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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
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MASTER'S THESIS

THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN UNION ON SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS IN EUROPE: THE CASES OF BASQUE AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Dilan Elif AKSU

Supervisor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Zühal UNALP CEPEL

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DECLARATION

I, Dilan Elif AKSU, hereby declare that this master's thesis titled as "The Role of European Union on Separatist Movements in Europe: The Cases of Basque and Northern Ireland" has been written by myself in accordance with the academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that all materials benefited in this thesis consist of the mentioned resources in the reference list. I verify all these with my honour.

Date
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Dilan Elif AKSU

ABSTRACT
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The Role of the European Union on the Separatist Movements in Europe:
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Dilan Elif AKSU

Dokuz Eylul University
Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of International Relations
International Relations

The study offers an insight into the role of the European Union on the separatist movements in Europe. In the research, a conceptual framework was provided about the legal and historical background of the separatist movements. In the theoretical framework of the study, Social Constructivism was imposed and the Multi-level Governance (MLG) was used to emphasize the transformation of European politics with separatist movements.

The promotion of the European Union law and the European identity based on the fundamental values such as democracy, the rule of law, respect for human dignity and human rights contributed to defuse ethno-nationalist tensions within the EU member states. The restructuring of the European Union's institutions through the treaties enabled the subnational actors to gain ground in the EU governance. The European Union Cohesion Policy is the concrete evidence of the empowerment of subnational authorities in the recent years. On the one hand, the mobilization of subnational actors through lobbying activities made it possible to exert influence over the EU institutions regarding the policymaking process. On the other hand, the subnational actors take an active role in the policy implementation process owing to the programmes under the Cohesion Policy. While undermining the states' gatekeeping role, the European Union gives an opportunity to the subnational actors to have a voice in the EU governance. In this context, through Basque and Northern Ireland

cases, the study discusses that the European Union has become an actor that plays key role in the transformation of ethno-nationalist tensions in Europe.

Keywords: separatist movements, the European Union, Basque, Northern Ireland.

ÖZET

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

Avrupa Birliği'nin Avrupa'daki Ayrılıkçı Hareketler Üzerindeki Rolü: Bask ve Kuzey İrlanda Örneği
Dilan Elif AKSU

Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü
Uluslararası İlişkiler Anabilim Dalı
Uluslararası İlişkiler

Bu çalışma Avrupa Birliği'nin Avrupa'daki ayrılıkçı hareketler üzerindeki rolünü açıklamaktadır. Araştırmada, ayrılıkçı hareketlerin hukuki ve tarihsel arka planı hakkında kavramsal bir çerçeve sağlanmıştır. Çalışmanın teorik çerçevesinde ise Sosyal İnşacılık yaklaşımına yer verilmiş ve Avrupa siyasetinin ayrılıkçı hareketler ile birlikte dönüşümünü vurgulamak için Çok Düzeyli Yönetişim yaklaşımından faydalanılmıştır.

Avrupa Birliği hukukunun ve Avrupa kimliğinin demokrasi, hukukun üstünlüğü, insan onuruna saygı ve insan haklarına saygı gibi değerleri temel alması, Avrupa Birliği üye devletleri içindeki etno-milliyetçi gerilimlerin etkisiz hale getirilmesine katkı sağlamıştır. Avrupa Birliği kurumlarının antlaşmalar yoluyla yeniden yapılandırılması, ulus altı aktörlerin Avrupa Birliği yönetişiminde zemin kazanmasını sağlamıştır. Avrupa Birliği Uyum Politikası, son yıllarda ulus altı otoritelerin yetkilendirilmesinin somut delilidir. Bir yandan, ulus altı aktörlerin lobicilik faaliyetleri yoluyla seferber edilmesi, politika oluşturma sürecinde AB kurumları üzerinde etki yaratmayı mümkün kılmıştır. Öte yandan, ulus altı aktörler Avrupa Birliği Uyum Politikası kapsamındaki programlar sayesinde politika uygulama sürecinde aktif rol almaktadır. Birlik, üye devletlerin otoritelerini sınırlarken, ulus altı aktörlere AB yönetişiminde söz sahibi olma fırsatı vermektedir. Bu kapsamda çalışma, Avrupa Birliği'nin, Avrupa'daki etno-milliyetçi gerilimlerin dönüşümünde

merkezi rol üstlenen bir aktör konumuna geldiğini Bask ve Kuzey İrlanda örnekleri üzerinden tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: ayrılıkçı hareketler, Avrupa Birliği, Bask, Kuzey İrlanda.

ABBREVIATION

CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CoR	Committee of Regions
EAEC	European Atomic Energy Community
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EGTC	European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation
EPC	European Political Cooperation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INV	Irish National Volunteers
IRA	Irish Republican Army
MLG	Multi-Level Governance
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PNV	Partido Nacionalista Vasco
R&D	Research and Development
SEA	Single European Act
SEM	Single European Market
SEUPB	Special EU Programmes Body
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprise
UN	United Nations
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
VAT	Value-Added Tax

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The study aims to evaluate the separatist movements in Europe and the role of the EU on the struggle between local and central governments. With the beginning of 1990s, identity politics strengthened the hands of separatist groups who have been striving for independence for a long time. The democratic and legal basis created in European Union also supported the social and political rights in society and increase the level of awareness in ethno-cultural groups in nation states. These ethno-cultural groups as minorities gained many rights in Western society including self-governance, educational and cultural rights. Idea of independence got stronger over time as the minorities started to see themselves as a nation. Separatist movements which affect domestic and regional politics occupy the agenda of European states.

The political and economic instabilities in the member states inevitably put strain on the European Union and make it essential for the EU to develop policies regarding the needs of European citizens. Through legislations, decisions and institutions, European Union gives priority to eliminate the gap among regions and form democratic, transparent governance. The EU enables the subnational actors to participate in policy-making process in regional politics and holds a mediatory position between central and local governments to preserve peace and stability within its borders.

The research as a case study focused on the role of the EU on the separatist movements and aimed to evaluate the political transition process in Basque and Northern Ireland as these two regions shared the same fate for forty years. The selection of Basque and Northern Ireland as cases revealed the contribution of the EU as these cases were the most extreme examples within Europe that required common actions to counteract. How the EU affects the separatist movements within Basque and Northernn Ireland and how the EU institutions contribute subnational actors to participate in policy-making process in the EU are examined in details as research questions in this study. The research hypotheses aimed to emphasize the role of the EU on the separatist movements. The first hypothesis of the study claims that the EU promotes decentralization and regionalization within Europe to appease separatist tendencies through establishing EU programmes and granting funds to the subnational authorities. The second hypothesis asserts that the EU Cohesion Policy is

an effective instrument to foster regional development, create a sense of belonging among the EU citizens and increase the legitimacy of the EU. The last hypothesis of the research argues that the subnational representation and mobilization in the EU contribute the political transformation in the EU member states facing ethnonational tensions.

Through definition of the right to self-determination and secession under international law it is aimed to clarify the movements which are claimed as separatist and limits the scope of the study. The thesis examines Basque and Northern Ireland as two case studies, focuses on the evolution of the separatist movements of two regions through violence and the dialogue among the EU institutions, regional and central governments of member states. The reason behind the selection of the cases is to emphasize the contribution of the EU on the transition from bloody conflicts to democratic governance. The formation of Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) as terrorist organizations undermined the states' sovereignty and targeted civilians for a long period. IRA and ETA were different from other active separatist groups and set the unique examples of separatism due to their historical claims. Age-long suffering, persecution and oppression in Basque and Northern Ireland led to rage against the parent states and the use of force for independence was legitimized by these two separatist groups. However, the promotion of the universal values such as human rights, rule of law, democratic and transparent governance changed the circumstances in these regions after the emergence of the EU as an effective actor. The basis formed by the EU contributed to the stability and the peace in the regions in several ways. The legal, economic and political role of the EU on separatism will be the focal point of the study.

The constructivist theory and multi-level governance approach set the theoretical framework of the thesis. With the end of Cold War, rationalist theories were unable to explain the changing dynamics of politics as they were mainly materialistic and state-centric while constructivism played a significant role in the EU governance. Constructivism defines the relations between agents and institutions through social context. In that context, both institutions and agents interact with each other through the notions of language, identity and communication to form common norms and structures. The values which the EU based on such as democracy, rule of

law and respect to the human rights promote a single European identity and affect the people living in the EU member states. Multi-level governance approach contributes the constructivist theory in political structures and decision-making process at supranational, national and regional level. The differentiated levels of policy-making process require coordination among agents and emphasize supranationalism and decentralization.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Historical Background of Separatism in Basque and Northern Ireland

In this part of the study, the evolution of separatist movements in Basque and Northern Ireland aims to give insight about current issues of regional politics. The ongoing debates on subnational identity and territorial claims are mainly related to peoples' perception of common history.

1.1.1 Separatism in Basque

The roots of Basque nationalism can be found in 1895 when Sabino Arana founded "Partido Nacionalista Vasco". His early works on Basque nationalism were on the reinforcement of particularism. The preservation of Basque language, identity and the local laws, also known as "fueros", were the main constituents of Arana's efforts. With industrial improvements in Basque, the region became attractive for many immigrants which led to a change in the demographic and social structure. The industrialization transformed Basque country into a fortress of Spanish socialism (Pablo, 2015, p.102). Therefore, the support for Catholicism, provincialism and absolute monarchy in Arana's work were interpreted as a resistance to the change came with the liberal Spanish state. Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV) won the first seats in provincial government in 1898-1899 after a successful political campaign (Pablo, 2015, p.103).

The death of Arana in 1903 caused a slowdown in the nationalist movement and a reform in PNV. In 1906, the party gathered the hard liners and moderates to make a new start in Basque nationalism. The party was renamed as "Comunion Nacionalista Vasca" in 1916. However, the delicate balance between the two sides of destabilized the party due to the clash of ideas. While moderates were pushing for autonomy, the hard liners supported independence. Once the crisis passed, the Basque nationalism strengthened its position in the region during the World War I. The international sympathy for nationalism and self-determination in those times helped the party to gain majority in provincial government and legislation. Despite of

the success of the movement, after the war, the Spanish state under the rule of Alfonso XIII was weak to meet the regional demands for autonomy. The disappointing result led to setback in local elections. The hard liners established a new political party named as "Aberri" and started a campaign for full independence. The dictatorship of Primo de Riviera ended the liberal system in Spain and sent the radical nationalist leaders to exile. The Comunion Nacionalista Vasca continued its activities limited to culture, education and sports (Pablo, 2015, p.105).

The resignation of Primo de Riviera in 1930 merged the two political parties. The new political party was named as "Partido Nacionalista Vasco" (PNV), dedicated to previous party, and the principles of Arana were adopted as a party program. During the Second Spanish Republic period between 1931 and 1936, the Basque nationalism made a profound progress. However, the socialists and leftists in the Spanish political system were suspicious about Catholic PNV. Although the Spanish republican government showed an active interest in resolving the problem of nationalities in Spain, the PNV was indecisive toward it. The party's attitude can be best expressed as a mixture of fear stimulated by republican anticlericalism and hope in response to the government's interest in solving the Basque dispute (Pablo, 2015, p.106). PNV made alliance with other right wing political parties to secure the "statute of Estella". The statute basically aimed to integrate the four Basque Provinces. The statute was rejected by the leftist parties due to its unconstitutionality. As retaliation, PNV and other right wing parties rejected the 1931 Spanish constitution. Afterwards, PNV chose a new policy regarding securing autonomy in Basque. The party entered into close a relationship with Republican Party to establish an integrated, autonomous Basque Country. However, due to the dispute between right wing parties and PNV, Navarre, the fourth province of the Basque, rejected the integration. The statute was established with three provinces of Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Araba (Pablo, 2015, p.107).

The military opposition against the Republican government led to the Spanish Civil War in 1936. General Francis Franco who was the youngest general in Europe in that time left the military base in North Africa and flew to the south of the Spain to accelerate the uprising. The rebels and the military who formed the nationalist side came together to take down the Republican government (Watson, 2003, p.283). The

circumstances in Basque also changed due to the civil war. The region was divided between Republicans and nationalist rebels. Although PNV was the ally of Republican Party, the ongoing religious persecutions all over Spain by Republicans weakened the alliance between the two parties. The main aim of PNV was to secure the autonomy in Basque during the war time. The bombing of Guernica by the Condor Legion of Hitler's Nazi regime in 1937 revealed the defenselessness of Basque people. Nazi Germany had been a close ally of General Franco and had no hesitation targeting civilians during the airstrike. While Franco ended the autonomy of Basque by capturing the provinces, Hitler found an opportunity test the power of German airforce before the World War II. The bombing of Guernica became the symbol of Basque nationalism. Having lost its territory, the Basque government went into exile, while the PNV as a party chose to end its participation in the war. Its troops separately surrendered to the Italian armies allied with Franco in the Santoña Agreement of August 1937 (Pablo, 2015, p.108). Under the dictatorship of Franco, Basque nationalism faced oppression, persecution and exile.

During the World War II, PNV and the other parties in exile saw the defeat of Nazis as an opportunity to regain the autonomy in Basque. They created clandestine networks to provide intelligence to Allied forces and aimed to get support for the defeat of Franco regime from Western democracies. Despite the successful strikes to the dictatorship, it became clear that PNV and the other opposition parties would not get help from the Allied forces because of the changing dynamics of international politics. The emergence of Cold War occupied the agenda of Western powers and the defeat of Franco dictatorship was not the priority. Following the World War II, PNV activities concentrated on the cultural and religious spheres. The Basque language schools, churches became the places to hold the line against the oppressive Spanish culture supported by Franco regime (Pablo, 2015, p.111).

The new era of Basque nationalism started with the foundation of ETA, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, in 1960. ETA was the most radical and independence-minded wing of Basque nationalism on the part of a younger generation of political activists who were frustrated with what they perceived as the inactiveness of the PNV against Franco (Pablo, 2015, p.111). Despite of the common purposes, PNV and ETA differentiated on ideological basis. While PNV represented the Catholic

democratic nationalism, ETA's ideology was a combination of revolutionism, Basque nationalism and Marxism. In addition to this, ETA performed many terrorist activities, killed many people and led to escalation of tension between Franco regime and Basque. The repressive measures were taken by the dictatorship against Basque region. The death of Franco in 1975 accelerated the transition to democratic regime in Spain. There were many small leftist parties established in Basque which were linked to ETA. PNV lost its majority in the region. The debates on a new constitution questioned the statue of Basque and the autonomy statue was provided to previous three Provinces of Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa in 1979. The Basque region had succeeded in acquiring a high degree of self-government, including an independent tax collection system, its own police force, internal control of education and health services, and a public television network (Pablo, 2015, p.114).

To preserve the peace in Basque region, the nationalist and non-nationalist parties came together to declare ETA to cease fire. "Ajuria Enea Agreement" was signed among the parties in 1988 aiming to the de-escalation of tension and end of terrorist attacks. However, the agreement could maintain the peace and stability only for ten years. The dissolution of the agreement and pacifism in the region came up with "Estella Agreement" which demanded ETA to lay its arms down and join the national political parties instead of pushing for independence. The short term ceasefire lasted only for fourteen months when regional and central government could not make an agreement. ETA continued the terrorist attacks despite of the loss of public support in the Basque region. In 2000, PNV declared that the autonomous statue of Basque was no longer satisfactory and a new framework for governance in Basque was necessary. The leader of PNV, Ibarretxe, presented the "Project of Free Association" in 2003. However, Ibarretxe's plan was rejected by Spanish courts. Zapatero's central government followed active policies against terrorist organizations in 2006 and onwards until the permanent ceasefire of ETA in 2011. The political deadlock continues in Basque region.

1.1.2   Separatism in Northern Ireland

The series of disastrous events known as "the Troubles" in Northern Ireland continued from 1968 to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. However, the disagreement and polarization between the two sides of the community have a long history to be explained. The British reign over the Irish island started in the late 12th century. Northern Ireland, or the Province of Ulster, was separated from the rest of the Ireland by natural barriers of hills, forests and waters. The British autonomy became permanent after the defeat of the last Ulster Chieftains, the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell, in 1607 (McCarney, 1996, p.76). The Irish natives of Ulster were replaced by the loyalist Scottish and British and the large lands were distributed among new settlers and private companies. The Irish people who lost their territories had to work on the farms of landowners. The anger against the new settlers reached to the peak point when the rebellion in 1641 took place. Many settlers were slaughtered by the native Irish people. The main importance of this rebellion had been to sow the seeds of insecurity in the region. The tension between Catholic and Protestant societies escalated over time as the Protestants put pressure on Catholic Irish people in the region. The unequal treatment to the Catholics changed dimension when the Catholic King James II was defeated by Protestant William of Orange. The Protestant settlements became permanent and the Catholics faced religious persecution, oppression and mistreatments. Following William's victory, the Protestant aristocracy founded a Protestant Parliament in Dublin. The penal laws legislated by the parliament included harsh measures against Catholic Irish people. Catholic bishops and members of religious community were ordered to leave Ireland until the end of April 1698 or they would be arrested and transported to the West Indies as slaves. The saying of mass and the training of priests were banned (McCarney, 1996, p.77). The aim beyond the religious supremacy was to capture the rest of the Catholics' lands.

The Presbyterians were also targeted as Catholics by the penal laws. The American and French Revolution affected the liberal Presbyterians who were striving for abolishing the penal laws, reforming the parliament and getting rid of British reign. They formed "United Irishmen" in 1791 in Belfast. The Catholics could also

have right to join the union after the expansion of membership criteria. The new attempt of rebellion took place in 1798 and the rebellion was suppressed after the leaders of "United Irishmen" were executed. In 1801, Britain dissolved the Irish parliament and took Ireland directly under its own administration. The Act of Union of 1801 bound Ireland to Britain under a legislative union and it had to be accompanied by Catholic emancipation (McCarney, 1996, p.77). The abolishment of the "Act of Union" came to the agenda again when a Catholic won the elections in 1828. However, the movement for an independent Ireland was interrupted by a great potato famine. The Irish farmers had to grow potato for their diet and corn for the payment to the landlords. The critical decline in the potato production caused starvation and death of four million of Irish people and immigration of one million of Irish people to United States (McCarney, 1996, p.78).

The insensitivity and reluctance of England towards the great famine became the symbol of Irish people who were struggling for the independent Ireland. The hatred against British ruling accelerated the formation of a new community. The "Irish Republican Brotherhood", or "Fenians", was founded in 1858. The uprising in 1867 shared the same fate with previous rebels. Many leaders of the community were killed or forced to immigrate. In 1885, British Prime Minister was convinced by the necessity of "Home Rule Bill" in Ireland. The bill aimed to establish an autonomous Irish territory. However, the "Home Rule Bill" was rejected two times by Commons and Lords. A new organization called "Gaelic League" was established in 1893. The organization's main aims were to protect the Irish culture and establish an independent Ireland. The Unionist, Protestant group in Ulster strongly argued against an independent Ireland when the "Home Rule Bill" occupied the agenda in 1912. Protestant Unionists took arms against the Catholics and formed Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) while Catholic separatists organized Irish National Volunteers (INV). The disputes over "Home Rule Bill" were suspended when the World War I erupted. Both Catholics and Protestants defended their homeland during the war. The Easter Rising in 1916 was easily repressed due to the lack of Catholics' support. Following the elections in 1918, Irish members of parliament refused to go to Westminister and set up a new parliament in Dublin. The Anglo-Irish blood war ended in 1921 when the Irish people acquired partial independence and dominion status from Britain. To

appease the Ulster Protestants, who had declared their intention in 1912 to resist "Home Rule" by force of arms if necessary, six of the nine counties of Ulster were to be partitioned off from the rest of Ireland and remain under British control. The remaining 26 counties were to be granted independence (McCarney, 1996, p.79). The separation of six countries from Ireland did not end the tension in the region. The conflicts between Catholics and Protestants continued as the governance in Ulster claimed itself as a "Protestant Parliament of Protestant People" (McCarney, 1996, p.79).

Ireland became fully independent and left the Commonwealth in 1949. The articles of Irish Constitution fueled the fears of Protestant Unionists in Ulster as the constitution claimed Ireland as a whole island. Article 2 of the Irish Constitution says: "The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas." Article 3 says: "Pending the reintegration of the national territory, and without prejudice to the right of the Parliament and Government established by this Constitution to exercise jurisdiction over the whole of that territory, the laws enacted by that Parliament shall have the like area and extent of application as the laws of Saorstat Eireann and the like extra territorial effect" (McCarney, 1996, p.79). These articles encouraged the Irish nationalist groups like Irish Republican Army (IRA) to reunite the Ireland by force.

With the fear of reunion of Ireland, Protestant Unionists increased the pressure on the Irish nationalists by discrimination, mistreatment and disfranchisement. The voting system did not allow Catholic nationalists to vote in the elections because the right to vote was only given to the landowners. As the lands of native Irish people were captured by the new settlers over the time, the Catholic nationalists became the renters of landlords. The inequality increasingly continued by forbidding the Catholics to take place in public services. The police, military forces and government of Northern Ireland consisted of Protestant Unionists (McCarney, 1996, p.80).

Following a period of building tension and mounting action around the issues of discrimination and inequality, a second-ever, and peaceful, civil rights march took place on Derry/Londonderry's Duke Street on October 5, 1968 (Reynolds, 2018, p.744). The peaceful protests in Northern Ireland shared the common values of other

civil rights movements in the world. However, disproportionate use of force of security units known as Royal Ulster Constabulary against protesters initiated the series of bloody conflicts in Northern Ireland. "People's Democracy" emerged as an organization of students to encourage the civil obedience. The Ulster and British government's efforts to halt the movement by use of force transformed the civil movement into a more radical one. The clashes between Catholics and Protestants reached to the highest point when Protestant mobs and special forces attacked and looted to Catholics' homes. In 1971, the Catholics formed Provisional IRA referring to IRA which was established in 1919 and had been inactive for many years. The organization was so weak and needed to be reorganized to protect Catholics from the Protestant Unionists. Therefore, the Catholics had to welcome British army in their territories. At the beginning, the British intervention to the Northern Ireland provided security for the Catholic community. However, the intervention went beyond its aims and targeted the Catholics by an illegal curfew for search of guns. The Irish people were shot, the properties and religious figures were destroyed. Following these events, an internment process began without any legal basis. These acts of British government in Northern Ireland led to reorganization of Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the campaign of terror and destruction lasted for 25 years until the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (Reynolds, 2018, p.747).

1.2 The Concepts of Self-Determination and Secession Under the International Law

Self-determination and secession are the concepts which are often confused with one another in international public law. Self-determination as a right dates back to early 1900s when Woodrow Wilson came up with an idea that all people have right to define their own destiny. At its most basic level, the right to self-determination is generally understood to be the right of cohesive national groups (peoples) to choose themselves a form of political organization and their relation to other groups (Borgen, 2010). Self-determination prior to the establishment of United Nations (UN) remained as an idea without any legal framework. The weak legal context for principle of self-determination was eliminated by UN General Assembly Resolution 1514. The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial

Countries and Peoples adopted by the General Assembly in 1960 by eighty-nine votes in favor, none against with nine abstentions, stated that; "all peoples have the right to self- determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."(Cop & Eymirlioglu, 2005). Although there is no clear definition of the people who have right to self-determination, the framework which is set for state creation especially gives priority to decolonization process. Starting from the end of World War II to the late 1970s, British, French and Portuguese colonies in the Middle East, Far East and Africa gained independence on the basis of self-determination. During the decolonization process, peoples were identified as groups living in certain colonies whose borders fixed by the colonial powers. The artificial borders defined by the colonial powers ignored the ethnic, cultural and religious roots of people and the newly independent states were established against the principle of self-determination. The relentless conflicts in the Middle East and Africa are mainly caused by former regulations of Western powers. The new states after gaining independence supported the status quo to prevent further fragmentation in their territories. The states' demand for the limitation on the right to self-determination put a strain on minorities and indigenous groups who were seeking for establishing their own states.

In 1990s, dissolution of Soviet Union and Yugoslavia created a new wave on state creation. As Wimmer and Feinstein (2010) have argued, the rise of the nation-state as principal form of organization of various units of international systems is a result of power shifts that allow nationalists to overthrow or absorb old regimes and that such a power shift is more likely when nationalists have had time to mobilize the population and delegitimize the old regime or when the established regime is weakened by war (Wimmer & Feinstein, 2010, p.785). Self-determination of people is redefined by ethno-national understanding after the dissolution of these multinational states and caused a dichotomy in international system. The attempts by nation states to limit the scope of self-determination added a new dimension to current debates. On the one hand, minority groups existing in nation states claim that they, as people, have the right to self- determination. On the other hand, nation states support the argument that the right to self-determination should be limited to protect their territorial integrity and sovereignty. The concept of self-determination is

divided into two as internal and external self-determination. While internal self-determination emphasizes the equal rights, non-discrimination and self-governance within a state and supports states' argument, external self-determination is conceived as a threat to the current international system which is linked to the concept of secession (Kohen, 2006, p.372). As the current international system accepts nation states as major actors in world politics, the external self-determination is unlikely to happen due to the opposition of states to protect their territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Secession as a concept basically refers to the withdrawal of a territory from existing state to establish a new state (Anderson, 2013, p.386). When compared to self-determination, secession has no defined legal framework. The states are skeptical about the secessionist movements as these movements undermine the state's territorial integrity and sovereignty. In addition to states, international organizations such as the League of Nations and the UN also preferred to avoid mentioning secessionism. A statement made by the UN Secretary-General U Thant in 1970 asserted that the United Nations has never accepted the principle of secession (Eastwood, 1993). The reluctance of states to form a legal document regarding secession creates a gap in international law which makes it hard to evaluate the movements. The states' political will to intervene the intrastate conflicts depends on their interests and the progress of secession is largely defined by states' political actions (Seshagiri, 2010, p.587). The current debates question legality of the movements while interpreting the political process in which secessionism evolves. According to Anderson (2013), the secessionism takes place in two conditions. On the one hand, if there are provisions in the constitution regarding secession, it is possible to mention consensual secessionism. Consensual secessionism which provides opportunity to peaceful dissolution as the parties choose to reach an agreement after bargaining or benefit from constitutional provisions which give the right of withdrawal. Unilateral secessionism, on the other hand, leads to escalation of conflict between parties as parent state tries to maintain its integrity and sovereignty. The secessionist group which strives for independence faces oppression, violation and discrimination (Anderson, 2013, p.353).

The debates on secession have several common points. First of all, secessionism is not supported by a legal document. Both treaty law and customary law remain silent as secession is conceived to have a destructive effect on international peace and stability. Moreover, the concept of secession is defined as a process. The secession is not an immediate case. The political and legal struggles, negotiations between separatist groups and states constitute the focal point of the secession. In addition to previous claims, there are some criteria for the statehood which secessionist movements are expected to fulfill. According to 1933 Montevideo Convention, the state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications; a permanent population, a defined territory, government and capacity to enter into relations with other states (Anderson, 2013). Following these criteria, secessionist territory needs to be recognized by other states on the basis of effectiveness and independence.

Secessionism takes place in contemporary international system as a last resort. Many scholars like Buchanan (1991) justify remedial secession. The remedial secession suggests the view that the people who are systemically discriminated, oppressed and persecuted under the rule of a state have right to establish their own states as the right of internal self- determination is not possible to be achieved. Although the international law prohibits the use of force, the state which is driven into a civil war requires intervention by United Nations if the conflicts cross the domestic dimension and threaten international peace and security. The parent state that has the authority over the whole territory is expected to avoid further escalation of conflict and violation of human rights while the people in secessionist part of the parent state are supposed not to use terrorism as a tool for independence. However, in practice, the conflicts get out of controls and turn into a civil war in which death and displacement of millions occur. The remedial secession gives opportunity to stop the violence, provide security for the people under the oppressive state and pave the way to establishment of a new state. The remedial secession is a generally accepted method to prevent crime against humanity.

In conclusion, self-determination and secession have limited effects on international law. Right to self-determination, despite its universality, was only implemented in the former colonies. However, while giving independence to

colonies, the concept of people was not well-defined. The people who were indicated in the legal documents were the humans living in the certain colonies. The differences in ethnicity, religion and culture were not taken into account. Secessionism, on the other hand, is not mentioned in any legal document. As there is no consensus among the states on the case secessionism, the political environment defines how a separatist movement is dealt with. Diversity in the implementation of policies regarding secession makes it harder to form a legal framework. For instance, recent separations of Kosovo, South Sudan and Crimea are sui generis cases and international law remained incapable to answer the current issues. The lack of generally accepted rules seems to raise difficulties in international arena in the near future.

1.3 Separatism in European Union

There are many active separatist movements in the EU which diverge in ethnic, cultural and regional basis. The separatist groups living under the authority of European states are improving their transnational ties with each other via the EU institutions and making their voice heard in international community. The most prominent movements in Europe are exemplified as Catalonia, Basque, Northern Ireland and Flanders.

The EU was initially established as an anti-nationalist project based on fundamental values such as the rule of law, human rights and democracy after the destructive effects of nationalism in World War II. The states' competences on specific topics such as coal and steel industries, common market, customs union, social and economic policies were transferred to the institutions of European Economic Community. Most of the competences remained to states and intergovernmental bargains constituted the main body of the community in the early years of integration. The European integration accelerated the process of conferral of competences to the European supranational institutions. With the Maastricht Treaty, while competences were transferred to the Union, the foundation of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) made it possible for regional actors to join the decision-making process of the EU despite of its consultative role. In addition to the Committee,

Treaty of Maastricht enshrined the principle of subsidiarity which gives priority to the decisions to be taken at the lowest political level in the EU (Connolly, 2013). The amendments via other treaties of the Union aimed to provide more democratic, transparent governance within Europe. The Treaty of Lisbon enabled the EU citizens to cast a ballot and helped the EU to form more democratic, effective and transparent governance. The representatives of the European Parliament are chosen not by the member states but the European people. In addition to the treaties, the developments in the EU law provided certain rights to the individuals, groups and organizations above the states' domestic law. European people are capable of invoking the rights provided by the Union in national courts. The superiority of the EU law over domestic law and the EU citizenship provided to the people led to a slight disappearance in the concrete borders of European nation states and created multi-level governance from bottom to top. Undermining the sovereignty of European states and providing funds to the regions under the economic and social cohesion policy strengthened the people who were striving for more autonomy in their region (Connolly, 2013, p.97).

The legal perspective of separatism is still being debated among the scholars. Despite the Union's contribution to the separatist movements through democratic institutions and platforms, the EU neither permits nor forbids these movements. The EU law does not emphasize the right to the self- determination in any legal document. However, the EU law recognizes the right to self-determination of European states. Within the borders of European Union, states act behalf of their peoples as it mentioned in Treaty of European Union and Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Levrat, 2017, p.4). In some extent, Article 49 and 50 of the Treaty of European Union indicate the right to self-determination implicitly and call member states for the implementation of Article 2 of Treaty of European Union. Article 2 notes;

> "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail".

Article 49 and Article 50 of the Treaty of European Union clearly put emphasis on the concept of the state which has the authority to apply for membership or withdraw from the EU. The criteria for the application to the EU were set in the Copenhagen Summit in 1993 and accepted by the EU member states. However, there is no clear reference to the peoples without their own states in legal documents. The competences of states and the EU are clearly defined in the EU law and the claims for self-determination and secession are generally regarded as an internal issue which member states are expected to deal with. In a letter of 7 January 2014 to the President of the Catalan Government, the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, considered that the attempt at self-determination by Catalonia was "a question of internal organization related to the constitutional arrangements in the member state." (Kochenov & van des Brink, 2016). In other words, the seceding part of any member state has to experience the difficulties alone during the separation process. By seceding from the parent state, the new state will also have to withdraw from the EU. Although Catalonia and Scotland expect to be the new members of the EU automatically, the EU law as a part of international law accepts the customary rule which requires a new application from the seceding state. Since citizens of the newly independent state would lose their qualification as the citizen of an EU member state, they would also suffer the loss of their fundamental status of EU citizenship and the legal rights associated with it (Chamon & Van der Loo, 2014).

Besides the legal context, the political dimension after the secession is worth to be considered. When a new state applies for membership, the consent of the EU institutions and member states is a prerequisite. The lack of parent state's consent will block the accession process of seceded state. Therefore, the dispute settlement between the member state and seceded territory is essential for accession. Even though the new state is the former region under the EU, it has to fulfill the Copenhagen Criteria and negotiation chapters to become a member. Political and economic capability of a candidate state is expected to be sufficient to compete with the other member states in single market. At that point, it is possible to foresee that if newly independent states cannot meet the requirements, the EU will face fragmentations within its borders.

The EU refers to the right to self-determination in the context of free will of the EU citizens. By limiting the competence of the EU states, investing regions to provide social and economic cohesion, granting political rights and leverage for European people over national courts enable an ever-closer Union. Efforts on realizing external self-determination by separating a territory from the main state instead of enjoying autonomous rights of regions within the border of the EU create a political paradox. As Connally (2013) claims, despite of the current limitation on formal participation, the stateless nations of Europe have succeeded to develop transnational ties with each other. European Parliament have joined with representatives of other stateless nations to form the European Free Alliance, which "gathers 40 progressive, nationalist, regionalist and autonomist parties throughout the European Union" and "focuses its activity on the promotion of the right to self-determination of peoples (Connally, 2013, p.81). The cultural, linguistic protection for the minorities and funds for regions are provided at supranational level to promote fundamental values of the EU such as prosperity, human rights and democratic governance.

The EU's long lasting collaboration with the Council of Europe provides a basis for the fundamental values of the EU. Council of Europe which was established in 1949 to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe after the devastation of World War II became the major partner of the EU to sustain peace and stability in the region. The enhanced cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe laid the foundation of a united Europe. On the one hand, with the interorganizational cooperation, the formation of the EU identity through common cultural and historical values of European people enabled the EU and the Council of Europe to carry out the joint programmes to foster human rights, democracy and the rule of law within EU member states. On the other hand, the Council of Europe encouraged the intercultural dialogue within the member states to counteract xenophobia and racism. The EU adopted the values that were put forward by the Council of Europe to achieve social cohesion in Europe. The Juncker Report (2006) revealed the need to strengthen the partnership between the EU and the Council of Europe to shape the future of Europe. The elimination of the dividing lines between these organizations contributed the EU to stimulate human rights, democracy and the

rule of law within the EU. The EU and the Council of Europe's special emphasis on strengthening local and regional democracy and supporting civil society paved the way for democratic, transparent governance in the EU.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The aim of a theory is to explain, predict and understand a phenomenon. The emergence of the European Community (EC) as a phenomenon in the 1950s initiated debates among scholars on how to explain the current integration process in Europe. Federalism, neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism were the main theories which shed light on European integration until the 1990s. The theories aimed to explain the certain periods in the European integration process. Federalism proposes a united states of Europe which will abolish the nation states and transfer sovereignty to a supranational authority at the end of the integration process. However, the states' reluctance to give up on their sovereignty weakened the federalist views. The intergovernmentalist view emphasizes the role of member states' bargaining power when the EU institutions have limited competences and the states have the final say. Intergovernmentalism is influenced by realist and neo-realist views that the concepts of state-centrism and national interest are privileged (Cini, 2013, p.90). The Empty Chair crisis and the deadlock in budgetary negotiations of the European Community supported the argument of intergovernmentalism. Neo-functionalists, on the other hand, give importance to strong economic relations among states. The growing economic interdependence among members will require institutions which regulate the market and put pressure on states to follow common economic policies. The economic cooperation among members transforms into a political union over time as neo-functionalist concept of "spillover" predicts. The concept basically claims that integration in one field encourages further integrations in several areas. As a result of the process of spillover in different fields, the EU comes into being as a self-sustaining entity (Cini, 2013, p.54).

Intergovernmentalist and neo-functionalist assumptions on integration dominated the European politics until the 1990s. The dominance of rationalist assumptions continued until the 1990s as their concepts of state-centrism, material

capabilities of the states were generally accepted by the academics. The relations among states were meant to be temporary and based on zero-sum game in which only one side was able to benefit from the cooperation (Yılmaz, 2014, p.59). The EU integration process after the 1990s went beyond the neo-functionalist and intergovernmentalist assumptions as the focus shifted from the economic gains to the formation of the common identity based on norms, rules and culture. The slowly integrated EU invalidated the assumptions of rationalist theories. The theoretical clash between intergovernmentalism and neo-functionalism on the EU integration was replaced by the debate between the constructivist and the rationalist views.

The European integration went beyond the material capabilities and interests of the EU member states after the 1990s and the constructivist notions shed light on the formation of the EU identity and its institutions. Constructivism as a new approach to European politics put the European society based on common norms, culture and identity forward rather than focusing on the material capacity of states and interest-driven states' relations. In this study, constructivism will be applied as a theoretical framework and the EU's role in the regional politics will be supported by the assumptions of constructivism and multi-level governance. Following the constructivist approach, multi-level governance will be evaluated regarding the regional policies of the EU.

Constructivism is valuable for this study as it is not strictly confined with the existing legal and political structures. It is rather focuses on the human practice and the interactions between agent and structure (Koslowski, 2011, p.565). Constructivism basically aims to explain how the states' identities and interests are formed. In that point, the constructivist assumptions differ from the rationalist ones as the rationalists accept the identities and interests as predetermined. The emphasis on the social dimension of the structure constitutes a contradiction with the rationalist theories which have materialistic ontology such as neoliberalism and neorealism. The main concepts of the constructivist view are deliberation, norms, discourse, persuasion, socialization, identity and arguing (Gandra, 2015, p.5). Constructivism regards states as the main actors in the international system but it also emphasizes the role of transnational and international organizations. The interactions among states, institutions and individuals constitute the basis of the approach. The

international system is defined as a set of interactions among different actors. The social practices are established and regulated by the norms.

Constructivists see the international system as a social structure in which the international law and norms affect the actors of the system and also the actors led to the changes in the international system over time. This social structure affects not only the international outcomes but also the interests and identities of the actors in the system (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). As claimed by the constructivist approach, humans are the members of social communities in which their interests and identities are gradually changed, redefined over time due to the interactions among human agents. The daily discourse and practices between the agents and the institutions create a basis for the mutually accepted norms, identity and culture.

The constructivist emphasis on the concept of mutual constitutiveness of agency and structure shows that the approach occupies a vital place in European integration as socially constructed norms, institutions and identity affect the domestic policies and politics of the EU member states and led to transformation of the states' national interests (Risse, 2004, p.147). Initially, the European states voluntarily came together to transfer their sovereignty to the EC to take advantage of peace and prosperity in the region. However, the amendments in the founding treaties and the establishment of new institutions as a result of intergovernmental negotiations paved the way for ever closer union. The role of communication and discourse should not be neglected on the formation of the EU. Social practices are understood via words, language and communicative utterances (Risse, 2004, p.149). The communicative actions contribute the dispute settlements process and the promotion of deliberative democracy in the EU as agents are able to interact with each other and take an effective role in problem solving mechanisms. In a nutshell, the constructivist approach makes a major contribution to European studies in three ways. First of all, the mutual constitutiveness of agent and structure provides an opportunity for a greater understanding of Europeanization's role on the concept of statehood. Secondly, the EU law, rules and policies allow us to grasp how the EU states' interests and identities are shaped. Finally, the communicative practices in the EU make it possible to examine how the EU and Europe are constructed discursively (Risse, 2004, p.151).

The first years of the 1990s brought a significant change to international politics. The end of the Cold War eradicated the bipolar international order and ended the pressure on the states after forty-five years. The security blocks dissolved due to the end of nuclear war threat. The end of the Cold War period also turned a new page in the international politics as the new challenges came with the globalization such as terrorism, refugees, ethnic and intra-state conflicts became the current issues. Due to failed foreign policy performance in the Balkan Wars in the mid-1990s, the EU was harshly criticized by many parties. The reason beyond the incapability of the EU was the reluctance of the EU member states to delegate their security and defense control into the hands of the community (Yılmaz, 2014, p.55). At the beginning, the EU was considered to be an economic community based on intergovernmental discussion among members. However, following the unexpected dissolution of the USSR provided an opportunity for the EU to play an active role in world politics. Although the EU member states had been the parts of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Council of Europe for nearly fifty years, the changing dynamics of world politics required the EU to incorporate the fundamental values into its own institutional bodies. The issues related to security and fundamental rights had been taken for granted by the member states as the EU mainly focused on the economic gains. However, dissolution of the Soviet Union resulted with several conflicts in the EU neighborhood and put pressure on the reformation of the EU. The peace in the region was the priority as the economic growth and prosperity of the EU depended on it. To foster peace and stability in the continent by military actions was not a possible option for the EU as the member states intensified their relations mainly in economic area. Therefore, the EU chose to form an identity based on the civilian norms and values and became the pioneer of democracy.

The need for a change in the political stance in international arena led to a new formation in the EU. The efforts for the construction of the EU identity dates back to 1970s when European Political Cooperation (EPC) was established as an intergovernmental framework for the coordination of member states' foreign policies (Yılmaz, 2014, p.54). The framework was not effective but it enabled the EC member states to consult with each other regarding economic aid and sanctions to

third countries. Another important step for the EU identity came up with Single European Act (SEA) in 1986. SEA basically aimed to establish the single market and the customs union and provide a basis for free movement of goods and services within the EU. In addition to creation of an economic union, SEA also had been the first major amendment of Treaty of Rome. While attracting the third countries with economic growth and prosperity, the EC also emphasized the importance of fundamental values such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights (SEA, 1986). The efforts to form a union based on civilian power gave result when the member states declared themselves as the promoter and protector of the fundamental values such as human rights, democracy and rule of law in Luxembourg European Council in 1991. The declaration formed the basis for "the Copenhagen Political Criteria" which was confirmed by the EU member states in 1993 (Yılmaz, 2014, p.56). "The Copenhagen Criteria" were not only a declaration of the EU member states but also the preconditions for candidate states to fulfill for the EU membership. The Copenhagen Criteria has three stages: political criteria, economic criteria, and harmonization with the EU acquis. The political criteria require the rule of law, democracy and human rights. The economic criteria stipulate a stable market economy which is able to compete with other EU member states. The third stage is based on the EU acquis. The candidate state is expected to harmonize its domestic legislation with the EU rules and norms. The Copenhagen Criteria contributed to form a common identity and belonging among the EU member states. The preparation for the accession of Central and Eastern European states accelerated the formation of the EU identity as these countries were expected to internalize the EU values to benefit from the economic, social and cultural opportunities of the EU. The Treaty of Maastricht which came into force in 1993 incorporated the EU identity under Article 2. The article remarks;

> "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail".

The three pillar structure introduced with the Maastricht Treaty also strengthened the EU identity. The second pillar, also known as Common Security and Foreign Policy, allowed the EU member states to rearrange common political stance within the intergovernmental framework. The political identity in the EU was socially constructed with the contribution of the member states and the EU values which originated from the Enlightenment period in Europe promoted the civilian based EU norms and law. The fundamental values of the EU were reinforced when The Charter of Fundamental Rights introduced at the Luxembourg European Council in 1997 and were adopted in the Treaty of Nice and entered into force in the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 (Yılmaz, 2014, p.66). With the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU gained a legal status and provided social and political rights to the European people under the EU citizenship. The EU member states' authority over their citizens is restricted as the competences of the EU increased. The EU citizens are able to claim their rights by applying to the EU institutions. The decisions taken by the EU authority bear legal consequences over the EU member states which force them to comply with the EU legislations. The EU institutions impose penalty to any member state that refrains from its responsibilities and infringes the EU rules. The fundamental values which form the basis of the EU identity are protected via European courts and the EU citizens are encouraged to defend their rights. The superiority of the EU legislations over domestic rules allows the EU to preserve democratic, transparent governance within the EU borders. With using soft instruments such as economic and commercial means, the EU promotes peace and stability around the world. The EU peacekeeping operations enable the EU to resolve regional and international disputes. The conflicts and national terrorism within the EU member states such as Spain and the United Kingdom were resolved with the contribution of the EU. Armed attacks by separatist groups were replaced by civil rights movements after the peace settlement. Rather than preventing war by material assets as realist ideology assumes, the EU used soft power instruments and focused on the social relations, common identity and norms (Yılmaz, 2014, p.65). The socially constructed political identity permits the EU to sustain its role as a guarantor of peace and stability in the region.

To achieve the deliberative democracy within the EU, a newly-emerging approach gained prominence in European studies in the 1990s. Multi-level

governance (MLG) approach aims to resolve the political dichotomy between neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism and reaches a common ground between these two approaches since state-centric assumptions fail to explain the EU as a polycentric entity. The approach benefited from the constructivist assumptions while focusing on regional politics. The concept of the MLG was developed to specify the presence and influence of subnational actors in the policy-making process of the EU. Multi-level governance is the participation of a range of different types of actors (public, private and societal) in policy-making and implementation through formal and informal means (European Parliament, 2014, p.23). The states' sovereignty is reexamined with the MLG as the borders between domestic and international, private and public spheres are abolished. The notion of the nation state loses its significance due to the centralization and regionalization process of the EU (Aalberts, 2004, p.24). The EU provides subnational actors an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes of regional politics and promotes trans-border cooperation among regions while centralizing the role of the EU institutions. Within this perspective the concepts of statehood and sovereignty are not as predetermined, concrete facts but as institutional facts based on social interactions. At that point, the constructivist contribution on MLG enables to enrich the understanding of dynamics of the EU governance. The perception of international relations as a 'social reality', constructed by the means of human conventions and intersubjective understandings, forms the basis of Alexander Wendt's constructivist assumptions to international politics (Aalbert, 2004, p.35). As identity and interest are the results of social relations, states and institutions are also the parts of these relations. The states are the self-preserving and interest-driven entities. Social interactions allow the states to redefine their interests and identities. As Wendt (1999) claims, when states are communicating by means of state officials, they are not only pursuing selfish goals, they are also instantiating and reproducing a particular conception of who they are. However, MLG challenges the classical notions of statehood and sovereignty and annihilates the hierarchical order established by Westphalian system. Despite the key role that states retain, the EU institutions, the subnational and transnational actors also take place in policy-making processes. The erosion of the state sovereignty, the European Commission competences on agenda-setting and the effective role of the European

Court of Justice in adjudication indicate that the EU is not expected to transform into the United States of Europe but the unique structure of the EU ensures the democratic governance within its borders by sharing competences with the actors at different levels. Yet another institution of the EU, CoR defines multi-level governance while emphasizing the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and institutionalized cooperation among actors. Committee (2012) notes;

> "Coordinated action by the EU, the Member States and regional and local authorities according to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in partnership, taking the form of operational and institutionalized cooperation in the drawing-up and implementation of the European Union's policies".

The construction of the EU is an everlasting process in which actors reaffirm their interests and identities via continuous social interactions. Including regional and local authorities into decision-making process enables the EU legislations to be implemented successfully. In addition, the institutionalized cooperation among parties strengthens the EU integration while promoting the EU values and identity by creating the sense of belonging. Decentralization and regionalization in the EU member states contribute the democratic, fair governance and preserve peace and stability in the region by providing the opportunity of representation of subnational groups which are neglected by the central governments of the EU member states. In the fourth chapter of the study, the contributions of CoR will be analyzed in details.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Literature Review

This chapter of the study aims to compile the academic studies existing in the literature related to the thesis subject. The scope of the study will be limited to Basque and Northern Ireland. The focal points of the chapter will be the role of the EU on the political transition of nationalist terrorism in Basque and Northern Ireland and the EU regional policies which contribute to the representation of subnational actors in Europe. Firstly, the dynamics of the nationalist terrorism in Basque and Northern Ireland will be evaluated. ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) and IRA (Irish Republican Army) as armed separatist groups played a significant role in the bloody conflicts that continued for a long period. Following this, the EU role on the conflict resolution and peace settlement in Basque and Northern Ireland will be reviewed. At the final section of the literature review, the contribution of the EU to preservation of peace and stability in these two regions will be addressed. The representation of local governments and subnational actors within the EU institutions and regional politics will be underlined.

2.1.1 The Cases of ETA and IRA

The appearance of ETA and IRA as terrorist organizations led to intra-state conflicts that took the lives of hundreds of people. These two separatist armed groups differ from the current ideological terrorist organizations as their claims were limited to the territories where the subnational minorities resided in. These territorial claims required a war of attrition with the central governments that aimed to get the states' security forces out of the specified territories. In this chapter, the common ground of the formation of ETA and IRA will be evaluated. The focal point is to examine how the nationalistic terrorism legitimatized its activities through public support in these regions and affected the social, political and economic life in the EU member states. The literature review of this section reveals the similarity between ETA and IRA while promoting the counter terrorism measures in the EU member states.

Since the late 1960s, Spain and the United Kingdom got drawn into series of unfortunate events. The enmity between communities turned into intra-state conflicts that threatened peace and stability in Basque and Northern Ireland. The conflicts in Basque were based on the nationalist reaction to Spanish government and the immigrants. As it is previously mentioned in the historical background of the study, the abolishment of traditional rules known as "fueros" and the supremacy of Spanish state over the Basque region transformed the hatred of Basque people into an armed struggle (Pablo, 2015, p.101). The Basque people who had lived autonomously for centuries became the citizens of Spanish state. During the Franco dictatorship, the bombing of Guernica which resulted with civilian casualties in Basque was followed by the cultural and lingual bans on the subnational minorities. The rage against Spaniards contributed to the formation of ETA. On the other hand, the conflicts in Northern Ireland were not only based on nationalist claims but also religious discrimination. The clash between Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland had continued for centuries due to the Britain's displacement policy in the region (McCarney, 1996, p.77). The territories belonged to Irish Catholics were given to British Protestants and the Catholics experienced discrimination, starvation and religious persecution. The establishment of Republic of Ireland with the exception of six counties that constituted Northern Ireland left the Irish Catholics as minorities in the region. The civil right movement which aimed the Catholic minorities to have equal social, political and economic rights was suppressed disproportionally by the government of Northern Ireland. The Catholic minority revitalized IRA which had been disbanded after the independence of Republic of Ireland. IRA aimed to protect the Catholic community from the Protestant government and its security forces. The failure of IRA resulted with the Catholics to welcome British troops in Northern Ireland in the hope of protection. However, unlawful internment and curfew period of British government caused resentment and rage in the Catholic community (Reynolds, 2018, p.747). The public support to IRA increased over time and IRA increased its legitimacy in Northern Ireland.

The common ground of the formation of ETA and IRA can be summarized in four factors. First of all, the religious or ethnic minorities were targeted by the nation states and these minorities were deprived of the social, economic or political rights.

The discrimination and inequality in society encouraged the minorities to take radical actions to achieve their goals. Second factor which contributed to the radicalization of minorities was the lack of power. There was no institution or state that was willing to help the subnational minorities (Waldmann, 2005, p.242). In Basque conflict, the subnational minority was demoralized by Spanish state. The despair and insecurity of Basque people were the key causes of the formation of the armed resistance. In Northern Ireland, Catholic community supported British security forces in the first place. However, following the curfew and internment period, British forces, along with Protestant security forces of Northern Ireland, claimed the civilians' lives that were not associated with IRA. Another factor that led to the armed resistance of subnational minorities was the safe zones. Although the minorities were not directly supported by any state or institution, the safe zones in which the armed groups were trained and equipped contributed to the radicalization of community. As Waldmann (2005) notes:

> "ETA members in danger of prosecution escaped by to the French Basque country, where the organization's resided and from where most of the larger operations IRA members on the run could always count on some Southern part of the island."

The last condition of radicalization was the understanding of basic solidarity. Sharing the common identity and history strengthened the bonds among the members of the community. The remembrance of common myths and memories created a basis for the solidarity. The sense of belonging to an ethnic or a religious community helped the minorities to keep the spirit of fighting alive as subnational minorities were alienated from the society. ETA and IRA used similar methods to transform the group solidarity into public support. The religion was the major component of Irish Catholics and Basque nationalists. The Christian morality and ethics dominated the armed propaganda from the beginning. The early leaders of both ETA and IRA were deeply committed to religious principles and they avoided any action that did not comply with the Christian thoughts. The intention of the organizations to promote a social order based on justice and Christian principles was clearly emphasized (Rooney, 2007, p.68). Armed propaganda of ETA and IRA was built on the theology of the "just war". The justification of the revolutionary movements in the context of "just war" became prominent when the criteria of the war were summarized in an

edition of Provisionals' Republican News in 1973 (Rooney, 2007, p.69). Those criteria note;

> "(1) [T]he regime is tyrannical.
> (2) the leaders have a "mandate" [...] for their actions.
> (3) peaceful means have not proved fruitful.
> (4) the Rising has a real hope of success
> (5) and the campaign is carried out with a due sense of proportion."

Besides the Christian doctrine, ETA and IRA also put special emphasis on the close relations with the subnational communities. The radicalized communities are the preeminent factor for the armed groups as these communities provide political and economic support and contribute to the legitimacy of terrorist organizations. The war of attrition between the armed group and the central government is an unpredictable war in which the primary aim is not to destroy the enemy but to impair it by means of psychological and physical attacks. The costs of the terrorist attacks are compensated through financial support and recruitment of new members from the radicalized community. Therefore, it is possible to refer that the subnational community and the armed group are hard to separate from each other due to the mutual interests of the sides. As the legitimacy of armed groups depends on the public support, the interests of the subnational communities are at stake. As a result, both ETA and IRA are selective while performing terrorist attacks. Instead of indiscriminate attacks that cause more damages and casualties, the armed groups targeted states' security forces and senior bureaucrats. The dependence on public support and the self-restraint behind the terrorist attacks are clearly summarized by Sean MacStiofain, the Provisional IRA's first Chief of Staff (Sànchez-Cuenca, 2017, p.300). MacStiofain states:

> ''No resistance movement in history has ever succeeded in fighting a struggle for national freedom without some accidental casualties, but the Republican interest in retaining popular support clearly lay in causing as few as possible.''

The variation of financial resources of the terrorist organizations changed over time due to the transformation of the society. In the early years of armed struggle, both ETA and IRA relied on violent crimes such as kidnapping, bank robbery and extortion. It is known that IRA also attempted to drug trafficking in

1970s. However, this involvement caused a huge loss in the credibility of IRA (Jonsson, 2007, p.73). In the case of Basque, ETA enjoyed the revolutionary tax which was compulsory for the major businesses in the region. However, the mandatory tax implementation led to the distrust of ETA. As a result, both ETA and IRA examined the profit and loss of their activities and focused on preservation of public support. Over the time, these organizations relied more on "victimless crimes" such as oil smuggling, tax and value-added tax (VAT) fraud and money laundering (Jonsson, 2007, p.72). In addition to these operations, ETA and IRA also secured the flow of money through local businesses. Legally established businesses contributed to the armed groups (Jonsson, 2007, p.72).

To cope with the terrorist organizations, Spain and the United Kingdom followed a similar path. First of all, the passive state sponsorship was targeted. In that situation, a state does not directly fund the terrorist organization but remains silent to the terrorist activities in its territory. While IRA was supported by the United States due to the massive numbers of Irish immigrants, ETA found a safe haven in southern part of France. Secondly, the intelligence services in both Spain and the United Kingdom played a key role in information gatherings that helped central governments to detect financial resources of terrorist organization. For instance, it was detected that political branches of the armed groups transferred state funds to the terrorist activities. Therefore, Herri Batasuna, the political extension of ETA, was banned in Spain and suppressed through counter terrorism measures. Sinn Fein, the political branch of IRA, was also forced to cut ties with the terrorists. Spain and the United Kingdom served as the models in counter terrorism measures. In addition to block the armed groups' financial resources, the variation of policies including international intelligence cooperation, diplomatic pressure, human intelligence gathering and public relations campaign demonstrated their success (Jonsson, 2007, p.77).

2.1.2 The Role of the EU in Conflict Resolution and Peace Settlement

The conflicts in Basque and Northern Ireland date back to the early years of the 1960s. The formation of two separatist groups, ETA and IRA, became the major

issue in these regions for the next fifty years. The territorial claims of two conflicting sides created a vicious cycle of atrocity. However, the involvement of the EU to settle the peace and deescalate the tensions in both regions took place in the midst of the 1990s. The reason behind the delay was the newly emerging structure of the EU. The functions of the community were limited to the economic area based on the intergovernmental negotiations. Following the Single European Act (SEA) which entered force in 1987, the initiatives to form a common stance in foreign and security policy were taken. The Treaty of Maastricht which founded the EU created the structural basis for further cooperation among the EU member states regarding the security challenges in Europe. The European Commission also made a significant progress in addressing the issues that the EU faced. As a protector of the EU values, the role of the Commission on the promotion of soft power of the EU cannot be ignored. The European Commission was empowered to take initiatives on implementing policies and holding a mediatory position among the EU member states.

The role of the EU on preserving peace and stability in its neighborhood can be explained via three mechanisms. First of all, the EU follows the policies of conditionality as the means to encourage certain actions in actors' behaviors. These policies are known as "carrot and stick" policies which offer a reward to the actor for the implementation of desired action or punish the actor for noncompliance. The decision-makers in the EU member states calculate the profit and loss of implementation of certain action. The policies of conditionality provide an opportunity for the EU to influence the domestic politics within the EU member states. The second mechanism followed by the EU is the social learning. Instead of cost and benefit analysis as in the previous method of conditionality, social learning aims to change domestic politics through a transformation of defined interests. The method of social learning forms a basis for actors to voluntarily internalize the EU norms and values that underlying the EU system (Tocci, 2007, p.15). The arguments of social constructivism regarding social learning assume that interactions in institutional structure affect the actors' behaviors. Börzel and Risse (2003) state:

> "Through participation in common institutional structures, actors change their identities and therefore also their perceived interests and ensuing actions This

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can occur in a top-down fashion, where 'change agents' or 'norm entrepreneurs'
in close contact with the EU international framework, persuade other domestic
elites and the population to change their interests."

Bottom-up fashion is also a possible path to change actors' preferences and their perceptions on identities. In that case, the non-profit organizations, local governments and businesses which aim to promote fundamental values come together to mobilize the individuals and exert influence over decision-makers. As a result, the structural change through social interactions occurs. The last mechanism of the EU on preservation of peace and stability is the passive enforcement. In the case of the passive enforcement, a set of legally binding rules is preeminent. The EU cannot force a member state to take an action which is politically suitable but has no legal basis. The set of rules that is inherent in the institutional structure of the EU is compulsory for a member state to comply with. These rules are perceived as the costs which come with the EU engagement (Tocci, 2007, p.17). The states that are willing to retain close ties with the EU voluntarily follow the rules of the Union. Due to the sense of belonging, the states prefer to interiorize certain values exerted by the EU. In conclusion, the EU is able to increase influence within its neighborhood as the rules bear legal consequences for the actors. The three mechanisms set the examples of the enforcement of the EU's soft power. Without coercive means, the EU plays a key role to sustain peace not only within its borders but also in many parts of the world.

Despite the lack of capacity, the EU involvement in Northern Ireland and Basque conflicts continued for a long period. The implementation of different policies due to the regional necessities contributed to the de-escalation of the conflicts. In the case of Northern Ireland, during the 1980s, the political strain caused the European Commission to follow shallow policies based on economic packages as the involvement of the EU in an ethno-religious conflict within a member state could be perceived as interference to state's sovereignty. Therefore, the EU perception on the conflict resolution was shaped through the political developments in Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The Haagerup Report commissioned by the European Parliament in 1984 was the first major document that addressed the conflicts within the Europe and advised on the actions that should be taken by the EU. By defining the origin of the conflict in Northern Ireland, the report put a special

emphasis on the British-Irish relations and added that the EU had no competence to force Republic of Ireland to change its constitution (Hayward, 2004, p.7). The Irish constitution that came into force in 1937 clearly stated the Republic of Ireland's sovereignty over whole Island. Article 3 of the Irish constitution had claimed:

> "Pending the re-integration of the national territory, and without prejudice to the right of the Parliament and Government established by this Constitution to exercise jurisdiction over the whole of that territory, the laws enacted by that Parliament shall have the like area and extent of application as the laws of Saorstát Éireann and the like extra-territorial effect."

The EU supported the intergovernmental dialogue between Ireland and the United Kingdom while providing economic aids to the conflicting parties. In 1985, the bilateral dialogue between Ireland and the United Kingdom improved with the signature of Anglo-Irish Agreement that aimed to end the bloody conflict in Northern Ireland known as "Troubles". Following the settlement of the Anglo-Irish body, the EC initiatives to empower the cross-border relations took place. Instead of transforming the national identities into a single European identity, the EU supported the free expression of the national identities to form a basis for tolerance in the divided society of Northern Ireland. As Kockel (1991) stated:

> "The EU acknowledges that economic integration, political cooperation and legal harmonisation do not eradicate borders, not least because their symbolic power becomes even more important for nationalism in the context of Europeanization. This is at least in part due to the fact that nationalism springs from 'the same source that informed the concept of the nation-state and, ultimately, that of a united Europe."

The three policy initiatives implemented by the EC affected the discourse in Northern Ireland. The establishment of the Single European Market (SEM) abolished the physical and technical trade barriers between Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Second policy initiative that contributed the de-escalation of conflict was the reform of the EC Regional Policy in 1988. The reformation of the regional policy enabled the EC to respond the needs of regions within its borders. The third initiative was the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in 1994. The programme promoted cohesion between communities involved in the conflict and enhanced economic and social stability through creating shared space and services.

These initiatives improved the cross-border relations between the northern and southern parts of the island. The supranational role of the EU was claimed to be increased preeminently (Tannam, 2007, p.343).

The Peace Programme has evolved in three phases: Peace I (1995–1999); Peace II (2000–2004) and the Peace II Extension (2005–2006); and Peace III (2007–2013). Between 1995 and 2004 the EU committed over €1.66 billion to its Peace I and II Programmes in Northern Ireland, while Peace III (running to 2013) involves an additional €2.25 billion (Hughes, 2009, p.7). The case of Northern Ireland was the first test for the EU to form its framework on conflict resolution. The Peace I revealed the malfunctions of the programme as the overlapping institutional structures hampered the process. By analyzing the former faults in Peace I, the EU followed a bottom-up fashion rather than transferring the funds to the central governments. Strengthening the local non-profit organizations contributed to the empowerment of civil society and the decline of state control over community relations. Although the peace process was carried out by the British and Irish governments, the EU made a significant contribution to this process. Ireland and the United Kingdom became the members of the EU in 1973. The EU served as a forum in which Irish and British counterparts perceived each other's interests in an equal basis. The historical hostility based on the Irish subordination and British reign was put aside as the cooperation became much more beneficial than conflict.

The case of Basque is slightly different from Northern Ireland as there is no agreement on the road map of the peace process. Despite the ceasefire of ETA, the quarrel between central and local government on the legal status of Basque continues. The negotiations among political parties in the region remained inconclusive as the party programmes are different from one another. In 2016, the latest regional election in Basque indicated the success of nationalist parties. The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) which supports self-rule rather than independence claimed the %37.2 of the votes while EH Bildu, left-wing, pro-independence party, was the second party with the %21 of the total votes. Spanish parties, Partido Popular (PP) and Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), claimed the %21.9 in total. Despite the secondary role of Spanish parties in Basque, the efforts on centralization

of power carried out by the Spanish government are likely to affect the regional politics (Pallarés, 2016).

The Ibarrexte Plan introduced by PNV supported the greater autonomy in Basque. The demands on self-rule in the region were rejected by the Spanish courts. The Basque parliament was authorized by the Spanish state regarding culture, education and language. However, the policies followed by Basque government related to these areas are subjugated to Spanish legislation (Barraso, 2014, p.20). Any attempt by local government to reform these policy areas bears legal consequences. For example, the Basque parliament can pass a bill to change the official language in the region but the attempt will be rejected by the Spanish constitutional courts. The Article 3.1 of the Spanish constitution clearly states that Castilian is the official Spanish language of the State. All Spaniards have the duty to know it and the right to use it.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution with 321 in favor, 311 against and 24 abstentions on "the Peace Process in Spain" which express solidarity with the victims of nationalist terrorism and support the fight against terrorism (European Parliament, 2006). The parliament expressed its appreciation on noncoercive and democratic resolution regarding the prolonged conflict in Basque. Josep Borrell, the then president of European Parliament, stated:

> "This is good news for Spanish society and the whole of Europe, which shows that terrorism, can be fought by the force of democracy; this is a time to show calmness and caution, a time to remember the many victims of terrorism, and a time for hope, for the unity of all the political forces of democracy."

The fragility of political structure in Basque paved the way for the EU to follow indirect policies rather than the political involvement. In addition to the political parties, there are also trade unions and social movements which play a significant role in peace process. The lack of shared values in the divide society of Basque, the social mediation was the prerequisite. The survey conducted by the several organizations such as Elkarri and Lokarri confirmed the needs of social mediation in Basque. The results of a sociological survey conducted in Spring 2013 showed that the %80 of the respondents supported the idea of dialogue between the Spanish government and ETA, %80 of the participants called for recognition of the

(rights of) all victims of the conflict, %80 of them wanted ETA to disarm and %70 of respondents supported the idea of prison reforms for ETA prisoners (Mayilian, 2014, p.25). There was no official mediation or reconciliation in the Basque conflict. However, besides Nobel laureates such as Federico Mayor Zaragoza, José Saramago, Cora Weiss, many foreign political and community activists contributed to the peace process in Basque. The decline of the public support for ETA in Basque provided a basis for dialogue between ETA and the Spanish government. The distrust between the central government and the leaders of ETA was the major obstacle in peace process. The negotiations over the future of ETA criminals regarding the ETA's demands of amnesty left the process unsettled due to the frustration of the families of the victims.

The Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) programmes established by the EU opened up an opportunity to encourage the cooperation among the neighboring regions. The Basque Country, which geographically comprises the Basque Autonomous Community and the Chartered Community of Navarre in Spain and parts of the Département Pyrénées-Atlantiques (in the region of Aquitaine) in France, uses the CBC programme to promote socio-economic development in the three administrative entities (Mayilian, 2014, p.26). In addition to the CBC programmes, the EU also founded European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), a legal framework which constitutes the basis of regional cooperation, to provide cohesion among the regions of Europe. These programmes empowered the regional actors and enabled regions to represent themselves in the EU institutional framework rather than centralizing the state power. It is hard to assume that the central government of Spain will allow the full independence of Basque. While the Spanish constitution claims the territorial integrity of the country, the unfavorable conditions in domestic politics due to the absolute majority of Spaniards hamper the efforts on the establishment of independent Basque state. In addition to this, according to the EU law, a region attempts to declare its independence separates not only from its parent state but also the EU. It should be noted that all the EU member states are required to approve the newly independent state as a candidate. As the separation from Spanish state will deprive Basque of the virtues that it has, the balance is likely to shift in favor of the greater autonomy rather than full independence. The domestic dynamics within

Basque are in favor of the EU due to cross-border cooperations that support the political, economic and social relations of Basque (Idoiaga, 2010, p.22). The fundamental values which the EU was founded on contributed to the de-escalation of tension and provided a basis for democratic governance within the EU member states.

2.1.3 Regional Policies of the EU

The primary aim beyond the establishment of the EU is to promote peace and prosperity by encouraging interdependence and solidarity among its members. The destruction of the Second World War in Europe left a bitter experience behind. The millions of civilian casualties, the terrorized peoples and the collapsed economies were the remnants of the war. The idea to build the future of Europe together, the European states took initiatives to form a regional organization. This organization, from the very beginning, propounded the cooperation in many fields such as atomic energy, social and economic policies. The intergovernmental dialogue to sustain economic growth and prosperity led to the formation of regional policies within the EC. This part of the literature review aims to give a point of view on the regional development policy of the EU known as Cohesion Policy. The evolution of the regional policy over time is the concrete reflection of the empowerment of supranational and subnational actors within the EU. The Cohesion Policy is supported by the EU mechanisms, programmes and legal frameworks to enhance transparent, result-driven and efficient multi-layered governance.

The EU Cohesion Policy sets a unique example of the largest integrated development policy under the single legal framework. The origin of the policy dates back to the early 1960s when the regional policies regarding the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) and the European Economic Community (EEC) came into force. The European Regional Development Fund was established in 1975 to boost regional development within the EC. However, due to the accession of new members to the EC, the policy interventions by the European Commission in an ad hoc manner successfully changed the structure of the regional development policy. The reformation of the Cohesion Policy in 1988 was a milestone for the EU as the

European Commission was authorized to undertake the whole regional policy under the leadership of the then president of the Commission, Jacques Delors (McCann, 2013, p.406). Updating the logic and function of the Cohesion Policy enabled the EU to meet the needs and conditions of the new member states and deploy appropriate policy instruments to support regional development. As the former regional policy until 1988 provided funds based on the level of GDP in the EU member states, the underdeveloped regions within the richer countries were unable to receive funds. The new regional policy put an emphasis on the concept of "additionality". This concept refers to the idea that the outcomes would not have been reached without the policy.

The EU funds together with the national funds of the member states provide an opportunity to achieve certain goals in regional development. However, achievement of the goals requires the policy interventions that should be properly planned to comply with the national policies of the EU member states. In addition to national governments, the cooperation among the EU institutions, regional and central institutions of the EU member states should be ensured to increase the efficiency of financial resources. In order to fulfill the needs of regions, the EU set different categories of eligibility to assist the EU regions in need. The least developed regions with a GDP per capita of below %75 of European average were eligible for the greatest assistance, followed by other categories of regions facing particular challenges associated with deindustrialization and severely localized unemployment (McCann, 2013, p.407).

The accession of new members in 2004 and 2007 raised difficulties for the EU Cohesion Policy due to the dramatic change in economic geography of the EU. Central and Eastern European states were lack of institutional capacity to respond the economic challenges. Moreover, the most of the population resided in underdeveloped regions within these states. As a consequence, the regions in need of urgent financial assistance of the EU drastically increased. The EU funds previously allocated the other regions were interrupted due to the organizational inability. One of main issues in the EU regional policy was the incapability of policy interventions (McCann, 2013, p.408). This incapability caused a paradox within the EU. The policy interventions to keep the EU member states up with the current development were only effective on those states that had strong administrative bodies. However,

the member states with powerful administrative institutions were the most developed countries that were not dependent on the EU funds. Therefore, the initiatives on capacity-building in the least developed member states were prioritized. The Lisbon objectives brought about a significant change regarding the EU Cohesion Policy to form organizational capacity to respond regional challenges.

The effects of Lisbon Treaty on the EU Cohesion Policy can be summarized in several points. The objectives associated with the Treaty set several targets in the Cohesion Policy. While increasing the EU competitiveness in global market, the demand for economic and social convergence among the regions is also met. The first objective is the smarter Europe based on innovation, digitalization that is able to take quick actions to respond the needs. The second target is the greener, carbon free Europe that aims to reduce carbon emission and fight against climate change through investing in renewable energy resources. Another objective of the Lisbon Treaty is a more connected Europe with strategic transport and digital networks. The aim of establishing an ever closer union by the Lisbon Treaty also encourages a more social Europe which is able to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare (European Commission, 2018).

The planned roadmap of the EU Cohesion Policy between the years of 2021 and 2027 puts these objectives into effect. The integration of immigrants and asylum seekers in the EU regions is supported by the EU regional funds that share the economic burden of national and regional governments. The flexibility to use different EU funds in a single project also contributes to attract private investments in projects of public interest. The roadmap puts a special emphasis on the economic governance within the EU. The clearer provisions on the implementation of the Cohesion Policy, more efficient use of the EU funds and capacity-building in the less developed member states provide a basis for synergy across Europe. The previous method on the allocation of the EU funds was based on the GDP of the EU member states. However, the European Commission regulated this method and added a socio-economic dimension in it. Youth unemployment, climate change, education level and the amount of asylum seekers to be integrated in the EU regions are taken in consideration while allocating the EU funds (European Commission, 2018).

To achieve the certain objectives specified by the Lisbon Treaty requires a planned legal framework under the leadership of European Commission. The EU Cohesion Policy is implemented through the EU funds. Each EU fund specializes in different field and enables the European Commission to fulfill the different needs of the EU regions. The first fund, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), aims to reinforce social, economic and territorial cohesion by eliminating regional challenges in the EU. The fund prioritizes the small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), research and low-carbon economy. ERDF also supports the investments in information and communications technology. In the less developed EU member states, infrastructure plays a significant role for the competitiveness in both internal and global market. Therefore, the EU encourages regional development through ERDF.

Second fund provided by the EU is European Social Fund (ESF). The fund promotes high levels of employment and job quality, improved access to the labour market, the geographical and occupational mobility of workers, the adaptation of workers to industrial change and to changes in production systems needed for sustainable development, a high level of education and training for all, the transition between education and employment for young people, combatting poverty, social inclusion, gender equality, non-discrimination and equal opportunities, the implementation of reforms, in particular in the fields of employment, education, training and social policies (European Commission, 2015).

The third fund is Cohesion Fund. The fund is only provided for the EU member states with a gross national income (GNI) per inhabitant of less than %90 of EU-27 average (European Commission, 2011). Transportation networks, climate change, environment and urban development are prioritized by the Cohesion Fund. Interreg, also referred as European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), provides a framework for the exchanges of experience between national, regional and local actors from different Member States, as well as joint action to find common solutions to shared problem. The cooperation takes place as cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and interregional cooperation. The eligibility of cooperation is defined by the European Commission. Regions of the Union along maritime borders must be separated by a maximum of 150 km to be eligible.

Transnational cooperation includes national, regional and local partners. Interregional cooperation covers all EU member states and also several non-EU states. To reach thematic objectives, the exchange of experiences among the members plays a significant role. Article 7 of Specific Provisions for the Support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European Territorial Cooperation Goal notes (2013):

> "Interregional cooperation should aim to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by encouraging exchange of experience between regions on thematic objectives and urban development, including urban-rural linkages, to improve implementation of territorial cooperation programmes and actions as well as promoting analysis of development trends in the area of territorial cohesion through studies, data collection and other measures.

In 2006, the formation of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) as a supplement to Interreg contributed the regional and local partners to overcome the difference between national rules and regulations. EGTCs provide a basis for the regions to cooperate without signing an agreement and enables regional actors to represent themselves within the EU (European Union, 2011, p.132).

Basque and Northern Ireland are currently involved in various programmes in which they are able to pursue their regional interests. Basque takes place in seven programmes which focus on the Lisbon objectives of research, innovation, climate change, sustainable transport, low-carbon economy, competitiveness of SMEs and better public administration. The programmes are Interreg POCTEFA, Interreg SUDOE, Interreg Atlantic Area, Urbact, Espon 2020, Interact and Interreg Europe. Northern Ireland actively participates in nine programmes. As the efforts on the more tolerant and peaceful society continues, the EU involvement in Northern Ireland through PEACE V persists. Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) shared the financial resources of PEACE V. SEUPB's report (2016) states:

> "The ERDF contribution to the Programme is approximately €229m (85%). In addition €41m (15%) will come from match-funding, raising the total value of the Programme to approximately €270m. 6% of the total ERDF, €13.75m is allocated to Technical Assistance."

In addition to PEACE V, Northern Ireland takes place in Interreg VA, Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme, Interreg North West Europe, Interreg Atlantic Area, Urbact, Espon 2020, Interact and Interreg Europe. The programmes propound cooperation in social inclusion, energy efficiency, urban development, transportation networks, climate change and low-carbon economy. In Chapter 4, the achievements of the EU programmes will be evaluated in details.

2.2 Research Methodology

2.2.1 Introduction

The chapter of research methodology focused on the Constructivism and Multi-Level Governance to examine the role of the EU on the separatist movements within Europe. The thesis was carried out as a case study based on qualitative methodology. The selection of Basque and Northern Ireland as cases provided an opportunity to evaluate the political transition processes of these two regions from armed struggle to political dialogue. The major contributions of the EU to these political transition processes in Basque and Northern Ireland were assessed under the theoretical framework. Constructivism and multi-level governance underpinned the EU influence over these armed separatist movements while emphasizing the need for dialogue among the EU institutions, national and regional governments. In this chapter, a detailed explanation of the research design, research approach, research methods and data analysis aimed to give a clear insight regarding the thesis.

2.2.2 Research Design

The study examined the role of the EU on the separatist movements in Europe from a constructivist point of view. The empowerment of supranational and subnational actors within the EU undermined the classical notion of state sovereignty. Interactions among the EU institutions, national and regional actors provided a basis for a multi-layered structure in which actors from different levels could join the policy-making process in the EU. The qualitative research design

offers an interpretive understanding on the constructivist role of the EU as a social phenomenon. Qualitative research is a broad concept which incorporates different approaches and methods that provide distinct focus and viewpoints. According to Mason (2002), qualitative research approaches have three characteristics in common:

> "Being grounded in an "interpretivist" position i.e. they are concerned with how the phenomena of interest are interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted, based on research methods which are flexible and sensitive to social context and based on analytic methods which take account of complexity, detail and context."

The research designed as a case study evaluated the transition of the societies in Basque and Northern Ireland. Thomas (2011) defined the case studies as analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods.

The case study using qualitative methodology is based on hermeneutic understanding that evaluates the relations among variables and reaches a conclusion through interpretation. According to Astalin (2013), as a research design, the case study claims to recommend a wealth and depth of information which is not usually offered by other methods. With many variables the case studies can be identified as a complex set of conditions which produce a particular demonstration. It is a highly multipurpose research method. It can employ any and all methods of data collection from testing to interviewing.

The research questions constitute the focal points of the study. The research design, therefore, is expected to underpin these questions with other components of the study such as conceptual framework, goals, methods and validity. How the EU affects the separatist movements within the EU member states and how the EU institutions contribute subnational actors to participate in policy-making process in the EU were examined in details as research questions in this study.

According to Maxwell (2008), the conceptual framework of the study is the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs the research. In the first chapter of the study, the conceptual framework provided an insight regarding the concepts of separatism and self-determination in both international law and the EU law. The historical background also contributed to inform the readers on the evolution of Basque and Northern Ireland movements. The

goal of the study is to understand how the EU constructs a European society based on the fundamental values while restricting the national authorities and strengthening local actors. The division of the EU governance into various levels enables the EU to use the financial resources more efficiently. Multi-level governance also provides an opportunity to mitigate national governments' oppression over subnational groups and form democratic, transparent governance where these subnational groups can raise their voices.

The methods used in the study are linked to the research questions and research design in general. The value and feasibility of the research methods cannot be guaranteed by adhering to methodological rules; rather, they depend on the specific setting and phenomena which are studied and the actual consequences of the strategy for studying it (Maxwell, 2008, p.233). Prestructuring the study is a beneficial tactic to sort out the collected data and get rid of the irrelevant ones. As this qualitative study focuses on the existing data, documents and interviews in literature, sorting out the existing information contributes the researcher to gather speed in the study. In the case of validity, as qualitative research is based on the interpretation of the knowledge in literature, the researcher is expected to convince the readers. However, there are two threats in qualitative research that the researcher encounters. The first threat is the bias. Bias refers to ways in which data collection or analysis are distorted by the researcher's theory, values, or preconceptions (Maxwell, 2008, p.243). It is hard to eliminate the researcher's biases in an interpretive study. The second threat is the reactivity. While it is possible to control the variables in a quantitative, experimental researches, the influence of the researchers over the qualitative studies are not likely to be mitigated. In this study, to achieve validity and reliability, the primary sources of institutional and legal frameworks in the EU were assessed. Besides the primary sources such as agreements, regulations and official reports, the secondary sources in literature were compared to one another to reach a dependable conclusion.

2.2.3 Research Methods

The research methods used in the data collection aimed to inform the readers regarding the way that the study was carried out. Unlike positivist or experimental research that utilizes a linear and one-directional sequence of design steps, there is considerable variation in how a qualitative research study is organized (Denzin, 2000). As the qualitative research offers a deep understanding on the selected case through interpretation of the words, the methods used in this study for data collection focused on the interviews, press releases and official documents of the actors. In addition to these primary resources, the secondary sources published by the other researchers were also involved in the study to gather rich, comprehensive and contextualized data. Using several data sources in a qualitative study is a prevalent way to enhance the reliability of the collected data.

The research as a case study focused on the role of the EU on the separatist movements and aimed to evaluate the political transition process in Basque and Northern Ireland as these two regions shared the same fate for forty years. In Basque and Northern Ireland, the bloody conflicts in the divided societies caused a deep distrust and unrest that required a political involvement of the EU. The policies implemented through the EU institutions, mechanisms and legal frameworks set a unique example that sheds light on how the EU socially reconstructed these societies and transformed the uneasiness and distrust into mutual respect and tolerance. In order to evaluate the EU policies, the scope of the study was limited by both the theoretical framework and the qualitative research design. Social constructivism is based on the interactions between agent and structure and focused on the constructed reality as a consequence of these interactions. The discourse, language and the social relations among the actors in the system have an irrefutable significance in the theory. Therefore, the study used the qualitative methodology to carry out a discourse analysis. The qualitative research ruled out the observation and experiment as options and limited the scope of the study to the literature review of existing data. The study heavily depended on the interpretation of the collected information. However, to achieve credibility in the study, the use of the secondary resources provided a point of view on the explanation of the official documents such as

regulations, decisions and agreements. The secondary sources were obtained through the search of academic databases.

One of the issues that a researcher encounters while carrying out the study is the relationship between research questions and the data collection methods. The general mistake made by the researcher is to use operationalization in the study (Maxwell, 2008, p.235). Operationalization basically refers to a process by which a researcher defines how a concept is measured or manipulated in the study. However, in qualitative research, the concepts are abstract and immeasurable in the most cases. Another issue that should be taken into consideration while conducting the study is the triangulation of different methods. According to Maxwell (2008), triangulation is collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods. This strategy reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops. The study paid regard to the consistency of the collected data by diversifying the sources of information. The contrasting sources were eliminated to prevent disintegrity in the study.

2.2.4 Research Approach

According to Creswell (2014), research approaches are plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The research approach aimed to give a clear insight to the readers about how the study was conducted. The primary focus of the research approach was to provide an overall explanation on the selected research subject. The study evaluated the role of the EU on the separatist armed struggles while scrutinizing the roots of the separatist movements in the EU. The selection of Basque and Northern Ireland as cases revealed the contribution of the EU as these cases were the most extreme examples within Europe that required common actions to counter. Rather than use of coercive means, the EU focused on the peaceful resolution of the conflicts through set of regional and institutional reforms. The limitation of states' actions on the several policies contributed to

mitigate the oppression and discrimination faced by the subnational groups resided in the specific regions.

The selection of the research approach was especially based on the characteristic of the research topic and research questions. The research topic required an explanation of the social phenomena rather than focusing on the numbers and statistical data. The methodology used in the study, therefore, was qualitative. The qualitative methodology includes several methods as observations, surveys, content analysis, historical studies and literature review. The study mainly used literature review, historical studies and content analysis as methods to provide a detailed evaluation of the research subject. The research questions in qualitative methodology tend to be open-ended questions which seek to reach a comprehensive conclusion. Therefore, the research questions used "How?" and "Why?" as interrogative adverbs rather than "What?" and "Which?" in quantitative methodology. Inductive approach in the qualitative research enabled to generalize the outcomes of the selected cases and broaden the scope of the study. Creswell (2014) defined qualitative research as follows:

> "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data."

The research approach involves three different components. These components are categorized as worldview, design and methods. Worldview is a philosophical orientation that the researcher takes into the study. The philosophical worldviews are divided into four as postpositivist, constructivist, transformative and pragmatic. In this study, the constructivism was proposed as a philosophical worldview and inserted into theoretical framework. Constructivism or social constructivism is a preferred approach in the qualitative research which aims to develop an understanding of world. By developing subjective meanings of certain things or events, constructivism leads the researcher to address the complexity of socially constructed world. These subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. They are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through

interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives (Creswell, 2014, p.8). The researcher cannot be isolated from these historical and cultural norms while conducting the study. The background of the researcher, therefore, is one of the significant factors for the qualitative research that includes constructivist worldview.

The second component of the research approach is the research design. Research designs are types of inquiry carried out by qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches that give specific direction to the procedures while conducting a study. There are five methods used in a qualitative research. Narrative research is a design of inquiry from the humanities in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives (Riessman, 2008). Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants (Giorgi, 2009). Grounded theory is a design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants (Charmaz, 2006). Ethnography as a design inquiry focuses on the shared patterns of behavior, language and culture in a selected society. Case study is also a part of the design inquiry.

The main aim in the case studies is to provide an in-depth analysis on a selected case. Therefore, the researchers obtain detailed information through several data collection procedures to evaluate the case in a comprehensive manner. The last component of research approach is the methods used in the study. There are three types of methods as qualitative, quantitative and mixed. The study used qualitative methods to give a clear insight into the role of the EU on the separatist movements through evaluation of the cases of Basque and Northern Ireland by imposing constructivist worldview. Interviews, official reports, legal documents, documentaries and secondary sources existed in literature were examined to achieve reliability in the study.

CHAPTER 3: EUROPEAN UNION ON ACTION

3.1 Policies of the EU on Decentralization and Separatism

The establishment of borders through the continuous wars among nation states made it inevitable for the states to have subnational groups in their territories. The inclusion of ethnically different groups resulted with the state oppression over these groups. Through coercive state policies, the subnational groups were discriminated, assimilated and persecuted for a long period. The appearance of the right to self-determination following the World War I attracted many subnational groups who had been striving for independence. However, due to the limitation on the right to self-determination, the former colonies of Western powers had the right to establish their own states. The subnational groups living under centralized nation states could not proclaim their independence. Following the formation of the UN, the concept of human rights developed and the fundamental rights were provided to all human beings. The universality of the human rights provided a basis for an equal and fair treatment for all people. The legal studies on the international law regarding right to self-determination and secession simultaneously gained ground. The secession was referred as a last resort by the scholars to limit the independence movements as these movements posed a danger to the principles of the territorial integrity and sovereignty. The right to secede was justified for the subnational groups who were persecuted by tyrannical, oppressive states. The subnational groups were mobilized through the new discourse on the legal studies regarding secession and asserted their claim on independence. However, the tendencies of nation states to protect status quo in international system made it impossible for these subnational groups to declare independence in the near future.

The EU, from the very beginning, has been aware of the fragility in international system and clashing groups within the EU member states. Instead of direct involvement of conflicts, the EU propounds the peaceful transformation of these conflicts within and outside the EU borders. The EU law, regulations and legal documents give priority to the integration process rather than promoting fragmentation in the EU. As an international organization, the EU complies with the

developments in international law. The secession and the right to self-determination are considered on a similar basis with international law. Despite the EU's encouragement of the separatist movements through democratic institutions and platforms, the EU neither permits nor forbids these movements. The EU law does not mention the right to self- determination and secession in any legal document. However, the EU law recognizes the right to self-determination of European states. Within the borders of the EU, states act behalf of their peoples as it mentioned in Treaty of European Union and Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The self-determination is referred as a free will of a member state to decide whether to stay in the EU or withdraw from it. The members of subnational groups benefit from the rights granted by the EU complementary citizenship but cannot proclaim their independence. The legal and political consequences of a unilateral declaration of independence should be taken into consideration by these groups as a territorial secession which paves the way for resignation from the EU membership. The deprivation of the EU facilities, therefore, is the main deterrent factor for the subnational groups.

With the beginning of the 1990s, the effects of identity politics over the subnational groups became apparent. The separatist movements due to the rise in the group consciousness gained strength. These destructive effects of separatist tendencies were perceived as dangers by the EU and its member states. The radicalized subnational groups as a result of a long period of oppression and persecution posed a major challenge to the European integration. Therefore, the EU implemented several policies that focused on the elimination of those effects through conflict transformation. The EU policies on de-escalation of tension within the EU member states contributed to the conflict transformation in the divided societies. First of all, the promotion of fundamental values such as human rights, the rule of law, democracy forced the oppressor states to comply with the EU law as the Article 2 of Treaty of European Union clearly stated the values which the EU founded on must be respected by all member states. The formation of a legal basis for equal treatment to all people enabled the EU to take appropriate measures regarding noncompliance with the EU fundamental values. As the EU citizens, the members of these subnational groups are able to claim the rights which are granted by the EU.

The supranationality of the EU over domestic law puts a strain on the policies of the EU member states. Secondly, the EU identity provided an opportunity for the EU to create a common ground among its citizens. The aim beyond the formation of a single identity was not to rule out ethno-national identities but to help the EU to melt these ethno-national identities in the same pot. Sharing common values was an effective way for developing mutual understanding and tolerance within the divided societies. Thirdly, the major step to eliminate separatist tendencies in the EU was the establishment of democratic institutions in which the subnational actors could be heard. Decentralization of policy-making process in the EU led to the representation of different actors from local, regional and national levels. Despite its immaturity, the multi-level governance enabled the EU to increase efficiency in policy implementation process. The primary objectives of the Lisbon Treaty to build an ever closer union among the European peoples and doing more with less, therefore, can be achieved with the contribution of the multi-layered structure in the EU governance. The promotion of decentralization in fiscal, social and economic policies provides a basis for the oppressed, discriminated subnational groups to address their needs.

The Treaty of Lisbon puts a special emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity to achieve the defined objectives. The principle of subsidiarity states that an action should only be taken at the EU level when the required objectives cannot be efficaciously achieved by the means of action taken at national or regional level. The policies that are not under the exclusive competences of the EU are carried out by local, regional or national actors based on the desired proximity to the EU citizens (European Parliament, 2020). This principle also contributes to increase efficiency in the budget management of the EU by defining the economic needs of the EU regions and avoiding discretionary spending. The economic crisis erupted in 2008 entailed the EU to cut the nonessential spendings to sustain the economic growth and prosperity within its borders. By the end of 2009, several EU member states end up failing to repay their debts. The crisis intensified in the EU member states such as Greece, Portugal and Ireland and increased the demands for the EU's cohesion and structural funds. Underdeveloped regions faced severe economic downturn due to the great economic recession between 2008 and 2012 (Kenton, 2020). As a consequence, the need for a territorial reform became apparent.

The statement of Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) on the economic and financial crisis prioritized the territorial reform to respond the needs of the EU regions. The governing bodies of the CEMR clearly expressed their concern regarding the devastating effects of the economic crisis on the local and regional governments. In addition to the objective of accomplishing the closer proximity to the EU citizens, the call for a greater interregional cooperation and European integration to deal with the economic downturn was launched. According to the CEMR, local self-government in Europe is essential to ensure the construction of a society close to its citizens, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity (CEMR, 2013, p.6). The territorial reform movement based on the concept of a Europe of regions dates back to the 1980s but the movement gained momentum due the occurrence of financial and economic crisis in the EU. However, the distinct regional needs and policies constitute a major challenge to form a common ground for territorial reform. To promote economic stability and reduce public expenditures, the EU regions follow different policies and strategies as a result of the distinct political cultures. Therefore, the formation of a legal framework on the implementation of territorial reform is the preeminent necessity.

The territorial reform aims not only to achieve decentralization of power among local, regional and central governments but also eliminate the financial and operational restrictions imposed by the central governments. The strict budgetary control of the EU also puts a strain on the local, regional and national governments. As a result of the budgetary restrictions, the national governments merge the local and regional governments to cut the excessive public spendings. The EU's CoR in fact issued a warning in this respect in an opinion in April 2013, asking that any municipal mergers be carried out on the basis of adequate studies (CEMR, 2013, p.11). The recentralization tendencies of the national governments hamper the development of local governments and limit their competences. To prevent the central governments from intervening in the local and regional policies, the clarification of the competences among national, regional and local levels is prioritized by the territorial reform. Although the local and regional governments achieved a substantial economic level through intermunicipal cooperation within the EU, the crisis affected the major financial transfers from the central governments to

subnational authorities. The local and regional governments ended up with more autonomy after the Treaty of Lisbon but these governments are lack of capacity to deliver public services due to the financial restrictions. The tension between regional and central governments regarding financial and operational restrictions foments a new wave of political unrest within the EU member states. On the one hand, the subnational groups who have been striving for independence for a long period search for more autonomy in regional governance. On the other hand, the nation states that have transferred their competences to the supranational institutions of the EU make an effort to centralize their power rather than sharing with subnational authorities.

Through implementing budgetary and operational restrictions, the central governments prevent local authorities from delivering public services at desired level. Although the policies should be taken at the lowest level to achieve the proximity to the citizens, the principle of subsidiarity remains ineffective due to the interventions of central governments. Many minority members still do not feel they 'belonged' in the nation-state they are citizens of, and the economic crisis with its austerity measures usually opening the way for centralization and reduction of autonomy for regional bodies further provoked separatist tendencies (Crepaz, 2016, p.25). Recent studies claim that the subnational groups define themselves on a regional identity rather than genuine ethno-nationalist identity. The decreasing effects of ethnicity enabled the subnational groups to feel belonged to the regions that they reside in. The end of the public support to ethno-nationalist terrorism and the territorial identification provide a significant opportunity to promote relations between central and regional governments. As the separatist tendencies in the EU pose a danger to European integration and the territorial integrity of the EU member states, establishment of dialogue among the EU institutions, central and regional governments and empowerment of regional governments contribute to the stability and prosperity in the EU.

In the past, the separatist armed groups, ETA and IRA, terrorized the people in Basque and Northern Ireland, killed and injured thousands of people and hampered the economic and social developments in these regions. By providing greater autonomy to the regional governments and encouraging the regional cooperation rather than implementing restrictions give advantage to the EU and the

member states to eliminate the separatist tendencies. In that way, while the territorial integrity of the EU member states remains intact, the subnational authorities can respond the needs of the citizens. The EU empowered the CoR by the Lisbon Treaty to rectify the issue between central and regional governments. As an advising body, the Committee of Regions must be consulted while deciding the new policies regarding the EU regions. It must be taken into account regarding economic, social and territorial cohesion, trans-European networks, transport, telecommunication and energy, public health, education and youth, culture, the job market, social policy, environmental policy, vocational education, and climate change (Crepaz, 2016, p.29). The Committee also monitors the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity. Any policy that disregards the principle is brought to the Court of Justice for the final judgment. In addition to the CoR, European Regions takes an effective role in promoting transnational collaborations. The representation of different actors that share common social and economic structures contributes the regional development.

The EU plays a key role in dealing with separatist movements through the EU law, programmes and funds. Following the entry of the Treaty of Lisbon into force, the respect for the minorities has become a prerequisite for the EU membership as the cultural diversity is privileged in the EU to advance tolerance, peace and stability within European society. In Europe, direct military solution to a conflict is not within the bounds of possibility. The EU prioritizes the conflict transformation in divided societies. Therefore, any peaceful initiative for conflict resolution is strongly supported by the EU institutions. The EU does not initiate policies to cope with the irredentist or separatist movements; it only takes active role after the invitation of an EU member state that faces difficulties. Following the invitation, the European Commission can, for instance, develop regional policies aimed at conflict transformation, with the goal of making the positions of the conflicting parties more compatible. In the long term this will allow for more cooperation between them, or joint decision-making. The Commission implemented such a conflict transformation policy for Northern Ireland, with the full support of the British and Irish governments (Muro & Woertz, 2018, p.37). The defined border between Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland was the main issue. The UK's separation of six counties from the

rest of Irish island and implementation discriminative policies towards Catholic Irish community fueled the unrest that turned into a bloody conflict.

The establishment of dialogue between Irish and British counterparts regarding the set of events known as "Troubles" took place after Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom became members of the EU in 1973. The Irish and British counterparts perceived themselves as equal partners instead of focusing on the bitter experiences of colonialism. The EU did not contribute directly to the progress between Republic of Ireland and the UK but it provided an opportunity to two sides of the conflict to exchange opinions through the EU institutions. The EU also contributed to the conflict transformation indirectly when Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland joined the EU's Single Market in 1993. The supranational integration of the EU lifted the established border between Republic of Ireland and the UK. Lifting the customs barriers helped the Catholic Irish community to get the long period of discrimination, oppression and persecution over.

The EU's Regional Development Fund also had a direct impact on socio-economic conditions through funding major infrastructural projects in and around the Irish border region, which had long suffered from neglect, under-investment and low population density (Ramsbotham & Zartman, 2011, p.33). The EU programme known as PEACE aimed at realizing the goals of peace and reconciliation through voluntary projects on social inclusion, equality and tolerance. The first two PEACE programmes (1995-2006) invested in 2 billion euros and funded over 22,000 diverse projects on women's groups, child care provision, family literacy and youth training schemes. Such needs and gaps were especially crucial in the border counties, north and south (Ramsbotham & Zartman, 2011, p.33). The direct and indirect effects of the EU on the Northern Ireland conflict formed a common basis for mutual understanding and tolerance through multi-level approaches. The EU incorporated many actors into peace building process such as voluntary sector, country/distinct councils, public agencies and government department. The effective use of the EU funds on social inclusion, employment and infrastructure made a major contribution to conflict transformation in Northern Ireland and formed a common ground for consociational power sharing in the government of Northern Ireland.

In Basque case, the EU did not take an active role as France and Spain did not want to internationalize the Basque conflict. The EU, therefore, establish cross-border cooperation that aimed at social and economic development rather than resolution of an ethnic conflict. The cross-border cooperation between Basque and Aquitaine, known as Northern Basque, developed after the major reform of regional policy in 1988. The cooperation especially focused on common culture and history. The diverse expectations from the EU cross-border cooperation programme indicate that the nationalists focus on the nation-building process through the cooperation while the non-nationalists put emphasis on the regional development. Potential EU cross-border instruments include 'communities of collaboration' and the 'Euro-regions'. Both of these relate to relations between provincial administrative units in different but neighboring EU member states, and refer to a common cultural, linguistic or historical identity as the basis for building economic or social relations (Ramsbotham & Zartman, 2011, p.37). In addition to these instruments, the legal framework known as European Group for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) came into force in 2007 to promote cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation to perform joint actions. These instruments do not assert any political power regarding the Basque conflict. Rather, they focus on social and economic cohesion in the region. The demand of Basque nationalists on the EU PEACE programme for Basque conflict is harshly opposed by France and Spain (Ramsbotham & Zartman, 2011, p.37). The EU instruments are not capable of overriding the political will of these member states. Therefore, the EU effects on conflict transformation are limited regarding Basque conflict. However, the EU capability of conflict transformation in Northern Ireland set the example for the further conflicts. A change in the political attitude of France and Spain on Basque conflict may give mandate to the EU for conflict resolution.

To sum up, the EU plays different roles in Basque and Northern Ireland. There are several factors behind the differentiation of the roles. First of all, the socioeconomic situations are dissimilar in Basque and Northern Ireland. Basque is relatively wealthier than Northern Ireland. Therefore, the EU has been more integrated in Northern Ireland to eliminate huge disparities and discriminative policies in the divided society. Secondly, Northern Ireland's "Troubles" has been

internationalized by the Irish lobbying activities in the US. Thus, Irish lobby has succeeded to draw attention to the conflict. Furthermore, the positive attitudes of Irish and British counterparts to resolve the conflict contributed the peace process after they became the members of the EU. Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom invited the EU to join the conflict resolution process. The EU established programmes and provided funds to promote social inclusion, health and education services to create mutual understanding in the Northern Ireland besides infrastructure investments. However, in the case of Basque, the opposition of France and Spain to internationalize the conflict led to the indirect involvement of the EU. Instead of establishing a peace programme in Basque, the EU focused on the economic and social cohesion. It should be noted that the EU member states remain as key actors in the EU politics. Therefore, the EU has no competence to overturn the nation states' authority regarding the domestic affairs.

3.2 The Cohesion Policy of the EU and the Role of Committee of Regions

From the very beginning, the aim of the EU institutions was to promote cooperation and cohesion among its members. The establishment of European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) formed a common ground to improve the dialogue and trust among the European states while giving an opportunity to benefit from the energy resources through transferring states' competences to a higher authority. Following the foundation of the EEC, the huge disparities among the member states became apparent. The gap between industrialized and underdeveloped regions was the major obstacle for the European integration. To achieve competitiveness, economic growth and prosperity, member states took the initiative to create European Social Fund (ESF). The regional policies were conducted through intergovernmental conferences among the member states until the Single European Act (SEA) came into force in 1987. SEA was the first major change of the Treaty of Rome that constitutionalized the regional policy by adding the title of Economic and Social Cohesion (Manzella, 2009, p.14). As a result, the legal framework for regional policy was established by the SEA. The urge to prepare the less favored regions to customs and monetary union after the accession

of Greece, Spain and Portugal gained importance. The reform of regional policy in 1988 was the milestone for the future of European integration. Under the leadership of Jacque Delors, European Commission played a key role on the implementation of the EU regional policy. The European Commission put an emphasis on the formation of a regional policy that was capable of dealing with the challenges that the member states would face.

To increase the capability of the policy, separate budget was a prerequisite. Instead of depending on the intergovernmental budgetary transfer of the member states, the regional policy claimed the right to have its own budget. The reason beyond the reform initiative of the European Commission was to take appropriate measures regarding the 1992 Programme which would be potentially harmful for the fragile economies of the Union (Manzella, 2009, p.13). The objectives of the EU regional policy on eliminating regional disparities and reinforcing social and economic cohesion contributed the widening and deepening of the European integration. The EU regional policy was conducted through three structural funds mentioned below. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund Guidance Section and the European Social Fund (ESF) were the main components of the policy to accomplish the regional development objectives. The reforms that took place in 1993 and 1999 were the concrete evidence of the transformation of the EU politics. These reforms did not bring a major change to the regional policy as the 1988 reform did. However, they empowered decentralization to achieve policy effectiveness. The decentralization of the responsibility of the EU member states by including various actors to policy implementation process led to the appearance of new governing principles in the EU.

Following the establishment of internal market with the Treaty of Maastricht, the EU prioritized to fund infrastructure in the poorer regions within its borders. As the regional development was the main criteria for the European Monetary Union, the EU aimed to strengthen the fragile economies of least favored member states such as Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland. The Treaty of Maastricht requested a Cohesion Report from the Commission every three years to evaluate the regional development in the EU regions. With the arrival of the new member states, the EU fund for the regional policy was doubled to meet the demands of the EU regions

between 1994 and 1999. The reform took place in 1999 aimed to cope with the economic instability after the introduction of Euro as a common currency in the EU. The economic situation was critical as the EU member states were challenged due to the increase in the fiscal adjustment pressures and unemployment rate (Manzella, 2009, p.16). The EU fund for the regional policy remained the same for the period between 2000 and 2006 (Manzella, 2009, p.16). The Treaty of Amsterdam put a special emphasis on the employment to deal with the harsh economic condition.

The European Commission set four goals to underpin the reforms. Firstly, the Commission increased the concentration of support. Focusing on certain objectives raised the effectiveness of the EU Cohesion Policy. Secondly, the decentralization of the policy implementation led to a decrease in the member states' responsibility. While the EU member states remained as primary actors in the EU regional policy, the inclusion of environmental and gender equality organizations took active role in the policy implementation (Manzella, 2009, p.17). Another goal of the reforms was to pave the way for less detailed and complicated process in policy implementation. Lastly, the European Commission introduced a set of regulations to increase efficiency and control the expenditure of the EU funds. By monitoring, reporting and evaluating the policy implementation process, the European Commission played a supervisory role and intervened in the EU regional policy through enforcement of stronger audit procedures. The strategic turn in the EU Cohesion Policy took place after the Treaty of Lisbon came into force. The Lisbon objectives gave particular importance to the economic growth and employment. The accession of new members to the EU put a strain on the EU Cohesion Policy as the new members were lack of capacity to respond their needs. The need for the EU funds increased due to the economic crisis. Therefore, the EU took appropriate measures to sustain economic growth, investments and employment while promoting the fight against climate change (European Union, 2013, p.13).

The European Commission adopted a new legislative package for the period between 2014 and 2020. The effects of Lisbon objectives contributed the reorientation of the EU Cohesion Policy. The European Commission gave priority to smart, sustainable economic growth towards 2020. The new, result-driven regional policy aimed to boost territorial cohesion through making the distribution of the EU

funds easy and rewarding the member states' performance. The EU Cohesion Policy includes the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) as policy instruments (European Union, 2011, p.1). The main principles of the policy proposed by the European Commission set conditions for gender equality, compliance with the EU law, multi-level governance and sustainable development. The thematic concentration of the Cohesion Policy gave an opportunity for the Commission to implement regional policy smoothly. Monitoring the regional development through the annual reports enabled the Commission to intervene in the policy implementation process. The flexibility on the allocation of the EU funds helped the EU to transfer the funds from one region to another if there was not sufficient progress after the evaluation process (European Commission, 2018).

The evolution of the EU Cohesion Policy presents a clear evidence for the empowerment of supranational and subnational actors within the EU. While the EU member states remain as key actors in policy-making process, the subnational authorities gain more importance in the implementation of the EU policies and legislations. The differentiated needs of the EU regions can be responded by more tailored regional programmes through a bottom-up fashion as multi-level governance suggested. According to MLG, besides the gate-keeping role of the nation states, the subnational actors are essential for the European Commission to accumulate the information about the regions. These actors also work closely with the Commission in announcing the benefits of the regional policy to their regions by contributing to improve the effective use of structural funds (Buonanno & Nugent, 2011, p.11). The inclusion of various actors in the Cohesion Policy reinforces the regional development as the local and regional actors have a good grasp of the regional needs. Instead of authorizing the EU member states, distribution of the EU funds through different programmes make a huge contribution to achieve proximity to the citizens. Establishment of cross-border cooperation programmes in the rural areas led to the infrastructure development within the EU. The territorial cooperation paves the way for the formation of groupings among the EU regions. The regions which pursue common regional interests carry out lobbying activities through the EU institutions.

The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) sets the example for further cooperation among the EU regions. The dynamics of the EU politics allow for the representation of different views in the EU institutions to accomplish people-oriented, democratic governance.

The EU Cohesion Policy constitutes the backbone of the European integration. Promoting social and economic convergence in the EU makes the member states to feel more belonged to the European society. Recent empirical study evaluating the impact of the EU Cohesion Policy on the European identity indicates that the economic benefits of the Cohesion Policy contribute not only the regional development but also the citizens' daily lives. The more the citizens are aware of the EU funds provided for regional development, the more they identify themselves as European. The rising populism and Euroscepticism in the EU can be eliminated through well-organized regional programmes. According to Cohesify survey, if EU policymakers want to promote regional and local identification with the EU, Cohesion Policy is clearly an effective instrument (Borz & Brandenburg, 2018, p.22). Another empirical analysis examining the correlation between the EU Cohesion Policy and the regional growth demonstrates that the EU funds contribute to the economic growth in all regions. Although the economic growth rate is higher in the most favorable regions, the capacity building in the least developed regions is likely to influence the regional development positively (Crescenzi & Giua, 2014, p.30). Recent surveys carried out by the European Commission on the citizens' awareness and perceptions of the EU regional policy have also indicated the positive results of the EU Cohesion policy. According to the 2017 survey, more than three-quarters of the respondents claim that the impact of the EU co-financed projects on the development of their city or region has been positive (Eurobarometer, 2017). The citizens' awareness of the EU projects has increased in 2017 comparing to previous data obtained in 2015. However, majority of the EU citizens have not heard about the cross-border cooperation programmes. In Republic of Ireland, only %35 of the respondents claimed that they heard about the programme. In the UK, the ratio was %27. The ratio was higher in Spain (%20) comparing to France (%10). According to 2019 survey, the citizens' awareness of the EU co-financed projects has increased in 25 countries. Over eight in ten respondents state that the impact of the EU projects

on the development of their city or region has been positive (Eurobarometer, 2019). The awareness of the cross-border cooperation has slightly changed between 2017 and 2019. While the awareness of the citizens has decrease by %1 in Republic of Ireland and the UK, the ratio in Spain (%21) and France (%15) has increased.

In 2018, the European Commission proposed the EU's budget for the period between 2021 and 2027. The proposal clearly emphasized the importance of the Cohesion Policy. The Commission gave the biggest share to the Cohesion Policy to achieve a quick recovery from the economic and social crisis. €442,412 million was provided to sustain social and economic cohesion and promote European values (Climate Action Network Europe, 2019, p.2).

For the period between 2021 and 2027, the European Commission set five main principles for the EU Cohesion Policy. Firstly, the formation of a smarter Europe through digitalization, innovation, economic transformation and support for SMEs is put forward by the Commission. Secondly, a greener, carbon-free Europe is taken into consideration to invest in renewable energy resources and fight against climate change. Thirdly, the EU aims to develop strategic transport and digital networks to achieve a more connected Europe. Fourth principle of the EU Cohesion Policy is to build a more social Europe through delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare. The fifth and last principle for the specified period is to support locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU to achieve a Europe closer to citizens. The condition for the allocation of the EU funds is renewed. Although the GDP per capita remains the same as condition, the youth unemployment, low education level, climate change, and the reception and integration of migrants are also taken into consideration to respond the regional needs. In addition, the removal of the cross-border obstacles provides an opportunity for the regions to deliver joint services. The proposal for the European Cross-Border Mechanism by the Commission opens a way for new interregional and cross-border programmes. The empowerment of the regional cooperation programmes will enable the CoR to take an active role in the policy implementation process (European Commission, 2018).

The CoR was formed as a consultative body in 1994 following the entry into force of Treaty of Maastricht. The CoR has 329 members that represent local and regional governments of the 27 member states of the EU. The CoR's primary mission is to involve local and regional actors in the EU decision-making process and thus achieve greater participation by the EU citizens. The representatives are appointed for five years and the president of the CoR is selected among the representatives and serves for two and a half years. The Council and the Commission are required to consult the CoR before taking actions in specific areas such as education, culture, public health, economic and social cohesion. Besides the mandatory consultation, the Council and the Commission may also ask the CoR for an opinion regarding a policy area or the CoR issues an opinion on its own initiative. In addition to its consultative role, the CoR take an active role in monitoring decision-making process to safeguard the principle of subsidiarity. The referral to the Court of Justice takes place when the consultation mechanism is not correctly carried out (European Parliament, 2020).

The CoR is designed to be a minor component of the European politics that carries out a consultative role. Although it is generally referred as an EU institution, the CoR differs from the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament in relative influence and capacity. The efforts of the Commission to establish direct links with the subnational authorities to enhance efficiency in regional policy contributed the institutional activism of the CoR (Schönlau, 2017, p.1170). The institutional activism is carried out through inter-institutional dialogue and political exchange. As a result of the lobbying activities through mobilizing support of local and regional representatives, the policy areas which require mandatory consultation have been increased under the Maastricht, Amsterdam and Lisbon Treaties. The CoR has gained political and legal power through increasing its influence over the EU institutions. The Committee claimed the right to take action regarding its prerogatives in economic and social cohesion. Due to the EU enlargement, the organizational capacity of the CoR has increased over time. The annual budget of the CoR has reached approximately 96 million euros and a permanent staff of around 520 (Schönlau, 2017, p.1172). The success of the CoR was not only the result of its lobbying activities but also the Commission and the member states' contribution to

increase legitimacy in the EU governance. The Commission's proposal to build a more connected Europe through improving the relations with all actors provided an opportunity to the CoR. The Committee suggested the inclusion of local and regional partners into the EU policy-making process. To respond the concerns about the legitimacy of European integration, the CoR developed and promoted multi-level governance. The organization of academic and political debates on multi-level governance gave opportunity to the Committee to gain credibility in the EU governance. The CoR played an active role to promote multi-level governance as a new structure of European integration to improve its institutional standing among other EU institutions. The EU Cohesion Policy, therefore, is associated with the multi-level governance as the CoR promoted the general principles of MLG to organize EU decision making in the interest of legitimacy and proximity of the EU to the citizens (Schönlau, 2017, p.1176). Thus, the CoR could extend its role and influence EU decision-making process by interacting with other EU institutions.

Following the general assessment of the EU Cohesion Policy and the CoR, the implementation of these policies in Basque and Northern Ireland should also be examined. Basque, also referred as Pais Vasco in related documents, participates in several EU programmes at regional and national level. The promotion of cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation by the EU Cohesion Policy contributed the regional development in selected policy areas. Due to France and Spain's firm position against the internationalization of Basque conflict the EU focuses on the regional development policies and grants funds for economic and social cohesion in Basque. Basque is relatively more industrialized than other regions in Spain. As a result of the labor immigration to the region, Basque requires policies to enhance sustainable employment, social inclusion and technical assistance. According to the shared data of Basque Statistics Institute, Eustat, migratory balance of the Basque was positive in 2018. While the immigration rate has a rising trend, emigration rate continues to be relatively low (Eustat, 2018). The ESF provided €108 878 214 for the period between 2014 and 2020. The ESF's primary aim is to improve economic and social conditions through providing sustainable employment, social inclusion and technical assistance to specified region. The ESF contributes the national governments to lighten their economic burden after the occurrence of

financial crisis. Recent indicators show that the employment rate has increased in nearly all counties of Basque compared to 2018. In 18 of the 20 subregions employment rate increase while in 19 of the 20 subregions the unemployment rate has fallen (Eustat, 2020). In addition to overall improvement in labor market, the gender gap in the unemployment rate recessed from 2.6 to 2.4. The increase in job market enabled more women to find employment in 2019. The ESF statistical data shared by the European Commission show that the fund provided for defined period contributed the labor market through promoting social inclusion of homeless and disadvantage people, supporting long term unemployed people, educating and training the job seekers (European Commission, 2019).

The ERDF planned €358 258 014 for the period between 2014 and 2020. The ERDF prioritizes the Lisbon objectives by focusing on research, innovation, low-carbon economy, information and communication technologies (ICTs), competitiveness of SMEs, environment protection and resource efficiency (European Commission, 2019). To promote deeper Franco-Spanish economic cooperation research, innovation and smart specialization gained importance. A project named COMPETITIV´eko aimed to improve the capacity of SMEs by enabling each region to develop its own competitive advantages while promoting the common interests. The EU granted €655 593 for the project (European Commission, 2019). In addition to this, the ERDF contributed the competitiveness of SMEs through giving consultation and grants, providing direct employment and encouraging startups. In addition, by improving risk prevention mechanism and protecting biodiversity in the region the ERDF also made it possible to raise the awareness on the conservation of environment. A recent cross-border cooperation project, Txinbadia+ between Basque and Aquitaine funded by the ERDF provided an opportunity to strike a balance between public use and protection of nature. The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) provided €133 370 561 to Basque for training young farmers, encouraging organic farming, strengthening the local markets and protecting biodiversity in the region (European Commission, 2019). Besides the specific regional, cross-border programmes, Basque also benefits from the opportunities of the EU funds through interregional and transnational cooperation programmes. Currently, Basque is the part of Interreg Poctefa, Interreg Sudoe, Interreg Atlantic

Area, Urbact, Espon 2020, Interact and Interreg Europe which are co-financed by the ERDF. These programmes aim to enhance cooperation and solidarity among the EU member states (European Commission, 2019). In 2008, a study evaluating the effects of the ERDF on Basque economy demonstrated the transformation from a traditional economy based on agricultural products to the entrepreneurial oriented economy based on research and innovation. Regarding the role played by European Cohesion Policy and Structural Funds two main action lines can be distinguished in the Basque policy sphere. The first one refers to the awareness and sensitization of the policy priority targets highlighted by Lisbon strategy, the European programming guidelines and the benchmarks from European best practices and European innovation scoreboard (Faíña & Lopez-Rodriguez, 2008, p.54).

By supporting the SMEs through European Research and Development policy (R&D), the EU raised the competitiveness of these SMEs at regional and national level. The data obtained by the study indicated that the EU funds gave a major boost to the Basque economy from 1995 onwards. In 2011, a questionnaire replied by the Basque Government regarding the EU Cohesion Policy also presented the achievements of the EU regional policy. The ERDF operational programme of the Basque Country for 2007-2013 has earmarked more than 90% of its resources to actions related to the Lisbon objectives, thereby exceeding the threshold required by the Commission (Gobierno Vasco, 2011). Besides the ERDF, the ESF also contributed to the Basque Government to deal with the devastating effects of financial crisis. The formation of sustainable job market through training the unemployed citizens and encouraging new startups was essential for the region. The involvement of regional and local authorities in the decision-making process to achieve more democratic and citizen-oriented EU governance and efficient budget management was also supported by the regional government in Basque towards the Europe 2020 strategy.

In Northern Ireland, the EU plays a key role in promoting sustainable economic growth, peace and stability. The regions that are close to the border between Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland have suffered from the conflict for forty years. The border regions are the least developed areas in Northern Ireland due to the lack of infrastructure and investment. Therefore, the EU funds make a huge

contribution to support the Northern Ireland in post-conflict reconstruction era. The ERDF provided €522 091 481 for the period between 2014 and 2020 in total. The thematic objectives of the ERDF in Northern Ireland prioritized competitiveness of SMEs, research and innovation and low-carbon economy. Through the ERDF, many firms received grants and technical assistance, new startups and new direct employment were encouraged. According to the programme, around €113m will be invested to increase R&D - aiming to almost double the number of high growth SMEs to reach 1,300 in 2023 and to assist 200 Northern Ireland companies to engage in R&D activity for the first time. The planned financing for the ESF over the period 2014-2020 was €451 019 789 (European Commission, 2019). The ESF especially focused on educational and vocational training, sustainable and quality employment and social inclusion in Northern Ireland. Through the ESF, many disadvantaged, disabled citizens also joined the labor market. According to the data shared by the Commission (2019), 68020 people benefitted from the EU fund by gaining a qualification through the EU training programmes. In that way, the EU contributed Northern Ireland to restructure the labor market to achieve sustainable and quality employment. The EAFRD provided €418 660 359 for the period between 2014 and 2020. The fund put a special emphasis on the climate change, environmental protection, social inclusion and competitiveness of SMEs.

A report shared by the Commission in 2017 regarding the EAFRD in Northern Ireland demonstrated the major challenges in the region. According to the report, the rural areas constitute the large part of Northern Ireland. As the economy is based on the agricultural products, the growing population in rural areas poses a danger to environment. To decrease the carbon emission and protect biodiversity in the region, the EAFRD focuses on restoring, preserving and enhancing the ecosystems. Promoting innovation in forestry, agriculture and rural areas aims to increase the resource efficiency while preserving the biodiversity and improving water and soil management in Northern Ireland (European Commission, 2019). In addition, the interregional programmes funded by ERDF, Interreg V-A and Interreg V-B, prioritize the environment protection, resource efficiency, research and innovation. As a part of the UK, Northern Ireland also takes place in transnational programmes such as Interreg Atlantic Area, Interreg North West Europe, Espon,

Interact, Interreg Europe, and Urbact (European Commission, 2019). These programmes promote the EU cohesion policy by providing a basis for the transnational, interregional cooperation among the EU member states. The programmes contribute the EU member states to adopt the objectives of the EU regional policy.

The EU's role in promoting peace and stability in Northern Ireland through PEACE programme is also worth to be mentioned. Due to the prolonged inter-community violence, Northern Ireland has been deprived of the capacity to foster economic and social progress. The discriminative policies towards the Catholic Irish community fomented a social unrest in divided society of Northern Ireland. The PEACE programme provided 269,610,967 € to support social inclusion in Northern Ireland. The EU promotes the shared education and services projects to deal with the legacy of the conflict. The shared education projects aim to enhance mutual understanding among the children and young people. For the period between 2014 and 2020, it is expected that 350 schools in the programme area will wish to engage in shared education actions and that up to 144,000 pupils will participate in shared education classrooms. The programme will take a whole school approach and provide training for 2,100 teachers to facilitate shared education and collaborative partnerships (European Commission, 2019). The shared space and services projects, on the other hand, aim to help the victims and survivors of the conflict and address the needs of these people to cope with the history of the unfortunate events. The PEACE programme also encourages building positive relations among the cross-border communities. Instead of imposing the EU identity in the region, the EU is in favor of free expression of the ethno-national identities. Therefore, the PEACE programme aims to leave a transformative impact by supporting dialogue within the society rather than a direct interference. To sustain economic growth, peace and stability in Northern Ireland the EU's role is crucial. The withdrawal of the UK from the EU put a strain on the policymakers due to the controversial situation in Northern Ireland. The Good Friday Agreement signed by Irish and British counterparts required the abolishment of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The EU's customs union provided an opportunity for these EU member states to implement the agreement. The reintroduction of the border was expected to

fuel the social unrest in Northern Ireland. Therefore, the EU harshly opposed the idea of a backstop in the Brexit deal. The recent deal stipulates that Northern Ireland will be obliged to align with the specific EU regulations while also benefitting from the UK's trade deals. The obligation will continue until 2024. At the end of the period, Northern Ireland assembly will decide whether to extend or end the arrangements. The EU Commission's request to open an office in Belfast to monitor the implementation of the protocol was accepted by the UK. The goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK will be checked to eliminate the errors in the implementation of controversial protocol (Euractiv, 2020). The EU will remain as a key political actor in Northern Ireland in the near future.

3.3 Diversification of the EU Politics: Subnational Actors in the EU

In this chapter of the study, the primary focus will be on how the subnational actors have gained ground in the EU governance over time. To foster peace and stability, the EU enforced the European integration to eliminate the destructive effects of international and intrastate tensions within Europe. Besides the economic gains, the EU promoted the European identity and fundamental values to pacify historical disputes among the member states. The EU identity contributed to the formation of mutual understanding among the members. The EU cultural policy promoted the common values such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The promotion of common cultural values aimed to increase the legitimacy of European project and increase the popular support of European citizens regarding European integration (Calligaro, 2014). The EU cultural policy provided an opportunity for the cultural diversity by setting a framework for cultural interactions based on the fundamental values. Undermining the monopoly of the nation states over cultural assets led to the freedom of cultural expression of subnational groups. The cultural policy played a significant role to create a sense of belonging among European citizens. Strengthening the bonds among the members through emphasizing the common history and culture of European peoples and constructing a single European identity added a political dimension to European integration. The

EU as an intergovernmental bargaining platform gradually evolved into a political organization with supranational institutions.

The EU also played a constructivist role on the struggle between central and regional governments. The ethno-nationalistic tensions within the EU member states posed a major challenge for both the EU member states and the European integration to be annihilated. Therefore, in addition to the EU role on the conflict transformation through Europeanization process, the EU regional policy contributed the EU to meet the demands of the neglected regions. To decrease regional disparities, the EU established cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes to foster social and economic cohesion in Europe. The inclusion of the subnational authorities in policy-making and policy implementation process gained importance to achieve the set of objectives regarding regional development. Transformation of the EU governance into a multi-level structure is of the preeminent results of European integration and regionalization.

Deepening and widening process of European integration stimulated the reconstruction of the governance through revisions in the founding treaties of the EU. The revisions hampered the gate-keeping role of the nation states and put restrictions on their authority. The EU law, regulations, directives compelled the member states to harmonize their legislations with the EU acquis. The restrictions were perceived as concessions by the EU member states to achieve the common goal of economic growth and prosperity. The economic advantages of the EU far overweighed than its enforcement. Thus, the member states voluntarily comply with the EU legislations. The subnational actors became more involved in the EU governance following the 1988 reform of Cohesion Policy and the formation of the CoR. The Treaty of Maastricht opened up an opportunity for the representation of the subnational actors through the EU institutions. The subnational groups had their voices to be heard through establishing close ties with the CoR, the Council of the EU, European Commission and opening regional offices and transnational associations in Brussels (Hooghe & Marks, 1996, p.74). The subnational mobilization in Europe gained momentum following the political developments in the EU governance. The subnational authorities rallied to realize "Europe of the Regions". The concept refers to the empowerment of the subnational and supranational actors in the EU while

ruling the nation states' authority out relatively (Hooghe, 1995). The expectations on the postnational future of the EU accelerated the regional movements to surpass the states' competences. The formation of the CoR as an advisory body provided a ground for the subnational representation in the EU. Despite its symbolic and advisory role of the Committee, the policy areas which require a mandatory consultation of the CoR have been expanded through the EU legislations. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Committee extended its role through building close relations with the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council to gain recognition as an EU institution in policy-making process.

The CoR proactively involved in the policy initiatives and expressed its opinion if the regional needs were at the stake. Although the CoR aimed to bring the subnational actors into view, the internal and external limitations negated the efforts of the Committee. On the one hand, the representatives of the CoR include local and regional actors. The diversity of representatives causes lack of harmony in the functioning of the Committee as the representatives prioritize different needs (Hooghe & Marks, 1996, p.76). Due to the different political culture, there is also a distinction between the representatives of centralized and decentralized states. While the autonomous regions of Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK enjoy their EU-related roles, the regions of centralized states such as Greece and France have limited roles in the regional representation. In addition to this, the financial crisis created a tendency towards recentralization in the EU. The efforts of the EU member states to have control over the regional programmes and funds put a strain on subnational authorities through financial and operational restrictions. Therefore, the subnational actors make a great effort to form alternative channels to raise their demands.

The Council of the EU is one of the alternative channels for the subnational actors to exert their influence over the policy-making process in the EU. According to the Article 146 of the Treaty of Maastricht, a member state can be represented by the regional ministers with full negotiating powers in the Council (Hooghe & Marks, 1996, p.77). However, the representation by the regional ministers is not likely to be approved by the centralized states. Building close ties with the Commission regarding the EU regional policy is the another institutional channel for the subnational authorities. The 1988 reform of the Cohesion Policy clearly emphasized

the need for a close cooperation among national, regional and local actors on the equal basis (Defoort, 2002, p.7). The structural funds provided by the EU directly reach to the member states and engage actors from different levels to achieve defined objectives of the Cohesion Policy. The subnational authorities play a significant role in the implementation of the EU legislation at regional and local level. Thus, the demands of subnational authorities for more autonomy in the EU governance gained momentum following the reform. The EU clearly offered an opportunity for the subnational actors to strengthen their position by providing new avenues for them. The influence of the regional actors in the EU governance gradually increased despite the opposition of the EU member states. The Europeanization and regionalization processes have a positive impact on the subnational actors. On the one hand, Europeanization as a concept refers to an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EU political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national logic of national politics and policy-making (Ladrech, 1994). As the EU member states have to align themselves with the EU law, norms and institutions, the ethno-nationalist tensions within the states lose ground gradually. Regionalism, on the other hand, contributes the subnational actors to play an effective role in policy implementing process in the EU governance.

Except from the institutional channels, the subnational actors also had their voice to be heard through establishing regional offices and transnational associations. Regional governments which have political interests distinct from the central governments are more likely to seek a place in the EU governance. The regional offices in Brussels essentially aim to gather information about the EU programmes and structural funds and gain a comparative advantage through attracting investment. The regional offices also play an important role to solve the current representation crisis in the EU. Although the Treaty of Lisbon provides wider autonomy for the subnational entities, the inclusion of these entities in policy-making process remained limited. The recentralization tendency of the central governments puts a strain on the local and regional governments and hampered their operational and financial performance. Building direct links with the EU institutions, therefore, is a must to restrict the central governments' authority in an indirect way. Transnational

associations, in addition to the regional offices, provide a ground for the subnational actors to exchange information and deliver joint services.

The regional offices gained importance following the replacement of "Europe of the Regions" with "Europe with the Regions" (Hooghe & Marks, 1996, p.74). The change in the concept clearly demonstrates that the EU member states remain as key actors in the policy-making process and therefore it is not likely to abolish the nation states. The local and regional governments are not the privileged actors in the light of the EU treaties. Rather, these subnational entities are regarded as objects instrumentalized by the central governments to achieve efficiency in the policy implementation process (Pazos-Vidal, 2019, p.7). Despite the principle of subsidiarity and the requirement of proximity to the citizens, the subnational actors mostly remain ineffective through institutional channels. Therefore, the regional offices have become one of the major components of subnational mobilization in the EU. The 'multi-actorness' and the flexibility of MLG let the subnational actors to use both informal channels and formal ones to influence policy-making process (Trobbiani, 2016, p.13). The regions prefer functional representation rather than territorial representation. The main reason beyond this preference is the inefficiency of the institutional channels. Other reason is the new consultation regime developed by the Commission which offers an opportunity to participate in the EU policy-making process as experts on the selected policy areas. Therefore, rather than territorial representations, subnational actors tend to specialize in the policy areas which have importance for the regional interests. All the lobbying activities and interest aggregation process enable the subnational groups to participate the policy-making process as functional actors.

Transnational associations which represent the subnational entities have increased gradually since the midst of the 1980s. The transnational associations include the Assembly of European (AER), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Conference Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), the "Four Motors for Europe" (Hooghe & Marks, 1996, p.86). The AER and the CEMR play a meditory role between the European Commission and the subnational governments to oversee the progress in the EU regional policy. The exchange of experiences among the actors contributed the efficiency of the EU programmes. The

second set of the associations aims to gather the European regions around the common territorial feature or policy problems (Hooghe, 1995, p.189). The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) contributed the cross-border and transnational cooperation among the regions.

To gain a seat in the EU governance lobbying activities is a must for the local and regional governments. The policy initiatives are launched by the European Commission and accepted by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union through the co-decision procedure. The subnational authorities make efforts to build close relations with the EU institutions to raise their voice regarding the policy areas. Basque takes an active role in subnational mobilization to exert influence over the EU policy-making process through formal and informal channels. Basque is the one of the members of the CoR. As previously mentioned, the inclusion of actors from local and regional level as members poses a major challenge for the functioning of the CoR. Diversity of the regional interests hinders the CoR from taking appropriate actions in the policy-making process. The internal structure of the CoR results with the grouping of economically advantaged regions within CoR to have an impact upon the EU governance. More developed and authorized regions as Basque have their voice to be heard through the CoR and contribute the policy-making process in the EU. However, it is worth noting that the CoR is designed to be an advisory body. Therefore, the decisions taken by the CoR are not legally binding for the EU institutions. Despite the improvement in the Treaty of Lisbon, the Committee remains as a weak body.

The interregional organizations in which Basque holds a strong position are Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), the Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power (REGLEG) and Assembly of European Regions (AER). These organizations aim to achieve active democratic control over the EU governance. The empowerment of the subnational entities through the principle of subsidiarity is expected to eliminate the democratic deficit in the EU and contribute to achieve the proximity to the European citizens (Bienefeld, 2009, p.148). The CALRE is in close connection with the European Parliament. During the Basque presidency of Calre in 2005, the contribution of Basque and Catalonia to involve the

subnational authorities in the early warning system of the EU is worth to consider. The early warning system enables the national parliaments to react any breach of the principle of subsidiarity. With the efforts of Basque and Catalonia, establishing close ties among CALRE, CoR and the national parliaments provided an opportunity for the regions with the legislative powers to involve the policy-making process. The indirect involvement to the policy-making process helped the subnational entities to exert influence in the EU governance. CALRE's informal networks with the CoR, the Commission and the European Parliament increase the effectiveness of the regional governments in the EU (Bienefeld, 2019, p.150).

REGLEG is the one of the interregional organizations in which Basque plays an active role that contributes the inclusion of the subnational actors in the policy-making process. In addition to the legislative power, REGLEG is comprised of the regional governments with the executive power (Bienefeld, 2019, p.154). The main goal of the REGLEG is to achieve legal and political status for the regions with legislative and executive power. REGLEG gain influence in the EU governance through lobbying the European Commission, the Council of the EU and the CoR. Using informal representational channels is the main method employed by the REGLEG to raise the regional demands. AER is the other transnational organization which Basque participates in. AER embodies other interregional associations and provides a basis for them to discuss the issues that affect the regions. AER's objectives bear a resemblance to the REGLEG and CALRE's policy goals. The promotion of the principle of subsidiarity and the empowerment of the subnational entities in the policy-making process in the EU are prioritized by these organizations. AER caries out the lobbying activities through informal networks to improve relations with the CoR, the Council of the EU, the European Commission, CEMR, the Conference on Peripheral Maritime Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and CALRE (Bienefeld, 2009, p.161).

Basque also gives importance to the other transnational associations and business groups to promote its interests. Basque especially focuses on the policies related to information technology, competitveness of SMEs, agriculture, fisheries, culture and tourism. The policy areas are supported through the EU cross-border cooperation programmess and transnational networks. It4All and Cifal Bilbao aim to

promote the information society in Basque. The involvement of Basque in the policy-making process regarding information technology enables the region to achieve the Lisbon objective of smarter Europe through promoting innovation, research and technology. Basque benefits from The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) to raise its demands regarding the policy of fisheries. CPMR is closely associated with the European Commission as the fisheries policy is an exclusive competence of the EU. Basque is in close contact with the business and interest groups through the regional government and the regional office in Brussels. The interactions among the regional offices, interest and business groups provide an opportunity for Basque to acquire influence on the EU governance as the EU encourage active citizenship and civil society. The mixture of formal and informal networks enables Basque to gain influence in the EU governance. Establishing formal relations with the Commission, the Parliament and the Council is not a preferred method to be employed due to the advisory role of the CoR. Alternative, informal channels through lobbying interest and business groups and expertize the European Commission on a specific policy area help Basque to come to the forefront in EU policy-making process.

In the Northern Ireland, the level of subnational representation in the EU has changed over time. Despite the empowerment of the subnational authorities in the UK, the traditional character of government was not undermined by subnational and supranational actors (Murphy, 2011, p.552). As the MLG predicts, sharing competences between subnational and supranational entities hampers the gate-keeping role of the nation state and its sovereignty. The establishment of Northern Ireland's regional representation in Brussels (ONEIB) enabled the region to pursue its regional interest and build close ties with the UK representation, UKRep. The regional representation in Brussels provided a basis for the exchange of information between the EU institutions and Northern Ireland regarding the EU regional programmes and funds. The ONEIB promoted the inclusion of regional representatives in the EU governance. However, the ONEIB's activities also served the reinforcement of the state influence over the regions (Murphy, 2011, p.553).

The ONEIB was not the first organization that represented Northern Ireland in the EU. In 1991, the local politicians established Northern Ireland Centre in

Europe (NICE) to achieve a better representation of the region (Murphy, 2011, p.556). The organization was funded by the local government departments, private sector bodies and voluntary sector organizations. NICE expertized the EU institutions on the policy areas which were critical for Northern Ireland. The signing of Good Friday Agreement in 1988 brought many difficulties for NICE. As NICE was not an official association, the establishment of ONEIB forced the organization to close. ONEIB's ties with the UKRep restricted its right to represent regional interests. Rather, ONEIB and UKRep agreed on the promotion of national interests. The regional office served as information and intelligence service under the influence of UkRep. As a result of the divergence of political preferences of the UK and Northern Ireland, the region remained ineffective on the critical policy areas. For instance, agriculture, infrastructure, education were the key policy areas for Northern Ireland while the UK merely took policy initiatives. The devolution of power contributed the regional representation of Northern Ireland in the EU since 2007 (Murphy, 2011, p.562). The relative independence from UkRep enabled the Northern Ireland to improve relations with the Ireland regional representation office, Perm Rep, in a functional and friendly manner. The devolution of power also contributed Northern Ireland to pursue its interest through CALRE, REGLEG, AER, AEBR (Murphy, 2011, p.563).

Following the decision of the UK to withdraw from the EU, Northern Ireland holds the key position in the negotiation process between the UK and the EU. The withdrawal agreement put a special emphasis on the future of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU with %55.8 of overall votes (Phinnemore & McGowan, 2016, p.7). The possibility of the establishment of hard border between Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is expected to fuel the unrest in the region. The EU presence in the region is crucial to sustain the peace and stability. The alternatives for the hard border between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland put a strain on the customs check between the UK and the EU. The UK has left the EU on Jan 31, 2020 and the transition period will terminate at the end of the year. Northern Ireland will be a part of the EU customs and single market while benefiting from the upcoming trade deals of the UK. The parliament of Northern Ireland will decide whether to stay in or leave the EU customs after a four year period. The

unique position of Northern Ireland kindles the strife between the UK and the EU. On the one hand, the EU requested to establish a permanent office in Belfast to monitor the process. The request was declined by the UK to prevent the EU from gaining influence in Northern Ireland. On the other hand, the UK pushes the EU for a trade deal and makes efforts to eliminate the possibility of hard border between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland. In addition, it is assumed that Northern Ireland-based companies will have full access to the EU and the citizens who have Irish passport are also accepted as the EU citizens. Thus, a future "Invest in Northern Ireland" campaign could do very well because of the economic and political advantages of the region (Henig, 2020). Northern Ireland can strengthen its hands and have its voice to be heard by using its unique position in the EU.

The approach of MLG coined by Hooghe and Marks demonstrates the complex web of informal and formal networks within the EU governance. Besides the member states and the EU institutions, the subnational entities, interest and business groups, civil society have been reinforced since the midst of the 1980s. The promotion of subsidiarity and proportionality in the EU will surely contribute the formation of civilian-based, democratic and efficient governance. The EU provides an opportunity for the subnational actors to be heard through different channels. In that way, the demands for the independence are replaced by the demands for more autonomy in the EU governance.

In conclusion, both Basque and Northern Ireland benefit from the advantages provided by the EU. These regions have become more and more involved in the EU policy-making process as their legal status grant the right to take political actions in many areas. Through informal and formal channels, Basque and Northern Ireland have established close ties with the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council of the EU. Furthermore, through opening regional offices in Brussels, both regions are able to gather information regarding the EU programmes and funds while contacting with the interest groups, think tanks, trade associations and other transnational associations such as Calre, Regleg and AER to influence the European Commission and have a voice in the EU governance. The mixture of communication channels gives an opportunity for the regions such as Basque and Northern Ireland to achieve their objectives. The complex structure of the EU governance surely

contributes the radicalized and neglected subnational groups to assert their rights. Thus, the public support for the separatist armed groups such as ETA and IRA has declined over time along with the decrease in the demands of independence. Recently, local and regional governments have been demanding more authority from their states rather than secession.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the role of the EU on the separatist movements in Europe. Constructivism and Multi-Level Governance formed the theoretical framework of the research to provide insight into the research topic. The selection of Basque and Northern Ireland as cases revealed the contribution of the EU as these cases were the most extreme examples within Europe that required common actions to counteract. The ETA and IRA were the last active armed separatist groups in Europe that threatened the peace and stability in the EU member states for forty years. The direct and indirect involvement of the EU in Basque and Northern Ireland contributed to the peaceful transformation of these conflicts. How the EU affects the separatist movements within the EU member states and how the EU institutions contribute subnational actors to participate in policy-making process in the EU were examined in detail in this study.

Through conceptual framework and historical background the study aims to inform the reader regarding the research topic. The concepts of secession and self-determination in the international and the EU law are explained in the first chapter. The historical background of the conflicts in Basque and Northern Ireland aims to shed light on the transformation in the divided societies. The key role of the EU on the struggle between central and regional governments contributes to reach a mutual understanding in Basque and Northern Ireland. The constructivist approach is valuable for this research as it is not strictly confined with the existing legal and political structures. It rather emphasizes the human practice and the interactions between agent and structure. Constructivism basically aims to explain how the states' identities and interests are formed. In that point, the constructivist assumptions differ from the rationalist ones as the rationalists accept the identities and interests as predetermined. The emphasis on the social dimension of the structure constitutes a contradiction with the rationalist theories which have materialistic ontology such as neoliberalism and neorealism. The main concepts of the constructivist view are deliberation, norms, discourse, persuasion, socialization, identity and arguing. Constructivism regards states as the main actors in the international system but it also emphasizes the role of transnational and international organizations. The interactions

among states, institutions and individuals constitute the basis of the approach. The formation of the EU identity is evaluated in detail in order to put a special emphasis on the change in the perceptions of the EU member states and European citizens. The EU identity aims not to abolish national identities but melt these identities in the same pot through setting a framework for cultural exchanges.

The research imposed qualitative methodology. The qualitative research design offers an interpretive understanding on the constructivist role of the EU as a social phenomenon. The empowerment of supranational and subnational actors within the EU undermined the classical notion of state sovereignty. Interactions among the EU institutions, national and regional actors provided a basis for a multi-layered structure in which actors from different levels could join the policy-making process in the EU. The goal of the study is to understand how the EU constructs a European society based on the fundamental values while restricting the national authorities and strengthening local actors. The division of the EU governance into various levels enables the EU to use the financial resources more efficiently. Multi-level governance also provides an opportunity to mitigate national governments' oppression over subnational groups and form democratic, transparent governance where these subnational groups can raise their voices. The methods used in the study are linked to the research questions and research design in general. As the qualitative research offers a deep understanding on the selected cases through interpretation of the words, the methods used in this study for data collection focused on the interviews, press releases and official documents of the actors. In addition to these primary resources, the secondary sources published by the other researchers were also involved in the study to gather rich, comprehensive and contextualized data.

In the last chapter of the study, the impact of the EU policies on the separatist movements was evaluated in a comprehensive manner. Transformation of the collected data into the findings takes place in that chapter. The concepts of decentralization, regionalization, subnational representation and mobilization intertwined with one another. Therefore, it was quite hard to evaluate these concepts separately. The EU promotes decentralization and regionalization within Europe to appease separatist tendencies through establishing EU programmes and granting funds which take the subnational authorities into consideration in the policy

implementation process. The EU does not have any regulation, legislation that forbids the separatist movements within the EU member states. However, as the separatist tendencies pose a challenge for the European integration, the EU requires reapplication of the separatist regions for the EU membership. If a unilateral secession of a region from an EU member state occurs, the separated region has to reapply for the EU membership and fulfill the Copenhagen criteria. It should be also kept in mind that all the EU member states are required to approve the applying state. Thus, the EU law nips the separatism in the bud and encourages the reconciliation and coordination between central and regional governments.

The EU Cohesion Policy constitutes the backbone of the European integration in which many actors interact with each other. In the second section of the last chapter, the evolution of Cohesion Policy and the Committee of the Regions is examined in details. The active programmes in Basque and Northern Ireland are broadly mentioned to demonstrate the effects of the EU regional policy. The section also gives place to current agenda of the EU Cohesion Policy that fosters transnational and cross-border programmes to achieve sustainable economic growth and prosperity within the EU. Moreover, the perception of the EU citizens and regions regarding the EU Cohesion Policy clearly states that the EU programmes and funds contribute to the elimination of the regional disparities and provide social and economic cohesion within the EU borders. The EU programmes and funds under the Cohesion Policy also create a sense of belonging to the EU and increase the legitimacy of the EU. The subnational authorities demand more authority from the supranational institutions of the EU to gain ground in the multi-layered structure of the EU governance.

The third section of the last chapter aims to offer an insight into the subnational representation and mobilization in the EU. Although the institutional channels for the subnational representation are provided, the member states' pressure over the subnational authorities has relatively increased following the financial crisis in 2008. The subnational groups have established alternative channels such as regional offices and transnational associations to gather information about the EU programmes and funds and exert influence over the policy-making and policy implementation process in the EU. In that way, the subnational actors aim to clear

the hurdle posed by the EU member states and enjoy their EU-related roles. The subnational mobilization in the EU is the concrete evidence of the political transformation in the member states facing ethnonational tensions. The diminishing public support for the armed separatist groups such as ETA and IRA has brought the ethnonationalist conflicts to the end. The EU's constructivist role cannot be ignored in the process of conflict transformation. The study aims to contribute the existing literature through providing a broader perspective on the research topic. Rather than focusing on the conflict resolution methods of the EU, the study attributes importance to the subnational representation within Europe to retain peace, stability and economic prosperity.

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