The Strategies of Counter Terrorism in Western Europe: The Cases of IRA and ETA*

Batı Avrupa'da Terörizme Karşı Mücadele Stratejileri: IRA ve ETA Örnekleri

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Abstract

This article frameworks a comparative investigation of the underlying causes and effects of ethnic separatist terrorism through the case studies of the IRA and ETA in Western Europe. Drawing on theoretical perspectives including primordialism, modernism, ethno-symbolism, and constructivism, the study explores the structural foundations of these movements, their recruitment dynamics, and the role of ethnic identity in sustaining group loyalty. The research further investigates the counterterrorism strategies employed by the UK and Spain, emphasizing the importance of both coercive measures during high-intensity conflict and political, economic, and social strategies during periods of reduced violence. A key conclusion is that long-term success in counterterrorism requires an integrated approach involving democratic political reforms, legal adjustments, and international cooperation. The study's comparative framework and its integration of multiple theoretical and empirical tools represent a significant contribution to the academic literature on ethnic terrorism and conflict resolution.

Keywords: Ethnic Nationalism, IRA, ETA, Terrorism, Ethnic Separatism, Counterterrorism.

Öz

Bu makale, Batı Avrupa'da IRA ve ETA örnekleri üzerinden etnik ayrılıkçı terörizmin temel nedenleri ve sonuçlarını karşılaştırmalı bir analizle ele almaktadır. Primordializm, modernizm, etno-sembolizm ve yapısalcılık gibi kuramsal yaklaşımlardan yararlanılarak, bu hareketlerin yapısal temelleri, örgütlenme ve militan devşirme dinamikleri ile etnik kimliğin grup bağlılığını sürdürmedeki rolü incelenmektedir. Araştırma ayrıca, Birleşik Krallık ve İspanya'nın uyguladığı terörle mücadele stratejilerini inceleyerek, yüksek yoğunluklu çatışma dönemlerinde zorlayıcı önlemlerin, şiddetin azaldığı dönemlerde ise siyasi, ekonomik ve sosyal stratejilerin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışmanın temel bulgularından biri, terörle mücadelede uzun vadeli başarının, demokratik siyasi reformlar, yasal düzenlemeler ve uluslararası iş birliğini içeren bütüncül bir yaklaşım gerektirdiğidir. Makalenin karşılaştırmalı çerçevesi ve çoklu kuramsal ve ampirik araçları bir arada kullanması, etnik terörizm ve çatışma çözümü literatürüne önemli bir akademik katkı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etnik Milliyetçilik, IRA, ETA, Etnik Ayrılıkçılık, Terörizmle Mücadele.

Introduction

Terrorism has persisted throughout human history as a disruptive phenomenon that challenges political authority and social order. From the Sicarii of ancient Rome to the Assassins of the medieval Islamic world, and later, the Jacobins of the French Revolution, terrorism has evolved in its form, motivation, and methods. In the 19th century, amid the socio-economic transformations wrought by the Industrial Revolution, terrorism began to take on more ideological and political dimensions. Urbanization, mass migration, and class polarization gave rise to movements that utilized violence as a tool of resistance against perceived systemic injustices. By the 20th century, particularly during the Cold War and its aftermath, terrorism assumed a more complex and transnational character—marked by the rise of ethnic separatist movements that challenged the sovereignty and territorial integrity of established nation-states. With the backlash of laborers and peasants, who could not gain what they desired with industrialization and community expansion, created the ground for many attacks and fight against law enforcement. Terrorism, with the comprehensive socio-economic changes occurring with the industrial revolution, became revolutionary and gained a meaning like anti-statism and kept this meaning until World War I (Taşdemir, 2006: 38). The traces of terrorism in this period date back to when the conflict of interest between the industrial capitalism and workers and the bourgeoisie classes was supported by the peasant class in Spain, Tsarism Russia, and Italy, and the extensive revolution against oppression and the counter stance against corporate authority (Caşın, 2008: 237).

In the 20th century, terrorism became international terrorism by adapting to the multinational structures in the 1960s and terminated to become the merely system applying regular wars. Recent examples can be given in this respect and two poles that are not in hot conflict during the Cold War struggled against each other through terrorism. Proxy wars emerged meaning the use of target elements in the region instead of using their own armies due to the increase in the material and spiritual costs in this period. With nuclear weapons, the states gained more destructive power, and this caused countries to be more cautious. The destruction and casualties caused by hot war caused states to use terrorism as a tool.

Within this context, the emergence of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the United Kingdom and Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain constitutes two of the most prominent cases of ethnic separatist terrorism in Western Europe. Rooted in deeply entrenched historical grievances, cultural distinctiveness, and nationalist aspirations, both organizations waged prolonged armed campaigns against their respective states. While the IRA sought the unification of Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland and the removal of British authority from the island, ETA aimed to achieve full independence for the Basque Country, transcending regional boundaries within Spain and extending into southern France. These organizations not only represent distinct case studies of ethnic terrorism but also offer critical insights into the dynamics of identity-based conflict and the multifaceted nature of counter-terrorism strategies.

This study aims to undertake a comparative analysis of the structural foundations, ideological motivations, and operational methods of the IRA and ETA, as well as the policy responses adopted by the United Kingdom and Spain. Moving beyond a purely

descriptive or chronological account, the research employs a multi-theoretical framework, drawing upon primordialism, modernism, ethno-symbolism, and constructivist perspectives to interpret the formation of ethnic identity and its radicalization into violent separatist agendas. These theoretical paradigms offer essential tools for understanding not only the socio-psychological drivers of group solidarity and inter-group antagonism but also the mechanisms through which these identities are politicized and weaponized.

What sets this study apart from existing literature is its dual emphasis on both theoretical modeling and policy-level application, bridging a gap that often exists between academic abstraction and practical counter-terrorism measures. While numerous studies have addressed either the historical evolution of the IRA and ETA or the theoretical frameworks of nationalism and ethnic conflict separately, this article combines these elements in a comparative and integrative analysis. By doing so, it offers a more comprehensive understanding of how specific state strategies influenced the trajectory of ethnic terrorism and contributes novel insights into how theoretical paradigms can inform policy effectiveness in deeply divided societies.

The article also contends that counterterrorism cannot be effectively addressed through military means alone. A nuanced, multi-level approach is required—one that incorporates legal reforms, democratic accommodation, socio-economic development, and international cooperation. Both the United Kingdom and Spain, in their respective trajectories, transitioned from repressive security-centric responses to more comprehensive strategies that integrated political negotiation, devolution of authority, human rights protections, and engagement with moderate political actors within the ethnic communities. Notably, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland and the gradual demobilization and disarmament of ETA by 2017 reflect the long-term efficacy of such inclusive and reform-oriented approaches.

Furthermore, the article advances the academic discourse by highlighting the evolution of state responses—from repressive security measures to inclusive political solutions—and underscores the pivotal role of local political actors, legal reform, and international cooperation in long-term conflict resolution. Its in-depth, comparative methodology not only illuminates the shared and divergent trajectories of IRA and ETA but also generates practical policy recommendations applicable to other ethnically fragmented societies. As such, the study serves as both a theoretical and policy-relevant resource in the fields of terrorism studies, ethnic conflict, and European security.

By triangulating historical documentation, legal texts, policy statements, and theoretical literature, this article seeks to contribute both empirically and conceptually to the scholarly discourse on ethnic terrorism and counterterrorism. Comparative design not only illuminates the shared patterns and divergences between the two cases but also yields practical policy implications for states confronting similar challenges. In this regard, the research underscores that successful counter-terrorism efforts must prioritize legitimacy, institutional resilience, and the proactive mitigation of the socio-political conditions that give rise to violent separatism.

Ultimately, this article argues that the persistence of ethnic terrorism is symptomatic of deeper structural and historical fault lines. As such, it necessitates not only robust and

adaptive state responses but also a long-term commitment to justice, equality, and pluralism. Only by addressing the root causes of grievance and marginalization—while simultaneously upholding the rule of law and democratic governance—can sustainable peace be achieved in societies marked by ethnic divisions and historical trauma.

Ethnicity, Ethnic Group and Ethnic Identity

Hutchinson and Smith defined ethnicity as the harmonious living of people with biological and cultural characteristics. The concept of "Ethnos" was used as an exclusionary word to define non-Greek foreign barbarians. The Greeks used the term "genos Hellenon" to describe themselves (Nişancı, 2015: 197-221). Under the notion of "Ethnic Nepotism", there are some studies that perceive ethnicity as a genetic concept related to the lineage. It says that ethnicity's connection to kinship and blood is nothing new. Lineage is one of the basic elements of ethnicity (Berghe, 1987: 15).

Ethnicity is explained by the feeling of shared sense of ownership. This feeling of ownership is based on a common lineage, history, culture, race, or religion (Horowitz, 1985: 53). Ethnicity is like an umbrella that embraces people that differ in terms of color, race, language, and religion.

The concepts of ethnicity and ethnic groups can be used interchangeably. While these two concepts are so close, there is a slight difference between them. An ethnic group is based on ancestry (lineage), culture, or national origins; whereas ethnicity is the identification with an ethnic group or the form that is articulated through the ethnic group.

Nation and Nationalism

The English word "nation" comes from the Latin word "nasci" (Connor, 1994: 94). This word means "being born" or "having common blood ties". According to the Turkish Language Society, the nation means: Group of people living mostly on the same land, sharing the same language, history, emotion, national tradition, and customs (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2018).

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) describes the nation as a political unity. According to Rousseau, wealth, language, and legislations are the three greatest important elements for humankind. However, the law is superior to the other two elements (Cohler, 1970: 128). Renan did not agree with explaining nation with objective features such as race, culture, language and religion. According to Rennan, what makes nations, nations is a common memory or a past full of heroism, national heroes, or common victories (Renan, 1994: 17). Thus, he examined the nation through subjective elements. Özkırımlı, defines the nation as follows: "group of people sharing a history, a land, ancient memories, common myths that has a mass public culture, duties, rights and common inclusive economy valid for all members with a certain name", (Özkırımlı, 2000: 219).

Anderson says that national states are imagined political communities. This is because the members of a nation will never meet or get to know each other. But as an idea, every individual of the nation sees themselves as part of this collective union (Anderson, 2007: 17).

Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, primordialism, modernism/constructivism, ethno symbolist approach and social constructivist approach are generally studied in the fields of identity, ethnic identity and nationalism literatures.

Primordialism deals with ethnicity as a given or a natural phenomenon. It considers the ethnic group as related to biological affinity and race. Group identity is an essential aspect of an individual's personality (Esman, 2004: 55). An advocate of this idea, the sociologist Edward Shils, notes that social life essentially revolves primary group relationships. According to Shils, it is not possible to explain how a person sees himself or herself as affiliated with a certain group, how they associate themselves with that group through social interaction. According to Shils, this is totally related to kinship (Shils, 1957: 147).

Although the adopters of this idea support the same view, there are three different pillars among them such as naturalist, biological and cultural. This difference is founded upon Anthony D. Smith's work (Özkırımlı, 2009: 84). The naturalist approach constitutes the most radical approach of Primordialism. According to this approach, ethnic identity is as natural parts of human such as scent, sight, and gender. A person's group or community, that he/she is tied to, was determined beforehand.

Biological approach bases the ethnic dependence upon genetic ties. At this juncture, Pierre Van Berghe's sociobiological approach is important. Berghe shed light on the fundamental nature of ethnic feeling. Being impressed by the Darwinist approach, Berghe states that socio-organisms biologically have kinship with others. More than other organisms, human beings experienced affinity transition and are in interaction with each other (Berghe, 1994: 11).

The last approach, cultural primordialism is mostly based upon Geertz and Shils works. Geertz handles primordialism in terms of social-historical perspectives. Geertz set forth two important aspects that motivate and revive the human being. One of them is acceptance of a person's identity by community. The other is the demand for economic wealth.

Eller and Coughan set forth three aspects in terms of cultural primordialism. The first is primary dependence is given. These dependencies are natural. The second is that the first sentiments are not expressed and identified. The third is about primordialist attachment.

According to the advocates of modernism, nationalism was born before the nation. The advocates of this view say that nationalism and thus, nations are structures belonging to the few centuries of modern age. Nationalism emerged with the establishment of central states, with the elements of economic dependence and secularization arising with capitalism. For instance, Elie Kedouri favors 'secular milleniarism' with nationalism. Those adopting the modernist approach say that nation and nationalism could not exist in ancient times. The reason is explained by the socio-economic conditions not having the capacity to create a nationalist ideology in ancient times. E. Gelner explains nationalism by referring to the industrial revolution. Whereas, according to A. Smith, the ethnic basis is more significant in explaining nationalism. Generally framing theories of nationalism for Rousseau, Hegel, Fichte and Herder, there is a direct relationship between the

perspective of liberty, self-determination and doctrines of statehood (Edwards, 2012: 50-51).

In terms of economic aspect, Marxist ideology comes to the forefront. With modernization, the identities began to threaten status quo. This has led Marxists to reassess their position. As a result, Tom Nairn's *Theory of Unbalanced Growth* and Michael Hetcher's *Internal Colonialism* approaches sought to make Marxism to compatible with modern global standards. Nairn attributes the birth of nationalism to the uneven development of capitalism in the eighteenth century. In his work, he discusses the asymmetric dependency relationship between core and periphery countries noting that developed countries are superior to undeveloped countries in this context.

Michael Hetcher set forth a model he called the "diffusionist model". This model outlines three progressive stages of national development. Hetcher's model proposes that the asymmetrical relationship between core and periphery countries will diminish by the third stage leading to a more balanced distribution of welfare.

While researching ethnicity, those members of the ethnic groups and the nonmembers who frame the group's values and cultures from their own subjective perspectives. Subsequently, by ascribing new meanings to these norms, they try to whistle up the group's support (Brass, 1994: 40-41). At this point, it can be understood that the shape of ethnic identity and the formation of the core of nationalism are not irreversible but rather flexible and revisable.

Nationalism is defined as a political movement that seeks to obtain and maintain power, legitimizing this effort by invoking nationalist elements (Breuilly, 1993: 2). The connection between nationalism and politics is primary. Politics is related to power and control. The concept of rulership relates to acquiring state authority and enacting policies. Since nationalism is involved in this process, its relationship with state administration cannot be ignored. Hobsbawm claims that nationalism is itself an invented tradition. Many elements associated with nation and nationalism are products of social engineering. Certain elites treat information, values, or elements already present in society's memory as if they were newly applied to create something different.

Eric J. Hobsbawm, in his work *The Invention of Tradition*, argued that nations and nationalism are constructs of social engineering. In this context, the invention of tradition is an established fact. It is repeated until it becomes internalized by the community. These practices are modern reproductions that draw upon the past (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983: 1). This process not only shapes collective identities but also reinforces the legitimacy of the nation-state. By intertwining historical narratives with contemporary practices, societies create a sense of continuity and belonging that can be pivotal in fostering national unity.

Benedict Anderson, in his work, *Imagined Communities*, presents his thesis on nationalism. Anderson asserts that nations and nationalism represent specific types of cultural formations (Anderson, 2007: 5-6). He describes the nation as follows: "A nation is an imagined political community — imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." People belonging to an ethnic group do not need to be physically present in the same location; it is sufficient for them to imagine solidarity and unity in their minds.

The ethno-symbolist approach is situated between primordialism and modernism. This approach is represented by scholars such as John Armstrong, Anthony D. Smith, and John Hutchinson. The symbolist approach emphasizes the importance of myths, values, traditions, memories, and symbols in the construction of national identities. Ethno-symbolists challenge the primordialist assertion that ethnicity and nationalism are static and timeless. However, the ethno-symbolist approach posits that elements such as symbols play a crucial role in the formation of the nation.

Constructivist nationalism theory began to take shape in the early 1970s. Constructivists focus on three main points: First, ethnicity is a socially constructed identity. Second, they argue that people actively participate in the creation and maintenance of their ethnic identities through social interactions. Lastly, constructivists believe that these identities can change over time, influenced by various social, political, and historical factors. The core idea of the constructivist approach is that ethnic and national identities are modern constructions. The idea that nations were born with the rise of industrialization is widely accepted. The social constructivist approach emphasizes the dynamic and changing nature of ethnicity/race and the social structure underpinning these identities. In this respect, they refer to the concept of the "invention of ethnicity" (Sollors, 1986: 4-20). Sollors argue that the primordialist approach is a subjective model of cultural loyalty. He asserts that ethnicity is a structure created, maintained, and reimagined by humans and is intertwined with tradition.

William L. Yancey *(1976)*, in his study, *Emergent Ethnicity,* rejects the concept of cultural heritage and instead treats ethnicity as an evolving phenomenon. In his model, Yancey draws on the experience of migrants in the U.S., such as Jewish, Italian, and Polish communities. The formation, building and development of ethnic communities, cultures, and identities are closely related to industrialization. As industrialization develops, new employment opportunities emerge with urbanization. Common workplaces and residential areas allow people to access shared services such as churches, schools, and financial institutions. In this regard, Yancey explains how Polish, Jewish, and Italian migrants strengthened their kinship ties.

Politicization of Ethnicity, Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Separatism

By the decline of the Cold War and the transition of the new world order that followed, the evolution of international society began to question the hegemony of the state within the national communities in the different regions where subordinated by the systemic pressures of the Cold War. In harmony with the Charter of the United Nations, the primary goal was to prevent interstate conflicts. However, the contemporary world now faces more serious domestic problems: differences among regions within multinational states. Alongside certain regional integration movements around the world, there are also ethnic-sectarian-regional separatist and irridentist movements opposing this trend. People and ethnic communities want to protect and preserve their titular values, identities, and cultures. whereas these domestic tensions lead to internal conflicts and clashes that could be politicized and threaten international peace and stability via terrors and civil wars.

The emergence of multi-ethnic structures in Europe was due to certain structural characteristics of Roman Imperial historical traditions in some Western European countries. There are many reasons behind the existence of a multi-ethnic structure in

Europe: the immigration of colonial people to the former colonial powers, the scattered resettlement of nations due to World War I and II—which caused millions of deaths—the redrawing of borders, nations with different ethnicities being enclosed within the borders of different states, socio-political mobility in post-war Europe, and the disruption of established polities by foreign forces (Erkal, 2000: 43–53).

The concept of "Ethnopolitics" refers to the politicization of ethnicity. Rothschild emphasizes the inequalities between ethnic groups and argues that ethnicity will no longer remain a purely social or cultural phenomenon but will become even more powerful than these dimensions (Rothschild, 1981: 20–32). When ethnicity and region are significantly affected by state hostility, conflict between two or more groups is characterized as ethnopolitics. These are intra-group conflicts that reflect the biases, behaviors, and communication methods of group members—the core of ethnic politics. Group members communicate over social values (as in the case of Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants), identity issues, religion, and nationalism. Ethnopolitical conflicts are harder to resolve because issues such as historical injustice, group oppression, and victimization—frequently evoked in ethnicity discourse—require time to be addressed.

Ethnic conflict is one of the greatest threats to international peace and security. Ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, Rwanda, Chechnya, the Caucasus, Cyprus, Iraq, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Syria, India, China, Russia, Ukraine, Israel, and the West Bank and Gaza of Palestine are among the most widely known and bloody ethnic conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries. Ethnic conflicts often give rise to genocide, crimes against humanity, human rights violations, discriminations, disasters, economic crises, and refugee influxes.

Ethnic demands can turn into violence as soon as a group perceives its existence to be threatened. The perception that a group is "dangerous" leads to vertical violence. For an ethnic conflict to emerge, there must also be a political opportunity. This includes two elements: first, a weakened or unstable state that offers the opportunity for foreign support; second, a regional base, either through ethnic groups concentrated in specific regions or supported by neighboring countries, enabling successful mobilization (Toft, 2003).

The aim of ethnic separatism is to divide society by highlighting differences in race, sect, or religion—ultimately seeking sovereignty by separating a region from its parent country. Violence is often used as a tool to achieve this goal (Altun & Karaman, 2011: 6). The rapid growth of separatism can be explained by the broad expansion of the nationalist self-determination doctrine (Connor, 1967: 53). The self-determination method, a reserved form of governance for the Christian communities in the end of 18th century, evolved into a doctrine that persisted through the rise of nationalism in the 19th century. After the World Wars, many ethnic separatist movements seek to legitimize their actions through this doctrine—although it was originally designed to delegitimize colonial imperialism and prevent interstate conflicts under international law via the UN system. In the 21st century, however, the doctrine has been used by separatists in non-colonized states, influenced by globalization. In this context, separatism is often framed regionally as a form of "political self-expression".

After the Cold War, with the decline of superpower-based systemic balance, intrastate conflicts involving ethnic, religious, sectarian, and regional differences increased, often

culminating in civil wars through the disintegration of federal or multi-ethnic states. As a result, ethnic separatist movements have generated tensions, while international institutions and actors have struggled to respond effectively—except where king-states pursue conflicting policies driven by any strategic interests.

The Causes of Ethnic Conflict

There are studies that claim humans are socially inherent prone to conflict and thus explain ethnic conflicts through this lens. These studies argue that the origin of conflict lies in human nature (Şahin, 2013). Individuals are born like a blank slate and form assumptions over time, based on which they choose their friends and enemies. The act of designating an enemy can itself become a source of conflict. However, collective identities encompass far more complex dimensions, and their outcomes vary significantly compared to individual preferences.

The causes of ethnic conflicts are typically categorized under five main headings: tribal hatred, historical grievances, fear of cultural collapse, power struggles and democratization, and security concerns. Especially in the post-Cold War era, tribal hatred has intensified, dividing humanity along lines of race, belief, and nationality. Gurr explains the roots of ethnic conflict through the concept of "relative deprivation." Relative deprivation arises from the gap between the expectations of ethnic groups and the realities they experience. This disparity triggers grievances, which can ultimately lead to conflict. Gurr also emphasizes that the greater the discrepancy between expectations and reality, the more intense the sense of deprivation—and thus, the higher the likelihood of conflict (Gurr, 1970: 24).

Karl Deutsch relates the concept of "social mobilization" to ethnic conflict (Deutsch, 1961: 493–514). This concept refers to the transformational phase that societies experience when transitioning from traditional to modern life. In this process, individuals adopt new behavioral patterns and increasingly engage in mass political participation, which in turn distances them from traditional norms. Such transformations can lay the groundwork for ethnic and social divisions.

In the study titled "Why Emerging Democracies Go to War", Mansfield and Snyder (2005: 2) investigate the link between democratic transitions and conflict. While it would be inaccurate to claim that all transitioning democracies will experience conflict, Mansfield and Snyder distinguish between well-established and fragile transitions. They argue that the likelihood of conflict increases when democratization occurs in the absence of strong political institutions. The presence of the rule of law, free and fair elections, functioning political parties, and professional media significantly reduces the risk of conflict during democratic transitions. One essentialist approach is Posen's study "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict", which applies the security dilemma—a concept from international relations theory—to ethnic conflicts (Posen, 1993: 27–47). Posen criticizes the assumption that the nation-state model equates to a purely ethnic state. He analyzes ethnic conflicts that emerged after the Cold War, particularly in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, through the lens of the security dilemma. According to Posen, ethnic groups in fragile or failing states experience deep insecurity due to uncertainty and fear. This insecurity leads each group to strengthen its own security apparatus, which in turn triggers a chain reaction among rival groups. Each

group perceives the arming of others as a threat, even when it is intended for self-defense. This self-reinforcing cycle of mutual distrust and militarization creates a volatile environment ripe for ethnic conflict.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the United Kingdom's Struggle against the Emergence and Development Process of the Irish Republican Army (IRA)

The Tudor dynasty in Britain pursued a policy of converting Ireland to Protestantism. Protestants from Scotland and England settled on the island to alter its sectarian and demographic composition. While the indigenous population was predominantly Catholic, the newcomers were Protestant, which led to a deep-seated sectarian divide and subsequent tensions and clashes between the two communities. In the 17th century, internal conflicts between Royalists and Parliamentarians in England affected Ireland's structure significantly. The 1641 uprising, largely supported by Catholics, was countered by intense Protestant migration supported by Parliamentarians. With the victory of Oliver Cromwell—leader of the Parliamentarians—the Catholic population in Ireland was harshly punished and suppressed (Özçağatay, 1998: 27). Although the conflict initially stemmed from religious differences, over time it evolved into an issue of nationalism and ethnicity. Ireland became divided between Nationalists, who desired full sovereignty, and Unionists, who supported continued union with the United Kingdom (Hennessy, 1997: 85).

Between 1846 and 1854, Ireland suffered a devastating famine that caused approximately 1.5 million deaths, and another 1 million people to emigrate, primarily to the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The trauma of the famine ignited nationalist sentiments, and Irish immigrant communities abroad played a crucial role in forming separatist organizations. One such movement was the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), which laid the ideological and organizational groundwork for the future IRA (Roskin, 2016: 53).

In Easter 1916, the IRB launched an uprising aimed at radicalizing Irish nationalism. Although the rebellion was suppressed, it succeeded in galvanizing public sentiment. Following World War I, the doctrine of self-determination gained traction, and the Sinn Féin Party rose to prominence. In the 1918 elections, Sinn Féin won 73 seats but refused to sit in the British Parliament. Instead, it proclaimed an Irish Republic in Dublin, forming the Dáil Éireann, which organized a military wing known as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) (Özçağatay, 1998: 62–63). In 1912, Britain agreed to negotiations with Irish Republicans, ultimately recognizing the southern state while establishing "Northern Ireland"—consisting of six counties in the northeast (Özçağatay, 1998: 66).

By 1949, the southern state declared full independence from the British Commonwealth and became the Republic of Ireland, dissolving the previous "Free Ireland" framework. Britain, in turn, adopted a policy centered on maintaining control over Northern Ireland, where the Catholic minority faced widespread discrimination in housing, employment, and voting rights. This environment of systemic inequality led many Catholics to view the IRA as their defender (Roskin, 2016: 53–54).

As a result of various political agreements and armed confrontations, the island was permanently divided along ethno-sectarian lines: the northeast became predominantly Catholic/Irish/Nationalist, while the rest was Protestant/British/Unionist. Although the conflict began as a sectarian struggle, it gradually developed into an issue of nationalism and ethnic identity. By 1969, dissatisfaction with the IRA's effectiveness grew. Opposing factions began to organize and eventually formed the Provisional IRA (PIRA), believing they could better defend Catholic interests (Smith, 1997: 90).

Between 1970 and 1971, the IRA conducted 15 deadly attacks, resulting in 26 deaths. The group's ability to rearm—thanks to support from sympathizers in the Republic of Ireland and weapon supplies from the United States—enhanced their operational capacity (English, 2003: 91). In early 1971, the IRA began direct confrontations with British forces. The first British soldier was killed by the IRA in February 1971 (Coogan, 1995: 3). A military crackdown ensued, during which hundreds of individuals were imprisoned without trial, furthering tensions. This heavy-handed approach only radicalized Catholic communities, feeding into IRA recruitment.

The situation deteriorated further with the "Bloody Sunday" massacre in 1972, during which British forces opened fire on Catholic demonstrators, killing 13 people on the spot and another later (McKittrick & McVea, 2002: 62–75). This incident significantly bolstered IRA support and pushed many citizens into paramilitary activity. In total, it is estimated that over 3,600 people were killed throughout the Troubles, including civilians, soldiers, and militants from all sides (Roskin, 2016: 54). After years of clandestine negotiations, the Good Friday Agreement was signed in Belfast in 1998, marking a major milestone in the peace process. The IRA declared an official end to its armed campaign on July 28, 2005, and British forces fully withdrew within two years (Gürses, 2007: 47–87).

The Causes of IRA Terrorism

The British dominance over Ireland led to the demographic ascendancy of Protestants, primarily due to the migration policies enforced by successive British governments. Concerned that Irish Catholics might rebel with external support from France or Spain, the United Kingdom strategically encouraged the settlement of Protestants from Scotland and Britain in Northern Ireland to shift the demographic balance in their favor. By the time the island was partitioned in 1921, Protestants constituted 65% of the population, while Catholics made up 35% (Darby, 2016).

According to the Office for National Statistics (2021), Northern Ireland's current population is 1,903,105, residing in an area of 14,132 km². The religious demographics have since shifted: Catholics now represent 45.7%, while Protestant Christians account for 43.5%. An additional 1.3% are affiliated with other religions, and 17.4% identify with no religion.

The policies implemented by the UK's military and security forces were widely perceived as discriminatory by the Catholic/Nationalist community, which led to increased sympathy for the IRA. When the Northern Irish government attempted to address the reform demands of Catholic nationalists, Unionists strongly resisted. Even minor concessions made to the Catholic population were seen by Unionists as excessive and

threatening. This resistance fueled mistrust, with Unionists fearing that nationalists would push for full Irish independence if their demands were met.

This dynamic aligns with Gurr's theory of relative deprivation, which highlights the disparity between what a group expects and what it receives as a source of grievance and conflict (Gurr, 1994). The unmet expectations of Catholics, combined with pressure from Unionists, escalated tensions. The government's use of disproportionate force against peaceful Catholic initiatives only served to radicalize the movement further.

The works of John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary offer a compelling model for analyzing the Northern Ireland conflict. Their theory posits that religious, cultural, and socio-economic divides form the core boundaries of the struggle and act as the primary determinants of the conflict's persistence. From a socio-psychological perspective, the radicalization of collective identities and the desire for self-determination for reasons of security and autonomy played a critical role in sustaining the conflict (McGarry & O'Leary, 1995: 848).

Although the IRA initially followed a strategy focused on defense, it also conducted attacks. Between June 1970 and August 1971, the group carried out 15 deadly operations, resulting in the deaths of approximately 26 individuals. One of the most significant early events was on June 27, 1970, when IRA snipers opened fire on Protestant groups in Belfast for four hours, killing four people. This incident followed a series of violent riots earlier that month. The Provisional IRA (PIRA) agreed to a ceasefire between 1972 and 1975 due to increased military pressure from the British Army. During this period, the organization reassessed its strategy, leaning toward political engagement. PIRA members imprisoned during this time were increasingly identified as political prisoners, laying the groundwork for the group's transition toward political activism, including the adoption of a long-term strategy known as the "Long War."

In 1981, imprisoned IRA members initiated a hunger strike to protest their treatment and to draw attention to their political cause. The most impactful moment came with the death of Bobby Sands, who died during the strike after being elected to the British Parliament. His death drew global attention and sympathy for the Republican cause, leading to increased financial and material support for the PIRA throughout the 1980s.

United Kingdom's Strategies in Combating IRA Terrorism

Security Area

The United Kingdom initially prioritized short-term suppression of IRA violence, viewing a political resolution as a long-term objective. Consequently, between 1969 and 1974, British policy focused on maximizing its security presence in Northern Ireland, continuing the state's long-standing approach dating back to 1920. During this period, the UK sought to maintain law and order through conventional security forces stationed in the region. However, this strategy saw limited success and failed to address the primary causes of the dispute.

At the outset, the UK attempted to restore order by deploying British security forces to Northern Ireland. Initially welcomed by the Catholic population as potential protectors, these troops quickly lost credibility due to their disproportionate use of force, which

exacerbated sectarian tensions. Rather than acting as neutral peacekeepers, British troops were increasingly perceived as hostile occupiers, contributing to the radicalization of Catholic communities.

The emergence of a more organized and militant Provisional IRA (PIRA) in 1969 posed a new and intensified threat to British forces. The PIRA utilized advanced tactics such as sniper attacks and bombings, further complicating the British military's mission. As the Catholic population increasingly turned to the IRA for protection against what they saw as discriminatory treatment by British forces and the Unionist-controlled Stormont government, the UK's counterterrorism efforts became more difficult.

In response, the British government escalated its approach by deploying specialized military units, including the Special Air Service (SAS). By 1976, SAS commandos were primarily engaged in intelligence-gathering operations. However, their actions, including instances of excessive and secretive use of force-were widely criticized when made public, fueling further distrust and backlash (Demir, 2017: 193).

One of the most controversial security measures was the imposition of curfews in 1970. These curfews, intended to isolate and apprehend IRA operatives, resulted in the seizure of significant quantities of weapons and ammunition. However, they also led to civilian casualties and widespread accusations of human rights violations, undermining the legitimacy of the UK's counterterrorism campaign. From an institutional perspective, the British Armed Forces could be deployed under the direction of the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR), but their mandate was limited. Military support was only provided upon official request, and the armed forces had no autonomous authority beyond what was explicitly authorized (Özeren & Demirci, 2010: 270).

During the 1970s, alongside political negotiations, the British government responded militarily to growing conflict between Nationalist and Unionist communities. In many urban areas, especially those controlled by paramilitary factions, security forces were denied entry, creating so-called "no-go areas." This situation escalated tensions and necessitated a more forceful intervention.

In 1972, the British government launched Operation Motorman, which became the largest military operation in Western Europe in the 20th century not involving full-scale war. With approximately 30,000 personnel deployed, the objective was to reclaim control of no-go areas and dismantle the infrastructure supporting paramilitary groups. Although the operation succeeded in reasserting temporary state control, it failed to produce lasting stability (Fraser, 2000: 58). The Bloody Sunday massacre, in which British soldiers shot and killed 14 unarmed civil rights protesters earlier that year, was cited as the primary justification for the operation.

Legal Area

The Irish Government Act of 1920 was a critical early legislative response to tensions in Ireland. However, as violence escalated, particularly due to IRA activities, the British government introduced increasingly stringent laws. One such measure was the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act (ROIA), which aimed to bypass some of the legal constraints of liberal institutions to more effectively counterterrorism (Hart, 2002: 24).

In response to IRA bombing campaigns and the looming threat of war, the Prevention of Violence Act was passed in 1939. Violence significantly intensified following the 1969 split within the IRA. As the conflict worsened in 1971, the government introduced internment without trial, a more developed form of the 1922 Special Powers Act (McKittrick & McVea, 2002: 70–75).

The Emergency Powers Act (EPA) of 1973 marked a turning point. This law, enacted by the central UK government, reversed the burden of proof, requiring those accused of terrorism-related crimes to prove their innocence (Özeren & Demirci, 2010: 277). It represented a significant deviation from standard legal norms and was viewed as a radical measure.

Later, the Northern Ireland (Offenses) Bill of 2005–2006 introduced a form of conditional amnesty. It allowed members of both Catholic nationalist and Protestant unionist paramilitary groups to return to Northern Ireland or benefit from probation—provided they had accepted the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and declared a ceasefire. Those who did not recognize the agreement were excluded from these provisions (Özeren & Demirci, 2010: 278).

Following international criticism, the UK incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law in 2000. This was, in part, a response to rulings from the European Court of Human Rights, which found the UK guilty of human rights violations, including the coercion of confessions from six wrongly imprisoned IRA suspects. The UK's legal reforms included the establishment of a Supreme Court in 2009, endowed with adjudicatory powers in cases involving human rights, devolution, and public authority accountability (Roskin, 2016: 36, 45).

Political Area

The UK's approach to resolving the Northern Ireland conflict evolved from a security-centered strategy to a more comprehensive political solution. By embracing devolution, the UK granted increased autonomy to Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, thereby addressing long-standing tensions between the central government and regional populations (Roskin, 2020: 68).

Throughout the 1970s and beyond, various regional nationalist movements emerged in the broader global context, such as those in Quebec, Catalonia, and the Balkans—motivated by cultural, economic, and historical grievances. Similar patterns of center-periphery tensions shaped the Northern Ireland conflict. Historical injustices, economic marginalization, and a desire for cultural self-determination fueled nationalist sentiments, often encouraging support for violent resistance (Roskin, 2020: 68).

In March 1972, the British government began political discussions with the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP). Unlike Sinn Féin, the SDLP rejected violence and promoted negotiation. Recognizing the failure of the Stormont government and the intensifying violence by the IRA, London saw dialogue as a necessary path forward. British officials asked the SDLP to report on IRA activities and the broader sentiments within the Catholic nationalist community.

This shift from military confrontation to political engagement was signaled by Prime Minister Whitelaw's openness to negotiations with the IRA. SDLP efforts to persuade the

government that IRA prisoners were political prisoners marked a step toward legitimizing peaceful political discourse.

The Sunningdale Agreement attempted to establish a power-sharing mechanism and recognized Northern Ireland's right to self-determination. The Council of Ireland, created as part of the agreement, was to include equal representation from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Demir, 2017: 195). However, the agreement failed for two primary reasons: a lack of consensus on power consolidation before implementation, and the exclusion of paramilitary groups, which undermined its legitimacy.

Further progress was made with the Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA) in 1985, signed by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Irish Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald. This agreement established an Intergovernmental Conference focused on political, legal, and security issues, and marked a critical stage in building cross-border cooperation (Coakley, 2010: 39).

A breakthrough came with the Downing Street Joint Declaration on December 15, 1993, which opened the door for Sinn Féin to participate in peace talks—provided the IRA declared a ceasefire. This move reflected a strategy of confidence-building, designed to encourage the IRA to abandon violence in favor of diplomacy (Coakley, 2010: 47).

In July 1997, the IRA declared a full ceasefire, paving the way for inclusive, multi-party negotiations. These talks culminated in the Good Friday Agreement (also known as the Belfast Agreement), signed on April 10, 1998. The agreement contained three main strands: intra-communal relations within Northern Ireland, north-south relations between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and British Irish intergovernmental relations (Demir, 2017: 197).

The UK's constructive role in the peace process was further reflected in symbolic gestures. Prime Minister Tony Blair's public apology in 1997 for the Irish famine—a first by a British leader—was widely seen as a significant step toward reconciliation. On July 28, 2005, IRA representative Seana Walsh announced an end to the group's armed campaign, stating that all weapons would be decommissioned. Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams emphasized the importance of this development, and British troops began their withdrawal from Northern Ireland on August 1, 2007.

Meanwhile, the UK's broader devolution policy continued to shape the political landscape. In Scotland, economic nationalism driven by control over oil reserves led to the 2014 independence referendum, in which 44.7% voted 'Yes' and 55.3% voted 'No' (Roskin, 2016: 69). In the context of Brexit, Scottish nationalism has gained renewed momentum. However, in 2022, the UK High Court ruled that the Scottish government cannot hold a second referendum without approval from the UK Parliament (BBC, 2022).

However, because of Brexit, there is needed for Britain either to sign a free trade zone agreement with the EU or build custom offices and tariffs check control area between the EU member Republican Ireland and Northern Ireland for pushing of commercial benefits and unification nationalism (Roskin, 2020:72). There should be also underlined peculiarity of the Irish nationalism such as territorial unification with home country, ethnic, separatist and religious sectarian features, too.

While British election system favors major two parties, Britain political party system evolves from two into two-plus party system which both Scottish nationalist party became third party (48 deputy in 2019) and Irish party in parliament 10 seats could be very effective in falling the government as 11 Scottish labor members did change that labor government in 1979 (Roskin, 2020:47)

ETA Organization and Spain's Strategies for Combating Terrorism

The Basque Region

The Basque Region (*Euskal Herria* in Basque) spans across parts of northern Spain and southwestern France (Clark, 1984: 13). The region's autonomous identity can be traced back to 1512 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018). Covering an area of 7,234 km², it is home to approximately 2,208,007 people, with 1,071,155 men and 1,136,852 women. The population density stands at 305.4 people per square kilometer area.

In comparison, Spain's total population is recorded as 48,946,035, comprising 23,995,107 men and 24,950,928 women (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2024).

Emergence of the Conflict

Before the formation of modern Spain, the Basque territories belonged to the Kingdom of Navarre during the 10th and 11th centuries, marking the first significant political unification of the Basque people. However, with the fall of the Kingdom in 1512, the Basque areas were incorporated into the Crown of Castile. Under the Foral System, these territories retained certain rights of self-government and local autonomy, even under monarchical rule (Clark, 1984: 13).

The adoption of a liberal constitution in the early 19th century by the Spanish state reignited tensions between regionalist traditionalists and centralist liberals, culminating in the Carlist Wars (1833–1840; 1873–1876) (Özçer, 2006: 21). The 1789 French Revolution had a profound influence in this context, sparking a wave of nationalist sentiment across Europe, which further intensified identity-based conflict in the Basque Country (Clark, 1984: 14).

The Politicization of Basque Nationalism

Basque nationalism became formally institutionalized with the foundation of the Basque Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista Vasco – PNV) in 1895 by Sabino de Arana y Goiri. PNV's objective was to attain independence or at least political autonomy for the Basque region (Douglass & Zulaika, 1984: 243). Arana's interpretation of nationalism was deeply ethnic and racialized, portraying the Basques as culturally superior and viewing Spaniards as inferior (Demir, 2017: 211).

Arana's influence on Basque nationalist ideology and language remains significant to this day. He coined the term "Euskadi" to define the Basque nation and advocated that the Basques were a distinct nation deserving of their own state. Through PNV, he created a political channel for expressing these nationalist ambitions.

During the Spanish Civil War in 1936, the Basques were initially granted autonomy. However, after General Francisco Franco's forces seized control, this autonomy was revoked. The Basque government was forced into exile in France, and the Franco regime

imposed strict limitations on Basque culture, language, and national identity over the next four decades (Demir, 2017: 214; Murphy, 2007: 338).

While Basque nationalist rhetoric subsided in the early years of Franco's dictatorship, the late 1950s saw a resurgence in youth-driven nationalism. This generation increasingly turned to radicalism, terrorism, and political violence, not just within the Basque Country, but across Spain.

The Causes of ETA Terrorism

The emergence of ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) and its turn toward terrorism can be understood within the broader context of Spain's transition from a fragmented medieval society to a centralized modern nation-state. This transformation provoked significant regional resistance, particularly in areas like the Basque Country, due to linguistic, psychological, political, cultural, geographical, and economic differences.

The Carlist Wars (1833–1840 and 1873–1876) marked a significant moment in the development of Basque nationalism. The abolition of the Foral System—which had guaranteed regional autonomy—by the Spanish monarchy and military generated considerable unrest. The loss of these historical rights pushed Basque society toward more organized nationalist movements (Sullivan, 1988: 74).

By the late 19th century, the Basque Country underwent rapid industrialization, particularly in cities like Bilbao and San Sebastián. This industrial boom attracted migrants from other parts of Spain, altering the region's demographic structure and creating tension between native Basques and non-Basque immigrants (Heiberg, 1989). The resulting socioeconomic and cultural shifts fueled the desire among many Basques to preserve their identity and autonomy (Clark, 1984: 59).

The ideological foundation of Basque nationalism was laid by Sabino de Arana, who argued for the creation of an independent Basque state consisting of seven historical provinces. His vision was grounded in ethnic nationalism, viewing Basques as distinct and superior to Spaniards. Arana's influence remains central to Basque nationalist ideology to this day.

Early Basque nationalism evolved into two ideological streams:

- Moderates, who supported regional autonomy within a parliamentary democracy, and
- Radicals, who emerged during the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–1930) and were willing to use confrontational tactics to defend Basque culture and language (Heiberg, 1989).

During the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1936), Basque nationalists sought legal autonomy. Though autonomy was briefly granted in 1936, it was quickly revoked due to the Spanish Civil War. The bombing of Guernica by Franco's forces in 1937, which resulted in the deaths of 1,654 civilians and the destruction of the town, became a symbol of Basque suffering and further radicalized the nationalist movement (Demir, 2017).

Under Franco's dictatorship (1939–1975), Basque identity faced systematic repression:

- The Basque language (Euskera) was banned.
- Salaries declined and unemployment increased after 1940.

- In the 1947 general strike, 6,000 Basques were arrested and 15,000 workers dismissed (Zirakzadeh, 1994: 63).

Franco's regime responded to domestic unrest with militarized measures:

1. The declaration of OHU (state of emergency), which suspended civil liberties such as freedom of expression, movement, and workers' rights (Demir, 2017: 242).
2. The division of Spain into military jurisdictions, where military courts often passed judgments based on forced confessions rather than evidence. Torture and intimidation were common practices under this system (Demir, 2017: 243).

This oppressive climate created fertile ground for radical mobilization, as noted by Tarrow (1994), who argues that social movements arise when political opportunities open through shared networks and grievances (Tarrow, 1994: 82).

ETA emerged from the desire to revitalize Basque identity, promote cultural preservation, and resist the Spanish state. Initially, ETA aimed to overthrow the Franco regime or arm other resistance movements. However, sustained repression pushed the organization toward increasingly violent tactics, beginning in the late 1960s (Sullivan, 1988: 38).

Following Franco's death, Spain transitioned to democracy, culminating in the 1977 constitutional referendum. However, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) boycotted the process, claiming Basque demands had been excluded. Many in the Basque community followed suit, perceiving that "the new Spain" failed to reflect their aspirations. This led to a surge in support for the armed struggle over political solutions (Demir, 2017: 234).

ETA rejected the new constitutional framework and, particularly, the 1981 Law on the Protection of the Constitution, which broadly defined terrorism as "any act against the unity of Spain." This led to the arrest of 23 members of Herri Batasuna, the political wing that aligned with ETA, and the revocation of constitutional rights for ETA prisoners. The law also disproportionately affected Basques, increasing their presence in Spanish prisons and reinforcing the belief that little had changed despite democratic reforms.

Amnesty International, in its 1980/81 report, criticized the Spanish government's anti-terrorism policies and documented harsh prison conditions. ETA capitalized on these grievances to bolster its stance during ongoing autonomy negotiations, framing its actions as a continuation of the Basque struggle for self-determination.

Spain's Strategies for Fighting Against ETA Terrorism

Security Area

Only military measures were used in the fight against ETA terrorism during Franco's reign. ETA carried out its first serious act in 1968 and then, martial law was declared in various parts of Spain and the Basque Region. Those engaged in terrorist acts, those who got involved in these acts, and those who supported them were under pressure and control during this period. Basque demonstrations and protests were prevented with the implementation of OHU, and their citizenship rights were suspended in the Basque region (Demir, 2017: 247).

After the Franco era, it was aimed to end the policy of oppression against the Basques and all the Spanish people. Therefore, no practices such as OHU were carried out against the Basques during this period (Alonso and Reinares, 2005: 53). With the escalation of

ETA terrorism in 1979, units from domestic security forces such as the Rural Antiterrorist Group (RAG) from the Civil Guard and the Special Operations Group from the National Police were sent to the region to combat ETA terrorism in the Basque Country (Jimenez, 2002).

In 1980, the Counter-Terrorism Unified Command (Mando Único para la Lucha Contra-terrorista – MULC) was established to combat ETA in accordance with the law. This structure played an active role particularly in targeting right-wing-related structures. MULC formed ATA activists for integration and normalization processes and aimed to isolate ETA.

The Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), which came to power in 1982 in Spain, aimed to intensify the fight against ETA due to serious demands from the army, and this paved the way for an anti-democratic struggle. In 1983, an organization called the "Anti-Terrorist Liberation Movement (GAL)" began to fight against ETA. The purpose of GAL was to eradicate ETA by using the same methods employed by the organization itself (Şimşek, 2010: 330). These special forces carried out operations both in the Basque region and in French Basque areas as well.

Legal Area

With the Constitution of 1978, the Basque community regained a structure like the Foral system that had been taken from them in 1876. According to this constitution, the Basque government had administrative bodies such as the President and the Parliament. The government had its own health system and tax policy. The parliament was formed by electing 25 representatives from each of the three Basque regions. The Basque Country also has representatives in the Spanish Parliament (Demir, 2017: 249).

Only military measures were applied in the fight against terrorism during Franco's reign, and terrorists were tried in military courts. With the end of Franco's reign in 1975, and starting in 1977, those convicted of terrorism were tried in civil courts (Alonso and Reinares, 2005: 53). Governments after Franco tried to end the unlawful practices of the Franco era.

A legal basis for the fight against terrorism in Spain was established by the 1978 Constitution. The highest legal foundation for Spain's fight against ETA terrorism is this constitution. The 1978 Constitution claims to be a constitution of autonomy in terms of ethnicity (Altun and Karaman, 2012: 23). This constitution not only provides a system of autonomy but also aims to unite the separatist historical nationalities in the country within the constitutional system.

Spain continued its fight against terrorism through statutory decrees until 1980. A law to fight terrorism was enacted for the first time in 1980. However, this law was criticized by those who claimed it violated certain constitutional rights. The "Anti-Terrorism Act" of 1984 was a more comprehensive law than the 1980 version. Significant structural changes were also made to the "Criminal Code" and the "Procedural Acts Law" in 1988 (Demir, 2017: 252). Spanish governments, which increasingly tried to base the fight against terrorism on legal grounds, introduced more democratic laws grounded in the rule of law. In 1986, Spain's legal reforms regarding human rights violations and civilian-military separation became especially important for EU accession.

Before this process, the Socialist Party had won the election following the Nationalist-Conservative bloc. In France, since 1981, a Socialist-Communist government under President Mitterrand had been in power. Spain is expected to sign a legal cooperation agreement with France to prevent ETA's arms supplies, militant crossings, and illegal logistics activities through its French branches (Özçer, 2018). However, few benefits were realized until EU accession and Mitterrand's cohabitation with Jacques Chirac's government in 1986. After that, both countries further strengthened anti-terrorism cooperation across various levels, balancing left- and right-wing approaches in France.

Political Area

Spain pursued policies such as reintegration into society (reinsertion) in 1981 and the dispersion of prisoners to different prisons in 1989 to disrupt ETA's organizational structure. The reinsertion policy involved reduction of sentences or amnesty for those who showed regret for crimes committed against the Spanish state (Demir, 2017: 252). This social integration policy, aiming to reintegrate terrorists into the community, was one of the steps in Spain's accession to the EU in 1986. The success of these policies in combating ETA cannot be denied.

The Spanish government launched the "ZEN Plan" in early 1983 to eliminate regional terrorism in the Basque region. The PSOE government, which came to power in 1982, allocated a budget of $110 million for the plan. The ZEN Plan was designed to eliminate the operational capabilities of terrorists (CIA, 2018).

Spain's entry into the EU in 1986 led to significant improvements in fighting ETA. However, France's initial protection of ETA sympathizers within its borders and reluctance to act against them hindered Spanish efforts. Over time, however, cooperation between Spain and France improved due to Spain's EU membership. In August 1986, France's ambassador to Madrid, Pierre Guidoni, met with two leaders of Herri Batasuna and issued an ultimatum to ETA: announce a 60-day ceasefire to enable political negotiations with the Spanish government. France warned that if this initiative was not implemented, all Basque prisoners would be deported to Spain. ETA refused to comply, citing security concerns and ongoing deportations. Nevertheless, the cooperation between France and Spain within the EU framework was significant (Aiartzave Zabala, 2010: 23).

On January 28, 1988, ETA issued a declaration announcing a planned two-month ceasefire for political negotiations in Algeria. ETA leaders, realizing that their goals could not be achieved through military means, decided to pursue negotiations. Both parties expressed a commitment to good faith. While ETA maintained the ceasefire, the Spanish Government emphasized the importance of negotiated political solutions and democratic principles. However, the process soon failed due to irreconcilable differences between the two sides (Aiartzave Zabala, 2010: 4).

The PSOE party came to power again in the 2004 elections. Prime Minister Zapatero has promised social changes and structural reforms in Spain's autonomous communities. In May 2005, Zapatero received Parliament's approval to engage in dialogue with ETA. The negotiations were intended to address demilitarization, prisoners, refugees, victims, and broader reconciliation efforts between ETA, Spain, and France. Zapatero's efforts were criticized by some, and he was accused of betrayal.

In 2009, Batasuna began changing its strategy and eventually encouraged ETA to end its armed struggle. In September 2010, ETA declared another ceasefire, stating that it would pursue its goals through peaceful, democratic means. That same year, public protests were held in the Basque region demanding an end to the conflict. In January 2011, ETA announced that the ceasefire would be permanent and would be verified by international observers (Thomas, 2012: 30).

Conclusion

These two terrorist organizations differ primarily in terms of their emergence. This study takes as its basis the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), which split from the original Irish Republican Army (IRA) and emerged in 1969. However, the origins of IRA's can be traced back to the 1920s. PIRA's main objective was to end British rule in Northern Ireland and to unify the island by merging the north and south. The organization waged an armed campaign for approximately years, ultimately declaring a ceasefire in PIRA, continued its struggle for 40 years and declared an armistice in 2005 and announcing the end of its armed struggle.

The other organization examined in this study is Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), which was founded in 1959 with the primary goal of achieving independence for the Basque region. Although ETA declared a truce in 2006, it violated this commitment with subsequent attacks. Eventually, ETA announced an indefinite ceasefire and declared a complete end to its armed campaign.

When analyzing the targets of these two organizations, key differences emerge. Unlike ETA, the IRA did not distinguish between military and civilian targets; both were considered legitimate. ETA, on the other hand, primarily targeted members of the private sector and high-ranking military or civilian officials, explicitly avoiding civilian casualties. The IRA's focus on military targets was deeply rooted in its foundational belief that Northern Ireland was under occupation. Its violent acts were thus aimed at removing British troops from what it considered its territory, in pursuit of Irish unification. In contrast, ETA sought the independence of the Basque region, aiming to unify Basque territories in both Spain and France.

At the time of their emergence, ethnic nationalism in both contexts was promoted through political parties and cultural organizations. While certain political parties had connections to terrorist groups in Northern Ireland and Spain, legitimate parties that operated within democratic frameworks also existed and contributed to efforts to resolve the conflict from its early stages.

External support played a significant role in sustaining these terrorist organizations. Over time, the reduction of such support corresponded with a decline in their operational capacity. For instance, France eventually ceased to provide sanctuary to ETA militants, and no European Union countries or institutions currently support the activities of either ETA or the IRA. This lack of support further empowered the respective states to combat terrorism effectively. Both the UK and Spain undertook comprehensive reforms—legal, security, administrative, social, economic, and political—which were essential to managing the long-term democratic peace processes. These processes were supported by

national, regional, and international actors and ultimately led to the delegitimization of terrorist violence.

In conclusion, the following common characteristics can be identified regarding the causes of ethnic separatist terrorism:

- The marginalization and deprivation of ethnic groups often led to the emergence or intensification of terrorist movements.
- The survival concerns of these organizations frequently began to outweigh their initial ideological motivations.
- Political instability, turmoil, or periods of transition—especially those toward democracy—provided fertile ground for the growth of terrorist organizations.
- The broader international environment also significantly influenced the development and persistence of such groups.

The states' strategies in combating terrorism also reveal common patterns:

- During periods of heightened violence, states predominantly relied on military forces and law enforcement, often supported by legislation, to legitimize the use of force.
- Once the threat level decreased and the security situation stabilized, governments shifted to political, social, and economic measures to address underlying issues.
- Initial efforts often involved engaging moderate elements within the ethnic communities, thereby marginalizing radicals and building public support for peace.
- Disrupting the internal and external support networks of terrorist organizations proved critical to their decline. Physically and ideologically, isolating these groups from the public was essential.
- Regardless of the tools or policies employed, it was crucial that the fight against terrorism remained within a legal framework.
- Finally, even the most effective domestic measures could not fully eliminate terrorism if such organizations found safe havens beyond national borders. Hence, international cooperation was—and remains—vital in the fight against terrorism.

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