

SECTION II  
**EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF MINORITY PROBLEMS  
AND MULTICULTURAL REGIONS**

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**REGION**  
*and*  
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**SPATIAL AND HISTORICAL CONDITIONS  
OF THE BASQUES AIMING TO OBTAIN  
POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE**

The problem raised in the title involves a general truth that present forms of statehood – independent nations – are viewed from a historical perspective. We look to past times for factors indicating the future in respect of statehood and national sovereignty. We seek clues and links indicating historical continuance of the said elements. In the case of the Basques attempts to project present realities upon the historical background are rather complicated. The reason is that Basques, inhabiting the northern region of Spain and south-west France, do not have their own state, and never in the history have had a fully adequate form of statehood. The lack of the tradition of statehood – for they have always formed part of a larger political unit – has not lead to the loss of their sense of national identity and has not weakened their struggle for political independence. What is more, the Basques today share a strong sense of national cohesion and national awareness, which is expressed in the Spanish constitution. It is indeed remarkable that a nation lacking the major form of protection of national identity, i.e. statehood, managed to retain it, giving it new dynamics and character. To understand the process of development of Basque national identity it is necessary to examine the historical background and to identify relevant issues.

The aim of this study is systematic investigation and presentation of the problem in question with reference to the history of Spain and specific space, so that the historical and geographical perspectives are combined to provide a comprehensive view (Tab. 1).

Table 1. Basques against the background of historical events on the Iberian Peninsula

Period	Time interval	Selected elements of socio-political situation of Basques	
		Political affiliation	Elements of Basque identity and autonomy
Protohistorical	about 1200 BC – late 3 <sup>rd</sup> century BC	–	development of the Basque language (euskara) and tribal structures
Roman Spain	Late 3 <sup>rd</sup> century BC – early 5 <sup>th</sup> century AD	Roman State	resistance to romanization
Rule of German tribes	early 5 <sup>th</sup> century – early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	Visigoth State	wars with the invaders
Conquest of the Arabs' Iberian Peninsula	early 8 <sup>th</sup> century	independent Basques tribes	the rise of the Kingdom of Pamplona
Emergence of Christian states	8 <sup>th</sup> century. – early 9 <sup>th</sup> century	part of the Kingdom of Asturia and the Kingdom of Pamplona	first privileges and liberties ( <i>fueros</i> ); Basque rebellion in Asturia against the go-vernor of Pamplona; the coming to power of the Basque Arista dynasty
	mid-9 <sup>th</sup> century	the County of Castile (Alava)	<i>fueros</i>
	10 <sup>th</sup> century	the Kingdom of Navarre (Guipuscoa, Biscay, Alava); part of the Union of Navarre and Leon	<i>fueros</i> ; three provinces within one state; development of Basque economic power
Development of States on the Iberian Peninsula	11 <sup>th</sup> –13 <sup>th</sup> century	Alava and Guipuscoa in the Kingdom of Castile	important role in the economy of Castile and Leon of Basque mines of iron (Biscay), rope production and smithies; the granting of <i>fuero</i> to many Basque cities, e.g. Vitoria and San Sebastian

Growth of the power of Castile and Aragon	14 <sup>th</sup> –15 <sup>th</sup> century	the Kingdom of Castile and Navarre (also as part of the French Crown in 13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> century)	<i>fuero</i> takes hold; conflict between ‘Basque’ and ‘non-Basque’ lifestyle (Navarre)
From the Spain of Catholic Kings to the rise of the Republic	late 15 <sup>th</sup> century – 1876	Spain	<i>fueros</i> , economic activity of the Basque Society of the Country’s Friends (1870s)
	1876–1930		Basque language ( <i>euskara</i> ) illegal; rise of the Basque Nationalist Party, <i>euskalerriakos</i> movement, Solidarity of Basque Workers – a labour union, journal ‘Euzkadi’ and Basque flag ( <i>ikurrina</i> )
Republican rule. Civil war	1930–1939		revival of <i>euskara</i> and the development of Basque institutions
	1936–1937		Autonomous Basque Country
Rule of general F. Franco	1939–1975		<i>euskara</i> illegal; the rise of ETA
Transition to democracy	1975–1978		the right to use Basque language and flag; restoration of autonomy to Basque Country
Democracy	1978–		pre-autonomy status for the Basque Country; the rise of the party <i>Herri Batasuna</i> ; approval of the autonomy statute for the Basque Country

Source: author’s elaboration.

The origins of Basque identity go back to prehistoric times. The territory of present-day Spain, where most of the Basque population lives, was then inhabited by groups of people living in isolation<sup>1</sup>. They represented different

<sup>1</sup> The name *Hispania* came into use in Roman times and denoted the whole of the Iberian Peninsula (Lara, Baroque, and Ortiz, 2006).

cultures, but some of them might exhibit strong resemblance to groups inhabiting territories that are nowadays situated in other countries<sup>2</sup>.

The beginning of the process of Basque ethnic identity development is traced back to the protohistoric period – regarded as the close of prehistoric times – in the history of Spain falling on the time between the appearance on the Peninsula of Indoeuropean peoples (about 1200 BC) and the beginnings of Roman presence there (late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC). It was a time when peoples living on the Peninsula came in frequent contacts with one another and with external influences, exerted, on the one hand, by Indoeuropean nations, and on the other by Fenicians and Greeks. The peoples then inhabiting the Iberian Peninsula, defined as ‘pre-Roman’, comprised two major nationalities: Iberians, Celts and Celtiberians, living at the interface of these cultures. This led to the emergence of three main cultures: Iberian, being within the sphere of influence of the colonizers’ cultures, Celtic – close to the Indoeuropean world, and Celtiberian – combining the influences of both these cultures. Basques, inhabiting the Peninsula alongside other ethnic groups, followed their own, distinctive path of cultural development (Lara, Baruque, and Ortiz, 2006), which maintained its own tribal organization distinguished by the matriarchal type of social relations.

When the Peninsula became in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC a part of the huge mosaic formed in the Mediterranean region by the multiethnic Roman State, the Basques, like the whole of Spain, came within the sphere of its economic, cultural and religions influence<sup>3</sup>. However, unlike the rest of the Peninsula, Basques did not adopt the language of the metropolis, i.e. Latin. The Basque language was one of the few old languages in use on the Peninsula which resisted the process of Latinization. It was so, too, in the period of the Empire, when Iberian script and other native languages yielded to omnipresent Latin.

Another factor consolidating Basque ethnic identity was their social, legal and political status. Being a predominantly peasant population, they put up resistance to increasing tax burden and rebelled against owners of great estates. All this was a form of opposition against political control exercised by Rome over northern tribes of highlanders, Romanized only in a small degree.

Despite preserving some elements of their ethnic identity (e.g. language and customs) in the following centuries, Basques shared the fate of Spain, which came under the rule of Visigoths. It was a difficult period for the

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that there is no question of some distinct prehistory of Spain or the Iberian Peninsula.

<sup>3</sup> The process of Romanization is commonly divided into two stages: the Republic, when the culture and social organization of native population played a more important role than Roman civilization, and the Empire, when endogenous culture was dominated by the new civilization.

people who had so far lived according to their own laws and customs. Lara, Baruque and Ortiz (2006), writing about Swintila, one of Visigoth rulers, remarked that he ‘subdued the Basques, rebellious as ever’. During Visigoth occupation they waged wars with the invaders and fought against persecution and growing fiscal oppression.

The conquest of the Iberian Peninsula as a result of Arab invasion in the early 8th century had enormous consequences for further history of Spain, but did not have much influence on the history and culture of the Basques. While the Islamization of Spain, or, as some historians claim, Hispanization of the Muslims who came to the Peninsula was taking place, and centuries of co-existence of three societies and religions – Christian, Muslim and Jewish – strongly affected the development of Spanish national identity, the Basques remained unaffected, and the territories which they inhabited became a shelter for fighting Christians. This period had great significance for further development of Basque identity, although paradoxically Frankish documents from that time referred to areas inhabited by Basques and other peoples of the Pyrenees region as ‘Hispania’.

Being outside the sphere of Muslim domination and unaffected by Islamization process, as it was previously with Roman and Visigoth influences, Basques, who underwent Christianization also rather late, preserved archaic tribal structures. They lived in dispersed villages, animal farming being their main occupation. Politically, the Basque country remained independent.

In the period of the rise of Christian states on the Peninsula (originally in its northernmost part), the areas inhabited by Basques became a part of the emerging Kingdom of Asturias (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century), independent Kingdom of Pamplona (later Navarre) and Castille (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century), encompassing the present-day Basque province of Alava. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century Alava, Guipuscoa and Biscay came under the control of Navarre<sup>4</sup>.

It was in Navarre in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century that the Basque Arista dynasty, whose founder was referred to as ‘Lord of the Basques’, took power in all the country. Thanks to rich in minerals and economically advanced regions (Alava) of the present-day Basque Country, in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century the supremacy of Navarre over the other states – Asturias and León – was established. The first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century was a period of the greatest power and prosperity of the Kingdom of Navarre and of the Basques, who constituted a large group among its inhabitants.

The decline of the Kingdom of Navarre did not favor the political unity of the territories inhabited by Basques. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the provinces of

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<sup>4</sup> Alava (Basque Araba, Spanish Álava), Biscay (Basque Bizkaia, Spanish Vizcaya), Guipuscoa (basque Gipuzkoa, Spanish Guipúzcoa).

Guipuscoa and Alava were annexed, and in the 13<sup>th</sup> century incorporated into the Kingdom of Castile. Navarre and, therefore, Basques, being in the neighbourhood of powerful neighbours – Castille and Aragon, found themselves in a difficult political situation.

When Basque territories formed part of the Kingdom of Castile, where in the 14<sup>th</sup> century uniform jurisdiction based on Roman law was introduced, the Basque country was the only one to resist the new system and to retain local tradition in this respect (*fueros*). The Basques in the Kingdom of Navarre, too, maintained this important institution, which enabled them to continue the practice of making pacts with the monarchy. The recognition of *fueros* of the Kingdom in the period of the rule of French kings in Navarre (1248–1328) allowed the Basque population of this state to preserve elements of their identity.

In the period of transformation of Spanish kingdoms into one state the Basque country was part of a powerful neighbour – Castile. The remaining Basques lived in the Kingdom of Navarre, which – squeezed between two strong neighbours, France and the union of Castile and Aragon – had no major role in this process<sup>5</sup>.

The Basque population, which for centuries had migrated to Navarre (mostly highlanders, whose occupation was livestock farming) came into armed conflict with local non-Basque population inhabiting the coast and urban settlements. Local people were primarily burghers, merchants and farmers<sup>6</sup>. It was in a way a conflict between lifestyles: pastoral model of living typical of highlanders, and peasant lifestyle, specific to the inhabitants of coastal regions. The main occupation of the Basques was animal husbandry, and, to a lesser extent, cereal crops, wine and olives growing. Only few of them were engaged in industrial activity and trade. During the period of mining and metallurgy development (15<sup>th</sup> century) the government pursued a policy of bringing and employing specialists from abroad to overcome the stagnation in the country by boosting in this way the growth of industry and trade. This policy was conducive to the inflow and rise in the number of

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<sup>5</sup> As a result of marriage (1284) between Joan, successor to the throne of Navarre, and French monarch Philip IV, the kingdom was annexed to France. Until 1328 Navarre was part of the crown of France. The governors and officials delegated to highest positions in the Kingdom of Spain were French, too.

<sup>6</sup> This conflict had several causes. One of them was the succession of the throne of Navarre, for which competed prince de Viana and his father John. A civil war broke out between two camps: *beamontés* and *agramontés*. Basques belonged to *beamontés*, supporting Charles de Viana, while non-Basque population supported his opponent. It was also a clash between the pastoral lifestyle characteristic of mountain regions and peasant way of living prevalent on agricultural coast (Lara, Baruque, and Ortiz, 2006).

non-Basque population in Navarre. However, socio-economic position of Basques consolidated their national cohesion and identity.

Since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century Basques living in the Kingdom of Castile and Navarre (incorporated in 1512 into the united kingdoms) have become a permanent element of the ethnic composition of the emerging state of Spain, although they did not constitute an integrative factor in this complex political formation<sup>7</sup>. It is necessary to give at this point an explanation regarding the term Spain. In Middle Ages it did not denote a concrete state in the sense of a political entity, but rather – as Spanish historians state – a certain historical heritage (defined strongly by the legacy of Roman Spain), a specific territory and a group of people for whom a major and tangible integrating factor was fairly close linguistic affinity and growing hegemony of one of these languages, i.e. Castilian<sup>8</sup>. Given the important role of language in the process of rise and integration of the Spanish state, the Basques made no contribution in this respect as their language was totally unrelated to any of the languages used in the area in question.

In the course of progressing consolidation and unification of the Spanish state, whose origins were in the era of Catholic Kings, the Basques shared the changing fortunes of other nations in Spain and of the country as a whole. They preserved, though, their rights and privileges in the form of *fueros*. An element emphasizing territorial distinctiveness of Basques, especially in the Enlightenment period, were customs posts along the river Ebro.

What had particularly significant consequences for ethnic identity of the Basque community was the Spanish-French war, which broke out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It resulted in demarcation in 1841 of the boundary which divided the Basque nation into the ‘peninsular’ part subordinated to Madrid and the ‘continental’ part ruled from Paris. The Spanish part comprised Guipuscoa, Biscay, Alava and Upper Navarre; the French part comprised three provinces: Labourd, Soule and Lower Navarre. The territorial separation of the

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<sup>7</sup> The joining of Navarre to Castile was not a form of annexation but rather a union of two states, in which Navarre retained elements of its tradition: legal system, Cortes and other institutions.

<sup>8</sup> Since Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabelle of Castile united all Iberian kingdoms (except Portugal), the term used to denote the present-day state assumed a stronger political connotation – it referred both to Castile and to the union Castile-Aragon. It also came into common use in informal language, replacing the official title.

The beginnings of modern Spain date back to the period of the reign of Catholic Kings, though strongly influenced by the Middle Ages. The term Kings of Spain reflects the complicated situation of that time. The term Catholic was granted by Pope Alexander VI to be used by kings of Spain, although it is particularly associated with the royal pair Isabelle and Ferdinand (Lara, Baroque, and Ortiz, 2006).

Basque community was followed by the abrogation of centuries-long Basque freedoms and *previllagues* – *fueros*<sup>9</sup>. Madrid decided that only persons of non-Basque nationality could hold posts in administration, courts of law and education, as well as higher positions in Church. The Basque language was banned from public life.

Historical and geographical studies show that European nations which were not able to form or maintain for a long period some kind of statehood either have not survived or have retained very little of their traditions and identity. It therefore seemed that Basques, who lost their last remaining enclaves of freedom, would share the destiny of other such ethnic groups, which disappeared completely. Paradoxically, in the case of Basques the policy of restricting their freedoms, which was pursued by Spanish governments, provided an impulse for the rise and development of the nationalist movement.

However, a factor that was of key importance for the development of Basque nationalism or – broadly speaking – Basque national identity, was rapid industrialisation of the territories where they lived<sup>10</sup>. Industrial development and favourable economic situation in Vasconia attracted great numbers of non-Basque migrants from other parts of Spain (Fig. 1 and 2)<sup>11</sup>. This process lasted until the late 1970s. Immigration resulted in the upsetting of the ethnic structure of the Basque Country and deterioration of the living conditions of the Basque population. It also led to a growing sense of their ethnic identity being threatened. As a result of strong opposition to such a state of affairs, the Basque Nationalist Party (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco* – PNV) was formed in 1894, associating representatives of nearly all social

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<sup>9</sup> To keep their freedoms and privileges, they opposed the camp of King Ferdinand VII aiming at integration and modernization of the country. They supported the king's brother, Don Carlos Maria Isidoro (hence 'carlists'), taking part in two uprisings. After the suppression of the second uprising (1872–1876) King Alfonso XII finally revoked Basques' privileges. Basques also took part in the creation of the Carlist state (1843–1847), which comprised a part of Navarre and Vasconia. The remaining old privileges were cancelled, but in 1878 new fiscal regulations were introduced, which favoured the rising Basque bourgeoisie.

<sup>10</sup> The main industry in the Basque country was metallurgy, developed on the basis of local iron ore (Biscay). Accumulation of capital flowing to Basque provinces from other cities (Madrid) and regions (Catalonia) of Spain and France and growing investments led to rapid growth and domination of Basque industry on the domestic market. Other industrial branches included ship-building, construction and chemicals. The rise of an industrial complex in the Basque Country played a major role in the history (not only economic) of this state.

<sup>11</sup> The inflow of immigrant workers contributed to change in the profile of the typical Basque miner and foundry worker, who additionally worked as a farmer.



strata. It soon became the main Basque political power<sup>12</sup>. Strong nationalis movement developed among Basques also as a response to the policy of Spain's central government, which did not take into account the needs of historically and culturally distinct nationalities.

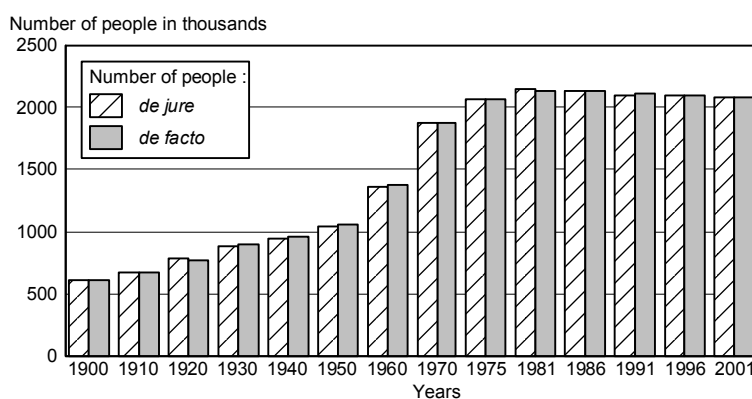


Fig. 1. Population *de jure* and *de facto* in Basque Country in 1900–2001 (based on results of population censuses)

Source: <http://www.eustat.es/>

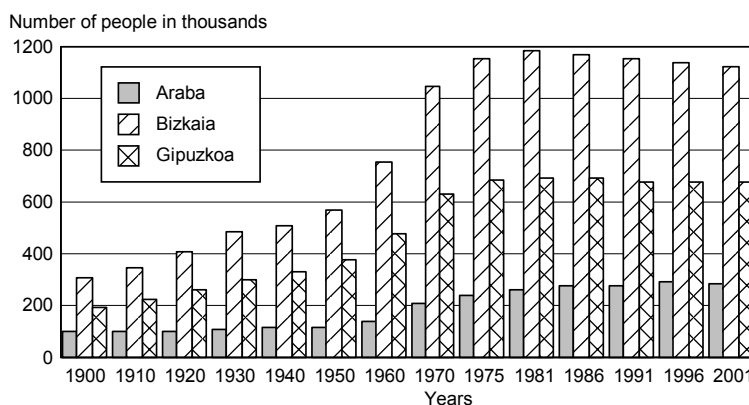


Fig. 2. Population in provinces of Basque Country in 1900–2001 (based on results of population censuses)

Source: <http://www.eustat.es/>

<sup>12</sup> Nationalist ideas, stemming from the desire to protect privileges, were also propagated by a movement associating so called *euskalerrriakos*, who have co-formed PNV since they joined Basque nationalists (*aranists*) in 1898. In 1911 nationalists created the Solidarity of Basque Workers (*Solidaridad de Obreros Vascos*).

Postulates for self-government and autonomy put forward by Basque nationalists led to the creation in 1936, after the monarchy was overthrown in 1930, of the autonomous Basque Country, which lasted only one year. In the Spanish Civil War Basques sided with the Second Spanish Republic against the victorious Francoist regime, which brought them severe repressions that lasted until General Franco's death in 1975. The repressions included prohibition of the Basque language and cultivation of regional traditions. Basque cultural and scientific associations were dissolved. Moreover, massive immigration of non-Basque speakers from other regions of Spain, troubled by economic crisis, additionally worsened socio-economic situation of Basques. In the context of the government's policy of suppressing Basque national identity a certain dualism in Basques' attitudes can be noticed, which to some extent is also true today: the wealthiest inhabitants willingly enter into cooperation with industrialists from outside the region, while the less well-off protested against the authorities, combining economic postulates with political demands.

Consolidation of the forces struggling against the policy of the Spanish government led to the creation in 1953 of the organization The Basque Country and Freedom (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* – ETA), fighting for independence for all Vasconia, including the departments in France.

The centuries-long struggle to preserve their national identity led to restoration of autonomy for the Basques when Spain regained democracy after Franco's death (Tab. 2, Fig. 3).

Table 2. Basque Country in numbers (2003)

Province	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population	Population density (inh/ km <sup>2</sup> )	Capital	Number of capital's inhabitants
Alava/ Araba/ Álava	3,037	286,387	94.3	Gasteiz/ Vitoria	216,852
Biscay/Bizkaia/ Vizcaya	2,217	1,122,637	506.3	Bilbo/ Bilbao	349,972
Guipuscoa/Gipuzkoa/ Guipúzcoa	1,980	675,563	340.1	Donostia/ San Sebastian	178,377

Source: <http://www.eustat.es/>

Under the Statute of Autonomy of December 1979, also known as Guernica Statute, Basque Country is an autonomous community comprising the historical territories of Alava, Biscay and Guipuscoa. The Statute provides mechanisms for neighbour Navarre, which also has a Basque ethnic background, to join the three provinces and become part of the Basque

Autonomous Community if it is so decided by its people. The Basques are recognized as an Autonomous Community within Spain and the existence of the Basque nation is acknowledged. Administration in the Basque Autonomous Community is performed by the Government, which controls economic and financial matters (including taxes), education and health systems, police force and mass media, and the Parliament, composed of an equal number of representatives from each of the three constituent provinces. The provincial governments have been restored (traditional Foral system), though many of their powers have been transferred to the Autonomous Basque Government, which coordinates their activity. The Guernica Statute also defines financial competences of the autonomous community – it transfers a part of its revenues to the central budget to participate in the costs of so-called exclusive functions of the state, which are constitutionally reserved for the central government, i.e. foreign policy, defence, army and judicial system.

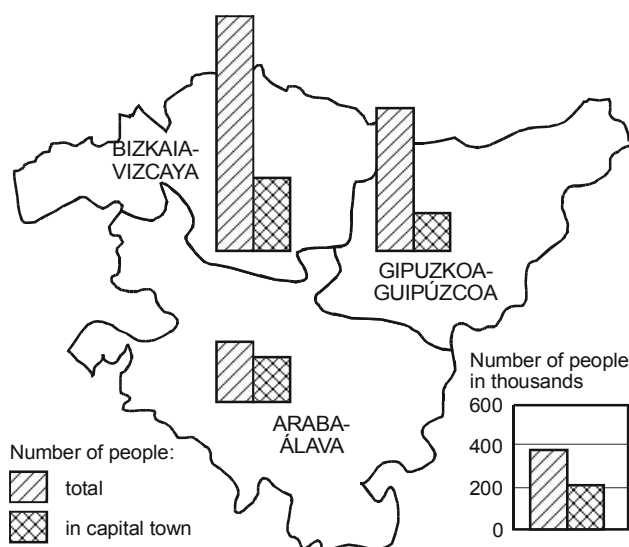


Fig. 3. Population in several provinces of Basque Country (2003)

To sum up the historical and geographical considerations, it is necessary to summarize the factors which contributed to the preservation of Basque national identity and, as a result, to their gaining some degree of self-determination. This factors are:

1. Consciousness of common descent, although the nation's origin is a disputable question among researchers. The prevailing view is that they are the oldest indigenous inhabitants of Western Europe, who came there some 4 thousand years ago from the Caucasus or Asia Minor.

2. Consciousness of their own history, in which the knowledge of historical facts is mixed with a rich sphere of myths.

3. A sense of national identity, which developed throughout centuries and assumed the present character in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Contemporary Basques have problems with self-identification, because objective identity (manifesting itself through, e.g. knowledge of the language) does not concur with subjective identity (perception of oneself).

4. Distinctive language. Analysis of the Basque language reveals structures that do not exist in Indo-European languages. Linguists have tried to find similarities to other languages. Some elements similar to Georgian, Indian and Japanese have been found, but they are most likely coincidental. Today the Basque language has many dialects spoken in different parts of the Basque Country.

In 1964 some measures were taken aimed at unification of the language so as not to allow Basque to be replaced by Castilian. As a basis for standardization were used the dialects spoken in Lapurdia (due to its substantial literary heritage) and Guipuscoa. The percentage of people knowing Basque has evolved: in 1900 it was 83 % of the Basque population, in 1975 – 24%, and today – about 30% (Fig. 4 and 5). We are therefore witnessing the renaissance of this language, both among older and younger generations. This is also due to the policy of regional authorities, which methodically coordinate the system of Basque language teaching<sup>13</sup>.

5. Freedoms and privileges in the form of *fueros*. Granted in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, they acted as part of the legal system and regulated the relation of the Basque provinces with the Crown. *Fueros* gave Basque citizens a privileged position in Spain with special tax and political status. They defined, among other things, Basques personal and property rights, use of common land, levee to the army. The heritage of this tradition is still an element regulating life in provincial areas.

6. Elements of folk culture and national symbols. This sphere of national tradition is represented, among others, by country music and dancing (using traditional, non-Spanish instruments), original sports and games, and folk literature. A major national symbol is the Basque flag – *ikurriña* – which blows alongside the Spanish flag on public buildings in Basque Country.

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<sup>13</sup> Parents and children have the possibility to choose one of three models of Basque teaching: 1) education in Spanish with Basque as a separate subject; 2) the opposite of the former model; 3) education in both languages. Starting from the school year 2008/2009 the education system in the Basque Country is to be unified – education is to be entirely in Basque, with Spanish as a compulsory subject. Within 10 years the new system is to be introduced in all primary and secondary schools.

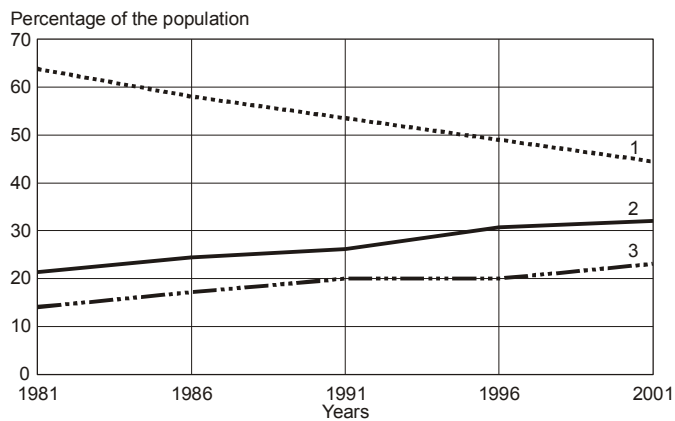


Fig. 4. Knowledge of the Basque language in Basque Country (population aged  $\geq 2$  years); 1. Non-Basque speakers; 2. Basque speakers; 3. Quasi-Basque speakers  
Source: <http://www.eustat.es/>

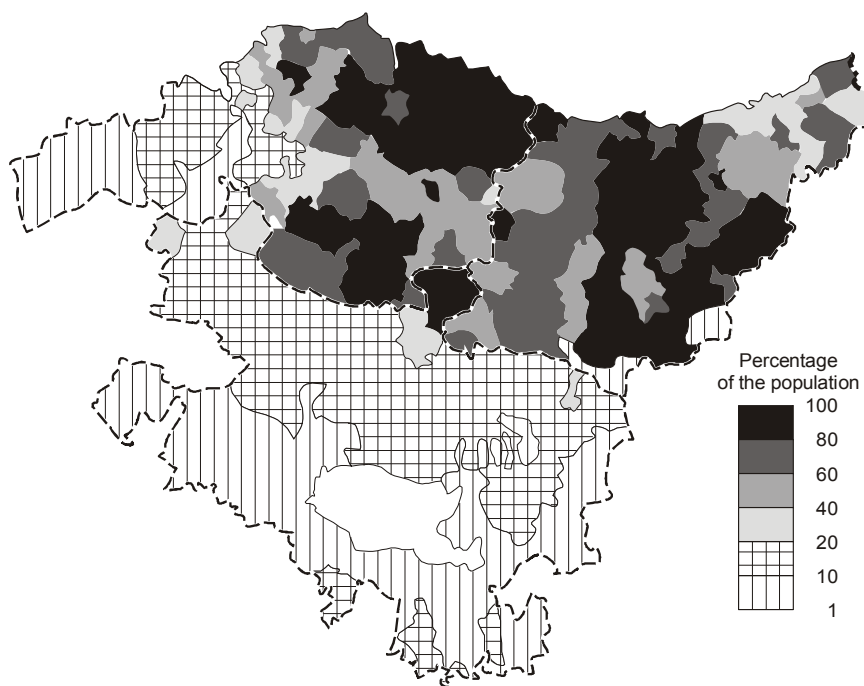


Fig. 5. Basque-speaking population  
Source: <http://www.eustat.es/>

7. Activity of nationalist parties, associations and organizations, among which should be mentioned the Basque Nationalist Party (*Eusko Alderdi Jeltzalea*), successive versions of the party *Herri Batasuna*, formed in 1978, and the terrorist organization ETA<sup>14</sup>.

8. Economic achievements of the Basques, which are considered to be pioneers of industrial development in Spain. Today, the Basque Country and Catalonia are the main economic regions of the country. After the 1980s crisis caused by the decline of heavy industry (chiefly metallurgy), the region is again going through a period of economic prosperity. Besides traditional industries, such as metallurgy, motor industry, mechanical engineering, petrochemical and paper industry, new branches (such as electronic and service industry) are thriving. The share of the Basque Country in generating Spain's Gross National Product (GNP) was 6,4% (1999), with 5,4% of the total population.



Fig. 6. 'Seven in One'

The possibility, afforded by autonomy, to decide about the nation's affairs does not satisfy the aspirations of all Basques. Results of polls conducted at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century showed that 38% of all the inhabitants of Basque

<sup>14</sup> The group known as *Herri Batasuna* existed until the 1998 elections, when it was enlarged and renamed as *Euskal Herritarok*, to be again renamed as *Batasuna* during the 2001 elections to the Basque Parliament. Two years later the group was made illegal on charges of cooperation with the terrorist organization ETA. The party has, though, a parliamentary representation associated in the group *Sozialista Abertzaleak*.

Country and Navarre – roughly as much as the proportion of people with a better or worse command of the Basque language in the Basque Country claim independence for all lands inhabited by Basques. They are of the opinion that the four Basque provinces in Spain and three territories inhabited by Basques in France should be united into one independent state ('seven in one') (Fig. 6).

Therefore, a question arises: is there a possibility of creating an independent Basque state? The answer is: yes, provided that all interested parties, particularly the Spanish government, agree to such a solution. However, given the attitude of the Spanish government so far, it does not seem likely in the foreseeable future. There is one more principal question that is not addressed in disputes concerning self-determination of the Basque nation: what do Basques themselves think about independence? The polls indicate that 30% of citizens of Basque nationality are in favour of maintaining ties with Madrid with simultaneous widening of the scope of autonomy of both communities, while the rest are for keeping status quo or do not have an opinion.

Thus, solution of the Basque problem is not only a question of agreement between Basques and Spaniards, the parties most involved in the conflict, but also a question of coming to an agreement among Basques.

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