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*Center for Studies, Training  
and Social Analysis*

# The Basque exodus as a consequence of ideological persecution

REPORT 02 | CEU-CEFAS

May of 2023

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# Executive Summary

- From 1976-1977 onwards, the Basque Country began a process of demographic collapse with a profound negative impact. The region that has aged the most in Spain since 1976 is the Basque Country, due to the enormous drop in fertility –which is considerably higher than the national average– and to the Basque exodus.
- The result is that, in net figures, some 180,000 native Spaniards have left the Basque lands between the beginning of 1977 and 2022 for political reasons. This loss of some 180,000 people –around 9% of the 1977 Basque population– actually implies an additional demographic loss of several tens of thousands more inhabitants –the children and even grandchildren that many of those who left would have had in the Basque Country. The impunity of the ETA killings, protected by the silence in the streets and the approving comments of the sympathisers from other parties, would be the main cause of the beginning of the exodus.
- The establishment of a nationalist model at the political and social level would also have economic consequences. At present, the economic anomaly of the Basque Country, as Spain's second region in terms of per capita income after the Region of Madrid, is that it contributes far less in fiscal terms to the Central Government than the value of what it receives from the State, and enjoys far greater public funding per inhabitant for comparable public services than the fifteen Autonomous Regions under the common tax regime.
- There is general disappointment with the Basque Government for its lack of attention to the situation and needs of the victims of terrorism and other exiled people, which contrasts with the attention paid to the descendants of Basques living outside Spain for reasons other than terrorism (mainly economic emigration to America), who have the right to vote in Basque elections, according to Article 7.2 of the Statute of Guernica.
- Despite the disappearance of the most violent expression of nationalism, the Basque Government led by the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party) has not created the conditions –educational, linguistic and social–

to facilitate their return. The truth is that they want them out in order to consolidate their exclusionary project without any hindrance.

- The elections held in the Basque Country since 1978 have never taken place in a climate of freedom, but under persecution and threat. These circumstances have prevented the non-nationalist alternatives from competing on equal terms. They have not been able to campaign normally, nor to have native candidates or to count on auditors and proxies. The census has been altered, definitively, by ETA terrorism and nationalist pressure.
- The Spanish Government, apart from the respective indemnifications, has not ensured the compensation to which the victims of terrorism are entitled. It has not taken any measures to give them back the rights they were deprived of. Not only have 379 killings gone unpunished, but their disenfranchisement has ensured results for nationalism that it would not have achieved without the existence of terrorism.
- The decapitalisation caused –and not only of a moral nature– is evident. The descendants of the people killed will not return to the Basque Country. The flight of talent and entrepreneurs and the loss of attractiveness of the Basque Country as a land of opportunities is demonstrated by an indisputable fact: in 1975 the Basque Country accounted for 7.80% of the national GDP, today it barely amounts to 5.90%. The new generations of descendants of the murdered and extorted people are aware of the lack of institutional interest in explaining what the existence of terrorism has meant for Spain. They have not heard the testimony of any victim during their school years. The education system and the level of demand for the Basque language do not guarantee a brilliant professional career in the Basque Country. Those who remain will probably seek their future abroad and those who left will not return.
- EH Bildu, together with ERC, has become a party of great political prominence due to the PSOE-Unidas Podemos coalition's dependence on it in the national executive. On the other hand, the departure of 10% of the total population of the Basque Country for reasons of discrimination and threats has not been recognised or integrated, thus leading to the elimination of Basque political plurality. The consequence is the consolidation of the Basque community as a national element entitled to a process of self-determination, at the expense of a portion of Basque society, driven into permanent exile by the discriminatory context created by ideologised autonomous institutions.



# Introduction

After half a century of democracy in Spain, the Basque provinces have undergone a major social transformation. The initial plurality demonstrated in the first elections, as befits an advanced, urban and industrial society, was gradually degraded by the emergence of terrorism and the establishment of a nationalist autonomous government which, with no political alternative to replace it, has imposed a way of life that resembles a single-party regime.

Today, the terrorism of ETA and its satellite groups have come to an end, leaving in their wake almost a thousand direct murder victims, along with other discriminatory measures that have created a severe social trauma. However, the disappearance of terrorism has not meant the deactivation of its social support, but rather expanded it, and has even increased its prominence due to the interrelation with other political forces that do not pose democratic cordons, and which were used by the nationalists against the representations of democratic parties.

This anomalous situation leads many to believe that terrorism can be seen as a beneficial instrument, because by spreading death and pain it has managed to shape a society to its liking and to the benefit of nationalist parties. One of the recurring questions is what became of the victims, those attacked in the first instance, whose relatives were vilified and murdered, or pressurised, insulted and robbed, forcing them to leave the land of their forebears, having to seek the right to live in peace and freedom and to exercise their private interests in faraway places where they were given the opportunity to live.

It is difficult to quantify, but it is estimated that 10% of the total population of the Basque provinces has been regularly fuelled by the imposition of a nationalist regime that has been expelling the descendants of non-nationalists, who, without contacts or the opportunity to find a future job in a labour market mediated by conditions that benefit the nationalists, have been forced to emigrate without return, joining those who have been violently expelled for publicly expressing their ideas, and who have been forced to leave their homeland.

In this respect, it was necessary to draw up an academic and technical report that could provide the necessary data to analyse and understand an anomalous situation that is poisoning Basque social coexistence. The memory of a transition that gave a voice to all the different political sectors, but which, in the process of institutionalising the autonomous system, led to the mass murder of three hundred Basque civilians in order to silence and prevent the formation of other political alternatives that might overshadow nationalism, together with the continuous killing of hundreds of members of the army, security forces and civil servants belonging to different groups, from prison staff to nuclear power plant workers. This inhumane pressure that destroyed lives was accompanied by social pressure, based on nationalist sectors that took advantage of the moment to create a unique educational, cultural, social and even economic system, taking advantage of the reconversion to eliminate a steel and shipbuilding industry that employed tens of thousands of workers, most of whom voted for non-nationalist left-wing options.

The socio-political model created benefited from the absence of a political alternative, although there were such alternatives with Jaime Mayor Oreja at the head of the Basque PP (Popular Party-conservative), or Nicolás Redondo Terreros in the PSE (Basque Socialist Party), who were fought to prevent their possible accession to the highest office of the Basque Government. The dependence of the regional executive on the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party) has led to the creation of a closed model, also promoted by the central government, to prevent the growth of social support for terrorism, which is impossible without obtaining the educational and cultural competences that for four decades have depended on a political ideology with social construction objectives. The fraudulent use of history has not only promoted the creation of an identity that does not reflect historical reality, but has also fostered the need to receive benefits for non-existent injustices from a falsified past, as well as the control by the nationalists of a special system of economic control through the Basque concert, which has allowed them access to considerable financial resources, creating a situation of inequality with the rest of Spanish society.

This team decided to answer these different issues with a report that would help new generations of Spaniards to understand in a scientific way the special situation of the absence of freedom of expression and even political freedom in the Basque provinces, the presence of thousands of Basques in other provinces of Spain who are afraid to return to their homes, the progressive deterioration of a region that was the engine of the Spanish economy and now maintains a high standard of living at the expense of a special system that benefits it and leads to the departure of the youngest and most well-trained people on a journey of no return, because of the maintenance of a region in a localised, uniform regime that is closed to criticism. This report aims to provide answers to a present, shaped by its painful past, and to lay the foundations for a future where Basques can live in freedom and plurality, on an equal footing and without political tolls.

# Historical context of the last Basque exile

Basque society has reflected in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a plurality in its political behavior that responds to the diversity of opinions of its citizens. Social complexity, the result of the evolution from a rural to an industrial world in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, produced profound changes in the mentality of the inhabitants of the Basque provinces, which was combined with the arrival of numerous human contingents in response to the offer of industrial work. Resistance to the changes of the modern developed in Western Europe made the small Basque Country one of the most ideologically diverse places in Spain.

To this highly pluralistic society, where regional Carlism and a liberalism divided into families would persist, foreign mimetic ideologies such as Marxist socialism and nationalism based on racial assumptions would also be added. It was in this open environment that the Basque political forces took shape, which had a plural and eclectic origin as they gradually formed into numerous groups from the different families originating from the Carlist wars and the industrial revolution.

## Local origins of political forces

Carlism, as the oldest political movement in Spain, having originated in 1833, was to have a great influence on the shaping of the Basque right-wing movement. In the Basque Country, Carlism was able to combine a series of principles such as the defence of religion in the social order, regionalism as an expression of tradition, the feudal structure of land ownership in the economic order and the monarchy of the *ancien régime* in the political sphere. Legitimist traditionalism took root in those regions where industrialisation had not been established and maintained a significant social presence, as was the case in Durango and Orozco in Vizcaya, Tolosa and Goyerri in Guipúzcoa. However, social change, where industrialisation was introduced, led to the replacement of traditionalism by Basque nationalism.

Although a minority movement, Basque liberalism had its origins in the national sentiment that emerged in 1808 from the struggle against the French invader - a modern patriotism that overcame the old differences of the kingdoms of the *ancien régime* and tried to identify itself with the legal framework that emerged in

the 1812 Constitution. In Bilbao, the town that had resisted several sieges by the Carlists, the veterans of the city's volunteer militia formed the "El Sitio" ("The Siege") cultural society, which had clear liberal roots and promoted cultural activities in the city, such as the march to the Mayona cemetery every 2nd of May to pay tribute to the victims of the various sieges of the city.

Basque nationalism, founded in 1895 by Sabino Arana, began to be called *bizkaitarrismo*, because it started out as a party linked exclusively to Vizcaya, although it later included all the provinces with a Basque population in its demands. The elements on which Basque nationality was based included race, language, law, idiosyncrasy and customs. Its emergence came about in opposition to the identity crisis produced by industrialisation and the massive arrival of an immigrant proletariat. The only possible defence against the modern world was expressed by Sabino Arana through the severance of all ties with Spain and the proclamation of independence. In this way, political independence would preserve Basque society from the evils of the modern world such as secularism, migrants and industrialisation. From then on, nationalism contributed to the assertion of a Basque personality that was differentiated from and opposed to the national entity of Spain.

The ideas of Basque nationalism came from a school of Germanic nationalism known as *Völkisch*. This movement defended a philosophy that placed people in such a way that they depended on their racial origin and history, making them part of a national community based on blood and a common language. This denominator of nationalism meant that, in the search for this ideal community, the peasant became the model to be followed and was glorified to the point of exaggeration as the ideal prototype of the man that Basque nationalism wanted to save and create.

Spanish socialism had its origins in the decision of Paul Lafargue, Karl Marx's son-in-law, to come to Spain to spread socialist ideas in 1871. Here he met the typographers José Mesa and Pablo Iglesias, who were responsible for creating the conditions for the development of Spanish socialism. The new movement began its work in May 1879, although it only became legal in 1881. The new political grouping called the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) structured its discourse around anti-clericalism, anti-republicanism and anti-royalism. At that time, it was a marginal and revolutionary group that was clearly opposed to Catholic values, believing that the Church, as the foundation of the Spanish conscience, should be destroyed in order to create a new society based on the values of Marxist socialism. As for the situation in the Basque Country, the leading figure of socialism was Facundo Perezagua, a metallurgist affiliated to the PSOE since 1879, a native of Toledo who emigrated to the "industrial France" of Vizcaya in his childhood. He was responsible for founding the first socialist group in Bilbao on 11 July 1886, and in December of the following year the second in Ortuella, one of the mining towns in Vizcaya. From then on, the left bank of the Nervión and the Deva valley in Guipúzcoa became the socialist strongholds of northern Spain.

## The Basque Country during the Second Republic

The proclamation of the Second Republic provided an opportunity for Basque autonomy to become a reality. However, the nationalists had excluded themselves from the republican conspiracy of the Pact of San Sebastián and the Carlists were opposed to the established regime. This did not prevent the recognition of autonomous aspirations by the planned Republic, and Fernando Sasiain, a Republican, and Indalecio Prieto, a Socialist, negotiated the inclusion of Basque autonomy in the Republican organisation. However, José Antonio Aguirre, the Nationalist mayor of Guecho, led a movement of town councils in favour of autonomy that culminated in the Estella meeting, where the Basque Studies Society was commissioned to draw up a Statute with the support of Nationalists and Carlists.

Meanwhile, the left gave priority to the consolidation of the Republic and relegated the autonomist demands to the background. Nationalists and Carlists opted for the Statute in the hope of turning the Basque-Navarre Country into a territory safe from Republican anticlerical legislation. The Estella Statute was approved by 427 out of 548 mayors, thanks to the support of Nationalists, Carlists and independent Catholics. However, the project was put on hold when the statutory text was declared unconstitutional for reserving a power of the national executive, namely negotiation with the Vatican.

On 19 June 1932, the assembly of mayors met in Pamplona, where most of them accepted the Statute due to the conjunction of the Republican left and the nationalists. However, Navarre clearly rejected the draft and on 6 February 1933 the Basque town councils accepted the new draft that excluded Navarre from the Statute. The new draft was viewed with indifference by the left, but it received the fervour of nationalism, which threw itself enthusiastically into the project in order not to miss the opportunity. In Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa the result was approved by a large majority, but in Álava it was only by a narrow margin. In this way, the PNV set out on a path separate from the interests of the rest of the Basque Catholics in order to establish a Basque State governed by the party.

The PNV's isolation from the rest of the right-wing forces pushed it towards a progressive radicalisation that would lead it to resume the anti-Spanish sentiments that had been overcome through pragmatism. The Civil War helped to accentuate the separation between the two political sectors and caused a profound division in Basque society. The PNV's positioning in favour of the Republican government would keep the coastal provinces under its control. On 19 July, the newspaper *Euzkadi* published a statement by the *Bizkai Buru Batzar* in which the PNV took sides with the Republic, clearly encouraged by the opportunity to be granted autonomy at a time when the Republic was in a weakened position. Although the nationalists of Álava and Navarre had different opinions, *Napar Buru Batzar* launched a manifesto stating that the Navarrese PNV, given its fervently Catholic and pro-Regionalist ideology, did not take sides with the Republican government.

## The Franco regime and the Basque Provinces

From the outset, Franco's regime had the support of the army, the Church, the business community, part of the urban middle class and the peasantry. The new social order promised progress in exchange for the absence of any revolutionary threat. In this way, under the new regime, the Basque bourgeoisie was not only able to regain the power it had lost during the Republic, but also managed to ensure that the state relied decisively on its support, and it came to have a much greater representation in Madrid than it had achieved in other periods. Provincial councils, town halls, ministries and embassies were filled for decades with Basque surnames. The sociological profile of the group of high-ranking leaders who participated in Franco's regime is remarkably well-defined: individuals with a high degree of cultural and intellectual training, with a low average age and very little political preparation prior to 1937. Their position with respect to the regime was pragmatic, their personal loyalty to Franco being more important than their membership of a specific political family (Falangists, Carlists, royalists, liberals, Christian Democrats, etc.). The convergence of interests in Basque Francoism also included a sociological framework in which a broad range of middle and popular sectors took part. The economic development of the 1960s promoted the emergence of a clientelism of the regime that was confusingly apolitical, but closely linked to the maintenance of the system. The petty bourgeoisie, the middle class, the civil service and professionals in the service sector made up the Basque social fabric of the regime.

The developmentalism undertaken in the Basque Country had a rapid impact on the demographic variable. In fifteen years, from 1960 to 1975, the Basque population grew by 44.38%, a quarter of whom were young people from other provinces in search of factory jobs. The demographic contribution to Basque expansion showed spectacular migratory balances in the coastal provinces. In the sixties, Vizcaya took in almost one hundred thousand inhabitants and Guipúzcoa half that number. In the specific case of greater Bilbao, extending the dates of reception from 1950 to 1970, the population rose from 405,000 to 816,000 inhabitants. The two coastal provinces were the first in the country in terms of living standards.

## The arrival of democracy

In the final stage of Franco's regime, some of the pioneers of the Basque centre-right groups took part in the democratic opposition where, despite not being in the majority, they held positions of indisputable social importance and their spirit even penetrated sectors that collaborated with the regime. The mood of these groups was reformist and they wanted the transition from Francoism to democracy to take place at the lowest possible social and political cost. However, the reform of Spain's territorial structure would become one of the main issues in the transition. In the early post-Franco years, the nationalist impulse would manifest itself very strongly and would force the administrative reform of the State to be considered as one of the key issues in the democratisation of the country. The assumption of Basque nationalist symbology by the socialist and

communist left led to the urgent need to convert Spain into a decentralised country. The demand for autonomy would later be crucial to understanding the climate in which the 1978 constitution was conceived.

The most conflictive points between the centrist UCD government and those demanding autonomy were the geographical delimitation of the Basque Country, the competences of self-government, the very symbolism that nationalism was successfully striving to impose, the refusal of Basque nationalism to accept the constitutional text and the refusal of the national government to do the same with the statutory project drawn up in Guernica. The Suárez government tried to calm the tense political climate in the Basque Country by means of amnesties, the expatriation of imprisoned terrorist leaders and the legalisation of the *ikurriña* (Basque flag). Meanwhile in Catalonia, the appointment of the exiled president of the *Generalitat*, Josep Tarradellas, provided the government with an ideal interlocutor to re-establish the institution of autonomy in the principality. In the Basque provinces, the lack of unity among the Basques and the absence of a charismatic leader prevented a repetition of the Catalan formula.

However, the 1978 Constitution, despite being the first to recognise nationalist demands, did not fulfil all their aspirations, as the nationalists sought the annexation of Navarre. Nevertheless, the constitution affirmed the indissolubility of the Spanish nation, although in its eighth article it created a tricky point by stating that the Spanish nation was made up of nationalities and regions, in an attempt to articulate two contradictory concepts. It also left Navarre, a fundamental part in the process of constructing a Basque political reality, subject to a diffuse and controversial process. As compensation, the constitutional text had approved a second transitory provision that facilitated access to autonomy for those territories that had approved a draft statute in a referendum in the past.

Despite the political effort made by the government, the compensation was not enough and the PNV joined the radical nationalist forces in the campaign for abstention in the 1978 constitutional referendum. The Constitution was approved on 6 December by 67% of the electorate, with 88% voting in favour. In the Basque Country, consensus had not been reached with the nationalist world. The indissolubility of the Spanish nation, written in the second article of the Constitution, threatened the future possibility of Basque secession. The nationalists took advantage of this point to refuse to accept the Constitution and to encourage their supporters to abstain.

The Constitution was approved in Álava by 72.4%, in Vizcaya by 73% and in Guipúzcoa by 64.6%, although it did not manage to exceed 50% of the electorate due to the high abstention rate of 34.4%, used as a refuge for those who did not want to speak out in the midst of the “years of lead”. However, they were surpassed by a higher abstention rate in other provinces such as Orense and Lugo. Nationalism tried to take advantage of an anomalous situation caused in November and December 1978 by the numerous ETA killings. The 27 deaths at that time helped to create an atmosphere conducive to staying at home, not turning out to vote and not visibly showing one’s support for the Constitution, especially in small towns.



The establishment of Basque autonomy was an urgent solution sought by the government in order to create a legal framework in which Basques of all persuasions could feel at ease in peaceful coexistence. However, the presentation of the project had opened a phase of crisis, when the centrist government tried to oppose the points that contradicted the 1978 Constitution. However, after the results of the general elections of March 1979, with President Adolfo Suárez and the President of the Basque General Council, Carlos Garaicoechea, taking part in the negotiating process, an agreement was reached on the points referring to the main competences, adapting the statutory text to the constitutional spirit.

Nevertheless, the confirmation of the draft statute was skilfully capitalised on by the nationalist PNV, which claimed to represent the general will of all Basques and wasted no time in using the granting of the statute of autonomy to its advantage. The PNV's electoral advance in the general elections of that year, together with that of Herri Batasuna, which represented a radical nationalism in favour of violent measures, the decline of the Socialist electorate and the campaign of mass murders carried out by ETA provided the necessary climate for Adolfo Suárez's centrist government to believe that support for the PNV's theses would help to reduce support for the more radical ideas of HB, which supported ETA's bloody actions.

Thus, in the final text of the statute, national reality became nationality as stated in its first article. In its second article, Navarre was included as a territory that would form part of the future Basque autonomous region, if this were to take place in accordance with the procedure established in the fourth transitory provision of the Constitution. Other issues such as education, public order and the regional treasury, regulated by means of economic agreements, were included in the Statutory text. However, the additional provision stated that the acceptance of autonomy did not mean that the rights that the nationalists considered that they were entitled to by virtue of their history would be renounced.

In October 1979, the statute was approved in a referendum with a 58.85% turnout and a 90.27% affirmative vote. The result was a clear reflection of the division of Basque society and at the same time of its political plurality. PNV, PSOE, UCD, EE and PCE were in favour of its approval, while HB, EMK (Communist Movement), LKI (Revolutionary Communist League) abstained, and AP and UN –as defenders of regionalism– were opposed to the statute.

The national left, such as the socialists and communists, the centrists in the government, part of the right wing of AP, the left-wing nationalists of EE who were the political arm of ETA-PM and the nationalists of the PNV reached a consensus to live together in an autonomous system governed by the Statute of Guernica. However, parties linked to the radical left such as Herri Batasuna and the small pro-splinter groups of the first ETA, EMK (Maoist) and LKI (Trotskyist) immediately opposed it. The acceptance of the statute meant the establishment of Basque autonomous institutions. The power of these future bodies was to be represented by an autonomous parliament, a government and a president or lehendakari. On 9 March 1980, the first



regional elections were called and the PNV won 25 seats, HB won 11, PSOE won 9, UCD won 6, EE another 6, AP won 2 and the PCE won 1.

However, abstention was still very high, with 40.7% in Álava, 40.6% in Vizcaya and 42.1% in Guipúzcoa, the province hardest hit by the killings and street surveillance by HB informers. The decline of national-level parties was increasing, especially those with a centre-right orientation and those of a nationalist nature that were formed with a parliamentary majority that helped their identification with the autonomous institutions. The absence of HB in the Basque Parliament will help the PNV to govern alone with an artificial majority, and to unite its party with the idea of being responsible for and the key player in obtaining autonomy, completely

## Terror, a key element in the imposition of pro-independence totalitarianism

The reason for the concealment of possible sympathisers of groups that defended right-wing ideas was due to the impossibility of their being represented on an equal footing with the rest of the political parties. From 1976 to 1984 and again from 1995 onwards, Basque citizens who sympathised with or belonged to any of the acronyms representing the right wing of the political spectrum could be accused by both branches of ETA of being enemies of the Basque people and, after a campaign of defamation against them by members of the Basque nationalist groups, be killed by their hitmen in the street while society remained silent, in a manner very similar to the “omerta” of the Sicilian mafia. Although in 1977 the number of killings fell to 11 compared to 17 the previous year, the police arrested 450 ETA members in 1976, mainly after the operation carried out on 12 April which ended with the arrest of 87 people linked to the kidnapping and murder of the businessman Angel Berazadi; and the most important one on 20 November with the arrest of the 300 members of the ETA assembly held in the Monastery of Aránzazu (Guipúzcoa). However, from the royal pardon of November 1975 until 17 October 1977, when the Amnesty Law came into force, 1,232 ETA inmates were released from jail, 678 of whom rejoined the death squads<sup>1</sup>. The reactivation of those who joined the death squads contributed to the offensive in the “years of lead”, which spanned much of the period of the centrist governments. The victims of those early days were people who were able to exercise a certain degree of local leadership and contribute to the formation of a group sympathetic to a right-wing option in some Basque town or city. Their death served as an example to prevent the local structuring of the political party and thus terrorise its possible sympathisers, forcing them, after suffering threats, to go into exile in other Spanish provinces, leaving their voters in the hands of the PNV as the only alternative to ETA supporters.

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<sup>1</sup> Study by Mikel Buesa “Los presos de ETA y el juego de la gallina” (ETA prisoners and the game of chicken), Institute for Industrial and Financial Analysis, Working Paper no. 83, 2012.

The lack of freedom to present their own candidacies, because no one was willing to risk their lives for a political option, meant that a significant number of Basque citizens were unable to enjoy something as basic as being able to freely choose their political representative, especially in the municipal sphere. The low level of establishment and membership of political groups was a direct consequence of the impossibility to organise resulting from the lack of freedom of this major social sector of the Basque Country. From the first general elections held on 15 June 1977, the Basque centre-right was scattered among numerous parties, preventing it from playing an important role in the unique political scenario of the Basque Country. However, given the results obtained on that date, if they had come together they could have represented a force to be reckoned with in the early days of democracy.

In Alava, the UCD was the leading political force in the province with 38,338 votes, which re-presented 30.2% of the people of Alava. The towns with more than 50% of the votes were Armiñón, Baños del Ebro, Berquenda, Elvillar, Lanciego, Lapuebla and Valle de Arana. AP managed to win 7,994 votes with 6.2% of citizen support. More than 10% was obtained in Arceniega, Armiñón, Ayala, Elciego, Labastida, Laguardia, Salinas and Zambrana. As for the DCV-EKD (Basque Christian Democracy), it received considerably less support from the people of Alava, with 3,473 votes, or 2.7%, and a presence of over 5%, but never exceeding 10% in Berquenda, Labraza and Peñacerrada.

In Guipuzcoa, the situation was very different from the situation in Alava: the governing party UCD and the conservative AP did not participate with their own party acronyms, although a similar party did participate at the provincial level, Guipuzcoa Unida, which received 27,048 votes, 8% of the electorate and whose strength was spread over a large number of small towns in the interior of the province. The towns in Gipuzkoa with more than 10% of the votes for GU were Aizarnazabal, Albiztur, Azcoitia, Belaunza, Berrobi, Gainza, Herrialde, Irún, Isasondo, Lizarza, Olaberria, Oñate, Placencia, San Sebastián and Tolosa. Among them, Hernialde, the legendary town where Santa Cruz served as parish priest and led his guerrilla life, stood out with 16% of the vote of the descendants of that famous and fearsome black guard.

The second centre-right party in the province was the DCV-EKD (Basque Christian Democracy) with 16,627 votes, representing 4.9% of the electorate. The towns where they won more than 5% of the vote were Anoeta, Eibar, Gaviria, Irún, Isasondo, Mondragón, Zaldivia and Oñate. A party called *Demócratas Independientes Vascos-Unión Foral*, led by Escudero Rueda, also appeared in the province and received its share of 15,505 votes, representing 4.6% of the citizens of Gipuzkoa.

In industrial Vizcaya, the UCD obtained 91,262 votes with a representation of 15.9%, showing the greatest electoral presence in the towns of Abadiano, Baracaldo, Basauri, Bilbao, Dima, Gordejuela, Lanestosa, Orozco, Trucios and Zaldívar. AP also obtained a significant percentage, with 36,934 votes, a representation of 6.3%. The towns where the conservative movement had a significant presence and was least marginalised were Aránzazu, Arcentales, Arrieta, Castillo Elejabeitia, Ceanuri, Gecho, Lanestosa, Mañaria,

Meñaca, Ondarroa, Orduña, Trucios, Ubidea and Villaro. The latter was particularly significant, as the conservative party obtained 26% of the votes. With a testimonial presence, the DCV- EKD had obtained 6,034 votes, representing 1% of the total, with a presence of some relevance in Garay where 4.9% of voters gave them their support.

In short, in the general elections of June 1977, Basque nationalism showed a strong but not hegemonic social presence. In Alava, the PNV accounted for 17% of the electorate, being outnumbered by the UCD with just over 30%, and the sum of these and the rest of the national right-wing parties together accounted for 39.1% of the Alava electorate. In hard-hit Guipúzcoa, the PNV won 30.5% of the provincial vote, occupying first place in terms of political sympathy. However, the combination of right-wing political forces accounted for a far from negligible 17.5%, despite the absence of the UCD in these general elections. In Vizcaya, the PNV also occupied the leading position with 29.9% of the citizens' vote, but the combined results of the right-wing parties represented 23.2% of voters in Vizcaya.

ETA-PM targeted UCD militants and cadres for their governmental work. Thus, in July 1979, the governing party, which had a testimonial militancy, suffered the attempted kidnapping of the centrist member of parliament and rapporteur of the constitution, Gabriel Cisneros, who was finally shot dead. In November the deputy Javier Rupérez was kidnapped, only to be released a few days later. Meanwhile, centrist Basque militants suffered the loss on 9 November 1978 of the Anzuola militant Luis Candendo, on 12 May 1980 of Ramón Baglietto in Azcoitia and on 25 March 1980 of Enrique de Aresti, uncle of Pilar Aresti, founder of the UCD in Vizcaya. But the campaign against the UCD intensified in October and November of that year against the Basque leaders of the governing party. On 29 September, José Ignacio Ustarán, a member of the party's executive committee in the Basque Country, a native of Vitoria and husband of a centrist councillor in the Basque capital, was assassinated. In the following month, two other members of the executive, Jaime Arrese from Elgoibar and Juan de Dios Doval from San Sebastián, who occupied the third and fourth places on the UCD list in Gipuzkoa, respectively, in the last elections held, were also killed. In the same month, the former centrist councillor of Amorebieta, Felipe Estremiana, was also assassinated in a terrorist attack.

The death of Juan de Dios Doval, a law professor at the Public University of the Basque Country, sparked the first student demonstration against ETA's terrorist activity. In November, the same event took place in Guetaria, the town of Elcano, which took to the streets to demand the return of José María Silveti, president of the local fishermen's guild, who had been threatened with death because of his militancy in the UCD.

However, this murderous campaign against government party militants was simultaneous with the assassination of members of the small Basque AP structure and related parties. On 6 February 1979, José Antonio Vivo, mayor of Olaberría and a militant of Guipúzcoa Unida, the main centre-right political party in the province in 1977 until its dissolution in favour of the UCD and AP, was assassinated. Months later,

on 13 September 1979, Modesto Carriega, director of the Banco Hispanoamericano branch and AP man in Baracaldo, where he was the party's reference point for the left bank of the Nervión, was assassinated. Carriega had been the number two candidate for Vizcaya in the 1979 parliamentary elections, behind the businessman Luis Olarra Ugartemendía. In June 1978, AP had managed to bring together ten thousand supporters at a rally in Baracaldo, an event that was not to be repeated. The following year the pressure would be greater with the assassination on 10 January in Vitoria of Commander Jesús María Velasco Zuazola, head of the Alava police force, but also the husband of Ana Vidal-Abarca, vice-president of AP in the province, who would have to go into exile outside the Basque Country with a broken family. Similarly, in November, Vicente Zorita de Santurce, who had been candidate number three on the AP list for Vizcaya in the first autonomous elections of 1980, was assassinated, his body being found with a Spanish flag in his mouth.

The assassination of these militants in a party with a small following due to the lack of freedom would lead to an exodus of Basque families. The Zorita family –like other threatened families– left Santurce for accommodation near the coast of Alicante. Members of the AP executive board such as Jesús Pérez Bilbao, Antón Peña, Miguel Ángel Planas and the president himself, Pedro Zubiría, went into exile, with Antonio Merino remaining the only member of the party's first executive board to remain politically active in the Basque Country. In the case of Jesús Pérez Bilbao, a resident of Algorta, one morning he found a grave dug with his name on it in the garden of his house. The head of a family of twelve children, he had no choice but to go into exile.

ETA's strategy was to wage a "war of attrition" that would lead the government to accept the alternative KAS. This document called for a new amnesty, granted in 1977, with democracy, the expulsion of the armed forces and public order from the Basque Country, the legalisation of pro-independence parties that had not accepted the constitution, the inclusion of Navarre in the Basque Country, the proclamation of a provisional Basque government and the acceptance of the right to self-determination. In order to achieve their objectives, the years during the constitutional and negotiation period for the draft statute were to be a time of real bloodshed, with the mass elimination of members of the armed forces, public order and civil guard, but also of those citizens sympathetic to right-wing options whose disappearance consolidated the hegemonic position of the PNV in the Basque countryside. Between 1978 and 1980, 247 people were killed by the various radical nationalist terrorist groups.

Their impunity was reflected in the wide range of victims, from the taxi driver from Guetaria, Manuel Albizu, in March 1976; the worker Vicente Soria, from Plasencia, two weeks later; the ambush on the president of the Guipúzcoa provincial council, Juan M<sup>a</sup> de Araluce, who was murdered along with the four members of his bodyguard in June the following year; to the assassination of Javier de Ybarra Bergé, former president of the Vizcaya deputation, after a thirty-day kidnapping during which he was tortured, as a post-mortem later proved. In the case of Araluce, the killing was repudiated by the 27 mayors of the Vergara Group,

members of the national movement led by the businessman and mayor of Vergara, José Luis Elgoro, son of the Francoist mayor of Elgueta, who shortly afterwards led a group of them to join Herri Batasuna, saving them from extermination.

In October, Augusto Unceta Barrenechea, the active president of the Vizcaya provincial council, was assassinated along with his two bodyguards. This socialisation of terror was complemented by the after-effects of the 2,632 people officially recognised as wounded by the gang's hitmen, to which should be added the kidnappings of businessmen, liberal professionals and representatives of consulates. Throughout its history, ETA has kidnapped around 84 people, mostly businessmen, with the aim of extorting money from them in order to increase its criminal income. These actions were carried out in order to make the businessmen pay on a regular basis; ten of the kidnap victims finally being killed.

The Basque right wing was able to move from the marginal position and variety of acronyms to which it was condemned by terrorism to the possibility of becoming a governing force in the Basque Autonomous Community itself. However, the key event that shattered the image of a centre-right linked to the upper classes was the devastating effect of terrorism on the Popular Party councillors. ETA's bloody campaign against the councillors of small Basque towns brought to light the names and surnames of those who belonged to the political alternative it sought to exterminate. The councillors were the link between the social base and the political class. Their local representation meant that they were in permanent contact with their sympathisers as they devoted themselves to municipal work for a few hours, without cutting themselves off from their family, professional and neighbourhood environment. However, their proximity to society and lack of influence on the ruling classes made them easy targets within the political community, as they lacked protection due to their absence of institutional leadership.

The continuous killings among this group caused authentic social upheaval and revealed the interclassism of the Basque centre-right when it appeared on the front page of the newspapers that the dead were anonymous citizens from different social and popular collectives and with biographies similar to the majority of the citizens of the Basque Country. The myth of an oligarchic Basque right-wing that lived off the fate of the rest of Basque society vanished when the identities of the dead began to be those of neighbours with no economic or social significance.

Socialism, from way back in March 1978, when the then PSOE president, Ramón Rubial, and the UGT president, Nicolás Redondo, joined forces in favour of a National Statute of Autonomy and Self-Determination until the arrival of Felipe González as president of the national government, evolved towards the social democratic model prevailing in Western Europe, based on a "German social democratic" model strongly supported by the old German leader, Willy Brandt. The assassination on 23 February 1984 of PSE senator Enrique Casas, as the first left-wing leader to be assassinated in the region, caused a great stir. During the PSE presidency of Nicolás Redondo Terreros, Basque socialism began to feel the jaws of the ETA death

squads in its flesh. In April 1987, the Town Hall in Portugalete was attacked with Molotov cocktails, resulting in the death of socialist militant Teresa Torrano and Comisiones Obreras trade unionist Félix Peña. In 2000, Basque socialism faced one of the worst terrorist offensives against its militants. The attack in February 2000 against the Secretary General of the PSE and former vice-president of the government of José Antonio Ardanza, Fernando Buesa and his bodyguard; in May, the assassination of the former PCE militant, José Luis López de Lacalle, founder of the Ermua Forum and independent supporter of the PSE lists; in July, the assassination of Juan M<sup>a</sup> Jáuregui, former civil governor of Guipúzcoa and member of the PSE; in November, the assassination of Ernest Lluch, former health minister in the government of Felipe González, brought to an end a dark year for socialism. In March of the following year, the veteran socialist, Froilán Elespe, deputy mayor of Lasarte, was added to the list of those killed by the gang's hitmen. A year later, the socialist councillor of Orío, Juan Priede, was killed; in February 2004, the head of the local police in Andoáin, PSE militant, Joseba Pagazaurtundúa. Four years later, the murder in Mondragón of the former socialist councillor, Isaías Carrasco, was added to the list.

The development of a social resistance against the violence of terrorism in the face of nationalism, which had been adopting a hegemonic and totalitarian position since 1980, did not take shape until the 1990s. The impunity of ETA's murders, protected by the silence in the street and the sympathetic comments of the supporters of the other parties, would sustain its actions. However, when, after the extermination of right-wing sympathisers and members of uniformed bodies (military and police), historical militants of the left-wing opposition to Franco's regime began to be murdered, Basque society began to realise that ETA was "at war" with Spain and was fighting to impose a single regime based solely on its own ideas. Although Basque society had acted sporadically in mass rallies against terrorism, as evidenced by the rallies against the assassination of engineer José María Ryan in 1981 or that of Captain Alberto Martín Barrios in 1983, the regular presence of opponents of violence on the streets would not appear until 1987. On 5 July 1993, when the engineer Julio Iglesias Zamora was kidnapped, the collectives for peace organised a campaign to make the violation of human rights permanently visible through the use of the blue ribbon –a visible show of opposition that the threats of the gang's informers who formed part of its political network attempted to suppress.

Such a situation, with hired killers murdering and maintaining an invisible totalitarianism within a democratic regime, can only be compared to when Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) and professor of law at New York University, demonstrated in a study by his foundation how in the southern states of the USA between 1877 and 1950, some 4,400 African Americans were publicly lynched with the silence and complicity of local society and institutions, maintaining a racist and murderous regime for decades while the country allegedly suffered from a racist and murderous regime for decades while the country claimed to be the homeland of rights and freedoms.

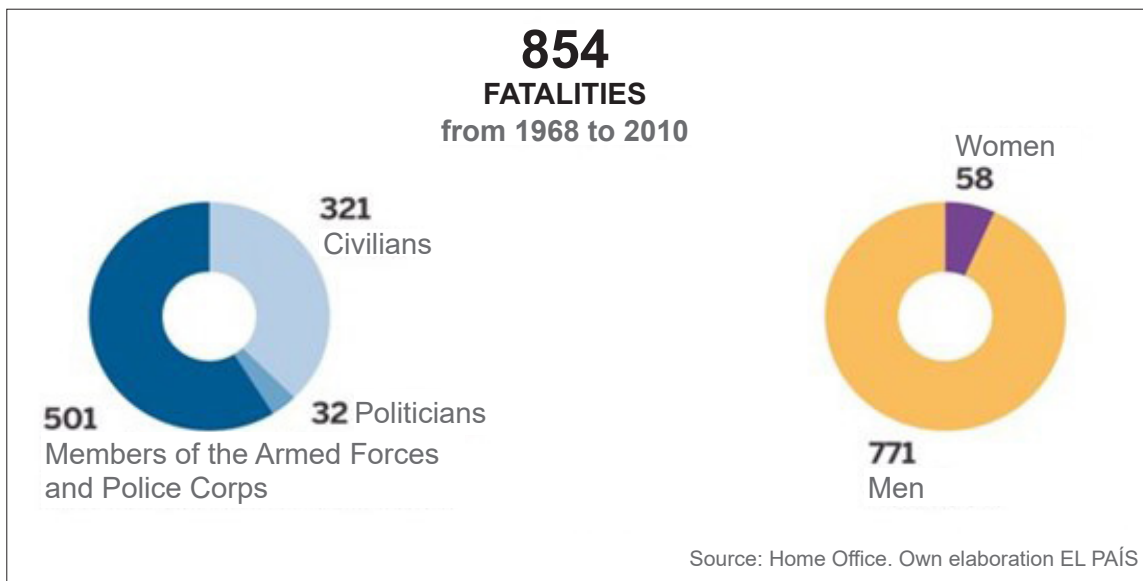
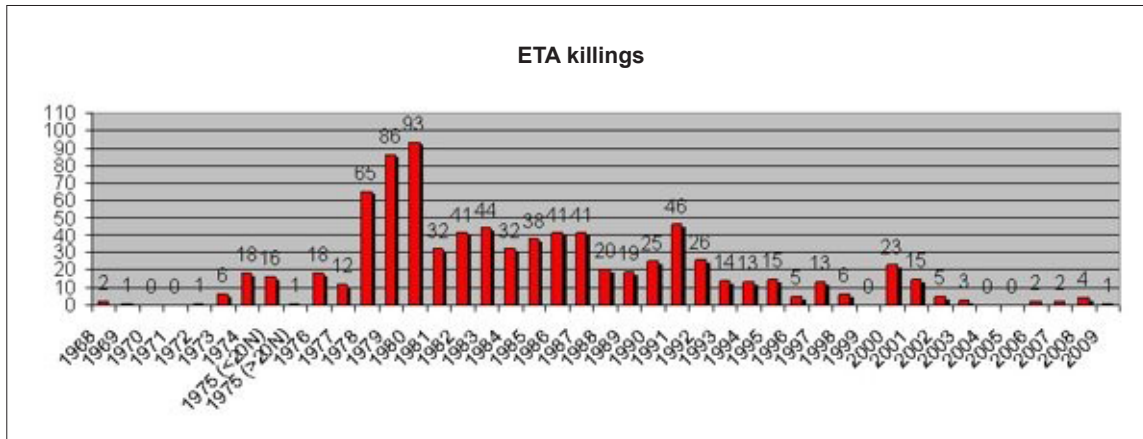


In the Basque Country, society's definitive backlash against the terrorist world came with the murder on 12 July 1997 of the PP councillor from Ermua, Miguel Ángel Blanco. His kidnapping two days earlier and subsequent assassination triggered a wave of attacks on headquarters and premises linked to the nationalist left in Basque society that lasted three days. The brutal assassination of Miguel Ángel Blanco exceeded the social consequences that the armed gang had imagined. The social effect was immediate and society rose up against any organisation linked to ETA and the nationalist parties that had created an environment conducive to its maintenance. The fulfilment of a previously announced assassination frustrated the hopes of a society that had been anticipating the councillor's salvation until the very last moment. The media coverage of the kidnapping helped to keep the population on tenterhooks in the hope of the impossible. The murder on 12 July in the middle of a holiday period for young students and on a Saturday, a public holiday for many people, provided the ideal conditions for a society tired of violence to take to the streets in protest. However, the nationalist authorities prevented acts of violence against the pro-ETA supporters and the Ertzaintza (Basque police) even took part in the defence of the pro-independence supporters' premises with an order to act against the civil uprising three days later. That opportunity would be bitterly remembered when the PNV recovered ETA's weakened social support through the Estella pact on 12 September 1998. The sovereigntist agreement between PNV and EA with the pro-independence left, in exchange for an ETA truce, helped set the stage for an ETA that finally abandoned violence, but maintained a strong political presence through Euskal Herria Bildu (EH Bildu), which brings together all the direct and critical support for independence.

At present, with a quarter of the Basque electorate, EH Bildu, together with ERC, has become a party of great political prominence due to the PSOE-Unidas Podemos coalition's dependence on it in the national executive. In the municipal elections of 28 May 2023, terrorism victims' associations drew attention to the presence of 44 candidates on the EH Bildu lists who had been convicted for their relationship with ETA, seven of them with blood crimes for assassinations. The political and social pressure this created forced the seven former ETA hitmen on the EH Bildu lists to pledge to resign as councillors if elected. The candidates are Jose Antonio Torre Altonaga, convicted for the 1978 murder of Lemóniz nuclear power plant workers Alberto Negro Viguera and Andrés Guerra Pereda; Asier Uribarri Benito and Lander Maruri Basagoiti, convicted in 2001 for their participation as accomplices in the 1997 murder of civil guard José Manuel García Fernández; Begoña Uzkudun Etxenagusia, convicted in 1989 for the 1984 murder of José Larrañaga Arenas; Jose Ramón Rojo González, convicted in 1996 for the 1991 murder of Francisco Gil Mendoza; Juan Carlos Arriaga Martínez, convicted in 1989 for the 1984 murder of Army Major Jesús Alcocer Jiménez; and Agustín Muiños Díaz, convicted in 1985 for the 1983 murder of José Antonio Julián Bayano.

On the other hand, the departure of 10% of the total population of the Basque Country for reasons of political discrimination, threats, assassinations and expulsion from work has not been recognised or acknowledged, thus promoting the elimination of Basque political plurality and the reduction of voting

options for those who recognise it, in the different nationalist variants, making the Basque region a national element with the right to a process of self-determination at the expense of the rest of Basque society driven into permanent and regular exile by the uniform and discriminatory context created by ideologised autonomous institutions.





# Demographic trends in the Basque Country since the Transition: a horrifying decline

“Demographics is destiny” (*Auguste Comte, philosopher*)

“By their fruits you shall know them” (*Jesus Christ. Matthew 7, 15-20*)

For the first three quarters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Basque Country enjoyed an impressive demographic –and economic– boom. Between 1900 and 1975, the Basque population grew from 600,000 to 2 million –it multiplied by 3.3 times, almost twice as much as in the rest of Spain– because it received a lot of internal Spanish immigration, and births far outnumbered deaths. Ortega y Gasset could have said that the Basque Country enjoyed, in those 75 golden years, “indecent” demographic health.

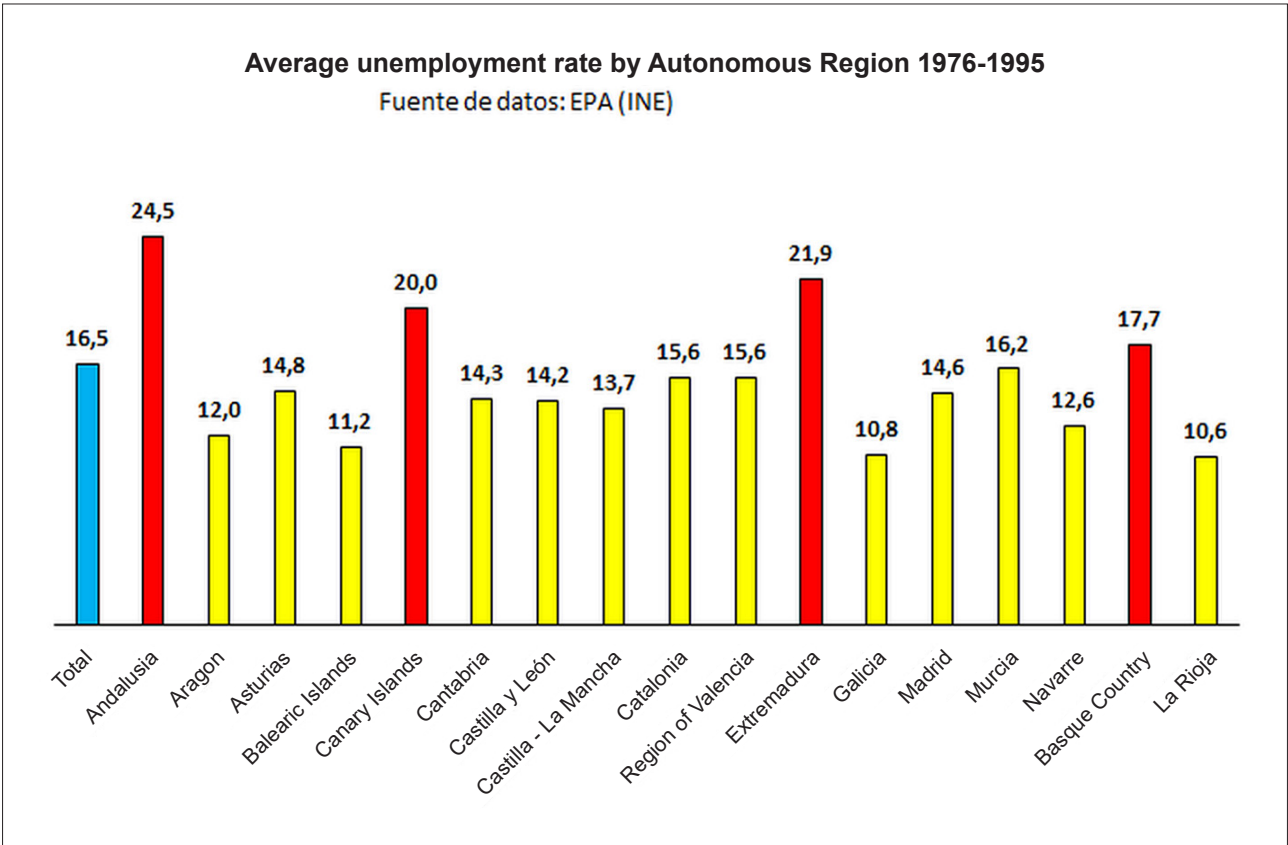
After Franco’s death, ETA terrorism, which had already produced a considerable number of fatalities in the last three years of Franco’s regime, was in crescendo. From the beginning of the transition, Basque nationalism gained political and cultural hegemony in the region. And since 1979, with the Guernica Statute, it also gained political power, which it has maintained ever since, with the isolated exception of a legislature in which the PSOE governed.

From 1976-1977 onwards, a process of demographic collapse began in the Basque Country with a far-reaching negative impact, particularly intense up to 1995-2000, characterised by:

- **The mass departure of the population to other areas of Spain and abroad**, either because of threats from ETA and hostility to those who were not nationalists, or because of economic difficulties. The latter cause, partly resulting from the crisis in Vizcaya’s large-scale industry –a major part of the Basque economic fabric, but only that, a part of it– was exacerbated by the worsening of the political climate and terrorism. Terrorist extortion of businessmen, which included notorious murders and kidnappings, inevitably had a damaging effect on the economy, as did the departure of the population for political-terrorist reasons. On the other hand, in the decade following Franco’s death, the economy was not much better in

the rest of Spain either, unable to offer great opportunities to those leaving the Basque Country, whose unemployment rate was only slightly above the national average in the first 20 years of democracy, the so-called “years of lead” of ETA terrorism.

- **A sudden collapse in the fertility rate** (number of children per woman)<sup>2</sup>. This also occurred in the rest of Spain from 1977 onwards, but nowhere to such an extent during the first 20 years of democracy.



In turn, these two phenomena had a much greater impact in Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa, the two “most Basque” provinces, with more people with “Eight Basque Surnames” and greater nationalist electoral dominance than in Alava. Over the years, and especially from 2000 onwards, the devastating pace of the decline in Basque demographic health slowed down –but without the negative trend being reversed– as terrorist activity decreased and the stability of the Basque economy recovered, largely thanks to a system of public funding that was privileged with respect to the other Autonomous Regions, with the exception of Navarre. The Basque Country, Spain’s second region in terms of per capita income after Madrid, currently contributes much less in taxation to the central government than it receives from it, and enjoys much more public funding per inhabitant for comparable public services than the fifteen Autonomous Regions under the common tax regime.

<sup>2</sup> The number of children per woman is not directly influenced by migration –as it is by the total number of births– since it measures the fertility of “stayers”.

# Net outflow of the Spanish population from the Basque Country

Migratory flows usually involve outflows and inflows of population, for which there are no good specific statistics from the INE (National Statistics Institute) until 2008. It is possible to estimate quite accurately the net balance of immigration minus emigration, as the difference between the total population variation and that due to the natural increase (births minus deaths)<sup>3</sup>. Taking a more precise approach, by specific ages, for example, over a period of 20 years, in a certain place we can compare how many people born in Spain at X + 20 years of age there are now with those born at X years of age two decades earlier, taking into account in the comparison, in order to calculate the net emigration/immigration of Spaniards, those who would have died in that period.

Bearing this in mind, comparing the population born in Spain living in the Basque Country on 1 January 2022 with that of 45 years earlier, and discounting the balance between births and deaths accumulated in that period (without including those born in Spain to foreign mothers living in the Basque Country, as well as the deaths of foreigners living in the Basque Country in that period), the result is that **some 180,000 native Spaniards have left the Basque Country, in net numbers**, between the beginning of 1977 and 2022. That would be the sum of the Basque exodus for political reasons, plus those who have left for economic or other reasons –for example, to study at university or to marry someone from another place and move there– minus those who have gone to live in the Basque Country in the last 45 years. This reduction of some 180,000 people, around 9% of the Basque population in 1977, in fact, at the present time, implies an additional demographic loss of several tens of thousands more inhabitants, which are the children and even grandchildren that many of those who left would have had in the Basque Country.

On the other hand, as population movements tend to have a much lesser effect on elderly/retired people, who have been living in a place for many years and are less inclined to move, this overall 9% implies higher net outflow rates in intermediate and young age groups. Along these lines, **on 1 January 2022, 18.1% fewer people born in Spain aged 45 to 49 years old were living in the Basque Country than those aged 0 to 4 years old in 1977**. This decline is the sum of net emigration and deaths (but the latter represent a very minor part of the decline, as mortality in these age groups is very low). In the rest of Spain, the decline in the same time interval in this age group was only 3.9%, 14.2% less. Among native Spaniards aged 5 to 9 in 1977, the Basque decline in 45 years was 17.1%, compared with 4.2% in the rest of Spain (12.9% less). **Among those aged 10 to 14 in 1977, the decline in 45 years was respectively 16.6% and 2.8%, and among those aged 15 to 19, 12.9% and 2.5%.**

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<sup>3</sup> The natural increase in the Basque Country was positive until 1990 due to the inertia of the demographic health inherited from the political regime prior to democracy. At the national level, the positive balance, although decreasing until 1998, lasted until 2014, and since 2015 it has been increasingly negative. In the Basque Country, the balance was initially negative from 1991 to 2003. From 1999 onwards, as at national level, it experienced an improvement, mainly due to babies born to immigrant mothers. Finally, from 2013 onwards, there were once again more deaths than births in the Basque Autonomous Region.

Let us take a look at some additional and complementary data on the Basque exodus:

- **On 01/01/2022 there were 50,000 fewer people born in Spain living in the Basque Country** than on 01/01/1976 (110,000 fewer without counting the children of foreigners), in sharp contrast with the balance of the rest of Spain: 4.3 million more native Spaniards than in 1976 (some 2.3 million more without counting the children of foreigners born in our country), despite the fact that, in cumulative terms, births exceeded deaths in the Basque Country by 118,000 between 1976 and 2021. If the whole of Spain had behaved like the Basque Country, at the beginning of 2022 there would have been 900,000 fewer native Spaniards living here, rather than 4.3 million more.
- **The bordering single-province autonomous regions (Navarre, Cantabria and La Rioja) have gained quite a lot of native Spanish population since 1976**, unlike the Basque Country, which has lost it.

Source: Population Figures (INE)	On 1 January 1976		On 1 January 2022		Population variation 1976-2022 (abs y%)			
	Total population	Born in Spain	Total population	Born in Spain	Total population		Born in Spain	
<b>Spain</b>	35.946.425	35.787.176	47.432.893	40.067.582	11.486.468	32,0%	4.280.406	12,0%
<b>Basque Country</b>	2.018.991	2.012.823	2.176.918	1.961.719	157.927	7,8%	-51.103	-2,5%
<b>Álava</b>	229.031	228.389	329.798	290.645	100.767	44,0%	62.256	27,3%
<b>Guipúzcoa</b>	664.716	661.520	713.439	641.487	48.723	7,3%	-20.033	-3,0%
<b>Vizcaya</b>	1.125.244	1.122.914	1.133.681	1.029.588	8.437	0,7%	-93.327	-8,3%
<b>Cantabria</b>	490.873	489.633	584.368	525.787	93.495	19,0%	36.154	7,4%
<b>Navarre</b>	489.629	488.191	659.155	552.847	169.526	34,6%	64.656	13,2%
<b>Rioja, La</b>	243.810	243.546	315.916	267.560	72.106	29,6%	24.014	9,9%

- Even recently, in the period from 2008 to 2021, with a Basque Country without terrorism, despite enjoying the second highest per capita income in Spain, one of the lowest levels of unemployment and much better public services, **the region has continued to suffer a net loss of Spanish population** through emigration to other regions, unlike Madrid, Navarre, La Rioja or Cantabria. This loss is smaller in volume than in the “years of lead”, but it is still an anomaly in a wealthy region, which should naturally attract a national population and not lose it.
- The case of **Castro Urdiales**, a Cantabrian town very close to Vizcaya, speaks for itself. In the former Flavióbriga<sup>4</sup>, the registered population born in another autonomous region, overwhelmingly Basque, has increased dramatically in recent decades, to the point that in 2022, 60% of the entire population born in Spain was now resident in Castro Urdiales.

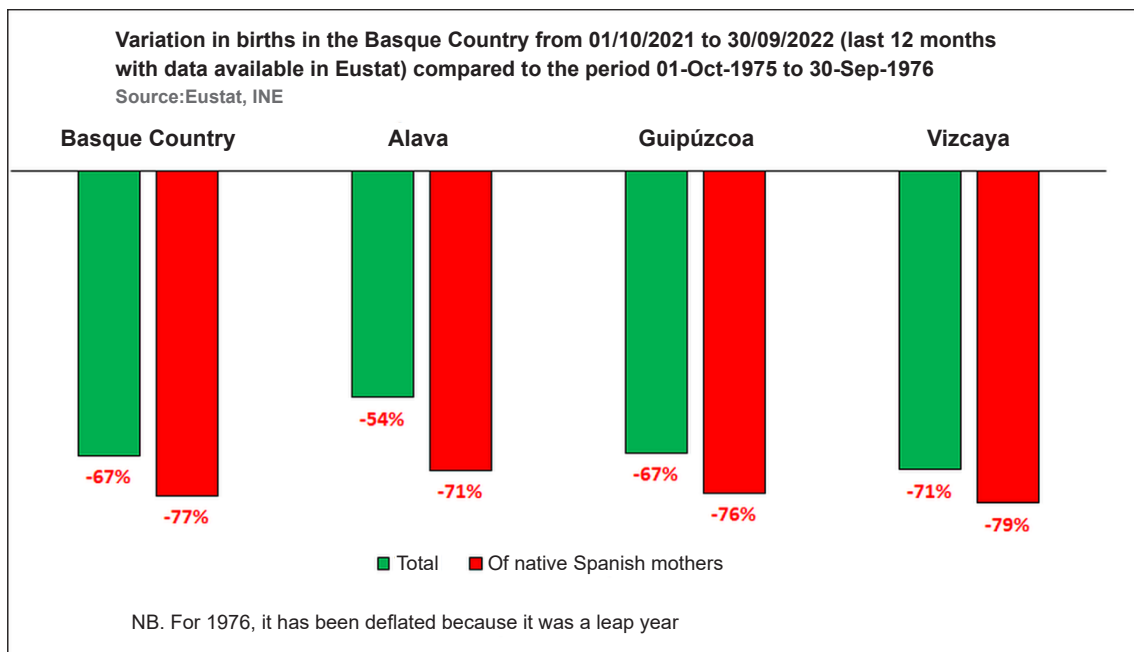
<sup>4</sup> Thus named by the Romans in honour of their emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus.

Population of Castro-Urdiales (Cantabria)			
Year	Inhabitants	Born in Cantabria	Born in another autonomous region
1950	11.646	N/D	N/D
1960	11.988	N/D	N/D
1970	12.401	N/D	N/D
1980	12.912	N/D	N/D
1990	13.594	N/D	N/D
1996	15.167	9.753	5.191
2003	23.734	10.466	12.231
2022	33.109	11.718	17.332

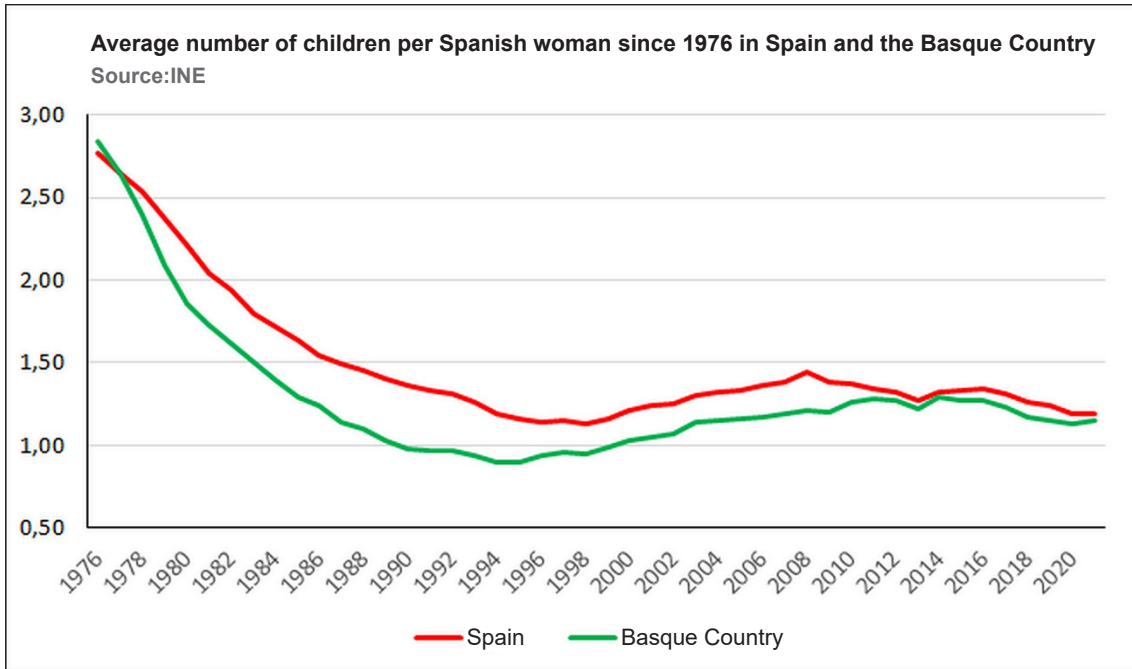
Source: Population Censuses and Municipal Registers (INE)

### Other indicators of the Basque demographic collapse

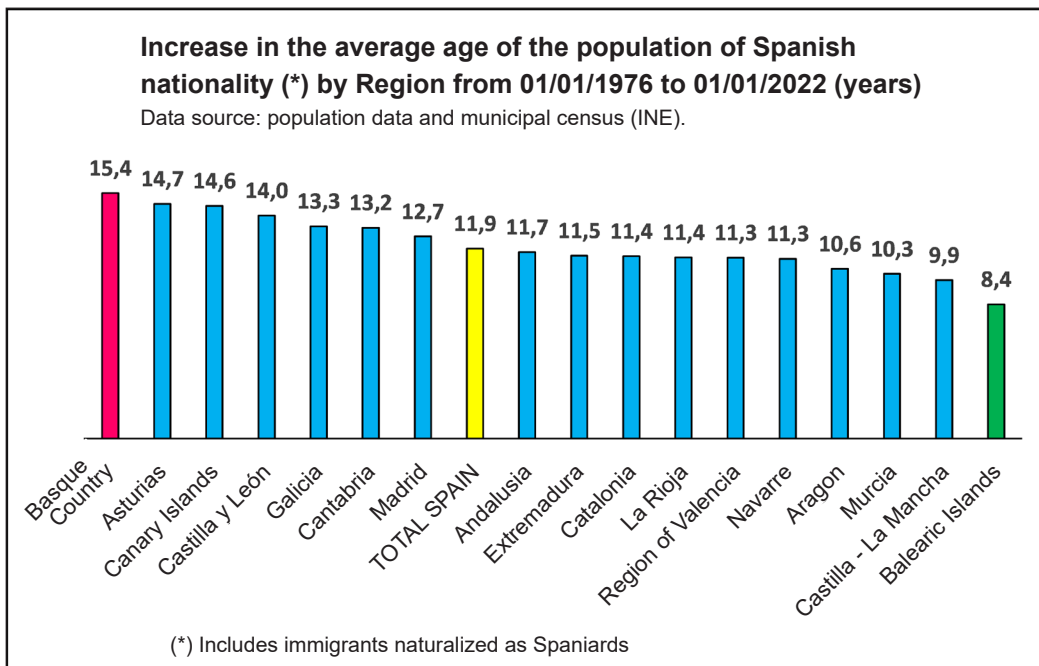
- **The Basque population in 2022 was 4.6% of the overall Spanish population (2.1 million out of 47.5), compared with 5.6% in 1977 (2 million out of 36).** As a result, in terms of its representation in Congress, Vizcaya has lost two seats in Congress out of the 10 it had in 1977, and Guipúzcoa, one out of 7.
- **The fall in births to Spanish mothers in the Basque Country** from 1977 to 2022, with Vizcaya at the top, **exceeds 75%** in the case of non-immigrant mothers, and 67% overall. In the rest of Spain, the fall has been about 15% lower in total, and about 11% less in the case of Spanish mothers.



- **The fall in fertility in the Basque Country in relation to that of 1976 was the largest in Spain until the year 2000** (when it was surpassed by the Canary Islands). On average, it was 0.20 children per woman less than the national average between 1976 and 2021.



- **The region that has aged the most in Spain** since 1976 is the Basque Country, due to the enormous drop in fertility, which is considerably higher than the national average, and to the Basque exodus, which took many young people and their children (born or future) with it, as can be seen in the table.



- In line with the great ageing experienced throughout Spain, and as a consequence of the fall in the birth rate since the Transition, in the last 20 years there has been a tremendous loss in the number of young adults born in our country, a decline exacerbated by the Basque exodus in Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa, and to a lesser extent in Álava.

Variation from 2002 until 2022 of the resident population from 20 until 39 years old, born in Spain, divided in provinces									
Nº	Province	Variation	Nº	Province	Variation	Nº	Province	Variation	
1	Asturias	-50,1%	18	Ávila	-40,9%	35	Alicante	-31,6%	
2	Vizcaya	-49,8%	19	Pontevedra	-40,8%	36	Tarragona	-31,3%	
3	Zamora	-47,9%	20	La Rioja	-40,2%	37	Cádiz	-30,9%	
4	Guipúzcoa	-47,0%	21	Zaragoza	-40,0%	38	Sevilla	-30,7%	
5	Valladolid	-46,9%	22	Lérida	-38,9%	39	Ciudad Real	-30,5%	
6	León	-46,4%	23	Huesca	-38,6%	40	Córdoba	-30,1%	
7	Palencia	-46,4%	24	Navarra	-38,5%	41	Huelva	-29,8%	
8	Álava	-45,8%	25	Cuenca	-37,6%	42	Jaén	-29,0%	
9	Lugo	-45,0%	26	Valencia	-37,1%	43	Badajoz	-28,0%	
10	Burgos	-45,4%	27	Teruel	-36,6%	44	Granada	-26,6%	
11	Soria	-44,7%	28	Cáceres	-35,8%	45	Murcia	-26,6%	
12	Salamanca	-44,3%	29	Madrid	-35,5%	46	Baleares	-25,3%	
13	Orense	-44,3%	30	Castellón	-35,2%	47	Málaga	-24,4%	
14	La Coruña	-43,5%	31	Albacete	-33,4%	48	Almería	-23,6%	
15	Cantabria	-41,8%	32	S. C Tenerife	-33,2%	49	Toledo	-18,8%	
16	Segovia	-41,7%	33	Las Palmas	-33,2%	50	Guadalajara	-16,1%	
17	Barcelona	-41,3%	34	Gerona	-32,1%				
<b>TOTAL SPAIN: LOSS OF -35,9%, nearly 4.5 MILLION</b>									
Source: Municipal Register on 1 January 2002 and 2022 (INE). Prepared by Alejandro Macarrón Larumbe									

- Between 1976 and 2021, the region with the **greatest fall in natural population increase** (births minus deaths per 1,000 inhabitants) was the Basque Country, from 13.02 more births than deaths per 1,000 inhabitants in 1976 to 4.05 fewer births than deaths in 2021 (17.07% decline). On a national level, it went from a balance of +10.48 per 1,000 in 1976 to -2.37 in 2021 (12.85% decline).
- In certain emblematic towns, such as **Rentería**, **Éibar** and **Hernani**, since their historical maximum population at the beginning of the Transition, there has been a sharp loss of total population, and specifically of those born in Spain, as can be seen in the tables (in the case of Hernani, the population decline 1981-2021 was 33% for the total population, and 40% for those born in Spain).

Population of Rentería 1900-2021			
Year	Total	Born in Spain	Born abroad
1900	4.081	4.081	N/0
1920	6.956	6.956	N/0
1930	8.973	8.973	N/0
1940	10.106	10.106	N/0
1950	12.784	12.784	N/0
1960	18.642	18.642	N/0
1970	34.369	34.369	N/0
1981	45.789	45.789	N/0
1991	41.646	41.646	N/0
1996	39.663	37.743	10
2003	38.397	37.743	654
2011	39.217	36.697	2.520
2021	39.219	35.109	4.110
2022	39.023	34.760	4.263
<b>Var. 1981-2022</b>	<b>-15%</b>	<b>-24%</b>	<b>N/0</b>
Source:INE			

Population of Éibar 1900-2022			
Year	Total	Born in Spain	Born abroad
1900	6.583	6.583	N/0
1920	11.888	11.888	N/0
1930	12.874	12.874	N/0
1940	11.772	11.772	N/0
1950	16.318	16.318	N/0
1960	31.725	31.725	N/0
1970	37.073	37.073	N/0
1981	36.494	36.494	N/0
1991	33.422	33.422	N/0
1996	0	30.303	0
2003	28.182	27.452	730
2011	27.396	25.453	1.943
2021	27.467	23.897	3.570
2022	27.282	23.669	3.613
<b>Var. 1970-2022</b>	<b>-26%</b>	<b>-36%</b>	<b>N/0</b>
Source:INE			

Finally, as far as foreign immigration in the Basque Country is concerned, although already very significant, its presence is lower than in other wealthy regions of Spain, such as Madrid, Catalonia or the Balearic Islands (another Basque demographic anomaly?), at around half or less as a percentage of the total population than in those Autonomous Regions. Another Basque peculiarity is that the greatest fertility difference between Spaniards and foreigners in the whole of Spain is in the Basque Autonomous Region, which is indicative among foreigners of a high percentage of Africans and/or Muslims<sup>5</sup>, virtually the only immigrants with a much higher fertility rate than Spaniards. In the first nine months of 2022, births to foreign mothers exceeded 29% of Basque babies: 37.4% in Álava, 29.1% in Guipúzcoa and 27.2% in Vizcaya. Of the births to foreign mothers in 2021, in 45% of cases the mother was American (Hispanic-American in more than 90% of cases); in 34%, African; 14%, European and 7% Asian. About 9% of Basque babies in 2021 were born to a Muslim immigrant woman.

**\*Methodological note.** All the above data have been collected from the INE (National Statistics Institute) or Eustat, or are our own calculations using data from these sources.

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5 In Spain, there are two groups that overlap approximately 90%: 90% of Africans are Muslims (mostly Moroccans), and 90% of Muslims are Africans.



# Economic impact of Basque nationalism. The Basque tax privilege

Between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the Transition, the Basque Country –and especially Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa– was one of the most economically powerful areas of Spain, if not the most powerful in relative terms. With the arrival of democracy, coinciding with the economic crisis resulting from the first and second oil shocks and the crisis of large Basque heavy industry, and all this exacerbated by ETA terrorism, which was doubly opposed to economic stability (communist and opposed to the unity of Spain) and a great extortionist of businessmen, the Basque Country underwent two decades of major economic collapse. Then, as terrorism became less intense, and with a privileged tax regime, paying a ridiculously low quota to the central government in relation to its economy, since the turn of the millennium, the Basque Country has recovered much of the prosperity lost in previous decades. But it has not recovered anywhere near its previous economic weight in the Spanish economy as a whole, nor the strength it once had, based mainly on a great entrepreneurial dynamism, and boosted by demographic trends highly conducive to economic growth, and not like now, in which a particularly beneficial tax regime is a key pillar of the higher per capita Basque income and the material wellbeing of its citizens.

Between 1955 and Franco's death, the growth of the Basque, Catalan and Madrid economies was much higher than that of the rest of Spain as a whole. And of the three regions, the one that grew the most in relative terms until 1975 was the Basque region. Since then, Catalonia stopped gaining economic weight in Spain, and Madrid has continued to increase its economic weight since about 1995, until it overtook Catalonia. The Basque Country suffered a major collapse from 1975 to 1995, from which it did not recover thereafter, although since then its decline has been much milder in terms of GDP relative to Spain as a whole, recovering in per capita income to second place nationally, after Madrid, although at a greater distance from the latter than in 1975. In addition to the good work of Basque businessmen, the progressive end of terrorism, and a particularly beneficial tax regime in terms of the relationship between what is earned and what is spent in the Basque Country, including episodes such as the so-called “Basque tax holidays”, which were later declared illegal by the European Union, have all played a part in this recovery.

<b>Weight in Spain's GDP of the Basque Country, Catalonia and Madrid</b>				
	<b>1955</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Basque Country</b>	6,8%	7,8%	6,1%	6,0%
<b>Catalonia</b>	17,9%	19,3%	19,6%	19,0%
<b>Madrid</b>	15,3%	17,1%	17,0%	19,4%
Source: FEDEA				

## Indicators of Basque tax privilege

### 1. Basque pension deficit and quota

As the Basque Country is one of the oldest regions in Spain, with pensioners who have contributed more on average and with some of them with good pensions due to industrial restructuring, the region has a high deficit between what the Social Security pays in retirement, widowhood and other pensions and what is collected in contributions (more than 4.3 billion in 2022, a figure equivalent to approximately 5.5% of Basque GDP). There would be nothing unusual about this, as something similar happens in other Autonomous Regions with a large retired population, were it not for the fact that this deficit is financed by the central Government out of tax revenues to which the Basque Autonomous Region barely contributes. The Basque quota for 2022, with which Spain's second Autonomous Region in terms of per capita income contributes to the common expenses of the State in what has not been transferred to it (foreign affairs, armed forces and border control, Social Security, other ministerial functions and those of autonomous State bodies, etc.) was set at 1,467 million Euro, which is barely enough to cover 35% of the Basque pension deficit, and which was equivalent to 2% of Basque GDP in 2022.

### 2. Per capita funding of the Autonomous Regions and provincial councils

The combined per capita budget for services and benefits of the Basque Government and the provincial councils is much higher than the equivalent in the rest of the Autonomous Regions and the provincial councils of their provinces (where they still exist, since there are no longer any provincial councils in single-province regions such as Madrid, Murcia, Asturias or Cantabria, among others), with the exception of the other autonomous region, Navarre. The Basque Government usually argues that it has more competences, but there are many competences transferred to all the Autonomous Regions, and in particular, those with the greatest volume of expenditure (health and education), which allow for a homogeneous comparison. If we compare Basque spending per capita on health and education with that of the Madrid region, the region with the highest per capita income in Spain, the result speaks for itself:

- **In healthcare, Basque Government spending per capita in 2022 was almost 1.6 times that of the Madrid autonomous government.** Bearing in mind that the Basque population is older than that of Madrid, and dividing health spending by the number of people over 64, the imbalance would be smaller, but it is still appreciable: **1.2 to 1**. This higher per capita spending on healthcare does not result in a higher life expectancy, which is one year higher in the Region of Madrid than in the Basque Country.
- In education, **the Basque Government's spending per capita in 2022 was almost 1.8 times that of the Madrid regional government.** However, as the weight of the child and youth population is lower in the Basque Country, dividing regional education spending by the number of children under 24 years of age, the imbalance would increase to **2 to 1**. However, despite the fact that Madrid has a higher percentage of first –and second– generation immigrants among the under-20s –the vast majority of whom are in public rather than private education, and on average obtain worse academic results– Basque pupils do not score better in PISA reports and tests such as the PIRL reading comprehension test than Madrid pupils in general.

The Basque provincial councils have much higher per capita budgets than the other provinces in Spain that have them. This occurs despite the fact that, in the case of the Basque Country, and not Navarre, the Basque provinces are small in size (between the three of them they cover 7,234 square kilometres, almost 800 less than Madrid, itself a smaller province than the national average), and there are no large areas with very low population density, one of the typical areas of social utility and action of the provincial councils.

Excluding municipal funding, the Provincial Council of Alava (a province with 330,000 inhabitants and a surface area of 3,037 square kilometres) has a spending budget of some 530 million Euro for 2023; that of the Provincial Council of Guipúzcoa (715,000 inhabitants, 1,997 sq. km) amounts to some 1.1 billion Euro; and that of the Vizcaya Provincial Council (1,130,000 inhabitants, 2,217 square km), about 2 billion Euro. In contrast, for example, the budget of the Burgos Provincial Council (350,000 inhabitants, 14,292 sq. km) is 146 million Euro for 2023; that of Alicante (1,920,000 inhabitants, 5,816 square km), 284 million Euro; and that of Lérida (439,000 inhabitants, 12,150 square km) is a meagre 150 million Euro.

\* \* \* \* \*

How much lower would Basque GDP per capita be without its privileged tax system (i.e. with a much higher quota), with per capita regional and provincial council spending on public services and benefits being equal to that of the rest of Spain? How much would Basque pensions have to be lowered or taxation raised in the absence of coverage of the Basque SS deficit by the central government? How much lower would the Basque pension deficit be and how much higher would Basque GDP be without the Basque exodus caused by terrorism and the oppressive political-social climate, and without the additional drop in fertility that occurred in the Basque Country compared to the rest of Spain? The answer to these questions is by no means insignificant, but a proper analysis would undoubtedly yield very high numbers.

# Interviews with those expelled from the Basque Country as a consequence of ETA terrorism

The conclusions in this section are the result of the analysis of the responses received to the questionnaire sent in March 2023 to people from different groups that were particularly affected by ETA terrorism: relatives of those murdered, university professors, journalists, judges, businessmen, students, etc.

It is significant that thirteen years after ETA's last assassination, twelve years after its announcement of a definitive ceasefire and five years after its dissolution, several of those surveyed still prefer to remain anonymous.

These are the conclusions:

- Virtually all those interviewed acknowledged that terrorist activity was the main reason that prompted them to leave the Basque Country. However, they also stated that the existing political environment, the oppression and lack of freedom suffered by those who were not nationalists undoubtedly contributed to reinforcing their decision.

It is worth illustrating this first section by recalling the civil death that befell the relatives of those killed by ETA in the early years of its terrorist activity. Helplessness, indifference and lack of solidarity were then and for many years the standard behaviour of Basque society and its institutions. This is the testimony of the son-in-law of a Popular Alliance politician murdered in 1980 who prefers to remain anonymous:

*“We were hit full force by ETA terrorism when our father was assassinated. They dragged him on to the hillside with unparalleled brutality, putting a Spanish flag in his mouth, forcing him to his knees and discharging a burst of machine-gun fire, followed by a shot in the side of the head. And then, there was the discomfort of our women when they were doing the shopping and the others turned away from them. The Basque Government has never been interested in our needs”.*

- There is also unanimous disappointment with the Basque Government for never having been concerned about their situation or their needs, beyond the compensation they may be entitled to as a result

of the laws on victims of terrorism. This coldness towards the victims is curious if we compare it with the spirit and effort used to attend to the “Basque communities abroad” with subsidies and institutional visits to the other side of the Atlantic. That is, those who do not know the Basque Country because they are descendants of those who had to leave Spain in the 19th or 20th centuries for economic or political reasons.

These people, who would have the right to vote if they so wished –article 7.2 of the Basque Statute of Autonomy–, have a welcome and an institutional priority that has not been given to those who had to leave the Basque Country as a result of the terror only twenty, thirty or forty years ago. Undoubtedly the “distinguishing feature” in their case must be their non-nationalist political status. This attitude also makes most of those interviewed rule out the possibility of returning.

It is striking to note that none of those surveyed even knew that in 2011 the Basque Government, then led by the PSE (Basque Socialist Party), came up with a project called “Return” whose aim was to design a public reparation programme to facilitate the return of the relatives of those murdered by ETA, as well as those who had been extorted, coerced, threatened, etc. The project remained just that, and the victory of the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party) in the 2012 regional elections meant that it was definitively left on the shelf.

On the possibility, with or without aid, of this hypothetical return to the Basque Country, the testimony of the children of Manuel González-Barandiarán, director of “La Gaceta del Norte”, who was forced to flee Bilbao quickly to avoid assassination, is enlightening:

*“Our departure was when we were still very young. We have built our lives outside the Basque Country and although we have returned for short periods to visit the family that is still there, at this point there is no reason for us to return permanently, given that, although ETA no longer kills, the hostile social climate towards those who are not nationalist remains”.*

In relation to this possibility of return, Fernando Maura, former Basque MP, former member of parliament and former member of the European Parliament, raises an interesting question in view of the lack of institutional interest in facilitating the return and suggests the need to adopt measures to prevent the flight of human capital from continuing to increase:

*“I am afraid that it is now rather difficult whatever measures are intended to be taken in this regard. I believe rather that the institutions should –if they really want to– work to prevent the diaspora of the younger generations by creating an environment of professional opportunities open to current trends (less Basque, more English...) Otherwise, human decapitalisation will continue unstopably and the Basque Country will become –if it is not already– a subsidised territory populated by old people. A sort of Jurassic residence full of green meadows, good restaurants and elderly people”.*

As for the Basque Government’s interest in finding out about the situation of the displaced persons and addressing their concerns or needs, we include this response by Professor Edurne Uriarte, which reflects the general idea of all those interviewed:

*“The Basque Government has certainly never contacted me, neither to inform me about what happened to the bombers who tried to kill me, nor to ask me about my situation after the scandal of the cancellation of my professorship and my departure for Madrid. Regrettably, for the Basque Government, I am a Basque who does not exist”.*

- Looking more closely at the attitude maintained by the Basque Government and the nationalist parties to promote a climate that would ensure their well-being and prevent them from leaving or facilitate their return, the people interviewed agreed that the atmosphere they created and the decisions they made did not help mitigate the indifference and even hostility shown towards them. Moreover, they state that the attitudes towards those who publicly expressed their disagreement with the prevailing ideology –politicians, journalists, professors, etc.– continue to this day. The contempt for those who were murdered for representing the State, especially in the case of the State Security Forces and Corps, as well as for their families, continues.

Consequently, the exiles claim that, despite the disappearance of the most violent expression of this ideology, the collateral consequences of their departure from the Basque Country make them rule out the option of returning.

The testimony of Carlos Fernández de Casadevante, Professor of International Public Law, gives us pause for thought:

*“They took advantage of the shaking of the tree. Firstly, to participate with an advantage in all the elections in the Basque Country while the non-nationalist parties did not compete on equal terms and had to struggle to stand because their candidates were threatened or assassinated. In the case of the UCD, they were exterminated. Secondly, another great advantage is the fraudulent alteration of the electoral roll, which explains the current situation. In my opinion, this is irreversible”.*

Professor Francisco Llera’s response to the climate created by the nationalist parties is also enlightening, especially with regard to the treatment meted out by the former president of the PNV between 1987 and 2004.

*“I remember the public diatribes Arzalluz directed at me in one of his weekly sermons when the news of my transfer to Washington became public. And I don’t know that they have done any better with others. ‘Ethnic hatred’ is incompatible with ‘Christian compassion’”.*

It is also worth highlighting the opinion of Víctor Legorburu Zuazua, son of Víctor Legorburu Ibarreche, mayor of Galdácano murdered on 9 February 1976, on the climate promoted by the nationalists:

*“The intention was to drive us out of the Basque Country. The priority of the two nationalisms, the radical (ETA) and the supposedly moderate (PNV) has always been the creation of the Basque nation (which has never existed). There is plenty of evidence of their collusion. In this way they have moulded a society almost without dissent, they control it in its entirety, they dominate all educational, health, social, informative, sporting, etc. institutions, and as a consequence the political ones. The further away the Spaniards are the better for them. They have very little left to do to erase everything that indicates the presence of Spain in our land. They have even manipulated the geographical toponymy, they have ‘Basquefied’ everything in their own way, inventing all kinds of falsehoods and myths”.*

- The exiles were also asked whether the educational and linguistic policies implemented by the Basque Government, headed permanently since 1980 by the PNV, with the exception of the three years of socialist government between 2009 and 2012, had an impact on their decision to leave the Basque Country.

The answers are similar, but the one given by the journalist Isabel San Sebastián sums up what the majority said:

*“For many years ETA practised a policy of extermination of the political adversary with the help of an indifferent or accomplice PNV. The exodus resulting from this violence is an undeniable fact. Now language policy acts as a discriminatory barrier. In my family, for example, the last person to use Basque was my great-grandmother. My grandfather, born at the end of the 19th century, already expressed himself in Spanish. They “build” a Basque Country in their own image and likeness, where the rest of us find it difficult to fit in”.*

- Figures on the number of people forced to leave the Basque Country as a result of terrorism are not exact. The closest estimate of this figure was made in 2011 by the Basque Institute of Criminology and places the so-called “Basque exodus” in a range of between 60,000 and 200,000 people.

When asked about the influence of this forced modification of the electoral roll and its influence on the Basque political map, all agree that it has undoubtedly contributed to the fact that the constitutionalist alternative has been weakened while the nationalist options have been clearly strengthened. The response of the philosopher Fernando Savater is very clear in this respect:

*“The guideline applied to those who remember their Spanish citizenship is: the fewer, the better; the less visible, the better; the further away, the better. Naturally, the non-nationalist political option has been clearly and constantly obstructed”.*

Or this one by journalist Carlos Cuesta:

*“More than 200,000 people left with their children -like me-. The entire PNV vote in the 2020 regional elections was 349,960 people. The entire EH Bildu vote was 249,580. Of course the vote of the exiles would alter the electoral result and of course both the PNV and EH Bildu are aware that this allows them to alter the democratic result”.*

And finally this one by Fernando Múgica, son of Fernando Múgica Herzog, assassinated by ETA in 1996:

*“The electoral roll of the Basque Country has been altered for decades to the detriment of the constitutionalist parties by the Basque diaspora. In the next municipal and regional elections in 2023 it is possible that up to 2/3 of the votes cast will be nationalist, combining PNV and EH Bildu. It is a distorted electoral scenario that responds to the nationalist hegemony that they achieved through violence for decades”.*

- The questionnaire also asks about the attitude maintained not only by the Basque government, but also by the Spanish government. It is assumed that perhaps they could have felt more supported by the latter, as it responds to a political sensibility that is alien to nationalist ideology, but the disenchantment is similar. Apart from the material aid and compensation provided for in the law, the different Spanish governments have not undertaken any concrete policy to alleviate their sense of institutional helplessness or to restore the political rights they lost when they left their administrative neighbourhood in the Basque Country.



The truth is that in the first legislature of Mariano Rajoy's government, from 2011 to 2015, the Home Office commissioned a report from the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies to propose measures that would encourage the return of exiles to the Basque Country, or at least their political participation, i.e. the right to vote in this Region. However, it is equally true that this report was not subsequently accompanied by any legal amendment.

On this issue, the response of a magistrate who decided to leave the Basque Country as a result of the stifling atmosphere for public servants is of particular importance as it represents one of the powers of the state.

*“At the time, they could and should have taken such measures. It is highly doubtful that the current governments have any intention of doing so, but quite the contrary”.*

- The departure from the Basque Country of the people under threat and of the direct relatives of the murdered people, together with the mainly linguistic obstacles imposed by the Basque government, has led to an evident decapitalisation. The physical disappearance of the murdered or kidnapped businessmen, the damage caused to those who were extorted and the trade union hostility to business activity led to a clear decline in economic growth. In 1975, the Basque GDP represented 7.80% of the national GDP; in 2021 it was only 5.94%.

In addition, the intellectual impoverishment resulting from the educational endogamy that prevents access to the civil service for talent from outside the Basque Country as a result of the requirement for knowledge of the Basque language should be highlighted. This situation means that many young people, if their families have sufficient resources, opt to seek a higher quality education outside the Basque Country, which in many cases means that they do not return because of the opportunities available elsewhere in Spain or abroad. However, there are those who believe that there is still time to reverse this situation.

With the future in mind, we have selected three responses to this situation.

These are the words of Ana Velasco, daughter of Commander Jesús Ignacio Velasco, who was murdered by ETA in Vitoria on 10 January 1980:

*“For the situation to be reversible, it is essential for the oppressive climate of omnipotent separatism to disappear, since freedom is a key factor for entrepreneurs to undertake projects. It is also necessary for them not to be subjected to the designs of the governing party, since today, in order to prosper in the Basque Country, it is necessary to be a member of the PNV, ETA's party or to show support for nationalism”.*

And these others - more hopeful - from the grandchildren, under the age of 30, of two people murdered by the gang:

*“I believe that due to terrorism and the consequences that it continues to have, such as the flight of talent due to the exile of some 200,000 people, the slowdown in the economy, the ageing of society, the lack of private investment, etc., have meant that the Basque Country is not an attractive region in which to start and build a professional*



*career. Today, the Basque Country is losing young people year after year, so if even the Basques themselves opt for other places in Spain to start a professional career it will be difficult to attract talent from elsewhere”.*

*“The Basque Country has a privileged economic and business position compared to most of the other regions of Spain. But this advantageous position is not enough if you want to attract talent and entrepreneurship from other regions. Generally, enterprising and talented people have the ability to choose where to settle and they usually choose to do so in open societies, where political issues are not a relevant factor in order to prosper. In this respect, I believe that the Basque Country has a lot of room for improvement”.*

- In phenomena such as the one we are dealing with in this report, there are demands that are not related to material issues but to ethical concerns. They are centred on the need for society, after fifty years of terrorism, to compensate its victims with Truth, Memory, Dignity and Justice. And certainly meeting these demands is the least that a state governed by the rule of law can and should offer victims when it was unable to ensure the first fundamental right, the right to life.

In the questionnaire, we asked whether the actions promoted by the Basque Government in the field of education, memory or in the media are helping to ensure that the demands we have previously mentioned are met. Once again, all those interviewed stated that little or nothing is being done in this respect and, on occasions, it is even worse, as the opposite is taking place through an equidistant narrative that mixes up violence of very different origins and blurs or points out responsibilities that have nothing to do with ETA terrorism. These are some of the responses.

The journalist José Antonio Zarzalejos states the following:

*“It is Basque society and especially nationalism that have to carry out a (moral) catharsis of their omissions, ask for forgiveness collectively and recognise those of us who are outside as victims due to terrorist threats and the aggressiveness of nationalism”.*

The testimony of Professor Francisco Llera is also very clear in relation to the interest in Memory and the will of the governments of the Basque Country and Spain:

*“The so-called “democratic” memory ended with Franco [...] ETA did not exist. There is nothing to hope for because they have no will to do so. They will do the minimum possible and only if they feel very much in evidence. It’s not something they have on their agenda or they are concerned about. The ETA prisoners and the pressure from their entourage are of more concern to them”.*

- Faced with the indifference and passivity of the Basque institutions in finding out about the situation of the exiles and repairing the damage caused, all those interviewed, while expressing no desire to return, highlight the warm welcome they have received in the places to which they have had to move. They also point out that there is no way to compensate for the pain and damage caused by the terrorist group and nationalist oppression, but they would consider it positive to be able to participate politically with their vote, although they believe that nobody will be the least bit concerned about meeting this demand, least of all the nationalist.

This is the response of Ana Iríbar, widow of Gregorio Ordoñez, regarding the climate she found in Madrid when she left the Basque Country:

*“Not only have I felt more welcome, but from the first day I have been and am just another citizen of Madrid. It’s incredible but true. At the first meeting of the homeowners’ association where I moved in, the chairman of the community opened the meeting by saying how proud they were to have me among their neighbours... unimaginable in my house in San Sebastián”.*

As for the possibility of returning, this is the opinion of Magistrate Juan Pablo González, a judge for many years in Bilbao, later a Magistrate in the National High Court and current president of the Provincial Court of Madrid.

*“The reasons that caused me to leave remain. It is the conviction that those who are not nationalists and who are not prepared to remain silent have no professional future in the Basque Country, at least in the public administration, even if it is state-owned”.*

- With regard to the next generations, we have interviewed several young people under the age of thirty and the answers are similar. Despite the current scenario, some of them are surprisingly hopeful and, most importantly, none of them exude resentment despite the difficulties that the political environment in which they have lived, the linguistic imposition to which they have been subjected or the lack of opportunities may have caused them.

Firstly, they say that at school they did not receive any information or testimony about terrorism and its victims. They have learned about it through their family and some have been directly affected by the murder of their grandparents and by other testimonies outside the educational system. On the other hand, despite the time that has passed since the last ETA attack, they prefer not to talk about politics in public in order to avoid problems. They agree that the atmosphere created by nationalism does not allow them to express themselves freely and without fear of being singled out.

They consider knowledge of the Basque language to be reasonable, but its requirement for entry into the public administration to be disproportionate. They also believe that this requirement has a lot to do with the decision of so many young people to leave to study and work outside the Basque Country, as well as with the lower level of teaching at Basque public universities, as language is a definite obstacle to the arrival of teachers and professors from other parts of Spain or abroad.

Although several of them, after finishing their studies outside the Basque Country, have decided to pursue their professional careers abroad, they believe that the decapitalisation of the Basque Country is still reversible. If the institutions dedicate themselves to creating the right conditions for investment, education and research to be facilitated in the Basque Country, they do not rule out the possibility of this region regaining the leading position it occupied for so many years in the Spanish economy. These are some of the responses:

*“The Basque Country has many characteristics to be a developed region, but for that to happen, it would have to know how to attract talent not only from the rest of Spain but also from the rest of the world”.*

*“I have no memory of dealing with the issue of the victims of terrorism at school, nor of hearing the testimony of any victim. Therefore, I do not believe that the Department of Education has had any kind of commitment either in delegitimising terrorism or in defending its victims”.*

*“I think it is reasonable that obtaining a Basque language qualification should allow you to obtain extra points in the employment exchange as a measure to prevent the language from being lost. However, I do not consider that it should be a prerequisite for access to public employment, so its value should under no circumstances be greater than having better training in relation to the post for which one is applying”.*

*“Access to the civil service has been and continues to be carried out under unequal conditions, with the level of knowledge of the Basque language often taking precedence over other skills and aptitudes. Consequently, I consider that excellence has taken second place to the candidates’ level of Basque”.*

**CENTER FOR STUDIES, TRAINING AND  
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