Euskera and the Government: The Impact of Twentieth Century Spanish Governmental Language Policy on the Basque Language and Nationalist Movement

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Euskera and the Government: The Impact of Twentieth Century Spanish Governmental Language Policy on the Basque Language and Nationalist Movement

Abstract
Throughout their history, the Basque people have been subject to great amounts of oppression, while at the same time attempting to fight for their identity, equality, and simply the ability to ensure the continuation of their culture. This was never more of a danger to the Euskadi people than during the twentieth century mainly resulting from the repression they experienced under the Government of Francisco Franco. As a reaction to those policies, the Basque Nationalist Movement worked to ensure the survival of the language through the creation of underground schools and other programs to spur the use of language. In this paper, I argue that while Franco's policies initially led to a decrease in the usage of Euskera, they eventually led to a strong resurgence of the language and the Nationalist Movement as a whole.

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Euskera and the Government: 
(Euskera ta Jaurlaritza) 
The Impact of Twentieth Century Spanish Governmental Language Policy on the Basque Language and Nationalist Movement

A Master's Thesis submitted to
The Faculty of the Master of Science in International Studies Program
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Master of Science in International Studies

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Abstract:

Throughout their history, the Basque people have been subject to great amounts of oppression, while at the same time attempting to fight for their identity, equality, and simply the ability to ensure the continuation of their culture. This was never more of a danger to the Euskadi people than during the twentieth century – mainly resulting from the repression they experienced under the Government of Francisco Franco.

As a reaction to those policies, the Basque Nationalist Movement worked to ensure the survival of the language through the creation of underground schools and other programs to spur the use of language. In this paper, I argue that while Franco's policies initially led to a decrease in the usage of Euskera, they eventually led to a strong resurgence of the language and the Nationalist Movement as a whole.
I. Introduction

Walking through the village of Goizueta, nestled in the mountainous regions of northern Spain, it is easy to subscribe to the idea that the peaceful appearance of the area has an almost mythical quality. A cloud-like mist surrounds the mountaintops; the sun shines brightly on hillsides covered with sheep; the River Urumea runs softly through the village, mixing its sounds with those of the handmade bells around the necks of the farm animals, and the townspeople go about their days in much the same way as their ancestors did hundreds of years before. However, it is in this region, known to some as the Basque Country, to others as País Vasco or Euskal Herria, where some of the world’s most violent terrorists and the world’s most beautiful scenery coexist. In that same village, one who looks closely will find graffiti displaying the message “Gora E.T.A.” – loosely translated
as “Long live the E.T.A”, or “Up with the E.T.A”. (ETA stands for Euskadi ta Askatsuna, literally meaning “Basque homeland and freedom”, and is the underground militant movement in the region. ETA will be discussed in much greater detail further on.) Cars bear bumper stickers protesting the imprisonment of “freedom fighters,” and the ikurrina (the Basque flag, shown at right) is displayed prominently in place of a Spanish flag. It is assumed, (and rightfully so) that E.T.A has a strong presence in the area, but discussion of such a topic rarely occurs with outsiders. Of course, it is important to note that not all Basques should be lumped together as terrorists – but it is also important to discuss the impact that the culture of the Basques has played in the development of the terrorist movement.

An average person seldom recognizes the Basque region and its people, especially ones residing outside of Europe. However, putting aside the violent activities of the Basque Nationalist Movement, there is certainly more of a presence of the Basques and their culture in society, a presence that is often overlooked. One of the world’s most famous golfers, José Mariá Olazábal, is a native Basque, from the Spanish city of San Sebastian. The popular game of jai-alai was invented in the French Basque territory, at the time the French themselves were developing another popular game called tennis.¹ Additionally,

the popular shoe style of espadrilles originated in small Basque mountain villages.

However, setting aside the "famous" descendants of the region, it is necessary to examine the Basque culture more closely in order to understand the region, and this requires a look at the native tongue. One of the strongest identifiable characteristics of any culture is its language, and that isn't truer of any culture on earth than of the Basques. The specific language used by the Basques – Euskera – is one of the most unique languages on earth. Its origins are shrouded in legend, and virtually no connections exist between Euskera and any other language in the world. It is this language that has been the main identifiable characteristic of the culture for centuries. As the government in Spain has changed (mainly in the twentieth century), so has the language policy of the government towards minority languages such as Euskera. It is this language policy that has been a major cause of the development of the Basque Nationalist Movement, the Basque political party Herri Batasuna, and most importantly, the ETA. Due to the pressure felt by the Basques to protect their culture and their language, it is exceedingly possible that the Nationalist Movement in the Basque territories of Spain would never have grown to the level and size that they comprise, had the pressure never existed. It is this belief that allows one to argue that while the twentieth century governmental policies of Spain (particularly those of the Franco regime) may have initially caused a decrease in the number of Euskera-speaking citizens, it ultimately has led to a strong resurgence of the ancient, mysterious language.
II. A Brief Introduction to the Basques and the Nationalist Movement

One of the prevailing questions that must be answered before the Basque language situation can be considered is, of course, 'who are the Basques?' The Basques are an ethnic group that occupies several provinces in northern Spain (four provinces) and southern France (three provinces) along the Pyrenees Mountains, the Bay of Biscay, and the Ebro River. In total, the area is about the size of the US state of New Jersey.\textsuperscript{2} The Basque country includes the prominent European cities of San Sebastian, Bilbao, Pamplona (all Spanish), Biarritz, and Bayonne (in France). The Basques are an ancient, mythical people with a very distinct language, culture, and even a distinct blood type and genetic sequencing. While the origin of the Basque people is relatively unknown, it is believed that between the 7 and 9 C.E., the culture migrated to the region where they currently occupy territory — in the Pyrenees and on the Spanish and French Coasts.\textsuperscript{3}

The Basque conflict is centuries old, and had its beginnings with the Roman, and later the Moorish conquest of Spain. The major Basque province of Navarre (in Spain) was conquered in 1512 by King Ferdinand, who later allowed

\textsuperscript{2} Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond. (University of Nevada Press: Reno. 1979.) Pg. 3
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid. Pg. 13
the region to be governed by the "fueros" or Basque code of law. This practice of semi-self government was in place until the years after 1876, when the local authority that had been exercised by the Basques began to diminish. In 1895, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) developed. The PNV became a driving force behind the Basque independence movement, and it was partially through their efforts that in 1914 the Spanish government in Madrid adopted a plan that allowed for the delegation of limited powers to local provinces. The Spanish parliament (The Cortes) then offered a opportunity for these provinces to develop plans for autonomy, and by 1931, was beginning to accept these ideas. The Basque autonomy plan was drawn up, presented, and authorized in 1936, but the Nation soon became involved in a Civil War, which interfered with implementation of the Autonomy statute.\(^4\)

Following that Civil War General Francisco Franco assumed control of the country, and the autonomy plan that the Basques so desired was not simply abandoned, but hopes of it ever being implemented were shattered. Franco instead instituted a strong oppression of the Basque people, and it was this generalized oppression – especially the strictly forbidden language of Euskera – that eventually caused the development of the anti-Franco and Nationalist Movements.\(^5\) Although the church initially led those movements, illegal political parties and separatist movements soon developed and groups such as the PNV began to grow. At the same time, groups such as the ETA (Euskadi Ta

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Akatasuna, or Basque Homeland and Freedom) had their beginnings. As these
groups began to grow in strength, the oppression that had been implemented by
the Franco regime (both towards the groups as well as individual citizens)
significantly grew. This growth helped to contribute to the demands for
independence by the people, and helped promote the development of the ETA.
By 1959, the ETA was a significant force behind the drive for Basque
independence, strongly based in the desire to re-establish Euskera as a healthy,
viable language.

The struggles in the Basque country have been extremely violent, and
significantly more controversial than similar movements in most other areas of
the world. The ETA, which developed when several PNV members desired a
more radical agenda to gain independence, has played an increasingly violent
role in the struggle between the Spanish Government and the Basques. With
Franco as the head of government in Spain, the Nationals were often imprisoned
and executed for their actions against the Franco regime. The first “terrorist” act
committed by the ETA was the attempted derailment of a train in Spain
transporting a several Spanish elected officials. One of the most significant
actions that was undertaken taken by the ETA was the assassination of Admiral
Carrero Blanco, the chosen successor of Franco and Spanish Prime Minister, in
1973. This was done in response to the conviction of several Basque
nationalists in 1970, with little evidence that supported the conviction. However,
this action split the Basques more than it held them together. Following the
assassination, the ETA split into two factions, the Military ETA, or ETA-M, and
the Political ETA, or ETA-PM. The ETA-PM ceased all violent activities, and has become the "official" Basque nationalist group. The ETA-M is the group that has carried on the violent traditions of the movement. This group believes that violence is purer than politics, as politics requires you to compromise yourself in order to make any gains. They also promote a fear of "hispanicization" of the Basque regions, which is caused by a fear of the decline in the number of speakers of the Basque language. With the continued existence of the ETA-M, as well as the push from political Basque organizations, the drive towards growing the language continue to be as strong as it was during the Franco years.

III. An Introduction and History of the Basque Language

In order to discuss the importance of the Basque language in the development of the Nationalist Movement, it is of course necessary to first discuss the language itself. Euskera is a little known language in the world. The number of fluent and regular speakers of Euskera is extraordinarily small, and the language is so complex that learning it is a huge undertaking. The language itself is generally spoken in the Western Pyrenees, nearest to the Bay of Biscay. The linguistic region extends both into Spain and France, from the Spanish city of Bilbao eastwards approximately 100 miles towards the city of Bayonne in
France. The interior border of the territory extends approximately 30 miles inland toward (but not including) the city of Pamplona in Spain. This however is not the historical territory, but rather the modern. Formerly, Basque was spoken in a much larger area, which included the seven commonly accepted “Basque” Provinces of Spain and France, as well as several other territories throughout Spain, which today are primarily Catalan or Spanish speaking, and as far north into France as the banks of the Garonne River.

The origins of the Basque language are generally unknown; however there are several different hypotheses that attempt to define the history, ranging from the reasonably acceptable to the downright bizarre. There is little known about the ancient history and culture of the Basque society, but there are vague references to the Basque people in writings of the pre-Christian era. Theories that attempt to describe the origins of the language are varied. One such hypothesis places the origins of the Basque language with the people of the lost continent of Atlantis. The theory claims that the Basque people are descended from the few surviving members of that civilization that somehow managed to escape before the continent was lost forever. Other theories on the more peculiar side of the spectrum include that it was the language spoken in the Garden of Eden, or that it was the language spoken at the tower of Babel. Of the more believable theories, one suggests that the ancestors of the Basque language are not European in nature, but rather Asian, and were immigrants.

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6 see Kurlasky, *The Basque History of the World.*
7 See Clark, *The Basques, the Franco Years and Beyond.* Pg. 10.
8 See Clark, *The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond.* Pg. 132
from Asia Minor to the Pyrenees region during the Bronze Age (approximately 2000 B.C.E.) A second theory only recognizes the existence of the Basques after the Roman conquest in the first century B.C.E, when the first written records exist. It is known, however, that the first text ever preserved in Castilian Spanish (The Codigo Emilianese, from 977 C.E.) was also written in Euskera. At the time of the Roman conquest, the language of the Basques was the only pre-Indo European language that survived in Gaul (France), and the only one that survived the introduction of Latin into the areas now recognized as Spain. The first known written sample of the language dates to 980 C.E., despite widespread acceptance that the language existed for centuries prior to that date, with historical references to the Basque people dating as early as the 3rd Century C.E. Despite the differences in theories, it is widely accepted that Basque is the first of the European languages to exist in Western Europe – all of the other languages considered “modern” in the area arrived centuries after Basque was being spoken.

The language itself is definitely one of mystery. While it certainly has a complicated and long history, the structure of the language is exceptional and unique. Euskera is unrelated to any languages that currently exist on earth. The original language was descended from an ancient language known as Aquitanian, which died out centuries ago. Attempts have been made to link Basque with many other languages on earth, including Egyptian and dozens of

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9 See Clark, Robert P. The Basques, The Franco Years and Beyond. Pg. 133
10 See Kurlansky, Mark. The Basque History Of The World. Pg. 246.
African languages, as well as Sumerian, Minoan, and hundreds of other languages spoken around the world – from Asia to North America and back to Europe. Not even the slightest hint of a linguistic relationship could be found. Slight comparisons are often made to similarities that exist with some Romance Languages, but this is completely attributed to the fact that during the Roman colonization of Europe around 200 B.C.E., limited intermixing of the cultures caused some Latin-based words to be absorbed into the Basque language.\textsuperscript{12}

Some argue that there are obvious similarities in a great deal of words, but the truth is that any "Basque" words with ties to other languages are either slang and not the "proper" Basque phrase, or a word that did not exist in the time of the creation of the language and was added when the new phrase or term was introduced to the Basques by another culture. While the Basque language has survived for great lengths of time without being eliminated, it has also failed to eradicate or even alter the surrounding languages. Historically, the Romans were disinterested in the region, so the language was unaltered by the Roman conquest. One of the only examples of a Basque word being used and influencing a neighboring language is the Castilian word for "left" izquierdo. The word is derived from the similarly meaning esker, or eskerdo. There is also the example of the English word "silhouette" which was derived into English through a French translation of the Basque Zilhueta.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} See Clark, Robert P. \textit{The Basques, The Franco Years and Beyond}, Pg. 11
\textsuperscript{13} Basque Language. The English Centre of International PEN. Accessed online 10/25/04.
The language itself is written using the Latin alphabet. For hundreds of years, Basque was simply an oral language, and never had a written form. However, in the early Twentieth century, a formal written orthography was conceived, and then standardized in 1964 by the Royal Basque Language Academy (the Euskaltzaindia). The alphabet includes the following letters: a b d e f g h i j k l m n ñ o p r s t u x z. Obviously, the Basque language alphabet lacks approximately five letters that are common in most other Latin alphabets. These letters are only used when writing foreign words and names is impossible without those letters. The use of the letter x or the combination tx often creates the “Ch” or “C” sound, which is absent from the traditional Basque alphabet. For example, the Basque greeting for “hello” is “Kaixo”, and pronounced “Kaiy-sho.”

The languages complexities do not end here, and in learning basic Euskera, one will find difficult phrases such as “Eskerrik asko” for “Thank You,” and “Ez horregatik” for “You’re welcome.” Verb conjugation is similarly complex. In the verb “To Be” (Izan), conjugation is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Verb</th>
<th>Aditza</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To Be</td>
<td>Izan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am</td>
<td>Ni naiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are</td>
<td>Zu zara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are</td>
<td>Gu gara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You all are</td>
<td>Zuek zarete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Basque/Euskera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Bat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Bi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Hiru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Lau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Bost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Sei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Zazpi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Zortzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Bederatzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>Hamar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One can see through the conjugation of this basic verb that the infinitive changes dramatically for each position, and rarely is there a direct relationship between the infinitive and the conjugate in any of its forms.

The numerical system has its complexities as well. The numbers from one to ten in Euskera are as follows:

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14 Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada at Reno. Online Basque tutorial, Lesson One. [http://basque.unr.edu/07/7.4.1/7.4.2.2.lesson1.htm](http://basque.unr.edu/07/7.4.1/7.4.2.2.lesson1.htm) accessed 10/29/2004

15 Ibid.
However, the placement of the number in context with a noun can vary depending on which noun and which number is being used. For example, in creating the phrase “one house” you may write “etxe bat.” However, in changing that phrase to “two houses” the phrase now becomes “bi etxe.” Additionally, the Basque language does not require pluralization of the noun when it is used with a number, so the literal translation of “bi etxe” would be “two house.”

Unfortunately, with such a unique language came many barriers that are still difficult for the language to overcome. Throughout much of its history, Euskera was a language mainly spoken by peasants and lower-level clergy members. It has only recently (in the mid to late twentieth century) spread to higher social levels. Consequentially, the Basque upper classes were much more closely tied to the Spanish government itself than their own culture and society, which for much of history made a unified movement towards a Basque self-government exceedingly hard to attain.

With the extreme complexities of the language, it is easy to understand how the continued survival of the language may be in doubt. Learning the language as a native speaker is certainly difficult, but learning it as a second language is an incredible challenge. The sounds of the language are so unusual that linguistic scholars have been quoted as saying “They say they understand each other, but I don’t believe it.” Basque legends often refer to a story that

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16 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 See Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond, pg. 148.
tells of the devil coming to Euskadi to learn the language, but after seven years of studying it, he was only able to learn the words bai (yes) and ez (no). It is important however not to dwell on the anecdotal evidence of the complexities of the language, but to discuss the major obstacles that one faces in learning the language. Firstly, the complex syntax and morphology that exists is unlike any other European language. In making the statement "I give the book to the boy" a person learning Euskera would actually phrase the words in the following fashion: "Book the boy the to in the act of giving I have it to him." The unusual use of verbs and structure pose a great obstacle to learning Euskera as a second language. Additionally there are severe shortages of resources and facilities to aid in the study of the language, there is a wide gap between the oral and written versions of the language, and there are eight separate and distinct dialects which are mutually unintelligible, therefore making inter-regional conversation very difficult.

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20 Ibid.
21 see Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond, Pg. 149
22 Ibid.
IV. The Short-Lived Move Towards Basque Independence

Before the Spanish Civil War, the Basques in Spain were making great strides towards earning some form of self-rule. If it wasn’t complete political independence, there was at least the promise of limited autonomy in the near future. A desire for independence had existed in Euskadi for as long as the Spanish National Government had exercised control over the region, but the organized movement for independence did not begin to grow seriously until the late Nineteenth Century. Between the years of 1893 and 1895, a Basque man named Sabino de Arana y Goiri developed the Basque flag (the Ikurina), created the Basque National Party (PNV), and composed the Basque national song, in addition to composing great amounts of political literature. Those writings eventually grew to be the inspiration for the Twentieth Century Nationalist Movement.²³

As the desire for autonomy grew, various territories in the region began proposing the plan to the newly formed Republican Government. (In 1931, the Spanish Monarch King Alphonse XIII was exiled from the country and a new government was created.) Things were going exceedingly well for the Basques, and autonomy plans were being passed overwhelmingly. The Autonomy statutes that were passed included provisions that allowed the Basque provincial government to promote and use Euskera as a co-language with Castilian Spanish in areas of the region where they felt it was a viable option. In the

²³ "Basque History" http://perso.club-internet.fr/mcleguy/baskhise.html
upcoming weeks, the new provincial government enacted legislation to promote the language. However, this success in both governmental and linguistic policy was short lived. Before the plans could be enacted, the country broke out in civil war, which started when a Spanish nationalist-led group began protesting the Republican government. By October of 1936, the nationalist group had succeeded in gaining power and pushing the Republican government out. One of the leaders of the rebellious organization was named Spanish Chief of State and generalissimo - Francisco Franco had come to power.

Immediately, the policies towards ethnic minority groups in the nation were changed. Areas such as the Basque country or Catalonia were reverted to complete Spanish control, and any promise that they had seen of autonomy was eliminated. Franco not only removed the possibility of autonomy, but also attempted to limit the growth (and possibly even eliminate the existence of) minority cultures in the region. Basques were forced to move their culture underground and use their language purely in secret if they wished to avoid punishment.

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V. Franco and the Basques

At the time that Franco took control of the Government, nearly half of all residents of the Basque Provinces used or spoke Euskera. The former policy that permitted the Basque government to promote Euskera as a co-language was discarded, and the official policy became one of complete suppression. This occurred in an era in which the future of the language was already in danger, due to the large numbers of immigrants (non-Basques) that had moved into the region due to the industrialization of the area. The methods used to suppress the language were varied, but included the closing of the Basque National University that had been operating for several centuries. Additionally, any books that were published in Euskera were subject to burning, all Basque on tombs and funeral markers had to be removed, and all religious and official government documents were altered to replace Basque proper nouns with their Spanish equivalent. Basque cultural centers and libraries were occupied by Spanish military units, and the use of Basque in schools, on the radio, in public gatherings, publications or religious services was prohibited.

The oppression that Franco enforced caused almost a complete elimination of the language in the territories of Biscay, Guipuzkoa, and northwest Navarre.

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25 see Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond. Pg136
26 see Hualde, Jose Ignacio. Towards a History of the Basque Language. Pg.21
27 See Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond, pg 137.
28 See Hualde, Jose Ignacio. Towards a History of the Basque Language. Pg 21
Punishment for speaking Basque in public could be severe. Students were often forced to participate in a form of punishment known as “the ring,” where students would pass an iron ring from person to person, handing it off to the next person caught speaking the language in school. At the end of a set period of time – usually a day or a week, the student who was left holding the ring (the most recent person caught speaking the language) would be severely beaten.\textsuperscript{29} The impact of these severe policies on the usage rates is obvious; before the Civil War, over half of all Basques in Spain spoke, used, or understood the language. The rate drops drastically in the years immediately after Franco assumed control.\textsuperscript{30}

\textbf{VI. The Decline and Rise of the Basque Language}

Even prior to the introduction of Franco’s anti-Euskera policies, the language had faced difficulty in maintaining its status in society. While it is true that the decline of the Roman Empire did help Basque to maintain its identity, other invading cultures forced the Basque people to unify themselves and their culture against the new peoples. This caused a centralization of political ideas and a strengthening of the language.\textsuperscript{31} During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, Euskera was almost completely an oral language, as Spanish dominated the written world, although the use of Basque in the region was

\textsuperscript{29} Flinspach, Susan. An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning. (University of Iowa Press, 1989) pg. 62
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., pg. 71.
\textsuperscript{31} See Hualde, Jose Ignacio. Towards a History of the Basque Language, Pg. 7
considered crucial to successful participation in everyday life. Between the years of 1750 and 1850, when Europe was experiencing its industrial revolution, the industrialization did not skip the Basque country. Unfortunately, with the development of new industry came a need for a larger workforce, and the relatively small Basque population was unable to sustain the job market on its own. Immigration into the region became necessary, and the use of Spanish began to push the use of Basque out of common use. This introduction of new workers into the area eventually caused the Basques to experience a period of time when they were actually a minority in their own area. The decline was mainly due to the lack of a unified, codified Basque grammar and vocabulary, along with regional pronunciation. The language didn’t travel well: Basques from one region often had difficulty communicating with those from another. As previously mentioned, Euskera was often considered to be a “peasant” language, and the newly developing middle class did not desire to be associated with the language. On the other hand, purists (people who believed in a continued use of the language) disliked the immigration for the a very different reason. By introducing modern and foreign words into the Basque language, it ruined what was considered a “pure” language, and prevented those purists from wishing to speak the “new” version.

By the late nineteenth Century, the Spanish Government in Madrid had made strong attempts to rid the area of minority languages, and had developed

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32 See Hualde, Jose Ignacio. Towards a History of the Basque Language, Pg. 10
33 See Flinspach, Susan. An Evaluation Of Basque Language Status Planning, Pg. 64.
34 See Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond, Pg. 134
35 Ibid.
strong policies towards spreading the use of Castilian Spanish in the region. The policies never explicitly prohibited the teaching or usage of Euskera, but the teachers that were sent into the Basque territory were never asked if they were able to speak or teach the language – as it was preferred that they weren’t. The teachers also worked to discourage the use of Euskera in the classroom, often punishing students severely for using the language when they were expected to be speaking Spanish. It was permitted for local governments to create programs of study in the language; however they were prohibited from hiring certified teachers to teach in the programs, so they were incredibly ineffectual. This time period also reflects the strong measures that were undertaken by the government to encourage political and economic centralization in northern Spain. This movement was contradictory to the attempts the Basques were making towards autonomy, and eventually led to one of the first major periods of social and cultural tension between the Basques and Spaniards.

Despite these early efforts to reduce the amount of Basque that was spoken in the region, the language actually experienced a period of growth during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. Growing from numbers below 300,000 speakers, there were 400,000 Eusklakdun or Euskaldunak.

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36 See Clark, Robert P. *The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond*. Pg. 135
37 Payne, Stanley G. *Basque Nationalism*. (University of Nevada Press: Reno. 1975) Pg. 236
38 See Clark, Robert P. *The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond*. Pg. 135
39 See Hualde, Jose Ignacio. *Towards a History of the Basque Language*. Pg. 15
40 See Kurlansky, Mark. *The Basque History of the World*. pg. 135
(Basque language speakers) by 1931, and 570,000 by 1934. This may be attributed to the underground language schools that were created when official schools were disallowing the use of Euskera. These schools, known as ikastolas in Basque, were in place long before Franco came to power, and played a significant role in the ability of the language to survive that era. These schools were often tied to a pro-independence and pro-Basque political ideology, which helped to drive not only the movement for a unified language, but an independent state as well. These ikastolas developed for many reasons, but mainly to protect the language from decline due to government oppression and the stigma that it carried throughout the industrial period, during which the Basques had become a virtual minority in their own territory. Despite the increased presence of immigrants, the Basques worked hard to establish and protect the long term status of their language. In 1918, the first Congress of Basque Studies was held, during which the Academy of the Basque Language was founded, thus providing a center for the study of the language.

Even prior to the notorious repression of the Basques by Franco’s government, the Euskadi were experiencing this subjugation. As the nineteenth century became the twentieth, new leadership in Spain left the Basques without much support. When, in 1923, King Alfonso XIII turned his power over to General Miguel Primo de Rivera, the General immediately worked to consolidate

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42 See Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond. Pg. 136
43 See Flinspach, Susan. An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning. Pg. 63
44 Ibid. Pg. 64
the Spanish language by repressing regional cultural and political movements. He ruled that the use of Euskera (or any other minority language) was not permitted in areas that were considered “non-folkloric”, which resulted in the beginnings of reduced usage in former linguistic strongholds. This situation presented great difficulty for the Euskadi, but it was nothing in comparison to what they were about to experience. The small amounts of cultural and linguistic development that were permitted to occur (even during this era, scholars were able to work towards language standardization by working to collect Basque literature and folklore, thus following the rules of de Rivera) suddenly came to a halt in 1936 at the start of the Spanish Civil War, and remained on hiatus until the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945.

The actions of Franco against the Basques began soon after he assumed power over Spain. As previously stated in section VI, Franco’s policies became immediately restrictive over the use of the Basque language. Books written in Basque were destroyed. Those people caught speaking the language in public were jailed, and children who used the language in school were severely punished – and often beaten. Dionisio Txoperena, a Basque man who was raised in Spain during Franco’s regime, recounts stories of how he and his brothers would be beaten on a daily basis by their teachers in order to force the children to speak in Spanish rather than Euskera. Living in a small mountain village, it was not a difficult decision to make when the brothers chose to leave

48 See Flinspach, Susan. An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning. Pg. 71
school in order to work – with the added benefit of no longer having to face the daily beatings.\textsuperscript{51} Even throughout the Civil War, Basques were dedicated to protecting their language. They saw the decrease in the number of speakers; however the determination to reintroduce the language never waned.\textsuperscript{52}

The strict, complete ban of Basque did not last long. The efforts to suppress the language began to erode as early as 1950, when the first book to be published in Euskera since the Spanish Civil War was released for public sale.\textsuperscript{53} Schools that educated students in the language began operating on the sly, and in 1955 a Basque Studies program was instituted at the University of Salamanca.\textsuperscript{54} Restrictions that had been placed on religious services were also loosened, and Basque was allowed again in sermons and homilies.\textsuperscript{55} Many of the loosened restrictions were instituted by Franco himself, out of fear that such strict regulations would cause a revolution. Contrary to his beliefs, that revolution had already begun.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{52} See Flinspach, Susan. \textit{An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning}, pg. 75.
\textsuperscript{53} See Clark, Robert P. \textit{The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond}, pg. 137.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} See Clark, Robert P. \textit{The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond}, pg. 138.
\textsuperscript{56} See Trask, Robert. \textit{The History of Basque}, pg 66.
VII. The Influence of Linguistic Policy on the Nationalist Movement

The Basque people often say "Euskera is the lifeblood that ties us together into a family. It is the language which makes the family possible...it is only through Euskera that a Basque can achieve his full human potential." With this belief so strong in the Basque culture, it was only a matter of time before the language caused a Nationalist Movement to rise. However, it was only with the catalyst that Franco’s policies provided that the movement could grow to its current size and influence. In a culture where the language is the most distinguishing feature of the people, it is not a far stretch to say that use of the language has an extremely high correlation to one’s political ideology. While Euskera had begun to die out as a linguistic choice among the youth in Basque cities, those who had ties to the Nationalist Movements that were begun in the late nineteenth century decided instead to use the situation to attempt to resurrect the language. The ikastolas themselves had grown out of nationalistic fervor in the late 1800’s, so it was an obvious choice to reinstitute those schools to help increase pride in the “religious, linguistic, racial, and

58 See Clark, Robert P. The Basque Insurgents. pg 11.
59 See Clark, Robert P. The Basque Insurgents. pg 12.
60 See Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond. pg. 150.
historic features of the Basque people". This philosophy quickly spread throughout the region, causing a rollover in the feelings people had toward the language. People who had been apathetic towards maintaining the language had a newfound fervor towards protecting it, and with that, the movement had its growth.

Between 1947 and 1950, a student-run organization known as Euzko Ikasle Alkartasuna was founded to promote the Basque culture in the face of Franco's oppression. They illegally distributed literature and propaganda as an effort to promote the language, and published Basque language periodicals to help preserve the language. Not long after the creation of this group, it joined forces with a politically minded Basque Nationalist Movement, known as the Basque Nationalist Party (or PNV) which is commonly known today as the Batasuna party. However, the unity of this group was short lived, and by 1959, the Batasuna-leaning members of the group had begun to disagree with the "cultural" side of the group as to what the purpose of their organization should be. The Batasuna was still aiming for political equality, while the culturally minded members were working to support and continue the use of Euskera. This disagreement led to a split of the recently formed group. The leader of the "cultural" movement within the organization walked away and led the supporters

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62 see Flinspach, Susan. An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning. Pg. 66
65 See Diez Medrano, Juan. Divided Nations: Class, Politics, and Nationalism in the Basque Country and Catalonia. Pg. 144.
67 see Zirakzaheh, Cyrus Ernesto. A Rebellious People: Basques, Protests, and Politics.pg. 149.
of the Basque culture to form a new nationalist group, Euskadi Ta Askatuna, or ETA.\textsuperscript{68}

The ETA took a strong stance on the Basque language. Publications that were sent out by the organization often bore the phrase "One can't be a true Basque patriot if you don't speak Basque and teach it to your children."\textsuperscript{69} While most commonly known for their terror-related activities, the ETA has always been of the opinion that their sole duty and goal is to promote and protect the language and the culture of the Basque people\textsuperscript{70}, and they still, even decades after the death of Franco, fight for Euskera to be declared the sole official language of the Basque country.\textsuperscript{71} One of the primary projects of the ETA was the reintroduction of the ikastolas to the Basque territories of Spain. In 1960, they were first reopened, and the schools spread quickly, even into areas where Basque had been considered a dead language for decades.\textsuperscript{72} The development of these schools was an indication that the Nationalist Movement was insisting on the availability of a Basque education for their children, and that a purely Spanish education would not suffice.\textsuperscript{73} With such close ties between the Nationalist Movement and the culture and education of the people, it was (and still is) incredibly difficult to distinguish between cultural pride and extreme nationalism.

The organization also helped provide transport and financial aid for students who

\textsuperscript{68} See Zirakzaheh, Cyrus Ernesto. \textit{A Rebellious People: Basques, Protests, and Politics}. pg. 149.
\textsuperscript{69} See Zirakzaheh, Cyrus Ernesto. \textit{A Rebellious People: Basques, Protests, and Politics}. pg. 153.
\textsuperscript{70} See Daiez Medrano, Juan. \textit{Divided Nations: Class, Politics, and Nationalism in the Basque Country and Catalonia}. Pg. 144.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} See Hualde, Jose Ignacio. \textit{Towards a History of the Basque Language}. Pg. 21.
\textsuperscript{73} See Flinspach, Susan. \textit{An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning}. pg. 68.
wished to have a complete Basque education to Basque-run boarding schools outside the country.\textsuperscript{74} As the popularity of these options for providing an education in Euskera grew, the effectiveness of police actions against the schools and the ETA itself diminished exponentially.\textsuperscript{75} The popularity was also helped by the effort of the ETA to tie the ikastolas to the desires of the Catholic Church in the region. With the aid of both reduced police power and the backing of the church, the number of ikastolas in the Basque country grew to over 85 in the four Basque provinces in Spain alone.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{VIII. The Impact of the Nationalist Movement on Language Usage}

As Franco worked to suppress the usage of Euskera, there was an initial decline in the number of people that speak the language. However, despite the sharp decline in the initial years of Franco, the efforts of the ETA and the Nationalist Movement to protect the language were extremely successful. As the movement forced the government to allow limited usage, and worked toward

\textsuperscript{74} See Flinspach, Susan. An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning, pg 73.
\textsuperscript{75} See Flinspach, Susan. An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning, pg 76.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
regulation rather than elimination, the growth of the language flourished.\textsuperscript{77}

Religious services began being celebrated in Euskera, and by 1968, the Law of General Education was passed that allowed the teaching of Euskera and other regional languages at the primary level. When graphed, the youngest and oldest generations of Basques see a rise in the usage rates of the language, whereas the middle generation sees a decline, which is representative of the Franco Era.\textsuperscript{78}

Nationalists worked to standardize the language during the 1960’s, in an effort to make the language more unified. The standardization was directed by Basque linguist Koldo Mitxelena,\textsuperscript{79} and the language that resulted from the movement (known as Batua Euskera) is currently the only form of Basque that is formally taught in Spain.\textsuperscript{80}

When General Francisco Franco died in November of 1975, the control of the Spanish government was handed over to King Juan Carlos, the Grandson of the exiled Alphonse XIII.\textsuperscript{81} The ascension of Juan Carlos to the head of the government ushered in an era where a new constitution and the formation of regional autonomies would become a reality. The government issued a decree which modernized the regulations on teaching Euskera and other regional languages, and the practice was now allowed in state sponsored schools at the

\textsuperscript{77} see Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond. Pg. 138.
\textsuperscript{78} see Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond. Pg. 146.
\textsuperscript{79} See Hualde, Jose Ignacio. Towards a History of the Basque Language. pg. 22.
\textsuperscript{80} See Totoricaguena, Gloria P. Identity, Culture, and Politics in the Basque Diaspora. Pg52.
\textsuperscript{81} See Flinspach, Susan. An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning. pg. 79
discretion of the principal. Separate decrees were issued that protected the use of regional languages within the government, and the new Spanish Constitution stated that while Spanish was the official language of the country, regional languages could be considered co-official in their respective autonomous regions. The constitution was printed in all regional languages as a sign of acceptance to the cultural minorities. The government also included policies that stated minority languages could be used as a main language as long as non-speakers would not be discriminated against. With this success, the Nationalist Movement had moved extraordinarily close to one of its main goals: the protection and preservation of their language.

Examples of usage rates reflect this preservation by indicating a rise in the speaking rates among Spanish Basques. In 1975, just after Franco’s death, only 19% of the Basque population (and 22% of the total population) admitted to being a fluent speaker of Euskera. Ten years later, in 1985, the rate had risen to 30.4% of Basques. By 1991, the number of speakers was almost 700,000, and in 2005, the number had reached a high of 780,000 speakers (approximately 40% of the population of the Basque region). The most significant gains within the various age groups can be seen in Basques between the ages of 16 and 24,
indicating a surge of language education in the post-Franco era. With the new widespread acceptance of the language, the Catholic Church helped to increase available education. Beginning in 1976, over 40% of all Catholic Schools in the Basque regions of Spain began offering classes in Euskera, thus furthering the cause of increased Basque literacy.

Basque, along with other regional languages was able to stand up to the policies of the Franco government due to the strong opposition of groups such as Batasuna and the ETA to the regulations. The strength of the organizations, the people within them, and the uniqueness of the culture itself made Franco’s attempts at eliminating the language extremely unlikely to succeed.

The Basque Provincial Government now faces a situation where instead of being stigmatized, a majority of the region favors a completely bi-lingual state, and up to 60% of the population support required mandatory bilingualism in all public places. It has reissued goals to help spur language revitalization in order to ensure the survival of the language, increase its vitality, and to possibly obtain the goal of regional bilingualism within the next few generations.

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86 See Mateo, Miren and Aizpurua, Xabier. Sociolinguistic studies carried out by the Deputy Ministry for Language Policy of the Basque Government, pg. 25.
86 Flinspach, Susan. An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning. Pg. 78.
80 Clark, Robert P. The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond. Pg. 145.
91 Flinspach, Susan. An Evaluation of Basque Language Status Planning. Pg. 89.
IX. Conclusion

It is only during the twentieth century that the Basque language faced the possibility of extinction (due to Franco), and experienced the opportunity of renewal (thanks to the ETA and Batasuna.) In such a unique yet complex society, the efforts of ETA cannot be simply boiled down to good versus bad. It is not a secret in our society that ETA is considered a terrorist group by many governments and organizations, including our own in the U.S., as well as the United Nations. In no way should the complimentary attitude towards the successes of the ETA in protecting the language be seen as an approval of the violent tactics that the group may utilize in other situations. Rather, one should look at the positive things they have been able to attain without violence: one such thing is the protection and continuation of the Basque language. If one examines the history – both ancient and modern – of the Basque people, one will quickly see that they are a culture full of dedication, drive, and perseverance. The effort they put forth to protect their culture is no different than at any other point in their history – it was simply one of pride and dedication to themselves, their ancestors, and their culture.

One of the greatest achievements of the movement was the ability of the Nationalists to change the face of Euskera for posterity. Looking into the future, the language is poised to grow, and it seems certain to do so. Programs of study in the language are now available globally, both through university studies and online. The Nationalist Movement influenced this growth in three ways. First, of
spread an awareness of the situation that faced the Basques during the reign of Franco, thus causing backlash against the leader from several fronts. It also allowed the Basques to construct their own identity and to create pride in their culture, thus giving fuel to the fire of the Nationalist Movement. Thirdly, language standardization, education, and planning were established, thus ensuring the continued use of the language despite Franco’s wishes. 92 It is these three successes that truly show the impact of the Nationalist Movement: that by Franco’s unrelenting persecution of the Basques, he inadvertently spurred a movement that furthered the very cause he was trying to end.

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