

# Determining factors to participate in a rebel group:

The case of ETA

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## Abstract

Much research has been done on rebel groups, but the literature on why within the same territory certain people participate in armed groups, while others do not, is scarce. Here, I examine the reasons that led up to 548 ETA militants to join the organisation at its inception using data from sentences from the Public Order Court (TOP). I compare national identity with belonging to the working class. This article is inscribed in the debate on whether grievances (moral or ideological motivation) or greed (personal economic opportunities) are the most relevant factors in deciding to join an armed group. I use individual variables, such as the family's national identity or if they had a working-class profession, but also social variables, like the amount of Basque spoken in the municipality or how proletarian the locality was. The only very significant conditioning factor to belong to ETA found is that of national identity, both the egotropic identity –acquired from family, but also the sociotropic one –acquired socially. Socioeconomic factors, on the other hand, do not push to join ETA. However, if a town was proletarian and very Basque-speaking, it would tend to have a higher proportion of ETA fighters than the rest.

**Key words:** *ETA, likelihood of participation, ratio of fighters per municipality, national identity, working class.*

# 1 Introduction

Why would someone participate in a rebel group? Most of the literature on armed conflicts has focused on the structural factors necessary for violence to break out in certain regions compared to others (e.g. de la Calle 2015; Waldmann 1997). The analyses have rarely tackled the question of why inside the same territory some people participate in rebel groups and some do not (e.g. Weinstein and Humphreys 2008; Wood 2003). Even then, the majority amongst this minority of papers, is focused on those who do participate, without counterfactuals, turning out to be merely descriptive analyses. Therefore, the puzzle on participation in armed groups lacks pieces to be completed.

My research addresses the case of the initial members of the Basque armed organisation Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA, *Basque Country and Freedom* in English). More specifically, on the individual and social factors influencing them to participate. The beginnings of ETA is a period of special interest. Firstly, because there was not enough information to know if ETA would evolve into an organisation of low-intensity actions, a terrorist group or a guerrilla army. Secondly, because it has never been analysed before.

To search the reasons of the fighters to participate in ETA I focus on the ideals the first participants fought for. In particular, on the political goals from their Second Assembly, in 1962, when they first established a specific common theoretical frame: Basque reunification, the *reeuskaldunisation*<sup>2</sup> of society, independence and socialism (Lorenzo Espinosa 2018). Hence, the members' objectives are probably a combination of working-class identification, which serves as a prerequisite to supporting socialism, and national identity, which encompasses the rest of the demands.

It could seem that this investigation's external validity should be limited to one kind of rebel organisations, the nationalists, as its main focus is the split between class and national identity. However, I interpret *national identity* as a motivational or ideological factor, whereas *class*, as a material or opportunity factor. Motivational factors in literature are also called *grievances* –political or cultural in this case. On the other hand, opportunity factors are also known as *greed*, that is to say, the rational calculation that joining a rebel group will bring more benefits than not doing so Hoeffler (e.g. 2013). This way, this papers is framed in the greed v. grievances debate and the results' external inference is checked with other rebel groups.

We must consider the historical background in order to understand whether being a member of the working class provided sufficient material incentives for people to look for a way out of their sufferings in an armed group. It is important to note that during Franco, the living conditions of the Basque working class worsened dramatically (Garmendia and González 1988). Also, as Ibarra

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<sup>2</sup>The promotion of Basque language so that it becomes hegemonic amongst the population again.

(1990) points out, the “very serious economic situation” suffered by Basque workers gave them great power of mobilisation. That is, workers had a large political capacity to react against the deterioration of their material living conditions. Consequently, the burdensome situation in which the Basque working class was placed may have encouraged them to join ETA. There they did not have to work in often rotten situations and they could live *well* enough from bank robberies and funding from their donors. In addition, they could get out of their daily monotony to which the work and its conditions condemned them, and live highly adrenaline experiences. This does not mean that they had no political beliefs, simply that what motivated them the most was to escape from a material situation of misery (economic incentives).

On the other hand, many studies (e.g. Dinas 2012; Jauregui 1986) have highlighted the centrality of Basque national identification as one of the major determinants in their political preferences. Therefore, we can suppose that it is entirely feasible that this identity would also be a key motivator for the first members of ETA to fight for independence. Even more if they thought of them as heirs of a history of resistance against the *Hispanicisation*<sup>3</sup> of the Basque Country, whose legacy was to be honoured, as nationalism would defend<sup>4</sup>.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Why do people participate in rebel groups?

The reasons why certain nations have experienced armed conflict while others have not, as well as what the underlying factors were that led to those conflicts, have been extensively discussed in the literature. However, when talking about the reasons to become a member of an armed group the debate most of the time is limited to these two variables: opportunities (or greed) and motivation (or grievances) (Cederman and Vogt 2017). Greed could be defined as a combination of individual motives of enrichment and of opportunities to enhance their material situation. Grievances are political or identity-based motives appeared from perceived injustices and seeking the common good for *their* people. This dichotomy between grievances and greed emerges, according to Eck (2010), from the theory of collective action from Olson (1965), who theorises that common interests are insufficient to produce public goods, because personal interests are said to be also needed. According to those who advocate for the primacy of opportunities, people will thus participate in

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<sup>3</sup>To read more on the institutional efforts to dismantle Basque identity in favour of the Spanish one, take a look at Pérez-Agote (1984), Sánchez Erauskin (1998) or De Pablo (2009).

<sup>4</sup>When referring to this *legacy* I talk about the battles against the conquest of Navarre, in 1521, the Carlist Wars of the 19th century, that had as the main battlefield the Basque Country, or the anti-fascist resistance of Euzko Gudarostea (or *Basque Army*) during the Spanish Civil War.

a rebellion when benefits overcome costs (Tullock 2005). By contrast, according to the grievances theory, when the relative deprivation of rights and freedoms is surpassed, there will be enough to become a member in a rebel group (Gurr 1970; Weinstein and Humphreys 2008).

The question of which of the two variables predominates in more scenarios and under which conditions has not yet been answered globally. Regan and Norton (2005) argue that, although “factors that predict antistate activity at one level of violence do not always hold at other levels”, grievances, in the form of political discrimination, are one of the “strongest predictors” of violent antistate activity. However, they add that in times of collective demoralisation greed can get to be an effective substitute. Instead, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) contend that a grievance is too “immaterial and ubiquitous” to be the ultimate determining factor. These authors hold that the individual costs and benefits of taking up arms are calculated beforehand. There will be greater chances for an uprising whenever people have less to lose, which is to say, it is more likely to happen in areas where poverty and inequality are more ingrained. Additionally, rebels will have more incentives to overthrow the government where there is more to gain, that is, where there are more natural resources and immovable capital to be found, such as diamonds, narcotics, or oil. Moreover, the possibilities for the rebels to take roots are especially boosted when the government has weak institutions and a scarce presence around the territory (Paris 2004).

In general, notwithstanding, it appears that participating in rebel groups has nothing to do with being poor, low-educated or illiterate (Hassan 2002; Krueger and Laitin 2008). In many cases, it is the opposite. Krueger and Malečková (2003) argue, in fact, that political violence is not rooted in the poverty suffered –egotropic causes, but rather in the poverty socially perceived –sociotropic causes. Following a *Robin Hood*-type model, in many cases these are men and women who, coming from non-poor strata –middle or even upper classes, embark on armed struggle. Either because they detect too much poverty or inequality in society<sup>5</sup>, or also because they want to counteract ethnic or religious discrimination, or prevent the occupation of their territory.

These are the causal mechanisms operating in the cases of Hezbollah (Krueger and Malečková 2003), Al-Qaeda (Sageman 2004), the Pakistani jihad (Fair 2008), the Palestinian intifada (Berrebi 2005), or the Zionist terrorism (Segal 1988). In all of them, their own ideological motives prevailed to choose the armed path over the economic opportunities. Russell and Miller (1977) also notice the same phenomenon in the case of terrorism originated in Western countries –especially revolutionary terrorism, and Flórez-Morris (2007) in that of the Colombian urban guerrilla. These Colombian urban guerrilla organisations were fed mainly from university students who claimed that their ideological and moral convictions were their main impulses to participate<sup>6</sup>. Hudson (1999) explains

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<sup>5</sup>Common case of extreme left rebel groups

<sup>6</sup>In contrast, only 9.5% of these interviewed Colombian fighters mentioned the economic opportunities offered by

that this is due to “deep sense of guilt for the majority poverty of the world’s population”, namely ideological motivations.

One of the most significant factors proven for participating in armed groups is a particular form of grievance: is the repression suffered –violations of human rights in their various aspects, as evidenced by Krueger and Laitin (2008) with a sample of 781 international terrorist attacks. Eck (2009) adds to the previously mentioned argument that the maximum effectiveness to respond to repression occurs when it is neither too high nor too low. This will probably generate “sufficient grievances to motivate participation while mobilising against such regimes is still not too costly”. And, according to Thoms and Ron (2007), repression “can transform latent grievances into active antagonisms”, which provides “strong motivations for violence”. This ultimately leads to “cycles of violence” in constant escalation (Mohammad 2005). In fact, reacting to repression is one of the main reasons argued by combatants to explain their entry into armed groups (e.g. Flórez-Morris 2007; Taylor and Quayle 1994). On the other hand, de la Calle (2015) confirms at an aggregate level after studying thirty regions with nationalist movements, that repression is in fact one of the greatest predictors for the emergence and strengthening of rebel groups, as long as their movement is not marginal and has enough deep-rooted sympathy among the population.

These results indicate a prevalence of the immaterial motives over the material ones, and Malečková (2005) gets to the same conclusions in a meta-analysis. Participating in a rebel group is, hence, much more politically motivated –fighting mainly for rights and civic freedoms, than economically. Nonetheless, it is also true that it is perfectly feasible to suffer economically, but to feel more driven by ideas than by material necessities. For instance, in the Salvadorean guerrilla the grievances were the best predictor to participate, although the economic incentives did also play their role (Wood 2003). On the other hand, in the Sierra Leonean civil war grievances conditioned participation in the insurgency and counterinsurgency in the same way. It depended on which army got first to the place. Moreover, grievances were also as robust as economic opportunities, with independent roles (Weinstein and Humphreys 2008).

Nonetheless, there are other analysed factors which stay out of the debate between greed and grievances to find out the roots of participation in rebel groups. One of the most recurring explanations are the psychological traits. In this area, Sarraj (2002) concludes that the profile of the Palestinian human bombs guilt, shame and an overwhelming desire to avenge Israeli oppression are interspersed. Similarly, evidence of repressed sexual fantasies has also been found in immolations (Konet 2001; Morgan 2002). On the other hand, Tschantret (2021) concludes that the only difference between far-right terrorists and Islamists and the general population is that the former are eaten by a deep “preoccupation with revenge and chaos”. However, it has been proven many times that the guerrillas as one of the reasons for joining the group armed.

these factors does not imply any relationship with mental health problems or psychopathologies (Crenshaw 1990; Hassan 2002; Post 2005).

Another significant much less common line of research lies on social incentives. That is, the gains that the individual can achieve in her or his social circles by taking up arms with the local rebel group (Eck 2009). Lichbach (1998) and Weinstein (2007) assert that these incentives are in fact more effective than the economic ones, as they result in greater involvement of the combatants, given the social pressure to be accepted in the community.

## 2.2 Nationalist political violence: the Basque case

Among the different types of rebel groups, the nationalists are of outstanding importance. In number of organisations and attacks nationalism has been the main one, with 180 different operational groups between 1998 and 2005 and 2,540 attacks. Islamism surpasses it only in victims (Piazza 2009). ETA has been one of the most prominent groups inside this branch, in turn, the most violent expression of Basque nationalism.

Modern Basque nationalism was promoted at the end of the nineteenth-century by the brothers Luis and Sabino Arana, who founded the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV by their initials in Spanish, or EAJ in Basque) to avoid the liberal drift that the regime was adopting, to recover the privileges that it had historically enjoyed, and return to traditionalism in a land without Spanish influence or interference. At various moments during their lives, they promoted independence as the only way. Little by little the party grew, although practically only in the province of Biscay, since outside its territorial limits the establishment of the party was testimonial. With the advent of the Second Republic the party was able to strengthen across the Basque Region until they got to lead the Basque government and to approve their own Statute of Autonomy, in 1936 (de la Granja 2002). During the postwar, the PNV weakened and lost the initiative to confront the Francoist regime. Facing the situation, a group of students who were part of the PNV youth, Euzko Gaztedi Indarra (EGI, *Basque Youth Force*), split up in 1959 due to strategic disagreements and founded ETA to reverse the situation of inaction against the regime (Bullain 2011).

In the Third Assembly, in 1964, ETA adopted the armed struggle as a method. Afterwards, it would soon become one of the most powerful and feared organisations in the West. They did also found a deep-rooted political movement on various fronts around ETA: on the institutional front, a party that for many years was the second Basque force –Herri Batasuna (*Popular Unity*); on the labour front, one of the most strong unions –Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeen (*Patriots Workers' Commissions*); on the youth front, the largest Basque youth organisation –Jarrai (*Continue*)...

amongst others. In absolute terms, this movement acquired a mobilisation power and support only comparable to the Northern Irish republican movement (Casanova 2007; Ó Broin 2004).

All these elements forged a breeding ground that legitimised ETA’s activity for decades, at least for a relevant part of Basque society (Sánchez-Cuenca 2007). This legitimisation especially boosted after more popular actions, such as the murder of drug dealers or informers (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2013). All these variables transformed ETA into the fourth non-Islamic armed group with the highest number of actions<sup>7</sup>, just behind the group in which ETA has always mirrored, with whom ETA has shared ideology and tactical-strategic roadmap (O’Callaghan 1999): the PIRA.

Indeed, the most analysed case of armed separatist violence in political science is that of Northern Ireland, “The Troubles” as it is commonly known and in which the PIRA was the protagonist (Whyte 1991). However, only Gill and Horgan (2013) have analysed the large-scale individual profile of the leading Northern Irish Republican actor. They find that the main sources of the rebel group were in the Ulster, and initially in large cities, but over time the municipalities of between 2,000 and 10,000 inhabitants took over. The socioeconomic origin of the “volunteers”, as they are called there, was mainly the working class. While the most militant-producing county was Antrim: the most populous in the region, and in turn the most competent in the Irish language.

Regarding the literature on ETA, it has been concluded that the vast majority of their membership has been male, especially at the beginning, when more than 95% were male. Over time the number of women increased, but the sexist dynamics of society were not absent (Hamilton 2013). The average age was also especially low<sup>8</sup>: it ranged from 16 or 17 to just over 20 years old (Reinares 2004; Unzueta 1988). In addition, the fighters were predominantly of rural origins during the seventies, but from the mid-eighties the proportion was reversed and the urban environment became its largest source of membership.

Furthermore, most of the combatants came from Gipuzkoa, and secondly, from Biscay. de la Calle (2015) explains this phenomenon by arguing that the nationalist left –ETA included– was a radical expression of vindication of the Basque identity, which was particularly found in the highly Basque-speaking towns which remained politically “orphans”. That is to say, the municipalities – mainly Gipuzkoans– that had historically voted for the Carlists, during the Franco regime stopped trusting and supporting the Carlist cadres after they became regional elites. Meanwhile, Biscay, despite being the most populous, was not such an important source for ETA because it had historically been the fiefdom of the PNV, which partially inhibited other nationalist influences. The south of Navarre and the province of Araba, on the other hand, were of little help for ETA to recruit,

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<sup>7</sup>Although the number of victims behind is actually 745, far from the 11,437 from Sendero Luminoso (*Shining Path*) or the 1,866 from the PIRA (Provisional Irish Republican Army, or *Óglaigh na hÉireann* in Irish).

<sup>8</sup>Comparatively with the PIRA (Gill and Horgan 2013) or with jihadism (Sageman 2004).



because Basque language and nationalism had little implantation (Tejerina 1992).

In cultural matters, 75% of combatants between the eighties and nineties came from places where more than 60% did not speak Basque. This percentage contrasts with that of the seventies, when the majority came from villages where Basque was the majority language (Reinares 2004). The percentage of Basque surnames also decreased with time: in the first period studied by Reinares (2004), 60.6% had two out of two Basque surnames, while only 21.6 % had none; between 1983 and 1995, those of two Basque surnames were 41.6% and those of neither were 32.6%.

Later, in socioeconomic matters, half of the affiliation during the seventies was working class, while between 1983 and 1995 it was only 16%. It decreased in favour of the “new middle class”, with 52.2% of the share, and more specifically students, which would represent a third of the total number of fighters. Some more well-established origins than those of PIRA (Gill and Horgan 2013).

### 3 Theoretical argument

Consequently, what is it more determining to participate in armed violence? The ideas or the incentives to flee from situations of hardships? There are two potential mechanisms: whether that national identity is the main trigger to enrol in ETA, or that material factors are. This dichotomy is not detrimental to the possibility that both mechanisms have a positive effect. Hence, we face two different hypotheses:

- *H1*: The Basque nationalist identity is a significant determining factor to participate in ETA during its beginnings, *ceteris paribus*.

- *H2*: To be part of the working class is a significant determining factor to participate in ETA during its beginnings, *ceteris paribus*.

### 4 Data & Methods

To test these two hypotheses, I use the data compiled by Del Águila (2001) from the sentences from the *Tribunal de Orden Público* (TOP, or Public Order Court), a Francoist special court that prosecuted political offences since 1963 to 1977. These data represent a clear measure of opposition during the dictatorship. I circumscribe the data to the southern Basque Region<sup>9</sup>, with a total

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<sup>9</sup>The Basque Region claimed by nationalism is made up of seven provinces, three in the French territory and four in the Spanish one –Araba, Biscay, Gipuzkoa and Navarre. As ETA only arose in Spain and against Franco, I will

sample of 548 ETA combatants and 1,370 condemned by the TOP outside of ETA.

I conduct analyses at both the individual and municipal levels in order to compare and analyse outcomes in two different ways with two distinct kind of variables. Firstly, I compare Basque people between them, and afterwards Basque towns and their ratio of ETA members among their population.

## 4.1 Individual analysis

For the individual analysis, I study in a logistic regression the possibilities of belonging to ETA according to individual variables, such as social class, gender, whether they had Basque surnames and whether they had been born in the Basque Region. The dependent variable is a dichotomous one in which 1 implies belonging to ETA and being sentenced by the TOP, while 0 means being sentenced by the TOP without being from ETA. I am aware that those convicted by the TOP are not an accurate counterfactual that reliably represent the Basque society of the time, since it is largely made up of communists, trade unionists and ultra-leftists, whose class origin tended to be much more working-class than the Basque average society. Still, they are the most accurate counterfactual among the existing data. Consequently, I will be cautious when analysing the implications of the results.

As independent variables I will firstly use a codification for *belonging to the working class* from professions in the sample, following Oesch (2006)'s classification. Then I dichotomise it, with whether or not they belonged to the working class –skilled or unskilled workers– or not.

For national identity I use two proxies: a dummy for having at least one Basque surname and another for having been born in the Basque Region. To create the first proxy I codify the origin of the two surnames of the convicted, whether they were Basque surnames or not. As a robustness check in Annex 2 I include a polytomous variable on whether they had one, two or no Basque surnames. The *Basqueness* of the surname is determined according to whether 80% or more of the people with that surname currently live in a Basque province, using the database of the National Institute of Statistics (INE, by its acronym in Spanish)<sup>10</sup>. With this variable I analyse their roots in the territory: the more Basque surnames they have, the more likely they are to have more Basque ancestry and to speak Basque at home, which in turn increases the chances that they will feel

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confine myself to analysing only the southern provinces (those in Spanish territory). Navarre and the Basque Country are currently two distinct autonomous communities, but they have historically formed a cultural, sociolinguistic and political unit with the rest of the provinces (Bazán Díaz 2002; González Ollé 1970). Furthermore, Basque nationalism, and specifically ETA, have had a relevant impact and presence in the four provinces, and their reunification has been a historical demand (Casanova 2007; De Pablo 2009). I will be referring to this southern region as the Basque Region.

<sup>10</sup>Same criteria as those used for similar analyses (e.g. Balcells and Villamil 2020)

the prohibition of speaking their language as an outrage. They would also be likely to think that under Franco’s “attack on Basqueness” the best way to save their heritage, culture and language was through nationalism and the fight for independence<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, with the second proxy I use –having been born in a Basque province– I do also address the attachment to the Basque Region. However, in this case I do not limit myself to contemplate the roots of their families in the Homeland. I consider too the possibility that “second or third generation immigrants” grew during their upbringing a great sense of attachment to Basqueness and a deep sentiment of belonging to its land and to defend it.

As control variables I use *Woman*, a dummy about their gender, being 1 if they are a woman and 0, a man. I code it from the names recorded in their sentences. I also use *Age*, a continuous variable about how old they were when sentenced.

## 4.2 Municipal analyses

Next, I repeat the analysis with the set of Basque municipalities as a sample. As dependent variables I use, on the one hand, the proportion of ETA convicts among the total of those convicted by the TOP per municipality and the relative number of ETA convicts per every thousand inhabitants.

As an independent variable for *workers’ presence per town* we have the *Logarithmic & inverted distance to the nearest large factory*: a continuous variable showing the logarithmic and inverted distance in kilometres from the centre of its neighbouring municipality to the closest large factory<sup>12</sup> existing in the sixties and seventies. For a better interpretation, I invert the results. Thus I can interpret that the higher the result is, the higher the workers’ presence in the municipality. Also, on the other hand, the nearer a large factory was to the population, the more they would *breathe* in their environment –perhaps even at home– all the difficulties of labourers’ lives. It does not matter if they were not industrial workers, either because they were too young or because they refused to go through the same supposed ordeal that their own would have experienced. They would have passed the experience and their objective socioeconomic conditions would be by inheritance the workers. I extract the data from the industrial report of the Basque Cultural Heritage Collection, EKOB (2012), and the Great Navarrese Encyclopedia (Navarra 1990).

For *national identity* I utilise again two proxies. The first, *Basque percentage*, a continuous variable consisting of the relative quantity of proficient Basque speakers by municipality in the

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<sup>11</sup>The causal correlation between minority regional languages and nationalism has long been proven, also for the Basque case. To see as examples Tejerina (1992) or Watson (1996).

<sup>12</sup>I determine if it was large depending on whether it had at that time more than a hundred employees, approximately, according to the consulted bibliography.

eighties. For Biscay, Gipuzkoa and Araba, the data are from the 1981 Sociolinguistic Map, of the Basque Government. For Navarre I use the data collected by Gros (2007) from surveys from 1986. Both are the closest available data to the period studied. As they predate the laws on teaching in Basque in the Basque Autonomous Community (1983) and Navarre (1988), we can expect no substantial difference between both periods. With this variable, I try to capture the same causal mechanism as the ones used in the individual analysis, but in this case leaving room for those who were immigrants from other Spanish regions and who could be influenced by the environment to join a nationalist organisation. Let me explain, living in an environment of high proficiency in Basque and where traditions are salient, it is expected that these immigrants have enough conditions to end up feeling part of a Basque *us*. Be it for affinity with their fight against “Spanish oppression” or simply as a way of social integration, taking it to the last consequences. During the history of ETA, in fact, there are many cases of immigrant participants, such as those of Miguel José from Galicia, or of Juan José and María Rocío from Castile<sup>13</sup>.

I also employ Mountaineering group, a dichotomous variable reflecting whether or not the municipality had any mountaineering group. These groups have historically been in the Basque Region a space where nationalism took refuge during times of repression and dictatorship. They used it too to organise and to spread their propaganda (de la Granja 2002). Therefore, it is intended to be a proxy for nationalist associationism in times of repression. I select the mountaineering groups that were active just before the constitution of TOP –1963, since this is when, theoretically, the future members of ETA would have had enough time to become aware and organise themselves in nationalist organisations, using the mountaineering groups as covers, before participating in the armed group. Thus, it could be that from those clandestine spaces of nationalist organisation, practically the only ones existing in Spanish territory at the time, strongholds arose convinced that the only way to carry out their struggle was by the means of arms. The data are obtained from the Basque Mountain Federation (EMF 2021), and from the Navarrese Encyclopedia (Navarra 1990).

## 5 Results

In this section I show and analyse the different models tested for the individual and municipal analyses. The tables are designed with the *stargazer* package from Marek (2018). Firstly, notwithstanding, I include descriptive graphs and maps to visualise the effect of the independent variables on the possibility of belonging to ETA.

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<sup>13</sup>Names taken from TOP.

## 5.1 Descriptive analyses

I begin by showing the relationship between dependent and independent variables with the following graphs and maps. In the graphs I have filtered out the Basque municipalities with nobody convicted by the TOP. There are only 142 out of 526 with sentences. However, the towns where there are not, it is not due to linguistic or socioeconomic issues, but to its population size. Hence, we can expect no sampling bias in these descriptive analyses.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the percentage of Basque spoken municipally and the relative quantity of ETA members in town. As it can be seen, there is a constant and clear positive correlation between municipalities in the proportion of Basque speakers and of ETA combatants, especially above 75% of Basque spoken.

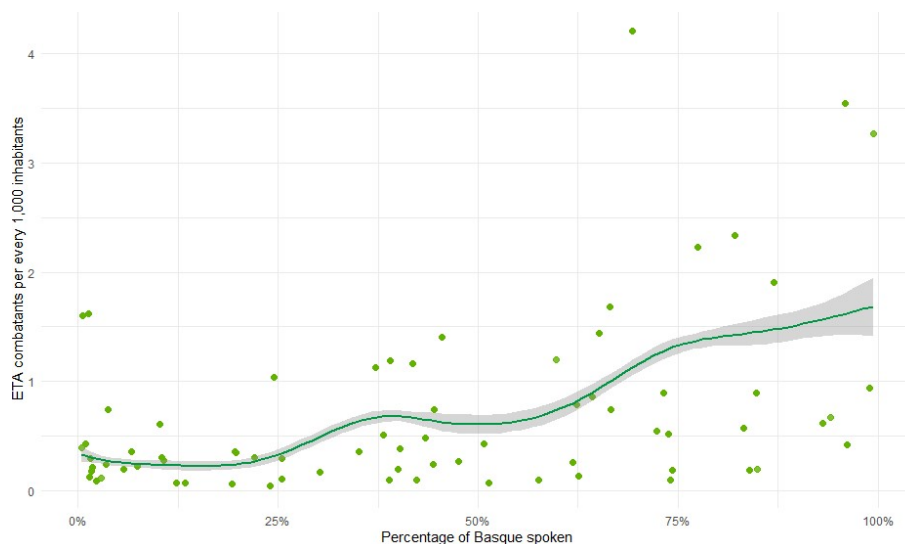


Figure 1: *Proportion of ETA fighters by percentage of Basque speakers.*

On the other hand, there is the graph with the municipal proxy for *working class*: the distance to the nearest large factory. We see unclear correlations with the relative presence of ETA members. Except for the fact that in the end of the axis the correlations decreases, when the concentration of cases diminishes.

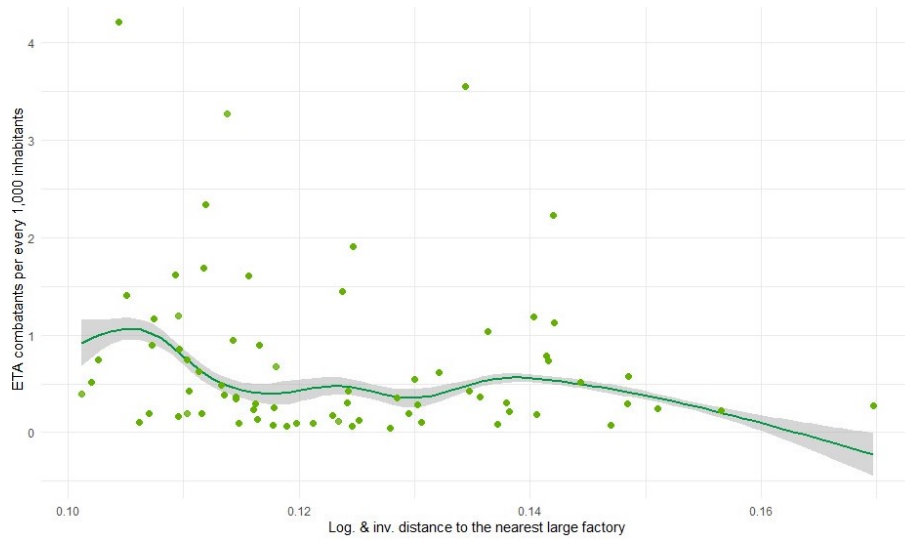


Figure 2: *Proportion of ETA fighters based on how proletarian their town is.*

Conversely, the Figures 3 and 4 show the correlations between the dependent variable respectively with the relative workers' presence and the percentage of Basque spoken. More specifically, I divide the municipalities into three, depending on whether there was a low, medium or high presence of workers, and then I correlate the dependent variable with the percentage of Basque spoken on the x-axis. In the first I do it with the number of ETA convicts per thousand inhabitants; in the latter, with the proportion of ETA combatants among the total of those convicted by the TOP.

As we can see in both figures, the quantity of Basque speakers has a greater impact on ETA's ability to recruit the more proletarian the municipality. That is, Basque national identity is most influential in working class environments to participate in the armed organisation. If workers' presence is high, there is a considerable correlation between a higher percentage of Basque spoken and a greater proportion of ETA members.

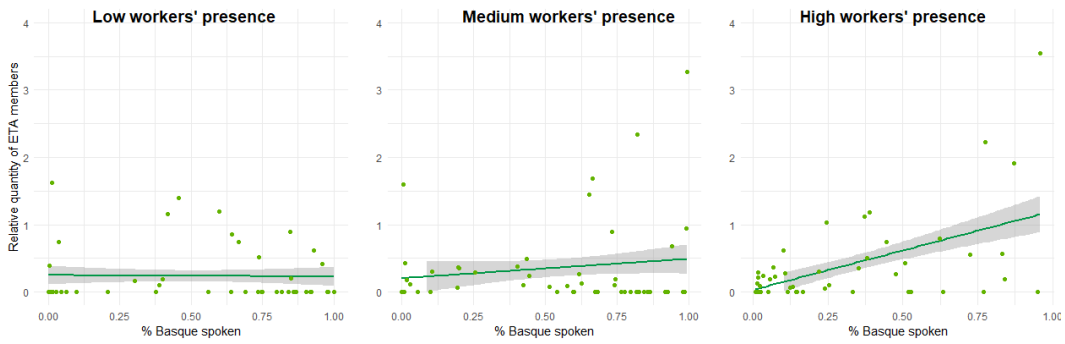


Figure 3: *Relative quantity of ETA members correlated with workers' presence and Basque spoken.*

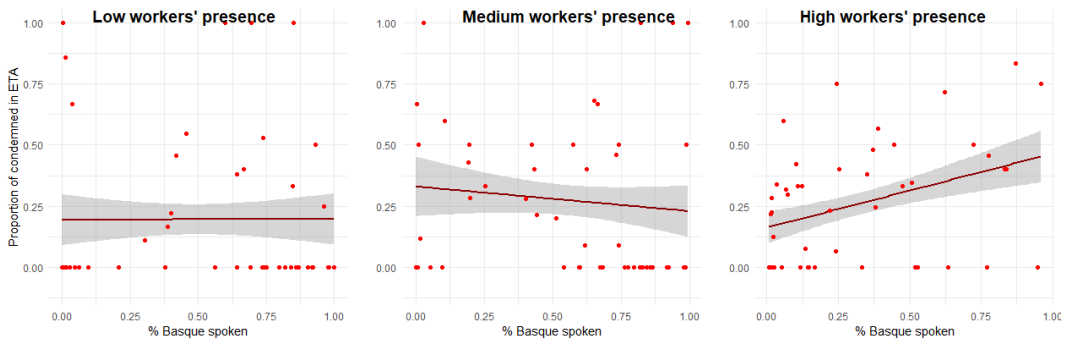


Figure 4: *Proportion of ETA members among the convicted by the TOP correlated with workers' presence and Basque spoken.*

Finally I add two maps for the Basque Region. Figure 5 shows the distribution of the percentage of Basque spoken in the eighties. Figure 6, the proportion of workers' presence per municipality. In the first map we observe how the more Basque-speaking municipalities are accumulated in the north, including the most mountainous areas, whereas the southern the town is, the lesser the Basque spoken. On the other hand, Figure 6 shows with black dots large factories that were operational in the sixties and seventies. With that information, I obtain the indicator on how proletarian the town was, depending on how close they were to the nearest factory. As we can sense, the big cities are the ones with the highest industrial concentration, especially the four provincial capitals. Nonetheless, we see how the distribution of factories is largely heterogeneous, and there are quite a few not specially populated municipalities with a large factory nearby.

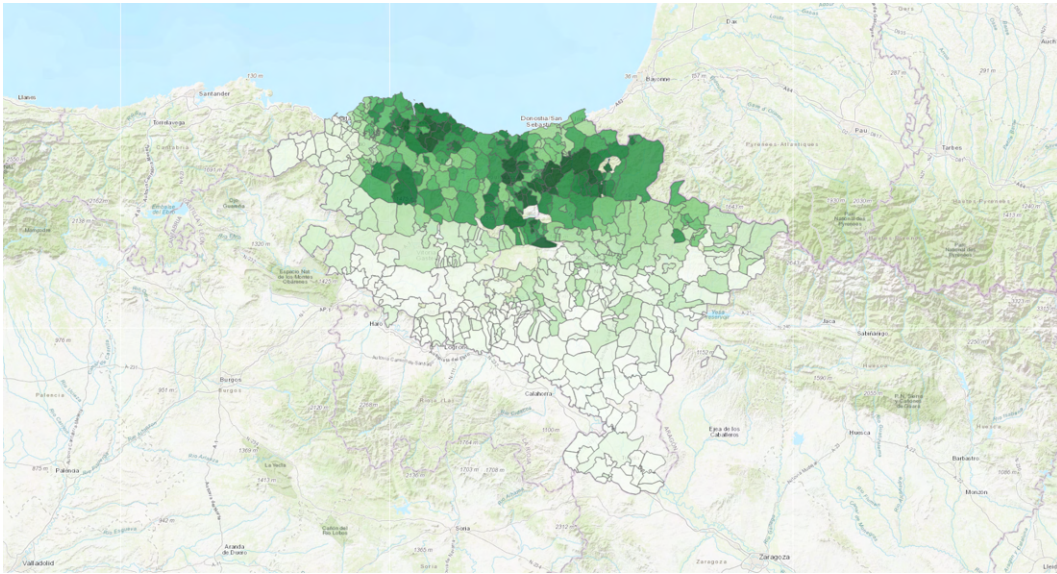


Figure 5: *Map of Basque fluency in the Basque Region. The darker the town, the more Basque is spoken.*

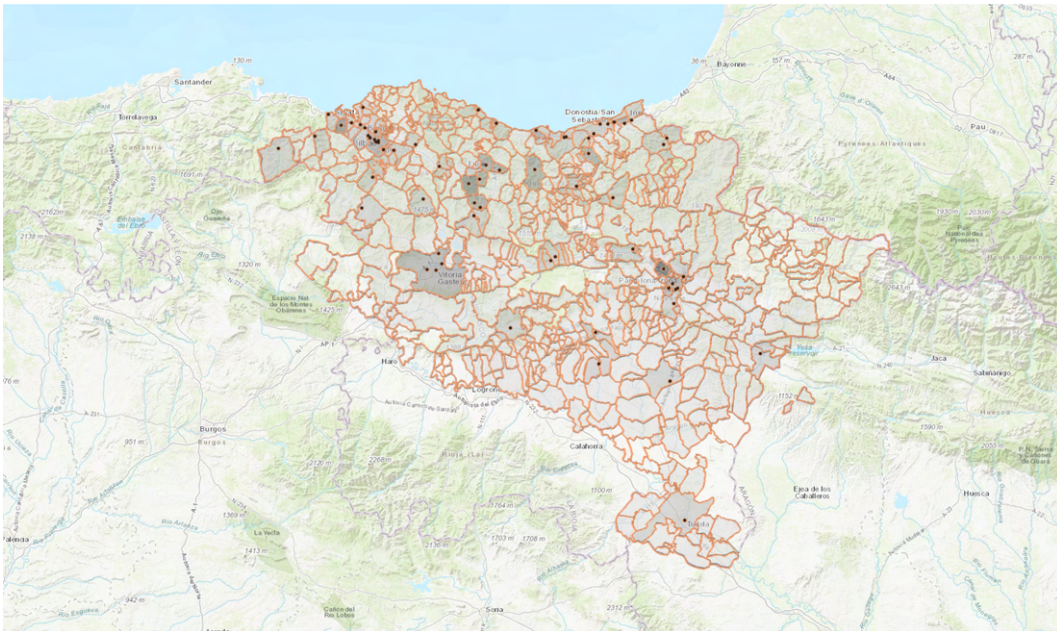


Figure 6: *Map of workers' presence in the Basque Region by municipality. The black dots represent the large factories existent in the studied period. The darker the town, the more proletarian it is.*



## 5.2 Individual analysis

I start by showing the results in Figure 7 of the individual analysis. It explains the likelihood of belonging to ETA according to various factors. The included model just has dummy variables for being working class and having a basque surname.

We observe how the most significant positive variables –99% significance– are the proxies for national identity: having been born in the Basque Region and having a Basque surname. Nonetheless, the former has a larger and more determining coefficient than the latter. Meanwhile, we see how the dummy for working class implies a negative likelihood to enrol in ETA, but without significance. It is also worth mentioning that there are no significant gender differences to participate in ETA, but there are in terms of age. Age is significantly negative at 99%, which means that the younger the convicted people were, the more likely that they were from ETA.

Therefore, from this individual analysis of a sample of 1,877 people, 548 of whom were active in ETA, I conclude that national identity is the factor that to a greater extent conditioned entry into ETA, along with youth, in comparison with the rest of people imprisoned by the TOP. On the other hand, being from the working class had a negative influence to being more likely to participate politically in activities unrelated to ETA in the Basque Region.

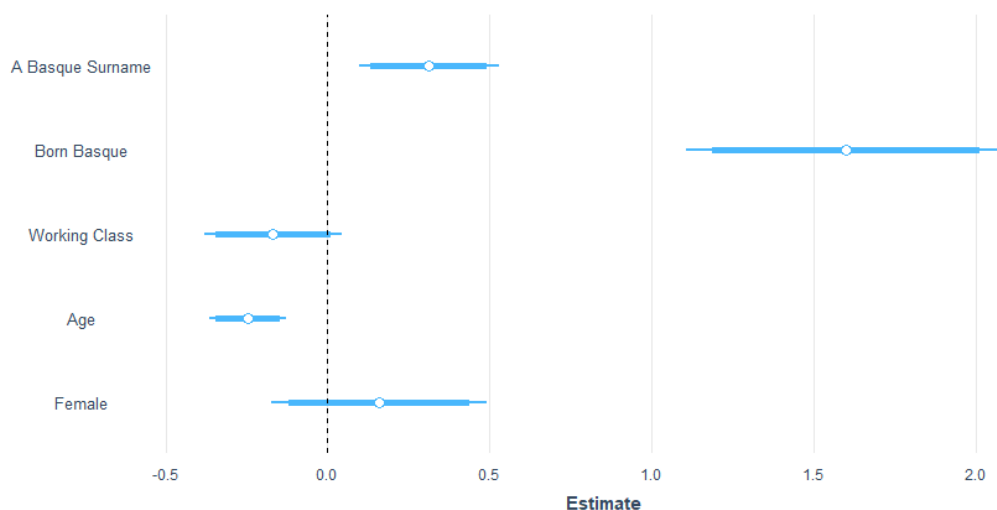


Figure 7: *Coefficient plot of the individual analysis, with confidence intervals of 90% and 95%.*

### 5.3 Municipal analyses

I continue with the regressions from the municipal analyses. In Figure 8 I attach three models whose dependent variable is the proportion of ETA fighters among those convicted by the TOP. In Figure 9, the dependent variable is the relative number of convicts of ETA per thousand inhabitants. These tables contain more models than the previous analysis. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, because as they are aggregate analyses I was able to add more and more variables available at the municipal level. Secondly, because of the interactions I have brought about to find out which mechanisms do actually underlay.

In the two models for each regression I include the control variables of repression –Torture, Arrests and Past Repression & Violence<sup>14</sup>. Population Size is also included with its value inverted to include interactions and interpret them better.

The independent variables are included too. First, those that emulate the national identity: % Basque Spoken and the dummy for Mountaineering Group. Then, the one that measures the presence of workers in the municipality –Distance to the Nearest Large Factory. I interact this one with the population size inverted and the percentage of Basque spoken in town. In the second interaction, the maximum value is for the least inhabited places, but with more workers' presence, and the smallest, that of the largest municipalities in population with less workers' presence. Meanwhile, the third interaction represents that the most proletarian and Basque-speaking municipalities are those with the highest value, and those with less Basque spoken and less workers' presence, the smallest values.

In both tables *% Basque Spoken* is constantly positive and significant at 95%. On the other hand, the variable on mountaineering groups is constantly negative in all models, but with no significance, what seems to indicate that these spaces did not work as a refuge for ETA during the Franco regime.

Regarding the proxies for working class, the Distance to the Nearest Large Factory is not significant in any model. In Figure 8 it is also constantly negative, while in Figure 9 it is positive without interactions. But when interactions are added, the coefficient can be either negative or positive. No interaction with Distance is significant, neither with population size nor with percentage of Basque spoken, although the latter is positive in both regressions. In other words, the fact that there was a greater or lesser presence of workers in the municipality does not seem to have any significant causal effect. Therefore, national identity prevails over population size to explain the greater presence of

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<sup>14</sup>Although repression has been portrayed previously as a grievance, it is not interpreted as a proxy for national identity. Hence, it is employed as a control variable, considering its demonstrated impact to participate in rebel groups.

ETA in certain towns.

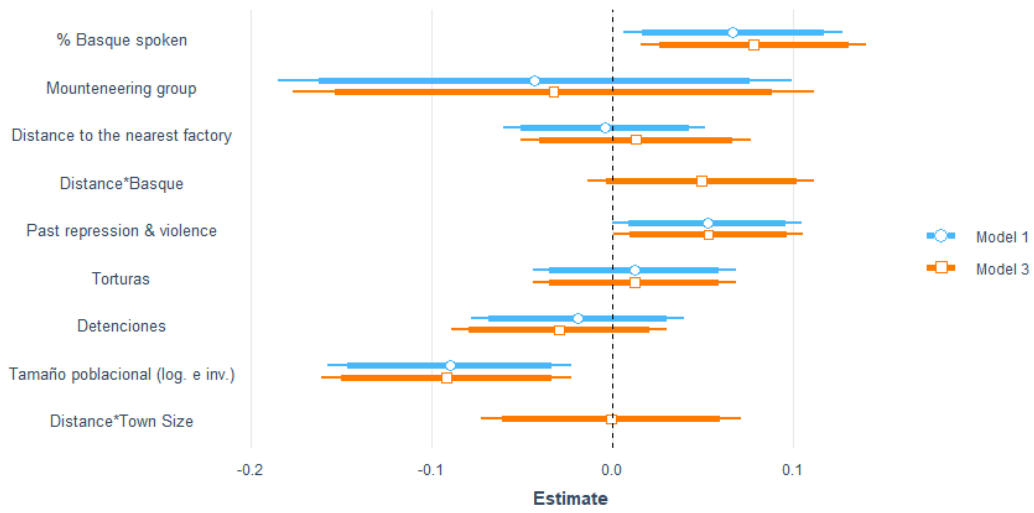


Figure 8: Coefficient plot of the relative quantity per town of ETA members, with confidence intervals of 90% and 95%.

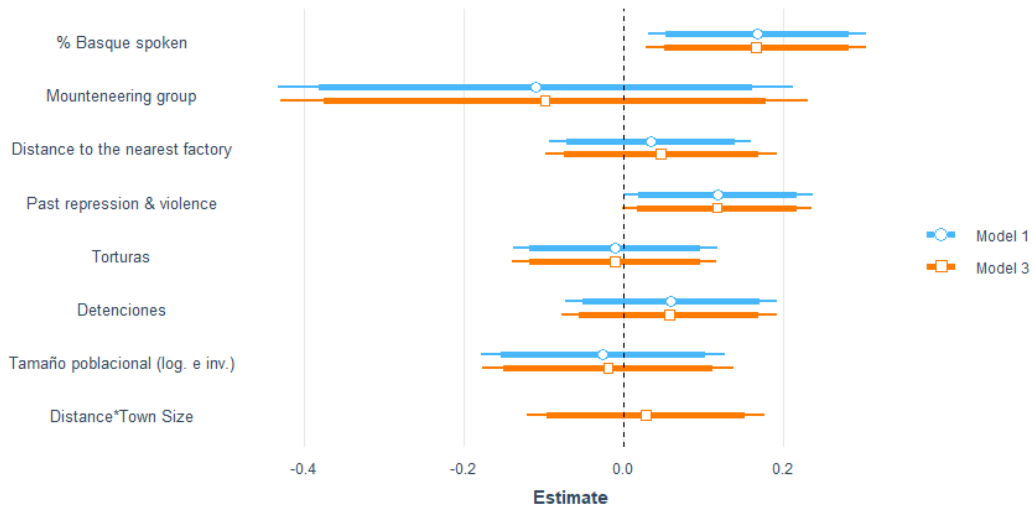


Figure 9: Coefficient plot of proportion of ETA members among people convicted by the TOP, with confidence intervals of 90% and 95%.

Now let us analyse the control variables. Firstly, Inverted Population Size is very significantly negative for model 1 of Figure 8 –when there are no interactions. This means that the smaller the

town, the less proportion of ETA members among those convicted by the TOP. In model 3, it is still negative, but when adding interactions in which this variable is involved, it loses significance. This could indicate that small towns with little Basque spoken are a trigger to join illegal political activities with nothing to do with ETA. ETA during its beginnings, in a context of high repression, must have had a hard time establishing itself in less populated places, where they would not have networks and where there were no objective conditions that facilitated this integration, that is the Basque language. Consequently, the implantation there would be much easier for the rest of the anti-Francoist opposition.

The proxies for repression are still left to analyse. Past Repression & Violence is always positive, and significant at 95% in models 1 of Figure 8. In Figure 9, it is significant at 90% in the two models. Tortures and Arrests, the two proxies for recent repression, on the other hand, are insignificant, and both are either negative or positive, depending on the model. Possibly the opposite signs of these two variables are due to the relatively high correlation they have, of 47.46%. Perhaps the difference between recent and past repression is due to the fact that the latter was more linked to the nationalist rhetoric of anti-Spanish resistance in the civil war of the *gudariak*<sup>15</sup>, and therefore, the most repressed towns in the past were more conditioned into ETA. Whereas the recent repression may have been more intimidating than motivating for the people.

Consequently, the municipalities where there was a special proportion and presence of ETA had a large proportion of the population fluent in Basque, and consequently with a tendency towards a notably shared nationalist identity. On the other hand, it did not matter so much how proletarian the town was, neither for the presence of ETA nor for that of the rest of convicts. Still, there is a non-significant tendency that the higher the presence of the working class in the locality, the greater the effect of Basque fluency to participate in ETA. Also, the municipalities that had suffered repression in the war and postwar were more prone to engender ETA fighters. This fact may be due to a collective memory of resentment forged to push a part of the population against the origin of the violence suffered, the Francoist State.

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<sup>15</sup>Basque for *soldiers*, as they are widely known in the Basque Country.

## 6 Discussion and conclusions

In order to summarise, it is time to test the hypotheses. We cannot reject Hypothesis 1, that national identity, under the proxies of having a Basque surname and having been born in the Basque Region, as it is highly significant to participate in ETA. On the contrary, we reject H2, that belonging to the working class pushes to take part in a rebel group like ETA, at least using the rest of those condemned by the TOP as a counterfactual<sup>16</sup>.

Regarding the aggregate independent variables, we get pretty clear results as well. Let us commence with Hypothesis 3, about the effect of national identity on a greater presence of ETA in the locality. Figure 1 effectively indicates that the more Basque is spoken, the more relative number of inhabitants of the municipality to be in ETA. Figure 3 confirms these indications, putting the number of ETA fighters in proportion to the rest of those sentenced per municipality. However, after the 75% burden of Basque speakers, the proportion of ETA reaches its peak and starts to decrease in favour of the rest of the convicted persons, who hold a record of relative presence in the most fluent towns in Basque –Figure 2. Despite this final descriptive decline, in Figure 8 we see that the percentage of Basque spoken actually serves as a determinant to participate in ETA, with high significance and leaving the rest of the factors constant.

However, the other proxy for national identity at the aggregated level, the mountaineering groups, does not throw the same results. It is not significant in any model and it is constantly negative. Perhaps these groups could have been useful as a refuge mechanism and to promote other types of anti-Franco organisations. If we took mountaineering groups as the only proxy we would have to reject Hypothesis 3, but previously it has already been observed and reviewed that theoretically and empirically the percentage of Basque spoken was a much more certain proxy for nationalism, whereas these groups were theoretically a less robust one. Hence, taking as the proxy for national identity the percentage of Basque spoken, we cannot reject the hypothesis, or in other words, a higher percentage of Basque spoken in the environment does influence to join ETA .

Hypothesis 4 argues that the greater the presence of workers, under the proxy of proximity to a large factory, the more ETA combatants. It must be rejected. Although in Figure 9 we observe that the more proletarian the municipality is, the more relative number of ETA combatants there were, without significance, though. The same occurs with the rest of those sentenced by the TOP. The difference is that when including interactions we see that ETA’s strength was in the small proletarian municipalities, while that of the rest of the condemned is that of the populous and proletarian towns. Having said that, when the interaction of *Log. & inv. distance to the nearest large factory* is included with *% Basque spoken* we see that this becomes very significantly positive

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<sup>16</sup>The setbacks from this method have already been discussed in Methodology.

and that it inhibits the effect of the inverted population size. Therefore, the workers' presence in the locality could influence in favour of ETA, but only if it was accompanied by the proxy for national identity. Consequently, the working-class character, as such, did not influence a greater proportion of ETA combatants in the population.

The results obtained with the control variables shall also be taken into account. Youth has been shown to be a very significant factor in explaining the factors of belonging to ETA, in contrast to the rest of those convicted by the TOP. But also the repression and violence suffered in the municipality, both past and recent, is a very significantly influential factor in increasing the proportion of ETA combatants during its beginnings.

In conclusion, the main causal mechanism found to participate in ETA during its beginnings is the national identity, both in its egotropic aspect, that is, the one forged at home and through family tradition, as well as the sociotropic one, that acquired in social circles of the municipality. What did not influence the participation in ETA was to belong to the working class, or to live in a proletarian municipality. This implies, thus, that the immaterial factors were the ones that ultimately determined the entry into an armed group like ETA, whereas the material factors, or economic opportunities, did not have any effect *per se*. In any case, if the working-class condition were to have any effect in belonging to ETA, it would have to be combined with the national identity.

These results are consistent with the findings of Reinares (2004) on the membership from ETA judged by the Spanish National Court during the period just after the Spanish transition: a particularly young profile, fluent in Basque and mostly from small and Basque-speaking municipalities. These findings are also useful to add a missing piece to the puzzle of causal factors for participation in rebel groups. Thus, ETA is one more case that adds to those already mentioned in the Literary Review, indicating that to participate in armed groups, grievances, or motivations, are more important than greed, or economic opportunities. However, as I have noted previously, there are still many cases to be investigated quantitatively, going beyond the descriptive analyses, on why within the same territory there are those who participate and those who do not.

To begin with, in further research it should be verified whether these mechanisms which work with ETA in its beginnings are maintained throughout its decades of activity, also when ETA's *revolutionary tax* is introduced, its financing channels are diversified and consequently the incentives to participate in ETA for financial reasons grow. Then, other cases of large-scale nationalist political violence, such as the Irish, the Corsican or the Tamil should also be studied. Thus, it should be checked whether national identity is still the main motivation for participation in armed groups. Finally, they should continue studying cases of the different types of armed groups not investigated

hitherto. In this way, we would verify if we can speak of a universal mechanism that is maintained regardless of whether the group is vigilante, ultra-leftist, far-right, fundamentalist...

As a final reflection, I must also highlight the difficulties encountered during research. The main one, not having a counterfactual that was a truly representative sample of Basque society at the time. The profile of those convicted by the TOP was precisely linked to a lot of leftist activism, especially trade unionists, but also working-class parties, such as the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) or other small Trotskyist, Maoist and anarchist organisations. This implied that the presence of the working class was possibly over-represented and that the results obtained were perhaps significantly different from those obtainable with an actually representative sample. Another notable drawback is the inaccessibility of certain data, such as the percentage of the population per municipality that is dedicated to the industrial sector, or even the Gross Domestic Product per capita and per town. If these data were accessible, it would not have been necessary to use proxies probably not so accurate, as has been the distance with the nearest large factory.

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