan's closest comrades from the beginning, commander Bayık explains the notion of this 'special' leadership in the PKK from its earliest phases:

"In other organizations, a leadership emerges during certain periods of the struggle, even the leadership of Lenin was questionable up until around 1912s. Constitutively, it was approved in 1912. What we have is the approval of *Önderlik* even when we were a small group; he left his mark on all occurrences, strengthening the struggle

from the beginning. This is the differential side of this struggle. This, at the same time, suggests that the *Önderlik* is a different kind of leadership, that he is different from other leaders.” (Bayık n.d.: 25)

As another founding cadre, Cansız also emphasizes her disagreement for popularly having been labeled ‘*Apocular*’ at the beginning; however, by listing words praising the ‘divine’ personality of Öcalan, she describes how he was portrayed among first cadres and how he became different within the party:

“In the initial phase, we had constantly voiced ourselves about our movement being called like this. We were saying that it was wrong to name a movement like this and, additionally, divulge it this way. I did not put up with it at all that it was likened to the ‘*Akıncılar*’<sup>337</sup> or groups like them. In the end, the name was not important; I had never been obsessed with this side of it. He was a person; he was a principal. He was a revolution, internationalism, patriotism, a keen fight. He was the representative of all beautiful phenomenon. He was such divine power, a material power. It was what we had in our minds. We were careful not to discuss other concepts. Yes, we were the *Apocu!* In fact, we loved it at heart; we adopted it. It had such an attraction which was not possible to pronounce easily but filled us with pride and inspiration.” (Cansız 2014, Vol.1: 274)<sup>338</sup>

The early numbers of the PKK’s official journal *Serxwebûn* provide a more precise and accurate diagnostic regarding the question of leadership within the PKK in its founding phases. Narrating the story of his detention, Mazlum Doğan refers to a simultaneous police raid to “*Apo’s village*” (March 1983 n° 15, p. 6) by using his short name only, which sounds far less hierarchical than those exalting adjectives like *Önder*, *Başkan* or *Serok Apo*. Referring to Cemil Gündoğan’s analysis on the tradition of political defense by Kurds in courtrooms (2007), Aydınoğlu precisely emphasizes the declaration made by early founding leaders like Mazlum Doğan and Kemal Pir, who admits that while ‘Abdullah’ is one of the leading militants of the party, the entire organization cannot be reduced to single-man management and that the PKK is independent of any individual (2014: 51). *K-I/01*, who spent significant time by Öcalan’s side, confirms that it was also the strategy developed by Öcalan during the pre-guerrilla period in order to avoid propagandistic issues formulated by the Turkish state:

“*[Did the emergence and development of the notion of Önderlik begin in that early period?]* Yes, at that time as well everyone showed respect towards Öcalan, but constitutively the group identity was at the forefront: Kurdistan Revolutionaries. The organization essentially defined itself through this slogan. At that time, the state wanted to isolate this organization by creating the image that it was something of a single man and not an organization. But the organization developed a counter-expression against this expression. At that time, however, despite this counter-expression, Öcalan was the core of this organization, having certain prominence in all aspects from the beginning; not like he gained this prominence afterward; [*he was*] the first person who had this importance, the first founder, first guide. He was initially already holding this role.” (K-I/01)

The official sources provide ambiguous information concerning ‘the party leadership’ and the national leadership of the people of Kurdistan. In mid-1983, Abdullah Öcalan appears as the Secretary-General

---

<sup>337</sup> Referring to Islamist youth movement the *Akıncılar* led by Salih Mirzabeyoğlu and Tefrik Risa Çavuşoğlu.

<sup>338</sup> Cansız retrospectively interprets the criticism made by Mazlum Doğan over Öcalan’s harsh words of warning towards one of the participants of the founding meeting in Fis village as ‘an obligation of responsibility and respect shown to the *Başkan*’ and defines her own feelings as follows: “I felt a bit weird anyhow. I did not feel truly comfortable. ‘Ok, it was necessary’, but it was criticism addressed to the *Başkan*” (*ibid.* 368). Whether or not this was how Cansız felt in that very moment of Mazlum Doğan’s criticism towards Öcalan or it was her later construction of her memory on a meeting held back in 1978 while writing her diary in the Zap region in 1996, the period that Öcalan’s leadership was far more consolidated, remains unknown and must be looked into through the PKK’s early publications for an objective understanding.

of the PKK, representing the party during meetings held with other Kurdish formations (*Serxwebûn*, July 1983, n° 19: 2). At the beginning of 1984, the leadership of the Kurdish people is attributed directly to the PKK, as affirmed by the slogan “Long-live the PKK, the great leader of our people” (*Serxwebûn*, Feb 1984, n° 26: 22). In an article titled “Long-live our Party leadership”, the leadership is attributed to early *martyrs*, specifically Haki Karer, Mazlum Doğan, Kemal Pir, and Hayri Durmuş are mentioned, as well as those who carry on fighting, firstly Abdullah Öcalan. The article ends with a “Long-live our Party and its leader cadres” (*Serxwebûn*, July 1984, n°31: 18-23).

Whether it is a coincidence or not, after the 15 August 1984 guerrilla offensive, the party leadership is directly attributed to Öcalan. In September 1984, the Secretary-General Öcalan is mentioned, for the first time in *Serxwebûn*, as the head of the “leadership of the PKK” after false news about his death published in *Milliyet* daily; additionally, the well-known slogan “*Bijî Serok Apo*” (Long-live Apo the Leader) is used for the first time (September 1984, n° 33: 1, 19). The same volume also reports the crowd shouting, “*bijî serok Apo*” and “*bijî PKK/HRK*” during a mass rally in Germany against the 12 September junta. Finally, by the end of 1984, *Serxwebûn* monthly mentions ‘APO’ as the leader of the people of Kurdistan (“Long-live APO, the leader of Kurdistan people”), still sharing the title of the leader with the PKK itself as a non-personal figure in what is called the Kurdistan National Liberation Movement (*Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluş Hareketi*) (*Serxwebûn* December 1984, n° 35: 5).

As seen in *Chapter 7*, the PKK guerrilla in the early 1990s was not only a military force but also –especially after its 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference– a pioneering actor through political, social, and cultural fields with self-assigned executive, legislative and judicial functions (Öcalan 1992: 210). This role required intellectually well-qualified and prepared cadres. Öcalan’s extensive theoretical lectures at the Mahsum Korkmaz Academy (later collected in his famous ‘*Çözümlemeler*’ [Analyses]) were the primary sources to indoctrinate ‘individuals’ appropriate to the ‘organizational life’ of the PKK (A.K. Özcan 2006: 165). This was also the period that Öcalan’s charisma and abilities began to acquire a more abstract concept of leadership. Still popularly known as Apo, he was converted into the ‘savior of Kurds’ and the creator of the liberated Kurd represented by his guerrillas:

“*[Did the concept of Önderlik exist at that time?] Well, it wasn’t called Önderlik; at the time, we weren’t at that level yet. However, the name of Apo was identical to the organization and identical to freedom for us. Rebellion, it was identical to rebellion against unfairness and injustice. For that reason, this name was the expression of the result of all these values for us, and it was one of the most important factors driving us.*” (K-II/04)

“In many public demonstrations, when you asked the individual carrying *Önderlik*’s poster ‘who is Abdullah Öcalan?’ they didn’t know, but when you asked, ‘who’s he you’re carrying?’, they’d say ‘It’s Apo!’ Apo had become a cult, a symbol representing freedom and liberation. Beyond being a name, his stance and the idea of freedom that he had introduced created an enormous sympathy among people towards *Önderlik*. [...] You see, *Önderlik* has this importance for Kurdish people. He took people who were ‘below-zero’ and managed to make them walk forward, promising hope for freedom. Moises had made his people wander around the desert for

forty years; similarly, Önderlik made these people fight, promising freedom under his own command, under his own flag” (K-II/02)

On many occasions in this period, the concept of *Önderlik*, introduced in PKK literature in the 1990s, clearly refers to the personality of Öcalan, who became the absolute authority within the organizational hierarchy in the PKK.<sup>339</sup> The title of *Önderlik*, in his own words, corresponds to him as a result of the consensus among the vast majority of cadres:

“I am one of the servants of my people too, and I fight. I have never said, ‘I am the *Önder* [Leader], anyone else other than me shall not and cannot be it’. It is the ascription you have made. I have never offered myself as the president anywhere; in fact, I have not offered myself for the position of Secretary-General either. You have called me these [*titles*]. ‘Since it lightens the burden on their shoulders and they find it appropriate for themselves, let us do it this way’, I said.” (Öcalan 1994: 440)<sup>340</sup>

In other cases, however, the very same concept connotes a rather impersonal and abstract notion. Such usage of the term is based on the theoretical definition and explanation of Öcalan’s lectures on the subject, later to be titled as *Önderlik Gerçeği ve PKK Deneyimi* (The Leadership Reality and PKK Experience), in which the *önder* (leader) and *öncü* (pioneer) are frequently used interchangeably. These concepts, in the simplest sense, refer to being an ideal PKK revolutionary who must be free from any characteristic of scrunched and belittled Kurdish personality and help Kurdish people transform such undesired characteristics they possess into their real potential (Öcalan 1992: 29-30). In this case, the role of *Önderlik* is attributed to the PKK to be carried out in the political, social, economic, and cultural revolutionary fields in order to spearhead Kurdish people.<sup>341</sup> The correct leadership that *must* be instilled into every cadre is reflected as the most fundamental task:

“Let us not live with that old ‘Kurdish mentality’ or the mentality of the Turkish left. As much we condemn Kemalism, aghadom, and tribalism, we also condemn their indirect reflections. The PKK shall make this point clear and assertive: PKK cadres glide smoothly like butter, and they are organizers like a spider. They create the new through a high organizational level; they remold and reshape the people participating in this work, almost like a dough. Also, they make everyone carry out their duty and role properly. In this way, they accomplish the desired level of leadership. Here are the PKK cadres, people who achieve all of these.” (Öcalan 1992: 243)

---

<sup>339</sup> Some authors argue that this absolute authority manifested itself through a tendency of dictatorial authority and dogmatism, a process which began with the criticism, abandonment and assassination of high-ranking European committee member Çetin Güngör (alias *Semir*) in the mid-1980s and reached its peak in the Party’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress celebrated under the total control of Öcalan (Marcus 2007: 91-93, 109). Those who left the PKK due to disagreements on the matter of Öcalan’s modification of the organization’s paradigm (K-I/10, K-II/11 and K-II/12) make a similar interpretation with this respect.

<sup>340</sup> In Section 7 of the ARGK Regulation, titled “Approach to Values”, it is also stated that “The person who created the values of our Party is himself the utmost value. For this reason, the representative who is on the highest peak of the compound of all values is the *Önderlik* of the Party” (1995c: 153).

<sup>341</sup> Lectures on the ‘*Önderlik* reality’ in Kurdistan and within the PKK consist of repetitive speeches of Öcalan in 1987 - 1988 regarding the definition of leadership and the challenges ahead (see 1992: 37 – 247). They are most probably designed in order to make the recruits comprehend the idealized characteristics of the ‘PKK leadership’. Notwithstanding, as the author of these lectures, Öcalan, at times, also personalizes the concept of *Önderlik* in himself as the Secretary-General (*ibid.* 214-215). The PKK is considered a ‘leadership-based movement’ (*önderliksel hareket*) which aims to achieve a ‘popular leadership’ (*halk önderliği*); however, this does not necessarily mean that being a PKK militant makes the individual a ‘leader’ but rather only a candidate to be a leader. Although it sounds like a definition of impersonal ‘leadership’ attributing the quality of being a leader to a movement, the PKK, as being the ideologue of the movement, most of the time this impersonal leadership overlaps with the personal leadership of Öcalan, who qualifies himself as the creator of the PKK (1992: 81).

It would not be wrong to affirm that the PKK is a pioneering movement that takes on playing a leadership role for the genuine liberation of Kurdish people in a sense far broader than the national liberation struggle. The place that Öcalan occupies is paramount for the guerilla; some 70% of the recruits attributes the PKK's 'success' directly to their leader and his philosophy (A.K. Özcan 2006: 190, 223), which reproduce the abstract notion of *Önderlik*, as stressed by *K-II/07*:

"When Önder Apo was captured, many sectors said that the PKK would dissolve; they were hoping so. However, the PKK is a popular movement, a leadership-oriented [*önderliksel*] movement; that's to say, it has a permanently functioning mechanism. It doesn't depend on individuals; this movement moves forward even without individuals, including myself or anyone else. *Önderlik* said, 'I'd be more functional dead than alive' [...] In the end, he's an individual, a human being; he may have an accident, he may get ill or die due to natural causes. For this reason, it's not that determining within the PKK. What is decisive within the PKK is the movement itself, a movement-based approach [*hareketsel yaklaşım*]." (K-II/07)

From an intergenerational perspective, the evolution of Abdullah Öcalan from being the Secretary-General of the PKK to becoming the *Önderlik* of the Kurdish people is also noted in some cases. *K-II/03*, who spent 12 years in several prisons in and out of Kurdistan along with other PKK cadres, narrates a highly significant anecdote about the interactions with their fellow inmates from the first generation, which exemplifies the evolution of the figure of *Önderlik*:

"The 90s-generation, we call him *Önderlik, Başkan*, we even don't use his name. When we went to Ceyhan prison, the majority of those who were detained in 1980 was there. They in that period called themselves '*Arkadaş*' [*comrade*]; Heval *Serok*, Abdullah Arkadaş... [*Comrade Abdullah*]. When we were having debates in an official environment, like training methods or a political meeting, they would say, 'Comrade Abdullah said that...', we the 90s-generation were like cats on hot bricks! We had tremendous discrepancies among us. [...] On that matter, we criticized an elder each time, they slogged away, but eventually, they too had to accept it! A year after, after 1996, elder comrades stopped saying, 'Comrade Abdullah' or 'Heval Abdullah.' They had to follow our line; otherwise, we were continually criticizing them in official meetings, pronouncing their name like 'That style of this comrade isn't correct; he doesn't consider *Önderlik* an entity, he considers *Önderlik* an individual; *Önderlik* is an entity and cannot be given a personal name!', and then they agreed with us. They resisted at first; they didn't accept it. They'd stayed alongside *Önderlik*, *Önderlik* called them 'comrade', they too called *Önderlik* 'comrade'." (K-II/03)

By the end of the 1990s, a cornerstone incident took place with Öcalan's detention in Kenya. It was the beginning of a new period for the history of Turkey, Kurdistan, as well as the PKK. Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit announced 'the capture of the head of terrorists' as historical damage to the PKK, which would supposedly be the end for the organization. While the prime minister was right in the first part of his affirmation, he was not in the latter. When asked about how the moment of the capture of Öcalan with his blindfolded and handcuffed images was received, it was defined as 'a breaking point' (K-II/08), 'the most impacting incident in an emotional and psychological sense' (K-II/05), 'a state of devastation' (K-II/03), 'a state of shock' (K-II/01, 02). *K-II/04* depicts the atmosphere that the cadres lived through in prison at that moment:

"It was weary of humanity, rebelling against humanity. Rebelling against life and injustice was dragging people to take action. A state which could be qualified as nihilism, losing the sense of life, was emerging among some while some people embittered, going aside; they were neither eating nor speaking, such a situation. [...] We were

making a military ceremony. Believe me; I'd made ceremonies hundreds or thousands of times like that; for fallen comrades, *Newroz*, and the 27<sup>th</sup> of November, among others. They were stomping their feet so hard that day that I thought that prison would collapse. I spoke for two or three minutes, and then I heard slogans around me; some cried; I couldn't stop myself, and I cried too. I only turned my face to conceal it, so they wouldn't see it. It was also rainy; I turned my face and went inside. As I heard a few people crying loudly in the back, I returned, and everyone was in the same mood. There was a tremendous flood of emotions. [...] All young people who were released from prison in that period went to the mountain without exception and joined *fedayee* units called 'special forces'. Without exception, we know them, and, in fact, most of them lost their lives." (K-II/04)

Self-sacrificing *fedayee* actions launched as a performance of political protest within the PKK starting the post-1980 period 'zindan resistance' converted into a well-respected form of politico-military struggle in the 1990s. The construction of the notion of *Önderlik* in progress seems to have reproduced simultaneously along with the exaltation of the concept of '*fedailik*' (self-sacrifice) as a form of proving one's utmost level of commitment, mental concentration (*yoğunlaşma*), and loyalty to the cause. As *Önderlik* was considered the leader of this cause and the creator of the 'new Kurd', this proof of commitment and loyalty would be dedicated to him (Bozarslan 2003: 114). One of the best examples of this approach is observed in the action of Zeynep Kınacı (alias *Zilan*), who carried out a suicide attack on Turkish soldiers, killing more than ten on 29 June 1996. A letter addressed to the party president illustrates the level of loyalty and the upper limits of sacrifice for the PKK *Önderlik* in this period:

"My President, ...If we even sacrifice our life to you, it is not adequate in comparison to your unlimited labour and efforts. I wish we had things further than our life that we could sacrifice. *You re-create a people through your own life. We are merely your work. You are the assurance of the whole people of Kurdistan and the future of humanity. Your life gives us honour, love, courage, confidence, trust and belief. The whole people of Kurdistan and the millions of humans are loyal to you in peril of their life.* The attractiveness of your life also profoundly influences our life. In the most difficult circumstances, we think about your love for us and obtain spiritual strength. You are the one who is most loyal to the martyrs. On this basis, we will absolutely not hesitate over the triumph of our demands." (quoted from A.K. Özcan 2006: 175-176) (*emphasis added*)<sup>342</sup>

The emotional impact of Öcalan's capture, defined and objectified as an 'international plot against *Önderlik*' in the official discourse of the PKK, was so significant and devastating that actions such as self-immolations as a form of protest emerged both in the capitals of Europe as well as prisons all over Turkey (Grojean 2012: 163-164). *K-II/03* exemplifies one of the potential cases of widespread self-immolation protests carried out within prisons in this period:

"I wrote my letter in preparation to burn myself. 11:00 pm was the time we went to bed; before 11:00, if you're not sick or something, you read until 11:00. It's a scheduled life; there are formal sessions, and except formal sessions, there are individual reading and writing hours. Between 11:00 pm and 01:00 am, there was a 2-hour period; comrades go to sleep, the guard comes to take you to close access between the kitchen and ward upstairs. It was my turn during those two hours; I'd stay downstairs; I'd planned that when everyone would go to sleep, I'd lock them in and burn myself. I'd already written my letter and left it inside my locker. I guess a comrade suspected of my behavior, and he talked to the comrades in charge. That day they didn't let me stay downstairs. The day after, they searched inside my locker and saw my letter. They didn't allow me; I was stopped, in short." (K-II/03)

---

<sup>342</sup> For the entire letter by Zeynep Kınacı as well as other PKK militants who took up *fedayee* actions during the 1990s and 2000s, see Demir, Melike G. (2015) *1980'lerden 2000'lere Siyasal Kürt Kadınının İnşası*, İstanbul: Belge, pp. 209-228.

As affirmed in *Chapter 9*, a considerable part of third-generation cadres was directly influenced by the capture and imprisonment of Öcalan, which was one of the main motivations in opening the door to mass 'Önderlik participations' (K-III/09) in the early 2000s. The strong figure of *Önderlik* represented by Öcalan became a mechanism of militancy involvement in the armed struggle. *K-III/07*, whose first childhood period political activities were based on pro-PKK slogans related to the legendary figure of *Serok Apo*, describes his impression in both the public and private life in his adolescence upon the capture of 'Serok Apo':

"[How did you feel at that moment when you heard the news?] At that moment, I was a secondary school student when I heard the news. I was on my way to school, and our school was near the central bazaar. While walking towards the school, I saw people gathering in the coffeehouse, in front of the television; I tried to watch too, and I saw *Önder Apo* captured. They were exhibiting him on television, in front of a Turkish flag. I had a strange feeling. I couldn't make sense of it. I looked at people; I felt that people were sad. I saw that. It impacted me, and I didn't go to school after that. I went back home directly, telling myself, 'there must be something serious'. When I got home and saw my family, my dad and mom were crying. It was then I felt that it caused a strong impact inside of me. Something was emerging inside of me. Sure, because in our childhood when policemen came over, we were making a victory sing and shouting slogans like '*Biji Serok Apo!*' You think about it, 'Serok Apo is captured now', and a different feeling inside of you arises. You can feel that a part of you disappears." (K-III/07)

The capture and imprisonment of Öcalan, however, did not decrease the charismatic authority he possessed. Following the PKK's official version, all cadres who were loyal to the *Önderlik* from any generation strongly believed that it was the result of an 'international plot' orchestrated by the superpowers of the world (an alliance of all Western countries) as well as influential regional actors (Israel as well as Arabs and Persians as historical enemies of Kurds).<sup>343</sup> In this sense, the concept of *Önderlik* became a synonym for the creator of philosophy that oversteps the limits of Kurdistan and the Middle East, acquiring a universal character:

"The greatest ideology that I consider closest to me as a Kurd, as a woman and as one of the children of this people is the ideology of *Önderlik*. [And how do you define the ideology of *Önderlik*?] The ideology of *Önderlik* is humanity, the resurrection of humanity that has been killed and buried. It's the re-resistance of humanity; humanity begins to resist again. That's how I define it. It can also be defined differently. Indeed, ideologically, every human being must read and know *Önderlik* and the ideology of *Önderlik* – not only as an individual... Maybe at the moment, I'm speaking as a militant of *Önderlik*, and I am speaking too little, I'm defining it too insufficiently, but I'd like everyone to read *Önderlik* and to get to know his ideology and his philosophy." (K-III/03)

Under these circumstances, no alternative leader, neither in the PKK nor in Kurdistan, is considered possible. Apart from the liberation of Kurdistan, within the framework designed by Öcalan, the freedom of *Önderlik* becomes an objective of the utmost value for all PKK cadres. This objective constitutes one of the most important motivations, not only for the involvement of recruits but also

---

<sup>343</sup> It is observed that for any cadre from any generation, the 'Strategical Leadership' (*Stratejik Önderlik*) as the main and indisputable ideologue and strategist for the popular struggle is exempted from any sort of practical errors, mistakes or wrongdoings. Instead, these tend to be attributed to the 'Tactical Leadership' (*Taktik Önderlik*), which corresponds to those who implement (and, mostly, those who are incapable or unable to implement) perspectives guided by the Strategical Leadership on the ground, in accordance with Öcalan's own distinction (1992: 267-275; 1994: 439-450; also see PKK [1995c] *ARGK Yönetmeliği*, (n.p.): Weşanên Serxwebûn, pp. 153-155; PKK [1996] *ARGK Savaş ve Ordu Kılavuzu*, (n.p.): Weşanên Serxwebûn, pp. 67-76).

for the continuity of those who have been in the guerrilla for many years, along with the memory of *martyrs* and goals for which they have sacrificed their own life, just as the Önderlik does.

### **13.3. The Party of Martyrs: Immortality through ‘bedel’ and ‘borç’**

Although the notion of martyrdom is generally associated with religious causes, a broader and secular definition of the concept also focuses on great suffering or the death of a person for faith, belief, or cause (Olivola & Shafir 2013: 92). This approach emphasizes the functional role of martyrs in another sacred but non-religious cause, e.g., the nation (Rosoux 2004: 84), in which the symbolic and emotional values of martyrdom acquire a connotation as strong as martyrdom for an abstract divine creator. The social and intragroup functionality of the myths constructed upon the martyrdom of those who have sacrificed and lost their lives for a cause convert them into a mechanism to increase the number of recruits and consolidate the social devotion to the cause (Naveh 1992: 146).

The role of the martyr within the PKK goes back to the initial phases of the movement during which the first casualties (honored as ‘martyrs’ later on) took place. The founding cadre *martyrs* were frequently constructed as militant figures with extraordinary skills and dedication during the lectures of Öcalan in the Mahsum Korkmaz Academy, whose very name was taken by the PKK’s legendary guerrilla commander, *Agit* the *martyr*. Such cadres as Kemal, Haki, Mazlum, Hayri, and Agit were depicted as those who best understood the life that Öcalan designed for Kurdish people to pursue and, therefore in his own words, they were “the militants of a very beautiful life and struggle” (2009[1996]: 332). *K-I/01* explains how the conceptualization of martyrdom began in early phases of the struggle after the death of Haki Karer and socially and politically constructed under cohort effects of the time:

“...when it comes to the organization’s politicization, it was the killing of Haki Karer. The organization developed discourse on his martyrdom. [...] Additionally, as you know, there was this fact of martyrdom then: Becoming martyr was being exalted; it was like becoming a martyr for the sake of this cause meant to bring you to a higher position; it was something valuable... That, at the same time, became a tie reinforcing [*the struggle*] with your inner world. [*Was it from a revolutionary perspective or a religious one?*] No, it was constructed from a revolutionary perspective, from the perspective of militancy, a status emerging out of revolutionary decisiveness. There were historical examples; well, any revolutionary movement in the world had martyrs; they had ceremonies.” (K-I/01)

This early concept of martyrdom in the PKK later experienced certain transformations as the struggle extended and became costlier in terms of human losses. Martyrdom theorized by Öcalan did not merely praise the efforts and dedication of the *martyr* but also characterized them as the most significant reason and motivation of the struggle, making them the main actors of the Kurdish movement. In this conceptualization, the martyr became the ‘commander-in-chief, the real leader and real PKK militant’ (K-I/08, 09) and the PKK became ‘the party of martyrs’ (K-I/05, 06), as a reflection of the bridge that Öcalan sought to establish between the martyr and the living, between death and life:



“We must keep alive the strength, passion, resistance, and sorrow of the martyr in our person. We must become the bridge between martyr and life. We must see the difference between the life of the martyr and the death of the living. In a social reality in which those who live a dishonest life are many, or those who stay with the bits and pieces of rustic life are almost dominant, we should not permit these great torches of life to be put out. I have tried to be competent on my behalf not to allow this torch to be put out. I have been attentive to evaluate well the connection that they [*martyrs*] establish with life. I have tried to be a bridge by keeping the life of the living close to martyrdom, and this way, making them live the martyr, and also by pulling the living from the martyr. Because it is impossible to respond in any other way. While knowing the great meaning in the life of the martyr, being aware that it requires a great mastery, great patience, and endurance in strength to transform it into a power of life, and feeling this responsibility, I have thoroughly embraced this role of being a bridge. We have tried not to give much passage to the carelessness of those who are living carelessly and fake life. On the other hand, we have theorized the martyr, so to say, we have transformed them into the theory of war. Thus, we have given enough power to make them influential and dominant. As much as we have blocked the fake life, once again, we have tried to revitalize life, unify and be a remedy through the theory of martyrdom. There have been advances; the martyr has given their life, and life has become suitable for the martyr.” (Öcalan 1996: 281-282)

Öcalan’s effort and dedication to comply with this task bring the martyr to the forefront in the struggle; their aspirations and objectives are inherited by those who continue the struggle; they become part of the ongoing struggle alongside their comrades through many generations. As one of the most famous slogans of the PKK, *şehîd namirin* (martyrs do not die) indicates, the martyr has a spiritual power that converts them into prominent figures of the ongoing struggle. The attribution of this role to the martyr makes a ‘leader’ (Bozarslan 2003: 111)<sup>344</sup>, who leads the way for the people of Kurdistan:

“In our movement, the notion of martyrdom has an exceptional place; it occupies an exceptional place that determines all of our spirituality. However, besides that, they also have ascribed the qualification of leadership in our struggle: walking through the way they indicate, walking through the way they fell martyr for. That’s to say, they both constitute a sense of great spirituality, but, at the same time, they occupy a leading position when it comes to carrying out the struggle. This lead constantly imprisons us to the struggle, but we bring ourselves into existence, socialize ourselves over their spirituality.” (K-I/04)

“There are two essential things for us: the first are our martyrs, and the other is Önder Apo. Even today, our sustenance in the organization is [*due to*] our martyrs and Önder Apo; our people in resistance follow them. These three elements are the fundamental source of motivation for our struggle.” (K-II/10)

The construction of substantial symbolic value through the meaning attributed to the martyr, a subject considered to have paid the utmost ‘value cost’, morally obligates those who are potentially ready to pay the same cost for the value expectations aspired through the armed struggle. In this sense, the continuity of the struggle along with martyrs brings about two fundamental concepts frequently repeated among PKK cadres and *yurtsever* circles: Each martyr represents a *bedel* (moral price)<sup>345</sup>,

---

<sup>344</sup> It may sound contradictory that Öcalan, who has been the indisputable leader of the PKK for decades, defines the position of martyrs within the movement as ‘the real owners of the struggle’ who share the leadership with him. This may be explained through two arguments: First of all, the concept of *Önderlik* within the political discourse of the PKK goes beyond the limits of the figure of Öcalan and is an institutionalized entity, a compulsory responsibility and pioneering task for each PKK cadre. Secondly, while martyrs are described as ‘immortal’ in a spiritual sense, and they occupy a supreme position within the reality constructed by the PKK, they do not pose risks in the form of challenging the intra-party hierarchy and, therefore, the place that the party leadership (Öcalan) occupies. For this reason, they are not considered a threat capable of causing damage or instability to the movement. This arguably makes martyrs the best partners to share the PKK leadership with.

<sup>345</sup> The concept of *bedel*, which refers to a non-material price paid for the cause, is frequently used to indicate sacrifices made by individuals or social groups (e.g. a family) and considered of great value. Although the qualitative data collection process in Kurdistan did not specifically focus on this question, participatory observations in the field showed that in those local institutions where the Kurdish *yurtsever* ideology was dominant, those families who had paid the *bedel* through the

that's to say the utmost 'value cost' (death) a guerrilla is potentially ready to pay, as well as *borç* (moral debt) as they have not been able to achieve the utmost 'value expectation', which is the liberation of Kurdistan. Each fellow *comrade* that the martyr leaves behind, therefore, feels obliged to pay this debt by carrying on fighting until they accomplish the task for which the martyr has given his life or until they too fall martyr for the very same goal:

"Önder Apo defines the PKK as the party of martyrs. He defines the Kurdistan struggle as a struggle of martyrs. We can talk about martyrs for days. There are great values; torches appear in Kurdistan's society through the personality of each martyr. [...] We don't express the martyrdom to bless the death, but to make sense of life. We try to comprehend why they've sacrificed their lives, for what [*cause*] they have bravely sacrificed their lives, not for blessing the death. Önder Apo says, 'each death contains its own defect, own debt within itself.' In his martyrdom, Hayri Durmuş mentions 'Write, «Hayri owes to the people of Kurdistan» on my grave.' He owes because we haven't liberated Kurdistan's society. It means each death is a debt." (K-I/06)

"It doesn't matter where and how they fall martyr, as we constantly say, 'we owe them', that is an expression made by our leading cadres, 'write on my gravestone indebted'. We're all indebted. We're all the passengers of this route. But we understand something very well; each martyrdom opens the way for progress. It's absolutely like that because they made progress in loyalty, they're in no way ordinary; this is an ideological and philosophical popular struggle, something devoted to this. Nobody falls martyr in a blood feud. It's about a country, a people, so the moral price it costs is expensive; however, the heritage it leaves behind is equally strong." (K-II/07)

With each generation, the value of martyrs as objectified by the PKK appears to further consolidate itself due to the narrative constructed on new heroic figures who have paid the price, alongside the previous generation martyrs. The impact of the narration produced and socially reproduced on prominent *martyrs* such as Agit, Haki, Mazlum, Hayri, and other previous generation members plays an influential role in attracting recruits and the continuity of affiliated individuals:

"The existence of the PKK is the reality of martyrs. From Haki and his comrades to Mazlum, Beritan, Zilan, Viyan, Mehmet Tunç, and their comrades, the PKK is a party of martyrs. All peoples have sacred values, and these are our sacred values, our essential must. Because these people paid the price, they gave their life. It's converted into a philosophy, a stance, a line, and continued this way. Comrade Haki is the PKK; the PKK began with *heval* Haki, Önderlik has dedicated the PKK to him, and thanks to him, the PKK has grown. Mazlum and his comrades' efforts in extending the PKK throughout the world, getting the resistance adopted by the people, rising against cruelty, not surrendering, expanding the voice of 15 August to the world, then comrade martyr Beritan... I mean, this is how I can tell you about martyrdoms; they're the PKK itself." (K-II/05)

The unpaid debt of martyrs also forces those who survive to continue. Until the debt is paid, which means that Kurdistan's liberation is accomplished, the PKK militant has two well-defined choices: continue fighting to pay the debt for which they show the utmost commitment or become a *martyr*, passing their debt down to others who will replace them. While the first option implies total obedience to the party doctrine (*Önderlik*, i.e.), the latter implies a compromise to the debt inherited by fallen comrades. Any other options, such as escaping, giving oneself over to the police, or even committing suicide, are considered *ihanet* (betrayal), strongly abhorred in the PKK. *K-II/11*, who had long thought

---

martyrdom of a family member were deemed more deserving for certain positions; merits such as educational level, professional qualifications, competences and efficiency, at times, could be underestimated in comparison with the moral value attributed to *bedel* that ascribed a *borç* to those who served in any component of Kurdish Liberation Movement.

to abandon the PKK and finally did so in 2004, explains this tiny line between resistance and betrayal, and the functional role that martyrdom plays in the continuity of militancy:

“...beyond the idealized PKK reality, what later makes you stay are some emotional things; it’s your comrades dying by your side, your loyalty to them. And these fallen comrades guide you. [*It is about*] a sentiment inside of you based on an approach to choose –no matter what- the latter at any cost between two lines defined as betrayal and resistance. It becomes the fundamental factor in explaining your stay. During that tough period, I preferred to kill myself; I preferred the option of committing suicide; however, leaving the PKK never went through my mind.[...] The structure of the PKK is indeed very devoted in that sense; you establish a kind of thing [*connection*] with them [*martyrs*], you establish unity [*with them*]; they become the fundamental factor determining your identity, and you feel that eventually, you’ll experience an identity crisis when you break away from them.” (K-II/11)

Another high-ranking PKK commander, *K-I/10*, who left the organization during the same period of internal crisis, confirms a similar position, describing measures taken by those cadres who seek to break away from the organization without being labeled an ‘*ihaneçi*’ (betrayer). The suicidal acts, narrated as heroic *fedayee* actions and considered the utmost level of devotion and commitment to the cause and *Önderlik* in the group truth and PKK historiography, under these circumstances arise as an ‘appropriate option’ to end one’s militancy in an honorable manner:

“As soon as you run into a contradiction with the organization, as you get out of that system, your physical staying inside changes nothing; it may take you to a different form of death or even to betrayal by giving yourself over to the enemy. Those individuals who couldn’t feel it beneath themselves to do such a thing self-destructed themselves by suicidal actions or killing themselves, putting a gun against their head. [...] [*The organization*] says, ‘we can transform them, or they can change their mind through the process. And even if they don’t change, they conduct suicidal actions against the enemy, against the state, which is also beneficial for us!’ The organization knows; these people don’t shoot themselves; this would be a betrayal. In the PKK, shooting yourself by putting a gun against your head is considered a betrayal, another form of betrayal. It’s considered an inner betrayal towards the organization. You see, what do they do then? They can’t feel it beneath themselves to do such a thing either, then on the first occasion they come across the enemy, they fall into the arms of death.” (K-I/10)

The value attributed to martyrs among the third generation follows a similar pattern based on the same notions as *Önderlik*, *bedel*, and *borç*. Those who fall martyr during an armed confrontation or in a self-sacrificing *fedayee* action (whatever the real reasons lying behind such actions are) keep the mechanism of intra-group loyalty alive, further strengthening the motivation to continue to struggle each time a militant falls martyr:

“Martyrs are our reason for living. Today, the reality that fusions all of us in the PKK, the people, guerrilla, the *yurtsever*, or the sympathetic in the same pot are our martyrs. Martyrs are a never-forgotten sensation, a phenomenon. The first reference which brings all of us together is *Önderlik*, and the second is martyrs. The notion of martyrdom is sacred among us because they’re very young people who sacrificed themselves for their people. For this reason, the rank of martyrdom is sacred, significant among us.” (K-III/12)

“As I’ve said, when I first joined [*the guerrilla*], I had no hesitation at all. It wasn’t that much emotional participation either; it was a movement of whose philosophy I’d got to understand. However, the more you live through martyrdoms occurring next to you, the more it increases your level of loyalty to life, the more reasons you have to give a life struggle. Each [*fallen*] comrade is an order which you must respond to. Because they lived along with us and fell martyr while battling along with us in the same emplacement, their objectives and goals are obvious. The objective and aim that each martyred comrade sets as goals are obvious. So, you say, ‘how can I give a better response to them?’, and this becomes a much stronger reason to fight on inside of you.” (K-III/02)

Finally, these objectives and goals of martyrs become compatible with the new paradigm of the PKK. While the liberation of Kurdish people still appears to be the continuing ultimate aim inherited by active cadres, this objective has been broadened, going beyond the limits of Kurdish people and Kurdistan. New generation cadres combine this broadened task with the core values of the PKK:

“...from our perspective, their sacredness is because *they sacrificed their lives for the sake of humane life*, the freedom of a society, a people. Therefore, they’re our pioneers, our indispensables, our sacred. Because the way they prefer or choose plays a pioneering role for a free life, *not only for Kurds but also for the entire humanity*. These are the prices paid in this way.” (K-III/05, *emphasis added*)

Martyrs and martyrdom, mechanisms of reproduction in the Kurdish Liberation Movement, continue to play a functional role through the following generations. The expansion of the Kurdish conflict under the conditions of civil war in Syria has also extended the sphere in which *martyrs* and *martyrdoms* are reproduced, constituting an essential symbolic element of Kurdish collective memory along with Kurdish women who arise as another representation of devotion and sacrifice since the early 1990s.

#### **13.4. Women’s liberation struggle within and outside of the PKK**

Identity formation and the struggle of Kurdish women in political and social domains have caught great attention from both local and foreign scholars in recent times.<sup>346</sup> Kurdish women who had once been ignored completely or only occupied a restricted space as ‘eastern rural women’, depicted as despicable ‘objects’ of the non-modern Turkey within the official identity discourse (Çağlayan 2013: 52), remained mostly absent in those studies on Kurdish conflict through the 1980s and 1990s. The visibility of Kurdish women as an academic subject, in this sense, follows a pattern similar to their position in the conflict.

Although women’s presence among guerrilla units in the late 1970s and early 1980s seemed rare (N.A. Özcan 1999: 160)<sup>347</sup>, it saw a rapid increase in the early 1990s and become an internationally well-known subject of interest in later periods. In the first generation of the PKK, women’s involvement, especially in Sunni Muslim conservative rural areas, was incomparably lower than that of men due to the position of women in the feudal structure (Cansız 2014, Vol.1: 314). Taking the affirmation made by later generation women cadres (K-II/05, 12) concerning the general profile of

---

<sup>346</sup> Apart from the recent scholarly works focusing specifically on this subject (Çağlayan 2007, 2013; Al-Ali & Pratt 2009; Alinia 2013, Al-Ali & Taş 2017, 2018; Nilsson 2018; Begikhani 2003, 2018; Begikhani, Gill & Hague 2010; Weiss 2010, 2012, 2014, 2018; Üstündağ 2019, Käser 2019), it is also noteworthy that Kurdish women have occupied a considerable place in western literature (Anderson 2012; Lightbourne 2016; Trencavel 2017) as well as documentaries (Briand 2007; Akyol 2016; Darg 2017).

<sup>347</sup> Even though it is difficult to obtain reliable data, some indicators provide a rough idea about the proportion of women among PKK cadres. In his *Collective Works*, one of the leading PKK figures of the period, Mazlum Doğan indicates that there were some 15-20 female militants out of an approximately total number of 450 militants in the Diyarbakır Prison № 5 in the early 1980s (1994 [1982]: 128). The same gap is also observed among the number of fallen militants in the early editions of *Serxwebûn Album of Martyrs 1976 – 1984*. Among hundreds of male militants killed in this early period, only 6 women – Fevziye Kandemir, Sakine Kirmızıtaş, Besey Anuş and Azime Demirtaş, are described as PKK militants and Türkan Derin and Aysel Göçer are referred to as *yurtsever* sympathizers (PKK [n.d.]: 175, 187, 229, 230-231, 261, 289).

women militants into account, mostly Alevi-Kurdish women with a considerable level of formal education (Demir 2015: 71), it may well be argued that the testimony of Cansız represents the first-generation of female PKK militants to a certain extent.

In early party publications, Kurdish women are tenuously mentioned as one of the actors of the national struggle from a revolutionary perspective. Such topics as the slavery of women in class society and repression and exploitation imposed by feudal-comprador structures on disadvantaged social groups like women in Kurdistan are also superficially mentioned in the founding *Manifesto* (PKK 1993[1978]: 28, 121; *Serxwebûn*, March 1983, n<sup>o</sup> 15: 8). Similarly, the call for a mass organization by those disadvantaged groups such as women, youth, peasants, and artisans, and then gathering them under the umbrella of a 'national' struggle also appears in early texts detailing the armed struggle in Kurdistan (Öcalan 1983: 245).<sup>348</sup> However, the question of women in the Kurdish *revolution* was not considered a specific topic to be further developed at that time, as Cansız narrates her experience with this respect during which she was one of few active female *Apocu* militants:

"The field where I could develop relations in a relatively easier way was [*the issue of*] women. Nevertheless, it had no separate or distinctive sides. It was part of general activities, carried out depending on those. Regarding women's studies, I did not have a proposal even at an intellectual level. Through definitions like 'women will take part in the struggle for national independence, she will be free as much as she achieves a position to be in charge of any matter, she will achieve genuine freedom', I was trying to transmit our general principles to women outside in a practical sense. Women were the most oppressed sector, the field which had the biggest chance to get revolutionized. There was faith in this, and the approach of caring about women was present from the beginning. Generally, there was also influence from women's movements to a certain point. These were morally giving us strength. However, there were still severe deficiencies at the core of the question. We had not yet analyzed the historical, social, and actual aspects of the question. Moreover, women's participation in the revolution in Kurdistan, its organizational and practical instruments were not clear yet. Neither were there concrete objectives." (Cansız 2014, Vol.1: 291-292)<sup>349</sup>

Women's participation as active subjects of the struggle is occasionally mentioned in early issues of the PKK's official publication: Those early female figures, Besey Anuş and Azime Demirtaş, who fell *martyr* in the struggle, are commemorated on 8 March (International Woman's Day) with the motto "Long-live the Revolutionary Resistance of Kurdistan's Women" (*Serxwebûn*, March 1984, N<sup>o</sup> 27: 24; also see PKK n.d.: 230). The importance of women's participation in the Kurdish National Liberation Movement and mobilization of women within the Kurdistan National Liberation Front (ERNK - *Enîya*

---

<sup>348</sup> Although the theoretical manifesto of the PKK draws a clear strategy motivating all disadvantaged groups, including women (Çağlayan 2007: 96), none of the above-cited texts mentions women and their social position as active subjects within the national liberation struggle, neither does any specific chapter exist for this question. As commander Karayılan befittingly affirms that Öcalan's opinion towards the liberation of women rather concretized in the late 1980s (2014: 254).

<sup>349</sup> Soon after this period, Cansız narrates her experience within the PKK's founding congress of 1978 in Fis village, to which she attended as one of few women militants of the time. Having been influenced by Vietnamese and Bulgarian movements, Cansız, along with her comrade Meral, had prepared a draft for a women's unit project within the PKK. However, she did not feel comfortable to publicly present the draft during the meeting as her fellow comrade Kesire Yıldırım (alias *Fatma*), Öcalan's ex-wife, hesitated whether it was too early for such a project due to the lack of women cadres in the movement at the time (2014, Vol.1: 368-369).

*Rizgarîya Netevî Kurdistan*) are covered extensively a year later under the title “Women look at the future more confidently with the National Liberation Front” (*Serxwebûn* March 1985, N°39: 21).

Several factors affected women’s participation within the PKK in this early period, ranging from the social characteristics of Kurdistan concerning women’s (lack of) presence in public and political spheres to intra-party mentality. Due to the absence of the PKK in urban areas and the limited mobilization of Kurdish women in the public sphere in the 1980s, it was unlikely for them to contact the PKK (Marcus 2007: 172). For this reason, the general profile among first-generation women militants was university students or young teachers organized in TÖB-DERs (K-I/01, 02, 09). The main concern that young women had in rural Kurdistan, in general, had little to see with politics and the national question. *K-I/09* narrates an anecdote from his village in the Serhat region with this respect:

“...at one stage, we received reactions from young girls too: In our village, there was a teacher named *K* [*name*], he was older than us, working as a teacher. We won him too; we brought him to the *Apocu* line. Girls in our village were cursing him, saying, ‘you’ve made them *Apocu*, so what about us now? Aren’t we gonna marry? We will have to marry a man from another village now!’ Teacher *K* was telling us, ‘I’m scared, I can’t pass by the fountain!’ Whenever I pass by the fountain, girls are cursing me!’ Why? [*Because*] Young boys in the village became *Apocu*, they pulled out of the love affairs, girls and so on! [*laughing*] For that reason, teacher *K* couldn’t pass by the fountain.” (K-I/09)

Women’s presence and, above all, their acceptance by their male colleagues within the PKK was not as easy in practical terms as Öcalan theoretically proposed it. The male-dominant mentality among the party cadres constituted a significant obstacle on this matter despite Öcalan’s progressively growing inclusive approach towards women, as the self-criticism by commander Karayılan explains:

“The militarization of women became a subject of strong debate among us in the past. ‘The principle of liberty and equality is right in ideological terms; we adopt it; however, whether women would provide strength or not in a practical sense’ was debated. In the beginning, there was some hesitation over the female militant composition. There was a perspective still stuck on a male-dominant system. Despite its different forms, the male-dominant perspective still had a certain influence. However, under the guidance of *Önderlik*, through work, efforts, support, struggle, and resistance, intra-party gender struggle made progress in men and women and reached a certain level. However, there are still deficiencies that must be fought against and overcome. It cannot be expected that a five-thousand-year-old mentality sustaining this male-dominant system will be overcome entirely within five or ten years. It is good to want all these to be overcome within a short period, but not realistic.” (Karayılan 2014: 545)

The impacts of male-dominant cultural codes in Kurdish society were reflected in the group’s first-generation male militants who pushed women to get involved in auxiliary positions widely considered gender-specific domestic works attributed to women in society. While some individuals define the party’s official approach towards women as ‘valuable, egalitarian, based on the same principles as today’ (K-I/02, 03), they also emphasize a certain degree of incomprehension of the ideas introduced by Öcalan among male militants. The *K-I/01* confirms that women’s process of becoming a political subject began to transform in the late 1980s until which male militants had a rather protectionist attitude towards their female comrades who occupied auxiliary positions:

“Women were present at the beginning, but not many. During our period, I do remember that we had some 20-30 women comrades<sup>350</sup> in Lebanon in 1982, that’s all. It wasn’t something like ‘let’s discuss the question of women’. Our discussions were still passive at the time, but the following tendencies were notable: Men mercified women, tried to protect them, women weren’t much in action, they stayed in the rear-guard positions; they made bread, they cooked. [...] After 1987, an organization for women in Europe, the Union of Kurdistan’s Patriotic Women [YJWK], was founded. After 1987, women-inclusive ideology gradually started to be discussed; that’s to say, in 1987, for the first time, women were able to organize themselves in Kurdistan. We used to have a thing [perspective] among us regarding women as our sisters. After 1987, women’s status overcame sisterhood; they became just another political subject. Historically, until 1987, women within the PKK saw men as if they were their elder brothers. On many occasions, they regarded us like their elder brothers.” (K-I/01)

Women’s participation in auxiliary tasks was also seen in early urban actions carried out by male militants of the *Apocular*. While most interviewees mention the presence of women comrades, it is K-I/09 who distinguishes between being a ‘professional militant’ who devoted full-time effort to the party and ‘sympathizers/advance sympathizers’ who were not professional militants but provided support and help to male militants for ideological proximity. Having taken part in most armed actions in the Kars-Kağızman area in this early period, the interviewee confirms that highly-educated women comrades mostly corresponded to this latter category of ‘advance sympathizers’ in this period:

“Sometimes we took guns and explosives when we prepared actions, and when we were in trouble, those lady comrades carried guns, explosives and so forth on them; they were making them cross police checkpoints. Once crossed, they handed them back to us, and we would take action. It was like this. [Did they directly participate in action?] Those women comrades were participating with posters; they took part in the distribution of leaflets, in discussions, and so forth. But in armed action, only S [name] took part a few times. [...] ...but we weren’t able to bring them to a professional level, that’s true. Both for having adventurer spirits, and also not being able to understand and comprehend truly [the matter] It was like ‘we’re here, it’s enough!’, it was this mentality of ‘enough’. We failed to offer them that opportunity.” (K-I/09)

Finally, in rural areas where feudal relations were dominant, the social pressure that male militants felt due to entrenched judgments concerning gender roles based on extreme inequality and oppression, women’s active participation in the guerrilla was problematic. Stressing the impacts of male-dominant characteristics of religion, which had arguably deteriorated gender inequality even further for centuries, K-I/02 explains the level of unwillingness among male guerrillas at the time to roam alongside women comrades in public in rural Kurdistan. Having been asked whether women’s militancy was found bizarre at that time, the interviewee puts particular emphasis on the militancy of women in the countryside that he defines unacceptable in the eyes of conservative peasants:

“In the city, two women go to a house, get in, and talk to other women; it wasn’t seen that odd. But being in the mountains along with women, in an armed unit, in the same shelter, in the same cave, on the same route; a woman by my side, and we’re walking through the forest, caves, houses... For goodness sake! This is where it makes the fur fly! [...] As we didn’t roam around with women, we were saying, ‘let the movement not deploy [any women] with us!’ at that time. We couldn’t put ourselves across villages as *Apocular* yet, and moreover, [if] we went around with women by our side, we wouldn’t be able to put ourselves across at all! [...] ...from 1984 or 1985 on, women were carrying out rural activities in the region. Imagine, we are two guys, and there is also a

---

<sup>350</sup> Confirming this information, K-I/02 affirms that three of those women in Lebanon were from Hilvan: One of them dropped out the organization, and two of them fell *martyr* in the Botan region in a later period of their armed militancy. Considering that the PKK had around 300 cadres in Lebanon at the time (Öcalan 1995: 188), one can roughly estimate that women’s presence was around 10% in this initial pre-guerrilla phase.

woman; 'tock tock tock!', we knock on the door at night, 'Salaam alaikum!' He looks at us, [there is] a woman! Then we eat, have dinner, and at midnight we leave the house with a woman by our side. The first thing that comes to the villager's mind is, 'they go and have sex with her!' Sure, we say, 'there isn't such a thing, we have no intimacy' so far and so forth but come and explain this in Kurdistan! He says, 'Tell me another one! If I were you, I'd do that!' That's what passes through his mind like a monologue. Well, sure, we had some difficulties with this respect." (K-I/02)

Over time, the question of women within the PKK as well as in Kurdistan was theorized further; at the beginning of the 1990s, Öcalan began to pay specific attention to women's place in the liberation struggle, and women showed a growing interest in the idea of the liberation of Kurdistan, in which they also saw their liberation as women. Mass participation of women in the early 1990s brought a different profile in terms of a geographic area and educational level, as affirmed by K-II/05, who established a relation between the general profile of female cadres socially influencing the PKK during this period:

"In the 1990s, there was a women's revolution in Kurdistan; thousands of people joined [the guerrilla]. After that, Önderlik made an even deeper analysis of this. There were [initiatives] before too. In 1987, YJWK [Union of Kurdistan's Patriotic Women] had held a congress in Europe. Maybe my comrades have already told you about it. Until that moment, the PKK hadn't been socialized that much. Who were those female comrades who had joined before? Alevi sectors from Dersim, educated ones, partly from Amed. That's to say, those who had awareness. Half of those female comrades who joined had been teachers before or [part of the] educated sector. The PKK was launched there and then settled in Kurdistan naturally, a march from Ankara to Kurdistan; Önderlik also recognized this as a march. From the 1990s onwards, the PKK socialized through *serhildans*, and as the women were the head of the society, of course, women participated the most. I remember, in Mardin, in Botan, they were flowing as if it were a river; they participated in their hundreds. Along with us, that much participation itself brought a need for analysis made by Önderlik." (K-II/05)

Although the impact of this progress was reflected among guerrilla cadres, it occurred to a far less and slower extent in Kurdish society, which made it one of the most significant factors for Kurdish women to join the guerrilla. In this sense, the value expectations for Kurdish women who found themselves in an intersectional position in terms of ethnic and sexual identities were more potent in comparison with Kurdish men, whereas the potential value costs of armed militancy remained unchanged:

"[How did you feel when you joined the organization] I felt free. I mean, as a woman, better to say as a teenage girl who was just entering the adolescence period. The society in which you were born was obvious; we all know that feudal criteria are dominant in Kurdish society. Feudal influences are certainly present even in the smallest sector, those who say, 'I live a bourgeoisie life!' Especially when girls are in question, you have to pursue a life under these feudal influences. This is one aspect, and as I've already said, on the other hand, there's an enemy reality. You feel that you've got rid of both repressions at the same time. Now you're aware of this: Other people won't be able to decide on your behalf as an individual. It's not other people who will rule on your willpower. From now on, your willpower will be in your own hands; the right to make a decision and the right to choose belongs only to you. Coming out of such a reality, inevitably, the first thing that the involvement in such an environment makes you feel is a tremendous sense of freedom." (K-II/06)

Despite the mass participation of women in guerrilla lines and the doctrinal encouragement by Öcalan himself, men within the PKK had great difficulties accepting to fight against the enemy side by side with their fellow female comrades. In their judgment, this was due to what they tended to define as



‘dominant feudal values’ among Kurds against which women had to continue fighting. Reportedly, some of the highest-ranking provincial commanders were the protagonist of this exclusionist attitude:

“In fact, in that period, women were subjected to enormous insults. For example, Şemdin Sakık [*Parmaksız Zeki* or *Şemo*]. Especially in this [*Amed*] region, there were enormous bases for the militarization of women; Şemdin Sakık chucked it all out. He was sending back all women by saying, ‘what the hell are you doing here!’ Some people came a second, a third time, and he sent back; it was a rebellion against women’s movement, women’s structure, and the ideas of *Önderlik*, but at that time, we weren’t able to ascribe such a meaning to it, because we were unable to interpret it the way we do today. Most comrades like me and I knew that it was wrong, but few people were able to politicize and discuss this against *Şemo*. Those who did, *Şemo* labeled them as spies or sent them to combat of no return. Women had enormous difficulties in this matter. What *Şemo* did was quite vulgar and obvious; however, women had this problem in almost all fields, like ‘women can’t do, women can’t manage this or that.’ But women showed an enormous resistance, like ‘I can do it!’ I remember quite well: We had a woman comrade who was having difficulties carrying her weapon. Other comrades were saying, ‘*heval*, let’s help you’, but she tenaciously refused to give her weapon; she carried it out of breath all the way. We witnessed hundreds of examples like this; a tremendous resistance was seen on their part.” (K-II/03)

Before this period, the position of women appeared as the ‘object’ of construction instead of subjects who themselves constructed the PKK’s political discourse on gender. The massive participation of women as a result of the functionality of the political discourse in the early 1990s inevitably had its impact on the construction of gender in this political discourse and, by time, transformed this passive position towards more active subjects (Çağlayan 2007: 100-101). This new role was best observed in the continuous practical struggle of women within the PKK, not only against their male comrades but also among the female ones who had difficulty in getting rid of the traces of male dominance. K-II/01 and K-II/05, two individuals from completely different profiles, exemplify those women guerrillas who joined the PKK at an early age and had to carry out ‘multiple struggles’ –against the state as a Kurd and against the elements of dominant patriarchal power relations in Turkey/Kurdistan, as well as their fellow male and female comrades within the PKK as women:

“Some [*men*] joined from the countryside, or they’ve got a stricter family tradition. Naturally, they don’t want women in the struggle, and you begin to clash with this. Or sometimes feudal values may come to the forefront more among female comrades, in a way like ‘let’s not argue with men much, let’s tolerate them, let’s do anything they order’, and naturally you clash with this. [...] Although the PKK leadership or the majority of the PKK said, ‘this struggle must be a women’s struggle, women must form an army’, there was an intra-party resistance against this, in a way like ‘how come women fight alone? How can they climb the hill? I can carry a sack of flour, but women can’t! I can have a two-day walk without a break, but women can’t!’ It was because they didn’t want a women’s army. They were saying, ‘we trust *Önderlik*, but in our opinion, *Önderlik* is wrong on this matter!’ [*laughing*] [*As a woman, when you joined the movement, did you work harder to be accepted?*] Sure! It comes about naturally. Because there’s a counter-belief that women cannot do [*things*], and by saying ‘I can do this’, you sometimes get involved in things by forcing yourself. [...] when male comrades once said, ‘I can carry a sack of flour alone, can you?’, I, too, humped a sack of flour on my back! Then I stayed on the floor for the whole week! [*laughing*]” (K-II/01)

“When they were sending [*us to war*], Ferhat [*Osman Öcalan*] held a meeting and said, ‘if these women cause any trouble – I never forget it-, take their *rakt* [cartridge bag] and their rifle, tie their hands and arms, and put them under a rock!’ Can you believe it? That’s what he exactly said! We went to war with such a mind, and we made efforts with all our strength to prove ourselves. I do remember that. Then I was way thinner, around 15-16 years old. The entire team was more or less like that. We took seven cartridge clips and four grenades; we

belted a 50-meter *şutik*<sup>351</sup>, can you believe it? We had no space left in our cartridge belt; we had to fasten some more *şutik* to carry another one. Our waist was like this, very thin. One with a bag, another one's *biksi* [*machine gun*]. They [*men*] loaded our *biksi* with some 1500 bullets [...] Kurdistan's geography is very tough; from Xakurke to Sehidan, from there to Şemzinan, we walked carrying that ammunition, without any fear, without causing any trouble, only because 'let these men not say a word to us!' It was about our pride; we didn't have such a conscious mind otherwise." (K-II/05)

The idea of becoming a guerrilla and going to the mountain to take part in the liberation struggle, however, was considered far more inappropriate in Kurdish society than among guerrilla lines within the PKK. While women's participation in guerrilla lines was theoretically welcomed; however, in a society in which women hardly appeared alone in the public sphere (K-II/01, 02, 03, 04, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 12), such a decision was considered 'dishonorable' in the moral sense. Even in those areas where the question of gender was based on relatively more equalitarian patterns, priority given to the question of *namus* (honor)<sup>352</sup> was overwhelming:

"My father was telling me, 'if you wake up for the dawn prayer, this is worth the whole world for me!' I mean, religion was quite influential. He was telling me, 'daughter, you must be clean and moral. Your name shouldn't get a bad reputation!' For instance, when I joined [*the guerrilla*], I heard some negative comments from the comrades who joined from the same place. I was a recognized house-daughter; I was hardworking, my father called me 'the head of household'. After I'd joined, some people went to visit my house as if I'd died." (K-II/10)

This patriarchal protectionism towards women in Kurdistan gradually began to transform from the early 1990s on thanks to the quantitative increase of narratives related to characterizations, heroic acts, and attitudes of female militants. As underlined by scholars who study this process, however, sacrificial acts and martyrdom of women, which convert them in 'Goddess', do not correspond to the representation of Kurdish women in everyday life (Çağlayan 2007: 112-113; Demir 2015: 74-75): Zekiye's self-immolation on the Diyarbakır city walls (K-II/02), Berivan's similar practice on Newroz day (K-II/01, 05), and Beritan throwing herself off a cliff to avoid being captured by KDP *Peshmerga* (K-II/10) are all narrated as heroic acts of resistance performed by women within the PKK, which are reproduced continuously through social and cultural mechanisms.<sup>353</sup> These narratives have served to encourage Kurdish women and legitimize their participation in guerrilla lines.

---

<sup>351</sup> The *Şutik* is a traditional belt-like cloth fastened around the waist, which is normally around 10-meter long. The interviewee emphasizes the necessity of wearing an extremely long *şutik* to carry more ammunition and weapons.

<sup>352</sup> The concept of *namus* is related to the sexual integrity in a family whose primary protection is assigned to men. In sexual terms, women are obliged to act following traditional customs, and moral values or, on the contrary, men within the family are in charge of protecting *namus* by punishing –most commonly by killing– the woman in question (Sev'er & Yurdakul 2001: 964-965). All other related concepts which generally include *namus* in noun phrases, such as *namus davası* (honor cause), *namus bekçisi* (honor guard), *namus temizliği* (honor cleansing) are related to this specific context which is not exclusively specific to Kurdistan and Kurdish *töre* (traditional customs) despite the widespread propaganda (Çağlayan 2013: 38-40).

<sup>353</sup> From a generational perspective, it may well be affirmed that the self-immolation action by Zekiye Alkan on the Diyarbakır city walls in 1990 points to a milestone in terms of women's place within the Kurdish National Liberation Movement, which may also be recognized as the commencement of the period of second-generation women in the PKK (Demir 2015: 72). Indeed, as Güneş emphasizes, issues of the PKK's two official publications, *Berxwedan* and *Serxwebûn*, constantly reproduced the heroic narration constructed on such actions taken by those as well as upcoming generations cadres (2013: 261).

The alteration taking place on the social perception of Kurds concerning women guerrillas is best analyzed through one of the most frequently reproduced narratives in terms of *namus* preservation (by the individual herself) and *namus* protection (by the PKK). This highly-circulated specific story is about the martyrdom and the post-mortem examination of a female PKK militant - whose name is pronounced differently by cadres from different generations (K-I/02; K-II/01, 05), who was reportedly killed in an armed confrontation sometime in the second half of the 1980s. The reproduction of the same narrative with slight changes involves various generations:

“The comrade we called *Yewarka*<sup>354</sup> fell martyr in an armed confrontation in a village of Şırnak. The military in that period had a similar perspective, too, so they took her body to the hospital and requested, ‘let’s see if she’s virgin or not!’ So, they examined her, and they realized that she was a virgin! Then this Captain reportedly took all soldiers and lined them up; first, they were insulted, and they received beatings, and he said, ‘don’t intervene! If you were a woman and stayed so many years with men, you’d have lost your virginity forty times!’ [...] ...as the villagers heard this conversation, they said, ‘Hmmm! So, we were wrong in thinking that way!’ They were saying, ‘these go in mixed company of men and woman at night in the mountain, under a tree, and when they are alone, they surely do something with each other!’ As they witnessed such things, such relations in different places and different forms, they said, ‘It seems we’ve cast aspersions upon them, we thought in a wrong way, it isn’t like that. Their going to the mountain isn’t to have intimacy together, but to fight together!’ And after that, they had more trust in the guerrilla; they put their daughter, their wife to the honor of guerrilla.” (K-I/02)

“When Heval Ayten<sup>355</sup> fell martyr, they took her body to Nusaybin and did an examination, ‘let’s see if she’s virgin or not!’ That battle itself is very famous; in fact, there’s a song ‘*Li Mêrdînê, li Bagokê, Xûşka Ayten*’ [*In Mardin, in Bagok, my sister Ayten*]. Within the group, there was only one woman; she was comrade Ayten. When they took her body to Nusaybin, they examined her virginity, and as she turned out to be a virgin, the sergeant, too, was impressed. How did I hear that story? As people transmitted this from one place to another in the form of a *çîrok* [oral story] by chatting with one another, they made an issue out of it in the city center. People were speaking like ‘such a girl, how come she could be that courageous, that clean!’ Reportedly, that surprised sergeant said, ‘This girl wouldn’t protect her virginity even for two days among our soldiers; however, she’s been inside the movement for years and fell martyr fighting in a confrontation resisting until her last bullet, but she’s still as clean as a new pin’ Sure, the state wanted to expose her deliberately, but it just happened to backfire.” (K-II/05)

Whether the incident itself is real or invented -and no matter in what other forms it may have happened, it has been objectified as truth by continuously having been reproduced among Kurds and, consequently, acquires a highly plausible nature compatible with the ideal understanding of *namus*. Arguably, the role that male family members were once traditionally assigned as the defenders of *namus* within the context of family honor is now taken –or, at least, shared- by the PKK, which appears to take up this *namus*-protector duty. By referring to the same story, in which Berivan becomes the protagonist, *K-II/01* explains that the social perception of women in the guerrilla in the 1990s:

“[In the 1990s] when people talk to one another, they were saying ‘women joining the PKK are different, they are more moral [*namuslu*] than those at home. Regardless of what they are, we have stronger trust in the PKK than our own brothers, our own sons!’ It was the reality created in that period, the example of Berivan was

---

<sup>354</sup> Most probably, the interviewee refers to Hanım Yaverkaya, who is also mentioned by Öcalan (2005) as one of the early women militants of the PKK (Demir 2015: 71).

<sup>355</sup> The interviewee refers to Ayten Tekin (alias *Rojin*), the only woman among those 20 guerrillas who fell in combat during the ‘Bagok Resistance’ on 1 April 1988 (Serxwebûn, August 1988, Special Ed. N° 13: 21; For the commemoration of ‘Bagok Resistance’, see Serxwebûn, April 1989, N° 88: 26-27). This folk song about the Bagok Resistance is also performed during the collective *halay* dance in Kurdish weddings, constituting one of few permissible social activities of the period (K-II/03).

always given: She was killed, they did a virginity examination, but she happened to be a virgin, and the state had trouble on that matter. In the 1990s, the approach was a bit [*different*]; those who went to the PKK joined by first getting rid of their sexual identity. People trusted women who joined the PKK, but it was presented like 'she's like a man now!', that's to say she's not a woman anymore; she's like a man. For example, there was a slogan '*Şêr şêre, çi jine, çi mêre!*'<sup>356</sup>, that's to say, 'a struggle is a struggle, no matter carried out by women or men'. However, rather than a consciousness on women, a social consciousness, there was a situation of perception based on 'in the Kurdish struggle the gender thing doesn't matter; all of those who join the fight participate assuming this.' Sure, the PKK has also transformed this in the future; today, they don't join by leaving their woman identity behind." (K-II/01)

The role that the PKK assumes in order to become the protector of the *namus* may well be analyzed in its narrow and broad dimensions, which are closely related to each other: The former has to do with what was –and still is- being tragically experimented in Kurdish society as well as in Turkey, 'honor crimes', in which men are expected to assume the duty to clean the 'stain on the *namus*'. Practices considered deviant and unacceptable in terms of *namus* were attended by the PKK and punished severely. In this sense, it would not be wrong to argue that –voluntarily or not- the PKK also assumed this role and acted accordingly to consolidate the 'trust' the people of Kurdistan had in the guerrilla as the protector of their *namus*. This role was occasionally exercised when those attitudes considered 'morally inappropriate' took place within the guerrilla. An example of this role in verdicts handed down by PKK courts discriminately on male and female militants involved in such 'crimes' was the following:

"We lived through some tragic examples on this matter. You see, women and men occasionally had affairs. Those were the things we'd witnessed. They both were taken to court; women were executed, but men survived. It was ferocity. It had nothing to do with the PKK philosophy; it was due to the court's philosophy favoring the feudal man. There were other examples, not everywhere, but yes, these happened." (K-II/03)

The broader sense of *namus* is related to the reinterpretation of the concept in which the women's body is substituted with the 'land' or the '*patria*' whose defense and protection against 'foreign hands' become a question of *namus* (Çağlayan 2007: 107). This broader interpretation of honor constructed over the women's body is best exemplified through an anecdote by the same individual, K-II/03, who describes his feelings about these 'foreign hands' laying on his *motherland*, 'staining his *namus*' when he witnessed half-naked soldiers marching through the main avenue in Batman city center in his childhood period:

"[How did you feel when you saw these soldiers?] I remembered the words of *Cigerxwîn*<sup>357</sup> when he was a high school student. Batman is a city of oil and army. One day, on his way to high school, *Cigerxwîn* sees a man carrying a pistol and asks him, 'where are you heading to?' The man responds, 'I'll take my revenge!' *Cigerxwîn* asks 'revenge for what?' and he says, 'for my honor [*namus*]!' By pointing his finger at oil-well, *Cigerxwîn* says, 'assuming your mother is your honor; then the most important honor would be the land, the motherland. Every day this iron bar goes in and out; why don't you think about it?' It was the first poem that I'd read from *Cigerxwîn*,

---

<sup>356</sup> A saying in Kurdish Kurmanji that literally means "A lion is a lion, no matter if it is female or male".

<sup>357</sup> *Cigerxwîn* or *Cegerxwîn* (pseudonym for Mullah Şehmus Hasan, Mardin, 1903 – Stockholm, 1984) was one of the leading poets of modern Kurdish literature and a leading political activist of Kurdish ethnonational revival. For more information on *Cigerxwîn*'s political biography, see Yüksel, Metin (2018) "Cegerxwîn'in Şiirlerinde Uyanış, Dayanışma ve Tarihe Tanıklık" in Y. Çakmak & T. Şur (Eds.) *Kürt Tarihi ve Siyasetinden Portreler*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, pp. 235-243; on his literature and poetry, see Temo, Selim (2007) *Kürt Şiiri Antolojisi*, Vol. 1 & 2, İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı.

and this story appeared in it. Whenever I saw those soldiers, these words always came to my mind. I remembered these words all the time, and I found myself in an extremely oppressed position psychologically. It [*the state*] looked like an enormous giant who imprisoned and repressed you, and I stared at him with disgust.” (K-II/03)

The mechanism employed in traditional ‘*namus* cleansing’, which is killing, is also considered ‘legitimate’ in this homeland-oriented *namus* question despite the difference when it comes to punishment. In this latter case, the legitimate *namus* protection/cleansing passes through killing the perpetrator of violation and, therefore, being ready to die on this path, if necessary. The emphasis made on ‘an honorable life’ by almost all generations, but especially among second and third-generation cadres when explaining their involvement in the armed struggle, in this sense, may be interpreted as part of this broader sense of *namus*.

Nevertheless, most of the time, the practices of *namus* protection in both senses are observed simultaneously. The protectionist moralism is reflected in guerrilla practices on the ground, becoming evident when struggling against the enemy army consisting of male soldiers. In such practices, men confronting the enemy along with their women comrades find themselves in a role of *namus* protection in both senses: They have to protect their ‘grieved mother(land)’ (Çağlayan 2007: 109) as well as their women comrades. It is understood that this patriarchal protectionism is so strong that men were, and to a certain degree still are, ready to renounce even their own lives, similar to those who are ready to sacrifice their own life at the cost of ‘cleaning’ the family honor:

“One day, a male guerrilla comrade said, ‘among *hevals* under my command, if fifty men fell martyr, this wouldn’t hurt me, but if a woman guerrilla fell martyr, I wouldn’t stomach this.’ Why did we have such a perception of gender? [*Because*] within society, there was this type of perception. The martyrdom of a man is not perceived the same way as that of a woman. [...] On the battlefield, for instance, a young male *heval* took a bullet for a woman *heval* by jumping in front of her. He protected our fellow woman comrade, she had no injuries, but he fell martyr. I witnessed this with my own eyes.” (K-II/10)

“In the beginning, when we were going to take an armed action, there was such an approach: ‘Let women comrades not be in the forefront’ that’s to say ‘let them stay in rear guard position’ [...] Let’s say a war erupts, and men say, ‘let me be in the forefront, but let women comrades stay a bit... [*behind*].’ It’s about that *namus* issue; ‘if a woman is captured, they treat her in a different manner, and we men find it difficult’. Such thoughts come to one’s mind. Nevertheless, another point is that the more you see their comradeship and the level they devote themselves to the struggle, one feels completely different indeed. Especially the way they burn themselves through those *fedayee* actions during *Newroz* times. These can transform even those who firmly oppose women’s militancy. There are many women influenced by such actions. I know when I first joined, a lot of young people came to join as women comrades influenced them. For example, you know the Cizre *serhildan*, thanks to the attitude of comrade Berivan, a lot of young people joined the revolution at that time. They were saying, ‘if a woman comrade does these things, why shouldn’t I do them?’” (K-II/07)

These influences continue through the next generation accumulatively, which has consolidated the position of women in the Kurdish National Liberation Movement. While the social reproduction of narratives constructed on previously taken actions continues to influence guerrilla lines, similar actions are continuously carried out on which similar narratives are constructed and reproduced. In harmony

with the *Önderlik* philosophy on the exaltation of women, in these narratives, women protagonists convert into ‘martyrs’ by demonstrating great devotion, enlightening the way for further generations.

The question of *namus* continues to occupy an important place in society, and heroic actions taken by women guerrillas, which unexceptionally end with their *martyrdom*, are described by bearing in mind the existing patriarchal sensibility on this matter.<sup>358</sup> While admitting progress in their larger family surroundings (K-III/05, 06, 07, 11, 12), almost all individuals (except K-III/08 and 10) also affirm the adverse effects of existing social pressures and male-dominant hegemony on women in Kurdistan as well as others parts in Turkey where they spent considerable time. Notwithstanding, remarkable progress observed with this respect is attributed to the struggle carried out by women within the PKK, not only against their fellow male comrades but also their own mentality shaped in society:

“[Before] if a woman left home, it meant that she’d never go back to that home. It was a *namus* issue; she had to be killed. However, today it’s not like that. A woman can go and take part in activities. It’s happening in Kurdistan today. How have they achieved such a status? It’s surely the struggle carried out by women; women have paid the price; they have taken pains with it.[...] ...you fight within the PKK too, against yourself, as I’ve told you before, as a woman, you fight against yourself. For instance, in terms of fighting, improving in adapting to this life, improving yourself in the military sense, in the art of war.” (K-III/01)

The sensibilities and practices that emerged as a result of the progress made in the women’s liberation movement are also reflected in Kurdish *yurtsever* social environments at a slower pace. The intersectional position of Kurdish women in the face of the state and Kurdish men remains solid; however, the social impacts of the women’s movement are notable in society.<sup>359</sup> As observed, this begins with the emergence of the women’s movement in the 1990s and progressively continues through the 2000s:

“Look, the park you see over there is called Şemse Allak. Do you know who Şemse Allak is? A woman who became a victim of an unidentified murder. Why did she get killed? Because she was involved in prostitution, they killed her because she was working in the brothel. Look, this is the first park built [for a woman] in Diyarbakır. In a city like Diyarbakır, where feudal dominancy is present, if you said that a park with the name of a ‘whore’ –please be aware that I use that word in inverted commas- will exist, people would react like a cat on hot bricks, wouldn’t they? This is a response to those strict values of feudalism. Look, that park over there is now called Şemse Allak. You see, I’m talking about the philosophy which has achieved this.” (K-II/03)

---

<sup>358</sup> The story of Beritan (pseudonym for Gülnaz Karataş) briefly mentioned by the interviewee is another widely known narrative reproduced among *yurtsever* circles, in which, with no ammunition left, Beritan chooses to commit suicide by throwing herself off the cliffs in Xakurke region instead of handing herself over to the KDP *peshmergas*. Here, Beritan complies with her role as a PKK woman by protecting her *namus* at the cost of her life, which is completely coherent with the moral value existing in Kurdish society. Idealizations of protagonists who carry out similar ‘exemplary actions’ within the PKK by encouraging women cadres to achieve ‘*Beritanlaşma* or *Zilanlaşma*’ (verb form meaning “becoming a Beritan or Zilan”) explains limits on sexual freedom within the paradigm of the Kurdish women’s liberation. Similarly, the ongoing prohibition of intimate relations between men and women in the guerrilla –apart from possible other reasons such as military discipline and inappropriate life conditions- may also be explained through the sensibility that the PKK executives show towards dominant patriarchal supremacy on sexual questions in Kurdish society. In any case, qualitative data obtained in this field study on this matter is not sufficient to test out such hypotheses, which require specific studies focusing on this subject.

<sup>359</sup> Obviously, as explained previously, the data collected for this study is too limited to make reliable inferences with this respect. For relevant qualitative data on Kurdish women living in western suburbs and their socialization out of traditional private life, see Demir, M. G. (2015) *1980’lerden 2000’lere Siyasal Kürt Kadınının İnşası*, İstanbul: Belge, pp. 136-142.

“There was a structure that –at least in my own family- women at home had gradually entered in social life beyond the family. There were women in my family who had joined the movement too. It consequently made the relations within the family environment in our home different in a more visible manner from the traditional relationships existing in society. Even though it was a smaller version of society in general terms, I can affirm that it was a family who was trying to break it [*male-dominance*], make a hole in that cycle.” (K-III/05)

Having experienced actions taken throughout the 1990s and been subject to narrations constructed on heroic women figures, the progress made on this matter within the PKK was remarkably more visible than the social progress in Kurdish society. As a result of the progress made through the women’s movement, in this generation, women were in considerably better conditions within the guerrilla, and this advancement was reflected even among the most conservative sectors:

“Let me give you an example: A woman comrade goes to a village, where there is a Sheikh. A Sheikh then was way different; he was like an *agha*; he wouldn’t give his seat to anyone. However, when a woman comrade goes there, that Sheikh stands up and gives his seat to that woman comrade as a sign of respect.” (K-III/01)

Nevertheless, all third-generation women guerrillas admit to having been subjected to discriminative attitudes, behaviors, and reactions by their fellow male comrades at some point. In comparison with the experiences among previous generation women cadres, it is noted that men were not able to manifest such attitudes in explicit manners due to in-party social pressure. It is usually in military practices that the same *namus*-related protectionist approaches and behaviors occasionally still take place. *K-III/10* exemplifies such an attitude taken by her higher-ranking male comrade during a siege in the Zagros Mountains:

“In that operation, they didn’t put women comrades in attack positions. They said, ‘if women comrades are captured, the enemy plays a lot with them’, so they didn’t put us there; almost all of those who went to attack were male comrades. [...] Bodies of those comrades in attack position remain there; we can’t take them out afterward. When the body of a woman comrade remains there, they [*soldiers*] disgustingly play with the body. So, comrades were wary of allowing it; the commander didn’t allow it. We, women comrades, insisted a lot. Almost everyone insisted, saying, ‘we can join the attack too, we can do it too’, but finally we couldn’t.” (K-III/10)

The in-party progress made throughout the years on gender roles and the position of women achieves a more institutional character in this last generation. As *K-III/07* points out, each newcomer *şervan* must take a ten-day course on the ‘History of Women’ when they join the PKK, which, as the interviewee affirms, causes a significant impact in their mindset vastly shaped by a patriarchal social and institutional environment in and out of Kurdistan. *K-III/11* shares his first experience and describes the position that his fellow male comrades had towards the idea of women militancy:

“...we all had a silent reaction, unacceptance. Because the fact that women had that much right to make decisions was something different. All boys, we had the same mentality: ‘She’s my sister, she’s younger. She’ll work, she’ll bring me a glass of water, a cup of tea...’ My comrades grew up and came from an environment like this, and they were experiencing a contradiction inside. However, none of them preferred to speak it out much; they were like, ‘although we don’t understand, it must be correct!’ That’s why their attitude was positive. They all had this approach: They firmly believed that this difference would bring nice things. They firmly believed that difference, the ongoing progress was correct, and we were wrong, but they had trouble accepting this. [...] Sometimes there were problems, even right now. And this is due to not being able to make sense of the women’s liberation ideology, not being able to comprehend it. Sometimes protectionist attitudes emerge. You know, like saying

'women are weak, they can't do this or that.' It still has effects on this. However, it's also gone through tremendous change and transformation. These effects have been minimized to a great deal. At least, I've learned not to grab the bag of a woman comrade while walking! [*laughing*]" K-III/11

The subject of the women's liberation struggle, following the new paradigm, has gone beyond the frontiers of northern Kurdistan, becoming a focal point during the expansion of the Kurdish movement all the way through *Rojava* (western Kurdistan, Syria). This progress has opened the way for the construction of a broader narrative based on Kurdish women warriors. As in the case of previous generations, heroic acts of female fighters and *martyrs* continue consolidating women's central position in the Kurdish National Liberation Struggle, which is no longer only and exclusively a political question for Turkey.



## Conclusions

After analyzing three consecutive political generations of the Basque and Kurdish movements, it has been attempted to provide detailed insight regarding cohort and period effects on the political socialization processes of actors as well as motivations and justifications of their later period politico-military involvement. An extended period, beginning from the primary socialization within the immediate family environment and continuing through the later period secondary socialization mechanisms (friend circles, schooling, associative world, work environment, and alike), has been included through life-history analysis. A broader political analysis simultaneously focuses on the historical trajectory of social legitimacy that both movements have enjoyed in their quest to achieve political objectives that have gone through changes and transformations over time. In this last chapter, it would be convenient to conclude the study with some comparative remarks based on the initially formulated research question(s) and hypotheses.

### *Generational variables in the development and radicalization of Basque and Kurdish nationalisms*

As analyzed in details through the previous chapters, both the emergence of Basque and Kurdish nationalisms in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and their revival later in the early 1960s follows a similar generational pattern. Despite entirely different socio-economic structures, the emergence and development of nationalism in the Basque Country and Kurdistan are shaped by the traumatic impacts of large-scale political events and their profound social consequences on both macro and micro generational levels.

Carlist wars and subsequent mass emigration flow towards the Basque Country and national self-determination movements and tragic impacts of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Kurdistan constituted significant traumatogenic events that conditioned the core symbolic elements of Basque and Kurdish nationalisms to be reproduced in later periods. Likewise, the devastating effects of the Spanish Civil War and the attitudes taken by the post-war Francoist regime towards the Basque 'traitor regions' and Kurdish revolts and policies implemented following their suppression in Turkey's Kurdistan provoked a generational silence as a result of which a new political generation with specific generation styles came into being during the Basque and Kurdish revivals.

Basque and Kurdish ethnonational movements and their radicalization indicate a generational rupture born out of –and against– the silence adopted by the previous generation nationalists. The emergence of a generation unit whose members opted for the idea of armed struggle as a specific generation style, that is to say, the radicalization of the ethnonational movements, equally developed under specific macro and micro level generational variables. While the cohort effects of prominent revolutionary movements and anti-colonial struggle via armed insurrection at a global level influenced

young Basque and Kurdish generation entelechy, the political context of Spain and Turkey of the time shaped different radicalization processes in both cases in which physical and symbolic state violence played a key determining factor.

The entelechy born and socialized under the conditions of absolute physical and symbolic repression over the Basque nationalist universe during the Francoist dictatorship saw a rapid radicalization, preparing the grounds more prone to the emergence and acceptance of the idea of armed struggle proposed by ETA right after a short-winded cultural resistance by EKIN. In the Kurdish case, however, the initial steps of ethnonational revival were more timid and limited to sporadic cultural activities led by the new generation entelechy later to be named the *49ers* rather than an organized full-fledged movement with a specific program and method based on the idea of Kurdish national liberation. The radicalization of the Kurdish ethnonational movement and the adoption of armed struggle as a generation style began to develop following the 12 March 1971 military memorandum that brought along the stigma of *leftism* and *Kurdism* in Turkey.

The emergence of EKIN/ETA and the *Apocular/PKK*, therefore, follow two different trajectories: EKIN, as a cultural movement developed by the young generation entelechy born out of traditional PNV nationalism, pointed to a sharp break-up from this latter and advancement towards an independent organization in the Basque Country. Initial groupings of this new entelechy were formed by educated youth gathered in the University of Deusto, under the influence of Jesuits priests who had a considerable ideological influence on early period ETA militants. The *Apocular/PKK*, on the other hand, were a result of a gradual historical process and, unlike other coetaneous Kurdish movements influenced by DDKO or KDP, they emerged out of Turkish leftist revolutionary youth in western Turkey and deployed in Kurdistan only after the collapse of this latter. Arguably, the lack of institutions (public university) in Turkey's Kurdistan at the time obliged many young Kurdish intellectuals to pursue their education career in western Turkey, where the social conditions and interactions determined their later period political stance with respect to their relationship with the Turkish left.

The prominence and expansion of a specific generation unit pointing to anti-colonial struggle through the use of arms, among others, followed a similar process and intra-generational debates in both cases. However, through different forms and trajectories: Discussions among various in-group sectors regarding whether the armed struggle was a viable option or whether it was necessary to establish closer ties with the Spanish left and consequent splits due to discrepancies on these matters took place within the initial period of ETA out of which several groups with diverse trajectories eventually broke up (Branka, *ETA-Berri*, *ETA-VI*). The Kurdish case, however, saw a gradual process of disengagement and a definitive autonomy from the Turkish left. Similar debates and cleavages took

place among different concrete groups, among which the Apocular/PKK represented a similar ideological line to that of ETA-V, which is a Marxist-Leninist organization seeking to achieve national liberation through an armed revolution against a colonial rule.

The growing influence of ETA and the PKK due to their being the only significant politico-military actors against authoritarian regimes in Spain and Turkey made it easier for these movements to convert into leading organizations of the Basque and Kurdish neo-nationalisms. ETA's sophisticated military actions through the 1970s (execution of Admiral Carrero Blanco, e.g.) and the PKK's guerrilla offensive against the military junta of 12 September 1980 caused above all a significant symbolic damage to the 'colonial enemy' considered 'invincible' in the eyes of most previous generation nationalists until then. Collective traumas of the past constructed upon this image of invincibility of the state/enemy were adopted and reconstructed by these movements in a new narrative in which they appeared as the leading actors of the national liberation struggle against the same historic enemy. In the absence of the founding organization of Basque nationalism that had been in exile since Franco's taking over, as well as all rival Kurdish nationalist and revolutionary movements eliminated by the military junta of the 12 September, and in the presence of indiscriminate physical and symbolic state violence, this narrative found considerable support among Basques and Kurds.

Notwithstanding, the type and forms of armed insurgency took different manners in both cases as a result of different social settings that determined the characteristics of political violence: ETA's initial rural guerrilla campaign (*Las Cabras*) lived short in highly industrialized Basque Country where the majority of the population was settled in urban industrial zones. The organization penetrated labor movements by getting involved in disputes and conflicts through urban commando cells attracting the attention of young Basque nationalists and immigrant workers with leftist tendencies from the rest of Spain. After the initial urban organizational activities, the PKK, on the other hand, focused on mobilizing rural Kurdish peasantry living under the hegemony of tribal *aghas* and pursued a guerilla campaign exclusively. The organization's urban settlement began to spread rapidly along with migration flow from rural Kurdistan to towns and cities, where the phenomenon of *serhildan* emerged and rapidly extended through the 1990s.

#### *Social mechanisms of mobilization and militancy*

Regarding the social mechanisms of political violence, the outcomes of qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews show that these mechanisms through which indoctrination of Basque and Kurdish neo-nationalisms and political violence are reproduced depending on the group capacity in each period. When the initial stages of ETA and the PKK are analyzed, a remarkably low capacity of resource mobilization is noted. In the absence of logistic and material means for organizational

development, both groups initially made use of commonly available mechanisms in extending their ideology and winning potential recruits over.

In the case of ETA, Basque nationalist and anti-Francoist low-ranking clergy played a crucial role in terms of logistics and recruitment. Being one of the few available mechanisms relatively free from Francoist repression, the local church provided a sort of protective umbrella for young Basque nationalists. The support provided by the local church facilitated the organization to attract the attention of popular masses in a highly religious society that opened doors for potential young recruits through cultural (*mendigoizales*, folk dance groups, e.g.) and underground (*ikastolas*) activities organized among friend circles (*kuadrillas*) under the protection of the church.

With the Spanish Transition and re-institutionalization of Basque politics with the PNV's return from exile, the hegemony of ETA as the only actor of Basque nationalist politics also came to an end. Political changes also had reflections on the divided social organization that both poles of Basque nationalism competed to establish their mechanisms, each creating its own associations, labor union, and media. Defining itself as a popular movement and aiming to maintain its hegemony in the public sphere, the *abertzale* left movement led by ETA sought to penetrate social movements of the period, such as the anti-nuclear movement against Lemoiz and *insumición*. Democratic consolidation also made a wide range of civil organizations available. The 1990s and 2000s saw the involvement of youth movement through student organization (*ikasle abertzaleak*) and *abertzale* left youth organizations (*Jarrai*, *Haika*, and *Segi*) that took a more active role in the public sphere, which increasingly manifested itself through violent acts of *kale borroka* during the isolation and illegalization periods of the social components of Basque national liberation movement (MLNV).

In the Kurdish case, similar organizational development was observed. Before the 12 September 1980 *coup d'état*, leftist associations (TÖB-DERs, e.g.) led by educated youth of the period and higher education institutions served as main mechanisms through which the PKK (along with other coetaneous organizations) could extend its ideas, program, and methods among urban Kurdish intellectual youth. This process began in western Turkey first and gradually extended towards major towns and cities in Kurdistan with the organization's 'return to the country' in the late 1970s. Coffee houses and village squares were common places where the *Apocular* contacted Kurds in this period.

The military coup of 1980, however, pointed to interruption up until 1984 except for 'prison resistance' by the arrested leading PKK cadres that appeared as the primary myth-making mechanism of the 'Kurdistan National Liberation Movement' in its initial phases. Along with the organization's launching of a guerrilla offensive in 1984, the PKK focused its armed propaganda activities in rural

Kurdistan by seeking to mobilize Kurdish peasants against the state and local traditional aristocracy that the organization considered as the extension of the colonial enemy in Kurdistan.

The 1990s saw the group's penetration in towns and cities under strictly limited possibilities for political organization. Except for specific social gatherings like marriage ceremonies, the PKK's organization in urban spaces via militia was illegal. Significant symbolic dates such as the *Newroz* celebration or 15 August were violently intervened by state security forces causing outrage among Kurds, which started the period of massive popular uprisings (*serhildans*). During these rallies, mass and indiscriminate detentions converted prisons that had already been the primary myth-making tool into an active social mechanism of militant recruitment. After the 2000s, the Kurdish movement dominated most civil society organizations and movements in Kurdistan as well as Kurdish communities living in western metropolises of Turkey and an active diaspora network in Europe.

Regarding the influence of primary and secondary socialization processes, qualitative data indicates the role of life course effects in the generational reproduction of political engagement and militancy. Political socialization of individuals is shaped mainly through the adolescence period, going beyond the in-family transgenerational lineage transmission. There is no clear empirical basis to affirm a 'family tradition' in militancy, and the political socialization of militants largely depends on other variables (schooling, friend circles, associative world, group legitimacy) that have to see with the secondary socialization. As noted in the case of the first generations of ETA-m and PKK militants, specific individuals develop political and militancy affiliation to these organizations despite opposite family backgrounds (e.g., Spanish immigrant family or Kurdish rural family with tribal loyalties). As observed in some cases in both movements, the transmission of militancy potentially takes place in a reversed form; consequences of militancy of younger generations (imprisonment, exile, e.g.) provoke a process of 'resocialization' among older generation family members, leading them to adopt the group truth and even exercise certain practices of 'family-based social activism'.

Finally, as many individuals affirm, experiences regarding the national identity during the early-period socialization become meaningful only inasmuch as the later-period political socialization achieves a certain level of nationalist consciousness through which these distant memories are reconstructed. Based on this affirmation, it may be argued that these experiences (like the practices of symbolic and institutional violence) do not directly lead individuals to militancy. However, they instead serve as reconstructed elements of justification in the decision-making process of militancy.

#### *Group truth and the perception of social reality*

When it comes to the perception of social reality by those actors involved in politico-military strategy in different periods, the data shows that the subjective reality adopted by individuals is reproduced

following the group truth objectified in each period. However, due to epistemological deficiencies of the life-history analysis technique, outcomes with this respect must be evaluated cautiously. Narratives regarding the perception of national identity during the socialization period tend to be reconstructed retrospectively according to the militant's later period experiences and knowledge. It means that an individual's perception of social reality is something 'learned', and past experiences are narrated in harmony with the group truth adopted in a certain period.

Two generational periods in both cases clearly illustrate the above-pointed argument: The age group born and socialized during the post-Franco period in the Basque Country delegitimized the Spanish Transition and consolidation of democracy, affirming that 'nothing has changed' with the death of the dictator. Despite objective changes endowing with KAS alternatives (e.g., political autonomy, Basque linguistic normalization, *Ertzaintza* police force) through which these generations socialized, they adopted the group reality based on the labeling of the new regime as 'false democracy', legitimizing the continuity of violence. A similar case is observed among those PKK militants who had joined the organization before Öcalan's new paradigm was adopted in the early 2000s. The idea of an independent and sovereign Kurdish state that had appeared in the organization's official publications prior to this change was refused and criticized by those militants who continued to serve in the PKK. The group truth, based on Öcalan's new doctrine that defamed any nation-state, was adopted and reproduced by the militants who had once fought in order to achieve a Kurdish sovereign state.

It must be noted that group truth regarding the social reality and national question, on the other hand, is updated by leadership cadres of avant-garde movements. Official primary sources of both organizations reveal that cohort and period effects determine the changes and transformations deemed adequate with this respect. The macro generational impacts of the fall of the USSR and the subsequent new world order based on neo-liberal economic development in Spain and Turkey in the early 1990s oblige both Basque and Kurdish movements to take adequate steps by bearing in mind smaller-scale period effects that have to see with the political context of both countries.

Isolated by the 'democratic bloc', constitutionalist signatories of the Ajuria-Enea pact of 1988, the MLNV had to adopt 'Democratic Alternative', leaving previously insisted KAS alternatives and developed a new politico-military strategy on the basis of political negotiations. This new approach and changes made in the politico-military strategy to this end, the transition from defensive to offensive use of violence, yielded the expected results with the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement among the Basque nationalist forces, opening the doors for the first overt negotiations with the state.

The cohort effects of the same period on the PKK are observed through Öcalan's writings before his capture in 1999. It is precisely in this period that the leading ideologue and then indisputable

leader of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement begins to seek a possible peaceful solution through negotiations with the Turkish state. Also, by making a critic of Soviet socialism –once adopted by the PKK, he focuses on the ‘re-creation of genuine Kurd in the mountains’ by focusing on such questions as the personality and family structure in Kurdistan. This new focus to be maintained in the new paradigm of the PKK after the 1999 – 2004 process also coincides with the period of women’s mass participation in guerrilla lines and militarization of women as separate units.

### *Justifications of violence*

Changes and transformation in regime type and tolerance are reflected in the motivations expressed by social actors when it comes to justifying the group violence exercised in each period. Longitudinal analysis of the collected data in terms of individuals’ motivations and justification of participation in politico-military strategy in both cases indicates two different trajectories pursued in the Basque and Kurdish ethnonational movements.

In the Basque case, political developments from the late 1970s onwards that have progressively evolved into a more inclusive and pluralist direction have made their impact on the justification of violent repertoires. Concerns for the Basque ethnic survival expressed by the first-generation of ETA-m militants who were born and socialized during the Francoist period have gradually left their place to a desire for the accomplishment of a political project (an independent Basque nation-state) considered a guarantee for the Basque national development. As observed among the second and third generation of MLNV militants, utilitarian justifications for the use of coercion have rather to see with the achievement of a sovereign Basque state described as ‘ideal’ (socialist, monolingual-*Euskaldun*, and nonpatriarchal) in their mindset.

In the case of PKK militants, on the other hand, almost all interviewees from three consecutive cohorts analyzed in this study overwhelmingly emphasize their concerns for Kurdish ethnic survival as the primary normative justification. All other motivations and justifications listed by actors (impossibility or unavailability of non-violent repertoires, e.g.) are also associated with this uninterrupted concern. Becoming the only available actor and reproducing the ‘destiny’ of coetaneous organizations following the 1980s coup, the PKK has successfully objectified its avant-garde role as the unique guarantor for the survival of Kurds as a nation. The lack of official mechanisms guaranteeing the cultural recognition of Kurds and the uninterrupted physical and symbolic violence by the state consolidate the recent period of Kurdish collective memory, establishing a coherent bridge with the past traumas objectified in the modern historiography of Kurds.

Violence exercised by the states in each period analyzed appears as a key variable referred by all individuals from any generation in both cases. Notwithstanding, when the outcomes of data are

considered, it is noted that the characteristics of state violence in the Basque and Kurdish cases differ significantly in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and this difference shapes the social legitimacy attributed to the organizations and groups exercising violent repertoires.

Those individuals who socialized during the late Franco period and served in ETA during the Spanish Transition and consolidation of liberal democracy describe high levels of symbolic violence along with indiscriminate physical violence by the state apparatus when narrating their political socialization period. The second and third generation of MLNV militants, on the other hand, socialized in a period during which the practices of symbolic and institutional violence reduced significantly. In contrast, physical violence by the state as well as state-sponsored groups mostly and deliberately targeted a specific sector among Basques, *abertzale* left circles, acquiring a much more discriminate character in comparison with the late Franco period.

Among the generations analyzed in the Kurdish case, both symbolic and physical practices of state violence, to which individuals and their social surroundings have been frequently subjected, do not show significant changes in any period: All three generations report that they have been subjected to institutional violence in the form of restrictions on Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements (language, e.g.) or imposition of symbolic elements of Turkish nationalism during their early socialization period. They also report practices of indiscriminate and high-level physical violence by the state as well as state-sponsored groups in both urban and rural settings. Arguably, this is the reason behind the comparatively higher degree of concerns over the question of ethnic survival in the Kurdish case than that of the Basque case.

In both cases, those individuals who get involved in politico-military strategy and legitimize the use of violent repertoires claim that they are deprived of fundamental rights regarding their national identity. However, the generational analysis shows that there is a significant change in terms of the actor's value expectations and value costs through different cohorts: During the Francoist period, the possible value costs of joining a military organization (that is, imprisonment, exile, or death) were considered worthwhile for the value expectation (Basque ethnic survival) under extremely restricted conditions of the dictatorship. Since the Spanish Transition and all the way through a democratic consolidation period, while the possible value costs have remained unchanged, the value expectation has changed into achieving ideal conditions for the Basque national development (i.e., Basque self-determination) for which the alternative mechanisms did not require the value costs of armed militancy. As some second and third-generation individuals confirm, for most people in the 1990s and 2000s, assuming the possible value costs by taking a step forward in their militancy trajectory (i.e., joining ETA) is considered too risky for this value expectation.



In the Kurdish case, generational analysis of the actors' value expectations and value costs shows that both have mostly remained unchanged in any period: In all three cohorts analyzed, the qualitative data reveals that motivations and justifications focus overwhelmingly on the Kurdish ethnic survival as the most determining variable of militancy involvement. Beginning from the 12 March 1971 memorandum, and especially after the 12 September 1980 coup, death is referred to as a highly possible value cost of claiming any rights concerning Kurdish national identity (i.e., living as a 'Kurd'). Therefore, manifesting the highest level of engagement (that is, joining the PKK) for the same value expectation (Kurdish ethnic survival) that supposes the same value cost as opting for non-violent means is considered worthwhile for the actors.

Throughout the study, it is noted that violence does not only appear as a phenomenon that originates out of relations between the state and non-state organizations but also significant social relations that equally produce conflictive situations. What is commonly observed in both cases – somehow to a different extent, is violent practices in social life, physical or not, provoking a sense of victimhood that includes discriminative attitudes in terms of race, language, religious creed, and sex (Jackman 2002) perceived by individuals from any generation.

In the Basque case, perceived social violence is mostly limited to the use of Euskera despite the co-official status of this language in the Basque Country. Overwhelming communicative dominance of Spanish among Basques provokes a sense of offense among those who are in favor of a monolingual Basque Country. Race and religious creed are reversely relevant as they once were key components of traditional *Aranist* Basque nationalism in the exaltation of the nobility of Basques in comparison with Spanish *maketos* that also had certain effects in the early years of ETA. No justification for the use of violence based on racial discrimination or religion is reported among individuals who joined the movement after the Spanish Transition.

The Kurdish case points up a rather complex picture of social violence, going beyond the frontiers of Kurdistan, including large immigrant communities with constant interaction with Turks in western Turkey. Pejorative myths regarding the alleged racial characteristics of Kurds or the religious creed of Alevi communities, the cultural division of labor of Kurdish immigrants in western Turkey, and linguistic discrimination are frequently reported by the individuals from any generation analyzed. The value dimension of ethno-symbolic components, more concretely Kurdish language, also creates social tensions between those Kurds from urban spaces with a certain level of formal education in Turkish and those *gundîs* (peasants) with no or limited command in this language. Similar situations are also noted occasionally among the Basques to a far less extent. In both cases, individuals tend to reevaluate

humiliating attitudes towards ethno-symbolic components once they acquire a certain level of political consciousness and commitment regarding their national identity.

A clear difference is observed between the Basques and Kurds when it comes to the impact of intersectional identities in militancy engagement, and the analysis indicates that the conflict based on intersectionality is directly related to the social structure of each case. In this sense, the difference in terms of social structure and settings between the Basque Country and Kurdistan is directly reflected in the patterns of social conflict out of intersectional identities.

In the Basque case, the interviews rarely report gender-related questions as a motivation for their political socialization and later militancy in the MLNV. However, these questions have been analyzed, and significant steps have been taken with this respect among the political and military components of the MLNV once they are involved in activism. In terms of social class, however, although there is no empirical evidence that the Basque identity is related to poverty or underdevelopment and those latter do not appear among motivations and justifications of military engagement, class question adopted by ETA in a highly industrialized society has been an essential factor in the recruitment of working-class actors, including those *Euskaldun berries* from Spanish immigrant background having no intrinsic relation with Basque ethno-symbolic components.

Intersectionality in terms of ethnic and religious identities, as well as class and gender-related questions, on the other hand, appears as a significant factor repeatedly reported by the PKK militants from any generation analyzed. Unlike the Basque case, all other disadvantageous identity belongings are related to the ethnic condition of being Kurdish and expressed among the normative justifications and motivations of involvement in the PKK. These identity belongings are frequently presented as an additional source of perceived deprivation along with Kurdish identity. The organization's secular position and emphasis on class struggle and gender equality in Kurdistan have made the PKK a common destiny in the eyes of those Kurds who have been subjected to a varying degree of violent practices due to the possession of multiple disadvantageous identities.

#### *Generations, contention, and social legitimacy of violence*

The last research sub-question reveals the key findings of this study in relation to the social legitimacy of political violence in both cases from a generational perspective. The period analyzed through available quantitative data, as well as the qualitative outcomes of the field course of this research, show that Basque and Kurdish cases draw a similar starting point in terms of social legitimacy of political violence that follows a diametrically opposite trajectory throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Initial achievements of both ETA and the PKK in terms of social support received by Basque and Kurdish nationalist sectors, cohort and period effects in the growth or decline of this support, and, finally, the

impacts of social legitimacy on the social and symbolic transformations within the groups are to be discussed for the final assessment.

Why and how ETA and the PKK, as two organizations opting for political violence with considerably limited initial capacity in terms of group power and resource mobilization, managed to achieve a considerable level of social legitimacy in the eyes of Basque and Kurdish nationalist sectors should be explained through several factors. These have to do with both the historical development of Basque and Kurdish nationalisms and their later period narration in the national historiography as well as the socio-political conditions under which both movements emerged.

In the Basque case, a series of civil wars through the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 supposed two traumatogenic events provoking the loss of national achievements, first the privileges under the *fueros* and then –and even more importantly, the Basque autonomy declared during the Second Spanish Republic. Both events are followed by profound political and social transformations constructed as ‘national traumas’ in the Basque collective memory. The emergence of ETA during the social silence of Basque nationalism under the conditions of the Francoist regime by the new generation entelechy grew upon this national narrative that, to a certain extent, justified the idea of recuperation of loss through the use of arms.

The case of the PKK points to a similar process of radicalization justified through the Kurdish collective memory on traumatogenic events of Kurdish revolts in the initial years of the young Turkish Republic and following repressive policies. Severe consequences that earlier Kurdish entelechy who timidly attempted to break the social silence continuing since the Dersim revolt of 1938 faced after the 12 March 1971 military memorandum brought violence as a new generation style to the forefront which the PKK successfully practiced. The impacts of the 12 September 1980 coup and the military regime prepared suitable grounds for the expansion of the PKK. First of all, almost all other rival Kurdish organizations were eliminated, and the PKK remained the sole significant actor. Secondly, the new regime converted the prisons into a myth-making mechanism, out of which the PKK’s symbolic universe was built up. In both cases, past traumas and sociopolitical conditions of the period, along with cohort effects based on anti-colonial struggle, constituted a reasonable political discourse that managed to attract those concerned with Basque and Kurdish ethnic survival.

The position of the dominant Basque and Kurdish classes concerning the national question also arises as an essential factor in the emergence and development of a popular movement backed by large sectors concerned for ethnic survival. In the presence of close cooperation between Basque and Kurdish ruling classes and Spanish and Turkish states, and the lack of interest of these classes in opting for Basque and Kurdish national development, ETA and the PKK as popular movements came to the

forefront as the leading actors of the national struggle and received considerable support from the nationalist sectors. The position of ETA in favor of the Basque working class against the Basque bourgeoisie and its involvement in labor-related questions, and the PKK's struggle against tribal *aghas* who exploit the landless peasant illustrate the social roots of Basque and Kurdish neo-nationalisms.

The initial popular support and legitimacy attributed to ETA saw a significant transformation through the 1990s due to political changes taking place since the death of Franco and Spain's transition to liberal and pluralist democracy. With the re-institutionalization of politics, the PNV, the founding actor of Basque nationalism, recovered its leading position in Basque politics, ending ETA's two-decade-long protagonist position. The cohort effects of neoliberal policies implemented through the professionalization of politics and privatization of social life also unsettled the hegemony of MLNV in the public sphere.

These developments damaged the transgenerational transmission of the group truth based on 'the state of war'. Those who were born and passed through their socialization during the Francoist regime experienced the last traumatogenic incidents of the dictatorship; such events as Burgos Trial and the last executions by Franco built up a collective memory that delegitimized the regime to a large extent in the eyes of general Basque public opinion. New generations, who socialized in the period of democratic consolidation with significantly reduced symbolic and physical state violence, however, found it challenging to adopt this group truth legitimizing the use of violent repertoires for the Basque self-determination. Incidents experienced by later generations after the Spanish Transition were reproduced as 'national traumas' almost exclusively within the group truth of *abertzale* left, whereas larger segments of Basque society did not adopt these trauma narratives.

Likewise, while practices of symbolic, institutional, and physical violence during the Franco period had traumatic impacts, discriminate character of physical violence exclusively targeting *abertzale* left circles and the components of the MLNV, as well as the social conflict on the linguistic question, were not qualified as 'national trauma' by the vast majority of ordinary Basque nationalists. Political marginalization and social isolation of the MLNV, starting with the Ajuria-Enea pact, legitimized the fight against 'ETA terrorism'. This official truth consolidated through the 2000s, especially after the 11 September attacks in 2001 on which the narrative of 'war against terror' was successfully constructed in the western world, winning most ordinary Basque nationalists over against the group truth reproduced in minimal space by the *abertzale* left

In Kurdistan, on the other hand, both cohort and period effects mostly favored the justification of the use of arms through the 1990s. As several individuals point out, cohort effects of the same neoliberal policies in Turkey made the gap between western Turkey and Kurdistan even further visible

in terms of economic development and cultural division of labor, justifying the PKK's anti-colonial discourse. Official counter-terrorism discourse incited discrimination and racism towards Kurds living in western Turkey for economic or security concerns, facilitating the penetration of the PKK through organizational activities among these large communities.

Period effects of the 'anti-terror' policy of the state in rural Kurdistan through mass forced displacements and burning of villages and other extrajudicial methods implemented as well as the ongoing strict repression on the Kurdish symbolic universe also made the PKK's argument of 'occupied Kurdistan' visible. Mass *serhildans* in towns and cities and mass arrests and civilian casualties as response continually reproduced a vicious cycle of violence and mobilization. The narrative constructed by the PKK as the only organization of the Kurdish national liberation struggle, therefore, was extended among young generation Kurds through the 2000s, undermining the cohort effects of the 1990s observed among upcoming young generations in the rest of Turkey.

Almost all individuals from any generation analyzed in this study affirm that they and their surroundings have been subjected to physical, symbolic, and institutional violence as well as societal violence in and out of Kurdistan. The indiscriminate character of these violent practices and the lack of any mechanism promoting the symbolic components of the Kurdish national universe made the trauma narrative based on these practices be adopted by large segments of Kurdish society, legitimizing the group truth objectified by the PKK against the official truth on 'PKK terrorism'.

Comparative analysis of both cases indicates that the historical narrative constructed upon collective traumas and the fight for ethnic survival constitutes a plausible bridge with the facts experienced by the young generations of Kurds. In contrast, in the Basque case, this latter lacks significantly, especially apart from the mid-1980s. The emergence of anti-(ETA)violence movements backed by a considerable number of Basque precisely emphasizes the problematic transgenerational transmission of the MLNV's group truth based on overdramatization of suffering and war to future birth cohorts. In contrast, in Kurdistan, the PKK has managed to extend its group truth over urban and rural masses, establishing its absolute hegemony with no significant rival movement or group.

As a result of this process, the growing social legitimacy of the PKK among a considerable number of Kurds has made it possible for the political generations in Kurdistan to show an uninterrupted continuity. The impossibility and high-value cost of non-violent repertoires and, therefore, the lack of any other significant alternative political actor claiming the representation of Kurds have made the PKK and its legal representatives the hegemonic actors of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement. The same cohort effects of neoliberalism in the Basque Country as a part of Spain, a leading member of the EU since 1986, and period effects favoring more plural and competitive

politics in the field of Basque nationalism, and the rigid opposition of the PNV towards the use of violent repertoires in political contention with the Spanish state have provoked a rupture in the transmission of generational tradition that gradually ends up in political and social marginalization of the MLNV.

Finally, cohort and period effects also have significant impacts on the symbolic evolution of these groups that, in return, transform the society to the degree that the group is qualified legitimate by the members of this latter. When the generational development of both cases are taken into consideration, one notes that changes and transformations in cultural and social dynamics are reflected in the performative rituals of ETA and the PKK.

The initial influence of Catholic Basque culture on ETA saw a rapid transformation after the second and third waves of secularization with the end of Francoism, and, as a result, the MLNV began to have reasonably loose ties with traditional social institutions. Arguably, the fact that the movement has not adopted such concepts as martyrdom or a divine understanding of leadership also has to see with the consequences of this secular social evolution of Basque society. In the Kurdish case, however, the impacts of cultural and social dynamics and moral conduct are reflected in the performative practices of the PKK and the Kurdish *yurtsever* movement. Despite the secular structure of the PKK and progressive claims on gender-related questions, it is noted that the movement adopts certain religious and traditional concepts such as divine leadership, martyrdom, and *namus* by reinterpreting and transforming their content in accordance with its own value system.

Although the research population of this study is unable to provide sufficient empirical evidence, initial findings show that impacts of these transformations are reflected in broader social sectors to the degree that these movements are attributed a pioneering role, in other words, considered legitimate, by their respective societies. In this sense, the nuance between the well-known slogans *ETA herria zurekin* (ETA, the people is with you) and *PKK halktır, halk burada* (The PKK is the people, and the people is here) refers to a crucial difference in terms of the distance that the avant-garde movement and its popular bases have. This distance is also reflected in the interaction between the group and the community that it claims to represent that has followed an opposite direction in ETA and the PKK beginning from the early 1990s and continued through the 2000s. Future studies with a broader research population will provide more satisfying answers to questions with this respect.

## Bibliography

- Agirre, Joxean (2007) *¿Cipayos? Policía vasca o brazo armado del PNV*, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.
- Agirre, Julen (pseu. Eva Forest) (1974) *Operación Ogro: Cómo y por qué ejecutamos a Carrero Blanco*, Hendaye: Ediciones Mugalde.
- Aguilar, Paloma (2002) *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*, New York: Berghahn Books.
- Aizpuru, M., Unanue, D. (1991) "El clero diocesano guipuzcoano y el nacionalismo vasco: un análisis sociológico" in Beramendi & Máiz (Eds.) *Los Nacionalismos en España de la II República*, Madrid: Siglo XXI, pp. 287-304.
- Alcedo, Miren (1996) *Militar en ETA. Historias de vida y muerte*, Donostia - San Sebastián: R & B.
- Alexander, J. C., Eyerman, R., Giesen, B., Smelser, N.J., Sztompka, P. (2004) *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, California: University of Berkeley Press.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2012) *Trauma: A Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Álvarez Enparantza, José Luis (Txillardegui) (1997) *Euskal Herria en el Horizonte*, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.
- Álvarez Junco, José (1996) "The nation-building process in nineteenth-century in Spain" in Clare Mar-Molinero and Angel Smith (Eds.) *Nationalism and the Nation in the Iberian Peninsula. Competing and Conflictive Identities*, Oxford: Berg, pp. 86-107
- Álvarez Junco, José (1997) "El nacionalismo español como mito movilizador. Cuatro Guerras" in Rafael Cruz and Manuel Pérez Ledesma (Eds.) *Cultura y movilización en la España contemporánea*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, pp. 35-67.
- Álvarez Junco, José (2001) *Mater Dolorosa. La idea de España en el siglo XIX*, Madrid: Taurus.
- Alwin, D.F., McCammon, R.J. (2007) "Rethinking generations" in *Research in Human Development*, Vol.4, Nº3-4, pp. 219-237.
- Anter, Musa (1991/1992) *Hatıralarım*, Vol. 1 & 2, Istanbul: Yön Yayıncılık.
- Apalategi, Jokin (1979) *Los vascos: de la nación al estado. PNV, ETA, ENBATA*, San Sebastián-Donostia: Elkar.
- Apalategi, Jokin (1998) "Le Pays Basque à l'heure de l'Union européenne et de la démocratie espagnole" in D. Laborde (Ed.) *La Question Basque*, Paris: L'Harmattan, pp. 119-193.
- Arana Goiri, Sabino (1980) *Obras completas*, Vol. 1-3, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Donostia: Sendoa.
- Aranzadi, Juan (1982) *Milenarismo vasco (Edad de oro, etnia y nativismo)*, Madrid: Taurus.
- Aretxaga, Begoña (1988) *Los funerales en el nacionalismo vasco radical: ensayo antropológico*, San Sebastián: Casa Baroja.
- Aretxaga, Begoña (2000) "A fictional reality: Paramilitary death squads and the construction of State terror in Spain" in Jeffrey A. Sluka (Ed.) *Death Squad. The Anthropology of State Terror*, Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania.
- Aretxaga, Begoña (2005) *States of Terror. Begoña Aretxaga's Essays*, Reno (Nevada): University of Nevada Press.
- Arregi, Joseba (2000) *La Nación Vasca Posible. El nacionalismo democrático en la sociedad vasca*, Barcelona: Crítica.
- Armstrong, John A. (1982) *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill (USA): The University of North Caroline Press.
- Arriaga, Mikel (1997) *Y nosotros que éramos de Herri Batasuna*, San Sebastián: Haranburu.
- Attias-Donfut, C. (1988) *Sociologie des générations. L'empreinte du temps*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

- Ayata, Muzaffer (1999) *Tarihe Ateşten Bir Sayfa: Diyarbakır Zindanı*, (n.p.): Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Aydın, Suavi (1998) *Kimlik Sorunu, Ulusallık ve 'Türk Kimliği'*, Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi.
- Aydın, S., Emiroğlu, K. (2003) *Antropoloji Sözlüğü*, Ankara: Bilim ve Sanat.
- Aydın, S., Taşkın, Y. (2017) *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., İstanbul: İletişim.
- Aydinoğlu, Ergun (2014) *Fis Köyünden Kobanê'ye Kürt Özgürlük Hareketi*, İstanbul: Versus Kitap.
- Azurmendi, Mikel (1998) *La herida patriótica*, Madrid: Taurus.
- Bahçeli, T., Noel, S. (2011) "The Justice and Development Party and the Kurdish question" in M. Casier & J. Jongerden (Eds.) *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey: Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish Issue*, London & NY: Routledge, pp. 101-121.
- Bandura, Albert (1998) "Mechanisms of moral disengagement" in W. Reich (Ed.) *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, pp. 161-192.
- Barker, Rodney (1990) *Political Legitimacy of the State*, Oxford: Clarendon.
- Barker, Rodney (2001) *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects*, Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Barker, Rodney (2007) *Making Enemies*, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barkey, H.J., Fuller, G.E. (1998) *Turkey's Kurdish Question*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bartels, L.M., Jackman, S. (2013) "A generational model of political learning" in *Electoral Studies*, pp. 1-12.
- Bastante, Jesús (2004) *Los curas de ETA: la iglesia vasca entre la cruz y la ikurriña*, Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros.
- Bayık, Cemil (Cuma) (n.d.) *PKK Tarihi*, (n.p.).
- Beetham, David (1991) *The Legitimation of Power*, London: Macmillan.
- Beltza (pseu. Emilio López Adán) (1974) *El nacionalismo vasco (de 1876 a 1936)*, Hendaye: Ediciones Mugalde.
- Beltza (pseu. Emilio López Adán) (1977) *El nacionalismo vasco en exilio 1937 - 1960*, San Sebastián-Donostia: Editorial Txertoa.
- Bender, Cemşid (1995) *Kürt Tarihi ve Uygarlığı*, İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları.
- Berger, Gerald J. (1967) "Political socialization and political change" in *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 20, N° 2, pp. 390-407.
- Berger P., Luckmann, T. (1991 [1966]) *The Social Construction of Reality*, London: Penguin Books.
- Berkowitz, Leonard (1989) "Frustration-aggression hypothesis: Examination and reformulation" in *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 106, N°1, pp. 59-73.
- Bertaux, Daniel (2010) *L'enquête et ses méthodes: le récit de vie*, (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Paris: Armand Colin.
- Beşikçi, İsmail (2013[1977]a) *Kürtlerin Mecburi İskanı*, İstanbul: İBV Yayınları.
- Beşikçi, İsmail (2013[1977]b) *Türk Tarih Tezi, 'Güneş-Dil Teorisi' ve Kürt Sorunu*, İstanbul: İBV Yayınları.
- Beşikçi, İsmail (2013[1990]) *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) Dersim Jenosidi*, İstanbul: İBV Yayınları.
- Beşikçi, İsmail (2014[1969]) *Doğu Anadolu'nun Düzeni (Sosyo-Ekonomik ve Etnik Temeller)*, İstanbul: İBV Yayınları.
- Biner, Z. Özlem (2010) "Acts of Defacement, Memories of Loss: Ghostly Effects of the "Armenian Crisis" in Mardin, Southeastern Turkey" in *History and Memory*, Vol. 22, N°2, pp. 68-94.
- Boratav, Korkut (2003) *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908 – 2002*, (7<sup>th</sup> Edition), Ankara: İmge Kitabevi.



- Bozarslan, Hamit (1988) "Les révoltes kurdes en Turquie kemaliste (quelques aspects)" in *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, N° 151, (Mouvements Nationaux et Minorités au Moyen-Orient), pp. 121-136.
- Bozarslan, Hamit (2002) "Kürt Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd Hareketi (1898-2000)", in T. Bora (Ed.) *Milliyetçilik*, İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 841-870.
- Bozarslan, Hamit (2003) "Le nationalisme kurde, de la violence politique au suicide sacrificiel" in *Critique Internationale*, N°21, pp. 93-115.
- Bozarslan, Hamit (2005a) "Türkiye'de Kürt Milliyetçiliği: Zımnî sözleşmeden isyana (1919-1925)" in A. Vali (Ed.) *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, İstanbul: Avesta Yayınları, pp. 199-229.
- Bozarslan, Hamit (2005b) "Türkiye'de (1919-1980) Yazılı Kürt Tarihi Söylemi Üzerine Bazı Hususlar" in A. Vali (Ed.) *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, İstanbul: Avesta Yayınları, pp: 35-57.
- Bozarslan, Hamit (2009) *Conflict kurde: Le brasier oublié du Moyen-Orient*, Paris: Éditions Autrement.
- Bozarslan, Hamit (2012) *Ortadoğu'nun Siyasal Sosyolojisi: Arap İsyanlarından Önce ve Sonra*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Bozarslan, M. Emin (1964) *İslâmiyet Açısından Şeyhlik ve Ağalık*, Ankara: Toplum Yayınevi.
- Bozarslan, M. Emin (2002[1966]) *Doğunun Sorunları*, İstanbul: Avesta.
- Brass, Paul R. (1994) "Élite competition and nation-formation" in J. Hutchinson & A.D. Smith (Eds.) *Nationalism*, Oxford & NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 83-89.
- Braungart, M. M., Braungart, R. G. (1986) "Life-course and generational politics" in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 12, pp. 205-231.
- Braungart, M. M., Braungart, R. G. (1991) "The effects of the 1960s political generation on former left- and right-wing youth activist leaders" in *Social Problems*, Vol. 38 N°3, pp. 297-315.
- Brende, J.O., Parson, E.R. (1986) *Vietnam Veterans. The Road to Recovery*, USA: Penguin Group.
- Breuilly, John (1993) *Nationalism and the State*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bristow, Jennie (2015) *Baby Boomers and Generational Conflict*, Hampshire & NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brubaker, Rogers (1998) "Myths and misconceptions in the study of nationalism" in J.A. Hall (Ed.) *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 272-306.
- Bruni, L., Giacomucci, G. (1992) *ETA: Historia Política de una Lucha Armada*, Vol. 1-2, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.
- Burnett, Judith (2010) *Generations: The Time Machine in Theory and Practice*, UK: Ashgate.
- Buss, Allan R. (1974) "Generational analysis: description, explanation, and theory" in *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 30, N°2, pp. 55-71.
- Büyükkaya, Necmettin (2008[1992]) *Kalemimden Sayfalar*, İstanbul: Weşanxaneyê Vateyî.
- Cansız, Sakine (2014) *Hep Kavgaydı Yaşamım*, Vol.1 & 2, Diyarbakır: Aram.
- Caro Baroja, Julio (1974) *Estudios Vascos VI. Introducción a la historia social y la económica del pueblo vasco*, San Sebastián-Donostia: Txertoa.
- Casanova, Iker (2007) *ETA, 1958 – 2008: Medio Siglo de Historia*, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.
- Casquete, Jesús (2009) *En el nombre de Euskal Herria. La religión política del nacionalismo vasco radical*, Madrid: Editorial Tecnos.
- Cassan Patrick (1997) *Le pouvoir français et la question basque (1981 – 1993)*, Paris: Ed. L'Harmattan.
- CEDRI (1990) *El GAL. El terrorismo de estado en la Europa de las democracias*, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.

- Cizre, Ü., Çınar, M. (2003) "Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process." in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, N° 102(2), pp. 309-332.
- Chauvel, Louis (1998) *Le destin des générations. Structure sociale et cohortes en France au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Paris : Presses Universitaires de France.
- Clark, R. Paul (1990) *Negotiating with ETA: Obstacle to peace in the Basque Country, 1975 – 1988*, Reno (Nevada): University of Nevada Press.
- Collins, Randall (2004) *Interaction Ritual Chains*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Colomer, Josep M. (1998) "The Spanish 'State of Autonomies' in politics and policy in democratic Spain" in *West European Politics*, Vol. 21: 4, pp. 40-52.
- Connor, Walker (1990) "When is a nation?" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.13, N°1, pp. 92–103.
- Connor, Walker (2002) "A primer for analyzing ethnonational conflict" in S. A. Giannakos (Ed.) *Ethnic Conflict: Religion, Identity, and Politics*, Ohio: Ohio University Press, pp. 21-42.
- Conteh-Morgan, Earl (2004) *Collective Political Violence*, NY & London: Routledge.
- Conversi, Daniele (2000) *The Basque, the Catalans and Spain. Alternative routes to nationalist mobilisation*, Reno: University of Nevada Press.
- Conversi, Daniele (2012) "Nationalism and modernism" in *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol.17, N°1, pp. 13-34.
- Corcuera, Javier (1980) *Orígenes, ideología y organización del nacionalismo vasco (1876-1904)*, Madrid: Siglo XXI.
- Corcuera, Javier (2009) "Estatutismo vasco durante la Segunda República. Foralidad y autonomía regional" in Luis Castells & Arturo Cajal (Eds.), *La Autonomía Vasca en la España Contemporánea (1908 - 2008)*, Madrid: Marcial Pons, pp. 203-224.
- Corsten, Michael (1999) "The time of generations" in *Time & Society*, Vol. 8, N°2, pp. 249-272.
- Coser, Lewis (1956) *The Functions of Social Conflict*, NY: Free Press.
- Coser, Lewis (1967) *Continuities in the Study of Social Conflict*, NY: Free Press.
- Coverdale, John F. (2014) *The Basque phase of Spain's first Carlist War*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. (1991) "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color" in *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 43, N°6, pp. 1241-1299.
- Crenshaw, Martha (1981) "The causes of terrorism" in *Comparative Politics* Vol. 13, N°4, pp. 379-399.
- Cruz, Juanjo (1977) *Franquismo y lucha de clases: una aproximación histórica (1939 - 1975)*, Barcelona: CEDES.
- Çakır, Ruşen (2010) "Kurdish Political Movement and the 'Democratic Opening'" in *Insight Turkey*, Vol.12, N°2, pp. 179-192.
- Çağlayan, Handan (2007) *Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar: Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Çağlayan, Handan (2013) *Kürt Kadınların Penceresinden: Resmî Kimlik Politikaları, Milliyetçilik, Barış Mücadelesi*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Çelik, A., Dinç, N.K. (2015) *Yüz Yıllık Ah: Toplumsal Hafızanın İzinde 1915 Diyarbakir*, İstanbul: IBV Yayınları.
- Çelik, Ayşe B. (2012), "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Turkey: From Denial of Kurds to Peaceful Co-existence?" in D. Landis & R. D. Albert (Eds.) *Handbook of Ethnic Conflict: International Perspectives*, NY: Springer Press, pp. 241-260.
- Çelik, Filiz (2017) "The Alevi of Dersim: A psychosocial approach to the effects of the massacre, time and space" in T. Issa (Ed.) *Alevi in Europe: Voices of Migration, Culture and Identity*, London & NY: Routledge.

- Darıcı, Haydar (2009) *Violence and freedom: The politics of Kurdish children and youth in urban space*, PhD dissertation, Istanbul: Sabancı University.
- Delgado, Ander (2007) "El nacionalismo vasco y el clero durante la Restauración: ¿una relación tan estrecha?" in L. Castells, A. Cajal & F. Molina (Eds.) (2007) *El País Vasco y España: Identidades, nacionalismos y Estado (siglos XIX y XX)*, Bilbao: UPV/EHU, pp. 185-213.
- De la Calle, Luis (2007) "Fighting for Local Control: Street Violence in the Basque Country" in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51, Nº2, pp. 431-455.
- De la Granja, José Luis (2006) "El antimaketismo: la visión de Sabino Arana sobre España y los españoles" in *Norba. Revista de Historia*, Vol. 19, 191-203.
- De la Granja, José Luis (2008) *Nacionalismo y II República en el País Vasco. Estatutos de autonomía, partidos y elecciones. Historia de Acción Nacionalista Vasca: 1930-1936*, Madrid: Siglo XXI.
- Della Porta, Donatella (1995) *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany*, Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Della Porta, Donatella (1996) "Social Movements and the State: Thoughts on the Policing of Protest." in D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy & M. N. Zald. (Eds.) *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University, pp. 62-92.
- Demir, Melike G. (2015) *1980'lerden 2000'lere Siyasal Kürt Kadınının İnşası*, Istanbul: Belge.
- De Pablo, S., de la Granja, J.L., Rubio, C. (2011) *Breve Historia de Euskadi: de los fueros a la autonomía*, Madrid: Debate.
- Deringil, Selim (1991) "Legitimacy structures in the Ottoman State: The reign of Abdulhamid II (1876-1909)" in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 23, Nº 3, pp. 345-359.
- Dersim Raporu (2011 [1933-1934?]), Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Dersimi, Nuri M. (1952) *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim*, Aleppo: Ani Matbaası.
- Dersimi, Nuri M. (1992) *Dersim'e ve Kürt Milli Mücadelesine Dair Hatıralarım*, Ankara: Öz-Ge.
- Desfor Edles, Laura (1998) *Symbol and ritual in the new Spain: The transition to democracy after Franco*, Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Díez Medrano, Juan (1999) *Naciones Divididas. Clase, Política y Nacionalismo en el País Vasco y Cataluña*, Madrid: CIS.
- Doğan, Mazlum (1994[1982]) *Toplu Yazılar*, (n.p.): Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Douglass, W.A., Zulaika, J. (1990) "On the interpretation of terrorist violence: ETA and the Basque political process" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 32, Nº 2, pp. 238-257.
- Dowd, James J. (1980) "The problem of generations: and generational analysis" in *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, Vol.10, Nº3, 213-229.
- Drona, Javier (2013) *Con Cristo o Contra Cristo: Religión y Movilización Antirepublicana en Navarra (1931 - 1936)*, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.
- Dr. Şivan (pseu. Sait Kırmızıtoprak) (2014[1970]) *Kürt Millet Hareketleri ve Irak'ta Kürdistan İhtilali*, Istanbul: El Yayınları.
- Dunleavy, Patrick (2012) "The State" in R.E. Goodin, P. Pettit, T.W. Pogge (Eds.) *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy Vol. 2*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), UK: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 793-804.
- Dunleavy, P., O'Leary B. (1987) *Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy*, London: Macmillan.
- Düzgün, Ali Ekber (2010) "Dersimliyim: Biraz içinden, biraz dışından" in Ş. Aslan (Ed.) *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, pp. 83-99.

- Echeverria, Begoña (2003) "Schooling, Language, and Ethnic Identity in the Basque Autonomous Community" in *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Vol. 34, Nº: 4, pp. 351-372.
- Edmunds, J., Turner, B. S. (2002) *Generations, Culture and Society*, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Edmunds, J., Turner, B. S. (2005) "Global generations: Social change in the twentieth century." in *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 56, pp. 559-577.
- Egaña, I., Giacomucci, G. (1992) *Los días de Argel: Crónica de las conversaciones entre ETA y el Gobierno español*, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.
- Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. (2003[1956]) *From Generation to Generation*, (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers.
- Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. (1973) *Tradition, Change, and Modernity*, NY: John Wiley and Sons.
- Ekinci, T. Ziya (2010) *Lice'den Paris'e Anılarım*, Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Elder, Glen H. (1999[1974]) *Children of the Great Depression. Social Change in Life Experience*, Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press.
- Elder, G.H., Pellerin, L.A. (1998) "Linking history and human lives" in J.Z. Giele & G.H. Elder (Eds.) *Methods of Life Course Research*, California, London & New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 264-294.
- Elias, Norbert (1996) *The Germans. Power struggles and the development of habitus in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Elizondo, Arantxa (1999) *La presencia de las mujeres en los partidos políticos en la Comunidad Autónoma de Euskadi*, Vitoria-Gasteiz: Gobierno Vasco.
- Elliott, Diana M. (1997) "Traumatic events: prevalence and delayed recall in the general population" in *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 65, Nº 5, pp. 811-820.
- Elorza, Antonio (2005) *Tras la huella de Sabino Arana. Los orígenes totalitarios del nacionalismo vasco*, Madrid: Temas de Hoy.
- Eppel, Michael (2008) "The demise of the Kurdish emirates: The impact of Ottoman reforms and international relations on Kurdistan during the first half of the nineteenth century" in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 44, Nº2, pp. 237-258.
- Ergil, Doğu (1975) "A reassessment: The young Turks, their politics and anti-colonial struggle" in *Balkan Studies*, Nº 16(2), pp. 26-72.
- Erikson, Kai T. (1976) *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*, New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Esler, Anthony (1984) "The truest community: social generations as collective mentalities" in *Journal of Political & Military Sociology*, Vol. 12, pp. 99-112.
- Esteban de Vega, Mariano (2003) "La crisis de finales del siglo del XIX y el nacionalismo español" in J.R. Aymes and S. Salaün (Dir) *Les Fins de Siècles en Espagne*, Paris: Press Sorbonne Nouvelle, pp. 125-148.
- Euskadi ala hil* (1976), (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), Saint-Jean de Luz: Editions Euskal-Elkargoa.
- Euskadi Eta Askatasuna (1993) Vol. 1 -8, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.
- Euskadi Eta Askatasuna (2005), Vol. 9-11, Andoain (Gipuzkoa): Aise Liburuak.
- ETA (1979) *Documentos Y*, Vol. 1-18, Donostia: Hordago.
- Etxezarreta, Miren (1977) *El caserío vasco*, Bilbao: Fundación C. de Iturriaga y M<sup>a</sup> de Dañobeitia.
- Eyerman, Ron (2001) *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, Cambridge and NY: Cambridge University Press.

- Eyerman, Ron (2002) "Intellectuals and the construction of an African American identity: outline of a generational approach" in J. Edmunds & B.S. Turner (Eds.) *Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics*, Lanham (Maryland): Rowman & Littlefield, pp.51-75.
- Faligot, Roger (1992) *Guerre spéciale en Europe: Le laboratoire irlandais*, Paris: Ed. Flammarion.
- Fanon, Frantz (2002[1961]) *Les damnés de la terre*, Paris: La Découverte.
- Fearon, J.D., Laitin, D. D. (2003) "Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war" in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, N°1, pp. 75-90.
- Ferret, Jérôme (2012) "Crise sociale, question nationale et violence urbaine. Retour sur la mystérieuse Kale Borroka en Espagne" in *Papeles del CEIC* N° 84.
- Ferret, Jérôme (2014) "Young radical nationalists: Prisoners of their own myth? The case of the *Kale Borroka* in the Spanish Basque country" in *Current Sociology* N° 62(7), pp. 1017-1035.
- Figley, C.R., Kleber, R.J. (1995) "Beyond the 'victim': Secondary traumatic stress" in R.J. Kleber, C.R. Figley & B.P.R. Gersons (Eds.) *Beyond Trauma: Cultural and Societal Dynamics*, NY: Plenum Press, 75-99.
- Fillieule, Olivier (2001) "Propositions pour une analyse processuelle de l'engagement individuel" in *Revue française de science politique*, Vol.51, N°1-2, pp. 199-217.
- Fillieule, Olivier (2009) "Carrière militante" in O. Fillieule, L. Mathieu & C. Péchu (Eds.) *Dictionnaire des mouvements sociaux*, Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, pp. 85-94.
- Fishman, Joshua A. (1980) "Social theory and ethnography: language and ethnicity in Eastern Europe" in P. Sugar (Ed.) *Ethnic Conflict and Diversity in Eastern Europe*, CA: ABC-Clio, pp. 84-97.
- Foran, John (Ed.) (1997) *Theorizing Revolutions*, NY: Routledge.
- Fuccaro, Nelida (2005) "Manda Yönetimi Suriye'sinde Kürtler ve Kürt Milliyetçiliği: Siyaset, Kültür ve Kimlik" in A. Vali (Ed.) *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, Istanbul: Avesta, pp. 231-260.
- Funes, María Jesús (1998) *La salida del silencio. Movilizaciones por la paz en Euskadi 1986-1998*, Madrid: Akal.
- Fusi, Juan Pablo (1987) "La Guerra Civil en el País Vasco: una perspectiva general", in Garitaonandía, C. and de la Granja, José L. (Eds.) *La Guerra Civil en el País Vasco 50 años después*, Leioa: Editorial UPV/EHU, pp. 43-50.
- Fusi, Juan Pablo (1989) "La organización territorial del Estado" in J.P. Fusi (Ed.) *España. Autonomías*, Madrid: Espasa, pp. 11-40.
- Fusi, Juan Pablo (2001) "España. La evolución de la identidad nacional" in Fernando García de Cortázar (coor.) *La nación española: historia y presente*, Madrid: Fundación para el Análisis y los Estudios Sociales, pp. 93-109.
- Garmendia, José Mari (1995) *Historia de ETA*, Vol. 1 & 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), San Sebastián-Donostia: R&B Ediciones.
- Garralda, José Fermín (2001) "Orígenes e ideología del nacionalismo vasco" in *Anuales de la Fundación Francisco Elías de Tejada*, N° 7, pp. 161-244.
- Gellner, Ernest (1994a) "Nationalism and modernization" in J. Hutchinson & A.D. Smith (Eds.) *Nationalism*, Oxford & NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 55-63.
- Gellner, Ernest (1994b) *Encounters with Nationalism*, Oxford (UK) & Cambridge (USA): Blackwell.
- Gellner, Ernest (2006) *Nations and Nationalism*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gezik, Erdal (2012) *Dinsel, etnik ve politik sorunlar bağlamında Alevi Kürtler*, (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Gibbons, John (1999) *Spanish politics today*, Manchester & NY: University of Manchester Press.
- Giddens, Anthony (1987) *The Nation-State and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, LA: University of California Press.

- Giddens, Anthony (1995) *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), London: Macmillan.
- Giele, J.Z., Elder, G.H. (1998) *Methods of Life-Course Research*, CA & London: Sage Publications.
- Giner, Salvador (1986) "Nacionalismo étnico: centro y periferia en España" in F. Hernández & F. Mercadé (Eds.) *Estructuras sociales y cuestión nacional en España*, Barcelona: Ariel, pp. 436-460.
- Goffman, Erving (1956) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Science Research Centre.
- González Katarain, María Dolores (Yoyes) (2009) *Yoyes: desde su ventana*, Irún (Gipuzkoa): Alberdania.
- González Portilla, Manuel (1981) *La formación de la sociedad capitalista en el País Vasco 1876-1913*, Donostia-San Sebastián: Haranburu.
- González Portilla, M., Garmendia, J.M. (1988) *La posguerra en el País Vasco*, San Sebastián-Donostia: Kriselu
- Gouin, Margaret (2014) "Self-Immolation and Martyrdom in Tibet" in *Mortality*, 19:2, pp. 176-183.
- Göner, Özlem (2017) *Turkish National Identity and Its Outsiders: Memories of State Violence in Dersim*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Greenfeld, Liah (1992) *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity*, MA & London: Harvard University Press.
- Grojean, Olivier (2009) "Violences contre soi" in O. Fillieule, L. Mathieu, P. Péchu (Eds.) *Dictionnaire des mouvements sociaux*, Paris : Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, pp. 564-570.
- Grojean, Olivier (2012) "Self-immolations by Kurdish Activists in Turkey and Europe" in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, N° 25, pp. 159-168.
- Grojean, Olivier (2017) *La révolution kurde. Le PKK et la fabrique d'une utopie*, Paris: La Découverte.
- Guibernau, Montserrat (1996) *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Guibernau, Montserrat (1999) *Nations without States: Political Communities in a Global Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Guibernau, Montserrat (2007) *The Identity of Nations*, Cambridge & MA: Polity Press.
- Gunther, R., Sani, G., Shabad, G.(1988) *Spain After Franco: The Making of a Competitive Party System*, Berkeley, LA & London: University of California Press.
- Gurr, Ted R. (1970) *Why Men Rebel*, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gurr, T. R., Moore, T. H. (1997) "Ethnopolitical rebellion: A cross-sectional analysis of the 1980s with risk assessment of the 1990s" in *American Journal of Political Sciences*, Vol. 41, N°:4, pp. 1079-1130.
- Gurrutxaga, Ander (1985) *El código nacionalista vasca durante el franquismo*, Barcelona: Anthropos.
- Gurrutxaga, Ander (1990) *La refundación del nacionalismo vasco*, Bilbao: UPV/EHU
- Gurrutxaga, Ander (1996) *Del PNV a ETA. La transformación del nacionalismo vasco*, Donostia-San Sebastián: Haranburu.
- Güneş, Cengiz (2012) *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Güneş, Cengiz (2013) "Explaining the PKK's Mobilization of the Kurds in Turkey: Hegemony, Myth and Violence" in *Ethnopolitics*, 12:3, pp. 247-267.
- Güneş, Cengiz (2015) "Serhıldanlar ve kitleleşen Kürt direnişi" in A. Işık, B. Bilmez, R. Önen, T. Baykuşak (Eds.) *1990'larda Kürtler ve Kürdistan*, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üni. Yay. pp. 63-79.

- Güneş, C., Zeydanlıoğlu, W. (Eds.) (2014) *The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on Violence, Representation, and Reconciliation*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Güvenç, S., Teselli, F.Ş., Barut, M. (2011) *Zorla yerinden edilenler için ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel haklar araştırma raporu*, Göç Platformu.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1975) *Legitimation Crisis*, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hamilton, Carrie (2007a) *Women and ETA: The gender politics of radical Basque nationalism*, Manchester & NY: Manchester University Press.
- Hamilton, Carrie (2007b) "The Gender Politics of Political Violence: Women Armed Activist in ETA" in *Feminist Review* № 86, pp. 132-148.
- Hanioglu, M. Şükrü (2008) *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Hechter, Michael (1999[1975]) *Internal Colonialism. The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536 – 1966*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), London & NY: Routledge.
- Hechter, Michael (1978) "Group Formation and the Cultural Division of Labor" in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 84: 2, pp. 293-318.
- Hechter, Michael (1985) "Internal colonialism revisited", in E.A. Tiryakian & R. Rogowski (Eds.) *New Nationalisms of the Developed West*, USA: Allen & Unwin, pp. 17-26.
- Hechter, M., Levi, M. (1979) "The Comparative Analysis of Ethno-Regional Movements" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 2, № 3, pp. 260-274.
- Heper, Metin (2007) *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation*, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hirsch, Marianne (2008) "The generation of postmemory" in *Poetics Today*, Vol. 29, №1, pp. 103-128.
- Hirschler, Konrad (2001) "Defining the Nation: Kurdish Historiography in Turkey in the 1990s" in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37: 3, pp. 145-166.
- Hobsbawm, Eric (1959) *Primitive Rebels*, Frome & London: Butler & Tanner Ltd.
- Hobsbawm, Eric (1992) *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Hofmann, David C. (2015) "Quantifying and qualifying charisma: A theoretical framework for measuring the presence of charismatic authority in terrorist groups" in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 38, №9, pp. 710-733.
- Horowitz, Donald L. (1985) *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, LA & London: University of California Press.
- Hroch, Miroslav (1995) "National self-determination from a historical perspective" in *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol. 37, № 3, pp. 283-299.
- Hroch, Miroslav (2013) "National movements in the Habsburg and Ottoman empires" in J. Breuilly (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, UK: Oxford University Press, pp. 175-198.
- Hutchinson, John (2005) *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, London & CA: Sage Publications.
- Hutchinson, John (2017) *Nationalism and War*, Oxford & NY: Oxford University Press.
- Ibarra, Pedro (1987) *La evolución estratégica de ETA (1963-1987)*, Donostia: Kriselu.
- Ibarra, P., Ahedo, I. (2004) "Los sistemas políticos de Euskal Herria" in *RIPS*, Vol. 3, №1, pp. 77-96.
- Idigoras, Jon (2000) *El hijo de Juanita Gerrickabeitia*, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.
- Inglehart, R., Welzel, C. (2005) *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy*, Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press.

- Irmak, Hüseyin (2011) "Osmanlı belgelerinde Dersim'e dair bazı örnekler" in Ş. Aslan (Ed.) *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, pp. 245-267.
- İnce, Başak (2012) *Citizenship and Identity in Turkey: From Atatürk's Republic to the Present Day*, London & NY: Tauris.
- Jackman, Mary, R. (2002) "Violence in social life" in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 28, pp. 387-415.
- Janson, Carl-Gunnar (1981) "Some problems of longitudinal research in the social sciences" in F. Schulsinger, S.A. Mednick & J. Knop (Eds.) *Longitudinal Research: Methods and Uses in Behavioral Science*, Boston, The Hague and London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishing, pp. 19-55.
- Jáuregui, Gurutz (1981) *Ideología y estrategia política de ETA. Análisis de su evolución entre 1959 - 1968*, Madrid: Siglo XXI.
- Jennings, M.K., Niemi, R.G. (1981) *Generations and Politics. A Panel Study of Young Adults and Their Parents*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Jongerden, Joost (2007) *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds: An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War*, Leiden & Boston: Brill.
- Jongerden, Joost (2010) "Village Evacuation and Reconstruction in Kurdistan (1993-2002)" in *Études rurales*, N° 186, pp. 77 – 100.
- Jongerden, J., Akkaya, A.H. (2011) "Born from the Left: the making of the PKK" in M. Casier & J. Jongerden (Eds.) *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey: Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish Issue*, London & NY: Routledge, pp. 123 – 143.
- Juhem, Philippe (2009) "Effets de Génération", in O. Fillieule, L. Mathieu & C. Péchu (Eds.) *Dictionnaire des mouvements sociaux*, Paris : Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, pp. 188-197.
- Jwaideh, Wadie (1999 [1961]) *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihi. Kökenleri ve Gelişimi*, İstanbul: İletişim.
- Kahraman, Ahmet (2003) *Kürt İsyanları: Tedip ve Tenkil*, İstanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın.
- Kansu, Aykut (1997) *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, Leiden, NY, Cologne: Brill.
- Kaplan, Gisele (1992) *Contemporary Western European Feminism*, London: UCL Press.
- Karabekir, Kazım (2004) *Ermeni Dosyası*, İstanbul: Emre Yayınları.
- Karayılan, Murat (2014) *Bir Savaşın Anatomisi: Kürdistan'da Askeri Çizgi*, Diyarbakır: Aram.
- Kaya, Ayhan (Ed.) (2009) *Türkiye'de İç Göçler Bütünleşme mi Geri Dönüş mü?*, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Kaya, Mehmet S. (2011) *The Zaza Kurds of Turkey: A Middle Eastern Minority in a Globalised Society*, London & NY: I.B. Tauris.
- Kaufman, Stuart J. (2001) *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.
- Keating, Michael (1997) "Stateless Nation-Building: Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland in the Changing State System" in *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol.3, N°4, pp. 689-717.
- Kedourie, Ellie (1960) *Nationalism*, London: Hutchinson & Co.
- Kellerman, Peter F. (2007) *Sociodrama and Collective Drama*, London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Kelman, Herbert C. (2001) "The role of national identity in conflict resolution" in R. D. Ashmore, L. Jussim, & D. Wilder (Eds.) *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction*, Oxford & NY: Oxford University Press.
- Keser, İnan (2010) *Göç ve Zor: Diyarbakır Örneğinde Göç ve Zorunlu Göç*, Ankara: Ütopya.



- Keyder, Çağlar (2013a) "İktisadi gelişme ve bunalım: 1950-1980" in I.C. Schink & E.A. Tonak (Eds.) (2013) *Geçiş Sürecinde Türkiye*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edt., İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, pp. 471-536.
- Keyder, Çağlar (2013b) "Türkiye demokrasisinin ekonomi politiği" in I.C. Schink & E.A. Tonak (Eds.) (2013) *Geçiş Sürecinde Türkiye*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edt., İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, pp. 61-118.
- Klandermans, Bert (1997) *The Social Psychology of Protest*, Oxford (UK): Blackwell Publishers.
- Klare, M. T., Kornbluh, P. (Eds.) (1988) *Law Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, proinsurgency, and anti-terrorism in the eighties*, NY: Pantheon.
- Klein, Janet (2007) "Kurdish nationalists and non-nationalist Kurds: Rethinking minority nationalism and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1809" in *Nations and Nationalisms*, Vol.13, N°1, pp. 135-153.
- KONDA (2011) *Kürt Meselesi'nde Algı ve Beklentiler*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Kotan, Mümtaz (2003) *Yenilginin İzdüşümleri*, Athens: Yunan – Kürt Dostluk Derneği Yayınları.
- Kurij, Seyîdxan (2015) *Şeyh Said Hareketi. Tanıkların Anlatımı ile*, Diyarbakır: Lîs Yayınevi.
- Kutlay, Naci (1998) *Anılarım*, İstanbul: Avesta Basın Yayın.
- Kutlay, Naci (2012) *Kürt Kimliğinin Oluşum Süreci*, Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları.
- Kutschera, Chris (1997) *Le défi kurde ou le rêve fou de l'indépendance*, Paris : Bayard éditions.
- Laitin, David D. (1995) "National revivals and violence" in *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol.36, N°1, pp. 3-43.
- Laitin, David D. (2007) *Nations, States, and Violence*, Oxford & NY: Oxford University Press.
- Laizer, Sheri (1996) *Martyrs, Traitors and Patriots: Kurdistan after the Gulf War*, London: Zed Books.
- Lamprou, Alexandros (2015) *Nation-Building in Modern Turkey: The 'People's Houses', the State and The Citizen*, London: I. B. Tauris.
- Larronde, Jean-Claude (1990) *El nacionalismo vasco. Su origen y su ideología en la obra de Sabino Arana-Goiri*, San Sebastián: Txertoa Argitaletxea.
- Lecours, André (2007) *Basque Nationalism and the Spanish State*, Reno: University of Nevada.
- Lefevre, R., Sawicki, F. (2006) *La société des socialistes. Le PS aujourd'hui*, Paris: Editions du Croquant.
- Leonisio, R., Molina, F., Muro, D. (2017) (Eds.) *ETA's Terrorist Campaign: From Violence to Politics, 1968–2015*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Letamendia, Francisco (1990) *Euskadi. Pueblo y Nación*, Vol. 1-7, San Sebastián (Donostia): Sendoa Argitaldaria.
- Letamendia, Francisco (1997) *Juego de Espejos: Conflictos Nacionales Centro-Periferia*, Madrid: Editorial Trotta.
- Letamendia, Francisco (2001) *Ciencia Política Alternativa. Su aplicación al País Vasco e Irlanda del Norte*, Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos.
- Lewis, Bernard (1968) *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), London, Oxford & NY: Oxford University Press.
- Linz, Juan J. (1985) "From primordialism to nationalism" in E.A. Tiryakian & R. Rogowski (Eds.) *New Nationalisms of the Developed West*, USA: Allen & Unwin, pp. 203-253.
- Linz, Juan José (1987) *La quiebra de las democracias*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Linz, J.J., Gómez-Reino, M., Orizo, F.A., Vila, D. (1986) *Conflicto en Euskadi*, Madrid: Espasa Libros.
- Llera, Francisco J. (1994) *Los Vascos y la política (El proceso político vasco: elecciones, partidos, opinión y legitimación en el País Vasco 1977 - 1992)*, Bilbao: UPV-EHU.

- Llera, Francisco J. (2013) "ETA: medio siglo de terrorismo y limpieza étnica en Euskadi", in *Sistema*, Nº 231, pp. 3-46.
- López Vidales, Neréida (2004) "Ritualismo y simbología en el nacionalismo vasco radical. La religión nacionalista" in *Espiral*, Vol. 10, Nº 30, pp. 11-36.
- Lorenzo Espinosa, José María (1993) *Txabi Etxebarrieta. Armado de palabra y obra*. Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.
- Lorenzo Espinosa, José María (2006) *Historia de Euskal Herria. El nacimiento de una nación*, Vol. 3, Tafalla (Navarre): Txalaparta.
- Madsen, D., Snow, P.G. (1996) *The charismatic bond: Political behavior in time of crisis*, Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press.
- Mannheim, Karl (1952[1928]) "The problem of generations" in P. Kecskemeti (Ed.) *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 276-322.
- Marcus, Aliza (2007) *Blood and Belief. The PKK and the Kurdish fight for independence*, NY: New York University Press.
- Mardin, Şerif (1973) "Center-periphery relations: A key to Turkish politics?" in *Daedalus*, Vol. 102, Nº1, pp. 169-190.
- Mardin, Şerif (1991) *Türk Modernleşmesi*, Istanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık.
- Marías, Julián (1949) *El Método Histórico de las Generaciones*, Madrid: Revista de Occidente.
- Marín, José María (2000) "Diez años de gobierno del PSOE (1982 – 1992)" in *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Nº 13, pp. 189-209.
- Martínez, Josetxu (1993) "La construcción de la identidad nacional. Los elementos diferenciales" in J. Apalategi & X. Palacios (Eds) *Identidad Vasca y Nacionalidad. Pluralismo Cultural y Transnacionalización (I)*, Vitoria-Gasteiz: Instituto de Estudios sobre Nacionalismo Comparados, pp. 171-190.
- Mata, José Manuel (1993) *El nacionalismo vasco radical: discurso, organización y expresiones*, Bilbao: UPV/EHU.
- McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., Tilly, C. (2004) *Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, J.D., Zald, M.N. (1977) "Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory" in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, Nº. 6, pp. 1212-1241.
- McCrone, David (1992) *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation*, London & NY: Routledge
- McDowall, David (2004) *A Modern History of the Kurds*, Revised Ed., London & NY: I.B. Tauris.
- McGowan, Todd (2004) *The End of Dissatisfaction? Jacques Lacan and the Emerging Society of Enjoyment*, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Mees, Ludger (2003) *Nationalism, Violence and Democracy: The Basque Clash of Identities*, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Merton, Robert K. (1995) "The Thomas Theorem and the Matthew Effect" in *Social Forces*, Vol. 74, Nº2, pp. 379-424.
- Miralles, Ricardo (1992) "Histografía del movimiento obrero en el País Vasco: 1880 - 1936" in *Historia Contemporánea*, nº 7, pp. 237 - 256.
- Miroğlu, Orhan (2010) *Hevsel Bahçesinde Bir Dut Ağacı. Canip Yıldırım'la Söyleşi*, Istanbul: Everest Yayınları.
- Morley, D., Robins, K. (1995) *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Morris, Christopher W. (1998) *An Essay on the Modern State*, Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press.

- Munarriz, Fermin (2012) *El tiempo de las luces. Entrevista con Arnaldo Otegi*, Bilbo, Euskal Herria: Baigorri Argitaletxea S.A.
- Murua, Imanol (2016) *Un final para ETA: Crónica de un proceso inacabado*, Donostia (San Sebastian): Tarttalo.
- Murua, Imanol (2017) *Ending ETA's Armed Campaign: How and Why the Basque Armed Group Abandoned Violence*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Muro, Diego (2008) *Ethnicity and Violence: The Case of Radical Basque Nationalism*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Nairn, Tom (2003[1977]) *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), Australia: Common Ground.
- Naveh, Eyal J. (1992) *Crown of Thorns: Political Martyrdom in America from Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King, Jr*, NY: New York University Press.
- Neal, Arthur G. (1998) *National Trauma & Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century*, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Nordstrom, C., Robben, A. (1995) "Anthropology and ethnography of violence and sociopolitical conflict" in A. Robben & C. Nordstrom (Eds.) *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*, LA & London: University of California Press, pp. 1-25.
- Olick, Jeffrey (1999) "Collective memory: The two cultures" in *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 17, N<sup>o</sup>3, pp. 333-348.
- Olivola, C., Shafir, E. (2013) "The martyrdom effect: When pain and effort increase prosocial contributions" in *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, Vol. 26 N<sup>o</sup>:1, pp. 91-105.
- Olson, Robert (1989) *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion*, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Orhan, Mehmet (2016) *Political Violence and Kurds in Turkey: Fragmentations, mobilizations, participations and repertoires*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Orridge, Andrew W. (1981) "Uneven development and nationalism: 2" in *Political Studies*, Vol. 29, N<sup>o</sup>2, 181-190.
- Ortiz (pseu. Francisco Letamendia) (1975) *Historia de Euskadi: el Nacionalismo Vasco y ETA*, Paris: Ruedo Ibérico.
- Ortiz (pseu. Francisco Letamendia) (1979) *El no vasco a la reforma*, San Sebastian: Editorial Txertoa.
- Oteiza, Jorge (2007[1963]) *Quousque tandem...! Ensayo de interpretación estética del alma vasca*, Alzuza (Navarre): Fundación Museo Jorge Oteiza.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (1983) *Kürdistan'da Zorun Rolü*, (n.p.): Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (1992) *Önderlik Gerçeği ve PKK Deneyimi*, Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (1993) *3. Kongre Konuşmaları*, Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (1993) *PKK IV. Kongresine Sunulan Politik Rapor*, Istanbul: Zagros.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (1994) *Bir Muhatap Arıyorum: Ateşkes Konuşmaları*, Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (1995) *Diriliş Tamamlandı, Sıra Kurtuluşa*, (Röportaj: E. Kürkçü & R. Duran), Istanbul: Güneş Ülkesi Yayıncılık.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (1996) *Devrimin Dili ve Eylemi*, Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (1999) *Kürt Sorununa Demokratik Çözüm Manifestosu*, Savunmalar Vol.1-3, Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (2001) *Sümer Rahip Devletinden Demokratik Uygarığa, AİHM Savunmaları*, Vol. 1 & 2, Cologne: Mezopotamya Yayınları.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (2004) *Bir Halkı Savunmak*, Istanbul: Çetin Yayınları.

- Öcalan, Abdullah (2008[1995]) *Nasıl Yaşamalı*, Vol. 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (2009[1996]) *Nasıl Yaşamalı*, Vol. 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Öz, Sibel (2015) "90 kuşağının saçakaltı: Hapishaneler" in A. Işık, B. Bilmez, R. Önen, T. Baykuşak (Eds.) *1990'larda Kürtler ve Kürdistan*, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları pp. 117-133.
- Özar, Ş., Uçarlar, N., Aytar, O. (2013) *Village Guard System*, Diyarbakır: DİSA.
- Özcan, A. Kemal (2006) *Turkey's Kurds. A theoretical analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan*, NY: Routledge.
- Özcan, N. Ali (1999) *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) Tarihi, İdeolojisi ve Yöntemi*, Ankara: ASAM.
- Özçelik, Sezai (2006) "Theories, Practices, and Research in Conflict Resolution and Low-Intensity Conflicts: The Kurdish Conflict in Turkey" in *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, 26 (2), pp. 133-153.
- Özoğlu, Hakan (2004) *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries*, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Pastor, Jaime (2012) *Los nacionalismos, el Estado español y la izquierda*, Torrejón de Ardoz (Madrid): La oveja roja.
- Payne, Stanley (1975) *Basque Nationalism*, Reno: University of Nevada Press.
- Payne, Stanley (1999) *Fascism in Spain, 1923 - 1977*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press
- Pérez-Agote, Alfonso (1984) *La reproducción del nacionalismo vasco*, Madrid: CIS.
- Pérez-Agote, Alfonso (1987) *El nacionalismo vasco a la salida del franquismo*, Madrid: CIS.
- Pérez-Agote, Alfonso (1989) *La sociedad y lo social. Ensayos de sociología*, Bilbao: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco.
- Pérez-Agote, Alfonso (2008) *Las Raíces Sociales del Nacionalismo Vasco*, Madrid: CIS.
- Pérez-Agote, Alfonso (2012) *Cambio religioso en España: los avatares de la secularización*, Madrid: CIS.
- Peterson, Steven A. (1983) "Biology and Political Socialization: A Cognitive Developmental Link?" in *Political Psychology*, Vol.4, N°2, pp. 265-288.
- Pilcher, Jane (1994) "Mannheim's sociology of generations: an undervalued legacy." in *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 45, pp. 481-495.
- PKK (n.d.) *1976 – 1984 PKK Direniş Şehitleri Albümü*, (n.p.)
- PKK (1978) *PKK Kuruluş Bildirisi*, (n.p.): Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- PKK (1993[1978]) *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu (Manifesto)*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- PKK (1995a) *Beşinci Kongre Kararları*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), (n.p.): Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- PKK (1995b) *PKK: Program ve Tüzüğü*, Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- PKK (1995c) *ARGK Yönetmeliği*, (n.p.): Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- PKK (1996) *ARGK Savaş ve Ordu Kılavuzu*, (n.p.): Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- PKK (2000) *PKK: Program ve Tüzüğü*, Cologne: Weşanên Serxwebûn.
- Preston, Paul (2005[1986]) *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Rai, Tage S., Graham, J., Valdesolo, P. (2017) "Dehumanization increases instrumental violence, but not moral violence" in *The National Academy of Sciences* Vol. 114, Issue 32, pp. 8511–8516.
- Reinares, Fernando (1998) *Terrorismo y antiterrorismo*, Barcelona: Paidós.
- Reinares, Fernando (2001) *Patriotas de la muerte. ¿Quiénes han militado en ETA y por qué?*, Madrid: Taurus.

- Rifat, Mevlânzâde (2009[1912]) *Sürgün Hatıralarım*, İstanbul: Avesta Basın Yayın.
- Riggs, A., Turner, B. S. (2000) "Pie-eyed optimists: Baby-boomers the optimistic generation?" in *Social Indicators Research*, N° 52, pp. 73-93.
- Ritzer, George (1986) *Social Problems*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), NY: Random House.
- Ritzer, George (2011) *Sociological Theory*, (8<sup>th</sup> Edition), NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Robles, Cristóbal (2013) *La Santa Sede y la II República (1931). De la Conciliación al Conflicto*, Madrid: Visión Libros.
- Romano, David (2006) *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity*, Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenthal, Gabriele (2007) "Biographical research" in C. Seale, G. Gobo, J.F. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice*, London, CA, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Rosoux, Valérie (2004) "The politics of martyrdom" in R. M. Fields (Ed.) *Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology, and Politics of Self-sacrifice*, Westport, Connecticut & London: Praeger, pp. 83-117.
- Ross, C. J., Richardson, B., Sangrador-Vegas, B. (2016) *Contemporary Spain*, (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), London & NY: Routledge.
- Ryder, Norman B. (1965) "The cohort as a concept in the study of social change" in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 30, N°6, pp. 843-861.
- San Sebastián, Koldo (1984) *Historia del Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, San Sebastián-Donostia: Txertoa.
- Sánchez Erauskin, Javier (1993) *El nacionalcatolicismo en las vascongadas del primer franquismo (1936-1945) como clave del intento legitimador de un regimen*, PhD thesis, Leioa (Bizkaia): UPV/EHU.
- Saraçoğlu, Cenk (2011) *Kurds of Modern Turkey: Migration, Neoliberalism and Exclusion in Turkish Society*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Sargil, Zeki (2010) "Curbing Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Turkey: An empirical assessment of pro-Islamic and socio-economic approaches" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 33 N°3, pp. 533-553.
- Sarrailh de Ihartza, Fernando (*pseu.* Federico Krutwig) (2006[1962]) *Vasconia*, Navarre: Astero.
- Schink, I.C., Tonak, E.A. (2013) "Sonuç" in I.C. Schink & E.A. Tonak (Eds.) (2013) *Geçiş Sürecinde Türkiye*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edt., İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, pp. 585-604.
- Schuman, H., Scott, J. (1989) "Generations and collective memories" in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, N°3, pp. 359-381.
- Searle, John R. (1995) *The Construction of Social Reality*, NY: The Free Press.
- Sebrî, Osman (2012) *Hatıralarım*, Diyarbakır: Lîs Yayınları.
- Serdî, H. Hişyar (1994) *Görüş ve Anılarım*, İstanbul: Med Yayınları.
- Sev'er, A., Yurdakul, G. (2001) "Culture of Honor, Culture of Change: A Feminist Analysis of Honor Killings in Rural Turkey", in *Violence Against Women*, 7(9), pp. 964-998.
- Shariati, Ali (1986) "Nowruz" (translated by M. Abedi) in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 19, N°:3-4, pp. 235-241.
- Shulman, Stephen (2002) "Challenging the civic/ethnic and West/East dichotomies in the study of nationalism" in *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35, N°5, pp. 554-585.
- Simmel, Georg (1955) *Conflict & The Web of Group-Affiliations*, NY: The Free Press – Macmillan Inc.
- Smith, Anthony D. (1981) *The Ethnic Revival*, Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, Anthony D. (1986) *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Smith, Anthony D. (1991) *National Identity*, Reno: University of Nevada Press.

- Smith, Anthony D. (1999) *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Spitzer, Alan B. (1973) "The historical problem of generations" in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, Nº5, pp. 1353-1385.
- Staub, Ervin (2012) "The origins and inhibiting influences in genocide, mass killing and other collective violence" in M. Breen-Smyth (Ed.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence*, London & NY: Routledge pp. 205-224.
- Sullivan, John L. (2015 [1988]) *ETA and Basque Nationalism: The Fight for Euskadi 1890 – 1986*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Summerfield, Derek (1995) "Addressing human response to war and atrocity: major challenges in research and practices and the limitations of western psychiatric models" in R.J. Kleber, C.R. Figley & B.P.R. Gersons (Eds.) *Beyond Trauma: Cultural and Societal Dynamics*, NY: Plenum Press, pp. 17-31.
- Tajfel, Henri (1981) *Human Groups and Social Categories. Studies in Social Psychology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taş, Latif (2014) *Legal Pluralism in Action: Dispute Resolution and the Kurdish Peace Committee*, London & NY: Routledge.
- Tedeschi, Richard G. (1999) "Violence transformed: Posttraumatic growth in survivors and their societies" in *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, Vol. 4, Nº 3, pp. 319-341.
- Tejerina, Benjamín (1992) *Nacionalismo y lengua*, Madrid: CIS.
- Tejerina, Benjamín (1999) "El poder de los símbolos: Identidad colectiva y movimiento etnolingüístico en el País Vasco", in *Reis*, nº 88 (Oct-Dec. 1999), pp. 75-105.
- Tejerina, Benjamín (2001) "Protest cycle, political violence and social movements in the Basque Country" in *Nations and Nationalism*, Nº 7(1), pp. 39-57.
- Tejerina, Benjamín (2015) "Nacionalismo, violencia y movilización social en el País Vasco: Factores y mecanismos del auge y declive de ETA" in *Papeles del CEIC*, Vol. 2015/3, Nº 136, pp. 1-19.
- Tezcür, Güneş M. (2009) "Kurdish Nationalism and Identity in Turkey: A Conceptual Reinterpretation" in *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [Online], Nº 10.
- Tezcür, Güneş M. (2015) "Violence and nationalist mobilization: The onset of the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey" in *Nationalities Papers*, 43:2, pp. 248-266.
- Tilly, Charles (1975) "Reflections on the history of European state-making" in C. Tilly (Ed.) *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-83.
- Tilly, Charles (1978) *From Mobilization to Revolution*, NY: Random House.
- Tilly, Charles (1994) "State and nationalism in Europe 1492 – 1992" in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 23, Nº 1, pp. 131-146.
- Tilly, Charles (2003) *The Politics of Collective Violence*, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- TİP (1965) *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Programı*, Istanbul.
- Toticagüena, Gloria P. (2004) *Identity, Culture, and Politics in the Basque Diaspora*, Reno: University of Nevada Press.
- Touraine, Alain (1985) "Sociological intervention and the internal dynamics of the Occitanist movement", in E.A. Tiryakian & R. Rogowski (Eds.) *New Nationalisms of the Developed West*, USA: Allen & Unwin, pp. 157-175.
- Turner, Bryan S. (2002) "Strategic generations: historical change, literary expression, and generational politics" in J. Edmunds & B.S. Turner (Eds.) *Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics*, Lanham (Maryland): Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 13-31.

- Unceta, Alfonso (2003) *La producción del sistema educativo en el País Vasco: la lógica público-privado*, PhD thesis, Leioa (Bizkaia): UPV/EHU.
- Unzueta, Patxo (1988) *Los nietos de la IRA: Nacionalismo y la violencia en el País Vasco*, Madrid: El País.
- Urzelai, Peio (1998) "Egunkaria, le défi d'une génération de journalistes" in D. Laborde (Ed.) *La Question Basque*, Paris: L'Harmattan, pp. 400-404.
- Üngör, U. Ümit (2014) "Lost in commemoration: The Armenian genocide in memory and identity" in *Patterns of Prejudice*, 48:2, pp. 147-166.
- Ünsal, Artun (1990) *La vendetta: tuer pour survivre*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Üstel, Füsün (2004) *Makbul Vatandaş'ın Peşinde*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Van Bruinessen, Martin (1988) "Between Guerrilla War and Political Murder: The Workers' Party of Kurdistan" in *Middle East Report*, No. 153, pp. 40-50.
- Van Bruinessen, Martin (1992) *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, London & NJ: Zed Books.
- Van Bruinessen, Martin (1994) "Genocide in Kurdistan? The suppression of the Dersim rebellion in Turkey (1937-38) and the chemical war against the Iraqi Kurds (1988)" in G. J. Andreopoulos (ed.), *Conceptual and Historical Dimensions of Genocide*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 141-170.
- Van den Broek, Hans-Peter (2004) "Borroka. The Legitimation of Street Violence in the Political Discourse of Radical Basque Nationalists" in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, № 16(4), pp. 714-736.
- Van den Broek, Hans-Peter (2017) "Labelling and Legitimization: Justifying Political Violence in the Basque Country" in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 29, №1, pp. 119-136.
- Verberg, Norine (2006) "Family-based Social Activism: Rethinking the Social Role of Families" in *Socialist Studies Review*, Vol. 2, №1, pp. 23-46.
- Villa García, Roberto (2007) *Las elecciones de 1933 en el País Vasco y Navarra*, Madrid: Dykinson.
- Villacañas, José Luis (2015) *Historia del Poder Político en España*, Barcelona: RBA Libros.
- Watts, Nicole F. (1999) "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-1994," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31:4, pp. 631-656.
- Weber, Max (1946) *Essays in Sociology*, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Max (1949) *The Methodology of Social Sciences*, NY: The Free Press.
- Weber, Max (1978[1922]) *Economy and Society*, Vol. 1 & 2, LA & London: University of California Press.
- Wieviorka, Michel (1988) *Sociétés et terrorisme*, Paris: Fayard.
- Wieviorka, Michel (1998) "Passages. Dictature, Etat de droit et violence politique" in D. Laborde (Ed.) *La Question Basque*, Paris: L'Harmattan, pp. 527-546.
- White, Paul J. (2000) *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers? The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey*, London & NY: Zed Books.
- Woodworth, Paddy (2001) *Dirty War, Clean Hands: ETA, the GAL and Spanish Democracy*, Cork: Cork University Press.
- Yardımcı, S., Aslan, Ş. (2011) "Memleket ve garp hikayeleri: 1938 Dersim sürgünleri ile bir sözlü tarih çalışması" in Ş. Aslan (Ed.) *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay. pp. 413-440.
- Yayman, Hüseyin (2016) *Türkiye'nin Kürt Sorunu Hafızası*, (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), İstanbul: Doğan Kitap.
- Yeğen, Mesut (1999) *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

- Yeğen, Mesut (2006) *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa*, İstanbul: İletişim.
- Yeğen, Mesut (2009) "Prospective-Turks' or 'Pseudo-Citizens:' Kurds in Turkey" in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 63, N° 4, pp. 597-615.
- Yeğen, Mesut (2011) "The Kurdish question in Turkey: denial to recognition" in M. Casier & J. Jongerden (Eds.) *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey: Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish Issue*, London & NY: Routledge, pp. 67-85.
- Yeğen, M., Tol, U.U., Çalışkan, M.A. (2016) *Kürtler Ne İstiyor? Kürdistan'da Etnik Kimlik, Dindarlık, Sınıf ve Seçimler*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Yurdusev, A. Nuri (2004) "The Ottoman attitude toward diplomacy" in A. N. Yurdusev (Ed.), *The Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional?*, Basingstoke, Hampshire & NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 5-36.
- Zabaltza, Xabier (2016) "Gernikako Arbola, un himno huérfano" in *Historia Contemporánea* N°54, pp. 207-241.
- Zald, M. N., Useem, B. (1987) "Movement and countermovement interaction: Mobilization, tactics, and state involvement" in M. N. Zald & J. D. McCarthy (Eds.) *Social Movements in an Organizational Society*, New Brunswick (USA): Transaction Publishers, pp. 247-272.
- Zana, Mehdi (2014[1991]) *Bekle Diyarbakır*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), İstanbul: Avesta.
- Zana, Mehdi (1995) *Sevgili Leyla, Uzun Bir Sürgündü O Gece*, İstanbul: Belge Yayınları.
- Zeki, M. Emin (1977) *Kürdistan Tarihi*, İstanbul: Haşmet Matbaası.
- Zirakzadeh, Cyrus E. (1991) *A Rebellious People: Basques, Protests and Politics*, Reno: University of Nevada Press.
- Zulaika, Joseba (1988) *Basque Violence: Metaphor and Sacrament*, Reno (Nevada): University of Nevada Press.
- Zulaika, Joseba (2009) *Terrorism: Self-fulfilling prophecy*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Zumalde, Xabier (2004) *Mi lucha clandestina en ETA*, Arrigorriaga (Bizkaia): Status ediciones.
- Zunbeltz, K. de (pseu. José Luís Zalbide) (1975[1968]) *Hacia una estrategia revolucionaria vasca*, Ciboure: Editions Hordago.
- Zürcher, Eric J. (2004) *Turkey: A Modern History*, (New Edition), London & NY: I.B. Tauris.

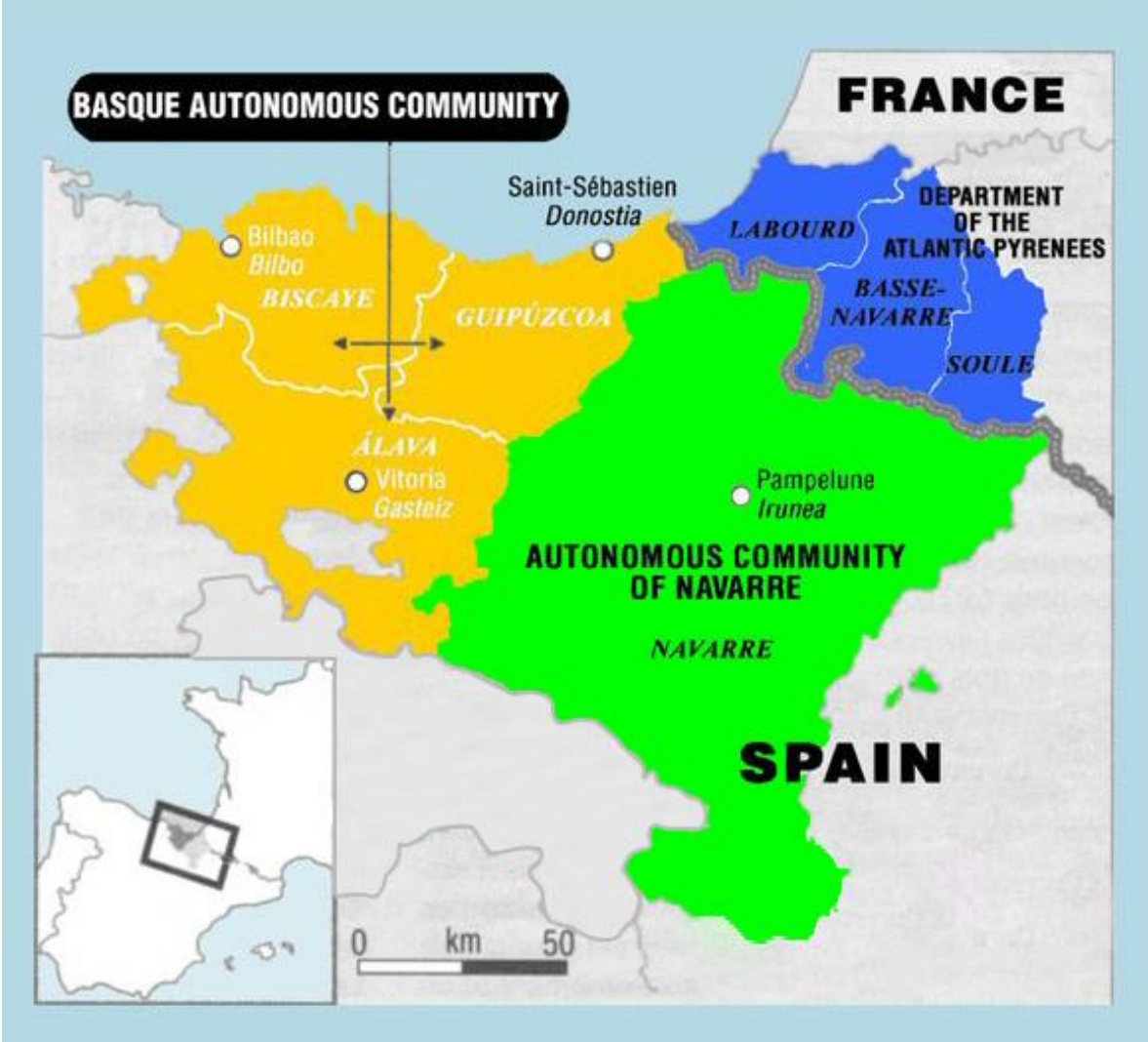


## Online sources

- Basque Government, <https://www.euskadi.eus/gobierno-vasco/inicio/>
- Basque Statistical Institute (*Eustat*), <https://www.eustat.eus/indice.html>
- Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research (DISA), <https://disa.org.tr>
- Hacettepe University, Institute of Population Studies, <http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/eng/index.html>
- Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, <https://en.tihv.org.tr>
- Migration Platform of Turkey, <https://www.gocplatformu.org/tr/index>
- PKK Official Web Page, <https://pkk-online.com>
- Serxwebûn Online Archive, <http://serxwebun.org>
- Turkish Grand National Assembly Archive, <https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr>
- Turkish Statistical Institute, <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/Start.do>
- The University of Uppsala, Conflict Data Program, <https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/>
- UPV/EHU Euskobarómetro, <https://www.ehu.eus/es/web/euskobarometro/home>

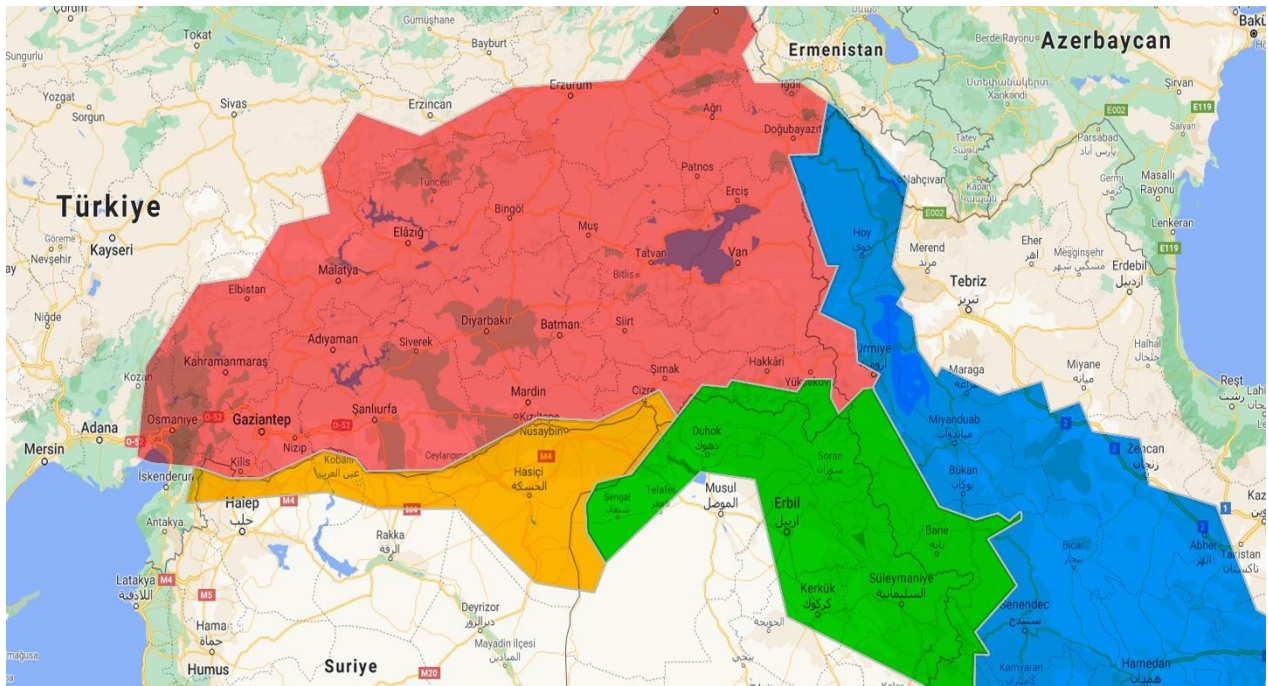
**Appendix 1: Maps**

*Map 1: Seven historical provinces of the Basque Country*



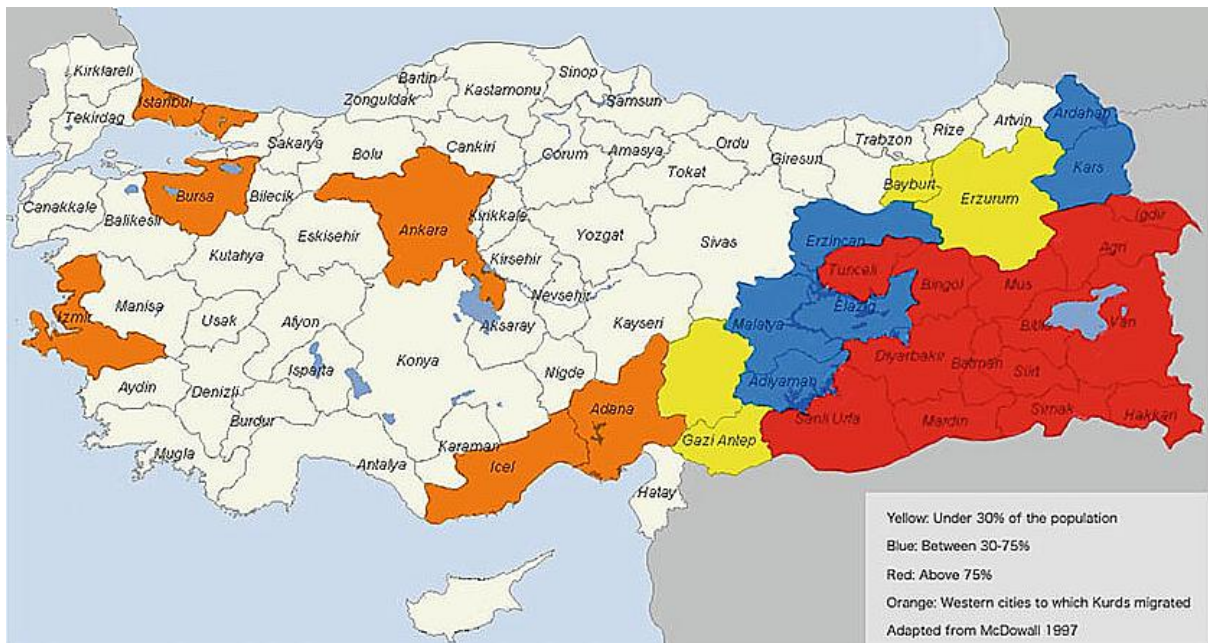
Source: Designed by Tony Seed, New Media Services Inc.

Map 2: Four parts of Kurdistan (Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran)



Source: Washington Kurdish Institute, Mapa GIsrael, ORION-ME

Map 3: Distribution of Kurds Across Turkey



Source: Çelik 2012: 242 (Adapted from McDowall 1997)

## **Appendix 2.1.** Questionnaire for in-depth interviews in the Basque Country

### ***Preguntas orientativas para las entrevistas en profundidad (País Vasco)***

#### ***Información sociodemográfica***

Código : B-l/0...  
Edad/Sexo/Localidad :  
Educación :  
Profesión / Ocupación :  
Militancia actual :  
Estado civil :  
Familia (Aitas, hermano, hij@s) :  
Organización :  
Fecha de encarcelamiento :  
Centro(s) penitenciario(s) :  
Duración de encarcelamiento :

#### ***Información general:***

1. ¿De dónde es? ¿dónde nació? Su infancia, adolescencia, estudios etc.?
2. Su familia: ¿a qué se dedican/dedicaban sus aitas? Orientación política en su entorno familiar?
3. Idioma: relaciones con Euskera en su entorno social
4. Religión: una familia creyente/practicante?
5. Su kuadrilla: ¿qué perfil tenían? ¿Qué papel tenía la política en el entorno social?

#### ***Proceso de socialización política y militancia***

6. ¿Cuándo empezó a ejercer actividades políticas?
7. ¿Cómo veía la organización ETA?
8. ¿Qué opinaba sobre la lucha armada armada como método? (la lucha popular?)
9. ¿Cómo fue su participación? (¿me puede comentar de ese momento?) ¿Cómo era el ámbito político-social? (Alguien o algún evento fue determinante a la hora de tomar esa decisión?)
10. ¿Cómo fue el momento de tomar la decisión de ingresar/colaborar con la organización armada?
11. ¿Cómo veía la estrategia militar de la MLNV en aquel entonces?
12. Opiniones sobre la organización en la que militaba: ideología, relaciones entre hombre y mujer, estrategia político-militar etc.

***Las siguientes preguntas serán adaptadas según el trayecto de militancia del militante: pres@, exiliado, huído/clandestinidad etc.***

13. Cómo y dónde fue su detención? Estuvo incomunicado? En caso afirmativo cómo fue su experiencia?
14. Una vez trasladado a la cárcel, cómo fue la primera experiencia? Dónde estuvo?
15. Las condiciones dentro de la cárcel/exilio/clandestinidad? Acceso a la información, tratamiento, relaciones?
16. ¿Cómo pasaba su tiempo? (cárcel: algún ocio/hobby?)
17. ¿Cómo fue el primer encuentro con los familiares tras su huída/detención? ¿Visitas, comunicación en cárcel/exilio/clandestinidad?
18. Y los amigos? Sobre todo su kuadrilla? Contacto, frecuencia de las visitas?
19. Cómo valoraba esas visitas (familiares, amig@s etc.)? Cómo le hacían sentir?
20. Antes de salir/volver, había hecho algunos planes?
21. La vuelta a Euskal Herria cómo era? Cómo fue el recibimiento/Ongi etorri?

***Opiniones respecto su pasado militante, el Estado, ETA/la lucha armada y legitimidad***

22. Si tuviera alguna oportunidad de cambiar algo en su pasado (en relación con sus actividades políticas), cambiaría algo? (¿qué sería?)
23. Cómo el Estado y su política (respecto a las cuestiones pendientes)? Ha cambiado a lo largo de los años? (y la idea de lucha armada?) Qué representante el Estado para Usted?
24. Qué opina sobre el cese indefinido de la actividad armada de ETA? ¿Qué opina del cambio estratégico? ¿Podría evaluar ese trayecto?
25. Cómo evaluaría el apoyo popular al MLNV (a la lucha armada)?

Muchas gracias, eskerrik asko

Fecha y lugar de entrevista: \_\_\_\_\_

Duración de entrevista: \_\_\_\_\_

Notas post-entrevista:

## Appendix 2.2. Questionnaire for in-depth interviews in Kurdistan

### Derinlemesine mülâkat kılavuz soruları (Kürdistan)

#### Sosyodemografik bilgi

Mülâkat kodu	: K-1/0...
Cinsiyet	:
Yaş, cinsiyet, bölge	:
Eğitim düzeyi	:
Medeni durumu:	:
Şu anki aktif pozisyon (gerilla, milis, mahkûm vb.)	:
Aile (Kardeşiniz var mı? Yaşları?)	:
Tutuklandığınız oldu mu? (Hangi tarihte? Ne kadar süre?)	:
Hangi ideolojik yaklaşım sizin için referans niteliğindedir?	:
Annen ve babanızın mesleği/eğitim durumu nedir?	:
Herhangi bir dinî ya da ruhanî inanca sahip misiniz?	:

#### Genel bilgi: Aile ve toplumsal çevre

1. Aileniz hakkında bilgi verebilir misiniz? (ailenizin sosyoekonomik yapısı nasıldı? Varsa aşiret ilişkisi ve bunun siyasal-toplumsal sonuçları nasıldı?)
2. Aile ortamındaki hâkim siyasal görüş neydi? Evinizde genel anlamda siyasete dair ne anımsıyorsunuz?
3. Kadın: Aile içerisinde ve toplumsal alanda kadının konumu nasıldı?
4. Din: Ailenin ve toplumun din ile ilişkisi nasıldı ve bugün nasıl bir ilişki içindeler?
5. Kürtçe: Evde hangi dil/lehçe kullanılıyordu?
6. O dönemde bulunduğunuz bölgede toplumun Harekete/Partiye olan bakışı nasıldı?

#### Siyasal toplumsallaşma ve mücadeleye katılım süreci

7. Ne kadar zamandan beri örgütte yer alıyorsunuz?
8. Silahlı mücadeleye/gerillaya katılmadan önce siyasal aktiviteleriniz oldu mu? Nelerdir?
9. Katılımınız nasıl gerçekleşti? Hangi bağlamda oldu? (örneğin, belirli bir kişi sayesinde mi? Ailesinden ya da yakın arkadaşlarından birisinin daha önceden katılımı oldu mu?)
10. Mücadeleye girdiğiniz anda kendinize sorduğunuz sorular nelerdi? Sizi mücadeleye girmeye iten neydi? Sizi engelleyen ya da tereddüt duymanıza sebep olan bir şey söz konusu oldu mu?

11. Neden silahlı mücadeleye katılmayı tercih ettiniz? Katılımın sizin için ne anlama ifade ediyordu? Bu eylemde bulunmakla hedeflediğiniz neydi? Orada ne yapmak istemiştiniz?
12. İlk kez şiddet eyleminde bulunduğunuzda kendinizi nasıl hissettiniz?
13. Kuşku duyduğunuz, kendinize eğer mücadeleye katılmamış olsaydınız daha rahat bir hayatınız olacağını söylediğiniz anlar oldu mu? (Pişmanlık yaşıyor musunuz?)
14. Bugün hayatınızı nasıl geçiriyorsunuz? Vermiş olduğunuz karar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

#### **Maruz kalınan şiddet ve radikalleşme**

15. Size göre PKK'nin silahlı mücadeleye/şiddete başvurmadan amaçlarına ulaşması mümkün olur muydu?
16. Polis ya da askerın eline düştünüz mü? (Hapishane-zindan dönemi için soru çeşitlendirilecek: zindan dönemi aktiviteleri, örgütlenme koşulları, toplumsal çevrenin desteği vb.)
17. Mücadeleye katılmış ya da katılmamış yakınlarınızın devlet şiddetine maruz kaldığına tanık oldunuz mu? Bu tecrübenin daha sonraki katılımınızda bir etkisi oldu mu? Olduysa nasıl bir etkisi oldu?
18. Bugünlerde radikalleşme hakkında çok konuşulmakta. Bu terimin sizin için anlamı nedir?
19. Radikalizm ve terörizm arasında bir fark görüyor musunuz?

#### **Normatif üretimler ve duyguların inşası**

20. Sizce şiddete başvurmadan da davaya hizmet etmek mümkün müdür?
21. Katılımınızdan bu yana kadarki süreçte sizin için belirleyici rolü olan olaylar söz konusu mu?
22. Devleti nasıl algılıyorsunuz? Sizin için devlet neyi temsil etmektedir? Devlet'in Kürt sorununa yaklaşımı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? Sizin döneminizden bugüne değişen bir şey oldu mu?
23. Silahlı mücadele içerisinde kendinizi yapmaya hazır hissetmediğiniz şeyler var mı?
24. Hangi noktaya kadar şiddeti kullanmak istemezsiniz (örneğin; intihar saldırısı, belirli hedefler)?
25. Örgütünüzde çok fazla şehit var, onlar hakkında en düşünüyorsunuz? Sizin için neyi temsil ediyorlar? Zaman zaman düşünüyor musunuz?

Çok teşekkür ederim, gelek spas.

Mülâkat tarihi ve yeri: \_\_\_\_\_

Mülâkat süresi: \_\_\_\_\_

Mülâkat notları:

**Appendix 3.1.** Interview chart (Basque Country)

	<b>Interview Code</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>City/Town</b>	<b>Age*</b>	<b>Sex</b>
<i>Founding Generation</i>	B-F	20.02.2014	French Basque Country	EKIN/ETA	Bizkaia	Bilbao	82	Male
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Generation</b>	B-I/01	16.11.2013	Hernani	ETA-m	Gipuzkoa	NA	56	Male
	B-I/02	23.11.2013	Bilbao	ETA-m	Araba	NA	58	Male
	B-I/03	22.05.2014	Bilbao	ETA-m	Bizkaia	Bilbao	62	Male
	B-I/04	24.05.2014	Zestoa	ETA-m	Gipuzkoa	Zestoa	53	Female
	B-I/05	27.03.2014	Arrasate	ETA-m	Gipuzkoa	Arrasate	68	Male
	B-I/06	02.06.2014	San Sebastian	ETA-m	Gipuzkoa	Beasain	57	Female
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Generation</b>	B-II/01	21.05.2014	Bilbao	ETA	Bizkaia	Bilbao	43	Female
	B-II/02	17.03.2014	Bilbao	ETA	Araba	Vitoria-Gasteiz	40	Male
	B-II/03	01.02.2014	French Basque Country	Jarrai/Haika	Navarre	Iruñea	40	Male
	B-II/04	18.04.2014	Bilbao	Jarrai	Bizkaia	Lekeitio	38	Female
	B-II/05	14.05.2014	Bilbao	Jarrai	Bizkaia	Bilbao	38	Male
	B-II/06	09.05.2014	Bilbao	Jarrai	Bizkaia	Bilbao	40	Male
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Generation</b>	B-III/01	08.05.2014	Leioa	Segi	Bizkaia	Lekeitio	29	Female
	B-III/02	28.05.2014	CONF	ETA	Bizkaia	NA	NA	Male
	B-III/03	15.02.2014	Azpeitia	ETA	Gipuzkoa	Azpeitia	34	Male
	B-III/04	06.06.2014	CONF	ETA	Gipuzkoa	NA	NA	Female
	B-III/05	24.05.2014	Azpeitia	Segi	Gipuzkoa	Urnieta	30	Female
	B-III/06	15.02.2014	Azpeitia	ETA	Gipuzkoa	Azpeitia	35	Male



**Appendix 3.2.** Interview chart (Kurdistan)

	Interview Code	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Organization	Province	City/Town	Age*	Sex
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Generation</b>	K-I/01	05.12.2014	Diyarbakır	PKK	Erzurum	Varto	52	Male
	K-I/02	17.12.2014	Diyarbakır	Apocular/PKK	GAP/Ruha	Hilvan	54	Male
	K-I/03	15.07.2015	Ankara	PKK	Dersim	Dersim	56	Male
	K-I/04	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	Apocular/PKK	CONF	CONF	60	Male
	K-I/05	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	Apocular/PKK	Amed	Diyarbakır	57	Male
	K-I/06	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Serhat	Kars	50	Male
	K-I/07	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	Apocular/PKK	Güneybatı	Maraş	61	Male
	K-I/08	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	Apocular/PKK	GAP/Ruha	Derik	61	Male
	K-I/09	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	Apocular/PKK	Serhat	Kağızman	60	Male
	K-I/10	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Dersim	Dersim	54	Male
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Generation</b>	K-II/01	11.12.2014	Diyarbakır	PKK	Amed	Diyarbakır	38	Female
	K-II/02	17.12.2014	Diyarbakır	PKK	Amed	Lice	42	Male
	K-II/03	18.12.2014	Diyarbakır	PKK	Garzan	Batman	38	Male
	K-II/04	18.12.2014	Diyarbakır	PKK	Serhat	Ardahan	42	Male
	K-II/05	19-31.03.2017	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Botan	Cizre	42	Female
	K-II/06	19-31.03.2017	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Amed	Diyarbakır	41	Female
	K-II/07	19-31.03.2017	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Garzan	Bitlis	42	Male
	K-II/08	19-31.03.2017	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Ankara	Ankara	44	Male
	K-II/09	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Adana	Çukurova	49	Female
	K-II/10	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Mardin	Nusaybin	42	Female
	K-II/11	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Erzurum	Varto	43	Male
	K-II/12	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Garzan	Batman	47	Female

	Interview Code	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Organization	Province	City/Town	Age*	Sex
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Generation</b>	K-III/01	19-31.03.2017	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Garzan	<i>Istanbul**</i>	34	Female
	K-III/02	19-31.03.2017	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	NA	NA	34	Female
	K-III/03	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	NA	NA	36	Female
	K-III/04	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Botan	NA	36	Male
	K-III/05	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Amed	<i>Istanbul**</i>	38	Male
	K-III/06	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Amed	Lice	38	Female
	K-III/07	19-31.03.2017	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Serhat	Doğubeyazıt	32	Male
	K-III/08	19-31.03.2017	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Serhat	Van	28	Female
	K-III/09	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Garzan	<i>Istanbul**</i>	37	Male
	K-III/10	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Güneybatı	Maraş	34	Female
	K-III/11	19-31.03.2017	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Garzan	NA	27	Male
	K-III/12	10-20.07.2016	Southern Kurdistan	PKK	Serhat	Tatvan	31	Female

NA : Not answered

CONF : Confidential information

\* Indicates the age that the participant has at the moment of the interview

\*\* While initially being from Kurdistan, some participants indicate the place where they got involved in political activism and eventually joined the PKK

**Appendix 4.1.** Sociodemographic data of participants (Basque field)

<i>Code</i>	<i>B-I/01</i>	<i>B-I/02</i>	<i>B-I/03</i>	<i>B-I/04</i>	<i>B-I/05</i>	<i>B-I/06</i>
Age, sex and place of birth	56, male, Gipuzkoa	58, male, Araba	62, male, Bilbao	53, female, Zestoa	68, male, Arrasate	57, female, Beasain
Marital status	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced	Married	Divorced	Single
Education	High school graduate	Primary school gra.	University graduate	Teaching education	Primary school gra.	University graduate
Primary language	Basque	Spanish	Spanish	Basque	Basque	Spanish
Religious belief	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist
Ideological definition	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism
Occupation of father	NA	Worker	Government official	Worker	Animal husbandry	Worker
Occupation of mother	NA	Housewife	Housewife	Housewife	Animal husbandry	Housewife
Siblings	NA	-	1	4	NA	2
Children	NA	1	2	-	3	-
Militancy/organization	ETA-m, HB	ETA-m	ETA-m	ETA-m	ETA-m	ETA-m
Current status/occupation	Herrira	Worker	Lawyer	Waitress/bartender	Butcher	House arrest
Prison terms (if applicable)	9 years	22,5 years	21 years	18 years	4 + 1 + 29 years	11 years (continues)

<i>Code</i>	<i>B-II/01</i>	<i>B-II/02</i>	<i>B-II/03</i>	<i>B-II/04</i>	<i>B-II/05</i>	<i>B-II/06</i>
Age, sex and place of birth	43, female, Bilbao	40, male, Gasteiz	40, male, Navarre	38, female, Lekeitio	38, male, Bilbao	40, male, Bilbao
Marital status	Civil partnership	Partner	Single	Single	Divorced	Partner
Education	University graduate	High school graduate	High school graduate	Postgraduate	University graduate	University graduate
Primary language	Spanish	Basque/Spanish	Spanish	Basque	Spanish	Spanish
Religious belief	Catholic (Agnostic)	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist
Ideological definition	Socialism	Anarchism	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism
Occupation of father	Worker	ETA militant	Worker	Civil servant	Worker	KAS militant
Occupation of mother	Housewife	Cook	Worker	Civil servant	Housewife	Housewife
Siblings	-	-	NA	2	4	1
Children	1	-	-	-	-	-
Militancy/organization	ETA	Jarraí, ETA	Jarraí/Haika	Jarraí	Jarraí	Jarraí/Kale borroka
Current status/occupation	Basque teacher	Cook	Political refugee	Scholar	LAB unionist	Sortu militant
Prison terms (if applicable)	21	1 year	1 year	6 years	6 years	3 years

<b>Code</b>	<b>B-III/01</b>	<b>B-III/02</b>	<b>B-III/03</b>	<b>B-III/04</b>	<b>B-III/05</b>	<b>B-III/06</b>
Age, sex and place of birth	29, female, Lekeitio	NA, male, Bizkaia	34, male, Azpeitia	NA, female, Gipuzkoa	30, female, Urnieta	35, male, Azpeitia
Marital status	Partner	Single	Soltero	Partner	Partner	Single
Education	Postgraduate	University dropout	High school graduate	University dropout	University Graduate	High school graduate
Primary language	Basque	Basque	Basque	Spanish	Basque	Basque
Religious belief	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist
Ideological definition	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism
Occupation of father	NA	NA	Worker	NA(Politician)	Worker	Unionist
Occupation of mother	NA	NA	Housewife	NA	Housewife	Housewife
Siblings	2	1	1	1	1	2
Children	-	-	-	1	-	-
Militancy/organization	Segi	Jarria, ETA	ETA	ETA	Segi	ETA
Current status/occupation	Sortu militant	Militant	Student	Militant	Educator	Accountant
Prison terms (if applicable)	1,5 years (bailed out)	10 years (France)	8 years (France)	4 years (France)	1,5 years (bailed out)	4,5 years (France)

NA : Not answered

CONF : Confidential information

**Appendix 4.2.** Sociodemographic data of participants (Kurdish field)

<i>Code</i>	<i>K-I/01</i>	<i>K-I/02</i>	<i>K-I/03</i>	<i>K-I/04</i>	<i>K-I/05</i>
Age, sex and place of birth	52, male, Varto	54, male, Hilvan	56, male, Dersim	60, male, <i>CONF</i>	57, male, Diyarbakır
Marital status	Single	Single	Divorced	Single	Single
Education	High school dropout	Primary school graduate	University graduate	Primary school graduate	High school graduate
Primary language	Zazaki	Kurmanji	Zazaki (Kirmanchki)	Turkish	Kurmanji
Religious belief	<i>NA</i>	Atheist	Alevism	Alevism	Atheist
Ideological definition	Socialism	Socialism	Socialism	Dem. ecology/women	Socialism
Occupation of father	<i>NA</i>	Farm worker	<i>NA</i>	Passed away	Passed away
Occupation of mother	<i>NA</i>	Farm worker	<i>NA</i>	Housewife	Housewife
Siblings	7 (1 died in guerrilla)	8	<i>NA</i>	8	7
Children	-	-	1	-	-
Militancy/organization	PKK	Apocular/PKK	PKK	Apocular/PKK	Apocular/PKK
Current status/occupation	DTK	KCK	<i>NA</i>	KCK Executive Board	PKK
Prison terms (if applicable)	5 years	24 + 3,5 years	8 years	12 years	12,5 years

<i>Code</i>	<i>K-I/06</i>	<i>K-I/07</i>	<i>K-I/08</i>	<i>K-I/09</i>	<i>K-I/10</i>
Age, sex and place of birth	50, male, Kars	61, male, Maraş	61, male, Derik	60, male, Kağızman	54, male, Dersim
Marital status	Single	Single	Married	Single	Married
Education	High school graduate	Teacher's institute	High school graduate	Tech. High School	Sec. school graduate
Primary language	Kurmanji	Kurmanji	Kurmanji	Kurmanji	Kurmanji
Religious belief	Universalism	Alevism	Atheist	Atheist	Atheist
Ideological definition	Dem. ecology/women	Dem. ecology/women	PKK ideology	PKK-humanism	Kurdish patriot
Occupation of father	Civil servant	Farmer/Animal husb.	Farmer	Farmer/Animal husb.	Farmer
Occupation of mother	Housewife	Farmer/Animal husb.	Housewife	Housewife	Housewife
Siblings	<i>NA</i>	2	5	13	5
Children	-	-	2	-	1
Militancy/organization	PKK	Apocular/PKK	Apocular/PKK	Apocular/PKK	PKK (dropout)
Current status/occupation	Educator at the PKK	Art & Literature, PKK	Study Commission PKK	PKK Martyrs' Comm.	Political refugee
Prison terms (if applicable)	23 years	-	7 years	10 years	8 years

<b>Code</b>	<b>K-II/01</b>	<b>K-II/02</b>	<b>K-II/03</b>	<b>K-II/04</b>	<b>K-II/05</b>	<b>K-II/06</b>
Age, sex and place of birth	38, female, Diyarbakır	42, male, Lice	38, male, Batman	42, male, Ardahan	42, female, Cizre	41, female, Diyarbakır
Marital status	Single	Married	Single	Single	Single	Single
Education	High school graduate	University graduate	Sec. school dropout	University dropout	No education	Sec. school dropout
Primary language	Kurmanji	Kurmanji	Kurmanji	Turkish	Kurmanji	Kurmanji
Religious belief	Non-religious	Non-religious	Atheist	Atheist	Universalism/Cosmos	Cosmos
Ideological definition	<i>Önderlik</i> ideology	Socialism	Apoism/PKK ideology	Socialism	Apoism/ <i>Önderlik</i>	Dem. ecology/women
Occupation of father	NA	NA	Passed away	Passed away	Farmer/Animal husb.	NA
Occupation of mother	NA	NA	Housewife	Farmer	Housewife	NA
Siblings	3	7	8	7 (1 died in guerrilla)	7	NA
Children	-	2	-	-	-	-
Militancy/organization	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK
Current status/occupation	DTK	KCK	PKK/KCK	PKK/KCK	Active guerrilla	Active guerrilla
Prison terms (if applicable)	8 years	13 + 3 years	12 + 5 years	12 + 6 years	-	-

<b>Code</b>	<b>K-II/07</b>	<b>K-II/08</b>	<b>K-II/09</b>	<b>K-II/10</b>	<b>K-II/11</b>	<b>K-II/12</b>
Age, sex and place of birth	42, male, Bitlis	44, male, Ankara	49, female, Çukurova	42, female, Nusaybin	43, male, Varto	47, female, Batman
Marital status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Married	Married
Education	High school graduate	University dropout	Primary school graduate	No education	University dropout	University dropout
Primary language	Kurmanji	Turkish	Turkish	Kurmanji	Zazaki	Kurmanji
Religious belief	Atheist	Quantum/science	Atheist	Muslim/non religious	Atheist	Atheist
Ideological definition	Socialism	Apoist socialism	Dem. ecology/women	Dem. ecology/women	Anarchist/Pacifist	Radical left
Occupation of father	Craftsman	Worker	Dealer	Farmer/Animal husb.	Teacher	Medical assistant
Occupation of mother	Housewife	Housewife	Housewife	Farmer/Animal husb.	Housewife	Housewife
Siblings	9	1	11	7	3	8
Children	-	-	-	-	2	1
Militancy/organization	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK (dropout)	PKK (dropout)
Current status/occupation	Guerrilla Commander	Guerrilla Commander	PKK Court of Justice	Active guerrilla	Political refugee	Political refugee
Prison terms (if applicable)	-	-	-	-	-	-

<b>Code</b>	<b>K-III/01</b>	<b>K-III/02</b>	<b>K-III/03</b>	<b>K-III/04</b>	<b>K-III/05</b>	<b>K-III/06</b>
Age, sex and place of birth	34, female, Garzan	34, female, NA	36, female, NA	36, male, Botan	38, male, Amed	38, female, Lice
Marital status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Education	Sec. school dropout	Sec. school dropout	Primary school graduate	Primary school graduate	University graduate	High school graduate
Primary language	Kurmanji	Kurmanji	Kurmanji	Kurmanji	Kurmanji	Kurmanji
Religious belief	Apoist philosophy	Non-religious/Science	Muslim	Zarathustra	Atheist	Atheist
Ideological definition	Apoism	Dem. ecology/women	Önderlik ideology	Dem. ecology/women	NA	Dem. ecology/women
Occupation of father	Craftsman	Teacher	NA	Farmer/Animal husb.	NA	Engineer/politician
Occupation of mother	Housewife	Housewife	NA	Housewife	NA	Housewife
Siblings	6	7	NA	10	NA	5
Children	-	-	-	-	-	-
Militancy/organization	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK
Current status/occupation	Active guerrilla	Active guerrilla	Active guerrilla	Guerrilla Commander	Guerrilla journalist	Active guerrilla
Prison terms (if applicable)	-	-	-	-	-	-

<b>Code</b>	<b>K-III/07</b>	<b>K-III/08</b>	<b>K-III/09</b>	<b>K-III/10</b>	<b>K-III/11</b>	<b>K-III/12</b>
Age, sex and place of birth	32, male, Doğubeyazit	28, female, Van	37, male, Garzan	34, female, Maraş	27, male, Garzan	31, female, Tatvan
Marital status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Education	University dropout	University dropout	Primary school graduate	High school graduate	University dropout	No education
Primary language	Kurmanji	Turkish	Kurmanji	Turkish	Kurmanji	Kurmanji
Religious belief	Atheist	Agnostic	Muslim	Alevism	Atheist	Atheist
Ideological definition	Dem. Confederalism	Dem. ecology/women	Dem. Confederalism	Dem. ecology/women	Socialism	Dem. ecology/women
Occupation of father	No profession	Worker	Stallholder	Beekeeper	Farmer	Textile production
Occupation of mother	Housewife	Housewife	Passed away	Beekeeper	Housewife	Housewife
Siblings	5	4	9	5	12	7
Children	-	-	-	-	-	-
Militancy/organization	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK	PKK
Current status/occupation	Active guerrilla	Active guerrilla	Guerrilla Commander	Active guerrilla	Active guerrilla	Active guerrilla
Prison terms (if applicable)	2 years	10 months	-	-	-	3 months

NA : Not answered

CONF : Confidential information

## Appendix 5.1. Samples from in-depth interviews (Basque field)

### Interview: B-1/06

*Me dijiste que tu familia eran inmigrantes, ¿no? ¿qué orientación política tenían?*

No tenían ninguna orientación política, pero más bien provenían de un ambiente muy conservador. O sea, te digo, si mi familia pudiera votar en este momento, seguro que votaría al PP. Venían de un pueblo de Castilla, de un pueblo muy pequeño de... Cómo se llama esto? De campesinos, de un ambiente muy conservador. [*¿Eran católicos practicantes?*] Bueno, practicantes no eran mucho, católicos sí, pero no han sido de misa, no. Pero sí en casa... Bueno, y a nosotras nos han obligado a ir a misa y esas cosas, ¿no? Todo entorno a la religión, pero no... Hasta una edad, y luego nos han dejado en libertad. [*Y tu vínculo con la religión después cómo ha sido?*] Bueno, yo tenía un vínculo cuando era joven muy fuerte, sobre todo en la adolescencia, pero luego ahí, no sé, yo creo que en un periodo de crisis o de conocimiento de otras realidades, bueno, pues, te vas alejando. Pero hasta ese momento la implicación sí era muy fuerte. [...] Luego, en casa con mi padre, pues, mi padre odiaba todo lo que fuese vasco, sobre todo por la lengua. Entonces siempre nos lo ha quitado. Y luego en el pueblo había... Bueno, mi madre empezó a trabajar en casa de una gente, a cuidar los niños de una gente vasca, las relaciones fueron más o menos amables. Yo creo que desde mi madre había más respeto hacia todo lo que fuese lo de aquí. Mi padre no. Luego era la época, si quieres, antes de la muerte de Franco, entonces la cultura vasca estaba muy castigada, incluso aprender euskera no era fácil. Bueno, yo vivía la juventud desde esa distancia, luego hay una etapa; el abandono de la religión, el acercamiento si quieres más... Entonces, todo espacialmente muy organizado, porque entonces nuestro barrio en un pueblo que era muy euskaldun y muy nacionalista, estaba fuera, a las afueras. [...]

*¿En esa época tú cómo veías la organización ETA y la lucha armada?*

Yo no tenía una visión así muy clara; yo oía que habían detenidos, oía que habían puesto las *ikurriñas* en el pueblo, en mi pueblo también se hizo una acción armada, tampoco me pareció muy... Bueno, es decir "pero por qué pasa?", te llevan a hacer preguntas. Sí, sabía que ya estaba ahí la organización, ya hacía preguntas. También le decía a mi padre "¡jo, pero también defienden a los obreros!", mi padre era un obrero normal, corriente, "qué van a defender a los obreros si sólo quieren la independencia", "sí es así, pero unen las dos cosas" Entonces, bueno, yo estaba descubriendo ese mundo. Descubriendo a través de que nos contaba la prensa también; en los últimos años del franquismo había los radios comunistas, había en París, Radio París. Mi madre la oía a la noche porque hubo varios detenidos en el pueblo; el taxista del pueblo y luego el otro... La gente que todos conocíamos, ¿no? [...]

*¿Cómo veías, evaluabas tu propia militancia? ¿La lucha armada era justa, legítima para ti? (Por supuesto, claro) Porque era ya después del franquismo, los poli-milis lo dejaron, la inserción...*

Yo creo que muchos no cuestionábamos si era necesario seguir. Lo que pasa es que la muerte de Franco no trajo un cambio que nosotros lo esperábamos. Entonces no se dio, si quieres, la transición democrática, la que nosotros creíamos, veíamos que no había cosas palpables; al revés había toda una fachada, pero que lo principal... Pues, bueno, sí, es verdad que se había instalado un sistema "democrático", entre comillas, representabilidad, pero una cultura democrática no había, sobre todo cara a los sueños del Pueblo vasco. No había un reconocimiento del Pueblo vasco y su derecho a ser, no había.



## Interview: B-II/02

*¿Cuándo empezaste a ejercer actividades políticas?*

Pues a los 15 años, bueno, igual un poco antes. Militar, lo que es militar militar en... a los 15 años. [*lo que fue en el movimiento juvenil o?*] Sí, bueno, paso a... Cuando pasas al instituto, antes no había eso ¿no? De la *ikastola*, del octavo paso al instituto, y allí empecé en el movimiento estudiantil, en *ikasle abertzaleak*, y junto a ello pues me integré a *Jarraí*, por la misma regla de tres, como *Jarraí* pertenecía a KAS y ya que estabas militando en KAS etc. etc. [*¿Y eso cuándo fue?*] Finales de los 80. [*Entonces a los 15 años, digamos ¿ya tenías la idea de luchar por Euskal Herria?*] Sí sí sí, muy clara. Claro, mi niñez no fue tampoco una niñez la verdad. Cuando unos chavales estaban jugando aquel escondite con la edad que tenían, yo estaba viendo a gente, a compañeros de mi padre muertos por el GAL, ¿no? Entonces mi infancia es como muy radical, se acaba casi sin tener principio. Entonces la madurez que adquiere de la persona o la personalidad mía, la adquiero mucho más temprana. [...]

*¿Cómo veías la organización ETA y su lucha armada como método?*

Muy lógico, muy lógico porque si tú tienes una bota que te está pisando la cabeza, lo que haces es intentar quitarte esa bota, ¿no? Y si el método que tienes que usar, aunque sea muy duro, tiene que ser la lucha armada, pues tendrá que serlo... Si no hay otra manera. [*Pero esa época, en cambio de los años del franquismo y tal, en las 80s la democracia parlamentaria ya estaba presente, ¿no?*] Sí, pero realmente funciona o no funciona o realmente quién dejó aquí establecido toda esa democracia? Fue Franco, o sea, realmente han cambiado los collares de los perros, pero los perros siguen siendo lo mismos, y han cambiado las formas de reprimir a la población, han cambiado la estrategia de cómo seguir en el poder, pero realmente son los mismos poderes que te están impidiendo, sobre todo nosotros como pueblo, serlo ¿no? [...] [*Entonces, digamos, ¿tu mirada respecto a la violencia de ETA era legítima en esa época?*] Por supuesto, sí, sí. En esa época, actualmente y para mí siempre! O sea, siempre, la violencia es necesaria aunque no es buena, ¿eh? Yo no estoy diciendo que esté de acuerdo porque yo creo que los primeros que no estamos de acuerdo con aplicar la violencia somos los que la aplicamos, pero creo que es necesaria y hay que dar ese paso y, claro, vivir con ello. Porque toda la gente que ha hecho lo que ha hecho, yo creo que no se ha alegrado nadie por haberlo hecho. Han sido decisiones que ha habido que tomar. [...]

*¿Cómo fue la decisión de sentirte capaz de ingresar o colaborar con la organización armada?*

Son las ganas de libertad, las ansias de libertad que tienes. O de ayudar, sobre todo, de que las cosas cambien, de creerte realmente, ¿no? Tener esa consciencia de creer lo que piensas, entonces... Pero luego también es un paso que yo, por ejemplo, fue muy natural... Igual fue por mi vivencia o por... por lo que fuera, pero... [*que no fue una decisión de una noche a la otra?*] No no no, fue algo... una escalonada y sin más, fue algo como muy natural. [...]

*Respecto a tus actividades políticas y político-militares, ¿si tuvieras alguna oportunidad de cambiar algo, cambiarías algo en tu pasado?*

No. No, nada. [*silencio*] [*Así que no se trata de ningún tipo de arrepentimiento?*] No. [*silencio*] Mucha pena, muchas veces sí pena o de cosas que son... pero no. No porque cuando se toma la decisión de hacer algo, yo creo, estás obligado a ello, lo haces y punto. Y ya está. No lo tienes que hacer para luego arrepentirte si ya has tenido la necesidad de hacerlo por ello mismo, porque hay esa necesidad, pero luego no hay ningún tipo de arrepentimiento que valga, vamos. Yo no me creo a la gente que se arrepienta o que diga que se arrepiente. Que hubiera hecho las cosas distintas? Igual sí, las hubiera hecho distintas esa persona, yo personalmente no.

## Interview: B-III/04

*¿Cómo te parecía la idea de lucha armada con fines políticos en esa época? Cómo lo veías desde tu perspectiva?*

Bueno, yo creo que no me planteaba. Bueno, ves legítimo y no te planteas cuando estás militando, como militante de base, yo al menos no me planteaba. Yo había socializado, había crecido en esa visión de la estrategia político-militar, ¿no? Entonces, no te planteas las coordenadas de una estrategia político-militar, simplemente creces en ellas y tiras hacia... (*adelante*) y tiras en ellas, no? En todo caso, conforme pasan los años, yo he sido consciente de si un frente de lucha u otro tenía una virtualidad política u otra, ¿no? [...] Es una vez ya entro en la clandestinidad o que cojo y... Bueno, durante esa época también tenía mi participación en... (*ETA*) -bueno, eso no sé si puedo decir- (*se ríe*) Quiero decir que yo siempre he sido, han sido muchos años participando en... en *ETA* también. Pero, yo al menos, no me planteaba, y es conforme... cojo y me introduzco en *ETA*. [*¿Te refieres a que antes de pasar a la clandestinidad, ya eras una militante legal de ETA?*] Eso... Eh... Pero no te voy a responder a eso, ¿no? (*se ríe*) Tú tienes que tener en cuenta -bueno, supongo que ya sabrás porque habrás leído- tú puedes militar en *ETA*, pero la *IA* es un conjunto de organizaciones y entre ellas está *ETA*, que trabaja en las coordenadas de una estrategia político-militar. Entonces, no tienes porque participar en *ETA* para ser consciente de cuáles son las coordenadas de una estrategia político-militar y valorarlas o no valorarlas.

*Luego llegó el momento cuando decidiste ir a la clandestinidad. Y esa decisión ¿cómo la tomaste?*

Bueno, antes de ir a la clandestinidad, estamos hablando de los años 90. Yo creo que hay un cambio en 2001 y 2003, 11-S y 11-M, bai? Yo sí creo que ahí hay un cambio. Antes, durante lo años 90 hay, y yo creo que sobre todo en Lizarra-Garazi y así, hay un desgaste de esa estrategia, o sea, tiene un desgaste social. Nosotros tiramos, la *IA* responde, se mantiene, mantiene el pulso, visualiza la imposición de los estados, pero hay un desgaste social, un desgaste social, eh? [...] Yo creo que en el 2001, en el 2003 hay ya otra reflexión más en profundidad, tanto en *EH* como en la propia organización sobre la efectividad de la lucha armada. Yo creo que en esos análisis encima hay dos elementos que confluyen: por una parte la consciencia de que la lucha armada como instrumento político cada vez está más deslegitimado en ciertos sectores y puede llegar a ser un obstáculo para la acumulación de fuerzas en *EH*, algo que ya desde 95-97 con la Alternativa Democrática se planteaba esenciar. [...]

*Me imagino que a un niño de 3, 4, 5 años debe ser difícil de explicar porqué tienes que huir, porqué tienes que ir a la cárcel o porqué no puedes salir, y porqué no puedes estar con él o ella, ¿no?*

Ellos, al menos el mío, me preguntaba constantemente cuál eran las razones de mi militancia, no? Yo creo que eso es un... La lucha en Euskal Herria, nosotros estamos en una guerra, por así decirlo, no convencional. Entonces muchas veces, sobre todo, yo creo que los últimos años el militante es el que tiene que explicar cuáles son las razones de su militancia. No es una reacción, en el Franquismo, en la dictadura, incluso ahora con las ilegalizaciones tu detención es algo muy justificable. Tú participabas en una dinámica política y ahí una represión que te hace detener. En nuestro caso, es el militante o la militante la que tiene que justificar cuáles son las razones de su compromiso militante, porqué decide dar ese paso militante, no? Y encima algo que para muchos sectores es "entre comillas" es inexplicable a no ser que entres ya en el relato de la persona militante, de las idealizaciones militantes y de más, porque vivíamos entre comillas en "una democracia", porque la *CAPV* tiene unos grados de competencias, de soberanía económica, lingüística. Entonces, los elementos que hasta ahora se utilizaban. Por qué? Porque luchas por el Euskera. "Ama, pero yo estoy en el Ikastola y hablo Euskera y nadie me viene y me imposibilita hablar Euskera! Qué más quieres?", ¿no?

## Appendix 5.2. Samples from in-depth interviews (Kurdish field)

### Interview: K-1/04

*Harekete katılmadan önce toplumun politik bilinci ne durumdaydı? Toplum nasıl bir politik bilince sahipti bunu biraz değerlendirebilir misiniz?*

Harekete katılmadan önce... 1970'ler -yetmişlerin başları diyelim- 70'lerin başındaki toplumdaki toplumun politik durumu daha çok Türkiye devrimci mücadelesi ile bağlantılı bir politik durum vardı, daha çok etkili, öncelikle onu söyleyeyim. 68 Hareketi'nin etkileri vardı. 68 dünya hareketi yine gençlik hareketinin etkileri, peşinden 68 dünya gençlik hareketinin Türkiye'deki yansımalarını 12 Mart'a kadar, yetmişlerdeki 12 Mart'a kadarki gelen süreç Türkiye'de çok ciddi bir dalga yaratmıştı, devrimci bir etki yaratmıştı. Şimdi bu devrimci etki toplumun birçok kesimini etkileyen bir gelişmeydi. Tabi bu aynı zamanda yani bir yanıyla devrimci gelişmeye çok önemli bir zemin sunduğu kadar diğer tarafta kendi karşıtını da ortaya çıkaran bir özellik taşıyordu. Yani solculuk, devrimci yada karşı devrimci gibi bir bölünme ortamı söz konusuydu politik olarak. Zaten temel olarak etkilendiğimiz şey de oydu. Şimdi diğer açıdan da Türkiye'deki , yani Türkiye'deki ya da Türkiye'de Kürdistan'daki mevcut genel politik duruma ya da sosyal duruma baktığımız zaman da esas olarak devrimci mücadelenin gelişmesi ve etki yaratması biraz bununla bağlantılıydı. [...]

*Sizin bu mücadeleye katılımınız nasıl gerçekleşti? Sizi mücadeleye iten sebepler nelerdi?*

Şimdi biz Kürdistan'dan çok eskiden sürgün olduk Türkiye'ye. Dersim'den sürgün olduk A'ya [*şehir ismi*]. Çok eski, yani 300-400 yıllık bir durum. Biz A'dan da Ankara'ya 1965'lerde taşındık. Bizim işte dediğim gibi o dönemlerde 1960'larda 70'lerde bir dalga vardı. Biz hem Kürttük hem Aleviydik hem de yoksul bir aileden geliyorduk. Yani devrimci olmanın bütün alt yapısına sahiptik. Aleviler zaten hor görülüyor, Kürtlük zaten lanetli bir durum olarak görülüyor. Yoksulluk da aynı durumdaydı. Bu anlamı ile zaten bizim aile yapısı devrimci bir çizgiye sempati duyuyordu. O zaman Türkiye'deki o sol çizgiye genel bir sempati vardı. Tabi bu sempati Türkiye'deki soldaki devrim-sosyalizm eksenini üzerinde. Daha Kürt meselesi konusunda hiçbir şeyimiz yoktu. Kürtlük daha çok giderek unutulmuş, varsa onun etkileri de bir an önce onun etkilerinden kurtulmak, toplumsal baskılarından kurtulmak için de Kürtlükten kurtulmak gibi bir paradoks içerisine giriyorduk. Şimdi o anlamı ile sosyalizme, devrim ve sosyalizme büyük bir sempati vardı. Öyle bizim B'de [*semt ismi*] her düzeyde devrimci hareketlerin şeylerine katılıyorduk. [...]

*Neden silahlı mücadeleyi tercih ettiniz?*

Silahın zorunluluğu artık şundan kaynaklanıyordu: O günkü Türkiye yapısı, yani devlet yapısı durumu ile ilgilidir. Yani bugün de aslında böyledir. Şimdi o zaman çok ciddi bir anti-komünizm var, yani devlet çok anti-komünist, anti-sosyalist bir yapıya sahiptir. Yani bu konuda kendini ifade etmenin en ufak bir imkanı yok. Bu konuda hatta biraz boşluklar var, az da olsa boşluklar var; ama Kürt meselesinde hiç boşluk yok. Yani Kürdüm demek bile yasak. Kürdüm diyemezsin, Kürdistan diyemezsin, bunlar yasak. Bunları söylemenin bedeli Türk Ceza Kanunu'nun 125. maddesidir. Türk Ceza Kanunu 125. Maddesi de idamdır. Yani 'ben Kürdüm' demek, 'Kürdistan var demek' 125'ten yargılanmayı, idamla yargılanmayı gerektirir. Yani idamla yargılanırsın. Kendine sosyalist demek ya da komünist demek 168. bilmem kaçınıcı madde... O da 15 yıl, 20 yıl, idama kadar gider, ama Kürdüm demek kesin idamdır. Şimdi, legal [*bir mücadele*] nasıl olacak? Yani Türkiye aşırı derecede milliyetçi. Demin başında da söyledim; bir ulus-devlet kurulma süreci var Türkiye'de. [...]

## Interview: K-II/07

*Öncelikle çok teşekkür ederim Heval X [isim] görüşmeyi kabul ettiğiniz için. Dediğim gibi sizin gerilla yaşamı öncesindeki hayatınızdan biraz başlayacağız. Aile ortamındaki, çocukluğunuzdaki hakim siyasal görüş neydi? Ulus bilinci, Kürtlük bilinci ne düzeydeydi? Evinizde genel anlamda siyasete dair neler anımsıyorsunuz?*

Ben 93'te katıldım harekete, katılmadan önce öğrenciydim. Büyüdüğüm çevre, aile ortamı tam feodal değil, fakat normal bir Kürt ailesiydi. Yurtsever bilinci ve yurtseverliği olan bir aileydi. Daha çok dinin etkisinde olan bir aileydi, fakat böyle çok böyle dindar değil, her şeyi yurtseverliğin önüne koyan ya da her şey dindir şeklinde değil de yurtseverlikle inandığı inancı yaşayan bir aile ortamında büyüdüm. Tabi küçükken daha çok yaşamım köyde geçti. Yatılı okulda okudum köyde okul olmadığı için. Daha sonra ortaokuldan sonra metropolde okuluma devam ettim. İstanbul'da liseyi bitirdim, oradan zaten gerillaya katıldım. Yani o süreçte ben çevrede gördüğüm ve bulunduğum ortamda özellikle katılmama sebep olan faktörlerden biri İstanbul'da o dönemde gördüklerim, yaşadıklarımı, bilincime yerleşen hususlar oldu. Kürtlere olan yaklaşım, daha önce işte tutuklamalar, haksızlık... [...]

*İstanbul'daki o bölgedeki toplumun, yani sizin ve toplumun siyasal ve ulusal bilinci, Kürtlük bilinci nasıl korunuyordu? Yani çünkü artık Kürdistan dışındasınız.*

O dönem, mesela bizim dönemde YCK vardı. Örgütlüydük, ben de YCK'de çalıştım. Yani müthiş bir çalışma vardı orada o Kürtler arasında, dayanışma, göç edip gelenlerin, hepsinin o zaman mücadeleye sempatisi vardı. Maddi, manevi. Yani şey duygusu çok fazlaydı yani mesela o yörede veyahut o çevrede hangi ilden, hangi yerden, kim gelmişse gelsin düşman dahi olsa birbirini bulurdu. İşte falan yerin kiraathanesi, falankesin derneği, bir düğün müğün olduğunda herkes giderdi. O düğün, normal düğün olmaktan çıkardı. Yani bir siyasi ortama veya sembole dönerdi. Biz bunları çok gördük. Yine özellikle gidiş gelişlerde ve Kürdistan'da yaşanan mücadele direkt damgasını ortama vuruyordu, çevreye. Örneğin biz oradayken hiç Kürdistan'da yapmadığımız, öğrenci, gençlik gezileri (*yapardık*). Gider mesela bir yerlerde, Belgrad ormanları örnek vereyim, oralarda bütün siyasi tartışmalar vesaire (*yapardık*). Herkes katılırdı. Bazıları da çok genç sayılmazdı, yani normal işveren vesaire herkes gelirdi.

*Neden mücadeleye katılmayı tercih ettiniz kişisel olarak? Bu katılım sizin için ne anlam ifade ediyordu?*

Demin de belirttim ben dedim ya hani, katılmadan önceki pozisyonum bir öğrencilik pozisyonuydu. Dedim yani bu sistemde ne de olsan, en fazla devletin bir memuru olur çıkarsın. Bunun da yani sadece sana bir katkısı olabilir. O da olur mu, o da net değil. Yine zaten sistem içerisinde bir devlete bağlılıktır, onun dışında bir şey değil. Diğer taraftan işte diyorum ya, köyün yakılmış, insanların katlediliyor, arkadaşların gidiyor, çevrende böyle bir yaklaşım var. Seni kendinden saymıyor, dilin yasaklı... Bütün bunlara yani ne kadar okusan da, gelişsen de cevap veremezsin. [*İstanbul ortamında bunu çokça tecrübe ettiniz mi?*] Çok fazla, mesela beni etkileyen konulardan biri de örneğin, belki siz de görmüşsünüz, birçok durağa gidiyorsun o işçiler iş bekliyor, hepsi Kürdistan'dan gelenlerdir. Değil mi? Mesela, bu insanın çok zoruna (*gidiyor*). Biri iş isterken on tane el havada. [...]

*İlk kez silahlı şiddet eyleminde bulunduğunuz anı hatırlıyor musunuz? Kendinizi nasıl hissetmişsiniz?*

Tabii şeydi. Yani yeni bir eylem, hatta insanda yeni bir duygu yaratıyor. Yine o 93 yılına tekabül ediyor bizim ilk eylem şeyi. Tabii o dönem... Zaten eskiden şimdiki gibi değildi. Diyelim ki öyle yeni katılanlar uzun süre şey yapmazlardı. Eğitim süreçleri (*olmazdı*). Çünkü pratik ister, mecbur. Kürdistan, kırsal alan farklıdır. Yani her gün hareketlisin, öyle sabit bir kampta bekleyemezsin. Yani sen pratikte her şeyi öğreniyorsun. Savaş, yani pratik görerek öğreniyorsun yani. Bizimki de öyle gelişti fakat şey var yani nasıl? Daha çok heyecandır, sen mutlusun yani, diyorsun "Bak ben de artık eski hayalime kavuştum. Yeni yeni, yeni başladım ama hoştur. Artık ben bir darbe vururum. En azından intikam alabiliyorum.

## Interview: K-III/01

*Kürdistan'da yaşadığınız bölgede toplumun kendi anadiliyle olan ilişkisi nasıldı?*

Yani kendi anadilini konuşuyordu. Ama mesela sen bir devlet dairesine gittiğinde kesinlikle sen şey yapamıyorsun yani, konuşamıyordun. İlla ki yanında birisi (*olacak*), seni mecbur bırakıyorlardı: "Sen Türkçe öğreneceksin." E şimdi 60 yaşındaki, 70 yaşındaki bir kadın ya da bir baba nasıl Türkçe konuşabilir yani? Kendi doğduğu, büyüdüğü, hiç şehre gitmemiş yani, bir kere işi düşmüş, mecburen ki gidip işini yapacak. Ama mesela olmuyor. Kendi çocuğunu götürmesi gerekiyor ya da Türkçeyi bilen bir insanı şey yapacak, yani konuşuracak. Ondan başka yolu yok yani. [...]

*Katılımınız nasıl gerçekleşti, belirli bir kişi sayesinde mi oldu? Aile, arkadaş çevresinden daha önce katılımlar olmuş muydu? Yoksa genel anlamda sizin şahit olduğunuz olaylar mı etkili oldu?*

Daha çok bu gördüğüm olaylar oldu. Yani o süreçte dedim ya yani ben kendim bu kararı verdim. Daha küçük yaştaydım, ama bu kararı (*verdim*) ve gittim yani. Mademki ben bir kadınsam, ben bir Kürtsem, benim iradem yoksa, benim hakkım yoksa bu ülkede, bu toplumda o zaman benim de kaderim eğer kalsam benim de kaderim annem gibi olur yani. Yarın, diğer gün benim çocuğumun kaderi de benim gibi olur. Bunların olmaması için ben şu seçime gittim yani. Yani PKK gelip beni bulmadı, ben PKK'ye aslında geldim. Ben PKK'yi araştırdım, ben PKK'yi "kimdir, neyin nesidir gerçekten?" Yani yavaş yavaş ben kendim ta o yaşanan sorunlar, işte o okulda yaşanan katliam vardı, dayımın şehadeti vardı. Bunlar ya da anne baba olan diğer taraflarda, çevren geneli öyleydi yani. Bu sadece mesele bir kadın, bir erkek sorunu değil, genel toplumda yaşanan aslında Türk toplumunda da bu çok yaşıyordu. Hani diyeyim "Ben bunu sadece Kürt toplumunda gördüm." o yanlış olur, bu ayrımı. Mesela belli bir süre sonra diyelim 97, 96, 97 gidip araştırsak, milletvekilleri yoktu yani. Yani Kürdistan'da deyim hani Kürtçe dili tamam o kadar yasaklanıyordu ama zor yani Kürdistan içerisinde doktoru çok azdı. Neden doktoru çıkartılmıyordu? Öğretmeni çok azdı, neden çıkartılmıyordu? Mühendisi yoktu, neden çıkartılmıyordu? Bunların hepsi soru yaratıyor sende. Neden yani? Çünkü o bakış açısı var sana verilen misyon, sen sadece bir kölesin. Sen ancak bir temizlik işini yaparsın, gidersin evinde oturursun, çalışırsın sabahtan akşama kadar sonra evine gidersin. [...]

*Gerillaya katılırken kendinize sorduğunuz, tereddüde düştüğünüz bir durum oldu mu?*

Yani nasıl bir tereddüt? Yani ben tam dağ ortamını tanımadığım için "Acaba zorlanır mıyım, zorlanmaz mıyım? Zorlanırsam mesela ne yapmam gerekiyor?" Mesela o konular (*vardı kafamda*) ama yüzde 99 ben diyordum "Yapacağım." Nettim yani. Kararlıydım yani. Çünkü belli bir şey vardı, sana olan yönelimler vardı. Zorluğunu nasıl olsa sen onu göze verirsin (*alırsın*) yani. Senin yanında insan katlediliyor. Senin yanında kadın öldürülüyor yani. Senin yanında yani sen kendin, kendi dilini konuşamıyorsun yani. Belli bir süre sonra, geldikten sonra bile, kendi dilimizi konuşamıyorduk yani. Ama mesela Türkiye'de nasıl? Biz dışarı çıktığımızda Türkçe konuşuyorduk. Eve geldiğimizde Kürtçe konuşuyorduk. Öyle bir şey vardı yani. Çünkü ya da kendi, mesela öyle bir düzeye geliyor ki, sen kendi annenden utanıyorsun kıyafetinden dolayı. Öyle bir zihniyet, öyle bir baskı oluşuyor. [...]

*Mücadeleye katıldıktan sonra kuşku duyduğunuz, kendinize "Eğer mücadeleye katılmasaydım bugün daha rahat bir hayatım olurdu." dediğiniz anlar oldu mu?*

Hiç olmadı şu ana kadar ve olacağını da zannetmiyorum. Çünkü gittikçe o belli bir gelişme, şahsi olarak yani örgütün mesela verdiği imkânlar boyutunda, kendim de farklı farklı araştırmalar yaptığımda, hem dünya çapında bunu araştırdığımda öyle bir şeyin zerresini bile ben kendim yaşamıyorum şahsen. Yani tam tersi daha çok iş yapmam gerektiğini, öncülük yapmam gerektiğini, sorumluluğumun daha da ağırlaştığının bilincine varıyorum kendim yani.