
Elkarri's VII General
Assembly
Document 2 of the
Presentation-base

Elkarri's Action Plan 2003-2005

Zubi berri bati eraiki

Building a New Bridge

March 1, 2003

Presentation

On December 21, 2002, Elkarri celebrated its tenth anniversary. On this date, it finalized the validity of its Zubigintzan Strategic Plan, approved in June 2000, and initiated its seventh General Assembly, which ended on March 1, 2003. The mission of this Assembly was to sanction a new biannual strategic plan for the 2003 – 2005 period.

The context is especially complex. The atmosphere of extreme tension, threat, and agitation are unprecedented. The Popular Party, UPN, PSE-EE, PSN, and UA are directly threatened by the ETA. Batasuna is subject to a double process of illegalization and suspension of activities. Lehendakari, in the name of the Basque government and the three parties that compose it, has made a proposal for a new pact of coexistence that generated a tense debate. Within a few months, in May 2003, there will be municipal and autonomous elections. In March 2004, there will be general elections, and in spring 2005, autonomous elections.

Neither is Elkarri's moment ordinary. The Peace Conference just ended. This process represented an intense experience that brought the Bake-bidea proposal to a close. Additionally, the commemoration of its tenth anniversary always represents an occasion in which a profound exercise of balance and evaluation is obligatory.

It is in these internal and external conditions that an assembly process was developed. Elkarri's challenge has been to extract conclusions from its recent experiences, to elaborate and to apply a useful action plan for peace in this difficult moment and after its ten-year history.

The materials of the seventh General Assembly were distributed in two different documents: Document 1 with the Action Balance of the last two years and this Document 2, which includes the Action Plan proposal. This second document has three parts: 1) diagnostics; 2) bases and role of Elkarri; and 3) an intervention project.

The first part: Diagnostics

Since the elaboration of the Eraiki project in 1998, representation assemblies and in its six-monthly action programs and continuous criterion in the analysis model, taking as its entry identification criterion for the field of obstacles and opportunities promote its development. And third, a process criterion to interpret inside the trial and error dynamic and the overcoming of stages. This first part of the seventh General Assembly's presentation must give content to these criteria and structure them in three parts:

1. Description of the present situation.
2. Obstacles and opportunities.
3. Conclusions.

1. Description of the present situation

We set out the description of the situation from three different viewpoints: the last two years, the present n

1.1. The last two years

Our present reality is marked by the international and internal evolution of the last two years. After interpreting the present and the evolution of events through a wider perspective, this first section will review the recent past.

1.1.1. The international perspective

The assassinations of September 11, the war in Afghanistan, the aggravating of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the crisis in Iraq are events that have set out models that are more authoritative and militaristic and less inclined toward diplomacy, negotiation, or mediation in conflict resolution. All of this has had a negative influence in Europe, in the Spanish government's politics, and in our own reality. On the other side of the scales and despite all the difficulties, Ireland continues establishing a positive reference for a peace process. In this way and with this exception, the international plan of the last two years has constituted an adverse and hostile time for the proposal of dialogue and non-violence.

1.1.2. The internal perspective

Also from an internal perspective, this has been a very unfavorable period to promote a peace process and dialogue solutions. The analysis of the last two years must be marked in the context created by the rupture of the truce at the end of 1999. From this moment, the year 2000 was dominated by a heartbreaking offensive of threats and deadly attacks from the ETA and by an intense political agitation that extended to the autonomous elections on May 13, 2001. The result of these elections marked a serious setback for the PP government's strategy and a blunt response given the rupture of the truce. The year 2002 continued to be characterized by an extreme political tension, fed by the threat of the ETA, each time extending to wider sectors, and by the strategy of illegalization, suspension, and persecution of Batasuna that the Spanish government promoted. Putting a polemic counterpoint to this situation, Lehendakari presented a new proposal for a pact of coexistence in September. The Peace Conference was brought to a close without an agreement but with significant advances. All of this occurred inside a convulsive climate that, in the last few months, was furthermore mixed with a very strained pre-electoral environment due to the situation of threat and exclusion. The role of the communication means has also at times been an important negative factor that generated tension, has strained the environment, and has hardened positions.

1.2. The Present Moment

The situation from which we start is nothing easy. We drag all the burdens of distrust, blockade, e by five factors.

1.2.1. Three strategic gambles

The political scenario today is fundamentally occupied by three strategic gambles with their corresponding leaderships. The ETA's strategy of violence, Spanish government's strategy of illegalization, and the Basque government's strategy of a new pact. In this context, all of the current politics manage to satisfy the majority of the blockade, but none of them succeed in dividing the majority of the deadlock. The media-oriented and political debates do not find constructive paths, rather, they are trapped in the political tension and dominated by distrust.

1.2.2. Multiple threats

The political situation is moreover characterized by an extended and multilateral perception of serious threat. The PP, UPN, PSOE, PSN, PSE-EE, and UA are victims of persecution, threat, and attacks by the ETA. Basque leftist organizations suffer an offensive of aggressions, illegalization, and suspension of activities. The parties that form the Basque government continue subduing the tentacles of media and political pressure. Without establishing a comparison between qualitatively distinct situations, this description serves to highlight that the acts of certain political actors are developed largely from a priority of self-defense in front of the fear of being obliterated, excluded, or destroyed. A factor that is not very opportune in the search for peace.

1.2.3. The collision of force strategies

The social hope for peace, solutions, and understanding are trapped in the collision of two dominant strategies of force: violence and illegalization. These two strategies are unfeasible. They go against an immense majority of society's will and they do not lead to solutions, but to the aggravation of the problem. They have a large capacity for a blockade and for influence on reality but an evident incapacity for breaking the deadlock.

1.2.4. Attempts at breaking the deadlock

In this real context, there are present distinct attempts to break the deadlock that, for the moment, are not able to overcome the blockade. Apart from experiences such as those of the Erandio Town Hall or the demonstration promoted in Eiber, a clear case is the Peace Conferences. After one year of work, the destructive impact of the violence and the excluding impact of the illegalization has impeded the consensus drafts from converting into an explicit agreement. In any case, the presentation of these constructive initiatives has a very important effect because it is an indispensable counterweight in front of the power of the imposition, the force, the fatalism, and the despair.

1.2.5. Social cohesion

An absolutely necessary key for understanding our reality is an integrative and moderating cohesion of society. A much consolidated social position that rejects violence, asks for dialogue to settle unresolved problems, demands a plural social solution, and wants to have the possibility of deciding its own future. Fortunately, our situation of violence and conflict has a democratic, adult, and emancipated society that does not accept authoritarian guardianship

neither to supplant it, nor to liberate it, nor to impede its rebellion. This social positioning is transversal and crossing all political spectrums. We have a centered society that, turning its back to extreme chance, acts to stop the spirals of violence, confrontation, division, and exclusion.

1.2.6. Suspicions

As for what references the question of pluralism, in the comprehension of what is pluralism and above all in the comprehension of how pluralism is conceived, not much coincidence exists. That is to say, we must qualify the affirmation of what is a society centered in the demand for a plural society, of a solution that incorporates pluralism as a shared patrimony.

Maybe many people know what their specific collective identity is, but it is sure enough that they don't know very clearly what are the political and social consequences that entail said self-knowledge and above all what are the norms (in the widest sense of the term) that it is necessary to establish to make possible the peaceful coexistence of different identities.

The problem that we set out now is that of uncertain identity. This uncertainty provokes actual excluding positions. The uncertainty provokes exits/refuge toward isolation. In doubt, people grab for what they intuitively believe it is and tend to distrust other definitions. We don't feel that we are before a scenario of conflict, but we are before a scenario of distrust more generalized than it seems. A scenario that constructs following the sequence of uncertainty/ignorance/non-recognition/distrust.

1.3. Consequences and evolution

The political conjunction is marked in the present by violence, the blockade, and a multiple perception of threat is clearly exposed to the possibility of a larger degradation. In short, it is possible that we are witnessing a worsening of stubbornness by the force strategies and by an electoral context contaminated by threat and exclusion. The evolution of the situation in the short and long-term is unpredictable and results as very risky for making prognoses for the next two years. Nevertheless, it agrees to hold in account these following references.

1.3.1. The height of Manichaeism

A situation supported by violence, threat, exclusion, deepening tension, and blockade is favorable for bolting forward, for extreme reactions, to an exodus of desperation, extraordinary and irregular proposals, and for apocalyptic discourses. Manichaeism thus finds its most favorable method through the power of "with us or with them," and through giving all prominence to the "terrific" political action. They can, for all of this, follow conjunctions in which the force and the initiative are situated in a dominant way in the most extreme positions and in which is accentuated its capacity of influence and of blockade. In this context is produced a severe obstacle for acting through dialogue and mediation. It is agreed to prepare for these moments of great tension and Manichaean pressure.

1.3.2. Deadlock reaction

In the same measure in which a degradation of the situation can be produced, a larger social, political, economic, and international demand for change and an intensification of initiatives for breaking the deadlock are being hoped for. We could predict that a worsening of the situation could bring about a larger resolute reaction. The resources and forces of this social movement are going to be centered on this objective and on summarizing them to the other actors that in internal, state, or international fields are deciding to promote a peace process that would significantly and positively transform the conflict. Among the foreseeable is our will and projects of change for the situation; among the unforeseeable are the results that we will obtain.

1.3.3. The unforeseeable

In the evolution analysis, it is necessary to also tell of the factors that are unforeseeable. Among them, for example, are the results of the next three electoral meetings that can change the sociopolitical panorama: municipal and autonomous elections in May 2003, general elections in March 2004, and autonomous elections in May 2005. Neither must it discard that the real scenario, occupied principally by three strategies, leaves room for another or other strategies, even for the creation of new initiatives or for other types of changes. Among the unforeseeable and that which we cannot dismiss is also the truce. An option that could turn the situation 180 degrees, but that depends on the ETA and on how it did not used to be convenient to blindly speculate. The configuration of the future, what logically can augment or worsen the situation, is composed of objective, subjective, and unforeseeable factors that, in any case, must be taken into account.

2. Obstacles and opportunities

In the former point, we described the situation in which we find ourselves limited to a triple perspective of the recent past, present reality, and the evolution of the future. In the whole situation, as complicated as it is, we can identify a catalogue of obstacles and opportunities. This is the work that we deal with in this second section of the situation's diagnostics.

2.1. The field of obstacles: immobility

We demarcate the field of obstacles in the inertia of the conflicting positions. That is to say, in the immobility. This immobility has four expressions that feed back to it: imposition, exclusion, unilateralism, and veto. They are very interrelated and they have a significant capacity to neutralize the possibilities for a change in the situation. In face of the search for shared solutions, all of these have the same common characteristic: they promote the blockade and distrust.

2.1.1. Negative conception of the resolution of the conflict

This conception is fundamentally represented in the strategy of violence and of the threats used by the ETA. It also has to be seen through all the violations of human rights that pretend to be used to achieve political ends. It forms a part of a negative and forceful political culture. It settles in the conviction that there is no possible solution without employing violence and that it is necessary to impose on the rest, although the rest are the majority, a fixed interpretation of the conflict, of rights, and of solutions. Immobility, in this case, expresses in the greatest extent that in order to put an end to the violent actions, these must move first.

2.1.2. Excluding conception of political coexistence

The strategy of illegalization promoted by the Spanish government is today the most clear expression of an excluding conception of coexistence, although it is not the only one. This form of confronting the political problems in our society takes as its base an authoritarian political culture and single-minded thought. It aids this conviction that problems don't have a solution if they don't prescribe to the ideology of the dissident. It constitutes a form of negation of the "other" and of the pluralism of our society. It coincides with the former in its negative vision and in the form of manifesting its immobility: it is they who must change before I move myself from the position of force.

2.1.3. Unilateralist conception of a solution

It is based in the conviction that a solution trusting in its own forces and in those that are closest is possible. It forms a part of a self-sufficient mentality that has intellectual and media defenders with influence in practically all of the political sectors. The base of its discourse is centered in negating the existence of the problem or in making objective the impossibility of a shared solution. One way or another it happens to augment the inutility of dialogue or the sterilization of searching for an agreement without exclusions. It forms a part of the political culture that, in practice, does not accept all of the complexity of the real pluralism of our society. It is also a form of immobility because its premise is that dialogue must be demonstrated – giving the reason in advance – to merit the pain, meanwhile, I will not move.

2.1.4. Closed conception of democracy

Everything for the people but the people, this is the expression that best could summarize this form of conceiving these democratic relations. This mentality forms a part of a paternalistic and elitist culture of extended politics. Democracy is conceived of as a closed and non-participative framework. On one hand, legislation is presented as sacred and untouchable; it is the only point of possible meeting. On the other hand, the role of the citizen is reduced to voting every four years and, in any case, in participating in demonstrations when they convene. Immobility is expressed in this conception vetoing the possibility of democratic change of the framework and impeding the possibility that our society can be expressly consulted about solutions or about the future. In this way, this conception blocks two possible ways of exit.

2.2. The field of opportunities: change

We associate the space of opportunities with the idea and the chance for change. That is to say, with factors that have the potential of opening the real situation. We group these opportunities that we observe in the present situation in four blocks.

2.2.1. A society in favor of dialogue

The space of central opportunities and the clearest, strongest point that presents the present conjunction is found in the positioning of our own society. The majority social will of non-violence, dialogue, plural agreement, and freedom of decision is the active principle for breaking the deadlock. It neutralizes the strategies of force and imposition, habilitates an alternative, and coincides with the principles of democratic resolution of other conflicts such as that of Quebec or that of Northern Ireland. It defines the framework, the principles, and the base for a resolute peace process.

2.2.2. An open debate

Despite the uncertainty and the heated polemics, the open debate with the proposal presented by Lehendakari constitutes an opportunity in the present blockade scenario. This debate permits a democratic and dialoged revision of the present framework of coexistence, contemplates consulting society, consequently leaves those who call the on resources of using force without pretext, and has the challenge of multilateralism because to be able to prosper requires reaching sufficiently plural agreements.

2.2.3. The emergence of reflections and proposals

It must also highlight as an opportunity the emergence in the last times of diverse reflections and proposals of those realized by IU, Udalbiltza (SA), Aralar, EA, PSE-EE, and ELA. They are contributions that have to be seen through the method of the peace process, with the construction of a new framework for coexistence, with the Statute, and with the strategies of pacification. Although they form a part of the still incipient process, they have the common value of promoting a discussion about alternatives and of putting to light the absence of results from immobility.

2.2.4. Conclusions from the Peace Conference

The conclusions from the Peace Conference also constitute a space of opportunity for change, especially from the work perspective that Elkarri must develop. Five points summarize these conclusions: a social network of information, participation, and a culture of peace of more than 100,000 people; an important network of facilitation and support for the peace process; a viable methodology for dialogue between political forces in adverse conjunctions; two consensus drafts about the methodology for a peace process; and the Bake-bidea proposal. This is the solid and constructive base through which Elkarri can consolidate its project.

3. Conclusions

The diagnostics of the situation are summarized and simplified in this third section of conclusions in two blocks: the definition of the present situation and the treatment of what it requires.

3.1. Definition of the situation

The scheme that we follow to define in a summarized way the present context portrays, first, the principal characterization of the present moment. Following this, we will indicate the weak and strong points of this conjunction in face of the change toward a resolute peace process.

3.1.1. Characterization

We find ourselves in a conjunction characterized by a hard struggle between immobility (inertia and confrontation) and the options for change through non-violence and dialogue. For the moment, since the rupture of the truce, the balance has tilted toward the side of immobility. The chance for breaking the deadlock still has insufficient force. The situation is of a grave political crisis with the risk of further degradation.

3.1.2. Weak point

The factors that most strongly oppose change and the breaking of the deadlock are the imposition (violence), the exclusion (illegalization), the negation of dialogue and plural agreement (unilateralism), and the closing of democratic possibilities (veto).

3.1.3. Strong point

The determining factor for a process of change is found in the social majority options, in the initiatives toward breaking the deadlock and in the critical political, social, and international mixture that actively support them. This factor is moreover the indicator of the validity of this diagnostic, if this reality was modified, it would lose its validity.

3.2. Treatment

In face of achieving a change in the scenario that permits the resolute peace process to go forward, the intervention of a social movement like Elkarri would necessitate articulating this following treatment.

3.2.1. Priority

The first is to unite and to accumulate the most social, political, and international forces for a process of change through dialogue and non-violence, and to explore creative ways to use these inertias in order to rechannel them positively. This is the priority for acting with efficiency and this is the field of central opportunity from which to intervene.

3.2.2. Lines of preferred intervention

About this base, it must preferably intervene in three areas:

- To support, especially in the moments of most difficulty, the principles of a resolute peace process, the hope for an alternative, and the defense of social majority will.

- To create conditions for breaking the deadlock acting on the principle factors of the blockade: violence, illegalization, unilateralism, and veto.
- To generate spaces of trust, looking for safe spaces of communication, dialogue, reconciliation, and pre-agreement between political forces.