

Stefano Filippini

THE BASQUE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT AND BASQUE RADICAL NATIONALISM: BETWEEN RUPTURE AND CONTINUITY*

Abstract: This paper examines the emergence of the Socialist Movement (MS) in the Basque Country and its ambivalent relationship with the *izquierda abertzale* tradition. After the end of ETA's armed conflict in 2011, the Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV) underwent a strategic and ideological reorientation, moving away from earlier forms of militancy. This transformation alienated a generation of young activists who had been socialised into a more radical political culture, contributing to the formation of *Gazte Koordinadora Sozialista* (GKS), the nucleus of the MS. While the MS critiques the direction taken by the post-conflict *izquierda abertzale*, it simultaneously retains core elements of *abertzale* identity, producing a political project marked by both rupture and continuity.

Keywords: *Basque Country, social movements, Socialist Movement, izquierda abertzale, post-conflict.*

IL MOVIMENTO SOCIALISTA BASCO E IL NAZIONALISMO RADICALE BASCO: TRA ROTTURA E CONTINUITÀ

Abstract: Il presente articolo analizza l'emergere del Movimento Socialista (MS) nei Paesi Baschi e il suo rapporto ambivalente con la tradizione della *izquierda abertzale*. Dopo la fine del conflitto armato tra ETA e lo Stato spagnolo nel 2011, il Movimento di Liberazione Nazionale Basco (MLNV) ha attraversato un periodo di riorientamento ideologico e strategico, allontanandosi dalle forme di militanza del passato. Questa trasformazione ha estraniato un'intera generazione di militanti che avevano vissuto la loro prima socializzazione in una cultura politica maggiormente radicale, contribuendo al costituirsi di *Gazte Koordinadora Sozialista* (GKS), il nucleo fondatore del MS. Mentre il MS critica la direzione presa dalla *izquierda abertzale* nel periodo successivo al conflitto, esso ha al tempo stesso mantenuto alcuni elementi chiave dell'identità di quest'ultima, elaborando un progetto politico segnato da rotture e continuità.

Parole chiave: *Paesi Baschi, movimenti sociali, Movimento Socialista, izquierda abertzale, post-conflitto.*

This paper analyses the rise of the Socialist Movement (MS) in the Basque Country and its relationship with the *izquierda abertzale* (IA) and the radical Basque nationalist tradition. The MS is a political movement that emerged in 2018 from a split within the *abertzale* youth

* Data di ricezione dell'articolo: 14-IX-2025 / Data di accettazione dell'articolo: 30-IV-2026.

organisation and student union, when a group of youngsters decided to establish the *Gazte Koordinadora Sozialista* (“Youth Socialist Coordinator”) (GKS). The split occurred in the aftermath of the almost fifty-year conflict between the Spanish state and the separatist armed organisation Euskadi ‘ta Askatasuna (ETA), a process that began when ETA declared a unilateral ceasefire in 2011 and concluded with its dissolution in 2018. This process occurred without formal recognition from the Spanish state and, therefore, without a peace agreement between the factions involved; for this reason, it has been defined as virtual peace-making (Whitfield 2014).

The *abertzale* radical Basque nationalism has been extensively studied in recent decades, particularly its relationship with the armed struggle (e.g. Cirulli 2012; Conversi 1997; Irvin 1999; Mees 2001, 2019; Muro 2013; Pérez-Agote 2006). However, interest in the topic declined after the end of the armed conflict. A few authors have examined the evolution of political activism in the region and the changes in the new post-conflict context (Giordia 2021; Larrinaga *et al.* 2023; Larrinaga - Amurrio 2023). However, little to no research has been conducted specifically on the origins and evolution of the Socialist Movement, which currently represents an influential alternative to the IA for young people’s political socialisation in the Basque Country.

In fact, given that the MS originates from the Basque radical leftist tradition, the *izquierda abertzale*, its militants belong to the same social milieu and compete with one another for the recruitment of young people. The MS attempts to differentiate itself from the *abertzale* political tradition by criticising the IA in the post-conflict period for its moderation and tendency towards political reformism, arguing that both its historical failure and the end of its political cycle are at stake. At the same time, it presents itself as a Marxist organisation, aiming to organise the Basque proletariat to establish a socialist Basque state.

Therefore, this paper aims to fill this gap by investigating the formation of GKS and the organisational expansion that eventually led to the establishment of the Socialist Movement, a network of political and grassroots organisations that share specific ideologies and goals. Furthermore, an additional aim is to assess the relationship between the MS and the hegemonic Basque militant culture, namely the *abertzale* nationalist one. Indeed, such relationships involve several contradictions that warrant further investigation. First, the MS stems from the *abertzale* political culture and both criticises and follows it. In fact, despite arguing that the nationalist political logic cannot cohabit with the communist one, the MS does not reject the existence of a Basque national community. Instead, it aims at the creation of a socialist Basque state, which should be accompanied by the establishment of socialism all over the world as the only possible solution for socialism to survive throughout time. Second, although the MS argues not to belong to Basque nationalism, it communicates mainly in Euskara (the Basque language), which is not known by the entire population of the Basque Country, especially by the most vulnerable social classes. Moreover, the MS was born and is organically structured within Euskal Herria, which, in the Spanish state, includes territories

claimed as part of the Basque Country by the *izquierda abertzale* (namely, the autonomous communities of the Basque Country and Navarre). Third, the militant habitus of the MS is in line with the *abertzale* one, especially when considering each youth organisation and their practices of socialisation for youngsters. Finally, although the MS criticises the political cycle of the *izquierda abertzale*, it remains ambiguous and vague regarding its positioning towards ETA and the Basque armed struggle. The ambiguity is due on the one hand to the necessity of differentiating from the IA, but on the other hand to the necessity of remaining in line with the main pillars of the Basque militant tradition, which has been characterised for decades by support for ETA's armed struggle. This ambiguity is also reflected in the MS's commitment towards the *abertzale* commemorative calendar (Casquete 2013) for symbolic but purely nationalist commemorations such as the *Aberri eguna* and the *Gudari eguna*.

The article is organised as follows. After presenting the data and methodology used in the analysis, it begins by briefly tracing the evolution of the *izquierda abertzale* across the decades, with particular attention to how it changed after the end of the armed conflict in 2011. Accordingly, the first part of the article examines how the Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV) was composed during the armed conflict. The MLNV represented the network of organisations that supported ETA in pursuing its political goals from the late 1960s until 2011. I then describe how a new, successful *izquierda abertzale* movement emerged after 2011, how the conception of Basqueness changed, and the implications for post-conflict young people approaching militancy and activism. Finally, I focus on the origins of GKS and the Socialist Movement, their political agenda, and their relationship with Basque nationalism.

Methods and methodology

The article is based on an analysis of documents, newspaper articles, and other written sources published by the MS. The data were selected after a detailed review of the MS's written production, which mainly consists of public statements on its websites and social media, news and opinion articles on the news website Gedar.eus, and cultural and in-depth articles from the movement's journal *Arteka*. Clearly, a single article cannot suffice to analyse the entire body of written knowledge produced by the MS due to space limitations. Therefore, the written sources analysed were selected by identifying those referring to the creation and organisation of the movement and to the Basque national question and nationalism.

The data have been analysed using frame analysis. Frame analysis is one of the main methods used in researching social movements. It has been adopted to examine the cognitive mechanisms by which grievances are interpreted and consensus for mobilisation is created (Lindekilde 2014). The definition of frame analysis was first used in the social sciences by Goffman (1974) and then introduced in the field of social movement studies by Snow and Benford (1988) to conceive social movement actors as «signifying agents» capable of shaping

the meaning of their actions, rather than merely passive carriers of ideologies (Lindekilde 2014). In doing so, frame analysis identifies three core framing tasks: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. While the former fosters agreement among people, the latter fosters action, moving people to mobilise (Benford - Snow 2000). By applying frame analysis to the data, the intention is to unveil the MS's strategic discourse in its attempt to create its own socio-political milieu in the Basque context. Written documents are a suitable type of data for frame analysis, as they examine how actors consciously and strategically construct discourses.

Radical Basque Nationalism during the conflict

During the Basque armed conflict (1968-2011), the Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV) served as an informal, broad network of political and civil society organisations, youth groups, grassroots organisations, and social movement organisations that supported ETA in its goal of establishing an independent Basque state. In this sense, the MLNV represented ETA's radical milieu, defined as

the immediate social environment from which violent groups emerge and to which they remain socially and symbolically connected. They share experiences, symbols, narratives, and frameworks of interpretation with this milieu, and the armed groups are—at least to a certain extent—linked to (or part of) its social networks. (Malthaner - Waldmann 2014: 983)

The MLNV represented a specific type of radical milieu, defined as a radical community (*ibid.*). Such communities typically emerge from religious or ethnic communities in response to a perceived threat to their cultural or political identity and autonomy. They originate from a defensive impulse and are typically spatially concentrated in a specific area. Their collective identity is tied to the notion of historical belonging and the claim that a certain territory should be defended or liberated (*ibid.*).

Despite its complexity and the absence of a defined structure, Llera *et al.* (1993) provide a helpful description of the MLNV. In addition to the movement, there are the armed organisation (ETA), the political party (*Herri Batasuna*), the labour union (LAB), the youth organisation (*Jarrai*, later evolved into *Haika* and then *Segi*), the prisoners' supporters and the popular committees. At the periphery of the MLNV, there are specialised movement organisations, such as ecologists, women's groups, Basque-language programmes, and anti-drug programmes, that attempt to merge armed struggle and nationalism with their specific demands within Basque society. The MLNV was born in a specific historical conjuncture, when the world was witnessing the development of national liberation struggles in the European colonies, while the New Left movement was consolidating in Western Europe. Moreover, the MLNV emerged within a European context of social turmoil, in which the so-

called new social movements (focused on post-materialistic values) joined the more traditional workers' movement after the 1968 protest cycle. Therefore, within the context of a transformative event such as the Spanish democratic transition, the old Basque movements (the nationalist and workers' movements) encountered the just-born new social movements, allowing the confluence of multiple demands, which formed a cycle of protests that contained greater claims than just the nationalist one (Zubiaga 2014).

Given this, Basque society has been characterised as highly mobilised, with a strong tradition of unionism, and described as a movement society (Barcena - Ajangiz 2011). The political conflict and the national question have inevitably shaped Basque movements; radical Basque nationalists sought to build their social movement ecosystem by making their organisations active on a specific grievance (Iraola *et al.* 2023). The deep politicisation of Basque movements during the armed conflict created a cleavage within leftist movements between *abertzale* and non-*abertzale* activists. The former openly supported MLNV and ETA, while the latter were less committed to nationalism and less supportive of ETA.

Thus, besides being a radical community organised around an armed actor, the MLNV also fits the definition of a «social movement family», defined as «a nationally-based, historical configuration of movements which – though having different specific goals, immediate fields of struggles and strategic preferences – share a common worldview, have organisational overlaps and occasionally ally for joint campaigns» (Della Porta - Rucht 1995: 6). Indeed, what holds the different movements together, with their particularities and claims, is the shared master frame of national and social liberation of the Basque Country. This strategy of coordinating all the different conflicts in the same direction by applying the same protest frame is defined as the «strategy of accumulation of sectorial struggles» (Fernandez - Antolin 2000); the sense of all the struggles is ultimately true only if it contemplates the final goal of the freedom of the Basque people (*ibid.*). From the MLNV's perspective, any demand eventually becomes part of the broader national liberation struggle.

Within these different movements under the MLNV family's umbrella, the national revolutionary discourse, which legitimised the use of political violence, found a structure for maintaining and reproducing itself. From the beginning of the democratic transition, ETA sought to control new forms of conflict led by new social movements. A famous case is the anti-nuclear mobilisation in Lemoiz, in which the construction of a nuclear power plant was halted in 1982. After that, ETA's involvement culminated in the killing of two engineers involved in the project. ETA and the MLNV attempted to attract new movement initiatives to their political line wherever possible. When that was not possible due to the militants' weakness, the MLNV formed its political group to combine the movement's demands with the MLNV's revolutionary nationalism (Tejerina 2001). This resulted in either the co-optation of movements (ecologism and ethno-linguistic movements) or their fragmentation (as in the case of feminism, anti-militarism, solidarity, and pacifism).

Hence, the network of organisations created within the MLNV combines a more political and militant structure with grassroots organisations concerned with issues typically associated with the new social movements. However, this community did not support the armed struggle unconditionally or follow it in the same way as ETA's armed struggle. In a sense, the legitimacy of the armed struggle is continuously discussed within a radical community and its social surroundings (Waldmann 2005). This is especially true when analysing the legitimacy accorded to the armed struggle over time. In the Basque Country, ETA's role as leader of the MLNV was progressively contested after specific events, especially the killing of Basque political representatives and the birth of a strong victims' movement in the region. The loss of ETA's social legitimacy further deepened the divide between *abertzale* and non-*abertzale* activism. In the final decade of the twentieth century, this gave rise to a phenomenon known as the duplication of social movements (Iraola *et al.* 2023), in which parallel organisations emerged within the same sectoral struggles, distinguished primarily by their stance on radical nationalism and political violence.

The sharp decline in the social legitimacy of armed struggle led to increasingly severe repression by the Spanish government of the MLNV and *abertzale*-leftist activism in the Basque Country. Beginning with the Aznar administration in 1998, a new policy emerged that treated all forms of *abertzale* activity under the doctrine of 'everything is ETA', thereby criminalising political activism even in the absence of direct links to armed actions. This approach was further strengthened in 2003 with the enactment of the new Party Law, which outlawed any form of Basque *abertzale* party (Bourne 2015), effectively rendering the movement illegal for the remainder of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Finally, in October 2011, ETA unilaterally declared a permanent ceasefire. The decision to end the armed struggle was facilitated by two conclusions within ETA itself: on the one hand, the channels pursued from 1975 onwards by the armed organisation to achieve its political goals had been ineffective (negotiation with the Spanish state and the creation of a national front in the Basque country, which could not be maintained alongside ETA's violence); on the other hand, the difficulty of justifying the use of violence while advocating democratic ideals. This situation led to an increasing number of militants and sympathisers holding the view that it was possible to achieve more political success without armed struggle than with it (Zabalo - Saratxo 2015).

Transformations in Radical Basque Nationalism after the end of the armed struggle

Following ETA's unilateral ceasefire, the *izquierda abertzale* could reemerge from illegalisation. In 2011, the new political party *Sortu* was formed as the heir to the *abertzale* party tradition that began with *Herri Batasuna* in the 1970s. Since its foundation, the new party has emphasised its willingness to normalise its presence within institutional politics. *Sortu's* statute rejects any

external subordination that seeks to convert the party into an auxiliary organisation of those who promote violence (Bourne 2018). Furthermore, *Sortu* participated in the creation of the electoral coalition *EH Bildu*, which includes parties such as *Eusko Alkartasuna* and *Alternatiba*, which have a long history of condemning ETA's violence (*ibid.*). *EH Bildu* became a significant electoral force over the last decade, becoming the most-voted party in Gipuzkoa and the second in Araba, Bizkaia, and Navarra in the 2023 Spanish elections. Contrary to its *abertzale* predecessors, *Sortu* (as part of *EH Bildu*) has supported the last Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE)-led governments in Madrid, marking a watershed in the political tradition of the *Izquierda Abertzale*. In doing so, the post-conflict *izquierda abertzale* took a double step that produced a rupture with its past: (1) in the first stage, the decision to reject violence as a legitimate political means and to participate fully within institutions; (2) in a later stage, the decision to support the Spanish central government, a political decision that has never represented a viable option throughout the history of the *izquierda abertzale*.

Alongside *Sortu's* alignment with mainstream electoral politics, the movement's discourses on independence and sovereignty underwent a radical change after the end of the armed conflict. Over time, Basque nationalist discourse experienced three distinct stages: (1) The Basque ethnic nationalism theorised by Sabino Arana, based on the non-biological concept of 'race' and the superiority of the Basque essence over non-Basques (particularly migrants coming to Bizkaia from Spain); (2) the MLNV's nationalism, which stressed the role of language as a crucial element of Basque identity and argued for a revolutionary political practice to achieve independence (inspired by the national liberation movements in the so-called Third World); (3) a new discourse on Basque nationalism, born from the crisis of the revolutionary political practice, that gives centrality to the concept of democracy and shifts from referring to the people to citizenship (Zabalo - Odriozola Irizar 2017). The new discourse does not focus on the dualism of feeling only Basque at the cultural level (national identity) and class oppression at the political level. Rather, it embraces discourse on personal and social wellbeing, which «apart from trying to win over new adherents to nationalism, seeks the support of citizens who are avowedly not Basque nationalists, but who might be interested in a pro-independence process depending on said social or personal interests» (Zabalo - Iraola, 2022: 74).

However, the shift in discourse is not without contradictions: the linguistic factor, central to the MLNV's discourse, remains highly relevant in *abertzalismo* today. Euskara is described as the «main sign of identity for our people» in *Sortu's* founding paper (Zabalo - Odriozola Irizar 2017); at the movement level, the pro-Euskara movement remains one of the strongest in the Basque Country (Larrinaga - Amurrio 2016). However, their conceptualisation of language as central to citizenship clashes with the recent values of inclusive citizenship developed within the Basque pro-migrant movements. The latter has emerged as an important actor within the Basque movement ecosystem in recent years.

As for nationalist discourses, the end of violence represented a watershed for activists' socialisation and practices. During the decades of armed conflict, the Basque political field was constructed by connecting sub-nationalist demands with new values, such as feminism, environmentalism, antimilitarism, and resistance to state violence (Larrinaga - Amurrio 2023). In the Basque Country, unlike in most Western countries, new social movements, values, and cultures have been strongly associated with left-wing nationalism, creating a connection that persists today (*ibid.*).

Within a new socio-political context, the post-violence generation of activists remains attached to a political socialisation pathway rooted in the radical Basque tradition. On the one hand, family plays an important role in the politicisation of *abertzales*: parents who are politicised are likely to raise new activists. On the other hand, in constructing themselves as political subjects, post-violence activists encounter the same participatory opportunity structure that was developed during the violent conflict: a first engagement with activism within informal youth spaces such as *gaztetxes* (self-managed spaces) and *gazte asanbladas* (local youth assemblies), before entering more structured movement organisations (*ibid.*). Although there is strong transmission of culture and political memory, the end of ETA led to a transformation in the repertoires and models of youth, resulting in a distinct breakdown between generations whose experiences differ. The change in radical nationalist discourses and the end of political violence created a first post-conflict generation of militants who appeared to be significantly more reformist than the previous generations, due to the need to distance themselves from such a tradition of political violence.

Youth activism in the Basque Country has politicised the private sphere of activists themselves, following a continuum with the political culture that emerged during underground activism under Franco and the subsequent policies of popular and national construction (Larrinaga *et al.* 2023). However, post-violence activists' practices mark a rupture with the *abertzale* political culture by individualising their political practices (following a general tendency in Western Europe). This change means the loss of importance of political parties and organisations for activism and the politicisation of everyday life's practices, such as the language used to communicate, the type of job, the freedom to develop sexuality, the forms of consumption, and so on. Therefore, post-violence activists have constructed their own activist identity by following a specific political habitus within which they were politically socialised: a longstanding counter-hegemonic and sub-nationalist activist culture. Nevertheless, beyond the continuum within the same habitus, the end of the armed conflict caused a generational (and cultural) rupture in political practices and identities.

Birth and organisation of the Socialist Movement

The disappearance of ETA as the vanguard of radical Basque nationalism caused disagreement, frustration and disappointment in the most radical sectors of the MLNV. The renunciation of the military strategy, as well as the moderation of the means and political goals of the new *izquierda abertzale* represented by *Sortu* and *EH Bildu*, led to the creation of a microcosm of dissident organisations intended to return to the political vision that characterised the MLNV for the last decades. However, the political relevance of the *abertzale* organisations that disagreed with *Sortu* and the official movement remained marginal. The splinter groups of the *izquierda abertzale* organised around three topics: (i) the constitution of a new political paradigm that (ii) would be positioned outside the official structure of the *izquierda abertzale*, yet assuming the historical thesis of the MLNV, capable of (iii) transforming the whole official *izquierda abertzale*¹. This paradigm is what characterises the dissident *izquierda abertzale*, a heterogeneous group of organisations that criticise *Sortu* and the ‘officials’ from within, arguing that they embrace the legacy of the MLNV. Important examples in this sense are the creation in 2014 of the Movement Pro-amnesty and Against the Repression (ATA), created to reach an amnesty for all the former ETA’s militants, and the foundation of the platform Jardun in 2020 as the new reference for the so-called ‘dissident’ *izquierda abertzale* (González - Anillo 2021).

Following the relegalisation of the organisations of the MLNV, the new *izquierda abertzale* decided to put into process the development of a new youth organisation that could substitute *Segi* – the former youth organisation illegalised during the last phase of the armed conflict – in the post-violence context. That process, known as *Gazte Zukgua*, led to the creation of *Ernai*, the new youth organisation of the *izquierda abertzale*, in 2012. *Ernai* aligned with *Sortu* on both political goals and the narrative about the end of the armed struggle, which occurred in 2011. Along with the end of the armed conflict, the *izquierda abertzale* decided to leave behind the coordination of street mobilisations and the grassroots organisations that had always been central to its political strategy. Besides, the new movement found it difficult to support actions that might be considered violent, such as clashes with police during strikes and occupations. This change was taking place while in the rest of the Spanish state the new wave of radical mobilisation started with the 15-M, leaving the Basque politicised youth on the one hand witnessing to what was happening in the rest of the Spanish state, and on the other hand experiencing the new political moderation of the *izquierda abertzale* within a historical deeply conflictual social context. Hence, the *abertzale* youth underwent years of socialisation within the *izquierda abertzale*, where it was normal to talk about armed struggle and revolutionary strategies. However, when they reached the age to take part in the political movement, the latter

¹ «De cuando partimos hacia la organización comunista», *Arteka*, n. 22, XI-2021.

completely removed those ideals with which the youngsters had become familiar during their adolescence².

In 2018 the situation of disappointment and increasing tension between parts of the youth and *Sortu* over the strategic ends and repertoires of the *izquierda abertzale* led *Ikasle Abertzaleak* (IA), the historical *abertzale* student union, to break with *Ernai* and the rest of the movement. The fracture deepened in 2019, when a group of youngsters announced the birth of the *Gazte Koordinadora Sozialista* (GKS) at a press conference in Vitoria-Gasteiz³. GKS was founded as a youth organisation that proposed an alternative for youngsters who disagreed with the discourses of the *izquierda abertzale* and, consequently, of *Ernai*.

GKS characterises its political agenda through a Marxist perspective and discourse. In this sense, a pivotal example is the set of perspectives on the central issues they seek to address and the related solutions presented in their *Political Proposal for the Working Youth*⁴. As a youth organisation, GKS focuses on political projects that address the needs of young people in the Basque Country. Borrowing theoretical concepts from frame analysis in social movement studies (Benford - Snow 2000), it is possible to identify GKS's diagnostic and prognostic framing. GKS analysis stems from the acknowledgement of the general proletarianization of youth in the current system, which is driven by three main factors. First, the proletarianization of society led to the destruction of the middle class, impoverishing the working conditions for the lower classes. Youngsters grow up facing the impossibility of planning their future, finding it hard to achieve things that were taken for granted by their parents' generation, such as a steady job and owning a house. Second, the bourgeoisie's dominance at the cultural level prevents the mobilisation of people against capitalism, despite the exploitation they are subjected to within this system. The hegemonic culture creates a depoliticised and individualised environment in which political militancy cannot be contemplated as an option for young people. This system leads youngsters to consider it normal to live in an authoritarian and impoverished social context. The education system is also structured around the idea of producing people who can adapt to the needs of the context already described. Finally, the third diagnosis concerns authoritarianism and the suppression of rights that the working class conquered in the last century. Again, GKS focuses primarily on the effects on youngsters who are exposed to political repression and are generally considered immature and irresponsible subjects.

In its analysis of youth proletarianization, GKS identifies five primary areas of concern: the youth labour market, the deterioration of youth lifestyles, the industrial culture consumed by young people, the education system, and issues related to authoritarianism and collective rights. For each of these areas, GKS proposes multiple actions aimed at transformative change.

² «De cuando partimos hacia la organización comunista», *Arteka*, n. 22, XI-2021.

³ «Gazte Koordinadora Sozialista sortu dute, gazte problematikari klase perspektibatik erantzuteko», *Gedar*, 17-II-2019

⁴ *Propuesta política para la Juventud Trabajadora*, *Gazte Koordinadora Sozialista*.

However, the organisation's central and overarching prognosis for addressing the broader decline in youth conditions is the establishment of a socialist state. According to GKS, socialism inherently requires no oppression; rather, it represents the transcendence of all oppression. To achieve this, GKS emphasises the necessity of securing what it defines as «the political independence of the working class»⁵ as the only viable path toward building a socialist state committed to organising socialism on an international scale.

Since the foundation of GKS in 2018, several other sectoral organisations have emerged, collectively forming what is now known as the Socialist Movement (MS). Notable developments include the establishment of independent communication platforms for disseminating information and producing knowledge, most prominently the news website *Gedar* and its associated YouTube channel. The movement also publishes a monthly journal titled *Arteka*. Other key components of the MS include the housing union *Extebizitza Sindikatu Sozialista*, the cultural organisation *Ekida*, the women's organisation *Itaia*, and the student union *Ikasle Abertzaleak* (which has recently changed its name to *Ikasle Antolakunde Sozialista*)⁶.

Moreover, the MS has recently played a pivotal role in establishing the *Coordinadora Juvenil Socialista* (CJS), a network of socialist youth organisations active across various autonomous regions of the Spanish State. This effort to forge alliances with non-independence-based movements marks a clear departure from the *izquierda abertzale* tradition, which has historically aligned itself almost exclusively with national liberation movements worldwide. A similar dynamic has emerged in other parts of the Spanish state, where a traditionally strong independence movement is present. For instance, in 2022, part of the Catalan independentist and leftist youth organisation *Arran* split to form a new organisation, *Horitzò Sozialista*, aligned with the CJS⁷.

Through these structures, the Socialist Movement seeks to construct an alternative sociopolitical ecosystem capable of challenging the hegemony currently held by the *izquierda abertzale*. In doing so, the MS follows a specific tradition rooted in Basque militant culture, particularly the strategy of accumulating sectoral struggles, already discussed in the preceding paragraphs. Although each organisation operates within its respective domain, they are united by a shared master frame centred on socialism and the pursuit of a Basque Socialist state. A particularly illustrative example is *Itaia*, which critiques feminism as typically articulated within capitalist frameworks, despite its substantial presence in Basque grassroots activism. Instead, *Itaia* advances the concept of the «working woman», advocating for the organisation of working women toward socialism⁸.

Over the past several years, the youth organisations of the MS, such as GKS, IA, and *Itaia*, have grown in popularity, presenting a viable alternative for the political socialisation of the

⁵ *Propuesta política para la Juventud Trabajadora*, Gazte Koordinadora Sozialista.

⁶ «VIII. Kongresua: Euskal Herriko Ikasle Antolakunde Sozialista», *Ikasle Abertzaleak*.

⁷ «Una part d'Arran s'escindeix i crea Horitzò Sozialista», *El Punt Avui*, 17-VII-2022.

⁸ «Proposamen Politiko», *Itaia*, 23-IX-2022.

Basque youth in a context traditionally dominated by youth organisations affiliated with the *izquierda abertzale*. While these movements compete at the youth level, the *izquierda abertzale* continues to hold a predominant role in adult militancy, with no significant alternative entities emerging. This development has fostered a competitive dynamic among sectoral organisations, reminiscent of the doubling of social movements during the armed conflict period. As previously mentioned, the most conspicuous competition between the *izquierda abertzale* and the MS ecosystem is observed among youth and student organisations. Basque youths interested in political activism find themselves at a crossroads: on one side, the *abertzale* organisations *Ernai* and *Ikama* (the student union), and on the other, GKS and *Ikasle Abertzaleak*. Both sets of youth organisations adhere to the radical Basque tradition of convening a *Topagune*. At this annual gathering, young people from across the Basque Country gather for several days to participate in political and recreational activities. The organisation of various *Topagunes* exemplifies the competition between the two political ecosystems, as the level of participation in each event indicates the organisations' popularity and mobilisation capacity. These gatherings become arenas where groups vie to attract militants from the same political milieu.

Since 2020, the MS has organised the Socialist Councils, which form the movement's administrative nexus and coordinate its struggle at the local level. These structures are conceived as the means through which the movement operates across various local domains⁹. Inspired by the Marxist concept of cells, the Socialist Councils are regarded by the MS as both executive organs and expressions of proletarian power. As cells, they represent a conceptual framework for the gradual structural articulation and expansion of the movement. By 2023, Socialist Councils were active in 11 regions and major cities across the Basque Country¹⁰. At the end of that year, members of the movement founded the *Euskal Herriko Kontseilu Sozialista* (EHKS), a political party intended to serve as the movement's main political reference point. In line with its Marxist discourse, the creation of the party marks a further step toward consolidating a new political cycle that ultimately aims at socialist revolution. The party is conceived as the unified organisation of the revolutionary proletariat—a centralised strategic command coordinating all fronts of struggle and all sectors of the proletariat¹¹.

At the spatial level, the MS is organised around the establishment of so-called Socialist centres, which involve the permanent occupation and revitalisation of abandoned buildings. The socialist centres consist of what social movement scholars have defined as free spaces (Polletta 1999), which are those «small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilisation» (*ibid.*: 1).

⁹ Koltza, «Kontseilu Sozialisten artikulazioa eta estrategia sozialista», *Arteka*, n. 13, I-2021

¹⁰ «Euskal Herriko Kontseilu Sozialista sortu dute», *Gedar*, 15-XII-2023.

¹¹ «Estrategia Sozialista Berria. Komunismoaren Berrosaketa Internazionalerako Oinarri Estrategikoak», *Euskal Herriko Kontseilu Sozialista*.

As argued in the previous chapter, this is not a new practice in the Basque Country, as it follows the practices of the *izquierda abertzale* militants with the *gaztetxes* over the last few decades. Also, as in the case of the *gaztetxes* (Ó Broin 2003), socialist centres have been subject to police evictions in recent years¹². The establishment of Socialist Centres follows the logic of organising an inter-generational Socialist Movement, with spaces for gathering outside schools and universities. Indeed, the inter-generational feature is intended to be the main innovation that distinguishes the socialist movements from the more traditional *gaztetxes*, which have always been spaces managed and lived in by youngsters. The main tasks of the centres are to serve as places where militants can meet to socialise and organise their political activity; additionally, the socialist centres serve as places where sympathisers and the movement's reference group can interact and learn about the movement.

The Socialist Movement and the Radical Basque Nationalist tradition

In this section I analyse the relationship between the Socialist Movement and the radical Basque nationalist tradition of the *izquierda abertzale*. The goal of the analysis is to assess the ruptures and continuities between the two political movements to identify differences and commonalities in their collective identity. In doing that, I consider three most relevant issues: (i) the historical assessment of the MLNV made by the MS; (ii) the MS's discourse over nationalism and the national question; (iii) the relationship between the MS and the *abertzale* commemorative calendar.

The MS's assessment of the historical cycle of the *izquierda abertzale*

In the historical analysis of the MS¹³, the *izquierda abertzale* is regarded as a movement that, while rooted in a popular social base and composed mainly of working-class militants, eventually adopted a political strategy and discourse that did not reflect its popular character. Specifically, the critique highlights its embrace of inter-classism and reformism. This analysis does not focus solely on the more recent *izquierda abertzale* but traces these contradictions back to its origins. A key moment occurred at ETA's Fifth Assembly in the early 1970s, when the organisation attempted to merge nationalism and socialism by adopting revolutionary nationalism as its political line. Influenced by anti-colonial struggles in the Global South, this vision reframed the principal contradiction as one between the oligarchy and the people, rather than between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. According to this paradigm, the socialist revolution was to be preceded by a popular revolution aimed at confronting the oligarchy,

¹² «El desalojo de los centros socialistas», *Gedar*, 12-VII-2022.

¹³ «Klase borroka ezker abertzalearen baitan 70eko hamarkadan», *Arteka*, n. 16, IV-2021.

which was identified with the Spanish state. The ‘people’ were thus equated with the oppressed Basque population, a category that extended beyond the proletariat to include other classes, such as the petty bourgeoisie. From the perspective of the Socialist Movement, this approach effectively resolved the tension between social and national liberation by prioritising the national dimension. As a result, class struggle was subsumed under the framework of national liberation. This, in turn, led to the internal contradiction of reconciling diverse class interests, paving the way for an inter-classist and reformist strategy that diverged from a strictly proletarian revolutionary path. Hence, the MLNV emerged from the historical defeat of the proletariat within the Basque independentist left.

From the perspective of the Socialist Movement, the MLNV cannot be considered as having been defeated by external forces at the end of the armed conflict. However, given that it also failed to achieve its objectives, the MS concludes that the MLNV failed due to internal causes, namely the conjunctural nature of the *izquierda abertzale*’s political project. In fact, in this analysis¹⁴, the *izquierda abertzale* is seen as the product of a specific historical conjuncture — namely, the rise of Francoism and the class composition of the Basque industrial sector. This conjuncture initiated a cycle of mobilisation, struggle, and conflict that culminated in the emergence of ETA and the birth of *abertzale* nationalism. According to the MS, it was this cycle of contention that gave rise to *abertzalismo*, rather than *abertzalismo* being the origin of the cycle. Consequently, the crisis of Basque nationalism is understood to be intrinsically linked to the end of this historical cycle of armed conflict.

Moreover, continuing the analysis of the MS, while it is impossible to conceive of the emergence of an armed actor like ETA without the context of Francoism, it is also evident that the end of the armed struggle deepened the crisis of Basque nationalism. This implies that nationalism was not the driving force behind the struggle. However, the struggle itself, shaped by the specific historical conjuncture previously described, gave rise to the nationalist movement. Consequently, the disappearance of the armed struggle is not the cause of the crisis of nationalism; rather, it is the crisis of nationalism that explains the end of the struggle. Therefore, the end of the armed struggle allowed the Spanish state to coopt the *izquierda abertzale* and use it for its own goals, representing the definitive defeat of the MLNV strategy for class and national liberation:

Following the breakdown of the latest negotiations, the Spanish state saw a real opportunity to dismantle the *izquierda abertzale* both politically and militarily. The self-destruction of the armed struggle, however, has led to a reconfiguration of the political playing field in Euskal Herria. Allowing the new, tamed *Izquierda Abertzale* to participate in elections has been a necessary step towards stabilising Spanish bourgeois democracy after sidelining ETA. As the MLNV is one of the strongest national liberation movements in the Western imperialist centre, and after witnessing its undeniable historical failure, the objective capacity of its strategic foundation to overcome both national and class oppression is now in question. What we face is the obsolescence of strategies

¹⁴ «Ezker abertzalearen porrot historikoaren ondorioak», *Arteka*, n. 22, XI-2021.

based on reformism and interclassism, as well as the limits encountered by armed organisations specialised in carrying out profound social revolutions.¹⁵

Within this historical context, the armed struggle emerged under the banner of national liberation, which for much of the population signified resistance to Francoism and its associated lack of democracy and social rights. From its inception, the liberation struggle was more of a progressive than a revolutionary project, with armed resistance being accepted primarily because it was directed against a dictatorship. Therefore, Basque *abertzale* nationalism was a product of a particular historical conjuncture —one that, according to the MS, has now come to an end:

The greatest betrayal that can be committed against the *izquierda abertzale*, and any other conjunctural movement, is to fail to understand its ephemeral nature and attempt to artificially keep the corpse alive. [...] Neither the strategy nor the political principles have changed: the heirs of the *izquierda abertzale* pursue ‘national liberation’, ‘statism’ and ‘democracy’ —socialism has always been statism and interventionism for them. However, these objectives can no longer appear under the guise of conflict, as a favourable framework has opened up for them within bourgeois institutions and the Spanish state. Autonomism is therefore not a decision that has been made, but rather the form that the paradigm of ‘national liberation’ necessarily had to take.¹⁶

Perspectives on the national question

Beyond its critique of the specific historical phenomenon of Basque *abertzale* nationalism, the Socialist Movement advances a broader critique of nationalism itself, particularly of stateless nationalism. The form of stateless nationalism that has shaped the political agenda of the *izquierda abertzale*, according to the MS, is not genuinely oriented toward its stated goals. Instead, it becomes a vehicle for other objectives.¹⁷ In this sense, stateless nationalism does not seek to establish a new state at the service of the proletariat but instead envisions a Basque republic in which the same capitalist logic found in the Spanish and French states would be reproduced. From the MS’s perspective, the central contradiction of stateless nationalism lies in the fact that, while it recognises the logic of class domination inherent in nation-states, its political horizon remains limited to becoming just another state. As such, it would merely reproduce capitalist social relations under a different national flag, subjecting its citizens to the same structures of exploitation and domination:

What is curious about stateless nationalism is that, although war is a means used by large states to justify the greatness of their nation as a way of drawing the working masses into the defence of the

¹⁵ «El final del empate: la ofensiva definitiva del Estado contra el MLNV», *Arteka*, n. 22, XI-2021, p. 29.

¹⁶ «Consecuencias del fracaso histórico de la izquierda abertzale», *Arteka*, n. 22, XI-2021, p. 41.

¹⁷ «Las antinomias del nacionalismo», *Arteka*, n. 34, XII-2022.

power of a particular bourgeoisie, in the case of stateless nationalism, its sole ambition is to become just another state. This leads those who claim to make a nation great to resign their citizens to joining a process that turns them into second-class subjects: that is, to ‘change’ their nation, instead of changing the entire world.¹⁸

Besides, the MS stresses that when socialism and nationalism coexisted within the same political project, the latter always dominated the former through inter-classism. Nationalism is a project of class domination, since it prioritises the independence of a historical community over the independence of the proletariat¹⁹. In contrast, the MS emphasises the necessity of forging a natural alliance between the Basque proletariat and the international revolutionary proletariat. For the MS, revolution is only possible if it is international in scope; any isolated national project that fails to break with capitalist structures is inherently limited and ultimately reformist.

However, the MS stresses the difference between the two phenomena: nationalist communities and nationalism. While describing the latter as a mere instrument for capitalist reproduction, the MS pays attention not to reject the idea of the former, distinguishing their discourse from those who reject the reality of national communities, with a specific reference to the stateless national communities – namely, the radical Basque political milieu, the MS’s reference group. On the one hand, it is clear how the MS criticises the nationalist logic even in its stateless form, as in the Basque Country. On the other hand, the movement’s goal remains a Basque state, thereby aligning it with the broader culture of Basque political militancy within the *izquierda abertzale*.

In fact, since the first press conference, GKS has stated that its main goal is to defend socialism against bourgeois domination and oppression. From this statement, as well as from the absence of symbols associated with radical Basque nationalism, one could see that GKS was attempting to position itself outside the political milieu of the *izquierda abertzale*. Indeed, if the latter gave an essential role to the national question, that is not the case for GKS, where the independency of the Basque Country assumes a different aspect; on paper, GKS aims at contributing to the construction of a Basque Socialist state, yet the discourse on the national liberation depends on the one about class oppression and liberation of the proletariat, contrarily to the historic discourse of the MLNV, where the struggle for the Basque state had the priority over the class struggle.

The tension between rejecting nationalism and pursuing an independent Basque socialist state is most visible in the MS’s stance on Euskara. Although the MS attempts to present a few of its statements and cultural output in Spanish and French, its news portal, *Gedar*, prioritises Euskara for most articles and analyses. On social media —the organisation’s primary channel to its base— posts are also predominantly in Euskara. This preference reflects the MS view

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 9

¹⁹ «Nazionalismoaren genealogiak», *Arteka*, n. 34, XII-2022.

that Euskara is the language of the Basque national community and should become the common language of the proletariat. However, the MS argues that under capitalism, Euskara has been commodified and is primarily reserved for the privileged Basque middle class, who gain labour-market advantages from fluency. As stated in an editorial dedicated to Euskara, the current bourgeois linguistic regime seeks to live in Euskara while still doing business with it, thereby preventing the meaningful, widespread diffusion of the language. For the Euskara to survive as a living, popular tongue, the MS contends, it must be removed from market logics and embraced as the everyday language of the working class.

Since the end of Francoism, Euskara has increasingly become the language of the new Basque middle class. Research conducted by militants of the MS²⁰ highlights an inverse correlation between the spread of Euskara and levels of relative poverty in the Basque Country: the greater the knowledge and use of Euskara in a given area, the lower the poverty levels. This suggests that fluency in the language is closely tied to class privilege and access to resources. For this reason, the MS sees it as a political task to turn Euskara into a social question, removing it from the confines of privilege and transforming its use into a free and conscious choice available to all, particularly the working class²¹.

However, the MS's predominant use of Euskara creates a paradox. While the movement aims to reach and organise the Basque proletariat —now increasingly composed of individuals who do not speak Euskara, such as migrants— its linguistic practice risks excluding precisely those sectors it claims to represent. This tension reveals a contradiction between the MS's aspiration to build a broad, class-based movement and its reliance on a language historically tied to the radical Basque nationalist tradition. As a result, the very tool meant to forge a collective proletarian identity may become a barrier to inclusion and communication.

Commemoration of the *abertzale* calendar

Casquete (2013) analyses how the MLNV reinforced the collective identity among its members, also through mnemonic mechanisms, such as the mnemonic calendar. By giving rise to cycles of celebration, the commemorative calendar is an important tool for a mnemonic community to strengthen bonds within the social group. It occurs through a process of mnemonic socialisation that teaches the group members, especially the youngsters, what is memorable and what is not (Zerubavel 1996). In its analysis, Casquete (2013) identifies five categories of commemorations within the MLNV calendar: (i) days linked to community martyrology; (ii) welcoming activities for ETA members recently released from prison or returned from exile;

²⁰ «Euskara eta maila sozioekonomikoa: errepasso soziolinguistiko bat», *Arteka*, n. 12, XII-2020.

²¹ «Euskara, auzi soziala», *Arteka*, n. 12, XII-2020.

(iii) purifying celebrations; (iv) vicarious acts; (v) historical festivities of the Nationalist and Left-wing political traditions.

The first and last categories are of particular interest with respect to the MS. The first category — days linked to community martyrology— indicates those commemorations that belong exclusively to radical nationalism and were not shared with any other political milieu. Typically, these dates coincide with the death of prominent *abertzale* militants. The most important example is probably the *Gudari Eguna* (the soldier's day), which occurs on September 27th to commemorate two prominent ETA militants executed without trial in 1975 (*ibid.*). On the other hand, the historical festivities of the Nationalist and Left-Wing political traditions refer to those dates that the MLNV does not exclusively commemorate. The *Aberri Eguna* (Fatherland's Day) is the most important date from the nationalist tradition, while the commemoration of Mayday and March 3 —the commemoration of the 1976 death of five workers in clashes with the police that occurred in Vitoria-Gasteiz— are those coming from the left-wing tradition.

Although rooted in the wider Basque nationalist tradition, both GKS and EHKS have issued public statements²² commemorating the *Aberri Eguna*, which takes place annually on Easter Sunday. These statements typically criticise the bourgeois nationalist parties, accusing them of using the commemoration to legitimise a national project grounded in class interests. In contrast, the Socialist Movement reaffirms its vision of building a Basque socialist state— one that genuinely defends Basque cultural heritage, especially the Basque language, and is founded on principles of international proletarian solidarity. The statements consistently express the MS's commitment to the struggle for a free and classless Basque Country, in continuity with the efforts of previous generations of militants:

Aberri Eguna can be celebrated from different perspectives. Bourgeois nationalist parties, for example, use it to legitimise their claims, building on their class perspective. We, however, want to reclaim a project opposed to the bourgeois national framework: the right to self-determination for Basque workers, grounded in internationalism.²³

A similar approach is taken in the commemoration of the *Gudari Eguna*²⁴, during which GKS pays tribute to all past militants who gave their lives for political projects rooted in the pursuit of freedom:

²² Euskal Herriko Kontseilu Sozialista, «Aberri Eguna», post on X, 31-III-2024, <<https://x.com/EHKSozialista/status/1774369948883726379>> (last visit 30-III-2026); «Euskal langileriarentzat autodeterminazioa aldarrikatu du EHKSk Aberri Egunean», *Gedar*, 20-IV-2025. Gazte Koordinadora Sozialista, «Euskal estatu sozialistaren aldarria zabaldu nahi dugu gaurkoan», post su X, 31-III-2024, <<https://x.com/EHKSozialista/status/1774369948883726379>> (last visit 30-III-2026) «Aberri Egunaren harira», *Gazte Koordinadora Sozialista*.

²³ Euskal Herriko Kontseilu Sozialista, «Aberri Eguna», post on X, 31-III-2024 (last visit 30-III-2026).

²⁴ «GKSk 'oroimena eta askatasuna' aldarrikatu ditu Gudari Egunean», *Gedar*, 27-IX-2020.

Many have been the militants who, throughout the history of the workers' movement, have given their lives in defence of projects whose goal was freedom. Among them are those executed on September 27, 1975, militants who were engaged in the struggle for a free Euskal Herria and who fought for a free and just society. Such projects have been forged through processes of struggle to free a social group from domination and an oppressive power regime. Thus, freedom, as a critical concept, refers to an injustice and, in that sense, is not an abstraction, but rather points to a concrete, present form of injustice that must be confronted today. Although these processes of liberation may be framed or located within strategic paradigms, those militants remain alive in the political memory of the workers' movement, and we too will try to ensure that they continue to be so.²⁵

According to GKS, the question of freedom remains relevant today in light of the ongoing injustices faced by the working class and oppressed sectors. As such, a central aim of the organisation is to preserve the memory of those militants within the movement's collective memory. GKS argues that any attempt to develop new projects oriented toward liberation must be informed by the legacy of past struggles. This means critically engaging with previous political practices and adapting them to the current configuration of power and class dynamics. The previous militants must be respected, and the new socialist militants need to learn from past mistakes to achieve the current goals.²⁶

In another statement, GKS reaffirms the need to honour those who fought in the past cycle of struggle²⁷. Even if it failed to achieve its goals, it laid the foundations for the current cycle. New generations do not begin their fight from scratch but rather build upon the political legacies of those who came before them, drawing from their practices, strategies, and organisational models. GKS remembers the militants who resisted the repression and denial of Basque culture by the Spanish and French states. These individuals must be remembered, as it is thanks to their efforts that the political awareness of the need to fight both national oppression and class domination has endured across generations. Moreover, GKS criticises the social-democratic leadership (that is, the post-armed-struggle *izquierda abertzale*) for attempting to break this revolutionary tradition, which it considers essential to the continuity and development of an emancipatory political project. As shown, the MS chooses to commemorate dates that originate exclusively from the nationalist tradition, despite its explicit critique of nationalism —particularly stateless nationalism— as an ideology and its self-identification as a rupture from the *abertzale* political tradition. While the MS argues that all historical attempts to merge nationalism and socialism have ultimately failed, it nevertheless upholds the existence of national communities. It defends the right to both national and class liberation. At the same time, the MS maintains a critical perspective on the historical cycle of

²⁵ Gazte Koordinadora Sozialista, «Euskal estatu sozialistaren aldarria zabaldu nahi dugu gaurkoan...», post su X, 31-III-2024, <<https://x.com/GKSsozialista/status/1774334511238549721>> (last visit 30-III-2026).

²⁶ «Gertakizuna iraunkortzen», *Arteka*, n. 22, XI-2021.

²⁷ «GKSk 'oroimena eta askatasuna' aldarrikatu ditu Gudari Egunean», *Gedar*, 27-IX-2020.

struggle led by the MLNV, viewing it as the product of a specific historical conjuncture and as reformist and inter-classist from its very beginning. Nevertheless, the MS also highlights the importance of these earlier cycles of struggle, arguing that they provide essential political legacies for new generations. According to the MS, it is precisely this legacy that the contemporary social-democratic *izquierda abertzale* seeks to erase. Thus, while positioning itself in opposition to the current *izquierda abertzale* and distancing itself ideologically from the *abertzale* tradition, the Socialist Movement remains both symbolically and politically connected to that heritage. This contradiction is likely explained by the fact that the MS's militant base and broader social reference still essentially belong to that political milieu within Basque society.

Conclusion

This introductory analysis of the MS seeks, first, to advance the study of the evolution of radical Basque nationalism in the post-ETA context. At the same time, it aims to bring together two fields of research within the social sciences: nationalism studies and social movement studies. More specifically, it engages with debates on the national question within the Left (Custodi 2023), processes of identity change and crisis in post-conflict societies (Todd 2018), the relationship between social movements and violence (Bosi *et al.* 2015, Della Porta 2013), radicalisation within left-wing movements (Alimi *et al.* 2015; Wennerhag *et al.* 2017), and youth radicalisation (Muxel 2020).

The article attempted to describe the birth and the discourse of the Socialist Movement, as well as its relationship with the radical nationalist tradition in the Basque Country. In doing so, the article has explored the transformations within radical Basque nationalism from the armed conflict to the present day. It has highlighted the transformation of the MLNV into the post-conflict *izquierda abertzale* and the consequent moderation of the movement's discourses and practices, while a specific radical political culture persisted in this milieu, particularly in the political socialisation of youngsters. These reasons led to the creation of GKS in 2019 and, subsequently, to the establishment of the other organisations that form the Socialist Movement in the years that followed. The article focused on the MS's discourse on contradictory topics from the perspective of the historical cycle of the *izquierda abertzale*, nationalism, and the commemoration of nationalist recurrences. In doing so, the article highlighted contradictions between the MS, which argues that it represents an apparent rupture with the *abertzale* tradition, and the continuities between both movements.

Finally, the article sought to answer whether the Socialist Movement represents either a rupture with the radical nationalist tradition or its continuation. Regarding the former, the MS exhibits several features that distinguish it from the *izquierda abertzale*. The first and most important is the use of a Marxist lexicon and discourse, which makes class liberation more

central than national liberation. Second, the MS has been a prominent actor in establishing a network of socialist movements in the Spanish state, demonstrating its willingness to form alliances with Spanish socialist organisations, which the *izquierda abertzale* has never had (being willing to establish alliances only with national liberation struggles).

As for continuities, in its attempt to create an alternative to the hegemonic culture of the *izquierda abertzale*, the MS built its movement ecosystem around multiple sectoral grassroots organisations, bonded together by the same master frame – the goal of establishing a Basque socialist state. This organisational schema mirrors the one invented by the MLNV during the armed conflict, which persisted beyond its end, sedimenting into the radical Basque militant culture. This pattern reproduces another typical feature of Basque movements, namely the doubling of social movements. Contrary to the doubling that occurred during the armed conflict, the current distinction is not based on support for political violence but on support for the new socio-democratic political line of the *izquierda abertzale*. Another continuity is the MS's adoption of the *Topagune* as a key event for socialising young people, as well as socialist centres, which follows the Basque culture of the *gatzetxes*. Moreover, as shown in the last section, the MS strongly criticises the historical cycle of the *izquierda abertzale* and its nationalist discourse. However, the MS recognises the existence of a Basque national community with its national language. Exactly like radical Basque nationalism, the MS seeks an independent state for the Basque Country, though with a more internationalist discourse, placing the movement in line with the radical Basque nationalist tradition. If, for many years, the distinction in the Basque Country has been between independentist (*abertzale*) and non-independentist (non-*abertzale*) movements (Fernandez - Antolin 2000), the MS belongs to the Basque independentist movement tradition. This argument is reinforced by the ambiguity of the MS, which, on the one hand, criticises nationalism and the *izquierda abertzale*, yet, on the other hand, participates in nationalist commemorations such as the *Gudari* and the *Aberri Eguna*.

As noted at the beginning of this paper, the data considered for the analysis enabled an investigation of how the MS strategically constructed its discourse on pivotal topics of contention in the Basque case. However, the lack of in-depth interviews with activists is a limitation of this initial research on the Socialist Movement, as the analysis does not consider the micro-level of activists' interpretations and framings of social reality. Therefore, this research should be seen as an invitation to pursue further inquiry into the Basque Socialist Movement, particularly through in-depth interviews with activists. Research with MS activists should also address their perspectives on the Basque national question and history in comparison with those of young *abertzale* activists, since both groups come from the same socio-political milieu yet compete, especially at the youth level.

References

- Alimi E. Y. - Bosi L. - Demetriou C. (2015), *The Dynamics of Radicalization: A Relational and Comparative Perspective*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Barcena I. - Ajangiz R. (2011), «Basque Social Movements: Euskara, Feminism and Environmentalism», in Ahedo I. - Urteaga E. (eds.), *Basque Political Systems*, University of Nevada Press, Reno, pp. 219-234.
- Benford R. D. - Snow D. A. (2000), «Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment», *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, pp. 611-639.
- Bosi L. - Ó Dochartaigh N. - Pisoiu D. (2015), *Political Violence in Context*, ECPR Press, Colchester.
- Bourne A. (2015), «Why Ban Batasuna? Terrorism, Political Parties and Democracy», *Comparative European Politics*, n. 13 (3), pp. 325-344.
- Bourne A. (2018), «Pathways out of Violence: Desecuritization and Legalization of Bildu and Sortu in the Basque Country», *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, 17, pp. 45-66.
- Casquete J. (2013), «Commemorative Calendar and Reproduction of Radical Basque Nationalism», *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 14 (1), pp. 21-35.
- Giordia A. (2021), «Less Divided After ETA? The Evolution of Ideological Cleavages in the Basque Environmental Field, 2007–2017», *Mobilization*, n. 26 (2), pp. 217-236.
- Cirulli A. (2012), *L'Ascia e il Serpente. L'ETA e il nazionalismo basco dopo la lotta armata*, Datanews, Roma.
- Conversi D. (1997), *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain: Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilisation*, Hurst, London.
- Custodi J. (2023), *Radical Left Parties and National Identity in Spain, Italy and Portugal: Rejecting or Reclaiming the Nation*, Springer, Cham.
- Della Porta D. (2013), *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Della Porta D. - Rucht D. (1995), «Left-Libertarian Movements in Context: A Comparison of Italy and West Germany, 1965–1990», in Jenkins J. C. - Klandermans B. (eds.), *The Politics of Social Protest*, Routledge, London, pp. 119-139.
- Fernandez A. - Antolin J. (2000), «Estructura organizativa de los “nuevos” movimientos sociales en el País Vasco: claves para su comprensión», *Política y Sociedad*, 35, pp. 153-164.
- Goffman E. (1974), *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA.
- González F. O. - Anillo C. F. (2021), «De ETA a los consejos socialistas. El nuevo paradigma del Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Vasco», *Revista Internacional de Estudios sobre Terrorismo*, 3, pp. 44-56.

- Iraola I. - Bergantiños N. - Epelde M. - Sagastizabal M. - Zabalo J. (2023), «Is the National Question a Problem for Social Movements? Activist Discourses from the Basque Country», *Ethnopolitics*, 24 (3), pp. 241-259.
- Irvin C. L. (1999), *Militant Nationalism: Between Movement and Party in Ireland and the Basque Country*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Larrinaga A. - Amurrio M. (2016), «The Ethno-Linguistic Movement and Linguistic Self-Determination in Euskara», in Zabalo J. - Guibernau M. (eds.), *Basque Nationhood: Towards a Democratic Scenario*, University of Nevada Press, Reno, pp. 83-119.
- Larrinaga A. - Amurrio M. (2023), «Legacy and Rupture: The Political Learning of Young Left-Wing Basque Nationalists in the Post-ETA Period», *Young*, 31 (1), pp. 22-37.
- Larrinaga A. - Odriozola O. - Amurrio M. - Iraola I. (2023), «Exploring New Citizenship Practices: The Meaning of Young Activists' Political Engagement in the Basque Country», in Zabalo J. - Filibi I. - Escajedo San-Epifanio L. (eds.), *Made-to-Measure Future(s) for Democracy?*, Springer, Cham, pp. 217-239.
- Lindekilde L. (2014), «Discourse and Frame Analysis: In-Depth Analysis of Qualitative Data in Social Movement Research», in Della Porta D. (ed.), *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 195-227.
- Llera F. J. - Mata J. M. - Irvin C. L. (1993), «ETA: From Secret Army to Social Movement – The Post-Franco Schism of the Basque Nationalist Movement», *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 5 (3), pp. 106-134.
- Malthaner S. - Waldmann P. (2014), «The Radical Milieu: Conceptualizing the Supportive Social Environment of Terrorist Groups», *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 37 (12), pp. 979-998.
- Mees L. (2001), «Between Votes and Bullets: Conflicting Ethnic Identities in the Basque Country», *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24 (5), pp. 798-827.
- Mees L. (2019), *The Basque Contention: Ethnicity, Politics, Violence*, Routledge, London.
- Muro D. (2013), *Ethnicity and Violence: The Case of Radical Basque Nationalism*, Routledge, London.
- Muxel A. (2020), «Political Radicalism Among the Younger Generations», *Youth and Globalization*, 2 (2), pp. 123-136.
- Ó Broin E. (2003), *Matxinada: Basque Nationalism and Radical Basque Youth Movements*, Left Republican Books, Dublin.
- Pérez-Agote A. (2006), *The Social Roots of Basque Nationalism*, University of Nevada Press, Reno.
- Polletta F. (1999), «Free Spaces in Collective Action», *Theory and Society*, 28 (1), pp. 1-38.
- Snow D. A. - Benford R. D. (1988), «Ideology, Frame Resonance and Movement Participation», *International Social Movement Research*, 1 (1), pp. 197-217.
- Tejerina B. (2001), «Protest Cycle, Political Violence and Social Movements in the Basque Country», *Nations and Nationalism*, 7 (1), pp. 39-57.
- Todd J. (2018), *Identity Change After Conflict: Ethnicity, Boundaries and Belonging in the Two Irelands*, Springer, Cham.

- Waldmann P. (2005), «The Radical Community: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Background of ETA, IRA and Hezbollah», *Sociologus*, 55 (2), pp. 239-257.
- Wennerhag M. - Fröhlich C. - Piotrowski G. (2017), *Radical Left Movements in Europe*, Routledge, London.
- Whitfield (2014), *Endgame for ETA: Elusive Peace in the Basque Country*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Zabalo J. - Iraola I. (2022), «Current Discourses and Attitudes in Favour of the Independence of the Basque Country», *Regional & Federal Studies*, 32 (1), pp. 73-93.
- Zabalo J. - Odriozola Irizar O. (2017), «The Importance of Historical Context: A New Discourse on the Nation in Basque Nationalism?», *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 23 (2), pp. 134-154.
- Zabalo J. - Saratxo M. (2015), «ETA Ceasefire: Armed Struggle vs. Political Practice in Basque Nationalism», *Ethnicities*, 15 (3), pp. 362-384.
- Zerubavel E. (1996), «Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past», *Qualitative Sociology*, 19 (3), pp. 283-299.
- Zubiaga M. (2014), «El Ciclo de Protesta en Euskal Herria: Hegemonía y Radicalización Democrática», in *La Rebel·lió Basca. Una Historia de l'Esquerra Abertzale*, Txalaparta, Tafalla, pp. 2-35.